

Masterplan and Governance Workshop 19th July 2018

York Central Partnership, in collaboration with My York Central, held a workshop on the subject of ‘Masterplan and Governance’ on Thursday 19th July 2018 at the National Railway Museum.

The event was open to everyone who wanted to attend and required people to register their attendance free online using event website Eventbrite.

Five people attended the workshop. Attendees included local residents, a representative from a local education institution, and a representative from an international company with properties in York.

The workshop consisted of three presentations from York Central Partnership and the consultant team, each followed by a question and answer session with attendees on the topic.

The presentations covered the following topics:

- Masterplan
- Governance
- Planning application process

The workshop was chaired by Helen Graham from My York Central. She began the workshop with an introductory session which allowed attendees to introduce themselves and explain their reason for attending the workshop. This provided an opportunity for individuals to voice their initial thoughts and queries on the proposals, providing a framework for later discussion.

Question / comment	Response
<p>Masterplan</p> <p>Following the initial presentation on the masterplan, an attendee noted their appreciation that feedback regarding breaking down blocks and uses provided at earlier consultation events had been incorporated into the proposals.</p> <p>The attendee then raised a query about how new housing provided as part of York Central is being balanced with housing to be delivered as part of developments elsewhere in York, noting concern about possible lack of demand. The attendee also raised concern about existing commercial units in the city centre which are empty, equally showing a lack of demand for commercial space. A query was also raised about the possible impact of Brexit, and whether this had been considered by York Central Partnership in their plans for York Central.</p>	<p>The Partnership responded that they have incorporated a number of flexible units into the plans for York Central, allowing for flexibility in terms of their use. It was also noted that, although the masterplan is broken down into areas intended for particular uses, they have been designed to incorporate a range of other uses within them. This degree of flexibility will allow the Partnership to respond and react to changing market demands.</p> <p>Responding to concerns surrounding Brexit, the Partnership said that had given a lot of consideration to the best way of bringing the site forward, and whether to get a development partner or master developer to bring the whole site forward. It had been decided that the best way of doing this is if the Partnership were to act as master developers. This would allow them to be in control of the development, and bring parcels of land forward in a flexible way in response to market conditions. The Partnership referenced an initiative Homes England undertook, which could be replicated for York Central if required, which acted to diversify and “kick start” the market within their own developments.</p> <p>It was also noted that York Central fell within the York Central Enterprise Zone. This provides incentives to businesses to come forward within the site. It was noted however, that these incentives are only available for a certain amount of time.</p>

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Question / comment	Response
<p>An attendee mentioned that the council had targets for delivering housing, but questioned whether such targets also existed for other uses, such as office space.</p>	<p>The Partnership noted that, unlike housing, it was very hard to predict demand and need for commercial space. They did however say that they are able to demonstrate demand for commercial space. They have spoken to businesses in York who are looking for alternative premises but are having difficulty finding spaces in York which meet their requirements. The commercial spaces in York Central are therefore being designed with these requirements in mind. It was also noted by the project team that the City of York Council have submitted their Local Plan which requires them to identify need for commercial space, and subsequently identify sites where this can be delivered. It was mentioned that the traffic modelling undertaken for the project took into account development sites due to come forward in York over the coming years, and they were therefore aware of these.</p>
<p>An attendee raised concerns around the “changing face of our high streets”, noting that this was a concern not only in York but nationally. The attendee noted that it was a “mystery” as to how best to support the high street retail market. It was suggested that continued research and analysis was needed to understand how that situation “would play out”.</p>	<p>The Partnership noted that they had done a lot of research into the sectors which they should be targeting as part of their work and research into getting a deliverable scheme. They have been looking at growth sectors – what they are and where they are/want to be. They have already had interest from businesses looking to locate in York Central, and are in the process of deciding which sectors they would like to pursue. They are also considering businesses within new technologies and how to create links to universities.</p>
<p>An attendee noted that YCP should be targeting national and international companies.</p>	<p>The Partnership responded that they would be, and part of their research has been looking into the type of spaces and building footprints international companies would need. The masterplan includes flexibility to combine some blocks together if larger footprints are required.</p>
<p>An attendee raised a consideration about how York Central should work with the city centre. It was noted that there should be a synergy between the city centre and York Central. Reference was made to how other cities are thinking about dealing with their declining high streets, and this included looking at possibilities of creating more residential accommodation in the city centre.</p>	

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Question / comment	Response
<p>Another attendee felt it would be important to future proof the development. The attendee expressed their concern over Park Road, and thought the name was inappropriate because the road acted as a barrier to the park for those in the residential area on the opposite side. They mentioned some research that had been done into what makes people use parks and the research had shown that if children had to cross a road to use a park, it was less likely to be used.</p> <p>The attendee recognised that, because of its railway heritage, York Central should be about movement and railways.</p> <p>They referenced a successful example of where movement had been achieved, citing Millennium Bridge and its success in connecting parts of the city whilst being simple and beautiful. It was suggested that more future thinking was required with regards to this road, as it was felt that this was not reflected in the proposals.</p> <p>The attendee hoped that this part of the masterplan would have a community feel that would allow children to play safely.</p>	<p>A member of the design team mentioned that there would be other, smaller green spaces within this residential element. These had been incorporated into proposals in response to feedback from earlier consultation. Car-free play streets had been incorporated into the design to allow children to play safely in the street, whilst being overlooked by the housing.</p>
<p>The attendee noted that the Great Park was to be the largest green space, and therefore it was important to achieve safety in its use for children too.</p>	<p>A member of the design team said that they had done a lot of work with traffic officers into how they could make the road a positive part of the development.</p>
<p>An attendee enquired whether it was a requirement for the road to be an arterial road.</p>	<p>The Partnership responded that the road was about creating capacity for the site – that enough infrastructure had to be put in place to deal with the additional people the development would bring. It was noted that the Partnership would be unable to deliver the quantum of development proposed without the road.</p> <p>A member of the design team said that the road isn't intended to feel like a main road, and would feel more like a street. Speed would be restricted to 20mph ensuring drivers would be at a pace to allow eye contact with those walking around them, and regular pedestrian crossings would be incorporated. It was stressed that priority would be given to pedestrians first, followed by cyclists.</p>
<p>An attendee felt that by segregating cyclists, this was not prioritising cyclists, but merely separating them from cars in the road, suggesting that cars therefore have priority. They suggested that by removing the barriers between cyclists and cars, this would give more priority to cyclists and lead to traffic calming.</p>	<p>A member of the design team emphasized the desire for the development to encourage sustainable modes of transport, and that those who are not confident cyclists would likely feel safer and more secure being segregated from traffic – the hope is that by making cycling safer, this will encourage more people to take up cycling in York. Cyclists can choose to use road or segregated cycle route.</p>

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Question / comment	Response
<p>An attendee asked whether this was the main road for cars through York Central, and if so, it was still felt that children would not be able to move freely between their house and the park. They queried the possibility of moving the road south, so that it borders the railway line, removing the road as a barrier between the residential element and the Great Park.</p>	<p>The Partnership mentioned that they could not guarantee this land (York Yard South) was available within the access funding timeframe, and there were a number of site constraints (e.g. fixed connections to city road network at Water End and Marble Arch) that had been taken into consideration in the design process. It was noted a number of options had been explored before deciding on this arrangement.</p> <p>A member of the design team reiterated that extensive research had been done into play streets and creating pockets of green space for this purpose. There would be a number of specific interventions ranging from play streets (for teenagers and younger children with natural boundaries to keep them inside this area) and garden streets for use by the whole community.</p>
<p>Governance</p>	
<p>Who will be responsible for the long term management of the green spaces?</p>	<p>The Partnership noted that this was still being looked into, but that they would ensure provisions would be put in place to enable the management of these spaces. Different organisations could be involved, for example, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust often manage new open spaces with the Land Trust. The Partnership noted that it was likely that different organisations would look after different spaces within the masterplan.</p>
<p>An attendee asked who would own the main public spaces?</p>	<p>The Partnership responded that they were still looking into this. But this would require funding which could be through a service charge or endowment.</p>
<p>An attendee questioned whether the Partnership would put a covenant down to ensure that public space would stay public.</p>	<p>The Partnership responded that it would be in their interest to ensure that these spaces were well maintained and remained publically accessible so that the development remained attractive to investors, residents and businesses, providing pleasant public spaces and environments for employees.</p>
<p>An attendee enquired into whether it would be possible for the College they represented to get involved. The institution has courses in horticulture and other subjects relevant to the management of green spaces. The attendee enquired as to the possibilities of developing a long term relationship with the site, and possibilities for apprenticeships for their students. It was also considered that York Central could provide a presence for the College away from their main campus. They noted that, outside central York, agriculture was one of the main industries, and that there was a wealth of experience within this industry in York. It was noted that involvement could be interdisciplinary, and possibilities could exist for horticulturists to work with engineers on projects relating to York Central.</p>	<p>A representative from the National Railway Museum mentioned that they currently had 4 acres of brownfield land which they are hoping to turn into green space, and welcomed a conversation with the College representative about ways in which the College could assist them with this.</p> <p>(Links to the My York Central idea for a hub for creativity and innovation were also noted, as a focus for an exchange of learning and skills which benefits the whole of York.)</p>
<p>One respondent queried whether York Central was being considered as an opportunity to improve infrastructure for electric cars and if incentives for residents (such as reduced rates) for driving electric cars had been considered.</p>	<p>A member of the design team said that they had considered future transport possibilities, and had therefore incorporated a network of electrical charging points into the masterplan, as well as spaces for car sharing.</p> <p>When considering opportunities to futureproof streets, the design team had also incorporated features to allow car parking spaces to be turned into other types of spaces, such as green or social spaces if car use reduces in the future.</p>

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Question / comment	Response
It was questioned whether there could be creative incentives for people not to have a car.	It was mentioned that the multi-storey car parks incorporated at the edge of the site would hopefully discourage people from using their cars and travelling through the site.
An attendee raised a point that they feel York Central should be visionary in its approach to car use (by banning them, for instance), and as a consequence, less people would use cars. They hoped that roads, like Park Road, might one day be converted into green space.	A member of the design team said that they had incorporated the idea of ‘Parklets’ – a form of guerilla gardening which reclaims parking spaces and roads as social spaces, into the design guidelines for York Central.
An attendee pointed out that York Central is effectively an island, bounded by infrastructure on all borders and that this also presents an opportunity to prevent car use.	<p>The Partnership mentioned that bus gating to prevent cars using roads on the site had been investigated, and although the traffic modelling analysis had shown that bus gating would cause an increase in congestion in other parts of York just now, there was no reason why bus gating could not be employed in the future if this was no longer the case, supported by citywide sustainable transport measures such as improved public transport and extended park and ride hours.</p> <p>It was noted that a workshop dedicated to movement had taken place the evening before, and that another workshop would take place again soon.</p>
An attendee asked who the decision makers are.	The Partnership responded that this would be the Delivery Board, but decisions would be made within the framework of the vision set by the Steering Group.
The attendee asked who the Delivery Board would be.	The Partnership responded that the Delivery Board would be comprised of the Development Partners, which are Homes England and Network Rail, as majority landowners, and potentially City of York Council.
An attendee said that they would prefer if somebody in the Delivery Board had their interests, as residents, at heart.	The National Railway Museum responded that they did not have a desire to be on the Delivery Board for York Central, as this would involve risk to them, and as a charity it would not be sensible to take on the role of speculative developer. The Council will need to consider their role in the Delivery Board. It was however noted that the council do have a role as local planning authority and also to deliver the infrastructure and local plan targets and it was therefore in their interest to make sure this development happens.
The attendee, a resident of St Peter’s Quarter, explained that they were also shouldering a degree of risk if the development did not turn out to be a success. They therefore felt that they should be represented within the Delivery Board by having the council inputting into the decision making process (ensuring democratic visibility and involvement).	It was noted by the Partnership that Homes England and Network Rail are both public sector bodies with a government objective to deliver housing where and when they can. It was also mentioned that a decision about the structure of the Delivery Board is due to take place by York Central partners, including a report to City of York Council Executive, in November or December this year.

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Question / comment	Response
<p>Design Governance – structure of the planning application</p> <p>An attendee asked what would happen if developers didn't come forward. A question was also raised about how they would control development to make sure that what is delivered is of a high quality and delivers the right amount of affordable housing.</p>	<p>The Partnership responded that in taking on the role of master developer, a lot of this risk was taken away. The memorandum of understanding ensures that guidance relating to the development is adhered to by developers. It was mentioned that Homes England have a pool of developers who have undergone an OJEU qualification process to confirm their quality and ability to deliver, and that they could use this pool of developers to bring forward development sites. They also mentioned that in order to pick a development partner for a site, the Delivery Board would need to undertake a strict procurement process. This would involve issuing a brief to developers which would outline the requirements for the site in terms of quantum, quality, size and use, so that the developer would be aware of the requirements from the outset, and would be bidding to deliver these.</p> <p>It was noted by another team member that York Central is a very good prospect for businesses in terms of its location, allowing people to commute easily to it, and in terms of the range of services and opportunities it offer. Reference was made to a similar recent development in Leeds which has been very successful and may see Leeds rivalling Manchester for growth soon. It was felt that York Central provides the same opportunity.</p> <p>Another member of the team mentioned possible opportunities for the City of York Council to take on some of the offices within the development in order to kick start commercial investment in the site, offering these commercial spaces at discounted rates to businesses and start-ups in York.</p>
<p>An attendee, who is familiar with the property market, noted that York has a robust residential market which is unlikely to be severely impacted by economic changes.</p> <p>The same attendee said that, in terms of commercial space, it was important that provisions were put in place that would make it easy for businesses to move in, this could be as simple as providing coffee shops nearby for employees, but certainly IT infrastructure would need to be put in place across the site. This would make it an attractive prospect for many businesses, including those based internationally.</p>	

Conclusion

Helen thanked people for attending and encouraged people to keep engaged and take the opportunities to continue the conversation:

- YCP drop-in 26 July.
- NRM events 25 and 28 July.
- YCP will circulate details of the next movement discussion with Tony May when the date is set.