

Belfast Masterplan Review

SBPB's comments are summarised as follows:

1. SBPB is supportive of a Masterplan for Belfast and broadly supports the strategic objectives, however, we have concerns about the spatial analysis and objectives relevant to the South Belfast area and particularly to the communities close to the city centre.
2. The Masterplan refers to key challenges facing Belfast and these are agreed, however, we would add that a challenge faced by communities is in planning for a return to renewed growth i.e. communities losing further valuable space to major redevelopment proposals. The Masterplan could be considered to be a plan for investment over building communities.
3. Socio-economic interfaces are a key issue for South Belfast; pockets of urban deprivation are 'masked' by virtue of being located 'cheek by jowl' to areas of wealth and success. Major projects will require social clauses and health impact assessment targeted to address significant disparity.
4. The renewed strategic objectives that focus on the 'learning city' and the 'digital city' have particular relevance to South Belfast and could see a particular emphasis on creating the skills necessary in residents to be employed in the new dominant employment sectors within the city. Skilling South Belfast will need to rely on apprenticeships in local businesses.
5. A spatial focus in Shaftesbury is generally welcomed, but is perhaps premature, poorly defined, and does not corroborate with on-going work by BRO on the Shaftesbury Square Development Framework. Shaftesbury, as a wider area of spatial analysis, requires more detailed attention and a strategic approach to provide effective project delivery.
6. Accessibility and connected city objectives are welcomed, but the Masterplan does not provide any radical solutions that will remove the significant physical barriers faced by communities caused largely by transport arrangements. The urgent need is to reconnect remaining disparate communities close to the city centre with the city centre, with each other, and with places they can access employment zones.
7. SBPB supports a low-carbon city objective, but residential quality of life measurements must be at the core of any projects. The Belfast Healthy Cities URBACT 2 Programme of building healthy communities must be formally incorporated into the planning and development of the projects and programmes that come from the Masterplan.
8. The 'neighbourhood city' objective is a valid visionary commitment but requires a specific definition of what is meant by neighbourhood and the infrastructure that holds a community together. The Masterplan needs to consider local facilities and services that form the core infrastructure of neighbourhoods. This objective needs to relate more formally to the delivery of the community planning process and this will help to define the infrastructural elements that are key within each neighbourhood.
9. SBPB considers that the Masterplan should be prepared in two parts; a set of core strategic objectives to inform city-wide projects such as the 'digital city' and 'learning city' but provide much more time and scope for examining spatial issues and provide an analysis and solutions for both Shaftesbury and the Northern City Fringes in tandem.
10. The River Lagan has been subject to substantial visioning work and is the focus of projects in several South Belfast Communities. The Masterplan doesn't appear to address the role of the river corridor within the social, environmental and economic fabric of the city.