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**Submission on National Planning Framework “Ireland 2040, Our Plan” to the
Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government**

The failure to deliver appropriate Traveller Accommodation through the structures established following the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act , 1998, since the late 1990s has been well documented. The ongoing Traveller accommodation crisis (and its associated fire risks) is evidenced by the Department`s own annual statistics from the November Count of Traveller families, information accessed via Parliamentary Questions about funding approved for Traveller accommodation, not being drawn down, and the figures compiled regularly through the Irish Traveller Movement.

The awful, fatal tragedy in Carrickmines almost 18 months ago, highlighted the very serious safety risks associated with chronic overcrowding on Traveller halting sites and group housing schemes.

Even the ESRI has noted the failure of the existing structures, as recently as January 2017, in its report, which states : *“The government needs to be more proactive in ensuring that local authorities are meeting their obligation to provide adequate Traveller-specific accommodation. The fact that funding for this has been provided but not spent points to a **systemic failure** in existing processes and structures. In order to achieve the accommodation objectives, further action is necessary. The challenge clearly goes beyond the funding issue and includes the need to **enforce** local responsibility and to address local opposition to the provision of Traveller-specific housing.”*

Furthermore Ireland is due to be investigated by the EU Commission for its compliance with the Race Equality Directive in terms of Ireland`s failure to deliver Traveller accommodation.

For these reasons, and to give practical effect to recently announced formal recognition of Traveller Ethnicity, the new National Planning Framework should include the following :

- The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 needs to be amended, with the creation of effective structures to deliver Traveller accommodation. A **National Traveller Accommodation Agency needs to be established** to proof the adequacy of local Traveller Accommodation Programmes, and which will step in to deliver Traveller accommodation, if local authorities fail to implement their Traveller Accommodation Programmes.
- In view of the ongoing Traveller Accommodation crisis of overcrowding and associated fire safety risks, the delivery of Traveller accommodation should be **included within `Strategic Infrastructure Development Projects`**, including the fast-tracking of Traveller accommodation through the planning process.
- The new NPF needs to remove any ambiguities between the statutory obligation to provide Traveller accommodation under the current Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act , or its successor, vis-à-vis zoning objectives in City & County Development Plans. Clear responsibility for compliance with this, needs to be assigned centrally, and not be left to local authorities.
- The statutory obligation for **human-rights- and equality-proofing** needs to be outlined in the new NPF, and Traveller accommodation should be specifically named in this regard.