

DRAFT EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

***PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
AT INTERSECTION OF
ALLIANCE AVENUE AND ARDOYNE ROAD.***

Draft dated 19 August 2002.

Introduction

The junction of Alliance Avenue with Ardoyne Road is one of a number of North Belfast interfaces between housing areas that are 100% Catholic or Protestant. The area suffered badly during the Troubles of the last 30 years but in recent years the interface has experienced a lot of rioting and conflict. Unusually a major Catholic educational establishment is located on the wrong side of the interface lines although for much of the troubles Catholic girls were able to access Holy Cross Primary School without a problem.

However during last year civil conflict at the interface gave rise to a protest at the increased number of parents and adults who were bringing children to the school...

School protest was suspended in late November 2001, after Ministers had proposed a number of community safety measures designed to reduce tensions, including proposals to design a redevelopment of the Alliance Ave/Ardoyne Road junction in consultation with local communities. Although there are no formal planning issues in this redevelopment, the agreement of both communities is required as no contractor could be found to carry out the work under potential threat.

Traffic Management

Alliance Avenue is now a significant route for traffic cutting across the North of the city. Even though DRD Roads Service recently implemented some traffic calming measures on Alliance Avenue it appears that increasingly heavy traffic on the Avenue, taken together with long standing cross community strife at its intersection with the Ardoyne Road, meant that a pressing need was emerging to re-develop the layout of the road at that point.

On 1 November 2001, I issued an information paper to community interests in Glenbryn and Ardoyne. A copy of that paper is attached at Annex 1.

In addition to suggesting a range of community safety and related measures, the paper proposed to address redevelopment of the intersection. The paper recognised the fact that the key to solving the problems of community conflict in this area and in other interface areas

in North Belfast is effective community dialogue and the development of community infrastructure, which can contribute to the creation of vibrant and stable communities.

The 1 November paper indicated that **“if early positive feedback was received on these proposals from elected and community representatives, every effort will be made to ensure that the proposals are actioned urgently”**. The paper went on to say: **“These measures can only be taken forward successfully in a constructive and peaceful atmosphere, underpinned by community dialogue.”**

The specific reference to the Alliance Avenue intersection was as follows:

The Environmental Challenge: Glenbryn/Ardoyne Interface

A project to regenerate the environmental interface at Ardoyne/Alliance Avenue is proposed. This might include possible road realignment and other environmental improvements. Perhaps some non-residential development might also be included. To meet this challenge effectively would require cross-community support and active community involvement in project design and development.

Intervention by First Minister and Deputy First Minister

During November last year the First and Deputy First Ministers held a series of consultation meetings with politicians and community interests from the area and then on 23 November, in letters to local MLAs and other interested parties, the Ministers proposed a package of measures to address a wide variety of community safety and related issues in the area. Much progress has been made on implementing these measures including protection for houses at the interface and additional traffic calming arrangements.

The section from their letter relevant to the development of the intersection of Alliance Avenue and Ardoyne Road is as follows:

“We have also today decided to commission the preparation of a detailed design for the regeneration and improvement of the Alliance Avenue intersection and the other related community safety matters that fall to the

Northern Ireland Executive, including possible road alignment at the intersection. The design will be conducted urgently and in full consultation with local communities and other interests. The target date for completion of the design is mid January. If agreement is reached on a scheme, and once the extent of land that may be available is confirmed, a preliminary layout should be available within 2 weeks. A further 3-4 weeks would be needed to complete detailed design and liaise with utility providers (eg gas, electricity, etc)".

Development

OFMDFM appointed The Planning Cooperative (TPC) to prepare a design for the project. The local representative of TPC is Bill Morrison. DRD Roads Service was commissioned as project managers. At a later stage, Groundwork (NI) was appointed to assist with detailed environmental designs and local consultations.

During the consultation process, Groundwork NI clarified the viewpoints of all the main stakeholders in the situation and compiled these into a statement of design briefs. This is attached as Annex 2.

In the absence of wider agreement, there could be further community conflict at this interface. This would have significant and continuing negative impacts on the social and economic environment for everyone around this interface and further reduce the quality of life and work of local residents, the staff and clients of the Everton complex and the clients and staff of the mentally handicapped day centre nearby.

Proposal

Realigning the Ardoyne Road will provide additional space on the northeast corner of Alliance Avenue on which to erect a structure or environmental improvements that will disrupt (not block) line of sight up and down the Ardoyne Road. The changes are intended to make it difficult for people on either side of the intersection to attack houses in neighbouring areas. Taken together with the improved traffic management at the intersection, the proposal aims to make a significant improvement in community safety on both sides of the intersection.

Future development

The realignment of the road creates a space at the intersection. In the first instance, the structures on that space will reflect current realities of community mistrust and potential threat. However it is hoped that through a process that leads to cross community dialogue, trust and respect can increase to the point where the structures can in future be changed to something more appropriate for those circumstances. These changes could include artistic structures or some non-residential building of use to the local community.

Senior Liaison Official
Draft 19 August 2002.

ANNEX 1

PAPER FOR INFORMATION OF GLENBRYN/ARDOYNE COMMUNITY INTERESTS

Following extensive discussion with elected, community and statutory representatives, the inter-departmental group (which includes departments from the Devolved Administration as well as the Northern Ireland Office) and the Senior Liaison Official from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, have considered measures which might be put in place to tackle the complex community issues in the Glenbryn/Ardoyne area, and in other parts of North Belfast.

On **safety and security** measures, work has already begun on the Alliance/Glenbryn Peace Wall. Enhanced policing arrangements involving dedicated police resources on a 24 hour a day basis have been announced. Measures to protect windows on housing close to the interface are being actively pursued.

Work is also underway to address **housing** needs in this area in the context of the North Belfast area strategy. This work is a high priority for the N.I. Housing Executive.

A support package to meet the **needs of pupils and parents** in Holy Cross and Wheatfield schools has already been announced.

The Training and Employment Agency, working in partnership with contracted training organisations, has agreed to deliver outreach and awareness sessions for Glenbryn/Ardoyne residents at suitable local venues, to explain the various services and opportunities relating to **jobs and training**.

The following additional measures are proposed in recognition of the fact that the key to solving the problems in this area and in other interface areas in North Belfast is **effective community dialogue and the development of community infrastructure** which can contribute to the creation of vibrant and stable communities.

If we receive early positive feedback on these proposals from elected and community representatives, every effort will be made to ensure that the proposals are actioned urgently. These measures can only be taken forward successfully in a constructive and peaceful atmosphere, underpinned by community dialogue.

The Community Challenge: Independent Action Research Project

An Independent Action Research Project is proposed. This would identify short and medium-term goals, priorities and strategic activities aimed at building community capacity in those areas which lack an effective community infrastructure in addition to maintaining community activity which is working well. It would have an independent Chair, one or two independent Deputy Chairs, and a Steering Group comprised of six community representatives nominated by the six North Belfast MLAs, who would also be ex-officio members of the Steering group. It would be resourced and supported by Government, but independent of Government.

The Environmental Challenge: Glenbryn/Ardoyne Interface

A project to regenerate the environmental interface at Ardoyne/Alliance Avenue is proposed. This might include possible road realignment and other environmental improvements. Perhaps some non-residential development might also be included. To meet this challenge effectively would require cross-community support and active community involvement in project design and development.

Senior Liaison Official

1 November 2001.

ANNEX 2

ARDOYNE ROAD FINAL DESIGN BRIEF

(As registered by Groundwork NI and updated 3 April.)

Glenbryn Design Criteria

Community Safety Measures

- Provide a 3.6 m high security fence 25 yards, if possible, from the back of the houses on Hesketh Road.
- Provide security for houses directly above the Alliance Avenue junction by blocking pedestrian access along the footpath at the Corner of Alliance Ave and providing a 2m high wall from the house on the Alliance Avenue junction up to No49 Ardoyne Road.
- Provide secure parking and emergency access for residents of these houses behind the new wall
- Allow some visibility to be retained up the Ardoyne Road from below the Alliance Avenue junction
- Protect these properties from stone throwing by providing an inaccessible section of no-mans land between the new wall and the realigned Everton car park.
- Provide a roundabout at top of the Alliance Avenue to slow traffic
- Ensure emergency access at rear of the Everton car park is kept locked at all times.
- Ensure the scheme looks attractive

Ardoyne Design Criteria

Community Safety Measures

- Provide safe pedestrian access up and down the Ardoyne Road past the Alliance Avenue junction
- Ensure visibility is retained up the Ardoyne Road from below the Alliance Avenue junction
- Provide a wall to help protect the houses directly above the Alliance Avenue junction
- Provide parking for these houses if possible
- Provide railings on corner on the lower side of the Alliance Avenue junction to improve visibility
- Ensure the scheme looks attractive
- Provide a roundabout at top of the Alliance Avenue to slow traffic and design a feature for it as a cross-community schools project

DRD Road Service Design Criteria

- Ensure the roundabout meets the required DRD design guidelines in terms of size, height, curve of road etc
- Ensure proposed curve in the Ardoyne Road meets required DRD design guidelines in terms of sight lines, dimensions etc-nothing above 25cm within a sight line
- Ensure entrance to parking bay complies with the required DRD design guidelines in terms of sight lines, turning dimensions etc
- Ensure entrance to the Everton car park complies with the required DRD design guidelines in terms of sight lines, turning dimensions etc
- Ensure the scheme is practically possible in terms of existing underground services, drainage, changes in level etc

**Everton Centre Design Criteria
North and West Health Trust**

- Retain existing number of car parking spaces in the top car park (70 min) by redesigning the levels and layout of the existing car park.
- Provide adequate lighting and CCTV cameras in car park.
- Retain a main entrance off the Ardoyne Road.
- Replace existing pedestrian entrance below the roundabout.
- Provide a security fence to the back of the car park and provide a lockable vehicular gate and access route to the kitchens. Also provide a lockable emergency vehicle gate and access from the car park through to the Crumlin Road entrance
- Resurface lower car park and provide adequate drainage and lighting. This work is to accommodate the closure of the top car park during the works.
- Ensure the design is attractive.

Everton Daycentre Supporters and Parents

- Relocate poly tunnels, gas tank and bins
- Recreate gardening area for Daycentre community garden.
- Relocate fire/collection point to front of site and introduce new turning head for buses
- Improve security
- Provide a path around the site for patients.
- Ensure works affecting the garden shop and their plots does not start until the Autumn. The poly tunnels can however be moved in the short term.
- Provide a planting scheme that reflects the wishes of the gardening group and which makes the entrance and car park look attractive.
- Ensure there is adequate access from the Crumlin Road to the garden centre by both communities

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister Design Criteria

- Ensure the finished scheme is more attractive than the area is at present
- Ensure community safety is improved
- Accommodate the needs of the community during the works so as to cause minimum disruption.
- Ensure there is an achievable timescale and phasing for the scheme
- Ensure the main criteria of the groups above have been accommodated where possible.

Groundwork NI

April 2002