



Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council

OPENING STATEMENT OF CORK CITY COUNCIL

to the

JOINT OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

17 October 2018

Context

Cork City Council wishes to thank the Oireachtas Committee for the invitation to address it on the Appropriate Use of Public Lands. This statement addresses both land supply and its importance for housing supply, the most crucial issue that now needs to be addressed for Cork to continue to grow sustainably as envisaged in Project Ireland 2040.

This statement is structured to so identify the major areas of publicly-owned land in Cork City and the strategic priorities that will guide the continuing sustainable development of the city under the Framework of Project Ireland 2040. The strategic priorities for the future development of Cork city are set out in the Cork City Development Plan 2015 and the Cork Local Economic and Community Plan 2016. In 2017, Cork City and Cork County Councils prepared Cork 2050 which identified a strategic pathway to 2050 for the city and county of Cork. This was a submission to the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan.

Report

Cork city is due to expand in area subsequent to the Local Elections 2019. This will see the population increase from 125,000 (2016 Census) to 210,000 persons. The area of the city will increase from 37.3km² to 187km² (five-fold increase). The population of the expanded city is due to grow to between 315,000 and 345,000 persons under the projections forecast in Project Ireland 2040. Project Ireland anticipates 50% of this increase in population being catered for

within the existing built-up area. In tandem, the population of Metropolitan Cork is due to expand from 310,000 today to c. 500,000 in 2040.

In terms of economic development, this is a very encouraging, but it underlines the urgency of addressing the housing supply shortage, the existence of which presents a whole set of challenges. Not only is the supply issue a social challenge; equally it is an economic challenge, and unless it is tackled, it is clearly a potential obstacle to future employment and economic growth in Cork City. Early resolution of this issue will reap long term rewards in local and regional tourism, enterprise development and foreign direct investment aside from the obvious quality of life and liveability benefits of a vibrant, compact - water-front city, a city that is *'literally a harbour of opportunities'*.

To achieve these development targets, the city needs land to develop. The primary need at present is for housing and its associated infrastructure, both physical and socio-economic.

Cork City – Housing land supply

Estimated total yield on zoned land (units)	Estimated units on land where infrastructure required	Potential early delivery of residential units*
19,048	13,289	5,749*

*Sites with no infrastructure impediment, including those with planning permission or pending planning permissions and other serviced sites.

Development activity in Cork City is showing strong signs of increasing after the period of recession. However, actual construction of housing and apartment developments, with the marked exception of Cork City Council's own social housing construction programme, remains slow. The most active sector is student accommodation with 713 beds under construction, 1,365 beds with planning permission extant or planning permission pending for **1,008** beds.

An earlier presentation by Cork City Council to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness in July 2017 concluded that the main issues facing housing supply were :

- *Scarcity of development land within the city boundary*
- *Growing population and increased inward migration to the city as the main employment centre in the region, and therefore increasing demand beyond normal growth levels*
- *Ageing of our population and the need to have appropriate housing options for all ages*

- *Tendency towards urbanism and urban living – housing demand profile is changing and the city must respond*
- *The need to build sustainable communities and not just houses*
- *Lack of investment into existing older housing stock*
- *Local autonomy to make decisions is essential. It should not be a requirement to have as many layers in our local to national dealings when it comes to social housing approvals*
- *Viability issues*

These issues still remain as the primary challenges with respect to housing supply in Cork City.

Public Lands

There is currently 155.15 hectares (ha) of publicly-owned land, with development potential, in Cork city. The major owners of public land in Cork city are:

1. Cork City Council

Cork City Council owns 41.25 ha of land that is currently zoned residential. Development proposals are being actively pursued on 34.9 ha of this land.

Cork City Council is the freehold owner of the landbank at Old Whitechurch Road, which was assembled some years ago for residential purposes. It comprises some 22 hectares (54 acres) of a southerly sloping green field site zoned residential in the Cork City Development Plan located just inside the current Northern City boundary. The Council is working to unlock the potential of these lands for the provision of housing to assist in meeting the growing demand for housing in the Northern environs of the City. To this end, it has committed to the LIHAF (Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund) scheme for these lands as part of its response to the Rebuilding Ireland initiative and is currently advancing the significant enabling infrastructure works which includes removal of overhead grid lines and installation of a spine access route. The landbank is within a reasonable driving, cycling, and walking distance of the Blackpool Retail and Business Park and it is envisaged that these lands could create a sustainable residential neighbourhood, which would derive character from its location, topography and amenity and could be a most attractive place to live. The Council's vision is for this landbank to be fully developed to provide a sustainable housing development. The landbank has an estimated capacity for 600 units or more (subject to planning permission). The Council envisages a mix of private, affordable and social housing

units and associated neighbourhood centre developed on these lands to balance the prevalence of social housing in the north of the city.

The Council is also advancing plans on a site measuring 5.13 hectares at Boherboy Road, which is in the north east of Cork city and has planning approval for 147 units. An application has been made to the Serviced Sites Fund, operated by the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government and it is intended to develop the scheme as a mix of both social and affordable housing.

2. Health Services Executive

The HSE owns two properties with development potential :

- a) St. Finbarr's Hospital, Douglas Road; serviced; 9.42 ha; zoned Residential, Local Services and Institutional Uses; underutilised
- b) Former St. Kevin's Hospital, Shanakiel; serviced; 11.04 ha; zoned Residential, Local Services and Institutional Uses; vacant.

3. Electricity Supply Board (ESB)

The ESB owns three properties with development potential:

- a) Marina Generating Station Site, Centre Park Road; serviced; 4.32 ha; zoned Mixed-Use Development; underutilised
- b) Former NORA site, Centre Park Road; serviced; 2.01 ha; zoned Mixed-Use Development; vacant
- c) Regional Office, Sarsfields Road; serviced; 5.6 ha; zoned Mixed-Use Development; potentially surplus to requirements.

4. Iarnród Eireann

Iarnród Eireann owns one property with development potential:

- a) Kent Station, Horgan's Quay; serviced; 2.54 ha; zoned Mixed-Use Development and Public Open Space; largely disused.

5. Port of Cork

The Port of Cork owns a large area at Tivoli Docks:

- a) Tivoli Docks, Lower Glanmire Road; requires significant infrastructure; 61 ha; local area plan being prepared; currently used for port activities, but these are due to be relocated over the next five to six years

6. Bord na Móna

Bord na Móna owns a property in the South Docks:

- a) Monahan Road; serviced; 1.86 ha; zoned Mixed-Use Development and Inner-City Residential Neighbourhood; Storage of coal and other solid fuels.

7. Department of Defence

The Department of Defence has a substantial landholding adjacent to Collins Barracks:

- a) Campfield, Old Youghal Road; serviced; 3.8 ha; zoned Residential, Local Services and Institutional Uses, Sports Ground and Landscape Preservation Zone.

8. Bord Gáis Energy

Bord Gáis Energy owns a significant site just southeast of the city centre:

- a) Gas Works Road; serviced; 2.14 ha; zoned and Inner-City Residential Neighbourhood; storage and parking.

9. IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland has a substantial and strategic land bank at Kilbarry, undeveloped since acquired in the 1970s:

- a) Dublin Hill; serviced; 10.17 ha (additional land in Cork County area); zoned Business and Technology; undeveloped.

These publicly owned lands represent a considerable resource. It is Cork City Council's position that they should be brought forward for development as soon as practicable. They have already been notified to Government and will be prioritised by Cork City Council in its engagement with the Land Development Agency. These lands are also zoned for development and have the potential to make a massive contribution to the sustainable development of Cork City, if proper urban design principles are adhered to and the temptation to only address short-term needs is avoided.

Cork City Council also urges Government to address in appropriate circumstances underutilised private lands, even if this requires a re-examination of the protections currently afforded to private property in the Constitution.

Conclusion:

While there have been encouraging developments on the supply of housing in Cork recently due to enhanced delivery of social housing by the City Council and a pick-up in private sector housing (not apartments) being made available in and around the City, the adequate supply of affordable accommodation to rent or to purchase is still challenging and will pose socio - economic risks as outlined above if not resolved.

Aside from the Council's progress in the delivery of its social housing programme in the City, it is concentrating on housing provision on its own land banks at Old White Church Road and Boherboy Road and with the support of LIHAF and other public funding for enabling infrastructure, it considers that it can expedite delivery immediately in Boherboy Road and later on Old Whitechurch Road.

With regard to delivery on all other potential housing sites owned by public bodies as outlined above, there is potential for early delivery of thousands of homes depending again on infrastructure capacity and availability / viability of schemes in the marketplace. The Council will continue to engage proactively with these public bodies and the Land Development Agency to promote housing delivery and the sustainable development of Cork City. It is an exciting time for Cork City, we need to resolve the housing supply and affordability issues in a timely manner so as not to inhibit our progress and quality of life.

Thank you.

We are happy to address any questions the members may have.

**Ann Doherty,
Chief Executive of Cork City Council.**

15th October, 2018.