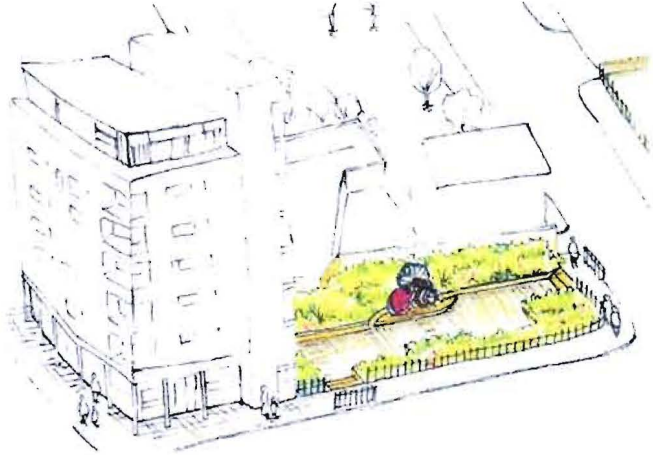


Newtownards Road 2012 Regeneration of 380-390 Newtownards Road



Newtownards Road 2012

East Belfast Partnership (EBP) has identified the Newtownards Road as one of its priority regeneration projects. This key arterial route was once a thriving area but has suffered from decades of neglect due to numerous factors including: conflict, decline in local shopping, a road protection line and the current economic crisis. Empty shops and dereliction have increased tension and discouraged people from spending time 'out and about' in the area. The ultimate aim of NRd2012 is to get people to enjoy living on the Newtownards Road again; to get them interested in and being part of its regeneration and to regain its community spirit which has been lost. The project is also seeking to encourage new people into the area.

The NRd2012 project intends to carry out the following improvements: Public Realm Enhancements – paving and lighting, Shop Front Improvements, Facade improvements to derelict buildings and a number of interim environmental improvement schemes.

Interim Environmental Improvement Schemes

By developing the Road in manageable sections we will be building local engagement and getting people connected to the longer term goal of greening the whole area and developing opportunities for volunteering across the wider area.

Seven key derelict sites along the road have been identified for treatment as the project evolves. EBP has secured commitment from the site owners in the private and public sector to support their work. In addition, local community groups, DSD, DRD, Belfast City Council and other departments are very supportive of these environmental interventions since commercial development of these sites is a distant prospect. It is anticipated that the schemes will include some or all of the following elements: Hard landscaping; Soft landscaping, Art Pieces; Seating; Visitor Information; Features e.g. green walls; lighting, interpretive signage.

Preliminary discussions with focus groups have identified an interest in developing the sites with a theme linking the areas rich industrial past to a new contemporary identity of sustainable living, by using the role of nature in both the past, present and future. A number of themes have been identified including

the Ropeworks, tobacco production, glass factories and linen mills. These themes will be developed further in workshops e.g. people will learn how the flax plant was used to produce rope.

380-390 Newtownards Road

Project Aim

To create a community pocket park at 380-390 Newtownards Road. The site is adjacent to the Connswater Community Greenway (CCG) Civic Square, CCG has extensive support from local communities and plans for this site will complement their proposals.

Site History

This site sits on a road protection line which has led to severe blight on this particular stretch of the road for over 30 years. It is very visible due to its location at the junction with the Albertbridge Road – improving it will therefore have an extensive impact on the local area and for the local community.

Ownership

The site at 380-390 is owned by DRD Roads Service (380-388) and Landmark East (390), both landowners are fully supportive of the Pocket Park proposal. Landmark East is a subsidiary company of EBP.

Permissions

Planning permission to develop an interim Community Pocket Park at 380-390 Newtownards Road has been granted. EBP has consulted with adjacent landowners who were issued with planning notification letters. Adjacent landowners support the proposal since it will improve the visual form of their own buildings.

Maintenance

EBP previously held discussions with BCC and Roads Service regarding ongoing maintenance. Belfast City Council has agreed in principle to undertake maintenance via a service level agreement; once the work has been completed but Committee and Council approval is required. DRD Roads Service are willing to undertake regular maintenance of their land as per their normal contractual obligations i.e. grass cutting.

EBP in partnership with Going Green and other local volunteers plan to establish a support group to ensure that there is a maintenance plan for all the sites that are to be developed. We also propose to co-ordinate our efforts with other local groups such as Walkway and others involved in the CCG project. We plan to establish a central pool of gardening equipment for general use by volunteers – we already have had some equipment donated and expect to purchase additional items through local business sponsorship.

Funding

Funding has been secured from Roads Service to carry out an asbestos survey, demolish the derelict buildings and erect fencing around the site. An application to the Alpha Programme will be submitted at end June to carry out development of the Pocket Park.

Workshops

EBP will facilitate and deliver workshops to community groups for all of the sites including 380-390. They will be used to raise environmental awareness, generate ideas, gather information for interpretive boards and to work on concepts for art pieces, landscaping and furniture. In the longer term it is our intention to arrange training workshops on gardening skills etc.

Volunteers

A crucial element of the success of this project is the involvement of local people. EBP will recruit local volunteers to contribute ideas, collect information, prepare sites, create raised beds etc. People will be recruited through the Inner East Neighbourhood Partnership (IENP) which has already identified the Road as a key priority in their Action Plan. The sites will have community landscaping integrated into the projects to ensure there is ample opportunity for local involvement and ongoing maintenance. The Going Green group at East Belfast Mission is very keen to help develop and maintain the site and is committed to helping us take our plans forward.

Environmental Benefit

The creation of green spaces helps introduce the natural in the urban environment; this is particularly important in the inner city where this type of provision is at a premium and people have few opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Where open spaces do exist often they are bland and unattractive. Development of the Pocket Park will provide a pleasant place for people of the area to spend time in and enjoy. We plan to use its development as an opportunity to raise environmental awareness and by careful planting schemes help promote biodiversity in the area.

Community Benefit

We know that the idea of having access to this new open space and more particularly being involved in its development has already engaged the local community. For some time local residents have complained about how unpleasant the current site is and how unsafe it makes them feel. Our plans are a response to these concerns. We are committed to making sure that the space is easily accessed by all age groups and interests once it has been completed.

Statutory Support

Representatives from DRD Roads Service, DSD and Belfast City Council who are part of the NRd2012 Project Management Team are all very supportive of the Pocket Park; believing it will have a massive impact on the appearance of this section of the road. DRD Roads Service has agreed to fund an asbestos survey, demolition of the existing buildings and the provision of temporary fencing to facilitate the project. We believe that this demonstrates a significant commitment.

Community Consultation

Groundwork NI was commissioned by EBP in January 2009 to carry out a feasibility study for the site. This included consultation with adjacent landowners, residents and local community groups, all of which were supportive of the project and some were keen to participate in its delivery. Further consultation has already taken place and residents of the Newtownards Road from Connswater Community Centre, Dee Street Community Centre, Carew II family centre and others have already shown indicated that they want to be involved.

RECEIVED 2.1 MAR 2011

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Date: 18 March 2011

Dear Lisa

POCKET PARK ON 380-390 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BELFAST

Following on from our discussion, I can confirm that Roads Service, as the owner of much of the above site, is supportive of your proposals to turn the area into a pocket park.

Roads Service are indeed willing to help with the scheme by funding £20k towards the demolition of the properties. We will also contribute to any maintenance of grassed areas created as part of the proposals.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely

John McQuitty

JOHN McQUITTY

Newtownards Road 2012
Regeneration of 380-390
Newtownards Road



Current buildings at 380-390



View towards Upper Newtownards Road



View towards Belfast city centre



View from Connawater Street

Newtownards Road 2012

Pocket Park at 380-390

Newtownards Road



Impact of proposed demolition

Impact of proposed demolition

