

Chapter 5 Urban Design and Public Realm

5.1 Introduction



Photo 5.1. Stillorgan Shopping Centre



Photo 5.2. Kilmacud Road Lower/N11 Junction

Public realm is all areas of the urban fabric to which the public have access. It is where physical interaction takes place between people. It therefore, includes buildings and their design, streets, squares and parks, from signage and street furniture to the microclimate. A rich public domain can create character and civic identity. There is currently a distinct lack of uniformity and local identity and a decline of the public realm within Stillorgan. There has been a proliferation of piecemeal development over the last two decades that has resulted in an environment that provides little architectural interest, quality or uniformity. Much of the original fabric of the village has been replaced, with only a few isolated structures remaining. The District Centre is dominated by a two storey Shopping Centre at the junction of the Kilmacud Road Lower and Old Dublin Road (Photo 5.1.), which is in need of redevelopment. Elsewhere, there is a prevalence of poor quality 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, architecture, whereby the structures appear unsympathetic to the original urban form, eroding the character and identity of the area.

The area is traversed by a heavily trafficked road network and dominated by a major traffic node at the junction of the Kilmacud Road Lower, Old Dublin Road and "The Hill" (Photo 5.3). The landscape is dominated by traffic and surface car parking. This monopolisation of the streets by traffic results in an area that is hostile to pedestrians, that restricts permeability and thus produces a congested and unpleasant shopping environment (Photo 5.2).

To the immediate east of the Plan boundary is the N11. However, there are poor pedestrian linkages across this major traffic route to the east side of the Stillorgan area, which is predominantly residential (Photo 5.3). There is an existing underpass, which connects to Patricia Villas, which is well used, however underpass design is generally considered to be undesirable for pedestrians.

The existing layout provides inadequate passive surveillance of the public realm resulting in its poor quality and maintenance. This is reflected in the degraded footpath surface treatments and the fact that there is little, inadequate or dated street furniture, public art, passive recreational areas, lighting and landscaping (Photos 5.1 & 5.2). The existing urban form and development, therefore, provides little cohesion or sense of place. The area is deficient in passive recreational public space. There is no collective architectural form or strong identity and the existing road network creates a barrier, restricting the permeation of pedestrians throughout the area.



Photo 5.3. Kilmacud Rd Lower/N11 & Kilmacud Rd Lower/Old Dub Rd /"The Hill"

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5.2 Civic identity

Vision

Successful developments that 'place' an area can be achieved by careful integration with the surrounding built environment using the right materials, forms and landscape elements for the locality relating to the existing built fabric and settlement structure. New development shall provide an opportunity to enhance a local environment and create a place of distinction.

Mixed-use developments shall be encouraged at suitable locations in particular at the hub of the District Centre, in order to achieve a sustainable urban form. The regeneration and redevelopment of Stillorgan District Centre shall create an urban context in respect to its scale, design and layout.

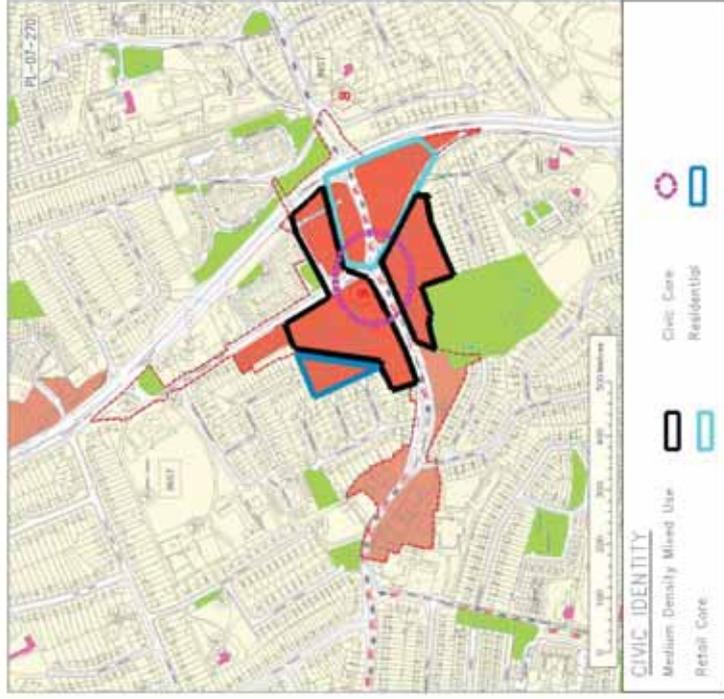


Figure 5.1

Strategic Objectives

- A civic core/space shall be created around the existing traffic node at the junction of the Kilmacud Road Lower and Old Dublin Road/The Hill (Figure 5.1).
- To achieve the civic core/space, development in this area shall provide for a diverse mix of uses to create a civic identity for Stillorgan (Figure 5.1).
- New development shall be responsive to local character and respect the visual context of Stillorgan. This presents an opportunity in Stillorgan to identify and create its own unique local character, somewhere that is recognisably distinct and promotes a good quality visual environment.

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5.3 Layout and Orientation

Vision

The existing urban grain in Stillorgan creates a limited street network with barriers between the residential and commercial areas. Future development needs to accommodate intensity of movement and activity at the heart of the District Centre. The design and layout of development and building pattern will influence the activity and vitality of an area. It is envisaged that new development layouts will have a coherent building edge, in so far as they will allow for a scale of development, with buildings on the street, which will maximise street activity and interest.



Figure 5.2

Strategic Objectives

- The optimum layout and site-specific design of buildings within each development shall be achieved taking into account local context, the surrounding environment and existing amenity and accessibility.
- Building layout shall have full consideration for the microclimate advantages of orientation and aspect (Fig. 5.2).
- Developments shall be of human scale and create key frontages to ensure street activity and the surveillance of the public domain (Fig. 5.2).
- Developments, in particular on the prime development sites identified in the Plan, shall form convenient and integrated street patterns allowing for an intensity of activity and uses (Fig.5.2).

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5.4 Building Design

Vision

In the case of Stillorgan, opportunities exist for future building design to enhance the urban fabric. Whatever their function buildings shall be well designed, well built and visually pleasing and appropriate. At present, in Stillorgan there is a lack of visual harmony with regards to building design and form. It is envisaged that new building style will create a new character, whereby new architecture shall be appropriate to the development in the area to create visual harmony.

Strategic Objectives

- Developments shall address the following issues in respect to adjoining properties: overlooking, scale and bulk, overshadowing of habitable rooms and height.
- Building design shall reflect its function and be easily interpreted.
- Design shall create architectural diversity and richness to establish an area's character.
- Developments shall provide for day and night activities creating pedestrian and social activities and visual interest.
- Ground floor areas shall contain uses that create vitality and liveliness.
- Building access shall be at the front to create pedestrian activity.
- Lengths of blank facades facing public spaces shall be avoided.
- In residential development, buildings shall present a high quality living environment for its residents, both in terms of the standard of individual dwelling units and in terms of the overall layout and appearance of the scheme. In particular, appropriate mitigating measures against the negative impacts of the N11, shall be provided for in any residential development in close proximity to this national route.
- Architecture, palette of materials and landscaping shall be of a high quality and shall complement each other to create a sense of uniformity within the heart of Stillorgan.
- Development shall use sustainable construction methods to minimise the use of energy and materials and reducing pollution and waste.
- Buildings shall create a strong building edge, in particular along the street network and shall create a high visual impact, with visually interesting street frontage.



Photo 5.4. Dunderum Town Centre: An example of high quality architecture with building frontage interest.

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5.5 Building Height and Density

Vision

The strategy is to strengthen the centre of Stillorgan and provide a co-ordinated development form, a distinct skyline, a unique identity and to promote higher densities through a more compact urban form.



Figure 5.3

Strategic Objectives

In evaluating height and density of proposed developments, the Council will consider the following:

- Benchmark building height of 5 storeys. Development on the Shopping Centre Overflow Car Park and Millhouse Car Park will be restricted to a height of not exceeding 4 storeys.

Development will generally be acceptable up to this benchmark height provided that:

- (i) It integrates and relates appropriately to its context;
 - (ii) It respects and contributes to local character;
 - (iii) Existing residential amenity would not be compromised by the proposed development.
- Subject to the discretion of the Planning Authority, development may be modified down from the benchmark height (Downward Modifiers) in circumstances of exceptional local sensitivity where new development would significantly harm:
 - (i) residential living conditions through overlooking or overshadowing,
 - (ii) a setting of a listed building,
 - (iii) an area of particular character,
 - (iv) a planning or social objective.
- Stillorgan is identified as a Secondary Growth Node with a Transitional Zone, in the DLR Building Height Strategy Final Consultants Report 2007. As such it is an objective to promote a distinct skyline and unique identity for Stillorgan.
 - Building height shall be graded so they are lower in close proximity to residential areas. Transitional Zones allow for a gradual transition of densities and height. Section 15.2 of the County Development Plan deals with Transitional Zonal areas and therefore a Transitional Zone of 25 metres will be applied to development in Stillorgan District Centre and Neighbourhood Centre.

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- A local landmark is a single outstanding building which is either taller or of more notable design than its neighbours. Two Landmark Buildings of a slim, elegant and high quality design at a maximum of 9 storeys in height may be provided on Sites A & B (1 building on each site) at the junction of the Kilmacud Road Lower and the N11, (Fig. 5.3). A local landmark development may be permissible if:
 - (i) It will substantially enhance the legibility of the area ie: by marking an important node or street corner.
 - (ii) It preserves and enhances local character.
 - (iii) It creates active street frontages and addresses and improves public realm, the network of streets and spaces and the quality of the physical environment.
 - (iv) Its scale, mass and height respects adjoining buildings.
 - (v) It does not have an adverse impact on living conditions in terms of overlooking, overshadowing, excessive scale etc.
 - (vi) It does not compete with existing landmarks.
 - (vii) It is of outstanding architectural quality and urban design.
 - (viii) In considering landmark developments, the Planning Authority will take into account the cumulative effect of new or proposed landmark developments within Stillorgan to ensure the benchmark height is not undermined.

- Planning applications for landmark buildings shall contain:
 - (i) An Urban Design Study,
 - (ii) An Impact Assessment Study,
 - (iii) A Design Statement.

- Higher densities shall be provided through an urban compact form.

- The densities of proposed developments shall reflect their location and use with lower densities at transition points from established residential areas.

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5.6 Places and Spaces

Vision

Places and spaces refer to all areas accessed by the public, including parks, civic areas, squares, shared spaces and footpaths. The design of open space and amenity areas shall form an integral part of a comprehensive development framework for Stillorgan. The Plan will aim to facilitate the provision of a variety of public spaces within the context of a new built environment and aims to harness the intrinsic assets of existing open space and amenity areas.

The focus shall be on the provision of attractive public spaces and passive amenity areas. These can be provided in the form of pocket parks and larger civic spaces that provide places for sitting and socialising. The Plan will aim to facilitate the creation of a network of linear passive open spaces, which are linked by pedestrian and cycle route networks. Every development shall make a positive contribution to the space network that responds to the social and cultural needs of the community. Where appropriate the Plan aims to facilitate the retention and where possible the enhancement of existing green open spaces in Stillorgan.



Strategic Objectives

- A Civic Core/Space shall be created at a central location within the District Centre to create identity and character (Fig. 5.4).
- Spaces and places shall be able to meet a variety of needs eg: passive recreational areas and active recreational areas, to accommodate activities such as markets, food stalls, street performers etc..
- Open space shall form an integral part of proposed developments, in order to create an attractive environment.
- Spaces shall be provided in such a way as to ensure a uniformity of schemes throughout the District Centre with emphasis on design, themes and materials to create continuity.
- To create a network of spaces, interconnected by pedestrian and cycle routes to ensure full permeability of the area (Fig.5.4.). To achieve this objective, all new residential and mixed-use developments shall provide high quality public and semi private open spaces.
- Shared spaces shall be attractive, inviting and finished to a high quality, whereby due consideration shall be given to materials, signage, lighting, landscaping, street furniture and markings that are appropriate to its function and location.
- Open spaces shall be well designed physically and functionally, be overlooked, well lit, well used, safe, supervised and accessible.
- Public and semi private open spaces shall be well maintained and managed (through planning conditions requiring management agreements).
- Public Art helps to create a place of identity, improving the visual and cultural environment. Public Art shall be promoted and encouraged within each new significant development, particularly within open public spaces to create visual interest and landmark features of distinction.
- Developments shall provide for indoor active recreational facilities for young people within the Stillorgan District Centre.
- Developments shall provide high quality public and private playgrounds and open recreational facilities.

Figure 5.4