



Subject:	Connectivity and Access
Date:	12 th August 2020
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
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	To update Members on the current status of the 'Bolder Vision Connectivity Study for Belfast', together with an update on the York St Interchange review and proposals for a framework for community consultation on planning decisions,
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the DfC and DfI Ministerial endorsement of the Bolder Vision for Belfast;• Agree to write to the DfI Minister to support the external review of the York Street Interchange, and to offer an opportunity to engage with the review process;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to support a partnership project with Ulster University and other stakeholders in relation to a UK-wide planning community consultation research project
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Connectivity Study – A Bolder Vision for Belfast</u></p> <p>In August 2019, Council, DfC and DfI agreed to jointly commission a three-phased City Centre Connectivity Study, a ‘Bolder Vision for Belfast’. This was to develop a shared vision for the City Centre and consider how the streets and places could be reimagined to meet the changing needs of a diverse range of users and provide enhanced connectivity to surrounding communities - as well as supporting existing businesses and encouraging inclusive growth. The objective was to create a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city centre which will improve economic, social and environmental wellbeing for all by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating healthy, vibrant, sustainable and shared spaces; • overcoming severance with surrounding communities to improve access for all; • providing improved access for people walking and cycling; • creating places for people to live; • encouraging regeneration; and • enhancing civic pride to attract local people and visitors.
3.2	<p>Phase 1 is now complete and A Bolder Vision for Belfast was ratified by Council in March 2020. In June 2020 the CG&R Committee were asked to note that the Ministers for DfI and DfC had been asked to endorse the Bolder Vision and commit to progressing the future phases and seek to embed the Framework in the Programme for Government. For the next phases the intention is to develop an action plan to outline scenarios, projects and delivery options based on the Future Vision. This will be used to inform further discussion with key civic partners, businesses, communities, Third Sector organisations, interest groups, statutory authorities and city leaders.</p>
3.3	<p>Members are asked to note that the Bolder Vision for Belfast has now been formally endorsed by both the Ministers for DfC and DfI, along with a commitment to working together collaboratively to consult widely with the public and other stakeholders to agree on a final Vision which will help guide future infrastructure investment decisions. It is proposed to formally launch the Vision jointly with DfI and DfC in the near future and discussions are ongoing with DfI and DfC in terms of progressing with the next phases.</p>
3.4	<p>As the City begins its recovery post-Covid, and with the challenges that will remain in the coming months, there is renewed emphasis on how we use our City Centre spaces safely, whilst also promoting active travel. Some of the interventions coming forward to help address</p>

	<p>these challenges align with the ethos of the Bolder Vision and there is an opportunity to build on these, subject to stakeholder support and resources.</p> <p>York St Interchange</p> <p>3.5 The DfI Minister has announced that an external review is to take place to future proof the York Street Interchange Project in advance of moving to the procurement phase of the project through discussions with specialists and stakeholders. It is proposed that the Chairman of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee formally writes to the Minister to welcome the proposed review, and to offer an opportunity for the Committee to engage with the process during the external review.</p> <p>Ulster University Partnership Project</p> <p>3.6 The University of Ulster has been selected to be a part of the UK wide Connecting Communities for Quality of Life Project, which will develop a framework for community consultation on planning decisions, supporting the development of community empowerment and paving the way for more resilient developments in the future. As a key city stakeholder, Council has the opportunity to partner with the University of Ulster on this 30 month project. The Project will offer a framework to gain an improved understanding of what communities want, and how best to gain this information through the planning consultation process whilst enhancing social value and an improved process for joined up, long term consultation with communities on planning issues. It is proposed that new formats will be developed based on a review of best practice in community consultation in collaboration with CaCHE - the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (www.housingevidence.ac.uk). As part of the Project the emerging framework will be tested and refined through pilot consultations which will take place in Reading, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh. Further detail will be brought back to Committee as this work progresses.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Finance & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Costs associated with the next phase of the Bolder Vision will be brought forward within existing CRD budgets.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The next phase of the Bolder Vision will be subject to screening for Equality and Good Relations Implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	None