

Urban Form and Spatial Structure

The spatial structure of Dublin is provided by both its natural and man-made features. The river Liffey, together with the area between the canals, containing both the old city and the world famous Georgian Squares, all help to convey the city's strong character and identity. The basic building blocks of this unique urban character consist of individual buildings, streets, urban spaces and neighbourhoods. At all levels it is important to foster character and coherent patterns of urban structure, to make the city more legible and create a sense of place.

The existing Development Plan strategy for the spatial structure of the city has three key elements:

- Expanding the city centre eastwards to the Docklands and westwards to Heuston
- Developing 'Prime Urban Centres' as sustainable hubs in the suburbs e.g. North Fringe, Ballymun, Crumlin and Rathmines
- Making new "developing areas/regeneration areas, such as Pelletstown, Digital Hub and Poolbeg

Urban Form & Density

One of the main objectives of the current Development Plan is to create a sustainable compact city with good public transport, less reliance on cars and a sustainable mix of services e.g. schools, libraries, shops, parks for each neighbourhood. Dublin is recognised as a relatively low density city compared to many European cities, although there are a growing number of good examples of quality higher density accommodation being provided (e.g. the new Ballymun, St. Anne's, Milltown and at York Street in the city centre)

A Coherent, Connected City

The city centre contains new clusters of development such as at Docklands, Temple Bar, and Heuston. Others are emerging, including the DIT at Grangegorman and the Digital Hub. In addition, a number of new civic spaces have been created for example, the GPO plaza on O'Connell Street, Smithfield and at the City Hall. The City Council aims to link these clusters and spaces so that people can find their way around the city and experience Dublin's unique character and atmosphere.

Urban Design / Architecture

Urban design is essentially a tool to assist in the craft of creating quality urban spaces; it is about how buildings are put together to shape and enliven our streets and civic spaces. Good urban design supports the economic, social, cultural and sustainability goals of the city.

Architecture, if done properly contributes to the quality of urban life, civic pride and city identity. Good architecture recognises that most buildings work quietly as a backdrop to the city and in turn allows the city to be distinctive.

Urban Public Space

Public space is fundamental to city living and quality of life. Being able to take part, as individuals and communities, in our public spaces is an affirmation of democracy, tolerance and the enjoyment of urban life. Dublin has in the last decade seen the growth of a promising recent network of public space from Meeting House Square, City Hall, the Liffey Boardwalk and Grand Canal Dock.

The Suburbs

Dublin's built-up area is now extending out to the city boundaries, with new communities at the North Fringe, Pelletstown and Park West. The challenge here is to ensure that these areas are integrated into the structure of the city. The strategy in the current City Development Plan is to promote a 4-tier hierarchy of suburban centres:

- 1st Tier Prime Urban Centres
- 2nd Tier District Centres
- 3rd Tier Village / High Street Centres
- 4th Tier Neighbourhood Centres

The suburbs also contain some large tracts of industrial lands, which have relatively low employment provision e.g. at Naas Road and Clonsaugh.



A City of Neighbourhoods

Dublin City Development Boards "City of Neighbourhoods" Strategy 2002-2012, aims to promote a hierarchy of good neighbourhoods in all areas of the city. There are many definitions of what constitutes a good urban neighbourhood. The National Economic and Social Council Report 2004 states that they should have a mix of uses, include all generations, provide for a balanced work / life and be safe and clean. The Bristol Accord 2005, suggests that a sustainable neighbourhood should be inclusive, well designed, thriving and tolerant.

Tall Buildings as part of the City's Urban Structure

Although Dublin remains predominantly a low-rise city, it contains a number of taller buildings such as Liberty Hall and the Alto Vero building at Grand Canal Dock. In previous centuries church spires and domes punctuated the city skyline. The current Development Plan protects the historic city centre including the Georgian Squares while providing for height in certain locations to promote investment and city identity. However this policy appears to have resulted in lack of clarity for both developers and the general public.



Urban Form and Spatial Structure: The Big Picture Questions

- How can the Development Plan enhance Dublin's uniqueness in this era of globalisation?
- How can the Development Plan help integrate regeneration areas into a more coherent urban structure?
- How can the urban structure facilitate the most sustainable patterns of settlement and employment?
- How can a tall building policy provide more certainty for investors and the public?
- How can we achieve sustainable densities which will enhance the urban structure of Dublin and create a place where people will want to live / work?
- How can we create safe and pleasant linkages between different parts of the city?
- How should we design and manage successful streets? Have our recent streets e.g. Cows Lane, Ballymun High Street been successful?
- How can we retain the urban grain and texture, given global trends for larger floorplates?
- How can contemporary architecture match the quality and longevity of earlier periods?
- Should the Development Plan set out principles for good architecture?
- How can we develop public spaces for a variety of events, markets entertainment, relaxation etc.?
- How can spaces be designed and managed so that they are safe and clean?
- How can the Development Plan enliven the existing Prime Urban Centres (PUC's) of Finglas, Ballymun, North Fringe, Northside, Phibsborough, Rathmines, Crumlin Shopping and Ballyfermot? Is there a need for new PUCs?
- How can the Development Plan ensure create good, sustainable neighbourhoods with a distinct identities and strong community pride?
- How can a tall building policy add to the identity and structure of the city in a coherent way, without compromising the existing historic urban forum and heritage?

**What do you think? Have we left out any of The Big Picture issues?
We want to hear your views...**