DPS009

Belfast Local Development Plan

Technical Supplement 3
Employment and Economy
August 2018

Belfast City Council

Energising Belfast

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/LDP

Contents

Appendices

Table of Figures

1.0 Introduction

Purpose of Document

1.1 This technical document has been prepared to draw together the evidence base that has been used to inform the preparation of the Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035. It is one of a suite of topic-based Technical Supplements that should be read alongside the LDP to understand the rationale and justification for the policies proposed within the draft Plan Strategy.

1.2 It builds upon the suite of 17 thematic Topic Papers prepared and published alongside the Preferred Options Paper (POP), which established the baseline position as at April 2017 and identified the key issues that need to be addressed by the LDP. This Employment Technical Supplement therefore updates this baseline position and sets out the evidence base that has informed each of the employment policies within the draft Plan Strategy.

1.3 Again, it forms part of a series of thematic reports to accompany the draft Plan Strategy. Whilst each of the Technical Supplements can be read separately, there are inevitably some important related matters and background evidence within other Technical Supplements also.

1.4 It should be noted that the evidence base collected to inform the LDP also forms the basis on which a series of additional assessments and appraisals required as part of the plan preparation process, most notably the Sustainability Appraisal. By combining the evidence gathering stages for both the Sustainability Appraisal and Local Development Plan, we aim to streamline the documentation produced and avoid duplication. It will also help to ensure that sustainable development is embedded in the planning process and that the Sustainability Appraisal is one of the main drivers informing the preparation of the LDP.

Planning and Employment

1.5 Employment and economic growth play a vital role in the planning system in delivering sustainable goals for the public good, improving the social and economic prospects of all residents.

1.6 Planning should manage development with regard to encouraging economic prosperity. Whilst planning should promote economic development, it must also seek to remain flexible enough to adapt to changing business environments so that future growth is not stymied.

1.7 Facilitating employment in the right location is critical to the future economic growth of Belfast. The city plays an important role regionally, containing several major and strategic employment areas and also accounts for 31 per cent of all jobs in the region[1], therefore an economically successful Belfast is critical.

1.8 It is important that the new plan is based on an accurate assessment of the amount, quality, connectivity and location of employment land to be planned for the city. The best information has been used in compiling this paper however it may need to be revised in

[1] Belfast City Council (April 2017), 'Belfast facts and figures'.

light of the release of any new data. It contains data that refers in places to the former BMAP pre-local Government reform, however, where possible data has been included which relates to the new Belfast Council area to provide a more up-to date statistical evidence base.

2.0 Policy Context

Strategic Context

2.1 Europe 2020' Strategy adopted by the Council in 2010 states three priorities - smart growth, sustainable growth and inclusive growth and five targets to raise employment rates, invest in research and development, meet 20/20 climate/energy targets, increase third level education and to reduce poverty and social exclusion. The draft Programme for Government cites economic growth through rebalancing and rebuilding the economy as the top strategic priority.

Regional Context

2.2 The Regional Policy context is provided by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and regional planning policy statements.

Regional Development Strategy (RDS)

2.3 The RDS provides a framework for strong sustainable economic growth across the region and recognises that a growing regional economy needs a co-ordinated approach to the provision of services, jobs and infrastructure. It provides Regional Guidance to ensure an adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth. RG1 ensures that there is adequate supply of land to facilitate economic growth. Land should be accessible and located to make the best use of available services, for example water and sewerage infrastructure, whilst availing, where possible, areas at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off. Other regional guidance promotes transport infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure, tourism infrastructure and delivering a supply of energy.

2.4 The Metropolitan Area of Belfast is one of the key components of the Spatial Framework Guidance. SFG3 enhances the role of Belfast City Council as the regional capital with focus on admin, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities. SFG1 promotes urban economic development at key locations throughout the BMUA specially focusing on the Belfast Harbour Area and directing mixed use development towards sites such as the Titanic Quarter, Crumlin Road Gaol, The North Foreshore and the Harbour to act as catalysts for regeneration. Belfast Port is an important area for industry and trade occupying 19% of the council area and is set to grow further as the employment potential of Titanic lands are realised.

2.5 SFG 4 manages the movement of people and goods within BMA to integrate land use and transport so that people can access employment opportunities. Belfast LDG is the regional city gateway for the seaport and the City Airport and SFG15 strengthens these gateways for regional competitiveness of goods and passenger traffic and further recognises that the region can benefit from collaboration with its North/South and East/West neighbours to boost economic performance.

2.6 The quality and viability of sites zoned for economic development uses in area plans should be assessed against an Employment Land Evaluation Framework (Appendix 1) which will enable authorities to identify robust and defensible portfolios of both strategic and locally important employment sites in their development plans. This means protecting zoned land in development plans and, in order to capitalise on the development opportunities provided by a concentration of people, goods, available infrastructure and business, promoting economic development opportunities in the regional capital of Belfast.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

2.7 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) was adopted in September 2015 to replace DOE PPS's as an aid to shorten and simplify the guidance. The SPPS sets objectives to:-

- Promote sustainable development in an environmentally sensitive manner
- Tackle disadvantage and facilitate job creation by ensuring the provision of a generous supply of land suitable for economic development and a choice and range in terms of quality, size and location to promote flexibility and meets specialised needs of specific economic activities.
- Support the re-use of previously developed economic development sites and buildings where they meet the needs of particular economic sectors
- Promote mixed use development and improve integration between transport, economic development and other land uses, including housing whilst ensuring compatibility and availability by all members of the community
- Ensure a high standard of quality and design for new economic development

2.8 A system to monitor the take-up and loss of land allocated for economic development purposes should also be put in place so that any shortfalls can be identified.

2.9 The SPPS expresses the need in the interests of sustainability to restrict new building purposes outside settlements. PPS21 Sustainable development in the countryside sets out appropriate farm diversification and other economic activity. Following Local Government Reform Belfast City Council has extended to include lands in Colin Glen, Cave Hill, Lagan Valley Regional Park, Belvoir Park, parts of the Craignalet Hills, the Castlereagh Hills and three small settlements of Hannahstown, Edenderry and Loughview but the Council remains contextually urban. Policy is to cluster, consolidate and group new development with established buildings and the re-use of previously used land and buildings. Policies and proposals such as farm diversification, agriculture, forestry development, tourist accommodation and re-use /conversion of buildings may be considered by the LDP.

2.10 The RDS is complemented by the DOE's Planning Policy Statement (PPSs) Planning Policy Statements, the most relevant of which is PPS 4 Planning and economic development which sets of the Departments planning policies for economic development uses and indicates how growth associated with such uses can be accommodated and promoted in development plans. Its remit covers industrial, business and storage and distribution uses as currently defined in Part B "Industrial and Business Uses" of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2004 which has since been updated to the Planning (use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. For the purposes of this policy economic development uses comprise the following:-

- Class B1: Business
  - As an office other than within Class A2 (financial, professional or other services);
  - As a call centre
  - For research and development which may be carried out without detriment to amenity
- Class B2: Light Industrial which can be carried out without detriment to amenity
- Class B3: General Industrial for carrying out of industrial processes other than one falling within B2; and
- Class B4: Storage or distribution.

2.11 The key aim of this PPS is to facilitate the economic development needs of the Region in ways consistent with protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development. It recognises that changing patterns of employment in NI require more flexible approach when determining the types of economic development that are acceptable in particular locations. For instance, high technology, knowledge driven enterprises and light industry and Class B1 high technology office uses may be compatible within an area allocated for general industrial development or modern low impact industries within residential areas without causing unacceptable disturbance and adverse impact upon amenity. It also directs Development Plans to include the safeguarding of existing expansion of this use. PPS4 details particular matters that should be assessed as appropriate in the course of preparing a development plan. A development plan will therefore provide information such as acceptable employment uses, key site requirements and economic needs etc.

2.12 Under the provisions of PPS4 Industrial zonings can comprise of proposed and existing industrial lands consideration should be given to identifying these as economic zonings to protect the land for economic purposes.

2.13 PPS5 Retailing and Town Centres also covers employment and economic development insofar that they relate to retailing and offices to be explored in further papers.

2.14 PPS13 Transportation and Land Use policy recognises the importance of Belfast in the regional strategic transport network providing links to infrastructure for freight and tourism both which will be examined in further papers.

Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy

2.15 The Governments “Anti-Poverty Strategy” Lifetime Opportunities was published was published by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2006. It outlines a set of long-term goals and targets to work towards eliminating poverty and social exclusion in NI by 2020. A main function of the LDP is to facilitate development and create a framework to enable investment. The re-use of previously developed land can support this strategy and assist with economic regeneration and physical renewal, stimulate enterprise in disadvantaged areas to tackle long-term unemployment.

NI Executive Economic Strategy: Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Prosperity

2.16 The NI Economic Strategy was published by the Minister for DETI in March 2012 with the overriding vision to improve economic competitiveness by growing the export-driven private sector. This is to be achieved by stimulating innovation and research and development, improving skills, competing in the global economy, encouraging business growth, diversifying the local export base and establishing economic infrastructure. The long-term goals for the region are to grow those areas of greatest potential such as telecommunications and ICT, advanced engineering and materials. Emerging growing sectors such as business and financial services, the green economy sector, creative industries, tourism and the social economy are of importance.

DETI Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014 – 2025

2.17 The DETI Innovation Strategy was published by the Minister for DETI in September 2014 with the vision that by 2025 Northern Ireland will be recognised as an innovation hub and will be one of the UK's leading high-growth, knowledge-based regions which embraces creativity and innovation at all levels of society. The strategy aims to achieve this through cultural change; knowledge generation; knowledge exchange through engaging and collaboration between businesses and academia and knowledge exploitation through the transformation into products and services which can be exported. The Strategy supports the expansion of the NI Science Park and creation of open innovation centres. The NI Innovation Strategy promotes key market sectors where Northern Ireland has both the capability and the potential to compete on a global basis:

- Agri-food technology: Integrated value chain, traceability, niche / functional food, packaging and shelf life;
- Advanced manufacturing and materials: Advanced engineering, composites, electronics and electrical components;
- ICT: Software engineering, Big Data / Data Analytics, Cyber Security, Capital Markets and Digital Content).

Belfast City Council Social Clauses Framework

2.18 Social clauses are defined by the Cabinet Office as "requirements within contracts or the procurement process which allow the contract to provide added social value through fulfilling a particular social aim". The Strategic Investment Board initially developed the Social Clauses toolkit that focused on construction contracts. This was reviewed and they and recently completed the Buy Social Toolkit http://www.buysocialni.org/. The document states that from April 2016 the Buy Social requirements are to be used in procurement above £2M for construction and above £4M for civil engineering.

2.19 Belfast City Council adopted a Social Clause Policy in January 2016 on an interim basis and agreed to review it within 18 months to take into consideration changes in the operating context across local and central government.

Belfast Integrated Economic Strategy 2015-2020

2.20 The Integrated Economic Strategy for Belfast was commissioned by Belfast City Council and Invest NI. The Strategy set out the key aspirations and priorities for Belfast City Council, Invest NI and partners in respect of the economic growth and prosperity of the Council area. The Strategy was developed around five themes of a competitive and internationally connected city; a learning city; a people centred and inclusive city; a sustainable city and an accountable city. The economic synopsis makes forecasts regarding population increase and suggests an additional 8,000 jobs that could be created between 2012 – 2025; future deprivation challenges; suggests unemployment levels of 7% of the working age population in 2022 and business challenges of entrepreneurship, business start-ups, social enterprise and FDI growth, employability and skills challenges and challenges and opportunities within different sectors.

2.21 There has been an improvement in the skills base over time but still gaps remain, especially in relation to the population with low or no qualifications. Progress is required to develop the skills base as a platform for the long term economic vision.

Draft Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland – Economy 2030

2.22 The draft Industrial Strategy for NI, entitled Economy 2030, was commissioned by the Department for the Economy and published on 24 January 2017. The Strategy sets out a long term vision to transform NI into one of the world's most innovative and competitive small advanced economies.

2.23 The Strategy states that support and enhanced investment will be offered to market opportunities that are most likely to lead to strong and sustained economic growth. The Strategy is based around five priority pillars for growth:

- Accelerating Innovation and Research;
- Enhancing Education, Skills and Employability;
- Driving Inclusive, Sustainable Growth;
- Succeeding in Global Markets;
- Building the Best Economic Infrastructure.

2.24 Public consultation for the document ran from 24 January 2017 until 25 April 2017. It is unknown how the Strategy will proceed in the absence of a sitting Executive at Stormont.

Local Policy Context

Belfast Harbour Local Area Plan 1990-2005

2.25 The quashing of BMAP also means that the Belfast Harbour Area Local Plan (adopted in 1991) was also re-instated as the statutory development plan for Belfast Lough and its foreshores, encompassing land east of the Belfast to Larne railway line and west of the Sydenham By-Pass and the Belfast to Bangor road. It was prepared within the strategy set out in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 and underlines the importance of the harbour area to Belfast and to the Northern Ireland economy.

Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001

2.26 The current development plan for the majority of the Belfast district is the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001, which was adopted in December 1989. The area covered by the Plan included the whole of the administrative area of the former Belfast City Council area, together with the urban parts of the former District Council areas of Castlereagh, Lisburn and Newtownabbey as well as Greenisland and Holywood.

2.27 The purpose of the BUAP was to establish physical development policies for this broad urban area up to 2001, clarifying the extent and location of development and providing a framework for public and private agencies in their investment decisions relating to land use. Although alterations were made in 1996, the BUAP is now largely out-of-date and was formally superseded by the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015 in September 2014. However, BMAP was quashed as a result of a judgement in the Court of Appeal delivered on 18 May 2017, meaning that the BUAP 2001 remains the statutory development plan for most of the Council's area.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP)

2.28 Although formally adopted in 2014, this process of final BMAP adoption was declared unlawful as a result of a judgement in the court of appeal delivered on 18 May 2017. This means the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001 and the other Development Plans provides the statutory plan context for the area. However, BUAP was published in 1990, nearly 30 years ago. The Belfast City Council Plan Area has undergone massive transformation since then, particularly in the city centre. The formal development plans which apply are dated and silent on many of the planning issues pertinent to needs of current planning decision making. In recognition of this unique circumstance and taking account of the short term transitional period in advance of the adoption of the Local Policies Plan it is important to provide clarity in relation to the application of planning policy.

2.29 Draft BMAP, in its most recent, post-examination form remains a significant material consideration in future planning decisions. It was at the most advanced stage possible prior to formal adoption. Draft BMAP referred to throughout this document therefore refers to that version. However, in preparing this document the council has also had regard to the provisions of the draft BMAP which was published in 2004, the objections which were raised as part of the plan process and the Planning Appeals Commission Inquiry report.

2.30 The SPPS's transitional arrangements provide for continuity until such times as a new LDP for the whole of their council area is adopted to ensure continuity in planning policy for taking planning decisions.

2.31 BUAP contains less zonings or designations than draft BMAP and delineates a city centre boundary which has expanded significantly since then by virtue of the application of Draft BMAP. The council therefore intends to use a number of the existing designations contained in the draft BMAP, insofar as it relates to the Belfast City Council Plan Area, to form the basis of decision making until the LDP is adopted in its entirety.

Belfast City

2.32 The strategic vision for Belfast city is to promote it as the regional capital and major focus for regional administration, commerce, specialised services, cultural amenities, employment and development opportunities. It is the leading regional shopping centre and primary office location with the largest concentration of employment and commercial floorspace in Northern Ireland. The City Centre is at the core of the Regional Strategic Transport Network and transportation hub for the Metropolitan Urban Area.

2.33 The City Centre includes some of the city's most prominent civic and historic buildings, primary pedestrian routes, the river and waterfront, former industrial and port lands, the primary office area, the Cathedral Quarter, an area of cultural and heritage, entertainment areas, gateways and accessibility nodes and the orbital boulevard. The plan defined the boundary of the city centre by the inner ring road, orbital boulevard and the east bank of the River Lagan between the Albert and Queens Bridges. The city centre includes the site of the new Transport Hub a key arrival point and link towards the Linen Quarter.

2.34 The Harbour Area has a vital role in the promotion of Belfast as the regional capital and focus for major employment opportunity. Port lands encompass 1565ha on the former Harland and Wolff Shipyards on Queens Island now referred to as the Titanic Quarter; Duncrue Industrial Estate, the North Foreshore and George Best City Airport.

2.35 The Harbour Area Strategy seeks to facilitate and promote further development of the Port and Airport the major gateways to Northern Ireland by sea and air; provide employment opportunities to strengthen the role of BMA as the regional economic driver and improve accessibility.

Harbour

2.36 Belfast Harbour is a major employment location extending for approx 800ha to include the site of a former terminal building on a small portion of land abutting the Sydenham Bypass to the southeast of the City Airport.

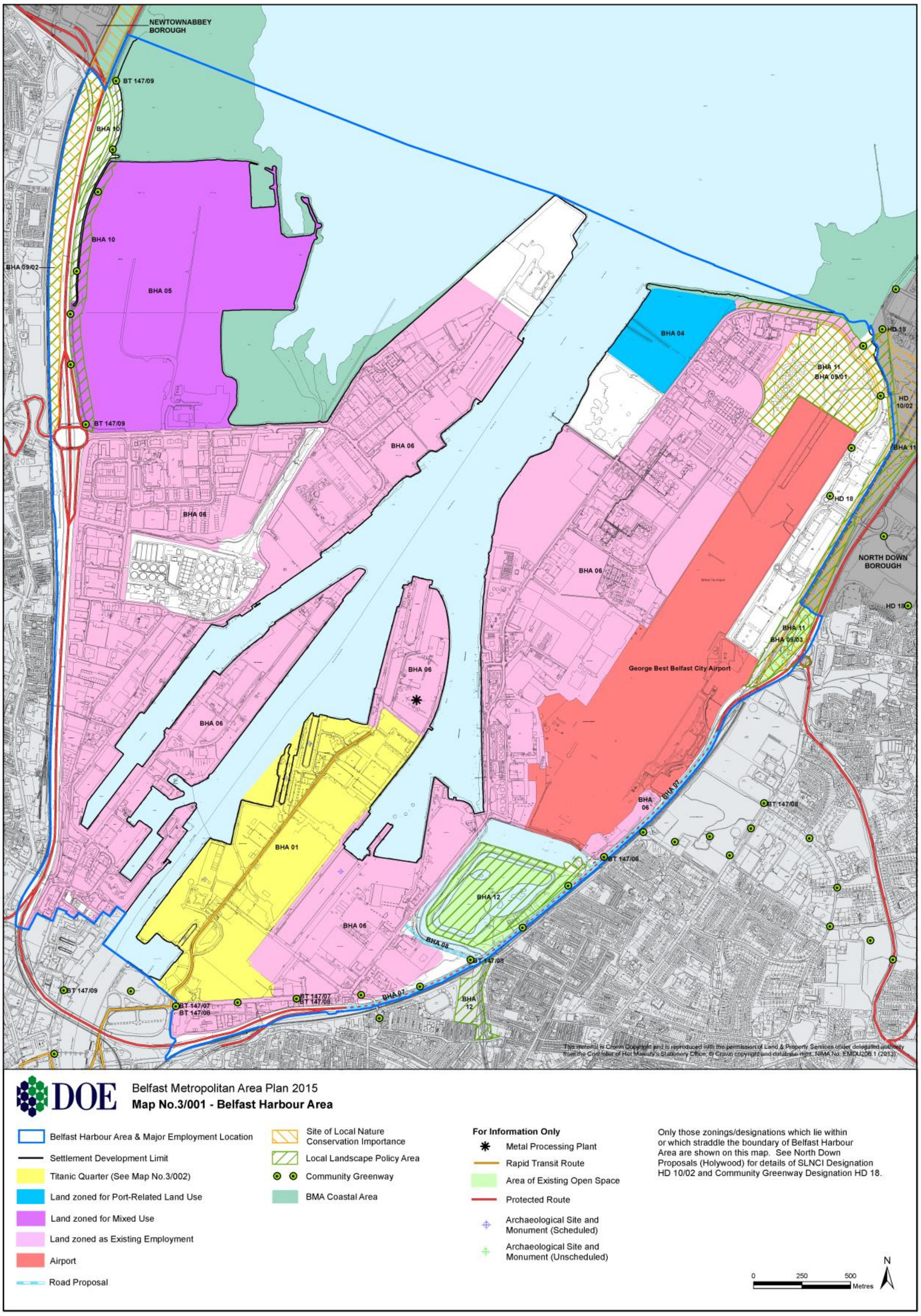


Figure 1: Belfast Harbour Area BMAP

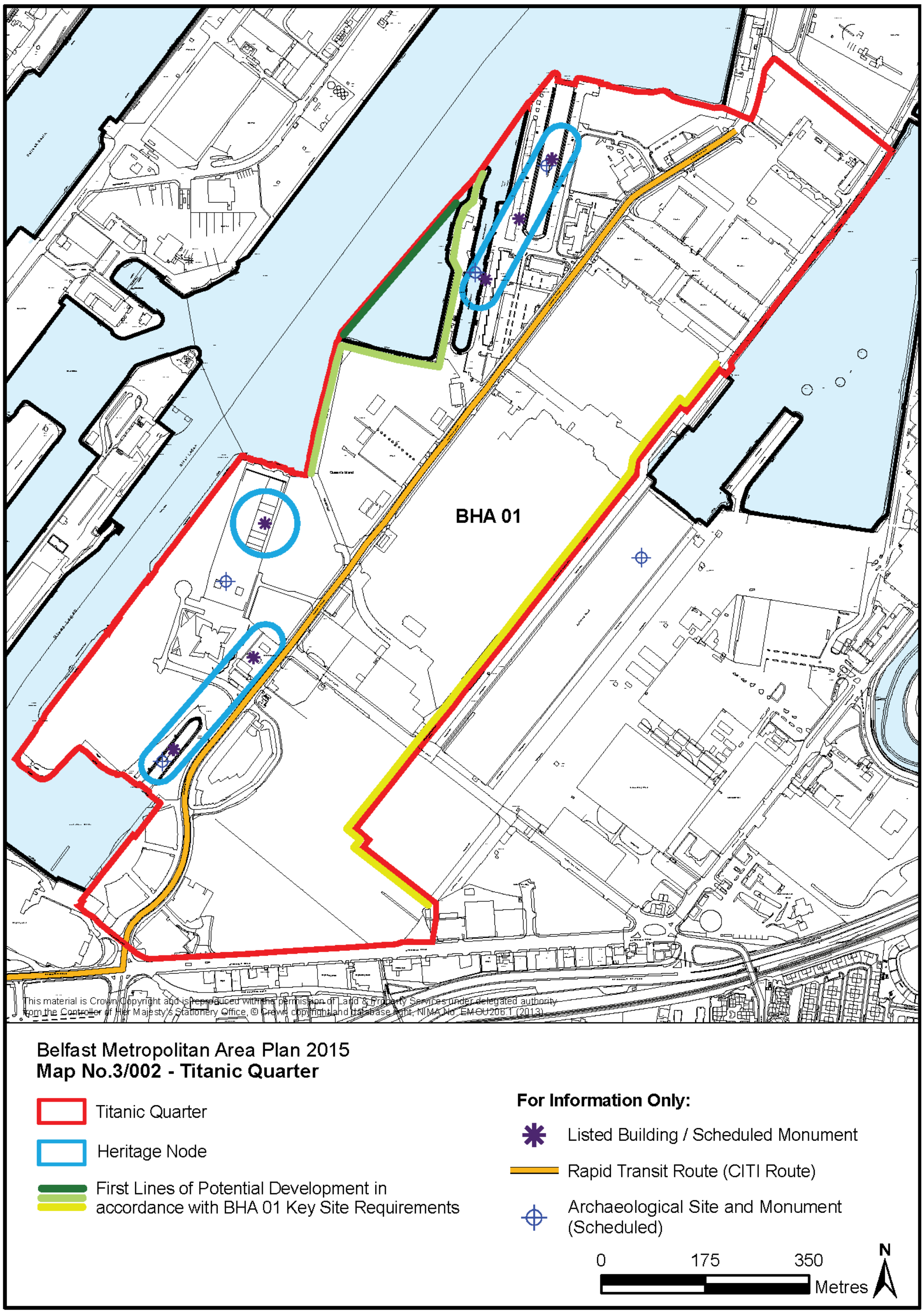


Figure 2: Titanic Quarter BMAP

North Foreshore

2.37 The plan zoned 127.2ha of land within the North Foreshore for mixed development to include uses for waste management and recycling facilities; port and port-related land uses; Class B1 – B4 uses as defined in the Order and open space and associated facilities. An Environmental Resource Park known as Giants Park has been recently granted permission within this zoning. Recently planning permission has been granted for a film studio and workshop within Dargan Road.

Port

2.38 A significant proportion of land within existing employment lands are identified for port related operations. The plan zoned 19.1ha of land known as D3 which has been infilled and is used for port related activities which would require a waterside location such as terminals, loading and discharging facilities.

George Best City Airport

2.39 The development plan gives favourable consideration to proposals that are clearly related to and dependant on a site near the airport in order to capitalise on the potential provided by the concentration of people and goods at the regional gateway. Such airport related employment uses may include airline sale/reservation and booking offices, maintenance, supply and manufacture of airport equipment and warehousing for freight handlers for example. Bombardier Aerospace a worldwide manufacturer of aerospace/aeronautical equipment is situated within proximity to the airport.

Titanic Quarter

2.40 The Plan zoned 87.31ha with the Titanic Quarter for mixed use including employment within business uses as specified in Class B1 (a), (b) or (c) of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2004 updated in 2015 and light industrial use as specified in Class B2 of the same Order. Key site requirements state that the total amount of floorspace for Use class B1 (a) Offices shall not exceed 15000sqm but proposals above and beyond will be considered where it can be demonstrated that it cannot be accommodated within BCC and would otherwise result in a loss of inward investment. This area now comprises apartments within Abercorn Basin, Thompson Dry Dock and Pump House tourist facilities, Belfast Metropolitan College and sports complex, office buildings, an exhibition hall, a hotel within former Drawing Offices and film studios. A portion of land to the western waterfront has been reclaimed to form part of the zoning.

Outer Belfast

2.41 Whilst the city centre is the principal focus for employment BMAP also zoned 49ha of land for mixed use and 217ha of land as existing employment within 35 sites across the Belfast Council District to include former employment sites within Castlereagh and Lisburn Districts in order to facilitate future employment opportunities and protect from inappropriate non-employment based land uses. Acceptable uses on employment zonings except were otherwise stated in key site requirements include Classes B1 – B4 uses within Business, Industry and Distribution. BMAP specifically details key sites requirements for those mixed use sites at the Monagh Bypass, Crumlin Road, Girdwood Barracks and the former Mackie’s site on Springfield Road.

2.42 Lands at Monagh Bypass/Upper Springfield Road comprise 36ha of land zoned for mixed uses. There is an extant outline planning permission for mixed use development which was granted in 2013 to include Class B1 (a) offices totalling 1000sqm and not exceeding 200sqm individually.

2.43 Land at Crumlin Road to include the Girdwood Barracks comprise 12.53ha for mixed uses insofaras related to industry uses within Class B1 (a restricted to the existing Gaol and Courthouse buildings), (b) and (c), B2, B3 and B4. The Girdwood Community Hub, a multi-use sports pitch and housing are now built and occupied.

2.44 Existing employment lands at the former Mackies site on Springfield Road comprise 19ha of lands for industrial and business uses. An innovation centre comprising 5560sqm of lettable space of which a maximum of 1400sqm of class B1(a) 0.85ha of the site has now been constructed and is part let.

2.45 There are notable areas zoned for existing employment at Kennedy Way and Springfield Road; Prince Regent Road and Castlereagh Industrial Estate within the former Castlereagh District council areas and Springbank Industrial Estate within the former Lisburn District Council. The resultant areas zoned for employment average approx 3ha in size.

Community Plan (Belfast Agenda)

2.46 The Council took on responsibility for community planning in 2015 as a result of local government reform. It is a process whereby councils, statutory bodies and communities themselves work together in partnership to develop and implement a shared vision for their area, to make sure that public services work together with communities to deliver real improvements for local people. The plan sets out a joint vision and long-term ambitions for Belfast's future, as well as outlining priorities for action over the next four years.

2.47 The vision for Belfast in 2035 set out in the Belfast Agenda is:
"Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone. A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit."

2.48 Delivery of this vision is based on a number of strategic outcomes, together with four bold ambitions to be achieved by 2035, including an additional 66,000 residents living in the city. The LDP is recognised within the Belfast Agenda as one of the key tools available to shape the physical future of Belfast in a sustainable way – including employment.

2.49 Councils must take account of their current Community Plan when preparing a Local Development Plan (LDP). The LDP will provide a spatial expression to the community plan, thereby linking public and private sector investment through the land use planning system.

3.0 Recent Studies and Reports

Urban Capacity Study

3.1 The Urban Capacity Study (UCS)[2] involves an assessment of the potential for future housing and employment growth within the urban footprint. The urban capacity study takes account of housing development opportunities arising from previously developed land, infill sites, conversion of existing buildings and possible changes of land uses.

3.2 In regard to potential changes of land use, it is noted that the study identifies over 1.1m sq. metres. of employment land available, which rises to over 1.9m sq. metres if all mixed use housing/employment sites come forward as employment use.

3.3 The UCS states that a total of 550,000 sq. metres of gross developable land shall be made available for employment use over the Plan period to meet the needs of the city. This therefore leaves a significant excess of employment land that may be suitable for residential use.

3.4 It is important to note that the UCS forms part of the evidence base for the emerging LDP. However, it does not determine whether a site should be allocated for future development, and does not constitute a land allocation. Land allocations can only be made through the final stage of the LDP, the Local Policies Plan.

Office Sector Study

3.5 The Office Sector Study[3] was used as part of the evidence base to underpin the emerging Office Policy of the draft Plan Strategy. The study was undertaken in July 2018 to examine the dynamics of the current office market across Belfast. With the aid of commercial property-letting insight, the study analysed market overview, demand, occupier requirements, market trends, transactions and pipeline supply.

3.6 The study noted that the majority of office activity in the region was focused in Belfast city centre and that foreign direct investment has brought a range of new occupiers from the technology sector into the local market. It was stated that a demand for a high quality workforce has increased with such new businesses entering the market and so there is evidence of increasing requirements for enhanced working environments and staff accommodation.

3.7 To inform the preparation of the LDP, a number of studies were used to provide background data and information relating to employment growth, including market analysis and capacity of the urban footprint for future supply and demand of employment land. These studies are presented in the sections below.

---

[2] The Urban Capacity Study was completed on behalf of Belfast City Council in March 2018 by Arup.
[3] The Office Sector Study was completed on behalf of Belfast City Council in July 2018 by Osborne King commercial property letting agents.

Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper and Public consultation report

3.8 The Preferred Options Paper (POP) was published on 26 January 2017 and was open for consultation until 20 April 2017. The POP outlined the vision, objectives and key planning issues affecting the city; possible options on how to deliver new development and planned growth, and what our preferred options are and the rationale for that preference.

3.9 This document recognises that employment land is one element of a multifaceted approach to economic growth. The other key strands chiefly pertain to office, educational, residential, leisure and tourism development.

3.10 There was strong support for the 'city centre first' approach applied to development and job creation, and to strengthen Belfast's role as the regional economic driver. However, this was balanced with the need to distribute employment opportunities in areas of high unemployment and areas of multiple deprivation.

3.11 There was strong support given to enablers of high skilled employment such as higher and further education institutions.

3.12 There was broad recognition that employment has evolved through new key growth sectors with employers/employees both now seeking new workplace environments than have traditionally been the case. The majority of respondents were supportive of managing employment alongside a flexibility to support complementary uses that may facilitate and even increase further economic growth, adapting to emerging trends.

3.13 Outside of the city centre, activity was more sporadic, based on occupier site-specific requirements and often where smaller indigenous businesses had been priced out of the city centre office market.

3.14 Going forward, the Office Policy will be largely guided by the SPPS town centre first approach. Capacity for flexibility will be built into the policy for circumstances where an office development cannot be accommodated within the city centre or where FDI may otherwise be lost. In part, this will involve a portfolio approach is taken to ensure an equitable spread of office supply across the city and that all occupier requirements are met.

City Centre Investment Fund

3.15 Belfast City Council's City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy highlighted the need to increase the availability of Grade A office space in the city centre due to market failures leaving a substantial shortfall in supply. In response to this and in effort to attract high quality employment space suitable for the knowledge economy, the Council created the City Centre Investment Fund to enable partnership working with the private sector and stimulate the delivery of such office space.

4.0 Draft Plan Strategy Policy Approaches

4.1 Belfast developed as a market place and port around the 17th and 18th centuries with the largest period of growth around the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulting from the manufacturing industries of linen and shipbuilding. These industries have since declined in importance and are now offset by increased employment within the service sectors.

4.2 Belfast today displays great economic optimism, following a period of economic growth, political stability and civic confidence but there are still pockets of social and economic deprivation within our city. Suburban expansion was accompanied by a dispersal of employment facilities and a shift in employment from traditional manufacturing industries which has resulted in parcels of derelict land across the Council area and even within the city centre, such as the Sirocco site.

4.3 An understanding of Belfast's economic performance is one of the key factors in determining the well-being of Belfast, essential in assessing and zoning the provision of economic development land. A vibrant economy that provides job opportunities for everyone must have a diverse range of growing sectors and a workforce with the sufficient skills to be resilient against technological change, it is the aim of this technical supplement to analyse the current status quo.

4.4 Economic Profile of Existing Employment Base:

- Belfast LGD working age population stands at 188,616 persons[4];
- Employment rate NI measures 69.8%[5] comparison to the UK average of 75.7%[6];
- 29% total jobs across NI based in Belfast and 46% in the Belfast Metropolitan Area reflecting the concentration of economic activity;
- There were 7,010 people claiming unemployment-related benefits, which accounts for 25% of all claimants in Northern Ireland[7];
- NI unemployment rate of 3.2% was below the UK average of 4.3% and was the lowest unemployment rate of the UK regions; and
- Additionally the unemployment rate was below the European Union (7.3%) rate and the Republic of Ireland (6.2%) rate[8].

	Number of Claimants			% Of Working Age			Change over Year	
Area	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Number	%
Belfast	4,912	2,098	7,010	4.5	1.8	3.1	-1,096	-13.5
NI	18,789	9,579	28,368	3.2	1.6	2.4	-3,627	-11.3

Figure 3: Claimant Count by Council Area

[4] NISRA, Population Estimates for Belfast Local Government District. Published 30 June 2017.
[5] NISRA, Labour Force Survey. Published 17 July 2018.
[6] ONS, Employment and Labour Market. Published 17 July 2018.
[7] NISRA, Claimant Count by Council Area. Published December 2017.
[8] Department for the Economy, Labour Market Statistics. Published 21 March 2018.

- Belfast LGD travel to work area covers 2690sqm comprising 81,094 commuters representing 52% workplace population.

Figure 4: Belfast travel to Work Area (in green)

Key Growth Sectors

4.5 Building upon the city's inherent strengths and preparing Belfast for a more economically resilient future, the Council seeks to create jobs and prosperity within an economy that is fit for the 21st century. In Belfast the largest share of employment is based in the services sector which will be set to increase through projected future employment growth.

	Manufacturing		Construction		Services		Other		Total
Area	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Belfast	9,332	4%	4,476	2%	202,421	93%	2,251	1%	218,480
NI	80,446	11%	33,050	4%	604,086	82%	22,033	3%	739,615

Figure 5: Employee jobs per business sector[9]

4.6 Opportunity sectors include telecoms and ICT, professional & administration (particular legal & financial administration), advanced manufacturing (renewable energy & low carbon technologies), life and health sciences, creative and cultural industries, tourism and the social economy.

4.7 Belfast has made significant investment progressing towards becoming a digital city that will further foster these key growth sectors. By providing a high speed ultrafast network capacity Belfast is one of only 21 Super Connected Cities in the UK which is undoubtedly an attractive incentive for businesses, such as the creative industries, which send large volumes of data. Better provision will create and support jobs, businesses, attracting major foreign investors as well as benefiting residents of Belfast.

4.8 Companies such as 'Analytics Engines' specialise in 'Big Data Processing' and initiatives such as 'Smart Cities' can be used by creative and technological industries to promote the city in comparison to other competitors. This is in addition to Project Kelvin which provides direct telecommunications connectivity with North America via industry leading fibre optic submarine cables.

4.9 Belfast has become the second fastest growing knowledge economy in the UK[10] and is Europe's top destination city for new software development projects[11].Whilst there are eight local enterprise centres in the Belfast LGD providing workspace provision and business services such as social enterprises; start-ups must align to future growth sectors and jobs of the future and ensure the workforce has the skillset to meet market needs. A report by Centre for Cities (2015) noted that Belfast ranks poorly in terms of entrepreneurship (last out of 64 cites). It was also the LGD with the 2nd lowest proportion of registered business per 10,000 population in 2014 (DETINI Inter Departmental Business Register) and the city still has an above average reliance on the public sector for employment. The issue is further exacerbated by a cultural reliance on public sector employment according to Pricewaterhouse Coopers[12], which also stated that the region's economy is still struggling

[9] NISRA, Business Register and Employment Survey. Published 2016.
[10] Invest in Belfast, Belfast City Council.
[11] Financial Times fDi Magazine, 2015.
[12] Pricewaterhouse Coopers, UK Economic Outlook. Published July 2018.

to recover from the economic crash and will deliver the lowest economic growth of the 12 UK regions in 2019.

	Private		Public		All
Belfast	138,265	66%	72,159	34%	**210,424**
NI	478,536	69%	212,965	31%	**691,501**

Figure 6: Public/Private Sector Employment Split[13]

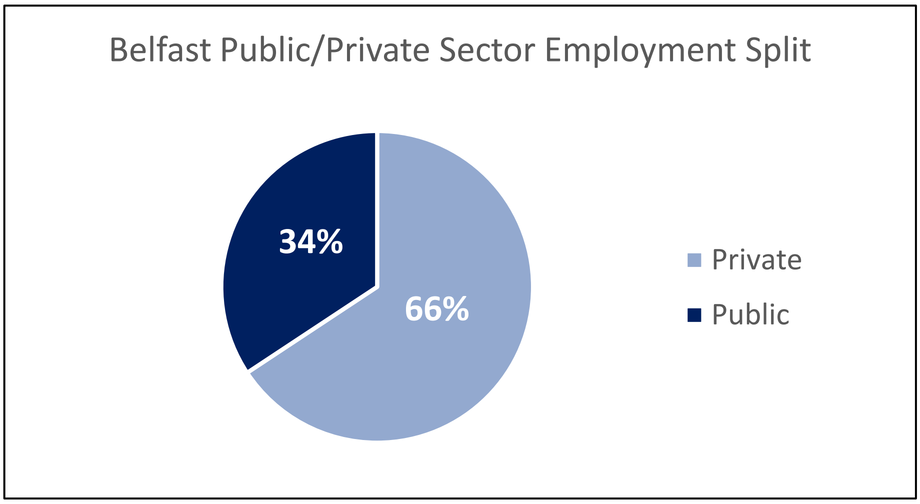


Figure 7: Public/Private Sector Employment Split

4.10 However, Belfast has potential to become a ‘Creative Destination’ by providing a pro-business environment through innovation centres and collaborative hubs where knowledge can be exchanged and exploited.

4.11 Belfast City Council has now begun a series of entrepreneurial programmes targeting the indigenous population in an attempt to raise the local rankings. The Belfast Enterprise Academy is a one year programme open to all Further Education and Higher Education students who are living in the Council boundary area and provides funding towards business start-ups. Other entrepreneurial hubs, business advisory services and investment programmes have also opened, supported by local banks, Invest NI and the Council and in 2017, Belfast was named one of the world’s top 50 cities for female entrepreneurship[14], outperforming Cambridge, Manchester, Bistrol, Edinburgh, Cardiff and also Tokyo, Shanghai, Milan and Beijing.

4.12 The devolution of Corporation Tax Act will enable Northern Ireland to set its own rates and should encourage domestic businesses to invest and also increase foreign direct investment by reducing the rate to 12.5% from 21% in line with the Republic of Ireland rate. The Act which was given Assent in March 2015 and the power handed to the Executive in April 2018. Whilst it is estimated that the tax changes could create 2,000 jobs in the local area, a sustained drive on skills levels would be required to ensure that Belfast has the

[13] Invest NI, Belfast Regional Briefing, 2016.
[14] Dell, 2017 Women Entrepreneur Cities Index. Published June 2017.

appropriate skilled workforce in place to match the demand for jobs that a reduction in Corporation Tax would bring. However, the introduction of the reduced 12.5% Corporation Tax has been stalled by a lack of sitting Stormont Executive and it is currently unknown when a government will be fully functional again to implement this policy.

4.13 Whilst Belfast remains an attractive place for business and the Council has committed to initiatives to proactively foster inclusive economic growth via emerging business sectors, there remains synergistic localised challenges. A report by EY[15] stated that foreign investment in Northern Ireland plummeted by more than 50% in 2017, partially blamed by the effects of Brexit and the lack of a Stormont Executive which may point to a more uncertain future of Belfast's economic prosperity in the short to medium term and something which needs to be given careful consideration.

Employment Space Requirements

4.14 Belfast City Council has an ambitious growth strategy set out in the Belfast Agenda, which mirrors the aspirations of regional planning policy. The Council must ensure that an adequate supply of land is available, on sites in a range of locations, sizes and conditions, to attract investment into the city and to support existing business sectors.

4.15 Research by University of Ulster's Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) was carried out to assess the employment land requirements over period 2016-2035, tying together both population and employment forecasts. This study has been used to inform the emerging policy of the draft Plan Strategy.

4.16 The study showed that the expected path for future employment growth is broadly positive. It is estimated that current overall employment in the city is around 245,000. This is 38,000 more than in 2001 and with the exception of two years (2009 and 2012) when 10,000 jobs were lost, figures have been on a consistent upward trend. In fact since 2012, Belfast has gained 14,000 more jobs across all sectors.

4.17 The baseline scenario, is the estimation of the most likely economic outcomes for economy to 2035, which would result in a period of slight employment decline until 2019 followed by a return to growth from 2020 onwards.

4.18 Between 2016 and 2035, this forecast suggests that Belfast's employment would be 46,000 higher than current levels. The upper scenario would result in considerably stronger job creation, adding a further 23,000 above the baseline scenario and resulting in total employment of around 286,800 in 2035.

[15] EY, EY's Attractiveness Survey UK, May 2017.

		No Sensitivity Applied		Capacity of 10%		Capacity of 20%	
		Base Scenario Sq M	Upper Scenario Sq M	Base Scenario Sq M	Upper Scenario Sq M	Base Scenario Sq M	Upper Scenario Sq M
B1A	General Offices	283,643	510,286	255,279	459,257	226,914	408,229
B1B	R&D Space	36,643	81,429	32,979	73,286	29,314	65,143
B1C	Light Industrial	33,929	89,571	30,536	80,614	27,143	71,657
B2	Industrial & Manufacturing	6,786	25,786	6,107	23,207	5,429	20,629
B8	Storage & Distribution	103,143	157,429	92,829	141,686	82,514	125,943
B Mixed Class	Small Business Workspace	143,857	253,786	129,471	228,407	115,086	203,029
	Total	**608,000**	**1,118,286**	**547,200**	**1,006,457**	**486,400**	**894,629**

Figure 8: Demand for B Use Class Employment Space, 2016-2035, Sensitivity Analysis

4.19 In the baseline scenario, with no allowance made for existing capacity, Belfast will require a total of 608,000 sq m of employment space for B Use Classes between 2016-2035, whilst in the upper scenario, this is forecast to rise to 1,118,286 sq m.

4.20 Focussing on the baseline scenario, the largest requirement will be in B1A use class - General Offices. This use will require an estimated one third of the total requirement. Small business space (B Mixed Class) and Storage and Distribution (B8 Class) are also estimated to require over 100,000 sq m each.

4.21 Of course, not all future demand will require new buildings. Many businesses will expand within their current footprint and vacant property will also be absorbed, if fit for purpose. It was beyond the scope of this research to audit current provision of the extent to which employment growth in Belfast can be absorbed by current provision. Rather, sensitivity analysis has been applied to the numbers above on the basis that a) 10% and b) 20% of employment growth can be absorbed by current provision. These assumptions can be revised should data become available.

4.22 It should be noted that independent research commissioned by the Council to assess employment space requirements across the city consider the full range of economic uses, including retail, professional services and hospitality (Class A), hotels (Class C1) and leisure/cultural uses (Class D2).

4.23 Taking into account the demand for employment space versus the uptake of employment space and with no allowance made for existing capacity, Belfast will require a total of 550,000 sqm. of employment space for B use classes between 2020-2035. The table below sets out the methodology of how the figure of 37,000sqm. per annum was derived.

	UUEPC Forecasted Demand (sq. metres.)
2016-2035	608,000
Per annum	32,000
2020-2035	480,000

	Employment Space Requirements (sq. metres.)
Build out rate 2015-2016 (Building Control Completions)	14,000
Shortfall per annum (Forecasted demand minus completions)	32,000 – 14,000 = 18,000
Timeline adjustment (2016-2019)	18,000 x 4 = 72,000
Forecast adjustment (2020-2035 demand + 2016-2019 shortfall)	480,000 + 72,000 = 552,000 (rounded to 550,000)
LDP demand per annum 2020-2035	**37,000**

Figure 9: Employment land supply calculations

4.24 An urban capacity study (used to gauge the quantity of vacant and underused land and buildings within the council boundary and how much of this could be suitable for employment over the next 15 years) was also commissioned by the council to ensure that the supply of employment land is both realistic and deliverable.

4.25 Approximately 1.16million sq. m. gross employment floorspace is available from committed employment sites and new sites identified. This increases to an indicative capacity of approximately 1.9million sq. m. should all those sites suitable for either employment or housing come forward for employment uses.

	Employment (Emp) sites (sq m)					
	Committed sites (a)	**Site in existing emp. locations (b)**	**New Sites**		**Total**	
			Emp. sites (c)	**Housing / emp. sites (d)**	**Just emp. sites (a+b+c)**	**All emp. sites (a+b+c+d)**
City centre	203,482		146,366	595,741	349,848	945,589
Titanic Quarter	100,000				100,000	100,000
Inner city		10,946		101,393	10,946	112,339
Wider city		326,601	278,765		605,366	605,366
Arterial routes		82,301		29,705	82,301	112,006
Strategic centres		7,383	11,882	15,842	19,265	35,107
Whole city	**303,482**	**421,819**	**437,013**	**742,681**	**1,162,314**	**1,904,995**

Figure 10: Number of employment sites and indicative yield

4.26 This demonstrates there is a substantial oversupply of employment space within the Council area. However, when considering the potential release of employment land for alternative uses, it should be noted the difficulty if attempting revert back to employment land in future years and so decisions must be taken strategically and with a long-term sustainable view in mind.

Employment Locations

4.27 The RDS recognises Belfast as the regional capital and gateway for movement of people and goods through the seaport and airports. A strategic and integrated transport network sits at the heart of increasing economic competitiveness of Belfast and its export sector in the movement of freight.

4.28 Due to the historical legacy of employment in Belfast, the harbour area is now strategically located in terms of industrial activity and transport connections and contains some of Belfast's major employers.

4.29 In order to keep Belfast competitive and resilient to market changes, it is essential that the city can attract investment and facilitate expansion, both of the localised and foreign markets, via suitable high-quality and sustainable employment sites.

4.30 The city is well connected with the rest of the world with two airports, the second largest port on the island of Ireland and direct road and rail links to the capital of Ireland and proposed transport hub and rapid transport systems that will underpin the city centre's function for investment and development.

4.31 The Harbour is a major economic enabler supporting:

- 31% of NI's GDP
- 27% of NI's employment
- 700 companies[16]

4.32 Trade is expected to grow by 68% by 2030 and the Commissioner's plans indicate requirement for 82 additional acres of land to be reclaimed.

	2015	2016	2017
Turnover (£)	54.3m	58.1m	61.9m
Tonnage of goods handled	23m	23m	23.7m
Freight vehicles (RoRo)	481,000	503,000	513,000
Containers (LoLo)	123,254	124,000	126,000
Cruise ships		82	94
Ferry & cruise passengers	1.381m	1.5m	1.65m

Figure 11: Snapshot of Port growth from 2015-2017[17]

[16] Belfast Harbour, 20-30 Year Plan. Published
[17] Figures gathered from Belfast Harbour Annual Reports 2015-2017.

Two office developments and a hotel have been constructed on Harbour lands, with a further office proposal under planning consideration, the complete scheme is known as City Quays. NI Science Park (Catalyst Inc.) is also expanding their space, the film industry is utilising buildings within harbour lands and a £107m energy from waste facility has also been developed in the harbour area.

4.33 The harbour estate is a key location handling liquid bulk products such as diesel, kerosene and chemicals, dry bulk sector commodities, including grain and animal feedstuffs, aggregate, coal, and scrap metal, break bulk products including steel, paper and timber. The Port also supports exports of manufactured goods, dairy, beef and poultry products supporting the agri-food sectors. The Port comprises logistics warehousing and container terminals with primary routes to the major European hub ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam, however, it is also a freight and passenger route to Liverpool, Loch Ryan and Heysham.

Figure 12: Belfast Harbour, City Quays Masterplan. Published 10 June 2014

4.34 Belfast Harbour Commissioners plans to invest £147m over the lifetime of its 20-30 year Corporate Plan. This investment will support 1,600 jobs including major projects such as facilitating a new cruise dock and has already involved the recently constructed Stena Line Terminal which has helped increased tourism numbers and will continue to boost the hospitality sector.

4.35 The Offshore Wind Terminal has been constructed, which is the first of its kind in the UK and home to the world’s largest developer of offshore wind, DONG Energy. The terminal has handled 305,000 tonnes of wind farm components in 2017, representing a record since it opened in 2013.

4.36 It is envisaged that Belfast will become a world leader in green technology through the recent approval of the £9.5m Giants Park an Environmental Resource Park of approx 65 acres promoting regeneration of former industrial wasteland and providing a sustainable development in the form of renewable energy technologies. This development has the potential to create 800 green collar jobs, provide training and construction opportunities and 1,000,000sqft of commercial floor space.

4.37 Construction is already underway to create NI's first Cleantech Hub innovative business cluster at the southern portion of the site, creating up to 400 jobs and brining in £105m of investment. In 2017, a £20m film studio complex also opened on the Giants Park site.

4.38 Northern Ireland Science Park Innovation Centre located within the Titanic Quarter provides support for innovation-led, high-growth; knowledge based businesses and provides links with the Universities, Colleges and research centres and accesses to global data exchange. This centre has the opportunity for further expansion and growth. MatrixNI are the NI Science Industry Panel providing advice on the future policies necessary for NI to ensure economic growth and wealth creation through greater commercial exploitation of its science and technology capabilities.

Loss/Protection of zoned employment Land

4.39 As previously stated under Employment Space Requirements, there is a substantial oversupply of employment space within the Council area. Taking a rational approach going forward, it would seem unnecessary to protect unzoned employed land given the substantial oversupply, however, by developing an employment land monitor it would ensure a sustainable and more strategic approach to employment land supply could be managed.

4.40 The value and role of employment land should not be understated given that a successful economy and strong employment will help sustain future growth of the city, both physically and in terms of its' population, While the market may fluctuate and the value of land for uses, such as housing, may overshadow the financial value of employment land, it would be ill advised to lose zoned employment land for short term gains.

4.41 Once zoned employment land is lost to another use, it is difficult to transfer back into sole employment use and can be detrimental to other industrial uses within the surrounding premises if not managed accordingly.

4.42 However, in order to allow for a degree of flexibility there are circumstances where it should be appropriate to support alternative uses, so long as they do not adversely affect the city's overall capacity to meet future demand for employment land and are compatible with existing retained employment uses within their vicinity.

4.43 Additionally, in circumstances where an employment site may have lain vacant for an extensive period of time, after active marketing, then it could be deemed that the site may not be suitable for zoned employment use and an alternative usage may be more preferable.

4.44 For example, it is acknowledged that lands for housing, community and business uses have been granted approval on lands zoned for employment and industry on the site of the former Visteon factory which had been vacant for 6 years. Commercial property agents note that the subject property comprises c. 2.59 acres of commercial development lands forming part of a 21.5 acre brownfield site which will be regenerated in its entirety. The planning application for the site met policy tests and so was granted approval for 244 houses and 6,075sqm of floorspace for business uses which highlights the necessity for further review of lands under the next stage of the Local Development Plan.

Industrial development

4.45 Although a high percentage of Belfast's employment is focused within the service sector, other sections, relating to industry, storage and distribution, still play a highly important part and often help facilitate the growth of other sectors via their accommodations and logistical capabilities.

4.46 The RDS sets out in policy that conditions should be conducive to achieving further sustainable economic growth and therefore the Council must ensure adequate employment land supply for industrial, storage and distribution uses.

4.47 Invest NI advise that whilst demand from industrial occupiers is both limited and ad hoc in nature, it is considered greatest for units of less than 10,000sqft. Invest NI advise that there were 51 industrial buildings in Belfast for sale or let in Quarter 3, 2018, with the majority 15,000sqft and under. The bulk of accommodation is distribution/warehouse/storage in nature and, due to the age of the stock, would require redevelopment. This is represented in the lower rental prices which have remained stagnant over recent years as is seen in the Figures 13 and 14.

4.48 Speculative development is not commercially viable due to limited demand of industrial developments which is mainly indigenous. Invest NI advise that they have ownership of five sites which have available land to be sold or leased to qualifying businesses situated at Springbank; Forthriver; Whiterock; Glenbank and Springvale in Belfast West and North totalling 12.99ha.

4.49 Savills[18] stated that while the amount of industrial space transacted rose in 2017, there are still constraints, however, this is mainly due to a lack of quality supply rather than Brexit uncertainties.

[18] Savills, Savills World Research. Published February 2017.

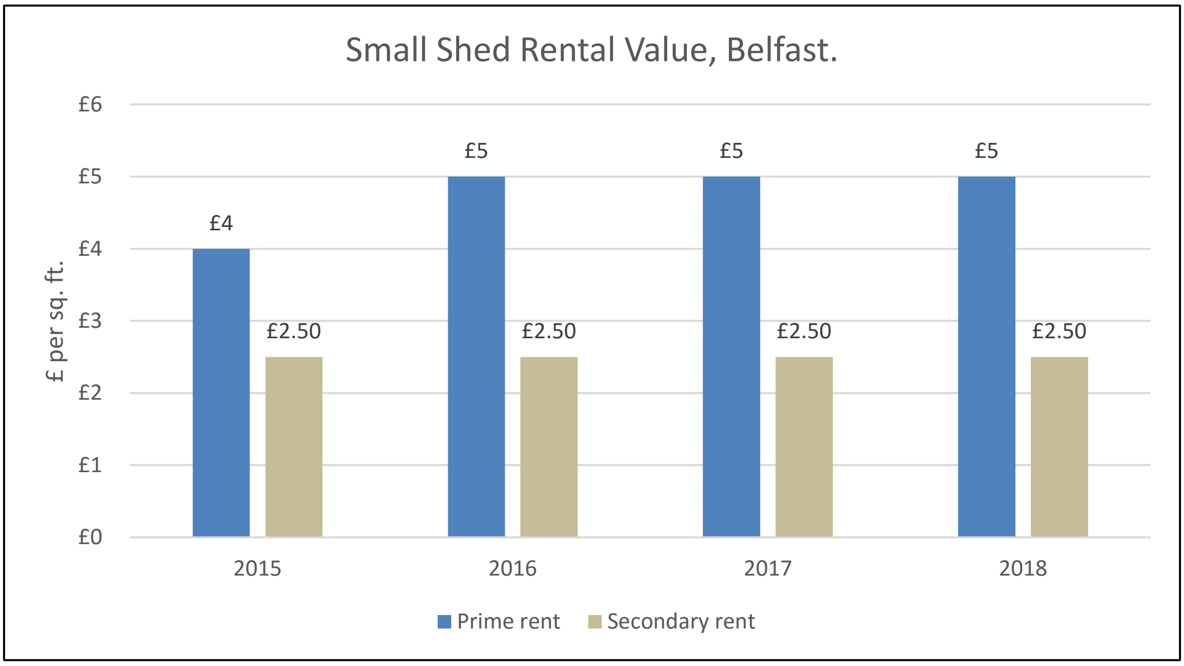


Figure 13: Small Shed Rental Value, Belfast 2015-2018 (Colliers Industrial Rents Map)

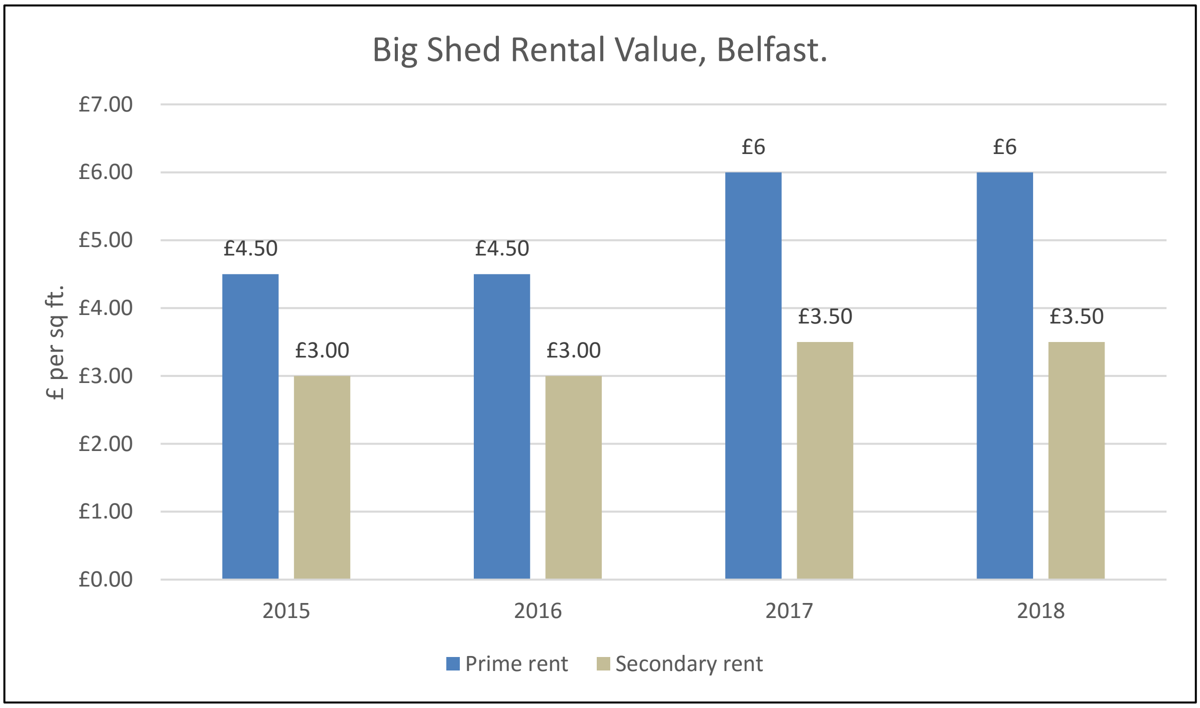


Figure 14: Large Shed Rental Value, Belfast 2015- 2018 (Colliers Industrial Rents Map)

Office

4.50 Under the guidance set out in the SPPS, a sequential approach must be followed in relation to proposals for main town centre uses. This includes office development.

4.51 In recent years, Belfast has seen sustained investment in digital infrastructure, making it highly connected and very attractive to businesses particularly in the office sector. Belfast now has 83% of its residents with access to superfast broadband, the highest percentage of any region in the UK[19].The Belfast office market has massively benefited from this connectivity and from healthy employment growth of an increasingly educated and skilled workforce.

4.52 For multiple years, the Belfast office market suffered from a massive undersupply of Grade A office space, being considered not financially viable to build speculative schemes. The market mainly comprised lower grade stock and was dispersed across the city, with nodes at Stormont serving public administration and a designated office area surrounding Queen's university, accommodating educational and ancillary office uses.

4.53 The Belfast Agenda set out to increase investment in the city and the City Centre Investment Fund outlined opportunities to upgrade local office stock to Grade A quality, reducing the risk factor for developers in a game-changing move to ensure supply could meet the new demand.

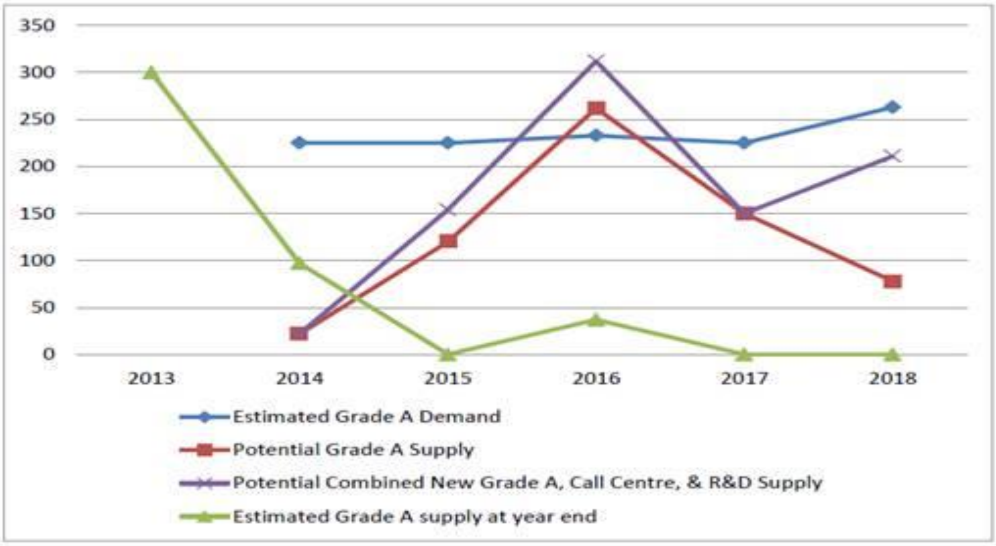


Figure 15: Belfast Grade A Office Supply and Demand Forecast (2014-2018)

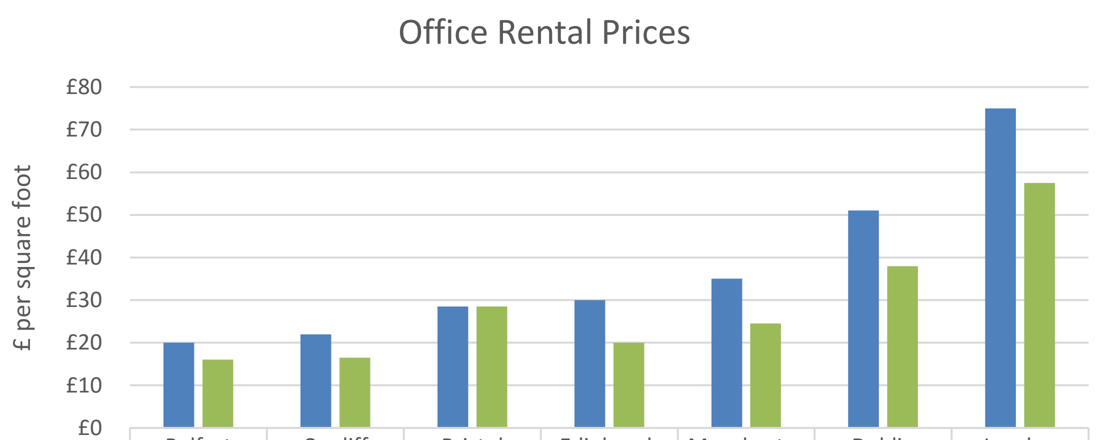
4.54 The Belfast office market showed resilience to the Brexit vote in comparison to other sectors, and consistent growth has enabled the city to hit the highest level on record during the first half of 2018. According to Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH)[20], the Belfast Office

[19] Belfast City Council, Belfast Facts & Figures. Published April 2017.
[20] Lambert Smith Hampton, Belfast Office Market Update H1 2018

Market Update H1 2018 showed 538,646 sq.ft of office space was occupied during the first six months of 2018 - more than double the same period in 2017, achieving the highest half year on record and surpassing the annual total recorded in each of the last 10 years. The report also showed that 78% take-up rate was focused on Belfast's Grade A office space and that demand for 2018 has been driven by the public sector, technology and media and telecoms, accounting for 75% of take-up.

4.55 Invest NI advise that almost 60% of enquires for office space were from FDI businesses. This is unsurprising given the competitive pricing of local office space in comparison to other cities in the UK and RoI.

4.56 According to LSH[21] Belfast city centre has seen the majority of office transactions completed, aided by a resultant low vacancy rate (2.7% for Grade A) has seen rents rise to £21.50 per sq. ft. per annum.



	Belfast	Cardiff	Bristol	Edinburgh	Manchester	Dublin	London
Grade A	£20	£22	£28.50	£30	£35	£51	£75
Grade B	£16	£16.50	£28.50	£20	£24.50	£38	£57.50

Figure 16: Office Rental Prices Belfast versus UK Cities (Colliers June 2016)

4.57 The Harbour Commission have completed construction of two speculative Grade A office developments at City Quays, one is fully occupied while the other is nearing at full capacity. Occupants include first time names into the local market, a global law firm and an American technology company. A third speculative office development is also awaiting planning permission in the City Quays scheme, proposing 250,000 sq ft of commercial Grade A office space.

[21] Lambert Smith Hampton, Belfast Office Market Report 2017.

4.58 Such speculative schemes show confidence in the market and also the importance and popularity of the city centre as a location for businesses in the office sector. Nonetheless, they have remained very low with few schemes coming forward through planning, the majority of activity has been via refits and refurbishments of existing stock.

Weaving works and Linen House, two recent office refurbishment schemes in Belfast city centre

4.59 Further interest has been sought to develop commercial space at the Titanic Quarter and Sydenham Business Park and Grade A office accommodation was also completed at Weavers Court, Linfield Road and Forthriver Industrial Estate but there is still not the same level of Grade A office accommodation comparable to the UK.

Higher Education

4.60 As the local labour market evolves and more employment opportunities are focussed in the key growth sectors, largely around the computer-based and professional sectors, there is forecast to be a considerable oversupply of lower skilled labour in the city. Therefore, there is a great emphasis placed by the Council on upskilling the local workforce to be resilient to changes within the employment market.

4.61 Currently, the city still retains high rates of youth unemployment and above average rates of residents with education qualifications. According to a labour market report by NISRA[22], youth unemployment rate was 14.4% which is markedly higher than the UK average of 10.4%.

[22] NISRA, NI Labour Market Report March 2017.

4.62 The city retains high levels of persons with no or low skills and qualifications and the Belfast LGD has the lowest proportion of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs at grade A*-C or equivalent when compared to other local government districts. However, Belfast showed the greatest decrease in amount of residents aged 16-65 with no qualifications of all Council areas since Local Government Reform (14.2% in 2016, a decrease from 19%).

	No Qualifications	Below NVQ L4	Above NVQ L4
Belfast	14.2%	51.8%	34.0%
NI	16.0%	53.1%	30.9%

Figure 17: Qualification Levels (16-64 population)[23]

4.63 The Belfast Agenda sets out an aim that every young person leaving school has a destination that fulfils their potential and indicators have been established to monitor these aims. A target has been set that "By 2035, everyone will have access to information, education, training and lifelong learning and can access jobs and opportunities to actively participate in all areas of life".

4.64 The City's aspirations of being a 'learning city' is founded within Queens University Belfast (QUB), the Ulster University (UU) and Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC), which have some of the world's leading courses and research institutes specialising in medical sciences, pharmacy, law, nursing, art and design, ICT and renewable technologies.

4.65 The role of the higher and further educational institutions in the city is not limited to teaching of students and upskilling of the future workforce. They also play a role in the physical regeneration of Belfast.

4.66 QUB has developed over 60 spin-out companies to create over 1,500 jobs[24] and has some 1,800 international students from nearly 100 counties enrolled to the institution, helping to diversify the workforce and attract skilled labour. The university has also helped regenerate a substantial amount of derelict and historic buildings surrounding the main campus, with further plans to invest £223million in its capital programme.

4.67 The current relocation of the £250m Ulster University into the city centre will further enhance the educational offer to students. It will provide employment to both lecturers and ancillary staff and also generate complementary services. It is estimated that higher education and students in Belfast generate £1.2bn in output, create 14,756 full-time jobs and contribute to £700.3m to local GVA figures.

4.68 Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) recommends that the economic development of the University campus should be extended to include a proposed

[23] NISRA, Labour Force Survey Local Area Database. Published 2016.
[24] QUB, Vision 2020

‘Creative Hub’ with connections to an extended library and innovation uses within vacant buildings in proximity. This would provide opportunities for the surrounding communities to engage with the university institution, even if not directly being educated at it, creating multiplier effects and helping to fill the skills gaps to meet changing employment patterns.

4.69 The BMC e3 campus within the Titanic Quarter has aided regeneration of the waterfront area and substantially increased footfall in the area. The e3 campus is dedicated to enterprise, employability and economic development. These education facilities have become leaders of health and medical research, cyber security research, food safety, advanced manufacturing and ICT. BMC has a creative media hub and there are opportunities surrounding the new campus to expand the creative and digital media services that exist within the Cathedral Quarter.

New UU Belfast city centre campus CGI image

Newly opened BMC Belfast Titanic Quarter campus

4.70 The higher and further educational institutions of the city therefore play a vital role in the vibrancy and vitality of Belfast and the Council seeks to support their continued success in creating strong multiplier effects benefitting all citizens.

Appendix A: The Employment Land Evaluation Framework (RDS 2035)

Stage 1 **Taking stock of the existing situation**	An initial assessment of the 'fitness for purpose' including the environmental implications of existing employment land portfolio. This is principally in order to identify the 'best' employment sites to be retained and protected and identifying sites that should be clearly be released for other uses.
Stage 2 **Understanding Future Requirements**	Quantify the amount of employment land required across the main business sectors during the development plan period. This is achieved by assessing how they can be met in aggregate by the existing stock of business premises and by allocated sites. Account should also be taken of turnover of existing sites due to relocation or closures. Both short/medium term and strategic provision need to be considered in this process.
Stage 3 **Identifying a New portfolio of sites**	Devise qualitative site appraisal criteria to determine which sites meet the occupier or developer needs. Confirm the existing sites to be retained, replaced or released, and any gaps in the portfolio. In this allocation, consideration should be given to previously used sites, and in the reallocation, the environmental impact of one site relative to others should be included. The results of Stage 2, together with this site appraisal should provide a robust justification for altering allocations for employment land.

Appendix B - Uptake of employment related zonings in Belfast District Council Area 2015 (hectares)

Land zoned as Existing Employment

Plan Ref	Location	Total Area (Draft)	Remaining 2014(adoption)	Developed (over course of draft period)
BHA 06	Belfast Harbour		547.96	
BT004	Land at Springfield Road (Mackie's)	19	18.82	0.18
BT005/01	Newtownards Rd/Tamar St	3.124	2.82	0.3
BT005/02	Island St/Ballymacarrett Rd	1.335	1.34	0
BT005/03	East Belfast Enterprise Pk	0.825	0.81	0.01
BT005/04	Castlereagh Rd	6.936	6.63	0.3
BT005/05	Hillview Rd	5.767	5.75	0.01
BT005/06	Cambrai St	1.542	1.19	0.3
BT005/07	York Rd/Jennymount Business Pk	7.665	7.6	0.06
BT005/08	Duncairn Gardens	4.695	4.52	0.17
BT005/09	Shore Rd/Skegoneill St	1.254	1.2	0.05
BT005/10	Glenbank Business Park	4.263	3.74	0.52
BT005/11	Donegall Rd	1.456	1.47	0
BT005/12	Stockmans Way	6.494	6.19	0.3
BT005/13	Ravenhill Business Pk	2.306	2.2	0.1
BT005/14	Glen Rd	4.11	6.91	2.8
BT005/15	Kennedy Way	15.45	13.00	2.45
BT005/16	Whiterock Industrial Estate, Springfield Rd	4.99	4.81	0.18
BT005/17	Westlink Enterprise Centre, Distillery St	2.102	1.76	0.34
BT005/18	Springfield Rd	23.74	23.58	0.16
BT005/19	Ballygomartin Industrial Estate	4.457	4.41	0.04
BT005/20	Lanark Way	4.626	3.57	1.056
BT005/21	Argyle Business Pk, Shankhill Rd	2.118	2.0	0.118
BT005/22	Agnes St Industrial Estate	0.737	0.74	0

BT005/23	Louden St/Townsend St	1.699	1.63	0.06
BT005/24	Andrews Mill, Divis St	2.335	2.33	0
BT005/25	North Howard Link	2.636	2.18	0.456
BT005/26	Conway St	1.807	0.97	0.83
MCH09	Prince Regent Rd	18.247	17.09	1.157
MCH 10	Castlereagh Industrial Rd, Montgomery Rd	32.712	29.14	8.572
MCH11	Ballygowan Rd	0.5	0.49	0
ML05 (Part of)	Seymour Hill Industrial Estate		0.93 of 10.8	
ML07	Springbank Industrial Estate	29.535	31.55	
ML08	Kilwee Industrial Estate, Dunmurry	5.766	5.7	0.06

Land Zoned for Mixed Use

BHA01	Titanic Qter	38.93?? 87.31??	89.83	
BHA05	North Foreshore	47.364??79.84??OS BHA19	127.25	
BT002	Land at Monagh Bypass/Upper Springfield Rd	31.75 ?? (Draft)	36.08	
BT003	Land at Crumlin Rd inc Girdwood	12.806	12.53	

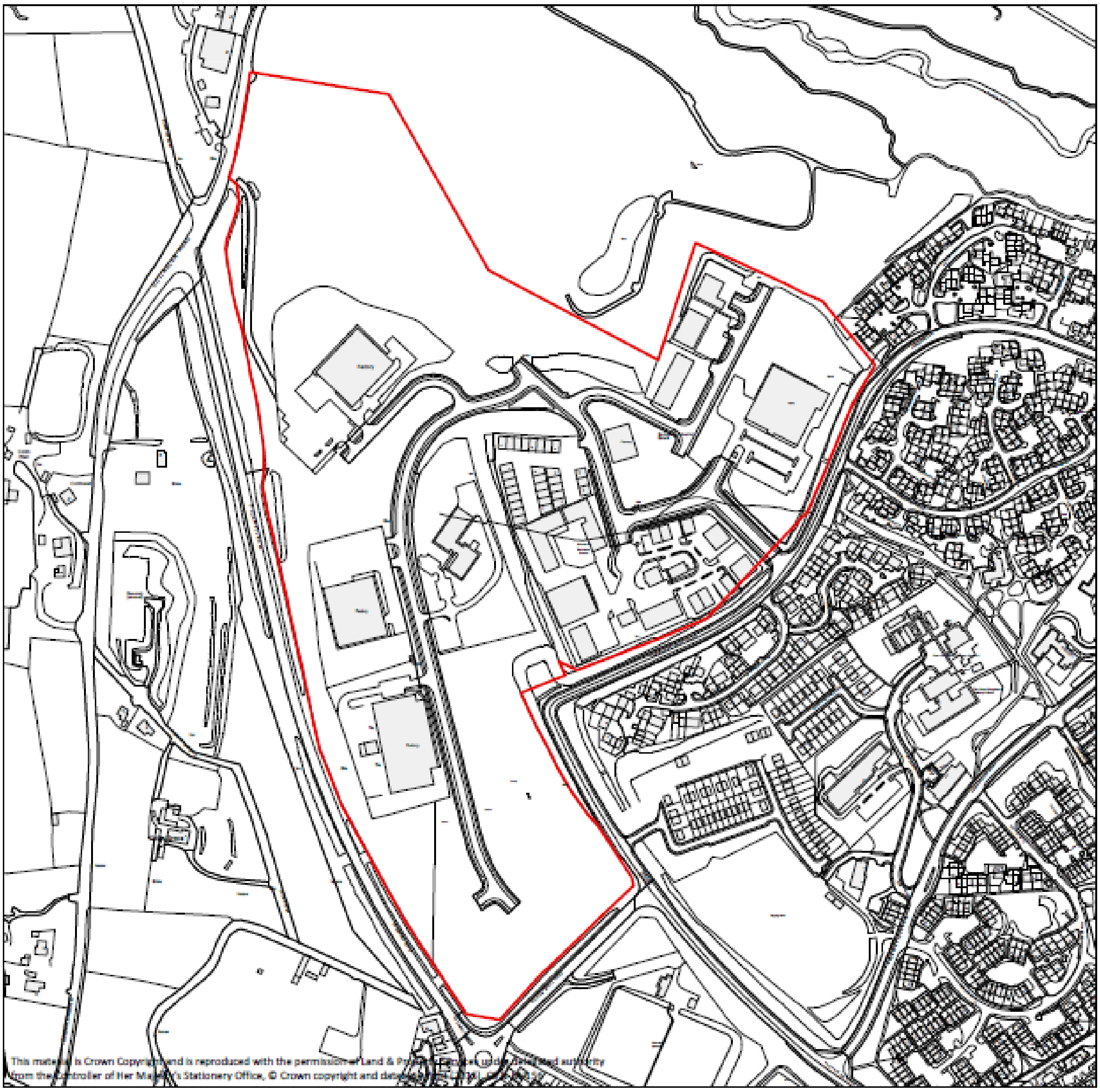
Land Zoned for Port Operations

BHA04	D3, Airport Rd W	19.11	19.11	

Appendix C - Invest NI Landholding with available lands

Belfast City Council

Employment and Economic Development



Invest NI landholdings in Belfast City as of 31st March 2015

SPRINGBANK

Invest NI Landholding (30.83ha of which 5.34ha available)

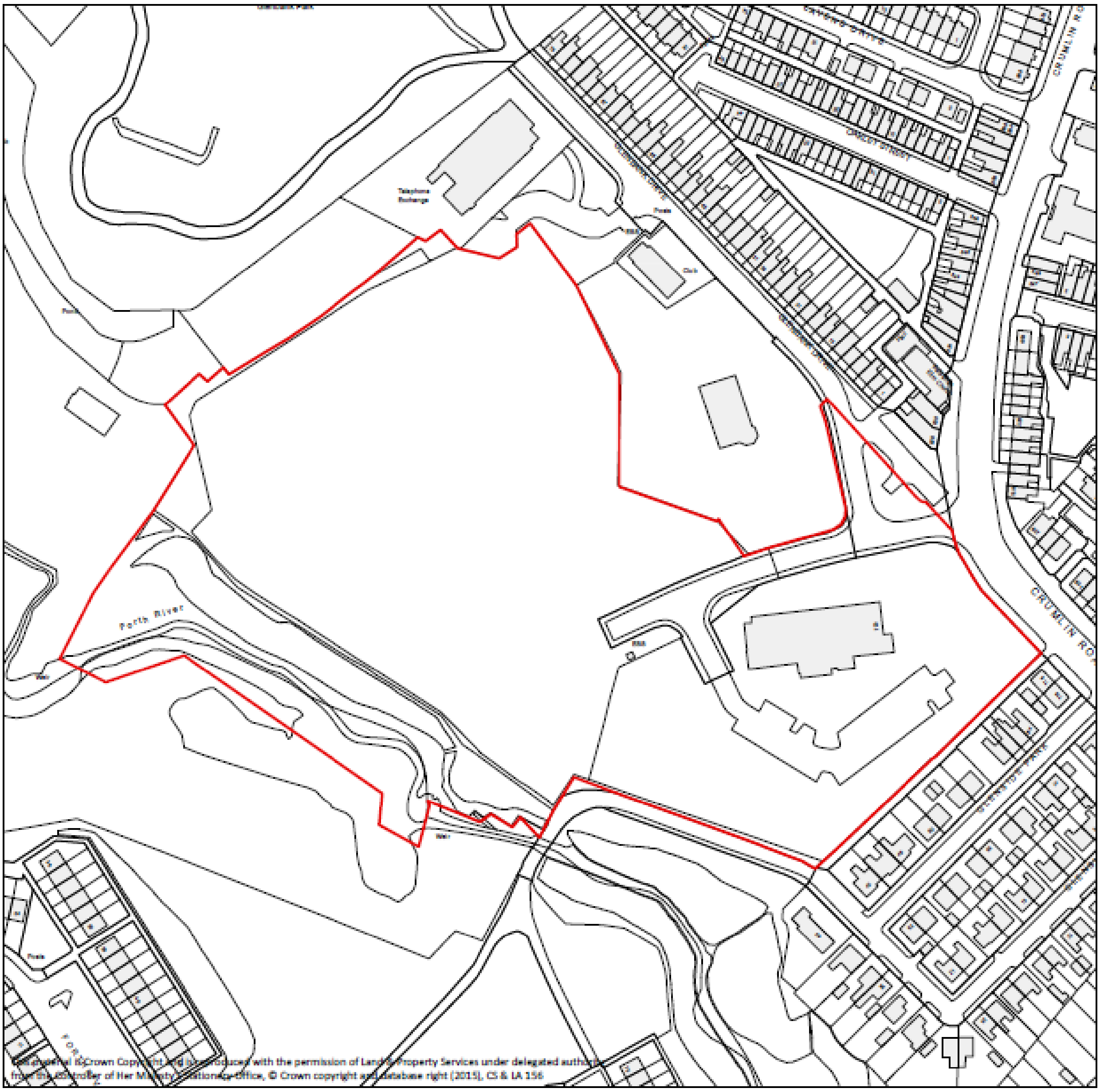
Source: Invest NI

0 25 50 100 Metres

N

Belfast City Council

Employment and Economic Development



Invest NI landholdings in Belfast City as of 31st March 2015
GLENBANK

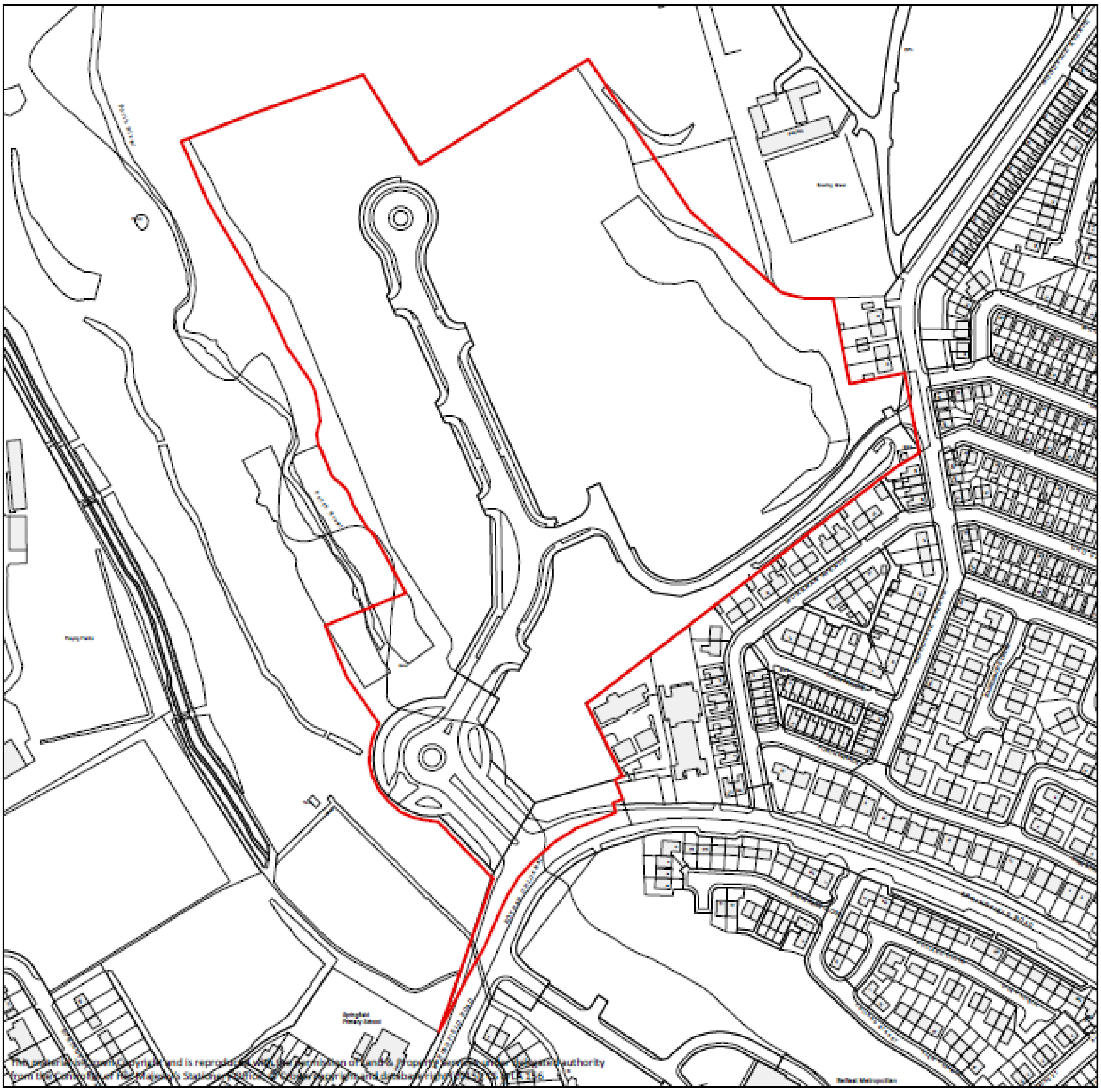
Invest NI Landholding (4.48ha of which 1.17ha available)

Source: Invest NI

0 12.5 25 50 Metres

Belfast City Council

Employment and Economic Development



Invest NI landholdings in Belfast City as of 31st March 2015

FORTHRIVER

Invest NI Landholding (9.34ha of which 4.33ha available)

Source: Invest NI

0 25 50 100 Metres

N

Belfast City Council

Employment and Economic Development

Invest NI landholdings in Belfast City as of 31st March 2015

WHITEROCK

Invest NI Landholding (4.91ha of which 1.34ha available)

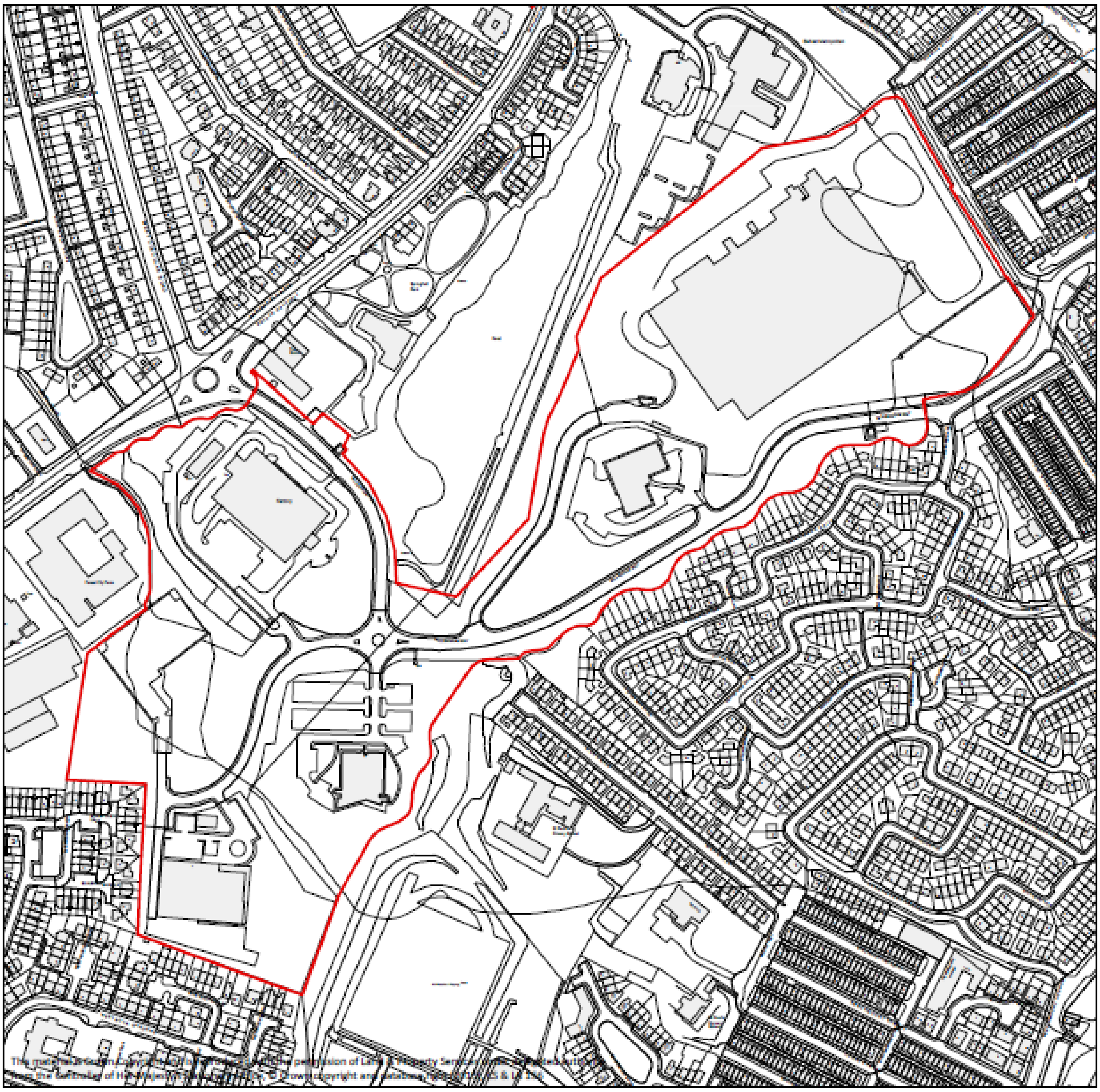
Source: Invest NI

0 12.5 25 50 Metres

N

Belfast City Council

Employment and Economic Development



Invest NI landholdings in Belfast City as of 31st March 2015

SPRINGVALE

Invest NI Landholding (19.39ha of which 0.85ha available)

Source: Invest NI

0 25 50 100 Metres

N

Belfast Planning Service
Belfast City Council
Cecil Ward Building
4-10 Linenhall Street
Belfast BT2 8BP

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/LDP
planning@belfastcity.gov.uk
028 9050 0510
@belfastcc
@belfastcitycouncil
Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council