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STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
DRAFT INNER NORTH WEST MASTERPLAN 2018

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction
This is a Non-Technical Summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) carried out for the draft Inner North West Masterplan 2018. It is outlined below in accordance with the subject headings contained in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Draft Inner North West Masterplan 2018 (Schedule 2 (1))
The Inner North West Masterplan (INWM) seeks to guide the regeneration of this area by identifying a number of overarching Masterplan objectives and by formulating design guidance for identified Character Areas. It is aimed at fostering a coordinated approach among stakeholders so that development projects can take shape against a holistic vision for the area (Figure 1.0). The potential of the area for development is identified in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (draft BMAP) and the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015 (CCRIS).

Figure 1.0
In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004, which seek to protect the environment and to promote sustainable development, this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) assesses those elements of the INWM that are likely to have significant effects on the environment. In the main, the SEA assesses the effects of the illustrative design guidance for 10 Character Areas in the Masterplan.

The need for the Inner North West Masterplan (Schedule 2 (2))
In the absence of the Inner North West Masterplan this area would be subject to uncoordinated, piecemeal development that would take place on an individual site basis. The INWM seeks to provide strategic direction and guidance for the coherent development of the entire area against which applications for individual sites can be assessed. In so doing, this part of the City Centre, which is much in need of regeneration, can emerge as a better-connected, pedestrian friendly, mixed use area. It will also help to safeguard the historic character of the area and support wider environmental initiatives for the area related to open space and public realm creation.

Environmental characteristics of the Inner North West (Schedule 2 (3) & (4))
In terms of the natural environment there are no designated areas of environmental protection within the Inner North West area. However, the location has a hydrological link, via the Farset River, to the following natural environment designations:

- Belfast Lough Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Belfast Lough RAMSAR site
- Belfast Lough Open Water SPA
- Inner Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)
- Outer Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)
- East Coast Marine proposed SPA (pSPA)
- North Channel candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC)
- The Maidens Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

In its response to the SEA Scoping Report DAERA NIEA stated a requirement to subject the INWM to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). The NIEA noted that while the site is not in close proximity to marine designated SAC sites they have mobile species, notably seals, which warrant assessment. Accordingly, a HRA was duly carried out by Shared Environmental Services in conjunction with Belfast City Council.

In terms of the historic environment, the main features of the area (including their settings) are:

- An Area of Archaeological Potential (AAP) that applies to the whole Masterplan area
- Historic buildings – there are 19 listed buildings including the Grade A listed Central Library
- Features of Industrial heritage – over two dozen features are recorded including foundries, factories (e.g. claypipe), mills, warehouses and a tannery
- A Site and Monument Record of a C17th defensive ditch on Queen Street, situated along the known line of Belfast City’s C17th ramparts.

The Historic Environment Division (HED) advised that the SEA should take account of the historic character of the area when assessing the effects of indicative proposals in the INWM, particularly in respect of impact on listed buildings and their settings.

Environmental protection objectives (Schedule 2 (5))
Reference is made to a range of legislation, regulations, plans and policies that contain environmental protection objectives relevant to the preparation of the SEA. For example, the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC is the basis of the North East River Basin Management Plan 2015-2021, which is a key reference document for the preparation of this SEA.

Likely significant environmental effects and their mitigation (Schedule 2 (6) & (7))
Likely significant environmental effects associated with this proposed development strategy are interrelated and apply during both the construction and operational stage. The main effects requiring attention are listed below:
safeguarding against any deterioration in water quality at the Lagan Estuary and Belfast Harbour, which are water bodies classified as having poor and moderate ecological potential respectively. Potential deterioration is principally linked to the accommodation of increased residents, students and workers in the Inner North West. By way of mitigation it is recognised that there is an appreciable need for investment in the wastewater treatment capacity of Belfast. To this end, the Preferred Options Paper for the Belfast Local Development Plan 2035 already makes it clear that, if necessary, wastewater treatment capacity in Belfast will be addressed through review and phasing of growth.

- The threat of pollution to marine life in the harbour and birdlife in the designated SPAs in Belfast Lough. This risk increases during severe storm events. With this in mind, the effectiveness of the drainage network would be greatly improved by reducing the amount of rainwater runoff entering the combined sewerage system. The incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) within the storm drainage systems of new development layouts is therefore viewed as especially important in this regard.

- The potential for on-site and adjacent off-site sources of contamination implies that proposed development in the Inner North West could pose an unacceptable risk to environmental receptors, notably groundwater, surface water and future site users. The threat of contamination within the Inner North West should therefore be fully investigated in accordance with the Model Procedures for the Management of Contaminated Land (CLR11).

- The Masterplan’s aspiration to create a vibrant community in this part of Belfast carries the risk of increasing car usage in the area, which could adversely impact on air quality and noise levels. However, by improving connectivity in the area, the Masterplan aims to promote the modal shift from use of the car to walking, cycling and use of public transport.

- Ensuring that the new urban grain proposed for this area respects listed buildings and their settings, as well as the historic character of the area, for example the presence of the C17th City Ramparts.

- Emphasising the need for new development to reduce emissions by various means, including use of gas energy, renewables (solar panels, biomass, CHP) and heat efficient design in the construction of buildings.

Based on the foregoing it is anticipated that the bulk of mitigation measures to prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects will take place at the planning application stage. This is because relevant supporting studies/information can be requested and appropriate planning conditions can then be attached to permissions. Supporting studies/information may include environmental impact assessments, habitats regulations assessments or specific requests for, inter alia: contamination risk assessments; landscape and visual impact assessments; archaeological assessments; drainage assessments; transport assessments including travel plans, etc. In the main, planning conditions are likely to pertain to the implementation and construction stage. They typically relate to monitoring of the risk of contamination and to the preparation of construction environmental management plans (Waste Management Plans and Dust Mitigation Plans).

**Difficulties and guidance in preparing SEA (Schedule 2 (8))**
As with most strategies of this type the carrying out of a SEA for the INWM suffered from a lack of detail in the Masterplan from which to assess the likely significant effects on the environment. The Masterplan outlines general objectives and design guidance rather than specifying concrete development proposals. The illustrative masterplan is visionary in nature, with its delivery projected on a long-term basis and contingent upon the cooperation of a range of stakeholders.

**Alternatives (Schedule 2 (8))**
Alternatives to proposals in the INWM largely centre upon the consideration of less substantial development options, in terms of the density of build that is appropriate. However, this would run contrary to the existing pattern of build in the area. Also, the overarching principles of sustainable development would underscore the benefits of concentrating residents and workers on centrally located brownfield land in the Inner North West. Here in the City Centre services are readily available and within easy walking distance. This contrasts sharply with the situation in less accessible locations beyond the City Centre that are likely to encourage use of the car.
Monitoring (Schedule 2 (9))
In the interest of consistency with the Local Development Plan (LDP) for Belfast the INWM largely aligns itself with the SEA objectives and monitoring indicators identified as part of the Sustainability Appraisal in the Preferred Options Paper for LDP.

Conclusion
This SEA underlines and reinforces the need to reconcile the development ambitions of the Inner North West Masterplan with legislation and policy governing environmental protection and sustainable development. The SEA was assisted in this regard by the fact that half of the 8 Masterplan objectives resonate with the need to promote sustainable development and to protect the environment.

Braniff Associates
June 2018
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background
This Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been prepared by Braniff Associates, Town Planning Consultants on behalf of Belfast City Council. It comprises an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects associated with the draft Inner North West Masterplan 2017. It has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004. These Regulations aim to place environmental protection and sustainable development at the centre of plan and programme preparation as per the requirements of The European Union’s Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC).

The preparation of this SEA was guided, as reasonably practicable, by reference to Best Practice Guidance for NI, Scotland and England & Wales. This included: the 2005 publication "A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive" by the Office of the Prime and Deputy Minister (OPDPM); the Scottish Government’s 2013 Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidance; and the 2015 Development Plan Practice Note for NI titled “Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment”.

It is important to underline at the outset that reference to building heights in this SEA Report is purely for information purposes only and is made without prejudice to the planning application process. Building heights in the Inner North West will ultimately be in accordance with the Tall Buildings Policy of the emerging Local Development Plan for Belfast.

1.1 Overview of draft Inner North West Masterplan 2017
The Inner North West Masterplan (INWM) aspires to transform this part of the City Centre (Figure 1.1 overleaf) through the creation of better connected, mixed use neighbourhoods. While it is technically titled a “Masterplan” it does not provide an overall proposed layout for the area. Instead, it outlines development objectives and broad design guidance for different parts of the area.

The extent of the Inner North West area within the context of Belfast as a whole is shown in Figure 1.2 enclosed at the end of this section. As outlined in Section 2.0 of this report the potential of the area for development was identified in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (draft BMAP) and the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015 (CCRIS).

As stated on page 3 of the Masterplan, its purpose “...is to help encourage, inform, influence and direct the activity of both the public and private sectors in the Inner North West’. By highlighting how development of individual sites can take place within the context of a wider vision for the area, the Masterplan aims to have material weight in guiding the general layout and density of development in this area.
Figure 1.1

(i) Masterplan objectives

The objectives for the Inner North West area are outlined below:

1. To reuse and integrate the existing heritage
2. To deliver a variety of residential accommodation or tenures
3. To provide high quality and distinctive work and employment spaces
4. To support city centre retail activity
5. To improve and support the existing offer and create links to new and existing creative and cultural activity
6. To provide a high quality public realm to create green, walkable and cyclable spaces
7. To promote sustainable communities, quality urban design and help create a welcoming and attractive place for everyone
8. To upgrade and manage the transport and parking facilities and promote active and sustainable transport

Added to the above there are three main Design Principles for the development of this area. These principles and their subcomponents are:

Reduce Severance
Create a Network of Open Spaces
Improve North South Connections
Improve East West Connections
Create a Mixed and Vibrant Quarter
Heritage to Inform the Masterplan
Identify the Key Opportunity Sites
Mixed uses to support Urban Living
Create density for Population Growth

Create a Strong Hierarchy and Integrate Parking
Street Hierarchy
Active Frontages
Public Parking
Public Transport

It is notable that heritage is expressly stated as informing the Masterplan.

(ii) Character Areas
The Inner North West Masterplan provides design guidance for 10 Character Areas and Streets. In the main, this advice relates to potential uses, the scale and massing of buildings and the nature of the public spaces in between.

The above objectives and guidance are detailed in Section 5.0 of this SEA, where they are subject to strategic environmental assessment.

1.2 Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment
It is questionable whether the Inner North West Masterplan falls within the scope of Article 2 of the EU Directive 2001/42/EC and Regulation 2 of the 2004 Regulations as it is not a statutory plan or programme. In this regard, its preparation is not subject to a formal consultation and adoption process stipulated in legislation. However, the Inner North West area has been the focus of major development in recent times, including student accommodation and development linked to the new Ulster University campus. Against this background the Council is keen to ensure that the Masterplan has material weight in guiding future development in the area. From a town planning perspective this is aimed at encouraging orderly and consistent development, and protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development. Accordingly, the Masterplan is intended to be material to planning decisions insofar as it supplements statutory planning guidance in the Belfast Local Development (LDP), regional planning policy in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and other planning guidance.

Viewed in this context, and mindful of the hydrological link of the area to environmental designations in Belfast Lough and beyond, the Council’s assessment of the screening criteria in Schedule 1 of the 2004 Regulations reasonably concluded that, on balance, the INWM is likely to have significant environmental effects and should therefore be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment. A copy of the response to this screening determination from DAERA NIEA is attached as Appendix 1.1.

1.3 Scoping the SEA & the need for Habitats Regulation Assessment Scoping
Further to the screening determination the Council, as the responsible authority, contacted the SEA Team in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), as the consultation body, to receive clarity on the scope of the SEA. Feedback on the scope of the SEA was received from the NIEA on 14th May 2018. The SEA Team also requested feedback from the Department for Communities Historic Environment Division (HED) and this was received on 19th April 2018. A copy of their scoping responses is enclosed as Appendix 1.2 and 1.3.
Their responses identified a number of considerations under the following subject headings:

- Biodiversity, flora and fauna
- Marine
- Climate
- Air Quality
- Historic environment

Both the NIEA and HED submission pointed to relevant environmental guidance and information sources. Moreover, because the site has a hydrological link to a number of European designated sites, the NIEA advised that a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) was also required. This has been carried out by Shared Environmental Services in conjunction with Belfast City Council and is submitted separately to this SEA. Its key findings are briefly summarised below.

**Habitats Regulation Assessment**

In summary Step 1 of the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) found that no effect on any designated site can reasonably be predicted for the Masterplan vision, objectives, design principles, illustrative masterplan and delivery at this stage as the majority of proposals are general policy statements or proposals that are too general to assess. Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was therefore not required. Having stated this, the HRA did note that the overall level of development could be greater than the capacity to treat wastewater and could lead to a decline in water quality in some designated sites. Accordingly, the HRA highlighted the safeguards in place in respect of the emerging Local Development Plan being subject to Habitats Regulations and the fact that NI Water and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) are statutory consultees on planning applications.

**1.4 Conclusion**

The Inner North West Masterplan (INWM) outlines a vision/framework for the area which is aimed at fostering a coordinated, joined up approach among stakeholders associated with its future development. This SEA tests the INWM for the likely significant environmental effects of this Masterplan, the localised findings of which will complement the wider output of the Sustainability Appraisal being carried out for the whole of Belfast under its Local Development Plan (LDP).
Fig 1.2: Size of Inner North West in context of Belfast City Centre and Council area
RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS & OBJECTIVES

2.0 Introduction

Schedules 2 (1) and 2 (5) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 require an outline of the Inner North West Masterplan’s relationship with other related plans and programmes, as well as with relevant environmental protection objectives at International, European and National level.

Even though the Inner North West Masterplan (INWM) is technically considered a non-statutory document, it is still intended to have material weight in the decision-making process. In this regard, it should be considered alongside the contents of the Belfast Local Development Plan 2035 (LDP), the preparation of which is nearing draft Plan Strategy stage.

2.1 Other Plans and Programmes

The publications and information sources that provided the contextual background for the preparation of this SEA originate from central and local government and include:

- The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015
- Belfast Local Development Plan 2035 (currently at draft Plan Strategy stage)
- Regional Development Strategy 2035
- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (draft BMAP) 2015
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 2015
- Biodiversity Strategy for NI 2020
- Sustainable Development Strategy NI 2010
- NI Waste Management Strategy 2013
- Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021
- A New Approach to Regional Transportation 2012
- UK CCRA 2017 report and NI Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2014
- Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (NI) 2011
- Living with Water Programme: Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan 2015
- UK Marine Policy Statement 2013 (UK MPS)
- Marine Plan for NI (once published)
- Belfast Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2007
- Belfast City Council Air Quality Review and Assessment Reports
- Belfast City Centre Access & Mobility Study 2008 by DSD & DRD
- North Eastern River Basin Management Plan 2015
- Conservation Objectives for Belfast Inner and Outer Lough SPAs 2015 by NIEA
- Belfast Lough Local Management Area Action Plan
- Belfast Urban Regeneration Potential Study Update 2012 by DSD
- Northside Urban Village Regeneration Framework 2009 by DSD
Section 2: Relationship with other Plans & Objectives

Strategic Environmental Assessment
Draft Inner North West Masterplan 2018

- Westside Regeneration Masterplan 2009 by DSD
- North West Quarter Masterplan 2005 by DSD
- Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020
- Belfast Integrated Economic Strategy 2015-2020
- Belfast City Council Air Quality Action Plan 2015-2020
- Belfast Strategic Noise Maps
- Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment 2016

The relationship of the INWM with the principal planning documents noted above is further considered below.

The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015

The Inner North West Masterplan has evolved from the Council’s City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015 (CCRIS) which sets out the ambitions for the City up to 2030. The regeneration strategy identifies the Inner North and Inner West as separate Special Action Areas for regeneration and investment (see Figures 2.1 and Figure 2.2). This Masterplan develops upon this work and recognises that both Special Action Areas have to be considered jointly to "...ensure that the area is properly connected to surrounding communities through streetscape and urban design improvements." (p111, CCRIS)

Figure 2.1: Inner North area in CCRIS
Section 2: Relationship with other Plans & Objectives
Strategic Environmental Assessment
Draft Inner North West Masterplan 2018

Figure 2.2: Inner West area in CCRIS

Belfast Local Development Plan 2035 (Preferred Options Paper)
A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Interim Report accompanies the Preferred Options Paper (POP) for the Local Development Plan (LDP). The SA appraises policies in the POP to ensure that they reflect sustainable development objectives relating to social, environmental and economic considerations. Understandably, the SA overlaps with the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment, given the shared aim to enshrine environmental protection and sustainable development within the LDP. With this in mind, the SA Interim Report outlines 19 objectives relating to the social, economic and environmental provisions of the POP. Naturally, in the interest of consistency, those SA objectives relating to the environment form the basis of the SEA objectives conceived for the Inner North West Masterplan and are considered later in Section 4.0.

Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)
There are 12 Regional Strategic Guidelines outlined in the RDS, 8 of which relate to the economy and society and 4 of which relate to the environment. It is not necessary to recall them all within the pages of this SEA save to say that they hinge on facilitating sustainable economic and residential growth while simultaneously seeking to protect the environment. In particular, the desire of the Masterplan to rejuvenate this part of the City Centre resonates with Regional Guidance No.7 (RG7), namely to support urban renaissance.
Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (draft BMAP)

At the time of print, the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan has draft status as a result of legal proceedings. Technically, therefore, the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 is still the statutory Development Plan for this part of the City Centre. Nonetheless, draft BMAP is still the most up to date Development Plan to guide development in the Belfast area. It contains a number of proposals for this area, which are relevant to the Masterplan, and these are graphically reproduced in Figure 2.3 enclosed at the end of this section. They include the following:

CC 016 - Opportunity site for retail-led development on land to the north of Castlecourt.

3 Gateway entrance points to the City Centre, namely: (i) The junction of Clifton Street/Donegall Street with Carrick Hill/ North Queen Street; (ii) The junction of Peter’s Hill and North Street with Millfield and Carrick Hill; and (iii) The junction of Divis Street/Castle Street with Millfield and College Avenue

CC 009 - The Old City Conservation Area, which applies to the southeast corner of the Masterplan area.

CC 005 – Retail Core - Over half of the Masterplan area lies within the Retail Core of Belfast. Draft BMAP states that “The boundary of the Primary Retail Core is designated to ensure the continuance of a compact and attractive shopping environment, offering both choice and convenience.” P28, Part 4 Volume 2, Draft BMAP

CC 02/14 – Housing Zoning at 67-87 Carrick Hill.
CC 04/03 - Housing Zoning at Car Park at Library Street, Little Donegall Street and Stephen Street
CC 04/09 - Housing Zoning at Car Park at Little Donegall Street

CC 006 – Primary Retail Frontage - This pertains to that part of the Masterplan boundary delimited by Royal Avenue. These frontages have the greatest concentration of retail uses and, as with the Retail Core, there is a policy presumption to maintain their majority use in this regard.

2.2 Environmental Protection Objectives

Environmental Protection Objectives are mainly found in European Directives and most have been transposed into UK law as Regulations and/or are implemented via planning policies. The latter includes the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS, September 2015) and accompanying Planning Policy Statements (PPS’s). Notable PPS’s include:

PPS 2 – Natural Heritage
PPS 6 - Planning Archaeology and the Built Heritage
PPS 11 – Planning and Waste Management
PPS 15 – Planning and Flood Risk
PPS 18 - Renewable Energy

The relevant directives and related legislation are listed below.

- SEA Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.
Section 2: Relationship with other Plans & Objectives

Strategic Environmental Assessment
Draft Inner North West Masterplan 2018

- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004
- The Birds Directive 2009/147/EC
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended) - known as the Habitats Regulations
- Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (as amended)
- The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended).
- Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
- Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995
- Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA)
- Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013
- The Environmental Noise Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise
- The Landfill Directive 99/3/EC on landfill of waste
- The Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC on the quality of water intended for human consumption
- Air Quality Fourth Daughter Directive 2004/107/EC
- Air Quality Directive 2008/50/EC on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe
- The Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control)
- Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC. Established an overall policy for the production and promotion of energy from renewable sources in the EU
- The EU Floods Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks
- Aarhus Convention (1998) which established a number of rights of the public with regard to the environment.
- The European Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention)
- The European Landscape Convention (this applies to the historic as well as the natural environment)
- The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta, 1992)
- Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

As with the aforementioned plans and programmes, reference to environmental protection legislation helps cast a light on the environmental issues and objectives relevant to the Inner North West Masterplan. These are considered in the subsequent sections of this SEA.
Fig 2.3: Draft BMAP proposals for Inner North West

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015
Map No.2/001 - Belfast City Centre

- Boundary of Inner North West Masterplan

Legend:
- City Centre
- Land zoned for Housing
- Primary Retail Core
- Primary Retail Frontage
- Character Area
- City Centre Gateway
- Development Opportunity Site
- Protected City Centre Housing Area
- Road Proposal
- Pedestrian/Cycle Bridge Crossing (Indicative line)
- Railway Station
- Area of Townscape Character
- Historic Park, Garden and Demesne
- Local Landscape Policy Area
- Community Greenway

For Information Only:
- Conservation Area
- Area of Existing Open Space
- Rapid Transit Route
- Protected Route
- Archaeological Site & Monument (Scheduled)
- Archaeological Site & Monument (Unscheduled)
SECTION 3: EXISTING ENVIRONMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

3.0 Existing baseline environment

Understandably, as part of a large city, the receiving environment in the Inner North West is urban in character, with substantial buildings and hard standing areas (mostly for parking) in between. This is illustrated in the aerial image captured in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Inner North West location
In order to obtain a full appraisal of the baseline environment reference has been made to DAERA’s Environmental Evidence and Information publication for Local Development Plans, May 2017. The main elements of the natural and historic environment within and connected to this area are listed below.

**Natural environment**

While there are no environmental protection designations within the area of the INWM the location has a hydrological link, via the culverted Farset River, to the following natural environment designations:

- Belfast Lough Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Belfast Lough Open Water SPA
- North Channel candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC)
- The Maidens SAC
- East Coast Marine proposed SPA (pSPA)
- Belfast Lough RAMSAR site
- Inner Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)
- Outer Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)

The locations of the nearest designations in relation to the INWM are collectively shown in Figure 3.2 enclosed at the end of this section, while the locations of the North Chanel cSAC, The Maidens SAC and the East Coast Marine pSPA are enclosed as Appendix 3.1.

The River Lagan feeds into Belfast Lough, which is both a Ramsar International wetland site & Special Protection Area (SPA) due to its significance for the feeding and roosting of birdlife. The inner part of Belfast Lough is characterised by mudflats and lagoons while the outer part is comprised of rocky shores and some small sandy bays. They serve as feeding/roosting grounds for wintering waders and wildfowl (such as redshank, great crested grebe, oystercatcher, goldeneye and scaup). In terms of its environmental rating, the outer part of Belfast Lough is considered to have favourable status while the inner part is considered unfavourable, and this is partly reflected in the decreasing number of internationally important Redshank.

Seals are a site selection feature of The Maidens SAC and Harbour Porpoises of the North Channel cSAC. While the Maidens SAC and North Channel cSAC are not in close proximity to the Inner North West, seals are present in quite significant numbers within Belfast Lough, with a harbour seal colony of nearly 50 adults having been recorded. While assessment of impact on the seal population is largely addressed in the Habitats Regulation Assessment that accompanies this SEA, they are still considered under Section 5.0 of this SEA.

**Historic environment**

Figure 3.3 displays the main features of Belfast’s historic environment relevant to this area. These features, including their settings, are:

- An Area of Archaeological Potential (AAP) that applies to the whole Masterplan area
- Historic buildings – there are 19 listed buildings including the Grade A listed Central Library
- Features of Industrial heritage – over two dozen features are recorded including foundries, factories (e.g. for claypipes), mills, warehouses and a tannery
- A Site and Monument Record of a C17th defensive ditch on Queen Street, situated along the known line of Belfast City’s ramparts.

These features are considered further in Section 3.1 below.
3.1 Environmental Issues

The chief environmental issues pertaining to the Inner North West Masterplan (INWM) relate to the need to reconcile the Masterplan’s aspirations to substantially redevelop and environmentally improve this area with the need to protect the environment and to promote sustainable development. As noted previously the INWM essentially outlines development objectives and design guidance for the substantial regeneration of this City Centre location. The aspiration to create a better connected, mixed use neighbourhood is allied to an increase in the residential population and in employment levels. The construction and operational phases of development conceived under this Masterplan generate a number of environmental issues and these are considered below.
Coast and marine

A key environmental consideration for the INWM involves safeguarding against any deterioration in water quality at the Lagan Estuary and Belfast Harbour from the accommodation of increased residents, students and employees. The overarching objective is to improve the ecological status potential of water in and around Belfast Lough, so that environmental designations of international, European and national importance are protected.

The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 (Statutory Rule 2003 No. 544) aims to achieve ‘Good Ecological Status’ or better, for the quality of all water bodies. The Regulations established a legal framework for the protection, improvement and sustainable use of Europe’s water environment and this has been taken forward in the form of River Basin Management Plans.

It should be noted that for Highly Modified Water Bodies (HMWB), such as the Lagan Estuary and Belfast Harbour, the objective is ‘Good Ecological Potential’. The ecological potential represents the degree to which the quality of the water body’s aquatic ecosystem approaches the maximum it could achieve, given the heavily modified and artificial characteristics of the water body that are necessary for the use or for the protection of the wider environment.

North East River Basin Management Plan 2015-2021

The North East River Basin Management Plan 2015-2021 applies to the Inner North West area given that it is located in the Lagan catchment area and has a hydrological link to the River Lagan, via the Farset watercourse (Figure 3.4). The Basin Management Plan identifies the Lagan Estuary and Belfast Harbour as forming part of the Lagan Local Management Area (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.4: River Farset Hydrological link to River Lagan

Source: Rivers Agency website
According to 2015 data the Estuary has Poor Ecological Potential (PEP) while the Harbour has Moderate Ecological Potential (MEP). It is the objective of the River Basin Plan to achieve moderate ecological potential status for the Estuary by 2021 and to attain Good ecological potential status for both by the year 2027 (see Appendix 3.2). Viewed in this context, development proposals in the Inner North West need to be carefully evaluated from the perspective of surface water runoff and wastewater treatment capacity so that they do not undermine the slow progress made in reducing eutrophication and improving water quality (Figure 3.6).
Within the River Basin Management Plan Structure, existing shellfish waters are Water Framework Directive Protected Areas for economically significant aquatic species. An area of Belfast Lough is 1 of 7 shellfish protected areas in Northern Ireland. Its extent is shown in Figure 3.7. The NE River Basin Management Plan points to the need for improved modelling of the catchment to assess environmental impacts on these species. So too, it cites the need for monitoring of pollutants and events that pose the greatest risk to the aquatic environment, notably periods of intense rainfall and discharge/runoff into the sea.
Marine Conservation Zone

Under the Marine Act (NI) 2013 part of the Outer Belfast Lough is designated as a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) to protect Ocean Quahog clams. In outlining potential management options for the conservation of the clams DAERA acknowledge that coastal infrastructure proposed at Belfast Harbour, which is downstream from the Inner North West area, is suitably distanced from the Outer Belfast Lough MCZ to have any likely effects (p23, Conservation Objectives and potential Management Options for Outer Belfast Lough MCZ). Given that the Inner North West area is further removed from the MCZ it is reasonable to assume that the same conclusion would apply here. The main threats to the MCZ relate to dredging and demersal trawling, together with anchoring and mooring of vessels linked to transport and recreation.

Marine Policy

Although the Inner North West has a hydrological link to the River Lagan it does not border this river or Belfast Harbour. This notwithstanding, in its response to the Scoping Report, DAERA NIEA pointed to the legal requirement to consider the UK Marine Policy Statement 2011 and the Marine Plan for NI (once adopted). The UK MPS 2011 highlights the need for all parties involved, including tourism bodies and water users, to be collectively engaged and consulted on decisions affecting the coast and marine area (para 3.11.6). Indeed the North East River Basin Plan particularly underlines the need for capacity building within those organisations taking decisions, particularly the planning authority, and for greater awareness of the environmental issues affecting marine territory.
Air and Environmental Quality (including noise)

Air quality
The Inner North West area is located close to the Air Quality Management Area No.1 which is largely centred on the M1/Westlink (Figure 3.8). Four arterial routes converge on the area, including Falls Road at Castle Street, Shankill Road at North Street, Antrim Road at Donegall Street and Shore Road at York Street/Royal Avenue. All of these locations experience considerable public transport activity from buses and black taxis. So too, the Millfield Road is a busy cross-city route of dual carriageway standard and Castlecourt Shopping Centre has one of the largest and busiest car parks in the City Centre (1,600 spaces). Other sizeable surface car parks exist near Castlecourt. Against this background, the scale of mixed use development envisaged for this area implies that emissions in the area are likely to increase above existing levels in spite of policies and initiatives to promote a modal shift to public transport and walking.

Figure 3.8: Inner North West and Air Quality Management Area

The Westlink/M1 Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was revoked for exceedences of particulate matter in September 2015. The latest 2017 Progress Report by Belfast City Council noted that although there has been decline in ambient nitrogen dioxide levels in recent years, this AQMA and other air quality management areas will need to be retained to monitor future trends before consideration could be given to revocation.

Belfast City Council and other partners have developed a comprehensive Air Quality Action Plan 2015–2020 that is aimed at achieving compliance with the nitrogen dioxide UK Objectives and EU Limit Value by 2020. The key measures are summarised below.
• Completion of the Belfast Multi-Modal Transport Model by which to estimate the likely change in air quality arising from different transport options
• Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) to become operational in September 2018
• Creation of new Transport Hub to reduce congestion and improve air quality
• Development of bicycle network/infrastructure by Department for Infrastructure (DfI) under the 2015 Bicycle Strategy for NI
• DFI to build capacity for the Ultra Low Emission Vehicle market by expanding electric charge points
• Park and ride programme 2015-2020 by DfC to provide more spaces
• Development of York Street Interchange to improve flows and reduce concentrations of NO2
• Fleet upgrade by Translink to more environmentally friendly models
• Marketing and incentives to encourage travel by public transport
• Consolidation and expansion of Belfast Bikes Scheme

Noise
As an urban area with more than 100,000 inhabitants Round 2 noise maps have been produced based on 2011 data. Not surprisingly, they reveal that the highest noise levels (greater than or equal to 75dB) correspond to the busiest roads in the INW, namely Millfield, Castle Street, North Street and Donegall Street. Comparison with the Round 1 noise map in 2006 would suggest that the extent of high noise levels around Castle Street junction have increased.

A Noise Action Plan 2013-2018 prepared by Department for Regional Development highlighted the following noise considerations relating to Belfast.

• Prioritisation is given to addressing Candidate Noise Management Areas (CNMAs) located adjacent to the motorways within Belfast, where, subject to funding, mitigation could include use of acoustic barriers and/or low noise surfacing, with the latter only proving effective on roads with a speed limit above 30mph. Candidate Noise Management Areas were initially identified where the LA10,18h indicator is at least 75dB. There are 23 of these in Belfast, none of which are in the Masterplan area. The nearest is CNMA 23 which covers a stretch of the Westlink close to the York Street Interchange.

• From a broader perspective the Noise Action Plan notes that mitigation of noise levels throughout Belfast will be assisted by the promotion of the Belfast Rapid Transit system. Furthermore, of relevance to the INW it states that noise insensitive buildings on busier routes can be used as barriers to protect noise sensitive structures. The Plan also points to measures outside the control of the DRD (now DfI) such as vehicle manufacture/ design to control noise at source, with the move towards electric vehicles helping in this regard.

Wastewater treatment capacity
Investment in infrastructure may be required to facilitate the level of population and economic growth envisaged in the Inner North West. As part of the City Centre the Inner North West has a comparatively small population base. In recent times, apartment development has appreciably increased the number of people living in this part of the City. At present, there are approximately 9,000 people living in Belfast City Centre.
The Community Plan for Belfast, known as the Belfast Agenda, together with the Belfast Local Development Plan, takes into account the possibility that the population of Belfast (337,000 in 2014) could grow by another 66,000 people by the year 2035. Brownfield sites in the City Centre, including the Inner North West, are envisaged to absorb an appreciable proportion of this increase. Indeed, the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy aspires to create 6,000 new homes in the City Centre over a 15 year period between 2015 and 2030. Examination of major planning permissions in the Inner North West (Table 3.1) indicates that the emphasis has been on obtaining consent for student housing, with some apartment development.

**Table 3.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LA04/2015/0419/F</td>
<td>Student housing for 654 bedrooms &amp; 93 Studio Rooms</td>
<td>College Avenue</td>
<td>11 Storeys</td>
<td>Near completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA04/2015/0609/F</td>
<td>Student housing (620 units for 804 students)</td>
<td>Jn of Carrickhill &amp; Little Donegal St</td>
<td>6 Storeys</td>
<td>Not started - allowed at appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA04/2017/1375/F*</td>
<td>93 Apartments</td>
<td>Kent St/Library St</td>
<td>8 Storeys</td>
<td>Not started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA04/2015/0676/F*</td>
<td>Student housing in 78 Shared Apartments (408 ensuite bedrooms)</td>
<td>Kent St/Library St</td>
<td>10 Storeys</td>
<td>Not started - allowed at appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA04/2016/1915/F</td>
<td>Refurb of Listed Building to provide 18 apartments and GF Commercial units</td>
<td>Jn of Little Donegal St &amp; Library St</td>
<td>4 Storeys</td>
<td>Not started</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Same site with 2 permissions

As with many parts of NI the drainage network in Belfast, which originates from Victorian times, requires significant upgrading to cope with demand from increasing population levels and from flooding from severe storm events. The main WWTW (Waste Water Treatment Works) serving Belfast currently operate above their theoretical design capacity. The effectiveness of the network would be greatly improved by reducing the amount of rainwater runoff entering the combined sewerage system. The incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) within the storm drainage systems of new development layouts in the Inner North West is therefore viewed as especially important in this regard.

**Contaminated soils**

According to the Masterplan this area historically comprised a dense network of houses, shops, workshops and markets. However, examination of the NIEA historic environment database does reveal evidence of past manufacturing activity in the area, including of cement and claypipes, as well as foundries and factories. The full list of industrial features is illustrated below (Figure 3.9).
Any contamination found in the Inner North West should be fully investigated in accordance with the Model Procedures for the Management of Contaminated Land (CLR11). Any waste classified as hazardous under Technical Guidance WM3 – Waste Classification: Guidance on the classification and assessment of waste, July 2015, has to be consigned off site by a registered carrier and the NIEA duly notified in advance of doing so.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna
The term biodiversity embraces all natural entities, including animals, plants and insects on land and in water. The brownfield land within the Inner North West has the capacity to support diverse and rare communities of species...
and it has been added to the list of Northern Ireland Priority Habitats as ‘Open Mosaic Habitats in Previously Developed Land’. Not all Brownfield sites support Open Mosaic Habitats and reference has to be made to the relevant criteria for identification of such habitats.

The Inner North West is separated from the Inner Lough SPA by a distance of several kilometres. It is highly unlikely therefore that noise and disturbance associated with construction and operations in this area will adversely affect protected bird populations. This view is substantiated by the determination of major development proposals located nearer the SPA (see Section 5.0 later).

**Waste Management**

There is a requirement to encourage the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste to meet landfill obligations. In March 2016 40% of waste in Belfast was recycled compared to 32% in 2011. Recycling targets of 50-60% by 2020, linked to the EU Waste Directive, will require further improvements by the Council. There is a requirement for a duty of care in the handling of waste, under Article 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

**Historic environment (Cultural and built heritage)**

The Masterplan identifies buildings of historical significance throughout the area. There are 19 listed buildings in the Inner North West and most are found off Royal Avenue (Figure 3.10). There are also clusters of historic buildings on the outer edge of the Masterplan boundary at Donegall Street, Fountain Lane and College Square North. The settings of historic buildings outside the Masterplan area may also warrant consideration for the assessment of proposals in the Inner North West. For example the setting of St Patrick’s Church on Donegall Street featured heavily in the assessment of a student housing scheme at the corner of Millfield and Donegall Street (App Ref: LA04/2015/0609).
The Old City Conservation Area (CC 009) applies to the southeast corner of the Masterplan area.

There is one Scheduled monument on Queen Street relating to 17th Century Ditch & Ramparts earthworks (cf ANT 061:018). It is depicted as a green circle in Figure 3.10. The presence of the Ramparts was highlighted by the Historic Environment Division (HED) in its response to the Scoping document. The HED pointed to the economic, social and cultural benefits of recognising the Inner North West’s historical context when considering
the new urban fabric for the area. With this in mind, Figure 3.11 shows the 1833 street pattern and indicative extent of the ramparts (illustrated by the red dotted line) within the Inner North West area.

**Figure 3.11**: Belfast 1833, Historic Towns Atlas

Viewed in the context of the above there is clearly a requirement to acknowledge the heritage of the area, in terms of its former street pattern, industrial activities and presence of the ramparts.
Landscape/townscape

Compared to more elevated locations in Belfast, the City Centre offers appreciable scope for innovative design and enhanced scale and massing of buildings. Indeed, the consideration of tall buildings in appropriate locations is mentioned in the Masterplan. This includes Gateway locations in this area, which are key entrance points into the City Centre, and locations for new public space that are adjudged suitable for accompanying landmark structures. Recent planning permissions in the area (see Table 3.1 earlier) indicates that tall buildings are very much part and parcel of the area. This is not entirely surprising given that the urban design strategy for draft BMAP pointed to the scope for landmark development in the City Centre, particularly at its Gateway entrance points. For example, this resulted in the construction of 9-10 storey apartment/commercial structures at the junction of Divis Street and Millfield.

In certain locations in the Inner North West that are close to residential use, amenity issues in relation to overshadowing, dominance, overlooking and invasion of privacy would have to be sensitively considered. Key vistas into and out of the area, particularly those from arterial routes, would have to be carefully handled.

From a wider perspective, proposed development will have to respect the overall townscape of Belfast City. Protecting the setting of Belfast is embodied as strategic guidance within the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS). Based on the Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment 2016 the INW lies within the Belfast and Lagan Valley LCA (No.21). It recognises that urban renewal is a force for change. It states that The cityscape of central Belfast continues to change. Though the 19th-century core of the city is cherished and protected, a certain amount of renewal is a feature of a dynamic city, though this must respect the historic importance and landmark nature of many buildings.

Material Assets, Population and Human Health (open space and access)

Examining the capacity to increase public realm space and public rights of way, in the interest of enhancing permeability are other environmental consideration for this SEA. This is especially so given the relative under-provision of open space in the City Centre as a whole. In this regard the Masterplan highlights the potential for the creation of new urban squares off North Street, at Smithfield and in the area of Central Library at Union Street.

Flood risk

According to the 2014 NI Climate Change Adaptation Programme, Belfast could experience a sea level rise of approximately 14.5cm above 1990 levels by the year 2050.

Under the North Eastern Flood Risk Management Plan 2015, Belfast is designated as a Significant Flood Risk Area (SFRA) and is at risk from both tidal and fluvial flooding. The Plan seeks to build the resilience of water infrastructure to flooding events via drainage and network upgrades.

According to the Rivers Agency’s flood risk maps the Inner North West area is not located within the 100 year fluvial flood plain or 200 year coastal flood plain (Figure 3.12). Rivers Agency has no flooding reports for this site but modelling for an extreme 1 in 200yr rainfall event suggests that low spots in this urban area are susceptible to surface water accumulation (Appendix 3.3). This occurs when drainage systems are overwhelmed and the ground is unable to absorb the rainfall.
Climatic factors

Lowering vehicle emissions in the interest of climate change will be linked to:

- encouraging walking by improving connectivity
- reducing car parking availability;
- improving public transport alternatives (notably BRT);
- accommodating environmentally friendly technology (charging points for electric cars);
- encouraging cycling via initiatives like bike share and provision of dedicated infrastructure; and
- use of Travel Plans by employers and managed residential schemes.

Added to the above, there is considerable scope to incorporate low carbon initiatives in the design and operations of new buildings, including deployment of renewable energy measures such as solar panels.

3.0 Conclusion

In the light of the above, it is clear that there are a number of environmental issues that the Inner North West Masterplan has to take into account. These are considered further in the remaining sections of this SEA.
Figure 3.2: Location of Inner North West area relative to Natural Heritage designations
SECTION 4: SEA OBJECTIVES & INDICATORS

4.0 SEA topics

The 2004 NI Regulations point to the assessment of the likely significant effects on the environment under the subject matters of: (i) biodiversity; (ii) population; (iii) human health; (iv) fauna; (v) flora; (vi) soil; (vii) water; (viii) air; (ix) climatic factors; (x) material assets; (xi) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; (xii) landscape, and (xiii) the inter-relationship between them.

In its May 2017 publication entitled “Environmental Evidence and Information for Local Development Plans” DAERA added Coast and Marine to the list of subject matters stated above. It also appended the term Geo-Diversity to the subject matter “soil”, in order to fully address issues pertinent to designations such as ASSIs, SLNCIs and Landscape Character Area (LCA) Geodiversity profiles.

4.1 SEA objectives

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Interim Report for the Preferred Options Paper for Belfast’s Local Development Plan 2035 (LDP) has identified 19 sustainability objectives for Belfast City under the topic headings of social, economic and environment. Because the SA incorporates SEA objectives it is prudent, in the interest of consistency with the LDP, for the Inner North West Masterplan (INWM) to align itself with the LDP’s SEA objectives as they relate to the SEA topic headings noted above. Save for slight adjustments to the wording of certain objectives these are reproduced and tabulated below for each SEA topic.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Topic</th>
<th>SEA Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna/Coast &amp; Marine</td>
<td>Maintain and enhance biodiversity assets and protect habitats and species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Soil/Geo-Diversity</td>
<td>Protect and enhance soil quality and geodiversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Historic environment (Cultural Heritage)</td>
<td>Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Landscape/Coast &amp; Marine</td>
<td>Protect, maintain and enhance the quality of Belfast’s distinctive landscape &amp; seascape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna/Material assets</td>
<td>Protect and enhance open space and public access to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Material Assets/Water</td>
<td>Promote the sustainable management of waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Water/Coast &amp; Marine</td>
<td>Promote the quality and efficient use of water resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Air</td>
<td>Reduce air pollution and ensure continued improvements to air quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Climatic Factors</td>
<td>Support mitigation efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a low carbon economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Climatic Factors</td>
<td>Support the adaptation to Climate Change and effectively manage flood risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Population &amp; Human Health</td>
<td>Improve health and wellbeing for an improved quality of life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 SEA Indicators

For the purposes of monitoring progress in meeting the SEA objectives identified in Table 4.1 a range of indicators can be outlined (Table 4.2). For the most part, they are likewise based on the SA Interim Report for the Preferred Options Paper and also build upon advice given in the OPDPM’s 2005 guidance “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment”.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Objectives</th>
<th>Monitoring indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Maintain and enhance biodiversity assets and protect habitats and species</td>
<td>• Seal counts in harbour (common &amp; grey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Achievement of Biodiversity Action Plan Targets (BCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Native species at risk especially protected species (NIEA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Protect and enhance soil quality and geodiversity</td>
<td>• DAERA classifications of land quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and</td>
<td>• Loss or damage of historic buildings/features and their settings (HED/ NIEA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their settings</td>
<td>• Reference to historic context in naming new streets and spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Protect, maintain and enhance the quality of Belfast’s distinctive landscape</td>
<td>• Number and height of tall buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and seascape.</td>
<td>• Design of and materials used in construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Protect and enhance open space and public access to it</td>
<td>• Living Environment Deprivation – Outdoor Physical Environment (NISRA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of Council areas of open space, sport and recreation (OSS BCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Extent of walkway for Highway to Health Scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Promote the sustainable management of waste</td>
<td>• Waste arising and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Household waste arising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recycling rate of household waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tonnage percentage of household waste arising which has been (a) recycled (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• composted (c) used to recover heat, power and other sources of energy (d) land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• filled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Construction and demolition waste rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Promote the quality and efficient use of water resources</td>
<td>• National water quality figures (NIEA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• NI Water quality data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Water consumption data (NI Water)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of flood management systems incorporating SuDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Reduce air pollution and ensure continued improvements to air quality</td>
<td>• Air Quality data (BCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Traffic volumes drawn to area &amp; occupancy of car parks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SEA Objectives & Indicators

#### Strategic Environmental Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9. Support mitigation efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a low carbon economy | • Carbon Dioxide & NO2 Emissions per capita  
• Volume usage of BRT & cycle lane network  
• Proportion of energy supplied from renewable sources  
• Energy use by type (gas, oil and electricity) (DfE) |
| 10. Support the adaptation to Climate Change and effectively manage flood risk. | • Frequency of flood events  
• Numbers of people and properties affected by flood events |
| 11. Improve health and wellbeing for an improved quality of life.        | • Life expectancy (NISRA), gap in health life expectancy between the lowest and highest deprivation quintile  
• Death rates from cancer, circulatory disease, respiratory illnesses, accidents and suicides  
• Access to a GP or primary care professional  
• Participation in sport and cultural activities  
• Proportion of journeys on foot or by cycle (NI Travel Survey)  
• Access to local green/open space  
• Multiple Deprivation Measure  
• Proportion of adults and/or children who are obese  
• Proportion of people who rank themselves as having high levels of wellbeing  
• Proportion of adults participating in moderate exercise at least three days per week  
• Number of households in housing stress  
• Number of GP surgeries, health facilities  
• Noise pollution/nuisance (BCC Environmental Health Data) |

Notes: BHARNI (Built Heritage at Risk NI Register), ASAI (Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest), AAP (Area of Archaeological Potential), OSS (Open Space Strategy), SES (Shared Environmental Services)

### 4.3 The absence of the Inner North West Masterplan

In the absence of the Inner North West Masterplan this area would be subject to uncoordinated, piecemeal development that would take place on an individual site basis. This lack of contextualisation could erode the remaining historic character of the area and undermine wider initiatives for the area related to open space and public realm creation. In recognition of the likelihood of this happening, the INWM seeks to provide strategic direction and guidance for the coherent development of the entire area against which applications for individual
sites can be assessed. In so doing, this part of the City Centre, which is much in need of regeneration, can emerge as a better-connected, pedestrian friendly, mixed use area.

Related to the above, the Strategy’s aim to provide substantial residential accommodation and commercial employment space in the central part of the city is environmentally preferable to the alternative of developing this space in the outer parts of Belfast. Urban renewal of this type will provide much needed regeneration in this part of the City Centre. Centrally located residents are more conveniently located to services in the City Centre and therefore less likely to use the car than those living further out.

Accordingly, equipped with the INWM as a material consideration, the Council will be in a stronger position to influence the pattern of development in this area in the interest of sustainable development and environmental protection.
SECTION 5: ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

5.0 Approach to assessment

The Inner North West Masterplan outlines development objectives and design principles for a part of the City Centre that is much in need of regeneration. While the document is entitled “Masterplan” it is essentially a guidance document rather than a blueprint for the redevelopment of the area. The vision that is outlined in the document is tabled for illustrative purposes only and is principally intended to highlight the potential uses, scale and pattern of development that may be possible in the area.

Within the context of the above the approach to strategic environmental assessment is largely twofold and consists of the following:

- To strategically assess the 8 Masterplan objectives of the Inner North West Masterplan. Consideration is given to the requirement for alternative or additional wording for these objectives in order to reinforce the need for environmental protection and sustainable development. While the Masterplan objectives are assessed in tabulated form against SEA objectives (see Table 5.1 at end of section) their general wording means that it is not possible to proceed to the next level of assessment, in terms of stipulating mitigation, alternatives and monitoring of effects. This notwithstanding, it is important to note that the Masterplan objectives are embodied in the urban design guidance for the 10 Character Areas below, which is subject to this further level of assessment.

- To strategically assess the illustrative guidance for the 10 Character Areas and Streets that form part of the Masterplan against SEA objectives. This involves assessing their likely significant effects on the environment and recommending mitigation, alternatives and monitoring where required. For ease of comprehension their assessment is submitted in tabulated form at the end of this section (Table 5.2, Tables 5.2 (a) to (h)). Guidance on appropriate mitigation measures is assisted by examination of recent planning permissions in the area.

5.1 Classification of effects

Projects are assessed on the basis of their impact relationship with the SEA objectives for the area. Impact is classified according to the following categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Likely significant adverse effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Likely significant beneficial effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Likely significant beneficial &amp; adverse effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>Likely insignificant effect or not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Uncertain due to lack of detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the above impact categories is briefly described below.

**Likely significant adverse effect** - Invariably the principal purpose of a SEA is to identify the likely significant adverse effects on the environment and to recommend alternatives, mitigation and monitoring where necessary. Mitigation may take the form of prevention, reduction or compensatory measures to offset significant adverse effects.

**Likely significant beneficial effect** - It is recognised that certain design guidance is likely to have significant beneficial effects on the environment, for example the upgrade of pedestrian/cycle crossings and creation of public realm/open space.
Section 5: Assessment of environmental effects
Strategic Environmental Assessment
Draft Inner North West Masterplan 2018

Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect – some design guidance can have obvious beneficial effects (e.g. reuse of historic building) while equally possessing the potential for adverse effects on the environment (removal of bird habitats when improving historic building).

Likely insignificant effect or not relevant – Some effects may be considered insignificant or are of questionable relevance to the strategic environmental objectives considered. For example, while the desire to improve street connectivity through Castle Court (under design guidance for Character Area No.5) resonates with the strategic environmental objective to improve public access it has little relevance for the other environmental issues considered.

Uncertain due to lack of detail - Some effects on the environment may be uncertain due to the lack of detail at this strategic stage and are therefore incapable of being assessed. A lack of clarity particularly pertains to the layout and design of the Masterplan, which is illustrative in nature.

Not assessed - It is considered appropriate, at the outset, to identify those developments that have planning permission and are likely to be implemented. This is necessary because mitigation for these projects has already been determined at the planning application stage and alternatives are not possible. However, this category is unlikely to apply to the assessment of this Masterplan because the 10 Character Areas typically extend beyond sites with planning permission.

5.2 Nature of effects

According to the 2004 Regulations the likely significant effects on the environment can take the following forms:

Short, medium and long-term effects - Short term effects are more likely to be connected with the construction period while medium and long term effects are usually associated with operations and activities linked to a proposal.

Temporary and permanent effects – Again these respective effects have a close relationship with construction and operations. For example, the disturbance caused by the integration of historic and listed buildings may entail temporary adverse effects on nesting species. However, they will have permanent beneficial effects in the long term linked to the preservation of the historic environment.

Cumulative effects – These occur when two or more environmental effects combine to produce a greater effect. The issue of cumulative impact in the Inner North West is most notably related to the grouping of tall buildings in this area and the visual impact implications this has for settings of listed buildings, townscape, vistas and the landscape setting of Belfast.

Synergistic effects – These occur when two or more effects work together to create a new effect. This could occur if two harmless pollutants from former separate industries combine during redevelopment to create a pollutant that is harmful to environmental and human receptors.

Secondary effects - Secondary effects may ensue from initial environmental impacts. For instance, direct effects on soil, as a result of increasing the risk of pollution within a specific area, could have a secondary significant effect on biodiversity.

Mindful of the above, it must be stated that effects on the environment are usually interrelated and often overlap to make simplistic categorisation difficult. Indeed, Scottish guidance considers synergistic and secondary effects as other forms of cumulative impact. Viewed in this context, the differentiation of effects on the basis of the above categories is not explicitly referred to in subsequent SEA tables. Attempting to do would only confuse matters. Instead, it can be assumed that they are implicitly considered as part of the assessment.

5.3 Difficulties in carrying out assessment

In keeping with Schedule 2 (8) of the 2004 Regulations it worth highlighting the difficulties encountered in compiling the required information for this SEA. As with most work of this type the carrying out of a SEA for the INWM suffered from a lack of detail in the Masterplan from which to assess the likely significant effects on the
environment. The Masterplan outlines general objectives and design guidance rather than specifying concrete development proposals. The illustrative masterplan is visionary in nature, with its delivery projected on a long-term basis and contingent upon the co-operation of a range of stakeholders.

5.4 Guidance from planning applications

Carrying out the SEA has been guided by the determination of major planning applications for development in the Inner North West and surrounding area in recent years. These applications were required to submit supporting environmental information, sometimes in the form of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), which helped cast light on the key environmental issues relevant to this area. This information has been assessed by the relevant authorities and planning permissions granted with environmental conditions attached where required. For these reasons, they are referred to in the assessment tables where appropriate.

Importantly, based on the recent determination of a planning application for a containment bund for contaminated material in the Musgrave Channel (Ref: LA04/2015/0190/F) it is not anticipated that proposed development in the Inner North West will entail significant environmental effects for the Belfast Lough Special Protected Areas. Granted planning permission in January 2016, the findings of the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) for this major proposal generally accepted that there would be little threat to the bird population from noise and disturbance during the construction and operational phase and this view was accepted by the NIEA (Appendix 5.1).

Mindful of the above, it is envisaged that the effective management of likely environmental effects associated with the Masterplan will be addressed at the planning application stage via the submission of EIAs and Construction Environmental Management Plans/Construction Method Statements.

5.5 Strategic assessment of Masterplan objectives

As stated in Section 1.0 of this SEA the Masterplan objectives for the INW include the following:

1. To reuse and integrate the existing heritage
2. To deliver a variety of residential accommodation or tenures
3. To provide high quality and distinctive work and employment spaces
4. To support city centre retail activity
5. To improve and support the existing offer and create links to new and existing creative and cultural activity
6. To provide a high quality public realm to create green, walkable and cyclable spaces
7. To promote sustainable communities, quality urban design and help create a welcoming and attractive place for everyone
8. To upgrade and manage the transport and parking facilities and promote active and sustainable transport

Clearly, at least half of the above Masterplan objectives, notably 1, 6, 7 and 8 expressly resonate with the need to promote sustainable development and to protect the environment. Viewed in this context, it is not considered necessary to modify or add to these objectives.

The strategic assessment of the Masterplan objectives is tabulated in Table 5.1. It can be seen that the Masterplan objectives with the greatest capacity to conflict with SEA objectives, i.e. by having likely significant adverse effects on the environment, relate to accommodation of substantial mixed residential and employment development, namely Masterplan objectives 2, 3 and 4. As a City Centre location targeted for significant growth in the Local Development Plan it is envisaged that development will be quite considerable. Indeed recent developments and planning permissions bear testament to this assertion. Given that the Masterplan objectives are an intrinsic part of the urban design guidance for the 10 Character Areas their effects are essentially addressed as part of the assessment of the Character Areas below.
5.6 Assessment of the illustrative urban design guidance for Character Areas

Mindful of the foregoing this section seeks to focus on the most apparent effects of the Masterplan on the environment that can be readily identified at the strategic level. These relate to the urban design guidance for the 10 Character Areas listed below:

1. Queen Street - Rejuvenate a key north-south city centre route
2. King Street and Castle Street - A local high street and city centre gateway
3. Bank Square - Well connected, public "outdoor room"
4. Smithfield Market - Create public meeting place for Inner North West
5. Castlecourt - New shopping street through existing mall
6. North Street - Reinvention of oldest and longest radial street
7. North Street Public space - Create culture-related "outdoor room"
8. Union Square - New pocket Square close to University area
9. Donegall Street - Retain and enhance existing streetscape
10. Carrick Hill / Millfield - Create boulevard with active streetscape

The Character Areas are assessed against the environmental topics and strategic environmental objectives (SEOs) identified in sections 3 & 4 of this SEA (Table 5.2). Those Character Areas adjudged to have "a likely significant adverse effect" or "likely significant beneficial & adverse effect" are then considered against the sequence of subject matters stated in the 2004 Regulations, namely: alternatives, mitigation and monitoring. Their environmental assessment is detailed in Tables 5.2 (a) – (h). Consideration of these subject matters is not warranted for Character Area guidance that is adjudged to have a significant beneficial effect on the environment or where its effects are deemed insignificant, uncertain or assessed elsewhere.

5.7 Conclusion

Based on the foregoing and the tables attached overleaf it is anticipated that the bulk of mitigation measures to prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects will take place at the planning application stage. This is because relevant supporting studies/information can be requested and appropriate planning conditions can then be attached to permissions.

Supporting studies/information for planning applications may include environmental impact assessments, habitats regulations assessments, or specific requests for the following: contamination risk assessments; landscape and visual impact assessments; archaeological assessments; drainage assessments; transport assessments including travel plans, etc. In the main, planning conditions are likely to pertain to the implementation and construction stage and may consist of the following: ongoing monitoring of the risk of contamination; preparation of construction environmental management plans to include Waste Management Plans and Dust Mitigation Plans; and construction method statements for preservation of historic buildings.
Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna/Coast &amp; Marine</th>
<th>Soil/Geo-Diversity</th>
<th>Cultural Heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage</th>
<th>Landscape/Coast &amp; Marine</th>
<th>Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna/Material assets</th>
<th>Water/Coast &amp; Marine</th>
<th>Air</th>
<th>Climatic Factors</th>
<th>Climatic Factors</th>
<th>Population and human health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obj 1</td>
<td>Obj 2</td>
<td>Obj 3</td>
<td>Obj 4</td>
<td>Obj 5</td>
<td>Obj 6</td>
<td>Obj 7</td>
<td>Obj 8</td>
<td>Obj 9</td>
<td>Obj 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SEA Topic and Objectives**

- **Maintain and enhance biodiversity assets and protect habitats and species**  
  - Protect and enhance soil quality and geodiversity  
  - Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings  
  - Protect, maintain and enhance the quality of Belfast's distinctive landscape & seascape  
  - Protect and enhance open space and public access to it  
  - Promote the sustainable management of waste  
  - Promote the quality and efficient use of water resources  
  - Reduce air pollution and ensure continued improvements to air quality  
  - Support mitigation efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a low carbon economy  
  - Support the adaptation to Climate Change and effectively manage flood risk  
  - Improve health wellbeing for a better quality of life.

**Inner North West Masterplan objectives** *

- **To reuse and integrate the existing heritage**  
  - Likely significant adverse effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect  
  - Likely insignificant effect or not relevant  
  - Uncertain due to lack of detail  
  - Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

- **To deliver a variety of residential accommodation or tenures**  
  - Likely significant adverse effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect  
  - Likely insignificant effect or not relevant  
  - Uncertain due to lack of detail  
  - Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

- **To provide high quality and distinctive work and employment spaces**  
  - Likely significant adverse effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect  
  - Likely insignificant effect or not relevant  
  - Uncertain due to lack of detail  
  - Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

- **To support city centre retail activity**  
  - Likely significant adverse effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect  
  - Likely insignificant effect or not relevant  
  - Uncertain due to lack of detail  
  - Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

- **To improve and support the existing offer and create links to new and existing creative and cultural activity**  
  - Likely significant adverse effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect  
  - Likely insignificant effect or not relevant  
  - Uncertain due to lack of detail  
  - Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

- **To provide a high quality public realm to create green, walkable and cyclable spaces**  
  - Likely significant adverse effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect  
  - Likely insignificant effect or not relevant  
  - Uncertain due to lack of detail  
  - Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

- **To promote sustainable communities, quality urban design and help create a welcoming and attractive place for everyone**  
  - Likely significant adverse effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect  
  - Likely insignificant effect or not relevant  
  - Uncertain due to lack of detail  
  - Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

- **To upgrade and manage the transport and parking facilities and promote active and sustainable transport**  
  - Likely significant adverse effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial effect  
  - Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect  
  - Likely insignificant effect or not relevant  
  - Uncertain due to lack of detail  
  - Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

* The general wording of the Masterplan objectives means that it is not possible to proceed to the next level of assessment, in terms of stipulating mitigation, alternatives and monitoring of effects. This notwithstanding, the objectives are embodied in the design guidance for the 10 Character Areas, which is subject to this level of assessment - see Tables 5.2 (a) to (h)
## Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inner North West Character Areas and Streets</th>
<th>SEA Topic and Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Queen Street</strong></td>
<td>Rejuvenate a key north-south city centre route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>King Street and Castle Street</strong></td>
<td>A local high street and city centre gateway</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bank Square</strong></td>
<td>Wall connected, public &quot;outdoor room&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Smithfield Market</strong></td>
<td>Create public meeting place for Inner North West</td>
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<td>New shopping street through existing mall</td>
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<td><strong>North Street</strong></td>
<td>Reinvoment of oldest and longest radial street</td>
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<td><strong>North Street Public space</strong></td>
<td>Create culture-related &quot;outdoor room&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Union Square</strong></td>
<td>New pocket Square close to University area</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Donegall Street</strong></td>
<td>Retain and enhance existing streetscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carrick Hill / Millfield</strong></td>
<td>Create boulevard with active streetscape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SEA Topic and Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna/Coast &amp; Marine</th>
<th>Soil/Geo-Diversity</th>
<th>Cultural Heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage</th>
<th>Landscape/Coast &amp; Marine</th>
<th>Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna/Material assets</th>
<th>Material Assets/Water</th>
<th>Water/Coast &amp; Marine</th>
<th>Air</th>
<th>Climatic Factors</th>
<th>Climatic Factors</th>
<th>Population and human health</th>
<th>Improve health and wellbeing for a better quality of life.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obj 1</strong></td>
<td>Maintain and enhance biodiversity assets and protect habitats and species</td>
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<td><strong>Obj 2</strong></td>
<td>Protect and enhance soil quality and biodiversity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obj 3</strong></td>
<td>Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings</td>
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<td><strong>Obj 4</strong></td>
<td>Protect, maintain and enhance the quality of Belfast’s distinctive landscape and seascape</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obj 5</strong></td>
<td>Protect and enhance open space and public access to it</td>
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<td><strong>Obj 6</strong></td>
<td>Promote the sustainable management of waste</td>
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<td><strong>Obj 7</strong></td>
<td>Promote the quality and efficient use of water resources</td>
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<td><strong>Obj 8</strong></td>
<td>Reduce air pollution and ensure continued improvements to air quality</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obj 9</strong></td>
<td>Support mitigation efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a low carbon economy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obj 10</strong></td>
<td>Support the adaptation to Climate Change and effectively manage flood risk</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obj 11</strong></td>
<td>Improve health and wellbeing for a better quality of life.*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Key

- Likely significant adverse effect
- Likely significant beneficial effect
- Likely significant beneficial & adverse effect
- Likely insignificant effect or not relevant
- Uncertain due to lack of detail
- Not assessed - proposals already have planning permission or effects are assessed under other Plans/Strategies

*The next level of assessment in Tables 5.2 (a) to (h) relating to alternatives, mitigation and monitoring is not warranted for Character Area guidance that is adjudged to have a likely significant beneficial effect on the environment or where its effects are deemed insignificant, uncertain or assessed elsewhere. This essentially relates to the assessment against SEA Objectives 5, 6 and 11 above.

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### Table 5.2 (a)

**Assessment of Likely Significant Environmental Effects of illustrative Urban Design Guidance for Character Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Topic</th>
<th>1.0 Maintain and enhance biodiversity assets and protect habitats and species</th>
<th>Likely significant adverse effects on environment</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna/Coast &amp; Marine</td>
<td>Significant development is envisaged as part of the rejuvenation of the above Character areas and Streets. The noise and vibration linked to construction could have adverse effects for environmental designations. Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site comprises tidal mud and sand flats, estuaries and lagoons. Belfast Inner Lough SPA provides important feeding and roosting sites for a significant number of wintering waders and wildfowl. The Belfast Lough Open Water SPA comprises the open marine water of the Lough. There is also a need to take into account potential effects on seals. All SACs within 135km of the project/plan should be screened for Grey seals and all SACs within 50km of the project/plan should be screened for Harbour seals. Although the Inner North West is not located within close proximity to the marine designated SAC sites known as North Channel cSAC and The Maidens SAC these SACs have mobile species (porpoises and grey seals respectively) which may be affected. Indeed, Belfast Harbour has a significant seal colony that has become established in recent years, with peak counts of nearly 50 adults having been reported. Assessment of likely significant environmental effects on these European sites will largely be addressed in the HRA. This notwithstanding, it is unlikely that construction noise (e.g. pile driving) in the Inner North West will affect the birds of the SPA and seals in Belfast Lough given the appreciable separation distance of several kilometres to Belfast Lough SPA. This assertion is somewhat vindicated by the findings of a 2015 HRA that was carried out for the creation of a containment bund for contaminated material at the Musgrave Channel in the Belfast Harbour Estate (Ref: LA04/2015/0190/F). Unlike the Inner North West it is located at the Lough, yet the determination of this application generally accepted that there would be little threat to the bird population from noise and disturbance during the construction and operational stage (see p5, Appendix 5.1). In addition to the above the potential impact on bird nesting sites and open mosaic habitats will also have to be investigated. Redevelopment may involve their loss and replacement elsewhere.</td>
<td>Less intensive development that minimizes the amount of piling required could be tabled as an alternative option for development in the Inner North West e.g. low density mixed use development. However, this can hardly be considered a reasonable or viable alternative for such centrally located.</td>
<td>Given the separation distance of the INW from the environmental receptors in Belfast Lough it is unlikely that mitigation will be required. This notwithstanding, standard mitigation measures typically include: <strong>Noise</strong> - Use of noise dampeners on heavy machinery, use of continuous flight auger piles to reduce vibration &amp; noise from piling. <strong>Dust</strong> - Dust Mitigation Plan e.g. water suppressants during dry periods, wheel washes, etc. <strong>Pollution of water</strong> - Implementation of Pollution Prevention Guidelines, use of sediment traps and filters. In addition to the above it is recommended that the criteria for the identification of valuable open mosaic habitats is considered as part of the environmental appraisal of individual development proposals in the Inner North West area.</td>
<td>Bird and seal numbers in Belfast Lough will be telling indicators of the health of Belfast Lough. (Refer also to indicators in Table 4.2 in Section 4.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.0 Queen Street  
2.0 King Street and Castle Street  
6.0 North Street  
7.0 North Street Public Space  
9.0 Donegall Street  
10. Carrick Hill/Millfield
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Topic</th>
<th>SEA Objective</th>
<th>Likely significant adverse effects on environment</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soil/Geo-Diversity</td>
<td>2.0 Protect and enhance soil quality and geodiversity</td>
<td>It is considered that proposed development in 8 of the 10 Character Areas has the potential for significant adverse effects due to the presence of contamination. The Inner North West consists of mainly developed hardstanding ground. Historical maps indicate former factories, foundries and workshops in the area. Examination of recent applications in the area point to contamination risks. For example, permission (Ref LA04/2015/0609) for student housing at the corner of Carrick Hill and Donegall Street pointed to slightly elevated concentrations of volatile contaminants, including heavy metals. Accordingly, there is potential for contaminants to become mobilised in the soil/substrate during site works and to present a threat to human and environmental receptors.</td>
<td>This relates to the consideration of alternative, less intensive uses (e.g. extensive public realm space) that minimize site disturbance and agitation of potential contaminants. However, the creation of public realm space is a feature of many Character Areas and is intended to complement the creation of new living and working structures in this part of the City Centre.</td>
<td>A preliminary and generic quantitative risk assessment should be undertaken to ascertain risks to human health and environmental receptors. Should unacceptable risks be identified then appropriate remedial works should be carried out and agreement sought from the relevant regulatory bodies. During construction works, any material encountered in soils or groundwater that shows visual or olfactory signs of contamination will be sampled and sent for chemical analysis.</td>
<td>This will occur at the planning application stage and at the implementation stage when planning conditions will be discharged, notably the preparation of a verification report that addresses the threat of contamination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.2 (c)

**Assessment of Likely Significant Environmental Effects of illustrative Urban Design Guidance for Character Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Topic</th>
<th>SEA Objective</th>
<th>Likely significant adverse and beneficial effects on environment</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage</td>
<td>3. Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings</td>
<td>Effects relate to the potential implications for historic environment, including listed buildings and their settings, historic street network and the heritage of the area. Examination of historical maps against the indicative layouts for each of the Character Areas indicates that efforts have been made by the Masterplan to retain and integrate the historic street network. Indeed, the Masterplan contains sections that expressively refer to the hierarchy of street types in the area, including lanes and entries. Furthermore, the Masterplan has identified historic buildings of interest in addition to listed buildings. The fact that reuse of the existing heritage is expressly embodied as a Masterplan objective body well for beneficial effects in preserving heritage. However, this has to be balanced against the concern for adverse impact on the setting of these buildings linked to the scale and massing of development envisaged for neighbouring land. Certainly, HED have been vocal on this matter in its consultation responses to planning applications in the area. In its Response to the Scoping Report the HED pointed to the impact of tall buildings on the historic character of the City. However, it is important to note that the preparation of the Masterplan has been partly warranted by the desire to better coordinate schemes so that the impact of development in the area is holistically appraised. At present, planning permission is being granted for buildings as tall as 11 storeys on a piecemeal basis.</td>
<td>Viewed in the context of the ongoing huge transformation taking place at the neighbouring Ulster University site, as well as the substantive level of hotel and student housing development occurring in the City Centre, the consideration of alternative low key development options for the location would be inconsistent with this pattern of build. Furthermore, the 2014 Living Places guide, entitled “An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for NI” highlights the contribution that landmark development can make to generating a sense of place and arrival. This has an especial relevance for the designated Gateway locations in the Inner North West and the contribution that landmark buildings possess as markers for new public space.</td>
<td>Ensure that future development takes into account and respects the neighbouring presence and settings of historic buildings. Encourage proposals to acknowledge the industrial heritage of the area e.g. through use of public art, nameplates, etc. For instance, the historic role of Smithfield Market could be emphasised as part of regeneration proposals.</td>
<td>This will occur at the planning application stage via design guidance and use of planning conditions. Belfast City Council’s Building Control department will be consulted on any proposed new street names.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2 (d)

Assessment of Likely Significant Environmental Effects of illustrative Urban Design Guidance for Character Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Topic</th>
<th>SEA Objective</th>
<th>Likely significant adverse effects on environment</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscape/ Coast &amp; Marine</td>
<td>4. Protect, maintain and enhance the quality of Belfast’s distinctive landscape &amp; seascape</td>
<td>The Inner North West forms part of the Belfast and Lagan Valley Landscape Character Area (LCA). The LCA recognises that urban renewal is a force for change. It states that “a certain amount of renewal is a feature of a dynamic city, though this must respect the historic importance and landmark nature of many buildings.” While the Masterplan repeatedly states that the height of new buildings should take its cue from historic buildings, and provides guidance for 5-7 storey build, it does refer to opportunities for taller elements at Gateway locations and as markers for new public squares at Smithfield, North St and Union Square. The integration and visual impact of these buildings needs to be evaluated in the context of the existing townscape.</td>
<td>The INW Masterplan could impose building height restrictions or insist on low density development. However, these are not considered reasonable alternatives when it is remembered that buildings as tall as 10-11 storeys already exist in this area and that extant permission exists for more. Draft BMAP recognises that key entrance junctions into the City Centre (Gateways) present the optimum locations for the accommodation of tall iconic buildings.</td>
<td>Sensitive design will be required to ensure the harmonious integration of tall structures with the historic fabric. To this end a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) should be requested as supporting information. Shadow Impact analysis on neighbouring residential areas (both existing and proposed) may also be required.</td>
<td>This will occur at the planning application stage via design guidance and imposition of planning conditions.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Table 5.2 (e)

## Assessment of Likely Significant Environmental Effects of illustrative Urban Design Guidance for Character Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Topic</th>
<th>SEA Objective</th>
<th>Likely significant adverse effects on environment</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Water/ Coast & Marine | 7. Promote the quality and efficient use of water resources | Developments in the above Character Areas possess considerable potential for the accommodation of significant residential and employment populations in the INW. The INW lies within the North Eastern River Basin District (NERBD) and specifically within the Lagan Local Management Area. While the INW does not directly impact on any protected area it has a hydrological link to the following protected areas: Belfast Lough Shellfish Waters; as well as the Nutrient Sensitive Areas of Inner Belfast Lough and Inner Belfast Lough Catchment. The NERBD identifies two significant sources of pressure preventing water bodies from achieving good ecological status. These are diffuse pressures from agricultural sources and point pressure sources from urban wastewater and development. Added to these there is the risk of pollution from waste and contaminated land. | In order to eliminate or drastically reduce the risk of any interference with the existing water quality, restrictions would have to be imposed on the scale and nature of development permissible under the Masterplan. To do so would fly in the face of the existing pattern of build in certain locations (junction of Divis St/Castle St and College Green) and against the permitted pattern of build in others (6-9 storey student housing granted at junction of Carrick Hill and Little Donegal St – App Ref: LA04/2015/0609/F) As previously noted the issue of economic viability also runs counter to the feasibility of pursuing low density options on this key City Centre land. | The LDP makes it clear that, if appropriate, wastewater treatment capacity in Belfast will be addressed through review and phasing of growth. NI Water and the NIEA are also statutory consultees on major planning applications. Related to the above, there is a requirement to have regard to the environmental objectives of the North Eastern River Basin Management Plan (p34). These are:  
• provide at least good status for all water bodies;  
• prevent deterioration in status;  
• promote sustainable development; and  
• achieve specific standards for protected areas. In order to address diffuse and point source pollution of surface and groundwater from urban catchments the River Basin Plan underlines the need to increase awareness within local planning authorities of the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the need for stormwater management (SuDs). This may involve capacity building within planning authorities and policy reinforcement under the Strategic Planning Policy Statement. | Reference to water quality data for the River Lagan. Degree to which SuDs (attenuation measures, soakaways, etc.) are incorporated into Masterplan proposals |
Table 5.2 (f)

Assessment of Likely Significant Environmental Effects of Illustrative Urban Design Guidance for Character Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Topic</th>
<th>SEA Objective</th>
<th>Likely significant adverse and beneficial effects on environment</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>8. Reduce air pollution and ensure continued improvements to air quality</td>
<td>The Masterplan is explicitly supportive of promoting active and sustainable transport in the Inner North West. This can be acknowledged as a beneficial impact on the environment. Equally, however, it must be recognised that an element of integrated parking provision is inevitable in this City Centre location. While the environmental impact from additional vehicular trips will be partly offset by the development of existing surface level car parks there is still a need to consider effects on air quality.</td>
<td>In order to fully negate the threat from air pollution linked to increased traffic generation consideration could be given to the creation of a pedestrian only mixed use venue. However, despite efforts to encourage the modal shift away from the car, private transport is still very much a feature of visits to the City Centre. As such the creation of a pedestrian only zone in the Inner North West could harm its appeal for investors and would place it at a considerable disadvantage to other city centre areas seeking regeneration. Notwithstanding the above it must be remembered that the INW Masterplan has placed appreciable emphasis on the need to prioritise pedestrian connectivity over use of the car.</td>
<td>While parking standards are lower in this City Centre location, further reductions in parking standards would reduce parking availability and encourage the use of transport options other than the car. Added to the above, use of travel plans by operators of new development can help encourage a move away from the car to other more sustainable modes of travel. This can involve the following: • The provision of cycle stands and onsite shower facilities; • Employer supported cycle purchase schemes and cycle allowances; • Work incentives to encourage car sharing; • Encouraging travel to work by public transport, for e.g. bus and rail timetable notification board showing services available, employer contributions for Translink bus and rail season ticket holders. Also as part of modal shift incentives in Travel Plans businesses could encourage the use of ultra low emission vehicles by only reserving employee parking spaces for such vehicles and providing onsite charging points.</td>
<td>Travel Plans will be made a condition of planning permission and their stipulated commitments to promote use of non-private transport will be enforced.</td>
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### Table 5.2 (g)

Assessment of Likely Significant Environmental Effects of Illustrative Urban Design Guidance for Character Areas

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climatic Factors</td>
<td>9. Support mitigation efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a low carbon economy</td>
<td>The energy required to heat and light buildings for additional residents and workers in this area may be sourced from fossil fuels, notably oil, the emissions from which would aggravate the greenhouse gas effect.</td>
<td>Insist that the energy requirements for new buildings are virtually self-generating without the need to feed off the transmission network. While modern building design increasingly incorporates energy efficiency measures and renewable technology (e.g. solar panels) the scale of development envisaged, coupled with the need to respect the historic environment, mean that self-sufficiency in energy provision is not feasible.</td>
<td>Encourage maximum use of renewables (solar panels, biomass, CHP) and heat efficient design in the construction of new buildings. Consider use of gas instead of oil. Utilise LED lighting for streets and public spaces. In spaces between buildings, use Central Monitoring Systems to allow for variable lighting regimes (VLR) that dim lights during times of low human activity. Minimize light trespass and sky glow by incorporating low level illuminated bollards, down-lights, handrail lighting</td>
<td>Monitor planning applications for their incorporation of renewable and energy-saving initiatives. Also refer to Indicators in Table 4.2 in Section 4.0</td>
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Table 5.2 (h)

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<tr>
<td>Climatic Factors</td>
<td>10. Support the adaptation to Climate Change and effectively manage flood risk</td>
<td>Low spots in parts of the Inner North West are modelled as being susceptible to pluvial surface water accumulation related to an extreme 1 in 200yr rainfall event.</td>
<td>Restrict development to those areas not modelled as susceptible to surface water accumulation. However, this would run counter to recent planning decisions in the area. For example, the ongoing development of student housing at College Green, which is identified as being at risk from surface water accumulation during a 1 in 200yr event (Application Ref: LA04/2018/0256/F).</td>
<td>Carry out drainage assessment in those parts of the Inner North West modelled as liable to a 1 in 200yr surface water hazard. Stormwater discharge to the public storm sewer to be limited to the pre-existing runoff rate. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to be encouraged.</td>
<td>Number and extent of flooding occurrences, together with the size of population and number of properties affected</td>
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