To the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government.

I am here today on behalf of the St. Michael’s Estate Regeneration Team from Inchicore in Dublin 8. We want to thank you very much for this opportunity to address you.

The St. Michael’s Regeneration Team was set up in 2001. Membership comprises of local residents, local community projects, volunteers and a worker from the Canal Communities Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force.

St. Michael’s Estate was a local authority flat complex located in Inchicore in Dublin’s South-Central Area constituency. There were 346 local authority homes on this site and it was designated for regeneration back in 1998.

To date only two phases have been completed with 175 new replacement homes being built on two separate schemes on adjacent sites.

Since 2002 there have been three proposed plans for the estate. The first of these was to have been a publicly funded plan which was rejected by the then Department of Environment in 2004.

A city council driven plan followed this and was rejected in 2005 by the local community and by all fifty-two city councillors. This was followed a Public Private Partnership model which collapsed spectacularly in 2008. Following the collapse of the PPP residents continued to campaign for a democratic and egalitarian model of regeneration and received some small reward for their efforts when funding was allocated to build the Thornton Heights housing scheme. This development of seventy-five quality homes along with community facilities was completed in 2014.

Currently the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Dublin City Council’s proposed plan under the Housing Lands Initiative, in our view, is to give this away valuable land to a developer. We are opposed to this model of development.

Instead we are proposing that a Cost Rental Model be utilised to provide the housing and facilities. St. Michaels Estate can be the pilot for a radical and workable solution to the housing issues currently plaguing Ireland.

Our Arguments for a Cost Rental Model for St. Michael’ are based on the principles of (1) meeting Housing Need, (2) reducing Housing Costs (Rents and Purchase) providing real Affordable housing and (3) the promotion of long term Housing and Community Sustainability.

We have a Housing Crisis with over 96,000 households on the social housing waiting list

St. Michael’s Estate in Inchicore is in housing district Area J which has 2,165 households and in Dublin South Central which has 7,000 households on the social housing waiting list.

This land is Public Land and it should remain in public ownership and used for the public good.

A Cost Rental Model creates the conditions for a ‘real’ mix of income and household types which will create for more sustainable communities.

Local people can live in Affordable Rental Accommodation in their own areas.
This housing option will relieve the pressure and burden from people who are ‘stuck’ in the unregulated private rental sector.

It will also give people another option other than having to take out lifetime mortgages and then subject to lifelong debt.

The cost-rental model will pay for itself over time.

This model will offer people the opportunity of living near the city as is in the case in Vienna.

This model takes housing out of the ‘Market’ and out of the hands of Vulture Funds.

This ‘Model’ is also crash proof.

A Cost Rental Model has also been promised by this government for example in

The Programme for Partnership Government

Social Housing 2020

Rebuilding Ireland – Strategy for the Rental Sector.

Our Plan for St. Michael’s in Inchicore

We propose a publicly funded development be built on this public land.

That 300 homes be built as a pilot Cost Rental Model on the site and that community facilities and amenities should be budgeted for and built as part of this development. If we want communities to work it makes sense to build these first as the people of Inchicore have a benefit from the scheme from the very beginning.

The tenure mix should consist of 150 households which would come from the social housing waiting list and will pay differential rent. The other 150 households will qualify from a new list created for those with incomes above the current threshold for social housing.

The overall cost will be in the region of between €55 million and €60m. We request your support to get this money ringfenced in this year’s budget. The financial outlay for the scheme will be recouped over a period of thirty to forty years on the basis of rental revenue received from tenants. The revenue will provide funds for the ongoing maintenance of the estate from its inception.

As legislators and policy makers of Ireland we urge you to seek workable and imaginative solutions to the housing crisis. St. Michael’s Estate offers such a unique opportunity to begin a process of radical housing change in Ireland.

On behalf of St. Michael’s Estate Regeneration Team

Eilish Comerford: Community Regeneration Worker.