

## The Cathedral Quarter

The City Centre features heavily in the draft Ripon City Plan. One of the main reasons for this is that the neighbourhood plan for the city emerged because of concerns about economic vitality and vibrancy and the belief that there was an opportunity to do things differently.

We have outlined our approach previously to identifying different quarters of the city based upon the role they currently play and the potential they have over the next 15 years. In the preliminary draft Ripon City Plan we identified the Cathedral Quarter and encouraged the Cathedral to “... develop plans for the Cathedral Precinct that could include development of new facilities to enhance the Cathedral’s community and visitor roles.”

As part of the Ripon Revealed Festival held over the May Bank Holiday weekend, the Cathedral launched their “Growing God’s Kingdom” strategy which identified eight structured areas for delivering the strategy and included a strand of activity around “buildings development.” Those that were able to attend the event may have seen some of the initial masterplan drawings outlining the aspiration and proposals. This was the culmination of work over the last year or so, using specialist consultants to develop proposals. As a City Plan Team we have been engaged in the process and have used our expertise and knowledge to assist and advise the Cathedral and our regular communication has ensured that the emerging masterplan and the City Plan are closely aligned.

The *Preliminary Draft Ripon City Plan* identified five proposals within the Cathedral precinct. Following further work by the City Plan Team in preparing the draft Ripon City Plan for consultation, considering the previous public consultation and discussions with the Cathedral, we are proposing two changes. We propose to extend the area of protected open space, although this will not affect any proposed development by the Cathedral. Furthermore, the areas identified as regeneration policy areas at the stonemason’s yard and Cathedral Hall and parking area have been removed so as to support and enable a comprehensive approach to the estate to be taken by the masterplan rather than just focusing on these areas.

Overall, the City Plan Team are supportive of the aspiration and content of the emerging Cathedral masterplan, whilst recognising that there is still a great deal of work to do. The aspiration for major investment to improve the Cathedral’s facilities and enhance its role within the city centre is welcomed.

With the important economic and tourism role of the Cathedral for the city centre, we welcome the proposed integration of the open spaces in the vicinity of the Cathedral with Minster Gardens, the stonemason’s yard, Old Deanery Hotel and Cathedral staff parking and cottage into a single comprehensive public realm along with the west entrance (Cathedral Close). This provides an opportunity for a new building for a range of visitor and other Cathedral accommodation, integrated with the existing Courthouse museum and the hotel, and enables improved connectivity and permeability between the Cathedral and the car parks.

The links between the Cathedral Quarter and the neighbouring Market Place Quarter are important to maximise the impact of the proposed Cathedral investments. Our proposals for increasing car parking capacity in the St Marygate car park support the Cathedral’s aspirations and the masterplan provides further stimulus for regeneration of the area to the rear of Kirkgate including the Maltings premises.

Elsewhere, the masterplan's proposal for a south cloister provides an important opportunity for improving the Cathedral's facilities and we support this whilst welcoming the retention of the important pedestrian route around this part of the Cathedral which we feel is essential.

Whilst we are just at the beginning and there is a long way to go the Cathedral Quarter is an important part of the City Centre and collaborative working between the City Plan Team and the Cathedral, supported by others, can help to deliver major investments in the City helping to increase city centre vibrancy and vitality. Over the coming weeks we hope that this close working relationship will continue and ensure that the best is made of the opportunities being presented.

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