
Tallaght: The Planning and Development of an Irish New Town

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Introduction

This paper reviews the development of Tallaght, one of three new towns developed to the west of Dublin. It explores the new-town planning and development process, drawing comparisons between the manner in which the post-war new-towns development programme was undertaken in the United Kingdom. It highlights in particular the limited degree of control over the character and phasing of development which derived from an overwhelming reliance upon the private sector through promoting and facilitating development rather than its being actively undertaken by the public sector itself.

As with the Mark I UK new towns of the 1940s, in a context of having to cater for metropolitan population growth and the aim of effecting a decrease in residential densities in the parent city, it was the desire to control unplanned suburban sprawl, minimise wasteful land development practices and avoid the unregulated phasing of urban development which underlay the reasoning behind Tallaght's development. However, despite these important similarities, a study of the precise manner in which the development of Tallaght was undertaken affords valuable insights into the way in which the execution of new town policies undertaken with similar overall objectives and within similar planning ideologies generated quite contrasting products when they were applied in differing socio-political contexts. In Tallaght, differences in the level of public-sector funding available for development, in the organisational environment responsible for carrying out policy and in the constitutional position of property owners combined to generate very different results to those achieved in the UK.

The first problem was a legacy of British rule. This related to the persistent need to deal with the city's densely inhabited slums of tenemented eighteenth-century dwellings which, as late as 1938, still housed over 111,000 persons at an average density of more than 17 persons per house (MacLaran, 1993). From the 1920s, peripheral growth had been viewed as necessary in order to effect a reduction in central area population densities to permit slum clearance.

A second phenomenon, which was new to the Irish economy since Independence, was economic expansion associated with a rapid population growth. During the late 1950s and 1960s, a resurgence of interest in planning accompanied a period of unprecedented economic growth following years of economic stagnation during the 1950s when 400,000 people emigrated. By 1961, the Irish Republic's population totalled only 2.818 million, the same area having had a population of 3.09 million in 1921. Pursuing a policy of integrated economic development under the stimulus of the Department of

Finance, the First Programme for Economic Expansion (1959) placed strong emphasis on the expansion of non-agricultural employment and involved opening up the Irish economy to foreign capital investment. This was to have dramatic effects as Ireland's gross national product increased at an average rate of 4 per cent per annum, growing by almost 50 per cent during the 1960s. Dublin shared in this growth. Industrial employment in the city expanded by 13 per cent during the decade, while expansion of employment in the services sector exceeded 15 per cent.

The third element was urbanisation. At Independence, less than a third of Ireland's population was urban, with only 32.3 per cent living in settlements greater than 1,500 persons in 1926. By 1951, this proportion had increased to 41.5 per cent and by the mid-1960s over half the population was urban. Dublin gained strongly. As a result of both migration and natural increase, its population rose by over 15,000 annually during the first half of the 1960s, expanding by over 18 per cent during the decade.

The Genesis of Irish Urban Planning

It was in a context of economic growth and faith in the power of planning that Dublin's new towns found their genesis. Largely in response to the problems and pressures linked to economic and population growth, legislation to create a modern formal planning system was enacted through the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 1963, which confirmed local authorities as the relevant planning bodies. The Act imposed a duty upon them to adopt a development plan for their area which would deal with such matters as amenity, obsolescence, traffic in urban areas, sanitation in rural counties and land-use zoning, though the latter was not an obligatory element in the predominantly rural county areas. As Bannon observed:

‘In as much as there was a value system behind the Planning Act, that set of values was strongly motivated in favour of orderly development through growth and expansion’ (Bannon, 1989, 130).

The Act created a two-tier structure, whereby a myriad of plans were to be produced by the 87 local authorities, regional co-ordination of this highly localised system becoming the responsibility of the Minister for Local Government.

In conformity with the optimistic and expansionist spirit of the age, a series of consultancy reports was published during the 1960s dealing with issues ranging from the wholesale regeneration of the north inner city of Dublin (Nathaniel Litchfield and Associates, 1964) to traffic circulation in the city (Schaechterle, 1965). These were to prove highly influential in determining the direction of planning during the 1960s. Additionally, British-based consultants were appointed to advise Dublin Corporation on conservation matters, while Colin Buchanan was commissioned in 1966 to make recommendations to the Minister regarding physical development policies in order to provide for economic development in seven of the nine planning regions (Colin Buchanan and Partners, 1969).

Dublin's ‘Shadow’ Development Plan, 1967

From the early 1960s, there had been a growing awareness among politicians and planners of the desirability of a development plan for the whole Dublin metropolitan area, comprising both the central area administered by Dublin Corporation, which was experiencing a continued reduction in its population, and the expanding suburbs which

lay within County Dublin. The 1963 Act provided a major impetus towards such a plan. A team, advised by Nathaniel Litchfield and Associates, was assembled to produce a draft development plan for the City and County area. The plan admitted to being only 'partially matured' both because of a lack of time and the fact that relevant reports from other British consultants were awaited. These included, most notably, that of Myles Wright, who was simultaneously working to a brief from the Minister to address the strategic expansion of Dublin. Only a preliminary report, produced in 1965, was therefore available to the planning team.

The draft plan was highly schematic, describing broad functional zones and aiming to protect and enhance the economic functions of the city core at a time when it was evident that a substantial amount of physical regeneration was required there. It was also 'seamless', in the sense that its design did not take account of the boundary between the two jurisdictions (Dublin County Borough and County Dublin) but attempted to plan for the whole metropolis. It aimed to give direction to the separate city and county plans which were to be produced subsequently, yet without determining a binding relationship between functional dispositions on either side of the boundary. It sought to achieve a 'better balance in the structure between land use and transportation' (Dublin County Council, 1967, 32) through decentralisation, the expansion of suburban services and employment, infilling rather than permitting unrestricted peripheral development and the improvement of public transportation with interchange points to private transport.

Drawing upon Wright's preliminary report, the Draft Dublin Development Plan (1967) recognised that 'there is sufficient information on the potential areas for development to indicate that the major expansion must be westwards' (Dublin County Council, 1967, 5). Hinting at the possibility of new-town extensions, it foresaw peripheral expansion being 'guided into new forms', with the new settlements being provided with a balanced land use - transportation system (Dublin County Council, 1967, 49-50). It was therefore considered essential that the western periphery be protected 'from any premature development which could prejudice the realisation of the selected plan' (Dublin County Council, 1967, 49). Thus, until the completion of necessary studies, the plan envisaged merely an infilling of the existing urban structure and small-scale expansion of outlying towns. In the case of Tallaght, this involved a rounding out of the population of the village, scheduling some 60 ha. for development. Construction in those locations which subsequently became developed as Dublin's other new towns was to be even more limited, amounting to 2 ha. in Lucan and 4.5 ha. in Clonsilla-Blanchardstown.

The Draft Dublin Development Plan (1967) was discussed by the City Council but neither published nor placed on public exhibition. The schematic approach revealed little detail on how specific areas of the County would be affected. It reached discussion in the County Council at a time when the suburban representatives were increasingly eager to demonstrate their independence from the Corporation and it was poorly received by an authority which increasingly guarded with jealousy its planning prerogative (McCarron, 1998). Evidently, the draft plan would have to be replaced by a new draft giving full recognition to Dublin County Council's independence.

With the benefit of hindsight, much was lost as a result of the draft plan's rejection, particularly its recognition of the need for metropolitan-wide co-ordination of planning and the desirability of a planned suburbanisation of activities. Instead, it became merely

a 'holding plan' which would have to suffice until the Minister made a decision on the adoption of Myles Wright's final report. The draft plan clearly indicates the contemporary thinking in Irish urban planning during the late 1960s. In particular, while recognising the necessity to guide development into 'new forms', a fully-blown new-towns policy was not yet on the agenda. This had to await the impact of Myles Wright's deliberations.

Towards New Towns: The Myles Wright Plan

In 1964, the British planning consultant, Myles Wright, was appointed by the Minister of Local Government, to produce a report on the planning and future development of the Dublin Region, largely to assist in its regional co-ordination. His task was to address the problem of how the Dublin region (Dublin City and County, together with Drogheda in county Louth and the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow) should best cope with its burgeoning population. Metropolitan Dublin, extending into the surrounding counties, was predicted to expand by 275,000 by 1985, while the city centre was expected simultaneously to shed some 73,000 residents. Wright addressed the requirement for 175,000 new dwellings, together with the problems arising from increased urbanisation and traffic congestion. *The Dublin Region: Advisory Regional Plan & Final Report* was published in 1967 in two parts and, although it was never formally adopted, it stands as a seminal document in terms of planning ideology and praxis in Ireland. It was particularly influential in the decision to develop new towns.

An underlying principle of Wright's plan was the assumption that it should function as an instrument of planning co-ordination and integration. It maintained that a regional plan for land use and development helped to translate a social and economic programme into an efficient distribution of roads, buildings and other works in a manner which would prove 'convenient, economical and fine in appearance'. In accordance with the two-tier system of planning, Wright (1967, viii) argued that a regional physical plan would provide a framework for guiding local plans, which otherwise would prove to be purely 'local, negative and rigid'.

The second key principle informing the plan was the need to accommodate the anticipated rapid growth in private transportation without creating congestion in the city. Given the mood of optimism inspired by conditions of economic expansion, it was not surprising that Wright's report should have been underpinned by an optimistic outlook for consumer spending and been imbued with the view that Irish trends in car ownership would replicate those of the UK. Ignoring Mumford's (1961) warnings regarding 'speed' and 'space' as principles of design, the future primacy of the private motor car and an associated decline in the relative importance of public transport became a key determinant of the scale and form of Dublin's physical growth as envisaged in Wright's plan.

'Ireland is coming late into the age of a car for most families. There is every sign that Irishmen, as sturdy individualists and democrats, will wish to use cars fully... Achievement, step by step, of the best practicable conditions for greatly increased motor traffic is thus a main aim of the Advisory Plan, and the prime determinant of where to place new urban developments' (Wright 1967, 18).

He argued that there was no evidence that a suburban rail service could be economically viable in Dublin and that there was no reason to subsidise rail passenger transport 'on social, humanitarian or any other grounds' (Wright 1967, 134). He also rejected high-density development, which might support passenger rail, as alien to the type of development best suited to the western new towns. A final underlying principle in Wright's plan for urban growth was the perceived need to balance a sense of openness with the benefits of an urban location.

'The optimum location in a motor age is one that combines local spaciousness (at home and work) with regional concentration – that is, easy access to a wide choice of jobs and employees, customers, suppliers, and facilities of all kinds' (Wright, 1967, 9).

The implication for the inner city was the necessity for a substantial centrifugal movement of both employment and population. However, constrained by the Dublin Mountains to the south, by Dublin Bay to the east and the airport to the north, only the westerly direction seemed to offer good prospects for expansion. Wright proposed the development of four new linear towns to the west of the existing conurbation, each focused upon a number of small existing settlements: Tallaght-Saggart, Clondalkin-Milltown, Lucan-Palmerstown and Blanchardstown-Mulhuddart. These would be separated from one another by wedges of green space and stretch westwards from beyond a narrow green belt separating them from the existing built-up area. The completed new towns were expected to comprise an area of almost 6,880 ha. and to accommodate a population of about 350,000. Ultimately, they were to be relatively self-sufficient in terms of services and employment, thereby reducing congestion due to decreased commuting to the core. However, some reliance on the existing conurbation was to be expected, at least initially.

The option of creating a new town at a location remote from the existing city (at a distance of 50-60 km.) was rejected on the grounds that the economic and social linkages of metropolitan Dublin were such that the necessary private capital investment could more readily be harnessed in sites close to the city. Nevertheless, it was to be expected that some growth would be deflected towards existing towns such as Kildare and Arklow.

Wright recommended that several different functional areas should be created and planned for within the new towns, using zoning to achieve a balance between residential space, industrial space, commercial space, circulation space and open space. The vast majority of open space was to be reserved for the green wedges between the towns. Reminiscent of Ebenezer Howard's ideas, these were to consist of private, semi-private and public open spaces, to include farming land, demesnes, convents, golf courses, sports clubs, parklands, etc. Within the built-up area, open space was to be provided at the rate of 0.2 ha. (0.5 acre) per 1,000 persons for small informal parks and a similar per capita allocation for play areas within the residential neighbourhoods. The size and form of the residential neighbourhoods were to be determined by walking-distance criteria. Local areas of open space, churches, shops, bars, clubs and other basic social facilities were to be no more than 0.8 km (0.5 mile) from any dwelling, while small shops and primary schools should be no more than 0.4 km away. These neighbourhoods would be low-rise and of low density.

Although Wright recognised that certain industries could be successfully located within other types of functional area, primarily residential or commercial districts, he argued that the best option was to zone areas for industrial use that could be developed into industrial estates. These, he noted, offered a number of benefits to the industrialist. Within the new towns, a dual-hierarchy of shopping and other services was to be developed. The residential and industrial areas would possess only low-order services, while the proposed town centres would have second-order service facilities of all kinds, together with offices.

Generally, to discourage congestion, Wright argued that the traffic system across the Dublin Region should be developed on a grid system based on existing and new roads rather than a radial system. This would involve a hierarchical arrangement involving 'traffic routes' comprising motorways or expressways together with 'access' or development routes, comprising loop roads and cul-de-sacs which structure the residential environment.

Ultimately, the suggested method of physical planning was fairly traditional, involving a blueprint approach orchestrated by a body of 'experts' with little direct consideration for the needs or values of the likely end-users, nor indeed with much room for flexibility or informality in form or function of the future urban environment. Wright's prescribed standards for open space and walking distances coincided with those set down by Perry (1929) who, in turn, had been strongly influenced by the work of Unwin and Geddes. Thus, the origin for planners' prescriptive formulae used in the creation of new communities, or 'magic numbers' as they have been described by a former Dublin City and County Chief Planning Officer (McCarron, 1998), lies within the broad ideological heritage of environmentalism, aesthetics and spatial determinism.

Finally, it is important to note that Wright suggested that a special agency be created to oversee the physical development of the entire Dublin region in order to guide the implementation of the regional plan. He argued that without such an agency to guide the activities of the various planning authorities, insufficient administrative and technical skill would be available to support the plan. This would lead to disappointing performance and, consequently, public disillusionment with the planning system.

Meanwhile, the planners who were working on the local plans for Dublin were somewhat disadvantaged in that there was no indication from the Ministry as to whether or not Wright's plan would be adopted formally. There were several objections to components of Wright's report. The positioning of the four proposed linear new-town extensions failed to take into consideration issues of topography and river catchment basins. Furthermore, the roads engineers, influenced by the Schaechterle (1965) plan, were highly skeptical of Wright's organisation of road networks based on rectilinear grid systems rather than radial routes with intersecting orbital ring roads. Short of large-scale public acquisition of the necessary land, there was also no means of securing from speculative private development the 'green wedges' between the new towns.

Nevertheless, it was clear that Wright's aim of attempting to shape the future growth of Dublin, rather than permitting piecemeal development, was well received in government and planning circles. Moreover, while previous peripheral expansion had been slow and had clustered around or engulfed pre-existing service centres located in former village main streets, as at Drumcondra, Terenure and Stillorgan, more rapid future growth held

the prospect of expansion into areas which were virtually bereft of facilities and service centres. There was therefore wide agreement that something had to be done to provide appropriately for growth. At a time of rapid population expansion in the region, resulting from both natural increase and a substantial net inward migration to the city amounting to some 10,000 persons annually during the mid-1970s, the idea of relatively self-contained new towns was seductive. The development of new towns to the west of Dublin would create sufficient capacity to cater for a substantial element of population growth and the necessary relocation of residents from the densely settled core.

There was also agreement that the metropolitan area required additional population growth to ensure its continued economic significance and provide for the physical regeneration of its much decayed core. Distant new towns, as in the case of those ringing London, were therefore considered inappropriate. Additionally, as the new towns might well be unable to provide adequate employment for their residents, at least in the short to medium terms, proximity to Dublin was considered essential. Effectively, the alternative of developing at a distance from the city would require the political will to risk threatening the economic health of the capital itself. It would also necessitate political agreement about precisely where such distant development should take place. Given the political failure to agree where the Irish 'growth centres' suggested by Buchanan (1969) were to be located, it was highly unlikely that either would be forthcoming.

Planning Arrangements: Coordinate and Promote

Although Wright's (1967) report was never adopted formally by the Minister, certain of its proposals were to shape the subsequent development of the metropolis through their incorporation in the Dublin County Development Plan (1972). This was ensured by the secondment of senior planners from the Ministry to the team charged with assisting the preparation of that plan. It was this plan which was to shape the way in which the western periphery of the city was to develop. It adopted the new town concept, although the number was reduced to three, the two centrally located new towns of Clondalkin and Lucan being merged. Following from Wright's 'green wedges', the Plan preserved open areas between the towns and also reserved land between the three new towns and the existing city to remain as undeveloped open space and to allow for the construction of an orbital main road.

Within the new towns, the Plan adopted a monofunctional approach to the zoning of land uses, the new town 'development areas' being zoned into residential, employment, recreational and circulation spaces. Furthermore, reminiscent of British approaches, it created a hierarchical network of circulation space within the new towns, providing for fast-flowing national and regional routes, primary distributor routes and local roads giving access to industrial, commercial or residential frontages.

In the case of Tallaght, 1,820 ha. of land lying at the foot of the Dublin Mountains was zoned for development, 71 per cent of which was to comprise residential areas, 12 per cent was industrial, 8 per cent was parkland, 3 per cent was reserved for a town centre and 6 per cent comprised roads (Bannon and Ward, 1988). Although it was hoped that the towns would develop with a strong local employment, it was accepted that commuting to the existing built-up areas of the city from the new towns would be inevitable. With this in mind, rail links between the New Towns and the city centre were proposed, though never constructed. The provision of 1.67 ha. of open space per

1,000 persons, subject to a minimum of 10 per cent of the gross development area, was to be a requirement of all planning permissions.

Unlike the British new towns, there were to be no dedicated development corporations for Dublin's new towns, all three of which were scheduled to be developed simultaneously. Planning and administration were to remain within the control of Dublin County Council, whose offices were located on O'Connell Street in the heart of Dublin, some 10 km from the new towns. Neither was the local authority to be provided with enhanced powers to ensure their successful creation. Execution of the development plan relied almost wholly upon the zoning powers of land-use planning to designate land for specific functions in order to guide and regulate the activities of private-sector development interests. This would be underpinned by limited public expenditure on physical infrastructures.

In view of the very constrained powers of local authorities, it is somewhat surprising that anything remotely resembling a new town ever took shape, although some critics might claim acerbically that it never really did, at least not until very recently. Progress involved the herculean task of trying to secure the co-ordination of the development plans with the policies of a wide range of disparate interests, including the Eastern Health Board (hospitals and clinics), the churches (primary and secondary education), the Vocational Education Committee (vocational schools and technical colleges), CIE (Coras Iompair Eireann, responsible for public transport) and the Department of Posts and Telegraphs (telephone provision). The attention of the main agency in the state devoted to industrial development, the Industrial Development Authority, initially proved impossible to engage in this project, its primary concern then being the attraction of employment to the west of Ireland.

Even the development of basic infrastructures posed financial obstacles for the local authority. Although the provision of drainage works and sewerage was financed by the central government, the local authority was at first provided with no additional finance to fund its three new towns. Central government did finance the development of 'non-frontage' main roads, but the local authority frequently lacked sufficient resources to fund necessary road construction or even the upgrading of pre-existing routes. Moreover, some years after the inception of development, at a time when the population of Tallaght was increasing rapidly, Dublin County Council was shorn of its main income base following the abolition in the late 1970s of residential rates (property-based taxation). Almost inevitably, the income which it subsequently received directly from the exchequer in lieu of such revenue failed thereafter to keep pace with inflation (Grist, 1983).

Apart from the construction of certain basic infrastructures by Dublin County Council and of public housing by the two local authorities, the development of Tallaght therefore became primarily an experiment in the ability of a single local authority to facilitate private-sector residential, industrial and commercial development in specified localities. Meanwhile, the provision of urban amenities depended upon the co-ordination of a variety of public bodies' expenditure plans in order to put in place a highly restricted range of public services which, all too frequently, were of indifferent quality.

The Land Question

One factor which possessed major consequences for the development of all three new towns was the right enshrined in articles 40.3.2 and 43 in the Irish Constitution (Bunreacht Na hÉireann) 1937, that land owners should be permitted to profit from the ownership of private property. A political unwillingness to challenge this constitutional guarantee ensured that compensation for the compulsory acquisition of land would have to be made at the full development value, thereby virtually precluding any attempt to deal with the problem of betterment.

Unlike the Mark I British new towns, there was to be no provision for the control of land prices to ensure that the returns from socially created development through planned urban expansion might accrue to the community at large, rather than be garnered by a few private land owners profiting from their fortunate geographical location. Thus, in many respects, rather than representing an Irish implantation of British post-war provisions for new town development, the arrangements for the creation of Tallaght had greater similarity with the urban extensions in the UK which were effected by private enterprise, rather than by public sector involvement, under the Town Development Act 1952 and the Local Government Act 1958.

Bereft of adequate powers to implement the development plan and of the ability to control the most vital development resource, that of land, the local authority witnessed the emergence of a scramble for land between large-scale housing developers desperate to acquire large amounts of land zoned for development. Land dealing became a significant and profitable element in the development of the new residential areas, developers with large parcels subdividing their holdings and selling them on to smaller builders. This gave rise to complaints from smaller builder-developers who experienced considerable difficulty in securing land. Moreover, the acquisition of development land by a disparate array of private sector developers and small builders ensured that any public control of the phasing of development was rendered impossible, conditions prevailing within the private market becoming the sole determinant.

The government did provide a loan of £3M (€3.8M) to the local authorities of Dublin Corporation and Dublin County Council (£1M (€1.27M) annually from 1966–68) to provide for the creation of a land bank. The facility was mainly taken up by Dublin Corporation to acquire 730 ha.. (1800 acres) of land, mainly in the new towns, for public housing and ancillary uses, including some 405 ha. (1,000 acres) of development land in Tallaght.

Private-sector development was directly facilitated by the local authorities. In order to promote affordable housing for low-income owner occupiers, Dublin Corporation had instigated a Small Builders' Scheme in 1969. This involved the provision of serviced sites to private-sector builders, a license being granted to undertake construction on a small number of plots (6–10 sites) which remained in the ownership of the local authority. Title would be transferred from the Corporation to incoming owner-occupiers only upon completion of construction. Licensing permitted effective local authority control over the size, mix and pricing of properties and the policy continued successfully until the mid-1980s. By that time some 4,500 sites had been developed on land previously owned by the Corporation, including some 600 in Tallaght at Glenview, Watergate, Oldbawn, Cookstown and Fortunestown. A similar scheme was operated by the County Council. Elsewhere, building land was sold on by the local authorities for

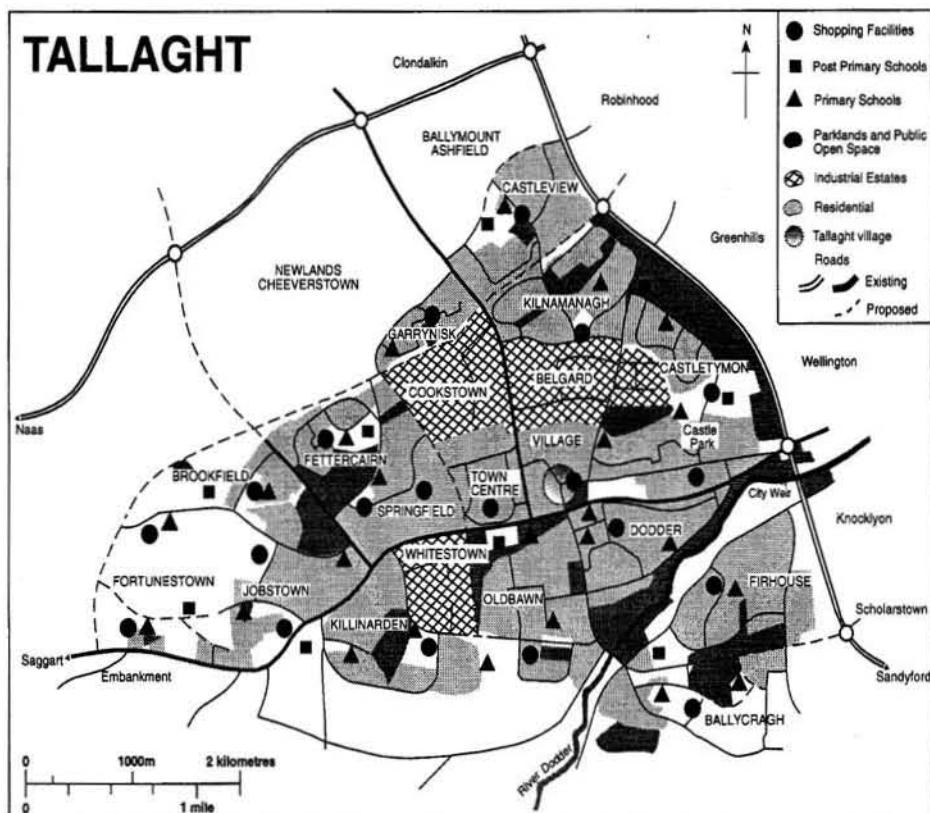
private-sector development, the Corporation alone disposing of 90 ha. (220 acres), upon which around 2,200 dwellings were eventually developed, primarily in the new towns.

The Urban Plan

Land Use and Transportation

Reflecting contemporary planning ideas, the plan for Tallaght (Figure 1) was dominated by the organising principles embodied in the road network, the functional zoning of land and the provision of green space. Transportation planning was founded on the assumption of a virtually ubiquitous availability of the motor car. In conformity with Tripp's (1942) approach to road planning which had been revived in the 1960s by Buchanan, a hierarchical road network was devised similar to that adopted in Harlow, Essex. This comprised primary routes, secondary distributors and tertiary estate roads aimed at limiting the volume of traffic using residential streets.

Figure 1. Development Plan for Tallaght



A fundamental anti-urban planning ethos seems to underlie the stipulation of low housing densities at 24 dwellings to the hectare, an overly generous provision of open spaces at a rate of one hectare per 2,470 persons (one acre per thousand residents) together with substantial green wedges which separate the residential districts. The inclusion of sizeable tracts of open space made the availability of motorised transport

essential for movement around the town. While the car represented a necessary requirement for the town's effective operation, low residential densities also ensured that it would prove expensive to provide an adequate public transport service to outlying residential areas. Yet, as late as 1991, nearly 40 per cent of households in Tallaght lacked access to a car, the ownership rate in the large public-housing districts of west Tallaght amounting to barely 20 per cent. The use of the cul-de-sacs together with low housing densities also increased the cost of providing doorstep public services such as refuse collection and postal deliveries.

The emphasis on low residential densities resulted, at least in part, from a reaction to the appalling overcrowding of the city's tenement slums (see MacLaran, 1993). Far higher residential densities had successfully been achieved in the British new towns, but the products of the British new town development corporations were viewed as quasi-public housing and were firmly avoided in Dublin because of a commonly held belief in County Council circles that sales to owner occupiers could not be effected if housing densities were higher (McCarron, 1998). The consequence was the creation of virtually functionless open spaces, the Dakota-like landscape presenting a striking example of 'prairie planning' (Figure 2). The non-urban appearance of the residential streets is reinforced by the ubiquitous grass strips between pavement and highway. Neither was the urban character enhanced by the regulations for carriageway width stipulated by local authority roads engineers to ensure that emergency service vehicles could gain access to residential areas with ease and at speed. These have resulted in excessively wide tertiary-level roads and a residential environment that lacks any intimacy or visual complexity (Figure 3).

Figure 2. A fundamental planning element in Tallaght is the provision of large tracts of open space

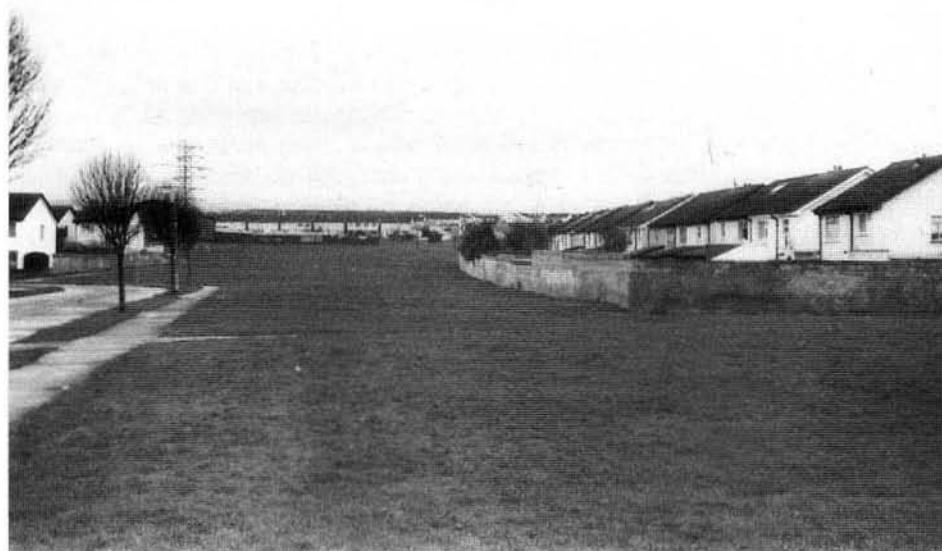


Figure 3. Profit maximisation and planners' development criteria combine to create a monotonous residential environment



A stated aim of the County Development Plan (1972) was to provide for the development of 'residential neighbourhoods'. Yet, it was far from clear from that document precisely what these were to comprise. The situation in Tallaght was clarified by the adoption of Action Area Plans. These non-statutory plans, catering for districts of two to three hundred dwellings, detailed the layout of inter-estate distributor roads. However, the design of residential streets was left to the private-sector developers themselves, ratification of their proposals being sought in the normal manner through planning applications. Clusters of Action Areas produced neighbourhoods of around 5,000 residents, the underlying principle being to develop units of around 1,250 dwellings constructed around a series of focal points, such as community centres, schools and commercial facilities. It was believed that this would foster cohesive communities and create a comfortable urban environment. However, as the institutional and planning arrangements for the development of Tallaght verged on *laissez-faire* guidance and lacked the degree of control found in the development of UK new towns, progress depended wholly on the compliance of land owners and developers.

Residential Neighbourhoods

By the 1970s, although social engineering had become less acceptable as an element of planning praxis, it was an aspiration of planning authorities to create mixed-tenure neighbourhoods in Tallaght. A substantial degree of mixing was effected in the early developments of Dodder and Castletymon, although within these neighbourhoods the

two tenures have tended to occupy separate spatial segments. In general, private-sector development for owner-occupation attempted to avoid locating close to large public-sector housing estates, Firhouse being an example of a whole neighbourhood which was developed by the private sector alone. Nevertheless, a greater degree of inter-mixture at a finer spatial scale has resulted from the transfer of tenure which has taken place through the subsequent sale to sitting tenants of housing which had originally been developed by the local authorities.

The mixed-tenure estates which planners had hoped to create in west Tallaght generally failed to materialise to the desired degree because the private housing element proved difficult to sell to owner occupiers (*Irish Times*, 6 Sept 1989). These areas were therefore developed essentially by the public sector. Moreover, in owner-occupied housing estates situated close to large, increasingly residualised, public housing areas, the second-hand market proved exceptionally weak during the 1980s. Indeed, Murphy (1990, 1992, 1994) found evidence of de facto red-lining of such areas by those same mortgage lending institutions which had facilitated their original development a decade earlier. For those who had embarked on the first rung of what they had believed to be an upward housing ladder, this caused immense difficulty in reselling properties.

The majority of residential development in Tallaght was undertaken by private-sector developers building for owner occupation, accounting for over 60 per cent of the total by 1985 (Planning Department, Dublin County Council, 1987). It has generally been characterised by conservatism in layout design in order to create for a mass market a product that was acceptable to the highly conservative mortgage lending institutions. In 1973, a three-bedroomed semi-detached house could be purchased for £6,500 (€8,250). Dwellings normally possessed a small garden to front and rear and was developed at a low density of 24 dwellings per ha. (10 per acre), with a reservation of 10 per cent of land devoted to public open space.

Although a degree of variety in layout and housing design is present, if only because of the rolling topography of the site and the plethora of developers who had undertaken operations, three-bedroomed two-storied terraces and semi-detached dwellings predominate. Brick is encountered only infrequently due to the almost ubiquitous use as walling material of the cheap nine-inch cavity block which relies upon cement-rendering and an emulsion finish for waterproofing. Clean-sweep development, involving the removal of trees and hedges to maximise economy and profitability in the design of the layout, further robbed localities of the potential for early maturity of townscape as one would have encountered at a similar stage in the development of UK new towns such as Harlow, renowned for its landscape architecture. The landscape which has emerged is profoundly monotonous and a visual testimony to developers' profitability criteria. Moreover, the inadequacy with which planning conditions were officially enforced saw developers often failing to provide adequate footpaths, public lighting and play spaces. This led to frequent agitation from residents' groups lobbying to ensure that developers properly completed housing estates to required standards.

If private-sector layouts showed little invention, those of the public sector rarely exhibited greater imagination. These accounted for some 38 per cent of the residential units which had been constructed by 1985, Dublin Corporation having been responsible for the development of some 1,500 houses annually throughout the 1970s until the mid-1980s. The schemes developed by Dublin Corporation at Killinarden (Figure 4)

illustrate the evolution of ideas about layout. Having been preoccupied during the 1960s with the design of inner-city flats, cottage housing development became the least glamorous element of the Corporation architects' activities (MacLaran, 1993). Layout progressed from one based in the early 1970s on rectilinear arrangements of long, straight terraces serviced by wide straight roads. By the late 1970s, the design of Cushlaw Park had become slightly more sophisticated, incorporating a curvilinear road layout. In the early 1980s, Donomore Park reveals a layout which was based on short cul-de-sacs together with far greater informality in the positioning of individual houses. More innovative was the adoption of Radburn layout principles in the public housing development at Castle Park Estate, providing for vehicular access to the rear of dwellings, although this has become less than visually attractive with the subsequent development of a shanty-like township of garages in back gardens (Figure 5).

Figure 4. The evolution of lay-out patterns in Killinarden, Tallaght

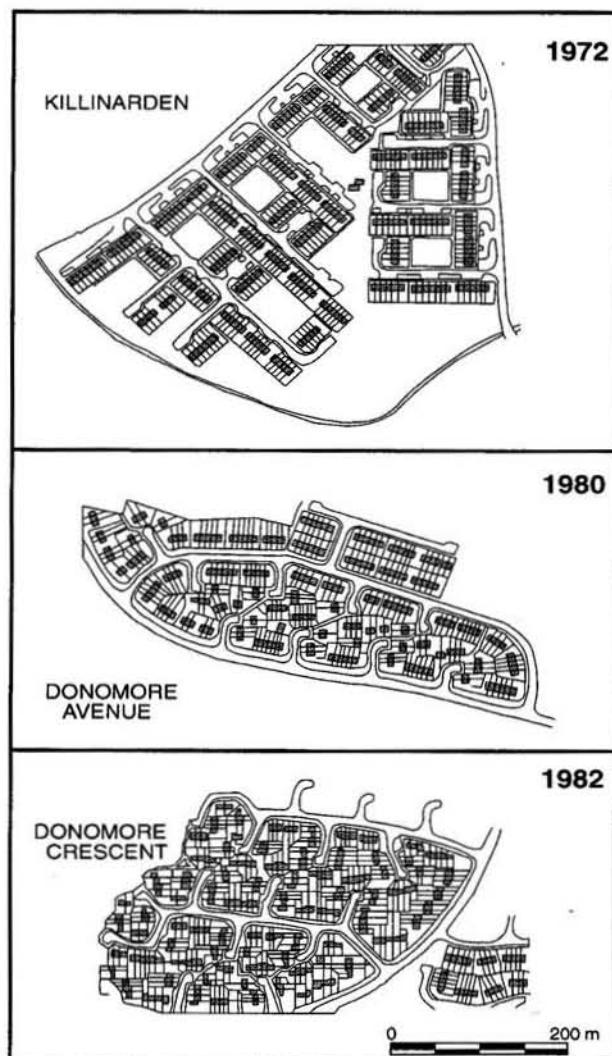


Figure 5. Radburn planning embellished by a shanty-town of garages*Services and Amenities*

Compounding the deficiencies created by the absence of a development corporation with both executive functions and powers of implementation, it soon became apparent that Dublin's was to be a new-towns policy on the cheap. The lack of power to effect the creation of community facilities, together with the inability of planners to control the phasing of private-sector residential development, resulted in the creation of isolated housing areas which long remained unserved by facilities. However, the vitality of the voluntary organisations located in the town helped to assuage the impact of such underprovision. One example is the Tallaght Welfare Society which originated in 1966 from local disquiet about the land dealing, rumours of imminent far-reaching changes and private- and public-sector acquisition of land. The objective was to meet the varied welfare needs of a rapidly expanding urban area and a range of information and social services were developed to this end (Lavan, 1981).

Neighbourhoods were designed so that no dwelling would be more than 400m from a shop. But the local authority was unwilling to risk *ultra vires* action by developing neighbourhood shopping centres itself or run the risk of being unable to sell on such shops to recoup the development cost. Thus, the local authority was unable to provide an element of rent allowance to induce local retailers to begin trading before the market potential of full and final development had been realised, as had been possible in UK new towns such as Harlow. Instead, the reserved land was simply made available for private developers to purchase. Few showed any interest. Some neighbourhood shopping centres were developed by people keen to develop the adjacent public house. However, problems were encountered even here. Public houses in proximity with

neighbourhood schools were viewed with disapproval by local residents (McCarron, 1998). Furthermore, regulations for the provision of drinking establishments in county council areas required that no public house could be opened within 800m of an established hostelry.

In 1991, at a time when Tallaght contained a population of more than 70,000 persons and comprised the third or fourth largest urban area in the state, its administration remained appropriate to a rural district. Even after the administrative restructuring of the Dublin area in 1993, none of the new towns gained a separate administration. However, by the mid-1990s, Tallaght did accommodate the headquarters of South County Dublin Council, whose administrative area also includes substantial areas of south-west suburban Dublin together with the new town area of Lucan-Clondalkin.

Today, the neighbourhood centres present a somewhat sorry visual element of the contemporary townscape (Figure 6) detrimentally affected by rising levels of personal mobility and the opening in 1990 of a shopping centre at The Square, a flagship development located on a site long reserved for Tallaght's town centre. This belated development comprises a 55,740 sq. m. multi-level shopping mall accommodating over 130 shops, nine restaurants and a 12-screen cinema. However, it was only brought to fruition following the government's decision to grant the greenfield site Designated Area 'urban renewal' status. This allowed it to benefit from significant tax concessions for investors, tax allowances for tenants and a ten-year abatement of commercial rates (see MacLaran, 1993). During the 1990s, the incentives also stimulated the development of 24,000 sq. m. of office space, a multi-storey car park and the construction of a hotel. The opening of a third-level college and a regional hospital in the late 1990s have further contributed towards the transformation of Tallaght from a dormitory suburb into something more reminiscent of a town.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, daily life in west Tallaght required considerable pioneering spirit and fortitude of constitution. For example, Killinarden, with a population of 8,000 in 1994, possessed no supermarket, phone kiosk, police station, dentist, clothes shop, bank, credit union or building society. Fettercairn was developed from 1978 onwards but had its main construction phase after 1981. It comprised 870 dwellings by 1985, but by the end of the decade its services comprised only one local shop, two public phones and a grounded shipping container operating as a retailing facility (*Irish Times*, 6 Sept 1989).

Figure 6. Neighbourhood stores at Brookfield, West Tallaght

In an area of low car ownership rates, even if households did have access to a motor vehicle, this tended to disappear each morning taking its owner to work. It was a particularly isolating experience for women seeking to raise children in far-flung mono-functional housing estates. Shopping involved a lengthy trek, often with several young children in tow, along ill made-up paths or pot-holed roads to the village stores in old Tallaght, which were adequate to serve only the original pre-new town population. It was said that women from west Tallaght who shopped in the village stores could be identified by their being covered in mud from the walk (Irish Times, 6.9.89). Residents of districts poorly served by shops were obliged to rely on travelling vans to purchase basic food items. Others preferred to make a weekly trip to the centre of Dublin to shop in Thomas Street or Meath Street in the Liberties area of the inner city whence many had originated.

However, even travel to central Dublin by public transport proved difficult from the western districts of the new town. By the time it reached Tallaght, the existing city-bound bus service from Blessington would frequently arrive full. Nonetheless, the provision of additional bus services was long delayed. CIE refused to operate on roads that had not yet been taken in charge by the local authority. Nor could buses enter estates where there was no provision of a turning circle. Yet developers were unwilling to undertake the costly provision of turning areas as an interim measure on half-finished estates because, when completed, the eventual layout of the estate would provide for through circulation. Furthermore, CIE timetables and rosters were based on existing route lengths. Their extension to serve west Tallaght would therefore have involved rescheduling of services and changes to crew rosters, necessitating overtime payments or the engagement of additional crew (McCarron, 1998).

Only in the provision of schools was there any degree of successful co-ordination. Normally, the provision of primary schools was the responsibility of individual

parishes. However, it was recognised that this was inappropriate for a rapidly expanding population where considerable foresight and planning co-ordination were required. This responsibility was therefore taken over by a diocesan secretariat which liaised with the Primary Schools Liaison Committee of the Planning Department. This committee held monthly meetings to discuss the implications of development progress for existing and future Action Area Plans. Officers from the Department of Education concerned with forward planning, architectural design and the inspectorate assisted in the definition of optimal school provision, favouring primary schools of 32-classroom size, which were appropriate to neighbourhood units of 5,000 residents.

Population Structure and Social Problems

Table 1 shows that the demographic composition of Tallaght's population in its early years comprised a high proportion of children and young adults. In both 1981 and 1991, over 48 per cent of Tallaght's residents were under twenty years of age. Population growth and the expansion of the workforce were later to impose a major demand for the creation of new employment as large numbers annually reached school leaving age.

Table 1. Demographic Structure of Tallaght

	Tallaght (1981)	Tallaght (1991)
0-4	20.0	10.8
5-9	14.8	13.2
10-14	8.8	14.4
15-19	4.9	10.7
20-24	6.2	6.5
25-29	13.2	6.5
30-34	13.5	7.9
35-39	7.5	9.0
40-44	3.9	8.5
45-49	2.2	5.1
50-54	1.5	2.8
55-59	1.0	1.6
60-64	0.8	1.1
65-69	0.7	0.7
70-74	0.5	0.6
75+	0.4	0.7

Source: Census of Population, 1981, 1991.

Although significant decentralisation of industrial activity did take place to industrial estates in the new town, employment creation fell woefully short of what had been envisaged because much of the space on the industrial estates was developed for warehousing rather than for labour-intensive factory employment (MacLaran and Beamish, 1985). In line with general trends in the Dublin region, manufacturing decline in recent decades created further difficulties. Between 1976 and 1996, Tallaght lost 27 per cent of its manufacturing employment (Drudy and Punch, 1997). Moreover, during the 1990s, a shortage of serviced land suitable for further industrial development emerged. Office employment long failed to materialise, although some office development belatedly took place in the Designated Area adjacent to the central shopping mall from 1994 (MacLaran and O'Connell, 2001).

In spite of the dominance of owner occupation in Tallaght's housing, 70 per cent rate of which was owner occupied, the under-representation of professional and managerial workers was considerable (see Table 2). This is reflected in the low proportion of residents with experience of higher education, amounting to just 9.1 per cent in 1991, compared to 24.1 per cent for the whole Dublin region. Moreover, the problem of rising unemployment became acute during the long recession of the 1980s. By the end of the decade, male unemployment exceeded 56 per cent in Fettercairn, 50 per cent in Killinarden and 47 per cent in Jobstown (*Sunday Business Post*, 19 Aug 1990). By 1991, unemployment in Tallaght as a whole amounted to 22.9 per cent, considerably higher than the level for the Dublin region as a whole, which stood at 17.8 per cent (Census, 1991).

Table 2. Social Structure of Tallaght, 1991

	Dublin	Tallaght Region
Higher prof., managers & large proprietors	5.3	13.7
Lower prof., managers & small proprietors	10.2	14.8
Other non-manual	18.2	20.6
Skilled manual	28.8	15.6
Semi-skilled manual	15.6	10.6
Unskilled manual	11.3	12.0

Source: Census of Population, 1991.

In 1984, an important policy initiative was the introduction by the government of a grant of £5,000 (€6,348) to public-sector tenants who relinquished their tenancy in order to move into owner occupation. Although this 'surrender grant' was intended as a cheap way of creating availability in the public housing stock, it had a profound impact on the social geography of west Tallaght, with its sizeable public housing areas. In many of the less desirable public-housing districts, the availability of the surrender grant together with cash grants available to all first-time purchasers of newly constructed dwellings, resulted in a large-scale exodus of those households whose adults were in permanent employment and who had the capacity to obtain mortgage credit. Within three years, over 1,000 households moved out of public housing in Tallaght, mainly from the western part of the town, 17 per cent of households in west Tallaght having availed of the grant in 1985 alone. Of the 177 houses vacated in Fettercairn, 95 were subsequently occupied by jobless families. Unemployment in the district rose from 54 per cent to 68 per cent within a twelve month period (*Irish Times*, 22 Aug 1987). By mid-1986, 113 families had left Jobstown, which then had an unemployment rate of 61 per cent (*Irish Times*, 11 June 1986).

Vacated dwellings became the target of vandalism and drug squats. In 1988, 32 vacant houses in west Tallaght had their internal fittings stripped and were damaged to a value of £320,000 (€406,316) (*Sunday Tribune*, 7 Feb 1988), inciting one County Councillor to call for the army to be deployed to protect vacant dwellings (*Irish Times*, 24 Oct 1986). Through the late 1980s into the early 1990s, deprived households constituted a growing proportion of west Tallaght's residents. By 1991, lone parent families comprised 29 per cent of the households in Fettercairn, 26 per cent in Killinarden and 31 per cent in Jobstown (Census, 1991). Indeed, such was the enormity of the

difficulties under which the residents of Killinarden were obliged to live, suffering from a real unemployment rate of around 80 per cent, high rates of crime, addiction to hard drugs, joyriding and few urban facilities, that the indifference of the Irish class system towards the least advantaged was compared to that of the apartheid system of white South Africa (*Irish Times*, 9 Mar 1994).

Conclusions

Although the problems underlying decisions to develop the UK's Mark I new towns and those to the west of Dublin had certain similarities, generally relating to projected population growth and the need to deal with congestion in the existing conurbation, and while there were also similarities in the ideologies and broad physical blueprints, the final products were markedly different in critical ways. In both cases, one can identify the legacy not only of planners' indoctrinated concerns for aesthetics, the benefits of spatial order and a faith in 'magic numbers', but their overwhelmingly optimistic and ideologically conservative belief in the benefits which capitalist growth could deliver. However, profound differences lay in the practical application of planning ideology and in their processes of planning and development, which were embedded in different institutional and constitutional contexts.

In the UK, the entire development process was tightly controlled by Development Corporations endowed with widely ranging powers, enabling them to purchase land at current use value and proceed directly with the development of basic infrastructure, commercial and industrial property, housing and urban facilities. However, sweeping powers of planning and implementation did encourage design imperialism in which architects working for the public sector were able to work unhindered by any normal market requirement that the product meet acceptable levels of design criteria set by prospective occupiers. At best, this had the effect of generating a heterogeneous residential landscape. At worst, architects occasionally seemed to work to a brief aimed at appealing to other members of their profession rather than to tenants. Inevitably, some experiments failed to stand the test of time and of 'livability'.

In the case of Tallaght, somewhat contrary to the broad role for planning which had been envisioned in the Act of 1963, planners had little power. Instead of establishing and empowering a single corporation to oversee and lead the new town's development, the creation of Tallaght was contingent upon the complicity of a range of actors, primarily private-sector developers and land owners, as well as the disparate array of state and semi-state bodies which were relied upon to participate in a generally piecemeal process. Moreover, the constitutional guarantee to private property ownership was believed to preclude addressing the question of betterment. This ensured that any increments in land values arising from urban growth could not be captured for social ends. In guaranteeing the protection of landed interests, De Valera's Constitution of 1937 effectively represented the legal triumph of the Irish propertied class, which was eventually to be paid for by the working class through hugely inflated land prices. This became reflected in higher than necessary housing plot prices and resulted in a reduced capacity of the local authority to fund adequate community facilities.

In Tallaght, the planning and institutional arrangements and the development process itself contained inherent contradictions in terms of the social costs, the financial returns accruing to private sector interests and the physical quality of the end product. The main beneficiaries of the entire process were the developers and landowners who were best

positioned to take advantage of the local authority's reliance on private-sector activity to undertake much of the residential development. At the same time, significant costs were imposed on the prospective residents, who effectively had least input into the control and management of the new urban environment. The bankruptcy of imagination in design and landscaping, the clean-sweep approach to development and the imperatives of private-sector profit maximisation conspired to create a monotonous suburban landscape.

Moreover, the under-funding of the local authority and the inability of planners to control the phasing of development resulted in the construction of housing areas which long remained unserved by any facilities which were beyond the logic of private sector provision (Bannon and Ward, 1988; Ronayne and Duggan, 1990). This is encapsulated by the introduction to a report on community and social services by the chairperson of the Tallaght Welfare Society:

‘The story of Tallaght is one of neglect. Despite representations throughout the years, nothing has changed. The nature and structure of development create built-in limitations to personal and family development... It is just not realistic to locate 70,000 people in the largest suburb in Europe, without services, to “christen” it a town, and then expect it to work’ (Tallaght Welfare Society, 1988, 1).

Unlike the Mark I UK new towns, where physical planning and the process of development prioritised social and welfare requirements, the minimal degree of public-sector control in Tallaght allowed little provision for the needs and values of residents. It created a ‘town’ with few services, health centres, community facilities, or recreational amenities. These were accommodated in a plan which was structured around private transport requirements, mono-functional zoning and open-space standards. The efficient zonal segregation of functions, the low density of development, the vast tracts of open space, the rapid rate of expansion and the assumed primacy of the motor car effectively expanded the ‘distances’ of everyday life in Tallaght, leaving many services, amenities and other public facilities beyond easy access for much of the population. The high proportion of car-less households were especially disadvantaged.

Undoubtedly, Tallaght would have been more successful had many of its neighbourhoods not been dogged by such extraordinarily high rates of unemployment. Its physical plan might have been appropriate had its households possessed incomes sufficient to permit universal multi-car ownership. Instead, particularly for the residents of west Tallaght, the social meaning of the new estates could best be described in terms of isolation, unemployment, the harshness of the environment, a near-total absence of urban services and a disrupted network of family and community support which had been enjoyed in the inner city where many households had previously lived. The emergence of problems with delinquency and drug abuse merely exacerbated an already difficult situation (see Punch, 2002).

Ultimately, the development of Tallaght provides an interesting contrast with that of the UK Mark I new towns. The Irish case reflects many of the classic themes of planning praxis and of the problems engendered by relying primarily on the private sector to fulfill public-sector plans through promoting and facilitating development rather than by

actively undertaking development directly, which could have permitted greater control over the whole development process.

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