

# BUILDING BLOCKS OF REGENERATION IN DUBLIN

Dublin City Council is making headway with the ambitious regeneration of its inner city housing complexes, with plans to complete and deliver some 4,200 quality homes in sustainable communities and create better urban places by 2022. Report by Elaine O'Regan.

**B**y virtue of its scale this will be the largest housing regeneration programme in the state with far-reaching positive benefits," Anthony Flynn, the executive manager with responsibility for Dublin City Council's housing delivery, told Council Review.

"It will deliver the type of scale required to make a difference to our waiting list and implement our objectives as part of the Government's Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness," Flynn added.

Published in July 2016, the plan sets out strategies for achieving the government's housing objectives across five pillars: addressing homelessness, accelerating social housing, building more homes, improving the rental sector and utilising existing housing.

The plan aims to double the current output of overall housing to at least 25,000 per annum by 2020 to service all tenure types. A social housing programme of 47,000 units to 2021 will be delivered with funding of €5.35 billion.

## STRATEGIC LAND AUDIT

Dublin City Council carried out a city-wide strategic land audit, prioritising key projects for the regeneration scheme with the aim of building on previous regeneration schemes in Ballymun, Dublin Docklands, Fatima Mansions and on the ongoing regeneration of Tom Kelly Road Flats on Charlemont Street.

"This plan for the delivery of over 4,200 homes will leverage an investment of over €1 billion from a combination of public and



Croke Villas and Environs: Phase one of seven units under construction on Ballybough Road, 76 units at planning stage, completion expected in 2019.

private sources," said Flynn.

In addition to providing vital housing, the programme would act as a dynamic catalyst for urban regeneration, he added, improving the appearance of the city centre, enhancing the public realm and helping to instil "a sense of place" in the people living there.

The National Planning Framework places particular emphasis on the physical consolidation of the city centre area. "I'm delighted the city council is now in a position to revisit regeneration projects that were unfeasible during the recession. It will take place in a coherent, sustainable manner for the benefit of the city," said Flynn.



St Teresa's Gardens: The development is at the planning stage, with expected completion date of full project in 2021.

## UNDER-UTILISED LANDS

Dublin City Council's Housing and Community and Planning Departments collaborated to identify and designate Strategic Development and Regeneration Areas (SDRAs) with the capacity to deliver approximately 8,900 new homes.

"Our regeneration programme aims to sustainably develop and transform the largest under-utilised lands with a focus on areas close to public transport as well as areas of under-utilised physical and social infrastructure," said Flynn.

The regeneration of inner city complexes, including St Michaels' Estate, St Teresa's Gardens, Dominick Street, Dolphin House, O'Devaney Gardens, Croke Villas and Environs has the potential to deliver in excess of 4,200 units.

A number of large land banks have also been identified for further residential development. These include lands located at Belcamp on Malahide Road, North Fringe, Park West/Cherry Orchard and Ballymun.

Master plans are under development for Belcamp and Park West/Cherry Orchard lands while a Local Area Plan is underway for Ballymun. On the larger inner-city sites included in the scheme – St Michaels' Estate, O'Devaney Gardens and Oscar Traynor Road – the council will seek a sustainable mix of tenures with roughly 30 per cent social, 20 per cent cost rental and 50 per cent private.

"The mix of tenure, dwelling type and size is designed to support sound social, environmental and economic sustainability policy objectives for each area," said Flynn. "Our vision is to ensure that

## PROGRESS TO DATE

**\*St Michaels' Estate:** Phase One constructed with 71 homes, expected completion date of full project 2022.

**\*St Teresa's Gardens:** Planning stage, expected completion date of full project 2021.

**\*Dominick Street:** detailed planning stage expected completion date of full project 2020.

**\*Dolphin House:** First phase of 100 homes under construction to be completed by 2018, expected completion date of full project 2021.

**\*O'Devaney Gardens:** First phase of 56 homes construction to commence 2017, expected completion date of full project 2022.

**\*Croke Villas and Environs:** Phase one of seven units under construction on Ballybough Road, 76 units at planning stage, expected completion date 2019.

**\*Charlemont Street:** First phase of 79 homes due for completion in November 2017.

## PROJECT PROFILE — CHARLEMONT STREET REGENERATION

First phase of 79 homes due for completion in November 2017. Ten years ago a Community Charter and Social Agenda was agreed between Charlemont Street's local residents' Redevelopment Group, who worked closely with Dublin City Council.

As part of the Community Charter, it was agreed that a Regeneration Board would be established to oversee the redevelopment. In October 2013, the council engaged Peter Dorman, Community Action Network (CAN), to develop a board structure satisfactory to both the community and the city council.

Neil Crowley was appointed Chairperson of the Charlemont/Tom Kelly Regeneration Board in March 2014 which was ratified by the Housing SPC. The first meeting was held in November 2014, and they now meet on a quarterly basis.



Located close to the Grand Canal, the five-acre estate on Charlemont Street consists of:

- Tom Kelly Road Flats, constructed in 1969, consisting of 138 flats across four five-storey blocks.
- Site of Charlemont Gardens, constructed in 1969, consisting of 30 flats in one five storey block. Demolished March 2014.
- Site of French-Mullen House, constructed in 1941, consisting of 13 flats in one four-storey block. Demolished March 2014.
- Site of St. Ultan's private housing complex purchased by Dublin City Council in 2000 and demolished in 2002 to pave the way for regeneration.
- There is an existing stand-alone community building, a small playground.

### Procurement History

Dublin City Council advertised for developers on 19 June 2007:

- The brief for the land was for a high quality sustainable mixed-use and mixed-tenure neighbourhood.
  - In exchange for providing housing to the Council the developers were to have the opportunity to develop the remainder of the lands for their own benefit.
  - The council was supported in the project by the National Development Finance Agency (National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) who are tasked by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with supporting public authorities in PPP projects).
  - Five developers were shortlisted based on an assessment of their financial and technical capacity.
- o Alcove McGarrell Reilly submitted a tender on 17 June 2015 that provides that Block 3 comprising 79 apartments and a fitted-out community centre. The payment to

the Council of the Capital sum of €4,886,286 will be provided to the Council in exchange for the land.

- o Contracts were agreed and signed in December 2015. Works commenced in January 2016.
- o Practical completion date for Block 3 was revised from 8 December 2017 to 10 November 2017.
- In addition DCC has the option to purchase an additional 15 social housing units in Block 4 at a 10% discount on prevailing market price.
- o The Council's ability to exercise the option to purchase will depend on the availability of Exchequer Funding. The option had to be exercised by 30 September 2016.
- The transfer of title of the residual lands will only occur when completion of Block 3 has been achieved and all payments have been made to the Council.
- Having performed its obligations, and paid all required payments, the purchaser and/or its nominees will become entitled to take title to the rest of the Charlemont Street site for the development of that site for mix of private residential and commercial.

**Planning History:** The final permission granted was based on the Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017. Significantly less development was achieved than was envisaged when the project was first advertised in 2007.

### Housing Provision

- The proposed development consists of five blocks, ranging in height from four to six storeys, containing a mix of residential, commercial, retail and community space.
- The demolition of the front blocks (St Ultan's Flats in 2002 and Charlemont Gardens and French-Mullen House in 2014) was necessary to facilitate the development of social housing at the front of the site (Block 3 comprising 79 social housing units and a community centre).



Anthony Flynn, DCC's executive manager with responsibility for housing delivery.

every household should have access to secure, good quality housing suited to their needs at an affordable price in a sustainable community."

The council's aim is to deliver quality homes in sustainable communities and create better urban places.

### CATALYST FOR RENEWAL

"It's important that we avail of the opportunities provided by the current social housing programme to ensure that our regeneration schemes will contribute to the holistic integrated

development of the areas in which they are located," said Flynn.

"Our projects will act as a catalyst for the renewal of under-utilised areas by strengthening the fabric of urban centres, bringing back a mixture of uses to urban centres and locating people where services are available.

The mix of tenure at St Michaels' Estate, O'Devaney Gardens and Oscar Traynor Road will assist social integration and the creation of vibrant, sustainable communities. "It will also help to restore, strengthen or upgrade the social and physical fabric of each area and eliminate derelict, under-utilised areas and maximise the use of existing infrastructure," said Flynn.

While the regeneration projects had a higher unit price than a new build on a green field site, Flynn said they offered



Thornton Heights: This development of 75 houses and apartments in Inchicore, completed in mid-2014, was Dublin's longest-planned social housing regeneration project.

obvious sustainable benefits. "Our infill or regeneration sites are in excellent locations close to the city centre and all the associated services are within walking distance.

"However, the buildings occupying these sites were typically designed and built in the 1960s and 1970s and are in need of major refurbishment. In addition, the sites have not been used to their full potential," he said.

### COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

A full cost-benefit analysis was carried out in respect of each proposed project, Flynn continued, and the benefits of demolishing existing units and building modern quality units in their place had become clear.

"The costs associated with infill development can involve the cost of site assembling, de-tenanting, demolition and decontamination," he said.

"These costs result in a higher unit cost for infill development. However, in the long term, infill development is the most sustainable efficient use of resources."

Land is a scarce commodity, requiring a resource-efficient approach. "We need to be environmentally conscious of the demands we make on infrastructure and energy," said Flynn. "Brownfield or infill development trumps greenfield development when the value of existing local community infrastructure and services are considered.

"What often gets overlooked in this material world is the value of people's network of relationships within their existing community which helps support, nurture and sustain families."

Dublin City Council's regeneration



Dolphin House: The first phase of 100 homes under construction will be completed by 2018; the full project is due to be finished by 2021.

projects would create attractive places for modern urban living, Flynn added. "By building in these central areas, we will be catering to people's needs in all aspects of their lives and across their life cycle in areas such as employment, recreation, social and commercial services in a sustainable and responsible manner," he said.

#### COMMUNITY BENEFIT CLAUSE

For the first time a Community Benefit Clause has been included in the conditions of contract for a construction project delivered by a local authority.

It comes from a commitment by the St Teresa's Garden and the Dolphin House and Park Regeneration Boards that local community benefits be included in the contracts for those projects.

"The inclusion of the community benefit clause strengthens the commitment to social and economic regeneration that will directly benefit individuals and families from both communities," said Flynn.

He continued: "It is a key social inclusion measure, which will ensure that the successful contractor engaged by the city council will undertake to offer employment and training opportunities to unemployed persons.

"It will assist in giving greater support

to marginalised sections of our community and in the creation of a more equal and sustainable community."

The Department for Housing, Planning and Local Government was fully

supportive of Dublin City Council's current regeneration programme and together, he added. "Together, we have a pipeline of projects from feasibility, planning, tendering to construction stages," he said.



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