



Belfast District Council (Shadow)

Report to	Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	DSD consultations – Shaftesbury Square Development Framework & South West Gateway Masterplan
Date:	30 th January 2015
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be fully aware that the operational Transfer of Regeneration and Community Development from DSD to the Council has been delayed by 12 months until 1 st April 2016. As part of their existing responsibilities and in parallel to the preparation for transfer of regeneration powers to Council DSD have continued to develop various projects, plans and policies under their remit for delivering Urban regeneration and Community Development functions.
1.2	As part of their ongoing work DSD commissioned consultants to prepare two masterplan documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaftesbury Square Development Framework http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations/shaftesburysq-dev-framework-consultation.htm • South West Gateway Masterplan http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations/consultations-south-west-gateway-masterplan.htm
1.3	Draft responses to these documents have been prepared for Members' consideration and are attached in Appendices 1 and 2.

2	Key Issues
	Strategic Issues
2.1	As part of its preparation for the transfer of regeneration powers the Council had compiled a baseline of DSD documents which comprise the broad operational / policy context for regeneration activity in the City Centre and wider neighbourhoods across the city.
2.2	These documents provide the regeneration policy context within which DSD (through

	<p>BRO and BCCRD) currently deliver the transferring Urban Regeneration and Community Development function. Any existing informal and formal policy instruments produced by DSD could be used to inform future Council regeneration policy and contribute to the Local Development Plan (land use planning context); the Belfast Plan (community planning context) and the emerging City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan (an updated urban regeneration context for the city centre).</p>
2.3	<p>The Council consideration of the draft Shaftesbury Square Development Framework and South West Gateway Masterplan was carried out in the context of the emerging Council strategies and plans referred to above.</p>
2.4	<p>Financial Issues</p> <p>The physical interventions proposed within this plan could have significant financial implications in the event of any commitment to these actions being delivered. It is essential that any proposed actions that can be delivered in advance of transfer of functions in 2016 are clearly identified and undertaken by the Department utilising existing budgets. Any interventions that lie beyond this timeframe should be set within the wider context of local government reform and recognise that financial implications associated with any proposals would not be binding on the Council.</p> <p>In any final documents it should be clear that recommendations for the period post April 2016 that may not be the responsibility of DSD and can only be considered in the context of existing Council plans and projects as well as our future planning, community planning and regeneration functions.</p>
2.5	<p>Shaftesbury Square Development Framework</p> <p>DSD appointed GM Design Associates to undertake the Shaftesbury Square Development Framework. The aim is to create a basis for the restoration of Shaftesbury Square as a successful urban space with vibrant local communities linked by attractive and active urban streets. See Appendix 1 for an outline of the study area and a draft Council response.</p>
2.6	<p>The Development Framework identifies a number of opportunity sites such as Posnett Street and Hope Street and has included indicative development schemes with various land uses on these sites. In addition to developing these sites the Development Framework aims to regenerate Shaftesbury Square as a major civic space.</p>
2.7	<p>Officers have sought to contribute to the development of the plan through comments and advice (via the project board). The contributions, in many instances, have not been taken into account in the draft document. Issues previously identified by Council which remain of concern and will be addressed in the draft response include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for greater clarity on the purpose of the development framework and what it aims to achieve • A more robust analysis is needed to assess the issues in the area such as dereliction and vacancy and identify the contributing factors for these issues and offer a rationale for the proposed interventions • The requirement for a defined boundary and the rationale for it explained. The transport interventions could impact on key junctions that currently sit outside the identified area • There is little to no understanding of projects / activity already planned in the area and how these have been incorporated into the development framework. Greater certainty on future schemes should be sought from DRD for projects such as future Bus Rapid Transit and potential southern routes in the city. • A large part of the development framework focuses on the realignment of the

	<p>transport infrastructure, however, a transport assessment to analyse the practicalities of this should be prioritised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The framework should identify responsible partners or delivery mechanisms to assist the process of taking forward the interventions with an emphasis on developing strong community involvement and responsibility. • There are opportunities for greater alignment with Council programmes and initiatives such as the Council's Masterplan and the City Centre Regeneration Strategy & Investment Plan and their respective themes. • Greater clarity must be given to what is meant by the proposed delivery of quick wins, short, medium and long term plans and who will be undertaking these actions. • There is no mention of the potential for uses such as student housing and the opportunity for their inclusion in a positive manner as managed accommodation which could be the catalyst for wider regeneration. <p>South West Gateway Masterplan</p> <p>2.8 The stated aim of this Masterplan is to identify a range of strategic actions that will underpin the regeneration of what is described as one of Belfast's most important economic areas. As with the Shaftesbury Development Framework Belfast City Council officers provided comments as part of the Project Board.</p> <p>2.9 The area covered by this Masterplan includes the entire stretch of the Boucher road; Stockmans Lane from Balmoral Road to Kennedy Way; The Kennedy Centre; Westwood shopping Centre in the West and as far East as Windsor Park. See Appendix 2 for the study area and a draft Council response.</p> <p>2.10 The Council is a substantial land owner in this area with land interests in the retail, industrial and commercial uses in the Boucher area but also parks and leisure interests given the proximity of the Olympia Leisure centre, Musgrave park, and the Boucher Playing Fields which are subject to some of the proposed interventions. Due to our land holdings and our existing plans for this area we would expect further engagement with the Council if this is further developed.</p> <p>2.11 The Masterplan is very high level and aspirational proposing 10 actions for the area, some of which such as the Blackstaff Park, remain at a concept stage:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive Branding – the area needs a shared identity to pull together its leisure, business and retail uses 2. Integrated Travel Plan – to tackle the issues of congestion, parking and poor pedestrian connectivity 3. Civic transport Interchanges – improving connection to public transport links 4. Quality Pedestrian and Cycle Corridors – installing good quality pedestrian and cycle paths, tree planting and signage. 5. Quality Wild Life Corridors – enhancing the role of Blackstaff River to increase biodiversity in the area and reduce pollution 6. Black Staff park (incorporating Boucher Playing fields, the vacant waste water treatment plant. Initial concepts designs show a connection of these areas of green space over the M1. 7. Landmark M1 bridge – a proposed pedestrian and cycle bridge connecting Boucher Road and the Falls Road. 8. Community Greenway – linking Musgrave Park, Milltown Cemetery and the Blackstaff River 9. Community Development – increase direct relationships with businesses and local communities in this area. 10. Proactive planning, design and management – to allow a long term,
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	sustainable, transformation to take place.
2.12	Key issues that any final document will need to address are existing plans for the area including Olympia; our open space assets; the large commercial Council landholding and the opportunities that exist in this area. Some of the concepts proposed such as the M1 bridge and Blackstaff park could have major implications for our assets and existing commercial properties on both sides of the M1. Whilst these proposals are at a concept stage it is essential that there is more robust assessment and engagement with the Council before the completion of any draft plan.
2.13	Relevant to both plans, as outlined above, is the need for DSD to recognise that the Council will not be bound by any emerging proposals. The Council will consider the implications of these plans not only from the resourcing perspective but also from the viewpoint of deliverability within any future regeneration policy context. The plans should therefore avoid raising community expectations for delivery beyond 2016 as proposals will be considered alongside Council's existing commitments, plans and policies at that time.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	None

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	None for Belfast City Council at this time.

5	Call In
5.1	This decision is subject to call in

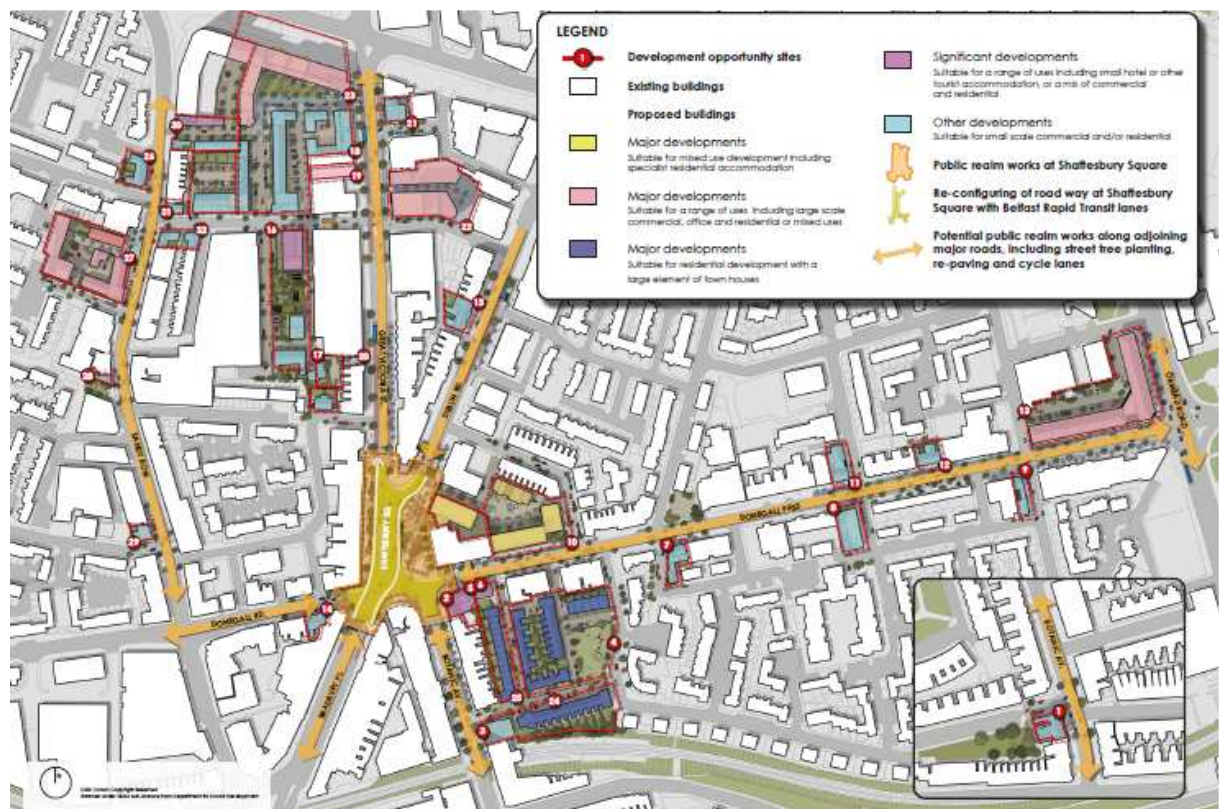
6	Recommendations
6.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the attached draft responses in Appendices 1 and 2 and agree for submission to DSD

6	Decision Tracking
Timeline: Send ratified Council responses to DSD after Full Council in February . Reporting Officer: John McGrillen	

7	Abbreviations
DSD- Department for Social Development	

6	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Draft response Shaftesbury Square Development Framework Appendix 2 - Draft Response South West Masterplan Gateway	

Appendix 1: Shaftesbury Square Development Framework Boundary



Draft Belfast City Council response to Shaftesbury Square Development Framework

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Shaftesbury Square Development Framework. In the response below we have set out some overarching comments in the context of Local Government Reform and the potential resourcing implications aligned to this before outlining specific comments on the draft Framework.

Strategic Context

As part of its preparation for the transfer of regeneration powers the Council has compiled a baseline of DSD documents which comprise the broad operational / policy context for regeneration activity in the City Centre and wider neighbourhoods across the city.

These documents provide the regeneration policy context within which DSD (through BRO and BCCRD) currently deliver the transferring Urban Regeneration and Community Development function. These existing informal and formal policy instruments whilst not binding on the Council, could be used to inform future regeneration policy; contribute to the Local Development Plan (land use planning context); the Belfast Plan (community planning context) and the emerging City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan (an updated urban regeneration context for the city centre).

The Council consideration of the draft Shaftesbury Square Development Framework was carried out in the context of the emerging Council strategies and plans referred to above.

The physical interventions proposed within this plan could have significant financial implications in the event of any commitment to these actions being delivered. It is essential that any proposed actions that can be delivered in advance of transfer of functions in 2016 are clearly identified and undertaken by the Department utilising existing budgets. Any interventions that lie beyond this timeframe should be set within the wider context of local government reform and recognise that financial implications associated with any proposals would not be binding on the Council.

It should be clear in the final Development Framework that any recommendations beyond April 2016, which are not the responsibility of DSD, will only be considered in the context of existing Council plans and projects as well as our future planning, community planning and regeneration responsibilities. Whilst the Council is broadly supportive of the proposals in the Development Framework they do not necessarily relate to current Council priorities and should not be considered to commit the Council to implementation.

Draft City Centre Regeneration Strategy & Investment Plan

The emerging plan identifies the South Centre as a distinct area of the city centre and as one that should be the primary focus of Belfast's office sector. The South centre joins the Shaftesbury area and the city centre in a highly competitive inter-city environment, it must attract high quality employment by providing the kind of spaces that the knowledge economy is looking for. Whilst the city centre has other concentrations of office development, the South Centre must retain its primacy by revitalising its office function through a series of strategic moves.

Comments on the Development Framework

As part of the engagement process for this Framework Council provided the consultant team with a range of comments to help inform the draft document via the Project Board, meetings with the consultants and written responses. Many of these comments remain relevant and are re-stated in this response.

The Council is supportive of the general vision to create a basis for the restoration of Shaftesbury Square as a successful urban space with vibrant local communities linked by attractive and active urban streets, however, the boundary for the study area needs to be clarified and the rationale for it explained. The boundary needs to be clear especially if the transport proposals for Shaftesbury Square are to be realised. The impact of the proposed changes to the layout of the traffic infrastructure could only be considered in the context of the connections to roads sitting outside the study area including Hope Street, Bankmore Street and the incomplete inner-city ring road southern section.

The Framework identifies the suggested quantum of development that could occur in the area up to the year 2026, including retail, office and residential development. The Council's Masterplan and emerging City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan both support growing the city's residential population, improving the quality of the city's office stock in suitable areas and managing the city's retail offer. In terms of the scope for new development described in the Framework it would fit with Council's Tourism Strategy to increase the hotel provision in the City, however, 680 bed rooms (6 Hotels) may be an overly optimistic aspiration for what is geographically quite a small area. That being said there are a number of opportunities in the wider area for a variety of uses to be encouraged and developed. The figures in sq. ft for retail development and 'cafes, restaurants etc' need to be accurately converted from the sq metres figures printed (page 3 of the Development Framework).

The Framework identifies 34 sites with development potential in the study area. The Council is supportive of regeneration occurring in a holistic and planned manner, however, it is essential that this planning takes full consideration of the many different facets of development including the current ownership of sites and development that is already planned. Notwithstanding our earlier comments on implications of Local Government Reform, the final Development Framework could demonstrate an understanding of the site ownership in the area, the complexities of viability and funding of delivery and the intentions of respective land owners.

The suitability of the uses should be contextualised in relation to their acceptability from the planning policy or community/political perspectives. The general issue of underutilisation of property could be highlighted in relation to both overall vacancy and partial vacancy. The "exceptionally high" terminology for ground floor vacancy and other measures need to be contextualised or expressed in quantitative terms for example by using absolute numbers or percentages. This should also be considered in the context of the wider area and economy to explore the viability of these, taking account of the regeneration potential in the area over the longer term and the interdependencies of city-wide regeneration and economic development.

The final version of the Framework could include greater detail on the contributory factors underpinning the vacancy issues in this locality. The reasons why property remains un-let or vacant should be captured and understood in terms of local factors and broader economic changes that have contributed to the current "challenge" that is apparent across the area. This understanding would inform the potential measures or actions that could support positive change for the area.

It would further enhance the Framework if specific measures on targeting such issues as upper floor vacancy and dereliction or suggest locally specific changes that may address any adverse perceptions influencing the investment potential of the area. This could take the form of practical measures such as potential schemes, initiatives/support, policy changes, management of space etc. Links to existing interventions (e.g. LOTS, BIDS) and relief provided by other organisations, or appropriate examples of success measures that have addressed the challenge

identified will enhance the final framework document. This work could also consider the potential for interim or meanwhile solutions which if placed within a framework context would not undermine or prejudice future development potential.

A key component of the Council's previous engagement for this Development Framework was the consideration of the role of purpose built managed student accommodation in this area located on the fringes of the Queen's University Campus. Recent research undertaken by Viewforth consultants identified the financial contribution of higher education students and their institutions to the local economy. Key findings from the research include:

Key findings for Belfast economy:

- Belfast's share of Higher Education Institution staffing is 6019 FTE (out of 7205 FTE in NI).
- Belfast's share of the direct output of the HEIs was £485 million, directly generating £321 million GVA.
- Knock-on/additional output created in the city economy (in other industries) is £368 million, creating an additional 4525 fte jobs and contributing £187 million to GVA.
- Total impact of the HEIs on the city economy is output of £853 million, 10,544 fte jobs and £508million contributed to GVA.
- Impact of off campus expenditure of students coming to Belfast from outside the city (33,397 students in total) is estimated to be £384.5million output generated, 4212 FTE jobs created and £192.32million contribution to GVA.
- The total output generated by Higher Education and HE students in Belfast is £1.2 billion, creating 14,756 fte jobs, and contributing £700.3million to GVA.

The study area has many factors in its favour such as proximity to the traditional office core, excellent public transport connections, and proximity to Queen's university Belfast - one of the City's major anchor institutions. What is lacking is a catalyst to lift the vitality and vibrancy of the area. Perhaps further consideration could be given to purpose built managed student accommodation as a catalyst for wider regeneration in the right location as part of a balanced approach to other uses in the area, especially in the context of the new University of Ulster Campus under construction in the north of the city centre.

The Vision

The Council is generally supportive of the stated vision in terms of developing the area as an attractive link between the city centre and the south of the city. As outlined earlier this aligns closely with our Masterplan and the emerging City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan.

The Council is also supportive of rebalancing the ratio of roadspace to pedestrian / civic space where this is appropriate. Shaftesbury Square performs an important function for vehicle transport in the city and proposals to amend this roadspace will have to be considered in terms of potential impact on the surrounding road network. 'Sensitively managing' traffic as described in the Framework would be welcomed where this fits with the demands of the road network and is deemed achievable by the roads authority. The realignment of Shaftesbury square and the knock-on effects of this will need further detailed analysis. The Framework could expand its boundary to enable consideration of the potential completion of the inner-city ring road southern section and the opportunities that road scheme could afford Shaftesbury Square if it was to be delivered in future.

The proposed response to the traffic-related issues in Shaftesbury Square will benefit from further engagement with DRD to ascertain more realistic timescales for major road interventions and the potential introduction of a north-south axis for Bus Rapid Transit.

The Draft Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland suggests that a comprehensive network comprising urban routes, quiet routes and greenways. In the development framework area the establishment of urban routes targeting residents for commuting purposes may be the main focus, however for these cycling lanes to be useful 'complete' routes need to be provided. Therefore the cycle lanes developed as part of the regeneration of this area must connect to existing routes and should incorporate the locations of the Belfast Public Bike Share docking stations.

When creating the dedicated cycle routes through the redesign of Shaftesbury Square the Council would highlight the docking stations included in the Belfast Public Bike Share Scheme in the development framework area. The Belfast Public Bike Share Scheme will be operational from Spring 2015. The docking stations are highlighted in the enclosed map.

The impact of increased pedestrian crossings on traffic and the surrounding area must be considered. If traffic is slowed and stopped for longer periods of time increasing pollutants the impact on the existing Air Quality Management Area in Cromac Street must be considered and any issues arising mitigated for.

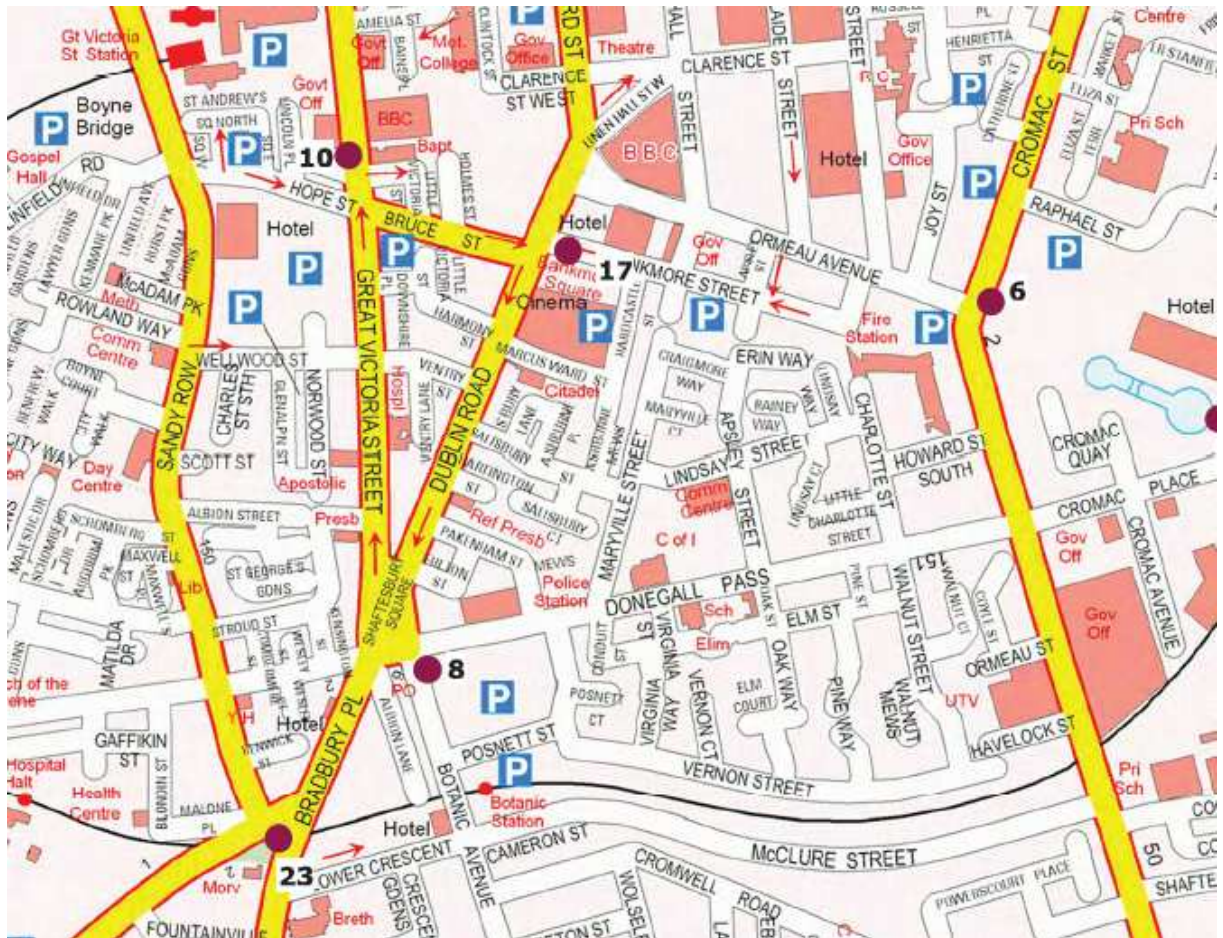
The Framework provides indicative development schemes for key sites in the study area. Whilst these are useful for showing the potential for sites in terms of massing it is important to consider the impact this can have on community expectations, particularly where no planning or viability assessments have been undertaken. In terms of the uses identified in for these sites greater clarity is needed on what is meant by 'specialist residential accommodation' and what type of cumulative impact certain uses can have. An oversupply of a particular use can result in detrimental impacts such as proliferation of hot food bars, to give one example, and the associated effects on environmental quality through fumes and litter. The Framework would benefit from an assessment of planned development for the sites identified as development opportunities.

The plan will need to consider identifying the responsible partners or delivery mechanisms and this will be important going forward in terms of ownership of proposals and managing expectations related to the short, medium and long term goals. Whilst the Council would support partnership the focus at local level must be to ensure that the right skills, organisations and structures are in place to deliver effective regeneration.

Whilst the Council is supportive of greening the city and introducing trees to help soften the urban landscape we understand the financial implications of such measures in terms of maintenance which is currently carried out by Transport NI.

In conclusion, the Council is generally supportive of what is a well intentioned plan however all such plans and proposed interventions must be considered as part of a wider context in which they sit. Given the planned transfer of regeneration powers to local councils in 2016 it is essential that the final version of this Framework is cognisant of the future planning and regeneration context that is on the horizon and as such any proposed interventions cannot come with any commitment of Council delivery.

Bike Share Locations



- 6- Gasworks (Cromac Street)
- 8- Botanic Avenue/ Shaftesbury Square
- 10- Great Victoria Street/ Hope Street
- 17- Bankmore Square/ Dublin Road
- 23- Bradbury Place

Appendix 2: South West Masterplan Gateway Area



Draft Belfast City Council response to the Southwest Gateway Masterplan

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Southwest Gateway Masterplan. In the response below we have set out some overarching comments in the context of Local Government Reform and the potential resourcing implications aligned to this before outlining specific comments on the draft plan.

The Council has been involved in the development of this plan through participation on the Board and as a substantial land owner in this area with land interests in the retail and commercial uses in the Boucher area but also parks and leisure interests given the proximity of the Olympia Leisure centre, Musgrave park, and the Boucher Playing Fields which are subject to some of the proposed interventions. Due to our land holdings and our existing plans for this area we would expect further engagement with the Council if this is further developed.

Whilst the Council is broadly supportive of the stated aim to strengthen the social and economic role of the study area by improving its environmental quality and connectivity, it is essential to consider not only the existing governance context but also the implications of Local Government Reform which will result in Belfast City Council becoming the planning authority for the city in April 2015 and becoming the regeneration authority for the City in April 2016 (and receiving DSD masterplans and development frameworks as part of this transfer).

Strategic Context

As part of its preparation for the transfer, the Council has compiled a baseline of DSD documents which comprise the broad operational / policy context for regeneration activity in the City Centre and wider neighbourhoods across the city.

These documents provide the regeneration policy context within which DSD (through BRO and BCCRD) currently deliver the transferring Urban Regeneration and Community Development function. These existing informal and formal policy instruments whilst not binding on the Council, could be used to inform future regeneration policy; contribute to the Local Development Plan (land use planning context); the Belfast Plan (community planning context) and the emerging City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan (an updated urban regeneration context for the city centre).

The draft South West Gateway Masterplan is one of this suite of documents. The Council will consider the potential implications for the emerging Council strategies and plans referred to above, as part of the work informing the transfer of Planning and Regeneration and Community Development, and the responsibility for the Council to prepare a Community Plan for Belfast.

The physical interventions proposed within this plan could have significant financial implications in the event of any commitment to these actions being delivered. It is essential that any proposed actions that can be delivered in advance of transfer of functions in 2016 are clearly identified and undertaken by the Department utilising existing budgets. Any interventions that lie beyond this timeframe should be set within the wider context of local government reform and recognise that financial implications associated with any proposals would not be binding on the Council.

Olympia leisure centre

The Council is investing £19m in the Olympia Regeneration project as part of a £105m capital investment in the leisure estate. The Olympia project is linked to the stadium redevelopment programme led by DCAL with the relevant sporting bodies. The Olympia Regeneration project

will create a sporting village incorporating a new building for leisure and community use located at the redeveloped Windsor Park stadium, accessed via a new attractive boulevard. Under these plans, the site where the centre is currently located would be redeveloped into a more attractive open space, forming part of the stadium entrance.

Public consultation carried out by the Council in 2013/14 sought input from the public on the potential facilities, layout and design of the Olympia Regeneration project but comments were also received on the wider area. Several of these comments from the public are pertinent to the DSD's Draft South West Gateway Masterplan's proposed strategic actions, and the key points are summarised as follows:

- Requests for closer **integration, connectivity and access** between the retail, residential and sporting environments in the Olympia/Boucher Road area
- Concerns from businesses and residents alike over **traffic congestion and parking** in the Olympia/Boucher Road area particularly around large scale events.
- Requests for **improvements to public transport** i.e. a new bus stop

The investments totalling over £50m at both Olympia and Windsor Park will result in high quality public realm and environmental improvements. Complementary activity in the surrounding area such as improved paving, planting and lighting could realise the potential 'sparkle effect' of the investments and inspire further development in the area.

It should be noted that while the Council is broadly supportive of the proposals in the plan they do not necessarily relate to Council priorities and should not commit the Council to implementing their plan or study findings.

The Actions

1. Positive Branding

The Council is generally supportive of this proposed action. The Boucher area could benefit from coordination of the assets which range from open space, industrial, business and retail uses and the new Windsor Park stadium and leisure development currently under construction. The area identified as the South West Gateway is more like a conglomeration of distinct areas insofar as the westerly elements including Kennedy Centre and Westwood shopping centre currently function as destinations in their own right and distinct from the Boucher road area. In this sense it will be challenging to unify these areas with a brand especially given that many uses are replicated in the areas e.g retail stores in Boucher retail park, Kennedy Centre and Westwood Centre.

2. Integrated Travel Plan

This action is closely linked with Action 3. It is not clear how the ambition to reduce congestion and car parking aligns with the ambition to increase car parking capacity. Greater pedestrian activity and reduced emissions would be welcomed for this area which is identified as an Air Quality Management Area due to the high levels of emissions including nitrogen dioxide. Efforts to reduce these emissions are generally supported and the plan could develop on the opportunities for greater sustainable travel and access from the surrounding areas.

3. Civic transport Interchanges

One of the main challenges for this area is congestion. Boucher Road, Stockmans Lane, Kennedy Way and this section of the Falls / Andersonstown Road. The areas adjacent to

the Southwest gateway contain excellent public transport links - the Lisburn Road is well served by Metro Bus and the Boucher area is constrained by the Belfast – Portadown rail line. The Western fringe of the study area is well served by Metro and Black Taxi services and will benefit from Bus Rapid transit in coming years. None of the existing provisions service the Boucher area in any meaningful way, nor does it connect the respective Boucher and western areas of the study area. The result of this being that it is difficult to use public transport to actually arrive at the main uses in the area – retail / commerce / open spaces. The challenge will be to connect the study area with the public transport opportunities on the edges. This could be better physical connections from existing rail halts such as Balmoral but particularly Adelaide or analysing opportunities / demand for bus services into and through the area.

4. Quality Pedestrian and Cycle Corridors

This again is linked with actions 2 and 3 in terms of an improved environment for pedestrians and cyclists will encourage a modal shift away from the private car and which in turn would reduce congestion levels and improve air quality. The open space and leisure opportunities lend themselves to active uses but currently the areas of Boucher Playing Fields, Musgrave Park, Olympia Leisure Centre all suffer from a lack of inter-connectivity. There are opportunities for improved movement generally and also for better signposting.

5. Quality Wild Life Corridors

Linking the environmental assets in the area could be beneficial not only in terms of biodiversity but also for achieving the aims of creating pedestrian and cycle corridors and the aspiration for Blackstaff Park.

6. Black Staff Park

The masterplan area has a number of open space and leisure assets in the ownership of Belfast City Council namely Olympia Leisure Centre, Boucher road Playing Fields, Musgrave Park and Falls Park on the western periphery. As mentioned previously there is merit in an approach that improves connectivity between the aforementioned open space / leisure assets, however, there are a number of considerable challenges with the concept of Blackstaff Park. The major concern is the deliverability of such a project in both financial and physical terms. The M1 is a major barrier to this suggested action and the physical challenge of spanning the motorway coupled with the current status of the waste water treatment facility results in major feasibility issues with this aspiration. If this is something that the final plan considers achievable in future then Council would be happy to engage further on how such a scheme may be progressed, however, detailed analysis of the funding options and other aspects of deliverability will be essential. There will be a need for engagement on potential use of park and on the types of active recreation space that may be created and the local demand for it.

Notwithstanding the earlier comments on the implications of LGR and future Council plans it should be noted that investments in Council's open space and leisure facilities are taken in the context of the wider Council budgets and specifically the ongoing city-wide Leisure Transformation Programme.

7. Landmark M1 Bridge

The Council is generally supportive of proposals that will encourage greater use of sustainable modes of transport. As with the comments above, the proposed bridge presents numerous challenges in terms of deliverability, feasibility and funding. The bridge would have a significant impact on our Boucher Playing fields which, as the plan acknowledges, has been used increasingly for a range of sporting/ leisure events. The

proposed bridge would also have implications for a range of commercial land uses on the western side of the M1 motorway, including our existing recycling centre. The lands located between our recycling centre and the Falls Road / Andersonstown Road have various planning permissions attached. The existing layout of these sites and the potential future layout are key considerations which will influence the deliverability of such a bridge. As with the previous action the masterplan could provide further analysis of how this might be achieved, identify the necessary stakeholders and offer analysis of the deliverability including funding opportunities.

8. Community Greenway

As with the previous actions on wildlife and pedestrian corridors the Council is broadly supportive of attempts to improve usage of the city's open spaces and environmental assets. Linking the open space assets in this part of the city to the broader area including Falls park, Bog meadows and other existing pedestrian and cycle routes will have a positive impact on the city and its residents.

9. Community Development

The Council is supportive of interventions that will help raise the skills level in our communities. The final plan should give further detail on the specific training programmes envisaged and how these link with existing training programmes carried out by Council and our partners. The final plan could consider how proposals for development could be linked to community development and support existing activities.

10. Proactive planning, design and management

The Council supports the action to take a proactive approach to planning and design for identified areas that will enable coordinated change to take place. Planning for areas such as the South West Gateway must be cognisant of the new place shaping powers coming to Council as part of LGR – Area Planning, community planning, and regeneration powers (transferring from DSD in 2016).

In conclusion, the Council is generally supportive of what is a well intentioned plan however all such plans and proposed interventions must be considered as part of the wider context in which they sit. Given the planned transfer of regeneration powers to local councils in 2016 it is essential that the final version of this masterplan is cognisant of the future planning and regeneration context that is on the horizon and as such any proposed interventions cannot come with any commitment of Council delivery.