



## York Civic Trust

*Promoting Heritage - Shaping Tomorrow*

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### **York Civic Trust's response to the City of York Council's Railway Station Front Consultation, June – July 2018**

#### **Overview**

The York Station Front masterplan has been made available for public consultation in June/July 2018, and as described on the website (<https://www.york.gov.uk/StationFront>) and on the display in the City of York Council West Office foyer.

Representatives from York Civic Trust's Planning Committee have used their professional expertise to appraise the masterplan's impact on the heritage of the site and transport implications.

In terms of heritage, it is important to recognise the current station is Listed Grade II\*. It was built by the North Eastern Railway to designs by Thomas Prosser in 1877 (with the station layout planned by the Engineer Thomas Elliot Harrison) to replace the original G.T. Andrews terminus station within the City Walls. The station consists of a two and three storey frontage building in yellow Scarborough brick backed by the magnificent curved trainshed of wrought iron arches on cast iron columns and further, later platforms and awnings. The station was badly damaged during an air raid in 1942 which removed sections of the frontage building and the double row of buttress columns at the south end of the concourse. Much restoration and new work was carried out to the trainshed in 1977 and to the concourse area and Travel Centre in the 1980s.

The Civic Trust therefore welcomes the basic principle of the proposals as it acknowledges and addresses many conflicting issues relating to this important area of the City. As a result of these changes, the heritage of the station and its surrounding environment might well be better understood and appreciated.

In terms of transport, we welcome the general thrust of the proposals. These will simplify pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movements; remove vehicles from the *Porte Cochere*, which is one of the most polluted locations in York; transform Tea Room Square into a public space, thus removing the single largest source of delays and conflicts on the site; and provide the potential for an effective bus-rail and bus-bus interchange.

*Patron* H.R.H. The Duchess of Kent

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## **Introduction**

The masterplan is based on eight key features which are intended to work together to improve the use of the space in front of York Station.

The key features as described on the website are:

1. Removing Queen Street Bridge
2. Taxi ranks and drop off/pick up
3. Bus stops
4. Parking
5. Pedestrian crossing
6. Tea Room Square
7. Station Square
8. Cycle routes and parking

Detailed comments on the various features are given below, with a final section on further recommendations.

### **1. Removing Queen Street Bridge**

The removal of this bridge is key to the proposals.

Queen Street provides the principal road access to York Railway Station. The bridge, built in 1877-8 to replace a level crossing which had existed since 1839, served to admit railway tracks across this street into a railway terminal depot within the city wall. Although new station facilities were provided outwith the City Walls with the opening of the current station in 1877, the North Eastern Railway (NER) wished to retain railway access across Queen Street, although their use of the tracks would be considerably reduced. Railway use of the level crossing fell considerably with the opening of the 1877 station, road use however rose greatly, so the bridge was built at the behest of York Corporation during 1877-8. The Bridge was modified in 1909, with the two northernmost arches being replaced by a single steel-girder span. In conjunction with the corporation having acquired horse-drawn street tramways, and a move to electrify them, the bridge was widened by moving the pedestrian footways out onto extensions flanking either side of the bridge. These were constructed at the city's expense using reinforced-concrete stanchions; a good relation had existed for some years between the NER and the 'Hennebique ferro-concrete' consultant L.G. Mouchel. The bridge ceased to span railway tracks in the mid-1960s with the building of Hudson House. By the 1970s, the concrete structure was beginning to pull away from the original bridge, possibly as a result of vehicles mounting the pavement, so work was carried out to bond these back in and address damage to the bridge parapets.

The Civic Trust acknowledges that the bridge now serves no useful purpose, other than perhaps to buttress Tower 13 of the City Walls, and can see a number of planning gains by its removal. The traffic flows would be improved, land made available for the other uses covered by this proposal, and the opening up of views of the magnificent arches through the City Walls designed by G T Andrews.

## **2. Taxi ranks and drop off/pick up**

We accept the proposals for relocation of taxi pick up and drop off areas, but strongly recommend that passenger waiting areas and walking routes to and from the station are covered. We are less convinced that adequate space has been provided for taxis to queue to pick up; this needs to be designed to minimise disruption to other users of the area, and so that drivers can turn their engines off until called.

## **3. Bus stops**

While we welcome the provision of a bus layover and turn-around facility, and the relocation and regrouping of bus stops, we consider that this is the weakest part of the proposal in transport terms. The new turn-around facility offers the potential for all but two of York's bus routes (the 6 and 25) to serve the station (with Boroughbridge Rd and Shipton Rd services doing so from the York Central side of the station). This would mean that York would for the first time have an effective bus-rail and bus-bus interchange. However, it is essential that the bus facilities are designed to accommodate the resulting growth in bus flows, as well as any newly planned services, such as a mobility access bus serving the footstreets. The current services stopping on Station Rd amount to around 50 buses per hour each way, for which the current bus stop provision is often inadequate. Our vision for a bus interchange used by all routes except those mentioned above would increase this to around 70, of which 35 would use the turn-around facility. To accommodate these flows, there is a need for up to six bus stops in each direction, of which some could potentially be provided in the layover and turn around area. The layover area also needs to be designed for at least three buses to be laying over at any time.

Bus users will be expected to use bus stops on both sides of Station Rd, in the layover area and on the York Central side of the station. An effective information system will be needed to tell passengers where to find their buses, and to provide real time information on bus departures centrally in the station, centrally on each side of Station Rd and locally at each stop. The bus information point in the station will need to be upgraded rather than threatened with closure as in the VEC planning application which is still under consideration.

All bus waiting areas must be covered, and with adequate seating. Action should be taken to provide a covered route between the station and the stops on both sides of Station Rd and in the layover area.

## **4. Parking**

We welcome the proposals for short-stay parking, which should provide sufficient capacity much more efficiently than at present. We agree that in due course a parking structure might be provided for long-stay parking, but we are concerned to hear that consultants envisage the need for a substantial increase in long-stay parking to reflect the predicted growth in rail patronage. Such traffic adds significantly to congestion and pollution in York while not contributing at all to its economy. We strongly recommend that the Council investigate ways in which alternative access can be provided from the outer ring road to the station. Our proposal above for all six park-and-ride services to serve the station should contribute to this

## 5. Pedestrian Crossing

We welcome the provision of two new pedestrian crossings of Queen St/Station Rd. It is important that both are designed as “super crossings”, similar to that in Sheaf Square in Sheffield, and as planned for Fishergate in the Castle Gateway masterplan.

It will be important to design all larger pedestrian areas, and particular those on both sides of Station Rd and in Tea Room Square, following best practice in the design of urban public realm, with any space required for vehicle access and unloading and for cycle paths clearly demarcated bearing in mind the needs of those with movement disabilities, and with ample seating to allow people to dwell in these areas.

## 6. Tea Room Square

Currently the Square, named after the Edwardian Tea Rooms at the rear of the square, is always congested with the conflict of traffic serving the entrance and exit to the Short Stay Car Park, using the Square as the emergency entrance to the station, the delivery point to station facilities and the hotel and the exit from the *Porte Cochere*. Added to the traffic flows are the pedestrian flows into and out of the station and to and from the City.

The Civic Trust would welcome the removal of the conflicting traffic flows. We would however stress the importance of preserving the cycle route.

## 7. Station Square

The area named Station Square or Parcel’s Square in the proposals appears to relate to the area currently occupied by the former Parcels Office and Traincrew accommodation. Both these buildings are in effect replacement buildings following the bomb damage sustained in the Baedeker raid of 29 April 1942. The attached photograph shows the buildings prior to the raid.



Also damaged in the Air Raid was the two storey structure over what is now the travel centre. The removal of these buildings opens up the possibility of utilising the vacant space above the Travel Centre because the reconstruction works in the 1980s provided a concrete deck at first-floor level which could be used as a floor at a later date.

Careful thought will be required to the work necessary to reinstate the Trainshed wall where the offices have been removed. Consideration should be given to the reinstatement of the double row of columns.

#### Work to the *Porte Cochere*

The visuals on the website and on the displays in the West Offices imply the removal of traffic from the *Porte Cochere* with the subsequent glazing of the arches. Whilst not part of the current proposals, careful thought needs to be given to this. Although a similar scheme works exceptionally well at Sheffield due to the space available, similar installations at Leicester and Newcastle are less successful. At the latter, some of the trading units provided have already closed.

### **8. Cycle Routes and Parking**

While we welcome the provision proposed for cycle routes, we have a number of suggestions for further improvement:

- while the Queen St/Blossom St junction provides for cyclists, it will be preferable to provide alternatives to allow cyclists to avoid this busy junction with its awkward approach gradients;
- bearing that in mind, the route from Lowther Terrace and hence Holgate Rd should be further upgraded, to allow the gradient to be negotiated on a more direct route;
- ideally there should be a direct route for cyclists between Queen St and York Central, which might in due course share the new pedestrian route proposed above; in the meantime clear and safe access is needed to the proposed new cycle route through Leeman Rd tunnel;
- we welcome the proposed provision of segregated cycle tracks parallel with Station Rd, and recommend that steps be taken to identify a continuous segregated track NE-bound on the NW side of the road;
- it will be important that a segregated route is provided through Tea Room Square and the current short-stay car park leading to Scarborough Bridge (which has recent planning approval to provide far better pedestrian and cyclist access); otherwise the interaction between cyclists and pedestrians in this busy and constrained area will be unsafe;
- we welcome the provision of a new shared route through the Hudson House site to Station Rise;
- when we were consulted on the Hudson House development, we strongly recommended the provision of a direct cycle route through the site to Toft Green, so that cyclists from Terry Avenue and Bishophill can access the station without having to traverse the Queen St/Blossom St junction; we reiterate that recommendation

here, and suggest that ways are sought of providing a direct route which negotiates the change in elevation across the site;

- in the plans, no provision is shown for cyclists to cross Station Rd, other than by dismounting and using what are shown as pedestrian crossings; as argued above, both crossings should be “super crossings” and should allow for cyclists to cross without dismounting.

## **Other considerations**

### **a.) Pedestrians**

In general terms the pedestrian routes offered are appropriate, and we assume will be designed to provide the necessary width for high pedestrian flows. Considering in turn the routes which do not use Queen St/Station Rd:

- there is a strong case for improving the route from Lowther Terrace and hence Holgate Rd to provide pedestrians with a more direct route;
- there is similarly a case for providing a more direct route to Scarborough Bridge, which we assume will be included once the new cycle bridge is installed;
- no route is offered between Queen St and York Central other than via the station footbridge and the Marble Arch tunnel; while a new route across the station would be expensive, thought should be given now as to how it might be provided, on the basis that it might be funded through developer contributions in due course;
- the new public routes through the Hudson House site to Station Rise and Toft Green are to be welcomed; the latter should be designed to be as direct as possible.

### **b.) Rail passengers**

The proposals say nothing directly about provision for rail passengers once in the station. We are strongly of the view that the enhancements proposed for the approaches to the station should be matched by improvements to the facilities within the station which enable passengers to continue their journeys. Like the station approaches, these need to be designed to reflect the predicted 40% increase in passenger numbers. While the Council has been promoting enhancements on both sides of the station, VEC’s planning application of early 2018 (which has still to be determined) envisaged a 60% reduction in the ticket office space and the apparent removal of the bus information point, purely in the interests of commercial gain. We very much hope that that application will be rejected, and we urge the Council and the new operator to work together to decide how best to enhance facilities for information and ticket sales.

**Summary**

To reiterate, York Civic Trust welcomes the basic principle of the proposals.

It is important that the proposals for the station frontage take full cognisance of the proposals for York Central and Scarborough Bridge. Consideration should also be given to providing a formal entrance to the station and to provide cover for the bus stands.

It has been noted that the visuals are particularly sanitised as they do not include any street furniture.

**9 July 2018**

**Dr David Fraser**  
***Chief Executive***  
**York Civic Trust**