



Subject:	Cathedral Gardens - Update on Masterplan and next steps
Date:	22 September 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Frankie Smith, Project Sponsor

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the development of the emerging master plan for the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note that they will receive a presentation on the emerging design concepts for the Cathedral Gardens Master Plan from Council appointed consultants – Hassell - at this meeting (22nd September 2021)note that the next stage will be to go out for public consultation on the concept design with a further update to be brought back

3.0	Main report
	<u>KEY ISSUES</u>
3.1	<p>Members will recall that at Committee last month they received a detailed update paper in respect of ‘City Centre Open Spaces’. In this it was highlighted that the City Centre Connectivity Study: ‘A Bolder Vision’, in line with the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy (BCCRIS), proposes the development of a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city centre with a greener, walkable and connected core. BCCRIS identifies that the city centre lacks major publicly accessible open spaces, and that the majority of open spaces are disconnect and have a hard landscape and character, with the centre lacking in greener streets that can provide relief in the most densely developed part of the city. BCCRIS has also identified the opportunity to provide a sizable new open space and greening opportunities by linking St. Anne’s Cathedral to Cathedral Gardens and Writers Square. At the Future City Workshop, held with Members of the CG&R Committee in May 2021, Members also noted that the provision of high quality, inclusive and sustainable open spaces for families and city users to enjoy and utilise the outdoor environment was a key priority.</p>
3.2	<p>The Council’s key asset in the city centre in terms of open space is Cathedral Gardens. The SP&R Committee has previously agreed the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens. Members will be aware that originally this was to be taken forward as part of Streets Ahead Phase 3. However, when this was placed on hold it was agreed the redevelopment of the Gardens should be decoupled from this.</p>
3.3	<p>The redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens provides a significant opportunity to inject critical and much needed quality public urban space into the city centre. The area adjacent to and surrounding Cathedral Gardens is home to a rich history of fabrication and cultural identity. It is a precinct in the process of evolution through a mixture of commercial, education and housing related developments that are transforming this part of Belfast into a new and vibrant mixed-use neighbourhood for the city.</p>
3.4	<p>Members have been advised that the Council have commissioned Hassell Consultants to develop a concept masterplan for the redevelopment of the Cathedral Gardens space. The Master Plan has been commissioned with the intention to create a unique urban space. As part of this process a number of engagement sessions have taken place with key stakeholders to inform the emerging design concepts that will be presented to Members at this Committee for consideration. The emerging design concepts include the reinvigorating the civic space, the integration of landscape and urban forestry and building in exemplary grey to green infrastructure along with looking at how the site can be programmed to become a year round asset for use by all audiences.</p>

3.4	<p>The redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens is currently a Stage 2 – Uncommitted on the Capital Programme. The project will be required to go through the 3 stage approval process as agreed for all capital projects. This includes consultation on proposed designs. The next proposed step is to go out for wider consultation on the concept masterplan including public consultation via the 'Your Say' consultation platform, continued engagement with key stakeholders (e.g. UU, DFC, DFI, St. Anne's Cathedral), and targeted consultation with a range of stakeholders (e.g. the Events sector). Following this the final proposed design will be brought back to Members.</p>
3.5	<p>As previously outlined a key consideration during delivery of the project will be how to offset the loss of open space at Cathedral Gardens during the permanent construction works, with potential utilisation of vacant city centre lands for temporary open space currently under exploration by Officers. Pending agreement and subject to funding it is proposed to recreate a play space within a suitable site. The final scope of these works will take into consideration the final design for the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens to ensure complementarity. This work is continuing and an update report will be brought into this Committee for approval prior to proceeding.</p>
4.0	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p>
4.1	<p>Finance - The redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens is an agreed project on the Council's Capital Programme.</p> <p>Resources - Officer time in terms of the next steps of consultation</p>
5.0	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</p> <p>All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.</p>
6.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>N/A</p>