

Comments for Planning Application 18/00005/LBC

Application Summary

Application Number: 18/00005/LBC

Address: Station Building Railway Station Station Road York YO24 1AY

Proposal: Internal alterations including new customer zone, first class lounge, TVM housing, ATM building and ladies toilets following demolition of existing concourse building and associated reinstatement works

Case Officer: Lindsay Jenkins

Customer Details

Name: Dr David Fraser

Address: Fairfax House, 27 Castlegate, York YO1 9RN

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Consultee response

Stance: Customer made comments neither objecting to or supporting the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Built by Thomas Prosser, Benjamin Burley and William Peachey in the 1870s, with later additions, York railway station is of high architectural and aesthetic value, largely due to its curved platforms and roofs, façade and central concourse. The importance of the station and its station building has been rightly recognised as a Grade II* listing.

The York Civic Trust previously made general comments on this application following considering it at the Trust's Planning Committee meeting on 8 March 2018. Following the revised drawings (9 November 2018), which were considered at the Trust's Planning Committee meeting on 13 December 2018, we continue to have a number of concerns about this application. These are:

1. Need for a more holistic approach (with other major schemes affecting the railway station site)
2. Poor usability / customer provision
3. Missed opportunity to improve awareness of the station's heritage significance.

1. Need for a more holistic approach

There is a need for a more holistic approach to be taken, through acknowledging or even working with other partners and their proposals affecting the railway station and setting. This would include the proposed York Central scheme and its inclusion of a new station frontage to the rear of the existing station, the on-going Scarborough Bridge pedestrian / cycle path improvements, and the pending Queen Street bridge and railway station façade alterations. The latter intends to relocate the taxi rank and drop-off lane in the glazed porte-cochère to the parcels office area of the station.

It would free up the porte-cochère and potentially offer considerable space to LNER for some of the provision needs outlined in this application (and would be less detrimental to the heritage of the station than those currently being proposed in this application).

Without this greater level of synchronicity with other major proposals affecting the site, how can the proposed changes in this application be justly considered? How will these changes contribute to the York Railway Station Conservation Management Plan that is being prepared by Alan Baxter Ltd for Network Rail? How will these changes affect the enhanced listing programme of the station's heritage assets currently being conducted by Historic England?

2. Poor usability / customer provision

There will be no two-way access from the external and internal concourses to the proposed new ticket office, as there currently is with the ticket hall's two main doors connecting both concourses. This will force all users to go via the inner concourse, which is already a small space, leading to potential overcrowding. We would prefer to see the current ticket hall retained in its current location, even if reduced in size to accommodate new retail uses.

There are currently nine face-to-face ticket booths (when all staffed) in the ticket office. This application will reduce it to four face-to-face ticket booths and use an even smaller room than was proposed in this application by Virgin East Coast. There will be a considerable reduction of queuing space in the new ticket office, with standing room for only c. six people, less for those with disabilities, before customers will be forced to queue out the door and in the inner concourse.

Granted that many people today prefer to use electronic methods to pre-purchase tickets, but with the expected 40%+ increase in rail users over the next 12 years (as outlined in the Local Plan), it is evident that a substantial proportion of rail users will continue to rely on face-to-face ticket advice and sales in the station's ticket office. YCT believe this aspect of the proposal is an unacceptably poor provision for York citizens and visitors to the city, and not befitting a railway station with such heritage significance and connectivity importance in the rail network as York.

3. Missed opportunity to improve awareness of the station's heritage significance.

A removal of the Filmore & Union concourse building offers the opportunity for greater visual connectivity between the inner concourse and arriving/departing passengers, as well as an appreciation of the attractive, historic iron and glazed roof and iron columns. This opportunity to improve the connectivity and visual understanding of the station is however lost in the revised scheme of this application due to the decision to replace the Filmore & Union structure with a bank of TVMs.

In conclusion, York Civic Trust continues to have major concerns over the function of the station for users in terms of lost visual connectivity, poor usability, and the missed opportunity to better reveal its heritage significance (NPPF para.200). In addition, there is clear lack of synchronised thought occurring, with the proposed changes in this application being made independently and apparently unaware of other approved, under consideration and pending major schemes affecting York railway station.