



Subject:	A Bolder Vision Connectivity Study Consultation Update
Date:	8 September 2021
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Callie Persic, Connectivity Programme Lead

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To update Members on the pre-engagement activity that will shape the A Bolder Vision public consultation document, including the workshop held with Belfast elected representatives on 23 AugustTo update on the planned 12-week public consultation starting on 27 September until 20 December 2021 and timeframe for completion of the Vision
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The update on the Connectivity Study: A Bolder Vision, including the feedback from the elected representatives' workshop on the 23rd August, and planned Public Consultation in the autumn.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>A Bolder Vision for Belfast involves a fundamental rethink of how streets and places are used to make them attractive, inclusive, accessible, healthy, and vibrant places. As reported previously Phase 1 of the City Centre Connectivity Study, A Bolder Vision (ABV), was agreed by Council and endorsed by the DfC and DfI Ministers and is underpinned by four Visioning Principles that will drive and shape the city centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a healthy, shared, vibrant and sustainable environment that promotes well-being for all, inclusive growth and innovation; Fundamentally changing the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car; Providing lively, safe, and green streets linking inclusive shared spaces to promote resilience and enhance our built heritage; Removing severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities to improve access for all.
3.2	<p>As reported to this Committee on 11 August 2021, Phase 2 of the City Centre Connectivity Study will provide scenarios and projects to inform the future of the city centre by shaping large infrastructure projects and developing supporting or enabling schemes and initiatives. To support the development of these scenarios, five workshops took place in June with a range of community, voluntary, statutory and private sector stakeholders as part of a co-design process. This included a cross-sector Visioning Workshop on 25 June that included Vienna's former Vice Mayor who successfully implemented a transformation agenda comprised of numerous innovative, inclusive projects, as a keynote speaker. The following week four thematic workshops took place covering Community, Heritage & Culture; Infrastructure, Energy and Environment; Economic Recovery, Development & Tourism, and Connectivity (Transport and Digital).</p>
3.3	<p>Follow up meetings have taken place with IMTAC, the Transport Hub and within Council Departments. A part of the governance structure, an Oversight Group comprised on the BCC Chief Executive and the DfI and DfC Permanent Secretaries met in early September. This is a critical partnership that helps align the Vision across local and central government, including across critical policy, strategy, funding opportunities and capital investment. This</p>

	<p>early engagement with a range of stakeholders provided a chance to explore opportunities and challenges and consider interventions to support positive transformation of the city centre.</p>
3.4	<p>As a continuation of the co-design process, a workshop with Belfast elected representatives including Councillors, MLAs and MPs took place on the 23rd August and provided an opportunity to feed into the emerging scenarios. Representatives were asked to consider how to spatially locate potential Bolder Vision interventions to support the positive transformation and identify potential outcomes for communities of Belfast, both in and outside of the city centre while still ensuring that the accessibility and servicing of the city centre. Representatives were presented with a number of areas of opportunity such as the potential of a city civic spine, inner ring road, a network of streets linking destinations in the context of large infrastructure projects for the city centre, such as BRT2, Belfast Streets Ahead and public realm catalyst projects being delivered through Section 76. This included discussion around the prioritisation of specific streets and access nodes for specific uses, such as public transportation network, walking and cycling and vehicular requirements as opposed to continuing to balance all of the needs within all of the streets.</p>
3.5	<p>Through facilitated break out rooms, elected representatives were able to give detailed feedback on the proposals and offer suggestions and concerns. The workshop captured a range of insights and suggestions, both strategic and granular.</p>
3.6	<p>The key issues raised during the engagement sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of improving connectivity to surrounding communities, particularly in the north of the city, Sailortown and Titanic Quarter and to ensure the realisation of benefits to communities through improved connectivity; • Remove the feeling of severance of communities from city centre and create a sense of arrival using heritage buildings and spaces; • Consideration of the needs of different users, including elderly, families, those with disabilities, students, visitors, and professionals; • How to future-proof the land and keep the essence of Belfast; • Widened pavements should be kept clear to ensure accessibility is enhanced and street clutter kept to minimal, especially shops placing signs etc; • Questions around the impact of York Street Interchange, impact on movement and the potential to something better with the funding; • Need to balance uses and need for those living, working and visiting the city centre;

- Concerns about the timeframes for delivery and need to see short, medium and longer term changes;
- Inner ring road is critical to travel and there is concern of displacement and congestion caused by road closures;
- Concern that cars will be displaced into neighbourhoods and need to establish residents' parking schemes;
- BRT could be complemented through micro-mobility or shuttles and in Multistorey Car Parks to support active travel choices;
- Recognition that the city centre needs to change to accommodate more city centre living, families, green spaces, diverse uses and a better night-time economy to drive footfall and keep people in the city;
- The changes must be radical to make the transformation needed for the future;
- The proposed two-way public transport system for BRT & Metro on Donegall St & Royal is a retro-grade approach in terms of the city centre public realm environment – how can we plan this better?
- Learn lessons from COVID and support businesses spilling out onto streets or bring in more public realm;
- Consider the different levers that could help make the changes, such as congestion charge, Clean Air Zones, residents' parking or increased opportunities for modal change

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3.7 The contribution from the elected representatives will be incorporated into the scenarios and build on the feedback received during the previous co-design sessions. Additionally, follow up meetings will be held throughout the consultation process.

3.8 The public consultation document will include scenarios for the future of the city centre, based on emerging infrastructure projects and the future city centre user and supported by short, medium and long term projects. Aligned to the scenarios, a high-level, qualitative Multi-Criteria Analysis will prioritise each option against a set of criteria is being developed that will outline the benefits of the interventions that will inform the Business Case, including social, economic and environmental benefits. This approach will allow for an informed debate balancing the views and requirements of all of our city stakeholders and users to provide a holistic agreement for the landscape of the future city centre that will test approaches and/or enable larger schemes to come forward and shape the transformational changes required to create a connected and animated city core for an inclusive and modern Belfast. This is

	<p>particularly critical at the minute to ensure that we get our planned capital works right to support our future ambitions.</p>
3.9	<p>The 12-week public consultation will commence on 27 September 2021 and run until 20 December and will be hosted on Council’s Engagement HQ site. Engagement events will mainly take place online through a virtual consultation room that will be available 24/7 and will be communicated via Council, DfC and DfI communications channels as well as through Council’s own extensive networks that reach across sectors and into communities. During this period, Officers will remain flexible and if opportunities emerge for in person engagement sessions, then these will be incorporated into the consultation plan.</p>
3.10	<p>To ensure the process is inclusive, there has been engagement with IMTAC on the public consultation process and Officers will continue to work with them and through their People, Streets and Places group who will help advise on engagement methods.</p>
3.11	<p>After the consultation is completed, the responses will be collated in a Public Consultation Report and Summary Recommendations that will be brought back to Committee. The final Monitoring Strategy and ABV Strategy Delivery Plan is due to complete by May 2022.</p>
3.12	<p>Finance & Resource Implications</p>
	<p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.13	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</p>
	<p>None associated with this report, however, an EQIA Screening will be carried out on the emerging work.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>
	<p>None</p>