



<b>Report to:</b>	Shadow Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>York Street Interchange- Environmental Statement consultation</b>
<b>Date:</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> March 2015
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen (Director of Development)
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Keith Sutherland (Urban Development Unit Manager), Anne Doherty (Planning & Transport Officer)

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The Department for Regional Development announced the preferred option for the York Street Interchange (YSI) in December 2012. The preferred option proposes the full grade separation of movement between the Westlink, M2 and M3. Grade separation is provided via underpasses below the Lagan Bridge and Dargan Bridge. York Street would be partially raised to accommodate the underlying links. All north facing slip roads at Clifton Street remain open in the proposed layout.
1.2	DRD Transport NI has now completed Stage 3 assessment of the scheme and this work has included the completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment, in accordance with the requirements of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. The DRD Minister announced the formal consultation on the Environmental Statement for the proposed York Street Interchange on 27th January 2015.
1.3	DRD Transport NI anticipates that following this stage of public consultation there will be a Public Inquiry (possibly late 2015), with construction beginning 2017/18 and the proposed scheme completed by April 2021.
1.4	A Strategic Advisory Group has been set up by DRD Transport NI to provide strategic guidance to facilitate the integration of York Street Interchange with other government and private initiatives and also to review the scheme aesthetics. The Council are represented on this group along with representatives from DSD, Planning NI, Arts Council, FAB and Transport NI.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>A draft response is attached in Appendix 1 for consideration and a summary of the main issues is outlined below.</p> <p>It is suggested that the Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Statement for the York Street Interchange as part of the Stage 3 Assessment public consultation process.</p> <p>The York Street Interchange is highlighted in the Council's draft City Centre Regeneration</p>

Strategy and Investment Plan as a significant project for the city. It is suggested that careful design is required for connecting north / south routes for pedestrian and cyclists and creative solutions are needed to reduce the visual impact of the interchange and make use of otherwise dead space required. The Plan suggests "Underpass Projects" to improve the visual impact and pedestrian connectivity through the M3 and York Street Interchange through public art, landscaping interventions and community sports facilities.

The Council will continue to work with DRD and other partners through the Strategic Advisory Forum to consider actions to minimise the impact of the scheme on the adjoining residential areas and to consider the aesthetics and finishes of the road proposal. The Council are also keen to assess the regeneration opportunities of surplus land parcels resulting from the proposed development at an early stage to maximise the potential benefit for the city. It should be noted that the YSI proposal will impact on one of the DRD off street car parks which will be transferred to Council ownership in April 2015.

It is suggested that the Council request DRD to reconsider the use of on road cycle lanes and shared bus lanes as part of the proposed cycle provision for the scheme. In our response to the draft NI Bicycle Strategy, the Council strongly supported high quality segregated cycle lanes in urban areas particularly on routes where traffic volumes and speed may be high. It is considered that the York Street proposal presents an opportunity to develop segregated cycle lanes along with other innovative measures for cycling infrastructure such as bus stop by passes. The Council would recommend input from DRD Cycle unit into the design of this infrastructure following on from consultation on the Bicycle Strategy.

There are a number of proposed developments in the vicinity of the YSI proposals such as City Quays and the new University of Ulster campus development on York Street. The need to increase the opportunity for active travel access to the new University campus, the city centre and the harbour area is vital.

In relation to the technical aspects of the proposed scheme, it is suggested that the Council highlight the following issues relating to air quality, noise and contaminated land:

- Air Quality

Council Officers have been working closely with DRD on the development of a new Air Quality Action Plan for the city and York Street Interchange has been identified as one of the measures to include in the new plan to improve air quality in that area. The scheme is considered as a means of reducing localised emissions on connecting roads (i.e. as a result of relieving a significant congestion hotspot) and, to a lesser extent, incremental reductions in background emissions, which of course will have a wider impact on exposure. It is suggested that there will be additional concerns regarding the air quality impacts of the proposed scheme on receptors, however, the Council would wish to continue in consultation with DRD regarding the operational and construction plans for the proposed scheme.

- Noise

It is suggested that there could be some concerns as to the impact the construction and particularly piling works could have on the local community. The Council would request early communication from DRD and future contractors regarding work schedules, especially night time work to ensure early communication and engagement with local communities.

- Contaminated Land

The Council welcomes the approach taken and the recommendations made with respect to the management of any unforeseen contamination during construction. However, full

	technical details of the work to be completed have not been provided. This would need to be submitted in order for the Council to fully appraise the possible land contamination issues. Furthermore, there are some concerns that the risks posed to users / residents of adjacent sites has not been fully considered.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	There are no resource implications attached to this report.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	There are no specific Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Call-in</b>
	This decision is subject to Call in.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
6.1	Elected members are requested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to consider the proposed Draft response to the consultation appended and to agree a final response or any amendments to be forwarded to DRD.</li> </ul>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	Timeline: March 2015 Reporting Officer: Keith Sutherland
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	YSI- York Street Interchange DRD- Department for Regional Development FAB- Forum for Alternative Belfast
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
9.1	Appendix 1- Draft Belfast City Council response to York Street Interchange- Environmental Statement.