

**WEST BELFAST PARTNERSHIP
BOARD**

**WEST BELFAST STRATEGIC
REGENERATION FRAMEWORK**

**FINAL REPORT
AUGUST 2008**

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Disclaimer

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Strategic Regeneration Framework and Implementation Plan (The SRF) will define West Belfast's needs and priorities in order to drive regeneration activity and investment over the next 10 years. The associated clear, shared and delivery focused Implementation Plan will guide public and private sector investment in West Belfast over the next three years.

Deloitte was commissioned by DSD, through the West Belfast Partnership to develop the SRF in conjunction with RPS in October 2007.

1.2 Purpose of the Strategic Regeneration Framework

By virtue of its social, physical and economic make-up, West Belfast has been the focus of many regeneration projects and initiatives, including most recently, Neighbourhood Renewal and the Renewing Communities programme. The area has also been the subject of a wealth of empirical and academic interest. Over the last few years West Belfast has begun to see an increase in private sector led regeneration activity, such as private housing and retail development.

Although there has been clear progress on a number of fronts, there has not been an overarching or shared vision for West Belfast that has captured the strategic linkages between public sector strategy and resource and private sector investment plans and that has inspired 'buy in' from individual communities.

The SRF is an opportunity to address this and to provide all stakeholders, including residents, with a holistic vision and statement of priorities and opportunities for the area, and importantly an integrated and sustainable plan for implementation for the short, medium and long term.

The SRF aims to:

- provide a strategic vision and context for guiding regeneration, planning and development;
- identify a portfolio of strategic regeneration activities which could be delivered by the public and private sector;
- set investment priorities for the area and influence future planning decisions;
- provide a clear, comprehensive plan for action;
- act as a marketing/procurement/planning tool; and
- link with existing and emerging policies, projects and initiatives.

The SRF is designed to complement the overarching vision for the city of Belfast and is also compatible with key government strategies at a city and Northern Ireland wide level.

It identifies, coordinates and prioritises opportunities for major development and investment. It also aims to demonstrate the benefits of enhancing and integrating initiatives in order to achieve a greater impact on the ground and to provide coherent sustainable development.

The SRF covers a wide range of themes including economic development, education, skills and training, physical and environmental design, housing and transport, in addition to issues concerning community and social regeneration.

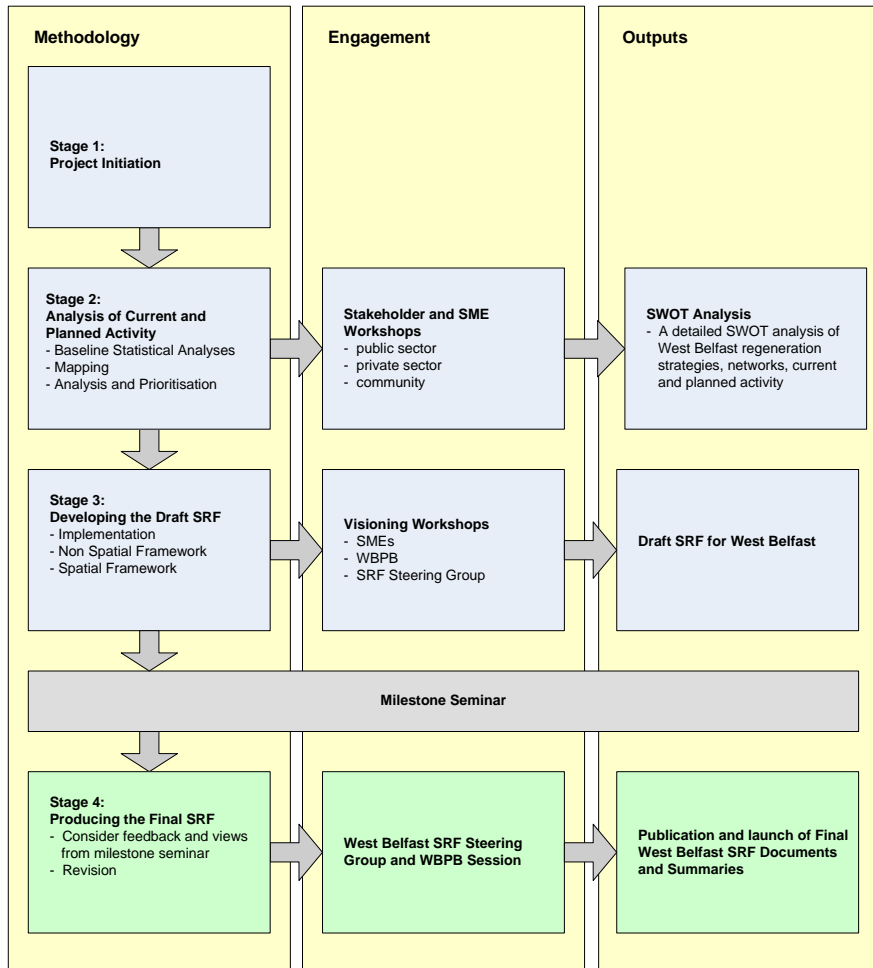
It is intended that the SRF will assist government departments and agencies to plan and coordinate activities and expenditure in order to meet the current and future Programme for Government (PfG) objectives. It will also inform the strategic plans and practice of a wide range of public sector partners, to include organisations such as Belfast City Council (BCC), Lisburn City Council, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Belfast Metropolitan College. The extent and impact of regeneration activity in West Belfast upon economic activity, investment and quality of life within communities will act as a measure of its success.

It is critical that the SRF has ownership within the public sector and amongst the people of West Belfast. It must also inspire and attract the investment potential of the private sector in order to realise its overarching vision.

1.3 Methodology

The development of the SRF commenced in October 2007 and ended in July 2008. Figure 1.1 provides a summary of the methodology undertaken to produce this document.

Figure: 1.1
SRF Methodology



1.4 Structure of the Report

The remainder of the SRF is structured as follows:

- Section 2: **Welcome to West Belfast** briefly profiles the area;
- Section 3: **What's on in West Belfast** provides an overview of the policy framework and key strategies that impact upon West Belfast;
- Section 4: **Need for Change** highlights key issues, strengths and challenges by theme;
- Section 5: **The Vision** presents the vision for West Belfast and the overarching strategic priorities;
- Section 6: details the framework for **Investment, Enterprise and Economic Development**;
- Section 7: presents the framework for **Employability, Education, Skills and Training**;
- Section 8: indicates the framework for **Physical, Environmental and Transportation**;
- Section 9: presents the framework for **Communities and Services**;
- Section 10: details physical enhancements for the **Character Areas**; and
- Section 11: **Making it Happen** details the proposed next steps in the regeneration of West Belfast.

The SRF is to be read in conjunction with the Implementation Plan which is contained within a separate document.

2. WELCOME TO WEST BELFAST

2.1 Introduction

West Belfast has changed considerably over the last few decades. Its streetscape and townscape have been evolving in response to population growth, changing business environments, improvements in the road network and the growing importance of urban green spaces to influence quality of life aspects for the community.

The geographical remit of the SRF is shown in Figure 2.1 below. The area takes in the Belfast Hills, running to the North West and the M1 motorway to the South East and spans a total of 3,358 hectares.

Figure: 2.1
Geographical Remit of SRF



Source: RPS/Deloitte

2.2 Neighbourhoods

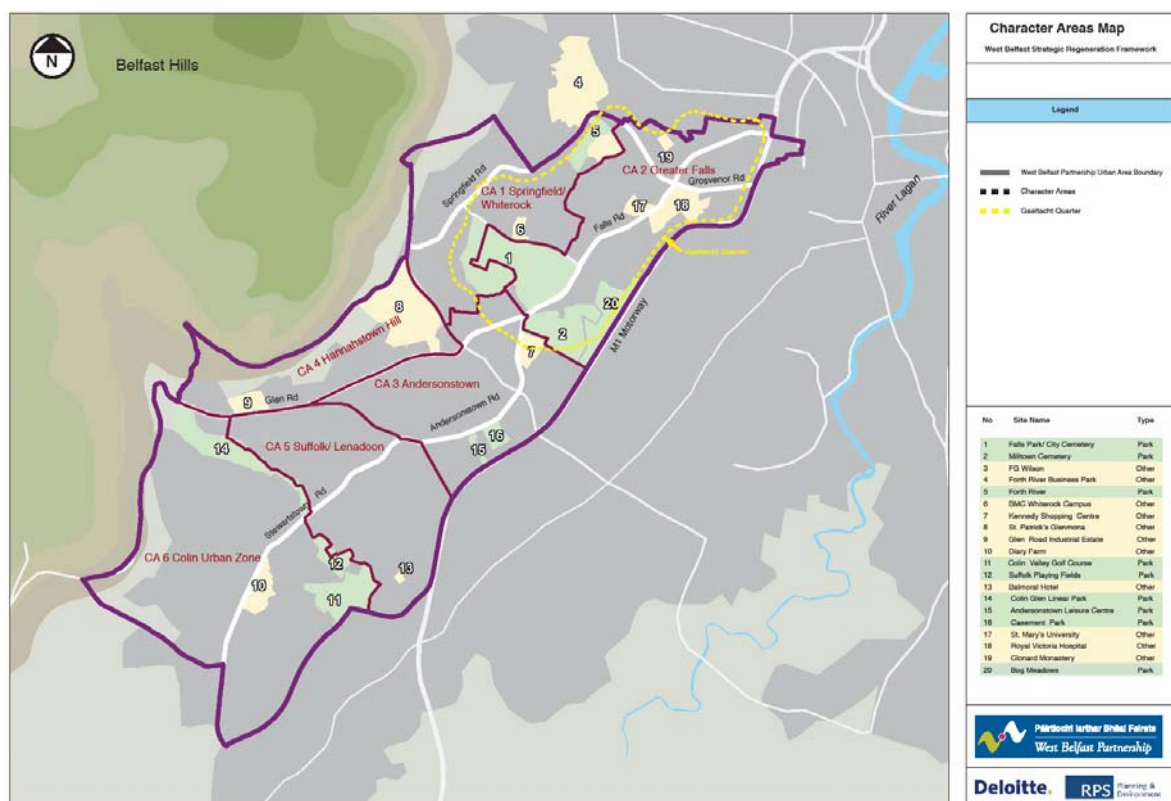
The SRF area predominately falls within the BCC area and includes the eleven electoral wards of Andersonstown, Beechmount, Clonard, Falls, Falls Park, Glen Road, Glencolin, Ladybrook, Upper Springfield, and Whiterock. A proportion of the study area also lies within Lisburn City Council area and includes the electoral wards of Collin Glen, Kilwee, Poleglass and Twinbrook.

For the purpose of the current study we have defined neighbourhood areas which are loosely based around the BCC Strategic Neighbourhood Area Planning (SNAP) and BRO Neighbourhood Renewal boundaries. These are as follows:

- Upper Springfield/Whiterock;
- Greater Falls;
- Andersonstown;
- Suffolk/Lenadoon;
- Hannahstown Hill; and
- Colin.

The approach will give us a more detailed understanding of the localised needs and characteristics of the area. It will also link in with the prioritisation and actions determined at neighbourhood level. These are illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Figure: 2.2
Character Areas Map



Source: RPS/Deloitte

2.3 Open Spaces



West Belfast is encapsulated by the Belfast Hills (left). These provide remarkable views both into and out of the area. From the peaks of the Hills, one can view other areas throughout Belfast, as far as Castlereagh, Cavehill, Belfast Lough and beyond.

Much of the study area is based within the Belfast/Lisburn Landscape Character Area. Belfast and Lisburn lie within the lowland basin of the River Lagan which is enclosed by steep ridges and escarpments with elevated views over urban areas from the surrounding escarpment slopes.

There are many open spaces throughout the study area, ranging from walkways and parks to landscaped gardens. Examples include Lagmore and Collin Glen linear parks, Lenadoon Millennium Park and Springfield Park.

At 47 acres, Bog Meadows is the largest piece of natural wild land remaining within the urban area of Belfast. It is a UNESCO award winning nature reserve, in recognition for the role the site plays in the positive contact between people and wildlife.

These open spaces provide a sense of natural character to the area and are a valuable link with the urban landscape. Indeed, West Belfast benefits from a distinctive position - with accessible rural landscapes and natural beauty within a short distance of urban life.

Local landmarks create recognisable elements in the West Belfast skyline and compliment the strong sense of identity and place which the area summons. There are a variety of distinctive buildings, particularly those of civic status, towers and statues.

Some examples along the Falls Road are the Divis Tower (right), Bobby Sands Mural, and St Peter's Cathedral. Along Grosvenor and Broadway, the Royal Victoria Hospital and the nurse's accommodation provide instantly recognisable landmarks marking the entrance to West Belfast. Further into West Belfast, Casement Park, the Bass Brewery, Divis Mountain and St Mary's University all provide structures of visual interest.



Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) have designated Falls Park and Dunville Park as valuable features of built heritage, to be protected from all development which would harm their historic character.

2.4 Housing

The predominant land use in the area is residential housing. There is a mix of both private and social housing, including group Traveller housing, with higher densities of housing closer to the city centre (e.g. lower Falls) and more suburban densities towards the Hills and outer study area (e.g. Poleglass and Lagmore).

The influx of private developments and investment into the area has increased rapidly over the past 10-15 years. As a result, large tracts of vacant and derelict land and buildings have been redeveloped to regenerate the urban fabric, particularly along the Suffolk Road, Glen Road, Andersonstown Road and Falls Road.

This development process has yielded a substantial growth in the production of apartment developments, either singularly or as part of a mixed typology developments. There has also been an increase in the redevelopment of some of the former Mills for residential use. One such example is the former William Ross Mill in Clonard. Proposals are also being brought forward for the Peter Pan complex.

2.5 Industrial land use

There has been a gradual decline in heavy industry. This was once a rich source of employment for local people. Existing industrial facilities mainly provide employment and business resources for the West Belfast populations, focusing on general employment, light and heavy industrial uses.

There is a variety of Local Enterprise and Business Parks in the vicinity and the Kennedy Way area is one example of expanding industrial development. The Springvale/Forth River sites also have the potential to provide a mixture of business, education and community facilities, however is considerably under utilised at present. The area has significant potential to provide additional floor space for education and employment over the next 10-15 years. There are good linkages to the M1, and there is potential to develop public transport facilities in the area to enhance its attractiveness to investors.



There are many other sites which provide smaller localised employment facilities, for business and community and uses. For example, the Conway Mill (left) is a former industrial Mill building located to the rear of the Conway Industrial Estate. It has been partially redeveloped to provide offices and small business units for independent employers, as well as community and cultural uses. There are also plans to expand business support to social economy projects at Work West.

2.6 Community

Northern Ireland benefits from a variety of active community groups, with community-based structures being particularly dense in many of the most disadvantaged areas. Living through thirty years of conflict appears to have drawn the residents of West Belfast together and it is perceived to be an area with a strong community infrastructure.

The resident population of the SRF area is 74,490, representing 27 per cent of the total population of Belfast. The area experienced a population decrease of 1.4 per cent between 2001 and 1991, in line with that of Belfast as a whole. At ward level, seven out of 13 wards saw a decrease in terms of population. The largest decreases were in Collin Glen (-34 per cent) and in Kilwee (-26 per cent), whereas the largest increase took place in Twinbrook (+26 per cent).

Over the years there has been a gradual shift in terms of the age profile, with a decrease in the percentage of the population aged under 16 and a subsequent increase in both the 16-59 age group and those aged over 60 years. This reflects the steady fall in the number of births in the area. However it is important to note that in spite of this decrease, West Belfast continues to experience the highest number of births in Northern Ireland and has a younger than average population.

People living in the area are predominately from a Catholic community background, representing 96 per cent of the population. Suffolk, based within the SRF area, is a small Protestant community of 350 houses and a population of about 1,000 which is surrounded by Catholic communities.

The Traveller community is one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland. The majority of Travellers in West Belfast remain concentrated within the main Traveller sites based within the wards of Upper Springfield, Glen Road and Glen Collin. The remaining are located in non-site accommodation. Two group housing schemes are now being piloted on the Monagh Road and on the Glen Road, which had previously been unofficial sites. The first phase has been completed on the Glen Road.

Local area knowledge suggests that residents from minority ethnic backgrounds are increasing. These residents are mostly living in the Beechmount, Cavendish and St. James areas in addition to areas surrounding the Royal Victoria Hospital and St. Mary's University College.

In close proximity to the urban density of West Belfast and the city centre, there is also a rural community, with a long standing farming tradition in settlements surrounding the Belfast Hills.

2.7 Culture and the Arts

The resurgence of the Irish language is a key feature of the cultural landscape of the West Belfast area. In the SRF area, knowledge of Irish is higher than amongst the NI population in general with 27 per cent of people having some knowledge of the language. The development of the Irish language in the area has been supported by the establishment of a Gaeltacht Quarter and the growth in Irish medium education. West Belfast is also home to various sources of Irish language media, including Raidió Fáilte and Lá Nua, which also have a prominent role to play in the promotion of the Irish language.



West Belfast has a vibrant arts community which is an important element of the cultural fabric. Several community bodies and facilities based within the area provide support to those participating in the arts. Situated within the Gaeltacht area of West Belfast, Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich (artist's impression left) provides a centre for artistic activities and houses several arts and media projects. Its

resident theatre company, Aisling Ghéar is the only professional theatre company which performs drama through the Irish language medium. An Cultúrlann also plays host to regular traditional Irish dance events such as Céilí dances. According to NITB statistics¹, An Cultúrlann attracted 50,000 visitors in 2006 alone.



In West Belfast, the arts are often used as a means of improving community relations through conveying different cultures and traditions in a positive and inclusive environment. For example, one of the most widely recognised musical events in the area, Fèile an Phobail (left), was established in 1988.

Its main event, the August Fèile is the largest community festival in Europe. As a result of its success, Fèile an Phobail has grown from a one week festival to a year round programme which aims to bring the benefits of the arts to all, regardless of social background.

2.8 Tourist Attractions

Northern Ireland has been slow to develop its tourist industry in line with other areas of the UK and ROI. However there has been substantial growth in the overall number of visits to Northern Ireland with 1.9 million visitors in 2006, representing a 53 per cent increase on 1994.

Belfast has also experienced an associated rise in tourism activity, with Belfast City Council reporting a six per cent increase in visitors in 2006. There were a total of 1,186,000 overnight visitors in Belfast in 2006, spending a total of £151.3 million.

¹ NITB (2006) – Survey of Visitor Attractions

West Belfast has the potential to take advantage of the general increase in tourism activity in Belfast as a whole. West Belfast has a plethora of tourist attractions which attract interest from around the world including St. Peter's Cathedral, Clonard Monastery, Fèile an Phobail, Milltown and City Cemeteries, Divis Mountain and Colin Glen Forest Park.



During recent decades, mural painting has developed into one of the most powerful media for symbolic expression and political statement in Northern Ireland. One of the most extensive collections of mural art (left) can be found within the Gaeltacht Quarter of West Belfast. Here, murals are used to give a snapshot of historical events, to convey political ideas, to display historical role models of the area and to express the sentiments of the area's residents regarding the Northern Ireland conflict.

Several tourism organisations now offer tours of these murals and their associated history. These include Black Taxi Tours and Coiste na nIarchimí who offer tours led by republican ex-prisoners through the political history of West Belfast. Coiste also offers joint tours with loyalist groups.

These attractions have the potential to generate significant economic benefit for the area. For example, an Economic Impact Study carried out in 2000 revealed that Fèile an Phobail contributed £3.3 million to the Belfast economy, with £1.3 million of this concentrated in West Belfast over the ten days of the August Fèile. The Fèile now has had a more substantial economic impact than was originally estimated.

2.9 Leisure and Retail Facilities



There are many leisure facilities throughout the SRF area ranging from playing fields to leisure centres. Casement Park (left) is a large stadium located in the heart of Andersonstown, catering for 32,000 people. It is the home grounds for the Antrim GAA and hurling teams hosting many championship games, as well as a number of smaller clubs. It received funding several years ago to

upgrade and improve its facilities, including new floodlighting.

Other popular leisure facilities within the area include the new modern facilities at the Falls Leisure Centre, Andersonstown Leisure Centre and Beechmount Leisure Centre and the new third generation playing field at the Grosvenor Recreation Centre. Facilities available at these centres include public swimming pools, fitness suites, football facilities, badminton courts and indoor hurling facilities.



West Belfast also has a varied provision of retail facilities ranging from large scale multiples to small local independent retailers. There are four main shopping centres in West Belfast, providing a variety of food and comparison goods. The Kennedy Centre is located on the Falls Road and is considered by many to be the largest and most vibrant shopping area with a wide catchment area. It has over twenty individual retail units which are fully let to a range of independent and franchise traders. These units are high in

demand, and as such the vacancy rates are low.

In addition, there are a number of other pockets of retailing scattered throughout the area, serving a variety of catchments and functions. There are also traditional shopping areas located in specific areas throughout West Belfast which are well established and attract a loyal customer base.

3. WHAT'S ON IN WEST BELFAST

3.1 Introduction

Five SRFs (North, South, East, West and Greater Shankill) for the Belfast area have been commissioned via the respective Belfast Area Partnerships and as such the current document plays a fundamental role within the wider Northern Ireland and city-wide strategic context, vision and priorities.

3.2 Northern Ireland Regeneration

The Programme for Government (PFG) sets out the Northern Ireland Executive's strategic priorities for 2008-2011. This has been used to determine the Budget and Investment Strategy. Together, these documents demonstrate how Government will allocate resources and capital investment in support of agreed overarching priorities for Northern Ireland.

3.3 Programme for Government 2008-2011

The overarching aim of the PFG is:

“to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland, with respect for the rule of law and where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in years to come”

The priority SRF developed to address key social, economic and environmental challenges shown in Figure 3.1:

Figure: 3.1
PfG Priority Framework



Growing the economy is Government's top priority and this will be underpinned by two cross-cutting themes:

- a better future with a focus on fairness, inclusion and equality of opportunity; and
- an emphasis on developing sustainable societies and economic activity.

The subsequent 23 Public Service Agreements (PSAs) illustrate a greater focus on working together to achieve cross-cutting themes. The targets and actions set out in the PSAs will provide the framework by which performance against the PfG will be monitored and measured.

3.4 Northern Ireland Executive Budget 2008-2011

The Executive's Budget for 2008 to 2011 places a clear emphasis on regeneration, and economic regeneration in particular. The Budget has increased allocations to DEL and DETI in order to promote economic growth and the development of a skilled, innovative and productive economy. In addition, the Budget provides for capital investment in new public sector infrastructure exceeding £2 billion a year by 2010-2011. This will support an ambitious programme of investment in hospitals, schools, housing, roads, public transport and other public services.

3.5 Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2008-2010

The Investment Strategy sets out the framework of priority areas for investment and is intended to assist government and the private sector to plan ahead to deliver Northern Ireland's largest ever investment programme, as guided by the objectives of the PfG. Over the next three years around £6 billion of new infrastructure will be delivered in order to address a legacy of previous under-investment.

Future infrastructure investment will be taken forward under six pillars that will help to join up the plans of government departments and other stakeholders to avoid duplication and recognise opportunities to maximise outcomes by working together. The Investment Framework is summarised in Figure 3.2.






Figure: 3.2






Investment Framework



3.6 The Role of Government Departments

Each Department has a role to play in delivering the priorities outlined under PfG:

Department	Responsibility	Key Policies Supporting Regeneration
	<p>Urban regeneration; Community and voluntary sector development; Social legislation; Housing; and Social security benefits, pensions and child support.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy to close the gaps between quality of life in the most deprived areas and the rest of society Around £10m of expenditure in West Belfast</p> <p>Renewing Communities Government action plan to present a framework for tackling disadvantage by addressing individual, family and community issues</p> <p>West Belfast Housing Strategy Action Plan for housing supply and regeneration £202.8m allocated for housing regeneration in the area</p>
	<p>Health and Social Care including policy and legislation for hospitals, family practitioner services and community health and personal social services; Public Health covering policy, legislation and administrative action to protect the health of the population; and Public Safety covering policy and legislation for Fire and Rescue Services</p>	<p>Investing for Health Strategy Strategy to encourage the healthy lifestyles of people in Northern Ireland</p> <p>New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs 2006-2011 (NSDAD) Strategy to address alcohol and drug abuse</p> <p>Promoting Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008 Aims to promote mental and emotional health</p>
	<p>Supporting Ministers and the institutions of government; Building a programme for government and modernising government programme; Promoting better community relations, a culture of equality and rights; and Targeting social need and promoting social inclusion.</p>	<p>First Steps Towards Sustainability Strategy Places an emphasis on the sustainability of economic development and regeneration</p> <p>Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy Works towards reducing poverty and social exclusion amongst individuals, families and communities</p> <p>Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy Works towards improving community relations in Northern Ireland and to promote a 'culture of tolerance'</p>
	<p>Economic policy development; Energy, mineral development, tourism, health and safety at work, Companies Registry, Insolvency Service, consumer affairs and labour market and economic statistics service; and Ensuring the provision of the infrastructure for a modern economy.</p>	<p>Economic Vision for Northern Ireland Sets out the direction for economic policy based on the following priorities: innovation; enterprise; skills; and infrastructure</p> <p>Regional Innovation Strategy Aims to develop and maintain a world class infrastructure for research in Northern Ireland</p>
	<p>Enhancing the provision of learning and skills; Increasing the level of research and development, creativity and innovation in the Northern Ireland economy; Helping individuals to acquire jobs, including self employment, and improving the linkages between employment programmes and skills development; and The development and the maintenance of the framework of employment rights and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland Aims to improve opportunities for adults to update their essential skills of numeracy, literacy, and ICT. Focus on demand driven training.</p> <p>Essential Skills Gives people the opportunity to develop their basic numeracy and literacy skills</p> <p>New Deal Targets those with identified skills barriers to employment</p>

Department	Responsibility	Key Policies Supporting Regeneration
	Regional planning; Transportation strategy; Ports and Public transport; Roads and water policy; and Providing and maintaining roads.	Regional Development Strategy Framework to guide the future development of NI to 2025 Regional Transportation Strategy 2002 to 2012 Aims to develop a modern, sustainable transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment
	Protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment; Land use planning; and Improve and promote road safety and the regulation of drivers, vehicles and operators.	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) Provides a planning framework for the Council areas of Belfast City, Lisburn, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Newtownabbey and North Down.
	Policy and legislation in pre-school, primary, post-primary and secondary education; Youth Service; Promoting community relations between and within schools; and Teacher education and salaries	Revised Curriculum Emphasis on providing greater links between education and the world of work Schools Improvement Initiative Comprehensive strategy to raise standards in schools Extended Schools Initiative Targets schools in the most disadvantaged areas £70m committed in the past four years
	Arts and creativity, museums, libraries and sport; Inland waterways and inland fisheries; Linguistic diversity; Public records; and Advising on National Lottery distribution.	Re-imaging Communities Replacing divisive images and murals with works of community arts £3m funding over three years
	Promoting sustainable economic growth and development of the countryside; and Assisting the competitive development of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors of the economy.	Rural Strategy 2007-13 Provides a broad strategic context for rural policy in Northern Ireland Aims to diversify the rural economy, protect the rural environment and sustain rural communities.

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3.7 City-Wide Regeneration

Belfast is emerging from a long period of decline and over the past ten years there has been a marked increase in the levels of investment and growth within the city. Indeed, Belfast has attracted an estimated £2 billion in investment since 1994, including a large amount of private sector investment in hotels, offices and entertainment venues.

However, despite recent growth and increases in prosperity, it is widely recognised that Belfast has key problems which need to be addressed. Several initiatives have been launched in order to address these. BCC's State of the City research series has highlighted evidence of Belfast's underlying competitive weaknesses related to the following:

- strategic decision-making capacity: Belfast has been described as an over-governed city with an absence of a single accountable body;
- urban economy: The city needs to develop new industries in order to generate employment for disadvantaged communities;
- innovation: Belfast has been described as over-relying on the public sector and there is a need to embrace new businesses and ideas;
- failing city centre: Although there has been an increase in activity, it is apparent that stronger retail and residential offerings need to be developed;
- problems with planning: Planning process has been described as very slow and the level of development has been a challenge;
- working with the region: Focused efforts are required to strengthen Belfast in its core city role;
- transport: It has been identified that there needs to be increased public transport access to the city centre;
- neighbourhoods: Many communities have not benefited from increasing prosperity elsewhere; and
- quality of life: Belfast must offer a rich quality of life if it wants to attract highly skilled, talented people to live and work.

3.8 Belfast Regeneration Office

DSD manages the regeneration strategy for the renewal and development of the most deprived areas in and around Belfast. Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) takes the lead on behalf of government in coordinating a collaborative approach to the regeneration of Belfast. It works in partnership with Government Departments and Agencies, BCC, local Area Partnerships and individual stakeholders from the private, voluntary and community sectors.

BRO has a role in assisting with physical regeneration across the city, particularly in brokering change across a range of issues (e.g. employment, education, health, infrastructure, access to services, community safety) that affect the standards of living and quality of lives of the people who live and work in the areas of greatest need.

The five Belfast Area Partnerships were formed with support from BRO (and previously from Making Belfast Work). Each Partnership has a wide membership comprising Councillors, local community representatives, private sector representatives and observers drawn from the key public agencies. The Area Partnerships have a central role in taking forward a targeted urban regeneration strategy for Belfast.

3.9 Belfast City Council

Although DSD has the statutory remit for regeneration, BCC has sought to consolidate the Council's position as civic leader for regeneration. Changes in legislation have allowed the Council to become more strategically involved in regeneration and development activities over the last ten years.

Following the implementation of the Review of Public Administration (RPA), it is envisaged that local government will be responsible for a wider range of services including planning, local roads, urban regeneration and some housing services. In addition, it will have the power to influence many more through the council-led community planning process.

BCC's plans for regenerating the city are presented out in The Belfast Masterplan². The Masterplan is described by BCC as being a first step towards producing a single, comprehensive development strategy for the city. The Masterplan segments the city into a 'centre city' and a 'middle zone', with the 'centre city' characterised by economic dynamism and the 'middle zone' being the area where regeneration strategy has an impact on the quality of life of its residents.

Recommendations for spatial planning of the city are as follows:

- **An Energised Core:** defined as the area between Queen's University, Belfast Harbour, the Westlink and the fringes of residential development in the east;
- **A Connected Middle City:** where transport, local indigenous job creation and environmental improvement projects improve the access of communities to economic opportunities and facilities;
- **Integrated Neighbourhood Renewal:** representing an overall strategic approach to improve each sector in the context of the wider city model;
- **Environmental Assets:** developing a series of projects to utilise the city's natural assets; and
- **City Presentation:** delivering quality urban design in order to create a positive impression of the city.

The Masterplan recognises that the opportunities within the city centre are interdependent on the integration of the wider city region in order to maximise potential, and therefore that a shared vision for Belfast is required.

² Belfast City Council (2004) Belfast: The Masterplan 2004 - 2020

3.10 West Belfast Regeneration

The West Belfast and Greater Shankill Taskforces were established by government and the Area Partnerships with the aim of bringing forward recommendations to reduce unemployment and poverty in the two areas. A joint report, published in 2002, identified over 150 recommendations around the themes of employability, education and training, entrepreneurship, social economy, infrastructure and planning and cultural economy.

Eight critical priorities stemming from these themes were highlighted as follows:

- removing the Benefits Trap: removing or reducing disincentives within the social security system;
- setting up the Employment Services Board: to allow and encourage people to be better prepared for available jobs and to seek cooperation of employers in the placement of suitable candidates;
- regeneration of the former Mackie's site (Forth River Business Park): to attract and locate incoming investment and provide units for local enterprises;
- Springvale Educational Campus: to agree a clear role for Springvale taking account of educational and vocational needs;
- Arc/Zone of Enterprise Development: defined areas should be earmarked for commercial and industrial development;
- BMAP: need for a local area plan to influence land use, planning and arterial roads;
- retailing: need for an active urban regeneration policy to sustain and modernise the presence of local retailing; and
- Enterprise Development: launch of a re-invigorated enterprise awareness campaign and a more supportive and coherent approach to local business assistance.

Significant developments which have been progressed by the Government under these initial recommendations include the establishment of the Employment Services Board (ESB), The Enterprise Council and The Employers Forum. West Belfast and Greater Shankill Partnerships have a role in working towards the implementation of the Taskforce recommendations.

3.11 Integrated Area Based Strategy

The West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces' area is one of the three pilot areas to benefit from the Integrated Development Fund (IDF). In order to access this fund, each area was required to draw up an integrated area strategy combining the efforts of local communities, councils, Government Departments, statutory bodies, and Local Strategic Partnerships with the aim of supporting an integrated approach to the development of area-based initiatives.

With many of the recommendations from the original Task Forces report not addressed, the Task Forces developed a specific regeneration strategy in order to address the common social and economic agenda, the cultural and creative sector, education and training and enterprising communities. The vision underpinning the strategy is:

“that by 2008 the Task Force areas will be recognised locally as a centre for economic, social and cultural development and internationally as an example of best practice in addressing a common social and economic agenda”

The following strategic objectives were identified:

- Economic Regeneration: to achieve levels of economic activity on a par with regional and national levels;
- Common Social and Economic Agenda: to establish a social and economic agenda reflected in quality of life, mobility and opportunities for meaningful employment for all citizens;
- Cultural and Creative Sector: pro-actively support the development of initiatives which can give meaningful expression to the culture of the area;
- Education and Training: develop a sustainable infrastructure which meets the needs of growing communities; and
- Enterprising Communities: support neighbourhoods to become active and vibrant areas where people want to live, work and invest.

In order to deliver these objectives, 17 bids were made to the Integrated Development Fund including education and employability projects. Resources available for the project total £21.7m from IDF funding sources. In addition, two significant projects were progressed without any application to the IDF including the redevelopment of the Forth River Business Park and the Targeted (Employment) Initiatives programme sponsored by DEL.

The Task Forces, in their subsequent 2007 Strategic Review stated that after a promising start, progress against the Integrated Area Based Strategy has been disappointing. Although the majority of projects have been implemented, progress has been extremely slow and in some cases has come to a standstill. Overall, it was noted that the projects lacked the scale and impact envisaged in the original reports and taken together do not address the problems of unemployment and poverty in West Belfast.

Specifically, much attention has been given to the progress of the Forth River business park. Although £12.1m has been invested in the project by Invest NI largely through developing infrastructure, the sites are still vacant and there is little activity apparent within the park. This has caused an element of frustration within the local community. Invest NI have highlighted that the serviced sites are now being actively marketed and that there has been an amount of interest in the sites. Given demand trends for other parks within the area and the proximity of the site to the city centre, Invest NI expect that interest will grow within the next two to three years. Invest NI are currently conducting a consultation exercise in order to gather local suggestions as to potential uses for the park.

3.12 Localised Activity

There are many programmes and initiatives working locally throughout West Belfast in order to deliver regeneration activity at a grass roots level. A key strategy aimed at delivering regeneration activity locally is the Government's "People and Place, A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal". This strategy was designed to help close the gap between the quality of life for people in Northern Ireland's most deprived neighbourhoods and the quality of life of the rest of society.

Neighbourhood Renewal sets out four interlinking strategic objectives:

- Community Renewal – to develop confident communities that are able and committed to improving the quality of life in the most deprived neighbourhoods;
- Economic Renewal – to develop economic activity in the most deprived neighbourhoods and connect them to the wider urban economy;
- Social Renewal – to improve social conditions for the people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods through better co-ordinated public services and the creation of safer environments; and
- Physical Renewal – to help create attractive, safe and sustainable environments in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

A key element of the strategy is the identification of Neighbourhood Partnerships in each Neighbourhood Renewal area, to drive local planning and implementation. Neighbourhood Partnerships have played a key role in improving the quality of life in the most deprived areas of West Belfast. These have provided support to community development projects and workers over a number of years. Neighbourhood Renewal is also designed to deliver a number of area based strategies such as Health Action Zone (HAZ), Arterial Routes Plans and Sectoral Housing Strategies for West Belfast. Other initiatives specifically aimed at supporting the development of children and young people include Sure Start and Extended Schools.

West Belfast also has a number of areas that are supported by the Local Community Fund (Andersonstown, Falls Park and Ladybrook). This aims to develop community capacity in areas suffering high levels of disadvantage, specifically within the most 11 to 20 per cent most deprived communities as defined by NIMDM.

3.13 The Role of the SRF

Regeneration activity is therefore underway in various forms at a national, regional and local level. At a national level, the PfG and associated spending programme will provide clear opportunities for West Belfast on the basis of the area's high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Indeed the PfG has indicated its support for the aims and objectives of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Force reviews. However there is a need to link central and local Government initiatives and spending power with private sector investment in order to maximise area wide benefits. It is important that there is a focused implementation plan and delivery mechanism at a local level.

The West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Force Strategic Review is supportive of the concept of the development of the SRFs for West Belfast and Greater Shankill as this complements their overarching recommendation for an area-based approach to regeneration according to local needs. It is recommended that the SRF should provide an overall strategy for West Belfast which is an ambitious and exciting physical development programme reflecting the high aspirations of the community.

The SRF acts as a vehicle for a number of strategic priorities and related opportunities presented within the original Taskforce reports and highlights additional current and future opportunities whilst corresponding to the Neighbourhood Renewal themes of social, physical, community and economic regeneration.

4. THE NEED FOR CHANGE

4.1 Introduction

This section provides a snapshot of identified needs and challenges across West Belfast using data obtained from a variety of statistical sources (see Phase 1 Baseline Report for more detail), Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans and thematic workshops with community, public and private sector representatives. It is also important that the regeneration of West Belfast builds upon the existing strengths and opportunities which the area has to offer. Information is presented according to the following inter-related themes:

- Enterprise, Investment and Economic Development;
- Employability, Education, Skills and Training;
- Community Cohesion and Renewal;
- Social Regeneration; and
- Physical Environment.

A summary of the overarching strengths and challenges is provided at the end of each theme.

4.2 Enterprise, Investment and Economic Development

West Belfast will benefit significantly from economic development. The area has a relatively youthful population who have the potential to contribute significantly to the local economy, given adequate training and employment opportunities. It is located in close proximity to the city centre and Belfast International Airport, offering accessibility for major employers and other business visitors. It also benefits from a unique cultural product, in the Irish language, providing the opportunity to generate significant revenue from tourism activities and as an economic driver.

However, The Framework area faces significant challenges related to preparing for, creating and accessing employment. There are high levels of income, employment, and education deprivation in the area, which has perpetuated the lack of inward investment and negatively affected the overall quality of life of the resident population.

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) ranks wards in terms of a number of statistical indicators across the areas of health, education, employment, income, proximity to services, crime and disorder and living environment. In terms of the domain for income deprivation, ten of the wards in the SRF area fall within the top 10 per cent of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland in terms of income. A similar picture emerges for employment deprivation with 11 of the 15 wards in the SRF area being amongst the most deprived in Northern Ireland (i.e.73 per cent).

The concentration of economic deprivation is highest in the Falls and Whiterock areas. These areas rank first and fourth respectively in the most income deprived areas in Northern Ireland and circa 40 per cent of their populations are considered employment deprived. The issues behind these high levels of economic deprivation are considered as follows:

4.2.1 Low Levels of Economic Activity

West Belfast has historically suffered from low levels of economic activity. The latest census figures state that 49.2 per cent of working age adults in the SRF area are economically inactive, compared to 37.7 per cent for Northern Ireland as a whole.

This is perpetuated by relatively high levels of unemployment. Although numbers claiming unemployment benefits have declined from 14.1 per cent to 6.1 per cent between 1996 and 2004, the proportion of working age adults seeking job related benefits remains high in comparison to the Belfast (4.1 per cent) and NI (2.8 per cent) average. The SRF area also has a higher proportion of long term unemployed (i.e. those claiming unemployment benefits for longer than 12 months) than across Belfast and NI. Additionally, 1.6 per cent of working age adults in the SRF area are long term unemployed, compared with 0.9 per cent across Belfast and 0.6 per cent across NI. Long term unemployment is particularly challenging as the longer a person is out of the labour market the less likely they will be to gain employment often due to mismatched skills.

However, benefit statistics only capture part of the picture of the number of adults without employment in the area. A relatively high proportion of people are also outside the labour market due to looking after the home/family or permanent sickness/disability.

Furthermore, there are fewer people of working age in the area compared to the rest of Belfast, meaning that a lower proportion of the population has the potential to be economically active.

4.2.2 Limited Employment Opportunities

West Belfast has lower levels of business concentration than other parts of the city and experiences low levels of business start-up, self-employment and entrepreneurship. According to Experian data on businesses, West Belfast has the lowest level of business concentration in Belfast with 1,817 businesses operating within the area. This relates to 18 per cent of all businesses based in Belfast, compared to equivalent figures of 21, 25 and 36 per cent for East, North and South Belfast respectively. This is perpetuated by a relatively low level of business start ups compared to other areas of Belfast, with 13 per cent of all business start ups in the Greater Belfast area.

In terms of sectoral analysis, the wholesale and retail category is the largest category by number of businesses, making up over one in four businesses in West Belfast. West Belfast is also over-represented with regard to the manufacturing sector which make-up approximately 10 per cent of business in the area. In a changing work environment where service sectors are growing and traditional manufacturing sectors are in decline, communities in West Belfast may be disproportionately vulnerable to the widespread trend of job losses. In the SRF area, there are fewer people employed within managerial and professional occupations (13.6 per cent) and a higher proportion of people employed within administrative, sales and customer service and elementary occupations (46.7 per cent) in comparison to the Belfast and Northern Ireland average. This means the population do not have the spending power to sufficiently support their local businesses and this does little to encourage business start-ups and investment.

The resulting low base of businesses presents immediate barriers to employment because it means that for a large proportion of the community they must travel outside the area for employment. With low levels of car ownership and poor public transport connectivity to other areas in the city and beyond, this presents accessibility and cost issues for many.

4.2.3 Struggle to Attract Inward Investment

West Belfast has experienced significant problems in attracting inward investment. This can largely be attributed to the tendency of firms in the high growth sectors (such as Information Technology, Finance and Services) to seek out a highly educated workforce. This has the potential to act as a barrier to investment as these firms are not attracted to the traditional labour markets such as that of the SRF area. Investment in these high growth sectors are likely to be based within Major Employment Locations (MEL) highlighted in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP). West Belfast has not been allocated MEL status.



Existing industrial facilities within the study area include Kennedy Way Industrial Estate, Kilwee Industrial Estate, and the Glen Road Industrial Estate / Work West (left). These areas provide employment and business resources for the West Belfast population. High profile tenants of these sites include FG Wilson, Delta Print and Packaging, Andor, APT and Diffusion Antibodies. However there seems to be a discrepancy with regards

to the availability of accommodation for business use. Many LEAs are full to capacity with small local businesses. However, the larger industrial units appear to have long-term vacancies. Sites that are experiencing long-term vacancies include Springvale, Whiterock, and Glen Bank.

Although West Belfast lays claim to significant amounts of industrial development land at several sites, there is a perception that no substantial progress has been made in providing jobs / opportunities for local residents. There are apparent difficulties in supporting successful local businesses to move onto the next level. This is related to restrictions with regards to office development (under 2,000 sq ft) which discourages a better mix of office and industrial employment.

4.2.4 Lack of Incentives for Investors

Ultimately new business creation will come from entrepreneurs who see an opportunity to create personal wealth. Despite being an area experiencing high levels of deprivation there are few incentives provided to boost investor confidence and job opportunities (e.g. lower rents/rates, high quality office accommodation). Local concerns over land availability and use have often led to strained relationships between key developers, entrepreneurs and members of the community. Local investors have also raised concerns about the high levels of public sector bureaucracy and complex and lengthy planning processes.

The physical decline of the area, especially on the main arterial routes and entrances has contributed to the lack of economic confidence and low amounts of inward investment. These outward signs of neglect and discontent are coupled with local anxieties over high business rental and rates values and a lack of quality office accommodation. There are also concerns that there are poor road links to the existing industrial areas from the main arterial routes and a lack of on street parking along the main business routes.

The Royal Victoria Hospital is a major employer in the area. However, there appears to be little opportunity for people coming into work at the hospital to contribute to the local economy, due to the lack of retail outlets, cafes, and facilities nearby.

4.2.5 Perceived Lack of Public Sector Commitment

There are feelings amongst the business community that West Belfast is not seen by Invest NI as being a priority area in which to develop and seek opportunities for Foreign Direct Investment. Statistics from the Invest NI Annual Report 2006/07 indicate that in the previous financial year Invest NI offered £39m of assistance to projects in the four Belfast Constituencies which included £20.7m towards 16 inward-investment projects. None of these inward-investment projects however were located in West Belfast.

There is also a perception within the local area that there have been significant shortfalls in delivering the Task Force recommendations. Although Invest NI state that they have invested around £12.1m in developing the infrastructure of the Forth River business park and are actively marketing it, the site is currently vacant.

4.2.6 Low Rates of Business Sustainability

There are concerns that businesses initially locate in West Belfast but then pull out, either because of internal difficulties or more attractive investment opportunities elsewhere. There are low rates of business survival within the SRF area. Trivirix, a US based medical equipment company operating for six years in West Belfast provides one example of the difficulties faced in attracting sustainable investment. TriVirix was in the top 100 fastest-growing companies within the USA and had annual revenue figures of \$51.5m for 2005. However, in February 2006 it pulled out of the Springvale site in West Belfast with the loss of 119 jobs, despite some £2.5m investment. This and the closure of major employers such as Bass Brewery, parts of Ford Visteon and TriVirix have left derelict sites as well as unemployment, frustration and low morale amongst the community. Due to the pressure for additional housing in the area, there is concern that potential industrial land will be approved for residential use. Local people are concerned that West Belfast will become a housing base for people working in other parts of the city.

4.2.7 Poor Tourism Infrastructure

Despite the fact that tourist attractions in West Belfast have the potential to generate substantial levels of income, there is an absence of targeted tourist facilities (including Bed and Breakfast and hostel accommodation, retail outlets, hotels, visitor centres, conference facilities, restaurants and recreational facilities). Additionally, with no rail connections, the area is not as accessible via public transport as other parts of Belfast.

Although West Belfast has significant potential as a tourism destination, at present many people who travel to West Belfast to see its attractions simply leave the area once they have seen the sites. As a result, potential additional revenue that could be attracted leaves with them. It is estimated that day visits generate £30.28 of revenue per person. However, overnight business visitors staying in accommodation spend around £50 for each day of their visit. Given that these visitors are likely to stay for a number of days, the additional revenue generated by overnight stays is significant.

Official statistics on the accommodation stock in West Belfast are limited. However, an indicative search reveals that there are no hotels in the West Belfast area, compared to 41 hotels in Belfast as a whole. This provides an indication of the lack of accommodation and tourist facilities within the area.

4.2.8 Summary of Strengths and Challenges

The strengths and challenges associated with this theme are summarised as follows:

Economic Strengths	Economic Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Proximity to city centre; ✓ Location for major employers; ✓ Location for Higher & Further Education Colleges; ✓ Youthful population; ✓ Government commitment to the aims of & objectives of the West Belfast & Greater Shankill Taskforce; ✓ Establishment and roles of Enterprise Council, Employers Forum & Employment Services Board; ✓ Proximity to International & City Airports; ✓ Developing social economy sector; ✓ Unique cultural product; ✓ Abundance of natural assets; and ✓ Links with Irish language and education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Low levels of economic activity; ✗ Low levels of educational attainment; ✗ Existence of skills gaps; ✗ Limited employment opportunities; ✗ High levels of long term unemployment; ✗ Failure to attract inward investment; ✗ Low rates of business sustainability; ✗ Lack of incentives for investors; ✗ Perceived lack of public sector commitment; ✗ Poor transport links; ✗ Perceptions that West Belfast is not a major employment location; and ✗ Lack of infrastructure to support tourism.

4.3 Employability, Education, Skills and Training

In order to improve the long-term quality of life within the SRF area it is recognised that there needs to be access to good quality education and training opportunities for both children and adults. West Belfast is home to a number of Universities and Higher and Further Education Colleges, to include St Mary's College. In addition, several schools within the area are achieving high levels of academic achievement at both GCSE and A-Level. A variety of training providers located within the area also offer training opportunities for those in employment, and those seeking employment opportunities. However, it is important to recognise that significant challenges remain.

A preventative approach to education and training is perceived to be central to breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation apparent within many areas of West Belfast. The following issues have been identified under the employability theme.

4.3.1 Low Levels of Educational Attainment

On a West Belfast wide basis, levels of academic achievement are comparatively low, further contributing to the challenge of tackling economic inequalities in the area. In the SRF area there are over 10 per cent more people with no qualifications than both the Belfast and the Northern Ireland averages of 41 per cent. There are also significantly lower levels of the population with first degree or higher degree qualifications (10 per cent) compared with Belfast (19 per cent) and Northern Ireland as a whole (16 per cent). This suggests that that the population within the SRF area are relatively lacking in the skills required by the move towards a higher value added economy.

These comparatively low levels of attainment are also experienced at a school level. Of recent school leavers, a lower number of pupils gained 2 or more A-levels in the SRF area (35.0 per cent) than across Belfast (40.8 per cent) and NI (44.7 per cent). There are also lower numbers of school leavers gaining 5+ GCSEs (53 per cent) compared with Belfast (57 per cent) and Northern Ireland (64 per cent). In addition, 9 per cent of school leavers gained no GCSEs compared to the Belfast (7 per cent) and Northern Ireland (five per cent) average.

4.3.2 Geographical Disparities

There is significant variation between wards in the SRF area with regards to education deprivation. The education, skills and training domain of the NIMDM has the widest range of rankings of all the deprivation measures for wards in the SRF area suggesting a high degree of difference in terms of educational attainment within the local area. Six wards fall within the top 10 per cent of educationally deprived wards in Northern Ireland, however, other wards (including Falls Park, Andersonstown, Ladybrook and Kilwee) are ranked considerably higher. The SRF area faces the challenge of closing the gap between the educational deprivation experienced by the more disadvantaged wards and the achievements experienced elsewhere.

Several secondary schools in West Belfast are achieving high levels of academic achievement in both GCSE and A Level examinations including St. Colm's High School, St. Genevieve's High School, Coláiste Feirste, and St. Louise's Comprehensive College. In these schools, between 93 per cent and 100 per cent of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs and grades A* to G. Furthermore, none of the pupils at these schools in the academic year 2005/2006 progressed without achieving any GCSE qualifications. These schools perform relatively well compared to the Northern Ireland averages of 84 per cent and three per cent respectively. At A-Level, between 89 per cent and 100 per cent of pupils at these schools achieved two or more A-Levels at grade A to E. However, the DE statistics do not breakdown this information down to subject level. Therefore, it is not possible to state the percentage of pupils achieving A to E grades in core subjects such as Maths and English.

This compares with several other secondary schools that experienced a relatively poor performance (Balmoral High School and Corpus Christi College) with around one third of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs and a significantly higher proportion leaving school with no GCSEs (20 per cent to 63 per cent). These schools also experienced a low percentage of pupils proceeding to A Level (between 0-10 per cent).

The disparity in educational attainment experienced in the area also extends to grammar schools in terms of both GCSE and A-Level performance. It is important to note that when comparisons are drawn between local secondary and grammar schools GCSE performances, it is apparent that many secondary schools are outperforming the area's grammar schools.

4.3.3 Low Educational Aspirations

Economic pressures, lack of qualifications and lower aspirations of further and higher education mean that people are more likely to enter low paid employment or training on leaving school. These low levels of educational aspirations are exemplified by the significantly lower levels of the population with first degree or higher degree qualifications. When considering recent school leavers, this trend appears to be continuing into the future with the percentage of school leavers in the SRF area continuing on to higher and further education (48 per cent) remaining considerably lower than the NI average of 66 per cent. In contrast, more school leavers continue straight into employment or training (45 per cent) than across Belfast (38 per cent) and across Northern Ireland as a whole (29 per cent).



West Belfast has access to a range of educational institutions including two Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) campuses (Whiterock and Gerald Moag, left), numerous outreach centres and St. Mary's University. Development of an additional BMC campus at Springfield Road is underway. However the areas of Whiterock, Falls Upper Springfield, Twinbrook, Collin Glen and Clonard are in the top 10 per cent of educationally deprived wards in Northern Ireland. A history of educational deprivation in these areas suggests that many parents lack the skills to support their children's educational development at home. As a result, without intervention this history of deprivation is likely to perpetuate into the future.

4.3.4 Barriers to Accessing Further Education and Training

High levels of socio-economic deprivation means that there are a variety of barriers that people need help to overcome before being able to access education and training within and outside the SRF area (e.g. structural barriers in terms of qualification requirements on some courses, availability of part-time courses, mobility, economic constraints, low self-esteem and poor health). Disabled people also have restricted opportunities to access education, training and employment due to fewer accredited qualifications and lack of appropriate facilities and equipment. It is apparent that there is a general lack of incentive for people to come off benefits in order to participate in training courses. Similarly, employers now have to pay a higher percentage to access training for their employees and this means that they are selective about whom they identify to be beneficiaries.

4.3.5 Increased Pressures on Training Organisations

There are a relatively large number of training organisations in the area resulting in competition for funding and participants. In addition, this is concern that there are lower numbers of young people requiring access to training due to the relatively young population profile and falling birth rates. Despite this, there are high numbers of adults wishing to access training, such as women returning to work, people with disabilities, the long term unemployed and school leavers. However, in addition to short-term funding constraints, training organisations often have to deal with personal issues such as alcoholism, poor health, drug use, persistent offending behaviour and poor literacy, numeracy and social skills.

4.3.6 Existence of Skills Gaps

Industrial restructuring, the decline of manufacturing and traditional skills and the rise of the service economy have had differential effects on West Belfast. In the most disadvantaged areas a spatial mismatch and a skills mismatch has emerged with respect to the economy. The majority of people are not equipped with the relevant qualifications, training and skills for existing and potential employment opportunities both within and outside the SRF area. This is further perpetuated by high levels of economic inactivity and long-term unemployment. There needs to be more forward planning with regards to emerging employment sectors in order that schools, further education and training facilities can assist the West Belfast population to obtain the relevant qualifications, competencies and skills for emerging opportunities.

4.3.7 Summary Strengths and Challenges

The strengths and challenges associated with this theme are summarised as follows:

Employability Strengths	Employability Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strong community education offering; ✓ Location for University and Higher and Further Education Colleges; ✓ Youthful population; ✓ Support from the Employers Forum & Employment Services Board; ✓ Opening of the Springfield Road Campus; ✓ Variety of Training providers; ✓ Thriving Irish Medium Education sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Low levels of educational attainment; ✗ Low numbers of school leavers continuing to Further & Higher Education; ✗ Existence of skills gaps; ✗ Limited employment opportunities; ✗ High levels of long term unemployment; ✗ Disparities in school performance; ✗ Poor transport links and connectivity; ✗ Low educational aspirations; ✗ Barriers to accessing FE and training; ✗ Poor literacy, numeracy and essential skills.

4.4 Community Cohesion and Renewal

West Belfast is renowned for its rich heritage and history and has a strong sense of identity which has been cultivated by the local community. West Belfast has a long tradition of collective community action and active community groups, with community-based structures being particularly dense in many of the most disadvantaged areas. Living through thirty years of conflict appears to have drawn the residents of West Belfast together and it is perceived to be an area with a strong community infrastructure.

The active community sector within the area has led to the development of a promising social economy sector which offers significant employment opportunities for the local population. In addition, the area has the potential to address community relations issues leading to strengthened community cohesion.

Surveys suggest that there are higher levels of social capital in West Belfast in comparison to other areas in the city. Fifty-five per cent of West Belfast residents thought that they lived in a tightly knit community, compared to 48 per cent of people who lived in the North, 41 per cent in the East and 39 per cent in South Belfast.

However local opinion suggests that this strong sense of community is likely to be localised in nature and does not take account of the variety of marginalised groups within the community. The key issues are outlined below.

4.4.1 A Frustrated Community Sector

West Belfast has a strong tradition of community activity with community-based infrastructure in place in many areas. Although there have been steady improvements in relationship building and partnership, confidence in public sector bodies is limited within many communities. Perceptions of a strong social capital within West Belfast, masks pockets of inactivity within and across neighbourhood boundaries. Often local community groups are poorly resourced, relying on volunteer resources and struggling to sustain adequate and long term funding.

4.4.2 Changing Communities

The SRF area is experiencing significant changes amongst its communities. Despite historical population growth, people have begun to move out of the SRF area and the resident population of the area has decreased by 1.4 per cent between 2001 and 1991. This compares to a seven per cent rise in the overall Northern Ireland population. Also, the profile of the residents of the area is changing. There has been an increase in the working age population, and those over 60 years of age between 1991 and 2005. In contrast, there has been a decrease in the population under the age of 16.

The minority ethnic population in West Belfast is increasing, with approximately 1 per cent of the population estimated to be of a non-white ethnic background. The physical landscape of West Belfast is also evolving with development accelerating in the area over the past 10 to 15 years.

Housing Renewal programmes have demolished large tracts of low density, low quality housing in poor condition and replaced it with high quality new accommodation (right). This development process has resulted in a substantial growth in the production of apartment developments and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). These developments are often associated with an increase in privately rented accommodation widely noted throughout the SRF area.



4.4.3 Social Exclusion

West Belfast is characterised by some of the highest levels of socio-economic deprivation in Northern Ireland as measured by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM). Those living in areas experiencing multiple deprivations experience a much greater risk of poverty than those living in more affluent areas. In particular, child poverty is thought to be a significant problem in West Belfast. There is widely considered to be a substantially higher risk of poverty in households headed by a single person with children. West Belfast has a high concentration of this household type (16 per cent) compared to the Northern Ireland (8 per cent) and Belfast (11 per cent) average.

There are various marginalised groups living within the West Belfast area who may feel excluded from existing social networks and community life in general including ethnic minorities, the disabled, older people, the Traveller Community, teenage parents and the homeless. In addition, there are special cases of peripherality within the SRF area. For example, Suffolk is a small Protestant Unionist community which is surrounded by Catholic communities. Although involved in various community relations activities with neighbouring Lenadoon, Suffolk has a sense of alienation from the wider nationalist community and has poor transport access, in or out of, the district. Suffolk and neighbouring Lenadoon recently worked together to try to gain Ministerial agreement for the Protestant Suffolk Primary School to gain integrated status. This would have helped to combat dwindling pupil numbers aim and would have made the area more attractive for existing and new families. However, the bid was rejected and the community is concerned that the population will continue to decrease. The Colin area, which sits within the Lisburn City Council boundary, is on the periphery of West Belfast and also experiences poor transport connections and a general lack of retail and community facilities.

There are large numbers of young people living in the SRF area. This significant youth population presents both a challenge and an opportunity. They currently have limited accessible facilities, open space, recreational and play areas. Some young people's behaviour is perceived to be threatening and destructive towards others living within the community. Drug and alcohol abuse and a lack of coordinated, well resourced service provision is an underlying concern for many community representatives. Large numbers of young people are outside mainstream youth provision and there is a concern that some young people are, or have the potential to be on the fringes of the community. As a result there is a

need to help young people to reach their full potential through greater promotion and development of a variety of targeted educational and social opportunities.

Older people are often particularly vulnerable to social exclusion as a result of relatively low incomes, reduced mobility and often poorer health. Population projections for Northern Ireland as whole reveal that the total number of people aged over 70 is estimated to more than double over the next 40 years. In West Belfast, the birth rate is falling steadily, and the proportion of the population over 60 has been increasing. Should these trends continue into the future, there will be significant pressures on the social infrastructure of West Belfast in terms of the need for housing, healthcare provision and a broad range of public services and amenities.

As noted the area is experiencing an influx of new people, many of these are from different traditions and cultures. There is a need to provide opportunities to explore and share these cultures in order to develop a better understanding between residents in order to ensure that all are included and contribute to the life and development of the community.

4.4.4 Community Relations

The conflict had a far reaching impact on the residents of West Belfast. 500 political deaths between 1969 and 1999 were located in the West of the city, representing 31 per cent of the total deaths across Belfast. In addition, while no accurate figures can be recorded, estimates by political prisoners support groups suggest that ex-prisoners make up a significant percentage of the adult population (around 11 per cent in some areas). Furthermore, West Belfast is an area with dense family and social networks and the impact of the conflict upon the community has left a widespread legacy.



Much of the violence associated with the troubles occurred around interface areas in West Belfast. Many of these interfaces are marked with a physical barrier (left), whereas others are ‘perceived / hidden’ interfaces which are known only by the local community. These continue to be an area of concern in terms of anti-

social behaviour, marginalisation, limited access to services and the high levels of disadvantage often associated with interfaces. As a result of the interface violence experienced in this area, several peace walls have been erected over the duration of the conflict.

Locally recognised interfaces within the area include:

- Carnamore Park, Suffolk;
- Stewartstown Road, Suffolk;
- Kells Avenue;
- Moyard;

- Springmartin Road – Upper Ballygomartin Road;
- Springhill Avenue;
- Workman Avenue;
- Springfield Road – Workman Avenue;
- Lanark Way;
- Cupar Way;
- North Howard Street;
- Northumberland Street;
- Percy Street – Boundary Way;
- Townsend Street; and
- Roden Street.

Physical barriers erected at these interfaces include Northern Ireland Office (NIO) walls, gates and fences. Several of these have been removed, however many remain and have become extended and more permanent. There is potential for this to become shared space in the future, according to residents’ wishes.

4.4.5 Summary of Strengths and Challenges

The strengths and challenges associated with this theme are summarised as follows:

Community Strengths	Community Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Active community sector; ✓ Neighbourhood Partnership activity; ✓ Variety of groups & organisations; ✓ Social economy enterprises; ✓ Desirable place to live; ✓ Strong social capital in some areas; ✓ Wealth of commitment & expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Community divisions; ✗ Owned rather than shared spaces; ✗ Potential alienation of marginalised groups; ✗ Large number of groups and structures; ✗ Lack of sustained funding; ✗ Lack of coordination; ✗ Array of forums; ✗ Public image of West Belfast; ✗ Geographical disparities in social capital; ✗ Difficulties in gaining participation.

4.5 Social Regeneration

As noted, West Belfast benefits from a range of public sector initiatives. These have undoubtedly had a positive impact on the access to services, community relations and health issues within the area. In addition, it is the location of the Royal Victoria Hospital and Healthy Living Centres providing close proximity to health care. A strong

community sector has also been delivering various community safety initiatives and plays a valuable role in improving community relations in the area.

Issues of community safety and availability and connectivity to quality facilities and services will have a significant impact on quality of life. In order to ensure that West Belfast continues to be an attractive place to live, the area must be supported by modern, well-run and accessible service provision and residents need to feel safe within and outside their respective communities. The identified issues for social regeneration are highlighted as follows:

4.5.1 Restricted Availability and Access to Facilities and Services

In some neighbourhoods there are a limited number of shops and community facilities. The low levels of deprivation on the Noble domain of proximity to services masks the fact that in some areas, transport links and access to services are relatively poor. For example, in the Colin area the average distance to the nearest GP is 1.36km and the average distance to the nearest hospital is 7.46km. Similarly there are universities situated within the SRF area but low levels of educational attainment.

There are also thought to be a limited number of accessible sporting venues in the area, with the four public leisure centres thought to be too expensive for some people. Additionally, there is a lack of youth facilities for different age groups, few children's play facilities and little organised activities.

The few facilities existing for young people often face restricted opening hours, particularly in the evenings, at the weekends and during the summer months. This plays a factor in the number of youths congregating on the street. In particular, a lack of youth provision has been associated with the participation of young people in interface conflict. This behaviour could be prevented to a certain extent through the development of attractive, modern and adequately resourced youth provision in the area. Indeed, there is poor access to cinemas, nightclubs and social activities throughout West Belfast.

West Belfast is the only part of the city not serviced by rail. Heavy reliance on the car as a means of transport results in a heavily congested road network on many of the key routes traversing the area and linking with the city centre. Unlike other areas of Belfast there are no outer ring roads to divert traffic off the secondary roads and there are several well-known 'bottlenecks' in the area. Connectivity into and out of the area is considered to be poor. In particular, vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist access to the city centre is limited and the M1 appears to sever rather than connect West Belfast to the rest of the city. Several bus services operate within the area. However there is only one Metro route throughout the study area (Metro service 10). Buses operate within the normal traffic movements which can add to the build up of traffic. The Black Taxi service is a popular mode of transport for residents.

Poor availability and access to services within an area can have a detrimental impact on the quality of lives of its residents and can contribute to a sense of marginalisation. For example the Sliabh Dubh estate in Upper Springfield has little in the way of retail and community facilities and residents experience isolation from the rest of West Belfast and surrounding estates.

4.5.2 High Levels of Health Deprivation

The health needs of the population of West Belfast are met by the Royal Hospitals and by a number of small health centres spread throughout the SRF area. Access to health services is a priority for West Belfast given the high levels of health deprivation experienced by its residents.

Despite the close proximity to leading health facilities, 9 out of the 13 wards of the SRF area are amongst the top ten per cent unhealthiest wards in Northern Ireland. The life expectancy in West Belfast is slightly lower in comparison to the Northern Ireland average. In addition, 28 per cent of people of working age in the SRF area had a limiting long term illness.

Higher levels of mental ill health are aligned to poverty and disadvantage. Notably, West Belfast had the highest percentage of suicides amongst young people in the UK last year. It has been recognised that there are concerning levels of dependency on prescriptive drugs in West Belfast. This is considered to be a greater risk amongst women and particularly older women. Drug and alcohol abuse is also considered to be a problem in the West Belfast area. A total of 1,137 new clients were referred to the Eastern Health and Social Services Board during 2004 and 2005. A significant 21.5 per cent of these clients were from the Falls Ward.

A significant health challenge for the West Belfast area concerns the high levels of teenage pregnancy in the area. Thirteen per cent of all births in the West Belfast Parliamentary Constituency are to teenage mothers. This is seven per cent above the Northern Ireland average and two per cent above the Belfast average.

Teenage pregnancy and early motherhood can have negative consequences for both mother and baby. It is often associated with poor educational achievement for the mother, poor physical and mental health, social isolation and poverty. Furthermore, there is a high percentage of babies born to unmarried mothers (68 per cent compared to 56 per cent across Belfast) and single parenthood is high. For some areas such as Falls (85 per cent), Whiterock and Collin Glen (78 per cent) this proportion is extremely high.

There are higher levels of long-term sickness and disability amongst the West Belfast population. Sixteen percent of people living in the Framework area who are aged between 16 and 74 years are permanently sick and/or have at least one disability. This is in contrast to 11% in the BCC area and 9% across Northern Ireland.³ In order to address these concerns, it is estimated that around £1.5bn per year is spent on the population in the North and West Health Action Zone.

4.5.3 Concerns Over Crime and Community Safety

Crime continues to impact on the quality of life within the West Belfast community. There were a total of 8,654 offences recorded in the SRF area in 2005/2006. The majority of these offences involved assault, theft and criminal damage with 27 per cent of the total incidents taking place in the Falls ward. The true number of offences may be greater due to the traditional reluctance to deal with the PSNI. In addition, it was recognised that the fear of reprisal was a major constraint to the reporting of crime. Increased safety and security measures are considered to be necessary in order to encourage more victims to come forward.

Crime levels have had an impact on the sense of safety experienced by the residents of the area. Although 95 per cent of people living in West Belfast stated that they felt safe walking alone in the area during the day, this number was reduced to 51 per cent at night. High levels of 'open-air' drinking among young people and congregating youths heightens the feeling of fear and vulnerability within the community. Frequent intimidation generates a climate of fear which inhibits the elderly, single-parent families, children and persons with disabilities from venturing outdoors. This is combined with perceptions of slow or nonexistent response from the police and a perceived absence of beat-patrol officers.

Car crime is a particular problem in the West Belfast area. The IMPACT Project notes that the average number of cars taken within the Greater West Belfast area stands at between 14 and 19 per month. This does not take account of cars stolen elsewhere and abandoned in the area. Related to the high incidence of car crime in West Belfast, there are also higher rates of road traffic incidents in the area. Statistics reveal that the rate of pedestrian casualties per 10,000 population was higher in West Belfast than other areas of Belfast.

³ Census (2001). Economic Activity Rate

4.5.4 Summary of Strengths and Challenges

The strengths and challenges associated with this theme are summarised as follows:

Social Strengths	Social Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Proximity to city centre; ✓ Location for Higher & Further Education Colleges; ✓ Health Action Zone; ✓ Increased engagement with PSNI; ✓ Neighbourhood Partnerships; ✓ Proximity of Royal Victoria Hospital & new Health & Wellbeing Centre; ✓ Models of Good Practice; ✓ Contribution of community sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Adhoc, disjointed approaches to service provision; ✗ Poor transport links; ✗ Lack of coordination between statutory & community stakeholders; ✗ Need for greater support for parents; ✗ Poor links between schools & the community; ✗ Lack of affordable & accessible childcare; ✗ Increased cost of some formal education courses; ✗ High incidence of mental health problems; ✗ Lack of area based service planning.

4.6 Physical Environment

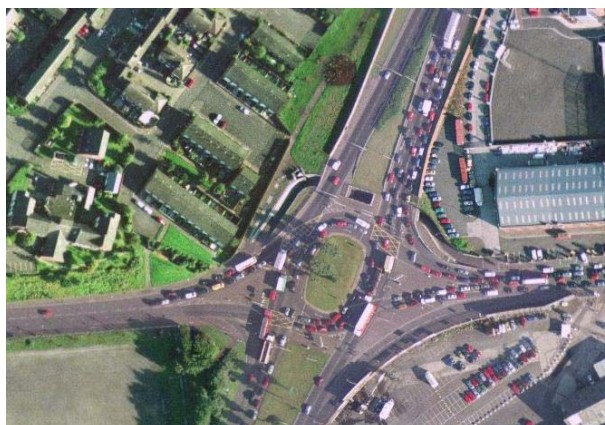


West Belfast has various unique physical attributes which create character and support the strong sense of identity. For example, West Belfast has a number of unique natural assets including the Bog Meadows Nature Reserve (left) beside the M1. West Belfast is also in close proximity to the city centre, and to Belfast International airport.

The physical environment in West Belfast has experienced increased developments over the last few years. However there remain areas where improvements need to be made. Improving the physical conditions of neighbourhoods to both enhance their appearance and give residents a sense of pride in their communities has the potential to address a range of economic, social and community issues.

4.6.1 Poor Roads and Transport links

West Belfast faces significant challenges in terms of its road and transport infrastructure. The predominant mode of travel through Belfast is by car. Unfortunately the road network is often congested on many of the key routes across the area and there are a number of well-known “bottlenecks” in the area at several busy roundabouts and junctions. These include the



roundabout on the Glen Road / Monagh By-Pass, the roundabout at Falls Road / Andersonstown Road, the mini roundabout at Whiterock Road / Falls Road and the junction of Falls Road / Springfield Road / Grosvenor Road (above).

Factors contributing to this traffic congestion include high car dependency and school traffic, pressures of new developments and illegal parking. In addition, there are issues with regard to internal connectivity between neighbourhoods and connectivity with the city centre. Vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist access to the city centre is poor and the M1 appears to sever rather than connect West Belfast to the rest of the city. Furthermore the SRF area is in close proximity to Belfast International Airport but road access is poor.

Bus priority lanes operate during restricted hours and as a result buses operate within normal traffic movements often contributing to the build up of traffic. An additional form of public transport which is unique to the area is Black Taxis. These provide services to seven routes in West Belfast and have a usage of around 5.8 million passengers per annum.

It is important to note that there are proposals for a Rapid Transport System for West Belfast. Its aim is to provide an efficient and alternative mode of transport, with connections to major generators of employment and travel in the area.

4.6.2 Ad-hoc Development

The neighbourhoods in the area vary significantly with a range of private and social housing, higher and suburban densities, and detached, semi-detached and apartments.

There are a number of challenges impacting development in the area. Concerns have been raised by many regarding the redevelopment of large detached houses on substantial plots and the impact of this on the townscape of the area. There is recognition of the need to preserve historical and regionally significant architecture and to adopt respectful but creative architectural principles when undertaking substantial new builds. Also a lack of available land is significantly constraining new development in West Belfast. There is a need to make better use of the remaining land mass in West Belfast. As a result of the limited opportunities for development it is critical that future planning considerations are undertaken in line with the overall long-term objectives for the area.

4.6.3 High Levels of Housing Stress

Housing provision in the SRF area is of key concern and has a considerable impact on the quality of life of the population of West Belfast. Analysis of housing tenure in West Belfast indicates that it has a high proportion of social rented housing (42.9 per cent) and lower levels of owner-occupied housing (51.9 per cent) compared to both the Belfast and Northern Ireland average. The level of social rented housing varies greatly by ward. There are significant proportions of socially rented housing occurring throughout several wards across West Belfast including peripheral estates such as Twinbrook and inner city wards such as Falls.

Social housing waiting lists are high and occupancy rates are higher than both the Belfast and Northern Ireland average. A key issue in the SRF area is overcrowding, with all wards showing over-occupancy ratings (17.8 per cent) higher than Belfast (9.9 per cent) and Northern Ireland (7.3 per cent) averages, with several individual wards scoring significantly higher suggesting housing pressures in these areas.

Private development and investment into the area has increased over the past 10 to 15 years leading to the redevelopment of vacant and derelict land. However there are concerns amongst the community regarding a growth in the production of apartment developments and Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

Activity in the private rented sector has been relatively low in comparison to other areas in Belfast. However there has been a recent growth in this sector in areas such as Beechmount and St. James. New housing developments have often been high density and include apartments as well as houses. Due to the scarcity of available land, there is a feeling that new housing developments should take the growth in lone parent families and tendency towards larger families into account.

4.6.4 Vacant Retail and Industrial Units

West Belfast has a good provision of retail facilities within its boundary, which vary from the large-scale multiples to small local independent traders. There are four main shopping centres in West Belfast, which provide a variety of food and comparison stores. These include the Kennedy Centre, Park Centre, Westwood Centre and the Dairy Farm. Demand for floor space varies between these centres, with some centres seeking planning approval to provide additional floor space and others suffering from low occupancy rates. In the Dairy Farm in particular, there is a sense that the design and structure of the centre is unattractive to retailers as units are considered to be too small, and circulation space too large.

4.6.5 Poorly Designed Environment

Despite the rich industrial and social heritage of the SRF area, there is a lack of distinctive old and new architecture. Many old buildings which are steeped in character are derelict and unfit for habitation. Therefore there is a need to preserve historical and regionally significant buildings including the Culturlann, St Comgall's and St. Mary's. In addition, it is important to adopt respectful but creative architectural principles when undertaking substantial new builds.

In general, West Belfast could be considered to have poorly defined streetscape in terms of irregular building line and height. This is in addition to areas of low quality townscape and blight caused by derelict sites. Concerns have also been raised regarding the redevelopment of detached houses on large plots and their impact on the townscape.

4.6.6 Neglect of the Natural Environment

Due to poor transport links, low mobility levels, physical neglect and community safety issues members of the community may not regularly access the environmental assets on their doorstep. Furthermore, the overall lack of development land and quarrying activity in the Belfast Hills puts pressure on the natural environment. There is also a problem with fly tipping (right) throughout the area and blights on the natural landscape along with difficulties maintaining existing open spaces and landscaped areas.



4.6.7 Summary of Strengths and Challenges

The strengths and challenges associated with this theme are summarised as follows:

Physical Strengths	Physical Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Proximity to the Belfast Hills, Colin Glen Forest Park, Bog Meadows & Divis Mountain, ✓ Support of the National Trust; ✓ Historic character of the area; ✓ Growth in provision of commercial land and premises; ✓ Good vehicular linkages to Westlink and M1; ✓ Dedicated Metro routes; ✓ Proximity to Belfast International Airport; ✓ Black taxis service unique to West Belfast; ✓ Mix of independent retailers and multiples throughout West Belfast; ✓ Historically and regionally significant buildings; ✓ Accessible playing fields throughout the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Lack of land available for future development; ✗ Poor public transport links with the city centre and the rest of the city; ✗ Piecemeal development in certain areas; ✗ Declining industrial sector leaves derelict sites e.g. former mill sites; ✗ Traffic congestion during peak times; ✗ Lack of respect for the natural & physical environment; ✗ Lack of on street parking for retailers along main arterial routes; ✗ Areas of low quality townscape; ✗ Public realm improvements required along key routes.

4.7 Ready for Change

Although the circumstances are difficult, the prospects for sustainable regeneration, supported by public and private sector investment are promising. Some future benefits include:

- close proximity to Belfast City Centre, the International and City airports and key transport links;
- confirmation of a Rapid Transit System for the West that will provide connectivity within and across the area, improving connectivity to the City Centre and beyond;
- the new Belfast Metropolitan College Campus on the Springfield Road;
- the Gaeltacht Quarter which will promote the Irish language as an economic driver for the area;
- proposed regeneration of Castle Street, Fountain Square and Bank Square to include a new pedestrian square and a street to link the main commercial and business centre of Belfast with the West of the City;

- opportunities created by the tourism and social economy sectors to generate significant economic returns and employment for the West Belfast area;
- a Health and Wellbeing centre planned for Andersonstown;
- relatively youthful population and the strong sense of community cohesion in the area; and
- a growing desire for long term, sustainable change within communities.

The Review of Public Administration also provides renewed impetus for change, with the current 26 council areas being rationalised to create 11 new council areas. Transfer functions to local government include local development planning, development control and enforcement, local public realm, urban regeneration and community development delivery functions, a range of housing functions, local economic development, local tourism, arts and sports and leisure.

Across the UK there is a move to place responsibility for economic development within local government. Responsibilities assigned to local government in Northern Ireland are likely to follow suit in the drive to establish Belfast as an economic driver for the region.

5. THE VISION FOR WEST BELFAST

5.1 Introduction

There is a wish for change in West Belfast. The area must now strive for comparability with the performance of the rest of the city and neighbouring areas. Communities need to vocalise and raise their ambitions to ensure that the focus of existing and future regeneration activity leads towards a vision for attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods that will contribute to a competitive and prosperous city region.

The production of this document is considered to be a key element of the work required to ensure that West Belfast plays a sustainable role within the wider city, the region and Europe into the future. It will ensure that the investment in the social and physical fabric of neighbourhoods is co-ordinated in accordance with the wishes of the community in an integrated and “joined-up” manner.

5.2 The Vision

Although on the ground activity is central to driving regeneration and achieving the vision for West Belfast, the overarching Vision for West Belfast is wider than individual projects and organisations. It is as follows:

“West Belfast will play an integral role in the regeneration of Belfast showcasing its people, vibrancy and distinctiveness. This is an area of contrasts, positioned against the Belfast Hills...a place of enterprise, creativity, inspiration and passion. An outward looking, welcoming and inclusive community enhanced by civic pride, strength and a determination to flourish.”

5.3 Supporting Statements

This Vision for the future is clarified via the following supporting statements:

West Belfast will benefit from a diverse and thriving local economy.

West Belfast will be known for its wealth of private and public sector investment opportunities. Local people will benefit from this entrepreneurial culture through job creation, self employment opportunities and connected physical regeneration and wealth creation. Businesses will be attracted by modern, affordable and flexible facilities and services. Tailored support will be offered during each stage of their development cycle.

The area will be renowned for its vibrancy with its thriving arts, cultural and Irish language industries. These sectors will generate sustainable revenue for the people of West Belfast.

West Belfast will attract, retain and provide a skilled and confident workforce contributing to the wider Belfast economy and beyond.

With its focus upon attracting new technologies, knowledge driven and creative industries and its premier office based facilities West Belfast will provide and draw a highly skilled workforce. It will be seen as a major employment location.

There will be an increased focus upon forging links between employers, schools and the voluntary and community sectors. Educational opportunities within its many educational facilities will be accessible to all.

Residents will have the opportunities, qualifications, skills and support needed to fulfill their ambitions and play a significant role in sustaining a prosperous and growing economy in West Belfast, Belfast and beyond.

West Belfast will be widely recognised as an attractive place to live, work, socialise and visit.

West Belfast will maximise the spectacular backdrop of the Belfast Hills and will have a reputation for environmental excellence and responsibility. Future physical development will take place against the enhancement and protection of the natural environment and the long term vision for the area.

Residents will live in well designed and affordable housing and will enjoy a quality physical environment. A network of green spaces will enhance and link the area's unique cultural heritage and rich natural assets.

The local transport service will be enhanced by a modern roads infrastructure and affordable and efficient Rapid Transit facilities. Residents will be physically connected to opportunities within and outside the local area.

West Belfast will be an eminent and sought out residential, business and visitor destination.

West Belfast will have a network of active, safe and well serviced and well coordinated communities.

Neighbourhoods will build on the strong foundation of community infrastructure that already exists and the new confidence and desire to reach out to and work with other areas of the city.

Partnership working between local communities and key individuals, bodies and agencies will ensure that communities have access to a range of modern, affordable, high quality services and facilities which meet their needs. Targeted investment in health, education, housing, community safety, leisure and transport will improve the quality of life of all residents in West Belfast, creating sustainable and inclusive communities, free from poverty and deprivation.

5.4 Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities for West Belfast are presented below. These, taken together will address and overcome the identified challenges to West Belfast's economic, social, community and physical renewal and will contribute towards the delivery of the long term vision for the area.

The four overarching and inter-linked priorities for the long term regeneration of West Belfast are as follows:

- **Employability, Education, Training and Skills**

Increase employability and aspirations by focusing on increasing access and participation in education, skills and training.

- **Investment, Enterprise and Economic Development**

Improve the economic viability of West Belfast through attracting inward investment, developing tourism and supporting and encouraging enterprise.

- **Physical, Environmental and Transportation**

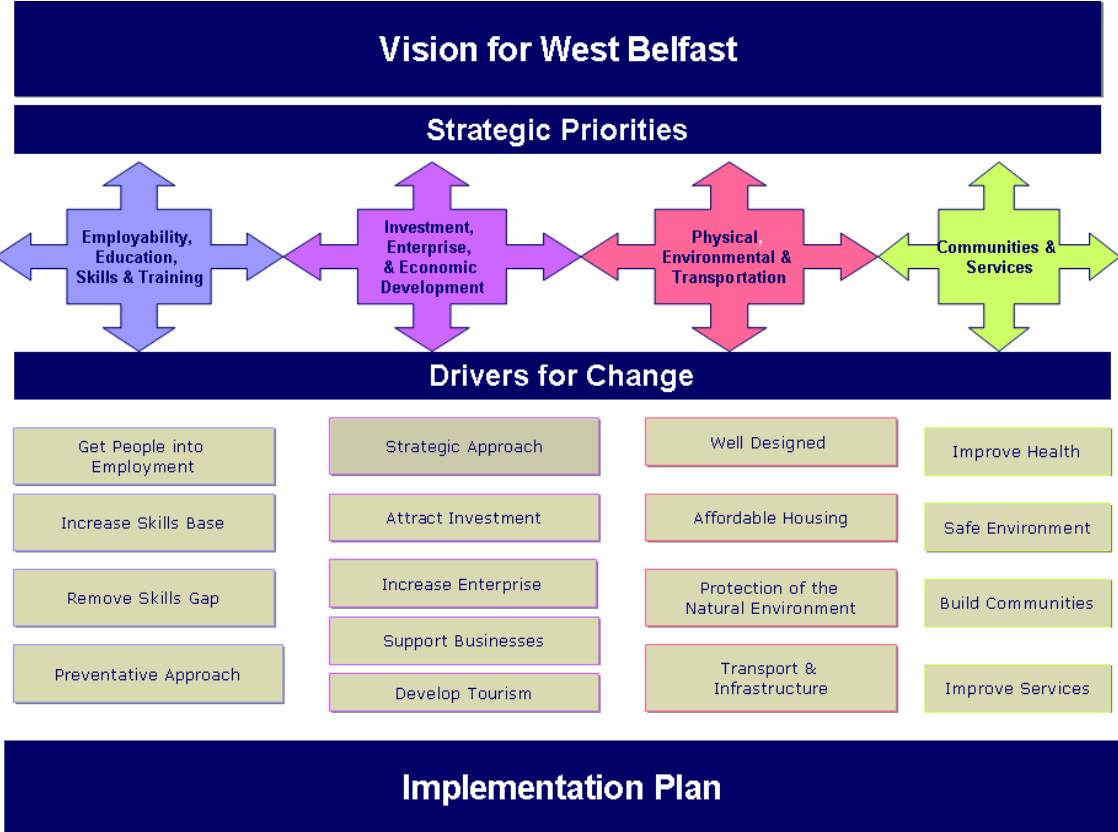
Develop well-connected and well-designed neighbourhoods, which enhance and preserve the long-term sustainability and beauty of the natural landscape.

- **Communities and Services**

Ensure that all residents have access to well run, high quality local services and facilities which encourage strong community involvement and operate in a coordinated manner; and

Improve the quality of life for all sections of the community through the provision of a safe, secure environment and a range of opportunities to participate in community life.

These strategic priorities will be addressed by a range of interventions which will drive change. These include securing economic investment, assisting people to access employment, physical and infrastructure development and ensuring high quality neighbourhood services and facilities. The strategic priorities and related drivers for change are summarised as follows:



6. EMPLOYABILITY, EDUCATION, SKILLS AND TRAINING FRAMEWORK

Increase employability, raise attainment and aspirations by focusing on improving access to and participation in education, skills and training.

6.1 Introduction

Regional Forecasts Ltd compiled a comprehensive set of economic forecasts up to 2015 for the city and its metropolitan area on behalf of BCC. Belfast is expected to have one of the UK's fastest growing economies over the next decade in terms of job creation. One of the most significant of the forecasts is the city's dramatic move away from an economy based on traditional manufacturing services towards a high value added service sector and knowledge-based manufacturing economy. Regional Forecasts states that the city's employment record has been strong and growth is expected to continue, albeit at a slower rate. Similarly, the rapid growth in retailing and public administration jobs over the last decade is unlikely to be repeated in the decade ahead. Evidence shows that the remaining employment growth is likely to be generated by the fast growing professional services sector and this is where the greatest opportunities exist.

Belfast's declining population has not held back economic growth in the past, but its continuation may restrain future competitive potential and overall prospects would be improved by a reversal of this decline. The city's ability to develop an internationally competitive service sector export market, supported by an increasingly skilled workforce, will ultimately determine its position in Europe. It was recommended that making the city increasingly attractive for highly qualified people and for the firms that seek to employ them, should become a major policy imperative.

Increasing people's access to employment, improving educational attainment and widening training opportunities has a central role to play in eliminating the high levels of socio-economic deprivation experienced by many of the residents of the Framework area. By preventing and addressing the challenges that are currently being experienced, the future life prospects of people living within West Belfast will be improved. Initiatives need to focus upon enabling more people to take up available jobs and increasing incentives to gain employment for those who are outside the employment market, whether through lack of skills, a result of the benefits trap or other barriers. A number of interventions have been identified to take forward the employability agenda. These are:

- Get People into Employment;
- Increase the Skills Base;
- Remove Skills Gap; and
- Adopt a Preventative Approach.

6.2 Get People into Employment

West Belfast needs to get economically inactive people into work. There is recognition of the requirement to educate and prepare people for future investment and job needs, however, equal effort must also be placed on connecting people to existing employment opportunities.

In their reports, the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Taskforces proposed new structures for reaching those furthest from the labour market and assisting them to move towards and ultimately gain meaningful employment. The mechanisms included an Employers' Forum (established in 2003) to bring together the collective interests of Employers, Job Assist Centres operating across the areas to engage individuals and help them move towards employment and an Employment Services Board to oversee and facilitate the new services and structures designed to get more people into employment.

As recommended by the Taskforces, the Employment Services Board (ESB) was established in 2004 as a mechanism to bring together key voluntary, community, business and statutory interests to increase the prospects and employment of those further removed from the labour market in the Task Force areas. The ESB fulfils a key role in ensuring that the initiatives rolled out as part of the Taskforce recommendations match the current needs of the unemployed people in West Belfast and the Greater Shankill with those of employers. ESB not only advises Government on relevant policies and programmes and review progress on customised counselling, placement and employment services, but also considers how best to meet the needs of hard-to-reach groups such as people with disabilities, ex-prisoners and travellers.

It is critical that appropriate resources are put in place to allow ESB's specialised subgroups to carry out the work and that financial support is provided to progress and implement key recommendations emanating from these subgroups- particularly where mainstream provision does not adequately address the needs of identified target groups. There is a wish to expand the service to reach those who have not fully benefited from the existing tailored education, training initiatives and to ensure a targeted approach to women returners, particularly with regards to the lack of childcare provision.

It is essential that government provides long-term support and funding to the work of the ESB. The role of ESB should be enhanced to provide strategic advice and direction to Departments on training and employment activities within the area. This needs to be linked into a range of initiatives which will improve employability, address long-term unemployment and promote economic regeneration through job creation.

6.2.1 Remove Barriers

Some people may not need or want to work, but for the greater numbers that do, employment can appear to be an unrealistic goal. Economically inactive people face a range of barriers to employment, including a lack of basic skills or confidence, a disconnection from the labour market, caring responsibilities and financial disincentives. Many may have a health problem or mental or physical disability which restricts the range of work which they can undertake.

There is often a need to manage employers' expectations with regards to the requirement for formal qualifications to be stated as essential criteria for basic entry level posts. Online recruitment and assessment tests can also provide barriers to individuals with low self esteem, poor computer skills and inexperience.

The transition from benefits to employment is one of the major barriers to going back to work. People may need advice about how they will benefit financially from employment and may need support to manage their money and manage any debts that they have.

The Taskforces recommended that research must be undertaken to determine the effect of the Tax Credit and other Government incentives within West Belfast and identification of best practice in addressing these issues elsewhere in the UK and Ireland (e.g. Graduated Benefits Allowances) and the opportunities for applying this best practice in the Framework Area. Scope for administration or political discretion within NI in the application of laws or regulations bearing on the financial incentive to take up employment ought to be explored.

Appropriate flexible childcare support needs to be in place to allow lone and other parents to undertake training and start work. Research commissioned by the Employment Services Board in 2006 confirmed access to affordable childcare as a considerable barrier to employment and identified a severe lack of affordable places in West Belfast. The situation is set to worsen with greater emphasis on encouraging more lone parents to participate in the labour market. Without a corresponding increase in the local capacity to fulfil childcare requirements, government targets simply will not be met. A feasibility study must be undertaken into the development of social economy childcare services to single parents and women wishing to return to work. Recognition of the social benefits of employment must not be underestimated. Employers need to invest more time and effort when marketing employment opportunities (e.g. holiday entitlement, information about the company, social opportunities).

Although not thought to be widespread, some people do not feel comfortable travelling outside their own communities to access training and employment due to fears for their personal safety. Despite the fact that people in West Belfast are more open to accessing opportunities elsewhere, there is an onus upon employers, community and training organisations, public representatives and government to address potential chill factors and to ensure a neutral space. This is in line with OFMDFM's Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) policy, BCC's Good Relations Plan and the Re-Imaging Communities initiatives.

6.2.2 Support Labour Market Intermediary Services

Labour Market Intermediaries (LMIs) undertake a number of functions at the interface between the unemployed person and the employer. They typically provide a combination of job preparation services (pre employment support, training), recruitment services (job matching) and retention and advancement services (post employment support and career development activities). For the most part they work by referring clients to a range of existing training provisions and interventions to address their barriers.

A key recommendation of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces was the establishment of a new LMI operation termed Job Assist with a key function of reaching out to those who had disengaged from even looking for work and those who would not access mainstream public services.

The Job Assist Service, which is overseen by the Employment Services Board, was provided in West Belfast by a consortium of community organisations with Upper Springfield Development Company Limited (USDCL) acting as lead partner. Funded in the first instance from the beginning of 2004 by DEL through their Targeted Initiatives Programme, the consortium continues the Job Assist service as the West Belfast contract winner for DEL's new 3 year Local Employment Market Intermediary Service (LEMIS April 2007- 2010)

The consortium's Job Assist Centres (JACs) are seen as a vital component of addressing the needs of the long-term unemployed and the hard to reach groups. Job Assist runs alongside other targeted initiatives including existing services offered at job centres and benefits offices and other interventions that include New Deal, community based provisions and customised training. However, changes in the funding structure from Targeted Initiatives to LEMIS has led to the reduction of the Job Assist service in West Belfast from five localised offices to one. Despite this, since Job Assist began operating in 2004, almost 2,400 hard to reach individuals have availed of their services with 410 gaining sustainable employment.

The evaluation of the JACs under Targeted Initiatives indicated that they are good at outreach and engagement but the job outcomes were limited over the period, however, it must be recognised that the client group which the centres are dealing with have complex needs and that a conversion period of 18 months from engagement to employment is realistic. In developing the Targeted Initiatives replacement, LEMIS, DEL took on board the findings of the evaluation and placed a much heavier emphasis on employment outcomes for the period 2007-2010.

Early indications of the Job Assist Service under LEMIS indicate employment outcomes have improved significantly. In addition LEMIS compares very favourably to some of the other mainstream DEL programmes such as JSSs (Job Seekers Service), Pathways and Steps.

Continued support for Job Assist needs to be in place, in order to address the needs of the long-term unemployed and hard to reach groups. The JAC's work should continue to contribute to the achievement of the aims of mainstream government programmes.

Of course, Job Assist is not the only mechanism in West Belfast seeking to move unemployed people into employment. Many community based providers operate an LMI type service albeit on a smaller scale. The benefits of such operations must be recognised and supported. Many provide good practice examples of partnership working, effective signposting of employment opportunities and progression and complementary working practices.

6.2.3 Increase the Range of Interventions

As mentioned in the previous section most LMIs operate by engaging with clients, assessing their barriers to employment and assisting them to overcome these by referring them to a range of interventions and training to overcome these barriers.

With no budget provided to buy in interventions directly, services like Job Assist have to work off the range of interventions available locally ranging from community based provision to BMC courses and mainstream DEL programmes such as New Deal.

This causes concern on a number of fronts. Firstly, much of the community provision which is so important is in jeopardy due to the fact that it is heavily reliant on European funding and therefore in imminent danger. Community based services must be protected both in term of resources and quality.

Secondly, there are often conflicts in JACs referring clients to DEL programmes whereby clients often have to switch benefits with no guarantee of getting back to their original status. The new STEPS programme may offer a fresh approach to some of the procedural barriers but the operational roll out of the interaction of JACs and STEPs must be based on continuity of service to the individual.

Thirdly, the number and type of interventions available to unemployed people is decreasing year on year. As well as the pressures on community provision we have seen a move towards reduction of community education within BMC and a decrease in starter/feeder courses as the FE Means Business Strategy is rolled out. Too often a successful programme's funding is not renewed and new programmes are introduced. For example, DEL stated that the Transitional Employment Programme (TEP) is too costly to continue despite the positive benefits and have suggested that a new service delivery model should incorporate the positive aspects of TEP in their design structures. This trend continues to frustrate providers, trainers and those working with the long term unemployed. A cost benefit analysis on TEP should be considered.

There is scope for additional schemes offering labour market experience to unemployed people. These must have an increased focus upon programmes in the growth sectors (e.g. ICT, hospitality) where there is more likelihood of people getting jobs in the commercial sectors but must include core employability elements incorporating so called softer skills which are a particular need of those further from the labour market. Medium, rather than short-term term funding will help alleviate organisations' anxiety over funding. The work of the Employment Services Board, LEMIS and Employers Forum must continue to improve job accessibility in the context of shifts in the wider labour market and spatial economy.

6.2.4 Connecting People to Opportunities

An ongoing priority will be to secure the active support of employers in making opportunities available for West Belfast residents and then providing appropriate mentoring and other support to ensure that they make a successful transition to work. Opportunities must be created to help link into an increasing number of new and existing employers to ensure that people living in West Belfast are represented within their workplace and supported to remain employees.

The role of the Employers' Forum cannot be understated in this respect. The Employers Forum, also set up on the recommendation of the Task Forces, is private sector led and funded and works very closely with the Employment Services Board and Job Assist Centres to open up opportunities and develop approaches to help those further from the labour market gain meaningful employment. They already have around 60 of the major employers from across the city engaged and contributing to their work.

Links with employers in development areas throughout Belfast such as Titanic, Laganside and North Foreshore, should be a continued priority. ESB has a role in working with the Employers' Forum to increase links with employers and service providers outside West Belfast.

The axis of development for the City over the next 10 years follows a south and east axis while the axis of need is clearly north and west. Vastly improved affordable transport linkages are therefore essential to increasing the employment rate in West Belfast.

The proposed Rapid Transit System and increased pedestrian and road linkage to the City Centre and beyond will serve to physically connect people to opportunities. However, economic issues are likely to inhibit people from travelling outside West Belfast for work. Most of the attainable jobs are less well paid and therefore payment of travelling expenses would have a significant impact upon individuals' wages. Therefore the transport system needs to be affordable in order to encourage people to look for employment outside West Belfast.

6.2.5 Help Sustain Employment

The long-term unemployed usually feel removed from the workplace and need additional support to reintegrate them into working life. Many of those in receipt of benefits will require support over an extended period of time in order to both secure and retain employment and raise aspirations.

ESB in partnership with the Employers' Forum under IDF recommended that a two year Workforce Buddies mentoring programme should be set up to support an employee mentoring scheme in the West Belfast and Greater Shankill area. This was funded through IDF at a cost of £125,000 for two years and was managed by Business in the Community on behalf of the Employers' Forum.

A number of "Workforce Buddies" were established in participating companies who acted as work-based mentors for long-term unemployed and economically inactive people who were taking up employment opportunities, particularly participants who had completed an employment intervention and subsequently entered employment (e.g. New Deal, Job Assist). The pilot ended on 31st

December 2007 and was not renewed. It is suggested that the Workforce Buddies scheme is revisited in order to support the long term unemployed in maintaining employment and the recommendations for the further development and monitoring of the scheme adopted.

Peer Group Mentoring is also beneficial within a training situation and needs to be extended as an additional means of support within, or outside, the workplace. It is recognised that there is a need to provide more support networks for certain groups (e.g. mature students, people with disabilities, lone parents).

6.3 Increase the Skills Base

In order to support communities to increase their existing skills and subsequently the range of employment opportunities open to them there needs to be appropriate and targeted awareness raising campaigns undertaken to inform them of what is available to them. There are low levels of numeracy and literacy and many people lack the basic life skills that employers seek. All residents must enjoy equality of opportunity and the creation of a centre of learning excellence in West Belfast will help deliver these goals. However, this will be difficult in a current environment with a reducing number and range of interventions.

6.3.1 Raise Awareness

Outreach engagement and delivery is critical to improving people's employability. There are a variety of practical approaches which have been undertaken by the Neighbourhood Partnerships across West Belfast. For example, door to door engagement, post offices, schools, black taxis, bookies, shopping centres, health centres and local community provision. Continuation of these methods of raising awareness of the education and training opportunities available throughout West Belfast should be undertaken in relation to the new Springfield Road campus and its range of community targeted service provision. Open days and short taster courses should be offered. People should also be made aware of the availability of support structures such as child care and travel allowances.

For many people who are in employment there is limited prospect of receiving quality training as part of their employment. It is important that those who wish to address their own training needs can do so. This is particularly relevant to people in part-time or temporary employment. There is an opportunity for Springfield Road Campus, St Mary's, the Whiterock Campus and other schools to provide increased training opportunities for the surrounding communities.

6.3.2 Improve Basic Skills

There needs to be additional funding for literacy and numeracy programmes and increased provision of Essential Skills courses and initiatives to help unemployed people overcome basic difficulties. A particular drive needs to be made to ensure e-readiness within and across communities.

The **Belfast Computer Clubhouse** opened on the peaceline between the Falls and the Shankill Road in Belfast. The Belfast Computer Clubhouse is a creative, multimedia, learning environment where young people can explore their own creative interests and become confident learners through the use of technology.

The Computer Clubhouse offers a vibrant environment with state-of-the-art computers and a variety of software and technological tools for use on projects in the **visual arts, video, robotics, music animation, web and graphic design**. It is a project targeted at encouraging the creative potential of young people aged 8 - 18 in the **West Belfast** and **Greater Shankill** areas.

There is an increasing need to progress residents' personal development alongside skills development in order to ensure that they can compete in the marketplace and sustain employment. As a result these modules need to be more available as many trainers thought this aspect was under resourced. These modules should be included in training, education and learning programmes for the unemployed to cover issues such as lack of confidence, behaviour in the workplace and team work.

The **Active Learning Project** has been operational in Upper Springfield since 2003 and provides a service for people who wish to enhance their essential skills and gain recognised qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Since September 2006 twenty-eight learners have gained accredited qualifications from entry level one through to level two and it is predicted that a further seventeen learners will have gained qualifications by the end of August 2008. Programmes include Help Your Children with their Homework, Refresher Maths and English and Family Budgeting with many people using essential skills learning as an alternative to GCSE Maths and English.

An appropriate package of interventions should be formulated to address basic health and education issues and training providers should be supported to overcome the challenges that may arise in delivering these programmes. It is suggested that The Steps to Work programme should receive funding to provide a menu of employability interventions that can be customised to meet the needs of different groups.

In preparation for the new BMC Campus on the Springfield Road, DEL provided Belfast Metropolitan College with £1,250,200 to implement a capacity building project for the period from 2005 - March 2008. The aim of which was to raise awareness and stimulate demand for the provision/services amongst the community for the new campus on the South side of the Springvale site.

This capacity building programme involved a series of educational and related programmes and activities with local residents. These followed seven thematic strands - Project Management, Employer Engagement, Community Partnership Building, Multimedia, Employability, Entrepreneurship and Staff Development.

An evaluation of this community outreach programme is currently being undertaken in relation to the appropriateness of each of the seven programme areas funded in terms of contributing to the delivery of the aims and objectives and building capacity. Recommendations on how appropriate aspects of the initiative can best be continued will be made. The outcome of the evaluation should be considered and the programmes altered/extended as appropriate with clear funding channels.

6.3.3 Workforce Development

Businesses need to invest in their workforce and employers should be encouraged and supported to develop staff opportunities for skills development in addition to external recruitment initiatives. For example, in instances whereby career progression is limited there may be opportunities to transfer existing staff into roles that are harder to fill through external trawls. This will enable people to broaden their skill sets and obtain a continuation up the career ladder. The approach requires determining the relevant skills for the job and taking people's experience into account, rather than formal qualifications.

Up-skilling the workforce is crucial. However cost and lost work time remain barriers to many employers. Therefore DEL needs to persuade employers and staff of the benefits of investing in training. The availability of flexible, locally provided training is important.

6.4 Remove the Skills Gap

People living in West Belfast frequently lack the basic skills to access existing and emerging job opportunities. Furthermore, residents typically have lower levels of educational attainment. The gap between the needs of new and emerging businesses and the skills available within West Belfast will widen unless action is taken.

6.4.1 Workforce Planning

There is a need to adopt a workforce planning approach to ensure that the skills of the population match the needs of employers. DE, DEL and DETI should work together to inform schools and other education and training organisations to ensure that they are aware of the emerging types of skills and competencies needed to meet labour market needs. Similarly people in West Belfast need to have access to the education and training that will equip them with the skills and competencies needed to participate in the emergent economy.

An important consideration is to ensure that front line agencies are aware of the job vacancies and growth areas when advising clients. Work with education and training service providers will ensure that their curriculum meets the needs of local employers.

The **Employability Initiative** in Health and Social Services involves the Royal Group of Hospitals Trust, Employment Services Board, the West and Greater Shankill Partnership Boards, Unison, North and West Belfast HSS Trust and the Mater Hospital Trust. It enables the health and social service sector, working with stakeholders in the community to make a substantial impact on unemployment and poverty. Existing staff complete vocational qualifications by participating in training programmes, thus allowing them to practice at a higher level and create additional vacancies in entry level posts.

The development of close relationships with the private sector will be crucial to successful workforce planning and the Employers' Forum will be central in enabling and advancing public/community/private sector links. A long term structure needs to be put in place for the Employers' Forum to support the effective tailored training initiatives developed in partnership with ESB in order to address skills and employment needs. Identification of additional opportunities should be linked to the new growth sectors (e.g. IT, engineering, contact centres, construction and retail) and new employment sites. This would create sustainable jobs for the unemployed. DEL should consider mainstreaming targeted sector based skills training schemes.

Comparator Study: Dublin Docklands

The Dublin Docklands Authority was created under the Dublin Docklands Development Authority Act 1997 with the purpose of leading regeneration activity within the area. The area was seen as being relatively educationally disadvantaged with a high proportion of persons leaving school with lower levels of educational qualifications. Employers generally considered that they must look outside the area for skilled employees. In addition, access to and through the area is poor and public transport considered to be inadequate. Arterial routes regularly suffered congestion, often as a result of a growth in HGV traffic.

In terms of economic development, the Docklands Authority worked closely with government agencies in order to attract international services into the area, specifically in terms of the financial services sector. The support and development of the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) was considered to be a key element of the regeneration of the area. However, the importance of nurturing traditional industries was also recognised. Research and development complexes were developed in partnership with third level colleges in order to facilitate industrial and commercial development. Supporting small businesses, business start ups and the leisure and tourism sectors were also thought to be key to the economic regeneration of the area.

Social and community development was also a key theme of the Dublin Docklands Master Plan. There was an emphasis on improving education and training provision in order to provide the necessary skills to support the economic development of the area. A particular focus was to be placed on creating learning partnerships between education, business and the community to ensure that the skills shortages experienced in the area were addressed.

6.4.2 Modernise Training and Education Delivery

The E3 Campus on the Springfield Road is an innovative employment focused approach to education and training. BMC has developed a workforce and economic development strategy for use with its students and has embarked on a strategy of change management which will align its curriculum delivery and programme content to meet the skills and competences required by business and industry.



It is important that young people have the appropriate opportunities and learning environment to practice and develop the higher level skills required in a knowledge based and globally referenced economy. Colleges also have a role to play in providing support for problem solving and innovation in firms. The local community and residents must benefit from this facility. It is proposed that it will be a 24 hour facility and will provide modern work and community space for local people (artist impression left).

Business and industry will be actively involved with BMC and will provide learners with practical and technical projects. The new campus will provide a new type of learning space which will more closely resemble a modern 21st century workspace than the traditional classroom environment.

However, E3 is a campus which will mostly be used by existing BMC students. This is an innovative approach to encourage residents from West Belfast to move onto appropriate courses. One example of such an approach involves the Engineering Skills for Industry course which is supported by the Employers Forum and run by BMC for the engineering sector. It has a different framework with a high proportion of soft skills and core employability support. It has New Deal as its base, however in order to meet the required costs ESF and Bombardier have made financial contributions, resulting in a near 100 per cent employment rate for completers. This model should be mainstreamed.

There is a further opportunity to build upon the close proximity of BMC's Whiterock facility and the Whiterock Business Park to the Springfield Road/Forth River development and to encourage the development of a learning hub around these locations. The resources at Whiterock Children's Centre Family Support Unit need to be at the centre of future plans. It is important that Whiterock remains a community education resource.

The Whiterock Children's Centre (WCC) was established in conjunction with BMC to provide a childcare service for students attending the city's various institutions. The childcare component of the WCC is the organisation's anchor project and has a highly visible presence in the local area of Whiterock and Upper Springfield and in West Belfast generally as a key childcare provider.

The numbers that the centre can accommodate for BMC varies from year to year and now stands at approximately 24 crèche places for most of Belfast. In addition to those held over for BMC clients, the organisation also has an additional 42 places. These are a mixture of

fee and non fee places. In addition to these there are approximately 25 separate after school places.

The WCC also has a commitment to the provision of places for children with special needs. The organisation indicates that it has the potential for growth and the capacity to accommodate larger numbers in its childcare provision programme. It has recently purchased a quarter of the old BMC building on the Whiterock Road within which it will develop its current programmes and seek to develop new ones.

There have been major changes to the way that training is delivered, particularly in terms of the use of ICT within the community. However many people who are not working are falling behind the working population in terms of their ability to use ICT to apply for jobs and increase their computer skills. New technology has a vital role in the delivery of education and training across all age groups – providing the ability to access training within the home, the workplace and community setting as well as more traditional settings. An ongoing priority will be to work with mainstream funding and delivery organisations to ensure that provision supports people with poor ICT skills.

6.5 Preventative Approach

There is a necessity to break the generational cycle of deprivation experienced by many people who live in West Belfast. A preventative approach to unemployment must be undertaken in order to prepare young people with appropriate skills for the workplace and to ensure that their full potential is reached. Specific objectives include raising educational standards, establishing greater links between parents, schools and the community, developing employability strategies for vulnerable young and helping young people to make more informed career choices.

6.5.1 Raise Aspirations

It is important to support people to raise their aspirations in order that they may access well paid jobs. This is true of people at all stages of their life, but young people in particular need to benefit.

In order to achieve this there must be financial assistance and deeper relationships forged with the private sector, in order to help the most disadvantaged young people stay in the education system. For example, through continuation and expansion of BMC's full fee remitted Higher Education scholarships and bursaries for students who are the first generation in their family to enter further or higher education. For example the Aisling Bursary is an initiative between West Belfast Partnership Board, the Andersonstown News and local employers and provides a small grant payment to West Belfast residents who are enrolled in a full- or part-time higher education course.

Encouragement and support also needs to be widely available via expansion of the University of Ulster's Step Up initiative to schools throughout West Belfast. Local Champions of Learning schemes should be promoted by the Enterprise Council and LEAs in coordination with schools in the area. Speakers should be invited from a range of backgrounds, from self employment, businesses etc. to talk of their own experiences and to act as a role model. Particular emphasis should be made to identify role models for young men. Expansion of peer support (e.g. Widen Access and Participation programme) from College and University

students is required for schools throughout West Belfast - linking in with the new Springfield Road Campus.

6.5.2 Raise Standards

There is a requirement to create schools fit for the 21st century in order to ensure that educational attainment is raised across West Belfast. Investment in the educational infrastructure will provide opportunities to develop extended schools and link in with key community facilities.

The School Improvement Programme was launched in 1998 and provides a comprehensive strategy, involving all education partners, to raise standard in schools. It is concerned with tackling low achievement and raising standards for all, in all types of schools. Some £70 million has been committed within the past four years to the programme. To improve the life chances of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, an investment of £8m over two years will be used for the establishment of multi-disciplinary support teams that provide support services to schools.

Education and learning is the key to improving young people's long term outcomes. However, there are disparities in educational attainment throughout the area. It is crucial that this gap is closed and that schools in Belfast reach and surpass those across Belfast and the rest of Northern Ireland. Therefore comprehensive research into school performance data needs to be undertaken, under performance identified and recommendations for action developed. Schools are fundamental to retaining and attracting families and have a central role to play within communities.

Delivering relevant education and learning is a challenge. The move to a skills, rather than subject focused curriculum, emphasise the relevance of attaining work based skills that employers require (e.g. Science and Skills Programme). In many West Belfast schools there are major issues of attendance and behaviour to address. Support is required to help reduce the number of "status zero" young people in the area. Overall there must be a collaborative approach to education amongst schools in the area – working towards the sharing of knowledge, facilities and good practice. Adequate funding needs to be available to help teachers to further develop their skills in the classroom.

6.5.3 Integrated Services for Young People

There is a move towards new and innovative working practices and a focus upon integrated service provision for young people. The Department of Education's (DE) Integrated Children's Services programme supports the delivery to integrated services to children in order to enhance early years provision and support developmental and learning activities.

The Health Action Zone put in a successful application to the Integrated Development Fund for £5m in 2004. It will pilot a new approach to addressing the very complex needs of children and young people in North and West Belfast. It offers a new model of partnership working at local level in which schools, together with all the relevant local agencies and local people, will play an integral role.

Local Implementation Action Groups (LIAGs) had responsibility for the design of the work programme and were able to use the funding available to build a platform of support services to focus on the greatest social and educational needs identified in its area. Services will be delivered that will demonstrate direct benefit and obtain real and measurable results. Ultimately the purpose will be to change how services are developed and delivered in order to improve outcomes for children. The Integrated Services for Children and Young People (ISCYP) Executive Group (chaired by the WBP) will oversee delivery.

The central theme of the programme will be the development of full service children's communities. The LIAG's intention is to initiate a change from 'full service schools', which serve their communities, to 'full service communities' in which schools will play their part. The LIAG is described further in Section 9.

6.5.4 Provide Additional Learning Opportunities

There is a distinct lack of after school provision across West Belfast. Out of hours learning initiatives must be financially supported with long term funding required to support and extend current initiatives such as Easter Schools and Summer Schools. These programmes should be tailored to meet the need for Basic Skills and for support in the run up to GCSEs and key learning stages. Additional out of hour provision for children and young people with special educational needs is critical.

Study Support Centres Funding should be provided for the coordinated development of a satellite of fully resourced homework clubs and study support centres in schools and community based settings.

6.5.5 Establish Links between Parents, Schools and Communities

The extended schools initiative provides a vehicle to engage and promote parental involvement in the education of their children and in accessing additional service provision. The promotion of schools as a major resource and service hub within communities is an exciting prospect for West Belfast.

Extended schools are designed to make the school 'the hub of the local community' and funding is targeted at disadvantaged pupils. An Extended School is one which works with pupils, families and community, builds partnerships with other schools, the further education sector and statutory, voluntary, business and community organisations, provides families with opportunities for lifelong learning and personal development and uses its accommodation flexibly. Extended schools in West Belfast engage in collaboration and partnership with neighbouring schools and statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations and complement the aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Partnerships and the WBP education subgroup.

There is a broad consensus that intervention in the early years is among the most effective means of improving educational performance and outcomes. Such interventions are an important facet of strategies that help to lift children out of cycles of deprivation and onto positive trajectories. The evidence is promising, and suggests that well-designed programmes raise educational attainment and achieve other, positive, adult outcomes. The most successful programmes are defined by early and intensive intervention and include a follow-through component in later stages of the child's development (e.g. Sure Start).

Improved parental involvement and support is needed in order to raise attendance levels and improve behaviour and increased efforts should be directed at building school-parent relationships and gaining full parental cooperation. For example the Parenting Support Programme running in West Belfast is designed to increase parental involvement in children's education and enable them to become effective partners of the school. Continued funding needs to be in place for the development of frameworks for parent/education forums to identify and address parental issues and concerns regarding the education of their children and to support the development of greater school, parent and community links.

Full Service Community Schools Network is a consortium of extended schools managed by BELB in partnership with CCMS. The work coordinates a range of statutory, community, voluntary and business organisations at the school to support teachers, pupils and families. It acts as a bridge between the community and the schools bringing a full range of support services on to the school site while also making the school a resource at the centre of disadvantaged communities. Community resources are brought onto school premises so that everyone has access to them, thus turning schools into hubs or centres. The optimum point of access was via the Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum and social workers, dental health workers, school nurses and counsellors were involved. Mentoring is an important part of the programme. The accredited training programme aimed to increase adult employability, while enabling them to contribute to their community.

An independent evaluation of the programme concluded that benefits included increased attendance for targeted pupils, reduced suspensions, increases in the number of pupils with five or more GCSE A-C grade, increased returnees to 6th form and higher levels of interest in pupils' schoolwork and future career.

There is a need to extend and modify the Community in Schools initiatives to support primary and second level schools working together in order to achieve higher retention rates of young people at risk from early drop-out, to achieve positive transitions from primary to secondary school and higher transfers to further and higher education and to raise achievement levels amongst the at risk groups. There needs to be greater flexibility in the curriculum and financial support for the coordination of the expanded initiative. Additional funding to support the greater application of adult and community outreach education and schools is needed.

6.5.6 Alternative Education Support

A combined activity programme must ensure that young people benefit from a modern, supportive learning environment that increases the engagement of young people and their parents. Investment needs to promote an inclusive education system by ensuring that local people are skilled to take advantage of emerging employment opportunities.

Too many young people fall through the system. There needs to be more integrated working practices. The priority is to help young people to remain in full-time education and therefore there must be more integration and partnership working between alternative education providers and schools. There is a need for increased funding to develop and support strategies to prevent young people dropping out of full-time education. Adequate financial support should be made available from DE to support the alternative education sector in its work with young people who are out of mainstream education. Innovative programmes should be extended (e.g. Citywise Education Project, Lagan Valley Education Project, Pathways, Conway Education Centre).

The Pathways Project provides a programme of personal development and structured learning to young people who are experiencing difficulty in mainstream education. It is important that this initiative has links to the new employment sites within and outside West Belfast. As an incentive, a back to education/training allowance should be made available to young people who have left school early and who wish to return to college, education or training.

Modules aimed at preparing young people for employment should be compulsory at GCSE level. These would cover competencies such as team working, time-management, project delivery etc. The Springfield Road campus aims to deliver such a programme with FE students.

There is successful Alternative Education Provision (AEP) in West Belfast and Shankill, which contributes to the AEP Forum and the LIAG.

Newstart is an Alternative Education Project working with some of the most marginalised, disaffected and vulnerable young people from West, North and South Belfast. The project has members across all of Belfast working to address issues facing groups working in the marginalised education sector and advance policy in this area.

The Education Centre on the Springfield Road targets disaffected and/or excluded young people of school age who are outside mainstream educational provision (7-25 years). Newstart provides a structured curriculum to include English, maths, ICT, citizenship, world of work, vocational training, life skills, out-door pursuits, music and art. Parents, including young mothers, of referred young people and from the local community also receive support and outreach is provided to detached older young people disengaged from existing youth provision. In-school support programmes are also offered covering specifically designed courses on drug, alcohol, substance abuse awareness, personal development, car crime and its consequences, self harm and suicide awareness, domestic violence and emotional well-being.

DE is currently undertaking a review of AEP provision and it is recommended that the AEP Forum must be central to any preventative approach – providing in-school support and training.

6.5.7 Improved Careers Guidance

Currently the Careers Service provides a careers information, advice and guidance service to all post primary schools, AEPs and Training for Success training organisations. It provides careers guidance interviews in Falls Road and Andersonstown Jobcentres on request. DEL and DE are to introduce a joint strategy for an impartial all-age careers education, information, advice and guidance in. The finalised Strategy and Action Plan will be published in summer 2008.

Information resource units should be established in a range of locations to provide opportunities for parents and pupils to get involved in investigating careers options. These should also provide information on relevant statutory and local services. This service could be maintained at the Springfield Campus and could facilitate computer and internet access.

There needs to be pre-GCSE career guidance with parents and children. Career guidance/mentoring must be adequately funded within schools, with ongoing support to train teachers in careers guidance as well as to ensure teachers have the time and resources to update information and build relationships with local businesses. Schools, education and training providers and employers must work in partnership to assist young people aged 14-19 years find the career paths which offer them the best prospects. Employers should be actively encouraged to get involved in school activities via the Enterprise Council and Employers Forum.

In order to prepare young people for the workplace, skills which would enhance employability need to be incorporated in personal, social and education classes (e.g. motivation, team building, personal development, with support from peer education activities). There must be a focus upon increasing work experience opportunities for year 12 pupils through partnership working between schools and local employers. Work experience should be built into the curriculum in order to offer each young person a variety of experiences.

7. INVESTMENT, ENTERPRISE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Improve the economic viability of West Belfast through attracting inward investment, developing tourism and supporting and encouraging enterprise.

7.1 Introduction

Increasing economic growth will be a key element in driving the regeneration of West Belfast. A number of interventions have been identified to take forward the economic agenda. These are:

- Adopt a Strategic Approach to Development;
- Attract Inward Investment;
- Increase Enterprise;
- Support Business Infrastructure; and
- Develop Tourism.

These interventions are in line with the PfG's priority of growing a dynamic and innovative economy.

7.2 Adopt a Strategic Approach to Development

Central and local government need to adopt a more strategic and coordinated approach in order to address historical ad hoc economic development and maximise the existing and potential regeneration opportunities across West Belfast.

All economic, physical, social and community development activity must support and fulfill the overarching vision for West Belfast and for Belfast as a whole. This will be achieved by the following:

7.2.1 Use of the Strategic Regeneration Framework in Decision Making

There must be full statutory weight given to the strategic priorities and related interventions outlined within the current document.

Planning and investment activity will be made in accordance with the wider strategic objectives and long term vision for West Belfast in addition to supporting evidence from specific master planning exercises, feasibility studies, research and consultation.

The SRF for West Belfast will act as a regeneration plan for the area. It will detail key strategic sites, highlight major investment opportunities for the area. It will provide possible links between projects and indicate what needs to be done to bring about real change for the population.

There needs to be a dedicated long-term commitment to core fund/second WBP posts in order to provide a joint resource for the work of the Partnership, the Sub Committees, West Belfast Traders Forum and of the SRF. It is anticipated that the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Strategic Regeneration will work towards fulfilling the vision set out in the SRF.

They will be supported by a range of staff to include Housing & Environment Officer, (currently seconded from NIHE), Planning Officer (usually seconded from Planning), Health & Well Being officer (a placement funded by Belfast Trust), Education Officer (Post vacant), Taskforce (DETI pays for the secondment for staff to work between the WBP and Greater Shankill partnership) and Economic Development (funded by BCC/DETI). It is recommended that funding/secondment is explored in relation to the area of community safety. West Belfast Partnership will also have a role in establishing and monitoring indicators to measure the impact of the SRF priorities.

7.2.2 Protection of Land for Industrial and Employment Use

The relocation and subsequent loss of existing employers and employment land within the study area is a growing problem. In many cases the industrial and business use of land has ceased in favour of residential development.

Therefore, a more coordinated approach must be adopted in order to protect existing employment sites and to proactively identify and protect possible land opportunities. The creation and use of a central and local government land database to identify and register strategic development sites and provide information on land ownership must be explored. This would be complemented by an examination of planning, or land vesting powers, in order to facilitate their purchase and development for commercial and industrial use.

7.2.3 Review of Relevant Policy

In order to achieve the SRF's economic regeneration objectives and attract investment there must be research undertaken to identify and review of relevant planning and funding policy in order to ascertain any direct or indirect barriers to development.

In particular the SRF wants to overturn the current constraints on office development in excess of 2,000 sq ft outside Belfast City Centre and Invest NI's current restrictions on financial assistance for new hotel developments within a 10 mile radius of Belfast city centre. This prohibits development, investment and competition within the area. There needs to be further guidance on West Belfast's qualification as a NTSN area under the agency's support for tourism businesses.

7.2.4 Develop Hubs of Economic Activity

There are a range of unexploited opportunities for employment development which would lead to economic growth in several key sites and locations. The proximity of sites to the International and City Airports, the motorway network and the ferry terminal provide ease of connectivity and opportunities for businesses. A number of potential economic hubs have been identified throughout the Framework area.

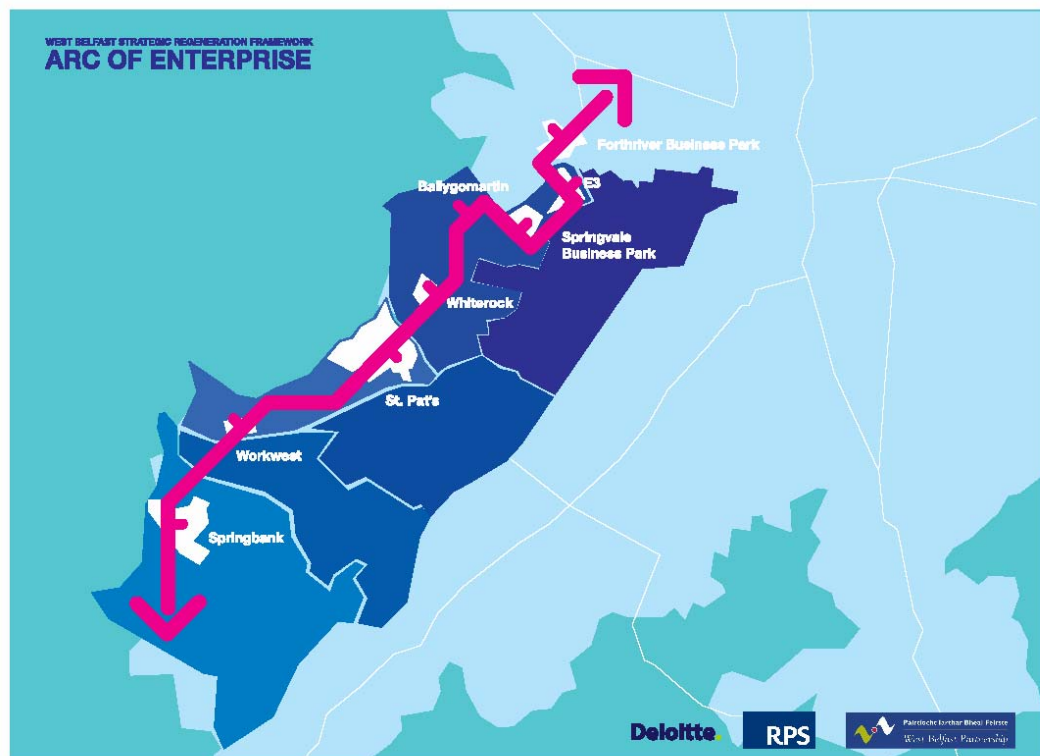
The **Arc of Enterprise** connects the following industrial sites:

- The **Forth River** site is owned by Invest NI. The estimated cost of the regeneration scheme in 2003 was approximately £26 million. Contributions towards this figure were estimated as follows: Invest NI £14m, EU Peace II £2m and Private Sector £10m. The site is marketed as having the infrastructure in place for serviced sites and being able to accommodate approximately 220,000 sq ft of business and industrial space suited to new and expanding indigenous companies and Foreign Direct Investment;
- BMC's proposed **Springfield Road Campus** will focus on Employability, Entrepreneurship and Enterprise i.e. E3. The involvement of local businesses and communities will be facilitated by the proximity of the Millennium Community Outreach Centre which houses both the Enterprise Council and Employment Services Board, the key agencies which broker links with industry and the community in North and West Belfast. There needs to be concerted efforts between the campus, trainers and voluntary and community sector to ensure the inclusion of local people as a result of this venture. The Forth River site and the Springfield Road Campus together offer a unique opportunity to support enterprise development, neighbourhood regeneration and the attraction of inward investment. It will also provide a much needed resource for local companies;
- **Springvale Business Park** was originally part of the original Springvale Masterplan. It was designed to be an integrated project with associated developments in housing, and education in the area. Residents include FG Wilson and Andor which provide high value added jobs;
- **Farset Enterprise Park** on the Springfield Road is situated in an easily accessible location in West Belfast in close proximity to Springvale Business Park;
- **Whiterock Business Park** was originally an army site which was redeveloped by Invest NI with infrastructure. The site is a combination of flexible business units (with 1000 sq. foot bays) and serviced sites. APT has taken a 5 year lease on $\frac{3}{4}$ of the flexible business units the company carries out research and provides good quality jobs. The Park has been actively marketed and sites are currently in negotiation;
- **Glenbank** is a sister building to Whiterock. 2.9 acres of available land and there is interest in the sites. ISD, a mechanical electrical engineering firm has taken 1/3 of the building. This offers graduate level jobs. The business site is considered to be a good size as it matches the volume of economic activity within the surrounding area;
- The **Glen Road Industrial Estate** dates from the 1980s and is currently full. Resident firms include Andersonstown News and Work West. Work West have bought an adjacent site to develop for social economy activity. Initially the park was difficult to market but now has a lot of vitality; and the new social economy village is due to open in the autumn '08.
- The **St. Pats/Glenmona** site is designated for employment through the dBMAP process. This area currently accommodates a Diocesan school and associated buildings, on a large undeveloped site within the development limit. The long term vision for the site includes mixed use development, with a strong focus on providing new modern employment facilities in a strategic location with good links to the M1. Both this site and Forth River offer significant potential in terms of employment generation, which needs to be supported with a strong investment strategy as well as local and international support;
- The **Kennedy Way Industrial Estate** has excellent links to the busy district of Boucher Road and beyond via the M1. The area has recently undergone major industrial development; and
- **Springbank** is the largest business park in the Framework area. It is considered to be very successful with good links to the airport. It largely consists of FDI clients including

Diffusion Antibodies. Glenwood Enterprise centres are also located there. Clients have largely bought their own premises, as opposed to renting facilities.

The strategic connectivity of these areas must be built into the planning and infrastructure framework with specific sites protected for commercial and industrial development. Specific links between the sites must be identified and relationships developed and strengthened (e.g. between Whiterock Business Park and the BMC Whiterock Campus and to maximise on the proximity of Springfield Campus and Forth River). Invest NI and other relevant parties must collectively promote these sites as a single development opportunity as outlined in the Arc of Enterprise Model forwarded by the Taskforces. See Figure 6.1.

Figure: 6.1
Arc of Enterprise Map



Source: West Belfast and Greater Shankill Taskforce/RPS/Deloitte

A feasibility study is currently being conducted into the development of a **commercial hub** within the boundaries of Kennedy Way, Glen Road and the Upper Section of the Falls Road. This project is known as the **Andersonstown Gateway**. The Enterprise Council, on behalf of DSD, are currently taking forward this work which explores a number of sites which have the potential to provide sustainable investment opportunities that will benefit local communities. Sites for consideration include:

- the sewage treatment work and derelict service station at the bottom of the Kennedy Way;
- unused properties and land in the Blackstaff Industrial Estate;
- redundant BCC utility site at the upper end of the Kennedy Way;
- Andersonstown Barracks site;
- Falls Bus Depot;
- Falls Park; and
- Gransha Shops.

Andersonstown has great potential to become a retail core within West Belfast. This area needs a strong public realm strategy and is expected to develop into a more mixed use retail centre with residential and commercial uses being reintroduced where possible. Connectivity with the Boucher Road is also being explored. This area is important in terms of access to jobs and the creation of links to South Belfast's Boucher Road. The feasibility study and its aim to provide strategic and sustainable development for this part of the Framework area are aligned with the objectives of the current work.

A key strategic driver for the regeneration of the Colin area will be the development of a town centre. Presently there is a very limited 'community feeling' within Colin. The **Colin Gateway Project** is an important pre-cursor to wider development which will include the redevelopment of the Dairy Farm and development of a Children's services hub and a Health and Well-being Centre. The Gateway Project will not maximise its potential if it is seen as a standalone project - "the Gateway needs to be a Gateway into something". A masterplan is currently being developed.

An enhanced town centre will attract new services to the area, providing employment and further opportunities to develop the local economy. The growing population, poor transport links and limited local services, lends potential for growing existing businesses and starting new ones, including social enterprises.

At present the **Glen Complex in Lenadoon** consists of ground floor retail and workshop units, first floor community projects and second floor offices and workshop. It sits in an 8 acre site that was acquired by North and West Housing Association in Sept 2003 and they have developed the rest of the site as social housing. The building is in a poor state of repair although structurally sound. The site on which the Glen Community Complex sits has been set aside as part of a mixed use planning application with provision for community use. An Economic Appraisal is currently being undertaken.

In order to address areas of major dereliction physical redevelopment a masterplan for the Falls area was funded by DSD under Renewing Communities. This will provide a vehicle to coordinate and orchestrate public sector investment and leverage in private sector investment. The draft masterplan has been completed and was submitted to DSD in early March 2008 for consideration.

Within the PfG and Investment Strategy NI there is a strong focus on attracting and developing knowledge drivers such as universities and research institutions. The Falls area of West Belfast is in a strong position to develop a **Knowledge Corridor** which would build upon the reputation and close proximity of the educational and research institutions of St Mary's University and the Royal Victoria Hospital. This should also foster connections between the Mater Hospital, City hospital, Queens University Belfast and Belfast Metropolitan College.

7.2.5 Connect People to Jobs

In order to obtain long term economic sustainability it is crucial that the West Belfast population does not solely rely upon job creation within the area. Instead there is a need to significantly improve connectivity within West Belfast and, between West Belfast and job opportunities located in the City Centre, Lisburn and MELs.

The proposed Rapid Transit System for Belfast and related WWAY for West Belfast must improve connectivity within West Belfast and provide links to other areas outside the vicinity.

It is crucial that WWAY provides increased connectivity to employment opportunities to all the inhabitants of West Belfast. In particular, those people living in the Poleglass, Colin, Twinbrook and new Hannahstown neighbourhood. This concept and the potential for private investor contributions as a condition of development are discussed further in Section 8.

7.3 Attract Inward Investment

There is a desire to market West Belfast as an area with a wealth of investment opportunities in order that it will be a “destination” for businesses - known for its workforce, opportunities and facilities. In order to achieve this, barriers to investment must be identified, a package of incentives must be developed and a proactive and coordinated effort must be made to better promote the considerable land assets that exist.

7.3.1 Address Barriers to Investment

There is a need to identify and address barriers to investment within specific geographical locations in West Belfast (e.g. physical decline, poor public transport, high congestion, poor road infrastructure, high rental costs, lack of surrounding facilities, inadequate support services) in order to limit vacancies and ensure benefits for the local community.

Urban and regional gateways are the first glimpse of West Belfast to potential investors and tourists. They are highly visible and new developments and improved signage would do much to improve the image of the areas as a whole thereby stimulating business investment. Within West Belfast the following Gateways have been identified - Castle Street, Broadway, Kennedy Way, road to the International Airport, Colin Urban Zone, Lower Falls, Divis Street, Grosvenor Road and Andersonstown Gateway. There must be an enhancement of the Arterial Routes Project to include all these areas. Currently only the Lower Falls Road and Upper Springfield Road have been identified for consideration.

In order to attract large scale investment there needs to be improved connectivity to major road networks and better road links between economic development sites. It is particularly important to provide the road and service infrastructure to support the Arc of Enterprise.

To improve the efficiency of existing sites there must be investment in existing employment locations which have a long-term sustainable economic role but are in need of investment to upgrade or improve the appeal to existing and future businesses. A range of competitive, high quality and accessible business infrastructure supports such as ancillary and/or shared services is required to meet the needs of modern businesses. There is a general need to simplify and reduce bureaucracy around planning permission and grant applications. For more detail on physical regeneration see Section 8.

7.3.2 Brand West Belfast as a Place to Invest

West Belfast needs to have a coordinated marketing initiative with BCC which will clearly brand the area as a place in which to invest. Due to the scale of the opportunities at Forth River Business Park (right), it is necessary that West Belfast is marketed as a potential location for growth sector industries and a major employment location.



The **Forth River** Business Park is currently vacant, with 12.7 acres of serviced sites being actively marketed to Invest NI clients. Invest NI have identified a range of options for the site moving forward as follows:

- Continued marketing of entire area as serviced sites;
- Design a building capable of a manufacturing/office environment & obtain planning permission;
- Construct 1 or more buildings. These would be owned, managed & leased to Invest NI to client companies

It is suggested that Forth River could provide a range of follow-on units in the range of 2,000 - 10,000 sq ft for local businesses which link into the facilities at the Springfield Road Campus, in addition to larger business space. The site has the potential to be very successful given its links to the City Centre.

The scale is large enough to accommodate a number of significant and larger businesses and should be marketed to attract the emerging creative industries/new media, service and medical R&D sectors. The location would be suitable for the proposed Belfast World Trade Centre.

It is situated in an interface area and there is a need to develop this site as a shared space through the cooperation of West, Greater Shankill and the other Belfast Area Partnership Boards. The proposed Cottonmill and Farset Way developments would follow shared space design and principals.

7.3.3 Champion Investment

There needs to be a cultural shift towards the encouragement of private investment which will provide opportunities for increased economic activity and change for the community. It is important that political leaders as well as private sector leaders act as Champions for the area - encouraging investment that is in line with the overall strategic vision for West Belfast. This must involve increased dialogue with the private sector and encouragement of business development.

7.3.4 Targeted Investment Initiative

The area will benefit from the development of a detailed time-bound Action Plan to maximise and promote investment opportunities in West Belfast.

Invest NI needs to strategically identify potential investors and actively promote and market West Belfast. The agency needs to agree and work towards meeting specific inward investment targets for West Belfast in conjunction with the local business community.

The responsibility of attracting and sustaining Foreign Direct Investment must go beyond one agency. There is a need to improve and develop links between Invest NI, DETI, LEAs, Employers' Forum, Enterprise Council, local government and local businesses. The West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council should continue to provide advocacy for local business interests.

7.3.5 Provide Investment Incentives

It is recommended that West Belfast's share of new inward investment will reflect the area's high deprivation levels. There is a need for policy changes and initiatives which would give West Belfast a competitive advantage to enable it to become more financially attractive to investors. The use of tax incentives, reduced rents, direct financial incentives or grants to encourage private investment within identified enterprise zones are required, in addition to rates and rent reductions for businesses in areas of economic decline.

However, care must be taken to ensure that investment is long term and brings sustainable employment, rather than driven solely by short term financial incentives.

7.4 Increase Enterprise

Business start-up is a vital route into employment for many people. As noted previously West Belfast would benefit from new businesses establishing in the area. There is a need to encourage and support business start ups through fostering an enterprise culture within the West Belfast.

7.4.1 Foster an Entrepreneurial Culture

There is a need for a specific Enterprise Awareness campaign targeted at the residents of West Belfast and local business people must be calibrated through ongoing relationships with schools, Local Enterprise Agencies (LEAs), ESB (Employment Services Board) and the Enterprise Council.

The Enterprise Council is currently developing recommendations to increase enterprise and entrepreneurship in West Belfast. The Enterprise Council's role requires development in order to assist with the implementation of these recommendations in order to promote the development of local businesses.

It is important to make links in order to cross promote knowledge, skills and opportunities. For example, forging links between local people and St Mary's to maximise and increase the accessibility of their work programmes on entrepreneurship. There is considerable potential for the community and FE/HE sectors to build upon the work that they are doing to raise enterprise awareness and this also includes working with migrant groups (e.g. Whiterock Campus) to raise awareness of opportunities of starting a business.

Renewing Communities identified the need to foster an entrepreneurial spirit at an early age, particularly in areas of greatest socio-economic deprivation. There has to be an expansion of these targeted initiatives (e.g. Schools Enterprise Programme) across West Belfast in connection with the voluntary and community sector and other relevant agencies. Young people who are not currently in mainstream education should be specifically targeted through Alternative Education Providers and youth outreach work.

The Springfield Road Campus also provides opportunities to link schools and businesses in order to make entrepreneurship more accessible for young people. However, it is important that all sections of the community have access to information and support and a proactive approach is needed to ensure this. This is explored further in Section 7.

7.4.2 Increase Business Start-Ups

It is apparent that the bureaucracy around starting a business needs to be decreased in order to reduce barriers to business creation. It is suggested that “self-employment” or “working for yourself” is more accessible language than “starting your own business.”

Fear of debt, a lack of business knowledge and uncertainty around financial support are significant barriers to becoming your own boss. The unemployed are at further risk of exclusion from self-employment due to the benefits trap. As a result there should be increased access to finance for people who are unemployed and benefits should be retained on a decreasing scale to cover exploration and business start-up. Currently people on New Deal for young people or New Deal 25+ can “Test Trade” for up to 26 weeks. This means that you can continue to receive benefits, equivalent to Job Seekers Allowance plus £750 grant assistance which is payable in two instalments. This assistance needs to be expanded to people across the benefits system.

Invest NI have revised their Go For It Start a Business programme. The new programme will have an enterprise awareness element which specifically targets Neighbourhood Renewal areas at pre-start in addition to a new start-up and growth element. Although it provides useful practical information and support, from April 2008 the programme ceased to provide a start-up grant to full- and part-time students. The programme’s IT training offerings have also been reduced. This lack of finance will act as a barrier to enterprise for people who are less well off and it is recommended that the grant element is reintroduced.

In general there is a feeling amongst the local business community that there is a lack of Invest NI support for non export focused start-ups. Invest NI and the preferred delivery agent must work closely with Neighbourhood Partnerships in order to develop this programme to meet local needs. The new programme will skew resources towards those with growth potential and the ability to become Invest NI clients.

7.4.3 Increase the Role of LEAs

A personalised approach to business start-up has proved effective and there is potential for Local Enterprise Agencies (LEAs) to play a central role in this. The new Start a Business programme anticipates that delivery agents will be responsible for localised recruitment to include mobilising local networks and delivering outreach initiatives.

LEAs must be funded to explore and encourage enterprise and to play an active role in business development and support – providing a mentoring role and encouraging business skills development. This needs to be specifically targeted at young entrepreneurs and new enterprises rather than purely providing managed workspace.

A targeted mentoring programme would seek to match up the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business practitioners with small business owners who need practical and strategic one-to-one advice and guidance. The specialist fields for mentor engagement typically include general management, financial structuring, production planning, marketing, distribution, corporate organisation and strategic planning.

7.4.4 Develop and Support the Social Economy Sector

West Belfast has a fledgling Social Economy Sector with immense drive and potential and there is a growing need to help new and existing social enterprises to develop and grow into sustainable and viable businesses.

Social Economy Belfast (SEB) is led by Work West and is a partnership between NICEM, East Belfast Enterprise and South Belfast Partnership Board. The Invest NI Social Entrepreneurship Programme encourages community and voluntary groups to become sustainable through the development of social enterprises. Work West is currently the delivery agent for North and West Belfast and Lisburn. Groups and individuals are offered free access to a wide-ranging and flexible training and mentoring programme in order to help develop new skills and build on existing ones. The Social Entrepreneurship Programme has been given a short extension until September 2008 and will focus on providing support to three social economy projects and a small number with growth potential. This will be in preparation for the opening of the Work West Social Economy Village. It will be important that this business support is sustained.

Funding from the Integrated Development Fund was approved for a £1m Social Economy Fund to support recruitment of individuals from 'hard to reach' groups. However flexible solutions are required to stimulate additional social economy activity and social enterprise start up in the long term. It is important that adequate support services are provided in order to support businesses as they develop and expand.

Colin Care has been set up as a social economy enterprise. In delivering excellence in a Domiciliary Care Service, high quality staff are recruited from within the Colin area, inducted and trained to deliver a broad range of tasks. The initial financial support for this company was secured from Lisburn Strategic Partnership and the Lisburn Health and Social Care Group. All profit made is reinvested in the community and it provides much needed quality employment in Colin, providing employees with higher levels of skill and experience that over time will enable them to develop a proper career path. Colin Care has developed five social economy proposals to increase employment opportunities and skills within the local population. Their model concentrates on developing partnerships with the private as well as the public sector. They wish to attract secondments with business related skills (marketing, sales, operations, business plan development), rather than reliance on short-term staff contracts.

Current procurement policy provides a barrier (e.g. to tender companies need one year previous experience), therefore there needs to be policy changes to remove this barrier and to enable public sector commitment to supporting a percentage of services through social economy projects via service level agreements.

The overall aim must be that a percentage of public services (e.g. care, environmental, transport, childcare) should be delivered by the community through social economy projects.

Work West has developed a Black Book Trade Directory for social enterprises across Northern Ireland to encourage the purchasing of services from the sector. This needs to be proactively marketed and supported throughout the private and public sector.

There needs to be strong Government funding and support for Social Economy Network (NI) Ltd (SEN) as representative body of the NI social economy sector and assistance for the Social Economy Forum to facilitate joint working between Government and Network members and to facilitate the purchasing of services.

7.5 Support Business Infrastructure

DETI has a role in ensuring the provision of the infrastructure for a modern economy. Invest NI is tasked with supporting business growth and inward investment, promoting innovation, research and development and in-company training, encouraging exports and supporting local economic development and company start up.

West Belfast must safeguard existing employment and encourage further growth in those businesses with potential. It is important that businesses are linked to appropriate networks and that high growth companies in key sectors contribute to the growth of the regional economy.

7.5.1 Increase Business Sustainability

Within West Belfast it is crucial that there is a further emphasis on monitoring the local economic climate, identifying and supporting businesses at risk, developing action plans to mitigate movement out of West Belfast, ensuring eligible businesses are aware of and can access available finances and ensuring potential winners have access to finance packages. Political leverage and support is required to make this happen.

It is important that businesses are encouraged and provided the opportunities to market their products and services to organisations both outside and, within the area. Locally based relationships will help sustain and build employment opportunities and will help boost the local economy.

7.5.2 Explore Local Government Opportunities

Many local businesses fall outside Invest NI's remit. BCC's Economic Development Plan has the following objectives: Business Development, Talent and Community Economic Regeneration. It aims to stimulate SME growth and competitiveness, promote and enhance development in key growth sectors, encourage economic growth through the development of business incubation facilities, establish a World Trade Centre facility in Belfast and to promote entrepreneurship within Belfast. In particular the plan aims to support area-based economic development activity and to co-ordinate local employability activity in the city.

It is suggested that BCC, in conjunction with political representatives and the Enterprise Council reconsider the feasibility of establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) arrangement in West Belfast. This would enable businesses to play a more influential role in the regeneration of the local areas based on business empowerment and engagement with local government.

7.5.3 Provide Targeted Support for Local Businesses

The Enterprise Council will take the lead in developing a Small Business Network to identify issues and solutions and to bring greater coherence to the promotion and support for local businesses.

Targeted business support will be required to work with local people to increase their productivity and market share in order to generate higher quality employment opportunities and wages for local people. Retail and service companies are a valuable source of local employment and it is important to encourage these businesses to take up training and skills development. Networking amongst local businesses is another means of improving competitiveness and to exploit trading opportunities. There also needs to be provision for micro-businesses and the development of a comprehensive outreach programme of advice and mentoring – particularly in areas of tourism, crafts, arts and retail. Links should be developed within and across the sector, particularly to other fledgling enterprises (e.g. Conway Mill).

Residents and visitors need to understand, support and value the contribution of traders within the West Belfast economy by promoting local businesses through development and expansion of the BUY LOCAL campaign through the West Belfast Traders Forum.

7.5.4 Encourage Business Growth

In order that West Belfast can capture lower level inward investment from relocations and assist the growth of local companies, a broad range of accommodation for small and medium sized companies to include high quality, small office space, managed workshops and incubation space must be developed. The area needs quality and diverse start up space and there is a lack of business space available on flexible terms and conditions.

LEAs often experience problems in obtaining suitable workspace in order to enable companies within their site to grow. This shortage of workspace means that there is usually a waiting list for facilities. It is important that vacancies can occur to enable other small businesses avail of services. There is a steady demand for affordable, flexible space and the centres offering this type of accommodation are unable to accommodate demand.

There is a significant gap of accommodation in the 2000-3,000 sq ft range. Coordination of the opportunities around the Work West expansion, Forth River, Whiterock and Springfield Campuses may help alleviate this issue. There is a need for a strategic approach to capture the full range of needs and to enable progressive routes for new and established businesses.

However, LEAs must tailor their services to accommodate growing businesses in order to provide a smooth, seamless transition from incubation through to establishment and expansion.

In order to support this transition, Government held sites should exercise greater flexibility in setting rental rates and offering purchase options such as cooperative and co-ownership. Invest NI must enable the use of its vacant sites for non-Invest NI clients.

7.6 Develop Tourism

West Belfast has substantial potential to develop its current tourist activities in order to generate significant revenue for the area. As such, tourism will have a key part to play in West Belfast's wider economic regeneration.

7.6.1 Maximise Cultural Economic Opportunities

Cultural offerings such as heritage, language, music, sports and the arts must be strategically exploited in order to benefit West Belfast and drive forward the process of regeneration.

Over recent years there has been a renewal of interest in the Irish language which has seen the growth of its use as a medium of conversation and as an expression of cultural identity both for groups and for the individual. This has led to the establishment of Irish speaking communities, mini - gaeltachts in an urban setting, and to the establishment and growth of all-Irish schools, nursery, primary and secondary.

Gaillimh le Gaeilge project was set up "to further the position of Galway as the prime bilingual city in Ireland, to develop the Irish face of the city, with a view to reinforcing its attractiveness to visitors from other parts of the country as well as from abroad, particularly individuals with an interest in lesser-used languages and cultures (*Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge*, 1992: 5).

A large part of the work of Gaillimh le Gaeilge has been directed at persuading the business sector in the city to make a significant use of Irish for inside and outside signs and encouraging the use of Irish on stationery and packaging, as well as in direct interaction with customers. Additional forms of promotion targeting aim to affirm and publicise the position of Galway as the hub of Irish and Celtic culture. The business community is approached in a variety of ways, often with logistic support from the Galway Chamber of Commerce. Techniques include direct mailings, extensive personal contacts and the organisation of business lunches. Gaillimh le Gaeilge impresses on businesspeople that Irish is an irreplaceable element of the city's identity - a valuable corporate identity.

The line of argument deliberately stresses that a decision to increase the visibility of Irish must be made on the basis of good business sense, or possibly concern for the economic vitality of Galway. Once a shop decides to use Irish (which, in practice, means adding Irish alongside English rather than replacing English by Irish), Gaillimh le Gaeilge staff can assist with translations, devising slogans in Irish and sprucing up graphical design. Experience has shown the value of intervention at an early stage. For example, staff routinely monitor planning applications for new supermarkets or shop fronts, and approach businesses before decisions about outdoor or indoor signs are likely to have been made. Regular contact is also maintained with sign-writers, who are in a good position to persuade clients to move to bilingualism.

It is believed that the maintenance of Irish, far from being an economic hindrance, constitutes one of the chief assets that a city in a rather peripheral location can capitalise on. Although no hard data are available to estimate this effect, the recent but perceptible growth of cultural tourism throughout Western Europe provides a business argument for increasing the visibility of Irish.

Over the last ten years, society in the North of Ireland has changed a great deal. The Irish language now is stronger and subject to greater recognition than ever before, notably under the Good Friday Agreement and the international instrument, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Irish language remains, however, the only primary indigenous language that is not subject to specific domestic legislative protection. Welsh has been protected by the Welsh Language Act since 1993. Gàidhlig is now subject to the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. The Irish language is the subject of constitutional protections and the Official Languages Act 2003 in the South of Ireland, and has recently been adopted as an official language of the European Union. POBAL believe that the Northern Ireland Act provides a type of Constitution and this is where constitutional protection for language rights should be entrenched. POBAL believes that the Irish Language Act for NI is the next logical step for the UK government in relation to the Irish Language. A key area of development would lie within the provision of Irish within the statutory educational system to include the development of Irish-medium preschool, primary and secondary education in order to maximise access to Irish-medium education at each level and the development and adequate provision of Irish language educational books, software, and audio-visual and web-based teaching material.

Irish language economic development group Forbairt Feirste has organised start-up business programmes for Irish speakers, hosted seminars and conferences to encourage businesses to use Irish as a marketing tool and to increase customer satisfaction and to explain why Irish is good for business. It is the only economic agency “as Gaeilge” in Northern Ireland with a clear remit to employment opportunities and business start-up opportunities for Irish speakers.

In order to promote the Irish language within the economic sector Forbairt Feirste is implementing a two pronged strategy. This is as follows:

- training provision for the Irish speaking community so that the Irish speaking workforce will be confident and highly skilled; and
- promotion of Irish in every aspect of business life so that Irish speakers will have an advantage and extra opportunities in the job market.

Specific projects with which Forbairt Feirste are involved include:

- Forbairt 2000: Forbairt Feirste is providing the only Irish Medium training course for school leavers in the North of Ireland;
- *Gnó le Gaeilge*: This campaign encourages businesses and organisations in Belfast to implement a bilingual policy in relation to signage and services;
- An Nasc: A new purpose built £300,000 Irish Language centre on the Falls Road;
- Business Directory which lists all businesses in Belfast that provide bilingual services;
- Eurocraft, a transnational project which develops and promotes the craft sectors of the participating regions;
- Business Start-Up training in conjunction with LEDU, to date there have been 2 courses in Belfast and 1 in Derry;

- A basic Television Course in conjunction with Nemeton;
- Forum for Further Education and Training, a newly established forum that is researching the needs of the Irish speaking community with the aim of making appropriate provisions; and
- Seo chugainn an Béal Feirste Nua... a publicity campaign that aims to attract investment to the Irish speaking areas of Belfast.

The organisation's current adhoc funding must be replaced by core funding in order that it may develop and continue to impact positively upon the economy and image of West Belfast.

Provision of enterprise awareness and entrepreneurial skills training to the sector should be undertaken. This would include mini companies in Irish schools, role model visits and activities to encourage young Irish speakers to consider self employment as a career option. There are 7 Primary and 1 Post-Primary Irish medium schools in West Belfast, with a total of 1,452 pupils. Figures from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta indicate that within the Framework area there are also 7 Naíscoileanna which are attended by 251 children. The need to provide business start up and advice services to the Irish speaking community in the Irish language should be explored.

7.6.2 Develop the Gaeltacht Quarter

A Development Board, An Ceathrú Gaeltachta Teo has been set up to oversee the delivery of a Gaeltacht Quarter within the Framework area. The overall aim is to secure wealth creation by maximising the economic opportunities provided by a growing cluster of Irish Language and cultural based enterprises and activities which additionally have significant tourist potential. This is the first initiative of its kind anywhere on the island of Ireland.

There is an outstanding opportunity to foster the powerful and vibrant **Gaeltacht Quarter**, based on the Irish Language, culture and traditions. This would add to the rich diversity of Belfast for the enjoyment of its citizens and visitors and would contribute positively to the image of Belfast as an attractive location in which to work and live. There are a myriad of Irish language projects as well as arts, crafts and music initiatives which can be nurtured and developed to provide real job opportunities in West Belfast and beyond. The physical hub of the Gaeltacht Quarter is concentrated on an area around one square mile but with its focal point the Falls. It is bisected by the Falls Road, which provides the arterial route connecting the city centre to the wider West Belfast.

The Gaeltacht Quarter will link into citywide regeneration initiatives such as Cathedral Quarter, Titanic Quarter, Queen's Quarter and Laganside and there is a clear relationship between Gaeltacht and activities within the Springfield Campus and St Mary's University.

The establishment of the Gaeltacht Quarter will be a valuable cultural, community and economic asset and it is crucial that An Ceathrú is adequately resourced to develop the cultural cluster in West Belfast. There is a further opportunity to develop an economic niche through links with Republic of Ireland and media (e.g. TV, radio, film/editing). However, many allied cultural projects and organisations currently require support in order to reach their full potential and to forge links with wider opportunities across Belfast.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the potential links between the Gaeltacht Quarter and other Belfast quarters and neighbourhoods.

The Gaeltacht Quarter currently has funding for Business, Development and Marketing plans and one landmark project. As the North's only Irish language arts centre, An Cultúrlann MacAdaim Ó Fiaich is at the heart of this proposition. It is the lead in capital development related to Gaeltacht Quarter IDF bid and will see an extension to the existing building to include a ground floor exhibition space and roof garden. There may be an opportunity to acquire land at the back of the Culturlann which is owned by Springfield Charitable Association, this would greatly advance the building's versatility in the future.

There is a feeling that the Gaeltacht initiative needs to be re-launched in order to revitalise community support, awareness and ownership, due to delays in funding and support since the original concept. Given proper funding and a strategic and resourced development plan, the Irish language, music and culture can create additional entrepreneurial and economic activity.

Local people need to have a sense of identification. It is important that there are connections with the Gaeltacht that reach beyond the Falls area. For example, Upper Springfield Neighbourhood Partnership is planning to develop a pilot programme with an Irish language charter in order to use language as a regeneration tool.

Comparator Study: The Irish Quarter, Birmingham

The Irish Quarter is a new phase in the ongoing regeneration of Birmingham. The area is located to the south of the commercial centre, in Digbeth, and will be the focus of a £400 million development programme over the next five years. Birmingham's Irish Quarter has existed in practice for some 50 years, mainly situated around St Anne's Church and community club where many of the Irish Community initially settled.

Whilst the community itself has now dispersed, there is a strong affinity with the area, as it is home to a wealth of Irish based businesses, The Irish Club and the headquarters of the Irish Forum which represents in excess of 70 Irish based organisations. Digbeth is the location of the world's third largest St Patrick's Day parade, attracting over 80,000 visitors every March creating substantial opportunities for the businesses in the area. A need was identified for development activity to officially recognise the area's Celtic connections. The Irish Quarter is located close to the commercial centre of Birmingham and is therefore well placed for future growth and expansion.

There is the potential to develop links with this area and others.

St Mary's University (right) is currently the base of a DE Resource Unit for Irish medium schools and it is a vital and central landmark for Gaeltacht Quarter and the West Belfast community. St Mary's is going through a period of change and there are opportunities to offer more training and learning programmes to local people and to play a more active role in the cultural identity of the Falls. Proposals for the Farset Way connect a number of assets in West Belfast to include St Mary's. Significant changes are proposed to change the appearance of the area into a softer, more relaxed environment. The Farset Way is discussed further in Section 8.



An Economic Appraisal was undertaken on behalf of **Pobal**, the umbrella organisation for Irish speaking Groups to establish an Irish Language Education and Visitor Centre with archive facilities, associated bilingual service provision, activities and educational enhancement to target sections of the population (including researchers, English and Irish-medium schools and tourists) and to the wider public. The Centre would explore and explain the development of the Irish language and Irish-speaking community and would be a hub and focal point within the Gaeltacht Quarter of West Belfast. The former Beechmount leisure site was the preferred option for the centre and Forbairt Feirste have plans to develop a purpose built theatre/arts venue in this area. Partial funding for a substantial piece of public art has already been found. There may be an opportunity to link Pobal's concept with St Mary's DE Resource Unit.

Irish language media plays a prominent role of the promotion of the language in the area. There is immense potential to develop a creative industry hub with a focus upon promoting and developing the Irish language. Raidió Fáilte, based on the Falls Road is Belfast's first Irish language radio station. Lá Nua Irish language newspaper is also published in West Belfast. Aisling Ghéar and independent Irish language film companies. Plus there is the potential to attract Irish media such as TG4, Telegael, RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta and other broadcasters to the cultural cluster in the West of the city.

The media facilities at the Springfield Road campus will offer access to industry standard digital media facilities and could provide opportunities for Irish language broadcast media. It is envisaged that the campus will offer short industry standard digital editing courses, television and radio presentation courses and professional and television feature/programme production, professional graphic design for film and television, professional set design for drama and factual programming and training. Students will be encouraged to develop new media business ideas and the centre will support business start-ups and assist existing SMEs develop and innovate. This could help foster an economic niche through the clustering of independent studios and provision of space and services for small production houses.

The **Conway Mill** is held in trust for the benefit of the local community by the Conway Street Community Enterprises Project Ltd. The company wishes to develop the mill with the aim of encouraging local people to access educational and employment opportunities. The mill will become a Centre of Excellence for the incubation of small arts and crafts businesses and the focal point for the clustering of "creative sector" businesses. There are plans to create a spectacular roof gallery and potential uses are workshops for artists/creative industries/architecture with a retail outlet, gallery, arts venue, and visitor centre. Conway Mill received funding under the IDF, however there is currently a financial shortfall in terms of refurbishing the 3rd floor as a multi purpose venue space, linking in with the radio station, new acts and trade shows.

7.6.3 Undertake Targeted Tourism Development

Fáilte Feirste Thiar must continue to be financially supported to assist in developing the tourism product and supporting infrastructure for the tourism industry to be an economic force in West Belfast. Fáilte Feirste Thiar should be supported to drive implementation and tourism development.

An audit of existing activities and organisations with tourism links or potential needs to be undertaken. A Tourism Forum comprising of local interests should be established with the aim of developing the West Belfast brand, joining up initiatives in order to maximise benefits, cross promote opportunities, develop tourism packages and identify support needs. The marketing of West Belfast will go through Fáilte Feirste Thiar and coherent, simple messages must be devised and delivered.

A West Belfast Recreation and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan needs to be developed. This will link into the wider Cultural Tourism Action Plans, the Belfast City brand and related initiatives. For example there is a joint initiative between Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) and the Belfast Area Partnerships to develop and implement the Belfast City Cultural Diversity and Visitor Servicing Programmes in order to ensure that the benefits of tourism are realised, developed, enhanced and spread throughout the city with an emphasis on spreading visitors into disadvantaged areas. There is a need to develop public, private and community partnerships in order to maximise economic opportunities.

Casement Park has a capacity of 34,000 and is located on the Andersonstown Road. It has limited covered seating in an antiquated stand with the remainder of the venue comprising of open concrete seats and standard terraces for 31,000 spectators. There are no facilities for corporate hospitality or restaurants and public transport to the area is limited. The venue is poorly designed within the constraints of the urban areas and does not comply with modern safety requirements. There is an opportunity to build upon the wide popularity of sport and maximise its potential as an economic and tourism driver. A partnership approach is required and a tourist package could be developed with Fáilte Feirste Thiar and the County Secretary.

There is a profusion of tourism-marketable, open and managed environmental spaces within and surrounding West Belfast. These environmental assets will be promoted within the tourism strategy and there must be a continuation of the work of organisations such as The National Trust and Belfast Hills Partnership to enhance and protect the natural environment.

Tourist development will be lifestyle development, which will enhance the quality of life for residents of West Belfast. The local community should be encouraged to own and influence the strategy and any economic benefits need to be realised on the ground. Private sector advice and partnerships should be sought in order to maximise investment potential and drive forward development. This requires political and community support and involvement. Calculated risks must be undertaken in order to develop and maximise the area's assets. Strong relationships with the local media will ensure that there is active promotion of the local amenities and environment – highlighting the contribution that the local community can make to developing tourism. An Engagement Strategy needs to be developed alongside the Tourism Strategy.

7.6.4 Build the Necessary Infrastructure

There needs to be significant development of supporting infrastructure for tourism in terms of cafes, restaurants and places to stay. An audit should be undertaken to determine gaps in tourist/visitor facilities. This would inform the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the area.

Invest NI and NITB need to proactively market their business advice and financial support packages in order to encourage targeted tourism business development in West Belfast and help existing businesses grow in order to close service line gaps. Currently, all start up businesses will receive capability support. However, capital support is dependent upon whether or not it will supply a priority tourism or service or will be certified by NITB as tourist accommodation. Existing accommodation businesses receive both capability and capital support.

As there is a clear need for tourist accommodation in the area, Invest NI and NITB must financially assist and encourage local community tourism initiatives, local businesses and hoteliers to invest in a range of tourism initiatives to boost the local economy. Quality high end offerings need to be developed in order to win the business market and ensure a sense of pride in the area.

The current funding policy will not provide capital funding within a 10 mile radius from the city centre for new hotels or upgrades. However, specific projects in NTSN areas, those on the periphery and those capable of generating a new customer base will be considered. There are also opportunities to obtain funding for “unique” small tourism focused hotels.

The redevelopment of **St Comgall's** school (right) as a Landmark Conflict Transformation and Peace-Building Centre and living history museum was originally submitted to the IDF by Falls Community Council. Uses may include an oral history archive or centre for oral history research. However, there may be an opportunity to develop this site as a hotel with conference facilities and community space due to its prime location on the Falls Road.



NITB is to work with the SEN with a view to developing a practical programme of contacts and information on the tourism sector tailored to social economy enterprises. Potential Social Economy projects links to tourism could include bed and breakfast provision, outdoor pursuits, local information provision or arts/crafts. There is a requirement for significant outreach and mentoring support around these proposals.

Coiste na n-Larchimi was awarded IDF funding to establish a political tourism social economy project. However it has not progressed due to difficulties with matched funding and obtaining a site. The original proposal was for a 42 bed international back-packers hostel with café on the Falls Road. This would have linked in with the well established political tours and would have secured employment for a number of ex prisoners. However, there is an opportunity to develop this prospect with the Saffron Project focusing on wider environmental assets of West Belfast.

NITB also provides financial support for new start up guesthouses and bed and breakfasts in high quality “country” type house accommodation. Farming communities located in the areas surrounding the Belfast Hills already avail of this opportunity. Finance needs to be directed at developing and completing existing attractions and enabling employment on a long-term basis, rather than just over the summer months. The environmental and cultural tourism offerings have immense potential (see Section 8).

Targeted effort needs to be put into developing an evening economy - able to attract people from all over the city. The West Belfast Traders Forum needs to work with local government in order to maximise opportunities for West Belfast retailers to benefit from city centre evening economy initiatives.

There are various environmental, transport and public realm improvements required in order to successfully market Belfast as a place to visit and spend time. For example, adequate parking facilities along key routes, increased pedestrian facilities, crossings and cycle lanes, accessible public transport and adequate visitor facilities. Road improvements to facilitate bus movement are required at key tourist sites.

In order to improve the appearance of the area for the people who live there and support tourism initiatives designed to reduce litter, graffiti and fly posting should be promoted. These are opportunities to create employment, get local people involved, link into schools and take ownership of the area.

Belfast International Airport has a significant role to play in accessing markets, encouraging inward investment and boosting tourism for the area and the region. It is important that the transport links to the airport from and into the west of Belfast are radically upgraded. There is a need for improved signage from the city centre into West Belfast in order to direct visitors to the area. It is understood that it has been suggested that directional signs should bring people into the City and then outwards to West, rather than directly into the West. This view needs to take into consideration opportunities for wealth creation for the local population, due to its links to the International Airport. Public realm and infrastructure improvements are discussed in Section 8.

8. PHYSICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

There is a need to develop well connected and well designed neighbourhoods, which enhance and preserve the long term sustainability and the beauty of the natural landscape.

8.1 Introduction

The regeneration of the physical and environmental landscape of West Belfast of West Belfast offers the opportunity to reposition development in the market, change perceptions of a place, and create value. A number of interventions / strategic objectives have been identified to take forward this planning and design agenda. These are:

- Design for Sustainable Communities;
- Deliver Affordable Housing;
- Protect and Enhance the Natural Environment; and
- Create Sustainable Transport Solutions.

8.2 Design for Sustainable Communities

A sustainable and successful community is a place where people want to live and work. It is safe and inclusive, well planned, well run and offers equality of opportunity to all who live and work there. West Belfast's growth has been constrained by its location between the Westlink and the Belfast Hills, and as such, the challenge has been to promote growth and vibrancy within the context of sustainable development solutions.

8.2.1 Design Places for People

One of the main regeneration objectives for West Belfast will be that new developments shall be safe, comfortable, varied and attractive. They shall be distinctive, offer ample opportunities for meeting people, playing in the park, and watching the world go by. The growing population has inevitably incurred pressure on the availability of development land, housing, local services, and facilities. A successful place will be a place where people can live and be connected easily to employment, service and transport nodes.

In designing new developments, the emphasis all too often is the provision of housing, with little emphasis on the schools, community facilities, public realm, and open space. For example, the Lagmore development has generated over a 1,000 houses over several phases, however little provision was made for supporting services such as community centres, offices, local shops, open space, playing fields. This needs to be a fundamental aspect of all design processes. There needs to be stronger planning policies endorsing this aspect and the SRF needs to be given statutory weight to support this aspect.

One of the concerns raised during the consultations related to community safety, and the impact of poor design and poor quality public realm, that does little to alleviate the problem of anti-social behaviour. One of the most effective measures for community safety and crime prevention is the creation of lively, live-in urban areas and public spaces which are easy to overlook and oversee.

Three key principles should be considered:

- ensuring natural surveillance and human presence;
- minimising conflict; and
- designing-in territoriality and community involvement.

One project is initiating a best practice approach to this issue:

In **Glenwood, Poleglass**, a large tract of open space located between two established communities of Woodside and Glenside has become a haven for anti-social activities, such as vandalism and drinking. This has affected the amenity of the existing residents and created an unsafe environment for those living and passing through.

However, as part of the improvements to the Glenwood area, the NIHE and BRO are working together to redress the situation. Proposals have been drawn up and submitted to close up alleyways, abandon unsafe routes and reduce the amount of shrubbery on this open space area. The aim is to remove the potential for hidden vandalism and manage the access to neighbourhoods.

Further schemes, similar to the Glenwood scheme, should be pursued by the NIHE as part of their neighbourhood renewal programme, particularly where areas are subjected to high levels of anti-social behaviour.

Place making should also draw inspiration from local heritage and character, which can serve to strengthen local identity. West Belfast has a wealth of heritage, and some of its most successful projects have developed from a distinctive response to the area, which has complemented the setting. In particular, schemes have included the re-use of old buildings of architectural merit or local significance. For example:

- An **Cultúrlann MacAdaim Ó Fiaich** is a successful community enterprise and conference facility on the Falls Road, which was formerly the Broadway Presbyterian Church;
- The **William Ross Mill** in Clonard was a former industrial Mill premises, which has been restored and converted to apartments; and
- **Conway Mill** affords the opportunity to celebrate cultural heritage, generate new employment sources and create work space.

These types of proposals reinvigorate former buildings which are an integral part of the city's heritage and retain a unique and identifiable aspect in the streetscape, for example, the skyline, the building line, the materials, and the urban grain. Local developers should be encouraged to consider the reuse of old buildings or those with special architectural or historical merit, DSD should consider introducing special urban development grants which focus on the regeneration of such buildings.

8.2.2 Mixed Use Developments

A successful community requires employment, community, education, health, spiritual, civic and residential facilities. The benefits of this include:

- convenient access to facilities;
- reduction in travel to work congestion;
- increased safety;
- urban vitality and street life; and
- increased vitality for small businesses.

It is important that all new development focus and consider these fundamental issues, and design an integrated neighbourhood. The following design principles should inform all new large developments:

- propose a mixture of uses;
- develop character areas;
- mix house types and tenures; and
- locate mixed use centres on public transport nodes.

For smaller developments throughout the inner city, it's important to focus on the details of the development. The following high quality design principles should be incorporated in the core design of redevelopment schemes or new developments:

- respect the context and setting;
- buildings should face the street;
- encourage continuity of street frontage;
- provide enclosure and generate active frontage;
- ensure buildings, streets, and places are of human scale; and
- provision of a high quality landscape.

These design principles are particularly recommended in the redevelopment proposals for the following opportunity sites:

- Andrews Flour Mill;
- St Comgall's;
- Former Andersonstown PSNI station site;
- Former petrol station site on Kennedy Way;
- InBev site, Glen Road; and
- Dairy Farm.

8.2.3 Create a Destination

West Belfast is constantly developing and growing into a modern vibrant and lively area, with a growing visitor population. There are a range of intrinsic resources and assets within West Belfast, ranging from the flora, fauna and biodiversity of the Hills, through to the cultural Irish language and festivals. These resources should be harnessed to create a strong vision and strategy to focus community aspirations and create a place of distinction. The SRF offers the opportunity to harness these resources and create this vision.

Places with a distinctive character and identity will attract people to live, work and visit, making them sustainable culturally and financially. In West Belfast, the local landmarks provide the area with much of its identity. Landmarks such as distinctive buildings, particularly those of civic status, towers or statues help provide reference points. They are structures which help orientate visitors and residents in the area, and usually create recognisable elements in the skyline.



Along Grosvenor and Broadway, the Royal Victoria Hospital and the nurses accommodation provide instantly recognisable landmarks marking the entrance to West Belfast. Elsewhere throughout the West, Casement Park, the Bass Brewery, Divis Mountain (left), and St Mary's University all provide structures of visual interest in the area.

However, the landscape is changing, with the loss of key landmarks, such as the Bass Brewery, and there are many opportunities to help build on the destination, by creating more a sense of arrival or focal point for West Belfast at some of the existing gateway areas. For example, opportunities arise for landmark developments within the St Pat's lands, Springfield Road Campus, the former Andersonstown PSNI site and the Dairy Farm site in Colin.

There is a need to promote and develop these gateway locations to create new and exciting landmarks and focal points for the area. These include:

Andersonstown: The site of the former PSNI station provides an opportunity to create a focal point and landmark development, as part of the Andersonstown Feasibility Study;

Castle Street: This area is an important link to West Belfast and the city centre;

Broadway: This area is characterised by buildings belonging to the Royal Victoria Hospital. Refurbishment of the existing Nurses/Doctors accommodation should be encouraged and supported as well as a redevelopment of the existing derelict red brick building adjacent (the Swiss embroidery building), to compliment the ongoing refurbishment of the main site;

Divis / Lower Falls: This area is being developed as the gateway to the Gaeltacht area, a potential destination of national and international significance. The opportunity to reach out to the town centre through landmark mixed use gateway developments at key locations should be explored to ensure the Quarter realises its true potential;

Hannahstown: This is an important Gateway from the International Airport into West Belfast, which is currently enters in from the Belfast Hills. Road and public transport links are poor with little signage along the way. Supports development of this important gateway;

Grosvenor: This area at the access point of the Grosvenor Road and the Westlink provides an excellent gateway location for a prominent landmark development, to orientate visitors and provide a focal point; and

Colin: The Colin Gateway project is an important pre-cursor to a greater development which ultimately could include redevelopment of the Dairy Farm. The Gateway project will not maximise its potential if it is seen as a standalone project.

8.2.4 Encourage Community Participation

Local community participation is a key element in creating a vibrant, exciting and sustainable community. All too often in West Belfast, development has taken place in isolation of the existing communities, with little or no respect for the character and context of the local area. Any successful project must consider human as well as physical geography. This requires an understanding of the local people.

Effective community engagement is central to understanding how places work and what is needed from a new development. Its value should not be underestimated as if undertaken well it will inform the design process, highlighting opportunities and constraints at an early stage and creating a consensus for development to proceed.

To be effective engagement should start early, involve the right people, create partnerships and identify boundaries at an early stage. There should be clear understanding from the outset what the agenda for involvement is, who is involved, what roles people play and what the process will be.

There is a need for the preparation of a Community Participation Strategy for West Belfast. This will outline the approach to communicating and actively involving the local community in the development process, and help promote an understanding of the role of design in strengthening local communities. Design is an essential tool in negotiating trade-offs between different interest groups and securing mutually compatible solutions.

A wide list of local interest groups and individuals should be collated and identified, which should involve resident and community groups, businesses, and statutory agencies. The strategy should encompass a breakdown of all the design work, master planning, feasibility studies and detailed project work which has been carried out to date, for example, Andersonstown Feasibility Study, Colin Gateway Project, Renewing Communities, Renewing the Routes.

8.2.5 Protect Established Residential Areas

As indicated above, the changing housing market has increased the pressure on the existing established townscape, which needs to be addressed. The two main issues are Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and loss of established character.

A rise in student numbers and migrant workers associated with two regional facilities in the West (RVH and St Mary's University), has given rise to an increase in the numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The dBMAP HMO Subject Plan designates certain areas where HMOs are acceptable, including the Falls/Springfield, Donegall Road and Andersonstown. It also introduces policies which guide the development of HMOs throughout Belfast.

It is recommended that the strict policy controls in the dBMAP Subject Plan are endorsed and enforced by both Planning Service and the NIHE. There is a clear need to ensure that the amenity of existing residents is not adversely impacted and the character and identity of established areas is protected.

Through consultations it was recognised that there are increasing concerns regarding the loss of established housing areas which have a distinctive and identifiable character. For example, the Glen Road and Fruithill - these areas have large detached dwellings on large plots of land. Several planning applications have resulted in plot intensification and approval of high density apartment development. Any further intensification in similar areas should be actively discouraged.

Community Groups and the West Belfast Partnership need to work collectively to identify those areas of established residential character. It is recommended that further discussion should take place with Planning Service and local developers to discuss ways to reduce the potential for unsympathetic development.

8.2.6 Creating a Thriving Public Realm

A comfortable and stimulating public realm encourages social interaction and people movement. It involves attention to detail of planting, surfaces, security, public art, street furniture, lighting and signage.

There are many areas throughout West Belfast that exhibit evidence of poor public realm. For example, Divis Street and Lower Falls area is severed from the City Centre by the Westlink, dissolving pedestrian and cycle linkages. The immediate area is characterised by wide pavements, lack of lighting, street furniture and an uneven street frontage. This has resulted in an unattractive and uninviting environment discouraging walking and cycling through the area. In addition, it is an uninviting entrance to the Gaeltacht area. Similar problems are visible within the Andersonstown and Colin, along the Stewartstown Road. There is also a need to ensure that the Grosvenor Road acts as a key corridor to the West.

Improvements to the public realm are a vital part of creating a prosperous and attractive environment for tourists, investors and residents. This has been recognised to date in several ongoing projects, such as Renewing the Routes and Belfast Streets Ahead. However there is the potential to develop these further.

All new developments should be required to submit public realm proposals with planning applications. These will detail how each proposal will improve and enhance the immediate public realm, creating an improved street and pedestrian environment. These would focus on:

- public spaces;
- green areas;
- new paving;
- new linkages and pathways;
- street furniture;

- lighting; and
- signage.

The Falls Masterplan aims to renew the physical environment and address remaining derelict areas. In addition, problems of community safety, poor public realm and lack of investment opportunities will be addressed. The focus will be on developing proposals for St. Comgall's, Dunville Park, Conway Mill, Peter Pan and the Gaeltacht Quarter and creating a successful and inviting public realm which fosters accessible and attractive links between these attributes. The project will support the creation of a safe and secure pedestrian friendly environments, new public spaces and new streetscape improvements for the area that support these uses.

It is recommended that a physical development masterplan is developed for Andersonstown and that the Colin Masterplan incorporates public realm improvements.

Andersonstown is a thriving community, supported by local facilities along the Andersonstown Road. However, this area suffers from a congested traffic route, with a dominance of black taxis, vehicles and buses. The buildings along the local centre are somewhat dilapidated, small in scale, with poor signage and an uneven street frontage. Although these are key facilities and services for the local neighbourhood, the pedestrian and cyclist environment is not inviting and does not foster civic pride or an attractive area to move within.

It is recommended that a physical public realm strategy is prepared under the Andersonstown Gateway project or the Renewing Communities project. The aim of this is to identify the issues within the area and make recommendations on the steps and costs required for improvement.

8.2.7 Enhance the Gateways

These thoroughfares are the first glimpse of West Belfast to potential investors and tourists. They are highly visible and new development along them can do much to improve the image of the areas as a whole thereby stimulating business investment. The following Gateways have been identified:

Castle Street area (right) is the major pedestrian gateway to the city for West Belfast residents and is also the main entrance to West Belfast for visitors and tourists. The Department of Social Development's North West Quarter Masterplan (Part1) encapsulates the Castle Street area and seeks to "create a revitalized mixed use quarter which optimizes the areas economic, tourism and leisure potential, creates appropriate new shopping development and brings direct benefit to the adjoining residential communities in North and West Belfast".



There are also regeneration initiatives being delivered in the surrounding area including the proposed regeneration of Fountain Square, Bank square and the West Side Regeneration District. This development will include a new pedestrian square and street created in the district linking the main commercial and business centre of Belfast with the West of the City (see plans, left).

This development will include over 320 new residential units, with 20 per cent of these units designated as social housing. The Masterplan (August 2005) incorporates a Concept Plan which was prepared to guide future development. Current plans envisage partly funding the regeneration of the Castle Street area in 2011.

Broadway: A full underpass at Broadway is newly completed. Greater pedestrian facilities around the roundabout as this is one of the pedestrian gateways to the West, Gaeltacht Quarter, St Mary's University and Royal Hospitals. Currently pedestrian access is difficult and does not promote walking-tourists. To supplement the Westlink Improvements, Belfast City Council is currently undertaking a Public Art Sculpture at Broadway Junction. Public art could be used in other gateways to improve the urban living environment whilst complementing the distinctive character of each area.

Kennedy Way: This route links the west to the busy district of Boucher Road and the residential area of south Belfast - the M1 severs the links here so it is important that once the works are completed that environmental improvements are undertaken to improve this important transport corridor. Kennedy Way should be upgraded with structural and environmental improvements to allow the area to become visually-pleasing, linking West Belfast with South Belfast and M1. It must become a pedestrian friendly area with increased street lighting. The area has undergone major industrial development with added car traffic and requires environment improvements to conceal the harsh industrial landscape, reduce noise impact, whilst complementing the Bog Meadows tourism area.

The Gateway to the Belfast International Airport is an important regional gateway for west Belfast which offers an extensive range of air services and facilities. Belfast International Airport has a significant role to play in accessing markets, encouraging inward investment and boosting tourism for the area and the region. It is important that the transport links to the airport from and into the west of Belfast are radically upgraded/improved and with a measure of environmental and signage improvements. The RDS identifies the need to enhance regional gateways as economic development opportunities.

The Colin Gateway and the Andersonstown Gateway have also been identified as development opportunities (see Section 6, 6.2.5).

8.3 Deliver Affordable Housing

The influx of private developments and investment into West Belfast has increased and large tracts of vacant and derelict land have been developed. These improvements to the urban fabric have helped create a buoyant housing market, high quality new housing, and have made West Belfast a highly desirable place to live. Although houses prices have increased, this has decreased accessibility to accommodation for local people. However, the recent downturn in the housing market has left vacant building sites and empty properties.

On the other hand, social and affordable housing in West Belfast is in high demand and there are higher than average numbers of applicants registered on both the general waiting list and on the housing stress waiting list. NIHE and the Housing Associations are continually seeking land to address their accommodation needs in the medium and long term throughout West Belfast. There is a concern that population increases will ultimately put further strain on public and community resources.

8.3.1 Secure Affordability in New Residential Developments

The Minister for Social Development has recently announced her intention to produce a variety of policy amendments relating to social housing. One of the most significant amendments will require private developers to provide an element of social / affordable housing in all new residential developments. BMAP has zoned several housing sites throughout the study area, which are located in some of the areas in greatest need.

There are several opportunities to be explored for the location of social and affordable housing. These would work towards addressing the high demand. All new potential developments should liaise with the NIHE during the design process.

The **St. Pat's /Glenmona** site is approx 35 ha of land, currently accommodates a Diocesan school and associated buildings, on a large unzoned site within the development limit. The long term vision for the site vision envisages the creation of an urban village with residential, employment, education, healthcare, recreation and cultural uses. It is envisaged that almost half of the site will be developed for residential use, with an even distribution of social, affordable and private residential development. Links and connections are planned to adjacent developments and local resources such as the Belfast Hills. A cross sectoral group has met to discuss the issue of wider strategic develop of this site in connection with surrounding land;

Fold and Oaklee Housing Associations and a private developer are currently developing a scheme located at **O'Hare's Field, Glen Road** to provide approximately 440 units of accommodation to include a minimum of 230 social units. The site itself is currently zoned for social housing and the proposals being developed will include retail and community facilities;

Recent proposals have been put forward to redevelop the **Peter Pan complex**, in the heart of the Springfield Road. The scheme envisages the demolition of the existing commercial facilities, and replacement with 5 retail units and 184 social apartments, including basement car parking.

8.3.2 Promote a Mix of Tenures and Form

The urban form of existing neighbourhoods in West Belfast varies considerably. There is a mix of:

- tenure: both private and social housing and grouped Traveller housing;
- density: Higher densities toward the city centre (e.g. lower Falls) and lower densities in the suburban areas nearer the Hills (e.g. Poleglass, Lagmore); and
- typology: detached, semi-detached, terraced, and apartments. Higher density terraced or semi-detached cul-de-sacs were commonplace (e.g. Falls, Lenadoon, Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy).

The influx of private development has yielded a growth in the production of apartment living, with projects such as Doire Beg, Fruithill, Riverview Ridge and Kenown Court. The provision of social housing within the study area can incorporate a range of typologies to address the different housing needs – general housing, special needs and housing for the elderly. There has been a declining trend in the social rented accommodation and an increase in owner occupation, promoted by the growth in low-cost schemes such as co-ownership.

It is suggested that policies are required to encourage the design of mixed tenure residential developments to promote social diversity and sustainable communities. The NIHE, Housing Associations, and Planning Service are key players in this discussion. Pepper potting different tenures throughout an area ensures that a variety of housing types and ownership patterns are sprinkled rather than clustered into exclusive hubs and will ensure that current and future demand can be met as a result of changing demographics and increased investment.

8.3.3 Support Diverse Housing Needs

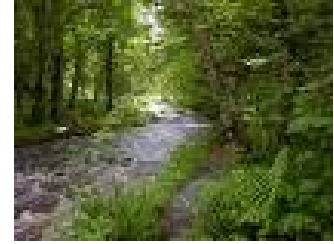
West Belfast is unique throughout Belfast in that it accommodates a distinct type of specialist housing. Throughout the study area, there are three sites dedicated to providing land and dwellings for Travellers in grouped housing. There are two existing sites on the Glen Road, at Glen Road Heights and O'Hare's Lane and work has commenced on another site at the top of the Monagh By-Pass. Glen Road Heights is fully serviced and provides permanent accommodation for approximately 20 families. The site at O'Hare's Lane (next to Patrick Kelly's Compound) provides accommodation for several long established facilities. Consideration should be given to extending the scheme and site provision in line with need.

The existing site on the Glen Road needs to be developed in conjunction with the Travelling community, local residents and local agencies. This would be a serviced site, similar to the ongoing Group Housing schemes.

In addition, it is recommended that currently derelict sites, previously allocated for Traveller housing should be brought back into an alternative use. One such example is the existing derelict site on the Glen Road, opposite Hawthorn Glen, adjacent to the pylon and Colin Glen Linear Park. It is understood that this is currently within the ownership of BCC.

8.4 Protect and Enhance the Natural Environment

West Belfast has a wealth of rich natural landscape assets and environmental resources. The Belfast Hills are an exciting and rich commodity for the study area, as a haven for wildlife, recreation / amenity value and most importantly, providing a unique and identifiable setting for the West. In addition, it boasts Colin Glen Linear Park (right), Bog Meadows, the Cemeteries, Parks (such as Falls, Dunville, Casement) and golf courses such as Colin Valley. Many of these are interlinked with each other and with the Hills, however much potential exists to promote and develop these spaces and create sustainable and accessible linkages.



Green linkages are one of the fundamental elements of successful spaces. How to arrive at the space and access the facilities and activities is a key element in their success. In the development of all green space, both in the urban area and the rural areas of West Belfast, accessibility and linkages must be at the core of any strategy or masterplan for success.

It is recommended that all strategies being prepared should create a movement framework, which examines the potential to externally access the space (e.g. links with public transport, community greenways, cycle networks, trails). In addition, this framework should also examine the internal movements and the links that could be created with other spaces (e.g. internal trails, footpaths and desire lines).

8.4.1 Develop Access to the Belfast Hills

Boomers Hill, Ballycollin, Hannahstown, Divis and Black Mountain create an impressive and somewhat imposing feature over West Belfast. Several landowners and groups look after these areas, and develop the environmental and recreational potential. The National Trust, Colin Glen Trust, Environment and Heritage Service, Ulster Wildlife Trust, Belfast City Council and the Belfast Hills Partnership manage the green communities, farms and wide range of important plants, animals, birds, archaeology and stunning landscapes.

They also provide, manage and promote access to these assets, in a coordinated manner. The Hills receives over 20,000 visitors per year and they utilise the existing accesses afforded at the Colin Glen Forest Park, Glenside Woodland, Divis Road and Lodge, and Slievenacloy.

dBMAP in association with the above groups identified several potential new access points, to improve access for walkers, visitors, education groups etc. These are located at:

- New Barnsley (top of Whiterock);
- Ballygomartin Road;
- Top of the Monagh By-Pass; and
- St Pat's/Glenmona.

It is recommended that financial support is given to the Belfast Hills Partnership to develop a feasibility report which explores these further. This should include recommendations on the necessary infrastructure and communications (e.g. car parking, signage, trails, guide leaflets) required to develop these areas as new access points. In addition, the potential for linking into the existing street network within the urban area should be explored as should the potential benefits to the tourism industry.

In association with this study, the development of the Divis-Dixon link should be promoted as part of a Belfast wide strategy to link the Belfast Hills with other prominent open spaces. This promotes the environment to the benefit of the entire community, visitors, and tourists.

Lady Dixon - Lagan Valley Link is a proposed green connection which is currently being developed, linking from the Belfast Hills to the Lagan Valley Regional Park. This proposal promotes pedestrian access right from the summit of Divis Mountain, past the TV mast, along Divis Road, through Glenside Community Woodland, down along Colin Glen Park with facilities located at the Suffolk Road complex (tea, toilets etc) before following Colin Glen through to Colin Valley Golf Course, linking into Dunmurry Village, and on through to Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, where the trail enters the Lagan Valley Regional Park. This is the only Regional Park within Northern Ireland.

This has the potential to become a significant marketable tourist asset, attracting visitors from throughout the region. This should be promoted and supported by the NITB and EHS. Funding has been secured for the Colin Glen - Divis section and part of the Dunmurry section, however further funding is required to continue this work.

In promoting green linkages and connections, it is interesting to note the lack of accessibility from the West Belfast Hills through to the North Belfast Hills, which encompass Ligoniel, Cavehill, Carnmoney Hill on round to the proposed Giants Park. Difficulties in attaining land and connections through this area, has meant that this potential connection has not been explored to date. It is suggested that this is progressed further.

8.4.2 Promote Regeneration Opportunities

A key priority in the environmental and community regeneration of the Belfast Hills, Bog Meadows, Colin Glen and surrounding landscape is raising awareness of the range of recreational and educational resources available. The Hills are home to a wealth of biodiversity, archaeology and landscapes:

- plants: bluebells, orchids, wildflower meadow, moorlands;
- animals / birds: eagles, skylarks, badgers. Irish hare, red grouse, curlew;
- archaeology: round cairns, standing stones; and
- panoramic views: Belfast, Ards Peninsula, Lough Neagh, Scotland and the Mourne.

Promotion of these assets is extremely important and is identified as a key priority of this Framework.

Another key priority is developing the existing access points to the Hills. In particular, the existing access points along the Colin Valley are considered one of the most accessible and well visited nodes in West Belfast. Although an access point, the Colin River and associated park create an outstanding facility and resource for a range of recreational and educational activities. It provides much needed urban green space, a unique area of biodiversity and is home to the proposed Black's Road Neighbourhood Park, as well as a vital connection linking West Belfast to the rest of the city, Lisburn and the Belfast Hills.

Colin Glen Trust is developing and promoting the Colin Glen River Valley through the **Riverside Project**. It is aimed at developing innovative, community based partnerships, social eco-housing, recreation, sport, education, and business to create new facilities and opportunities to regenerate the adjacent communities. The objective is to promote the park as a tourism and recreational resource, with visitor attractions, employment opportunities, eco-housing, and community-active outdoor lifestyles. Many of the individual projects planned include:

- Creation of a mixed use facility at the existing Colin Trust Visitor Centre. This envisages a new Forest Park Centre, supported by some eco-social housing to help address some of the areas anti-social behaviour problems;
- Development of the Colin Valley Golf Course, to provide improved visitor and user facilities. It is envisaged that this will include a new clubhouse and new restaurant (in association with Belfast Metropolitan College) with employment and education opportunities, and potential hotel as a long term aspiration;
- A ten pitch 5 a side Soccer Centre at the Colin Valley Golf Course;
- Develop links with Greenmount Campus with a view to establishing an outreach horticultural education facility; and
- Hydro Power project to enhance the parks funding and introduce an important renewable technology.

Private money has been secured for some of these components, however further funds are required.

The National Trust intends to redevelop their Divis Lodge site, to create a new visitor and educational resource centre. This is an important access node to the Hills, and has the potential to become the centre of environmental activity in the area.

Another important project related to the Hills is the Saffron Project. It is recommended that this project is highlighted and supported by a range of partnerships. There are significant benefits (education, economic, training, recreation, environmental and social) to be attained and funding for this project is critical.

The Saffron Project began as a driver for regenerating the Upper Springfield area. It aims to empower people to play an active role in the social and economic life of the community by generating potential jobs, training and education models. The basis of the proposal is the development of a specific section of the Black Mountain in line with current Environmental Policy. However, the Saffron Project needs to be expanded wider than Upper Springfield. The focus is on ensuring that the natural setting for Belfast is protected whilst providing for recreational and amenity development.

The Saffron Project focuses on:

- development of the Mountain as a nature reserve;
- reconstruction of traditional nature walks, with sign posting and environmentally friendly; and
- conservation and development of shrubbery, woodland, wetlands, and wildlife natural habitat.

The benefits include:

- rejuvenation of Black Mountain as a natural amenity for the community;
- opportunities for addressing unemployment, social deprivation, training and community empowerment;
- development of visitor facilities and accommodation;
- individual personal development; and
- cross-community support and neutrality.

It is suggested that this project is expanded to include Divis Mountain, and the other Hills towards Lisburn, linking in with other initiatives such as the Cottonmill Fisheries project and Farset Way.

8.4.3 Improve Signage

Through consultations, it was highlighted that an important component of many of the landscape assets and the visitor / tourist experience was legibility and signage. Although the literature for the Hills, and other associated projects provide details maps and access details, there is a fundamental lack of roadside signs to direct and guide visitors and tourists to these important nodes and assets. 'Brown signs' are an important element of the visitor experience and are unfortunately only allocated from B-Roads.

It is imperative that one of the largest tourist attractions in Belfast benefits from optimum accessibility and legibility. This is an immediate priority for decision makers, and steps should be taken as soon as possible to address the lack of signage provision. Discussions should involve the NITB, DSD, EHS and Belfast Hills Partnership. Signs are required to the Divis Lodge area, from the M1 and M2 motorways and should be a permanent fixture.

8.4.4 Promote Community Greenways and Open Spaces

West Belfast is rich with a hierarchy of different open spaces, with varied typologies and functions. For example:

- woodland/nature reserves: Glenside Woodland, Bog Meadows;
- playing fields: Casement, Donegal Celtic, St Teresa's;
- cemeteries: Milltown, City;
- parks: Dunville, Falls;
- greenways: Poleglass, Twinbrook; and
- waterways: Colin Glen, Forth River.

Community Greenways are designated in dBMAP, and formalise a network of spaces (existing and proposed) encompassing cycle and footpath routes. They also act as wildlife corridors enabling wildlife to travel through urban areas. In West Belfast, these are like green fingers radiating from the countryside into the urban core of the City.

The Colin Community Greenway links through from the Belfast Hills, along the Glen, Suffolk Playing Fields, Colin Valley Golf Course, through to the Lagan Valley Regional Park. Two other Greenways radiate from the Hills, one through Forth River valley, through Falls Park and into Bog Meadows. It connects with another route travelling from the Whiterock, through Falls Park, the cemeteries into Bog Meadows. Both link though to Musgrave Park, Balmoral Golf Course and on through to the Barnetts Demesne.

"Green Chain Link": There is a need to conserve the natural environment in light of competing pressures on land for housing, economic development and natural heritage. BCC's Belfast Masterplan describes the need to create a **"River-to-Hills access corridor"**. This would be a Green Chain Link from the River Lagan in the heart of the city, to the hills in the West.

This corridor would provide pedestrian and cycle access to a series of environmental assets and create a new green space resource for surrounding communities. The Green Chain Link would embrace existing public green spaces, new linear parks and boulevard planting along roads.

It is recommended that a strategy is prepared to ensure that access and links between these areas are properly developed. This should be led by a consortium of local environmental groups in association with the NITB.

One of the most significant greenway concepts, still in its infancy, within West Belfast is the Farset Way. This proposal has huge historical, cultural and tourism potential and would link across the city to the Connswater Greenway. It is recommended that a comprehensive feasibility study is carried out to examine the project in detail, outline all the potential routes, and source potential costings, as well as the benefits and drawbacks.

The Farset Way is proposed by Forbairt Feirste in parallel with the development of the Gaeltacht Quarter. The concept focuses on the rejuvenation of the river channels and glens which are mostly hidden beneath the West Belfast urban area, and connect through the Divis Mountain and the River Lagan. The three lead projects are the Farset Way, the Falls Glen and the Beechmount project, which will focus on reopening of the waterways and establishing a relationship with them. A landmark theatre, tourism and visitor centre is also envisaged at the former Beechmount leisure centre site to provide a focal point for the project.

The best loved parks and gardens are often intimate in scale and well cared for. There needs to be adequate space to take a pleasant stroll, have a kick-about and provide habitats for wildlife to thrive. However, it is the quality not the quantity. West Belfast has several key parks which are underperforming and require assistance. Improvements are necessary to alleviate anti-social behaviour, improve the public realm and the quality of the space available.

Half Moon Lake, Lenadoon was transformed into a biodiversity and educational green area within a built up urban area. It has restricted access and is utilised by local community groups and schools as a learning environmental resource. It is located opposite the Donegal Celtic playing fields and there is the potential to create a linkage to the Colin Glen park.

One of the main priorities is to ensure all open spaces are utilised for their biodiversity, educational, and recreational resource. Green spaces provide important ‘green lungs’ within an urban area, and can create a strong community involvement and civic pride. Tourism and open space is inherently linked and should be promoted as strongly as possible.

8.4.5 Enhancement of Natural Landscape

A wealth of opportunity exists in West Belfast to promote and develop its natural assets to build on the success of its tourism potential. For example:

- The Bog Meadows;
- Colin Glen Linear Park and Colin Valley;
- Falls Park;
- Milltown and City Cemeteries;
- Dunville Park;
- Casement Park; and
- Divis and Black Mountain.

These spaces should be actively promoted through the development of a Recreation and Tourism strategy. In addition, there must be a continuation of the work of organisations such as the National Trust, Belfast Hills Partnership, Colin Glen Trust and the Ulster Wildlife Trust.

There are also opportunities to develop the potential of several other existing natural assets. One project would be to develop the Forth River Corridor. This waterway, valley and wildlife corridor traverses West Belfast, linking the Hills, down through Springfield, across the proposed business park, Cotton Mill and E3, through to St Mary's, Bog Meadows and the River Lagan eventually.

Although part of the Farset Way and Cotton Mill Fisheries proposals, the development of the new **Forth River Business Park** presents an exciting and bold opportunity to reintroduce and develop the Forth River Valley and Wildlife corridor. This area is owned by Invest NI and infrastructure is in place to attract a range of business and industrial space, as well as incubator units and research and development floorspaces.

This creates an opportunity to develop in tandem the restoration of the Forth River in this area – this should take place as part of a masterplan exercise to examine the waterway, the surrounding habitat and wildlife corridor, and its potential to be re-integrated back into the business park. Opening up this natural asset and incorporating it into the business park will help create an attractive setting and eco-friendly environment for potential investors. It also creates a neutral space, in an area with interface issues. Urban development grants should be offered to potential investors to help develop this asset as part of their business proposals.

8.4.6 Protection of the Natural Landscape



Fire setting throughout the Belfast Hills is a huge problem, resulting in the destruction of habitats and the loss of wildlife. Easter and summer holidays are a problematic time for fire setting (see left).

The Belfast Hills Partnership has been liaising with the Fire Brigade and site managers across the hills, and has produced information packs for the Fire Brigade outlining contact details, access routes and water availability. There needs to be increased education awareness programme within schools and youth settings regarding the damage to the tourism economy and the impact for the local community and environment. Environmental work in the Hills should be developed and promoted as diversionary programmes for young people.

From the consultations, it was clear that a key priority is addressing environmental degradation that has occurred in past years, and the promotion of environmental renewal schemes. Quarrying has reduced the environmental quality part of the Belfast Hills, changing the landscape and damaging the natural biodiversity of the area. Although quarries offer considerable employment and economic opportunities, there needs to be a balance struck between this and the environment.

Glenside Community Woodland is a disused quarry site, owned by Cemex Ltd. Bryson Charitable Group took over the management of the quarry site, and recreated community woodland with waterfalls and ponds. The site is accessed through the Colin Glen and pedestrian access is also available on the Upper Springfield Road.

This restorative environmental scheme has successfully reintroduced flora, fauna, vegetation, animals and water-based ecology into a damaged ecosystem.

The existing dormant quarry sites within the Hills, present considerable opportunities to restore the environmental quality of these unique assets. Projects which support environmental restoration should be promoted to assist environmental regeneration. A working group needs to be set up to identify sites and make recommendations for environmental restoration. This would comprise of the Belfast Hills Partnership, Colin Glen Trust, the National Trust, EHS, Belfast City Council and the local quarry owners. Funding should be a mix of private and public sector investment. One best practice project involves the former Glenside Quarry.

Colin Organic Composting Facility is to be based at Glenside Quarry site. The Glenside Quarry was a former sand and gravel quarry which has been dormant for several years. As part of the restoration plan, Natural World Products Ltd has secured planning permission for an organic waste composting facility. This facility will manage and treat brown and green waste, producing a marketable compost material for sale. As part of this scheme, NWP are collaborating with the Colin Glen Trust to establish an education officer, to be based at the Glenside site. The aim is to create an educational outreach facility within the Hills. NWP are providing shared accommodation for this facility, which will be used for meetings, and as an educational resource. The facilities will be provided by NWP and the education officer will be appointed and funded by the Colin Glen Trust.

Another key priority which requires further funding and development is the environmental restoration of Black Mountain Quarry.

Black Mountain Quarry is an active quarry with approximately 15-20 years potential life remaining. The quarry interrupts significant views of the Hills, the high scenic quality and creates an unusual skyline landscape. Although still active, options for its restoration need to be explored.

It is recommended that a feasibility study of the quarry area is prepared, to explore the viability of alternative uses, benefits and drawbacks, and potential costings. This should be carried out in conjunction with the quarry owners, Belfast Hills Partnership, and Planning Service.

Comparator Study: The Eden Project

The Eden Project is a best practice approach to dealing with the renewal of an area of poor environmental quality. A reclaimed china clay pit has been transformed into an educational resource complex. It focuses creating a greenhouse compound housing natural environments, which foster plant species from around the world, and is supported by waste recycling and wind turbines. The initial funding for the project arose from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and other public sector funding sources.

It is important that environmental investment and regeneration reaches the surrounding areas and communities to provide employment and training opportunities. For example, the unique environmental assets within the area would lend itself to horticultural or biodiversity training and employment.

8.5 Transport: Making the connections

Places need to be easy to get to and physically and visually integrated with their surroundings. This requires attention to foot, bicycle, public transport and car access. Achieving sustainable movement systems is a key tenet of a successful community and good access and connections can improve urban life.

8.5.1 Making Good Connections

West Belfast has a plethora of routes traversing the area, on in a south west to north east axis. People have the opportunity to move through West Belfast using several modes of travel – car, bus, black taxi, walking and cycling. There are no rail services or tram system, and the City’s Metro system has only one Metro route serving the entire population in this area.

The key strategic network corridors traversing the study area are not confined to the recognised arterial route, but focus on important connections and movement routes within and outside the boundary. These are primary connections for the residents of West Belfast and also for those moving through the area to reach their destinations.

Primary connections include:

- Falls Road;
- Glen Road;
- Grosvenor Road;
- Andersonstown Road;
- Springfield Road;
- Stewartstown Road; and
- Hannahstown Hill (i.e. Upper Springfield Road).

These primary routes have been identified due to their importance in providing access to and from the city centre, Lisburn, the Belfast Hills and Belfast International Airport.

The success of a town of new development depends on how well these connections work. It is this contribution which helps renew the physical fabric of a city and reinvigorate the neighbourhood.

All new developments and regeneration projects need to consider accessibility – developments need to be designed to offer people travel choices that are widely accessible and meet the needs of everyone. New developments need to be aligned to existing and proposed roads and public transport routes. The more direct links there are, the more successful the integration.

Schemes such as E3, Forthriver Business Park, Colin Town Centre, Gaeltacht Quarter are dependant on the success of their connections. It is important to create new and enhance existing connections between areas of employment, housing, leisure and retail as part of new developments. New proposals should indicate how they maximise travel choice. A comprehensive approach is required by the developer, in connection with the local community, Planning Service and Road Service.

8.5.2 Encourage Walking, Cycling and Public Transport

Connections should give people the maximum choice in how to make their journeys, with a presumption in favour of walking, cycling and public transport.

A network of footpaths allow for pedestrians and cyclists to permeate through Belfast. Footways are provided alongside all the key corridors, and throughout the local neighbourhoods. A safe, attractive and well cared for public realm encourages people to walk. There is also a network of walking trails throughout the parks in West Belfast, including Dunville Park, Falls Park, Lenadoon Millennium Park, Springhill Millennium Park, Springfield Park to name a few. In addition, there is an extensive network of paths which also facilitate pedestrian access around Divis and Black Mountain, as well as Glenside Community Woodland. It is recommended that all new developments within West Belfast commit to enhancing existing linkages between the green spaces and urban area.

There are a number of different strategies and masterplans at different stages which are examining the quality of the existing realm with a view to encouraging more people to walk and cycle (Renewing Communities, Belfast Streets Ahead, Renewing the Routes)

Connections with the City Centre and other areas of Belfast are difficult. The Westlink serves to create a considerable barrier for movement, and has resulted in shatter zones at key connection points. It is difficult for pedestrians to navigate the expanses of road, the lack of proper high quality development creates unattractive frontage, pedestrian crossing facilities, and lighting. For example:

- Divis Street / Castle Street;
- Grosvenor Road; and
- Donegall Road.

These are key entrance points into West Belfast by tourists and visitors to the area, and it is extremely important to create a sense of arrival and attractive, accessible and safe pedestrian network which addresses the shatter zone drawbacks. It is recommended that Gateway Masterplans are developed for these sites as a precursor for securing additional funding streams. 'Fixing the missing link' should be a key objective of the proposals.

The Falls physical masterplan identifies **Divis Street/Falls Road interchange** as a key shatterzone requiring improvement. It advocates the creation of a more pedestrian-friendly environment that will allow people to move more easily into the city centre. The redevelopment of St Comgall's, Andrews Flour Mill and the Twin Spires area will create a strong building frontage, which will be supported by a "greening" of the roads, through avenue planting, site specific street furniture, lighting and interpretation. In addition this requires enhanced traffic management, formalised parking and specific routes for buses and cyclists. This will serve to reduce the dominance of cars and develop a shared space environment.

There is a clear need to facilitate cycle networks along the key corridors within the West of the city. Cycling can be made more popular by providing direct and convenient traffic calmed routes, with a safe place for people to leave their bikes at their destination. Detailed discussion is required with Sustrans regarding National Cycle Networks.

There is a need to address the lack of Metro routes within West Belfast, and increase the number on a par with other areas of Belfast. Discussions should be undertaken with Roads Service and Translink. This is particularly relevant along the Springfield Road, with the proposed new development of E3 and the Forth River Business Park, where public transport connections will be a crucial element in the success of these schemes.

There is a clear need for the development of the Quality Bus Corridors by Translink and Roads Service throughout the core and non-core routes as proposed in the dBMTP. These proposals contain measures to improve the quality of bus transport along key routes. Specific measures include bus-priority measures, bus lane enforcement cameras, high quality bus shelters and bus only streets within the adjacent city centre areas.

In addition, it is recommended that the sufficient bus provision is agreed and designed into the new developments in Hannahstown Hill, including the St Pat's/Glenmona site, O'Hare's Field and the InBev site. This is a vital element of sustainable travel and will optimise travel choice for all new residents and workers.

Finally, as part of the Colin masterplan, it is important to consider a new and improved bus route linking the expansive neighbourhoods with the new proposed facilities at the Dairy Farm town centre. Signage and well located bus stops will also be paramount. It is recommended that Translink are involved at an early stage of the design process.

8.5.3 Reduce Traffic Congestion

The predominant mode of travel throughout the West is by car. The road network is often congested along the key corridors. The roadworks along the Westlink (right) have served to increase the pressure on the road network, adding to the already congested network of corridors. This is expected to ease slightly upon completion of the works early next year. The traffic congestion is symptomatic of a range of factors including high car dependency, lack of parking enforcement, school traffic, illegal parking, and new developments.



It is recommended that education, advertising and promotion is undertaken in conjunction with Translink, Sustrans and Roads Service, to raise awareness of the various sustainable travel choices other than the car.

Existing ‘bottleneck’ areas are easy to identify – this is where traffic pressure is at capacity, causing queuing and slow flowing traffic movements. Key areas for improvement are:

- Glen Road roundabout;
- Andersonstown Road / Falls Road roundabout;
- Whiterock / Falls Road roundabout; and
- Falls Road / Springfield Road / Grosvenor Road junction.

There is a clear need to highlight these to Roads Service and implement a series of junction enhancements to improve capacity and free flowing traffic. It is recommended that these are completed by both public and private sector investments linked to new developments in the area.

One best practice example is the proposed improvements to the **Glen Road / Falls Road intersection**, which will be undertaken by the owners of the Westwood Centre. As part of their expansion plans for the Centre, a package of works have been agreed with Roads Service to improve capacity and signalisation at this busy roundabout. This package will be privately funded;

As part of the **Westlink** proposals the roundabout at the bottom of Kennedy Way, linking the area into the Outer Ring was earmarked from upgrading. This roundabout facilitates connections from the M1 into South and West Belfast and was significantly congested at peak times. The improvements were recently completed and comprise controlled signalisation, crossing facilities for pedestrians, clear signage and road markings and an improved facade.

The promotion of Park and Ride facilities are another tool to help address the current congestion difficulties. Three potential locations are proposed at:

- Kennedy Way Industrial Estate;
- Opposite the Cutts Industrial Estate; and
- St Pat's/Glenmona.

It is interesting to note that the rest of Belfast benefits from an orbital route, which filters much of the through traffic from the inner city areas. For example M2, M3, M1 are connected by the outer ring road dual carriageway, which is a major structure capable of accommodating a huge capacity of vehicles, reducing congestion, and providing key connections between different part of the City.

The Belfast Transportation Plan 1969 proposed several extensions to this orbital route, one of which outlined a potential route through West Belfast – the A55 Outer Ring extension from the Monagh By Pass to Ligoniel. This was assessed by Roads Service, however was abandoned. It has not been revived in the latest Belfast Metropolitan Area Transport Proposals, nor has any funding been set aside.

However, there is a clear need to address the severely congested routes within Belfast, and it is recommended that a feasibility study is carried out to examine the potential of such a route, in terms of the benefits and drawbacks, potential linkages to proposed projects, the cost implications and land ownership issues. The benefits may include creating an important link to North Belfast and reducing traffic congestion, however this needs to be weighed up against the impact on the biodiversity, landscape scenic value and other key environmental assets.

Another proposal in its infancy also offers the potential to address the traffic congestion. Roads Service recently put forward a list of proposals including a potential access onto the M1 at Black's Road, leading to the West. Funding has been secured by the SIB for several of these proposals, including the Black's Road proposals, however these are in their infancy.

It is recommended that discussions commence with SIB and Roads Service regarding this proposal, and a feasibility study is carried out to assess its potential.

8.5.4 Promote WWAY Rapid Transit System

The dBMAP and dBMTTP propose a Rapid Transit System for Belfast, which includes a proposed route into West Belfast. This route links through from the Europa Bus Station, across the Westlink, via Roden Street through to the Royal Victoria Hospital. It aims to provide an efficient and alternative mode of travel with connections to major generators of employment and travel in the area.

The proposal holds exciting prospects for travel to, through and from West Belfast. However it is dependant on the success and timeframe of the pilot EWAY through East Belfast and it does not go far enough into the West.

It was established by DRD that the most feasible method of rapid transit will be guided bus transit. The recent feasibility study completed by Atkins outlines several extensions to the WWAY:

- **Hannahstown / Springfield Linkage** (Route 4): This route would travel from the RVH along the Springfield Road to the Monagh By-Pass, through to St Pat's and onto the Glen Road / Hannahstown Hill, with connection to the airport. This would create benefits for any future employment and education development at Springvale / E3, and the St Pat's / InBev / O'Hares Field developments;
- **Andersonstown / Dunmurry Linkage** (Route2): Along the Falls Road, Andersonstown Road, Stewartstown Road, Dunmurry into Lisburn with potential connections to the Park and Ride facilities at Kennedy Way and Sprucefield; and
- **Falls Road / St Pats** (Route 3): this route moves along the Falls Road, Glen Road, Monagh By-Pass into St Pats.

Routes 2 and 3 appear to be viable and have obvious gain benefits from the passenger potential of the major development areas adjacent. It notes further that Route 4 is unlikely to be economically viable, even though it links two major shopping areas and the RVH and University. Figure 8.1 overleaf, illustrates the proposed and recommended route for the WWAY.

It is recommended that a further assessment of the potential of Route 4 is carried out. It is imperative that these routes are secured and strategic discussions should be held with Roads Service, DRD and Translink to discuss the implications for the Atkins report. It is recommended that funding sources are secured at an early stage and should involve both public and private sector investment. The input from the private sector within the Hannahstown Hill area should be actively pursued.

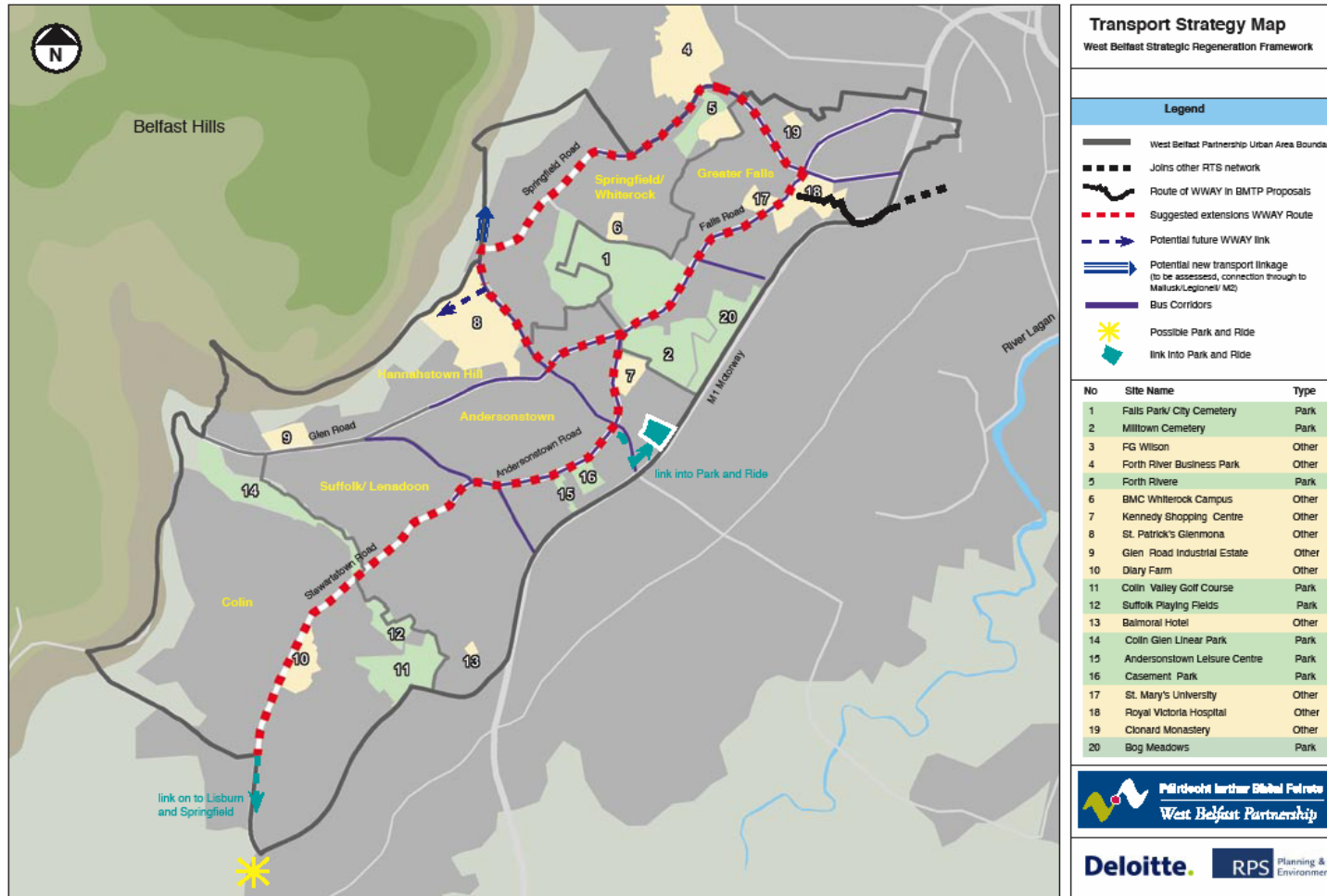
It is further recommended that in terms of regeneration objectives, the rapid transit system should be based on segregated running, with on-street priority running.



West Belfast is unique in that there is an additional mode of public transport available – black taxis (left). These provide services to seven routes within West and one to North Belfast forming a gateway service to and from the city centre. They are an invaluable and well-utilised source of travel for many residents and visitors within the

West Belfast area. They also generate a source of income for many in the area. The taxi movement routes must be a key consideration in any WWAY proposal, to ensure these vital community resources are sustained.

Figure: 8.1
Transport Strategy



Source: RPS/Deloitte

9. COMMUNITIES AND SERVICES FRAMEWORK

Improve the quality of life for all sections of the community through targeted health initiatives, the provision of a safe, secure environment and a range of opportunities to participate in community life; and

Ensure that all residents have access to appropriate, well run, high quality local services and facilities which encourage strong community involvement and operate in a coordinated manner.

Quality of life is a fundamental component in the regeneration of West Belfast. There are significant health and lifestyle issues across the area and there needs to be a drive to tackle health inequalities within the population. Adults and young people need to be made accountable for their actions and a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour is critical to residents' wellbeing and feelings of safety. Linked to the current high levels of deprivation, there are many vulnerable people living in West Belfast, with a number experiencing extreme poverty, drug and alcohol related problems and exclusion from wider society. Access to shops, health facilities recreational and community facilities needs to be improved in certain areas in order to offer more choice and attract more people into the area.

A number of interventions have been identified to take forward the communities and services agenda. These are:

- improve health and wellbeing;
- provide a safe environment;
- support community cohesion; and
- improve service provision.

9.1 Improve Health and Wellbeing

Unemployment and poor health are the biggest socio-economic problems facing people in West Belfast. Improving health and promoting well being is a cross cutting theme throughout the SRF. West Belfast has some of the highest health deprivation indicators in Belfast and regionally. The underlying reasons for which are correlated to the high incidence of inter-generational poverty and deprivation. Residents are more likely to contract cancers, coronary heart disease and will subsequently have a lower life expectancy than the rest of Belfast. Tackling low educational attainment, benefit dependency, poor housing and environment and fear of crime will improve people's health. There are also a number of lifestyle issues such as smoking, diet and lack of exercise which have an impact upon health and self esteem. Health related issues affect all age groups. The Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans also have health and wellbeing running through them as a central theme. An audit of the Action Plans reveal health concerns relating to mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, obesity, teenage parenthood, family and childcare support and older people's issues.

9.1.1 Targeted Health Promotion

In order to help inform people about health issues there needs to be increased funding and support for health information and promotion targeted at local communities. This would include health fairs, targeted events, advice and referrals. Prevention and early detection events must facilitate early diagnosis of health problems such as high/low blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol. These will be undertaken with organisations such as Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Ulster Cancer Foundation, Action Mental Health in order to raise awareness. Specific programmes targeted at men's health are needed.

The **Health Education and Relaxation Therapy (H.E.A.R.T.) project** was developed in response to the health inequalities evident within the area of the Falls Ward. The following services are provided: information, advice and referral services which allow people to make positive decisions about their health, access to education programmes including accredited and non accredited courses, developing self help activity, which improves the physical health and mental well being of people and contributes to a healthier community. The H.E.A.R.T project works with service providers to ensure the co-ordination of activities, events and campaigns to raise awareness about unhealthy life styles and promote positive changes. It offers a range of services provided by community based groups such as Clan Mor Sure Start, North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust, a doctor's surgery and a non-dispensing chemist.

It is important that employers are also targeted and encouraged to participate in employee health promotion initiatives, both within the community and the workplace.

9.1.2 Promote Healthy Lifestyles

Action must be taken to change people's behaviour. Considerable work is still required to reduce smoking and alcohol intake and to persuade people to adopt a healthier diet. People need to be awareness of the links between unhealthy lifestyles and major illnesses.

To complement the programme which already exists, the H.E.A.R.T. Project is in the process of locating a physical assessment and health monitoring suite and developing a training programme for young people which would lead them to being fitness instructors / physical activity coaches. The Health Awareness Boosted by Interactive Technology (**H.A.B.I.T.**) suite will incorporate the traditional method of physical activity (i.e. the gym) and update it with a balanced approach through the creative use of new technology via an I.T. system of assessment, task setting and monitoring of health outcomes.

Helping people to become more active must be a priority. There are many opportunities to promote West Belfast as a place for outdoor leisure and informal exercise. There is a need to capitalise on the green space assets within the area for activities such as walking, cycling, jogging etc. and promote physical activity to improve fitness.

Dunville Park is a five-acre site at the corner of The Grosvenor Road and Falls Road. It is approximately 1.5 miles from Belfast City Centre and is on a main arterial route. The park is under-utilised and is a focal point for anti-social behaviour. Part of the Renewing Communities master planning exercise has highlighted the potential in the park and ways to improve it.

A new 'living park' will provide an attractive stepping stone within the Gaeltacht and reinstate Dunville as a community hub. Aspects to improving this include uncovering the lost assets such as the Mill streams, the introduction of new squares and public art, and well-designed streets, and integrating the new development within existing street networks. Work is being progressed by Friends of Dunville Park and Renewing Communities.



There are four leisure centres in West Belfast which are owned by BCC: Andersonstown, Beechmount, Falls (left) and Whiterock and one is owned by Lisburn City Council (Brook Activity Centre in Twinbrook). BCC run a Boost discount scheme to children aged 16 and under, over 60s students in full-time education, those who receive means-tested benefits and their dependant children and regular users

who pay monthly for unlimited access to our leisure centres. The affordability of leisure facilities is critical to encouraging uptake of services. People in receipt of means-tested benefits, can have unlimited access to BCC leisure centres for £10 per month plus a £15 administration fee. Many residents feel that this is too costly. There is a requirement to foster stronger links between leisure service providers and local community groups and residents.

Installation of a Third generation playing field at **Grosvenor Recreation and Community Centre** has been secured and works began in 2008. This amenity will not only improve the physical appearance of the area but will substantially increase access to sports and recreational activities. The project will provide the opportunity for community organisations, sports teams, schools and other relevant organisations to develop a sports strategy for the entire area, with a particular emphasis on social inclusion.

The new playing field will represent one of the largest outdoor playing spaces in the densely populated and built up area and will be located directly adjacent to the Westlink on the Grosvenor Road.

Innovative initiatives are required to ensure that local people benefit from these facilities. There needs to be continued work undertaken with local schools in promoting healthy snack or lunch initiatives to help with the growing problem of childhood obesity. Partnership working should be undertaken with GAA clubs, in order that they may also play a vital role in adopting a healthier lifestyle.

9.1.3 Promote Positive Mental Health

The area of mental health is complex with many people experiencing multiple inter-related issues such as depression, alcoholism, debt and anxiety. Mental health is a major issue for many residents in West Belfast and the effect upon their lifestyle and behaviour can be detrimental. Support services in this field are particularly resource intensive.

The focus of work on mental health must concern tackling problems at an earlier stage and to develop more effective prevention services with a range of partners. There is a need to raise awareness of mental health issues amongst communities and primary healthcare providers such as GPs and to increase the range of counselling services and alternative therapies available. For example, these need to be focused upon improving coping skills, raising self esteem and developing supportive environments. A holistic approach must be undertaken. There also needs to be more timely diagnosis and access to Mental Health services.

West Belfast has one of the highest levels of suicide in Europe and the area needs to be allocated services to deal with the high level of need. Support must be provided to assist the work of local organizations and services working to prevent suicide and care for those who have been bereaved through suicide.

The Suicide Awareness and Support Group, West Belfast was established by bereaved family members, as part of a community response to the increasing incidents of suicidal deaths in West Belfast. The group has now been in existence for the past 6 years and during this time has provided a self-help support group for families and individuals bereaved through suicide.

A number of members have undertaken **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST)** training and some have completed the ASIST Training for Trainers Programme which qualifies them to deliver ASIST training programmes to local communities.

9.1.4 Decrease Drug and Alcohol Abuse

There is a requirement for a targeted range of interventions regarding drug and alcohol abuse to include the misuse of prescription drugs. Increasing efforts must be focused upon preventative measures. In order to achieve this there needs to be cooperation from GPs and pharmacists to look at alternatives to prescription drugs.

There is also a need to support people suffering from alcoholism and drug addiction to progress to more stabilised life styles which include training and employment. In addition to funding and support of existing programmes, there must be funding for the development of new approaches such as health promotion in schools regarding alcoholism and drug abuse.

More work needs to be undertaken with those who sell alcohol in order that opening hours and age restrictions are enforced.

Colin Partnership Community Safety Subgroup is working with Belfast and Lisburn Community Safety Partnerships to roll out the Off Licence Code of Practice across the Colin and Dunmurry areas. The aim is to get all local off licences to sign up to the code and to provide training for their staff. The Colin area has also piloted alcohol strategies such as the "Bottle Watch" scheme with PSNI. This initiative was successful, however funding has ended.

Communities across West Belfast could benefit from this approach to tackling underage drinking.

9.1.5 Improve Sexual Health

It is important to reduce the numbers of teenage parents in the area. This will be achieved through raising awareness and supporting young people to make informed decisions and choices about personal relationships and sexual health. Initiatives should be targeted and must take account of each group's particular needs. There is a need to identify and work with partnership agencies to include schools and youth provision to increase the availability and accessibility of sexual health services which meet the needs of young people and to ensure high quality best practice and user friendly services. Appropriate training should be developed and provided for local staff/volunteers in sexual health.

9.1.6 Provide Family Support

There must be more awareness raising and promotion of information and services targeted at supporting families, to include those targeted at domestic violence situations. There are several models of good practice existing throughout the area. For example, Colin Live and Learn has a parent coordinator who works with Gateway Teams and links parents into the appropriate support services. However, there is a concern that it is the same families are referred and there are difficulties in ensuring continuity of staff.

Cross departmental resources should be skewed into an education and support package for families at risk - covering budget management, parenting skills, mental health, nutrition and exercise. There is a need to ensure that government strategies and initiatives are adequately resourced and coordinated in order to make a difference on the ground. For example, allotments, community gardens, food choices and basic cooking skills. This will link in with school curriculum and full service schools.

Consultations have noted a lack of access to suitable childcare facilities which include day care, sessional care, pre-school and after-school provision. There is a need to map family and childcare services across West Belfast in order to establish the quantity, type and quality of service offered. Additional crèche/childcare facilities and more specifically targeted at children with physical and learning difficulties are required.

There is a need for more accessible and affordable childcare to support working families as the existing provision is too expensive for the unemployed to access with the exception of the community facilities. Larger employers should be encouraged to provide on site childcare facilities/share facilities with other companies close by. Increased community based provision of childcare facilities using the social economy model needs to be supported. Initiatives would be sustained by a combination of statutory mainstream funding and self finance.

More speech and language therapists are required across North and West Belfast. The Trusts need to look at creative ways to ensure that the gap is filled (e.g. working with the hospitals and universities).

DE Speech & Language Pilot

As part of an IDF bid, **dedicated speech and language therapists** were employed to work in Primary 1 and 2 classes in the schools in Colin. Six schools in Colin are currently involved in a speech and language programme for full classes as well as individual and small group work.

The speech and language pilot scheme covering Colin and Poleglass is proving successful and there is scope for this service to be made more widely available. It is hoped that there will be adequate evidence to encourage DE to continue and extend these services.

9.1.7 Assist Older People

West Belfast has a growing older population, many of whom are long term residents and may suffer from an absence of family support and poor health. A key issue is to develop better ways of identifying vulnerable older people by collating information held by GPs, social care and housing providers and voluntary and community organisations. There is an opportunity to promote and support independent living in the community through working with all service providers to ensure that appropriate help is available to those who need it. A referral and support system for people who have been discharged from hospital needs to be in place to ensure consistency of treatment.

Building on the work of the Good Morning Project, financial support to community initiatives and volunteering will help ensure that older people are able to benefit from social network opportunities. This is addressed later in the section.

Older people have different housing needs to the rest of the population. Several Neighbourhood Partnerships have identified the need for appropriate accommodation for older people. For example a lack of bungalows in Suffolk and Greater Falls Neighbourhood Partnership areas support for a feasibility study to consider development of a fit for purpose 30-40 bed Nursing Care facility in West Belfast.

It is important that older people are supported to live independently within the community supported by mainstream and community services as needed. This will be achieved by improving access to services, maximising support provided by the voluntary and community sectors, providing home care management packages and well trained home help, day services, alarm systems and sheltered (+ care) accommodation for those who require this level of assistance.

9.1.8 Support People with Disabilities

There is a widespread feeling that the needs of people with disabilities are not being met. There is insufficient data relating to disability in West Belfast, as opposed to ill-health and is an area in need of further understanding. People with disabilities face a wide range of barriers including attitudinal, economic, physical and emotional and it is important that individuals receive support to live independently and with dignity, have choices about services and care and are supported in being involved in the local community.



The **Iveagh Project** (see proposed image left) involves the development of a regional treatment and assessment unit for children with a profound learning disability, consisting of an 8 bedded unit for children aged 5-18 years. It has capital investment of over £3m and plans to enhance the local environment. It will provide short term (6 to 12 months) care via Inpatient / Hospital Unit facilities and will use intensive clinical and therapeutic interventions. The location is the Old Iveagh school at Broadway.

9.1.9 Support Carers

Many people in West Belfast provide unpaid care to family, friends, neighbours or others. They need support and assistance to continue playing this vital role. For example, Greater Falls Neighbourhood Partnership identifies the need to devise a Befriending Scheme for carers in order to provide respite, financial advice and access to services. They aim to secure funding for the Welcome Trust Disabled Care Group Plan which provides support for people with disabilities and their carers. The Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan identifies the need to provide comprehensive Level 2 Day Care Service for dependant elderly people with the provision of transport adapted for disabled people. This service will support older people who wish to live within the community. It also will provide a social activities and programmes of personal care while providing valuable respite for carers.

9.1.10 Provide Quality Health Facilities

The availability of high quality health facilities in accessible locations is an important community feature. There is a planned £2.9 billion programme of health care investment to be delivered across Northern Ireland over the next 10 years. Primary and Community Care investment will begin to put in place the new infrastructure required to transform healthcare delivery by delivering more treatment and care closer to where people live and work. A major new health facility is planned for Andersonstown and there is an opportunity to provide a range of community facilities at the location.

There is a commitment of £28 million in funding for two new **Health and Wellbeing Centres** in West Belfast. They will be located in Andersonstown and Shankill. A wide range of health and social care services will be available such as family planning and orthodontics, nutrition and dietetics and physiotherapy. Primary care services for the people in West Belfast are currently provided from a number of separate facilities with local people having to travel to a range of locations for their community health and social care services. It will be crucial to ensure that all residents in West Belfast have access to these facilities.

There is a concern as to what happens to those people with disabilities who use the current day centre at Beech Hall when it is taken down and replaced by the Health and Well Being Centre. Also there is a need to influence and shape the development and content of the Health and Well Being Centre to best meet the needs of the local area. There is a need to develop communication channels between the community and BHSCT to influence and shape the development and content of the Health and Well Being Centre to best meet the needs of the local people.

For example, Belfast Education and Library Board have recently completed a review of their library estate and there are plans new library facilities in North, West and South Belfast which will be constructed over next ten years. There is an onus to 'join up' services where possible (along the lines of the Grove Health and Well Being centre) in neutral locations. It is important that the future library network in Belfast links up with other service providers for mutual benefit.

The investigation of a similar approach at Colin, within the context of the town centre development, should be investigated. An Emotional Health and Wellbeing Centre/Children's Centre is currently at economic appraisal stage. This would be a valuable asset to the community.

The Royal Hospitals is Northern Ireland's biggest and best known hospitals complex situated on a 70 acre site which is situated in West Belfast. Made up of four linked hospitals - the Royal Victoria, Royal Jubilee Maternity Service, Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children and the Dental Hospital - "the Royal" treats more than half a million people every year and has a worldwide reputation for excellence.



The hospital is undertaking major redevelopment projects to provide new and modern facilities (see proposed image left), these include a Women and Children's Hospital, a new Emergency Unit and an Energy Centre.

There are opportunities to build upon the Royal's proximity with regards to fostering relationships between research and development functions, suppliers and businesses within the medical field. For example, building upon physical capacity at St Mary's or within industrial sites situated along the Arc of Enterprise in order to increase employment opportunities.

However, whilst these developments are welcomed, it must be recognised that physical proximity to a service does not necessarily mean that provision is accessible for those who are most in need of its services.

Despite its proximity to the Royal, West Belfast has some of the highest levels of health deprivation in Belfast. Similarly, West Belfast does not have a history of young people participating in 3rd level education, yet St Mary's University is located on the Falls Road. Later in this section recommendations for improvements in service provision are addressed.

9.1.11 Multidisciplinary Approaches

There is a need to strategically plan and coordinate local service provision and support multidisciplinary partnerships.

For example, HAZ works in partnership with the community, voluntary, private and statutory sector to improve health and wellbeing. It takes a broad view of social and economic elements which determine health status. The purpose of the HAZ Integrated Services for Children and Young People Project (known as the LIAG) is to tackle inequality and improve the life chances of children and young people by developing better service integration.

The West Belfast LIAG seeks to address the needs of children and young people and their families through the development of enhanced integrated working. At the heart of this approach will be radical, multi-agency, multidisciplinary approach to service delivery. It will establish a 'full service' community based approach to children and young people's services that will change the way in which the problems of children and young people are dealt with. There will be an onus upon community and statutory agencies to ensure that they work together in a fully co-ordinated manner at local level.

The approach will support the following four themes:

To ensure that children and young people are "**Education Ready**" and able to benefit from formal/informal education will require a heavy emphasis on early years provision across West Belfast - building on the success of Sure Start and extending and widening its scope;

To extend the range and quality of **family support services** available. These will address the needs of older children and their families. It is hoped that family support can be delivered in a variety of ways with workers being recruited and trained as required;

The provision of **community based mental health supports** to the children and young people to include enhanced counselling, educational psychology, community based nursing and key therapies. The training and development of lay workers will be an essential element of this approach. The aim will be to encourage early intervention. The development of services under this theme would reduce the demand for access to the very limited highly specialised mental health services; and

Provision of alternative education, **outreach youth work**, learner support and community education for parents and young people to address alcoholism, drug abuse and citizenship.

The LIAG seek to develop a model which will have the potential to be mainstreamed and will seek to influence the planning and design of integrated services for children and young people by ensuring that project impact is captured and shared.

The key task of ensuring that children and young people are able to maximise their potential for achievement, will require a heavy emphasis on early years across West Belfast. This will mean extending the Sure Start model and widening its scope to link in with Healthy Living Centres and LIAG for a holistic and coordinated approach.

9.1.12 Community and Statutory Partnerships

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) was formed in April 2007 with the merging of the 6 Healthcare Trusts in Belfast – Belfast City Hospital, the Royal Hospitals, Mater Hospital, South and East Belfast, North and West Belfast and Greenpark Healthcare Trust. As part of the Review of Public Administration (RPA), the Boards were replaced by a single Health and Social Services Authority. Inside this Authority there are 7 Local Commissioning Groups (LCGs). These will map onto the new district councils and will be demand led by patients and driven by GPs and primary care professionals.

Therefore there is a need to ensure that the Health Trusts continue to increase their work with local people across West Belfast, building relationships with residents. There is recognition that a lot of money has been invested in health over the years- with little impact upon those who suffer most. Similarly it is unrealistic to deliver all services at a neighbourhood level and there should be coordination of services on an area wide basis with increased community links.

Healthy Living Centres are focused on deprived areas, are run by local partnerships and provide a wide range of services to the community. They seek to address the wider determinants of health inequalities such as social exclusion, lack of access to services and socio-economic deprivation. Projects reflect local priorities and needs. Community involvement and ownership are central, they are based on multi-agency working and they contribute to regional and local policies and strategies.

West Belfast has 2 Healthy Living Centres, based in Upper Springfield and the Maureen Sheehan Centre in the Falls. Programmes include Men's Health Awareness, Smoking, Anger Management, Salsa Dancing and Good Morning Projects.

The recent cuts in the health budget will place additional pressure upon the community sector to address unmet needs.

9.2 Provide a Safe Environment

Crime and the fear of crime have an adverse impact upon the quality of life of many people in West Belfast. Tackling crime will be important in building safer, stronger communities across West Belfast. Crime hotspots need to be targeted to reduce their impact upon residents and the underlying causes of crime, particularly drug abuse and alcohol, must be addressed. Anti-social behaviour needs to be dealt with through education, enforcement and diversionary activities.

9.2.1 Increase Reported Crime

There were a total of 8,654 offences recorded in the Framework area in 2005/06. There are significant cultural factors in West Belfast that can serve to mask the incidence of crime. There is no traditional support base for the PSNI within the community. Although crime is still reported, there has historically been a reluctance to deal with the PSNI as a legitimate police service and hence much crime in the local area is not represented within the PSNI statistics. There have been improvements in reporting to the police in many areas across West Belfast. However, there is a need to agree a strategy for engagement with PSNI in order to develop local, acceptable and accountable policing. There needs to be improved engagement between the District Policing Partnerships, PSNI and local communities in order that local policing needs are tackled within the area's Policing Plans.

9.2.2 Tackle Crime and the Fear of Crime

Three wards within the Framework area rank in the top 10 per cent of the most deprived wards in terms of reported crime. These are Falls, Falls Park and Kilwee. Glencolin is the least affected out of the region's wards. The majority of offences involved assault, theft and criminal damage with 27 per cent of the total incidents taking place in the Falls ward.

There is a need for residents to engage with PSNI and local community safety initiatives to map existing crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots and to develop an Action Plan to address local issues and concerns.

Community safety is a major issue for the local community and emphasis has shifted towards addressing crimes such as anti-social behaviour and youth nuisance. It is important that adequate weight is given to crimes which have an impact upon resident's quality of life. All residents living within West Belfast should feel safe within and outside their homes. Additional security measures should be sourced for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled and those living alone.

The Good Morning Project™ is a collaboration between organisations with an interest in supporting the more vulnerable members of within the community. This is primarily by means of regular friendly telephone conversations. Use of the trademarked term "the Good Morning Project" is licensed only to member organisations, who are committed to a code of best practice and undertake regular appraisal. Members contribute towards improving the services provided by the Good Morning Project. There are several Good Morning Projects in West Belfast (e.g. Upper Springfield, Colin).

9.2.3 Partnership Working

Belfast Community Safety Partnership brings together over 30 organisations whose services impact upon crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Work includes speaking to local communities about their concerns, supporting projects such as Neighbourhood Watch, developing local projects throughout Belfast and funding local initiatives and piloting initiatives such as Community Safety Wardens and night time transport services.

Current Community Safety Partnership Action Plans are thought to be too rigid but they are now looking at developing a model for when issues are developing on the ground. Collective strategic planning needs to take place- a flexible structure in place in order to deal with emergency situations – fear of raising expectations and resources can't meet them.

Involving and engaging the local community is a fundamental in addressing crime and community safety concerns. Increasing involvement and a greater sense of empowerment will lead to an increasing willingness to report crime and challenge inappropriate behaviour. Stronger relationships between PSNI and local communities and the mapping of crime hotspots will lead to an increase in local intelligence gathering and effective tasking and coordination of activity across all relevant agencies will ensure that crime and anti-behaviour hotspots will be better policed.

There is also limited understanding and knowledge of who to contact when a crime occurs. Awareness raising activity about relevant agencies and organisations to contact and how to contact them needs to be disseminated to residents.

There is a need to hold duty holders to account (e.g. NIHE, PSNI, BCC, Lisburn City Council). In order to do this local residents must have a greater input in identifying problem areas and offenders. Residents will also need to help develop priorities for action through the Safer Neighbourhoods agenda.

Upper Springfield has adopted the **Safer Neighbourhoods Forum** which has worked to address such issues as the 'Ballymurphy feud' and ongoing anti-social behaviour and crime. The Forum identified a number of urgent tasks that were necessary in order to build community confidence and ensure greater reporting and follow-up of incidents. This included establishing a structured system to record and monitor incidents, developing and building local confidence in the use of a reporting /referral system and following up actions and individual incidents with partner agencies and victims as appropriate. Focus was placed upon building local confidence in the use of a reporting /referral system and following up actions and individual incidents with partner agencies and victims as appropriate.

The West Belfast Community Confidence Forum was developed to facilitate the expansion of the model throughout West Belfast. This approach requires a strong challenge function on behalf of the community. Support, training and advice upon the promotion, ownership and implementation of these schemes are crucial to its success.

9.2.4 Adopt Preventative Strategies

Deprived neighbourhoods face a range of social problems to include high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, high rates of anti-social behaviour, unemployment,

poverty, vandalism and crime. There are growing concerns for young people living in West Belfast, particularly in terms of anti-social behaviour and increasing issues of alcohol and substance abuse. Whilst there is a major role for schools and education there is a requirement to combine preventative and enforcement actions.

The focus needs to be on developing early intervention and prevention strategies whereby a range of support services and structures will be put in place to identify and respond to risk factors that may lead to offending behaviour. As noted earlier it is essential that schools and youth facilities are able to provide individualised support and mentoring to young people. Community based family support services, community restorative justice programmes, projects to re-integrate ex-offenders into the community and programmes to address drug and alcohol abuse have all been successfully introduced across West Belfast.

These programmes should complement ongoing work with parents and young people to instil civic responsibility, community values and a greater sense of responsibility for one's actions. An improving citizenship agenda linked to schools will help challenge and improve behaviour amongst young people.

There are certain areas in West Belfast that are persistent locations for death-driving and car crime (e.g. Suffolk Road, Glen Road, Black's Road). In order to reduce death-driving there needs to be more innovative and effective traffic calming methods in key locations and an expansion of existing initiatives such as PSNI IMPACT project which targets car crime.

Persistent vandalism of public and private property may be tackled through a range of initiatives such as the targeted use of alley-gating, CCTV, improved street lighting, education programmes with school children and young people, involvement of young people in the design, development and maintenance of public spaces and the active management of public parks and play areas through the employment of community wardens/play supervisors.

BCC are currently running antisocial behaviour pilots in parks with local communities surrounding Dunville Park, Clonard area and Falls Leisure Centre and Whiterock Leisure Centre, Falls Park and Belfast City Cemetery. Actions include removing graffiti, cutting back vegetation and shrubbery and erecting new bye-law signs to make our parks look and feel safer, liaising with friends' groups to identify their needs and developing activities and working with the **BCC Youth Forum** to identify activities for young people. BCC encourages local groups to submit proposals for activities and programmes in their local area.

There must be zero tolerance of underage and open air drinking and drug taking with the enforcement of fines for street drinking and failure to comply with licensing laws. Innovative educational programmes regarding the health risks of binge drinking and recreational drug use must be developed in partnership with young people. Those who do not routinely access youth services should be involved through on street youth work models and peer mentoring.

9.2.5 Increase Youth Activities

Fears for community safety and anti-social behaviour arise when people see crowds of young people gathering on the streets due to a lack of youth facilities. There is a concern that youth funding is being reduced despite an underlying need

for investment in this area. There is an overall need for more affordable, safe and supervised activities for children and young people within West Belfast with an adequate number of fully equipped community and youth facilities open during the evenings, weekends and school holidays. Existing community and youth centres operate restricted hours and often have limited facilities and resources. It is stressed that anti-social behaviour should not be seen as being rewarded and therefore all children in West Belfast must have increased access to these opportunities.

A range of specific diversionary activities focused on young people through detached and centre-based provision provides a variety of sports, leisure and educational opportunities and a significant proportion of this activity is provided by the voluntary and community sector. There are many models of good practice throughout West Belfast e.g. Upper Springfield Intervention Programme, Colin Youth Project. However, more work needs to be done on a West Belfast wide basis.

9.3 Support Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is affected by a range of inter-related issues. There is a need to reach out to the people who are most excluded from opportunities, improve community relations, promote greater community involvement in decision making and service delivery and develop more opportunities for people to interact.

9.3.1 Build Capacity

Community and voluntary organisations play a key role in identifying local issues and fostering community cohesion through capacity building and developing networks. Overall, West Belfast has a strong community sector. However this masks pockets of inactivity within and across neighbourhood boundaries. Although a great deal of collaborative working takes place at a local level, this could be greatly improved. Many local community groups are poorly resourced, relying on volunteer resources and struggling to sustain adequate funding. The emphasis must be on identifying areas where there is weak community infrastructure and supporting the community sector to build capacity in order to enable people to take action.

During the consultations it was recognised that although many people volunteer their time for community activities, the sector is becoming more professional and people are often put off formal involvement due to a lack of knowledge around terminology, policy etc. Care needs to be taken to ensure that local people are equipped with the skills and understanding to participate in local decision-making. This will require both staff and resident training, support and increased financial resources.

9.3.2 Develop Community Hubs

It is important that residents have a facility which they can utilise to socialise and participate in community life. It is recommended that "Community hubs" are included as part of large scale housing and mixed use developments. However, certain areas in West Belfast are not well served in terms of community facilities.

For example, the Suffolk Community Centre runs a Summer and Easter scheme, organises bus trips and is the location for many community groups - including Suffolk Residents Association, Suffolk after-schools club and baby clinic. There is a lack of retail, leisure and social facilities in Suffolk, therefore maintenance and enhancement of this centre will be an important factor in improving the quality of life in the estate. Similarly, the development of housing at Lagmore was undertaken without sufficient development of facilities for the new community. Hence there is a need for investment that would benefit the social and economic infrastructure in this community⁴.

In contrast, low levels of community capacity in specific parts of West Belfast have led to low usage of community facilities (e.g. Hannahstown Hall, Horn Drive and Glen Community Centres). There is a need to maximise the use by sharing facilities, targeted capacity building programmes and increased awareness of initiatives. Other community facilities such as The Glen Complex in Lenadoon are in need of substantial refurbishment.

9.3.3 Encourage Participation

It is important that local people are informed of and actively involved in the design management and delivery of community activities. It is important that resources are put into community newspapers, regular open days and public meetings and the launch and maintenance of websites. The Neighbourhood Partnerships across West Belfast have had, and continue to have, an active role in encouraging community participation. Already many structures are in place in order to engage a broad section of people in neighbourhood activity.

There is a need to develop and promote volunteering opportunities. Volunteering must not only be seen as a valuable resource for the wider community but also as a stepping stone to training and employment and a mechanism for improving self esteem and social skills.

⁴ Lagmore Community Forum – Neighbourhood Development Centre Feasibility Study (2006)

Comparator Study: Ballymun Regeneration

The Ballymun programme of regeneration began in 1997 with the creation of Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (BRL), the Dublin City Council company set up to plan and implement regeneration in the area. The aim is to implement a regeneration programme which will result in a new town with new and improved facilities for the 30,000 people who will live there. BRL is working with the community to develop and implement a Master Plan for the physical, economic and social regeneration of Ballymun.

Ballymun faced significant economic, social, and physical challenges which had led to a poor image being associated with the area. The residents had a relatively limited education and a lack of basic skills which had led to high levels of unemployment and a dependency culture. In addition, there was a widespread perception that public bodies had failed to address the significant challenges experienced by the area.

A key focus of current regeneration activity is the provision of housing - with at least 5,000 new homes to be built in a variety of styles and sizes in five existing neighbourhoods. In order to address the lack of community participation and anti-social behaviour, Neighbourhood centres will be developed with a range of local services. Lands surrounding the M50 were to be developed for employment generating uses. A multitude of arts, environmental action, recreational and training opportunities have been developed in the area. This is supported by a physical community infrastructure of parks, arts and leisure facilities.

9.3.4 Promote Social Inclusion

Social changes place pressure on communities. West Belfast has a significant number of people who are at risk from exclusion from civic life due to their age, disability, ethnic background or to poverty.

Although numbers are smaller than the rest of Belfast, there are increasing numbers of people from a minority ethnic background living in parts of West Belfast. Therefore there is a need to ensure that these residents are able to connect with and feel a part of community life and are accepted by the neighbourhoods in which they live. It is important to target all new residents for inclusion in activities and to promote greater tolerance and respect. Disability Action Transport and Community Transport Services also provide door-to-door travel services to communities, the elderly and people with disabilities. Services like these ensure that vulnerable people are able to physically connect with the outside world.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans all stated concerns about the lack of facilities and services for older people and resultant feelings of isolation and inequality. It is recognised that older people want to participate in activities but are not necessarily interested in education or training. There needs to be promotion and expansion of existing Befriending services across West Belfast with links into regular community events and accessible facilities. There must also be a review of the counselling referral process and service take-up amongst older people to ensure that the elderly do not feel isolated from the rest of the community. Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans also state a need to include people with disabilities in civic life. It is important that Neighbourhood Partnerships are supported to help people become involved in the community.

There is a need to ensure that young people are made to feel part of the community. This is particularly important due to the fact that West Belfast has a high percentage of young people and the youth services budget is being cut. There should be a skewing of available resources in order to provide activities and resources for all young people living in the area. The use of innovative outreach practices are recommended as it is sometimes difficult to attract young people to participate in community activities.

In general there is a need to actively encourage the participation of older people, people with disabilities, young people, carers, Travellers and the long term unemployed in community activity. Community outreach programmes should be developed in conjunction with representative organisations to ensure that efforts are targeted and people are aware and can avail of the various programmes and facilities on offer.

9.3.5 Encourage Good Relations

As previously noted there are several interface points in West Belfast. Suffolk, is at a sensitive interface with the nationalist Lenadoon community and there is a history of problems along the interface point along the Stewartstown Road. “Normal” problems appear to be escalated at interface areas and there is a large section of the community that live in fear of crime within interface areas. However, despite tensions and interface violence, Suffolk and Lenadoon have applied a variety of good practice cross-community initiatives. The Suffolk and Lenadoon Interface Group (SLIG) was developed to bring together Protestant and Catholic communities on both sides of the road.

Atlantic Philanthropies have provided support for community-based reconciliation, joint advocacy and the development of shared spaces by assisting communities to implement a **Peace-Building Plan** for the Suffolk Lenadoon area in West Belfast. The long term vision of the group is to establish 'two ordinary communities living side by side as good neighbours'. Two Youth Advocacy Workers will be responsible for working jointly within the two communities to establish a project that will aim to give young people the opportunity to build peace at a local level through local youth interventions. They will also be responsible for drawing up a joint comprehensive youth strategy.

There needs to be further expansion and funding of current activities and mechanisms in place to ensure that the lessons learned from SLIG’s work are shared in other areas. For example, the Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project as been recognised by a British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) award and on the Springfield Road there is a long established mobile phone network and strong relationships between local community activists.

Physical barriers have implications for access, tourism and social inclusion and the aim of community relations activities should ultimately result in taking down both mental and physical boundaries according to the wishes of the communities affected. The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan must consider the land use implications in interface areas and the associated issues such as regeneration potential, environmental quality, surplus land and accessibility to facilities.

There is a need to provide opportunities to explore and share histories and cultures in order to develop a better understanding between residents. For example, work within and across communities could be linked into the West Belfast Historical Society's programme and would be a valuable tourism asset.

The West Belfast Historical Society was established in 1974 as a result of a series of local public history lectures based on Belfast and its surrounding areas. The West Belfast Historical Society has been responsible for providing lectures on a monthly basis ever since. The West Belfast Historical Society is neither political nor sectarian in its outlook being open to all who have an interest in local history. The main objects and aim of the Society are to promote local history and to record on paper and film or other illustrations of all social, economic or other events associated with that area of Belfast lying west of the River Lagan.

There is a need to ensure that residents have access to shared spaces and shared services. Research evidence suggests that service usage is highly dependent upon perceptions of the community "ownership" of the location in which the facility is situated. This pattern demonstrates a fundamental challenge for public authorities who have an obligation to ensure equality of access within and across communities.

During December 2000 and January 2001 **Springfield Intercommunity Development Project (now Interaction Belfast)** was approached about developing fishing facilities in the Springfield Dam, which is a former part of Thomas Mackies Engineering Works situated on the Springfield Road Interface. This **Cottonmill & Fisheries** project underwent an Economic Appraisal regarding establishing a put and take fishery and leisure facility on the 5.2 acre site of the Springfield Dam in Belfast. The appraisal was positive but the project was never progressed.

This area is located on the Springfield Road, adjacent to FG Wilson, the Community Outreach Centre and the Forth River Valley. It is a former industrial Mill site, which produced cotton. An artificial lake was created to provide energy and power to run the manufacturing machinery of the mill industry. Although the Mill activities have ceased and buildings are gone, the artificial lake still remains. There is a desire to develop this area, bringing the lake back into use for recreational and water-based activities. There is the potential to create a focal point for recreation, which could link in with the development of the Forth River Valley, and integrate into the Farset Way proposals. It offers the potential to develop local recreation use, and opportunities to cultivate water based activities, such as children's canoeing, kayaking, and fishing lessons. This could be a joint venture with the local leisure centres at Beechmount, Whiterock and Falls. This is located on a key network route and along the proposed WWAY connector route along the Springfield Road, providing a safe and accessible route to and from the area. This scheme should be progressed by a local intercommunity group in conjunction with BCC and other interested investors.

There is believed to be a need for a facility which will allow both of the communities on the Springfield Road to share space and to come together. This is an interface area and there is a problem of stone throwing and rioting which helps to generate fear and distrust for the other community. It is recognised that if something is put in place, it will require very careful management to ensure that it is seen as a truly cross community activity. The Economic Appraisal was successful in 2004 subject to shortfall funding being met. However it has not proceeded. It is recommended that the Economic Appraisal is revisited in light of the developments at the new Springfield Road Campus and any future proposals at Forth River Business Park. This project is located in close proximity to the Springfield Road Campus development and would enhance the prospect of promoting good relations between communities and facilitating ease of access.

9.3.6 Develop Culture, Arts and Leisure Opportunities

Access to culture is an important aspect of community life. Many Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans highlight the need to increase arts and cultural activity within the area. This will be a key driver community development and a means of creating and supporting employment both directly through employing people in arts and cultural activities. It will also link into the West Belfast tourism initiative, increasing tourism spend within the local economy. There is a need to ensure that local people can access and participate in a broad range of affordable cultural activities. Community festivals such as Féile an Phobail also help to increase community interaction and community cohesion.

Oscailt is Féile an Phobail's Disability Awareness Project. Oscailt ('Open') is about equal opportunities and access to all forms of the arts for people with a disability, and strives to promote disability awareness. Féile encourages people with disabilities to attend events and also to organise their own as part of Féile's annual programmes. Highlights throughout the year include dramas, music events, dance events and art and craft workshops through its work with schools and disability groups in Belfast. Work which takes place on continuous basis all year round is showcased within each of the three festivals.

There is a need to celebrate and recognise the positive work being carried out across West Belfast in order to promote local pride, responsibility and feelings of community. Drama, dance, music and arts have been utilised by a number of community groups such as the Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and USDCL.

Colin Arts and Culture Forum has been set up to encourage interest in drama, music, dance, story telling or the history of the Colin Area, to enable them to make a contribution to the forum and their community. The group intend to establish a Colin School of Music, School of Drama, and School of Dance as a centre point for arts and culture in the area. Each of these schools will offer a variety of activities including the opportunity to learn a new instrument, performing concerts and dramas, Irish dancing, hip hop, DJ-ing, and many more activities.

The Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and **Impact** are targeting young people between the ages of 13 and 18 to participate in putting together a new drama aimed at young people within the community. The youth of the Colin area will have the chance to write, direct and act. They will discuss the issues that affect their everyday lives including car crime and anti-social behaviour and turn them into an informative and fun play to give the local community an insight into youth issues. Sessions involve introduction to the issue of car crime, improvisation and exploration of the issue, character work and development, script writing and rehearsals. The drama will then be performed in various local locations.

There is a need to ensure that the heritage and history is maintained for current and future generations. Existing cultural offerings need to be developed further and support provided to potential investors. There are many opportunities to maximise economic and social regeneration through the promotion of heritage, arts and culture. These include:

- **Falls Park** became Belfast's second public park when it opened in 1873. The Cooler, a huge outdoor swimming pool was closed in the 1980s. The City Cemetery was opened in 1869. The older sections of the cemetery contain many monuments, statues and vaults. Burials still continue today in the newer part of the cemetery. The regeneration of the Park and the City cemetery has been provided funding by BCC under Brighter Belfast;
- **The Andersonstown Traditional and Contemporary Music School and McPeake School of Music** are the two largest traditional music schools in the country. These organisations are based in the Falls and represent and nurture a growing traditional music sector with potential for employment, job creation and youth outreach. There needs to be further development of home, tourism and international markets for traditional markets, backed by professional development for local musicians. There will be opportunities to utilise facilities at Springfield Campus;
- **Donegal Celtic Park** is the home of Irish Premier League team Donegal Celtic. It is situated in the Suffolk Road in West Belfast. It is named in nostalgia of Celtic Park on the Donegall Road in West Belfast, which was home of the former Belfast Celtic. Like the old ground, The Donnie is also known to the fans as Paradise (similar to Celtic Park in Glasgow as well). Current capacity is approximately 3500 and there are plans in place for a 3,000 seater stadium that will include a social club and a gym. This is a result of private sector investment in the club.

9.3.7 Provide Long Term Commitment

Although there have been steady improvements in relationship building and partnership, confidence in public sector bodies is limited within many communities.

There is widespread feeling amongst the community that the level of statutory participation and contribution within Neighbourhood Renewal is poor, with a lack of guidance on Departmental roles and responsibilities. Neighbourhood Partnerships have raised concerns through face to face meetings, letters to key officials, Freedom of Information requests and political lobbying about lack of or delays in progress. Partnerships have also raised concern about the need to identify a cross-government Neighbourhood Renewal budget and to address the lack of joined up thinking and working practices. Neighbourhood Renewal remains a cross-Government matter that is coordinated by DSD until its transfer to Councils under RPA.

At a recent presentation to the Social Development Committee Neighbourhood Renewal panel members made a number of recommendations for the future delivery of the policy to include protocols whereby each Department “proves” its strategic, operational and financial planning to incorporate the development and implementation of Neighbourhood Renewal. It was also recommended that the timeframe for the implementation of Neighbourhood Renewal becomes a permanent, renewable and ongoing process undertaken by DSD and with the support of Executive colleagues through the Programme for Government.

9.4 Improve Service Provision

The residents of West Belfast require high quality and easily accessible community services, including health centres, libraries, community and leisure centres, youth provision and cultural venues. It is important that service providers work together to strengthen facilities and services and to cluster services in order to develop more collaborative approaches to service delivery. The Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans provide a comprehensive starting point for a service audit within and across neighbourhoods in West Belfast in order to move towards strategic area based service provision.

9.4.1 Develop Needs Based Services

The relationships and evidence base built up via the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships Action Plans will play an important role in ensuring community involvement and identification of need on a local level. Local Government now has responsibility for Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Planning under RPA and there is an opportunity to ensure that local service provision is carried out in a strategic, coordinated fashion within the most deprived areas. There is a case to be made that resources should be skewed according to the needs of an area. This would involve looking at how services are currently delivered and redirecting provision accordingly.

There is a need to ensure that the appropriate structures are in place to enable information and good practice sharing amongst communities. There is a concern that much work is funding driven and organisations do not often have the opportunity to share good practice and ensure a more coordinated approach to service provision and resource sharing. There are gaps in the linking up of local services both locally and across Belfast. It is important that these services are supported and that their local geographical remit made explicit.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies must be used as the basis for identifying and prioritising the needs of the community and ensuring that those statutory agencies responsible for the delivery of public services meet their responsibilities. The LIAG should be used as a pilot to assess the effectiveness of devolving commissioning decisions to communities. Those who are able should be encouraged to take-up a Direct Payment facility in order to increase user choice and control over the services they need. Services must be commissioned based upon the need of the population and should be provided by a range of organisations to include the voluntary and community sector.

9.4.2 Provide Inclusive Services

Services must be equitable and inclusive. Service providers such as health, education, social care and housing must understand their client group and react to different service needs.

The onus is on service providers to come up with new ways of delivering services in order to attract and appeal to target groups. It is important that services adopt innovative working practices in order to meet the targets in their Good Relations Plans.

The National Trust believe that it is important that people with profound and multiple disabilities can participate in and experience the assets of West Belfast. In order to encourage greater participation from people with disabilities and their carers, the National Trust has ensured that the route to the Divis Mountain can be accessed by all. They have additionally improved their visitor facilities on Divis to include facilities for people with disabilities and their carers.

All services should be developed in conjunction with local communities and excluded groups. For example, through staff awareness training conducted by sector representatives such as An Munia Tober, Help the Aged, Disability Action etc.

9.4.3 Increase Service Delivery by Communities

A number of programmes and services currently being successfully delivered by the community are aimed at health and wellbeing. They provide accessible, affordable services in an appropriate setting. However, many of these services are delivered with little or no core funding support from the statutory sector. There must be increased opportunities for the voluntary and community sector to deliver care services.

It would also be valuable for statutory organisations to assist and facilitate companies to qualify for Government tenders and to identify and remove existing procurement policy barriers for social economy service delivery and commitment to support the delivery of a percentage of services through social economy projects via service level agreements.

Community sector provision is often perceived to be a cheap alternative and there is little evidence of partnership working or joint accountability. Increased populations in certain areas and proposed new developments will put further strain on service provision. However, short term funding and one off initiatives are not the way forward. Community organisations find the current financial payment systems difficult to manage. They do not have the capacity to deliver services if they do not receive payment upfront.

The Link Community Association in Andersonstown was established in 1996. The group's objective is to provide a forum for local residents in order to improve the quality of life of the whole community by empowering them with a strong sense of cultural identity, equality, ownership, partnership and inclusion. The **Oasis Project** is a plan to develop some green space located between North Link and South Link and bounded by rows of housing on each side (Bearmagh Drive and Commedagh Drive). This area is disused at present and attracts young people, driving quads, underage drinkers and vandals. The group has produced a plan to redevelop this site and to resurface both of its existing playing fields (which are unusable at present). The proposed outdoor facilities will include upgraded playground facilities for local children, an Astroturf sports pitch with floodlighting, a grass pitch for GAA youth training, a walkway, a climbing wall and a community garden. The group also hopes to develop a resource centre at the site to accommodate those groups currently using the small office space rented by Link Community Association.

Link's vision for the project states that there must be management and input from relevant community based groups and individuals, with all services organised and provided by the local community where possible.

10. CHARACTER AREA ENHANCEMENTS

10.1 Introduction

This section outlines the boundaries for the six West Belfast character areas. It also describes potential enhancements for the neighbourhoods. Maps are provided to illustrate proposals for each area. These proposals should be considered alongside Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans. These Action Plans will drive forward the regeneration of West Belfast at a local level. However, each Plan does not work in isolation. Rather, they are co-terminous and complementary and their combined effort will help deliver strategic regeneration across the West.

10.2 Character Area 1: Upper Springfield/Whiterock

10.2.1 Boundaries

This area incorporates the neighbourhoods of Turf Lodge, Springfield, Dermot Hill, New Barnsley and Ballymurphy as well as sections of Ballygomartin, Beechmount and Springvale. The western boundary follows the Monagh By Pass along this route to the end of the Gortamona development. Its southern boundary slips along the rear of dwellings fronting onto Gransha Park, along Gransha Gardens and Green, and follow the boundary between Whiterock Leisure Centre and the City Cemetery until it meets the Whiterock Road. It travels down the Whiterock Road, passed over the rear of Rockmount Street to Beechview Park, past Beechmount Leisure area, through Corpus Christi and St Paul's School to reach Millennium Way. The boundary follows Millennium Way, Forfar Street, Elswick Street onto the Springfield Road, where it continues until it diverges onto the Springmartin Road. At this point the northern boundary progresses across the Hills to the rear of Whiterock, where it joins the top of the Monagh By pass again.

10.2.2 Proposals

The Upper Springfield / Whiterock area benefits from its location at the foot of the Belfast Hills, which offers huge potential for developing new recreational and tourism uses and destinations. The area benefits from a strong BMC presence with the established Whiterock facility and the proposed Springfield Road campus. There is also a large area of industrial land. It has the potential to become a major employment location and a community learning zone. The recommended key strategic projects for the area include:

- new and enhanced access to the Belfast Hills and promotion of tourist trails and recreational uses. Development and implementation of the Saffron/Newhill Project, linking into the wider environmental tourism offering. There is potential for partnership with Coiste and the National Trust for accommodation provision;

- promotion of community greenway linkages and pathways between open spaces, key places and civic spaces. Environmental protection and enhancement of Falls Park;
- creation and promotion of tourism uses in area, linked to the Gaeltacht Quarter and the Andersonstown Quarter;
- Arc of Enterprise – Whiterock, Glenbank, Forth River, E3 connectors;
- Forth River Business Park development with links to E3, Farset Way and rejuvenation of Cotton Mill area and creation of water based activities at the Mill Pond;
- relationship between Whiterock Business Park and enhancement /development of the Whiterock BMC campus; and
- long term potential to create new orbital link route connecting the M1/ Monagh By Pass with North Belfast.

See Figure 10.1 and 10.2, overleaf, for development and traffic and transport proposals.

Figure: 10.1

Upper Springfield / Whiterock Development Proposals

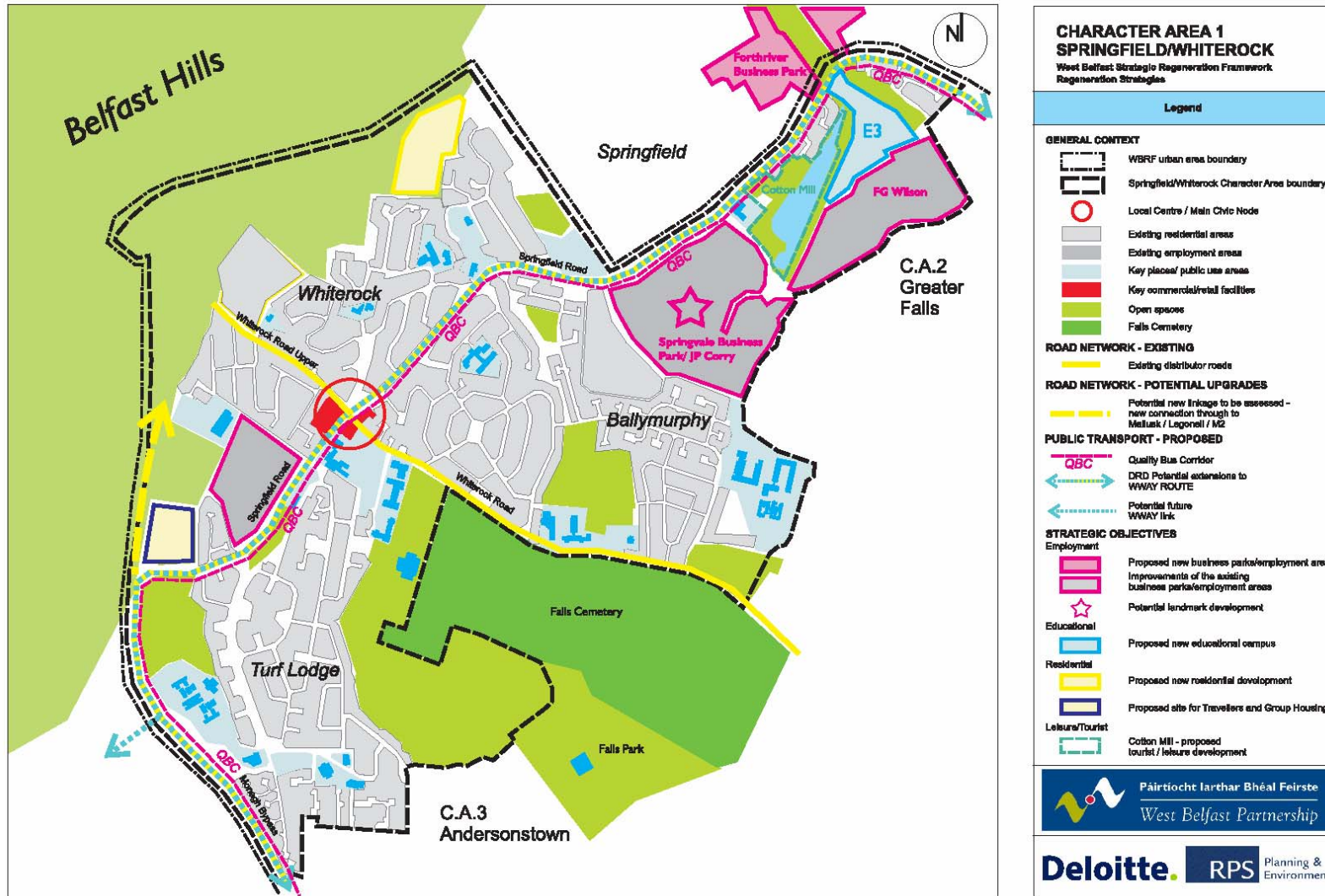
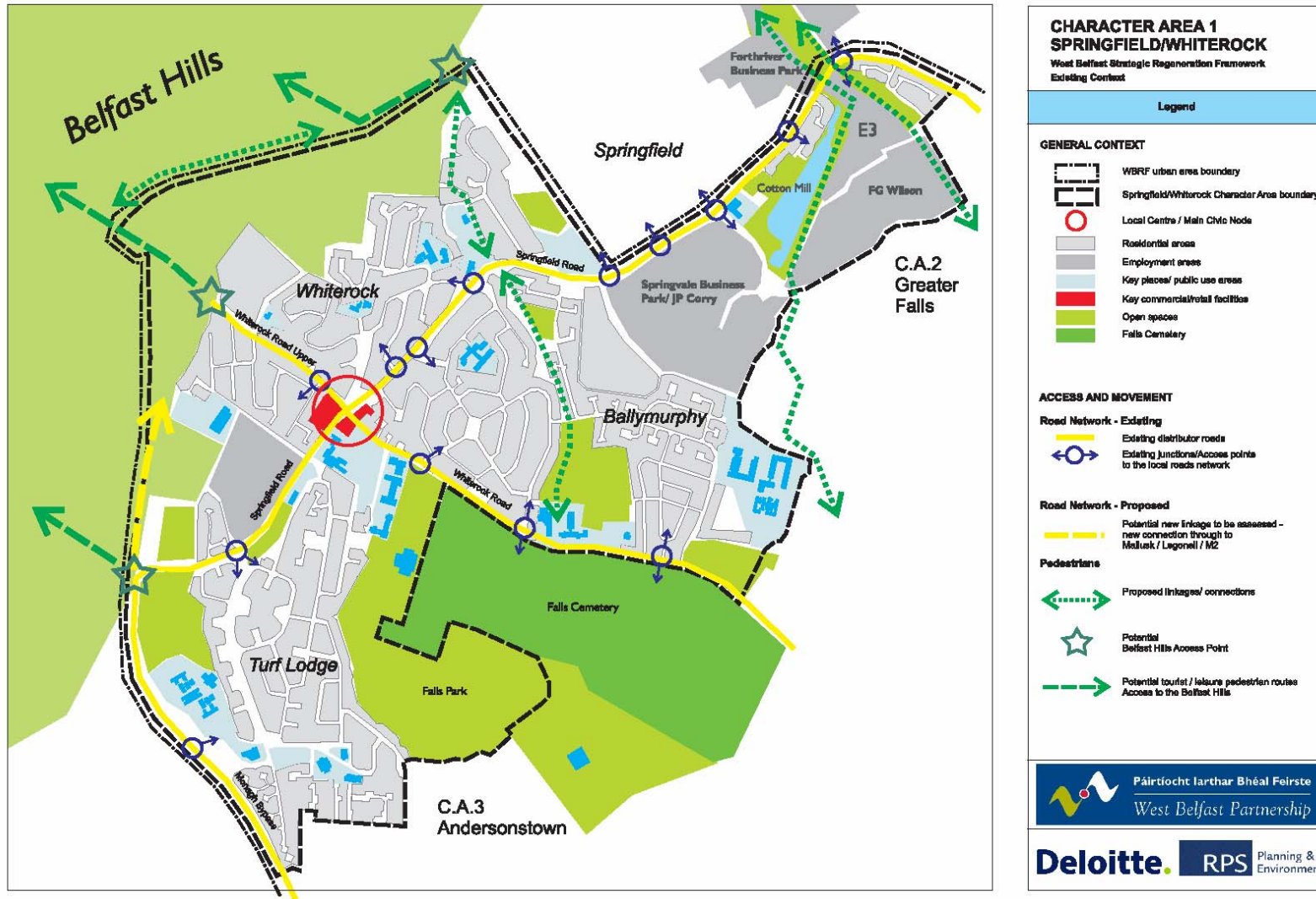


Figure: 10.2

Upper Springfield / Whiterock Traffic and Transport Proposals



10.3 Character Area 2: Greater Falls

10.3.1 Boundaries

This area incorporates Falls, Springfield, Beechmount, Falls Park, Milltown, Roden Street and the RVH. From the Andersonstown roundabout (at the former PSNI site) the boundary travels north along the rear of dwellings facing onto Divis Drive, and follows the periphery of the City Cemetery up onto the Whiterock Road. It travels southward along this road, and diverges along the playing fields at the rear of Rockmount Street, onto Beechview Park, past Beechmount Leisure area, through Corpus Christi and St Paul's onto Millennium Way. From here, the boundary follows Forfar Street, Elswick Street onto the Springfield Road, where it continues in an easterly direction onto Lanark Way, Cupar Way, David Street, North Howard Link onto lower Northumberland Street. From here it follows Beverley Street and Percy Street onto Divis Street and turns onto the West Link. At this point the boundary follows the Westlink, through Grosvenor and Broadway, where it eventually diverges on the western side of Bog Meadows along Milltown Cemetery, taking in St James and back to the Andersonstown roundabout.

10.3.2 Proposals

The Falls area benefits from its close proximity to the city centre and M1 motorway. This offers huge potential for developing tourism opportunities within the area to make Falls an Irish language and cultural hub. Figure 10.2, overleaf, illustrates the development proposals. The recommended key strategic projects for the area include:

- development and promotion of the Gaeltacht Quarter according to its Business and Marketing Plan, with cultural links throughout West Belfast and additional linkage to Cathedral Quarter, Titanic Quarter and Laganside via Green Chain Link;
- development of Culturlann and possibility of acquiring adjoining land;
- a feasibility study into the Farset Way, connecting the Divis Mountain and the River Lagan, The Falls Glen and the Beechmount Project, which will all focus on reopening the waterways and re-establishing a relationship with them;
- the development of the Beechmount Project to incorporate a theatre and an Irish Language Education and Visitor Centre (Pobal proposal);
- link Farset Way to Bog Meadows Nature Reserve with new tourist/recreational facilities required;
- development of a public art strategy linking into Gaeltacht quarter;
- full progression of Conway Mill development to create a roof gallery, workshops for artists/creative industries/architecture with a retail outlet, gallery, arts venue, and visitor centre and multi purpose venue space;

- progression of St Comgall's development and feasibility of hotel development on the site;
- environmental protection and enhancement of Dunville Park;
- landmark developments and public realm and pedestrian improvements at the Gateway locations of North West Quarter, Grosvenor and Broadway;
- implementation of the Falls physical masterplan;
- progression of the Grosvenor leisure facilities; and
- creation of a knowledge corridor between St Mary's University and RVH research hospital in order to strengthen and expand medical research and development opportunities in this area and feed into the growth of the Arc of Enterprise.

See Figure 10.3 and 10.4 overleaf, for development and traffic and transport proposals

Figure: 10.3
Greater Falls Development Proposals

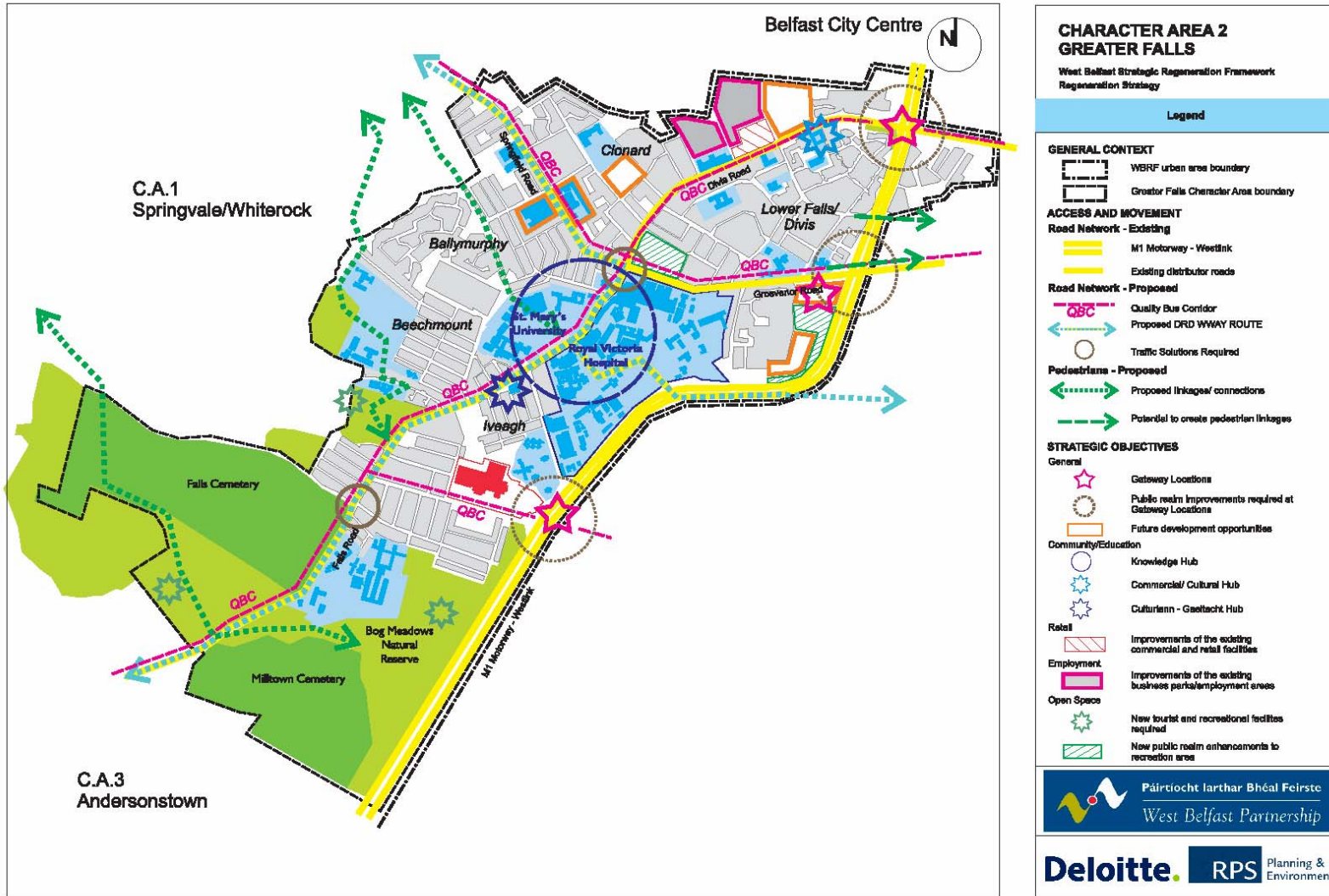
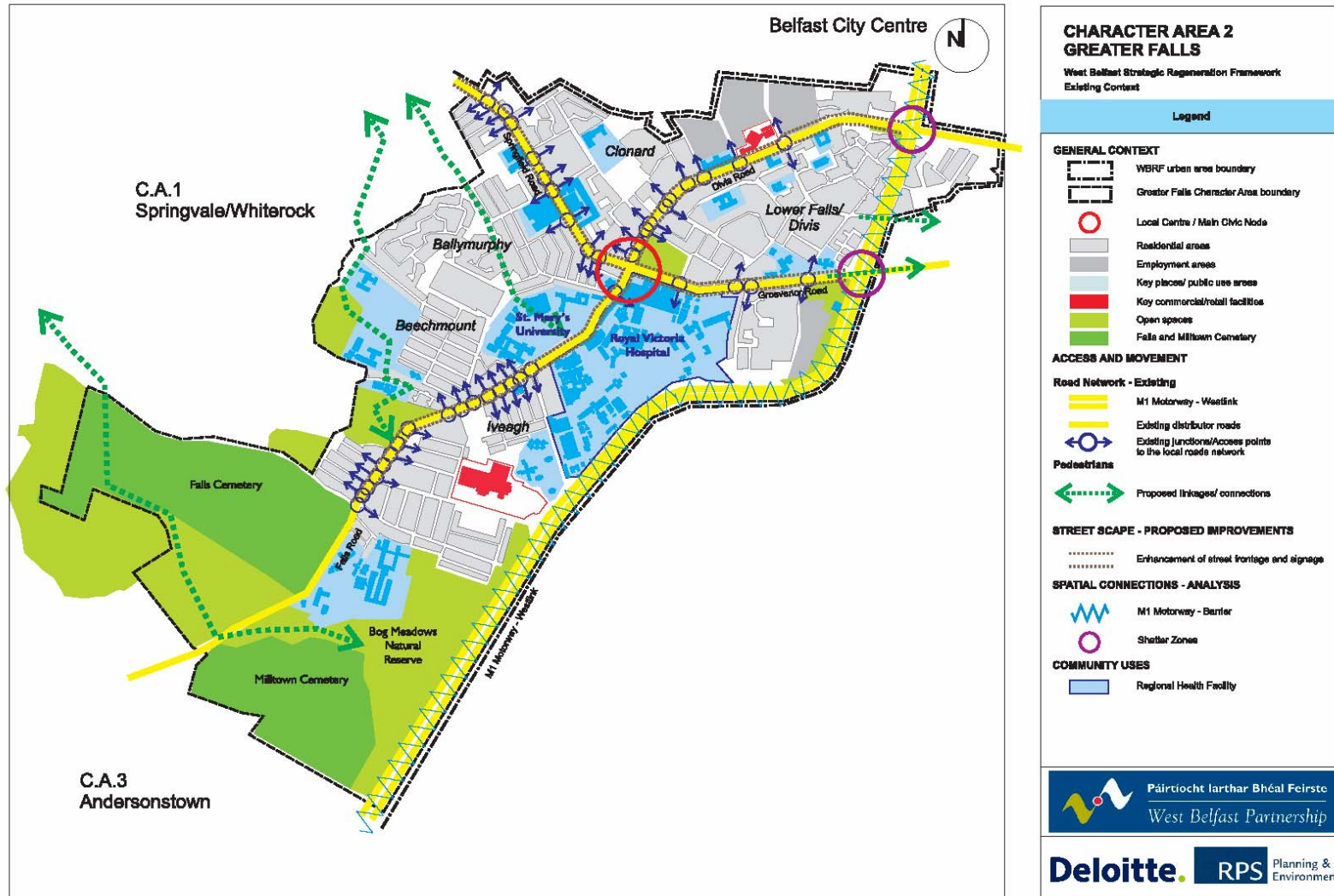


Figure: 10.3
 Greater Falls Development Proposals



Character Area 3: Andersonstown

10.3.3 Boundaries

This incorporates the neighbourhoods of Andersonstown, Coolnasilla, and Casement. The boundary commences at the Andersonstown roundabout and moves along the edge of Falls Park, Gransha Green, Gardens and Park, and follows the rear of dwellings in the Aitnamona development out onto the Monagh By Pass. The route follows the By Pass until the Glen Road roundabout, where it travels in a westerly direction along the Glen Road, and diverges along Shaw's Road, back onto the Andersonstown Road. At this point, it continues in a southerly direction along Finaghy Road North, where it deviates along the Westlink and merges with the Andersonstown Road via the edge of Bog Meadows and Milltown Cemetery.

10.3.4 Proposals

Andersonstown is a bustling neighbourhood with significant retail and industrial parks as well as individual retailers. Andersonstown is in need of public realm improvements and traffic calming at certain junctions, but could easily become the commercial hub of West Belfast. Physical enhancement proposals include:

- investigate creation of Business Improvement District with BCC;
- development of Casement Park to a major sporting, tourism and entertainment venue and exploration of related tourism package;
- progression of proposed Park & Ride at Kennedy Way;
- landmark and public realm development at Kennedy Way and Andersonstown Barracks site;
- traffic calming at Kennedy Way/Andersonstown Road and Kennedy Way/Glen Road junctions;
- upgrades at Kennedy Way Industrial Estate (Links with Arc of Enterprise);
- progression of the new Health & Wellbeing Centre at Beech Hall;
- progression and development of Andersonstown Feasibility Study recommendations;
- progression and development of the Oasis Project to develop green space located between North Link and South Link. The project includes upgraded playground facilities for local children, an Astroturf sports pitch with floodlighting, a grass pitch for GAA youth training, a walkway, a climbing wall and a community garden. The group also hopes to develop a resource centre; and
- public realm improvements on the Andersonstown Road.

Figure 10.5 and 10.6 overleaf, illustrate development and traffic and transport proposals.

Figure: 10.5
Andersonstown Development Proposals

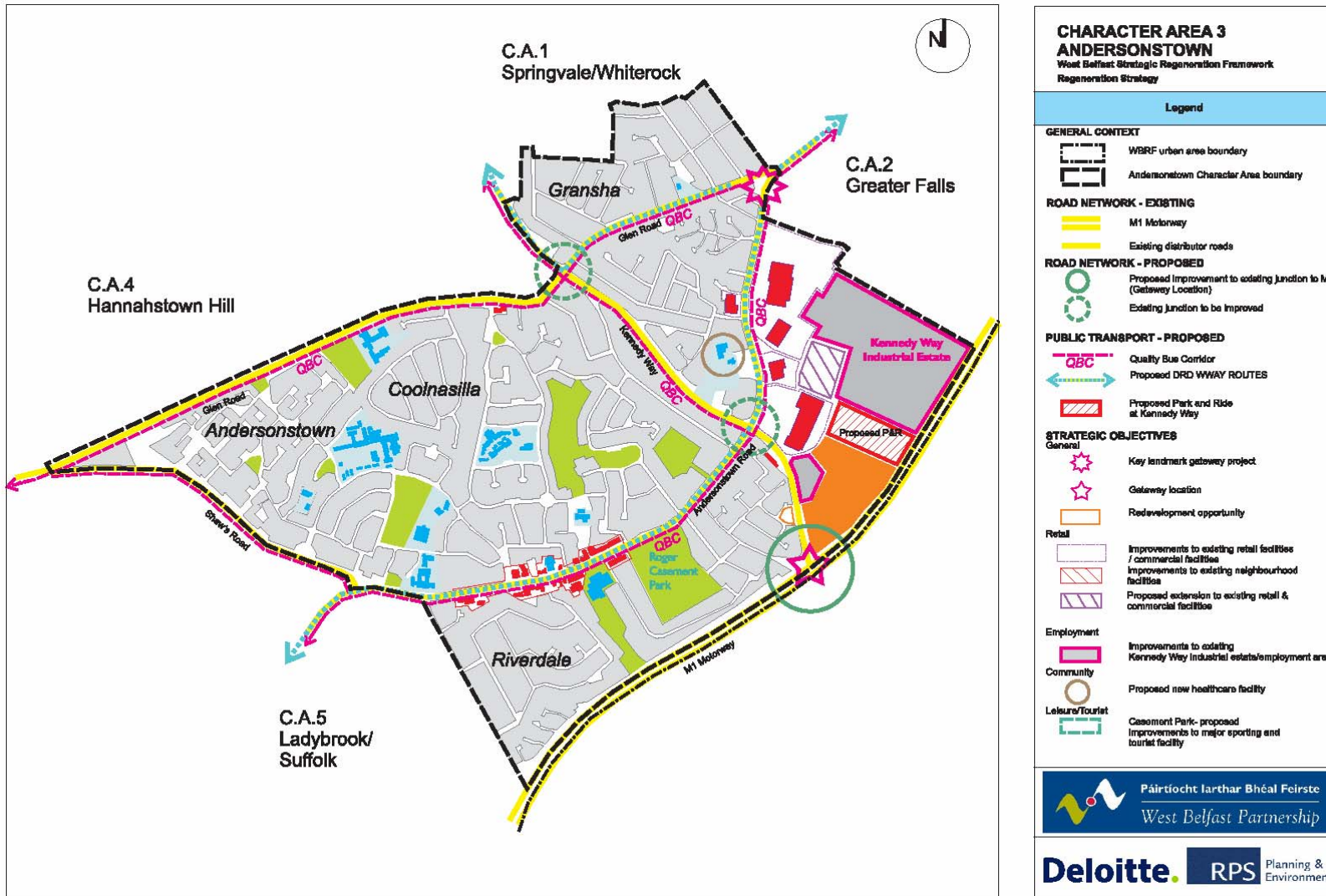
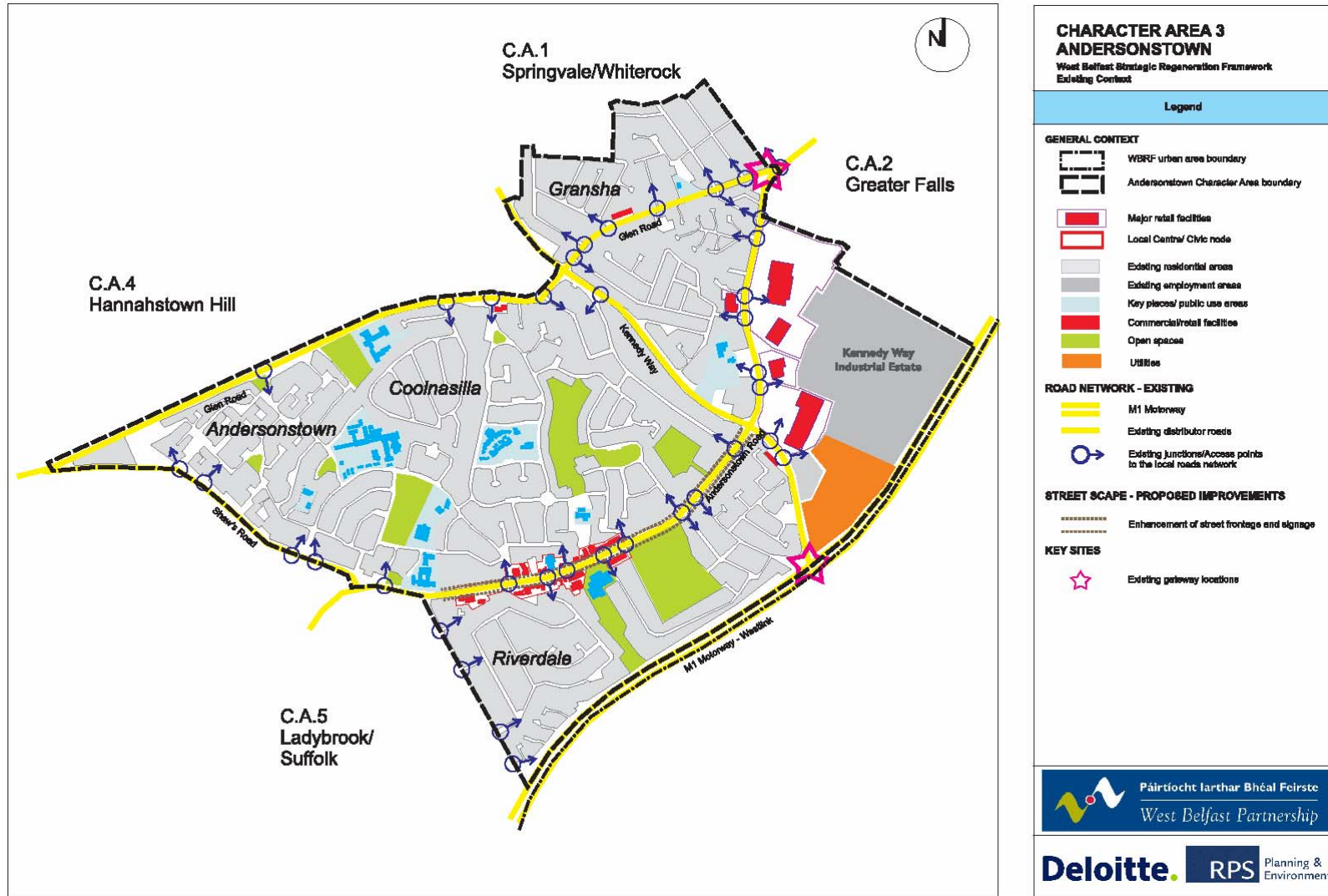


Figure: 10.5

Andersonstown Traffic and Transport Proposals



10.4 Character Area 4: Hannahstown Hill

10.4.1 Boundaries

This boundary incorporates all land between the Hills and the Glen Road, including St Pat's, Meadowhill, Glencolin, and Hawthorn Glen. The boundary along the eastern edge follows the Monagh By Pass (taking in Aitnamona), and deviates left at the top over the Hills, incorporating the Upper Springfield Road. It travels southward along Hannahstown Hill, and along the rear of dwellings at Hawthorn Glen to meet the Glen Road, where it progresses in an easterly direction to meet the Monagh By Pass again at the Glen Road roundabout.

10.4.2 Proposals

The Hannahstown Hill area comprises of a variety of development opportunities, which, if strategically managed could become a new neighbourhood with housing, employment and community facilities. Due to the environmental importance of the Belfast Hills and natural landscape to the West Belfast community and the potential economic opportunities that greater promotion of the area as a tourist destination might yield, it is crucial that the development of this area does not detract from the Hills or provide an obstacle to accessing the natural environment.

The concept plan for Hannahstown aims to create a new development area running from Hannahstown Hill to Monagh By Pass with a new access road running parallel to Glen Road, Hannahstown. The current development boundary runs along an un-coordinated line unconnected to topography or field boundaries. The proposal seeks to redraw the development boundary – to include new land and exclude land currently zoned. The proposals could provide space for around 700 new dwellings together with mixed community, commercial and leisure uses focused on a new urban renewal village core. A fundamental element of the Hannahstown proposal is the protection of the Belfast hills through sensitive landscape treatment. This will also establish a new permanent development limit.

Proposals are as follows:

- the St Patrick's/Glenmona Development scheme will provide for the regeneration of 88 acres of brownfield lands. The proposals include the creation of an urban village centre, business/office space, industrial zone, juvenile justice facilities and housing. The site is within the Belfast Urban Area Development limit and has the potential to provide between 450 and 650 units of private and social housing. It will include a Group Medical Practice and community and retail facilities;
- expansion of Work West and development of Work West Social Economy Village;
- development of a regional gateway on Glen Road;
- long-term environmental project at Blackmountain quarry;
- investigation of new access points to the Hills;

- road improvements to the Monagh Bypass/Glen road junction;
- extension of the WWAY via Monagh Bypass;
- development and environmental improvements to the Glen Road Travellers site; and
- links to the Arc of Enterprise at Work West and St Pat's/Glenmona.

Figure 10.7 and 10.8 overleaf, illustrate development and traffic and transport proposals.

Figure: 10.7

Hannahstown Hill Development Proposals

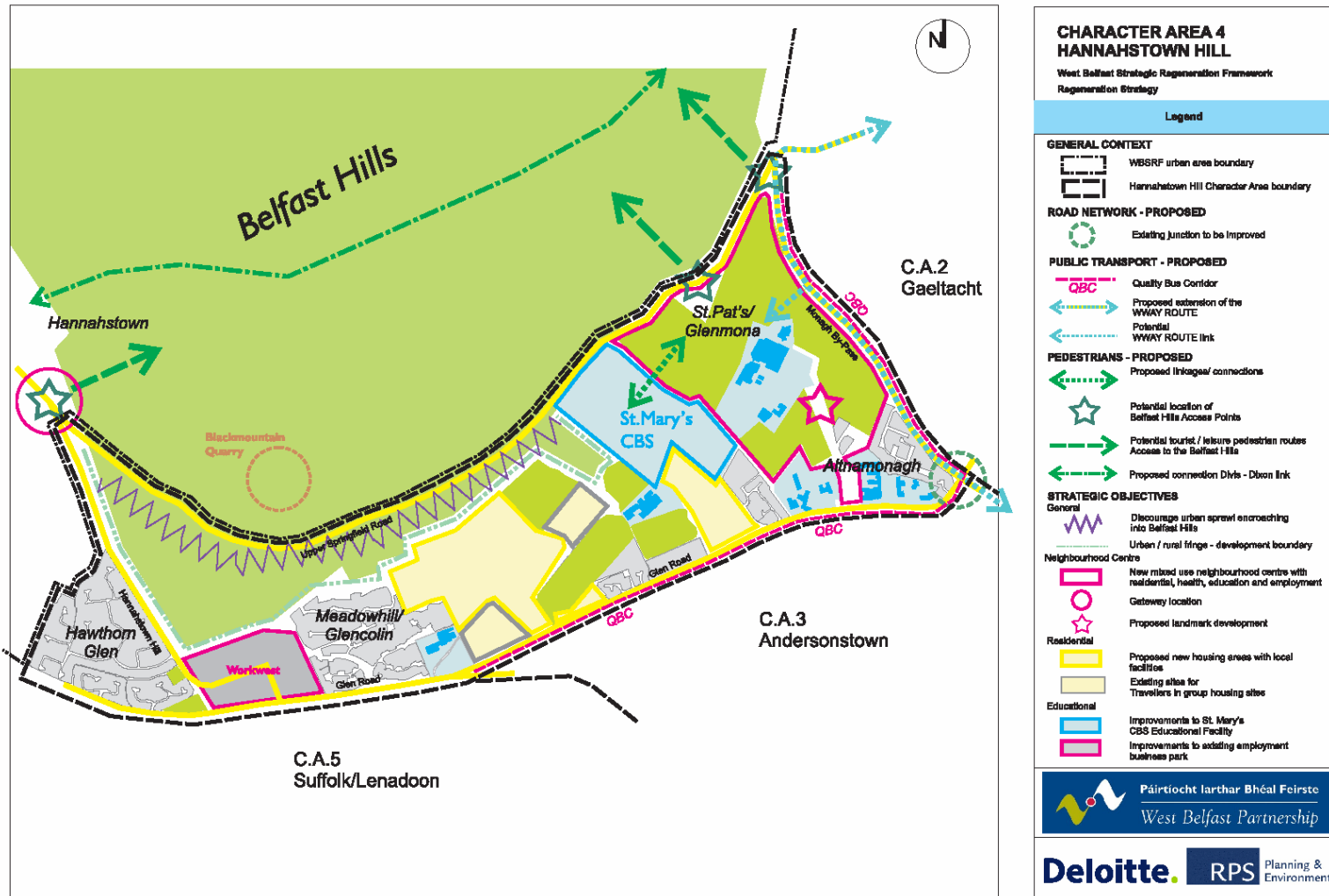
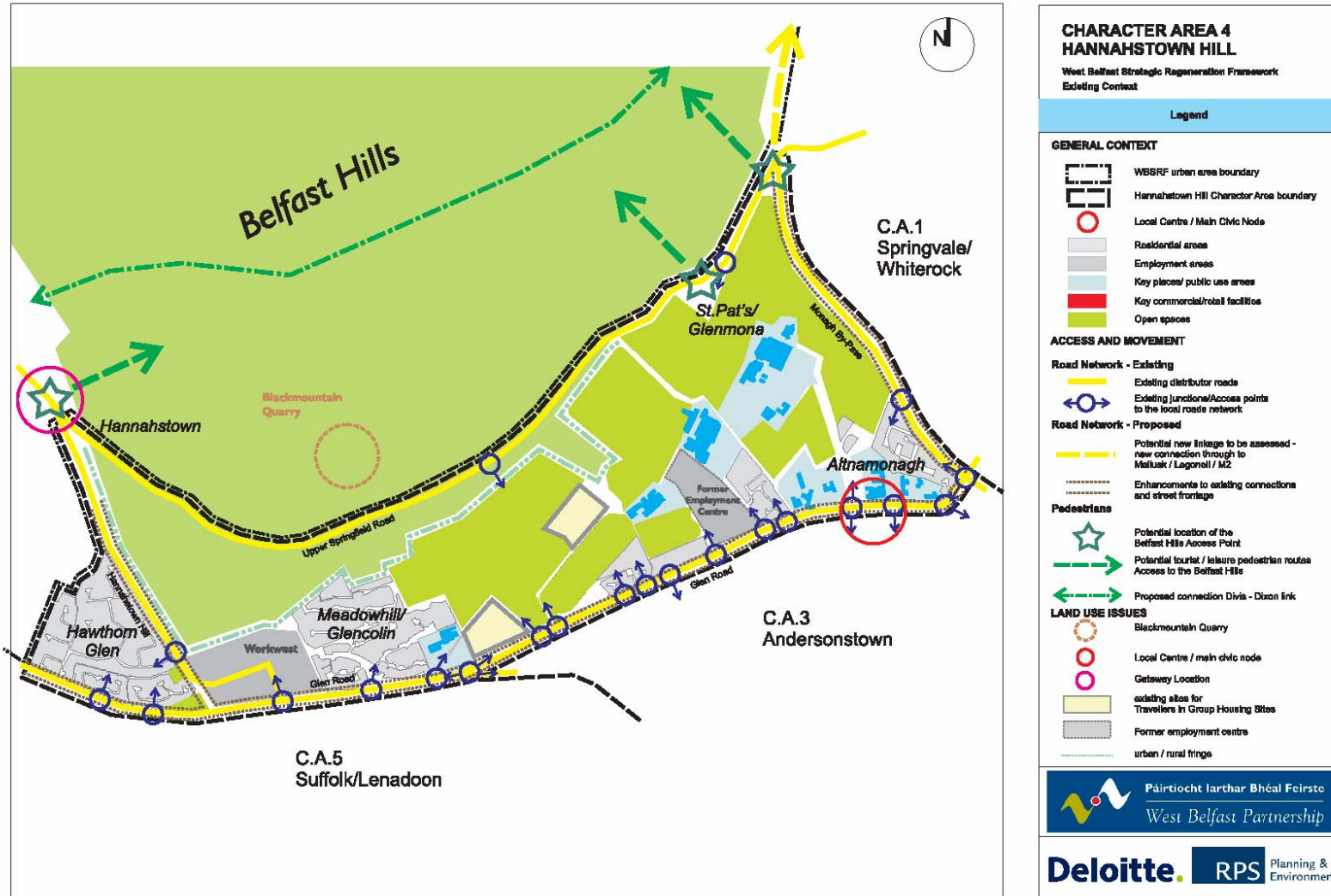


Figure: 10.7

Hannahstown Hill Traffic and Transport Proposals



Character Area 5: Suffolk/Lenadoon

10.4.3 Boundaries

This area incorporates the neighbourhoods of Suffolk, Lenadoon, Ladybrook, Black's Road, and Maysfield. At the northern point of the area, the boundary travels from the junction of the Suffolk Road / Glen Road, the boundary follows the Glen Road, onto Shaw's Road, Andersonstown Road and eventually onto Finaghy Road North, where it diverges in a southerly direction along the Westlink deviating along Old Golf Course Road. The boundary turns north along the rear of Glendale, Dunmurry Lodge, Suffolk PS, Caranmore park & Gardens, alongside Colin Valley Golf Course and Suffolk Playing Fields. It then travels briefly along the Stewartstown Road, and diverges along Suffolk Road again, however follows the boundary of Colin Glen, to the rear of Larkspur, Garvey, and Suffolk Heights, before rejoining the Suffolk Road at the junction.

10.4.4 Proposals

The tourist and economic potential of the natural environment is not realised. There needs to be more coordination with NITB, the Belfast Hills Partnership, FFT and WBP to develop links between tourist offerings and natural assets. There is a shared interface along the Stewartstown Road - SLIG brings together communities on both sides of the Stewartstown Road. Atlantic Philanthropies have provided support for community-based reconciliation, joint advocacy and the development of shared spaces by assisting communities to implement a peace-building plan for the Suffolk/Lenadoon area in West Belfast. The long term vision of the group is to establish 'two ordinary communities living side by side as good neighbours'. Any development must take into consideration community sensitivities and wishes.

- conduct a feasibility study into potential road improvements from Black's road to the M1. This would enable people to devise an additional gateway opportunity into West Belfast and to connect the area with opportunities on the Boucher Road;
- development of Donegal Celtic Sports Stadium on the Suffolk Road;
- public realm improvements to the gateway at Finaghy Road North;
- extension of the WWAY route along Andersonstown Road;
- progression and development of the Glen Complex at Lenadoon;
- phase 2 of the Suffolk Lendoon cross community/commercial venture;
- NIHE land at Malinmore remains undeveloped (This is within Suffolk boundary and discussions should be undertaken with the community);
- potential to develop the old Co-op site (in conjunction with SLIG and local residents). This is an important gateway between Lisburn and Belfast;
- progression of Colin Glen Trust Riverside Project to include development of Colin Valley Golf Course. Potential link with Saffron;

- visitor hub for Dixon – Divis link, with improved visitor facilities on the Suffolk Road;
- environmental improvements to the Suffolk river path; and
- maintenance and enhancement of Suffolk Community Centre.

Figure 10.8 and 10.9, overleaf, illustrate development and traffic and transport proposals.

Figure: 10.8

Suffolk / Lenadoon Development Proposals

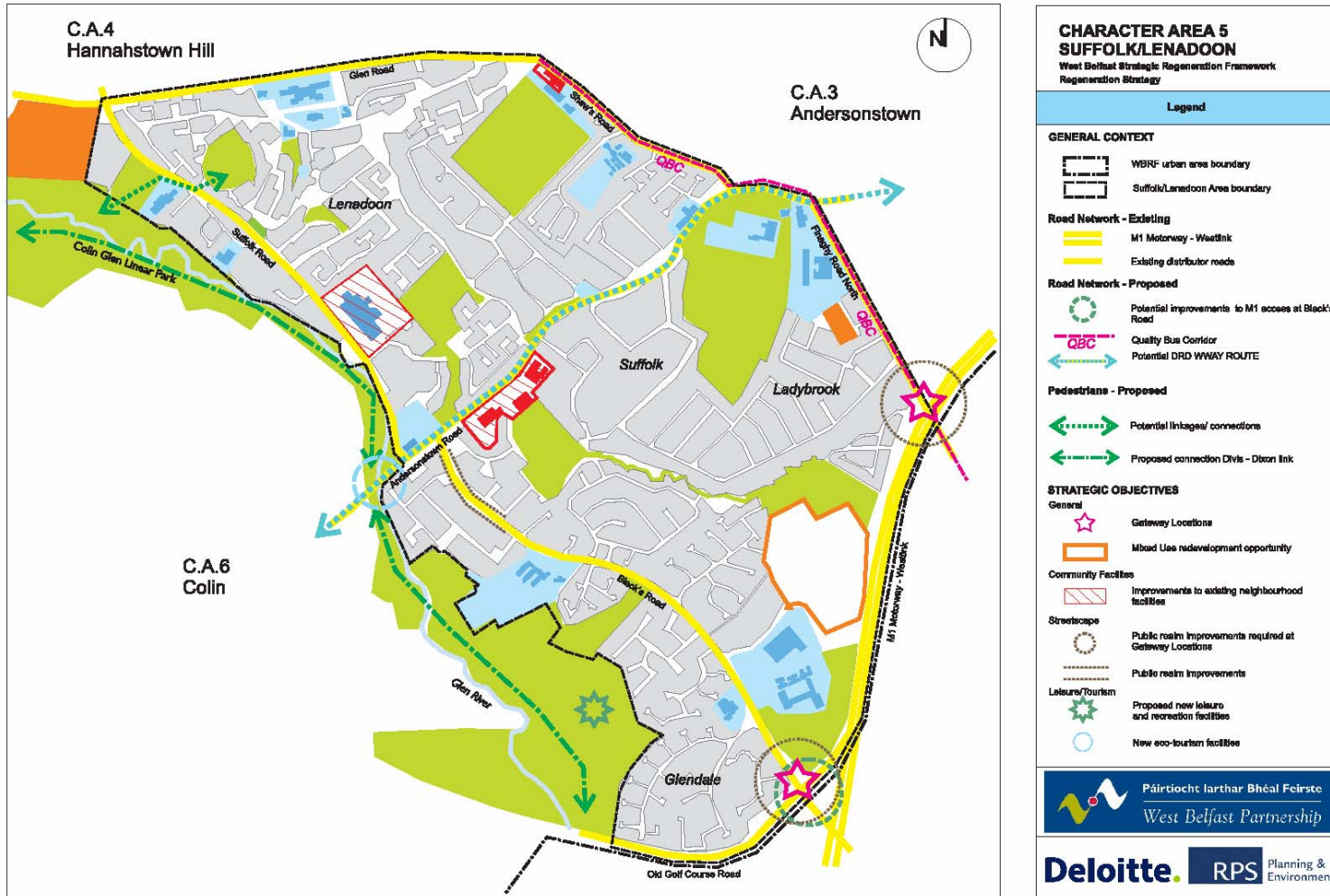
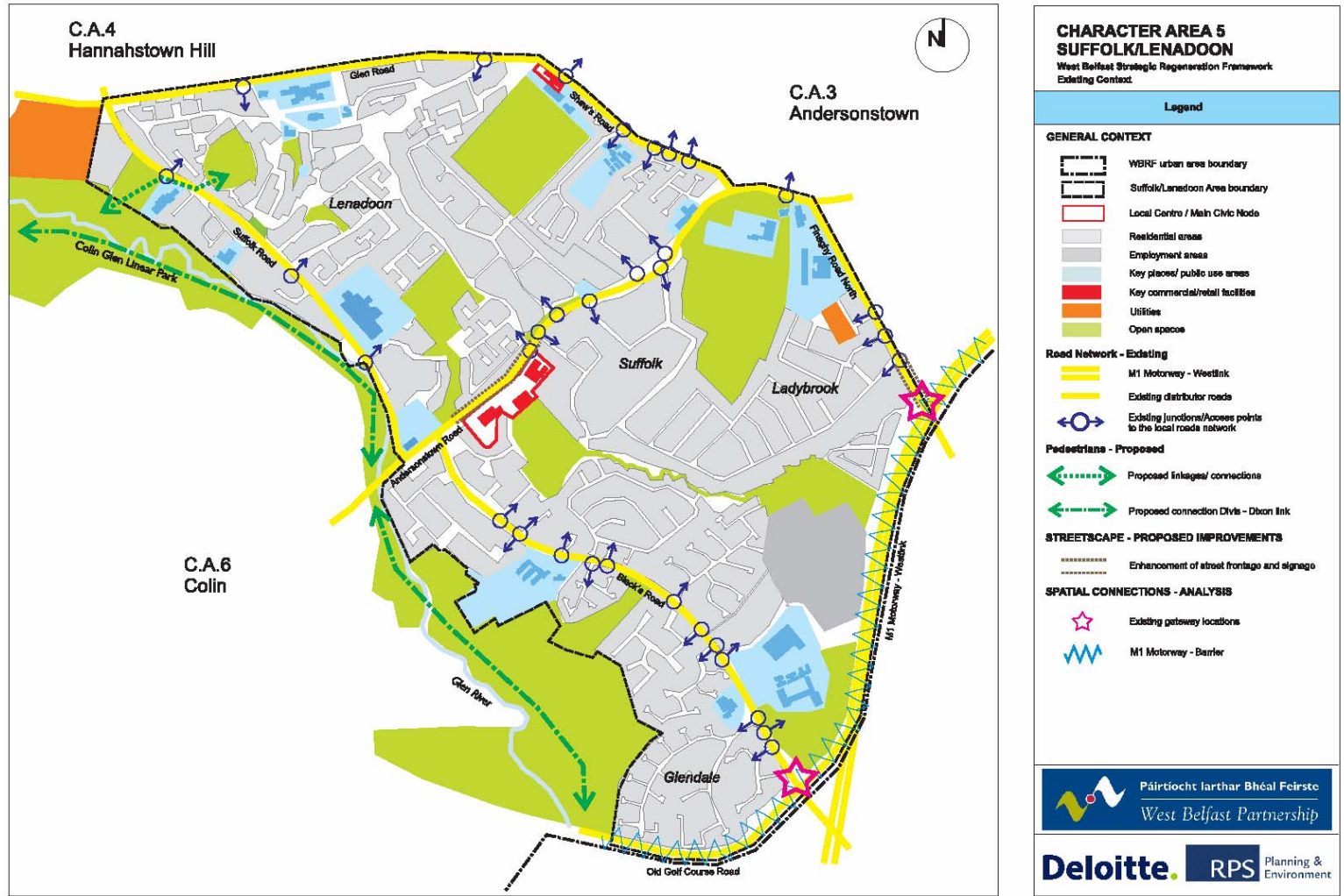


Figure: 10.9

Suffolk/Lenadoon Traffic and Transport Proposals



10.5 Character Area 6: Colin

10.5.1 Boundaries

This character area incorporates the neighbourhoods of Poleglass, Colin, Twinbrook, Upper Dunmurry Lane, Kilwee, Glengoland and Cloona. The boundary commences at the junction of the Suffolk Road and Glen Road, where it moves in a northerly direction along the Glen Road, across the Hills, incorporating the Colin Glen Road and Old Colin Road, where it moves south east through Teeling and Lagmore Avenue onto the Stewartstown Road. It follows this road due south, curving around the southern part of Twinbrook to join Creighton Road. At this point the boundary moves northward along Creighton Road, Old Golf Course Road and onto the M1 where it diverges to the north west just before Glendale. The boundary moves along the rear of Glendale, Dunmurry Lodge, Suffolk PS, Caranmore Park & Gardens, alongside Colin Valley Golf Course and Suffolk Playing Fields. It then travels briefly along the Stewartstown Road, and diverges along Suffolk Road again, however follows the boundary of Colin Glen, to the rear of Larkspur, Garvey, and Suffolk Heights, before rejoining the Suffolk Road at the junction.

10.5.2 Proposals

The strategic Colin Neighbourhood regeneration initiative aims to bring physical regeneration into an area that experiences acute deprivation on multiple levels. The manner in which the Colin Neighbourhood has developed over the past thirty years has created a sense of physical disconnectedness across the area, in that the four areas have expanded with only one main link road. The Stewartstown Road is the primary route for travel into the Colin Neighbourhood as well as the route for travel into both Belfast and Lisburn. However, the prominent position of this road is reflected poorly in terms of overall layout, presentation of commercial premises and attractiveness for pedestrians.

The purpose of this co-ordinated programme of activity is to physically enhance the Stewartstown Road as a means to create clarity of structure and a quality of physical environment which will assist in the regeneration of the Colin Neighbourhood. Proposals include:

- establishment of a gateway at Stewartstown Road/Dunmurry Lane junction;
- extension of WWAY route to increase connectivity;
- provide pedestrian and cycle friendly links on discrete pathways and traffic calmed roads;
- introduce new public realm works including enhanced surfaces, street lighting, street furniture, and boundary features;
- enhance the Stewartstown road to create an attractive central area and meet the needs of a busy town centre;
- upgrade of facilities at Springbank and strengthen relationship to Arc of Enterprise;
- establish Divis – Dixon links;

- develop links with Colin Glen Forest Park Riverside Project;
- redevelopment of the Dairy Farm;
- development of a Health and Well-being Centre and Children's Centre; and
- potential new park and ride site near McKinstry Road.

Figure 10.11 and 10.12, overleaf, illustrate the development and traffic and transport proposals.

Figure: 10.11
 Colin Development Proposals

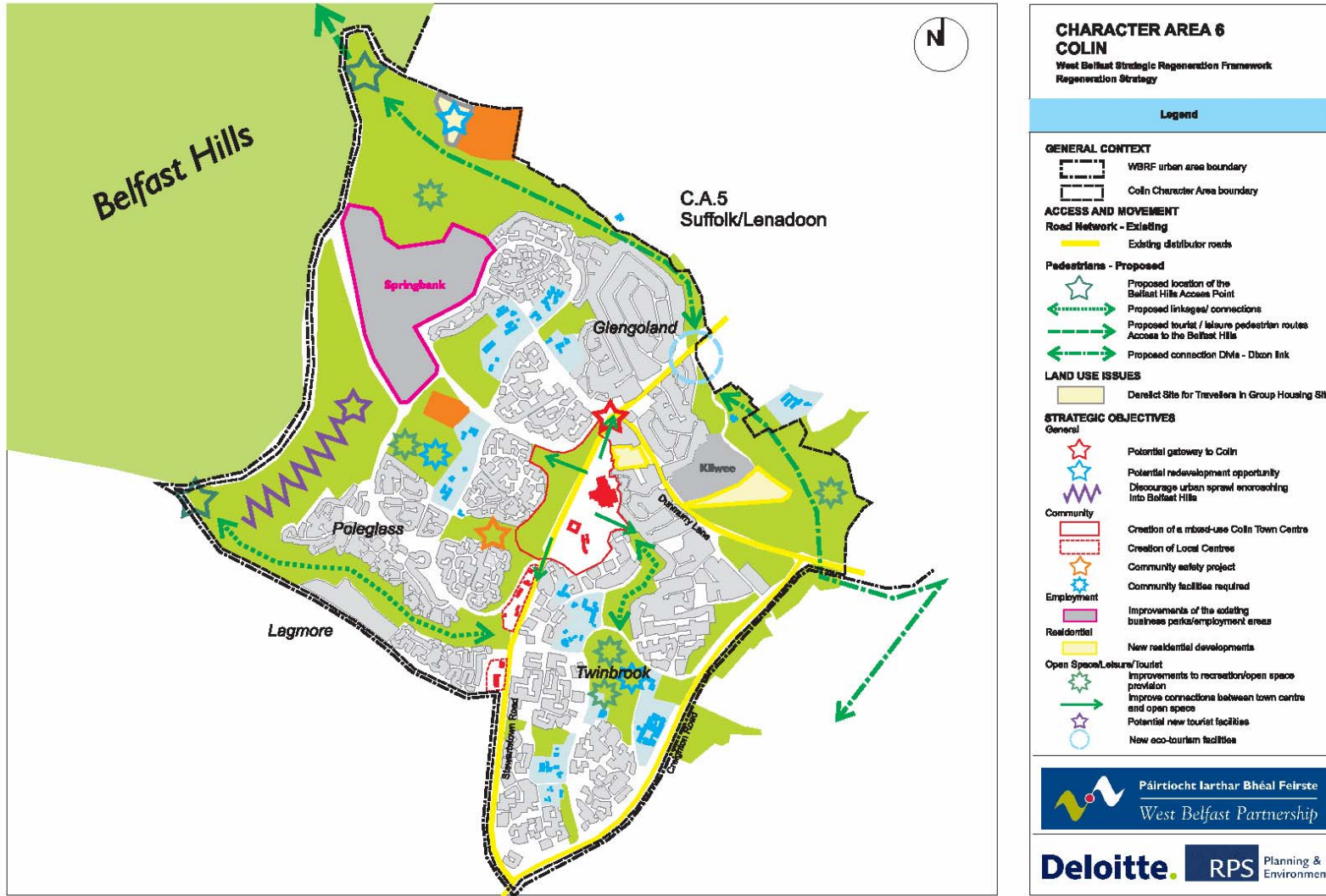
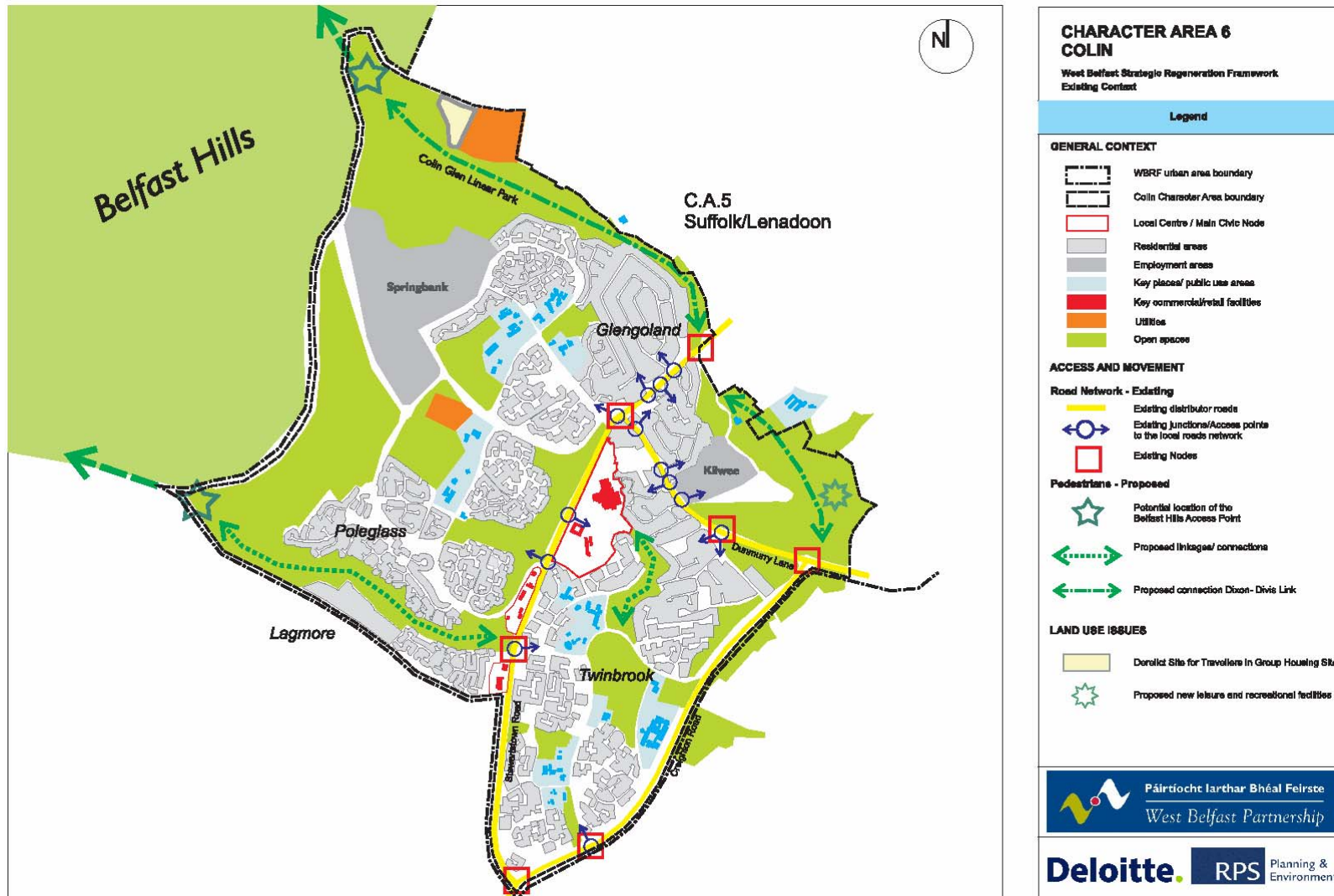


Figure: 10.12
 Colin Traffic and Transport Proposals



11. MAKING WEST BELFAST HAPPEN

The regeneration of West Belfast is a long-term venture. It is based not only upon physical regeneration but an interlinked programme of social and economic development in order to create sustainable communities. Therefore, a concerted effort is required by a range of individuals, organisations and agencies to inspire and motivate local people to help West Belfast move forward. It is drive, determination and collective effort that will make West Belfast happen.

11.1 A Vision for Belfast

The vision highlights that West Belfast recognises that it has a role to play within wider Belfast Regeneration. The vision for West Belfast is one that is deliverable and complementary, not competitive to the future of the city centre and Belfast as a whole. The proposals to regenerate West Belfast will lead to and enhance Belfast's prosperity and improve connectivity across the city.

Central and local government must work together towards the definition and achievement of a single vision for Belfast. Roles and responsibilities for delivery need to be assigned and owned, delivery plans and mechanisms must be put in place and targets set and monitored. Each player needs to understand and be committed to fulfilling their role in delivering Belfast – whether it is at a regional, district, area or neighbourhood level. The agreement of a shared vision and objectives and complementary actions from stakeholders such as DSD, BRO and Belfast and Lisburn City Councils will be paramount to delivering change.

The Belfast Area Partnerships will play a central role in the regeneration of their local areas. They will develop and coordinate localised activity in order to fulfil their respective area visions. They will proactively develop relationships with the public, private and community sectors in order to progress the SRFs and related Implementation Plans. They will individually advise and assist central and local government with regeneration issues and will collectively work as a team in order to work towards city-wide renewal.

Belfast Strategy Group must have sufficient representation, powers and drive to bring integrated approaches and solutions on behalf of local and central government. Their role will be to ensure that the legislative, policy and funding environment is conducive to enabling regeneration on a strategic basis. Its composition should be flexible in order to learn from expertise outside of government and to enable task specific working groups to be formed. The collective Belfast Area Partnerships must be involved in the development of citywide plans and will ensure alignment at a local level. Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans provide the framework for regenerating Belfast within and across communities.

11.2 Implementation Plan

The SRF is a 10 year vision for West Belfast. However, developments in policy, practice and market dynamics do not stand still. As a result the accompanying implementation plan for the SRF is the initial step towards implementing regeneration. It must be a flexible and changing framework in order to overcome arising issues and benefit from new information, approaches and opportunities. However, there are key principles which underpin its development:

- regeneration must be connected. The underlying impact of interventions under each one of the four priority areas – must have a positive and demonstrable outcome on the other three areas;
- increasing people's life chances, life quality and life time is at the core of the SRF. Breaking and preventing the treadmill of intergenerational poverty is its overall aim;
- the achievement of West Belfast's vision depends upon attracting private sector investment into new housing, employment, retail, leisure and services opportunities. Measures must be in place to develop community confidence, capacity and commitment in order to build investor confidence in West Belfast;
- in order to ensure the vision for West Belfast is achieved an overarching structure with full responsibility for delivering the SRF must be in place; and
- politicians, local and central government, community and local business people must collectively own, support and work towards achieving the wider regeneration agenda and long term vision highlighted in the framework.

11.3 Flagship Projects 2008 – 2011

The regeneration strategy for West Belfast is an ambitious but achievable programme. Proposals for the early years are more definitive than for the later years. Early activity will focus on the definition of the following flagship initiatives:

- development of the Arc of Enterprise;
- development of the Gaeltacht Quarter according to its Business and Marketing Plan;
- the enhancement of and improved accessibility to the Belfast Hills;
- Hannahstown Neighbourhood Concept Plan; and
- development of the Colin Masterplan.

These initiatives have been selected due to their ability to significantly drive physical, economic, community and social regeneration in West Belfast. The Arc of Enterprise provides the connecting link across each area stretching development across West Belfast (see separate Implementation Plan for additional proposals). Each proposal provides opportunities for investment and job creation in order to benefit local people and improve quality of life.

11.4 Steps Towards the Flagships

The Flagship proposals for regeneration will rely on numerous smaller scale developments to feed into the overall vision and delivery of West Belfast's potential. A selection of projects have been presented in the Character Area plans, within these there are several projects which have potential to act as a stimulus to drive economic and community transformation and communicate change to the local population:

- the Saffron Project;
- the proposed hotel development at St Comgall's;
- the Farset Way connecting Divis Mountain and the River Lagan, The Falls Glen and Beechmount Project;
- the WWAY;
- Irish language Education and Visitor Centre at Beechmount;
- enhanced development of the Culturlann;
- regeneration of the Gateways to West Belfast;
- the Cotton Mill and Fisheries proposal;
- progression of and support for the LIAG;
- development of Forth River Business Park;
- Public Realm improvements along key corridors;
- improved branding and marketing of West Belfast;
- support for the West Belfast Community Confidence Forum;
- review of planning legislation;
- Colin Glen Riverside Project; and
- development of a Health and Wellbeing Centre and Children's Centre at Colin.

The above list is not meant to be exhaustive. There are many valid and worthwhile projects and ideas devised and actioned as a result of local community activity, many of which are contained in Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans. It is important that these local ideas and concepts are channelled into the SRF and that effort is put into strategically linking projects and themes to ensure widespread regeneration and partnership development.

11.5 Delivery

The SRF identifies fundamental social, economic, community and physical development issues that must be addressed and highlights interventions that will bring about change. The underlying message of the document is that a strategic, planned and targeted approach is required to make connections in the midst of disconnections. Delivery of West Belfast’s vision needs robust management and coordination arrangements in addition to committed partnerships and dedicated financial resources.

West Belfast needs Champions. The area requires strong, coordinated leadership in order to gain the statutory, private and community backing needed to drive the vision forward. West Belfast will not reach its full potential unless private investors, retailers and developers are aware of and, encouraged to do business in the area. To this end, the regeneration of West Belfast depends upon the will and determination of elected political representatives and statutory and community sectors in order to provide favourable conditions for investment. A collective vision and coordinated effort will empower people to work together and long term sustainable change will follow. There is a need to step away from competitive communities into connected communities. Amalgamation of effort, knowledge, skill and resources will have a greater impact upon West Belfast as a whole.

The SRF is only of value if the vision and related actions are put into practice and delivered. It is imperative that new ways of driving regeneration are developed and delivered. The pace of change in West Belfast must be accelerated. While significant investment in regeneration is already underway, the emphasis is largely upon bespoke arrangements to deliver specific projects. This means that investment and change is slow.

Four significant challenges to regeneration have been identified. These are:

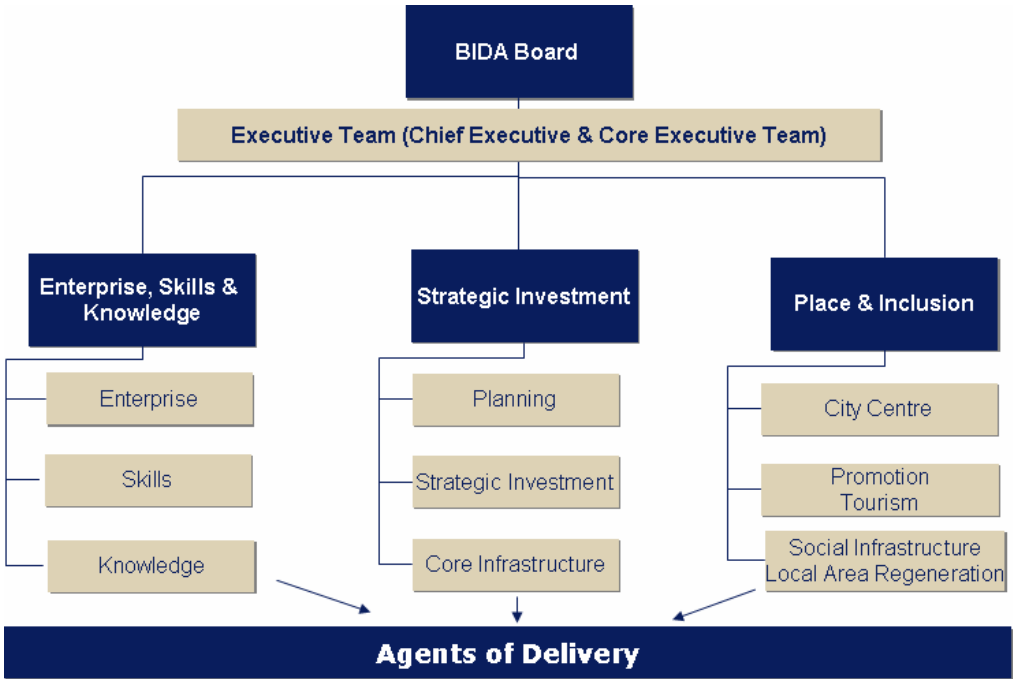
<p>Aligning public sector resources to deliver a single Vision</p>	<p>A key challenge for the regeneration of West Belfast is the coordination of a large number of public agencies behind a single strategy. There is currently perceived to be poor alignment of different delivery priorities, and an insufficiently well developed medium to long term shared regeneration vision.</p>
<p>Levering private sector funding</p>	<p>With a tightening settlement through CSR 08/09 there is a growing trend towards seeking private sector financing alongside public sector investment. However, clarity of short and long terms aims must be resolved and the public sector present a unified front if it is to attract significant private investment.</p>
<p>Increasing the pace and scope of regeneration</p>	<p>The private sector will not wait on public sector bureaucracy. There must be early market engagement derived from accessing a wider range of financing options, alignment of public sector bodies behind a single vision (giving focus and direction for action) and possibly a ‘commercially’ driven vehicle (that has structures and a way of operating that the private sector recognises).</p>
<p>Optimising central and local government resources</p>	<p>Central and local government currently has a diverse range of assets spread across the city that are arguably under utilised. These could be disposed of to fund regeneration, be developed to create profits to fund regeneration and are located within a regeneration ‘area’ and/or used to catalyse a project. This requires further analysis and due diligence.</p>

There are a range of potential delivery vehicles which can deliver successful regeneration. However the appropriateness of individual solutions needs to be tested against local circumstances. Key drivers need to be identified up front and they should form the basis of the solution. It is less of an issue of ‘where has this been done before’ as every situation needs a bespoke response.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2008) state that very few successful cities were able to reverse their economic fortunes without creating some type of regeneration body that represents a partnership of key players from across government, the private, voluntary and community sectors⁵. Advantages of a partnership-led approach include greater leverage of resources, economies of scale, attainment of synergy, avoiding duplication, promoting specialisation and enabling transformational projects to be delivered.

The OECD team propose that there is a need for a Development Agency for Greater Belfast – the Belfast Investment and Development Agency (BIDA). Its key objectives would be to increase the economic growth of Belfast and to contribute to the economic growth targets for Northern Ireland as a whole and to ensure that all of Belfast’s residents share in the benefits of economic growth.

The structure of the BIDA is proposed as follows:



OECD suggest that the setting-up of a Development Agency could bring together local and nationally elected leaders with business and other leaders to secure the future vision for Belfast and provide the very opportunity for integration and reform of the existing position.

⁵ OECD (2008) Where are We Now? Belfast City Council, State of the City Conference Report.

11.6 Funding

As stated, this is a long term vision and strategy and not all arrangements for long term funding and delivery are in place. Some of the proposals will make new demands on existing resources and will require funding commitments from other partners. There is a need for innovation in the prioritisation, funding and delivery of projects which will drive and enable investment into the area.

There are several developments within central and local government which are likely to boost local economic regeneration. For example, the Capital Assets Realisation Team (CART) was established within SIB to work with Departments and other public bodies to identify the full extent of their assets and their need to retain them. Central and local government have considerable land assets in West Belfast and are therefore a key resource for the delivery of services and the achievement of economic development objectives. It is anticipated that future asset management will make better use of capital and revenue resources. The geographical mapping of public services and assets will lead to the coordination and improvement of services. There is also potential to take a collective approach to managing public sector assets in order to lever in resources from the private sector.

Additionally, BCC's City Development Plan is focused upon stimulating growth and regeneration initiatives across Belfast. The Plan aims to be the first step in consolidating the Council's understanding of what needs to be done to ensure Belfast's revival. The City Investment Fund will enable the development of a number of landmark capital schemes within the city and will pump-prime or lever additional investment into the city. It is likely that these schemes will focus upon the delivery of transformational projects which will leave a lasting legacy for future generations. Projects will be undertaken in partnership with other public sector bodies, local communities and the private sector.

The private sector will be a significant contributor to the delivery of the major capital investment initiatives in the regeneration strategy. Therefore increased dialogue is essential to developing effective delivery mechanisms. Partnerships with developers, house builders, retailers and others will lead to new homes, hotels, new or refurbished schools, local retail and commercial facilities. The area will benefit from a coordinated planning process with particular emphasis on securing contributions to mitigate the direct impacts of development to enhance the public realm. However, it is important that development provides community gain.

The voluntary and community sector will be an integral player in the delivery of this strategy. The sector will be a major partner in service commissioning and delivery, with the appropriate support to enable them to fulfil their expanding role.

The success of the regeneration strategy is dependent upon the timely delivery of specific actions and projects. Therefore the implementation plan should be taken forward by a variety of partners and a variety of funding streams will be required. This includes existing mainstream public sector and private investment. Accessing mainstream funding will require the strategy's priorities to be embedded in PfG and departmental PSAs. This work is underway and after submission to DSD, the SRFs will be subject to Executive approval, public consultation and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). During the process there will be continued engagement between BCC, DSD, the Belfast Area Partnerships and Departments.