

Introduction

Through the Housing Executive's Customer Outlet and Workspace Strategy, we are reviewing all of our office accommodation requirements across Northern Ireland in a structured manner between 2023/24 and 2028/29.

How our customers interact with us has changed and continues to change significantly, with footfall figures falling by circa 70% over the last 10 years.

Therefore, through this strategy, we are seeking to ensure that our workspaces and customer outlets still meet the needs of our tenants, customers and our people.

As a public sector landlord and the Strategic Housing Authority for Northern Ireland we must also ensure that we make the best use of tenant and public monies and comply with the NI Asset Management Strategy and other relevant policies and legislation.

This consultation report concerns our intention to consolidate all of our offices in Derry/Londonderry to Carlise House. The report is divided into Sections 1 & 2.

Section 1 provides a high-level summary of the points raised through the consultation exercise and our overarching response.

Section 2 provides additional specific comments relating to the 17 themes identified when the responses were analysed. The individual consultation responses received can be viewed at Appendix 1.

Section 1: Summary of Written Consultation Responses/Identified Themes and an Overarching Housing Executive Response.

Through the consultation exercise, we received 16 written responses.

- 3 from individual members of the public
- 1 from Derry City and Strabane District Council
- 8 from elected representatives including councillors, MLAs and MPs from various political parties (DUP, Independent, Sinn Féin, SDLP & UUP)
- 3 from community groups
- 1 Disability Housing Forum

The Housing Executive would like to thank all those who contributed and recognise the time taken to respond to this consultation.

We have identified 17 main themes that were raised during the consultation exercise, with the most often mentioned being:

- potential access issues associated with persons with disabilities (81.3% of responses)
- potential access issues associated with older age groups (68.8% of responses)
- availability of parking for customers and/or staff (62.5% of responses)
- potential impact on the quality of our services (56.3% of responses)
- potential 'chill factors' associated with religion / community background (43.8% of responses).

Theme	No. of Responses that mentioned the theme	%
Theme 1 – Age	11	68.8%
Theme 2 – Disability	13	81.3%
Theme 3 – Parking availability	10	62.5%
Theme 4 – Community background	7	43.8%
Theme 5 – Dependants and caring responsibilities	2	12.5%
Theme 6 – Digital exclusion	3	18.8%
Theme 7 – Safety	3	18.8%
Theme 8 – Transportation / parking costs	5	31.3%
Theme 9 – Service quality	9	56.3%
Theme 10 – General concerns about immediate localities potentially losing a service	6	37.5%
Theme 11 – Potential plans for other office move / closure (Strabane)	2	12.5%
Theme 12 – Staff-related	4	25.0%
Theme 13 – Quality / cost-effectiveness of the new office	3	18.8%
Theme 14 – Potential traffic increase in the new area	4	25.0%

Theme 15 – Positive action in relation to workforce composition of the Housing Executive	3	18.8%
Theme 16 – Rural areas potentially being at a disadvantage	1	6.3%
Theme 17 – Irish Travellers	1	6.3%

In addition to the themes identified above other comments we received related to the Common Selection Scheme and the potential for the future development of the Waterside office. These comments have been sent to the relevant business areas for information.

Overarching Housing Executive Response

In line with the wider trend across Northern Ireland, how our tenants and customers interact with us in Derry/Londonderry has changed significantly over the last 10 years with footfall figures falling by circa 70%.

How we work has also changed; for example, through use of new technologies. In addition, many of our buildings are old and no longer fit for purpose, for the achievement of our objectives as a public service provider and employer.

We want to have modern facilities for our people, tenants and customers, that are accessible, provide value for money and enable improved collaboration and service delivery.

It is also important to note that our homelessness service provision was centralised in the city centre (Waterloo Place) in 2017. As a result, only a small number of tenants and customers regularly visit our offices in Waterside and Collon Terrace in person.

Our primary methods of engaging with tenants and customers have also changed through our Customer Portal, by phone, email, or SMS, rather than via office visits. Most face- to- face contact is through home visits, including for those for whom it is challenging to access our offices, including older people and people with disabilities. We would also emphasise the role of our Patch Managers. This is a mobile role, working within local communities and meeting customers in their homes. Our Maintenance Officers can also make home visits in relation to repairs.

Carlisle House is situated in the commercial and retail centre of the city near to the Foyleside shopping centre. There are good transport links and parking facilities including disabled parking bays nearby.

It is circa 500m from our existing office in Waterloo Place and circa 200m from our current Richmond Chambers Office.

The move enables us to remain in close proximity to our existing presence in the city, to bring our services together into one building allowing our teams to work together, in turn creating greater opportunities for better collaboration. It will enhance our services and ultimately benefit our customers.

As a result of the consultation exercise, we listened to concerns around staff and customer access. Therefore, we have sought and acquired additional space for

dedicated 'shop front' customer access. The separate entrances will have a range of accessibility features including step-free access and a loop system will be available for hearing aid users.

Concerns were raised during the consultation about our tenants and customers at Waterside and Collon Terrace offices. Although the numbers of tenants and customers accessing services via these offices are very small, we are exploring possible options to enable the establishment of part-time 'housing surgeries' following the closure of these offices. These arrangements, should they be introduced, will be kept under review in line with demand.

Section 2: Summary of Written Consultation Responses and additional Housing Executive Responses broken down by Themes.

Theme	Response
Theme 1 – Age	11 responses from the consultation mentioned potential access issues associated with older age. - As highlighted in Section 1 Carlisle House has step-free access at the entrance and a loop system will be available for hearing aid users. The building can be accessed by good public transport links and there is public parking including parking bays for persons with disabilities located nearby. - The much wider use of alternative methods of communication also enhances access to services. The majority of our services can be provided via our Customer Portal, by phone, email or SMS. Where our customers feel that they might benefit from face-to-face engagement, we will continue to offer home visits for those who experience challenges in accessing our services in our offices, including older people and persons with disabilities. Again, we would highlight and emphasise the role of our Patch Managers. These are mobile roles, working within local communities and meeting customers in their homes.
Theme 2 – Disability	13 responses from the consultation mentioned potential access issues associated with disabilities or mobility issues. - The United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was highlighted by Disability Action and we recognise in full the UNCRPD obligations and human rights standards and strive in all that we do to progressively realise the rights set out in the convention. As noted in Section 1 Carlisle House will be accessible for customers with disabilities and we will continue to offer home visits to our customers. We will also continue to offer a comprehensive communication support service designed to address sensory and cognitive disabilities. - Also noted in Section 1 and theme 1 the majority of our services can be delivered via our Customer Portal, by phone, email or SMS. There are also good transport links and public parking including disabled parking bays for people with disabilities located nearby. We are also exploring possible options to enable the establishment of part-time 'housing surgeries' following

	the closure of the Waterside and Collon Terrace offices, which would be kept under review in line with demand. As mentioned earlier in the report we would emphasise the role of our Patch Managers. These are mobile roles, working within local communities and meeting customers in their homes.
Theme 3 – Parking availability	10 responses from the consultation mentioned potential access issues associated with parking availability. • There are a number of car parks (including parking for persons with disabilities) in the city centre in the vicinity of the Carlisle House. As highlighted in Section 1 Carlisle House is only a short distance away from our Waterloo Place and Richmond Chambers offices. As it is based in the commercial and retail centre of the city it has good public transport links.
Theme 4 – Community background	7 responses from the consultation mentioned potential so called ‘chill factors’ associated with religion / community background. • As highlighted in Section 1 Carlisle House is located in the commercial and retail centre for the city. We would also highlight that our homelessness service moved in 2017 from Waterside and Collon Terrace offices to the city centre, and there are now only a small number of tenants visiting these offices in person. Staff currently serving the Waterside and Collon Terrace housing areas will continue to carry out their duties as normal in these areas. It is only their base of operations that will change. As mentioned previously the role of our Patch Managers is a mobile role, working within local communities and meeting customers in their homes. • We will also ensure that our customers continue to benefit from alternative arrangements for face-to-face engagement, e.g. home visits, and we are continuing to explore possible options to enable the establishment of part-time ‘housing surgeries’ following the closure of the Waterside and Collon Terrace offices, which would be kept under review in line with demand.
Theme 5 – Dependants and caring responsibilities	2 responses from the consultation mentioned potential service access issues for people with dependants and caring responsibilities. • We understand that carers play an essential role in the wellbeing of others and that their time and energy are often stretched. We acknowledge the concerns and

	recognise that individuals with caring responsibilities (whether for children, older relatives or relatives with disabilities) may face additional barriers in accessing services, particularly when required to travel further. However, as noted earlier in this report, how our customers engage with us has changed and the much wider use of alternative methods of communication including our Customer Portal, phone, email and SMS. increases access to our services. We will also continue to offer home visits. In relation to our staff, we will continue to offer a range of support including flexible working arrangements to accommodate caring responsibilities of our staff members.
Theme 6 – Digital exclusion	3 responses from the consultation mentioned potential service access issues due to digital exclusion. As noted previously we will continue to offer other methods of contact (e.g. face-to-face engagement and telephone-based support). In addition to this we look for ways to enhance digital inclusion opportunities for our customers through strategies such as the Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy and the Tenancy Support & Sustainment Strategy.
Theme 7 – Safety	3 responses from the consultation mentioned safety concerns. - As highlighted in Section 1 Carlisle House is located in the commercial and retail centre of the city close to our existing Waterloo Place and Richmond Chambers Offices. - As previously highlighted Homelessness provision moved to our Waterloo Place office in the city centre from 2017 onwards. Waterloo Place is approx. 500m away from the proposed new office location of Carlisle House. - We have listened to consultees, and because of this acquired dedicated space for customers and separate access for staff. The building will have CCTV and alarms in the public area and interview rooms; and dedicated security staff will also be present.
Theme 8 – Transportation / parking costs	5 responses from the consultation mentioned potential access issues associated with transportation and/or parking costs As noted in Section 1 and themes 1, 2 & 3 there are several car parks within the city centre in the vicinity of

	Carlisle House. Translink also provide bus services to the general vicinity of the building, with a number of services using the bus stop located outside the entrance to the building. While public transportation costs are outside of our control, we note that Translink offer a range of concessionary options for public transport journeys within Northern Ireland. Further information is available via the link Free and concessionary bus and rail travel nidirect
Theme 9 – Service quality	9 responses from the consultation mentioned potential service quality issues following office consolidation. • Based on our experience of similar changes we anticipate only minimal impacts to our tenants, customers and our people. We also acknowledge the many ways in which our customers now engage with us e.g. our Customer Portal, by phone, email or SMS, which gives greater access to services. • We will also ensure that our customers continue to benefit from alternative arrangements for face-to-face engagement, e.g. home visits, and we are continuing to explore possible options to enable the establishment of part-time 'housing surgeries' following the closure of the Waterside and Collon Terrace offices, which would be kept under review in line with demand. These surgeries could potentially provide opportunities for letters or documents to be dropped off. In addition to this and as mentioned previously the role of our Patch Managers is a mobile role, working within local communities and meeting customers in their homes.
Theme 10 – General concerns about immediate localities potentially losing a service	6 responses from the consultation mentioned potential negative impact due to removal of public services from local areas. • We acknowledge the concerns, particularly the perception that any office consolidation may lead to a reduction in provision within local neighbourhoods. As already mentioned in theme 9, we will ensure that our customers continue to benefit from alternative arrangements for face-to-face engagement, e.g. home visits, and we are continuing to explore possible options to enable the establishment of part-time 'housing surgeries' following the closure of the Waterside and Collon Terrace offices, which would be kept under review in line with demand.

	Staff currently serving the Waterside and Collon Terrace housing areas will continue to carry out their duties as normal and, while their base location will change, they will continue to be present in these areas as part of their normal activities. As mentioned previously the role of our Patch Managers is a mobile role, working within local communities and meeting customers in their homes.
Theme 11 – Potential plans for other office move / closure (Strabane)	2 responses from the consultation had inquiries regarding potential office closures in Strabane. - Through our Customer Outlet and Workspace Strategy, the Housing Executive is reviewing all our accommodation requirements over a five-year period (23/24–28/29) to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of our tenants and customers. - The Strabane office is not included in the proposal to consolidate the offices in Derry/Londonderry.
Theme 12 – Staff-related	4 responses from the consultation mentioned concerns in relation to Housing Executive staff. Staff-related concerns have been addressed internally in direct consultation between management, Human Resources, trade unions and the impacted staff.
Theme 13 – Quality / cost-effectiveness of the new office	3 responses from the consultation had enquiries, or raised concerns, about the quality and/or cost-effectiveness of the new consolidated office. - The Business Case for the proposed new accommodation strategy within Derry/Londonderry considered nine initial options which were in turn shortlisted to three to proceed to economic appraisal. The results of the final overall appraisal were that, in terms of both monetary and non-monetary considerations, consolidating into Carlisle House was the preferred option. The Carlisle House building will receive a Grade A Cat B fit out resulting in what will be, in effect, a brand new office. Please note that a Cat B fit out is the term used to describe a fully operational workplace that has been designed to a client's unique specifications to make it their own. - In relation to concerns regarding emergency exits and evacuation procedures, the Carlisle House building has three emergency exits in addition to the main entrance. These exits provide sufficient capacity to evacuate all staff in the event of an emergency.

	• We acknowledge the points made regarding the A2/Buncrana Road project and our Collon Terrace office. However, the North West Transport Strategy clarifies that the upgrade to the A2/Buncrana Road is still an objective of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Once the scheme is confirmed for progression, we will have to give up the Collon Terrace office and a move will be required.
Theme 14 – Potential traffic increase in the new area	4 responses from the consultation mentioned potential traffic increase in the proposed location. • The Housing Executive has delivered services in the city centre for many years with traffic issues rarely, if ever, impacting customers or service delivery. Reference was also made to the lack of consultation with residents of the Fountain Estate with regard to traffic/parking. We would highlight that as part of the public consultation we emailed Housing Community Network Members in April and May 2025. This included Cathedral Youth and New Gate, which both represent the Fountain Estate. • We note that it is difficult to predict the volume of traffic coming into the city centre as it can be affected by many different factors outside of our control, e.g. events being held in the city. We would like to highlight that footfall in all offices in Derry/Londonderry has been decreasing over the last few years due to much wider use of alternative methods of communication with limited reliance on office visits. The majority of our services can be provided via phone, email, SMS and our customer portal. We also note that the proposed location has good public transportation links and that we will continue to offer home visits.
Theme 15 – Positive action in relation to workforce composition of the Housing Executive	3 responses from the consultation mentioned potential lack of positive action in regards to workforce composition of the Housing Executive. • We fully appreciate the concerns raised with regard to our workforce composition and the under representation of people from the Protestant community, and the senior leadership of the organisation consider this issue to be a priority. • Our affirmative action plan takes a proactive approach and we have dedicated resources in place tasked with

	focussing on outreach activity and engagement, as we seek to increase job applications from within the Protestant community. • The consolidation of the four offices into one location is a response to a wide range of issues set out in our report. The new office is located in the commercial and retail centre for the city with good public transportation links and only a few minutes' walk from our existing offices in Waterloo Place and Richmond Chambers. • We are also exploring possible options to enable the establishment of part-time 'housing surgeries' following the closure of the Waterside and Collon Terrace offices. These arrangements, should they be introduced, will be kept under review in line with demand.
Theme 16 – Rural areas potentially being at a disadvantage	1 response from the consultation mentioned potential negative impact on rural areas due to the consolidation of the four offices. • We acknowledge this concern and wish to reassure the consultees and our existing and potential customers that the proposed location has good public transportation links and car parks located nearby. With regards to people living outside the city we believe the location change will have minimal impact.
Theme 17 – Irish Travellers	1 response from the consultation mentioned potential negative impact on Irish Travellers. • The Irish Traveller community is long established in Northern Ireland. Irish Travellers are also among the most disadvantaged and marginalised people living in Northern Ireland and can face multiple deprivations in relation to health and well-being, housing, education, racism, mortality and discrimination. • The Housing Executive has responded to these challenges with the Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2021-2026. This strategy sets out how we plan to provide Irish Travellers with access to affordable, good quality, culturally appropriate housing accommodation which fosters a sustainable, vibrant Irish Traveller community and promotes inclusion, a sense of belonging and security. In relation to the office consolidation, the staff who have been involved in building relationships with the Irish Traveller community in the area will continue to fulfil these roles.

APPENDIX 1: INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Consultee	Consultee Response
Elected Representative	Staff and local constituents have been in contact with me regarding the above matter. The district office in the Waterside is seen as a key community asset within this part of the city. Moving this part of your organisation to Horace Street would be seen as regressive, especially for the elderly and those with disabilities. Horace Street is situated at a very dynamic junction with no real parking spaces. This will create a difficulty for those who may find travel difficult and for those with mental health issues. It will also no doubt impact your staff, who serve our local Waterside community, as they will not be present within their community.
Member of the Public	As a community worker I believe that such a move will hinder the vulnerable across all communities in the town. We need our local offices to stay where they are. The cityside is not easily accessible to many who are in elderly, disabled and even those who drive. I can't comprehend how you can even think staff will be able to park in an easily accessible location. I believe that a move like this could isolate a lot of tenants and applicants. The local offices provide a lifeline for many in our communities, this could be taken away from them before the year ends. These people cannot drive, struggle to make phone calls and certainly can't use computers. As a social housing provider surely the needs of locals should come first rather than a cost cutting exercise. Perhaps the move was initiated by

	people not familiar with the layout of our town. The cityside is currently a no go zone for a lot because of the increase in drugs and knife crime. Please consider the vulnerable when considering this move
Member of the public	I am contacting you to complain about the closure of NIHE offices in Waterside, Londonderry. How are those who are infirm, disabled or those who have little money to waste on bus fares going to get to city centre. For those who have a means of transport- where do they park? Ridiculous but we know that the Waterside area of Londonderry is always the second best for any progress in "our town". Shame on you
Elected Representative	Are there any plans to relocate the Strabane office.
Elected Representative	It has been suggested to me that there are plans to close a number of NIHE offices in the Derry area. As an MLA for W Tyrone I am seeking reassurance that the local Strabane office is not earmarked for closure, Hoping you can clarify this matter.
Shantallow Community Residents Association	I strongly disagree on the Housing Executive building been closed in our area, as it is so handy for local residents to get to, especially if they have no means of transport, and no money to get into the town, also people with disabilities, and not having money to use public transport, I'm sure it will be particularly hard on them. The main consideration and concern is removing this service from local people. I feel this building should not be moved out of the Shantallow and surrounding areas! As it is much needed, And should not be closed.

Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group

We have held 6 focus groups with tenants in Caw/Nelson Drive Estate who are very concerned about the proposed closure of the Housing Executive's Waterside Office for the following reasons -

1. Some tenants have told us that they never go over the Cityside as they feel uncomfortable as they come from a protestant background and don't feel safe.
2. Because of the dynamics of the City the Waterside deserves to have its own office where tenants can access local staff face-to-face if they have any issues or need advice.
3. Tenants have also told us that they were very unhappy when the Housing, Homelessness and Housing Benefit services were removed from the Waterside Office and they feel that this is just a step too far to close the office completely. In fact, they feel that these services should actually be returned to the Waterside office.
4. The new proposed offices – Carlisle House, Carlisle Road is totally unacceptable for parking especially for people with disabilities.
5. The nearest Car Park is in Foyle side which is quite expensive to park in and to get to Carlisle Road there is a very steep street to climb which is not accessible to many people. Parking in the Fountain estate is not an option as the residents are already unhappy with the amount of people parking there from outside the area.
6. If you come from a security background then going over to the Cityside is just not an option.
7. The proposed new offices in Carlisle Road are also on a junction with Horace Street which is a nightmare to get out of onto Carlisle Road and is currently under investigation with

	DFI by the Road Safety Partnership, Life After and local politicians. 8. Tenants would prefer face-to-face meetings with their Patch Manager etc in the Waterside office. 9. Tenants would regularly leave in paperwork/letters to the Waterside office to be forwarded on to Housing Benefit and Housing Applications etc so that they don't have to travel over to the Cityside as our postal service is currently very unsatisfactory. For all of the above reasons it is very important that the Housing Executive keep a base in the Waterside. We will be very disappointed if it is closed as we believe that tenants should come first and this should be made a priority for the Housing Executive.
Elected Representative	I fully understand the reasons behind the Richmond Chambers and Waterloo Place offices being amalgamated under one roof in Carlisle House at the corner of Horace Street and Carlisle Road. This move will see generous savings made on an annual basis. The proposed closure of the Collon office comes as no surprise due to the planned upgrade of the Buncrana Road. However, I do not see the benefit of closing the Waterside office. Closing both offices will remove local community access for NIHE Tenants. Parking is limited around Carlisle House and the surrounding area, with little provision for disabled drivers. The current bus service to and from the Waterside does not use Carlisle Road anymore, it uses John Street; this hinders anyone with poor mobility from walking up either Bridge Street, Orchard Street or Shipquay Street. There is no free parking for NIHE staff who can avail of free parking around the Waterside and Collon offices. Staff members who work in the community but are out of the Waterside office up to four or five times a day, will now find it hard to find parking around Carlisle House the four or five times they return to the office.

	Although figures show that footfall around the offices has decreased over the past number of years, this is not solely down to tenants not visiting these offices, but the increase by NIHE of working from home. I personally feel that with being over four years since lockdown that this practice of working from home should be in many cases rapidly faded out and only used in certain circumstances such as family need. This would increase footfall once again to the offices. Extra strain on Tenants who are in many cases severely affected by the cost of living may not be capable of meeting the cost of public transport into the Carlisle House offices, and you will be aware that the local public transport network is not the greatest service for users. Taxis can be deemed expensive to many tenants. I am aware that staff from the Waterside office are worried about parking around Carlisle House as there is very little free parking available, this will increase their monthly outgoings as the parking pass for Foyleside Shopping Centre is currently £45 per month but expected to rise to £50 shortly. Will any increase in costs be subsidised by the NIHE? We believe a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) based on physical and geographic access. What plans are in place to assist Tenants who due to poor mobility will not be capable of making the journey to Carlisle Road? Will there be outreach hubs set-up in communities to assist those in most need? Whilst I believe in every person's fundamental right to have a home, we are all too aware of the issues with housing those who present themselves as homeless. With the increase in numbers of people who have been declared homeless due to having private rented for years only to see their landlords raise the monthly rental payments to a level which they can no longer afford. These people often find themselves bereft of adequate housing points, to see any chance of achieving the required points tally, to insure they receive adequate housing to accommodate their needs.
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	The current housing points system is no longer fit for purpose, the small changes to incorporate the needs of woman who have endured abusive relationship is to be welcomed but does not go far enough. Due to many of these abused women experiencing a form of coercive control, it takes time to gain their trust meaning they have not been forthcoming about the abuse they suffered. This should be taken into consideration when dealing with their case and not making it time constraint. We still see those who have left the prison system given priority; most of them reoffend at some stage. Intimidation points continue to be a controversial issue, as we are well aware that the system is constantly abused to obtain these maximum points.
	Is Carlisle House adequate to house all relevant NIHE staff from the four offices? Does it possess an area large enough to provide a customer waiting area? Is the floor area of Carlisle House able to be secured, especially with the rise in abuse that NIHE staff have had to endure? Has the NIHE considered the amount of extra traffic, both vehicle and pedestrian, that will be added to one of the busiest streets already in the city centre and have there been discussions with Translink to accommodate accessible travel to Carlisle Road. Has consideration been given to the political divide within Londonderry and with those who still refuse to travel to the city centre from the Waterside due to feeling insecure?
Elected Representative	Whilst every organisation must consider changes over a period of time, a public sector body such as NIHE has to act in the wider interests as well as its own. There is reference in the document to the Waterside office being considered for 'alternative housing options', this should be clarified as

	failure to do so leaves consultees with an impossible task, not knowing what the 'alternative housing options' might constitute. A major concern I and my Party have concerns the Equality issue which is referred to on P8. NIHE has had a significant problem with under representation of Protestants since its inception. The combining of the Londonderry offices and relocating to Carlisle House shows no signs of addressing this chronic issue. The problem across NIHEs Northern Ireland wide workforce is one of a continuing underrepresentation of Protestants in the workforce which I have alluded to on numerous occasions since the early 1980's. In the West of Northern Ireland that problem is worse and in Londonderry it has become so bad it is one of chronic proportions. I have recently received from NIHE figures which show for example Richmond Chambers which has the largest number of employees in any NIHE office throughout the West of Northern Ireland and has now almost reached the point where there are NO Protestants at all. In the last four years the ratio of Protestants in this office with over 100 staff has dropped dramatically from 14% to 8%. Section 75 obligations will not be met by the suggested move to Carlisle House. The working age population in Londonderry & Strabane is approximately 24% Protestant, so four years ago it was extremely worrying at just 14%, and now it has become much much worse. My Party and I have warned throughout the last half century that this problem had to be dealt with and this has not happened. While we accept that 'footfall' at District Offices has reduced, simply combining existing offices to one City Centre location will not address the Section 75 issues.
Member of the Public	As the daughter in law of a resident I find it a complete inconvenience for taking my mother-in-law over to the cityside to see or speak to a housing executive member of staff on a face-to-face basis. My mother-in-law has walking and sight difficulties as well has a heart condition, so it would be impossible to just drop her off or go to a carpark to make her walk to the

	so-called new premises, as the closest car park would probably be Foyleside and she would not be fit to walk the distance. The new premises is totally unacceptable for parking. She is extremely upset about the proposed move, as she is happy with the car parking facilities right beside the waterside office and knows it would be such easy access and convenience to speak to a patch manager if needed. My mother-in-law also refuses to go into the city as she doesn't feel safe. She and my deceased father-in-law had two vans stolen and used for illegal activities back in the 80's and she has the fear of these types of things still happening. We would really appreciate your reconsideration in the proposed new sight and keep the office in the waterside, I think your tenants should be a priority as an official housing supplier. Especially for the elderly and disabled people.
Skeoge Community Association	Here are some reasons why NIHE offices should be kept within communities and remain local, particularly when serving the public: Concerns: 1. Access and Transport Barriers: Clients who rely on local offices may struggle with transport to a single central location. This could disproportionately affect: • Elderly or disabled individuals • People with limited financial resources • Families with young children • Vulnerable adults

	2. Loss of Local Relationships: Many clients build trust and rapport with staff at local offices. Losing these familiar faces could negatively impact service engagement, especially for vulnerable or anxious individuals. 3. Digital Divide: If the plan assumes an increase in online or phone-based services to compensate for the closures, there's a risk of excluding those without digital literacy or internet access. 4. Increased Pressure on Carlisle House: Centralising all services may create congestion, longer wait times, and overburden staff and facilities, especially if the building isn't significantly upgraded to handle the increased demand. 5. Resilience and Emergency Response In times of crisis (e.g. floods, hardship, housing emergencies, pandemics), local offices provide a quick, on-the-ground point of support and coordination. Please add any additional comments: Yes, while the goals of improving accommodation and aligning with policy are understandable, there are several additional considerations the Housing Executive should take into account to ensure the project is effective, equitable, and sensitive to community needs: 1. Impact on Service Users – Especially the Most Vulnerable • Accessibility: Ensure that clients with mobility challenges, mental health issues, or financial constraints are not disadvantaged by the centralisation. • Travel Costs and Time: Consider how people without personal transport, especially in rural or underserved areas, will reach the new central office.
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	2. Continuity of Care and Relationships Minimise disruption by ensuring existing client-staff relationships are preserved where possible—continuity can be vital for people managing complex housing or welfare issues.
	3. Mitigating Local Economic Impact Where feasible, consider community hubs or shared spaces with other services (e.g. council buildings, community centres/hubs) to retain some presence locally. Adjust plans accordingly to address identified risks or inequalities
Elected Representative	I think it is a big mistake to consolidate the Waterside Office. The Waterside services mainly PUL communities and a lot of the constituents have fears of travelling to the cityside. The travel network to the Horace Street location is currently suspended and any older resident have a considerable walk to access the new office. Parking is already a major issue in this city location. Staff would have to circle around all morning looking for a parking space or pay extortionate charges to park in the shopping centre, which is the closest car park or any size. The location of the office is a total barrier to the PUL community and this also will stop the already under represented PUL community from applying for jobs within the Housing Executive. The Waterside office is also owned by the Housing Executive so will not be the subject of massive rents and overheads. The Waterside Housing Executive is already owned by the Housing Executive so any investment to improve the accommodation will be represented in the property value. Any work carried out to a rented property will be an investment for the property owner and not NIHE. Moving is not the best use of tenant or public monies for the above

	reasons. This is a barrier to PUL users and also aged users due to the geographical location. The Housing Executive has relayed that footfall is a deciding factor. I can confirm that before Housing Solutions was moved to the Waterloo branch, the Waterside office was always packed. I don't believe the figures quoted is a true reflective of the footfall as many constituents go to the Waterside office to have their documents scanned and emailed to their Housing Officers as they are unable to travel to the city side. At present all the patch managers are located in the Waterside and therefore they come and go from the office to visit tenant and communities. These workers need to be at hand to the communities they take care of. Elected representatives meet and liaise on a regular basis with staff and if they were all stationed together then the personal touch and knowledge of areas will be lost. The car parking is a major issue and this move will be a barrier to all Waterside residents who depend on the help of the local staff. Vulnerable residents will be isolated not being able to access the service and this sometimes is vulnerable peoples only personal interaction with people outside their own homes. There is no benefit to closing the Waterside Office other than to disadvantage the local residents who depend on the office. There is no financial gain as the Housing Executive already own the building and there will be no footfall gain as many people will not be able to access the services if they are relocated to the city centre.
Elected Representative	I understand the need for many of our public bodies and organisations to transform and become more efficient. However, I have serious concerns about the Housing Executive's proposal to close four of its offices in my Londonderry constituency: at Collon Terrace, Waterside, Richmond Chambers and Waterloo Place.

	The proposal raises key concerns, not least for those who work in the Waterside office. I have been in touch with many of the staff there who feel that they will be disadvantaged when they move not just in relation to parking and their capacity to meet constituents but in their ability to meet with the most vulnerable in the Waterside. My constituents will suffer if the consultation continues to go in its current direction of travel because the face-to-face offering in the Waterside will cease. The Waterside office has operated for decades and has served the community well. Recently, I met the North West Road Safety Partnership to discuss issues at the Carlisle House site where, it is proposed, the offices will be consolidated. There are ongoing parking issues and challenges there in relation to traffic. This is recognised widely by local residents of the Fountain estate as well as the PSNI. The lack of consultation with residents of the Fountain on this matter is also disappointing. Attention needs to be made to the demographics of the city. The city centre and west back of the city is predominately Catholic with the East Bank (Waterside) being more shared and mixed religion. Many users of the Waterside office do not feel comfortable in the City Centre for a variety of reasons, including due to our recent history. The issue of access for vulnerable people must also be taken into consideration. I strongly believe that closing the Waterside office will have a detrimental impact on our older population who will not be able to access the city centre location as easily as the current service provides. The views of the Housing Executive staff in the Waterside office should be taken into account. They provide an excellent service in a shared environment. They overwhelmingly reject these proposals and I believe
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	that the reputation of the Housing Executive in the Waterside could be diminished if the proposals are to proceed.
Elected Representative	We wish to register our concerns and those of our constituents, both NIHE staff and service users, about the proposed closure of localised NIHE offices, in particular Collon Terrace and the wider consolidation into Carlisle House. This plan risks removing vital local access to housing services in an area with high levels of deprivation and vulnerable tenants. Face-to-face engagement is critical for many service users, particularly those with mental health issues, disabilities or literacy challenges. Removing this access, and expecting customers to travel to Carlisle House, which is not well served by public transport and offers very limited disabled parking, raises serious accessibility concerns. We have consulted Translink and can confirm that the nearest stop is at Foyle Street, a substantial walk for those with mobility difficulties. The lack of car-parking spaces, let alone disabled parking bays within the city centre is well documented. And for these reasons, we believe this makes Carlisle House an unsuitable location. The proposal appears to have been driven largely by quantitative data (i.e. footfall numbers during or post-COVID), ultimately skewing the demand for face-to-face services, rather than a full qualitative understanding of service user needs. This plan does not account for the many vulnerable service users who rely on this type of engagement Accessibility & Inclusion Carlisle House has limited disabled access, including only a one person through-floor lift and just two disabled parking spaces nearby. This is wholly inadequate given the volume and vulnerability of those who rely on face-to-face services. We feel that consolidating NIHE offices in this area could negatively impact equality, diversity, and inclusion, rather than support them and

would ask that an Equality Impact Assessment is carried out before any decisions are made. Additionally, some constituents have raised concerns that some members of the nationalist community would be required to travel to a loyalist interface area, which contradicts NIHE's commitments and risks escalating tensions locally, thereby compromising customer safety.

Car Parking

Staff and customers alike will face significant challenges parking in the vicinity of Carlisle House. Staff at Collon Terrace have already raised concerns over lack of parking and implications for safety, especially for those working unsociable hours. Ultimately, staff will face significant additional financial pressure. Based on both private parking and Council run car parks within the city centre, staff could expect to pay between £880 and £1,400+ per year. This is a significant expense, particularly without clear support or subsidised provision in the proposed relocation. This makes the proposed move not only inconvenient but financially burdensome. The added burden and reduced accessibility, we feel, could negatively impact staff morale and potentially lead to increased turnover, making it harder to retain experienced staff in the long term.

Horace Street is located near a residential area already heavily impacted by traffic congestion and limited parking availability. During peak times such as Halloween, the Jazz Festival, marching season, and the Christmas period, parking will become extremely difficult. Staff have also raised concerns around the lack of contingency plans in place for Horace Street in the event of an emergency, such as a fire or a security incident.

For comparison, Collon Terrace has a private staff car park and free parking within very close proximity to the office for tenants and customers. There are also a number of bus-stops within 50 yards of the Collon Terrace Office, for well-connected routes which travel directly from many NIHE estates, allowing vulnerable tenants to travel to the office with ease.

	Service Design We understand that no clarity has been given yet on how the front counter will operate at Carlisle House. There is also uncertainty around the shared entrance for staff and service users, which raises security and safeguarding concerns. The proposal to place all functions, including sensitive services like housing advice, in a single open-plan space undermines confidentiality and raises clear GDPR risks. Staff have already expressed concern that the floor plans are worse than those of the existing Housing Centre, with desks crammed side by side and no storage for confidential files. Impact on Staff Health & Wellbeing The introduction of hot-desking under the new flexible working policy is already causing stress. Staff who have worked effectively under blended arrangements for the past five years are now hearing suggestions of a full return to office with no clarity. This will have knock-on effects on staff with children/ childcare responsibilities and for staff with additional needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of maintaining appropriate health and safety measures in the workplace, particularly regarding physical distancing. Staff potentially being cramped and positioned too closely together at Carlisle House, is cause for concern. Highly contagious illnesses such as influenza, norovirus, and COVID-19 can spread rapidly in a shared office environment where multiple staff members occupy the same floor. This close proximity increases the risk of outbreaks, could lead to: • Reduced staffing levels due to illness • Increased financial costs related to sick pay and temporary resourcing, • Disruption to overall operations and service delivery,
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	• Negative impacts on employee wellbeing and morale. It is imperative that lessons learned from the pandemic are applied to ensure safer working conditions. This includes re-evaluating office layouts to maintain adequate distancing etc. Concerns have also been raised as to whether the kitchen/ cafeteria space is sufficient to comfortably accommodate all 170 staff members during lunchtime. It is unrealistic to expect staff to eat at their desks, as they need a dedicated, quiet area away from their workstations to properly rest and recharge. Having an appropriate space to take breaks is essential for maintaining mental well-being and productivity. If the current facilities cannot support this need, it raises serious concerns about whether staff mental health and wellbeing have been adequately considered in the workplace planning. Value for Money The annual cost of Collon Terrace is reported to be just 7.8% of the total office cost (£1.064m) approximately £83,000. In contrast, the disruption this move will cause for staff and service users appears disproportionate to the claimed savings. Future-Proofing Collon Terrace is a vested, owned building, not subject to lease costs. There is currently no confirmed timeline for the A2/Buncrana Road project, and DfI have confirmed that no decisions have been made regarding its future. This suggests Collon Terrace could remain a viable base for years to come. Community Impact Removing the district office from a nationalist-majority area where tenants have strong ties and local access to the office could undermine trust and relationships, especially with vulnerable groups including the Traveller community.
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Staff at Collon Terrace have built strong, trusted relationships with the large Traveller community in the area over many years. This is a highly deprived and often marginalised group, for whom face-to-face engagement is particularly important. From direct experience, we have found that some members of the Traveller community face challenges with literacy, making in-person support essential to ensure clear communication, understanding, and access to vital housing services. Relocating services risks undermining this rapport and creating significant barriers for a group that already faces considerable disadvantage.

Two other local housing providers, Radius and Apex, have chosen to base their offices in the Collon Terrace area, recognising the importance of being embedded within the community they serve. The existing NIHE office in this location is fully equipped to deliver vital services to tenants in what is one of the most deprived districts in the North. Removing this essential service is indicative of a lack of consideration for the needs of the local community.

Lastly, staff forced to drive into the city centre due to a lack of parking and poor public transport links will increase emissions and congestion undermining NIHE's sustainability goals.

Overall, we don't agree that the consolidation of NIHE Offices in Derry City Centre is the right move at this time, especially when demand for local, frontline housing services here continues to grow. The proposal feels less like a customer-led service transformation and more like a cost-cutting exercise and we are concerned that there has been minimal staff consultation or involvement in this decision thus far, with many feeling that the move is already a 'done deal.'

	We strongly urge the Housing Executive to reconsider this decision or at the very least, pause implementation until a full equality and impact assessment is completed. The current plan risks leaving behind the very people the Housing Executive was created to serve. Staff are already under significant pressure due to rising homelessness figures and increased caseloads. This proposed move risks being the straw that breaks the camel's back, adding further stress to an already overstretched workforce. Derry consistently records some of the highest levels of demand for NIHE services and homelessness presentations anywhere in the North. In this context, relocating and reducing accessibility to services not only places additional strain on staff but risks severely impacting some of the most vulnerable people in our community.
Disability Housing Forum	1. Lack of Transparency on Office Usage Data The consultation paper does not provide detailed figures on office attendance between March 2020 and April 2024. This period includes the COVID-19 pandemic, during which office access was significantly restricted and opening hours were reduced and after pandemic most of offices opening hours didn't come back to pre COVID-19 level. Without this context, the reported decline in footfall may not accurately reflect long-term trends in service usage. Transparent data is essential to justify such a significant change. 2. Accessibility Concerns The proposed location at Carlisle House is situated on a hill and has limited parking availability. This presents a substantial barrier for disabled individuals, older people, and those with mobility issues. Accessibility should be a core consideration in any public service

	relocation, and the current proposal does not adequately address these physical access challenges. 3. Inadequate Equality Mitigation Measures The consultation document suggests that disabled people or those with mobility issues could receive home visits as a form of mitigation. This approach is problematic for several reasons: It contradicts the social and human rights model of disability, which emphasizes autonomy and equal participation in public life. It is inconsistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which affirms the right of disabled people to access services on an equal basis with others. It fails to consider the needs of people with mental health conditions or neurodiverse individuals, many of whom may find home visits intrusive or distressing. 4. Loss of Informal Support and Information Sharing In-person visits to NIHE offices often allow tenants to access printed materials (leaflets, flyers) and benefit from informal conversations with staff, including the ability of staff to consult with colleagues. These interactions are difficult to replicate in a remote or home-visit model and risk reducing the quality and accessibility of information for service users. Recommendations: Provide detailed footfall data from March 2020 to April 2024 to allow for a fair assessment of service usage trends. Reassess the suitability of Carlisle House in terms of physical accessibility and parking. Develop inclusive mitigation strategies that respect the autonomy and preferences of disabled and neurodiverse individuals.
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	Ensure that any new service model maintains the same level of access to information and staff support as currently available in physical offices. We urge NIHE to reconsider aspects of this proposal to ensure that it aligns with principles of equality, accessibility, and user-centered service design. This decision, as new NIHE policy, to close offices and relocate to a different location must be screen under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. Given the adverse impacts highlighted above, the Disability Forum, recommends a full Equality Impact Assessment must also be carried out taking cognisance of the two Statutory Duties. In regard to Statutory Duty Two - the good relations duty - to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. It should be noted that some residents living in the Waterside area do not visit the Cityside. The Disability Forum recommends direct consultation with affected residents in the Waterside area. Additionally, the Disability Forum recommend direct consultation with tenants and their local Housing Community Networks across the whole City.
Derry City and Strabane District Council (Formal Response)	1. Accessibility for Residents There is a shared concern among Elected Members that the consolidation of all customer facing services into Carlisle House could significantly reduce physical accessibility for many residents. The existing distribution of offices, including Richmond Chambers, Waterloo Place, Collon Terrace, and Waterside provides more localised access for residents across the city and surrounding areas. The proposed centralisation to a single city centre location presents challenges for: · Older residents and those with reduced mobility. · Individuals and families without access to private transport.

	· Residents in more peripheral or economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. · Those who rely on in-person interaction due to digital exclusion or personal circumstance. While Council notes the reported reduction in physical footfall and the growing role of digital and telephone communication, face-to-face contact remains an essential service for a significant portion of residents. The proposed location must be matched with robust mitigation measures to ensure no resident is left behind or disadvantaged in accessing services. To that end, Council request that the Housing Executive: · Undertakes a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) that addresses geographic and physical access barriers. · Commits to alternative access solutions such as mobile outreach units, community based drop-in points, or assisted digital hubs. · Coordinates with public transport providers to enhance connectivity to Carlisle House. 2. Staff Welfare and Transition Support Council also expresses concern for the wellbeing and morale of staff currently based in the four existing office sites proposed for closure. A move to a single location, while potentially improving internal communication and operational efficiency, may also introduce difficulties for staff in terms of increased travel distances, disruption to existing routines, and potential overcrowding or adjustment issues in the new premises. We note the mention of hybrid working, wellbeing policies, and engagement strategies in the consultation document. However, Members would urge that: · Comprehensive and meaningful staff consultation be prioritised before any final relocation decision is taken. · Specific support measures such
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	as flexible working hours, travel assistance, and transitional welfare support be clearly defined. · The transition be phased in a way that minimises disruption and reflects staff preferences and needs. · Assurance be provided that the consolidation of office space will not result in job losses, and that the process will prioritise job security for all affected employees. It is essential that the staff who deliver front-line services are supported both practically and emotionally through any period of change 3. Community Cohesion and Neighbourhood Impact In addition to service delivery and internal operations, Council wish to highlight the broader implications of vacating the existing office locations on community cohesion and local identity. These offices serve not only as administrative centres but also as visible, accessible points of contact that help sustain a sense of place, belonging, and social connection, particularly in areas with limited civic infrastructure. The closure of offices such as Collon Terrace and Waterside may significantly affect the fabric of their communities by reducing opportunities for informal engagement, visibility of public services, and the everyday interactions that help strengthen local ties. The proposal should therefore be assessed not merely as an internal reorganisation, but as a strategic shift with wide-reaching consequences for neighbourhood vitality and community resilience. Council would seek request assurance that: · The future use or disposal of vacated sites will be subject to transparent and inclusive local consultation. · Potential community benefit - including opportunities for housing, regeneration, or local initiatives that foster social inclusion will be proactively explored. Conclusion Derry City and Strabane District Council acknowledge the importance of ensuring that the Housing Executive operates from a modern, efficient estate that reflects current and future service delivery needs. However, they strongly urge that any final decision on consolidation gives equal weight to the needs of residents, the wellbeing of staff, and the vibrancy of local communities.
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	We respectfully request that these concerns be fully considered and addressed in the final recommendations and implementation plan for the proposed consolidation of NIHE Office Accommodation in Derry/Londonderry.
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