



SOUTH BELFAST
PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Belfast Planning Service,
Belfast City Council,
Cecil Ward Building,
4-10 Linenhall Street,
Belfast,
BT2 8BP

7 December 2015

Consultation Response from South Belfast Partnership Board on the Draft Belfast Planning Service Statement of Community Involvement (September 2015)

Dear Sir / Madam

The South Belfast Partnership Board is a Board which brings together all sectors – community, statutory, political and private – to strengthen and better target the efforts being made by the community, the private sector and the Government to tackle the economic, social and environmental problems which affect the most disadvantaged areas of South Belfast. The South Belfast Partnership Board in consultation with a number of local community groups via existing structures in South Belfast are committed to the delivery of the improvements to city of Belfast. We believe regular engagement and active community involvement pre, during and post developments are vital. The response enclosed represents the views of:

South Belfast Partnership Board – an organisation that actively engages over 136 community, voluntary and statutory sector representatives delivering services to improve our local communities.

South Belfast Community Support Group – a group of 20 democratically elected community practitioners who represent the thematic areas of Health & Wellbeing, Education and Young People, Improving Community Relations, Employment and Economic Development, Physical Renewal and Housing from community and voluntary groups over South Belfast.

SBPB agrees with the intention of a statement for Community Involvement. It considers it vital that local citizen, residents and business owners are given the opportunity to express their views and influence the shape of planning development within their community.

Prevailing of new and existing structures to engage local communities which build trust, empowerment and openness in the new planning approach are welcome, however, I would draw your attention to the following points which have been raised as part of our SB Consultation and would welcome clarity around them:

1.0 What is a Local Development Plan?

- . is it a plan or plans?
- . can we ask for good examples of local plans and participation?
- . is it meaningful to people?

2.0 The Plan has to be a positive vision for South Belfast

- . has to address housing need.
- . has to meet the needs of businesses in the area.
- . has to deal with dereliction
- . the “vision of participation” need be positive.
- . the plan must be for people and not just tourism and commerce.
- . the Village Area in South Belfast has shown how Community Design Teams can work
- . the plan must be all about placemaking.

3.0 The Statement should keep in mind the needs of people with disabilities

- . how planning responds to footpaths/ walkways taking into account needs of wheelchair users and families with buggies
- . how community space keeps in mind the sensory needs of those with autism and developmental disabilities
- . play spaces should have dedicated and specific equipment that can be used by those who are physically impaired.

4.0 The Statement should be simple and understandable

- . the document is full of 'usual jargon' such as stakeholders.
- . the document reads as tokenism.
- . the ten stages set out for the Local Development Plans appears a box ticking exercise.
- . what is the time frame?
- . what does it really mean for people?

5.0 Where is transparency, who supervises and where is the accountability in the process?

- . very few people had heard about the consultation.
- . people are tired with another consultation.
- . who are the stakeholders and how can people get involved?
- . concern was expressed that responses would be ignored and the Council will 'plough on regardless' to meet deadlines.
- . how are consultations and steering groups funded?
- . who do our public representatives listen to?
- . the Belfast area Partnerships should play a role in coordinating neighbourhood involvement to strategic level.

6.0 Where does the Local Development Plan fit with other plans for the City

- . DSD and SIB plans.
- . Urban Villages.
- . DSD transfer of responsibilities.
- . is planning gain included?

I trust that you will consider the points raised in this letter and they will inform the final statement document. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss or expand on any of the points contained in this letter.

Regards,



Briege Arthurs

*Chief Executive
South Belfast Partnership Board*