

City of York Council
Examination of the City of York Local Plan
2017 – 2033

Phase 4 Hearings

Matter 2 – Universities and Colleges

Response by O'Neill Associates
on behalf of the University of York



Chartered Town Planning Consultants

City of York Local Plan Examination Phase 4: 12 September 2022

Matter 2 – University of York

This statement should be read in conjunction with the statement submitted in relation to Phase 3 Matter 2: Universities and Colleges, [HS/P3/M2/U&C/8b].

2.1 What are the needs of the University of York?

See the University's separate Statement

2.2 How many jobs are projected to be created by the University of York in the Plan period?

See the Expert Statement by Nicol Economics

2.3 Will that level of job creation have any consequent impact on the Plan's OAN for housing? This item is considered in the response to 2.2.

2.4 Does the Plan properly provide for the needs of the University?

1.1 The University's space needs are assessed in the submitted response to Matter 2.1; University job creation is assessed in the submitted response to matter 2.2, including mention of the impact of new jobs on local housing need.

1.2 The University's future development strategy is contained within its Integrated Infrastructure Plan, (IIP), adopted July 2022. This is a programme of priority projects, it is not an estates strategy attached to a masterplan. This is because activities and funding priorities are prone to shift over time, affected by issues such as Government policy, successes in funding bids and student recruitment. The IIP is intended to be implemented to meet short to medium term development needs over the next 6 years. The projects are based on campus west and east and the science park and are intended to utilise available development potential.

1.3 A set of campus plans accompany this statement to illustrate existing campus features, development constraints and committed development projects, (Appendix A).

- 01 Current Campus: indicates University boundaries and major features such as lakes, sports provision, buildings and neighbouring development
- 02 Trees and proposed Green Belt boundary: shows the extensive tree cover plus the very close proximity of the proposed Green Belt to the campuses

- 03 Constraints: identifies the Registered Park and Garden, Heslington conservation area, listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monument, the proposed Green Belt, the Yorkshire Water service reservoir and the main open spaces considered important in the landscape
- 04 Committed capital projects: Schemes, approved in July, are illustrated and identified with floorspace estimates
- 05 Future Projects 2022-2028: This illustrates all projects proposed over the next 6 years, including floorspace estimates
- 06 Possible development opportunities: These are based upon present expectations but are not fixed projects. On campus west, the Peninsular redevelopment involves removal and replacement of some of the 1960s CLASP student residences; the southern car park will be assessed for development potential. The campus east site 03 is available for development not yet committed

1.5 Additional space needs are planned to be met over the next 6 years by: -

- On campus west, renovation of buildings plus limited development and redevelopment within the heritage and other constraints
- On science park, repurposing buildings for university use and relocation of science park uses onto campus east, (see plan 05)
- On campus east, continued build out on available sites; limited infill development due to proposals mostly constituting large floorplate buildings. Redevelopment of existing buildings is not considered realistic or prudent given their recent construction.

1.6 The University is proposing to use this development potential to serve its needs for the IIP until 2028. By that time, it is anticipated that steps will have been taken to ensure that land allocated as ST27 would be available for occupation: i.e. the local plan will have been adopted, outline planning permission granted, infrastructure installed and reserved matters approved. Therefore, in the remaining 10 years of the plan period allocation ST27 is relied upon to cater for the vast majority of its development needs. On this basis, the Plan rightly provides for an extension site for campus east, ST27, which is supported by the University. The issue to address is whether the development potential of the proposed allocation is likely to be adequate.

1.7 The University's assessment of need post the IIP is based on a range of different student growth levels, (see 2.1 statement). If an annual growth of 1.5% to 2% is taken as the most likely range, then demand for additional land to accommodate such growth

beyond the present campuses is assessed as between 13.2 to 21.6ha, with land take for collaborative research projects additional. This is based upon the assumption that associated facilities which are not inappropriate development in Green Belt, such as an attenuation lake, sports pitches, boundary landscaping and lighting for pitches and access roads, would be able to be located within Green Belt, south of the proposed extension site.

This analysis raises questions, including the following:

- a) What is the development potential of the site ST27 as identified in the Plan?
- b) Is its allocation justified by need?
- c) Are off campus locations outside of the proposed Green Belt a realistic option to accommodate growth?
- d) Is the option of claiming very special circumstances for potential collaboration projects a realistic option for gaining planning permission?
- e) What is the development potential of the additional land proposed by the University?
- f) Is this justified by need?
- g) What are the implications for the University of its growth being inhibited?
- h) What are the implications of the University's growth being inhibited for the economic strategy in the Plan?¹

1.8 a) What is the development potential of the site ST27 as identified in the Plan?

Accurate measurement of ST27 is shown as 20.92ha, (plan 07 at Appendix B). Of this, it is considered that only 15.32ha is developable. A privately owned field of 1.3ha is discounted. Since the A64T running surface is approximately 2m above the ground level of ST27, the noise of heavy traffic travels across the site unhindered, so that a requirement to provide a wide acoustic and visual buffer zone to the A64T discounts another 4.3ha.

1.9 b) Is its allocation justified by need?

The 15.32ha would be adequate only if a student growth rate of 1.25% pa is assumed which gives a post 2028 space standard between 11.2 and 14.1ha and provides only 1.22ha of collaboration space, (Matter 2.1 statement table 2). Student growth of 1.5% pa to 2.0% pa are taken as the most likely rate, which gives an overall space need post

¹ U&C evidence HS/P3/M2/U&C/8b, page 10

2028 of between 18.2 and 26.6ha, (Matter 2.1 statement table 4). This is based on using the density limits in the policies of the submitted Plan.

The capacity is dependent upon the permitted densities and building heights, and it is understood that the Council is seeking that ED2, ED3 and SS22 should be limited by:

‘Proposals should preserve or enhance the historic setting of York and should be accompanied by a heritage impact assessment.’

Preserving (i.e. having no effect upon) the historic setting of the city would be likely to result in low densities and low rise buildings (on the existing campuses and the net developable area of the current ST27) and so would be unlikely to cater for the University’s development needs to 2038. An approach which sought to balance the public benefits of any development against any adverse effect upon the designated heritage assets of the city would be more consistent with National Policy.

1.10 c) Are off campus locations a realistic option to accommodate growth?

The proposed Green Belt boundaries are tightly drawn around the existing built form of the city save for a number of mostly housing allocations. No provision is made for safeguarded land to facilitate development beyond the plan period, and Green Belt boundaries are expected to ‘endure’ well beyond this time. The Council’s Heritage Topic Paper Update, September 2014, describes the city as a ‘dense urban area’ which would have Green Belt stretching up to the Council’s boundaries. Thus, any large alternative expansion site would need to be in a neighbouring Council’s area. An agreement would be required under the duty to co-operate, and none is in place to date with any neighbouring authority. To the contrary, there is an expectation that York will meet its own needs within its own area. Large brownfield sites in the city have largely been redeveloped: Terrys, a large section of the Nestlé factory, the former gasworks, the former glassworks, British Sugar. Any alternative site would need to be in Green Belt in these circumstances.

1.11 Satellite expansion sites were considered at the time of the campus east planning inquiry in 2006². The Inspector concluded at § 751:

“He was satisfied that there were no alternative sites suitable and viable for the development. Nor did he consider the disaggregation of the various elements of the proposed campus to be a practical or viable alternative.”

² APP/C2741/V/05/1189972, EX/OTH/25

This exercise has been renewed in the University's representations on the Submission Local Plan, (CD014U). Section 7 reports on Options considered for the Expansion of the University; §7.5 covers criteria considered for the selection of an expansion site and §7.6 reviews sites proposed for allocation in the Plan. None were suitable and available. Disaggregation not only has significant transport and staff retention implications but is grossly inefficient in terms of associated travelling time and costs, even if locations were available, which they are not.

1.12 d) Is the option of claiming very special circumstances for a potential collaboration project a realistic option for planning permission?

The process of bidding for funding for a research project or bidding to secure a funded project requires certainty on the statutory planning process that an allocated site provides. An opportunity to secure a major project in Green Belt could not provide that certainty and the planning process would normally be too lengthy to allow for permission to be secured. In any event fixing GB boundaries in the knowledge that they do not accommodate anticipated needs is the antithesis of a plan led system.

1.13 e) What is the development potential of the additional land proposed by the University?

The land to the west of ST27 that the University proposes should also be allocated for University expansion amounts to 9.95ha, giving a total of 25.27ha, (Plan 07 Appendix B). Again, land to the south could fall within Green Belt and would accommodate the attenuation lake, additional sports pitches, structural landscaping and essential lighting.

1.14 f) Is this justified by need?

The development needs for student growth of 1.5% to 2.0% pa shows a range of additional land required from 18.2ha to 26.6ha, (MIQ 2.1 table 4). At 25.27ha the majority of this growth could be accommodated including 5.0ha for collaboration space.

1.15 g) What are the implications for the University of its growth being inhibited?

A factor considered by the Inspector and endorsed by the Secretary of State was the consequences if planning permission were refused, (§177). The University stated at the time that if there was no growth, the University would decline. There would be some 4,500 jobs forgone and ... some 5,400 FTEs students would not benefit from a high quality education at the University.

These same factors are relevant today to consideration of the inhibition of the further expansion of the University, particularly in relation the negative implications on the

outstanding research teams to the lost research collaborations which may not be retained in the region or even the UK.

1.16 h) What are the implications of the University's growth being inhibited for the economic strategy in the Plan?

The Council's Economic Development Strategy 2016 includes 8 essential 'to dos' including three where the University has a direct role. These are to:

- Take practical steps to develop and retain talent in the city
- Deliver a local plan supporting a high value economy
- Drive real university and research-led growth in key sectors

1.17 The Council's Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy includes 5 themes of which three are directly linked to the University: -

- Building on York's strengths as an internationally renowned place including work with cultural, heritage and **digital/creative industries**
- Building upon the strengths in the **Bio- and Agri-tech sectors**
- Creating a city-wide network of **research and development** to harness the capabilities of our educational and research institutions

1.18 The note on the Economic role of the University of York in the City of York is included in the University's Phase 3 Matter 2 Hearings Statement Appendix e), [EX/HS/P3/M2/8b]. The Key conclusions include:

- 1) First, the University is a key asset and underpinning engine of the York Economy. This role is both on its own as a major employer with 4,500 FTE staff and, in collaboration with others, supporting several of York's key economic engines and future opportunities and as a source of highly skilled and paid workers.
- 2) Second, this role of the University is highlighted in local and sub-regional economic development plans and policies. Indeed, the draft Local Plan itself highlights the extremely important role of the University.
- 3) Third, the University has grown at a rate that has exceeded previous forecasts. Since the initial start of the development of the draft Local Plan (in 2013) the University has seen the number of students and staff rise by around 40% or 4% per annum on average over the nine years.

4) Fourth, its success is built on its world class teaching and research and the quality of its facilities and student experience. It has recently been placed in the top 10 universities in the Country for research.

5) Fifth, the University should be permitted to continue to grow in part as a result of developing new areas of teaching and research.

6) Sixth, it is worth noting that the latest economic forecasts used by the Council have seriously underestimated the likely growth in the education sector over the period 2017 to 2033. The evidence base being used for the Local Plan does not therefore build in adequately the growth that has already occurred at the University or is forecast to occur.

7) Seventh, the importance of future collaborations built around the University's research expertise with business and other research institutes. The University is entering a phase where new, large-scale University-industry collaborations are being developed and new regionally important opportunities are coming forward.

1.19 As pointed out elsewhere, although the draft Local Plan makes some provision for future expansion of the University, this is very significantly short of the space that will be needed if the University is to fulfil its anticipated growth over the plan period and beyond.

1.20 The emerging Plan includes policies ED1, ED2, ED3 and SS22 which are unquestionably in support of the expansion of the University. It is included as one of the five strategic employment sites in policy EC1.

2.5 Are Policies ED1-ED3 and EC1 effective as an approach to the University of York?

1.21 The response on the proposed revised policies as agreed with the Council is set out in Appendix D.

The nub of the disagreement is outlined in the Statement of Common Ground at Appendix E.

2.6 Is the 23% restriction on the developed footprint in Policy ED3 justified?

The 23% restriction was agreed by the Planning Inspector for the recovered application for campus east on the basis that this was appropriate for a site adjacent to the open countryside. It is now proposed by the Council that the 23% be replaced policies

optimising densities but within the scope of applicable constraints such as heritage context.

1.21 Outline planning permission restricts development densities to 23%. Loss of the 23% restriction is supported providing revised policies are appropriate to conserve the landscape dominated character of the campus, as agreed by the SoS. The campus is on the edge of the urban area, adjacent to open countryside and the Green Belt, so that an urban city centre type density would be inappropriate. Nonetheless a blanket preclusion on increasing densities and using land more efficiently in preference to greenfield land based upon an arbitrary percentage is considered unsupportable.

2.7 *Is Policy SS22 (ST27) soundly based?*

The revised policies as agreed with the Council are set out in Appendix D.

The nub of the disagreement is outlined in the Statement of Common Ground at Appendix E.

2.8 *Will it be sufficient for the needs of the University of York?*

1.22 No, for the reasons explained above. The ability to predict accurately over the plan period is necessarily difficult, but the extent of the land within policy ST27, even with a greater degree of flexibility within the existing campuses, remains inadequate. That is particularly the case in the absence of safeguarded land for the period after the end of the plan period, if it is expected that Green Belt boundaries are intended to endure.

2.9 *Is the 23% restriction on developed footprint in Policy SS22 justified?*

1.23 No, an arbitrary figure undermines Government intention to make efficient use of land, albeit it is recognised that the extension site is on the edge of open countryside, where a high density urban campus not appropriate. A development brief is required in order to confirm constraints and objectives for this area and to then clarify appropriate densities.

2.10 *Is the approach of the Plan to the University of York justified in Green Belt terms (whether in terms of Green Belt boundaries, or ‘washing over’)?*

1.24 The proposed Green Belt boundaries to campus west are acceptable.

The proposed boundaries to campus east are not acceptable. They intrude into the area of the outline consent and the consented design brief and masterplan. The design brief and masterplan is the appropriate method of implementing the outline consent.

The narrow green buffer on the northern side of campus east, adjacent to Field Lane, is surrounded by development on three sides and it does not fulfil a Green Belt purpose. It is protected by the approved design brief and masterplan, designating the area as landscape.

The eastern boundary of campus east incorporates a consented 500 vehicle car park south of the Park and Ride site, which is shown included in the Green Belt. The appropriate boundary is that of the outline consent, shown on submitted plan 01.

The western Green Belt boundary of campus east should align with the green wedge which exists to the north and south of the campus, shown on submitted plan 02.

1.25 The Green Belt boundaries proposed around extension site ST27 are not justified as they are not based on up to date evidence on the development needs of the University. They are not able to be permanent as required by National Guidance. There is no inclusion of safeguarded land to allow for expansion within the Plan period and beyond if required.

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30 August 2022

(UoY response to MIQs.V4.JO)