

Peter Carr

Chair

The Belfast Metropolitan Residents' Group

BMRG



MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP
FOR ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT
ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

- Umbrella group for 24 community groups in the greater Belfast area
- Formed in 1998 to make a community input into strategic planning
- Group with few equivalents elsewhere in Britain or Ireland

- Community planning is as much a **macro** as a **micro** matter
- Difficulties with the proposed reforms to Northern Ireland planning
- Involving the community proactively in any new system

- Community planning the exception rather than the rule
- Community's involvement with planning tends to be defensive, reactive
- Outcome: sense of disenfranchisement.
'Learned helplessness'

Reform of the Planning System in Northern Ireland

- Transfer plan-making powers to councils
- ‘Front-load’ the system
- Create a Northern Ireland that is ‘open for business’

BMRG Concerns with Reform Proposals

- Councils given too much power
- Potential for cronyism /corruption
- PPSs 'demoted' to aspirational
- The RDS will be sidelined
- Net effect: a set of laissez faire proposals.
- Checks unlikely to be effective
- More power to the already powerful

- The community seeks participation not consultation
- Participative vehicle: Local Plans
- Local Plans to form the building blocks of Area Plans
- Moderated to ensure delivery of regional targets

- Government evaluates the proposed scheme
- Comes forward with its own revised proposals
- Trial these in emerging Area Plan
- Reforms would give Northern Ireland one of the most democratic planning systems in the world