



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Town Planning Committee
Subject:	Windsor Park – Major Planning Application
Date:	7 February 2013
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer	Caroline Wilson, Programme Manager

1.0	<u>Relevant Background Information</u>
1.1	The Council has received correspondence from the Department of the Environment, advising of a major planning application under Article 31 for the re-development of Windsor Park. This is to provide an 18,000 seated national football stadium.

2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
2.1	<p>The new stadium at Windsor represents a significant investment by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure and the Irish Football Association. This contribution is recognised in the Council's Investment Programme, and most significantly in relation to the transformation of the leisure estate. The physical improvement of the leisure estate is dependent on the Council's agreed medium term financial strategy, and maximising value for money through strategic opportunities such as the Windsor and Casement developments.</p> <p>Both the Windsor and Casement stadia are on an aggressive timeline for delivery. Members have stressed the urgency of decisions in relation to these iconic investments, in order to realise the greatest potential socio-economic benefits and work towards an enhanced community provision.</p>
2.2	<p>Council officers from Environmental Health Services have worked closely with the applicant over the last 9 months, as part of a pre-application process, to resolve any issues prior to the application being submitted.</p> <p>A standard technical response in relation to environmental impacts is now being prepared by officers for submission to the Planning Service. The response will indicate that Council officers have considered all potential impacts and identified no issues in relation to the application and will be recommending to the Planning Service that the application is granted, subject to a number of conditions.</p>
2.3	The major application is complementary to both the aims of the Council's Investment Programme, as well as the principles underpinning the leisure estate transformation recently

	<p>agreed by SP&R Committee at its meeting (25 January 2013). The Council is committed to working with both stadia developers, in order to provide direct benefit to the city and its ratepayers in terms of the promotion of the city, as well as social and economic regeneration benefits.</p> <p>As part of the leisure transformation plan, Members have stressed the need to maximise the opportunities for partnership investments, and the emerging physical transformation plan includes the stadia developments as part of Phase 1, agreed by SP&R Committee.</p>
2.4	<p>It is therefore recommended that the Committee urges the Planning Service and the Department of the Environment to make all possible efforts to avoid potential and unnecessary delays and to make every effort to expedite the matter by avoiding the need for the holding of a public enquiry and to determine the application by way of issuing a Decision Notice.</p>

3.0	Recommendation
<p>It is recommended that the Committee agrees that the Department of the Environment is requested to make every effort to expedite the application as a matter of urgency and to avoid any unnecessary delays.</p>	

4.0	Appendix
<p>Correspondence from the Department of the Environment to the Chief Executive – 21 December 2012</p>	