

# APPENDIX N - EVOLUTION OF DESIGN

## COMPETITION BRIEF

This project was commissioned via the 'Town Centre Living' Architectural Design Competition. The subject site at Pirn Mill Road was one of four town centre sites selected by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), in liaison with local authorities. The RIAI (on behalf of the DHLGH and local authorities) ran separate social housing design competitions for each of the four selected sites. The aim of the competitions was to encourage innovative design solutions for social housing within town centres and deliver built examples of how compact growth and town-centre revitalisation, key objectives of the 'Town Centre First' policy, can be achieved.

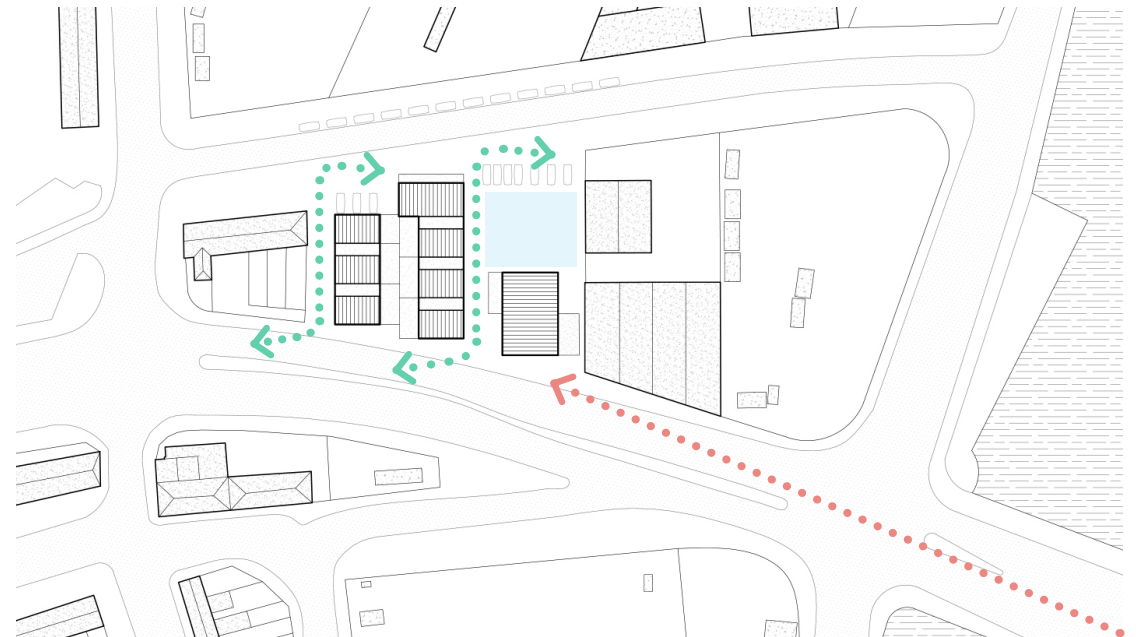
At competition stage the following design parameters were set out:

- Acknowledge the particular urban structure and existing context
- Ensure permeability and wider connections
- Maximise the potential to act as a critical link between wider hierarchies of public routes
- Prioritise pedestrian circulation
- Town centre appropriate – streetscape, active frontage etc.
- Exemplary architectural design with lessons for appropriate approaches to other sites
- Developing a unique character and delivering a sense of place

- Quality design to the highest contemporary standards
- Provision of safe and secure external spaces
- Car parking strategy consistent with location and scale
- Consistency with Department Design Guidelines
- Provision of UD Homes
- Economic approach and delivery of value for money

The Sligo specific brief had additional parameters particular to the site at Pirn Mill Road:

- A range of 16-24 dwellings was anticipated for the 0.2089ha site.
- Suggested Unit Mix:
  - 30-40% 1-Bed/2 Person
  - 10-20% 2-Bed/3 Person
  - 30-40% 2-Bed/4person
  - 10-20% 3-Bed/5 Person
- 15% Public Open Space
- 3-4 storey maximum building height was suggested



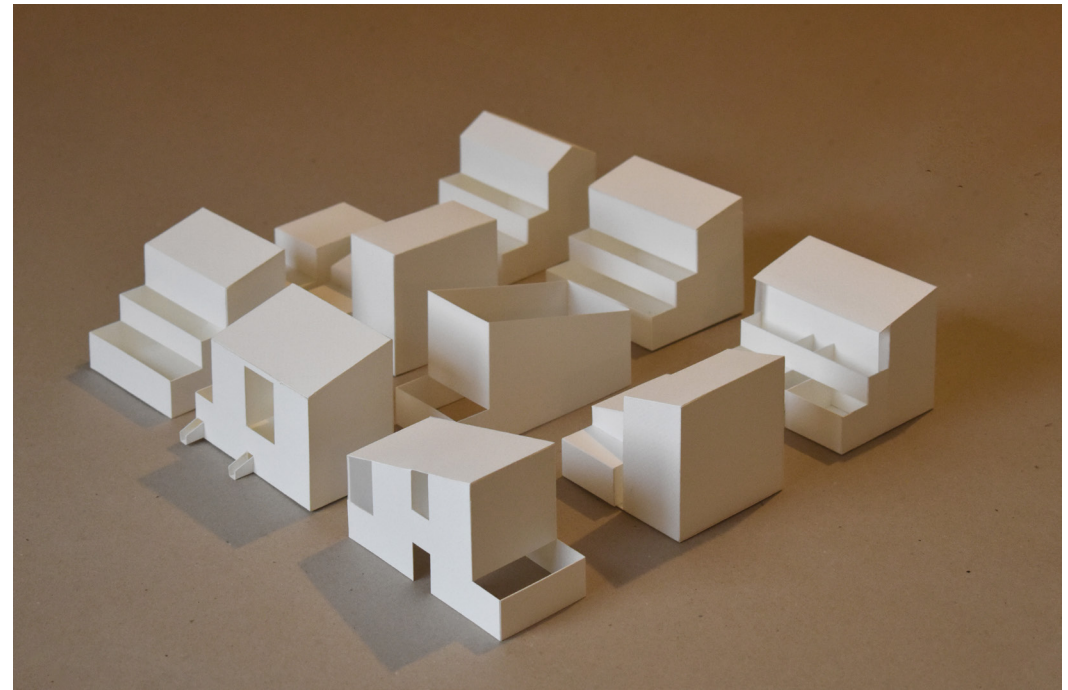
Competition Stage Site Strategy

# APPENDIX N - EVOLUTION OF DESIGN

## BRIEF REFINEMENT

TAKA Architects, as winners of the Sligo Town competition, were awarded the design commission for Social Housing at Pirn Mill Road. Following the appointment of the design team, Sligo CoCo and TAKA Architects refined the brief further to meet the specific requirements of the Sligo CoCo Housing Section:

- Limited shared access to minimise estate management issues (preference for individual stair access where possible, max 2no. units off a shared stairway)
- Ensure passive surveillance provided to shared stairs
- Access to units in 4-storey block to be provided without necessity for lift due to maintenance concerns
- Traditional methods of construction to be employed to avoid risk to programme
- Provision of 1-Bed and 2-Bed units to meet social housing need. As per Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030 49.5% of applicants on the Council's Housing List are one-person households. Town Centre First (2022) states that "A priority focus will be on town centre homes that could include Age-Friendly housing for our senior citizens, housing for people with a disability or reduced mobility and increased provision of 1-bed homes suitable for smaller households"
- Individual bin storage to be provided for each unit in place of communal bin store



Design Development Models of 4-Storey Block

# APPENDIX N - EVOLUTION OF DESIGN

## LOW-RISE MEDIUM-DENSITY HOUSING

The main objectives of the 'Town Centre Living' architectural competition was to deliver built exemplar designs which demonstrate the viability and attractiveness of housing on town-centre urban infill sites and to offer lessons as to potential design approaches on other similar sites. The central aim, in line with the government's 'Town Centre First' policy is to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and enjoy.

In response to the competition brief TAKA Architects submitted a proposal for town centre homes at Pirn Mill Road which offer an exemplar model for low-rise medium-density housing which is also appropriate for many town centre sites in Ireland. New innovative housing models enable more compact and adaptable forms of 'own-door' housing that cater for a greater range of household types within the city centre.

The continued application of suburban housing standards originally conceived during the 20th century is hampering innovation in the housing sector in Ireland. The 'Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements' promotes low-rise medium-density housing models such as the proposed scheme as a means of achieving compact urban growth. Low-rise medium density housing delivers densities of 40-100dph with a high proportion of own-door units.

The key design principles of low-rise medium-density are:

- Reduced plot sizes
- Tighter arrangement of houses
- Narrower streets
- Smaller street setbacks
- Reduced car parking ratios
- Distribution of private open space in the form of patio gardens and/or upper-level terraces and balconies
- Strong emphasis on high quality streets and public spaces
- Strong sense of place and community

Low-rise medium-density housing is a particularly appropriate solution for utilising brownfield infill/gap sites within the existing city centre of Sligo. This proposal offers an example of the suitability of sustainable compact residential development for the regeneration of the Docklands area.

This proposal for low-rise medium-density housing on a brownfield town centre site is in line with the policies of the 'National Planning Framework' (2018), 'Town Centre First' (2022), 'Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements' (2024), 'Regional Spatial Economic Strategy' and the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030.

## DESIGN STRATEGY

The low-rise medium-density model was deployed in a way which addresses and enhances the specific opportunities of the Pirn Mill Road site to create a vibrant and attractive place for town centre living.

The typical housing model is arranged in two east-west terraces (Block A & B) to the south of the site, with 'special' housing types to address the corner condition onto Pirn Mill Road. A 4-storey block (Block C) is located to the north-east corner of the site. The new Pirn Mill Square shared public space is located to the west of the site between the 2-storey terraces and 4-storey block.

The proposal includes opening up of the existing adjacent lane to create a new permeable pedestrian route "Lynch Lane". This has a number of benefits, such as increasing permeability of the urban grain, introducing passive surveillance of this lane, maintaining access to the rear of the existing houses and allowing more efficient use of the lands at Pirn Mill Road. In relation to the other frontages of the site, active street frontages are presented throughout. To the quieter Pirn Mill Road, domestic entrances and access to the new Pirn Mill Square are presented. To the more heavily trafficked N4/Michael Conlon Road, the street remains active through pedestrian permeability and passive surveillance from the new units.

A taller 4-storey "landmark" block is located to the north-east corner of the site serving as a transition in scale to the future plans for tall buildings to the immediate north of the subject site.

# APPENDIX N - EVOLUTION OF DESIGN

## UNIT TYPE DESIGN - GENERAL

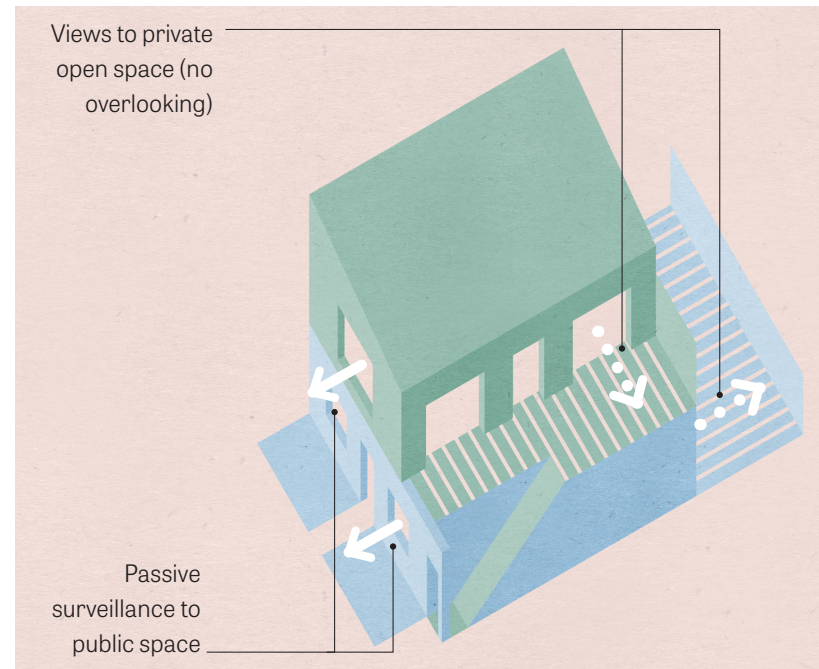
As part of the design process TAKA architects developed a proposal for town centre homes which offered an exemplar model for low-rise medium-density housing which is appropriate for many town centre sites in Ireland. This model type has been deployed in a way which addresses and enhances the specific opportunities of the Pirn Mill Road site to create a vibrant and attractive place for town centre living. The economy, familiarity and appropriateness of a low-rise medium-density housing model is uniquely suited to Irish town centre living.

This exemplar model has since been developed and finessed to ensure compliance with DHLGH Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, the Building Regulations and the specific requirements of Sligo CoCo as client. The design development of structure, mechanical and electrical schematics, fire, accessibility, acoustics and sustainability (nZeb) has been integrated and co-ordinated.

The site is arranged in 2no. 2-storey 'Terraces' (Block A & B) and 1no. 3/4 -storey 'Block' building (Block C). This exemplar model combines to form the basic 'building block' of the proposed scheme. These 'building blocks' form the Terraces which are terminated on the Pirn Mill Road end by 'specials' which address the communal public spaces and the realigned street. The exemplar model is also employed as the basis of the Block but is further adapted to provide greater density and a landmark form.

90% of units are own door access with just the two units at second-floor of the Block sharing the central external stairs. This limited shared circulation minimises maintenance and management. Street frontages are activated and passive surveillance of public and semi-public spaces is provided. Own door access offers residents a sense of identity and avoids the sense of anonymity often associated with traditional apartment living.

In addition, the careful spatial arrangement of internal spaces creates high quality units and provides visual connectivity between internal and external spaces. This has been carried through from the exemplar model and applied throughout to all modified units/specials. All units are minimum dual aspect.



- Own-door access to all units
- Efficient land use
- No overlooking of private spaces
- Dual/triple aspect homes

- 1 bed 2 person home
- 2 bed 4 person home

Diagram of Typical Stacked Units