



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	B-Team – Brownfield Pledge
Date:	29 January 2013
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1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Belfast City Council is the Lead Partner in the ERDF funded INTERREG IVC project B-Team. The B-Team project brings together specialists in Brownfield regeneration from different countries to exchange knowledge contributing to improved developments and enhanced regional policies focussing on the resolution of practical challenges on case study sites in the partners' countries.
1.2	The support and exchange of technical knowledge takes place during “Brownfield Days” events with the experience and practical approaches discussed and disseminated to a broader public at European Dissemination Events. The final conference of B-Team took place 7 – 8 November 2012 in Seville/Spain. The Managing Authorities as the funder of the project gave the project an extension until 31 March 2013 to carry out the remaining activities and complete the budgetary reporting.
1.3	The Brownfield Days in Belfast took place 10 – 13 September 2012 and were attended by representatives of the partner cities, BCC officers and elected members as well as representatives of other organisations such as Invest NI, BCCM, DSD and NIEA.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	Based on consideration of the priorities in the Investment Programme, wider Brownfield challenges and discussion with the European partners three topics/sites were identified for exploration during the Brownfield Days:
2.2	– <u>Topic 1</u> : Tackling city centre Brownfields and bring back life in vacant spaces (vacant city centre sites)
2.3	– <u>Topic 2</u> : Stimulating socio-economic activities in former industrial areas while involving surrounding communities (Springvale / Forth River)
2.4	– <u>Topic 3</u> : Dealing with constraints issues and balancing site aspiration (environmental, market value, planning, community) (Northern Fringe / Gasworks)

2.5	The BDs in Belfast presented the opportunity for the Council to benefit from the expertise of the other European partners in the field of Brownfield regeneration and to work towards innovative solutions for problematic Brownfield sites. At the last day of the BD there was a feedback session about the findings of the workshop days to which Members were invited
2.6	The policy recommendations, where possible, should be adopted and implemented to change or influence the planning processes of the host partner through the signing of a "Brownfield Pledge" (BP). This pledge would seek to commit the partner to improvements regarding their policies or approach to future activity. Following approval of the pledge Belfast the Council will receive a further €15,000 European funding to support the initiation of a specific action or the changes suggested thereby progressing the regeneration of a case study site. The resources can be used for a study, the organisation of an event, consultations, direct works or similar activity related to the case studies.
2.7	At the final conference of B-Team on 7 – 8 November 2012 in Seville/Spain, Belfast is one of the signatory of the "Seville Pledge" which outlined the commitment of the partner cities and institutions to revive and regenerate their Brownfields and support changes to policy that would facilitate this approach.
2.8	On the basis of the B-Team Partner recommendations both at the strategic and site-specific levels and the further consideration by Council officers, a draft of the "Brownfield Pledge" is appended for consideration by the Committee (Appendix 1).
2.9	<p>The strategic components recommended for support through the Pledge are outlined below.</p> <p><u>Leadership</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To maintain a leadership role and ensure a proactive approach in promoting the utilisation of Brownfield sites in the regeneration of the City, in line with the local development plans and the council's Investment Programme 2012-2015, and to work in direct partnership or collaboration with regional agencies and organisations. 2. To encourage the development of Brownfield sites through a holistic manner that will provide for investment and employment opportunities for those who live and work in the city. 3. To explore the potential for the establishment of a database for Brownfield sites throughout the City, similar to the National Land Use Database so that Brownfield redevelopment can be managed, coordinated and tackled appropriately.
2.10	<p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. To promote sustainable urban living by supporting mixed uses, environmentally efficient initiatives and coherent neighbourhoods in and around Brownfields integrating the social, environmental and economic potentials of the area. 5. To ensure greater support for Brownfield redevelopment in City development plans and other related documents such as the proposed Masterplan. Strategic Brownfield sites should be considered for different uses within the context of a common framework guiding their phased development.

2.11	<p><u>Connectivity</u></p> <p>6. Seek to ensure that the redevelopment of Brownfield contributes to a well connected city by using environmentally efficient links, incorporating high quality designed public realms and open spaces complementing the sustainable development agenda of the City.</p>
2.12	<p><u>Strategic Policy</u></p> <p>7. To continue the support for policies and practical financial incentives to attract appropriate uses of Brownfields. To consider the use of flexible lease agreements and more flexible planning policy at the local level to address vacancy and under utilisation of sites and spaces.</p> <p>8. To continue the role of the City Council in strategic retail policy seeking to protect the city centre role and reduce under-utilisation.</p> <p>9. Support in sustainable parking strategy for Belfast City Centre and effective enforcement to prevent temporary car parks developing in Brownfield sites to promote the use of land for other more sustainable uses.</p>
2.13	<p><u>Development Management</u></p> <p>10. To highlight the importance of planning as a mechanism for the communication with developers and consultees on key issues regarding the redevelopment of Brownfields, particularly in relation to contaminated land. Manage environmental issues at the early stage in the development process. Develop and provide guidance to developers to enhance understanding of the challenges associated with its development.</p>
2.14	<p><u>Communication and Community</u></p> <p>11. To recognise the importance of branding and communication in promoting Brownfield sites and encouraging new uses. To promote activities that shall establish sites in the mental map of the city and its communities. Identify the opportunities for early wins that build trust, confidence and positivity.</p> <p>12. To maintain and enhance awareness of political leaders, landowners, local communities in relation to the importance of Brownfield regeneration and to ensure active engagement and participation through an active, inclusive and open approach to all stakeholders.</p> <p>13. To support the potential for social clauses in development briefs for Brownfield sites in order to respond to local community needs or aspirations, and to ensure that renewal of these sites addresses shared community benefits.</p>
2.15	<p>The proposal would also be for the Council through the pledge to consider a range of actions at a site-specific level for the case study areas - 1) City Centre- Smithfield Market, 2) Springvale/ Forth River and 3) Gasworks- Northern Fringe. The detailed recommendations for the individual sites are also set out in the draft pledge appended to this report for consideration of this committee (Appendix 1).</p>
2.16	<p>These site specific recommendations are proposals from the European partners and should be considered at the time when the projects are due to developed subject to future funding and political agreement on the site specific level.</p>

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	There are no additional resource implications arising from the EU funded INTERREG IVC initiative. On approval of the pledge by the Council a further €15,000 to support the initiation of a specific action or initiative to progress the regeneration of a case study site will be available.

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

5.	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – consider the draft “Brownfield Pledge” and if appropriate endorse the document as part of the City Council commitment to improve policies and approaches to future Brownfields regeneration activity. – note the availability of the additional €15,000 to support further action following the adoption of the Pledge.

6.	Decision Tracking
There is no decision tracking attached to this report.	

7.	Key to Abbreviations
ERDF – European Regional Development Fund BDs – Brownfield Days BP – Brownfield Pledge	

8.	Document Attached – Appendix 1
Appendix 1: Belfast Brownfield Pledge	

In consideration of the regeneration and redevelopment proposals for Brownfield sites the City Council pledges to pursue the following actions at a strategic level:

Leadership

1. To maintain a leadership role and ensure a proactive approach in promoting the utilisation of Brownfield sites in the regeneration of the City, in line with the local development plans and the council's Investment Programme 2012-2015, and to work in direct partnership or collaboration with regional agencies and organisations.
2. To encourage the development of Brownfield sites through a holistic manner that will provide for investment and employment opportunities for those who live and work in the city.
3. To explore the potential for the establishment of a database for Brownfield sites throughout the City, similar to the National Land Use Database so that Brownfield redevelopment can be managed, coordinated and tackled appropriately.

Sustainability

4. To promote sustainable urban living by supporting mixed uses, environmentally efficient initiatives and coherent neighbourhoods in and around Brownfields integrating the social, environmental and economic potentials of the area.
5. To ensure greater support for Brownfield redevelopment in City development plans and other related documents such as the proposed Masterplan. Strategic Brownfield sites should be considered for different uses within the context of a common framework guiding their phased development.

Connectivity

6. Seek to ensure that the redevelopment of Brownfield contributes to a well connected city by using environmentally efficient links, incorporating high quality designed public realms and open spaces complementing the sustainable development agenda of the City.

Strategic Policy

7. To continue the support for policies and practical financial incentives to attract appropriate uses of Brownfields. To consider the use of flexible lease agreements and more flexible planning policy at the local level to address vacancy and under utilisation of sites and spaces.
8. To continue the role of the City Council in strategic retail policy seeking to protect the city centre role and reduce under-utilisation.
9. Support in sustainable parking strategy for Belfast City Centre and effective enforcement to prevent temporary car parks developing in Brownfield sites to promote the use of land for other more sustainable uses.

Development Management

10. To highlight the importance of planning as a mechanism for the communication with developers and consultees on key issues regarding the redevelopment of Brownfields, particularly in relation to contaminated land. Manage environmental issues at the early stage in the development process. Develop and provide guidance to developers to enhance understanding of the challenges associated with its development.

Communication and Community

11. To recognise the importance of branding and communication in promoting Brownfield sites and encouraging new uses. To promote activities that shall establish sites in the mental map of the city and its communities. Identify the opportunities for early wins that build trust, confidence and positivity.

12. To maintain and enhance awareness of political leaders, landowners, local communities in relation to the importance of Brownfield regeneration and to ensure active engagement and participation through an active, inclusive and open approach to all stakeholders.
13. To support the potential for social clauses in development briefs for Brownfield sites in order to respond to local community needs or aspirations, and to ensure that renewal of these sites addresses shared community benefits.

The proposal would be for the City Council to support the following actions at a site-specific level for the case study areas - 1) City Centre- Smithfield Market, 2) Springvale/ Forth River and 3) Gasworks- Northern Fringe subject to prioritisation, site specific approvals and timescales of development.

City Centre/Smithfield Market

1. Consider the support for the short term environmental improvements recommended by the B-Team partners such as the establishment of an urban boulevard (Millfield), considering changes to the car parking behind Smithfield market with the opportunity for more active uses such as outdoor market/urban gardens along with the green “hanging gardens” at Castlecourt and the promotion of local niche uses.
2. Review of buildings that could support potential for pilot student accommodation, explore 24h access through Castlecourt Shopping Centre and the enhancement of pedestrian links to local communities, as identified medium-term actions.
3. Consider the long-term vision of the Smithfield Market area as highly connected sustainable hub (bus, cycle, pedestrians) promoting mixed use based on existing character and the creation of strong vibrant city neighbourhood. Consider a bus rapid transit route improving connections to Smithfield & Union to the rest of the city.
4. Consider investigation of the policy gaps identified in the Brownfield scoping exercise and use the survey of the vacant spaces in the city centre to develop a strategic approach in Brownfield regeneration.

Springvale/Forth River

1. Consider the various recommendations from European partners for redeveloping the Springvale/ Forth River area into mixed uses such as an activity hub, new residential area including live-work units for self-employed and eco-housing, recreational area and employment area as part of the ongoing engagement with the various owners.
2. Continue the engagement activity with the local community groups and key stakeholders to promote potential for the entire area as open and shared site providing services which meet local needs.
3. Create synergies with local and proposed uses (hold workshops for local people and businesses; encourage workforce to use whole site and explore potential for temporary use to bring activity and use to the space and access). Capitalise on the assets already in place and establish links to existing and proposed infrastructure (Belfastmet E3, resource hub, and innovation centre).
4. Support proposals to enhance local community greenway and nature conservation; ensure linkages to existing greenway (phases of development - establish gateway/landmark; quality of development/design).
5. Seek to ensure Council leadership in the redevelopment of the site which should link to the City Strategic Plans, and aspire to have one-site approach (DSD and Invest NI) with collaboration across government and other bodies for the management/ redevelopment of the area.

The Gasworks- Northern Fringe

1. Consider the various recommendations from European partners for redeveloping the Northern Fringe into mixed uses including the provision of a green corridor with anchor building, a shared space that allows for community and wider public uses and mixed commercial and residential developments.
2. To ensure that any shared and/or green space takes consideration of the built heritage of the Gasworks site and supports community aspirations for the site.
3. Development should contribute to the wider social and economic development objectives of the city.
4. Improve connectivity and the quality of public realm and consider possible pedestrian connections of the area to the Lagan towpath and the east bank of the river.

