

# Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section  
Chief Executive's Department  
Belfast City Council  
City Hall  
Belfast  
BT1 5GS**

21st November, 2018

## **MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copies of the reports for the following items to be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 23rd November, 2018.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

### **AGENDA:**

#### **2. Restricted Items**

- (c) Response to Planning Application submitted for Sprucefield Park, Lisburn  
(Pages 1 - 10)

#### **5. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

- (a) Transport Hub Update (Pages 11 - 34)

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6  
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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<b>Subject:</b>	Transport Hub Update
<b>Date:</b>	23rd November 2018
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Alistair Reid, Director of Place and Economy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, City Regeneration and Development Lead Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress of the proposals for the Transport Hub and to confirm the Council's corporate support for the Transport Hub development.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	Members are asked to note the update in relation to the planning application for the proposed Transport Hub and its strategic importance in the regeneration and growth of the city. In light of its strategic and economic significance, Members are asked to provide their support to the proposed development and to note that this is in the context of the comments already made from a planning perspective, as agreed by the Planning Committee on 11 September 2018 and 17 October 2017.

	Members are also asked to note that the future proposals for the wider Weavers Cross regeneration will be brought to both the City Growth & Regeneration Committee and to the Planning Committee in due course. This will of course consider neighboring communities.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The proposed Belfast Transport Hub and wider Weavers Cross regeneration is a transport-led regeneration project which will ultimately involve the redevelopment of the Europa Bus Centre, Great Victoria Street Railway Station and surrounding NI Transport Holding Company (NITHC) land. It is proposed that this 20 acre mixed-use development site will comprise a multi-modal transport hub alongside commercial, leisure and residential facilities.
3.2	NITHC served a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) on the Council in October 2016 in respect of both the Transport Hub (PAN deemed acceptable) and the wider Weavers Cross Regeneration proposal (PAN deemed not acceptable and expected to be re-submitted). Subsequently a planning application was received for the new integrated Transport Interchange element only on 16th June 2017. This was called in by the Department for Infrastructure on 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2017 due to its regional significance and it is still under consideration. Consequently, the proposed development now consists of two separate elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport Hub; and</li> <li>• Wider masterplan development scheme (Weavers Cross)</li> </ul> <i>Transport Hub</i>
3.3	As noted above, in June 2017 NITHC submitted a full planning application ( <u>LA04/2017/1388/F</u> ) for a new integrated transport interchange comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• station concourse;</li> <li>• 26 bus stands;</li> <li>• 8 railway platforms;</li> <li>• bus maintenance and parking;</li> <li>• track and signalling enhancements;</li> <li>• bus access bridge;</li> <li>• cycle and taxi provision;</li> <li>• car parking;</li> </ul>

3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new public square and public realm improvements;</li> <li>• highway and infrastructure improvements; and</li> <li>• temporary structures and compounds for bus operations during construction.</li> </ul> <p>The application is currently being considered by DfI and a decision is expected before the end of 2018. The Council, as the local planning authority, responded formally to the consultation supporting the application, following meetings of the Planning Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and 11 September 2018.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Key Issues.</u></p> <p>By way of policy background, the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) sets out the Council's collective ambition for the continuing growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding area and includes a road map of policies and projects to underpin this growth, with the Transport Hub highlighted as a key strategic project in this overall regeneration. The Strategy was shaped by extensive engagement with city stakeholders from all sectors.</p>
3.6	<p>Transport and connectivity will play a key role in the economic growth and regeneration of Belfast by enhancing access and serving as one of the key elements to catalyse growth and support Belfast as a successful modern city. BCCRIS underscores the importance of this in terms of city wide regeneration.</p>
3.7	<p>The proposed Transport Hub is located in one of the identified signature areas of the BCCRIS i.e. the South Centre and the significance of the Transport Hub becoming the gateway to the city centre and its immediate vicinity is emphasised in this. It highlights that the proposal for a new Transport Hub at this location is to be welcomed as a major improvement in convenience and connectivity of the regional rail system and associated transport links, with significant increases in passenger traffic anticipated. It also emphasises that the opportunity is not just one of transport engineering but is a chance to redefine the gateway to Belfast's city centre and act as a major regeneration opportunity for the entire city centre and neighbouring areas.</p>
3.8	<p>The Transport Hub is also identified in the Belfast Agenda as a key element of the City Development growth ambitions. It highlights the importance of improved connectivity and</p>

	that we will seek to maximise the opportunities of the Transport Hub and provide the development of sustainable transport.
3.9	The Council's Planning Committee responded to the planning application as consultee and the response was agreed by the Planning Committee on 27th October 2017 and again on 11 September 2018. A copy of the response is attached at <b>Appendix 1</b> .
3.10	With regard to community engagement, Translink has consulted and engaged with a range of stakeholders prior to and as part of the submission of the full planning application. A dedicated Engagement Manager has also been appointed by Translink to provide communication and engagement support specifically for the development. Translink is also liaising with Council to bring forward various aspects of the development. There has been ongoing liaison on the Buy Social clauses and a draft Memorandum of Understanding has been prepared and will be finalised upon planning approval and appointment of the contractor. A Construction Employment Academy is also proposed to support jobs around enabling works and Transport Hub build.
3.11	It is clear that the Transport Hub will bring about significant regeneration, economic and environmental benefits to the city and aligns with the Council's ambitions within the Belfast Agenda and the Belfast Regeneration and Investment Strategy. The Council will however continue to work with Translink to ensure that delivery of the Transport Hub generates the greatest possible regeneration benefits to local residents in terms of jobs, training and economic impact.
	<i>Wider masterplan development scheme (Weavers Cross)</i>
3.12	The full application for the wider regeneration scheme has not yet been submitted to the Council. The site sits within the wider context of a regeneration masterplan, referred to collectively as Weavers Cross, which will be submitted in outline planning application form. The proposed regeneration masterplan for this wider area is expected to consist of a mix of commercial and residential development. Initially both the outline and full applications were to be submitted in tandem but the outline application for the wider site is yet to be submitted pending planning approval for the Transport Hub.
3.13	Further reports on the wider Weavers Cross regeneration proposals will be brought back to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee in due course and officers are continuing to

	engage with Translink on this. In addition, it is expected that the outline application for the wider site will be processed and determined by the Council. Prior to the submission of an outline application for the wider development, the applicant will be required to undertake pre-application community consultation as the proposal will be for Major development.
3.14	Given the strategic and economic significance of the proposed Transport Hub, the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee is being asked to note the update in relation to planning and to provide its support to the proposed development of the Transport Hub. This is in the context of the comments already made from a planning perspective and agreed by the Planning Committee on 17 October 2017 and 11 September 2018.
	<b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b>
3.15	No direct resource implications associated this report.
	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</b>
3.16	No specific equality or good relations implications at this time.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 - Planning Addendum report 11 September 2018.

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## ADDENDUM REPORT

### Re-Consultation From Department for Infrastructure

**Committee Meeting Date: 11 September 2018**

**Application ID:** LA04/2017/1388/F

**Proposal:**

New integrated transport interchange comprising; station concourse, 26 bus stands, 8 railway platforms, bus maintenance and parking, track and signalling enhancements, bus access bridge, cycle and taxi provision, car parking, new public square, public realm improvements, highway improvements, infrastructure improvements, temporary structures for bus operations during construction and temporary site construction compounds.

**Location:**

To The East Of The Westlink (A12); South Of (Nos.127-9) And Including Grosvenor Road; At Intersection Of Grosvenor Road And Stanley Street; At The Intersection Of Durham Street And Grosvenor Road; At The Intersection Of Fisherwick Place And Howard Street; At Great Victoria Street (between Nos. 1-3 To 27-45); At Glengall Street (between Nos. 3-21); At The Junction Of Hope Street, Bruce Street And Great Victoria Street; At The Junction Of Durham Street, Linfield Road, Sandy Row And Hope Street; At Sandy Row From 2 Hurst Park To 85-87 Sandy Row, Gilpins Site; To North Of Former Whitehall Tobacco Works At Linfield Road, Weavers Court Business Park/ Linfield Industrial Estate, Blythefield Primary School And Charter Youth Club; At Weavers Court Business Park And Railway Track Lands Surrounding Arellian Nursery And Bounded By Utility Street/Bentham Drive/Egmot Gardens/ Felt Street (to North); Prince Andrew Park And Abingdon Drive (to South); Beit Street, Roosevelt Rise, Roosevelt Square

**Introduction**

This matter relates to re-consultation by the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) on the planning application for the new Transport Hub (LA04/2017/1388/F). DFI is the determining authority having formally "called in" the planning application under Section 29 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

This addendum report should be read in conjunction with the original report to the Planning Committee in October 2017, which is appended.

**Background**

The planning application for a new Transport Hub was originally submitted to Belfast City Council in June 2017. Later that month, DFI directed the Council to refer the application to it for determination. The Department gave this direction as it considered the application to be of regional significance.

In July 2017, DFI formally consulted Belfast City Council on the application. The planning application was considered by the Planning Committee in October 2017. A copy of the Planning Committee report is appended.

The Planning Committee agreed to the recommendation set out in the report with the addition of a paragraph highlighting the broader regeneration opportunities and resources for local communities which this development presented and calling for these to be considered as part of the recommended Section 76 agreement.

In summary, the Council's response to the original consultation was:

- Further clarification required regarding cycle and car parking;
- Recommendation of a larger amount of usable green space;
- Recommendation of the use of Section 76 agreements for phasing, landscaping, public realm, parking and job creation (failing that a planning condition); and
- In addition, the Council requested that the Department considers the potential for regeneration opportunities for the communities in the area and a direct resource for local communities to deal with issues such as disruption, transport, and business closures. It is also suggested that a Section 76 agreement, which has the potential for supporting local regeneration such as business development, tourism initiatives, and tackling health inequalities, and that provides resources at a local level for the wider community via development contributions, should be considered.

**Amended/Additional information:**

In August 2018, DFI undertook a further round of consultation with the Council based on the receipt of further environmental information from the applicant. The Council has requested an extension to the consultation period until 28 September 2018 to allow time to coordinate its response.

Summary of new information:

- A 'Further Environmental Information' Planning Statement which responds to issues previously raised by consultees
- The Boyne Bridge Planning Information Summary which outlines the history of bridges at this location and the constraints to retention. It also outlines the proposed heritage aspects and highlights that Historic Environment Division welcome the approach and mitigation measures proposed
- A Construction Phase Sustainable Travel Plan
- Multiple documents pertaining to traffic surveys and modelling

Response to issues previously raised by the Council:

- Clarification has been provided regarding cycle and car parking. Officers advise that the proposed temporary car park should be appropriately conditioned to prevent permanent use.
- Clarification and further information was provided to deal with transport and parking. This will be assessed by DFI Roads.
- Whilst the Council felt that a larger amount of green usable space should be provided, the applicant states that the public consultation exercise showed a preference for flexible open space to hold events.
- The Council recommended a legal agreement to ensure that public realm, phasing, landscaping and parking are completed in the appropriate time and manner. The applicant responded to state that they are fully committed to the delivery of all of these components and that DFI feels these can be satisfactorily addressed via planning conditions. They further state that Translink's public funding includes some £7m for public realm and landscaping.

- The Council recommended a Section 76 agreement to leverage opportunities for residents to benefit both from construction jobs and long-term jobs. The applicant states that they have been working with the Council's Economic Development Unit (ECU) since April 2017 and hosted an event in October 2017 for attendees to learn of immediate and long-term employment opportunities as a result of this project. In addition, Translink and the Council have announced an official partnership to deliver the "Buy Social" clauses during the construction and engineering phase of the project which will include the formation of a "bespoke Construction Employment Academy".
- Finally, the Planning Committee requested the appointment of a dedicated community liaison officer to work closely with the local community on all aspects of the project. The applicant advises that a Community Development Manager was appointed specifically for this in Spring 2017.

**Recommendation:**

1. Members are requested to note the content of this briefing and advise if they wish to make any further comment on this planning application to DFI.

## From Department for Infrastructure

**Committee Meeting Date: 17 October 2017**

**Application ID:** LA04/2017/1388/F

**Proposal:**

New integrated transport interchange comprising; station concourse, 26 bus stands, 8 railway platforms, bus maintenance and parking, track and signalling enhancements, bus access bridge, cycle and taxi provision, car parking, new public square, public realm improvements, highway improvements, infrastructure improvements, temporary structures for bus operations during construction and temporary site construction compounds.

**Location:**

To The East Of The Westlink (A12); South Of (Nos.127-9) And Including Grosvenor Road; At Intersection Of Grosvenor Road And Stanley Street; At The Intersection Of Durham Street And Grosvenor Road; At The Intersection Of Fisherwick Place And Howard Street; At Great Victoria Street (between Nos. 1-3 To 27-45); At Glengall Street (between Nos. 3-21); At The Junction Of Hope Street, Bruce Street And Great Victoria Street; At The Junction Of Durham Street, Linfield Road, Sandy Row And Hope Street; At Sandy Row From 2 Hurst Park To 85-87 Sandy Row, Gilpins Site; To North Of Former Whitehall Tobacco Works At Linfield Road, Weavers Court Business Park/ Linfield Industrial Estate, Blythefield Primary School And Charter Youth Club; At Weavers Court Business Park And Railway Track Lands Surrounding Arellian Nursery And Bounded By Utility Street/Bentham Drive/Egmot Gardens/ Felt Street (to North); Prince Andrew Park And Abingdon Drive (to South); Beit Street, Roosevelt Rise, Roosevelt Square

**Notification and Call In:**

Belfast City Council has been notified of the above planning application. This application is being dealt with by the Department for Infrastructure as a result of it being classified as 'Regionally Significant' under Section 26 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011. The Department will be responsible for determining the application. After consideration of the application the Department will present a recommendation to the Minister for consideration.

Section 26 (6) of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 empowers the Department to cause a public local inquiry to be held by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) or a person appointed by the Department. It is not mandatory to have a Public Inquiry and the Department will consider if such an inquiry is necessary when reaching its recommendation to the Minister.

Where an inquiry is not held, and before a final determination is made, Section 29 (7) requires a notice in writing to be served on the applicant and Belfast City Council indicating the decision it proposes to make. The notice must specify that within a timeframe of not less than 28 days, the applicant or Belfast City Council can request the opportunity to be heard by the PAC or a person appointed by the Department. In such circumstances the Department on receipt of a request will write to the PAC asking them to convene a hearing.

If an inquiry or hearing is held then the Department must take into account any report submitted to it by either the PAC or appointed person before making a determination. The Department will issue a decision notice to the applicant and inform the relevant council and third parties of the decision that has been made.

The decision of the Department is final and there is no right of appeal. It is open to an individual to apply for judicial review in the Courts if they do not agree with the decision of the Department. Judicial review is limited to legal or procedural aspects of the decision only.

**Recommendation:**

- Members are requested to note the content of this briefing and advise if they wish to make any comment on this planning application to DFI at this stage.

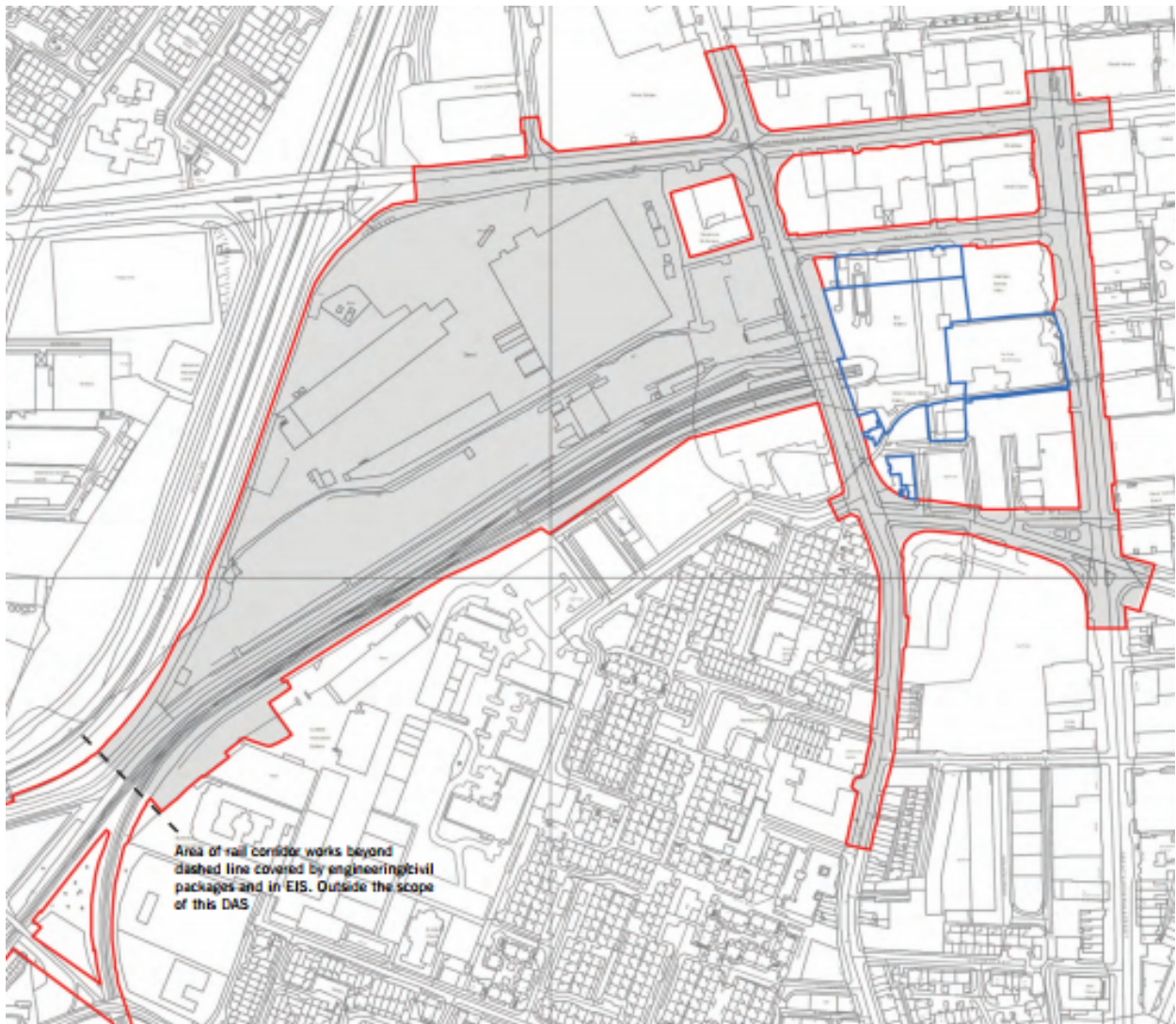
**Applicant Name and Address:**

NITHCO  
22 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7LX

**Agent Name and Address:**

Juno Planning and Environmental Ltd.  
409 Lisburn Road  
Belfast  
BT9 7EW

**Site Location Plan**







1:500 East Elevation



1:500 East Elevation

**Pre-Application Community Consultation:**

In accordance with the requirements of Section 27 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011, the applicant served a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) on Belfast City Council on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016. Belfast City Council responded on 18 May 2016 confirming that the PAN and associated approach to pre-application consultation met the requirements of Section 27 of the Planning Act and also provided information on a number of community groups that should be included in the consultation exercise.

The Pre-Application Community Consultation (PACC) Strategy included events in November 2016 and February 2017.

A Pre-Application Community Consultation Report has been produced to comply with the statutory requirement laid out in Section 28 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and is available to view on the Planning Portal - <http://epicpublic.planningni.gov.uk>.

**Background:**

The planning application was received by Belfast City Council on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and is accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

On 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Section 29 (1) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and all of the other powers enabling it in that behalf, directed Belfast City Council to refer the application to DfI for determination under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The Department gave this direction in view of the project being considered to be of regional significance.

**Description of Proposal:**

The site is located to the rear of the existing Europa Bus and Train Stations as well as adjacent lands. The proposed Hub will be located at a site west of Durham Street which is bounded by the existing rail corridor, the Westlink motorway, Grosvenor Road and Durham Street (and the Boyne Bridge). There are no proximate residential units within the immediate vicinity of the site and the area is characterised by mixed transport and commercial uses. There are however residential areas to the south in the Sandy Row area.

The proposed development comprises:

- The Belfast Hub building (No. 13 on the accompanying plan)
- The Station Square public realm (No. 01)
- Taxi ranks/pick up/ drop off areas (No. 02 and 22)
- Collanade (No. 05)
- Cycle parking (No. 06)
- Landscaping (No. 08 and 09)
- Temporary carpark (No. 10)
- Disabled bay (No. 23)
- Loading and coaches (No. 24 and 25)
- Bus operations area (No.11)
- Entrance area and ramps Grosvenor Road (No. 07)
- Bus maintenance facility (No. 12)
- Watercourse culverting
- Retail kiosk
- Temporary and permanent bus wash and refuelling facilities
- Lighting proposals
- Retaining walls
- Pedestrian accesses
- Road realignments
- Junction improvements
- Rail signals
- Signalling suite
- A footbridge
- A BMX park
- Cycleways
- Tracked busways
- 8 train platforms



**The Belfast Hub building** is comprised of a two-storey building with feature canopy/roofline to accommodate passengers for multi-modal transport. The building varies in height from approximately 10.6m to 14.5m above finished floor level with a canopy at a height of approximately 4.8m. It is largely glazed though the colonnade provides a pedestrian scale and contrasting sandstone and Portland stone. The flooring will comprise herringbone stone. The south elevation comprises sandstone/Portland stone cladding with a frameless glazing/curtain walling system with steel support and brushed stainless steel window frames. The west elevation contains sandstone coloured terracotta cladding and framed glazing with powder-coated framing. The east elevation comprises materials seen in both the west and south elevations. Internally, timber soffits are proposed to clad the underside of the roof features.

Internally, the hub provides an Enterprise Lounge for the Belfast-Dublin train route, a Goldline Lounge to service national bus routes, general seating areas, bus stands, kiosks, toilets, retail units, and back of house facilities such as security, left luggage and ticket office. The building naturally accesses the bus stands and rail platforms as well as Station Square.

Connectivity to the City Centre is via Glengall Street and on to Grosvenor Road (primary). The concept and design is detailed in the Design and Access statement which states that “key in the selection of the preferred option was the ability for the hub structure to be built while the existing rail and bus facility remain operational” which is achieved via construction phasing.

**Station Square public realm** is approximately 7000 sq. metres and will serve as a forecourt to the project. The area will serve as a civic square and will address two public entrances (Durham Street and Grosvenor Road) and will accommodate significant rush hour pedestrian traffic whilst also providing cycle parking facilities. This component of the proposal will comprise granite hardstanding with landscaping, a water feature, amphitheatre/seating areas, art installations, colonnade, taxi rank, drop-off area, cycle parking and retail kiosks.

**The Glengall Street pedestrian access** will form the main pedestrian access from the city centre through to Station Square and will contain two “super crossings” on Durham Street and Great Victoria Street. Vehicular access will be restricted to taxis and deliveries. The street will be paved in granite blocks. It is intended to provide lighting, planting and seating to facilitate pedestrian traffic.

#### **Durham Street removal of Boyne Bridge**

Durham Street will replace the existing Boyne Bridge and will retain the North-South vehicular movement. There is proposed landscaping at both the northern and southern ends of the street to tie in with Station Square.

The Boyne Bridge replaced and encases two arches of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Saltwater Bridge. The shotcreted remnant of the Saltwater Bridge still remains incorporated into the southern limit of the current Boyne Bridge. Being of local importance due to its origins, it is proposed that careful excavation is undertaken to establish the practicality of retaining and incorporating within the new station square and providing interpretive panels to describe the historic significance (this will be the subject of Outline Planning application.)

#### **Sandy Row/Grosvenor Roads**

The Sandy Row connection with the Transport Hub is stated as being critical to the scheme. Grosvenor Road similarly will provide a direct entrance to the hub. Both areas will be treated with proposed landscaping and granite paving.

#### **Operational Area**

The operational area of the hub is located to the south of the site and contains the more functional side of the proposals with bus operations, maintenance, drop-off and pick-up areas, the rail tracks and temporary carpark. Landscaping and public realm works are also proposed to create continuity throughout the site.

**Future masterplan**

The full application for the Transport Hub sits within the wider context of a regeneration masterplan which is being submitted in outline form in due course. Initially both the outline and full applications were to be submitted in tandem but given the intended call-in of the full application, the applicant decided to await the outcome of the full application before submission of the outline.

**Car parking and Access:**

The Transport Plan for the proposed hub is available to view on [www.planningni.gov.uk](http://www.planningni.gov.uk) and states that Translink have set a target for passenger growth of 1m additional passenger journeys per year resulting in 85m passenger journeys per annum by 2021. The Transport Plan describes the proposal as a “transport-led regeneration project” which will “act as a catalyst for the regeneration” of the area.

There are 100 cycling spaces proposed to cater for the new Transport Hub building which will be located adjacent to the main entrance of the hub and Station Square. It is anticipated that a Belfast Bikes docking station will be incorporated into the square in order to continue the ability to use public hire bikes to get to and from key points in the city in a sustainable manner. It is noted however that no agreement has been reached with the operator.

There are 90 staff parking spaces proposed as well as 112 visitor spaces.

In terms of traffic management the Hub proposals promote and enable a multimodal transport interchange enabling rail to connect with bus; BRT, taxis, Belfast Bike and cars. The proposal provides strategic on-site car parking provision to accommodate those driving to use public transport (the Belfast/Dublin train) which should minimise the need for drivers to traverse the city centre to locate car parking

**Landscaping and Public Realm:**

The proposals include large amounts of landscaping and public realm both to the frontages of the proposed hub as well as along key approaches from Sandy Row, Grosvenor Road and most notably, Glengall Street. The area described as Station Square creates a large civic space as a focal point to the Transport Hub. This area includes seating, landscaping, a water feature and cycle parking. It contains a number of pedestrian routes through from key entrances to the hub itself.

Transport hubs are no longer seen as purely functional nodes. Public demands and expectations of such facilities are higher, not only in terms of high quality architecture but also in relation to the place making qualities of associated open space and public realm. The city centre is currently lacking in green space with a large proportion of its existing public spaces dominated by hard surfacing.

The proposal incorporates a considerable expanse of hard surfacing within both the main civic space (Station Square) and the public realm associated with the Grosvenor Road entrance. Within Station Square the amount of green space is limited to three modest raised planting areas. In terms of the wider functioning of the city, an aspiration would have been to include a larger amount of usable green space, as an integral part of the design of Station Square, particularly given that ultimately it will be one of the more densely developed parts of the city. The injection of additional green space within this expansive 7000m<sup>2</sup> square (more than twice the size of Custom House Square) would, in this context, encourage increased dwell time within the space and prevent it from becoming merely a transition space. Consideration could also be given to injecting an element of playfulness to the design of the square/public realm which are presently very formal in its arrangement.

Given the proposals for such significant amounts of additional new public realm the applicant will need to consider the long term management and maintenance of these areas, particularly if they constructed from high quality materials. Whilst it may be assumed footways and roadways will be adopted in due course, this may not be the case with Station Square and it may be that Translink become responsible for this space in the long-term. This will generate an ongoing revenue cost.

In terms of Glengall Street it is suggested that this will both be the main pedestrian access from the city centre whilst also serving a function in terms of taxis and servicing. This has the potential to cause conflict between modes of transport and undermine the route as the key pedestrian connection. The applicant will need to consider how to mitigate this potential conflict through its estate management and servicing strategy.

The proposed colonnading is approximately 5.6-6.0m wide (distance between columns) which is considered adequate for two way pedestrian movement. However a potential pinch point exists within the public realm outside the Grosvenor Road entrance, specifically between the entrance and sections of retaining walls.

### **Urban Design Considerations**

The RDS advises that Belfast City Centre is the most important place in Northern Ireland and the place where investment impact can be maximised. The Transport Hub for Belfast should therefore play a key role in this continued transformation. A truly integrated Transport Hub should do exactly that, integrate with the fabric of the city to become a gateway to its centre and in doing so a catalyst for future investment and development. The Belfast Hub should represent one of the primary gateways to Belfast and create an excellent first impression of a confident and progressive capital city.

Given the significance of the Hub, not only to its immediate context but also the wider city centre, it is important that its relationship to the wider area be clearly contextualised within an overarching masterplan. This is not the case in this current application. The exclusion of the BT Exchange building/site and the adjoining Great Northern Mall from the overarching masterplan, which would have enabled a greater prominence along Great Victoria Street and Grosvenor Road, are missed opportunities from an urban design perspective.

The Hub is to be constructed a substantial distance to the rear of the original station and will be of a relatively low density, operating for the most part as a standalone transport facility albeit integrated within a network of public realm proposals. Transport hubs have become much more than just a place to get on and off trains and buses and are increasingly becoming places within which to shop, work, do business and relax. While there is a simplicity and elegance in the proposed contemporary architectural approach, including historical references to railway engineering vernacular through the use of colonnading and the undulating roof form, the opportunity could have been taken to deliver a transport hub with multiple functionalities. In this instance consideration could have been given to explore a range of compatible uses under one roof which may have resulted in a building of a higher density, presenting a more sustainable and legible solution that delivers a strong urban presence within the city that would be expected from a project of this calibre.

### **Active frontages**

It is noted that the proposed ground floor plans include a number of 'front of house' retail units located between both entrances, which are welcomed. However the opportunity should be taken to design these as dual aspect units that would enable them to have both active frontages both internally and externally, thereby helping to animate the public realm to the front of the building (a section of which would be covered by the proposed colonnade).

The redevelopment of the BT Exchange site, which abuts the northern edge of the square, does not form part of this application. As such a total of four kiosks are proposed along the southern edge of the BT Exchange site in order to address the obvious lack of active frontage to the square in this location. While there would be no objection in principle to the proposed kiosks, which are contemporary in their design and choice of materials, again this is considered to be a missed opportunity and one which may be perceived as a temporary arrangement within what should be one of the city's key public spaces. As a minor point, it is noted that a wedge shaped ornamental planting strip is proposed along the rear of the four kiosks. This arrangement could result in an area prone to trapping litter and may have the potential for anti-social behaviour.

### **Materials**

The simplicity of materials including Portland stone, terracotta panelling and glass curtain walling will be a positive design feature, however further detail would be required in relation to a number of annotations included within the drawings. These include reference to "concrete columns over clad in white" and large areas referred to only as "louvres". It is acknowledged that the use of glass curtain walling in this context will provide a transparent boundary between the buildings internal arrangement and its external setting which will enhance its legibility while allowing natural light to penetrate deeper into the building.

### **Temporary uses**

A number of interim uses form part of the current application. These relate to:

- Temporary landscape (public realm) south of the proposed civic space/colonnading – highlighted within previous PADs as a proposed commercial (tall) building;
- Temporary landscape (wildflower meadow) and temporary car parking west of the transport hub – highlighted within previous PADs as a collection of commercial buildings with an element of amenity/leisure/community use.

It is understood that the wider masterplan area will be subject to an outline application which will follow the full application for the Transport Hub and associated infrastructure. While there are no objections in principle to the temporary uses as proposed, their inclusion in this application means that they will be assessed outside of the context of those uses included within the wider masterplan which will be brought forward through the forthcoming outline application. Good urban design practice advocates that schemes should be resisted which would prejudice future development potential and/or quality. Conversely schemes should also be evaluated in relation to the wider context of the masterplan and any subsequent phases of development that are aspired to.

The lack of a wider masterplan context raises concern relating to the temporary landscape (public realm) proposed in this application, south of the proposed civic space/colonnading, which according to previous PADs, was earmarked for a proposed commercial (tall) building within the wider masterplan. It is unclear how this area of temporary landscape (public realm) will relate to the tall building shown in previous PADs and which is likely to form part of a future outline application. Of particular concern is the potential for such a building to potentially overshadow the civic space being due north of the site and any micro climatic conditions that may arise.

The temporary condition of the site, particularly during periods of construction, will be critical to the long-term success of the scheme in the eyes of not only commuters and residents, but it will also shape the perception of potential occupiers of the commercial space and residential units within

the wider masterplan area. Temporary landscaping, hoardings and wayfinding signage should consequently be of a high quality so as to generate value for the wider masterplan area. Thought should also be given as to how these temporary and permanent spaces can be animated and activated prior to development.

Likewise concerns would also exist in relation to the quantum of residential accommodation proposed within the wider masterplan, which for a scheme of this scale and significance should be substantially higher.

### **Regeneration Considerations**

The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) sets out the Council's collective ambition for the continuing growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding area up to 2030. It has been shaped by extensive engagement with stakeholders, including Translink, and contains a road map policies to guide city-centre decision-making and key projects that translate those policies into action.

The Council believes that the city centre will play a pivotal role in the growth of Belfast and the entire region and that there are exciting and significant potential opportunities for investment. Our commitment to city-centre regeneration is underlined by the £18.7m City Centre Investment Fund which the Council created to support the implementation of the Strategy.

BCCRIS identifies the South Centre of the city centre as the primary focus for Belfast's office sector, at the centre of Northern Ireland's knowledge economy and an essential driver of the region's economic growth.

The Strategy strongly welcomes the Belfast Hub as a major improvement in convenience and connectivity of the regional rail system and associated transport links.

The opportunity is not just one of transport engineering: it is a chance to redefine the gateway to Belfast's City Centre and is a major regeneration opportunity for the entire city centre with particular significance for the neighbouring community of Sandy Row which forms part of the South Belfast Urban Village comprising Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Market areas and West Belfast, Grosvenor road community.

This consultation relates to the detailed planning application for the station building, public square and associated proposals described on page 5. Although it includes streets and public realm for a considerable distance beyond the application boundary on Grosvenor Road, Glengall Street, Durham Street, Great Victoria Street and Sandy Row, it omits significant areas of land and buildings with regeneration potential between Durham Street and Great Victoria Street and south to Sandy Row. It is expected that these areas will be included in an outline application for the wider area likely to be submitted by Translink for determination by the Council early in 2018

### **Improved Connectivity**

It is important to make the Hub a civic gateway to the city with key connections.

It is important that there is a safe and easy way to cross Durham Street. The application proposes a significant new public square in front of the station with a crossing leading towards the rear of existing buildings fronting Great Victoria Street. This includes a colonnade which leads from the station around the southern boundary of the Square and aligns with the rear entrance of the Greta Northern mall. This is supported. The design of buildings and spaces between should assist those arriving at the new station to navigate through the proposed station square towards the Mall and Glengall Street and to the city centre beyond.

The improved physical links to the Sandy Row area with quality pedestrian connections that take account of safety issues, traffic management and improved street surface and public realm are supported. In particular the public realm proposals which stretch beyond the site boundary to Sandy Row and the Hope Street and Durham Street junction areas are welcome. However, to make these connections successfully, the improved public realm will require to be complemented by proposed new buildings on the southern side of Durham Street to respond to the context of existing city fabric and promote a quality city and street scape, making reference to building line of the Whitehall Tobacco Works building and encourage footfall along Sandy Row. This will need to be addressed in the forthcoming outline application for the wider regeneration area.

Improved links with the Sandy Row community through exploration of the cultural legacy and its interrelationships with the Hub site (for example with regard to Boyne Bridge and its predecessor, the Saltwater Bridge) are supported and encouraged.

The application seeks to improve physical links to West Belfast area with quality pedestrian connections that take account of safety issues, traffic management and improved street surface and public realm to stretch beyond the site boundary to the Grosvenor Road Area. This is welcome.

Proposals coming forward in the outline application should reduce severance, perception of severance, promote safety and ensure that proposed developments respond to the creation of a streetscape, with active uses and overlooking encouraged onto the Grosvenor Road.

Although beyond the boundaries of this application, it is important that the applicant recognises the importance of this proposal as the first element of providing improved access through the Great Northern Mall as the primary pedestrian route between the Hub and the Linen Quarter with a pedestrian crossing relocated to lead from the mall across to Blackstaff square and the city centre. It is expected that the improved public realm and pedestrian connectivity across Great Victoria Street, with the treatment of the proposed landscaping of Great Victoria Street to reflect its role as a civic gateway and materials to tie-in or make reference to Linen Quarter palette of materials will be addressed in the forthcoming outline application.

#### **Develop mixed-use land uses appropriate to this key, city centre location**

Proposed ground floor plans include a number of 'front of house' retail units located between both entrances to the station and these are welcomed. It is essential to maximise active street frontages, retail opportunities and community uses on the ground floors on the approach to the station building and on all proposed buildings within the wider Hub redevelopment area.

In addition to the development opportunity created by the relocation of the bus station closer to Durham Street, there are a number of surface car parks on Great Victoria Street, Bruce Street/Hope Street and Glengall Street which could accommodate new mixed use development. This should be addressed in the forthcoming outline application for the wider masterplan area.

Any forthcoming proposals for the wider Hub redevelopment area should, in addition to active ground floor uses, comprise mixed use development including Grade A office provision as well as quality mixed and tenure-blind residential accommodation. This would promote job creation and city centre living close to the new station, and encourage day and evening activity in the area.

#### **Meanwhile and interim uses**

As noted above, a number of areas of temporary landscaping are proposed within this application, and it is assumed that the wider outline application will include areas within the masterplan that will also either be vacant or be subject to temporary landscaping.

How such spaces are treated in terms of materials, management and activation is vital not only to how the Hub is received, but also in terms of generating long-term commercial interest in the

wider development and regeneration opportunities within the masterplan area. Transport-led regeneration projects elsewhere in the UK have recognised the importance of establishing a strong sense of place within the station environs, and in many cases have invested heavily both in temporary landscaping and meanwhile-type activities. In order to generate such added value the applicant would be encouraged to take a holistic approach to the 'curation' of the public realm and open spaces within this application and the subsequent outline application for the masterplan area, alongside such development partners as may be appointed in the future.

### **Employment Opportunities**

This is one of the most significant projects in terms of size within the Belfast City area and is exceptionally important in the creation of local employment, both for in terms of the construction jobs and long term employment. The Council would welcome early discussions on how a pipeline of training, skills and jobs may be created over the life cycle of this project in order to leverage opportunities for Belfast City residents. This would involve working with development partners and local training groups in addition to the council's Belfast Works initiative. Any such skills and employment programme would be compliant with statutory and legal requirements in the promotion of fairness and equality.

### **Planning Considerations:**

Volume I of the Environmental Statement submitted contains the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 Introduction;
- Chapter 2 Background;
- Chapter 3 The Site and Surrounding Area;
- Chapter 4 The Proposed Development;
- Chapter 5 Consideration of Alternatives;
- Chapter 6 The Environmental Assessment Process;
- Chapter 7 Ecology and Nature Conservation;
- Chapter 8 Air Quality;
- Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration;
- Chapter 10 Ground Conditions;
- Chapter 11 Historic Environment;
- Chapter 12 Townscape and Visual Impact;
- Chapter 13 Water Environment;
- Chapter 14 Socio-Economic;
- Chapter 15 Transport;
- Chapter 16 Waste;
- Chapter 17 Cumulative Effects; and
- Chapter 18 Mitigation Schedule.

Volume II contains the technical appendices as follows:

- A. Development Proposals;
- B. Ecology;
- C. Air Quality;
- D. Noise and Vibration;
- E. Ground Conditions;
- F. Historic Environment;
- G. Townscape and Visual Impact;
- H. Water Environment;
- I. Socio Economic;
- J. Transport; and
- K. Waste.

Volume III contains the figures as follows:

- A. Development Proposals;
- B. Ecology;
- C. Air Quality;
- D. Noise and Vibration;
- E. Ground Conditions;
- F. Historic Environment;
- G. Townscape and Visual Impact;
- H. Water Environment;
- I. Socio Economic;
- J. Transport; and
- K. Waste.

DFI have consulted the council on the details of the application and have undertaken consultation with the following organisations:

#### **Consultations -**

**Northern Ireland Water Ltd** – Interim response to state that NI Water are working with the applicant's consultants to agree a number of infrastructure alterations to accommodate the construction of the proposed project.

**Northern Ireland Environment Agency/DAERA** – Water Management Unit consider that the proposal has the potential to adversely affect the surface water environment. The Regulation Unit are content subject to conditions and informatives with regards to fuel tank removal, implementation of a remedial strategy, a piling risk assessment and verification of all remedial works. Natural Environment Division have provided advice.  
Historic Environment Division –

**Historic Environment Division** – HED Historic Buildings have no comment to make. HED Historic Monuments is content that the proposal satisfies PPS 6 policy requirements subject to conditions for the agreement and implementation of a developer-funded programme of archaeological works. This is to identify and record any archaeological remains in advance of new construction or provide for their preservation.

**Environmental Health** – Belfast City Council – Extension sought until 20 September 2017.

**Rivers Agency** – No response to date.

**Shared Environmental Services** – No response to date.

**Transport NI** – No response to date.

#### **Representations-**

At the time of writing a total of 25 No representations have been received from third parties raising 22 letters of objection, 1 petition of objection containing over 3000 signatures, 1 comment requesting further information on the Environmental Assessment and 1 letter by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive requiring amendments to the proposal to prevent blocking access to their land as well as other comments regarding landscaping and housing.

The representations can be summarised as follows:

- Demolition of the Boyne Bridge and loss of heritage therein



- Loss of allotment plots
- Pollution caused by the proposal
- Encroachment on public amenity facilities
- Inappropriate spending of public resource given deprivation in the area
- Omission of the Blythefield Park area in the Environmental Assessment
- Noise and disturbance
- Loss of trees/buffer zones
- Negative impact on the Markets Area, Victoria Square and Central Station
- Project should have a wider scope to include other parts of the city such as Yorkgate
- Impacts on NIHE land and access
- Concern regarding public realm and landscaping layouts

The full details of the planning application (drawings, reports and the Environmental Statement) can be accessed on the planning portal at <http://epicpublic.planningni.gov.uk>

**Recommendation:**

- Further clarification is required regarding cycle and car parking. There is reference to a large surface car park which is marked as temporary however, the Environmental Statement makes reference to only a reduction of 21 spaces following completion. It is noted that that staff numbers are anticipated at 300 daily, staff parking is proposed at 90 spaces. Further clarification would be required on justification of this number as well as a parking plan to delineate where the spaces are and how the uses would be conditioned.
- In addition the Transport Plan compares existing and proposed parking spaces on site but there is repeated reference to parking at Central Station which it would not appear to be appropriate to use for a before and after analysis. Similarly some of the modelling information refers to residential units which are not included in this application.
- In light of the scale of the proposed Station Square, the applicant should consider the inclusion of a larger amount of usable green space, as an integral part of its design.
- In light of the scale of development and the context of the wider masterplan, a Section 76 agreement would be recommended to ensure that public realm, phasing, landscaping and parking are completed in the appropriate time and manner. In the absence of a legal agreement, BCC would recommend that a Phasing and Implementation Plan be required and conditioned to formalise the phasing plans as set out in 4.11 of Volume I of the Environmental Statement and other documents and agreed prior to commencement.
- In light of the importance of the project in terms of employment creation, a Section 76 agreement would be recommended to leverage opportunities for Belfast City residents to benefit both from the construction jobs and long terms jobs that may come forward,

working with development partners and local training groups in addition to the council's Belfast Works initiative. In the absence of a legal agreement, BCC would recommend that a plan be required and conditioned for submission to the Council outlining the applicant's proposals for access to employment opportunities.

Members are requested to note the content of this briefing and advise if they wish to make any comment on this planning application to DFI at this stage.