



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Regional Development Strategy/Regional Transportation Strategy Reviews, Sprucefield Public Inquiry, the Belfast Masterplan Review, Transport Policy Update
Date:	12 August 2009
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Relevant Background Information

Update on the Regional Development Strategy / Regional Transportation Strategy Review

The review of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) was announced by the Minister for Regional Development in June 2008. Following the Department of Regional Development (DRD) stakeholder workshops in December, the Council submitted an initial written response which was approved by the Development Committee in February 2009.

The Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 was published in July 2002 outlining the strategic transportation investment priorities; potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives over the 10 year plan period. The Regional Transportation Strategy supports the RDS by defining the transportation vision for the Province and included a commitment to carry out a review.

Sprucefield Public Inquiry

In August 2008, Sprucefield Centre Ltd submitted a revised application for a significant retail development (including John Lewis Partnership) at Sprucefield. The proposed scheme will comprise: a John Lewis Department Store of 22,300 m² (covering four floors); 19 individual retail units with a total area of 22,500 m² (no more than four of the units to be less than 250 m² and the majority more than 500 m²); and 7 food units totalling 1,580 m².

Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce attended the Special Development Committee meeting in February 2009 to express their concerns in relation to the current

Sprucefield Centre application for further retail development. The Committee agreed to maintain the previously adopted position and submit an objection to the proposed development including a recommendation that the proposed development be subject to a public inquiry.

The Council submitted an objection to the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) reiterating the previously articulated position that the application would be considered contrary to both the current (RDS) and the proposed planning policies (BMAP) by virtue of the adverse implications for the existing retail centres and the future regeneration of Belfast and other adjoining centres.

The Department of Environment has requested the Planning Appeals Commission to conduct an Article 31 public inquiry for the purpose of considering the implication arising from the Sprucefield Centre Ltd application. The inquiry date has been set for Monday, 30th November 2009 at Park House, Great Victoria Street.

The Belfast Masterplan Review

The Council commissioned a masterplan for Belfast in 2003 to provide a framework for the development of Belfast for the period to 2020. The Belfast Masterplan was published in April 2004 and provided a strategic development framework for Belfast based on consideration of the economic, social and environmental issues in the City.

The adopted Belfast Masterplan provides the Council with a strategic vision for the future regeneration and growth of the City. The Masterplan also provided the basis for Council engagement in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan; the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan; strategic development sites such as Titanic Quarter and the various regeneration strategies published by the Department for Social Development. The analysis also supported Council regeneration initiatives such as 'Renewing the Routes'.

Transport Policy Review

The Council's revised Transport Policy was considered by the Development Committee in May 2009 and it was agreed that following ratification of the draft policy it would be formalised into a public document. During the consideration of the policy findings at the June 2009 Council meeting further clarification was sought on the specific issue of the proposed EWAY proposal for the Comber Greenway and the implications for the proposed Transport Policy.

Key Issues

Regional Development Strategy / Regional Transportation Strategy

The public consultation on the review of the Regional Development Strategy was expected to commence in Spring 2009, this has now been postponed. The Department for Regional Development recently announced that the public consultation will take place in Autumn 2009 and include a series of public workshops across the region. In the interim DRD have invited children and young people to submit a piece of artwork to represent their views on what NI will look like by 2035. The Regional Transportation Strategy also included a commitment to carry out a review and the Minister for Regional Development announced in April 2009 that this review will be carried out in Autumn 2009.

Sprucefield Public inquiry

In advance of the Public Inquiry, the Council is required to submit a statement of case

to the PAC by Friday 18th September 2009. The evidence is to be structured under the following topic headings:

- Economic benefits, severability and alternatives
- Impact on existing retail centres
- Impact on travel patterns, the road network and road safety
- Design, landscaping and visual impact
- Impact on the natural and built environment
- Impact on broadcasting and telecommunications
- Any other issues

The PAC will exchange the statements of case in the following week and the Council will have an opportunity to make comment on the other parties' cases. This rebuttal statement must be submitted to the PAC by Friday, 23rd October 2009.

The inquiry will commence at 10am on Monday, 30th November 2009 and the Council has responded to the PAC confirming that they will submit a statement of case and participate in the public inquiry. The approach to preparation and participation in the public inquiry will be to utilise internal resources supported by Dr Tony Quinn, the retail planning expert previously commissioned by the Council to provide specialist evidence. The legal representation will also be provided through the use of internal Council resources.

Belfast Masterplan

In the period since the formulation of the Masterplan in 2003/04 there has been considerable change to the economic, social and environmental context for the development of Belfast and the wider region. In addition, the proposed Review of Public Administration and the transfer of responsibilities including local land use planning and regeneration functions have altered the administrative context.

The five years since adoption have also seen the development of a number of new strategies including the City Centre Masterplans and the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks which the Department for Social Development commissioned for each of the five Partnership Board areas. This changing context and the emerging strategies for areas of the City have highlighted the need for the Council to have a coherent and up to date vision for the future development of Belfast.

The review of the current Belfast Masterplan offers the opportunity to revisit the strategic vision for the City. This review and updated strategic position would facilitate continued Council engagement with strategies such as the proposed Strategic Regeneration Frameworks and assist in influencing regeneration/development initiatives planned for the city.

The current departmental budgets include provision for the procurement of the Masterplan review. To initiate the project it is suggested that Committee approve an allocation of £70,000 towards the review and associated stakeholder consultation.

Transport Policy Review

The text of the agreed Transport Policy has been condensed to form the basis for a formal policy document and a copy is attached for information in Appendix 1.

Following the June 2009 Council, a meeting was convened to provide clarification in respect of the implications of the proposed policy in relation to the issues raised. Committee may wish to note that whilst the Transport Policy does not specifically

3. Formal Transport Policy document to be published.
Timeline October 2009 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Transport Policy

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