



## **Report to the Planning and Urban Form Strategic Policy Committee – September 2020**

### **Communications Strategy for the Development Plan Review Process.**

#### **Item No. 5 on the Agenda**

##### **1. Introduction**

The preparation of the new 2022 City Development Plan presents unique challenges. The post-Covid context means that many of the usual approaches we use such as workshops and open days for engaging with staff, Elected Members and consulting with the public are no longer workable. Also new is the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator, who has placed a clear emphasis on increased levels of public consultation. Thirdly, the imminent launch of the new Development Plan Guidelines by the Department will also place greater engagement and research requirements on Development Plan teams.

##### **2. Key Issues & New Requirements Emerging**

###### Requirements of the Planning Acts

The Planning Acts set out a number of statutory requirements for public consultation, and also allow the Authority to use a range of measures as it sees appropriate. For the Pre-Draft consultation phase a summary of what is contained in the Act is outlined below:

- 1- Publication of a public notice in a newspaper circulating in the area to which development relates that includes-
  - a. name of Local Authority and statement on intent to review the Development Plan;
  - b. that submissions on objectives and policies on the overall strategy are invited up to a named date (not less than 8 weeks);
  - c. that children and groups representing the interests of children are entitled to make submissions;
  - d. that the Council intends reviewing the zoning, but that zoning proposals will not be considered at this stage;
  - e. the time and places where any background papers or draft proposals may be viewed.
- 2- The Authority, after giving notice, shall *“take whatever additional measures it considers necessary to consult with the general public and other interested bodies”*. (Sn11 (3) (a)).

- 3- The Authority shall hold public meetings and seek written submissions and may invite oral submissions.
- 4- The Authority shall take whatever steps necessary to consult with providers of energy, telecommunications, transport and other relevant infrastructure and of education, health, policing and other services in order to ascertain any long term plans in the area.

At the Draft Stage the statutory requirements are:

- 1- Publication in a newspaper circulating in the area a public notice that includes-
  - a. name of the Authority and statement that the Draft Plan is published for comment;
  - b. that submissions on the Draft are invited up to a named date (not less than 10 weeks);
  - c. the time and places where the Draft Plan may be viewed.
  - d. State that written submissions received will be taken into consideration before making the Plan.

#### Office of the Planning Regulator

The newly established Office of the Planning Regulator has a role in increasing public and political education and engagement with the planning process. It has so far published one new document of note to the consultation phases of the Development Plan- "*Increasing Public Engagement in Plan Making*". This recently published advice note sets out a range of suggested options that Local Authorities should undertake to promote increased engagement. These are in summary (and grouped where related)

- media launch of commencement of public consultation phases
  - o Use of regional/local radio
  - o Press release
  - o Encourage Elected Members to circulate and promote press release
- Develop a social media plan, including reminders for launch and closing dates.

The document is available at <https://opr.iw.ie/view-file/9>

#### Departmental Guidelines

The current Departmental Development Plan Guidelines in place date from June 2007. The Department have stated that they are preparing a new updated set of Guidelines for preparing Development Plans. It is important to the process that any new requirements within the Guidelines are included in the process. It is hoped that a Draft version of these will be published prior to the formal commencement of the Review.

## Accessibility

It is important that the communications strategy addresses accessibility from the outset, so that all actions take fully into account what is required to meet this need.

The approach is guided by the updated publication 'Customer Communications Toolkit for the Public Service- A Universal Design Approach', published in 2020 jointly by the National Disability Authority and the Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform.

It is also proposed to be guided by the 'Plain English Style Guide for the Public Service' also published by the National Adult Literacy Agency and the Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform.

The planned actions for the communication strategy based on the above are:

- 1- Written documents will follow the universal design recommendations:
- 2- Formatting of all documents published will be easily read by assistive software.
- 3- Facilitate, where possible, oral submissions when requested.
- 4- Review prior to publication the pre-draft issues paper with the goal to gain the Plain English Quality Mark issued by NALA.
- 5- Include 'infographics' in the issue paper and the Draft Development Plan to provide more user friendly presentation of factual information.
- 6- Review technology options available with the aim to increase accessibility of the zoning maps for the publication of the Draft Development Plan.
- 7- Review the colours of the existing zoning maps and if recommended make changes to improve their accessibility.
- 8- Any video clips prepared to give information on the Development Plan will be subtitled.

## Gaeilge

A number of actions will be built into the management of the review process to ensure that the consultation process incorporates the wishes of those who want to engage in the process using the Irish language.

To this end –

1. All posters and leaflets promoting engagement to the public will be published in Irish and in English
2. All social media messages will be issued in Irish and in English.
3. The Draft Development Plan will be published in both Irish and English.

### **3. Key input stages for the Elected Members**

The Development Plan is a reserved function of the Council, and as such it is critical in preparing the Plan that the Elected Members are fully engaged with the process through each stage.

Whilst the day to day work of preparing and drafting text and maps is undertaken by the planning department staff, the making of decisions on the strategic direction of the Plan is a decision for the Elected Members, as is the making of a Draft Plan for public display; deciding any future changes to the Draft; and the final decision to adopt the Plan at the end of the process. At each stage of decision making, there are key aspects that must be taken into account, including consideration of the environmental impact and impact on habitats as well as many others.

For each key stage in the process it is intended that the Elected Members will have a number of opportunities to bring forward their priorities, ideas, new approaches for the Draft Plan; giving the opportunity to discuss and consider the complexity of the many issues facing this Plan; and to work towards finding the optimum solutions for the City.

#### Pre-Draft Stage

1. It is proposed to hold a two workshops with the Elected Members on key issues for the Draft Plan prior to the formal commencement of the Development Plan process. The first workshop will give information on the Plan process to all Members, followed by the second workshop which will focus on key issues for the Council that the next Development Plan should address. (To meet Covid requirements the venue will be the Mansion House, and some details may need to change to ensure compliance. This will be kept under review.)
2. For the six webinars to be held as part of the public consultation, it is hoped that the Elected Members can participate in the debate and give their views to encourage members of the public to engage in considering the issues involved.
3. A second phase of workshops will be held following completion of the public consultation on the Pre-Draft phase. This workshop will give detail on the submissions received, what were the main issues and aid the Members in agreeing the Directions to the Chief Executive required for the completion of this phase of the Plan preparation.

#### Draft Plan Stage

4. As the Draft Plan is being prepared it is proposed to hold third workshop to outline key thinking, policy directions and new challenges emerging on the main chapters to the Members and to discuss their impacts. The detail of how these workshops will be run will be agreed at a later stage when it is clearer what the impact of Covid will have at the time.
5. Following the issuing of the Chief Executive's Plan to the Elected Members it is proposed to hold a fourth series of workshops to outline the contents of the Plan and assist and advise Members in their consideration of the Draft Plan and in drafting motions for any changes.
6. Following the display of the Draft Plan, it is proposed to hold a workshop to outline what were the key issues from the submissions, what changes are proposed and to seek the views of the Members in relation to possible solutions and options. Advice

and support will also be given in relation to preparing motions in relation to possible amendments.

#### Amendments Stage

7. Following completion of the consultation on the amendments to the Draft Plan it is proposed to invite Members to a workshop to present a summary of the submissions received in relation to the amendments, and also assist and advise on the final stage of the Plan, where the Plan is made.

## 4. Public Consultation Plan

### 3.1 Pre-Draft Public Consultation

The purpose of the pre-draft consultation is to seek input from a wide range of people and organisations into what the main policies and objectives of the new Development Plan should be. Balanced with this, the consultation process seeks to inform the public that such future policies and objectives must also be in keeping with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

As this consultation period will fall within the current pandemic, there are challenges and changes needed in how this is conducted. To meet these challenges a range of new initiatives are proposed alongside what is statutorily required.

What is proposed to make the consultation process successful is:

1. Have a formal launch alongside the placing of the public notice, with press release and aim to promote the consultation process in the mainstream media.
2. Publish issue paper and also short leaflet to highlight the main issues the Plan will need to address and what the review process involves.
3. New webpage providing accessible information.
4. Utilise the poster boards and Big Belly bins with a promotion campaign
5. Image projection onto City Council Wood Quay building
6. Utilise social media to encourage links to the new webpage; and highlight closing dates.
7. Prepare a short video (with subtitles) that sets out clearly what a development plan is and why it is important to the future of Dublin City and place on the website and on social media.
8. Undertake a survey using the “Your Dublin, Your Voice” to draw attention to the consultation process and encourage engagement on the key themes.
9. Give a presentation on the process and key issues to all Strategic Policy Committees and the Public Participation Network, Age Friendly City, Comhairle na nOg and the Local Employment Office and encourage each to engage and make submissions.
10. Send emails with information leaflet to all community groups registered with the Council
11. Run six webinars that the public and interested organisations can partake in. The webinars will be framed around key themes, namely
  - i. Housing & Community
  - ii. Heritage and Conservation
  - iii. Climate Change, Green & civil Infrastructure
  - iv. Economy and Retail
  - v. Public Realm and Built Form
  - vi. Movement.

Comments from each will input into the content of the Chief Executive’s Report on the Pre-Draft Consultation.

12. Publish (i) the Issue paper, (ii) a limited number of detailed background research papers on key topics, alongside (iii) a shorter summary leaflet to encourage people to engage at the level that they are most comfortable with.
13. Encourage engagement by young people by working with Comhairle na nÓg to encourage older children to make submissions.

14. Encourage engagement with all children by holding a photo competition that will highlight visually what they like best about the City and/or their local area. This information will be collated and mapped to inform the review process and to bring their views forward for consideration in the Chief Executive's Report. Winning images will be used within the final Development Plan when published.

### 3.2 Draft Plan Public Consultation

The publication of the Draft Plan will take place in November 2021. At this current stage it is unknown what level of face-to-face public consultation events could be undertaken, and decisions will be made on the most suitable and safe approaches closer to the time.

We will work to develop a range of options and solutions to encourage public engagement with the Draft Development Plan. The proposals include:

1. Launch the Draft Plan with a press release and promotion to garner mainstream media attention.
2. Put in place a high quality user friendly dedicated webpage and improved browser style maps that allow people to zoom in on their area.
3. Ensure a visually strong message through posters that give a link to the submissions page
4. Have a social media promotional plan to promote/highlight key issues and thus drive interest and debate.
5. Where public open sessions are not feasible, offer "live-chat" sessions where people can ask questions and discuss the Draft Plan with one of the planning team/ Set up a "virtual room" that will allow people view the public display and meet staff.
6. Where limited open sessions are feasible, set up a booking session for the public or drop in (where numbers are appropriate).
7. Undertake an extensive email out to bring the consultation process to the attention of as many organisations as possible, including residents groups and organisations that represent children.
8. Give presentations to the PPN to encourage wider dissemination of the key issues of the Draft Plan.
9. Press release and social media messaging to highlight closing date.

### 3.4 Amendments to the Draft Public Consultation

This consultation period will take place from mid- August to mid-September 2022.

The aim of the communications strategy for this consultation is to make the public aware that changes have been made, and also to highlight that the changes are in response to the submissions received as part of the earlier public consultation.

To bring attention to the consultation process a number of actions are proposed

- Use social media to promote the webpage and to invite people to view the changes
- Issue a press release with aim to draw attention in mainstream media
- It is proposed to prepare a video clip message for the website that highlights the main changes and emphasises how the revised Draft reflects the submissions, and also guides people on how to review the changes. This video clip will also be produced in a short form for use on social media.

- Use email contacts for PPN groups and others to send out mail bringing the consultation process to their attention with links to the webpage.
- Reminders published through social media of imminent closing dates.

#### Meetings with Statutory Consultees and State Organisations.

There a number of statutory consultees and other Government Departments and State organisations that are critical to a range of issues within the Development Plan. Engagement with this particular cohort is critical throughout the process of making a new Development Plan. This list includes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Office of Public Works (OPW), Department of Education, National Transport Authority (NTA), Irish Water, Electricity Supply Board (ESB), adjoining Local Authorities and the East and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) as well as many others.

It is the intent of the Council to meet with as many of these organisations as is feasible through the process to ensure that their key area of work and the Development Plan policies and objectives are well aligned. Dublin City Council will seek initial meetings during the pre-draft consultation phase to encourage submissions and to encourage the organisation to consider how their functions interact with future policies and objectives, and where it is needed, those meetings will continue through the process of preparing the Draft Plan.

## 5. Timetable for the Review Process

Below is the proposed timetable for the Review of the Development Plan. Whilst this is the current proposed dates, Dublin City Council may need to change these due to unforeseen circumstances.

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Proposed Dates</i>
Start pre-draft consultation	15 <sup>th</sup> of Dec 2020, ending 11 <sup>th</sup> of Feb 2021
CE Report on Submissions on Pre-Draft	8 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021
Draft Plan presented to Cllrs	9 <sup>th</sup> of Sept 2021
Plan placed on display	18 <sup>th</sup> of Nov 2021, ending 7 <sup>th</sup> of Feb 2022
CE Report on Submissions	2 <sup>nd</sup> of May 2022
Councillors consider Draft	25 <sup>th</sup> of July 2022
Amendments Display	17 <sup>th</sup> of August 2022, ends 14 <sup>th</sup> of Sept
CE Report on amendments	12 <sup>th</sup> of Oct 2022
Councillors make Plan	23 <sup>rd</sup> of Nov 2022