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Delivered by email

NPF Submissions,
Forward Planning Section,
Department of Housing, Planning,
Community and Local Government,
Custom House,
Dublin D01 W6X0
npf@housing.gov.ie,

A Chara

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK – IRELAND 2040: OUR PLAN

Please accept this representation to the Issues and Choices Paper. Our perspective on the paper is as a planning consultancy based in Belfast and establishing a Derry office, with projects north/south and at the border and with our offices staffed with personnel from both jurisdictions.

Consultation on the NPF is very timely in the context of Brexit and to review key infrastructure priorities.

Balanced Regional Growth

We have been involved in realising a number of joint funded cross border projects including the North West Science Park at Fort George and the Altnagelvin Radiotherapy Hospital. A collaborative approach to infrastructure delivery is and will continue to be critical. Infrastructure planning for the North West Cross Border Region provides the critical mass necessary for a compelling business case.

Available statistics demonstrate the interdependency north south and firms will continue to source the brightest people, irrespective of which side of the border they originate from. This blurring of borders will continue and creates the environment for a more normal relationship between the two jurisdictions.

Resilience

As planners, we are struck by the reliance of the population in the border areas on limited public transport options. The recent Bus Éireann strike demonstrates how vulnerable the region is with a single public transport option. Private bus services have responded quickly in the circumstances but this could further threaten viability of this sole public mode of transport. Privatisation of these services could further erode future access to transport, if unprofitable routes are cancelled.

Car Dependency

Urban consequences of poor public transport infrastructure and high dependency on private cars are all too evident in the main towns in the North West. Customers desire free accessible parking, normally found

Hamilton House
3 Joy Street
Belfast
BT2 8LE

T 028 9072 3900 turley.co.uk

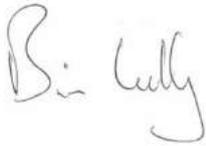
in retail parks on the periphery of the town centre. Vitality and viability of these centres is in continuing decline and the traffic congestion continues to increase. There is no single solution but a holistic approach to infrastructure investment must be adopted.

Health Well-being

The influence place has on our health is an increasing priority for planners. The combination of factors, including car dependency, inadequate public transport network, sprawling town centres and traffic congestion mean there are heightened prospects for health issues in the border region. The infrastructure deficit is affecting the health and well-being of the population in border areas.

We respectfully recommend that infrastructure planning for the Border Region, particularly in the North West, adopts a more holistic approach that reflects where people live and work in the region. Business as usual is certainly not an option and fresh investment and initiatives must be developed if sustainable growth is to be achieved in the border region.

Yours sincerely



Brian Kelly
Director

