

June 23

## **Social Housing and HOU5 of the Belfast Plan Strategy**

**When you say NIHE has 'supported numerous units for social housing within this context', how does that work in practice?**

The Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy was adopted in May 2023, therefore, this is a new process and there has been limited delivery of social housing units from HOU 5 at this early stage.

The Housing Executive's role in development management is set out in legislation. [Schedule 3](#) of the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, names the Housing Executive as a consultee in development management (the assessment of individual planning applications), 'where a proposal is likely to require a statement of affordable housing need'. The Department for Communities defines affordable housing as social housing, intermediate housing for sale and intermediate housing for rent.

A proposal which triggers the Belfast Plan Strategy's Policy HOU 5 Affordable Housing (applications with five or more residential units or over 0.1 ha) is a proposal which requires a statement of affordable housing need. If a Pre Application Discussion request or Planning Application is received to which HOU 5 applies, the Council consults the Housing Executive on the need for the proposal. The Housing Executive will respond to the consultation stating the need and the mix of need. Our response advises developers to partner with a Registered Housing Association who can acquire the affordable housing units, and we also state that the design of the social housing units must adhere to DFC's Housing Association Guide. The Council will take account of this advice when determining the planning application.

Alternatives are set out if the full requirement of HOU 5 cannot be achieved on site, due to exceptional circumstances. In these instances, where the Council accepts alternative provision for affordable housing from the applicant should be sought, we anticipate that the Council will consult the Housing Executive on the preferred option.

The Council and the applicant will sign a Section 76 planning agreement to secure affordable housing provision before planning permission is granted.

**Are social units arising from implementation of HOU5 incorporated into SHDP processes?**

Existing guidance is in place in the Housing Association Guide relating to appropriate procurement processes for housing associations to engage with private developers regarding the delivery of new social housing via 'Planning Gain'. The Housing Executive is also working closely with colleagues in the Department for Communities to incorporate a new 'Planning Gain' Scheme Type into the Housing Association Guide, with the aim of developing full guidance for housing associations for the end-to-end delivery of new social housing via the Planning system.

**Do they appear in the monthly SHDP updated tables?**

**If not, where do they appear?**

**Are they counted against SHDP targets?**

At this stage, while guidance is still being fully developed, any new social housing being brought forward via 'Planning Gain' will still count towards overall SHDP out-turn figures i.e. once confirmed as a start on-site. However, until full guidance is in place, such schemes will not routinely be recorded as 'Planning Gain', as practical delivery will be via an existing mechanism detailed in the Housing Association Guide e.g. 'Off-the-Shelf' Scheme Type. It is anticipated that, once full guidance is in place, that provision of new social housing via this mechanism will be recorded separately for the purposes of monitoring out-turn levels via the full range of Scheme Type. In the interim, it will be necessary to monitor planning applications and decisions notices to capture what has been approved through the planning process.