

York Central AAP: Issues and Options

Consultation Report

October 2006



src

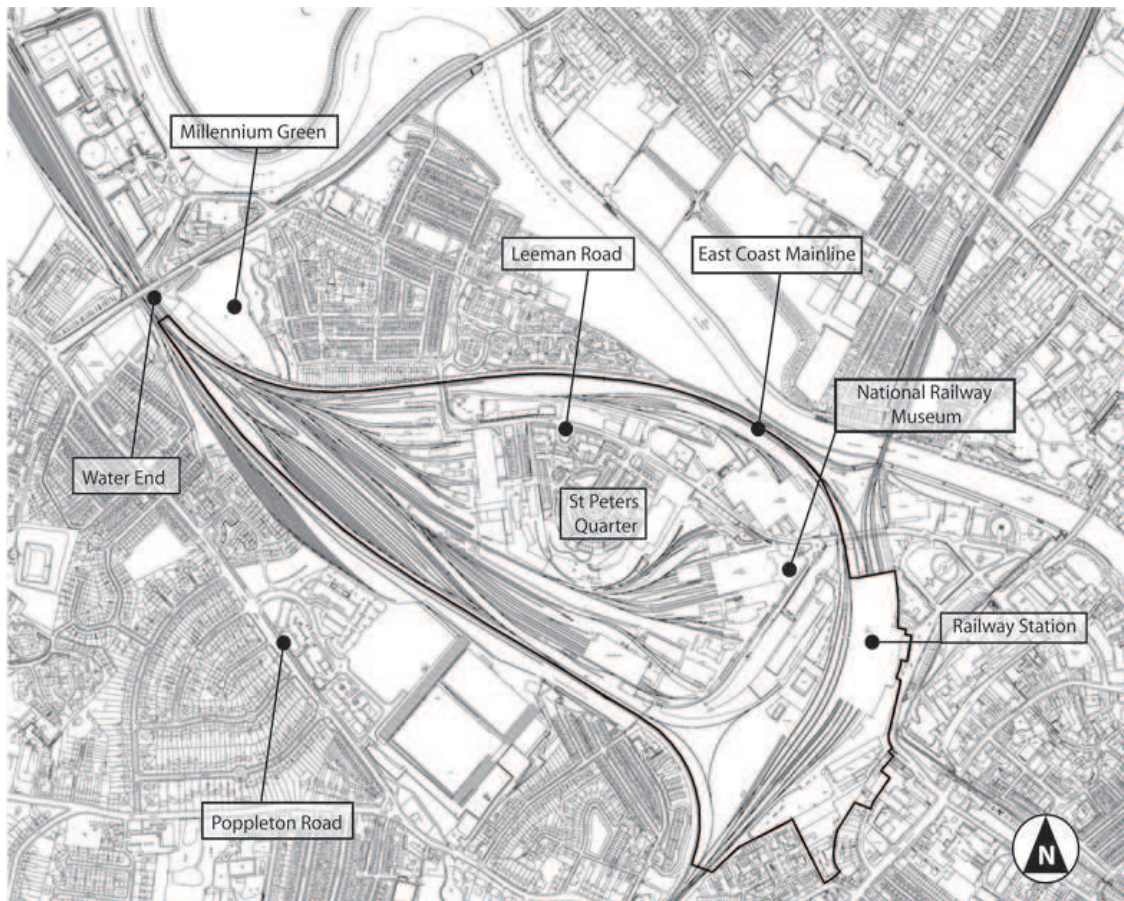
social regeneration consultants

1. Introduction and context

1.1 The City of York Council (CYC) is in the process of preparing a Local Development Framework, in line with new planning legislation. As part of this process an Area Action Plan (AAP) will be produced to guide new development and land use in the York Central area up to 2021. The initial requirement is to consider the key Issues and Options relating to the development of this area and CYC have appointed Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners to carry out this work.

1.2 The York Central site is a large brownfield site, covering approximately 37 hectares of land in a teardrop shape in and around York Railway Station. The site offers an opportunity for new mixed-use development in the city. The consultation will play a key role in making sure that community and stakeholder views are sought on a range of options for the site. In turn, this will ensure that the planning framework as set out in the AAP will be right for the site and for the city as a whole.

Map of site



1.3 Consultation on planning matters is now essential following the changes to the planning system as described in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). This Act replaced Local Plans with the Local Development Framework (LDF) process. The Act requires local authorities to consult with the community during the preparation of the LDF. City of York Council has produced a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which sets out how and when the community will be consulted on the production of planning documents. The methods described in the CCS aim to add detail to the more strategic approaches described in the SCI, and are specially tailored to the production of the Area Action Plan.

1.4 This report records the findings from the testing phase of the draft Community Consultation Strategy (CCS), which took place between July and August 2006. More detailed consultation in accordance with the Strategy will be undertaken to gain community and stakeholder feedback on the different options for the site outlined in the Issues and Options report.

1.5 The following sections of this report include more detailed information about the main outcomes from the testing phase of consultation, how the comments received have impacted on the draft CCS and what changes are necessary.

1.6 The following documents have been prepared as part of this stage of the consultation process:

- Consultation Report
- Appendices to the consultation report, including comments in response to the leaflet and briefing workshop reports
- Community Consultation Strategy
- Community Audit

2. The testing process for the draft Community Consultation Strategy

2.1 The testing process had three main elements as follows:

- a Community Audit which established a baseline assessment of the area.
- a leaflet circulated to over 3000 residents and businesses in the area giving them up to date information, plus an opportunity to give their views on the Strategy and the development of the site.
- a series of workshops aimed at key stakeholders or interest groups, again allowing them an opportunity to give their views on the Strategy as well as the development of the site itself.

Community audit

2.2 The community audit involved a combination of desk-based research, document reviews and telephone conversations with the relevant ward coordinators based at the City Council's York Pride unit.

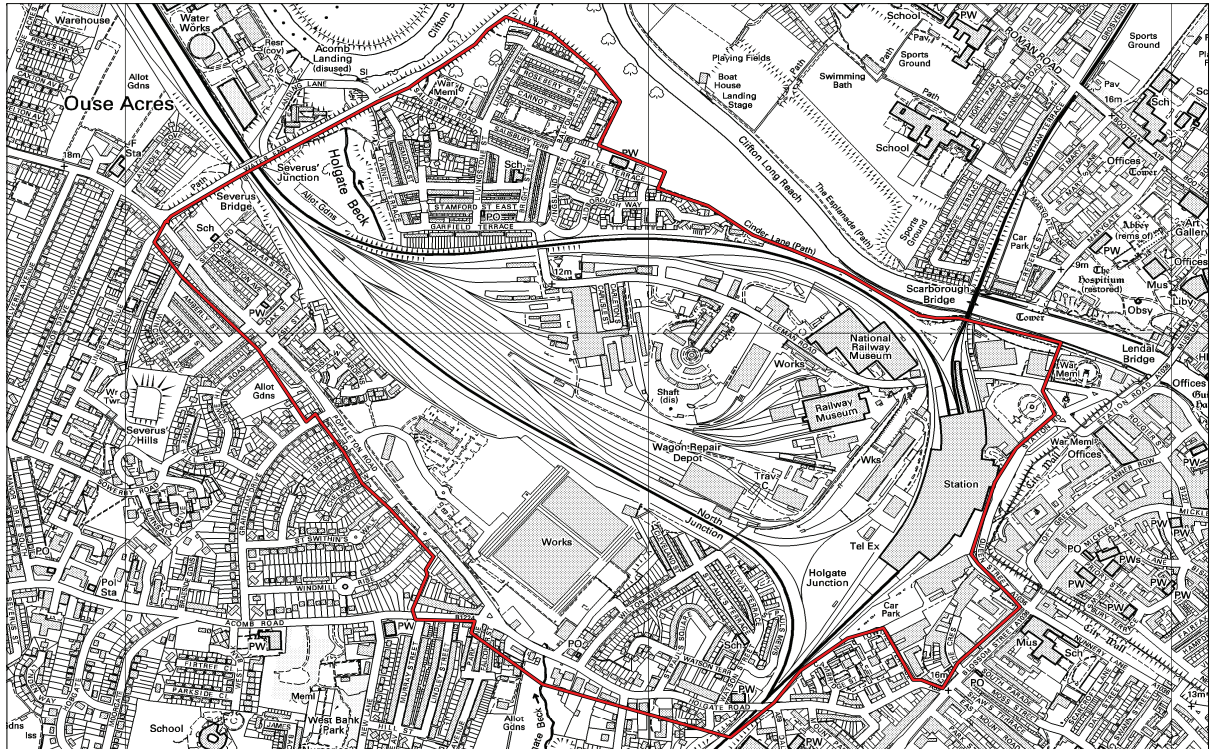
2.3 A separate community audit document has been prepared to provide a baseline assessment of the two wards that cover the York Central site. The audit also includes useful information on key community contacts in the area along with suitable community venues. This information will be used during the detailed consultation process.

Leaflet and Web site

2.4 A leaflet was produced, giving people general background information about the site and updating them on what's happening at the moment. The main purpose of the leaflet was to get people's comments and feedback on the draft CCS. Copies of the full and summary versions of the CCS were posted on the York Central website (www.york.gov.uk/yorkcentral) along with hard copies in the Council offices located at 9 St. Leonard's Place, the Guildhall and Central Library.

2.5 The leaflet was distributed to 3,100 households and businesses within the site and around the boundary of the site.

Boundary Map



York Central Leaflet Drop Area

Drawn by City Development.
Crown Copyright. Licence number LA09067L 2006

2.6 The leaflet was distributed at the end of July and people were invited to return any comments by 25 August 2006. People who wanted to make a comment could either detach the comments section of the leaflet and post it, drop it into council offices or return comments via email to the York Central Project team at the Council.

Summary of Comments

2.7 Twenty two responses were received from residents, businesses and agencies.

2.8 A record of all the comments received is included in the appendices to this report. This is split into three sections - residents' comments, business comments and agency comments.

2.9 In summary the main issues raised in relation to the consultation process included:

- using suitable venues e.g. local schools
- having good quality, well timed publicity
- using existing meetings such as Ward Committee meetings to hold consultation sessions
- concern over the time of year, the run up to Christmas is not the best time to be consulting residents
- avoid consulting with the usual suspects and 'loud' community members

2.10 The main issues raised in relation to the site and its development include:

- access to the site for vehicles
- providing cycleways
- developing pedestrian routes between railway station and the NRM, to access the parkland along the river and across the site generally
- adequate parking for residents and businesses will need to be included
- integration of public transport from the railway station
- there is a need for new public transport provision to service the new developments
- quality open space is needed as part of the development
- family housing and affordable housing needs to be developed on the site
- the site should be well designed and include eco homes along with traditional / historic building designs
- the site should have a mixture of uses including residential, commercial and leisure
- new facilities are needed are part of the redevelopment of the site including leisure and sports facilities, neighbourhood shops, health care facility and cafes and bars

Workshops

2.11 The final stage in the testing phase was to run two briefing workshops with different interest groups. The aim of the workshops was to get views from the participants on the draft CCS along with any views they may have on the development of the site.

2.12 The two workshops were held with:

- Business and commercial interests
- Special interests

2.13 The workshops were held on Thursday 3 August 2006. Each workshop involved a brief presentation followed by a facilitated discussion. 22 local businesses and wider business interests were invited to the workshop; six attended. 42 special interest groups were invited to the workshop; 13 attended.

2.14 A presentation was also made to Members at the LDF Working Group on 31 July 2006 followed by discussion and feedback. Nine local councillors attended this meeting.

2.15 A copy of the workshop presentation and full versions of the workshop feedback reports can be found in the Appendices to this report.

Summary of discussions

2.16 All three of the discussions focused heavily on the development of the site. However, a number of useful comments and suggestions were made in relation to the draft CCS. The first half of this section will summarise the comments made in relation to the draft CCS, while the second half will summarise the comments made in relation to the site and its development.

The Strategy

2.17 The main issues in relation to the consultation process included:

- The ability to access or use the internet via the York Central website as not everyone has access to, or can use the internet. For the next stage in consultation hard copies of all relevant documents should be placed in key buildings in the City including Council offices, schools and libraries.
- Consideration should be given to holding exhibitions in outer areas such as Acomb and local supermarkets. It maybe beneficial to reduce the number of exhibitions held in the town centre to focus more on the residential areas.
- The need for a range of opportunities for people to input their views. Suggestions included: involving local residents associations and ward committees; setting up a 'have your say' website where people can leave their comments and these can be read by other people; having traditional meetings where people could get round the table and discuss the plans; and, having a series of events and exhibitions.
- Making sure that consultation is effective i.e. asking questions that people want to answer and are the right questions. Consultation needs to be flexible enough to identify gaps and feed in comments in the process
- Making sure that the consultation is not held in periods of dead time for example, August and Christmas
- Specific groups for consultation could include:
 - Sporting / leisure interest groups (contact the Active York Partnership)
 - York Property Forum (YPF)
 - York Professional Initiative (YPI)
 - The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)
 - City centre businesses via the City Centre partnership

The development

2.18 A range of different comments were raised in relation to the development of the site. Although the same comments were made by the two different interest groups, business interest and the special interests, they also raised some issues that were specific to the interests of the particular groups. In summary, comments were made on the following aspects of the site and its development:

- removing the myths of the site i.e. it will only be used for housing and offices; the site could be used for so much more including further tourists attractions, a stadium and public open space for the whole City
- clear timescales are needed as it is a long process
- the scale of ambition needs to be appropriate for the site, i.e. big
- links between York Central and the City Centre need to be maintained; York Central should complement the City Centre
- the Issues and Options Report should include specific reference to green areas and the natural environment of the site
- concerns were expressed about the potential for the site to be over developed with high rise housing
- as part of the development of the site there is a need to produce an inventory of the buildings and historical artefacts on the site; some also suggested the need for an equivalent 'green' inventory
- concern was also expressed about how the AAP fits in with the wider development strategy for the City as a whole. York Central has immense implications for the historic core of the City
- construction traffic will also have an impact on the City, as it may add further delays to traffic moving around

3. Impact of testing process on the draft Community Consultation Strategy (CCS)

3.1 The testing phase of the consultation, through a combination of workshops and leaflets, revealed the need for a number of changes and additions to the draft CCS.

3.2 The comments received from the leaflet and workshops all represent reasonable ideas and suggestions and have revealed no major flaws in the draft CCS.

3.3 The key issues, which the testing phase of the consultation revealed included:

- providing hard copies of documents and plans as well as the use of the internet to view documents, using key buildings accessible to the public to place them in
- a number of additional interest groups were identified and these will need to be incorporated into the CCS
- the need for a range of methods for people to be engaged was felt to be important to all groups consulted during the testing phase
- clarity around the boundaries for consultation is needed, i.e. some felt that the residents of Acomb ward should be included in the consultation process
- the time of year is a major issue to consider, many indicating that consultation between November and January will be difficult because of Christmas and New Year.

3.4 Key suggestions for improvement include:

- hard copies of all documents produced as part of the consultation on the Issues and Options Report to be provided in key public buildings including council offices, libraries and relevant schools.

- a number of additional special interest groups will be consulted either as part of the stakeholder interviews stage or during the workshop stage. The following groups will be included in the consultation:
 - Sporting / leisure interest groups (contact the Active York Partnership)
 - York Property Forum (YPF)
 - York Professional Initiative (YPI)
 - The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)
 - City centre businesses via the City Centre partnership
- the finalised CCS will need to be made more flexible to enable a range of consultation methods to be included
- the final boundary for consultation needs to be established. The final CCS will also indicate the need for varying levels of detail in the consultation depending on the proximity to the site
- it is recognised that consultation during holiday times is not ideal.
- the need to have a freepost envelope for future leaflets that invite people to make comments
- improvements are needed to the York Central website to make it easier to navigate and locate key documents
- information about the document being available in other languages should appear on the front of the document
- the Ward Committee meetings should be involved in the consultation process
- it was suggested that local schools should be used as the venues for the exhibitions

3.5 These suggestions, as far as possible have been included in the amendments to the Community Consultation Strategy.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The findings from this testing process showed that:

- There is considerable interest in the site and many of the comments are well informed, with much thought on considerations of access, design and mix of the site.
- The draft CCS was seen as generally sound and acceptable although a number of issues were raised or ideas suggested relating to the detail. Where considered appropriate these have been incorporated into the revised Strategy.
- The majority of feedback related to the development of the site itself. A number of comments were also made in relation to the scale of the site particularly around how the development will fit in with the historic core of the City. These comments provide important material which will be referred to and used to inform the development of the Area Action Plan.
- The workshops worked well to gain feedback on the consultation process. A number of suggestions, in relation to the consultation, were made and these have been taken into consideration in finalising the CCS.

5. Next Stage

5.1 The next stage will be to implement the Community Consultation Strategy at an appropriate time to be agreed by the Council in order to gain the views of residents and other stakeholders on the Issues and Options that will be developed for the site.