

Development Committee

Thursday, 6th April, 2006

SPECIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCausland (Chairman);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors M. Browne, Crozier, Ekin, Kirkpatrick,
Smyth and Stoker.

Also attended: Councillors Adamson, D. Browne, Cobain, Ervine,
Jones, McCann, McCoubrey, Moore, Mullaghan
and Rodgers.

In attendance: Ms. M.T. McGivern, Director of Development;
Mr. K. Sutherland, Planning and Transport
Policy Manager; and
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Long.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

The Committee received a presentation on and considered a report regarding a Technical Amendment to the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendices referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Purpose of Report

To gain Committee and Council agreement on a formal response to the published Plan Amendment No1 to the BMAP Draft Plan November 2004.

Background

Planning Service published the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan in November 2004. The Draft Plan was open for consultation for an eight week period from the 30th November 2004 until the 25th January 2005. The objections were published to Draft BMAP on 7th September 2005 with an eight week consultation period until 2nd November 2005 to allow any counter objections to be submitted. Approximately 550 counter objections were received, the Department does not plan to publish the counter objections.

The Department published Plan Amendment No.1 to the Draft BMAP Plan on the 14th February 2006. Representations to Plan Amendment No.1 must be made to Planning Service by the 11th April 2006.

The Department published a plan amendment in order to reflect changes in the planning context and to address a number of omissions and inaccuracies that have been identified in the Draft Plan, the revisions include additions, changes and deletions to the plan proposals included in the Draft Plan published in November 2004.

Current Position

Plan Amendment No.1 comprises a written statement and accompanying maps. A summary of the Plan Amendment is attached in Appendix 2. The main elements of the Plan Amendment are as follows:

- Inclusion of Strategic Road Proposals Post 2015

Plan Amendment No. 1 includes additional strategic road schemes which are proposed to be implemented post 2015.

- Clarification Maps – Road Protection Corridors

Road Protection Corridors for road schemes and rapid transit schemes proposed in BMAP are included in Plan Amendment No. 1 showing the land take required to facilitate the implementation of the road scheme/rapid transit scheme.

Changes to Plan Proposals

Plan Proposals are amended to reflect changes in the planning context; to take account of Road/Rapid Transit Proposals including Road/Rapid Transit Protection Corridors. Omissions and inaccuracies have also been addressed in Plan

Implications for the Council

The report highlights the impact of the Plan Amendment No.1 on the following:

- Council owned land and operations that will be affected by the proposed amendments; and
- the amendments to proposals which address previous comments/objections made by the Council during the BMAP Draft plan consultation.

The suggested Council response to the Department is attached on Appendix 1.

Council Land

The following Council owned sites are affected by the amendments to include additional strategic road schemes and the clarification of the road protection lines for BMAP Road Schemes and Rapid Transit Schemes:

Site Affected	Draft BMAP Proposal
Victoria Park	BHA 09 Strategic Road Scheme A2 Sydenham By-pass BHA 11 the non strategic scheme – new junction on the A2
King George V Playing Fields	BHA 11 the non strategic scheme – new junction on the A2 BT13/01 Connsbank Link
Grampian Avenue Playground	BT 013/02 Hollywood Arches Bypass
Ballymacarrett Walkway	BT13/02 Hollywood Arches Bypass
Connswater Linear Park	BT 13/01 Connsbank Link
Hightown Road Cemetery	Proposal MNY 24 Non Strategic Road Scheme Hightown Road Link
City of Belfast Playing fields	Proposal PA 06 Strategic Road Scheme New junction on the M2 to the north of Sandyknowes
Gasworks Site	CC098 Non Strategic road Scheme City Centre Ring Southern Section including Bankmore Link CC098/01 Southern Section including Bankmore Link
Ormeau Avenue Car Park	CC098/01 Southern Section including Bankmore Link (impact dependent on option chosen)
Dundonald Cemetery	MCH 17 Rapid Transit Schemes Metropolitan Castlereagh MCH 17/01 EWAY
Lagan Lands East	BT 014 /03 Rapid Transit Schemes Belfast SuperRoute
Annadale Embankment	BT 014 /03 Rapid Transit Schemes Belfast SuperRoute
Annadale Allotments	BT 014 /03 Rapid Transit Schemes Belfast SuperRoute

Previous BMAP comments

Titanic Quarter

The Councils response to the Draft Plan raised the issue of the restrictions on building heights in certain zones in the Titanic Quarter area. They were concerned that the building heights proposed for Zone C / Zone D would not achieve visual prominence for the proposed Signature Project. The amendment states that some variance from the stipulated building heights will be considered against a number of criteria set out in the amended document.

CITI

The Council expressed a number of concerns on the proposed alignment of the CITI route in Draft BMAP. The Council requested that the alignment should be reconsidered to serve existing developments along Airport Road West including Shorts with a terminus at the proposed Tillysburn Rail halt, rather than running parallel to the existing heavy rail line. The Council also expressed concerns over the proposed crossing of the Musgrave Channel.

The Plan Amendment alters the alignment of the route within the Belfast City Airport boundary however amendment is minor and it stills runs parallel to the heavy rail line. The proposed crossing of the Musgrave Channel is included as the access point to Titanic Quarter but the alignment of CITI through Titanic Quarter area is no longer identified, this is to be considered as part of the Titanic Quarter Masterplan.

Access to Harbour Estate

Proposal BHA11 Non Strategic Road Scheme – New Junction on the A2

The Council requested clarification on the issues of access to the Harbour Estate. The Plan Amendment gives some further clarification on this proposal by indicating the actual land take required to facilitate the implementation of the new junction on the A2

Proposal BHA 09 Strategic Road Scheme A2 Sydenham By-pass / Proposal BHA11 Non Strategic Road Scheme – New Junction on the A2

The Council made a representation to Draft BMAP requesting further clarification on the impact on open space at Victoria Park / King George V Playing Fields arising from the proposed

improvements on the Sydenham by-pass. The Plan Amendment

No.1 gives clarification by indicating the actual land take required. However the Council also asked for mitigation of this loss of open space through improved vehicular and pedestrian access from Sydenham to Victoria Park to be included in the proposals, this has not been considered in the amendments.

Super Route

The Council previously commented on the proposed routing of the SuperRoute through open space areas as it appears unlikely that the proposed alignment will deliver its full potential, failing to take advantage of the available opportunities to the south of the city as well as impact on important landscape/historic areas such as the River Lagan Corridor and Belvior Park forest. The proposed alignment however remains unchanged in the Plan Amendment with the actual land take indicated.

New junction to the M2 to the north of Sandyknowes

The Council previously commented on the need to reconsider Park & Ride locations identified in Draft BMAP. The Council supports the principle of Park and Ride when appropriately implemented in locations where it can be integrated with public transport and intercept traffic before reaching identified bottlenecks, such as Sandyknowes. The Plan amendment identifies the actual land required for the implementation of the new junction at Sandyknowes but a formal Park and Ride is not identified in conjunction with this scheme.

City Centre Ring

The Council requested further information on the potential impact of the proposed City Centre Ring. The Plan Amendment No 1 provides a further explanation of the City Centre Ring – southern Section including Bankmore Link. (Proposal CC 098)

The plan amendment also revises the Key Site Requirements for a number of Development Opportunity sites in the city centre to state that 'development proposals shall facilitate the proposed City Centre Ring road' (Zoning CC054, Zoning CC 055, Zoning 056, Zoning CC057, Zoning CC071, Zoning 072)

Environmental Implications

To promote sustainable development throughout the City.

Equality Implications

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

1.2 To contribute to and influence the development of public policy

4.4 To ensure sustainable development

Recommendations

That the Committee consider the content of the appended document as a basis for discussion and agree an appropriate response for submission to the DoE Planning Service on the 11th April.”

The Planning and Transport Policy Manager drew the Committee's attention to various aspects of the report and, with the assistance of visual aids, explained in detail a number of the proposals contained within the Technical Amendment. He pointed out that the Amendment covered mainly transportation matters, although they had implications for a number of Council-owned sites.

During discussion, Members asked questions regarding various aspects of the proposals contained within the report and the proposed response from the Council. As a result of these comments, the Committee agreed to amend the response regarding a number of the proposals contained within the Technical Amendment.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the Council's response be as undernoted:

“Plan Amendment No.1 to the Draft Plan November 2004

In the absence of clarification or measures to address the concerns the issues identified should be considered objections to the amendment.

Council's Response

Proposal BHA 09 Strategic Road Scheme A2 Sydenham By-pass / Proposal BHA11 Non Strategic Road Scheme – New Junction on the A2

The Plan Amendment gives clarification on how the above proposals will impact on Victoria Park. The Council has serious concerns regarding the removal of a significant area of protected mud flats and mature tree species to the frontage of Victoria Park along with the impact on public facilities i.e. BMX tracks, playground, tennis courts, bowling green, performance space and public toilets and the loss of play provision at King George V Playing Fields. As a prerequisite, to mitigate against and minimise the loss of valuable space, the Council considers that a revised alternative location for the proposed junction and access roads

slightly further to the west of the Connswater River should be investigated. The Council also considers that the proposals should also incorporate provision for enhanced pedestrian and vehicular access to Victoria Park. The identified land take will increase the separation of the park from residential areas and to balance against the potential loss of open space facilities the opportunities should be taken to integrate improved access arrangements and to enhance the connections both between local communities in Sydenham and the development of Titanic Quarter.

BT 13/01 Connsbank Link

The Council has serious concerns regarding the loss of pitch provision within the King George V Playing Fields as there is currently pressure in this area to provide opportunities for formal recreation.

The implementation of the Connsbank Link proposal, as identified, will also result in the loss of a valuable natural asset of the Connswater River which is currently subject to the Connswater Linear Park proposal and identified as a community greenway within draft BMAP. The proposed roadway should either allow sufficient land to be retained for provision of this link or be designed with the incorporation of pedestrian/cycle access along the Connswater River and to allow for improved access to Victoria Park and the establishment of a greenway link through the east of the city.

CITI Route

The proposed alignment of the CITI route in the Plan Amendment does not address the Council concerns relating to the access for existing development in the Harbour Estate. The proposed access to Titanic Quarter across the Musgrave Channel is considered to be unsuitable due to the impact on existing buildings and the potential impact on the existing dry dock infrastructure. (See previous comments)

SuperRoute

The Council previously commented on the proposed routing of the SuperRoute through open space areas as it is unlikely to maximise its potential, failing to take advantage of higher density populations along the Saintfield Road/Ormeau Road corridor. The Council is disappointed to note the alignment in the Plan Amendment remains unchanged and would like to reiterate concerns in relation to the impact of the scheme on Annadale Embankment an important part of the Landscape Policy

Area and Belvoir Park Forest an historic demesne and an area of high importance for biodiversity. The public access to these open space resources are also likely affected by the transport corridor and the Council considers that the connections and crossing points should be integrated into the proposal. Further detail should also be provided on potential park and ride locations to service the proposed rapid transit route.

New junction to the M2 to the north of Sandyknowes

The Plan amendment identifies the actual land required for the implementation of the new junction at Sandyknowes but fails to integrate the provision with potential for a formal Park and Ride facility. In the absence of such provision in this locality the council would object to the proposed amendment.

Bankmore Link

The Council has a number of concerns in relation to the Bankmore link proposal. In August 2004, Belfast City Council declared four separate Air Quality Management Areas associated with road transport emissions (nitrogen dioxide – NO₂ and particulate material PM₁₀) and has developed with key partner organisations an action plan to improve the air quality within each of these areas. The four Air Quality Management areas are the M1 and Westlink, Ormeau Road, Upper Newtownards Road and Cromac Street area.

The Plan Amendment illustrates the actual land take required to implement the Bankmore link proposal which involves increasing the road network capacity in an area where there is residential accommodation within a city centre location. There is the potential that this development could lead to the declaration of a new air quality management area or to an extension of adjacent AQMAs on the Ormeau Road or Cromac Street. Indeed the development of this road may have a negative impact on the local residential accommodation as the new road would be much closer to the existing communities. This proposal is not supportive of the need to consider alternatives to increased road infrastructures and the potential for smarter choices as outlined in the Government White paper on *The future of Transport* and supported by the transportation unit of the DRD Roads Service. The Council would request that a detailed environmental impact assessment to be carried out on the proposal and extensive consultation to be carried out in the design of the proposal prior to the incorporation within this plan.

The Council have major concerns regarding the proposals to widen Hope Street, Bruce Street and Cromac Street to two lanes in both directions and the construction of the four lane carriageway between Dublin Road and the Cromac Street junction and the junction improvements proposed at Grosvenor Road Durham Street and Durham Street/ Albert Street/College Square. The proposal contains no details on pedestrian crossings and measures to both minimise adverse impacts on the businesses along the alignment and ensure accessibility. The Council would propose that consideration is given to a more traditional urban street pattern to ensure minimum impact on the surrounding communities is achieved with pedestrian priority, the potential for new development and consideration being given to accessing existing businesses.

The proposal will also result in a reduction in open space in the Cromac Street area which is likely to have further adverse impacts on the surrounding community. Consideration should also be given to incorporating measures to develop the main pedestrian/cycle entrance to Gasworks site and the connections to Lagan Tow path.

WWAY

The Council would like to reiterate previous concerns in relation to the proposed alignment of the WWAY Rapid Transit Scheme, in particular the loss of green space next to the Roden Street community and the impact on the Royal Victoria Hospital site. Although the proposal is in its early stages the Council believe further assessment is needed on the alignment of the route and which areas in the west of the city it will ultimately service.”

Chairman