

**Fears, Constraints and Opportunities  
Developing Shared Residential Space  
in Belfast**

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## Executive Summary

It is clear that the future of Northern Ireland will involve greater levels of sharing between members of the various different communities in terms of resources, services, public space and residential areas. This research commissioned by the Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Community Relations Council considers the views and experiences of residents, planners, community and voluntary sector activists and professionals working in both public and private sector housing and development regarding both the obstacles and potential that exists in the development of new and existing residential shared space.

### Methodology

At the outset of the research process a general literature review was conducted on the key themes of the research. The field research involved engaging with a range of stakeholders including residents who lived in a number of areas across Belfast. In total thirty-six individual interviews were conducted, with the potential participants identified and agreed by the researchers in collaboration with the steering group. In addition twenty-three focus groups comprising one hundred and sixteen participants were also held. E-mail responses were also received from a small number of organisations who were unable to offer a representative for an interview or who wanted to provide additional information to supplement their interview. Views were also sought at a workshop at CRC policy conference in April 2008. A full list of consultees that were approached can be found in the Appendix.

Key themes addressed in the research included people's:

- Experiences and understandings of shared residential spaces;
- Attitudes towards creating more shared residential spaces;
- Concerns and fears that might be voiced;
- Possibilities of and opportunities for new shared residential spaces in both green-field and brown-field sites;
- Views on the provisions of facilities and resources (shops, schools, transport, health, play, leisure) that help create and sustain a shared environment; and
- Views on factors that would make shared residential space more attractive, safe and sustainable.

Service providers were also asked to comment on the policy context, relevant strategies in their own organisation and to comment on current examples of shared housing.

### Key Findings

A number of key themes emerged during the research highlighting both the obstacles to the development of shared living and the kinds of dynamics that might pave the way for successful programmes.

Addressing the issue of *territoriality* is central to the development of new spaces. However, territoriality cannot simply be interpreted through a narrow focus on ethno-political segregation but must also recognise that single identity areas sustain strong networks of kinship, friendship and community. The continuation of these networks alongside ensuring access to services in health, education and employment all impact on individuals' willingness to live in areas of shared or mixed housing.

Through the research period it became obvious that there was a lack of clarity across the community, public and private sectors in relation to *terminology* regarding terms such as integrated, mixed, shared and segregated. These various understandings need to be debated and agreed as they have implications on the kinds of strategic interventions necessary to encourage moves towards becoming more integrated and shared.

It is widely recognised that there needs to be a substantial *good relations* programme as a pre-requisite to the kinds of sustained inter-community development work that might bring about the confidence needed to develop areas of shared space. Good relations programmes must also be central to the culture and management structures of any new shared housing projects and should address issues around parading, bonfires, flags and emblems, memorials, language and culture. If the issue of territoriality is genuinely to be challenged and interfaces are to be made more permeable through the promotion of shared spaces then real and practical dialogue must take place within and across communities:

*Safety* is a principal priority for residents irrespective of area, demography or income level. Nonetheless safety concerns and resourcing issues can differ considerably dependant on the type of neighbourhood. For example, perceptions of community safety in a new, purpose-built space where tenants have made an active choice to live in shared residential areas are very different from those facing individuals who are reluctantly sharing resources in a marked or unmarked interface area. In the former, surveillance and gated communities can be seen as desirable markers of exclusivity, whereas in the latter surveillance, alley gates, grids and grills are often associated with reactive and defensive responses to violence. There is some potential for increased feelings of safety through the removal of flags and emblems particularly at interface points or major arterial routes in order to diffuse tension and to neutralise contentious areas. Community safety is about feeling safe and overt cultural expressions still hold potential to create feelings of fear and mistrust.

The transformation of Belfast through immigration and transnational migrant workers is leading to an ever-increasing diversity of ethnicities and nationalities. This *diversity* is increasing positively to the social fabric of society but is also bringing challenges in terms of housing pressures. Significantly the diversity of an area can play a role in whether it is considered likely to have the potential to become shared on an orange – green as well as a black and white axis. The lack of any transit sites in Belfast with basic amenities combined with the Unauthorised Encampment Legislation (2003) has significantly curtailed and constrained the practice of nomadism in Belfast. Consequently there is some consideration to be given to the needs and rights of

Travellers in relation to culturally appropriate shared housing developments in and around areas where Travellers are settled, in particular in areas such as the Glen Road.

The relative *transience* of some sections of population combined with property speculation can create organically diverse areas. However, they are also by their nature less likely to have the kinds of community cohesion needed to ensure the continuance and strengthening of shared residential areas.

The *motivation* for developing shared housing varies considerably. For the public housing sector there is a clear ethos of community cohesion; for private developers economic returns are the prime motivators and their processes can only be primarily influenced in terms of good relations by changes to planning regulations; and for residents while there is much to commend shared housing initiatives, the emotional and historical connection attached to particular areas can act as an inhibitor.

Allocation on the *basis of need* is ‘*sacrosanct*’ and carries with it the historical narrative of discrimination in housing, yet for some it creates a paradox with the principle ensuring that new build, in Belfast particularly, could go to Catholic/Nationalist/Republican residents. The majority of respondents from all sectors recognised that allocation on the basis of need was a fundamental right that should not be tampered with. Some felt that it was more important to address interface areas and areas in which there are isolated minorities living.

For those who have an interest in the sustainability and good governance of shared housing schemes, there are a number of initiatives including charters, community wardens and management bodies that are drawn on in the *management* of shared areas.

There is a view in the community sector and from private developers, that the *planning process* is distinctly disjointed and lacking vision. There are also multiple planning programmes with similar aims but with separate resource streams and organisational responses operating in often overlapping areas. Bradley and Murtagh contend that the city would benefit from a ‘spatial planning’ process that ‘in an ideal situation, a statutory development plan for Belfast would be the spatial manifestation of the community plan’.

It is absolutely crucial that a genuine process of *consultation* is undertaken with local communities. It was broadly felt by community respondents that consultation was too often a symbolic act, in which community voices were not being listened to. There was a particular concern about the role of private sector developers and the gentrification of areas that paid little attention to the impact of private development on social cohesion.

### Framework

We have outlined a framework setting out aspects of the way forward for enabling statutory intervention to support shared living. This includes four main elements:

## Shared Residential Space

1. Recognition that sustainable shared residential areas should include a variety of indicators of diversity, including ethnicity, religion, age, marital status, class and housing tenure;
2. A broad range of measurable indicators that relate to resources, infrastructure, safety and the environment;
3. The need for a broad interagency working group to monitor and support existing and future shared residential neighbourhoods; and
4. Developing appropriate strategies to enable new shared residential areas.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are offered as a means of responding to the findings of this research and promoting the development of sustainability, shared and cohesive residential spaces in Belfast.

1. Belfast City Council should promote the concept of a Good Relations framework to be clearly integrated into local planning frameworks and incorporated and evaluated in any process of land rezoning for residential use.
2. Belfast City Council and the NIHE should undertake longitudinal research, using qualitative and multiple case study methodologies, into new shared housing developments to monitor levels of community cohesion, management issues and aspects of demographic change.
3. An inter-agency group should be established to provide support and guidance to relevant shared housing initiatives by developers from the public and private sector and to create connectivity to political structures. This group might include the DOE, BELB, NIHE, CRC, PSNI, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Translink and other relevant bodies (including funders such as Atlantic Philanthropies, CFNI).
4. The inter-agency group should adapt and adopt the Framework for Supporting Shared Living, and draw up action plans for its use and implementation. This should include initiating a debate on the core constituents of a mixed housing area.
5. The inter-agency group should ensure that comprehensive, participative and representative consultation with key local constituencies takes place in the future development of all shared housing schemes.
6. Belfast City Council and the NIHE should take steps to develop a capacity building strategy in partnership with relevant Housing Associations to facilitate their engagement in and management of shared housing developments and areas.
7. At least one private developer has adopted a form of community consultation as part of its approach to development in sensitive areas. Belfast City Council and the NIHE should explore how other private developers might be encouraged to

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consider Good Relations criteria in the development of mixed tenure shared housing developments.

8. Belfast City Council and the NIHE should developed a strategy to directly engage the Construction Employers Federation and the Construction Industry Training Board on the development of shared housing schemes and the promotion of a Good Relations duty within future developments.

### **Conclusion**

Together with the other research conducted as part of the Conflict Transformation Project we believe that this research has added to a greater understanding of the dynamics of shared living and the contexts in which it might work. It is clear that issues around community safety, the promotion of good relations and an agreed approach to planning are central to the development of shared living. Each of these factors will also be integral components in the future development of a shared, cohesive and integrated city.

## 1. Background

Over recent years there has been a growing recognition of the need to challenge the legacy of separation and division within Northern Irish society, and in particular the extensive levels of residential segregation that persist in many urban areas. Belfast in particular has been subjected to intense violence and social tensions over the past forty years, and this has contributed and reinforced the already existing patterns of residential segregation on the lines of ethno-national background. Most working class communities are almost entirely comprised of members of either Catholic Nationalist Republican (CNR) or Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) communities, while mixed or ethnically diverse residential communities are scarce. Many communities are divided by walls and fences, and the patterns of segregation and division have only increased during the period of political transition.

However, over the past decade Belfast has been subjected to extensive regeneration, renewal and redevelopment. There have been numerous housing and residential developments undertaken by the private sector, which have reclaimed many brown-field sites. Few of these have occurred in highly segregated areas of the city, the initial choice of development has been the riverside environment and the inner city. Some however, have encroached on segregated territories and have raised the profile of the issue of territorialism and the deep-rooted polarisation between many residential communities. While much housing development has skirted around the issue of breaching the tacitly accepted boundaries, there is nevertheless a need for more housing in the city, and in particular a need for social housing.

There is also a broad acknowledgment that a peaceful and prosperous future for Northern Ireland will involve greater levels of sharing: of resources, services, public space and of residential areas. A high percentage of the population have indicated through surveys (such as Northern Ireland Life and Times: Ark 2006) and other research that they would like to live in more socially mixed environments, and one of the most popular and thriving parts of the city, Ballynafeigh, is also one of the most mixed and diverse. However, the process of promoting, developing and nurturing shared residential areas has been slow (although there are a number of such initiatives underway across Northern Ireland). This report aims to contribute to this process by exploring some of the attitudes and aspirations with regard to developing shared residential space in what remains a largely divided city.

The research was commissioned by the Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Community Relations Council. It is one of a number of research initiatives that were commissioned in order to contribute to the development of a common agenda for the implementation of a Good Relations Plan in the city and, as such is intended to inform a number of other initiatives including the NIHE Shared Neighbourhood programme, the wider Community Planning process, Peace III and the Neighbourhood Renewal Initiative.

## Shared Residential Space

This report considers the attitudes of people living in a number of geographical areas and explores a variety of thematic issues related to housing, from both a local and a citywide perspective. It includes a discussion about common understanding of sustainable shared residential spaces and participants' attitudes to the development of such spaces along with the facilities and resources and safety concerns that they might require or be raised. It explores people's motivation for living in shared residential areas, as well as the inhibitors that in turn can arrest that enthusiasm; and it considers the possibilities of, and opportunities for, new shared residential spaces in both green-field and brown-field sites.

In considering experiences and perceptions of shared and segregated housing in Belfast, the report draws on the views and experiences of residents, planners, community and voluntary sector activists and of professionals working in both public and private sector housing and development. While the research is aimed specifically at the Belfast area, the material has been informed by the development of housing initiatives throughout Northern Ireland and of policy developments throughout Ireland and Great Britain, with cognisance of developments in Bradford, Sweden, Chicago and New York.

In relation to the barriers and the enablers that determine an area's readiness or suitability for shared housing, there is commonality between many of the issues occurring in rural and in urban areas across Britain and Ireland. These similarities, however, can in turn be impacted on by the permanence or transience of the local population. In Belfast, factors such as the sectarian sale and purchase of land (Leonard 2001) or the pressure wielded on the market by private development, are but two of the many variables that can be more influential in particular circumstances than in others. However, despite the anecdotal recurrence of these factors, there is currently little evidence on which to base any legislation or policy to address the challenges they might bring.

The report works from the assumption that shared living is a complex and controversial subject and is one that requires significant consultation and partnership if it has to have any impact on the successful generation of a sustainable and shared future.

It should be noted at this point that the use of specific terminology of 'shared', 'mixed' and 'integrated' housing can prove problematic for the purpose of analysis and comparison. Various constituent groups who participated in the research process employ differing and over-lapping understandings of these terms. To address this challenge, we offer a typology based on the NIHE use of the terminology, which states:

**The provision of quality housing, where people choose to live with others regardless of their religion or race, in a neighbourhood that is safe and welcoming to all.**

As authors, we have drawn on the NIHE model within the report. However, throughout the report, we also attempt to honour the language used by participants and other researchers. Consequently, while we appreciate the highly nuanced differences between divergent residential areas that are not completely segregated, we make no attempt to interpret the language of others so that they might fit within the framework of the NIHE paradigm. The report concludes with the provision of a number of practical recommendations drawn from the views of participants to the research process aimed at delivering opportunities in housing that will challenge the more negative forms of segregation.

### **Methodology**

The research was commissioned in October 2007 and following meetings of the steering group comprising the two research organisations, Trademark, and members of the Conflict Transformation Reference Group, comprising BCC, NIHE and CRC a final terms of reference and stakeholder list was agreed in early January 2008. Fieldwork began in late January 2008 and was completed in late April 2008.

The main aims of the research project were to:

- Undertake community, political and agency consultations in a number of areas across Belfast to explore community attitudes and proposals for shared residential space;
- Define a common understanding of shared residential space in Belfast and to determine the barriers and enabling factors of achieving this in the city;
- Examine the issues around promoting best use of land for residential use in the city and the wider affordability debate; and
- Develop a framework to enable statutory intervention to support shared living.

The field research was qualitative in format, and was based on a series of interviews, focus groups, conversations and discussions with a diverse range of participants and consultees. The general review of policy and literature influenced the structure of the themes and questions that formed the field research and two draft sets of guide questions were drawn up and modified for the groups, individuals and sectors being consulted. One set of questions was tailored specifically for service providers and the other was orientated for community-based organisations.

The key themes included:

- Experiences and understandings of shared residential spaces;
- Attitudes towards creating more shared residential spaces;
- Concerns and fears that might be voiced;
- Possibilities of and opportunities for new shared residential spaces in both green-field and brown-field sites;
- Views on the provisions of facilities and resources (shops, schools, transport, health, play, leisure) that help create and sustain a shared environment; and
- Views on factors that would make shared residential space more attractive, safe and sustainable.

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Service providers were also asked to comment on the policy context, relevant strategies in their own organisation and to comment on current examples of shared housing.

In total thirty-six individual interviews were conducted, with the potential participants identified and agreed by the researchers in collaboration with the steering group. In addition twenty-three focus groups comprising one hundred and sixteen participants were also held. E-mail responses were also received from a small number of organisations who were unable to offer a representative for an interview or who wanted to provide additional information to supplement their interview.

In addition to those for whom housing is a tenet of their core-working or for whom their community commitments intersect with housing issues, successive attempts were made to arrange meetings with a number of bodies representing the sectoral interests of the Section 75 categories. A full list of consultees that were approached can be found in the Appendix. Despite a considerable amount of effort being undertaken to engage a broad range of organisations in this research, a wider participation was hampered by a number of factors including:

- Housing is not seen as central to many groups' core areas of interest;
- A lack of personal experience or insight outside of a small geographical area;
- Few people consider themselves to live in shared housing areas and have a limited knowledge base of the subject to draw upon;
- Areas specifically developed for shared housing have comprised a small number of dwellings;
- A belief that the focus should be on housing for each of the Section 75 categories and not focus specifically on ethno-nationalist divisions; and
- Communities and individuals report consultation fatigue.

It is also of note that for some not only was their knowledge base of the subject matter scant, but there was also a broad consensus that the term 'shared spaces' is largely understood by the general public in terms of shared facilities and public spaces and less about shared residential communities or integrated living.

The findings from the research also formed the basis of a workshop at CRC's Policy Conference in April 2008, the themes and outcomes from the workshop have been included in section 6 of this report.

## 2. Policy Context

The Government's commitment to furthering overarching good relation strategies through *A Shared Future* and the *Racial Equality Strategy* have been effectively stalled since the restoration of the devolved assembly, although a new policy framework is currently being drafted. NICVA has pointed out that in relation to Government's aims to address patterns of socio-economic disadvantage, Departments' previous goals and actions are being reconsidered, as a result:

*In the absence of the A Shared Future policy, the Executive is currently without any policy on tackling sectarianism and addressing the divisions in our society (NICVA 2007: 2).*

Whilst it is perhaps understandable that any new government might wish to make its mark on key areas of policy, the effective hiatus and uncertainty that has existed since May 2007 in relation to promoting a more integrated and shared future, and the paucity of ideas in this regard in the first Programme for Government, gives a depressing indication of the significance accorded to challenging segregation and sectarianism by the local political parties in government.

It is worth noting in this regard that none of the six political parties who agreed to be interviewed for this research, the Democratic Unionist Party, Green Party, Progressive Unionist Party, Alliance Party, Social Democratic and Labour Party and Ulster Unionist Party (Sinn Féin did not respond to requests to participate), had any specific policies relating to shared space or the promotion of shared residential communities. But on the other hand, each of them demonstrated varying degrees of active commitment to, and compliance with, good relations policies.

*A Shared Future* included a range of proposed actions for the NIHE including (at 2.5.7) an intention to:

- Bring forward as soon as practicable its proposed pilot schemes on integrated housing;
- Ensure that applicants wishing to live in areas where people of all backgrounds are welcome should have a real choice, subject to availability; and
- Consider how best, in consultation with PSNI and others, to protect mixed housing areas.

The NIHE Annual Report for 2007 indicates that there has been some progress in delivering Shared Future housing schemes. They are working in partnership with the Department for Social Development (DSD) and the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) to evaluate future potential areas for shared housing; and they have established Service Level Agreements with Habitat for Humanity to develop community support for such schemes.

It is anticipated that the Government's new strategy *A Shared and Better Future for All, on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* (CSI) will be launched in the early summer of 2008. Any existing strategic commitment with regard to actions for producing CSI

can currently be sought, if not found entirely in the draft Programme for Government (PFG) in the Public Service Agreement (PSA) 7. In relation to Housing, PSA 12 for Housing, Regeneration and Community Development aims to *'promote decent, energy efficient, affordable housing and regenerate disadvantaged areas and towns and city centres, and support community development to create environments which enhance quality of life and contribute to well-being'*. The associated objectives place an emphasis on:

- Creating shared spaces that are accessible to all (Objective 2);
- Access to decent, affordable and energy efficient housing (Objective 3); and
- Promoting strong, integrated, sustainable communities where people want to live, work and socialise (Objective 5).

Furthermore, with an indicative budget commitment made to invest *'at least £1.4bn in social and affordable housing by 2018'* (PFG 13) Government would appear to be of a mind and in a position to meet the recommendations of the Semple Review on affordability, which stated that in order to combat the existing social housing crisis there needs to be at least 2,000 new build units per year (Semple 2007).

Honouring that pledge is recognised to be in the interests of all individuals or organisations committed to the process of conflict transformation; not least because of the impact housing has in a variety of economic, social and political outworkings. The first Programme for Government makes a clear link between housing and the wider concomitants of health and well being, and highlights the connections between a *'stable home environment, better health and better employment opportunities'* (2.3.2). This understanding and recognition of housing as a component in a wider holistic approach to personal and community development and good relations is further developed under the theme of improving community relations where a commitment was made to:

*Examine the impact of existing patterns of housing and services such as education and seek to respond positively where people wish to live and learn closer together* (2.5.1).

The Semple Review suggests that the essential requirements for sustainability include employment, health services, transport, schools, shops, leisure facilities and well-managed public spaces. The Report contends that the task of *'place-making'* is dependant on *'design excellence, community involvement and social well-being'*. That said, Semple goes on to note that even though housing policy met its targets over the years with respect to housing access and quality, it *'often failed to tackle the issues which needed to be addressed to ensure the development of sustainable communities'*. In light of this, it is suggested an overall strategic framework is required which pays particular attention to a contention that:

*Communities will operate best ... if they are of mixed income and mixed tenure.*

The Sustainable Development Commission<sup>1</sup> supports these ideas suggesting that mixed income communities and mixed tenure developments requires careful planning in which for instance ‘*Developments should be tenure blind so that any affordable housing is not distinguishable in design and quality from 100 per cent private housing*’.

The Draft Investment Strategy 2008 – 2018 aims to provide up to 10,000 new social housing completions over the next five years. As yet, there is no indication of how this is to be funded, what part of this can be expected to come through the sale of existing assets, and what impact this might be anticipated to have on communities in particular areas where changing demographics are already impacting on good relations.

The reorganisation of local government under the Review of Public Administration (RPA) is anticipated to enable larger council areas to realise significant powers in relation to community planning and specifically the potentially innovative ‘power of well-being’ (ECNI 2007) with a focus on public participation, community planning and participative governance. It is as yet unclear how this process will impact on NIHE operationally. The current review of planning in Northern Ireland launched in 2007 is also likely to have implications for local government.

Margaret Ritchie’s February 2008 announcement of £7 million to regenerate the Village area of south Belfast was welcomed across the city. However, the standard that marks *People and Place*, once the DSD’s flagship Neighbourhood Renewal policy, appears to be flying at half-mast in many other areas of the city. A recent issue of the NICVA journal *Scope* was dedicated to the process of renewal, and articles suggested that there is a lack of any real commitment to the policy due to political inertia and an accompanying ‘*party political silo administration at Executive level which can act as a disincentive to departmental collaboration*’ (Gibson 2008). Further, in the same edition, concern was raised about the ‘gentrification’ of working class areas without due regard and consultation in relation to existing community needs and desires (Donnelly 2008).

This theme of the necessity of appropriate forms and processes of consultation with citizens is one that can be found to recur throughout the city in relation to planning for both the private and public sector. For example, the Department of Social Development’s choice not to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment for the *Draft Masterplan for Girdwood Barracks* is a matter of some concern<sup>2</sup>. Despite the document’s claims of being conceptual and its proposals being ‘*simply indicative*’, it contains a variety of detailed ‘*agreed principles and recommendations*’ in relation, for example, to the Mater Hospital and St. Malachy’s school. Furthermore, it clearly states that consultation was undertaken at both the ideas and analysis stages,

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<sup>1</sup> Building houses or creating communities: A review of Government Progress on Sustaining Communities, SDC 2007 pp80 - <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=558>

<sup>2</sup> DSD recently stated (at the Participation and the Practice of Rights Project Residents Jury on the Girdwood and Gaol Masterplan 28th May, at the Indian Community Centre) that they had always intended to commence an EQIA in the summer of 2008.

perpetuating the view that any of its recommendations are more substantive than conceptual.

Belfast City Council's *Peace Plan*<sup>3</sup> has secured £6m of funding support under the SEUPB PEACE III Priority 1.1 (Building Positive Relations at the Local Level). The plan is underpinned by the vision and principles of the earlier published *Good Relations Plan*. Holding to the vision of '*a stable, tolerant, fair and pluralist society, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated, in an inclusive manner*', this is described as the aspiration of the city of Belfast, as A Shared City, A Peaceful City, A Welcoming City and An Open City. It also focuses on promoting the Good Relations Plan's core objectives of:

- Securing shared city space;
- Transforming contested space;
- Developing shared cultural space; and
- Building shared organisational space.

This is to be done through, a range of initiatives and programmes led by the council's Good Relations Unit. One of these being the Conflict Transformation Project, which seeks to provide opportunities for partnership agencies, including NIHE to develop 'a common agenda' for good relations in the city. One of the prime opportunities for developing such a framework of objectives is the regeneration of the 'North West Quarter' of the inner city ring (or as it has recently been renamed the 'Northside Urban Village' (DSD 2008). This area, which includes Carrick Hill, Brown Square and the area between Donegall Street and North Street that includes the Belfast Telegraph and City Library, meets all the four objectives of the Good Relations Plan. Yet while the current Draft Regeneration Framework highlights the importance of challenging social exclusion, promoting mixed usage and environmental sustainability, it emphasises neutrality over sharing, diversity and integration. It thus misses an opportunity to propose a more radical view of the possibilities for developing a shared, rather than simply a neutral, 'urban village'.

The support for and aspiration of a more shared and integrated society and shared and diverse residential areas in a peaceful diverse wider environment thus runs through most if not all current key policies related to regeneration and housing. And yet there is also a recurrent suspicion that too many policies stall or effectively disappear between publication and implementation, and that in practice they deliver considerably less than the sum of their aspirations and declarations. The challenge for politicians, public bodies and their partnerships is to find ways to move beyond the simple aspiration for a shared and diverse city to practical and agreed programmes.

### **Political Perspectives**

A lack of consistent political leadership, which at times appears as gatekeeping, is an issue that communities and planners alike feel can act as a deterrent to advancing discussions around shared interests across community divides:

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/goodrelations/docs/PeacePlan.pdf>

*Local political representatives need to ensure that they know exactly what a community wants and needs and how to articulate it. We have consulted with them in the past to later discover that it was their personal or party political vision and not that shared by the vast majority of the local community (Planning Consultant).*

All of the political parties interviewed for this research recognised the need for them to advocate and be agents for change in relation to shared housing but within a context of choice. It is a strongly held feeling by some political parties that shared spaces can only come about through bottom up community development and have to be seen as a product of genuine cross community development:

*Segregation that results from endemic fear and threat is unacceptable in a democratic society. The Housing Executive's strategy will be directed to remove fear and intimidation from all housing decisions relating to residential location. Shared housing has to happen through agreement, not government forcing it on us, otherwise its just artificial (Sinn Féin).*

The Alliance Party's response to the Programme for Government indicates three broad priorities: tackling segregation, re-balancing the economy, and delivering sustainable public services:

*Shared Housing forms part of all three of these priorities (Alliance Party).*

The focus could not however, be on quotas, but rather in giving people the freedom to choose where they wish to live. Central to these changes would be the link between high quality housing in locations where people can access high quality jobs:

*That means an end to this notion that people would rather seek work in Bengal than some parts of Belfast ... We need to work towards a situation where people can live together – this means not just provision of housing, but better community relations, more appropriate symbols, and improved policing (Alliance Party).*

The Alliance were also keen to point out that allowing people to have the option of living in a single identity area should not be tolerated:

*Removing this option would send a signal, at least, that government is serious about addressing this problem, and delivering the benefits that would come from a more open, pro-sharing approach to housing (Alliance Party).*

The Green Party had particular concerns in relation to the minimal environmental impact assessments being undertaken by some developers. In the same vein the Sustainable Development Commission pointed out that the Northern Ireland social attitudes survey pointed out a correlation between non-membership of the two main religio-political groups and environmental awareness and that seemed to suggest that 'Eco' themes could be useful for desegregated neighbourhoods<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/research/nisas/robinson.htm>

## Shared Residential Space

The Ulster Unionist Party gave a broad positive encouragement and clear acknowledgment of the merit and positive value of shared spaces and shared living but also highlighted the importance of the local context.

*It must be an organic process and not imposed, as there is potential for destabilisation of sensitive areas ... the emphasis must be on working with local communities (UUP).*

It was thought that shared spaces should have an 'ordinariness' about them and that to advertise or 'brand' areas as shared could place pressure on them to succeed as '*some sort of social experiment*'.

In terms of managing new shared spaces the DUP, Alliance and UUP expressed an opinion that sustaining shared communities in the way envisioned by the NIHE and its partners through additional resources and strategic interventions must be carefully judged due to budgetary constraints. Whilst areas of high conflict and interface areas might demand a more interventionist approach in the short to medium term, ongoing intervention implies that the community is not shared and that it remains dysfunctional.

There was no support from any political party for a centrally driven legislative model, which it was broadly felt could not be sufficiently nuanced to address the local context. However, the SDLP and Minister Ritchie has indicated a strong support for and encouragement of new shared housing initiatives. There was also an understanding that safety was of key concern to any community and that a closer and more proactive relationship with local community policing was a pre-requisite for any changes to living patterns and the kinds of choices people would make in the future.

One of the underlying and rarely voiced issues is that housing and the make up of residential communities is also closely linked to voting patterns and the political base of the various ethnically divided political parties. Thus promoting greater diversity, mixing and integration may in fact work against political self interest and, particularly in a situation of electoral polarisation, the best interests of a professional politician may well be for continued segregation and division. Such positions may be obscured by concerns over safety and security, as has been stated by Unionist politicians in relation to the provision of housing on the Girdwood barracks site, but the main concern about changes in the ethnic demographic profile of north Belfast may be the impact it has on seats on the city council, in the Assembly, and at Westminster.

### 3. The Wider Context

Despite a strong voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland, it has been suggested that prior to devolution the violence and division had a negative impact on the willingness of people to become active citizens within a civic rather than ethno-nationalist context. This has been further compounded by the relative weakness of local government, whose structures and responsibilities have been amongst the weakest in Europe, with a reduced role in the provision of public services including the provision of public housing (Acheson et al. 2008: 7).

Much of the literature about housing in Northern Ireland has focused on the costs, the scale and the effects of residential segregation (Shirlow 1998, 2003; Darby and Knox 2004). The Deloitte (2007) report on the Cost of Division provides both practical examples and a statistical evidence base of the cost of key services including housing (McGlade 2008). Bradley and Murtagh (2007) draw attention to the extent of the impact of conflict on Belfast when noting (amongst other factors) the blight on housing and property development and the difficulties of regeneration alongside associated factors such as ill health, community capacity and weakened infrastructures. While Lysaght and Baston (2002) drawing on literature from the 1970s through to the 1990s (in particular the work of Boal 1969, 1982) suggests that *'residential movements are thus interpreted as a response to violence'* and that individuals make a *'one off decision: through moving house, into an area that is perceived safe'*. Whether those moves are always towards segregated rather than towards shared areas remains open to question.

Other authors (Murtagh and McDaid 2000; Byrne et. al. 2006) have considered the financial and social benefits of mixed housing including stock occupancy and the good relations element of contested land use. Indicators developed by Murtagh (2001) in relation to the structural, market, local and design circumstances are designed as a compact tool to help identify project management requirements for specific responses that aim to have good relations outcomes. Gray and McAnulty (2006) offer a comprehensive set of recommendations to stifle residential segregation and to provide opportunities for change while Murtagh's indicators have been further refined in the recent publication commissioned by the Belfast City Council Conflict Transformation project, *Good Practice in Local Area Planning in the context of Good Relations* (Bradley and Murtagh 2007).

In this publication the authors present the indicators as criteria under which local area planning decisions may be made in relation to the good relations agenda. The authors consider three sets of circumstances: mixed residential housing areas; shared public realm; and interface communities. Of particular relevance to this research is the set pertaining to shared housing space which considers the issues to assist with planning and design of such areas:

- **Structural factors:** the presence of macro political stability, the absence of political crime and the absence of a historically high death rate during the conflict;

- **Market factors:** presence and maintenance of religious balance between PUL and CNR communities; a minimum 30% of any one religion should be present and be sustainable;
- **Site circumstances:** the site should be neutral, safe and accessible to services. Integration of employment, shopping, services and if possible education will enhance the viability of the site;
- **Site imagery:** no graffiti or territorial markers, the history of the area should not have a strong association with any community in terms of ethnicity or politics;
- **Community:** a strong community infra-structure should be developed, including provision of physical space for community development activities, alongside the promotion and management of a good relations agenda which allows for expression of cultural identity without contravening the issues linked to site imagery;
- **Management:** encouragement of a mixture of house types, tenures, ethnicity and economic status; maintenance of the mix of groupings should be done by adopting quota filters to the waiting list (necessitating a change of the legislature); a tenants contract to be drawn up detailing the conditions of living in a mixed area;
- **Design:** relating to the above points in terms of accessibility and safety as well as security; in addition tenants should be consulted in both site and dwelling design as well as encouraged to take ownership of monitoring safety;
- **Monitoring:** close and continuous monitoring of the scheme should occur to ensure problems are identified and dealt with promptly, good practice identified and documented to maximize transferability to other areas. It is also recommended that contingency plans should be drawn up in the event of the scheme failing.

The above criteria, which have been drawn up based on previous research and informed by an analysis of relevant literature and case studies, provide an excellent template with which planners of new build areas can work from. However, as the authors note the criteria await application.

While the social and economic costs of segregation have been a preoccupation for academics, it is market forces that are of principal concern for many citizens. An Ipsos-MORI poll for the *Belfast Telegraph* (10 August 2007) identifies Affordable Housing at 57 per cent, as the second most important concern for people across Northern Ireland after Health. Notably the issue of affordable housing was highlighted in advance of more prominent recent issues such as parades, policing, rates, schools, the economy and water charges.

The need to enable some degree of choice in accessing shared and mixed housing by the provision of viable housing in a variety of different environments is highlighted in an earlier analysis by Poole and Doherty (1995). The question of how best to facilitate increased choice in housing through the development of appropriate tenancy support and management structures has presented in other jurisdictions (Dunn 1994; Blackaby 2004; Harrison 2005 et al; Robinson 2005), with the caveat highlighted by the latter that ethnic integration does not necessarily equate to ethnic interaction, as has been evidenced by the work of Cantle (2001) and other inquiries conducted in relation to

the riots in the north of England in summer of 2001 (Ritchie 2001; Clarke 2001; Ouseley 2001).

There are a range of international initiatives from which learning can be elicited in developing mixed communities within contested contexts. Bradley and Murtagh (2007) point to a number of these including the Swedish Metropolitan Development Initiative; desegregation and social compact programmes in South Africa; cities of difference / Mongrel Cities; the *Moving to Opportunity* and *Section 8* agreements in the USA; and the Community Cohesion agenda and associated policy directions in the UK which are seeking to overcome the 'parallel' living experiences of those from differing religious and racial backgrounds. Gaffikin et al (2007) bring a reminder of the benefit of the European experience of the 'plaza' and suggest useful insights are to be gained from the approach of Copenhagen, Denmark, and Manchester in developing shared space allied with mixed tenure integrated housing. Other developments of note include the Chicago Housing Authority housing transformation programme<sup>5</sup> and the Council of Europe's project on 'shared cities'.<sup>6</sup>

More recent work that has some relevance to these issues is the London School of Economics research project exploring the regeneration and transformation of seven European cities that have been in decline due to loss of the traditional economic base (Power, Plöger and Winkler 2008). They highlight the opportunities that exist for proactive regeneration for restructuring the economy, refocusing employment, neighbourhood renewal and sustainable development if there is appropriate leadership, funding and investment to exploit potential opportunities and initiate what they term a 'turning point' from decline to revitalisation. In the case of Belfast their report (Plöger 2008) highlights the '*peace process as the turning point*' and point to the physical regeneration that has occurred in recent years, while noting that the '*difficult and critical task*' of building '*social integration and cohesion*' remains to be addressed. Significantly Plöger notes:

*Many of the vested interests such as political representation, security, jobs education and housing have a spatial component, and local territories are often defended against outside interests (Plöger 2008: 28).*

Taking a closer look at some of the case studies we can observe factors which influence their development and also the realities of the impact. For instance in Sweden the two billion kronor Metropolitan Development Initiative (Storstadssatsningen) began in 1998, with the aim of improving educational standards and reducing unemployment among immigrants in the wake of failures of the previous large scale housing programmes. The older housing schemes were also credited with contributing to increasing social deprivation and arrival of new immigrants into the older housing blocks. The MDI initiative set out to tackle these problems:

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.thecha.org/transformplan/plan\\_summary.html](http://www.thecha.org/transformplan/plan_summary.html)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural\\_co-operation/culture/action/dialogue/pub\\_DGIV\\_CULT\\_PREV\\_SHARED\\_CITIES\(2003\)2\\_Wilson\\_E.PDF?L=E](http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/culture/action/dialogue/pub_DGIV_CULT_PREV_SHARED_CITIES(2003)2_Wilson_E.PDF?L=E)

*By doing so, the state believed social segregation could be better fought. The answer was to pour more money into areas in bad repair, with the intention of improving not just the physical but also the social fabric of the estates (Demeaster 2007).*

The positive outcomes have included an increase in the number of teachers in schools, introduction of local job training centres and leisure activities targeted specifically at young people. However, as conditions improved for the immigrants, they gained employment, many moved out and were soon replaced by a new set of immigrants, bringing with them the same difficulties in accessing education and employment ensuring a continuing need for the MDI programme.

In Chicago the emphasis has been on creating new mixed-income communities with public housing residents living alongside those who have purchased property at the market rate and those who have purchased affordable homes. Generally, these developments consist of one-third public housing, one-third affordable housing and one-third market rate homes<sup>7</sup>.

As Schwartz and Tajbakhsh (1997: 102) note:

*Mixed-income housing is not new. Some States and localities have promoted it since at least the 1970s, through land-use regulations and tax-exempt financing. In New York City, mixed-income housing has long been a way of life as a result of rent regulation and public housing management that selected relatively higher income families from the public housing waiting list. However, the Federal Government has only recently embraced the concept of mixed-income housing developments, largely in an effort to revitalize public housing.*

The promotion of mixed income housing in America is further analysed by academics such as Smith (2002) who notes that ‘*it is not a silver bullet*’. On the one hand the policy has resulted in high-quality housing, and overcoming community barriers, however, alleviating poverty, mixed-incomes effects appear limited at best. Low-income families face serious barriers in the form of limited education, poor local schools for one’s children, a lack of employment opportunities and racism. Holmes (2006) in a UK based review of seven studies into mixed income communities did note high satisfaction amongst residents, developers, and housing managers. It was noted that the areas are not characterised by the problems often linked with exclusively low-income areas; mixed tenure and mixed income were ‘non-issues’ to residents – they saw their neighbours as ‘ordinary people’.

It has been proposed elsewhere that the NIHE considers that segregated living is an inhibitor to meet existing housing needs, which is evidenced in having 5,385 people (59%) on the current waiting list with more than thirty points (Deloitte 2008: 26). The authors stated that the existence of ‘parallel living’, in terms of housing allocation has the potential to lead to interface development with all its concomitant tensions, conflict and sporadic violence (Deloitte 2008: 28). When housing becomes or remains

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.thecha.org/transformplan/plan\\_summary.html](http://www.thecha.org/transformplan/plan_summary.html)

empty with no-one willing to occupy it (even in situations of high housing stress), the NIHE loses the revenue from the lack of rental income. It might be suggested then that choices made in the process of housing allocation in areas of either over- and under-occupied housing can stand in the way of shared housing. Furthermore, the possibility and desirability of shared housing can both be significant factors in how the legacy of the past is addressed in the context of residential communities.

A recent Demos report, drawing on the work of Buonfino and Hilder (2006), evidences that tightly knit communities contribute significantly to positive life quality, but it equally serves as a reminder for any urban planner that any increase in the building and developing of housing and public spaces can also lead to an increase in segregation and exclusivity (Beunderman and Lownsborough 2007). This also acts as a reminder of the argument made by Semple for mixed and diverse communities across a range of indicators, of which ethno-national background is but one, and successful and sustainable mixing should also include factors of class, wealth, race and nationality.

Integrated housing has previously tended to be considered a middle class preserve, in part due to the level of choice (Boal 1992; Murtagh 1994), whereas social sector housing estates have had the lowest rates of integrated living (Gray and McAnulty 2006). A question in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey of 2006 indicated that 79 per cent of respondents would choose to live in a mixed religion neighbourhood if they had the option. However, the perpetuation of segregated housing based on choice indicates that the responses may often be more aspirational than actively strived for or realized. The results for this particular question are high across all ages with no age group indicating less than 75 per cent support; however, the option of living in a mixed religion area was preferred marginally by those who are 35 to 44 years of age and those over the age of 55. In terms of religious tradition, the scores were also high though in rank order those with no religion, those from a Catholic and thirdly those from the Protestant tradition favoured mixed religion neighbourhoods. Similarly, when asked the degree to which they favour more mixing or separation, the same survey indicates that 78 per cent of people would favour more mixing. It is noteworthy that while these statistics relate to one year only, the trend towards a desire to live in a mixed area has grown to its present level from 66 per cent in 2001. Yet, as Russell (2006) points out: *'there is a clear distinction ... between expressing the preference to live in a mixed area and actually being willing to live together'*.

Segregated areas are being perpetuated by what has been termed *'normal residential processes'* within the housing market and this can contribute to what some have referred to as the *'ratchet effect'* whereby levels of segregation are kept high even when levels of conflict fall (Boal 1992; Smith and Chambers 1991; Murphy 2008). It has been suggested that segregated housing can be regarded as a system of stability, which might be considered to derive from systemic inertia (Poole and Doherty 1995). Evidence from Darby and Knox (2004) suggests that while the concept of a more integrated society is one that is widely supported, it is also tempered with the view that shared housing is often no more than aspirational, in the short term at least. Gray

and McAnulty (2006) further express concern about any goal of total integration when they argue that the wishes of those who want to live in single identity communities should be respected.

The urban Gaeltacht in West Belfast presents yet another dynamic to the debate on shared spaces. Established in the 1960s, the group also established an Irish medium nursery and primary school, a model that was later replicated in a number of areas throughout the area and beyond. There are sixteen Irish medium schools in West Belfast alone, with 28 per cent of the local population claiming to have some knowledge of Irish, with knowledge gained in school or through informal as well as formal adult education classes. An Irish medium newspaper, a bookshop, a theatre company and a radio station have also developed alongside an Irish language arts centre with an adjacent café (Zenker 2008).

It is perhaps a combination of such perceptions that gives rise to the suggestion that integrated housing initiatives are potentially no more than experiments in social engineering. Nevertheless, the challenge of meeting housing needs in a divided society is an issue that merits priority emphasis (Darby and Knox 2004) and cannot be seen outside the wider processes of social inclusion and exclusion (Doherty 1990).

The diverse and mixed residential area of Ballynafeigh, in south east Belfast, proves to be one of the few well-researched areas in relation to shared housing (Byrne et al 2006; Extern 2000; Hall 2001; Hanlon 1994; Murtagh and Carmichael 2005; Wilson 2007). Byrne et al consider how all the research might be linked to Boal's earlier work in relation to the transitory nature of mixed areas and comment that the studies:

*Suggest that while a rapidly changing population could lead to a change in the overall perceptions of the area, this is not necessarily the case, but even so it can reduce the sense of belonging and levels of cohesion within the wider community.*

Byrne et al note though that in respect to Ballynafeigh that population change in the area, which historically has been perceived to be mixed has seen more Catholics in recent years and also a high percentage of those who in the last census indicated that their religion was 'no religion or no religion stated' (25 per cent compared to 17 per cent in Belfast and 14 per cent in Northern Ireland). The mixed nature of the area was seen as appealing particularly to those in mixed marriages. In addition to the growth in the Catholic population the lack of growth of the Protestant population was seen by some as an indication that the area was experiencing a transient period in its development, with some fearing that the balance would shift to such a degree as to isolate the Protestant community.

In reviewing the research presented in this section a number of key themes are evident: the focus on the costs and impact of segregation; the possibilities offered by examples of shared housing and in particular the work of Bradley and Murtagh (2007) who propose a criteria for planners considering mixed residential spaces. The criteria sets down a series of headings each of which should be considered when planning new residential developments, whilst this is based on previous research and

## Shared Residential Space

informed by discussions with relevant stakeholders the application of the criteria awaits testing. Notably the issue of tenants' contracts requires further development in relation to enforcement, as too does the issue of legislation related to allocation using quota filters. We also looked briefly at international models but this remains an extensive area of work warranting further consideration, in particular there is scope for a critical analysis of models of practice to explore their potential transferability to the Northern Ireland context.

#### 4. Understanding Shared Neighbourhoods

The existing shared residential neighbourhoods in Belfast include a diverse mixture of residential environments and also come in different stages of development. They may often include a combination of public and private housing where residents may have differing levels of engagement and interaction that cross their community backgrounds. Consequently developing, supporting and promoting shared neighbourhoods may necessitate a range of different short, medium and long-term management strategies that responds specifically to local contexts. The development of shared neighbourhoods clearly require distinctive and particular types of policy interventions in order for them to become sustained sites of economic and social inclusion and vitality as well as to ameliorate any tensions which might lead to overt hostility between residents.

It is also worth noting that previous research by Byrne et al (2006: 133) consider the difficulties involved in the process of definition and recommended that: '*A consultation should be undertaken to debate and develop a standard terminology to be used in discussions on shared living*'.

Terms such as 'mixed' and 'shared' are often considered inter-changeable when used by tenants, community development workers and community relations practitioners in relation to integration and good relations. But they are also used more generally in housing studies, although within that context they refer to different concepts. For example the category of 'mixed' when used by academics and housing practitioners is more often associated with tenure in terms of Houses of Multiple Occupancy than with cohesion in terms of shared living based on community background (Murphy 2008). In Northern Ireland the definition of a mixed or segregated estate has changed over the years or according to the interpretation of different authorities. We understand that the NIHE classifies an estate as mixed/integrated if it has a minority population of more than 10 per cent or either Protestants or Catholics, although Murtagh has advocated a minimum of 30 per cent of members of the minority community to be considered as effectively mixed/integrated. Most recently Deloitte (2008: 9) determined that an area was either predominately Protestant or Catholic if more than 60 per cent of the population was from either community, while a mixed community background has between 40 and 59 per cent of Protestant or Catholic residents.

The variations in determining percentage thresholds clearly impacts on the judgement of whether to label an area mixed or not. A high percentage will lead to a higher level of labelling areas as segregated and vice versa. The majority of respondents, both community and stakeholders felt that the 10 per cent threshold was in reality not an indication of a mixed area and indeed such a small minority leads to a sense of isolation from the majority community and is perceived as providing conditions which may lead to harassment of the minority community.

As indicated earlier, in this report, we have adopted a typology based on the use of terms by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to explore issues of shared housing

with participants; however, any expressions used by participants in the research will remain unaltered when directly quoting.

- **Segregated Housing:** A large majority of residents are drawn from one ethno-political background
- **Mixed Housing:** Residents come from a variety of different ethno-political-religious backgrounds and may also have a wide range of socio-economic circumstances.
- **Integrated Housing:** In addition to the breakdown outlined under mixed housing, residents also share a number of local services and resources.
- **Shared Housing:** In addition to the breakdown outlined under integrated housing, residents actively develop and forge links within the community irrespective of community background.

Table 1 (below) reflects the broad understanding that various stakeholders and community respondents contacted as part of this research have to the above categories. Further to these categories the research team in consultation with the steering group identified a broader framework that would allow for an analysis of the above housing categories within the context of Belfast.

The following are provided as an indication of the diversity of such spaces in the East, South, North and West of the city and the potential or lack thereof, that they hold for shared living. Some of these areas will be considered in more detail below. We have also included examples outside of Belfast where relevant:

- **Existing shared neighbourhoods:** These include Ballynafeigh, Stranmillis and the Holylands areas of south Belfast. These represent what might be termed organically developed spaces in which the management of relationships between communities has formed a key part of change-management from which lessons can be learned in an area where shared space is the desired state. Some of these neighbourhoods are mixed, some might better be considered as shared.
- **Interface areas with some shared amenities:** These include the Suffolk Lenadoon interface in southwest Belfast and the mid-Skegoneill/Glandore area in north Belfast. Interface areas, such as the Yorkgate Centre between New Lodge and Tigers Bay, can also be considered flexible with a degree of permeability. There is a value in applying good relations approaches to community development and local area planning in order to strengthen cross community relations, create a safe space and ensure the genuine sharing of facilities.
- **Single identity with minority ethnic communities and/or migrant worker communities:** These include Donegall Pass and the Markets in inner south Belfast, and parts of the Antrim Road in north Belfast. Models of good practice exist in dealing with established ethnic communities and majority communities. Further work needs to be applied to the tensions emerging from more transient migrant worker populations.

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- **Purpose built neighbourhoods:** Aspirational or potential mixed residential areas in Belfast include Titanic Quarter and the Sirocco Site both in the east of the city. Such developments clearly offer the potential for a robust inter-sectoral approach to evaluating the design and planning of any ancillary services, resources and management protocols necessary to sustain shared spaces.

These four broad categories were drawn up to reflect the different demographic contexts in which we find a complex mix of segregated, mixed, integrated and shared housing.

In this section of the report we have looked broadly at the terminology used in reference to shared housing and at some of the challenges in respect to definitions. We have also set out the broad focus on this study in aiming to capture the different types of housing areas in Belfast and issues impacting on these different types of areas as well as issues pertaining to availability of land.

**Table 1: Understanding of terminology**

	<b>What do these mean to you?</b>	<b>Perception of this type of area</b>
<b>Segregated</b>	<p>Almost 100% single ethno-religious demography.</p> <p>Also single identity communities with significant minority ethnic or migrant worker population though still segregated on the basis of ethno-religious identification.</p>	<p>Close-knit communities with very little diversity although there are increasing numbers of migrants from Eastern Europe and African countries. It is safe for people who live there but unwelcoming for many other people. <i>“People can be suspicious if they don’t know your face/ background but it usually has a strong community”</i>.</p>
<b>Mixed Housing</b>	<p>Mixed ethno-religious demography and race on the basis of race and ethnicity.</p> <p>Usually ‘just streets and no community sense at all’.</p> <p>30% to 40% of one or other community was considered to be mixed.</p>	<p>Perceptions that mixed housing consists of transient population groups such as students, migrant workers or upper/ middle class areas. There was no sense of community or support for each other. <i>“These are either ‘slum’ areas or very wealthy such as the upper Malone Rd ...new private apartment blocks that have people living together but having no links with each other ...just streets and no community sense at all”</i>.</p>
<b>Integrated</b>	<p>Greater diversity of population, less transiency, longer-term occupation and presence of shared facilities. The majority of participants found it difficult to identify integrated areas in Belfast. This category assumed a higher percentage but was more about the quality of relationships and use of shared resources/ facilities.</p>	<p>Perception of generally middle class people <i>“people who can afford to move there”</i>. The most common example given was Ballynafeigh, with others pointing to parts of the Lisburn Road.</p>
<b>Shared</b>	<p>All backgrounds of people living in the area using the same services</p>	<p>This was a managed, resourced space that had not come about organically but was part of a planned process. The overall perception was that it was not realistic in Belfast. <i>‘This would be an area where there would be no sectarianism, racism, people would all feel safe regardless of their background and still celebrate their culture and tradition’</i>. Some statutory respondents felt that it would require a level of management and resourcing that in the current budget climate was unrealistic.</p>

## 5. Shared Housing and Housing Providers

Both the private and public sector make considerable assertions to their commitments to consult with communities in relation to how residential areas should and could be developed. For the public sector, their intention can be thwarted primarily due to the significant legal imperative of the common selection scheme (the points system) and ‘allocation on the basis of need’, whereas for those in the private sector, market forces are the key drivers that mitigates against any real commitment to the promotion of good relations and social cohesion.

### **Northern Ireland Housing Executive**

In its strategic and operational plans, NIHE indicates a significant contribution to the promotion of good relations and shared residential living through a variety of processes and partnerships with the voluntary, community and statutory sectors. The Housing Community Network provides a forum for local community groups to debate new and developing policies. Principal themes and areas of interest that impact on the wide determinants of successful housing policy are debated, evidenced and scrutinised in the cross-sectoral Consultative Forum on Equality which the Executive convenes and are recorded in its accountability documents (NIHE 2007b).

A variety of preventative measures to address homelessness are in place including mediation services for those who might be considered high risk including ex-prisoners, young people leaving care, rough sleepers and migrant workers. The organisation’s commitment to good relations and the concept of shared housing is disseminated externally through a variety of communications accessible in a variety of formats. District offices and both Homeless and Voluntary Sector Hostels make use of language interpretation and translation services.

The implementation of and commitment to mainstreaming the values of the good relations duty is embedded in the organisation and it takes a proactive lead on issues relating to re-imagining local areas including monitoring progress on flags and emblems, bonfires, parades and interfaces. To that end the Executive partners with a number of stakeholder organisations with interests in the development of Shared Future Housing Schemes such as those in Carran Crescent, Enniskillen and in Loughbrickland. These collaborators include, but not exclusively, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association, Mediation Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Tenants Action Project, Housing Rights and the Community Relations Council.

In addition the NIHE Community Cohesion Unit was established in 2005 and charged with translating the organisation’s community relations objectives into actions on the ground. Its approach is centred on five themes:

1. Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols;
2. Segregation/Integration;
3. Race Relations;
4. Interface Areas; and

### 5. Communities in Transition.

Its objectives include contributing to the creation of more stable, safer neighbourhoods, to work in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a divided society and finally to respect the rights of people who choose to live in either single identity or integrated neighbourhoods<sup>8</sup>.

The Executive's work in Belfast, as in other areas of Northern Ireland, is tailored to address the specific social and economic context of that area. The Housing Executive has established strategies for two key areas in Belfast in North and Greater West Belfast, both of which play a key role in the revitalising of disadvantaged communities. However, there is little specific material or intention in the strategies that addresses the potential for shared or mixed housing provision.

The Housing Executive's North Belfast Strategy (launched October 2000) has the key themes of increasing the housing supply in the area, of making better use of housing stock, sustaining and improving private housing and improving existing NIHE stock. This strategy commits to the delivery of 1,750 new social houses in the area and of working with Housing Associations and private developers to secure appropriate development sites and promote new private housing. To that end the Executive is engaged with a variety of networks aimed at promoting regeneration and social inclusion throughout the diverse demographics of the area through partnership working bodies including: North Belfast Community Action Unit; North Belfast Housing Network; North Belfast Housing and Environmental Forum; and the Inner North Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership.

The Housing Executive's Greater West Belfast Strategy (launched October 2003) has the key aims of maximising housing supply and regeneration through partnership. The strategy has a seven year target of 19,209 new social homes and has commissioned a number of studies with Neighbourhood Partnership Boards to progress best land use in a number of key sites with landowners and Housing Associations. None of the area based housing strategies make any notable reference to shared housing or mixed areas other than e.g. to referring to existing areas of South Belfast which have mixed communities (NIHE 2000, 2003, 2004). Documents such as the East Belfast Sectoral Survey (NIHE 2007a) however, do reference a shared future in the context of developments in the area.

The key strategy in terms of shared housing remains the Shared Future Neighbourhood Programme, which is targeted at thirty shared estates throughout Northern Ireland in a rolling three-year initiative. Current developments in this initiative in Belfast include the NIHE's discussions with the Carvill Group, the developer for the Titanic Quarter site. This extensive site was approved by planners on the basis that it included 400 units of social / affordable housing. However, identifying other locations in Belfast to develop and support integrated housing remains a challenge for the Housing Executive.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nihe.gov.uk/publications/leaflets/communitycohesion.pdf>

### **Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations**

When private developers are engaged on social housing projects, they will defer to the tendering agent's own policies in relation to managing the work with residents, the largest of which is the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA). NIFHA represents and supports the voluntary housing movement in Northern Ireland. As the umbrella organisation representing, supporting and promoting the activities of the thirty-six registered and seven non-registered Housing Associations in Northern Ireland whose members manage approximately 30,000 accommodation units. This equates to a quarter of all social housing in Northern Ireland and since 1998 they have been responsible for virtually all new homes built.

The organisation has developed a policy for developing social housing, which outlines their lobbying themes, these include:

- The need for clarity of definition as to what social housing means; and
- Requesting that Housing Associations be offered 'first refusal' on available land for new builds.

It is evident from the statement that Housing Associations believe that they have not been provided with full opportunities to develop the social housing market in Northern Ireland. Specifically it states that '*NIFHA would be keen for Councillors' support in challenging the Semple remark that: 'Housing Associations may not be capable of delivering 2,000 units per year'. Given a reasonably level playing field Housing Associations would be able to deliver this*'<sup>9</sup>.

It is clear that in general, housing associations do not have detailed sets of policies on good relations and shared spaces. However, it was very evident that on a day-to-day basis that they had extensive experience of dealing with inter and intra community conflict; including clients experiencing sectarian and racial abuse and a variety of forms of anti-social behaviour. Discussions with the sector highlighted that these practical skills and experiences could and should be harnessed in the future development of shared living and their ability to manage those spaces.

*Housing Associations could be a conduit for delivering on a new shared future, but they need support, staff training and advice on how to do that, we need to engage in partnerships to do that (BIH).*

Of course Housing Associations do already play a central role in the development of new pilot schemes in shared housing, in the early stages by leading on the consultation with communities and in the provision and management of new builds in partnership with the NIHE such as Ulidia Housing Association, at Carron Crescent, Enniskillen.

The formalisation of inter-sectoral partnerships must ensure that housing associations are provided with resources to build their capacity to provide the kinds of micro-management and long-term planning that shared living may require.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nifha.org/research-and-policy/social-housing-policy/>

### Private Sector Developers and Estate Agents

One of the challenges identified by Bradley and Murtagh (2007) is the reproduction of segregated space through symmetrical and often self-contained property markets. It is clear that private development around interface areas without some good relations or shared space criteria has the potential to simply reinforce segregation.

*Developments are costly and all agencies including the Council and HE need to work together with the education sector, churches, community groups etc. to encourage shared residential space (Private Developer).*

The private sector's understanding of and commitment to a Good Relations agenda is paramount to the sustainability of any shared housing initiatives that communities, council and statutory service providers may wish to develop or maintain. The private sector, however, has no obligation to adhere to these responsibilities. There is a clear need for the development of a range of planning incentives to guarantee progressive social outcomes to private development. It is noteworthy therefore that the recently launched 'manifesto' of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors entitled *Shaping Northern Ireland's Future* (2008) makes no mention of Good Relations or residential segregation in its section on housing. It does however highlight the need to 'prevent sink estates' by building sustainable communities that 'contain a mixture of housing types and tenures' and with good transport links and access to jobs and services. It would not take much for the manifesto to move beyond the recognition of the value of social diversity by housing tenure, family size and social class, to engage with the wider issue of residential segregation and the value of promoting mixed, shared and integrated communities as part of a sustainable future.

New developments such as the Titanic Quarter and the Sirocco site clearly have the potential to reverse the trend towards an increasingly segregated demographic map of Belfast<sup>10</sup>. Different ownership and tenancy options are proposed to provide improved choice and ownership opportunities for existing neighbours and new residents as well as access to affordable public housing. Designs in both areas can be seen to accommodate mixed income households through the development of a range of housing units from one and two bedroomed apartments to two, three and four-bedroomed family homes. Similarly, in both areas the 'mix' is stirred by consideration of bespoke accommodation to support those with particular needs related to, for example, mobility and safety in relation to age.

In planning terms, one private developer suggests that '*urban regeneration requires figures of around 7,500-8,000 to become a sustainable space*' (Private Developer). They explain that decisions to invest and develop any area are based on census figures and other statistics to determine the existing and potential economic output of the people living in the area. By identifying key gaps in the area, consideration can then

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<sup>10</sup> In considering the options provided by the new build in the Titanic Quarter the Semple Review recommends that Government should set a target of 20% affordable housing of which a significant element should be social housing

be given to the provision of new services that might realistically reflect what the community can viably support:

*There is no point in mandatory retail units if they cannot be sustained, this was a policy in Dublin a decade ago and now there are thousands of empty units all over the city and so transport links need to be strong to ensure people can easily access what is not available in their immediate area (Private Developer).*

Construction is a highly competitive industry where projects are increasingly required to demonstrate innovation. Evidencing good relations and appropriate forms of consultation in advance of decision-making in proposals is thought to impact on how a tender document is viewed. Yet, there is no scale in place to ‘score’ good relations as a criterion in the planning process.

The Construction Employers Federation and the Construction Industry Training Board do not currently have any commitment to supporting companies on new government policy and any legislation relating to shared residential space. A strategy to ensure that those delivering shared projects are knowledgeable of the legislation and best practice might go some considerable way to expanding views and culture within the sector.

Market forces and economic drivers remain the principal motivators for the private sector stakeholders and these are fundamentally unaltered by any concept of shared or segregated housing:

*A small development of twenty units is more single market orientated and issues such as shared housing are not always to the fore. For larger developments, we must ensure the community has a buy-in; it must add to and not detract from what that community is. But overall, the community has to want shared housing and not have it imposed on them, least of all by developers (Private Developer).*

Currently the only stimulus and inducement for the private sector to give any consideration to shared housing can be located in the planning process. Yet, there does not appear to be any consistency or strategic policy with regard to when, where and how planners apply good relations and shared living criteria. Furthermore, a prevalent culture in the planning service points to the planning service’s status as part of a team rather than an organisation with principal responsibility for how an area develops:

*We are only one of the players; other organisations play a more central role (BMAP Planning Service).*

Planning language is often aspirational. It is evident from the various policy statements drawn up by BMAP that whilst they have an overall commitment to viewing shared housing as relevant to them that the content of the statements from policy writers have broad, not specific themes. The statements are not explicit about what they mean by terms such as ‘achieving quality in new residential developments’

‘promoting quality residential environments and balanced communities’, ‘services being integral to developments’ and so on.

Terms of consultation and methods to engage with local residents and stakeholders in pre-planning and planning stages by private sector developers are wide. Invariably engagement in the consultation process is recorded as having been positive and that verbal and written comments have been considered. Good relations, however, are rarely explicitly addressed in non-technical summaries whereas attention is paid to the environmental and cultural heritage of the site in economic rather than social historical terms. Increasingly, developers have employees or consultants dedicated to community outreach although the process is not yet embedded across the sector. Private sector consultation with communities most often takes the form of presentations and ‘top spins’ on the potential of a new build within an area.

*We were invited to come to a meeting with an expensive model and lots of paperwork, but we didn't really know what questions to ask at that stage – if I'd have known then what I know now ....* (Community Group respondent).

The Sustainable Development Commission has outlined that people ‘*do not experience consultation in any real way*’ and that this is a key dynamic in a refusal to accept changes to planning and regeneration or new ideas for shared living. However, they also point out that when genuinely innovative approaches to consultation have been practised they have come in for significant criticism from central government as being too slow and missing ‘targets’. This highlights the statutory focus on immediate output rather than longer-term social outcomes, outcomes that have a positive impact on community cohesion<sup>11</sup>.

The need to maintain good relations during and after project delivery is better understood by some developers than others. The Carvill Group establish, manage and provide some funding for a management committee during a private project delivery phase with a number of their private developments. On project completion the residents take over the management role with Carvill remaining on the committee for a further year or more recognising that:

*When there is no buy-in from residents, it tends not to be a successful committee and issues such as problems with the use or maintenance of the shared or communal areas of a development are not addressed* (Chris Carvill, Private Developer).

In this section we have considered the position of housing providers in the context of the future provision of shared residential space. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has taken a lead in promoting and supporting sustainable, shared residential areas through the work of its Community Cohesion Unit and the Shared Future Neighbourhood Programme, although both are at an early stage of implementation. It is evident that particularly with respect to housing associations that whilst their commitment to good relations may not be explicit within policy documents that they

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<sup>11</sup> Building houses or creating communities: A review of Government Progress on Sustaining Communities, SDC 2007 pp78 - <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=558>

## Shared Residential Space

do have the practical experience of dealing with good relations issues. This experience should be drawn on when considering the practical implications of e.g. tenancy agreements and implementing them. There is also evidence of the need for housing associations to have access to an infrastructure to support them in implementing a shared living and good relations agenda.

The role of the private sector remains challenging for those interested in developing shared living. Some respondents felt that issues around social cohesion and good relations are not yet adequately high enough on the agenda of the private sector housing providers and developers despite some rhetoric to the contrary and that there was a need for political and legislative intervention to ensure that private development take cognisance of social outcomes. The challenge for the private sector in partnership with communities and public policy makers is to respond in a meaningful way to the provision of mixed tenure and affordable housing in ways that do not reinforce segregation and separation.

## 6. Attitudes and Opportunities for Shared Residential Space

Community responses to shared housing are many and varied, although housing need and affordability are the principal drivers for the majority of respondents. In this section we have drawn on the findings of the consultation with communities and stakeholders on attitudes to shared residential space with a focus on a series of landmark areas in Belfast. The views of respondents reflect the differing stages of development that some communities have reached in relation to sharing neighbourhood space and resources. Given these variants, it is unsurprising that specific areas have particular needs and expectations in how shared housing developments might be maintained and encouraged.

*The will of potential residents is the most important, there is no point in building schemes that no one wants to live in. For existing schemes, community leaders (elected, paid and voluntary) have to encourage and support existing residents to welcome new tenants and ensure there are solutions to problems of integrating. This needs to be backed up with robust policies protecting people and funding for more integrated community projects. The more people are supported to work, learn and socialise at a local level, the more likely people are going to want to move into areas they might not have considered before (Gordon McGrath, Carran Crescent/ NIHE).*

### Case Study Areas

Belfast has an overall population of 277,391, according to the 2001 Census of which 47 per cent self describe as coming from a Catholic community background and 49 per cent describe as coming from a Protestant or other Christian-related community background<sup>12</sup>. The census also records that on the day there was 113,934 households in the city of which 56 per cent were owner occupied (24 per cent of which were owned outright) and 43 per cent were rented. According to the 2001 House Conditions Survey, 21 per cent of all 'non-decent' homes in Northern Ireland were in the Belfast area.

The Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS) records that by 2003 there were 123,384 domestic properties in Belfast of which 49 per cent were terraced, were 25 per cent semi-detached, 9 per cent were detached and 17 per cent were apartments. The average household size Belfast-wide is currently 2.38, slightly lower than the NI average of 2.65 and this is expected to drop to 2.11 by 2015 despite a projected increase in the number of households to 120,600.

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<sup>12</sup> All figures in this section have been taken from the [www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk) website which in turn draws on a variety of data sets including the Census 2001, Domestic Properties 2003 (VLA).

**Table 2: Belfast Housing Patterns and Demographics<sup>13</sup>**

	<b>Belfast</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
Population	277,391	79,261	86,066	94,994	87,610
Catholic	47.2%	9.9%	44.9%	41.4%	82.7%
Protestant	48.6%	84.6%	51.9%	52.0%	16.2%
Households	113,934	34,824	36,383	39,715	30,992
Owner-Occupied	56.1%	67.3%	51.7%	60.4%	50.3%
Rental	43.9%	32.7%	48.3%	39.6%	49.7%
Terrace	49.0%	38.5%	49.3%	41.4%	55.7%
Apartments	17.0%	15.4%	18.2%	21.7%	12.4%
Detached	9.1%	13.9%	7.9%	13.8%	4.6%
Semi-Detached	24.9%	32.2%	24.6%	23.1%	27.3%
New Dwellings 2005	1930				

### **North Belfast**

*If we could crack Girdwood, we'd have an excellent model for the rest of Northern Ireland* (Sylvia Gordon, Groundwork NI).

North Belfast, with a population of 86,066, is an area comprising 45 per cent Catholic population and 52 per cent Protestant population. It includes the following wards: Ardoyne, Ballysillan, Bellvue, Castlevue, Cavehill, Chichester Park, Cliftonville, Crumlin, Duncairn, Fortwilliam, Legoneil, New Lodge, Waterworks, Woodvale, Abbey, Coole, Dunanney, Valley and Whitehouse

It also contains four of the most deprived areas identified by the DSD in the 2003 Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. While many of the wards comprise predominantly one or other community, North Belfast still has the highest number of interfaces between single-identity communities and sustained the greatest number of fatalities in any given area during the Conflict. Between 1996 and 2004, 6,623 sectarian attacks were recorded in North Belfast (Jarman 2005: 20).

The housing market in North Belfast is marked by the following characteristics:

- Prior to the current static state of the housing market, property prices have increased dramatically.
- Brown and green-field sites in the area are often associated with interface areas and can be unattractive for private and public sector developments.
- A number of social economy entrepreneurs in the area are building extensive portfolios of residential properties.

<sup>13</sup> The disaggregated area statistics are drawn from the four assembly areas in Belfast – all of which extend somewhat beyond the city boundaries into parts of [Castlereagh](#), [Lisburn](#) and [Newtownabbey](#) districts.

## Shared Residential Space

- The Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist Community has been described as being in ‘terminal demographic decline’ and the ‘greening of the North’ is seen as a threat within Unionist and Loyalist communities.
- The BT15 area has seen a recent, rapid increase in houses of multiple occupancy being privately rented to new migrant workers in particular from Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine.

Despite the highly contested sectarian nature of many of the areas in North Belfast, it is also the area where there is a strong infrastructure for a number of minority ethnic communities in terms of community centres and places of worship. The Indian Community Centre, the Sikh Gudwara, the Synagogue and an Eastern Orthodox Church are all to be found there representing the area’s significance for a number of old and newer established minority ethnic communities many of whom live close to these hubs of social activity.

BMAP identifies future major employment areas in Mallusk, Titanic and Lisburn West and therefore it is likely that there will be a further and increasing economic disconnect for North Belfast residents. There, the tensions brought about in relation to segregated housing are myriad and in many instances related to poverty and employment issues.

One of the challenges facing those wishing to advance potentially shared housing areas in North Belfast is the lack of readiness by some communities to debate the issue as other matters appear more pressing,

*We are not in a position to say exactly what the community wants because we simply haven’t had the opportunity to talk about it amongst ourselves yet. There are different networks that we are engaged in that might be able to address that. However, it is important to recognise that while some communities in North Belfast have been stretched to capacity in some areas, housing lies empty in other areas (Intercomm)*

North Belfast is an area with more unmarked interfaces between Loyalist and Republican areas than any other area in Belfast. Many such areas are characterised by the use of the symbolic colour-coding of kerbstones and other territorial markings. These may account for the considerable fear of the ‘other’ that impacts on the choices of some Protestants to buy and move into areas perceived to be Catholic.

*If you look at a map here I can divide up where is green and where is orange and where is mixed – now you’ll get Catholics prepared to move into Protestant areas, but you are very unlikely to find Protestants living in North Belfast prepared to move into areas that were traditionally Catholic as they are often seen as Republican areas. For example you’ll find Catholics are now prepared to buy into apartments and developments along the Shore Road, but there’s no chance I would make a sale to a Protestant into the New Lodge or areas off the lower Antrim Road (Estate Agents).*

This section will draw upon case studies of shared housing potential in two sites at different stages of development in North Belfast but which were referred to

consistently throughout the research process, namely: Dunmore Stadium, Mid Skegoneill and Glandore; and Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Barracks. These areas were selected as they offer demonstration of the factors impacting on new mixed builds and the opportunities presented by the released of new land.

### **Dunmore Stadium, Mid-Skegoneill and Glandore**

The Mid-Skegoneill area of north Belfast is one of the areas 'soft' interfaces, marked by empty land and decay, rather than NIO built barriers, flags and murals. It is an area in which sectarian trouble occurs on an irregular basis when tensions are high in other parts of the city. The Carvill Group completed development of the Dunmore site off the Antrim Road in 2005<sup>14</sup> building 130 houses and apartments on the grounds of a former greyhound stadium in an area comprising a rich mosaic of interface communities. The properties are adjacent to Alexander Park, the only city council park with a visible peace-line, and in a well-resourced residential area. After consultation with existing residents in neighbouring PUL and CNR communities, a degree of re-landscaping in bordering gardens was carried out. This principally occurred through the provision of low-level fences and was part of a process aimed at negotiating good will in advance of any sales in the new-builds and with the added intention of encouraging and brokering neighbourliness:

*We said we didn't want to be hemmed in and they thought it was a good idea so that we could talk to each other in the gardens* (Public Sector Housing Tenant).

The build took place on land that had previously been an over-grown area rich in wild life and flora used by local children in an otherwise densely populated urban area with limited play areas that are considered accessible to both communities. Whilst spaces such as Alexandra Park and the Waterworks are nearby, these were not viewed as neutral, accessible places for residents in the area. The sale and development of the land at Dunmore removed an unofficial off-road space that children from both communities had felt able to access over generations:

*You would never see the children, and even I remember it from being a teenager. You'd just be off the streets. My kids would see hedgehogs and foxes and everything there for them* (Mid-Skegoneill Resident).

While some of the properties that were built to back onto a PUL public-sector housing estate (Mid-Skegoneill), the orientation of and access to the majority of properties comes from an area perceived as CNR and the general perception in the area now is that the development has not added to the integration of the two principal communities in the area. Relationships are either non-existent or unproblematic between the Dunmore residents and others living in the area, but there is a view that residents and homeowners are now drawn almost exclusively from CNR backgrounds:

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.rparchitects.co.uk/projects\\_dunmore/RPA\\_dunmore.php](http://www.rparchitects.co.uk/projects_dunmore/RPA_dunmore.php)

*The Dunmore site is on an interface, but appears to have had mostly buyers from the Catholic community so this could well lead to Protestants moving from that area (Nelson McCausland, DUP MLA North Belfast).*

However, this view is somewhat at odds with research conducted in the area in 2006 in which 71 per cent of residents thought that Dunmore was a mixed religion development, although 25 per cent suggested that it was becoming more Catholic (Bell 2006; Bradley and Murtagh 2007). Furthermore the occupancy of the new development has not led to any noticeable increase in tensions in the locality and a security fence between the development and Alexandra Park has recently been removed.

The Dunmore Stadium build has in fact helped to regenerate and attract private finance into what might have been considered to be an abandoned and derelict area. However, existing residents in neighbouring areas are keen to point to the lack of any meaningful connection between those in public-sector housing and their owner-occupier neighbours:

*You would see people but there's no knowing them (Public Housing Tenant).*

Drawing in part on this learning, and on other proven initiatives such as the Suffolk-Lenadoon social economy project outlined below, the residents in the Mid-Skegoneill area adjacent to the Dunmore site are now working on an initiative with CNR neighbours in Glandore to develop a 'Common Purpose' plan (2008-2011) to regenerate social and economic life in the area. Both areas face economic and social challenges in relation to physical deterioration and community conflict and both have strong community infrastructures, which are witnessing a growing confidence in their inter-community contact.

The unmarked interface between the Skegoneill and Glandore communities is defined by an expanding area of derelict land and demolished properties at the junction of Skegoneill Avenue and Glandore Avenue. The area is becoming more ethnically diverse with an increase in the number of migrant workers living in houses of multiple occupancy. The area is also marked by a perceived increase in anti-social behaviour related to young people. To 'soften' existing boundaries between the two areas, local community-based organisations (Cavehill-Antrim Road Regeneration and Thornbush Community House) are considering appropriate social enterprise projects to assist in regeneration and good relations building in the area. Central to this process will be the development of a new build programme designed to address mixed residential use by the provision of a space for shared commercial and social usage. The location has the potential to develop into a shared community, but it is uncertain whether political support will be mobilised to enable it to happen.

### **Crumlin Road Gaol and the Girdwood Barracks**

Less straightforward, is the Government-led initiative to develop the Crumlin Road Gaol and the Girdwood Barracks site. On paper, the twenty-seven acre site offers the

public and private sector unprecedented opportunities to develop a range of services able to promote equality and good relations within a residential setting. Doing so has the potential to help resolve a degree of decay and environmental degradation on a number of interfaces close to the city centre in an area and in communities of considerable social and economic disadvantage. The size and social histories connected to the sites might lend it to the provision of arts and tourist facilities, training initiatives and employment opportunities.

However, outlined in the Draft Masterplan for the site is the statement (5.8.1) that housing *'on the site is, however, very sensitive and must be considered carefully.'* and that (5.8.3.) *'currently the two communities have yet to agree on the question of housing for the site'*. The plan expands this by advising that:

*A major concern of the Unionist community is that the site would cease to be regarded as 'neutral' if housing were to be included. A major concern for Nationalists is that this site has to be used to help address the significant and demonstrable need for social and affordable housing in North Belfast.*

This statement highlights the divergent responses of the two communities, not just to the Girdwood Barrack site, but to brown-field regeneration more generally in North Belfast, where demand for housing within the CNR population is much greater than among the PUL population. When the highly fragmented and intensely territorial nature of the social geography of the area is taken into account, it means that the opportunity to regenerate a number of interface areas is compromised by rivalry and suspicion.

The Draft Masterplan for Girdwood stops short of advocating for, while recognising the benefits of, a community development approach to engaging local buy-in to any proposals, however the contrasting needs and interests of the two main communities and their political representatives makes it likely that the regeneration of this important site will be a long, slow and tortuous process. There is an opportunity however for statutory agencies to become anchor tenants in order to increase opportunities for sharing via location of services.

### **West Belfast**

West Belfast has a population of 87,610 people in the following wards: Andersonstown, Beechmount, Clonard, Falls, Falls Park, Glen Road, Glencairn, Glencolin, Highfield, Ladybrook, Shankill, Upper Springfield, Whiterock, Colin Glen, Kilwee, Poleglass and Twinbrook. The population of the area is 82 per cent Catholic with a significant Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist enclave comprising Glencairn, Highfield and the Shankill wards known collectively as the Greater Shankill providing the bulk of the 16 per cent of Protestants in the area. West Belfast also has one of the longest established unofficial sites for Travellers in Northern Ireland in the Glen Road ward.

The housing market in West Belfast is marked by the following characteristics:

- Prior to the current static state of the housing market, property prices have increased dramatically, however, they still remain one of the lower areas of Belfast.
- It is by and large an insular market in that, those wishing to buy a property in the area already live there, and this is exacerbated with an under-provision of larger family homes.
- There is a lack of affordable housing to meet the needs of increasing numbers of single persons and lone parents
- Small private rented market compared to other areas of Belfast – however, the privately renting housing benefit sector in West Belfast experienced a dramatic rise in numbers between 2004 and 2005<sup>15</sup>.

This section draws on case studies of shared housing potential in two sites in West Belfast, namely the Lenadoon and Suffolk Interface Regeneration and Springfield Interface.

### **Lenadoon and Suffolk Interface Regeneration**

In 1996 the NIHE drew on Belfast Interface Project's existing inter-community contacts in the outer west Belfast housing estates in Suffolk (a PUL community) and Lenadoon (a CNR community), to determine future actions in the area. Over a period of five years local fora in both communities were supported to come up with community-based responses before statutory action would become inevitable. The focus was soon placed by both communities on the need to refurbish a semi-derelict block of shops and maisonettes. It was hoped that this space might be a catalyst in developing a more integrated space through the mixed use of shops and community facilities. The opportunities and challenges this would present were acknowledged and led to the development of the Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project as a cross-community regeneration initiative located on the interface between the communities.

In 1998 a Regeneration Committee including equal numbers of members from both communities in the area was formed to oversee the project and began working with NIHE, IFI, BRO and BEPB. The body was incorporated into a limited company in 2000. The Board comprises four directors from each of the two communities and four independent directors. A new build cross community project was the most sustainable option and currently has a number of commercial units, including shops, a café, a pharmacy as well as offices for the project and others leased to statutory child-care service providers. In 2003 the project's success was recognised by its receipt of a British Urban Regeneration Award, and remains in the joint ownership of the Suffolk and Lenadoon Community Forums.

Long-term residents in the area evidence the need for long-term capacity building and community development work when neighbours are seemingly entrenched in territorial and sectarian mind-sets:

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans\\_Policy/Plans/BMA/HMO/Supplementary\\_docs/HMA.pdf](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans_Policy/Plans/BMA/HMO/Supplementary_docs/HMA.pdf)

*It was very hard, death threats, harassment, people telling us it would never work, there was a lot of tension ... It was very, very difficult, but we just pushed on, we work at it every day. When we were setting it up we drew up criteria for releasing the units, non political; no flags or emblems, we looked at scenarios that might happen. (Suffolk/Lenadoon focus group composite responses).*

### **Springfield Interface**

The Springfield interface is not simply a division between two areas, but is contested space that has witnessed rioting, social unrest and violence as a result of the troubles. Sectarian murders, attacks as well as intimidation and displacement from homes occurred frequently in the area. Tensions and unrest in the area have peaked during the parading season. The area is completely divided in ethno-religious terms aside from Isadore Avenue and Springfield Parade.

Whilst there was a recognition that there were shared facilities in terms of the local GP and chemist, it was recognised that if offered, the community would prefer their 'own' facilities and that those in current use were only used because they were the only ones available. The group stated that even Farset, a cross community centre on Springfield Road, was not considered part of 'their' community and was rarely used as a result.

As with most respondents there was a broad acceptance of the idea of living in shared residential space, closely followed by all the reasons why it was not realistic. As with all interface areas the past is still ever present and these memories and legacies of the troubles mitigate against any radical changes to living patterns:

*Shared space within Belfast – No, too much history and ongoing fear of paramilitaries ... (Highfield focus group respondent).*

Those spoken to felt that residents of the area were a very long way from contemplating shared living space and that there continued to be a pernicious and negative influence asserted by paramilitary organisations:

*We feel we are a long way away from anything like that happening ... Paramilitaries are at the back of all the fear ... (Highfield focus group respondent).*

The group also articulated the very real impact of the changing demographics of Belfast, not just in terms of the increasing presence of minority ethnic groups and more transient populations of migrant workers but also the increase in the Nationalist population generally:

*There's a feeling that they (Catholics) are overrunning us, pushing us out (Highfield focus group respondent).*

## Shared Residential Space

There was a wide agreement that there was still significant work to be done within and across communities before they could realistically expect people to consider shared living:

*We need the confidence and security to move forward to shared spaces ...* (Highfield focus group respondent).

Other respondents felt that the interfaces and the facilities on them were increasingly shared and anecdotal accounts that new builds on the Springfield Road were being bought by diverse groups of buyers:

*They are building apartments on the Springfield Road and both communities are buying them, mostly younger people ... this is creating an atmosphere that shared spaces are possible* (Farset focus group respondent).

However, there was also a realisation of the difficulties in creating shared space that would be able to accommodate and witness the acceptance of each others' cultures and the cultures of new groups of people, rather than relying upon the vain hope that these 'troublesome' expressions of culture would eventually disappear. The fact that expressions of identity even if not intended to cause offence or intimidate, can still have a negative impact is a key issue that needs addressed. The only other option is to neutralise new shared areas which in turn might mitigate against the creation of genuinely integrated living space. Such approaches it was suggested also tend to demonise the very notion of 'culture' as sectarian. It is clear that more work needs to be done in supporting joined up community development work that addresses interface issues such as shared facilities, provision of safe space and dialogue around contentious parading issues.

Isadore Avenue and Springfield Parade were recognised as mixed areas on both sides of the community, although those spoken to were unclear as to the historical and political dynamics, which has brought this about. These two streets in the Mid-Spring area were viewed as buffer areas between West Circular and Springfield Road:

*I think it's because these small communities do not want any trouble, and we as a community backed what they were doing. They were a small oasis in the middle of mayhem. Volunteers and community workers supported what was wanted in these areas* (Farset focus group respondent).

It was noted that while there were no physical interface barriers in these areas that it was not immune to tension and violence, though this tended to emerge from anti-social behaviour rather than sectarianism.

### **South Belfast**

South Belfast is characterised by the contrast between its properties, with some of the city's most expensive private housing stock adjacent to some public housing estates that demonstrate significant markers of inner-city poverty. The area has a population

of 94,994 people, 52 per cent of whom are Protestant and 41 per cent are Catholic. The wards are Ballynafeigh, Blackstaff, Botanic, Finaghy, Malone, Musgrave, Ravenhill, Rosetta, Shaftesbury, Stranmillis, Upper Malone, Windsor, Woodstock, Beechhill, Cairnshill, Galwally, Knockbracken, Minnowburn, Newtownbreda. Two wards, Shaftesbury and Blackstaff are ranked in the top fifty most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, while significant portions of Botanic ward are also ranked high in terms of deprivation.

The housing market in the area is characterised by the following features.

- High levels of shared housing neighbourhoods in affluent areas BT9 and around the University campus;
- Highly transient and seasonal student communities in BT7;
- Of the six areas in Belfast that HE has specified for the Northern Ireland HMO Statutory Registration Scheme, five are in South Belfast (Fitzroy area of Holylands, Stranmillis area, Cromwell Road, Eglantine Avenue, and the area between Dunluce Avenue and Tates Avenue);
- A dedicated housing development for elderly Chinese people (Ho Ling Gardens) within the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican Markets area; and
- A number of historically Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist areas including, Donegall Road, Sandy Row and Donegall Pass are increasingly becoming host to new migrant communities.

### **Donegall Road and Donegall Pass**

There are a number of characteristics which can be identified as effecting these areas, namely, 'Protestant flight' to the east of the city, increases in migrant workers and established minority ethnic group populations and the impact of private development:

*We have seen the 'East flight' of Protestant communities in particular. Those who are left behind are the people who haven't got the money to move out of the city. Look at the standard of housing on the Donegall Rd – there are people still living with outside toilets. Giving people a decent house to live in is more important than numbers (Committee on the Administration of Justice).*

Changes that were happening were being driven by the housing market and property developers which the respondents felt was being done with no concern for community cohesion and community regeneration:

*People can't afford private housing and with the property boom and developers buying up properties this causes friction within the community ... (Donegall Road / Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

*Children wanting to live near and look after elderly parents – can't because of the lack of housing stock. Families being split up – very short sighted policy destroying communities – its not integration its gentrification (Donegall Road / Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

## Shared Residential Space

Developers themselves suggested that mixed tenure developments whilst aimed at alleviating some of the pressures on social housing provision could not be expected to address segregation, particularly in interface areas, without significant statutory intervention and political will:

*We are working on the planning stages of a development on the Donegall Road that mixes social and private units but it is unlikely to be widely shared on a religious basis due to its location (Private Developer).*

There was some sensitivity around race issues particularly the reputation of Donegall Pass; the community felt that they had tried to deal sensitively with what were complex and challenging issues relating to established minority ethnic communities and the dynamic of new and transient migrant worker populations; much of the discussion related to the availability of housing stock in Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist areas due to changing demographics and the lack of responsibility taken by private landlords in how population changes impact on increasingly marginalised working class areas. It was not helpful labelling areas as racist and providing no help or assistance in dealing with what are significant social changes.

There was also a recognition that the 'Pass' had been culturally diverse for some time in terms of minority ethnic groups but that this clearly didn't apply to Catholic/Nationalist/Republican and that this was unlikely to change in the near future:

*We are only 10 years out of conflict – so we really are only starting – it will take another generation before normality... (Donegall Road / Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

*Won't happen overnight but there have been changes – look at bonfires issue – 10 years ago unimaginable that this is even on the agenda and that the bonfire would be moved and downsized ... (Donegall Road / Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

Clearly, identity and how it is expressed is also an issue; there was an understanding that rather than neutralising space much work had to be done in encouraging communities not to see other forms of identity as a threat. Nonetheless, flags, emblems and murals, regardless of re-imaging from 'paramilitary' to 'cultural', were still likely to be considered territorial marking rather than any manifestation of inclusivity:

*Shared spaces are culturally sanitised – is this the price you pay to live in a mixed community? (Donegall Road / Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

Any changes without significant community consultation would clearly be a mistake '*real consultation is imperative*':

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*They plough on without consulting or if they do consult it is usually with community development workers not with the residents – not reaching the people on the ground (Donegall Road / Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

*Consultation is seen as a box ticking exercise – as a buy-in to a shared future ... (Donegall Road / Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

Social engineering was inevitably a topic of conversation with a fear expressed that it was not entirely one of perception but was based on some experience:

*BIH & Habitat for humanity only build houses for mixed communities ... (Donegall Road/ Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

Schooling was considered an important dynamic in the promotion of shared spaces but that the accepted plurality of educational provision was unlikely to assist in any process of integration.

As with all those spoken to on interface areas the key obstacle was safety and fear of violence:

*There are still people who will not walk past the Markets because of safety – interface thing - they think they are known by the other community (Donegall Road / Donegall Pass focus group respondent).*

The Markets focus group was keen to point out that suspicion of shared space projects was not cynicism but based on the experience of the Gas Works which was proposed as a shared space that could have provided a hub for community training, employability and shared activities for Donegall Pass, the Markets and Ormeau Road but which according to local people '*singularly failed to provide any of those things*' (Markets focus group respondent) and the regenerated area works rather as an economic peace line through conforming and reinforcing segregation in terms of living space:

*The Council turned it down flat; they have a vested interest in keeping the communities apart ... (Markets focus group respondent).*

It was strongly felt that the focus for the Council in combating sectarianism and segregation should be in allowing communities to grow in confidence and acceptance of other's cultures in order to share any potential public space and shared facilities:

*A mixture of training, consultation and collaboration with the communities to do things to bring them together and enable them to become assertive, confident and cohesive ... (Markets focus group respondent).*

*Look at the facilities that already exist, the chill factors are reducing ... (Markets focus group respondent).*

It was uniformly articulated that it was too soon to expect shared living and that the conflict was perceived to have been too recent for communities to move into a radically altered social context.

### **Ballynafeigh/Annadale Flats**

Ballynafeigh is a mixed area in relation to religion, social class, ethnicity, lifestyle and housing tenure. Census data reveals that 59 per cent of the population are Catholic and 34 per cent are Protestant and other Christian related. The Catholic population has increased in the area since the previous Census by 8 per cent whilst the Protestant population decreased by 9 per cent. The area also exhibits a higher proportion of ethnic minorities (2.1 per cent) compared with the wider Belfast population (1.37 per cent).

Some commentators, Byrne, et al (2006:24) pays particular attention to the quality of life and social relationships to be found in the Ballynafeigh area and consider the interest for living there particularly by young people. Wilson (2007) notes that while it was never planned to be a shared neighbourhood, there is a high interest among residents (seventeen of twenty) for living in a mixed area and for it to remain. Further, he considers that its capacity for continuing to be mixed is influenced by local traditions of peace, strong civic associations and the work of impartial institutions. These, he suggests, have helped to weave the social fabric which enables people to engage with one another as people first and then identified by their ethno-political status. A strong role has been played by the church in this process and by community organisations.

The Ballynafeigh Community Development Association (BCDA) has played a particular role in promoting a constructive 'shared' ethos through the delivery of services and its participation and sponsoring of networks useful to the community. Wilson (2007) remains concerned, however, that the area is under threat due to stresses including housing development and markets, sectarianism and various expressions of exclusion, racism and the impact faced by a rapid growth of new migrants into the community and short-term funding. It is his contention that a way forward for areas such as Ballynafeigh would be to have them designated 'shared neighbourhoods' overseen by neighbourhood forums who would deal with any contentious issues arising within them.

The changes brought to the area and to neighbouring Annadale Flats by the clustering of new communities of interest brings with it challenges as well as opportunities for sharing. Tensions between the long-term residents and a growing Chinese community in the area are being brokered by local as well as outside agencies and support organisations:

*There are a lot of people trying to make a difference and integrate the Chinese and other communities and our new build community centre close by will play its part in that social cohesion process (Chinese Welfare Association).*

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However, the level of integration in what is historically seen as a Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist area despite the increasingly mixed use of statutory, leisure and commercial services 'above' the Ormeau Bridge, is a complicated process and as yet unresolved. Nevertheless, the Annadale development is frequently heralded as a good example of mixed housing because of the presence of new migrant workers and the Chinese community. Yet:

*There are all sorts of internal politics and complications in some of the residents and community-based responses and expectations (South Belfast Roundtable on Racism).*

It might be suggested that monitoring and evaluating existing community development support and specifically capacity building in areas such as these will enable residents to become proactive in shaping the direction of their areas and less reliant on external input.

There was a clear understanding within those groups spoken to within Nationalist areas of south Belfast that the key dynamics relating to the potential for shared spaces between Nationalists and Unionists was the growth in the Nationalist population generally. It was also noted that this had a significant impact on waiting lists and the 'populating' of new builds by Nationalists.

There was recognition that the ethnic make-up of Belfast was changing and that there was a responsibility to engage with the relevant partners in ensuring that what might be previously perceived as mono ethnic and exclusive areas were becoming de facto mixed areas. However, this growth in diversity did not apply to an increase in PUL - CNR shared space but rather increase of minority populations in what remained exclusively PUL and CNR 'areas'.

Discussions on the potential for mixed areas that included the majority communities were characterised by a token thumbs up to the idea but with little enthusiasm for making the kinds of radical changes that this might require.

Those spoken to did recognise the potential for shared community spaces but were cognisant of the potential difficulties this posed particularly in terms of expressions of identity.

*Maybe a shared community centre would work – but not a shared cultural space as people will ask which culture? (Ballynafeigh focus group respondent).*

*You need somewhere where people's culture and identity can be expressed safely (Ballynafeigh focus group respondent).*

Because of the inevitable tensions around culture and the potential that it holds in sectarianising space there was again a fear expressed that this would lead to the sanitisation of areas and the marginalisation of cultural activities considered central to people's identities:

*Shared spaces here means sanitisation of culture and identity not inclusion* (Ballynafeigh focus group respondent).

### **East Belfast**

East Belfast is a predominantly Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist area of the city, it has a population of 79,261 people, 85 per cent of whom of Protestant and 10 per cent are Catholic. It includes the following wards: Ballyhackamore, Ballymacarrett, Belmont, Bloomfield, Cherryvalley, Island, Knock, Orangefield, Stormont, Sydenham, The Mount, Cregagh, Downshire, Gilnahirk, Hillfoot, Lishnasharragh, Lower Braniel, Tullycarnet, Upper Braniel, Wynchurch. Whilst some of East Belfast has a significant affluent profile the inner city wards, Ballymacarrett, Island, The Mount and Woodstock exhibit high incidences of deprivation<sup>16</sup>, with two neighbourhood renewal areas identified:

- Inner East Belfast – Ballymacarrett, Short Strand, Albertbridge Road, The Mount, and lower Beersbridge, Woodstock and Ravenhill Roads; and
- Tullycarnet – Tullycarnet and Vionville.

The housing market in the area is characterised by the following features:

- East Belfast shows a similar pattern to the South Belfast private rented housing market, in that there appears to be a higher number of higher paid tenants prepared to live in private rented accommodation<sup>17</sup>.

The two largest housing developments currently in Belfast are in the East on sites referred to as the Titanic Quarter and the Sirocco Works. These both have the prospect of greatly regenerating and stimulating further economic and social expansion in the Island, Ballymacarrat and surrounding wards.

### **Sirocco Site**

A ten-year building programme on a sixteen acre site has the potential to be a new residential, commercial and leisure development without the history and sense of identity that marks the neighbouring areas. It is hoped that the regeneration of the site will have a positive impact on the immediate vicinity of the Short Strand, Markets and Lower Newtownards Road area where there is currently no great incentive for people to leave the security of their perceived own single-identity territory. The developers' aim is to bring a mixed-use scheme to the area comprising childcare facilities, homes for the elderly, supermarket and surgery with 2,000 apartments for residents and 2,300 permanent jobs. The intention is for 'affordable housing with social housing pepper-potted throughout' the private developments. A new-build pledge has been made to carbon-neutral housing with environmental waste-managed through a variety of renewable technologies. The developers estimate that the Sirocco development will *'bring millions of pounds in employment terms'* (Private Developer).

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.nihe.gov.uk/publications/reports/East%20Belfast%20Sectoral%20Study.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans\\_Policy/Plans/BMA/HMO/Supplementary\\_docs/HMA.pdf](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans_Policy/Plans/BMA/HMO/Supplementary_docs/HMA.pdf)

The developer's approaches to the local communities as part of the pre-consultation process were brokered by an applied ethnographic research process. This mapped out the use of the area not just by survey, questionnaire and in depth interviews, but through an extended process of participant observation. Consequently, the developers were able to draw on a more detailed and wider than usual set of sources of information to determine the challenges and opportunities that a proposed shared housing site would bring to existing and neighbouring single identity communities.

And as part of their commitment to securing the buy-in of existing communities to that process, they work with the Princes Trust to provide pre-training for unemployed youth in the adjacent area and intend that all on-site construction jobs will be advertised locally. The scope of training will widen to include maintenance, retail, hospitality and management with a view to providing employment on completion of the project. While the developers recognise that it is unlikely in the first phase of the life of the development that residents will be attracted from neighbouring estates, it is anticipated that familiarity with the area as a place of employment will build confidence in shared residential spaces.

### **Titanic Quarter**

Titanic Quarter (TQ) is the company developing a 75-hectare riverside inner-city space on the site of Harland and Wolff shipyard land. The development is heralded as the biggest in Belfast and is being realised by TQ's sister company, Dublin-based property developers Harcourt Developments. While the project is anticipated to take twenty years to complete, Phase one properties sited by a marina, comprises 475 'exclusive' apartments and already has a waiting list of proposed tenants. Later phases have been proposed and acquired planning permission based on the intention to supply a mixture of housing described by TQ as '*from exclusive to social housing*' where tenants from the latter will be '*drawn from a waiting list indicating willingness for shared living*' and which will also see the development of a light industrial park'.

The area is being revitalised as a space appropriate for residential use by a range of support services and business enterprises including a new campus for the Belfast Metropolitan College and a 140 bedroomed hotel. The planned waterfront promenade along the Lagan frontage will have residential blocks punctuated by a variety of leisure uses. TQ suggest that there is the potential for the creation of 20,000 new jobs over fifteen years bringing an anticipated £1.5 billion investment into the immediate area. The project is endorsed by Belfast City Council's Chief Executive, Peter McNaney, who suggests '*it ticks all the right boxes: introducing new industries and increasing the skills base to help diversify the city's employment base.*'

In discussion about these sites participants articulated that they knew what shared space was because they had plenty of experience of its opposite, segregation. All lived in areas that they identified as single identity areas of the Short Strand, Lower Newtownards Road and Tullycarnet. The group had a clear understanding of what a shared space would look like even if they were unsure whether any existed or even could in the medium term:

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*It's utopia that would mean no sectarianism, racism, people would all feel safe regardless of their background and still celebrate their culture and traditions. People would have services nearby such as leisure centres, shopping centres and play areas that could be used by anyone* (St Matthew and Avoneil focus group respondent).

*Shared living is having a real sense of community – the whole community living together in a space that can be used to live, play, work and socialise regardless of where you come from, your religion or how much money you have in your pocket* (St Matthew and Avoneil focus group respondent).

*It wouldn't work in this area. A shared community would have to have a lot of trust that level of trust isn't there ...* (St Matthew and Avoneil focus group respondent).

Shared resources and facilities was clearly an important factor in encouraging the potential for shared residential living:

*A shared residential space needs to have good local services otherwise you're not sharing just living separately in the same place ...* (St Matthew and Avoneil focus group respondent).

This was a view echoed in the research by Deloitte (2007) in considering service provision throughout Belfast.

The closure of local services without the proper or appropriate form of consultation can too easily be perceived as being motivated by prejudice or to be discriminatory, rather than a response to budgetary constraints or other rationalisation:

*The closure of Maysfield Leisure Centre was sectarian ... what other reason was there to close it?* (St Matthew and Avoneil focus group respondent).

More significantly the kinds of negative perceptions that this creates may have a long term effect on attitudes to the local authority, trust in politicians and a willingness to engage in future planning of services or resources.

None of the participants expressed a wish to live in a shared residential space because *'the fear is still there'*. There was a reference to the Short Strand being *'hemmed in every year'* during the marching season and that this created unwanted tensions and community anger. On the other hand, the Newtownards Road and Tullycarnet participants felt that Nationalists didn't understand the importance of parades to Protestant culture. All participants agreed that there were so many examples of what both communities had done to each other and that it was too soon to remove the peace walls. Participants agreed that whilst each area had its own problems – sectarianism, racism, housing shortages and overcrowding, poverty and unemployment – they still felt safe within those communities. Examples were given of recent attacks on young people walking home at night and of bricks and bottles being thrown over the peace wall. All of these prevented participants from wanting to move or have the wall

removed. Others referred to having their close family living nearby and therefore did not want to leave the area.

The key issue was 'trust' and how that trust could be built. As long as people didn't feel safe in certain areas of their own city they felt it would be years, if not generations before that would change:

*Sectarianism is alive and well here no matter what has happened in politics (St Matthew and Avoneil focus group respondent).*

The participants agreed that the suffering on both sides was still too raw to consider a shared living space but they all said they did not want to be viewed as part of the problem or seen to be opposed to shared residential living. They were simply realistic of the need to improve relationships between their two communities. All agreed that there should be greater opportunities for shared living but felt they were more likely to succeed in new developments with new populations that didn't carry the history of the conflict. The Titanic Quarter was regarded as the most likely possibility for shared housing in Belfast. It was stated that the new development opened up genuine possibilities for people not just living together, but working and socialising together. They also believed people should be informed that it would be a mixed area and that they should be made to:

*Sign an agreement to work out disputes and not deliberately provoke their neighbours with religious, political or other negative symbols (St Matthew and Avoneil focus group respondent).*

However, they were also keen to point out that the wish to live with 'your own' and near to family should not be looked upon as a sectarian choice. They felt that whilst shared residential living should be a choice for those on the waiting list, no one should be 'forced' into making that choice because it's the only option:

*There are too many people in the Short Strand and not enough houses but that doesn't mean you should be forced into an area you are not happy to live in (St Matthew and Avoneil focus group respondent).*

### **CRC Conference Workshop**

The preliminary findings from this research were presented at a workshop at the Community Relation Council conference in April 2008. The discussion highlighted the following issues and concerns.

**Local Context:** Participants recognised that the detail of 'sharing' depends very much on the local context. Changing demographics is a major influence on the stability of an area. All of the participants asserted that safety, both real and perceived, is paramount. It was noted that it is important to identify the 'persuaders' within an area, for example, the influence of the private sector on community cohesion, good relations and social responsibility.

**Mixed Tenure Housing:** Participants highlighted that existing shared areas have very high land values and are often perceived as middle class as a result. It was noted that the provision of mixed tenure housing was essential and would require innovative legislation. One participant noted that with the current land value ‘bottoming off’ it offered the opportunity to secure land to develop social and affordable housing.

**Rationalisation of Services:** It was noted that a spectrum of sharing exists, with people more willing or likely to share services, with housing further down the list. However, there was recognition that as services are rationalised there will be greater pressure and need to deliver shared and safe facilities. There was acknowledgment of the financial implications of segregation, the ‘diseconomies’ of division, and equally the need to place a value on the economic and social benefits of sharing.

**Interface Areas:** It was noted that minority communities in interface areas could be particularly fearful of shared housing, and if they are surrounded by areas dominated by the ‘other’ community it could lead to fears of being ‘swamped’. However, it was felt that allocation on the basis of ‘need’ is sacrosanct. It was also noted that where there are small pockets of minority populations with large areas of vacant land the potential exists to pilot housing to increase the long-term sustainability of the area as shared. This is a significant challenge and it was suggested that political leadership could play a role in securing minority populations in these areas.

**Political Leadership:** Political will and leadership was deemed as essential in order to support opportunities for shared residential space and crucially, to maintain and sustain existing shared residential spaces. It was noted that political leadership can often reinforce separation, and although shared residential space is a difficult issue to grapple with it should not be ignored.

**Permeable and Welcoming Communities:** Chicago was highlighted as an example where collaborative leadership had enabled the development of permeable and welcoming communities. There the City Council, in partnership with the private sector, provides funding for the ‘flagging’ or branding of identity neighbourhoods for example, Little Italy or Little Armenia. Chicago City Council has clearly articulated the connection between the economic benefits of branding and supporting these areas with increased tourism and investment. It was noted that given the extent of territoriality in Belfast segregated areas are likely to remain for some time. Yet, it is possible to make the borders of these areas more permeable and welcoming.

**Planning, Legislation and Quotas:** Participants identified the need for meaningful consultation in the development and implementation of policy and land use. It was suggested that the planning system should introduce a ‘sharing’ framework so as to incentivise private sector development. It was noted that operating solely on a quota basis is difficult if sharing is to be meaningful and the existing housing allocation policy can actively work against sharing. To be genuinely shared it was advanced that there should be a critical mass over and above the existing quotas used to determine

whether an area is shared or not. While some argued for legislation to promote sharing, others felt that organic shared residential space is much more sustainable.

Finally the workshop participants felt that to enable shared residential space innovative approaches and capacity building would be required to build trust and change perceptions.

### **Use of Land for Shared Residential Living**

Identifying new areas for potential shared housing developments in Belfast has the added complication of a shortage of brown-field and green-field sites particularly in the north and south of the city. The Department of the Environment (2004) specifies that a total of 409 hectares (31 per cent) of the 1,324 hectares of designated housing land is classified as 'open', and thus indicating that it might be safely occupied by both CNR and PUL communities. The largest site in North Belfast is the Dargan Crescent landfill, which is currently earmarked to be the Giant's Park and cannot be used for residential purposes due to the land being contaminated from its previous usage. Other areas include the Girdwood Barracks site and the Northside Urban Village area, in both cases housing has been proposed as a significant element of regeneration, but has also been opposed or options significantly constrained by political dynamics. Other sites in the area tend to be significantly smaller, and as one estate agent informed us:

*There's really nowhere left for large developments, just small pockets without encroaching onto protected Council-owned sites attached to Cave Hill (Estate Agent).*

There are nevertheless a number of areas where housing has been allowed to become derelict, or to remain empty, or has been redeveloped into commercial properties due to a perceived lack of local demand. However, the notion of a lack of local demand is usually only applied in relation to the communities who assert a territorial claim to that land, whereas in reality the wider demand for housing across territorial boundaries is disregarded. This is the primary dynamic which has shaped the debate around housing in predominately PUL inner city areas that border CNR residential areas. The broad political and institutional acceptance of the identification or 'control' of territory by one community has meant that housing has not been constructed on interface areas and brown field sites despite strong local demand, because the demand has come from 'outside' the perceived ethno-territorial boundaries in question. The alternative has been the conversion of land into 'open space', lower density housing (often private) or a range of business parks and units. This 'greening of space' through environmental open spaces and the 'greying of space' through industrial and business development can then lead to additional tensions at interfaces between those communities who feel they are losing ground and those looking to 'move into' new territories.

Given the changes anticipated in the Review of Public Administration, there is likely to be a significant amount of land to be sourced through the rezoning and

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redevelopment of a number of public sector sites. These might come from schools, college premises or defunct security sites such as police stations. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this research to source any material in relation to existing real estate assets and plans for their potential disposal it is clear that there is significant potential for the development of shared spaces that goes beyond environmentally or economically transformed interfaces.

In October 2007, the Department of Finance and Personnel established the Capital Realisation Taskforce with a remit for defining the structures and protocols relating to the strategic management of public assets including the disposal of those that are surplus to requirements. The Public Affairs Committee Recommendation 2 (Department of Finance and Personnel 2008) that was accepted by DFP indicates that regardless of the method of disposal (namely inclusion in any inter-departmental deal, immediate disposal on the open market or development prior to disposal on the open market), value for money must be demonstrated. It is significant that there is no good relations benchmark in this process by which to temper market forces and support community cohesion. Despite the proclaimed desire to increase sharing and integration it is noteworthy that in the processes of attaining land for development, the Good Relations agenda is not paramount to any process of acquisition of land or planning for the private sector and that furthermore, there are no mechanisms to hold planners to account for choices in this regard.

Those areas where there is often least demand and most resistance to shared housing are often interface areas and yet these are often the spaces most likely to have land rated with a potential for shared housing regeneration or development. The extent to which these areas can accommodate shared residential space/living must be addressed as part of strategic policy decisions including consultation with local communities rather than the continued assumption that the legacy of the conflict will always mitigate against shared living.

## 7. Overarching Themes

Below we have outlined some of the key overarching themes that have emerged in this research and that could potentially impact upon the planning and management of new and existing residential shared issues.

### **Territoriality**

Any process of integration is based on both personal and community responses to an area. One of the key challenges facing those wishing to move into or to develop shared-housing initiatives is the relationship that residents have or have had within the area. A variety of ‘agents of integration’ can be important facilitators in places seeking to become or remain integrated. These agents might include individuals and impartial civic associations and institutions, non-governmental organisations, churches and statutory service providers acting in a public and/or private capacity, alongside others willing to ‘champion’ the area in a variety of physical places, such as schools, day care centres and shops (Byrne 2006:134).

Many people have close family and community connections to particular areas. For a realistic expectation as to how existing communities can thrive or survive as economically viable and shared spaces, consideration must be given to a number of factors in relation to service provision and the social infrastructure. Dependency issues, sustaining networks of kinship and friendship, as well as access to services in health, education and employment all impact on individuals’ willingness to live in areas of shared or mixed housing. Participants in a focus group in East Belfast focussed on the impact of the closure of the Maysfield Leisure Centre as a significant resource in the area. While its existence or closure did not alter the housing patterns in the area, consideration to how the facility might be managed so that it was considered to be a more inclusive space was considered a salutary lesson.

In terms of cultural belonging, expressions of group identity are often thought of as being most representative of communities when displayed in the material culture of flags, emblems and murals. A number of individuals from minority ethnic communities consider that paramilitary and political murals and sectarian symbols are a significant deterrent for moving into or staying in some areas:

*I’m definitely going to want to live where the poets and the musicians are, not where the AK47s and the politicians are – even if there is the same level of violence in each area. So how you sell your area with your murals and the message they give out is how you are perceived (Minority Ethnic Community Representative).*

Some political parties consider that there is a need to try and find shared symbols that can reflect common and shared histories rather than attempt to ‘neutralise’ areas by having no public display of cultural traditions:

*We need to develop an understanding among residents of what symbols mean – we need to help them with an expanding concept of culture not that it means three*

*particular colours or the design of a flag or ensign. I recently saw in the Republic a Poppy with a Shamrock at its heart that represented the Irish contribution to the First World War – now that was acknowledgement of a very shared experience* (Dawn Purvis, Progressive Unionist Party).

Respondents to the research who are not predisposed to living in or developing shared residential areas often draw on the components that others see as positive and enabling, to demonstrate why such elements would not or could not work in their particular area. For example, the surveillance mechanisms seen by some as a positive are considered by others to be an infringement of civil liberties. And, while many consider the absence of flags, emblems, street signs and historical memorials as a positive and welcoming sign, others are concerned about the ‘sanitisation’ and ‘neutralisation’ of areas. They seek to *‘be allowed to be yourself and express your culture without fear of intimidation or harassment’* (Voluntary and Community Sector focus group respondent).

Having easy access to schools of choice appears to be a significant factor in where people will choose to live:

*Education is key – the type and location of schools must also be considered. Few children from the Shankill Road go to Methodist College or BRA / Institute. We would need to address that before we start telling them to go to St. Malachy’s* (Committee for Administration of Justice).

The need to be able to access relevant services is clearly connected to the issue of transport and the ability to access other parts of the city. Belfast has become overly dependent on private cars to enable people to move around, and much of the existing public transport remains radial in form, with few bus routes connecting residential areas without accessing the city centre, and a limited rail network. In general the city lacks a modern, integrated public transport network and integrated public transport will be a key issue in the successful re-development of key brown-field sites.

### **Terminology**

Through the research period, a wide variety of examples were provided that indicated a lack of understanding by the community and statutory sector of expressions and terms used in relation to housing by academics and housing practitioners. When asking participants to describe terms such as integrated, mixed, shared and segregated, there was no consensus in their responses, with much overlap between categories: *‘Shared and mixed aren’t they interchangeable? I think it just means faces on the street that feel familiar’*. There is an urgent need for clarity in relation to the corporate housing sector and the community’s understanding of housing terminology if discussions between them are to be meaningful. Central to this debate is a need to address the various definitions of what constitutes a mixed housing area as it has implications on the kinds of strategic interventions necessary to encourage moves towards becoming more integrated and indeed shared.

### **Good Relations**

It is generally recognised that there needs to be a substantial amount of political will to support any good relations policies in shared spaces. This is an issue that is not lost on private developers. Communities on both sides of the sectarian divide recognise the pre-requisite of sustained inter-community development work to build confidence in areas of Belfast before any integration and social cohesion can be meaningfully welcomed rather than imposed.

*Political will must filter from the top right down to the local party representatives on the street and in the areas where shared housing developments will exist because they will have a role to play, with others in managing any conflict (Private Developer).*

The benefits of an inclusive and pro-active community group, an agreed tenant's charter and a developed good relations programme were seen as important in the Loughbrickland research. Good relations should form part of the Action Plans of any new shared housing projects and should address issues around parading, bonfires, flags and emblems, memorials, language and culture.

If the issue of territoriality is genuinely to be challenged and interfaces are to be made more permeable through the promotion of shared spaces then real and practical dialogue must take place within and across communities:

*Building up trust between communities - that needs to happen first, – it's a long road in front of us, I am concerned that we will be expected to move too fast ... It's all about territory, where is orange and where is green, don't think this generation are ready for shared housing but next one maybe (Belfast District Tenants' focus group).*

### **Community Safety**

Generally safety is a principal priority for residents irrespective of area, demography or income level. For some, safety concerns in the first instance can be evidenced by those who indicate a preference for living in segregated areas. Change, it is suggested, can only be an incremental process and one that requires a more stringent setting and monitoring of parameters:

*Advances in equality legislation, rights and protection have led to a significant drop in sectarianism in the workplace. If the same framework is laid down for housing, we will start to see the benefits (Committee on the Administration of Justice).*

Safety concerns and resourcing issues can differ considerably dependant on the type of neighbourhood. For example, perceptions of community safety in a new, purpose-built space where tenants have made an active choice to live in shared residential areas are very different from those facing individuals who are reluctantly sharing resources in a marked or unmarked interface area. In the former, surveillance and gated communities can be seen as desirable markers of exclusivity, whereas in the

latter surveillance, alley gates, grids and grills are often associated with reactive and defensive responses to violence.

Community safety issues that impact on the success of shared housing areas can also be influenced by seasonal variables. It is notable that reduced youth service provision during the summer months, alongside bonfire and parading issues, particularly on or near interfaces, lend themselves to heightened tensions.

It was clear that safety is a central consideration in contemplating any changes to the status quo in terms of housing or indeed sharing facilities and resources. There is some potential for increased feelings of safety through the removal of flags and emblems particularly at interface points or major arterial routes in order to diffuse tension and to neutralise contentious areas. Whilst the issue of paramilitary flags has become less of an issue, Protestant/Unionist/ Loyalist respondents considered this development to have been something that they have delivered on and for which there has been little recognition. Further they felt that removing all flags and emblems from parade routes could be perceived as an attack on their identity. It is considered traditional to 'decorate' parade routes and it was felt that it was not about antagonising the other community. However, whilst the intention was not necessarily to intimidate or aggravate, the impact of flag and emblems on the other community was a negative one. Community safety is about feeling safe and overt cultural expressions still hold potential to create feelings of fear and mistrust.

The role of the police in providing a community policing service was considered an important element of any planned shared housing. There were however, concerns over how safe areas are to be created and whether surveillance, cameras and gated communities created the wrong image for an area. The paradox in relation to safety appears to be that what some see as a marker of economic exclusivity, for example by the use of gated communities, can be seen by others in a different context, to represent communities under siege.

There would appear to be opportunities for City Council, Private Developers and Public Sector Housing to begin work in partnership with community groups and service providers in the area to reduce inter community tensions. During the summer of 2006, North Belfast Interface Forum ran a successful poster campaign – Think B4 U Act – through a variety of outlets including schools and in mixed residential areas, which addressed the consequences of 'recreational rioting'. People were encouraged to 'Think before you act' and to recognise that being charged with riotous behaviour was put in the context of not being able to access opportunities at a later stage, such as getting visas for travel.

### **Diversity**

The transformation of Belfast through immigration and transnational migrant workers is leading to an ever-increasing diversity of ethnicities and nationalities. This diversity is increasing positively to the social fabric of society but is also bringing challenges in

terms of adapting to the impact of new cultures and in developing collective ways of promoting integration:

*You need committed individuals who will reach out to the grass roots in an attempt to integrate (ICTU Migrant Worker Unit).*

These changes have had particular ramifications for housing provision in Belfast. It is anticipated that there are currently 43,000 people of working-age born outside the islands now resident here (Labour Force Survey, April-June 2007). An increase in the number of houses of multiple occupancy appears to be an emerging trend in particular areas in South Belfast and the Antrim Road (NIHE 2008). The NIHE has been working for sometime to develop clear policies for HMO's in Belfast and other urban areas. A number of factors, including extended family circumstances among others appear to necessitate the majority of new migrants accessing private rather than public sector accommodation.

It would also appear that a need for larger housing units is more evident in some ethnic groups than in others as there is an expectation of living in extended rather than nuclear family groupings. The diversity of an area plays a role in whether it is considered not just welcoming, but also likely to have the facilities and services that are required:

*Many of those who are recent comers to Belfast want to live in the Lisburn Road and Ormeau Road areas precisely because of the mixed diversity in these areas, and the lower levels of racial harassment than are experienced in other areas (NICEM).*

Nomadism is recognised in the Race Relations Order (NI) 1997 as a distinctive culturally-defining characteristic of Travellers. However, there is a lack of any transit sites in Belfast with basic amenities such as water and electricity and any hardstand enabling users to pull on and off as necessary. Furthermore, the Unauthorised Encampment Legislation (2003) effectively criminalizes the practice of nomadism in Belfast. Consequently there is some consideration to be given to the needs and rights of Travellers in relation to culturally appropriate shared housing developments in and around areas where Travellers are settled, in particular in areas such as the Glen Road.

### **Transience**

The nature of modern living and the role that property development plays in the lives of many people with access to the 'housing ladder' also mitigates against the maintenance of sustainable and shared housing schemes. The 'right to buy' allows a market-based re-adjustment of what might be delicately balanced shared housing developments. At the same time this transience and property speculation can create organically diverse areas. It could be argued that the more fluid the housing market is, the greater the potential for diversity; however, these emerging communities are different in scope and identity than traditional ethnic and kin based communities around which change might happen through the development of shared spaces. Diverse emerging communities that have come about through a transient housing

market may also have less community cohesion and would be less likely to seek to engage in the kinds of community development needed to ensure the continuance and strengthening of shared residential areas.

### **Motivation**

The motivation for developing shared housing varies considerably. For the public housing sector, an ethos of community cohesion, sharing and integration led by public policy and mainstreamed as an organisational ethos is to the fore. For private developers however, the market and economic returns are the prime motivators and their processes can only be primarily influenced in terms of good relations by planning regulations. For residents and those living in highly segregated areas, while there is much to commend shared housing initiatives, the emotional and historical connection attached to particular areas can act as an inhibitor. Some considerable capacity building and support is required in many communities to address the attitudinal change necessary for shared housing initiatives to thrive and be made sustainable.

### **Basis of Need**

Allocation on the basis of need is ‘*sacrosanct*’ and carries with it the historical narrative of discrimination in housing, yet for some it creates a paradox with the principle ensuring that new build, in Belfast particularly, could go to Catholic/Nationalist/Republican residents:

*If you continue to meet need, nothing will change* (Belfast District Tenants focus group).

Whilst there was sympathy for this position in terms of creating new shared living space, the majority of respondents from all sectors recognised that allocation on the basis of need was a fundamental right that should not be tampered with. Some felt that it was more important to address interface areas and areas in which there are isolated minorities living.

*We actually need to be negotiating with minority communities around dealing with alienation e.g. in North Belfast Protestants feel alienated by the growing Catholic community around them, but there are more vacant properties in Protestant areas and more Catholics on the waiting lists. This is the kind of work that needs to be prioritised– through proactive and positive investment of resources interface issues can be addressed* (Committee on the Administration of Justice).

### **Management of Shared Housing Schemes**

For those who have an interest in the sustainability and good governance of shared housing schemes, there are a number of initiatives including charters, community wardens and management bodies that are drawn on to manage shared areas. However, scale is a key component in the success of these models. What is applicable

in an area of twenty or thirty residences, where some considerable time and economics have been spent in building the capacity of neighbouring communities to engage in cross community development work, is very different from what might be required in any area the size of Titanic Quarter. It is of particular note that in smaller shared housing developments, the balance of one community over another can alter dramatically and irrevocably with a change in tenancy and the sale of a small number of properties. Consequently, it is of paramount importance that any solutions are tailored to the community's needs.

### **Planning**

In 2005, there were 1930 new dwelling starts in Belfast with 2,504 planning applications received and 2,296 processed, 93 per cent of which were granted (NINIS). There is a view in the community sector and from private developers, that the planning process is distinctly disjointed and lacking vision. There are also multiple planning programmes with similar aims but with separate resource streams and organisational responses operating in often overlapping areas.

The Department of Environment's Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, the statutory development plan for the city, co-ordinates the re-zoning of land and facilitates both public sector activity and private investment but with no investment role of its own. However, while Belfast City Council does have an investment role, which might be expected to increase under RPA, their Master Plan is used as a guide to local planning, economic development and community support.

Bradley and Murtagh (2007) contend that there has already been 'considerable policy engagement with the issue of segregation and land use issues' and point to the A Shared Future strategy, the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) which focuses on community cohesion (SPC3 – SCR1), the Community Cohesion initiative of NIHE, the People and Place consideration of the legacy of the conflict for Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans, Positive Steps, Renewing Communities, EQIA use and the Semple Review. In addition, attention needs to be given to considering how Article 40 Planning Agreements, Comprehensive Development Areas (CDA), Re- Development Areas, Community Investment Tax Relief, Community Land Trusts and Assets Transfer can act as facilitators of shared communities.

Bradley and Murtagh contend that the city would benefit from a 'spatial planning' process that 'in an ideal situation, a statutory development plan for Belfast would be the spatial manifestation of the community plan'. A joined up approach to policy and operational service delivery is also recommended by Deloitte (2008:104).

*Belfast City Council and its elected members have a massive role to play in encouraging and supporting their electorate to take opportunities for interaction and integration. It would also be useful if they undertook training in the planning process and act as a conduit where possible between developers and the local community and promote further realistic contributions from local residents. People feel safe where*

*they live so more must be done to re-assure them that there will be security and other benefits to shared housing (Private Developer).*

### **Consultation**

It is absolutely crucial that a genuine process of consultation is undertaken with local communities. It was broadly felt by community respondents that consultation was a symbolic act in which community voices were not being listened to. There was a particular concern about the role of private sector developers and the gentrification of areas that paid little attention to the impact of private development on social cohesion. A willingness to trust in and make life-style changes as a result of the continuing peace process and economic growth in the private sector is noteworthy though alongside a strongly articulated desire to be engaged in any process of neighbourhood regeneration, particularly when that involves significant private sector development:

*Private landlords have been a major problem ... we have challenged them ... we need to make sure private developers don't come in and just build what they want, local community need to be able to challenge them (Resident Suffolk/Lenadoon Interface).*

### **Conclusions**

This has looked at the key overarching themes that have emerged during the research and highlights both the obstacles and potential that exists in the planning and management of new and existing residential shared space. It is clear that a better understanding of the dynamics of shared living and the contexts in which it might work is key to the planning and support of existing and new spaces. Alongside the centrality of community safety and the promotion of diversity and good relations the issue of planning is pivotal to any genuine aspiration for the development of shared living. In the framework and conclusions below we have outlined some thoughts on ways forward; however it is clear that the success of future developments rests in large part on the will of planners and politicians to engage in an open and committed process that shares a practical vision of cohesion, sharing and integration.

## **8. Framework for Supporting and Promoting Shared Living**

There are a limited number of shared residential communities in Belfast, but there is an opportunity to promote and support the development of other such communities in the immediate and near future. But to do so requires an understanding of some of the key elements and activities that will need to be undertaken if the future diversity of the city is to grow in a cohesive and integrated, rather than polarised and fragmented manner.

The following sets out elements of four key factors that should be included in the formalisation of a framework and action plan for supporting and promoting shared residential spaces in the city of Belfast. The essential factors are the:

- Human components of the community;
- Indicators of diversity, sharing and sustainability;
- Means of supporting shared communities; and
- Opportunities for extending shared residential spaces

### **1. Components of Shared Residential Space**

The research study has identified three main examples of types of shared residential space, that either do exist or could reasonably be developed in working towards a more diverse and inclusive shared environment in the city. These are:

1. Existing Shared Neighbourhoods (eg Ballynafeigh, Lisburn Road).
2. Potential Shared Neighbourhoods (eg Skegoneill/Glandore; Ballyhackamore).
3. Newly Developed Shared Neighbourhoods (eg Titanic Quarter, Sirocco Quays).

We have noted earlier (section four) that the understanding of shared neighbourhoods should not be presumed to be limited to ensuring that there is a reasonable balance between people from Protestant and Catholic community backgrounds, but rather a shared residential area may (indeed should) also include people from:

- Established minority ethnic communities;
- Other faith communities and backgrounds; and
- New migrant communities.

We would also re-affirm the findings of the recent report by Bradley and Murtagh (2007) that our understanding of sustainable, diverse communities should include other factors such as:

- Availability of mixed tenure housing;
- A mix of single people, couples and families;
- People from diverse age ranges; and
- Different class, wealth and occupational backgrounds.

As has been noted elsewhere some of the existing and acknowledged shared residential communities, such as Ballynafeigh, are based on a diversity of income and class as well as ethno-national diversity (Byrne et al 2006).

## 2. Indicators of Shared Residential Space

The people who participated in the research identified a range of key factors that were considered as important in helping to create sustainable shared and diverse residential communities. These factors can be grouped under four broad headings: Resources, Infrastructure, Safety and Environment (RISE)

The table below sets out some of the key factors that were identified in each of the four categories, this table is not exclusive.

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shops</li> <li>• Employment opportunities</li> <li>• Public Transport</li> <li>• Health and well-being centres</li> <li>• Pre-school &amp; After-school child care facilities</li> <li>• Integrated and/or secular schools</li> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Facilities for young people</li> <li>• Sports and leisure facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political support and leadership</li> <li>• Community networks</li> <li>• Partnerships with statutory bodies</li> <li>• Top down &amp; bottom up management</li> <li>• Social economy projects</li> <li>• Advocacy / outreach workers for disengaged and vulnerable</li> <li>• Multi-lingual development workers</li> <li>• Inclusive social events and activities</li> </ul>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>Environment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate lighting</li> <li>• Appropriate surveillance</li> <li>• Community support wardens</li> <li>• Absence of paramilitary activity</li> <li>• Acceptable behaviour contracts</li> <li>• Deterrents to anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Low level of attacks on emergency services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of visible manifestations of sectarianism and racism</li> <li>• Absence of interface markers including walls and gates</li> <li>• Lack of grills on windows and entrances</li> <li>• Absence of flags and emblems</li> <li>• Inclusive public art (murals, monuments and memorials)</li> <li>• Managed or reduced bonfires</li> <li>• Playgrounds</li> <li>• Managed green spaces, with seating</li> </ul>

A list of key factors for each of the RISE categories should be identified in each existing, planned or aspirational shared residential area, which in turn would serve as a baseline for the status of the community. These key indicators should be monitored regularly over time to assess the physical / structural / social health of a community on a sharing/diversity index.

Other elements or activities that might be considered positive contributions in promoting or supporting cohesive social environments include:

- Voluntary Neighbourhood Charters
- Mandatory Social Contracts
- Provision or training in conflict management and mediation skills
- Resourcing and support for building skills and capacity within the community
- Use of staff secondments to support nascent initiatives
- Housing pathways / Choice Based Lettings
- Neighbourhood management initiatives
- Good Relations Impact Assessment for Planning Services

### 3. Sustaining Shared Residential Spaces

We recommend that an inter-agency **Shared Neighbourhood Working Group** be established to consider, review and implement any appropriate framework and protocols for shared residential communities. This body might be drawn from (though not exclusively) representatives of the Belfast City Council, NIHE, CRC, PSNI, DOE, BELB and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Among the activities such a body could be responsible for:

1. Developing proactive responses from the statutory sector to promote or increase opportunities for interaction;
2. Identifying the broad spectrum of services required for sustaining shared residential space;
3. Identifying gaps in key services and resources required for sustaining shared residential space;
4. Monitoring statutory agency and private sector activity to ensure they are not fostering or reinforcing segregation;
5. Monitoring the health of existing shared residential areas;
6. Identifying how to ensure the sustainability of a shared residential area; and
7. Providing a connection to political leaders and appropriate political fora to promote and encourage wider debate around developing and sustaining shared residential spaces.

### 4. Extending Shared Residential Spaces

Although there is still a small number of identifiable existing and planned shared residential areas, there should also be opportunities for residential communities that are currently completely segregated to transform into defined shared residential space.

This might involve members of the **Shared Neighbourhood Working Group** working with and supporting local community initiatives. An example of this might be the work that has been done in the Springfarm estate in Antrim over recent years. This would require a Communications Strategy to ensure people are aware of the initiative and of its benefits in terms of sustainability, economic viability, increased quality of life, and are encouraged to actively participate and support the process.

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The Shared Neighbourhood Working Group might actively seek to encourage the development of shared residential areas through activities such as:

1. Use of planning powers to create shared neighbourhoods;
2. Promoting sharing and the permeability of segregated communities through the provision of shared services and resources at boundary areas;
3. Exploring the role of all housing providers to work towards promoting shared, diverse and cohesive communities.

One final factor that might be noted as an important element in helping to facilitate and extend the growth of shared residential communities is political will: the support of the key political personalities and institutions, which have the power to either nurture or to stifle initiatives that aim to break down existing levels of segregation and polarisation, will be important. It is to be hoped the forthcoming replacement for *A Shared Future*, which will set out a programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration will offer the necessary political backing for developing and supporting shared residential communities in Belfast.

## 9. Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as a means of responding to the findings of this research and promoting the development of sustainability, shared and cohesive residential spaces in Belfast.

1. Belfast City Council should promote the concept of a Good Relations framework to be clearly integrated into local planning frameworks and incorporated and evaluated in any process of land rezoning for residential use.
2. Belfast City Council and the NIHE should undertake longitudinal research, using qualitative and multiple case study methodologies, into new shared housing developments to monitor levels of community cohesion, management issues and aspects of demographic change.
3. An inter-agency group should be established to provide support and guidance to relevant shared housing initiatives by developers from the public and private sector and to create connectivity to political structures. This group might include the DOE, BELB, NIHE, CRC, PSNI, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Translink and other relevant bodies (including funders such as Atlantic Philanthropies, CFNI).
4. The inter-agency group should adapt and adopt the Framework for Supporting Shared Living, and draw up action plans for its use and implementation. This should include initiating a debate on the core constituents of a mixed housing area.
5. The inter-agency group should ensure that comprehensive, participative and representative consultation with key local constituencies takes place in the future development of all shared housing schemes.
6. Belfast City Council and the NIHE should take steps to develop a capacity building strategy in partnership with relevant Housing Associations to facilitate their engagement in and management of shared housing developments and areas.
7. At least one private developer has adopted a form of community consultation as part of its approach to development in sensitive areas. Belfast City Council and the NIHE should explore how other private developers might be encouraged to consider Good Relations criteria in the development of mixed tenure shared housing developments.
8. Belfast City Council and the NIHE should developed a strategy to directly engage the Construction Employers Federation and the Construction Industry Training Board on the development of shared housing schemes and the promotion of a Good Relations duty within future developments.

## Glossary

Term	Explanation
A Shared Future	Government's policy and strategic framework for good relations in Northern Ireland
Affordability	The significant house price increases witnessed in recent years in Northern Ireland coupled with the shortage of social housing, has resulted in many people being unable to afford homes
BCC	Belfast City Council
BELB	Belfast Education and Library Board
BEPB	Belfast European Partnership Board
BMAP	The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan sets the planning and development context for the greater city area to 2015
CRC	Community Relations Council
DOE	Department of the Environment
DRD	Department for Regional Development
DSD	Department for Social Development
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment

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HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
Gentrification	The process whereby new housing developments attract higher income groups to city areas often displacing communities from those areas
NICVA	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NIFHA	NI Federation of Housing Associations
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NINIS	Small area statistics are provided by NISRA (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency) using the online Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information System
PSNI	Police Service for Northern Ireland
PUP	Progressive Unionist Party
RDS	The Regional Development Strategy sets out the physical plan for Northern Ireland and provides the context for BMAP.
RPA	Review of Public Administration
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party

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Semple Review	An Independent Affordability Review under the direction of Sir John Semple, a former head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The Review's remit was wide-ranging and the mechanisms aimed at securing social housing for rent, growing a quality private rented sector and assisting people into homeownership were examined.
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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## Appendix

The following is a list of groups and organisations that were invited to take part in research, but note that not all were either able or willing to respond or contribute.

1. Age Concern
2. Alliance Party
3. An Droichead
4. An Munia Tober
5. Ballynafeigh Community Association
6. Belfast City Council (CIT)
7. Belfast City Council (Development Department)
8. Belfast City Council Youth Panel
9. Belfast Chamber of Trade
10. Belfast City Centre Management
11. Belfast Gems
12. Belfast Interface Project
13. Belfast Islamic Centre
14. BIH Housing Association
15. Board of Social Witness, Presbyterian Church
16. The Bridge Community Association
17. The Committee on the Administration of Justice
18. CAREW - II
19. Carran Crescent
20. Carvill Group
21. CBI
22. Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
23. Chamber of Commerce
24. Chinese Welfare Association
25. Chartered Institute of Housing in Northern Ireland
26. Children in Northern Ireland
27. Cliftonville Regeneration Group
28. Clonard Women
29. Community Conventions
30. CORI
31. Corrymeela
32. Coalition on Sexual Orientation
33. The Crown Project
34. Community Relations Council
35. Department of Social Development
36. Derry City Council
37. Disability Action
38. Donegall Pass Development Association
39. Democratic Unionist Party
40. East Belfast – St Colmcille’s Church / Gilnahirk Presbyterian Church
41. East Belfast Alternatives
42. East Belfast Partnership Board

43. Ebrington
44. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
45. Equality Consortium
46. Farset
47. Glen Ava
48. Green Party
49. Groundwork
50. Habitat
51. Help the Aged
52. Highfield Development Association
53. Housing Rights/Shelter
54. Human Rights Consortium
55. ICTU Migrant Worker Unit
56. Interaction Belfast
57. Intercomm
58. Linc
59. Markets Development Association
60. Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
61. Mediation Northern Ireland
62. Mid-Skegoneil Community Development Association
63. Mount Vernon Community Association
64. North Belfast CEP
65. North Belfast Community Transformation Project
66. Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
67. Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
68. Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
69. Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Agencies
70. Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
71. Northern Ireland Housing Executive
72. Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association
73. Northern Ireland Tenants Action Project
74. North Belfast Churches Focus Group
75. North Belfast Partnership Board
76. Northern Ireland Council for the Homeless
77. Northern Visions
78. Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
79. Planning Service/BMAP
80. Police Service Northern Ireland
81. Progressive Unionist Party
82. Queens University Belfast
83. Sandy Row Development Association
84. Social Democratic Labour Party
85. Sinn Féin
86. SHAC
87. Simon Community
88. Skainos Unit
89. South Belfast Churches Focus Group

## Shared Residential Space

90. South Belfast Area Partnership Board
91. South Belfast Roundtable on Racism
92. Springfarm Development Association
93. St Matthews and Avoneil Parent Support Project
94. St Vincent de Paul
95. Suffolk Community Forum
96. Sustainable Development Commission
97. Titanic Quarter
98. Turley Associates
99. Ulidia Housing Association Ltd
100. Ulster Property Sales
101. Ulster Unionist Party
102. West Belfast Partnership Board
103. West Belfast Senior Citizens Forum