

## HOLLYWOOD ARCHES FINAL REPORT (APRIL 2001)

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## **JUNE 2002 UPDATE NOTE**

This Holywood Arches Report is dated April 2001 and sets out the following:

- the need for an Action Plan;
- an overview of the Arches;
- the approach to and structure of a proposed Action Plan for the Arches;
- the themes objectives and benefits of the Action Plan;
- suggested next steps.

Since that date the following has taken place:

### **Policy**

The publication of the following policy, planning and urban regeneration documents: Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland 'Neighbourhood Renewal' Consultation Document, draft Belfast Regeneration Office Strategy for Consultation, Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025, the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan Issues Paper and the proposed Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland. In addition, the preliminary work on the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan has commenced.

### **Review Groups**

Five "Review Groups" met to discuss draft proposals and implementation arrangements. The five Review Groups were as follows: traffic and access, development, environment and housing and policy, funding and implementation.

### **Development**

Further development has taken place at the Connswater Retail Park, planning permission has been secured for the redevelopment of the Gallaher's Bonded Warehouse Site, planning permission has been gained for the Northern Ireland Science Park on Queen's Island (and Phase 1 of the NISP has just commenced on site) and clearance work is well underway of the housing around Mersey Street. Refurbishment work is underway on Bloomfield House, formerly Irvines Shoe Shop and the Lomond House development has been completed on the site of the former Holywood Road Library. In addition, preparatory work is proceeding by the S&E Belfast HSS Trust on the creation of the Community Care and Treatment Centre at Holywood Arches.

### **Environmental Enhancement Schemes**

Environmental enhancement schemes have been completed on the Albertbridge Road and at the junction of the Holywood Road and Upper Newtownards Road. An additional sculpture is to be placed on the site adjacent to the existing, much admired, CS Lewis piece. In addition, a map of the area, to show local facilities, car parks, public transport routes, etc. is being produced and should be 'launched' shortly.

## **Economic Appraisal**

An economic appraisal of the possible extension of The East Belfast Enterprise Centre based at Albertbridge Road has been completed and a preferred site identified in the Belfast Harbour Estate.

## **Hollywood Arches Action Group**

A Hollywood Arches Action Group, involving traders and other interests, has been formed. It has met to discuss and progress the range of actions set out in the Hollywood Arches April 2001 Report.

## **Deprivation Index**

The 'Robson Index' of multiple deprivation (based on work carried out in 1994 by a team from Manchester University) has been replaced by the 'Noble Index'. This followed the Review of the N.I. Index of Deprivation which reported in July 2001 (Noble et al 2001). The Review resulted in the preparation of separate spatially-based indicators for each of 7 'domains', broadly corresponding to key New TSN areas, plus a summary overall measure and a child poverty indicator.

## **Note**

It should be noted that the following Report is, with the exception of some factual amendments, an April 2001 Report. It should be read in conjunction with this Update Note which summarises a range of actions/ events which have taken place since the Report was issued.

Further information is available from the Hollywood Arches Action Group, c/o Greater East Belfast Partnership, Bloomfield House, 391-405 Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 1RH.

## 1.0 HOLYWOOD ARCHES ACTION PLAN

### Basis for the Action Plan

1.1 The factors leading to the preparation of a Hollywood Arches Action Plan can be summarised as follows:

- the area the profound change in the role, function and appearance of the area.
- the policy context the blight and uncertainty caused by planning/roads proposals over the past 35 years.
- the development context the range of current and proposed development activity in the immediate and wider area.
- the city context the status of the Arches as a natural focus or hub for East Belfast.
- the community context the widespread support for the preparation of a “vision” or “development framework” for the Arches to stimulate and co-ordinate action.
- the regeneration context the release of the draft Belfast Regeneration Office Strategy for consultation and the Department for Social Development Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy consultation document.

### Purpose of the Action Plan

1.2 It is intended that the Action Plan will:

- provide a ‘vision’ or ‘development framework’ for the area;
- stimulate and co-ordinate action over the long term;
- assist with the regeneration of the Arches as the “hub” or “focus” of East Belfast.

1.3 Any ‘Action Plan’ or ‘Development Framework’ has to address a range of constraints and opportunities. Undoubtedly, the major constraint facing the preparation and implementation of an ‘Action Plan’ for Hollywood Arches is the long-standing issue of road protection lines and the significant extent of blighted land.

1.4 This Report assumes that there will be continuing uncertainty over the status of the road protection lines and E-Way (the Light Rapid Transit proposal using the old East Down railway route) until at least 2004/2005, the scheduled completion date for the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan in the DoE Planning Service Corporate and Business Plan.

- 1.5 A separate Map Appendix to this Report contains a selection of plans of the area including a plan showing the extent of current road protection lines.

## 2.0 ROLE OF THE ARCHES

### POLICY CONTEXT AND CHANGING ROLE

- 2.1 It is quite apparent that the Holywood Arches and the wider catchment area have experienced significant physical, economic and social change over the past forty years. The forces and trends which have driven these changes have, of course, affected many other areas in Belfast particularly in the inner and middle city.
- 2.2 Whilst the physical symptoms of the changes are perhaps the most obvious (e.g. vacant sites, derelict buildings, gap sites) to the onlooker, whether resident or passer-by, it is actually in the role or function of the area that the effects of the change have been most profound.

#### The Changing Role

- 2.3 The Terms of Reference for this study suggest that the Arches should be regenerated *“with the potential to become a significant urban centre in inner East Belfast”* having:
- a full range of competitive shopping and commerce in addition to health, social, recreational and community services;
  - employment, training, educational and development opportunities which further integrate the Centre with the immediate catchment area;
  - a high townscape quality, interest and pedestrian character;
  - good access by car, public transport and for pedestrians;
  - civic spaces and a pedestrian network which extend the quality environment into the surrounding residential areas.
- 2.4 The focus of an initial Stage 1 Report was limited but very important, namely, *“to appraise the needs, demand, potential and limitations of the proposal for Holywood Arches to become an Urban or District Centre”*. The focus of this Final Report is *“to provide realistic and robust Actions which will form the initial part of a Framework, for the implementation of a Vision, for the future of the Holywood Arches area”*.

#### Policy Context

- 2.5 From this basis it is helpful to briefly review the changing role of the Arches (through a document review) and to gauge its potential future role.

#### The Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP), 1969

- 2.6 The Belfast Urban Area Plan, prepared for the Ministry of Development, was published in May 1969. It contained 18 *“subject studies”* (e.g. housing, employment, shopping) and 13 *“locality studies”* (e.g. Central Belfast, East Belfast/ Castlereagh, Finaghy).

2.7 The movement and shopping “*subject studies*” noted the following in relation to Hollywood Arches:

#### **Movement**

- “*delays occur on radial approaches to the city .....*”(p52)
- “*.... parking, pedestrians and turning traffic conflict with through movement at .....* Albertbridge Road” (p52)
- “*... by-passes or diversions are needed to relieve the following shopping centres of through traffic ... Hollywood Arches*” (p58)
- “*... creation of pedestrian-ways and traffic-free areas with off-peak service arrangements at ... Hollywood Arches*” (p64)
- “*... an urban motorway around the city centre “linked to a number of regional motorways with a major interchange at Hollywood Arches* (p56).

#### **Shopping**

- “*... a hierarchy of centres, increasing in size towards the city centre, has developed on many radial routes...*” (p84)
- “ *the inner centres still draw shoppers from a wide area, for example, Hollywood Arches attracts one-third of its shoppers from outer parts of the Belfast Urban Area*” (p84)
- “*... because of the increasing emphasis on large-scale shopping developments, together with many other facilities, the neighbourhood centre with a catchment of say 10,000 or less will become less important in the hierarchy ...*” (p86)
- “*... 12 district centres to be established to include shopping and substantial car parking with recreation; leisure, social and community facilities and possibly housing, offices, hotels, warehousing and other services”. Hollywood Arches will be a district centre* (p88)
- “*... there are no major centres except for Lisburn, outside a radius of two miles from the city centre*” (p233.)

2.8 The East Belfast/ Castlereagh locality study noted the following:

- “*... East Belfast is one of the major industrial areas of the city*” (p118);
- “*... several heavily trafficked routes pass through the area* (p118);
- “*... a motorway route (M7) is planned along the line of the old East Down railway, but Newtownards Road (east of Hollywood Arches) will remain an important primary route* (p118);

- *“... serious conflict occurs between traffic and pedestrians at the shopping centre at Hollywood Arches, Newtownards Road (west of Hollywood Arches) and Albertbridge Road. Relief to Albertbridge Road is particularly desirable in the short term. The urban motorway will relieve the present congestion at Newtownards Road and could be successfully integrated into Hollywood Arches as an elevated motorway.” (p118);*
- *“... the establishment of district centres is key to ‘restructuring’ in the Urban Area, grafting a new concept on to a changing hierarchy of existing centres” (p243);*
- *“... district centres ... need to have a minimum catchment population of about 30,000” (p243);*
- *“... the success of district centres largely depends on an effective development control policy of steering selected uses to the district centres, whilst at the same time keeping a right rein on development elsewhere” (p253).*

### **The Hollywood Arches Local Plan 1985**

- 2.9 This Plan (see Map Appendix) was produced by the DoE Planning Service in 1985 in order *“to establish an overall planning policy for all development in the area for the next ten years and provide a planning framework for future housing policy and environmental improvements”.*

The Plan sub-divided the area into 20 smaller zones and set out proposals for each of these zones. Key issues noted in the Plan included the following:

- *“This district is undergoing considerable change.....”*
- *“The Arches is an area of social and environmental significance at the hub of East Belfast .....*”
- *“... there is a unique opportunity to create a pool of sound houses in inner city East Belfast.”*
- *“... the recently opened Connswater Centre has consolidated and complemented the existing shopping provision.”*
- *“... the area will become a focus of attention in East Belfast being a desirable place to live, work and shop.”*
- *“... policies and proposals will be implemented by a number of agencies including various branches of the Department, the Belfast City Council, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and private entrepreneurs.”*
- *“this policy (for Bloomfield Avenue) aims to retain good housing stock in residential use and to prevent the retail core shifting away from the Arches towards the Connswater Shopping Centre.”*

### **Belfast Urban Area Plan, 2001**

- 2.10 The BUAP 2001 was published in June 1990 by the Department of the Environment. It contained 3 parts namely Part A Framework, Part B The Development Strategy and Part C Policy Statements. The BUAP 2001 replaced the BUAP 1969-1986.
- 2.11 The BUAP 2001 noted the following:
- ...*"the establishment of eight linear parks" one of which was Connswater/ Knock River Valley (p57);*
  - *"the Eastern Approaches Strategy will provide for the following schemes to be built as and when resources permit: Hollywood Arches by-pass, Connsbank Link, Comber Route (1) and (2) and Ballybeen to Quarry Corner Link".*

### **The Draft Regional Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland, 1998**

- 2.12 The draft RSF, December 1998, was prepared by the DoE as a *"spatial framework"* for all of Northern Ireland. It contains, however, a specific section on Belfast within which the following points can be highlighted in relation to inner East Belfast:
- *"promote a renewed focus on regeneration for the City Centre, the town centres of Bangor, Carrickfergus and Lisburn and areas of disadvantage and deprivation located within the Metropolitan Area, including deteriorating areas in Belfast Middle City, and particularly the North and West Belfast Axis and the East Belfast Crescent";*
  - *"promote the development of a comprehensive urban network of public transport routes and services to provide better linkages between homes and jobs, with a particular focus on improving links between areas of social disadvantage and major employment opportunities".*

### **Report of the Panel into the Draft Regional Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland, 2000**

- 2.13 The Panel Report, February 2000, following the Public Examination into the draft RSF included the following comments relevant to Hollywood Arches at a strategic level:
- ...*"the provision of improved public transport services before the imposition of traffic restraint measures;" (p37);*
  - ...*"the extension of the E-Way system to Comber and Newtownards and its eventual operation as a light rapid transit route." (p41);*
  - ...*"we recommend that Translink consider in the long-term the integration of the E-Way with the suburban railway system" (p42);*

- ...*”to help deliver urban renaissance immediately, we recommend that a comprehensive package of measures be developed to bring forward urban housing land” (p68).*

**Response by the Department of Regional Development to the Panel Report, 2000**

2.14 The DRD Response Paper, April 2000, noted the following in relation to the E-Way system, urban renaissance and Transport in the Belfast Metropolitan Area:

- *The Department notes the recommendation of the Panel that the Strategy should advocate the extension of the E-Way system to Comber and Newtownards and its eventual operation as a light rapid transit route. It is also recommended that Translink consider in the long-term the integration of the E-Way with this suburban railway system. (para 1.33);*
- *The Department proposes to respond to this recommendation by indicating in the Strategy that possible innovative improvements to the public transport system in the Belfast Metropolitan Area and its hinterland, such as advocated by the Panel, should be considered within the context of the proposed Regional Transportation Strategy, and that these options should be kept open for the long term;*
- *The Department welcomes the recognition by the Panel of the value attached by the Department to an aspirational target in support of the urban renaissance drive. In view of the increasing number of small households, the Department considers there is a growing potential for innovative forms of urban housing developments. (para 1.60);*
- *The Department notes the recommendation of the Panel that in order to help to deliver urban renaissance immediately, a comprehensive set of measures should be developed to bring forward urban housing land. This is a matter, which will require further consideration within Government before a final response can be made. (para 1.61);*

**Overview**

2.15 At a strategic level the following can be noted in relation to the past and current role of Holywood Arches:

- the role of Holywood Arches has profoundly changed over the past forty years with the advent of purpose-built shopping centres, widespread housing redevelopment, economic restructuring, increased traffic volumes and the outward movement of population;
- the policy proposals of the 1960's for the Holywood Arches relating to the creation of a District Centre and major motorway interchange stemmed from a desire to *“re-structure”* the city and use the old Holywood Arches as a basis for a new purpose-built integrated *“District Centre”*;

- the current planning policy (BUAP 2001) for Hollywood Arches retains the role of the Arches as an interchange (albeit with a by-pass) and retains road protection lines for two major routes
- with the development and expansion of the Connswater Centre (opened in 1983), (and further development of Connswater Retail Park 2002), the District Centre concept of the 1960's is to some extent realised but the development is fragmented and there is a lack of integration and cohesiveness about the buildings, spaces and activities in the wider locality;
- increasing traffic volumes have caused major problems of severance and conflict in the heart of the Arches area.

### **Summary**

2.16 In summary, the Arches has evolved from:

- a busy neighbourhood focus with a clear “core” linked to radial routes serving a high-density, well-populated catchment area to...
- a wider fragmented area seriously affected by road blight, severed by a constricted “funnel” carrying heavy traffic flows and with its retail “core” relocated, since the early 1980's, from the Arches to the purpose-built Connswater Shopping Centre.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC OVERVIEW**

### **Study Area**

2.17 The study area is a relatively small area (approximately 11 hectares, 27 acres) in East Belfast. The following wards adjoin the study area:

- Island
- Ballyhackamore
- Bloomfield
- The Mount
- Ballymacarrett

### **Belfast Areas of Need (BAN) Study**

2.18 The 1970's Belfast Areas of Need (BAN) study sought to focus resources on the most deprived areas. Whilst there have been changes to ward boundaries since that date, it can be noted that the BAN Study identified Ballymacarrett and The Mount as being

in the worst 20 wards on one method of ranking and Island in the worst 20 wards on two methods of ranking.

### 1991 Census

2.19 1991 Census information (see opposite) was used to provide an “index of deprivation”. On an index range of -24.78 (low) to 20.70 (high) the five wards were classified as follows:

-24.78 - 0	low index of deprivation	Ballyhackamore
0.01 - 4.46		Bloomfield
4.47 - 10.93		-
10.94 - 16.07		Ballymacarrett
16.08 - 20.70	high index of deprivation	The Mount and Island

2.20 In 1995 The Making Belfast Work (MBW) area of operation, defined using the Robson index, included all of the five wards above in its ‘South and East’ MBW Team area

### The Robson Index

2.21 The Robson Index notes the following in relation to the five wards. The Robson deprivation index combines 18 separate indicators, chosen to cover a range of fields such as health, education, environmental and economic characteristics of electoral wards.

WARD	RANK IN TERMS OF DEGREE	RANK IN TERMS OF INTENSITY	RANK IN TERMS OF EXTENT OF DEPRIVATION THROUGHOUT N.I.
Ballyhackamore	482th	321st	-
Ballymacarrett	14th	35th	67th
Bloomfield	220th	154th	-
Island	9th	13th	26 <sup>th</sup>
The Mount	8th	26th	30 <sup>th</sup>
Cut-off point	* (217)	(229)	(130)

Source: Relative Deprivation in N.I.

B Robson, M Bradford & I Deas. September 1994.

- 2.22 The cut-off points are the overall degree of deprivation (217), the spatial extent of deprivation in an area (130) and the intensity of deprivation (229) based upon the average score of the worst three enumeration districts (small sub ward level of 400 houses on average). The most disadvantaged wards score above the breakpoints in each of the three measures outlined.
- 2.23 There are 566 wards throughout N.I. The degree of deprivation indicates the overall level of deprivation across the area as a whole, the intensity indicates the level of worst deprivation in an area and the extent reflects the severity of deprivation. From this analysis, the most deprived wards are: Island at the 26th worst in Northern Ireland, followed by The Mount, 30th and Ballymacarrett, 67th.
- 2.24 At the wider East Belfast level, recent reports have highlighted the wide range of values of the Robson index of social deprivation across wards. A study by the Urban Institute (December 1999), for the South & East Belfast Trust noted that the S&E Belfast Trust area contained 7 of the 10 most affluent wards in Northern Ireland but also 7 wards which are among the 20% of poorest wards in Northern Ireland.
- 2.25 The sobering fact is that the inner city East Belfast core shows the same characteristics, re. social deprivation, as portions of the north and west of the city. A recent feature has been the juxtaposition of areas of high development activity and high land prices alongside or close to areas of significant and persistent deprivation.
- 2.26 The implication of the above is threefold:
- Hollywood Arches is in a pivotal geographic location to serve a catchment area which continues to experience high levels of deprivation;
  - a development framework for Hollywood Arches should seek to respond to and, as far as possible, address the social and physical problems of the wider area;
  - Hollywood Arches could deliver physical and social benefits in a development concept or framework for a defined area.

## **WIDER DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT**

- 2.27 A significant amount of new development has recently taken place in the wider locality including the Odyssey Complex at Laganside to the west of the Arches, and the new Belfast City Airport Terminal to the north of the Arches on the Sydenham Bypass. Further significant developments are planned at the Howden Sirocco works site, the Titanic Quarter and the N.I. Science Park on the east side of the River Lagan.

## **RESPONSES FROM REVIEW GROUPS**

### **Review Groups**

- 2.28 Five review groups were formed to contribute to the study by addressing the following matters:

- what are the pressing needs/problems facing the area?
- what is the potential role of the area?
- what are the constraints/ barriers to the area realising its potential?
- what initiatives should be explored to enhance the role of the Arches?
- how and by whom should the initiatives be developed and implemented?

2.29 The five review groups were:

Traffic and Access	(9 participants)
Community	(6 participants)
Development	(11 participants)
Environment and Housing	(9 participants)
Policy, Funding & Implementation	(7 participants)

2.30 The sections below seek to highlight the major issues raised in each group.

## TRAFFIC AND ACCESS FOCUS GROUP

Needs/Problems	Potential Role	Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the artery through the area is congested, it is operating at the limit of its capacity and traffic is “funnelled” through the area;</li> <li>• pedestrian crossings are inadequate, of poor design and far apart;</li> <li>• priority is given to vehicle movement not pedestrians; public transport service, away from arterial routes, is poor;</li> <li>• it is difficult to stop, park and visit the area not least because of all-day parking by businesses;</li> <li>• there is tension between users of the area and through traffic and there is a poor quality of life for residents and businesses in the area;</li> <li>• the Arches is not a destination or an “attractor” unlike the City Centre and Connswater Shopping Centre; a by-pass, on a smaller scale, is needed;</li> <li>• the BUAP 2001 policy context is outdated but the replacement Belfast Metropolitan Plan is 4-5 years away;</li> <li>• the area is the strategic focus/junction of the “eastern approaches” to the city; there is significant blight from road protection lines and with heavy traffic the area has an unattractive appearance and retail facilities are declining;</li> <li>• a clearer hierarchy of routes is required and there may be scope for a “park and ride” scheme;</li> <li>• there will be further pressure on the “eastern approaches” due to additional housing development;</li> <li>• the Health Centre is a key “attractor” (with 250 staff including 18 GP’s) and access/ parking is confusing (poor differentiation between Health Centre and public car parking), difficult (at Westminster Avenue) and, at times, congested.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the area can “reclaim its role” as a focus or an integrated centre for East Belfast as many of the elements are already in place (the “free-standing” elements need to be integrated and further “brownfield development” should take place;</li> <li>• the area can become a “hub” for public transport with Albertbridge Road as a key public transport route;</li> <li>• the E-Way could become a Light Rapid Transit route; the area needs a well-designed by-pass of the appropriate scale.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify and strengthen linkages to the rest of the city;</li> <li>• improve pedestrian linkages and cycling network especially for use by local residents;</li> <li>• implement a “park and shop” initiative (receipts provide free car parking);</li> <li>• identify short term and long-term initiatives;</li> <li>• review the level of parking provision and the charging policy (350 spaces, excl. Connswater, are provided free);</li> <li>• review the BUAP 2001 planning policy and input to the Belfast Metropolitan Plan/ N.I. Transportation Strategy;</li> <li>• Review DRD Roads Service ownership and the impact of blight caused by road protection lines.</li> </ul>

**COMMUNITY**

<b>Needs/Problems</b>	<b>Constraints</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<i>Tribal allegiances</i>” in East Belfast but co-operation growing with a collective East Belfast identity (14 neighbourhood surveys are being undertaken);</li> <li>• traffic amount and speed causes problems relating to safety;</li> <li>• pedestrian access to library, shops and across roads needs to be improved;</li> <li>• Connswater is separate from Holywood Arches (and it is a long walk to Tesco’s) and there is concern over the impact of the “<i>D5 Harbour Exchange</i>” retail/leisure scheme on the area;</li> <li>• the area should be a focus for the catchment area but it is divided by roads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development pressures are affecting the area and there is a concern over rising property prices;</li> <li>• more housing is required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• crèche provision is required;</li> <li>• Connswater is providing help with training placements;</li> <li>• there is also a need for a pub, a neighbourhood shop and a training facility.</li> </ul>

DEVELOPMENT		
Needs/Problems/Constraints	Role	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the “D5 Harbour Exchange” scheme will have an adverse effect on the area;</li> <li>the Arches has become a “funnel for traffic”;</li> <li>land assembly for “affordable housing” is essential;</li> <li>road protection lines affect a lot of land and need to be reviewed;</li> <li>the ‘CD’ (comprehensive development) process may not be appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the role of the Arches needs to be defined: is it the “commercial core” or “employment centre” of inner East Belfast?</li> <li>should the area have more housing?</li> <li>the area has experienced dramatic change with the development of Connswater and small office schemes: it could cater for “office overflow” from city centre and become a “Professional Services” Quarter;</li> <li>the Arches is still a focus for the area and a “nodal point” but “synergy” is needed with larger developments such as Odyssey;</li> <li>the area has benefited from office and housing development but “the heart is missing” due to the Connswater Development and it cannot be a “village” like Ballyhackamore;</li> <li>the area has opportunities for “gentrification” with the further development of private housing;</li> <li>the retail sector is very competitive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>target UDG on the area and arterial routes and enhance grant levels;</li> <li>if the Arches is a “designated office area” then planning permission for office development is easier;</li> <li>develop some of the car parking sites at Connswater Retail Park;</li> <li>develop additional housing;</li> <li>focus on the wider area and improve links to Odyssey, Belmont Road, etc;</li> <li>Health Centre (with a 70,000 catchment population) will be redeveloped and will be a “key attraction”;</li> <li>release road protection land for temporary parking;</li> <li>develop the “night-time economy”;</li> <li>have an environmental initiative for the Connswater River;</li> <li>improve pedestrian linkages;</li> <li>do an ambitious “air rights development” above the roads.</li> </ul>

ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING		
Needs/Problems	Potential Role	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vehicle traffic take priority over pedestrians;</li> <li>• the murals create the wrong image and tend to reduce property values by 20%;</li> <li>• anti-social behaviour is occurring in the area;</li> <li>• the image of the shops should be enhanced;</li> <li>• there is a severe lack of open space provision within the Holywood Arches;</li> <li>• the arterial route should be regenerated in the first instance then move back to the residential areas;</li> <li>• car parking tends to be hidden and difficult to access;</li> <li>• social facilities are lacking in the area especially for the young and old;</li> <li>• any residential redevelopment needs to encourage the provision of social housing in the first phase;</li> <li>• more new people need to reside in the area to regenerate the '<i>spirit of community</i>'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create residential developments on the street frontage;</li> <li>• consolidate retail in certain areas rather than spread out;</li> <li>• create an urban village at the Arches, hence creating a '<i>sense of place</i>';</li> <li>• encourage the concept of people '<i>living above the shop</i>';</li> <li>• provide affordable high quality housing stock;</li> <li>• regenerate the road frontage properties to create a '<i>domino</i>' knock-on effect for the surrounding properties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create spatial framework masterplan for the area which would provide a strategic overview for the area. Such a framework would involve a high level of commitment from local residents, NIHE, Planning, Roads, etc;</li> <li>• undertake infrastructure improvements;</li> <li>• Urban Development Grants could be focused towards the arterial routes);</li> <li>• encourage community police initiatives – discourage anti social behaviour and promote a safer atmosphere;</li> <li>• Landmark East could play a role in association with Housing Associations, the private sector and the statutory sector. Housing Associations and the NIHE also have a key role to play;</li> <li>• potential for planning gain and benefits for the community;</li> <li>• DRD Roads Service should bring forward proposals for their large land holding.</li> </ul>

POLICY, FUNDING & IMPLEMENTATION		
Needs / Problems	Potential & Constraints	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the BUAP 2001 is out of date;</li> <li>the new BRO strategy can focus on “<i>areas for integrated action</i>”;</li> <li>levels of UDG could be enhanced and UDG targeted;</li> <li>a CD scheme could be appropriate and would, significantly, alter the Development Plan;</li> <li>a Local Plan or alteration to the Plan is a time consuming planning option;</li> <li>“<i>office development areas</i>” can be designated through BUAP 2001 although this power has not been used;</li> <li>office policy is flexible with the conversion of redundant buildings;</li> <li>Planning Service HQ could be persuaded that Call Centres could be developed in the area;</li> <li>the Arches area could become a “<i>Zone B</i>” for car parking policy;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the road protection lines have been held for 25 years but they were confirmed in BUAP 2001 as part of a wider strategy;</li> <li>the scheme is undeliverable in the plan period and is not the first priority in the N.I. list;</li> <li>there is a local problem but there is still a strategic need for a by-pass;</li> <li>a CD scheme could bring some local benefits;</li> <li>it might be possible to generate private sector interest in providing the Connsbank link if significant development opportunities were unlocked;</li> <li>need other proposals such as E-Way to deal with traffic;</li> <li>Maryfield junction will be used by D5 scheme and the overall Harbour development will have regional implications;</li> <li>a Dee Street interchange, on its own, could be used for the Harbour;</li> <li>a CD scheme could be based on existing protection lines but a smaller by-pass scheme could be delivered. The design is reasonably advanced for the link;</li> <li>the proposed Belfast Metropolitan Plan will review the roads issue and highlight the importance of the Harbour for development;</li> <li>there is a need for a “<i>political initiative</i>” at the Arches, as at the Gasworks, to clear the logjam over road protection lines and relieve the frustration of traders and residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning gain might be able to deliver a creative solution;</li> <li>Possible funding sources would be ‘Peace and Reconciliation, BRO, DRD Roads Service, BCC, NIHE;</li> <li>examine interim solutions (e.g. for the terrace containing the chemist);</li> <li>a sub-group of the environmental forum could consider initiatives;</li> <li>give the area status within the overall BRO strategy;</li> <li>a vision for the area is absolutely vital;</li> <li>classify management role of Lands Service at DRD Roads Service re. blighted property;</li> <li>extend the 5 year lease on roads - blighted land (used to be a 1 year lease!)</li> </ul>

### **3.0 APPROACH TO AND STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN**

#### **THE CONTEXT FOR ACTION**

- 3.1 The previous sections outlined the need for an Action Plan for the Hollywood Arches and provided an overview of the current state of the area. This section seeks to set the scene for the themes and objectives contained in section 4.0. The underlying assumption is that there is a range of issues, problems and opportunities which need to be urgently and comprehensively addressed so that, in simple terms, '*something can be done to improve Hollywood Arches*'.

#### **The Goal**

- 3.2 The essence of the task is to make Hollywood Arches a place for people which serves people's needs. Drawing from the Government's response to the Urban Task Force Report ("*Our Towns and Cities : the future. Delivering on Urban Renaissance*") it could be said that Hollywood Arches should be:

- a distinctive place, which reflects the particular strengths and characteristics of the area;
- should have its development influenced by the involvement of the local community, so that there is a response to local as well as wider needs;
- should benefit from a coherent approach, based on genuine partnership, from the many agencies involved in the area.

#### **Key Steps**

- 3.3 In seeking to achieve the goal of making the Arches a place for people, it is readily apparent that the key steps outlined in the Urban Task Force, noted above, have an immediate relevance to Hollywood Arches as an inner-city neighbourhood namely:

- better planning and design to create places that:
  - provide attractive homes;
  - have good quality, safe public spaces;
  - allow people easy access to shops, schools, health and leisure facilities on foot or bike;
  - are well served by efficient and reliable public transport.
- bring brownfield land and empty buildings back into constructive use so that:
  - they contribute to the quality of urban life rather than detract from it;
  - urban sprawl is avoided.

- look after the existing urban environment by:
  - tackling litter, graffiti, vandalism and noise;
  - maintaining and improving streets and buildings;
  - making sure parks, playgrounds and other public spaces are safe and attractive spaces.

3.4 Many of these aims and aspirations have been clearly and forcefully expressed during the focus group discussions held during the Study by community, public sector and private sector representatives.

### **Constraints**

3.5 However, it should not be assumed that the task of changing the Arches for the better will be straightforward simply because the issues/problems have been identified, aspirations expressed during wide-ranging discussions, and a range of proposals listed under a set of strategic themes.

3.6 There are a number of significant challenges and constraints facing Hollywood Arches and the implementation of an Action Plan namely:

- (a) blight and uncertainty: it is readily apparent that the road protection lines affecting the area have caused extensive blight and uncertainty over some 30 years. The blight extends beyond the actual protection lines and has had an extremely negative impact on the area.
- (b) absence of a vision for the area: whilst the Arches area has a wide range of facilities, the area lacks cohesion and new developments have, in many cases, further fragmented the area. There is no framework for the area to stimulate investment, encourage quality and restore linkages.
- (c) lack of a coherent, integrated approach: a wealth of diverse agencies (statutory, private and voluntary) are involved but there is no common or agreed agenda and no mechanism for involvement.
- (d) absence of a priority status for the area: the area has no particular status to assist its renaissance. It is not part of a Development Scheme area and it is outside (but close to) the Laganside designated area. Whilst it may become a Neighbourhood Renewal Zone (under the proposed BRO Urban Regeneration Strategy) it does not attract the priority interest or targeted effort and resources of any agency.

### **Opportunities**

3.7 However, there are a range of opportunities stemming from:

- the interest and co-operation stimulated by this Study;

- the wider policy context which is seeking to place a high priority on brownfield development and urban renaissance;
- the significant developments underway and proposed for inner east Belfast including Odyssey, Howden Sirocco site, NI Science Park and Titanic Quarter;
- the preparation of the Belfast Metropolitan Plan which should remove blight and stimulate development when the Plan is completed;
- the potential for major investment in housing (through the Urban Renewal Areas), in health infrastructure (through the S&E Belfast HSS Trust), in retail (should a change of ownership be completed for the Connswater Shopping Centre), in public transport infrastructure (through the E-Way) and in a variety of smaller development schemes (including the prominent Irvine's building).

### **Principles**

3.8 In light of the above a number of principles are of paramount importance:

- the community, private sector and statutory agencies should be involved in the preparation of the development framework for the area and should have “a stake” in its realisation;
- the development framework should provide a vision for the area, should be flexible to respond to changing circumstances and should be a springboard for action not an end in itself;
- the statutory agencies should pro-actively seek a coherent approach on the basis of genuine partnership with each other and the wider community;
- the statutory agencies should accord Hollywood Arches a priority status as part of a concerted effort to regenerate the study area;
- the elected representatives should be fully informed and lend support to the implementation of the plan;
- a targeted approach based on the setting of objectives, responsibilities and tasks which can be monitored should be adopted;
- a ‘driving’ agency or group is essential to encourage, facilitate and help co-ordinate implementation.

3.9 It is suggested that the role of the Hollywood Arches should be:

***‘An attractive hub for East Belfast which has a sense of identity ... is well connected to its wider locality, is full of vibrancy and vitality and ... is well managed and promoted’.***

## 4.0 THEMES, OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

### Introduction

- 4.1 This section of the Report provides a structure for a Hollywood Arches Action Plan by:
- identifying four generic ‘themes’ relating to appearance/identity, linkages, investment and organisation;
  - outlining a number of ‘objectives’ under each theme and the resultant benefits from action.

Each ‘Objective’ is accompanied by a list of those “Action Group” Members who, it is considered, should take responsibility for the achievement of that particular ‘Objective’. Effective **partnership, cohesion** and **co-operation** between all Action Group Members will be the key to the delivery of a sustainable vision for the Hollywood Arches area, through the framework of the Action Plan.

### APPEARANCE/IDENTITY

- 4.3 The physical environment and appearance of an area is the aspect which most people are aware of, both those who live and work in the area, and those who pass through it. It is therefore important to recognise this and to start the regeneration process in the Arches by taking steps to improve the physical environment of the area and, at the same time, improve and promote its identity.
- 4.4 The theme, therefore, is to ***“Improve the physical environment of Hollywood Arches and promote its identity”***. The objectives related to this theme are noted below.
- 4.5 **Objective: Produce A Signage Strategy for the Arches to Provide Information and Promote Identity.** The Signage strategy should concentrate on the heart of the Arches but also include linkages to residential areas and local facilities outside the central area, e.g. health centres and public open space.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- Belfast City Council,
- BRO,
- East Belfast Partnership,
- DRD Roads Service and
- DoE Planning Service.

- 4.6 **Objective: Develop an Environmental Initiative around the Connswater River both within and Outside the Study Area.** The Connswater River is an important local resource, which has the potential to act as a local nature site, as well as functioning as a key pedestrian and cycle route through the heart of the Hollywood Arches area. The environment of the river and river banks needs to be improved, not only from an aesthetic point of view, but also to support the introduction of some natural flora and fauna. The river and river environment could ultimately become not only an attractive semi natural environment but also an important educational facility for local school children. As the river is a designated watercourse, any environmental improvements to the river will have to be agreed by Rivers Agency.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- Connswater Shopping Centre Management,
- Belfast City Council,
- East Belfast Partnership Board and the
- Belfast Regeneration Office.

- 4.7 **Objective: Prepare an Environmental Education Pack on the Arches for Use by Schools in the Catchment Area.** The Hollywood Arches area has a rich local history relating to the old industry of the Ropeworks, Harland and Wolff, and the Shorts factory. There are already some local history publications such as the 'Underneath the Arches' booklet prepared by Ballymacarret Arts and Cultural Society. This type of information could be provided in an educational form with workbooks and activities guiding school children around local history sites, both old and new. The Library could be used as a local base for groups.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- Belfast Education and Library Board (local schools and public library),
- BRO,
- Ballymacarret Arts and Cultural Society and the
- East Belfast Partnership.

- 4.8 **Objective: Implement A Targeted Townscape Improvement Scheme.** There are a considerable number of attractive buildings within the Hollywood Arches area. These buildings are important not only because they form part of the area's local character, but also because they are a reminder of the local history of the Hollywood Arches. Whilst a number of these buildings appear in good repair, for example the old Ulster Bank there are others which are suffering from poor maintenance, for example the buildings on the Newtownards Rd opposite 'Wyse Byse'.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- BRO,
- East Belfast Partnership and
- Landmark East.

- 4.9 **Objective: Undertake short term but imaginative environmental improvements to vacant properties/sites affected by the road protection lines.** There are a considerable number of vacant properties which are blighted by the various road protection lines which traverse the central Holywood Arches area. Whilst the future of the proposed road schemes remains uncertain, the blighted buildings are slowly decaying and are in turn blighting nearby properties, which fall outside the road protection area. An example of where this occurs is the unattractive and semi derelict block of buildings on the Newtownards Rd facing the Albertbridge Rd. This is a significant problem, which must be addressed. A number of these properties are owned by Roads Service who would therefore be in a position to authorise improvements to the physical appearance of the properties.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- DRD Roads Service and the
- East Belfast Partnership.

- 4.10 **Prepare A Comprehensive Empty Property Database as the First Stage in the Preparation of an Empty Property Strategy.** This database is needed to identify property owners, to target areas for action and to establish a baseline for ongoing monitoring of the property stock.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows: The Valuation and Lands Agency already hold a considerable base of relevant information and could prepare such a database, in association with BRO.

- 4.11 **Objective: Produce an up-to-date, Attractive Map of the Area to Show Local Facilities, Car Parks, Public Transport, Etc.** The Holywood Arches area is relatively well served by local facilities with a library, a health centre, a leisure centre, playgrounds and public open space all located within close walking distance of the central shopping areas. An up to date map would help to make the area become more fully integrated and draw all the local facilities together with information on public transport, pedestrian routes, shops car parking, community facilities and local interest. 'A Guide to the Holywood Arches' would ensure that people both local and visiting, are fully aware of all the facilities, where they are located and how to get to them. Such a map could also serve to strengthen the identity of the local area with the inclusion of local landmarks, both new and historical.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- BRO,
- Belfast City Council,
- Belfast Education and Library Board,
- Connswater Shopping Centre Management,
- East Belfast Partnership Board and
- Local Traders

4.12 **Objective: Implement and Launch the Environmental Improvement Scheme for the Newtownards Rd and, Holywood Rd/Upper Newtownards Road Junction.**

The Environmental Improvement Scheme covers the area from the Albertbridge Rd Junction to the Holywood Rd junction and includes the important local focal point between the Holywood Rd and the Upper Newtownards Rd. The Scheme which comprises new street lighting, footpath improvements, tree planting and focal point, is the subject of a current planning application. The completion of these Environmental Improvements will not only greatly enhance the local area but will also provide an opportunity to generate public interest in the ongoing regeneration of the Holywood Arches area.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- DRD Roads Service,
- East Belfast Partnership and the
- BRO.

4.13 **Objective: Plan and Implement Significant Improvement Features for the Newtownards/ Albertbridge Roads “Gateway” to the Arches Area.**

Whilst the previous location of the Holywood Arches railway bridge, at the junction of the Holywood Rd and Upper Newtownards Rd, has historically served as the focal point and ‘gateway’ of the local area, there is a second important ‘gateway’ at the junction of the Albertbridge Rd and Newtownards Rd. The character of this important ‘gateway’ has changed considerably over the last few years and the area is in urgent need of re definition and improvement. The physical improvement of the Roads Service owned buildings at this junction will undoubtedly improve the appearance of the area, however, more comprehensive improvements are required. These comprehensive improvements could take the form of environmental improvements to the streetscape and could include the introduction of some form of gateway feature which would complement the Holywood Rd gateway and would create a sense of place for the Holywood arches area beyond. This area acts as an entrance to both the local Holywood Arches area and to the Connswater Shopping Centre, which wraps around the southeastern corner of the junction.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- DRD Roads Service,
- East Belfast Partnership,
- Belfast Regeneration Office,
- Connswater Shopping Centre Management and
- Local Traders.

4.14 **Objective: Develop the Arches Area as A Public Art Area Which Draws Inspiration from the History of the Area.** The Hollywood Arches area is steeped in history both old and new with the industrial history of the ropeworks and the more recent history associated with Van Morrison. Indeed the recently unveiled C. S. Lewis statue outside the public library is a perfect example of bringing local history to local people and visitors alike through the medium of public art. Examples of key sites for sculptures/art work could be:

- outside Portview Trade Centre,
- at the junction of Albertbridge/Newtownards Road,
- at the junction of Hollywood/Newtownards Road,
- at the Newtownards Road river crossing.

Some of the most successful pieces of public art are those which are promoted by the local community. It would therefore be valuable to create a local group with responsibility for promoting local art in the Hollywood Arches area that could involve:

- the local community,
- local traders,
- Belfast Regeneration Office,
- East Belfast Partnership Board,
- the Arts Council and
- Belfast City Council.

4.15 **Objective: DRD Roads Service to prepare and implement a maintenance/improvement plan for all the DRD owned land in the area.** DRD Roads Service own a considerable amount of land within the Hollywood Arches local area. This land/property appears largely unmaintained and has a negative impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As the short to mid term

future of a number of the proposed road schemes remains uncertain, the quality of the land/buildings will continue to deteriorate and will further impact the local area. In addition to carrying out the specific short term improvements outlined previously, it is also considered important to improve and maintain the appearance of all of the DRD Roads Service land until such a time as the land is required for proposed road schemes or is put back on the open market for redevelopment.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- DRD Roads Service

### **Benefits of the Appearance/Identity theme**

4.16 The key benefit which could flow from the above would be:

**‘An attractive hub for East Belfast which has a sense of identity....is well connected to it’s wider locality, .. is full of vibrancy and vitality and.....is well managed and promoted’.** The wider benefits would include:

- Improvements to the physical fabric of the local area.
- Enhancement of civic pride.
- Links between community identity, local history and education.
- Strengthening of ‘Holywood Arches’ sense of identity.
- Increased footfall through local area.
- More favourable/attractive environment for investment.
- Comprehensive information relating to land/property availability.

## **LINKAGES**

### **Introduction**

4.17 The Arches area is relatively well provided with local facilities, in the form of, local shops, a health centre, a library, local schools, parks and playgrounds etc. The area serves a large catchment population living in high-density residential areas, many of which are within walking distance of the central Arches area. It is therefore vitally important that people are able to move around and through the area and that safe and attractive links are provided between, people and services.

4.18 The theme, therefore, is to ***“Improve linkages within the area and between the Arches and the wider community”***.

4.19 The objectives related to the theme are noted below.

4.20 **Objective: Establish Key Pedestrian Routes through the Area Linking People to Community Facilities and Housing** The heart of the Holywood Arches area is one which is well served with local facilities, and is surrounded by relatively high density residential areas which feed into the local centre. As there is a significant resident population within walking distance of the 'Arches' the provision of high quality pedestrian routes is of particular importance. A number of key pedestrian routes have been identified in the area, linking people to shops, health centres, the public library, the leisure centre, public open space, schools, residential areas and other community facilities. These key routes should become well-established and recognised pedestrian/cycle links which have attractive safe environments and are supported with signage.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- DRD Roads Service and
- Belfast City Council.

4.21 **Objective: Enhance Key Pedestrian Routes through Use of Signage, Lighting, Paving and Landscaping:** As outlined above a number of key routes have been identified in the local area. Although it is assumed that many of these routes are already well used, they have the potential to attract greater use if they are made more attractive, present a 'safe' walking environment and are supported with directional and, where appropriate, informational signage. The presence of a network of well planned pedestrian routes, which are safe and attractive, and provide good links between services, will encourage greater pedestrian movement through the area.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- Belfast City Council,
- DRD Roads Service and
- BRO.

4.22 **Objective: Provide A New Pedestrian Crossing Point at the Heart of the Arches.** At present there are two principal pedestrian crossing points which serve the central Holywood Arches area, these are located at either end of the central area, at the Holywood Rd/Upper Newtownards Rd junction and at the Albertbridge Rd/Newtownards Rd junction. Pedestrians wishing to cross the Newtownards Road using the pedestrian crossing point at the Albertbridge Road, must cross the two lanes of the Newtownards Road **and** the four lanes of the Albertbridge Road, including a large traffic island. This is the journey which would have to be made by pedestrians wishing to travel along the Connswater River pedestrian route from the Mersey St area to the Connswater River pedestrian route leading into the Connswater shopping centre and beyond. Pedestrians crossing at second crossing point at the Holywood Rd must cross 4 lanes of the Holywood Rd, a traffic island and,

4 lanes of the Upper Newtownards Rd, to get from one side of the Newtownards Road to the other. The pedestrian crossing points are 260m apart.

Neither of these alternatives is particularly user friendly and the problem is exacerbated by the distance between the crossings. This is obviously not conducive to encouraging greater pedestrian movement through the area and it is therefore important to consider further alternatives for pedestrians such as the introduction of an additional pedestrian crossing point.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

DRD Roads Service.

- 4.23 **Objective: Amend Existing Pedestrian Crossings To Make More Pedestrian Friendly.** A Stage One, Traffic and Access Report, prepared by Oscar Faber in May 2000, highlighted the problems which pedestrians face at the existing crossing points. These problems related, not only to the distance between the crossings and the number of lanes to be crossed, but also the way in which the signals are phased. At the Albertbridge Rd/Newtownards Rd crossing, pedestrians must cross 'with the traffic' in two separate stages, whilst at the Holywood Rd/Upper Newtownards Rd crossing, pedestrians must cross in three separate stages. This obviously leads to frustration and pedestrians have been observed using the crossing when the red pedestrian phase is still showing. The opportunity exists to address this problem by revising the signal stagings and lane markings, to reduce pedestrian delay.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

DRD Roads Service.

- 4.24 **Objective: Identify and Introduce Safe Cycle Routes Which Can Link With Other Cycle Routes Beyond The Arches.** Where appropriate, cycle routes may be incorporated into pedestrian routes such as those along the River Connswater and Bloomfield Walkway. There are opportunities to link into cycle routes along the Sydenham Bypass which lead directly into the city centre and out to the Outer Ring and Holywood beyond. Where routes are used by both cyclists and pedestrians, signage should indicate that cyclists should give way to pedestrians. Given the number of local schools in the area an opportunity exists to identify 'safe routes to schools' which local children can use to travel to and from school (under supervision).

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

Local schools, supported by DRD Roads Service and Belfast City Council, with specialist advice from Sustrans.

- 4.25 **Objective: Integrate the Arches into the E-Way Proposal to Maximise the Benefit for the Arches.** The Proposed E Way would provide a high quality transport route following part of the old Belfast and County Down railway line. The E Way would cover the main Belfast, Comber, Dundonald and Newtownards corridors and would be supported by park and ride facilities, local highway improvements and would include an integrated footway/cycleway. The presence of the E Way passing through the centre of the Arches would provide an excellent opportunity for the local area. Not only would it provide a real alternative to private cars and therefore reduce congestion, but it would also be bringing significant numbers of people through the heart of the area. Opportunities could include a Transport Interchange Centre where people could change from E Way vehicle to bicycle or car. Such an Interchange Centre could also provide services such as information, retailing, restaurants etc. It would also be important to provide links to existing local facilities such as the Heath Centre, Schools, the public library, local shops and the Connswater Shopping Centre.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- Translink,
- Roads Service,
- Planning Service,
- Belfast City Council and
- Connswater Shopping Centre Management.

#### **Benefits of the Linkages theme**

- 4.26 The key benefit which would flow from the above would be:

‘An attractive hub for East Belfast which has a sense of identity....**is well connected to its wider locality** , .. is full of vibrancy and vitality and.....is well managed and promoted’. The wider benefits would include:

- Improved access to local services such as health centre and library.
- Improved access to city and greater East Belfast services, such as city centre offices and Ulster Hospital.
- Greater social inclusion
- Increased footfall through local area.
- Opportunities to benefit from E Way and possible Interchange Centre.
- Improved access into and out of city attractive to both commercial and residential investors.

## INVESTMENT

### Introduction

4.27 If the Arches area is to benefit from realistic and robust regeneration projects, there will have to be a significant amount of investment in the local area. Whilst some of this investment will undoubtedly come from the public sector, for example the creation of the Community Treatment and Care Centre, there will also need to be significant private sector investment. It is therefore fundamental to create an environment which is attractive to private sector investors and which stimulates private sector investment. The commitment of public sector investment is recognised as acting as a stimulus for private sector investment.

4.28 *The theme, therefore, is to “**Create, promote and secure development opportunities for a mix of uses**”.*

4.29 **Objective: Use Compulsory Acquisition Powers to Assemble Land:** At present there are derelict and vacant sites scattered throughout the study area. Whilst some of these sites are of a reasonable size, others are too small to be particularly attractive to potential investors.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

BRO (Department for Social Development) which may use its vesting powers to assemble parcels of land.

4.30 **Objective: Prepare Development Briefs for Vacant and Derelict Buildings/Sites Not Directly Affected By Road Protection Lines.** As outlined above there are a number buildings/sites which although not directly affected by the road protection lines are nonetheless affected by the poor appearance and dereliction of the blighted properties nearby, which are affected by the road protection lines. Examples of buildings would be those on the northern side of the Newtownards Road, on either side of the pedestrian through route which runs over the culverted river Connswater. The refurbishment/redevelopment of these buildings/sites would not only greatly improve the physical appearance of the area but would also attract new business to locate in the area and stimulate further regeneration investment. The most appropriate way to progress the reuse of these buildings/sites could be for BRO to parcel together and acquire the vacant/derelict buildings/sites and, in association with Planning Service prepare a number of development briefs before advertising the properties for sale. The Agencies that may be involved are BRO and DoE Planning Service.

4.31 **Objective: Promote the Availability of UDG to Existing and Potential Investors In the Area.** Belfast Regeneration Office provides Urban Development Grant assistance for regeneration projects in the Belfast area. People are not always aware that the UDG grants exist and are unsure of how to apply.

The Agencies that may be involved are BRO and GEBP.

It would therefore be particularly useful if BRO could

- produce an information pack which could be placed in East Belfast Partnership Board offices,
- actively target potential properties in the Arches area,
- run information sessions for, for example, architects, property owners and estate agents.

4.32 **Objective: Identify And Promote The Potential For A ‘Living Over The Shop’ Initiative.** The presence of residents living in the central Holywood Arches area would not only add to the vitality of the area but it would also make good use of vacant upper floors and enhance local stewardship of the area particularly at night time. BRO, in conjunction with VLA and local traders/property owners, should undertake an audit of properties having the potential to provide Living Over the Shop accommodation. Research also needs to be undertaken to determine where the demand for such accommodation may exist; this could be done by NIHE. The Agencies that may be involved are as follows: NIHE, GEBP and local traders.

4.33 **Objective: Review the Potential to Attract New Investment through “Spin-Off” From the Proposed Community Treatment and Care Centre.** South and East Belfast Health and Social Services Trust, which manages the Holywood Arches Health Centre has plans to refurbish and extend the existing building to create a Community Treatment and Care Centre for East Belfast. The centre will, for the first time, bring together a range of community services, which are currently provided from a number of buildings across the area. The services which will be based in the centre will include;

Health Visiting	Physiotherapy	District Nursing
Family and Child Care	Intensive Homecare	Sensory Impaired Services
Dentistry	Elderly Rehabilitation	Stroke Rehabilitation
Podiatry	Children’s Disability	Care Management
Speech & Language Therapy	Social Care	Community Paediatric

The Centre will seek to be an integral part of the local community and will provide high quality, effective, flexible accommodation for both staff and users. The development of an extended Health Centre building provides an important opportunity to create a high quality attractive building, which will enhance the surrounding area, particularly when viewed from the key vistas around the public library to the south and the Connswater River to the north.

The Centre will undoubtedly become an important local resource and will draw more people into the area. The improved Centre therefore has the potential to attract spin off investment in the local area as people visiting the Centre may be attracted to visit

local shops, cafés, chemists etc. which are within easy walking distance of the Centre.

It is therefore important to ensure that there are good pedestrian links between the Centre and other local facilities, and that there is appropriate signage, informing people of the pedestrian routes and the location of various facilities.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- SEBHSST,
- BRO,
- Belfast City Council and
- DoE Planning Service.

4.34 **Objective: Redevelop Infill Sites to Restore Frontage Development along the Albertbridge Rd, Newtownards Rd, Bloomfield Av, Hollywood Rd and Upper Newtownards Rd** The traditional building form in the Hollywood Arches had buildings flanking both sides of the roads. Between the Albertbridge Road junction and the Hollywood Rd/Upper Newtownards Rd junction there are a number of locations where there are gaps in the street frontage. The presence of these gap sites in the central urban area affects the overall character and vitality of the area. A particular opportunity exists along the Albertbridge Road to the east of Skipton Street. There is a vacant site on the eastern corner of Skipton Street which could be developed, possibly including the area over the road which could be closed at this point. New frontage development could also be extended from Skipton Street to the junction with Connswater Link. A large part of this parcel of land falls within the boundary of the Connswater Shopping Centre.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- DRD Roads Service,
- Belfast City Council,
- Connswater Shopping Centre and various private landowners.

4.35 **Objective: Develop An Extension Or Satellite Site For The East Belfast Enterprise Centre** The existing East Belfast Enterprise Centre on the Albertbridge Road is currently fully occupied and unable to meet demand for small business premises. An opportunity therefore exists to either extend the existing site or to provide a satellite site to accommodate the additional demand. Purpose built facilities could be provided, or vacant premises in the local area could be used, possibly on a short term, or temporary basis. This second proposal would have the added benefit of bringing vacant properties back in to use, at least for the short term.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- BRO,
- East Belfast Partnership Board and
- Belfast City Council.

4.36 **Objective: Prepare a Development Brief for the Gallahers Site on Severn Street**

The Gallahers Bonded Warehouse site on Severn Street represents a **significant opportunity** as a future re development site. The extent and location of this site adjacent to the central Arches area, the proposed Hollywood Arches Bypass, the Connswater River, and the Connswater Housing Renewal Area, means that it's re development is likely to have a significant impact on the local area, both physically and economically. It is therefore considered critically important that a development brief is prepared in advance of the site being redeveloped. This is to ensure that the site is well integrated into the local area both in terms of the use of the site, and the physical links which should be created between the site and adjoining areas.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows: landowner, DoE Planning Service and DRD Roads Service.

4.37 **Objective: Preparation of a Development Masterplan for the Connswater Shopping Centre:**

The Connswater Shopping Centre plays a pivotal role in the local Arches area, not just in terms of retailing but also in terms of it's physical presence on an extensive site with three road frontages. Opportunity exists to improve the existing Centre and make it more integrated into the surrounding area with improved boundary treatments, improved pedestrian links, including that along the River Connswater and further local information and signage. There is also a significant development opportunity to introduce additional built development on the site by creating road frontage development along the Albertbridge Road and possibly along Connswater Link This form of new development, if carefully planned, should make an important and positive contribution to the streetscape of the Albertbridge Road/Newtownards Road area. The closing off of East Bread Street would also create an opportunity to create additional floorspace and to improve the frontage of the Newtownards Road, adjacent to the River Connswater. The most appropriate way to plan for these improvements and developments is to prepare a development masterplan for the whole Connswater Shopping Centre Site.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

Connswater Centre owners in association with DRD Roads Service and DoE Planning Service.

## Benefits of the Investment theme

4.38 The key benefit which would flow from the above would be “An attractive hub for East Belfast which has a sense of identity....is well connected to its wider locality , .. **is full of vibrancy and vitality and.....**is well managed and promoted”. The wider benefits would include:

- Improved health care provision in new Community Care Centre.
- Improved provision of shops, services and housing.
- Enhancement of civic pride.
- Strengthening of Holywood Arches sense of identity.
- Increased footfall through local area.
- Re use of vacant floorspace.
- Creation of new floorspace.
- Creation of jobs associated with building and improvement works.
- Creation of jobs associated with new office/retail/service/residential developments.

## ORGANISATION

### Introduction

4.39 In order for the various Actions to be progressed and real change to be implemented, it is fundamental that the next steps of the process are carefully organised with working partnerships developed and key responsibilities given to appropriate bodies.

4.40 The theme, therefore, is to ***“Build consensus between the public, private and community sectors and target effort and resources towards achievement of the vision”***.

4.41 **Objective: Re-Establish the Holywood Arches Traders Association With As Broad A Membership as Possible.** The existence of an active local traders group has the potential to generate discussion and actions on important issues affecting local traders. Local people working and operating from within the local area hold a wealth of information. This knowledge gives an invaluable insight when trying to encourage existing trade and stimulate inward investment. Local Traders Associations also serve to strengthen local identity as people work together to common ends.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

Representatives from:

- local shops,
- local business (solicitors/estate agents/banks),
- Connswater Shopping Centre Management,
- Connswater Shopping Centre traders and
- BRO.

4.42 **Objectives: Have A Programme Of Special Events To Build Co-Operation And Promote A 'Sense Of Place'.** It is important to maintain a consistent level of local interest, involvement and enthusiasm in the regeneration and improvement of the area. This not only ensures support and ownership of improvement projects but, more importantly, rebuilds community identity and civic pride. Example of typical events could be;

- the formal opening of an Environmental Improvement Scheme, such as that currently planned, or
- the selection of the winning entry of a competition for a public art project, or
- a voluntary tree planting session in an area of public open space, or
- guided walking tours, 'the Van Morrison trail'.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- East Belfast Partnership Board,
- Belfast Education and Library Board and
- Belfast City Council.

4.43 **Objective: Ensure That Planning Policies And Development Control Procedures Support Investment in the Area.** If new development and inward investment is to be attracted to locate in the area it is important that the planning and development control policies provide an environment which is attractive for investment. There are a number of means of achieving this, one of which is the approach which has been taken to this study, involving representatives from key agencies such as Planning Service and Roads Service. However it is important for both Planning Service and Roads Service to continue this involvement and interest through to the detailed planning stage. A further tool to promote understanding and agreement is the use of development briefs which are prepared in advance for key

sites, with the support of for example Roads Service and Planning Service. BRO could play a central role in the preparation of development briefs.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- DoE Planning Service,
- DRD Roads Service and
- BRO.

- 4.44 **Objective: Form A Multi-Agency Action Group To Drive the Action Plan and Monitor Its Implementation.** If the Action Plan is to be successfully progressed and implemented it is **essential** that the various parties involved in the steering group take direct responsibility for the areas which fall under their remit. The mechanism for change should be one of **partnership** involving not only statutory bodies but also the private sector, local business/traders and community representatives. The Arches needs a 'Vision' and a framework through which this vision may be achieved. The Multi Agency Action Group should take responsibility for developing and delivering the Vision, through setting realistic and robust targets, objectives and timescales.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows: The responsibility for co-ordinating and managing the multi agency action group could lie with BRO although all group members should be equally committed to the delivery of the Vision.

- 4.45 **Objective: Create an Up to Date Database of the Area** It is evident from the research carried out as part of this study that a substantial volume of important information relating to the area is held by the various statutory agencies. It would therefor be particularly useful if this information could be fed into a database to provide up to date information on ownership, planning applications, statutory responsibilities, and key contacts, etc.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows: various statutory agencies.

The responsibility for sourcing and providing the information would rest with each of the appropriate statutory agencies with BRO playing a co ordinating role.

- 4.46 **Objective: Arrange an Annual Audit of the Area by the Statutory Agencies:** One of the important and on going functions of the Action Group should be to prepare an annual audit of the area, to feed into the database discussed above, and to identify progress, problems and opportunities in relation to key criteria, for example, vacant property, streetscape, signage, lighting, and pavements etc.

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

The responsibility for an annual audit would lie with the various Action Group members, for example, DRD Roads Service, Planning Service and VLA, and would be co-ordinated by BRO.

- 4.47 **Objective: Produce an Arches Newsletter** It is particularly important to keep not only the Action Group members but also the wider community, fully aware of what is happening in the area. The publication of a Hollywood Arches Newsletter would, keep people informed of progress, help to promote the area and would act as a vehicle to launch new ideas and proposals. The Newsletter could also invite responses on certain issues and advise people how they could become involved in the regeneration process

The Agencies that may be involved are as follows:

- BRO and
- East Belfast Partnership Board.

#### **Benefits of the Organisation theme**

- 4.48 The key benefit which would follow from the above would be: ‘An attractive hub for East Belfast which has a sense of identity....is well connected to its wider locality , .. is full of vibrancy and vitality and....**is well managed and promoted**’. The wider benefits would include:

- Enhancement of civic pride.
- Creation of community partnerships and alliances.
- Strengthening and promotion of Hollywood Arches sense of identity.
- Provision of an environment which is attractive to inward investors.
- Increased footfall through local area.
- Re use vacant floorspace.
- Creation of new floorspace.
- Creation of jobs associated with building and improvement works.
- Creation of jobs associated with new office/retail/service/residential developments.

## 5.0 NEXT STEPS

### The Way Forward

- 5.1 It is important at this stage to map out the way forward, so that all bodies involved are fully aware of what will be expected of them and when it will be expected. A staged approach should be adopted so that the range of objectives listed under the four themes in Section 4.0 are divided into:

Stage One Objectives                      1 – 2 Years

Stage Two Objectives                      2 – 3 Years

Stage Three Objectives                    3 – 5 Years

### Timescale

- 5.2 A timescale needs to be agreed for the commencement of the various stages, preferably as soon as possible, while the project still has momentum and the issues are fresh in people's minds

### Action Group Membership and Management

- 5.3 As the Action Group (noted in para 4.14 of this Report) will be the vehicle which will take the process forward, it is essential that the membership and management of the Action group is agreed as a priority.
- 5.4 This Report is not an end in itself but should be used as a tool within the overall aim of helping Holywood Arches to become:

***'An attractive hub for East Belfast which has a sense of identity...is well connected to it's wider locality...is full of vibrancy and vitality and...is well managed and promoted'.***

**1991 CENSUS INFORMATION**

<b>WARD</b>	<b>TOTAL PERSONS</b>	<b>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>CAR OWNERSHIP</b>	<b>UNEMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>LONG TERM SICK</b>	<b>RETIRED</b>
			<b>% Households with no car</b>	<b>% Econ. Active out of Employment</b>	<b>% Population long term sick</b>	<b>% Population retired</b>
BALLYHACKAMORE	5,838	2,387	35%	8%	4%	20%
BALLYMACARRETT	4,910	2,014	82%	36%	8%	38%
BLOOMFIELD	4,476	1,895	48%	11%	5%	20%
ISLAND	4,501	2,052	71%	22%	8%	25%
THE MOUNT	5,301	2,403	73%	26%	7%	21%
TOTAL	25,026	10,751*	-	-	-	-
BUAP			40%	15%	5%	17%

- 6% of the households in the BUAP.