The draft Inner North West Masterplan is a consultation document prepared on behalf of Belfast City Council and provides proposals for the area as apart of the wider strategic development of the city.

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios (FCBS) was appointed in December 2016 as Masterplanner and Urban Designer to lead a team of Consultants (JUNO planning, Systra transport and The Paul Hogarth Company landscape) with an in depth knowledge of Belfast and regeneration issues and challenges. The design team worked in collaboration with the Belfast City Council to produce a masterplan for Inner North West (INW) that seeks to guide future development in this area and help deliver the aims of the Belfast Agenda and City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. This document will now be used for consultation with key stakeholders and the general public.

**How to respond:**
There are several ways to provide feedback:

**Online:** Please fill in the online questionnaire on the council’s website: https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk

**Email:** Please email your questionnaire to invest@belfastcity.gov.uk

**In person:** Throughout the consultation period there will be a series of drop-in events and exhibitions. To find out more about the drop-in sessions, please check the website: https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/

**Exhibition:**
We will have an exhibition located in:

- **Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, BT2 8BP**
  13 February - 13 April
- **Central Library, Royal Avenue, BT1 1EA**
  16 April - 8 May 2018

Hard copies of the questionnaire will be available at both the drop-in sessions and exhibitions.
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Introduction

The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (2015) and The Belfast Agenda (2017) collectively set out an ambitious vision for the future development of the city centre. This vision provides a strategic context for the city’s regeneration activity for the next 10-15 years and identifies the range of opportunities presented by the city’s large scale developments, such as Ulster University, the Transport Hub (Weavers Cross), Royal Exchange and the ongoing development of the Titanic Quarter. These projects and others will catalyse growth and employment across Belfast in the years ahead.

The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (CCRIS) identifies five Special Action Areas (SAA) where there is a pressing need for change and where detailed development frameworks and/or masterplans should be developed to facilitate growth. This document examines the ‘Inner West’ SAA along with parts of the ‘Inner North’, an area that encompasses part of the core retail area of Belfast and which sits adjacent to the new Ulster University and Cathedral Quarter, as well as long-standing communities to the north and west.

The Inner North West (INW) is currently underdeveloped and in need of significant investment to ensure coherent proposals come forward on the many vacant sites in the area. At the same time, the INW needs to be developed mindful of wider linkages and connections with other parts of the city centre and adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

The INW Masterplan therefore seeks to create a new city centre mixed neighbourhood that:
- incorporates a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, retail and leisure, all integrated through a strong and cohesive public realm;
- takes into consideration the heritage of the area and the historic urban grain;
- reinstates the historically vibrant economy of the Inner North West area;
- promotes ‘city centre living’, with its social and environmental benefits;
- provides another component in terms of the city centre’s urban fabric; and
- delivers the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda.

The approach to the regeneration of the INW must be both considered and flexible in order to maximise the opportunity of the various potential land uses, without undermining the existing businesses and enterprises which have grown in the area over the years. The specific location of new homes, shops, workspaces and amenities will be decided as proposals come forward and as developers and investors engage with the statutory planning process. The public sector will play its part through investment of its own, such as public realm schemes, and by bringing forward its own land holdings.

The ultimate goal of this document is to help encourage, inform, influence and direct the activity of both the public and private sectors in the Inner North West. This in turn will lead to new jobs, homes and more people living in the city centre, and ultimately deliver the inclusive growth set out in The Belfast Agenda.

Notes on the redline:

The masterplan area represents a key area of Belfast’s inner urban core which is reasonably consistent in scale, use and character. Within this boundary there are a large number of underdeveloped sites which are attracting investment. This is driven by adjacent investments in Ulster University’s Belfast city campus, student housing, and the need for both office and residential development. By considering this area holistically, the council seeks to promote the development of a high quality and interconnected built environment which will stimulate investment, growth, wellbeing and broad opportunities for the city and region. While this document focuses on the area within the defined boundary, the broader agenda is to foster interconnection with surrounding residential neighbourhoods and a prosperous, shared city future.
Summary and Introduction

The INW: the missing jigsaw piece of the City Centre
The INW area is located at the north west of the City Hall and acts not only as the emerging quarter of the city centre but also the threshold between the west and north city centre residential neighbourhoods and the city core. The INW is also located at the convergence of four different uses:

- Residential to the west and north
- Retail to the east with the vibrant Royal Avenue and the Cathedral Quarter
- Education to the north with the emerging new student quarter catalysed by the new Ulster University.
- Mixed use to the south including the improved transport hub at Great Victoria Street Station, the City Hall and the MET College forming a series of key destinations.

With its strategic location, the INW has the potential to stitch together and connect all these parts of the city, encompassing the local and adjacent neighbourhoods and contributing to the cohesive and coherent city centre.
1. The Inner North West in Context

1.2 The Site

The layout and character of the INW is clearly defined by the three key and historic arterial routes (Donegall Street, North Street and Castle Street) lined by civic buildings and shops that create a grand approach to the city centre.

The INW is bounded:

- to the west by Carrick Hill and Millfield Road which creates a physical and challenging barrier for the local residential communities;
- to the east by a series of historic and listed buildings which define the vibrant Royal Avenue;
- to the north, Donegall Street announces the entrance to the city centre; and
- to the south, Castle Street, also a key route to the city centre, offers transport links with the taxi terminal and local shops.

North Street splits the area into two parts and delineates two different types of urban fabric. The Union St/Library St area has a tighter grain characterised by historic buildings, terraced houses and industrial buildings while the Smithfield area is characterised by larger urban blocks with some remaining finer grain retail and residential buildings. To the south of CastleCourt, the area consists of a finer grain around Bank Square.

The topography of the area is relatively uniform except for a sharp change of level towards Carrick Hill where the landscape slopes up to meet the main road, creating a raised edge of approximately 2.5m surrounding the site to the west.
1. The Inner North West in Context

1.3 Historic Context

The area was historically a vibrant quarter animated by a dense network of houses, shops, workshops and markets. However, lack of development, large scale demolition and the expansion of significant road networks had a negative impact on the area, its urban fabric, its economy and the connectivity between the city centre and surrounding city centre residential neighbourhoods.

The demolition of the Smithfield Market and the insertion of the inward looking shopping mall CastleCourt have engendered a long-term negative impact on the transformation of the area. Its historic fabric has been losing a significant number of important buildings either replaced by surface level car parks or fenced sites left vacant. Today the INW is a fragmented and isolated district in the heart of the city centre.

The challenge for the INW Masterplan is to bridge the severance created by CastleCourt and Carrick Hill/Milfield Road and ensure that a coherent urban grain and streetscape are restored and understand how this piece of city can support diverse uses that contribute to the vibrancy of the city centre.
1. The Inner North West in Context

1.4 Emerging Context

The INW masterplan announces a positive and exciting era of change for the city of Belfast.

The Greater Belfast Development for the Ulster University on Frederick Street will contribute to the regeneration of this part of the city, creating a new destination and generating footfall not only on Royal Avenue but also throughout the INW in areas such as Smithfield & Union, Carrick Hill, Millfield and St Patrick’s.

The Belfast Telegraph building and site, the future extension of the Central Library and the Streets Ahead Phase 3 will be beneficial assets to the regeneration of the Donegall Street and Library Street area.

Strategies and projects such as the innovative Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) phase 1, the Belfast Bicycle Network and the Belfast Car Parking Strategy will offer a valuable contribution to the area’s connectivity and accessibility but also will influence the design process to be used in developing a good and appropriate public realm and street network.

Belfast City Council has established a new vision of Belfast in the Belfast Agenda document which promotes four priorities: Growing the economy, Living here, City development and, Working and learning. The INW has all the relevant attributes that contribute to these priorities and the city’s vision and wider ambitions.
1.5 Planning Policy Context

Statutory planning polices:
The Inner North West (INW) supports and complements the existing planning polices and guidance as relevant to the site and its immediate context and is cognisant that the new Local Development Plan, draft Plan Strategy that will be published for consultation in 2018. Therefore, at this period of transition, the INW has been developed in line with current policy (Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and the Regional Development Strategy) and complies with Belfast City Council’s Preferred Options Paper (2017) and the Purpose Built and Managed Student Accommodation Supplementary Planning Guidance (2016).

Non-statutory planning policies:
The INW study area was identified within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy as an area the required a phased approach to regeneration and lands to the south of the masterplan area are located within the Inner West Special Action Area and lands to the north of North Street are within the Inner North Special Action Area.

The area was identified for regeneration in the following Department for Communities (then DSD) documents:

- BT1 Gateway Site Development Proposal (2016)
- Belfast City Centre Westside regeneration Masterplan (2009)
- Belfast City Centre North West Quarter Masterplan (2005)

New development within the Inner North West Masterplan area may give rise to impacts on the city’s infrastructure, or require new infrastructure if the impacts of development are to be appropriately managed. The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland establishes the principle that developers should be ‘…expected to pay for, or contribute to the cost of infrastructure that would not have been necessary but for the development or which needs to be rescheduled to facilitate the development.’ (par. 5.68). These are known as Developer Contributions.

The council will assess the need for Developer Contributions to support new development on a case by case basis. Infrastructure impacts that may need to be addressed through Developer Contributions include (but may not be limited to) open space, public realm, sustainable transport, employability and skills and air quality.

Where they are necessary to make development acceptable, Developer Contributions will normally be secured by means of a Planning Agreement. Planning Agreements will also be used to achieve other planning objectives, where necessary, for example façade retention in historic buildings.

The council encourages developers to have very early engagement with its Planning Service to discuss the impact of their proposals on infrastructure and whether Developer Contributions will be required to mitigate and manage those impacts.
The INW Analysis
2.1 Heritage - Existing Assets

The INW is peppered by historic and listed buildings. Some of these derive their value as singular noteworthy structures, while others are part of a valuable cluster. The listed buildings tend to be concentrated along Royal Avenue while other buildings with architectural and community value are located at key corners or key routes throughout the INW. These elements should be retained and integrated into the masterplan so they can reinforce the positive character of the area and also contribute to the legibility of the masterplan.
2. The Inner North West Analysis

2.2 Underused Sites

The extent of vacant land and empty or dilapidated buildings in the northern part of the INW has led to a fragmented and often bleak area, with residents and pedestrians often feeling less safe as a result. Most of the western fringe of the INW area is dominated by surface and multi-storey carparks, accentuating the severance issue between the city and the communities living on the other side of Carrick Hill/ Millfield Road.

The redevelopment of these underused buildings and vacant sites should be seen as key for the success of the masterplan and regeneration of the area. It will bring density back to this part of the city, re- instate the historic urban grain, contribute to the public realm improvement, create active frontages, destinations, employment and homes.
2. The Inner North West Analysis

2.3 Existing Challenges

A major issue encountered in the INW is the severance caused by the Carrick Hill, Millfield Road and CastleCourt, which act as both spatial and social barriers. CastleCourt acts as a blockage in terms of north-south permeability through the site while Carrick Hill/ Millfield Road severs the site from communities to the west and north. The current character of the area and the lack of residents, natural surveillance and activity at night-time, all make it hard to deter and prevent anti-social behaviour.

Another challenge is the need for an improved public realm, connectivity and green infrastructure along Carrick Hill and Millfield Road where it is affected by a high volume of traffic and wide roadway with an unwelcoming pedestrian/cycle environment.
2. The Inner North West Analysis

2.4 Millfield & Carrick Hill Road
Linkages to the communities

The current character of this highway infrastructure creates a physical barrier, a boundary between the city centre and the city centre communities on its fringes. One of the main priorities of the masterplan is to improve the east-west permeability.

The masterplan will seek to blur these boundaries and to provide better linkages for the city centre communities and invite people to travel to and from the city in a safe pedestrian and cycling friendly environment.

Public realm, landscape, crossings, bus stops, signalised junctions and active frontages are the key ingredients that the masterplan should take account of and promote in order to successfully achieve this objective.
3.1 City Centre Mixed Neighbourhood Draft Vision

The city centre between Donegall Square and Donegall Street will be transformed to create a vibrant place to live, work, shop and relax across a series of mixed use neighbourhoods.

Ulster University’s campus, new investment, student housing and the existing character will produce a welcoming quarter embodied by creativity, innovation, culture, 24 hour activity and wellbeing in the heart of the city centre.
The vision for the INW regeneration has taken inspiration from emerging quarters of other mercantile and harbour cities from around the world (see Appendices).

- UK (Manchester: the Northern Quarter; London: Hackney Wick);
- Europe (Dublin, Republic of Ireland: Temple Bar; Tallinn, Estonia: The Rotermann Quarter); and
- Internationally (Toronto, Canada: the Distillery District).

These thriving precedents have created successful and sustainable places focused on urban living and working. They all seek to retain and restore historic buildings, regenerate abandoned / open building plots and deliver areas where people can live, work, create, innovate, study, shop and enjoy leisure and culture in the city centre.

The Northern Quarter in Manchester has, for example, seen a positive dialogue between the city council and the existing community of local businesses and residents. This new district has delivered not only an international destination for the city centre but also a growing and flourishing neighbourhood.

Inspired by these precedents, in a context that is rapidly changing and with the support of a strong civic leadership and private investment and a genuine stakeholder engagement strategy the INW will become a unique and distinctive place in the city centre: Belfast’s first city centre mixed neighbourhood.
3. Vision and Objectives

3.2 Masterplan Objectives

**HERITAGE**
To reuse and integrate the existing heritage

**HOMES**
To deliver a variety of residential accommodation or tenures

**WORK SPACES**
To provide high quality and distinctive work and employment spaces

**RETAIL**
To support city centre retail activity
3. Vision and Objectives

LEISURE and CULTURE
To improve and support the existing offer and create links to new and existing creative and cultural activity

PUBLIC REALM
To provide a high quality public realm to create green, walkable and cyclable spaces

WELL-BEING
To promote sustainable communities, quality urban design and help create a welcoming and attractive place for everyone

TRANSPORT
To upgrade and manage the transport and parking facilities and promote active and sustainable transport
The INW Design Principles and Illustrative Masterplan

4

- Public Realm
- Transport
- Heritage
- Culture & leisure
- Homes
- Well-being
- Retail
- Workspace

People

Location

INW

Economy

Cultural Richness
4.1 Reduce Severance

4.1.1 Create a Network of Open Spaces

In addition to establishing a clear hierarchy of routes which prioritises connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists through and throughout the quarter, the masterplan provides three new public squares in response to the lack of open space in the city centre. This will build on the character of Bank Square and reinforce the identity of the masterplan area. Their locations, scale and character will be carefully considered in order to complement the nature of the area and provide a variety of scale and type of public space.

Key principles

- Improve existing public spaces
- Identify strategic locations to introduce new public spaces
- Create a network of connected open spaces
- Identify and enhance the existing and historic street network
4.1.2 Improve North South Connections

The masterplan seeks to improve and reinforce the north-south permeability and connectivity of the INW.

Key principles

- Transform Carrick Hill/Millfield Road into an urban boulevard
- Improve and increase pedestrian and cyclist crossings and junctions
- Deliver sympathetic treatment to key bus and BRT movements through the three key junctions
- Create a pedestrian/cyclist friendly environment (connected and aligned with the DfI’s cycling strategy)
- Provide active frontages along the boulevard
- Identify and articulate a central spine through the area that connects the sequence of existing and new open spaces
- Introduce a route through CastleCourt that connects the retail hub to the urban grain and supports increased pedestrian movement.
- Improve the public realm along College Avenue and create visual and physical connections south to Weaver’s Cross
- Extend the active southern part of Royal Avenue to link with the new Ulster University Campus
- Improve the public realm and active frontage along Queen Street
4.1.3 Improve East West Connections

The masterplan contributes to the improvement of the east-west permeability through the area, linking the communities to the west with the city centre.

Key principles

- Create visual and physical connections across Carrick Hill/Millfield Road
- Create visual and physical connections across Royal Avenue
- Improve the strategic junctions to make them more pedestrian/cyclist friendly
- Define and enhance the character of each east-west streets through streetscape improvements and retail, workspaces and/or other uses
4.2 Create a Mixed and Vibrant Quarter

4.2.1 Heritage to Inform the Masterplan

The INW masterplan urban grain and public realm are informed by the remaining historic buildings and take advantage of their key location to reinforce the character and entity of the area.

Key principles

- Retain and enhance the listed and historic buildings
- Understand their surrounding context and their role within and outside of the masterplan
- Reuse historic buildings to reactivate the street while maintaining architectural heritage
4. The INW Urban Design Principles

4.2.2 Identify the Key Opportunity Sites

The underutilised sites (including surface car parks) are key to the regeneration of the area and reinstating the historic urban grain.

Key principles

- Identify opportunity and underutilised sites
- Re-use/retrofit vacant and redundant buildings where possible to meet sustainability objectives
- Define and reinstate the existing street network with the appropriate built-form
- Activate the streets and public realm with front doors, lobbies, shop and other active frontages
- Identify the key street corners of the area in order to provide the appropriate scale and character to contribute to the legibility of the masterplan
- Maximise the existing multistory car parks
4. The INW Urban Design Principles

4.2.3 Mixed Uses to Support Urban Living

The masterplan seeks to capitalise on INW’s land use diversity and flexibility in order to support the population growth in the city centre.

Key principles

- Provide uses that complement the existing and support local independent businesses
- Retain at least 60% of the retail units along Royal Avenue/Primary Retail Frontage
- Maximise the retail use along Castle Street and the east-west connections as part of the Primary Retail Core
- Provide a mix of leisure and retail along North Street
- Retain and enhance the market use
- Deliver an urban quarter composed of flexible workspace and cultural/innovation space
- Introduce new homes, mixed tenure housing through a range of residential types with proposed mixed uses at ground floor
- Introduce public and shared open spaces to support residential and employment spaces
- Introduce meanwhile uses where possible on vacant land to create active street frontages, support evening or night time economy or accommodate seasonal events
- Potential for new visitor attraction
4.2.4 Create Density for Population Growth

The masterplan aims to deliver densification in support of the projected population growth of 66,000 new residents targeted by the Belfast Agenda. In order to support the growth aspirations for the city the Local Development Plan will allocate sufficient land to accommodate 37,000 new housing units to 2035. In line with the Strategic Planning Policy Statement’s Sequential Approach and Regional Development Strategy the highest density of development will be located in the city centre and will seek to accommodate density without ‘town cramming’.

The proposed density will correlate with the specific areas of the INW and will be in line with the LDP housing and urban design policies. The objective is to respect the heights of buildings to be retained in the long-term whilst at the same time acknowledging that it is important to encourage investment in the INW to support growth and maintain local distinctiveness.

Key principles

- Respect the conservation area and heights along Royal Avenue
- Prioritise the re-use of previously developed land and encourage the re-development of appropriate location to contribute to urban regeneration
- Form appropriate landmark gateway buildings at arrival points into the city centre that contribute positively to the legibility of the city and long distance orientation
- Deliver a variety of heights
4. The INW Urban Design Principles

4.3 Create a Strong Street Hierarchy and Integrate Parking

4.3.1 Street Hierarchy

The INW sits within a wider hierarchy of streets and public spaces. The scale of different streets and the experience of transitioning from one to another is an integral part of the city's character. It is important therefore, that the planning and design of public realm for the INW is taken forward in this context.

Key principles

- Identify the INW’s key routes
- Establish a strong street hierarchy that informs key frontages
4.3.2 Active Frontages

The street hierarchy strategy in section 4.3.1 forms the base line for the following active frontage strategy: Where the primary or key routes are identified the frontages will be occupied by uses that provide activity. This principle especially applies to the Royal Avenue, the INW arterial routes (Donegall Street, North Street, Castle Street), the ground floors defining the public spaces and the study area key corners. In instances where inactive frontages are unavoidable, they will be minimised and carefully integrated to the architecture and elevation.

Key principles

- Active frontages to be maximised on primary routes, public spaces or key corners
- Inactive frontages will be carefully considered, designed and integrated in the architecture of the building
- Inactive frontages will be treated with high quality detailing and materials
4.3.3 Public Parking

The masterplan seeks to reduce the impact of the surface car parks for the overall benefit of the urban fabric, the public realm and the density. The two CastleCourt service yards should also be reconsidered especially the one on Berry Street where relocating this service yard would re-open the street and considerably improve the east-west permeability. To encourage the use of bicycle as transport mode in the city and integrate the Belfast Bike Share network strategy, the masterplan should propose more provision of bike docking stations at strategic locations.

Key principles

• Integrate car parking in the new building types
• Improve the appearance of the multi storey car parks
• Relocate Berry Street service yard in order to re-open the east west connection
• Introduce or relocate bike docks at key public spaces
4.3.4 Public Transport

The INW masterplan takes advantage of the existing and the future public transport network to promote active travel.

It also identifies additional collection points for the Belfast Bikes cycle hire docks at strategic locations such as public squares to encourage cycling through and in the city centre.

Key principles

- Integrate cycling docking stations to support cycling in the city centre in line with the network strategy
- Facilitate the use of public transport over the dominance of car usage
- Provide a safe and high quality public realm around bus stops to promote active travel
- Two-way bus only street at the lower end of Castle Street
- Improve Carrick Hill/Millfield Road, the public realm and junctions
4.4 Illustrative Masterplan

4.4.1 Urban Design Principles Summary

Below are the proposed key urban design principles implemented in the proposed INW masterplan:

- Enhance the existing and historic street network
- Create a network of open spaces
- Improve north south connections
- Improve east west connections
- Improve Carrick Hill / Millfield Road: public realm and junctions
- Create a pedestrian/cyclist friendly environment
- Maximise actives frontages on key corners, routes and places
- Integrate and reuse historic buildings
- Re-use/retrofit vacant and redundant buildings where possible to meet sustainability objectives
- Reinstate the historic urban fabric
- Introduce new homes
- Provide a variety of uses that supports urban living
- Introduce landmark gateway buildings at arrival points into the city centre to improve legibility of the city and long distance orientation
- Deliver a variety of heights
- Establish a strong street hierarchy
- Integrate car parking
- Integrate and promote active travel
5.1 Street Types

5.1.1 A hierarchy of street types

A hierarchy of five street types is proposed to ensure that the INW is developed in a manner that integrates well with its surrounding context, while providing a high quality streetscape. Design principles are provided for each type, along with a typical cross section and imagery to convey the design approach.
5.1.2 Principal Civic Streets

The Principal Civic Street of Belfast is Donegall Place, which extends north from City Hall to become Royal Avenue. This is the city’s primary retail location and also, its ‘front door’ where civic gatherings and events of city and regional importance take place.

The design of the public realm, as established by the Streets Ahead project, should be suitably grand in scale and of the highest possible quality of design and specification.

Design Principles

- Grandness of scale (space, hard and soft elements)
- Flexibility for civic usage
- Distinctiveness of city significance
- Accommodate existing bus shelters and future street furniture associated with urban transport operation

01. The scale of Principal Civic Streets should feel generous and uncluttered

02. Where vehicular access is necessary, it should not detract from overall quality

03. Whether traditional or contemporary in design, fixtures and fittings must convey the civic importance placed upon the space.
Belfast’s Arterial Routes (Donegall Street, North Street, Castle Street and Wellington Place) are effectively the high streets of the city. They are the principal point of connection between the centre and populated areas of the city to the north, east, south and west. Consequently the high streets are very important cultural and symbolic corridors in Belfast and must therefore be given careful design attention.

As movement corridors connecting the city, these streets must strike a careful balance between pedestrian, cycle and vehicular space.

**Design Principles**
- Civic presence underlining high street role
- Balanced provision of pedestrian, cyclists, public transport and vehicular space
- Strong connectivity beyond the city centre
- Accommodate existing bus shelters and future street furniture associated with urban transport operation
5.1.4 Transport Corridor

Encircling much of the city centre is the transport corridor of Millfield, Carrick Hill and Frederick Street. This route plays an important role in the movement of vehicles. However, due to its location in the city centre, it must also be considered as a series of streets (rather than roads) where design quality is not compromised by functionality.

In the context of the proposed street hierarchy, the transport corridors must allow the arterial high streets that cross them to do so effectively, reducing the barrier effect they currently cause.

Design Principles

- Design quality / flare that complements functional requirements
- Emphasis on quality pedestrian crossings
- Strong landscape structure
- Integration of sustainable urban drainage
- Accommodate existing bus shelters and future street furniture associated with urban transport operation

01. These large streets, often with weak building frontage, should have a strong landscape structure of semi-mature trees.

02. Major crossing points should be spacious and celebrated as gateways to the City.

03. As arrival points to the city centre, design quality and choice will make a statement.
5.1.5 Secondary City Streets

The name secondary should not deflect from the important role played by these ‘city streets’. They provide access to parts of the city, but also function as public spaces. As the city centre moves away from car dominance, the opportunity must be taken to ensure these streets provide good quality pedestrian environment, spill out space from adjacent buildings and street trees.

Design Principles

- Pedestrian priority of space
- Flexibility to allow for street activation and animation
- Softening of space through trees where appropriate
- Building mounted lighting as part of a decluttered street
- Accommodate existing bus shelters and future street furniture associated with urban transport operation

01. Pedestrian space should be decluttered, safe and attractive

02. Provision for bicycles is particularly key on these less trafficked street.

03. Where space permits, city streets provide an opportunity to introduce vegetation.
Belfast’s narrow lanes and entries are an intrinsic part of the City’s character and identity. While a much cherished part of the nearby Cathedral Quarter, many of these small streets elsewhere in the city are at risk of being lost to development or reduced to service roads.

A wonderful opportunity exists to transform these unique spaces into high quality pedestrian environments, full of character and charm. Interpretation of their history and an attention to design detail will be essential parts of this process.

**Design Principles**

- Fully pedestrianised environment
- Detailed design appropriate to scale and experience
- Integrated narratives specific to history and culture of space

01. Belfast has some fine lanes and entries that demonstrate good design principles.

02. As people scaled places, the detailed design of these streets is critical.

03. Material variation and textures can help to subtly organise narrow spaces.
5. Street and Building Types

Illustrative Masterplan

1. City Hall
2. Saint Anne's Cathedral
3. The Mac
4. Belfast MET College
5. Royal Belfast Academical Institute
6. Victoria Square
There is the opportunity to provide in the INW a range of new building types that will assist in delivering a vibrant and sustainable new city centre neighbourhood.

These types can provide car parking by integrating through basements or under landscaped podiums (refer to Diagram 01). Building ground floors will be designed to promote flexibility allowing different types of uses and deliver active frontages.

Residential typologies will provide communal as well as private amenity spaces for residents. The height, massing and orientation of these blocks will need to be carefully considered in order to address their immediate context, avoid overshadowed public places and maximise daylight and sunlight in the courtyards.

Each of the building typologies will complement the type of street or public spaces they address and will contribute to the character of the area and the urban living environment that the masterplan and the city seek to deliver.

The three typologies included in this chapter should not be seen as prescriptive but as illustrative diagrams showing ways in which the design principles listed above could be delivered.
5.2.1 Homes

The illustrative section-diagram below shows one way of designing new homes above active ground floors which could include a market, retail units or other services (such as GPs or nursery). The key design principles that would be applied are:

- Active frontages at ground floor
- Car parking integrated under a podium
- Communal and private amenity space provided for the residents
- Large balconies or terraces for the apartments/homes
- Good levels of natural daylight and sunlight in homes
- Height and massing distributed in order to maximise sunlight in the courtyard
- Dedicated provision for cycle storage
- Use of high quality design and materials
- Mixed and tenure-blind housing

Diagram 01.
5.2.2 Historic Buildings

The second illustrative section-diagram shows one type of approach to designing a new development (residential in this case) around an historic building. The key design principles that would be applied are:

- Prioritise existing buildings by promoting conservation and adaptive re-use
- Active frontages at ground floor
- Retail units or other uses at ground floor
- Maisonettes at ground floor on secondary or tertiary routes
- Creative re-use of the existing building
- Shared and private amenity space for the residents
- Large balconies or terraces for the apartments
- Good level of natural daylight and sunlight in homes
- Height and massing distributed in order to maximise sunlight in the courtyard

5.2.3 Workplaces

This third illustrative section-diagram shows one approach of designing workspaces. The key design principles that would be applied are:

- Active frontages at ground floor
- Flexible ground floor units able to accommodate lobbies, retail units or other uses
- Deliver high quality working environment
- Car park integrated in basement
- Dedicated provision for cycle storage
- Provide a range of floorplate sizes to give a varied workplace offer
- Use of high quality design and materials throughout
6. Character Areas and Streets

6.1 Queen Street
Rejuvenate a key north-south city centre route

Queen Street was the focus of public realm improvement works a few years ago. The street has ground floor retail along much of its frontage, with a range of architectural styles and qualities. The street has obvious potential, however there is currently an overall lack of cohesion and little visual vibrancy.

There is a significant opportunity to promote substantive improvements to Queen Street, which will capitalise on increased footfall between the new Ulster University Campus and the Transport Hub. The public realm can be improved to facilitate an increasingly high profile role that the street can play. The streetscape design should incorporate a segregated cycleway, using high quality materials and detailing, reducing to a minimum the vehicular space which will continue to include bus movements. The wider footways will facilitate increased animation for cafes/restaurants to use for tables and chairs as well as accommodating increased footfall. Incorporation of large semi-mature trees will play an important part in changing the character of the street. Along with the retention of the Caithness paving, continued use of the ‘Streets Ahead’ lighting columns will provide cohesion with the surrounding area.

Shop front improvements and the dressing of the street with floral displays will play an important part in providing visual vibrancy and cohesion.

The development of two new entries connecting to Fountain Street will increase the permeability of the area, creating opportunities for increasingly diverse uses.
6. Character Areas and Streets

6.2 King Street and Castle Street
A local high street and city centre gateway.

Castle Street is a major attractor in the city centre and will be a key point where people will be drawn into the INW. It will be important to overcome Castle Street’s challenges and current character as an edge or boundary between areas to the north and to the south. At the moment the area is highly permeable but in order to enhance the current condition much will depend on the quality of the redevelopment and the legibility of the public realm. The intention is to create a more consistent high street in terms of scale and massing without losing the finer grain that is part of the area’s historic character.

The height datum along Castle Street should take its cue from the historic buildings at the eastern end of the street. However, it should be recognised that this height increase will not create an uncomfortable imbalance with the south side of the street. New medium rise buildings will step down towards the north and the finer grain of Bank Square. A new addition could be considered around the south and east perimeter of the Tannery multi-storey carpark providing active frontages. This would encompass the western portion of King Street, in turn, improving its legibility as a street.

It is anticipated that retail will continue to be the predominant use along Castle Street with workspace and residential potentially incorporated in the redeveloped areas to the north of Castle Street.
6. Character Areas and Streets

6.3 Bank Square
A somewhat hidden, yet well-connected, public ‘outdoor room’.

Building on the aspirations of the council and the public realm works delivered by DfC that have already been delivered on Bank Square, there is an opportunity for this important and well-used square to provide a public space and retail offer that would both contrast and complement that of CastleCourt and Royal Avenue. The passages and routes through and adjacent to Bank Square would be retained and improved and new buildings then introduced to ensure consistent frontages which would frame the square and provide a diverse mix of uses housed within listed, existing and new buildings.

The new buildings should respect heights of adjacent buildings. On the south side of the square new buildings should address the issue of overshadowing. Narrow passages should feel welcoming and safe, and both frame views to and step down in scale towards the open space and to heritage buildings as is the case along Chapel Lane.

The aspiration for Bank Square, as outlined in various BCC reports, is to offer artisanal goods. A market takes place on specific days of the week - this will continue to be supported.

The finer grain of the existing buildings and the form of new buildings have the potential to accommodate independent food and beverage units at ground floor of buildings alongside cultural and creative activities, residential and workspace.
6. Character Areas and Streets

6.4 Smithfield Market and CastleCourt
A place of confluence and meeting central to Inner North West Belfast

This area can be one of the most active places within INW, located along the key north-south spine, attracting shoppers from CastleCourt. People will be drawn into the area from Royal Avenue both via North Street and through the shopping centre itself. This area supports a reinvigorated and redeveloped market place that could also serve as a key public space for the area. A mix of uses would surround this reinvented Smithfield Market, building on the history of the location so that it once again becomes a vibrant, accessible and active place at the heart of the INW, drawing people into and through the area.

This area has the potential to support a high level of new development with the existing market re-housed in a more appropriate building. A taller element could be considered at the edge of a new public square acting as a marker and contribute to the varied character of the area.

Carrick Hill and Millfield Road are also able to support taller elements at the junction with North Street, with heights stepping down to medium rise to form a coherent block scale with the retained historic buildings.
6.5 Smithfield Market and CastleCourt

CastleCourt: An opportunity to carve a new shopping street through the existing mall

Smithfield Square
A new public space at Smithfield Square will be a meeting point for retail, food and beverage, residential, office and hotel uses. This mix will result in an area that feels vibrant and safe around-the-clock. The ground floor of all buildings fronting the square will be occupied by uses that promote public interaction ranging from community to commercial spaces.

CastleCourt
There is the opportunity to make the inward looking shopping centre CastleCourt more accessible and open to its surrounding context. The existing structure could be reviewed and adapted based on the model of other recent arcade shopping centres in the UK. There is the potential to form a new connection north-south greatly improving links through the INW and the city centre generally. There is the potential to re-imagine servicing regimes and create new routes and entrances around the Royal Avenue and eastern end of the shopping centre.

Berry Street
The east west route running alongside the southern elevation of CastleCourt is currently compromised and blocked by an existing service yard. If re-opened Berry Street could become an important east west link for the local communities and therefore will contribute to the improvement of the area’s connectivity and permeability. Its current service lane character will also need to be changed and transformed to create a safe, active and attractive route.
6. Character Areas and Streets

6.6 North Street

Reinvention of the oldest and longest radial street straddling commerce and creativity.

North Street is probably the street in the INW that has suffered the most significant loss of historic buildings and has therefore lost most of its character. The street is now bordered by a number of vacant sites, surface car parks and buildings of varied architectural character.

There is a clear need to redefine this key arterial route, reinstating its historic mixed-use character by accommodating retail at ground floors and re-establishing the main enclosure of the street.

The remaining listed and historic buildings should be carefully integrated into new developments.

The height and massing of the new buildings should address the surrounding context and respond to the datum established along Royal Avenue. A taller element at the junction of Carrick Hill/Millfiled road and North Street (Shankill gateway) could act as marker or gateway announcing approach into the city centre.
6. Character Areas and Streets

6.7 North Street - Public Space

Creating a culture-related “outdoor room” in the city centre

This sector of INW can become the hub for leisure and cultural use. The Streets Ahead initiative recognises the contribution to civic life and the public realm this area can make. Further west, a new public space along the proposed north-south spine, will be part of the series of new public spaces and become an ‘outdoor room’ for cultural activities.

The area provides the opportunity to create a balance between the area’s historic legacy and new development. The space can provide a destination at the junction of Royal Avenue and North Street drawing people into the INW and creating alternative routes through to the Ulster University and towards Donegall Street.
To the South of Donegall Street, a new city quarter will emerge to create a vibrant place to live, work, shop and relax. The Ulster University campus, new investment, student housing and the existing character will produce a neighbourhood with a 24-hour life and a night time economy characterised by creativity, innovation, culture and wellbeing in the heart of the city. This vibrant and thriving new quarter will attract visitors and tourists and become a new destination in the city centre.

The new public square will complete the network of public spaces in the INW area. The massing and height will respond to the existing context with a taller element which addresses the new open space and contribute to the INW height strategy and legibility of the masterplan.
6. Character Areas and Streets

6.9 Donegall Street

A street rich in history and diversity.

Donegall Street is one of the more characterful streets that has already started to embody activities linked to the Ulster University and related to culture, creativity, leisure and innovation. In comparison to the other radial streets (North Street and Castle Street) it is the one with the greatest number of existing buildings intact and clearly fit for retention and re-use. Hand in hand with this is the maintenance of many of the existing uses.

Donegall Street already supports a fairly high level of retail and food and beverage, including uses related to the evening economy. This offer should be encouraged to remain and new buildings will incorporate generous ground floor heights to allow for flexibility in use.

The retention of the existing buildings along the street means that a fairly consistent height datum is already established. It is only at either end of the street that height and mass increase. The redeveloped Belfast Telegraph building at the corner of North Street/Donegall Street and Royal Avenue steps up in height in acknowledgment of the height of Ulster University on the north side of Donegall Street.

At the north-western end of the street the building height steps up towards the junction of Donegall with Carrick Hill with a taller element acting as gateway.
The Carrick Hill / Millfield highway infrastructure is one of the major challenges to address in the INW area. It requires careful review in order to improve the pedestrian and cycle environment including upgraded crossings and active frontages. This main north-south route should be re-imagined as a boulevard.

The carriage way should be reviewed and options to reduce it explored. An increase of the pavement width on both sides of the road would allow integrating cycle lanes, trees, buffer zones, sustainable urban drainage and soft edges.

The ground floor frontages of the new developments can accommodate lobbies, retail and community facilities. This offer of uses would generate active frontages (especially at the key corners e.g. North St and Millfield) and destinations and promote footfall.

The new development should provide some height alongside the ‘boulevard’ in order to address the scale of the highway infrastructure and reduce the car dominance of this area with taller elements acting as gateway at the key junctions. This height needs to be carefully considered to allow it to be appropriately located. This will create a varied character and height along the main route and prevent a perceived wall of uniform scale.
7.1 Delivery

Development in the Inner North West will be driven by the market and private sector investment, and this document is intended to encourage and facilitate that investment. There remains however a significant role for the public sector in helping to deliver regeneration in this part of the city, and this masterplan has been produced in consultation with the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) with a view to further joint working in the future.

To help realise the ambitions in this masterplan Belfast City Council will:

1. Work with DfC and the private sector to review their land holdings within the Inner North West, and consider which sites might be brought forward for development.

2. Support DfC and DfI to bring forward additional public realm improvements where funding permits, including at the junctions and pedestrian crossing points along Millfield and Carrick Hill.

3. Incorporate improvements to public transport in and around the Inner North West within the forthcoming Infrastructure Study and as part of the potential Belfast Region City Deal.

4. Use this masterplan to inform the drafting of the Local Development Plan and the various policies within, and this document will also provide the basis for the Local Plan Policy for this area.

5. Utilise this document to inform discussions with developers as they come forward for proposals in the Inner North West.

6. Engage with private sector landowners in the Inner North West to understand potential barriers to development coming forward and how these might be addressed.

7. Bring forward the development of the Belfast Telegraph building via its joint-venture partnership, Bel Tel LLP.

8. Draw upon the wide range of business support and economic regeneration initiatives being delivered by the council and other bodies and direct these towards the Inner North West where applicable.

9. Explore opportunities for meanwhile or interim uses within the Inner North West, in consultation with landowners.

7.2 Public Consultation

In preparing the Inner North West draft masterplan we have engaged with many people including government departments, community groups, businesses, developers and elected representatives. There have been many plans and suggestions for this area and as part of the development of the draft masterplan we have reviewed these and now have put forward proposals for public consultation.

This consultation is open to everyone and we would like to hear from you about what you think of the proposals. Your input will help us develop the final masterplan which will be published later 2018.
How to respond:

There are several ways to provide feedback:

Online:
Please fill in the online questionnaire on the council’s website:
https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/

Email:
Please email your questionnaire to invest@belfastcity.gov.uk

In person:
Throughout the consultation period there will be a series of drop-in events and exhibitions. To find out more about the drop-in sessions, please check the website:
https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/

Exhibition:
We will have an exhibition located in:

Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, BT2 8BP
13 February - 13 April

Central Library, Royal Avenue, BT1 1EA
16 April - 8 May 2018

Hard copies of the questionnaire will be available at both the drop-in sessions and exhibitions.
8. Appendices

8.1 Precedent: Distillery District, Toronto

[Images of the Distillery District, Toronto]
8. Appendices

8.2 Precedent: Temple Bar, Dublin
8. Appendices

8.3 Precedent: Northern Quarter, Manchester
By post

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