



Discussion Document – Regeneration of Older Apartment Complexes.

Dublin City Council has made very significant progress over the last 10 – 15 years on the necessary regeneration of our apartment complexes throughout the city. The biggest project obviously was Ballymun (2,814 units) and included others such as Mountainview Court, Sean Treacy House, Newcomen Court, Swansnest Court (all demolished) and Crampton Court and St Joseph’s Mansions (Both Refurbished).

Fatima Mansions was successfully regenerated using the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model and in more recent times the Charlemont Street/Tom Kelly Road complex is nearing completion using the same model.

Complexes at Dominick Street, O Devaney Gardens and St Michael’s Estate unfortunately did not proceed under the PPP because of the economic crash but significant progress was made on de-tenanting which now facilitates the development of these sites. (Plans well advanced)

The next largest apartment complex in the city, Dolphin House is currently undergoing major regeneration as well as Croke Villas with St Mary’s Mansions about to begin.

Several Senior Citizen Complexes with bed-sit units have been refurbished to a very high standard in recent years (Converting two bed-sits into single one bed-roomed apartments) however the overall number of units (Density) is being reduced in most cases by 50% which is not sustainable in light of the current housing shortage.

In addition to all of the above and notwithstanding the progress made we still have in the region of **10,000** apartments (Including Senior Citizen apartments) located in **dozens** of complexes throughout the city that are in need of significant regeneration/refurbishment.

While we have invested in these complexes through programmes like Central Heating, New Windows, Roof Replacement, Dry Lining, and Energy Efficiency the reality is that many are over 50 years old and are not up to current standards particularly around lifts (Lack of), stairways, general communal areas and many are now affected by mould and condensation problems.

The options are:

1) A comprehensive Refurbishment Programme:

- This would necessitate wholesale de-tenanting,
- A very high cost
- Result In many cases a reduction in density eg converting two into one.
- Clear that the Government will prioritize funding towards the construction of new/additional homes rather than refurbishment over the coming years so the necessary finance will be very difficult to source and such refurbishment programmes would likely take many decades to complete.

In order to develop the approach to refurbishment or regeneration detailed options for a pilot “deep retrofit” (i.e. a complete renovation to achieve a high energy efficiency rating) of a city centre flat complex was carried out for St. Mary’s Place, Dublin 1.

The findings of this work were as follows:

- In this case, a ‘deep retrofit’ proposal would incur a high capital cost relative to the amount and quality of accommodation that would be returned to use.
- The deep retrofit proved difficult to fund through existing funding mechanisms.
- The existing site layout provides a relatively low density of housing which could yield a greater number of homes if re-planned.
- The existing layout is problematic, facilitating anti-social behaviour which could be mitigated with an improved layout.

2) A more radical approach of widespread demolition and new build.

- A rolling programme of building first, followed by de-tenanting and demolition
- Achieve much greater density by better utilisation of land/site and by going higher.
- Significantly Increase the number of Social Homes but also provide new affordable and private housing as well as commercial/retail buildings in what are key strategic locations in the city.
- Rather than one complex at a time the possibility of “bundling” several complexes which could involve up to one thousand apartments going out to tender/expressions of interest in order to achieve a viable rolling programme of new build, de-tenanting and demolition which could attract private sector funding.

3) Availing of land swap opportunities with adjacent land/property owners to achieve regeneration by demolition followed by the building of modern social Housing with much greater density. We can also progress individual projects like the Dorset Street Apartments (St Mary’s Place) where greater density is readily achievable.

We believe that **option 1** is not sustainable because the necessary funding would be expensive and very difficult to source, it would take a very long time to do and it would reduce rather than increase density at a time when it is essential to achieve intensification.

It would also create serious de-tenanting problems at a time when vacancies are very scarce.

We believe that opportunities under **option 3** albeit limited should be grasped as far as possible.

Option 2 in our view represents the best opportunity to finally regenerate the bulk of our remaining apartment complexes in the city over a reasonable period of time and to provide quality modern homes for our existing and future tenants.

This report is formulated as an initial discussion document for members of this Strategic Policy Committee but much more analysis and feasibility is required before final decisions can be made, therefore we will place this issue on the agenda of all future SPC meetings and we will present relevant reports/updates.

Brendan Kenny
Deputy Chief Executive
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