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| Subject: | Student Housing Strategy - Update on the Strategic Study of the Holyland and Wider University Area. |
| Date: | 12 August 2015 |
| Reporting Officer: | Siobhan Toland, Head of Environmental Health / Lead Operations Officer HESD |
| Contact Officer: | Stephen Leonard, Environmental Health Manager |

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

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues |
| 1.1 | <p>The Strategic Study of the Holyland and wider university area was approved by Committee on 26th March 2012 and adopted by Council on 2nd April. The recommendations of the study were two-fold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To make Belfast a Learning City and destination of choice for students requires a city-wide strategy for student housing that will promote choice and fit-for-purpose accommodation.▪ To restore the Holyland by gradually reintroducing affordable, single household accommodation and improving the quality of the environment, whilst working towards developing a new approach to managing the area |
| 1.2 | <p>An action plan to take forward these recommendations was presented within the final Strategic Study report. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on progress of these actions since the last update in April 2014. A summary of the action plan and relevant updates is provided in Appendix 1.</p> |
| 1.3 | <p>60% of the actions have been completed and works on the remaining 40% are ongoing and</p> |

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| | can be reviewed as part of the new emerging strategies and the work of the Laganbank PACT. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | Members are asked to note the contents of the report. |
| 3.0 | <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p><u>Making Belfast a Destination of Choice for Students</u></p> |
| 3.1 | A Framework for student housing and guiding the need for quality Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) document was completed by the Student Housing Joint Team (DOE, DSD, BCC, NIHE and SIB) and launched by the Council in April 2014. Recommendations from this document are now being considered in the context of the Council's new planning powers and Draft City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan. |
| 3.2 | The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy have been developed over the past 12 months and are nearing completion. Public consultation has taken place and a City Centre Development team has been assembled to take forward the implementation of the Plan. It is intended to present the Strategy to Council for approval in the coming weeks. |
| 3.3 | A study was undertaken to explore funding models for PBMSA. Market activity and the increasing number of planning applications for purpose built student accommodation indicate that financial intervention by the public sector is no longer relevant as there is a buoyant market within Belfast over the past year for this type of development. |
| 3.4 | In the past 18–24 months Belfast has experienced an influx of planning applications for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation, predominantly in the city centre. Currently there are applications for upwards of 5,000 student bed spaces in the planning system at various stages ranging from Pre application discussions to Full applications. A list of these applications can be found in Appendix 2 . |
| 3.5 | Queen's University have recently launched a procurement process through which they hope to secure up to 1200 bed spaces within a mile radius of their Lanyon building. Ulster University will retain their existing student accommodation provision adjacent to their |

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| | <p>Jordanstown campus and as a result will not be formally providing any PBMSA in the city centre.</p> |
| 3.6 | <p>The challenge for Council as the planning authority is how to ensure PBMSA is developed in appropriate locations with suitable scale, density, clustering and massing in light of existing suite of planning policies and plans, the emerging City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and our statutory requirement to develop a Local Development Plan for Belfast in the coming years. As a matter of urgency the Planning and Place Department is developing a more detailed and definitive planning document to ensure the best outcomes for the city from student accommodation having regard to the recommendations of the Framework for Student Housing. This will be brought to the Planning Committee in the coming months.</p> |
| 3.7 | <p><u>Restoring the Functional Integrity of the Area</u></p> <p>The Laganbank Partners and Communities Together (PACT) partnership is a lead network in developing aspirations that from the 2012 Holyland study. The Laganbank PACT held 2 workshops on 9 October 2014 and 10 December 2014. New terms of reference were agreed for PACT in June 2015 and the group has agreed a number of priorities for 2015/16 and these, along with an agreed action plan, are provided in Appendix 3. A further workshop with Landlords was held in June 15 to consider their role in PACT and how they could contribute to the area.</p> |
| 3.8 | <p>An Environmental Improvement Scheme along the Embankment was completed in November 2014. Over the last year a number of Environmental Clean-ups have taken place in the area including the Horsey Hill community clean up in Summer 2014 and City Church clean up in partnership with Street Pastors after St. Patrick's Day 2015. The Council wrote to all landlords to promote proper disposal of and waste management arrangements at the end of term. This was supported by Safer Neighbourhood Officers (SNOs) proactively patrolling the area.</p> |
| 3.9 | <p>PACT are currently developing an integrated neighbourhood plan to include an Environmental Improvement Programme, with the possibility of "renewing the routes" type bid being submitted by UQBA/LANI.</p> |
| 3.10 | <p>24 alleygates have now been installed across the entire Wider University area. A list of these locations can be found on pages 13 & 14 of Appendix 1.</p> |

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| 3.11 | The formal consultation for a Residents' parking scheme in the Rugby Road/College Park Avenue area was carried out between 29 th October and 19 th November 2014 during which a number of objections and representations were received. |
| 3.12 | Transport (NI) Officials met with some of the objectors in March 2015 and the issues they raised are now being considered with a view to making a decision on the way forward. It is envisaged the earliest a scheme could be implemented on the ground in the area would be towards the end of 2015/2016 financial year, although this is very much dependent upon there being a positive outcome to the consultation process. |
| 3.13 | Subject to full Council approval the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) Committee (June 2015), agreed to expand the City's New Bike Hire scheme to QUB and the Student Union. |
| <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> | |
| 3.14 | Costs associated with officer time in leading the partnership team around the delivery of the Strategic Study have been accounted for within existing budget estimates. |
| <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> | |
| 3.15 | There are no relevant equality considerations associated with the delivery of the strategy. |
| 4.0 | Appendices – Documents Attached |
| 4.1 | Appendix 1 - Updated Action Plan Appendix 2 - Current PBSA Applications Appendix 3 - PACT Priorities 16/17 |