

B.C.C.R.D.

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Date: 30 September 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

**BELFAST CITY CENTRE WEST SIDE REGENERATION DISTRICT -
DRAFT REGENERATION PLAN – DSD**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the regeneration issues set out in the draft masterplan document for the South West Quarter (SWQ) of Belfast.

Our initial comments are as follows:

Roads Service supports the proposals to regenerate this area of Belfast. The Streets Ahead project has already started work in the Fountain Street, College Street, Castle Street and Queens Street areas and the impact of these works will have a significant impact on the current highway arrangements.

Page 3 - The South West Quarter

With regard to Café culture, legislation does not currently exist in Northern Ireland to permit businesses to extend their operation onto the public highway. Roads Service has a statutory duty to maintain the fabric of the public road network and this duty is to take care as is reasonably required in all circumstances. Where the practice is undertaken within private property Roads Service is not involved.

We are aware that consideration is currently being given to developing legislation to regulate sitting out areas and until such legislation is in place Roads Service would not be keen to see this practice encouraged as we may have to exercise our legal prerogative to remove seating areas or take any other enforcement action deemed appropriate to maintain the fabric of the public road network.

Page 6 - Equality Statement

All road users to be given consideration including pedestrians, cyclists, buses, taxis, servicing, parking and access for property.

Page 7 – Piecemeal developments have an adverse impact on the quality of the ‘public realm’ due to the high number of individual utility service connections, hoardings and scaffolding.



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Roads Service would consider a co-ordinated development plan to be beneficial in this regard.

Page 9 - Emerging Vision

Strengthening of linkages between the SWQ and West Belfast by reducing effect from the main arterial routes.

Roads Service would support the aim to reduce actual and perceived segregation in the area. The aspiration for the City Centre Ring (CCR), as identified in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP), is to enable traffic to circulate efficiently around the core of the central area in order to gain access to the central area and, where necessary, provide for movements that would otherwise pass through the central area. The CCR is envisaged as a four lane road throughout. There may be opportunities to reduce road widths on the links to this section of the City including Millfield so as to minimise its severing effect and impact on the urban environment.

Explore the potential to pedestrianise Castle Street and consider how bus routes and car parking within the quarter can be better managed.

Roads Service agrees with the comments regarding the undesirability of pedestrianising Castle Street on page 19 due to the impediment to public transport penetration to the city centre.

Page 13 - Car Parking

Existing car parks in SWQ have been identified on page 13, however on page 16 these have been replaced by new development. The core redevelopment opportunity mentions 55 car park spaces but it is not clear if these are additional to existing or the total in SWQ following redevelopment. Any car parking associated with the proposals will be subject to the car parking policy of BMTP and Draft BMAP.

This may be the opportunity to examine the levels of on street car parking – both existing and desired levels and to establish whether on street parking is permitted. Disabled parking should also be considered.

Roads Service would support the introduction of traffic controls within the boundary of the Controlled Parking Zone as contained in BMTP. However, due account needs to be taken of residents, servicing and loading in the area.

Page 14 - Connectivity

Roads Service agrees in principle to improved crossing facilities and paragraph 1 is consistent with BMTP.

Second paragraph identifies a number of locations, the circles for D & E would suggest that the crossings are on Wellington Place, however this is not consistent with the text. There are already crossings in Wellington Place. Clarification is needed on the location of proposals for raised junctions. Given that Wellington Place will, under BMTP, become largely a public transport streets, are raised tables required?

Each location must be addressed on its own merits and consideration given to the interaction and impact on adjoining junctions.

P16 – Preferred Concept Masterplan

Three hotels have been identified at College Avenue, King Street and Castle Street and also

200 residential units. Roads Service would be concerned that there is no mention of public transport enhancements to offset parking displacement.

P17 – Preferred Concept Masterplan Key Features:

Improved linkages – This is consistent with BMTP.

New Street – This street will need to be constructed to appropriate standard in order for it to be adopted and maintained by Roads Service.

Better Transport Management – plans to restrict private car access is consistent with BMTP. The off-street car parking within the area is under private sector management.

Creation of a more secure environment – existing alley gating provision should facilitate.

Final paragraph – Co-ordination/phasing will be essential to protect road infrastructure.

Page 19 – Highway Benefits

Roads Service is in broad agreement with the Highway Benefits identified and welcomes the complementing of the proposals with the wider highway initiatives being undertaken by other Government Agencies.

Improved Castle Street environment – ‘high quality shared surface street treatment’ - Careful consideration needs to be given to the shared surface arrangement. As this will remain a public transport corridor kerbs will be required to facilitate bus stops etc and for protection of pedestrians.

Statutory Procedures

In order to amend statutory procedures such as Traffic Regulation Orders, Pedestrianisation Orders, Comprehensive Development Orders etc. details will need to be identified at an early stage to allow the relevant Department with the legislative power to programme and implement.

Roads Service reserves the right to make further comment as detailed design progresses.

I hope these comments may be of assistance.

Yours faithfully



KEVIN MONAGHAN
Deputy Divisional Roads Manager



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