

From: brenden boyle [REDACTED]
Sent: 05 February 2017 18:30
To: National Planning Framework; David McManus; Barry McManus
Subject: consultation input

I warmly welcome the proposed strategy but I am concerned that like all such previous documents, it will become victim to clientelism and populism and will therefore remain aspirational. To have any chance of success, it needs parliamentary buy-in from our esteemed lawmakers. It also needs effective institutional support, funding and monitoring which is independent of your Department.

Dublin needs to continue to grow because it is in competition with other European cities for investment, people and innovation. But that growth should be based on sustainable high quality designed building and interesting varied places, concentrated in our many drab breeze block housing estates and neighbourhoods close to the city centre. This would involve authorities and developers being resourced/incentivised to acquire multiples of properties for higher density quality development. It would also require the government establishing a strategic planning authority for the Dublin City travel to work area so that "local concerns" driven by "not in my back yard" are not the sole non-strategic drivers of development. The strategic planning authority would identify key strategic locations in the city for strategic city wide development. Decisions on development would be made on this basis and not on the present local planning framework which is too locally focused.

In our regions, we need to develop a small number of key locations as cities of tomorrow. Let's take Athlone as an example of why change is urgently needed.

I live in Athlone and in theory it has a population of 20,000 but 15,000 of these live in one-off houses in the countryside. The drivers of this flight to the countryside are many, varied and contradictory but the result is that the centre of town is increasingly characterised by poorly designed social housing estates and poorly designed for the most part private estates which are increasingly being rented out to low income people which mirrors the profile in our social housing estates. This process drives more and more people to seek refuge in the countryside. Athlone like the majority of our regional towns is poorly managed and planned and is characterised by endless poorly designed anywhere housing estates. There are no nice leafy suburbs in Athlone, no nice neighbourhood parks and therefore for the most part, people use the town for surface car parking, commuting and live in the countryside. This has serious implications for civil society as increasingly, shabby run down centres are perceived as normal in Ireland and are increasingly less attractive to inward investors who expect European standards and facilities. I would welcome the development of Athlone as a midlands city but to be successful, it would need a Ballymun Regeneration style body independent of our local councillors, who for the most part are focused on short term policy issues. This regeneration body would be driven by Master planning and strategic policy and funding support from your department.

Time will tell, whether Ireland has the ability to move from a North African, southern European style of development to a more focused sustainable high quality North European style of development.

Sincerely yours,
Brenden boyle, [REDACTED]