

My Castle Gateway

Castle and Eye of York Open Brief and Design Challenges

The Open Brief in brief

York is creating a new public space. What now is the Castle Car Park and the green roundabout we call the Eye of York will become a part of York where we can come together. A new place to gather.

In 2019, those who live, work and play in York imagined and debated what this new space will be. All their ideas and discussions have formed the My Castle Gateway Castle and Eye of York Open Brief. We then published the draft Open Brief for another round of discussion and comments, including comments from key organisations in the area.

The Open Brief brings the future to life. It evokes all the different things people will be doing. From paddling to protesting and from listening to music to reflecting in peace.

The final version of the Open Brief was published in May 2020.

Amendment: In April 2026 an amendment to the Open Brief was added related to the 1190 memorial area. You can read the revisions [here](#) and an account of the conversations that led to the amendment [here](#). We have kept the original briefing related to 1190 in the Open Brief but have added the new phrasing prefaced with 'Amendment 2026'.

Open Brief in brief!

York is creating a new public space. What is now the Castle Car Park and the green roundabout we call the Eye of York will become a part of York where we can come together. A new place to gather. A new place to spend time.

Imagine you are there in the future.

You might be watching the Foss go by and maybe even getting your feet wet!

You might take your lunch break here, perching on a sunny or shady step and biting into a sandwich.

You might be playfully running in and out of fountains – whatever age you are!

You might be opening your picnic and feeling welcome in the area without the pressure of spending money.

You might be navigating your way to and through the area easily and in ways that bring to life the layers of history in the area and its current and past setting within the city.

You might be thinking, or praying, facing Clifford's Tower and quietly remembering the people who died in the place where you are sat.

You might be one of thousands of visitors each year making a pilgrimage to Clifford's Tower, one of Yorkshire's most important historic sites, which sits at the heart of the Castle Gateway Area

You might be crowding into the area on an evening to watch a play, hear music or see fireworks.

You might be planning a rally, a procession or a protest, gathering in the Eye of York where Yorkshire MPs were once elected.

You might be watching birds gather in a place rich with wildlife, enjoying the way the wild is part of the city centre.

The Open Brief brings the area to life. It evokes the different things people will be doing. From paddling to protesting and from listening to music to reflecting in peace. It then sets out the Design Challenges. The designers who are working with the council will start their response in the spring. The designers will use this Open Brief and views and voices from other organisations who are based in the area as well as other practical and policy considerations to develop design ideas. Once the designers have developed their first ideas we will publish them for further discussion.

How the Open Brief was created

Ideas for the new public spaces have come from families playing in parks across York, from people having lunch at Red Tower, from walks on every topic from heritage to landscaping and ecology, from young people's interpretations of the area through art and dance, from people who run businesses and those who organise arts and community events as well as conversations with cyclists, people who use wheelchairs, people who push buggies and people who are blind or partially sighted.

Events, discussions and meetings of different kinds were developed around a series of key themes generated by the first phase of My Castle Gateway:

- [*Gathering Playfully*](#): we generated discussion around play through spending time in different parks around York including the Designer Outlet and Rowntree Park.
- [*Gathering Green*](#): we walked the area with landscape architects and pondered the trees and planting in our public spaces.
- [*Gathering with Water*](#): we looked at the connections to the Foss and the Ouse but also how water brings to life public spaces.
- [*Gathering with Heritage*](#): we were led down to the Debtors' Prison cells to look at graffiti left by people about to be transported and taken behind the scenes at the York Castle Museum to handle their amazing collections.
- [*Gathering Together*](#): we walked to look at our city and how public spaces work at different times, and we met and discussed memorials and their place in our city

- [Gathering on the Move](#): we have cycled around York with people who use bikes for wider mobility, reflected on long term work with MySight on these issues and debated how this affects the design of shared space.

We have also used social media (Twitter and Facebook) to share old photos and new ideas to [generate discussion](#).

All the events and social media conversations have been documented on our Flickr site, and all the Post-Its and screenshots have been tagged. This allows us to highlight the emerging issues (for example – want to see what people are saying about trees? Go [here](#), click on *treescastlegateway*). This tagging process has enabled us to identify key themes and open them up for discussion in public and to inform the development of the Open Brief.

Structure of the Open Brief

The Castle and Eye of York Open Brief covers the Castle Car Park, the Eye of York and the area around Clifford’s Tower.

The structure of the brief includes key themes which need to be considered across the whole area, and a focus on specific spaces within the area. We’ve called these specific spaces: Castle Car Park; Eye of York and Clifford’s Tower Area. While they are distinct zones, it is important they are designed as one space.



The Open Brief evokes what people want to do and also sets out the design challenges. A key overall design challenge will be to do the development in phases given the need to link in with the York Castle Museum transformation proposals and Clifford’s Tower project, while maintaining a unified approach to design and materials.

The brief is structure in the following way:

- Movement
- Flexibility of Use
- Activity
- Heritage
- Landscape, Ecology and Trees
- Play and Playfulness
- Castle Car Park
- Eye of York
- The Clifford’s Tower Area

Open Brief for the whole area

Movement

The Castle Gateway is not just about gathering and spending time in the area itself, it is also about movement to and through to areas beyond. Creating a porous space where people can access the areas from all sides and intuitively find their way to where they are going. Signposting should complement clear routes.

Bringing the Open Brief to life. In the future, what are people doing?

People are [walking](#) to and through the sites from all directions, including through [a new entrance](#) to the area through the Castle Walls. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove

As people come down Coney Street they are immediately clear that the city centre does not end there and that there are more delights – the Castle and Eye of York – beyond. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove

Cyclists are [parking their bikes](#), either in secure cycle parking for longer stays (and more expensive bikes) or in easy to use open racks which are situated next to the main destinations in the area. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove

Cyclists who use their [bikes for mobility](#) are able to cycle at all times of days to and through the area as part of making York accessible for all. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove #GatheringAccessibly

People who are blind or partially-sighted are using [textured](#) and high contrast designs in the public spaces to navigate to and through the area. Families are also using this as they move through the area. Children are laughing, swerving and grabbing their parents' hands as they try to stay on the line or within certain colour blocks. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove #GatheringAccessibly

Visitors – sighted, partially sighted and blind – arriving at the Railway Station immediately [find the route](#) to the Castle and Eye of York area. The route is high contrast, clear but also fun and means children run alongside and point out where to go next to their parents. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove #GatheringAccessibly

Movement: Design Challenges

- The open spaces should be structured to make movement intuitive and easy (the paths in Museum Gardens is a good example). All elements of the design – for example, [surfacing](#) and enclosure – should make the purposes of the space clear and should be part of a consistent design language. Routes for movement should be intuitive, places to sit should be obvious (but can also be playful), areas should be defined to encourage performance (for example by street artists) or siting of stalls. It is important that tactile routes are never crossed by stalls or other temporary structures.

- Approaches that work for people who are blind and partially sighted should also be playful and fun for families, they should both be a means of [increasing accessibility](#) and part of the brand and fun of the area. These include tactile paths, well-structured space and landmarks that can be used for navigation.
- [National standards for tactile paving](#) should be used.
- This design work for the area needs to be considered in terms of navigation towards the area from bus stops and from further beyond, from the Railway Station, from the centre of town and both directions along the Foss. Key points of difficulty have been noted – for example the end of Coney Street and junction with Castlegate / Clifford Street. Ways of improving the crossing of Coppergate at different points should be carefully considered. All of these must be seen as a process of connecting Castle Gateway to the rest of the city centre, and exploring opportunities for these connecting routes – Clifford Street, Castlegate, Coppergate – to be improved to become part of a broader destination, rather than just “a route to” Castle Gateway.
- It is important that signage within the area should be linked to the city centre wayfinding.
- There should be [cycle parking](#) in locations within the Castle Gateway where people would want to transfer from cycle to walking, not simply where it can be hidden away. This means finding locations near the entrances to the main attractions, and providing adequate parking so cycles are not locked in inconvenient or dangerous places due to overcrowding. Cycle parking needs adequate provision for “non-standard” cycles such as cargo bikes or trikes.
- There is also a need for secure cycle parking. One or more designated areas for this are needed which could be further away from the main attractions as people who want to use secure cycle parking tend to be more committed cyclists and therefore convenience is not the only issue.
- Routes for cycling should be provided which allow access for people who use cycling for [mobility](#). These routes should also work for families cycling together. These routes should be open all day and night and while all cycle routes should be of generous width, in these instances avoiding conflict with pedestrians is especially important.

Flexibility of Use

In an area like this, everything should have more than one use and work for lots of different people with different needs. The area needs to work during the day and at night. It needs to work in the winter as well as it works in the summer.

Bringing the Open Brief to life. In the future, what are people doing?

Someone is reading a book in peace in a sunny and sheltered spot near the court. Around lunchtime a street artist turns up with a guitar and people gather around and eat. Later the same day, 500 people come together [to hear a band](#) or watch a play. #GatheringPlace

Children use benches and other [sitting places](#) for play, for crawling under, climbing upon, hiding behind, peeking around. #GatheringPlace #GatheringPlayfully

People navigate a change in level by ramps and steps, the steps become places to perch. #GatheringPlace

In the summer, people flock and sit and bask in the sun. In the winter, shelter from the wind means that when it is cold but sunny, it is possible to sit out and enjoy. #GatheringPlace

Flexibility of Use: Design Challenges

- Spaces should be designed to allow for [flexibility](#) of use. There should be built in, tiered seating that can be used formally for performances and for casually sitting and spending time. This could be stepped paving, but should be arranged to give views of an area which could be used for performance, and in addition should be directed to make use of the views in the area.
The spaces should enable:-
 - Small activities without people feeling lost or drowned in space – for example a school group [having a picnic](#).
 - Medium size community performances (100-200 people)
 - Large scales activities such as a performances such as Mystery Plays (500+)
- Design of spaces and enclosure should encourage use all year round, by providing [shelter](#) from wind and rain and places to enjoy sunshine in winter but also shade in summer. This needs to be robust and [easy to maintain](#).
- Spaces and finishes should be designed to allow [different activities](#) at different times of day and of the year. For example the [court](#) restricts some daytime activities, but not night-time.
- A space that can be purposed as a stage needs to be built in. This should be able to be used for lots of different uses and just needs to have flat and non-slippery surface. A back to the stage might be useful to help with acoustics or it might be that space for a temporary back to the stage to be easily installed and reinstalled is designed in.
- The question of shelter and of possible cover of the tiered seating needs careful consideration. A reference point is [Bath Spa Ampitheatre](#) which creates a stage, has built in seating and can be covered as well. [You can see a range of images here.](#)
- Lighting and sound need to be considered. There need to be multiple sockets that are easy to make available (and don't cost to use). The power supply needs to cope with large demand for more complex performances.
- A Green Room /backstage facilities need to be repurposed from spaces used for other things at other times (e.g. the museum). Toilets need to be able to be designated for performances to comply with safeguarding.

Activity

The area should welcome everyone to spend time [without having to spend money](#), but places to buy from [York's independent businesses](#) which will bring life to the area, day and night and all year round.

Bringing the Open Brief to life. In the future, what are people doing?

People are eating ice-creams and watching people wandering in and out of small units for independent businesses. #GatheringPlace

People are sitting at tables outside a café drinking coffee, while not far away someone fills their water bottle at a free water fountain. #GatheringPlace

People are feeling very [welcome to the area](#) if they don't want to spend much, or any, money. There is a pay-as-you-feel streetfood stall and people are sitting and eating homemade sandwiches. #GatheringPlace

Young people now [meet here](#) instead of “where the fountain used to be” as it's easy to find and welcoming, and there's space for them to sit and gather with shops and cafes close by. #GatheringPlace

Small groups are gathering and waiting for a gig that is about to start. #GatheringPlace

A community theatre group rehearses in public – and passers by see a poster for the performance and buy tickets. #GatheringPlace

In the early evening young people of all kinds are drawn to the area to hang out and spend time, ensuring the area feels safe and is full of life. #GatheringPlace

Easily finding accessible and clean toilets – and enough that can cope with high demand. #GatheringPlace #GatheringAccessibly

Activity: Design Challenges

- It will be important for people to be able to spend time in the area [without spending money](#). This means careful design of space, seating and other features (water fountains, shelter) to allow commercial units (cafes, bars etc) to coexist with seating and gathering space where there is no pressure to spend.
- People felt that this was an area that didn't need [shops](#)...but it was also accepted that [commercial](#) activity can bring life to outdoor space. New commercial units should be designed to bring economic diversity to the area. Power supplies for stalls – both profit and not-for-profit – need to be designed into the public spaces.
- The seating and other infrastructure should be designed to minimise costs for community-led performances (see Flexibility of Use)
- [Evening](#) activity should be encouraged to ensure the spaces are animated when the shops close. What kind of environment will enable this, and how should lighting, shelter and enclosure be designed? How can the environment make it easy to clean up ready for the next day?
- Consideration will be given to provide “skateable architecture” for skaters and skateboarders including robust steps, ramps, edging treatments and protection for soft landscaping should be robust, with suitable edge treatments and absence of

skate-stopping. Layout would need to allow use without conflict with movement routes.

Heritage

The [significant changes of the past 1000 years](#) that have shaped the area need to be communicated as spatially and visually in the design of the area, but this needs to be done alongside – and where possible through – the personal stories of specific people who died here, were imprisoned here, transported from here, were elected here, voted here or protested here.

For more exploration of the heritage of the area read the [Historic England Statement of Significance for the Eye of York](#).

Bringing the Open Brief to life. In the future, what are people doing?

People can walk the banks of the two rivers, appreciating the historic importance of their confluence in the siting of the first settlements from which York has grown.

#GatheringHeritage

People feel they are in [the site of the former castle](#) and can see the Southern Gateway and remaining walls (and [walk along them](#)), tracing the line in the ground, seeing the link to Baile Hill. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

People can visualise the [height and scale of the Prison Walls](#), experience awe and a slightly uneasy feeling! #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

Realising how many people were [executed](#) on this site and contemplating what that means and might mean for thinking about [justice](#) today. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

Imagining what it might have been like to hear William Wilberforce speak against the transatlantic slave trade, seeking election as a Yorkshire MP, and reflect on what democracy is and should be today, and how debate is part of that. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

Being drawn into a space that makes you consider power and authority and what makes it legitimate. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

[Amendment 2026] The Castle and Eye of York creates spaces for reflecting on the complex histories of violence within the area and represents a hope for peace.

A place for remembering those that died in the South African War through the resiting of the Green Howards South African War Memorial from the roundabout at the end of Skeldergate Bridge and Tower Street into the Castle Gateway Area #Gathering Heritage

Heritage: Design Challenges

- Design of the space should choose appropriate places for articulating the specific stories of that place.

- Articulating the stories and histories should be done in ways – as far as possible – that are built into the environment through spatial design, views and integrated interpretation. An overview of the key challenges the history and heritage pose for the area’s future can be read here: [‘The Castle and Eye of York: Key questions the area’s past poses for its future’](#).
- How might outlines of the different phases of the area – Castle and Prison – be communicated? How might the last bit of wall and the back of the Female Prison be used to prompt the imagination? How might space for reflective remembering be created? How might democracy and its challenges be enacted spatially?

Landscape, Ecology and Trees

A [biodiverse and green area](#) in which to relax and spend time was a strong theme. Trees, in particular, have a very special place in people’s hearts, they are seen as giving life, shelter, shade and making an area feel humane, safe and pleasant. While some might see trees as getting in the way of the view, for others, trees can be the view and signpost and lead people to and through the area.

Bringing the Open Brief to life. In the future, what are people doing?

*People are sitting under the shade of a tree in summer, watching the world go by.
#GatheringPlace*

Feeling that spaces are green and natural, despite surfaces being hardwearing and usable all-year-round. #GatheringPlace

People notice the sound of nearby traffic less and hear the sound of leaves in the trees more. Carefully chosen planting brings new smells to the spaces. #GatheringPlace

People are aware of key [views](#), such as from the base of Clifford’s Tower towards the Ouse, because they are framed by, or defined by, trees. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage #GatheringWithWater

People are enjoying the [river views](#) and look over towards Piccadilly where the new buildings are integrated with the landscape on both sides of Foss. #GatheringPlace #GatheringGreen

Watching birds, spotting signs of otters and seeing a rich range of [wild flowers](#) as part of a day out. #GatheringPlace #GatheringGreen

Landscape, Ecology and Trees: Design Challenges

- There is a clear wish that, despite being an urban space and needing to function all year and in all weathers, the spaces should feel [green](#) and feature planting and trees. This will require careful design in terms of types of trees and planting arrangements (to avoid a repeat of Parliament Street where roots have pushed up the paving stones) and consideration of [maintenance](#).
- Trees are important and there is a wish for there to be [more](#) trees than currently in the area as well as a recognition that the right tree needs to be in the right place.

- Acknowledging that trees sometimes block views, some pointed out that trees can sometimes “be the view” and can also signpost significant features.
- There is acceptance that some trees are in the way of change and could be [removed/replaced](#).
- Developing an approach to landscaping that creates a [richer ecology](#), and also helps interpret the past of the place.

Play and playfulness

The whole area should create many different ways for people of all ages to play, especially [families](#) with young children. Different types of play can flourish in different parts of the Castle and Eye of York.

Bringing the Open Brief to life. In the future, what are people doing?

Children – and everyone! – are coming running, jumping, laughing as they play in the fountains. #GatheringPlace #GatheringWithWater #GatheringPlayfully

Children are peeking out, crawling through, hiding behind and climbing on structures that are also benches and seating for all ages. #GatheringPlace #GatheringPlayfully

Play and playfulness: Design Challenges

- The opportunity should be taken in design to make the landscape [playful](#), and to create urban spaces which are comfortable for adults to stay in while children play.
- [Fountains](#) and water features which are playful rather than ornamental attract children and encourage play. How can they also be used to bring to life different stories of the area?
- Different children thrive in different environments but there is a wish from [some parents](#) for space where children can play where boundaries can be clearly defined, and...
- ...it's not unique to families, but there needs to be [toilets](#) which are convenient to places where there is activity.

Open Brief for the specific areas

Castle Car Park

What is the space now?

The area is now Castle Car Park. It is between the Foss and Clifford's Tower motte and between the end of the Female Prison part of York Castle Museum and Castlegate and Coppergate Centre.

What did the Castle Gateway Masterplan say?

- Make a new public space
- Open up new walking routes
- Create a new building on the back on Coppergate to make the building turn towards the new public space
- Enable the York Castle Museum to welcome visitors and increase access through a new building – 'Castle Gateway Building' – linked to the end of the Female Prison.

In the future Castle Car Park area, what are people doing?

Getting as close to the Foss as possible – ideally close enough to get their feet wet!

#GatheringPlace #GatheringWithWater #GatheringPlayfully

Taking part in activities [on the Foss](#), such as [canoeing](#) or kayaking. #GatheringPlace

Sitting and perching, with a sandwich or an [ice cream](#). #GatheringPlace

Thinking, praying, [saying the Mourner's Kaddish](#) and 'facing the history of 1190' in a place that is spatially connected to Clifford's Towers and, like the plaque that is currently at the base of the motte, visually references Jewish history and faith. #GatheringPlace

#GatheringHeritage

Visitors to the Castle and Eye of York area understand the [significance of Clifford's Tower](#) – including the significance of the daffodils. A crucial message visitors leave with is that 1190 was not the end of York's Jewish Community and that it continues to thrive to this day.

#GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

[Amendment 2026] Groups gather to say the Mourners' Kaddish or to hear about the history of 1190 and of York Castle. There is space to sit on comfortable and accessible benches, while others stand.

[Amendment 2026] Events in Clifford's Tower are made accessible to those who the steps exclude by exploring digital connectivity and how this could be facilitated in the memorial area.

[Amendment 2026] The memorial space explicitly addresses and foregrounds 1190 including interpretation and detailing which is visibly Jewish.

[Amendment 2026] Visitors see but do not disturb activity in the memorial space, the design and separation making clear York's continuing active Jewish community.

Following the old line of Castlegate to help find their way towards the new Castle Gateway Building. For this wider path to be textured, high contrast, playful and helping tell the story of the area so it works for people who are blind, partially sighted as well as for families. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage #GatheringOnTheMove

Understanding the [Prison layout](#) of the 19th and early 20th centuries – and some of the amazing stories of people who were imprisoned there, like chartist leader Fergus O'Connor but also less famous and everyday people too. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

Seeing the Castle layout, including the Southern Gateway, and how Castlegate connected the city to area and understanding how things have changed since. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

Buying drinks and food from cafes, [pop-up](#) vans or [stalls](#). #GatheringPlace

Enjoying bigger outdoor events which take up more of the space, with some shelter and with places to sit and have a good view. #GatheringPlace

Wandering into this area at night because they want somewhere less boozy but still full of activity and to take part in cultural activities, like poetry readings, acoustic music, talks and discussions. #GatheringPlace #GatheringAtNight

Hanging out in the area at night and enjoying the buildings lit up in ways which are subtle, magical and tell stories of the area. #GatheringPlace #GatheringAtNight

Moving around easily on flat access and accessible paths that work for people who use wheelchairs, people with mobility issues and people with buggies. #GatheringPlace #GatheringAccessibly

Being welcomed to the York Castle Museum in an accessible way, with flat access and without long queues. #GatheringPlace #GatheringAccessibly

Understanding the whole history of the site through displays and interpretation in the new Castle Gateway Building. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

Castle Car Park: Design Challenges

The design of this space needs to respond to various challenges:-

- It should somehow reflect the history of the place, which has been at times closed off by [massive walls](#) and at other times opened up for [civic use](#). This is echoed in current wishes to have spaces which feel personal (for a picnic or meeting friends, or watching a street artist) but also opportunity for bigger events which require engagement over bigger distance. Texture and surfacing, steps and level differences and trees/planting are some of the design tools which might provide this.
- For the other buildings – especially the new buildings at the back of Coppergate and the new Castle Gateway Building– to respect and respond to Clifford's Tower,

physically and conceptually. For views, proximity and activities to be developed in ways which recognises the significance of Clifford's Tower.

- It needs to manage the transition from the enclosure of medieval streets to more open space, as people move from or to the city centre. The [sense of enclosure](#) shifts from buildings immediately bordering the street, to a space where enclosure is provided by a small number of key, large buildings. The design of landscaping and structures, and management of views, needs to respond to this.
- It needs to deal with the new development on the far side of The Foss, where the visual boundary will be the rear of [substantial new buildings](#). The design of the space (including structures and planting) needs to consider enclosure and control of views – where they are needed for legibility (seeing key buildings or routes) and where they can be more enclosed to provide shelter for all-year use. This would include considering prevailing winds and the path of the sun.
- It needs to allow direct access to The Foss. At a minimum this should enable use of the river for canoeing/kayaking and other non-motorised use. Ideally it should provide a wider access, allowing people to get close to or actually into the water safely and without risk of falling, and should also make visible the natural variation in the level of the river. Guidance on design is available [here](#).
- It needs to manage level differences. Consideration needs to be given to the level difference between Castlegate and the proposed setting of the new Castle Gateway Building museum entrance, and also between the base of the Motte and the Foss. Level/ramped access is needed to allow movement of wheelchairs, buggies etc, and cyclists.
- The design needs to provide places for [places to sit](#) or “perch”. This might include conventional [benches](#) or seating but might also include less formal opportunities such as more sculptural objects or steps. This approach should also be taken in respect of play and playfulness – surfacing, levels and projecting features can all contribute to this.
- The design of the space will also need to consider the uncertainty over the Castle Museum extension. One approach would be to assume the siting of the former [castle gatehouse](#) becomes a focal point for movement in any case, and also a space with views of the Foss and of the Last Drop. Other approaches may be considered.
- To create a place for thought, reflection, prayer and saying Kaddish which connects to the [histories of the place and especially the massacre of York's Jewish community in 1190](#) while still being clearly being a living part of present-day York. It should be distinct from, while connecting with and sitting well within, the other landscaping in the area, including harder landscaping and movement routes and [might be inspired by different traditions of gardens and outside spaces in the Jewish faith](#).
- The design of [the public space](#) needs to respond to [the route](#) between Castlegate and the proposed new Castle Gateway Building, and the fact that this divides the space in two, with an area beneath Clifford's Tower and the Motte, and an area which [borders the Foss](#), and links the rear of the Coppergate Centre and the proposed new building. The design of these two spaces might reflect the idea that the kinds of [atmosphere](#) and activities might move from being more reflective and quieter nearer the motte and more fun, noisy, playful and busy towards the Foss.
- The role of commerce in driving activity in public space was noted during the public engagement process. The design of the space and relationship with commerce on

the margins (for example the new Castle Gateway Building or the proposed extension to Coppergate) or on the space itself ([pop-up activities or stalls](#)) should be considered to ensure the space offers a lively, welcoming environment as much of the time as possible, with activity extending out into the space. The early [evening period](#) was identified as a particular challenge to which the design should respond.

- The design should create a space which feels welcoming and [safe](#) at all times including at night. The use of lighting, [legibility of routes](#), and design of landscaping and structures will be key to this.
- Consideration of sustainability should underpin the design and intended uses of buildings, spaces and landscaping.

The Eye of York

What is the space now?

This area is enclosed by York Crown Court and York Castle Museum, made up of the Debtor's Prison and the Female Prison. It currently has a roughly-circular grass area with a tree located centrally, and a tarmac road around this providing service access to the Museum and the courts. Outside this are paved areas, raised to form plinths to the court and female prison.

There is an ongoing debate about whether this area is called the Eye of York or Eye of Yorkshire, and indeed the extent of the boundary of this area. This debate [already been initiated as part of My Castle Gateway](#) and will need to be develop over the coming year.

What did the Castle Gateway Masterplan / York Castle Museum masterplan say?

- The current entrance to the York Castle Museum will go and a new entrance through from the southern side of the Castle Museum will be opened up for public access
- A wall walk of the Castle walls will enable people to make sense of the Castle area
- A new entrance to the Debtor's Prison will be created for York Castle Museum visitors
- The Crown Court will continue to be there, it needs to have vehicle access to the court and for there to be no loud noise during the day

In the future Eye of York, what are people doing?

Scouts and Guides are gathering for the [St George's Day parade](#). #GatheringPlace

People with placards make their way there for as the rally point for demonstrations. #GatheringPlace

People draw on the histories of elections and [protests](#) within the area to debate and discuss current issues. #GatheringPlace

The authority of the prison and court buildings are both acknowledged and softened by people coming to the area to read, picnic and play. #GatheringPlace

Families and groups are unfurling blankets and laying out their picnics. #GatheringPlace

People sit comfortably and admire the [different views](#) of all [the buildings](#) surrounding this space #GatheringPlace

[Parents relax](#) while they sit and picnic because there is space which can be clearly defined for their children as they play #GatheringPlace #GatheringPlayfully

People explore the histories of the Prisons and Court, they look at the visible [graffiti](#) from prisoners and they get a strong feeling of the specific people who were imprisoned here, were hanged or were sentence to transportation. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

People on foot can easily pass through the area and onwards towards [Castlegate](#) or the [Coppergate Centre](#), with routes being clear. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove

Hanging out here at night here is magical with subtle [lighting](#), pop up food vans and acoustic music. #GatheringPlace #GatheringAtNight

Coming together for amplified music and theatre performances against the backdrop of Clifford's Tower and the Court and Prison buildings. #GatheringPlace #GatheringAtNight

Visitors to the museum easily navigate toward the [entrance to the Debtor's Prison](#). #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

People – including people with buggies and who use wheelchairs – [move along the Castle walls](#) with views that make sense of the city defences and of the shape of the Castle. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage #GatheringOnTheMove

People enjoy the peace because electrical infrastructure is built in so there is no need for pop up vans or performances to use generators. #GatheringPlace

People visit [the Last Drop](#) – the last place people in York were hanged – and it acts as a place for reflection and remembering. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

The Eye of York: Design Challenges

The design of this space needs to respond to various challenges:-

- The presence of the [court](#) imposes some restrictions on activities during operation – at weekday daytimes – which don't apply at other times. The design of the space therefore needs to allow for [quieter use](#) such as sitting or picnics and children's play, and for the potential for larger, noisier events such as [performances](#) or background music for gatherings.
- It is a space with various movement routes between buildings and connections to onward routes to neighbouring areas, but also a space that invites lingering and appreciation of the architecture and setting. The design needs to allow for these to coexist.
- The single tree in the current central grass was noted by many as being "in the wrong place" and there was more support for [removal of this tree](#) than for others. However the general wish for [landscaping](#) and [trees](#) poses specific challenges here in respect of being balanced against maintaining views towards the buildings.
- The enclosed nature of the space and the fact that it is more of a destination than a route (and this will largely remain the case even with the [proposed new opening](#) in the walls) makes it attractive as a place where children can play and hence families can spend time. The design challenge this creates is in providing appealing opportunities for play within an area that can be clearly defined, while satisfying other aspects of the brief.
- The current perimeter road provides service access for the Museum and vehicular access for the court. This also tends to attract other vehicles which can conflict with pedestrian use of the space. Future design of vehicular access should largely exclude vehicles, [responding to wishes](#) to increase pedestrian use while allowing vehicular access only when strictly required.

The Clifford's Tower Area

What is the space now?

It is the road from Tower Street into the Eye of York area, along with the space around Clifford's Tower, including the entrance to Clifford's Tower.

What did the Castle Gateway Masterplan / English Heritage masterplan say?

- Steps will take people up to Clifford's Tower
- There will be a van to welcome visitors to Clifford's Tower

In the future Tower Street Approach, what are people doing?

Many thousands of visitors each year come to learn the story of Clifford's Tower, stopping at the English Heritage welcome van to find out more information, be welcomed and buy tickets. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

People read an information board which interprets the stories of the English Heritage site so as that many people as possible understand the significance of Clifford's Tower – including the significance of the daffodils. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

Groups of visitors meet and gather outside Clifford's Tower – buying tickets and chatting to the English Heritage staff – before climbing the stairs to experience the refreshed visitor information inside the tower and take advantage of views from the roof deck. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

People mill across what was a road but has become a pedestrian area with the distinction between pavement and road minimised. #GatheringPlace

People who are blind and partially sighted can navigate easily as the route up into the area from the bus stop is carefully designed. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove

People sit and enjoy the view towards the river Ouse and are able to appreciate how the landscape has a definite rise and fall, and then realise why this was the perfect place to build the castle. #GatheringPlace

People notice that trees mark the route towards Tower Gardens and the Ouse and point towards the other part of the Norman defences at Baile Hill. #GatheringPlace #GatheringHeritage

People in custody are delivered to Crown Court in a way that minimises impact on the other activities going on in the area. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove

In the morning – before the area gets busy – the museum is serviced by vans. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove

The place where the new drop was – and where the Luddites were executed – is marked and visitors move over toward the back of the Court to read and understand the histories of their trail and execution. #GatheringPlace

The experience of walking up into the area is one of a slowing of pace as the impact of traffic is lessened and of entering a new space where histories can be explored. #GatheringPlace

In the early morning, when the area is quiet, people run through the area and walk past Clifford's Tower on their way to work and appreciate its form and what it represents.

Design Challenges

The design of this space needs to respond to various challenges:-

- This space is complex in that it needs to combine ease of pedestrian and necessary vehicular movement with gathering and waiting.
- The design of the space needs to respond to it having two important views in opposite directions – up towards Clifford's Tower and beyond, and across Tower Gardens towards the Ouse and [Baile Hill](#) beyond. So, for example, seating and waiting areas need to enhance both.
- Discussion of the [significance of Clifford's Tower](#) has made it clear that for many, simply passing "[The Lowry Test](#)" is most important, meaning [minimising visual intrusion](#) upon the current view from Tower Street.
- A need to create a sense of arriving into a different space as you walk up the hill from Tower Street, for the area to feel [a bit quieter](#) and for people to be encouraged to slow down.
- The space is bounded on one side by [Tower Street](#), with a pedestrian crossing and onwards route through a narrow entrance into Tower Gardens. This raises many issues, including:-
 - [Noise and disturbance](#) from traffic
 - The pedestrian crossing is offset from the current route down to the road, making the route to [Tower Gardens](#) and the river indirect
 - Tower Street is effectively four lanes in width, with a central reservation on the adjacent section, making it a major visual (and physical) barrier
 - Separation of pedestrians and cycles at the crossing / Tower Gardens entrance is indistinctNone of these issues falls within the current scope of work but all have a bearing on the Tower Street Approach. Design of the space will need to work with current issues as identified, but should also allow for possibilities of future further works which address them. So, ideally...

People on foot walk easily across Tower Street and directly into the area with a new crossing area and an inviting route to and from Tower Gardens that lines up with the Tower Street Approach. #GatheringPlace #GatheringOnTheMove