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HEUSTON STATION ENVIRONS SUMMARY TEXT

PROJECT: **HEUSTON STATION ENVIRONS REGENERATION STRATEGY**

STAGE : **N/A**

DATE: **09 JULY 2002**

1.00 analysis

1.1 introduction

In April 2001 Dublin Corporation commissioned the Urban Projects led team of Fergal MacCabe, Faber Maunsell and DTZ Sherry Fitzgerald to undertake an urban study of the Heuston Station Environs, culminating in the production of a Regeneration Strategy Framework Plan for the area.

The overall objective given by Dublin Corporation was "to produce a regeneration strategy which will incorporate an urban design land use framework plan for the Heuston Station Environs."

In the brief from Dublin Corporation this objective is broken down into 3 key areas:

- to provide a regeneration framework for key development sites which address issues of spatial layout, urban grain, massing, height and land use and the need to interface such sites successfully with the Park, the river and cultural institutions.
- exploit the potential for reconfiguring the public domain to connect the Park, Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Kilmainham Gaol and the National Museum more effectively into the public realm of the city
- develop the role and potential of the river including the provision of appropriate urban design guidelines for new development in the river context.

The consultant team is asked to consider 3 general subjects:

Use:

address the potential to create a mixed use, sustainable, 24 hour environment

Urban Design:

consider linkages; design; height massing; spatial layout; issues relating to National Institutions and Headquarters; landscape; the urban sense of place of Dublin; public domain

Movement:

indicate how redeveloped sites will be serviced; broad ratios in mode of transport and how the adjacent road structure might accommodate the effect of development in the area.

1.2 regional context

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The study area as defined by Dublin City Council covers approximately 88 hectares. The area includes the northern section of the Guinness lands, the OPW and Eircom lands by the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Heuston Station lands, Clancy Barracks, the main gate and surrounding area of Phoenix Park, Montpelier Hill and the National Museum. An associated study area is marked for the Royal Hospital Kilmainham and grounds.

Heuston Station and its environs are a key focal point for the Dublin Region and Ireland as a whole. This is due to a number of factors:

1.
the area is a gateway site to the capital city as defined in the Dublin Development Plan 1999 and 'Managing Intensification and Change: A Strategy for Dublin Building Height 2000'.
2.
the area forms a critical junction in the National Route N4
3.
Heuston Station is the main railway station for all destinations in the west or south of the country and is particularly important as a commuter hub from County Kildare and the Midlands
4.
as a main freight station of the city – notably the direct distribution of Guinness from its site of production in the study area.
5.
the area is home to a large number of national or regional institutions, providing some key tourist sites and trip generators

1.3 city context

The river has great importance in terms of symbolising the city and as an orienting device in the dense urban grain. The river forms the main ordering device of the city centre.

The Heuston Station has a key and dominating role relative to the River Liffey. The station building faces the river head-on, positioned strategically on a man-made bend in the river. The station marks a change in the nature of how the river responds to the city context – from natural / picturesque at Chapelizod and Islandbridge, to controlled / urban through the city centre.

The other punctuation in the river's corridor through the historic city is the docks, which open up to the seemingly infinite expanse of the sea. Heuston Station and its environs can be seen to counterbalance this by defining the other end of the Liffey Quays and opening up to the more finite expanse of the countryside.

Another comparison with the docks can be made concerning the unusual number of large underused sites. These represent the potential for greater building height and density in the inner city, and coherent development within single ownership sites.

The study area is integral to the distribution of historic and tourist sites within the city centre and is therefore part of a complex set of linkages, routes and views across the city for various different groups of people: residents, workers, commuters and tourists.

The remaking of the city over the past 10 years has enlarged the city's core central area along the river towards the docks in the east and Heuston Station in the west.

Heuston Station is a major hub for the city's transport infrastructure and is consequently identified as a sustainable location for high density development.

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1.4 local context

The area is dominated by large landholdings with the effect of restricting public domain and permeability. The area is characterised by blank enclosing walls and confined traffic and pedestrian corridors.

The public domain is compromised. Congested roads with high numbers of HGV's and buses have resulted in an environment dominated by motorised traffic that is hostile to pedestrians and cyclists. This is particularly prevalent on the Quays and at rush hours.

The current traffic congestion will only be exacerbated by the introduction of the Light Rail Transit (Luas) in 2003, as the traffic is crossed at several points across the site by the Luas route.

Many expansive views open up across the site and city despite the physical restrictions. To the west of the station the predominant land usage is parkland.

The site is occupied by numerous protected structures and National Monuments, many of which are national cultural institutions. Large portions of the site are conservation areas.

2.00 regeneration strategy

The Regeneration Strategy is a generalised statement of intent by Dublin City Council for development in the study area.

- As the gateway to the capital city the Heuston Station Environs balances the docklands to the east of the historic city centre area and is marked by the transition from parkland to a high density urban environment.
The Regeneration Strategy proposes that the contrasting conditions within the Heuston Station Environs should be appropriately preserved and strengthened.
- The quality of services and environment in and around the station is crucial to presenting a positive impression of Dublin as it is the first experience of the city for a large number of visitors. The facilities in and around the station should be upgraded to cope with present and future demands.
- The area houses numerous national institutions, sites of historic significance and key elements of the national transport infrastructure. The production site of perhaps the country's most famous export is also located in the area – Guinness.
Existing facilities must be maintained and developed to provide outstanding facilities. Additional facilities must also be encouraged and developed.
- The profile of the Heuston Station Environs should be appropriate to a place of national importance.
- The Heuston Station Environs must be accepted by the wider public as a desirable and important destination that effectively extends the city centre core to the west.
The Heuston Station Environs must therefore provide a high quality and safe public domain with excellent connections to efficient transport nodes. High profile, high quality, mixed use and high density development must be facilitated.

The vision for the Heuston Station Environs is to create a coherent and vibrant quarter of the city that captures the public imagination with high quality services, development, design and public spaces that consolidate and improve the existing strengths of the area.

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3.00 development framework plan

The development framework plan proposes a series of public/amenity spaces, connections and appropriate development throughout the study area in order to realize the Regeneration Strategy. Outline plans for each stakeholder's site have been drawn up, integrating into the overall plan. Each of the largest sites is the subject of a separate more detailed development framework plan.

3.1 public and amenity spaces

It is proposed that the area is structured around 2 principal external spaces at either end of the station; Heuston Square and the West Terrace.

3.1.1 Heuston Square

The space to the front of the headquarters building of the Great Western Railway is considered to be in the centre of the Heuston Station Environs. All destinations in the area radiate from this space and it is the main connecting space with the city centre.

The East Square is to be the site of the three Light Rail Transit (Luas) platforms for Heuston.

It is proposed that the space should be an active and central urban square for the Heuston Station Environs.

The space must provide clear legibility of the entire area. The views up to IMMA at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham and across to Collins Barracks are significant.

The square will benefit from excellent views and light due to the relatively low existing protected structures to the south and west.

3.1.2 West Terrace

The Development Framework Plan proposes a new public space to the west of the station, elevated over tracks.

This space will be part of a sequence of spaces running from IMMA through St. John's Road West to Conyngham Road and the Phoenix Park, linked by a legible and high quality pedestrian and cycle route. The space will allow access to lands at the rear of the station.

Eastbound traffic is given the option to connect with the terrace from St. John's Road. Therefore access is also provided to the station or Heuston Station lands. Traffic can continue across to Conyngham Road. The space is to be used by public transport, taxis and private cars accessing the station lands (car park) or the north of the city.

The West Terrace uses the topography of the valley to create the illusion that the platform is at grade. The Terrace is formed by taking the level of Conyngham Road and continuing it across the river to the rear of the station and across the tracks. The pedestrian/cycle linkage can then continue across St. John's Road.

The space will lie in the centre of the valley between IMMA and the Wellington monument and will have a panoramic view of both structures and the Liffey Valley to the west.

The space will benefit from south west to west light with an almost unobstructed view to the setting sun.

3.2 Connections: Pedestrian and cycle

High quality pedestrian and cycle environments must link all public spaces, amenity and developments. This will significantly increase permeability through the large sites and create a multitude of routes through the sites connecting all points in the study area and city.

The principal proposed pedestrian and cycle routes across the Heuston Station Environs are described below:

3.2.1 Phoenix Park to Kilmainham

The Phoenix Park and Royal Hospital Kilmainham Gardens have been separated since the construction of the Heuston Station in the mid 1800s. Consequently both parks have lost any direct connection to each other and with the river. Both parks also suffer from poor linkage to the city or public transport nodes.

The construction of a pedestrian and a cycle link between the Phoenix Park and the Kilmainham area would directly address the above issues.

3.2.2 Dr. Steevens' Hospital to IMMA

Royal Hospital Kilmainham (Irish Museum of Modern Art) is currently poorly linked to the public domain of the city. Locating and travelling to IMMA on foot is presently difficult and requires the pedestrian to negotiate a hostile environment.

The OPW site bounded by the Cammock River, Military road and St. John's Road, represents a large area of impenetrable land that is underused and has good development potential.

A predominately pedestrian route running parallel with the Cammock is proposed directly linking Dr. Steeven's Hospital Park with the gates of IMMA. This will provide access to the museum and become an integral part of a wider tourist route from Collins barracks to IMMA, to Kilmainham Gaol and to the Memorial Gardens.

3.2.3 Victoria Quay to the Memorial Gardens

Heuston Station is presently connected to the city centre by Victoria Quay. The environment for pedestrians is of a low quality, increasing the physical separation and isolation of the station from the city. Pedestrian and cycle access to the station lands is also hostile and entirely vehicle oriented.

Clancy Barracks is currently entirely closed to public access.

The Memorial Gardens are a significant area of landscaped parklands presently underused and isolated from the city.

A new, identifiable route is proposed on the South bank of the River connecting Victoria Quay to Memorial gardens and at the wider scale linking Chapelizod to the docklands.

The new Digital Hub area off Thomas St. is largely blocked off from Heuston Station by the large and impenetrable landholding of Guinness.

Access along Victoria Quay, when upgraded, will alleviate this separation to an extent. However with the potential redevelopment of the Guinness lands, a new pedestrian route might be developed a block back from the Quays, providing part of a more intimate and direct connection.

3.2.4 The Museum Park to Sarah Bridge

The pedestrian environment on the North Quay at Museum Park (Croppies Acre) is hostile and dangerous, contributing to the isolation of the station from the city. The access along the North bank exists only in sections related to recent developments. The potential of a pedestrian link from Museum Park to Sarah Bridge should be realised.

It is proposed that pedestrian and cycle facilities on the North Quays be upgraded to provide secure and attractive areas. The South aspect and the views across and up and down the river offer potential for an attractive and high quality public domain.

3.2.5 Heuston Square (Luas) and the Phoenix Park

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The nearest Luas stop to the major public amenity of the Phoenix Park is at Heuston Square. The route over Heuston Bridge around the Hickeys site and onto Parkgate Street is currently unanimated and compromised.

The following should be provided:

- Wide provision and good separation for pedestrians on Heuston Bridge.
- Animated street frontage and high quality public domain at the edge of the Hickeys site.
- Improved public domain along Parkgate street.
- A new secure crossing from the south side of Parkgate Street to the Park entrance.

3.2.6 Arbour Hill to Museum Park

The principal existing residential areas adjacent to the study area lie to the north in Arbour Hill, Stoneybatter and Manor Street. A large section of these areas have no connection with the study area because of three major institutions: Arbour Hill Prison, Collins Barracks and the Law Society at Blackhall Place.

With the redevelopment of the National Museum site, there is potential to create a pedestrian route, subject to control and opening hours, linking Arbour Hill/ Stoneybatter to Museum Park. A route currently exists along the edge of the Arbour Hill Prison site.

The result of this would be:

- the breakdown of the impermeable mass of the Collins Barracks and Law Society, connecting the residential areas to the North with the Heuston Station Environs.
- to attract a greater number of people through the Museum site creating potential for retail or other uses, encouraging diversity of use and longer hours of use.
- to connect the Museum Luas stop with a larger residential catchment area.

3.3 Connections: Vehicular

The basic traffic strategy is to reduce, control and disperse the main through-traffic and allow efficient access to the station and all developments

3.3.1 Through traffic: eastbound

Traffic from the N4 eastbound currently travels along St. John's Road, past the south façade and across the east façade of the station and the Frank Sherwin Bridge to the North Quays.

It is proposed to disperse the traffic at a number of points to reduce loading around the station, across Heuston Square and on the North Quays.

This is to be achieved by providing three options for reaching the northside at:

South Circular Road
West Terrace
Heuston Square

3.3.2 Through traffic: westbound

At present the westbound traffic along the quays has four lanes on Victoria Quay. The traffic is then split in front of the station, either crossing the space in front of the east elevation, or crossing the Frank Sherwin Bridge.

In order to reduce traffic impact and increase pedestrian safety, the following developments are proposed:

- As part of the new development on the Guinness lands at Victoria Quay, the traffic heading for St. Johns Road should be brought back a block in line with St. John's Road before the Heuston Square. This will mean westbound traffic will not cross the Heuston Square. Victoria Quay will have only two lanes for a significant stretch near the station before turning onto the Frank Sherwin Bridge.

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- The two lane sections (after a split on the Victoria Quay) should provide increased areas for pedestrians and cyclists, improving safety and public amenity.

3.3.3 Clancy Barracks to Heuston Station Lands

At present Clancy Barracks and the Heuston Station Lands are cut off from each other and the general network of the city. It is proposed that a vehicular link is created using the height difference of the sites at the railway line. This will help integrate both sites into the city fabric and increase accessibility.

3.3.4 Public transport

The Development Framework Plan proposes new and improved provision for buses within the public spaces surrounding the station.

The Light Rail Transit (Luas) will have 3 platforms on the Heuston Square.

Taxis and private cars will have adequate provision for drop-off / pick-up on the West Terrace.

3.4 Connections: Views

Orientation and legibility of the city are dependent on visual connections.

The development profile and public perception of the Heuston Station Environs are key elements in the Regeneration Strategy.

One method by which the Development Framework Plan can facilitate this is by maintaining and strengthening visual connections of the Heuston Station Environs to and from the city centre and surrounding environs.

Due to the topography of the study area and the number of national institutions and established green amenity spaces, the study area has many existing and potential views.

For the Development Framework Plan the views are divided into significant views and visual connections. A significant view should not be adversely affected by development within the area shown.

A visual connection is defined as a view linking distant areas of the city, aiding orientation and legibility. Such a view is not regarded as untouchable but any development should enhance and not entirely block the view.

The impact of any development should be ascertained by a visual impact assessment as necessary.

3.4.1 Significant View: Royal Hospital Kilmainham to Phoenix Park.

The panoramic view of the Phoenix Park from the north terrace of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham is presently relatively uninterrupted by development.

The view is the only remaining connection between the Royal Hospital Kilmainham and the Phoenix Park, which were originally part of the same landholding.

The raised panorama includes the Magazine Fort, the Wellington Monument and Gandon's Royal Infirmary, all grounded in the mature planting of the Phoenix Park.

The view of the city from the Magazine Fort (the site of the old Phoenix House) on Thomas' Hill has been painted by numerous artists since the 1600's.

The composition of the Royal Hospital in parkland outside the densely developed city is more or less intact and it is proposed that this contrasting relationship be maintained. The Royal Hospital's position at the edge of the city is thus preserved.

The lines of the significant view are taken from the west and east corners of the north range of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, to the western side of the Magazine Fort and east edge of the main elevation of the Dept. of Defence Headquarters respectively.

While development between these lines is permissible, it must at no time:

- rise above the line of the existing apartment blocks on Conyngham Road when viewed from the terrace of the north range of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.
- block any part of the full elevations of the Hospital from any point in the Phoenix Park at a level comparable with the Magazine Fort and/or Department of Defence Headquarters

To fully ascertain the impact of any proposal on the view, visual impact assessments should be carried out as necessary.

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3.4.2 Visual connections: Chesterfield Avenue to Guinness Lands.

The vista at the city end of Chesterfield Avenue to the city is regarded as an important image of the diversity and culture of the city, contrasting the Park with the Guinness Works. Any development must not adversely obscure the view.

A tall building on the corner of the Guinness Lands opposite Heuston Station should be of appropriate slenderness and transparency in order to add positively to the view.

3.4.3 Visual connections: City Quays to Park.

The Phoenix Park is presently not well connected with the city. The only view from the city centre is from the Quays to the Wellington Monument. It is essential that this view be maintained.

No development should have an adverse affect on this view.

The visual connection is defined as the view of the Wellington monument from any point on the City Quays up to the East Square at pedestrian level.

3.5 Building development

The Development Framework Plan sets out guidelines for building development generally across the study area and specifically for each site.

Appropriate locations for tall buildings, distribution and location of uses and massing are described.

3.5.1 High Buildings and Massing

The development across the area must be sufficiently dense to allow a rich mix of uses. Human scale and the immediate environment or microclimate must be maintained at the optimum quality. Overshadowing should be minimised.

Building height is dependent on location and use, particularly in relation to significant views and visual connections.

The Heuston Station lands and Guinness lands are identified in 'Managing Intensification and Change: A Strategy for Dublin Building Height' as potential locations within the city for the development of tall buildings and high density.

The Development Framework Plan for the Heuston Station Environs is in line with this report and specifies the location of 3 tall buildings in the area.

The Heuston Station Environs is considered a suitable location as:

- it is a major strategic and well serviced site suitable for comprehensive development. The Heuston Station Environs will provide an attractive inner city location for large-scale intensive commercial activity.
- the Regeneration Strategy aims to create a high profile, high quality, mixed use and high density development. A small number of high quality tall buildings will ensure a new public perception of the area and provide large gross floor areas.

By restricting the number of tall buildings to 3 the permeability of views across the area and the overall character of the area can be maintained. New development must enhance the area and not dominate the existing institutions.

The footprints of the tall buildings should have a long dimension in an east-west orientation to avoid blocking out light and views from the west.

Each tall building is located on a major public space located around the station.

Guinness Building : corner site on Guinness lands relating to the Heuston Square.

OPW Building: corner site on OPW lands adjacent to Dr Steevens Hospital and Park, and opposite the south façade of the station building.

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CIE Building: site to the north of the station building on the river relating to the West Terrace and River Terrace.

The height of the buildings should not be the sole factor in assessing suitability. Slenderness ratio (height to width) and transparency (reflection and penetration of light) should also be taken into account.

Height should not be restricted by precedents in Ireland.

Each proposal must be assessed by a full visual impact assessment as part of an environment impact assessment.

The cluster of 3 tall buildings will locate the Heuston Station Environs from the existing city centre, docks and suburbs.

3.5.2 Landmark Buildings

The Regeneration Strategy for the Heuston Station Environs describes the area as the gateway to the city from the west. The strategy aims to extend the existing city centre to include the Heuston Station Environs while preserving and strengthening the existing character of the area.

Numerous sites throughout the Heuston Station Environs are suitable for development of new or extended hi-profile public buildings and/or institutions:

1. West end of Heuston Station
2. West Terrace tall building
3. Heuston Station Lands site
4. Guinness site on Heuston Square
5. Hickeys site
6. National Museum site
7. OPW site on Dr Steevens Park
8. Clancy Barracks/CIE lands
9. Phoenix Park site on Parkgate Street / Infirmary Road

3.5.3 Uses

The Heuston Station Environs Regeneration Strategy aims to create a high quality, mixed use, high density development centred on the station and associated public spaces. The Development Framework Plan must attract significant mixed-use development throughout the study area, shifting the defined city core westwards.

The area is presently characterised by large impermeable sites of single ownership and use. These must be broken down and integrated into the urban fabric. The distribution of uses across the Heuston Station Environs must be carefully controlled, taking into account present and future infrastructural facilities and phasing across the sites.

It is particularly important that office provision is phased to take account of the market demand and timing of improvements to public transport and the road network.

In general single uses on large sites should be avoided and a ratio of 60:40 commercial to residential maintained across all sites. This ratio can vary depending on the site and in response to market demand.

Commercial use should include cultural, enterprise, entertainment, education, retail, services, media recording and general media-associated uses, facilities, leisure, hotel or other uses considered appropriate by the planning authority for a high density, mixed use city centre location.

At the time of writing the residential market has the greatest potential to absorb new capacity. This element of the large mixed-use schemes should be facilitated first in order that the overall development is not held up by lack of office demand.

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3.5.4 Zoning

The existing zoning map in the Dublin City Development Plan 1999 generally reflects the large single ownerships in the study area. Most of the stakeholders' sites require re-zoning to create the planning context to facilitate appropriate development in line with the Development Framework Plan.

The proposed re-zoning should be implemented in the next review of the Dublin City Development Plan.

4.00 conclusion

The Heuston Station Environs are of national and civic importance. The area is rich in terms of historic and national monuments, natural amenity and topography. The area has potentially excellent transport connections.

The Regeneration Strategy and Development Framework Plan aim to realize the potential of the area and provide guidance for the appropriate and co-ordinated development of the Heuston Station Environs.

By the implementation of the required infrastructure, the creation of a high quality public domain – spaces and connections, controlled building development and appropriate diversity and mix of uses, the Heuston Station Environs will extend the city centre of Dublin to the west. This will create a coherent and vibrant quarter of the city that captures the public imagination.