



# UPPER DONEGALL STREET **PLACE SHAPING PLAN 2026**

Executive Summary



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Place Shaping Plan / 2026

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The North Belfast Heritage Cluster (NBHC) is a partnership of fourteen members, including Belfast Charitable Society, representing heritage organisations across North Belfast.

The NBHC received National Lottery Heritage Fund support for their four and a half -year Re-creating a Great Place North Belfast Project, part-funded by Belfast Charitable Society, promoting heritage-led regeneration and a shared vision for North Belfast.

To explore the full social, economic, community, heritage and environmental potential of Upper Donegall Street, NBHC commissioned a dedicated place shaping process, bringing fresh thinking to one of North Belfast's most historic streetscapes. The study area extends north from York Street to the historic Clifton House at the Clifton Street junction, encompassing Donegall Lane, York Lane, Union Street and Frederick Street. This work is envisaged as a pilot project with intention to roll this across the wider Cluster members in other geographic areas.

Between September 2025 and January 2026, the process engaged key stakeholders in structured and meaningful dialogue, identifying existing assets and emerging opportunities, and exploring how these might deliver lasting benefits to the wider community by 2036. Two cross-cutting themes shaped the process from the outset: the integration of Community Wealth Building principles and the imperative of climate resilience. Central to the approach was a commitment to early, substantive engagement with local stakeholders and service providers, ensuring that strategic development opportunities were identified in genuine partnership with those who know the area best.

### Vision



*The Upper Donegall Street area is a key gateway to the City Centre and North Belfast; it will be a thriving and sustainable commercial thoroughfare embracing its uniqueness and celebrating its history and heritage buildings. It will provide homes along with dedicated community and green spaces.*



Map showing Upper Donegall Street Study Area

### Strengthening the Highstreet

The Community Places Strengthening the Highstreet Star model was used to provide a framework for structure and thoughtful discussion on Upper Donegall Street. The Star model provides a graphical representation of how the community views the Upper Donegall Street Area, the closer the theme lies to the centre of the star the greater the need for improvement.



### Key findings

The key messages and consistent themes that emerged from the extensive engagement process centred around:

- The historic nature of Upper Donegall Street, and its wider area, is crucial to the potential development and regeneration
- There could be a strong district identity created through the branding of the historic buildings and provision of more information about the area and the buildings.
- With significant strategic development in and adjacent to the area (Belfast Stories, Housing led regeneration, Ulster University and the Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2 North-South Glider) there are opportunities to influence and maximise regeneration opportunities.
- There are few permanent residents, minimal community infrastructure and a lack of services, conversely there is a strong loyalty and affiliation to the area
- Potential growth in the relationship with Ulster University and its students while recognising there is an over saturation of student accommodation.
- Concerns around congestion: rush hour, taxis at the weekend and car parking on pavements
- In terms of public realm there was a notable lack of green space, lack of and consideration of climate actions
- The general care and maintenance of the buildings is poor (general dereliction and vacancies)
- There were notable safety concerns – especially for women, at night, with the poor street lighting noted
- There was an ambition from members of the North Belfast Heritage Cluster to ensure the project ripples out to include Place Shaping in their areas
- There was a desire to ensure there is a connection between this Place Shaping Plan and any wider Place Shaping for North Belfast.

## ● Place Shaping Priorities

Three Place Shaping Priorities have been identified; each priority has been agreed by the Project Steering Group and is accompanied by Strategic Outcomes and associated Place Shaping Objectives. The objectives identify key partners and are organised according to short (0-2 Years), medium (3-5 Years) and long-term (6+ Years) timeframes that will allow the Upper Donegall Street area to achieve its wider vision.

Donegall Street will be a thriving, well maintained and inclusive neighbourhood, where residents and visitors live, work and play. It will be a key gateway strengthening connections between City Centre investment and North Belfast.



Donegall Street will celebrate and maximise its rich and unique heritage and role in the formation and growth of Belfast as a city.



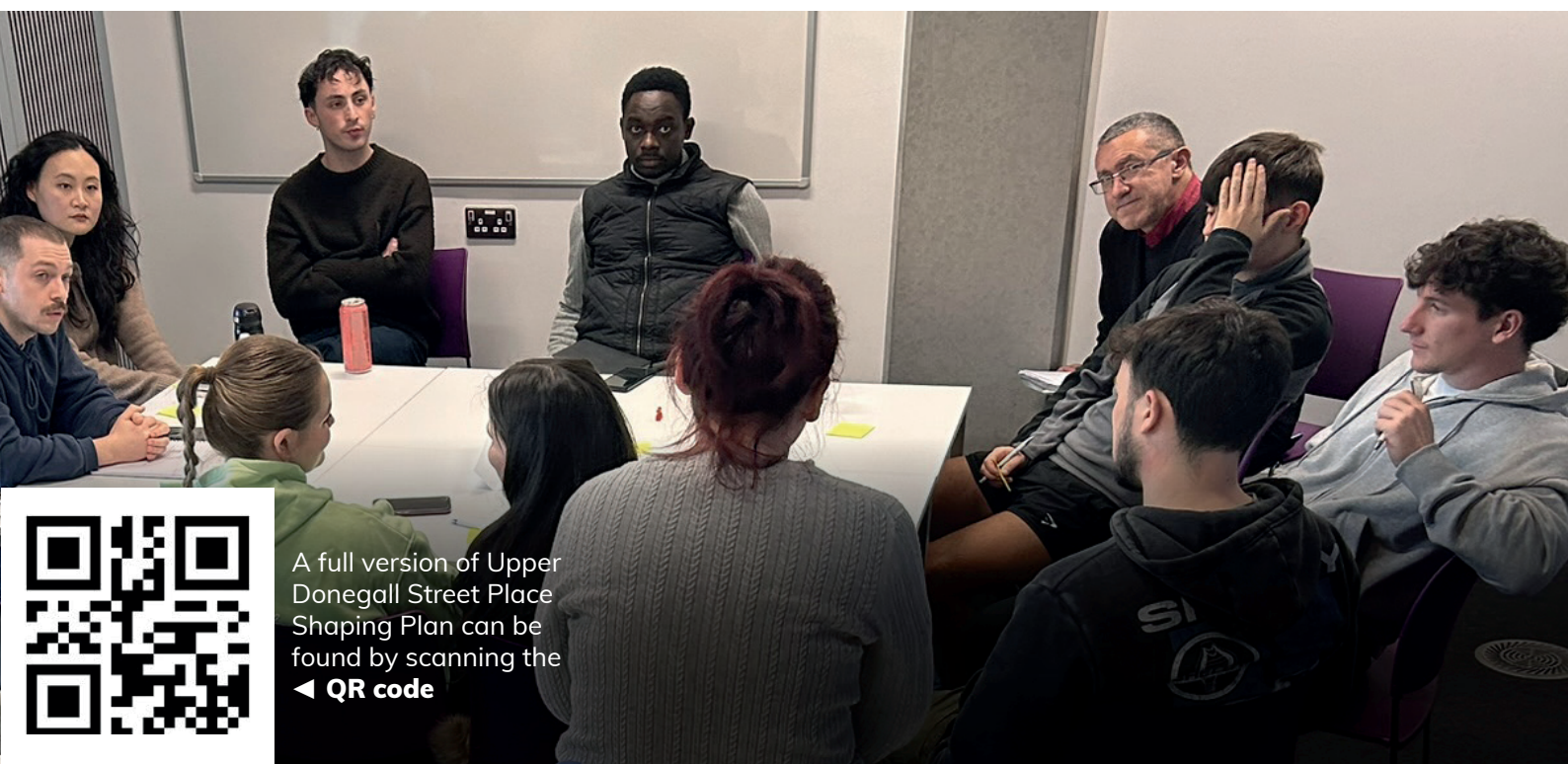
Donegall Street will be a climate resilient commercial thoroughfare which values the planet.



## ● Next Steps

Over the next eighteen months, the North Belfast Heritage Cluster and Project Steering Group will work with partners and stakeholders to deliver key actions across economic, heritage, and environmental priorities including;

- Liaise with the Belfast Night Czar and partners to develop a day and night-time economy strategy and enhance the public realm.
- Develop new heritage building signage and improve access to existing heritage assets in collaboration with partner organisations.
- Work with partners to introduce green infrastructure, discourage pavement parking, and promote sustainable transport options.



A full version of Upper Donegall Street Place Shaping Plan can be found by scanning the  
◀ QR code