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News

Councillors to vote on Dublin high rise plan

Olivia Kelly

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NEW PRINCIPLES for locating high-rise buildings in Dublin are to be put before city councillors for the first time tomorrow.

Council planners earlier this month published a review of densities and height in the city with details of 15 locations in the city and suburbs where high-rise buildings could be permitted.

The first step towards incorporating these locations and high-rise principles into the Dublin City Development Plan begins tomorrow, when the council's strategic planning committee will be asked to vote on a draft variation to the development plan.

The variation expands on the review document and lays out the specific criteria for developers seeking to build in each of the 15 locations identified for tall buildings.

Buildings of 16 or more storeys will be permitted in only five areas in the city. These are the Docklands; Connolly Station area; George's Quay including Tara Street and Hawkins House; the Digital Hub including Thomas Street/James's Street; and Heuston Station area.

A further 10 locations could accommodate buildings of eight to 15 storeys, the document says. These are Phibsborough; Grangegorman; the "north fringe" where the city meets Fingal on the Malahide Road near Darndale, Clonsaugh Industrial Estate; Ballymun; Pelletstown; the Dublin Industrial Estate near Cabra; Ballyfermot; Parkwest/ Cherry Orchard; and the Naas Road near the intersection of Long Mile Road.

The docklands will have the "greatest potential" to accommodate height, say the city planners, and is the area likely to have the tallest buildings. These should be concentrated on the northern side of the Poolbeg peninsula, but the plan says there should be some symmetry between the north and south banks of the Liffey.

The area likely to see the most significant change is around Tara Street. This is the closest point to the historic core of the city where building of more than 16 storeys could be located. However, the planners state that any high-rise building must not "intrude" on the main square of Trinity College.

The planners make particular mention of the Hawkins House "site" although the 12-storey Department of Health building is still standing and there is no application for its demolition. The planners say this would be an appropriate location for a "mid-rise marker" of up to 16 storeys.

The criteria for the site of the former mental hospital at Grangegorman, which is to be the new DIT campus, includes several references to nearby Broadstone. The physical integration of Broadstone and Grangegorman will be "promoted", the planners state, and one or two mid-rise buildings at Broadstone/Constitution Hill should be considered.

The variation to the plan also puts strict new requirements on large developments. Any application for more than 200 residential units must include an audit of facilities in the area as well as plans for educational and childcare facilities, shops, social facilities and open space.

Sinn Féin councillor Daithí Doolan, chairman of the planning committee, said the variation to the development plan would eliminate the large number of inappropriate developments which come before the planning authority.

"Until now someone could apply for the Eiffel Tower in O'Connell Street and due process would have to be gone through. Under this change if a development does not meet the criteria, it can be thrown out immediately."

The change also brought certainty to communities, he said.

"You now know if a high-rise building is permissible in your area, and even in areas designated for high rise you know there will be very tight controls on what can be built, and you also know there will have to be a benefit to your community."

The reviewed high-rise strategy follows negative public reaction to the council's *Maximising the City's Potential* document, a draft of which was published last year.

Although that document was never ratified it had been used to justify planning applications for high-rise developments and was mentioned in several Bord Pleanála hearings including the recent hearing on the Jurys/Berkeley Court hotels development in Ballsbridge.

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