

Waterfront South Central is a landmark whether it is built or not.

The Waterfront South Central proposal¹, (Case no: ABP- 309316-21) including over 1000 apartments and two towers of 41 and 45 storeys, is a landmark in Dublin's development in more ways than one and whether it is built or not.

A physical and symbolic landmark

If built, the scheme will physically dominate the skyline and the riverfront. It aims to be an icon, to define the image of the city and become '*a symbol of what Dublin stands for*'². Unlike the Sydney Opera House, Eiffel Tower, or even the Pigeon House chimneys, it is not a civic or public building but a private block of apartments for employees in Silicon Docks. Maybe 'in thrall to Big Tech and in hock to Big Finance' or 'conspicuous housing in a housing crisis', is an apt symbol of what Ireland 'stands for' in 2021. But is this landmark the symbol of our best selves that we want to impose on or bequeath to future generations?

A landmark planning case

This scheme represents the most substantial material contravention, to date, of the Dublin City Development Plan including the Docklands Strategic Development Zone. It disregards the rules for the site as if rules were meaningless. It is a landmark test of our planning system.

Our planning system needs strengthening, but recent measures that cede authority away from democratic local councils to the centralised, unelected An Bord Pleanala are not long term solutions or a short term success. The adjudication of Strategic Housing Development applications directly by An Bord Pleanala is a temporary arrangement already responsible for permanent damage through approving bloated developments in Dublin 1 and elsewhere.³

Approving Waterfront South Central will set a new scale and precedent for ad hoc planning in a landmark disempowerment of the council staff, of elected officials and the citizens of the city they represent.

A landmark political evaluation and signpost for the future

If the Waterfront South Central scheme is approved, it will be a landmark state endorsement of the financialisation of housing⁴. It will validate the thinking and increase the influence of those who promote and benefit from the current model, including some who use the housing crisis as a cynical cover for investment capital to extract rapid unprecedented profit. It will reinforce a development model that condemns the

¹ <http://waterfrontsouthcentralshd.ie/>

² p2. 2021 Vision + Place Strategy. Waterfront South Central. Wordsearch Place for Waterside Block 9 Developments Limited. http://waterfrontsouthcentralshd.ie/1other_doc.php

³ <http://waterfrontsouthcentralshd.ie/>

<https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/applications-shd>

<https://rebuildingireland.ie/news/new-regulations-to-fast-track-large-scale-housing-developments/>

<https://www.rte.ie/news/dublin/2021/0408/1208680-development-dublin/>

<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/construction/appeals-board-rejects-council-s-proposals-to-limit-docklands-height-increases-1.4519175>

<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/commercial-property/hines-secures-green-light-for-416-homes-in-dublin-8-1.4355397>

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/permission-granted-for-first-co-living-scheme-following-minister-s-ban-1.4537184>

⁴ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/Financialization/OL_IRL_2_2019.pdf

younger generation, even in well-paying jobs, to pay unaffordable prices or rents, and is building a legacy of tiny shoebox apartments packed onto sites without regard for sustainability concerns like accommodating children, working from home or adaptability.

If the Waterfront South Central scheme is rejected, it will mark a positive expression of a country willing to rethink how we address the complex challenges of housing and neighbourhoods. It will be a positive rejection of the thinking that welcomed vulture funds as an unqualified godsend and promoted co-living as a cool lifestyle choice. It could mark an opportunity to learn from the last decade and empower our national and local authorities and our talented built environment professionals to generate better housing solutions, for all of our society, economy and environment.

The decision made is pivotal to the next phases of national housing and urban development policies, as well as policies for financial regulation. The next version of 'Rebuilding Ireland', updates to the Housing Act and the future role of the Land Development Agency are currently at stake. All are critical to how we address our housing crisis.

A Yes or a No in this case is due by 20th May 2021 and will be a clear signal of even more of the same or a possibility to change.

Please visit our site

The Waterfront South Central proposal has had media coverage, but often more about the personalities involved than the wider dynamics and potential impacts of the development.

WTF Dublin is a non-profit group of people from different backgrounds and disciplines who see this scheme as a landmark case that warrants greater public discourse. We want to promote wider awareness and interrogation of the scheme itself through directing people to the information made available by the developers. We also provide context to and commentary on the claims made in the proposal.

We will be posting in future on efforts and suggestions to build a more inclusive, equitable and cohesive society and city.

Please check out and share the attached links:

www.wtfdublin.org

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uW4mgknqT7I>

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