

**Cabinet**

**23 April 2014**

Report of the Director of City and Environmental Services

## **HIGH SPEED RAIL COLLEGE**

### **Summary**

1. On 7 March, Government launched a consultation on possible locations for the main site of a new High Speed Rail College, to concentrate on designing and delivering the high level skills needed for high speed rail and other major engineering projects of the future, including High Speed 2 (HS2).
2. Cabinet is asked to confirm City of York Council support for the response for York Central to be considered as a location for the college hub, and delegate authority for the finalisation and submission of a response to officers, working with Network Rail as the landowners.
3. This is an urgent item due to the deadline for submission of 30 April 2014.

### **Background**

4. Responses have been invited by the Government to a consultation on the possible location of a new elite institution, focussed on designing and delivering the high level skills needed for high speed rail and other major engineering projects of the future. The college is expected to open its doors to students in 2017, and train the next generation of world class engineers for the construction of HS2, and future projects.
5. The college aims to deliver a tangible skills legacy that will serve the UK for the next century and continue the proud tradition the UK has for worldwide demand for its engineering expertise. It is expected that HS2 will create up to 2,000 apprentices during the

lifetime of construction. Once open, it is predicted that HS2 will underpin the delivery of 400,000 jobs.

6. The new college will have strong links to the national rail industry as well as a broader mix of construction and engineering firms, ensuring that students will have the skills employers are looking for when seeking to deliver big infrastructure projects such as HS2. It will provide the specialist training and qualifications needed for high speed rail and other future infrastructure projects across the country.
7. There are 7 criteria on which a decision about the college location will be based:
  - Ability to establish links with employers delivering to the rail industry in the locality
  - Ability to establish links with other providers in the locality
  - Ease of access for students
  - Supports the objective for HS2 to rebalance the economy
  - Size and availability of suitable site
  - Affordability and value for money
  - Support of partner bodies
8. Responses are made by landowners on a site basis, supported by industry, education providers and public sector bodies, rather than on a Local Enterprise Partnership or a Local Authority basis.
9. Network Rail is intending to put forward land at York Central as part of the consultation process which concludes on 30 April 2014.
10. Competition from other cities is expected to be intense; however, the case for locating the college in York is strong as it is already a national hub for employment and research in the rail industry. Within York, York Central provides the strongest site option available for the college, offering an outstanding and distinctive site for rail-related activity with excellent access and public transport connectivity. No other sites in York are being put forward.
11. The location of the site is expected to be announced in summer 2014.

## **Consultation**

12. Businesses and education providers in the city have been consulted on the location, and there is extensive support and momentum to back the York Central bid as a location and bring the college to York.
13. The Press are running a campaign to bring the college to York, engaging a range of stakeholders from secondary heads to business groups. Some examples of the support being received include Trevor Burton, head of Millthorpe School: “It will mean many opportunities for the young people of York to join the nation’s push for future prosperity and bring jobs and wealth to our city,” and Adam Sinclair, chairman of City Team York: “Anything that anchors the rail industry and its associated skills employment and future in the City of York has my unqualified backing and that of City Team York. It will also deliver focus and inspiration to thousands of young people in the coming years.”
14. There is also support from businesses and local authorities across the region, including Tata Steel, Henry Williams and Darlington Borough Council, and discussions underway with Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and Durham City Council. There is further work being undertaken with businesses and skills providers in the region to support the hub and spoke model of the proposed college, in collaboration with partner authorities along the East Coast Mainline and into West Yorkshire, and an engagement event has taken place at the National Railway Museum on 22 April.
15. In addition to this, there has also been public support from Local Enterprise Partnerships and MPs in the region. The weight of backing across sectors is significant, and will be a consideration in assessing bids.

## **Options**

- A) Support the submission of the York Central site for consideration as a location for the high speed college hub, and delegate authority for the finalisation and submission of a response to officers working with Network Rail

- B) Not provide Council support for York Central being put forward as a location for the high speed college hub.

## **Analysis**

16. York is ideally placed to compete and create not only local but also regional and national benefit from the opportunity arising for the location of a new high speed rail college. Not only does the city have a rich heritage within the rail sector, its current industry, connections and skills expertise, alongside the strengths of the proposed site, set it in an extremely competitive position against the criteria:
- a) **York is the largest city for the rail industry outside of London:** 10% of the national rail industry is in York itself, with 5,000 employees, more than double that of any other local authority area, and with major businesses such as Network Rail, Siemens, the National Railway Museum, Tata Steel on or adjacent to the proposed site. All aspects of the rail industry are featured in York, from Network Rail who provide the track infrastructure, to major train operators like East Coast and Northern Rail, and innovative engineering companies such as Omnicom and Trapeze Rail Group.
  - b) **Through its rail connections, York is also functions a hub for the largest connected rail cluster in the UK.** Within 45 minutes from York there is 14% of the UK's rail industry, including major businesses like Hitachi, Wabtec, DB Schenker, Henry Williams, Unipart and Trackwork.
  - c) **The strength of the site:** The York Central site is uniquely positioned and integrated with rail industry and infrastructure. The Network Rail owned site is unique in its location directly next to a railway station as connected as York. But not only this, the site also includes Network Rail headquarters, its largest training centre in the UK and the National Railway Museum as well as being located close to many other major rail companies.
  - d) **Connecting to existing regional rail skills expertise:** There are at least 12 leading skills providers with an engineering and/or rail specialism within 1 hour of York which could act as spokes for the college bringing capacity, niche expertise and progression opportunities. These include University of York, with specialism's

in safety and complex systems in rail, York College's Yorkshire Rail Academy, University of Leeds, University of Huddersfield Institute of Rail Research and Innovation Centre, Teesside University and Darlington College to name but a few.

- e) **A proven attractor of talent and a great place to study:** York is regarded the place Britons most want to live, which means it has a proven track record of attracting talent, and for people relocating to study, learn and work. With its rail strong connections, it also means that the travel to learn reach across a number of major cities is considerable.
  - f) **A strong choice for rebalancing the economy:** The college would act as a major catalyst for wider development of York's flagship development site and due to its position at the heart of the UK, the site would bring significant economic impact to both the city and the wider region, contributing significantly to the rebalancing of the economy in the North. It would also support identified issues of underemployment and productivity gaps within York's economy.
17. All this supports a strong pitch for York Central to be a compelling option for the new high speed rail college.
18. In relation to the benefits for the city, there are good reasons for Cabinet to support a York location for the new high speed rail college, most notably:
- a) **High level skills opportunities, and therefore job opportunities, for local people:** The new high speed rail elite institution will provide level 4 and level 5 qualifications with the aim of setting industry standards in rail and related engineering, delivered with the very best in teaching and specialist equipment. Given its direct link with industry, this institution will also provide a direct route into quality jobs in the construction of HS2, and longer term within the broader rail and engineering industries.
  - b) **Strong supply of talent for key rail businesses:** With an output of over 2,000 apprenticeships around HS2, and other industry specific skills providers, this would provide competitive advantage for local employers, such as Network Rail and Siemens, and a consistent supply chain of talent. Being located next to this source of talent would strengthen employers' ability to compete,

innovative and grow, bringing further jobs and economic growth to the city.

**c) An attractor of inward investment to the region:** The new high speed rail institution will have the investment, profile and supply of talent to be a significant attractor to potential inward investors. In competing on a national and international scale, the supply of high level skills from an elite institution would provide comparative advantage for businesses looking to locate in York, and further opportunities to create jobs and grow the economy.

**d) Growth and integration of a regional rail sector:** Bringing together the bid, and subsequent work in developing the college were it successful, provides a platform and focus for further synergies across businesses, skills providers and public sector partners with an interest in the rail industry in the region. This is an industry with a strong history and significant presence and employment within the city, so the college provides a further opportunity for developing this sector and maximising its growth. Given the industry by its very nature needs to have strong rail connections, the quick travel times between East Coast mainline hubs also provides the potential for further collaboration for mutual benefit and economic growth with other connected cities. Working together on this bid would be a good way of exploring this.

19. Locating the college on the York Central site will complement the commercial development ambitions for the site as set out in York's draft Local Plan, notwithstanding further consideration of full planning and site implications were the site shortlisted or submitted for planning permission.

### **Council Plan**

20. The high speed college being located in York is ideally positioned within Council Plan priorities. Were the bid successful, the college would help create jobs and grow the economy both directly and indirectly, as well as potentially contribute to getting development moving on York Central.

## Implications

21.

- **Financial** There are no financial implications at this stage of the process.
- **Human Resources (HR)** Officer time for supporting the bid will be managed within existing resources and responsibilities.
- **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.

## Risk Management

22. In supporting York Central at this stage, there is a risk of future discussions with government on the details of how the college will be funding or run, or in considering planning permission that locating the new high speed rail college at York Central is no longer seen as beneficial for City of York Council. However, this is low risk in terms of impact, as these considerations are likely to be taken forward through any discussions were the bid shortlisted, with implications highlighted with Cabinet as necessary, and firm business cases explored when further detail is released by the Government.
23. Were the response not to be supported, given the widespread support from businesses and education providers, there is the risk of the perceptions of City of York Council and the York Central site being detrimental to development and economic growth in the city going forward.

## Recommendations

24. Members are asked to consider:

- 1) supporting for the response for York Central to be considered as a location for the hub of the new High Speed Rail college, and delegate authority for the finalisation and submission of a response to officers, working with Network Rail as the landowners.

Reason: It supports the potential creation of jobs and growth of one of the city's key economic sectors.

## Contact Details

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**Report  
Approved**

**Date** *16 April 2014*

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**

*tick*

### **Annex A:**

The high speed rail college: consultation on possible location of main site (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills)

### **Annex B:**

Business Register and Employment Survey data on rail related industry along HS2 line

**For further information please contact the author of the report**