

McGuigan, Jenny

From: Ramsey, Carol
Sent: 05 February 2007 09:45
To: McGuigan, Jenny
Subject: FW: Response to North West Quarter Part Tw consultation
Attachments: IPH response to DSD Noth West Quarter Part Two Jan 07.doc

Jenny
This is dated 31/01 but received 1/02

Carol

From: Claire Higgins [mailto:Claire.Higgins@publichealth.ie]
Sent: 31 January 2007 16:05
To: Ramsey, Carol
Subject: Response to North West Quarter Part Tw consultation

Hello Carol

Please find attached a response to the North West Quarter consultation. I am aware that the closing date was yesterday but only on re-reading the press release today did I realize it was yesterday and the actual consultation document does not provide an outline of the process and related dates. I hope the attached will be taken into consideration in the final plans as a number of suggestions have been made to promote public health.

Kind regards
Claire Higgins
Public Health Development Officer
Institute of Public Health
Forestview
Purdys Lane
Belfast
BT8 7ZX
Tel: 028 90 648494
Fax: 028 90 646604
Email: Claire.higgins@publichealth.ie
Web: www.publichealth.ie

B.C.C.R.D.

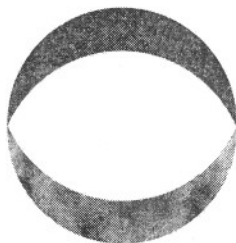
/ 5 FEB 2007

RECEIVED

Received after
cut off date.

**BELFAST CITY CENTRE
NORTH WEST QUARTER: PART TWO
JANUARY 2007**

**Consultation response from
The Institute of Public Health in Ireland**



THE INSTITUTE OF
PUBLIC HEALTH IN IRELAND

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Belfast City Centre, North West Quarter Part Two consultation. The Institute aims to improve health in Ireland, North and South by working to combat health inequalities and influence public policies in favour of health. A holistic model of health which emphasizes a wide range of social determinants, including economic, environmental, social and biological factors is adopted by the Institute and the following response outlines how this proposal has the potential to impact upon public health.

The Institute recognizes the benefits of the regeneration proposal for the North West Quarter. The area suffers from high social and economic disadvantage and we

welcome that a baseline of the current situation has been conducted. There is an increasing recognition of the links between individual health and neighbourhood deprivation. It is essential that the North West Quarter regeneration does not add to the current inequalities experienced by residents in the area.

The regeneration plan has the potential to impact on health in the following areas:

1. Housing

- 1.1. The area has an ageing population and planning for future housing, needs to take certain factors into consideration. Accessibility problems increase with age and have been linked with low subjective well-being, poor psychological well-being and poor perceived health. All housing should take into consideration the 'design for life' concept¹.
- 1.2. Private sector apartment style living can contribute to neutrality issues experienced in the North West Quarter. However due consideration should be given to current residents as this will be seen as a new community not an extension of the current community due to the private nature of tenure. Affordability is a major issue in this deprived area and the lack of social housing should be addressed to maintain current social networks that enhance a sense of community and promote social capital which has been shown to promote health.

2. Economy and Enterprise

- 2.1. The Institute welcomes the recognition of a need for new initiatives to increase employment opportunities in the local area. The area suffers from high unemployment which can have detrimental effects on health. Long-term unemployment can affect health, directly as the financial strain and associated debt can lead to depression and indirectly as people in poverty die younger, live in less healthy environments and have less healthy lifestyles.

¹ Institute of Public Health in Ireland, (2006) Health Impacts of the Built Environment: a review, pg 14

Employment and enterprise opportunities should be targeted to the local community².

3. Retail

3.1. Retail opportunities can encourage social integration which promotes local networks through social economy schemes and other initiatives that can engage local communities. Benefits include employment and social networks.

4. Tourism and Culture

4.1. The identified area has a number of interfaces and cultural traditions which can separate communities. Cultural activity contributes to the health and well-being of communities and has the potential to build links between social boundaries. However, whilst this can be beneficial, encouraging strong group ties can obstruct the development of wider contacts and social cohesion which may add to the formation of isolated communities and further segregation³.

5. Transport

5.1. The Institute welcomes the recognition that there is a need to reduce the barrier effect which exists between North Belfast and City Centre. Neighbourhoods designed for mixed use and are pedestrian oriented are likely to promote social networks and enable residents to perform daily tasks without the use of a car⁴. Research has shown that deprived communities such as the North West Quarter are likely to be characterised by high traffic volume and residents are at risk from increased road traffic accidents with the elderly and children being particularly vulnerable. Given the area has a large proportion of elderly residents the initiative to “strengthen gateways and reduce intrusion of roads/traffic, lights/crossings etc” is particularly welcomed.

5.2. The initiative to reduce the severance effect from the main arterial routes and improve pedestrian crossings is welcomed. This initiative will encourage

² Institute of Public Health in Ireland (2005) Health Impacts of Employment: a review.

³ London Health Commission (2002) Culture & Health: making the link.

⁴ Institute of Public Health in Ireland, (2006) Health Impacts of the Built Environment: a review.

physical activity through walking and cycling contributing to reducing the risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and stress. It is also likely this initiative will contribute to better social interaction between residents⁵.

- 5.3. Reducing dependency on private transport and encouraging public transport is welcomed. Traffic pollution is a major contributor to increased air pollution which is a known trigger for asthma and can also effect the cardiovascular and respiratory system. As the area is located near a main arterial route we welcome the initiative to offer greater priority to public transport, cycling and walking.

6. Design

- 6.1. There is currently a distinct lack of open space in the North West Quarter. The Institute encourages green spaces in urban environments to promote physical activity, provide a space for communities to meet and interact and act as a filter to improve air quality.

The Institute welcomes the regeneration of the North West Quarter of Belfast City Centre and the potential positive health impacts for the residents. A number of actions are the responsibility of outside agencies such as the Roads Service and BIFHE and there must be full commitment from all agencies in the delivery of the plan. Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a methodology which identifies the potential health impacts of an identified plan. This methodology also adopts a multi-sectoral approach and is one such method of engaging other agencies to commit to the implementation of actions.

Contact details: Claire Higgins, Public Health Development Officer

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Forestview, Purdy's Lane, Belfast, BT8 7ZX

Tel: 028 90 648494

Email: Claire.higgins@publichealth.ie

Website: www.publichealth.ie

⁵ Institute of Public Health in Ireland, (2006) Health Impacts of the Built Environment: a review.