



Belfast City Council

Report to: Health and Environmental Services Committee

Subject: **Proposed Recycling Centre at Springvale**

Date: 8th September, 2010

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Relevant Background Information

Prior to 1995, the Council had 13 civic amenity sites which were used primarily as mustering stations for the street cleaning and refuse collection squads. Each of these sites had several open-top skips where the public could deposit household waste free of charge for disposal.

The EU Landfill (LFD) and Waste Framework Directives (WFD) have set targets for the Council in terms of diverting biodegradable waste from landfill and increasing the recycling rate for the city. As a result, since 2005 new kerbside collection services for recyclable materials have been introduced to all householders in Belfast and this continues in the inner city with consideration of kitchen waste. A programme to refurbish and expand the civic amenity (CA) sites, or acquire new sites, was undertaken concurrently to develop modern household recycling centres with a much stronger emphasis on waste diversion and recycling. These new centres largely replaced the older smaller CA sites, located in residential areas which were subsequently closed.

To date, four recycling centres have been developed at Palmerston Road – off Holywood Road, Ormeau – off Park Road, Blackstaff Way – off Kennedy Way and Alexandra Park Avenue – off Antrim Road.

As part of the review of CA sites, the Service identified the benefits of developing a fifth household recycling centre between the north and west of the city which would facilitate a review of the need for the two remaining CA sites at Springfield Avenue and Agnes Street (Appendix 1).

The Service worked closely with the Council's Estates Unit, now located in the Property and Projects Department, to identify suitable locations which could serve both communities. Following protracted investigations, the potential of the former Mackie's site at Springvale was identified.

In late 2004/05, officers from the Waste Management Service and the Estates Unit commissioned some preliminary investigations into the suitability of the site as a recycling centre and identified two possible options for a proportion of the site. These proposals were forwarded to the Department for Social Development (DSD), along with a request for confirmation that they would be prepared to release part of the land for use as a recycling

centre to serve north and west Belfast, subject to agreement on price, Council approval, title and resolution of contamination and planning issues. At that time, DSD were commissioning site investigation reports to identify the scale of some contamination issues which were identified for the site. DSD advised that they were committed in principle to accommodating the Council's request and transferring lands for the purposes of a recycling centre.

In 2006, the DSD and the Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) undertook a Masterplanning exercise for the Springvale site to assess its development potential and produce a series of options. The Masterplanning process consulted widely with stakeholders including adjacent landowners, Belfast Institute for Further & Higher Education (BIFHE – now Belfast Metropolitan College), Invest NI, NI Housing Executive (NIHE), the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), Planning Service, Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and West Belfast Partnership Board. In addition, written consultation was invited from all elected members for the area.

As part of this exercise, officers from the Estates Unit restated the Council's interest in securing a proportion of the site for a new recycling centre, as well as use of part of the lands for sports pitches. At its meeting on 11 September 2006, the Committee considered the Masterplanning process and agreed that a formal expression of interest should be made to the DSD stating the Council's interests in a proportion of this site for a recycling centre (Appendix 2).

The Masterplanning Options Report was published in 2008 and identifies three options, all of which included a recycling centre. The report highlighted that the need for a recycling centre was identified through consultation and situating such a facility at this site would accommodate cross community usage. The DSD advised the Council's officers that the DSD Minister had decided to test the options within the report with a more select audience, namely the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Partnership Boards, before equality screening and giving consideration to a fuller consultation on the preferred option.

The DSD is now proposing to prepare a Masterplan for a wider area. DSD officers advised that they would be willing to recommend to their Minister to exclude the area identified for a recycling centre from the wider Masterplanning process on the basis that the earlier Options Report includes this facility in each of the proposed layouts on foot of the previous consultation exercise. This would allow the Council to proceed with site investigation, contamination reports, preliminary planning assessment, etc.

Invest NI, who own the adjoining lands, had previously constructed an access road and roundabout system into Springvale, and so control access to the site. Some officers from Invest NI have expressed reservations regarding the proposed development of a recycling centre at the Springvale site which they feel may not be compatible with their organisation's proposals on the adjoining land. At this time, there are no potential clients for these sites.

Key Issues

The LFD has set progressively reducing targets for Member States to reduce the amount of bio-degradable waste they send to landfill i.e. 75% by 2010, 50% by 2013 and 35% by 2020. In addition, the WFD currently being transposed nationally, will introduce a requirement for each council to recycle 50% of its waste by 2020. The Council is working with arc21 to provide appropriate contracts for the treatment and disposal of wastes in order to comply with this, and other, legislation.

In terms of delivering these objectives, the Council has identified "*better care for the environment*" as a corporate theme, within which there is a commitment "*to be on course to achieve zero waste direct to landfill by 2015*". The Council's recycling rate for 2009/10 was 26.7%.

Recycling centres have a significant role to play in helping to achieve these targets. With approx 20,000 tonnes of waste received per year and, based on existing data which shows that 60% – 70 % of this material at the recycling centres is recycled, there is the potential to recycle approx 14,000 tonnes overall. This compares with around 10% from the older, CA sites which is largely due to the limited segregation of materials which can be achieved at these facilities due to the size constraints of the sites. Based on the projected figures for 2012/13 and a 60% recycling rate, a new centre at Springvale could therefore contribute around 1,800 tonnes and almost 2% towards the Council's overall recycling rate.

The Council programme of development for recycling centres city-wide now means it has four strategically located household recycling centres but, on this basis, there is a gap at the north and west of the city.

Following searches by the Waste Management Service and the Council's Estates Unit, the Springvale site was identified as the most promising site in this area of the city suitable for development as a recycling centre. The Committee has previously recognised this case at its Committee meeting in September 2006. The previous DSD consultation exercise, part of the Masterplanning process, supported the case for a recycling centre at this location which would accommodate cross community usage.

The development of a recycling centre at Springvale would increase the Council's waste diversion and recycling rates and would facilitate a review of the need for the remaining CA sites at Agnes Street and Springfield Avenue. It could also contribute substantially towards demonstrating the Council's commitment to deliver "*Best Endeavours*" in order to mitigate against any financial penalty which may arise from a failure to meet NI Landfill Allowance Scheme (NILAS) waste diversion targets, which have been introduced to bring into affect the requirements of the LFD.

Any proposals for the layout of a Springvale recycling centre would be based on an updated version of the design previously used at the Ormeau facility at Park Road which has achieved national recognition at the letsrecycle.com awards after coming runner-up in 2009 in the best CA/Household Recycling Centre site category.

Earlier this summer, under the title "*North & West household recycling centre – a new shared space*", this proposal had been submitted for consideration for support under PEACE III (Phase 2) Local Action Plan for Belfast and it is contained within the current consultation document as Option 7. Public feedback on this exercise was due by the end of August and will be presented to the Good Relations Partnership on 3 September, before the final proposals are submitted to the SEUPB. Early indications suggest, however, that this proposal may be unsuitable for funding due to the risks associated with obtaining appropriate planning permissions in time to meet the Peace III programme timeframe.

For several years, the Service has ensured that the development of an additional recycling centre has been identified as a potential project for the capital programme; however, it is currently identified as "*uncommitted*" and capital financial resources have not been allocated. As part of the PEACE III bid process, the Service started preparing a Business Case/Economic Appraisal in line with Council's Gates Review process to secure the necessary expenditure.

Should the Committee approve the recommendations within this report, further discussions will need to commence promptly with Invest NI regarding securing access to the Springvale site for the purposes of developing and servicing a recycling centre.

Resource Implications

The proposal to develop a recycling centre at the Springvale site is likely to require a capital expenditure of around £2.25 million, but the operation of the facility will also require commitment to ongoing revenue funding. This includes an indicative land acquisition cost for the site, provided for by the Estates Unit, and allows for the development of a “*standard*” recycling centre.

Development costs for the proposal, and any additional items, will be outlined as part of the Economic Appraisal and Gates Review processes. Costs will be dependent on the particulars of the option selected and land acquisition costs and will be informed by appropriate site investigations, including contamination reports to determine any development issues. These could impact upon the value of the site.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- note the attached report and ongoing issues surrounding the Springvale site;
- agree to the Service progressing the development of a Business Case/Economic Appraisal for submission through the Gates Review process; and
- to commend the Springvale recycling centre proposal to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for inclusion as a “*committed*” project in the Capital Programme.

Decision Tracking

The Head of Waste Management will oversee the development of a Business Case/Economic Appraisal for submission through the Gates Review process, and ensure that the Springvale proposal is referred to the Strategic & Policy Resources Committee for inclusion as a “*committed*” project in the Capital Programme.

Key to Abbreviations

LFD – EU Landfill Directive
WFD – EU Waste Framework Directive
DSD – Department for Social Development
BRO – Belfast Regeneration Office
BIFHE – Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education
NIHE – Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIO – Northern Ireland Office
SIB – Strategic Investment Board
NILAS – NI Landfill Allowance Scheme

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Map showing proposed location of the recycling centre/existing recycling centres

Appendix 2 – Minute from Committee Meeting 11th September, 2006