



# THE INCLUSIVE CITY:

Can the aspiration of 'designing an inclusive city together' be observed in the planning process and resulting completed development of the North Lotts, Dublin?

# Abstract

The area under investigation in this paper is the North Lotts, historically a landscape of warehouses, factories and stores, with neighbouring communities which were dependent on the port, until the advent of containerization created mass unemployment and decline.

A succession of state bodies has, beginning in 1986 with the Urban Renewal Act, tried to combat decline and create investment, such as the Custom House Docks Development Authority which was replaced by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority. The area is now part of the wider Docklands Strategic Development Zone (SDZ), which allows developers to apply directly to An Bord Pleanála, without the possibility of appeal, therefore expediting the process and incentivising investment. The stated ambition of the 2014 SDZ masterplan is to “Design an Inclusive city together”

The term “Inclusive City”, lacking a universal definition, has been accused of being a catch all phrase with little precision in use. It is also not defined in the SDZ masterplan, nor in Dublin City councils development plan, although the latter provides a definition for inclusive communities, and inclusive design. This paper understands the term to mean cities that provide public space, housing, and services which cater to the widest range of users, as well as establishing institutional interaction between marginalised groups and the state. Therefore an inclusive city should provide inclusive built fabric, as well as an inclusive planning process.

Evidence of power dynamics in the planning system has been well documented in existing literature, as well as evidence of a “shadow planning system” (Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2014), whereby developers are granted more informal access to planners in “cash strapped” local authorities who rely on development and investment.

This paper aims to find evidence of inclusive city building in the North Lotts, by examining the Dublin Landings superblock as a case study. Research is carried out by initially comparing the evolution of successive masterplans, on metrics such as the planning process, public space and its relationship to existing communities. This is then compared to the planning applications for Dublin landings which span from 2015 to the present, and supported by an observational analysis of the completed public realm.

If the Dublin Landings development has inadequately committed to the stated aims of the masterplan, this paper seeks to explore the causal forces, and whether it points to the existence of a shadow planning system.

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# Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction &amp; Literature Review</b>	
1.1	Context	7
1.2	Defining the Inclusive City	8
1.3	Exclusive Planning Literature	9
1.4	Urban Design as a facilitator for Economic Growth	10
1.5	POPS	10
<b>2.</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Evolution of Planning Process</b>	
3.1	Dublin Docklands Development Authority	15
3.2	Dublin Docklands Development Authority Master Plans	15
3.3	Dublin Docklands Strategic Development Zone	15
3.4	Dublin Landings Planning Phase	17
<b>4.</b>	<b>Evolution of Public Realm</b>	
4.1	Dublin Dockland Development Authority Masterplans	19
4.2	Docklands Strategic Development Zone Masterplans	21
4.3	Dublin Landings Planning Phase	22
4.4	Observational Analysis	25
<b>5.</b>	<b>Relationship With Existing Community</b>	
5.1	Dublin Docklands Development Authority	30
5.2	Docklands Strategic Development Zone Masterplan	30
5.3	Dublin Landings Planning Phase	31
5.4	Community Amenity Provision	32
<b>6.</b>	<b>Discussion and Conclusion</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>37</b>

## List of Figures

- FIG 1.1 Map showing Dublin's major parks and Docklands developments as per 2014 masterplan.  
Source: Authors Own
- FIG 2.1 Photograph showing Dublin Landing's public realm facing south, Block D (left), Central Bank(right).  
Source: Authors Own
- FIG 3.1 Photograph of banner on Block A, facing the Mayor Street Housing.  
Source: Authors Own
- FIG 4.1 Plans showing evolution of public realm of Block 8.  
Top left: 2002 North Lotts masterplan  
Top right: 2014 SDZ masterplan  
Bottom left: 2015 masterplan  
Bottom right:Completed scheme, excluding landscaping.  
Source: Authors own
- FIG 4.2 Plan Showing ground floor activation along public routes as constructed.  
Source: Authors own.
- FIG 4.2 Drawing showing Dublin Landing's public plaza and overhanging office entrances, which are represented as being within the public plaza area by RKD Architects.  
Source: Authors own
- FIG 4.3 Section drawing showing the transparency between ground floor uses, Block A (left) , public realm (red) and Central Bank (right).  
Source: Authors own
- FIG 4.4 Section drawing showing permeability of Block D, from public realm (red), sunken courtyard (middle) and Block D (right).  
Source: Authors own
- FIG 4.5 Sketch showing symbolically uninviting public pedestrian entrance from Castleforbes Street. Public realm shown in red.  
Source: Authors own
- FIG 4.6 Image of sign depicting permissible activities.  
Source: Authors own
- Fig 4.7 Image of hostile architecture, prevents skateboarding or lying down.  
Source: Authors own

- FIG 5.1 Image showing pre-existing Mayor Street housing opposite Block A
- FIG 5.2 Section showing change between 2002 masterplan building heights (dark Blue), 2014 building heights (light blue) and completed building (black line).  
Source; Authors own.
- FIG 5.3 Section showing the difference between existing neighbouring building heights (black), Building height as per planning application elevation drawing (red) and as per planning application sectional drawings (blue).  
Source: Authors own
- FIG 6.1 Three drawings showing the difference between planning application submitted for a new hotel within a protected structure.  
Top: 2016 proposal- refused permission.  
Middle: 2016 proposal - granted permission.  
Bottom: 2018 proposal- granted permission.  
Source: Authors own

# 1. Introduction & Literature Review

## List of Acronyms

CHDDA	Custom House Docks Development Authority
DDDA	Dublin Docklands Development Authority
SDZ	Strategic Development Zone
DCC	Dublin City Council
NAMA	National Asset Management Agency
POPS	Privately Owned Public Space

## 1.1 Context

The North Lotts is an area to the East of Dublin city centre, reclaimed in 1717, from the tidal marshes behind the newly constructed north wall quay (Dickson, 2014).

By the mid 20th century the North Lotts primarily consisted of warehouses, stores and light industry associated with the port. The neighbouring communities had developed in tandem with the port, which was the primary employer in Dublin City (Bunbury, 2009).

Inner city decline in the post-war years was exacerbated with the advent of containerisation which pushed the port eastward as larger and deeper wharves were required to keep up with increasingly larger ships (Bunbury, 2009). A landscape of dereliction and abandonment in the North Lotts was left in its wake, as well as a population of unemployed, unskilled labourers.

The government first took an interest in the area as a potential site for inner city regeneration in 1982, but it was not until the creation of the 1986 Urban Renewal act, and 1987 Finance act that significant progress began to be made (Finance Magazine). The 1986 Act allowed the Minister for the Environment to designate specific areas for Urban Renewal, initially targeting the Custom House Docks Area (Ireland, Urban Renewal Act 1986). A new corporate body was established by the Minister, tasked with creating a master plan for the Custom House Docks and given permission to acquire and manage property.

Following approval of the masterplan by the Minister, the Custom House Docks Development Authority (CHDDA) had the power to approve new developments, circumnavigating the traditional planning process. Schemes approved by the body were considered exempted developments (Ireland, Urban Renewal Act 1986). This excluded the local community and the general public from the planning process. The CHDDA promised to establish a community liaison in 1987 but was not established until 1995 (Moore, 2008).

The 1987 Finance Act created a corporate tax haven within the boundaries of the Custom House Docks strategic economic zone, to incentivise development and international investment (Ireland, Finance Act 1987). The scheme was an economic success story, but the envisioned social benefits fell by the wayside (Moore, 2008). The economic exclusion of the neighbouring communities was compounded by defensive urban forms. The wall along Common Street, for example, where the Custom House Docks site comes into contact with Sherriff Street, a disadvantaged inner city community. A remnant of a prison built during the Napoleonic wars, the CHDDA recommended that developers remove sections to increase porosity while preserving the historic character, however an additional three metre fence was added to the parapet of the eight metre wall instead (Custom House Docks Development Authority, 1987).

The 1997 Dublin Docklands Development Act set about the dissolution of CHDDA, to be replaced by the Dublin Docks Development Authority (DDDA). The rights and functions of the DDDA remained essentially the same except the area under its remit expanded to incorporate dockland sites on both sides of the river, to include the Grand Canal Docks and the North Lotts, totalling 526 hectares (Ireland, Dublin Docks Development Authority Act 1997).

Unlike the CHDDA, The DDDA did not have full control over the planning process. The new authority's board had 25 members, including local community leaders and could designate areas where planning could be fast tracked and approved by An Bord Pleanála without appeal (Ireland, Dublin Docks Development Authority Act 1997). Even though this was an improvement on the previous process as local groups now had some form of representation, third party groups had no opportunity to contest planning judgements, and could only hope their community representatives would serve them at the pre-planning stage. The DDDA was formally dissolved in 2015, replaced by the Docklands Strategic Development Zone (SDZ), with oversight from Dublin City Council (DCC) rather than a corporate body (Ireland, Dublin Docks Development Authority (Dissolution) Act 2015).

A docklands masterplan was created by DCC in 2014 prior to the establishment of the SDZ. Its stated ambition is to “Design an Inclusive city together” (Dublin City Council, 2014, p. 4). It is this ambition which this paper seeks to explore.

## 1.2 Defining the Inclusive City

The term “inclusive city”, lacking a universal definition, has been accused of being a catch all phrase, with little precision in use (Mitlin, Clare et al., 2016). A multitude of organizations and state institutions have adopted the term to signify intent in their respected areas.

The Inclusive Cities framework in the United Kingdom for example, aims to support cities integrating “newcomers”, migrants and refugees with existing communities. The framework focuses on societal inclusion without referring to urban design strategies, but does highlight the need for inclusion at local government level and policy building (Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society, 2019). The ‘European Coalition of Cities Against Racism’ (2016) establishes a need for “inclusive cities” to promote cultural diversity, provide fair access to housing, ensure greater vigilance against racism, and greater support for victims. Several organisations such as the World Bank have published manuals for designing gender inclusive cities and the impact urban design can have on women and sexual minorities rights to the city. LGBTQ groups have pushed for the UNs New Urban Agenda for inclusive cities to be expanded to include LGBTQ groups, after several countries blocked the proposal (Paolo, 2016).

While the 2014 master plan does not explicitly define their use of the term, some insights can be gleaned from the document. The master plan is described as a model for inner city regeneration, creating a socially inclusive neighbourhood, supported by exemplary social and physical infrastructure. Accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility impaired is to be improved in the area. (Dublin City Council, 2014). This could be seen as broadly aligned with the terms “inclusive design” and “Inclusive Communities”, which are defined by DCC in its development plan and its Integration Strategy respectively. Inclusive design is used to create an inclusive environment that encompasses the needs of a wide range of user groups, such as the elderly and disabled, in buildings or the public realm (Dublin City Council, 2016).



The DCC Integration Strategy describes inclusive communities where community leadership and active participation in democratic processes, especially at local level, can be tools to combat segregation (Dublin City Council, 2016). Therefore as Ireland is a democracy, the planning system should be considered a democratic state process.

The phrasing of the stated masterplan's ambition, not only indicates the aim to design an "inclusive city" but also the need to do it "together", (Dublin City Council, 2014, p. 4).

The first and last indication of "designing together" illustrates the collaborative approach that will be undertaken during the planning and development phase which is described as being participative, and aimed at reaching all local residents (Dublin City Council, 2014, p. 6).

A thread can be strung between overlapping themes broached by some of the aforementioned organisations. Therefore, with an understanding of the existing literature, this paper understands the term "designing an inclusive city together" to mean; creating a city which caters for the widest possible range of users, in relation to public realm, housing provision and services. This could include groups such as the elderly, homeless, ethnic minorities or sexual minorities. A planning system which is collaborative, transparent and non hierarchical is critical to achieving the stated goals of inclusion.

### **1.3 Exclusive Planning Literature**

Themes of inclusion and democracy in the planning system have been extensively researched within existing literature. Within communicative planning theory it is understood that the role of the planner is to listen to each party and try to forge a consensus between differing viewpoints (Fainstein, 2014). Therefore, within democratic process each party should have a say, without hierarchy. It is believed by some that a stronger role of disadvantaged groups in policy decisions will create greater distribution of capital and resources (Healey, 2006). Broader participation will bring more just outcomes. Fainstein (2014) however believes that democratic processes can lead to exclusionary practices, situations where all social classes are not equally represented and believes that representatives of marginalised groups can be co-opted or manipulated.

The theory that all groups participating in planning processes do not have equal power has been well documented in existing literature. Fox-Rogers & Murphy (2014) describe how despite collaborative processes, results still generally favour the powerful. Local authorities in Ireland have little opportunity to generate income outside of state funding, therefore are reliant on commercial rates and development contributions.

Both Fainstein (2014) and Fox-Roger and Murphy (2014) state that due to increased neo-liberal attitudes from local authorities, planners become state agents, whose role is to maximise investment rather than a collaborative planning approach. Neo-liberalism is the economic idea which emphasizes the importance of the free market and seeks to limit any state intervention. State interference in the market should be minimised, or even offer incentives for investment. This drives social exclusion in cities as local authorities must incentivise investment if they are to remain competitive on the national and global network of cities (Fainstein, 2014). Policies to reduce inequality or promote inclusion often run counter to the invisible hand of the free market. Fox-Rogers & Murphy (2014, p. 244) identified strategies by which those in power circumnavigate the formal planning process, by gaining informal access to planners, described as

a “shadow planning system”. The authors conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with planners working across the greater Dublin area. The interviewees confirmed that additional meetings with developers were facilitated outside of the formal planning process. Third parties who wished to challenge developments were therefore at a distinct disadvantage as they had substantially less time with planners. Several interviewees also confirmed that their superiors had intervened on planning decisions on substantial developments (Fox-Rogers & Murphy, 2014).

#### **1.4 Urban Design as a Facilitator for Economic Growth**

Lawton and Punch (2014) describe how urban regeneration has become a tool to attract development. As cities compete to attract investment, they are subjected to pressure to remold their image. Cultural ideals and social harmonies are seen by authorities as a means to achieve their economic goals, the role of the planner becoming more attuned to marketing. The urban design trope that is attributed with these economic aims is the European city; ideals of social harmony and inclusion are associated with the urban form of streets, squares and high density living. Lawton and Punch (2014) contemplate that the social failure of cities is wrongly associated with the failure of modernism. Therefore, potential caricatures of European urban forms seek to camouflage social problems and serve the interest of developers. Calls for different urban forms are not sufficient to move towards a more socially inclusive city. Lawton and Punch note the example of the Temple Bar Project which established the European city ideal in Dublin. Inspired by cities such as Barcelona, which had been reinvented by successful public space developments. Gospodini (2002) writes that traditionally, the quality of urban design was an outcome of economic growth; however now urban design has taken on the role of facilitating and attracting economic growth. The group of architects who won the Temple Bar competition, Group 91, placed a focus on human scale, and quality pedestrian streets and squares. The principles of European city design spread to the subsequent incarnations of the Docklands, however loosely and at an increased scale. As the function of Temple Bar has changed, Lawton and Punch (2014) note that one of its primary public spaces, Meeting House Square has become gated, semi-privatised and closed at night.

#### **1.5 POPS**

The public space of Dublin Landings is privately owned by the Ballymore and Oxley Holdings development groups. Privately owned public space (POPS) is a phenomenon that was introduced in New York in the 1960s. Developments that created a public amenity space were rewarded by allowing increased floor areas, relative to their plot size. Traditionally the literature surrounding privately owned public space suggests they are less inclusive and underused by the public. Rules can be put in place which would not be enforceable in public space, for example rules on clothing, loitering, cycling. The Guardian reported that property owners in London have a list of regulations that users must adhere to within such spaces, however they are not obliged to make the information public, therefore the users may have no idea what regulations they are bound to. This was highlighted when protesters from the Occupy movement attempted to hold a demonstration outside the London Stock Exchange. Police removed the protestors as they had been inadvertently on private land and therefore trespassing. (Shenker, 2017)

Security cameras, security guards and constant presence from employees encourage civility. Security guards are beholden to their corporate employers, rather than the general public. These spaces are open to the public, but often prescribed for use for employees. Németh (2009) describes how they are often defensible spaces; oriented away from public routes and obscured from street view. High enclosing walls may surround them, with entrances that are symbolically uninviting. Hostile architecture can be used to dissuade the homeless from loitering or lying on benches. A lack of public services such as restrooms may also deter undesirable groups (Schmidt, Németh et al., 2011). Loukaitou-Sidens (1993) notes that it is primarily white office workers who use POPS in California. This was also highlighted by Lee (2020) who noted that the spaces were underused in Seoul and primarily by workers on lunch breaks. Average stay time was short, at 10 minutes and the satisfaction of users surveyed was low.

In the case of Ireland, the greenfield or suburban corporate campuses of previous decades are returning to the city with a partial embrace of urban values. Healy & Wiig (2020) noting the examples of London and Boston's corporate districts make the comparison that such spaces, squares and pocket parks, are intended for interactions between employees, akin to break out spaces in a corporate office, though at the scale of a city district.



FIG 1.1 Map showing Dublin's major parks and Docklands developments as per 2014 masterplan. Source: Authors Own

## 2. Methodology

This paper aims to find evidence of inclusive city building in the North Lotts, from the initial master planning stages, planning stages and completed built fabric. The North Lotts as a larger context is critical as it is the culmination of DCC's 'development at all costs' approach. Citywide issues of exclusion, inequality and power dynamics are visible and exacerbated here as the area has undergone rapid transformation in a short time span. Multi-million-euro projects are being constructed, bordering historically disadvantaged inner-city communities. North Lotts block 8 was chosen as a case study to observe inclusive design as it is both the largest block and the first to reach completion under the SDZ system.

Block 8 is bounded by the North Quay to the south, Castleforbes Road and New Wapping Street to the east and west and Mayor Street to the north. The south east corner is occupied by two protected structures, a brick warehouse dating from the 1870s and a three storey brick house from the same era. Another protected structure from the 1860s faces onto the North Quay. The south west corner is now occupied by the new Central Bank building which was completed in 2017. The project re-purposed the unfinished structure of the proposed Anglo Irish Bank headquarters, which was abandoned in 2009. The rest of Block 8 was the subject of a NAMA tender, dubbed 'Project Wave', which was won by a joint venture between Ballymore group and Singapore based Oxley holdings in 2014, who marketed the scheme as Dublin Landings (National Asset Management Agency, 2014).

The area of the tender had previously been composed of several properties which had been grouped by NAMA to create a 2.35 site, roughly 10 percent of the entire Docklands SDZ area. Connolly (2017) notes that bundling of such land made them out of reach to almost all Irish developers, only affordable to international developers, which was encouraged by the Irish state with tax incentives.

This paper tracks the evolution of several topics, related to inclusive city building, through the planning and construction phases of Block 8. These topics are: the planning process, the public realm, relationship to the existing community. Qualitative research is carried out on a range of sources, mostly in the form of text, images and drawings.

## Key Documents

The key documents analysed are as follows:

The initial masterplan of the North Lotts, produced by the DDDA in 2002.

A Docklands Masterplan, produced by the DDDA in 2003.

A Docklands Masterplan, produced by the DDDA in 2008.

An SDZ masterplan produced in 2014 by DCC prior to the dissolution of the DDDA.

Minutes from An Bórd Pleanála public consultations, relating to the 2014 SDZ masterplan.

Planning applications for North Lotts Block 8, submitted under the SDZ planning system between 2014 and 2020. 32 separate applications have been submitted during this time. One application was submitted for the new Central Bank offices. Five applications relate to the three protected structures. The remaining 27 applications were submitted by OXley Holdings and relate to the Dublin Landings Development.

Supporting information from associated government legislation.

It is acknowledged that the boundaries between the topics discussed are often blurred, however an attempt has been made to separate them in order to clearly describe and track their evolution. For example, the provision of children's play areas is intrinsically linked to both the public realm and the provision of community amenity. An inclusive planning process has direct consequences for both the public realm and the relationship with the existing community. The provision of a range of residential typologies and social housing can directly affect the safety of the neighbouring public space, through means of passive surveillance and ground floor activity.

An observational analysis was also carried out on the completed public realm, informed by Jan Gehl's (2010) method of analysing the quality of public spaces and streets. Gehl proposed that the edges of a city space can determine the quality of the space and established six criteria to be observed; speed, transparency, appeal, texture, function, horizontal or vertical. This observation was also guided by comparisons with previous analysis of masterplans and planning applications.

A secondary analysis was carried out in accordance with Gehl's (2011) behavioural mapping method. Gehl hypothesised the quality of a space could be determined by mapping the amount of social and optional activities taking place, rather than necessary activities. An attempt was therefore made to map the users and their roles in the public spaces of the Dublin Landings, however the results were inconclusive as the residential blocks are not yet complete and office workers are primarily at home due to Covid-19. This study over several hours did highlight the prevalence of security personnel in the area, similar to previous studies carried out on POPS.



FIG 2.1 Photograph showing Dublin Landing's public realm facing south, Block D (left), Central Bank(right).  
Source: Authors Own

## 3. Evolution of Planning Process

### 3.1 Dublin Docklands Development Authority

This paper understands the term “building an inclusive city together” to mean creating inclusive built space as well as employing inclusive, democratic processes during development. The following section explores the evolution of planning practices in the North Lotts and Block 8 as observed in successive masterplans and planning applications, as well as relevant government legislation and Bórd Pleanála consultation minutes.

Following the dissolution of the Custom House Docks Development Authority, the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) was established as per the Dublin Docklands Development Act of 1997.

The Act granted similar powers to the DDDA and the CHDDA but expanded the area under its remit, from the Custom House Docks, to the entire Docklands area. The DDDA did not have total planning control like the CHDDA, but could designate areas for fast track planning, without appeal to An Bórd Pleanála (Ireland, Dublin Docklands Development Act, 1997).

A council of 25 members was established, many of whom were local community leaders, as well as representatives from development groups. The council could present visions for the docklands that reflected the needs of the community, to be approved by the executive board. It was hoped that it would be a more democratic process, and allow communities to have more inclusion in the process. However, third parties still had no opportunity to challenge or appeal planning decisions and could only hope that the community liaisons would effectively represent their interests.

### 3.2 Dublin Docklands Development Authority Master Plans

As per the statutory obligations of the Dublin Docklands Development Act of 1997 act, a masterplan for the Docklands was required to be reassessed on a five year basis. The first masterplan for the North Lotts was published in 2002 and primarily outlines the nature and extent of the development, the general urban design and distribution of uses (Dublin Dockland Development Authority, 2002).

A masterplan for the entire Docklands region, produced in 2003 places more attention on the social and economic aims of the DDDA (Dublin Dockland Development Authority, 2002).

The term inclusive city was not in use by the state at this point, although the need for inclusion in the development process is suggested in several sections of the masterplan.

It was proposed that policies supporting “bottom up” local development, and community engagement in development will be implemented (Dublin Dockland Development Authority, 2002, p. 4). The phrasing is vague and does not indicate how these policies will actually allow local communities or third parties to engage in the planning process.

These ambitions are repeated in the revised 2008 masterplan, with phrases such as “bottom up” approach reappearing but without the necessary steps to show how communities may be included in the planning and development process (Dublin Dockland Development Authority, 2008, p. 42) .

### 3.3 Dublin Docklands Strategic Development Zone

The 2015 Dublin Docklands (Dissolution) Act disbanded the DDDA, moving the powers of the authority to DCC. The Docklands SDZ followed a similar planning system to the one employed by DDDA, however unlike the DDDA there was no statutory body tasked with representing community interests. Schemes would now be submitted directly to DCC but there was still no form of appeal or 3rd party involvement (Ireland, Dublin Docklands (Dissolution) Act, 2015).

A public consultation period was facilitated by An Bórd Pleanála in 2014, prior to the establishment of the Docklands SDZ, which was a mandatory provision of the Planning and Development Act of 2000. Once the masterplan was granted by An Bórd Pleanála, DCC could approve schemes within the SDZ without appeal.

Separate appeals were lodged to An Bórd Pleanála during the consultation phase by community representation groups; the North Port Dwellers Association, Inner City Organisations Network, South Docklands Organisations, North Wall Community Association, as well as other local community leaders and local residents (An Bórd Pleanála, 2014).

The community groups feared that the SDZ planning scheme would result in a loss of third party rights, and eliminate community involvement in the planning process (An Bórd Pleanála, 2014). Unlike the DDDA which liaised with community leaders through the Dublin Docklands Council, the SDZ did require the creation of a similar body. This could create a lack of accountability for developers as there would be no appeals process.

The senior planning inspector, in response to community group's concerns over exclusion from the planning process, stated that as it was not a condition of DCC's development plan, a community liaison would not be required. However, he did note that a liaison officer had been provided as part of the Grangegorman SDZ. It was stated that a bi-annual consultation of progress would suffice instead (An Bórd Pleanála, 2014). No evidence of such community consultations has been found by the author to date.

Suggestions were made by the planning inspector that each development would carry out its own community outreach during the planning phase although it is unclear if that was meant to be legally required or simply a suggestion (An Bórd Pleanála, 2014).

The masterplan was granted by An Bórd Pleanála in 2014 following the public consultation. The stated aim of this plan was "building an inclusive city together" (Dublin City Council, 2014, p. 4).

Within the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (Dissolution) Act 2015, it is stated that the council must establish a forum, which would include members from community groups and would be known as the Docklands Oversight and Consultative Forum. However the group was not established until 2017 and it is noted within the meeting minutes that there was no representative from the North Port Dwellers Association despite being a prescribed body by the Minister for the Environment (Docklands Oversight and Consultative Forum, 2017). Therefore, the residents who are most directly affected by the developments on Block 8 have no direct representation. It appears that the role of the forum is advisory only and has no real power to affect change (Ireland, Dublin Docklands Development Authority (Dissolution) Act, 2015).



### 3.4 Dublin Landings Planning Phase

After securing the NAMA tender for the development of block 8, Oxley Holdings first applied for planning permission for office block D, a nine storey office building and surrounding public realm works in 2015 (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015). 26 more applications were subsequently granted by DCC for the remaining office and residential blocks. Most of these applications relate to amendments to previously approved schemes.

Pre-application notes with DCC are provided with all applications, with attendees from DCC, Ballymore and Oxley Holdings and the design team, but no representation from any relevant local community groups. As per the SDZ scheme, consultations should have taken place with residents during the design phase (Dublin City Council, 2014). The compliance statement document submitted with the application states that Oxley Holdings will liaise with local organisations and discuss their social responsibilities with the planning board after permission has been granted (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015).

Marie Reilly, a resident of the neighbouring Mayor Street cottages submitted a comment to DCC in relation to the planning application, with the awareness that it was purely observational as there was no appeals process (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015).

She noted that no community consultation took place, as per the SDZ requirements. Tony McDonnell, another Mayor Street resident and community leader further highlighted the issue in an observation letter submitted in 2016 as part of the planning application for Block A. He noted that no consultation has occurred for blocks A and D, despite being previously informed that they would take place (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a).

These observations were noted in their respective planning reports in 2015 and 2016, however the planning officer stated that as the SDZ masterplan had already gone through a full planning process and consultation, further consultation would not be required. This appears to be a direct contradiction to the orders previously set out by the planning inspector during the SDZ consultation phase (An Bórd Pleanála, 2014). No evidence of any such consultations taking place since have been found by the author.

McDonnell also notes the issue of construction noise in his observation, especially late at night and at weekends. The example of cranes being assembled or disassembled at 4am is highlighted by McDonnell (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a). Mayor Street residents have repeatedly raised concerns in the media about construction work taking place after hours (Neylon, 2017). Construction sites must only work within the hours granted in the planning application, usually between 8AM and 6PM, however extensions can be granted by local authorities for exceptional cases. 58 extensions have been granted by DCC to Oxley holdings so far during the construction phase of Dublin Landings. These requests permit work on weekends and bank holidays, with others requesting extensions through weeknights. In some cases, work has been carried out on site through multiple nights in a row or through entire weekends (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015, 2016a)



FIG 3.1 Photograph of banner on Block A, facing the Mayor Street Housing.  
Source: Authors own.

## 4. Evolution of Public Realm

### 4.1 Dublin Docklands Development Authority Masterplans

The North Lotts masterplan, produced in 2002 was the first masterplan for the area, and set out specific objectives for the public space development (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2002). It is important to note that at this time the area was completely undeveloped, consisting of abandoned warehouses, light industry and derelict sites. The masterplan divides the North Lotts from east to west by an “urban boulevard” which picks up from the existing Mayor Street. A number of vehicular streets run perpendicular to Mayor Street, linking the quay to Sheriff Street, in the process defining 12 superblocks. It was proposed that a number of internal streets, which could be vehicular, pedestrian or shared spaces, would break up these blocks into smaller parcels, creating a finer urban grain. The larger blocks are designated as having local open spaces, such as squares or small parks with play areas. The masterplan asserts that the public spaces provided should allow for a high level of accessibility to the future communities of the docklands, as well as the existing communities. It is stressed that such designated spaces be made available to the general public and be designed to allow accessibility for a range of users.

A mix of 60% residential, 40% commercial is proposed throughout the North Lotts, but may be varied if the development provides elements which advance the social policies of the plan or provides public space. The high amounts of residential would help create safer streets and spaces through passive surveillance and the creation of an activated city district with life beyond office working hours.

The masterplan notes the importance of generating ground floor activation, through retail, cafes or restaurants which could animate the public spaces and provide passive surveillance, creating safer spaces. Ground floor residences with their own front doors are encouraged to activate the street edge.

Block 8, the largest block in the entire Docklands SDZ was designated to contain a generous public space, in the form of a linear park, running east to west through the centre of the block. This public space is connected to surrounding major streets via five “internal routes”; one to the North Quay, one to New Wapping Street, one to Castleforbes Road, and two to Mayor Street.

Allowable building heights are dropped from 5 commercial storeys along major roads to 4 commercial storeys along the internal routes and public park, with an additional storey setback from the building edge. This would allow for effective sunlighting to create bright, user friendly public spaces.

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Following the publication of the 2002 masterplan for the North Lotts, a separate plan was created for the entire Docklands region in 2003, however was directed more so at social and economic issues (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2003).

A key admission in this plan is the difficulty in providing parks and public space in the area and specifically notes the lack of parks in the North Lotts. The plan acknowledges the existence of empirical standards for open space in residential areas, published by the Department of the Environment, which according to the plan is primarily aimed towards suburban areas. The Docklands, especially the North Lotts do not meet these empirical standards, even though at the time of this masterplan the entire area was either undeveloped, derelict or vacant.

“While, naturally, it will not be possible or appropriate to meet the empirical standards for suburban areas because of the nature and density of development” ((Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2003, p. 78)

The standards, which were published in 1987 do not make any specific reference to suburban areas (Ireland, Parks Policy for Local Authorities 1987).

It is proposed that pocket parks could help tackle the deficiencies in public space provision. The masterplan describes “pocket parks” as “incidental parcels of space, created by the exploitation of the leftovers, of street widening and derelict spaces” (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2002, p. 87). Therefore, it could be construed that the DDDA sees parks and public space as a secondary importance, leftovers after developments are complete.

The local communities highlighted the lack of play space as a crucial need, which should be publicly accessible, rather than segregated within high end private residential complexes.

While the need to create accessible public spaces is seen a priority in the 2003 masterplan, it is also stated that a key objective is to develop an urban environment that will attract increased investment.

This sentiment was expanded upon in the revised 2008 plan, whereby the quality of the public realm is seen as a tool to attract business, by creating good spaces for employees and subsequently good spaces to locate business. The need for cutting edge urban design, landmark buildings and cultural institutions is emphasized, driven by economic, rather than social forces (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2008).

Similar to previous masterplans, the issue of providing public space and parks is highlighted in the 2008 plan. However, it is insinuated that the needs of the local communities are at odds with the economic aims of the SDZ. The plan notes that the designated open spaces need increased zoning protection, as there is significant pressure for development due to rising land values. (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2008).

## 4.2 Docklands Strategic Development Zone Masterplans

The 2014 masterplan follows a similar design to the previous plans. The major roads had been constructed at this time, dividing the superblocks. Some construction had been completed in blocks 1,3,4,5, and 6, although most of the area was undeveloped, including block 8.

Acknowledged again within the 2014 plan is the difficulty of providing parks within the area (Dublin City Council, 2014). Comparisons made within the plan highlight the lack of parks compared to similar docklands developments in Amsterdam, Hamburg and London. Out of the comparative schemes, Amsterdam had the smallest area of parks per hectare, with a ratio 1ha of park per 6.6ha of total development. By comparison the Dublin docklands area has 1ha of park per 12.6 ha of development, almost half the number of parks as Amsterdam. The docklands development in Hamburg has a ratio of 1ha per 4.5ha total.

However, while noting the low provision of parks, the scheme reduces the overall number and size of parks indicated relative to the previous masterplan.

The previous masterplan had shown a large linear park within Block 8, which had been substantially reduced and rezoned as street space. An additional internal street connects the interior of the site to the quays. Therefore, although the overall area of the public spaces has not dramatically changed, the nature and quality of these spaces would be vastly different.

As well as reducing the dimensions of the public spaces, the surrounding building heights have been increased by one. Therefore this plan changes a designated public park space, to a series of narrower streetscapes with more pronounced over shading.

During the An Bórd Pleanála consultation period appeals were made relating to the public realm by community groups and groups representing developer's interests.

Community groups raised the issue of inadequate social and community facilities which had been promised but not delivered (An Bórd Pleanála, 2014). Provision of play and recreation spaces is addressed as a key objective of the master plan. Only one area in the North Lotts is actually indicated to contain an open-air playground. The site map relevant to this section also depicts a "proposed jogging route" as an example of a public amenity, yet this seems to be an arbitrary route along areas zoned as streets (Dublin City Council, 2014, p. 77).

Despite the overall reduction in public space, groups representing developers appealed the amount of public space. Complaints were made that internal public spaces within blocks were excessive and some suggestions were made that they should not only be reduced, but removed entirely in some cases. The example of a small pocket park in Block 9 was highlighted as disproportionate by many groups, who said that the space was unnecessary as it was in close proximity to the point square (An Bórd Pleanála, 2014).

### 4.3 Dublin Landings Planning Phase

The first planning application for Dublin Landings development was submitted in 2015 by Oxley Holdings and related to Block D and associated public realm works. Indicative public realm plans were submitted for the whole site. The scheme was designed by RKD architects and Arrow architects (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015).

The site plan depicts a pedestrian street, running internally from west to east. Another primary pedestrian internal street runs south from Mayor Street to the North Quay. An internal pedestrian street connects the east to west street, to the North Quay. The public realm outlined generally follows the SDZ masterplan for the block, except an internal street connected to Mayor Street has been omitted. The planning officer, noting that this route would be desirable, accepted the applicant's explanation that this secondary route would divert pedestrians away from the primary north to south street. the other street (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015).

The intersection of the two main internal streets is described as a public plaza by the applicant. There is no widening or opening up of the street width to accommodate a larger public space however. Large overhangs on the corners of the "public plaza" create ground floor entrances to surrounding office blocks, with office space above. The submitted drawings graphically represent these spaces as being a part of the plaza, giving the impression that it is a much larger space. These spaces, which are very defensible, and overlooked by office security booths are not comparable to a public space.

Heavy planting is indicated throughout the public realm, and is described as being "something to look at" rather than interact with (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015). In many places the planting is raised, creating stone benches along the plantings border. In other areas vast swathes of raised planting up to 13 metres thick appear to be used as a tool to create a buffer zone between public areas and office space. Planting also seems to be used in the area described as a public plaza, to create zones with benches in some areas, but to also create defensible, semi private entrances to office buildings. Stone podiums to the central bank and basement voids to office blocks compound the separation between public and private, reducing transparency and visual connection between the site's public space, and internal office space.

The planning officer notes in the planners report that the general internal street width of 17 metres is less than indicated on the SDZ masterplan. In some cases the street widths are as low as 12.5 metres wide, which conversely increases the internal office space. Planting, which should be looked at, not inhabited, occupies large amounts of public space, leaving only four to five metre wide pathways for the public to use.

The public routes are further reduced due to voids to basement offices to block D which encroach into the space. They range in width from three to five metres, and up to 40 metres in length. Narrower lightwells from the central bank also encroach into the public space.

Large underground car park entrances occupy both east and west entrances to the block, subsequently narrowing the pedestrian entrance zone, and further eroding the public space. This, combined with heavy planting at these entrance points, leaves only 4 metres for pedestrian access, vastly different to the 2014 masterplan. A similar combination of voids to basements, heavy planting and narrowing of street width to accommodate a protected building tightens the southern entrances to the site. These nuanced changes to the entrances echo the symbolic gateways previously described by Németh (2009).

Not only were changes in the public realm recorded between different masterplans and planning stages, a pattern of change was observed within the many planning applications, whereby multiple amendments were submitted for previously granted structures. Repeated planning applications would be submitted over the course of several years with minor, albeit often significant changes. These changes often appear to be in favour of the commercial interests of the developers, rather than public interest.

An application for a kiosk on the north entrance was added to a planning application in June 2019. The application was an amendment to residential block B, but a single page describing the kiosk was also added (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2019). The kiosk is vaguely described as containing a cafe or retail. There are already prescribed retail and café locations on the ground floors of several blocks within the development, and the likeness to the security kiosks seen on corporate campuses is unmistakable.

The outdoor spaces related to residential blocks are also described within the initial planning application. The spaces are shown as two large courtyards, connected to the public streets by 7 pedestrian passages. These are graphically represented in the same style as the block's public space, and no gates or barriers are indicated (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015). This gives the impression that the Dublin Landings is providing far more open public space than required in the masterplan.

The applicant describes how play facilities will be located within the communal residential courtyards, but this is not graphically described in the initial planning application.

Two applications for residential blocks A and E were submitted by Oxley Holdings in 2016 (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016c, 2016b). These applications confirm the separation of private space and residential courtyards with the addition of gates and fences to the drawings which are set at 1400mm high. A gate from residential courtyard B to North Wall Quay is described as 1800mm high. These gates are not depicted on any elevations, sections or other drawings apart from select site plan drawings.

Later amended planning applications related to these spaces show a gradual increase in the defensiveness: gates raised from 1.4 to 1.8 metres, and south gates from 1.8 to 2.1m (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2017, 2019). The pedestrian entrances to the site are reduced from 7 in 2016 to 3 throughout the various planning amendments.

Indicated facilities for play are unsubstantial, and plans for community services seems tokenistic. A children's play area is designated between block A and E, although the applicant notes they are "designed to facilitate incidental play, rather than providing playground equipment". In describing the types of incidental play envisioned, the applicant highlights that pathways provided to access apartments can be used to "scoot on" or used for "toys on string." (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a)

Later amendments provide more detailed descriptions of the proposed play areas which will be placed in the private residential areas. Unlike the repeated promises of previous masterplans for publicly accessible play space, any play facilities in Block 8 would only be accessible to residents (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016b, 2016c).

The previous masterplans sought a mix of 60 percent residential to create a vibrant, animated district. The ratio has more than flipped, with the Dublin Landings containing 30% residential as demand for office space increased.

Although the public space has been reduced, what is promised by Oxley Holdings is pedestrian, providing level access and quality design.

It is noted in many planner's reports that the developments granted have a higher plot ratio and coverage than the masterplan. Total site coverage is 59% instead of 50% and the plot density is 3.7 rather than 3. A planning officer stated in relation to block A that the proposed atria would compensate for the reduced public space provided (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a).

Even though the developments are larger and denser than previously allotted, these measurements don't take into account the many encroachments into the public space from office blocks, such as sunken basements and car park entrances which reduces the public space by a further 30%.

#### **4.4 Observational Analysis**

At the time of observation, the public realm of the Dublin Landings was constructed. Construction was still being carried out on residential block B.

A public space is defined by its edge; therefore, the quality of the space can be influenced by the surrounding building's edges. Gehl (2011) argues that the ground floor edge has a large impact on pedestrian's experience of urban areas. Gehl hypothesizes that life grows out from the urban edges, and proposes several criteria for creating urban edges which will enhance pedestrian's experience and create human scaled spaces; Speed, transparency, appeal, texture, function and horizontal or vertical elements,

The speed at which the city is viewed changes the experience of it vastly, for example a pedestrian or car user. The Dublin Landings public realm is pedestrian and the design responds to this in many ways.

The transparency of facades can alter the pedestrians experience. Open facades tend to create more visual interest, and street activation, and passive surveillance from occupants. The Dublin Landings is a large development, and ground floor use varies. While cafe and retail uses occupy some of the North to South street, large areas of ground floor development have no activation. The function of the buildings are largely homogeneous, as corporate office space.

The transparency of these facades is also often lacking. Despite glass being used as a key material palette, notable things separate the pedestrian user of the public space with the internal occupant. Sunken basements create a distinct separation between the spaces.

Planting is often used to shield internal occupants from users of public space. The planting is dense and evergreen, often in deep raised beds in front of windows. Large parts of block A's ground plane are completely obscured by a raised bed. Level changes also reduce transparency. A limestone plinth to the Central bank completely reduces any visual connection to the ground floor, and metal grates reduce visual connection to the upper floors. There are limited entrances to office blocks from this courtyard.

The architectural elements are arranged vertically, rather than horizontally which Gehl (2011) argues helps create interesting facades for pedestrians. The public realm is constructed with high quality materials and a quality finish. Durable materials such as limestone benches and granite paving are used to create a robust public realm. The material pallet used on the office and residential buildings are a range of coloured bricks, grey, creme and brown, which are a welcome change from earlier steel and glass Dockland developments. Changes in material palette reduce the overall homogeneity of the development.



This is not as apparent on the Mayor Street facade, where the scale of the blocks are vastly different to the pre-existing houses. Mayor street which was initially proposed as an urban boulevard, is as a result dark, and unpleasant. A level change over the site creates a condition whereby the ground floor of block A is just above eye level and creates a long, horizontal, monotonous street edge. Kickert (2016) describes how important ground floor street activation is for fostering safe neighbourhoods. Kickert rates various ground floor uses based on their interaction with pedestrian zones, judging them on their transparency, permeability and hospitality. Retail, cafés and restaurants are rated highly by Kickert, whereas offices rank poorly. Higher levels of interaction with the street are reflected in the safety of the street.

The scale of the surrounding buildings is large relative to the dimensions of the public space. The resultant public realm therefore is dark and cold, with wind channeling from the river along the deep narrow street, creating a canyon effect.

There is a strong surveillance presence, from cameras, security guards patrolling the public space and at office entrances. Several signs announce to the public that the area is owned by Dublin Landings Group, and several acts were not permissible, such as cycling, smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol, skateboarding and scootering <sup>1</sup>. Hostile architecture, in the form of steel bars on benches, prevents skateboarding and impedes homeless people from lying down.

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<sup>1</sup> Previous planning applications stated such spaces could be used by children to “scoot on” in lieu of providing a playground.



FIG 4.1 Plans showing evolution of public realm of Block 8.  
 Top left: 2002 North Lotts masterplan  
 Top right: 2014 SDZ masterplan  
 Bottom left: 2015 masterplan  
 Bottom right: Completed scheme, excluding landscaping.  
 Source: Authors own

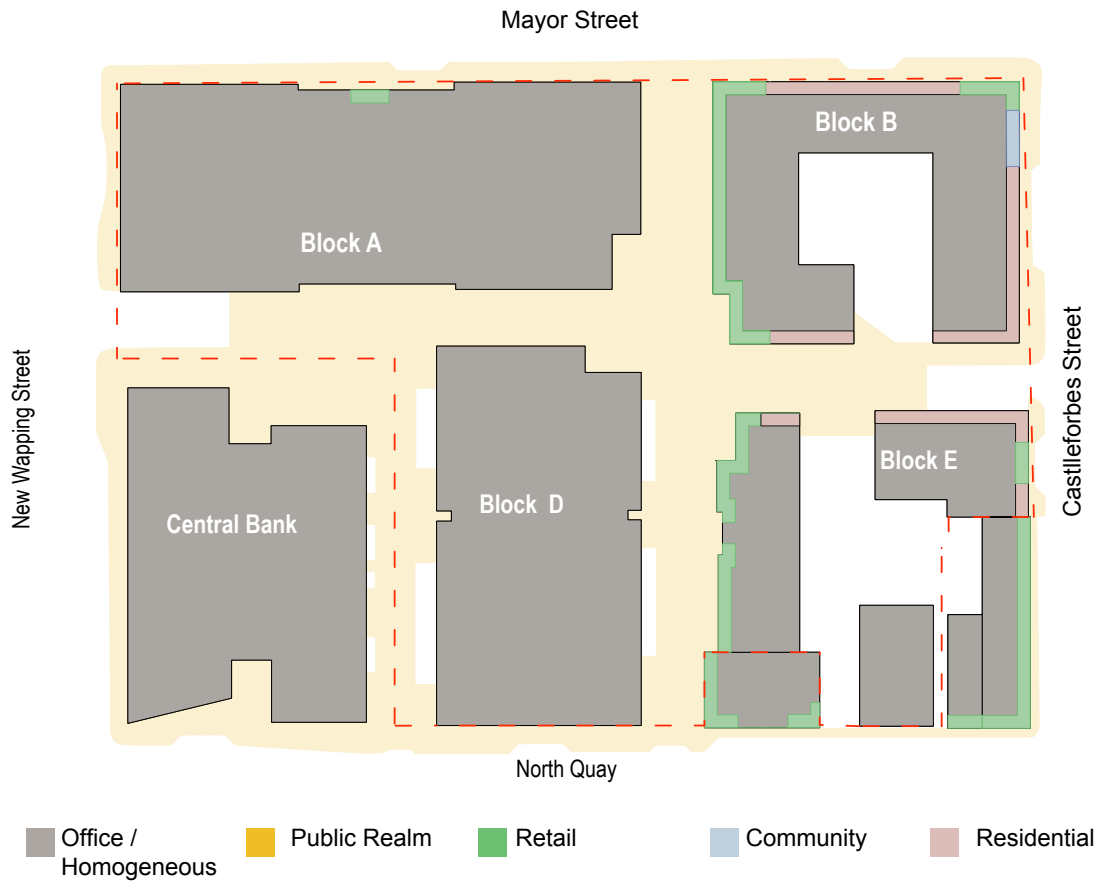


FIG 4.2 Plan Showing ground floor activation along public routes as constructed.  
Source: Authors own.



FIG 4.2 Drawing showing Dublin Landing's public plaza and overhanging office entrances, which are represented as being within the public plaza area by RKD Architects.  
Source: Authors own

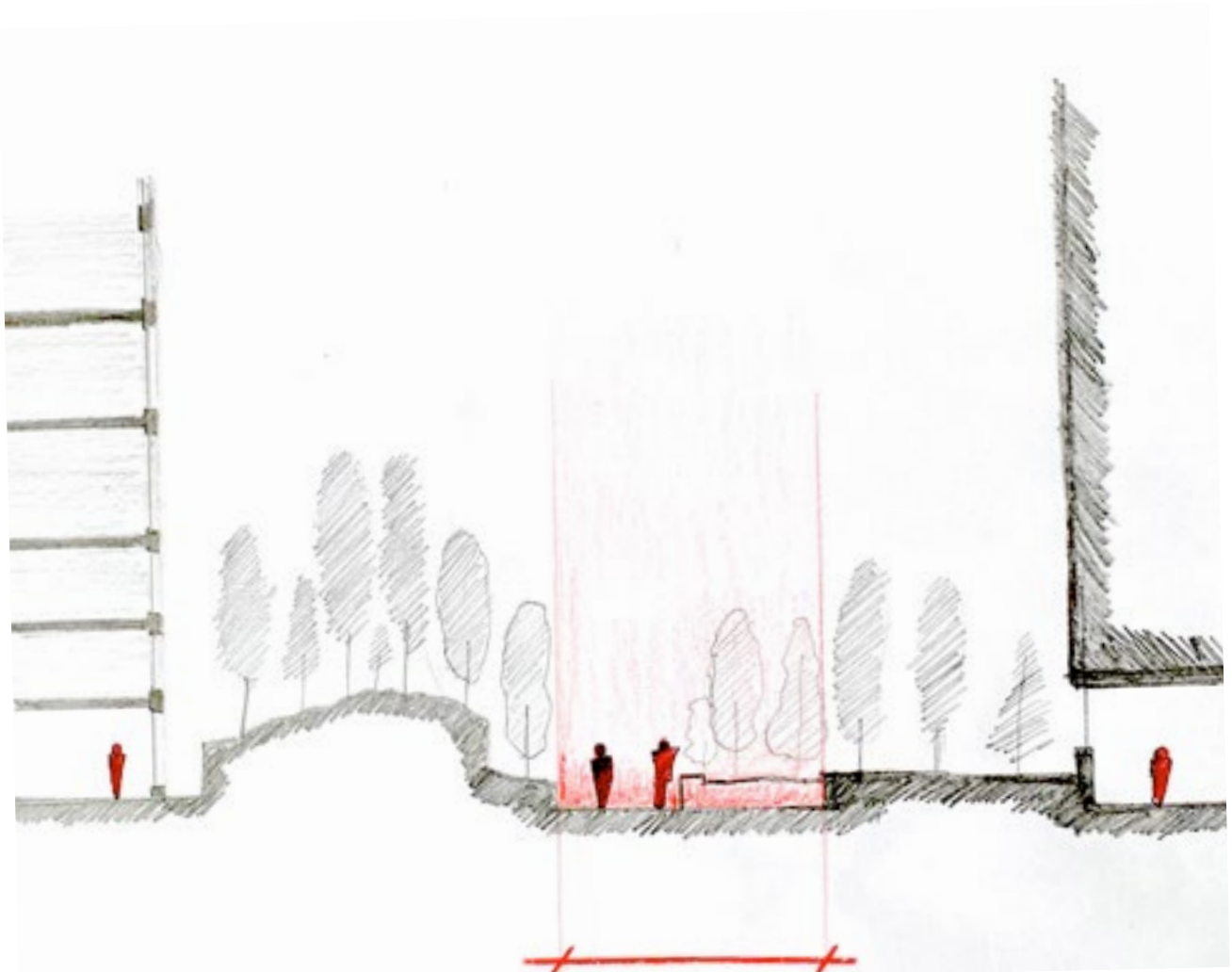


FIG 4.3 Section drawing showing the transparency between ground floor uses, Block A (left), public realm (red) and Central Bank (right).  
Source: Authors own

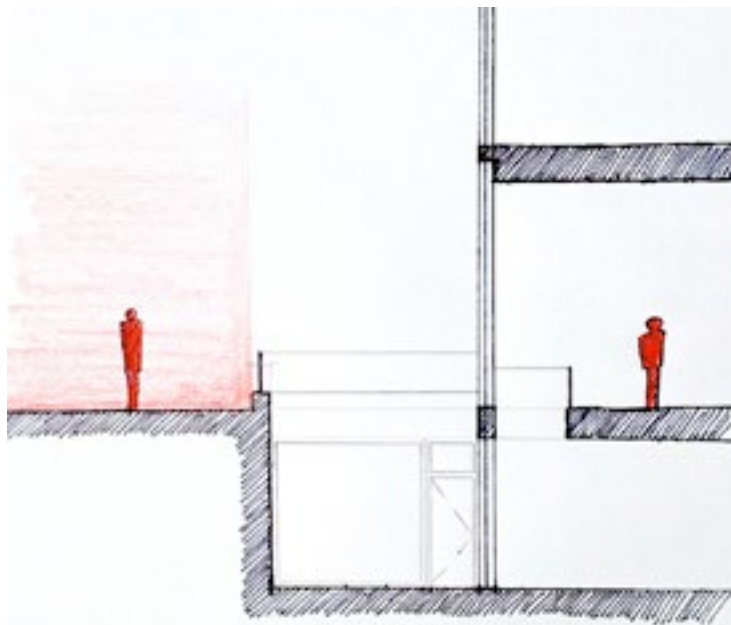


FIG 4.4 Section drawing showing permeability of Block D, from public realm (red), sunken courtyard (middle) and Block D (right).  
Source: Authors own

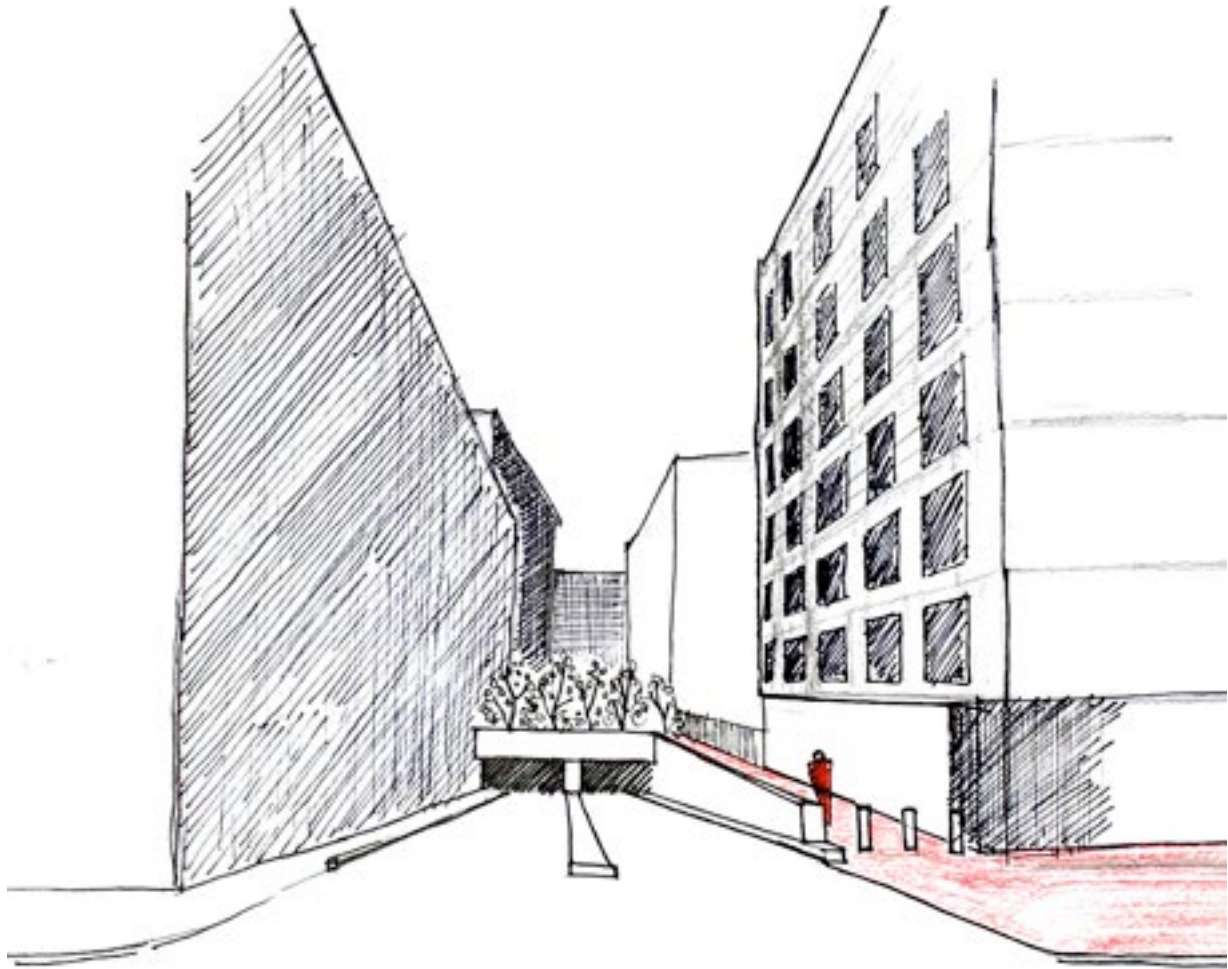


FIG 4.5 Sketch showing symbolically uninviting public pedestrian entrance from Castleforbes Street. Public realm shown in red.  
Source: Authors own



FIG 4.6 Image of sign depicting permissible activities.  
Source: Authors own



Fig 4.7 Image of hostile architecture, prevents skateboarding or lying down.  
Source: Authors own

## 5. Relationship With Existing Communities

### 5.1 Dublin Docklands Development Authority

Pockets of residential areas are scattered throughout the North Lotts, remnants of the areas industrial and maritime past. A row of ten, two storey cottages line the north side of Mayor Street, opposite block 8. These residents are represented by the North Port Dwellers Association, and resident Tony McDonnell is a community leader.

The 2002 masterplan designates all major streets as allowing development up to four commercial storeys, as well as an additional floor set back from the building's edge. The blocks adjacent to the Mayor Street houses are designated on the site plan as such, seemingly without acknowledgement of the dramatic shift in scales (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2002).

It is surely structures such as these that the 2003 masterplan references when describing how to design alongside protected structures and existing buildings. It is implied that the impetus is on the architects and designers to be respectful of such structures, for example by reducing overall heights and increasing setbacks. Yet the maps provided contradict the written sentiment as no such height reductions are put in place surrounding the mayor street housing (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2003). Block 8 is directly south of these dwellings, therefore a dramatic shift in scales would completely reduce their light.

The 2003 and 2008 masterplans describe the issues of scale, height and existing structures in more detail. Acknowledged is the widespread condition of pre-existing two storey houses throughout the entire docklands area. It is stressed that there will not be a significant departure from such heights in these areas. Building in these areas, it states, requires a sensitive approach (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2003, 2008).

### 5.2 Docklands Strategic Development Zone Masterplan

The SDZ masterplan shifts the focus to protected historic buildings, rather than all pre-existing two storey developments such as the Mayor Street housing. Building heights across the scheme increased by one story. In most cases buildings heights did not decrease in order to facilitate more light to internal streets and squares (Dublin City Council, 2014).

Developments in Block 8, which had previously been planned at five commercial storeys, was increased to six. This would further increase the overshadowing faced by the residents of mayor street.

### 5.3 Dublin Landing Planning Phase

An application for block A was submitted by Oxley Holdings in April, 2016. This block would have the most dramatic effect on the pre-existing dwellings of Mayor Street. The submitted scheme was 7 stories above ground level, contrasting with the two story dwelling just 15 metres north of the development (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a). The area was zoned as six commercial stories on the SDZ masterplan, however it was ambiguous whether this included an additional set back storey. The deputy planner noted that the applicant made a strong case for the additional floor, and that the decision was at his discretion.

None of the section drawings provided by RKD architects adequately describe the neighbouring community, despite the fact that section AA and BB directly dissect the existing dwellings. Accurately portraying Mayor street would have highlighted the dramatic shift in size between the sites. A fictional 6 story scheme is indicated instead, however no such scheme exists, and at the time of submission no such scheme had been previously granted for the area (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a). An elevation drawing is the only image which depicts housing on Mayor Street but has been drawn incorrectly, its overall height shown more than 2 metres higher than in reality.

The extent of site section drawings submitted with this application, as well as all other applications stop just before the dwellings. Such omissions make it seem that the developers are attempting to ignore their neighbours.

None of the drawings submitted by RKD Architects provides a dimension from the development to the neighbouring dwellings, a requirement by DCC. This would further highlight the dramatic shift in scales on the relatively narrow street (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a).

A public connection to Mayor Street, indicated on the masterplan has been removed, increasing the monumentality of block A relative to the preexisting cottages, and internally increasing office space. The implementation of the public connection could have softened the stark contrast between the developments of Mayor Street, and create a more porous street edge. The applicant states that the internal atrium replacing the public street would allow light to penetrate onto Mayor Street.

An independent daylight survey was completed, showing the effects of the development on the Mayor street dwellings (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a). The report indicated that the development would reduce the summer sunlight hours received from 56% to 35%, a reduction of 21%. The development would reduce the winter daylight hours from 22% to 0%. There are no Irish standards for daylighting, therefore planners abide by the British daylighting standards. These standards note that a reduction of 20% to the usual light received will be felt significantly by the occupants, making rooms feel noticeably darker, colder and uninviting. The neighboring dwellings would face a reduction of 38% of their usual light in the summer, and 100% of their usual light in the winter.

The deputy planner in the planning report stated that the study reported no loss in summer sunlight to these dwellings. He continued to claim that the proposed development would result in “some” additional overshadowing during winter months. It is clearly stated in the daylighting survey that the dwellings will lose significant light in the summer months and receive zero daylight during winter months. Therefore, the deputy planners claims are categorically wrong.

Mcdonnel noted that the development offered “no community gain, just community loss of light” (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016a, observation letter)

## 5.4 Community Amenity Provision

The 2002 masterplan and 2003 masterplan highlight the need for providing amenities for existing and future communities. The North Lotts was specifically highlighted as having a severe lack of community amenities and services such as healthcare services, recreation, community art space and childcare services (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2002, 2008).

The 2008 masterplan notes the residents' concerns over community facilities, and commits to delivering such facilities in parallel with commercial developments. Block 8 was designated as a high priority for community gain as it is the largest site in the docklands. The expansion of the area's population would put increased pressure on the already strained existing facilities. Such amenities, the plan states should be accessible to existing and future communities in the docklands (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2008).

During the SDZ masterplan consultancy phase community groups raised the issue of amenities and facilities which had been promised but not yet delivered. Concerns over childcare facilities that had been built in earlier dockland developments which catered to the affluent Dockland office workers, but were out of reach to pre-existing residents due to the high cost (An Bórd Pleanála, 2014).

The initial planning application for Dublin Landings, as required, designates several areas for community facilities. A large ground floor art exhibition space is proposed for block E, a prominent location on the North Quay. A small community space with an undescribed purpose is shown on the internal north-south street, later being moved to Mayor Street (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2015, 2016b). These are the only two facilities that could be seen as having a social or community aspect. The planning officer notes that a development with over 100 units would normally contain a childcare facility. The Dublin Landings proposed the construction of 268 apartments. The planning officer did not make childcare services a planning condition however.

An application for block E in 2016 sought to change the exhibition space to a restaurant, with a high double height internal space (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2016c). Within an amendment submission in 2017 to this block, a request was made for a temporary change of use to a marketing suite, for 3 years or until another extension is granted (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2017b). Another amendment to block E was submitted in 2020, granted the addition of a mezzanine level to the restaurant cum marketing suite. This would increase the size of the unit by 500 square metres (Dublin City Council, Oxley Holdings, 2020). Therefore, over a short period of time, an exhibition space, with social and cultural benefits was transformed into a two storey marketing suite.





FIG 5.1 Image showing pre-existing Mayor Street housing opposite Block A  
Source; Authors own.

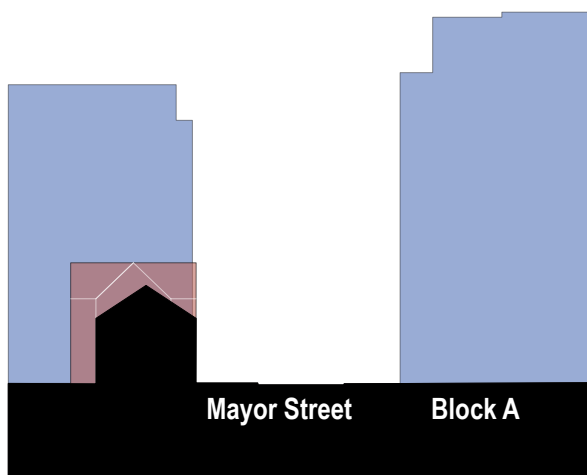


FIG 5.2  
Section showing the difference between existing neighbouring building heights (black), Building height as per planning application elevation drawing (red) and as per planning application sectional drawings (blue).  
Source: Authors own

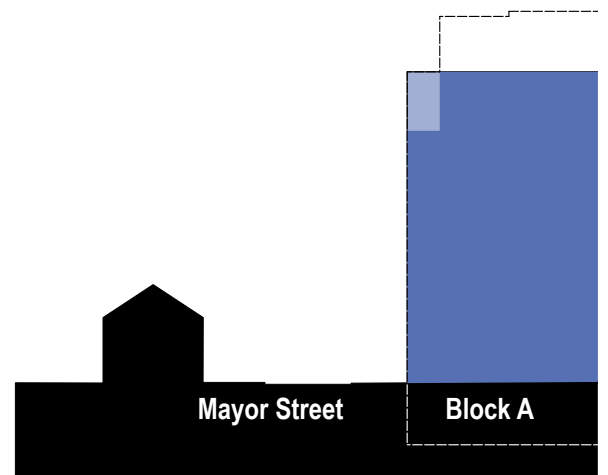


FIG 5.3  
Section showing change between 2002 masterplan building heights (dark Blue), 2014 building heights (light blue) and completed building (black line).  
Source; Authors own.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper sought to find existence, or lack thereof, of inclusive city building together in Dublin's North Lotts, in its public realm, planning process and relationship to existing community. An attempt was made to follow these topics as they evolved through initial master plans, planning applications and built fabric.

It is acknowledged that an inclusive city is not limited to these topics. Housing provision is also an integral part of creating an inclusive city, but was beyond the scope of this paper. Social housing negotiations between DCC and developers are not transparent and documentation is not publicly available.

This paper attempted to show that inclusive public space in the North Lotts and Block 8 was not a priority for state bodies, despite the continued rhetoric over accessible public space.

A dichotomy between the text of the masterplans and the masterplan's drawings was continually observed. Despite starting with a brownfield site in 2002, lack of public space was acknowledged as an issue by DDDA, prior to any development. If public space had actually been a priority for these state bodies more space could have been zoned as such from the very beginning. The lack of public space was further highlighted as an issue in later masterplans, while simultaneously reducing public spaces.

The amount and quality of public space in the masterplans gradually worsened as demand for office space grew, reducing the size of public space and increasing the height of the surrounding buildings. The case study of public space provision in Dublin Landings is not a black and white issue. Unlike previous Dockland Developments, such as Castleforbes Square which privatised all green space and cut corners on public realm works. Although further attempts were made to claw back public space for offices during the planning process, the quality of finish observed in the Dublin Landings public realm is commendable; it is also accessible, pedestrian and open to the public at all times of the day. The high level of surveillance, hostile architecture and security presence, however, do not promote ideas of inclusive public space and conditions the behaviour of the user. These areas are more analogous to a large corporate smoking area, than an extension of the public realm of the city. On several occasions security guards were observed interacting with the public. A security guard berated a cyclist for ignoring the signs banning the activity. Another security guard was observed following two men until they left the premises. It is important to recognise that the guards reasoning is unknown, but it could be speculated that the men were deemed suspicious, or undesirable (Németh and Schmidt, 2011, p. 1).

The contrast between differing objectives of the masterplans public space was further highlighted, the result of tension between economic and social pressure in the North Lotts. The importance of quality public spaces as a tool to attract investment was often raised by the DDDA and DCC, which underpinned the rhetoric of providing public spaces for community gain. It is not a surprise therefore that resultant public spaces are more akin to a break out spaces in corporate campus, than a community park or square.

Demonstrated in this paper is the tactic employed by developers of submitted multiple planning amendments with subtle but often significant changes. One example highlighted was the gradual change in use of a public exhibitions space to a two storey marketing suite.

These alterations appear to advance the economic aims of developers at the expense of public or community interests. It has been demonstrated that there is not an inclusive planning process in the North Lotts. Tactics such as these serve to further confuse and alienate local communities. Such subtle changes could be seen to make the planning process more convoluted, harder to follow and observe.

Examples of this approach can be seen on other areas of Block 8, which do not have such severe community repercussions, but are interesting examples nonetheless. Two protected structures hold the corner of Block 8, a Victorian house and warehouse but are not part of Dublin Landings development. Planning was submitted in 2016 for an eight storey hotel on the site, with associated bar and restaurant (Dublin City Council and Chirita Limited, 2016a). The scheme hoped to remove all internal fabric, keeping the protected brick facades and essentially using it as a pediment for a further four floors and glazed rooftop bar pavilion structure above. The senior planner commended the design as being “respectful of the protected structure” (Dublin City Council and Chirita Limited, 2016a, Planner Report). The application however was refused on recommendations from the conservation officer as it did not respect the historical significance and would obliterate the building’s character.

A second application was submitted to just five months later which saw the additional floors reduced to just two (Dublin City Council and Chirita Limited, 2016b). This application was granted permission. A third application was submitted in 2018. It sought to add two floors to the previously granted development. This application was granted permission even though it was almost indistinguishable from the scheme refused in 2016.

Contradictions were made between the states discourse of inclusive, integrated, bottom up planning processes, and the resultant planning process. Third parties and local communities have no access to the planning process, which is further capitalized upon by developers. Communities had very little opportunity to observe or appeal planning decisions, and when they did they were ignored by planning authorities. It was often observed in this paper that developers had disregarded requirements of the 2014 masterplan, and the planning authority turning a blind eye.

While this may not be evidence of a shadow planning system as discussed by Fox-Rogers and Murphy in this case study, planning authorities favoured the economic interests of the powerful as predicted by Fainstein (2014). Economic interests held precedent over social issues subsequently failing to “design an inclusive city together”.



FIG 6.1 Three drawings showing the difference between planning application submitted for a new hotel within a protected structure.  
Top: 2016 proposal- refused permission.  
Middle: 2016 proposal - granted permission.  
Bottom: 2018 proposal- granted permission.

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