

Emerging Government Policy and Initiatives on Urban Renewal

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General context

Programme for Partnership Government (PfPG), May 2016

- Sets out ambitious priority attached to urban regeneration, dedicated chapter
- Recognition of need for a range of actions/ initiatives

Specific commitments include examination of

- Introduction of scheme to regenerate urban centres
- Establishment of national Register of Derelict Sites
- Mandating LAs with better land management powers



General context (2)

- Reclassifying and incentivising the use of underutilised vacant premises for both residential and commercial use
- Legislation to tackle the under-use and hoarding of land, including derelict land
- Commissioning an audit of land holdings by State bodies and LAs that might be used for housing

Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan (July 2016)

Range of further measures, particularly in Pillar 5 - *Utilising Existing Stock*, most specifically more housing stock



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Introductory remarks (3)

Some measures already announced under Pillar 5

- Repair and Lease Initiative (€140m over 5 years)
- Buy and Renew Initiative (€25m for 2017)
- Purchase by Housing Agency of Buy-to-Let properties on portfolios of financial institutions (rolling €70m fund)

Further ongoing action by local authorities

- Purchase (by voluntary agreement or compulsory acquisition) of vacant housing for social housing - Dundalk



Introductory remarks (4)

Action 5.1

Housing Agency to develop National Vacant Housing Reuse Strategy

- Compile a register of vacant units
- Identify number, location and reasons for vacancies in high demand areas
- Set out a range of actions to help bring vacant units back into use

Action 5.9

“ We will review planning legislation to allow change of use of vacant commercial units in urban areas, including vacant or under-utilised areas over ground floor premises, into residential units without having to go through the planning process”.



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Vacancy statistics

Preliminary Census 2016 data

- 198,358 vacant homes
- 122,941 in rural areas
- 75,417 in urban areas
- Of these, 48,392 in cities, 27,025 in towns

Bringing even 20-25% of urban properties in areas of highest need/ demand into productive use could generate an additional 15-19,000 homes – significant contribution



Conversion of vacant commercial into residential use

What requirements have to be met to reuse buildings?

- planning permission for change of use
- Building Regs commencement notice etc
- Fire safety certificate
- Disabled access certificate
- Protected structure/ conservation issues (if applicable)
- RECI certificates
- Irish Water connection (if applicable)
- Multiplicity of consents, regulatory barriers, costs undermining viability?



Planning permission – existing residential

- Refurbishing existing residential – no planning issues
- Internal works generally exempt, also external works in character with existing structure and neighbouring structures (exceptions in case of protected structures)
- Subdivision of existing residential (more than 1 unit) - planning required due to intensification of use
- Amalgamation of sub-divisions back to original single residential use – planning not required



Conversion of non-residential (review of planning legislation)

- Proposed to introduce exemptions from planning permission for conversion of vacant commercial properties to residential use, including internal works and external works consistent with character of original structure or its neighbours
- Exempt from PP = no development contributions
- Likely to include conditions and limitations as follows
 - Qualitative requirements for accommodation - minimum floor areas, linkages to building control standards
 - Notification of development to LAs (planning register)
 - Limited timeframe (2021? – to be reviewed)



Building control/ standards

- existing housing

- Refurbishment of vacant residential comprising 1 residential unit – no issues
- Refurbishment of vacant residential to multi-unit residential, and
- Changing use from vacant commercial to residential
 - triggers Fire Safety and other BCAR (Building Control Amendment Regulations 2014) requirements including commencement notice etc



Possible new way forward - streamlining

- Planning element more self-contained, easier to address
- Other elements deal with different disciplinary codes, all more building related but with potential conflicting requirements
 - a. fire safety
 - b. accessibility
 - c. conservation/ protected structures
- Dept working with Dublin/other City Councils in context of Living City Initiative, exploring potential for further streamlining - support development of existing buildings



Possible way forward (2)

- Also with Waterford and Carlow County Councils in context of Pilot Repair and Lease Initiative
- LA Multi-disciplinary teams – Planners, Building Control Officers, Fire Officers, Conservation Officers
- Learning from multi-disciplinary team process, to inform
 - common issues, standardising approaches, potential for streamlining
- Outcome of process – guidance document on developing existing buildings in cities and towns
- Supplemented by training for LA officers for national consistency purposes



Possible way forward (3)

- Long term, streamlining the processes
- Dept supportive of working with LAs to bring vacant properties into reuse
- Challenge is how to do this, bring into effect while simultaneously ensuring that
 - systems of control deliver required standards
 - safety and welfare of people in or about buildings are not compromised



Other initiatives

Designated Urban Areas Grant Scheme until 2020

- Enabling capital investments on range of projects in larger urban areas
- €40m funding from EU ERDF, matched by LAs
- Approved projects will cost over €128m

Urban Renewal Scheme

- Details not yet finalised but likely further significant investment in urban renewal and regeneration projects, schemes and initiatives in period to 2021
- Particular focus on addressing vacancy in urban areas



Thank you for your attention

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