

York Civic Trust Annual Report 2012-13: Executive summary

Local Plan

The formulation of a new local development framework for York has been one of the main priorities of York Civic Trust in 2012-3. The existing Local Plan was put in place in 1956 and it is important that a new plan is established as soon as possible. This will govern the development of the city for the next 20 years.

All urban centres in the UK are under extreme pressure due to economic and population growth. The Trust wishes to see the City Council adopt a plan which allows for the sympathetic and sustainable growth of the city, supporting existing businesses and attracting new ones, without damaging York's historic fabric or exacerbating the current infrastructure problems.

The Trust supports many of the proposals in the draft plan but has highlighted a number of major concerns including wind farms, significant new housing development to the west of the city on the present 'green belt', and the surprising omission of specific policies to promote tourism and to support visitor attractions.

Wind Farms

An industry-generated report, *Renewable Energy: a Strategic Viability Study for York*, identified 29 potential locations for large wind turbines within the City of York. The Trust is concerned about the impact of wind farms on the views around York and the impact on outlying villages. An exhibition at Fairfax House, *Views of York*, highlighted the importance of views in and around our city. The report has been recommended for adoption by the Council as part of the York's plan, a policy which the Trust opposes.

Reinvigorating York

Improving the city streetscape, the quality of hard landscaping and street furniture has been a long campaign of the Trust. Investment is now beginning to show results. Trust vice-chairman Sir Ron Cooke is chairman of the group which oversees the work in York. A *Streetscapes Strategy and Guidance* document has been prepared and it is hoped this will be adopted by the Council as a 'design manual'. Small-scale improvements, including more legible street name signs, the design of street lighting and areas for relaxation – 'chill-out zones' - can have a big impact on the quality of experience in the city centre for both residents and visitors. A further £3 million has been allocated to Reinvigorating York. The Trust has been able to set up its own modest City Enhancement Fund, made

possible by the successful management of the Trust's assets, revenue and expenditure, to support the campaign.

West Offices

The Trust was pleased to see the completion of the West Offices development, the new home for City of York Council. Following vigorous opposition to an earlier proposal for a new building at Hungate/Peaseholme Green and its rejection by English Heritage, the Trust had put forward a number of alternatives including the remains of this building – the original railway station - inside the city walls. The project is an excellent example of re-use of a historic building and has been shortlisted for a number of industry awards. The Trust was able to fund the conservation of some historic ironwork which forms a key element of the setting of the West Offices.

York Design Awards

Twenty-five buildings in a number of categories received recognition in the 2012 York Design Awards. These ranged in scale from two new schools – Our Lady Queen of Martyrs RC primary school and Clifton with Rawcliffe primary school – and two new University of York academic buildings, the Department of Computer Science and the Department of Theatre, Film and Television - to a number of domestic extensions. York's primacy in conservation work was acknowledged in the repair of an unusual Tudor plaster ceiling at Heslington Hall and in work at York Pavilion Hotel. The 2013 Awards were announced on 1 July (see website page). Entries are invited for the 2014 Awards. For further details, visit www.york-design-awards.co.uk.

Fairfax House

Visitor numbers to Fairfax House continue to increase. Regular features include Decking the House for Christmas, and the Flower Festival in May. In 2012 the popular exhibition 'Views of York' was held through the summer months, followed by an exhibition featuring historic timepieces 'Keeping Time'. The first exhibition in 2013, on jewellery, was 'Crowning Glory'.

The other key areas of York Civic Trust's activities, including the popular events programme and an education programme for primary schools upwards, are covered in the Annual Report which has been sent to all members.