

Variation (No. 21)

of the

Dublin City Development Plan

2005-2011

Adopted by the Dublin City Council on 3rd December 2007

**Variation No. 21 of
the Dublin City Development Plan 2005-2011
Adopted Wording**

It was agreed at a meeting of City Council on December 3rd 2007, to vary the Dublin City Development Plan 2005-2011, adding a new section **4.5.0 “Achieving Liveable Sustainable New Apartment Homes”** in the Residential Chapter 4 and associated policies - **Policies Res 21, 22, 23, 24 & 25**, and relevant site development standards, in Chapter 15 - replacing **paragraphs 15.9.1, 15.9.2, 15.9.3, 15.9.4 and part of 15.9.6**.

CHAPTER 4 RESIDENTIAL

4.5.0 Achieving Liveable Sustainable New Apartment Homes

4.5.1 Challenges

In the region of 90% of new housing in the City area will be in apartment format and it is critical that new apartments are sufficiently spacious with all the necessary facilities to provide a level of residential amenity attractive to families with children on a long-term basis.

Achieving family friendly apartment housing quality and attractive new neighbourhoods are key challenges for the future success of the City. This has been summarised by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC): ‘housing is a key determinant of economic and social well-being and progress in Ireland ... the magnitude and significance of the challenge of creating sustainable neighbourhoods and social balance needs to be recognized ... it bears comparison with two other great challenges that Ireland faced and met in the past half century – the opening of the economy in the early 1960s and the establishment of the partnership approach in the mid 1980s’. The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government published Guidelines on Design Standards for New Apartments in September 2007 and these set out a baseline at a national level; the City Development Plan policy builds on and enhances these guidelines.

Dublin must compete globally with other cities to attract high value jobs and investment. A recent report from the OECD Competitive Cities in the Global Economy, documents how the attractiveness of a city in terms of public parks, public transport, cultural and social facilities, social inclusiveness and the quality of its housing are all significant factors in competitiveness and success.

Forfas/National Competitiveness Council ‘firmly believes that housing infrastructure, in terms of quantity, quality and price, is an important factor in national competitiveness. The reason that housing infrastructure is so important is the concept of ‘relative attractiveness’. The trend for modern enterprise is to settle where conditions are attractive for skilled labour as well as for capital.’

The costs of commuting long distances are a key issue in terms of CO₂ emissions, economic costs and negative effects on family life. It is important that people be

Adopted by the Dublin City Council on 3rd December 2007

offered a real choice of living in the City and not be required to live at a distance from the City because of an insufficient supply of new high quality apartment housing in the City area.

A key objective is to achieve the optimum quality and supply of liveable, sustainable apartment housing for a variety of household types and sizes including families with children. The needs of children shall be incorporated from the outset including provision for play and all apartments with two or more bedrooms should be designed with the needs of children in mind.

4.5.2 Apartment Qualities

The key issue in relation to apartment housing quality/liveability is the size or floor area of individual units. This is the envelope within which all the other qualities and facilities can be delivered. The concept of Target Average Floor Area across a scheme is a simple and transparent way to assess/ensure apartment quality.

There is a range of other factors within the apartment itself which affect the housing quality/liveability such as; dual aspect, facilities for children (e.g. quiet space for studying), above minimum floor to ceiling heights, daylight and sunlight, balconies/terraces like outdoor rooms, proper provision for drying clothes, sufficient storage, kitchens/bathrooms with windows, noise insulation, energy efficiency, good design and layout, etc.

Issues that relate to the apartment scheme include; the provision of attractive communal open space areas with provision for children's play, good daylight and sunlight qualities; generous and welcoming entrances and lobbies (e.g. double height), energy efficiency; architectural quality and finishes, parking for bicycles, ease of maintenance, etc.

It is also critically important to deliver the optimum/maximum supply of new apartment housing in order to promote housing affordability, offer more people a choice of living in the City and support the dynamism of the City.

Ensuring the highest quality of new apartment housing is especially important in marginal areas in order to deliver successful mixed-income regeneration areas and address the problems of concentrations of disadvantage. Parts of Dublin have some of the highest concentrations of disadvantage in the state and tackling these problems is a key objective for the City Council and other agencies.

Social infrastructure and other support facilities are key to achieving successful housing areas where people will choose to live and, besides the quality of apartments, this includes good parks and play areas, good shopping and other commercial facilities, good schools, a Public Library, leisure facilities, 'safe streets and clean streets' and efficient public transport. The issues are obvious and have been stressed in our consultation; the challenge is the delivery by a range of agencies not just the City Council.

The City Council has taken the lead in setting up Regeneration Fora and in developing partnerships with private developers and the local communities to address opportunities and problems and ensure successful, mixed-income new neighbourhoods.

There is an even greater need for public facilities such as public parks or libraries in areas of high-density housing.

Large sites offer particular opportunities to deliver on all the requirements for integrated, mixed-income, mixed-use and sustainable new communities with the full range of housing sizes and a greater ratio of apartments over 100m² shall be sought as well as commercial and community facilities. When required an Environmental Impact Statement should examine closely all these issues relating to sustainability and success.

POLICY RES 21

It is the policy of Dublin City Council to promote the optimum quality and supply of apartment housing for a range of housing needs and aspirations, including households with children and people with disabilities, in attractive, sustainable mixed-income, mixed-use neighbourhoods with the range of necessary social and other infrastructure, regard being had to the other provisions of the Development Plan and the proper planning and sustainable development of the City.

POLICY RES 22

It is the policy of Dublin City Council in assessing building heights to have regard to Performance Criteria including; providing excellent quality and innovative housing, optimising the supply of housing; providing good open spaces/parks and other community/public gain, good mix of uses, positive regeneration effects, energy efficiency, high quality contemporary architecture, etc. Applications shall be considered subject to all other provisions of the Development Plan and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area including the protection of amenities.

POLICY RES 23

It is the policy of Dublin City Council to achieve successful, mixed-income, mixed-use neighbourhoods, and a balanced planning approach may be taken, in order to deliver local services.

POLICY RES 24

It is the policy of Dublin City Council that apartment developments on City Council redevelopment sites should be models of good practice and deliver highest quality apartment homes with all the necessary support infrastructure such as public parks, good sized shopping, etc. contributing to attractive, sustainable, mixed-use and mixed income neighbourhoods.

POLICY RES 25

It is the policy of Dublin City Council to promote the transformation of areas with a high concentration of social disadvantage and the achievement of successful and socially integrated new neighbourhoods. Typically the transformation will involve the delivery of spacious new apartment homes in a high quality environment with all the infrastructure necessary to attract a wide range of income groups.

CHAPTER 15 GENERAL SITE-DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

15.7.0 Access For All

Dublin City Council is a signatory to the Declaration of “Cities and the Disabled” and recognises the need for equality of access for everybody to all aspects of the built and external environment as an essential prerequisite of equal opportunities and the development of an inclusive society.

Dublin City Council will have regard to the National Disability Authority’s guidelines Building for Everyone, the UK Lifetimes Homes standards and the Australian Adaptable Homes standards and will seek to encourage the implementation of best practice standards with regard to access. Appendix 15 sets out guidelines on appropriate access arrangements.

Part M of the Building Regulations (S.I. No. 179 of 2000) sets out standards to ensure that buildings are accessible and usable by everyone, including the aged, people with disabilities and people with children. The Technical Guidance Document in relation to Part M provides guidance on the access requirements for public buildings and for residential dwellings. However, a survey by the National Disability Authority showed that in practice difficulties are frequently caused for wheelchair users because of stepped thresholds at entrances and a lack of dished pavements.

In assessing applications, which relate to Protected Structures, regard shall be had to the protected status of the structure and the need to protect the special character. Appendix 18 provides guidance on this issue.

An important element in achieving sustainability in apartment design is the ability of the design to accommodate decreased mobility as residents may acquire some level of mobility impairment. The City Council Architects Department has developed design templates to achieve Lifetime Sustainability in housing design.

15.9.1 Apartment Guidelines

Policies are set out in Paragraphs 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 which promote the optimum quality and supply of apartment housing for a range of housing needs and aspirations, including households with children, and people with disabilities, in attractive, sustainable mixed-income, mixed-use neighbourhoods with the range of necessary social and other infrastructure. All planning applications will be considered with regard to these policies and the guidelines shall be read in this overall context.

This quality of an apartment can be considered in terms of three inter-related issues:

- the apartment itself,
- the apartment scheme and
- the environment outside the apartment block, the neighbourhood and the social and other infrastructure.

The needs of children must be incorporated from the outset and this includes play areas, storage for example a trike, bathrooms big enough to easily bath a child, study areas, etc. Designers shall ask themselves the question (and document the answer in the Housing Quality Assessment): "In very practical terms how does the proposed development accommodate satisfactorily e.g. a household of 2 adults and 1 or 2 children?"

Experience in Ireland and elsewhere has shown that children will play everywhere, so as far as possible their safety needs to be protected throughout the entire site, particularly in terms of safe access to designated larger communal or public open spaces. Proposals to meet this key performance criterion shall be detailed in the Housing Quality Assessment. The City Council is preparing more detailed guidance on providing for children's play and in the meantime regard shall be had to the Dublin Docklands Development Authority's Play Space Guidelines.

The scale of a development/size of site is a critical factor. Development of 500 or more units are akin to small to medium sized Irish towns and shall be planned to deliver on all the necessary qualities such as a wide housing choice, attractive to a wide range of income groups, with all the necessary social and other infrastructure including schools; and likely to be a settled and successful district in the future. The Environmental Impact Statement shall examine closely all these issues relating to sustainability and success

The floor area of an apartment house is the critical measure of its liveability. It is the envelope within which all the other qualities can be delivered such as spacious living and dining areas, kitchens suitable for cooking for a family, functional storage and laundry areas. There is a range of other qualities that are important including: dual aspect, balcony/terrace space, sunlight/daylight, noise, and floor to ceiling height.

A Housing Quality Assessment including all these criteria shall be required with all planning applications. The benchmark shall be to produce a quality of housing in apartment format as good as that of standard suburban housing.

Adopted by the Dublin City Council on 3rd December 2007

It is important to remember that minimum standards are not recommended standards and it would not be in the interests of sustainable development if a planning application barely met minimum standards.

Creative and innovative architecture and design shall be encouraged and shall be an important element in assessing planning applications.

Flexibility will be a key planning approach and in this regard Performance Criteria shall be used where possible to allow for creative/innovative solutions to, for example, the problem of drying clothes.

Different types of housing or different layouts that provide greater choice shall be encouraged, for example, open plan or 'loft style' apartments.

The quality of materials and finishes is a key criterion and this applies to all aspects of the building including the entrance to the basement car park which is often a prominent feature from the pedestrian viewpoint and requires careful design and high quality materials.

A Sustainability Report/Audit shall be required with all applications and innovative measures shall be encouraged. 'Green roofs' (with sedum type plants where they are not easily accessible) should be considered as standard and this can also allow for their use as amenity spaces where appropriate. Greater use of bicycles should be encouraged by providing Sheffield Stands for parking as they are quick and easy to access and ensure a high degree of security against theft and vandalism, with some of the stands being overlooked for added security.

The improvement of existing apartments/schemes will be encouraged by, for example, retrofitting balconies/terraces, providing new roof gardens, amalgamating apartments, or allowing for a change of use where residential amenity is poor such as directly onto a busy street.

The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government published Guidelines on Design Standards for New Apartments in September 2007 and these set out a baseline at a national level; the City Development Plan policy builds on and enhances these guidelines.

15.9.2 The Apartment

The Target Average Floor Area across a scheme shall be 85 m².

The recommended minimum floor areas for different apartment types shall be:

- 1 bed: 55m² minimum
- 2 bed: a range of 80m² to 90m²
- 3 bed or equivalent: 100m² minimum

The ratio of different apartment types shall be:

- 1 bed maximum 20%
- 100m² or 3 bed a minimum of 15%

The ratio set out above shall not necessarily apply to particular social housing provision such as housing for older people and regard will also be had to the Housing Strategy. The minimum floor areas shall apply in all cases.

As part of the objective of encouraging a variety of housing provision, an intermediate one bedroom plus study apartment in the range of, for example 60-70m² will be considered as part of the 20% maximum for one beds. The additional room would be suitable for study, living room extension, guest room etc. The additional room will not be included as a bedspace for open space purposes.

Dual aspect is a key quality of life issue and ideally there should be a through living room. Dual aspect provides for inter alia, cross-ventilation, better views, better daylight/sunlight and more adaptability within the apartment.

From a quality point of view, the target is two apartments per lift / stairs core per floor providing for 100% dual aspect. The maximum for single aspect is 15%, none shall be north facing and each single aspect unit shall be assessed in terms of its quality. For a freestanding block, three/four corner units with a central lift/stairs core provides for a certain level of dual aspect. In certain circumstances, a limited length of deck access (e.g. three apartments) may be acceptable as long as bedrooms do not face out onto the deck and it is well proportioned and designed. In some cases secondary bedrooms facing onto the deck may be acceptable if issues are dealt with by careful design such as providing a semi-private external buffer zone. The key performance criterion is the quality of residential amenity.

With creative design it should be possible to achieve 50% and upwards of 'kitchens with windows' and this will serve to increase its role as 'the heart of the home'. Through living rooms with a sitting area at one end, a dining area at the other, and an 'island' kitchen in the middle shall also be considered. Ideally bathrooms should have natural ventilation and light.

Designing apartments that are flexible and adaptable as the needs of the household changes is a key objective. The concept of habitable rooms as distinct from bedrooms is important as it allows an apartment/home to adapt to the needs of its residents over time. So, if of a suitable size and design, a habitable room can change from a dining room to a bedroom to a study as needs change. In particular the second/third bedroom can be flexible and the apartment made attractive to households at different lifecycle stages.

For larger dwellings, the provision of one main living room separate from the kitchen should be considered. For these dwellings, a combined kitchen/dining area can become the focal point for shared household activities e.g. children's play, pursuit of hobbies, casual meals and informal entertaining.

The private balcony or terrace area shall be seen as an outdoor room and spacious enough to accommodate a table and chairs for the household/visitors. It shall also provide for privacy and safety for children's play. The quality of detailing and finish is critical; for example, the floor should be of solid construction and the soffits should be visually attractive. Ideally the floor of the balcony and the living room should be at the same level to allow for integration of both. Ideally the balcony should be partly internalised to allow for privacy and noise insulation. A second balcony might also be considered on dual aspect apartments. The minimum sizes shall be: one bed. 6m², two bed. 8m², 3 bed or equivalent 10m².

A minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.7m (3m floor to floor) shall be required and the additional overall height of the building shall be allowed for, save in exceptional circumstances. Providing higher floor to ceiling heights for penthouse apartments will be encouraged. This additional internal height has a number of benefits besides the significantly increased sense of spaciousness, better daylight/sunlight, improved ventilation and more storage space. There may be a requirement for higher floor to ceiling heights in particular circumstances such as on the ground floor and/or to allow for a future change to a non-residential use. The top of the window frame in all habitable rooms in an apartment should be as high as is practicable within the particular form of construction.

Functional storage areas shall be provided to store the equipment a household is likely to need including relatively large items such as a child's bicycle. Space should be provided for the segregation of waste. Additional storage area shall be provided outside the apartment. Suggested minimum storage areas within the apartment shall be: one bed 3m², two bed 7m², 3 bed or equivalent 9m². The larger storage areas need not necessarily be provided in one unit and the Planning Authority will be open to different solutions.

Acoustic privacy is a key issue. People in apartment developments live in close proximity to one another so effective sound insulation/acoustic privacy is most important within apartments, between apartments, between apartments and common areas (e.g. bedrooms may not be appropriate immediately adjoining lift cores) and also from a more noisy external environment such as a busy street. Consideration shall be given to provision of higher levels of noise insulation than in the current Building Regulations. Avoiding putting a bedroom on one side of a party wall next to a living room on the other has proven to be successful. Also successful are layouts that use circulation areas to act as a sound buffer between the areas where sound transmission would be an issue. Floor slabs shall be capable of allowing residents to use a floor finish of choice without an increase of noise transmission. Attention should be given to the proximity of windows from one unit to the other to minimize noise transfer. Finishes to public areas in apartment blocks should be selected to reduce the impact of airborne sound as well as ease of maintenance. Triple glazing shall be provided where noise is likely to be intrusive. A noise assessment shall form part of the Housing Quality Assessment. This should have regard to (a) location in relation to noise generators such as a busy street (b) layout to minimise noise impacts and (c) noise insulation measures. The City Council is carrying out a study of current

practice and will bring forward proposals for improved delivery of noise insulation/acoustic privacy.

Proper facilities for washing and drying clothes ideally naturally shall be provided and this 'deliverable' shall be included in the Housing Quality Assessment. A utility room might be considered with natural ventilation. However, the Planning Authority shall not be prescriptive but shall consider different ways in which this performance criterion can be effectively met.

Hallways can be an attractive and useful space in an apartment. One possibility in a family-sized apartment is a space, perhaps 2m across in each direction, such that four people (including guests donning their coats) could congregate around the entrance door; and giving access to living room, bedroom, bathroom and cupboard doors. However, the Planning Authority will not be prescriptive in this regard and will allow for different design approaches.

All rooms shall be of a reasonable shape and proportion and have adequate space for normal living purposes. The shape and layout of rooms should maximise the amenity of residents. Indicative furniture layouts to scale should be shown on the plans. All living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms should be so located as to avoid facing towards nearby high boundary or gable walls. In the case of conversions, partition walls within and between residential units shall not cut across windows.

On schemes of five units or less in inner city areas each application will be considered on its merits and the minimum floor areas may be varied, where appropriate, subject to the delivery of high quality apartments and general quality of life.

15.9.3 The Apartment Scheme

Issues that relate to the apartment scheme include; the provision of attractive communal open space areas with provision for children's play, generous and welcoming entrances and lobbies (e.g. double height), attractive common areas, energy efficiency, architectural quality and finishes, safe and convenient parking for bicycles, ease of maintenance, etc. Providing for Information and Communication Technology is recommended. The delivery of these qualities shall form part of the Housing Quality Assessment.

Entrances and lobbies to apartment buildings are important quality issues. Entrances shall be clearly identified. Lobbies should be spacious and welcoming and can have a very important effect on a resident's sense of their home. It is a form of communal space. Health promotion reports recommend that people should be encouraged to use the stairs and so it should be placed in a prominent position to encourage use. Lobbies/stairways should be naturally lit and ventilated. If the lobby also gives access to the courtyard it should also be spacious with a strong visual link.

Daylight and sunlight is a key residential amenity and all buildings should receive adequate daylight and sunlight. Careful design of residential buildings, where the amount of incoming light is important, can ensure that sufficient sunlight can enter habitable rooms to provide comfort and also reduce the need for artificial lighting. All habitable rooms must be naturally ventilated and lit, and living rooms and bedrooms shall not be lit solely by roof lights.

Development shall be guided by the principles of Site Planning for Daylight and Sunlight, A Good Practice Guide (British Research Establishment Report, 1991). Regard will also be had to the BRE report Daylighting in Urban Areas prepared for the Energy Saving Trust. It is recommended that the lowest occupied level be analysed for daylight/sunlight. Staggering of balconies on the façade of a building has a positive effect on sunlight/daylight reaching the apartment. In schemes of 50 units and more, a sunlight/daylight analysis of the different apartments may be required and modifications to the scheme put in place where appropriate.

A variety of apartment building formats or typologies will be considered. A podium format with commercial use on the ground floor/s providing a platform for a communal courtyard with apartments above and views in and out of the elevated courtyard can be very successful. The ground floor commercial space can provide for a good size supermarket for example.

Given Dublin's northerly latitude, the sun does not rise in the sky very high and so the perimeter block of a continuous 6 to 8 storeys is not always appropriate. One solution is to provide for breaks/varied heights in the building blocks to allow for sunlight/daylight to flood into courtyards and public places such as streets. In certain cases additional height may be considered in order to replace apartment units lost to provide this public and communal gain.

Issues relating to the maintenance of the apartment scheme shall be considered at design stage including durability, longevity, ease of maintenance, life cycle costs. For example, design windows to enable cleaning from inside the building where possible. Facilitate cleaning of common areas by providing storage for materials, power and water sources and drainage outlets. Possibly provide

accommodation for a caretaker. Considered material selection and detail design can dramatically reduce the need for long-term maintenance and reduce costs. Service ducts serving two or more apartments should as far as practicable be accessible from common circulation areas for maintenance purposes.

Ground floor apartments onto city streets will not be permitted in order to protect residential amenity, animate the street and encourage a mixed-use culture. On particularly noisy streets, apartments on the upper floors facing directly onto the street may be discouraged. In some cases apartments onto minor streets may be allowed at ground floor level, but a floor-to-ceiling height of 3.5m to 4m will be required to allow for subsequent conversion to non-residential use.

Refuse storage, recycling and composting areas for apartment development must be addressed at the design stage for all schemes and must comply with the standards set out in Appendix 11: Guidelines for Waste Storage Facilities.

15.9.4 The Neighbourhood

Delivering attractive mixed-income, mixed-use neighbourhoods with all the necessary social and other infrastructure and a high quality environment is key to achieving successful neighbourhoods where people will choose to live. These qualities include good parks and play areas, good shopping and other commercial facilities, good schools, a Public Library, leisure facilities, 'safe streets and clean streets' and efficient public transport. There is an even greater need for public facilities such as public parks or libraries in areas of high-density housing. The issues are obvious; the challenge is the delivery by a range of agencies including the City Council.

A minimum of 10% Public Open Space (as distinct from private or communal space for the apartment scheme) shall be required and ideally the creation of a Public Park. Other contributions to the public domain will be encouraged such as art features, views into and out of courtyards, improved pedestrian paving, etc.

Suitable sites large enough to accommodate a supermarket are a scarce resource in the City area. The provision of good supermarket and other shopping shall be encouraged in the interests of improving local facilities and employment, promoting regeneration, enlivening the street and enhancing competition, affordability and choice. The affordability of a healthy diet ('food poverty') has been identified by the Combat Poverty Agency and others as a significant problem. The definition of neighbourhood shop shall be interpreted to allow for the provision of current supermarket/discount store floorplates and associated car parking.

Appropriate sized employment/office uses may be considered on suitable sites in Z1 zones which have a concentration of disadvantage, in order to attract mixed-income groups, drive the regeneration process forward, provide day-time demand for cafes, etc. and to transform their image. They can be located on the lower floors providing local facilities, employment, vitality over the 18-hour day and allowing apartments to be on upper floors with better amenity, regard being had to the protection of existing residential amenities.

15.9.6 Private Open Space for Residential Development

Apartments/Duplexes

In apartment developments private open space may be in the form of balconies, terraces, roof gardens or communal landscaped areas exclusive of surface car parking. The minimum private open space requirement for apartments shall be as follows:

Location	Private Open Space sq. m. per bedspace (min)
Inner City / Docklands / Prime Urban Centres / Ballymun	5 - 8
Suburbs	12 – 15"