

Report of the Director of City Strategy

YORK NORTHWEST AREA ACTION PLAN

Summary

1. At the meeting of the Executive on the 12 September 2006, Members agreed that a joint Area Action Plan (AAP) covering both the York Central and British Sugar sites should be progressed. This joint AAP will be taken forward as the York Northwest Area Action Plan. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the joint Area Action Plan and to seek agreement to a programme for the preparation of the AAP. The Area Action Plan will form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and will be included in the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) to be submitted to the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber in March this year.
2. Work which had been undertaken in preparation for the York Central Area Action Plan will now be transferred into the larger Area Action Plan. This work includes the work carried out on a Consultation Strategy for the Issues and Options stage and a Scoping Report for a Sustainability Appraisal. Consultation took place between July and August this year on both the draft Scoping Report and the draft Consultation Strategy.
3. The local Development Framework (LDF) Working Group meeting on 1st February considered a report on the York Northwest AAP (minutes of this meeting are attached in Annex 6). Members are asked to note the feedback received on the Consultation Strategy and the documents that have been produced as a result of this. Consultation on the Scoping Report for the Sustainability Appraisal will be reported back to Members as part of the wider Scoping Report for the York Northwest AAP.

Background

4. At the Executive meeting on 7 March 2006, Members agreed to the preparation of an Area Action Plan for York Central.
5. The first stage of work, the Issues and Options document, commenced in the summer with planning consultants, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) engaged to undertake the work. Specialist sub consultants, Social Regeneration Consultants (SRC), were engaged to carry out the first stage of public consultation relating to this. Yorkshire Forward agreed to provide funding to enhance the Council's planning capacity in undertaking this work.

6. At the LDF Working Group on the 31 July 2006 Members considered a report incorporating 3 documents, a draft Scoping Report for a Sustainability Appraisal, a draft structure for the Issues and Option document and draft Community Consultation Strategy relating to the preparation of the Area Action Plan for York Central. The documents related to the production of the first stage of work, the Issues and Options document. The proposed timescale for the work was to bring the draft Issues and Options document to a meeting of the Executive in October 2006, with public consultation on this being held between November and January 2007.
7. At a meeting with the Council on 8 September 2006, British Sugar confirmed that their refining operation in York would close before the end of 2007 and expressed a willingness to work with the Council to ensure that their site was used effectively for the benefit of the City.
8. In a report to the Executive on 12 September 2006, Members agreed that issues arising from the closure of the British Sugar site in Plantation Drive should be included in the emerging planning context for York Central. Members thereby resolved to reaffirm the commitment to the development of the York Central site and instructed officers to prepare a joint Area Action Plan covering both sites. This would allow for the development of the 2 sites in a mutually compatible way and to an agreed timetable. In view of this the community consultation, which had been planned for the autumn of 2006, will now take place this year.
9. On 12 December the Council met with Associated British Foods (ABF), the parent company for British Sugar, to discuss the future planning framework for the area. It is understood that Associated British Foods intend to engage consultants to advise them on the development of the site. ABF have also indicated that the de-contamination of the site is likely to take approximately 18 months.

Area Action Plan Programme

10. A programme for the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the York Northwest area has been prepared. This is attached in Annex 1. The key milestones in this are
 - Issues and Options stage by Autumn 2007
 - Preferred Option stage, by Winter 2008
 - Area Action Plan to adoption by the end of 2010
11. This programme will allow for the adoption of the Core Strategy (anticipated to be February 2010), before the adoption of this AAP. It is also programmed to align with preparation of other LDF documents. Informal comments have been sought on this programme within the context of the revised LDS from the Government Office. The indications are that the programme for the AAP is broadly acceptable. The programme takes account of the views expressed by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for a 12 month period from submission to the report being available.

Issues and Options Stage

12. Work on progressing this wider York Northwest Area Action Plan has commenced. It is anticipated that the Issues and Options document will be brought to Members for consideration in late summer 2007. Yorkshire Forward has agreed for the funding previously agreed for York Central be transferred to the York Northwest AAP. The contract with NLP has, therefore, been varied to reflect this position.

Consultation & Other Work on the York Central Area Action Plan

13. The work in preparing for the Issues and Options stage of the York Central AAP will be transferred into the preparation of the York Northwest AAP. This includes work on the document preparation, the Consultation Strategy developed and the Scoping report for the Sustainability Appraisal. A summary of the consultation responses on the Consultation Strategy is attached in Annex 2. A copy of the consultation report, feedback reports on the workshops and the amended Consultation document are attached in Annexes 3, 4 and 5.

Options

There are two options available to progress the Area Action Plan

14. **Option 1:** To proceed with the timetable for the preparation of the AAP as outlined in Annex 1, as the preferred option.
15. The programme outlined in Option 1 has been prepared to follow the requirements for AAP preparation outlined in PPS12 (Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks). The timetable for the AAP cannot be brought forward in advance of the Core Strategy, as this must be adopted first. It is anticipated that the Core Strategy will be adopted by February 2010 which would allow for the Examination on the AAP to be undertaken after the Core Strategy.
16. **Option 2:** To prepare the AAP with an alternative timescale, whilst ensuring all statutory requirements are met.
17. Given the need to meet the nine tests of soundness outlined in this policy guidance (covering procedure, conformity, coherence, consistency and effectiveness) and the timeframe for the Core Strategy it is unlikely that the AAP could be produced in any shorter timescale. An alternative longer programme could be prepared however there is a need to ensure there is a planning framework in place as soon as possible in order to consider any development proposals coming forward.

Analysis

18. The timetable for the AAP in Option 1 is considered to be realistic given the requirements outlined in government policy. Some authorities are currently bringing forward LDF documents to Examination. However, of the 5 considered

to date only two Core Strategies have passed the tests of soundness required. The documents produced by Lichfield, Stafford and Ryedale have been rejected by the Planning Inspectorate. As outlined in the information report on two of these documents given to Members in December last year, the failure to meet the tests of soundness have led to the documents having to be withdrawn and effectively the authorities going back to the first stage. One of the key reasons in the Lichfield case was the lack of appropriate evidence base and in the Stafford case a failure to produce a plan which was locally distinctive and was based on unsubstantiated targets for development. It is, therefore, seen as particularly important that the work on the AAP is based on a strong evidence base, particularly the work emerging in the Employment Land Study, Housing Market Assessment and Housing Land Availability Study.

Corporate Priorities

19. The York Northwest area provides large brownfield development opportunities adjacent to the city centre. It will be an important area for future employment and housing needs within the City. Regeneration of the area will attract investment, helping to strengthen the city's high growth sectors and generate quality jobs. Development of this area will help to protect and enhance York's existing built and green environment and provides an opportunity for a flagship sustainable development. Development of the area will support the following corporate priorities,
 - Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the City
 - Improve the contribution that Science City York makes to economic prosperity

Implications

Implications are as listed below:

Financial

20. The budget proposals considered by the City Strategy Advisory Panel on 11 December 2006 and Executive on 16 January 2007 included provision for an additional post to work on the York Northwest AAP. It was identified as a Corporate priority and contributing to the Councils corporate economic aims. Additional resources were, therefore, identified as being reprioritised to provide £75,000 in 2007/8, £105,000 in 2008/9 and £65,000 in 2009/10. These costs include document preparation, sustainability appraisal work and community involvement. The Issues and Options work by NLP is being funded by Yorkshire Forward.

Human Resources (HR)

21. There is a requirement for an additional post (1FTE) to be recruited for this project. The appointment will be a fixed term contract for three years, and the proposed grade is PO1-6.

Equalities

22. There are no Equalities implications.

Legal

23. The contract with Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners for the production of the issues and options work and public consultation in connection with this, has been varied to provide an Issues and Options document for the York Northwest AAP with associated documents, and not to progress the second stage of public consultation work in respect of York Central.

Crime and Disorder

24. There are no Crime and Disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

25. There are no IT implications.

Property

26. There are no property implications.

Other

27. There are no other known implications.

Risk Management

28. Two main risks to the programme are identified. Firstly, the risk involved in terms of proposals being put forward in advance of the adoption of the AAP. The York Central landowners are currently revising their timetable for engaging a developer and it is anticipated that the master planning will be undertaken alongside the preparation of the AAP. Given the length of time to reinstate and recover the British Sugar site it is anticipated that ABF are unlikely to be in a position to progress proposals immediately following the closure of the plant. Given the size and complexity of the planning issues to be considered both ABF and the York Central landowning groups have recognised the benefits of the Council pursuing an AAP for the area.
29. Secondly, risks to the programme may occur due the availability of resources. By allocating funding to the project, outlined in para 18 above, action has been taken to minimise these risks. A city strategy management team has also been set up to meet on a regular basis to ensure departmental coordination and management. The LDF Working Group will also receive reports at all relevant stages throughout the process of the AAP. However, as referred to in paragraph 16 above, the emerging studies will be important in establishing a robust evidence base to the plan. Any delays to the production of these documents will have implications on the timescales for the AAP.

Conclusion

30. The planning approach of joining the two sites within an Area Action Plan will ensure the environmental impact and infrastructure requirements from the development of this area are properly assessed. Consideration of the wider area will also assist in the preparation of the plan in terms of the type, scale and level of development that may be accommodated and the future implementation for this. The proposed timescales are put forward to take account of the size and complexity of the area and its potential impact on the City.

Recommendations

31. Members are asked to:

- 1) Agree, the attached programme for the preparation of the Area Action Plan and for its inclusion in the revised Local Development Scheme, having regard to the recommendations and amendments of the LDF Working Group.

Reason: To ensure the planning context for the area is considered comprehensively and the linkages/implications of both sites are jointly planned for.

- 2) Note the Community Consultation Strategy prepared for York Central, which will be taken into account in undertaking the public consultation relating to the York Northwest Area Action Plan, having regard to the recommendations and amendments of the LDF Working Group.

Reason: To ensure the public consultation is as inclusive and comprehensive as possible.

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Report Approved



Date 22/1/07

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All

Wards Affected: Holgate, Micklegate, Acomb and Rural West York

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Report to LDF Working Group 31 July 2006

Report to Executive, 12 September 2006

Annexes

Annex 1: Programme for York Central/British Sugar Area Action Plan

Annex 2: Summary of Consultation response

Annex 3: Consultation Report

Annex 4: Community Consultation Strategy for York Central AAP (SRC)

Annex 5: Community Audit for York Central AAP

Annex 6: Minutes of LDF Working Group, 1 February 2007