

# YorkNorthwest

## An opportunity for an Urban Eco\* Settlement

### Background Paper

Department of Communities and Local Government  
Visit to York

7 November 2008

Department Communities and Local Government  
Visit to York 7.11.08

## Introduction

York Northwest was one of eight areas comprising a New Growth Point bid within the Leeds City Region, contributing approximately 20% of the overall housing growth in the bid. York Northwest is one of the four areas which form part of the Leeds City Region proposal for Urban Eco Settlement status, complementing the four Local Authority areas within the Leeds City Region which were identified as eligible for Growth Point funding.

Eco settlement status would build on extensive work that has already been carried out by City of York Council in the development of an Area Action Plan (AAP) to guide the redevelopment of the area through the Local Development Framework.

## Context

The York Northwest area lies immediately to the north and west of York's historic city centre and railway station. It comprises two significant and distinct brownfield sites: 'York Central' and 'British Sugar'. The sites are located on close proximity to each other in a corridor formed by the East Coast Main Line railway and the A59.

York Central comprises approximately 35ha of developable brownfield land. The site is bounded in its entirety by railway lines. Historically, York Central has been occupied by a broad mix of rail related operational uses and the site still houses some of these, as well as the National Railway Museum, residential properties and independent businesses. Social and green infrastructure for communities within and adjacent to York Central is severely lacking.

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The former British Sugar site is located immediately to the north and west of York Central, close to the A59 Boroughbridge Road, and again is bounded in part by operational railway lines. The size of the site is approximately 39.5ha. For the past 100 years the site has been used as a sugar refinery plant. Operations ceased in December 2007 and demolition works are currently in progress.



In recognition of its regional importance, York Northwest is designated a regionally significant investment priority within the Leeds City Region and York Sub Area in the 2008 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The importance of this strategic role is emphasised in terms of housing delivery at a local level by the limited availability of development sites within the city and the resultant pressure on the Greenbelt.

Due to the scale, complexity and proximity of the two sites comprising York Northwest, the council are preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) to guide the comprehensive redevelopment of the area. The AAP will play a strategic role in delivering key objectives in York's Sustainable Communities Strategy, Corporate Plan and emerging Core Strategy.

## Objectives

A strong commitment to sustainability principals will underpin the planned redevelopment of the York Northwest area through the AAP. 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.

### *Vision for York Northwest*

#### **York Northwest in 2026 will be....**

*A distinctive place of outstanding quality and sustainable design...*

*Well connected with the city and the wider region...*

*Contributing to the city's economic prosperity...*

*A vital and innovative addition to York...*

*Fostering new sustainable communities and enhancing quality of life for all.*

### *Strategic Objectives*

- To create new sustainable and inclusive communities which achieve the highest standards of sustainability throughout.
- To ensure the new community and development is fully integrated with existing communities, the surrounding area, city centre and region.
- To maximise a unique opportunity to contribute towards the overall economic prosperity of the city.

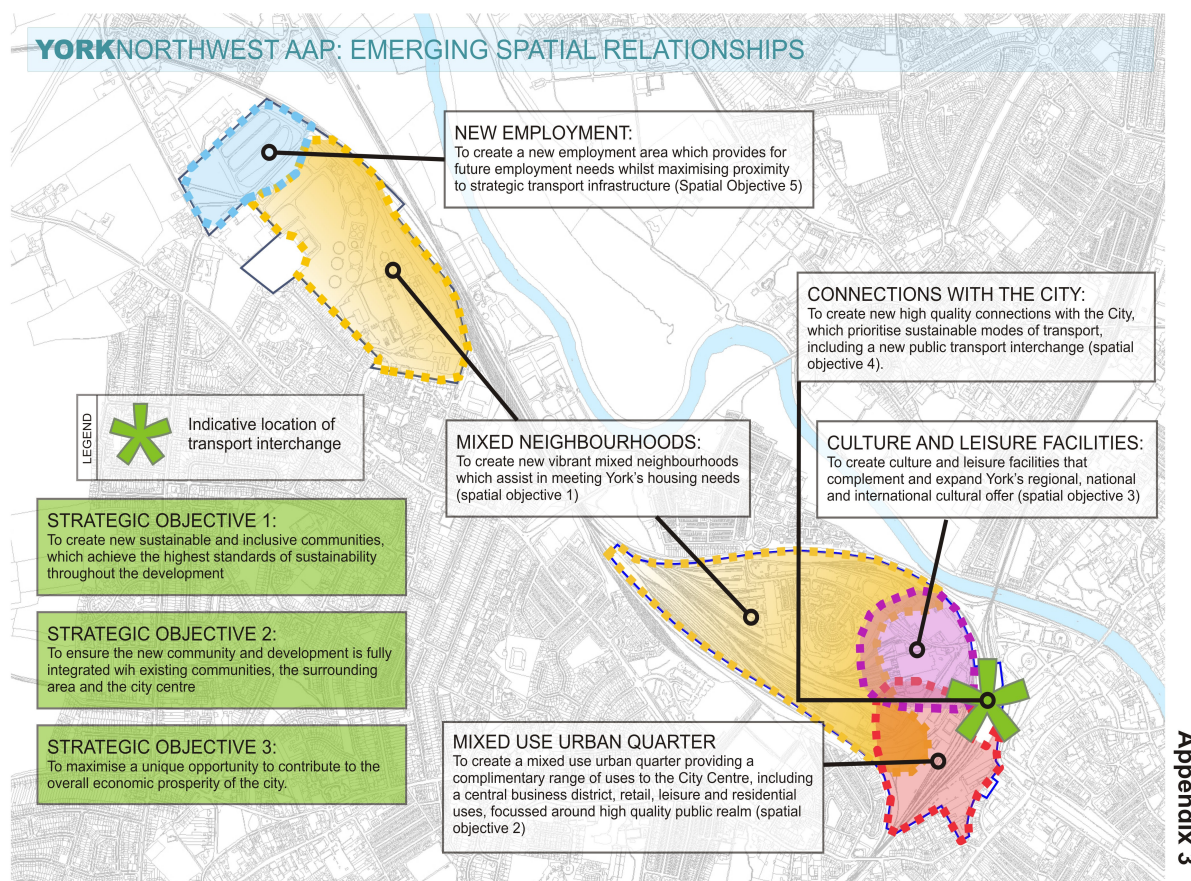
In addition to these overarching objectives, development objectives for the area will include the creation of:

#### **New mixed neighbourhoods which assist in meeting the housing needs of York:**

York Northwest offers a comprehensive development opportunity of unprecedented scale for York, which will enable the planning of new, mixed, sustainable communities to meet a broad range of York's housing needs and reduce pressure for urban expansion in Greenfield locations. The sites are currently estimated to yield 4,325 dwellings, equating to almost a third of the city's uncommitted housing growth until

2030. In line with current policy the council will seek to achieve 50% of units as affordable housing, in a variety of contexts from high density urban living to suburban family homes, and incorporating building for life standards and creative solutions to sheltered housing needs. The scale of the development also enables meaningful levels of community provision to be made, including healthcare, education and social/community facilities.

**A mixed use urban quarter providing a complementary range of uses to the city centre, including a new office quarter, retail, leisure and residential uses, focused around high quality public realm.** As a historic city, York is constrained in terms of future development opportunities. Highly sustainably located adjacent to the city centre, railway station and future transport interchange, with potential tram train, York Central offers an ideal location for a new urban quarter.



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**Connections that prioritise sustainable modes of transport, incorporating a new public transport interchange.** In 2006 City of York Council was assessed as excellent by the Department for Transport (DfT) for its Local Transport Plan. A key element of this was York's approach to sustainable transport modes. York Northwest is strategically well placed within the city to take this approach forward and implement an exemplar sustainable transport solution for the area, with cycling and walking at the top of the modal hierarchy.

## Progress to Date

**Anticipated date of adoption of AAP: 2010** It is anticipated that the York Northwest AAP will be adopted by City of York Council at the end of 2010. The AAP will provide the framework to guide subsequent master planning and planning applications for the area by developers. The Issues and Options stage of the AAP has been completed and testing of various development and transport scenarios is underway. The documents has been subject of statutory and non-statutory Sustainability Appraisal at key stages.

**Evidence Base work:** A substantial body of evidence base work has been produced by the council and stakeholders, including reports on land remediation and environmental issues, extensive transport studies and modelling work, city wide and site specific housing, retail, employment and open space studies and work to establish the future operational requirements of Network Rail.

**Infrastructure Provision:** Ongoing studies and discussions with key stakeholders including education providers, PCT, utilities providers, Highways Agency and Environment Agency, have enabled a more detailed understanding of what infrastructure will be required to support the development.

**Public Sector Funding:** A significant amount of public sector funding is being sought to help deliver development at York Northwest. This includes a £24m Major Scheme Bid

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(Phase 1) to deliver new and enhanced Park & Ride facilities, a £42m Major Scheme Bid for new and upgraded transport infrastructure, £40m Regional Development Agency infrastructure funding, £3.7m funding from the Cycling Demonstration Town initiative and a bid for over £5m for provision of Youth facilities from the 'Myplace' initiative.

**Work by Landowners:** Consultants working on behalf of the York Central landowners have completed feasibility work based around indicative masterplanning. The procurement process to appoint a developer for York Central commenced in July 2008 and it is anticipated that a developer will be appointed in Spring 2009. Associated British Foods (ABF) have appointed a development team who are progressing masterplanning for the British Sugar site. The intention is to prepare a the masterplan and planning application for the British Sugar site in parallel with the AAP process.

**Planning Applications:** It is anticipated that planning applications for both sites will be submitted in parallel with, or shortly after, adoption of the AAP. It is expected that housing will be delivered on the British Sugar site in the earlier phases of development as there are fewer barriers to delivery.

## Partnership

### York Central Steering Board

The council has been actively engaged with key stakeholders over a number of years to facilitate the development of York Central and the British Sugar site through the planning process. In view of the complexity of issues, the York Central Steering Board was set up in 2004 to provide a vehicle for high level strategic direction and resolution of overarching strategic issues under the direction of an independent chairman. Representation on the Steering Board currently comprises City of York Council, Yorkshire Forward, Network Rail, the National Museum of Science and Industry (the

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parent body of the National Railway Museum), Associated British Foods (the parent body of British Sugar) and National Express East Coast (who hold the franchise for York Railway Station).

It is expected that the Steering Board, or similar body, will continue after a developer has been appointed for York Central next spring, to provide a forum for discussion between parties at high level.

## Governance

It will be essential to ensure that appropriate management vehicles are established at an early stage in the development process to ensure that new and existing communities are actively involved and represented on an ongoing basis in development at both York Central and British Sugar. This will build on the communication/consultation framework which is already established to promote and active engagement with local residents and stakeholders as part of the AAP process.