

Ardoyne &  
Greater Ballysillan

# NORTH BELFAST



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



August 2016

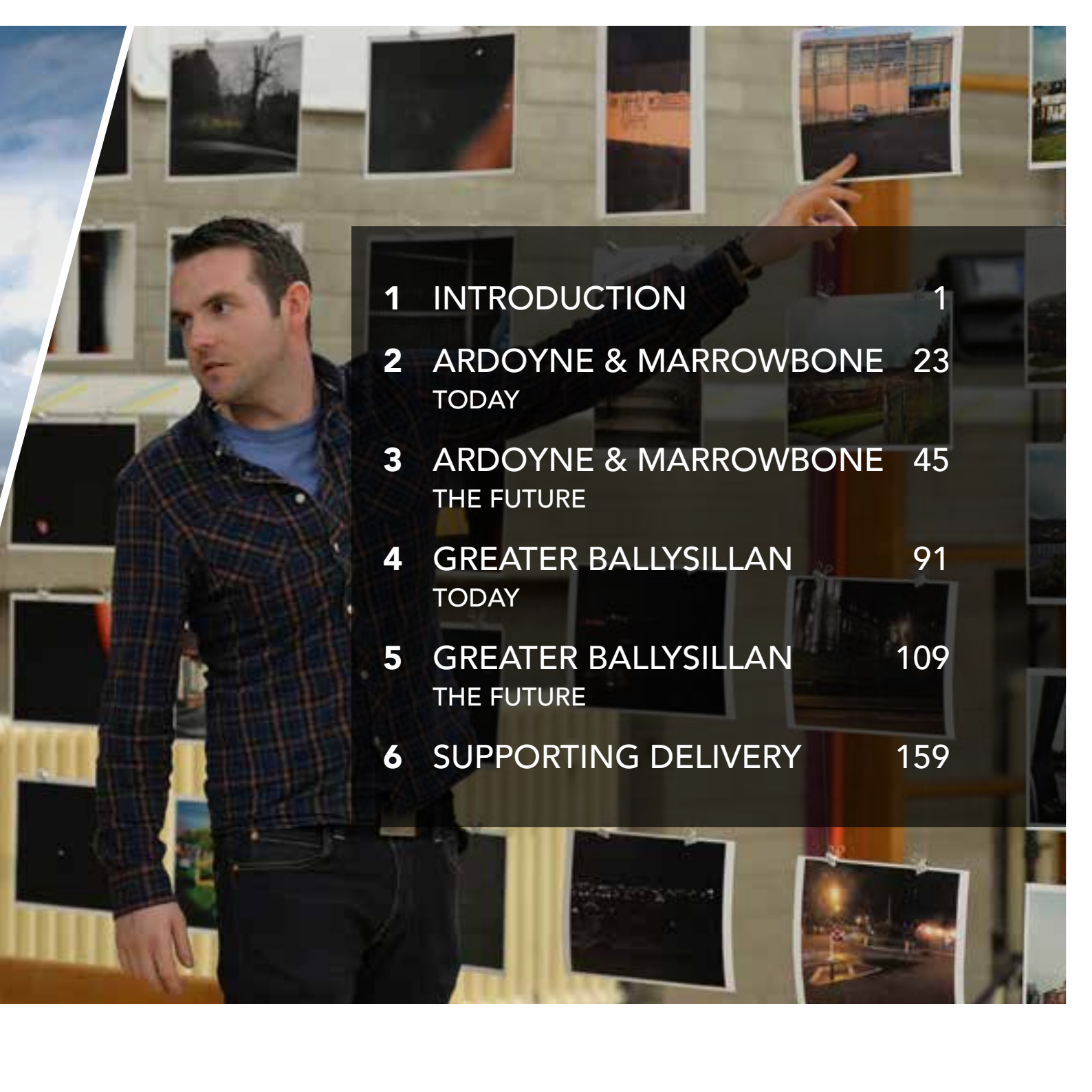
# ARDOYNE & GREATER BALLYSILLAN

URBAN VILLAGES INITIATIVE



The  
**Executive Office**

[www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

A man in a blue plaid shirt and dark jacket is pointing towards a wall covered in various photographs. The background shows a room with many photos pinned to the wall, some showing buildings and others showing street scenes. A semi-transparent dark box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing a table of contents.

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**URBAN  
VILLAGES**  
Thriving Places



CARR'S  
GLEN

Ballysillan Road

BALLYSILLAN  
PLAYING FIELDS

Crumlin Road

ARDOYNE  
SHOPS &  
LIBRARY

MARROWBONE  
MILLENNIUM  
PARK



# 01

## INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

1

## PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

This Strategic Framework is intended to provide a reference point for anyone involved in shaping investment decisions or identifying collaborative opportunities in the Ardoyne & Greater Ballysillan Urban Village area.

The Framework presents findings from a creative process of analysis and reflection which involved individual members of the community, as well as representatives from local and central government. It provides an analysis of place and is a tool for informing action and investment.

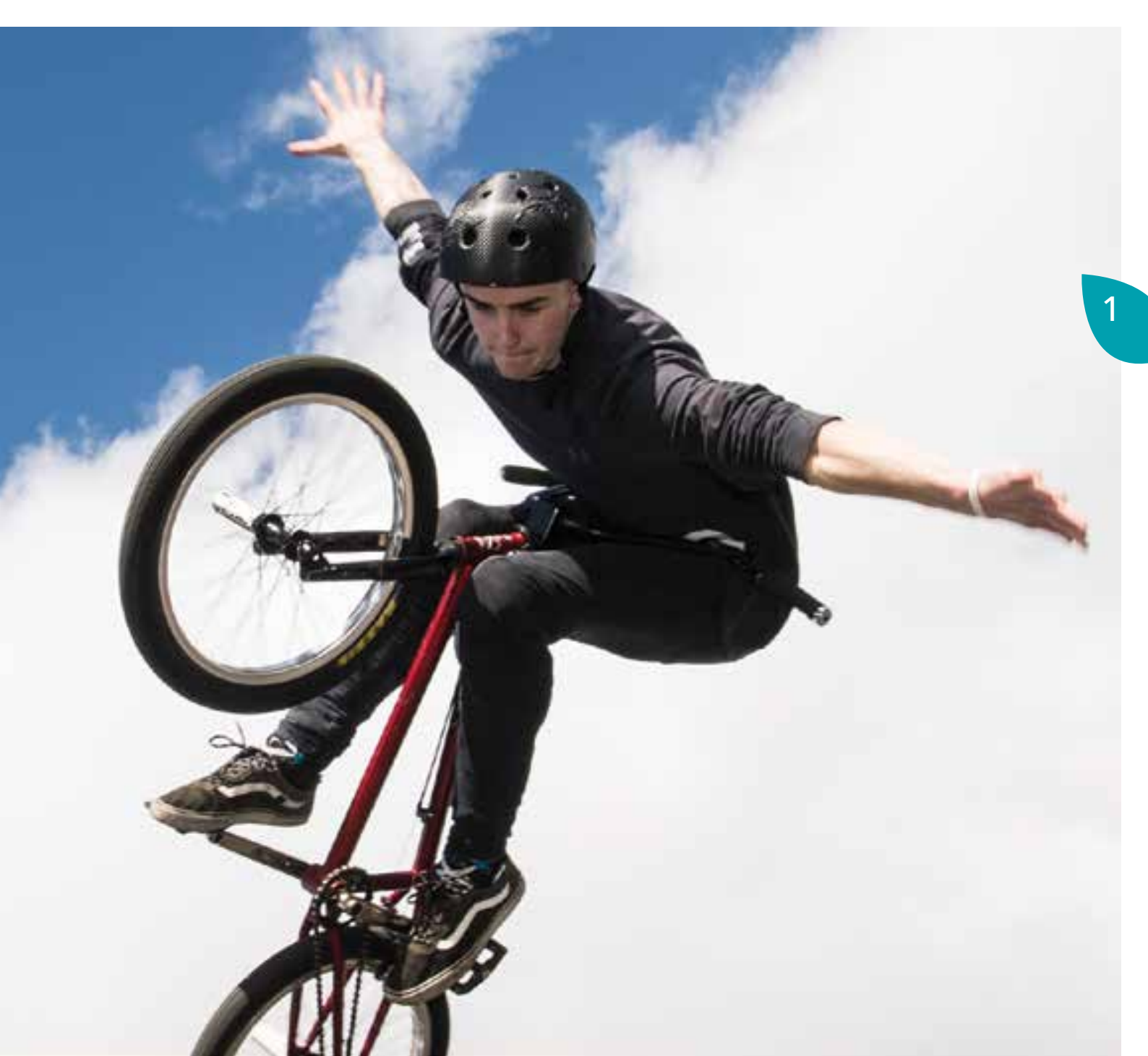
The Framework is intended to be used as a working document so that emerging opportunities can be identified and changing circumstances acknowledged.

It begins by presenting information on what the Urban Villages Initiative is, what it is trying to achieve and how it will work.

Sections 2 and 4 then sets out the local context and presents key findings under three headings - strengths, symptoms and causes.

Sections 3 and 5 looks towards the future and sets out Strategic Actions which emerged through the process of engagement, evidence gathering and analysis. These can help to inform future investment plans as well as identifying opportunities for alignment of effort and collaboration around shared outcomes.

Section 6 focuses on delivery. The Executive Office will take forward projects and programmes within its remit, and work with others to progress opportunities for shared delivery of outcomes, in keeping with the approach articulated in the draft Programme for Government Framework.



# WHAT IS THE URBAN VILLAGES INITIATIVE?

1

The Urban Villages Initiative is a key action within the Northern Ireland Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy. It is designed to improve good relations outcomes and to help develop thriving places where there has previously been a history of deprivation and community tension.



*Improve the physical environment*

*Build community capacity*



## There are three inter-connecting aims:

- to foster positive community identities
- to build community capacity
- to improve the physical environment.

In working towards these aims, a key delivery mechanism will be aligning and influencing investment and finding better ways of 'doing more with what we've got'. The goal is to enable current and future investment to be targeted and delivered in more effective and sustainable ways. In practice this will mean:

- co-ordinating and aligning effort across Government Departments, local Councils and community organisations to deliver good relations outcomes
- identifying and building on what is working because sustainable change requires investment in social (people and communities) and in physical assets
- exploring ways of investing and trying new approaches which stimulate private investment and economic activity.

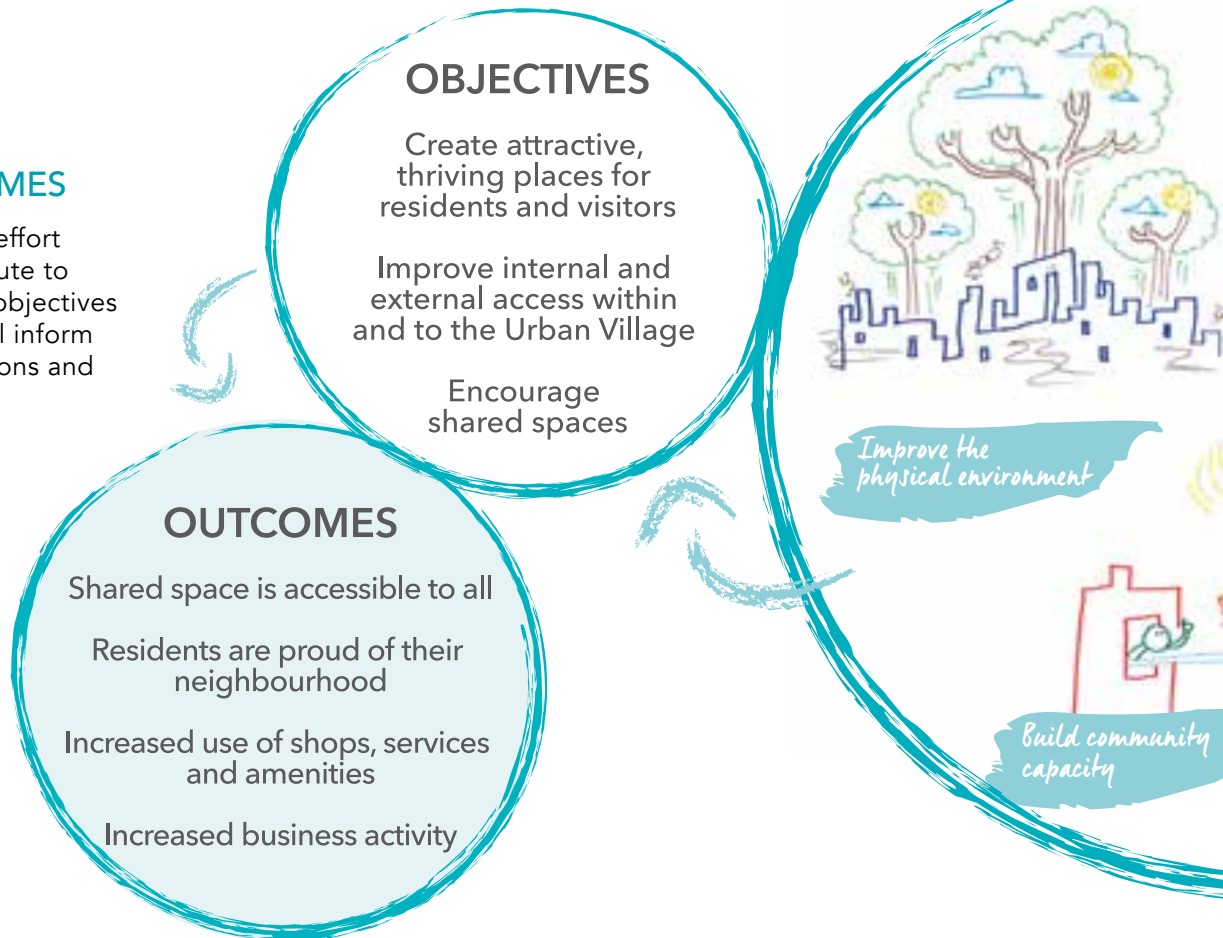


*Foster positive  
community identities*




## OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

In order to focus effort and set a clear route to delivery, a set of objectives and outcomes will inform investment decisions and actions.



### OBJECTIVES

Build trust and relationships

Enhance pride and confidence in Urban Village areas

Create welcoming places where people feel safe and connected, regardless of religious or ethnic background

### OUTCOMES

Improved relationships between and within communities

Cultural diversity is celebrated

A community where places and spaces are safe for all

Increased sense of community belonging

### OBJECTIVES

Encourage and support communities to express their views and influence what happens in their areas

Enhance the capacity and confidence of communities to work and socialise within and outside their immediate neighbourhoods

Enhance community capacity to participate in local and regional networks and recognise shared needs and priorities

### OUTCOMES

Increased use of shared spaces and services

Greater voice and influence

Confident and enterprising community



*Faster positive community identities*

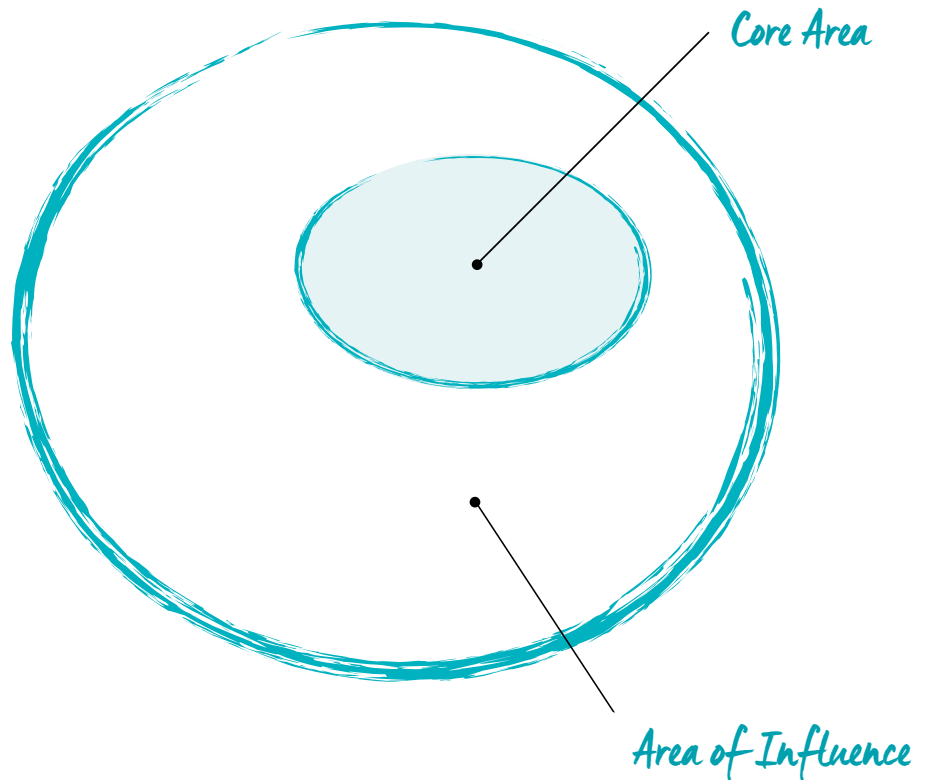


## PLACES

Delivery will be focussed on five 'core' areas in:

- Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan (North Belfast)
- Bogside, Fountain and Bishop Street (Derry~Londonderry)
- Colin (West Belfast)
- EastSide (East Belfast)
- Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets (South Belfast)

The core area provides a focal point for action and investment. The concept of a wider area of influence, that is not sharply defined, acknowledges that thriving places require wider connection to both physical and social assets. Investment decisions and actions will be informed by the likely impact on core areas.



## OVERARCHING THEMES

*Based on the findings of the research and consultation processes, four overarching themes for Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan are proposed.*

### **Cohesion:**

Ensuring strong relationships within the Urban Village area, as well with neighbouring communities, will be essential in taking the area positively forward in the future.

### **Connection:**

A continued focus must be made on removing the challenging physical and psychological barriers that prevent local people accessing services and opportunities.

### **Beacons:**

Individuals and local organisations continue to be instrumental in moving the area forward towards more peaceful and prosperous times. It is therefore key that positive role models and ambassadors are found and supported in their work, whilst key centres of help, hope and change are sustained.

### **Transformation:**

Comprehensive change is needed to tackle some of the challenges facing this part of North Belfast.

This change must not only be physical, clearly signalling a brighter future for the area, but also social and economic, making a difference for all those who live and work there.



## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The Strategic Actions in this Framework document are intended to inform discussion about how to best deliver positive outcomes in each place.

In order to ensure that expertise is harnessed at a neighbourhood level, local Reference Groups are being developed - to provide a first point of contact and sense-check for project ideas, to build civic stewardship and sustainability around specific interventions and to ensure that delivery is built from shared priorities.

## *Cohesion:*

### **Ardoyne & Marrowbone**

- Communicating a place to be proud of
- Focussed training opportunities
- Learning and sharing our positive story
- Listening and collaborating with our young people
- Creating positive places

### **Greater Ballysillan**

- Getting ready
- Sharing information, working together
- Promoting Greater Ballysillan
- Generational projects
- Forging cohesive communities



## Connection:

### **Ardoyne & Marrowbone**

- Promoting further collaboration and sharing
- Linking to local and wider employment
- Improving access to surrounding sport and leisure facilities
- Stronger physical and mental corridors
- Address the challenges of interfaces

### **Greater Ballysillan**

- River greenways
- Business incubation centre
- Coordinated sports programme
- Signage strategy
- Address the challenges of interfaces

## Beacons:

### **Ardoyne & Marrowbone**

- Places to meet, share information and opportunities
- Beautiful landmark buildings and places
- Inspiring local people

### **Greater Ballysillan**

- Neighbourhood centres & parks
- New Ballysillan park
- Revitalised leisure provision
- Carr's Glen & activity centre

## Transformation:

### **Ardoyne & Marrowbone**

- Making places feel and be safer
- Less litter and graffiti, more parks and trees
- Welcoming points of arrival
- Greater health and well-being
- First class education
- A mix of good new homes

### **Greater Ballysillan**

- Targeting dereliction
- Meanwhile uses
- Street development
- Centre of creativity
- Schools collaboration & sharing
- New & upgraded housing

# INTRODUCING ARDOYNE & MARROWBONE

1

The neighbourhoods of Ardoyne and Marrowbone are located between the Crumlin Road and Cliftonville Roads of North Belfast.

They share a predominantly nationalist, republican and Catholic identity, but have evolved as two distinct neighbourhood areas.





# INTRODUCING GREATER BALLYSILLAN

1

Greater Ballysillan describes a large area of North Belfast that stretches from the Forth River and Crumlin Road in the east to Cavehill Road in the west. It is comprised of several neighbourhoods of which Ballysillan is considered one.



# METHODOLOGY

1

## PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The methodology that informed this Strategic Framework began with an in-depth analysis process involving desktop research, site appraisal and extensive stakeholder consultation. This included 1-to-1 meetings, workshops, surveys, focus groups and public events.

The findings from each stage informed this Strategic Framework that is specific to the place and people. It seeks to build on what is working and will continue to progress positive change to bring about real transformation, whilst significantly improving the living environment and area.

Central to the methodology was engagement with the people who live, work and spend time in the area. Between January and March 2016 the Urban Villages team engaged with local people, community groups and wider stakeholders from both the public sector and local business through a series of 13 workshop events.

A range of issues were explored in more depth. These included, for example, the role of illumination and lighting in regeneration; children's play spaces; community gardens and allotments; and the role of business associations. This informed the findings and Strategic Actions in parallel with the valuable contributions and participation throughout the process.

*A commitment to sustained consultation and engagement with all local stakeholders is made for all stages of delivery and as such this is a working document forming the basis for discussion and delivery.*



## CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

### *Workshop Events*

A number of workshop events took place to inform this Framework. In Greater Ballysillan this included a 2 day session with local community organisations and a workshop with pupils from Boys Model School. In Ardoyne and Marrowbone 3 public workshops were held in the former St Gemma's School, the newly opened Houben Centre and in Ardoyne Community Centre.

### *Festivals*

Through the Urban Village Initiative, two very popular festivals took place providing an excellent opportunity for engagement with residents, as well as contributing to the vitality of each area.

The first was in the grounds of Holy Cross Boys Primary School Ardoyne and the second in Ballysillan Playing Fields.

In addition, the Urban Village Initiative was able to support the Hillview Christmas Fayre which succeeded in bringing interface communities together, including the temporary opening of 3 peace wall gates.

### *Community Led Events*

A total of 4 community events took place in the area, including the Upper Ardoyne Easter Fun Day, the NBWISP Community Health and Well-being event and the Yeeha consultation programme with young people in Ardoyne. A walking tour of the area was also arranged with the support of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens.

### *Surveys*

Short questionnaires were used at many of the public events taking place in the area. These ascertained local perceptions on the positives and negatives of the areas, as well as priorities for the future.

### *Consultation Meetings*

Numerous meetings with stakeholders in the Urban Village area underpinned the development of this Framework. These included local community groups, political representatives and statutory agencies.



1

STREET SOCIETY



5

WORKSHOP EVENTS



3

FESTIVALS



4

COMMUNITY LED  
EVENTS



691

SURVEY RETURNS



76

CONSULTATION  
MEETINGS



## STREET SOCIETY

1

In March 2016 three teams of architecture students from Queen's University Belfast were based in the former St Gemma's High School and the Jolly Roger Complex for a week as part of the Street Society Project across all Urban Village areas.

The students, who came from a range of different backgrounds, were drawn from the architecture department's postgraduate and first year undergraduate courses. The project gave them an opportunity to work in a real life situation of developing projects for the local community.

The three projects were as follows:

*Rivers and Glens, Greater Ballysillan* - the students were introduced to the networks of rivers and open spaces throughout the Greater Ballysillan area and asked to develop creative proposals to help the area capitalise more fully on such assets.

Through their study they focussed on the Ballysillan Playing Fields, generating an innovative sound map of the park and developing ideas for a series of timber buildings along the River Farset.

*Sacred Heart Parochial Hall, Marrowbone* - the future of this fine historic building is under active consideration by the local community in Marrowbone. The architecture students were invited to shape up proposals for the building around youth engagement and sports, including a state of the art gymnasium for the local boxing club.

*Former St Gemma's High School, Ardoyne* - being based in the classrooms of the vacated school gave the students an excellent opportunity to consider the future of the building. Working closely with the building's owners, they showed how various parts of the building, including its inner courtyard, could be brought back into meaningful use.





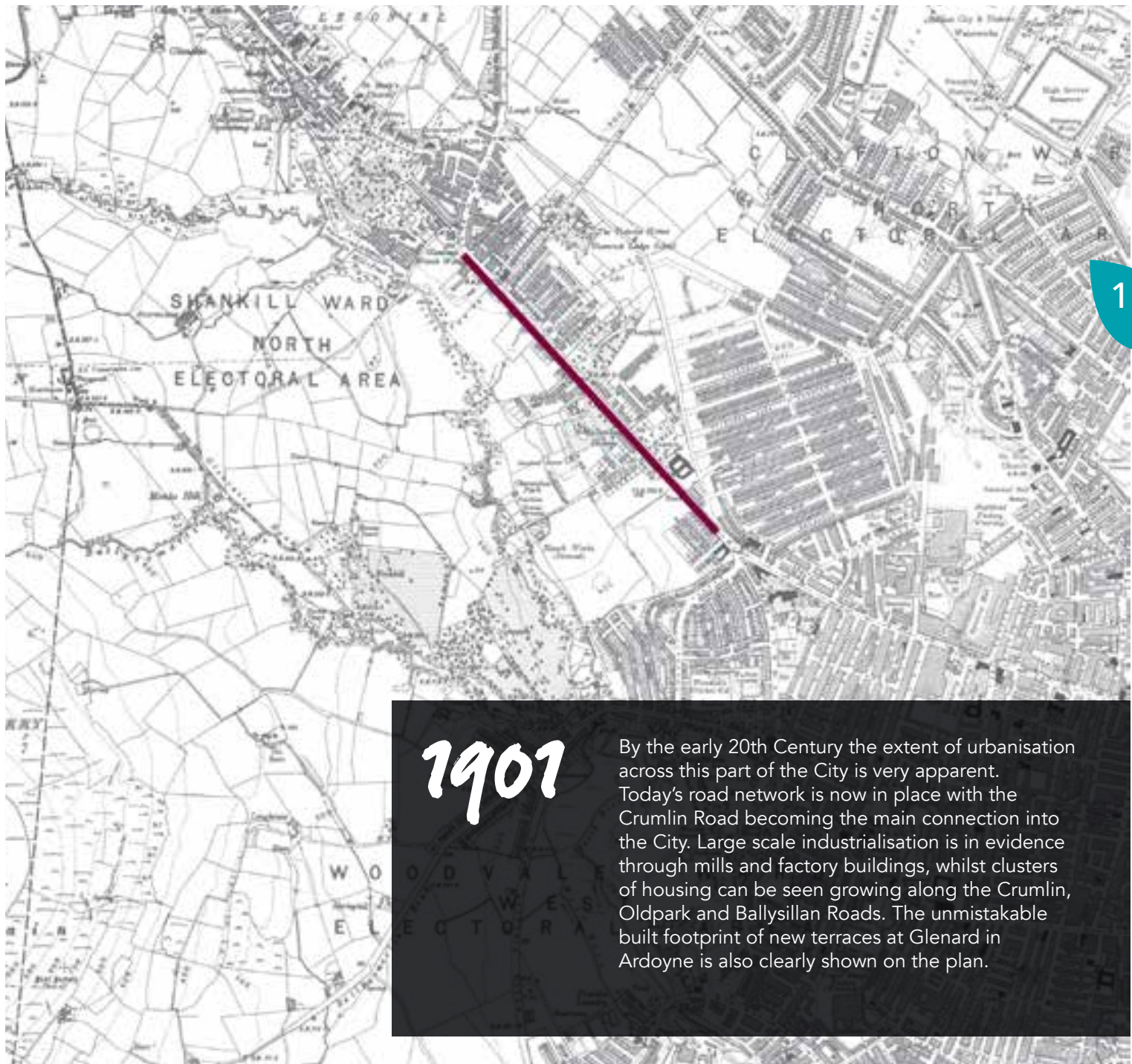
1



1829

Prior to the growth of industrial Belfast, Ardoyne and Ballysillan were rural in character. The above map clearly shows the area's hillside landscape and its network of fields and rivers. Also evident are the familiar Ballysillan Road and Upper Crumlin Road, which interestingly led directly to Ligoniel in the north and southwards into the City via Woodvale and the Shankill Road. These routes provided access to the large country estates such as Ardoyne, Wheatfield and Ballysillan, to which today's neighbourhoods owe their names.





1901

By the early 20th Century the extent of urbanisation across this part of the City is very apparent. Today's road network is now in place with the Crumlin Road becoming the main connection into the City. Large scale industrialisation is in evidence through mills and factory buildings, whilst clusters of housing can be seen growing along the Crumlin, Oldpark and Ballysillan Roads. The unmistakable built footprint of new terraces at Glenard in Ardoyne is also clearly shown on the plan.

**URBAN  
VILLAGES**  
Thriving Places





# 02

## ARDOYNE & MALLOWBONE TODAY

2

# STRENGTHS

The engagement process and analysis identifies many positive aspects and strengths that include people, activities and places which are summarised over the following pages.

2

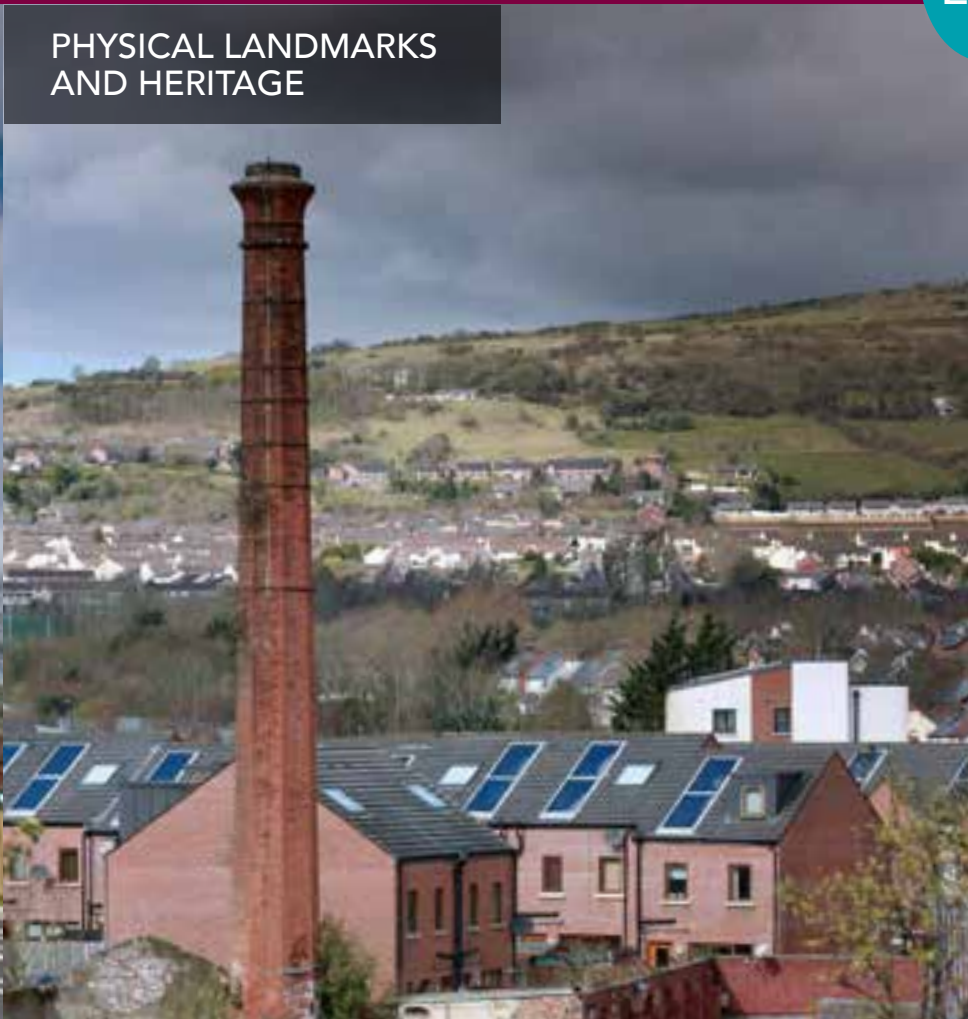
## COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND FRIENDLINESS



## COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND ACHIEVEMENTS



PHYSICAL LANDMARKS  
AND HERITAGE



## COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND FRIENDLINESS

Ardoyne and Marrowbone both have a strong sense of community. Many residents know one another and are from families who have lived in the area for generations.

Walking down Ardoyne Avenue or Flax Street, people will say hello and stop to talk.

Whilst this friendliness and community spirit may seem nothing out of the ordinary to local people, it is a critical ingredient of strong and sustainable communities.

It is made more special in the context of a community who suffered substantial loss and upheaval during the period of the Troubles.

Providing more opportunities to sustain and grow the strong community spirit of the area must therefore be an important starting point of this Framework.





2



## COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Places do not stand still and this Framework arrives at a time of momentum in the local area. Residents and community organisations have worked hard to bring about improvements to the area and the lives of local people.

As a result we see some significant recent developments. Most visibly these include the new Houben Centre emerge in the building of the restored school. Next door the Bradley Manor Nursing Home, employing many local residents, has been a marked success.

St Gemma's High School is seeing a process of steady reclamation by the local community, with a new gym and active plans for the building. And on Crumlin Road a peace wall is in the process of being removed.

This achievement brokered through intensive dialogue with local residents from different communities, is yet another sign of positive change.

In a locally distributed questionnaire residents rightly indicated that there is much more to be done.

However, these achievements represent important steps forward and through this Framework, should be regarded at catalysts for further investment.

## PHYSICAL LANDMARKS AND HERITAGE

The Ardoyne and Marrowbone areas have a strong physical character that helps to shape their identities as neighbourhoods.

Set against the backdrop of the Belfast Hills, the most prominent landmark is Holy Cross Church. Built in 1902 it commands a spectacular elevated position making it an important landmark in Ardoyne and Marrowbone, as well as the Crumlin Road and further afield.

2



Ewart's Mill, and its neighbouring Edenderry Mill also dominate the local skyline. Dating back to the 1840s, they are a constant reminder of the area's industrial heritage. So too are the various free standing chimney stacks, surviving long after the factories to which they belonged.

Finally, other physical landmarks operate at a more local level, including the fine Sacred Heart Parochial Hall in Marrowbone.

Hemmed in with modern houses, it never-the-less acts an important link to the area's history and pride.

The heritage of the area is of course expressed in other ways and a strong vein of heritage through sports, music and the Irish language permeates through Ardoyne and Marrowbone.



# CHALLENGES

Like all inner city areas, Ardoyne and Marrowbone face challenges. The following symptoms were highlighted during the research and consultation stages.

2

## VACANCY, DERELICTION AND BLIGHT



## DENSITY AND LACK OF SPACE



## ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND CRIME



INTERFACES



DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES



## VACANCY, DERELICTION AND BLIGHT

2

Whilst investment in the area over the years has made a significant difference to Ardoyne and Marrowbone, both localities still suffer from visible signs of vacancy, dereliction and general blight.

These include the former Jamaica Inn and 'Egg Box Factory' on the Old Park Road in Marrowbone and the former St Gemma's High School on Adilea Street and Ardoyne Avenue.

The most impacted area by far is along the Crumlin Road, where swathes of vacant buildings exist at Hillview and

Flax Street, as well as at the Ardoyne shops and cleared land of the former St Gabriel's school site.

The reasons for this physical blight are complex, linked to ongoing socio-political tensions and the economic challenges in this part of the City.

Yet the impact of prominent dereliction and vacancy on the area as a whole cannot be over stated, projecting a negative message to local residents, as well as those from outside the area.





## DENSITY AND LACK OF SPACE

Studying Ardoyne and Marrowbone from the air, it is apparent how dense its development pattern is in comparison to other parts of the City.

Particularly striking are the regimented rows of streets at Glenard and the contrast between these built up areas and large open spaces elsewhere in North Belfast.

As historic maps show and local residents will tell you, many open spaces that once existed in Ardoyne have since been built over, including the River Farset behind Etna Drive and the 'Millie' or 'Ducky' Dam now under the Holy Cross Boys Primary school pitch.

As demand for new housing continues, the question of development density and of public space will require to be addressed in tandem.

Any increase in population must be carefully considered in the context of local services and any impacts on the quality of environment.

It may, for example, be necessary for more flats and townhouses to be introduced than smaller housing types, so to retain space for good quality streets and open spaces.





## ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND CRIME

2

Like many parts of the City, Ardoyne and Marrowbone endure the impacts of antisocial behaviour, as well as criminal activity.

The most visible sign of this is the litter and graffiti in some quarters left in the wake of large groups of people that congregate there in the evening.

A cause for concern amongst local people, gatherings such as those in Marrowbone Park, create tension locally, whilst adding to the impacts of physical blight in public areas.

Yet less visible but of great concern to residents are issues of substance abuse and drug related crime.



Such problems have a major effect on the lives of young people and their families in particular, as well as on the wider community.

Whilst a challenging issue to combat, this ongoing concern must be central to this Framework.

Yet it is important to differentiate between the realities of such problems and the perceptions of them, which are influenced by the media and appearance of prominent locations.



## INTERFACES

A challenge across Ardoyne and Marrowbone is ongoing interface tension between different communities. The violence and upheaval of the 'Troubles' as they commenced in the late 1960s and early 1970s saw movements of people that consolidated single identity neighbourhoods.

The progress made in this area has been significant, resulting in a much safer and settled area than before.

Residents have indicated that they feel increasingly more comfortable in accessing shops and other facilities outside of the immediate area. Yet the peaceline along Alliance Avenue and the Crumlin Road continue to separate communities, as do large tracts of vacant land at Hillview.

Of local and indeed regional concern is ongoing tension at the Ardoyne Roundabout on the Crumlin Road.

A protest camp, located at the corner of Twaddell Avenue, was repeatedly cited as a source of concern by residents involved in the consultation process.

This part of North Belfast, including these and neighbouring communities, suffered significantly during the 40 year conflict of the 'Troubles'.

Whilst tremendous progression towards a more peaceful society has been made, the physical and mental scars of this period remain within the community, as well as the physical fabric of the place.

Within Ardoyne, paramilitary groups still exist and operate, creating an unsettled and fearful atmosphere. Violence or the threat of violence still permeates the area.

It is essential, therefore, that through this Framework and other initiatives, recognition of this past and indeed the present environment is made, whilst a confident, prosperous and peaceful future is planned and delivered upon in partnership with everyone in the area.



## DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Local people frequently reference the prevailing friendliness and community spirit in Ardoyne and Marrowbone.

Yet through engagement they have also highlighted a perceived change in local dynamics, with more people moving into the area from 'outside' than ever before.

2



The causes of this can be traced to increased mobility of the population after the 'Troubles', as well as an increase in privately rented housing influenced by the property boom and subsequent recession.

According to residents, this demographic change is impacting on levels of neighbourliness and community spirit.

Work is therefore required to improve levels of cohesion and shared local identity.









# 03

## ARDOYNE & MARROWBONE THE FUTURE

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The Strategic Actions for **Ardoyne & Marrowbone** have been developed through a comprehensive process of information gathering, analysis and extensive engagement with a wide and diverse audience. They seek to build on what is working, highlighting opportunities for sustaining positive change. Each of the Strategic Actions sits within one of four overarching themes and will lead to various projects and/or alignment with other projects.

3

### COHESION



- *Communicating a place to be proud of*
- *Focussed training opportunities*
- *Learning and sharing our positive story*
- *Listening and collaborating with our young people*
- *Creating positive places*

### CONNECTION



- *Promoting further collaboration and sharing*
- *Linking to local and wider employment*
- *Improving access to surrounding sport and leisure facilities*
- *Stronger physical and mental corridors*
- *Address the challenges of interfaces*



## BEACONS

- *Places to meet, share information and opportunities*
- *Beautiful landmark buildings and places*
- *Inspiring local people*

## TRANSFORMATION



- *Making places feel and be safer*
- *Less litter and graffiti, more parks and trees*
- *Welcoming points of arrival*
- *Greater health and well-being*
- *First class education*
- *A mix of good new homes*

# COHESION

3

COMMUNICATING A PLACE TO BE PROUD OF



FOCUSSED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



LEARNING AND SHARING OUR POSITIVE STORY





LISTENING AND  
COLLABORATING WITH  
OUR YOUNG PEOPLE



CREATING  
POSITIVE PLACES



## COMMUNICATING A PLACE TO BE PROUD OF

Ardoyne and Marrowbone have many great attributes, not least their people and the positive community spirit that can be found there. Yet the area's turbulent history and ongoing challenges give rise to negative external perceptions.

Work is therefore needed to shape a positive identity and image for the area.

There is no one quick fix to such a task. Yet through physical improvements, more special events and celebrations, and more effective communication within and beyond Ardoyne, a more positive message can be shared with everyone.



## FOCUSSED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Recent times have proven that the most sustainable change comes from within. Local people have been instrumental to improving Ardoyne and Marrowbone and this must be developed and supported. So too must work to provide individuals with the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

An enhanced programme of skills and capacity building is therefore needed to help local people and community organisations grow and succeed.

This should complement the work of existing initiatives, and may take the form of targeted training programmes as well as mentoring arrangements that support local people in achieving their goals.





## LEARNING AND SHARING OUR POSITIVE STORY

Ardoyne and Marrowbone share a rich heritage and culture, with strong links to the area's religious and industrial past and to the vibrancy of language, sports, music and the arts. By helping the heritage and culture of the area to flourish and sharing its significance, positive identity and the sense of community spirit can be reinforced.

The fulfilment of this Strategic Action could take many guises.

Training and education opportunities for all the community would help increase awareness and knowledge.

Increased interpretation of the area's heritage could result in valuable resources for locals and visitors, including a walking trail or audio tour.

Events also have an important role to play, with annual celebrations of music and the arts having been popular in the past.

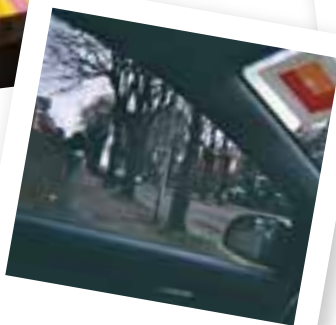
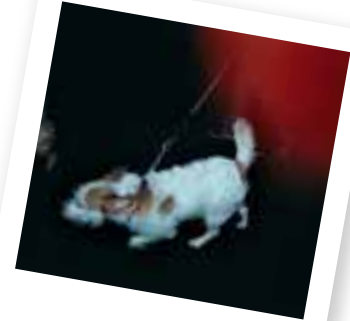


## LISTENING AND COLLABORATING WITH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people are of course the future of Ardoyne and Marrowbone. For some people, however, the behaviour of local young people is a cause for concern.

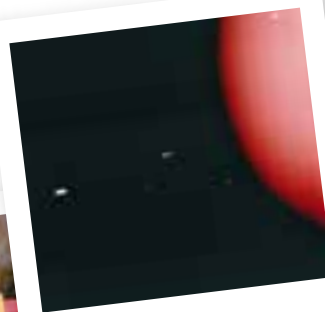
Yet engagement with young people and those who work with them has underlined the constructive contribution they can make to community life.

3



It is therefore very important that they are listened to carefully and given the opportunity to help shape and drive their area.

Building on successful youth work and outreach that takes place at present, work is now required to extend this positive engagement with young people.



## CREATING POSITIVE PLACES

Bringing people together from within and between communities requires the right kinds of public spaces. Ardoyne and Marrowbone's dense development pattern has meant that very few shared civic spaces are in place to provide natural meeting points for local people.

It is therefore important to find ways of creating such civic shared spaces in Ardoyne and Marrowbone. Most opportunity comes from existing sites earmarked for development, which must include good quality public spaces and public realm.

Longer term potential also exists with the improvements to existing areas as and when buildings are in need of renewal and development.

Opportunities to draw upon any remaining natural features, such as the submerged River Farset should be actively explored.



# CONNECTION

3

PROMOTING FURTHER  
COLLABORATION AND SHARING



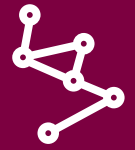
LINKING TO LOCAL AND  
WIDER EMPLOYMENT



IMPROVING  
ACCESS TO  
SURROUNDING  
SPORT AND  
LEISURE  
FACILITIES







**STRONGER PHYSICAL  
AND MENTAL CORRIDORS**



**ADDRESS THE  
CHALLENGES OF INTERFACES**



## PROMOTING FURTHER COLLABORATION AND SHARING

Much has been achieved through individuals and organisations collaborating with others, be they from within the area or from elsewhere.

These networks, including some effective cross community partnerships, help to ensure that Ardoyne and Marrowbone can maximise available skills and resources.



Helping support and grow such networks within the area and with neighbouring communities contributes to strengthening Ardoyne and Marrowbone and ensuring its place within the wider context of the City.

A clear potential exists for new connections to be made between different localities, including the various neighbourhoods of the North Belfast Urban Village area.

New links should also be made between groups that share similar objectives, helping them to have greater impact through collective endeavour.



## LINKING TO LOCAL AND WIDER EMPLOYMENT

It is essential that local people are given every opportunity to access employment opportunities, be they within the area or elsewhere in the City.

This requires a multifaceted approach to supporting those looking for work and looking to attract and grow local employment opportunities.

Large development opportunities, such as those presented in the Hillview area, should provide a route to increase employment locally.

From an early stage, work is therefore needed to match local people with the skills required, so they can benefit most fully from such investment.



## IMPROVING ACCESS TO SURROUNDING SPORT AND LEISURE FACILITIES

Ardoyne and Marrowbone are densely developed areas and as a result, little room exists for the provision of sports facilities.

Whilst this must be addressed through future development, work is also needed to help connect local individuals, teams and clubs with those sports and leisure facilities provided in the wider area.

As a remnant of the divided nature of the area's geography, good physical links to parks, leisure centres and playing fields are not always in place. Furthermore, work is needed to help ensure such facilities are safe and accessible for everyone, regardless of their background, religion or political belief.



## STRONGER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CORRIDORS

3

Ensuring strong physical connections within and beyond the local area will be an important part of helping Ardoyne and Marrowbone to integrate more with the City and capitalise upon nearby opportunities of employment, retail and leisure, for example.

This means in part overcoming the physical barriers that have grown up through necessity over the past 50 years.

It is recognised this is a sensitive process that must take place at an appropriate pace for those most directly affected.

It also means improving the physical quality of streets and footpaths, so that they are more attractive, better lit and more welcoming for everyone to use.

Furthermore, opportunities to establish destinations within the area that welcome people and groups from other locations should be progressed.

This would help to encourage a process of connection and further understanding between adjoining communities.





## ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF INTERFACES

In the 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy, the Northern Ireland Executive made a commitment to remove interface barriers by 2023.

As a headline action in that Strategy, we will work with local people and other stakeholders to address the challenges of interface walls in Urban Village areas as appropriate in each place. Clearly this is not a simple task and fulfilling such an objective must be carefully undertaken.

In each Urban Village area it is proposed that local people and those with responsibility for taking action on issues around interfaces are involved in shaping delivery of any capital or other schemes. There is no prescribed approach to this task.

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Work could also be undertaken to address non-physical barriers that exist between neighbourhoods, in keeping with Urban Village's three aims of fostering positive identities, building community capacity and improving the physical environment.

3



# BEACONS

3

PLACES TO MEET, SHARE  
INFORMATION AND OPPORTUNITIES



BEAUTIFUL LANDMARK  
BUILDINGS AND PLACES





INSPIRING  
LOCAL PEOPLE



## PLACES TO MEET, SHARE INFORMATION AND OPPORTUNITIES

Hubs are places that bring communities together and are therefore essential components of a neighbourhood. In Ardoyne and Marrowbone these are a range of churches, schools and community centres. Community facilities such as the health centre and library also play an important role here.

The quality of these buildings are variable, with some recently improved, but others in a relatively poor condition. This impacts upon their ability to serve the population and perform their role in bringing the community together and consequently, future investment will be required to safeguard them.

Furthermore, the important outreach work delivered from these bases must be sustained and developed where possible.

Scope also exists to create new hubs that provide space for local people, for events and other gatherings. Community feedback noted a lack of provision for disabled groups and the elderly.

Importantly, consideration should be given to public places on the edges of the neighbourhoods and not just in the heart. These buildings would then have potential to create hubs of value for all communities in the area, making them accessible to a diverse range of people.



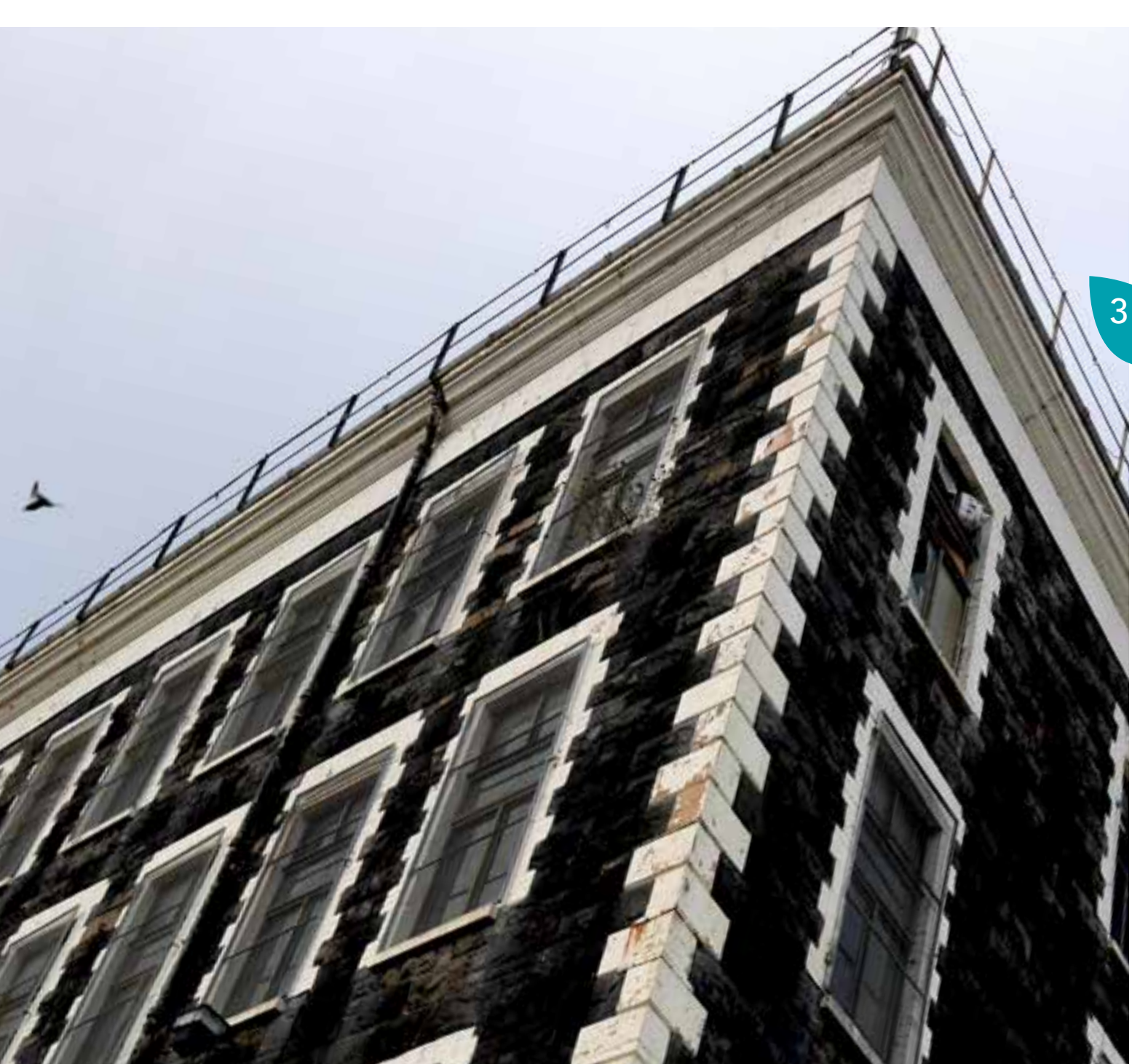
## BEAUTIFUL LANDMARK BUILDINGS AND PLACES

Physical landmarks are important contributors to a local sense of identity and pride. Ardoyne and Marrowbone are fortunate to have some important historic buildings. Yet their condition is variable with a number in need of refurbishment.

This should include the old chimneys that dot this part of the City. These landmarks, which remind us of the area's industrial past, should be protected and potentially floodlit to reinforce the role they play.

A number of new development opportunities are in discussion for Ardoyne and Marrowbone, such as a St Gemma's, Hillview, the Egg Box Factory, Marrowbone Parochial Hall and the planned schools campus at the former St Gabriel's Site.

All of these projects should be seized as opportunities to introduce excellence in architecture, urban and landscape design.







## INSPIRING LOCAL PEOPLE

People make places and the work of committed individuals is as key to Ardoyne and Marrowbone today as it will be in the future. In addition to making a positive difference to their area, such individuals, or 'champions' are role models that inspire others in the community.

Identifying, supporting and celebrating the achievements of key local people from all sections of the community will therefore be an important exercise.

This can help in reinforcing the positive identity of the area, whilst helping to inspire and lifting the ambitions of young people and others.

# TRANSFORMATION

3

MAKING  
PLACES FEEL  
AND BE SAFER



LESS LITTER AND  
GRAFFITI, MORE PARKS  
AND TREES



WELCOMING POINTS  
OF ARRIVAL





GREATER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

FIRST CLASS EDUCATION

A MIX OF GOOD NEW HOMES





3

## MAKING PLACES FEEL AND BE SAFER

Ardoyne and Marrowbone residents share concerns about crime and the safety of people and property.

Both places also have locations where residents do not feel safe, particularly after dark. Tackling real and perceived levels of crime and antisocial behaviour is therefore an important priority for the area.

Real levels of crime can only be dealt with through continued partnership between the local community and the police. Whilst a complex yet improving relationship exists between both entities, continued efforts to improve local and community policing are essential for the area.

Such work must also be complemented with proactive and positive engagement with those prone to committing offences.

Addressing the perceived levels of antisocial behaviour and crime must be tackled through environmental improvements and effective communication.

This will include improved management of public spaces, better lighting and the eradication of dereliction and blight.

Improved information and positive communications will also help people to understand the realities of crime in their area.

## LESS LITTER AND GRAFFITI, MORE PARKS AND TREES

3

Great potential exists to make Ardoyne and Marrowbone more attractive through the removal of litter and graffiti and the establishment of green spaces and trees.

Such work is not necessarily expensive to implement, but could make a significant impact in a relatively short space of time.

Coordination between the community, local and central government officials and with landowners will be necessary to help ensure that environmental improvements are well planned and designed and are deliverable.



## WELCOMING POINTS OF ARRIVAL

The points of arrival into Ardoyne and Marrowbone have the power to 'say' a lot about the area and create a positive welcome. By targeting these locations, many of which are sited at interfaces, efforts to bring forward appropriate development and environmental improvements are required.

Such projects should prioritise the eradication of dereliction and vacancy, potentially with the introduction of meanwhile uses until such time as longer term development comes forward.

Public realm works, lighting, signage and public art can all play an important role in physically transforming such spaces for the better.



## GREATER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Improving levels of physical and mental health must remain priorities for the Ardoyne and Marrowbone communities.

This will build on the work being undertaken locally thus far, but requires adequate investment in health care facilities and services.





## FIRST CLASS EDUCATION

Vital for the future of Ardoyne and Marrowbone is the ability of everyone, most of all its children, to access the best possible quality of education.

The area is fortunate to have good schools, although the quality of their buildings and facilities has been a cause for local concern.

The renewal of schools in the local area is therefore an important objective.

3



This may involve refurbishment on existing premises, or as energetically promoted by local groups, the concept of a new educational campus on the former site of St Gabriel's High School.

Any such campus must be planned carefully, so to integrate as well as possible with the surrounding area and communities.



## A MIX OF GOOD NEW HOMES

As noted previously, Ardoyne and Marrowbone are densely developed with a shortage of good quality public spaces.

As proposals for new housing in the area come forward, great care must be taken to ensure that it not only provides good quality living space for future residents, but also that the development contributes positively to the wider urban area.

This may necessitate consideration of different types and densities of housing, so to ensure adequate space is given to the public realm. Achieving an appropriate mix of different housing tenures will also be critical to create a balanced mix of occupiers.



3



**URBAN  
VILLAGES**  
Thriving Places





# 04

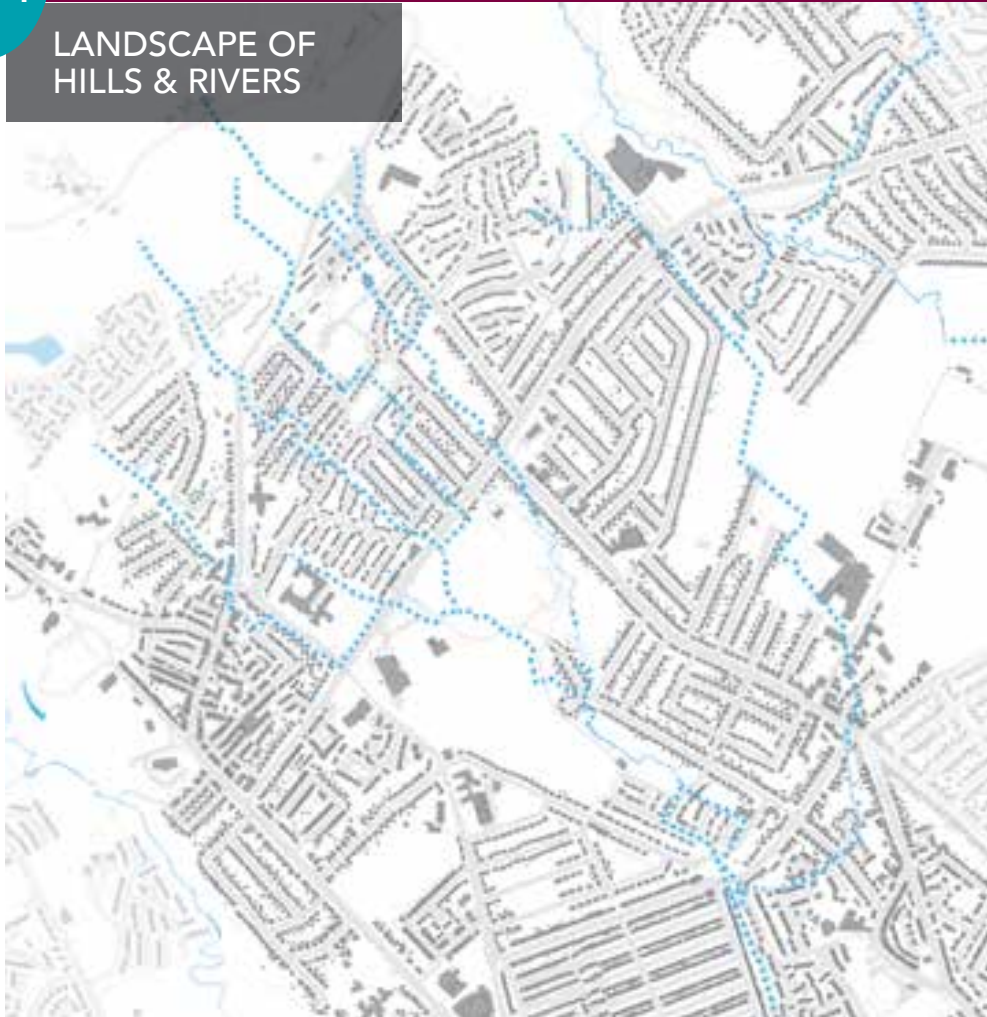
## GREATER BALLYSILLAN TODAY

# STRENGTHS

The engagement process and analysis identifies many positive aspects and strengths that include people, activities and places which are summarised over the following pages.

4

LANDSCAPE OF  
HILLS & RIVERS



LOCAL  
IDENTITIES





COMMUNITY BASED  
REGENERATION



## LANDSCAPE OF HILLS & RIVERS

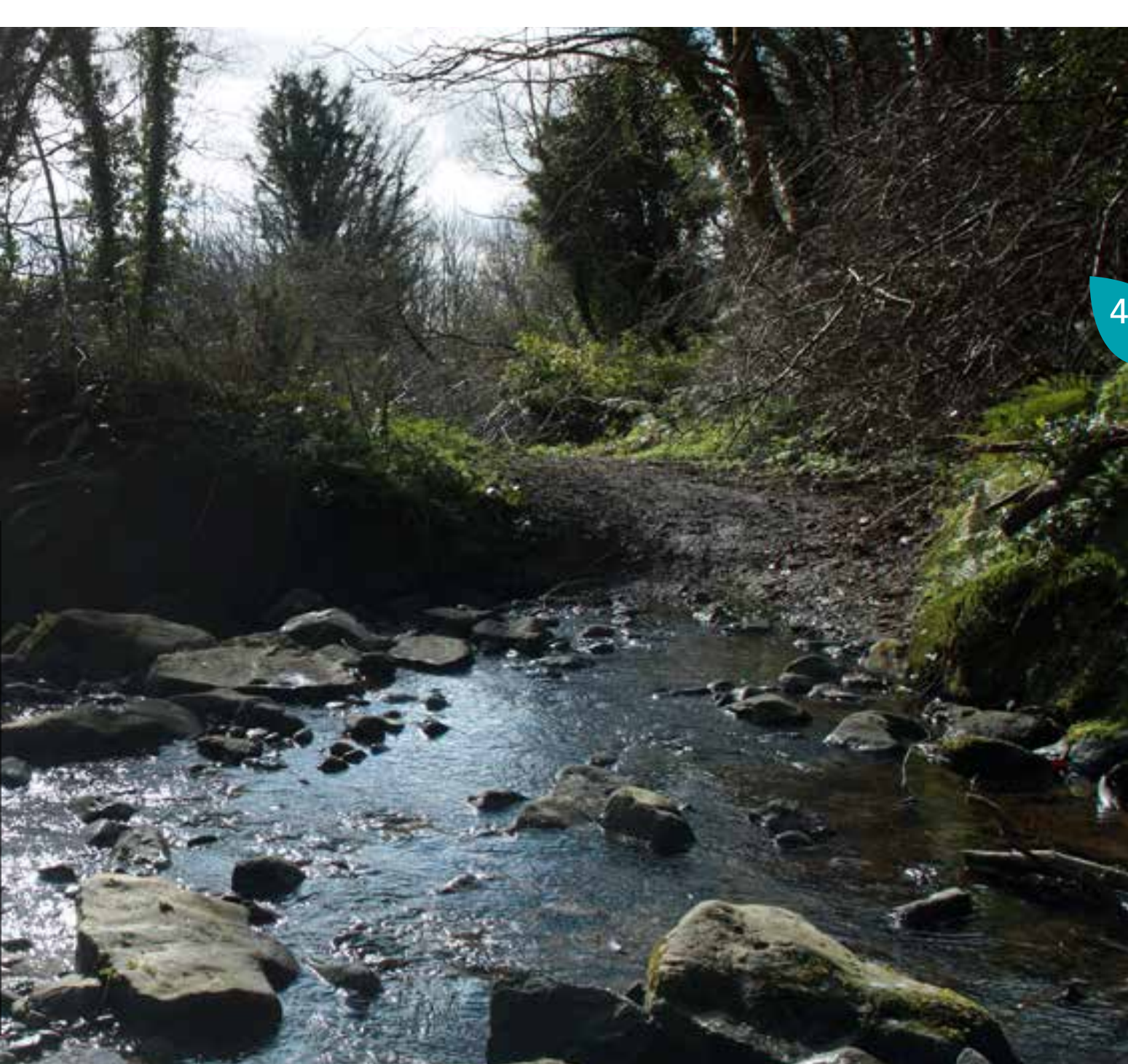
The Greater Ballysillan area enjoys an attractive landscape setting on the slopes of the Belfast Hills. As a result many of its streets and houses have striking views to the Belfast Hills and in higher parts, across much of the City as well. This strong, visible landscape enjoyed by so many (although not always accessible) is therefore an important component of the area's physical identity.

From its modest entrance on the Ballysillan Road, Carr's Glen stretches over a kilometre up into the Belfast Hills. Its dense woodland, industrial heritage and little known waterfall make the glen an excellent, although relatively untapped local resource.

Another important natural feature in the Greater Ballysillan area is its largely hidden river system, which flows from the Belfast Hills on its way towards the River Lagan.

Most notably, the hills around Ballysillan are the source of the River Farset, upon which the early city of Belfast was founded (Béal Feirste: Mouth of the Farset).

Yet a large proportion of the area's rivers are culverted underground, so play much less of a role in the lives of local people than they could.



## LOCAL IDENTITIES

As a large geographic area, Greater Ballysillan is comprised of several different neighbourhoods with their own sense of identity.

As seen on historic maps, the oldest of these are found on the Crumlin Road at Glenbank and the Oldpark Road, whilst newer settlements are located further up the hill in places such as Clare Glen and Mount Coole.

The identity of each neighbourhood is closely related to its important buildings including churches, schools and community centres.

The area also has a rich historic association with industrial and Ulster Scots heritage as well as to local bands and Loyal Orders.

Small groups of shops are also key points of reference for the local communities they serve.



## COMMUNITY BASED REGENERATION

Greater Ballysillan is home to a number of active community organisations. Community groups are spread across the area's different neighbourhoods, which combined with the valuable programmes they administer, provide an important link to local communities.

There is scope to continue to build community capacity in places like Joanmount, Tynedale and Silverstream.

Through various networks and most notably the Ballysillan and Upper Ardoyne Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership, local groups have come together to advance strategic regeneration.

Through the Greater Ballysillan Masterplan, a project funded by the Department for Communities, this work has succeeded in bringing about meaningful physical regeneration across the area.

This demonstrates a capacity for taking forward regeneration that should be supported in continued partnership with the local community.



# CHALLENGES

Like all inner city areas, Greater Ballysillan face challenges. The following symptoms were highlighted during the research and consultation stages.

4

## DERELICTION AND BLIGHT



## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR





LACK OF FACILITIES



FRAGMENTATION AND DIVISION



## DERELICTION AND BLIGHT

The Greater Ballysillan area continues to contend with highly visible cases of dereliction and vacancy.

Whilst recent projects have helped to address some of these, those that remain have a detrimental impact on the way in which the area looks and feels.

Consequently it is important that work is carried out promptly to resolve the blight they cause, which negatively impacts upon perceptions of the area.



## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

4

Like many city neighbourhoods Greater Ballysillan must manage the impacts of anti-social behaviour.

This problem is mostly associated with the Ballysillan Playing Fields and surrounding spaces, particularly after dark. Initial engagement by local groups with young people using the park in the evenings has proven effective.

This has underlined that not all people gathering in the evening are involved in anti-social behaviour. This important work must continue to help establish a better understanding of the dynamics of activity in the area, so that positive solutions can be found as part of a wider strategic process.



## LACK OF FACILITIES

A commonly made observation by local people is that there is a lack of local facilities in the Greater Ballysillan area.

This perception relates strongly to shopping, with the nearest large supermarket some 2.5km away, but also to places of employment and activities for young people.

This perception is reflected in the physical make up of the area, which lacks an identifiable centre, or, like similar parts of the City, an arterial route which acts as the focus for its population.



## FRAGMENTATION AND DIVISION

Greater Ballysillan is comprised of many different neighbourhoods. These vary in size and age, with some larger, more established areas and others smaller and more recently formed.

On the one hand, the existence of so many separate areas helps give Greater Ballysillan character and communities an identity. Yet on the other it results in fragmented neighbourhoods and communities that lack cohesion.

Related to the fragmentation of Greater Ballysillan is division. This manifests in a number of ways. Firstly, in places the physical landscape separates areas from one another.

This is particularly noticeable around the Ballysillan Playing Fields, but also in areas such as Westland which is physically detached from neighbouring areas.

Another form of division within the Greater Ballysillan area happens between areas of different income.

This is most noticeable in the north western parts of the area where estates considered to be predominantly 'middle class' sit alongside areas that identify themselves as 'working class'.

Whilst such division is subtle, it impacts upon the way in which different neighbourhoods function and their capacity for cohesion.

Finally another challenging form of division in Greater Ballysillan takes place along socio-political lines. This is most evident in Upper Ardoyne, separated from Ardoyne by the Alliance Avenue peace wall and at Ligoniel, north of Ballysillan.

Other less visible boundaries still exist between neighbourhoods that have been traditionally associated with different groupings of loyalism. Through necessity local people have learned to live with these divisions.

Yet their continued existence significantly contributes to fragmentation and the ability to sustain cohesive communities.









# 05

## GREATER BALLYSILLAN THE FUTURE

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The Strategic Actions for **Greater Ballysillan** have been developed through a comprehensive process of information gathering, analysis and extensive engagement with a wide and diverse audience. They seek to build on what is working, highlighting opportunities for sustaining positive change. Each of the Strategic Actions sits within one of four overarching themes and can lead to various projects and/or alignment with other projects.



### COHESION



- *Getting ready*
- *Sharing information, working together*
- *Promoting Greater Ballysillan*
- *Generational projects*
- *Forging cohesive communities*



### CONNECTION



- *River greenways*
- *Business incubation centre*
- *Coordinated sports programme*
- *Signage strategy*
- *Address the challenges of interfaces*



## BEACONS

- *Neighbourhood centres & parks*
- *New Ballysillan park*
- *Revitalised leisure provision*
- *Carr's Glen & activity centre*



## TRANSFORMATION



- *Targeting dereliction*
- *Meanwhile uses*
- *Street development*
- *Centre of creativity*
- *Schools collaboration & sharing*
- *New & upgraded housing*

# MASTERPLAN ACTIONS / STRATEGIC ACTIONS

5

In 2014 Social Development Minister Mervyn Storey MLA launched The Greater Ballysillan Masterplan.

This plan presents a vision for the future of the area and was compiled through extensive collaboration with the local community.

It is important, therefore, that this Strategic Framework is compatible with the Masterplan, so that together they can bring about much needed regeneration in the area.

The adjacent table illustrates the relationship between the actions of the Masterplan and this Framework.



Greater Ballysillan Masterplan Actions		Urban Villages Initiative Strategic Actions
A1	Getting Ready	Getting Ready
A2	Targeting Dereliction	Targeting Dereliction
A3	Meanwhile Uses	Meanwhile Uses
A4	Information Sharing	Sharing Information, Working Together
A5	Greater Ballysillan Promotion Strategy	Promoting Greater Ballysillan
B1	Neighbourhood Centres	Neighbourhood Centres & Parks
B2	Neighbourhood Parks	
B3	Working Together	(Merged With A4)
C1	Upgrade Existing Housing Stock	New & Upgraded Housing
C2	New Mixed Tenure Development	
D1	Rediscovered Rivers	River Greenways
D2	Continuous Foot And Cycle Paths	
D3	Ballysillan Signage Strategy	Ballysillan Signage Strategy
D4	Outdoor Activity Centre	Carr's Glen & Outdoor Activity Centre
E1	Enhanced Sports Provision	(Merged With G3)
E2	New Ballysillan Park	New Ballysillan Park
E3	New Park Frontage	
F1	Streetscape Improvements	Street Development
F2	New Development Opportunities	
G1	Revitalised Leisure Centre	Revitalised Leisure Provision
G2	Compatible Service Provision	
G3	Coordinated Sports Programme	Coordinated Sports Programme
H1	Schools Collaboration	School Collaboration and Sharing
H2	Potential Shared Facility	
I1	Ballysillan Business Centre	Business Incubation Centre
I2	Incubator Workshops	
J1	Creative Centre	Centre of Creativity
J2	Major Community Arts Programme	
K1	Generational Projects	Forging Cohesive Communities
K2	Forging Cohesive Communities	
K3	Connecting the Street	Address the challenge of interfaces
K4	Phased Peaceline Process	

# COHESION

5

GETTING  
READY

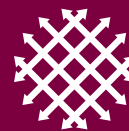


SHARING INFORMATION,  
WORKING TOGETHER



PROMOTING GREAT  
BALLYSILLAN





R

### GENERATIONAL PROJECTS



### FORGING COHESIVE COMMUNITIES



## GETTING READY

Progress in the regeneration of Greater Ballysillan can be attributed to the hard work and skills of local groups and individuals, often working alongside statutory authorities to bring about meaningful change.

This capacity amongst local groups and partnership needs to be further strengthened and supported so that a greater number of projects can be advanced locally drawing upon different sources of funding.

5





In addition to established groups, smaller less developed organisations, be they community groups, sporting clubs, special interest or faith groups, must be supported to build capacity amongst their members and volunteers.

Specific capacity needs should be identified through an assessment of current strengths and weaknesses, with potential for training to be provided locally.



## SHARING INFORMATION, WORKING TOGETHER

An important first step for Greater Ballysillan will be to ensure that information is made accessible and shared more effectively between residents, community groups, local and central government on issues pertaining to the area.

This will help bring neighbourhoods and communities together, ensure that local people and groups can avail of opportunities and raise awareness of ongoing regeneration achievements in the area.

Improving online information will be pivotal to this process. A centralised website and/or social media platform, acting in some ways like a community notice board, would present the opportunity to connect the population with what is happening in the local area.

This will provide the context for further partnership working between different organisations, including community groups and sports clubs. Effective and sustained collaboration will help to make the most of limited resources, whilst overcoming the impacts of division.

Importantly, this must take place with communities within and outside of Greater Ballysillan, including with Ardoyne and Marrowbone that share the Urban Village area.

Community centres, churches and other physical locations could also act as information hubs, helping people to access information.

Such communication channels may also be used to better connect Greater Ballysillan with surrounding communities and North Belfast as a whole.



## PROMOTING GREATER BALLYSILLAN

Greater Ballysillan is comprised of many different neighbourhoods, some of which are small in area.

Whilst each place has its own distinct character and history, there is value in further developing the wider identity of Greater Ballysillan area.

This would help to attract investment and small scale tourism to the locality, whilst also increasing a shared sense of identity between its constituent neighbourhoods.

Such work would materialise through a graphic style and branding, as well as key messages about the area to be shared online and through local media.



## GENERATIONAL PROJECTS

Growing a more cohesive society takes time and it is therefore important that programmes of cross community work are sustained over adequate periods.

Instead of short projects that take place over a matter of weeks, a need exists for longer and linked initiatives that have a greater impact on individuals and communities.

This would help to ensure that individuals can build upon the knowledge, opportunities, and relationships they have formed with those from different backgrounds.



## FORGING COHESIVE COMMUNITIES

Creating opportunities for linkage between communities is at the heart of the Urban Village Initiative and of great relevance to Greater Ballysillan and North Belfast.

Division holds back the ability of communities to thrive and for individuals to fully avail of opportunities, sometimes literally on their doorstep. Some excellent work goes on in Greater Ballysillan in fostering good relations.

5





Building on existing relationships and expanding networks will help to increase levels of mutual understanding between neighbours and neighbourhoods be they within Greater Ballysillan, or with adjacent communities.



# CONNECTION

5

RIVER GREENWAYS

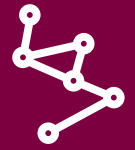


BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRE



COORDINATED SPORT PROGRAMME





**SIGNAGE  
STRATEGY**



**ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES  
OF INTERFACES**

## RIVER GREENWAYS

A special feature of Greater Ballysillan is its extensive network of rivers flowing from the Belfast Hills through the area on their way to the River Lagan.

Unfortunately many are concealed underground through culverting and consequently, the rivers play little role in the lives of local people at present.

An excellent opportunity exists in the Greater Ballysillan area to establish a greenway network using its rivers and other natural features. Opening up access and implementing foot and cycle ways can help connect neighbourhoods in the area, whilst providing a recreational resource for locals and visitors alike.

5



Improving rivers and their associated wildlife habitats will also contribute to biodiversity, as well as the general quality of the local environment. The river network would also help to connect local people with nature, providing an invaluable resource for education.

River Greenways would also allow for the creation of new physical connections to surrounding neighbourhoods and areas.



## BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRE

Relatively few training and employment opportunities exist within the Greater Ballysillan area at present. Addressing this issue should take two approaches.

Firstly, residents must be equipped to connect with jobs wherever they are located, be they within Ballysillan or more likely North Belfast or the City as a whole. This will require the provision of training that targets key groups and skill needs.

5



Secondly, businesses must be encouraged to grow locally, be they new or existing. This will require support through advice, mentoring and networking.

These dual approaches may in time warrant the development of a business incubation centre for Greater Ballysillan. This would provide a centralised facility for training and the growth of businesses, linked with local schools, colleges and other business centres.



## COORDINATED SPORTS PROGRAMME

Sports provide an excellent means by which to improve levels of fitness and well-being, as well as growing a local sense of community and pride. Greater Ballysillan has a number of active sports clubs, as well as increasingly good facilities centred mostly at the leisure centre and playing fields. Yet often these operate in relative isolation of one another and some would benefit from high numbers of participants.

A strategic coordination of sports across Ballysillan would help to maximise the impact these assets have on the population by connecting clubs, groups and individuals.

Centralising information about different clubs, facilities and events would help people to avail of sporting opportunities in the area.

Connecting sports clubs more effectively with local schools, youth groups and other organisations would increase interest and accessibility. And sharing of expertise, training programmes and other resources would enable the area's different clubs and groups to support one another and grow.





## SIGNAGE STRATEGY

5

Helping people to find their way around Greater Ballysillan by foot and cycle, as well as to learn about its heritage and culture should be achieved through a strategic approach to signage.

There is currently very little pedestrian level signage across the area, be it along streets or within spaces such as the playing fields. Well planned and designed signage systems can very effectively connect places and people together. They can also help influence people's decisions to walk and to explore the area.

The natural and cultural heritage of Greater Ballysillan is something of a secret to many. Yet appropriately designed and positioned interpretative signage could help to bring this urban landscape alive through the sharing of information and stories. Industrial heritage, natural features or Ulster Scots culture for example, are all important facets to the local identity of the area.

A coordinated network of signs and public art would therefore provide an educational resource, as well as an attraction to visitors.



## ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF INTERFACES

In the 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy, the Northern Ireland Executive made a commitment to remove interface barriers by 2023.

As a headline action in that Strategy, we will work with local people and other stakeholders to address the challenges of interface walls in Urban Village areas as appropriate in each place. Clearly this is not a simple task and fulfilling such an objective must be carefully undertaken.

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Work could also be undertaken to address non-physical barriers that exist between neighbourhoods, in keeping with Urban Village's three aims of fostering positive identities, building community capacity and improving the physical environment.

5

# BEACONS

5

NEIGHBOURHOOD  
CENTRES AND PARKS



NEW  
BALLYSILLAN PARK





REVITALISED LEISURE  
PROVISION



CARR'S GLEN AND OUTDOOR  
ACTIVITY CENTRE



## NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES AND PARKS

Greater Ballysillan has a network of community buildings, churches, small shopping areas and outdoor spaces that together form important centres to their surrounding neighbourhoods.

Given the fragmented nature of the local area, it is important that such spaces are used to their full potential and that they adequately meet the needs of the local population.

A strategic assessment of all neighbourhood spaces in Greater Ballysillan would help to ascertain the role they play now and in the future.

This would also provide valuable information on the facilities currently available, which should be shared and promoted locally.

Where important neighbourhood buildings and spaces are in poor condition, investment will be needed to bring about repair, renovation and/or extensions making them more fit for purpose.







## NEW BALLYSILLAN PARK

The Ballysillan Playing Fields featured prominently during the process to compile this Strategic Framework. That is because they are a large, centrally located resource with relevance to many, if not all of the various neighbourhoods and communities that comprise Greater Ballysillan and beyond.

Consultation with local residents revealed a strong desire to see this space improved and a host of creative and practical ideas for its future use.

To make the most of this potential and the importance of the park to so many different groups, a strategic plan will be required.

This should be compiled through a highly collaborative process allowing the park's many stakeholders to participate. This would then enable a series of actions to be identified for delivering in line with available resources.

## REVITALISED LEISURE PROVISION

Considerations are underway regarding the future of Ballysillan Leisure Centre as part of wide review across the City. This process will require an energetic and constructive dialogue amongst the local community and other stakeholders to ensure the future of the centre is aligned with the vision local residents have for Greater Ballysillan.

Underpinning the viability of the centre through increased usage and a wider catchment area to surrounding neighbourhoods will be an important part of this process.

5



There may also be a need to explore specialisation of this facility, so that it complements rather than duplicates services offered by other leisure centres in the North and West of the City.



## CARR'S GLEN AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITY CENTRE

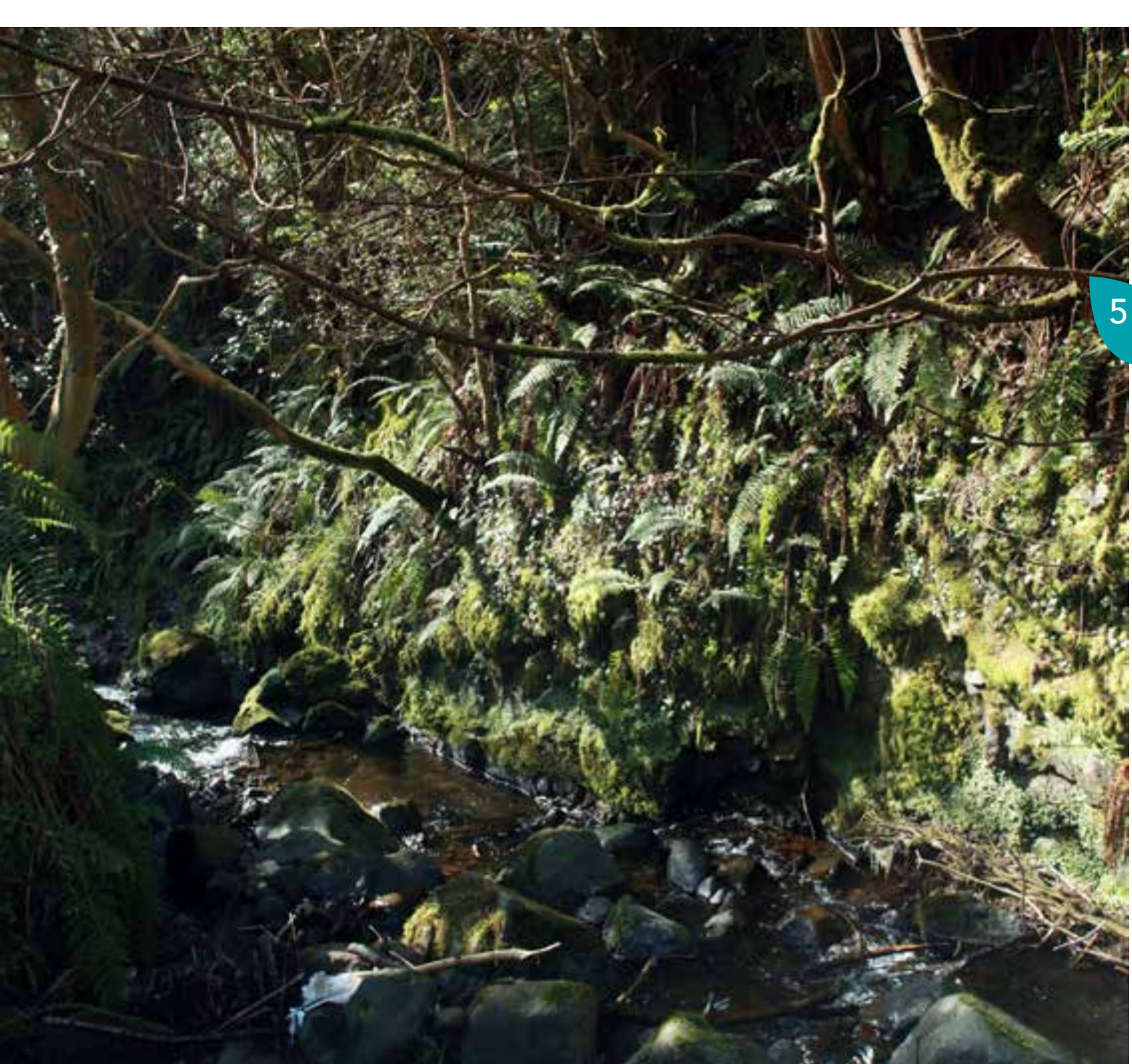
Greater Ballysillan is fortunate to be positioned at the foot of the Belfast Hills, with abundant views from many locations. The key point of physical access to the hills is Carr's Glen which meets the Ballysillan Road alongside Boys Model School.

Significant potential exists to improve the ability of local people to access the Glen and the Hills beyond.

The concept of an Outdoor Activity Centre was highlighted in the Greater Ballysillan Masterplan and requires further exploration.

This facility could provide a point at which to connect people from the Urban Village area and wider North Belfast with the opportunities afforded by its proximity to the Belfast Hills.

The centre would be a venue for training and facilitation of events and excursions. A broad range of potential activities could be included such as mountaineering, rock climbing, mountain biking and orienteering.



# TRANSFORMATION

5

TARGETING  
DERELICTION



MEANWHILE  
USES



STREET  
DEVELOPMENT





CENTRE OF  
CREATIVITY



SCHOOLS COLLABORATION  
AND SHARING



NEW AND UPGRADED  
HOUSING



## TARGETING DERELICTION

5

Several prominent cases of derelict and/or vacant buildings, as well as tracts of undeveloped land play a negative part in people's association and affinity with the local area.

This impacts upon residents young and old, as well as the perceptions of those from outside the area who may be passing through.

It is critical for Greater Ballysillan, therefore, that every effort is made to eradicate the blight caused by such buildings and spaces.

Removing derelict buildings, improving their appearance in the short term and finding long term development solutions are all practical steps to fulfilling this objective.





## MEANWHILE USES

Bringing spaces and buildings into use in the short term can help to animate Greater Ballysillan in physical, social and economic terms.

Through partnership with local residents and other organisations, efforts are required to find sustainable uses for empty shop units, long term development sites, under used public spaces and 'left over' pieces of land.

The range of potential meanwhile uses is extensive, including small shops or cafes, community gardens, play or sports facilities, outdoor classrooms or art galleries.

Key to the success of such initiatives will lie in a thorough process of engagement and facilitation with local people to find local ideas that are relevant to the community.

5



## STREET DEVELOPMENT

Streets are a critical and often overlooked component of our urban areas. In addition to serving as movement routes for people and cars, they provide civic space and the setting for buildings and facilities.

A number of prominent street locations across Greater Ballysillan would benefit greatly from public realm enhancements. The projects must be carefully tailored to suit the needs of the area and its existing physical characteristics.

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New surfacing, lighting, street furniture and trees help to improve visual quality, accessibility for all users and safety after dark. Streetscape projects are also proven to attract complimentary investment in properties nearby.

As per the Masterplan, the provision of centrally located facilities, including better shops, places of business and civic space would help to establish a recognisable centre to Greater Ballysillan, contributing to community cohesion.

Through future works planned to the park, to the former Lidl site, to Ballysillan Leisure Centre and potentially to Mercy College, the fulfilment of this concept along Ballysillan Road should be coordinated and actively pursued.



## CENTRE OF CREATIVITY

Community events including those organised to help shape this Framework have given a snapshot of the creativity that exists within the local community.

Through coordination and focussed endeavour, the arts can be harnessed to bring communities together, provide opportunities to acquire new skills and create space for personal expression.

This does not solely relate to young people, but to the wider community of people in Greater Ballysillan.

The creative arts have significant potential to positively contribute to the regeneration of Greater Ballysillan and the North Belfast Urban Village area.



## SCHOOLS COLLABORATION AND SHARING

The Greater Ballysillan area is home to five primary schools and three secondary schools, with several more nearby. They each play a very important role in their respective neighbourhoods and beyond, providing education for young people and often adults as well.

Significant potential exists for these schools to grow the working relationships they have with one another. Shared teachings, spaces and other initiatives can help to pool resources and build connections. New physical premises are also a possibility for the area.

Plans exist for an educational campus at the former St Gabriel's school site. Whilst this is primarily aimed at the Catholic Maintained Sector, it provides excellent opportunities for connections to other nearby schools, not least Wheatfield Primary on its door step. Other shared spaces, be they buildings or outdoor facilities may also help to connect schools elsewhere in the area.



## NEW AND UPGRADED HOUSING

At the time of writing, a number of housing projects are either under construction or soon to begin in Greater Ballysillan. This reflects a steadily improving property market and also, the local determination to see problematic vacant land developed, as per the Masterplan.

To support the fulfilment of the vision for Greater Ballysillan, this continued progress must be proactively shaped to ensure the best possible outcomes for the local area.

5





This will include a high quality of urban design and careful planning, so that new housing contributes to creating “positive, healthy and welcoming” communities.

The quality of public space and connectivity with surrounding neighbourhoods will be particularly important in this regard.

Furthermore work is required to ensure that the existing stock of social housing is fit for purpose.

Older properties such as those found in Silverstream, Tyndale and Glenbank are in need of investment to improve their physical condition, energy efficiency and durability.





**URBAN  
VILLAGES**  
Thriving Places





# 06

## SUPPORTING DELIVERY

6

# JOINT STRATEGIC ACTIONS

6

COMMUNICATING A PLACE TO BE PROUD OF

FOCUSSED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

LEARNING AND SHARING OUR POSITIVE STORY

LISTENING AND COLLABORATING WITH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

CREATING POSITIVE PLACES

PROMOTING FURTHER COLLABORATION AND SHARING

LINKING TO LOCAL AND WIDER EMPLOYMENT

IMPROVING ACCESS TO SURROUNDING SPORT AND LEISURE FACILITIES

STRONGER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CORRIDORS

ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF INTERFACES

PLACES TO MEET, SHARE INFORMATION AND OPPORTUNITIES

BEAUTIFUL LANDMARK BUILDINGS AND PLACES

INSPIRING LOCAL PEOPLE

MAKING PLACES FEEL AND BE SAFER

LESS LITTER AND GRAFFITI, MORE PARKS AND TREES

WELCOMING POINTS OF ARRIVAL

GREATER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

FIRST CLASS EDUCATION

A MIX OF GOOD NEW HOMES

## ARDOYNE & MARROWBONE

COHESION



CONNECTION



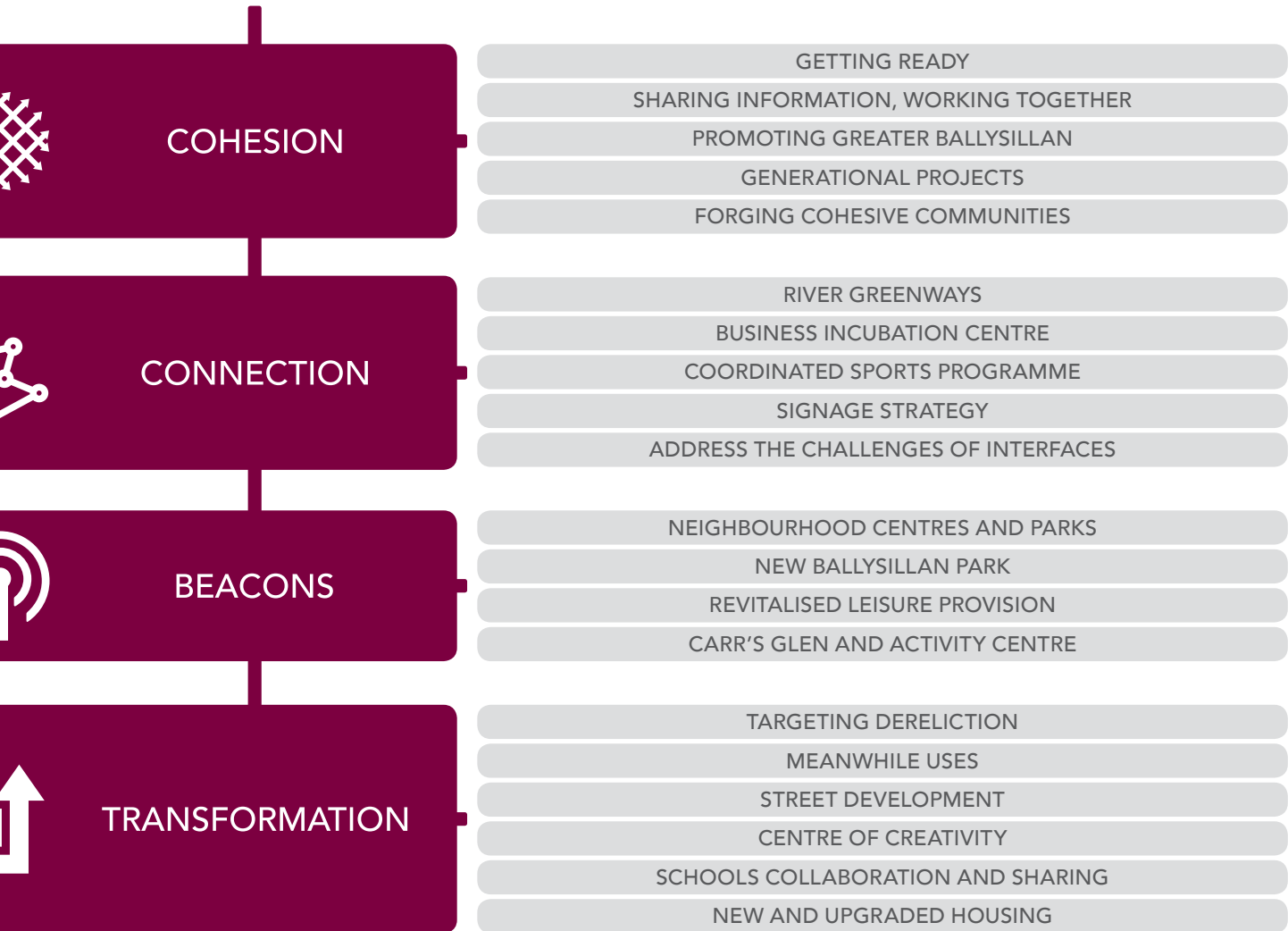
BEACONS



TRANSFORMATION



# GREATER BALLYSILLAN



# STRATEGIC ACTIONS

6

## STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

The Urban Villages Initiative is a headline action within the Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy. It is led by the Executive Office with the support of senior representatives from other government departments alongside Belfast City Council.

This Strategic Framework is intended to be a useful point of reference for anyone with an interest in the Urban Village areas and a means for identifying opportunities to collaborate around shared Programme for Government outcomes and indicators.

## ROUTES TO DELIVERY

Although coordinated by the Executive Office, and overseen by Junior Ministers, capital and revenue investments made directly through the Urban Villages Initiative will be led and managed by organisations that best suit the particular project or programme.

This means that work on parks, public realm projects and other physical interventions is likely to be led by the Council, the Department for Communities, NI Housing Executive or the Department for Infrastructure.

Support will be provided to projects and programmes in keeping with the good relations outcomes of the Urban Villages Initiative. We will draw from the most appropriate delivery partners including central and local government and community and voluntary groups.

Activity more focussed on community capacity building, cultural innovation and positive identities will be delivered by community and voluntary groups to maximise local networks and connections or through central or local government.





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