



## Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	DSD Retail Sequencing Policy
Date:	13 August 2008
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459 Pamela Davison Estates Surveyor, ext 3506

### Relevant Background Information

Members will recall that at the Development Committee meeting of 11 June 2008 they deferred consideration of a report regarding the Department for Social Development's Retail Sequencing Policy to enable further information to be circulated to all Members of Council. Members have received a copy of the Planning Advisory Report entitled 'Major Retail Led Redevelopment Proposals for Belfast City Centre' carried out on behalf of Belfast City Council by Dr. Tony Quinn of Braniff Associates. The Report was prepared to assist Committee consider their response to the request for support towards acceleration of the DSD sequencing policy on retail regeneration in the City centre.

### Key Issues

The Planning Advisory Report concluded that there will be capacity for another substantial retail development in Belfast City Centre some time in the future. This scheme will be in addition to the Royal Exchange scheme selected by DSD as the next major retail led regeneration scheme in Belfast City Centre. The analysis conducted for the Council would suggest that all spare capacity for additional floor space in Belfast City Centre has been exhausted by the opening of Victoria Square and the commitment to Royal Exchange. The evidence suggests that there will be no extra income in the population for retail expenditure until 2015.

The key statutory bodies are agreed that there is a need to encourage mixed – use development in the North West Quarter that is sympathetic to the historic streetscape and which enhances the permeability of the area. Westfield's presentation to Committee recognises the need for high levels of design within any future scheme.

Westfield have not yet submitted a planning application based on the presentation to Committee and are reluctant to commit to the expenditure on the fresh application without the certainty that DSD will set aside the sequencing of major retail led regeneration schemes. Westfield could extend and refurbish Castlecourt now by private land acquisition and submission of a planning application rather than wait for the support of the DSD's land assembly powers.

DSD have informed BCC officers that they would consider bringing forward a scheme at the Castlecourt site if it represented a major change in the retail offer in the city centre and created a significant point of difference, for example, similar to the John Lewis proposals for major new department stores in the city centres of Cardiff and Dublin. Westfield had a meeting on the 18 June 2008 with the Minister for Social Development Margaret Ritchie and Jackie Johnston of Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate. At a meeting with BCC officers on 9 July 2008, Cherton, who act on behalf of Westfield advised that the meeting with DSD was not encouraging.

#### **Resource Implications**

Asset – The Westfield Proposal will involve the relocation and disposal of the existing Smithfield Market.

Financial – The Westfield Proposal is a £150 million development in the North West Quarter of the City.

#### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to agree to a special Development Committee being held to update and inform Committee on the views and proposals of Westfield, Ewarts the developers of Royal Exchange and DSD. Members will have the opportunity to discuss further the implications of DSD retail sequencing policy in the light of current economic conditions and the need to create a competitive city. Westfield, Ewarts and DSD will be asked to make presentations to Members for consideration.

#### **Key to Abbreviations**

DSD - Department of Social Development  
Westfield - Westfield Shoppingtowns Limited  
BCC – Belfast City Council