



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Bank Square Regeneration
Date:	12 May 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3470 Pamela Davison, Estates Surveyor, ext 3506

Relevant Background Information

Members received a presentation from the Forum for Alternative Belfast on 8 February 2010 regarding their proposals for the regeneration of Bank Square Belfast. Members were supportive of the forum's proposals and agreed that a letter be issued to Department for Social Development in this regard.

Members attended a presentation by RPS, DSD's consultants for the regeneration of Bank Square on 12 February 2010.

Members agreed at the Development Committee of 5 March 2010 to an all-party deputation from the Committee meeting with DSD, Westfield and the Chamber of Trade and Commerce to discuss Bank Square regeneration in the context of the proposals prepared by FAB and RPS. The meeting was held on 19 April 2010.

Key Issues

DSD's Westside Masterplan identifies the redevelopment of Bank Square as a priority ahead of the redevelopment of the North West Quarter. DSD are planning to make a firm bid for funding for the redevelopment of the square in the next Comprehensive Spending Round. DSD's intention was to have a scheme ready for submission to planning service by 31 March 2010 but have delayed their final steering group meeting and submission until Westfield's commitment to the FAB's proposal was ascertained and agreement with BCC on their design proposals.

Key to FAB's proposals for Bank Square was development on land owned by Westfield. At the meeting on 19 April 2010 both DSD and Westfield advised that they had met on 8 April 2010. Their agreed position was that it was not currently feasible to include Westfield's land in the regeneration of Bank Square.

DSD advised that when the redevelopment of CastleCourt takes place the entire service yard may be relocated but that there was no possibility currently of any alterations to the yard.

Westfield confirmed that due to fuel tanks located underground in the service yard there was very little room for manoeuvre for development in or around the existing yard. There are on average 150 vehicle movements a day in the yard. Westfield had considered FAB's proposals for retail units around the periphery of the service yard. Westfield confirmed that they did not consider that there would be successful commercial enterprises.

Westfield also confirmed that they would not be gifting any land to the city for the regeneration of the square.

Responding to Members' questions DSD confirmed that their proposals for upgrade of the square would require expenditure of £4-5 million and provide significant improvement to the area (details in appendix 1) they are committed to working with BCC on their proposals to ensure that there is an agreed plan submitted to planning service. Confirmation was given by DSD that there was no halfway house between the FAB proposal and RPS proposal.

Westfield confirmed that they would work with DSD on the treatment to the perimeter wall of the service yard and in particular to the development of a living wall to improve the environment and aesthetic quality of this boundary to the Square.

The reopening of Berry Street was not currently possible on the grounds of health and safety.

DSD were also asked by Members that the future and management use of the Square would be on a shared space basis and fully inclusive to all communities.

Given that the proposals put forward by FAB are not considered feasible by Westfield or DSD at this time, Members are requested to support DSD's original proposals as in Appendix 1.

Resource Implications

There are no major resource implications regarding this report.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to support DSD's proposals for the regeneration of Bank Square as detailed in Appendix 1 (RPS Bank Square Public Realm)

Decision Tracking

Subject to Committee agreement DSD are advised of Belfast City Council's support for their regeneration proposals for Bank Square.

Timeline: May 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

DSD – Department for Social Development BCC – Belfast City Council FAB – Forum for Alternative Belfast
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Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - RPS Bank Square Public Realm
