



Subject:	Linen Quarter Public Realm Analysis and Vision: report on public consultation and amendments to finalised document
Date:	17 th May 2016
Reporting Officer:	Phil Williams, Director of Planning and Place
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Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update Members on the consultation process and responses received to the draft Linen Quarter Public Realm Analysis and Vision;• Outline amendments made subsequent to full consultation and present the final draft of the Vision document for notation.
1.2	<p>A summary of the consultation and engagement process undertaken is set out in Appendix 1. Organisations and individuals who responded are identified in Appendix 2. Appendix 3 summarises responses to the consultation from those who completed the consultation questionnaire. Appendix 4 summarises proposed amendments to the document. The final draft of the Vision document is attached at Appendix 5.</p>

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the comments received in response to the consultation exercise and the proposed amendments to the final draft of the Vision document summarised in Appendix 4; • Approve the Linen Quarter Vision and Guidance to support and complement existing planning policies as they apply to this part of the city centre; • Note that the document will act as a guide for the Council in the use of planning agreements to attract developer contributions for the necessary improvements to the public realm to support the wider regeneration of the Quarter.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) identifies the Transport Hub/South Centre as a Special Action Area (SAA), one of five such areas which are in need of a detailed and integrated planning approach. In November 2015, the City Growth and Regeneration and Planning Committees considered draft Public Realm Analysis and Vision documents prepared for Linen Quarter and Western Quarter. It was agreed that a public consultation exercise would be undertaken for Linen Quarter and that more detailed economic intervention should be developed for Western Quarter prior to public consultation being undertaken for that area. A report on the form of proposed intervention to be developed for Western Quarter will be presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in June.</p>
3.2	<p>The Council's consultation and engagement process began on 21st December 2015 and closed on 11th March 2016 and is summarised in Appendix 1. 68 consultation responses were received, the majority of which were positive about the Vision document, as explained in more detail below. 49 of these used the questionnaire format which was available for completion on-line or in Word format and the remaining 19 comprised letter and e mails. A list of those respondents who identified themselves is set out in Appendix 2. A clear majority of the questionnaire responses were positive, describing themselves as fully or mostly supportive of the various elements of the Vision document (Appendix 3). This was also reflected in the other written responses received.</p>

3.3	<p>Proposed Amendments to the Linen Quarter Vision and Guidance</p> <p>The key issues raised through the consultations are summarised in Appendix 4. The proposed amendments to the finalised documents are explained below.</p>
3.4	<p>Policy Context: appropriate changes will be made to the finalised document to reflect that it will not have determinative weight in planning terms but rather that it supports and complements existing planning policies that apply to the city and help shape its future direction.</p>
3.5	<p>Linen Quarter Boundaries: It is proposed to extend the southern boundary to include the Ormeau Baths and Fermanagh House on the corner of Ormeau Avenue and Aspley Street given their age, and in the case of the Baths, the importance of framing views south along Linenhall Street. This proposed extension also incorporates the northern sections of Maryville Street and Aspley Street and recognises the important connections they provide to the neighbouring community in Donegall Pass.</p>
3.6	<p>Vision Objective 1: Enhance the Arrival Experience – Great Victoria Street: the document will be amended as appropriate to cross-reference the need for traffic modelling and the importance of the relationship with the Transport Hub as detailed proposals are developed. More detailed design proposals will be the subject of the necessary statutory planning consents and Traffic Regulation Orders. This will require further detailed public consultation to be undertaken as proposals emerge.</p>
3.7	<p>It is proposed to retain the identified crossing point shown in the indicative layout plan on page 53 of the document as it best reflects the Council’s aspiration for the relationship between the proposed Transport Hub and the Linen Quarter. However, the final document will be amended as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on page 53, the illustrative layout will be amended to clarify that visual used shows an illustrative scenario; • on page 53, the text will be amended to clarify that the provision of a proposed super-crossing at this location would only be possible if Amelia Street is closed to through traffic; • also on page 53, the last bullet on initial proposals will be amended to add “Any changes to the existing layout of Great Victoria Street would require further detailed analysis and be subject to financial support and alignment with Transport

NI and other transportation plans. The illustrative scenario does not seek to provide the definitive solution”.

3.8 **Vision Objective 2: Develop new Street Typologies:** amendments will be made to better explain the concept of shared space, to remove references to continuous wall-to-wall paving and to clarify that detailed proposals will be developed in consultation with local users. It will cross reference with DRD’s Director of Engineering Memorandum (DEM 154/15): Kerb Heights in Public Realm Schemes which requires minimum kerb height of 60mm in public realm proposals.

3.9 **Vision Objective 3: Create New Focal Spaces:**
(i) Blackstaff Square: as with Great Victoria Street (paragraphs 3.6-3.8 above) the Vision document will be amended as appropriate to cross-reference the need for traffic modelling and the importance of the relationship with the Transport Hub as detailed proposals are developed for Blackstaff Square. It is proposed that rather than the central garden previously suggested, the square will be predominantly hard surfaced for flexibility of use and durability with the introduction of new street trees, feature seating and lighting.

3.10 Amendments will also be made to the design concept illustrations on page 65 and 66 to clarify that the proposals for Blackstaff Square will require the closure of Amelia Street if they are to work safely alongside the delivery of a proposed super-crossing at the location proposed on Great Victoria Street (see paragraph 3.7).

3.11 **Vision Objective 4: Make the Most of the Unique Building Stock & Vision Objective 5: Provide a Framework for New Buildings:** The document will be amended to ensure that it clearly cross-references the relevant Planning and Regeneration Policy context and that it clarifies its purpose with regard to how it will be used in planning terms. This will also clarify the weight to be given to the document in planning decisions.

3.12 **Connections with Neighbouring Communities and Key Arrival Points:** Amendments will be made to reflect the need to incorporate the principle of good connectivity with neighbouring communities. More specifically, the importance of improving linkages with the communities in Donegall Pass, the Markets and Sandy Row, designated by OFMDFM through its Urban Villages Initiative, will be recognised and incorporated

4.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment

4.1 The Council prepared a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programme Regulations 2004 (the 2004 Regulations) for the Linen Quarter Public Realm Vision & Analysis which determined that Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required. DoE NI disagreed with this position in the absence of further information regarding aerial emissions.

4.2 The Council has sought further expert advice from its Air Quality Officer. Based on four nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) monitoring locations on the arterial routes surrounding the Linen Quarter, the concentration of NO₂ are all below the EU Limit Value of 40µg/m³ with the exception of Great Victoria Street. On this basis, the concentrations within the Linen Quarter adjacent to the arterial routes will be substantially lower again. Given those monitoring results, it is the Council's considered opinion that the Linen Quarter Public Realm Analysis and Vision will not have any negative impacts on localised air quality concentrations.

4.3 In addition, planning permission will have to be sought in respect of any significant public realm works which will obviously require environmental assessment and may, in and of itself, require a strategic environmental assessment to be undertaken. It has also been agreed with the Council's Air Quality Officer that detailed air quality dispersion modelling will be undertaken on any design features of the public realm which could have a significant impact on traffic movement along Great Victoria Street.

4.4 It is therefore considered that the Linen Quarter document is unlikely to have any significant environmental impacts, specifically regarding air pollution from road transport and that Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required

5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

Equality and good relations screening was conducted in parallel with the proposed consultation processes. A full EQIA is not required.

6.0 Finance and Resource Implications

The cost of potential public realm/environmental improvement projects or economic intervention projects which may emerge, and which have potential implications for the City Centre Investment Fund, will be reported to a future Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

7.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Linen Quarter: Summary of Consultation and Engagement</p> <p>Appendix 2: Linen Quarter Consultation Exercise: List of Respondents</p> <p>Appendix 3: Linen Quarter Questionnaire: Summary of Questionnaire Responses</p> <p>Appendix 4: The Linen Quarter – Summary of Responses Received by Theme and Summary of Proposed Changes to Finalised Document</p> <p>Appendix 5: Vision and Guidance (finalised version subject to editorial and formatting changes as required for publication)</p>