
Executive

11 July 2006

Report of the Director of City Strategy

YORK CENTRAL AREA ACTION PLAN

Summary

1. Members are asked to note the revised timetable for the preparation of the York Central Area Action Plan (AAP), which brings forward the preparation of the Issues and Options document and consultation relating to this. As part of the preparation of the Issues and Options document, there will be a review of existing base line information, and not a separate Interim Planning Guidance document as had previously been agreed.

Background

2. A report to the Executive on 7 March 2006, set out the proposed planning approach for York Central. A timescale of three years had been allowed for preparation of the York Central AAP. Members agreed that Interim Planning Guidance for the area should be prepared, to enable updated policy guidance to be provided to potential developers in autumn this year.
3. At the York Central Steering Board meeting on 19 May 2006, York Central Landowners, Network Rail and National Museum of Science and Industry (NMSI), together with Yorkshire Forward, asked the Council to review the AAP programme to see if there were any opportunities to shorten the timescale.
4. At a meeting on 8 June 2006, Yorkshire Forward's Board agreed that Yorkshire Forward could provide funding to enhance the Council's planning capacity to shorten the timescale to prepare the York Central AAP.

Revised AAP Programme

5. A detailed review of the current AAP programme has now been carried out within the context of the Local Development Scheme (LDS). It is considered that, subject to the availability of funding from Yorkshire Forward for additional resources, the AAP timescale could potentially be reduced by a maximum of 8 months on the original programme. A revised project plan, as at 11.7.06, is set out in Annex 1. The programme has been aligned to take account of the Local Development Framework (LDF) programme, and in particular the Core Strategy, and Local Government elections next May.
6. The main opportunity for shortening the timescale to prepare the AAP is dependent upon getting the first stage of work, the Issues and Options

document and consultation relating to this, carried out by Christmas this year. This means that work on the production of the Issues and Options document needs to start during July. At a meeting on 16 June 2006, Yorkshire Forward agreed to fully fund a planning consultant, to be appointed and managed by City of York Council, to undertake this work.

7. Work needs to start with immediate effect in order to meet the key milestones as set out in the project plan at Annex 1. It is anticipated that the draft Issues and Options document will be brought to a meeting of the Executive in October this year, with public consultation held between November 2006 and January 2007.
8. A brief for planning consultancy services has been prepared and tenders invited from seven of the larger, experienced planning consultancies. Tender submissions have been returned from the following four consultants.
 - Arup
 - Baker Associates
 - Barton Willmore
 - Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP)

Tender Analysis

9. The four tender submissions have been assessed on price and against the requirements of the tender specification. A crucial part of the requirements is for there to be extensive consultation with the community to ensure the fullest possible understanding and feedback on any options put forward. Exempt Information at Annex 2 sets out a summary of tender submission costs. The detailed assessment of the tenders revealed the following:

9.1 Baker Associates

- On examination of the work programme, there was concern that the length of time given to assimilation of constraints and ideas elements was given 6 weeks, whereas the production of the Issues and Options document was given only 3 weeks in a 13 week programme.
- The explanation of the work involved weighed heavily on requirements for the production of sustainability documentation.
- In looking at any public consultation strategy, for the York Central area, it should be recognised that the local context would necessitate a high level of community engagement due to the scale of the development and its potential impact on the City. This did not appear to be reflected in the tender submission for the public consultation. In addition, the consultant saw their role as one of process ie. running and facilitating events, rather than providing the content for the consultation exercises.

9.2 Barton Willmore

- There was concern that there was no evidence of actual experience of producing Area Action Plan documents demonstrated within the tender submission.

- As in 9.1 above, the tender submission did not reflect the high level of the community engagement/public consultation which would be expected for the York Central area, due to the scale of the development and its potential impact on the City.

9.3 Arup

- On examination of the staffing input for the work it appeared that Arup had proposed a relatively high level of input by more junior staff. For a project the complexity and scale of York Central, a significant level of more senior staff input would be expected. There was also a concern that the size of the proposed Arup team could potentially lead to problems of consistency.
- As in 9.1 above, the tender submission by Arup did not reflect the high level of the community engagement/public consultation which would be expected for the York Central area, due to the scale of the development and its potential impact on the City.

9.4 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners

- On examination of the staffing input for the work, NLP proposed a higher number of days to be employed on the project and a higher level of senior input, which officers feel is essential to ensure the most effective outcome for this high profile project.
- The tender submission by NLP demonstrated the high level of community engagement/public consultation which would be expected for the York Central area and recognised the wide range of stakeholder interest in the project.
- NLP had not, however, included within their tender submission for preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report. It is understood that this is because NLP specialist in-house resources will not be available during the first few weeks of the AAP commission, which is when the SA Scoping report needs to be prepared. NLP resources will, however, be available to undertake the Sustainability Appraisal of the Issues and Options document.

10. Clearly none of the tenders submitted fully meet all the requirements of the tender specification. However, in view of the need to start work on the AAP at the beginning of July, it is felt that both Arup and NLP could still provide the desired outcome in the timescale required.
11. In assessing costs for these remaining two tender submissions, Arup and NLP, Members will note that the Exempt Information, as at Annex 2, shows that whilst the total cost submitted by Arup is less than the total cost submitted by NLP, the daily rate for NLP is less than that for Arup.
12. The consultation strategy submitted by NLP, however, had clearly responded to the issues of public consultation and community engagement in much greater depth, with a wide range of engagement proposals. The NLP consultation plan included a significantly higher level of public consultation and community engagement, demonstrating recognition and understanding of

the wide range of groups/stakeholders interests in the project and the sensitivities involved in this.

13. The omission of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report from the NLP submission will require this work to be done in-house. This work is an important part of the process, however, because of similar work already carried out in-house on the LDF Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, Officers feel that this could be completed in-house relatively easily.
14. When the lower daily rate, number of hours spent on the project, level of senior input and level of public consultation are taken into account, although the total cost of NLP is higher than Arup, it is considered that NLP offer better value for money.
15. Taking all of the above into account and recognising the urgency of getting this work underway to meet the early outcomes set out in the revised project plan, it is, therefore, recommended that NLP is appointed to produce the Issues and Options document, with specialist sub consultant, SRC, carrying out community engagement. Yorkshire Forward have confirmed their agreement to fully fund the appointment of NLP, subject to Members agreement.

Interim Planning Guidance

16. The original planning programme for York Central, showed preparation of Interim Planning Guidance this summer, with a report being brought to a meeting of the Planning Committee on 28 September 2006. The need for this has now been superseded, as work to review the existing base line information will now be undertaken as part of the Issues and Options document.

Consultation

17. The revised AAP programme for York Central has been prepared in consultation with the Director of City Strategy and the Head of City Development. Advice on financial implications and contract procurement has been sought from the Finance Manager, City Strategy, and the Corporate Procurement Unit. In addition, Yorkshire Forward and City of York Council's representatives on the York Central Steering Board, together with their executive support officers, have been consulted. Informal discussions have been held with Government Office

Options

18. This option is consistent with the approach to bring forward the LDF as soon as possible.

Analysis

19. The shortened programme means that the AAP will be at a more advanced stage in production by the time the developer is appointed in Spring 2007, than could otherwise have been achieved. Preparation of the Issues and Options document will not only provide the most up to date policy guidance for potential developers this autumn, but will outline what are the key issues and broad options for development of the York Central area. The funding from Yorkshire Forward for additional planning resources will enable an enhanced service to customers to be provided.
20. The main disadvantage is the very short timescale, over the peak summer holiday period, in which the Issues and Options document needs to be prepared.

Corporate Priorities

21. York Central is important to provide brownfield land for housing and employment needs for the City. Regeneration of the area will attract investment, helping to strengthen the city's high growth sectors and generate quality jobs. Development of the York Central area will help to protect and enhance York's existing built and green environment.

Implications

22. Implications are as listed below:
 - **Financial:** The consultant's fee for the Issues and Options work will be approximately £110K. Yorkshire Forward have agreed to fully fund the costs of the work so there is no direct financial cost to the City Council of the work.
 - **Human Resources (HR):** There are no HR implications.
 - **Equalities:** There are no Equalities implications.
 - **Legal:** There are no legal implications.
 - **Crime and Disorder:** There are no Crime and Disorder implications.
 - **Information Technology (IT):** There are no IT implications.
 - **Property:** There are no property implications.
 - **Other:** There are no other known implications.

Risk Management

23. The review and revised programme to enable a shorter timescale to prepare the York Central AAP is dependant upon getting the first stage of work carried out by Christmas this year. Any delay or slippage to this programme, for whatever reason, could have implications on the delivery of the shorter AAP programme. To reduce this risk, tight project management and regular monitoring of risk, will be undertaken.

Recommendations

24. Members are asked to:

- 1) Note the revised timetable for the preparation of the York Central Area Action Plan.

Reason: The current AAP programme has been identified as a risk to the development of York Central.

- 2) Approve the appointment of Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners to produce the Issues and Options document and carry out public consultation related to this.

Reason: The appointment of a planning consultant to carry out this work is needed to deliver the shortened AAP programme.

- 3) Consider that the preparation of Interim Planning Guidance (IPG) be discontinued.

Reason: The need for IPG has been superseded by the production of the Issues and Options document.

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Report Approved

Date 29.6.06

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For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Report to Executive, 7 March 2006

Annexes

- Annex 1. Revised Project Plan : York Central Area Action Plan
- Annex 2. Summary of Tender submissions (**EXEMPT INFORMATION**)