



Planning Agent's Workshop

Wednesday 17 January 2024

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Update on Planning Improvements
3. Housing Monitor/Need/Commitments – Policy HOU01 of Plan Strategy
4. Affordable Housing - Policy HOU03 of Plan Strategy
5. Planning Statements to accompany housing applications
6. Questions



2. Planning Improvement Programme

Update on Planning Improvements





REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDITOR
1 February 2022



Public Accounts Committee

**PLANNING IN NORTHERN
IRELAND**

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Ordered by the Public Accounts Committee to be published 22 March 2022

This report is embargoed until 00.01am on 24 March 2022

Report: NIA 202/17-22 Public Accounts Committee

2. Planning Improvement Programme Update on Planning Improvements

Why the need for a review?

- ❑ Ongoing planning performance and improvement programme at a **regional and local** level.

The **regional work** is directly in response to the **NIAO and PAC reports**.

- Identified a number of issues and made recommendations for improvement in relation to planning performance.
- ❑ At a **local level**, performance improvement is a key part of Council's normal business.
- Number of initiatives which have improved performance, and this continues with the adoption of the Plan Strategy.
- ❑ It is now **timely to review** the Council's **key operating procedures** in light of the Council now operating within its own adopted planning policy framework.

Ensure procedures remain fit for purpose to deliver a streamlined and efficient planning service.

Stakeholder Engagement with Planning Agents using Survey Monkey

Question 11 - Have you any other suggestions or initiatives that could improve planning performance and decision making locally?

- Variety of responses and comments received.
- ✓ Two workshops on local improvement options held with PC Members
- ✓ Committee Members have now agreed a number of options to be taken forward
- ✓ Revisions to the key operating procedures were unanimously approved.
- ✓ Phase 1 - GoLive date 1st February.
- ✓ Phase 2 – Date TBA

PHASE 1 Improvements at Planning Committee Meeting

1. Seating Plan and Speakers:

- EK & Omagh speakers sit behind Members.
- Seating plan will be rearranged to enable Speakers to face Members.

2. Planning Officer:

- SPTOs presenting applications

3. Agent's Presentation

- Forward these to Planning Officers in advance of the meeting



PHASE 1 Weekly List of Recommendations

- ❑ The **Weekly List of Recommendations = List of refusals or approvals with objections.**
- ❑ Emailed to Planning Committee Members each Friday.
- ✓ Will be replaced with an application list, conditions and refusal reasons.
- ✓ The list of applications included on the Weekly List of Recommendations will be published on the FODC website.
- ❑ Call in period for applications on the Weekly List of Recommendations.
Must now be called in by the following Wednesday @5pm.
(Changed from the following Friday 3pm).

PHASE 1 Copy requests for further information to Applicants.

- Request for **further information** sent to Planning Agent.
- Uploaded to Planning Portal and made public.
 - ✓ Planners will now also contact Applicants
 - ✓ Make them aware of the request for further information
 - ✓ Direct them to the Planning Portal

PHASE 1 Improvements to Committee processes:

- ❑ Planners will upload a Note to **Planning Portal** advising of recommendation, dates/times and location of Agendas and reports and a link to the guide on Speaking Rights.
- ❑ Planners will contact **Agents** when the Committee Agenda is published and make them aware of the recommendation and date of meeting & how to request speaking rights/deadlines.
- ❖ **Do not sit back and rely on Officers to contact you!**
- ❖ Continue to 'track' applications to received updates etc.
- ❖ Review NI Planning Portal.

PHASE 1 Other Improvements

- 1) Name of Councillor who 'calls a file in' included on the Planning Committee Officer Report along with their reason.
- 2) Delegation of all local applications to Officers where a legal agreement is required - no need to go to Committee any longer.
- 3) Agree a legal agreement template for Affordable Housing applications (HOU03)
- 4) No power of call in for Advertisement Consent applications: Approvals=issue.
- 5) Explore potential for further delegation of applications to Officers.
- 6) Explore how to reduce consultations – DAERA/DFI Roads/EHD etc.
- 7) Publish series of guides & 'how to' docs.



PHASE 2 Other Planning Improvements

Pre Application Advice & Discussions

Two sources of advice available depending on the customer's needs.

1. [Pre-Application Advice](#): informal chat by phone, email etc regarding potential applications etc – fees, what policies apply, drawings, reports etc. No change to this process and no fee required.
2. [Pre-Application Discussion](#): provide an enhanced and greater resourced PAD service, with an appropriate fee for this service.



PHASE 2 - Enhanced level of PAD service - what will you get???

- Dedicated Senior Planning Officer as a point of contact
- Set time for a reply to be issued & timetable for actions
- Meeting with Senior Planning Officer
- Council will seek advice from statutory consultees & make their replies available
- Formal reply in writing, providing:
 - ✓ Comment on relevant planning policies, and
 - ✓ Planning Officer's recommendations against these policies, and
 - ✓ Views of Planners on the likely outcome of any application.
- **Priority processing of application to recommendation and decision.**



PHASE 2 Deferrals

Aim: Define clear parameters for deferrals at Planning Committee.

Planning Committee Protocol as amended

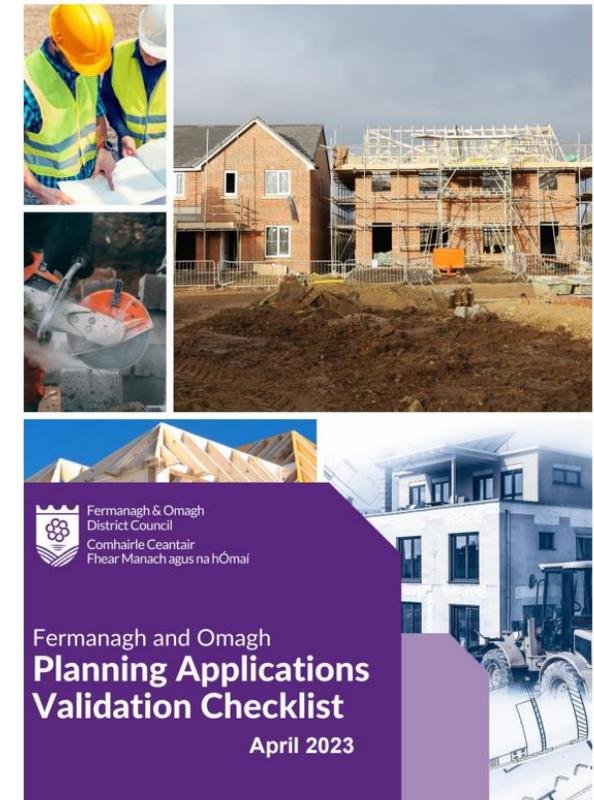
Para 1.11 - *“Deferrals should be rare”*

Para 1.17 - *“Deferrals should be an exception”*



PHASE 2 Validation

- DFI publishing legislation for Validation Checklists
- Council will review this
- Current Validation Checklist April 2023
- Planners review new applications and ensure all the necessary information is submitted with the application.
- Agents must review new applications against the Checklist



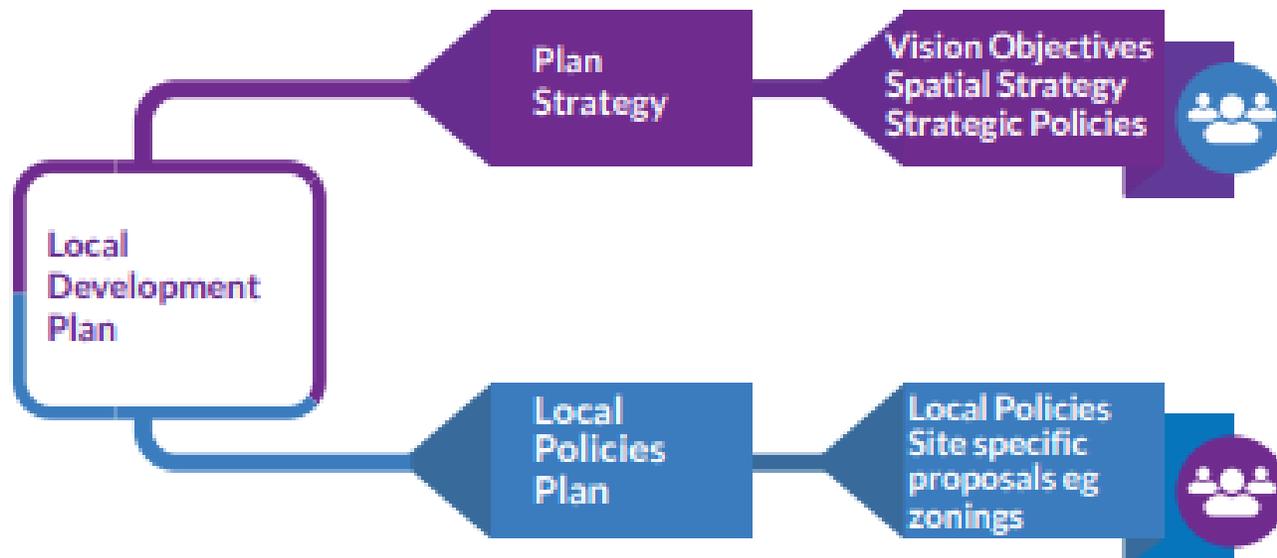
□ **Phase 1** Planning Improvements will be implemented from **Thursday 01 February**



3. Plan Strategy – Implementation



Figure 1: Content of Local Development Plan Documents



Plan Strategy - Implementation

- Whole Plan must be taken into account
- Relationship between **Plan Strategy** and
 - Fermanagh Area Plan 2007
 - Omagh Area Plan 1987-2002

Appendix 8 Table 1 sets out approach to be followed:

- SPPS Para 1.11 – PPSs – no longer relevant

1.11 Where a council adopts its Plan Strategy, existing policy retained under the transitional arrangements shall cease to have effect in the district of that council and shall not be material from that date, whether the planning application has been received before or after that date.



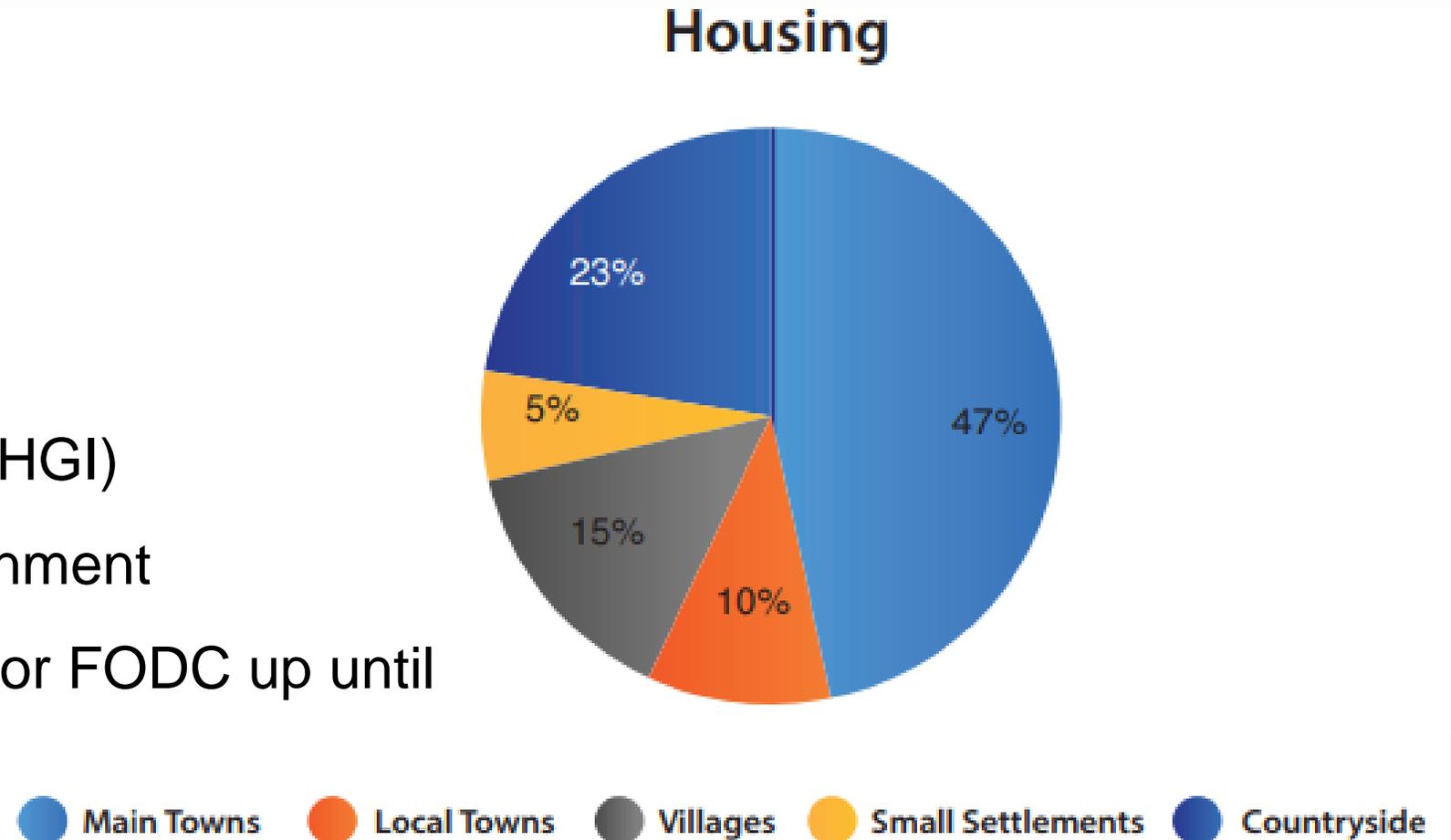
Council's Strategic Approach

- Manage growth based on sustainable patterns of development balanced across the Council area
- Focus major population and economic growth in two main towns
- Sustain the role of local towns, villages and small settlements
- Support and sustain vibrant rural communities



Council's Strategic Approach to Housing

- Settlement Hierarchy
- Rural Community Areas
- Housing Growth Indicators (HGI)
 - Issued by Central Government
 - Assigned 4,300 houses for FODC up until 2030



Council's Strategic Approach to Housing

Table 3: Summary – Scale of Development Appropriate to Each Tier of the Settlement Hierarchy

Housing	Industry and Business	Retail
Main Towns		
Allocations for large scale housing development and with an emphasis on brownfield sites within the Urban Footprint.	<p>Allocations of large scale sites to meet strategic employment needs.</p> <p>Range of general and local employment opportunities.</p> <p>Emphasis on retention of existing employment land to provide opportunities both for expansion and re-use.</p>	<p>Town centres – focus of a range of provision – large scale retail, leisure, community, cultural</p> <p>Local Neighbourhood Centres – to be identified</p> <p>Emphasis on protecting existing centres</p>



Council's Strategic Approach to Housing

Villages		
Within the defined physical limits of development as appropriate to scale and character, normally in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) small housing estates;(ii) small groups;(iii) infill	Emphasis on local employment/small rural businesses Where provision exists emphasis will be on retention. Potential for expansion likely to be limited due to environmental and infrastructural limitations.	Convenience shopping mainly to meet daily needs.



Council's Strategic Approach to Housing

- Policy SP02 & SP03
- Settlement Hierarchy Housing Need 2019-2030

Main Towns – 1632 – **1147**

Local Towns – 321 - **187**

Phase 1 & 2 zoned land

Villages and small settlements – 655 - **464**

Housing Policy Areas



Council's Strategic Approach to Housing

- Annual Housing Monitor 2021 – 2023
- Updated Indicative Need across settlements
- Commitments
 - Extant Permissions
 - Developments ongoing
- Settlement Hierarchy



Policy HOU01

- **Application for 25 Units**
- **Comply with policy?**



Policy HOU01 – Housing

(a) Main and Local Towns

The Council will support proposals for housing on sites **zoned for housing** within the towns and on **brownfield land** within the urban footprint of towns.

Glossary defines “Brownfield”:

Brownfield

Land that is, or was occupied by a permanent structure within a defined settlement limit. It may encompass vacant or derelict lands, infill sites, land occupied by redundant or underused buildings, a piece of industrial or commercial property that is abandoned or underused and often environmentally contaminated. It does not include the gardens of dwellings and apartments (broadly defined as those areas within the curtilage of a dwelling which do not contain any buildings).



Policy HOU01 – 4 parts

1) Is the site **zoned**?

2) Is the site **Brownfield** within the urban footprint?

HOU01 – “...permit housing on **unzoned greenfield land** within the settlement limits where either:

3) i) the **future housing need** exceeds the number of **existing commitments** and there is no evidence of this housing need being met through sites zoned for housing;

or

4) ii) it is demonstrated within the **Housing Need Assessment** that there is an unmet need for **Affordable Housing** which cannot be met through any existing commitments or on sites zoned for housing.

*****HNA**: Produced by Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Housing Applications – Current and Next steps

Planning Officers are reviewing all housing applications in settlements.

Three general categories:

1. Proposals on zoned or on a brownfield site
2. Greenfield but site has planning history (possible fallback position)
3. Greenfield and no planning history – supporting statement needed looking at need, commitments and zoned land

Planners to work constructively with Applicants/Agents



Housing Applications – Current and Next steps

- supporting statement - looking at need, commitments and zoned land Zonings

Need 100 – Commitments 200

Need 200 – Commitments 100

(a) Main and Local Towns

The Council will support proposals for housing on sites zoned for housing within the towns and on brownfield land within the urban footprint of towns.

The Council will only permit housing on unzoned greenfield land within the settlement limits of a main or local town where either:

- i) the future housing need exceeds the number of existing commitments and there is no evidence of this housing need being met through sites zoned for housing; or
- ii) it is demonstrated within the Housing Need Assessment that there is an unmet need for Affordable Housing which cannot be met through any existing commitments or on sites zoned for housing.



Housing Applications – Current and Next steps

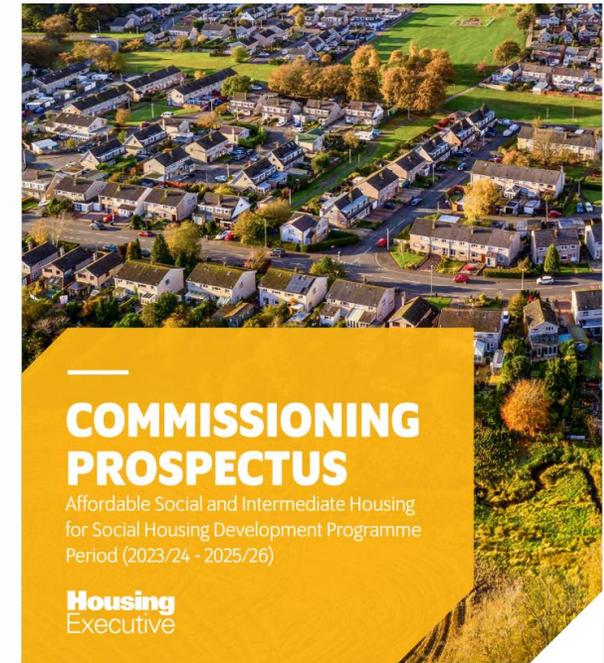
- supporting statement - looking at need, commitments and zoned housing land
 - Availability
 - Deliverability
 - Legal issues
 - WWTW

Not Definitive legal decisions – judgements on the evidence presented – but needs to be reasonable



Policy HOU03 - Affordable Housing in Settlements

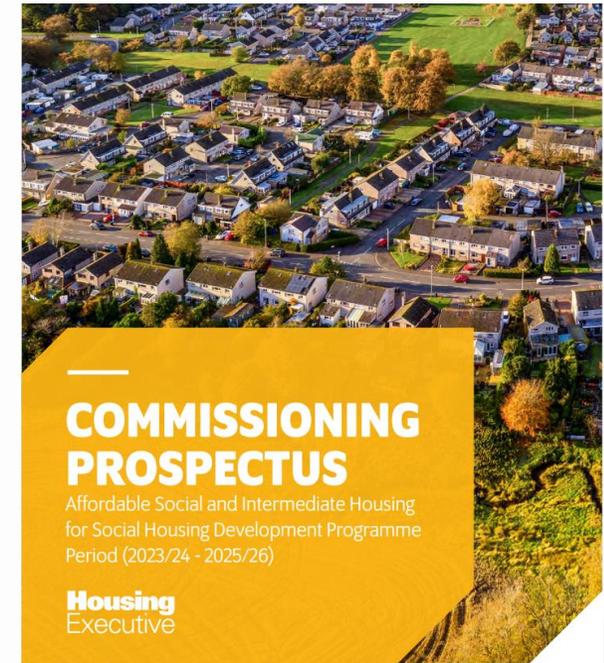
- The Policy requires a need to be established through the NIHE Housing Needs Assessment
- 10% provided on sites of 10 units or 0.5 ha
- Viability is material - Guidance
- Delivery secured by Legal Agreement



Policy HOU03 - Affordable Housing in Settlements

Advice on steps

- Contact NIHE - NIFHA
- PAD should be submitted
- Submission of application with supporting statements
- Delivery secured by Legal Agreement



Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Energy Efficiency,
- Affordable Housing
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs)
- Shop Front Design
- Homeworking
- Solar Farms
- Mineral Financial Guarantees
- AONB Design Guide



Questions?

