

## Regeneration: Windsor/Olympia & Casement/ Andersonstown

	<b>Strategic Overview</b>
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b> <p>The stadium developments represent an opportunity <b>to maximise additional benefits in terms of physical, social and economic regeneration</b> and each project is approaching a critical point in their delivery in terms of maximising community provision and wider regeneration impacts both in their respective immediate areas and on a city wide level.</p> <p>To enable the Council to fully realise the potential of the stadia developments initial work has been undertaken with regard to existing leisure provision in the vicinity of each stadium as part of the <b>overall leisure transformation programme</b>.</p> <p>This initial feasibility work indicates that the Windsor Park scheme could incorporate public leisure facilities in the west stand of the stadium in place of the existing Olympia Leisure Centre, with further pitch development as part of a wider Sports Village concept. Whilst the physical constraints of the Casement site offer more limited opportunity for public leisure provision as part of the stadium, there is an opportunity to explore the wider potential for maximising benefits arising from the stadium investment at the Council's Andersonstown Leisure Centre site and consider the scope of other leisure investment in the area.</p> <p>There is a need to ensure that the positives of the stadia developments are not just short term, fragmented or ad hoc. It is important that they are <b>framed within an overall strategic framework and action plan for area wide development</b>. Engagement with Members, the public, community groups and statutory agencies on existing plans and priorities is informing this process, and will continue to be important as the plans are developed further. As well as this period of consultation, investigation into best practice elsewhere will support this development.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Strategic Context</b> <p><b>(i) <u>Council Committee decisions:</u></b></p> <p>Recent Committee decisions on the stadia developments show that the Council regard it as important that the stadium developments should not be viewed in isolation but rather that <b>the full regeneration impacts, added value of and synergies between the stadia</b></p>

**developments and the Council owned assets be examined.** It was recognised that in doing so there is the potential to generate greater social, physical and economic regeneration outcomes.

(ii) **UUJ Research Study on best practice in stadia location/development:**

This independent study undertaken by UUJ in 2007 clearly identified that a stadium offers major regenerative benefits for the area. It referred to the concept of '**a string of pearls**' and the evidence base from elsewhere indicating the **multiplier effects** for businesses in the area and the capacity for it to act as an economic regenerator.

Their research indicated that a number of cities in the UK have placed focus on the ability of sports stadia to stimulate economic development and regeneration. The study referenced the leading stadium architects HOK Sport which said that '*new stadiums are advancing the cause of community regeneration..... and local authorities see them as catalysts for regeneration and renewal*'.

Research undertaken on the benefits of stadia for e.g. the effects of the Millennium Stadium Cardiff, indicated that **sports stadia can generate tangible and intangible impacts on the surrounding area.** In Cardiff, local council tourism research indicates that the stadium has been a clear catalyst for physical, social and economic regeneration. This research further shows how it raised the profile of the area, increased rates in the area and resulted in an increase in investors.

The report highlighted that the **branding of Belfast as a tourism-leisure-sporting destination** would bring enormous economic benefits and generate the multiplier effects. It did however point out that **a stadium cannot be sold as a single speculative venture** but instead needed to be carefully articulated into the business case for the city and viewed as a key initiative to unlock the need for more imaginative and integrated decision making. In this way stadium development assumes a much more important strategic role to unlock inertia, create critical mass, lever infrastructure investment, benefit the public interest and generate social and economic spin off for the city.

The study referred to evidence from the tourism sector which emphasised the potential money spend associated with stadia events. They highlighted the potential for those coming to events from outside the area staying longer and the resultant spin off benefits

ranging from buses and taxis to retail, restaurant, pub and hotel spend. It was cautioned however that **'we need to be geared up to cope'**. This is why it is now considered important to examine the potential for wider development and regeneration in the immediate locality of both Windsor and Casement.

**(iii) Deloitte Study on added value regeneration impacts of the stadia:**

This recent study identified direct opportunities from the stadia developments, such as increased visitor numbers, employment in leisure/ construction and an improved experience for watching live sports. However the report also identified the potential for **much wider regeneration benefits achieved through off site investments** such as providing complementary facilities in the areas and good connectivity between the stadia and their localities. It was highlighted that both stadium developments could provide the stimulus for further development in the area with the associated economic and social benefits.

The Deloitte study highlights complementary land uses and states that *'the greatest opportunities, on top of enhancing leisure provision at both sites, are likely to relate to retail and restaurant/entertainment uses. These will provide the best linkages to sports stadia on match days as well as developing the early evening economies in both parts of the city'*.

Deloitte's report notes that **'the development of Windsor Park and Casement Park have the potential to improve the economic and social conditions within the local areas and contribute to improving the quality of the lives of the people within the community'**. It also highlights that *'the stadiums will contribute to national strategies relating to sport and physical recreation as well as the Council's own priorities on playing pitches and enhancement of open spaces'* and that **the wider regeneration will act positively on the health and wellbeing of the surrounding communities** as well as providing economic regeneration through new employment, training and skills development opportunities.

**(iv) Southwest Gateway Masterplan (DSD led)**

Draft proposals in this Masterplan similarly recognise the potential for major investment in local sporting **stadia as something to build upon** and highlight that there is an **absence of links in the area** with adjacent, largely deprived areas. It notes the need for additional

leisure facilities in areas of need. The proposals do however **seek to avoid ‘ad hoc’ development** and it highlights the need to present a vision for creating **one attractive and identifiable location for employment, sport and recreation.**

The potential redevelopment of the leisure provision in both the Andersonstown & Olympia areas is consistent with the emerging findings of the South West Gateway Masterplan, particularly:

- The provision of **additional and improved sporting facilities** in an area of need
- Provide a **setting for private sector investment**
- Introduce **greater activity levels** contributing to increased footfall and safety
- Increased **employment opportunities**; improved land values
- **Economic impact** in neighbourhoods of deprivation
- **Community opportunities** through community facilities

### **3.0 Council Facilities**

There are constraints at both stadium sites for offering widespread regeneration on their own i.e. Windsor suffers from poor connectivity and Casement is limited by a constrained site configuration. Given that there are **Council assets** near both these locations, there is an opportunity for the Council sites at Olympia Leisure Centre and at Andersonstown Leisure Centre and potentially North Link Playing Fields to **play a key role in enhancing and maximising some of the stadia regeneration benefits.** Maps showing concept opportunities are attached to this report.

#### ***Olympia Leisure Centre***

The existing facilities at Olympia comprise a building for wet and dry sports, community centre, 3G pitch, play park and small all weather pitch together with car parking. It fronts onto Boucher Road to the west and adjoins Midgley Park on the east, which comprises a football pitch and associated car parking. Windsor Park adjoins Midgley to the east.

The Deloitte study highlights that the Olympia site could be used more efficiently. It points out that there is scope to develop deeper into the site, provide an enhanced leisure offering and potentially release land at the front for commercial or complementary development.

There are clear opportunities to consider the **three connected sites in a strategic manner and develop a 'leisure destination'**, rather than the current arrangement of three separate sports related sites without integration.

It is proposed that the Council relocates its indoor leisure facilities into the west stand of Windsor Stadium. This would support a **Sports Village** concept with new outdoor leisure including pitches for Council and Linfield use in the middle of the site; creation of a new boulevard access to connect Boucher Road to Windsor through the sports village, and the use of land fronting onto Boucher Road for commercial and complementary development.

### ***Andersonstown Leisure Centre***

The existing facilities provided in Andersonstown Leisure Centre include wet and dry sport. There are large areas of land to the rear of the current building that had previous use as an all-weather pitch. The site also contains an Ulster Bank and parking provision for the Bank and leisure centre. The site fronts onto the Andersonstown Road, a designated arterial route.

The redevelopment of the Casement Park stadium provides an opportunity for comprehensive regeneration in order to help maximise wider social, physical and economic benefits in the surrounding area. In the context of the major leisure related investment in this locality it is considered important that the **greatest mutual benefit in terms of community gain is maximised in tandem with the stadium development.**

In the context of the planned investment in this location it is considered that a redeveloped Andersonstown Leisure Centre provides the opportunity to support the integration of the Casement development in the area and the potential development of North Link Playing Fields for outdoor leisure. In line with the **'string of pearls' concept, as identified in the UJJ report , the three sites together could combine to provide an integrated leisure and community offering** including indoor and outdoor leisure and community facilities. This would contribute to the Council's vision of an Active Belfast with a range of high quality services and facilities.

In a similar way to the Sports Village concept at Olympia, which will provide indoor and

outdoor leisure/community facilities as well as commercial and complementary uses, the **overall development of the Andersonstown Leisure Centre, Casement and North Link would similarly provide the same offering as at Olympia.**

#### 4.0 Regeneration Outcomes

##### 4.1 *Social*

A comprehensive regeneration approach, including redevelopment of the leisure sites in conjunction with the stadia sites, is more likely to **bring a confidence not achieved by piecemeal development.** This 'feel good' factor in both areas will maximise the impact, compared to incremental improvements over time

Enhanced leisure provision at these locations will contribute to the Council goals of a reinvigorated leisure service, with a concentrated **focus on delivering improved health outcomes and tackling health inequalities.**

In June 2010, the Council agreed underpinning principles to a new **Active Belfast Strategy** as:

- promoting **participation for all**, targeting older and younger people and those in need;
- promoting shared space and access for all in well-connected, **welcoming and safe** leisure venues;
- working across the Council and in partnership to deliver sustained improvements in the **health and well-being** of residents;
- providing attractive **customer-focused services** through motivated and well-trained staff and volunteers; and
- fundamentally, committing to a **value for money service.**

Andersonstown and Blackstaff wards both fall within the **bottom ten per cent of the most deprived wards** in Northern Ireland regarding all measures including income, employment, health, education, living environment, crime and disorder.

Accessible leisure provision can have a **positive impact in terms of health and wellbeing.** Co-locating indoor and outdoor sports facilities with an international stadium and the home of the Northern Ireland football team and Antrim GAA at Casement should help make sport and fitness more aspirational and increase the motivation for participation.

This, in parallel with an activity programme, should help to address some of the aspects of deprivation in these areas.

Development at these sites could encourage **educational, training and employment opportunities through the use of social clauses**. It would also be more practical to combine the construction periods for the combined stadia and leisure redevelopment in order to minimise the length of overall disruption for the areas.

Redeveloping the Andersonstown Leisure Centre site, and potentially also North Link Playing Fields, would **complement, enhance and link the stadium and community benefit offering in Casement**, resulting in the area having a complete offering of indoor, outdoor, wet and dry leisure facilities for local use. This would mirror the leisure and community offering that could be provided at the Windsor Park / Olympia development.

It has also been identified that the proposed boulevard spine to link Windsor to Boucher Road will help to make Windsor a more neutral venue. The Deloitte study points out that a well designed access could help to create '**a shared and inclusive environment**'.

The redevelopment of Olympia provides the potential opportunity for the relocation of the community centre into the heart of the community. It is considered that the **community provision may have a greater impact if it were located closer to the community it serves**, combined with enhanced community outreach and synergies with the other community provision in the area. Continued public consultation will however be important in informing the optimal community provision for the area.

### ***Economic***

The wider regeneration potential of the combined developments will provide economic regeneration through **new employment, training and skills development opportunities**. The major investment in the redevelopment of the two areas will provide a much needed **boost to the local construction industry**. Through the use of social clauses, many of these opportunities will be available for local people.

Aside from the economic benefits resulting from the construction phase, an integrated approach to the Andersonstown/Casement and Olympia/Windsor proposals should also

bring wider economic **benefits to businesses in the local areas and the city as a whole**. It will be important to try and **maximise consumer spend** in the immediate areas and in the city generally. This can be fully maximised if the offering exists for visitors to remain in the area pre and post match in order to benefit the local economy. Initial discussions with hotel operators/hospitality sector for example indicate there may be potential for a hotel and/or restaurants on the Olympia & Andersonstown sites, although further feasibility work will be required on this.

This is consistent with the UJJ study which referred to the views of the hospitality industry and the economic spin offs from stadia development arising from the **increased requirement for accommodation, restaurants and associated money spend in the area**.

The Deloitte report also pointed out that *'there is strong potential to improve the benefits of match-day through the provision of new food and drink outlets that would encourage people and families in particular to spend more time in the area pre and post match'*. In addition this would help stagger arrival and departure times to and from matches which would alleviate traffic congestion on match days.

Both the Andersonstown & Olympia sites are currently poorly configured with underutilised land to the rear of the leisure centre buildings. **Comprehensive and planned redevelopment of the sites in the context of the wider areas could however provide a number of opportunities for economic development**. This would help capitalise on the potential tourism offering on days of events and matches as well as provide local opportunities.

This wider overall development could potentially contribute to the overall **tourism potential** offering local opportunities to capture tourism spend on match days and events by supporting commercial opportunities and complementary uses.

Both the leisure centre sites front onto a main road and their redevelopment would result in more efficient use of the road frontage for economic activities and commercial /complementary uses.

Redevelopment plans will have to take into account the existing Ulster Bank which



operates on the Andersonstown site.

### ***Physical & Environmental***

The South West Gateway Masterplan draft proposals highlight **the potential for forging a new iconic connection between South and West Belfast. The stadia /leisure developments could potentially be viewed as the two critical anchors for this masterplan.**

The ability to link and **create connectivity** between the various elements of the stadium /leisure/community developments as well as with the wider area will be a key regeneration driver. It is important therefore that these linkages and connectivity are optimised in the progression of the various proposals at both sites.

The Andersonstown & Olympia sites are both within the geographical area identified in the South West Gateway Masterplan. The draft proposals in it have an **aim of rebranding the area and establishing a 'destination identity'**. If a comprehensive approach is taken to development at these two locations, and in line with the observations in the UJJ report, there is the potential for the **branding of these areas and the city generally as tourism-leisure-sporting destinations.**

The proposal for the Sports Village concept at Windsor/Midgley/Boucher allows for a range of co-located uses which can better relate to each other rather than being constrained by ownership boundaries. The Sports Village concept is also consistent with the Deloitte study which highlighted that the site could be developed as a leisure destination.

The existing Andersonstown Leisure Centre is an ageing building with the second highest expenditure. Redevelopment of the leisure centre would not only bring about more efficient use of the site but also contribute to improved visual amenity by providing an active road frontage that will tie-in with previous **Renewing the Routes and DSD environmental improvements schemes**. It would also capitalise upon the anticipated **West Way Rapid Transit route**.

**Potential commercial opportunities at both locations could be aligned to provide more complementary uses** to stadia/leisure development such as hotel and

service/hospitality uses.

Initial planning policy analysis suggests that the potential community benefit of enhanced leisure facilities could outweigh the loss of any open space which would also have to be considered in the context of any investment elsewhere, for example at North Link Playing Fields. Initial analysis at Andersonstown suggests that leisure development will be the most acceptable type of scheme for this site given the existing use. It is however considered that some retail / community / commercial uses would also be suitable in this location if designed sensitively in terms of scale, massing and impact on amenity and **complement the leisure provision with the final result, in tandem with the stadium facilities, providing an anchor for the area.** Similarly, at Olympia/Windsor the integrated development of the overall site would provide an anchor for that area. Further planning assessments and feasibility will however need to be undertaken to fully assess the development potential and constraints at the various sites.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Whilst a comprehensive worked up regeneration framework for the wider area at both locations could identify further additional opportunities this will take time to fully develop. However, given the imminent stadium developments; the DCAL requirement for community benefit, and in the context of the Council's Leisure Strategy there is **the opportunity now to consider focused regeneration plans that build upon the leisure destination concept with leisure/community/stadium/complementary uses which are underpinned by good linkages and connectivity.**

These regeneration plans could also be framed within the overall context of **the draft South West Gateway Masterplan and could potentially be viewed as the two anchor developments** within this plan area. Further regenerative proposals in the form of other physical and community developments, improved infrastructure etc could be considered as the stadium developments progress or as the South West Gateway Masterplan evolves.