



Department of the  
**Environment**  
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## **Planning Policy Statements**

### Transfer of Responsibilities

The Department of the Environment has assumed responsibility for the following Planning Policy Statements from the Department for Regional Development on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008 and will therefore take forward future work on these documents:-

- PPS 5: Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Developments;
- PPS 12: Housing in Settlements;
- PPS 13: Transportation and Land Use; and
- PPS 20: The Coast.

As part of this transfer of responsibility those PPSs already published by the Department for Regional Development are hereby adopted by the Department of the Environment under the powers conferred by Article 3 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

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Planning and Environmental Policy Group



## Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS 12)

### Housing in Settlements



# Contents

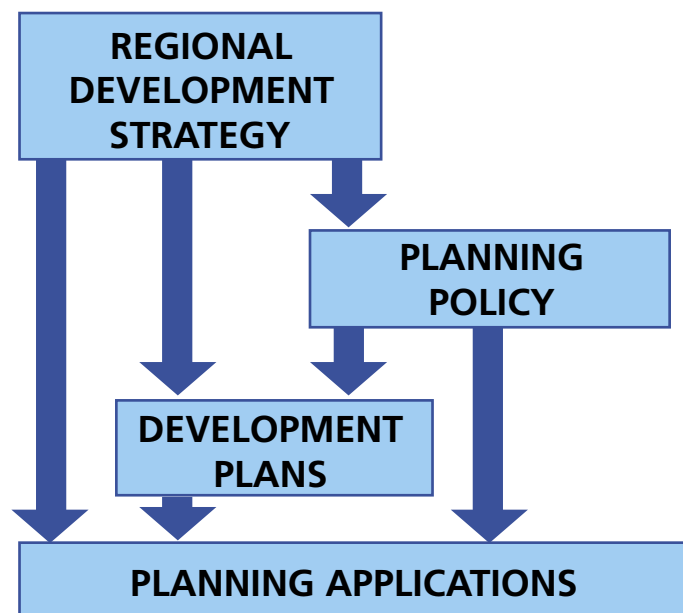
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# Preamble

1. On 20 September 2001, the Department for Regional Development (DRD) published Shaping Our Future: the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 (RDS). The RDS will guide the future development of the Region until 2025. Planning policies and development plans prepared by the Department of the Environment (DOE) Planning Service and development schemes prepared by the Department for Social Development (DSD) must be in general conformity with the RDS as required by the Planning (Amendment) (NI) Order 2003<sup>1</sup>.
2. This Planning Policy Statement (PPS) has been prepared in accordance with the DRD's statutory function of providing policy guidance and advice under the Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. Its purpose is to provide strategic direction and guidance in the form of regional planning policy to assist the implementation of the RDS. This PPS flows directly from the vision, spatial strategy and strategic planning guidelines contained in the RDS. It is one of the key mechanisms for the implementation of the RDS.

**Figure 1: Strategic Policy Framework**



3. This PPS is a material planning consideration for DOE Planning Service in preparing development plans and dealing with individual planning applications. Also, it is of relevance to the public and those whose

<sup>1</sup> The Planning (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order, 2003.

actions have a direct physical impact upon the natural or man-made environment. This includes landowners, developers, government departments and agencies, district councils, other statutory undertakers, voluntary and community organisations.

4. The policy guidance in this statement applies to all residential development proposals within cities, towns, villages and small settlements in Northern Ireland<sup>2</sup>. This policy document does not apply to dwellings in the countryside, except in exceptional circumstances in respect of Travellers accommodation, as outlined in Policy HS3. Dwellings in the countryside will be dealt with in PPS 14 – The Countryside<sup>3</sup>.
5. Nothing contained in this document should be read as a commitment that public resources will be provided for any specific project. All proposals for expenditure will be subject to economic, social, financial and environmental assessment and will also have to be considered having regard to the overall availability of resources.
6. This is one of a series of PPSs, produced by DRD and DOE Planning Service. This statement should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of the other prevailing planning policy statements, produced by DRD and DOE Planning Service. In particular PPS 7 “Quality Residential Developments”<sup>4</sup>; PPS 8 “Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation”<sup>5</sup>; PPS 13 “Transportation and Land Use”<sup>6</sup>; and extant policies contained in “A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland” (DOE revised March 1997)<sup>7</sup>.
7. This PPS replaces the following policies of “A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland”:

Policy HOU 1 – Housing Land Supply;

Policy HOU 2 – Housing in Towns and Villages;

Policy HOU 3 – Housing Redevelopment;

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 4 details the remit of PPS 12. An exception will be made for Travellers sites – Policy HS 3 states that “Where a need is identified for a transit site and this cannot be accommodated within a settlement, a site adjoining, or in close proximity to a settlement; other areas subject to policies of restraint, such as Green Belt, should be considered”.

<sup>3</sup> Planning Policy Statement 14 – The Countryside, DRD, to be published 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Planning Policy Statement 7 – Quality Residential Developments, DOE, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Planning Policy Statement 8 - Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation, DOE, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Planning Policy Statement 13 – Transportation and Land Use, DOE, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland, DOE, Revised March 1997.

Policy HOU 4 – Housing Need;  
Policy HOU 5 – Flats; and  
Policy HOU 6 – Living Over the Shop.

## **Equality Impact**

8. PPS 12 has been prepared in accordance with the Department's statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Section 75 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:
  - between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
  - between men and women generally;
  - between persons with a disability and persons without; and
  - between persons with dependents and persons without.
9. In addition, without prejudice to the obligation, the Department must also, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been carried out by the Department and is available at [www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture).

## **Human Rights**

10. This PPS is also subject to ongoing assessment in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) through Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998<sup>8</sup>. Preparation of this PPS has taken account of the requirements of the Convention.

## **New Targeting Social Need**

11. PPS 12 is consistent with the strategic approach of New Targeting Social Need and includes provisions such as the promotion of accessibility for all, which will contribute to tackling poverty, social exclusion and the regeneration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These provisions and the subsequent actions will complement and reinforce actions directly aimed at promoting equality of opportunity.

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Act 1998, Chapter 42, Article 2.

## **Rural Proofing**

12. PPS 12 has been prepared in line with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's "A Guide to Rural Proofing – considering the needs of rural communities". Rural proofing ensures that the needs and special considerations of rural communities and areas are routinely and objectively considered as part of the policy development process. The guidance within this PPS acknowledges and aims to address the needs of the rural community.

## **Sustainability Appraisal**

13. As good practice, this PPS was subjected to a Sustainability Appraisal in anticipation of the July 2004 deadline for compliance with the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA). The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal is to ensure that the PPS has been systematically assessed and revised during its preparation in the light of potential impacts on the environment and quality of life. It ensures that the policy contributes to the globally accepted objectives of sustainable development.
14. The Department is of the opinion that it is not required to publish an environmental assessment as specified in the new legislation because the first formal preparatory act (publication of draft PPS 12) was prior to the commencement date of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (NI) 2004 (2004 No.280). The Department is also of the opinion that the Sustainability Appraisal of this PPS substantially considers those matters which would have been examined under the new regulations and that there is no merit in commencing a fresh assessment.

# Policy Context

## Regional Development Strategy

15. The RDS recognises that the availability of quality housing in appropriate locations makes a vital contribution to the key policy objectives of government. It is a vital consideration in promoting economic well-being and social progress. New housing development can also stimulate urban and rural renewal. It is important that the public and private sectors work in partnership with key housing agencies to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of a decent home.
16. The RDS provides an overarching strategic framework for development plans and policies, guiding public and private investment decisions relating to land-use. It also provides a framework that both protects and enhances the physical, natural and man-made assets of the Region.
17. Importantly, the spatial development strategy of the RDS has at its core a hub, corridor and gateway framework aimed at achieving balanced and sustainable development across the Region. It contains six themes which:
  - promote regional balance;
  - encourage sustainable patterns of development;
  - reflect regional distinctiveness;
  - strengthen economic opportunities and regional competitiveness;
  - enhance accessibility; and
  - make best use of the regional assets in the hubs, corridors and gateways.

These themes apply to all development across the region and are embodied within this PPS.

18. The principles that underpin housing planning policy, outlined in the RDS, include the need to:
  - widen opportunity and choice;
  - improve the supply and quality of housing; and
  - promote sustainable development.
19. The RDS estimates that from its base year of December 1998, 160,000

additional dwellings will be required by 2015, with over 60% of these new households comprising one or two persons. It also estimates a need for some 250,000 additional dwellings by 2025 (SPG-HOU1)<sup>9</sup>. These regional housing growth figures apply to both the urban and rural area and include houses in the countryside. The "Review of the Housing Growth Indicators" has been issued for public consultation. This outlines a revised regional housing need figure of 200,000 additional dwellings by 2015<sup>10</sup>. Depending on the final outcome of this review, the HGIs may be altered to meet future housing requirements.

20. For the period up to the first review in 2010, the RDS sets a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located within existing urban areas of cities and towns of over 5,000 population<sup>11</sup>. The carrying out of urban capacity studies goes some way to achieving this target.
21. The approach to the location of future housing development, set out in the RDS is consistent with the spatial development strategy and reflects the guiding principles of the RDS by:
  - integrating housing with economic development, services, transport, and the local environment to achieve more sustainable patterns of development which make better use of resources;
  - helping to create a more cohesive society by a balanced spread of housing across the region and a high degree of integration with the Regional Strategic Transport Network of road and rail corridors; and
  - fostering a greater sense of community with a focus on place, the value of the individual, and high quality living environments.
22. There are three major themes in the RDS that relate to housing:

### **Managing housing growth and distribution (SPG-HOU 1 – SPG-HOU 3)<sup>12</sup>**

In managing housing growth and its distribution, a balance has to be struck between the need to ensure that the strategic objectives are met, particularly in relation to the drive to promote more housing

<sup>9</sup> Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 – Shaping our Future, DRD, 2001, Pages 113, 109: & The Family of Settlements Report – Shaping our Future, DRD, 2001, page 15.

<sup>10</sup> Review of the Regional Housing Growth Indicators, DRD, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> RDS, page 125.

<sup>12</sup> RDS, pages 113-116.

within existing urban areas, and the need to be able to respond flexibly to unforeseen demand for additional housing land.

### **Supporting urban renaissance (SPG-HOU 4 – SPG-HOU 5)<sup>13</sup>**

The promotion of more sustainable forms of development by encouraging compact and more attractive urban forms and increased housing within existing urban areas, supports the urban renaissance drive and investment in the hubs. It also helps conserve town settings, makes for more efficient use of resources, and helps achieve sufficient competitive 'critical mass' in the interests of regional economic growth.

### **Achieving balanced communities (SPG-HOU 6)<sup>14</sup>**

The strategy encourages the creation of more balanced local communities. These may be characterised by development patterns that contribute to greater community spirit, neighbourliness and a sense of belonging to a particular place. A variety of housing types and tenures offering choice is required to meet the different needs.

23. There are other policies and initiatives that support the key principles of the RDS and complement this PPS. For example, the town centre reinvigoration initiatives undertaken by DSD and the Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland being prepared by DOE<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> RDS, pages 123-128.

<sup>14</sup> RDS, pages 129-131.

<sup>15</sup> Promoting Sustainable Living - A Discussion Paper for a Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, DOE, (EHS), 2002.

# Policy Objectives

24. The objectives of this PPS are:

- to manage housing growth in response to changing housing need;
- to direct and manage future housing growth to achieve more sustainable patterns of residential development;
- to promote a drive to provide more housing within existing urban areas;
- to encourage an increase in the density of urban housing appropriate to the scale and design to the cities and towns of Northern Ireland; and
- to encourage the development of balanced local communities.

# Development Plans

25. The development plan process is the main vehicle for assessing future housing land requirements. The development plan will also identify the settlement hierarchy in the plan area. The definition, of which level in the hierarchy each settlement falls into, will be part of the development plan process for each locality. This PPS looks at three inter-related elements of the plan designed to meet its objectives and those of the RDS. These are:
- processes for allocating housing land;
  - measures to be contained in development plans; and
  - implementing, monitoring and reviewing development plans.

## The Processes for Allocating Housing Land

26. Housing allocations in development plans will be determined by the:
- a) application of the housing growth indicators (HGIs);
  - b) allowance for existing commitments (including dwellings already built);
  - c) use of urban capacity studies;
  - d) application of a sequential approach and identification of suitable sites for housing;
  - e) housing needs assessment;
  - f) allowance for windfall housing sites; and
  - g) residual housing need.

### a) Application of the Housing Growth Indicators

27. The RDS provides a HGI for each district council area (in the case of the Belfast Metropolitan Area the HGI relates to the entire plan area, covering six councils). This indicator covers urban and rural housing and will be used in development plans as the basis for allocating housing distribution across the entire plan area. A development plan will formulate a settlement and housing strategy for each district, on the basis of the RDS strategic guidelines (SPG-HOU 3.1, HGI 3)<sup>16</sup>. These strategies should aim to provide an appropriate balance across the entire settlement hierarchy, which also includes single dwellings in the open countryside, for which an appropriate allowance should

<sup>16</sup> RDS, pages 116 & 119.

be made, between housing in the urban and rural area. This PPS only deals with housing in settlements, which includes cities, towns, villages and small settlements. Housing in the rural area will be considered in PPS 14 – The Countryside, currently under preparation.

28. In making judgements on the allocation of housing distribution across settlements, a broad evaluation framework should be used. The evaluation framework contained in the RDS is reproduced in Appendix 5.

### **b) Allowance for Existing Commitments (including dwellings already built)**

29. In order to complete the calculation of the amount of new housing required for the settlements within the plan area, it is necessary to take into account housing already constructed, existing housing approvals not yet constructed and housing where proposals have achieved a reasonable expectation of approval. This applies from the start of the period covered by the HGIs in the RDS (1st January 1999).

### **c) Urban Capacity Studies**

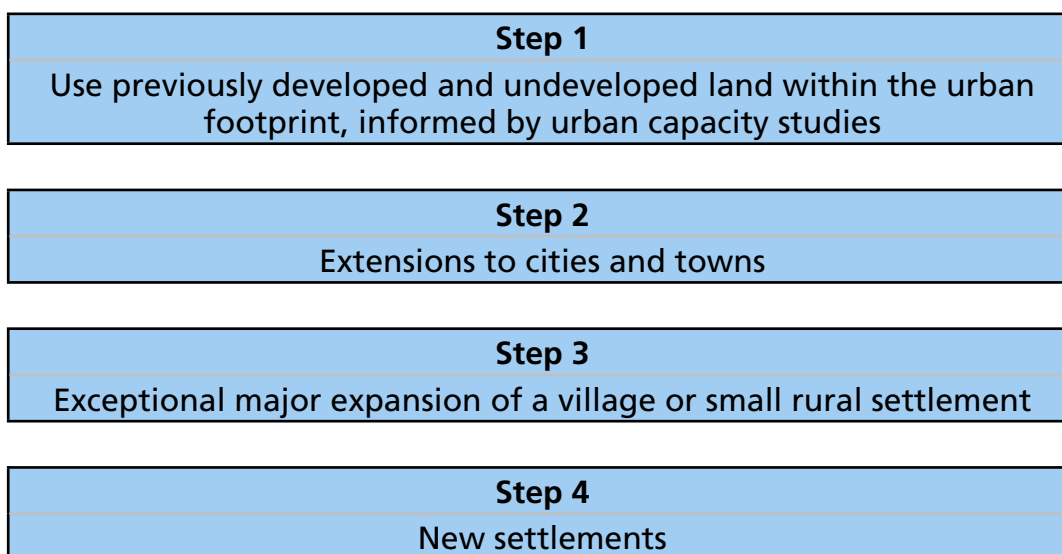
30. Urban capacity studies will be undertaken as an integral part of development plan preparation. These studies will provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential for future housing growth within the urban footprint. The study will indicate the capacity for housing within the urban footprint and the capacity for different types and densities of housing. The preparation of the study is an essential early step in the sequential approach to site identification and the managed release of housing land.
31. Additionally, urban capacity studies will also be important in providing base data for future assessments of housing growth indicators and targets for the Region. The urban capacity studies will be published as a technical supplement to the draft plan. A suggested methodology to be used is set out in Appendix 1.

### **d) Sequential Approach and Identification of Suitable Sites**

## for Housing

32. The development plan will identify sites for housing to meet the requirements for individual settlements taking into account the policy direction outlined in this PPS. It will also take account of local circumstances, other relevant planning considerations, and need to be in general conformity with the RDS. The RDS sets a regional target of 60% for the period up to its first review in 2010, for the location of urban housing growth within existing urban areas of cities and towns of over 5,000 population.
33. The sequential approach should apply to settlements above this threshold, but there may be circumstances where it may be appropriate to apply the sequential approach below this threshold to settlements, which are significant in their own locality. In addition, the sequential approach may be applied to lower tier settlements if it is considered appropriate in the light of local circumstances.
34. The sequential approach will be used in the search for and the identification of housing sites through the development plan process. This will focus on the re-use of previously developed land and buildings, underdeveloped and undeveloped land within the existing urban area, prior to considering greenfield settlement extensions. The main objective is to maintain compact town and village forms (SPG-HOU 4 – SPG-HOU 5 and SPG-ENV 6)<sup>17</sup>. The following diagram sets out the search sequence:

**Figure 2: Search Sequence**



<sup>17</sup> RDS, pages 123-128 &195.

35. All of the following criteria will be considered in the identification of suitable sites:

- the need for urban expansion, informed by allowances for existing commitments;
- the physical and environmental constraints on the development of land including the need to protect environmental setting, character, natural and built heritage and constraints such as contamination, land stability and flood risk;
- the capacity of existing infrastructure including public transport, water, sewerage, other utilities, social and community facilities (such as education and health) to absorb development without adding further financial burden;
- the degree of integration with centres of employment, services, other facilities, public transport and other non car modes (the latter two will be informed by the carrying out of an accessibility analysis as set out in PPS 13<sup>18</sup>);
- the need to manage the encroachment of housing on existing businesses to ensure that the operation and potential expansion of such enterprises, and the retention of jobs is not impeded by the juxtaposition of new housing areas;
- any relevant direction or guidance on strategic urban design;
- the ability to integrate new development without detracting from the character and identity of the settlement, whilst maintaining a sense of place (see Local Development Guidelines for Urban and Rural Areas, SPG-ENV 4<sup>19</sup>);
- the social and equality issues - in Northern Ireland there needs to be recognition of the need to deal sensitively and appropriately with the 'divided community' issue within settlements for both communities;
- the need to ensure that there would be no detrimental effect on residential amenity or on the health of residents due to nearby landuses and activities;
- the ability to unlock major strategic development opportunities such as those offering significant employment opportunities; and
- the strategic objectives for the plan area with direct relevance to the RDS.

<sup>18</sup> Planning Policy Statement 13 – Transportation and Land Use, DRD, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> RDS, pages 188-190.

36. It is not expected that every site identified will satisfy all of the above criteria, however, the approach taken must be both reasonable and justifiable. The requirement for identification of further land beyond the urban footprint in a settlement will be the residual after taking account of the urban capacity yield, windfall allowance and dwellings already constructed or committed.

### **e) Housing Needs Assessment**

37. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) will provide a Housing Need Assessment (HNA) in relation to identified areas of the housing market to assist DOE Planning Service in their preparation of development plans. The findings of the HNA will be taken into consideration in the preparation of a development plan and will be updated at regular intervals during the life of the plan. The findings of the HNA will influence how development plans will seek to facilitate a reasonable mix and balance of housing tenures and types to cater for the identified range of housing needs. Such a mix should seek to encourage equality of access to all sections of the community and create more balanced communities and greater community cohesion.
38. The HNA will be published as a technical supplement in support of the development plan. The HNA may be subject to examination at the public inquiry in connection with an objection.
39. The HNA will:
- set the regional housing market context within which such specific housing needs exist;
  - highlight housing trends to provide a descriptive baseline and draw attention to any issues that are significant;
  - analyse housing trends and the factors that are driving the housing market and give an indication of the relative importance of those drivers;
  - assess the impacts of local housing needs on the wider housing market; and
  - identify the range of housing needs.
40. The HNA will consider and analyse data and trends for the following housing categories. This list may change as a result of new policies

or new available research or as otherwise agreed with DOE Planning Service and DRD.

- Regeneration.
  - Social housing.
  - Affordable private rented.
  - Affordable owner occupied.
  - Empty homes.
  - Student accommodation.
  - Supported housing.
  - Travellers accommodation.
  - Second homes.
41. The NIHE will carry out regular monitoring and review of the data and trends for the various categories within the HNA.

## **Affordable Housing**

42. The availability of affordable housing (see Glossary) is one part of the drive to help create mixed and inclusive communities. The planning system has an important role to play in creating communities with a wider range of housing in terms of tenure, size, type and affordability.
43. Affordable housing can be considered as housing within a range of tenures, which is of a reasonable standard and available to households at reasonable cost. What is reasonable cost is dependant upon a prevailing situation, economic conditions and levels of income for each particular area. The NIHE carries out a regular assessment of low cost affordable housing and compiles the affordability index (see Glossary), which identifies the level of affordability in a particular area.
44. In particular any hotspots for affordable owner occupation, high social demand or concentrations of private rented housing benefit accommodation will be identified in the HNA. The potential impacts of the other specific issues, such as Traveller accommodation and supported housing will also be analysed.
45. Continued monitoring of affordable housing by the NIHE will be carried out both at the local and regional level and throughout the

plan period. Work already completed in the report "Affordable Housing in the Private Sector"<sup>20</sup>, the "Annual Review of the Northern Ireland Housing Market"<sup>21</sup>, and other relevant research will provide up to date information on affordable housing.

46. Outside of development plans the delivery of affordable housing to meet the needs of different household types in Northern Ireland can at present be met by the following housing mechanisms:
- social renting (Housing Executive);
  - social renting (Housing Association);
  - housing benefit funded private renting;
  - open market low cost owner occupation (co-ownership);
  - NIHE house sales; and
  - Housing Association house sales.
47. At present the main delivery mechanism for affordable housing is the co-ownership low cost owner occupation scheme. This represents a very successful single product approach, which has helped over 18,000 people into home ownership over the past 26 years. This success has been recognized by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) in its recent report on "Social Housing in Northern Ireland". DSD are looking at the potential expansion of the scheme.
48. In addition, the social housing sales scheme also assists in achieving more balanced communities through achieving a mix of housing tenures and house types as it enables those on low incomes to make the transition from renting of social housing to that of home ownership.
49. Where a local affordability hot spot occurs, as identified by the HNA and meeting the affordable housing need within the immediate area presents a problem of delivery, a range of other additional mechanisms should also be considered. There may be opportunities for the consideration of NIHE owned land within existing estates, which is peripheral to the existing housing to be examined for affordable housing use. These however must not conflict with the provisions as set down in PPS8 - Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation.

<sup>20</sup> Affordable Housing in Northern Ireland 2002, research commissioned by the NIHE, in partnership with the Council of Mortgage Lenders, and conducted by the University of Ulster and the University of Birmingham.

<sup>21</sup> Review of Northern Ireland Housing Market, NIHE.

50. Affordable housing is being delivered through the private housing market, particularly in the South East of England, where there is a severe lack of affordable housing for key workers. However, in Northern Ireland affordable housing has not reached such extreme levels. Research<sup>22</sup> has identified only isolated locations in Northern Ireland where house price inflation has reached such levels that affordability is an issue. These may be termed as affordable housing hot spots, but generally there are ample supplies of affordable houses available within the wider area of these locations.
51. It is considered that it is not appropriate at present, to impose an arbitrary level of affordable housing to be delivered by the private market. This situation however will be monitored and kept under review. If the situation deteriorates Government will consider further mechanisms to address affordable housing.
52. The planning system also has a part to play in addressing the issue of affordability. At present this will be through the identification of land for social housing purposes.

## **Social Housing**

53. The reservation of land for social housing will be achieved either through the zoning of land or the outlining of key site requirements through the development plan process. This will not preclude other sites coming forward through the development control process. The zoning of land for social housing will help facilitate the supply of affordable housing.
54. Following the completion of the urban capacity studies and HNA, development plans will give consideration to the social housing needs detailed in the HNA. Planning Service, in accordance with the identified need should seek agreement with the NIHE regarding sites to be zoned specifically for social housing. In some instances some of the sites may be in NIHE ownership.

## **Supported Housing**

55. The term 'supported housing' relates to accommodation with complementary housing support services to cater for people with a

range of specific needs (see Glossary).

56. For PPS 12 purposes it is necessary to distinguish between general needs housing where support needs are provided on a peripatetic/floating basis and the provision of specialised supported accommodation. In the latter the requirement for complementary housing support services are assessed, planned, and delivered in conjunction with accommodation based-solutions.
57. Increasingly, housing support services will be individual and person-centred and will not necessarily have specialised accommodation solutions and associated implications for landuse.
58. The landuse requirements for supported housing will be identified in the HNA. However, the HNA will only relate to that accommodation, which cannot be provided in a general needs housing solution (with an appropriate floating support model) but requires the provision of a specialised, accommodation-based solution. The HNA findings will be taken into account in the preparation of the development plan.

## **Travellers**

59. In 1999 the DOE (NI) gave the NIHE the strategic role in relation to the provision of accommodation to meet the needs of the Traveller community (see Glossary). Subsequently, the NIHE produced a report entitled "Travellers Accommodation – Needs Assessment for Northern Ireland 2002".
60. This report examined in detail the population and household characteristics, available accommodation and issues affecting the Traveller community and made several recommendations. The most important recommendation was to identify a 5-year rolling programme of schemes required to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers.
61. There are three broad categories of Travellers accommodation (see Glossary):
  - grouped housing;
  - serviced sites; and
  - transit sites.
62. The "Travellers Accommodation – Needs Assessment for Northern

Ireland 2002” and the 5-year programme will inform the HNA. This section will include a summary of the key findings and housing programme identified by the NIHE as it relates to the development plan area and to towns and settlements within it.

63. In particular, the number, type and location of the required accommodation will be highlighted to meet the need. This information will be taken into account in the preparation of the development plan.

#### **f) Allowance for Windfall Housing within the Urban Footprint**

64. Over the course of the plan period, windfall housing (see Glossary) can make up an important part of the supply of housing. In line with the objectives of the RDS, it is necessary to make allowance for this when deciding the number of sites to identify for development in the plan to prevent excessive allocation of housing land. For the purpose of making an allowance for windfall sites the assessment will be confined to within the Urban Footprint and **greenfield sites will not be included** and therefore no allowance should be made for greenfield windfalls.
65. The scale of the allowance for windfall housing will vary from area to area and may depend on the approach taken in the urban capacity study. Allowance can be made on the basis of examining past trends in windfalls coming forward for development and estimating likely future windfall potential. The justification of the windfall allowance should be included in the technical documents supporting the development plan.

#### **g) Residual Housing Need**

66. The need, if any, for further identification of land beyond the urban footprint in a settlement will be that which is residual after taking account of the urban capacity yield, windfall allowance and dwellings already constructed or committed.

## Measures to be contained in Development Plans

67. In order to address the areas set out above and achieve the objectives of this PPS, a menu of measures are outlined below. The following measures will, as appropriate, be accommodated in the plan proposals and requirements for specific sites:
- a) set out the period of the plan and the overall housing provision for each settlement;
  - b) set development limits for all identified settlements;
  - c) zone sites for housing in larger settlements, to meet identified housing need in line with the objectives of the RDS and this PPS. In smaller settlements, plans may indicate where it is expected that the majority of housing will be located through the use of Housing Policy Areas (HPAs). HPAs allow a degree of flexibility in relation to the use of the land by clearly setting out the circumstances where a use other than housing would be acceptable. The scale of development should be appropriate to the scale of the settlement;
  - d) incorporate a managed release of housing land, as outlined in Appendix 2;
  - e) identify specific sites or areas within settlements where the site or a proportion of it is required to meet one or more category of need and clearly state the proportion required;
  - f) identify settlements where the housing needs assessment has determined an affordability pressure, including that associated with second home development;
  - g) zone land or include policy, as appropriate, to reflect the local need resulting from the demand for second homes;
  - h) where justified, in the interests of balanced local communities, specify those sites or areas where the development of certain house types or a mix of house types will be required;
  - i) set minimum density levels for all housing sites within urban footprints and where appropriate for whole settlements, parts of settlements or other individual sites as deemed appropriate. Density levels should be appropriate to the character of the surrounding area (see Appendix 1). Where levels are set for whole or parts of settlements specify, where appropriate, individual sites where variance from this is desired and specify

the level of variance required. Particular attention should be paid to promoting higher density housing on sites that meet the following criteria:

- inner urban locations;
  - linked to public transport and adjacent to public transport corridors;
  - potential mixed use sites with opportunity for integration with employment and other services; and
  - appropriate locations on main distributor roads contributing to urban regeneration.
- j) set maximum density levels for sites or defined areas, as appropriate. This may be necessary in areas where higher density developments would have a significant adverse impact on the established character, amenity or environmental quality of an area or to ensure compliance with the overall housing allocation;
- k) identify areas within town centres where existing residential development will be protected, in support of the 'town centre living' concept;
- l) introduce a requirement for transport assessments to be carried out when considering certain sites for inclusion for residential use, where it is regarded as necessary to achieve increased integration with public transport and modes of transport other than the private car;
- m) set requirements for the housing elements of sites, where specific sites are identified for a mix of uses;
- n) include, where appropriate, specific policies for new housing which will ensure that the distinctive nature and character of settlements are protected; and
- o) identify, opportunity sites and specify the level of housing that is either required or is acceptable and any design requirements that should be applied.
68. In addition to the above requirements, it will also be necessary for development plans to take into account the requirements that are contained in other prevailing PPSs.

## Implementation, Monitoring and Review

69. In implementing, monitoring and reviewing the housing aspect of plans the following key issues need to be addressed in order to achieve the objectives of this PPS:

### **a) Manage the Release of Housing Sites**

70. Managing the release of housing land provides an opportunity for development plans to influence the order and timing of housing site release as well as controlling the location and type of housing developments. The approach will ensure development plans are more responsive to housing need as they change over the course of the plan period. It will also enable the sequential approach to be implemented. The consequence of this approach is that an appropriate tension is maintained in the provision of housing between existing urban areas and greenfield development. However, there is a clear preference in the provision of housing within existing urban areas in order to promote recycling of land and buildings. The site release mechanism can be adjusted to meet the different needs of settlements. This approach envisages compact urban forms, more housing within existing urban areas and reduced urban sprawl (SPG-HOU 4)<sup>23</sup>.
71. Appendix 2 contains a methodology, which will be followed in the preparation and implementation of development plans.

### **(b) Monitor the development of housing land and review the land release to ensure supply continues to be in balance with need and that plan objectives are being met**

72. Effective and regular monitoring is key to the 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to the provision of housing in settlements. It enables the required responsiveness and flexibility of any phasing and managed release mechanism. Monitoring will be an ongoing process with annual reporting and regular opportunities for review.
73. Effective monitoring will depend on tracking residential development in relation to set objectives on average annual building rates, rates and densities of building within existing urban areas and in adjoining

<sup>23</sup> RDS, pages 123-125.

greenfield locations, and estimated windfall rates. This will allow a clear view of overall progress and potential problems. It will also indicate any corrective measures that may need to be taken, such as amending the type, level and order of housing release.

74. It will also be necessary to monitor and assess housing in the rural area in order to ensure that total housing growth can be assessed against the plan's housing allocation.
75. The NIHE will assist DOE Planning Service by regular updating of the housing need assessments and analysis of the extent to which the categories of housing need are being met. As part of the monitoring process the HNA results will be taken into account, when carrying out the mid term review of development plans.
76. Where monitoring indicates that a persistent and significant gap exists between the housing objectives of the development plan and what is occurring on the ground, remedial action will be required. This may involve a plan amendment or review.

# Planning Control Principles for Housing in Settlements

77. These principles reiterate the housing principles in the RDS and where appropriate are amplified through the development control policies. This section outlines a number of principles to be applied to the planning and delivery of housing development in settlements.
78. As outlined above, the three major themes in the RDS that relate to housing are:
- managing housing growth and distribution;
  - supporting urban renaissance; and
  - achieving balanced communities.
79. The development plan process is the main vehicle for the delivery of these themes, in particular, managing the growth and distribution of housing throughout the Region. This is addressed in detail in the development plan section.
80. The development control process also has an important role to play and by promoting the following principles, can support urban renaissance and assist in the achievement of balanced communities:

- **increased housing density without town cramming;**
- **good design;**
- **sustainable forms of development; and**
- **balanced communities.**

81. These planning control principles should be taken into account in the preparation of development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals for housing development in settlements. They support and should be applied in conjunction with other relevant planning policy and guidance, in particular:

PPS 1 – General Principles;

PPS 7 – Quality Residential Environments;

PPS 13 – Transportation and Landuse;

Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments; and

Development Control Advice Note (DCAN) 8 – Housing in Existing Urban Areas.

## **Planning Control Principle 1**

### **Increased Housing Density without Town Cramming**

**An increase in the density of housing development should be promoted in town and city centres and other locations which benefit from high accessibility to public transport facilities. It should also form an integral part of major housing or mixed-use development proposals.**

**When considering an increase in housing density in established residential areas, great care should be taken to ensure that local character, environmental quality and amenity are not significantly eroded and that the proposed density, together with the form, scale, massing and layout of the new development will respect that of adjacent housing and safeguard the privacy of existing residents.**

**In residential areas of distinctive townscape character an increase in density should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.**

82. The promotion of increased density in housing development, as advocated in the RDS, aims to achieve a more sustainable form of development by encouraging compact urban forms and promoting more housing within existing urban areas, thereby supporting urban renaissance.
83. The development of higher density housing should be appropriate in scale and design to the settlements in Northern Ireland. In established residential areas any increase in housing density needs to be handled sensitively, particularly the redevelopment of existing houses and infill sites. To prevent town cramming the overriding objective, as stated in the RDS, will be to avoid any significant erosion of the environmental quality, amenity and privacy enjoyed by existing residents. Where new modern developments are acceptable in principle, they should respect the form, scale and massing of adjacent housing and seek to safeguard privacy. To protect the distinctive townscape characteristics of Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character, an increase in housing density will not normally be acceptable.

## **Planning Policy for Planning Control Principle 1 is set out in PPS 7 and PPS 13**

84. PPS 7 provides that development plans may include specific policies for the control of housing development in established residential areas, particularly those which display considerable townscape character. Amongst other things, it advises that such policies should seek to ensure that the form, density and character of new housing does not detract from the environmental quality, residential amenity and established character of the wider housing area.
85. As part of the drive to achieve an increased housing density, development plans should specify minimum site densities as a key site requirement for zoned housing land. These should however take into account specific site circumstances. A maximum site density may also be appropriate where the aim is to respect the surrounding context and setting, or in the case of a greenfield site, to ensure that these are not developed to excess at the expense of lands within the urban footprint.
86. PPS 13 indicates that town and city centres, major public transport interchanges and metropolitan transport corridors, which benefit from high quality and frequent public transport services are examples of accessible locations suitable for both higher density and mixed use development. This will assist in making the best use of urban land and generally support the viability of public transport services.

## **Planning Control Principle 2 Good Design**

**Good design should be the aim of all those involved in housing development and will be encouraged everywhere.**

**All new housing developments should demonstrate a high quality of design, layout and landscaping.**

87. Government policy aims to achieve attractive and sustainable places through good design and wishes to promote:
  - more sustainable patterns of living, working and travelling;
  - more effective integration between landuse planning and transport; and
  - the creation of attractive places in which people are happy to live, work and take their leisure.
88. Good design ensures attractive usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. It can also help secure the continued acceptance of new development.
89. The RDS promotes imaginative and innovative design which respects the character of an area, local tradition and human scale in order to create attractive surroundings and safe places to live.
90. Good design is not just about the architecture of individual buildings, but also about the functionality and impact of the development on the overall character, quality and sustainability of an area and includes the efficient and prudent use of resources.
91. In housing, a well-designed development should therefore respect its context and make the most of existing site characteristics. The layout should protect and respect natural habitat and heritage, encourage walking and cycling and should provide convenient access to public transport. Tree-lined avenues, generous planting and open spaces should be provided. Traffic should be calmed on as many roads as possible. The places created should be distinctive, attractive and safe, and should serve the needs of residents of all ages, particularly children.
92. There should be no acceptance of ill-conceived designs which do not contribute to making places better for people.

## **Planning Policy for Planning Control Principle 2 is set out in PPS 1 and PPS 7**

93. Regard should be taken of the good practice guidance set out in 'Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments' and DCAN 8 'Housing in Existing Urban Areas'. The report 'Improving the Quality of Housing Layouts in Northern Ireland' complements the Creating Places Guide.
94. The Creating Places Guide is structured around the process of design and encourages a greater emphasis on place, community and context in the design of new residential development. It highlights that good design comes from achieving a balanced response to all of the factors influencing the quality and sustainability of a scheme – setting, site characteristics, landscape design, circulation patterns and the buildings themselves. These should come together to form a coherent strategy for the overall design character of a proposal.
95. 'Improving the Quality of Housing Layouts in Northern Ireland' is a report jointly sponsored by the Construction Employers' Federation, DOE Planning Service, DRD Roads Service and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It aims to stimulate everyone involved in the development process to give greater attention to design issues.
96. DCAN 8 advocates a design-led approach to new housing in existing urban areas. It promotes the philosophy of working with context, and fitting development in with the prevailing character and appearance of the neighbourhood. A design-led approach helps to safeguard urban and environmental quality, promotes sustainable development and reinforces civic pride and a sense of place.

### **Planning Control Principle 3 Sustainable Forms of Development**

The use of greenfield land for housing should be reduced and more urban housing accommodated through the recycling of land and buildings. More housing should also be promoted in city and town centres and mixed-use development encouraged.

Major housing development should be concentrated in sustainable locations facilitating a high degree of integration with centres of employment, community services and public transport and taking advantage of existing infrastructure.

Local facilities, services and adequate infrastructure should be integrated into new housing development to meet the needs of the community.

A clear design concept should be established for all housing schemes or mixed-use development.

97. A key element of the RDS is to direct and manage future housing growth to achieve more sustainable patterns of residential development. It advocates the maintenance of compact town and village forms, the recycling of urban land and buildings and adopts a sequential approach to the allocation of land for housing. To help reduce the use of greenfield land it sets an ambitious regional target of accommodating 60% of the future housing growth within existing urban limits. This will encourage a more sustainable pattern of development by assisting urban regeneration, making efficient use of land and optimising existing infrastructure.
98. The RDS also encourages more housing within city and town centres and greater mixed-use development. City and town centre living encourages the development of 'walkable communities' with environmental benefits through reducing the need to use private cars, and community benefits to people such as the elderly and young people who do not have access to a car. It can also help promote the 24-hour city concept.

**Planning Policy for Principle 3 is set out in PPS 1, PPS 7 and PPS 13 and supplemented by Policy HS**

## HS 1 Living Over the Shop

Planning permission will be granted for residential use above shops and other business premises subject to the provision of:

- a suitable living environment; and
- adequate refuse storage space (large enough to allow for the separation of recyclable waste).

A flexible approach will be applied to car parking provision having regard to the circumstances of each case.

Where external alterations are proposed to facilitate the conversion of existing premises to residential use these will only be permitted where they are in keeping with the host building and the character of the surrounding area in terms of design, scale and use of materials.

### Justification

'Living Over the Shop' brings many social and economic benefits and is a cost-effective means of accommodating additional housing. Underused or wasted space is brought back into use and the fabric of buildings is put into good repair and maintained. It can provide a useful source of affordable rented housing and can contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres.

99. PPS 13 promotes the integration of transportation and landuse planning. It highlights that accessibility by modes of transport other than the private car should be a key consideration in both the location and design of development.
100. PPS 7 provides that the community infrastructure and services that are necessary to enable new housing to be satisfactorily accommodated should be provided by developers as an integral part of the development. The integration of local facilities such as schools, creches, surgeries, local shops and play facilities with new residential development, is one of the means to increase its vitality, provide a sense of community, and enhance its social and economic sustainability. This is supported by PPS 13. For zoned housing land development plans should identify what local neighbourhood

facilities will be required to meet the needs of the new community as part of the Key Site Requirements.

101. To facilitate a quality and sustainable form of residential development developers should establish a clear design concept that provides sufficient information to allow an informed decision on the design, sustainability and accessibility of the new development. This should address the main planning considerations set out in PPS 7 and have regard to the good design guidance set out under Planning Control Principle 2.

## **Planning Control Principle 4 Balanced Communities**

**Social housing should be provided by developers as an integral element of larger housing developments where a need is identified.**

**Where a need is identified for Travellers specific accommodation this should be facilitated at suitable sites.**

**A mix of house types and sizes should be provided to promote choice and assist in meeting community needs.**

102. Achieving balanced communities is one of the major themes for housing in the RDS. Diversity and social inclusion are distinguishing marks of well-balanced communities which embrace a mix of social groups and are able to accommodate people of different backgrounds who wish to live together.
103. In terms of landuse, a variety of housing types and tenures offering choice to meet different needs, supported by the opportunity to share in local employment, open space, community meeting places, local shopping and service facilities are required for the building of more balanced communities.
104. The development plan process will be the primary vehicle to facilitate any identified need for social housing by zoning land or by indicating, through key site requirements, where a proportion of a site may be required for social housing. Where appropriate, planning agreements may be used to secure a proportion of social housing in new development, where a need has been established.

**Planning Policy for Planning Control Principle 4 is set out in PPS 7 and supplemented by Policies HS 2 – HS 4**

## **HS 2 Social Housing**

**In locations where a demonstrable housing need is identified by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, planning permission for housing proposals will only be granted where provision is made for a suitable mix of housing types and tenures to meet the range of market and social housing needs identified.**

**The proportion of land or units to be set aside for social housing will be determined as part of the development control process.**

### **Justification**

**This policy will be applied where a need for social housing is established through a local housing needs assessment and the development plan for the area has not provided for it.**

## **HS 3 Travellers Accommodation**

Where a local housing needs assessment identifies that there is a demonstrable need for Travellers specific accommodation, planning permission will be granted for a suitable facility which meets this need. This may be provided through either a grouped housing scheme, a serviced site or a transit site where the following criteria are met:

- adequate landscaping is provided;
- the development is compatible with existing and proposed buildings and structures in the area paying particular regard to environmental amenity; and
- where appropriate, the provision of workspace, play space and visitor parking is provided.

Where a need is identified for a transit site and this cannot be accommodated within a settlement, a site adjoining, or in close proximity to a settlement; other areas subject to policies of restraint, such as the Green Belt, should be considered. The exceptional release of land for such a facility should take full account of environmental considerations.

### **Justification**

Travellers have distinctive needs which will be assessed as part of the local housing needs assessment undertaken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Where a need is identified and a development plan is under preparation, this should identify a suitable site(s). In other cases, proposals will be considered under this policy. Where a suitable site within a settlement is not available, exceptionally, a site adjoining or in close proximity to a settlement will be considered.

## **HS 4 House Types and Size**

**Planning permission will only be granted for new residential development of 25 or more units, or on sites of one hectare or more, where a mix of house types and sizes is provided. In smaller schemes the need to provide greater variety in type and size will be considered on its individual merits.**

**The required mix of house types and sizes will be negotiated with developers, taking account of the specific characteristics of the development, the site and its context.**

**In locations where apartment development of 25 or more units is considered acceptable, variety in the size of units will be required.**

### **Justification**

A mixture of different types and sizes of houses, apartments and maisonettes will help to provide choice within a housing development and assist in the creation of a balanced community in the local area.

Different house types and sizes can also help create visual variety and interest, make use of any awkwardly shaped parts of a site and assist in the promotion of greater affordability.

105. This policy will complement PPS 7 which already advises that on large sites a range of densities, building forms and a mix of house types will be required to help enhance quality and sustainability. In addition, it indicates that particular care will be required in the treatment of corner sites within housing layouts and that these should contain specifically designed buildings. Such corner sites provide potential for landmark buildings which can add to the mix and variety of house types and sizes within a residential development.

## Monitoring and Review of PPS 12

106. In order for any policy to remain appropriate over time, it is essential to record and measure changes as well as the overall performance of the policy. This tracking and monitoring can be achieved by setting appropriate indicators and targets. As this PPS provides policy guidance and advice in relation to the RDS, DRD will monitor PPS 12 through the procedures and mechanisms set up to implement, monitor and review the RDS.
107. There are three important principles that apply to the monitoring and review arrangements of the RDS and this PPS. The first principle is the importance of a partnership and participative approach to the implementation, monitoring and review of the strategy. The second principle emphasises the need for an outcome orientated implementation to deliver the aims and objectives of the strategy. The third principle stresses the need to learn the lessons from successful regional and inter-regional development in Europe and elsewhere.
108. Monitoring will provide an early warning of where policies are not implemented, not meeting objectives or are being overtaken by events. In relation to this PPS the recommended targets and indicators to be monitored are those to be agreed for the relevant strategic planning guidelines of the RDS. They provide a benchmark against which progress can be measured towards achieving the objectives of the PPS.

### Review Arrangements

109. The RDS will be subject to a review after 10 years to consider if major changes of direction are required in the light of new trends and circumstances. After five years (2005/6), DRD will carry out a focused assessment to identify any aspects where 'in course' adjustments might be appropriate, including any adjustments which may be appropriate in the light of 2001 Census data. This will also apply to the policy guidance contained in this PPS.
110. The NIHE is also assisting the Department by carrying out a monitoring and advisory role in relation to the HNA.

# Glossary

## **Accessibility Analysis:**

The process of measuring ease of travel from or to specific origins or destinations in order to provide an evaluation of the travel opportunities available that connect people from where they are to where they want to go. Such analysis will generally be carried out as part of a Transport Study undertaken in support of a development plan or a transport plan.

## **Accessible Locations:**

A site that has identified by accessibility analysis where integration with public transport, cycling, walking and the responsible use of the private car can be best achieved.

## **Affordable Housing:**

Comprises the social rented sector, housing benefit funded private rented and that part of the low cost owner occupation market which can be purchased utilising 30% or less of gross household income.

## **Affordable Index:**

A co-efficient based on 30% of gross household income (used to service a 95% mortgage) necessary to purchase a property with a market value equivalent to the upper limit of the lower quartile of house prices. The trigger for when affordability becomes an issue is when 30% of average household income is insufficient to purchase a dwelling in the upper part of the lowest house price quartile.

## **District Housing Growth Indicators:**

The RDS introduces the concept of having housing growth indicators applied to the Region. Their purpose is to direct the distribution of housing in the Region over the period to 2015, through the development plan process, in accordance with the Spatial Development Strategy.

## **Empty Homes:**

A private sector empty home is not liable for rates and is defined by the Rate Collection Agency as 'a property with no one living in it and is completely empty of furniture and/or effects or the furniture and effects therein are deemed to be of no value; and it is not being used in any

way'. However, empty homes also include all Housing Association/Housing Executive voids (excluding those classified as pending 'demolition' or 'sale').

### **Housing Need:**

For the purposes of this PPS the term housing need is identification of future requirements in relation to an identified set of housing categories formulated by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) through the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA).

### **Regeneration:**

The process of improving housing conditions or dereliction within an area (including NIHE estates) using a variety of approaches including redevelopment, estate strategies, housing renovation grants and the encouragement of the private sector.

### **Settlements:**

Settlements may be defined as cities, towns, villages and small settlements. The precise definition of which category each settlement falls into, will be part of the development plan process for each locality.

### **Social Housing:**

Housing provided by registered Social Landlords for rent. Such housing is allocated by reference to an approved (Department for Social Development) Common Waiting List and allocation system.

### **Supported Housing:**

Housing that has associated support provided for its occupant(s) where that support is provided within the building and as part of its management.

### **TSN:**

TSN (Targeting Social Need) is a government policy that aims to ensure that public resources are directed at those areas, groups and individuals who are most disadvantaged and excluded within Northern Ireland.

### **Travellers:**

A generic group as defined by the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 i.e. "having a shared history, culture and traditions, including a nomadic way of life."

**Urban Footprint:**

This is defined as the continuous built-up area of a settlement. Urban footprints have been identified and set as the baseline of January 2001 and for monitoring purposes will not be altered for five years. The boundary is represented by an uninterrupted line, often lying inside the planned settlement limit. It contains land which has a formal urban use and, for example, gardens on the edge of the settlement will be included within the urban area as they form part of a curtilage of a building. Undeveloped zoned land at the edge of the settlement is excluded.

# Appendix 1 Urban Capacity Studies

## Introduction

This appendix sets out a broad methodology for carrying out urban capacity studies as part of development plan preparation in Northern Ireland. It outlines the main issues that should be dealt with when carrying out a study. The guidance is based on the principles expressed in the RDS and this PPS. The methodology has been formulated in co-operation with DOE Planning Service.

Urban capacity studies are an integral part of the development plan process and are crucial to the identification of sites for future housing by a methodology which follows a sequential approach.

## Why assess Urban Capacity?

The need for urban capacity studies is clear in the light of the RDS. They are an essential tool in both ensuring a sequential approach to the identification of sites through the development plan process and managing the release of housing land. The studies will provide a full understanding of the potential for future housing growth within the urban footprint of settlements.

Urban capacity studies undertaken during development plan preparation will also inform any review of the RDS, particularly in relation to housing indicators and targets for the Region.

DOE Planning Service will only be required to undertake urban capacity studies as part of development plan preparation and not at any other regular or irregular intervals outside of this process.

## Which settlements should be assessed?

RDS sets a regional target of 60% for the period up to its first review in 2010, for the location of urban housing growth within the existing urban areas of the cities and towns of over 5,000 population. It states that the potential for achieving the regional target will be determined through the development plan process using urban capacity studies to maximise the share of residential development that can be achieved within the urban footprint (see glossary) of a particular city or town.

With the threshold for this set at 5,000 population it would also appear a logical threshold above which an urban capacity study

would be necessary to enable such determination of urban potential. In different parts of Northern Ireland, however, settlements of different sizes can be of relative importance within their own locality. For example, a town of 3,000 population may have a more important role and function in the rural west than one of equal size in the more urbanised east.

This guidance sets as a reasonable minimum requirement that urban capacity studies should in a development plan preparation be undertaken for the highest and second highest tiers of settlement in each district. Variance from this should only occur in exceptional circumstances where clearly justifiable and in recognition of the urban footprint target as specified in the RDS.

Additional urban capacity studies for lower tier settlements could also be included if considered appropriate in light of local circumstances and the sustainable development objectives of the RDS and the subject plan.

## **Urban Capacity Study Approach**

Generally, elsewhere in the UK, three alternative broad approaches to carrying out urban capacity studies are suggested.

1. Comprehensive surveys of the whole defined area.
2. Priority area studies.
3. Typical urban area studies.

In the context of Northern Ireland given the nature and scale of the main settlements and in the light of the strategic drive in the RDS for sustainable development and maximum focus within existing urban footprints, only the first approach involving comprehensive surveys of the whole defined area is considered to be generally appropriate. This will facilitate assessment of the entire area within the urban footprint by the definition of distinct character areas following an approach as outlined below (application of character assessment approach).

Only in exceptional circumstances and where clearly justifiable will an overall approach following either of the other two alternatives be considered acceptable. Instances where this might occur would usually be due to factors such as:

- urban area size;
- time or resources available; and
- particular local circumstances.

Within an overall comprehensive approach, use of typical urban area studies for more specific aspects, such as within a town centre, may be appropriate.

## **Application of Character Assessment Approach**

This involves the classification of the entire study area into distinct character areas across four broad character types, through a comprehensive analysis which is heavily reliant on survey.

The four character area types are:

- Type 1. Distinct areas of vacant/under utilised land – sites as a general rule should be of 0.1 hectares minimum size or with a potential of 10 dwellings minimum or less if local circumstances permit.
- Type 2. Areas already with a landuse commitment:
- (a) Non-residential: including important public open spaces, established industrial areas, educational and healthcare premises.
  - (b) Yet to be established Residential: Comprising development currently under construction or with current planning approval.
- Type 3. Established residential areas, possibly with minor non-residential uses, having a broadly similar character.
- Type 4. Areas with a relatively higher propensity for change - including town centres, mixed use areas, transitional areas.

The character areas should be identified and defined on the basis of a clear and transparent assessment, taking into account, as appropriate, relevant planning history, landuse, housing density, physical character and any other relevant factors. This is a suggested approach and there may be other methods that will achieve the same objectives. However, it is an important element of the entire urban capacity study and this may be open to scrutiny at the Public Inquiry, into the draft plan, depending on the nature and level of objections.

## Sequence of Study

Having established the settlements to be assessed, the urban capacity study for each of these should follow the broad sequence of steps as shown in the table below and explanatory notes for each step.

1. Urban footprint boundary.
2. Identify housing commitments.
3. Compile assets/constraints.
4. Site survey.
5. Planning history.
6. Select provisional urban capacity sites.
7. Define character areas.
8. Provisional windfall assessments.
9. Detailed consultation.
10. Potential yield summary and presentation.

In addition, this Appendix also sets out some additional guidelines for estimating yield from more detailed assessment of both Type 1 and Type 4 Character Areas (as defined earlier). This should be considered particularly in tandem with Steps 6 to 10 of the recommended sequence.

1. Ensure that the appropriate urban footprint boundary for the year 2001 has been established and identify this as the boundary of study. This is the important urban footprint reference point to coincide with the publication of the RDS which sets the base date for the 60% target.
2. Identify areas of housing currently under construction or with current planning approval. These form part of character area Type 2 as being committed to use and consequently identified in the plan as part of the residential zoning. Sources include the Northern Ireland Housing Land Availability Data.
3. Compile assets/constraints information from the data records and the consultation responses available. This should include insurmountable constraints such as flood, contamination, instability, steep gradient,

conservation issues etc. This may give preliminary assistance in the identification of character Type 1 areas and character Type 4 areas. Initial consultation with the key plan consultees will have been undertaken at the outset of the plan preparation.

4. Undertake a site survey to identify the urban capacity sites, to inform the analysis and to inform character area assessment. Reference to a 'standard survey sheet' is recommended to ensure consistency in the use of information and analysis. Key criteria in determining potential urban capacity sites include:
  - a vacant or occupied site, or part thereof, that is evidently not used or significantly underused;
  - a site conspicuously inappropriate (not just different to) amongst nearby uses; and
  - a combination of separate, possibly under-utilised, areas which together comprise an area of potential.

All the above would of course be further subject to a size threshold (refer 'Application of character assessment approach' character area Type 1) and should be identified where considered appropriate for either residential or mixed use.

5. Undertake necessary planning history analysis including those for identified urban capacity sites from Step 4. This may provide further guidance towards identifying the site potential and character assessment.
6. Select the final urban capacity sites and make a provisional assessment of future potential, both of which will be subject to detailed consultation with key plan consultees. It is important to consider sites in the light of the overall plan period and not to rule out sites that could readily be expected to come on stream within that period. Clear justification should be available for sites ruled out. Selected sites will ultimately be further classified in the plan as one of plan zonings; plan opportunity sites (all or part thereof); or subsumed into the general character area as part of overall windfall potential, if appropriate.
7. Finalise the definition of all remaining character areas across the type range, following the approach as broadly outlined above (application of character assessment approach).

8. Undertake provisional character area housing windfall assessments. This is crucial to the allowance made within the plan for provision of housing through developments not specifically identified by 'zoning' and thus not definitively predicted. It is thus an 'anticipated' extra provision which if not 'allowed for' might prejudice compliance of the plan with the housing allocations of the RDS. Such development is generally referred to as 'windfall' and will be likely to comprise:

- specific additional provision within Type 3 character areas
  - established residential areas;
- provision arising from within Type 4 character areas
  - areas with a relatively higher propensity for change; This may include 'opportunity sites' as may be identified in the plan which have some level of housing potential or have a specific level of required housing; and
- the cumulative potential of sites initially identified as 'urban capacity' but which remain 'unzoned' in the plan and have been subsumed in a general character area for reasons relating to, for example, size constraints.

The windfall assessment is to establish the housing yield potential from such windfall, albeit in general terms and should be undertaken with various possible yield categories which might arise.

For Type 3 Character Areas (established residential areas) these categories would comprise:

- sub-division of existing housing;
- empty homes (where in excess of average vacancy);
- redevelopment potential;
- infill;
- intensification of existing residential (use of private open space);
- conversion from non-residential;
- smaller areas of vacant/under-utilised land (below urban capacity site threshold); and
- other unspecified.

For Type 4 character areas (high propensity for change) these categories would comprise:

- sub-division of existing housing;

- redevelopment potential (existing housing);
- redevelopment potential (non-residential);
- intensification of existing residential (use of private open space);
- infill;
- conversion from non-residential;
- vacant non-residential;
- car park redevelopment;
- flats over shops;
- opportunity sites (with residential option);
- smaller areas of vacant/under-utilised land (below urban capacity site thresholds);
- ancillary space associated with established/committed uses; and
- other unspecified.

The estimation of potential yield for respective character areas requires consideration of the nature and character of their built fabric and account should also be taken of existing planning policy. Additionally, consultation with development control officers may be beneficial to such consideration.

Examination of past levels of windfall in recent housing developments will also be helpful in the justification of assumed future levels.

Overall, this assessment will assist in the allowance made for windfall provision in the plan for each settlement as required.

Clearly, there are many assumptions required in this type of assessment which reduce the accuracy and reliability of the conclusions. It is however crucial to the total housing allocation exercise in the plan preparation. These shortcomings are offset by the commitment to prepare an annual housing monitor/undertake a mid-term plan review.

9. Further input from plan consultees, relating to urban capacity sites and general areas of high anticipated windfall should be sought before finalising the estimated urban housing yield. This could, by agreement, be on a drip-feed basis to facilitate the respective individual work programmes of each body involved.
10. For each settlement, the assessment steps and resulting total anticipated yield across the various character areas should be clearly

presented both in detail and summary form. It is inevitable that this analysis may be carefully scrutinised during the post draft plan publication stages of plan preparation.

## **Monitoring**

The Northern Ireland Housing Land Availability Monitor is undertaken annually and this will permit the examination of housing development progress, both in total terms and by particular area subject to the level of detail compiled. Appropriate classification of sites within the monitor will permit detailed examination of progress, including within categories associated with windfall. This will permit on-going 'testing' of plan assumptions in accordance with the plan, monitor and manage ethos of the RDS and integral with the commitment for plan review as necessary.

## **Estimating Yield**

This will apply to Type 1 and Type 4 character areas as identified in the 'application of character assessment approach'. It is possible to go into varying levels of detail with regard to assessing yield and it will be a matter for the plan team to decide this and justify its decision. A design-led approach would be the most labour intensive but also the most realistic. Alternatively, a density multiplier approach can be adopted, which is a crude tool for multiplying the total area of land identified through survey work by an average housing density.

A more design-led approach is generally preferable, however where plan teams consider that this is not appropriate, consideration could be given to adopting it for a number of representative areas to allow for subsequent extrapolation.

The following key elements should be taken into account in estimating yield.

## **Current and future policy considerations**

- Existing policy constraints that will be in place into the foreseeable future.
- Future policy directions such as expressed in the RDS and relevant planning policy statements. This includes taking into consideration sustainability principles, making efficient use of land and reducing the need to travel.

## Constraints to development

These include surmountable constraints such as ownership, policy, economic/market factors (where known), adjacent land uses, need for a comprehensive development scheme, surmountable contamination etc.

## Density Levels

When it is necessary to identify typical bands of density in line with local circumstances and policy objectives for the RDS and PPSs, varying ranges of density bands might be considered appropriate, the most extreme at either end being:-

<b>LOW</b>	<30 dwellings/ha		<b>LOW</b>	<15 dwellings/ha
<b>MEDIUM</b>	30 – 50 dwellings/ha	or	<b>MEDIUM</b>	15 – 25 dwellings/ha
<b>HIGH</b>	50+ dwellings/ha		<b>HIGH</b>	25+ dwellings/ha

The density level to be applied will depend on local circumstances, site location in relation to policy objectives, such as distance from public transport nodes etc.

Development plan teams will be expected to clearly identify and justify the density levels and application criteria to be used in the urban capacity study for their area, which will be available for scrutiny following publication of the draft plan.

# Appendix 2 Managing the Release of Housing Land

This appendix sets out a broad methodology for managing the release of housing land to inform those preparing development plans in Northern Ireland. It is intended as a guide which sets out the main issues that should be dealt with. The guidance is based on the principles expressed in the RDS and this PPS.

This is a new emerging area of planning, with limited examples of best practice available in the UK or Ireland. The guide is therefore intended to be reasonably flexible within the confines of the principles set out in the RDS.

## Why manage the release of housing land?

The RDS requires a balance to be struck between a robust approach, which seeks to ensure that the strategic objectives are met, particularly in relation to the drive to promote more housing within existing urban footprints, and the flexibility to respond to unforeseen future circumstances.

To achieve this, the RDS sets out a new policy direction for the delivery of housing land through the planning system based upon the 'plan, monitor and manage' approach. It supports the establishment of long-term reserves of development land, through the development plan process, and using a plan, monitor and manage mechanism to ensure timely periodic releases of land for housing development.

The key reasons for adopting this approach are:

- to ensure a sufficient supply of housing, to meet an identified need;
- to maximise the Northern Ireland 60% target for the location of urban housing growth within the existing urban areas; and
- to ensure that housing land is developed in line with regional and local planning policies and objectives, particularly the efficient and effective use of infrastructure.

Managing the release of housing land provides an opportunity for development plans to influence the order and timing of housing development as well as controlling site location and type. The

approach allows plans to be more responsive to housing need as it changes through the course of the plan period. It will also facilitate a sequential approach to housing land allocation by allowing land within existing urban footprints to be developed before other less sustainable greenfield sites. The approach will assist in securing an appropriate tension between greenfield housing development and the provision of housing within existing urban areas and reduce the speed and extent of lateral spread of towns.

## **Approach to managing the release of sites**

There are three broadly recognised different approaches to managing the release of sites:

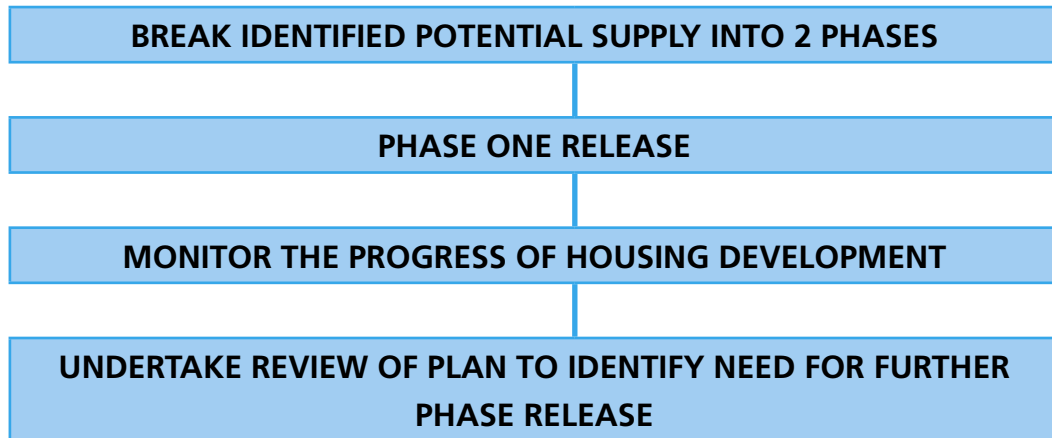
1. criteria based release;
2. site release based on ranking; and
3. phasing – releasing sites over time periods defined within the plan.

The use of phasing is considered the most likely to provide the certainty and flexibility required for the plan, monitor and manage mechanism in Northern Ireland. A criteria based approach is however required in the actual site selection process undertaken in plan preparation.

Managing the releases of land within settlements can be an on-going dynamic process to a varying extent throughout the life of a plan and beyond. The successful operation of phasing will depend on the completion of an adequate urban capacity study as part of the plan making process (see Appendix 1). However, there is discretion in relation to the sequence of steps. Figure 3 below sets out the suggested sequence.

## Figure 3: Managing the Release Sequence

### Allocation of Potential Housing Land Supply (See Para 26-66 and Appendix 1)



### Allocation of Potential Housing Land Supply (See Para 26-66 and Appendix 1)

The housing allocation as set by the RDS housing growth indicators will be distributed across the plan area during plan preparation, in accordance with the procedure required by the RDS and this PPS.

The residual housing need is that which remains after account has been taken of: dwellings built since 31<sup>st</sup> December 1998 (the start of the RDS housing supply period); extant planning permissions; sites to be zoned for housing from the urban capacity studies undertaken; and the allowance made for windfall.

In preparing a development plan, consideration will be given to greenfield sites zoned for housing in the larger settlements and key housing sites which will be identified in the villages and small settlements, as needed to comply with the plan's overall housing allocation strategy. The identification of these additional areas to accommodate housing development will likewise be in accordance with the site selection approach required by the RDS and this PPS. This will also include specific housing needs identified in the housing needs assessment.

### Dividing Plans into Phases

The division of the plan into two phases is considered the most appropriate in the Northern Ireland context. This takes account of the

housing allocations which are distributed across a wide settlement hierarchy and where a high level of extant planning permissions remain. Where plans are projecting forward approximately 15 years, phases of 7 or 8 years are most appropriate.

All sites identified in the site assessment during the plan preparation must be assigned to one or other phase, to facilitate the required overall housing allocation for the whole of the plan period.

The criteria used in assigning sites to phases should reflect the objectives of the RDS, local circumstances and other relevant material planning considerations. Therefore, in addition to the RDS objectives, other factors to consider when drawing up the criteria would include:

- local strategic objectives for the future of the plan area (taking into account the RDS and local circumstances);
- the sequential approach to the allocation of land for housing (see main PPS);
- accommodation of local physical and environmental constraints e.g. flooding, steep gradients, town setting etc;
- degree of integration with employment, community services and public transport. This will be informed by transport accessibility analysis required through PPS 13 and other car modes;
- the capacity of existing infrastructure including public transport, water, sewerage, other utilities, social and community facilities (such as schools) to absorb further development without adding further financial burden;
- maintenance and enhancement of local character;
- the need to manage the encroachment of housing on existing businesses to ensure the operation and potential expansion of such enterprises and the retention of jobs, is not impeded by the juxtaposition of new housing areas;
- promotion of equity and equality of opportunity;
- the divided community - in Northern Ireland there needs to be recognition of the need to deal sensitively and appropriately with the 'divided community' issue within settlements;
- site readiness for development – for example, sites already with planning permission will generally be assigned to Phase 1;
- other relevant material planning considerations e.g. infrastructure capacity; and

- the strategic objectives for the plan area (taking account of the RDS and local circumstances).

It is essential to ensure that the level of Phase 1 housing assigned is sufficient to meet the housing needs of this period and to allow for lead-in to the later phase developments as may be necessary.

It should be recognised that where necessary large sites may need to be assigned to more than one phase and thus released in accordance with this.

In certain circumstances it may not be feasible to break the overall housing provision into phases. This might arise where one or more of the following factors exist:

- relatively small overall residual housing need;
- more diverse settlement range;
- high level of extant permissions;
- lesser need for additional greenfield developments; and
- high level of shorter term specialised housing needs.

## **Phase One Release**

Site release is the point at which planning permission is granted. Sites in Phase 1 without planning permission will, however in effect be considered as released upon adoption of the plan or at draft plan where there are no related objections. Appropriate windfall proposals will, however continue to be released through the on-going development control process. Sites will not be released outside of the designated phase.

## **Monitoring the Progress of Housing Development**

Effective and regular monitoring is key to the 'plan, monitoring and manage' approach. If this does not take place the required responsiveness and flexibility will not be achievable. Monitoring should be an ongoing process with annual reporting and review. It is important to also ensure that the monitoring process being followed is sufficient to yield the information and data necessary for effective housing supply management.

The purpose of the monitoring is to enable a detailed understanding of what is happening in an area, building on the assessments

undertaken during the urban capacity study and other aspects of plan preparation.

Effective monitoring will depend on tracking development on the ground in relation to pro-rata annual building rates, rates of building within the urban footprint and greenfield locations, and anticipated windfall rates. This will allow a clear view of overall performance and gaps in progress, to be ascertained and therefore an indication of any corrective measures that may need to be taken in respect of continuing to make provision for some or all aspects of housing need.

### **Undertake Review of Plan to Identify Need for Further Phase Release**

At the appropriate time before the end of phase one of the plan period, a formal review of the prevailing housing progress and supply position and consideration of future housing need should be commenced. This will enable the identification of additional housing potential needed to supplement residual Phase 1 potential for the future housing needs then identified. Necessary site phasing re-assignment must be facilitated by either the provisions made in the relevant development plan, or by formal plan review.

These range from undertaking 'in-plan reviews' to full replacement plans which put back the plan end date. Where a full replacement plan is undertaken this would generally incorporate a new two-phase housing land supply provision. This would in effect achieve a continuous rolling forward of housing growth management by 7 or 8 years on each occasion. A complete reassessment of existing zoning and development limits and the potential for additional housing land supply would be undertaken, taking into account any changes to the regional housing strategy which may have arisen. The replacement plan would, of course, be subject to the full rigour and scrutiny expected for a new plan and also address all other related planning matters other than housing.

It is important to ensure that, regardless of the review mechanism employed, there will be a continuous housing land supply sufficient to meet prevailing housing needs.

# Appendix 3 Housing Needs Assessment

## Purpose

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS), through the housing growth indicators, provides the overall level of housing need for each district council area. The RDS commitment to create mixed communities will be best achieved through the preparation of a HNA, the identification of suitable sites in the development plan process to meet that need and managing the release of housing land to ensure sufficient land comes on stream at each stage.

This appendix is to inform development plan teams and outline best practice guidance for the preparation of HNAs. This guidance sets out the main issues that are dealt with when preparing a HNA.

HNAs are a relatively new and evolving process. Each HNA team will need to examine the process and may amend the methodology, subject to formal approval, used for analysis of each housing category to account for improved data, different methods of data collection and new research. HNAs, although produced as a technical supplement to the main development plan document are an integral and essential part of the development plan process for the identification of future housing sites and meeting the required housing need. This will contribute to creating mixed local communities, which meets government policy and the objectives of the RDS. If more information is required further details may be obtained from the NIHE's Housing Need Assessment Guidance Manual (PPS 12).

The NIHE will provide an assessment of local housing needs to inform development plans and will carry out regular monitoring and review in relation to these needs. It will provide a broad indication of the order of provision required for different categories of need within the level of the overall housing growth indicator.

The assessment will be based on historical data, recent trends within the locality as well as informed estimates of future trends. The HNA will be published as a technical document in support of the development plan. The HNA may be subject to examination at the public inquiry in connection with an objection.

The primary objective for a HNA is to identify future landuse requirements in relation to Supported Housing, Travellers and Affordable Housing. The HNA will assist DOE Planning Service facilitate meeting such landuse requirements by providing a document which sets out an assessment of specific housing needs and their impact on the housing market. It will also set the regional housing market context within which such specific housing needs exist.

In following the approach outlined in the NIHE's guidance a HNA will be produced that will:

- highlight housing trends to provide a descriptive baseline and draw attention to any issues that are significant;
- analyse housing trends and the factors that are driving the housing market and give an indication of the relative importance of those drivers;
- project local housing needs by examining both demand and supply and highlight the projected balance between demand and supply; and
- assess the impacts of local housing needs on the wider housing market.

The following housing categories require to be considered within the HNA report.

- Regeneration.
- Social Housing.
- Affordable Private Rented.
- Affordable Owner Occupied.
- Empty homes.
- Second homes.
- Students.
- Supported Housing Need.
- Travellers.

## **Format of Housing Need Assessment**

In order to produce a HNA a range of data and information will be collated, analysed and interpreted. This analysis will involve

examining trends and the range of factors that influence those trends. The analysis will not be merely a description of the data collated; it will consider how the various parts of the housing market are changing or likely to change over time and how this will impact on the local housing market.

These will be set within the context of existing and anticipated supply and within a strategic context for Northern Ireland.

The HNA report will commence with a general introduction which sets out what the HNA is and the purposes for which it will be used. It will confirm that the approach taken complies with best practice in GB and that it has been scrutinised by an external panel of experts.

The introduction will also summarise the structure of the HNA report.

The analysis will be undertaken at various geographic levels. The main area for analysis will be the development plan/district council boundary. Within these areas however other sub-level areas will be subjected to localised analysis. All catchment areas will be identified geographically and agreed at the beginning of the HNA process.

## **Regional Housing Market Assessment**

Before proceeding to assessment of individual aspects of need, the HNA report will clearly establish the regional housing context.

The purpose of the Regional Housing Market analysis is to set out an overarching picture of the way socio-economic, political, demographic and housing supply/demand issues are operating in the Region. It will also set out the different concerns and priorities as they impact on different parts of the Region or plan area.

DOE Planning Service will produce a draft narrative outlining the regional context for inclusion into the HNA. This will be updated annually and it will incorporate relevant issues from the NIHE Corporate Plan and the Review of the Northern Ireland Housing Market. It will also include relevant planning issues arising from the RDS. It will establish a perspective for housing within overall Government policy and priorities.

## Local Context

The purpose of including a localised housing context is to highlight local housing market, socio-economic, and demographic issues, within the development plan area, that are at variance from NI regional trends or where there is a possible issue associated with changing patterns of demand or supply of housing.

This section of the HNA will involve updating and expanding the Housing Issues Statement produced earlier for the “Issues” stage of the planning process. In analysing demographic information for the local context, it is not intended to predict the level of future household formation. The level of new household formation is determined as part of the RDS.

An understanding of the key demographic trends however is considered necessary if an informed HNA is to be carried out.

The primary data source for demographic analysis is the Census, although other research or data will be available to supplement this e.g. Noble Index of Relative Deprivation; General Registrars mid-year estimates or ad hoc research and commercially available datasets.

An understanding of housing supply is also considered necessary if an informed local HNA is to be carried out and the local context section will examine trends in order to determine:

- the available supply of housing in relation to the various tenures;
- property characteristics;
- the condition of the housing stock;
- voids or land surpluses;
- renovation grant activity;
- local housing strategies;
- estate renewal strategies;
- URAs;
- economic appraisals;
- rural initiatives; and
- specific housing stock related issues e.g. anti social behaviour, migrant workers or concentrations of houses in multiple occupation.

The significance of the regional and local context is that:

- it sets out an overarching picture of the way the housing market is operating and identifies the dominant concerns and geographic impacts in different parts of the region; and
- it identifies major sub-divisions or sub-markets within the region e.g. students or second homes.

## **Specific Housing Categories**

When considering housing need, it is necessary to identify the operation of a range of factors and to consider their impact and how they might affect housing markets and overall demand. However, in order to be able to carry out such an impact assessment it is first necessary to identify housing need in relation to each of the 9 specific categories identified.

## **Regeneration**

The RDS has set a goal to achieve more sustainable development by seeking a target of 60% of new development to be provided within the existing urban footprint of towns and cities. In assessing the potential for regeneration within settlements preference will be given to estate renewal, redevelopment and release opportunities.

The NIHE's approach to regeneration involves two aspects. The first is urban renewal, a physical approach which removes blight, unfitness and dereliction. The second is neighbourhood renewal, which goes beyond physical planning, and tackles social and economic regeneration.

This section will detail those NIHE Board approved regeneration initiatives which will result in a future change of landuse, tenure or housing density. It will also consider the subsequent impact of such action on future housing need.

Future regeneration activity within the development plan area will be estimated using past trends and the House Condition Survey.

This section will highlight proposals from other statutory or private agencies that have housing implications together with a consideration of any potential impacts on the housing market.

The regeneration programme will be analysed to detail the anticipated impact of the approved regeneration activity on housing markets. In particular, the consideration of regeneration will identify areas where high or low demand for housing is considered to be an issue. This will involve cross-referencing other aspects of need at both the macro and local levels.

## **Social Rented Housing**

Social Rented Housing Need focuses on those households who require their housing needs to be met by a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) i.e. the NIHE or a Housing Association. Social rented accommodation is subsidised through government funding (Housing Benefit and Housing Association Grant) and is therefore deemed affordable housing.

The Social Rented HNA will assess those applicants requiring “General Needs” social housing. It does not include a need assessment for “Supported Housing” i.e. housing with associated support provision catering for a range of specific housing needs required by individuals, for example, those leaving the health care system, probation services or certain vulnerable homeless.

The principal means of meeting social housing need is through the re-letting of existing Social Housing accommodation (stock turnover). Where relets are insufficient to meet housing need then the construction of further social housing is considered.

The NIHE, in conjunction with the DSD and Housing Associations, operate a Common Selection Scheme or waiting list for social housing. The Common Selection Scheme incorporates a register of those seeking social housing on a geographical basis.

Applicants are awarded points on the basis of their housing circumstances.

The Common Selection Scheme defines applicants with 30 points or more as being in “Housing Stress”. It is those applicants in housing stress which are considered in the calculation for projecting social housing need.

The social housing waiting list includes applicants applying as a result of the on-going programme of rural latent demand tests carried out

by the NIHE to reveal hidden social housing demand.

This element of the report is accompanied by the Social Housing Development Programme (shown as an appendix). This will identify proposed schemes where land is owned, yet to be identified and or acquired. The report should also contain a series of GIS maps showing the geographical extent of social housing need. This will be set against written descriptions of the key features of the need and how it has changed over time.

## **Affordable Private Rented**

The HNA will provide a strategic assessment and qualitative information in relation to the impact changes to trends in the private rented sector will have on the housing market generally, and on affordable housing specifically.

In particular, the following information will be highlighted within the HNA report.

- The numbers and percentage of private rented properties within the area, including any available trend analysis.
- Concentrations of HMO properties within the area and any trend analysis.
- Geographic concentrations (hot spots) of private rented accommodation.
- The levels and trends of Housing Benefit in payment.
- Housing Benefit rent values by location.
- Identification of issues, strategies and future proposals that will impact on private rented numbers.

## **Affordable Owner Occupied Housing Need**

In order to define low cost affordable home ownership and develop a working model to assess affordability, the Housing Executive, in partnership with the Council of Mortgage Lenders, commissioned a study entitled "Affordable Housing in the Private Sector in Northern Ireland". The research was undertaken by the Universities of Ulster and Birmingham. The model aims to develop an affordability index, which could be applied at a local level in Northern Ireland.

The researchers recommended that an affordability index model be

adopted which took account of available data on house prices and median incomes. The model should be robust and the importance of simplicity has been emphasised. The model is based on a limited number of variables that are easily obtainable on a regular basis and are defensible. The proposed model adopted, provides insight into affordability at District Council level and the four sectors of Belfast. The affordability index will be monitored over time.

The actual affordability model uses a typical Building Society annuity formula to calculate the maximum price a household with a median household income can afford to pay, assuming a typical interest rate (5.75% 2001-2003), a 95% mortgage (loan to value ratio) and a 25 year repayment period. 30% of household income is considered the maximum reasonable proportion of income which can be used to service mortgage payments. This figure is compared with what is considered to be a typical affordable house: a house priced at the upper boundary of the first quartile of house prices (25th percentile) in that district or sector (i.e., low cost home ownership).

The model places emphasis on changes over time and makes reference to key variables of house prices, incomes, mortgage term and interest rates.

## Empty Homes

A private sector empty home is not liable for rates and is defined by the Rate Collection Agency (RCA) as:

“a property with no one living in it and it is completely empty of furniture and/or effects or the furniture and effects therein are deemed to be of no value; and it is not being used in any way” (RCA definition).

However, empty homes also include all Housing Association/NIHE voids (excluding those classified as pending “demolition” or “sale”).

To determine the level of empty homes the HNA report will:

- define the area under assessment – this will be at a District Council level and also at the settlement and local area levels as appropriate;
- confirm the total dwelling stock;

- confirm the numbers of vacant empty homes;
- highlight those areas where empty homes are in excess of 3% of total housing stock;
- trend analysis for last 3 years; and
- outline Government/NIHE initiatives on empty dwellings.

Estimates of the number of dwellings which have been purchased purely for investment and which remain vacant will be informed by local community surveys and local Estate Agents. In the absence of available data the NIHE will commission research to be carried out.

## Second Homes

The definition of second homes is:

“Dwellings that are not occupied as main residences but are used as holiday/short term homes.” (NIHE definition: note such properties will be liable for the payment of rates to the RCA).

Properties bought as second homes but let as an investment are considered to be within the private rented sector.

Currently data on second homes is limited to that contained in the Census 2001 and it is therefore difficult to confirm precise information. NIHE has programmed research to be carried out into the growth and level of second homes. The following approach which is based on Census data and which will abstract percentage ratios will be used to assess the second homes issue within particular areas.

- Identify through Census data, those wards whose level of second homes is more than 5% as an indicator of pressure.
- In the identified wards an update on the second home market will be sought through local community surveys and local Estate Agents. In the absence of available data the NIHE will commission research to be carried out.
- The level of second homes will be compared against other relevant catchment areas i.e. Province and District Council.
- Analysis of second homes will include an examination of trends over time.

## Students

DOE Planning Service requires qualitative information in relation to the impact students will have on the housing market and any potential landuse requirements.

In particular, the following information will be highlighted:

- the numbers of students residing in the area, including any available trend analysis;
- geographic hot spots of student concentrations; and
- identification of issues/future proposals that will impact on student numbers.

## Supported Housing Need

The term supported housing relates to accommodation with complementary housing support services to cater for people with a range of specific needs including those leaving the various programmes of care within health services, probation and certain vulnerable homeless persons.

It is necessary to distinguish between general needs housing where support needs are provided on a peripatetic/floating basis and the provision of specific supported accommodation, where the requirement for complementary housing support services are assessed, planned, and delivered in conjunction with accommodation based-solutions.

Increasingly, housing support services will be person-centred and will not necessarily have specific accommodation solutions and associated implications for landuse.

In defining any landuse requirements for supported housing therefore, the HNA will only relate to that accommodation which cannot be provided in a general needs housing solution (with an appropriate floating support model) but requires the provision of a specific, accommodation-based solution.

## Travellers

In 1999 the DOE (NI) gave the NIHE the strategic role in relation to the provision of accommodation for the Traveller community.

Subsequently, the NIHE produced a report entitled “Travellers Accommodation – Needs Assessment for Northern Ireland 2002”.

This report examined in detail the population and household characteristics, available accommodation and issues affecting the travelling community and made several recommendations. The most important recommendation was to identify a 5-year rolling programme of schemes required to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers.

There are three broad categories of accommodation as follows:

- grouped housing – residential housing developments with additional facilities and amenities specifically designed to accommodate extended families on a permanent basis;
- serviced sites – managed sites where caravans/“park homes” can be based. These sites provide electricity and other services together with communal or individual amenity units containing toilets etc; and
- transit sites – sites to facilitate temporary or short-term location of caravans. Communal facilities are also provided.

The “Travellers Accommodation – Needs Assessment for Northern Ireland 2002” and the 5-year programme will inform HNA. As such this section will include a summary of the key findings and housing programme identified by the Travellers Unit as it relates to the development plan area and settlements within it.

In particular, the number, type and location of the required accommodation will be highlighted.

## **Supported and Travellers Needs**

The Supported Housing and Travellers categories operate independently of the other 7 categories of need and reflect the current programme required to address the particular needs identified in the Supporting People and Travellers Strategy documents.

Supported and Travellers housing will therefore be readily and easily identified from the analysis and programmes of the Travellers and Supporting People Units.

# Appendix 4 Local Development Guidelines for Urban and Rural Areas (SPG-ENV 4)

## **Identity:**

Encouraging community participation in the planning process. Reinforcing a sense of belonging and sense of place by maintaining distinctive places throughout local communities and in local landscape character areas, including places of public assembly and community interaction, focal points, landmarks and a continuity of urban and rural traditions.

## **Vitality:**

Continuously caring for, restoring and renewing the physical fabric of towns and villages by a strong emphasis on the imaginative re-use of older buildings and the use of previously developed land as a fundamental component of the regeneration process for towns, villages and rural areas.

## **Proximity:**

Providing compatible mixed-use developments extending local community choice and opportunity in relation to jobs, commercial facilities and services.

## **Accessibility:**

Developing multi-modal systems of urban and rural transport, which would enhance accessibility for local communities to the full range of urban activities and meet the needs of people with disabilities. This would be achieved by integrating public transport, cycling and walking with a more responsible use of the private car, whilst facilitating the movement of goods.

## **Amenity:**

Providing community greenways to establish connections with nature and the countryside, and local historic features, for residents in urban and rural areas by maintaining and building up an interlinked pattern of public open spaces, play facilities and landscaped areas, woodlands and wildlife habitats, pedestrian and cycle routes, linking to rivers, canals, coastal and inland waters, as well as respecting the rural setting of towns and villages.

## **Quality:**

Fostering an imaginative and resource efficient quality of design, which respects existing rural or urban character, local tradition and human scale.

# Appendix 5 RDS Evaluation Framework

## **Resource Test:**

The existence of community assets and infrastructure, including spare capacity.

## **Environmental Capacity Test:**

The environmental setting of the settlement and its potential to accommodate future outward growth.

## **Transport Test:**

The potential for integrating land use and public transport to help reduce reliance on the private car (see PPS 13).

## **Economic Development Test:**

The potential to facilitate an appropriate housing and jobs balance, and to unlock any major strategic development opportunities.

## **Urban and Rural Character Test:**

The potential to maintain a sense of place, and to integrate new development in a way that does not detract from the character and identity of the settlement.

## **Community Services Test:**

The potential to underpin and, where necessary, reinforce the community service role and function of the settlement.

## **Social Equity Test:**

The potential to improve equality of opportunity and equity of treatment.