

# Legal and Civic Services Department

## Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Ms Eilish McGoldrick

Our reference EMcGCGR220323YSI

Email [democraticservices@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@belfastcity.gov.uk)

Date 22nd March, 2023

Julie Harrison  
Permanent Secretary  
Corporate Policy Unit  
Clarence Court  
10-18 Adelaide Street  
Belfast, BT2 8GB

Dear Permanent Secretary,

### **York Street Interchange (YSI) Placemaking and Active Travel Review (PATR)**

At its special meeting in February, Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee received a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure and AECOM in relation to the York Street Interchange Placemaking and Active Travel Review.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure to request that it reviewed the Strategic Transport Objectives of the York Street Interchange. This was in light of the fact that the objectives were set in 2008, and prior to the declaration of a Climate Emergency by the Council and the NI Assembly, and the subsequent passage of the Climate Act. The Committee also request that DfI share the Assurance Review of the York Street Interchange which was provided to the Minister in March 2021.

Furthermore, at its meeting in March, the Council agreed that it would only reconsider corporately supporting the York Street Interchange project when confirmation was given by the Department for Infrastructure that they would proceed with the option that ensured safety of current residents, delivered the best place making and regeneration outcomes including

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plans for the bridges across the Lagan and a commitment from the Department that they would co-ordinate efforts to work collaboratively with all relevant stake holders including Belfast City Council, Department for Communities, Housing Executive, Belfast Harbour, The Ashton Centre and Sailortown Regeneration as part of the overall scheme.

The Council also agreed that this should include Community Stakeholders, the Stella Maris Hostel and Ulster University as relevant stakeholders and that the project needed to address both the air quality needs and housing objectives in the city.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eilish McGoldrick', written in a cursive style.

**Eilish McGoldrick**  
Democratic Services Officer

**From the Permanent Secretary  
Dr Julie Harrison**

Ms Eilish McGoldrick  
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Your reference:  
Our reference: SCORR-0162-2023  
12 June 2023

Via email:  
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Dear Eilish

## **YORK STREET INTERCHANGE – PLACEMAKING AND ACTIVE TRAVEL REVIEW**

Thank you for your letter of 22 March 2023. I am very sorry it has taken so long to reply. There are a number of matters that had to be considered before responding.

Responses to the points raised in your letter are included below.

### Review of the Strategic Transport Objectives for the YSI

The Council will be aware of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035, the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) 2002-2012 and the subsequent Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN-TP) 2015. These documents collectively form the extant transport policy for Northern Ireland until such time as their replacements are published. The Department is currently drafting a new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for consultation in late summer and publication by the end of the year. The aim of the RTS is to set out the future direction and the Department's climate goals and potential contribution to net zero. This will be followed by a review of the RSTN-TP.

Within these documents, the objective of removing bottlenecks on the strategic road network is identified and the strategic transport objectives for the YSI scheme are reflective of this principle. A deviation from the scheme objectives established at the onset of the project in 2008 would require Ministerial approval, given its potential implications on completed statutory procedures.

Notwithstanding this, the Council will be aware that a recommendation arising from the Project Assessment Review in 2020 was that "the YSI project brief should be reviewed and revised to ensure it aligns with the concept of 'place making' and new best practice in terms of urban transport design, and with the Minister's agenda."

The completed Placemaking and Active Travel Review (PATR), which identified a series of potential variations to the scope/brief of the project to improve placemaking and active travel outcomes, addresses this recommendation. The published PATR report and supporting annexes can be viewed on the YSI project website <http://www.yorkstreetinterchange.com/>

### Publication of the Project Assessment Review Report

In line with current guidance on best practice from the Department for Finance (DAO DoF 06/21) the Department plans, by the end of June 2023, to publish the Project Assessment Review report, subject to general data protection requirements, on its scheme website ([www.yorkstreetinterchange.com](http://www.yorkstreetinterchange.com)).

### Belfast City Council Corporate Support for YSI

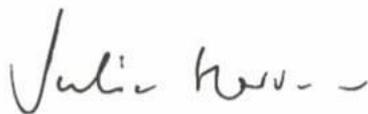
The Department welcomes the broad support for its PATR process thus far from the Council. We are grateful for the positive engagement with officers in the City Growth and Regeneration Department and also the Development and Planning Department. We are also grateful for the opportunity to present our work to both the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the North Area Working Group.

As outlined in the Department's recent presentation to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, the ongoing next steps in the PATR process involve the examination of the shortlisted scenarios in more detail to assess their road safety, cost, traffic, economic and environmental impacts and compatibility with stakeholder interests and objectives. This work is expected to be carried out by the end of summer 2023.

In respect of stakeholder engagement, the Department is committed to continue working collaboratively with its identified key stakeholders to the project, including those listed in the Council's letter of 22 March 2023 and others such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Belfast City Council's Planning Department, who are seeking to address housing need within the City.

The Department trusts that this response satisfies the Council and looks forward to continuing to work with its colleagues in progressing this key transport project for Belfast.

Yours sincerely



**JULIE HARRISON**