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Marino at 100: A garden suburb of lasting influence

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Abstract: Almost a century ago, Dublin Corporation began the detailed planning for its first large-scale suburban development. The intention was to build according to high ideals and high standards. Marino would be a garden suburb, following the then new Tudor Walters norms for the better-off working class and be a major step in solving the housing crisis in Dublin. Dublin Corporation had a point to prove, having been subjected to a stinging (and in the members' view, unfair) rebuke in the 1913 inquiry into the housing of the working classes in Dublin. A fine suburb was indeed constructed, which remains a prime residential area to this day. During the development process, Dublin Corporation found itself having to make policy decisions quickly which had far reaching consequences. What began as pragmatic responses to current circumstances came to be some of the defining principles which underpinned social housing (and some private housing) provision in Dublin for most of the century. As Marino approaches its centenary, it is appropriate to revisit the area and reassess its importance.

Keywords: *Tudor Walters, Dublin, housing, reserved areas, tenant purchase, shopping, low density.*

Getting Started

It is now almost one hundred years since the planning for Dublin Corporation's first complete garden suburb in Marino began to take shape, though the earlier Ceannt Fort development had some elements. It turned out to be more than a housing estate because in the development and execution of the scheme many concepts, even principles, emerged which influenced the city's approach to housing for decades. These included tenant purchase and reserved areas as well as a new system of housing allocation; all within a scheme which was intended to be a model one. Though it has long been absorbed by the

city, its distinctive landscape remains and it would be instantly recognisable to the first residents in the 1920s. This paper examines the development process in Marino, focusing on those aspects of its planning which gave it its spatial character, as revealed in rarely seen plans. A complimentary focus is on the working of the tenant purchase process and on the genesis of the reserved area policy.

The beginnings were accidental. Dublin's severe and long-standing housing problems had been exposed in a Local Government Board sponsored inquiry undertaken in 1913, which showed that the surface of the problem had barely been scratched and that the Corporation's output over the previous thirty years had been inadequate, even when its work via the Dublin Artizans' Dwelling Company was taken into consideration (Housing Inquiry, 1914; see Aalen, 1988, 1990). While the members of the Corporation felt that they had been unfairly criticised in the report and that, all things considered, they had done well, it was recognised that there had to be a major acceleration of building (Report 20/1914).

Even before the Housing Inquiry, Dublin Corporation's Housing Committee had been contemplating developing Marino. In the early years of the twentieth century, there was strong interest in the emerging concept of 'town planning' in Dublin (see Bannon, 1985) and in 1910, the municipal council (hereinafter 'council') considered a suggestion that land in Marino might be developed on 'garden city lines'. It was a plot of about 50 acres (20ha) which had been sub-let by the Christian Brothers to a Mr James Walker (Figure 1), though the ultimate owners were Dublin Corporation as part of the city estate. Most of the land seemed not to be in productive use and, judging by later events, the house, Marino House, must not have been in great repair.

Mr Walker had been anxious to develop this property for some time but he needed the co-operation of Dublin Corporation because of the terms of his lease. He had made overtures to the Corporation but these had not obtained the desired result. The idea was revived at a meeting of the Clontarf Ratepayers' Association at which it was proposed that Mr Walker be asked to restate his offer to the Corporation and that body be respectfully asked 'to afford Mr Walker facilities for undertaking this commendable project, whereby a large number of artizans and labourers will be afforded employment and the city as a whole benefit from the increased rating resources resulting from the erection of the buildings' (*Freeman's Journal*, 20 October 1910, p. 9). The presence of a number of aldermen and councillors on the

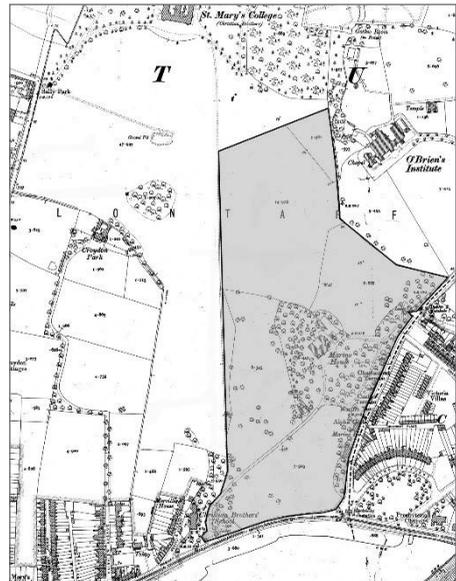


Figure 1. The Marino site marked on Ordnance Survey plan 18(IV), 1911.

platform, including Councillor Briscoe (see below), ensured that the Corporation was receptive to the proposal.

Mr Walker duly wrote to Dublin Corporation and his letter was considered at the council's monthly meeting on 14 November 1910. The speed with which the letter was written and found its way onto the agenda in the form of a fully developed proposal suggested that the matter had been under active consideration by both proposer and supporters for some time. Nonetheless, Mr Walker continued to maintain that the idea had come from others but that he was pleased to support what would be a good outcome for the city; a miniature garden city (*The Irish Times*, 19 November 1910, p. 11).

The cost to the city in developing the land was estimated at £50,000 and a motion in the name of Councillor Briscoe asked the Estates and Finance Committee to examine the proposal. Mr Briscoe was an enthusiastic supporter of the garden city idea and he noted that he had recently visited the UK and he was convinced that this was the way to build houses. Not everyone agreed and the motion that was eventually passed replaced the reference to a 'garden city' with the more generic 'houses'.

It was not until 1911 that the matter was considered in detail (Report 270/1911) and the initial reaction was not entirely enthusiastic. The report from the Estates and Finance Committee pointed out that Walker's property was only part of a larger lease of 228 acres which would lapse in 1921. It also became clear that Mr Walker's proposal was not entirely altruistic. In asking for a reversionary lease from Dublin Corporation, the ultimate owners of the property, he would ensure his continued ownership and ground rent income. He also wanted to control the development. His intention was that Dublin Corporation would build '£30 per annum' houses on the 'backwards part of the site' with the implication that more expensive housing would be built by him on the better sites. This was not in keeping with the principle that the houses would be for the better class of artisan.

There was also a cooling of enthusiasm from the Corporation's own officials.

It is quite true that the Corporation have from time to time advocated the building of artisan dwellings in the open country adjoining the city but in doing so we always felt that the erection of dwellings should be contiguous to large centres of industry and employment – for example, Kilmainham, close to the Inchicore Railway Works; Bride Street, contiguous to Guinness' and the other large employment centres, Townsend Street, for the workers on the quays – whereas this site, being removed from the centres of employment, will not, in our opinion, be a suitable position for the erection of working-class dwellings (p. 881).

They were reflecting on their experience in building at Conquer Hill, Clontarf, in 1905 (McManus, 2002), which had not been entirely satisfactory as tenants complained about being too far from their employment. The report to the council was without recommendation and Mr Walker's specific proposal proceeded no further. This was not the end of the matter for the site though; there were other options to be considered. Some preliminary planning of the Marino site was done in 1911 with one option being a development on the lines of what was being built in London's Hampstead Garden Suburb

(see Frazer (1995) for a discussion on the Local Government Board) and the Corporation came to the view that it was pointless getting land on which it could not afford to build. So, this early flurry petered out and nothing was done. The land at Marino eventually fell into its hands though, via the war-time government requirement that idle land be pressed into food production. Control passed to the Land Cultivation Committee, who put it to allotments. But as of 9 December 1918, it was again available for housing.

This was not Dublin Corporation's only project. There was absolutely no doubt that many Dubliners were living in appalling conditions (see Cowan, 1918). The work of Dublin Corporation's sanitary staff under the direction of the Chief Medical Officer for Health, Sir Charles Cameron, ensured that the problem was well known, if not well addressed. Despite the goad of the Housing Inquiry, it was not until 1918 that Dublin Corporation found itself in a position to respond and part of the response was to undertake a survey of the north city. This was seen to be 'essential in the drawing up of a programme to meet the insistent demand for healthy housing accommodation for the enormous section of the population in need of relief in this respect' (Report 13/1918).

Although it was a report of the Housing Committee to the Corporation, it was issued separately, doubtless to fulfil a propaganda role, as well as appearing in the printed volumes of Corporation reports. That said, it was an excellent report, containing two fascinating and important maps. The land use map provided a detailed picture of the usage and condition of the entire north city (Figure 2 shows an extract for the city centre). The

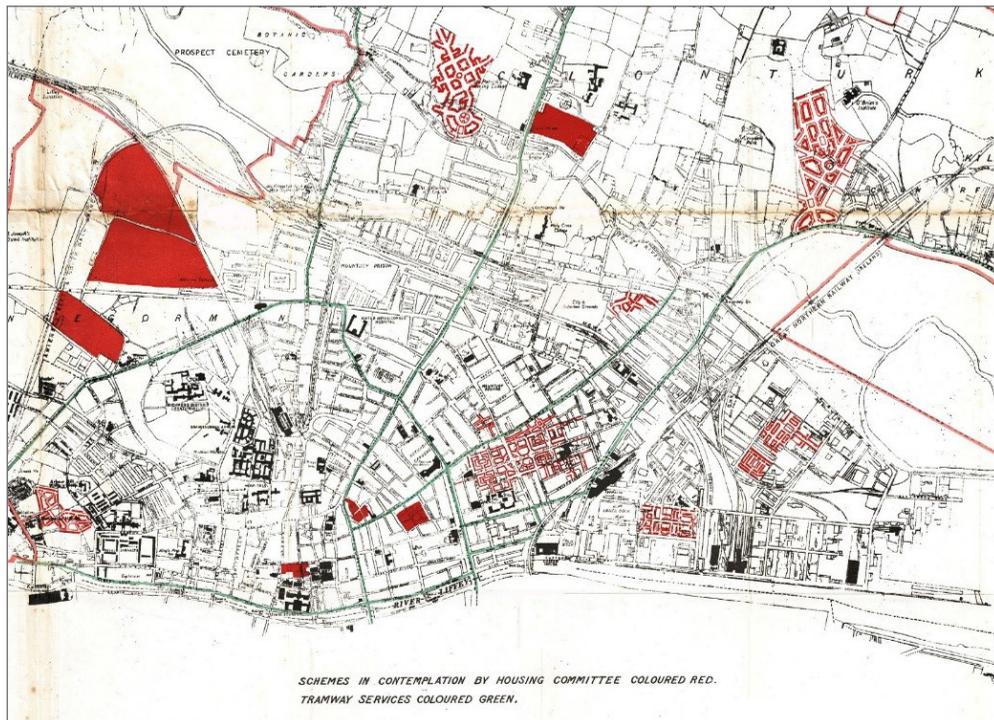


Figure 3. Extract from plan of future developments, 1918. Dublin Corporation, Survey of the North Side of the City of Dublin, Report 13/1918, Appendix 1.

development map set out the main building agenda and included schemes for Marino, Cabra, docklands and a fascinating idea which would have seen Upper O'Connell Street and its environs redeveloped for housing. In all cases, the geometric nature of the plans is evident. (Figure 3). A complimentary report was intended for the south city but it seems never to have been undertaken.

Tenant Purchase

From subsidised rental to tenant purchase, the breakthrough at Marino

Given the final line of the quotation above which speaks of the 'enormous section of the population in need of relief', it is surprising that the first inclination of the Corporation was to provide housing for 'artizans at economic rents'. By this they meant that the rents would meet all the costs involved, including loan repayments. Artizans were already reasonably well-housed, albeit in tenement buildings in many cases and, of all the potential tenants, were the ones most likely to be able to afford such rents. The reason for taking this approach lay in the Corporation's fear of taking on debt. The very earliest involvement of Dublin Corporation in housing provision had been in the 1870s, following the extension of the Cross Act (1875) to Ireland. Operating under the legislation, the Corporation acted as a facilitator, acquiring and clearing slum sites which were then leased to the Dublin Artizans' Dwellings Company (DADC) with the obligation to build houses. The first schemes in the Coombe and Plunket Street had proven to be a chastening experience for the council. Either they grossly underestimated the costs or they were the subject of a sustained and well-organised fraud. Prunty (1998, 2001) noted that the costs to the Corporation of both the Coombe and Plunket Street schemes were hugely in excess of what had been estimated; more than double in the latter case (Housing Inquiry, 1885). Granted these costs were supported by loans from the Local Government Board on favourable terms but they still had to be repaid and were a cost on the rates. The Corporation was not going to take on even greater costs by building for those who could not afford economic rents.

Despite the wish to charge economic rents, it proved impossible to do so in practice. In their Beresford Street and Church Street schemes (c. 1914) the Corporation (Minutes, 16 February 1914) decided on levels about 14 per cent lower because it was felt that this was the maximum that could be afforded by prospective tenants. For the Fairbrothers' Fields scheme, which was undertaken ahead of Marino, it was also decided to charge less than economic rents.

Likewise, when they decided to proceed with the Marino scheme, in consequence of the comprehensive report presented on 19 September 1919 (Report 210/1919), they envisaged the tenants paying rents of 10s., 8s. and 6s. for the five-, four- and three-roomed houses respectively. These were pre-war rent levels and should have been much higher at a time of rising building costs. It was reckoned that these rates were all that could be afforded, though there was hope that costs would fall in the future and rents would come more in line with costs. Even with the State providing a considerable subsidy, it was clear

to the Corporation that, resulting from these schemes, 'a heavy burden will fall on the ratepayers' (p. 56).

There was the usual public inquiry into Dublin Corporation's application for a loan of £503,673 to pay for the 550 houses envisaged in the Marino scheme. It was held by the Local Government Board chief engineering inspector, P. C. Cowan who, unhelpfully from the Corporation's perspective, had particular views on how the development should be managed. He favoured the application of a 'cost recovery system' – essentially economic rents, otherwise there would never be enough money to solve the housing question. He suggested rents of 12s., 10s. and 7s. 6d... (reflecting the fact that houses were to have baths which added 2s. 6d. alone to each house) in an alternative scheme for 490 houses. Even though building costs were falling from their war-time peaks, 'cost recovery' implied economic rents and it was but a small step from charging economic rents to the outright sale of Corporation-built houses. The moment came when a motion was put to and carried by the Corporation on 13 September 1920 (Minutes, p. 462).

It was moved by Councillor Forrester; and seconded by Councillor Doyle: That the Housing Schemes of the Council place an ever-increasing strain on the general body of ratepayers, who have this year to provide a sum of £52,000, equivalent to a rate of 1s. 2d. in the £, for the repayment of loans, interest, supervision, and upkeep; and further as the tenants in occupation at present ought not, and do not, desire to be a burden on the ratepayers, most of whom are struggling workers themselves, this Council requests the Estates and Finance Committee to report on the feasibility of disposing of the property to the occupying tenants and submit a scheme for the consideration of Council.

The subsequent report of the Estates and Finance Committee was favourable to the idea (Report 240/1921, Volume 2, p. 621). It was submitted to the council on 6 February 1922 and accepted by a narrow margin. The winning argument was that not only did tenant purchase diminish the burden on the rates, it had social benefits for 'the responsibility of ownership will naturally induce tenants to take a greater interest in the care of their dwellings, and obviate to a large extent the expenditure in repairs' and 'consequently inspire amongst them a greater civic spirit'.

The report set out a schedule for each of 1,172 cottages which had been built by Dublin Corporation since 1893. The repayment period ranged from 39 years to 60 years and the price was, in most cases, to be an annuity equal to twice the Poor Law Valuation of the cottage, plus ground rent at a rate of 25 per cent of the Poor Law. Thus, the concept of tenant purchase was developed, whereby the 'rental' paid by each tenant was in fact a mortgage repayment, which led ultimately to the transfer of the property to the tenant at the expiry of the term. The newly complete Fairbrother's Fields development was switched from rental to tenant purchase (Report 162/1922) and all of the planned houses in Marino and Drumcondra would be for purchasers.

The Corporation would house the better-off 'working class' who had large families but also had a stable income of sufficient size to maintain their rental/annuity payments. The Marino scheme houses were sold in 1925 for between £400 and £440 (an amount

not greatly dissimilar to nearby private developments) with a term of 40 years at 5 per cent per annum, the price depending on the type and situation of the house (Table 1). No deposit was required but fixed amounts could be set either against the purchase price or to reduce the term of the loan. Those who had the funds could pay for the property outright. The leases were for 99 years and there were conditions in relation to use and resale but nothing particularly onerous (Report 133/1925). The first 248 houses were allocated following public advertisement (see *The Irish Times*, 8 June 1925, p. 7) and an application process which attracted over 4,400 responses. This too was innovative and resulted from a scandal whereby it was suggested that houses were being allocated unfairly to clients of members of the Corporation (Report 93/1921 and 161/1922). Large families were given priority and all tenants had households with at least eight persons.

Table 1. Sale price and annuity charges for the Marino scheme, derived from Report 133/1925.

| Class | Price | Annual Payment (40 years) | Minimum Ground Rent | Type of house |
|---------|-------|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Class A | £440 | £26 | £2. 10s. | All semi-detached, end houses of blocks of three and end houses of blocks overlooking ornamental grounds. |
| Class B | £420 | £25 | £2. 10s. | Blocks of three built on an angle. Centre houses of blocks of three built in a straight line, and intermediate houses of blocks overlooking ornamental grounds. Also houses of all blocks built in terraces. |
| Class C | £400 | £24 | £2. 10s. | Intermediate houses of all blocks in terraces. |

A similar outcome resulted when the houses in the Drumcondra scheme were advertised for sale in 1927. This time, over 3,000 applications were received (*Irish Independent*, 8 December 1927, p. 8). As before, the sale price reflected the size and location of the houses with a lease of 99 years from 1 April 1929 and an interest rate on loans of 5¾ per cent (Report 26/1928). The total cost, which included the annuity charge, annual rates, ground rent, fire insurance plus a collection charge, ranged from £230 to £460.

It was during the development of Drumcondra that the Corporation's housing philosophy was made public. The Drumcondra scheme came at a time when Dublin Corporation estimated that there were still 22,000 families living in single-room tenements in the city. While this figure was not based on a census, the 1913 Housing Inquiry had determined that there were 20,108 families living in single room apartments and it is reasonable to believe that Dublin Corporation would have had a sense of what had happened in the interim. It was estimated that incomes of at least £8 a week were required to purchase a house and questions were being asked by commentators as to whether or not the strategy of building five-roomed houses, such as had been built in Marino, was the most effective. For the moment, the Corporation took the view that it

was. By taking these people out of the tenement market, it freed up dwellings which could be taken up by those with lower incomes. This was the argument put by the Town Clerk, John J. Murphy, at the Local Government Inquiry at City Hall at the beginning of September 1926 into the request by the City Commissioners for sanction for a loan of £684,787 17s. 0d. for their Drumcondra scheme. He was asked if, in fact, they were building for the lower middle classes and he agreed with that suggestion. It minimised the risk to the Corporation but it relied on a trickle-down effect with which many were uncomfortable. In fact, the decision to build a number of smaller homes in Drumcondra was not a deviation from this policy, even though these houses were considerably cheaper. They provided for 176 five-roomed, 143 four-roomed and 215 three-roomed houses. This was a significant departure from Marino (Report 127/1927) and the Commissioners explained that five-roomed houses reflected the fact that larger families needed to be accommodated first. While they agreed that they had not completely satisfied demand in that regard, they had made sufficient progress to allow them to begin to house smaller families (*Irish Independent*, 28 August 1926, p. 6). This was still a tenant purchase scheme, albeit catering to a wider demographic.

Reversion to rental housing in the 1930s

Ultimately, the provision of tenant purchase housing was not going to solve the housing problem and the Corporation moved almost exclusively to rental housing in the early 1930s. The policy shift was quite sudden and reflected an equally sudden change in the direction of government policy. As the 1939-43 Housing Inquiry put it: 'Between the years 1922 and 1931 housing legislation was concerned mainly with the provision of financial assistance to promote the erection of houses and not directed specifically to slum clearance' (p. 25). The 1931 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act gave local authorities new powers in relation to the clearance of unhealthy areas, the demolition or repair of unhealthy houses together with the compulsory purchase of land. The newly elected Fianna Fáil government of 1932 moved quickly to extend the provisions and to improve the financial supports. The Housing (Financial Provisions) Act of 1932 provided enhanced support to facilitate the housing of people displaced by slum clearance by local authorities and encouraged private enterprise to build for rental. During the debates in the Dáil and Seanad, the government made it clear that it wanted the local authorities to concentrate on slum clearance, and incentives were directed towards providing rental accommodation at subsidised rents in apartments/flats in central areas. As they saw it, the business of the local authority was to focus on the lower end of the market, though every tenant had to be able to pay some rent. The local authority was also provided with state financial assistance to provide housing for those who, though not displaced by slum clearance, were living in poor conditions. Again, the focus was on rental because the emphasis was on those who could not pay economic rents. For those with higher incomes, the government promoted partnerships between the local authority and public utility societies (explained further below) in providing accommodation both for rental

and purchase. As the Minister for Education, Mr Thomas Derrig, put it during the second stage debate in the Seanad on 21 July 1932: 'It will be greatly to the advantage of local authorities to encourage the formation of these public utility societies so as to relieve themselves to some extent of the burden of housing and to leave themselves free to concentrate on slum clearance' (Seanad Debates, Vol. 15 No. 25, col. 1514). Despite the focus on rental and provision for the very poor, there were still incentives for both public utility societies and private individuals to build houses for purchase. The Minister argued that with an SDAA loan and taking all outgoings into account a house costing £500 could be funded for no more than £1 per week (col 1515).

In the light of this change in state policy, it seems that there is a ready explanation for the Corporation's shift in policy. Surely, they had been waiting for the financial environment which encouraged slum clearance and they grasped it with alacrity? The reality seems to be more complex and reflected shifting balances of power and interests within the Corporation. The City Manager put on record a strong defence of their tenant purchase policy in 1932 (Report 51/1932 and Minutes, 5 December 1932 pp 178-80). Yet when the same City Manager presented a comprehensive review of the housing programme and underlying policy in 1934, he did not mention tenant purchase at all; rental was the only form of tenure considered. Indeed, he professed himself supportive of a policy of building smaller flat units in central areas so as to house the poorer tenants rather than building cottages in the suburbs for the better-off working classes; a policy which he saw as anomalous (Report 16/1934).

The cross-over point was the Cabra scheme (see McManus, 2002) where the first phase of tenant-purchase houses was occupied by 1931. It was initially planned that Beggsboro, a 12ha extension, would comprise four-roomed houses with bath and a hot and cold water circulation system. However, what was approved by the Minister was a scheme of 678 houses, comprising 84 four-room and 594 three-room cottages. Building commenced in April 1932 and by the time that the houses were completed in 1933, they were for rent. Thus, the Corporation abandoned tenant-purchase rather quickly and were steadfast in that abandonment for the next twenty years. They could have continued to offer a proportion of cottages for tenant purchase and they could have revived use of the policy earlier than they did. They should have done so, given the later problems they had with rental and, particularly, differential rents. But it seems that just as they once were devoted to tenant purchase, so they were now devoted to rental. This is not to say that Dublin Corporation abandoned support for the purchase market completely. They continued with their reserved areas policy though in a more muted way than previously and they still continued to provide support for purchasers under the Small Dwellings Acquisition Acts.

Distinctive Design

The Garden City / Garden Suburb Influence at Marino

Bannon (1978; 1985) has shown how Dublin Corporation and Dubliners generally came to have such an interest in garden cities and garden suburbs. The garden city, but more importantly, the garden suburb idea, diffused very rapidly from its earliest incarnation in Hampstead and quickly gained ground in Dublin. Its acceptance was reinforced by the personal involvement of Raymond Unwin and Patrick Geddes in local projects. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore Marino in its international context but the reader's attention is drawn to the very large-scale study by Stern, Fishman and Tilove (2013) of garden suburbs. Dublin was not unusual in seeing the advantages of such an approach to housing.

Marino was never going to be a garden city, despite the description of the site in 1910 as being suitable for 'a miniature garden city'. There was never any suggestion that it was going to be a self-sustaining city with industry and employment and, in any event, it was too close to the city centre. Nonetheless, the first UK attempt at the concept, Letchworth (1903), was well known and the later design for Welwyn Garden City (begun 1919) was also studied with interest as Marino's development came closer. As has been noted above, Hampstead Garden Suburb provided the initial inspiration. There are earlier developments which have claims to be the 'first' garden suburbs such as Pollokshields in Glasgow (Pacione, 2011) or Bedford Park near London (Affleck Greaves, 1975) but it was Hampstead that became widely known. In their report to the Corporation in 1911 (Report 270/1911) John G. O'Sullivan, City Engineer and Surveyor and C. J. MacCarthy, City Architect, offered a number of suggestions for development, the plans having been prepared in O'Sullivan's office by W. Cranwell Wilson. In one plan, the design was for 588 two-storey cottages. Each had a frontage of 14 feet (4m), with an average depth of 150 feet (46m), the large depth being justified by the likelihood that tenants would have had an agricultural background and therefore, they would have an interest in growing vegetables, etc. This report was notable for a brief comment in that 'provision for 30 houses having a frontage of 20 feet (6m) is shown facing Fairview Strand, where a slightly better class of house could with advantage be erected, and a better appearance presented for the main public road'. This will be explored a little later.

Perhaps of most interest was plan no 3 where 'I have endeavoured to adapt as much of the Hampstead design as would work in with local custom'. It envisaged a broad avenue, 71 feet (21m) wide, having a centre line of trees. Marino House was in a central position and accessed from both the new avenue and Malahide Road. Five large plots for detached houses of the best class would adjoin it. Houses of a variety of sizes were envisaged with 'a broad belt of plantation' being provided at the rear of second class houses so as to screen them from the front of houses on the lower road, while at the same time giving a pleasing outlook (Report 270/ 1911).

These were only speculative ideas at the time but development came closer to becoming a reality when a detailed plan was presented to the Corporation in September 1919 by the City Architect (Report 210/1919). The Tudor Walters report had been available only for

a short time but even by 1919 it was already 'a work of reference on housing questions' (p. 51). This confirmed the City Architect (C. J. MacCarthy) in his view that they needed to build bigger dwellings than before and the majority of dwellings had three bedrooms, living room, scullery, coal store, larder and WC. His plan allowed for 100 x three-roomed houses, 350 x four-roomed and 150 x five-roomed; all to have baths with hot and cold water. Smaller families would be accommodated in two-bedroomed houses while larger five-roomed houses would be available for those who could afford it.

Accompanying the report was an impressive outline plan, drawn at a scale of 88 feet to 1 inch (1:1,056). While Hampstead Garden Suburb was an inspiration, this plan owed much to model towns such as Port Sunlight (Hubbard, 1988) and to Letchworth (Figure 4). The main feature was an extended oval, running approximately north-south, with two rings of houses. The outer ring faced onto the surrounding roads while the inner ring faced onto a monumental linear park, surmounted by a formal square. In this park, a library and an assembly hall were placed. Marino House, which by now seems to have become ruinous, would be demolished. To the north-west, smaller geometric patterns of houses were suggested with roads intersecting to provide an overall focus for the development. Marino was very green though the reader will note that trees were relatively absent. A look at Figure 1 provides the explanation. The area was mostly under cultivation and there were few trees on the site. Those that were there are carefully noted on H. T. O'Rourke's (Assistant City Architect) plan. Perhaps surprisingly, the Corporation did not plant many additional trees, preferring grass, except along its signature roadway, Griffith Avenue, which is notable for its double line of trees on either side of the road. It is only in very recent years that Marino has begun to take on a 'tree-lined' appearance and only to a limited extent. By the time of the plan, the Tudor Walters standard of no more than 12 houses to the acre (30/ha) had been enshrined in the 1919 Housing Act but here the density was somewhat lower at 11 to the acre (27/ha).

The scheme was bounded by the existing main roads of Fairview Strand and Malahide Road to the south and east respectively while a new main road, linking Whitehall and extending on the Howth Road would provide the northern boundary. The western boundary was less marked because it comprised cultivated land and, even at this point, there must have been some suggestion that the scheme could be extended.

The plan was notable for the variety of housing types, not quite as many as provided in Port Sunlight but certainly more than might be expected in a typical local authority housing scheme. There would be ten different house types, four for the five-roomed houses and three each for the four-roomed and three-roomed houses. The larger houses were concentrated along the Fairview edge and the northern edge and especially around the main square. Here, an interesting effect was obtained by having a particular design for each side of the square (Figure 5). Elsewhere, variety was ensured by breaking up the sight lines by using setbacks and by limiting the runs of individual designs. This was true also of the smaller house types.

The design-values for the different house types were very high and Figure 6 shows a number of these. The house types varied in roof line, window design and door placement



Figure 4. Dublin Corporation, Housing Block plan of Marino, 1919. Report 210/1919, Sheet 1.

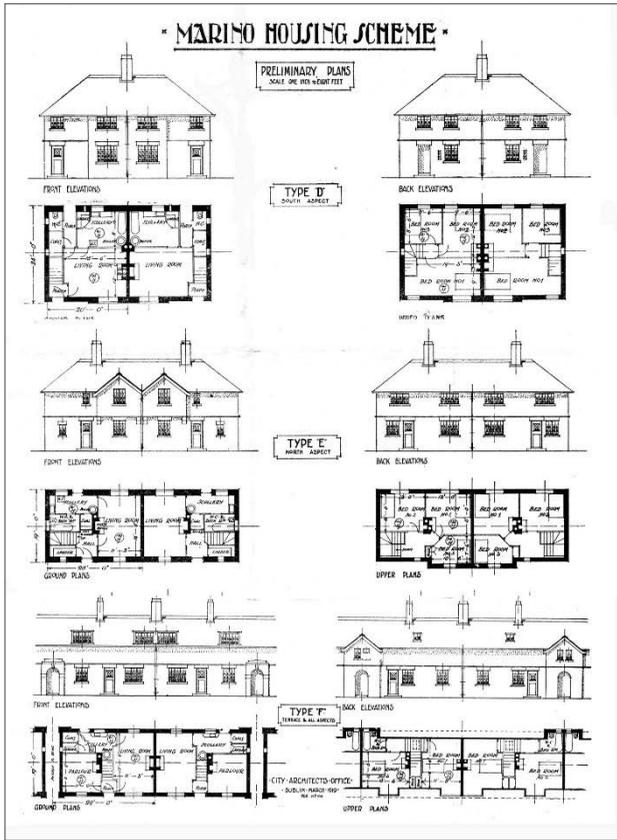


Figure 5. Dublin Corporation, Extract Housing Block plan of Marino, 1919. Report 210/1919, Sheet 1.



Figure 6. Dublin Corporation, House design for type D, E and F, 1919. Report 210/1919, Sheet 4.

as well as in internal configurations. In contrast to the semi-detached larger houses, the smaller units were terraced but had a covered passageway to allow access to the rear and the large gardens, without having to use the house. A line drawing of one design by H. T. O'Rourke (Figure 7) shows an impressive attention to detail. Looking at the model designs in the 1919 Housing Manual produced in the UK to give practical effect to the Tudor Walters ideas, it seems likely that these designs were also well known in Dublin even then.

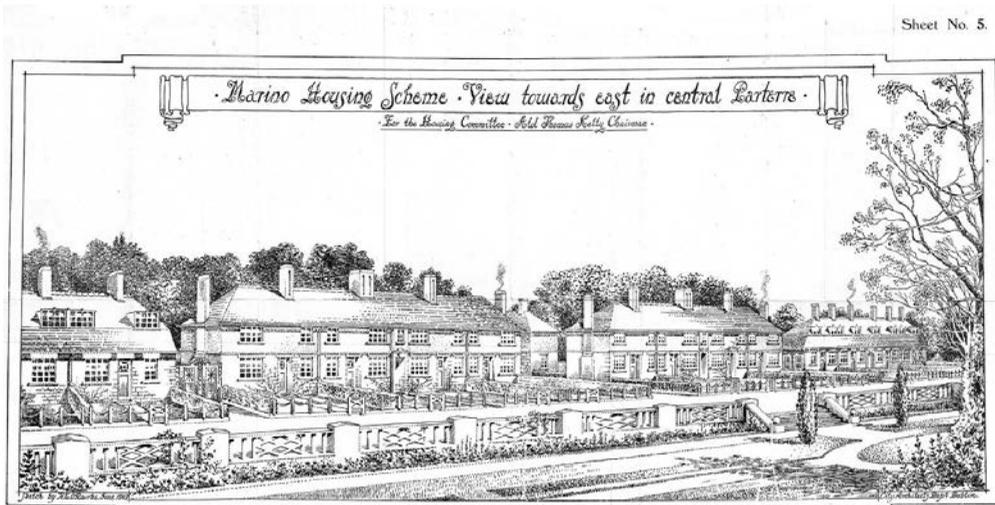


Figure 7. Marino, view towards east in central parterre, 1919. Report 210/1919, Sheet 5.

But the Corporation's fear of cost got the better of them. The estimated cost at £542,500 was a very significant sum but of greater worry was the continuing cost on the rates which would amount to around £20,000 after the third year. Additionally, at the time, material prices were fluctuating dramatically and the estimated building cost for one design of five-roomed houses rose from £784 to £1,176 between June and September 1919 (Report 210/1919, pp 67-70). This scared them and they suggested that three house types would be enough – one for each of the sizes, choosing the one which provided the best value. This would cut the cost to £505,345 and leave the rates to carry under £18,000 at the end of the third year. In overall terms this was not a huge saving but it was a recurring one and the Housing Committee was prepared to sacrifice one of the novel aspects of the scheme. It was clear that the City Architect's Office was not happy and H. T. O'Rourke, who was then Assistant City Architect but soon to take over the main role, wrote that the 'scheme as submitted has received long and most careful consideration by the City Architect and fulfils all modern requirements in housing. In the City Architect's absence, through illness, I feel it my duty to the Housing Committee to point out that if the scheme is altered in the manner now proposed, there would be very little chance of its being approved by the Local Government Board' (Report 210/1919, p. 66).

By the time the Corporation had dealt with the public inquiry and the suggestions of its chair, the design had gone through a number of revisions. What was ultimately built was on a larger scale than what was first suggested because the opportunity arose in 1922 to obtain another 76 acres (31 ha) to the west, extending to Philipsburgh Avenue, generally known as the Croydon Park extension (see McManus, 2002 and Figure 8). The final layout was still quite geometric, with a variety of house types, the use of setbacks and the north-south axis was retained. Large gardens were provided and the communal areas were transformed into much larger spaces, especially the two circular parks, keeping the density low.

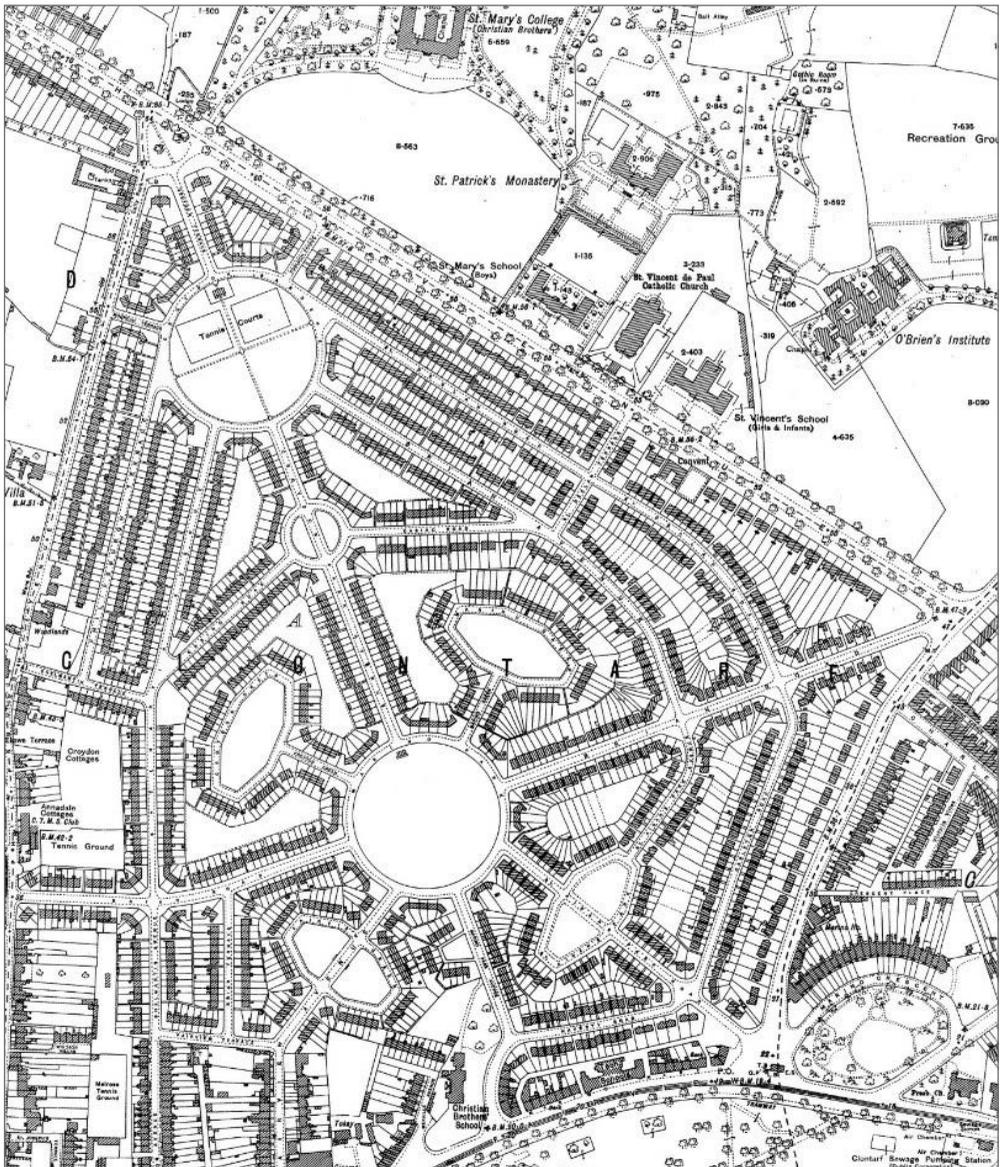


Figure 8. The completed Marino and Croydon development. Ordnance Survey plan 18(1V) 1938.

The genesis of the Reserved Areas Policy

The first phase of the Marino scheme, built on the original 'Walker' site, provided for 618 houses but the Corporation hit a snag as it moved towards implementation, which led to a reduction in the total number of houses to 428. The problem proved serendipitous, though, in that the solution resulted in a policy development – the reserved area (discussed below) – which was destined to have a profound impact on the Corporation's approach to housing provision.

The Marino houses were of the 'parlour type' with living room, parlour, three bedrooms, scullery, larder, bathroom and w.c. plus a coal cellar. They were to be built in blocks of eight, six, five, three and in pairs with a variety of materials and construction methods to avoid monotony. There was a commitment to use Irish materials when this could be done at a reasonable price. Acceding to the Minister's wishes, Dublin Corporation awarded contracts for individual sections, no contract extending for more than a year because of a belief that building costs were in a downward trend. This limited sections to about 200 houses, and four major contractors emerged from the various tendering opportunities – H. & J. Martin, G. & T. Crampton, John Kenny and Paul Kossel, a German firm.

The price was fiercely negotiated at the insistence of the Department of Local Government. Senator Farren, then chairman of the Housing Committee, complained that they were bullied into submission because the Department controlled the funding (*Irish Times*, 18 September 1923, p. 6). For example, Kenny won the first contract with a bid of £645 0s. 7d. per house (Report 267/1923) but following negotiations and the lowering of the specifications, the price was reduced to £589 19s. 5d. per house. Concrete or tiles were substituted for granite sills, breeze concrete was used for party walls and breasts, skirting was made smaller. The second contract also went to Kenny, largely because he was on-site and, this time, it was priced down to £550. However, the biggest saving was a dramatic one. The bathroom with a hot and cold water system was now dropped. It was soon realised that this was a step too far but not before the houses were completed. There was a retro-fitting project in 1926, which resulted in an additional cost to the tenants of 10d. per week (Report 205/1926).

By 1925, and with Dublin Corporation suspended by the Government for unspecified failures, it was possible to proceed with the Croydon Park extension. The first design provided for 918 houses on approximately 90 acres (36 ha). The houses would have five rooms with a variety of elevations and contain a parlour, living room and scullery on ground floor, and three bedrooms and bathroom on the upper floor. The houses were grouped by type, slates versus clay roof tiles with stock brick, concrete block or rough cast facing but all houses had rough cast on concrete to the rear.

Evolution of the policy

It had been in the background during the first discussions about Marino; the idea that a better class of house might be built along the frontage of the scheme. It was there in the plan submitted in 1919 and it was retained in the plan which ultimately went to the

Minister for approval. The snag was that the projected cost of these houses would be more than would be supported by the government grant.

The Minister's decision to limit grant aid to a maximum of £500 meant that the Corporation would have to limit the total cost of houses to £750 or carry all additional costs (Report 14/1923). While this would produce good houses, it did not meet their ambition for the new road to the north and the frontage along Fairview Strand. Moreover, they had decided that Malahide Road would be edged with housing rather than left as a plantation and now that they could extend their building to Philipsburgh Avenue, they needed to include that in their consideration. The Housing Committee were left with two choices. The first was to wait and hope that building costs would fall to the point that they could build their superior houses within the limit. The alternative was to lease the boundary sites to private builders for commercial or housing development. This would get the required frontage but pass the economic risk to somebody else. Thus was born their reserved area policy. It was not initially a point of principle but a pragmatic response to a limitation. It seems that they never would have otherwise gone for a mix of public-private development; in fact, their preference at the time was to build by direct labour, avoiding builders entirely. They later came to see the social advantages of this form of partnership in that it permitted an area to have a wider social mix than might otherwise have occurred. This also supported local services and shops, especially in the early, raw days of a development. Because this solution took some time to emerge, development of the reserved area was behind that of the tenant purchase houses but the Corporation was ready by 1925. Report 64/1925 noted that 'in connection with the Marino Housing Area it has been decided, with the sanction of the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, to reserve the main frontages for better-class residences and business premises'. The first step was the advertisement of plots along Fairview Strand/Marino Mart in February 1925 for 36 residential shops. This was a controlled development and those building had to build to the specifications of H. T. O'Rourke who was anxious to ensure a uniform appearance for this edge development.

The *Irish Times* reported that the corner block (Figure 9) was completed by January 1926 for Johnston, Mooney and O'Brien, the bakers and that three shops with a three-bedroomed dwelling above in the same block had also been sold (*Irish Times*, 14 January 1926, p. 4). Despite this apparent early success, the development along the main road was not complete until the commissioning of the vocational school in June 1934.

The other frontages were reserved for housing and report 255/1925 noted a proposal from the Dublin Commercial Public Utility Society Ltd. (DCPUS) to build twelve houses on Malahide Road at an average cost of *not less* than £750 a house, for sale to the members of the Society. Though well-known in the UK (see Aldridge (1915) for a discussion), Utility Societies were still novel in Dublin (and Ireland) but, as McManus (1999) has shown, Dublin Corporation had had a very good experience working with Canon David Hall in his pioneering use of the concept for his East Wall housing development, commenced in 1920. The use of public utility societies by Dublin Corporation in their reserved areas was clever. PUS were not in business to make profits and with that more relaxed financial

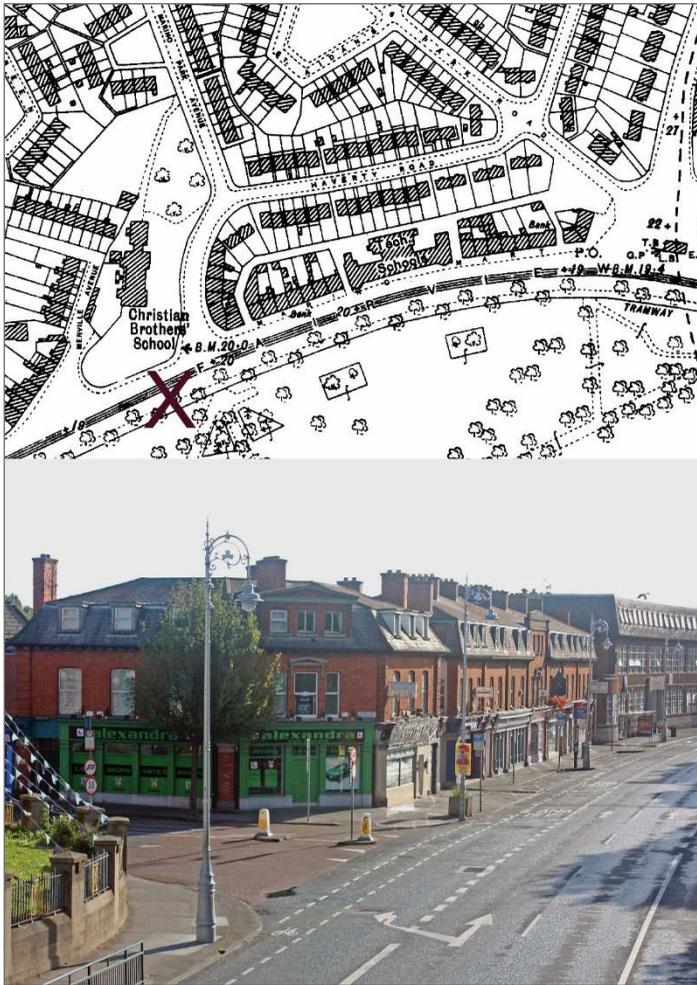


Figure 9. The shopping and commercial frontage for Marino along Marino Mart. Ordnance Survey plan 18(IV), 1938 and photograph taken on 16 July 2017 – X marks the shooting position.

outlook they built bigger and more impressive houses than would have resulted from the use of commercial builders. The state came to see public utility societies as appropriate partners for local authorities in the Housing Acts of 1931 and 1932, and Dublin Corporation's experience was central in developing that view. A detailed discussion of their role and influence may be read in McManus (2001).

This approach to house purchase was promoted by the Civics Institute of Ireland. The brochure produced for Housing Week in October 1925 set out the advantages of joining a public utility society with comparative tables provided. Leveraging the various grants meant that a purchaser would get £100 grant from the state and a grant of £100 from the Corporation under the Housing (Building Facilities) Acts. It was also provided 'further that the latter shall advance under the before-mentioned Act the sum of £200 per house'. There would be no ground rent for the first year but the houses needed to be completed within a year. A comparison of the plot sizes in the reserved areas with those within the scheme shows the significant differences between the two (Figure 8).

In approving the application, the Commissioners endorsed this approach as a template for any subsequent proposals to build on Malahide Road. Indeed, this did happen and the DCPUS were soon back for an additional four sites (Report 283/1925) and a further twelve (Report 21/1926). They continued thereafter as a significant developer in both Marino and Drumcondra, especially along the 100-foot road, which was named Griffith Avenue in April 1927, though the original intention was to name it Griffith Road (Report 17/1927). There, they were given 43 sites on the section between Upper Drumcondra Road and Goosegreen (now Grace Park Terrace) in 1928 for houses to cost at least £1,000 (Report 3/1928).

A reserved area was not included initially in the plans for the Croydon extension; it was not yet ingrained. However, the Commissioners and the Minister had grown comfortable with the reserved area idea and they were prepared to reduce the number of houses from 918 to 856 to allow for this and for improved amenity. As they put it: 'Agreeably with the policy already adopted for the first section of the housing scheme, it was decided to reserve the frontages to Philipsburgh Avenue and the new 100-foot thoroughfare for better-class residential or business premises' (Report 1925/105).

The Philipsburgh Avenue frontage proved not to be as attractive a prospect as the other frontages and it proved impossible to get developers. So, in September 1926, the Commissioners decided to become their own developers but with G. & T. Crampton (who had the nearby contract) to do the building at a cost of £18,200. The motivation was the same as before; it was important that the estate would look well (Report 191/1926). The 28 houses were to be on the same plan as Crampton was building in the Croydon Park extension but they had increased dimensions and elevations (Table 2) as well as bay windows.

Table 2. Comparison of Marino 'scheme' houses and reserved area houses.

| | | Living Room | Parlour | First Bedroom | Second Bedroom | Cubicle | Scullery | Bath room | Area |
|------------------------|---|-------------|------------|---------------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|
| | Frontage | Super feet | Super feet | Super feet | Super feet | Super feet | Super feet | Super feet | Sq. feet |
| Housing Scheme | End House, 19' 9". Intermediate House, 19' 5" | 157 | 130 | 139 | 112 | 66 | 41 | 40 | 844 |
| Frontage Houses | End House, 21' 9". Intermediate House, 21' 5" | 190 | 163 | 150 | 134 | 80 | 57 | 60 | 996 |

Note: A 'superfoot' is a measure of capacity equal to one-foot length of a board one foot wide and one inch thick.

The Philipsburgh Avenue Reserved area houses were ready for sale in 1927 at a very reasonable purchase price of £650 with ground rent of £4 and a 99-year lease. The Commissioners decided that 'applications will be considered from persons, resident or employed in the city, who can put up a deposit of £200 to get a loan of the remainder over 40 years @5¼ interest'. This came to £49 11s. 0d. per annum (Report 94/1927).

It was in the Drumcondra scheme that the reserved area concept had its greatest expression (see McManus, 2002), before a later retrenchment. This reserved area did more than provide frontage for the Corporation's own housing; there was also a substantial and distinctive residential area, occupying the higher ground of the site at much lower density. The City Commissioners were effectively acting as a private developer; this could be seen in modern terms as 'mission creep', with the suggestion that they had lost sight of their mandate to house the working classes. They could have built a lot more social housing on the site and still have had an impressive reserved area. Doubtless they would have argued that any addition to the housing stock was welcome and anything that encouraged people to use their own funds to house themselves was welcome and to be encouraged.

A suburb of lasting significance

It is now almost 100 years since the planning for Marino began in earnest. Today, it is one of Dublin's inner suburbs and it is regarded as being within easy reach of the city centre, even by foot; a great change in the perception of distance from the time of its creation. In social terms, much has changed. The population in the early days was estimated at around 10,000 people with most families comprising seven members at least. The 2011 census suggested that just over 3,300 now lived in Marino. Family structure has changed too. According to that census, only 2.6 per cent of families had over six persons; the modal group was two persons with 45.5 per cent of the total. In 2011, some 10.5 per cent were professional workers with a further 33 per cent in the managerial and technical category while only 7 per cent were semi-skilled and just a fraction over 2 per cent were described as unskilled.

In physical terms, the area has changed very little and would be instantly recognisable to its first inhabitants. The outward appearance of housing is mostly unchanged, a testament to the quality of the build. The narrow roads were never designed with traffic in mind and are, in fact, perfectly suited to modern traffic calming. However, the need to park cars has resulted in most front gardens being converted to driveways. Traffic management has required the imposition of one-way systems around the circular parks and some through-roads have been turned into culs-de-sac. The steel window frames, which were seen as 'modern' at the time of installation did not last well and have, almost universally, been replaced. Otherwise, there has been no demolition, no replacement of terraces with new builds but a few insertions on generous side gardens. The area has become settled and middle class.

As Figure 8 shows, a great deal of open space was provided behind the houses. This was intended for use as vegetable gardens, but this never transpired. The open access to these spaces, known locally as the 'lanes' became an unofficial circulation space, safe from traffic and almost Radburn-like. This usage persisted until the 1970s but, thereafter, increasing anti-social activity and security fears led to the closure of the access points and the space is now accessible only to the residents of the overlooking houses.

The impact of Marino on Dublin Corporation housing policy was long lasting. The most enduring aspect was that of the reserved areas, developed in Marino and given its fullest expression in Drumcondra. That expression was never repeated, probably because too much land was devoted to it, but the concept remained an important part of housing schemes. Dublin Corporation continued to be conscious of the positive effect that small enclaves of private housing had on their own larger schemes. Their different design was important in relieving the increased monotony of schemes that had no more than two or three designs. They improved the income profile of the area. This was something that the Corporation felt to be important and, for example, concern was raised when applications were received from the Magnificat Family Guild for sites in the reserved area on Collins Avenue in 1950 because it was felt that the income level of the group might not result in houses sufficiently different from those being built by the Corporation (Brady, 2014, p. 112).

Over time, the manner in which reserved areas were created changed. Public utility societies, so crucial in the early schemes, declined in importance as other mechanisms for getting access to credit became more generally available (McManus, 1996, 2004). The Housing Amendment Act of 1948 permitted less structured groups or even individuals to be given the same level of aid as public utility societies and, not surprisingly, people took the easier path. So, a mix of different types of groups became the norm. For example, when Dublin Corporation offered some 150 sites adjoining the Larkhill and Swords Road developments this resulted in successful bids by the Magnificat Family Guild, the Mamey Co-operative group, the Self Reliance Building Association, the Civil Service Housing Society and the National Federation of ex-Servicemen (Report 68, 86/1948).

By the 1960s, the Corporation had simplified the process and they made sites available to builders, with a policy of assisting small local builders, who then built for approved purchasers. So, in the 1960s, Bóthar Ainninn (St Brendan's Park) was developed as part of the larger Edenmore development largely by Curtis and Farrelly, who were local builders and by J. A. Lawler, who was also responsible for many of the houses on Edenmore Road. The reserved areas continued to be streets, rather than individual houses, and these were often seen as the significant streets or focuses within the area. Sometimes they were boundaries, sometimes major route ways but they were always intended to have a visual impact on the casual visitor.

An important element of the Marino development was the provision of shops along the southern frontage. By the 1950s, it had become the norm to provide a small run of shops within each new housing area and not just along the edge. The mix was generally a butcher, a grocer, a chemist, a tobacconist and newsagent, a hardware shop and, most interestingly, a fish and chip shop. Pubs were not facilitated but provision was never mentioned as a problem. These strips evolved during the 1970s into small neighbourhood shopping centres in a central location, usually in association with the local parish church and one of the primary schools.

The tenant-purchase policy did not long survive Marino, as has been indicated above. Instead a system of flat rents was introduced. In his 1934 review, the City Manager

considered differential rents but ruled them out on various grounds, including the annoyance it would cause to people paying higher rents for the same accommodation as their neighbours. This reticence proved to be a mistake. It became clear to the Corporation very quickly, and it is evident in the data produced and analysed by the 1939-1943 Housing Inquiry, that there remained a significant proportion, certainly in excess of 10 per cent and perhaps close to 20 per cent, of their tenants who could have afforded a tenant-purchase arrangement (Housing Inquiry, 1943, pp 58-9). It was also evident that these and other tenants were receiving remarkably good value from their flat rate rents since these were pitched at those with significantly lower incomes. Flat rents, once introduced, became almost impossible to change or even to increase. The 1939-43 Housing Inquiry recommended the introduction of differential rents as being 'essential' to the maintenance of the housing programme and while Dublin Corporation attempted to do so, it never really succeeded. Such was the level of protest that differential rents were applied only to new lettings and they remained an unsolved and volatile issue through the 1950s and well into the 1970s; the heat being taken out only by the great sell-off of rental properties from the end of the 1960s (see Brady, 2017).

Dublin Corporation was never driven by ideology to maintain its property portfolio in rental, unlike many local authorities in the UK. So, it is surprising that their resiling from tenant purchase was complete and lasted for so long. Tenant purchase was not attempted again until the 1950s when the Annadale Estate was developed, adjacent to Marino. It was decided to allocate the entire development of 204 houses in 1952 to tenant purchasers. It proved a spectacular success and the scheme was hugely oversubscribed. It was also tried again in the St Anne's development in 1954 with approximately 600 houses on offer. This was an elegant solution to the problem of how to build houses on the estate without annoying too much the adjacent middle class residents of Clontarf and Raheny. That enthusiasm might have caused the Corporation to saturate the market because it proved more difficult to find purchasers and it took more time and trouble than had been anticipated. As the economy picked up though, tenant-purchase and indeed outright sale were once again on the agenda in the Edenmore / Kilmore and Coolock developments of the 1960s (see Brady, 2017).

Marino was a very distinctive scheme. Its geometric design makes it easily recognisable from any map and from the air and there is nothing else quite like it Dublin. It had been intended as a 'model' scheme and, despite the penny pinching of the Department of Local Government, so it had turned out. The houses were of high quality, distinctive and the area never had an estate 'feel' to it. It was also an experiment in tenant purchase and a trial of the Corporation's new method of housing allocation. The reserved area policy had been developed and was set to be a recurring feature of housing schemes. The combination of all of these elements made the Marino housing scheme a high point in Dublin Corporation's housing provision, a model in many ways for what was to follow, a scheme to be looked up to, admired and aspired to. As well as fulfilling many of the Corporation's (and new national Government's) aspirations, it also provided decent comfortable housing for many families, a purpose which it still serves to the present day.

Notes

- ¹ All measurements were originally in imperial measure. Approximate metric equivalents are provided.
- ² Dublin Corporation published both minutes of its deliberations and the reports of its committees. Minutes are referred to by date but reports are referred to by their sequence. Thus, a reference to Report 133/1924 is a reference to report number 133 of 1924.
- ³ Dublin Corporation was abolished by order of the Minister for Local Government on 21 May 1924 for failings in the discharge of its duties. Even today it remains unclear what those failings were and why they were so egregious as to require abolition. The suspicion remains that the motivation was political rather than administrative. The city was governed by three commissioners, one of whom, P. J. Hernon, later became City Manager, who maintained the structures of the Corporation though there was little or no debate about policy issues. The elected Corporation was not restored until the local elections of 1930.

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