

**BUSINESS
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Cliff Sewell or Phil Hill
Omega Court, 364 Cemetery Road,
Sheffield S11 8FT
0114 268 3313
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Honing the competitive edge

OVER recent years Sheffield city centre has witnessed an unprecedented level of change to its physical character.

Exciting new buildings and urban spaces together with high quality public realm works are creating the momentum to help transform the area into the successful mix of retail, leisure, offices and homes that form the core of a modern vibrant city.

Sheffield set itself the ambitious target to become a significant European city and to be one of the UK's top five cities when measured against recognised competitive index criteria.

However, when analysed against other European cities, Sheffield is currently ranked 271st (out of 434) and of the UK cities only Liverpool is ranked below Sheffield.

Despite all the investment and work undertaken, over the past ten years it is disappointing to note the little overall change to these relative positions.

The reasons for Sheffield's historical below-average performance have been well documented over the years but can generally be linked to a reluctance of both industry and political leadership to recognise the need for continuous change and investment to compete in a rapidly changing global economy.

Many lessons have been learnt, the most important of all being that Sheffield PLC benefits most from the private and public sector working constructively together on



JON BOND, co-founder of Bond Bryan architects and member of Sheffield Property and Regeneration Committee, looks at how Sheffield can become more competitive and attractive

investment initiatives.

The development of the city centre has been directed from the vision of the major interventions, envisaged in the city centre masterplan document, linked together with an integrated approach to delivering the high quality public realm works.

Much of this work has been successfully completed with the e-campus, retail quarter

and the next phases of "heart of the city" soon to commence.

The results have been and will be a transformation of the city centre. But this is only the start. Whilst everyone involved should be congratulated on their achievements the true success will be in maintaining the momentum and attracting new and substantial private investment into the city.

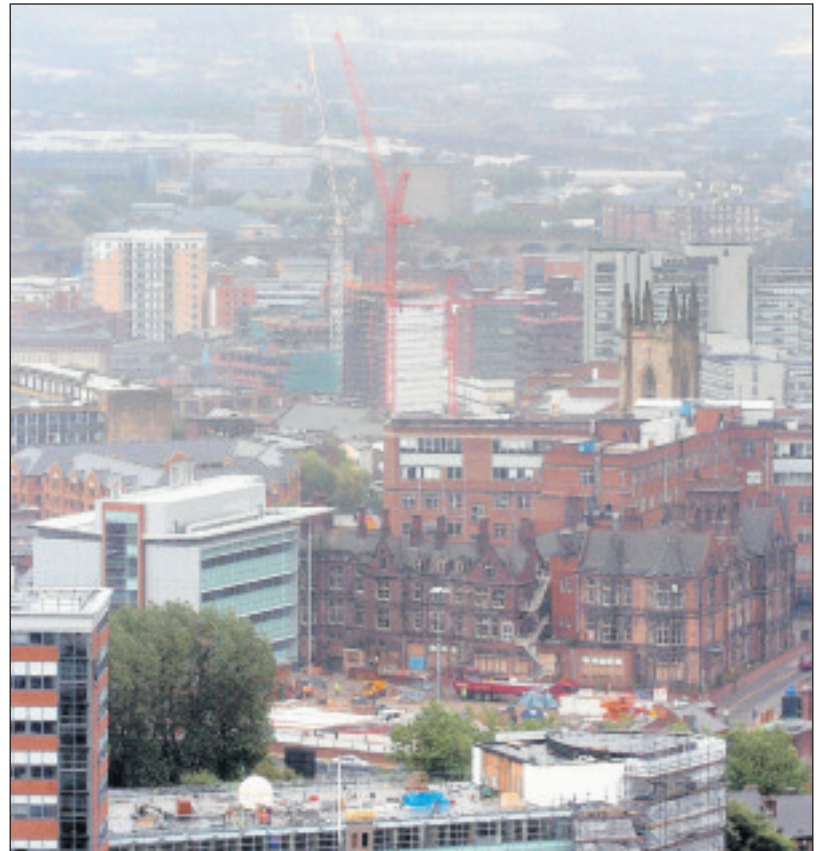
With this challenge very much in mind the city has appointed EDAAW to:

- Review the existing masterplan and strategic projects;
- Respond to changing context/opportunities;
- Help move from recovery to transformation;
- Identify new priorities; and
- Create a compelling delivery plan

EDAAW has already begun the consultation process to start to understand the challenges and opportunities facing the city and to engage with interested parties, including SPARC, to answer the question: How to make the city more competitive and attractive?

The Chamber strongly supports this initiative.

The life of a city is hugely complex requiring a continuous balancing of social economic and cultural requirements. For the city to move forward and to compete on a national and European stage will require above all ambitious, directed and visionary political leadership supported by all those people who believe in the ambition to see Sheffield achieve its full potential.



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