

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Ms Eilish McGoldrick

Our reference EMcGGR280623

Email democraticservices@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date 21st September, 2023

Mr. A. Rafferty
DfI Project Manager ETP 2035
Department for Infrastructure
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST, BT2 8GB

Via email: anthony.rafferty@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Dear Mr. Rafferty,

City Growth & Regeneration Committee Presentation – BMTP Follow up issues and Technical queries

I would like to thank the Department for its presentation to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee on Wednesday 28th June 2023 and would take this opportunity to set out the queries raised at the Committee that the DfI would respond to, along with the more technical questions mentioned in relation to the BMTP and the proposed Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP). The agreement to respond to these additional queries is welcomed and the Committee recognises that Plans generally evolve over long time periods and note that the DfI have stated that the BMTP work is important to LDP progression. With the Plan Strategy adoption, the Council is now at a critical stage in developing the scope and content for the Local Policies Plan (LPP).

The queries and issues arising from the Committee discussion were as follows:

- Clarification of the relationship between the BMTP and the Belfast Cycle Network 2021 (BCN) / Delivery Plan 2022-31 and why there may be scenarios where the Cycle Network could be displaced and how the priorities would be balanced?
- Wider engagement opportunities including the provision of a presentation to the West Belfast Partnership Board?
- Detail of the funding commitments (percentage spend and actual amounts) committed to the BCN 2021/Delivery Plan and what could be the outcomes in terms of the clear quick, short terms 'wins'?

- How will the BMTP address implementation and inconsistencies such as the approach to some pedestrianisation e.g. Hill Street is intended to be pedestrianised yet still heavily used by taxis and other vehicles.
- How will the Department engage with the Committee on any draft City Centre proposal in advance of the plan being brought forward by the “end of the year”?

The more technical questions that members have in respect of the relationship between the different plans relate to the concept of what ‘support’ actually means regarding the emerging BMTP and LDP. These queries whilst more specific and technical in nature relate to issues being faced across the city and the agreement that these matters could be addressed in written response from the DfI is useful.

These more technical queries are obviously closely related to our Local Development Plan and have been discussed at a different committee meeting in relation to the Plan Strategy development and specific proposals. The issues and more specific technical queries are in relation to the following:

- the presentation on the BMTP was high level around the objectives and consultation but can DfI confirm that it can deliver the support for the LDP to meet the revised draft for the LPP Timetable (appended)?
- timescales are becoming more critical following the Plan Strategy adoption, are there specific elements that DfI are progressing for formal inclusion within our Local Policies Plan (LPP)?
- DfI as statutory transport authority has confirmed it is responsible for progressing specific transport initiatives that can have land use implications, but the Council will need confidence that the details of these can be provided in time and to a standard that will support formal inclusion within the LPP. These include:
 - review of parking standards and approach both for applications in different types of areas (arterial routes, city centre, residential areas etc) and for different uses (current standards date from 2005). This should also include reserved parking standards for those with disabilities;
 - review of the areas of parking restraint and basis for retention or modification (city centre core, fringe etc) for inclusion within the LPP;
 - confirmation of the approach to road protection lines and strategic proposals such as the York Street Interchange;
 - potential for resident parking schemes with areas of focus to be identified or included – the approach, implications for policy and specific areas for consideration;
 - car parking strategy inclusion within the BMTP process – previous commitment from Minister for a “Joint Approach” with councils;
 - capacity to effectively support for the assessment of zonings and allocations within the LPP; and
 - how will the BMTP take account of such plans or existing proposals such as the Queens Island Transport Plan to ensure they support both BMTP delivery and positively respond to developments or opportunities in the adjoining areas.

I note from correspondence received since the presentation that the Permanent Secretary has taken the decision to change the name of the BMTP to the Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) 2035. Whilst you have indicated that this followed stakeholder feedback and acknowledges the much wider geographical area it is difficult to see how this will contribute to any increase the level of community engagement as the focus appears to be more strategic or generic and loses the clear link to the city and surrounding area.

As outlined at the beginning of my letter, the presentation from the Department was welcomed and well-received, I look forward to future engagement as your proposals continue to develop. I thank you in anticipation for your response to the queries I have set out above and should you wish to discuss this matter and clarification further, please do not hesitate to contact Kate Bentley (bentleyk@belfastcity.gov.uk) as our officer representative on the Project Board for the Transport Plan.

Yours sincerely



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Democratic Services Officer

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