



Subject:	East Bank Development Strategy: approval of final report
Date:	10 th October 2018
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Director of Place and Economy ext.
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• update Members on proposed changes to the draft East Bank Development Strategy (EBDS) as a result of comments received during the public consultation exercise and subsequent Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Screening(s) of the draft Strategy;• present the final draft of the East Bank Development Strategy for approval.
1.2	The relevant documents are included within the appendices as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendix 1: Strategic Impact Assessment (SEA) Adoption Statement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix 2: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Requirements Report. • Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) Screening Report. • Appendix 4: Rural Needs Impact Assessment. • Appendix 5: Summary of proposed amendments to the draft East Bank Development Strategy. • Appendix 6: East Bank Development Strategy (final version for publication).
2.0	Recommendations
	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the contents of the SEA, HRA and EQIA adoption statement, requirements and screening reports attached as Appendix 1,2 and 3; • Note the proposed amendments to the final draft of East Bank Development Strategy summarised in Appendix 4; and • Approve the East Bank Development Strategy to support and complement existing planning policies as they apply to this part of the city centre.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	In June 2017 Committee approved the draft East Bank Development Strategy for consultation. The 12-week consultation period commenced on 7 th July and ended on 29 th September.
3.2	<p>In December 2017, Committee considered a report on the public consultation process which summarised the 190 responses received and provided feedback from statutory agencies. Responses from the public were generally supportive. Principle areas of concern which were expressed related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal to relocate the Titanic Rail Halt in the absence of further transport modelling and feasibility being undertaken; • The lack of a specific land allocation for affordable/social housing within the Sirocco site; • A perception that the movement diagram and spatial plan included in the document were unduly prescriptive.
3.3	In terms of statutory agencies, almost all were supportive. Dfl Transport Strategy Division's response was non-committal subject to further traffic modelling being undertaken while Dfl

	<p>Rivers noted that the document needed to say more about how to address present-day flood risk to the proposed development as well as the impact of future climate change and in particular, potential sea level rise due to climate change.</p>
3.4	<p>In light of the comments relating to flood risk and others received relating to protected habitats and environmental considerations, the Council conducted an SEA Determination (a “screening” process) in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and has concluded that an SEA (Environmental Report) and HRA is required. It was agreed that further equality and good relations screening would be conducted in parallel with the proposed consultation processes on the SEA and HRA.</p> <p><u>Further Public Consultation</u></p>
3.5	<p>A 12 week public consultation on the SEA, HRA and EQIA was undertaken between 12th February – 7th May 2018 using the Council’s Consultation Hub (Citizenspace). One, on-line response from a member of the public was received which was broadly supportive of the findings in the consultation documents. NIEA provided a detailed response to the SEA and HRA reports and their comments have been incorporated in the SEA Adoption report attached as Appendix 1. The Adoption report has been used to amend the finalised Strategy to place more emphasis on encouraging sustainable development and respecting the natural and historic environment.</p>
3.6	<p>The MP for East Belfast requested that a meeting be arranged with a number of community groups on 12th April 2018 to discuss the EQIA Screening document. No formal response to the consultation was submitted following the meeting. Issues discussed included the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of fostering Good Relations as development proposals emerge for sites on the East Bank, for example Sirocco; • Improved connectivity between the city centre and local communities, across the River Lagan is welcomed; • It was suggested that improved connections between Rotterdam Court and Bridge End would create inclusive space and provide a safe connection to the proposed footbridge; • Concerns were raised over the potential re-location of the Titanic rail halt. It was reiterated that this is a long-term aspiration and suitable transport studies would need to be carried out to ensure viability of the proposal; • Concerns were raised about the location and allocation of housing within the Sirocco site. The idea of shared space within the site was welcomed.

3.7	<p>Two briefings also took place with the local councillor for Short Strand. While no formal response to the consultation was submitted following the briefings, issues raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of improved connectivity between the city centre, Short Strand and other communities in East Belfast: this would include the provision of another footbridge/cyclebridge across the Lagan; • The provision of social and affordable housing within development sites in the EBDS area which include significant residential proposals: this is felt to be essential to create sustainable communities with a range of housing tenures and types to meet a range of housing needs.
3.8	<p>On 8th August 2018, the findings of the SEA, HRA and EQIA were reported to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and a final draft of the EBDS was presented for approval. Councillors asked that approval be deferred to allow for party group briefings to take place. These briefings have now been completed. No additional amendments to the Strategy are proposed.</p>
	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p>
	<p><u>Environmental</u></p>
3.9	<p>A number of the amendments to the EBDS set out in Appendix 4 arise from the SEA/HRA consultation process. These have not been reported to Committee previously and are explained in more detail below.</p>
3.10	<p>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:</p>
3.11	<p><i>“Furthermore, the East Bank Development Strategy has taken into account the key findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).”</i></p>
3.12	<p>The EBDS refers to a range of specific projects related to the placemaking themes and conceptual proposals for this area. 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</p>

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.

3.13

The most significant amendment is to include a fifth placemaking theme at p14, Section 2.0 of the document order to act as a counterweight to the pro-development thrust of the four Placemaking themes in the draft document that underpin the regeneration of the area. 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.
- Emphasising 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.

3.14

In addition to the new theme, 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

	<p>some to interpret that maximum development in this area is the overriding goal at all costs, even at the expense of the environment.</p>
3.15	<p>To reflect NIEA comments related to waste-water capacity, the following text after the final sentence in the “Phased Implementation” subsection of Section 4.0, p14 has been added.</p> <p><i>“If appropriate, this will include addressing wastewater treatment capacity in the East Bank via review and phasing of growth.”</i></p>
3.16	<p><u>Planning Considerations</u></p> <p>The Council recently approved the progression of the draft LDP Plan Strategy for public consultation. However, it will still be some considerable time before we are in a position to bring forward the site specific Local Policies Plan (LPP) setting out details at a more local level and a providing significant element of the spatial articulation to the adopted policy.</p>
3.16	<p>The process for the development of the LPP is likely involve a review of documents and frameworks, such as the East Bank Development Strategy. The LDP Plan Strategy may then provide a container for such documents to be brought forward as a form of Supplementary Planning Guidance and thereby give weight to the principles or elements of the Strategy as a more detailed articulation of LDP policy. This, subject to a consultation and adoption process at that stage, would provide for more weight to be afforded to the document in the decision making process for planning.</p>
3.17	<p>Until the adoption of the Plan Strategy the EBDS and similar documents have limited statutory weight in formal planning decision making. However, it should be recognised that they can, in common with other documents, still be material to and enhance the consideration of development proposals especially where additional or more up to date data informs the context for a decision.</p>
3.18	<p>In recognition of the timing of the approval of the EBDS in relation to the imminent public consultation process on the LDP Plan Strategy, it is proposed to amend the “Forward Planning” section of the Strategy. The following text has been included:</p> <p><i>“Following the adoption of the LDP Plan Strategy, the Council will be in a position to review the East Bank Development Strategy with a view to bringing it forward as more formal</i></p>

planning guidance. This would provide the East Bank Development Strategy with greater weight in the decision-making process as a more detailed articulation of LDP policy”.

Affordable Housing

3.19 Amongst the supportive comments received from NIHE part of the public consultation exercise during summer 2017, was a suggestion that a reference be included in the final version of the Strategy that an indicative proportion of affordable housing (20%) should be required in residential proposals across East Bank.

3.20 The inclusion of an indicative target for affordable housing will be considered as part of the imminent public consultation on the LDP Plan Strategy. To avoid predetermining the outcome of further consideration on this issue, it is proposed that the final EBDS does not include a defined percentage for affordable housing at this time. As stated in paragraph 3.14 above, the Council will be in a position to review this issue following the adoption of the LDP Plan Strategy with a view to bringing it forward as more formal planning guidance.

3.21 In terms of planning applications received before that point, NIHE’s input will be sought as a statutory consultee with regard to the appropriate level and type of affordable housing required and negotiated with the applicant during the planning application process.

Equality, Good Relations, Rural Needs

3.22 The EQIA screening exercise which addresses Section 75 and Good Relations considerations concluded that all necessary adjustments and accommodations in relation to Section 75 have been made to the Strategy to this stage of its development. Should any matters arise from the consultation or during successive stages of implementation then appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that appropriate mitigation is applied and Section 75 issues will be mainstreamed into the fabric of the policy. The screening document also notes that “proposals will be brought forward under the scheme mindful of the need to be sensitive to any traditions or events associated with local communities. Section 75 scrutiny will be applied as and when appropriate to avoid an adverse impact on good relations locally and including any proposed housing developments”.

3.23 The Rural Needs Impact Assessment found that the strategy involves the development of an inner city area and will have no direct impact in rural areas. By improving transport links to the city centre there will be indirect benefits for those from rural communities.

<p>3.24</p> <p>3.25</p>	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None. The cost of publication and promotion of the EBDS will be met from existing budgets.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>Equality, Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment have been considered through the screening exercises attached as Appendices 3 and 4 and the results explained in paragraphs 3.22-23 above.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: SEA Adoption Statement</p> <p>Appendix 2: HRA Requirement</p> <p>Appendix 3: EQIA Screening report</p> <p>Appendix 4: Rural Needs Impact Assessment.</p> <p>Appendix 5: Proposed amendments to the draft East Bank Development Strategy</p> <p>Appendix 6: Finalised East Bank Development Strategy for publication</p>