



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Consultation - Draft Planning Policy Guidance 16 Tourism
Date:	16 March 2011
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Department of the Environment published a consultation document in November 2010 seeking views on the Draft Planning Policy Statement: PPS 16 Tourism. The proposed policy will introduce strategic planning guidance for tourism development in Northern Ireland.
1.2	Draft PPS 16 sets out the Department's proposed planning policy for both tourism development and the safeguarding of tourism assets. The aim of the PPS is to manage the provision of sustainable and high quality tourism developments in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment.
1.3	The Planning and Transport Unit has drafted a response with input from Council Departments to provide Belfast City Council with the opportunity to influence new strategic planning policy guidance on tourism development. Consultation responses should be submitted to the Department on or before the 25 March 2011.

2	Key Issues
2.1	It is widely recognised that the tourist industry is of major importance both at a national and local level generating economic prosperity and employment. Belfast plays an important tourism role as a 'gateway' to Northern Ireland and a destination in its own right. In 2009 there were 9.3 million visitor trips to Belfast and the value of direct tourism spend in Belfast City during 2009 was calculated as £451 million.

2.2	The production of new planning policy guidance for this important sector of the economy offers the opportunity to ensure the Department provides clear planning policy to support tourism developments both in the main urban areas and where appropriate in the countryside.
2.3	<p>A summary of the main policies in PPS 16 is outlined in Appendix 2. The draft document outlines the objectives of the policy as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To facilitate sustainable tourism development in an environmentally sensitive manner; - To safeguard tourism assets from inappropriate development; - To utilise and develop the tourism potential of settlements by facilitating tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale; - To sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale in rural areas; and - To ensure a high standard of quality and design for all tourism development.
2.4	<p>The proposed Council response is set out in Appendix 1 for consideration and a summary of the main issues are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The objective to ensure a high standard of quality and design for all tourism development should be welcomed also the need to safe guard tourism assets from inappropriate development. - The emphasis of the draft policies outlined in PPS 16 is on the regulation of tourism development rather than adopting a balanced or more proactive approach to the facilitation of development and the promotion of quality tourism proposals. A more balanced approach may be considered more appropriate. - The role of the development plan in tourist development is considered in the policy. The Council made representations during draft BMAP process for the plan to have a more proactive policy approach to tourist development in the city. In the absence of tourism opportunities being included in the current development plans it may be appropriate for the planning policy guidance to include a more proactive policy approach to tourist development to address this deficiency. - The draft policy asks for consideration on the role of local councils and their local tourism plans. The Council has prepared Belfast Tourism; Gateway to the future - an Integrated Strategic Framework for Belfast Tourism 2010-2014 and it would be recommended that PPS 16 makes reference to local council tourism plans to ensure they provide integration and guidance for tourist development in these areas. - The guidance specifically mentions rural tourism and the benefits of tourism to rural communities however the policy guidance lacks reference to the value of city tourism. The need for the inclusion of additional policy guidance for the promotion of city tourism and the potential regeneration benefits for local communities may be considered appropriate. - The draft policy removes the tourism need test for all new tourism development in the countryside and introduces the sequential test. Policies which gives greater clarity to the type of tourist development and amenities which will be permitted in the countryside should be welcomed where they integrate the consideration of proposals through sequential approaches.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	There are no resource implications

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are requested to consider the proposed response to the Consultation paper on Draft PPS 16 Tourism and if appropriate, agree a response to be submitted to DOE.

6	Decision Tracking
Further to agreement the final response will be submitted to DOE	
Timeline: 25 March 2011	
Reporting Officer: John McGrillen	

7	Key to Abbreviations
DOE – Department of the Environment	

8	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Draft Response	
Appendix 2 - Summary of Draft PPS 16 Tourism	

Appendix 1

Draft Response to Planning Policy Statement 16 Tourism

It is widely recognised that the tourist industry is of major importance both at a national and local level generating economic prosperity and employment. Trends including the growth of city breaks, conferences and the number of direct air access routes to Belfast demonstrate that tourism numbers to the Belfast Metropolitan Area have quadrupled since 2000. Belfast plays an important tourism role in being a 'gateway' to the rest of Northern Ireland. In 2009 they were 9.3million visitor trips to Belfast and the value of direct tourism spend in Belfast City during 2009 was calculated at £451 million.

3.0 Policy Objectives

'The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism' produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government states that "The planning system is crucial to ensuring the tourism industry can develop and thrive and the system should take a proactive role in facilitating and promoting the implementation of good quality developments to maximise economic, social and environmental benefits".

The emphasis of the draft policies outlined in PPS 16 is on the regulation of tourism development rather than adopting a balanced or more proactive approach to support development and the promotion of quality tourism proposals. The Council considers a more balanced approach would be more appropriate with linkages to local tourism plans where appropriate.

The objective to ensure a high standard of quality and design for all tourism development is welcomed also the need to safe guard tourism assets from inappropriate development.

4.0 The role of Development Plan

The consultation document states that the preparation of a development plan provides a key opportunity for planning authorities to consider how best to facilitate the growth of sustainable tourism in their areas. Whilst the lack of up to date plan coverage in Northern Ireland could offer potential for this to be included in future plans in the shorter term the current plans are unlikely to contain detailed tourism polices and proposals.

During the draft BMAP process, Belfast City Council made representatives to the Department requesting that BMAP should be proactive in identifying locations for future tourism facilities. In the absence of tourism opportunities being included in the local development plan it may be appropriate for the planning policy guidance to include a more proactive policy approach to tourist development or provision for supplementary guidance as interim guidance that provides a context for development and addresses the current deficit.

'The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism' (Department for Communities and Local Government) outlines examples of proactive approaches and suggests that local development plans consider preparing a hotel strategy in the larger urban areas that actively promotes sites to hotel developers. The Council considers this approach as appropriate for Belfast. New hotels in urban areas can add to the land use diversity and support the continued development of broader weekend and evening economies.

5.0 Consultation

The draft policy asks to what extent planning authorities should give consideration to how individual proposal will meet the objective of a tourist development plan for which Councils are responsible.

Belfast City Council has produced **Belfast Tourism; Gateway to the future** - an Integrated Strategic Framework for Belfast Tourism 2010-2014 in partnership with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and in consultation with stakeholders in both the private and public sector

Through this document, Belfast City Council sets out the plans and priorities for 2010-2014 as an Integrated Belfast Strategic Tourism Framework. The framework identifies a series of Tourism Place Destinations which should accommodate for a concentration of tourist related activity. The Council regard the framework as crucial to the city's development as a globally competitive sustainable tourism destination and will drive the opportunities and multiple benefits of tourism to community neighbourhoods across the city.

Consideration should be given to a mechanism for using the tourism frameworks in the planning of tourism development in particular in the absence of up to date local development plan coverage. The Council would recommend that PPS16 acknowledges the council's tourism development plans within the policy context as they will be a crucial in the implementation and interpretation of PPS 16 at a local level, this could be considered within a revised sequential approach.

6.0 Planning Polices

The guidance specifically mentions rural tourism and the benefits of tourism to rural communities however the narrative lacks reference to the value of urban or city tourism. Recent figures indicate that visits to Belfast city are worth up to £451 per year for the local economy, supporting up to 10,000 jobs in the greater Belfast area. In 2009, the city attracted 1.7m staying visits and 64,000 cruise passengers and crew. To build on the momentum achieved so far, the priority now is to raise Belfast's tourism to a higher level. It has the potential to offer much more to visitors and to attract them in much greater numbers. By doing this, tourism could make an even greater contribution to the local and wider economies and enhance the benefits it generates for businesses, citizens and communities.

The Council considers the need for the inclusion of additional policy guidance to support integrated city tourism and the coordination of assets. Policy support should also be given to tourism development where it will assist in the economic and physical regeneration of urban areas and be of benefit to the local community whilst contributing to the development of sustainable tourism infrastructure.

The Council would support proactive consideration for the redevelopment of existing buildings in particular redundant historic buildings for tourist development. The draft policy refers to this in Para 6.16 but is specifically in relation to rural buildings and should be extended to an urban context.

TSM 2 Tourism Development in Settlements / TSM 3 Tourism Development in the Countryside

The draft policy removes the tourism need test for all new tourism development in the countryside and introduces the sequential test for all new tourism development in the countryside. The Council welcomes the new sequential test which should encourage the location of tourism facilities within the settlements limits. Polices which gives greater clarity to the type of tourist development and amenities which will be permitted in the countryside are welcomed.

TSM 8 Criteria for Tourism Development

The design criteria relating to the movement pattern is unclear. The Council would welcome clear criteria to ensure the siting of new tourist development in accessible locations well served by public transport which will provide a sustainable choice of transport.

The Council supports general criteria to ensure the tourist development does not adversely affect features of the natural or built environment. The Council would emphasise the need to protect the historic built environment in the city, as well as its setting, from inappropriate development. The protection should also apply to key panoramas or views of natural resources such as the Belfast Hills.

Additional criteria to support the development of “authentic” tourism developments that fit with the brand values of Belfast and Northern Ireland would be welcomed. The Belfast Brand should be an integral guiding framework for future planning of tourist developments in the city. The Councils Tourism framework firmly establishes Belfast as the gateway to Northern Ireland and Ireland therefore its relationship to rural and other urban areas should be considered.

General criteria should be included to ensure that tourism developments are supported through managed and improved infrastructure and access where necessary.

The Council proposes that the policy below to suggested in relation to the draft BMAP, should be considered for inclusion in PPS 16.

BMA Tourism Strategy

Policy TSM Promotion of urban tourism

- Identify appropriate Development Opportunity Sites and actively promote for tourism development and associated infrastructure
- Consider favourably tourism development where it will assist in the economic and physical regeneration of urban areas and be of benefit to the local community.
- Promote the development of the ‘Must see’ visitor facility – Titanic Quarter Signature project
- Actively promote water based/maritime tourism development along the waterfront for example on Development Opportunity Sites along River Lagan
- Actively promote unique cultural quarter development
- Consider favourably the reuse of historic buildings for tourism development

Appendix 2

DRAFT PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 16 – TOURISM

SUMMARY

Policy objectives

The stated aim of this planning policy statement (PPS) is to manage the provision of sustainable and high quality tourism developments in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment.

The objectives of this statement are to:

- Facilitate sustainable tourism development in an environmentally sensitive manner
- Safeguard tourism assets from inappropriate development
- Utilise and develop the tourism potential of settlements by facilitating tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale in rural areas
- Sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale in rural areas;
- Ensure a high standard of quality and design for all tourism development

Changes to Existing Policy

When issued in final form, the policies of this Statement will supersede:

- Tourism Policies SP10 Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)
- TOU 1 to TOU 4 Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)
- CTY 1 of PPS 21 as it relates to tourism development
- Tourism policies of the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)
- Coastal Policies CO 5 , 6 and 7 of Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)

Proposed Policy

TSM 1 Safeguarding of Tourism Assets

This policy seeks to retain protection for tourism assets in Northern Ireland. Planning permission will not be granted for development within the visual setting of a tourism asset that would in itself or in combination with existing and approved development in the locality have an adverse impact on its value as a tourism asset.

This policy provides for the safeguarding of all tourism assets, including those which are subject to protection for other reasons under various legislative or policy instruments and those which are not subject to such protection

TSM 2 Tourism Development in Settlements

This policy statement continues the support for new tourism development within the settlement limits. Planning Permission will be granted for a proposal for tourism development (including a tourist amenity or tourist accommodation) within a settlement; provided it is of a nature appropriate to the settlement, respects the site context in terms of scale, size and design, and has regard to the specified provisions of a development plan.

TSM 3 - Tourism Development in the countryside

The needs based approach for tourist accommodation outside of settlements in the countryside is replaced by a sequential test under which the applicant must demonstrate

there is no suitable alternative site within the established settlement limits or other nearby settlements. The policy recognises that locations on the fringe of settlements will be preferable to those in the open countryside.

TSM 4 - Tourist Amenities in the countryside

TSM 6 - Self Catering Accommodation – New Multiple or cluster Self Catering Units in the Countryside

TSM 7 - Static Holiday Parks and Touring Caravan Sites in the countryside

TSM 8 - Criteria for Tourism Development

This policy incorporates the design criteria that for the assessment of all tourism developments to ensure sustainable, safe and high quality tourism schemes.