

York Central Area Action Plan

The Community Consultation Strategy

December 2006



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social regeneration consultants

YORK CENTRAL AREA ACTION PLAN

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1. Introduction

1.1 The City of York Council (CYC) is in the process of preparing a Local Development Framework for the City, in line with new planning legislation. As part of this process an Area Action Plan (AAP) will be produced to guide new development and land use in the York Central area up to 2021. The initial requirement was to consider the key Issues and Options relating to the development of this area and CYC appointed Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners to carry out this work, which was undertaken during the summer of 2006.

1.2 Social Regeneration Consultants (SRC) was additionally appointed to produce and consult upon a Draft Community Consultation Strategy (CCS). This 'testing' phase also took place during the summer of 2006 and involved:

- a Community Audit which established a baseline assessment of the area
- a leaflet circulated to over 3000 residents and businesses in the area giving them up to date information, plus an opportunity to give their views on the Draft CCS and the development of the site
- a series of workshops aimed at key stakeholders or interest groups, again allowing them an opportunity to give their views on the Draft CCS as well as the development of the site itself



The wheel lies on the edge of the site

1.3 The feedback from this initial consultation or 'testing' phase has been used to inform the revision and updating of the Draft CCS to produce this final document.

2. The Area Action Plan - Issues and Options

Background

2.1 The City of York Council has started work on a Core Strategy for York and an Issues and Options document for this Strategy has been consulted upon.

2.2 The Issues and Options report is the first stage in the preparation of an Area Action Plan for York Central. It will cover a range of issues with options relating to these. Consultation on this document and getting feedback from all those interested in the future of the area will be fundamental in taking forward the Area Action Plan to the next stages.

3. The Site



A view across the site

3.1 The York Central site is shown in the aerial view below. It includes both the railway station and National Railway Museum and essentially includes all the railway land in current and historic usage. Some are calling it 'the teardrop' site because of its shape.



St.Peters Quarter

National Railway Museum

Railway Station

3.2 The area is a 'brownfield' site close to the established City Centre and comprises a mixture of uses. Much of it is redundant railway land, buildings and sidings which provide a major redevelopment opportunity. There is approximately 35 hectares of developable land, providing an opportunity for a mixed-use scheme. This might include, for example, housing, offices, community and leisure uses amongst others. The site contains a number of listed buildings, the railway station and the National Railway Museum and existing housing developments, all of which would be retained and enhanced.

4. Background to community consultation

4.1 The Community Consultation Strategy (CCS) for the York Central Area must enable a range of communities and interests to participate fully in the planning approach and process developed in the Area Action Plan and its implementation.

4.2 It will engage communities (for the definition of communities, see below) in discussions about the future of the area whilst, at the same time, raising their understanding about the key strategic issues and opportunities and their capacity to involve themselves, as appropriate, in the overall planning process.

4.3 The approach to community consultation will use a definition of 'community' that is inclusive and applies to a number of differing interests. It will include those who currently live and / or work in the defined area, those adjacent to the area and those living, working and visiting the City who will clearly have an interest, albeit a less direct one, in the development of such a significant site. In terms of specific interests, the process will involve residents, businesses and commercial interests, community groups and voluntary organisations, service providers at local level as well as strategic level, and statutory consultees. This inclusive approach to community consultation will help to raise awareness of the planning process and the options available. It will aim to draw in all of the different residents, stakeholder and special interest groups in trying to develop a consensus on the way forward.

4.4 It will be important to recognise different interests, 'neighbourhood' differences within and adjacent to the area, the extent of past and current consultation work, and the strength of the social / community infrastructure in and around the area. This will involve working with existing representative structures, networks and forums where these are regarded as effective and inclusive.

4.5 An important element of the community consultation will be the inclusion of groups, which are often 'harder to reach' or 'rarely heard' through more informal consultation. This may include those with disabilities, young people and older people, and black and minority ethnic groups. This will enable discussions about the planning process and the potential outcomes with people who are not normally involved in any form of consultation / engagement activity. Staff who have experience and expertise in working with minority interest groups would be helpful in this consultation. A flexible approach will therefore be taken to ensure that local needs are met and everyone's voice has an opportunity to be heard.

4.6 The outcomes from the CCS must clearly relate to the overall strategy for the area and the technical issues arising during the Area Action Plan preparation if the process is to have real value and those involved are to feel that their views have been properly considered and incorporated. How communities 'feel' about the value of the consultation and engagement process will determine the level of positive engagement in, and to a large extent the sustainability of, the final outcomes.

4.7 This Strategy seeks to be realistic, practical and deliverable in terms of its outcomes. Whilst the community's expectations will inevitably be raised by discussions about the options for future investment and change, it will be important throughout the process to ensure that there is a close 'fit' between the technical work on developing options and preparing the AAP and local / City-wide expectations. Some degree of uncertainty is inevitable in any process of change, but it will be important to minimise this as far as possible, by providing clear and regular information to people as the process develops.

5. Key aims and objectives of the consultation

5.1 In particular, this Strategy aims to:

- actively engage the community in the preparation of the AAP, securing their full involvement in the process
- work within the strategic vision of York City Council, as well as building on and complementing current work in and around the area
- help develop an AAP which is high quality, sustainable, practical and deliverable and 'owned', as far as possible, by the local and wider communities
- place community consultation at the heart of the area action planning process and secure extensive support for the outcomes
- Comply with the nine principles outlined in the City of York Statement of Community Involvement

5.2 Finally, it is clear that a range of special interest groups exist which will have an interest in the York Central area. There will be a need, therefore, for an inclusive approach which is suitably sensitive, diplomatic and attempts to achieve equality and balance across a wide and varied range of interests.

6. The planning context

6.1 It will be essential that the CCS is fully integrated with, and meets all the requirements of, new planning legislation and detailed guidance as well as non-statutory provision. In this respect, it will be important to take particular account of the following government guidance:

- Community Involvement in Planning: the Government's objectives (ODPM 2004)
- Planning Policy Statement 1: delivering sustainable development (ODPM 2005)
- Planning Policy Statement 12: local development frameworks

- Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, 2005)
- Creating Local Development Frameworks: a companion guide to PPS12

6.2 The Community Consultation Strategy has been developed in accordance with the guidance set out in the above national policy documents and has paid particular attention to the government's principles for community involvement in planning, which are:

- community involvement that's appropriate to the level of planning
- 'front loading' of involvement
- using methods that are relevant to the community
- clear opportunities for continuing involvement as part of the programme
- transparency and accessibility
- planning for involvement

6.3 Additionally, there will need to be conformity with the Council's draft Statement of Community Involvement. This has been the subject of public consultation and it is anticipated that it will be submitted to the Government in January 2007.

6.4 This Strategy will ensure the approach taken will meet all of the current statutory requirements in its scope and scale. This will ensure that not only will consultation in the York Central area meet the requirements of the national planning system, but also of the Statement of Community Involvement for York.

7. The approach to developing the CCS

7.1 The development of this CCS has had three key elements:

7.2 **The first step was to provide a draft indicative Community Consultation Strategy**, including the range of approaches, techniques and mechanisms for community engagement.

7.3 **The second step was to test this indicative programme** through a short consultation process with representative groups covering key stakeholders and residents/businesses in the immediate area.

7.4 **The final step is the production of this final document**, which will effectively provide the strategy to get community feedback on the Area Action Plan, for subsequent implementation.

8. The Community Consultation Strategy (CCS)

8.1 The CCS is targeted on three main audiences, in order of priority:



Existing site interests include residents already living in the area

- **existing site interests** - those currently with a direct interest in the area, living, working, ownership, etc.
- **adjacent site interests** - those with interests around the site within a defined radius
- **the rest of the City** - those who live and work in York and who have an interest in the development of the area, including special interest groups

8.2 The CCS takes an approach which is inclusive and comprehensive, whilst also being realistic and practical. Through a tried and tested range of methods, it provides an

approach which results in a mixture of qualitative (perceptions and views) and quantitative (facts and figures) information.

8.3 Based on comments received during the testing phase, the Strategy now includes a number of general principles as follows:

- to make sure that hard copies of key documents and feedback material are available in public buildings, as well as being available on the York Central website
- to avoid carrying out public consultation during the main holiday periods of summer and Christmas
- to consider a range of venues for meetings and events that might include schools and supermarkets for example
- to ensure that the translation languages are put on the front or inside the front cover of each document rather than at the end
- to provide free post address as part of subsequent leaflet drops that invite people to make comment
- make improvements to the York Central website to make it more accessible and easier to find the relevant documents
- ensure a flexible approach to consultation involving a variety of techniques and approaches to ensure that the process as inclusive as possible

Stage 1 – preparation

Community audit

8.4 It is always vital that there is the right information to carry out a successful consultation process. A Community Audit was carried out as part of the testing phase, although this will need to be reviewed and updated as appropriate. The Audit involved gathering information on the area, an assessment of interests, previous consultation, community networks and other relevant information from key agencies and organisations. It includes a core list of stakeholders and interests for consultation.

Communications strategy

8.5 A clear, consistent and inclusive Communications Strategy will be needed as part of the CCS. This will cover the ways in which information about the process and the generation of responses will be handled. Methods could include leaflets, posters, press releases, questionnaires / surveys, Council newsletter 'Your City' and websites. For example, information on the Council's websites (and others as appropriate) in interactive form (i.e. enabling people to post their views and concerns and register interest), posters in public places, information through schools, places of worship, health centres, Council receptions and libraries, and articles in the local press and media.

8.6 Material may need to be translated into other relevant languages and made available in Braille, large print, audio and easy read, where appropriate. Early information should provide the background information on the AAP process, and outline when and how people can get involved. It should also start to enthuse people, making them aware of and interested in the process. Later information would advertise / inform people about consultation events. The items referred to in section 8.3 above will also need to be taken into account.

Stage 2 – implementation

Stakeholder interviews and outreach

8.7 There will be a series of interviews with a range of organisations through (mainly) face-to-face discussions and (some) telephone interviews. These would include a wide range of organisations, agencies, groups and networks as defined within the interpretation of 'community' (see above).

8.8 The following list of stakeholders was identified in the Community Audit and reflects those groups that are directly based in the York Central area and the wider area covered by the two wards of Holgate and Micklegate:

- local schools
- resident groups
- key local churches / places of worship / faith

groups

- community centres
- councillors (in two wards)
- relevant representatives from York Pride
- other relevant council officers
- key local businesses / or representative body, e.g. Chamber of Commerce

8.9 A number of city wide bodies would also be consulted including:

- police
- Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)
- Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- disability groups
- York Racial Equality Network

8.10 Based upon the consultation in the 'testing' phase, these interviews could also potentially include, amongst others, the following groups

- sport / leisure groups
- York Property Forum
- York Professional Initiative
- the Local Strategic Partnership (Without Walls)
- city centre businesses via the City Centre Partnership

8.11 All would be carried out in confidence and no individual views accredited or referred to.

8.12 The aim would be to:

- outline the background to the AAP and the community consultation process
- enable feedback on the issues and options document
- establish key local concerns and issues
- begin to identify a shared vision for the area
- understand concerns, priorities and likely levels of engagement in the process

8.13 A short summary report of the outcomes from these interviews will need to be produced.

8.14 There will be a number of informal meetings and sessions with 'hard to reach' or 'rarely heard' groups in and around the area who may not normally attend workshops or engage in other ways (for example, young people and black and minority ethnic groups). This may involve attending meetings held in places of worship, at youth clubs, or attending social sessions (such as coffee mornings) for older or disabled people. A variety of techniques will be used including short questionnaires, informal group discussions, individual interviews and informal visioning and mapping exercises (Participatory Appraisal techniques).

Workshops

8.15 A number of workshops will be held in relation to the AAP. These will involve residents living within and adjacent to the site, business and commercial site interests, special interest groups and service providers with an interest in the site.

The purpose of these sessions will be to:

- explain the background to the AAP, the process and agreed timetable
- present the key elements of the Issues and Options Report

- build consensus around issues, opportunities, priorities and vision
- begin to discuss ideas and solutions to feed into the development of the preferred option(s)

8.16 These will be informal working sessions held in appropriate local venues at appropriate times. They may be separate meetings or could be arranged around existing forums or committees.

8.17 Each workshop will involve an initial presentation on the key issues and options, and the opportunities for change. The presentation would be followed by small group discussions. These discussions would be facilitated and a report back will be given at a plenary session at the end.

8.18 The workshops will use a variety of consultation techniques and visual material which might include:

- maps and plans
- photographs (including aerials and elevation montages)
- participatory appraisal, using diagrams and charts
- short questionnaires

8.19 The outcomes of each workshop will be written up as a feedback report in plain English and other relevant languages and would be circulated to all those who attended plus other agreed parties.

Exhibitions

8.20 From the feedback at the testing phase the recommended technique for wider consultation is by a road show event with an exhibition taken to different locations over the course of a week. Locations should include local supermarkets and schools. This would need to be publicised and a questionnaire would be used to gather views.

Final report

8.21 There will also be a number of presentations to officers / council members / York Central Landowner Group as part of the consultation process. A final report summarising the outcomes of consultation will be produced and consideration given to how the key findings will be disseminated.

9. Conclusions

9.1 This Strategy has emerged from community consultation in the initial stages of the development of an Area Action Plan for the York Central site. The Strategy is an inclusive and comprehensive approach that attempts to cover all legitimate interests within a given time period. The strategy has been developed following public consultation and should therefore be reflective of how the local community wishes to get involved in the process. The next stage will be consultation on the Issues and Options document itself.