



Belfast City Centre Regeneration Policy Statement

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

BELFAST CITY CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction

1. This document constitutes the Department for Social Development's Regeneration Policy Statement for Belfast City Centre (hereafter referred to as the "the Statement" or "RPS"). It sets out the Department's regeneration objectives for Belfast City Centre and the Department's approach to achieving the regeneration of Belfast City Centre and provides guidance on the circumstances where the Department's statutory powers may be exercised.

Context

2. The Statement has been produced against the following background. On 5 August 2003, the Department for Social Development (hereafter referred to as "DSD" or "the Department") issued the 'Belfast City Centre Regeneration Policy Framework', commissioned from G V A Grimley ("the Grimley Report") for public consultation. The consultation period ended on 12th September 2003. The Department received 41 representations on the report, 35 within the prescribed timescale, and 6 late representations. The Department has taken account of the representations in preparing this Regeneration Policy Statement. The representations can be viewed on the DSD website at www.dsdni.gov.uk or by requesting a copy from Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate. In producing the Statement, the Department has had full regard to the Grimley Report and all consultation responses. On that basis this RPS utilises and responds to the Grimley Report.

Belfast City Centre

3. For the purposes of this document, “Belfast City Centre” (hereafter referred to as “BCC” or “the City Centre”) is as defined in the Belfast Urban Area Plan in Annex 1 attached. This Statement will be updated if necessary to reflect any changes to the boundaries of the City Centre, which may arise from the emerging Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.
4. The Department will move forward its regeneration objectives for the City Centre through the initiation of necessary regeneration action at a pace which maximises the opportunity for physical, economic and social development and secures orderly regeneration across the City Centre.

The Department’s Regeneration Policy Objective

5. The Department’s policy objective for regeneration, in pursuance of the Department’s statutory authority, is to promote and implement a comprehensive approach to tackling social, economic and physical regeneration and redressing disadvantage in cities and towns.

Department for Social Development’s Statutory Authority

Development Schemes, Land acquisition & disposal, Roads Extinguishment

6. The Department’s statutory regeneration authority derives from: Part VII of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 (as amended by the Planning (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, Article 31), which provides the legislative basis for comprehensive development

schemes, land acquisition and disposal of land, and the extinguishment of public rights of way; and the Social Need (NI) Order 1986 which provides the statutory basis for granting financial assistance to projects in areas of special social need and undertaking environmental improvement schemes.

7. The statutory powers referred to in paragraph 6 above are exercised in the public interest by the Department to assist in the assembly and vesting of lands for the purpose of comprehensive development.
8. The Department's powers are exercised in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998. In exercising its powers the Department also has a duty to promote equality of opportunity as required by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and to give regard to Government's New TSN objectives in relation to combating unemployment and increasing employability. The Department therefore plays a central role in developing and co-ordinating the implementation of urban regeneration programmes throughout Northern Ireland including Belfast City Centre.

Neighbourhood Renewal

9. The Department also has a wider responsibility for redressing disadvantage and targeting social need through the physical, economic and social regeneration of neighbourhoods in Belfast and in cities, towns and villages throughout Northern Ireland.
10. Consequently, whilst this Regeneration Policy Statement deals specifically with the Department's objectives and approach to the regeneration of Belfast City Centre, the Department in its implementation of the Statement will take cognisance of its strategy and action plans for the renewal of neighbourhoods in Belfast, particularly those which adjoin the City Centre, set out in Belfast Regeneration Office's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

The Department's Approach To The Regeneration Of Belfast City Centre

11. The Department will approach the regeneration of Belfast City Centre in adherence with its statutory authority (paragraphs 6-8 refer). The Department will exercise its statutory authority having regard to:
 - (a) the Department for Regional Development's (DRD's) Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland ('Shaping Our Future' published in September 2001), which requires the DSD to ensure that any Development Scheme promoted by the Department is in general conformity with the Regional Development Strategy;
 - (b) DRD's Planning Policy Statements where relevant;
 - (c) the Department of Environment's Belfast Urban Area Plan and its emerging Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and relevant Planning Policy Statements;
 - (d) the emerging Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan;
 - (e) the regeneration remit of the Laganside Corporation and in particular the Corporation's remit within the Cathedral Quarter area;
 - (f) the published views of Belfast City Council on the regeneration of the City Centre;
 - (g) the guidance set out in the G V A Grimley report 'Belfast City Centre Regeneration Policy Framework', referred to at paragraph 2 above;
 - (h) our overall regeneration objectives for the City Centre and any specific objectives for particular regeneration areas and/or sites

on which the Department may comment or bring forward from time to time.

12. The Department will consider the use of its statutory powers, where appropriate, to deliver the regeneration of Belfast City Centre through:
- the formulation of strategy;
 - the preparation of regeneration master plans;
 - the preparation of development schemes;
 - issuing of development briefs and design guidance;
 - co-ordination of development partners;
 - appraisal of development proposals;
 - direct investment in public realm; and
 - the use of its land assembly and roads extinguishment powers.

The Department's Regeneration Objectives For Belfast City Centre

13. The Department's regeneration policy objectives for Belfast City Centre are:
- to enhance the role of the City of Belfast;
 - to support and strengthen the City Centre as the premier regional shopping destination;

- to secure a comprehensive major retail led mixed use scheme, which regenerates the Victoria Square area as a matter of priority, and enhances the City Centre's regional role, integrates with the surrounding urban fabric, and strengthens links with the Lagan;
- to promote the physical renewal of Belfast City Centre;
- to create a high quality designed and safe urban environment, which is attractive to investors, employees, residents and tourists and which generates a sense of pride in the City;
- to build upon the City Centre's rich historic character through complementary and contemporary design;
- to promote urban economic development at key locations and on suitable sites throughout Belfast City Centre;
- to provide opportunities within the City Centre to help establish a 21st century economy well placed to compete with other European cities, thereby creating new job prospects for the people of Belfast;
- to protect and use the neutral space in the City Centre to help create inclusive communities and a skilled and adaptable workforce able to contribute to and share the benefits of sustainable economic growth;
- to create a sustainable and vibrant City Centre which supports a quality lifestyle attractive to inward investors and potential future residents;

- to create quality strategic gateways into the City Centre, thereby making it a welcoming experience for residents and visitors;
- to promote economic opportunities within the City Centre to attract and retain young people by providing strategic learning opportunities and competitive career prospects;
- to encourage growth of the creative industries;
- to promote Belfast as a premier European City;
- to promote mixed-use sustainable development in order to contribute to the viability and vitality of the City Centre and sustainable communities;
- to improve pedestrian linkages in the City Centre, particularly from the main shopping area to the river;
- to improve accessibility and make satisfactory arrangements for access by public transport.

The Department's Immediate Plans And Priorities For Regeneration In Belfast City Centre

14. The Department's plans and priorities are set out under the following 5 themes:

- Retail
- Office / Business

- Tourism / Leisure
- Connectivity / Public Realm
- Reinforcing City Communities

Retail

15. The re-emergence of Belfast City Centre as the premier shopping destination in the province is at the heart of the Department's regeneration policy for the City Centre.
16. In order to achieve quality retail provision, it is Government's aspiration to attract leading European and international brand retailers to the City, while recognising the need to safeguard Belfast's well-established independent retail market.
17. The Department advocates and will encourage mixed use in all retail led developments, mixing retail with leisure, residential and office use, in order to contribute to the vitality of any scheme and the City Centre as a whole in terms of evening activity, security and diversity.
18. It is not possible, nor is it appropriate, for all investment to take place in the City Centre at once, nor for the Department to support every scheme that comes forward. The Department considers it important to establish a degree of sequencing to ensure that maximum regeneration benefit is achieved from retail led development for the City Centre in its entirety.
19. The Department recognises the importance of consolidating the shopping core, in order to maintain a compact city with benefits in

terms of pedestrian flows, commercial strength and effective use of infrastructure. Its objectives for retail led regeneration will focus on the Main Shopping Area (MSA), as defined in the Belfast Urban Area Plan, as amended by the adopted Victoria Square Development Scheme (See map attached at Annex 2). This Statement will be updated if necessary to reflect any changes to the boundaries of the Main Shopping Area, which may arise from the emerging Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.

20. The MSA can be divided into 4 Shopping Quarters: North East; North West; South East; and South West. These shopping quarters are defined in the attached maps (See Annex 3). The Department has considered each of these shopping quarters and its plans and priorities for each one are set out below:

South East Shopping Quarter

21. The Department's regeneration approach for the South East Quarter is well advanced through a major retail-led regeneration scheme in the Victoria Square area.
22. In July 2000 the Department indicated its preference for Victoria Square as the priority location for regeneration of the City Centre. The Development Scheme for Comprehensive Development Area 136: Victoria Square, Belfast was published in April 2001 and adopted in January 2003. A Vesting Order for the area was made in November 2003, becoming operative in December 2003. Work on the site has now commenced.
23. AM Developments are the developers associated with the Victoria Square Scheme. Their scheme, which will be completed by April 2007, will bring forward a substantial quantity of retail floor space, enhancing the regional role of the City Centre, revitalising the heart of the City Centre, providing the benchmark for further development across the

City Centre and importantly connecting the City Centre to Laganside. The scheme currently proposed for Victoria Square by AM is expected to generate:

- approximately £300m private investment;
- an estimated 3,000 permanent jobs together with 3,000 construction jobs;
- £5.5m per annum estimated rates income;
- in excess of £100m net additional retail turnover;
- 15 acres of redevelopment; and
- 55,000 sq m of retail space.

24. The Victoria Square Development Scheme remains Government's current priority for retail led regeneration in the City Centre. The Department is committed to bringing its priority to a successful conclusion and will continue to ensure that the proper establishment of Victoria Square as a retail led destination is achieved.
25. The Laganside Corporation's remit includes the regeneration of a significant area within the South East Quarter. The Department will work with Laganside to ensure that proposed retail development is consistent with the specific objectives of both organisations for this quarter.
26. The Department also deems the Musgrave Street development site, in the ownership of PSNI and other parties, to be of strategic importance particularly in terms of securing a pedestrian corridor connecting Laganside, through Victoria Square, to the heart of the City Centre.

The use of the Department's statutory authority is unlikely to be required to secure the comprehensive development of this site. The Department will, however, work with PSNI and the DOE Planning Service to prepare a development brief, if necessary, to ensure that the widest possible regeneration benefit, for the City Centre and Laganside, is derived from any planning proposal for this site.

27. The Department requires a comprehensive and integrated solution to the redevelopment and renewal of the South East Quarter. Proposals that are ad-hoc or uncoordinated, would neither ensure the delivery of the Department's regeneration objectives for the area, nor the enhancement of the vitality and viability of the City Centre as a regional centre.

North East Shopping Quarter

28. The Department will consider supporting the early implementation of an appropriate retail-led proposal in the Royal Avenue/Cathedral Quarter area of the North East Shopping Quarter, and will consider using its statutory power to promote and implement such a scheme on the basis that it would act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the wider North East Quarter, and will help assist in the consolidation of Laganside's Cathedral Quarter initiative.
29. The Department's support for a scheme in this location will be subject to its meeting the Department's regeneration objectives for the City Centre as a whole set out at paragraph 13 above, and the Department's specific regeneration objectives for this area as set out below. Any scheme for the Cathedral Way / Royal Avenue area should:
 - provide a form of retailing that complements Victoria Square for occupiers;

- enable reciprocal benefit between the two schemes;
- consolidate and enhance Castlecourt as a key shopping centre;
- be outward-facing;
- demonstrate its potential to pump prime the wider regeneration of the Cathedral Quarter. This is a function of external appearance, pedestrian connectivity and mix of uses;
- present an appropriate, high quality frontage to Royal Avenue;
- provide a mix of uses other than retail;
- respect the fine urban grain of the area;
- respect the built fabric, character and historic street form of the Cathedral Quarter Conservation Area character and policy with particular attention to bringing the listed buildings back into productive use;
- bring about the regeneration of the tertiary retail sector of the City Centre;
- not prejudice plans for the wider regeneration of Cathedral Quarter through inappropriate form and scale;
- put in place appropriate connections to the Cathedral Quarter, Laganside and the Victoria Square area;

- meet and accord with relevant planning policies and highway requirements.
30. In January 2002, the Department entered a Joint Position Statement (JPS) with Dunloe Ewart, the original promoters of a retail-led scheme in the North East Quarter. The Department's regeneration objectives for this area set out in the JPS remain unchanged.
31. The Department intends to proceed with an appropriate regeneration scheme for the North East Quarter. It has decided to immediately appraise the proposals put forward by developers in respect of this location, particularly those who have significant land holdings in the area. This appraisal will assess whether these proposals, in the Department's view, sufficiently meet our regeneration objectives for the City Centre as a whole and for the North East Quarter specifically. This appraisal will be carried out in the context of:
- (a) the Department's approach to the regeneration of Belfast City Centre set out in para. 11 above;
 - (b) the Department's objectives for the City Centre set out in para. 13 above;
 - (c) the Joint Position Statement between the Department and Dunloe Ewart, referred to in para. 30;
 - (d) the Department's specific regeneration objectives for the North East Quarter set out in para. 29 above.
32. This appraisal will be completed by 30 June 2004. On the basis of this appraisal, the Department will make a decision as to whether to use its powers to lend its support to any proposal. If, following the appraisal, the Department concludes that its regeneration objectives are unlikely

to be met by any current proposal, it will consider how best to approach the regeneration of this area.

33. The proposed retail led scheme at Royal Avenue/Cathedral Way does not represent the entire regeneration potential of the North East Quarter. In order to address the overall needs of this area the Department may consider commissioning a masterplan for the area in due course.

North West Quarter

34. This is an important area in regeneration terms, particularly the extended North West area beyond the Main Shopping Area, as it connects the City Centre to the communities of North and West Belfast. It provides the potential to consolidate and expand the retail offer provided by Castlecourt, which already accounts for approximately 30,000 sq m of shopping and acts as a strong anchor to the west of the City Centre shopping area. It also provides significant scope to retain the historic character of the area as the old street grid to the north of North Street and to the rear of Castlecourt is largely intact; it has a number of fine Victorian buildings and has strong urban design attributes, particularly to the north of North Street; it also encompasses Smithfield Market.
35. The Department recognises that the area to the north and west of Castlecourt requires appropriate investment. The Department believes that the North West Quarter has considerable potential to provide additional retail development, where retail would be a primary use in a mixed use context.
36. The Department also notes that the promotion and implementation of any significant retail-based regeneration scheme in this area is likely to require the Department's statutory authority.

37. The Department believes that the future regeneration of this area will require careful thought to ensure that:
- the extended North West area as a whole is regenerated in a way which maintains and strengthens the unique character of the area and maximizes the potential for mixed-use comprehensive development for this area;
 - the 'blocking' effect which the current Castlecourt Centre has had to connectivity and urban regeneration to the rear of the Centre is avoided;
 - the regeneration better connects the area to North and West Belfast removing blight and securing neutral space for all sections of the community in which to live, work, shop and enjoy leisure time; and
 - the regeneration complements the Victoria Square and proposed North East Quarter Schemes by expanding the retail offer across the City Centre at a pace which maximises the potential of the City Centre but recognises the need for a sequenced approach in order to secure the maximum opportunity for the retail market and the consumer.
38. Given the extent and importance of the major regeneration opportunity in the extended North West area, the Department will immediately commission the production of a Masterplan to establish the best possible land use for the area. The Masterplan will address the range, mix and location of uses to maximise the physical, social and economic regeneration of the area. The Department will consult with Belfast City Council, key stakeholders and Westfield Shoppingtowns Limited who have significant land holdings in the area.

39. The Masterplan will be prepared in two parts:
- (a) The first part will address the area that lies within the Main Shopping Area, to maximise the retail led opportunity within this area. This will be completed by 30 November 2004.
 - (b) The second part will address the physical, social and economic regeneration of the entire area and will be completed by Spring 2005.
40. The Masterplan for this area will:
- consider the nature, scale and timing provision of additional retail facilities, having regard to the priority accorded to the Victoria Square Development and retail developments elsewhere in the City Centre;
 - promote 24 hour access to the City Centre;
 - explore the potential for a mix of uses including residential development;
 - explore the potential for retaining and developing a market function in the area;
 - ensure a high degree of connectivity with Royal Avenue and North-South towards Castle Street;
 - provide advice on the viability/deliverability of different development mix options;
 - significantly upgrade the pedestrian environment and improve pedestrian circulation and linkages;

- resolve conflict between car parking, service traffic and pedestrian movement;
- encourage active ground floor uses to bring life to the streets;
- promote a scale and form of development that protects and strengthens the heritage and urban form of the area, with potential for statement buildings at the intersections, creating a distinctive sense of place;
- respect and where possible reinstate the historic street pattern, ensuring that new buildings front on to these streets, in order to create a sense of living space;
- put in place design guidance to inform the development process;
- consider and address social exclusion;
- maximise connectivity north and west to the adjoining residential neighbourhoods;
- include guidance on public realm investment;
- provide a co-ordinated approach to regeneration which takes account of proposed accessibility and transport arrangements including proposals for the development and improvement of the public network;
- draw upon exemplars of good practice for similar neighbourhoods in other UK and European cities;

- clearly define the role of the Department and other public sector bodies in the regeneration of the area.
41. Following consideration of the masterplan, the Department will bring forward detailed proposals for the regeneration of the area, including, if necessary, the preparation of a Development Scheme and / or Brief.
42. Against this background, the following considerations will be relevant to the Department's assessment of whether the use of statutory powers are in the public interest:
- the extent to which proposals will regenerate the area on a comprehensive basis for a mix of uses and maximise the opportunities to preserve the unique character of the area;
 - the extent to which the retail elements will enhance the shopping function of the City Centre as a whole;
 - the extent to which proposals consolidate and enhance Castlecourt as a key shopping centre;
 - whether or not the proposals comply with the Masterplan proposed for the area;
 - whether or not the proposals would undermine and threaten the Department's other regeneration initiatives set out in this Statement;
 - the degree to which proposals promote connectivity between the area to the north and west of Belfast by removing blight and securing neutral space for all sections of the community to live, work, shop and enjoy leisure time;

- the extent to which any retail element of proposals would complement other retail led regeneration schemes within the City Centre by providing an enhanced range of consumer choice, but in a timescale which does not undermine the proper establishment of other retail led regeneration initiatives.
43. The selection of any Development Partner will be followed by a programme for the exercise of statutory procedures, which may include the publication of a development scheme, assistance with land assembly and road extinguishment, under the Planning (NI) Order 1991.

South West Shopping Quarter

44. The Department believes that this area of the City Centre remains vibrant and does not anticipate bringing forward any comprehensive development scheme for this area at present. The situation will however be kept under review in the light of the Department's regeneration objectives for the City Centre as a whole.
45. The Department recognises that investment in the public realm is required to reinforce existing investment and to address disrepair in the area. Details of the Department's plans and priorities for public realm improvements in this shopping quarter will be set out in our forthcoming public realm strategy as an integral part of our urban regeneration approach for the City Centre.
46. There are comprehensive development proposals for the College Avenue / King Street area. The Department recognises that this area acts as a strategic gateway from West Belfast to the City Centre. The Department intends to identify small-scale redevelopment opportunities to further enhance the attractiveness of this area.

Office / Business

47. The Department supports the consolidation of the existing office core in the Linen Conservation Area to the south of the City Hall and in Lanyon Place, and will promote the consolidation of these two areas through its overall regeneration approach.
48. The Department also recognises the need for new office development forms such as Urban Business Parks, which have strong transport connections and regeneration benefits. The Department intends to work with the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCO) to achieve high quality office development on the Grosvenor Road.
49. Laganside Corporation and Belfast Harbour Commissioners are jointly engaged in a study of the Greater Clarendon / Tomb Street / Little Italy area. They have commissioned the preparation of an urban design framework and masterplan to realise the potential of waterfront development and maximise the employment potential of the area. The Department is supportive of this study.

Tourism / Leisure

50. As the regional gateway, Belfast City Centre has an important role to play in developing the tourist potential of both the Metropolitan Area and the wider region. Considerable progress has been made in developing the tourist potential of the city, particularly in areas such as the conference and business development sector. Further potential exists, however, to improve the international image of the city and improve its attractiveness to visitors.
51. A 24-hour city can only be achieved by improving leisure facilities in the heart of the City. Mixed-use development will contribute to the vitality

of any scheme and the City Centre as a whole in terms of evening activity, security and diversity.

52. The City Centre remains a major focus of cultural amenities within the Belfast Metropolitan Area and Northern Ireland. These cultural amenities can play a key role, not only in terms of tourism and leisure activity, but also in the international image of Belfast City Centre.
53. Within the City Centre, the Department recognises the importance of developing the Cathedral Quarter as a cultural quarter. Laganside Corporation has responsibility for the physical regeneration of Cathedral Quarter and has produced a regeneration masterplan for this area. The Department has approved Laganside's regeneration proposals set out in the masterplan and will support Laganside in the implementation of the masterplan. Within the Cathedral Quarter, the Department supports the concept of an Arts Centre, which would provide impetus to the Cathedral Quarter initiative. Care is required in the design of the Arts Centre to maximise its benefits in terms of focusing regeneration activity and stimulating market interest.
54. In terms of tourism and leisure, the Department is primarily concerned with improving Belfast City Centre as a regional capital. It works and will continue to work in collaboration with Belfast City Council and key stakeholders in the City Centre, such as the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, and Belfast City Centre Management, to promote Belfast as a visitor destination, for both tourists and local people.

Connectivity / Public Realm

55. The public realm is the 'shop window' of the City. It is the first and last impression for those who live, work and visit. It should convey a strong and positive message to its citizens and to potential inward investors

and visitors. The quality of the public realm of the City should provide an aesthetically inviting image, and fundamentally should prime and support economic and social development.

56. In spite of much new development the City Centre still retains a substantial Victorian and Edwardian landscape. The quality of the townscape in the City Centre is of strategic importance in that for many people, in particular visitors to the city, it is the central area which gives the city its civic identity and sense of place.
57. The Department, in recognition that the provision of a high quality Public Realm is a fundamental tangible part of developing the economic and social vitality of the city, commissioned consultants to draw up a Public Realm Strategy (PRS) for Belfast City Centre. The PRS has been developed by a team of experienced consultants working closely with a steering group, comprising DSD, Belfast City Council, Laganside Corporation, Belfast City Centre Management, Roads Service and Planning Service. The Strategy was founded on a thorough process of appraisal of the existing fabric of the City, underpinned by a comprehensive programme of consultations with key representatives and organisations. The Department intends to publish the Public Realm Strategy in 2004.
58. The Department will, through its Public Realm Strategy, seek to improve and enhance the physical appearance of the city centre through improved new urban spaces, landscaping landmarks and public art.
59. This Strategy will facilitate the realisation of a high quality distinctive City environment. It will build on the characteristics that make it a special place and ensure that these components are safeguarded, enhanced and complemented. It will contribute to the achievement of the priorities set in this Regeneration Policy Statement, for retail, office/business, tourism/leisure and reinforcing city communities.

60. The Department promotes and encourages quality design in new developments which should respect the heritage and setting of the city. It is mindful of the 3 designated conservation areas within Belfast City Centre: Cathedral Conservation Area, Linen Conservation Area and Belfast City Centre Conservation Area. These, together with listed buildings, and scheduled monuments are evidence of a rich and varied built heritage within the City Centre. New development within the city centre should respect the context in which it is built, making best use of existing site assets.

Reinforcing City Communities

61. The Department recognises the need to secure maximum integration between the physical development and economic growth of the City Centre. We need to create a city where people enjoy interacting at all levels during business, social and leisure time.
62. The Department's responsibilities and objectives in respect of targeting social need and addressing the physical, economic and social regeneration of neighbourhoods are set out in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 above.
63. The Department in its implementation of the Statement will take cognisance of its strategy and action plans for the renewal of neighbourhoods in Belfast particularly those which adjoin the City Centre.
64. The Department, with its remit for physical, economic and social regeneration, has a major responsibility to ensure the implementation of New TSN objectives within regeneration schemes it supports. Maximising the accessibility of Belfast City Centre from all parts of

Belfast will be a key requirement of any regeneration initiatives supported by the Department.

Conclusion

65. The Department for Social Development's policy objective for regeneration is to promote and implement a comprehensive approach to tackling social, economic and physical regeneration and redressing disadvantage in cities and towns throughout Northern Ireland.
66. This Regeneration Policy Statement provides clear direction and a route map for the further regeneration of Belfast City Centre. It also provides a guide to private sector investors by identifying the Department's regeneration objectives, priorities, plans and guiding themes to achieve regeneration. Furthermore it accommodates opportunities for major retail led development schemes in the North West and Royal Avenue/Cathedral Way shopping areas while continuing to give priority to Victoria Square.
67. The overall aim of the Statement is to strengthen Belfast City Centre as a premier regional shopping destination providing a high quality safe urban environment, attractive to investors, employees, residents and tourists. In pursuit of this aim, the Statement provides the catalyst to help establish a 21st century economy in Belfast that is well placed to compete with other European regional cities, thereby creating new job prospects for the people of Northern Ireland.