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B.C.C.R.D.
30 SEP 2008
RECEIVED

30 September 2008

Department for Social Development
BCC Regeneration Directorate
2nd Floor
Lesley House
25 Wellington Place
BELFAST
BT1 6GD

Dear Sir/ Madam

**WEST SIDE REGENERATION DISTRICT
DRAFT REGENERATION PLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

We are writing on behalf of The Hughes Group, in association with HKR Architects, in response to the West Side Regeneration District Draft Regeneration Framework Public Consultation Document. The Hughes Group are landowners within the West Side Regeneration District and welcome the publication of this document and the vision for regeneration contained therein.

The Hughes Group are proposing a development that is a mixed use, regeneration initiative comprising two urban blocks at Castle Street/ King Street/ Marquis Street/ Chapel Lane. The exact breakdown of the proposed development is yet to be finalised but it will provide:

- office space;
- retail space;
- a 4 star hotel and associated uses (conference/ bar/ restaurant/ leisure facilities);
- serviced apartments associated with the hotel;
- residential units;
- basement car parking; and
- landscaping and public realm improvements.

The scheme will take the form of three blocks. Two of the three blocks will respond directly to the traditional heights of the area, whilst the third central block will be a taller, landmark building.

The Hughes Group's strongly welcome the following statements contained within the Public Consultation Document in relation to the Westside Regeneration District:

- *'it has a strategic geographical role as a gateway into the city centre from the west'*

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- *'it would ...act as a key gateway and link both to and from the communities of West Belfast'*

They strongly welcome the following statement contained within the Public Consultation Document in relation to Castle Street:

- *'there is potential to widen the tourism offer...in recognition of Castle Street's location as a gateway to the Gaeltacht Quarter in West Belfast'*

They strongly welcome the following statements contained within the Public Consultation Document in relation to their landholding:

- *'this block currently demonstrates significant levels of dereliction and presents a poor gateway to the SWQ from the west'*
- *'the prominence of this site would make it suitable for some form of 'gateway' development with preferred uses including hotel, office and residential, above street level retail and cafe/ restaurant uses'*

The Hughes Group proposals will contribute to the delivery of a number of the policy objectives contained within the Public Consultation Document. The proposals will deliver:

- a mix of uses and active ground floor frontages;
- a strengthened urban form, replacing vacant, derelict and dilapidated buildings with a high quality, high density, urban development;
- a statement building at the intersection of Castle Street and King Street that will create a distinctive sense of place at this gateway to the historic core of the city;
- the regeneration of Castle Street, King Street, Marquis Street and Chapel Lane – historic streets of Belfast that are currently in poor condition and lacking vitality – including an improved public realm; and
- a westward shift of the city centre towards neighbouring residential communities, linking these communities to the city centre more strongly and contributing to the creation of a sustainable, compact city.

The Hughes Group development proposals have been prepared by a multi-disciplinary professional team and have been developed as a result of a range of appraisals and studies into the site and its immediate and wider context. It is in within this context that the Hughes Group request that the Final Preferred Concept Masterplan contain provision for a landmark, taller building at the junction of Castle Street and King Street.

The Public Consultation Document identifies the site as a Gateway site and refers to the potential for statement buildings at intersections. It also notes the need to promote development which responds to the traditional heights and rhythm of the quarter. The Hughes Group contends that a landmark, taller building on this Gateway site, as part of a significant mixed use development of two urban blocks, is an appropriate design response that can be

placed acceptably within the traditional heights and rhythm of the quarter and the wider city centre context. The Hughes Group considers that site and development opportunities across the West Side Regeneration District should be maximised to deliver maximum benefit for the whole of the city centre.

Consideration should also be given to the relocation of the Castlecourt Service yard away from Berry Street and the relocation of Smithfield Market in its place, to link in with the proposed redevelopment and regeneration of Bank Square. This would have the additional benefit of improving connectivity from Royal Avenue into the West Side Regeneration District along Berry Street.

The Hughes Group development proposals have the potential to act as a catalytic regeneration project at the heart of the West Side Regeneration District and as such we would commend these comments to you and request that they be reflected in the final Regeneration Framework. If you have any queries about this please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Mounstephen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Mounstephen
for FM PLANNING LTD

cc The Hughes Group (EH/JH/AQ)
HKR Architects (IMcN)