



Subject:	Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker
Date:	9 th April 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, Angela McIntyre, Regeneration Project Officer

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

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1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1	To provide Members with an update on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker which captures regeneration and development activity which took place in the City Centre during 2024, as aligned to the eight core policies of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS). The detail of this report will be provided by way of a presentation at Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>Members are asked to note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) An overview of regeneration and development activity which took place in Belfast City Centre and Titanic Quarter during 2024, as aligned to the eight core principles set out in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, will be provided by way of a presentation to be made to this Committee on 9th April 2025. ii) This will include identifying challenges and proposed next steps to help unlock the next stage of the delivery of the Regeneration & Investment Strategy priorities in line with the 2024 BCCRIS 10 year stocktake for discussion with Members.
4.0	Main Report
4.1	<p>As members are aware the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) sets out our collective ambition for the continued growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding areas for the period 2015 to 2030. It contains a road map of policies to guide city centre decision-making and key projects that translate those policies into action, aligned to our overarching ambitions outlined within the Belfast Agenda. BCCRIS seeks to address the universal elements of a thriving city centre as well as challenges and conditions that are unique to Belfast and is underpinned by the following eight core principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the Employment Population; • Increase the Residential Population; • Manage the Retail Offer; • Maximise the Tourism Opportunity; • Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres; • Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre; • Connect to the City Around, and • Shared space and social impact.
4.2	<p>To facilitate the implementation of the eight policies for the city centre, BCCRIS identified a series of projects aimed at creating a liveable and economically thriving city, alongside, identifying the following five Special Action Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner North • Inner West

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North East Quarter • Transport Hub and South Centre • Oxford Street and the Eastern Bank
4.3	<p>The city centre provides an important role for Belfast, the Council and the wider region given Belfast's role as the regional driver and the critical role the city centre in particular plays in terms of employment, investment, tourism, education and a place to live and to visit. , The city centre makes up 2.6% of Belfast's spatial area but represents the largest employment base employing over 86,000 workers across the various sectors, representing c37% of Belfast's workforce. Approx 80% of the Councils income comes from the district rate, with the city centre accounting for 41% of Belfast's non-domestic rates income. The sectors contributing greatest to city centre rates are the office sector (66% of city centre non-domestic rate) and retail (17% of city centre non-domestic rate). From 2020/21 to 2023/24 the city centre non-domestic rate has increased year on year going from £41.9m to £49.1m over this 4-year period.</p>
4.4	<p>In 2024 a stocktake was taken on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. the findings of the report are largely in line with the statistics reported in the Regeneration Tracker, focusing on what has been achieved since the Strategies launch in 2015 and to identify work that is yet to be done. After extensive engagement across key city partners and stakeholder, including the CG&R Committee, the Stocktake also identified the key areas of focus to drive catalytic change. These areas of focus include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase city centre living across all tenures by addressing viability, funding, policy and water infrastructure issues. Recognising the importance of good placemaking and connectivity to creating inclusive and sustainable communities. • Deliver A Bolder Vision priority projects including a prioritising a number of infrastructure related capital projects, sustainable and active travel, delivering green and climate resilient public realm and open space. • Unlock major regeneration schemes that have stalled and preserving built heritage where possible. This includes a particular focus on the Tribeca site. This will require concerted public and private sector commitment. • A multi-Agency approach to Place Keeping and City Management - ensuring the city centre is well managed, clean, safe, accessible, vibrant and animated, capitalising on Belfast's distinct draw.
4.5	<p>The purpose of the Regeneration Tracker, which will be presented to this Committee, is to provide Members with an overview of regeneration and development activity which has taken place in</p>

	Belfast City Centre and Titanic Quarter during 2024 (1st January – 31st December), aligned to the eight core policies outlined within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.
4.6	A number of the core principles and projects and developments identified within BCCRIS have progressed well since 2015 to date (and in particular during 2024 which will be the focus of the presentation to Committee). This has included retail, office refurbishment, hotel and tourism, purpose-built student accommodation and major developments identified in BCCRIS such as the relocation of the University Ulster, progression of the new Transport Hub and Weavers Cross development, progression of City Deal projects including the Belfast Stories tourist attraction, waterfront development etc. Whilst retail across the UK has remained challenging previous reports to this Committee have shown that city centre ground floor vacancy levels have decreased from 23% to 21% in 2024 and there have been a number of new first to Belfast /first to market brands who have recently located in the city centre.
4.7	It is however recognised that challenges remain around city centre living, place-keeping and public realm, dereliction, and infrastructure investment. As reported to CGR in February 2024 and through the BCCRIS Stocktake the lack of regeneration related funding for Belfast (and the wider region) as compared to other UK city regions has put Belfast at a distinct disadvantage in terms of city competitiveness and addressing issues of viability, place making and progressing development and regeneration including housing and increased city centre living. As highlighted to Committee there are a number of funding streams available in other UK cities that have helped accelerate development inc the Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund, Future High Streets Fund, Transforming Cities Fund etc. The experience from other cities has shown that these have been critical in order to realise the full regeneration potential of their city centres and to meet wider city region requirements.
4.8	Notwithstanding the lack of this external funding, the Regeneration Tracker presentation to be made to Committee will highlight positive development activity during the 2024 period across the private and public sectors. In order to deliver the growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda to 2035 it has been estimated that this will require c £5.5bn investment and clearly the role of the private sector is critical in this. The Regeneration Tracker details the extensive private sector development delivered in 2024 along with highlighting some of the projects where Belfast City Council are leading on the delivery of addressing some of our key sectors for growth. This includes the Housing Led Regeneration Programme, the Bolder Vision, Strategic Property Acquisitions, Belfast Region City Deal Projects inc Belfast Stories, Cathedral Gardens redevelopment, and the Vacant to Vibrant Programme.

4.9	<p>An update on these various areas of work have been brought to both CGR and SP&R Committees. In terms of city centre living specifically it is worth highlighting the update brought to the March 2025 CGR Committee in relation to the housing led regeneration programme. This included an update appointment of Graham as the Council's Delivery Partner for a significant multi-site, residential led mixed use regeneration development opportunity (c £630m GDV). This followed the development of a number of Concept Regeneration Plans for Council and wider public and private sector lands and PADS for each of the cluster sites. Members were also updated on the Inner North West Development Brief which has now been awarded to Clanmil Housing Association. An update was also provided in relation to the city-wide Strategic Site Assessments where planning appraisals and feasibility studies are underway, and a number of sites agreed to progress to exploring delivery options.</p>
4.10	<p>It is worth highlighting that there are a significant number of consented residential units / schemes that have come through the planning system in the city centre particularly, and that many of these have not progressed for various reasons including issues around policy, viability, infrastructure etc, most of which are outside Council's responsibility. Notwithstanding this however it is worth noting that there are currently over 950+ homes under construction across 3 city centre sites, and over 1,503 social homes under construction across the city.</p>
4.11	<p>The Regeneration Tracker will present an update on the progress of development and regeneration activity within the city centre in 2024 as well as identifying challenges and proposed next steps to unlocking the next stage of the delivery, in line with the BCCRIS Stocktake, for discussion with Members.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
6.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
7.0	<p><u>Appendices - Documents Attached</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>