

Heritage Strategy Partnership Board

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Cllr Terry Fox
Leader, Sheffield City Council
Town Hall
Pinstone Street
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17 February 2022

Dear Cllr Fox

I write on behalf of the Heritage Strategy Partnership Board established to oversee delivery of the Heritage Strategy for the city (HS), published by Joined Up Heritage Sheffield in January 2021. We are pleased that it received the City Council's endorsement.

The Partnership Board welcomes the broad thrust of the Council's Strategic Vision for the City Centre (CCSV). Everyone knows now how great are the challenges to city and town centres and we welcome the Council's decision to develop a strategic approach to the many issues arising. We welcome the various principles and ambitions set out in the CCSV. There are also some important issues on which we seek an early discussion with you.

We can see a significant degree of synergy between the Ambitions of the CCSV and the Aims of the Heritage Strategy for Sheffield (HS) for which the Council made clear its support when the Strategy was published. We note that the CCSV does not mention the Heritage Strategy. The HS Aims, in particular those on diversity, the economy, health and wellbeing, and the environment, align with the CCSV and could make a major contribution to its Principles and Ambitions. Delivery of the two strategies in tandem will maximise the benefits to the city as a whole, as well as to wider City Council strategies.

However, the CCSV as it stands does not recognise the economic potential of heritage. A high quality, well-maintained historic environment is very influential in business location decisions, raising property values and attracting creative and high-productivity businesses. There are good examples of this in Sheffield, and the city needs, and has ample scope for, more. This is essential to ensure that Sheffield generates its full share of both the £2.4bn GVA contributed to the Yorkshire and Humber economy by the heritage sector, and the £1bn spent in the wider economy by heritage tourists.

Heritage is also of central relevance to policies designed to counter the climate crisis. The greater part of the Council's climate goals will have to be met through retrofitting older buildings, many of heritage value. New building, with its high up-front carbon cost, will make only a minor contribution, no matter how good its operational performance, and will still usually be higher in both carbon and monetary cost. Retro-fitting and conservation skills and technologies should form a large part of the

new, climate-friendly economy, and we believe Sheffield is ideally placed to be a leader in these. The CCSV's occasional references to re-use and retrofitting are welcome, but we need a strategic approach to these if we are both to reduce and conserve carbon. Contemplating the sacrifice of embodied carbon in buildings, along with their heritage value, really has no place in a climate crisis where sustainability must, as the Council has recognised, be a lead consideration.

Heritage has also a significant contribution to make to improving the health and well-being of Sheffield's citizens and to the effectiveness of the education of its children and young people. In a diverse city, diverse heritage narratives are important and need to be recognised.

The CCSV could we believe have benefited from being informed by the HS. Its attention to heritage is limited, with many significant gaps. Its consideration of this matter is largely restricted to Sheffield's industrial heritage, with a brief mention of football. "Iconic" buildings are seen in isolation, rather than as part of the total historic environment, and there are notable absences, such as the Old Town Hall. Moreover the city's successes in handling heritage go unmentioned: schemes such as that for Leah's Yard, and before that the Old Post Office, Butcher Works and the Leopold Street complex, illustrate our point about the potential of heritage – and there are others. A large part of the CCSV area is covered by eight Conservation Areas, with a ninth planned for Castlegate. These statutorily-protected assets ensure the quality of the historic environment, but are not mentioned. The CCSV looks to build on Sheffield's pre-eminence in creating public realm, relying on open space to facilitate health and wellbeing. It is the case that the historic environment also facilitates health and wellbeing, and more attention is needed to the buildings that delineate the space.

While the CCSV represents a positive start, we believe that the potential benefits can only be fully realised by giving heritage a broader and deeper role than is reflected in it at present. We urgently seek a meeting with you discuss how this can happen.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Valerie Bayliss

Chair, Heritage Strategy Partnership Board

Ellen Beardmore	Janet Ridler
Kate Brindley	Ian Rotherham
Chris Corker	Kim Streets
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