



## 15.0 URBAN DESIGN

### 15.1 Context

A glance at the map of Dublin reveals how different the organisation and structure of Ballymun is compared to the more successful and popular areas nearer the middle of the city.

Ballymun has a series of spiralling roads that do not go anywhere more important than a vehicle turning head. There are no connections between the spirals and few branches off. The City proper has a network of linked streets with frequent connections. This makes the City easy to understand and get around; it is permeable. If you go astray it is easy to take the next turn and get back on track. In Ballymun you very rarely know where the meandering roads are taking you and by the time you find you're off track your only alternative is to retrace your steps back down the enormously long cul de sacs, it is neither readable, permeable nor connected. The Masterplan layout seeks to remedy this by making connections and establishing a readable hierarchy of routes akin to the structure of a 'normal' City.

Similarly the format of open space in Ballymun is completely different to that of the City generally where there is a direct relationship between a hierarchy of open spaces and the buildings around them, which enclose and address the spaces. In Ballymun there is a sea of open space in which the buildings sit haphazardly. The Masterplan design shows buildings and open space in the same sort of relationship found in the central areas of Dublin.

### 15.2 Objectives

- to make distinctive neighbourhoods.
- to ensure each neighbourhood is a pleasant place to live, shop, work, learn, worship and play.
- to make a hierarchy of recognisable public places - Main Street, avenues, squares, parks, streets, greens and mews - 'places' rather than 'spaces'.
- to make the areas permeable and interconnected with vehicle links, cycle ways and safe pedestrian paths.
- to nurture variety of design responses rather than uniformity.
- to promote a Main Street with mixed land uses and higher buildings than its residential hinterland.
- to promote high design quality throughout the environment, with competitions for major prominent sites. Talented designers rarely need prescriptive design guidelines to make good places.

### 15.3 Recommendations:

- land parceling should include the public spaces, so that the design team for a land parcel are responsible for their part of the public domain.
- schemes for each land parcel should be developed in parallel if possible and neighbouring design teams should co-ordinate design themes for sites and agree what is common and what is to be different.
- the hierarchy of the new road pattern and public places should be themes to be interpreted and elaborated upon by individual designers.
- in the main street, continuity of enclosure is a priority so party wall conditions between owners should be preferred to a series of standalone buildings.
- within each community and area a shared vocabulary of materials and details be devised so as to give a distinct identity. This should include ideas for street furniture, kerb details, street lighting, planting species, facing materials, and so forth.
- adjacent land uses should be compatible rather than conflicting so as to achieve the optimum values for each land use. For example:
- a 'gradation' from main street offices/retail, via small scale enterprise workspace to housing rather than housing abutting a retail car park.
- Santry Woods side of Santry Avenue should be housing rather than industrial so as to help integrate public and private communities.

### 15.4 Massing and Scale

Suburbs are generally a rather monotonous carpet of two storey buildings. For Ballymun, the Masterplan proposes a hierarchy of familiar scale places from main street to civic square to urban street to local park to neighbourhood green to quiet courtyard.

For Ballymun the principal enclosing walls to the open spaces and many streets need to be three storeys or more in height - this can be achieved with monopitch roofs on two storey houses. The neighbourhood centres need to be prominent: 3 storeys would emphasise their presence.

The main street needs to be enclosed by higher buildings to give an enclosure ratio of at most 2.5:1 (width to height). The illustrations in Section 30 compare the main street with O'Connell Street and other familiar streets.

Taller buildings can be located in several landmark positions:

- the motorway roundabout
- the junction of Santry Avenue with Ballymun Road
- at the corner of the main street cross-roads
- at the ends of the main street

The existing towers of Ballymun are a symbol of a 1960's housing idea that has failed its residents and the City. Great care must be taken with the choice of location, land use, and client/design team to ensure new towers make an enduring and optimistic contribution to Dublin.

### 15.5 External Materials

The choice of materials and their detailing is crucial for the enduring quality of the project.

Materials and details should be selected that are appropriate for the different characters of places within the project. The following descriptions set out some themes and are meant to provoke creative interpretation and diversity and not be a rigid prescription.

#### 15.5.1 Main Street

Road Surfaces and Furniture: • road block or coloured macadam  
• stone pavings, granite setts and kerbs  
• stone seats rather than loose benches  
• bus stands, crossings, stalls, phone boxes to be sophisticated

Buildings: • generally 4/5 storey high  
• Civic functions, mixed uses in section and plan  
• colonnaded fronts to shelter some pavement  
• framed buildings rather than cross wall  
• glazing systems, stone, brick, render rather than light weight metal  
• soffits prominent so exposed structure rather than suspended ceilings  
• roof soffits could be exposed  
• parapets not eaves  
• lift cores expressed

Public Art: • classic objects in space, but also 'intrinsic' art treating surfaces, lighting, fountains, walls, seats  
Planting: • rhythm of large species urban trees in metal grids  
• water features  
• no grass, patterned paving

Boundaries: • building edges  
• 2.5m high walls, metal gates  
• stone bollards, railing in piers

Lighting: • highway levels for road but in white rather than orange light for length of high street to signify difference  
• buildings floodlit  
• lights strung between buildings rather than on standards.

#### 15.5.2 Primary Neighbourhood Roads and Edges of Parks

Roads: • signed off main street, possible traffic light controlled junction  
• black top, concrete kerbs  
• white lines  
• kerbside parking  
• grass verge for tree planting

Buildings: • 2 preferably 3 storeys high  
• terraced houses, linked pavilions  
• monopitched to accentuate height

- parapets, not eaves, consistent height around parks
- emphasis on rhythm of fenestration, porches and front steps
- corners and end terraces punctuate rhythm
- brick for exposure reasons, stone coursing, cills, copings
- shops: near destinations or junctions, lay-by pull up, 3 storeys for prominence, flats or group spaces over shops

Public Art: • emphasis to parks and neighbourhood centres, but 'intrinsic' ideas for footpaths, school boundaries, etc.

Planting: • trees help create rhythm and enclosure  
• urban trees in public domain  
• hedges behind railings  
• light leaf trees near homes

Boundaries: • railings or walls, not wooden fences  
• gables on back of kerb line  
• high side walls for security

Furniture: • bus stops, shelters, phone boxes, benches

Lighting: • yellow light on standards  
• building common entrances spill light  
• bus shelters lit.

#### 15.5.3 Cul de Sacs and Mews:

Roads: • combined surface for pavement and road  
• blockwork rather than blacktop  
• no white lines

Buildings: • 1/2 storeys high  
• recessed porches  
• eaves exposed  
• render for brightness  
• smaller windows for privacy on public side

Planting: • trees in turn around spaces  
• single trees in grids  
• private planting flows over walls

Boundaries: • building edges or low walls with gates  
• high wooden fences with pergolas

Furniture: • metal or timber bollards

Lighting: • bracketed off buildings  
• white light since domestic rather than roadway  
• spill light from homes.

#### 15.5.4 Generally

Details: • Substations, phone boxes, lampposts, meters, bins, boiler flues, manhole covers and so forth often spoil a composition. Rigorous co-ordination is essential between designers and supply authorities.

#### 15.6.0 Implementation

15.6.1 See Section 19.1 for Design Implementation.