

Regional Planning Policy & Casework



Department for
Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

Department for

Infrastructure

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09 March 2023

Dear Mrs Bentley

PLANNING ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2011, ADOPTION OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGY, (S12) DIRECTION (VARIATION) 2023

This correspondence encloses a formal direction from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the adoption of the Belfast City Council draft Plan Strategy development plan document.

The direction is made under Section 12 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and varies the previous Section 12 direction issued to the Council on 4 February 2022 (known as the *Department for Infrastructure Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, Adoption of Belfast City Council Plan Strategy, (s12) Direction 2022*).

This direction shall therefore be read in conjunction with the 4 February 2022 direction and with the Independent Examination Report attached at Annex A. *Schedule 1 & 1A* of the enclosed direction detail the further modifications required to be made before adoption of the Plan Strategy.

Requirement for a Second Direction

The direction that issued to the Council on 4 February 2022 set out a total of 78 modifications to facilitate the adoption of the draft Plan Strategy. As you are aware the direction provided the Council with the ability to draft the policy wording required to address

the requirement for a phasing policy, subject to agreement with the Department. This agreed wording is now incorporated as Policy SP1A and is specified through this subsequent Section 12 direction which formally varies the terms of that which issued previously. Authority for this is provided by Section 246 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Strategic Phasing Policy

Modifications 05 and 06 relate to the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) recommendation for a strategic policy on phasing. This requirement has now been addressed through Policy SP1A 'Managing Growth and Supporting Infrastructure Availability'. This strategic policy highlights the need for growth to be supported by appropriate infrastructure and the need to have due regard to the views of relevant statutory providers. Importantly the policy makes clear that at Local Policies Plan (LPP) stage any new zonings or development capacity identified will be managed and released in accordance with the provisions to be set out within the LPP.

This will include the timing and availability of adequate infrastructure. Modification 11 relates to consequential changes to Policy HOU1 due to the requirement for a phasing policy.

Other Modifications

In addition, there are several updates required to modifications 03, 29, 34, 38, 62, and 63 to provide clarity and to align with the findings of the IE Report. Modification 79 provides scope for the Council to make any other presentational or factual amendments, typographical or grammatical errors and other consequential changes required as necessary to facilitate the adoption of the Plan Strategy in final form. Any changes made under modification 79 should not amend the nature and intent of the modifications as set out. The Council should be satisfied in this regard.

Statutory Assessments

In light of the modifications and any resulting changes, the Council should ensure that updates to the sustainability appraisal and any other statutory assessments should be undertaken as necessary.

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring plays an essential part of the wider plan, monitor and manage approach. It is acknowledged that the main mechanism for reporting on the performance of the plan will be the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The Monitoring Indicators proposed in the Council's Monitoring Framework should be used to monitor the plan.

The Council will be aware that the plan should be reviewed, or partially reviewed, to take account of changing conditions. This is also a statutory duty in accordance with Section 13 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011. As a matter of good practice monitoring of the policies of the Plan Strategy should commence once the development plan document is adopted as this will assist in informing the preparation of the Local Policies Plan.

The Department wishes to acknowledge the further work undertaken by the Council to address the recommendations of the PAC in relation to the strategic policy SP1A. This will provide a clearer policy context for the management of the Council's growth aspirations, and we look forward to continued engagement on this important issue.

I would be grateful if you could arrange for any documentation pertaining to the direction, to be sent to Mr. Alistair Beggs.

Yours sincerely



ALISTAIR BEGGS
Chief Planner &
Director Regional Planning Policy & Casework

Encl

- S12 Direction (Variation) 2023
- ANNEX A – PAC IE Report