

**ON THE EDGE**  
**Regenerating a Dublin suburb.**

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Ballymun is a run-down 1960s high-rise Dublin suburb, the only one of its kind in Ireland. Its towers are conspicuous on the skyline and are one of the first views seen from the airport. Its deprivation has been chronicled by commentators such as Anne Power and it is one of five symbolic estates in her book *Estates on the Edge*. It has become known for its roaming horses and is the setting for Roddy Doyle novels.

1 In 1997 Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL) was set up to manage its design and renewal, and it was with a team led by MacCormac Jamieson Prichard that the Masterplan was prepared.

2 This article is about the ideas and intention of that Masterplan. For there to be real and lasting change, the project has to be much more than just a housing renewal exercise, it must tackle what the team called the four Es - employment, education, environment and empowerment. For Ballymun to grow into a more stable community, it needs to become more than a satellite dormitory, to be in fact a true town with a choice of places to work, learn, relax and shop, with significantly improved transport facilities. These are the ambitions behind, and the opportunities offered by, the Masterplan. This article by the Leader of the Design Team, explains some of the design ideas which aim to improve the environment, along with implementation strategies and reports on progress in the first year of the project. We publish it as a contribution from a practitioner towards understanding the detailed implications of the notion of regeneration

Ballymun was designed in the mid 1960s in response to an urgent need to re-house inner-city residents living in derelict properties. It was constructed on open fields on the edge of the city, beyond the 1930s to 1950s sprawl where radial routes out of Dublin dissolved into the countryside. As with many such estates of that era, the high-rise Balency concrete system was used; 2820 homes were built in seven 15-storey towers, nine 8-storey spine blocks, and ten 4-storey blocks; nearly all have three bedrooms. After numerous reports considering alternative options, one tower and two spine blocks were extensively upgraded in 1995. However, following an evaluation of the refurbishment, Dublin Corporation and the Irish Government committed themselves to rebuilding Ballymun through an integrated social and economic regeneration programme involving the demolition of all the high-rise flats over an eight-year time frame. Hence the establishment of BRL and the need for a Masterplan.

The overriding desire of the team is to find bespoke proposals for the many problems confronting Ballymun. Precedents established elsewhere can inspire, but can rarely be transplanted as ready-made solutions after all, that was the very approach in the 1960s which created the current problem. The safety valve on work of this nature is the community itself in Ballymun's case it is established, articulate and cautious of being a guinea pig for the second time.

With a project like this there is a risk of thinking that a few big ideas will solve the problem. The complexity of the issues requires a multiplicity of overlapping solutions which, with the implementation process itself, should make the community stronger and its fabric and economy more stable and enduring.

The design ideas

The 15 key design ideas to improve the environment are described below in a series of critiques of what exists and the Masterplan responses.

1. Motorway - saviour rather than scourge

The northern section of Dublin's orbital motorway, the M50, was opened in 1997 and the Ballymun Road,

which used to trickle out to the countryside, now connects and has its own junction. In spite of the easy road access to the airport, no bus link is provided.

Adding a motorway environment to Ballymun might seem to make matters even bleaker, but importantly it now places Ballymun on the way to somewhere. To the east, the M50 and the north-bound M1 demonstrate the development corridors that motorways become, albeit many of these have unattractive 'big shed' land uses.

The motorway creates an impenetrable edge to the north. The 19th century has left railway corridors into cities which overlook back yards. Motorways often do the same, but here the approach experience to Ballymun must set a better example. The new business park planned for the motorway edge must be well landscaped truly to achieve the meaning of its name. A tall landmark building - a hotel - is proposed to give this motorway junction an identity.

The Masterplan study can only control one quadrant of the junction. However, ideas have been explored for the other quadrants because it is essential that the motorway does not become another barrier to the integration of Ballymun into North Dublin.

#### 2. Planning context - creating places rather than spaces

On arrival in Ballymun there is a huge roundabout in the centre of the cluster of towers, from which radiate four branches of 8-storey spine blocks, culminating in the 4-storey blocks (see layout diagram). Beyond, are carpets of two-storey houses, many in poor condition but not as conspicuous as the towers. The overall impression is one of windswept grass with few trees - not helped by roaming horses which graze and pockmark the muddy verges and open spaces. The isolation and lack of connection is accentuated by the surrounding unstructured open space, which is perceived by some adjoining neighbours as a valued cordon sanitaire. To make matters worse, along the two boundaries, overhead electricity pylons run through this space, making an aggressive 'electric fence' and compounding Ballymun's isolation.

A sense of enclosure must be achieved along Ballymun Road, with town-like buildings leading to a recognizable centre. Wherever possible, new homes with road and footpath connections must be built on the wasteland boundaries to help dissolve the existing physical and social divide. The overhead cables have to be re-routed underground to enable this land to be built upon. The landscape strategy is important; it must create familiar and valued parks, rather than useless swathes of muddy grass.

#### 3. Road hierarchy - making through roads, rather than culs-de-sac

The existing road hierarchy reinforces the built form, with wide roads radiating from the central roundabout leading to estate roads that are dead ends which, in turn, lead to residential culs-de-sac and all these obstacles have to be negotiated by buses serving the estate.

The roundabout, which was the terminus of the suburban dual carriageway and divides the community in two, has pedestrian subways which are not usually justified by the pedestrian movement and even current traffic volumes. The residential cul-de-sac layouts often run roads parallel to the estate roads, thus generating still more verge space and compounding the low-density and separated pattern of settlement.

The Masterplan advocates several new short link roads that will convert the long culs-de-sac into through routes, making the communities better connected. Recently published research also demonstrates the security disadvantages of culs-de-sac, so that planning idea of the 1960s is being widely challenged.

The proposed road system replaces the roundabout with a crossroads, thus allowing through traffic

movements to be prioritized, since they represent 90% of the volume. The idea is then to traffic calm Ballymun Road, without reducing its capacity, so that potentially it can become a more conventional town main street.

This idea challenges traditional road engineering interpretations, but this is an era when the car's supremacy is being questioned. There are precedents in Dublin of main streets that carry similar volumes and have a strong character.

Creation of the Main Street is key to giving Ballymun a new identity, and building street frontages for retail, civic and commercial uses expected in a community of 30,000, will itself create a sense of arrival in a town, rather than in a huge housing estate.

#### 4. Transport - Public Systems rather than Private Cars

Presently car ownership is low, as one would expect with the current income profile and lack of secure parking. Car parking provision has a major impact on the quality of housing layouts and to be able to propose a low provision, BRL have actively supported improvements to public transport services.

Bus routing will be improved by eliminating the long culs-de-sac, and extending services to reach employment areas will be promoted by BRL.

The exciting new life line for Ballymun is the LUAS - Dublin's new tram system. Ballymun has been at the end of the proposed north line, and the Masterplan has not only reserved land for it, but has also identified a viable crossing point over the M50. BRL are pleased that the LUAS routes published in December 1998 now pass along the Main Street, over the M50, and extend to the airport, thus connecting Ballymun to the major new network for the 21st century. In combination with the new motorway junction, the LUAS will place Ballymun on the way to somewhere.

#### 5. Community - connected and focused rather than unserved and isolated

Communities need a visible focus - ideally one with all the classic ingredients of places to shop, work, worship, learn and relax. At Ballymun, the retail provision is in one place - the existing shopping centre. The centre was laid out as an inward-looking pinwheel plan, revealing its service yards to the visitor, with little parking and is so unappealing that it does not attract passing trade. In the 1970s, when spending power was higher and before the advent of large out-of-town shopping centres, it worked for a while, but now the spending power in Ballymun is very low, so a large number of shop units are empty or occupied by community support organizations. The few remaining shops inevitably offer less choice and goods which are frequently more expensive than at nearby, more competitive retail centres.

Developers have been interested in expanding the shopping centre dramatically and, had sufficient land been available, no doubt a retail-led development programme would have taken place. Meanwhile, the north of Dublin is becoming over-shopped with major new centres along the M50 corridor.

A vibrant town centre is planned and some of the committed facilities are noted later. It is essential to provide new facilities which will firmly establish Ballymun as a place in North Dublin to be visited, rather than avoided, and as a provider, rather than an absorber, of services.

#### 6. Corner shops - rather than container shops

The existing local convenience shopping need is unusually fulfilled by 27 unlicensed container shops which have set up around the neighbourhoods. These respond to the needs of the 'benefit' community and offer other services as well as snacks and corner shop produce. As one would expect, items are not the cheapest, but the container shops are convenient for the many homebound single-parent families. This

convenient corner shop economy needs to be replaced in the new Ballymun. Often in UK New Towns such shops were provided, but proved not to be viable, so special incentives have to be devised for Ballymun.

The new through road network, rather than the current cul-de-sac layout, will help certain locations experience substantial new passing trade. The strategy behind the planned locations for small neighbourhood centres is aimed at helping to integrate Ballymun into its adjoining communities, so several are located near the fringes of Ballymun, where the catchment for the shops could include wealthier neighbours.

Apartments over shops are proposed; such locations are ideal for small or elderly households. Shops provide a focus to which can be added community rooms for the many active groups in Ballymun and, most important of all, creche facilities that will help liberate single parents to pursue other activities.

#### 7. Identifiable neighbourhoods rather than one sprawling Ballymun

Ballymun already has sub-communities - Coutry, Shangan, Silogue, Balcurris and Poppintree - and they have been the bases for the Forums that provide one of the consultation mechanisms. Those areas have no clear focus - no beginning, no centre, no end - all have the same towers and spine blocks, except Poppintree which is all two-storey houses and has a young ill-defined park. So the design problem has been to re-plan those neighbourhood areas to group facilities and make well-defined places - around a park, row of shops, road junction, existing school or church - and carefully to reinforce existing facilities that work well. This ambition to create urban villages, or parishes, is a recurring goal for designers working in low-density suburbs.

Within Ballymun there are over 150 groups which currently meet in empty flats; they are the sign of a self-supporting active community and replacement meeting rooms are planned for the neighbourhood centres. Like the residents, the groups have been canvassed to find out where they would prefer to be located.

The existing parish churches and schools are the focus of much activity and support in the community. Although there are no funds available from the housing budgets, other sources will be explored to help improve their facilities and settings. The coming years of upheaval and disruption during building works will place additional demands on these support networks.

#### 8. Legibility - distinctive and different places rather than uniformity

The road system and road naming are the key to establishing an identity for each neighbourhood. Any visitor to Ballymun today must use the roundabout - a thoroughly unpleasant introduction. The proposed road system introduces short new lengths of road that are conventional turnings off the main street and lead to particular communities - so each can be signposted separately. These new link roads will lead quickly to new places - Coutry Park, Balcurris Park, Shangan Park - near which are convenience shops, an existing school and church, club space and so forth. This will all help to create attractive addresses, rather than block numbers. Several existing roads extend over 2 km, turn through 270 degrees and have wide grass verges which make finding addresses maddeningly difficult and dangerously slow for emergency services. Spine blocks have de-humanizing numbers rather than names. The new residential development will predominantly be two- and three-storey homes, and even small clusters of apartments will have their own front doors to the street. The length of roads, the choice of names, the location of front doors are all crucial ingredients to making successful and safe places.

#### 9. Public open spaces - railed parks rather than verges or fields

The swathes of unstructured open space will be built over and the new parks must be properly landscaped and maintained. Horses have grazed off what little planting there was. Parks will need railings, gates and

lighting. The existing open spaces have been used for football and there are several local clubs using over 30 pitches, but most are poorly drained, casually maintained and have no changing rooms. Hence, fewer properly laid out pitches with new club rooms are proposed.

In Ireland the word 'park' is used for any small open space; the useful English word 'common' has no usage because the recent centuries of land ownership excluded 'common' land. Parts of Poppintree Park, extensively planted and now maturing, are a good example of the style of planting that must be provided throughout Ballymun. There is a startling lack of equipped play areas; those that were provided have long since been devastated by vandalism, largely because of poor choice of location and lack of management. The Masterplan identifies locations that are overlooked, are on main pedestrian routes and which will be carefully designed for different age groups.

10. Security - frontages to public space and doors on to the street Graffiti and break-ins are common around the existing open spaces because side walls and back gardens abut public space. The Masterplan proposed that all public parks have driveable edges with housing frontages facing the park. This creates attractive addresses overlooking parks and helps to make the park feel safe.

Much has been written in the last two decades about the virtues of own front doors. Communal entrance halls are often a source of management problems. The elimination of unpossessed space is the mantra of housing designers everywhere.

11. Ballymun Road - a town main street rather than a dual carriageway

The housing renewal programme funded by the government is the initial ingredient to plan. The main street poses a much more complex set of political, commercial and logistical dynamics and has been the subject of a separate development strategy to be published in April 1999.

The character and quality of this street is entirely dependent upon the road design, and Muir Associates have been instrumental in advancing the planning processes for the new road network.

The exceptional development opportunity that exists is a consequence of land ownership being almost entirely with Dublin Corporation, who are also the planning authority. BRL have applied for special tax incentives to encourage private investment in the Main Street. The urban design intentions to create a mix of uses, enclosure to the street, several public places and traffic calming, have to accommodate a variety of potential outcomes - that robustness has been explored and tested with commercial advisers and by carrying out indicative massing studies on each land parcel. The factors of timing and sequence of land parcel releases have potentially profound implications on the outcome. Any tax incentives granted will only apply for three years, so there is an urgency to liberate key sites, sometimes in advance of the dates generated by the logic of the housing renewal programme.

12. Shopping - incremental renewal and growth, rather than major new centre

Perhaps inevitably, the nature of retail renewal for Ballymun is going to be slow and incremental. Until new employment and/or new residents with greater spending power are nearby there is no incentive for retailers to invest - they are 'followers' in this context, rather than 'leaders'. Meanwhile, the road works and car parking facilities for the shopping centre will improve its setting and accessibility. Its fragile commercial economy must be nurtured carefully and expansion facilitated without disturbing its essential service to the community.

The elimination of the huge roundabout and creation of a new enlarged car park visible from the Ballymun Road will improve its prospects. The building land won back by eliminating the roundabout will

enable a lot of new retail frontages to be created which can face the new main street.

Vacuous service yards can be 'wrapped up' with new developments - more retail, commercial leisure, sports hall or even multi-storey car parks if commercial pressures dictate.

13. Civic facilities - to serve north Dublin rather than just Ballymun

The busy road and retail development wisdom will initially inhibit shops from spreading to both sides of the main street and so, to create a balance of function across the street, the new civic facilities are planned for the other side of the road an arts centre, library and town hall. The Arts Centre has funding, is designed and started on site in Summer 1999. Its siting enables commencement prior to any demolitions, which in turn have to wait for new home completions.

The other employment opportunities that are being negotiated for the civic centre are a regional motor tax office, new police head-quarters and new enlarged local health authority offices.

This concentration of civic functions may be criticized as a continuation of the heavy local authority presence that typifies Ballymun, but the independent and local management of the functions, plus dilution with other private and commercial development, should mitigate that eventuality.

The great advantage of these regional facilities is that they will encourage visitors who, historically, have avoided Ballymun. What is important is that those visitors will see Ballymun changing and it is that fundamental change in perception that is slow to make happen and difficult to communicate to outsiders and, in particular, prospective investors.

14. Public art - collaborative and relevant, rather than applied and obscure

The role that publicly accessible art can play in urban life has been appreciated more in this decade. The role is multi-faceted - it can be one of celebration, involvement, enticement, amusement - as well as presenting information. All too often art has been applied retrospectively to public spaces; that is not this project's attitude to public art.

For the Ballymun Regeneration Project, involvement of artists at this early stage would represent a good investment for the next few years, while the scheme is building. Now the first wave of housing renewal is in train, spending time and money on art collaborations will not seem frivolous or untimely, as it would have done a year ago. Interventions by artists are good value; when done well they attract attention not just from local, but national and international audiences. A high profile for the whole project could be achieved during the process from competitions, displays of ideas by artists working on site, published reviews and so forth.

Artists working in residence are an asset for local schools to use for project-based and skill-based work.

The project must learn from the earlier era that built Ballymun and produced "Stonehenge" (the nickname for some standing stones on the spoil heap created from digging out the roundabout) and make sure that artists' interventions now are perceived by the residents to be relevant and inspired by the context and not so abstract that the work is not understood or respected.

Working within agreed themes, there are site-specific opportunities for arts and crafts people to explore concepts in different media based on the site characteristics, some of which are obvious, others may be dormant. Often, old place names reveal the essence of the site and can inspire interpretations. The towers to be demolished are named after the seven martyrs of 1916; their memory must live on in another way and help bring history alive for future generations.

In the manner of Cardiff Bay and Lewisham 2000, involvement of artists can bring delight to very practical objects such as signage, seating, surfaces and balustrades. A key place for an artist's involvement is the median of the main street (see John Maire's work in Lewisham). One major influence on that is its kinetic quality - perhaps the rhythm of its shape changes according to whether the road is fast or slowing and its profile is influenced by the ability or not to cross the road in particular places.

There are numerous opportunities for arts collaborations to be discovered and developed if the appropriate forum for debate is available. Local organized competitions can be one way to receive and select ideas and artists.

15. In search of an architecture - local inspiration, rather than foreign transplants  
Foreign ideas transplanted from other cultures can work, but may need several generations to be accepted. Today, imported ideas would declare the European cultural outlook that Ireland is embracing. However, the recent history of social housing shows that the arbitrary nature of some designers' imagery, combined with the residents' perception of being guinea pigs for designers' ambitions, makes this a serious issue that haunts social housing design.

My practice's first scheme for Ballymun derives its layout ideas from Dublin's 19th century residential suburbs. The scheme includes part of the fragment of Coultry Park Terrace, which will overlook the new Coultry Park and the Close behind that Terrace, and has developed its imagery from the Dublin architecture of squares and parks, and their mews and courtyards.

Dublin squares are usually contained by three- and four-storey houses, often with paired front doors sharing a flight of outdoor steps rising nearly a full storey. The formality and elegance of those existing terraces is confirmed by iron railings, wide York stone pavements and granite kerbs, with wide streets that must inform the choice of details and materials for the new terraces. In an era of access for all and flush thresholds, the outside steps image can still be made to work on clusters of apartments where the ground floor is fully accessible and common entrance halls are eliminated and replaced by the outside stair leading to several front doors at first floor level.

Creating containment of the new parks requires three or more storeys in height. Housing mix, derived from analysis of the first phase of residents to be re-housed, tends to generate a large stock of five-person/three-bedroom houses; these can be designed as narrow frontage (5 m) town houses on three levels, or wide frontage (8 m) two storey suburban houses. Our scheme uses 6 m frontage houses on two and a half floors - the 6 m width permits both flexible bedroom layouts in two rooms and offers several living/dining/kitchen configurations that can respond to the house and its orientation of the house type; the half storey achieves the height to the public side without unduly overshadowing the garden. The 6 m frontage to a road is also notionally one, off-plot, kerbside parking space. However, a concentration of family homes in one location is not desirable, so mid-terrace and end-terrace apartments are planned. The ground level end-terrace corner apartments are designed to be adaptable to a local meeting room, corner shop or housing management office if required.

In contrast to the formality of the brick-clad terraces bounding the park, the mews cottages behind are two-storey, wide-frontage plans, with coloured render elevations inspired by 19th century Dublin examples. Here, the road and pavement surfaces will be combined with other calming devices to make the mews a safe place for children and to deter through traffic.

#### Implementation

The environmental design themes set out above are being developed in the first phase of 650 new homes

by 13 design teams. Their work lies within BRL's management and briefing framework that has other common strategies described below.

#### Land parcelling

An early mistake made in the UK New Towns, and seen in Ballymun, was to divide up the development lands using the roads as boundaries; this resulted in the road engineers' world of verges dividing and isolating hamlets of residential developments. Roads are the way we discover and explore towns, so they must be thoughtfully designed and possessed by their adjoining sites.

Hence the Masterplan recommends that housing development land parcels should straddle roads. Design teams on adjacent parcels should work together and co-ordinate common elements where adjoining parcels share a boundary. Likewise, open spaces, such as parks and greens, should be designed in conjunction with their overlooking properties, not as a separate exercise, perhaps by the same design team.

To maintain confidence and continuity of relationships within each neighbourhood, there needs to be one co-ordinating architect. The co-ordinating architect would be responsible for organizing the separate teams of designers. To ensure variety and consistent attention to quality, the housing sites are likely to be in the range of 50 - 120 homes, with the emphasis on more smaller schemes wherever practical. A potential criticism of this method is one of it spawning too much variety; this can be avoided by the careful choice of designers who evolve a pallet of materials and details to share within a neighbourhood.

The innovative and experimental housing percentages should be distributed across the housing sites to maximize the richness of interpretations and avoid enclaves of "funny" houses. That said, some innovative and experimental homes should be in prominent positions to help promote public interest. Self-build sites are proposed to be in groups on secluded sites, so that their programmes and individuality are not critical to others.

#### Energy and environment

With advice from ECD and Dublin-based CODEMA, a series of energy analyses were undertaken to enable BRL to reassure residents that their heating bills would not increase when they moved to a new home. Currently, residents have a district heating system, the cost of which is recovered through an inclusive rent. The existing system has the familiar problems of poor control, therefore intrinsic wastefulness and high maintenance costs. As a result of the proposed complete demolition, the idea of district heating has to be reviewed, so a new strategy had to start from first principles. With several housing ownerships and management regimes being proposed, an individual home-by-home heating system is preferable. ECD and CODEMA developed a clear understanding of the energy purchase options for the project and for the residents and have confirmed that, with good insulation standards, it will be possible to heat space and water to better standards than at present for the same expenditure.

The project is an opportunity for experimentation and research into the benefits of different energy-saving strategies. BRL is setting basic energy targets for all the new homes, and promotes within each scheme that 4% of the homes have one additional energy-saving feature and that 1% be experimental in some way - all to be defined by the scheme's designers in consultation with ECD and CODEMA. It is hoped that there will be monitoring of the properties, perhaps funded through EU energy grants, so that both the technical and human factor sides are analysed and can be fed back into the design briefs for subsequent schemes in Ballymun and other regeneration projects.

#### Sustainability

This is a topical concept which is often difficult to define and measure. The Department of the Environment

in Ireland published Sustainable Development - A Strategy for Ireland in 1997 and land use planning is seen as a significant factor in that strategy, and urban regeneration is a key policy objective. Ballymun does offer a rare opportunity to identify criteria, choose indicators and establish targets over time frames.

The kinds of issues under the four main headings that are to be analysed and monitored are the change in job opportunities in the area, the health and crime statistics, educational attainment, energy targets, environmental improvements, and community awareness and involvement in the project. The process of identifying indicators has started and will continue.

An overriding ambition of the residents is for Ballymun to become like another part of North Dublin and to grow away from their conspicuous image of being a huge local authority-managed estate. The test of the residents' belief in this was the debate over the allocation of 'spare' homes in the first wave of new build - the outcome was a resounding commitment to them being made available to the non-local authority-rented sector. There is also acceptance that land should be made available to private house builders. The processes of empowerment, self-management, and more private investment and enterprise are the key to Ballymun's version of sustainability.

In the UK, research published by the Civic Trust and the Rowntree Foundation on Sustainable Suburbs (February 1999) identifies the problems and proposes strategies similar to those described in the Masterplan.

#### Consultation

It is not easy to consult with a community of about 20,000. During the masterplanning exercise, the existence of long-standing organizations and groups - the Ballymun Task Force, the Ballymun Partnership and Estate Forums, to name but a few - gave the initial framework by which to contact the community. The range of consultative methods has included a planning day (c. 2000 attended), focus groups, design groups, working groups, public meetings, newsletters, public exhibitions (over 5000 attended), feedback questionnaires and surgeries for one-to-one discussions. The process continues and methods evolve as the scale of issues reduces from town planning down to play areas, house plans and resident choices within new homes.

It is obviously impossible to please everyone, but to articulate the likes and dislikes is a fundamental part of making the process and decisions overt and understandable to all. The time, thought and energy put into the process by residents have been remarkable and must help the community possess the outcome of many difficult decisions.

#### Housing tenure

The plight of Ballymun has not been helped by housing management policies over the past two decades; they have been explained in Anne Power's book. BRL realize the role housing management can play in bringing about improvements by diversity of tenure and local estate management.

The spectrum of tenures that are available in Ireland is similar to the UK, except that the Housing Association movement is not large because most rented housing is still managed by Local Authorities.

#### Local authority rented housing

Dublin Corporation has been committed, since 1998, to involving tenants in a partnership approach to local estate management involving Estate Forums with elected tenants associations. The resident groups in Ballymun should be early examples of how the new system will work.

Local-based management of housing is essential. BRL supports the decentralization of management and

maintenance in partnership with the community. Effective estate management can best be achieved by making local government more accessible to the people of Ballymun by supporting the ongoing devolution of local services and estate management to the locality. Tools, such as tenants' handbooks and the use of performance indicators, will help to ensure that residents are fully involved in decisions that are made about how their estates are managed. The corner shop units, planned in many of the schemes, will be ideal locations for local management teams in the early years - the units are designed to become flats if no other use prevails.

#### Private ownership

As one would expect, the majority of Irish people aspire to own their own home and Ballymun Regeneration Ltd will increase the availability of low-cost, high-quality housing for purchase as part of the regeneration process. Existing residents will be able to purchase new housing under the Discounted Sales Scheme and options such as Shared Ownership will also be available. Voluntary Housing Associations will be encouraged to build mixed tenure schemes - private ownership, shared ownership and rented accommodation.

Early private developer schemes will be an important demonstration that Ballymun is a good place to live and will help to change prejudices.

#### Housing co-operatives

These are a distinct form of non-profit housing association, in which the members are the residents and, with an active and articulate community like Ballymun, these may become popular.

#### Private rented sector

The private rented sector has always had an important role to play in social housing and in helping to bring about social mix. It is an important provider of housing to young people, including students and those on social welfare. In addition, it is a flexible tenure for people who wish to remain mobile to enable them to seek employment where it becomes available. The recently announced tax incentives for private investment in housing (February 1999) will apply to Ballymun, so BRL can now activate plans for several sites along the Main Street.

#### Voluntary housing associations

A feature of the involvement of housing associations in the delivery and management of social housing is that they provide a means to achieving a broader community input of local knowledge, skills, experience and resources into the solution of housing problems. They also promote the involvement of residents in estate management, community development and community education programmes.

#### Allocation policy

A working group has been established to explore an appropriate allocations policy for the regeneration process in Ballymun. It consists of residents, housing professionals, representatives of the estate forums and BRL team, who work in partnership to devise the policy and strategy document upon which the "housing resettlement programme" is being implemented. The values underpinning this programme are equity, openness, clarity, participation, housing need, viability and sustainability.

As expected, the existing household size often does not match the existing dwelling size, so many residents are having to reconcile a loss of space with a new home - the classic quantity versus quality debate. In each phase of the housing renewal there are homes additional to the basic replacement numbers needed. The residents groups have agreed to these extra homes being offered to others and to the non-local authority-rented sector - this is a true demonstration of the community's desire to dilute its current tenure and is a commendable act of selflessness and commitment to a different and better future.

#### Progress

The key design ideas within the Masterplan have been described, and the first wave of 650 new homes were designed and planning applications lodged by December 1998—just 15 months since the BRL team set up their offices on site. In parallel there have been many other initiatives on employment generation, education programmes and community empowerment processes.

Private residential tax incentives were granted to Ballymun in February 1999 and business investment incentives were announced in October 1999. The project has a good start, thanks to the existing community and their trust in the BRL team. Political pressure must be maintained to ensure that the eight-year programme is delivered.

In December 1998, it was announced that the LUAS would be routed through Ballymun and go on to the airport - that is the strategic transport infrastructure that will truly embrace Ballymun as part of North Dublin, rather than the isolated peripheral satellite that it has been for 30 years.

#### Exit strategy

It may seem rudely premature, at the beginning of an eight-year programme, even to be raising this issue. However, to have achieved real sustainability there should, by definition, be no need for a special agency like BRL at the end of the programme, provided the improvement process has put in place self-funded and self-managed community and business organizations. The organizations and their roles over the project period must evolve and change and not be self-perpetuating like so many bureaucracies. Towards the end of a housing renewal programme, the housing management organizations often take on the community development role.

In the case of Ballymun, with its sheer scale and the comprehensive New Town-like systems that it will have, there should be a multiplicity of local organizations in place. Perhaps a town council is the democratic structure that could inherit the enlarged and matured Ballymun and be one of the crucial management components of its future.

At the time of writing this essay David Prichard was a Partner of MacCormac Jamieson Prichard.

1. Anne Power's *Estates on the Edge: The Social Consequences of Mass Housing in Northern Europe*, Macmillan, 1999, was reviewed by Anna Bowman, 'Millennium visions...' in *City 8*, pp. 149-154. Roddy Doyle's novels were discussed in Kevin Honan, 'Producing Dublin: the city in writing' in *City 7*, pp. 57-66.

2. The Masterplan Team brought together key personnel with multi-disciplinary experience: urban renewal and new housing for Dublin Corporation through BRL's in-house team, large-scale public and private sector development in Ireland through O'Mahony Pike Architects, Housing Action Trust experience from the UK through DH Regeneration's work at Waltham Forest, urban economics through Halcrow Fox, landscape through Brady Shipman Martin, infrastructure through Muir Associates, energy strategies through ECD (Energy Conscious Design) and CODEMA (City of Dublin Energy Management Agency) and town planning policy in Ireland through McHugh Consulting. The design team leaders, MacCormac Jamieson Prichard, have gained wide urban design experience from working in new towns, for development corporations and for large landowners. The Masterplan had to be completed in a four and a half month working period and include extensive public consultations, so as to accompany an application for tax incentives for inward investment that had to be made to the Department of the Environment in Dublin in March 1998.