

Objection number **OBJ06A**
Objectors Name Paul O'Neill (Ashton Community Trust)
Date submitted..... 12 February 2015
NIMVO plot number N/A

TransportNI has considered the correspondence in the above objection and responds as follows:

- 1. We are a group of residents and community activists living and working within the Greater New Lodge /North Queen Street area of North Belfast. Our group was formed following public meetings at Clifton House, Tuesday 23rd Sept 2014 and North Queen Street Community Centre 13th of October. (See attached clippings from Greater New Lodge Community Magazine)**

As you are aware the plans for York Street Interchange have gone out to public consultation, we would like to raise a number of points for your consideration.

Although statements have been made by Transport NI relating to the "importance of public input", to date the residents living in the immediate vicinity of the planned development are still very much in the dark as to how this will impact on their lives and general living conditions. Based on our own local engagement, residents have informed us that they have never received any form of communication from any of the departments involved in the project.

Over the past number of months we have raised concerns in the form of a letter sent to the different departments involved in the proposed motorway change. This was sent on our behalf by Mark Hackett of the Forum for Alternative Belfast. (*See attached*). We have also spoken in person to DRD and Transport NI officials (*Clifton House, Tuesday 23rd Sept 2014*). However we have not received any significant response.

Representatives from our group attended the '*York Street Interchange Orders Exhibition*' on Monday 9th of February 2015 in the Ramada Hotel Belfast and indeed handed in this letter to the officials there. However we feel that given the gravity of this project and its potentially enormous life changing impact on our community that a more intensive and meaningful dialogue is required between all stakeholders. This should include residents, elected representatives, senior engineers and all relevant departments. To ensure that this dialogue process is flexible and easily accessible it should take place at community level.

We fully understand and appreciate the long term strategic importance of the new road development. However, equally important is the principle of shared decision-making to ensure that this project will not unduly undermine the needs of our community.

Communications

- a) Communications to date have been undertaken in accordance with the project Communications Plan, a copy of which was included in Volume 2 (Appendix 6, Annex 4) of the Environmental Statement.
- b) This plan included a programme of consultation with project stakeholders, including residents of the area and Ashton Community Trust, at appropriate points in the development of the road scheme to date.

- c) This process included a public consultation in June 2011 and Orders Exhibition in February 2015, and the prior distribution of over 30,000 flyers to addresses in the area (Postcode sectors: BT13 1; BT14 6; BT3 9; BT1 1, 2 and 3; and BT15 1, 2 and 3). On both occasions, these flyer drops were supplemented with hand delivered letters from TransportNI for properties immediately adjacent to the Proposed Scheme. The public consultation events were advertised in local press, with widespread TV and radio coverage. TransportNI also wrote specifically to key stakeholders, including the residents of Little Georges Street, Molyneaux Street and the Ashton Community Trust to invite them to attend the consultation events. Furthermore, an exhibition of the scheme was held at Cityside Retail Park following announcement of the preferred option for the scheme in December 2012.
- d) We would note that further to receiving this letter, we have further engaged directly with representatives of Ashton Community Trust on two separate occasions to discuss the Proposed Scheme.

Ongoing dialogue

- e) TransportNI is content to meet with local representatives to illustrate, explain and discuss impacts, which would include any proposed mitigation measures. Moreover, a community liaison officer would be appointed for the duration of the works.

- 2. Given that this project will undoubtedly affect in one way or another the health and well being of our community, developing relationships and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with local people and communities is crucial. Using the information obtained from this dialogue would help influence and help shape the decision-making process in such a way as to achieve the optimum outcomes for all stakeholders.**

Ongoing dialogue

- a) TransportNI is content to meet with local representatives to illustrate, explain and discuss impacts, which would include any proposed mitigation measures. Moreover, a community liaison officer would be appointed for the duration of the works.

- 3. Quote *"Transport NI recognises the importance of public input in the development of major road schemes and holds public consultation events at key stages to inform and to facilitate community involvement in its decision making process. Key objectives of undertaking community and stakeholder involvement are:***

- ***to ensure communities and other stakeholders are provided with sufficient, timely information about the scheme***
- ***to ensure that decision making is inclusive of diverse community ideas and opinions***
- ***to ensure that planning, development and delivery of the project meets the 'balance of community' needs and expectations***
- ***to enhance transparency and public accountability***

- ***to build constructive and collaborative working relationships with communities and other stakeholders".***

We would respectfully request that you instruct all relevant officials to commence a meaningful dialogue with us as outlined in this letter.

Ongoing dialogue

- a) TransportNI is content to meet with local representatives to illustrate, explain and discuss impacts, which would include any proposed mitigation measures. Moreover, a community liaison officer would be appointed for the duration of the works.

DRD TransportNI
Eastern Division
02 October 2015