



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Gasworks Fringe
Date:	15 October 2008
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470
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Relevant Background Information

A special Development Committee on 15 May 2007 approved the Gasworks Northern Fringe Masterplan Report prepared by Consarc Design Group.

The report concluded that the process of the development of these important City Centre lands would be beneficial to the City and the Council and recommended that a team should be appointed to establish a clear direction and consider a planning methodology which would deliver a Masterplan and Planning approval for the development of the site.

Committee in January 2008 agreed to Officers entering into negotiations with Inislyn the owners of the Radisson Hotel site in a one to one deal for sites C and D adjacent to the Hotel due to the potential to maximise the return on these sites to B.C.C.

An integrated design team was appointed in April 2008 under the Councils Consultancy Framework Agreements and Select Lists. The Lead Consultants and Architects are Consarc Design Group.

Key Issues

The design team and the City Council Officer team commenced activity in May 2008. A series of initial consultations with Planning Service, Roads Service and Northern Ireland Environment Agency have taken place.

Principally it has been confirmed that the only process which will deliver a satisfactory conclusion about the development process is a formal application for outline planning permission for the proposed development project.

Informal discussions with Planning Service have confirmed that the mixture of land uses comprising offices, hotel extension, multi-storey car park are unlikely to be challenged within Planning Service.

Early indications are that the issues which will require clarification and confirmation are vehicle access and permeability of the site specifically relating to a secondary access from Raphael Street.

Proposals for car parking provision will be carefully scrutinised in accordance with current guidelines and policy which are one space per 300 square metres for new developments.

Consultations with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency have established the need for site investigation works. RPS the environmental consultants for the project have estimated that the completion of these works would be in the region of £45,000 to £55,000. These works are essential as part of the appraisal process which will ultimately inform Council of the viability of the Gasworks expansion. BCC Project Management Unit have recommended that these works are tendered by invitation from a Select List. A budget notation of £1.550 m is provisionally included in the capital programme. Capital expenditure if agreed by Development Committee will be sent to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval in line with current Council procedures.

The Interim Progress Report, see **Appendix 1**, prepared by Consarc Design Group contains a full list of the reports, investigations and appraisals to be completed.

The design team will continue to work in close liaison with Council Officers and a further presentation of the proposals will be brought to Members for approval prior to further consultation with the local community and submission of a planning application.

Council Officers met with the Markets Development Association in October 2007 and discussed the Masterplan report and confirmed that further consultation would take place once Consultants were engaged and the development proposals progressed.

Resource Implications

Financial

At this stage Geo-Environmental site investigation works to be tendered by Select List estimated costs £45,000 - £55,000.

Asset

The redevelopment of 4.6 acres of Council land potentially extending to 7.02 acres if the visitors car park on the existing gasworks site and the redevelopment of the NIE site at Stewart Street are included.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the Interim Progress Report on the Gasworks Northern Fringe Project as attached in **Appendix 1**.
2. That Committee agree to request approval from the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to proceed with the tendering and appointment of Contractors to complete the Geo-environmental site investigation works as required by the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency. A budget notation of £1.5 m is provisionally included in the capital programme

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Gasworks Northern Fringe Project Interim Progress Report

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