

The Masterplan attempts to be a flexible framework. Consultation will be on-going throughout the regeneration process.

This section describes the opportunity for creating a vibrant town centre for Ballymun.



The Main Street

At present the Shopping Centre is not orientated to attract passing trade - it is not possible to see what shops there are in the Centre, whether they are open, where to park and how to enter. The idea of creating a main street is going to be difficult to achieve. Traditionally main streets have evolved over centuries and in recent decades they have been destroyed by traffic and changes in shopping habits. Commercial developments must be viable so visibility and parking issues have to be solved.

Once the Ballymun Road is narrowed and made safer, it is realistic that there could be town centre facilities on both sides of the road. Shops will tend to congregate on the west-side and civic functions - the new Town Hall, motor tax office, EHB offices, Arts Centre, Information Centre, Library, and so forth on the other. The reserve for the Luas proposes to set down on both sides of the road (rather than in the middle) thus making it safer and more comfortable to wait for a tram so reservations have to be provided now. A town centre 'square' is proposed - in fact a triangle, about the size of Pearse Square, Dublin 2.

This could be overlooked by the new Arts Centre and its activities could spill out into the square in Summer. The new civic offices will generate lunchtime trade and a north city wide service like the motor tax office will give Ballymun a wider customer base.

Key ingredients for an enduring main street are density and a mix of uses - shops, offices, apartments, leisure, community and so forth - and the ability for them to change over time. A building type is illustrated that can foster many of these uses - by having a generous ceiling height, not being too deep in plan, and by locating stairs and lift cores carefully. Appropriate tax incentives might encourage speculative developers to invest in such a building type. Higher densities are needed to help create a viable local economy and to support a good public transport system.

The likely interest in office space resulting from a successful IAP submission is difficult to predict and will not be certain until say mid 1999. It is therefore important for the Masterplan

to show a range of possible outcomes from a base case of what is certain now, through a medium term/possible case, to a long term/optimistic case. These three scenarios are illustrated and show a progressively longer main street area. The phasing strategy can cope with these later decisions.

As an alternative to the incremental growth provided for in the three scenarios referred to above it has been suggested that a land reservation should be made along the Main Street for a regional sized shopping centre from the outset. This proposal is shown in outline sketch on the bottom right hand corner of page 68. Such a proposal would be a high risk strategy dependent on commercial viability and planning approval which is uncertain. This could lead to urban blight and impact severely on adjoining housing unless a firm commitment to such a scale of investment is made from the start. There is historically a conflict between lively main streets and very large shopping centres.