

URBAN PANEL

Review Paper

Hull: Independent but also interdependent

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I. Introduction

I.1 The Urban Panel visit to Hull comes at what is potentially a new chapter in its long and proud history. It is a history well known to many of its inhabitants but not one appreciated beyond the City's boundaries to the extent it deserves, despite its important trading links to Europe that have been a major contribution to its historic environment . It is a place that now has an opportunity to rectify that lack of recognition through its successful City of Culture bid, which was achieved only after persistent and determined effort. It was this bid that was the catalyst for the Panel visit.

I.2 The Panel's remit was to identify how Hull can make the most of the opportunity that the City of Culture accolade can bring, with particular emphasis on the Old Town and so lay the foundations for a newly confident place that can welcome increased numbers of visitors, develop improved business opportunities and deliver better quality of life for its citizens.

I.3 The local English Heritage team provided a briefing for the Panel which included the recent collaboration between the City and English Heritage - a publication celebrating its rich historic environment. It is an extensive heritage that still survives, despite the depredations of change which has

included conflict, economic and social decline. The two day visit enabled the Panel to both see at first hand the quality of the city and to hear more about the impact of recent change, as well learning how it was proposed to begin to address the challenges it faces, both now and into the future.

2.0 Executive Summary and Report Recommendations

2.1 The Panel were impressed by the extent and quality of heritage in the Old Town which was felt to be special and unique. Yet these assets are not being put to best use and exploited to their full potential for the benefit of the city's residents, visitors or businesses.

Overall Recommendations for the City

- **VISION** – Through its Local Plan the City Council should articulate its vision for the City of Hull including for the Old Town – the themes from the City of Culture bid are a strong starting place. Consider what makes Hull special and unique. The vision should then join together the many strands of work and projects taking place in the city.
- **RAISE THE PROFILE** - Capitalise on the City of Culture success and begin the long journey to changing perceptions of Hull. Set out to actively learn more from others. Prepare a destination strategy and capture those visitors as they arrive from the ferries
- **MAKE HERITAGE WORK HARDER** - Capitalise on the assets in the Old Town, raise the profile of the museums, and consider what you want the heritage assets to achieve. The Old Town is a key asset to the City of Culture – plan specifically for its future with an area management plan, marketing and strategy setting.
- **SUSTAINABLE CITY LIVING** –. Capitalise on the flat topography and compact nature of the city to develop the cycling strategy Create an urban village in the old town that is easy to walk and cycle around. Develop the transport strategy to reduce car use through park and ride schemes. Connect the nodes within the city through targeted public realm improvements and better public realm management to increase legibility. Look to increase student presence in the city centre and a greater provision for older citizens together to increase diversity and resilience of communities.
- **URBAN VILLAGE** – Encourage residential use within the old town to create a living neighbourhood which will in turn encourage a diversification of activities and draw in

businesses and providers. The conversion of buildings to residential led mixed use should be encouraged and the City Council should lead the way with its own property holding.

- **ENERGY FUTURE** - Encourage SMEs related to renewable/green energy to diversify the energy focus from large businesses, encourage partnerships with education facilities to develop skills for local residents. Widen the energy focus from employment and economic benefit to community and culture.

2.2 There is encouraging evidence that the Council is securing investment, improving perceptions of the City and strengthening civic pride. A clear vision and strong partnership working in the Old Town would reap significant rewards and the Panel outlined ideas for new approaches to be explored.

Recommendations for the Old Town

- Create a clear vision and brand setting out expectation of quality for the area
- The Old Town should be identified as a distinct area for master-planning in the Local Plan
- Establish an Old Town partnership to prepare a specific management strategy to be delivered by a cross partner board
- Explore development trust vehicles to initiate start up projects
- Carry out urban capacity study especially with regard to housing
- Consider tall building policy for the Old Town to preserve the special flat, low rise nature of the place
- Deliver a discrete public realm for the Old Town that reinforces overall identity but responds to its varied character as part of a master-planning approach
- Encourage community and meanwhile uses for under-used spaces or shops- pop up parks, etc.
- Notwithstanding the recent public realm strategy proposals for the Old Town, reconsider the proposal for the hard landscaped event space in Trinity Square. The Old Town needs a green space to linger in and provide a distinct oasis for quiet enjoyment.

- Celebrate entrances to the Old Town – e.g. at site of Beverley Gate use these spaces for temporary pavilions/events (particularly as part of City of Culture 2017) – they can be the links to adjacent areas
- Consider pedestrian connectivity from the Old Town towards the River Humber and the Fruit Market area
- Focus outdoor market activity in Whitefriargate to support development of distinctive retail character
- Develop Old (King's) Town champions both as part of the City of Culture and as a lasting legacy.
- Encourage high quality boutique hotel into the Old Town
- Engage with Trinity House to realise its potential as a visitor attraction and explore how they might best use their property portfolio more effectively.

3.0 The Panel Visit : Walking Tour- finding the heart of the city

3.1 Emerging from their hotel and Paragon station the Panel began their tour at the St Stephens Centre, noting it is but the latest chapter in a story of consistently shifting commercial centres; ones that have moved ever further away from their historic origin at Whitefriargate. The logic for the St Stephens Centre to provide large floor plates not available elsewhere as part of a comprehensive scheme to improve Hull's transport hub, has meant that its impact in drawing business away from other areas of retail activity is exacerbated. The strategic mitigation of that impact, balancing St Stephen's with new development on the east of the city, has not yet been delivered.

3.2 The Panel were then faced with the choice that any visitor to Hull has to make, whether to cross Ferrensway without a clear indication of what lies

beyond to entice and reward such effort. Walking the spacious streets leading to the Princess Quay shopping centre the generous extent of the public realm was very noticeable and several panel members commented on how “under-populated” it felt and clearly what a challenge it presents.

3.3 Arriving at Queen Victoria Square, the civic and former late nineteenth century commercial heart of the city with its fine art gallery, maritime museum and City Hall, the panel were struck by the lack of a sense of arrival caused by the scale and spaciousness of the space and the relative incoherence of the public realm in relation to the surrounding buildings. This feeling appeared to be also the result of the self-effacing character of the maritime museum and the art gallery, both of which are housed in fine buildings but fail to really announce their presence.

3.4 As the Panel moved past the Princess Quay shopping centre this lack of engagement continued. Reaching the Old Town at the beginning of Whitefriargate, was the first opportunity to encounter the former docks that underpinned much of the wealth of Hull. A slight incline as you approached the site of the former gate into the medieval city drew attention to the otherwise generally flat topography of the city, whilst allowing a view down Whitefriargate and the historic origins of Kingston upon Hull.

3.5 The Panel noted how the reduced width of Whitefriargate increases the visual impact of the pedestrians walking through the Old Town giving the impression of busy footfall. But that did not translate into bustling activity in the buildings, many of which appeared under-used, with vacant upper floors and poor quality shop-fronts. The occasional glimpse of side streets and alleys leading off Whitefriargate did not offer much excitement or intrigue, although the formal beauty of Parliament Street was notable.

3.6 Reaching the spectacular Parish Church of Holy Trinity, as fine an illustration of the former importance and wealth of the city as you could wish for, the Panel noted the tantalising presence of Trinity House, occupying a four square Old Town block. It is impermeable but has potential as a visitor attraction; museum and documentation centre all housed in architectural splendour. The Panel felt that the Old Town is a historic place just waiting for an inventive approach to breathe new life back into its high quality fabric. This was exemplified for them when they were led into the covered market, which they would have been unlikely to have found independently. The Panel commented on the strong tradition of covered markets in England's northern cities but noted how, here in Hull, although it was lunchtime there was little activity in what was currently an intriguing but hidden gem with much potential.

- 3.7 En-route to Castle Street the quality of the built environment and its potential for providing a distinctive and very desirable place in which to live began to strike home, only to receive a jolt when reaching the A63 which had to be crossed in order to access the Fruit Market.
- 3.8 The Fruit Market with its “meanwhile” uses is clearly an area undergoing significant change. It already has a character that is emerging as distinct and potentially complementary to that of adjacent Old Town despite the current unfortunate severance caused by the A63. Reaching the Humber and the vast expanse of water was an uplifting moment for the Panel – the moment when the traditions and relationship of the city to its estuary became clearer. But what is an important amenity felt under-realised with a fragmentary character and lack of waterfront activity.
- 3.9 The Deep stands isolated in uninviting public realm, much having the character of left over space and no legible connections back to Old Town. A feeling confirmed for the Panel when walking alongside and under unfriendly roads flanking the rear service areas of retail buildings and car parks and further reinforced by the presence of the private sector operated ‘land train’

3.10 Being welcomed back into the finer grain of the Old Town the Panel wove its way through streets of great character to reach the River Hull and its celebrated Scale Lane swing bridge. They appreciated from its elevated vantage point a lack of coherence across the river. However, they also saw the opportunities presented by the currently undeveloped land on its eastern bank to provide a new, and potentially well connected, quarter for the city, continuing the historic approach of planned expansion beyond the water traditionally encircling the city centre.

3.11 Threading their way back towards the Guildhall the Panel were struck once again by the quality of the environment and the general lack of activity compared to other places fortunate enough to possess such assets. The number and quality of the museums and the different stories that could be illustrated by the area was a subject of much discussion, which continued until the conclusion of the tour and lunch.

4.0 The Panel Visit: Bus tour and the wider city

4.1 On the second day the Panel were taken to see the wider context of the Old Town and gain a better understanding of the whole city. Following Ferrensway and the planned interwar expansion of Hull, they were given a flavour of the range of residential areas of different character across

the city. These included the university area, the Avenues and the areas undergoing regeneration as part of the Newington and St. Andrew's Area Action Plan. They also enjoyed a tour of Alexandra Dock, soon to be redeveloped as part of the Green Port Hull development.

- 4.2 The coach tour of the city illustrated for the Panel how Hull has developed a character of disconnected areas, several of great potential, but not working well together. However, it did highlight how the topography and generous public spaces within the city were major assets that could help deliver a sustainable and “liveable” place through cycle-ways and better connected local centres.

5.0 The Panel Visit : Exploring the challenges : The Planning Context

- 5.1 Neville Brown's (Planning Policy Manager) introduction to the current status of the city's planning framework and the range of challenges facing the Council supplemented the briefing provided by the English Heritage local office by bringing out more clearly the issues from a local perspective. Whilst, individually, the challenges he set out are faced by many other areas across the country, the combination of these challenges make planning the future of the city particularly problematic.

- 5.2 The first is the constricted boundary within which the Council has to plan for future housing provision. The second is the issue of topography and in particular flooding. The impact of both issues is exacerbated by the perceived remoteness of Hull which has an influence on the perception of development viability. Current low levels of public funding mean that the Council is also exposed to greater uncertainty by having to rely increasingly on the market-led, single development partner model. Development viability has also had a direct impact on the Old Town contributing to lack of private investment which in turn feeds into a lack of demand and consequently perceived low value.
- 5.3 However, there is an emerging recognition that standard approaches to regeneration have not always delivered for the city and that perhaps a different way is required. The clearest sign of that different way is the development of the City Plan led by the City Leadership Board bringing in key partners from across Hull and making it an accessible “living” document that is open to suggested projects.
- 5.4 The new Local Plan, which reaches its Preferred Options stage in winter, is being prepared informed by the objectives of the City Plan. Its preparation is against the backdrop of a withdrawn Core Strategy and an Area Action Plan for the city centre that has also been discontinued.

5.5 The local plan has to tackle some difficult issues including high levels of unemployment, population skills shortages, health and wellbeing problems and educational challenges. Additionally, Kishor Tailor CEO of Humber LEP, spoke of low levels of business survival and the difficulty of bringing regional partners together. The picture is however far from bleak in his view as the LEP area enjoys excellent connectivity to Europe and the rest of the UK and has the potential to form a niche as a centre for energy (in particular renewable).

6.0 **Panel Analysis : Routes and Roots the Vision for Hull:**

6.1 It was clear to the Panel that Hull's winning bid for the City of Culture could be a turning point. The themes identified in the bid stem from a good understanding of what makes Hull different and distinct and, if embraced more widely, the bid offers a model of how the city could go forward in other areas. For example, The Freedom Story is a great way to celebrate migration and reflect positively on the challenge of changing communities in the city, which elsewhere has been cast as a negative issue. This would allow Hull to position itself as a "welcoming city", with a positive and inclusive image, which will be of fundamental importance in developing the skilled workforce required by the new employment opportunities.

- 6.2 Developing that positive image is also the basic requirement for beginning to address the issue of how to capitalise on one of the city's greatest assets, which is the Old Town. Whilst the Panel commend the steps being taken by the Council in developing its approach to the Local Plan, there is a need to go further and provide a clearer, more coherent vision within that document that expresses with greater confidence what the city could be and how its current inhabitants can contribute to that future.
- 6.3 Whilst it is clear that the Council is working with some partners on developing a vision for the port, on a programme of public realm improvements, and on events for the City of Culture there was not a strong sense that these initiatives were well linked and that the process had yet identified potential synergies which could increase impacts.
- 6.4 Using the Old Town as the example the Panel felt that as a key asset, whilst it should be the focus of a distinct approach to planning and management that reflects its very different granular character and enormous potential, it should also be recognised that this area could deliver against many of the wider objectives of the Local Plan.

6.5 It struck the Panel forcefully that based on historic population and housing numbers the Old Town has the potential to make a significant contribution to current and future housing need, if handled sensitively and creatively. This would require a good understanding of that potential capacity to determine how it would then best feed into the current debate around housing delivery- whether that should be within or outside the city boundary. Whilst the Panel acknowledges that there are challenges to increasing residential occupation within the Old Town, not least financial relating to end value, there are also clearly significant challenges in trying to provide housing outside the boundary of the city.

6.6 If a conscious decision is taken to actively explore the potential for a new urban village based in the Old Town, the quality of its current spaces, the character of its public realm and a marketing of the “brand” would all be required to bring about market interest. But the Panel were clear that intrinsically the Old Town is a high quality, distinctive area with the ingredients already in place to make it ideal not only for city living but also hosting the ancillary business that will be attracted to servicing an expanding residential community.

6.7 The Old Town could also play a significant role in building the employment resilience identified as an issue by both the Council and the

LEP. Whilst the development of a new economic future built on renewable energy infrastructure is significant, it is important that the focus is not solely on big energy businesses but should also include smaller companies related to energy efficiency, green energy and energy conservation. The Old Town provides opportunities for these energy sectors and through exemplar projects could provide a home for new SMEs trading on the distinctive character of their location.

- 6.8 Ensuring that distinctive character is maintained relies also on careful management of the setting of the Old Town to ensure that its attraction is not affected adversely by large scale development or inappropriate uses that would compete rather than complement. The Panel were concerned, therefore, to learn of proposals for both a tall hotel within and a conference centre immediately adjacent to the Old Town. The proposed location of the conference centre will not be visible from the Old Town and therefore it increases the challenge of ensuring that this proposed use delivers economic benefit for the Old Town itself, rather than being a stand-alone, self-contained facility, largely accessed by car.
- 6.9 The role of the Old Town in making its contribution to the planned development of Hull as the regional focus for renewable energy should be as a centre of excellence based *within the city* rather than being on its

periphery within the eastern docks. Promoting a sustainable approach to energy use by sustaining the embodied energy of existing buildings, developing skills in renewal and repair of fabric, could assist in encouraging new businesses. This model has been explored elsewhere – e.g. *The Soho Community Project* but it will require the Council to lead on the establishment and maintenance of local partnerships to deliver the economic, environmental and, ultimately, community benefits.

6.10 To enable the Old Town to play this role also depends on stronger links with the academic sector in Hull. Both the University and, in particular, Hull College located adjacent to the Old Town which both have well-regarded architecture courses, should be encouraged to raise their profile and engagement with this historic area. The Panel felt that there is the potential to build on existing, and create new partnerships through related curricula that deliver new opportunities to develop the skills local communities will need.

6.11 Perhaps the most obvious immediate role for the Old Town is as a key element in the City of Culture because it is the repository for many of the stories, material and themes that will be explored through the programme. However, it needs its own identity within that wider programme with a discrete strand of “meanwhile” and other events

centring on its distinct character. This will help in creating an impression of the Old Town being “the place to be” as part of the build up to the year of City of Culture and is the start to changing perceptions. If that strand were to be developed with a particular emphasis on the involvement of the current communities within the Old Town it would also raise its profile as a potential place to live, as well as help to develop partnerships that will be vital for its future.

6.12 The Panel was hugely impressed with the vast wealth of heritage and culture which can be found in the Old Town but it was startlingly clear that these excellent heritage assets are not being exploited, celebrated or marketed to their full potential – either to those living in Hull or nationally to those visiting, or thinking of visiting.

6.13 It was a general and repeated concern of the Panel that the Old Town as a place is currently very fragile. This is demonstrated by low footfall and occupancy levels, poor permeability and legibility, declining trends for retail and office space (reflected nationally) and the apparent lack of a coherent and dedicated management structure. This fragility and the “granular” nature of both the physical environment of the town and the communities within it obviously require a different approach from those which have been tried (and evidently failed) before.

6.14 To facilitate an increase in residential occupancy, to give liveability and viability to the Old Town, depends on a holistic approach. Within the clearly articulated vision for the Old Town the Council should consider in detail what should stay/go; what should change; and how each location can be enhanced in order to give confidence to potential investors. The Council has a key role as property owner working collaboratively with other key landowners e.g. Trinity House and despite the setbacks of a failed previous strategy for the Old Town it should not be discouraged from taking a comprehensive and plan-led approach in this particular area of the city.

6.15 In recognition of the current difficulties of viability the Council will need to explore different methods of delivery for regeneration and, vitally, ensure that new development responds to the unique character of the Old Town by reinforcing its distinct identities. However, experience elsewhere (Saltaire and Derby) can provide ideas on how to capture the added value of the historic character that exists; through pioneer investments into refurbishment or conversion on a small scale, delivered by community development trusts for example.

- 6.16 Starting with a clear understanding of the special qualities of the Old Town, possibly translated into a re-branding of the area (e.g. as the Kings Town) active marketing based on special quality and limited availability could drive up demand. Starting small, but within a master-plan and in concert with other Old Town landowners, the first steps can be taken, building interest in a location that is unique within the city and the wider region.
- 6.17 Gradually these interventions, through a bottom up approach working with partners already in the Old Town, can start to generate the values that will attract external investors and will become self-sustaining. It is a medium term approach which requires active management of the transition from former failing, historic, commercial town into a new vibrant urban village. It will require investment not only in the buildings themselves but also the spaces between to drive up perceived values and will need a longer term view of investment return.
- 6.18 The Panel understands that the Council has started to take steps to tackle some of these issues across Hull in advance of the Year of the City of Culture. Addressing the issues raised by the expanse of the public realm is clearly a major priority. The ambition of the proposals

was obvious but did raise questions in the minds of the Panel regarding the realism of the timetable for delivery.

6.19 The Panel felt that improved management of the public realm was equally, if not more important than the introduction of extensive “new” public realm to building a sense of pride in place. Therefore, the longer term strategy of targeted interventions to improve the quality of connectivity, through providing segregated cycle lanes etc. under consideration at the moment is important in order to complement carefully managed activation of key spaces e.g. Victoria Square. However, the Panel do acknowledge that because of the limited time available for discussion their understanding of the public realm strategy is potentially not fully informed.

6.20 Similarly, the brevity of the time available to discuss the City of Culture bid and programme may have left a misleading impression, but the Panel were concerned that in an enthusiastic and focussed presentation, a clear legacy arising from the bid was not set out. Legacies from major events, cultural or sporting are always difficult to deliver and this challenge does need to be addressed if the local communities of the city are to benefit from the increased profile that will hopefully result from a successful 2017.

- 6.21 The strategic decision to apply for the City of Culture accolade was vindicated by its success and could be an important catalyst for positive change. The Panel also concluded that there is also another strategic decision facing the Council. The proposed improvement of the A63 was identified as a significant factor in its considerations.
- 6.22 Whilst the Panel acknowledges that every city needs infrastructure to enable it to thrive and adapt, it needs to be introduced and sustained with great care for the sense of place. We know from wide experience how the basis for civic pride and economic success comes from having good, well cared for historic roots. The road is an important economic driver too, but handling the relationship between the two issues is a difficult challenge.
- 6.23 It was abundantly clear to the Panel that there are strong forces driving the proposals and that they will deliver some benefits. It is for the Council to determine for itself how far those benefits extend to the city, improving its resilience and in particular helping with its efforts to improve the long term prosperity of the Old Town and the Fruit Market.

- 6.24 It is the experience of the Panel elsewhere that the severance to pedestrian movement caused by trunk roads is severe. Unless pedestrian flow is easy and attractive, areas cut off decline rapidly. Pedestrian linkages work best at grade and so the proposal for a part sunken road crossed by bridges is a particular challenge. It is clearly difficult finding locations for commodious pedestrian bridges or linkages along the A63 but re-considering north/south vehicular movements and their relationship to the central historic area may be an opportunity to create that space.
- 6.25 Given the length of time the proposals have been discussed and the framework within which they have been developed, it would be a brave decision not to take them forward thereby losing the investment recently identified. But it is also clear that the impact of the road in its current configuration and the recent proposals for pedestrian movement across it is a significant obstacle to the chances of making the Old Town and the Fruit Market connected successful places. The A63 currently also adversely affects the experience of local communities by its impact on air quality and contributes to the economic fragility of the Old Town by allowing potential visitors landing at the port to speed past it, thereby losing out to other places.

6.26 Doing nothing is therefore not an attractive option but addressing the environmental issues e.g. air quality whilst also enhancing the urban value of the Old Town is a delicate balance. Infrastructure has an enormous and long lasting impact on cities and it is important to get the best answer for the future of Hull.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The Urban Panel was extremely impressed with the unique character of Hull and its extraordinarily broad range of high quality heritage assets. The special nature of the Old Town, with so many different facets to its character and the potential of Trinity House was particularly striking. The Panel considers that the Old Town is both special and different. This difference should be incorporated into Local Plan policy, the City Plan and other formal documents.

7.2 Hull has to find its own way, as it has in the past, but that has traditionally involved reaching out to others through trade. Its proud tradition of independence should not translate into isolation.

7.3 The city has taken some knocks in the recent past and is now just beginning to make the first tentative moves to recover from them. The key objective to achieve, which enables the recommendations of the

Panel to be realised, is for the city to overcome its perceived geographical isolation within the UK by promoting its long tradition of intellectual and cultural connections and by reaching out to make new partnerships. The council has to make people want to travel to the city – which isn't at the end of the earth- and value what they find there so that they want to come back...

Appendix I

Comments provided by Visit England following the visit

SWOT Analysis- Hull Old Town from a tourism development perspective

This analysis relates solely to the old town area of Hull as defined by the city council. Threats and Opportunities include both externalities and issues of direct relevance to Hull.

Strengths

- Mediaeval street pattern is largely intact, lending itself for exploration by visitors on foot and creating a sense of 'discovery'
- A wide range of free municipal museums is on offer, well-spaced throughout the quarter (although of varying quality)
- Free or low cost parking is nearby which can support a growth in the day visitor market
- The area contains many interesting and historic buildings with original facades
- There is a good selection of authentic pubs, many of which specialise in local beers and sold at reasonable prices as well as a range of chains which have used existing buildings including converted bank premises
- There is a reasonable daytime footfall which adds to the sense of animation and activity in daylight hours
- The area is dissected by some roads but these do not interfere too much with pedestrian flow
- The indoor market, although tucked away out of sight, is worthy of exploration because it is uniquely housed and provides and displays locally procured products
- The 'road train' adds a sense of 'leisure destination' and although quirky in presentation/interpretation, offers a sense of a unique experience because of the personalities involved (ie driver and guide)
- The staff at the attractions are friendly and enthusiastic about their product and local people convey a sense of welcome
- The Deep is on the doorstep of the old town and offers a national standard attraction
- The nearby Premier Inn is highly rated on Trip Advisor. (This was an inherited property by the chain, is of higher than average quality for the brand and is air-conditioned)

Weaknesses

- Lack of local leadership or vision in developing an overall plan for the old town and adjacent areas
- There are many vacant shops at street level and vacant accommodation at first floor level and above
- The area is less animated at night and could deter visitors by being too quiet
- The public realm is of varying quality, much of it using 1980s style materials and is in need of refreshing and greater coordination
- There is a barrier between the old town and the post-war city centre and the routes within the area are too linear and don't encourage pedestrian exploration or dwell time
- There is no consistent area lighting pattern or strategy
- There is a lack of soft surfaces/quality green open space
- The eastern boundary looks out onto unattractive land awaiting redevelopment
- The Premier Inn and commercial buildings on the east bank of the Hull are unattractive and unsympathetic to the old town ambience; new build housing on the southern periphery is also poor quality
- There is very limited independent retail space and few places to buy food
- There are posters/adverts promoting places outside Hull (ie nearby seaside) but little to interpret what is already there in the old town
- Street maintenance is poor with litter, dog excrement and refuse

Opportunities

- Changing consumer profiles, patterns and behaviour mean that an undeveloped visitor destination is able to compete from a 'clean sheet' and can position itself to those markets more quickly and directly
- Hull could learn from Futures research that identifies key segments and activities that are likely to be more popular over the next decade including consumers seeking 'authentic experiences', activity holidays, exploring cycling routes, special interest activities, new niche markets, etc. Its location on a flat landscape near the Humber Estuary lends itself to many of these as well as being developed as a base for eco-tourism
- Hull's 'product' in terms of its industrial heritage lends itself to external funding opportunities such as from the Coastal Communities Fund
- The increased threat of international terrorism and world instability might deter a return to outbound tourism and Hull could exploit its

connectivity to domestic markets- its distance and reach time is less than many people perceive

- The Wilberforce theme could be further exploited as a marketing brand with its many links to the abolition story and attractiveness to niche markets, including inbound
- Hull's status as a low wage locality means that it can be more competitive in terms of its labour markets
- There is scope to develop an accommodation offer within the old town, preferably attracting boutique type development- increasing overnight stays is essential to raise the value of visitor expenditure
- Hull University could adopt unused accommodation in the old town as student residences and this would bring life to the area
- The Trinity House Charity could realise the profit potential from more proactive commercial development of their properties
- A late night café/bar culture could be developed to animate the quarter at night time (possibly building on the Truck Theatre) and to complement daytime trade with emphasis on locally produced/sourced food and drink offer
- New styles of hard paving using granite and marble could be incorporated to help define the area spatially and de-clutter existing unnecessary signage and railings
- Community supported pocket parks could be created throughout the area in odd patches of land that are currently neglected
- The area around the Trinity church could be developed as a 'continental' style square with pavement cafes
- Cycle routes and cycle parking could be developed throughout, linking to the rail station, central business area and quays
- New mixed use development could include a larger high-end hotel, cross-subsidised by new housing and visitor facilities
- The eventual development of the east bank of the Hull could act as a catalyst for development growth in the old town (this might mirror the kind of ex-industrial to leisure shift that has been occurring in places like Reykjavik or other fishing ports in the UK)
- Incubator business units could be developed where there are currently vacant shops to encourage new micro-businesses and an arts/cultural industries sector
- There is scope for improved interpretation throughout the quarter, recognising its current assets and relationship to the heritage offer

Threats

- There is a risk that the staycation effect could fade, leading to further outbound holiday-taking and increased pressure on the domestic market
- Long-term national transport planning initiatives such as HS2 and DfT road initiatives are likely to continue to by-pass Hull or to lead to visitors passing through without encouragement to stop
- The domestic market is increasingly competitive and other potential rival destinations are already active in the market so Hull has a lot of catching up to do
- There will be a skills gap due to a number of factors including lack of existing hospitality jobs, apprenticeship opportunities and mis-match in the skills of the existing workforce and there is little 'service culture' within the city
- In the rush to attract new development once the recession eases, poor design decisions might slip through the planning process and pressure for out of town development should be resisted if the old town is to be a vibrant commercial centre
- Without an established partnership approach through a LEP and DMO working together, external funding opportunities might be limited
- Scale of new commercial development (ie high rise hotel or residential development)
- Spiral of decline in terms of retail offer and anchor stores moving out or relocating
- Expansion of Hull's other industries might blight the landscape and degrade the tourism offer
- Lack of partnership approach (no Destination Management Organisation now exists for Hull)
- New Highways Agency road proposals cutting off access from quay area
- Uncertainty and planning blight in peripheral areas pending any new development
- Quick fix solutions that merely patch up problems rather than seeking quality solutions (ie streetscape/ street furniture)
- Failure to capitalise on Hull's unique assets and to allow corporate brands to take over (ie shop facias)
- Unsympathetic traffic management measures within the old town
- Closure of independent pubs and cafes
- Buildings being converted into HMOs or low rent options

Additional Opportunities regarding localism

- There is a hunger in England for authentic experiences and this is something Hull as a city can offer on many levels. Together with Grimsby, it was the premier deep sea fishing port, with a fascinating maritime heritage- the legacy is still there in part but needs to be saved for the future
- The warmth of the local people is clearly apparent but probably unknown by those who have never visited. It is hardly an original concept to promote friendliness of local people but one that could be experienced by visitors to Hull and spread by word of mouth
- There is opportunity to develop a local food and drink offer utilising the many businesses already trading in Hull, especially around seafood, fish, beer and wider Yorkshire/East Riding food and drink themes
- A better relationship needs to develop between the university and the college and local entrepreneurs and cultural/craft businesses
- If the visitor offer can be improved and reach a critical mass, it will encourage an interest in housing relocation and could help buoy up the locally depressed housing market
- The relationship between Hull's sports teams and the weekend holiday offer could be encouraged to develop, especially for away fans travelling some distance to see games
- Hull trains is an unusual train operating company brand and despite being part of First Group, its name could be used to promote Hull more strongly to London and SE markets
- Hull could develop more of a distinctive look- this could be done with simple measures such as 'dressing' the city in a corporate house style, utilising the council's colours and iconography
- Hull's position with regard to its hinterland could be developed along lines that create a more symbiotic relationship so that elements of coast and countryside support and are supported by the city offer. One cannot tackle everything at the same time- it is best to create 'shop windows' of excellence, possibly within the old town that act as catalysts for further work.

City of Culture Opportunities

- There is a good City of Culture team already in place, with excellent credentials and they should be given every support in the run up to events
- Hull is not Liverpool and comparisons may be unhelpful but many instances of best practice can be gleaned from what Liverpool achieved, especially in overcoming its formerly negative perceptions

- This will be a one-off opportunity- everything must be done to throw weight behind it as there is no second chance
- An emphasis on an events-based programme of activities should broaden the reach of the city to visitors throughout the year
- The City of Culture award will undoubtedly raise levels of civic pride and self-confidence in the city
- Hull is ideally placed to grow coach-based tourism and group travel offers based on the City of Culture theme and it has adequate resources to support coach markets
- The city has considerable cash resources it can use for seed funding of initiatives and can offer match-funding to external funding bids for programmes such as RGF or CCF and any subsequent initiatives using City of Culture as a hook

Role that VE could play

Visit England can assist in several ways:

- In order to establish a full Destination Management Organisation, VE can extend advice and support as well as tools to get this re-established
- Development of a Destination Management Plan
- There is a vast amount of research available which can help to define key markets and future trends in the industry
- There is freely available resource such as the website, various links to specialist sites and a free image library available
- As a full DMO, Visit Hull or whichever organisation emerges, can participate in the Destination Management Forum and exchange best practice with other stakeholders

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