

Appendix 1

Draft Response

The Council generally supports the 'Belfast on the Move' proposals to promote sustainable transport options for the city centre. The proposal to reduce the amount of unnecessary through traffic in the city centre is welcomed, however, the measures must ensure the city centre remains accessible for leisure, shopping and business use. The increased priority for pedestrians and public transport in the city centre is supported along with the need to provide sufficient dedicated parking spaces for disabled people.

The Council considers a strategic approach to traffic management in Belfast is necessary to integrate the 'Belfast on the Move' city centre transport proposals with the rest of the city. The potential for displaced traffic from city centre streets to cause congestion elsewhere or create adverse impacts on residential communities should be continually monitored and managed.

In the consideration of this response to the specific 'Belfast On the Move' proposals it should be noted that the Council does not endorse the longer-term proposal for the completion of the southern section of the City Centre Ring (Bankmore Link). The Council in previous responses highlighted design concerns and the need to consider sustainable transport options such as the implementation of Rapid Transit, Park & Ride and expansion of Quality Bus Corridors prior to building new road infrastructure.

Parking and moving traffic offences in the city centre

The Council considers that enforcement of moving traffic offences will be critical for effective traffic management in the city centre. The enforcement of general traffic using bus lanes is needed to ensure the benefits of dedicated bus lane provision and changed priority are realised. Also the issue of traffic congestion at box junctions and illegal parking of taxis, tour buses and coaches should be enforced.

The current arrangements whereby the Police Service for Northern Ireland has responsibility for enforcing moving traffic offences with DRD responsible for parking offences may undermine the potential for coordinated action and effective management. The decriminalisation of moving traffic offences with single responsibility could ensure more effective enforcement of moving traffic offences in order to contribute to improvements in traffic management and road safety. The Council would strongly recommend that parallel actions are taken by DRD and PSNI to address this issue.

Cycling provision

The Council supports measures for dedicated off road cycle lanes and the use of bus lanes for cyclist. However, the introduction of one way traffic to a number of city centre streets may result in longer journeys in some circumstances for cyclist to reach city centre destinations. The Council would request consideration is given to the introduction of contra flow cycle lanes in proposed one way streets such as Donegall Place. In addition, the potential for cyclists to share pedestrian areas should be considered through the changing of regulations to facilitate appropriate opportunities.

Bus Routes

The Council would support measures to increase the number of through bus routes in the city and the reduction of bus layover in the city centre. These changes should be accompanied by further improvement to the Metro Bus Service along the arterial

routes and further development of Park & Ride to provide attractive alternatives to the private car.

Barrack Street area

The Council would support measures to restrict 'rat running' in the Barrack Street residential area.

Waste Collection and Street Cleansing issues

The Council's waste collection vehicles need to stop frequently along the carriageway the city centre in order to empty bins and collect waste. The refuse vehicles require full access in close proximity to where the bins or waste facilities are located as it not feasible, or safe to move large bins across roads in busy city centre traffic locations. Provision for waste collection vehicles to stop in the bus lanes for short periods to allow Council operatives to undertake statutory waste management functions should be included within design and enforcement regimes.

Council operations in the City Centre also require vehicular movements in all streets and any proposals to pedestrianise areas or restrict traffic should ensure access is maintained for Council vehicles including mechanical street sweeping vehicles.

St Georges Market

The traffic management proposals should ensure that market traders retain access to St George's Market to allow for unloading and loading of produce.

Disabled Access

The sustainable transport measures must be linked to the implementation plan of the Department for Social Development, Access and Mobility Study to ensure that the disabled community is not disadvantaged in accessing city centre services. Sufficient dedicated parking spaces for disabled people should be provided throughout the city centre.

Air Quality

The Council recognises that technical solutions to improving poor air quality are achievable through the reduction of the amount of traffic in the city centre, combined with measures to remove the most polluting vehicles from our roads and/or to keep them out of the city centre. Measures that promote the use of (clean) public transport, together with those that support low impact transportation such as cycling and walking assist in the improvement of the city centre environment. In relation to air quality, the Council would support the scheme to introduce 'Sustainable Transport Enabling Measures' in the city centre and it considers that there is the potential for positive outcomes in relation to air quality should this proposal be implemented. The Council would request that air quality issues are considered at all stages as part of the detailed planning process for this proposal and that the Council is kept informed on predicted impacts, particularly in relation to ambient levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter at relevant monitoring locations.

Longer Term proposals

The longer term measures include the proposal for the Bankmore link between Cromac Street and Hope Street. The Streets Ahead Phase 2 proposals link the full pedestrianisation of Donegall Place and the creation of an iconic square in the setting of the City Hall, to the development of the Bankmore Link.

Whilst the Council would support the further pedestrianisation of Donegall Place and an improved public realm setting for City Hall as suggested in the Streets Ahead Phase 2, there would be concerns in relation to the proposed link to the Bankmore

Inner-ring Road as the only mechanism to facilitate such future action. Further consideration should be given to sustainable transport options such as the implementation of Rapid Transit, park & ride schemes and expansion of Quality Bus Corridors prior to building new road infrastructure