

YORK NORTHWEST

Eco-district briefing report

Summary

1. The Government have identified a need for 3 million new homes in England to be delivered by 2021. The national Growth Point initiative and Eco-town programme have been established to promote and accelerate the delivery of new housing with a particular emphasis on sustainable development and affordable housing. York Northwest was identified as a priority location within the Leeds City Region (LCR) for new housing and was one of eight districts within the city region, which comprised a joint bid for New Growth Point (NGP) funding. Unfortunately, York Northwest, along with three other priority locations, did not meet the criteria for New Growth point funding.
2. In parallel with the bid for NGP funding, LCR Leaders also considered opportunities to locate an eco-town within the city region. However, as this was not considered to be an appropriate option, a dialogue has been opened up with the Government to consider alternative locations for 'urban eco settlements'. This has focussed on the priority locations identified in the NGP bid, and includes York Northwest. Discussions with CLG to date have been very positive and although York Northwest was not successful as a New Growth Point, it is considered that there is a significant opportunity to secure funding to support growth in this area.
3. This note briefly outlines the NGP and Eco-Town context and current position with York Northwest. The papers attached at Annex 1 and 2 provide further background to inform discussion by Members. A copy of the Urban Eco* Settlements proposal, which was prepared to complement the Leeds City Region New Growth Points Package, is available in the Members Library.

Background

Growth Point Initiative

4. The Growth Point Initiative was announced in December 2005. It is a cross government initiative aimed at supporting local communities who wish to pursue sustainable, strategic growth proposals, including new housing. It is a partnership between local partners and central government.
5. A city region New Growth Point bid was submitted to Government in October 2007 as part of the second round Growth Points Programme. This identified a

'package' of eight priority regeneration locations, where infrastructure and other constraints were impeding housing development and the delivery of city region housing affordability and regeneration ambitions.

6. In July 2008, LCR was identified as one of 20 successful Growth Points, however, of the eight priority locations, only the four districts (Barnsley, Craven, Calderdale and Wakefield) which agreed levels of housing over and above the RSS figures, were considered eligible to access Growth Point funding. Aire Valley, Leeds; Bradford-Shipley Canal Corridor; York Northwest and North Kirklees/South Dewsbury were not successful.
7. The LCR secretariat has been working with Local Authority partners to prepare the City Region NGP Programme of Development (PoD) for the four successful districts of Barnsley, Calderdale, Craven and Wakefield, although Craven have subsequently withdrawn from the bid.

Eco-Town Programme

8. The Eco-town programme aims to deliver exemplar sustainable new towns of between 5,000 and 20,000 homes in large scale, free standing new settlements. The eco-towns concept includes development to be zero carbon development, be an exemplar in at least one area of environmental technology, provide between 30% and 50% affordable housing and provide good public transport links.
9. A study was commissioned by LCR Leaders to look at opportunities for an eco town in the city region. Following completion of the study in June 2008, LCR Leaders resolved that there was not a suitable site for an eco town in the city region, nor did the concept of a freestanding eco town provide an appropriate solution to city region housing needs. LCR Leaders agreed instead, that the focus should be on delivering regeneration ambitions, particularly in the priority locations identified in the NGP bid.
10. A dialogue was opened up with the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Ministers to consider the four regeneration locations (including York Northwest) which were originally submitted as part of the New Growth Point package as viable alternatives to an eco town in the city region.

York Northwest – Proposal for an Urban Eco* Settlement

11. Initial proposals for a complementary package of four Urban Eco* Settlements (UES) at Aire Valley, Leeds; Bradford-Shipley Canal Corridor; York Northwest and North Kirklees/South Dewsbury have been prepared. The purpose of the UES proposal, which sits alongside and complements the NGP Programme of Development (PoD) for Barnsley, Calderdale and Wakefield, is to inform and enhance the discussions with CLG and Ministers. It is understood that a level of funding may be available early in the New Year, although discussions are still at an early stage.
12. The PoD and UES proposal were submitted to CLG at the end of October. Copies of both these documents, which are public documents, are available on request. A copy of the Urban Eco* Settlements proposal, has been placed in the Members Library.

13. The following principles have been identified by LCR partners as the basis for the Urban Eco*Settlement programme in the city region:
- 1) The city region 'urban eco settlements' programme will be at least as ambitious in sustainability terms as the eco town initiative.
 - 2) The proposals will prioritise major brownfield regeneration sites and locations that provide significant potential for pioneering on a large scale, high quality design and sustainable living principles to create new places that deliver truly integrated and sustainable living environments. These will seek to promote innovation in environmental technologies and be zero-carbon, offering the opportunity to be exemplars in design and environmental sustainability; provide a range of high quality services including innovative public transport infrastructure; enable access to jobs and the economic potential of the city region; and importantly, provide much needed affordable housing.
 - 3) In particular the programme will encourage and incentivise:
 - Walking and cycling;
 - Maximising public transport use;
 - Development of urban brownfield land;
 - Sustainability in building design and construction methods and materials which have a low environmental impact and minimise construction waste;
 - Application of advanced renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency measures;
 - High standards of water efficiency and use of sustainable urban drainage and waste water treatment systems;
 - Complementary mix of housing, employment, retail, 'social' development and green infrastructure;
 - Active community participation; and
 - The promotion of healthy living.
14. A strong commitment to sustainability principals will underpin the planned redevelopment of the York Northwest (YNW) area through the YNW Area Action Plan. These principals have been embraced from the inception of the project and are embodied in the draft vision and in three overarching objectives for the area.
15. The UES proposal for York Northwest included an initial sum of £65.5m with an emphasis on providing funding for green transport infrastructure and social infrastructure. This figure included funding to support the development of the A59 Park & Ride, the public transport interchange, pedestrian and cycle measures (including enhancement of existing and provision of new bridge links to the surrounding area) and provision of youth and sports facilities.

Next Steps

16. Subject to discussions with CLG, further detailed work to establish the eco credentials for each of the four UES locations and to take forward delivery of the sites will need to be undertaken. LCR Leaders are considering appointing consultants to carry out a study to look at the potential to fast-track one of the UES locations and discussions with senior civil servants and the relevant Chief Executives are ongoing.

17. In taking forward any proposals for an urban eco* settlement at York Northwest, it will be important to ensure that the landowners of the York Central (Network Rail, National Museum of Science and Industry/National Railway Museum and Yorkshire Forward) and British Sugar sites (Associated British Foods) are fully supportive of the initiative. A key consideration from the developer perspective will be the potential impact of compliance with 'eco principles' on development viability. Funding from this initiative could provide the opportunity to achieve higher standards of sustainability on a difficult to deliver brownfield site.

Options

18. There are no options available.

Corporate Priorities

19. 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 support the following corporate priorities,
- Increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport
 - Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the City
 - Improve the contribution that Science City York makes to economic prosperity

Implications

20. Implications are as listed below:
- **Financial** None.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** None
 - **Equalities** None
 - **Legal** None
 - **Crime and Disorder** None
 - **Information Technology (IT)** None
 - **Property** None
 - **Other** None

Risk Management

21. In compliance with the Councils risk management strategy, there are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

22. Members are asked to note the contents of this report which is provided for information purposes.

Contact Details

Author:

Sue Houghton
York Northwest Project Manager

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Bill Woolley
Director of City Strategy

Tel: (01904) 551375

Report Approved



Date 18.11.08

Specialist Implications Officer(s): None

All

Wards Affected: Holgate, Micklegate, Acomb and Rural West York

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Appendices

Appendix 1: Briefing Note York Northwest Eco Town Status (October 2008)

Appendix 2: Background Paper CLG Visit (7 November 2008)