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# **Consultation on the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage's Statement of Strategy 2024 - 2026**

**Response from the American Chamber of  
Commerce Ireland (AmCham) to the Department of  
Housing, Local Government and Heritage  
Consultation on the Statement of Strategy 2023 –  
2025.**

August 2024

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## **The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland The Voice of US-Ireland Business**

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The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland (AmCham) is the collective voice of US companies in Ireland and the leading international business organisation supporting the Transatlantic business relationship. Our members are the Irish operations of all the major US companies in every sector present here, Irish companies with operations in the United States and organisations with close linkages to US-Ireland trade and investment.

The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland (AmCham) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the consultation on the review of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's Statement of Strategy for the period 2024 – 2026.

Housing and planning are key priorities in supporting the development of critical infrastructure and delivering for talent and business in Ireland. While housing represents a challenge for Ireland to overcome to support future growth and development in Ireland, 9 in 10 respondents to a recent AmCham survey have outlined that their corporate headquarters have a positive view of Ireland as an investment and growth location. Additionally, 56% said that they expect the number of employees within their Irish operations to grow within the next 12 months, with a further 41% expecting to maintain employee numbers. With smart policy decisions, Ireland can remain as a foremost destination for talent and business into the future. Key to this will be the delivery of the necessary infrastructure and housing levels to cater for both current and future demand.

## **Strategic Goal A**

AmCham members have consistently identified housing as the number one challenge for Ireland to overcome to support future growth and investment. In AmCham's most recent survey of members, 40% of respondents identified housing as the top issue in this context.

Further, 98% of respondents highlighted that the availability of residential accommodation is challenging for staff in their business operations in Ireland. As such, the delivery of housing to meet the needs of talent in Ireland is of the foremost importance. Where talent wishes to live is a key driver in attracting investment and supporting business growth and, as such, accommodation plays a key role as an economic enabler within Ireland.

In line with the objective of Strategic Goal A *"to provide a framework that ensures a sustainable housing system in Ireland with a supply of good quality housing to match the needs of all our people"*, AmCham is of the view that a continued focus on the delivery of housing under the 'Housing for All' Plan is essential. Further, in supporting the Department's strategy, it would be beneficial to ensure the ongoing revision of housing targets to inform the delivery of the necessary accommodation levels in both the purchase and rental markets to cater for current and future demand. This will be important in supporting Ireland's growing population.

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## Strategic Goal B

In terms of Strategy Goal B which aims *“to provide a framework for the sustainable management of water resources from source to sea and for the provision of effective and efficient water services”*, it is essential that the necessary capacity in water and wastewater is provided for future growth of housing and FDI investment in Ireland.

Key to advancing the provision of water and wastewater in Ireland will be ensuring the necessary resources and the requisite capital investment is provided for the delivery of vital infrastructure projects. Key amongst these will be the delivery of the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands, and the Greater Dublin Drainage Project.

Projections have indicated that the Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland will, by 2044, require an additional 34% supply of water in comparison with current levels. The provision of this supply will be key in ensuring the delivery of housing, and business growth in the region can be supported into the future, in a sustainable manner. Further, continued growth in this and other regions will also necessitate greater enhancements in wastewater infrastructure capacity also. Delivery in this context will be important in ensuring Ireland remains an attractive location for both talent and business.

## Strategic Goal D

Strategic Goal D which aims *“to ensure that planning and building in our regions, communities and maritime area contributes to the delivery of sustainable and balanced development”* is a pivotal goal within the Department’s strategy.

Reform of the planning system is key to addressing challenges which have existed in terms of delivering adequate housing supply. AmCham acknowledges the progress of the Planning and Development Bill 2023 which works to address some key challenges within the Irish planning system. As such, in terms of the Department’s strategy, a continued focus on ongoing reform of the planning process to provide enhanced certainty of timeframe and process, building on the progress being made in the Planning and Development Bill 2023, would be beneficial.

Further, a focus on the triaging of planning applications to allow for the prioritisation of critical infrastructure and investments would work to ensure Ireland remains an attractive location for growth, FDI and for talent in ensuring the necessary capacity is provided to cater for future demand. In addition, the increased digitisation of planning processes would support transparency, ensuring a more efficient and effective planning system.

Ensuring the necessary resources are in place within the planning system will be key to realising and supporting the Department's strategic goal, and supporting planning authorities in terms of their consideration of applications within timelines that will allow for more efficiency in the delivery of key housing, infrastructure and investment projects.

The delivery of a planning system which can cater for the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century society and business is essential in ensuring Ireland remains a destination of choice for talent and investment into the future. Providing the greatest possible degree of certainty in terms of the planning process and timeframes will be key in supporting Ireland's competitive offering on the global stage. Action to ensure vital infrastructure projects can advance through the planning process in a prioritised manner would further support this. As such, great opportunity exists for Ireland in this context.