

A COMHAR PAMPHLET TO ENCOURAGE DEBATE
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

COMHAR, the National Sustainable Development Partnership, was set up in 1999 with the aim of advancing the national agenda for sustainable development, and contributing to the formation of a national consensus regarding this process. Comhar is made up of 25 members drawn from a wide range of nominating bodies representing stakeholders from environmental, community, statutory, professional and economic sectors. Comhar seeks to work in partnership to encourage sustainable development across Irish economy and society, and to advise Government on policies which support and promote sustainable development.

The pamphlet, *LIVING OVER THE SHOP Relief From the Long Commute*, is the second in an occasional series on issues related to sustainable development. The aim of the pamphlets is to promote a greater understanding of sustainability issues. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Comhar but are intended to encourage debate on these important issues. Comhar is grateful to James Pike for taking on the task of writing this pamphlet.

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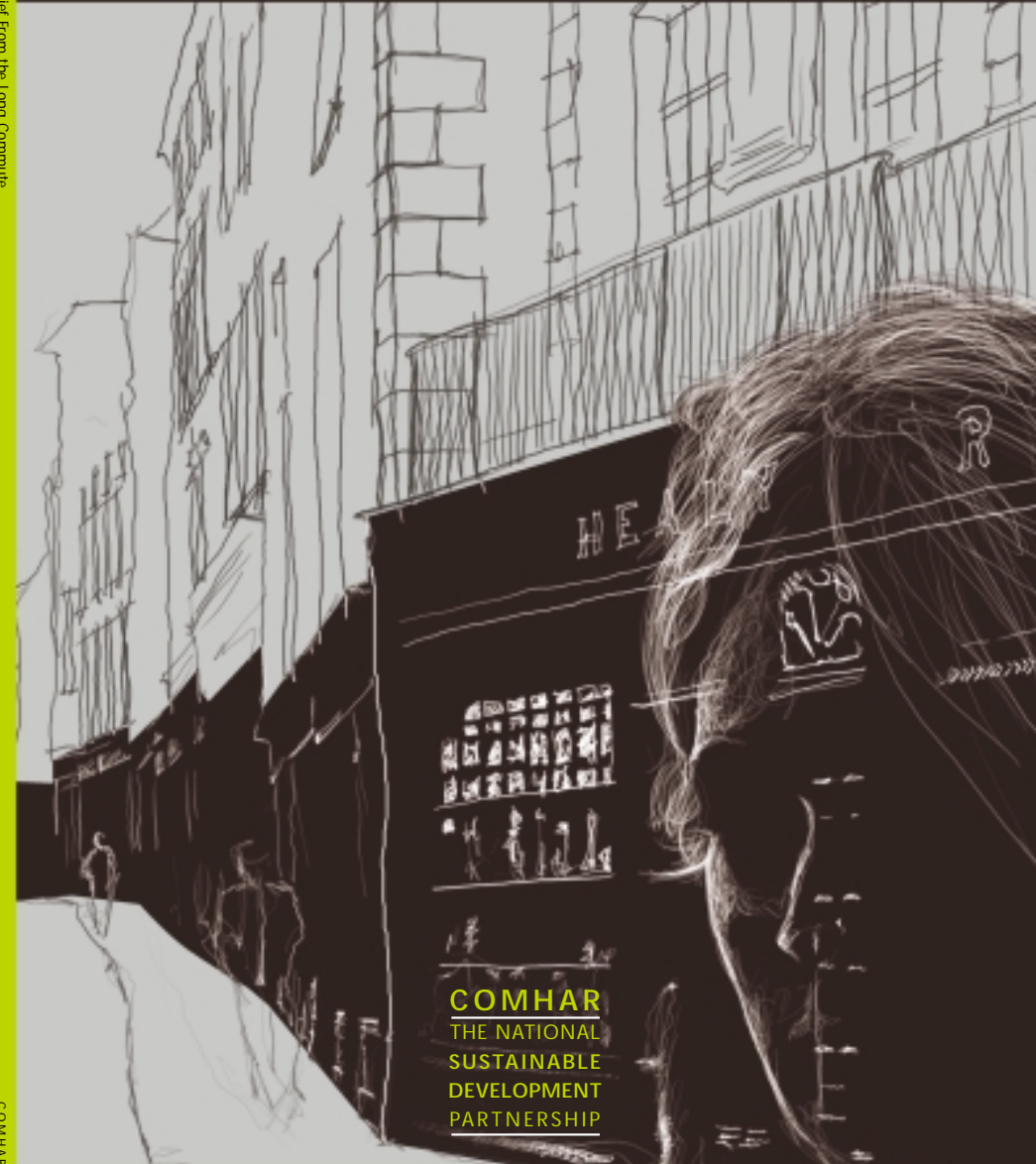
LIVING OVER THE SHOP Relief From the Long Commute

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JAMES PIKE

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DURING MY CHILDHOOD in England we lived for several years in Woodstock, near Oxford. During the eighteenth century the building, facing a small square, was a bank, and in one of the front rooms on the ground floor, on either side of the fireplace were two large iron doors guarding the vaults of the bank. They were secured by large iron bolts which had to be pulled up into the bedroom above to open the doors below. They were so placed that the legs of the manager's large four-poster bed could be positioned on them. The ultimate advantage of living over the shop.

Living over the shop, as we understand it, can mean two things – living over where you work or, as is commonly expected in most 'living over the shop' incentive schemes, creating apartments over shops, which will not be occupied by the shopkeeper. However, there is another interpretation: living close to where we work, as we did in most towns and villages up to thirty years ago.

There remain very few shopkeepers who live on the premises, even in small towns and villages, and the small shop itself is under threat from shopping chains, out of town shopping centres, and filling stations.

So what are our chances of reintroducing genuine living over the shop? Or should we accept as the only realistic goal the second option?

We can certainly encourage, with some hope of success, living and working in the same building, and much of our new development and redevelopment in urban centres provides

apartments over shops. It is much more difficult to retain the integrity of older shopping streets, while providing good residential accommodation above.

This has been proven by the many attempts we have made with our “living over the shop” incentive schemes – LOTS. The first LOTS scheme, founded in 1994, had very little success except in Cork, where more than 110 apartments were created in accommodation above designated shops, and the population of the city centre grew by 2000, with the historic centre increasing by 29%. Why was the scheme relatively successful in Cork, but not in the other designated cities – Dublin, Limerick, Galway and Waterford – where there was huge potential?

The main reason was that the designated streets in Cork were part of a comprehensive Urban Pilot Project for the rejuvenation of the historic core of the city. The area was also a traditional residential area. In addition, substantial publicity was given to the scheme, and the local authority developed two grant-aided projects, which the public could visit. The project was shown on RTE’s ‘Our House’ programme, which raised the profile of the scheme.

Galway was successful in generating a particular urban form, with new developments in the city centre creating residential courts at first – or second – floor level over commercial development. In one of these you can gain the impressive but slightly disturbing experience of emerging from a large car park into a spacious courtyard and then going through one of the two-storey houses and looking down into Eyre Square.

Elsewhere there was very little promotion of the scheme and it was not integrated into local or Designated Area Plans or Rejuvenation Area Plans.

A number of factors were blamed for the failure of the scheme. Flaws in the taxation provisions, as well as a lack of consultation and promotion, were listed in a report by KPMG. A major problem in Dublin was the general perception that the city centre was a place to escape after work and was not an attractive residential location.

This perception changed substantially through the nineteen nineties, so when a new, more comprehensive scheme was relaunched in 2001, there were high hopes for its success. More generous tax incentives were offered, new build extensions were included and greater promotion and publicity was undertaken. In Dublin, six remodelled apartments in Capel Street were undertaken as demonstration projects.

But, in spite of these improvements and promotion, the scheme has had very little success. It has attracted only 28 applications nationwide, with a total of 128 dwellings. So where has it gone wrong, particularly in Dublin, where it was hoped to create up to 2000 new units?

Several factors are still not favourable. Many city centre streets are not suitable for living, particularly where there is a major entertainment focus in the street, as in the main, eastern end of Temple Bar in Dublin; the western end has proved very successful for new residential over retail developments since it does not have any pubs, only secondary retail and some cafés. In Cork, Oliver Plunkett Street would not be successful because there are several pubs and night clubs, whereas North Main Street was successful because it contained mostly retail uses.

It therefore seems sensible to encourage small office uses, as well as residential uses, in order to retain the existing fabric, where it is of high enough quality. This raises the issue of the quality of historic building in our towns and cities, and also the lack of maintenance over the last century. For the first fifty years of the new state, what little money was available was used for slum clearance and building new housing, initially, in Dublin in particular, in the city centre and later, after the Emergency, in the suburbs. In the shopping streets, after the initial effort at the end of the Civil War, very little restoration work was done, business, in small offices, was still carried on over the shops, but as people began to leave the city as a place to live, the better professional businesses moved into the large houses in the Fitzwilliam Estate and deserted the former commercial centre.

Nobody, who could afford not to, wanted to live in the city

centre and indeed in the centre of any of our cities or towns. In Dublin in the mid-nineteen eighties my practice was involved in two attempts, one in Clanbrassil Street and one in Gardiner Street, to build apartments for sale. Durkans built the one in Clanbrassil Street, but had to sell the apartments to the City Council because they could not sell them to the general public, and in Gardiner Street, McNerneys could not make the sums add up and abandoned the project.

Also, in the early 1980s we did a survey of all new housing in Tipperary Town over the previous 25 years and discovered that some 230 Local Authority houses had been built over that period within the town boundary, but only 6 private houses, whereas some 240 private houses had been built outside the town boundary but within a mile of it. This was in spite of the fact that the second family car was not generally affordable and I have memories of young mothers pushing prams down country roads to get to the shops in the town.

The issues, as they stood in the mid 1980's, are set out in comprehensive form in the book *Replace or Retain – Irish Policies for Buildings Analysed*. The book contains 31 papers by a number of public servants, business leaders and consultants from the whole island. It covers economic, cultural, institutional and technical issues. The book made a number of clear-cut recommendations, particularly in relation to Ireland's building stock, which were subsequently taken up by government, including the introduction of proper listing procedures and conservation areas, and the inclusion of codes of practice in the Building Regulations for existing buildings. All these have contributed greatly to the retention and improvement of our existing stock, but a number of other measures, such as the preferential tax provision for new buildings over conversion of old buildings remain particularly in the housing sector and the tax incentives provided for "living over the shop" and the tax incentives of the 1987 and subsequent Urban Renewal Acts have proved insufficient to overcome them. However, there are a number of other factors which act as disincentives.

In my own contribution to the book, I dealt with "the impacts of policies on medium-sized towns" those of 5,000 – 25,000 population, but probably relevant to those of 25,000 – 75,000 population. These towns substantially improved over the previous 20 years and I considered that they held out a greater potential for quality of life than our larger cities; however, there were worrying trends.

"A sprawl of houses and other uses out into the countryside with very little discouragement from existing plans, and certainly little or no particular enforcement of planning restrictions.

As a result of the sprawl, greater demands have arisen for car parking in the town centre and for better access roads to the parking.

A loss of existing uses in the town centre, particularly residential and industrial uses, but also a trend to lose commerce and shopping if the demands for parking and access are not adequately satisfied.

An increasing social divide between the town and the surrounding area, with higher income households tending to be located in the surrounds of the town and lower income households in the towns, most of them in local authority housing.

If we evaluate the long term effects, and these trends are allowed to continue, we see that urban sprawl will occur.

The costs of transport and of providing various services could be too high for the scattered population. The loss of agricultural land may become critical on a national scale. The destruction of scenic amenity will have serious implications for social development and tourism. The blockage of planning options by scattered development will cause much conflict in the future expansion of our towns.

The demand for more parking and better access roads will entail the destruction of many more buildings in our town centres. If the parking is not provided, there will be a growth of more out-of town shopping and commerce and further sprawl.

The loss of residential and industrial uses will lead to our town centres becoming exclusively commercial centres

surrounded by ring roads and parking lots. Most of our building stock will be either in the wrong place or suitable for wrong use and will, therefore, be demolished. The loss of industrial jobs to the areas outside the town will speed the increase of sprawl. Shopping and commerce in our smaller towns are almost exclusively ground floor operations and therefore the disuse and dereliction of upper floors in our predominantly three – or four – storey towns will lead to redevelopment out of scale with the existing townscape and to the ultimate destruction of that townscape.

Many of our medium-sized towns are already becoming the exclusive domain of the less well-off sections of society, the local authority tenant and the elderly, while those who can afford it build in the countryside or in surrounding villages, which are becoming the preserve of the better-off. This is generating social antagonism and economic problems for the urban authorities. Increasing vandalism and theft will tend to drive commerce out of the town, thus perpetuating the trend for sprawl and further exacerbating the problems.

The issues of replace or retain have to be considered in the light of these social and economic problems. Do we really want the above trends to continue? If not, what planning policies must we adopt to reverse them? Do we continue our policies of “do nothing”, leaving it to market forces, and hope that economic pressures alone will change the trend and force people back together in urban settlements, or do we take positive steps to encourage balanced urban growth?

Can we rely largely on public investment in housing and other building to regenerate our urban centres? Can we achieve the containment of our towns by establishing green belts and strong enforcement of plans which prohibit one-off housing around our towns? Or can we reverse the trends by more positive planning measures? I believe that we can, and we must adopt a positive planning policy which harnesses our limited resources to achieve balanced urban redevelopment. It is in this context that this issue of replace or retain is of vital importance.

What shape should this planning policy for balanced urban redevelopment take?

The local authorities should draw up action plans for the central areas of our towns. These would comprise overall plans for the smaller towns and local plans covering areas of the larger towns.

They should assess the impact that the public building programme and public land uses will have on the problem; assess the potential for private investment by establishing likely demand for shopping, office space and housing; analyse parking needs and prepare a programme of action, including road improvements. They should record existing assets in buildings and the urban landscape, examine plans for improvement and new amenities such as pedestrian streets and routes, landscaping, restoration of buildings or whole streets.

They should demonstrate the potential for urban redevelopment by illustrating possible redevelopment proposals, and select key areas for action to encourage private improvement or redevelopment, while acting as a contact between land – or building – owners and potential sources of finance for development.

They should analyse the potential of the property which they own and identify land or buildings where public intervention will probably be required.

Before they move in to purchase particular properties, they should establish probable developers and gear their intervention to realistic financial and development proposals, so that limited public funds or borrowing capacity will not be tied up for long periods.

The revolving fund now in widespread use for building restoration has a useful part to play. It is to be hoped that local authorities can encourage the intervention of more private developers by the examples they produce through programmes such as the above. In this way, problems can be tackled on a much wider scale than would be achieved by the use of limited public funds.

Only when redevelopment proposals are adopted and programmes well under way, can people begin to see the advantages of urban living, and the local authority can start to put on the pressure for containment, and get public support for the necessary planning measures, such as green belts and higher service charges, which will help gain momentum once the above trends have been reversed.

Our medium-sized towns hold greater potential for a good lifestyle in the future. However, we cannot afford to let present trends drift. Only if the reversal of current trends is achieved will there be sufficient momentum generated to make the issue of replace or retain in Irish towns a meaningful one. "We can reverse these trends even with our present limited resources; all we need is an awareness of the problem, a resolution to put things right and a reasonable level of skill in doing so."

Unfortunately we have not reversed these trends and much greater prosperity has exacerbated rather than reversed them. The Urban Renewal Acts and their tax incentives did create, after a few years, the momentum for the growth of the apartment market, particularly in central Dublin, but in most smaller cities and towns, except Limerick and Galway, this has not been successful in reversing the trend towards the wealthier sections of society leaving the towns, and the main urban renewal achieved has been related to commercial and tourist development.

I will examine how our failure to make these policy changes has contributed to the lack of success of 'Living over the Shop' but also to many factors which adversely affect our quality of life.

This is where the quality and condition of the existing building stock, and its poor adaptability, come in. In some European cities, Edinburgh and Bordeaux for example, the original fabric of the cities was built in stone and has proved very durable and adaptable to accept both residential and commercial uses. Bordeaux, with its new pedestrianised centre and interlocking tram routes has an impressive number of residential units in older buildings in the city centre available and obviously popular.

In Dublin, while certain areas of the Georgian core have survived intact, and have proved reasonably adaptable from residential to office uses and now back again, the lesser shopping streets, like Capel Street, have proved less adaptable, and renewal to achieve both residential and commercial over shopping is being achieved by new buildings rather than conversion of old ones. In Dublin, in particular, new developments, even in more suburban locations are becoming mainly mixed use with residential or offices over shopping. However, there remain many buildings, in suburban areas as well as the city centre, of sufficient quality to warrant retention and conversion, and this is even more true in Ireland's other cities and small towns.

There are still a number of factors which discourage renewal, in particular stamp duty, which penalises conversion over new build residential, and indeed has many other negative effects on our built-environment and the mobility and flexibility of our workforce, and indeed discourages people from moving closer to their work.

It is the totally wrong form of wealth tax, which is where the new high rates originated, after the abolition of the property value tax. In addition to a disincentive to move closer to the job, it discourages downsizing for older people, which has resulted in the serious under-population of our inner suburbs, which are the closest to major employment and are best served by public transport. It is also driving more Irish capital into investment in foreign markets. Surely it is time to reduce stamp duty to a level which achieves its original objective of providing funds for the proper registration of property, an aim which has itself not yet been achieved.

"Living over the shop" and other urban renewal incentives have largely taken the form of tax allowances, which have proved ineffective in achieving the desired developments, and are now, rightly, under serious questioning by the Department of Finance. There is another form of incentive which has been raised as being worthy of more detailed investigation by the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution in its report on private property;

this is “Land Value Taxation”. This form of taxation represents a small annual percentage charge on the development value of property. It could be particularly appropriate as an incentive in the case of “living over the shop” because the value of the property to be assessed would include the potential value of the use of the upper floors, as well as the ground floor use, and would be based on the value of similar properties which had been converted in comparable areas.

Land value taxation has much wider implications than on this issue alone. It could be a substitute for other forms of taxation including capital gains tax, commercial rates, and a portion of stamp duty, as I raised earlier.

A number of submissions made to the Oireachtas Committee supporting this form of taxation, which is particularly well set out in the submission to the committee by the School of Philosophy and Economic Science (an economic think-tank), but is also supported by the submissions of Feasta, the Green Party and the R.I.A.I. (Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland) among others. Land value taxation has long been a policy of the Consumers Association of Ireland and this body issued a paper advocating it in 1999. I.B.E.C. (Irish Business Employers Council) also support land value tax and were promoting its introduction recently.

land value taxation was discussed in September 2004 at a full plenary meeting of Comhar and it was agreed unanimously by all representatives, including agriculture and business sectors, to draw up a submission proposing land value taxation to the Minister of the Environment, Heritage and local government following his request for submissions on local government funding.

With the introduction of land value taxation there would be a direct incentive to develop all zoned property to its maximum potential, particularly in towns and villages, which should result in much greater use of existing properties or the redevelopment of those that are beyond repair. However, this will require more detailed Local Area Plans and Protected

Structure listing to give all property owners a clear guide on the development potential of their properties.

The tax would also encourage the development of all zoned land, but the market for urban and village housing will still be difficult until we level the playing field on the development of urban housing versus rural, unzoned housing. Currently, rural, unzoned housing does not contribute to Part V, nor does it contribute to a substantial portion of the service cost incurred by the local authorities or other suppliers such as the ESB which has applied. I cannot see why there is any justification for subsidising scattered dwellings. There is also the question of annual service costs for scattered housing. No research has been done here, but recent research in the United States has shown that the extra cost to the authorities of servicing such dwellings, as compared to suburban detached housing, is between €7,000 and €10,000 per annum.

Now that the Part V legislation has been revised to allow for financial contributions, instead of just the provision of land or buildings, there is no justification for any exclusions from Part V. A motion to this effect was passed unanimously at the conference on Smaller Towns and Villages, in County Clare in November 2004.

It would not be difficult to set out a range of such charges on the basis included in the current legislation. It is estimated that the charge would average about €25,000 per dwelling. If you add to this a service charge calculated on the same basis as current urban sites, at least €15,000, and you still have not added the annual cost of servicing.

We can clearly see from these figures why there is such a demand for one-off housing, it is highly subsidised by the taxpayer, and particularly the person buying a new, urban or village house.

The creation of such a level playing field for all housing development would make “living over the shop”, and all urban locations much more attractive without any need for subsidies.

This leads me to the third interpretation of “living over the

shop”: living in close proximity to our work, and indeed our other social infrastructure, shops, recreation, schools.

The creation of a level playing field for all development contributions, regardless of location, is an essential start, the introduction of L.V.T. (land value taxation) would provide the incentive to invest in development, and the subsequent reduction in stamp duty, and the removal of capital gains tax and commercial rates would eliminate other current disincentives, but we will also need to plan on a comprehensive basis if we wish to create the sort of urban and village development in which nearly everybody will want to live.

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in its 2004 report, *Housing in Ireland, Performance and Policy*, stated in the introduction to its conclusions and recommendations:

The Council is particularly concerned about two issues: the quality of the neighbourhoods, villages, towns and cities being constructed in Ireland, and the provision of social and affordable housing. Two features of the overall argument should be highlighted at the outset.

First, the instruments that can address these concerns are to be found in the areas of planning, urban design, infrastructural investment, land management and public service delivery, rather than in manipulating tax instruments to alter the supply or demand for land or housing.

Second, the Council rejects the idea that a greater quantity of housing must be at the expense of quality development. The Council believes that increased quantity and better quality can be complementary and, indeed, mutually reinforcing. This requires a clear vision of the kind of high-quality, integrated, sustainable neighbourhoods that are worth building.

The magnitude of significance of this challenge needs to be recognized. It bears comparison with two other great challenges that Ireland faced and met in the past half century – the opening of the economy in the early 1960’s [sic] and the creation of a new economy through partnership in the mid-1980’s [sic].

It is similar in three ways. First, it is essential to the social

and economic future of Irish society. Second, it requires a widely shared understanding and consistent action by numerous organizations, both public and private. Third, it challenges not only our established behaviour but, more importantly, the self-perception that underpins that behaviour. The opening and modernization of the economy challenged the self-perception that Ireland was a cohesive society, but one that could not aspire to the levels of material prosperity found elsewhere. The recasting of policies and approaches in the 1980’s [sic] challenged the self-perception that the Irish are a creative and convivial people, but not capable of high-grade manufacture of sophisticated objects. Achievement of the new principles of urban development and social integration seems to be blocked, more than anything else, by the self-perception that Ireland is so attached to extensive development, and so divided between competing interests, that although we can create a dynamic economy, we cannot make quality, sustainable, socially-cohesive, cities and towns.

Since the earlier self-perceptions were confounded by the emergence of a prosperous society and a world centre of engineering and information technology, there is no reason why we cannot prove ourselves wrong again.

In immediate parallel to this statement, Dr. Risteard Mulcahy, the author of “Improving with Age” in an article in the *Irish Times* stated:

There has been a profound cultural change in attitudes to smoking, after a public health campaign lasting 40 years or more. Without such a cultural change, success could not have been achieved.

While smoking may be on the wane, we now have a new and serious increase of obesity in the population. It is described by the WHO as a metabolic syndrome. This pervasive syndrome describes a pattern of biological markers which is associated with obesity and an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, sudden death, high blood pressure, diabetes, and high blood sugar and blood fats.

A public health strategy aimed at reversing the current trend is likely to be much more difficult than the campaign against cigarettes. To succeed we must understand the fundamental reasons at the basis of the metabolic syndrome. These are changing eating and physical exercise habits.

Vigorous exercise was part of the daily life of most workers in Ireland 50 years ago. Transport was by foot or on the bike. Physical work was an inherent part of the job. Many domestic chores involved physical effort. Workers were lean, strong and flexible.

All has changed over the past 50 years. Most adults have cars; the bicycle is little used; and walking as part of daily life is discouraged by poor urban, suburban and rural planning and by safety and security considerations. Children are particularly disadvantaged by poor walking and cycling facilities in our new suburbs, despite the recommendation in the 1995 report of the Lord Mayor's commission on Cycling that all new suburbs should be provided with safe cycling tracks. Our suburban sprawl and long commuting distances are serious disincentives to an active life.

There has been no corresponding increase in leisure exercise. Television popularity, commercial pressures and public policies tend to encourage a sedentary life and the viewing of sport rather than participation. The use of many exercise facilities are discouraged by an increasingly litigious society. Little can be done to increase work exercise. A cultural change, valuing activity, fitness and leanness, is mandatory to achieve exercise in all age groups. In Ireland we have always had an eclectic interest and involvement in sport but currently active aerobic leisure exercise tends to be enjoyed more by the young, the better educated and men rather than women.

Encouraging an aerobically active population will need enlightened town planning, pedestrian and cycling facilities on country roads and a network of paths, lanes and tracks in rural areas, including mountains, forests, open country and farmlands.

My last walking holiday was in France in 2003. Walking 15-18km a day, we never encountered traffic because of the rich

network of tracks and pathways in Burgundy, mostly through farmland and vineyards where it was traditional never to leave the recognized rights of way and where, therefore, there was no conflict with farmers.

We need easy access to gyms and health centres through prescription or tax inducements and extended pedestrian areas in cities and towns; less emphasis on Bertie Bowls and more on sports teachers and sports facilities in schools and colleges. And we need legal reform to counteract opportunistic litigation.

It is unlikely that the metabolic syndrome can be counteracted, even by enlightened public policies, unless there is a profound cultural change where we all take a positive pride in health, fitness and leanness, and where adults, both teachers and parents, encourage children to adopt healthy lifestyles by mutual family participation.

Such a cultural change will bring happiness as well as health but it can only be achieved by a comprehensive programme of public education, appropriate legislation and media support.

These challenges obviously relate directly to issues raised in *Living over the shop* and its broader interpretation. What are the targets we should set and how can we set about achieving them?

Jane Jacobs, the great protagonist for the city and author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, in her recent book *Dark Age Ahead*, predicts that Western Civilization will collapse as other civilizations have collapsed, unless fundamental changes are made. She points out that in a stagnant period of economic progress and low job creation in Canada, Toronto has proved an exception by achieving extensive import substitution and in Toronto, the best example is the major sub-city of Brampton, which is thriving economically and socially. 50% of the labour force living in Brampton work in Brampton, 25% work in adjacent suburbs and 25% in the inner city. Surely this is a realistic minimum target for all urban developments, whether they are suburbs or satellite towns.

Independent towns at a reasonable distance from the cities should achieve much higher targets.

How do we achieve these targets? We should think about integrated communities and forget about segregated zoning. The major lesson to be gained from Poundbury, the new suburb of Dorchester in the south of England, is not the traditional architecture, or attempts to lessen the impact of parked cars, but integration of factories and offices into the new settlement so that 2,000 jobs will be provided together with the 2,500 houses and apartments. Already, on completion of the first phase, there were 600 jobs alongside the 500 homes. This has enabled the opening of a small supermarket and a pub and café as well as local service businesses. The town's major secondary school is nearby, which reinforces the daytime activity. This daytime activity is vital to the life of the community, even if much of it is generated by those who live elsewhere, either in Dorchester or in the surrounding area. On completion of the whole community, it is hoped that a high proportion of the workforce will be living in the community or the larger town of Dorchester.

It should be a requirement of all town or village expansion plans that a high quota of employment space should be included in all development areas. There is no need to segregate most employment uses from residential uses, with the exception of a few large industrial uses or those needing access for a large number of trucks, and many of these, with careful planning, can still be integrated into development areas.

There are models being developed for new, balanced, communities in Ireland. We need to examine them in detail and compare them to best practice abroad in order to reach consensus on models for all our Local Area Plans.

In the major urban context, a number of plans for new, higher density, transport-based communities have been adopted in Dublin, particularly Pelletstown and the North Fringe/Baldoyle, but while they include many of the elements required to create sustainable communities, they have not addressed in sufficient detail the integration of employment uses,

or the programme of physical and social infrastructure in tandem with residential development.

Adamstown, to the south west of Lucan, has had the advantage of being designated a Special Development Zone (SDZ) and this has necessitated the preparation of very detailed plans, including mandatory phasing of all development areas, in conjunction with infrastructure provision, so that it can pass a major public enquiry process before being adopted and subsequently carried out, without the right of further third-party appeals.

The plan is for a new town of 10,000 dwellings, with a population of 25,000, focused on a railway station on the new commuter line from Heuston Station to County Kildare.

The town centre, around the railway station, proposes a wide range of employment uses, as well as shopping and public facilities. Schools and recreation facilities are included and programmed for early provision. Employment is projected at 7,000-8,000, which is not particularly ambitious. I consider 10,000 to be a better target.

To the south-east of the Dublin conurbation is another transport-based string of developments set around the proposed LUAS extension from the Sandyford Industrial Estate to Cherrywood. This area has the potential to generate a network of balanced communities with a total population of around 80,000 and up to 60,000 jobs.

The Sandyford Industrial Estate, along with the Leopardstown Business Park and Centre Park, already provides for over 30,000 jobs. It is now being transformed into a high-density city quarter with substantial residential development as the industrial sheds are being replaced. Further along the LUAS line, Glencairn and Stepside are being developed to a much higher density than the initial suburban housing and an element of employment is being included in the new District Centre. Further employment is being provided at Carrickmines, with local shopping and more intensive residential development. This is reinforced by the adjacent Kiltarnan Village Local Area Plan

which aims to create a medium-density, balanced community, building on existing social infrastructure.

Carrickmines leads to the major new town development at Cherrywood and Lehaunstown. Cherrywood already has around 3,000 jobs in place, and the aim is to create a new town centre, at urban densities, integrating business, residential, retail, recreational and other public facilities, without any segregation of uses. The balance of the town will consist of medium-to high density residential development, integrated with employment and recreational uses and further retail in local centres along the LUAS line. Public transport will be further reinforced by quality bus corridors connecting the town to all other areas of the county.

This type of urban extension promises communities with up to 75% of the population working within the interconnected townships, and public transport links to employment in the rest of the county and Dublin City Centre.

This emerging linear urban corridor has a close parallel in the Thames Gateway in London, which stretches out into Kent along the new Channel Tunnel rail line, with a target of 120,000 houses and 160,000 jobs.

There is the potential to develop a similar corridor when the tracks are doubled along the main Cork railway line from Cherry Orchard to Adamstown, and along the proposed Metro to Dublin Airport and Swords.

The “New Towns” to the west of Dublin are a disaster area of vast single-use zonings, no interconnecting road network and dysfunctional public transport. This is a travesty of the original Myles Wright plan, adopted in the 1960s, which proposed mainly medium-to high-density residential development integrated with employment areas and town and local centres, separated by generous green belts. What he envisaged was development in line with the new towns around London, with separate local government and a programme of coordinated provision of infrastructure, ahead of development. What we got was no separate local authorities, and infrastructure development

provided largely by the private developers, or coupled with extensive public housing. Users were strictly segregated and the pattern of development was, universally low density with town centres being provided after many years of development by large commercial shopping centres.

Blanchardstown, possibly the most balanced socially of new towns, is probably the worst, with its industry and employment located in vast tracts to the north of the N₃, which segregates it from most of the residential areas south of the road. There is no integrated road system, the existing rail line has been largely ignored, and public transport within the ‘town’ is almost non-existent. There is only one road, the M₅₀ motorway, interconnecting Blanchardstown with the other new towns and their adjacent major employment areas, so it is not surprising that it is jammed with traffic. Myles Wright proposed three major road connections between the towns. While these are now being completed between Tallaght and Clondalkin/Lucan, the outer ring road is completed to either side of the Liffey Valley, but there appears to be no intention to complete it, in spite of it being a priority in the current Dublin Strategic Planning Guidelines. The additional outer link road from Clonee to the M₄, which would divert substantial traffic arriving from the north-west into Blanchardstown, has been partly built by private developers, but there are no plans to complete the link to the M₄ or to Dublin Airport, so that when the M₃ and M₂ are completed, even the widened M₅₀ will be blocked solid.

The communities created in these towns are largely unsustainable, the low densities will not support local facilities and they are not directly interconnected. They are too far from employment and major shopping and public facilities. The redevelopment of these towns and several major suburbs into sustainable communities is a daunting task, but it can be accomplished.

It will demand a total change from current segregated zoning policies to comprehensive Local Area Plans, incorporating Urban Design Masterplans, and fully costed and programmed

Infrastructure Plans. Once adopted, these plans will need dedicated staff to coordinate and champion the carrying out of these plans.

Such a plan has recently been carried out for the western Environs of Kilkenny, an area of some 300 acres on the edge of the city. This replaces a previous plan which had involved little consultation with stakeholders or the public and where infrastructure was not programmed or costed. Similar plans in other sectors of the city had proved very unsatisfactory, with badly coordinated open space and road systems, and no programme for physical or social infrastructure.

The new plan provides a comprehensive programme for the development of infrastructure which gives all landowners a clear timetable for when particular parcels of land can be developed and what items of infrastructure they will have to provide and the urban design principles and range of densities they will have to follow. The landowners and potential developers cooperated fully in the formation of the plan. One of them described the adopted plan as the equivalent of receiving outline planning permission for his land.

The consultant team has been reappointed to oversee the execution of the plan and a member of the planning staff appointed to champion it.

Such plans for the redevelopment and renewal of existing urban areas will be much more complex and will involve a much greater number and range of stakeholders. The Cork Urban Pilot Project provides an excellent example of how to carry out urban regeneration; this is being followed by plans for other areas of the city. Several other urban Local Area Plans have been undertaken recently in other Irish cities, but I am not convinced that they have involved sufficient consultation or detailed economic analysis. The Ballymun Regeneration Project in Dublin has certainly been undertaken with a high degree of public consultation and programming, but it did not address in enough detail the issues of the provision and access to employment. Without a fully programmed strategic infrastructure plan for the city, which has

ring-fenced finance available, can there be an element of certainty for key infrastructure, particularly public transport, without which good access to employment cannot be assured.

Ballymun is well on the way to providing the necessary recreational and social facilities and the commercial centre is being redeveloped and expanded, though the plight of the medical clinic has highlighted the problems of coordinating the delivery of such facilities. The provision of new schools in new communities across the country has been scandalously delayed and is responsible for a major element of traffic congestion.

The need for Strategic Infrastructure Plans on a statutory basis for all urban areas is vital, particularly in Dublin. Major progress has been made in the Cork City region, with the City and County authorities drawing up the successive Leaside Urban Transportation Study (LUTS) and the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) and the infrastructure of the area shows the major benefits. There are still major problems in getting the various national providers of infrastructure to commit to the programmes necessary to carry out the plans on an agreed time-scale. The public rail transport plan has now received government funding; it needs to be carried out to an agreed programme so that the urban corridors to Blarney and Middleton can be achieved. If it is, then the Cork area will be able to forge ahead on an assured and sustainable basis and provide a serious counter-magnet to Dublin.

Cork is emerging as an excellent model for our cities, since it has achieved joint action with its neighbouring authority. This has not been achieved in the Limerick area and around other cities. Kilkenny is becoming an example for our larger towns and is certainly proving a self-reliant magnet separate from the Dublin area, attracting new housing and employment with its vibrant city centre.

Many larger towns in the greater Dublin area, such as Drogheda or Navan, are in danger of becoming dormitory towns; they need a much larger element of local employment to make sustainable new communities.

This is even truer for smaller towns and villages, particularly in the Dublin area, but also around our other cities. Indeed, local employment is the key element lacking in so many communities. County Development Plans should select towns or villages for major growth only where proportional employment or the immediate prospect of it is available. An obvious example can be seen in County Westmeath where Rochford bridge, with very little local employment or social amenities, has received substantial residential development, whereas Milltown Pass, with two factories and other employment, a school and other social facilities has received very little.

This planning framework can be created only by a commitment at central government level to incorporate it into our National Development Plan. It can be financed largely and indeed enthusiastically by the various private developers and public agencies when they see the high level of certainty which will be created.

The other major task we face is creating greater public awareness of the issues involved and the lifestyle advantages of living close to work and play for all.

In the new U.K. publication *The Home Buyers Guide (What to look for and ask for when buying a new home)*, the first chapter is about location and encourages the prospective purchaser to “think outside the box” and to examine whether the neighbourhood has all the major elements for living and working within walking distance.

People must be aware that they need to calculate the proportion of their valuable time that will be spent getting to work, the children to school and to leisure activities, to do the shopping and other necessary or desirable activities. Do they want to spend 25% of their waking days sitting in motor cars, as many parents do today?

Recent research by Brian Guskian, quoted in the *Irish Times*, estimated annual motoring costs of €31,300 for a two-car family using the proposed M3 motorway.

The task is still an enormous one, but it is the only way that

the broader principles of “Living Over the Shop” will be realised and many of our citizens will be freed from car dependency, and can join the currently decreasing minority who enjoy the privilege of living their daily lives, within a close framework for the whole family. If this can be achieved, it will certainly create a sustainable future and put Ireland genuinely at the top of the world table for quality of life.



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