



NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

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SPRINGVALE : PROPOSAL FOR NEW UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Commenting today on the proposal by the University of Ulster to develop a new campus on the Springvale site in West Belfast, the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP, said:-

"This is a very imaginative proposal. It marries the need to meet the growing demand for university places from young people and mature students throughout Northern Ireland with the need for economic regeneration in an area of multiple deprivation in Belfast. This area straddles the physical boundary between the two communities.

"At this stage the proposal is only in outline form. It will require a full economic appraisal to determine whether it would be feasible, and represent good value for money; and it will be necessary also to examine the implications for the Higher Education system in Northern Ireland. In addition, it must satisfy planning requirements. It would require an amendment to the already published Comprehensive Development Scheme for Springvale. In examining the proposal the Planning Service would want to take full account of the views of local people before making any recommendations.

"Finally, there is the question of resources. This new and large scale development obviously does not feature in present public expenditure plans. Public expenditure in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the country, will be subject to very tight constraint over the next few years. This project would be expensive and public expenditure support could be found only by adjustments elsewhere in the Northern Ireland Public Expenditure Block. Therefore resource decisions would hinge on whether it could be afforded within the constraints on public expenditure, and, importantly, on the extent to which private and other sources of finance in addition to public funds could be established.

"This visionary initiative, however, with its particular significance for deprived areas of Belfast, deserves and will receive the most careful examination."

The Secretary of State indicated that the proposal would be given very careful consideration over coming months. No commitment could be made at this stage, but a decision based on the outcome of the economic appraisal, an examination of the implications for the higher education system, planning review and assessment of public expenditure implications, would be made in due course.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Springvale Development Scheme was formally adopted on 15 October 1992 following a period of extensive community consultation. It provides a development framework for the regeneration of an area stretching from the former Lummus Mackie works (Albert Foundry) on Springfield Road to Glencairn and contains proposals for physical changes addressing economic, environmental, housing and recreational needs. A number of major projects are under way, or at an advanced planning stage.

2. Subject to the outcome of the Feasibility Study by the University, the Belfast Development Office of the Department of the Environment would take forward a review of the Scheme in consultation with the Department of Education, the University, local communities and other interested parties. Any amendment of the Scheme necessitated by the review could be accommodated under the Planning (NI) Order 1991. Unresolved valid objections to a proposal to amend the Scheme would normally be considered by a local Public Inquiry..