

DESIGNING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: STRUGGLING TO COMBINE BEAUTY WITH EQUITY

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Abstract

Drawing from international debates on the compact city, new urbanism and urban renaissance, recent Irish planning and housing policy has stressed the centrality of developing sustainable communities and neighbourhoods as part of the regeneration of inner city areas. However, in regenerating inner city neighbourhoods, and in particular social housing complexes, tensions and conflicts have arisen between the urban design agenda and the social and community agenda. This paper, using case studies of the regeneration of social housing complexes in inner Dublin into mixed tenure neighbourhoods, explores the tensions between policies and practices that emphasise the creation of sustainable communities through innovations in planning and urban design, and the challenges of creating and delivering socially sustainable communities on the ground. Design and beauty, it is argued, predominate over considerations of integration and equity.

Key words: regeneration; urban design; Dublin; equity

1 Introduction

1.1 The return of urban design

The introduction to a new 'reader' in urban design argues that in key ways the emergence of what is termed modern urban design is in large part a return to what are termed elements of classic urbanism, such as walkable neighbourhoods, a human scale and an active public realm (Larice and McDonald, 2007). Indeed, the recent publication of two 'readers' in urban design is in part testament to the resurgence of the subject as an academic and professional discipline (see also Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007). While it is true to a great extent that modern urban design is partly a reincarnation of classical urbanism, it should also be noted that urban design has returned in a number of different guises. For example, the rise of the 'new urbanism' agenda is heavily inscribed with urban design principles and practice (Talen, 2005; Grant, 2006). Likewise, the emergence and development of the 'urban renaissance' policy in the UK is heavily suffused with the language of urban design (Imrie and Raco, 2003). Both these planning zeitgeists, new urbanism and the urban renaissance, are significantly influenced by architectural or design determinism, with the implication being that there are design solutions to social issues. This is an old trope in the history of planning and recurs often. Perhaps the latest appearance of this relationship is in the debate on sustainable communities (Raco, 2005, 2007). While the sustainable communities debate is about an holistic approach to the generation and regeneration of communities, urban design is a fundamental element of the policy arsenal in creating sustainable communities. In the broadest sense this paper explores critically the attempt to create sustainable communities via the mechanism of urban design.

1.2 Context and rationale

In the past decade or so there have been a number of paradigm changes in planning policy and practice in Ireland, some reflecting international trends, others more local influences. One of the core changes, emanating from the late 1990s, has been a significant turn to urban design. It would not be an exaggeration to say that prior to the mid 1990s there had been little or no emphasis on urban design in planning policy and practice and this was evident in the often poor and mediocre standard of many residential developments. However, in the past decade sustainable development policies have been developed and advocated across a number of policy areas, nowhere more so than in the field of spatial planning. With regard to urban planning in particular, sustainable development principles have led to an emphasis on creating a compact urban form which in turn has led to a stress on residential density and urban design as the key means of achieving a compact city form. According to the policy, a compact urban form, directed by proper urban design, is more environmentally efficient and sustainable and further, that it allows the creation of sustainable communities.

It is the contention of this paper that urban design is now seen as a core element of creating sustainable communities and that while this proposition has some validity, that it suffers from an old criticism of many planning ideas, in that it is environmentally or design determinist. Moreover, we argue that urban design needs to be more nuanced with respect to different client groups and that claims to universalism need to be treated with caution. The new policy documentation on residential density and urban design in Ireland is suffused with ideas and proposals which link aspects of the physical environment to the more social notion of a sustainable community. The paper examines the urban design paradigm in the quite complex and controversial case of the demolition and redevelopment of social housing flat complexes in inner Dublin. We explore, in particular, the tensions that exist between what is seen as an urban design solution to creating a sustainable community, a path taken by developers and local authorities, and a more socially-driven solution, being pushed by the local community. The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 examines in some detail the emergence of the urban design paradigm in Ireland. Section 3 takes a detailed case study of a proposed social housing estate regeneration in Dublin and explores the tensions over how a sustainable community might be created and in particular the differing views with respect to urban design and density. Section 4 makes some provisional conclusions.

2 Urban design and density in Ireland

2.1 Sustainable development policy in Ireland

Like most other developed countries, the past decade or so has seen a major shift towards sustainable development policy and practice across many policy areas. In the arena of spatial planning, the notion of sustainable development, no matter how it is defined, is seen as the core driving force of policy and practice. In 1997 the Irish Government published a major policy document on sustainable development policy and this has informed other policy areas such as planning (Government of Ireland, 1997). In spatial planning, the idea of sustainable development was codified in the publication of the seminal *National Spatial Strategy*, which proposed balanced regional development through a plan-led strategy. The plan-led strategy encompasses a cascade of plans from the national spatial strategy, regional plans, county

development plans to specialised local area plans, all of which are interrelated and complementary.

With regard to housing, the NSS sets out a series tests which should in future be used in determining the location of housing in urban areas. While these tests are inevitably general, the emphasis is very much on sustainability, integration and the maximisation of existing urban land and associated services.

Table 1 Housing Location Tests for Urban Areas

Tests	Evaluation Considerations
The Asset Test	Are there existing community resources, such as schools etc. with spare capacity?
The Carrying Capacity Test	Is the environmental setting capable of absorbing development in terms of drainage etc.?
The Transport Test	Is there potential for reinforcing usage of public transport, walking, cycling etc?
The Economic Development Test	Is there potential to ensure integration between the location of housing and employment?
The Character Test	Will the proposal reinforce a sense of place and character
The Community Test	Will the proposal reinforce the integrity and vitality if the local community and services that can be provided?
The Integration Test	Will the proposal aid an integrated approach to catering for the housing needs of all sections of society?

Source: Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2002:103.

Table 2, again taken from the NSS, emphasises the need to develop and consolidate existing urban areas before deciding to develop greenfield sites. This sequential approach to development, if actually implemented, would have profound consequences for the planning and development of Dublin, as it would in theory seek to locate most new development within the metropolitan area and within the primary and secondary development centres.

Table 2 Urban Consolidation Priorities

1. Identify opportunities for re-use	Through the development plan process, identify under-utilised or underdeveloped lands within town and villages
2. Realise options for re-use	Realise identified opportunities using, for example, the Derelict Sites Act and acquisition of key sites
3. Identify extension options	Where sufficient development opportunities within the urban area are not available, consider appropriate extension options to the village or town
4. Realise extension options	Follow up on options for extensions to the built up area using the location tests

Source: Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2002: 104.

2.2 Paradigm shift – towards higher residential densities

While the national spatial strategy was published in 2002, the essence of the shift to sustainable development in housing had in fact taken place a few years earlier. The publication of residential density guidelines in 1999 represented a fundamental paradigm shift in Irish planning (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1999). Heretofore, characteristic suburban residential development was low-density (10 dwellings per hectare), low-rise, and consisted of terraced or semi-detached housing, with front and back gardens and off-street parking. As a result, the urban form and footprint of many Irish cities was one of suburban sprawl. However, the residential density guidelines advocated very significant increases in densities which in turn led to a necessity to consider urban design in a much more systematic and careful manner than before. The residential density guidelines proposed increasing significantly residential density in different sub-areas of towns and cities. For example, densities of 90-120 dwellings per hectare were proposed in some inner areas while densities of 20 dwellings per hectare were proposed on greenfield sites. These density guidelines were adopted as national policy and superseded any local policies contained in local development plans. Cognisant that such guidelines might give carte blanche to developers to build at higher densities but with low quality design, the guidelines developed a series of design standards that had to be considered in order to deliver high quality residential environments. This move to higher densities, alongside the need to consider design standards, has led to the development of urban design as the method of balancing increased density with quality liveable environments.

In addition to policy on higher residential densities, another policy and practice change has led to a further emphasis on urban design. The Planning and Development Act 2000 brought into law the notion of local area plans (Government of Ireland, 2000). Such plans, which were in effect subsets of a county or city plan, were in effect the introduction of detailed master planning for either major new residential or mixed used developments in green field sites or for regeneration areas. In practice these plans have been very comprehensive master plans containing very detailed urban design prescriptions. In Dublin, for example, examples of such master planning can be seen in the development of the major new town called Adamstown to the west of the city (see www.adamstown.ie) and the regeneration of the largest social housing area, Ballymun, to the north of the city (see www.brl.ie).

2.3 Codification: The establishment of urban design in housing policy

In the past two years policies in residential density, urban design and sustainable communities have been further codified and established in a number of policy documents. The recent housing policy statement *Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2007a) outlines the Government's vision on housing for the coming years and takes as a starting point the adoption of sustainable approaches to housing and the building of communities. Sustainable communities, according to the policy, "are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well-planned, built and run, offer equality of opportunity and good services for all"(2007a, p.21). The physical and environmental elements of sustainable communities envisaged by *Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities*, are clearly outlined in the policy. The type of neighbourhoods that are promoted in the housing policy statement are "*areas where an efficient use of land, high quality urban design and effective integration in the provision of physical and social*

infrastructure such as public transport, schools, amenities and other facilities combine to create places people want to live in” (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2007, p. 26). This definition is resonant of the traditional neighbourhood design promoted by New Urbanism (Katz 1994, Duany *et al.* 2000) and also reflects the positive features of the compact city literature (Breheny 1992) together with the UK government policy on Urban Renaissance (DETR 1999, 2000). The type of features promoted in these international concepts and policy and also reflected in Irish policy include, countering sprawl, through the consolidation of urban areas, the creation of compact urban satellites developed around transport infrastructure, and the promotion of mixed use and well-designed higher density development. At neighbourhood level this translates into neighbourhoods which have a clear centre, are walkable, have a street network that takes the form of a web or grid, has a mix of uses, high amenity green spaces and narrow versatile streets (National Economic and Social Council, 2004, pp. 125-126). In addition, while Dublin is a low-rise city, a debate has emerged in planning circles that encourages an increase in height (Dublin City Council, 2007).

A companion volume to the housing policy statement, entitled *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities*, fleshes out some of the design implications of the broad policy. It is argued that ‘*A key aim of urban design is to deliver sustainable communities through the creation of a high quality built environment, by reducing, as far as possible, the necessity to travel, particularly by private car for the purposes of employment, education and recreation and to avail of services and amenities necessary for living*’ (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2007b, p21). Table 3, taken from the document, illustrates what is considered sustainable housing. Government have also recently produced an *Urban Design Manual* which gives very detailed guidance and examples of urban design (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008b).

Table 3 Quality Sustainable Housing

<p>Socially and environmentally appropriate The type of accommodation, support services and amenities provided should be appropriate to the needs of the people to be accommodated. The mix of dwelling type, size and tenure should support sound social, environmental and economic sustainability policy objectives for the area and promote the development of appropriately integrated play and recreation spaces.</p> <p>Architecturally appropriate The scheme should provide a pleasant living environment, which is aesthetically pleasing and human in scale. The scheme design solution should understand and respond appropriately to its context so that the development will enhance the neighbourhood and respect its cultural heritage.</p> <p>Accessible and adaptable There should be ease of access and circulation for all residents, including people with impaired mobility, enabling them to move as freely as possible within and through the development, to gain access to buildings and to use the services and amenities provided. Dwellings should be capable of adaptation to meet changing needs of residents during the course of their lifetime.</p> <p>Safe, secure and healthy The scheme should be a safe and healthy place in which to live. It should be possible for pedestrians and cyclists to move within and through the area with reasonable ease and in safety. Provision for vehicular circulation, including access for service vehicles, should not compromise these objectives.</p> <p>Affordable The scheme should be capable of being built, managed and maintained at reasonable cost, having regard to the nature of the development.</p> <p>Durable</p>

The best available construction techniques should be used and key elements of construction should have a service life in the order of sixty years without the need for abnormal repair or replacement works.

Resource efficient

Efficient use should be made of land, infrastructure and energy. The location should be convenient to transport, services and amenities. Design and orientation of dwellings should take account of site topography so as to control negative wind effects and optimise the benefits of sunlight, daylight and solar gain; optimum use should be made of renewable sources of energy, the use of scarce natural resources in the construction, maintenance and management of the dwellings should be minimised.

Source: DoEHLG (2008, p7)

The residential density guidelines, first introduced in 1999, have been revised and republished as *Sustainable Residential development in urban areas* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008a), which further codifies and entrenches the urban design agenda. Moreover, government have introduced guidelines on the development of apartments in urban areas - *Sustainable urban housing: design standards for new apartments* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2007c).

2.4 Policy versus Practice

While it is clear from the above that there has been a plethora of legislation and policy pushing the compact city and urban design agenda it is worth examining what has happened in practice. From the mid 1980s until 2008 generous tax incentives were available to investors and occupiers for new apartment development in Dublin's inner area. As a consequence, over the past twenty years approximately 20,000 new apartments have been built in the inner area of Dublin. While the policy has advocated high quality design recent research by Redmond, Scott and Howley (2007) show that although there is a high overall level of satisfaction with apartment living, when we examine the issue in more detail, we get a more complex picture. The research shows that there are high levels of dissatisfaction with aspects of apartment living, in particular residents are highly dissatisfied with: the availability of internal storage space; the quality of noise insulation; kitchen layout and size; the view from the dwelling. When the results are broken down by apartment size, we see that the levels of dissatisfaction with one bedroom apartments are particularly high. In addition, there was also significant dissatisfaction with some aspects of the apartment block, particularly the lack of open space, lack of storage space and noise from neighbours. With regard to the neighbourhood in which the apartment block is located, the survey showed that there are high levels of dissatisfaction with levels of noise, the amount of litter and the cost of housing. Crucially, over half of all respondents thought that the area was not suitable for bringing up children. These results are quite negative in tone and bode ill for the idea of developing sustainable communities through good urban design.

2.5 Mixing social and private housing

The results with regard to satisfaction with apartment living summarised above refer to private renters or owner occupiers. However, the issue of high density living takes on an even more complicated, not to say controversial, aspect when we consider urban design and the mixing of tenures. Two policy changes in the past decade have led to mixed tenure developments, where social housing tenants are mixed with private occupiers, and these developments have major implications for the practice of urban design. In 2000 the Planning

and Development Act introduced a mixed tenure policy whereby private sector housing developers, as a condition of planning permission, must transfer up to 20% of the site to the local authority who can subsequently use it for a combination of social rented housing and/or affordable housing for purchase. This planning gain measure applies in all urban areas in Ireland. In practical terms when a developer completes a block of 100 apartments, for example, 20 of the apartments must be transferred to the local authority who will subsequently rent 10 units to social housing tenants and sell 10 to affordable first time purchasers. This measure has caused considerable controversy and is disliked by developers. From a planners perspective it has generated a series of design quandaries. For example, developers will have particular views on where exactly social housing tenants should be located in an apartment block. Some developers have tried to insist that social housing tenants have separate access (Brooke, 2006). In essence, should social housing tenants be randomly distributed through an apartment block or segregated in some micro manner? In theory, according to government advice, developments are to be integrated and have no visible trace of segregation. Either way, this measure has thrown up significant challenges for urban design.

The second way in which mixed tenure has come to the fore has been through the regeneration of social housing estates through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). In the past decade Dublin City Council have sought to demolish and redevelop a number of inner city social housing flat complexes via PPP mechanisms. The PPP policy was conceived during the years of the property boom in Ireland where property and land prices increased exponentially. Developers were asked to tender to demolish and redevelop social housing estates as mixed tenure areas or neighbourhoods at considerably higher residential densities than the existing social housing estate. In effect developers were given some of the site for free, on which they could develop and sell private housing at market value, and in exchange the developer built and transferred some new social housing to the local authority on another part of the site. Such regeneration sites were subject to detailed pre-planning discussions between the existing social housing tenants and the local authority about the overall design of the new mixed tenure estate and a raft of contentious issues have arisen such as the overall mix between social and private housing, dwelling size, storage, private open space, car parking, safety and security and the quality of internal fixture and fittings. What has emerged is quite significant disagreements over design, hinting that urban design is not perhaps the seemingly neutral activity it sometimes purports to be.

3 The reality of Regeneration and Urban Design

The regeneration process on social housing estates in Dublin's Inner city has thrown into sharp relief the extent to which issues of design and density are a challenge for residents living in an existing local authority flat/apartment complex. In the private sector, new home purchasers of inner city apartments are often prepared to trade off levels of open space, and sometimes internal space in order to be close to the city centre. In many cases young first time buyers view apartment living as an ideal starter home from which they intend to move as their family circumstances change. Research in Dublin has shown that the purchasers of new inner city apartments have tended to be either young single people or young couples, with few

families living in the newer high density developments within the city (Howley *et al.* 2009a and 2009b). In an inner city social housing complex the community profile is very different and the regeneration process may require real changes in a community's living environment, without the same element of choice involved. Design issues which may seem to be offering considerable improvements in the living environment from a design professional's view, may hold significant concerns for residents faced with major regeneration. As outlined below these concerns are not unfounded and are based on residents' knowledge of other regeneration projects, their lived experience of anti- social behaviour and the challenges they face with their existing living environment. Drawing on a case study of Dolphin House in Dublin's South Inner city we will document some of these below and relate how the realities of redesign and regeneration match the principals outlined in the policy sustainable communities and urban design guidelines.

3.1 Case Study Area: Dolphin House

Dolphin House, a local authority flat complex built in the 1950s is currently in the earliest stages of the regeneration process. Consisting of 436 units in total and a population of almost 900 the estate is now one of the largest remaining local authority flat complexes in Dublin city. At its core it is a relatively stable estate and has a tight knit community, however at the margins it suffers from anti-social and intimidatory activity. There are also problems with the physical fabric of the estate, with ongoing accommodation and maintenance problems (Dolphin House Community Development Association, 2009). Since November 2007 the community and the Dolphin House Community Development Association (DHCA) have been involved in an intensive process of consultation surrounding the potential regeneration of their estate. Although discussions regarding regeneration of the estate have been taking place since 2002, it is only in the past 18 months that significant and in depth engagement of the community has taken place. The authors have been engaged in a study of the regeneration process on the Dolphin House estate since November 2007. This has involved undertaking qualitative research including participant observation at community meetings and interviews with residents and those working in the community, together with quantitative survey research

3.2 Regeneration Demolition and Refurbishment

A key overriding issue in the regeneration process in Dolphin House has been the debate surrounding demolition and refurbishment as options in the regeneration process. At the very outset of the regeneration process the local authority Dublin City Council and residents alike, seemed willing to consider all potential improvement and redevelopment options. Indeed the very first study in relation to regeneration on the estate carried out in 2003/2004 by architectural consultants Urban Design Ltd. recommended regeneration options including refurbishment, infill buildings and partial demolition. However, these initial proposals were never fully debated or discussed with the local community and ultimately Dublin City Council, which had initially commissioned the study, shelved these proposals. The reason behind the abandonment of these initial proposals can be attributed to the shift in policy by both the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government, and Dublin City Council away from direct State financing of regeneration and refurbishment of social housing estates, towards undertaking regeneration projects through the process of Public Private

Partnerships (PPP). The focus since 2004 on PPP has meant that complete demolition and redevelopment has become the preferred option from the perspective of the City Council and has thus influenced regeneration options and design in the intervening years. In 2006 the City Council began the process of commissioning a Feasibility Study on PPP development options for Dolphin House. The principles of development for the feasibility study drawn up by the city council in 2006, clearly highlight the role of increased densities, heights, and a significant increase in private sector development on the site. These principles are influenced by the residential density guidelines, and are echoed in the policy documents outlined above.

These Principles of Development were focused on providing a ‘social mix’ of residential and commercial development aimed at maximising the development potential of the estate. The principles included “examining the extent to which housing of mixed tenure could be developed within the area” (Rose, 2006). The Dolphin House site had, according to one of DCC’s Senior Planners, “great potential to provide a very attractive and dense mixed-use new city quarter with a significant number of sustainable new homes” (Rose, 2006, 1). The “vibrant mix of uses” in the new estate would be biased toward income-generating uses such as private residential, commercial retail, offices, recreation (leisure, hotels) education (private third-level college) uses (Rose, 2006, 2). There was a clear emphasis on maximising the value of the site, as was the case with all of the PPPs mooted by the City Council (Drudy and Punch, 2005; Bisset, 2009).

Under a section entitled: “Heights and Opportunity Costs,” Rose (2006, 3) outlines that, “for a wide range of reasons there should be no rigid/arbitrary height limits...There are great opportunity costs involved in limiting heights to a relatively low level and these can be: lesser housing quality, less public open space, fewer new homes provided: fewer employment opportunities and other facilities; less funds available for public facilities such as a public library; wasteful use of scarce city centre land; negative impacts on regeneration possibilities...Setting height maximums in St Michael’s resulted in the loss of a good sized public park.” There should, it was argued be ‘flexibility’ which would “allow for major office use, private third level college, major hotel or an entertainment centre” (Rose, 2006, 4). The brief thus clearly outlined trade offs between increased heights and densities and the delivery of a range of social facilities, but also focused on providing flexibility to the private sector to provide commercial facilities of whatever type seemed pertinent – given the panoply of uses suggested.

The actual feasibility study for the site prepared by MCO Architects, the firm which won the tender, reflects many elements of these Principles of Development and the design is premised on PPP. The issue of increased densities is a central component of this, with the study estimating that 800 residential units could be provided on the site presuming a 50/50 split between commercial and residential development, or up to 1000 residential units presuming a 70/30 split between commercial and residential, with buildings of up to 12 storeys recommended on certain sections of the site.

When the feasibility study was completed in October 2007, the DHCDA argued for significant resources be allocated to allow them to hire architectural and other expertise in order to analyse the feasibility study, to develop alternative options (as they felt that the option being put forward did not reflect the views of the community) and to facilitate the engagement of the entire community in the regeneration process, something which they felt

had been missing up to that point¹. After significant negotiation the City council agreed in March 2008 to provide the community with the funds to hire their own planning/architectural experts to help them craft a response to the feasibility study, and for other facilitation expertise, but only on condition that the residents agreed in principle to the PPP process, and premised on this, demolition and regeneration. Somewhat reluctantly the DHCDA agreed.

In May 2008 the community's architects/planning consultants and independent communication and consultation consultants were finally appointed and a process of consultation and engagement with the community was initiated in June 2008. The discussions, view finding meetings, site visits, consultation sessions and surveys (see table 4 for an overview of the process), which have been carried out since then regarding the regeneration process on the Dolphin House Estate, reveal the tensions between official policy and how it is manifested on the ground.

Table 4 Dolphin Decides Consultation and Community Engagement: Timeline of Main Events

November 07	Joint Regeneration Board set up. DCC present their PPP feasibility study for complete demolition and regeneration prepared by MCO Architects
March 08	Resources secured for technical aid to assess feasibility study and develop community plan
May 08	Technical expertise appointed
June 08	Block groups set up
June 30th, July 1st and 2nd July 10th	Initial block group meetings: View Finding meetings. Discussing residents opinions of estate and hopes for regeneration. Residents from Dolphin House Visit to O Devaney Gardens, Poplar Row (Ballybough) and Marmion Court regeneration projects
July 16th	Residents provide their views to community architects (Sheridan Woods) 7pm Community Centre First newsletter distributed

¹ These resources were something which the DHCDA had been arguing for from the moment they had been informed that the council wanted to develop a feasibility study for PPP for Dolphin House and indeed only agreed to the feasibility study going ahead on the proviso that such funds would be forthcoming from the City Council.

July 22nd	CEO Barnardos and JRB Chair Fergus Finlay launches Dolphin Decides Summer Project. Resident and young people's survey undertaken for architects.
September 19th	Social Regeneration Planning Meeting for workers and voluntary groups and residents.
October 6th	Visit to Fatima apartments and inside houses
October 8th	Second Newsletter distributed with outline of architects analysis and options
October 20th	Block Groups Joint meeting. Architect presents analysis of options & feasibility study
November and December 08	Survey of all residents of Dolphin on the regeneration options.

3.3 Density Issues

The issue of increased density is one which is central to the current national and local policies in relation to sustainable development. All new development and regeneration proposals are encouraged to increase densities, particularly in inner city areas and on sites served by good public transport. In regeneration projects, where PPP is the favoured means of delivery, the focus on profitability for the private sector makes increasing densities an even greater priority. Increased densities are required to accommodate, existing households and a quantum of private households. Although, increasing density does not necessarily require an increase in height of development, in some cases this does occur and for existing residents there are often real concerns that heights of development in their estate will be increased. This was an issue that arose throughout the consultation phase.

During the consultation process held during the Summer of 2008, the architects and community consultation experts worked with the community to develop their vision for a redevelopment estate. Residents expressed clear concerns regarding the increase in density and height on their estate, with concerns expressed about overdevelopment and of the site and overshadowing. The architects for their part, while respecting the community views, were cogniscent of the need to address the various policy documents in place that would necessitate higher densities on site. Thus, the environmental criteria developed by the architects for assessing the development options reflect both community views and current policy.

By the Autumn of 2008 the Community Architects had drawn up three regeneration options for the estate and presented these to the community, these were a Refurbishment Option (Option1), a Partial Refurbishment and Intensification Option, including some demolition (Option 2) and a Complete Redevelopment Option which involved – demolition and rebuilding of the estate(Option 3A). A fourth option presented to residents and evaluated by

the Architects, was a development option previously prepared for Dublin City Council by MCO architects, also a complete demolition and redevelopment option but with higher densities (Option 3B). The presentation of these options to residents through the circulation of a community newsletter and community meetings allowed residents to consider in more detail the design implications of potential redevelopment proposals. These consultation sessions were followed by a full survey of the estate using a questionnaire survey which ascertained residents' views of each of the options and their overall preferences. The survey, which was carried out in November and December 2008 had a response rate of 80% and clearly revealed some of the residents' preferences.

Residents expressed concern in relation to density and particularly the increased height in both of the demolition and redevelopment options. At the consultation meetings residents made the following comments. A six storey block in Option 3A raised the following comment:

“we’re going higher – we’re being moved into six storeys – sure that’s no good either”

and

“They are disgraceful them pictures, the storeys too high”

The Feasibility study option which had blocks of 8 -12 storeys elicited the following comments:

“Ballymun on the Southside – No Way!”

“Imagine the shouting from the balcony of an 8 storey”

The questionnaire survey revealed a preference for the demolition and rebuild option (67 per cent of respondents) and of these favoured the Community Architect’s option (91 per cent), however the elements of this option which the highest numbers of residents disliked included proposed height increases and increase in population. Indicating the residents’ concerns around density and height.

Table 5 Option 3A Demolition and Rebuild Community Architects’ Proposal: Elements Disliked by Respondents

Option 3A Elements Disliked	Number	Percentage
Dislikes Demolition With Residents Still Living There	15	4.3
Dislikes Smaller Green Space	28	8
Dislikes Increased Height	58	16.5
Dislikes Commercial Development	9	2.6
Dislikes Lots of New Residents	33	9.4
Dislikes Too Much Private Sector Development	24	6.8
Dislikes Other Reason	32	9.1
Dislikes Nothing	18	5.1

Source: Dolphin House Community Survey

The fourth option presented which was the original MCO feasibility study Option 3B, with its inclusion of development of between 8 and 12 storeys was very strenuously opposed. Only 8 per cent of the respondents who stated that they favoured complete demolition and redevelopment favoured this option. The survey revealed the grounds for this opposition rooted in concerns about heights and amounts of incoming residents.

3.4 Tenure Mix

The increased density on the estate which is a prerequisite for regeneration based on PPP, involves the proposed construction of significant amounts of private development in addition to the replacement of the 436 units of public housing on the estate. As we have discussed elsewhere tenure mixing in regenerated housing estates using PPP has two perceived advantages for a local authority, firstly, the regeneration process is funded by the private sector and the areas effects of large scale social housing are tackled through tenure mix (Redmond & Russell, 2008). The two options of demolition and rebuild are both based on significant new private sector development on the Dolphin House estate, while the partial demolition and redevelopment also involves some new private sector development. The following table outlines the potential numbers of units involved.

Table 6 Division Between Social and Private Housing Different Options

Option	Amount Social Housing	Amount Private Housing Approx*	Total Units Approx
Option 1 Refurbishment	436	0	436
Option 2 Partial Refurbishment and Intensification	436	257 (37%)	693
Option 3A Complete Redevelopment Community Architects	436	321 (42%)	757
Option 3 B Complete Redevelopment MCO Feasibility	436	498 (53%)	934

These figures were based on assumptions of certain land transfers.

Source: Sheridan Woods Architects and Urban Planners, 2008

The residents responses to the provision of increased numbers on the estate was mixed – while there was a general acceptance that private sector development on the estate was a good idea, with 42 per cent of residents agreeing (35 per cent disagreed, while 11 per cent did not know and 12 per cent did not answer). However, when questioned further, the residents overwhelming opted for the option of the lowest quantum of private development outlined.

Table 7 Level of Private Housing that is Considered Acceptable by Residents

Amount of Private Housing Acceptable	Number	Percentage
30 % private	114	47.1
40% private	25	10.3
50% private	23	9.5
60% private	8	3.3
No private	55	22.7
Don't Know	17	7.0
Total	242	100.0

Total n = 352 Missing= 100

Source: Dolphin House Community Survey

For those who had answered negatively that they did not believe in private sector development, the reasons they gave related to getting a better deal for the community, and ensuring that there was social housing going forward.

“Keep it for the community-community based rather than private”

“Enough private, people need council housing”

“Keep it social for the generation coming”

There was also a concern that there would be no controls over who came into the neighbourhood that the residents would not know the new private owners, or tenants

“Don't know who is living in them”

“Won't know who people are. Happy with community”

“Too many private-more and more houses”

This issue is dealt with in more detail below in relation to the issue of the location of social and private housing on a regenerated estate.

3.5 Dwelling Type and Layout

Once consultation began with residents on the estate regarding renewal, more detailed issues relating to dwelling type, design and layout came to a fore in the discussions. The issues which arose for Dolphin residents were.

- The type of dwellings to be provided
- The location of social and private Housing

3.5.1 Dwelling Type – Houses versus Apartments

Throughout the process of regeneration many residents have expressed the desire that new housing units on the site would follow a more traditional typology with front and back gardens. This was reflected in the report from MCO dating from 2007 and is reiterated in the consultation exercises that have been carried out during the current phase of consultation. At the outset of the process residents asked if there would be houses provided and discussed some of the advantages and disadvantages of living in different types of accommodation. The following are notes recording some of the issues in a group discussion held in December 2007 which was a preliminary vision meeting regarding regeneration. People spoke about potentially getting to grips with a new type of accommodation

“We will have to get used to living in a house and living in a top/down accommodation, with stairs, and also having a front and back garden”

While another resident said that they would be, “Nervous, afraid of living in a house”,

A further resident talked about needing new furniture for a new home having to get rid of half the furniture,

“new accommodation will have state of the art furnishings – my stuff wouldn’t look right, it wouldn’t fit in.”

However, another resident expressed a preference for apartment accommodation, but used examples of locations with a greater tradition of apartment living and more spacious apartments than would be the norm in Ireland, this resident also wondered if a traditional house was an option at all:

“ I wouldn’t mind an apartment like they have in Manhattan, France, like, nice and big...do we even have a choice of a house?”

The residents did recognise the limits to physical improvements as reflected in the following statement, intimating that anti- social behaviour was likely to continue even in new accommodation:

“A leper will always have its disease – people who throw rubbish out windows/balconies will still do this in lovely houses, there is a need for a mix of houses and apartments.”

The community survey revealed a clear preference by residents for a house as the accommodation option they would most like to have in a redeveloped Dolphin estate² As the table below illustrates of those who answered this question, 51 per cent said their first preference would be a house, the next option favoured was a ground floor apartment. When the second preferences are studied the highest percentage, 47.8 per cent of residents,

² The options outlined by the Architects included no traditional houses and the questionnaire survey stressed that there may be few if any conventional houses in any regeneration proposal. However, the survey did include the option of a house to ascertain people’s preferences. Respondents were asked to rank their top three preferences.

expressed a preference for a duplex townhouse with one apartment above (the option closest to a traditional house).

Table 8 Respondents’ Housing Preference

Preferred Accommodation	First Preference	Percent	Second Preference	Percent	Third Preference	Percent
A House	121	51.5	17	9.2	11	7.64
Duplex Townhouse with one Apartment Above	31	13.2	88	47.8	20	13.89
Duplex Townhouse with two or three Apartments Above	4	1.7	11	6.0	48	33.33
An Apartment on the ground floor	41	17.4	19	10.3	29	20.14
An Apartment over ground	31	13.2	45	24.5	26	18.06
Purpose built senior citizen’s dwellings	7	3.0	4	2.2	10	6.94
Totals	235	100.0	184	100.0	144	100

Source: Dolphin House Community Survey

In reviewing the residents’ responses and their comments in more qualitative consultation sessions, while there was evidence of some acceptance among the residents that redevelopment is unlikely to facilitate the provision of a significant amount of traditional low density traditional housing, their aspiration and their preference for a traditional housing option remained. Some of this desire may be attributable to difficulties residents have experienced of living in flats/apartments which have no private open space and with communal stairways and shared access which are poorly maintained and which become the location of anti-social behaviour.

3.5.2 The location of social and private Housing and Community Cohesion

Another key concern expressed by residents relates to the layout of any redevelopment and where the public housing, of which they would be recipients would be located. Residents are concerned that redevelopment may mean that they lose the best locations on the site to the private sector. A further locational issue related to the extent to which in a regenerated housing estate people could keep their neighbours. This issue arose in consultation sessions and from the questionnaire survey. Given the disruption to community that such redevelopment can cause, residents are anxious to know if they will keep their neighbours in a redeveloped estate. This is particularly important where residents worry about being located beside or in proximity to a family or individual associated with antisocial behaviour, or where they have longstanding neighbours and friends.

“I have lived in Dolphin Estate for 26 years and they have been the best 26 years of my life, it is very important to keep my neighbours”

“I love my block, the people are nice, everyone says hello to each other. It would be important to keep each block together, keep the same neighbours”

(Comments recording at view finding meeting July 2008)

This evidence of neighbourliness and valuing community was also shown in results from a community survey carried out by the Architects in the July 2008 (response rate 139 households). The results show that 51 per cent of the households responding to the community questionnaire stated that the best thing about living on the Dolphin Estate was their neighbours. Residents and community workers report that unlike other inner city housing estates, the estate has a relatively settled and non-transient population, with many of the residents living there since it was first built and many second and third generations of families living on the estate.

The importance of retaining stability in the community and retaining this level of neighbourliness are viewed by the residents and the DHCDA as crucial to the success of any regeneration programme, and would seem essential to the creation of a sustainable new community. Yet the policy documents on sustainable communities do not pay much, if any, attention to this component of the sustainable community. Keeping the community intact and the estate fully tenanted are significant objectives for the DHCDA and they are concerned that without a robust Social Regeneration Plan and regeneration actually beginning to occur, there will be devastating impacts on the long standing community as anti social behaviour escalates. They worry that if the estate deteriorates the greater the likelihood that key community leaders and more stable residents will leave, which would be devastating for the estate. Therefore the issue of the role of design in contributing to safety is an extremely pertinent one.

3.6 Security and Defensible Space

The issue of security and anti social behaviour is a significant one for the residents of Dolphin House estate, consistently the issue of tackling anti social behaviour, particularly tackling drugs was seen as the primary factor that needs to be dealt with on the estate³. This was clearly revealed by the preliminary community survey undertaken by the architects where 13% of the highest percentage of the respondents answered that ‘safety’ was their hope when asked: What are your hopes for the Dolphin Estate? While 16% said that increased safety and addressing the drugs problem were the key things that should be done to make the Dolphin Estate a better place? As the Architects conclude in relation to this early phase of consultation;

“We note the principal aspiration for the regeneration of the estate is safe environment. The community survey indicates that despite unsatisfactory standards of living accommodation, the majority of households would prefer to see the drugs and anti-social behaviour problems on the estate being addressed rather than their specific accommodation needs being addressed” (Sheridan Woods Architects and Urban Planners, 2008: 129)

³ Indeed this issue has become even more urgent as we write this paper as there has been an escalation of intimidatory action by those involved in drug dealing on the estate, involving slashing car tyres, and pouring acid on cars, planting a hoax pipe bomb and engaging in physical violence towards residents who are active in the community. This was prompted by an increase in police patrols around the estate which prevented the daily drug dealing which was happening on the estate taking place (Holland, 2009)

Discussions with residents to ascertain their needs and gather their views of the estate, as it stands also highlighted safety issues more graphically:

“My young fella works nights and your nerves would be gone worrying about him.”

“It’s very intimidating. We are all right, we say nothing, cos you don’t know what’ll come through your letter box one night. When I come home from work at night, the first thing I do is look at the halls”

“Generally safe but strangers coming into the block is a problem. People are nervous of them.”

“Anti social is getting very bad in the last while. Police not doing enough. People are afraid to complain”

“Safety in public spaces is an issue. Police do their best but judges let them off”
(Source: Block Group Meetings June 2008)

A safe community is clearly a key facet of a sustainable community and the Architects in proposing their design options were cognisant of the issue of security in all of the three options they put forward. Indeed the main objective of the refurbishment option was to tackle anti social behaviour:

“The main objective of this development option is to alleviate anti-social behaviour problems by means of design and to provide a certain amount of control in terms of access to communal areas. However, we note in this regard that anti-social behaviour is a social problem which reflects the socio-economic make-up of the estate and as such a physical solution in itself cannot address this problem in its entirety. (Sheridan Woods Architects and Urban Planners, 2008: 51)

The options proposed by the architects did address these issues by controlling access, by creating more semi private spaces and through the creation of more defensible spaces. However, many of the residents expressed concerns about the solutions proposed. The survey carried out on the estate found that the majority of the residents - 67 per cent - favoured the demolition and rebuilding option. An overwhelming majority of these respondents chose the option which had been prepared by the Architects working for the Dolphin House Community Development Association. However, when residents were questioned about elements of this option that they disliked, they raised concerns about the safety and security of underground car parking, the potential for the vandalism of lifts and, in particular, they wondered whether or not the enclosure of semi-private space and providing key controlled access would prevent access by outsiders.

Thus, design responses considered as creating safer environments can potentially be seen as threatening from the perspective of a community under siege at times from those involved in anti-social behaviour. A new regenerated housing estate can be seen as a panacea to a local authority and PPP where the rebuilding might have been outsourced to the private sector looked very attractive. Yet the ‘wicked problems’ of anti-social behaviour, are not solvable by physical regeneration alone. A social regeneration programme, which the DHCDA have

identified as being crucial to the success of the physical regeneration project in Dolphin, is vital if the wider social issues facing the community are to be tackled. However, as pointed out above any significant social regeneration programme in Dolphin House has been premised on the physical regeneration process beginning and funding trickling down from the PPP process.

4 Conclusions

The past decade has seen a paradigm shift in Irish planning policy, which in line with international trends has moved away from permitting and encouraging low density suburban development, to the promotion of much higher residential densities, particularly in locales well served by public transport and well located in relation to existing amenities and infrastructure. This has been codified in a series of recent policy documents which have as a central focus an emphasis on the creation of more sustainable communities through better urban design solutions. While there is a recognition in these policy documents that sustainable communities are multifaceted, these documents are far more comprehensive on how the physical and environmental components of sustainable development will be delivered, than on how some of the social components might be dealt with.

Higher density, sustainable development as outlined in these policy documents has been championed in the regeneration of inner city public housing estates in recent years. However, just as research shows levels of dissatisfaction with some of the design outcomes of private sector higher density development in inner city Dublin (Howley *et al.* 2009a, 2009b) our case study illustrates significant levels of concern regarding some of the facets of higher residential density, among social housing residents facing the regeneration of their estates.

From a local authority perspective the principles outlined in the housing, urban design and residential density guidelines sit comfortably with the focus on regeneration through PPP. The PPP process can only work when premised on the idea of utilising land more efficiently, extracting higher residential densities (including in some cases the necessity to increase height), and mixing tenures, all key components of these policy documents. Private sector developers seem happy to abide by this policy as long as it is congruent with the creation of profit. However, for residents of social housing in estates about to undergo regeneration, lived experiences and real concerns regarding the maintenance of community and issues regarding safety and crime, place a different perspective on some of the policy prescriptions. Higher densities, increased heights, and mixing tenures all hold specific concerns for these residents. From their perspective design alone will not deal with many of the very real problems they face. While these residents see the advantages of better standards of design and larger apartments, they are wary of the creation of many public spaces, overlooked or not, which they consider as potential sites for anti-social behaviour. Their desire for own door housing and private open space stems from experience of shared deck access balconies, common stairwells and other shared spaces which are poorly maintained and which lack privacy. In essence these residents place a great deal more value on maintaining community than the local authority and developers. Their concerns provide food for thought for policy makers who might well devote greater consideration to investing the same time, energy and resources into how social structures can be retained and enhanced in the regeneration of housing estates and the creation of sustainable communities, as they have done into considering the physical and environmental dimensions.

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