
Executive

21 July 2009

Report of the Director of City Strategy

URBAN ECO SETTLEMENT

Proposal for a Demonstration Exemplar at British Sugar, York

Summary

1. This paper outlines a proposal for funding a Demonstration Exemplar Urban Eco Community on part of the former British Sugar site within the York Northwest area. Member approval is sought to submit the proposal to Leeds City Region (LCR), subject to the agreement of Associated British Food (the landowner of British Sugar), for inclusion as part of their submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) this July. Following Ministerial consideration during the summer, a decision on the bid is expected in September this year.

Background

2. In October 2008 initial proposals by the Leeds City Region (LCR) partnership were submitted to the government to create Urban Eco-Settlements at four locations within the Leeds City Region (including York Northwest), to complement the LCR New Growth Points Package 2008-2017.
3. A subsequent study in January 2009 to assess deliverability of the four Urban Eco Settlement areas (as part of the Eco Towns agenda), identified the British Sugar site at York Northwest as having potential to provide the early delivery of 120 homes as a 'demonstration exemplar' for the new urban eco community at British Sugar. The demonstration exemplar would provide an example of leading edge sustainability features which could be used as a model for implementation on other sites throughout the country.
4. Following a meeting between the CLG and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and LCR in May this year, the LCR are currently preparing more detailed information on the eco credentials of the four Urban Eco Settlements (UES) being put forward. A bid for funding these UES will be submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) at the end of July this year for consideration over the summer.
5. The Council have engaged with the landowner of the British Sugar site, ABF, to produce a proposal which will form part of the LCR submission to CLG. The scope of the proposal has been reduced from 120 homes (see para 3) to 60

homes to reflect the level of funding available nationally. The submission will include detail of the proposed composition of the specific sustainability design/technologies which could be included in the new development. ABF requested preliminary funding for consultants to develop the proposal. However, as funding for this was not available, council officers prepared an initial proposal, for discussion and agreement with ABF. The attached indicative proposal (see Annex 1) reflects the outcome of these discussions.

Consultation

6. On 28 April 2009 officers gave a presentation to the Acomb Ward Committee on the background to the emerging urban eco settlement proposals. Illustrations of eco principles and examples of eco developments within York and elsewhere in the country were also outlined. There will be an opportunity for residents to be involved in planning as part of the AAP process and masterplanning work by the landowner/developer.

Approach

7. The Council has a strong commitment to promoting and delivering sustainability across all aspects of council activities. York has extensive experience in the delivery of sustainable development and the approach underpins all CYC strategic operations. The council has been nationally recognised for its leading edge approach to promoting sustainability and sustainable integrated transport with the completion of projects at the Danesgate Skills Centre, the Eco Depot, Park and Ride sites and programme of works forming part of the Cycling City initiative.
8. York Northwest has a key role in delivering the Core Strategy vision and is expected to make a significant contribution to meeting the demand for York's future housing needs. The British Sugar demonstration exemplar proposal is considered to present an important opportunity to promote and support the redevelopment of the area. Additionally, it provides an excellent opportunity to build on the city's experience of sustainable development and implement further new eco design/technology with benefits not only for the exemplar development and development within York, but also for the wider sustainability agenda.
9. The overarching theme for the future development of the York Northwest area is the need to promote sustainable development which is reflected in the vision for the area. This is essential for a development of this scale to ensure future development minimises its impact on the environment and helps to minimise the city's impact on climate change. The designation of the York Northwest area as an Urban Eco Settlement will strengthen and enhance the sustainability objectives for the area to be set out in the Area Action Plan. The exemplar proposal has been prepared using the Eco Town standards set out in government guidance, as relevant to the York Northwest context.
10. This proposal is capable of delivery as an initial phase of development of the York Northwest Urban Eco Settlement. It will showcase a model of sustainable development which can be used as a benchmark and adapted for implementation elsewhere. However, it is recognised that the cost of delivering development to this exemplary standard would require a step level increase in

costs of construction and implementation. The demonstration exemplar will provide an opportunity to assess the cost effectiveness of specific specifications, which can then be used in the wider development area.

11. A comprehensive package of high quality social (including opportunities for training/skills development) and green infrastructure with a community 'eco hub' and sustainable approach to travel is outlined in the proposal. The emphasis will be on the provision of family housing with a range of sustainable technologies to promote energy generation and water/energy efficiencies.

The Proposal

12. Given the limited timeframe in which to develop the submission, the attached proposal with conceptual plans is illustrative at this stage and further detailed work will be required in the event of a successful bid. The proposal outlines an indicative area for a first phase pilot scheme comprising 60 residential dwellings at a density of 50 dwellings per hectare with a site area of approximately 1.5ha. The pilot scheme would be accessed via the existing Millfield Lane with a new internal access road. Green infrastructure could include open space and allotments and funding has been included within the bid to facilitate access to off site open space, feasibility work and infrastructure/management.
13. Sustainability initiatives, which will be promoted as part of the proposal include for example:
 - a) Achieving through innovative solutions Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes as a minimum, with Level 5 for water use and Level 6 for energy generation and efficiency.
 - b) Providing recycling facilities to promote the ethos of recycling and reducing waste as a matter of good practice and using locally and responsibly sourced and recycled building materials.
 - c) Providing allotments within the scheme to encourage future residents to grow their own food and reduce their impact on the environment/eco footprint.
 - d) Constructing a show home facility, which will act as a temporary community hub for the first phase of the development. This would provide an advice and information centre for residents on eco features (where experiences on practical issues can be shared), car club and related management issues. It would also provide a base for young people linked to on-the-job sustainable construction related training.
 - e) Providing a range of sustainable technologies to ensure low/zero carbon energy, including solar thermal arrays, photovoltaic arrays, high insulation standards/ reduced air leakage, maximising natural lighting and wind power. Energy generation and efficiency technologies could also include the installation of a district wide heating system using biomass/biofuel boilers.
 - f) Developing an approach to manage the entire water cycle impacts of the Exemplar development at British Sugar. This will incorporate high water

efficiency, low water usage technologies and appliances that minimise the need for processing water.

- g) Developing an innovative, integrated approach to sustainable modes of transport which will prioritise walking and cycling. This will include for example, providing a car club with an element of zero private parking, evaluating the potential for an element of cycle hire, and provision of good cycle space within homes.
 - h) Installing Real Time information panels in all residential units in the Demonstration Exemplar, which will include live bus approach times, and walk time; city wide public transport, journey time and road network information; environmental information on household energy/utility, consumption; details on council services, e.g. refuse collection; and community, Education and Police information.
14. Within the masterplanning process careful consideration will need to be given to the precise location of the exemplar to ensure that the overall layout, phasing and construction issues for the site are taken into account. Additionally, regrading of existing land levels may be necessary to facilitate the demonstration development.
15. It is anticipated that two planning applications would be submitted; a full application for the pilot scheme and a second, outline application for the whole of the British Sugar site. The demonstration exemplar proposal would be considered as part of the wider masterplanning of the British Sugar site and the planning applications would be considered within the context of the York Northwest Area Action Plan. A draft programme outlining the alignment of the planning application process with masterplanning and production of the Area Action Plan is attached at Annex 2.
16. A funding package based on high level costings of the specific eco measures with a breakdown of specific funding elements is outlined in Table 1 within the proposal. At this stage, a nominal figure has been included in the funding package in the absence of a development scheme and appraisal. A sum of £6.0m for the Demonstration Exemplar is being sought from CLG. Additional grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) would be sought to achieve 50% affordable housing.

Corporate Priorities

17. The York Northwest area provides large brownfield development opportunities adjacent to the city centre. 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. The regeneration of this area will help to support all the corporate ambitions with a particular emphasis on reducing CO₂ emissions, providing more affordable homes and raising the city's profile to attract new inward investment and job opportunities.

Implications

18. Implications are as listed below:

- a) **Financial** The total cost of the scheme is estimated to be £6m which is also the level of funding sought from CLG. This will be fully funded from the government and there will be no additional budget requirement from the council. The potential costs to the council (for project management) in developing the exemplar scheme would therefore be reimbursed by the government. If the funding bid is not successful, these costs will not be incurred as the development will not be progressed.
- b) **Human Resources (HR)** The submission includes a bid for project management over a period of three years. This would primarily be used to fund additional staffing.
- c) **Equalities** None
- d) **Legal** The submission includes a bid for legal fees associated with the preparation of a memorandum of understanding between the City of York Council and Leeds City Region.
- e) **Crime and Disorder** None
- f) **Information Technology (IT)** None
- g) **Property** The proposal has been prepared in liaison with the sustainability officer dealing with corporate capital projects within Property.
- h) **Other** The proposal has been prepared in liaison with the council's sustainability officer within City Strategy.

Risk Management

- 19. A risk register is attached at Annex 3. This identifies the main risks from initial funding and planning phases to construction and implementation. Seven elements of the register are identified as being high risk. These include:
 - a) CLG offer does not cover funding gap for demonstration exemplar.
 - b) Inadequate funding for resources to prepare and deliver the scheme.
 - c) Planning consents delayed.
 - d) Adoption of core strategy delayed.
 - e) Delay to development programme.
 - f) Adverse market conditions.
 - g) Reputational risk.
- 20. Mitigation measure to reduce the level of risk are outlined. These include early identification of funding requirements and allocation of resources; progression of planning applications as early as possible with additional resources employed as necessary; and obtaining specialist property/market advice as appropriate throughout the process.

Recommendations

- 21. Members are asked to:
 - (1) Agree, subject to ABF's agreement, that the attached proposal is submitted for inclusion as part of the wider Leeds City Region bid to CLG for Urban Eco Settlement funding.

Reason: To ensure a proposal is put forward within the timescales given to the Leeds City Region.

Contact Details

Author:

Sue Houghton
York Northwest Project Manager

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Damon Copperthwaite
Assistant Director of City Development and Transport

Ann Ward/Ben Murphy
York Northwest Project Officers

Report Approved**Date** 09/07/09

Tel: (01904) 551375

Specialist Implications Officer(s): None**Wards Affected:** Acomb and Rural West York**For further information please contact the author of the report**

Background Papers

None

Appendices

- Annex 1 Draft Demonstration Exemplar Proposal for British Sugar
- Annex 2 Draft Programme
- Annex 3 Draft Risk Register