

IPH response to DSD consultation on Marine Gardens, Bangor

05 Aug 2009

Background to the consultation:

A development has been proposed in Bangor, Co Down. The Department of Social Development (DSD) consulted on the issue and IPH has responded as below. IPH has also carried out a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) screening on the proposal which can be accessed below.

The proposed development is bounded by Main Street, King Street, Southwell Road, Queens Street and the Marine Gardens Car Park.

The scheme includes a mix of retail units within a new covered street; office space and over 200 residential homes. The development proposal also contains multiple leisure aspects with plans to incorporate a 120-150 bed hotel; a 400 seat multi-use arts, performance and convention space; a family entertainment centre and restaurants, in addition to enhancing the public realm and civic uses of the waterfront area with the creation of a promenade, an outdoor performance space, public parks and tourist facilities.

The Regional Development Office (DSD) asked a number of questions in their consultation. Below are the answers from IPH. Do you feel the scheme will be a positive addition to Bangor? Please give your reasons.

This scheme has the potential to impact positively on the health and well being of Bangor residents and visitors to the area. However much depends on the way in which the scheme is planned and implemented. In order to ensure the best possible outcomes, we suggest that potential impacts on health and well being are considered in a systematic way.

A screening exercise based on the limited information available (please see attached) indicates that the scheme may impact on a range of issues that influence health and well being including employment, crime and housing. Further investigation about the size and scale of

potential impact is recommended when more information on the proposed scheme is available.

Furthermore it is important to consider the impact of the scheme on different groups within the population. Health inequalities (the difference in health outcomes between different population groups) can be adversely affected by such schemes, with more negative impacts being experienced by already vulnerable groups.

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) recognise the potential of the scheme and ask DSD to consider conducting a Health Impact Assessment to fully determine the health and well being impact of the scheme.

What are your views on the design of the scheme?

An initial response to the minimal design details that are available at this stage suggests that this is a good use of the space in that it includes walkability and accessibility features that are important contributors to health and wellbeing. Artistic representations to date suggest an aesthetically pleasing environment which includes public and open spaces which are good for community cohesion.

Do you think that this is a good use for the site?

Again due to limited information available it is hard to ascertain the other viable options for the site. However the current proposal has the potential to positively impact on health and well being and therefore identify this as an important consideration for any development proposed for this site.

Any concerns you have about the scheme

IPH are concerned that health and well being aspects of the scheme will not be fully understood or appreciated without conducting a full Health Impact Assessment. IPH therefore calls on DSD to conduct a Health Impact Assessment prior to proceeding with the scheme.