

## New Lodge Housing Office

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19 JAN 2007

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Dear Sirs

The New Lodge Housing Forum would like to respond to your consultation document being the **Belfast City Centre North West Quarter Part Two.**

The Forum would be one of the most pro-active housing group with close proximity to this Quarter, they currently are involved through a number of agencies for the reintroduction of Social Housing in this and other sections of lower North Belfast. Over the past few years they have travelled to a variety of other cities across Europe and viewed developments of this nature like the Dock Lands in Amsterdam the Eldonian Urban Village in Liverpool the developments of Private & Social housing in Dublin and others. They have for the past number of years tried to bring about changes from the policy makers who for whatever reason have held back on the decisions for development any available land in North Belfast to include Social Housing They are involved through the Northern Ireland Housing Executives Housing Strategy on the Housing and Environmental Forum with the North Belfast Partnership Board and through this have their Community Housing worker as a representative on the Inter Agency panel that meets Quarterly, They have representatives on the Partnership Board through the community support group were they recommend the development of any additional Housing requirements.

### **Response on Housing**

For years the development of this section of Belfast has not had the required impetuosity that this report is recommending and the forum would request that you consider these recommendations carefully

We would like to support the development of this quarter and will provide some Statistical information with regard to why we would strongly recommend the introduction of Social Housing as apposed to the current thinking of high rise type accommodations. Currently within this area we have over 500 people and Families registered on the N.I.H.E waiting list that can be verified by documentation from its latest report

The development of any new Social Housing programmes are delivered through the N.I.H.E and the 9 Housing Associations providing all new developments for the past seven years, and we have held many debates with both these groups to appose high rise accommodation being the only way forward. Our reasons for this is because we as the community who have the largest high rise outlets in Belfast and know the costs involved for large scale maintenance and the high security budget required to make these acceptable for people to live in these types of accommodations we know that these costs will have to be reflected within the rents of any new apartments.

Currently a number of private sector developers are planning massive new build apartment dwellings in and around this quarter, This has created problems for both the housing associations and this community where they have over priced plots of land that have been considered for developing social sector housing, they then deliver multi storey apartments that have exuberant rents / prices that can not be realistically achieved by people from these areas, these types of accommodations have been proven in past years not to be sustainable.

## Response Continued

So when considering the introduction of any housing is up for discussion we would strongly recommend that the Department of Social Development and others use the powers available to them for ring fencing or vesting available land within this quarter for the sole purpose of delivering new Social Housing.

The remit of developing a plan of this nature is not an easy task and the forum know that other priorities must also be considered for this Quarter, and as we are now in a hopeful new era, were Belfast will become a better place for all the people of this city to live and work we would like you to consider some of these proposals.

## SHARED SPACE

There have been many changes in Belfast over the past few years were Tourism, Hotels and large retail outlets are developing yearly, But to maintain these as a viable resource requires people, currently the younger population from these areas are having to move further out of the City to resource any form of Housing, were if a policy was developed on price capping for Private sector housing was introduced in the plan and would allow a future workforce being maintained within this area. The introduction of a policy for integrated housing in this quarter could be developed for a new Multi-Cultural society by the introduction of joint allocations were every other property be made to people from different religious backgrounds or the growing Foreign National community who are currently coming here to live and work could be one possibility of integrated housing. There is also the possibility of developing new ways of controlling Anti-Social behaviour or religious discontent in such new developments, were residents would be required to sign up to a community charter and after some debate to the content, the introduction of a charter for living in this new area of housing be introduced.

## OTHER FACTORS

Within the plan are a variety of other proposals for the Social Economy, Education, Transport, and other factors and all of these must be highlighted as a way forward for this plan to work, but also is the viability of new European thinking were ideas of City Centre living and maintaining the work force within it's boundaries will provide a new quarter that will become sustainable. This is one possible way were a new place to Live, Work, and Socialise and even creating new business opportunities like those of modern European cities like Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin would be the only answer.

Currently there is great emphasis on the community sector to develop ideas for Social Economy concepts were new business ideas and outlets for creating employment are being promoted. The New Lodge community are being fully encouraged to develop new proposals and are currently promoting ways that new economic development could be introduced for the future Girdwood site and others, so that people from these areas can become economic assets to the future of this city.

So in conclusion please consider these proposals as a way that this North West Quarter could be developed and as a way that every community could benefit by delivering Social Housing as a forward thinking approach for not only the people who would live here but also the development of Belfast into the 21st Century.

The New Lodge Housing Forum