EIA Quality Mark Case Study

York Central

Purpose of the project:

York Central is one of the largest city brownfield regeneration sites in England, with some part of the area restricted to rail uses for more than 150 years. The 45-hectare site has been designated as a UK Government ‘Housing Zone’ and has also been awarded ‘Enterprise Zone’ status. Located adjacent to the city’s existing retail and business core, York Central offers a unique opportunity to create a series of new city centre residential and business neighbourhoods, with improved access to the city’s railway station.

Description of the project:

York Central is located to the west of York city centre, to the west of the East Coast Main Line. The site is predominantly brownfield land, with railway infrastructure and rail lines making up a significant part of the area, along with active business, industrial and storage uses. The site is constrained by the adjacent East Coast Main Line.
Outline planning permission with all matters reserved was sought for the redevelopment of the site to provide a mixed-use development with up to 379,729 m² GEA, including up to 2,500 homes and up to 87,693 m² commercial space.

**Key Issues:**

The outline nature of the planning application presented difficulties in relation to defining the basis of the assessment. This was compounded by the duration of the construction phase (anticipated to be a phased approach over up to 15 years), which meant interim assessment years based on partial build out were required.

Construction traffic was a particularly complex issue. Initially it was determined that only an assessment of operational traffic was required as this represented the worst case in terms of volume of traffic generated. However, due to the duration of construction and associated HGV movements, it was felt that this was a potential gap in the assessment. This required a number of assumptions to be made on the build out rate, type of development and volume of construction material to enable an estimate of construction traffic.

York’s historical importance was a key issue for York Central. Statutory consultees and the local community were keen that the scheme design retained it’s ‘Yorkness’ in regard to the heritage of York and the heritage value of the site itself. This resulted in a number of design iterations throughout EIA process to ensure ‘buy-in’ from key stakeholders.

**Lessons Learnt:**

Early and continued stakeholder communication was key to the success of York Central. Consultation with the local community and stakeholders commenced at an early stage of the project during the access selection and continued throughout the project. Given York’s historical importance, maintaining views across the city was a key focus of the design. To achieve this within a broad parameter approach at the outline stage, extensive consultation was held with Historic England to develop a set of parameter plans which set restrictions on the massing and height of future development to protect the important views.

Due to the existing uses on the site and location next to an active rail line, gaining access for baseline data gathering was restricted, particularly in relation to ground and archaeological investigations. To provide the local planning authority and statutory consultees with the comfort that appropriate investigations and mitigation would be undertaken prior to construction, management plans which set out the process to be followed once the site became accessible, were submitted with the ES. These management plans then formed conditions of the planning permission.

For the daylight assessment, a 3D model obtained from the council was used for an adjacent existing residential development. It was later found out that this model was produce during the planning for that development, rather than being an ‘as built’ model.
This consequently affected the accuracy of the daylight availability assessment as there was a difference between the number/locations of windows in the 3D model and the development that was built. The lesson learnt from this is to always to a ground truthing exercise to ensure existing baseline models are an accurate reflection of the baseline conditions.

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