

# YORK

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

HEMINGWAYDESIGN

# **Introduction**

This document is designed to:

**a) provide information about the concept of ‘place brand’**

**b) demonstrate how the York narrative was developed**

**c) support the core values with additional key associations, brand copywriting and storytelling**

**d) provide suggestions on the future implementation of the York narrative**

# What is a place brand?

A 'place brand' influences how people think about a place. When someone says 'Paris' you think romance, when someone says 'Copenhagen' you think contentment – what do people think when we say 'York'? And is it helpful?

**A place brand aims to guide how people think about a place.**

Imagine if York were a person – what would they be like? What would they believe in, how would you interact with them, what could you learn from them?

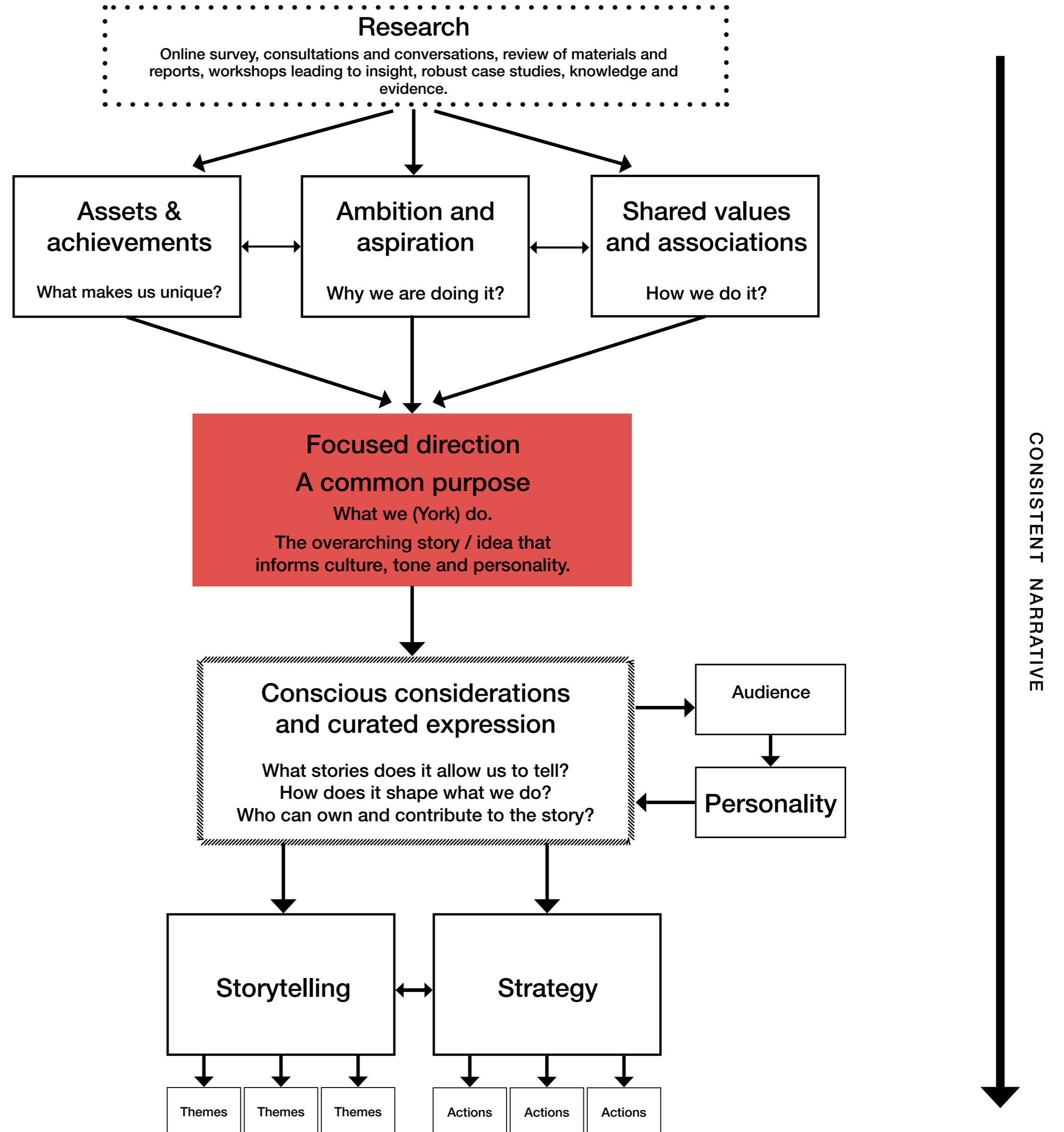
The place brand describes who York is.

The place brand is comprised of a series of associations that together create a perception.

If everyone in the community – local people, organisations and businesses – joins in supporting and reinforcing this shared view of York, then the city will gain a strong voice that helps it to stand out from competition. This can mean more funding, more brilliant people and businesses, and a community united behind common goals. All this means a better place to live, work, study and visit for everyone.

The place brand is contributes towards this.

# The model for a consistent narrative



# Research

Our research and engagement process.

For a place brand to be effective, it is vital it is based in fact. The research and engagement process aims to uncover a city's strengths and better understand areas it could improve.

To uncover the true essence of York we undertook an in-depth engagement process including a digital survey, round table discussions, a masterclass, one-on-one meetings, workshops in community centres, schools, universities and businesses and consultation boards in public spaces.

In total we have so far engaged with over...

**5,700**

...people to talk about York.

(Please see Appendix 2 for more detail)

# Stage 1 – key takeaways

Unlike many other places York, does not have an image 'problem'. There is nothing fundamentally negative to overcome. York is a textbook example of a strong brand: widely known, authentic and focused – and with this perception shared widely and deeply.

However it is a challenge that the associations are so strong, and they don't help build a diverse and broad understanding of the city. The beautiful, heritage tourism association is so dominant it leaves very little space for anything else – even with residents or those people who come to York frequently for work or leisure.

This is a manageable challenge - but it will be ineffective to change the perception people have of York without aligning any changes to the strong and dominant associations. There's an underlying narrative that needs to be told - a narrative of a city that reinvents itself - through more than 2000 years of

change, the people of York not only prevailed, but flourished. The heritage that can be experienced and admired in York is the backdrop to tell the stories of today and tomorrow - not distant from the past, but connected to it.

Rather than run market-facing campaigns, instead develop, build and embed a shared narrative and set of values in the activities of the city and let people see, feel and discover these so they can develop the new perceptions themselves.

A number of key narratives and values have clearly emerged and the early thinking is set out in the following pages.

Once developed and approved, the immediate priority for engagement with the narrative are the stakeholders, business partners and residents of York.

# Emerging narrative

3 overarching themes:

Heritage | Compact city | Leading the way

With sub-themes woven through:

Independence | Environment and sustainability

Socially aware | Innovation | Creativity

Quality of life | Connectivity

# Emerging value 1 - **history and heritage**

## **OUR THINKING**

There is no doubt that York's current primary asset is history and heritage. It is the backdrop - both visually and ideologically - to everything that happens in the city. But on its own, it is not enough.

To move forward, heritage assets (buildings, events, attractions, stories) must be relevant to both the present and the future. History can become a medium through which to tell modern stories about the city. 2000 years of human stories have led the city to where it is today.

## **EXAMPLE SUPPORTING QUOTES FROM CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

"The history of York is the history of England. The city walls. The lack of tall buildings. Where streets are gates, gates are bars, bars are pubs. Where else can you see a Viking or Roman shopping without anyone batting an eyelid?"

"I also love the Minster bells on a Sunday morning, it's like a connection with time, back through all the centuries that bells have been ringing out across this town from this wonderful building."

"York's mix of heritage and its heritage offer is unique and we should not be ashamed to shout about it. This does not mean that York cannot be cutting edge or exciting... it should continue to do this by creating partnerships in the city that are truly that"



## Emerging value 2 - a beautiful compact city

York has all the benefits of city living - access to culture, transport connections, educational and business opportunities and vibrant communities - whilst remaining very much on a human scale as a small city.

It is compact, low-rise, walkable, cyclable, liveable and relatable. With millions of visitors a year and a population of 200k, it still feels intimate and personal.

You are always likely to bump into someone you know, and friendly locals are happy to chat to tourists. This personal interaction creates a strong sense of community which in turn creates a social awareness.

The intimacy of the city has been a significant factor in creating an atmosphere of collaboration, support and localism with hundreds of voluntary groups, exciting social enterprises and impactful local housing associations.

# Emerging value 2 - a beautiful compact city

## EXAMPLE SUPPORTING QUOTES FROM CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

“York is an amazing place to live and work, it is like a large village/community and because of this has a unique character that larger cities like Leeds & Manchester struggle to re-create... it’s beneficial to the creative and technology sectors, it complements their “campus” type approach to business.”

“I think York is unique in that it has a lot of the positives of a big city... but it has the warmth and closeness of a town. It’s one of the reasons I love living here - everything is close together and there’s stuff to do and visit, but it’s not got the overwhelming and intimidating quality that big cities can have.”

“We need to understand the deep significance of the human scale of this city... this human scale is translated into a strong humane quality to society in York. Built on its quaker heritage, York has a strong social conscience, individuality and independent spirit”

“It’s a small enough city that you can get anywhere and a big enough city that there is always something exciting going on.”

# Emerging value 3 - leading the way

With two universities, York is a city of great thinkers and creative minds. Excellent centres for research have led to groundbreaking developments in biotech, digital and rail tech.

Thinking differently, creatively and independently led to the designation as UNESCO City of Media Arts. The city punches above its weight for independent retail and hospitality.

Recently, agricultural researchers in York have developed a new hybrid plant to help in the treatment of malaria, with the potential to save millions of lives around the world.

## **EXAMPLE SUPPORTING QUOTES FROM CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

“...with the digital infrastructure and sustainable transport ambitions, York should capitalise on this. The city is large

enough to be a genuine test bed, whilst its location means it is Independent and distinct.”

“I think York’s hard-won status as the first UNESCO UK City of Media Arts is a lens through which we could reimagine York’s education, its landmark developments, it’s retention of talent, it’s evening economy, its relationship to heritage, it’s support for business and its international reputation. It’s hard to think of a more succinctly powerful story than York being known internationally as a city at the intersection of creativity, technology and heritage”

“Cultural highlights for local people include the Festival of Ideas, the Arts Barge festival, and some of the wonderful independent theatre that makes it to York. We are also treated to a fantastic range of restaurants and cafes.”

# Developing the narrative

After further workshops, the core values were developed into a final narrative. The result is a set of values and story for York that its people and those working in and on behalf of the city can understand, enthuse about, see themselves reflected in and effectively advocate.

It's a narrative that is wide-ranging enough to be flexible. It's clear enough to be useful. Well evidenced and robust enough to convince the head and emotive enough to engage the heart.

The final York narrative has been developed based upon three elements:

- **Assets and achievements**

What assets does York have? What has happened there?  
What's happening now? What makes it unique

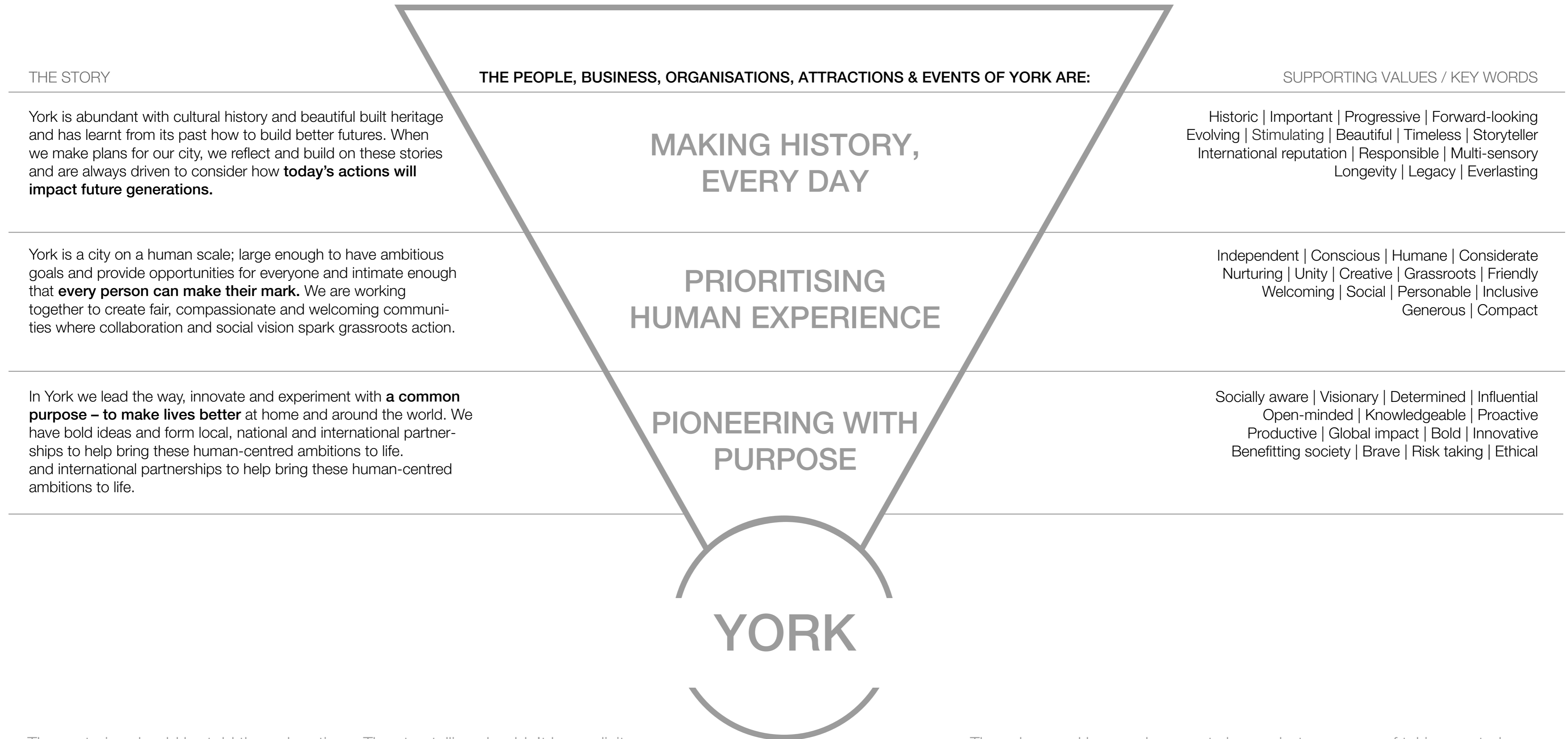
- **Ambition and aspiration**

Now we know what York is - what does it want to be

- **Shared values and associations**

A set of values that inform behaviours and influence actions that the place and its people can adopt.

# The filter process



These stories should be told through actions. The storytelling shouldn't be explicit, but their essence should be woven into all communications; should be present in all events and projects and be a foundation of public-facing campaigns.

The values and keywords are not slogans but are a way of taking control over York's key associations. Taking these core values into account in all actions means presenting a united front that can create a powerful place brand.

## Core value 1

MAKING  
HISTORY,  
EVERY DAY

## The story/narrative

World history can be told through the stories of York(1), from Vikings to Romans to Medieval monarchs, through revolutionary tales to modern day discoveries. When the Minster bells ring out on a Sunday morning you're reminded that they've been doing so for 600 years, and this sense of continuance is everywhere as you wander York and its enduring surrounding communities.

Ours is a beautiful place where every day experiences become something worth savouring. Two rivers weave a trail of water, wildlife and green space through a timeless city where bold modern design takes inspiration from centuries of architectural experimentation(2) – with only delicate spires and ancient towers on the horizon.

1. <http://www.historyofyork.org.uk/timeline>

2. <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/02/19/make-architects-hiscox-office-building-york-soviet-rocket/>



# Core value 1

MAKING  
HISTORY,  
EVERY DAY

## The story/narrative

The City of York aims to be truly sustainable(1) – both in the sense of being environmentally aware and considering its impact(2) and by being built to stand the test of time. This comes from an understanding of the past – the city walls(3) stand as a physical testament to the fact that building carefully on good foundations is the key to longevity. The actions of York as a modern city reflect this – it is a city that has learnt from its past how to build better futures(4), which is why York has taken action to declare a climate emergency and commit to being a carbon neutral city by 2030(5).

1. [www.york.ac.uk/research/themes/environmental-sustainability](http://www.york.ac.uk/research/themes/environmental-sustainability)

2. [oneplanetyork.co.uk](http://oneplanetyork.co.uk)

3. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York\\_city\\_walls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York_city_walls)

4. [iknowfood.org](http://iknowfood.org)

5. [www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/17521465.york-declares-climate-emergency-after-young-people-demand-action](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/17521465.york-declares-climate-emergency-after-young-people-demand-action)

## Core value 1

MAKING  
HISTORY,  
EVERY DAY

## Supporting values

Historic

Storyteller

Important

International reputation

PROGressive

responsible

Evolving

Multi-sensory

Stimulating

Longevity

Beautiful

Legacy

Timeless

everlasting



# Making history, every day

*Key themes & evidence (i.e. why it's "on brand" for York)*



## 1. The Shambles

Compact medieval centre, unexplored snickets and architecture suddenly transporting residents / visitors to a completely different century.

Even a long-term resident can find new hidden corners and undiscovered spaces in their city, and independent retail is creating new experiences and opportunities for small businesses and curious consumers.



## 2. Influence base for The North

First the Romans came, then the Vikings and York established itself as a power base for The North, being the seat of the Council of the North in the 16th and 17th centuries. During the medieval period York was England's second city.

York later became a centre for UK railway expansion during the industrial revolution and is now one of the best connected cities in the North.



## 3. 2019 - York declares a climate emergency and commits to become a carbon neutral city by 2030.

As a result of public campaigning led by younger generations, the city committed to bold climate action for a better future for its citizens.



# Making history, every day

*Key themes & evidence (i.e. why it's "on brand" for York)*



## 4. The UK's First Gigabit City

York was chosen to be the site of CityFibre's first city-wide full-fibre infrastructure project and now stands as a flagship example of a Gigabit City. In this historic city, residents can now access internet at up to 100x faster than the UK average.



## 5. Nestle Product Technology Centre

Henri Nestle began developing new dairy products to tackle infant mortality rates in 1867, and a global dairy and confectionary business evolved from that starting step. In 1988 the company moved into the site of the original Rowntree factory. Nestle in York is home to the Product Technology Centre - the company's leading global research and development centre where 170 people now work to innovate in nutrition, health, sustainability and food technology every day.



## 6. National Railway Museum Development

The award-winning National Railway Museum in the heart of York exists to tell the story of rail transport in Britain and its impact on society and is about to undergo an ambitious redevelopment to ensure that it continues to be culturally relevant to a modern York. The plans include a 'Wonderlab' which will explore the future of engineering and aim to inspire a new generation to imagine the future of rail travel.



## Core value 2

# PRIORITISING HUMAN EXPERIENCE

## The story

The world needs places like York because of the human scale that comes from being a relatively small city but with universal impact – combining the assets of a modern metropolitan city with the community feel of a Yorkshire town. Here you can cycle to school, run along the riverbank to work or walk Roman roads(1) to get around, and no matter whether you live in the centre or one of the vibrant neighbourhoods supporting community living in our city(2), you can feel a part of the whole.

The towers of the Minster and the bends of the river help you to navigate even when you lose 21st century life down narrow medieval snickleways; shopping and eating from local independents as well as internationally renowned names; stopping to chat to your neighbours and finding world-class culture(3) and history at every turn.

1. <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/york/vol1/pp1-4>

2. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/mar/29/high-street-closed-betting-shops-york-back-from-dead>

3. <https://www.asff.co.uk/>

## Core value 2

# PRIORITISING HUMAN EXPERIENCE

## The story

In a big city it can be easy to feel anonymous, but the intimate environment of York fosters social awareness, where people look after each other and work for a greater good(1). York really is a society of friends with an impressive number of volunteering groups(2) working to build our supportive, sustainable communities.

The human scale of our city helps to create a welcoming, compassionate and collaborative community where visionary minds come together to share ideas.

1. <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/17467559.we-will-keep-all-libraries-open-with-paid-staff-in-every-one-yorks-libraries-chief/>

2. <https://www.livewellyork.co.uk/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pagelD=4202>

## Core value 2

PRIORITISING  
HUMAN  
EXPERIENCE

## Supporting values

Conscious

Friendly

Humane

Welcoming

Considerate

Social

Nurturing

Personable

Unity

Inclusive

Creative

Generous

Grassroots

A compact city



# Prioritising human experience

*Key themes & evidence (i.e. why it's "on brand" for York)*



## 1. Caring - kindness of people

Grass-roots dynamism and active voluntary sector - many people reaching out to help others in need, spanning differences in race, culture, income, faith. History of volunteering, social action and engaged citizens, which place it in a unique position, to respond to some of the challenges in society today. Brilliant network of community groups, social enterprises and charities.



## 2. The Quaker approach

York Quakerism helped develop a liberal reforming strand within the national tradition. The Quakers in York played an active role in the improvement of working and living conditions, not least in the establishment of Adult Schools, electoral reform, health improvements and slum clearance, with Seebohm Rowntree's poverty study in York playing a key role in the establishment of the UK Poverty Act.



## 3. Quality of life and personal wellbeing

Voted Sunday Times Best to live 2018 and Best in The North 2019.

There is wildlife, green space and rivers in the city centre and the peaceful Yorkshire countryside can be enjoyed only 20 minutes away.



# Prioritising human experience

*Key themes & evidence (i.e. why it's "on brand" for York)*



## 4. YORspace Community Housing Project

A community-lead initiative to build a solution to York's housing shortage.

Financially and environmentally sustainable homes designed to meet the real needs of residents and foster a sense of community.

An innovative mutual home ownership model to guarantee homes stay permanently affordable.



## 5. York Central

York Central will include vibrant and distinctive residential neighbourhoods, cultural spaces, and a high-quality commercial quarter powering York's economy into the future and helping to provide the homes the city needs, as well as thoughtful, useable public spaces.



## 6. A compact city

At just 34km<sup>2</sup>, the built up urban area of York is much smaller than regional centres like Leeds (487km<sup>2</sup>) or Greater Manchester (630km<sup>2</sup>) or even comparable heritage cities such as Norwich (62km<sup>2</sup>) or Cambridge (42km<sup>2</sup>).



## Core value 3

# PIONEERING WITH PURPOSE

## The story

York leads the way, innovates, and experiments<sup>(1)</sup> all towards one simple goal – to improve lives.

In York, we know life can be better – at home and around the world – and we act to make this happen. We have bold ideas and form national and international partnerships to help bring these to life.

Our city's reputation is built on social and industrial innovation. We have a history of embarking on missions to solve issues that are negatively impacting on people's lives and York continues to live these values through pioneering work that happens every day in laboratories and research spaces across the city.

1. <http://yorkfestivalofideas.com/>



## Core value 3

# PIONEERING WITH PURPOSE

## The story

York drives social change(1) that results in national and global progress. We are a city of human-centred thinkers and problem solvers.

We're leading the way in meditech by carrying out the world's first tendon implants(2); helping to save millions of lives by developing ground-breaking antimalarial treatments(3) and working on turning plant waste into biofuel(4) to name just a few current projects.

York has a track record of being socially conscious - if an idea or innovation, design or decision, product or project doesn't in some way positively impact lives, we haven't reached our goal.

1. <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/business/news/14128209.york-firm-to-revolutionise-tendon-repair-surgery/>

2. <https://www.york.ac.uk/biology/news-events/other/supplyofplant-basedmalariatreatment/>

3. <https://www.york.ac.uk/biology/centrefornovelagriculturalproducts/research/bioenergy/>

4. <http://www.historyofyork.org.uk/themes/georgian/the-retreat>

## Core value 3

PIONEERING  
WITH  
PURPOSE

## Supporting values

Visionary

Global impact

Independent

Bold

Determined

Innovative

Influential

Benefitting society

Open-minded

Brave

Knowledgeable

Risk-taking

Proactive

Ethical

Productive



# Pioneering with purpose

*Key themes & evidence (i.e. why it's "on brand" for York)*



## 1. Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust

Established over 100 years ago by Joseph Rowntree to provide housing in communities and to understand the root causes of social problems. Then: New Earswick - Community and housing for workers planned and built by Joseph Rowntree in 1904 as a self-governing garden village. Now: Derwenthorpe - "What all housing developments should aspire to" ~ The RIBA Journal



## 2. The Retreat

The Retreat at York led the world in the humane treatment of the mentally ill based instead on the Quaker principles of self-control, compassion and respect. This radical approach began a series of reforms and greater understanding in mental health in the nineteenth century and psychiatry textbooks today still refer to the Retreat.



## 3. NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence)

Improving health and social care through evidence-based guidance

York University credited as influential / founding partner: *A Terrible Beauty*, *A Short History of NICE*



# Pioneering with purpose

*Key themes & evidence (i.e. why it's "on brand" for York)*



## 4. UNESCO City of Media Arts (2014)

York won the designation as the UK's first City of Media Arts in 2014, in recognition of the globally important and pioneering work of the creative and media sectors in the city. The York UNESCO City of Media Arts plan includes working to double the size of York's creative economy and increase inclusive engagement in the arts for the benefit of everyone in our society, as evidenced by Arts Council England research.



## 5. Centre for Novel Agricultural Production (CNAP)

CNAP work on 'biology to benefit society'. This York University-based research centre use world-leading bioscience to develop more sustainable supply chains and creative uses for agricultural waste to support York's growing bioeconomy. Their work aims to solve societal problems in health, clean technologies and bioenergy.



## 6. Food and Environment Research Agency

FERA work to protect food consumers through pioneering thinking in agri-food science. They lead the way in working to detect emerging threats in plant, environmental and animal health & help small food & drink businesses in Yorkshire to innovate and develop. Fera Science Ltd (Fera), pioneers in original thinking applied, driving innovative products and techniques to identify & detect emerging threats earlier across agri-food science.

# York timeline

The city's existing narrative is clearly dominated by history. York shouldn't fight history (an impossible task) but it's our view that...

## HISTORY IS WHY YORK IS LIKE IT IS; NOT WHAT YORK IS.

We have created a timeline that tracks events where York's longstanding core values have been formed, fine-tuned and engrained in the city's DNA then connects them to the city's number one asset and association; history (i.e. time - then, now and in the future).

The timeline marks some historical events that have shaped the city we see today.

It is a storytelling tool that sequences the moments in time where York has demonstrated its core values through history and some opportunities (we currently know of) where it can prove them in the future.

Using the brand filter will provide an opportunity to sense check recent events and test whether they align with these brand values.

The values can make York's heritage assets relevant to today and in the future. Making its citizens and visitors proud of York's role in the country and across the globe.



**Alms Houses (936)**

The very first dedicated almshouse or hospital in England; designed to accommodate the very poor, elderly and infirm people of the city.

Example of human-centred / benefit society / progressive attitude



**The Ancient Society of York Florists (1768)**

The oldest horticultural society in the world was founded in York and is still going strong today with four shows a year.

Example of new ideas / self expression / international



**Lindley Murray (1795)**

Author of an English Grammar book written for a Quaker school in York that became the principal book used in schools throughout England and the United States for generations.



700

800

900

1000

1100

1200

1300

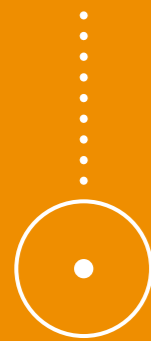
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1800



**Alcuin of York (c.735-804)**

A local scholar and headmaster of the Cathedral school of York; considered to be the most learned man in the West. Amongst his innovations was the invention of the first form of writing to use upper- and lower-case letters.

Example of thought leadership / setting the benchmark / benefiting society / intelligence / international reputation

**The Bar Convent (1686)**

England's oldest living convent. Founded by Frances Bedingfield, who purchased the small plot of land under an alias, as a school for girls at a time of religious intolerance and persecution for Catholics.

Example of making a difference / compassionate / selfless / making a difference



**John Goodricke (1781)**

Astronomer who laid down the foundations for all future measurements of the universe





**The Retreat (1796)**  
 Quakers pioneer humane mental care at one of the most internationally important institutions for the care and treatment of mental health patients. The retreat is still providing specialist mental healthcare to this day.

**Yorkshire Philosophical Society (1822)**  
 Formed to pursue the study of natural sciences. The British Association for the Advancement of Science (now the British Science Association) was formed with the Society's help.

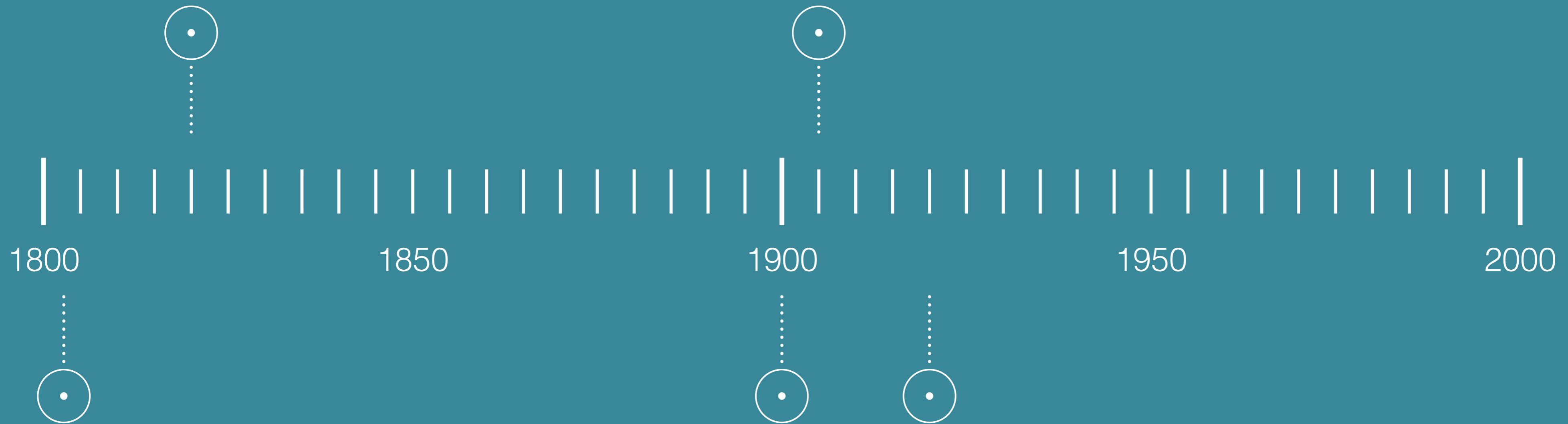


**New Earswick (1904)**  
 Community and housing for workers planned and built by Joseph Rowntree as a self-governing garden village. The principal was that good quality housing could allow people to lead fulfilled lives and strength of community at a time when working class slum living had become the norm in most industrialised cities.

**The Poverty Line (1901)**  
 A term conceived by Seebohm Rowntree that had a far-reaching impact and helped influence the development of a range of social and welfare reforms such as the Old Age Pensions Act in 1908, the National Insurance Act in 1911 and ultimately culminated in the establishment of the NHS.



**Tang Hall (1920)**  
 One of the first state-aided housing schemes to create 'Homes fit for Heroes' returning from the first world war.







City of Media Arts (2014)  
Designated the UK's first UNESCO City of Media Arts, galvanised and supported by the Guild of Media Arts.

Example of new ideas / self expression / international reputation

Meditech (2015)  
The world's first tendon implants using technology developed in York.

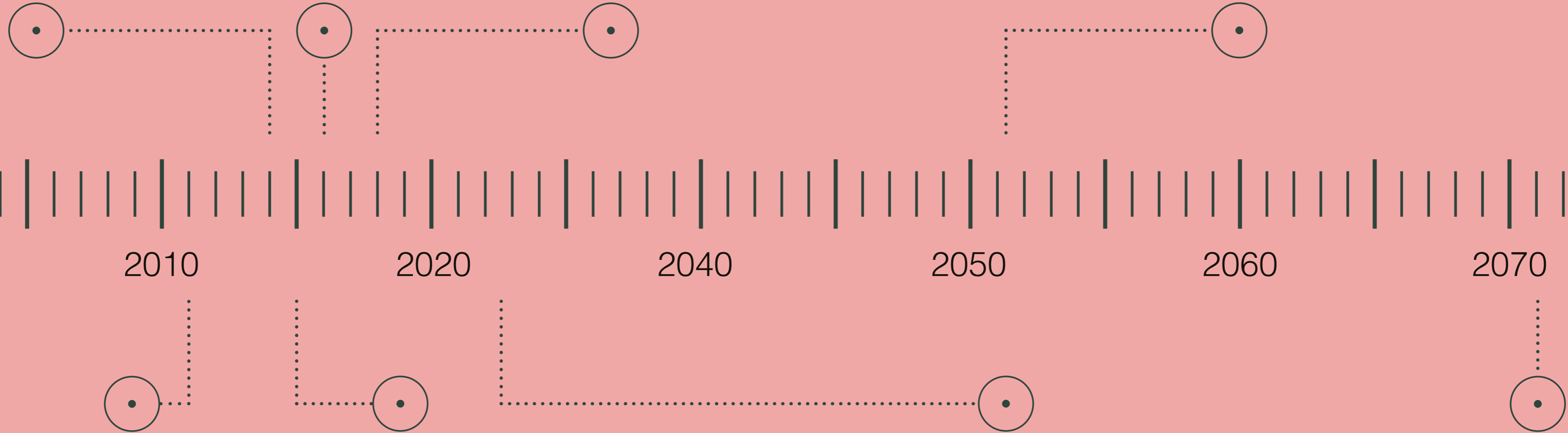
Example of thought leadership / setting the benchmark / benefiting society / intelligence / international reputation

Gigabit City (2018)  
The UK's first gigabit city with city-wide full-fibre infrastructure.

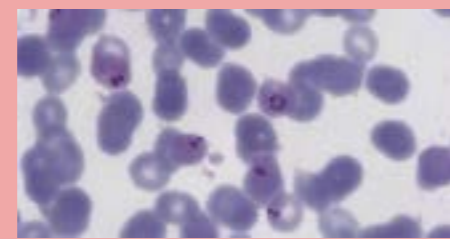
York Mediale (2018)  
International media arts festival bringing extraordinary installations and world premiere performances to York.



York Central  
"Vibrant and distinctive residential neighbourhoods, cultural spaces, and a high-quality commercial quarter powering York's economy into the future and helping to provide the homes the city needs."



Festival of Ideas (2011)  
A partnership between York's major institutions with the objective is to enhance York's reputation as a city of ideas and innovation through offering the highest calibre of public events to local, regional and visitor audiences.



Ground-Breaking Antimalarial Treatments (2015)  
Work in York is contributing to the sustainable production of plant-based antimalarial treatment that helped slash malaria mortality rates in Africa and Asia, saving millions of lives

Example of thought leadership / setting the benchmark / benefiting society / intelligence / international reputation



Railway Museum (2025)  
£50 million transformation of the museum opens on the 50th anniversary.

York 2000 Anniversary in 2071



# Recommendation

Create an online home for the York Narrative and filter.

The filter process is explained on page 5 of the York Narrative booklet.

We recommend that a website is developed to serve as a digital home for the narrative, including a digital filter process to test proposed activities against the core values.

This digital filter would take the form of a set of guidelines and checklists to help people develop their own stories, whilst maintaining a clear value and an overall coherent message - supporting local businesses and individuals to always be 'on brand'

The online destination will be a portal for people to learn about latest city brand insights and thoughts on the brand positioning of York - its reputation, performance and appeal as a city to live, visit, work and invest in.

The portal will contain the most important elements of the place branding strategy including vision, values and goals as well as direction (in the form of a simple test) to find out whether your ideas and initiatives are 'on brand'. From facts to photos, videos and copywriting, the portal will hold everything you need to make decisions in one place.

References:

Oslo - [oslobrandbox.no](http://oslobrandbox.no)

Brabant - [www.brabantbrandbox.com](http://www.brabantbrandbox.com)

Liverpool - [www.marketingliverpool.co.uk/toolkit](http://www.marketingliverpool.co.uk/toolkit)