



AN

URBAN

VILLAGE



"AN URBAN VILLAGE - MODEL OF GOOD HOUSING PRACTICE"

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- > SDLP proposals for development of the Girdwood Barracks site in North
- > Belfast
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- > The Girdwood Barracks site will be released for public development, very
- > largely as a result of the SDLP's single-minded prioritisation of this
- > issue throughout the talks process. Demolition began at the start of June.
- > When it is finished, approximately 22 acres of land close to the junction
- > of the Crumlin and Antrim roads will become available for community use.
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- > "This is the chance of a lifetime for the social and economic development
- > of North Belfast," said local SDLP MLA Alban Maginness. "Imaginative
- > development of this site can make a huge contribution towards solving some
- > of our most pressing social problems, starting with housing. This is the
- > time for vision."
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- > SDLP representatives in the area want to see balanced, coherent
- > development of this and the adjoining sites of Crumlin Road Jail and
- > Courthouse. Development should be focused on housing, health, leisure,
- > business and employment and take account of the needs of important local
- > institutions including the Mater Hospital and St Malachy's College.
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- > "We have to recognise the reality that this site has some interface
- > problems," said Cllr Pat Convery. "With good design, sensitive handling
- > and thorough consultation we believe it is possible to rise above these
- > problems and serve all the people of the area."
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- > In space terms, the Girdwood site should be developed on the basis of:
- > * 50% social housing
- > * 15% private housing including affordable and co-ownership
- > * 15% leisure and sports
- > * 15% business starter units
- > * 5% roadway and new entrance to Mater Hospital
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- > **An urban village**
- > At the moment there are 2,030 households on the Housing Executive waiting
- > list in North Belfast, and of those, 1091 are in acute housing need.
- > Girdwood has the potential to break the back of the acute housing need

> problem. However, the SDLP is firmly set against the creation of another
> monolithic, soul-destroying estate without proper design or amenities.

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> Girdwood presents a unique opportunity to introduce the highest standards
> and practices of modern urban development. The concept of the urban
> village represents a more natural development of communities on a human
> scale within the wider city, suited to the realities of contemporary
> family life.

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> "We want homes of the highest possible design standard which push the
> boundaries in energy-saving, renewable materials and family safety and
> security," said Cllr Cathal Mullaghan. "We want to see a mix of housing
> types with the emphasis on family homes, including provision for single
> people, the elderly and people of disability."

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> Some units of several storeys may be appropriate for part of this site,
> and this issue must be dealt with early in the public consultation
> process. It is also important that an appropriate mix of small retail
> service units and a community centre are designed in from the start.

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> **Leisure**

> Thanks to the work of the SDLP, Belfast City Council is now committed to
> building an additional leisure centre in North Belfast. This commitment
> has been further endorsed in the Capital Programme. What has not been
> determined is the site for such a centre, and for the moment options must
> remain open on whether this site is the appropriate location for a major
> leisure centre. However, in one form or another, a significant proportion
> of the site must be reserved for leisure purposes. It is proposed that a
> new playing field should be included on a partnership basis with St
> Malachy's College.

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> **Business units**

> There is a high demand for business starter units in the area. It is
> important that these should be designed in such a way that both
> communities have an emotional investment in and attachment to them so that
> they can act as a practical buffer zone in reducing any tension.

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> **Mater Hospital**

> Local people have suggested that consideration should be given to making a
> new entrance roadway to the Mater Hospital from Clifton Park Avenue,
> offering better hospital security than the current entrance from Crumlin
> Road, which might become a pedestrian-only entrance. The Mater Hospital is
> seeking additional land at the rear of the prison site for an
> administration block and we support them in this. It is hoped that there

- > could in time be strong links between the hospital's physiotherapy unit
- > and such leisure facilities as may be developed on the Girdwood site.

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- > **Prison and courthouse**

- > It is important that fabric of these fine buildings should not be allowed
- > to deteriorate. The SDLP sees the development of the Crumlin Road Gaol and
- > the Courthouse as being an integral part of the overall development of
- > this area, and their future should be included in the process of public
- > consultation on the Girdwood site. We propose that the Courthouse be used
- > as Belfast City Council offices, a much-needed addition to the Council's
- > present estate. The Gaol should be developed for community purposes,
- > including possibly a museum reflecting its use through the last century on
- > the lines of Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin. Other parts of the Gaol could be
- > used for more specific community purposes.