



The Ballymun Regeneration project recognised from the outset that the involvement and support of local residents as partners in the process was crucial. A variety of means to actively involve residents were developed to ensure full and meaningful community involvement. The consultation was designed around the key objectives of

involving people in agreeing priorities, considering options and identifying solutions. The development of ideas and proposals in this way sought to build a strong local consensus in support of the Masterplan. The techniques involved included:



Public Meetings

Held in all areas of Ballymun to present the latest ideas for the Masterplan, tell people how they can get more involved, answer questions and address local concerns. These meetings have extended beyond Ballymun to include parts of Glasnevin, Shanliss, Oldtown and Shanard.

There has been general support amongst the people of Ballymun for the concept of creating local neighbourhoods with their own community facilities, shops and play areas. BRL have explained that they want to start work in all the areas at the same time so that there is even handed treatment across the board. A wide range of issues have been raised, the need for new drainage and services in some areas, the desire to maintain a large number of well maintained football pitches etc.

Generally, people have not been opposed to private housing being built in Ballymun provided that there are sufficient new homes built for Ballymun people. A constant theme has been the need to bring jobs and training opportunities to Ballymun.



Area Forums

There are five area forums in Ballymun. The members of these five forums were actively involved in the development of the Masterplan and their enormous commitment ensured that the Masterplan reflects the views of the community of Ballymun and of the individual localities. The area forums were particularly important in ensuring that there was sufficient focus on the different issues of particular interest to each area. There were also many common concerns and issues raised by all the Area Forums including:-

- the proposed housing allocations policy for the regeneration project
- the timing of new house builds
- the impact of new housing on the existing low rise houses
- the size and type of new homes
- the type of heating to be installed
- the extent to which people will be able to influence who lives next door to them
- the extent to which people will be able to remain living in their existing community and area
- the need for people to move more than once to free up sites for new build

These issues will be addressed by the new working group on Housing Management which will meet in April 1998 for its initial meeting. The regeneration project is deeply committed to the concept of community involvement in these and other issues.



Design Groups

A single Design Group was established to ensure the involvement of local people in developing the Masterplan. It comprised representatives from the Area Forums, Ballymun Housing Task Force, the Eastern Health Board, and local Community Groups. The Design Group met with the project team each week to develop and refine their ideas for the Masterplan for Ballymun, and the success of the consultation process is evident in the level of community input to the Masterplan. The Design Group concentrated on the overall land uses for Ballymun and on the possibilities for the new town centre. A recurring theme at Design Group meetings was the need to attract businesses to Ballymun that will provide sustainable employment. The group examined:-

- proposals for the new road layouts throughout the area
- new routes for public transport
- site proposals for the new Municipal Centre
- site proposals for the proposed Arts Centre & Civic Resource Centre
- proposals for retail and commercial uses
- site proposals for neighbourhood centres

The Design Group has evaluated existing facilities for youth, young children and recreation and assessed the need for further development of these facilities. Design Group meetings provided the project team with a vital source of locally based knowledge, ideas and information and were a useful and productive mechanism for ensuring that the proposals in the Masterplan are relevant, applicable and acceptable to Ballymun.



Surgeries/Drop-Ins

Surgeries or drop-ins were held fortnightly each Thursday morning in the Ballymun Shopping Centre. These were a means of enabling residents to become involved at an individual level and were particularly useful for people who were unable to attend public meetings or who did not have an opportunity to give their views otherwise. The Drop-Ins were useful for people who did not want to raise issues of concern to them in a public forum. The individual sessions resulting from these drop-ins added a depth of consultation which is hard to achieve in a public setting.

The topics raised by people at these sessions included:-

- the drugs problem in Ballymun
- older people said it was not safe enough at night for them to go out alone and that they would like a more secure environment
- many people were worried about the loss of the 'van shops' which are seen as convenience shops
- there was concern about the lack of facilities for young people in Ballymun
- people were generally very positive about the strength of the community spirit in Ballymun.



Newsletters

The regeneration project used newsletters as an important way of reaching every household in Ballymun and the adjoining areas. The newsletters were also a way of keeping people from outside the area informed and copies were sent to the EU in Brussels and to members of central and local government as well as to people in the business community. The newsletters are a useful way of keeping everyone up to date and are also a handy way of showing the way progress of the regeneration project since they record developments as they occur. The intention is to continue to use newsletters throughout the life of the project.

Public Events

The first public event held by the regeneration project was a Planning Day which was held in the Shopping Centre on the 29th November 1997. This event was attended by over two thousand people. It established what the concerns of the community were, and what the people saw as the main areas of concern. It was also a way of testing early ideas for the Masterplan and for checking the project team's understanding of the community's perceptions. The Planning Day took the form of a series of 'question boards' which posed questions and presented options about the key social, economic, housing, infrastructural and educational issues facing Ballymun. The use of these boards, in conjunction with one-to-one consultation sessions, questionnaires and surveys ensured that the regeneration project team were able to move on to the next stage of the process with an up-to-date and focussed analysis of these key issues and so continue its work in developing the Masterplan. The second public event was the launch of the Draft Masterplan over the weekend of the 7th & 8th March 1998. This exhibition was held in BRL's own offices and represented the culmination of the first wave of public consultation and was the first opportunity for the public at large to see the full range and scale of the work of the Design Team and the Project Team. Over 5,000 people visited the exhibition and over 50% of the questionnaires distributed were completed with an overwhelming 85% stating that they were satisfied with the principles of the draft Masterplan. The success of the consultation process can be measured by the relatively minor nature of the amendments which will be needed to take account of the comments and suggestions made by those visiting the exhibition. A summary analysis of the questionnaires from both events is shown in Section 4.

Focus Groups

Six focus groups were established to consider the six key social themes which required specific consideration in developing the Masterplan. Almost one hundred local community groups were invited to send representatives and the Area Forums were also involved. In addition all the relevant agencies operating in Ballymun were involved. The themes which were covered were:-

- Children and Youth
- Training and Education
- Employment and Economic Development
- Advice Support and Community Development
- Leisure Sport and Recreation
- Health and Physical Environment.

Their work was invaluable and their commitment was remarkable. A summary of the findings of the Focus Groups was prepared and will be incorporated into the briefing documentation for the new Working Groups who will build on their work. The momentum which these groups added to the project was a contributory factor in the development of this Masterplan.

Working Groups

As a direct follow up to the Focus Groups and to carry on their work 3 Working Groups will cover such topics as (a) Training for Employment, (b) Local Estate Management and Home Ownership (c) Improving the Image of Ballymun/Economic Development. The Working Groups will be long-term forums for developing detailed implementation strategies and action plans for the regeneration. Membership will comprise representatives from area forums, community, voluntary, statutory and professional organisations. In this way the Working Groups will be representative and will be able to access experts in both the public and private sectors. The terms of reference and objectives will be drawn from the work already performed and shown in the relevant sections of this Masterplan. The intention is that the working groups will be an important way to ensure that the detailed work of the regeneration project continues to benefit from the vast array of knowledge, experience and ideas which have so far been available to it.

Future Community Consultation

BRL will build on the success of the public consultation process to-date and will continue to engage in meaningful consultation and encourage the active involvement of the community, as a vital component of the future success of the regeneration of Ballymun. This is especially important because the proposals are at such an early stage. BRL recognises the vital role which existing groups and organisations have to play in the regeneration process. It also recognises that it is unwise to rely for public consultation solely on formal structures and groups and is aware that it is important that the wider community is offered a wide range of opportunities to engage in the process. It will continue therefore to present the people of Ballymun and the adjoining areas with opportunities to influence the regeneration planning and implementation process through one to one meetings and through open public meetings and events. The events organised by BRL have placed particular importance on the need to cater for children at its public events thus ensuring that parents can participate and concentrate on the proceedings. Such arrangements are particularly important as lone parents and others find it difficult to attend formal meetings on a regular basis because of their child care or other responsibilities. In addition it is committed to the merits and benefits of the newsletter as a means of dissemination of ideas and the generation of feedback including a letters page. BRL will continue to concentrate upon working with the community and other groups to maintain a dialogue and a consultation process that facilitates the community in developing participatory and leadership skills. BRL sees the Design Group, the Area Forums and Working Groups as an effective means of establishing a partnership approach to actively pursuing the successful implementation of the principles enshrined in the Masterplan. The targets, principles and performance indicators set out in the Masterplan will help to create a benchmark against which the project's performance can be measured. They will also serve to show what is and what is not attainable from the project.