

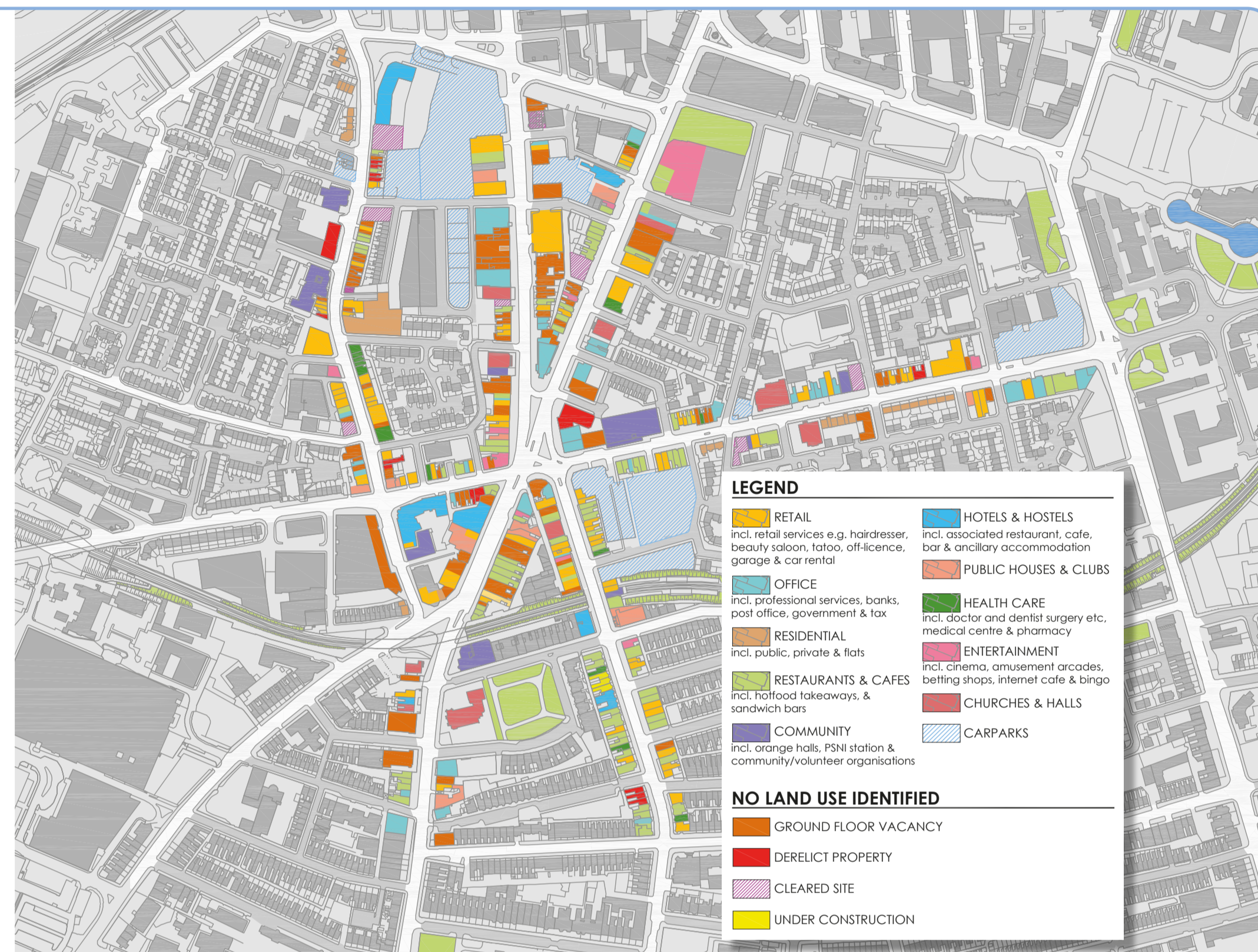
2 The existing situation

Shaftesbury Square Belfast DRAFT Development Framework

Land use

Shaftesbury Square and the neighbouring main streets, is an area of mixed uses. In terms of occupied buildings in business use, there are now:-

- 250,000 sq.ft. of offices,
- 230,000 sq.ft. of hospitality uses including hotels, hostels, pubs and clubs,
- 110,000 sq.ft. of retailing,
- 90,000 sq.ft. of cafes and restaurants, and
- 27,000 sq.ft. of banks and building societies.

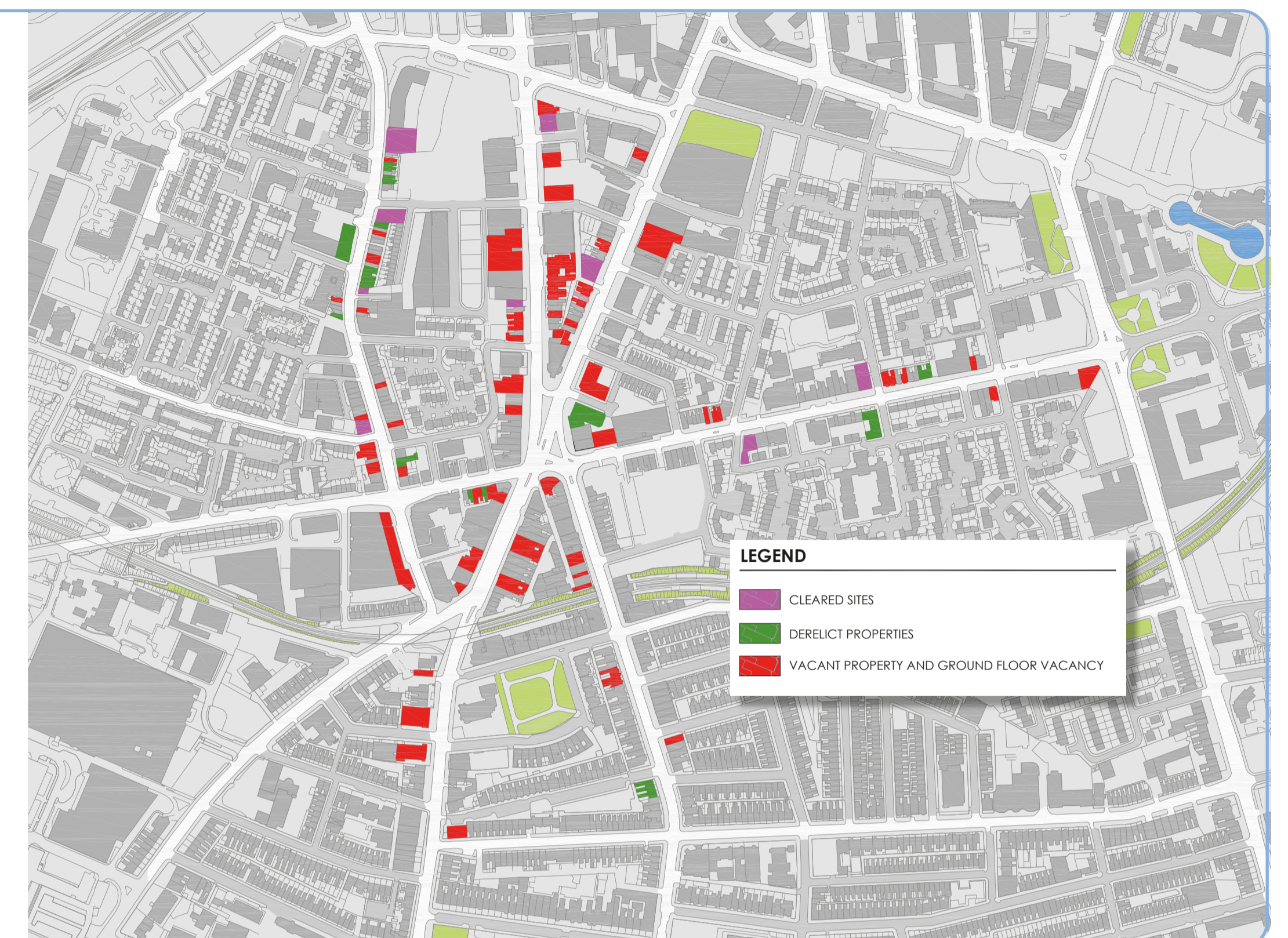


Vacancy and Dereliction

In the past generation there has been considerable contraction of the area's retail and residential functions, whereas there has been considerable expansion of its catering and hospitality functions. In terms of the use of land:-

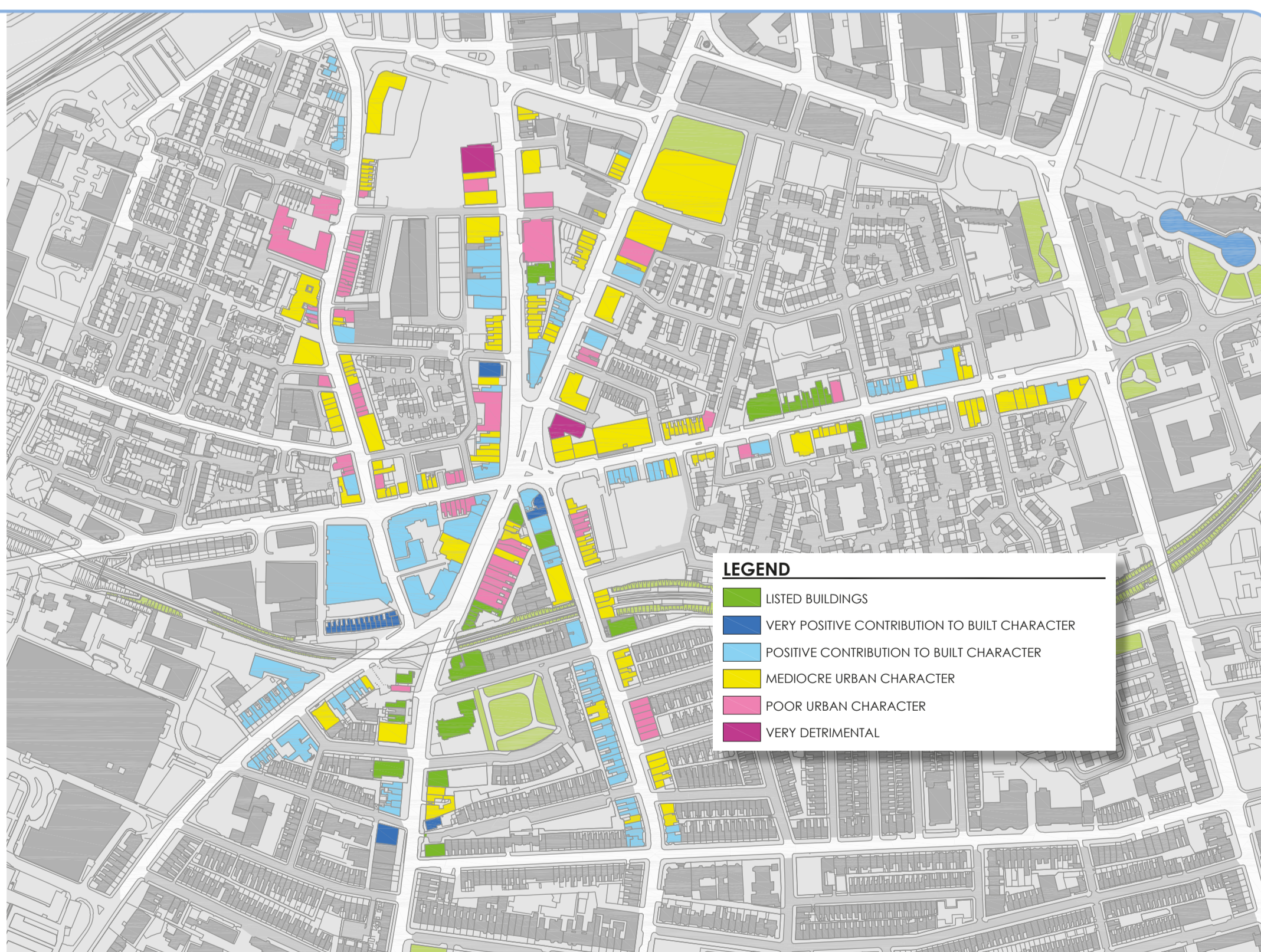
- 25% has been cleared of previous buildings,
- 7% is occupied by derelict buildings,
- 11% is occupied by vacant buildings, and
- 57% is occupied by buildings in use.

This indicates the extent of the loss of beneficial activity in the past generation. There are particularly high levels of vacancy of both retail premises (36% of the total) and office space (29% of the total).



Urban form

This is now an area that has lost much of its earlier visual coherence, both through the opening up of many gaps within the street frontages along with considerable variation in the height and mass of redeveloped buildings. The wider area is now characterised by a visually confusing mix of remnants of the original Victorian terraces, unsightly gaps often occupied by temporary car parks, modern redevelopments of very varied quality and character but often exceedingly bulky and dominant, along with a visual clutter of signage on buildings and "street furniture" on the streets. The well-mannered elegance of the original Victorian city of this part of Belfast has been replaced by a fragmented and "shrill" urban environment. This is particularly true of Shaftesbury Square and Great Victoria Street.



Building condition

While there remain a considerable number of handsome and well maintained buildings both older and modern; overall this is an area that gives the impression of having seen better times because of the prevalence of buildings that are in either very poor condition or derelict. Again this is a particularly characteristic of Shaftesbury Square and Great Victoria Street.

