



## **Submission to Cork City Docks Issues Paper 07 July 2017**

Cork Chamber commends Cork City Council for its approach in beginning the preparation of the Local Area Plans for Cork City Docks and for Tivoli Docks, and share the commitment of Cork City Council in promoting and supporting the sustainable economic development and growth of Cork City to meet the current and future needs of the population. In doing so, Cork Chamber also welcomes all future opportunities to engage with stakeholders to fulfil this vision for Cork.

It is essential that such fundamental plans are integrated into future city development plans, regional economic strategies and the forthcoming national planning policy framework under development ensuring that all future plans reflect the broader vision of the City at regional and national level.

As such, the Chamber has identified a number of key areas that we feel need to be addressed within this pre-plan issues exploration stage.

Cork Chamber is the leading business organisation in Cork supporting and representing the interests of close to 1,200 businesses employing over 100,000 people in the region.

### **Climate Change and Sustainability**

It is essential that the development of the City Docks is economically viable, that there is an appropriate mix of business/ commercial to residential land use as well as a mix within the businesses operating sectors so as to ensure resilience in the face of any potential future sectoral downturns. As with this, it would be most appropriate to also ensure a number of flexible plots that remain without a designated purpose and so allowing the market to dictate their use as the City Docks evolve as a location.

Cork Chamber contends that it is essential for an indepth Climate Change and Sustainability assessment to be undertaken of this area to guide the development plan, ensuring resilience to a 1 in 100 year flood scenario and beyond, ensuring sufficient distance between development and the river's edge, and the implementation of appropriate measures such as for example, flood relief channels etc. There is an opportunity here to create an amenity space at the river's edge in the form of seating areas, the greenway walking/ cycle route, a community green space with surfaces that can dissipate and absorb flood and storm impacts.

There is an ideal opportunity to initiate a greenway to link Little Island/ Cobh via Dunkettle to the City and further afield to Ballincollig with CSO Census data from 2016 showing cycle commuting as having the largest percentage increase of all means of transport, rising from 39,803 in 2011 to 56,837 in 2016, an increase of 42.8 per cent over the five years. It is important that any future development of Cork city is mindful of the growing demand for adequate and safe cycling infrastructure as well as the public health benefits that would be brought about by enabling more people to cycle to and from work and the city through investment in infrastructure. This greenway can have the dual function as a flood relief zone.

As part of the national agenda and regional agenda to meet Climate Change targets and to increase resilience as well as increasing the ability to sustainably manage and to further create an enabling City for its residents, the emphasis as regards commuting and access should be to increase opportunities to utilise a public transport network. A docklands that offers an effective alternative to private car usage is most appropriate, however as much of the population are car owners currently and into the foreseeable future, it is still necessary to provide for the practicalities of daily living as public transport capacity and options are increased. Therefore, in providing car parking spaces, the avoidance of surface level car parking would be most appropriate and still ensure needs are met.

The redevelopment of the City Docks, an area of 162 hectares, 117 hectares of which is developable, offers a truly unique opportunity to create an iconic attraction adjacent and complementary to the heart of Cork City, one that attracts visitors, and builds on the character, culture and heritage of the City. As a City, there lies vast, and yet untapped potential to develop a docklands that is an acclaimed nationally and internationally for its land use mixes, its architectural design, its open spaces and its character. There is a further unique opportunity here to make this the location of an iconic structure(s), for example a sculpture park as the Austrian Sculpture Park with an artist in residence programme, one of appropriate scale to the docklands; a mixed use amphitheatre/ art space; art gallery in the style of a Guggenheim for example, etc. The inclusion of an iconic attraction would be of enormous future benefit in creating a versatile City Docks that attracts visitors as well as creating an attractive location for the business and residential communities.

Further to this, to ensure a thriving community into the future, it is necessary to cater to the needs of a variety of resident's ages, needs and family sizes. To create a location that entices people to stay and meets the needs of a community. It is widely acknowledged, that the inclusion of green spaces in urban areas has positive social and health impacts, as well as creating an appealing and attractive location that is enticing. Herein, there is the opportunity to promote for architectural design that emphasises green space via ground level recreational open space and shared community spaces. This will be instrumental in facilitating a thriving, self-sustaining location that is predominantly not a transient location for residents.

As with this, there is also the opportunity to provide for the inclusion of roof top gardens, living walls, the connection with the river via appropriate seating arrangements (potentially that have a dual purpose as flood dissipaters). Cork City has the potential to be the leader nationally and internationally in the creation of a landmark green urban environment following international design and best practice. Alongside this, such features would greatly enhance the future application of Cork City towards achievement of the European Green Capital Award. The development of the City Docks

has the potential to further attract and grow interest in Cork from a tourism perspective as well as its potential in creating a unique docklands location that is attractive to a skilled overseas and domestic workforce.

Finally Cork Chamber emphasise the necessity to focus on the provision of public transport options and herein the adaptability of this infrastructure to future transport modes e.g. adaptability of the Bus Rapid Transport route to light rail in the future (dimensions of structures, suitability of route etc). Cork Chamber also emphasise the necessity to including linking infrastructure in addition to footbridges (or potentially the adaptability of one of the planned footbridges to facilitate a light rail link between the North and South City Docks and to connect the proposed Bus Rapid Transport Network (future Light Rail) to the Commuter Rail Network along the North Docks.

### **Creating a long term vision of the Cork City Docks 2018 – 2050**

Cork Chamber contends that the redevelopment of the City Docks has vast potential and is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a new urban quarter in Cork City. As a City we are in a truly unique position to have 117 hectares of developable, brownfield land in our City environs. Herein, there is unequal potential to create a City Docks that is a landmark attraction in itself, one that is complementary to the heart of Cork City, one that promotes mixed land uses to business/ commercial and residential, one that is high density towards meeting current and future residential property demand, one that facilitates a thriving community of all ages, and that is internationally and nationally acclaimed for its architectural design, environmental merits, energy use, green spaces, and public/ sustainable transport options and availability.

There is a further unique opportunity here to make this the location of an iconic structure(s), for example a sculpture park as the Austrian Sculpture Park with an artist in residence programme, one of appropriate scale to the City Docks; a mixed use amphitheatre/ art space; art gallery in the style of a Guggenheim for example, etc. The inclusion of an iconic attraction would be of enormous future benefit in creating a versatile City Docks that attracts visitors, as well as creating an attractive and thriving location for the business and residential communities. The inclusion of a project such as Boxpark Shoreditch, London, entirely constructed out of refitted shipping containers, creates a unique shopping and dining location, offering affordable and flexible leases for a variety of businesses. Linking to maritime heritage, there is merit in considering such a project for inclusion in creating a vibrant and distinct City Docks.

Essentially there is the opportunity to create a City Docks that achieves a design, ownership/ tenure types and landuse between business/ commercial and residential, consistent with achieving a viable long term, resilient and thriving City district. The City Docks should be high density, with architecturally attractive high rise construction appropriate in height and character to the Docks and surrounding environs.

Furthermore, there is also the potential to repurpose such distinct buildings as the Odlums building and the ESB powerplant, adding to the character and uniqueness of the City Docks.

Cork Chamber suggest that development of Cork City Docks is approached as an international pilot project for future urban planning incorporating concepts such as living cities initiatives, smart technologies, urban greening, clean energy and green transport.

### **Delivery Challenges**

There are a number of challenges associated with the future redevelopment of Cork City Docks, namely land ownership across the docklands and the phasing of acquisition to meet the capacity of Cork City Council to absorb ownership costs while also ensuring a sustainable and thriving momentum in the redevelopment process. The businesses in operation across the docklands area will require time and support in identifying alternative sites.

The release for development of state owned lands, ESB lands and CIE lands will be essential to ensure the fruition of these plans and should be achieved at the outset.

There are three Seveso sites in the Dock area, the former Shell Ireland Depot (now owned by Topaz Energy), the National Oil Reserves Agency (N.O.R.A.) and Goulding Fertilizers, which are all located on Centre Park Road. Among these, two of the sites, Topaz and NORA have been delisted from the 'Seveso' designation and operations have ceased on both sites. This now leaves Gouldings as the only remaining 'Seveso' site. The appropriate relocation of this Seveso site must be negotiated without delay with an appropriate alternative location identified.

Furthermore, the advancement and timely completion of the N28 redevelopment to motorway status is crucial to facilitating the relocation of Port of Cork activities from along the Docklands enabling the redevelopment of the Docks.

Cork Chamber proposes the exploration of a range of options to facilitate the timely and co-ordinated implementation of the future Cork City Docks Local Area Plan which could be inclusive of a Cork Docklands Development Forum, as either a statutory or non-statutory body, and inclusive of private business representation.

The provision of enabling infrastructure phased in line with the redevelopment of the City Docks is essential for example the provision of the Water Street, the Mill Street Bridge and the Eastern Gateway Bridge. The decision whether to accommodate bridges that open (to allow ships to pass through) will need to be economically assessed against the benefit due to the additional costs of such infrastructure.

The provision of public transport infrastructure at the outset is critical, with the public transport route being a catalyst in this redevelopment and the redevelopment of the Tivoli Docks area.

Cork Chamber contends that the ratio of residential to business/ commercial occupancy must be economically viable, sustainable and ensure a self-sustaining, complementary and thriving docklands into the future.

In terms of funding, Cork Chamber recommends Cork City Council to be ambitious and seek alternative avenues of funding, for example through ISIF or EIB, in recognition of the national capital plan having limited scope for additional investment.

## **Employment**

It is essential that the City Docklands is attractive to a variety of business sectors and sizes so as to ensure future viability in the face of any geo-political sectoral shocks or possible downturns in sectors of the economy.

The provision of adequate modes of public transport to sufficiently and effectively serve the area will be essential. As well as ensuring a location that is permeable and easy to navigate.

The provision of the Greenway connector between the City and through the Cork City Docks to Little Island/ Cobh via Dunkettle will ensure the connection to the City as will the provision of the Bus Rapid Transport route. It will be important to ensure a link between the Commuter Rail line and the South City Docklands BRT line to ensure fluid movement in the future. Currently the plans are for two footbridges, Cork Chamber propose that one of these should be adaptable to facilitate a Light Rail interconnector in the future.

The Eastern Gateway bridge is crucial in connecting the South Docks with Tivoli and to ensuring a fluid movement of people to and from the North of the City to the South of the City, especially in light of future predicted population increases. The Eastern Gateway Bridge should be shared between public/ sustainable transport modes and private car, facilitating a dedicated and uncongested public/ sustainable transport, and in doing so promoting the uptake of public transport for commuting. The bridge should be adaptable to meet future transport modes such as a Light Rail interconnector.

## **Housing**

Cork Chamber advocates for the development of mixed use and high density urban villages, well served by public transport networks and where residents are within walking distance of employment opportunities, and supporting social and community infrastructure including shops, services, schools and leisure facilities. As with this, Cork Chamber contend that a mix of house types (apartments to townhouse style to add character to the area) along with a mixture of accommodation sizes for different categories of households should be planned for e.g. 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, 3 bedroom apartments. It is essential that the appropriate mix, type and range of housing are planned for so as to ensure the development of a sustainable and thriving community. Due to the location and proximity to the City Centre, and as is replicated internationally, Cork Chamber strongly contends that this location should be high density with increased height of developments as appropriate.

It is also essential that a variety of tenure types is provided and that all housing/ apartment developments contain an acceptable proportion of larger flexible units to ensure that such developments are sustainable and provide suitable and viable longterm options for families allowing people the choice and opportunity to remain in an area into the future and as their needs change, as such ensuring a 'Lifecycle Approach'.

It is essential that there is flexibility as regards apartment sizes to accommodate a range of family sizes via one, two, to three bedroom units as well as townhouse style accommodation to ensure a

diversity and the development of a distinct character. Residential developments should be market led and there should be flexibility as regards apartment sizes towards the larger than minimum sizes such as in DunLaoghaire Rathdown Council area.

As stated, there needs to be an emphasis on high rise and the adjacent creation of amenity green spaces and rooftop spaces that are conducive to a thriving, healthy and sustainable community (for all ages).

### **Infrastructure**

The facilitation of an effective public transport network to serve commuters, residents and visitors to the region is essential in the development and successful achievement of the long term vision for the City Docks.

It is advised that there is flexibility as regards plot ratio with a certain number of plots remaining without commercial or residential landuse zoning and so being dictated by the market in the future, and thus facilitating an evolving docklands.

All infrastructure should be adaptable as much as possible to future uses and transport types/ energy types (solar)/ climate change.

The provision of the Greenway connector between the City and through the Cork City Docks to Little Island/ Cobh via Dunkettle will ensure the connection to the City as will the provision of the Bus Rapid Transport route facilitating a designated route for commuters and an amenity path for leisure uses. This Greenway can have a dual function as a flood relief zone using appropriate materials.

It will be crucial to ensure a link between the Commuter Rail line and the South City Docklands BRT line to ensure fluid movement in the future. Currently the plans are for two footbridges, Cork Chamber propose that one of these should be adaptable to facilitate a Light Rail interconnector in the future.

The Eastern Gateway bridge is crucial in connecting the South Docks with Tivoli and to ensuring a fluid movement of people to and from the North of the City to the South of the City, especially in light of future predicted population increases. The Eastern Gateway Bridge should be shared between public/ sustainable transport modes and private car, facilitating a dedicated and uncongested public/ sustainable transport, and in doing so promoting the uptake of public transport for commuting. The bridge should be adaptable to meet future transport modes such as a Light Rail interconnector.

The provision of enabling infrastructure at the outset and in line with the redevelopment of the sites is essential i.e. the provision of the Water Street and Mill Street Bridge along with the Eastern Gateway Bridge to ensure permeability and connectivity working to catalyse development across the docklands.

Essentially the provision of public transport infrastructure is critical with the public transport routes acting as a catalyst in this redevelopment and the further development of the docklands.

Furthermore, the Docklands, once assessed as regards Climate Change and future flood potential will need to be prepared for development meeting recommendations from assessment undertaken. The preparation of the Docklands to weather future flood activity will incentivise development and investment in the Docklands, acting to catalyse the achievement of the future Cork City Docks Local Area Plan vision.

There are three Seveso sites in the Dock area, the former Shell Ireland Depot (now owned by Topaz Energy), the National Oil Reserves Agency (N.O.R.A.) and Goulding Fertilizers, which are all located on Centre Park Road. Among these, two of the sites, Topaz and NORA have been delisted from the 'Seveso' designation and operations have ceased on both sites. This now leaves Gouldings as the only remaining 'Seveso' site. The appropriate relocation of this Seveso site must be negotiated without delay with an appropriate alternative location identified.

Furthermore, the advancement and timely completion of the N28 redevelopment to motorway status is crucial to facilitating the relocation of Port of Cork activities from along the Docklands enabling the redevelopment of the Docks.

#### **Other**

Cork Chamber proposes the exploration of a range of options to facilitate the timely and co-ordinated implementation of the future Cork City Docks Local Area Plan which could be inclusive of a Cork Docklands Development Forum, as either a statutory or non-statutory body, and inclusive of private business representation.

#### **Placemaking**

It is essential that the docklands deliver a location that is conducive to business growth and residential occupancy. The docklands must deliver a quality of life in terms of amenity, safety and convenience, presenting an attractive, well-maintained appearance with a distinct sense of place and a quality public realm.

The opportunity exists here to promote the efficient use of land and energy to minimise the carbon footprint.

Via the adoption of effective ratio of business/ commercial to residential, a thriving location can be achieved.

There should be an emphasis on greenspaces, and the creation of a docklands that is a destination in itself, an iconic attraction, while being complementary to the heart of Cork city. The location should provide for adequate community space appealing to all age groups.

The docklands should have the amenities conducive to a viable and thriving population and should be inclusive of such amenities as schools, creches etc.

Equally, a section of the City Docks site could be reserved for river and boating activities. For example, the location would be perfect for a small marina for visiting boats or houseboats. Again, this would offer some vibrancy and uniqueness to the area as well as enable any visitors to Cork by private boat to travel to the city or East Cork via the rail way line.

Cork chamber believes that the City Docks could become an excellent case study for future urban living. Consequently, non-car modes should take centre stage in the planning process.

Pedestrianised streets, access to the river and cycling facilities should be prioritised to deliver an attractive, alternative way of living to the current norm.