



Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County **Building Height Study**

Building Height Strategy

Final Consultants Report

2349

DUN-LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN COUNTY
BUILDING HEIGHT STUDY

THE TEAM
URBAN INITIATIVES
CBRE DUBLIN

PROJECT DIRECTOR
JONATHAN BORE

DESIGN DIRECTOR
KELVIN CAMPBELL

FINAL REPORT
03/2007

1 Fitzroy Square
London W1T 5HE
t +44 (0)20 7380 4545
f +44 (0)20 7380 4546
www.urbaninitiatives.co.uk

urbaninitiatives

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	5
2	CONTEXT.....	10
3	PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY	13
4	DETAILS OF THE STRATEGY	22
5	LANDMARK BUILDINGS: GUIDELINES.....	35
	APPENDIX A: SUMMARY TABLE - HEIGHT RECOMMENDATION.....	41
	APPENDIX B: PUBLIC CONSULTATION - SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS	51



1 Introduction

Why is a strategy required?

1.1

Urban Initiatives has been commissioned by Dun-Laoghaire County Council to prepare a Building Height Study, which will offer guidance on building heights and tall buildings throughout the County.

1.2

Building heights have an important influence on the character of cities and quarters. Whilst some cities are characterised by low-rise buildings, others are defined by their high-rise structures. Cities or quarters can have a homogenous and uniform building height or present a diversity or range of building heights.

1.3

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown is essentially a low-rise county. The prevailing building height seldom exceeds two to three storeys, and in some areas even single storey development prevails. During the post-war development boom, residential and retail developments stayed mostly around two to three storeys. Only a few higher developments were scattered around the County with maximum heights of up to seven storeys. As single developments they were rather the exception than the norm, and their impact remained local.

1.4

However, recent and proposed development has tended to be higher. It is often in the region of 4 to 6 storeys but in some cases it is more, particularly in the larger development sites such as Stepside, Carrickmines, Cherrywood and Sandyford. In Sandyford, newer office developments have an average of 6 or 7 storeys and recent apartment developments have reached 9 or 10 storeys.

1.5

There are also a number of proposals for tall buildings in the area. Tall buildings are defined as buildings that are significantly higher than their surroundings and/or have a considerable impact on the skyline. A tower of 15 storeys is currently built in the centre of the Beacon South Quarter development and a number of proposals for towers of up to 24 storeys are in the pipeline.

1.6

Tall buildings can mark points of significant activity such as central places, create fine landmarks, highlight civic buildings and emphasize important transport connections. On the other hand, they can overshadow, overlook and dominate their immediate surroundings and have harmful effects on living conditions, private gardens and public spaces. Inappropriately planned, designed and located tall buildings can detract seriously from the quality of a residential environment. Tall buildings can be especially harmful for historic buildings, conservation areas, natural heritage areas and significant views and skylines, and the greater their height, the broader their impact tends to be. It follows that their location needs to be carefully managed.

1.7

New development will change the County in the years to come. Whilst some areas such as Cherrywood are progressing through masterplans which provide a structure and meaningful approach towards building heights, others, particularly Sandyford, do not currently benefit from an overall plan. A positive and planned approach can harness the benefits of new development to transform the County into a more sustainable place with more households, more facilities, a better public realm, better transport and a more attractive environment.

1.8

This study represents part of that process. It is a strategic document that establishes the broad parameters for setting building heights throughout the County. It contains criteria that can be used for evaluating planning applications and establishing more detailed building heights strategies for individual places and centres.



Heights in the County are predominantly low rise

Few landmarks with exceptional height



Recent development seeks urban scale with increased height

Background to this Report

1.9

The Building Height Study comprises a Baseline Report and a Building Height Strategy. This document represents the project's second stage, the Building Height Strategy.

1.10

The following studies, which can be found in the Baseline Report, have been undertaken to inform the Building Height Strategy:

- an analysis of the existing and emerging characteristics and structure of the study area;
- an analysis of current and emerging national, regional and local planning policies;
- a market analysis of Greater Dublin and, more specifically, Dun Laoghaire –Rathdown County;
- a comparative study on High Building Strategies in different European cities.

1.11

The Building Height Strategy is based on well-established urban design principles which form the core to Urban Initiatives' work and which guide urban projects throughout Ireland, the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe. The urban design principles underlying the study are explained in detail in section 3 of this report.



Consultation

1.12

The study has been the subject of two phases of public consultation. In October 2006, the project was announced on the Council's web-site and in national papers, and the public and stakeholders were invited to comment in writing by 10 November. 56 responses were received from a variety of interested stakeholders, including individual residents, residents' associations, councillors and developers. Whilst many of the submissions recognised the benefits of higher development densities as opposed to urban sprawl, concern was expressed regarding the feasibility of pursuing higher densities and heights given the capacity of the transportation network and social infrastructure. A number of submissions argued that more recent and unplanned developments have had a negative impact on the residential amenity of established low-rise areas, as well as the natural and built heritage of the County. Developers generally embraced the concept of higher development densities and tall buildings, whilst local residents expressed concerns about residential amenity.

1.13

The desirability of a single coherent plan to inform decision making on taller buildings and higher development densities was highlighted in a number of submissions. Several people thought that taller buildings would not be appropriate adjacent to areas of low-rise residential development; that building heights should be graded so that they are lower in close proximity to existing residential areas; and that taller buildings and higher development densities should be restricted to newly planned industrial estates, business parks or established commercial/employment areas. Others felt that building heights should be restricted along the seafront, and should generally not exceed 5 storeys. Some thought that taller buildings and higher development densities should be encouraged in areas with good transport links.

1.14

During the second phase of consultation, an outline of the preliminary Draft Building Height Strategy was made available for inspection at Dun Laoghaire County Hall and Dundrum Office between 25 January and 14 February. The presented material was also available on the Council web site. Urban Initiatives gave a presentation to councillors in Dun Laoghaire on 24 January and to developers the following day at a venue in Dublin hosted by CBRE. The public and stakeholders were invited to comment on the draft proposal.

1.15

This phase of consultation reflected the differences of opinion which emerged in the first phase. In essence, whilst local residents welcomed the prescriptive nature of the height and density recommendations within the draft report, private developers argued that the recommendations were too conservative and prescriptive, and that a greater degree of flexibility should be provided.

1.16

More specifically, private developers argued that the imposition of blanket and maximum heights would fail to allow for local conditions. It was pointed out that some permitted developments had already exceeded the recommended heights. It was therefore suggested that the study should refer to 'potential', 'preferred' or 'optimum' building heights rather than 'blanket' or 'maximum' heights, and that greater emphasis should be placed on qualitative rather than quantitative assessment criteria. Finally, a number of submissions requested that Sandyford Business Estate and Stillorgan Industrial Park be treated as special cases.

1.17

All the comments received by Urban Initiatives in response to the consultation process have been taken into account in the preparation and recommendations of this study. A fuller summary of the written responses can be found in Appendix B.