

Sandy Row, Donegall Pass
& the Markets

SOUTH BELFAST



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



August 2016

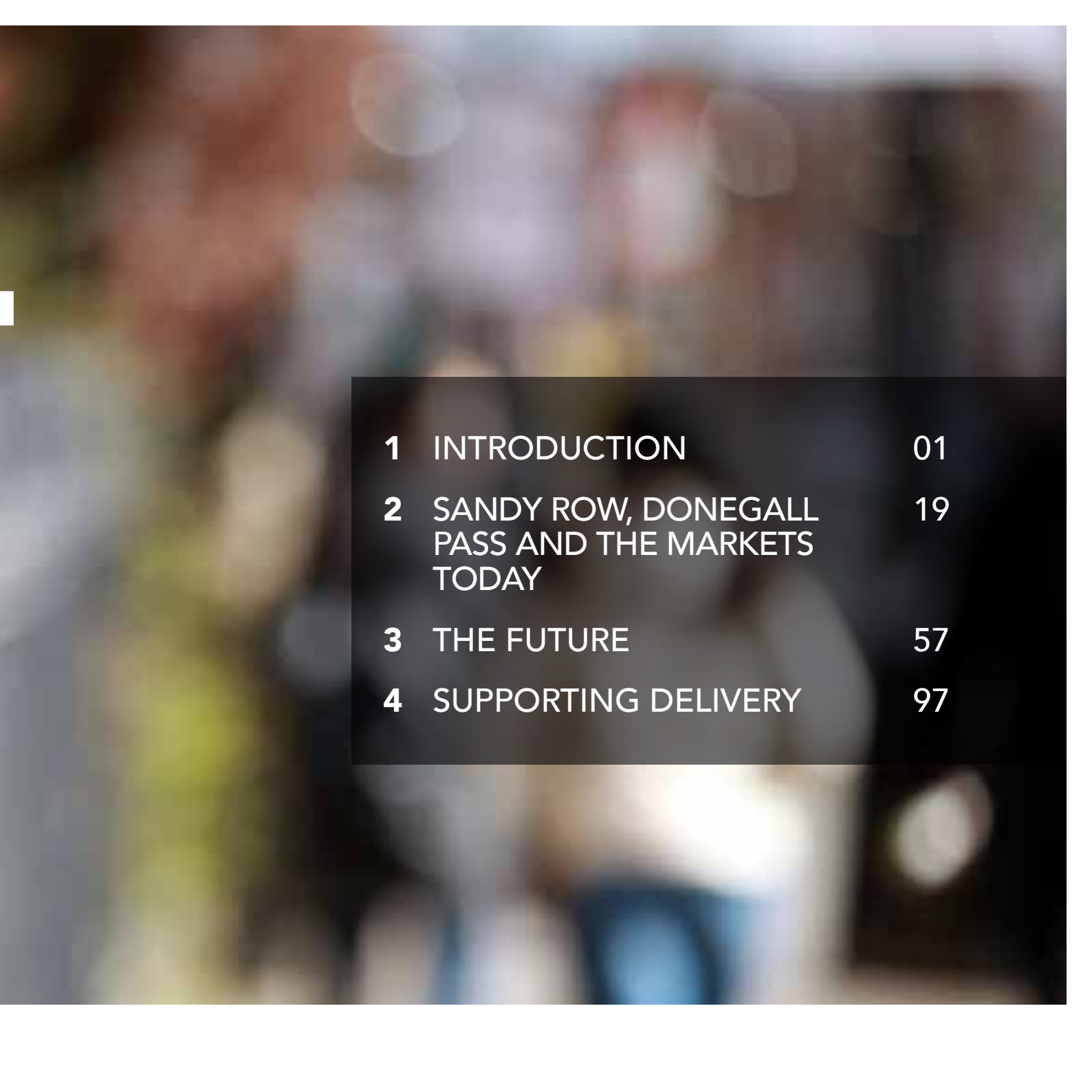
SOUTH BELFAST

URBAN VILLAGES INITIATIVE



The
Executive Office

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk



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URBAN VILLAGES

Thriving Places





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 South Belfast 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.

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

Section 3 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 4 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:

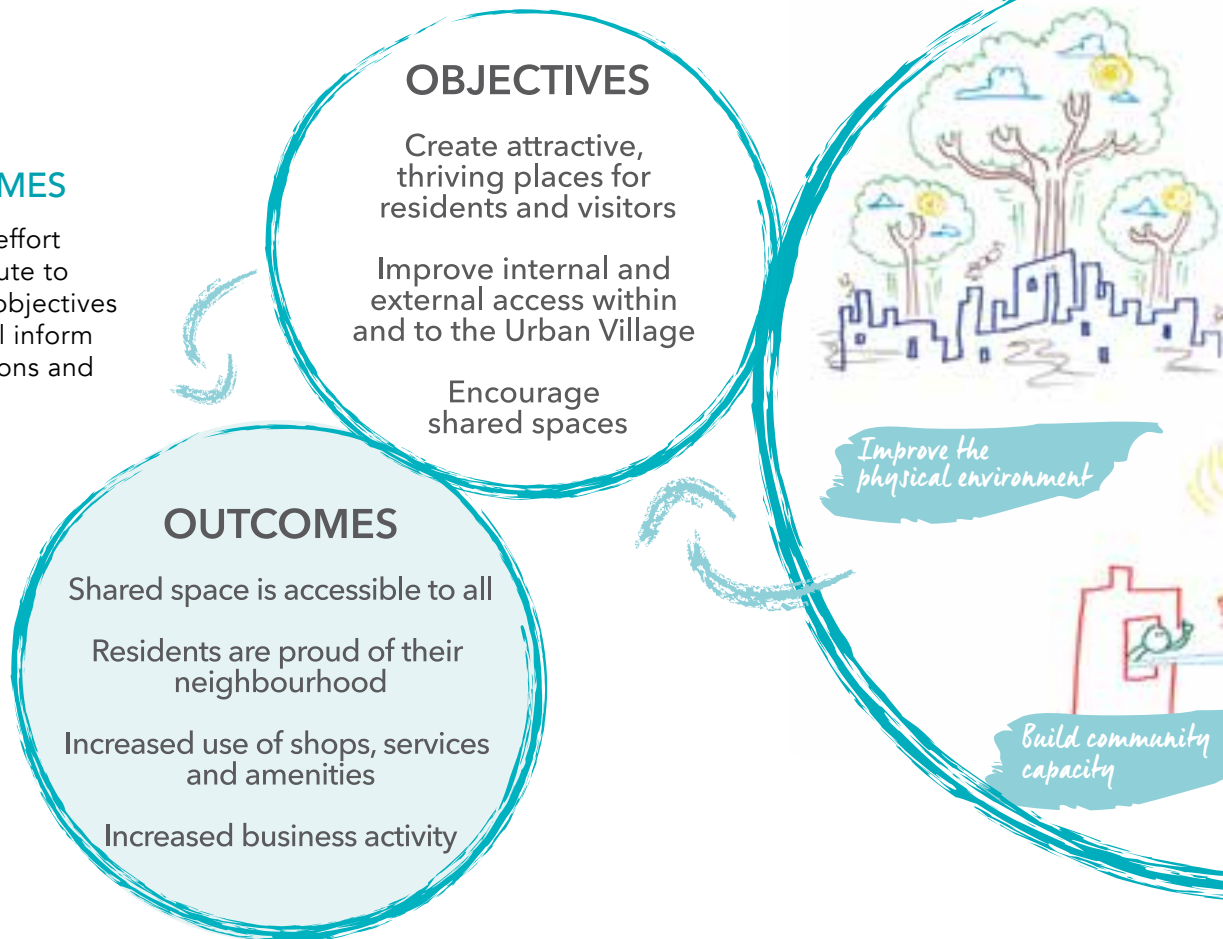
- co-ordinating and aligning effort across Government Departments, local Councils and community organisations to deliver good relations outcomes
- identifying and building on what is working because sustainable change requires investment in social (people and communities) and in physical assets
- exploring 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

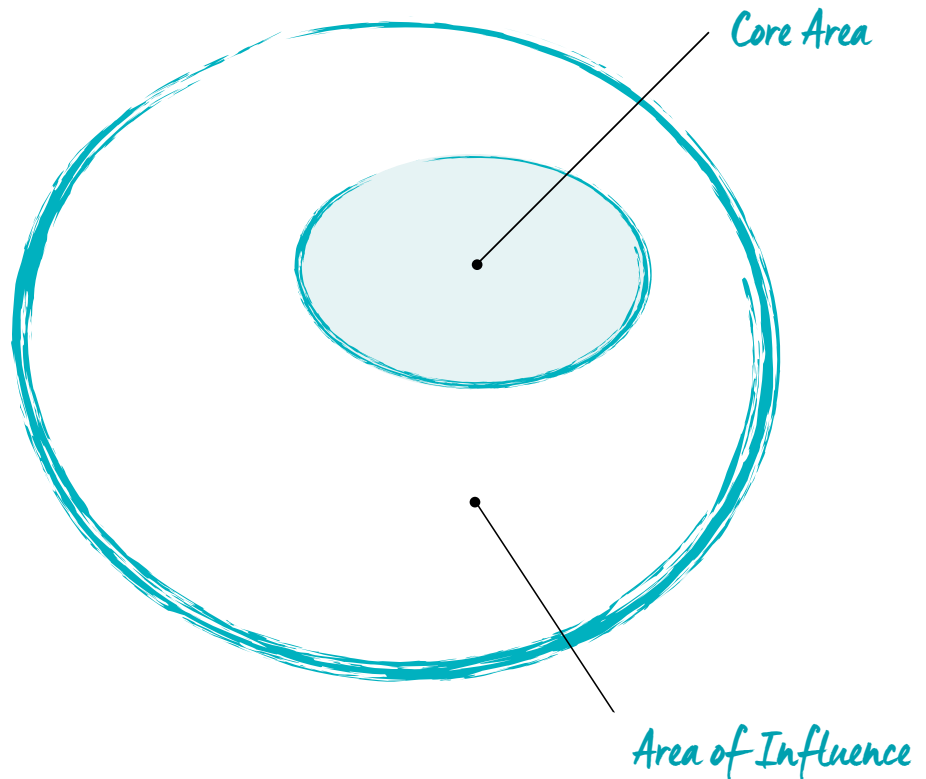


PLACES

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.



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.

Transform Neighbourhoods

- Enhance and upgrade the area
- Address vacancy and dereliction
- Improve and increase green open spaces, linking them together
- Improve lighting
- Address imbalance of traffic and parking impacts on communities

Connectivity (People & Place)

- Improve access to facilities, services and activities for children and youth
- Maximise connections to city centre, proposed Transport Hub and River Lagan
- Harness community voice to influence and respond to opportunities

Enterprising Communities

- Support local business, entrepreneurship and social enterprise ventures
- Improve access to employment opportunities
- Attract and influence investment
- Harness tourism and heritage opportunities

Community Well-being

- Improve health, happiness & well-being
- Build trust and relationships

INTRODUCING THE PLACE

1





The core area is made up of three distinct neighbourhoods - Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets, situated on the edge of the city centre, yet separated by roads and dereliction / vacant sites. The railway severs the area from the surrounding areas to the south, east and west although this puts four train stations within easy reach.

METHODOLOGY

1

The process 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.

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.

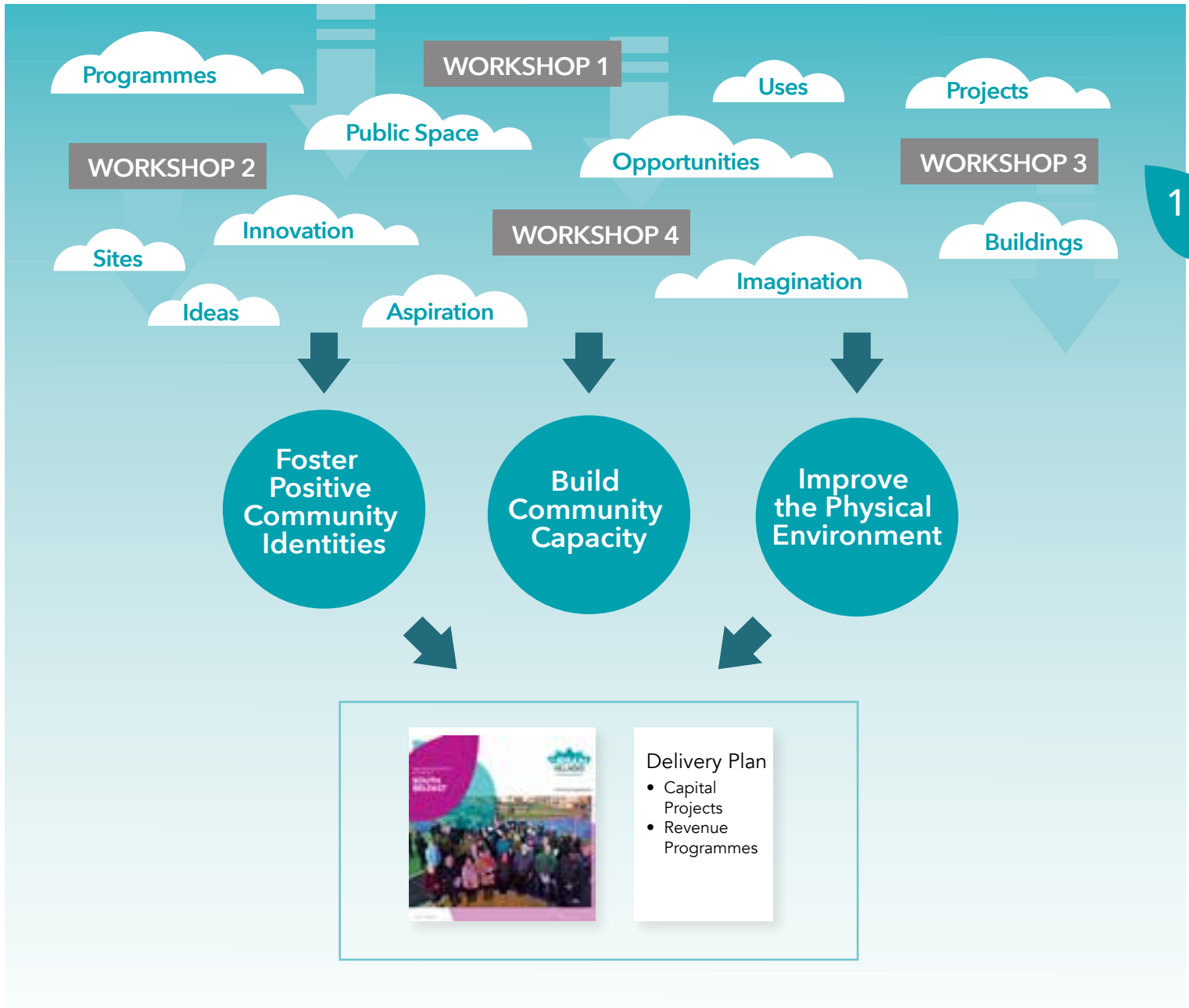
The findings from each stage help to ensure this Framework is specific to the place and people. It seeks to build on what is working and will continue to progress positive change to bring about real transformation, whilst significantly improving the living environment and area.

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.

Workshop 1 Discovering our own strengths and *Workshop 2 Discovering seeds of success* were held in each neighbourhood followed by *Workshop 3 Explore the potential... visiting the neighbours*. Through the engagement process we explored what people like about their area, identified what's working well and looked at potential to create new possibilities and opportunities. *Workshop 4 Presenting the future* culminated in showing the findings, testing some of the emerging ideas and getting feedback on Strategic Actions and ideas for future projects.

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.



1

IN PARALLEL

Over 100 meetings were held with stakeholders from the public, private and community sectors. The purpose of these meetings was to understand the existing context, ongoing and potential projects and to jointly identify opportunities for the Strategic Framework to consider.

Youth and children's workshops were coordinated which provided invaluable information in determining what local young people like and dislike about the area and the type of place they would like in the future.

Local businesses were surveyed, which provided an understanding of the current trading environment and identified ways in which the business community could be strengthened and supported through the strategy.

Community events, started in December 2015 and ran through until the end of March 2016, presented excellent opportunities to bring people together and gather further feedback and participation.

Creative programmes with community groups have been positively received, reinforcing the contribution that the arts can make to this area of the city and demonstrating its potential for the future.



STREET SOCIETY



WORKSHOP EVENTS



DIGITAL SOUTH
EVENT



COMMUNITY LED
EVENTS



BUSINESS SURVEY
RETURNS



CONSULTATION
MEETINGS

STREET SOCIETY

An intense one week 'Street Society' programme was conducted by Queen's University Belfast.

This involved three groups of architecture and planning students developing ideas for community groups throughout the study area, and three projects by architecture and planning teams and seven acoustic teams of sound students that worked in parallel throughout the area. Proposals emerging from this exercise helped community groups look at potential opportunities as well as informing the Strategic Framework.

Gilpins

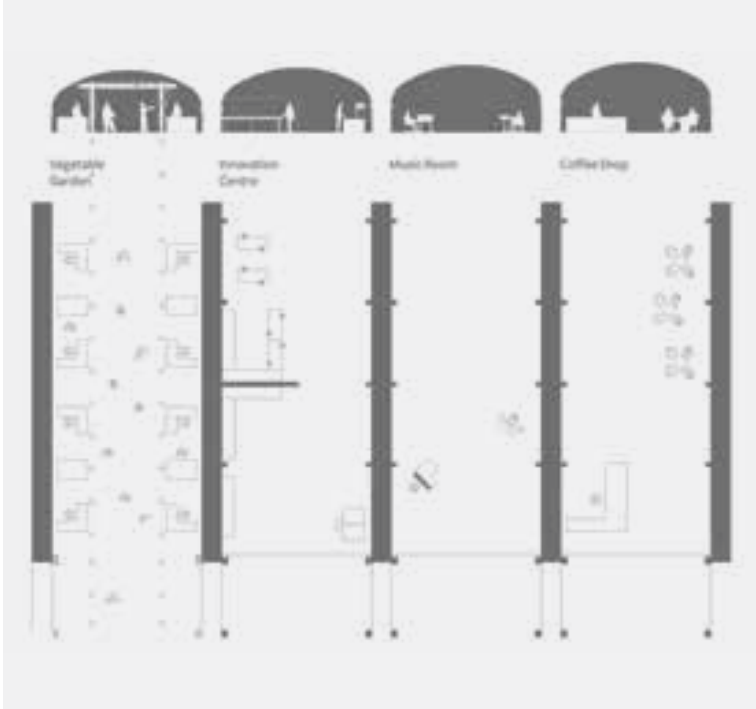
students proposed a micro brewery as an anchor, reflecting the history whilst looking to future economic generators including studio / enterprise / office space focused around a flexible public open space. A phased approach was considered which could be refined, using the front block in the short term to generate income, whilst refurbishing the historic buildings to the rear.

Markets Arches

students proposed innovative units supportive of the creative arts as well as local entrepreneurs in need of a central hub to operate from. Tunnel five also reclaims some local history, reopening a passage beneath the bridge brought to life as a vegetative walkway for the community reflecting the former market trades.

From woods to gardens

students proposed a variety of greening initiatives to increase biodiversity and reflect diverse cultural identities. Ideas included the expansion of community gardens reach and incorporate kitchen facilities, potential for an urban farm, meditation garden, rain gardens, vegetation walls, entrance features, trees and planting.





**URBAN
VILLAGES**
Thriving Places



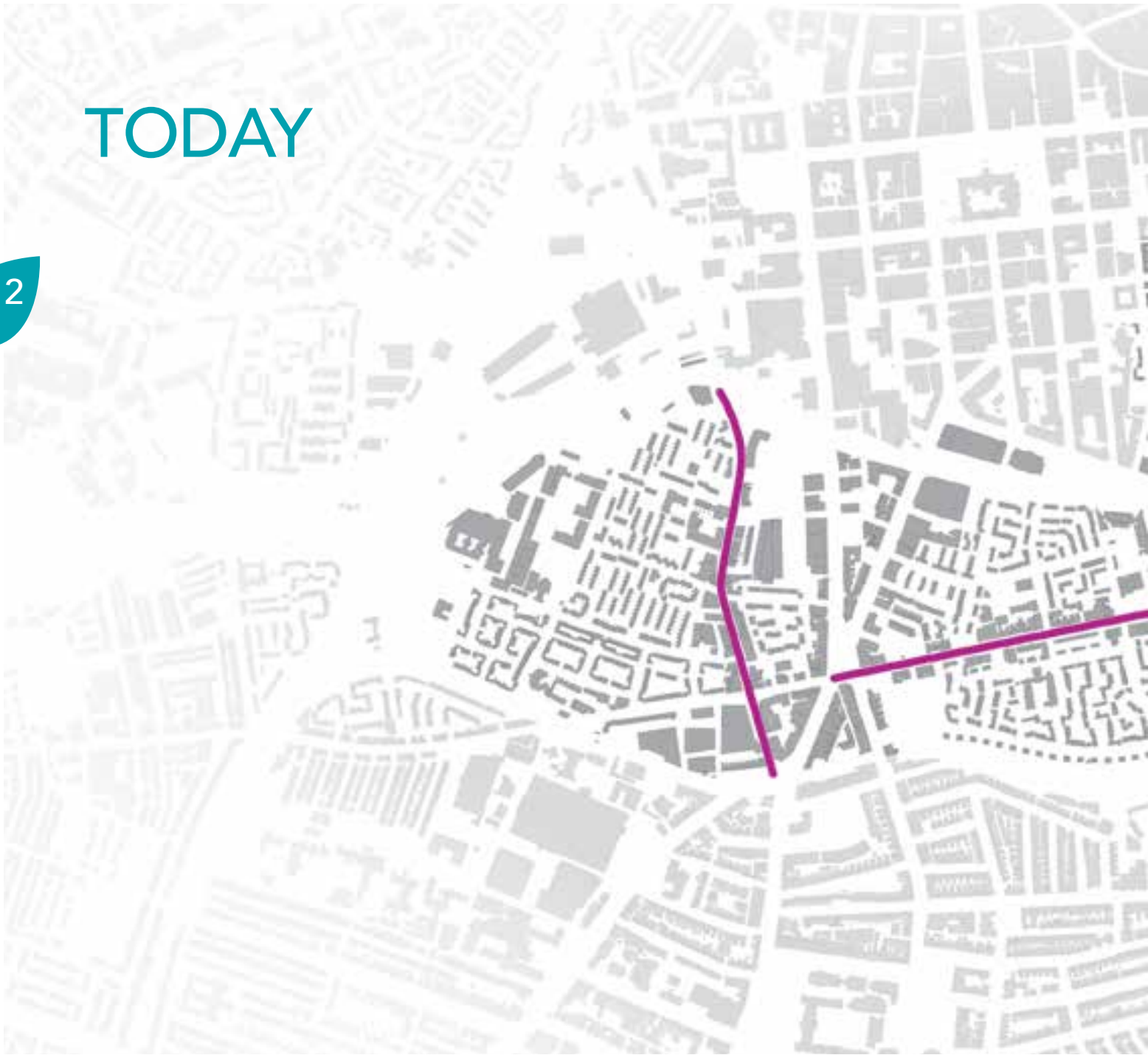


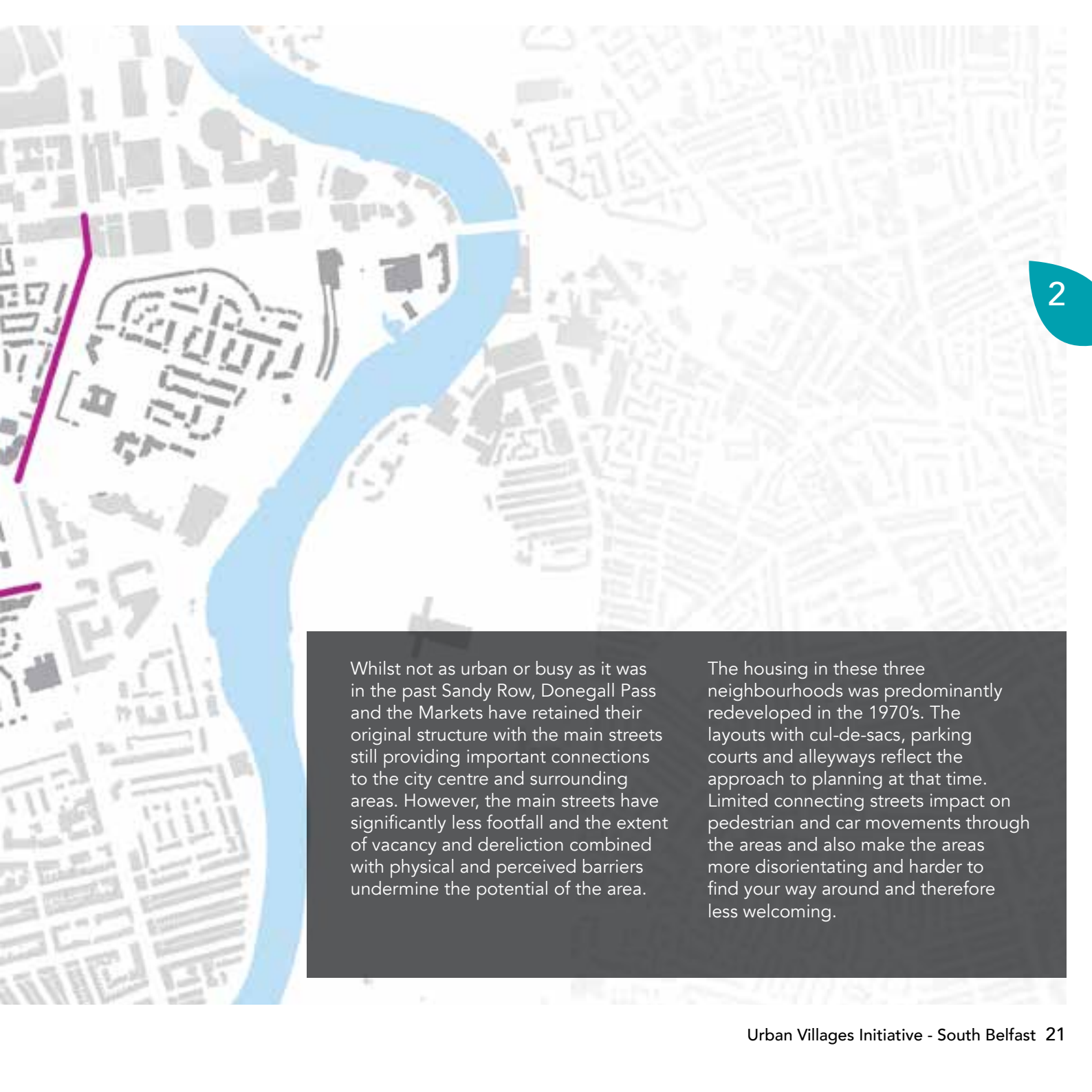
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SANDY ROW,
DONEGALL PASS AND
THE MARKETS TODAY

TODAY

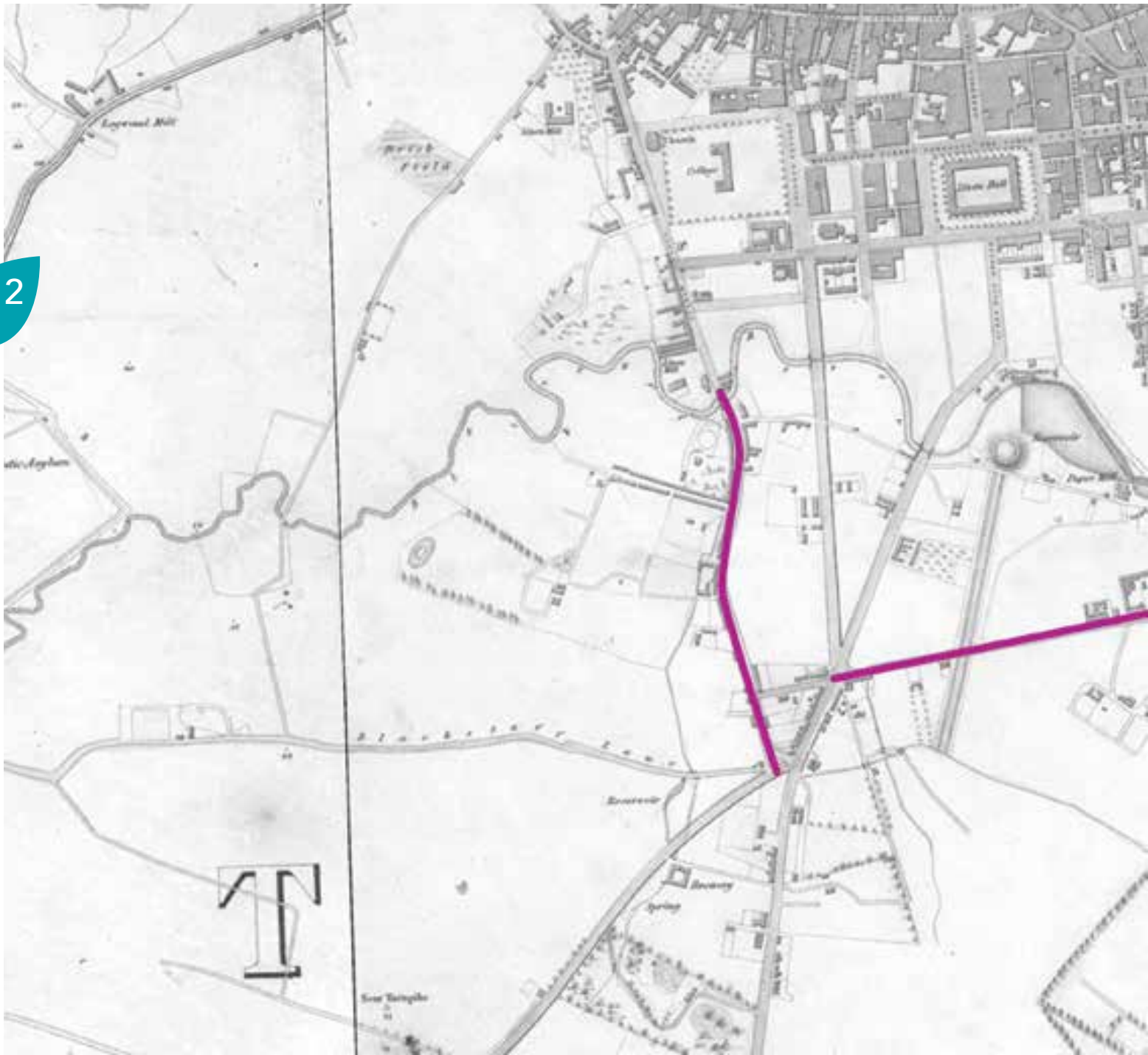
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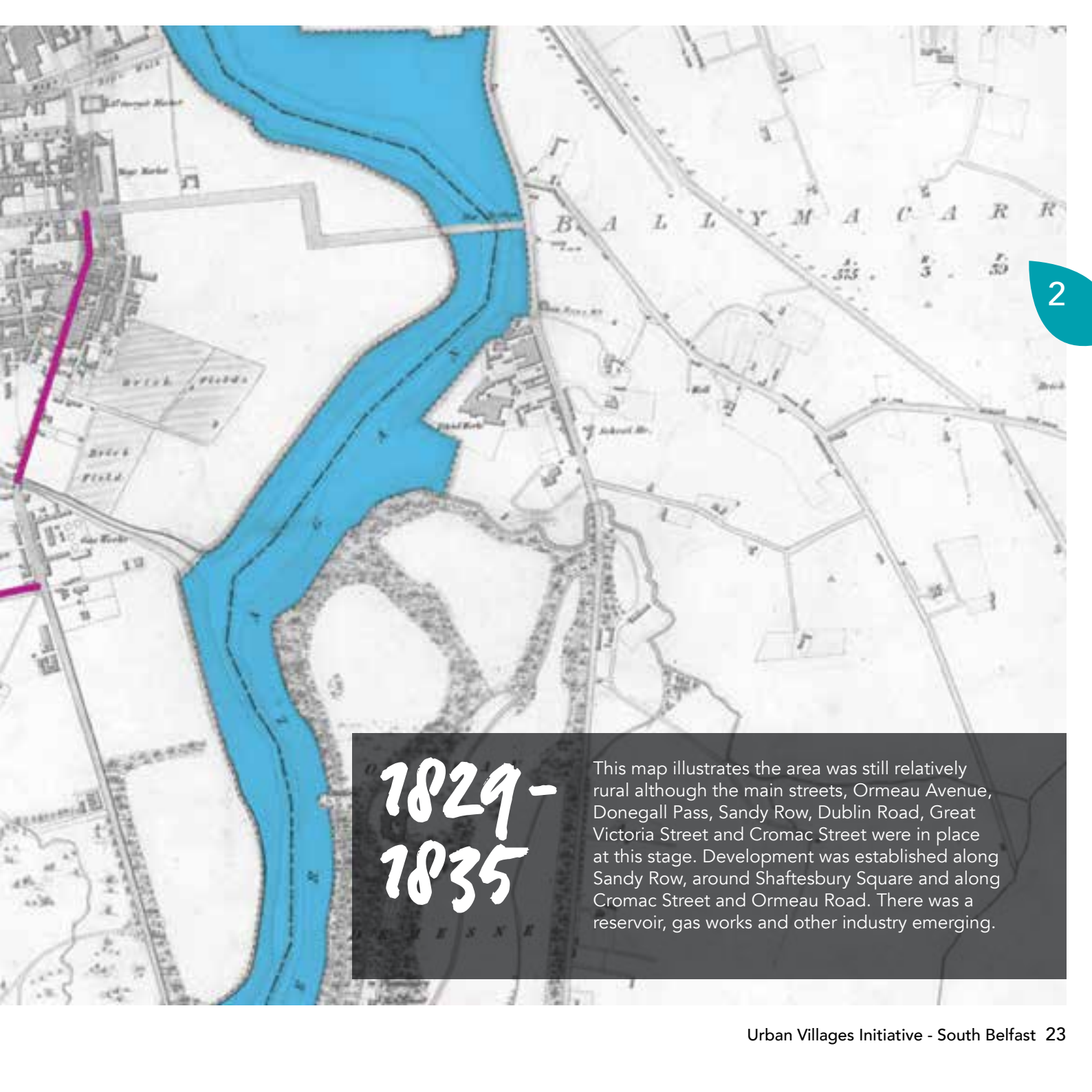


Whilst not as urban or busy as it was in the past Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets have retained their original structure with the main streets still providing important connections to the city centre and surrounding areas. However, the main streets have significantly less footfall and the extent of vacancy and dereliction combined with physical and perceived barriers undermine the potential of the area.

The housing in these three neighbourhoods was predominantly redeveloped in the 1970's. The layouts with cul-de-sacs, parking courts and alleyways reflect the approach to planning at that time. Limited connecting streets impact on pedestrian and car movements through the areas and also make the areas more disorientating and harder to find your way around and therefore less welcoming.

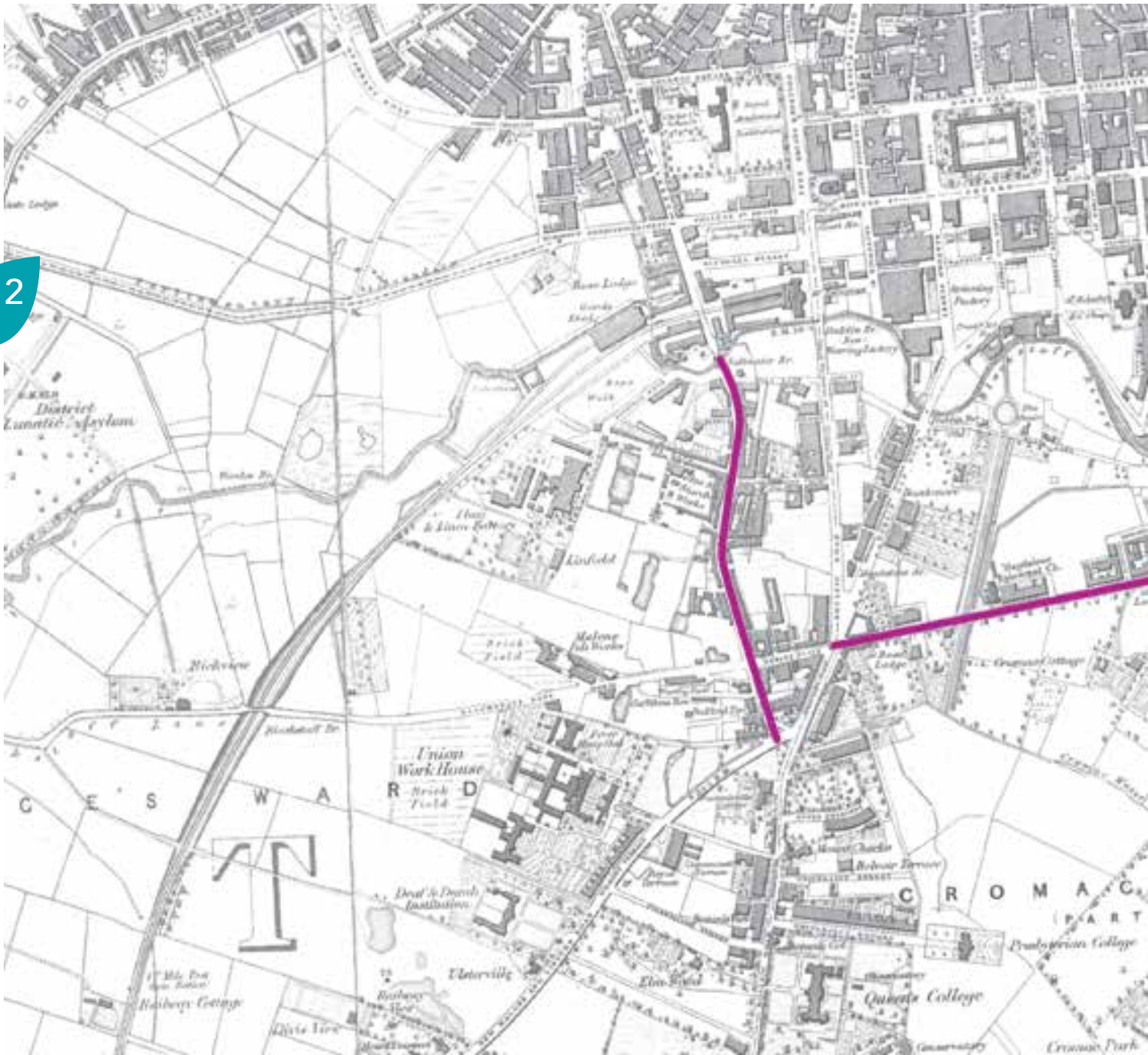


22 Urban Villages Initiative - South Belfast



1829-
1835

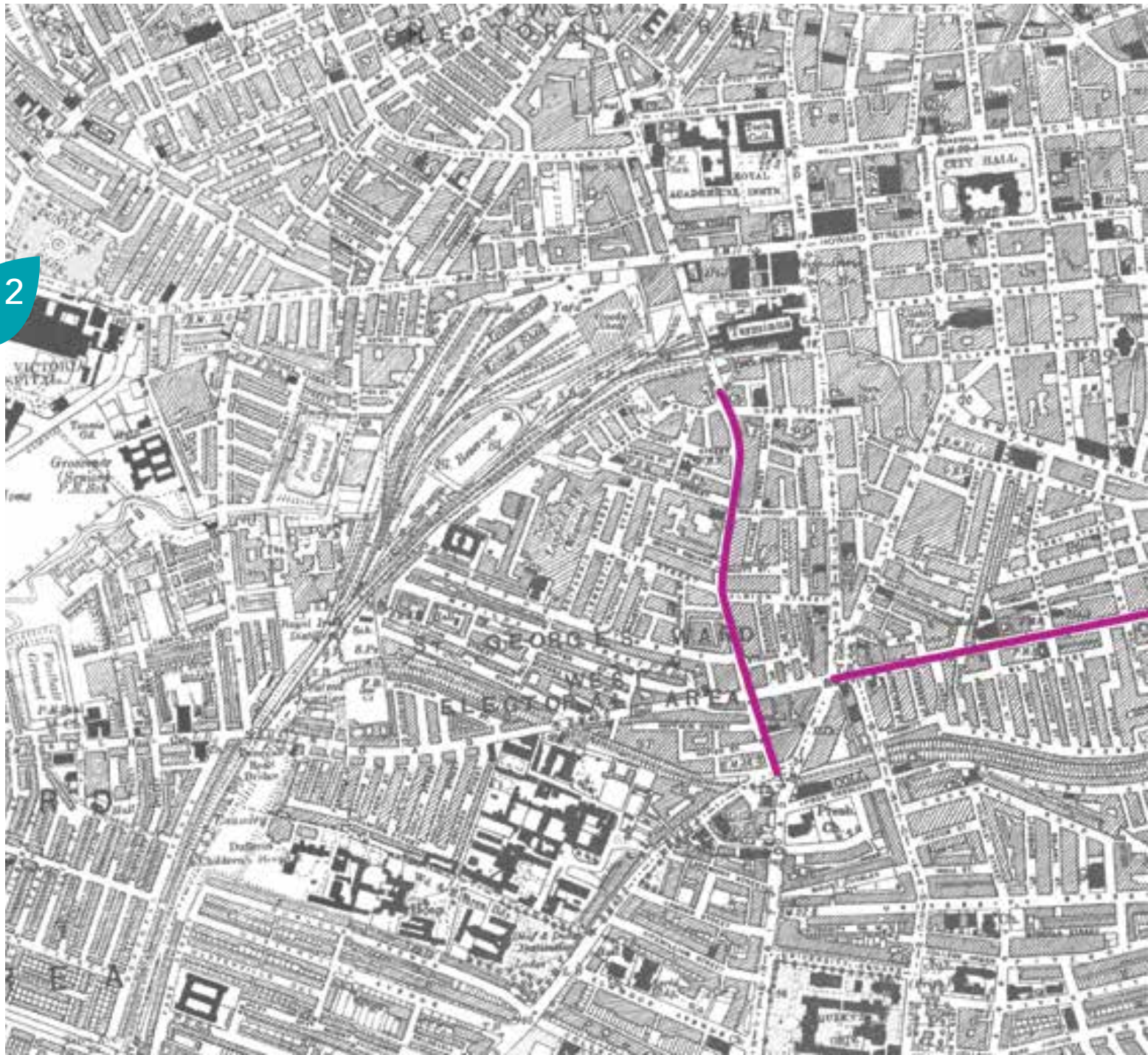
This map illustrates the area was still relatively rural although the main streets, Ormeau Avenue, Donegall Pass, Sandy Row, Dublin Road, Great Victoria Street and Cromac Street were in place at this stage. Development was established along Sandy Row, around Shaftesbury Square and along Cromac Street and Ormeau Road. There was a reservoir, gas works and other industry emerging.





1831-
1904

There is increased development in the area including foundries, factories, mills, churches, lodges and terraced housing.



A detailed historical map of South Belfast, Ireland, showing the railway line and dense urban development. The railway line is highlighted in blue, running through the city. The map shows a dense grid of streets and buildings, with a large area of terraced houses and industrial buildings. The railway line is shown as a prominent feature, cutting through the urban fabric. The map is labeled with various streets and landmarks, including 'MAY'S MOUNT', 'MARKET', 'Aids Works', 'Castell Lock & Weir', 'Fountain', 'Orchard Ground', 'Beverhill Fresh Ch.', 'Dalrymple', and 'Widdowson House'. The map is dated 1901-1964.

1901-
1964

The railway was built through the area along with significant dense development. The markets were located on both sides of East Bridge Street. Dense urban street patterns are evident with rows of terraced houses positioned alongside industrial buildings, in a bustling part of the city. The urban form of the area remained relatively unchanged until the redevelopment by the Housing Executive in the 1970's.

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

STRATEGIC LOCATION



CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TRADITION



ARCHITECTURAL
HERITAGE



COMMUNITY SPIRIT,
FRIENDSHIP AND LOYALTY



INVESTMENTS







STRATEGIC LOCATION

Situated beside the city centre, just minutes walk from City Hall, the area has a strategic location at a city and regional scale. The neighbourhoods of Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and The Markets are wrapped around the city centre with all the facilities including: retail, recreation, arts, culture, leisure, civic, administration, businesses, health and education, in very close proximity.

To the south, east and west is the railway line with other neighbourhoods beyond. This wider area provides access to other amenities including the River Lagan, Botanic Gardens and Ormeau Park, Queen's University, Ulster Museum, Lyric, Crescent Arts Centre and the Botanic Avenue.

The Golden Mile links Queen's University to the City Centre, through Shaftesbury Square as an important city wide route for students, tourism and business.

Four train stations border the area: Central Station adjacent to the Markets area; Botanic Station close to Donegall Pass; City Hospital Station and Great Victoria bus and rail station beside Sandy Row. The proposed Transport Hub and subsequent changes to the other stations and introduction of the south Belfast Rapid Transit route have the potential to provide significant benefits and opportunities to the whole area.





CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TRADITION

The area and communities are steeped in cultural heritage and tradition.

The industrial and commercial activities included the cattle, horse, potato and vegetable, flax and fruit markets, gas works, flax and linen factories, weaving and spinning mills.

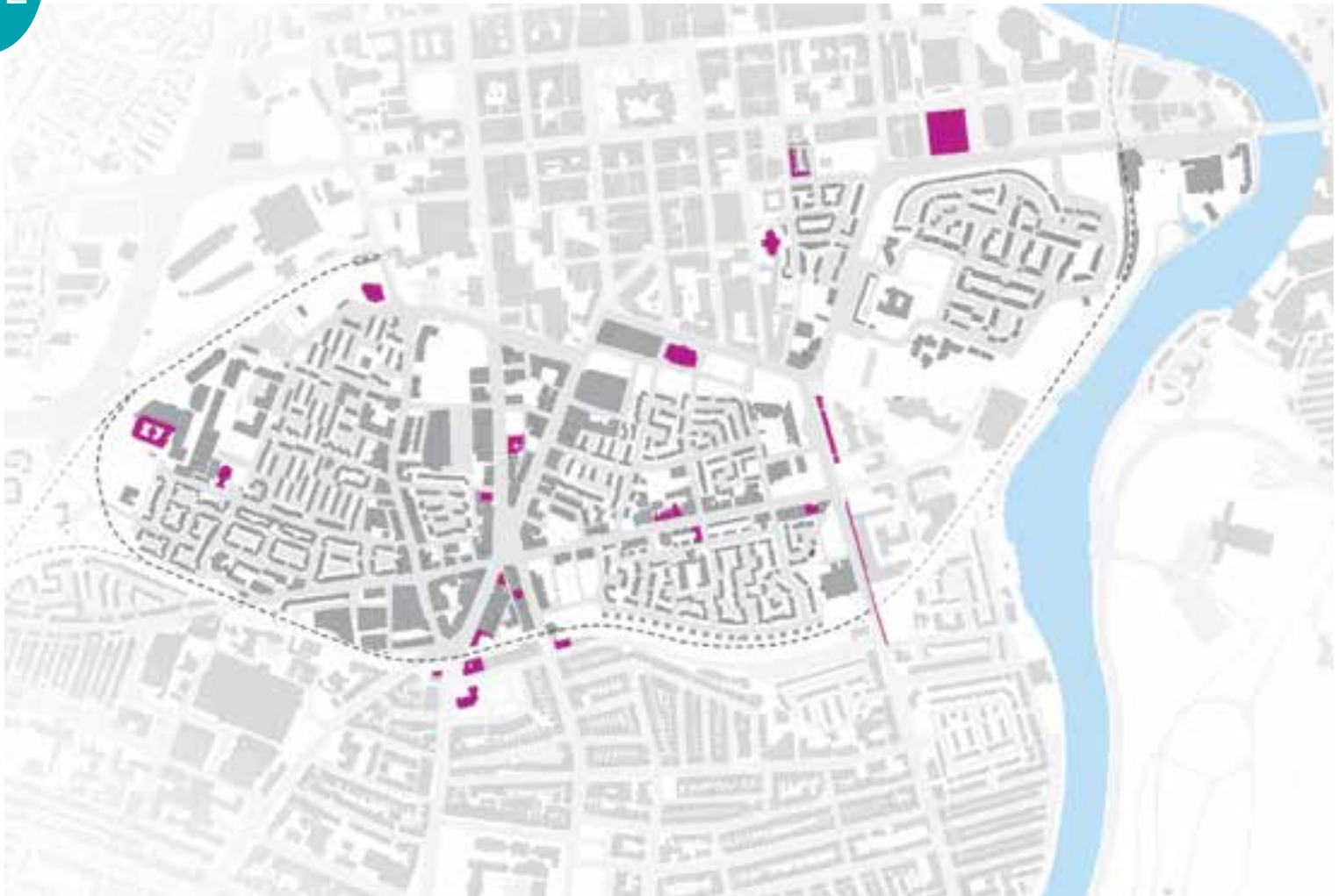
Housed in densely populated two and three storey terraces with limited conveniences workers had a strong sense of community in these bustling streets. There is a real need to respect good memories including the

contributions that remaining cultural and built heritage provide. There are reminders of this rich industrial and cultural heritage existing today including the mother, daughter sister sculpture. There are also many groups including music, history and photography groups that have very strong traditional cultures.

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

The architectural heritage is varied in quality and style. The listed buildings are limited and many of these buildings are in need of occupiers and intervention to reinstate their former appearance and the positive contribution they provide to the area.

In Donegall Pass listed buildings include a Georgian terrace, St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church, the former School of Music and the former Water Margin restaurant. There are also a few listed properties around Shaftesbury Square, Ormeau Baths and also Blythefield Primary School and St. Aidan's Church of Ireland on Blythe Street.



There are other buildings and structures that contribute to the built heritage although many of these are in poor condition including Gilpins on Sandy Row, Lanyon Tunnels, the former Police Station on Donegall Pass and some terraces on Donegall Pass, Cromac Street, Ormeau Avenue, Shaftesbury Square, Dublin Road and Great Victoria Street.



COMMUNITY SPIRIT, FRIENDSHIP AND LOYALTY

Through the engagement process we have gained an appreciation of the genuine community spirit throughout the neighbourhoods.

The qualities most valued were friendship, family and loyalty. The communities are recognised as being culturally diverse and this provides a colourful richness although not without challenges.

The existing programmes, activities and events that provide opportunities for people to come together, and the resilience and energy groups demonstrate, often with limited resources shows, the strengths that should be nurtured and encouraged to flourish more.



THE STRENGTH
OF THIS AREA
RESIDES IN
THE HEART
OF
THE
PEOPLE...



INVESTMENTS

Belfast City Council has recently invested in the children's play area in the Markets and the SureStart facility is currently on site. The Community Garden in Donegall Pass is flourishing due to financial investment from City Council and significant time and commitment invested by local volunteers.

Being on the edge of the city centre there are signs of investment being attracted here. Although there may be concerns about the scale and type of future developments being attracted to the area, there are significant benefits to be captured, provided these are harnessed and shaped.

2



The proposed Transport Hub along with other private development proposals and investments have the potential to provide catalysts for wider regeneration as well as potential contributions including training and employment opportunities.

The Urban Villages team worked in partnership with the Housing Executive (NIHE) on their Hope Street and Posnett Street sites. Working collaboratively on creative community engagement events gave people the opportunity to give their opinions towards shaping the future proposals for these sites. The recognition of the

additionality gained by the Urban Villages team working alongside NIHE and Belfast City Council has provided a firm basis for our ongoing collaborative work to achieve quality developments and meaningful community benefits.



CHALLENGES

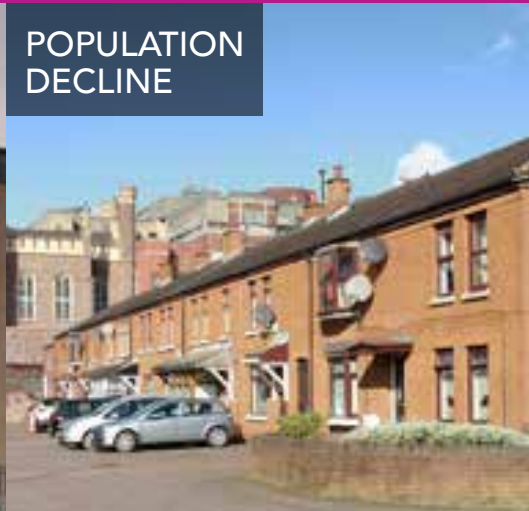
Across all three neighbourhoods the challenges are very similar which should not be a surprise given they are all on the edge of the city centre, were redeveloped in the same era and face the same economic context.

2

VACANCY AND DERELICT BUILDINGS AND SITES



POPULATION DECLINE



IMAGE



CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND UNEMPLOYMENT



BARRIERS AND SEVERANCE



PARKING

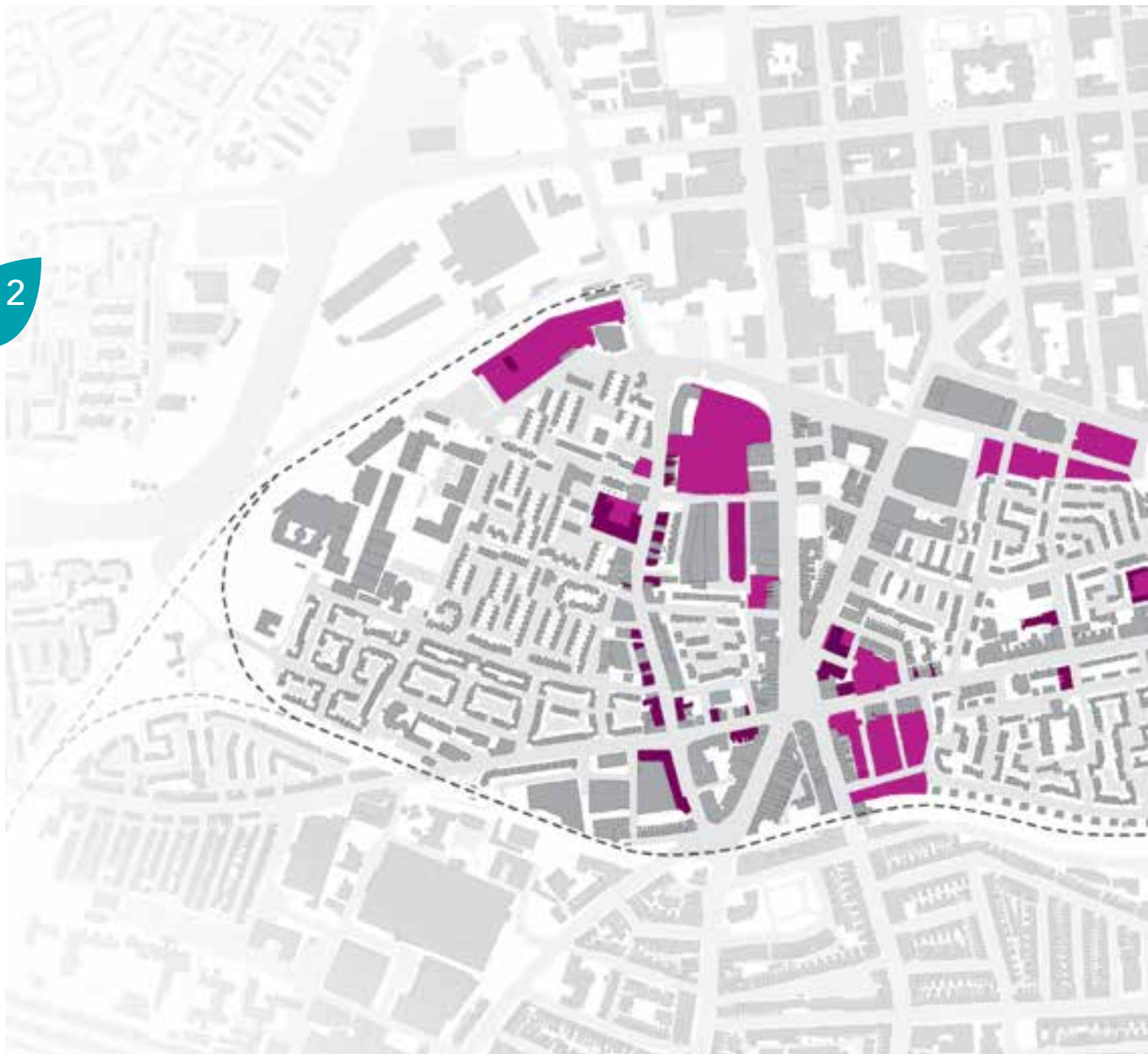


DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE



AMENITIES AND FACILITIES





VACANCY AND DERELICT BUILDINGS AND SITES

The number of vacant, underutilised and/or derelict buildings and cleared sites is a concerning characteristic. There are a number of reasons including the economic recession, reduced population in these areas and changes in shopping patterns. In addition, a significant part of this blight between the neighbourhoods and the city centre is caused by the long standing proposals for the inner ring

road by the Department for Infrastructure.

The size of the opportunity sites varies from small, vacant units to larger areas of under-utilised sites and they offer considerable development potential for the area. Re-occupying and redeveloping these buildings and sites is an urgent priority given the significant extent and prominent locations so close to the city centre.

POPULATION DECLINE

2

The redevelopment of the three neighbourhoods by the Housing Executive created vastly improved living conditions although this led to significantly less houses and therefore reduction in the population.

Also this was compounded by the 'Troubles', which resulted in many of the area's population leaving. Many families that remained experienced

significant challenges such as generational unemployment, social and economic disadvantage and poor health and well-being.

The low density of housing compounded by undeveloped sites has implications on the ability of the area to sustain crucial health, education and leisure services, in addition to shops and local businesses.



CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Addressing economic inactivity and unemployment, particularly for young people, by encouraging delivery of industry relevant and softer skills training whilst increasing access to sustainable job opportunities, will impact significantly on the social and economic well-being.

Retailing has changed considerably over the years with depopulation and the development of large shopping

centre complexes, many local retailers relocated elsewhere or ceased trading. Recently the retail pattern has become more reliant on online shopping with the economic downturn contributing to an even more challenging trading environment for local businesses.

The current economic climate is still weak although showing signs of developer and investor interest.

2



IMAGE

The image of the three neighbourhoods is challenging given the general appearance of the main streets, poor quality shopfronts and broken, dirty footpaths giving a poor impression.

The current lighting levels combined with the building materials make places feel dark and unwelcoming in the evenings. This is made worse by the number of broken fittings, closed up vacant buildings and cleared sites.

There are also murals, flags and bonfires that can be intimidating and impact on the image and perception of places.

There is significant opportunity to improve the areas' image and build a contemporary identity reflecting the rich heritage and culture of both traditional communities and the broad spectrum of new communities prevalent across South Belfast.



... but don't feel safe at night ...



BARRIERS AND SEVERANCE

Between the city centre and the three neighbourhoods there are busy roads and vacant sites causing barriers and unwelcoming places. In addition, there are congested roads between and through the neighbourhoods carving up the area. These make barriers that are physically hard to cross on foot and junctions that prohibit important traffic movements. This contributes to where people go to and the places they may stop and spend on the way.

Also the layout of the residential areas means there are dead ends

and alleyways that cause barriers and challenges.

The River Lagan and the railway line create barriers yet also provide connections. In addition, there are historically territorial boundaries between the three neighbourhoods. Although they are not physical barriers they do limit connectivity between and through the area.

Addressing the challenge of barriers and severance is critical and provides a significant opportunity that will benefit the whole area.

PARKING

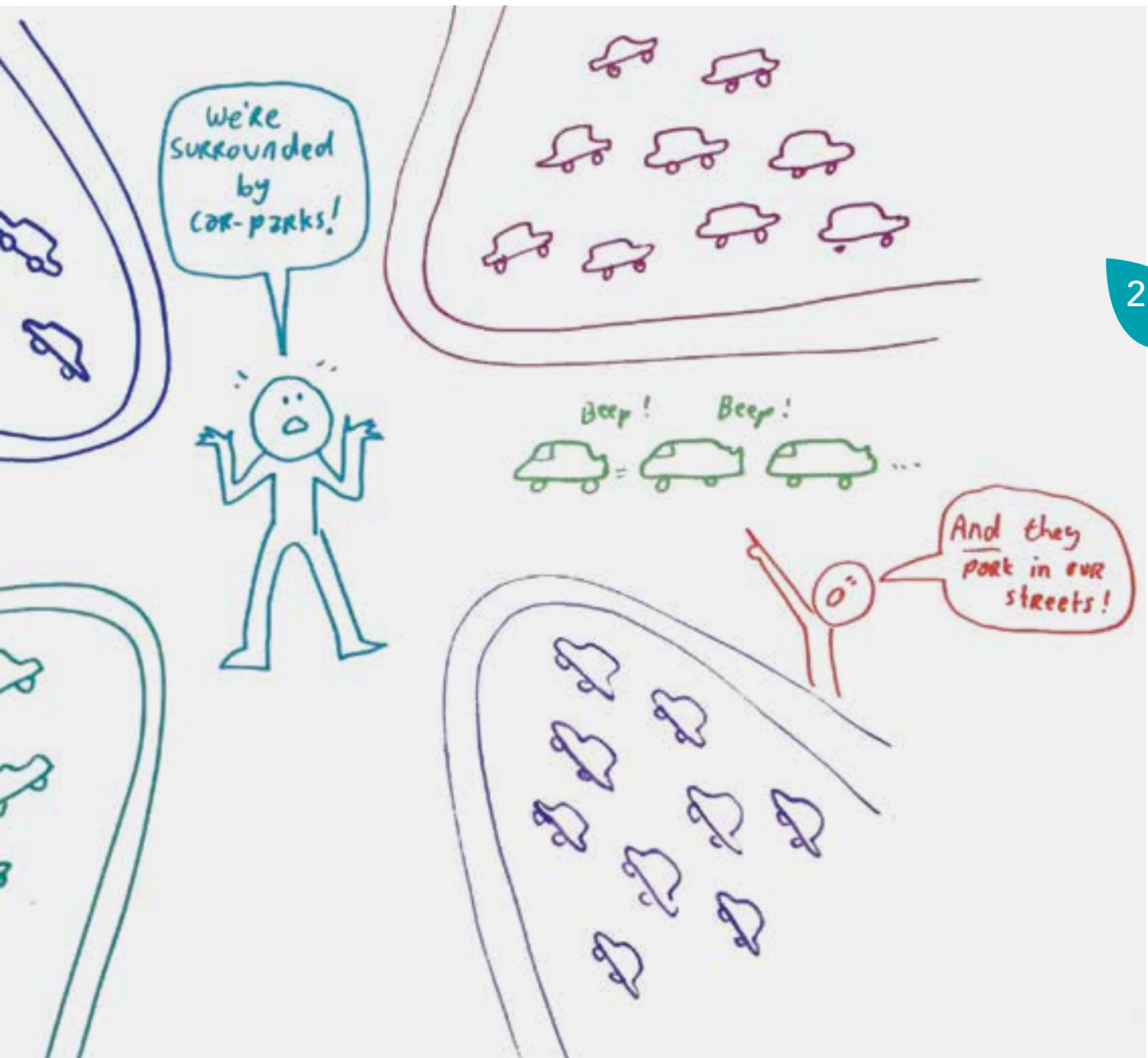
Parking and the dominance of cars is a consistent challenge across the three neighbourhoods.

Commuter parking within residential areas causes inconvenience to residents and creates hazards for emergency and refuse vehicles as well as impacting on pedestrian and cyclist movements.

Limited short term on-street parking close to retailers, services and restaurants is impacting businesses. Also the current trend of parking on pavements on Donegall Pass is unattractive and blocks the paths for pedestrians, and is particularly problematic for anyone with mobility issues or pushchairs.

Parking must be addressed in a comprehensive manner and in advance of development proposals on existing surface car parks. Given the relatively low level of car ownerships in the area there is potential to transform these spaces given the right approach and cooperation of resident and business communities.







DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

Recent planning applications and approvals in the area have been predominantly for student housing, grade A offices and apartments.

These have led to concerns about the scale and type of future developments being proposed and the implications for local residents specifically with regard to parking, management and inward migration.

However, there should also be significant benefits to communities from future development. Additional population living and working in the area will bring additional footfall and potential spend and act as catalysts to attract future investment.

The appropriate uses, associated parking, bulk, scale and massing should be addressed through the planning process and the requirement to engage with communities before submitting planning applications means there are more opportunities to review and consider proposals at an early stage.

There should also be the potential to secure developer contributions that would deliver benefits for the wider community such as training and employment opportunities, social enterprises and environmental improvements.



2

AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

There are different amenities and facilities such as play parks, youth clubs, pitches, community gardens and community centres across the area. They each have their own various challenges including: quality, availability, affordability, suitability and sustainability.

Identification and removal of barriers to access, combined with a shared approach to prioritised improvements could make significant impact.

**URBAN
VILLAGES**
Thriving Places



03

THE FUTURE

VISION

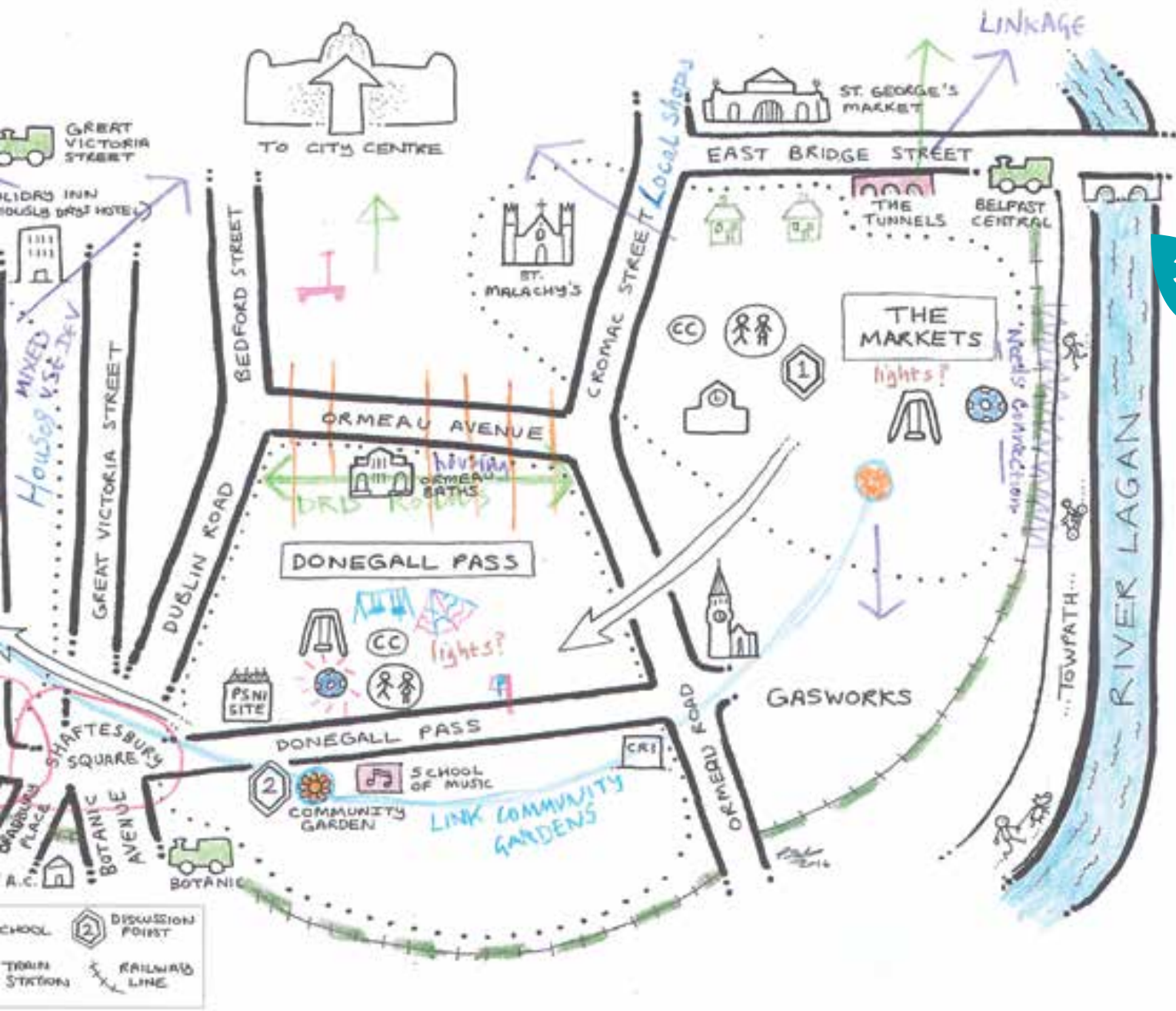
3

Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets are welcoming neighbourhoods with opportunities for all ages living and working here. We are open, connected and enjoy a great quality of life.

We need to build on what is working and continue to progress positive change to bring about real transformation, whilst significantly improving the living and working environment. This will include physical changes to places and stewardship of them by individuals and communities to maintain and sustain them.

Targeted measured support for programmes and services aligned to the UV Strategic Actions and overarching themes will complement a broader aligning/influencing role.





3

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The Strategic Actions 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 investments through the Urban Villages Initiative and/or alignment with other projects to maximise impact and reach.



TRANSFORM NEIGHBOURHOODS

- Enhance and upgrade the area
- Address vacancy and dereliction
- Improve and increase green open spaces, linking them together
- Improve lighting
- Address imbalance of traffic and parking impacts on communities



ENTERPRISING COMMUNITIES

- Support local business, entrepreneurship and social enterprise ventures
- Improve access to employment opportunities
- Attract and influence investment
- Harness tourism and heritage opportunities



CONNECTIVITY (PEOPLE & PLACE)

- Improve access to facilities, services and activities for children and youth
- Maximise connections to city centre, proposed Transport Hub and River Lagan
- Harness community voice to influence and respond to opportunities



COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

- Improve health, happiness and well-being
- Build trust and relationships

TRANSFORM NEIGHBOURHOODS

3

ENHANCE AND UPGRADE THE AREA



ADDRESS VACANCY AND DERELICTION
(BUILDINGS AND SITES)



IMPROVE AND INCREASE
GREEN OPEN SPACES,
LINKING THEM
TOGETHER



IMPROVE LIGHTING



ADDRESS IMBALANCE
OF TRAFFIC AND
PARKING IMPACTS ON
COMMUNITIES





ENHANCE AND UPGRADE THE AREA

There are significant opportunities to brighten up the area. Improving the existing public open spaces and children's play areas will improve their appearance and create safe spaces that inspire all ages to enjoy their neighbourhoods. Public spaces provide the opportunity to bring people together provided they are designed to address the needs of all ages and abilities.

Making the approaches into the area and streets through the neighbourhoods more attractive and welcoming could be transformative.

This could include footpath improvements, innovative street furniture, benches/seating, shading elements, lighting, tree planting, hanging baskets and window boxes, increasing the number of refuse bins, pooper scooper facilities and signs. Environmental improvements and increasing awareness should enable people to take more pride, interest and responsibility for their own neighbourhoods. Public art, especially when designed through a collaborative approach can improve an area visually and increase ongoing stewardship.



ADDRESS VACANCY AND DERELICTION (BUILDINGS AND SITES)

There are significant opportunity sites and buildings which could transform the area. These range from empty upper floors of buildings to vacant shop units, historic buildings and cleared sites. They will need various levels of interventions by different individuals, groups, voluntary, private and public sector organisations. Opportunities will be short, medium and long term and could include a living over the shop scheme, shopfront improvements to redevelopment proposals for buildings and or sites.

Due to the extensive nature of the opportunity sites, potential exists to transform some of the vacant spaces through the innovative application of meanwhile uses as temporary interventions of value to an area and its people. Community gardens, performance spaces, outdoor galleries, wildlife gardens and many other imaginative proposals should be considered and developed with local residents, organisations, schools and landowners. A commitment to supporting the management of these spaces must be made from the outset, on the clear understanding that ultimately they will be redeveloped.

IMPROVE AND INCREASE GREEN OPEN SPACES, LINKING THEM TOGETHER

Existing green spaces should be enhanced and potential opportunities sought to increase the amount and quality of green spaces. They can provide attractive havens offering opportunities to focus activities that bring people together.

Whether community gardens, allotments or pocket parks these should be linked to maximise the wider environmental and community benefits. The links may be physical through planting and/or organisations working within and across the neighbourhoods.





IMPROVE LIGHTING

An improved sense of security is often simply a matter of contrast, if one area is brighter than another it is perceived as safer, regardless of the actual light level. Lighting can improve the sense of safety and create a welcoming, visually appealing environment for residents living there and encourage others to visit and feel safe and inspired when they do.

Good facial recognition through improved light fittings and colour rendering plays an important role in how people perceive the safety of a place.

There is also evidence of a corresponding reduction in anti-social behaviour and reduced vandalism where spaces and streets are well lit.

There's an opportunity to progress a lighting strategy that addresses the various types of lighting that could be improved or introduced. This could range from way-finding feature street lights; enhanced neighbourhood lighting; creative lighting in play areas; floodlighting or highlighting attractive buildings, features and public art; projections onto facades; innovative festival and temporary event lighting.



3

ADDRESS IMBALANCE OF TRAFFIC AND PARKING IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES

An appetite is emerging to revisit the potential to introduce a South Belfast residents parking scheme given the demand from residents for such a scheme. This will become increasingly important given future development proposals for many sites that are currently surface car parks.

Transport NI is responsible for the on-street parking and potential to introduce residents parking. This will require design work and public consultation to determine the acceptance of the proposals by residents and businesses. Belfast City Council has a greater interest in addressing parking given that public

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car parks transferred to the council as well as planning powers.

There is potential to transform spaces within the neighbourhoods that are currently used by commuters for parking into "Homezones" which are pedestrian friendly spaces that improve the appearance and use of these streets and spaces.

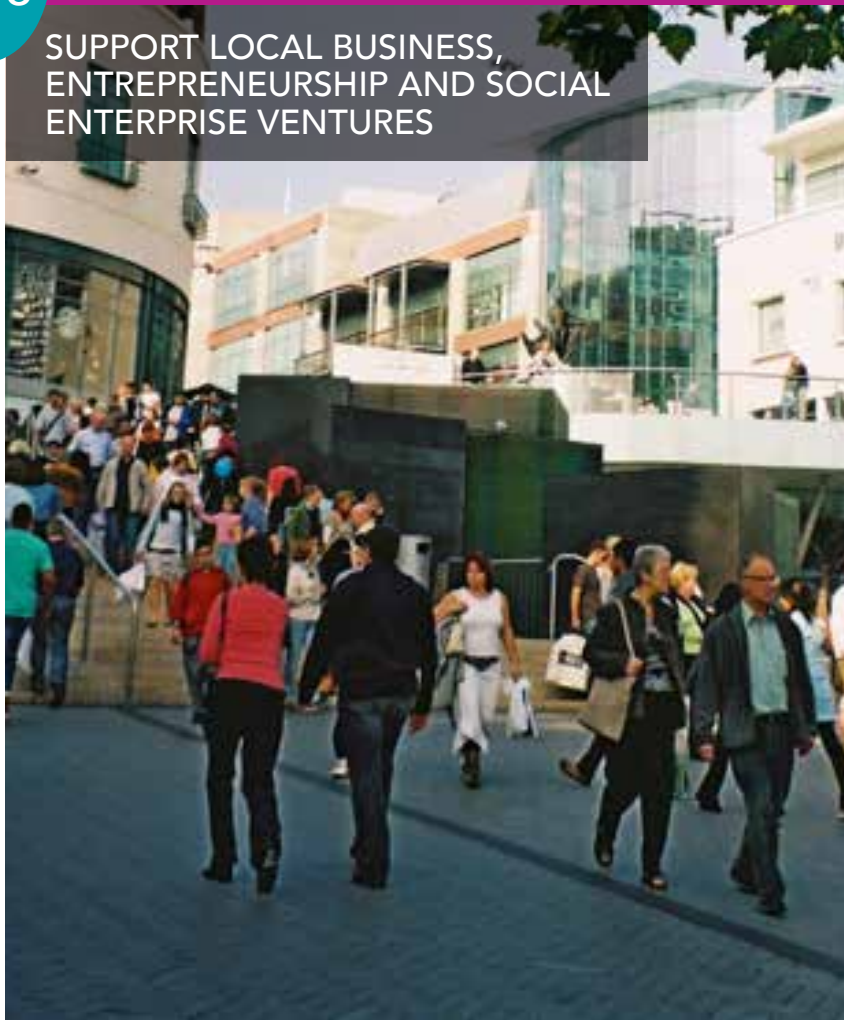
In addition, managing short term on-street parking will be important to facilitate businesses and support economic activity.



ENTERPRISING COMMUNITIES

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SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE VENTURES



IMPROVE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES



ATTRACT AND INFLUENCE INVESTMENT



HARNESS TOURISM AND HERITAGE OPPORTUNITIES



SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE VENTURES

Traditional retail and trade areas on the edge of town have suffered from amongst other things out of town shopping centres and the concentration of services in the city centre. Supporting existing enterprise and encouraging new business/social enterprise will directly impact on the

desire for people to live, work and visit the area resulting in improved community and economic life helping drive broader regeneration efforts. This could be achieved through exploring initiatives such as the live over the shop scheme, rent/rate free periods, investment zoning,

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incubation units, increasing the mix of office, retail and hospitality offer for residents and visitors and collaborative support for business and trade associations.

Increasing footfall and improved consumer experience through

improving the quality of environment (shop frontages, streetscapes, landscaping, public realm and welcoming entrances/gateways) and addressing parking issues will also help provide the uplift these areas require in order to attract private sector investment.



IMPROVE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The economic inactivity and unemployment is an important issue particularly for young adults. The focus should be placed on enhancing the opportunity for employers, education and training organisations to work together to create a workforce with industry relevant and employability skills supporting existing and future job creation and economic growth. Delivery of industry relevant and softer skills training targeting growing business areas such as the creative and digital industries, as well as connecting business needs with talent from within

the local labour force should be encouraged. Increasing access to apprenticeships and sustainable job opportunities will impact significantly on the social and economic well-being of individuals and families within the area.

A holistic approach to increasing employment opportunities should be harnessed through addressing the provision of affordable childcare, delivery of after schools clubs to include digital/coding skills, support for softer employability skills and brokerage of work placement and apprenticeship opportunities for all age groups.



ATTRACT AND INFLUENCE INVESTMENT

Being located beside the city centre there are various development proposals in the area, predominantly for student housing, grade A offices and apartments. There are also opportunities emerging in relation to potential future occupiers, private investors and developers showing interest in the area. However, there are also concerns expressed at the quality of the public realm, frontages and level of rates that could detract investment from the area.

The ripple effect of catalytic investment creating reimaged streets and or spaces could have a transformative impact on the area and underpin the regeneration of the wider physical and economic context.

Focus should be placed on harnessing emerging opportunities, making connections between interested occupiers, investors, developers, the various local and central Government Departments to maximise the potential to attract investment in a holistic manner.

The Urban Villages team will continue to work in partnership with the Housing Executive on their Hope Street and Posnett Street sites and collaborate with Translink on the Transport Hub. These significant development sites are likely to include public and private sector investment.





HARNESS TOURISM AND HERITAGE OPPORTUNITIES

The expanding tourism offer in Belfast provides this area, located on the edge of the city centre, with an important opportunity. The potential to expand and promote existing cultural tourism initiatives and focus on assets in terms of the rich built and cultural heritage should be explored.

This could increase economic opportunities in relation to social enterprise ventures and emergence of additional facilities that are required to support the tourism industry. This could include cafes, restaurants, niche shops, hotels, guest houses,

serviced apartments and present opportunities for cross business offers to consumers.

Consideration should be given to points of arrival, attractions and the promotion of routes between them. For example the future walk along Sandy Row from the Transport Hub to Queen's University and City Hospital and the link from City Hall to the Ormeau Baths and onto the former School of Music and between the Waterfront Hall through the Lanyon Tunnels and the Markets to the Gasworks and the River Lagan.

CONNECTIVITY

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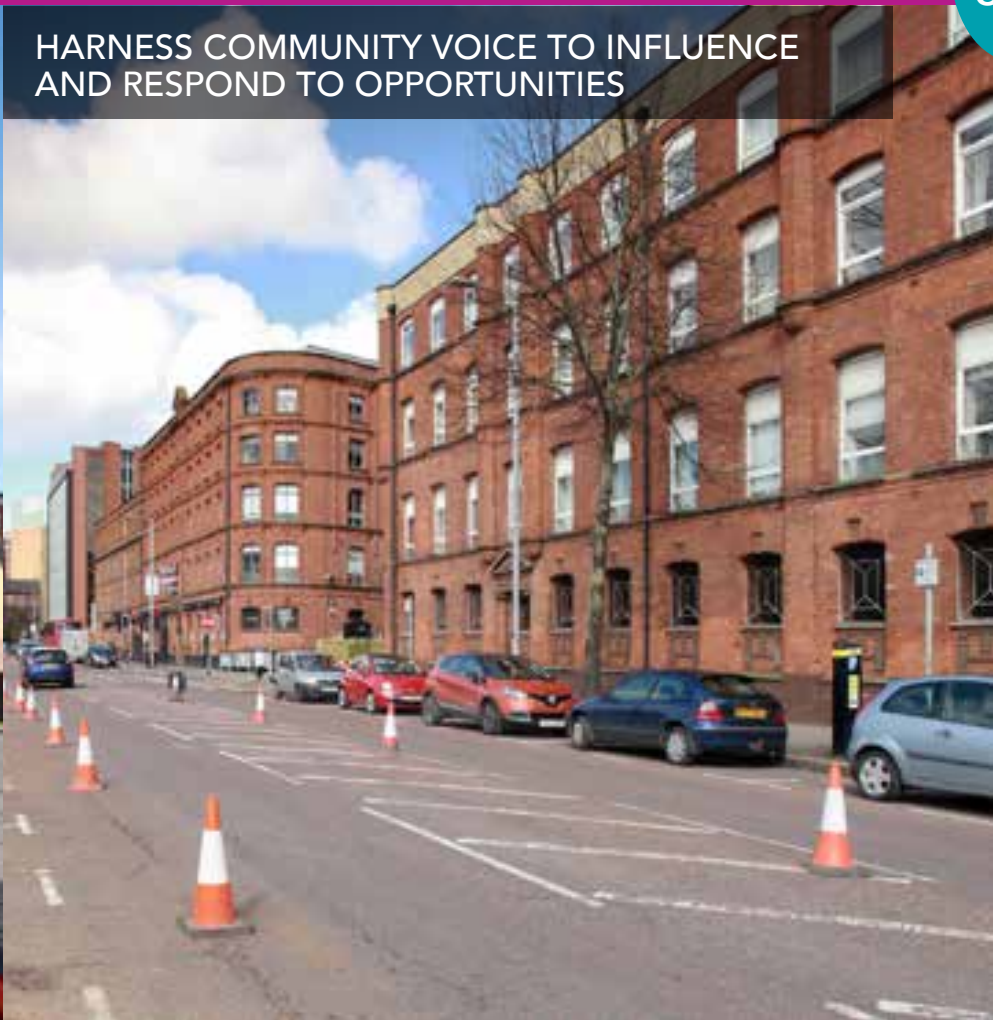
IMPROVE ACCESS TO FACILITIES,
SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH



MAXIMISE CONNECTIONS TO CITY
CENTRE, PROPOSED TRANSPORT
HUB AND RIVER LAGAN



HARNESS COMMUNITY VOICE TO INFLUENCE AND RESPOND TO OPPORTUNITIES



IMPROVE ACCESS TO FACILITIES, SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Enhancing access to activities, services and facilities for children and youth requires focus on key thematic areas for improvement for example ensuring quality early years provision, parent and toddler groups and addressing lack of quality childcare provision. Also exploring the potential to increase the number, quality and content of after schools club provision and school holiday clubs for children to gain new skills, broaden

aspirations and encourage connectivity within and across neighbourhoods. Equally, addressing adequacy of service provision for children with special needs and youth club provision and related activities such as drug and alcohol awareness programmes should be considered.

Increasing the 'offer' of activities and services must be complemented by improving access to existing facilities, removing actual and perceived barriers to access and where possible employing a shared approach to usage and targeted physical improvements.





MAXIMISE CONNECTIONS

Given the location beside the city centre maximising connections should include links to the proposed Transport Hub and River Lagan. Improving footpaths, crossings and cycle routes on 'desire lines' should be explored to make walking and cycling more attractive and safe.

A key strategic connection is the proposed pedestrian bridge over the River Lagan to the Ormeau Park. This provides an important opportunity to significantly improve links from the area to the River Lagan, the tow path and the extensive leisure facilities in the park.

The important strategic street connection 'Shaftesbury Link' formerly known as the Bankmore Link Road should be progressed. This would address the barriers between neighbourhoods and the city centre by designing the streets to have appropriate crossings, footpaths and cycle facilities.

Resolving this strategic part of the road network could also enable Shaftesbury Square to realise its full potential as a civic space. It could also release the development potential of the sites (currently surface car parks) alongside the streets and introduce the potential Belfast Rapid Transit route.



HARNESS COMMUNITY VOICE TO INFLUENCE AND RESPOND TO OPPORTUNITIES

Due to proximity to the city centre the neighbourhoods often feel under pressure from developments and consequential traffic. Historically the proposed scale of buildings, mix of uses and limited associated parking has led to concerns about the implications for residents.

There are opportunities to assist communities to get a better understanding of the proposals being presented, enhance knowledge of the process and best approach. This should assist their ability to influence proposals and increase confidence to address them at the earliest stage.



In addition to shaping the form and nature of proposals, communities should also be able to influence developer contributions that would deliver benefits for the wider community such as training and employment opportunities, social enterprises and environmental improvements.



COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

3

IMPROVE HEALTH, HAPPINESS
AND WELL-BEING



BUILD TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS



IMPROVE HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING

Through focussing on social and capital assets, we can look collectively at how to do more with less to reduce inequalities in health, life and mental well-being, delivering positive outcomes for the area. Concentrated focus on physical activity, emotional well-being and activities to bring people together will be delivered through the lens of the Take 5 approach of give, be active, connect, keep learning and take notice.

Positive community spirit can be harnessed through support for activities that already exist in the neighbourhoods

such as tea dances, intergenerational programmes, promotion of health champions and community celebration events. Increasing access to sport and recreation for all ages should include provision of opportunities to take part in craft, culture based activities and growing, through community garden and allotment schemes, in addition to traditional youth and adult sport provision and after school provision supported by fit for purpose facilities. Delivery of mindfulness classes for all ages, parenting and early years interventions and community based arts culture and cooking programmes can make positive impacts on emotional resilience and well-being.



BUILD TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS

In 'Together: Building a United Community', the Northern Ireland Executive made a commitment to remove all interface barriers by 2023. While this commitment refers to physical barriers between communities and neighbourhoods. This Framework

recognises that more work is needed to continue building trust and relationships within the South Belfast Urban Village area so that investment and action supports collaboration around shared interests and priorities.

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04

SUPPORTING DELIVERY

SUPPORTING DELIVERY

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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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