



Annual Monitoring Report

for Financial Developer Contributions

April 2015 - March 2020

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Belfast
City Council

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Since the reform of local government and transfer of planning powers to councils in April 2015, Belfast City Council has secured over £3.5 million in financial Developer Contributions, required to mitigate the impacts of new development on the city and make it acceptable.

This document is the Council's inaugural Annual Monitoring Report, which publishes for the first time, key information around financial Developer Contributions collected to date. As it is the first annual report it covers the financial period from April 2015 to March 2020.

The main aims of the Annual Monitoring Report are as follows:

- To set out what monies have been secured to date and for which purpose;
- To confirm what monies have been paid to the Council so far;
- To clarify what monies have been committed and in which areas;
- To confirm what monies have been spent and on which projects; and
- To provide greater transparency around the process of Developer Contributions

Developer Contributions

Many forms of development give rise to impacts on the city's existing infrastructure, and need new or improved infrastructure if the impacts of development are to be appropriately managed. The [Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland](#) (SPPS) establishes the principle that developers should be '*...expected to pay for, or contribute to, the cost of infrastructure that would not have been necessary but for the development or which needs to be rescheduled to facilitate the development.*' These are known as Developer Contributions. Moreover, Developer Contributions can be used to help manage the environmental impacts of new development by securing appropriate mitigation, compensation or monitoring.

Developer Contributions may either be "in kind" or financial, whether it is to facilitate the provision of infrastructure that is needed to support the development; or to manage the environmental effects of development to an acceptable level. "In kind" contributions are where the developer directly provides the infrastructure or environmental mitigation themselves. "Financial contributions" are where the developer pays a commuted sum to the council or a government department, which will then be used to deliver the infrastructure or environmental mitigation. The monies received will be ring-fenced solely for that purpose. Examples of such contributions include financial contributions towards future management and maintenance of Public Open Space; delivery of public realm; and employability and skills interventions.

Developer Contribution Framework

The Council published its [Developer Contributions Framework](#) in January 2020. The Framework sets out the Council's approach to securing Developer Contributions, including financial contributions, through the planning application process. It is intended for use by applicants,

developers, elected members and the public, and by planning officers in the assessment of planning applications within Belfast.

The Framework brings together existing regional and local planning policies on Developer Contributions and sets out the council's interpretation of those policies. The Framework should be read in conjunction with the existing planning policy framework, including the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS), Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP).

Planning Agreements

The means for securing financial Developer Contributions through the planning application process is by a Planning Agreement under Section 76 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. A Planning Agreement is a legally binding agreement between the relevant parties, normally between the council, landowner, applicant and any other parties directly involved in fulfilling the agreement. Planning Agreements are used to secure a Planning Obligation where it is not possible to do so by way of a planning condition.

Developer Contributions that take the form of financial payments must always be secured by a Planning Agreement and cannot be required by a planning condition.

A Planning Agreement is a public document and forms part of the planning permission for the development. It must be signed by the parties before planning permission can be issued. Planning Agreements sit alongside the planning permission decision notice and will be published on the Northern Ireland Planning Portal website in due course.

Specific guidance on the use of planning agreements is provided by the Department for Infrastructure's [Development Management Practice Note 21: Section 76 Planning Agreements](#).

Monitoring of Planning Agreements

All Planning Agreements, including those that secure financial Developer Contributions, are routinely monitored by the Council's Planning Service to ensure compliance. The Council has a dedicated Section 76 Monitoring Officer whose role is to record and monitor all signed Planning Agreements. The Council maintains a database which records and provides the financial information contained in this Annual Monitoring Report.

Chapter 2: Overview of Financial Developer Contributions

Background

This chapter provides an overview of overall Financial Developer Contribution activity since April 2015.

During the period April 2015 to March 2020, the Council entered into a total of 41 Planning Agreements, of which 26 secured Financial Developer Contributions. The remaining Planning Agreements secured non-financial planning obligations in areas such as travel plans, travel cards and other green transport measures; management of land; management of Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation; affordable housing; and apprenticeships during the construction phase. These are not reported in this Annual Monitoring Report.

Summary of overall activity

A total of £3,594,721 was secured in principle against a total of £2,374,208.43 (including interest) received by the Council.

Table 1 below provides an overall summary of Financial Developer Contribution secured, received, committed and spent from April 2015 to March 2020.

The Total Amount Secured in Principle column shows the Financial Developer Contribution secured through the planning application process by type of contribution. The Total Amount Received does not necessarily correspond with the Total Amount Secured in Principle because the payment is not required to be made to the Council until the relevant trigger is met, typically on commencement of development or occupation. In addition, it is important to note that there are some occasions where developers decide not to implement their planning permission and subsequently, the amount secured in principle from the Section 76 Agreement does not need to be paid.

Table 1 also shows the total amount committed and spent during this period.

Categories	Total Amount Secured in Principle	Total Amount Received	Total Amount Committed	Total Amount Spent
Public Open Space	£278,750	£54,497.43	£0	£0
Pedestrian Crossings	£304,778	£243,728	£0	£0
Public Realm	£3,011,193	£2,075,983	£585,650	£0
Total	£3,594,721	£2,374,208.43	£585,650	£0

Table 1: Overall summary of activity from April 2015 to March 2020

Table 2 below shows the overall activity during each financial year since April 2015.

In recent years, there has been a move towards more 'in kind' contributions rather than financial as advocated by the Developer Contribution Framework. This is because it is normally more cost efficient and practical for the developer to directly provide the contribution themselves. It also provides more certainty on delivery, as the developer usually put the measures in place whilst they are constructing the development.

For 2019/20, the Total Amount Received exceeds the Total Amount Secured in Principle because payments were received in relation to Planning Agreements from previous years. In addition, the Council was able to recoup a number of late payments following proactive monitoring of the Planning Agreements. Interest is charged for late payments.

Year	Total Amount Secured in Principle	Total Amount Received (Inc. Interest)	Total Amount Committed	Total Amount Spent
2015/16	£0	£0	£0	£0
2016/17	£1,570,972	£1,011,872	£0	£0
2017/18	£945,501	£309,600	£0	£0
2018/19	£360,750	£207,546	£475,650	£0
2019/20	£717,498	£845,190.43	£110,000	£0
Total	£3,594,721	£2,374,208.43	£585,650	£0

Table 2: Income secured and received by financial year

Table 3 below details the amount received per category for each of the financial years.

Categories	Income received during 15/16	Income received during 16/17	Income received during 17/18	Income received during 18/19	Income received during 19/20	Total
Public Realm Improvement Works (PRIW)	£0	£1,011,872	£309,600	£103,773	£650,738	£2,075,983
Public Open Space	£0	£0	£0	£0	£54,497.43	£54,497.43
Pedestrian Crossing	£0	£0	£0	£103,773	£139,955	£243,728
Total	£0	£1,011,872	£309,600	£207,546	£845,190.43	£2,374,208.43

Table 3: Income received per category for each financial year

Charts 1 and 2 below illustrate the relative difference in Financial Developer Contributions Secured in Principle and actually received between April 2015 to March 2020 according to the three categories of contribution.

Chart 1 shows that 84% of monies Secured in Principle during the period were for public realm, 8% open space and the remaining 8% pedestrian crossings.

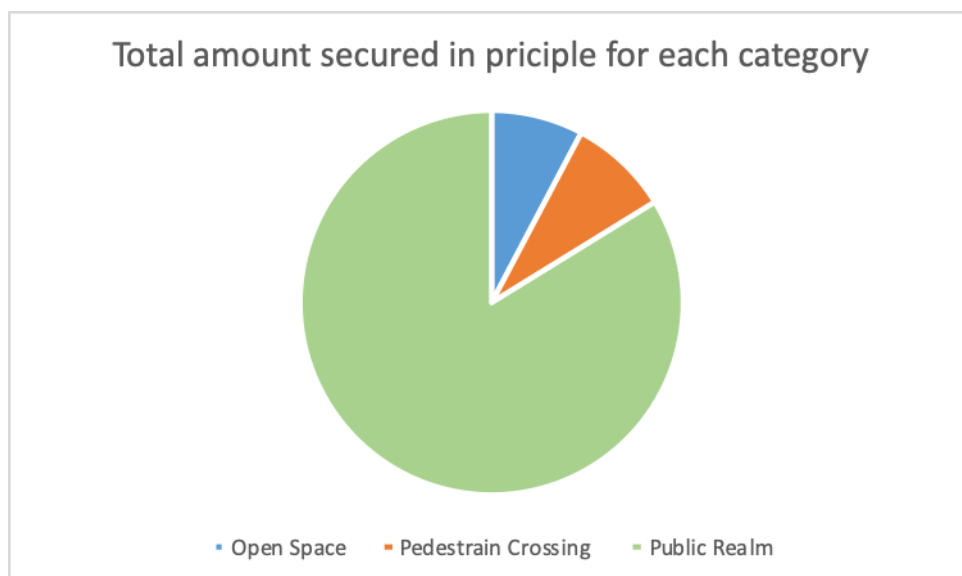


Chart 1: Total amount secured in principle from Financial Contributions for each category

Chart 2 below shows that 87% of the total money Received during the period was for public realm, 10% pedestrian crossing and 2% open space.

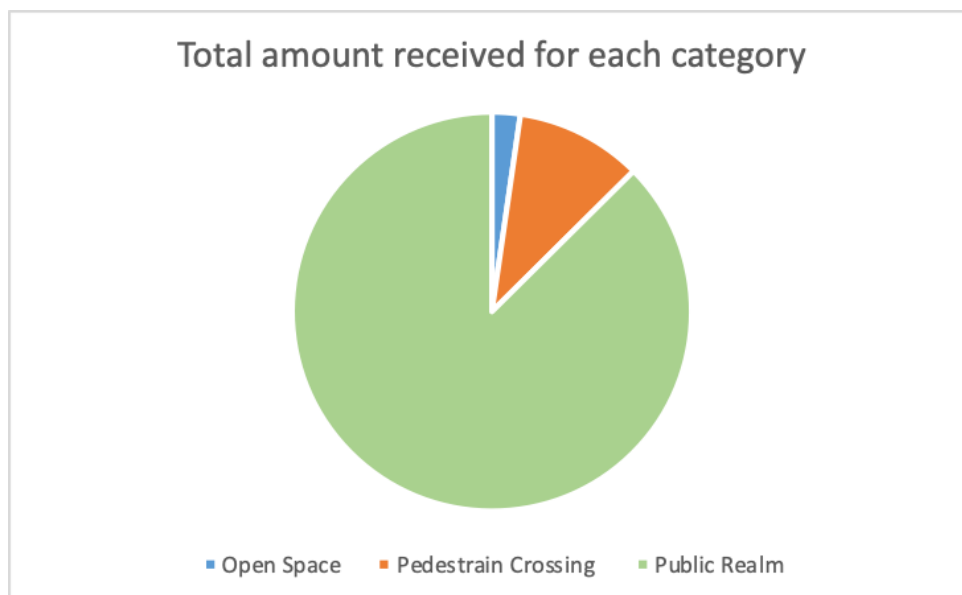


Chart 2: Total income received from Financial Contributions in each category

Commitments and Spending

In January 2020, the Council agreed that individual service areas within Belfast City Council would be responsible for managing financial contributions according to their related areas of spend. Table 4 below summarises the lead service areas by category of Financial Developer Contribution secured to date. In future, once secured, financial contributions towards employability and skills will be managed by the Economic Development Unit.

Category of Financial Contribution	Lead Service Area
Public Realm Improvement Works (PRIW)	City, Regeneration & Development
Public Open Space	Physical Programme Team
Pedestrian Crossings	City, Regeneration & Development

Table 4: Belfast City Council Lead Service Areas responsible for managing spend

To date, £585,650 of £2,374,208.43 received has been committed by the Council to specific projects.

In partnership with the Department for Communities, the Council has committed £475,650 towards a pilot 'Catalyst' public realm project in the vicinity of College Avenue, College Street and College Court. This was agreed by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2018. The Council is to utilise Financial Developer Contributions received in relation to planning permissions LA04/2015/1252/F (41-49 Queen Street) and LA04/2015/0419/F (78 College Avenue). The Department for Communities will work with the Council on this pilot project and will provide gap funding to help deliver the scheme.

In November 2019, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to spend £110,000 on a Public realm upgrade scheme on Chichester Street. This will comprise new surfacing, bollards, lighting, seating, paving, kerbs and associated site works. This financial contribution is in relation to the development of Erskine House: new premises for HMRC with ground floor retail (LA04/2016/1789/F). The works are to be undertaken by the developer and the monies are to be transferred to the developer only on completion.

In terms of spending, no monies have been spent by the Council to date.

Chapter 3: Public Realm

Background

As described in Chapter 2, the vast majority of Financial Developer Contributions secured in principle since April 2015 have been in relation to public realm works.

The Developer Contributions Framework defines public realm as ‘...*the space between buildings where people have free access (whether publicly or privately owned), such as streets and public squares*’. Larger scale developments, including business, commercial and residential proposals, have the potential to create significant footfall in the urban environments in which they are located. In the interests of connectivity and good design, it is important that those developments contribute to the upgrading and enhancement of the public realm where it is not up to standard in order to promote safer and more sustainable access such as walking and cycling, as well as promoting better designed places

A Total of 22 Planning Agreements require the developer to pay a Financial Developer Contribution to the Council for improving the Public Realm. The majority of these agreements are associated with Major developments located in Belfast City Centre with nine being for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation. The maps at Appendix 1 show the spatial location of the planning permissions that secure Financial Developer Contributions towards Public Realm across the city.

Proposals for Major development will normally be expected to make a contribution to the improvement and enhancement of the public realm because of their scale, whether by direct “in kind” provision or by means of a Financial Developer Contribution.

The Council’s City Regeneration and Development team are responsible for managing Financial Developer Contributions secured in relation to public realm.

Summary of overall activity

During the period April 2015 to March 2020, a total of £3,011,193 was secured in principle towards public realm improvements against a total of £2,075,983 received by the Council.

Table 5 below provides an overview of each of the Planning Agreements that require a Financial Developer Contribution towards public realm improvements.

Planning Reference	Site Address	Development Title (where known)	Amount Secured in Principle	Amount Received	Committed or Spent
LA04/2015/0418/F	Land south of Franklin Street East of Brunswick Street and West of McClintock Street Belfast BT2 7GX	Maldron Hotel	£115,000	£115,000	No
LA04/2015/0420/F & LA04/2018/0824/F	1 McClintock Street, Belfast, BT2 7GL	Elms BT2	£220,500	£220,500	No

Planning Reference	Site Address	Development Title (where known)	Amount Secured in Principle	Amount Received	Committed or Spent
LA04/2015/0264/F	Lands bounded by Bedford Street INI building McClintock Street and Franklin Street BT2 7GP	Bedford Square phase 2	£260,000	No	N/A
LA04/2015/1175/F	Lands at 78-86 Dublin Road Belfast BT2 7BY	Botanic Studios	£100,000	£100,000	No
LA04/2015/1252/F	41-49 Queen Street 24-30 College Street and 29 Wellington Place Belfast	Swanston Hall (Athletic Stores)	£142,650	£142,650	Committed
LA04/2015/0419/F & LA04/2018/0831/F	78 College Avenue Belfast BT1 6BU	Elms BT1	£336,150	£336,150	£333,000 Committed
LA04/2016/0967/F	55-71 Ormeau Road	Portland 88	£30,000	No	N/A
Z/2014/1657/F	Site at 28-30 Great Patrick Street Belfast BT1 2LT		£237,500	£237,500	No
LA04/2016/1789/F	7-9 Arthur Street 20-32 Chichester Street and existing building at 34-36 Chichester Street	Erskine House	£110,000	£110,000	Committed
Z/2015/0177/F	123-137 York Street Belfast BT15 1AB	123 York Street	£142,450	No	N/A
LA04/2017/2306/F	Nos. 26-44 Little Patrick Street, Belfast		£103,773	£103,773	No
LA04/2016/2385/F	81-107 York Street Belfast		£200,000	£200,000	No
LA04/2016/1252/F	Site bounded by Little York Street Great George's Street and Nelson Street Belfast	Athena House	£309,600	£309,600	No
LA04/2015/0707/F	Land at 33-39 Bridge End Belfast south of Bridge End and east of Belfast/Londonderry railway line.	The Sandford	£16,000	No	N/A

Planning Reference	Site Address	Development Title (where known)	Amount Secured in Principle	Amount Received	Committed or Spent
LA04/2019/0909/F	Lands at no.s 43-63 Chichester Street, 29-31 Gloucester Street and Seymour Lane, Belfast.	The Paper Exchange	£200,810	£200,810	No
LA04/2016/0548/F	19-27 Chichester Street Belfast BT1 4JB	Chichester House	£85,000	No	N/A
LA04/2017/0288/F	4-5 Donegall Square South		£100,000	No	N/A
LA04/2017/1707/F	1-5 Albert Square	Graham House	£116,760	No	N/A
Z/2015/0176/F	21-29 Corporation Street and 18-24 Tomb Street Belfast BT1 3BA		£125,000	No	N/A
Z/2015/0118/F	37-41 Little Patrick Street		£60,000	No	N/A

Table 5: Overview of Planning Agreements securing Public Realm

Commitments and Spending

As explained in Chapter 2, £475,650 has been committed by the Council towards a pilot ‘Catalyst’ public realm project in the vicinity of College Avenue, College Street and College Court. The Department for Communities will work with the Council on the pilot project and will provide gap funding to help deliver the scheme. These monies have been assigned from the planning agreements for two PBMSA schemes in the immediate vicinity of the pilot project area. These are the Student Roost, Swanston House, No, 41-49 Queen Street (LA04/2015/1252/F) and No. 78 College Avenue (LA04/2015/0419/F).

£110,000 has also been committed as a public realm upgrade scheme associated with Erskine House LA04/2016/1789/F, comprising new surfacing, bollards, lighting, seating, paving, kerbs and associated site works. The proposals were recognised as delivering high quality and sympathetic public realm enhancements which will enhance the character and appearance of this part of the city centre conservation area. A combination of high quality bollards and light stacks, soft landscaping in the form of street level planters and granite paving to a “Streets Ahead” standard will ensure a quality of public realm that significantly exceeds the current specification on the ground.

In terms of spending, no monies have been spent by the Council to date.

Chapter 4: Public Open Space

Background

The Developer Contributions Framework describe Open Space as ‘All open space of public value, including green infrastructure and civic space, as set out in the Belfast Open Space Strategy. It also includes inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals and reservoirs that offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and can also act as a visual amenity’. It is vital that people have good access to open space for health, social and recreational reasons.

Four Planning Agreements require payment of a Financial Developer Contribution towards new or improved public open space. The maps at Appendix 1 show the spatial location of the planning permissions that secure Financial Developer Contributions for Public Open Space across the city.

The Physical Programmes Department are responsible for managing Financial Developer Contributions received in connection with Public Open Space.

Summary of Overall Activity

During the period April 2015 to March 2020, a total of £278,750 was secured in principle towards public open space against a total of £54,497.43 received.

Table 6 below provides an overview of each of the Planning Agreements that require a Financial Developer Contribution towards Public Open Space.

Planning Reference	Site Address	Development Title (where known)	Amount Secured in Principle	Amount Received	Committed or spent
LA04/2019/0025/F	Parklands Knocknagoney Dale Knocknagoney Belfast		£90,000 ¹	No	N/A
LA04/2017/0235/F	Rosepark House, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 3NR	Rosepark House	£53,000	£54,497.43 (including £1,497.43 interest)	No
LA04/2015/0670/F	Lands at Castlehill Manor Castlehill Road Belfast	Castlehill Manor	£39,750	No	N/A
LA04/2015/0668/F	Lands adjacent and East of No.43 Stockmans Way Belfast		£96,000	No	N/A

Table 6: Overview of Planning Agreements securing Public Open Space

¹ This contribution of £90,000 for Parklands, Knocknagoney is on the same site as an earlier planning agreement. The second permission is being implemented and so only that sum is recorded to ensure there is no double counting of the financial contribution.

Commitments and Spending

No Financial Developer Contribution towards Public Open Space have been committed or spent to date.

Chapter 5: Pedestrian Crossings

Background

The Developer Contributions Framework states that *‘Larger proposals that require a Transport Assessment are more likely to identify the need for specific measures to address infrastructure and sustainable transport contributions’*. The need for new or improved transport infrastructure will be identified by the Council in consultation with the Department for Infrastructure Roads Service.

A total of 3 Planning Agreements secure Financial Developer Contribution towards new Pedestrian Crossings. Two out of the three contributions have already been paid to the Council. The maps at Appendix 1 show the spatial location of the planning permissions that secure Financial Developer Contributions for Pedestrian Crossings across the city.

The City Regeneration and Development team are responsible for managing Financial Developer Contribution for Pedestrian Crossings.

Summary of Overall Activity

During the period April 2015 to March 2020, a total of £304,778 was secured in principle towards pedestrian crossing against a total of £243,728 received.

Table 7 below provides an overview of each of the Planning Agreements that require a Financial Developer Contribution towards Pedestrian Crossings.

Planning Reference	Site Address	Amount Secured in principle	Amount Received	Committed or spent
Z/2015/0177/F	123-137 York Street Belfast BT15 1AB	£61,050	No	N/A
LA04/2017/2306/F	26-44 Little Patrick Street	£103,773	£103,773	No
LA04/2016/2385/F	81-107 York Street Belfast	£139,955	£139,955	No

Table 7: Overview of Planning Agreements securing pedestrian crossings

Commitments and Spending

No Financial Developer Contribution towards Pedestrian Crossings have been committed or spent to date.

Chapter 6: Next Steps

The Council's Planning Service will continue to secure financial contributions through the planning application process in accordance with the Developer Contribution Framework and regional policy.

In line with the Council's adopted approach, this is likely to result in proportionately more in-kind contributions and less financial contributions. However, it is expected that the breadth and type of financial contributions will expand, with the potential for new categories such as contributions towards employability and skills, and community facilities.

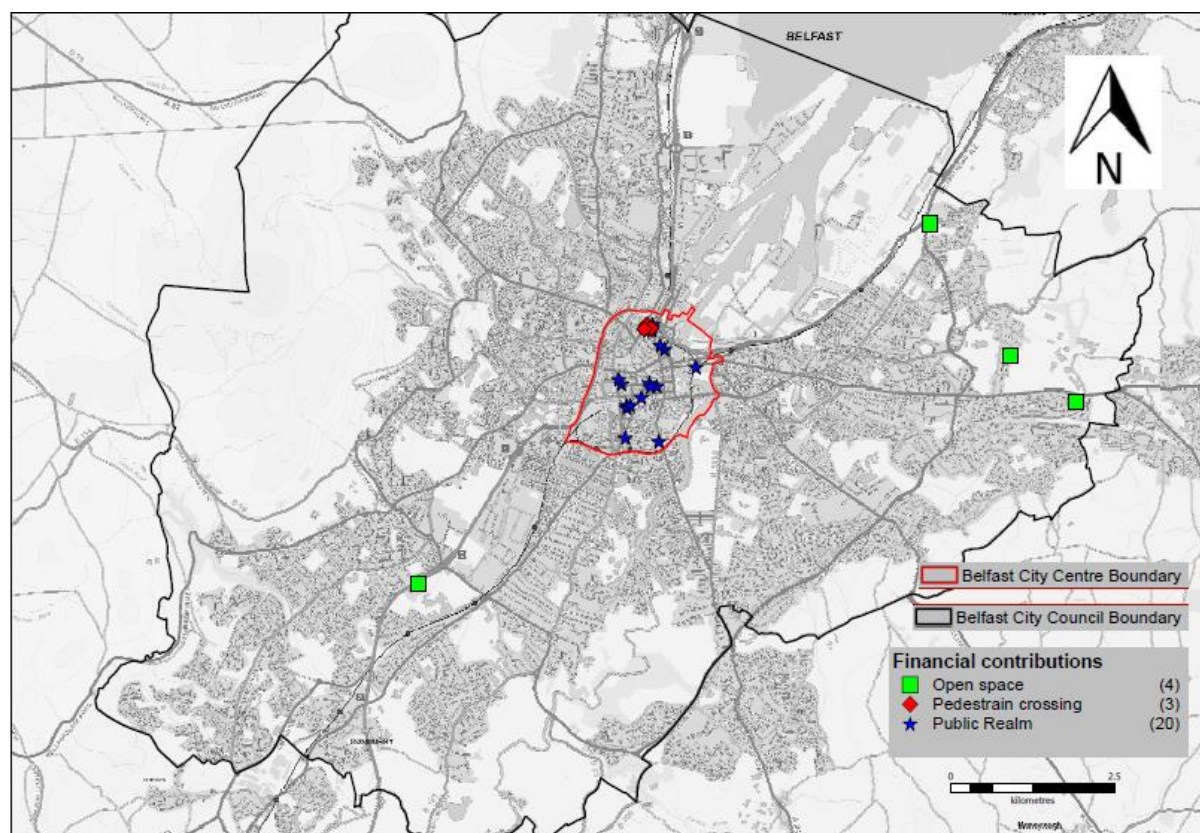
The Planning Service will continue to work with other areas of the Council, notably the City, Regeneration and Development team and Physical Programme Department to identify further projects against which financial contributions can be committed and spent. The Planning Service is also working closely with the Economic Development Unit to bring forward new internal processes for identifying and securing Developer Contributions towards employability and skills.

The Planning Service's Section 76 Monitoring Officer will continue to proactively monitor completed planning agreements to ensure compliance, securing interest on late payments. This will ensure that monies are properly received, assigned and spent for the purposes for which they were secured in the interests of the city.

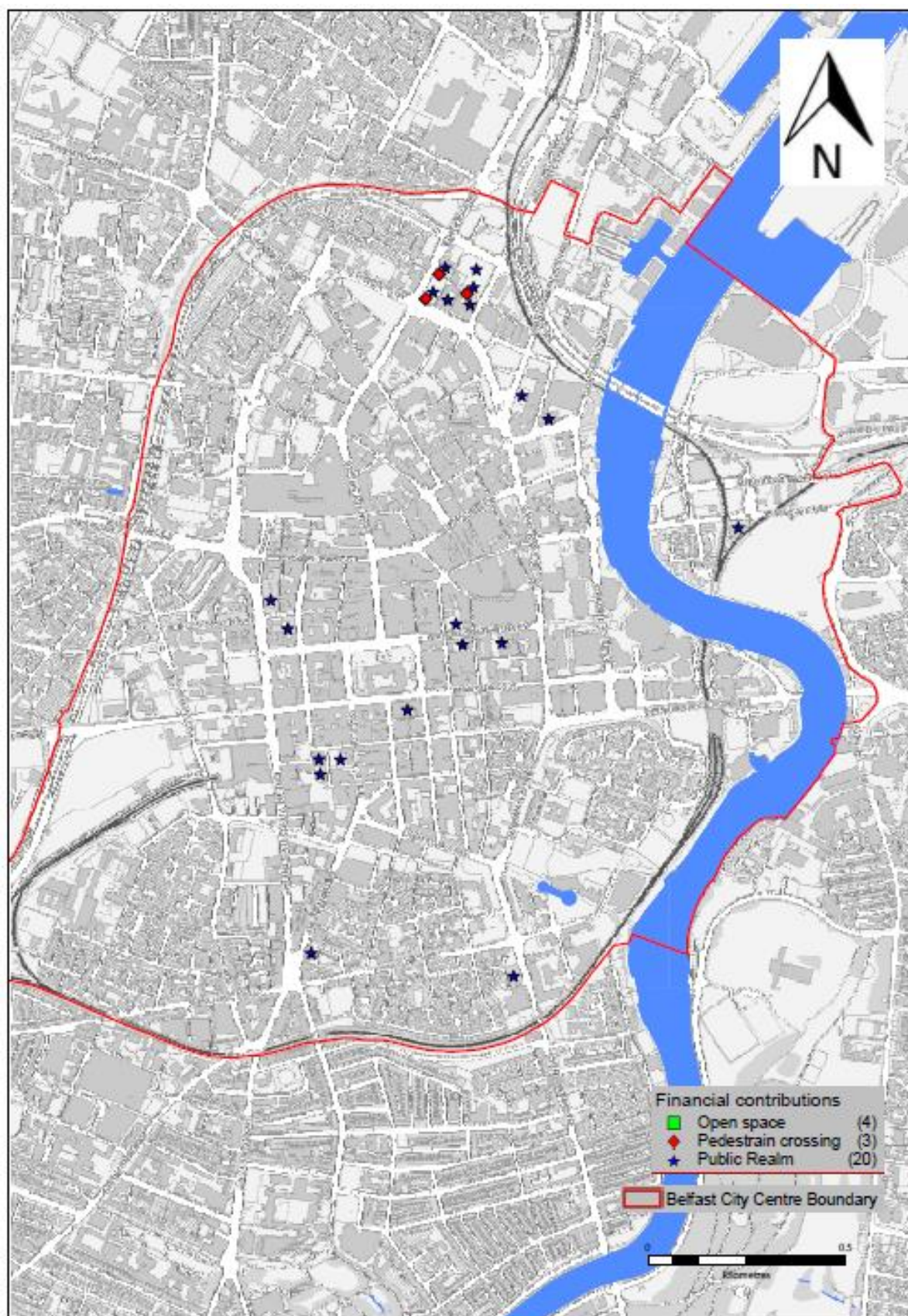
Finally, the Council's Planning Service will prepare an Annual Monitoring Report for 2020/21 for publication over the summer 2021. This will include an update of the information contained in this inaugural Annual Monitoring Report.

Appendix 1:

Maps showing the location of Financial Developer Contributions across Belfast



Map 1: Location of Financial Developer Contributions across the wider City



Map 2: Location of Financial Developer Contributions across the City Centre

Further Information

For more information about Financial Developer Contributions and Planning Agreements secured between April 2015 and March 2020 please use the following contact details.

General Enquiries

Section 76 Monitoring Officer (Planning Service)

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