

Peter Hall
Committee Clerk
Culture arts and leisure Committee
Room 344
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST BT4 3XX

24 June 2013

Dear

The Committee is scheduled to receive an oral briefing from DSD officials on The Library Square Public Realm Scheme at its next meeting on 27th June in the Central Library, Belfast.

I have attached a briefing paper which sets out the background, potential key design features and the way forward on the Scheme, including its assimilation into Phase 3 of the Belfast: Streets Ahead public realm improvement programme. If acceptable a brief electronic presentation of the Library Square scheme can be given at the Committee meeting. Martin McDermott, Project Manager, Belfast City Centre North East Quarter and Ciaran Donnelly, Project Sponsor, Belfast: Streets Ahead will attend.

Yours Sincerely

Martin McDermott

Cc Ciaran Donnelly

Culture Arts and Leisure Committee
REQUEST FOR BRIEFING ON LIBRARY SQUARE

1. Introduction

1.1 The Culture Arts and Leisure Committee have requested a briefing on the DSD's proposals for Library Square. This written brief should provide some information about work on the scheme to date and therefore provide some context to the Library's plans for modernisation. Mr Martin McDermott and Mr Ciaran Donnelly will attend the Committee meeting in Central Library on 27th June 2013.

2. Background on Library Square

2.1 'Library Square' lies within the Northside Urban Village also known as the DSD's NorthWest Quarter Part 2 area. The Northside Urban Village was defined in DSD's Northside Urban Village Regeneration Framework adopted in May 2009. Library Square is identified as a key opportunity within the Public Realm Strategy for Belfast City Centre. This strategy contains government's proposals for development of the public realm in Belfast City Centre to achieve 'world class' standards in urban design, maintenance and management of the streets and public squares at the heart of the City.

2.2 The City Centre's public realm is the 'shop window' of Belfast. It is the first and last impression for those who live and work in the City, and those who visit. It should convey a strong and positive message to its citizens and to potential investors and visitors. Outwardly, the quality of the public realm of the City should provide an aesthetically inviting image, but fundamentally should both prime and support economic and social development. Government aims to maximise the potential of the City Centre's public realm to position Belfast as a premier European regional capital and the primary retail and leisure destination in Northern Ireland.

2.3 The proposed square aims to attract increased footfall and private investment into this gateway to the Northside. The scheme proposes to create a new imaginatively designed high quality shared space in the city centre, using materials chosen for their durability and local relevance. The proposals have a communications and learning theme, given the site location bounded by the Belfast Telegraph, Belfast Central Library and situated close the University of Ulster. The proposed increase in student and university staff numbers in this part of the city by 2018, along with the proposed Royal Exchange development, will see

Culture Arts and Leisure Committee
REQUEST FOR BRIEFING ON LIBRARY SQUARE

huge increases in the level of footfall through the area.

3. Design Proposals

3.1 'Library Square' was identified as a catalytic project in the Northside Urban Village Regeneration Framework, published in May 2009. Officials worked collaboratively with a design team and stakeholder group including DRD, Planning NI, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Belfast City Centre Management, Belfast Central Library and the Belfast Telegraph to finalise design proposals for the creation of the new square in the area between the rear of Belfast Central Library, Belfast Telegraph and the Frames complex.

3.2 The scheme designs have cost £75,000. Capital build costs for the scheme were estimated at £3m in 2012. Key elements of the proposed scheme are as follows:

- Unique Street Paving Pattern, incorporating decorative typographic montage;
- A temporary screen 'media' wall;
- WIFI Hot spots throughout;
- Sculptural trees;
- Kiosks to add on street activity;
- Permanent seating and tables using the 'letters' theme; and
- An aqua graphic fountain.

Further details are contained are contained in the attached consultation document at **Annex A.**

4. Programme for Government

4.1 The Programme for Government 2011-2015 commits to delivering at least 30 Schemes to improve landscapes in public areas to promote private sector investment in towns and cities across Northern Ireland. Belfast has the potential to become an international destination for tourists and business interests with the purpose of driving the economy of Northern Ireland forward. For this to occur, Belfast has to become an attractive city on many different levels. Public spaces are a key component in promoting Belfast to the rest of the world.

5. Consultation

Culture Arts and Leisure Committee
REQUEST FOR BRIEFING ON LIBRARY SQUARE

5.1 Consultation on the design proposals was carried out between November 2012 and February 2013. Following the publication of notices in daily newspapers, a display of the proposals was staffed by DSD in both Central Library and the University of Ulster at York Street. Consultation letters were sent to Statutory Consultees and Section 75 groups. All properties located in the immediate area of the scheme received details of the design proposals. Details of the scheme were also published on DSD's website.

6. Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 3

6.1 The planned implementation timetable of the Library Square scheme has altered in recent months. The proposed new University of Ulster's campus at York Street and the granting of planning permission for the Royal Exchange development have provided a fresh opportunity to enhance the connections between the north-side of the city centre and the retail core through to the City Hall. It was within this context that DSD Minister McCausland announced changes to the Belfast Streets Ahead project in April 2013.

6.2 As a result of this announcement, the Library Square public realm scheme has now become part of the overall Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 3 project. That project is a public realm scheme which will complement the works completed during the Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 1 project and will link to the University of Ulster's plans for their campus at York Street. It will deliver high quality streetscapes and open space, and will include improvements to surfacing, lighting, landscaping, street furniture and public artwork.

6.3 Work has commenced on the procurement of the Integrated Design Team to take forward the development of design proposals for the scheme. This is expected to be completed by the end of 2013. At this time the estimated date for submission of a planning application for the scheme is November 2014.

6.4 Project area is likely to include Royal Avenue, York Street (to its junction with Frederick Street), Frederick Street, North Queen Street (part), the environs around St Anne's Cathedral, Cathedral Gardens (subject to agreement with Belfast City Council) and Library Square (Union Street, Little Donegall Street and Library Street. Construction is due to commence in March 2016 and be completed by April 2018, subject to funding and statutory approvals being in place. A map for phase three of the Belfast Streets Ahead initiative is attached at **Annex B**.

Culture Arts and Leisure Committee
REQUEST FOR BRIEFING ON LIBRARY SQUARE

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The Department would be pleased to provide further briefings on Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 3 if required.

Martin McDermott

Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate

Ciaran Donnelly

Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate

Library Square, Belfast Public Realm Scheme

Within the decorative setting of historic buildings, a striking and surprising new piece of public realm linking residential communities with the city centre, building on the unique history of printing, newspapers, books and words.



Library Square Scheme Introduction

The Department for Social Development (DSD) is seeking comments from the public on its proposals for 'Library Square', a new landmark public space proposed for Belfast city centre's Northside.

The Vision

The 'Library Square' site is located at the junction of Little Donegall Street, Library Street and Royal Avenue and is currently an under utilised environment, which detracts from the rich architectural heritage that surrounds it. Enhancing this space is a key priority for DSD, as set out within its Northside Urban Village Regeneration Framework, published in May 2009.

DSD's vision for Library Square encapsulates the following core priorities:

- The creation of an animated shared space with active ground floor uses;
- Create a high quality pause point in the North Belfast Cultural Corridor;
- A high quality environment in line with the Belfast: Streets Ahead public realm programme;
- An accessible leisure destination, for both residents and visitors to the city; and,
- A catalyst to help promote the regeneration of the wider Northside.



Design Process

DSD appointed a design team, which comprised public realm and masterplanning experts from Benoy and Peter Brett Associates and was project managed by Drivers Jonas Deloitte.

The design team spent over 6 months working with key stakeholders, including the Belfast Telegraph, Belfast Central Library, the Northern Irish Tourist Board, Planning Service and DRD Road Service, in developing a proposal which is both deliverable and responsive to DSD's strategic vision for the regeneration of the city centre. Delivery of the project is subject to approval for the business case, available funding and obtaining statutory planning permission. The estimated build cost for this project is £3m.

The design concept has drawn on public realm best practice from around Europe and proposes a palette of materials which have been selected for their durability, local relevance and high quality. The proposals have been developed to reflect a communications and learning theme, given

the site location bounded by the Central Library and situated close to the University of Ulster. The proposed significant increase in student numbers in this part of the city by 2018 will greatly increase the level of footfall through the area. The Library Square proposals aim to promote the use of media and social connectivity, by

- Providing a communications connectivity hotspot, facilitating the use of public access to wireless networks;
- Providing for interactive media in the Square, potentially through the installation of a media wall/screen.

Library Square is envisaged as being more than just a piece of public realm. It will be a further shared space in Belfast city centre providing a flexible environment, serving as an iconic meeting place, a gateway and a space to relax in. Careful consideration has been given to how Library Square interacts with its surroundings, with scope for it to accommodate food, beverage and cultural activities.



Programme

A public exhibition will be held in Belfast Central Library (21st - 25th January 2013) and the University of Ulster's York Street Campus (28th January - 1st February 2013). DSD invites comments on the proposed new square.

Following the public consultation, consideration of comments received and equality screening exercise, DSD intends to take the design concept forward as a planning application.

Details available online at: <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations.htm>

Written comments should be submitted to:

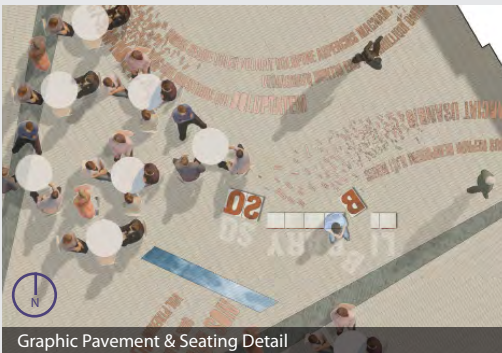
Business Support Unit

Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate
Department for Social Development
4th Floor Oxford House
49-55 Chichester Street
Belfast
BT1 4HL

Email: librarysquare@dsdni.gov.uk

The closing date for comments is 22nd February 2013 at 12 noon

For further details please contact Jenny McGuigan on 028 9027 7 653.





PHASE 3

PHASE 1

PHASE 2

BRICK LANE STREET

TRINITY STREET

YORK STREET

CONGREGATION STREET

DOUGLAS STREET

LESLIE AVENUE

ROBERT STREET

ROYAL AVENUE

ROYAL AVENUE

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