

York Street Interchange Community News Sheet



Ashton Community Trust

March 2017

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The construction of the York Street Interchange is regarded by many as a key transport priority. The scheme comes under the remit of the Department of Infrastructure, formerly DRD. The estimated cost at least £165 million.

Local Residents Committee

In October 2014 in preparation for the formal consultation process for the scheme, a local public meeting was called in North Queen Street Community Centre (The Recy) and a residents group was formed. From the outset the resident's group realised this would be a highly disruptive

project with the potential to cause severe impacts on the lives and well being of local residents. They were also fearful that aspects of the design would further spatially separate and isolate this community from the city centre and its associated social and economic opportunities.

The residents group began listing a range of serious concerns. These included the physical impact, associated disruption, safety, privacy, light, noise, air pollution issues, McGurk's Bar Memorial site, pedestrian and traffic movement, property devaluation, mitigation, compensation and more.



Public meeting to form a residents group October 2014

The group realised that it would probably be unable to prevent the scheme from happening, but argued that protections were crucial to offset its worst effects on local people.

Since then, the residents group has argued its case with government officials, lobbied politicians, made written submissions to the formal consultation process and presented to the Public Inquiry (November 2015).

Public Inquiry Recommendations

In November 2016 the Public Inquiry Report was published and advised that the York Street Interchange scheme should proceed but recommended stronger community engagement, mitigation measures and careful resolution with local residents. The inclusion of the positive recommendations in the report is in no short measure down to the efforts of the residents group. Although there is no date for the actual construction phase to start, the Department of Infrastructure has allocated £4million to allow the scheme to be developed to a point where construction could begin at some future point. This budget includes costs to cover a new consultation process.

New Consultation

To ensure the best possible outcome for local people the residents group is lobbying hard to ensure the consultation is structured in such a way that it puts the concerns of local residents first. For example the residents group has compiled over forty five technical and design issues relating to the current design that they want taken into consideration. To reinforce their demand for a truly meaningful community consultation it has proposed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (**MOU**) be agreed between the Department of Infrastructure and the local residents group. See summary of MOU on back page.

Infrastructure Minister Meets Residents

The Minister for Infrastructure, Chris Hazzard accompanied by Principal Highway Engineer Stephen Pollock recently met with the residents group in the Bunscoil, Lancaster Street on February 27th. Also in attendance were Caral Ni Chuilin MLA and JJ Magee City Councillor. The Minister was also taken on a walking tour of the area and shown at first hand the various issues of concern relating to the Interchange. During the meeting Mark Hackett who is a local urban designer advising the residents group said,

"Engagement to solve problems locally was clearly instructed by the Public Inquiry. Therefore resources must be made available for the residents



Residents group view plans

to engage with and shape the next design phase of the project in order to reduce its detrimental effects. We made this point very strongly to the Minister and the other department officials who were present".



Minister Hazzard meets local delegation

Caral Ni Chuilin MLA also strongly supported the argument for the local community to be provided with independent technical expertise. She said, "Independent technical assistance is crucial in ensuring that the local community has confidence in the consultation process and is an active participant in the remainder of the design phase and throughout the entire construction stage".



Minister Hazzard views McGurks Bar Memorial site

Wider Urban Issues

Besides the York Street Interchange, our area also sits alongside a huge amount of additional urban development. This includes the new university campus, student accommodation tower blocks in York Street and the Streets Ahead and Clifton Gateway public realm improvement schemes, to give some examples.



Historically speaking, planning and design decisions have created a pattern of disconnection for inner city areas like the New Lodge resulting in poor local urban environments and social exclusion. Belfast City Council in its 'City Centre Regeneration Strategy' has begun to acknowledge this issue and has publicly stated the need to connect city centre physical regeneration into surrounding inner city neighbourhoods. It is not clear yet how this is to be accomplished.



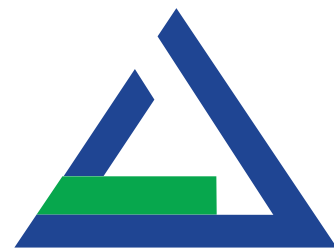
However the Ashton Community Trust (ACT) in collaboration with residents groups has been putting together its own views about how this could be achieved by conducting a mapping exercise of various spaces and locations in the local area. The basic idea is to document and highlight problems and propose practical actions to resolve all related issues such as physical condition, safety, visual appearance and connectivity. Ashton believes that this will provide an informed basis for a wider

engagement process incorporating local residents, community groups, elected representatives and statutory agencies. Ashton Community Trust will keep residents up to date as this process develops.

York Street Interchange Residents Group

The residents group is made up of local residents, community activists and has pro bono support (work undertaken without charge) from architect Mark Hackett and Niall Murphy, solicitor. If you are a local resident and would like to become involved contact;

Cecilia Heron or Paul O'Neill phone 028 90 742255
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Ashton Community Trust

This publication has been produced by Ashton Community Trust of behalf of local residents.

Community Propose Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The following is a summary of the MOU proposal outlining how the residents group believes the next phase of the consultation should be structured.

Aim

Create a sustained community engagement workshop process as recommended in the Public Inquiry to address the next stage of design. The aim would be to resolve local design concerns, reduce the impacts of the Motorway Interchange on surrounding area and to increase the urban and pedestrian connectivity through the Interchange. The process should also explore and progress community urban opportunities such as asset transfer, area management and mitigation projects.

Process

The residents group has compiled over forty five technical and design issues. Residents will nominate 2-3 people to attend regular workshops with officials and designers to explore these. A list of priorities will be agreed and resourced. Public briefing meetings will be arranged at regular intervals including any pre-agreed issues that require wider community discussion and input. Local resident representatives will conduct evening meetings every 6 weeks to update and engage with the wider group.

Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)

The SAG is made up from a number of statutory departments including Department of Infrastructure, Department of Communities and Belfast City Council. We propose at least two nominated community representatives will sit on the SAG group. The wider members of the SAG group will agree to support the community engagement process where required.

Dispute

The Infrastructure Department and its design team shall not exercise a veto in disputes over design issues but commits to seek resolution and independent mediation.

Subsequent Stages

The Department will extend appropriate resources for residents during subsequent stages and during implementation operations.

Monitoring

The residents group will record and document the workshop process and agree work streams with the Department and designers. The residents group will keep minutes of all meetings and report back to the local community.

To visit the Department of Infrastructure website for York Street Interchange go to:

<http://www.yorkstreetinterchange.com>

