

## **Peterborough Embankment Masterplan**

The long-awaited Embankment Masterplan has at long last been revealed to public gaze. Is it “a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a new city riverside...” or a curate’s egg, some of it good and some of it bad?

The Masterplan includes exciting developments of the area with an attractive Embankment Park and enhanced Riverside, a new ‘cultural hub’ around the Key Theatre and attractive plans for an open parkland style university campus. However, the Masterplan does contain an elephant in the room, an option for an Arena, a new home for POSH.

Inevitably media attention has centred on this element of the plan, which in the Masterplan is referred to as the flexibility to include an Arena “should it come forward”.

The Masterplan rightly accepts from the outset that an Arena cannot be sited near the south-east corner of the Embankment because the major loss of green space and the blocking of important views of the Cathedral and negative impact on the heritage setting of the cathedral which would be totally unacceptable and attract national opposition. The Masterplan option pushes the Arena to the north, away from the river, and this location clearly has very major problems.

The Arena option takes a substantial section of land from the University campus as well a large additional area of green space to the south of the athletics track. The Civic Society is reluctant to accept the removal of the athletics track but can see that it could be viewed as a trade-off to enable the longer-term aim of creating a University of Peterborough which is open to all at all times. The relocation of the Athletics club to a new home in the City before the existing track is removed would be essential and would incur substantial expense.

The proposed Arena would be uncomfortably close to the campus buildings and totally alter the parkland setting of the University. The University buildings would be overwhelmed by the height and bulk of the Arena (approximately 140 x 160 m and 23.5m high), 10 m higher than the current University buildings. Large crowds of up to 20,000 would swamp the University area and seriously impair the functioning of the campus. The images in the Masterplan showing precedent sites for such a tight relationship between academic buildings and a sports stadium are misleading as all the sites have substantially more separation of stadium and academic buildings and very different setting than that on the Embankment.

Pedestrian/cycle access to the Arena is said to be separate from the university but the main car parking for the Embankment area is planned to be at a new transport hub and multi-storey car park in Wellington Street to the north and the natural route to the Arena would be through the University campus. Even if pedestrians could be diverted around the campus it would be impractical and probably dangerous to try to corral large crowds in the narrow circulation space around the Arena shown on the Masterplan option.

The Arena would also block high quality views of the cathedral and the huge bulk of the Arena would be a major detraction from the cathedral setting and remaining

