

B.C.C.R.D.  
18 AUG 2008  
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ULSTER  
REFORM CLUB  
*Established 1885*

Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008

Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate  
Department for Social Development  
Lesley House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
25-27 Wellington Place  
BELFAST  
BT1 6GD

Dear Sir/Madam

**BELFAST CITY CENTRE: WEST SIDE REGENERATION DISTRICT  
DRAFT REGENERATION PLAN**

I write on behalf of the Ulster Reform Club which occupies a Grade 1 Listed Building at 4 Royal Avenue. The rear of our premises accesses on to Bank Square and the Club's rear outdoor terrace at first floor level overlooks the Square.

The Club is very concerned about the proposals contained in the draft Regeneration Plan for the West Side of Belfast City Centre published on the 26<sup>th</sup> June.

At the outset, it is disappointing to note that the Club was not included in the consultation process undertaken by the Department's consultants, namely, Drivers Jonas. We believe that as a key presence on the West Side, the Club should have had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion as a stakeholder and to "air their views on significant issues before development of the masterplan options" – to quote from the report. We believe that this omission has led to some fundamental flaws in the proposed Plan.

Firstly, the draft Plan indicates that Bank Square is outside the Plan area. However, the Plan then goes on to indicate that the Square is an important open space and proposes in the section entitled "Preferred Concept Masterplan" that Bank Square should become an enclosed open space with a new two storey building on its East side "to enclose the square".

The rear of our Club premises is already an intimidating space with much anti social activity. If the Concept Plan was implemented, this area would become a dead space and anti social behaviour would only increase further.

The Club objects in the strongest possible terms to this aspect of the Concept Plan and cannot understand how experienced consultants did not understand the implications of this particular proposal.

*Hospitality Conviviality Individuality*

Secondly, the key to this locality is the future of the service yard of Castle Court and yet the Concept Plan is silent on the issue, preferring instead to relegate it to the back of a new two storey building creating dead space in the very centre of Belfast.

The potential of Bank Square and the linkage of Berry Street must involve a consideration of the Castle Court service yard. Ideally it should be relocated.

So far as the Club is concerned, we are engaged in consideration about embarking on a serious investment in the provision of sleeping accommodation – either by way of an hotel or a Club facility – together with retail/restaurant on the ground floor fronting on to Bank Square. Our decision depends on the proposals for the Square and, crucially, the future of the service yard. If the Concept Plan prevails, the opportunity of any ground floor retail/restaurant would be lost. Further, we would feel obliged to “turn our backs” on the Square and provide an inward looking building towards the existing Club terrace. None of this would, we suggest, make for good urban design.

On a practical note, the Club wishes to have information on the Department’s proposals for services in the area of Bank Square. Perhaps you would indicate your proposals in this regard.

In summary, the Club believes that the future of the West Side cannot be effectively addressed unless serious consideration is given to the future of the Castle Court service yard. This is the catalyst to the regeneration of the Bank Square locality and we would urge a serious rethink of the Preferred Concept Masterplan for the West Side.

Representatives of the Club stand ready to engage in discussion with the Department or their consultants to expand on this representation and to participate in efforts to find a more satisfactory solution to the development of this crucially important part of Belfast City Centre.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RWC McCann', written in a cursive style.

RWC McCann  
President