Good Density: Drivers, Dividends and Debates

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Good Urban Developments

Follow sustainable development goals

Our citizens require access to:

» Shelter/Homes

» Employment

» Education

» Health care

» Recreation and amenity

» Retail

» Quality environment, etc.

To do this we need development, infrastructure, while managing potential impacts on people, the environment, climate change, etc.

Good Density: Drivers, Dividends and Debates – a balancing act !

Key factors for successful urban development: density, *(social, physical and green)* infrastructure and mixed use

Additional Factors I would suggest include

ethereal considerations such as :

- **'Quality of life' / Residential Amenity for existing and future residents**

- **'Sense of place' – character of an area**

- **Engagement and Buy-in**

- **Sustainability, longevity and adaptability**

- **Economic Viability**

The Key Challenge for 'Planning' and Good Urban Development

With so many involved in 'planning' - do we have shared goals, a shared understanding of those goals and an agreed method and timeframe to achieve them?

What does a good urban development look like?

"We have too many cooks in the kitchen."

Irish Planning System
An Overview

Overview of Irish Planning System

The Irish Planning can be divided in to 3 main components:

- » Planning Policy & Guidelines (National)

- » Forward Planning/Plan Making (Regional and County/local)

- » Development Management (ABP/PAs)

- » Regulatory (OPR) recently established (April 2019)

National Policy Framework –

helping shape new places for future populations – promotes 'densification' and good urban development

Sustainable Urban Housing:
Design Standards for New Apartments
Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Planning Guidelines

An Roinn Tithíochta,
Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil
Department of Housing,
Planning and Local Government

**Urban Development
and Building Heights**

Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Consultation Draft
August 2018

Urban
Design
Manual

A best practice guide

Project Ireland 2040
**National Planning
Framework**

Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Planning Guidelines
**Sustainable Residential
Development in
Urban Areas**
(Cities, Towns & Villages)

"compact growth" commitments within the NPF to:

- target at least 40% of future housing development within or close to the existing footprint of built-up areas,

- make better use of under-utilised land, particularly vacant, infill and brownfield lands close to existing services and facilities; and

- create a national regeneration and development agency to drive and coordinate the release of lands for re-development

NPF as a key driver of 'good urban development'

» Change in policy context – focused development and '**compact growth'**

» **New mandate linking planning and investment funding**

» Renewed focus on brownfield **regeneration** (urban/town/village)

» Stronger evidence basis for planning

» **Requirement to translate policies int RSESs and Dev Plans**

NPF and advancing the National Objectives ... Key Challenges and Opportunities

» **Coherence and buy-in between national, regional and local plans**

» NPF has to remain the blueprint for sectoral policy / investment – even with Brexit looming!

» **Meet society's (changing!) needs** ... how to anticipate and **future-proof plans and development** (different world with needs in 2040?)

» Public and stakeholder engagement beyond plans and into delivery

» What does the vision look like ? Does everyone understand what it looks like in practice? – communication, education, visual aids required

Competing factors in defining or agreeing on what is 'Good Urban Development'

Left (green circle):

- National Policy Context

- Theory/Aspirations

- Providing for future residents – with no voice

- Plan led looking at future needs

Vs.

Right (pink circle):

- Local Context/ Local Democracy

- Practice/Pragmatic

- Possible or perceived impact on existing residents (observers)

- Market led based on today's demands

Consultation, Engagement and Collaboration Required

We can't do it alone – so who are the key Stakeholders ?

» Public Planning & Development Bodies – Dept. Housing, Planning & Local Govt., Planning Authorities, Regional Assemblies , An Bord Pleanála, Land Development Agency, etc.

» Professionals – Planners, architects, engineers, etc.

» Politicians – Government, TDs, Senators, Cllrs

» Market drivers/Influencers - Developers, CIF, PII, Estate Agents, etc.

» Public/local communities

Key factors for successful urban development

Last slide was my way of saying I don't have all the answers – and I took comfort in the title of today's Conference "Good Density: Drivers, Dividends and **Debates**"

Planning is not a 'black and white' definitive science –

it's about people and places – and therefore each case is different and each of us may see the merits of each case differently.

But is it possible to provide some insight …….

Densification and place-making – one size does not fit all …. there remains fear and uncertainty – but why?

» A positive and sustainable 'place' is specific to its location

Smaller Settlements and Rural Areas

Smaller Towns and Villages

Large Towns

Cities

» All 'positive places' have similar attributes in terms of their design criteria:

- Sense of Place/Location - site specific design

- Access to services and amenities

- Quality environment – natural and man-made

- Adaptable and flexible places/communities

DUBLIN

CORK

How will they want to live, work and recreate ?

Densification and associated development does not destroy our landscapes - it helps preserve them

An Bord Pleanála

ABP Insights & Experience - Responding to the Housing Crisis - Strategic Housing Development Provisions

» Planning & Development Residential Tenancies and Housing Act, 2016

» Fast track planning decisions for residential developments (100+ housing units, 200+ shared living, 200+ student bedspaces) was a response to the Housing Crisis in 2016.

» SHD has responded – PAs and ABP have worked hard to meet the targets

  » 230 pre-app opinions

  » 100 + planning decisions

  » Timelines met

  » tri-partite pre-apps completed by within 9 weeks

    » Decisions within 16 weeks

    » 2 Oral Hearing decisions completed within 24 weeks

    » Over 16,500 residential units permitted in 20 months and 7,500 student bedspaces.

Strategic Housing Development Process

In addition to the efficiencies in ABP process

» Strategic Housing Developments (SHD) has

   » Improved Certainty/Understanding of ABP requirements/considerations at application stage

   » 75% Grant rate - previously 50:50

   » Introduced consistency and implemented national policy –

      » Sometimes at odds with local context (20-25 % overturn of PA recommendations)

      » Highlights areas and PAs where inconsistency with national policy exists

      » Focus on GDA, and five urban centres/cities identified in NPF

      » Promoting high quality, compact growth, densification (including apartments) and place-making, and optimization of public transport system, and greener agendas (EV charging etc.)

   » Further enhancements possible and recommended to the SHD Review Group

SHD Pre-application Consultations

National Perspective

As is apparent from the mapping of pre-apps, the primary focus is in Dublin, and the GDA.
Thereafter Cork city and county (primarily within the metropolitan area of Cork)

To a much lesser extent Galway, Waterford and Limerick include SHD proposals.

Outside of the areas identified as key Cities/Centres of Growth in the NPF, Ennis, Clonmel, Gorey and Kilkenny each include SHD pre-app.

SHD Overview

Pre-application Consultations

Scale of developments being considered at Pre-App increasing

	SHD Pre-apps 2017/2018	SHD Pre-apps Received 2019* (*up to Aug)
Number	**133**	**97**
No. Student Bedspaces	9264	2816
Total Residential	**33,906**	**28,849**
Houses	15,255	8064
Apartments	18,036	20,785
incl. Build to Rent	2973	4,853

Changing nature of residential development

SHD Applications

National Perspective

Unsurprisingly the take up of SHD applications are again within the GDA, Cork and thereafter Galway and Waterford.

It maybe noted that Galway and Cork include a number of student accommodation pre-apps and applications

SHD – Output/Decisions

Feeding in to SHD Review -

Up to end Aug '19 - 118 valid apps received, 91 decided

Strategic Housing Development - Applications			
	Permissions Granted	**Housing Units**	**Student Bed Spaces**
2018	27 (12 R)	7,102	4,479
Quarter 1 2019	6 (3 R)	1,685	289
Quarter 2 2019	17 (5 R)	3,552	2,805
July- August '19	17 (4 R)	3,833	-
Total	67 (24R)	16,222	7,573

SHD – Output/Decisions

General observations:

» 12 months (2018) = 7,102 units permitted (27 grants) vs.

» 8 months (2019) = 9,070 units permitted (40 grants)

» Sept-to date ('19) = 1,674 units permitted (8 grants)

17,869 units (11,478 apt/6391 houses)

» Delivery and Viability of residential development, in particular at higher densities is an issue that has yet to be resolved – but is critical - and number of apartments being applied for is a positive

» On-going activity and demand

» Apps on hand – approx. 35+ (13 received to date in Oct)

» Pre-apps on hand – approx. 25 (15 received to date in Oct)

Strategic Housing Decisions

On-going improvement in performance !

» Pace of input and output has been dramatic during 2019

    » 2017 - 0 decisions

    » 2018 – 39 decisions - 27 granted and 12 refused

    » 2019 (Q1,2,3 – 9 months) – 52 decisions - 40 granted and 12 refused

    » 2019 (Sept-date (6weeks) – 10 decisions – 9 granted and 2 refused

Grant rate at c.69% in 2018

» Data submitted to the SHD review group – up to end of August:

    » 91 SHD cases decided –

        » 67 granted

        » 24 refused

Grant rate at approx. 73% reported to SHD Review Group

» Up to date stats show 101 SHD cases decided –

    » 75 granted

    » 26 refused

Grant rate at approx. 75% to date

SHD promotes 'quality' and 'sustainability'

Pre-app process designed to tease out issues which may require further consideration prior to making an application, it does not consider the merits or pre-empt a decision – and not all applications adequately address the issues raised.

Reasons for Refusal at application stage vary, and include:

» Density

» Design

» Lack of connectivity to services

» Context

» EIAR

» NIS

» Lack of infrastructure

Good Urban Development - all relate to their location, and access to services and infrastructure

Private Sector continue to respond positively and innovatively to the question of density in Ireland

Learning from other markets and professionals

Final observations if we are to achieve good urban development and densification!

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I've got your back!

Funding and commitment

Political and Societal Shift required !

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Thank you!