



# INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND REGIONAL PROPERTY PROGRAMME



INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND

## INTRODUCTION

The Economy Minister's Economic Mission has recognised the importance of industrial land and buildings to business growth, noting that some areas suffer from economic disadvantage which should be addressed by creating a more regionally balanced economy. **This document sets out a new regional strategic approach to Invest NI's provision of industrial land and property that will act as a key enabler to achieving a more regionally balanced economy.**

The Programme is aligned to the Department for the Economy's Sub Regional Economic Plan and Invest NI's Regional and International strategic priorities. The Programme seeks to offer certainty and speed of delivery by using existing Invest NI assets in strategic locations already zoned for industrial use. It will also target assets already in public ownership and give consideration to privately owned land that is zoned for industrial use within existing Area Plans.

Local partnerships will be a key delivery mechanism of the Regional Property Programme. Invest NI will work to identify suitable local partners such as Councils, Enterprise Agencies and within the private sector, to bring forward proposals that aim to refurbish and repurpose existing industrial building stock

## BACKGROUND

The January 2023 Independent Review of Invest NI concluded that Invest NI's involvement in land acquisition and disposal had been limited over the previous decade and that there was continued evidence of market failure in the provision of industrial land in several areas in NI. As a result, the Review recommended that:

**Invest NI should bring forward a strategy for the development of industrial land and property in partnership with other key stakeholders, in particular, local councils. This should consider the respective roles of each partner in improving the supply of land and premises for growing businesses.**

The Independent Review of Invest NI recognised that the provision of industrial land and property solutions was a key element in facilitating future economic growth and both the Department for the Economy and Invest NI accepted its recommendations and committed to the development of a new Industrial Land and Buildings Strategy by September 2024.

In preparing the Regional Property Programme, Invest NI consulted with local stakeholders including all eleven councils. Alongside this, extensive research of the industrial market was undertaken. The findings of which are summarised as follows;

- The Northern Ireland industrial property market remains relatively unchanged since the publication of the 2023 Independent Review of Invest, therefore the

recommendation that there is a continued need for Invest NI to intervene in the provision of industrial land remains valid.

- To ensure alignment with key priorities, the delivery of at least one or two large scale (circa 100 acres) “Strategic Sites” should be considered over the life of the Strategy. These must be fully supported at Executive level and across the NI public sector given their scale and regional significance/impact.
- Options to deliver Speculative/Advance Build properties to fully maximise the opportunities from the delivery of one (or more) Strategic Site(s) should be explored.
- Any new business park can only be delivered in the medium to longer term as the acquisition and development process typically means it will take between 3 – 5 years until land is market ready. The Programme will therefore be delivered on a phased and prioritised basis over the ten-year period.
- Invest NI’s existing landholdings at Campsie in Derry (54 acres) and Mandeville in Craigavon (95 acres) offer the opportunity to deliver new accessible industrial land in the shorter term.
- There are currently a range of privately owned vacant buildings across the country. Emerging local need and Invest NI’s International Investment Strategy should inform a requirement for specific targeted interventions in this market.
- Each individual council area has its own unique strengths and dynamics. Invest NI will embed new Property Executives in the regions to work closely with councils, Enterprise Agencies and the private sector to define the same and develop partnership-based region-specific solutions.
- Modern business parks require business attractive amenities such as onsite childcare, food provision etc and this should be factored into the delivery of any new business park.
- On a regional basis, Invest NI should maintain a “watching brief” on the office market and, where a specific need is identified, develop targeted strategies that can deliver high quality office space in partnership with the private sector and/or other stakeholders.
- Due consideration to Net Zero and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) aims and objectives must be given to all new land and property development undertaken by Invest NI

## **DELIVERY: KEY ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

- By its nature, the acquisition and delivery of new land to market is a lengthy process. The Regional Property Programme acknowledges this and, whilst new acquisitions are proposed in the medium to longer term, the Programme

also aims to offer a shorter-term route to market for land that is already in Invest NI or public ownership.

- The Programme includes a mix of both land acquisition and targeted provision of industrial property solutions. Opportunities for the development of buildings including the refurbishment and repurposing of existing stock (both office and industrial), and the development of follow-on space for new business starts lend themselves to delivery partnerships with the public and private sectors and will be explored in further detail by the Regional Property Executives.
- The Programme will have multi-year budget requirements and, at this stage, the total estimated cost for its delivery is circa £140m over ten years.
- There are several challenges to the delivery of the Programme, particularly the availability of suitable water and electricity infrastructure. Although we have long established working relationships with both NI Electricity and NI Water, it is likely that agreement on prioritising the delivery of land and buildings for economic development including the investment alignment of essential supporting infrastructure, across various public bodies, will be required to successfully deliver on the Programme's ambition.
- The Planning process continues to be challenging. Economic development projects of strategic significance to the Northern Ireland economy should be prioritised in the planning process. Invest NI will work with its council partners, the Department for Infrastructure and stakeholders/consultees who form part of this process with the aim of agreeing same.
- Councils are currently working through their new Local Development Plan process which will define the specific locations of land zoned for industrial purposes. Until these zonings have been agreed, there remains a risk that planning applications may not be approved. Invest NI has established positive working relationships with each of the local planning teams within councils and we will continue to use our influence to seek to resolve planning delays as quickly as possible.

## **REGIONAL PROPERTY PROGRAMME 2024-2034**

- Invest NI will complete the infrastructure work at **Campsie, Derry** and deliver circa 54 acres of industrial land. The land is already in Invest NI ownership and therefore can provide a quick route to market.
- Invest NI will design and develop the lands at **Mandeville, Craigavon** to deliver circa 95 acres of industrial land. This land is already in Invest NI ownership and therefore can provide a quick route to market.
- Invest NI is committed to working in partnership with stakeholders at a local level. A team of regionally located Property Executives will work in partnership

with local stakeholders, councils, Enterprise Agencies and the private sector to understand specific local property needs and co-design solutions accordingly to include, but not limited to, follow on space, refurbishment of existing building stock and consideration of mixed-use site developments aligned to identified local need.

- Emerging local need and International Investment Strategy will inform a requirement for specific targeted interventions, for example, the modernisation of existing buildings, both office and industrial and/or the speculative development of buildings via incentivisation or direct provision.
- Strategically located sites provide opportunities for businesses to maximise the economic opportunities arising from our unique access to the dual markets in the UK and European Union and the all-island economy. We will therefore seek to deliver at least one Strategic Site along those main arterial routes that give businesses quick access to ports, airports etc.
- Councils are currently working on delivering their council area specific Local Development Plans. Invest NI will work in partnership with councils throughout this process to ensure sufficient industrial land is provided to facilitate business growth for the life of the Plan. Where a need is identified, together with councils and local stakeholders, we will identify and deliver new industrial lands to meet that need.
- We are committed to ensuring the investment in City and Growth Deal projects is maximised. We will work with stakeholders in that regard and if a specific property intervention is required, we will co-design and deliver the solution in partnership.

**The Regional Property Programme 2024 -2034 has the ambition to:**

- ❖ **Deliver between 300 and 400 acres of new industrial land at a range of modern business parks across Northern Ireland over the next ten years.**
- ❖ **Provide at least one new Strategic Business Park with the potential to offer investors purpose/advance build premises, enhancing our ability to attract new foreign investment and capitalise on all island economic opportunities.**
- ❖ **Embed a more flexible and proactive regional property presence through the deployment of new Regional Property Executives which will enable us to develop flexible and partnership-based property solutions tailored to specific regional economic needs.**