

Executive

12 September 2006

Report of the Director of City Strategy

York Central Area Action Plan

Summary

1. Following the recent announcement by British Sugar to close their sugar beet operations at Plantation Drive in York, Members' approval is sought to put on hold work on the York Central Area Action Plan (AAP). Discussions with British Sugar will need to be undertaken to clarify their intentions for the future use of the site. Subject to the outcome of these discussions, the implications for the planning context for the York Central area and York Central AAP may need to be reassessed.

Background

2. At a meeting of the Executive on 7 March this year, Members agreed to the preparation of an Area Action Plan for York Central. At a further meeting on 11 July 2006, Members agreed a revised timetable to enable a shorter timescale for the preparation of the York Central Area Action Plan. Members also agreed to appoint planning consultants, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) to carry out the production of the first stage of work, the Issues and Options document. Yorkshire Forward has agreed to fully fund the costs of this work.
3. The current timescale for the work is to bring the draft Issues and Options document to a meeting of the Executive in October this year, with public consultation on this being held between November and January 2007.
4. Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners and sub consultants, Social Regeneration Consultants, have now been appointed, and work to prepare the Issues and Options document started this July.
5. A report was brought to the LDF Working Group on 31 July this year to enable Members' early consideration and comment on the scope of the emerging Issues and Options document, the Consultation Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and the draft Community Consultation Strategy.
6. On 4 July 2006, British Sugar announced its intention to close its plant at Plantation Drive in York.

Current Position

York Central Area Action Plan

7. Preparation of the draft Issues and Options document by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners is progressing to the project programme, with completion expected in mid September this year.
8. A draft Consultation Strategy has been produced by Social Regeneration Consultants. This has been the subject of public consultation to gain feedback on its content. The period for consultation is due to finish on 25 August 2006.

The first stage of consultation included:

- 3 workshop sessions with members and key stakeholders.
 - Production and delivery of 3,200 leaflets to households and business premises within the immediate York Central area. The draft consultation strategy and leaflets have also been made available for the public to view at 9 St Leonard's Place, the Guildhall and Central Library.
 - Inclusion of the draft consultation strategy on the updated York Central web site.
9. Work on a report summarising the comments received and suggested revisions to the Draft Strategy is currently being prepared.
 10. The Council have prepared a draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and this has been the subject of consultation over the last 5 weeks, in accordance with the requirements of the statutory process. Assessment of responses received and suggested amendments to the report are currently being undertaken.

British Sugar

11. The British Sugar site is located immediately to the north west of the York Central area close to the A59, Boroughbridge Road. The size of the site is approximately 39.5 ha (97.6 acres), including 2.9 ha of designated Open Space (the Bowling Green sports pitches). The area is currently used for industrial purposes within Use Class B2 and is in single ownership. The site abuts the potential transport corridor between the York Central site and the Outer Ring Road as set out in Policy YC 1 of the Development Control Draft Local Plan.

Key Issues

12. The British Sugar site is of a similar size to the developable area of York Central, which provides 37 ha of brownfield land. The total size of both sites will be in the region of 76 ha (189 acres). York Central has already been identified as providing a significant opportunity to accommodate future housing and

employment needs for the City. A plan showing the location of the two sites is appended at Annex 1.

13. If the British Sugar site were to become available, it would provide another major opportunity for development in the City. Due to the proximity of the two sites, however, it is apparent that each site would have a significant effect on the other site in terms of:
 - Viability.
 - The type and scale of development.
 - The environmental impact of adjoining areas and the wider city.
 - Transport infrastructure requirements and impact on the existing highway network.
 - Timescales for the implementation of each site.
 - Strategic benefit for the City.
14. In view of this, and the need to ensure the potential planning benefits for the wider city are maximised, it is evident that the planning context for the two sites should not be considered in isolation from each other. It is, therefore, suggested that work on the York Central Area Action Plan is put on hold until the position regarding the future intentions for the British Sugar site are known.
15. Pending the outcome of discussions with British Sugar, the possible options in respect of the planning context for both the York Central and British Sugar areas will need to be considered. In the event that there is a need to reconsider the overall comprehensive planning framework for both sites, a further report will be brought back to a future meeting of the Executive, setting out the resource and programme issues arising from the changed approach.

LDF Working Group

16. The LDF Working Group has already met to consider the documents outlined in paragraph 5 above. In view of the uncertainty caused by the announcement by British Sugar further reports to the LDF Working Group on 24 August and 26 September will not be brought before Members.

Consultation

17. The implication of putting work on the Area Action Plan on hold, will be that the public consultation which was planned in November 2006 to January 2007, will now not take place.

York Central Steering Board

18. Subject to members agreeing the recommendation as set out in paragraph 25 of this report, a paper will be taken for discussion by members of the York Central Steering Board at their next meeting on 22 September 2006.

Options

19. Members are asked to consider the following two options:
 - Option 1: to continue with the work on the York Central AAP.
 - Option 2: to put the work on the York Central AAP on hold until the position with the British Sugar site has been established. This is the preferred option.

Analysis

20. Should there be a need to reconsider the overall planning framework for both the York Central and British Sugar sites, to continue with work on the York Central AAP (Option 1) in isolation from the British Sugar site, could potentially be misleading and result in abortive costs.

Corporate Priorities

21. York Central provides a large brownfield development opportunity adjacent to the city centre. It will be an important area for future employment and housing needs within 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 and provides an opportunity for a flagship sustainable development.
22. The emergence of the British Sugar site for redevelopment will need to be assessed in terms of its strategic contribution in terms of future employment and housing needs in the City.

Implications

23. Implications are as listed below:
 - **Financial:** The issues and options stage of the AAP work is fully funded by Yorkshire Forward, who have been advised of the situation and that Members will consider the issues outlined above at this meeting. Officers will seek to negotiate a fee settlement based on work carried out, if this is required. There are no financial implications for the Council.
 - **Human Resources (HR):** There are no HR implications.
 - **Equalities:** There are no Equalities implications.
 - **Legal:** The Council has a contract with Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners to deliver the Issues and Options work for the AAP; however, Officers will seek to negotiate an early break in the contract if this is required.
 - **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

24. The approach suggested in this report would minimise potential costs to Yorkshire Forward should it be necessary to reconsider the planning approach for the area.

Recommendations

25. Members are asked to:

- 1) Agree to suspend work on the Area Action Plan pending discussions with British Sugar.

Reason: The It would be inappropriate to continue work on the AAP given the potential implications that the British Sugar site may have for the York Central area.

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Report Approved

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21.8.06

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For further information please contact the authors of the report.

Background Papers:

Report to the Local Development Framework Working Group, 31 July 2006

Report to Executive, 11 July 2006

Report to Executive, 7 March 2006

Annexes

Annex 1. Site Location Plan