



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-02538

Keyword: Road Policing

Subject: RODEN STREET FOOTBRIDGE, BELFAST

Request and Answer:

Question

The information I am requesting consists of the report drawn up and submitted by Pete Connolly, an Architectural Liaison Officer in the Crime Prevention Unit, which flagged up concerns regarding the relocation of the Roden Street Footbridge.

Answer

I have decided to disclose records in relation to your request subject to the deletion of information pursuant to the provisions of section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states that fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

Please see attached report which contains the reported submitted by Pete Connolly.

To release this report in its entirety would require me to release personal details about individuals other than the applicant as the report was submitted in the form of a letter and contains the recipient name and address. This would be a breach of the Data Protection Act and is catered for within Freedom of information by the exemptions under Section 40(2) as outlined below.

Section 40 is a class based exemption, therefore it is not necessary to evidence the harm caused by disclosure. The data protection rights of a third party would be breached by disclosure, therefore Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and a public interest test is not necessary. This is because personal data is governed by other law (The Data Protection Act 1998).

All requests made under the FOIA are applicant blind. A request must be treated as such and a public authority will always view any disclosure as into the public domain and not just to an individual.

Personal Data is regulated under the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and when information contains personal data about a third party it can only be released if disclosure would not breach any of the data protection principles.

Principle 1 is that personal data must only be processed lawfully and fairly. This data was imparted to the PSNI for communication purposes. To provide this information for any other purpose, i.e. by releasing it under Freedom of Information would be unfair to the individuals concerned and therefore a breach of this principle.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this email.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ www.psnipolice.uk

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

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11 August 2006.

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: M1 Westlink detailed Landscape Design

I thank you for your enquiries for input from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, in respect your project for "M1 Westlink Detailed Landscape Design".

I have consulted with colleagues from the West Belfast Police District and the Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Police Head Quarters.

Observations

The Belfast neighbourhoods, St James and The Village are separated by the M1 as it approaches the city.

The Broadway roundabout is the junction of the M1, Westlink, Broadway and Donegal Roads. The Roundabout, and the Motorway approaches were heavily planted with trees, shrubs and other vegetation. These visual screens along with the constant heavy traffic, generated by the busy roads, acted as effective barriers that helped contain much of the traditional antipathy that exists between these two neighbourhoods.

The Westlink also creates an interface between other Catholic and Protestant Neighbourhoods in Belfast City. Stone throwing between those communities is an issue throughout the whole year, with heightened tensions particularly during the summer months.

The early stages of the re-development of the roads in the area of Broadway Roundabout have seen the vegetation removed. The heavy flow of traffic continues to create an effective barrier against the opportunities for anti-social gathering and inter-community strife there.

I note that the drawings forwarded to me detail a large area of 'Pedestrian Paving', with 'Hard Standing' and 'Bench Seating'. A large piece of public art is also planned for the roundabout.

A new footbridge is planned to replace the present bridge over the Westlink at the junction with Roden St at Mulhouse Rd. The footbridge shall be relocated slightly.

The design of the footbridge may create hiding places and encourage gathering by skate boarders or anti-social street drinkers. The design of the footbridge includes an enclosed walkway across the Westlink; however, it seems to create elevated, open platforms on either side of the carriageway.

A new road bridge is to carry traffic and pedestrians along Grosvenor Road passing over the Westlink.

Conclusions & Recommendations.

Broadway Roundabout Junction.

The completed re-development at Broadway will separate traffic. There shall be uninterrupted traffic flow on the M1 and Westlink with an underpass through the junction. The finished roundabout road level should remain unaffected by the construction. The possibility exists that in the absence of heavy and constant traffic flow, that the roundabout could become a focus for anti-social gathering and inter-community strife.

I note that the drawings forwarded to me detail a large area of 'Pedestrian Paving', with 'Hard Standing' and 'Bench Seating'. A large piece of public art is also planned for the roundabout.

I wish to caution you against the current design plan. It is my opinion that it would lead to dangers for community safety.

I recommend that no features should be used that could encourage loitering and lingering on or at the roundabout.

I recommend that the roundabout should be without any public space.

I further recommend that the roundabout should be fully planted out with low-growing, thick, thorny planting such as berberis or firethorn.

Roden St Footbridge.

I have reservations in respect of the planned footbridge. I am concerned that the design of the stair well creates hiding places and covered gathering places.

I recommend that at ground level, the spaces under the stairwells should be designed out. Either filling with solid concrete, or enclosing with paladin fences or planting with thick, thorny shrubs to prevent gathering there, might achieve this.

I recommend that screens should be developed to prevent the raised walkways on either side of the road from being used as platforms from which stone-throwing attacks might be launched against traffic on the roadway or the opposite neighbourhood.

The walkway design is likely to be an attraction to skateboarders who could create fear of crime and thereby discourage pedestrians from using the footbridge.

I recommend that features and surfaces that would discourage skateboarders should be employed here.

I recommend that the flooring should incorporate grilles or similar, particularly on the stairs.

Grilled floors will permit vision through to the different levels and would disclose the presence of any person lurking there. Grilled floors would not create shelters on the lower levels against rain and other inclement weathers. Therefore the walkways would be unlikely to be used for anti-social gathering during bad weather.

There should be no formal or informal seating around this junction.

Grosvenor Road Bridge.

I recommend that the Grosvenor Road Bridge should have screening on either side to prevent stone throwing down onto the Westlink traffic below.

I recommend that the Grosvenor Road should not have traffic islands, which will create safer gathering places in the middle of the road, for any person involved in anti-social gathering. I recommend that where traffic calming measures are developed these should be in the form of painted road markings or crash barriers to divide traffic flow.

There should be no formal or informal seating around this junction.

The total elimination of crime cannot be guaranteed, but it can be reduced if the opportunity to commit wrongdoing is not present. Crime Prevention advice is given free, without the intention of forming a contract. The Police Service does not accept liability for the advice given. However, the advice if acted upon will greatly reduce the opportunity for crime to occur.

Should you have any queries please contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Pete Connolly,
Crime Prevention Officer.