



**Housing  
Executive**

# **NIHE Draft Rural Strategy 2026-2031**

**Ciaran Herity  
NIHE Rural Unit**



# Housing Executive Rural Unit

- Identifying and addressing rural housing need.
- Work directly with Rural Communities.
- Rural development and regeneration contributions.
- SPOD funding to support community initiatives.
- **Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016:** We have a statutory duty to pay ‘due regard’ to rural needs in policy development.

# Draft Rural Strategy 2026 - 2031

## Reaching Rural 2021-2025

- Reaching Rural is our outgoing strategy
- Between 2021-2025 the Housing Executive invested approx. **£243.47m** in rural areas.
- Continued programme of Housing Needs Tests, with **44** completed over the course of this strategy.
- Currently in an interim year until our new strategy is in place.

## Vision Statement

- ‘We aim to build thriving and sustainable rural communities where people of all backgrounds can access affordable housing and enjoy a decent quality of life.’
- Consultation Period: 8 Weeks
- Friday 23rd January to Friday 20th March 2026

# **Theme 1: Supporting Our Rural Customers**

1. Deliver tailored solutions that address distinct rural needs.
2. Enhance support for an ageing population.
3. Invest in accessible housing options to meet growing demand.
4. Provide homelessness prevention and support in rural areas.
5. Promote inclusion and cohesion through community-based programmes.

## **Theme 2 – Enabling the Provision of Affordable Rural Homes**

6. Enable new affordable homes in areas with identified need (including hidden/latent demand).
7. Collaborate with councils to shape planning policies that support inclusive rural growth.
8. Promote affordable homes within mixed-tenure environments.

## **Theme 3 – Securing the Future of Our Rural Communities**

- 9. Improve the energy efficiency of rural housing stock.
- 10. Encourage energy upgrades in the rural private sector to reduce fuel poverty.
- 11. Promote climate-resilient planning through Local Development Plans.
- 12. Maximise the use of existing land and property assets in rural areas.

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# Public Consultation

- **Strategy Period:** The new Rural Strategy will run from **2026 through to 2031**.
- **Consultation:** A draft has been released for public consultation until **20<sup>th</sup> March 2026**.
- **Call to Action:** Your insights, experiences and ideas are vital in helping us shape a strategy that truly reflects rural needs.
- We encourage you to review the draft and share your feedback with us.
- A drop-in event will take place on **Tuesday, 3 March, 2026 from 1-3pm in the Rural Community Network building in Cookstown**.
- Public Consultation Forum via **Teams** on **Friday 13 March, 2026 from 10.30am-12pm and Monday 16 March, 2026 from 2.00pm-3.30pm**.
- **Contact Detail:** For further information or to submit comments, please contact:
  - **Rural Housing Team:** [Rural.Housing@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:Rural.Housing@nihe.gov.uk)
  - **Pamela Johnston:** [Pamela.Johnston@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:Pamela.Johnston@nihe.gov.uk)
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**Housing  
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# **NIHE Place Shaping: Assessing housing need & enabling new social homes**

**Sinead Collins**

**Head of South Place Shaping**



[nihe.gov.uk](https://nihe.gov.uk)

# Duty to Assess Housing Need

The Role of the Housing Executive:

- **1981 Housing Order** - Housing Executive must regularly examine housing need.
- **Schedule 3, Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (NI) 2015** - Housing Executive as consultee in development management
  - “where a development proposal is likely to require a statement of affordable housing need”
- **Part 1, Section 2 of the Planning (LDP) Regulations (NI) 2015** - Housing Executive as consultation body in the LDP process.

# 15-Year Housing Market Assessment 2020-2035

- Projects new cross tenure supply requirement forward over a 15-year period (owner occupied and private-rented, intermediate, social).
- Considers population growth, income levels and housing affordability.
- Strategic – an evidence base for Local Development Plans and key data for the housing development sector to plan new build.

Local Government District	Market	Intermediate	Social	All Tenures
Fermanagh and Omagh	<b>3,570</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>5,350</b>
<b>Northern Ireland Total</b>	<b>54,890</b>	<b>15,450</b>	<b>25,280</b>	<b>95,620</b>



# Housing Affordability



## **greatest affordability pressure**

Belfast, Causeway  
Coast & Glens, Derry  
City & Strabane and  
Fermanagh & Omagh  
HMAs



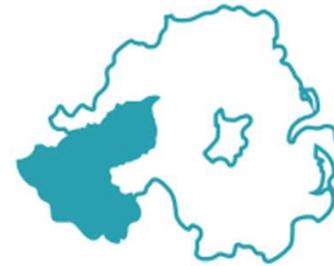
## **increasing affordability issues** in PRS



# 43%

**43% of lower quartile  
income spent on  
lower quartile rents**

*(H2, 2024)*



# £687

**Fermanagh & Omagh has the  
lowest average rent  
of £687**

*(H2, 2024)*



**NIHE House Sales**

# 19

average selling price  
£52.68k

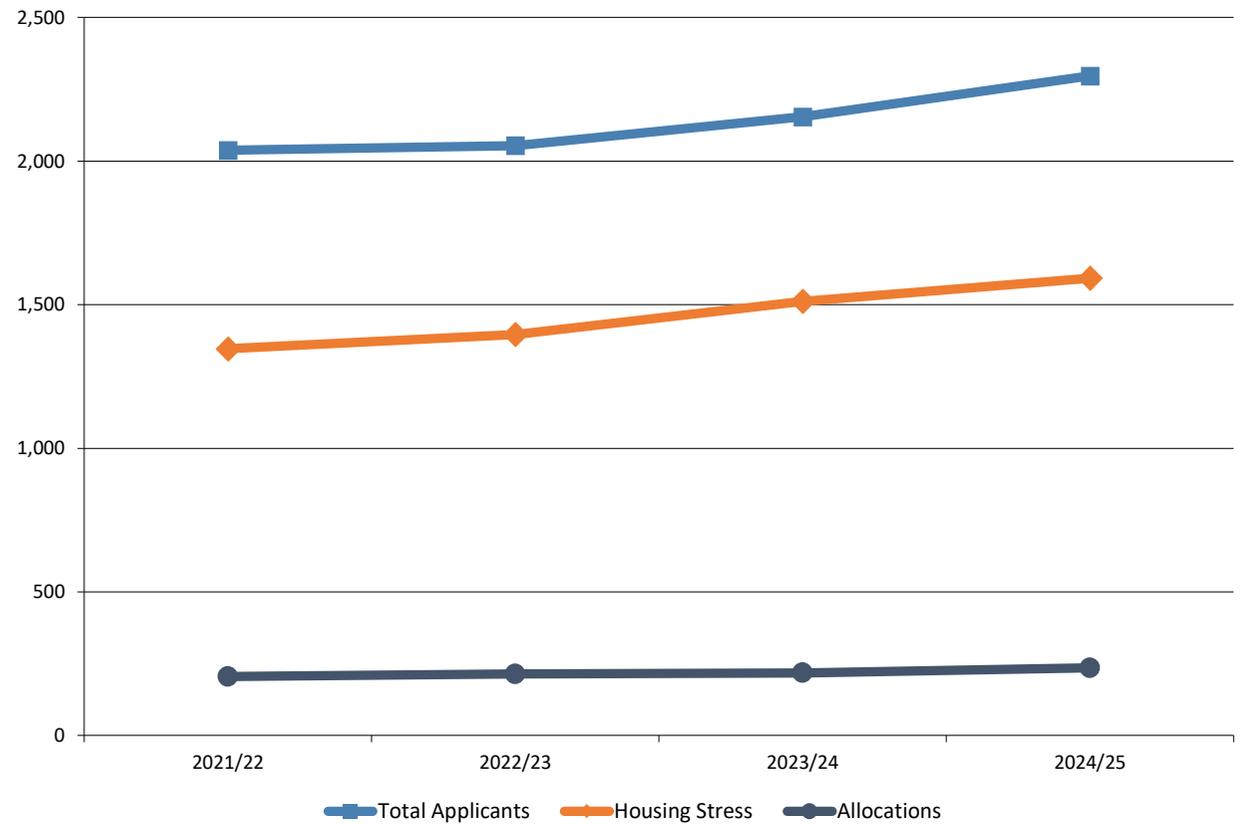
# 20

Properties  
purchased  
through  
**Co-  
Ownership**

# 5-Year Social Housing Need & Demand Assessment 2024-2029

- Assessed annually from the **Common Waiting List** for people choosing social housing as their housing option with circumstances defined as being in housing stress.
- **Groups applicants into households** e.g. single, small family, large family, older persons.
- **Informs the Social Development Guidelines**, used to plan the location of new social housing to ensure it is targeted in areas of acute housing need.
- Used as **part of the assurance process for Housing Associations to draw down Housing Association Grant Funding (HAG)** and to support the operational delivery of the annual Social Housing Development Programme.

# Waiting List Trends 2022 – 2025



# 5-Year Social Housing Need & Demand Assessment 2024-2029



Housing Need Assessment Area	Projected Need 2019-2024	Projected Need 2024-2029
Enniskillen	176	322
Omagh	113	289
Lisnaskea	0	48
Irvinestown	0	35
Lisbellaw	7	27
Maguiresbridge	4	22
Dromore	0	19
Fintona	0	19
Belleek	0	14
Beragh	0	12
Total Urban	289	611
Total Rural	45	331
<b>Fermanagh &amp; Omagh Total</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>942</b>

# Enabling the right homes in the right locations

Development Planning	Development Management	Oversight of the Social Housing Development Programme
<p>Statutory consultee in the Local Development Plan (LDP) process to ensure sufficient provision is made for housing, <b>across all tenures</b>.</p>	<p>Statutory consultee and <b>respond to planning applications</b> that are assessed against Affordable Housing Policies where Plan Strategies have been adopted.</p>	<p>Manage the <b>delivery of the social housing development programme (SHDP)</b>. Confirm support for housing proposals against identified housing needs, allowing Housing Associations to secure <b>Housing Association Grant (HAG)</b> funding.</p>

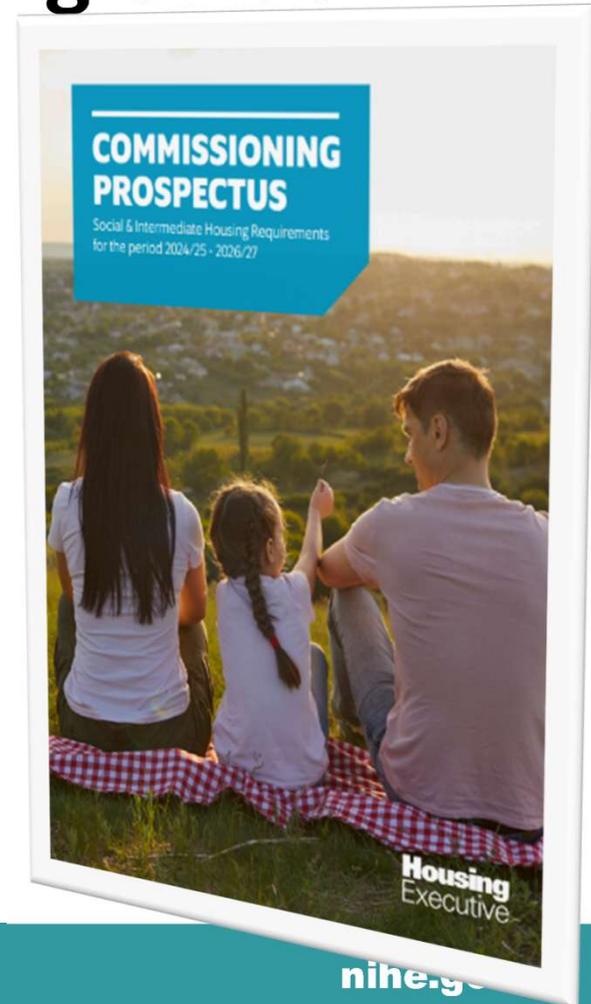
# Fermanagh & Omagh Plan Strategy 2030

- Housing developments of 10 units or more or an area over 0.5 ha – must have 10% affordable housing.
- 53 HOU 3 consultations
- Approx. 265 units supported for social housing across urban and rural settlements
- Schemes approved with S76 Legal Agreement



# NIHE Annual New Build Commissioning Guide

- Annual publication providing detailed information about the requirements for the provision of new housing to councils, Housing Associations, Developers and across the sector.
- Provides cross tenure needs and analysis by Local Government District.
- **Directs housing associations to deliver new social and affordable housing within context of annualised delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP)**
- It highlights **Social Development Guidelines**, namely areas of acute social housing need.



# Affordable Housing Supply



## Social

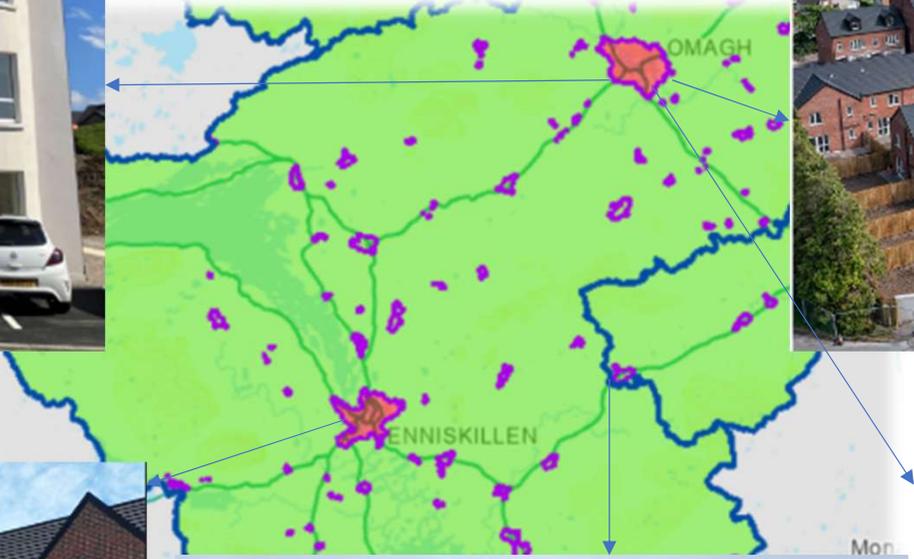
### **5 Year SHDP Performance**

- 217 starts (194 urban and 23 rural) were achieved against the target
- Includes 51 apartments, 147 houses (13 Four+ beds), 19 w/c units
- Resulting in 35 more starts (+52 urban and -17 rural) against the SG target.
- >200 units included on 3-year SHDP (2026/27 – 2028/29)

## Intermediate

- In 2024/25, there were 20 properties purchased through Co-Ownership in FODC.
- Co-ownership active stock of 150 properties.

# Social New Build Activity 2020-2025



# Key Challenges & Opportunities



## Key Challenges

- Scale of cross tenure housing need & demand
- Gaps in supply – increasingly in rural areas
- Affordability pressures & limited intermediate products
- Lack of choice leading to pressures on Private Rented Sector

## Opportunities

- Programme for Government priority and targets for housing
- Ambition of the Housing Supply Strategy and its cross departmental focus
- Policy HOU3: Increase of affordable housing through public & private investment
- Support for NIHE Revitalisation

## Role of partnerships

- Strategic place-based approach
- Mixed tenure developments – public/private partnerships
- Unlock Public Sector land

# Further Information

## South Region Place Shaping

**Newry Mourne & Down District  
Ards & North Down  
Mid Ulster  
Fermanagh Omagh  
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon**

E:Mail: [South.Placeshaping@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:South.Placeshaping@nihe.gov.uk)

Strategic Housing Market Assessment : <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/working-with-us/research/housing-market-analysis>

Northern Ireland New Build Requirements: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/working-with-us/partners/commissioning-prospectus>