

The Society of  
**Chartered**   
**Surveyors**

**Submission to Dublin City Council  
Development Plan**

**March 2010**

By:  
Claire Solon  
Chair of the Planning & Development Division  
Society of Chartered Surveyors

Dublin City Council  
Civic Offices  
Wood Quay  
Dublin 8

12<sup>th</sup> March 2010

**R.E: Submission to Dublin City Council Development Plan**

Dear Mr. Stubbs,

On behalf of the Society of Chartered Surveyors, I would like to make this submission with regard to the Draft Dublin City Development Plan. The members of the Society are involved in all aspects of the property industry employed in planning practices, property development companies, estate agencies, auctioneering practices, and quantity surveying firms amongst others. From this varied background, we have reviewed and amalgamated comments from our members in relation to the proposed Draft Development Plan for Dublin city.

This Development Plan will shape the future of Dublin in the medium term, hopefully at a stage when the market will be resolving itself and on the road to recovery. The content of this Development Plan is critical in terms of assisting in this recovery, both economically and socially. It should be noted that Dublin is competing for foreign direct investment against other European regions and cities abroad, rather than indigenously. This should be recognised and proactively pursued through policies to be implemented as part of this Plan for the city.

The key areas which we wish to outline are as follows:

1. Height strategy as proposed will limit redevelopment of obsolescent buildings and curtail investment;
2. High rise buildings in KDCs are not feasible for short to medium term;
3. Importance of the Interconnector and Metro North to the economic vitality of the city centre;
4. Introduction of thresholds for sustainable construction including recycled materials and 'design for disassembly';
5. Support for redevelopment of obsolescent buildings in the city centre; and
6. Development standards as proposed.

Each of these areas is discussed in more detail in the main body of this submission overleaf, along with other issues which we feel should be considered by Dublin City Council in relation to the Draft Plan.

## **1.0 KEY DISTRICT CENTRES**

In terms of infrastructural projects, we wish to highlight the importance of the Interconnector and Metro North to the economic vitality of the city centre. Without these infrastructural projects the Plan as drafted is delayed in its ability to deliver within the estimated timeframe. It would also mean that the Plan would have a weakened status in the short term and competitiveness would be lost to other regions and cities. The SCS hereby affirm our support for this essential project.

The SCS supports the idea and designation of KDCs but there is a lack of detail on how these areas will be developed and enhanced. The same comment would be made for the Key Developing Areas (10 listed). On a minor issue, we note that there is a possible error on page 15 of the current Draft. It is stated that there are 9 key district centres on but only 8 are listed.

## **2.0 CYCLING**

Safer cycle paths should be a priority. It is noted that there is a promenade and cycle way proposal in Fig 2 but it is not clear from diagram where this is to be located. The inner city Key Developing Area is also not included in the diagram. The safety of cyclists has been noted in a number of submissions as the main impediment to increasing the number of people utilising this method of transport. It is submitted that the improvement of cycle paths and safety within Dublin city centre is a key priority and more detail should be included as to how this will be delivered. (Fig 6 outlines green cycle routes around city).

## **3.0 PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT**

It is submitted that segregation of foot traffic and those waiting for public transport by provision of waiting areas on foot paths, such as College Green and Parnell Square West should be included as an objective. Currently, pedestrians are forced to walk onto the roadway as pavements are crowded and blocked by those awaiting bus services creating a health and safety issue. The segregation measures may necessitate widening of foot paths in designated locations but would result in a safer environment and remove blockages to pedestrians.

The 'major pedestrian route' illustrated along Market Square is not an accurate reflection of this area. This is a tertiary route and without investment and development (including redevelopment of the Fish and Fruit Market sites) it will remain a tertiary pedestrian route. Pedestrian movement is minimal along this route after Henry Street. The SCS agrees that it should be a major strategic pedestrian route but this would require considerable development to make this a reality. A future strategic pedestrian route should also be included to link also the Phibsborough Key District Area, such as that included for Grangegorm, which would reinforce the objective 'Connecting Neighbourhoods' in Fig 20.

The upgrading of the public realm around the city centre should also be included as an aim within the Development Plan.

#### **4.0 DERELICT AND OBSOLESCENT DEVELOPMENTS/SITES**

The promotion of renovation and redevelopment of obsolescent buildings in the city centre is a priority, particularly given the external economic factors. It is estimated that 24% of vacant office buildings in the city are obsolescent. This means that almost one quarter of the building stock will remain vacant and continue the cycle into disrepair over the medium to long term if not redeveloped. This is a critical factor for both the economy of the city in terms of development, provision of suitable space to attract multi-national organisations, and also in terms of tourism and attractiveness of the city as a whole.

The SCS supports SC04:

*'to carry out an audit of vacant and derelict sites in the city to expedite their redevelopment as part of reinstatement of the urban form and structure of the city.'*

However, this audit should be expedited and the height policy as outlined in this Draft Plan will act as a countermeasure for redevelopment across the city. It is noted that higher densities will be promoted in the city centre, within Key District Centres, Key Developing Areas and within the catchment of high capacity public transport but this is unrealistic in most redevelopment cases if a higher building is not permitted. This is discussed in more detail in Section 8.0 below.

The SCS supports SC13 which outlines that residential /commercial schemes over 100 units / 10,000m<sup>2</sup> or as otherwise determined by the Planning Authority on the basis of potential impact on the surrounding environment, will be accompanied by an Urban Design Statement and a Community Infrastructure Statement. Detail on the required contents of these reports should be drafted in guidance documentation to ensure that each application includes the correct information and to assist in those applying for permission.

Green technologies and sustainability should be key considerations in the redevelopment of obsolescent buildings, to encourage longer design lives of the buildings. The SCS proposes the following aim, or rewording of the existing conditions:

*'to support the redevelopment or renovation of existing poor quality properties in the city centre area with particular regard to 'green' buildings'*

The current zoning within the CBD of Dublin and in particular the prime Dublin 2 office areas is a mixture of various types of zonings including Z1, Z4, Z5, Z6, and Z8. The SCS submits that his entire area (other than the principal protected Georgian squares and buildings) should be Z5 - the mixed use city centre zoning objective. This will encourage redevelopment and investment in these city centre areas on a consistent basis.

#### **5.0 WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING**

##### **5.1 RECYCLING FACILITIES**

*'SIO56 To ensure the provision of adequately sized public recycling facilities in new commercial developments in excess of 1000 m<sup>2</sup>'*

The SCS considers that this is excessive as most commercial developments provide accommodation above the 1,000sqm threshold and enforcement of this regulation will

result in a surplus amount of recycling facilities. This should be amended to 'or as necessary' by the Council to avoid provision of these facilities where not required. Regard should also be had to the inclusion of residential developments within this category.

## **5.2 RECYCLED MATERIALS**

*'SIO57 To promote the reuse of building materials, recycling of demolition material and the use of materials from renewable sources. In all developments in excess of 10 housing units and commercial developments in excess of 1000 m2 a materials source and management plan-showing type of materials/proportion of reuse/recycled materials to be used shall be implemented by the developer.'*

We would propose that a minimum percentage of recycled or reused materials should be indicated in the plan to create a standard threshold, otherwise this will be difficult to enforce. The materials plan should show the proportion and list the source of the materials, and show how the minimum amount is provided. We would propose a minimum of 20% of materials should be recycled or reused and this should be applied to all developments in excess of 10 housing units or 1,000sqm as noted in the Draft Plan. This should not create an excessive financial burden on developers which is an important consideration in this economic environment while

This minimum standard is in line with international precedence as follows:

The Scottish Government has asked all public bodies in Scotland to set 10% recycled content as a minimum standard in major public sector projects in Scotland. Councils including Aberdeen, Glasgow, Midlothian, South Ayrshire and the Shetland Islands have already taken action, as has Scottish Water.<sup>1</sup>

The Olympic Delivery Authority has adopted minimum standards of at least 20% (by value) of materials used in the permanent venues, to be from recycled content for London 2012.<sup>2</sup>

WRAP's case studies illustrate that most projects exceed 10% recycled content with minimal effort. By adopting the available opportunities to increase recycled content through the use of cost competitive, readily available products (i.e. 'good practice'), levels exceeding 15–20% are common.

We would also propose that in any Council demolition project that a new demolition permitting option is introduced which would provide contractors and developers greater opportunities to salvage reusable building materials from housing or other projects that are being removed. In this way, improved performance can be achieved whilst retaining flexibility to take account of the economic, technical and environmental circumstances of the specific project. Experience from case studies has also shown that it is easy to incorporate requirements for recycled content in a wider basket of sustainability standards for a construction project.

## **5.3 DECONSTRUCTION**

Deconstruction is the systematic disassembly of a building in order to maximize the salvage of reusable building materials first and to recycle materials second. Salvaging reusable building materials reduces the amount of construction waste routed to landfills and reduces

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Delivering Higher Recycled Content in Construction Projects' WRAP, September 2009

<sup>2</sup> 'Delivering Higher Recycled Content in Construction Projects' WRAP, September 2009

the demand on virgin resources. Deconstruction and salvage are more labour and time intensive than standard demolition and many developers opt simply to demolish existing structures rather than incur the delay deconstruction and salvage will impose.

Applications for private developments could be granted a demolition permission prior to the granting of the actual planning permission in relation to the scheme. The new permitting process would allow early site access to applicants who agree to remove a structure through deconstruction rather than through a standard demolition process. This would allow contractors and developers to commence deconstruction and disassembly in advance of commencement of the actual construction. The developer would be taking a risk on the grant of permission by deconstructing prior to grant of the final planning but it would allow the option of disassembly without the usual time constraints which occur in the normal building process.

This will provide developers more time to deconstruct an existing structure and increase the salvage of reusable building materials. The deconstruction option may be used if a complete planning application has been submitted (rather than granted); and a Waste Management Plan has been submitted to outline the intended reuses and strategy for disposal of the waste. The Waste Management Plan should show the following targets are achieved:

- A minimum of 20% of the building materials, by weight and excluding brick and concrete, will be reused.
- A minimum of 50% of the building materials, by weight and excluding brick and concrete, will be reused, recycled or beneficially used.
- 100% of brick and concrete will be reused, recycled or beneficially used.

Upon completion of deconstruction, a final Waste Management Report should be required identifying the actual rates of salvaged and recycled materials.

#### **5.4 DESIGN FOR DISASSEMBLY**

The principles of *Design for Disassembly* (DfD) should be integrated into the design and construction methods for proposed developments as part of the planning application. DfD requires a consideration of how the elements and components of a building can be disassembled without damaging them so that the component, element or material can be re-used and its value retained when the building is altered, refurbished or completely disassembled. This will save a large amount of construction and demolition waste going to landfill. It would also retain the value of the building for the owner when it reaches the end of its useful life or undergoes any degree of change. The SCS proposes that a report outlining how these principles are achieved should form part of a planning application in all developments in excess of 10 housing units and commercial developments in excess of 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.

*‘To promote the reuse of building materials, recycling of demolition material and the use of materials from renewable sources. In all developments in excess of 10 housing units and commercial developments in excess of 1000 m<sup>2</sup> a Design for Disassembly report should be submitted showing how the building materials can be deconstructed and disassembled without damage to allow for reuse.’*

## 5.5 LITTER

Tourism is an important factor of the economy of the city. Litter wardens should patrol the city centre streets and issue fines to any person found littering. Given the prolificness of the littering problem, we believe that these appointments would be self-financing if not revenue generating and would benefit the city and the tourism industry. Today, two-thirds of the 60 towns and cities surveyed annually have attained that status, according to the An Taisce report in June 2009 undertaken on behalf of Irish Business Against Litter (Ibal). This report listed Dublin as one of four cities which were considered 'littered', an issue which needs stricter enforcement of the litter laws, along with educating the population.

## 6.0 CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

*'FCO12 To ensure that a Cultural Impact Assessment accompanies all major planning applications which assesses the contribution(s) that the proposed development proposal will generate in the cultural life of Dublin City'*

*REO2 To request Economic and Employment Impact Statements for appropriate planning applications and to have regard to the economic criteria set out, in planning decision making*

While the SCS supports these proposals, clarity is required on what constitutes a major planning application for the purposes of this objective. Guidance documents should be issued outlining the main requirements to be included in any such report to maintain the standard in each planning application.

**RE8** To promote and facilitate enterprise and entrepreneurial activity including that of immigrants, as well as small/start up businesses

**RE9** To promote and facilitate the provision of commercial developments that are flexible and can provide for a range of unit sizes including units suitable for small and startup enterprises

**RE11** To promote and facilitate the use, including the temporary use, of vacant commercial space and vacant sites, for a wide range of enterprise including cultural uses

These three aims as listed above, could reinforce the reuse of current vacant buildings in the city centre by facilitating change of use applications, and rebates on rates for partially let buildings. Currently the rates system is organised so that if a unit becomes vacant following the relevant date, there is no rebate so the owner is liable for the rates for the entire year even though there is no tenant.

This is a disincentive for landlords to allow short term lettings, or lettings from weaker covenants, as there is a risk that the rates bill will be higher than the rent actually received, should the tenant fail to progress the relevant business. This risk is considerably higher for start up businesses so is a real issue when attempting to find uses for vacant and obsolescent buildings which would not be redeveloped due to the feasibility in the current market (and now height restrictions as proposed). While this is not necessarily an issue for the Draft Plan, it should be recognised by the Council as an issue in terms of delivering the objectives as noted.

## **7.0 SOCIAL AUDITS AND PROVISION OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

In Section 12.4.6, the quantum should be amended to include developments for schemes of 200 units or 20,000sqm rather than 200,000sqm based on a typical average apartment size of 100sqm which would correspond to the proposed area figure.

Section 16.2.5 outlines that:

*'In addition to the above, green roofs should be provided as standard in apartments schemes, industrial parks, utility buildings and larger commercial developments. The use of green roof area for amenity purposes will be dependent on appropriate design with regard to overlooking and impact on adjoining privacy.'*

While the SCS supports the principle behind this proposal, subsidies and/or grants would be required in tandem to partially fund the increased capital cost associated with green roofs. Alternatively the wording 'and on a site specific basis' could be added to the end of the sentence, or amend 'as standard' to 'as required'. Should this be adopted in its current wording, it imposes another barrier to investment and stimulating development by enforcing large increases in capital costs with no financial benefit.

The successful German model for promotion of green roofs includes the fact that taxes are collected on anticipated storm water control or usage fees, and are used to cover constructing, maintaining and replacing storm water management facilities. A 100% utility surcharge is levied against owners of impervious roof covers (Dr. Michael Krebs, 1999), and thirteen German cities allow a reduction between 50% and 80% of the utility fee for using a green roof. Over a 36-year period, the reduction in the usage fee alone can compensate the building owner for as much as 50% of the additional capital cost.<sup>3</sup> This means that green roofs are more readily affordable and would assist in their incorporation into building proposals. Where subsidies are not available, the green roof could be considered as open space in terms of development standards applicable to a planning application.

In terms of sustainability, while they are aesthetically more pleasing, the actual advantages of green roofs are few. It is arguable that green roofs provide any insulation benefits, and in any event, there are more feasible and better performing methods of insulation. We would submit that enforcing this 'as standard' on proposed developments will further stifle recovery in the property market. We support the aim, but do not agree that it should be considered a minimum standard as it currently worded in the Draft Plan.

Green walls should also be considered as part of development proposals, not just limited to green roofs. In the UK, Design for London published a technical report on Living Roofs and Walls, supporting the new London Plan. Policy 4A.11 promotes green roofs and walls:

*'The Mayor will, and boroughs should, expect major developments to incorporate living roofs and walls where feasible and reflect this principle in DPD policies. It is expected that this will include roof and wall planting'*

Rain water harvesting should be as standard in all developments above 1,000 sqm to reduce the pressure on water supply within Dublin city centre and promote sustainability.

---

<sup>3</sup> Zentralverband Gartenbau e.V. (ZVG) 1999

It is submitted that consideration should be given to the incorporation of green or living walls within proposed developments, and rain water harvesting should be as standard.

## **8.0 HEIGHT POLICY**

The SCS welcomes the introduction of key views within the Draft Plan to protect existing streetscapes and vistas. The impact of taller buildings on vistas across the city is contentious issue, but one that needs to be resolved without stifling development in an already depressed market. The visual impact of taller buildings should be assessed on a case by case basis, specific to the individual site in question to establish the effect on the environs (both close to the site and also across the city in terms of roofline).

The City of London addressed this issue by identifying a series of protected vistas and publishing a supplement to the London Plan, which provides planning guidance on high-rise development proposals. “**The London View Management Framework**” provides technical guidance to built environment professionals on the use of Qualitative Visual Assessment techniques and the Management of Protected Vistas by Geometric Definition. This approach has the merits of clearly identifying strategic views, vistas and townscapes that are important to the City’s natural and built environment and providing a City wide and objective, means of assessing the potential impact of a development proposal.

High rise structures are appropriate for many reasons such as marking regeneration, gateways, location to high density transport centres or prestige. Apart from the visual impact of high-rise buildings and high-rise clusters on the city and regional skyline, there are also city and regional implications for public infrastructure capacity.

Height and density should be encouraged in the Central Business District of Dublin rather than restricting it to the KDAs. The locations of some of the KDAs in Dublin mean that high rise is likely be uneconomical for the medium terms due to the economic circumstances and value creation potential of these areas.

The severe and entirely inappropriate height restriction imposed in the city centre outside of the limited areas identified as areas for high buildings will stifle development in the city centre. By limiting the height within the city centre, the Council is effectively stopping redevelopment of obsolescent buildings and curtailing investment in property development. The SCS would endorse the incorporation into the Development Plan of the principals as set out in the policy paper ‘Maximising the City’s Potential – A Strategy for Intensification and Height’.

The Height Strategy should be clearly set out, be consistent in terms of overarching policy and provide a rational point of guidance for the design parameters which we believe must be successfully applied to intensified development throughout the city. It is our opinion that the ‘Strategy for Intensification and Height’ set out a welcome position on the intensification of Dublin city and emphasised the necessity for securing a correct planning framework for intensification of land use within the city.

The Height Policy should be alert to and flexible towards the optimum utilisation of landbanks which become available within the existing urban fabric. In particular where thresholds of site size are achieved, which can allow for a fuller spectrum of land uses to be

delivered on site, and where proximity to the city centre and to good quality public transport is available, the final policy must continue to be supportive of design led solutions to successful intensification and height at these locations.

The 6 themes as outlined in the 'Strategy for Intensification and Height' document were a good and consistent approach to assessment. Below is a possible table which would allow for an examination of how proposed developments could deliver on appropriate requirements for tall buildings within Dublin city on a case by case basis.

Assessment criteria for high buildings				
Represent strategic intervention in terms of: -	Contribution to the Six Themes	Visual change	No material adverse impacts on:	Exceptional character
Strategic regeneration and / or  Significant Economic contributor and / or  Significant Cultural contributor	Economic  Social  Cultural  Urban Form  Movement  Sustainability	Determine what is the more dominant character (Change or protection of elements)  Determine the areas where change is deliverable  Identify robustness of the lands with edge analysis  Identify the location of points of transition in the townscape  Identify prominent sites and view cones to be protected, or to be embellished / improved	Built and natural heritage of the city  Environmental amenities including micro climate and shadow impacts  Quantitative / Qualitative standards for proposed and existing residential areas  Established or emerging residential communities	Creating new identity  Exceptional architectural design quality  Creating positive urban design solutions including public space  Promoting sustainable urban design and building solutions  Process of design selection by means of architectural competition or assessment by an urban advisory panel

## 9.0 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Our submission in relation to the development standards included in the Draft Plan are outlined below. The provision of maintenance facilities such as a management room, maintenance store(s) and accommodation for a caretaker should be included in larger

schemes containing 40 or more apartments and consideration should be given to the provision of such facilities in smaller schemes.

### 9.1 UNITS PER CORE

The SCS welcomes the standard of six units per core per floor, amending the requirement in Variation 21 for two units per core per floor which would have resulted in significant cost increases for occupiers as submitted previously. This will reduce the running costs of these expensive capital items, and also the required financial input into the sinking fund, resulting in more affordable service charges for occupiers and owners.

However, there are a number of other standards which we consider excessive. While the SCS supports high quality development, the standards imposed should be rational and achievable. It is not logical to impose standards that have little or no benefit in terms of occupational requirements and are academic in principle. Standards should have regard to the benefit accruing, and also to the running costs of these impositions and the burden that will be enforced on occupiers in relation to their ongoing maintenance and repair. A cost benefit analysis should be undertaken prior to imposing such rigorous standards as they act as a further countermeasure to development.

### 9.2 APARTMENT SIZES

In 2007, the CSO published a report indicating that ‘fewer than one in five households in Dublin City are now made up of the traditional family of husband, wife and children.’ It also stated that the average number of persons per private households has continued to decline and now stands at 2.8, compared with 2.94 four years earlier. The smallest households continue to be found in the cities with Dublin City having the smallest at 2.5.

The report also reveals that there was a continued increase in the number of one-person households - up 51,877 or 18.7 per cent since 2002. One-person households, which accounted for 22.4 per cent of all households in the State in 2006, were the predominant household type in all five cities. The number of persons per household in Dublin city centre is outlined in the table below.

Census	Total	One Person Occupier	Two Person Occupiers	Three Person Occupiers	Four+ Person Occupiers
2002	180,852	52,517	51,644	30,086	47,205
2006	190,984	55,957	58,295	32,144	44,588
Growth	6%	7%	13%	7%	-6%

*Table 9.1 Private Households in Dublin*

Nearly 56% of one-person households were occupied by single (never-married) persons; a further 26.7% by widowed persons; 14.4% by separated (including divorced) persons and 3% by those describing their marital status as married. Current patterns within the EU would indicate that the proportions of all households made up of childless couples, older people

living alone, single people of working age living alone and lone parents will increase further and average household size move nearer to 2.00.<sup>4</sup>

These population trends of greater household formations and shrinking household size are even more pronounced in Dublin as highlighted in the CSO Census 2006 by the reduction in larger households and a 7% increase in one person households. The underlining development standards being applied by DCC do not appear rooted in demographic analysis and will potentially burden Dublin with a disparity between residential units being constructed, and those in demand. Standard economic policy is based on the concept of supply and demand – equilibrium being the point where they intercept and the market operates efficiently. By curtailing the market reacting to demand, a growing and diverse population is negatively impacted.

In relation to the minimum areas per apartment, the DoE has published standards in relation to apartment sizes and we submit that these should be the standards imposed across all local authorities. It is not beneficial to any area – public or private, to impose stricter requirements on the current market, particularly as such minimum standards are not based on any official research, but more subjective in nature.

### **9.3 FLOOR TO CEILING HEIGHTS**

We submit that the minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.7m is illogical and it should be done at the discretion of the developer. Given today's energy costs, this added cubic footage will require additional HVAC requirements. It will add unnecessary building and operating costs to apartments. Once again we would challenge the DCC to provide any evidence of the benefits of this policy change.

This minimum requirement will also impinge on the height policy as currently drafted which assumes a 3m floor to floor height. The minimum 2.7m finished floor to ceiling height will result in an increased floor to floor height when structure and services are included.

### **10.0 LIVE WORK UNITS**

As per Section 17.9.13: *'The minimum internal floor to ceiling height of live work units shall be 4 – 4.5 metres and the architectural design should be sufficiently open and transparent to allow the commercial use to illuminate and enliven the street.'*

The minimum provision of a floor to ceiling height of 4m to 4.5m is considered excessive – this should be floor to floor height. Under the current wording, an additional space would have to be added to the minimum outlined to allow for structure and services which would equate to a floor to floor height of over 5m.

### **11.0 REGENERATION AREAS**

The SCS supports the inclusion of additional areas for regeneration through mixed use including the lands subject to unsuccessful PPP processes such as Croke Villas, Dominick

---

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, 2002

Street, St. Michael's Estate, O'Devaney Gardens and St. Teresa's Gardens. A proactive approach must be taken in order for these areas to be redeveloped which should include liaising with private stakeholders to gauge the uses appropriate in this economic climate in order to deliver viable and deliverable projects.

We wish to also bring to your attention the other areas such as Grafton Street and O'Connell Street environs that are currently suffering in this economic environment and which need to be supported by policies from Dublin City Council. City centre retailing is suffering in part due to planning policies which severely restrict new development and also misguided initiatives such as the Special Planning Control Scheme for Grafton Street and Environs which is stifling the delivery of positive change in response to changes in the market.

## **11.0 OTHER COMMENTS**

We submit that the disruption which will result from the Metro North / DART Interconnector / Luas projects has not been dealt with adequately in this plan. Transport projects will have a significant impact on the trading of businesses in the relevant areas and a methodology for minimising this disruption should be included in the Plan. In addition, the NRA's proposals for the construction of the Eastern Relief Road is not mentioned and we submit that this should be included as a possible deliverable within the Plan.

A balance must be met between keeping the city open and accessible for businesses and the continuing restriction on city centre traffic. Consideration must be given to supporting businesses who are suffering in this climate and manners in which private transport is curtailed.

Investigation into vacancy in residential units is included in the Housing Study in Appendix 3 but we propose that this should also include investigation and analysis of vacancy within commercial properties and methods of counteracting this issue. Vacancy in office and retail properties is increasing on a daily basis and measures must be proposed to deal with this matter.

More action must be taken in this Development Plan to support jobs and the ongoing creation of employment in the city centre. The height policy proposed will have a negative impact on attracting new businesses to the city centre by curtailing the redevelopment of existing properties. This has been outlined in Section 8 above in more detail. A proactive approach must be taken in order to assist in the recovery within the city centre.

A description of 'Gross Area' for the purposes of calculation of the plot ratio should be included (as per the current Development Plan). This should be the total GIA above ground divided by the site area to allow for an assessment of the massing on the site, excluding plant and services below ground. This would allow consistency between the Draft and current Development Plan and a prescriptive and definitive measure of comparison between proposed developments.

Although not within the remit of the current Plan, we wish once more to draw your attention to the levy scheme as currently adopted which will commence in January 2010. It is apparent that within the real economy at present all costs of business are being examined including salary levels, office overheads (i.e. telecoms, electricity) and rental payments to landlords. As part of this exercise the levies that are being charged by the local authorities

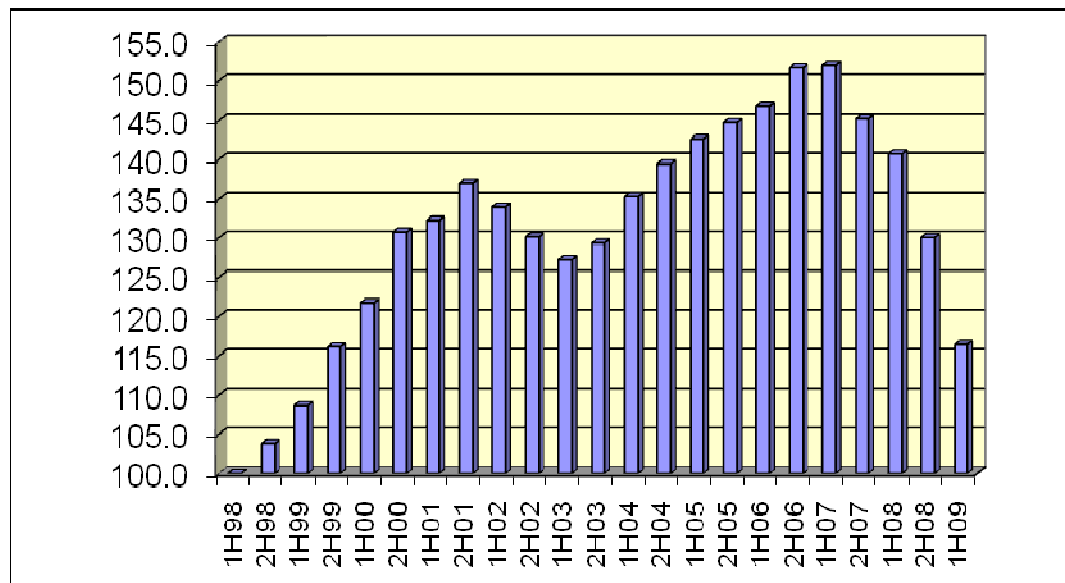
should also be reviewed and reduced in line with the significant reduction in all costs being achieved throughout the economy. Dublin City Council's revenue calculations are out of kilter with other costs in the economy, increasing the levies in this economy where costs are reducing.

Dublin City	Contribution Levy Until Jan 2010	Contribution Levy as of Jan 2010	Percentage change/increase
Commercial	€110 per m <sup>2</sup>	€127 per m <sup>2</sup>	15.5%
Residential	€11,500 per apartment unit	€156.62 per m <sup>2</sup>	15.8% (based on average 85 m <sup>2</sup> apartment)

Source: Dublin City Council

These uplifts in contributions are unsustainable in the current economic climate. The levies currently imposed are related to the price for works which is subject to change to match how much is paid for the services. This cost should be reflected in the levies to be charged. The index is in fact reducing, yet the proposed levies would increase the amounts payable for developments. The Society of Chartered Surveyors Tender Price Index has in fact shown a decline in tender prices for the second half of 2009 to below 2004 levels (by approx 17%) which would in fact reduce the levies payable to significantly below the previous rate. We note that the Council has changed the index from TPI to Wholesale Price Index but this is an incorrect index to use when pricing building and construction services. These reduced levies would be appropriate given the prevailing economic and market conditions.

The graph below shows how on average tender prices have reduced further in 2009 and are now at similar levels to the end of 1999. The Council's levy rates for 2010 onwards ignore the downward economic and market trends, are inequitable and will have negative impacts on the market recovery.



Source: Society of Chartered Surveyors

This graph reflects the dramatic fall off in all sectors of the construction industry including residential, commercial, public sector and civil engineering works and the fact that the output of the industry is likely to reduce to less than half of its peak of €38bn in 2007. This TPI is the only independent assessment of construction tender prices in Ireland. The fall in tender prices comes despite increases in the cost of labour and material inputs and reflects the situation where contractors are bidding at or below cost in order to secure a share of the ever diminishing market.

It is likely that there will be a further reduction in tender prices during 2010 albeit at a slower rate, as below cost tendering can only be a short term solution. Increasing the rates of development levies will exacerbate an already deflationary and unstable market. We understand that the Council requires income from levies to service their areas, but increasing the development levies will be counter-productive as it will dampen further the feasibility of property developments and prevent recovery even further. The levies need to be based on the TPI and move in line with the cost fluctuations in order to provide a realistic price mechanism and avoid further stifling of development.

The final point we wish to make is in that planning policy in the Dublin Docklands area is inconsistent between policies proposed by Dublin City Council and that of the DDDA. Where there is a conflict, we feel that the provisions of the City Development plan should prevail and this should be ratified by both bodies to ensure consistency in development approaches.

## **12.0 CONCLUSION**

Overall, this submission identifies potential opportunities through policy changes to the Draft Development Plan which could realise benefits in the areas of sustainability, planning and economic development.

Should you wish for further information on any of the aforementioned proposals, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully,

-----  
Claire Solon  
Chair of the Planning & Development Division  
Society of Chartered Surveyors