

APPENDIX 1

Adoption Statement, May 2018
Strategic Environmental Assessment
East Bank Development Strategy

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT EAST BANK DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

ADOPTION STATEMENT, MAY 2018

The East Bank Development Strategy (EBDS) is intended to serve as a framework for the coordination of transportation initiatives, development projects and public realm works in the eastern part of Belfast City Centre. Known as the East Bank, the potential of the area for development is identified in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (draft BMAP) and Belfast City Council's City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015 (CCRIS).

This Adoption Statement for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the East Bank Development Strategy (EBDS) has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004. Regulation 15 stipulates that the Adoption Statement should outline the following:

- (a) how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;**
- (b) how the environmental report has been taken into account;**
- (c) how the opinions expressed in response to the invitations mentioned in regulation 12 have been taken into account;**
- (d) how the results of any consultations entered into under regulation 13(4) have been taken into account;**
- (e) the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and**
- (f) the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.**

In general the purpose of the Adoption Statement is to provide written evidence of how environmental considerations yielded by the SEA and consultation process have been taken into account by the EBDS. Each of the above considerations listed (a) to (f) is addressed below.

(a) how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
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The East Bank Development Strategy (EBDS) has largely evolved from the Council's City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015 (CCRIS) which sets out the development ambitions for Belfast City up to 2030. The CCRIS notes that the East Bank area "*feels too far away*" from the rest of the City Centre and seeks to improve its accessibility by means of a specific policy to "*Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre*". To this end the CCRIS states that: "*In the future, Queens Quay and Sirocco must be drawn into the centre through better physical connectivity.*" Accordingly, the EBDS focuses on a series of transport and public realm projects aimed at enhancing the integration of the East Bank area with the rest of the City Centre. These projects include the creation of bridges, walkways and removal of divisive road infrastructure. For example, as a complement to the imminent roll out of the Belfast Rapid Transit scheme in September 2018, the EBDS seeks to extend the cycle and walking network and to lower parking standards so as to reduce the availability of private car parking. This will encourage travel by public transport and by foot, thereby lowering emissions and noise levels.

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(b) how the environmental report has been taken into account;

The SEA has environmentally tested the 4 Placemaking Themes that constitute the strategic recommendations of the East Bank Development Strategy (EBDS). It has also environmentally assessed the range of transport, development and public realm initiatives envisaged for the area. The resultant findings of this environmental report have been taken into account as follows:

(i) Firstly, the EBDS needs to make expressed reference to the SEA Environmental Report and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) that accompany it. A sentence to this effect has been inserted at the end of the “Context” section, p9. It reads as follows:

“Furthermore, the East Bank Development Strategy has taken into account the key findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).”

The EBDS refers to a range of specific projects related to the placemaking themes and conceptual proposals for this area. As stated above, these include: key transport and movement projects; key development sites projects; and key public realm projects. Each of these projects was subject to strategic environmental assessment and, where appropriate, mitigation was outlined. It is considered appropriate for the EBDS to expressly refer to the key findings of the Environmental Report within the pages of the EBDS.

(ii) Secondly, in order to act as a counterweight to the pro-development thrust of the 4 Placemaking themes that underpin the regeneration of the area a fifth placemaking theme is included in p14, Section 2.0 of the EBDS. It reads as follows:

“Encourage sustainable development and respect the natural and historic environment.”

- *safeguarding against any deterioration in water quality at the Lagan Estuary and Belfast Harbour by reviewing wastewater treatment capacity and, if appropriate, phasing growth.*
- *Protecting against the threat of pollution to marine life in the harbour and birdlife in the designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in Belfast Lough by incorporating effective storm drainage management measures such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).*
- *Ensuring that potential on-site and adjacent off-site sources of contamination do not pose an unacceptable risk to environmental receptors, notably groundwater, surface water and future site users.*
- *Striking a balance between the desire to energise the waterfront with new development/activities and the requirement to respect the aquatic environment. This chiefly relates to: the protection of biodiversity from noise and disturbance; safeguarding water quality from spillages; and preventing marine litter.*
- *Promoting a modal shift from use of the car to walking, cycling and travel by public transport. This is necessary in order to improve air quality and to reduce noise levels for people living and working in and near this area.*
- *Ensuring that the new urban grain proposed for this area acknowledges its industrial heritage.*
- *Emphasizing the need for new development to reduce emissions by various means, including use of gas energy, renewable energy (solar panels, biomass, CHP) and heat efficient design in the construction of buildings.*

(iii) Thirdly, the wording of the first placemaking theme has been modified to read as follows: ***“facilitating the optimum development of key sites.”*** This is to replace the wording *“maximising the potential of development sites”*, which could lead some to interpret that maximum development in this area is the overriding goal at all costs – even at the expense of the environment.

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(iv) Fourthly, the following text after the final sentence in the “Phased Implementation” subsection of Section 4.0, p14 has been added.

“If appropriate, this will include addressing wastewater treatment capacity in the East Bank via review and phasing of growth.”

(c) how the opinions expressed in response to the invitations mentioned in regulation 12 have been taken into account;

Both the consultation body (DAERA NIEA & DfC HED), together with the general public, were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the environmental report during a 3 month period. Responses from the public on the environmental report and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) were invited by means of a standardised consultation form that also addressed rural proofing and equality issues. The feedback is detailed below.

DAERA NIEA & DfC HED

In addition to suggesting amendments to certain wording in the SEA the NIEA and HED made a number of suggestions and recommendations under a number of topic headings. These are tabulated below, together with the nature of the response by the Council.

Topic	NIEA Comment	Council response
Air Quality	It was suggested that the beneficial effects of certain transport initiatives for air quality could have been examined in the assessment. These include: Integrated Transport Modelling; Middlepath St cyclepath; Belfast Rapid Transit and North-South Pedestrian Link.	It is respectfully submitted that the detail of the North-South pedestrian link, which is contingent upon prior modelling work, is not available for assessment. Added to this Middlepath cycle path and Belfast Rapid Transit have planning permission and their environmental assessments have already been carried out.
Water Quality	As per the contents of the Local Development Plan wastewater treatment capacity in Belfast will, if appropriate, have to be addressed through review and phasing of growth.	While this was already mentioned in the SEA it was reiterated in the document as advised by the NIEA. So too, reference to it will be made in the East Bank Development Strategy (EBDS) – see b (ii) and (iv) above.
Groundwater/ Contaminated lands	The threat of contamination should be explicitly identified as a key environmental issue in the Non-Technical Summary and in Section 3.0.	This was incorporated into the SEA accordingly.
Waste Management	The SEA needs to emphasize that there is a duty of care on anyone who handles controlled waste	Text was inserted in the SEA to highlight this.
Guidance from planning applications	Further advice is given in respect of permission for a containment bund in the Musgrave Channel for contaminated material.	While this further advice is largely a matter for the applicant the need for classification and advance notification of removal of hazardous material was included in the SEA.
Historic environment	The importance of the historic environment receives little attention in the EBDS.	An additional place making theme and text is recommended for insertion in the EBDS to address this shortcoming.
Historic environment	The requirement to obtain scheduled monument consent for development affecting the area of the Sirocco Chimney and Glassworks, which will involve discussions with HED, needs to be expressly outlined.	Reference to this necessity was inserted accordingly where advised.
Habitats Regulation Assessment	DAERA is content in principle with the approach to Habitats Regulation Assessment	No action needed

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General Public

Only one response was received which stated full satisfaction with the remit and findings of the both the SEA Environmental Report and the HRA.

(d) how the results of any consultations entered into under regulation 13(4) have been taken into account;

No other Member State indicated that it wished to enter into consultations before the adoption of the EBDS and accompanying SEA and HRA Reports.

(e) the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and

It is important to recognise that extant planning permission exists for development in large parts of this area which limits the scope for the consideration of reasonable alternatives on environmental grounds. This notwithstanding, the absence of the East Bank Development Strategy would result in this area being subject to uncoordinated, piecemeal development that would be primarily dependent upon the use of private transport. Given the propensity for this to occur, it is noteworthy that the EBDS aims to rebalance the transport network in this part of the City Centre so that walking, cycling and access to public transport become feasible alternatives to the use of the car.

(f) the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

As stated in Regulation 16 the purpose of monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the EBDS is to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage, thereby enabling appropriate remedial action to be taken.

In the interest of consistency with the Local Development Plan (LDP) for Belfast the EBDS largely aligns itself with the SEA objectives and monitoring indicators identified as part of the Sustainability Appraisal in the Preferred Options Paper for the LDP. Additional bespoke monitoring indicators for the East Bank are also stated in the SEA e.g. seal numbers, rate of use of Belfast Rapid Transit scheme, etc. While matters relating to resourcing and capacity building for monitoring by the Council as the Responsible Authority are ongoing other public bodies, notably DAERA NIEA, are at the forefront of keeping records in this regard. This information will be consulted in the interim until a formal monitoring procedure is put in place.

May 2018