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Dear Committee Clerk

Written submission on the Planning Bill

Thank you for your invitation to submit evidence to the Environment Committee in relation to the Committee Stage of the Planning Bill.

NI is a society emerging from conflict and this necessitates dealing with the realities of contested space, therefore the Community Relations Council (CRC) has a key interest in the planning system, particularly its contribution to building a shared and better future. This current consultation process offers a further opportunity to think about how we design and use space in which we live, work, socialize and visit, specifically within the context of a post-conflict and segregated society.

CRC has previously commented on Planning Reform and stated that public spaces should act as places with permeable boundaries, allowing ownership by all, thus preventing the creation of territories. CRC wants to ensure that these issues are taken into consideration in all future planning decisions. It is therefore important that the current Bill reflects these important societal issues and it is within this context that CRC proposes the following amendments:

- **Clause 2: General functions of the department and the planning appeals commission.**

Currently absent from the Bill is an explicit aim and objective linked to peace building. For that reason, CRC seeks an additional provision in the Bill under clause 2 (1) to place an additional duty on the Department and the planning appeals commission to promote shared spaces. The Bill should be revised to contain:

(d) promoting shared, safe and welcoming spaces.

The above amendment should be replicated in Clause 2 (2) (a), and Clause 2 (3) (a), after 'promoting economic development'.

- **Clause 2: General functions of the department and the planning appeals commission.**

CRC seeks a further amendment under clause 2 (1A) "to enhance the current duty on the department, or the commission in regards 'to the desirability of achieving good design'". The Bill should be revised as follows:

(1A) For the purposes of paragraph (1) the Department or, as the case may be, the commission must (in particular) have regard to the desirability of achieving good design, ADD: *'which also promote shared use'*.

This addition should be replicated in Clause 2 (2) (b) and Clause 2 (3) (b).

Conclusion

The amendments outlined above offer an opportunity for the Bill to ensure the development and renewal of policies, strategies and corporate plans which have good relations focus. CRC's proposals highlight the need to encapsulate a post-conflict vision for planning and we look forward to continuing this important discussion with the Committee. If you need clarification please contact Gemma Attwood, Policy Officer at the following email gattwood@nicrc.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Pp Gemma Attwood

DRAFT-CRC submission