



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	A2 Sydenham Bypass Improvement Scheme
Date:	16 June 2008
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
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Relevant Background Information

The Committee will recall that at a Special Meeting on 29 April 2008 it received a presentation from representatives of the Roads Service outlining the background to and proposals for the widening of the A2 Sydenham Bypass.

The Roads Service has initiated a public consultation exercise. Responses must be submitted by 20th June 2008. However, Roads Service has advised that there will be further opportunities for affected land owners to comment. That said we believe it is important that Council makes a response.

Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note the following key points:

1. The proposals in respect of the A2 road widening will have an impact on Victoria Park. The widening will require approximately a 6m incursion onto the park. This will affect facilities in the park including the service yard, bowling pavilion, playground and other facilities and open space.
2. There will be loss of open space.
3. There will be increased traffic noise and potentially other pollutants in the park as greater volumes of faster moving vehicles use the widened road.
4. There will be additional disruption to the park during construction of new carriageways.
5. Consultation to date has been focused on the issues associated with this specific scheme and has failed to take account of wider concerns.
6. There are planning issues with the proposal in terms of impact on the local community.
7. The scheme must be viewed within the context of the Connswater Community Greenway and further proposal for a new flyover and junction at Connsbank which is being undertaken as part of the Titanic Quarter Development.
8. The Connsbank junction proposal, if it receives approval to proceed, will result in the further loss of open space at King George V Park.

9. Both schemes are being progressed independently and focus on car-based transport solutions.
10. There appears to be a lack of a co-ordinated approach on the wider transportation issues and their impact on East Belfast despite officers from the Council having met with the key players in an attempt to highlight this as an issue.

Resource Implications

Financial

The Committee is asked to note that there will be significant financial implications involved in the redesign and re-location of elements of the existing park; these costs will need to be reflected in negotiations for compensation in respect of the proposed loss of open space.

Human Resources

The ongoing discussions and negotiations with the Department will require significant Council Officer time. This will involve input from Parks, Core Improvement (Estates Management and Project Management); Development (in terms of the Planning issues); and Legal Services (in terms of the legalities). It is not possible to quantify this at this time.

Asset and Other Implications

The proposals will have a detrimental impact on the provision of open space and recreational facilities within Victoria Park and will make access to the park and the facilities within it much less attractive.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agree that a short response be issued to the Roads Services highlighting:

1. The Council's concern at the loss of open space incurred as a consequence of the proposed Road widening scheme and the need for all possible measures to be put in place to minimise the impact of any road scheme(s) on the ability of the park to function as a recreational facility for the health and well-being of the citizens of Belfast.
2. The Council's concern at the lack of consultation on the wider issues surrounding the proposal.
3. The need for proposals to fully reflect the needs of the local community.
4. The proposals to reflect the combined impact of the Road widening proposals and those of the Titanic Quarter Development.
5. To agree that the Council seek a co-ordinated approach from the Department for Regional Development to the transportation issues of which the Sydenham Bypass widening forms part.
6. To Report to the Strategic P&R and Development Committees seeking support for this co-ordinated approach.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

None.