

# Submission to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government: Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas

21 Apr 2008

## Introduction

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland is an all-island body which aims to improve health in Ireland by working to combat health inequalities and influence public policies in favour of health. The Institute promotes co-operation in research, training, information and policy in order to contribute to policies which tackle inequalities in health.

Over the past ten years the Institute has worked closely with the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland to build capacity for public health across the island of Ireland.

The Institute takes the view that health is determined by policies, plans and programmes in many sectors outside the health sector as well as being dependent on access to and availability of first class health services. The importance of other sectors is encapsulated in a social determinants of health perspective which recognises that health is largely shaped and influenced by the physical, social, economic and cultural environments in which people live, work and play. Figure 1 illustrates these multi-dimensional impacts on health and also serves to highlight the clear and inextricable links between health and sustainable development. Factors that impact on long-term sustainability will thus also impact on health.

## Comments and observations

The Institute welcomes the revised draft guidelines for planning authorities with regard to Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and appreciates the open consultation process which allows us to comment on this document.

We are broadly supportive of these draft guidelines and particularly welcome the many references to the potential health impacts of residential development, including:

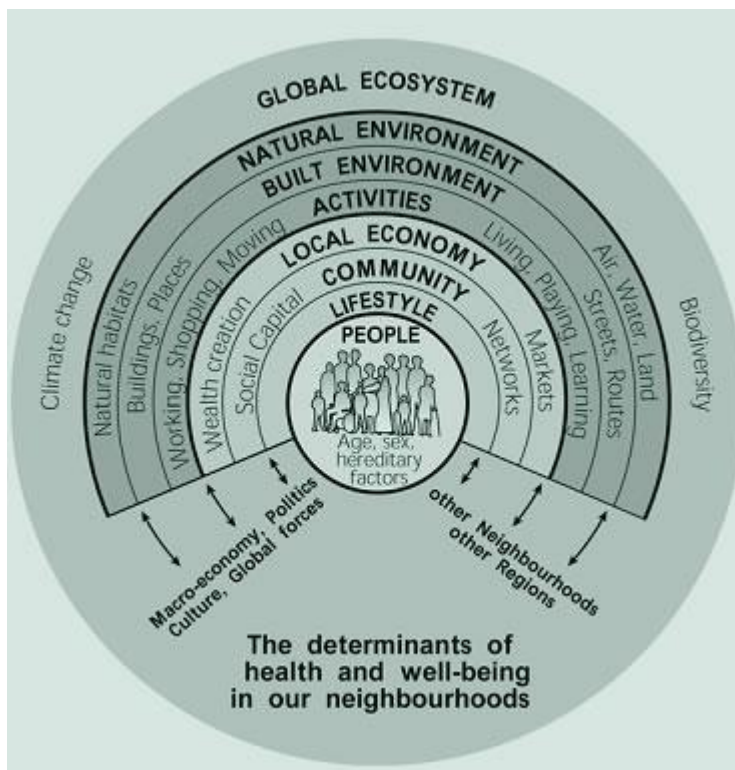
- Residential streets which prioritise and support walking and cycling

- Qualitative and quantitative standards for public open space which encourage physical activity and social connectivity
- Extension of these guidelines to smaller towns and villages

We feel that this could be further strengthened by a recommendation that health impacts be systematically considered in all new developments. Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process which considers both mental and physical health impacts of new proposals as well as its distributional effects (for example on vulnerable groups).

Finally we enclose for your consideration, a copy of a resource developed by the Institute entitled the 'Health Impacts of the Built Environment' which summarises many of the potential health impacts of development referred to in the draft guidelines.

Figure 1: The determinants of health and well-being (Barton & Grant 2006)



## References

Barton H, Grant M. (2006). The Determinants of Health and Well-being in our Neighbourhoods. The Health Impacts of the Built Environment, Institute of Public Health in Ireland 2006.

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