



Subject:	Shaping Sustainable Places Consultation Response
Date:	19 September 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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 <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. 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 matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To provide an update on the decision of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee in respect of the Council response to the DfC consultation on the proposed 'Shaping Sustainable Places'

	programme and to seek agreement on the elements of Council response relating to Council contribution and resource allocation.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Note the response to the DfC Shaping Sustainable Places consultation as agreed by the City Growth & Committee on 10 September 2025, on the basis that this would be subject to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee's consideration to the elements of the response relating to Council financial contribution and resource allocation. (ii) Agree the elements of the Council response relating to Council financial contribution and resource allocation. (iii) Note that the response will be submitted to DfC on the 21 September, subject to Council ratification on the 1 October 2025.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members are asked to refer to the report presented to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee on 10 September 2025 which can be found at Appendix A. The City Growth & Regeneration Committee approved a response to the DfC Shaping Sustainable Places consultation and noted that the response would be submitted to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee given the potential financial and resource implications of the programme. This sets out that DfC launched a public consultation on the 23 June on their proposed 'Shaping Sustainable Places' programme (attached at Appendix C), with consultation responses required by the 21 September 2025. This programme is proposed to take a similar approach to the DfC led Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, with DfC, DfI & DEARA working together to provide a long-term regeneration strategy for the region's villages, towns and city centres. The initiative aims to address issues like dereliction, vacancy, and declining footfall by investing in placemaking, adaptive reuse of buildings, and climate-resilient infrastructure.
3.2	Each government department (DfC, DAERA and DfI) are proposing to jointly fund a multi-year approach to enable councils across NI to deliver on departmental/council priorities. Pending approval through DoF, the partners intend to provide £5m each per annum of capital funding to a region wide funding pot for 10 years, totalling £150m with each Department contributing £50million over a ten-year period. At this stage it is not clear how the funding would be allocated per Council area, although some concepts for this are tested within the consultation.
3.3	The funding model proposed assumes a further minimum contribution of 10% (approximately £15 million) from Local Councils, which is important to clarify that such contributions cannot be presumed. It has been highlighted within the attached draft response (Appendix B) that Councils operate within defined governance frameworks and statutory processes regarding

	capital expenditure, and any financial commitment must be subject to formal approval. It is assumed that this will be assessed on a project-by-project basis.
3.4	<p>The draft Council response, attached at Appendix B, as agreed by the City Growth & Regeneration Committee on 10 September 2025, broadly supports the proposed vision and principles of Shaping Sustainable Places, particularly its emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place-based regeneration • Early and meaningful community engagement • Collaborative delivery models • Long-term, secured funding <p>These principles strongly align with the Belfast Agenda 2024–2028, which articulates a shared vision for Belfast as an inclusive, resilient, and thriving city.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Key Considerations Contained within the Draft Response</u></p> <p>As set out in the report to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee on 10 September 2025; the following key considerations including potential finance and resource implications for Council are highlighted:</p>
3.6	<p>i) Clarification on Departmental aims and additionality</p> <p>It remains unclear how this proposed programme will operate within existing constrained budgets and existing Executive level commitments. The draft response seeks clarification on whether this funding is additional to existing Executive level commitments/budgets/programmes, or whether Councils would be expected to deliver government priorities using this programme, i.e. will Councils be expected to consider, prioritise and deliver projects such as elements of the Eastern Transport Plan, Belfast Streets Ahead etc or will these remain within the Executive departments, and if so what are impacts of allocating budget to the Shaping Sustainable Places on the delivery timeframes of Executive strategic projects.</p>
3.7	<p>The scale of under investment in Belfast is significant, especially when considering that Belfast City Centre is the economic driver for the Region. Belfast currently has multiple major schemes pending funding, primarily via DfC and DfI, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Belfast Streets Ahead Phases 3 and 5 (DfC). ➤ Gateway projects at Shankill, Clifton and Fredrick Streets ➤ Belfast Cycle Network, BRT Phase 2 and other active infrastructure (DfI) ➤ Under the Bridges, Sailortown Bridge and emerging schemes linked to the Eastern Transport Plan

3.8	This is exacerbated by the lack of specific regeneration funding streams that are available to Belfast (and wider NI region) as compared to elsewhere in the UK. As set out in the report brought to City Growth & Regeneration Committee on the Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast, the city has experienced a regeneration deficit as it historically has not attracted as much funding, investment or spend on regeneration and local growth as other cities in the UK.
3.9	A combination of funds not being applicable to the devolved administrations and Northern Ireland receiving relatively lower allocations from funds operating on a competitive basis means that Northern Ireland has amongst the lowest spend on regeneration and local growth per head of population, compared to Scotland, Wales and English regions – nearly half the regional average spend per capita. This outcome is not reflective of need for regeneration in Belfast relative to other cities in England, Scotland or Wales or Northern Ireland more broadly. Arguably the need is greater in a Northern Ireland context. A number of specific regeneration funds available in the rest of the UK have not been available in Northern Ireland which has led to a clear deficit and a missed opportunity for growth and positive economic, regeneration, social and environmental outcomes.
3.10	The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, envisions a fundamental change of the relationship between Whitehall and local government in England – with the intent of tackling regional inequality by transferring authority and funding over key policy areas and funding, such as economic development, housing, planning, transport and skills. There is now a presumption in favour of devolution on foot of this White Paper and with the creation of new Strategic Authorities this means funding and legislative powers will be further devolved in other UK cities. The transfer of additional funding and power to these Strategic Authorities across the whole of England will allow Councils to set and deliver on priorities that better respond to local needs and drive growth.
3.11	Increased funding pots and flexibilities are to be afforded to those Strategic Authorities that progress within the devolution framework, with single-pot integrated settlements over 30 years and access to consolidated funding pots covering local growth, place, housing, and regeneration, non-apprenticeship adult skills and transport. These funding agreements provide a 30-year investment promise – by way of example, Cambridge and Peterborough will receive £30m per annum, North of Tyne £48m per annum and West Midlands £36m per annum.
3.12	Belfast is already facing a regeneration deficit in both powers and funding and could be left even further behind if there are not commensurate levels of funding as with other core cities.

	<p>This could make it even harder for the city to attract the resources needed to unlock demand and growth.</p>
3.13	<p>It is therefore essential that Departments clarify whether this new funding stream will replace historic investment programmes or run alongside them and that recognition. Without this clarity, there is significant risk that the ambition of the programme will far exceed its funding capacity. In addition, the Council would ask that DfC, DfI and DAERA support them in their ask for additional place based regeneration funding via Westminster commensurate with the approach and level of funding pots being afforded to other UK cities as a result of the Devolution White Paper proposals</p>
3.14	<p>iii) Council contribution and governance considerations</p> <p>Whilst a minimum 10% contribution is assumed, the draft response makes it clear that financial contributions cannot be assumed and would be subject to Councils own governance and approvals processes.</p>
3.15	<p>iv) Delivery capacity and resources</p> <p>Effective delivery of complex regeneration projects requires not only robust governance but also sufficient resourcing to navigate statutory approvals and technical processes. Where Councils are expected to take a leadership role, resources must extend beyond capital allocation and include dedicated funding for inhouse delivery teams, provision for a management fee to support project management functions, and specialist feasibility development support to prepare capital ready pipelines. To enable this, it is recommended that a portion of funding is ringfenced for early-stage activities including feasibility assessment, design development and meaningful community engagement, ensuring that projects are both viable and deliverable before significant capital spend is committed. It is also proposed that the requested 10% contribution could be assessed in terms of in-kind contribution in terms of staff and resource to deliver, although as above this will also be subject to Councils own governance and approvals process.</p>
3.16	<p>v) Support for competitive funding streams</p> <p>The draft response supports the use of thematic competitive funding (e.g. heritage assets, climate resilience, and economic centres) as a means to catalyse targeted investment and unlock place-based economic potential. These thematic streams can stimulate local enterprise, attract co-investment, and accelerate regeneration outcomes when aligned with strategic priorities. However, it is important to highlight that competitive mechanisms must complement and not compromise the foundational funding required to plan and deliver coherent programmes at scale. The assessment criteria needs to clearly set out how projects</p>

	would be evaluated, with a particular focus on the economic impact of the investment to ensure the greatest delivery of benefit.
3.17	Members are asked to note the agreed response from the City Growth & Regeneration Committee as included within Appendix B of this report, and to approve elements of the response relating to Council contributions and resource allocation as identified above. The response will be submitted to DfC as draft and will be submitted subject to final Council ratification on the 1 October 2025.
3.18	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> The Committee are asked to consider and agree the response to the Financial & Resource implications included within this response.
3.19	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> Equality, Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment have not been undertaken in the drafting of this response, although they have been considered. Detailed assessments will be required should the programme come forward.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix A – City Growth & Regeneration Committee report on Shaping Sustainable Places Consultation Draft Response</p> <p>Appendix B - Shaping Sustainable Places consultation (draft) Corporate Response</p> <p>Appendix C – Electronic link to the Shaping Sustainable Places Consultation 2025: https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Shaping-Sustainable-Places-consultation.pdf </p>