

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Nestlé South - Draft Development Brief for Consultation

Summary

1. This report presents a Draft Development Brief for Consultation for the southern part of the Nestlé factory site, Haxby Road, York. Recent job loss announcements at the site have highlighted the need to modernise the main factory complex in order to compete in a global market. This will allow the company to commit to staying in York for the foreseeable future.
2. The Brief sets out the need for an employment/ residential redevelopment of the area. It highlights the key planning issues for prospective developers to consider and highlights opportunities for adopting sustainable development principles, good design, layout and links to surrounding areas, and where further analysis is required.
3. With approval from Members it is intended that the Brief be subject to public consultation for 8 weeks from February to March 2007. Consultation responses will be considered and a revised Brief will be presented to Members for approval for development control purposes. The Council will then use this document in order to coordinate developer proposals, in the form of a master plan prior to planning application submission, and further detailed consultation with local residents and key organisations on any subsequent scheme proposed.

Background

4. In September 2006 Nestlé Rowntree announced the loss of over 600 jobs from their 2,400 strong workforce. In order to remain in York, a massive capital investment is needed in order to upgrade and improve facilities on the more modern northern part of the site, allowing redevelopment opportunities on the older, southern part of the site closest to the city centre.
5. Whilst the site is not allocated in the City of York Development Control Local Plan, April 2005, Policy E3b - Existing and Proposed Employment Sites - states that sites currently or previously in employment use will be retained within their current use class. Planning permission for other uses will only be given where:

- there is a sufficient supply of employment land to meet both immediate and longer term requirements in both quantitative and qualitative terms; and
 - unacceptable environmental problems exist; or
 - the development of the site for other appropriate uses will lead to significant benefits to the local economy; or
 - the use is ancillary to an employment use.
6. The site is therefore identified as an employment site, but consideration will be given to the wider benefits of an employment/ residential mixed use in terms of providing a re-investment opportunity for this major city employer, and its potential to add to the range and quality of employment use in York through redevelopment.
7. The site lies to the north of the City Centre on the edge of the built up area between Haxby Road and Wigginton Road. It is bounded to the south by the Sustrans cycle route, to the north by the existing Nestle site – which will be modernised and upgraded – and, to the north of the factory, by the company sports fields open out into green belt countryside. The area subject of this planning brief covers approximately 40% of the Nestle Rowntrees works (7.9 hectares/ 19.5 acres) and comprises the original factory buildings, which have been altered and extended in more recent years.

Consultation

8. The Draft Development Brief collates the main issues and policies relating to the site into one document in order to provide a clear and up-to-date planning framework for considering future proposals. The Council now wants to consult members of the community and stakeholders on this document.
9. Officers will consider responses to the consultation, revise the Brief accordingly and present a revised Brief to Planning Committee for their consideration in early summer this year.
10. If approved by the Planning Committee, the Brief will then be adopted as non-statutory Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance. It will be used to guide development proposals and to consider the suitability of detailed proposals when subsequent planning applications are submitted.

Main Issues

11. The Brief sets out a clear vision for the site, “to create a new, inclusive live/ work community and cultural hub well integrated with surrounding areas. It should accommodate a mix of uses and follow best practice guidance in order to achieve high standards of design, public space and sustainability. High quality urban design and safe and attractive pedestrian/ cycle routes through and around the area will help to create a sense of place, and low car use principles must be embraced”.

12. The Nestlé Rowntrees factory site has played a key role in providing employment in York for over a century with a strong sense of community and identity. This role should continue and aim to meet current and future demand for employment uses that are central to the long-term success of the York economy.
13. There is significant demand from both inward investors and indigenous businesses for premises for a range of employment uses in the city. This includes creative and digital industries, manufacturing, artists' workspace, live/ work units, and accommodation for start-up companies.
14. As part of the overall redevelopment of the site there will be opportunities to provide housing for a range of families and single households, including those living locally who are currently in unsuitable accommodation and who cannot afford to buy or rent on the open market.
15. Whilst there are no listed buildings within the site, and it does not lie within a designated conservation area, the chocolate works are unique to York and include buildings of historical and architectural distinction.
16. Development proposals should respect the character and setting of the site. It is highly visible from a number of surrounding vantages. Development proposals should therefore be of the highest quality and respect the important views of the main office building and entrance off Haxby Road. The opportunity will be taken to consider the designation of a conservation area along Haxby Road, to include Nuffield Hospital and the Rowntrees Theatre on the opposite side of the road.
17. In order to assess the appropriateness and extent of Conservation Area designation, a full character appraisal should be carried out which will consider the special architectural or historic interest of the site and surrounding area. This should be based on English Heritage guidelines.
18. If designation is considered appropriate, the appraisal should recommend a boundary for the Conservation Area, assess its historical context and character, and identify positive, neutral and negative factors. The appraisal would then be used as a basis for masterplanning work and for consideration of planning applications. A separate report to Members will be required to progress any designation proposals.

Conclusions

19. The Draft Brief for Consultation aims to provide clear advice as to the Council's views on acceptable uses for the site and the key planning issues that will require to be addressed by any development proposal. By not being overly prescriptive and instead outlining a framework for development, the Brief provides the basis for worthwhile community and stakeholder consultation.

Options

20. Option 1:

Approve the Development Brief, as proposed in this report, as the basis for consultation with local residents and key organisations.

21. Option 2:

Do not approve the Development Brief and request a new Development Brief is drafted with an alternative approach.

22. Option 3:

Do not approve the Development Brief and use the policies of the Development Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Structure Plan) and the Development Control Local Plan, 2005 as the basis for negotiation and considering applications.

Analysis

23. In terms of the options set out above, approval of the Brief for public consultation (Option 1) is recommended to Members. It would provide a clear and consistent basis for negotiating with potential developers, for progressing a comprehensive masterplan for the site and for considering planning applications.

24. Option 2 is not recommended as the Brief follows previous Council decisions to progress strategic sites in York through public consultation, before any planning application. The vision, objectives and potential development uses set out in the Brief have been developed in the context of existing national, regional and local planning policy.

25. Option 3 is not recommended. The level of detailed information contained in a Development Brief can better address the complexity of the site, its conservation value and prominence within the landscape. Consultation on the Draft Brief will allow the public to express their aspirations and concerns about the future of this site, together with local and national organisations/ interests, in the same way as planning briefs for Terrys, Castle-Piccadilly, Hungate and other important sites in York. Further detail progressed through a planning application will be tested against the vision, objectives and detailed guidance set out in the approved Brief.

Corporate Priorities

26. The redevelopment of the site at this time represents a major opportunity for the York economy and a significant opportunity to forward a number of the City's economic aims, including the Community Plan objective of a "Thriving City" and the Council's Corporate Aims which seeks to "strengthen and diversify York's economy", provide "improved employment opportunities for residents", and improve "quality and sustainability, creating a clean and safe environment".

27. The Brief highlights the importance of sustainability and has a section dedicated to sustainable development. This seeks to further the Community Strategy Objective of a Sustainable City – that “York should be a model sustainable city with a quality built and natural environment and a modern, integrated transport system”, together with the Corporate Aim to “Take pride in the city by improving quality and sustainability, creating a clean and safe environment”.
28. Of the 13 priorities of the Corporate Strategy Objectives, the following are directly addressed within this brief :
- Increasing the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport
 - Improving the quality and availability of decent, affordable homes in the city

Implications

29. Financial - The costs of printing the Brief and other incidental costs will be met from the existing internal budget.
30. Human Resources (HR) - No HR implications.
31. Equalities - Equalities considerations have been taken into account in the preparation of the Brief, and will be subject to formal consultation with relevant organisations.
32. Legal - No Legal implications.
33. Crime and Disorder - Crime and Disorder considerations have been taken into account in the preparation of the Brief, and will be subject to formal consultation with relevant organisations.
34. Information Technology (IT) – There are no IT implications.

Risk Management

35. There are no known risks.

Recommendation

36. It is recommended that Members approve the Draft Development Brief for Consultation for the mixed-use development of the Nestlé South site.

Reason: so that extensive public consultation can take place to allow proper community and stakeholder involvement in the forward planning of this major site.

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Background Papers

- City of York Development Control Local Plan, April 2005

Annexes

- Annex 1 - The Nestlé South Draft Development Brief, together with all appendices and plans.