

March 2023

## **Information request for NIHE's policy on the Special Acquisition of Dwellings.**

### **Request**

A copy of NIHE's policy on the Special Acquisition of Dwellings.

### **Response**

Chapter 4 of the General Housing Policy Guidance Manual, which covers the Housing Executive's policy on Special Acquisition of Dwellings, is currently under review.

### **Request**

**If such a policy doesn't exist, information on how NIHE sources permanent accommodation for homeless applicants with complex needs, whose accommodation needs cannot be met within standard stock. Please note, this does not relate to applicants seeking or needing supported accommodation.**

### **Response**

It is the role of the NIHE Housing Support Officer (HSO) to explore and to assist applicants with complex needs in finding a bespoke housing solution. To do so they follow an options appraisal process to explore the range of available housing options to meet the applicant's housing needs.

The first potential option is to consider existing adapted/accessible social stock i.e. Housing Executive or Housing Association properties. HSOs will also give consideration to properties suitable for adaptation, for example properties on a corner site.

If there is no feasible social option, they will explore properties available to rent within the private sector. If adaptation is required this can be facilitated via Disabled Facilities Grant (subject to the landlord's approval and means testing where appropriate).

In the absence of a suitable private sector option, the HSO will explore inclusion within the new build programme via the Place Shaping (PS) team who will seek to find a suitable new build scheme and liaise with the relevant Housing Association. Housing Associations may decline a request if a planning application has been submitted,

tender documents have been issued, if the scheme would be delayed, or if costs rise disproportionately.

If there are no planned or future new build schemes within an applicant's areas of choice, and all the other options have been fully exhausted, then the Regional Manager may approve a Special Acquisition. All other housing options must have been fully explored and ruled out with robust supporting evidence before acquisition is approved by the Regional Manager and this option is only available to those applicants with complex needs and Full Duty Applicant (FDA) status. Once approval is given, Place Shapers will approach the Development Programme Group (DPG) to initiate the Housing Association nomination process. It should be noted that Board approval is required to nominate a Housing Association to take the acquisition forward. If acquisition is refused or subsequently abandoned as not feasible, the HSO will review the options again.