

Chapter 3



3.1 Vision for the Docklands SDZ

The vision is that the Docklands SDZ will become a world-class maritime quarter with a distinctive Dublin character. It will be a model of sustainable inner city regeneration incorporating socially inclusive urban neighbourhoods, a diverse, green innovation-based economy contributing to the prosperity of the locality, the city and the country, all supported by exemplary social and physical infrastructure and a quality public realm integrated with the wider city.

The vision for the Docklands SDZ is centred on the best of what has happened in the Docklands to date, augmented by the core strategies of the City Development Plan for economic livelihood, a compact green city and a city of quality neighbourhood living. The vision must enjoy broad civic support, even through short-term challenges. Without a vision for the Docklands SDZ which commands enduring support, short-term, often competing interests could prevail, ultimately to the detriment of all.

The vision for the Docklands SDZ is evolved from the Mission Statement in the Docklands Masterplan 2008, which has successfully guided the social, physical and economic development of the Docklands to date, and on the vision in the City Development Plan 2011-2017, which is centred on the need for a shared vision for our city over the next 25-30 years.

The long-term vision for Dublin and the Docklands SDZ is based on the

principles of Sustainable Development, contained in the Framework for Sustainable Development (FSD) in the City Development Plan.

The current economic downturn must be grasped as an opportunity to create a long-term vision for the Docklands SDZ which will not only facilitate recovery but will ensure that the recovery takes place in a coherent sustainable manner for the benefit of the Docklands community, the city and indeed the country.

3.2 From Vision to High-Level Themes

The translation of the vision for the Docklands SDZ into a coherent, sustainable plan to achieve a

successful, thriving Docklands quarter for Dublin City necessitates the application of some themes. The themes are distilled from an analysis of the development of the Docklands to date, allied to the future needs of the city and its residents. These key themes are not self-contained, rather they are cross-cutting and will form the basis by which the Planning Scheme and all future proposals under the scheme will be tested. There are six key themes as follows:

3.3 High-Level Themes

3.3.1 High-Level Theme (i) - Sustainability

The sustainability theme imbues both the City Development Plan 2011 - 2017



and the Docklands Masterplan 2008 – 2013 and is a key overriding principle for the SDZ Planning Scheme. The City Council has developed the Framework for Sustainable Dublin (FSD) as a way of thinking and as a tool to help tackle the challenge of climate change, the post-carbon economy and social cohesion at city and local level.

The sustainability theme is built around a shared vision for sustainability based on meaningful civic governance centred on community engagement. There are compelling reasons for pursuing sustainability in the Docklands, not only in the obvious areas of flood management, energy conservation and sustainable movement, but also as a contribution to reducing urban sprawl, enhancing the green economy, creating a more healthy, socially inclusive, and ultimately a more resilient city.

As indicated in the City Development Plan and the Docklands Masterplan 2008 – 2013, the sustainability concept for the SDZ area can be encapsulated in the concepts of livelihood (jobs) and liveability (quality of life for all ages and future generations).

The SDZ Planning Scheme will use the sustainability indicators set out in Appendix 28 of the City Development Plan as a means of monitoring the progress of the Scheme.

3.3.2 High-Level Theme (ii) - Economic Renewal and Employment

The Docklands SDZ is of national economic and social importance to the State and is ideally placed to build on

the economic synergies which have happened to date in order to contribute a real competitive edge to the Dublin region. For example, the IFSC has grown to become a centre for green technology industry whilst Google and Facebook not only employ thousands of people but have put the Docklands on the international map.

The Docklands SDZ area is ideally placed to promote for the full range of international, national, and local enterprise, by virtue of the variety of sites available, the proximity to the city centre, a unique waterfront setting, and the potential for collaboration with employers in the area. It is an integral part of this high-level theme that the Planning Scheme provides for a range of employment uses, from large-scale FDI types, to small local support services, including start-up units. It is also important that there should be a variety of tenures available – long-term, short-term and temporary, to contribute to the economic vitality of the SDZ area and surroundings.

3.3.3 High-level Theme (iii) - Quality of Living

It is a strong theme of the SDZ Planning Scheme that it must be a model of contemporary living, providing a quality lifestyle for both existing and future residents with good access to employment.

In order to build sustainable communities and neighbourhoods, the Docklands SDZ Planning Scheme will provide for a variety of housing typologies to cater for residents at all stages of their life-cycle. A good

quality of living also requires a safe, supportive, external environment, incorporating recreational facilities, public spaces, life-affirming social infrastructure, including any necessary educational facilities.

A quality living environment also includes integration with green infrastructure and, as such, it is a key principle to promote a green/blue network providing public access recreational and bio-diversity opportunities, particularly along all the water bodies.

3.3.4 High-Level Theme (iv) - Identity

The fourth major theme is to create a distinctive Dublin maritime quarter. It is this unique character which will distinguish Dublin Docklands on the global stage. This can be achieved on a number of fronts, including re-imagining the existing heritage to providing for new active uses and providing a context for a rich urban landscape.

The cultural heritage of the area should inform the character of the area across all aspects – built form, quality of civic spaces, entertainment uses, public sculpture, bridges over water bodies, views and vistas into and out of the area etc. Paramount to the new maritime identity is design excellence married to a diversity of uses, to achieve successful urban place-making. Of course, the maritime quarter must be integrated with the rest of the city, including Dublin Port, while retaining its character.

3.3.5 High-Level Theme (v) - Infrastructure

The provision of good infrastructure, both physical and social, is a theme which includes and supports the delivery of the first four themes.

The physical infrastructure includes drainage, water supply, electricity, gas, telecommunications and flood management, all of which are necessary to promote quality neighbourhoods, employment and a good ecological environment.

Social infrastructure such as education, healthcare and community facilities are a necessary part of sustainable neighbourhoods in the Docklands.

3.3.6 High-Level Theme (vi) - Movement & Connectivity

This key theme is also necessary to enable the first four key themes to be delivered successfully and involves extending connectivity not only eastwards into the city centre, but north and south.

It is also part of this High-Level Theme to improve connectivity within the SDZ area, by making a safe and efficient public realm which caters for walking, cycling, public transport and the car. Increased connectivity across and along the water bodies is also a component of this key theme.

3.4 Sustainability – Process and Implementation

Sustainability is critical to all of the High-Level Themes.

It is necessary, therefore, to expand on the approach to Sustainability in the SDZ Planning Scheme and to explain the importance of process and strategy in developing an implementation framework for the scheme. Firstly, though, it is proposed to position sustainability in a more global/macro context.

The City Development Plan places sustainability at the heart of things through the Framework for Sustainable Dublin (FSD). This recognises the fact that our city operates within a global/international context of political, legal, social and environmental systems. The thrust of the FSD is that we must build success on the basis of a future where we live in harmony with nature while meeting our human needs. A key component of sustainability is collaboration which is about drawing in the energy of stakeholders across the spectrum of city life in the pursuit of a sustainable future.

In the context of sustainability and the SDZ Planning Scheme, it is important that sustainability is not limited to the environmental strand alone, central as this is. The vision for sustainability must be holistic and reflect the breadth and scope of all the High-Level Themes. It is proposed that 3 core strands will help structure sustainability in the SDZ:

- The Economic Strand
- The Social Strand
- The Environmental Strand



The question now arises as to how an effective collaborative process can be generated to ensure that an optimal response to sustainability is embedded in the SDZ. A limited view might suggest that the SDZ is essentially an efficient machine for delivering clarity in terms of planning permissions. It is important that the Designated Agency moves beyond a passive stance, takes ownership, drives co-ordination and implementation, and exploits the potential for collaboration from stakeholders. The following outlines some possible approaches under the core strands listed above:

- **Economic Strand:**

Section 4.1 outlines the tremendous economic platform that now exists in Dublin's Docklands with its unique

emerging mix of sectoral diversity and spatial focus. Research for the SDZ Planning Scheme has helped map the major economic sectors and their pattern of clustering. Much of the activity, however, is not very visible, and potential investor/visitors can experience difficulty in getting a tangible experience of what Docklands has to offer. This contrasts with 'Tech City' in London where a big effort is made to communicate the story but where the substance is much less than that existing in Dublin. The economic community in Docklands supports the need for further research on understanding the service pattern used by various sectors, and the synergies that are emerging from the spatial clusters. An opportunity exists to develop a temporary

building[s] over the proposed DART Underground station in Spencer Dock. These structures would be 3/4 storeys, would be well designed but budget conscious, and would be demountable, consisting of a series of cartridges. They would incorporate green design and have green roofs. The design objective of this building would be to encapsulate the creative and innovative forces driving contemporary docklands, and to tell the story of its varied and rich economic ecology. It is anticipated that agencies like the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and Dublin Chamber of Commerce and the Digital Hub, would welcome and support such a building, an exemplar of collaborative energies, but also as an effective focus for marketing.



- **Environmental Strand:**

While initiatives like the Dublin City Council Sustainability Report and the Regional Indicators Report represent logical and welcome initiatives under the Framework for Sustainable Dublin, the application of a cohesive environmental strand has not been pursued within recognisable area-based structures. The SDZ provides an opportunity to develop the potential of the environmental strand, with its focus on areas like infrastructures, energy and building construction, while also being aware of the close links existing with economic and social sustainability. In order to exploit the collaborative aspects of the SDZ, it is proposed to build links with a number of initiatives that have a strong synergy with the environmental strand including the 'Green IFSC' and the 'Sustainable Energy Community', the latter sponsored by SEAI. The focus of collaboration could be anchored physically in the riverside pavilion offices of DDDA where exhibition

material could foster awareness and generate a drive for deeper action and traction.

- **Social Strand:**

Social sustainability is concerned with the challenge of providing the citizen with the effective personal infrastructure that enables full participation in the life and culture of society. Social sustainability spans hard and soft infrastructure, and complements a focus on housing, schools and community facilities, with a parallel focus on programmes to improve access to learning and create more effective pathways to employment. Docklands has particular problems due to the embedded nature of long-term disadvantage. The level of educational disadvantage registers as even more acute when it co-exists with modern knowledge sectors which attract the most highly educated people. A society that is willing to brand itself as a 'Smart City', however, must develop the institutional agility to build

bridges between dimensions of environmental, economic and social sustainability, and find inventive and collaborative ways to cross-fertilise and encourage a culture of working together.

It is an objective of the SDZ Planning Scheme to facilitate collaboration in the pursuit of social sustainability and to support the view of a wide range of community activists that, in Docklands, 'We are one community'. Plot 20 [formerly known as Plot 8] at the eastern end of Grand Canal Dock is a pivotal site, enjoying high levels of visual amenity, incorporating unique marine heritage elements, and carrying long-standing community aspirations. It is proposed that a new community building on this site could house recreational water facilities for Grand Canal Dock while also anchoring social sustainability in a physical building aimed at generating collaborative energies to drive a radical vision of a socially sustainable future.

