

# DUNCAIRN GARDENS: Creating a thriving hub for the local community

## 1. REIMAGINING BARRIERS

Work is taking place across Belfast to reduce barriers and reimagine peace infrastructure.

The peace infrastructure along Duncairn Gardens is amongst the most clearly visible reminders of the past that will be found in Belfast, however it still provides an important function for the safety and security of those communities that live on both sides. Some excellent work has been undertaken in the past to reimagine some of these barriers and it would be great to see these ideas progress, through co-design with local people. We believe that the process of working together to reimagining these barriers and then see the work come to fruition will greatly assist with building social cohesion.

North City Business Centre have planning permission to recreate a dual frontage along Duncairn Gardens and North Queen Street. This is a really positive proposal that will also begin to recreate the frontage onto Duncairn Gardens.

Image 1: North Howard Street interface recently saw the replacement of its solid security gates with 'see through' gates.  
Image 2: An area where a former peace wall stood at the top of the Crumlin Road in Belfast

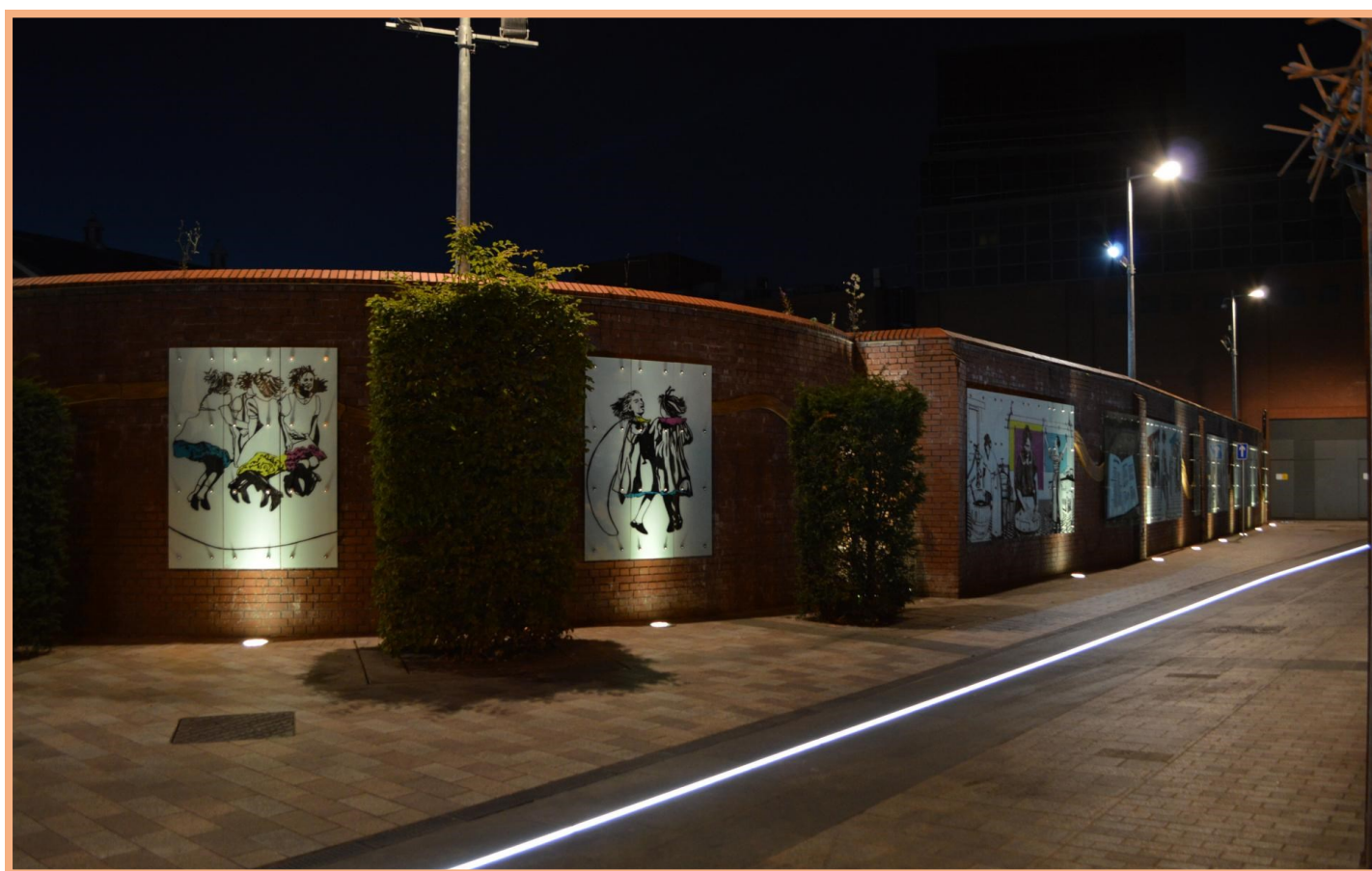
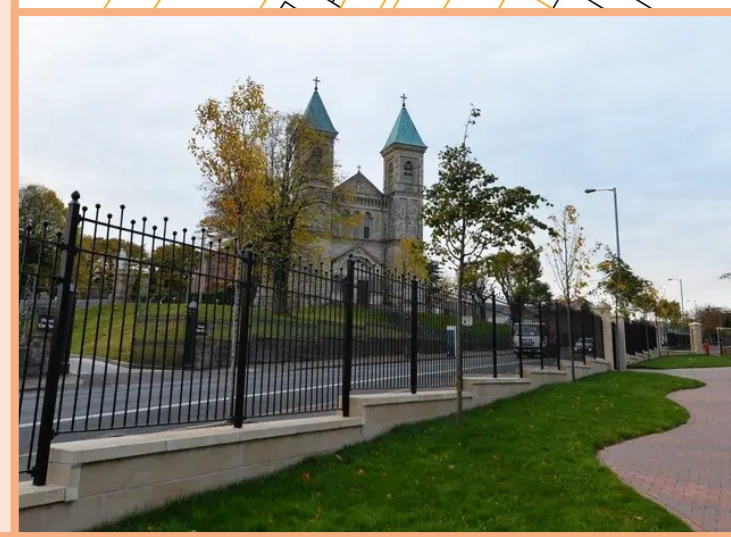
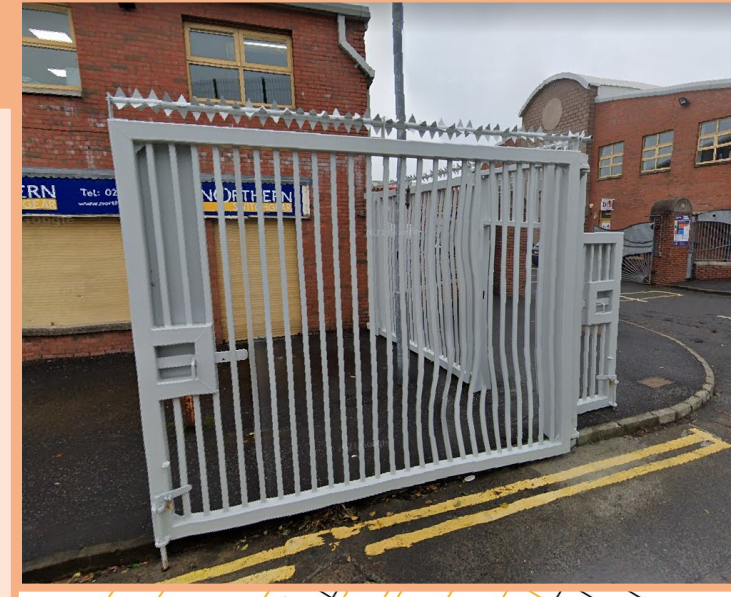


Image: Bank Square, Belfast

Alongside the formal peace infrastructure, the legacy of the past is also found in the way the area has evolved over time. The large commercial and business uses found along Duncairn Gardens were a result of vacant land that remained following the population decline of the 1970's. These uses have provided important employment opportunities over recent decades, however they have also added to the barriers that we see today. Long stretches of walls, such as that alongside the TeleTech building could be reimagined with community artwork, greened to create a 'living wall' or completely removed and replaced with railings, that would make the TeleTech building a much more inviting place to work.

## 2. CREATING A SAFE & RESILIENT PLACE

Duncairn Gardens would benefit greatly from improvements to the public realm. This investment in the public realm could help to regain the vitality that Duncairn Gardens once had. The beautiful tree lined avenue could be complemented and brought back to life with quality paving, street furniture and lighting, complementing the 'reimagining barriers' work.

When speaking to local people, it is clear that many feel that there has been a chronic underinvestment in this part of Belfast. Maybe this is a result of the area being an interface between two opposing communities. Evidence suggests that the services and amenities along Duncairn Gardens are used by people from both Tigers Bay and the New Lodge, therefore projects to improve the attractiveness of the area would benefit everyone, making the area feel much more healthy, safe and welcoming.



## 3. BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO VACANT BUILDINGS / PLOTS

There are a number of vacant and derelict buildings along Duncairn Gardens. The most notable being the former TeleTech building, a large warehouse style building with over 200 car parking spaces. The site is located within an employment zoning in both the existing and emerging development plan. The building presents a major opportunity to create jobs for local people. Early engagement has indicated that InvestNI consider the site to be surplus and will dispose of it at the right time. The site will be offered, for sale, to other public bodies in the first instance. Given the strategic importance of this building to the economic development and regeneration of the area, it is important for the future owner to examine how this building can deliver social and economic benefits for local communities.

There are also several other vacant and derelict buildings that could provide vital services and facilities to improve the liveability of the area. For example, imagine that the TeleTech once again accommodates hundreds of workers on a daily basis, the wall is removed, and the site opens onto Duncairn Gardens – this footfall could be the catalyst for a variety of new businesses (shops, cafes etc).



## REGENERATION PRINCIPLES

### 1.Reimagining Barriers

### 2.Creating a safe and resilient environment

### 3.Breathing new life into vacant buildings

### 4.Improving health and wellbeing

#### 4. IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLBEING

Many aspects of our built and social environment affect our health and wellbeing. Research confirms that the satisfaction people get from their local area, helps to build social cohesion and inclusion that in turn impacts upon physical and mental health and wellbeing. Changes to the built environment will not create dramatic changes over night, but over time they can have significant results. We believe that the projects highlighted under 'Reimagining Barriers' and 'Safe and Resilient Place' could greatly contribute to the health and wellbeing of surrounding communities.

The promotion and encouragement of active modes of travel (walking and cycling) should be a core consideration of all projects. There is a real opportunity to build on the areas greatest strength, its location and access to services and facilities, including City Side Retail Park, the City Centre and Alexandra Park. Better cycle infrastructure is essential, including cycle lanes, cycle parking and pedestrian and cycle crossing points.

The Belfast Healthy Cities initiative sets out an excellent framework that seeks to promote Belfast as a healthy, equitable and sustainable city through Community Prosperity, Greening the City and Healthy Transport.



Early engagement with local stakeholders has also established an aspiration to expand on the existing health facilities within the area through the creation of a 'Health Hub'. This could be complemented through the provision of greenspace and community garden areas.