



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Draft Development Plan for Crumlin Road Gaol
(pre-consultation views)

Date: Tuesday 19 February 2013

Reporting Officer: John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Council have received a request from OFM-DFM to provide initial pre-consultation views on an early draft strategy for the development of the Crumlin Road Gaol. The vision for the strategy is “to rehabilitate Crumlin Road Gaol as a public asset which helps transform North Belfast’s physical appearance, and contributes to that part of the City and wider Northern Ireland in terms of economic prosperity, improved social conditions and community confidence and cohesion; while balancing the historical and architectural importance of the site with current and future society needs.”
1.2	The purpose of the draft strategy is to guide future developments at the Gaol, including high level development objectives which will form the criteria against which future potential developments will be considered. A strategy for developing the Gaol is designed to ensure that any new works have an appropriate focus and direction.
1.3	Various stakeholder organisations have been listed as key stakeholders to consult. These include: Sites Oversight Board; Belfast City Council; DSD; Crumlin Road Gaol Community Engagement Group; Belfast Distillery Company; Belfast Tours Ltd; St Malachy’s College; Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; and other interested parties.
1.4	The consultation request was received on the 24 th January, with a deadline of 8 th February 2013. Council have stated that given the significance of this development and its potential to contribute to the development of the North Belfast Cultural Corridor that a response will be provided to OFM-DFM in early March.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Visitor Attraction and Conference Centre at the Gaol opened to the public on 19 November 2012 and a preferred developer has been announced to transform A wing into a boutique distillery. A number of uses are currently being investigated for the unrestored areas of the Gaol including a digital/creative industries hub, museum and a boutique hotel. Work is also ongoing to take forward a feasibility study and pilot research project on the history of the Gaol.

2.2	<p>A feasibility study into traffic management and parking arrangements is also planned to address issues arising from the increasing number of visitors to the site.</p> <p>The draft strategy will provide a basis for co-ordinating future developments. It has five main elements:</p> <p>1) Clarifying how the Gaol redevelopment links to the wider development in the area and the Programme for Government. The development of the Gaol was an integral part of the Draft Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Barracks Masterplan (July 2007) which focussed on tourism and hospitality as the preferred theme within the regeneration of Girdwood. The Master Plan however did not enjoy community or political consensus; as a result, it was agreed that development of the Gaol site should be progressed despite the Girdwood hiatus. The draft Masterplan has now been superseded by a DSD review of its implementation and a subsequent Ministerial announcement which did not include the Crumlin Road Gaol.</p> <p>2) Recognition of earlier research and plans such as the Buro Happold Study of 2005 and their suggestion that the full potential of the Gaol could not be realised without access to additional land.</p> <p>3) An overview of the work already happening. The physical restoration of the Gaol buildings and any new buildings will be taken forward through a planned programme of new development projects and maintenance. A programme for this work, as well as associated research studies and land acquisition, is currently under consideration with an expectation that business cases will be subsequently developed for projects. A strategy for developing the Gaol will ensure that any new works have an appropriate focus and direction.</p> <p>4) Details of the development routes available - There are two routes through which development ideas for the Gaol can be progressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - where a prospective developer approaches OFMDFM or a developer is approached by the CRGRT; or - where a competition is run to attract interest in developing a specific section/s of the Site through lease, partnership and other arrangements. <p>The buildings and grounds of the Crumlin Road Gaol will remain in public ownership. Other than repair or restoration works it is not anticipated that any development of the Gaol estate will result in a cost to the Northern Ireland Executive. Any potential developer will need to show evidence that they have the necessary finance to complete any proposed development and subsequently sustain their business over the longer term (e.g. 25 years plus).</p> <p>5) A summary of the proposed objectives - that will be used to evaluate development proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to meeting the regeneration needs of North Belfast in terms of employment, physical improvement and community reconciliation. - Support the commitments in the Programme for Government including employment, tourism and integrating social clauses into procurement and leases. - Recognise and protect the unique nature of the Gaol and contributing to the development of a 'Historic Quarter' for Belfast. - Encourage community cohesion and raising neighbourhoods esteem. - Complement current and planned development in the area. - Demonstrate a long term commitment to the regeneration of the Gaol. - Contribute to the establishment of the Gaol as a public asset of regional significance. - Remain sustainable in terms of financial stability, local environments, health and well-being, ecology, waste management, transport and mobility and security and
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	<p>crime prevention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that development costs including any appropriate site preparation or fit-out costs are borne by the prospective developer.
2.3	<p>It should be noted that OFM-DFM are seeking ‘pre-consultation’ views from Council, there are no specific questions and limited detail presented in the document (attached as Appendix 1). Therefore it is not possible to provide a detailed response at this stage. OFM-DFM have indicated that the draft Development Strategy will be shared with a wide range of stakeholders in February 2013, including local community representatives and organisations bordering the site.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	None, at this stage.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	The OFMDFM Policy screening states “The policy will have a beneficial effect for all Section 75 categories. The Policy Framework is designed to produce positive outcomes for the North Belfast population and Northern Ireland as a whole and for groups experiencing social and economic inequalities.”

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Members are asked to agree that the Council’s initial response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - welcomes the redevelopment of the Gaol and supports the regeneration of the area and arterial route - recommends that the strategy needs to take cognisance of other planned developments to ensure the sustainable regeneration of the site and surrounding area - emphasises the need for consultation with all key stakeholders to maximise the benefits and value of investment in the area - states that the Council should be consulted on any future planned developments in the Gaol

6	Decision Tracking
Timeframe:	April 2013 Reporting Officer: John McGrillen

	Key to Abbreviations
OFMDFM – Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister CRGRT – Crumlin Road Gaol Regeneration Team	

	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Draft Development Strategy for Crumlin Road Gaol	