

## **The Custom House Docks Development Authority & Planning Schemes**

It was against a bleak background of unemployment, deprivation and instability that the Custom House Docks Development Authority (CHDDA) was established by the state in 1987, as a special project organisation to oversee the development of an international financial services centre (IFSC) within the Docklands. The Urban Renewal Act 1986 delineated the boundaries of this area, which included the land between Amien Street to the west, Common Street to the East, Sherriff Street Lower to the north and Custom House Quays to the south. The Urban Renewal Acts of 1987 and 1994 expanded the scheme to include the land to the east until Spencer Dock and an extension to the centre of the Liffey.

These Acts and the resultant Planning Schemes of 1987 and 1994 established a framework to spur investment in run down inner city areas and reflected a broad focus on the renewal of the historic city. Tax incentives were the key new instrument for encouraging private sector funding of this phase of urban renewal. The chief concern at these early stages was the physical regeneration of the area and the establishment of the IFSC. And while there is no doubting that the latter proved a major innovation, especially in terms of employment, other concerns embracing broader social, cultural and environmental dimensions remained secondary.

The Planning Schemes proposed a broad mix of development yet the IFSC Phase 1 remained the major catalyst and by the mid-1990s the character of the original site described by the Urban Renewal Act 1986 became that of a high-class business enclave rather than a vibrant, new neighbourhood per se. No major cultural amenities were built although from the start it was the stated intention of the Authority to reserve the massive warehouse space of Stack A for a major cultural attraction. New residential blocks were built around the Inner (Revenue) Dock to make use of the water as a public amenity, but with 20-35 year olds in mind. Many new tenants were young upwardly mobile professionals and no new apartments were given over to the local population. This lack of social integration, added to the general lack of consultation with the local communities, caused a fuse of bitterness amongst the latter. They felt left out of the renewal equation and increasingly demanded to see how they would benefit from this considerable investment in their area.

The IFSC Phase 2 saw a radical shift towards a more holistic approach which took account of the wishes of the community and succeeded in attracting a broader mix of mobile tenancy to more mixed-use projects.

### **From CHDDA to DDDA**

The CHDDA represented a move towards a more holistic view of urban planning but was by no means the finished article. More account needed to be taken of the social, economic and environmental aspects of renewal. It was with this in mind that the Government decided in 1996 that a more strategic approach, encompassing the disparate facets, should be adopted to the redevelopment of the Area. A special Ta

Force was established and they recommended that the CHDDA set up a Project Team to conduct preparatory work for a Master Plan for the area.

The Dublin Docklands Development Authority Act, 1997, established the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA), which subsumed the functions of the CHDDA whilst further extending its remit eastward to the Point and across the Liffey to the South Docklands around City Quay and the Grand Canal Docks. The development area within Docklands is 85 hectares (211 acres) approximately, which will be developed over a 15 year period (1997 - 2012) with total public and private investment of IR£ 5 billion (6.3bn euros). The Authority's stated duty is to secure 'the improvement of the physical environment of the Dublin Docklands Area' and 'the social and economic regeneration of the Dublin Docklands area on a sustainable basis'. From its inception it had a more holistic view of urban renewal than its predecessor.

Under Section 18(1) of the Act the DDDA was required to prepare a Master Plan for the regeneration of the Area and to promote the implementation of the Plan. A Draft Plan was put on public display, inviting submissions from the public. After consideration of these the Draft Plan was amended and The Master Plan was adopted on 26 November 1997.

### **THE DUBLIN DOCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN 1997**

The essential challenge of the Master Plan, as stated in the Plan itself, is to guide the durable social, economic and physical development of the area and to capture the vision of a beautiful and sustainable environment. This general challenge included:

- Providing a real choice for those who wish to live in the Area
- Translating the aspirations of the communities within the Area into gain to be shared by those living and working in the area
- Providing a renewal strategy for rehabilitating under-utilised areas
- Capitalising on the appeal of the water bodies in the Area
- Promoting world class architecture and urban design
- Promoting the principles of sustainability in architectural/urban design

#### **Socio-economic objectives:**

Following intensive consultation, and having been informed by submissions received from a wide range of community groups and individuals, the Authority identified key socio-economic objectives for the Plan. A high level of community participation was considered necessary for the implementation of the Plan, so a Community Liaison Committee was established to maximise involvement.

The Authority also wanted to promote the development of new housing that responds to the diverse needs of the community, including housing for single parents or housing for the disabled. This is reflected in the requirement that all new residential development within the Area must reserve 20% of all units for social/affordable housing.

The Authority wished to have a major educational institution within the Area to provide further balance to the mix of uses. This it has done with the National College of Ireland Campus currently under construction and set to open in September 2002. The site was provided free by the Authority on the proviso that a percentage of places in the college are reserved for members of the local community.

#### **The International Financial Services Centre**

The development of the IFSC has made an outstanding contribution to the economic development of both Dublin and the country. Since 1987 it has become the largest and most significant project in the city and the biggest employer in the Docklands. The contribution in terms of revenue of the myriad companies trading there has been substantial.

The IFSC, incorporating the IFSC 2 extension- is currently nearing completion. It now stretches over 39 acres with almost 2 million sq ft of office space, in excess of 1,000 apartments, 2 hotels, pubs, restaurants, shops and a provision for a third level Docklands campus. The area will be fully complete in 2003 with between 12,000 - 14,000 people working in the area.

The Authority continues to promote the area as a world class business quarter and constantly seeking to accommodate new corporate tenants.

#### **Land Use**

The Authority wishes to guide renewal in a particular manner, pursuing a policy of mixed-use development to 'achieve a sustainable environment integrating living, working and leisure'.

In regards to residential use the Authority envisages a target population of up to 25,000 people by 2012, spreading this over all parts of the area rather than large pockets of residential use. It has allocated a minimum average ratio of 20% of all new units for social and affordable housing and liaises with Dublin City Council to provide for those on housing lists. The Authority hopes to encourage people to raise families in the Area and also seeks to promote architecture that does not articulate social difference.

The DDDA wishes to balance this emphasis on residential use with its desire to provide

- Adequate facilities for community organisation, education and training
- The continued development of commercial offices
- Areas for the expansion of existing industries and the introduction of new ones
- Adequate tourism, cultural and leisure facilities including the development of Stack as a major cultural-retail attraction and the provision of hotels throughout the Area
- New opportunities for retailing throughout the area and in centres such as the 'Poetry Village' at the eastern end of the North Docklands.

### **Transportation & Infrastructure**

The Master Plan sets out public transportation and infrastructure proposals that are consistent with the Dublin Transport Initiative. It assumes that the Dublin Port Tunnel will be completed and that the area will be eventually served by a light-rail public transport system - LUAS.

The DDDA's transport framework seeks to reduce the penetration of the Area by private cars by providing an integrated transport system in which transportation modes are interlinked by pedestrian connections. It seeks to provide a dedicated and safe network of routes for both cyclists and pedestrians and promotes an over-all programme of traffic calming.

### **Civic Design Framework**

A crucial aspect of the Plan is the interaction of the buildings within the Area with each other and with the spaces between them. How this interaction is spatially articulated is crucial to the form and character of the Area and can encourage use, so that streets and urban spaces are enlivened and inviting. The Authority encourages urban designers to recognise the importance of both space and context in their designs and to respond to the diversity of the environment in the Area.

Every effort should be made to ensure that spaces and streets link together in an interesting manner to exploit vistas, landmarks and the water bodies of the Area. Architecture should be proportionate and coherently expressed and patterns of existing pedestrian movement should be reinforced.

There is a legacy of varied architectural treasure in the Area, from cut-stone quays through interesting bridges to the cast-iron roofed structure of Stack A. The Plan provides for the conservation of these as well as the original orthogonal road layout and the open aspect of the quays.

Open space, in its varied forms is prioritised in the Plan. It seeks to create new space to exploit existing parks, water and coastline to create a city quarter of character. This will include an ECO park on the Poolbeg peninsula, a linear park along the Royal Canal, the opening up of the Grand Canal Dock for public amenity and the Campshill development along the length of the Liffey.

### **Employment, Education & Training**

Specific emphasis is made on creating new sustainable jobs within the Area, with an upper target of approximately 30,000 by the end of the Plan period. By 1997 8% of the Docklands workforce was resident in the Area but training policies combined with local initiatives will seek to double this figure. The Authority will identify, with the aid of the local community, job opportunities and will promote community employment projects that are tailored to the existing skill-base of the Area and that will create sustainable employment.

The Plan recognises that a successful regeneration programme needs proper education and training facilities to cater for the needs of all target groups within the community including under-achievers, potential third-level students, long-term unemployed and those who wish to return to education amongst others. The Plan supports all initiatives designed to reduce educational disadvantage in the Area.

### **Implementation**

The proposals of the Plan are implemented under what are known as Section 25 Planning Schemes. The provisions contained in Section 25 of the Dublin Docklands Authority Act 1997 enable the Authority to prepare Planning Schemes for the Custom House Dock Area or any other area within the Dublin Docklands Area specified for that purpose in the order of the Minister for the Environment & Local Government. Such Planning Schemes offer a fast-track route through the planning process, cutting down significantly on the considerable lag time usually experienced.

These Schemes indicate the manner in which the Authority considers the Area should be redeveloped and sets out policy in relation to land use, distribution and location, over-design, transportation, the development of amenities, and conservation. Planning Schemes have been created for the Extended Custom House Docks Area (now referred to as the North Lotts) and also for the Grand Canal Docks.

Aside from the Planning Schemes the Authority also prepares Action Area Plans for smaller areas such as the Campshires and the 'Village Centres' of Ringsend/Irishtown and East Wall. These plans outline specific improvements to be made to the area including upgrading of street furniture, paving, lighting and the introduction of new landscaping.