

The Ripon City Plan and the Economy

One of the original reasons for wanting to produce a neighbourhood plan was to improve and grow the Ripon economy. So this month we want to focus on how the policies we are proposing will help to achieve this over the next 15 years.

Over the last month, work has continued on developing the draft Ripon City Plan and we are all spending large amounts of time preparing all of the supporting documentation needed to enable us to begin the next stage of consultation.

From our preliminary draft, we know that you broadly support what we are trying to achieve and our vision of the future of the city accords with what you would like to see. This support is really important to us as it is ultimately you, as the residents of the city, who will be asked to vote on the City Plan.

Recent statistics paint quite a positive picture of the Ripon economy but there is a recognition that to be sustainable there are also some current opportunities which need to be exploited and challenges to overcome too. Our objective with the City Plan is to create the environment that will enable a long-term increase in the number of businesses and jobs within the city.

One of the things that the City Plan can do to help to facilitate this is to ensure that the business parks and industrial estate of the city are designated for business use only and policies are put in place to stop land and premises in these areas from being converted or redeveloped for alternative purposes. We also see opportunities to expand some of these business parks and industrial estates to provide more land on which new business premises can be built and new enterprises and job opportunities can be created.

We propose designating a number of regeneration areas in locations where we feel that redevelopment would benefit the city if it were approached in a strategic, comprehensive and co-ordinated way. A mixed-use approach is suggested for each of the three regeneration areas identified (Ure Bank, Bondgate Green and the Clothholme Military Estate), with space for housing, employment, leisure and open space as part of the redevelopment proposals.

With so many tourist and visitor attractions in and around Ripon, the visitor economy is an important part of our city but we feel there is the potential for future growth. Our hotel offer is an important part of our tourism infrastructure and so we want to put in place policies which will seek to stop our larger hotels from being converted to other uses and also seek to encourage investment in new hotel provision by identifying potential sites for this type of development.

The other part of our Ripon City Plan which has an economic dimension is our approach to strengthening the city centre. In relation to retail, we have identified a site where new modern shops could be built to meet the identified growth in retail spending and also we are suggesting a more flexible approach to granting planning permission to the change of use of shops to ensure that they don't sit vacant and unused. Our proposals also encourage an increase in car parking capacity; residential or office conversion of vacant space above or behind ground floor premises; and the reuse or redevelopment of vacant or underused land and premises.

Finally, our recommended policies and proposals identify the distinctive characteristics of areas of the city centre and set out different development approaches for the future. We are seeking to encourage the further development of the Market Place Quarter as the principal arrival point for the city centre and the central meeting point and linked to this we are seeking to encourage further cultural and community development in the Northern Quarter. We see the Spa Quarter as providing the open space and amenity for the city centre and the Cathedral Precinct being about developing and conserving the Cathedral and its surroundings.

Altogether, we feel these comprehensive policies and the approach we are proposing in the draft Ripon City Plan are sustainable and will help to support the Ripon economy to grow in the longer-term.

If you require any further information, please contact the Ripon City Plan Team:
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