



Voices Gloucester is committed to supporting dialogue in the city about our history and heritage. The questions below were submitted by audience members in response to the talk and discussion about the Gloucester's regeneration journey in September 2022, and the answers in blue were provided by Paul James, former leader of the council, as a reflection of his understanding of events.

1. Seeing that a big portion of investment into Gloucester's regeneration comes from the private sector, what is Gloucester's unique selling point to these investors?

The city's heritage and the potential it has for an uplift in value.

2. Did it make a difference being a HERITAGE regeneration company?

I would say yes. It provided a focus for regeneration and many listed buildings were brought back into use.

3. Heritage projects appear better managed compared to commercial partners who appear not to repay investment?

Not sure what is behind this question. The main heritage projects in the city (Project Pilgrim/ Llanthony Priory/De Crypt) were all well-managed, but commercial investment is needed for many other regeneration projects in the city.

4. Trusts (e.g. success of Llanthony) appear to deliver projects within budget and with imagination/high quality finish.

Agreed, but as above question, Trusts wouldn't have capacity to undertake every regeneration project in the city.

5. Did Gloucester Renaissance achieve its billion pound target?

No, because it ended a couple of years before it expected to, but overall the £1 billion figure has been significantly exceeded.

6. Has consideration been given to a new justice centre in the city? HMCTS owned land opposite the magistrates court on Great Western Road. Considering Crown Court is NOT fit for purpose, no disabled access etc and the Cheltenham magistrates court is in poor repair....

City MP Richard Graham did promote a justice centre at Blackfriars but it didn't gain traction with the Government. At some point the Crown Court issue will need to be addressed.

7. How much community consultation took place?

During the GHURC there was a lot of community involvement as they had a member of staff dedicated to it. When responsibility reverted to the City Council there wasn't the same level of resources. There was consultation for example on the Regeneration Strategy in 2016 and on individual projects, e.g. the bus station and Kings Square.

8. Such a pity that odd, unlovely buildings have been left next to new developments – e.g. Pizza takeaway next to Walkinshaw Court in Northgate Street and Thai restaurant near new Whitefriars flats.

This all comes down to ownership. I understand the owners of the pizza building in Northgate Street were made an offer but rejected it.

9. What can you tell us about what is going on at the Fleece?

Some issues with the Council's development partner were reported in the media. The Council was undertaking some investigative works as part of the Westgate High Street Heritage Action Zone. £6 million for The Fleece was awarded under the Government's Levelling Up Fund.

10. Are there going to be stained glass windows as planned in the new bus station?

Yes, still due to be delivered but not by Tom Denny or his wife, also a stained glass artist, as light levels not right. Council says due to be installed early in 2023.

11. How do we bring Alney Island into the City – links across the river

GHURC proposed a bridge near the former Countrywide store and a sculpture park on Alney Island but it was rejected because of flooding and nature concerns. It needs to link with development of former prison site and downgrading of The Quay in traffic terms.

12. What is the investment into affordable housing? Why is it repeatedly reduced?

The Council has a policy to secure affordable housing on developments, but it can be reduced when developments are not financially viable. Housing Associations also deliver affordable housing with the help of Government grants. For example, Rooftop Housing have invested well over £70 million in the city over the last decade or so.

13. Bringing people back to live in city – access roads and houses above shops

Agreed. This helps to give the city centre vibrancy and give buildings new uses given the contraction of physical retail

14. Why does regeneration not make more of Gloucester's history?

I'd argue that it does make a lot of the city's history e.g. bringing historic buildings back into use such as the Docks warehouses, St Michael's Tower, Llanthony Priory, 66 Westgate Street etc. Some projects have involved historic interpretation e.g. Project Pilgrim. However, there is always more we can do.

15. Has there ever been a plan for public art to be part of regeneration?

There was a 'Plan for Art' in the GHURC days but even then it was considered to be unaffordable. Public Art is delivered through developments where possible e.g. Greyfriars scheme and bus station stained glass window.

16. Are there plans for the current train station to be upgraded? (building, not the tracks)

My understanding is that the current project, which involves upgrading the station forecourt and making the subway safer and more accessible, also includes improvements to the station building.

17. Very upset at prospect of 'unapologetically tall' tower block proposed for Downings development in Docks. We should retain the roofline of the original docks warehouses. One tower will look like a sore thumb, but may also open the door for more!

Representations need to be made to the City Council through the planning process. The challenge at Downings is financial viability.

18. When the new Forum is completed, will the area of the old tattoo shop and car park be regenerated?

Spread Eagle Court is under separate ownership and not part of The Forum scheme. The owners did have a development scheme for it, but it seems to have gone quiet and I'm not sure of the latest position.

19. Public art-works and their neglect

See answer to Q21. Maintenance is always an issue and increasingly difficult when council budgets are under pressure.

20. How can we pick up the work started by the URC on a public art policy to inject colour and art into the public realm?

See answers to questions 21 & 25. Beyond that it's a matter for the Council.

21. Can Kings Square save the city given the move of major shops away from the city in recent years?

Not on its own. The city centre needs new uses, including the City Campus in the old Debenhams and the new digital and cyber quarter at The Forum. The gate streets need attention too, recognising that the amount of retail needed has shrunk and won't return to previous levels. There needs to be a proper plan to 'curate' the gate streets with new uses. As for the Square, it needs an active programme of events to make the most of it.

22. Artworks on Westgate and elsewhere – no interpretation?

Agree that interpretation is important and can often be done fairly inexpensively.

23. Can we regenerate areas outside city centre? E.g. Colwell School sold off cheaply has had two fires and a cannabis farm and is now owned by someone living in Dubai. Colwell School and Hatherley School in Barton both ear-marked for flats. Barton has had 3 murders in 3 years – can we consider returning both sites to community use?

Agree it is important not just to focus on the city centre. A planning application has been submitted for conversion of Colwell to apartments and the Hatherley site is now under offer and likely to go for housing. There are other community buildings in the Barton area (e.g. Trust Centre, Friendship Café) and others have struggled e.g. Barton Community Centre & Olympus/Picturedrome Theatre. The challenge is for them to be financially sustainable.

[The Highs and Lows of Gloucester's Regeneration](#) was an event held on 13th September 2022 and was a partnership between [Gloucester City Council](#), [The Gloucester Culture Trust](#) and [Voices Gloucester](#).



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