

The North Yorkshire Council

5 March 2025

Permission to accept funding offer from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Report of the Assistant Director- Planning

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 That the Assistant Director- Resources authorises the acceptance of the grant in the sum of £70,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Alongside publication of a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024, the government announced financial support for local authorities intending to undertake a Green Belt review.
- 2.2 Following approval of the Corporate Director for Community Development on 17 January 2025, the council submitted an Expression of Interest for Green Belt review funding, and on 28 February received notification that the bid had been successful. This report seeks authority to accept the funds offered.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following publication of a new NPPF in December 2024, the government announced financial support for local authorities intending to undertake a Green Belt review. As set out in "[Funding to support local authorities with the costs of local plan delivery and Green Belt reviews - GOV.UK](#)", authorities were invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a share of the available funding (up to a maximum of £70,000 per local authority).
- 3.2 Allied to the government's commitment to delivering 1.5 million new homes across the country over the next 5 years, the new NPPF introduced changes to the way in which the overall housing needs of an area should be calculated. The changes have resulted in a significant uplift to the number of homes that must be delivered annually within North Yorkshire, rising from 2315 homes (combined extant Local Plan targets) to 4077 homes per year. For context, the average delivery rate across the county over the last 10 years was 2800 homes per year. Planning to meet these numbers in a coordinated and sustainable manner – through the development of the North Yorkshire Local Plan – is expected to present a challenge.
- 3.3 The new NPPF also introduced changes to Green Belt policies. The fundamental aim of Green Belts is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and to achieve this, national policy severely restricts the type of development that can take place in the Green Belt. The extent of Green Belts are defined in strategic planning documents, such as Local Plans, where detailed boundaries are set out. In-line with the aim of Green Belts, national policy states that when reviewing and updating these plans, boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified.
- 3.4 Following updates to the NPPF, exceptional circumstances will now exist in all cases where an authority cannot meet its identified need for development through other means. Where this arises, authorities should review Green Belt boundaries in order to release land to meet needs

in full unless the review provides clear evidence that doing so would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

- 3.5 North Yorkshire includes land on the outer edges of two Green Belts- the “South and West Yorkshire Green Belt” and the “York Green Belt”. These are shown on Figure 1 below:

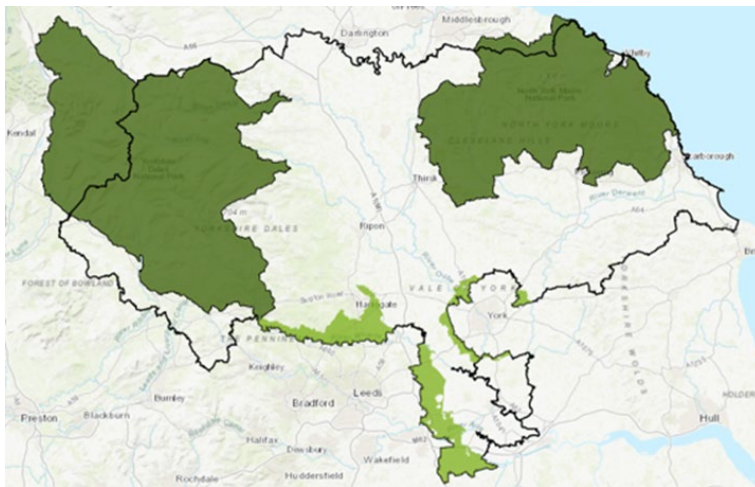


Figure 1: NYC area - black line; National Parks (outside Local Plan area) - dark green; Green Belts - light green

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF GREEN BELT REVIEW FUNDING OFFER

- 4.1 Information published alongside the invitation to bid for funding, referenced above, states that, *“Local authorities will be eligible for funding if they intend to undertake a Green Belt review to accommodate an increase in their local housing need announced in December 2024 alongside the wider changes to the NPPF, including those related to Green Belt release and grey belt.”*
- 4.2 As discussed in section three, the level of housing needed in North Yorkshire has increased significantly following the publication of the new NPPF, and while the delivery of new homes over the last 10 years has been strong, these levels still fall around 30% below the level now required to be accommodated in the local plan.
- 4.3 The North Yorkshire Local Plan will cover the whole North Yorkshire Council area, excluding land within the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks. It includes land within two Green Belts, as discussed in section three, which together total around 7% of the plan area.
- 4.4 As the local plan covers an extensive area, the overwhelming majority of which is not affected by Green Belt designations, land *outside* the Green Belt is likely to provide significant opportunities for development. However, not all land outside the Green Belt will be suitable for development. Constraints such as National Landscapes, protected environmental sites and areas at significant risk of flooding, which together cover extensive parts of the plan area, will provide strong reasons for restricting development. These, together with site-specific constraints, will reduce the potential for growth and may prevent development needs being fully accommodated, thereby automatically triggering the need for a Green Belt review.
- 4.5 At the current stage of plan preparation, with evidence gathering ongoing and the first stage of public consultation not yet reached, a definitive position (either way) on whether a Green Belt review will be required cannot be established. Therefore, at this stage, the only reasonable conclusion is that a Green Belt review *may* be required.

- 4.6 As work progresses and further evidence is produced the need for a Green Belt review will become better understood, although a definitive position may still not be possible until the plan is relatively advanced. However, in knowledge that a Green Belt review may be required and given that the higher levels of development required by NPPF will increase the likelihood, it is incumbent on the council to prepare for a potential review in order to prevent delays to overall plan production timescales.
- 4.7 To this end, early preparatory work facilitated through this funding could include establishing a clear and consistent methodology for undertaking more detailed assessment work at a later date, should this be required. In accordance with the funding guidance, the Council would have until the end of this financial year (end of March 2025) to submit proposals for how these funds received would be spent.
- 4.8 Following approval of the Corporate Director for Community Development on 17 January 2025, the council submitted an Expression of Interest for Green Belt review funding. On 28 February the council received notification that the bid has been successful with funds totalling £70,000 being offered.
- 4.9 Alongside the notification, the council received a Grant Determination letter. This sets out the Minister of State's determination as to the authorities to which a grant is to be paid and the amount of grant to be paid.
- 4.10 The Grant Determination also sets out that the Council shall at all times during and following the end of the Funding Period comply with the requirements of the 'Funded by UK Government branding manual' in relation funded activities and cease use of the Funded by UK Government logo on demand if directed to do so. This a standard requirement associated with receipt of government funding and is, therefore, not considered to present undue risk to the council.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 An alternative option of not accepting the funding offer has been considered but rejected. Where development needs cannot be met by other means, a Green Belt review is required by the recently updated NPPF and, therefore, should the need to undertake a review arise, it would do so regardless of whether the Council accepts this funding. The work would then be required to take place in order to produce a local plan that meets the tests of soundness. If the alternative option is pursued, the Council would have to fund this work through other mechanisms.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Grant Determination confirms that the grant will be non-ring fenced and therefore can be used to fund any of the activities associated with the Green Belt review. No specific guidance regarding monitoring or reporting the usage of the grant has been provided. The assumption is that this can be managed by a combination of Planning Officers and Finance Support.
- 6.2 No definitive date has been given for receiving funding, but it is likely to be prior to the year end. Officers will need to ensure they carry forward this Receipt in Advance (RIA) into 2025/26 where costs are going to be incurred.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Legal Services have reviewed the Grant Determination letter.

7.2 Any expenditure of the Grant will be in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and, if relevant, the Procurement Act 2023.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Equalities impact assessment (EIA) screening has been carried out and is included at Appendix A. This identifies that acceptance of the funds would not give rise to equalities impacts and concludes that a full EIA is not required.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Climate change impact assessment (CCIA) screening has been carried out and is included at Appendix B. This identifies that acceptance of the funds would not have climate or other environmental impacts and concludes that a full CCIA is not required.

10.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no policy implications associated with accepting the funding or with carrying out a Green Belt review as the work would provide evidence to inform the preparation of the local plan but would not itself make any changes to the Green Belt. Any changes to Green Belt boundaries would have to be proposed as part of the local plan and any policy implications would be fully considered within future supporting reports.

11.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 Following publication of a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), there has been a significant uplift in the number of homes that must be planned for in the North Yorkshire Local Plan. However, as large parts of the plan area are covered by constraints providing strong reasons for restricting development, accommodating these increased levels of development is expected to be challenging. Where development needs cannot be accommodated on land outside the Green Belt, the updated NPPF requires authorities to review Green Belt boundaries with the aim of releasing land to meet development needs.

11.2 Whilst a definitive position (either way) on the need for Green Belt land cannot be established at the current stage of plan making, it is incumbent on the council to prepare for a potential review in order to prevent delays to overall plan production timescales.

11.3 To this end, it is recommended that the funding now offered is accepted as this will enable work to take place without recourse to existing budgets. Work on a Green Belt review will not commit the council to amending Green Belt boundaries as this will require strong evidence that development needs cannot be met through other means. If this evidence exists, it will become apparent as local plan preparation advances at which point the Green Belt review will inform the further development of the plan.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- i) That the Assistant Director- Resources authorises the acceptance of the grant of £70,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) Screening.

Appendix B – Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA) Screening.

Nic Harne
Corporate Director – Community Development
County Hall
Northallerton
5 March 2025

Report Author – Matthew Lickes, Planning Policy and Place Manager
Presenter of Report – Matthew Lickes, Planning Policy and Place Manager

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

Initial equality impact assessment screening form			
This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.			
Directorate	Community Development		
Service area	Planning		
Proposal being screened	Permission to accept funding offer from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government		
Officer(s) carrying out screening	Matthew Lickes; Joe Varga		
What are you proposing to do?	That the Assistant Director- Resources authorises the acceptance of the grant in the sum of £70,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)		
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	To enable receipt of external funding to pay for preparation of evidence base to inform the development of the North Yorkshire Local Plan.		
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	No		
Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYC's additional agreed characteristics			
As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics? Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important? Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to? 			
If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be an adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your directorate representative for advice if you are in any doubt.			
Protected characteristic	Potential for adverse impact		Don't know/No info available
	Yes	No	
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Sex		X	
Race		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
Gender reassignment		X	
Religion or belief		X	
Pregnancy or maternity		X	
Marriage or civil partnership		X	
People in rural areas		X	
People on a low income		X	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		X	
Are from the Armed Forces Community		X	
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable	No		

impacts (for example, disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.				
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (for example, partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.	No			
Decision (Please tick one option)	EIA not relevant or proportionate:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Continue to full EIA:	
Reason for decision	<p>The receipt of and use of funds will not give rise to equalities impacts.</p> <p>The funding will pay for a Green Belt review that will identify sites that could be released from the Green Belt through boundary changes in order meet development needs (should this approach be required), whilst not fundamentally undermining the purposes of the remaining Green Belt.</p> <p>The review and its findings will be a piece of evidence to inform the preparation of the local plan but would not itself make any changes to the Green Belt or commit the council to doing so.</p> <p>If the council wishes to amend Green Belt boundaries following this work, this would need to be proposed in a local plan policy that would be subject to statutory consultation and independent examination. It is, therefore, considered that it would be the decision to include such a policy, rather than the decision to procure this evidence, that would give rise to any impacts.</p> <p>As such, inclusion of any such policy would need to go through equalities impact assessment screening and, if necessary, a full impact assessment. The outcome of this would then need to inform any final decision to include, amend or discard the policy.</p>			
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	Trevor Watson			
Date	5 March 2025			

Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment (Form created August 2021)

The intention of this document is to help the council to gain an initial understanding of the impact of a project or decision on the environment. This document should be completed in consultation with the supporting guidance. Dependent on this initial assessment you may need to go on to complete a full Climate Change Impact Assessment. The final document will be published as part of the decision-making process.

If you have any additional queries, which are not covered by the guidance please email climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk

Title of proposal	Permission to accept funding offer from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Brief description of proposal	That the Assistant Director- Resources authorises the acceptance of the grant in the sum of £70,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
Directorate	Community Development
Service area	Planning
Lead officer	Matthew Lickes, Planning Policy & Place Manager
Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the impact assessment	Hannah Nutsey, Climate Change Business Partner Joe Varga, Senior Policy and Place Officer

The chart below contains the main environmental factors to consider in your initial assessment – choose the appropriate option from the drop-down list for each one.

Remember to think about the following;

- Travel
- Construction
- Data storage
- Use of buildings
- Change of land use
- Opportunities for recycling and reuse

Environmental factor to consider	For the council	For the county	Overall
Greenhouse gas emissions	No effect on emissions	No Effect on emissions	No effect on emissions
Waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste
Water use	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage
Pollution (air, land, water, noise, light)	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution
Resilience to adverse weather/climate events (flooding, drought etc)	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience
Ecological effects (biodiversity, loss of habitat etc)	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology
Heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape

If any of these factors are likely to result in a negative or positive environmental impact then a full climate change impact assessment will be required. It is important that we capture information about both positive and negative impacts to aid the council in calculating its carbon footprint and environmental impact.

Decision (Please tick one option)	Full CCIA not relevant or proportionate:	X	Continue to full CCIA:	
Reason for decision	<p>The receipt of and use of funds will not have climate or other environmental impacts.</p> <p>The funding will pay for a Green Belt review that will identify sites that could be released from the Green Belt through boundary changes in order meet development needs (should this approach be required), whilst not fundamentally undermining the purposes of the remaining Green Belt.</p> <p>The review and its findings will be a piece of evidence to inform the preparation of the local plan but would not itself make any changes to the Green Belt or commit the council to doing so.</p> <p>If the council wishes to amend Green Belt boundaries following this work, this would need to be proposed in a local plan policy that would be subject to statutory consultation and independent examination. It is, therefore, considered that it would be the decision to include such a policy, rather than the decision to procure this evidence, that would give rise to any impacts.</p> <p>As such, inclusion of any such policy would need to go through a climate change impact assessment screening and if necessary, a full impact assessment. The outcome of this would then need to inform any final decision to include, amend or discard the policy.</p>			
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	Trevor Watson			
Date	5 March 2025			