

## 4 Urban Design

### 4.1 Introduction

Good urban design can help contribute towards the character and distinctiveness of an area and can assist in creating places where people would want to live, work and socialise.

It is acknowledged that there are only a limited number of opportunities for new development and/or redevelopment in the Plan area. Nonetheless, any new development (or redevelopment), if based on the principles of good urban design, has the potential to significantly improve Goatstown as an urban village. There are many related elements that help contribute to good urban design including overall layout, overall height, public realm and the design of individual buildings.

The following policies are intended to ensure that new development (or redevelopment) within the Plan area positively enhances Goatstown’s identity and assists in creating a stronger sense of place than currently exists.

### 4.2 Urban Design

*UD1: It is an objective of the Plan that new development within Goatstown shall be of a high quality design and layout that makes a positive contribution to the local built environment and enhances the identity and sense of place of the Plan area and its environs*

Goatstown lacks a distinctive identity. This is a result of a weak urban structure, uniform built form, absence of a defined streetscape, the overall dominance of traffic and the area’s close proximity to the competing larger higher order urban centres of Stillorgan and Dundrum.

The potential to enhance Goatstown is limited as a consequence of the well-established largely suburban context. However, there are some opportunities where the potential offered by good urban design can be harnessed to create an attractive urban environment. New development should adopt a creative approach and make a distinctive contribution to the local area.

A number of the sites identified as having redevelopment opportunity are in prominent locations notably the former Victor Motors site, ‘The Goat’ Public House, Topaz garage and the adjoining retail units. The pursuit of high quality architecture in any redevelopment of these sites is essential having regard to the obvious opportunities to more clearly define the streetscape.

*UD2: It is an objective of the Plan that all new residential and mixed-use development shall be designed having regard to the 12 design criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual (DoEHLG May 2009).*

The Urban Design Manual, which accompanies the ‘Guidelines for Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas’ (May 2009), sets out a series of 12 design criteria for residential development. The sequence of criteria trickles down from strategic issues to detailed design considerations with the intent of encouraging a logical approach to new localised development. The 12 criteria are sub-divided into three groups: Neighbourhood – Site – Home. These groups reflect the spatial scales that should inform and guide the design of any new development.

The 12 criteria, as set out in Table 4.1, should be key reference tools at pre-planning consultations and in the assessment of planning applications for any new development proposals within the Plan area.

**Table 4.1: 12 Urban Design Criteria (Source: Urban Design Manual May 2009)**

<b>Neighbourhood</b>	Context	How does the development respond to its surroundings?
	Connections	How well is the new neighbourhood / site connected?
	Inclusivity	How easily can people use and access the development?
	Variety	How does the development promote a good mix of activities?
<b>Site</b>	Efficiency	How does the development make the appropriate use of resources, including land?
	Distinctiveness	How do the proposals create a sense of place?
	Layout	How does the proposal create people-friendly streets and spaces?
	Public Realm	How safe, secure and enjoyable are the public areas?
<b>Home</b>	Adaptability	How will the buildings cope with change?
	Privacy/Amenity	How do the buildings provide a high quality change?
	Parking	How will the parking be secure and attractive?
	Detailed Design	How well thought through is the building and landscape design?

*UD3: It is an objective of the Plan that any planning applications for the redevelopment opportunity sites identified on Map 3 shall include a design statement that sets out the overall design, context and aims of the proposal.*

It is imperative that the design statements submitted with planning applications on these sites provide a clear rationale for the design concept proposed including the choice of layout, building form, roof shape, height, materials, finishes, façade details and orientation.

The optimum layout of buildings and spaces should be derived from thorough site analysis. The detail gathered in the site analysis should inform the overall design concept and there should be a clear and obvious link between the site characteristics and the eventual design proposed. The layout and orientation of buildings should be guided by the nature of the surrounding development, natural features, accessibility and sunlight patterns.

*UD4: It is an objective of the Plan that any redevelopment of the prominent and highly visible 'Goat' site shall be based on a design approach that is influenced by, and responds sympathetically to, the historic character of the area - most notably the mature trees, stone walls and various historic buildings; including Drummartin Terrace that flanks the southern boundary of the site. Any redevelopment proposals shall incorporate a diversity of uses and housing typology, varied plot widths and heights and shall include a rich mix and palette of materials. The public realm component of any redevelopment scheme shall be of a high quality with particular emphasis on paving, tree planting and street furniture*

The design concept for any redevelopment at Goatstown Crossroads should be based on a creative approach that helps create a distinctive identity and attractive streetscape for Goatstown. New development should be designed to enrich the local built environment. The design approach for any redevelopment proposal should reflect the historic character of the area. The Goat Public House site should continue to function as the primary focal point of Goatstown neighbourhood centre and this should be reflected in any redevelopment of the site.

### 4.3 Height

*UD5: It is an objective of the Plan that height in excess of two-storeys shall only be permitted where it is considered by the Planning Authority that the proposed development can be easily absorbed into the existing urban landscape and will not be visually obtrusive or overbearing.*

The Buildings Height Study contained in the County Development Plan 2010-2016 sets out a broad strategy for building height based on the accepted urban hierarchy of the County and focuses on the role of Local Plans for delivering detailed policy on building height at a local or micro level.

Goatstown is predominantly low-rise. The only exception within the Plan Area to one and two storey development is at Trimbleston, Roebuck Park and Mount Anville School. Trimbleston accommodates height of up to four storeys with an additional set back floor. Roebuck Park contains one three-storey apartment building with additional set back floor while the buildings in Mount Anville School generally range between three and four storeys.

Goatstown's ability to accommodate increased height is constrained having regard to the almost ubiquitous low-rise residential context of the area. There are nevertheless a limited number of sites with redevelopment potential which may be able to absorb heights of up to three and four storeys. Applications for development, which comprise of heights over two-storeys, should demonstrate that the proposed buildings can be readily absorbed into the existing urban fabric. Generally, the larger a site is, the greater its ability to absorb height. The two separate standalone sites at Knockrabo, for example, are of a size and scale capable of easily accommodating height in excess of two storeys.

*UD6: It is an objective of the Plan that a benchmark height of three storeys (with a possible additional set back floor or occupied roof space) shall apply on the sites of the Goat Public House, Topaz garage and adjoining retail units and the former Victor Motors site. Height should graduate down to a maximum of two-storey along the site boundaries where they adjoin existing low-rise development.*

Any increase in height shall respect the character of the surrounding area and shall be successfully integrated with existing development. Excessive height relative to local context will not be permitted where it would result in visually obtrusive or overbearing buildings.

Building height can make a positive contribution to the identity and character of an area. Increased building height at Goatstown Crossroads could help define Goatstown as an urban village and create a stronger identity.

Section 6 contains Local Site Framework Strategies that



Photo 15: Example of Staggered Height

provide more detailed guidance on height for specific sites that have redevelopment potential.



**Photo 16: Example of Three-Storey Residential Development**

## 4.4 Density

*UD7: It is an objective of the Plan to promote the efficient use of land by facilitating higher densities within the Plan area in accordance with County Development Plan policy.*

Sustainable development is predicated upon the efficient use of land. It is acknowledged that higher density development can more readily support the economic viability of public transport and local retail facilities and services. High quality design is, however, fundamental to creating successful higher density residential developments.

The pattern of development in Goatstown is predominantly low density. Experience demonstrates that low-density development results in a weak urban form and unsustainable travel patterns. New infill development within Goatstown should seek to achieve higher densities, which will help strengthen the urban form and enhance the overall vitality of the Plan area.



**Photo 17: Development at Trimbleston, Goatstown**

The capacity of a site to absorb higher densities is influenced by a range of factors including local setting, neighbouring uses, access, topography etc. The preparation of a design brief, including a detailed contextual and site analysis, will help determine a site's capacity and the appropriate density. The design of any higher density development should be sensitive to, and respectful of, existing surrounding residential development.

Infill development should be facilitated and encouraged where it can be demonstrated that the proposed development will positively enhance the streetscape and provide for a high level of visual interest while at the same time protecting established residential amenity.



**Photo 18: In-Fill Development on Lower Kilmacud Road**

## 4.5 Public realm

*UD8: It is an objective of the Plan to improve the appearance, quality and overall function of the public realm within the Plan area.*

Public realm is defined as all external spaces that are publicly accessible, including streets, parking areas, footpaths, squares and parks. A high quality public realm enhances the character of an area and encourages people to use and enjoy public spaces, thereby contributing to the overall vitality and animation of an area.

Measures to improve the public realm can include harmonising signage and reducing overall visual clutter by adopting a consistent approach in terms of street furniture, lighting, paving etc. Urban areas, particularly nodes of activity, come under pressure to accommodate a range of street furniture including bicycle stands, bus shelters, public seating, signage, traffic signal boxes, landscape features etc. Proposals for new street furniture should have regard to the need to reduce visual clutter - the co-location of street furniture shall be carried out where possible. Street furniture shall comprise of high quality materials and shall be designed so as not to detract from the visual amenities of the area.

Some localised improvements and upgrading have been

implemented to the public realm in the Plan area since the pre-Draft consultation process two years ago. These improvements have focussed on Goatstown Road and include resurfacing, the upgrading of paths and cycle paths and additional tree planting.



**Photo 19: Tree Planting along Goatstown Road**

There is, however, potential within Goatstown for further localised improvements. A package of localised public realm improvements / upgrades will be brought forward by the County Council as resources allow.

*UD9: It is an objective of the Plan to require applications for multiple residential / mixed-use development to clearly demonstrate the measures proposed to enhance the public realm.*

It is important that there is consistency in the selection and use of materials to be employed in any redevelopment proposals in the environs of Goatstown Crossroads. This should include stone paving, street furniture, lighting and signage. Detailed specification of hard and soft landscaping will be required to form an integral part of any application for redevelopment.



**Photo 20: Public Realm in Goatstown Close**