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Master Plan for the Regeneration of the Knocknaheeny District, Cork

"When a housing estate is labelled as a problem, its name can take on mythical proportions when used as a metaphor in the mass media making not only the estate, but the built form a symbol of social threat and instability". (Van Kempen 1994)

Background to the Masterplan Study

The neighbourhood district of Knocknaheeny is an isolated hill top site, approximately 1,2-km from the city centre. This residential neighbourhood was created in the 1970s to deal with urgent housing problems and the estate was loosely planned on the 'Radburn principle'. The area has no facilities or amenities and is poorly served by the town's existing infrastructure and public transport. The housing stock – 847 dwellings with a population of 3012 in the Knocknaheeny neighbourhood – is made up of uniform family houses with gardens front and back. The area is described as a 'problem area', these being principally socio-economic, and the population is relatively vulnerable and marginalized from the economic success of Cork and Ireland as a whole.

The built density is extremely low, approximately 11% of the land area, the urban tissue is distended, which is compounded by the low rise nature of the estate and the abundance of ill-defined windswept open spaces. There are no convivial meeting places and there is no centre to the area. The road system is

confused and characterised by a series of cul de sacs and closed-off roads, which are the result of misplaced security measures, and the entire area is bound by an extremely wide peripheral road. These factors have combined to further marginalize and isolate the estate from the city and from its individual areas within.

Cork City Council began a series of refurbishments in 1997 to improve the Knocknaheeny housing stock and engaged Cork-based Wain Morehead Architects. It became evident that an in-depth study into the area was essential in order to treat the problems of urban quality and social deprivation together. WMA together with French planners and urban designers Frapolli Green Chatin were subsequently appointed to establish a master plan for the whole area.

The aim of the plan was to bring the North West sector back into the mainstream flow of Cork.





The process was carried out in three phases:

Phase 1 Research and survey of the general character of the north-west sector of the city.

Phase 2 Neighbourhood project, including a public consultation and participation of residents, the production of three urban scenarios, which addressed the main planning decisions to be made by the corporation.

Phase 3 After validation and choice of the major planning elements, the master plan document was established. The document fixed the type, scale and position of land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, leisure and community); the road hierarchy and modifications necessary to the existing road system; the size and location of open spaces; the scale and density of new building; and the areas to be cleared. It also provided a cost and phasing strategy of the implementation of the plan.

Photography: Gabrielle Morehead Photography

- Public areas: squares, pedestrian areas, footpaths
- 2. Green area public planted areas: tree-lined mall, width 22 m (see detail)
- 3. Wooded area: urban forest
- 4. Local green areas: parks, play areas
- 5. Private gardens
- 6. public park lands: open planted areas
- 7. sports fields

1, 2
The neighbourhood of Knocknaheeny in north-west Cork
3, 4, 5
Proposed refurbishment and new build in Knocknaheeny

