

Shaftesbury Square

Development Framework



Executive Summary



Department for
Communities
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GM
DESIGN
ASSOCIATES



✱ Ulster Bank



One of the most familiar and somewhat iconic buildings of South Belfast, the former Ulster Bank building in Shafesbury Square, with its distinctive sculptures.

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Introduction

In mid 2013 GM Design Associates were commissioned by the Department for Social Development (now Department for Communities) to prepare a development framework for the area in and around Shaftesbury Square.

This is an inner city area on the edge of the City Centre, which has largely missed out on the wider urban regeneration of the centre of Belfast, despite the attributes of its location between the attractive suburbs of South Belfast that include the University area and the City Centre.

Developed throughout the nineteenth century as residential suburbs with larger “merchants” houses on the main streets, alongside tightly packed terraced “artisan” housing in the areas in between,

this area has subsequently changed to become more mixed in character. Most of the large houses along the main streets, throughout the course of the twentieth century were changed into commercial use. In the past generation these have become physically fragmented with some redevelopment of much larger scale buildings alongside a drift into obsolescence of many of the remaining terraces, followed by extensive demolition leaving unsightly voids. Simultaneously the neighbouring working class communities have largely survived the trauma of comprehensive redevelopment along with the stress of “The Troubles”, to achieve greater stability in recent years. Some of these neighbourhoods have once again become vibrant and growing communities.



The study area

Contemporary circumstances continue to bring challenges:-

- How to effectively and efficiently accommodate large volumes of traffic along the main streets and through the major junctions, particularly the complex of junctions within Shaftesbury Square, yet create a more humane and urbane environment?
- How to harmonise together the energy and distinctiveness of the rich mosaic of local communities, without the demoralising tensions of the past?
- How to fully avail of all the attributes of one of the most accessible locations both within Belfast and the wider Region?

In response this Development Framework is commended to all who have an interest in this area as it provides a sound basis for resolving its existing weaknesses, building on its strengths, harnessing its people's energies, healing its gaps and blemishes and moving forward so that it once again plays a full part in a re-energised city.



An historic view towards the south east of Shaftesbury Square. In this image we can see the original three and a half storey terrace buildings fronting the square. They are excellently proportioned with regular openings and dormers, and attractively curve around the corners of the adjoining Pakenham Street and Donegall Pass. Unfortunately this block was demolished 40 years ago. On part of the footprint stands the poorly scaled Equality building and a large derelict building.



An historic view towards the north west of Shaftesbury Square. In the upper left corner of this image we can see the impressive uniformity and pleasing proportions of the three storey Victorian town houses which previously flanked Shaftesbury Square and Great Victoria Street. There were attractive front gardens associated with these houses creating defensible space for the ground floors, something that has now been entirely lost.

Historic images of Shaftesbury Square.

Attributes of the Shaffesbury Square area

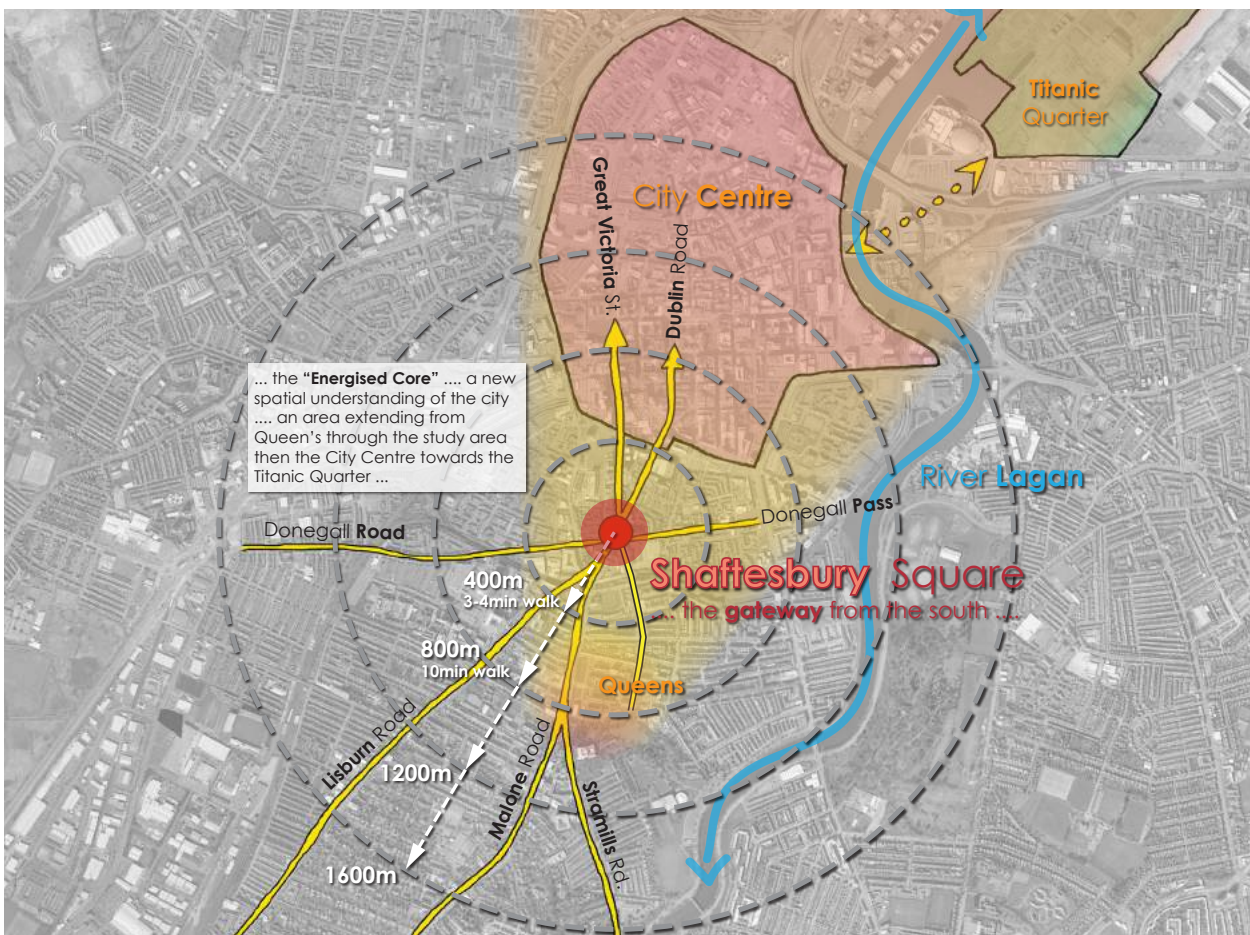
Shaffesbury Square is the major focal point for South Belfast at the fulcrum of a number of strategic routes.

It is conveniently close to a large residential population with approximately:-

- 3,500 residents within a quarter of a mile (400 metres, that is about a 5 minute walk)
- 10,500 residents within half a mile (800 metres, that is about a 10 minute walk),
- 23,600 residents within three quarters of a mile (1,200 metres), and
- 40,600 residents within one mile (that is 1,600 metres).

There is now a growing population. The number of local residents in the immediate vicinity of Shaffesbury Square (within 400 metres) increased by almost 20% and within a mile it increased by 7%.

This is an area with an extraordinary concentration of young adults with its proximity to Queen's University, two major teaching hospitals and its status as the preferred location for many young professionals and other adults working in the City Centre and the wider Belfast area. By 2011 (Census data) there were 8,700 young adults aged 18 to 29, living in the three Inner South wards around Shaffesbury Square. Here young adults formed more than 42% of the total population, compared to less than 17% in Northern Ireland as a whole.



Shaffesbury Square - a strategically located focal point.

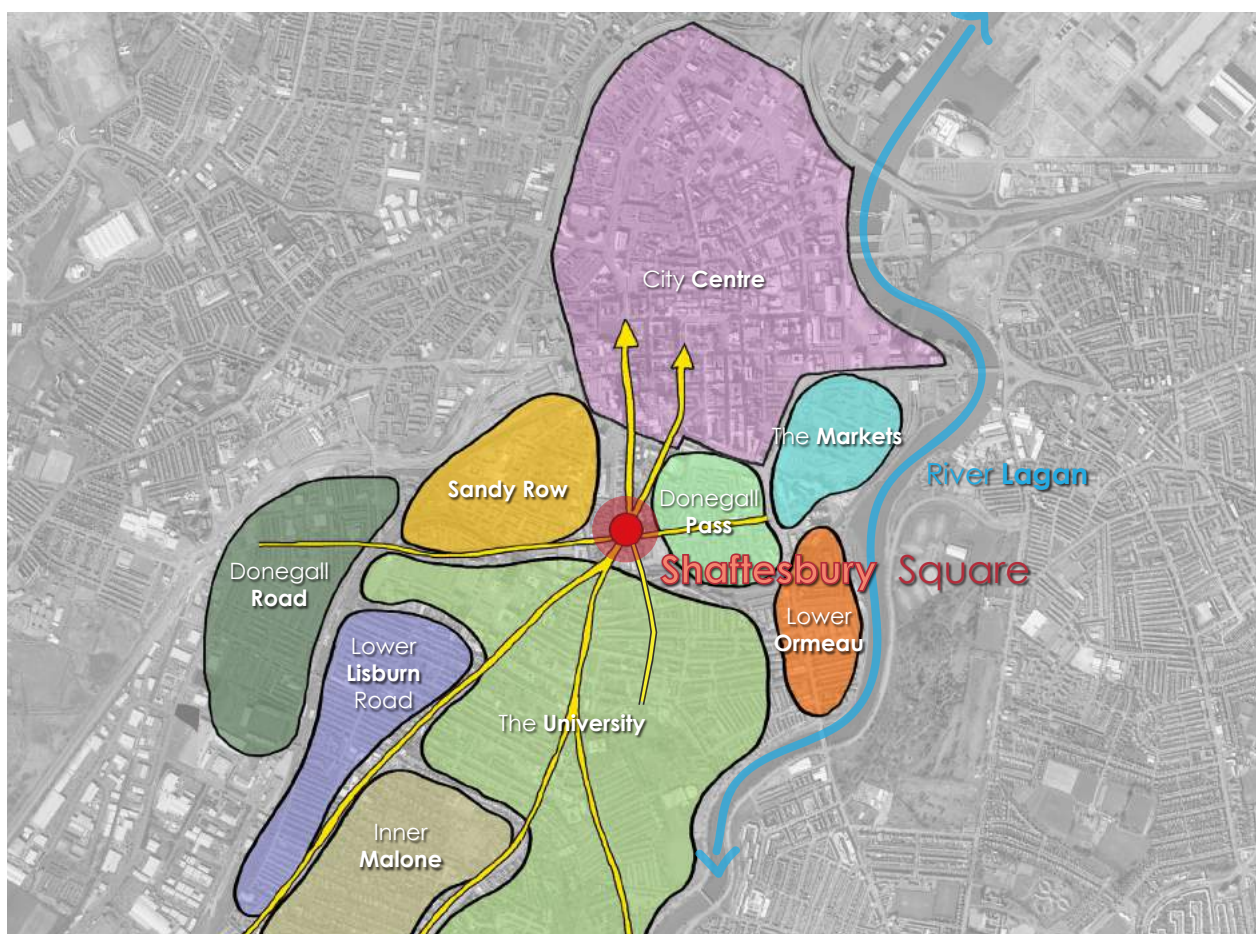
Additionally, in the three wards of the Middle South of Belfast, which are also easily accessible to Shafftesbury Square, in 2011 there were a further 9,000 young adults aged 18 to 29 years, that is almost 42% of the total population.

Conversely these inner and middle southern suburbs of Belfast have a considerably lower proportion of children and elderly than normal, with only 14% under 18 years of age compared to 24% in Northern Ireland and only 13% of 60 years of age or more, compared to 20% in Northern Ireland as a whole.

It is most significant that almost a tenth of all the Region's young adults (those aged 18 to 29) with

their energy, enthusiasm and often relatively high levels of disposable income, are concentrated within 2 miles of Shafftesbury Square.

Shafftesbury Square is also at the centre of a vibrant mosaic of local communities, which have all come through a period of radical physical, economic and social change. Some of these long established communities have emerged in good heart and are now confident and growing, others have stabilised but continue to have major demographic, social and economic challenges to resolve and some continue to be in a state of flux. For example, the arrival of migrant communities adds variety and energy but there are sensitivities relating to their effective integration into established communities.



Character areas in close proximity to Shafftesbury Square.

Aspirations of the communities around Shaftesbury Square

As part of the preparation of this Development Framework there was extensive liaison with a wide range of local interests including the communities, local government, central government departments, other public agencies, local business and the major education institutions. This identified numerous ambitions, aspirations and plans including:-

- Providing **family housing** meeting local need and strengthening existing communities.
- **Addressing problems** associated with high density **student houses** in multiple occupation.
- Creating opportunities for new forms of **enterprise, employment** and the **performing arts**.
- **Addressing** and easing residual **community tensions**.
- Developing **specialist housing** at appropriate locations.
- Promoting the imaginative **development** of **key development opportunities**.
- Improving and changing Shaftesbury Square to re-create it as **a multi-functional and attractive urban space**, including reclaiming it from domination by extraneous traffic.
- Facilitating and availing of the opportunities that will be created by proposals for public transport in the wider area including the second phase of **Belfast Rapid Transit** and the nearby **Regional Transport Interchange**.
- Creating a healthier urban environment more conducive to **safe walking** and **cycling** and with better air quality.
- Accommodating the **evening economy** without the frequently associated problems of anti-social behaviour.

The challenges

Vacancy, dereliction and clearance

There are a range of major challenges, especially in the main commercial streets in and around Shaftesbury Square. These challenges include:-

- **High levels of property vacancy** (36% of all retail floor-space, 29% of all office floor-space, 17% of all financial services floor-space and 9% of all catering floor-space).
- **Considerable areas of dereliction** (7% of the previously developed area is now occupied by derelict property).
- Extensive former built areas now cleared (**25% of the previously developed area has been cleared of all buildings** and is either without any beneficial use or in use as temporary car parks).
- A **significant proportion of buildings** are now in either **poor or very poor condition**.



Dereliction, vacancy and clearance at Donegall Pass.

The Challenges (continued)

The character and condition of the main streets in and around Shaffesbury Square

There is considerable variation between streets. Some remain vibrant places of varied business and active, others are now in very poor condition with a low level of activity:-

Shaffesbury Square

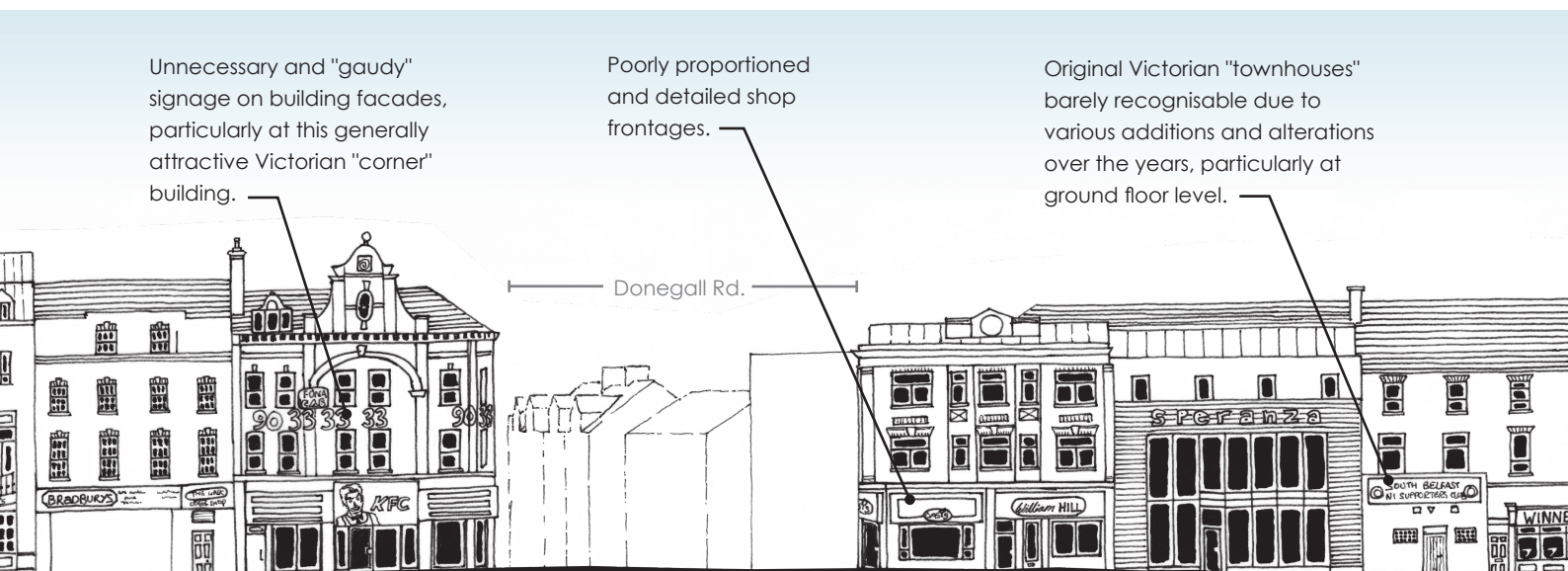
The Square itself is in a dismal state, with extensive vacancy and abandonment on all sides. It is a bleak and hostile environment for all who pass through other than motorists. It should be of the highest priority to reclaim this as an attractive inner urban space, which is a hub of activity. There are two key sites where appropriate redevelopment would greatly benefit this as an urban space; the gap sites at the corner of Donegall Pass and Botanic Avenue and that at the corner with Fulton Street.

Bradbury Place

Bradbury Place also has considerable vacancy and evidence of physical deterioration with a concentration of hospitality businesses and a reputation for considerable anti-social behaviour associated with the late evening economy.

Great Victoria Street

Especially south of the Hope Street/Bruce Street junction, Great Victoria Street is in a dismal condition, with extensive deterioration of buildings, high levels of vacancy and numerous cleared sites. Where there has been redevelopment, many of the replacement buildings are hopelessly disjointed, almost of every imaginable mass, height, scale, form and detailing. The decay of the buildings is far advanced on a considerable length of the eastern side and while the western side is generally in use, it also has significant physical and functional problems. The set back of some more recent buildings is particularly incongruous and discordant.



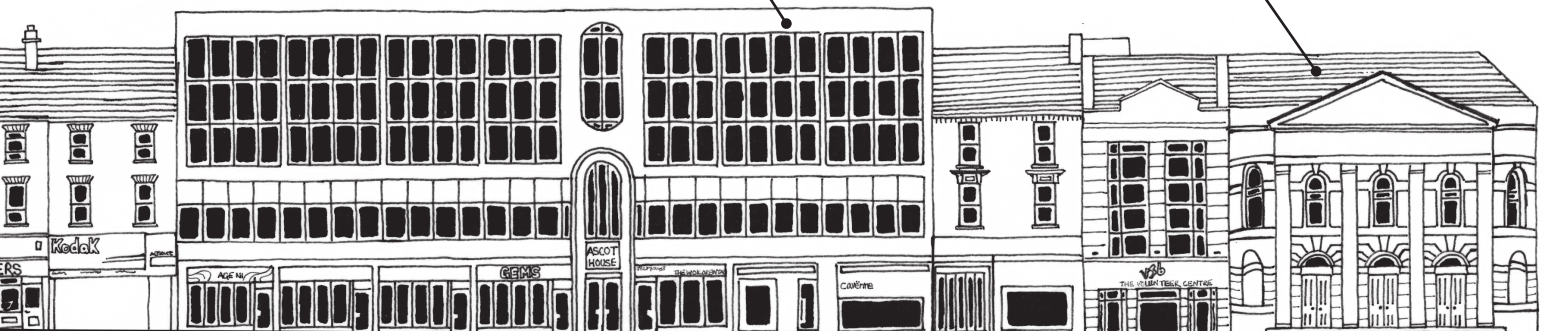
Shaffesbury Square - A streetscape elevation of the existing west-side.



The view along Great Victoria St., back towards Shaftesbury Sq. from Hope St. This image demonstrates how unappealing this street has become, created by ill-mannered buildings and public realm, gap sites and vacancy.

Ascot House. In terms of its scale and proportions relative to what was an originally attractive Victorian streetscape, is particularly incongruous.

Great Victoria Street Presbyterian Church. One of the few buildings in the square, at present with any significant architectural quality.



The Challenges (continued)

Dublin Road

With its varied commercial activities is in fair condition overall and shows some signs of improvement. It also suffers from too many ill-mannered modern buildings that have not respected their context.

Donegall Pass

Has also deteriorated considerably in the past generation, now with extensive underuse, vacancy, dereliction and clearance. It retains a significant residential function. Its urban form is now very varied ranging from a well maintained, listed, Victorian terrace, to numerous gaps and derelict buildings. Any redevelopment has tended to be more in scale and character with its neighbours.

Botanic Avenue

In relatively good condition with a low level of vacancy, a wide range of catering and hospitality businesses and a good range of local shops. Its overall character however, has been diminished by a considerable amount of unsympathetic redevelopment in the northern section of the street along with poor quality maintenance of too many buildings. The street trees along its length however, are a pleasant feature.

Donegall Road

Donegall Road (the eastern end) has benefitted from some good quality redevelopments but is weakened functionally by a high level of ground floor vacancy.



The good, the bad and the ugly of Donegall Pass. The good - impressive and relatively well maintained Victorian terraces; The bad - uncontrolled car parking to the fronts of the buildings; The ugly - poor quality two storey addition.

Sandy Row

Has lost most of its neighbourhood (and wider) retail function and is now characterised by extensive vacancy, building obsolescence and numerous poor quality buildings. It has a very varied physical character including some high quality residential redevelopment and commercial refurbishment, particularly the former Murray tobacco factory at its northern end. The re-use of the large Weaver's Court complex demonstrates what can be achieved in this area, with its numerous businesses in a mix of refurbished and new commercial buildings. Mid way along Sandy Row, the former Gilpin's complex remains an unresolved key development opportunity.



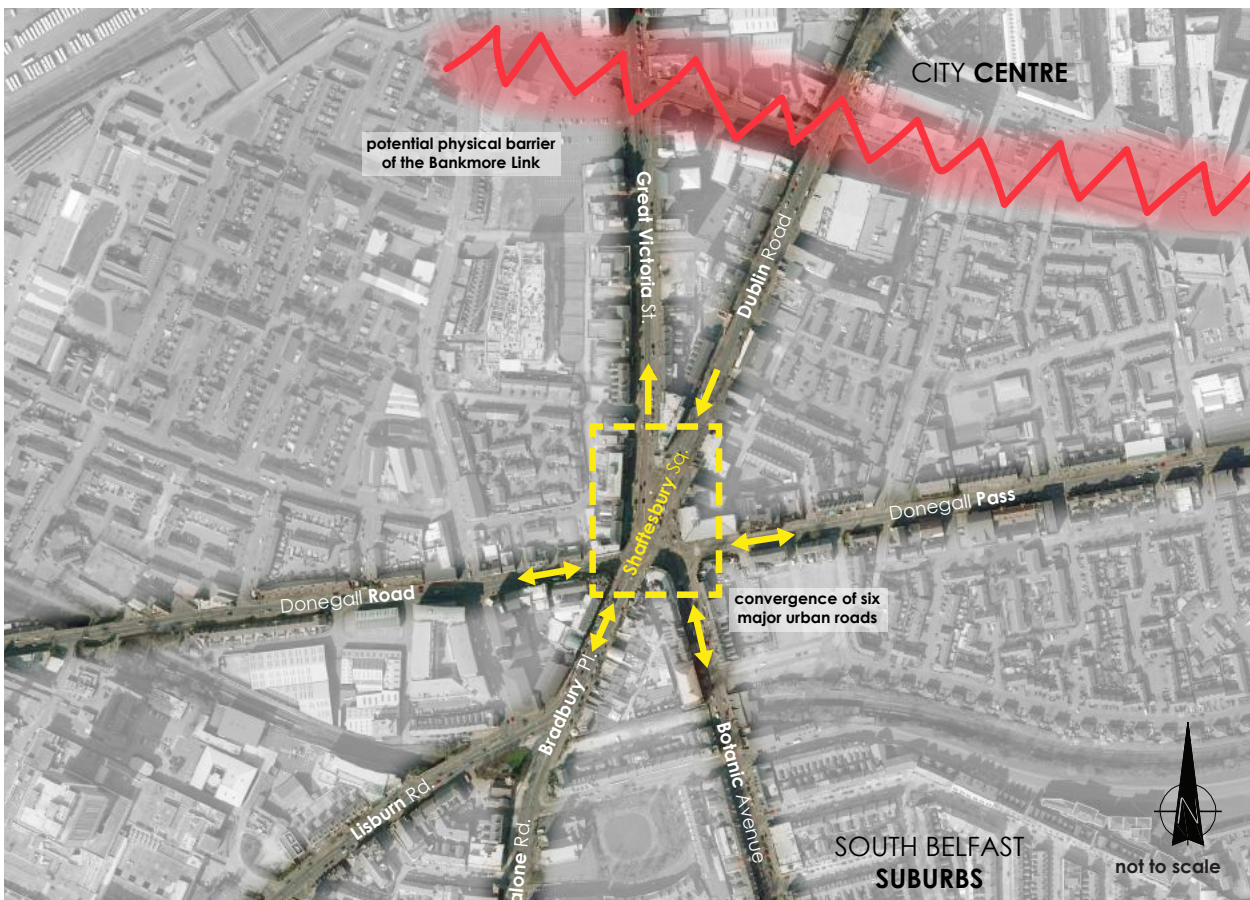
Gilpin's Complex at Sandy Row - a key development opportunity which has been vacant for quite a few years and still awaits a viable new use.

The adverse effects of traffic

The location of Shaftesbury Square at a major intersection, astride the main arterial route connecting the southern suburbs of Greater Belfast with the City Centre, has resulted in a traffic dominated junction to the detriment of all users of this urban space. Great Victoria Street, Dublin Road, Bradbury Place, Lisburn Road and University Road all carry large volumes of traffic to the detriment of their wider environment. The linking streets of Donegall Pass, Donegall Road and Botanic Avenue, while busy streets, have lower volumes of traffic and as a result tend to be more pleasant for pedestrians and other users of the street. There is no evidence of any overall shortage of car parking in the wider area, which benefits from a considerable quantum of informal car parking on sites of cleared previous development.

The routes from the wider University area through Botanic Avenue or University Street/Bradbury Place, then through Shaftesbury Square and along Dublin Road towards the City Centre are intensively used pedestrian routes, despite the hostile pedestrian environment, especially within Shaftesbury Square. The adverse environment for pedestrians is a product of many factors but not least the combination of the volume and the speed of traffic passing through Shaftesbury Square.

In the context of increasing use of bicycles in the wider area along with the proposed local cycle hire scheme, Shaftesbury Square is an exceptionally hostile and hazardous place for cyclists. Only the bravest (some would suggest most foolhardy) take their chance cycling through



Generalised view of traffic routes in and around Shaftesbury Square.

this complex of junctions. Many understandably take to the footpath or manage to avoid this area at considerable inconvenience. Shaftesbury Square is a key link within the wider cycling network of South Belfast requiring resolution.

Shaftesbury Square is a potential hub for public transport. At present 26 metro buses per hour for most of each week day pass through along three Metro routes, but the bus stops have been pushed out of the Square (presumably this was altered to facilitate the private motorists use of the space). These high quality bus services conveniently connect over 84,000 residents with the City Centre and its wider connections. Monday to Friday 684 buses pass through Shaftesbury Square each day. It is also very close to Botanic Station with

its 80 stopping trains each week day, with direct connections to all stations and halts between Bangor and Portadown along with connections through Central Station to the wider regional rail network and Dublin trains. Again there is considerable merit in enhancing the existing station facilities, particularly by providing improved facilities and a higher profile towards Shaftesbury Square.



It may not be legal but this is the only safe way to cycle through Shaftesbury Square.

Development potential of Shaftesbury Square

As part of the preparation of the Development Framework, based on a variety of surveys along with analysis of local and wider demographic, social and economic trends, the development potential of Shaftesbury Square was assessed for a wide range of sectors, as below:

Retail – This area formerly provided considerable neighbourhood shopping facilities but with the combination of population loss and changes in retailing, much of this has been lost. In the context of the more recent increase in the number of local residents, the settling of varied migrant communities in this area and the increasing interest in new forms of retailing, there is the potential in the middle to longer term of growing the scale and range of retailing in this area once again. It is projected that by 2026 there is the potential to add, in the most favourable circumstances, up to another 3,500 sq.m. of gross retail floor-space to what exists at present, which would be growth by a quarter, but it is likely to be less than that.

Business and Office – This area is no longer recognised as a major office node within the Greater Belfast Area. It increasingly has to compete with a number of high profile office locations including the City Centre and Titanic Quarter. Furthermore there already is a very high level of office vacancy within this area. In this context there is unlikely to be significant opportunity for new office floor-space before 2026.

Leisure and Tourism – Shaftesbury Square is at the heart of the main concentration of tourist accommodation in the Greater Belfast Area. It is an area which has fully shared in the growth of tourism infrastructure over the past decade with the development within Belfast of a sizeable city mini break trade. With its locational advantages this is an area that can be expected to continue to fully share in the anticipated continued growth in regional tourism of about 4% to 5% annually over the longer term. On this basis there is the potential for the addition of another 680 hotel bedrooms in this area by 2026.

Hospitality and Catering – Again this area can be expected to share in the general continued growth of a “coffee culture” in society. With its strategic location, high accessibility and proximity to a large population of young adults, the Shaftesbury Square area is well placed to accommodate a large number of new cafes, restaurants and other hospitality businesses. It is projected that a further 6,200 sq.m. of floor-space could be added by 2026, that is growth of over 70% compared to the present areas.

Residential – On the basis of a thorough scrutiny of all potential development opportunities assisted by the preparation of concept plans for each identified site, it is calculated that there is capacity for an additional 800 dwellings within the Shaftesbury Square Area. Depending on change in the local economy and the vibrancy of the local housing market there is a realistic prospect over the longer term for the delivery of 40 new dwellings each year.

Future Potential

- summary of conclusions

Having regard to the levels of existing vacancy, along with possible continued changes in the economy, society and technology, it is likely there will be limited scope for further retail, office or finance type development, within either a short term or medium term time-scale. Rather the conclusions of the range of capacity assessments is that the main opportunities for future development in this area will be within the hospitality, catering and residential sectors.

There are many variables, which will affect the future potential development of this area, including what happens in the national and regional economies, development within the competing City Centre and other Greater Belfast locations, impact of

major changes in the two Regional universities, implications of the possible renaissance of nearby inner city communities, actions by key public and private sector property landowners in the area, changes in private and public transport and many other factors. Hence it is not possible to project change over the period up to 2026, except in a generalised way and with many caveats.

Table 1 summarises the best estimates of the potential of this area, with two possible scenarios; the most favourable of conditions and moderately favourable conditions. Both scenarios assume continued growth in the local economy and restoration of business confidence in this area.

Economic sector	Additional gross floor-space required with modest growth (sq.m.)	Additional gross floor-space required with maximum growth (sq.m.)	Notes
Retailing	1,700	3,500	At present there is 5,800 sq.m. of vacant retail floor-space
Offices	3,300	11,100	At present there is 9,500 sq.m. of vacant office floor-space
Catering	2,700	6,200	At present there is 900 sq.m. of vacant catering floor-space
Hospitality	16,500	30,000	At present there is no vacant hospitality floor-space
Residential	15,500	31,000	At present there is 900 sq.m. of vacant residential floor-space
Other Uses	800	1,900	At present there is 700 sq.m. of vacant other uses floor-space
TOTAL	40,500	83,700	At present there is 17,800 sq.m. of total vacant floor-space

Table 1 - Summary of the best estimates of potential in the vicinity of Shaftesbury Square.

Future Potential - summary of conclusions (continued)

The implications of these alternatives are:-

- With maximum possible growth, associated with a regional economy continuously growing strongly and with every economic sector performing exceptionally well in this part of Belfast, all of the identified development sites could be developed (if all ownership and other site constraints were to be resolved) and any modern vacant floor-space brought back into use by 2026. In reality this is very unlikely to be achieved.
- With a steadily growing regional economy and every economic sector performing well in this part of Belfast, about half of the identified development sites could be expected to be completed by 2026 and most of the more modern, vacant floor-space brought back into use. This is towards the upper end of realistic expectations. In reality some sectors in this area are likely to perform better than others.
- The two main opportunities for substantial development can be expected to be within the hospitality and residential sectors, but both are subject to considerable competition from other existing and emerging city centre locations. In a competitive world, where both uses are very sensitive to economic and social conditions, there is a real risk that much of this potential development will go to other areas, unless social cohesion is achieved and an improved environment is created.
- There is unlikely to be much scope for any further, significant, retail and office development, in the context of the amount of existing vacancy, including modern floor-space.
- There is a particular opportunity in this area, in the context of the proximity to Queen's University and the Region's largest concentration of young adults including those with advanced qualifications and professional experience, to develop a wide range of new businesses, including those based on emerging technologies. This potential is considerable, particularly if the existing weaknesses of this area and the prevalence of a poor environment, can be resolved.

Public services - delivery in the Shaftesbury Square area

Education - After years of decline, primary school enrolments in the wider area are now increasing again. There remains considerable spare capacity in the Controlled sector, however in the Catholic Maintained sector, the enrolments of the nearest primary schools are all now close to capacity. Apart from nearby Methodist College, a large and successful voluntary grammar school, there is no other secondary education within or close to this area and all other secondary level pupils have to travel some distance to schools in the wider South Belfast area.

Health - The residents of this area benefit from proximity to a wide range of primary care facilities (including 8 health centres) and proximity to the Region's two major teaching, acute, hospitals, the Royal and the City Hospitals. There are a wide range of other health related facilities including dentistry and optometry in this area.

Community and leisure - Typical of inner city housing suburbs, this area retains a considerable range and density of social and community infrastructure, including churches and church halls (providing recreational facilities), pubs, community buildings, sports clubs and social clubs. In the wider area, including Ormeau Park, immediately across the Lagan, there are high quality playing fields and other recreational facilities including tennis. Nearby Botanic Gardens provides very high quality provision for more informal leisure. There is growing interest in the provision and development of community gardens and a revival of interest in allotments.



City Hospital, off the Lisburn Road just south west of Shaftesbury Square, a distinctive bulky landmark on the Belfast skyline.

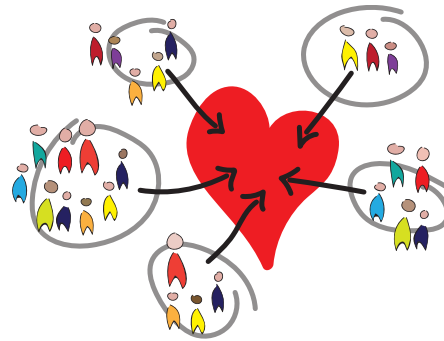
The vision for the Shaftesbury Square area

The restoration of Shaftesbury Square, surpassing its previous zenith a century ago, as a major city hub, giving an experience of urban life, comparable to the best in similar European cities, by re-structuring the space to provide an attractive link between the suburbs of South Belfast and the City Centre, becoming an enjoyable experience for living, working, business and relaxing.

This includes:-

- The development of Shaftesbury Sq. as a focal point, providing a wide range of good quality services, facilities and job opportunities for both the neighbouring inner city communities and the wider South Belfast population.
- The creation of Shaftesbury Sq. as a vibrant place, where traffic is sensitively managed with more space for pedestrians, enhanced provision for bus and taxi passengers and an improved link to Botanic Station.
- The restoration of Shaftesbury Square as a major civic space, surrounded by handsome and substantial buildings accommodating a rich mix of uses, with activity extending throughout the day and into the evening, including specialist retailing and hospitality especially at ground level, with business and residential uses at upper levels.
- A re-vitalised Shaftesbury Square, which becomes a catalyst for the economic, social and physical improvement of the adjoining arterial routes and streets.

Hence Shaftesbury Square becomes a place that is vibrant with prosperous businesses and active residents, enjoying all the liveliness and opportunities of urban living, where people mix and linger, ideas are shared, conversations flourish and friendships are made.



A FOCAL POINT FOR NEIGHBOURING COMMUNITIES



A VIBRANT PLACE WITH ROAD TRAFFIC SENSITIVELY MANAGED



A MAJOR CIVIC SPACE WITH ACTIVITY ALL DAY



A CATALYST FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO ADJOINING PLACES

Objectives

for the Shaftesbury Square area

A high quality urban experience, comparable to the best in similar European cities, with vibrant uses in high quality buildings, complemented by a pleasant and pedestrian friendly public domain.

An urban form of consistent character and quality, with obsolete and decayed buildings, either replaced by buildings of both high design quality and visual integrity or refurbished to a high standard.

A range of uses that contribute to a vibrant urban space throughout the day and into the evening, without resulting in anti-social behaviour.

A shared space enjoyed by all, including visitors, those working in the area and all the residents of the neighbouring, long established, communities.

The restoration of Shaftesbury Square as a prosperous commercial hub with a distinct range of services and facilities.

The creation of an appropriate residential environment that attracts residents to live within the Square.

A restructured public realm within Shaftesbury Square, where:

- public transport is attractively and fully accommodated,
- a pleasant and safe environment is created for pedestrians to move through and linger within,
- other street activity is accommodated,
- cyclists are safely accommodated and their passage efficiently facilitated, and
- essential vehicular movement is accommodated but with full regard to the wider environment.

The appropriate management of all vehicle movement within Shaftesbury Square, so that it no longer dominates and adversely impacts on the environment, with an overall reduction of traffic speed.

The removal of all unnecessary visual clutter within Shaftesbury Square and the reinstatement of a high quality urban space, suitable for a wide range of street activities.

The restoration of Shaftesbury Square as a public transport hub, including improved provision for public transport, within the Square.

The integration of economic activity within Shaftesbury Square and its vicinity, with the needs and opportunities of neighbouring communities, by the creation of job opportunities for a wide range of skills, the delivery of high quality private and public services and the provision of a range of efficient transport links to the remainder of the Metropolitan Area.

The development of a rich mix of facilities and services within Shaftesbury Square and the adjoining commercial streets, providing for the needs of the wider population of the City, especially that of South Belfast, including a wide range of cafes, restaurants and ethnic food outlets.

Transport & infrastructure - the context & issues

Shaffesbury Square is the node where a number of arterial routes that link the suburbs of South Belfast with the City Centre, all converge. The most important routes are Lisburn Road and Malone Road, with Botanic Avenue and Donegall Road having lesser and more localised arterial route roles. In recent years all traffic "into town" is funnelled through Great Victoria Street and all "out of town" traffic is funnelled along Dublin Road. Both these streets are one way. Generally the changes to the geometry and management of the road space within Shaffesbury Square, has helped to create a relatively safe complex of junctions with minimal delays to the passage of vehicles even at the peak periods.

On the basis of a detailed traffic survey in March 2014 the busiest linking streets are-

- Bradbury Place with 2,130 vehicles passing in the peak hour, then
- Dublin Road with 1,850 vehicles passing in the peak hour, then
- Great Victoria Street, with 1,500 vehicles passing in the peak hour.

The three other linking streets, all two way, carry only modest volumes of traffic:-

- Botanic Avenue with 730 vehicles passing in the peak hour,
- Donegall Road with 540 vehicles passing in the peak hour, and
- Donegall Pass with 400 vehicles passing in the peak hour.

At the peak hour in the morning (8-00 to 9-00) 3,050 vehicles entered Shaffesbury Square and at the peak hour in the evening (16-30 to 17-30) 3,298 vehicles entered.

Donegall Pass and Donegall Road provide an east to west link through Shaffesbury Square, across the Inner Suburbs of South Belfast. Previously Donegall Road also provided an important arterial route from the City Centre through to the M1 motorway. This role has been reduced, particularly with the improvement of the West Link in the past decade. This is reflected nowadays in the modest volume

of traffic along Donegall Pass and the reduced volume of traffic along Donegall Road.

Botanic Avenue, Malone Road and Lisburn Road are all important Metro routes, each with a high frequency, high quality bus service but without any passenger facilities whatsoever within the Square itself.

The other major street in the immediate vicinity of Shaffesbury Square is Sandy Row, which provides an alternative north-south route for through traffic. Sandy Row continues to have a significant function as a local centre that includes retailing and other services for the substantial local population, with its very distinct character. It is not desirable to implement any measures elsewhere that would encourage additional through traffic detracting from the quality of the environment and road safety for the many local residents who generally move through Sandy Row on foot.

Shaffesbury Square developed in the late Victorian era as a major transport hub, where the tram services from South Belfast converged. This historic public transport role has been lost with all bus services now passing through and all bus stops pushed to under-stated locations outside the Square itself. This reflects the modern approach of regarding Shaffesbury Square merely as a traffic junction, rather than an important transport hub. Hence the approach of regarding this space as merely a traffic junction, where the primary objective has been to facilitate the most efficient movement of vehicles, has greatly diminished this as a major urban space. Its long term physical and wider functional decline then became almost inevitable.

The main pedestrian route from the Queen's Area and the adjoining residential communities to the City Centre passes through Shaffesbury Square, used by a large number of pedestrians. Although Shaffesbury Square has been made a relatively safe route over the years with the provision of both pelican and zebra crossings, it is an unpleasant environment for pedestrians, dominated by noise, vibration, emissions and a sense of hazard from the large number of complex vehicle movements.

There are also a significant number of cyclists who brave the hazards and unpleasantness of crossing Shaftesbury Square. The Square and its vicinity however, is effectively a gap in Belfast's existing cycle network. It is well known from other British

cities, that traffic arrangements such as those of Shaftesbury Square are particularly hazardous for cyclists and therefore cause difficulties and deter the use of bicycles as an efficient and convenient way of moving around within the city.

Having regard to sustainability, environmental and health considerations there is a hierarchy of preference as follows:-

- **Walking** – no direct consumption of resources but considered to have a limited range for most practical purposes (generally 400 metres is considered the maximum that most pedestrians regard as reasonable, although with modest fitness up to 2,000 metres, that is a 20 minute walk, is not exceptional). Involves no additional costs and contributes significantly to good health and a sense of well being.
- **Cycling** – minimal consumption of resources with a considerably greater range than pedestrians with up to 5 kilometres, that is a 15 minute cycle, not exceptional for most purposes. Again healthy and contributing to a good sense of well being but is often perceived as hazardous, especially along heavily trafficked urban routes. Complex junctions, such as Shaftesbury Square and its links, at present are a particular concern for the safety, real and perceived, of cyclists.
- **Public transport** - bus and train passengers – relatively low level of consumption of resources and with a much wider range of distance that can be reasonably covered compared to either walking or cycling. There are limitations depending on the quality, frequency and range of services, but Shaftesbury Square is exceptionally well connected by road and rail (Botanic Station is only about 100 metres away). Generally very safe and convivial.
- **Car passenger or car share** – higher level of use of resources. Contributes to the adverse conditions created by large volumes of road traffic. There are limitations for passengers with less flexibility than a car driver has.
- **Car driver** – high level of use of resources. Concerns about long term implications for health if there is an over-dependence on car travel.

most
favoured



least
favoured

The hierarchy of transport.

Transport & infrastructure - the context & issues

The large space within Shaftesbury Square has been arranged to accommodate:-

- three lanes of traffic travelling along the major arterial route that passes along Bradbury Place through Shaftesbury Square and into Great Victoria Street, towards the City Centre,
- three lanes of traffic out from the City Centre along Dublin Road through Shaftesbury Square and into Bradbury Place, with one of these outbound lanes facilitating traffic turning right into Donegall Road and then on towards the motorway (M1) and the other two lanes passing southwards through Bradbury Place towards Malone Road and Lisburn Road, and
- a fourth Southwards lane accommodating vehicles coming from Dublin Road and turning right into Donegall Road and Botanic Avenue.

There are a complex range of vehicle movements accommodated within Shaftesbury Square, with the 6 major linking streets providing 5 different entrance points and 5 different exit points. 4 of the connecting streets are two way and 2 are one way. Altogether 10 different turning movements are allowed. Some of these result in a degree of confusion if not conflict, particularly for vehicles coming out from both Donegall Pass and Botanic Avenue turning right towards Great Victoria Street. To facilitate these secondary vehicle movements there are four separate "yellow boxes".

There are 9 formal pedestrian crossings, both light controlled pelican crossings and zebra crossings to accommodate the range of pedestrian movements. There is an informal crossing place with dropped kerbs on the eastern side of the Square where pedestrians take their chance.

To facilitate the perceived optimum arrangement of traffic lanes, over the years Shaftesbury Sq has been carved up into a complex of vehicle corridors, separated by two very large traffic islands and five smaller traffic islands. These traffic islands, which occupy a considerable proportion of the total space available, serve no useful purpose other than providing a refuge for crossing

pedestrians within what feels like a sea of moving vehicles. Despite previous efforts to reduce the amount of road related equipment and signage for pedestrians this remains a very cluttered environment. The recent tree planting within the core of the existing Square does little to soften this bleak environment.

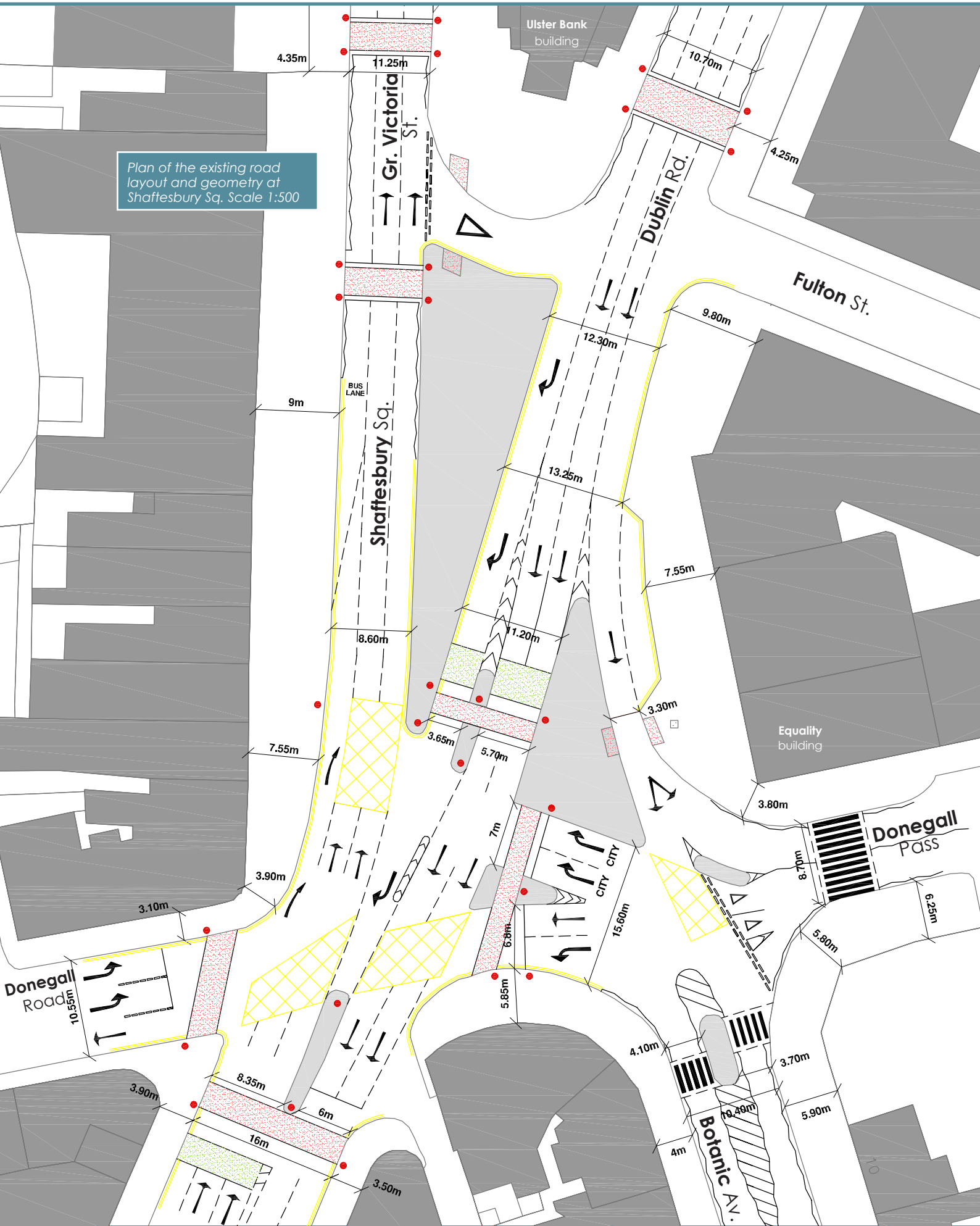


The design of the crossing points contribute to street clutter within Shaftesbury Square.



There is no provision for cyclists at the Square.

Plan of the existing road layout and geometry at Shaftesbury Sq. Scale 1:500



Transport & infrastructure - the potential

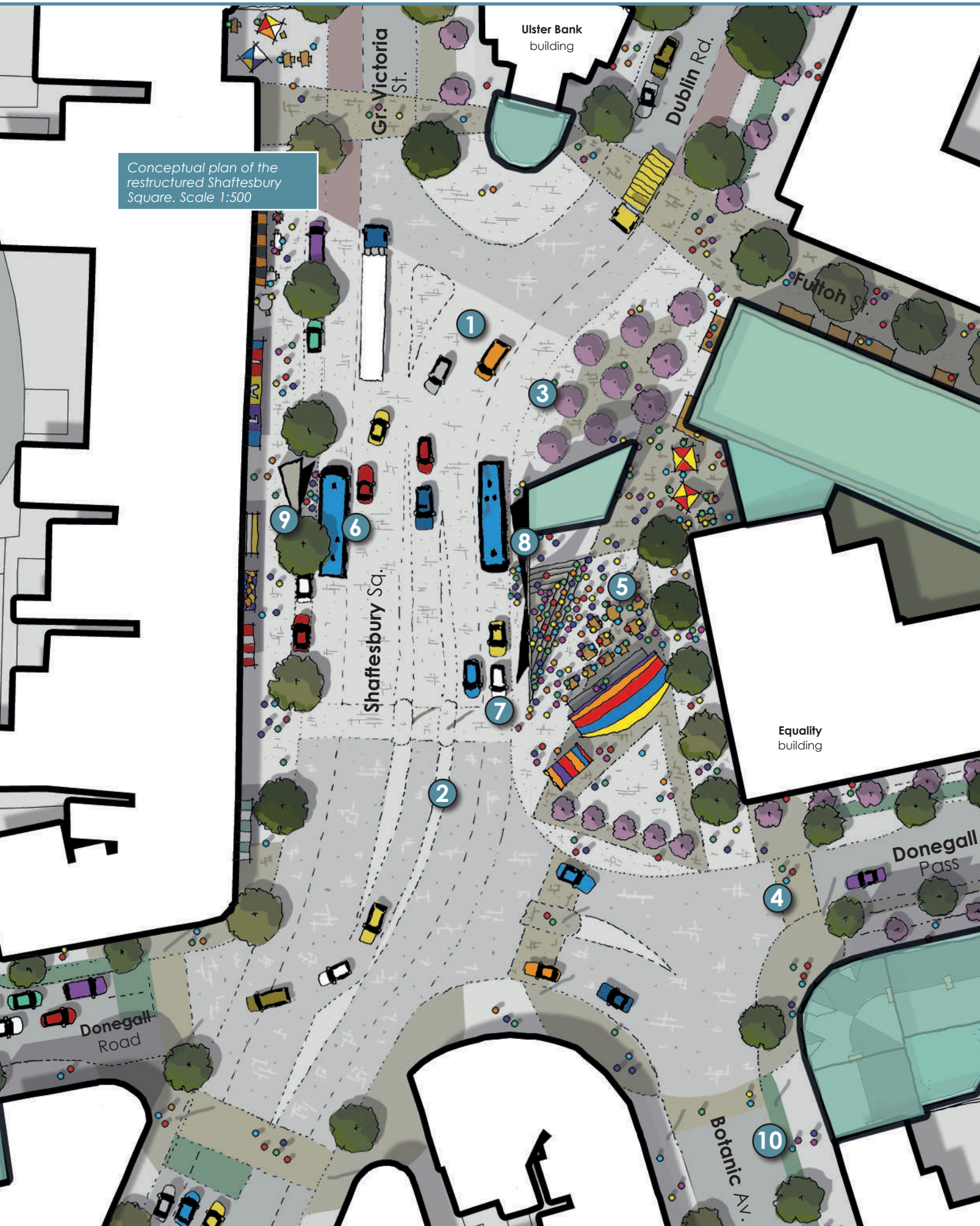
In response to the limitations and environmental difficulties created by the existing arrangements, it is recommended that the public realm within Shaftesbury Square is adjusted. This could be similar as illustrated on page 27 (opposite). This arrangement would provide more space for pedestrians, dedicated routes and facilities for cyclists, a public transport interchange and usable spaces for outdoor activity.

The concept illustrated opposite has been the subject of considerable initial testing and is not expected to have any significant adverse impacts on traffic movement but will require further detailed scrutiny when the design process is advanced.

Hence it is recommended to:-

- 1 Simplify the arrangement of traffic lanes.
- 2 Alter the detailed geometry of the existing traffic layout to ensure by design that vehicle speeds are reduced to 20 mph.
- 3 Modify the position of the lanes to remove the large traffic islands that have no useful purpose and thereby facilitate a large urban space in the eastern half of Shaftesbury Sq, which will have the capacity to accommodate a wide range of street activities.
- 4 Simplify the arrangement of pedestrian crossings and minimise any potential conflict between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
- 5 Enhance the pedestrian experience by providing safe and pleasant routes through Shaftesbury Square in all directions.
- 6 Provide dedicated lanes for 'rapid transit' through the heart of Shaftesbury Square.
- 7 Ensure any rapid transit vehicles are given precedence at all times over other road traffic so that it becomes advantageous in terms of journey times for public transport passengers rather than the occupiers of private cars.
- 8 Provide quality facilities for passengers using a 'rapid transit' system within the heart of Shaftesbury.
- 9 Remove all bus stops from the adjoining streets and relocate into a pair of stops in the heart of Shaftesbury Square, enhancing the efficient movement of vehicles on the adjoining streets.
- 10 Provide dedicated cycle routes through the entire length of Shaftesbury Square from north to south.

Conceptual plan of the restructured Shaffesbury Square. Scale 1:500



Transport & infrastructure - wider implications

The implementation of the wide range of transport and infrastructure proposals of this development framework is unlikely to be fully completed within a short time period, rather it will be incremental and in the context of wider City Centre development it will be modest scale. Any larger proposals will trigger the normal traffic and transport assessments including, when necessary, relevant related measures.

As demonstrated by the review of the background issues, in this Inner City area, it is reasonable to expect a considerable proportion of additional journeys generated will be either by public transport, walking or cycling. The scope for non-car use in this locality is very high. This area is exceptionally well served by public transport,

whether by bus, train or taxi. The high quality local bus services generally have considerable spare capacity.

Despite the doubling of the number of train passengers on the local rail network in the past decade, with increases in train frequency and also in train capacity, there generally remains significant spare capacity on local train services.

These proposals (by providing for enhanced pedestrian, cycling and public transport - eventually rapid transit) represent a shift towards more sustainable patterns of movement within South Belfast.



The Belfast Bike Scheme. Shafesbury Square is an ideal hub location for this exciting new initiative.



This illustration visualises a potential final appearance of Shafesbury Square including the rationalisation of the space used by vehicles and full provision for the proposed rapid transit system, pedestrians and cyclists.

Development opportunities

Table 2 (on page 33) summarises the development potential of a wide range of sites in and around Shaftesbury Sq. Their appropriate development, would greatly enhance this area physically, economically and functionally. These sites have either been cleared of previous development or are occupied by buildings now in a derelict condition. Some of the sites have full planning permission. A site at 53 to 57 Botanic Avenue, where 12 apartments are under construction for a Housing Association, has not been included.

The potential number of floor levels refers to what is considered to be the most appropriate, having regard to the site and development plan context. Some sites lend themselves to a range of floor levels.

Table 2 also indicates the approximate site area in square metres. The potential floor-space is an estimate of the total potential floor-space that could be provided by the appropriate redevelopment of each site, having regard to the site size, an appropriate building footprint and the most appropriate number of floor-levels.

The scale of potential in the wider area is very considerable. There are:-

- 34 individual sites ranging in size from just 60 sq.m. up to largest 7,150 sq.m. (that is almost 2 acres), and
- a total of 3.45 hectares (approximately 8.5 acres) of either derelict or cleared sites requiring redevelopment.

It is estimated that the development potential of these 34 sites is a total of 62,100 sq.m. of internal floor-space (that is approximately 670,000 sq.ft. of floor-space).

The key sites, at the most critical nodes in the urban fabric, directly impacting on the functioning and appearance of Shaftesbury Square, where it is most important to achieve development at the earliest opportunity, are as follows:-

- Site 33 at the junction of Shaftesbury Square and Fulton Street, and
- Site 2 at the junction of Shaftesbury Square and Botanic Avenue.

It should also be a very high priority to seek to secure the development of the following high profile nodes:-

- Site 6 at the Shaftesbury Square end of Donegall Pass,
- Site 10 - the PSNI site at the Shaftesbury Square end of Donegall Pass,
- Site 22 at the junction of Great Victoria Street and Ventry Street,
- Site 23 at the junction of Great Victoria Street and Hope Street, and
- Site 27 at the former Gilpin's complex in Sandy Row.

In addition to the identified development sites, there are a number of Victorian terraces, which have been disfigured by modern alterations but have a future and would enhance the wider area if sympathetically refurbished.



The former Belfast School of Music at Donegall Pass by RS Wilshire is of considerable architectural significance. This Art Deco building of 1936 if demolished would be of great loss to this neighbourhood. This framework strongly encourages its appropriate and sensitive refurbishment.

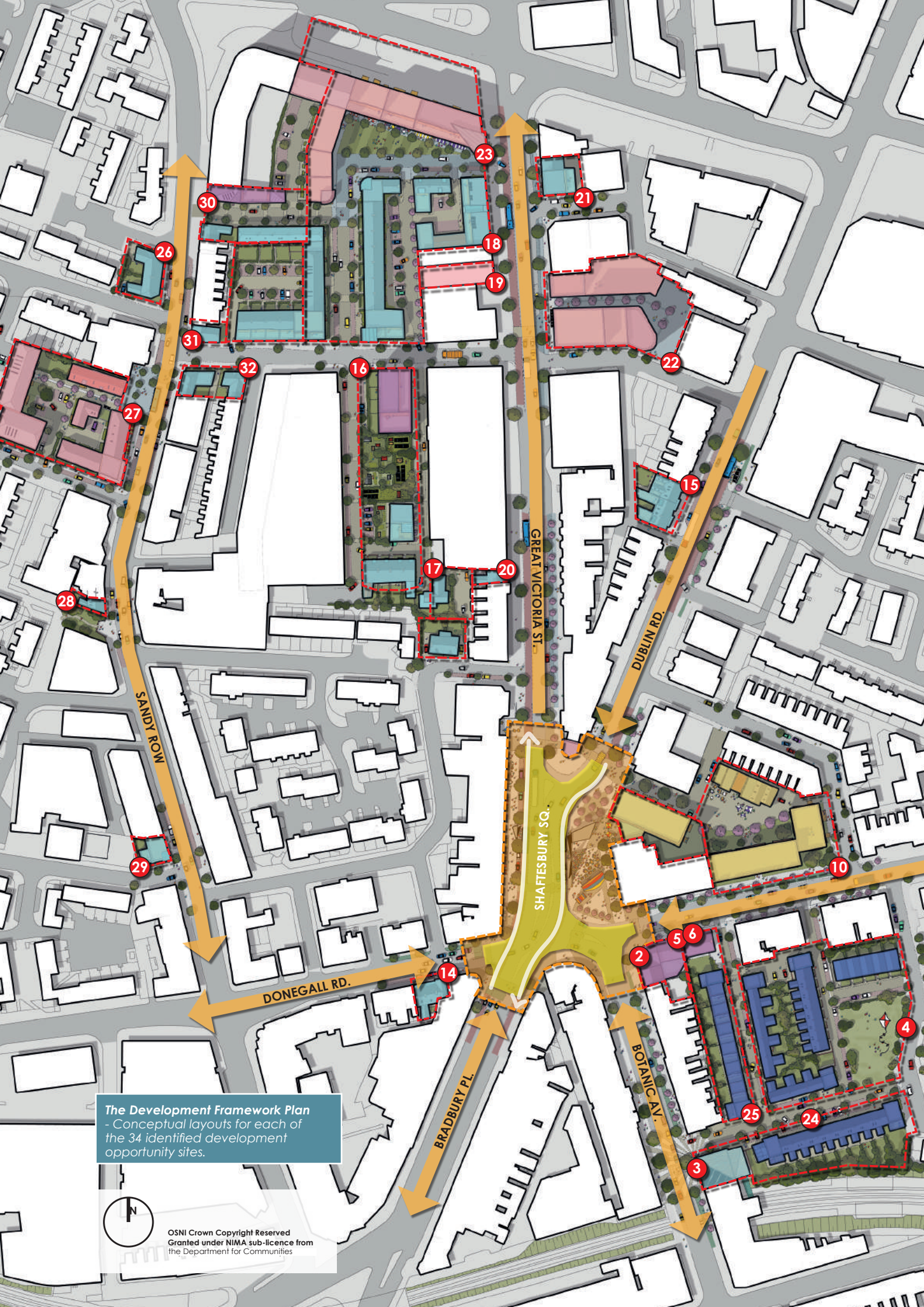


Development opportunities in the vicinity of Shaffesbury Square.

	Site	Site area (sq.m.)	Potential number of floor-levels	Potential floor-space (sq.m.)	Appropriate uses
1	87-91 Botanic Av. (Botanic Lodge)	360	4	900	Residential/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
2	2-4 Botanic Avenue	400	5	1,800	Residential/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
3	36 Botanic Avenue	300	3	600	Possible railway station extension/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
4	Chambers Street	4,220	2/3	1,930	Residential
5	1-3 Donegall Pass	350	4	1,040	Residential/Catering/Commercial
6	5-13 Donegall Pass	280	3	420	Residential/Catering/Commercial
7	61-63 Donegall Pass (com. garden)	270	3	480	Residential/Catering/Commercial
8	99 Donegall Pass (School of Music)	460	3	1,050	Residential/Catering/Commercial
9	141-143 Donegall Pass	230	3	450	Residential/Catering/Commercial
10	16-18 Donegall Pass (Former Police Sta.)	2,070	2/3/5	3,280	Residential/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
11	76-78 Donegall Pass	300	3	720	Residential/Catering/Commercial
12	92-94 Donegall Pass	150	3	390	Residential/Catering/Commercial
13	118-140 Donegall Pass	3,300	3/4	6,500	Residential/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
14	6-12 Donegall Road	140	4	440	Residential/Catering/Commercial
15	65-71 Dublin Road	390	8	2,240	Residential/Catering/Commercial
16	Glenalpin Street East	2,400	4	3,000	Residential/Hospitality/Commercial
17	Glenalpin Street South	430	4	640	Residential/Commercial
18	69-71 Great Victoria St.	410	4	1,350	Residential/Catering/Commercial
19	77 Great Victoria Street	210	5	700	Residential/Catering/Commercial
20	115 Great Victoria Street	100	5	400	Residential/Catering/Commercial
21	90-94 Great Victoria St.	330	5	1,050	Residential/Catering/Commercial
22	106-110 Gr. Victoria St. (Fanum House)	2,220	10	6,500	Residential/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
23	Hope Street	7,150	2/3/4/5/6	14,000	Residential/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
24	Posnett Street south	1,250	2/3	840	Residential
25	Ratcliffe Street	900	2/3	840	Residential
26	57-61 Sandy Row	410	4	1,200	Residential/Catering/Commercial
27	81-87 Sandy Row (Former Gilpins site)	2,660	3	3,600	Residential/Catering/Commercial
28	109 Sandy Row	60	3	110	Residential/Commercial
29	149-151 Sandy Row	170	3	280	Residential/Catering/Commercial
30	48-52 Sandy Row	1,150	3	800	Residential/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
31	70 Sandy Row	120	3	250	Residential/Commercial
32	74-80 Sandy Row	370	2/3	520	Residential/Commercial
33	1-6 Shaftesbury Square	660	7	3,500	Residential/Catering/Hospitality/Commercial
34	Stroud Street	330	4	700	Residential/Commercial

Notes:- Catering includes cafes, restaurants and other facilities for the preparation and sale of hot food, on and off the premises. Commercial includes retailing and offices. Hospitality includes hotels and guest houses.

Table 2 - Development potential of opportunity sites in the vicinity of Shaftesbury Square.



The Development Framework Plan
- Conceptual layouts for each of the 34 identified development opportunity sites.



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LEGEND



The 34 Development Opportunity Sites



Existing buildings



Proposed buildings

Major developments
Suitable for mixed use development including specialist residential accommodation



Major developments
Suitable for a range of uses including large scale commercial, office and residential or mixed uses



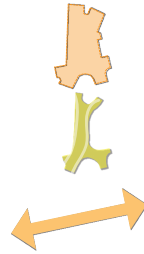
Major developments
Suitable for residential development with a large element of town houses



Significant developments
Suitable for a range of uses including small hotel or other tourist accommodation, or a mix of commercial and residential



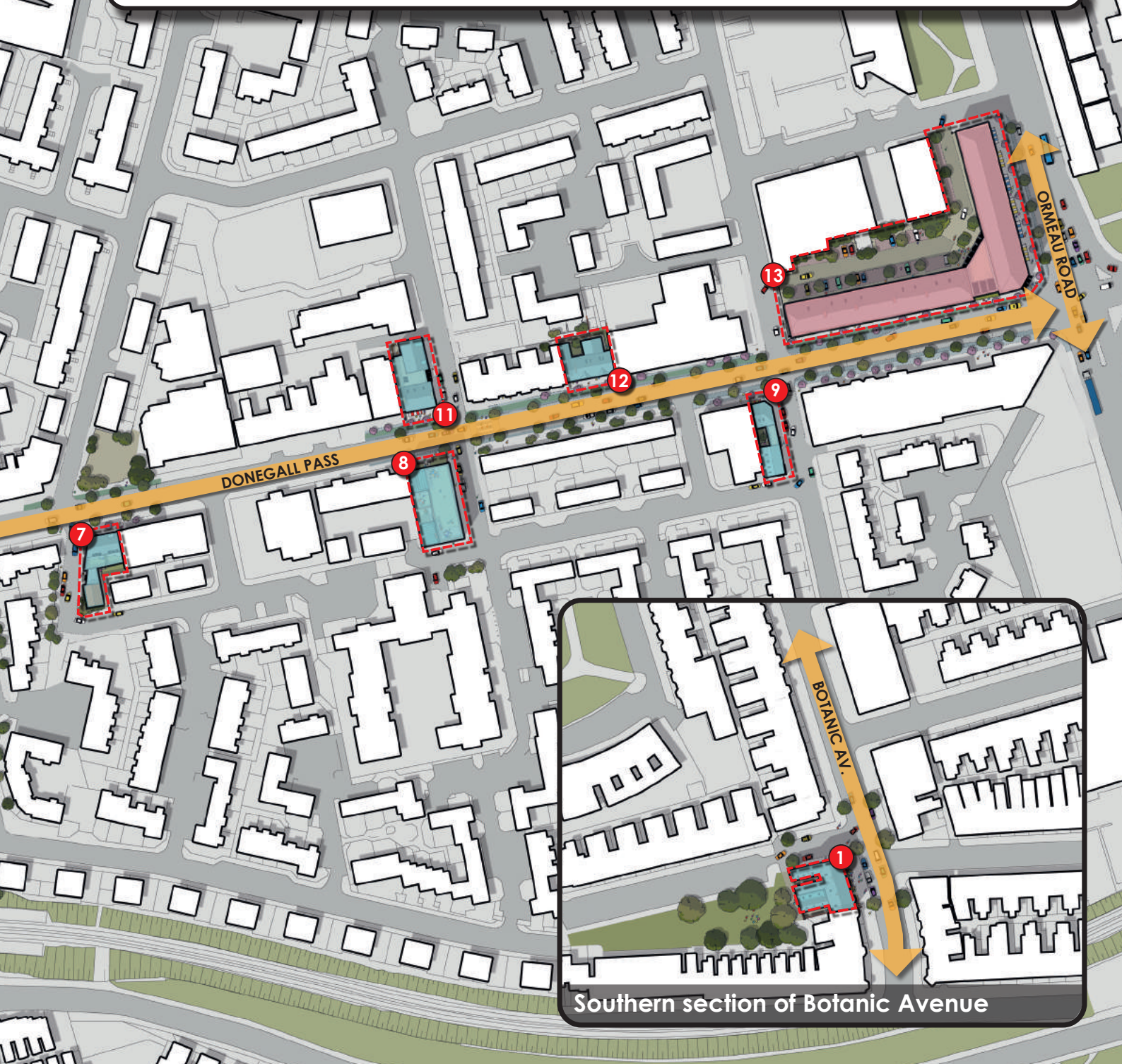
Other developments
Suitable for small scale commercial and/or residential



Public realm works at Shaffesbury Square

Re-configuring of road way at Shaffesbury Square with Belfast Rapid Transit lanes

Potential public realm works along adjoining major roads, including street tree planting, re-paving and cycle lanes



Southern section of Botanic Avenue

Land & property acquisition

It is recommended that detailed consideration be given to the acquisition of the derelict structure at **1-6 Shaftesbury Square** for the following reasons:-

- The **long term dereliction** of the damaged building on this site.
- The **blighting effect** of this long term unsightly structure on a prominent site that is dominant within the heart of Shaftesbury Square.
- The known potential there is in **acquisition by other users** with the resources and need to proceed with development.
- The size of this site, **sufficiently large to create a critical mass**, if developed, and act as a catalyst in the wider development and transformation of this area.
- The potential in **combination with adjoining sites** for large scale and high profile development.

If the Department should decide to proceed with acquisition of either one of these sites or both of them, a development brief should be prepared, defining the parameters of an appropriate scheme, sufficient to ensure all objectives are delivered, yet with flexibility to accommodate a range of design and building use solutions. Disposal by competition with an appropriate building license should then ensure control of the site is retained until successful completion of the development.

As the next highest priority it is recommended that careful consideration should also be given by the Department to the acquisition of the vacant and cleared site, presently screened by large advertising panels, on a very prominent corner of Shaftesbury Square, at the junction of Donegall Pass and Botanic Avenue, which includes the property at **2-4 Botanic Avenue**, for the following reasons:-

- The **blighting effect** of this long term vacant land, where the former buildings were cleared a considerable time ago, on a prominent site that is visually very prominent within Shaftesbury Square.
- The adequacy of the size of this site, **sufficiently large to create a critical mass**, if developed, and act as a catalyst in the wider development and transformation of this area.

Implementation

The thorough and wide ranging stakeholder and community consultation that took place during preparation of the Development Framework has established an appropriate foundation to build upon and provides a sound basis for bringing together the resources required for effective implementation. Successful and continued delivery of the individual components of the Development Framework will require a flexible, co-ordinated, co-operative and committed approach by all implementation bodies across the public, private and community sectors throughout the Development Framework's timeframe.

It will be most important to bring together the resources for the successful delivery of a major proposal as a catalyst at an early stage, to "kick start" the social, economic, physical and environmental regeneration of Shaftesbury Square and its vicinity, bringing visible short term benefits and creating the confidence needed for on-going regeneration to be realised.

Public sector Intervention, particularly by DfC and Transport NI will be a key driver in ensuring the delivery of many components of this Development Framework, particularly the key catalyst of re-configuring the Shaftesbury Square urban space and its roads and junctions. Successful implementation of this key component may be critical to the future success of this Development Framework. Public sector intervention can include:-

- **direct development;**
- **public realm** improvements;
- **infrastructure improvements** including transport;
- **service delivery;** and
- other enabling measures including **funding, marketing, facilitating and utilising powers and assets**. The resources of Belfast City Council will be critical in driving forward delivery of urban regeneration based on the co-ordinated approach of this Development Framework.

Resolving barriers to delivery

To establish aspirations and gain the support and endorsement of all stakeholders from the outset, including the removal or mitigation of any potential barriers to the delivery of proposals, the preparation of this Development Framework has been completed, alongside a carefully managed engagement process. This included consultation and liaison with all key public and private sector stakeholders, local communities and local business. Prior to publication, a draft of the Development Framework was subject to an extensive public consultation. All views received were then carefully considered, prior to final publication.

Potential barriers to the delivery of the individual components of the Development Framework include:-

- **Financial** - Availability of funding resources either from the private or public sectors, particularly with regard to the major catalyst of re-configuring the roads and junctions within Shaftesbury Square.
- **Political** - Co-operation across the political spectrum and ensuring cross party support for all elements of the Development Framework.
- **Community** - Support and "buy in" from all of the range of communities who reside in this part of South Belfast on a continuing basis.
- **Other development and interface projects** - Ensuring other development proposals will not adversely impact on the delivery and subsequent success of the Framework.
- **Constraints** - Physical, environmental, social and economic that could adversely impact on the implementation and delivery of proposals.
- **Co-operation** - Between all key stakeholders who will have an input into the implementation and delivery of proposals.
- **Market Conditions** - Successful delivery of the proposals will be dependent on fluctuating market conditions, affecting the commercial viability of individual development proposals.

These are potential obstacles that could impede implementation and delivery of the Development Framework. In order to resolve any barriers to the delivery of proposals it is crucial that the level of communication and co-operation that has occurred between all Stakeholders throughout the preparation of the Development Framework is maintained to ensure proposals are delivered without hindrance, on time, to budget and without impacting on the delivery of other components of the Development Framework. As owners of this Development Framework, DfC followed by Belfast City Council, will have responsibility for resolving barriers and ensuring all elements of the Framework are implemented and delivered as planned.

Responsibility for delivery

The following key stakeholders will have the primary responsibility for implementation, with a continuing commitment to providing resources for the delivery of the range of proposals contained in this Development Framework: -

- **Department for Communities (DfC)** are currently the Government Department with responsibility for urban regeneration and the delivery of this Development Framework. Under the Reform of Local Government the responsibility for urban regeneration was due to be transferred to the local Councils from 1st April 2016. This transfer has been postponed and DfC will continue to have responsibility for urban regeneration. The Strategic Investment Board are creating an Urban Villages Team that will support DfC in the development of the Urban Villages programme. In the delivery of the South Belfast Urban Village initiative it will be important to have full regard to the proposals contained within this Development Framework. DfC will support this Development Framework until the programmed transfer to Belfast City Council of responsibility for regeneration. Following transfer of responsibilities, DfC will provide further support to Belfast City Council in discharging their urban regeneration duties.
- **Belfast City Council (BCC)** will play a key role in the delivery of this Development Framework. This Development Framework is not a statutory document however it should be a material consideration for the Council's Planning Office and elected members of the Council's Planning Committee during the planning process in respect of any development proposal on any of the opportunity sites identified in this document. It should also be considered in respect of any other proposed development that may impact on the implementation of the proposals included in this Development Framework.
- **Dol Transport NI** as the Government Agency responsible for road infrastructure will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the proposed re-configuration of Shaftesbury Square. Post implementation they will be responsible for its maintenance and future upkeep.
- **South Belfast Partnership Board** made a strong case to DfC for commissioning the Shaftesbury Square Development Framework. They have been actively involved throughout its preparation, ensuring the aspirations of the local communities of South Belfast have been fully considered and incorporated as appropriate in this Development Framework. They will be an important contributor to its implementation and delivery.
- **Private Developers and Landowners** will play an important role in the delivery of proposals for the identified development opportunity sites, either by direct development or as a joint venture. The key stakeholders will work closely and co-ordinate with all interested private developers and landowners to ensure effective implementation and delivery of the proposals.

Obtaining planning approvals

While this Development Framework is neither a statutory document nor a statement of planning policy or guidance, it will inform and assist in guiding the co-ordinated development and regeneration within Shaffesbury Square and its vicinity. It identifies key development opportunity sites within this area, providing guidance on the development potential and the type of development considered appropriate for each site, including an indication of potential floor space provision and an appropriate building height, consistent with all current published planning documents. These development criteria however, only give general guidance and are not intended to be rigidly applied. The planning policies contained within the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and Planning Policy Statements will take precedence over the proposals contained within this Development Framework. The Development Framework will be a consideration during the decision making process for future planning applications on the identified opportunity sites and for planning applications for proposals on other sites within Shaffesbury Square and its vicinity.

Proceeding by preparing planning applications and obtaining planning approval on opportunity sites for appropriate development will be encouraged and will bring benefits by "kick starting" the implementation of the regeneration initiatives of the Framework. Commencement of development on catalyst sites will bring visible benefits and install confidence in the realities and deliverables of the Framework, paving the way for subsequent planning applications to be made on other opportunity sites and also on other sites within the Square and its vicinity. In exceptional circumstances DfC, or subsequently Belfast City Council, should give consideration to obtaining planning approval for any key development opportunity, where this would improve confidence for a developer, by removing uncertainty and reducing development risks, thereby providing additional developer confidence.

As a stakeholder in the preparation of this Development Framework the Planning Authority will facilitate Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) to consider proposals at an early stage for the

opportunity sites, potentially avoiding subsequent delays. It is recommended that at an early stage of the generation of proposals a potential developer engages positively with the planning authority through a PAD so that any potential issues can be resolved prior to a formal planning application being submitted, thereby facilitating a more efficient decision making process and receipt of a timely and positive decision.



106-110 Gr. Victoria St. A prominent site already with full planning permission for a 173 bedroom hotel. The challenge here is achieving development within the short term of this high profile site.

Future studies & assessments

For key sites there will be merit in the preparation of preliminary proposals followed by detailed community consultation along with statutory consultees to the planning process. From the latter it may emerge that a range of technical investigations will be required within the planning process. These can include traffic impact assessments, transport assessments, noise, air quality, potential contamination, ground condition, flood risk and other potential constraints to development. For key opportunity sites, where public acquisition is envisaged, to enhance progress towards development, there may be merit if the implementing authority, completed all critical technical assessments prior to marketing the site to further reduce developer risk and facilitate the development process.

For the larger development opportunity sites it is recommended that a Pre-Application Discussion is held with the Planning Service, which also involves all relevant consultees, particularly Transport NI, reviewing development proposals, identifying constraints and any studies or assessments that may be required to support a planning application.

The draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan does not include any proposed environmental designations for either Shaftesbury Square or its vicinity, which would immediately require additional studies and assessments to be completed to support planning applications. For example there are no identified archaeological features or areas of archaeological potential within the wider area of interest, which would normally trigger an archaeological assessment of site investigation. Rivers Agency Strategic Flood Map identifies potential for some flood surface water in some localities and as such may request that planning applications on particular sites be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment if they deem the site to be significantly affected or liable to be subject to flooding.

Related to any planning application submitted for the opportunity sites that can accommodate major development, as detailed in Section 4.2, Transport NI may request a Traffic Assessment to demonstrate the impact on the road network due to the increase in the volume of traffic generated by

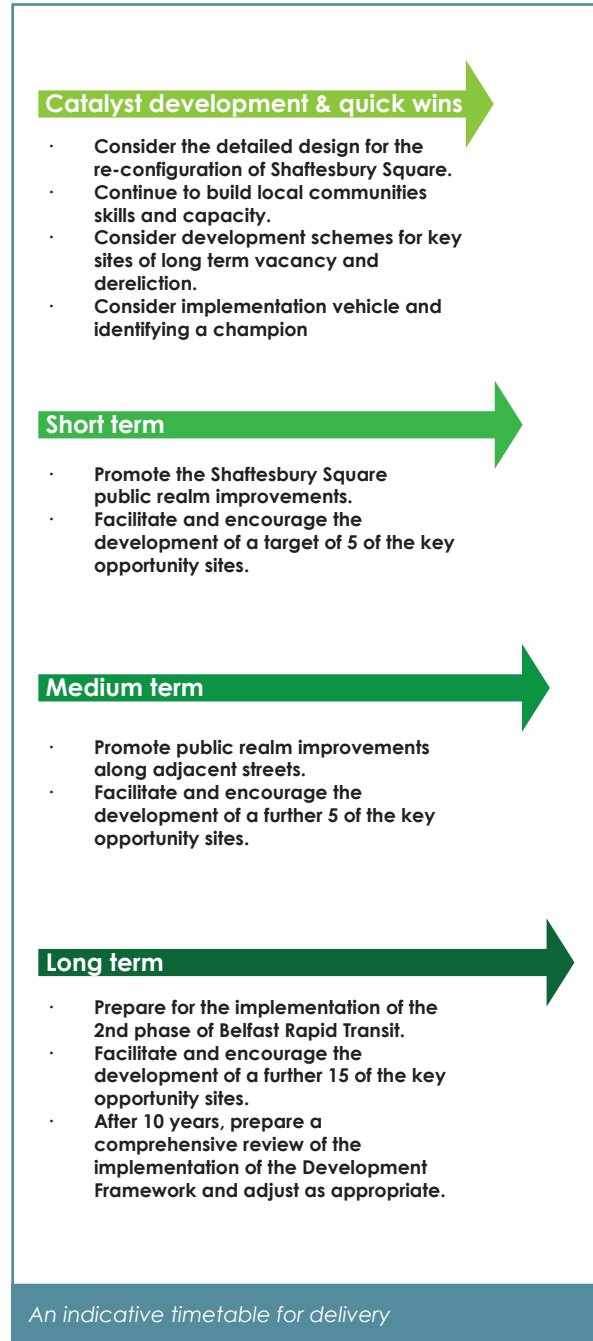
proposals. These assessments may conclude that there is a need for improvement to the adjoining road network to facilitate the site's development. Any Traffic Assessment should be based on an agreed Scoping Study with DoI Transport NI, prior to commencing preparation of the Assessment.

A timetable for delivery

The delivery of the proposals contained within the Development Framework will extend over at least a decade. Regular reviews of progress are recommended. Some opportunity sites identified within the Development Framework will be ideal contenders for "Quick Wins", bringing short term visible benefits to Shaffesbury Square and its vicinity. Development on other sites will be more long term.

A key element in the timetable for delivery of proposals will be the availability of funding to take proposals forward. Future changes in market conditions will also inevitably have a major impact on the timing of the delivery of proposed developments.

A series of measurable indicators should be established from the outset to monitor progress and ensure that proposals are being delivered consistent with the aspirations of the Development Framework. The Framework should be reviewed at least every five years to ensure appropriate and sufficient progress is being made and to identify the need for additional measures to remedy inadequate or inappropriate progress. This review should be used as a basis for ensuring that the Framework is sufficiently flexible and capable of appropriate adaptation to changes in the physical, social, economic and environmental context, rather than being a rigid and quickly dated tool of little benefit to the locality.



Conclusion

This Development Framework provides the basis for the co-ordinated development of the Shaftesbury Square area over the next generation. It is based on a realistic assessment of the causes of the current weaknesses, its distinctive attributes as a place, the potential opportunities of the future and the barriers to delivery that may have to be overcome. There has been long term physical, economic, social and demographic decline throughout this area, which in some streets is now deeply embedded, but at this strategic location between a resurgent City Centre and a vibrant University Quarter, with increasing confidence, this could become a very successful area with confident local communities benefitting from and supporting a wide range of uses and activities within Shaftesbury Square and the radiating streets.

This Framework will inform Belfast City Council in the application of its newly acquired planning responsibilities; including the preparation of the next physical development plan, the newly introduced community plan and the effective delivery of its development management functions.

Implementation will be enhanced if all the myriad of interests in the wider area, public, private and community work together, to actively and enthusiastically pursue the implementation of this Development Framework. It will greatly benefit from an influential "champion", ideally a local politician, or politicians, with a deep commitment to the area and with the contacts to make things happen, working alongside dedicated professionals on the ground, active on a daily basis in promoting its implementation. They in turn will require the necessary resources, financial and otherwise, at least until a positive momentum of change can be achieved.

Critical to the success of implementation will be the creation of an environment where there is sufficient confidence to generate substantial investment by the private sector. This is a daunting but not impossible task. Belfast City Council also will have a vital role by facilitating private and public sector investment using all the skills and resources available to it. There are many direct actions which Government Departments and

Agencies alongside DfC and the City Council can take in implementing this Development Framework, but none more vital than facilitating and promoting private investment.

The challenges of this area are formidable and should not be under-estimated, but equally there are many and varied emerging opportunities. This Development Framework defines an achievable vision, which has considerable support across the wide range of local communities and other interests in the area. What is now required, perhaps more than anything else, is the harmonious application of the energy and commitment by all those with a direct interest.



URBAN CLEARWAY
Monday to Friday
8.30 AM to 4.30 PM

Belfast Public
House Sign
Boundary Point

ER24636

MC2 5005



A view along Bradbury Pl. towards Shaffesbury Sq. At this time of the year the area's mature street trees are certainly impressive and soften this gateway to the city centre.

Shaftesbury Square is a major urban space at a key focal point between the city centre and the suburbs of inner South Belfast. It links the vibrant suburbs in and around the University Quarter with their large concentration of young adults with the resurgent city centre. Yet it continues to underperform with a shabby wider environment and the Square itself, dominated by moving vehicles. Likewise, the neighbouring major streets have experienced commercial decline and many are in very poor physical condition.

This development framework reviews the characteristics of this area, identifies the scale of remedial action required, assesses what is possible and recommends specific measures that will facilitate its transformation. A key challenge will be the reinstatement of Shaftesbury Square as an attractive, inviting and well-used space, yet accommodating its essential traffic function. If this is achieved the wider regeneration of this area will become more likely.