

To: NPF@housing.gov.ie
From: Kodzo Selormey on behalf of the Cork Social Democrats
Re: National Planning Framework
Date: 30th March 2017

Introduction

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, the second best time is now” – Chinese proverb

The Cork Social Democrats welcome the establishment of the National Planning Framework (NPF) with its commitment to a structured and integrated strategy for the development in Ireland.

We believe that the NPF should work towards a state that is in the words of Vaclav Havel

“a republic independent, free, and democratic, a republic economically prosperous and yet socially just, in short, a humane republic which serves the individual and which therefore holds the hope that the individual will serve it in turn”

That humane republic must be a one where there is healthcare, housing and opportunity for all built on a strong foundation of a diverse and prosperous economy and where individuals can live in safety and security.

From a practical perspective, Cork is ideally placed within the state to be the counterpoint to growth and development in the greater Dublin area. However, to make this happen there needs to be an integrated and sustainable development plan that encompasses, economic, social and infrastructural development in both the city and the county.

The Cork Social Democrats recommend the inclusion of policies in the specific areas into the NPF.

Transport and Environmental Infrastructure

There should be a significant investment in road infrastructure in Cork. This should include prioritising the Cork North Ring road and the M20 motorway to Limerick.

Serious consideration should be given to the construction of a tidal barrage to the east of the city to contain rising sea water. This would have the second advantage of serving as an additional road link across the Lee.

In addition to the development of road infrastructure, there also needs to be investment in public transport infrastructure. Currently, the central Cork city street network is chronically congested. As population projections predict substantial growth in Cork, public transport options with the city and its environs needs to expand substantially. Furthermore, to reduce the dependency on single occupant car travel, there will need to be dedicated efforts to

provide between Cork City and major commuter towns of Midleton, Cobh, Mallow, Ballincollig, Carrigaline and Blarney.

Housing

The NFP should strive towards an Ireland where everyone has an affordable and appropriate home to live in. The plan should endeavour to do this by implementing a range of strategies.

These should include

1. Economic incentives for bringing empty properties into use. 9.6% of Cork properties are currently vacant according to the Housing Agency.
2. Incentives to bring life and residents back into town and city centres, by developing policies that encourage urban development and regeneration. This should include the extension of the existing Living City initiative in Cork.
3. Have a dedicated strategy for housing older people. The numbers of over 65s will nearly triple to 1.4m by 2046, therefore there should be a focus on a relevant mix of housing for older people and not just focusing on housing that is linked to care.
4. Policies to lower the cost of building both new social and private sector housing.
5. It is essential that housing citizens in sprawling housing estates at the periphery of the city, where access to services, healthcare and amenities is limited. If we are to make the greatest use of funding, efforts to invest in city centre high density housing options are a priority.
6. High density housing development in the city needs to be multifaceted;
 - a. Housing options should target young professionals, families, students and the elderly together, ensuring a vibrant and dynamic community.
 - b. High density housing in the city centre allows for the establishment of well supported services and infrastructure in a defined area.
 - c. Access to bus and train networks will assist in reducing car dependency.

Healthcare.

By 2040 there should be a system of universal healthcare in Ireland, free at the point of use. In the move to this system there should be focus and investment targeted on Primary care.

Economic Development

96% of employers in Cork City, employ less than 50 people and they account for 62% of all employment in the City, based on the 2011 census. There should be a focus on supporting and developing these businesses by promoting policies that will

1. Ensure that there are additional resources targeted at job specific training in the third level institutions targeted at the needs of the SME sector.
2. Provide lines of accessible and affordable credit to SMEs

Good Governance

Development needs to be driven at the appropriate level which should by 2040 lead to additional powers being ceded by central government to Cork City Council and Cork County council to enable coherent local planning and development.

Arts and Cultural Development.

A vibrant Arts and Cultural scene is essential to a well-rounded society and investment within the Cultural sphere also gives an economic return far in excess of that invested. In Cork, there should be investment in studio and workspaces for contemporary artists, utilising some of the disused industrial facilities in the Docklands.