



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Gasworks Northern Fringe Presentation
Date:	11 November 2009
Reporting Officer:	Shirley McCay/Tim Husbands, Interim Co-Directors of Development
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Relevant Background Information

An integrated design team led by Consarc Design Group has been working since May 2008 on the preparation of an outline planning application for the Northern Fringe site which covers 6.7 acres of gross developable land, the last phase of the Gasworks Estate. Members agreed at the meeting of 16 September 2009 to receive a presentation from Consarc Design Group on the development proposals for this significant regeneration site.

Key Issues

Land Uses

Through discussions between the design team, the Council, the statutory consultees, and the neighbouring community, a Masterplan has evolved developed in cognisance of planning, transport, environment and contextual considerations. Five development sub-plot parcels have emerged to be identified in the presentation as sites A, B, C, D and E. A key objective of the plan is to ensure each parcel made a significant and individual contribution to the overall Gasworks complex.

Sites A and B bounded by Cromac Street and Raphael Street are designated as Gateway sites in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, occupying a pivotal landmark site and focal point on an arterial route into the city centre. Urban design guidance and discussions at the Dbmap (draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan) Inquiry indicated acceptable height ranges of between six and nine storeys. The buildings on site will accommodate offices and a carefully designed setback along Raphael Street addresses the relationship with the three existing dwellings.

Site C is at the rear of the existing hotel and will accommodate an extension to the

Radisson Hotel. Members agreed at Committee of 16 January 2008 to officers entering into negotiations with Inislyn, the developers of the Radisson SAS Hotel, in a one to one deal in order to maximise the potential of sites C and D. It is envisaged that this development block will evolve in a similar design to the existing hotel. It will accommodate bedrooms, meeting/function rooms and conference facilities. Site D accommodates an office development and multi-storey car-park for 300 plus relocated spaces.

The Estates Management Unit in the Core Improvement Team are leading negotiations with Inislyn. Land and Property Services (LP&S) have confirmed that Inislyn are best placed to realise the fullest potential of sites C and D through greater density of development by building adjacent to the existing hotel. Heads of terms are under negotiation between BCC and Inislyn and LP&S are instructed to confirm that any agreement between the parties brought before Members provides best value to Council.

Site E is located adjacent to the River Lagan and the Halifax building and has a distinct context. The development opportunity inspired the creation of an iconic river-front building with office use in two distinct structures interlinked into a high quality design. This layout and siting has been carefully designed to respect the existing residential properties on McAuley Street.

The Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) site adjoining the Northern Fringe lands remains on the market. However, in the current economic climate NIE are in no rush to sell. The Northern Fringe lands have been designed to ensure that in the future BCC may be in a position to influence the development on this site. Contamination-Part III of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, the enactment of which is impending, outlines the regulatory regime under which land and water contamination issues in Northern Ireland are assessed and managed. Discussions with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency have triggered a series of actions as a result of the proposed planning submission.

- A preliminary risk assessment of the site's historic usage to highlight potential contaminant sources and potential human health and environmental risks.
- Intrusive site investigation works.
- A quantitative contamination assessment.

Current emerging issues show that the subsoils are heavily impacted with contaminants throughout the soil profile with the most concentrated contaminants located within the top 6.0metres below ground level. Whilst a detailed risk assessment and detailed remedial strategy will be required, direct engagement with NIEA by BCC has begun to ascertain our statutory responsibility under legislation as yet enacted and also any retrospective liability for the existing Gasworks Estate.

Community Gain

The Asset Management Group are considering what options, if any, are available to BCC to provide" payback" to the local community from completion of the Gasworks Estate. Until the costs and liabilities of BCC are fully known in relation to the contamination issue no decision can yet be reached. However, if Members are satisfied with the development proposals as outlined by Consarc Design Group in their presentation, further engagement with the adjoining residents and the Markets Development Association will take place.

Resource Implications

Financial

A provisional asset valuation for the Gasworks Northern Fringe Lands of £6 million per acre at 1 April 2009.

Recommendations

1. Members are asked to approve the development proposals for the Gasworks Northern Fringe lands as presented by Consarc Design Group.
2. Members are asked to approve further engagement with the Markets Community Association and adjoining residents on the development proposals.
3. Members are also asked to note the contamination issue and that a further report will be brought back to Committee. Legal Services will be meeting with NIE to discuss the impacts of the yet to be enacted Part III of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 on the development of the Gasworks Northern Fringe lands.

Decision Tracking

Following approval by Committee of the development proposals and resolution of the contaminated land and community issues, an outline planning application will be submitted to Planning Service for the Gasworks Northern Fringe lands.

Timeline: April 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

Dbmap - draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan
BCC - Belfast City Council
MDA - Markets Development Association
LP&S – Land & Property Services

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