

# 03

## The Design Concept

Primary Design Concept

Making connections

Completing the city

A City Centre Urban Form

Bringing life to the waterfront

Creating a living neighbourhood

Building for the future

Shaping the place

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## Primary Design Concept

The primary design concept is the expression of the site as an extension to the urban core to be developed with an intensity and form appropriate for this European city centre.

To this effect a series of structuring concepts have been evolved.

These include:

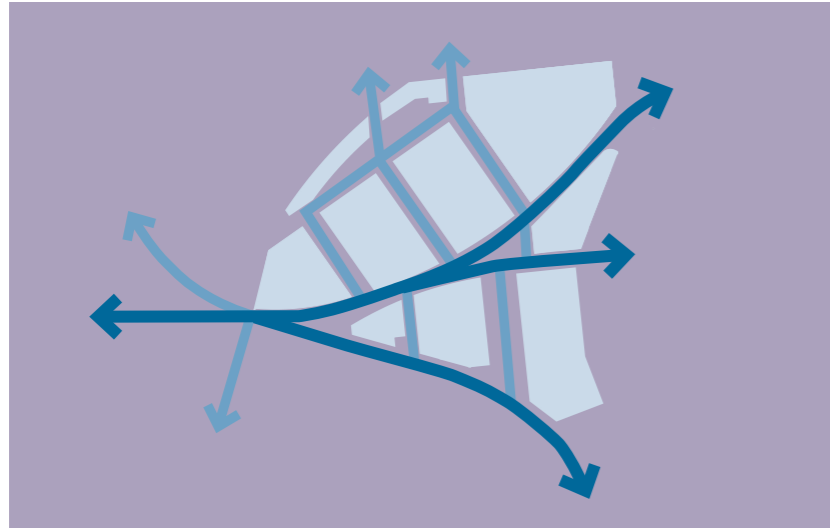
- creating a series of well-integrated connections between all adjacent quarters, threading them back into and through the new development;
- designing a form which is both truly urban and highly responsive to the city centre context; and
- producing a public realm which positively encourages a rich array of urban activities and interactions within an outstanding, memorable and unique urban landscape.





The concept masterplan seeks to realise a number of key design objectives, which may be summarised as follows:

**Objective 1:  
Connecting neighbourhoods & communities**



Mending the urban fabric by creating safe and attractive movement routes that reconnect central Belfast with the site, the river and the communities to the East.

**Objective 2:  
Completing the city centre**



Creating a seamless extension to the city centre - where one can cross over to either side of the River Lagan and feel equally that one is in the centre of a capital city.

**Objective 3:  
Bringing life to the waterfront**



Celebrating the sunshine bank of the river with a parade of new landmark buildings and a prestigious hotel, lively new squares and a city park and a dynamic promenade lined with an array of retail, restaurants and coffee shops.

**Objective 4:  
Creating beautiful public spaces**



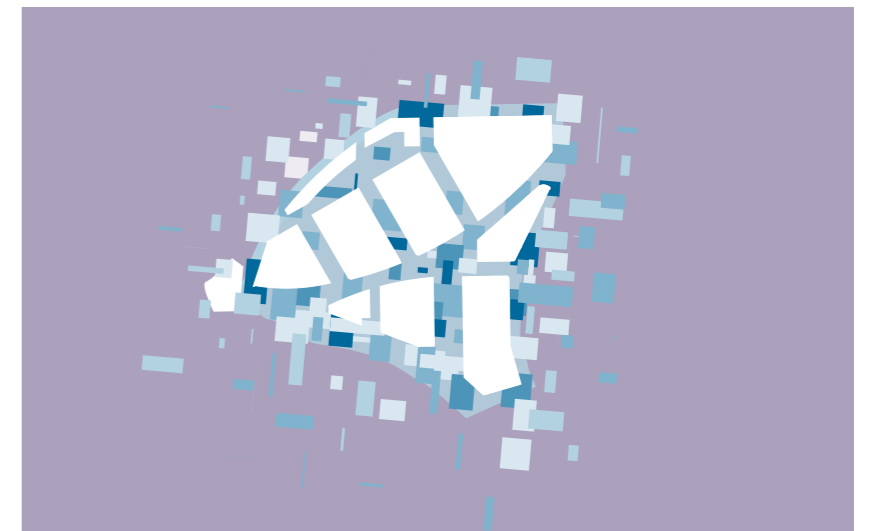
Establishing a new city destination shaped by series of public spaces, a lively riverfront promenade and a network of streets where the pedestrian has absolute priority.

**Objective 5:  
Developing sustainably**

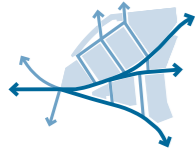


Setting new standards for sustainability with a commitment to ensuring every new home meets Eco-home standards as a minimum, implementing design that promotes walking, cycling and public transport and working with local communities to share facilities, services and new employment opportunities.

**Objective 5:  
Providing a rich mix of landuses**



Reviving Belfast city centre's heritage with a new urban quarter, sustained by new services and facilities and animated day and night by a diverse range of employment, retail and and leisure uses.



# Connecting neighbourhoods and communities

## The primary east-west axis

Belfast's urban layout is structured around the Civic Axis which runs on the Chichester Street alignment in front of the City Hall.

The design proposal extends this primary structuring axis across the River Lagan via a new pedestrian footbridge and the site itself, connecting both sides of the city centre and establishing a new link to the neighbourhoods of East Belfast.

This primary connection will be expressed in a number of ways:

**Visually:** Through the continuation of the alignment of Chichester Street across the Lagan and into the development, providing a highly visible connection. Views into the site will also be provided from vantage points within the residential areas to the east.

Taller landmark buildings will be positioned in a manner whereby they will be seen from a range of vantage points around the city and from the River, signalling entrances to the site on this axis and providing a strong visual presence in the city in general and from the river in particular.

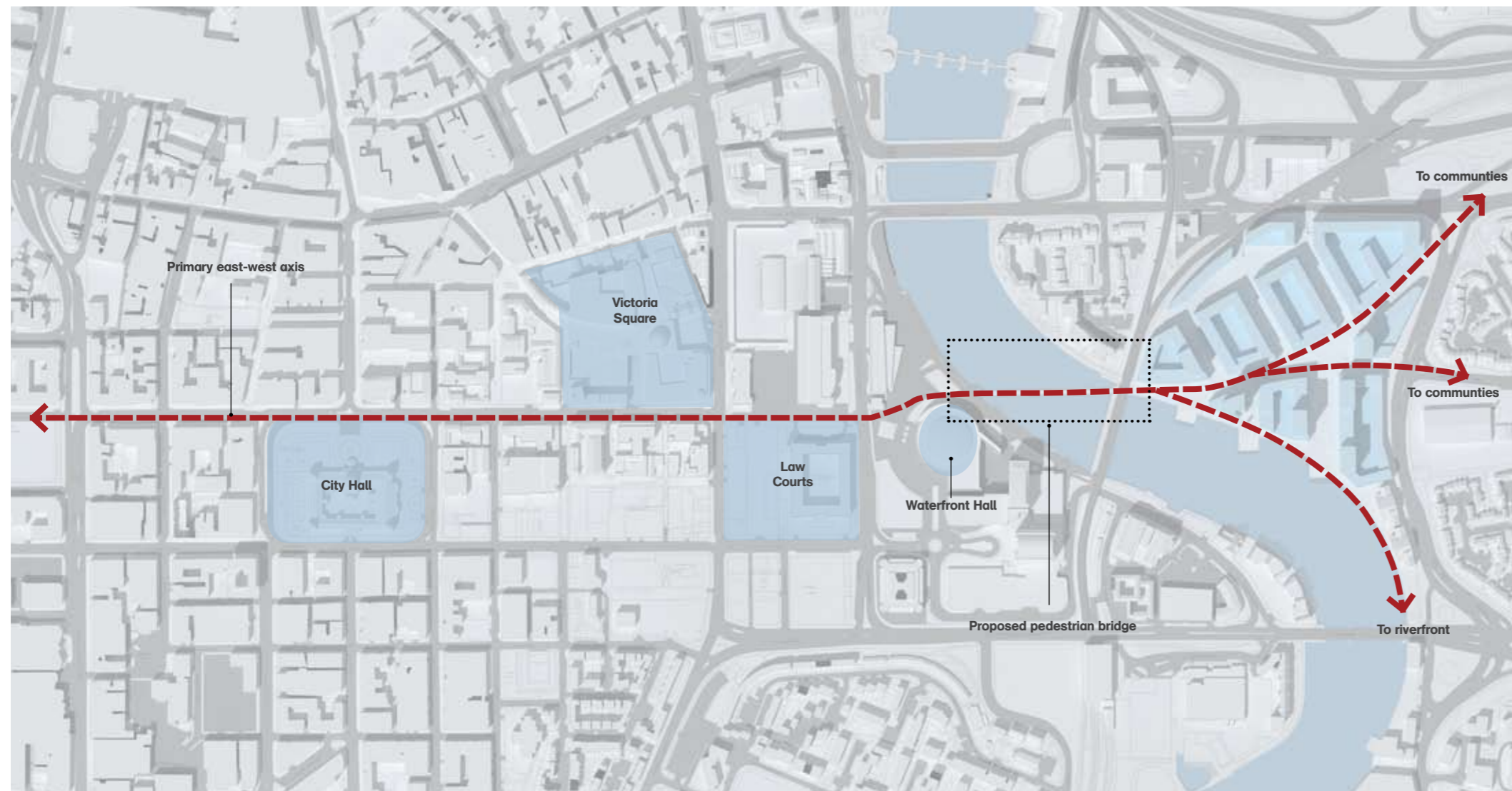
**Physically:** with a new pedestrian bridge between the Waterfront Hall and the existing Lagan walkway by the site. The 'landing' point will be near the meeting of key routes to the east, a point that will be celebrated with landmark buildings and lively activities.

**Form:** The scale of the new east bank will frame this primary axis with an urban ambient of around 8 stories, punctuated with a series of carefully positioned landmark buildings of 20 – 30 storeys. These higher buildings will be positioned to be integral to the structuring of this primary axis leading one into, through, and out of the site.

## Connections to the communities

The suburban neighbourhoods of East Belfast will be connected to the City Centre through the creation of new routes structured across the site. These routes will be designed to link spaces in a way that is positive and inclusive.

These connections will be further demarcated by the positioning of landmark buildings, representing gateways into the development. The new connections will emphasise the importance of the pedestrian over the car in order to help achieve a people-intensive city centre extension.



Connections from the City Centre through the development



View of H & W Cranes



View of suburban sky line



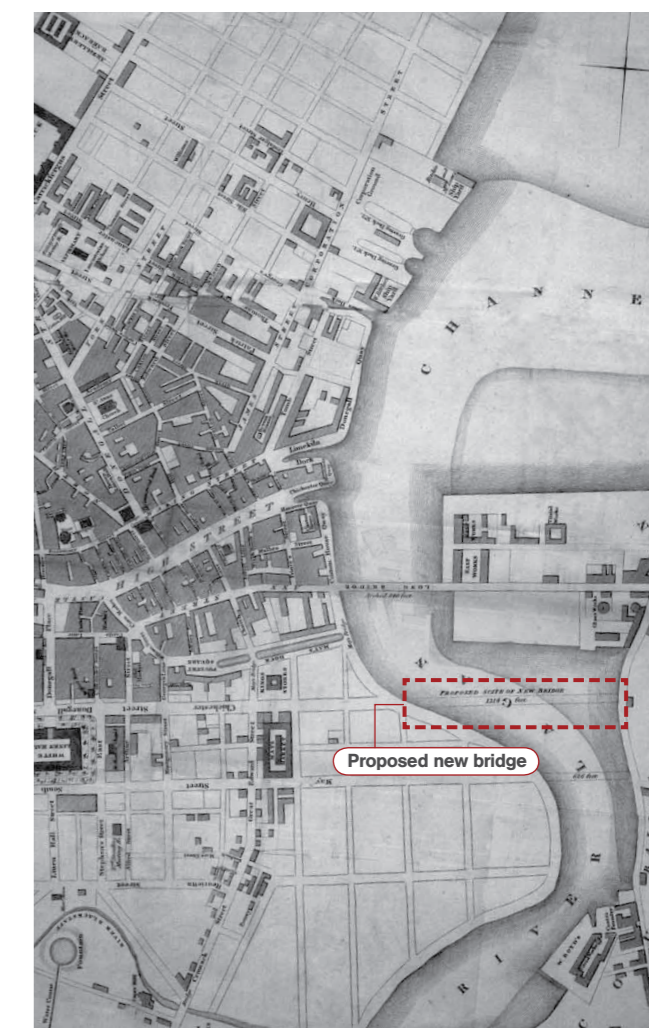
Riverside view





### The original Vision

A map from 1823 shows a proposed new bridge that was to have been constructed across the Lagan. It was aligned with the emerging major city centre axis along Chichester Street and reached over to the present Sirocco site.



Map of Belfast 1823 showing the proposed new Chichester Street Bridge.

Later maps show that the site came to be developed for industrial purposes and the vision was never realised. Almost two centuries later, the site finally lies vacant. It now presents the opportunity to create new movement routes from the East and link them via a new bridge, finally extending the Civic axis of Chichester street and physically and symbolically connecting both sides of the Lagan.





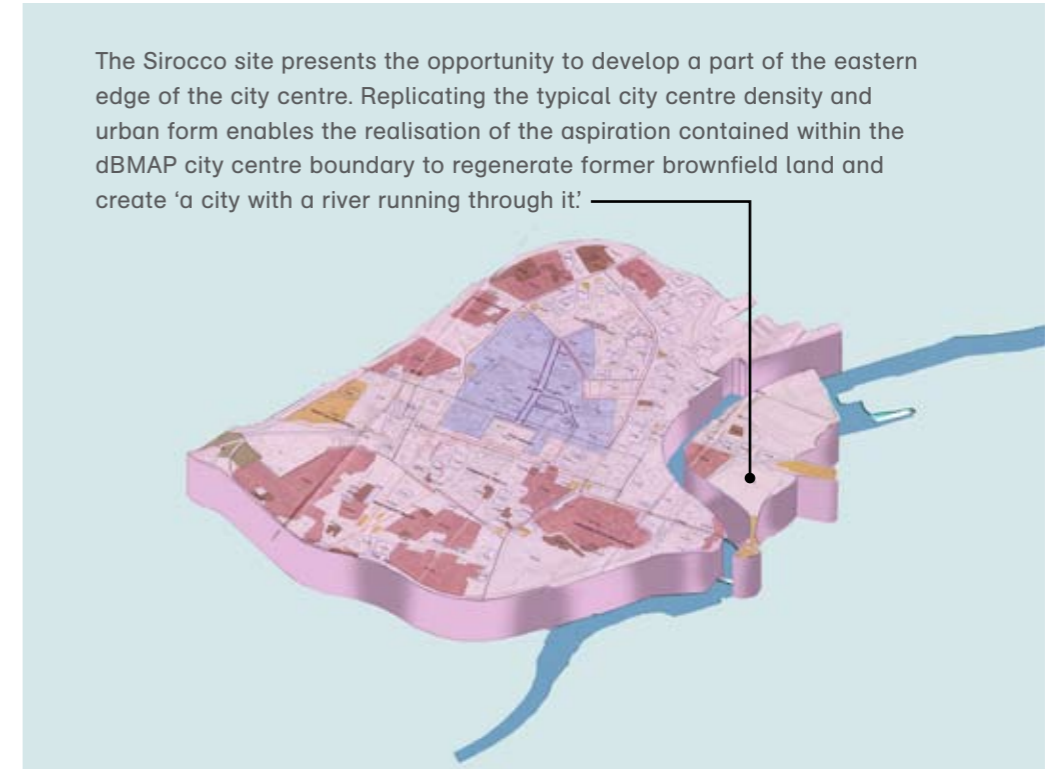
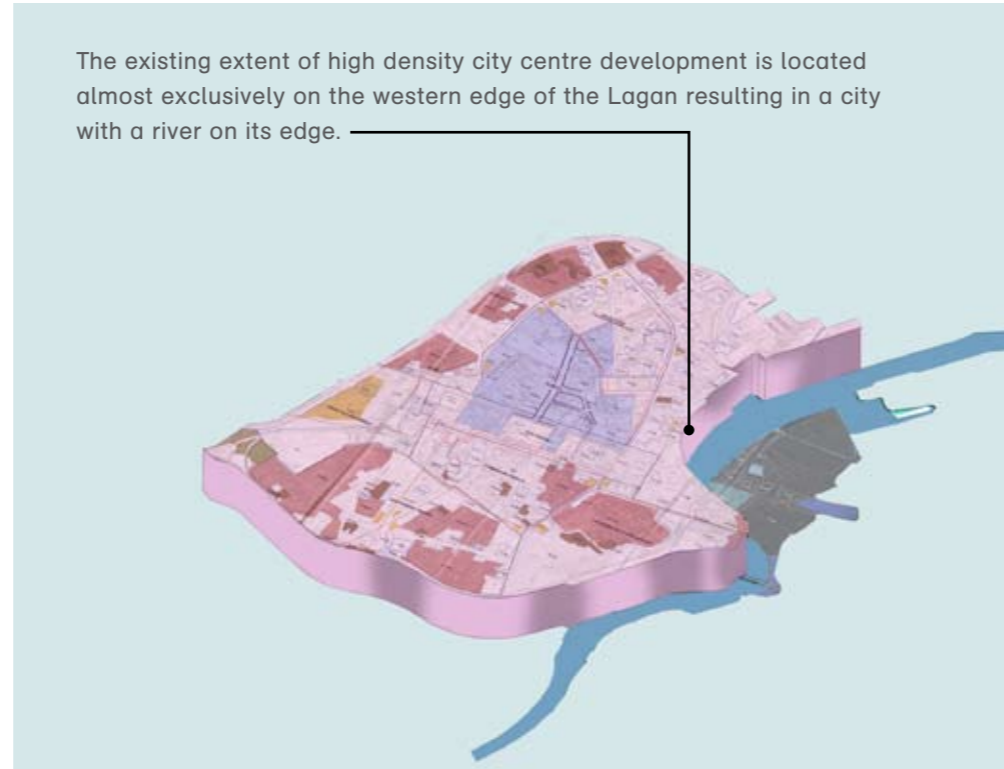
# Completing the city centre

## City centre urban form

The scale and massing of the development will be designed to a contemporary urban scale while based upon a traditional perimeter block form which echoes much of the older city centre. At the same time, the design concept will create a form which is also bespoke to its riverside setting, capitalizing on the long sunny aspect of this section of the waterfront.

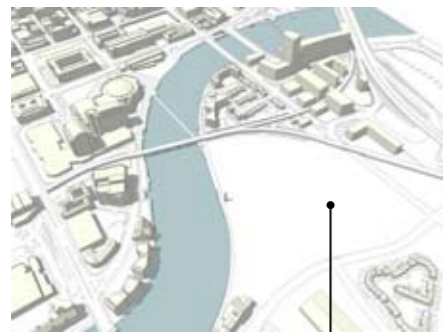
The design concepts in respect of the urban form have been informed by detailed study of the morphology of the existing City's core. These studies address the key elements that contribute to the intrinsic quality of the core, including:

- Block size
- Building height and massing
- Street width and public space proportions
- Land-use
- Significant views
- Movement routes
- Architectural form
- Public realm

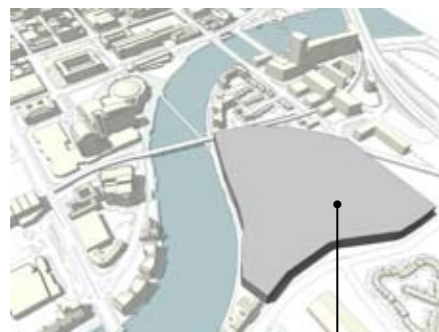


## City centre massing concept

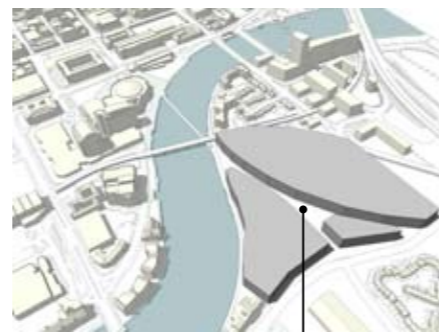
The masterplan evolved in response to the historic character of the city centre with the application of the typical Belfast plan and section



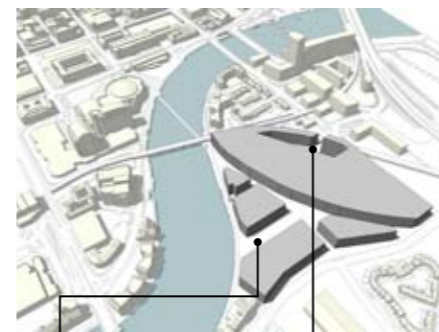
The site



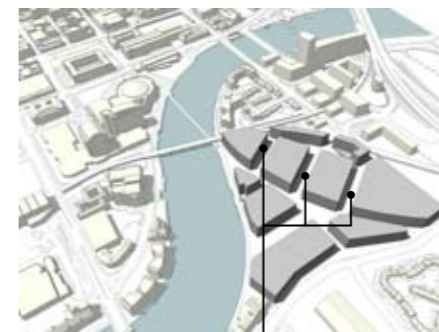
Typical city centre residential apartment building height



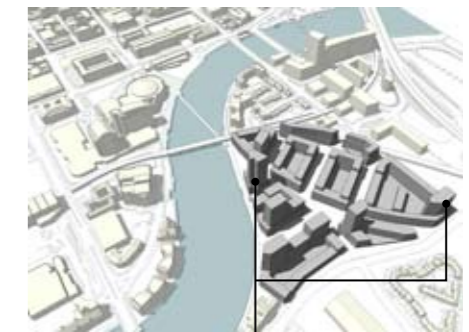
Urban walk establishing primary connection



Riverside park with southern aspect facing the Lagan  
Residential Park



Introducing city centre proportioned streets



Identification of Landmarks and gateways





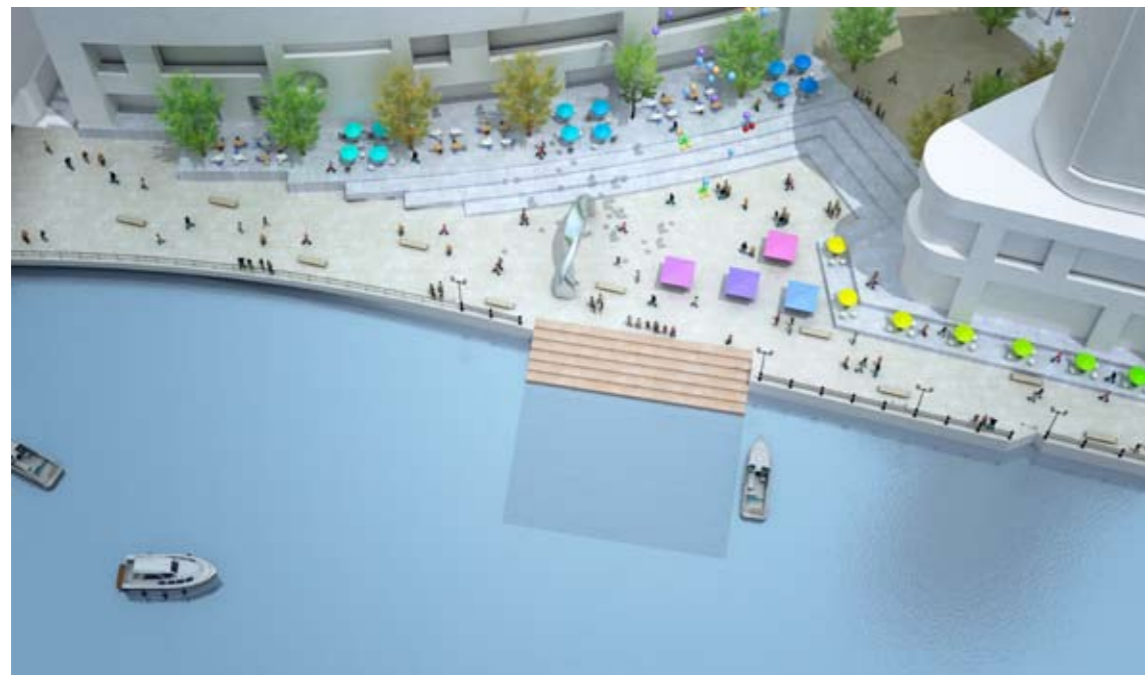
# Bringing life to the waterfront

## The Riverside

The riverside will become a new and important north south route in the city. It will connect the quarters to the north and south of the site, while facilitating overlapping east west connections.

The masterplan will ensure that the waterfront becomes activity rich, dominated by pedestrians, framed by a composition of new buildings all with active ground floor uses – shops, cafes, restaurants and set within a beautiful public realm.

The design of the public realm will enable event spaces beside and over the river, further animating the Sirocco promenade. There will be opportunities for small craft to be moored by the promenade.







# Creating beautiful public spaces

## Public Realm

The public realm provision is generous and varied from the 'new' waterfront promenade to the squares and spaces that punctuate the form with a series of transitional nodes. The public spaces will be framed with strong, legible building edges and active ground floors, helping to ensure that high levels of animation are encouraged and achieved.

The aim is to provide an area that attracts intensive use and enjoyment, throughout the day and into the evening, through its variety of uses and spaces which are well overlooked, safe to use and a delight to be in.

Hard and soft landscaping, of an appropriate scale that responds to that of the built form, will bring greenery into the centre, offering shade and shelter and visual contrast to the buildings.

Public art will enrich the spaces, adding to the unique character of the quarter and promoting a cosmopolitan ambience while street furniture and furnishings will be designed as a unifying 'family', providing unity and synergy throughout the development.







## Developing sustainably

### Sustainability

Sustainable development is about pursuing a balance between social, economic and environmental considerations. The Sirocco Masterplan aims to be exemplary, not only in its environmental performance, but also in the type of community that it will help to shape and support.

Accessibility to employment, retail, public transport, services and facilities is the prime determinant of residential density. The Sirocco site presents an opportunity to support this accessibility with urban density housing, thereby making best use of resources. Although high density, over 55% of the footprint of the site will be set aside for public realm. Each new home will be constructed to stringent environmental standards. The structure of the development blocks allows for flexibility in terms of adapting to different uses over time, in particular the ground floors configuration and the public space itself.

The masterplan will also promote a number of other sustainable initiatives including a central heating plant, recycling points and green roofs.

Sustainable forms of transport will be encouraged by introducing Belfast's first car-club and providing a high quality bus route through the site. The masterplan will also improve opportunities for walking and cycling, realising the opportunities presented by a city centre location. A new pedestrian priority public realm will be created which will link to existing routes with enhancements off-site.

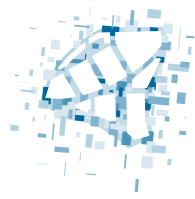
The regeneration of the area, the new employment opportunities that it gives rise to and the new services and facilities provided will have a profoundly positive impact on people living in this part of the city. Already a shared trust fund has been established that will assist a number of projects for the communities who adjoin the Sirocco site.

Ultimately, the masterplan aims to help develop a vibrant, strong and well-developed community that will be a true asset in social and economic terms, and to deliver a physical environment that sets new standards for Belfast in terms of environmentally conscious design.



A sustainable vision - the masterplan will promote green roofs to all the buildings.





# Providing a rich mix of land-uses

## Land Use

The Sirocco masterplan will ensure that the site supports a viable and sustainable community and makes a genuine contribution to the life and vitality of the capital city.

It will be developed primarily as a new residential quarter, required to increase the city centre population and help animate the wider area. A broad range of residential types and tenures will be included across the Sirocco site in order to establish the foundations of a balanced community.

Alongside the predominance of new homes, the site will also accommodate a mix of complementary uses. Local services and retail, presently absent from this part of the city, will be provided and will be supported and made viable by a high density resident population.

Other uses will include a supermarket, cafes and restaurants, a hotel, social and cultural uses, educational uses and own-door offices. They will serve both the immediate community and the wider city, and will bring new employment opportunities.

Ground floor uses that generate movement and interest will be crucial for the long term success of the new City Centre neighbourhood. The masterplan will guide their distribution across the site. The land-use structure will help to ensure that while residents are away at work or children at school or on holiday, the streets are alive with the activities associated with the ground floor, while at night, the neighbourhood will be kept safe by a large resident population in apartments that are specifically designed to promote overlooking of the public spaces.

The new city quarter will be lively, safe and full of interest due to a combination of high density living, a mix of activities, and the pivotal location between existing communities and the city centre.

