

**From:** Lennon, Breffni [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 24 February 2017 15:07  
**To:** National Planning Framework  
**Subject:** National Planning Framework Submission

Dear Sir or Madam:

I attended today's Ministerial consultation on the National Planning Framework with Minister Conveyey here in UCC. I work in a research unit in the School of Engineering on a Horizon 2020 project, which looks at the human dimension to the European energy system. Further details of our project can be accessed at: <http://www.entrust-h2020.eu/>. I did not take to opportunity to speak at the event given the time constraints we were under, but it struck me that the concept of communal living was not mentioned once in the discussions or in the literature provided to us.

As the Minister rightly pointed out, we need to ask ourselves difficult questions in relation to issues of spatial planning and development, our response to climate change, energy and our aging population. We also need to ask ourselves are we in fact asking the right questions. Too often we limit ourselves with rather binary choices – either an A or a B – rather than step back and critically assess what our options are. If we are serious about our rural (and indeed urban) communities, promoting real sustainability, improving population health more generally, and tackling our energy and environmental crises, then we need a concerted effort on the part of the government to consider how we can promote greater communal-style living within our population, and not just with the elderly. A partial reason for the unsustainable development of one-off housing in rural areas is because families want to live close to each other and not be atomised into housing units that are not in their neighbourhood (usually in apartments or housing estates in the larger towns and cities). If we were to offer people a real choice, whereby they can live in more communal spaces with elderly relatives living close by and work spaces (e.g. hot-desk office space etc.) available locally to enable them to work remotely from centralised offices we would see significant improvements in overall population health, a decrease in rural isolation, loneliness and suburban sprawl, along with a reduced demand on energy and expensive infrastructural projects with those monies being reinvested elsewhere.

Yours truly,

Breffní Lennon

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Dr Breffní Lennon

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