



Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and Belfast Open Spaces Strategy 2019-2035

Summary document
Draft for consultation

17 June - 6 September 2019



Belfast
City Council

Energising
Belfast



Introduction

We have developed a draft Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP) and a draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) for the period 2019 – 2035

and are currently carrying out a joint consultation on both documents. This booklet summarises both.

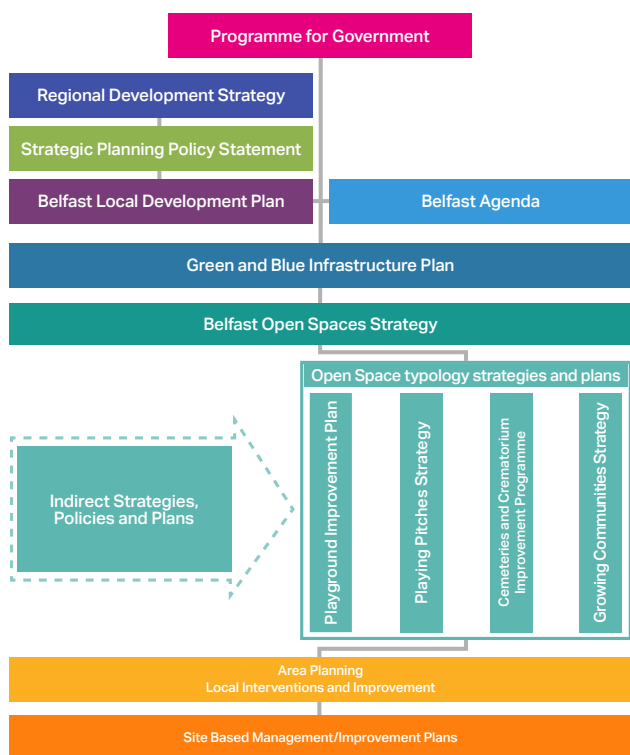
The GBIP relates to our vegetated areas (the green) and our waterways (the blue). The plan aims to ensure that our green and blue infrastructure is planned strategically in order to provide a broad range of economic, social and environmental benefits in and around our urban areas.



The BOSS aims to protect, develop and improve access to good quality open spaces for everyone in order to improve health and wellbeing, support urban wildlife and biodiversity and encourage investment in the city's economy.

Links between the GBIP and BOSS

The GBIP and BOSS are aligned to regional and local policies and strategies.



Have your say

The public consultation on both documents is running from 17 June to 6 September 2019. To have your say, download the full documents and take part in our citizen survey by visiting:

yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk



Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

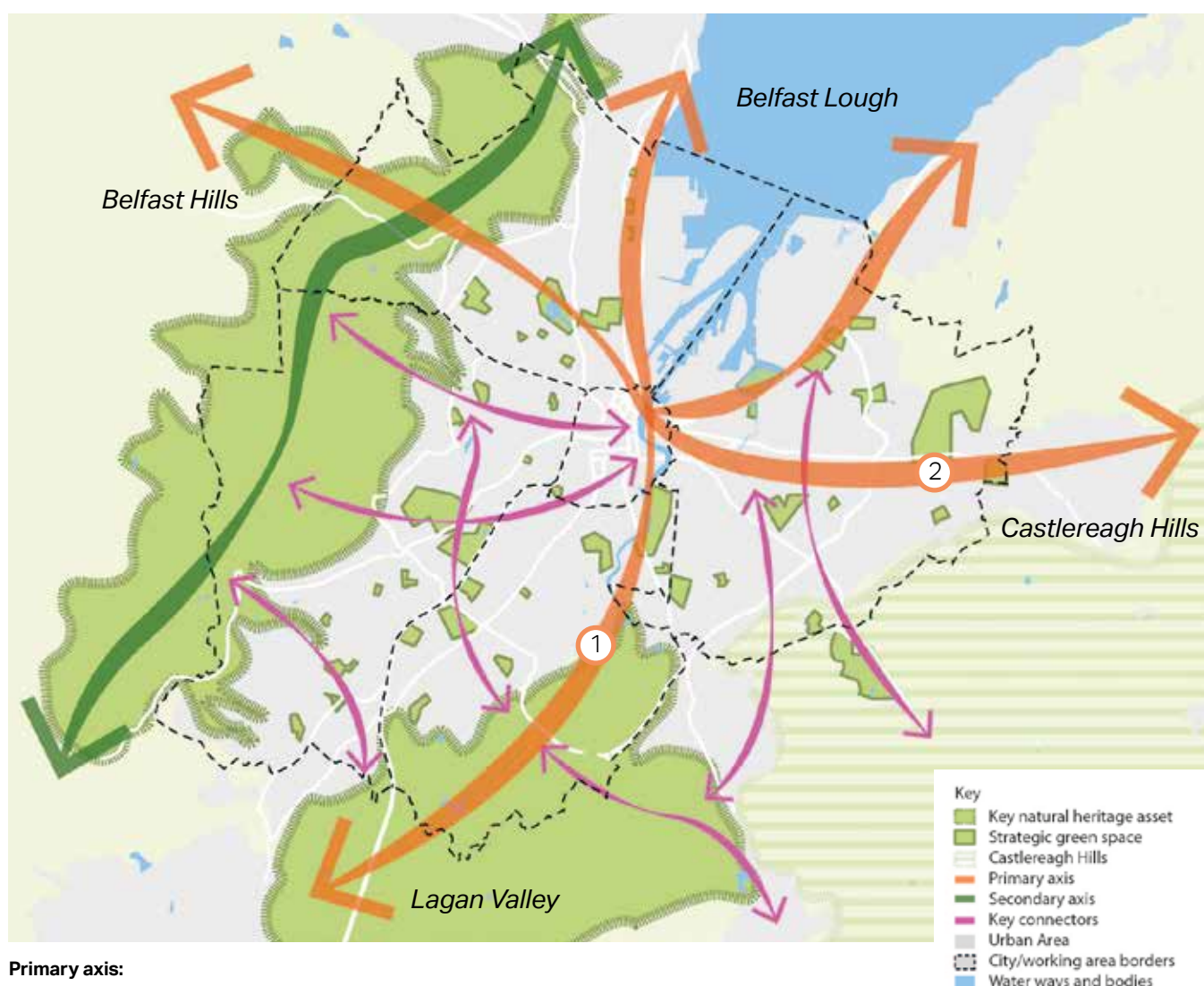
What is green and blue infrastructure?

Surrounded by the Belfast and Castlereagh Hills, and with the River Lagan flowing down to Belfast Lough, the city of Belfast has been fundamentally shaped by the landscape and water. As we learn more about our vegetated areas (the green) and our waterways (the blue), we are beginning to understand that they provide a broad range of economic, social and environmental benefits in and around our more urban areas. We are starting to think of these natural and semi-natural assets as 'infrastructure' and like any type

of infrastructure, assets will only continue to provide us with these benefits if we actively plan, invest in and manage them to ensure that they are utilised sustainably.

Green infrastructure includes a wide range of natural and semi-natural land cover including the swathes of upland and agricultural land that surround the city, as well as smaller sites such as parks, amenity spaces as well as gardens and even single trees. Blue infrastructure refers to waterways and bodies, including rivers and streams, reservoirs, lakes and ponds.

Green and blue strategic framework



The GBIP sets out an ambitious **vision** that:

By 2035 green and blue infrastructure will be strategically planned to enhance ecosystem services that benefit all living, working in and visiting Belfast.

This vision is supported by five strategic principles (SPs):



SP 1. Biodiverse

Although not all green and blue infrastructure assets will be delivered and managed primarily for biodiversity, all green and blue infrastructure should help enhance biodiversity. This is because biodiversity underpins the effectiveness of ecosystem services and the range of benefits that green and blue spaces provide to everyone.



SP2. Planned, interconnected networks

To maximise the benefits of green and blue infrastructure it needs to form an interconnected network. Doing so requires strategic planning to target delivery against the needs of the local communities. The GBIP sets out a strategic framework for the future delivery of green and blue spaces.



SP3. Integrated into the urban environment

As with all urban systems, green and blue infrastructure should not be seen as independent. It needs to form an integrated part of the urban fabric of the city. This Plan highlights a range of opportunities for integrating green and blue infrastructure into the public realm and buildings through, for example, the use of sustainable drainage systems to manage surface water.



SP4. Well designed and managed

To work effectively, all infrastructure, including green and blue assets, need to be well designed and regularly maintained. This GBIP sets out nine design principles for the provision of all green and blue spaces.



SP5. Appropriately funded

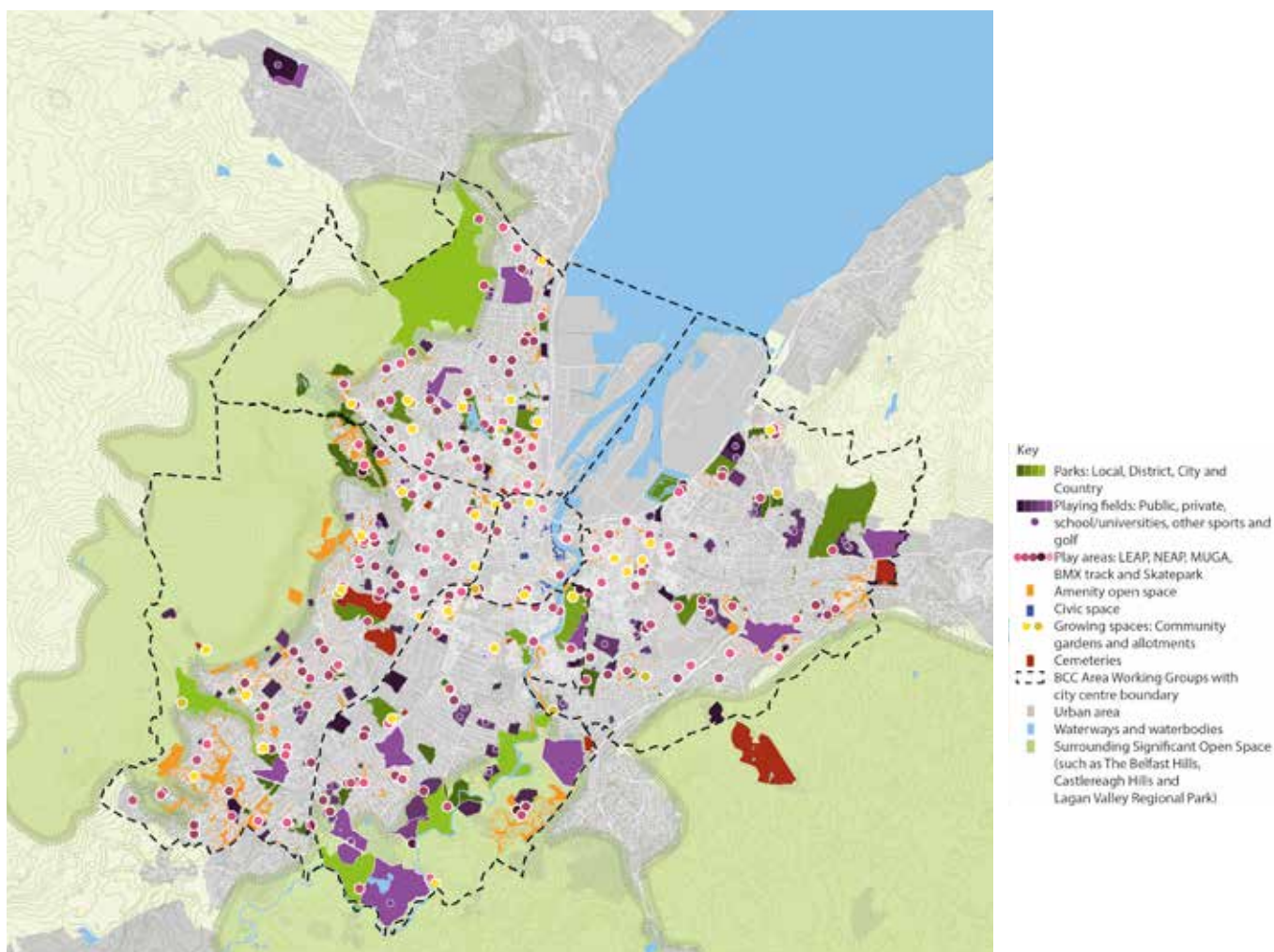
Green and blue infrastructure brings considerable value to the city. This value needs to be recognised and used to help attract sustainable funding to ensure the benefits continue to be felt. The delivery of the Plan will require collaboration and resource from a number of sources, including working with developers and the use of section 76 developer contributions.

Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

Belfast benefits from a wide range of open spaces. From the beautiful Victorian setting of the Botanic Gardens to the natural grandeur of Cave Hill Country Park, from the lawns of City Hall Gardens, to the

smallest of local play areas, they all add to the overall quality of our environment and contribute to our city's unique identity.

We have a variety of different types of open spaces across the city:



The **vision** of the BOSS is that:

By 2035 Belfast will have a well-connected network of high-quality open spaces recognised for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who lives in, works in and visits our city.

To help us achieve this vision we have agreed seven strategic principles (SPs) to support the protection, improvement, creation, accessibility and connectivity of our open space network.

To help us achieve our vision we have identified a range of opportunities and headline actions to be delivered over the next five years. To achieve our vision, open spaces must be managed collaboratively, as one of the city's most important assets. We will continue to work closely with our partners and stakeholders to help realise our vision for Belfast's open spaces.

This vision is supported by seven strategic principles (SPs):



SP1. Provide welcoming shared spaces

Our high quality open spaces are inviting and safe for everyone to use. There will be enough space to meet the needs of our growing city and our open spaces will be used to encourage community cohesion and social interaction.



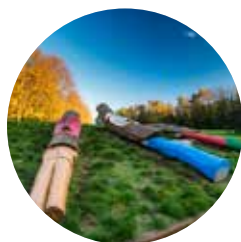
SP2. Improve connectivity

Well-connected and accessible open spaces will form a green network to support safe and sustainable movement across the city.



SP3. Improve health and wellbeing

Offering a wide range of facilities for formal sports and informal recreation, our open spaces will be the preferred option for exercise, relaxation and enjoyment.



SP4. Support place-making and enhance the built environment

Our open spaces will positively contribute to the distinct setting and character of our neighbourhoods and the built environment, helping to retain and attract investment.



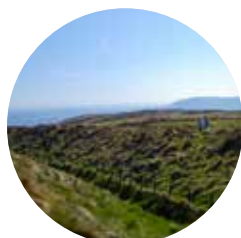
SP5. Increase resilience to climate change

Our open spaces will help us to minimise the impacts of climate change, including more severe rainfall events.



SP6. Protect and enhance the natural environment

By protecting and managing a wide range of habitats, our open spaces will strengthen biodiversity and benefit from the ecosystem services a healthy natural environment provides.



SP7. Be celebrated and support learning

Ensuring that events, activities and educational opportunities within our open spaces are well promoted, well used and valued by future generations.

We're committed to making sure that our publications are available to all sections of the community and will consider providing this in other formats. If you need an alternative format, please call 028 9091 8779.



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