



Belfast Local Development Plan

Technical Supplement 2
Housing
August 2018

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City Council

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1.0 Introduction

Purpose of this Document

- 1.1 This technical document has been prepared to draw together the evidence base that has been used to inform the preparation of the Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035. It is one of a suite of topic-based Technical Supplements that should be read alongside the LDP to understand the rationale and justification for the policies proposed within the draft Plan Strategy.
- 1.2 It builds upon the suite of 18 thematic Topic Papers prepared and published alongside the Preferred Options Paper (POP), which established the baseline position as at April 2017 and identified the key issues that need to be addressed by the LDP. This Housing Technical Supplement therefore updates this baseline position and sets out the evidence base that has informed each of the housing policies within the draft Plan Strategy.
- 1.3 Again, it forms part of a series of thematic reports to accompany the draft Plan Strategy. Whilst each of the Technical Supplements can be read separately, there are inevitably some important related matters and background evidence within other Technical Supplements also.
- 1.4 It should be noted that the evidence base collected to inform the LDP also forms the basis on which a series of additional assessments and appraisals required as part of the plan preparation process, most notably the Sustainability Appraisal. By combining the evidence gathering stages for both the Sustainability Appraisal and Local Development Plan, we aim to streamline the documentation produced and avoid duplication. It will also help to ensure that sustainable development is embedded in the planning process and that the Sustainability Appraisal is one of the main drivers informing the preparation of the LDP.

Planning and Housing

- 1.5 Housing lies at the heart of town planning and its origins were largely a government response to dealing with the legacy of Victorian slums and post war rebuilding. In more recent time planning for new housing assists in responding to arising needs and demands for new accommodation, both from the existing population, as new households form or as housing needs change. New housing can also assist in population stabilisation or growth, encouraging more people to stay within or move to the city.
- 1.6 New housing is also strongly linked to economic growth. The construction and maintenance of new homes is a key source of local employment, and new homes also house people who are able to work elsewhere. New housing can assist in regenerating existing communities, help reduce levels of religious segregation, accommodate new city centre populations associated with growing knowledge economies, and can improve the appearance and quality of the city and its neighbourhoods. The regeneration and renewal of existing housing areas through the construction of new homes represents a driver for local investment, including economic investment in local employment and service opportunities.

- 1.7 In Belfast, planning for new housing will be a critical element in ensuring that the Local Plan, including the Plan Strategy reflects the aspirations of the local Community Plan, particularly in seeking to stabilise and grow the population and provide a range of good quality housing options. Local planning policies relating to new housing are also required to be provided by regional policy, which advise that Councils should provide strategies for new residential development and should plan proactively for the objectively assessed development needs within their area. It is therefore clear that the Plan Strategy must contain robust and credible housing policies, within which a central element is to establish the level of housing growth to be accommodated in Belfast over the plan period.
- 1.8 It is important that the new plan is based on an accurate assessment of the scale and type of new housing to be planned for the city. The best information has been used in compiling this paper however it may need to be revised in light of the release of any new data. It contains original data that refers in places to the former BMAP pre-local Government reform. Where possible data has also been included which relates to the new Belfast Council area which provides a more up-to date statistical evidence base.

2.0 Policy Context

Regional Policy

- 2.1 The current regional policy and guidance sets out priorities for the approach to the location and density of new housing, and the assessment and monitoring of housing need, housing land supply and affordable housing. They established the framework for spatial planning as well as guidance for undertaking local planning for Belfast and its neighbouring Councils.
- 2.2 The regional policy context is provided by the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and regional Planning Policy Statements. A summary of these documents and how they pertain to plan making and housing allocation is provided in the following sections.

Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

- 2.3 The RDS 2035 prepared by the Department for Regional Development (published 15th March 2012) is the spatial strategy for the Executive and provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors. The RDS was prepared under the Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. The RDS acknowledges that housing is a key driver of physical, economic and social change and emphasises the importance of the relationship between the location of housing, jobs, facilities, services and infrastructure and must be taken into account when preparing a local development plan.
- 2.4 The RDS introduced the “Plan, Monitor and Manage” approach to providing housing requirements which seeks to ensure that plans become more sustainable, balanced and integrated. The RDS provides strategic guidance through Regional Guidance (RG) and Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG) under the 3 sustainable development themes of the Economy, Society and Environment. It advises that Sustainable communities are places where people want to live, work and play, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all. The guidance set out below supports the aims of ‘A Shared Future’ published by the office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in March 2005 and recognises the need to:-
- **RG6 Strengthen community cohesion** by developing integrated services and facilitates, fostering a stronger community spirit and sense of place and encouraging mixed housing development;
 - **RG7 Support urban and rural renaissance** by developing innovative ways to bring forward under-utilised land and buildings, particularly for mixed use development, promoting regeneration in areas of social need, ensuring that environmental quality in urban areas of social need, is improved and maintained with adequate provisions of green infrastructure, and reducing noise pollution.
 - **RG8 Manage housing growth** to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development by promoting more sustainable development within existing urban areas

and ensuring an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of everyone and using a broad evaluation framework to assist judgements on the allocation of housing growth.

- 2.5 The RDS seeks to promote more sustainable housing development within existing urban areas by encouraging compact urban forms. Housing land will be identified in Development Plans to ensure an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of everyone taking account of existing vacant housing and need identified in the Housing Needs Assessment/ Housing Market Analysis (this includes land for social and intermediate housing such as shared ownership and affordable housing).
- 2.6 The RDS recognises that there are significant opportunities for new housing on appropriate vacant and underutilised land, and sets a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located in appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprints of settlements greater than 5,000 population.

Regional Strategic Objectives

- 2.7 The regional strategic objectives for housing in settlements, consistent with regional guidance in the RDS, are to:
- manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development;
 - support urban and rural renaissance; and
 - strengthen community cohesion.

Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs)

- 2.8 The RDS 2035 identifies regional housing needs through Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) across Northern Ireland. HGIs have been produced as a guide for those preparing development plans. These figures are an estimate of the new dwelling requirement between 2012-2025 for each District Council area.
- 2.9 The HGIs were updated in April 2016 to reflect the new District boundaries following local government reform. These are calculated on the basis of 2012-based population projections and provide an indicator for each district between 2012-2025. It is important to note that these latest HGIs published by NISRA are based on the 2012-based population projection.
- 2.10 The methodology for calculation of the HGI's takes account of vacant stock (and second homes) data as set out in the Northern Ireland House Condition Survey 2011. Appendix A sets out more details in respect of vacancy/unfitness in the Belfast area.

Figure 1: NI Housing Growth Indicators 2012-2025

Local Government District	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Number of Households 2025	Second Homes 2025	Vacant Stock 2025	Net Conversions, Closures and Demolitions 2012 to 2025	New Stock Estimate 2025	Housing Stock 2012	Projected New Dwelling Requirement 2012 to 2025
Antrim & Newtownabbey	58,400	400	4,600	200	63,600	56,400	7,200
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	86,600	800	5,400	2,200	95,000	80,600	14,400
Belfast	147,900	2,200	15,300	2,300	167,700	154,000	13,700
Causeway Coast & Glens	57,300	3,700	5,600	2,100	68,700	62,000	6,700
Derry & Strabane	59,400	300	3,800	900	64,300	59,300	5,000
Fermanagh & Omagh	45,700	900	4,500	600	51,700	47,200	4,500
Lisburn & Castlereagh	60,400	500	3,500	700	65,000	55,400	9,600
Mid & East Antrim	57,800	100	4,100	800	62,800	57,400	5,400
Mid Ulster	55,200	100	3,800	1,500	60,600	51,100	9,500
Newry, Mourne & Down	70,900	900	5,100	500	77,400	66,500	10,900
North Down & Ards	68,800	1,000	4,900	1,100	75,800	68,700	7,100
Northern Ireland	768,300	10,800	60,400	13,000	852,500	758,500	94,000

Cells are rounded to the nearest 100. Calculations have been worked out using unrounded data. Therefore summing individual figures in the table add to total.

Source: Department for Infrastructure

Spatial Framework Guidance (RDS 2035)

- 2.11 The RDS Spatial Framework consists of 5 key components including the Metropolitan Area centred on Belfast. The BMUA is the major conurbation in Northern Ireland with a thriving retail service, administration, cultural and educational centre in the City of Belfast. It is the Region's largest employment centre. In 2008, it had a population of 268,000 which had been in decline. A sustained approach to regeneration has changed the city centre and brought dramatic improvements. The last decade has seen significant economic growth and around 26,000 jobs have been created in the Belfast City Council area. The evidence indicates however that over 50% of those who work in Belfast live outside it.
- 2.12 Many of those living in Belfast have not benefitted from the economic growth. There are pockets of deprivation and significantly almost 35% of the population, (around 95,000 people) experience deprivation. Deprivation levels in Belfast vary considerably. The majority of deprived areas are situated in the west and north of Belfast. In contrast, Belfast also has some of the least deprived of Northern Ireland.
- 2.13 Policy SFG2 focuses on growing the population of the city of Belfast. Population growth has been unevenly distributed in the region with the fastest growth rates in villages and intermediate settlements over the period 2001-08. Belfast has experienced a 1% population rise in contrast to more than a 10% expansion in the West and South of the region. Northern Ireland's population is projected to reach 1.946 million by 2023 with a marked increase in the size of the population at older ages. The number of people at pensionable age is estimated to increase by 40% to 2025. The most deprived areas and the least deprived areas continue to be the most urbanised. Key to population growth will be the provision of housing to meet the full range of need. The housing growth indicators are calculated on the basis of growing the population of Belfast, not on the projected population.¹
- 2.14 There are significant opportunities for more jobs to be created and it will be important to have a wide variety of house types for wishing to live and work in the City. It is estimated that between 46,430 - 68,800 jobs could be created between 2014 - 2035 (UU, 2016) depending on the growth scenario. Most of these jobs will be in service and office sectors and they will be attracted to the City by the availability of a skilled workforce and the quality of life which the City has to offer.
- 2.15 There are important factors to be taken into account that could be affected by the expansion of Belfast's population, such as internationally important conservation sites, increased recreational use on the Belfast Lough, increased demands on water resources and waste disposal. Housing growth must be appropriately managed to avoid adverse effects on these sites.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 'Planning for Sustainable Development'

- 2.16 The Department of the Environment's 'Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland' - Planning for Sustainable Development (SPPS), was published in final form on 22nd September 2015. This publication consolidates over twenty separate publications into

¹ Figures shown are based on the old Belfast Council Area

one document under the reformed two-tier planning system. The provisions of the SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans, and are also material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

- 2.17 The SPPS recognises that good quality housing is a fundamental human need that plays a significant role in shaping our lives and our communities. A home is a vital part of people's lives and contributes to creating a safe, healthy and prosperous society. The SPPS states that the planning system can play a positive and supporting role in the delivery of homes to meet the full range of housing needs of society, within the wider framework of sustainable development. The policy approach must be:-
- to facilitate an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of everyone;
 - to promote more sustainable housing development within existing urban areas; and
 - to provide mixed housing development with homes in a range of sizes and tenures.
- 2.18 This approach to housing will support the need to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services, and the creation of more balanced sustainable communities.
- 2.19 In preparing Local Development Plans (LDPs) councils should bring forward a strategy for housing, together with appropriate policies and proposals that must reflect the policy approach of the SPPS, tailored to the specific circumstances of the plan area. Planning authorities must deliver increased housing density without town cramming, sustainable forms of development, good design and balanced communities.
- 2.20 The SPPS advises that planning has a role to play in helping to improve the health and well-being of people by avoiding development that will result in a deterioration in air or water quality; safeguarding and facilitating open space, sport and outdoor recreation, managing the adverse impacts of noise and nuisance by influencing the location, layout and design of new development.
- 2.21 The SPPS also recognises that the planning process has an important role to play in the delivery of good quality housing that supports the creation of more balanced communities. Balanced communities can contribute positively to the creation and enhancement of shared spaces and vice-versa.

Sequential Approach

- 2.22 The SPPS advises that a sequential approach should be applied when determining suitable sites for housing in the plan, with previously used land considered first and major expansion and new settlements as last option.

Figure 2: Application of a sequential approach and identification of suitable sites*Source: SPPS***Planning Policy Statement 7: 'Quality Residential Environments' (PPS 7)**

2.23 PPS7 sets out DOE's Planning policies for achieving quality in new residential development and advises on the treatment of this issue in development plans. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development and the Quality Initiative. The Statement, together with the advice contained in associated Supplementary Planning Guidance documents, including Creating Places and Living Places, complements existing Government policy and initiatives aimed at achieving attractive and sustainable places through better design:

2.24 The main objectives of this Statement are:

- To promote an integrated approach to achieving sustainable and quality residential environments.
- To promote quality residential development that:
 - creates places for people which are attractive, locally distinctive and appropriate to their surroundings, safe, convenient, adaptable and easy to maintain;
 - respects and enhances features of value and local character and promotes biodiversity; and
 - reduces reliance on the private car, supports movement by pedestrians and cyclists, provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and connects well with the wider locality.
 - To promote the comprehensive planning and development of residential areas and ensure that adequate information accompanies planning applications which will enable the delivery of an improved design quality.

- To ensure that adequate provision is made for infrastructure and appropriate local neighbourhood facilities as an integral part of residential development.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (Addendum): Residential Extensions and Alterations

2.25 3.24 This addendum to PPS7 provides an additional planning policy for the extension and/or alteration of a dwelling house or flat, including those in multiple occupancy. The key objectives of this Addendum are:

- To promote high quality in the design of residential extensions and alterations; and
- To ensure that such works are sympathetic to the original property;
- Respect the character of the local area; and
- Protect neighbouring residential amenity

2.26 Annex A of the statement sets out detailed design guidance for extensions and alterations.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (Addendum): Safeguarding the Character of established Residential Areas

2.27 The primary purpose of this addendum is to reinforce existing planning policy on housing within urban areas and introducing additional provisions to protect areas of established residential character, environmental quality and local amenity. It also sets out regional policy on the conversion of existing buildings to flats or apartments. In addition, the addendum contains policy to promote greater use of permeable paving within new residential developments to reduce the risk of flooding from surface water run-off. The key consideration is to continue to ensure that new residential schemes are sensitive in design terms to people living in existing neighbourhoods and are in harmony with the local character of established residential areas, villages and smaller settlements.

2.28 Annex A sets out the space standards for new apartments and dwellings.

Planning Policy Statement 12: Housing in Settlements

2.29 The RDS is complemented by the DOE's SPPS and Planning Policy Statements. Planning Policy Statements (PPS) set out the policies of the Department of the Environment's (Department) on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. The most relevant of PPSs in relation to housing is PPS 12 'Housing in Settlements' (PPS 12). PPS 12 has been prepared to assist in the implementation of the RDS to guide the future pattern on housing by managing future housing growth and distribution, support urban renaissance and achieve balanced communities. The policy objectives of PPS12 are:

- To manage housing growth in response to changing housing need;
- To direct and manage future housing growth to achieve more sustainable patterns of residential development;
- To promote a drive to provide more housing within existing urban areas;
- To encourage an increase in the density of urban housing appropriate to the scale and design of the cities and towns of Northern Ireland; and
- To encourage the development of balanced local communities.

2.30 The PPS states that the development plan process is the main vehicle for assessing future housing land requirements and that housing allocation in development plans will be determined by:

- (a) Application of the HGIs;
- (b) Allowance for existing commitments (including dwellings already built);
- (c) Use of urban capacity studies;
- (d) Application of a sequential approach and identification of suitable sites for housing;
- (e) Housing needs assessment;
- (f) Allowance for windfall housing sites; and
- (g) Residual housing need.

Policy HS 3 (Amended) Travellers Accommodation (PPS12)

2.31 Travellers have distinctive needs which will be assessed as part of the local housing needs assessment undertaken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Where a need is identified and a development plan is under preparation, the plan should identify a suitable site(s).

Planning Policy Statement 21: ‘Sustainable Development in the Countryside’

2.32 PPS21 sets out the following policy objectives:

- to manage growth in the countryside to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development that meet the essential needs of a vibrant rural community;
- to conserve the landscape and natural resources of the rural area and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development and from the actual or potential effects of pollution;
- to facilitate development necessary to achieve a sustainable rural economy; including appropriate farm diversification and other economic activity; and
- to promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development in the countryside.

DCAN 8 Housing in Existing Urban Areas

2.33 Development Control Advice Notes (DCANs) represent non-statutory planning guidance which is intended to supplement, elucidate and exemplify policy documents, including PPSs and development plans. The DCAN provides advice on how to ensure that urban and environmental quality is maintained, amenity preserved, and privacy respected when proposals are being considered for new housing development within existing urban areas.

Creating Places: Achieving Quality in Residential Environments

2.34 This guide describes the contributions to quality and sustainability that developers in Northern Ireland will be expected to make through the design of new residential developments. It seeks to ensure that what is designed and built today will be cherished by both present and future generations. The guide is for use by all those involved in the design of new residential developments and the rejuvenation of existing housing areas

Living Places - An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland

- 2.35 This Urban Stewardship and Design Guide aims to clearly establish the key principles behind good place making. It seeks to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing (stewardship) and making (design) urban places, with a view to raising standards across Northern Ireland. The focus of the guide is urban areas, by which is meant all of our cities, towns, villages and neighbourhoods. It recognises the wider economic, cultural and community benefits of achieving excellence in the stewardship and design of these important places, be they existing or newly proposed.

Local Policy

- 2.36 The current planning policy context at a local level is complex as a result of a successful legal challenge to the adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015. There are therefore five existing development plans that relate to parts of the Belfast district, alongside draft BMAP. All of these documents will be superseded at the adoption of the new Belfast LDP 2035.

Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001

- 2.37 The current development plan for the majority of the Belfast district is the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001, which was adopted in December 1989. The area covered by the plan included the whole of the administrative area of the former Belfast City Council area, together with the urban parts of the former district council areas of Castlereagh, Lisburn and Newtownabbey as well as Greenisland and Holywood.
- 2.38 The purpose of the BUAP was to establish physical development policies for this broad urban area up to 2001, clarifying the extent and location of development and providing a framework for public and private agencies in their investment decisions relating to land use. Although alterations were made in 1996, the BUAP is now largely out-of-date and was formally superseded by the BMAP in September 2014. However, BMAP was quashed as a result of a judgement in the court of appeal delivered on 18 May 2017, meaning that the BUAP 2001 remains the statutory development plan for most of the council's area.

The Lisburn Area Plan 2001

- 2.39 The change in council boundary as a result of the local government reform on 1 April 2015, and the subsequent quashing of BMAP, means that the Lisburn Area Plan 2001 remains the statutory development plan for a small portion of Belfast's district around Dunmurry. Adopted on 4 July 2001, the Lisburn Area Plan sought to establish physical development policies for Lisburn and its surroundings up to 2001. However, as work on the development of BMAP had commenced at the time of adoption, an element of provision had been incorporated so that the area's reasonable housing development needs could continue to be met with some certainty until such time as the successor BMAP was in place.

Lagan Valley Regional Park Local Plan 2005

- 2.40 The quashing of BMAP also means that the Lagan Valley Regional Park Local Plan (adopted in 1993) was re-instated as the statutory development plan for the Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP). It sets out the strategy and policies associated with the protection and enhancement of the natural and man-made heritage of the LVRP. Its main objectives are to conserve the landscape quality and features of the Lagan Valley and to enhance recreational use by the public.

Belfast Harbour Local Area Plan 1990-2005

- 2.41 The quashing of BMAP also means that the Belfast Harbour Area Local Plan (adopted in 1991) was also re-instated as the statutory development plan for Belfast Lough and its foreshores, encompassing land east of the Belfast to Larne railway line and west of the Sydenham By-Pass and the Belfast to Bangor road. It was prepared within the strategy set out in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 and underlines the importance of the harbour area to Belfast and to the Northern Ireland economy.

North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995

- 2.42 A small section of the Belfast District at Knocknagoney was subsumed into Belfast as part of local government reform in 2015. The quashing of BMAP means that this area reverts back to the original North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (adopted 1989).

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015

- 2.43 Although formally adopted in 2014, this process of final BMAP adoption was declared unlawful as a result of a judgement in the court of appeal delivered on 18 May 2017. This means the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001 and the other Development Plans provides the statutory plan context for the area. However, BUAP was published in 1990, nearly 30 years ago. The Belfast City Council Plan Area has undergone massive transformation since then, particularly in the city centre. The formal development plans which apply are dated and silent on many of the planning issues pertinent to needs of current planning decision making. In recognition of this unique circumstance and taking account of the short term transitional period in advance of the adoption of the Local Policies Plan it is important to provide clarity in relation to the application of planning policy.
- 2.44 Draft BMAP, in its most recent, post-examination form remains a significant material consideration in future planning decisions. It was at the most advanced stage possible prior to formal adoption. Draft BMAP referred to throughout this document therefore refers to that version. However, in preparing this document the council has also had regard to the provisions of the draft BMAP which was published in 2004, the objections which were raised as part of the plan process and the Planning Appeals Commission Inquiry report.
- 2.45 The SPSS's transitional arrangements provide for continuity until such times as a new LDP for the whole of their council area is adopted to ensure continuity in planning policy for taking planning decisions.

- 2.46 BUAP contains less zonings or designations than draft BMAP and delineates a city centre boundary which has expanded significantly since then by virtue of the application of Draft BMAP. The council therefore intends to use a number of the existing designations contained in the draft BMAP, insofar as it relates to the Belfast City Council Plan Area, to form the basis of decision making until the LDP is adopted in its entirety. A list of the existing draft boundaries and designations is contained in appendix A.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015

- 2.47 This is a development plan for Belfast City Council area prepared under the provisions of Part III of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. The Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 was published in November 2004, and set out criteria for Conversion of Buildings for Multiple Occupation under policy HOU6. Representations received during public consultation on BMAP suggested the policy did not go far enough in addressing the issues relating to HMO's and, in particular, lacked a spatial dimension. The Subject Plan was prepared in response to these representations, together with emerging concerns regarding the impact of HMO's.
- 2.48 The Subject Plan identified 22 HMO policy areas, within which permission would be granted for HMOs where the number of HMOs would not as a result exceed 30% of all dwelling units. Only 2 of the 22 areas identified were under 30% HMOs at the time of the Subject Plan's publication. In addition, 18 HMO Development Nodes were identified where planning permission for HMOs was granted. Outside HMO Policy Areas and Development Nodes, HMO development would only be granted where it would not exceed 10% of dwellings on the road or street.

Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation – Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2.49 In June 2016, the Council introduced Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) in Belfast. It gives extra advice and guidance to developers, the public and planning officers when working on planning applications for PBMSA developments in the City. The guidance is structured into six planning issues, including:
1. **Location and accessibility:** the development should be at a location that is easily accessible to university or college campuses by sustainable transport modes.
 2. **Design quality:** the layout, design and facilities provided within a development should be of high standards.
 3. **Impact and scale:** the development should be designed in a way that does not conflict with properties close by or the general amenity of the surrounding area.
 4. **Management:** the development has appropriate management in place to create a positive and safe living environment for students while reducing any potential negative impacts from occupants.
 5. **Need:** there is a need for the type of accommodation proposed.
 6. **Planning agreements:** planning agreements and related developer contributions may be required for PBMSA where conditions alone cannot secure planning.

Other non-statutory documents

Community Plan (Belfast Agenda)

- 2.50 The Council took on responsibility for community planning in 2015 as a result of local government reform. It is a process whereby councils, statutory bodies and communities themselves work together in partnership to develop and implement a shared vision for their area, to make sure that public services work together with communities to deliver real improvements for local people. The plan sets out a joint vision and long-term ambitions for Belfast's future, as well as outlining priorities for action over the next four years.
- 2.51 The vision for Belfast in 2035 set out in the Belfast Agenda is:
“Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone. A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit.”
- 2.52 Delivery of this vision is based on a number of strategic outcomes, together with four bold ambitions to be achieved by 2035, including an additional 66,000 residents living in the city. The LDP is recognised within the Belfast Agenda as one of the key tools available to shape the physical future of Belfast in a sustainable way – including housing. Its development is described as one of several immediate priorities, under the theme of City Development, where it explains that the LDP will be vital to the delivery of the outcomes in the Belfast Agenda.
- 2.53 Councils must take account of their current Community Plan when preparing a Local Development Plan (LDP). The LDP will provide a spatial expression to the community plan, thereby linking public and private sector investment through the land use planning system.

Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy

- 2.54 The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) outlines how the Council aims to grow and regenerate the city core and its surrounding areas to 2030. It recognises that a thriving city centre is vital to the prosperity of the whole city and the region as around two-thirds of all jobs in Belfast are located in and around the city centre.
- 2.55 Eight policies for the city centre provide a vision for the eight areas of intervention considered most essential to Belfast's success. The policies address the universal elements of a thriving city centre as well as challenges and conditions that are unique to Belfast. One of these policies seeks to increase the residential population of the city centre. Five special action areas are identified for the city centre where more intensive plans will be prepared in the form of local master plans identifying specific projects and initiatives along with urban design and transport guidance.

Best Practice Guide for PBMSA

- 2.56 This encourages prospective developers to develop good quality PBMSA in the right locations. The guide explains how new developments can be planned and designed before planning applications are submitted and provides advice in the following eight areas:
1. **Pre-application:** encouraging early engagement with the Council and local communities
 2. **Location:** promoting suitable locations within the city centre
 3. **Policy:** outlining relevant planning policy constraints
 4. **Design:** encouraging good quality, well designed PBMSA in terms of layout, accommodation mix, open space, parking, facilities, waste and recycling, safety and crime prevention and energy reduction
 5. **Impact:** reducing negative effects whilst capturing any positive impacts of PBMSA development
 6. **Management:** ensuring effective management arrangements to deliver a safe and positive environment for students, whilst reducing the risk of negative impacts on the local community
 7. **Need:** ensuring the right balance between meeting student housing needs and preventing an over-supply of PBMSA
 8. **Planning agreement and developer contributions:** summarising issues in relation to PBMSA where the use of planning agreements may be considered.

Framework for Student Housing and Purpose Built Student Accommodation

- 2.57 Published in 2014, the Framework set out the Council's vision and direction for the supply of student housing and PBMSA in Belfast. It contains a criteria-based approach to be applied to proposals for purpose built student accommodation developments in the city, suggesting that planning permission for purpose built student accommodation should only be granted where the five criteria based around proximity, design, management, impact and need are met.

Planning and Place Advice Note on PBMSA in Belfast

- 2.58 In November 2015, the Council adopted an internal Planning and Place Advice Note on PBMSA in Belfast. As a technical guide, the document provides non-statutory planning guidance around the Council's approach to PBMSA to pro-actively encourage good quality development in the right locations. It sets out guidance in relation to six key criteria that will be considered when assessing applications for PBMSA. The document also provides guidance in relation to the use of planning conditions and/or legal planning agreements to mitigate perceived problems, such as noise or anti-social behaviour, etc. arising from student occupation. It builds on the criteria-based approach developed through the earlier work undertaken by the Council prior to becoming the planning authority for the City.

3.0 Recent Studies

- 3.1 To inform the preparation of the LDP, a number of studies were used to provide background data and information relating to housing growth, market analysis, capacity of the urban footprint for new housing and housing monitoring. These studies are presented in the sections below.

Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing in Northern Ireland

- 3.2 In June 2014 the Department for Social Development (DSD) published a consultation document to seek views on options for a scheme to secure developer contributions towards affordable housing in NI. At the same time draft Planning Policy Statement 22 'Affordable Housing' was published by the Department for the Environment (DOE). It stated that the proposed introduction of developer contributions, "...will promote a mix of housing particularly in terms of tenure, price and household composition including families with children, single person households and older people."
- 3.3 Since the publication of the consultation documents in 2014, the planning system has changed significantly, with responsibility for plan making and planning decisions largely passing to 11 new local government districts (LGDs). As neither of these previous documents were ever implemented prior to the transfer, DSD therefore commissioned further independent research in 2015 to provide up to date and Northern Ireland specific evidence on the economic impact of introducing a Developer Contributions Scheme. A report from this study was formally published in December 2015.
- 3.4 The viability testing contained within the study report confirms the relative weakness of the current housing market in Northern Ireland with questions over the viability of developing 100% market housing in many parts of Northern Ireland away from Belfast.
- 3.5 The analysis shows that a developer contribution scheme without any public subsidy would not be viable except in Belfast (and its immediate environs), where some level of contribution should be achievable. This would be more certain with the contribution provided as land rather than on-site units and with the increase in market values that is anticipated. It concludes that a locally defined developer contribution scheme (if one were put in place) should be set out as part of the local development plan process.

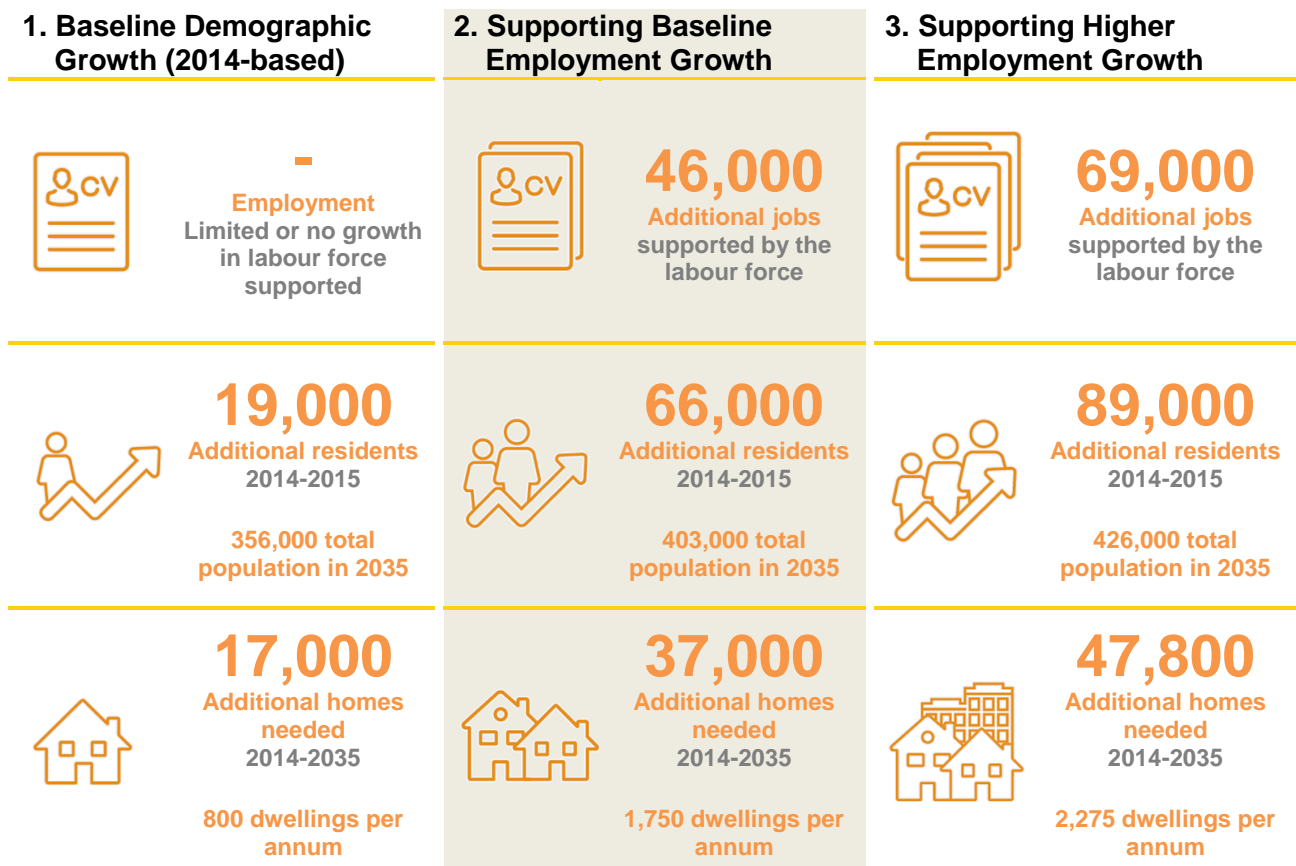
Belfast City Population and Housing Growth Study

- 3.6 The Council commissioned a 'Belfast City Population and Housing Growth Study' in March 2016² to consider the future population and housing growth of Belfast, and present a reasonable range of potential population and household growth scenarios.

² **NB.** *The Belfast City Population and Housing Growth Study completed on behalf of the Council in October 2016 is based on the 2014 population estimates and 2014-based population projections, being the most recent data available at the time.*

- 3.7 This sought to provide a baseline review of factors that will have an impact on future population and household growth in Belfast and, therefore, its need for housing. It provides:
- (a) An overview of the Belfast housing market context;
 - (b) A summary of the demographic picture of Belfast;
 - (c) An overview of the economic context;
 - (d) A range of potential growth scenarios; and
 - (e) An evaluation of the various growth scenarios.
- 3.8 The potential growth scenarios have been subjected to review and evaluation in order to arrive at a recommended position on a reasonable level of population and household growth to be planned for over the period from 2014 to 2035, having regard to the historic demographic, market and economic context of the city.
- 3.9 A full copy of the Study was published alongside the consultation on the Preferred Options Paper.
- 3.10 Three potential growth scenarios were developed as part of the 'Belfast City Population and Housing Growth Study', namely:
- **Scenario 1 - Adjusted Demographic Growth** - a demographic trend-based scenario based on trends recorded over the past two years (2012 – 2014), which exceed the scale of growth implied by longer term historic trends but are considered to capture positive and improving demographic trends in the city, including a declining net outflow of residents and a continued growth in employment;
 - **Scenario 2 - Supporting Baseline Employment Growth** - illustrating the scale of population and labour-force growth that may be necessary to support baseline levels of employment growth forecast by Ulster University (UU), based on prudent assumptions on labour-force behaviour; and
 - **Scenario 3 - Supporting Higher Employment Growth** - as above, based on higher levels of employment growth forecast by UU.
- 3.11 Variant levels of population, housing and employment growth are associated with each of these scenarios, with the key differences over the full plan period (2014 – 2035) summarised in the following table.

Figure 3: Future Growth Scenarios



Source: Belfast City Population and Housing Growth Study, 2016

Evaluating the Growth Scenarios

- 3.12 The Growth Study considered and tested each scenario in the context of their likely demographic and economic implications. This enabled a considered view to be reached on an appropriate and reasonable level of housing to be provided for through the emerging Belfast LDP. Scenario 2 was identified as the preferred option. While the relationship between employment and population is complex, providing for a higher level of housing growth would be more likely to grow the labour-force, enabling the attraction of new working-age residents and the retention of those existing residents who would otherwise move elsewhere in NI or overseas. It is considered reasonable and credible to plan for a growth in Belfast's economy at least in line with the baseline scenario developed by UU (Scenario 2), enabling a continued growth in the city's economy as in recent years.
- 3.13 A reasonable and credible level of population and household growth sits somewhere between Scenario 1 and Scenario 2, with the evidence implying that this should be nearer to Scenario 2. The provision of between 1,600 – 1,800 dwellings per annum over the plan period appears reasonable in light of these considerations and the latest information available.
- 3.14 The implications of planning for a level of growth within this range are summarised in Figure 3 above, based on the modelling underpinning Scenario 2 (1,750dpa) which sits in the middle of the identified range.

Size and Type of Housing Needed, Addendum to the Belfast City Housing Growth Options Report, December 2017

3.15 Following consultation on the POP, where confirmation of support for the preferred option was attained, the council commissioned additional work to provide detail on the size and type of housing likely to be required under the scenario recommended in the growth study. Its key findings are set out as follows:

- Around one third of additional households forming in Belfast are expected to contain a single resident, with a similar proportion containing two adults without children;
- The majority (89%) of additional households are not expected to contain children, although modelling indicates that around one in four (23%) households will contain at least one child;
- Modelling indicates that 30% of additional households will require flats, with the remaining 70% requiring houses;
- Broad benchmarks would suggest that around 40% of people would be expected to require properties of any type with 1 or 2 bedrooms, with the residual 60% requiring at least 3 bedrooms, however flexibility will be required to take account of local market need and demand fluctuations;
- The private rented sector accommodates around one in five Belfast households, that is considered by NIHE will continue to play an important role in Belfast's housing market, influenced by wider economic factors.
- Industry research recognises the preference for family sized housing with three or four bedrooms, with families typically averse to smaller flats due to space limitations. Meeting family need in Belfast will require a balanced profile of housing development.
- Around one in five Belfast households (18%) was occupied solely by older residents at 2011 Census. Older persons in Belfast will increase by more than half over the plan period, which will generate growth in the number of older resident households and specialist accommodation such as care homes.

NIHE Housing Market Analysis (HMA)

3.16 The Housing Market Analysis outlines that over the 15 year period 2017-2032, there will be a need for 940 social homes per year in Belfast, with 630 intermediate homes per year also required. Single and small families make up the majority of households in housing stress. There were 542 social housing units completed across Belfast in 2014/2015 and 434 completed in 2015/2016. Welfare reforms are likely to increase the demand for smaller social housing units, together with the predominance of single person and small family households on the waiting list.

3.17 The above figures show that affordable housing will remain a very important component of the future housing market in Belfast over the period of the LDP. Land availability, budgetary pressures and an uncertain economic context post Brexit will make delivery of the numbers required challenging. The HMA also acknowledges the implications of welfare reform on social housing and the continued role of PRS in the local market.

NIHE Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)

- 3.18 The Housing Executive through their Housing Investment Plan 2015-2019 have indicated that the population is projected to increase and older people will represent a higher proportion of the population. Household formation is currently lower than previously projected. The rate of new house building is lower than the annual requirement as set out in the RDS 2035.
- 3.19 Census 2011 demonstrates the continued desire of residents to own their own home. It also highlights the significance of the private rented sector which increased from 8% in 2001 to 20% in 2011 across Belfast. Private sector sales have also increased despite tighter mortgage lending conditions and negative equity still remaining a problem for many. Projected new social housing need for Belfast is nearly 6,000 units over the five year period 2015-2020.

Belfast Housing Land Availability (Housing Monitor)

- 3.20 As part of the preparation of a new LDP, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for NI (September 2015) outlines a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to ensure that, as a minimum, a 5 year supply of land for housing is maintained. It states that monitoring should be an ongoing process with annual reporting and review. This provides valuable information on annual building rates, housing output relative to planned densities and also gives an indication of the validity of estimated windfall predictions. It can also help to identify where a shortfall in potential land supply might exist and can inform house-builders on the availability of land that may be suitable for housing.
- 3.21 Whilst monitoring has been on-going across Belfast since the late 1990s, under the responsibilities of the former Department for Environment's (DOE) Planning Service, the future Housing Monitor in Belfast will operate with a baseline position of 31 March 2015, the date at which responsibility for planning transferred to the Council and also when the district boundaries were revised, eliminating direct comparisons to historic DOE monitoring outputs.

Figure 4: Housing Monitor 2016/17 summary table

Settlement / Area	Area Developed (Hectares)		Units Complete		Available Potential (Hectares)	Available Potential (Dwelling Units)
	01-04-16 to 31-03-17	01-04-15 to 31-03-17	01-04-16 to 31-03-17	01-04-15 to 31-03-17		
Urban Footprint	14.5	29.4	663	1,161	359.1	21,517
<i>Units within the Urban Footprint (%)</i>	-	-	93.0%	93.0%	-	92.9%
Greenfield	2.8	5.1	50	87	66.4	1,650
Belfast City Total	17.3	34.5	713	1,248	425.5	23,167

- 3.22 The information collated allows a clear view of the overall progress in meeting the housing objectives of the plan and in identifying issues likely to require intervention. For example, a need to release phased housing sites in order to maintain a 5 year supply of available housing land, or the release of a site providing for a particular housing need.
- 3.23 The most recent housing monitor figures for the period 01/04/16 to 31/03/17 outline that 17.3 hectares of land was developed in Belfast city, for a total of 713 units, leaving a remaining potential of 425.5 hectares for an estimated 23,167 dwelling units (refer to figure 4 above).

UCS - Urban Capacity Study

- 3.24 The urban capacity study involves an assessment of the potential for future housing and employment growth within the urban footprint, including the capacity for different types and densities of housing.
- 3.25 In terms of housing, the urban capacity study takes account of housing development opportunities arising from previously developed land, infill sites, conversion of existing buildings and possible changes of land uses. Consideration is given to the type of housing and density appropriate to each site in order to assess the number of housing units likely to be generated.
- 3.26 In regard to potential changes of land use, it is noted that the study identifies over 1.1m sq.m. of employment land available, which rises to over 1.9m sq.m. if all mixed use housing/employment sites are used for employment use. Draft policy EC2 of the Plan states that a total of 550,000 sq.m. of gross developable land shall be made available for employment use over the Plan period to meet the needs of the city. This therefore leaves a significant excess of employment land that may be suitable for residential use.
- 3.27 The study ensures that the most suitable sites are proposed for allocation for housing and that all sites allocated for housing development will have been robustly tested for suitability, availability and deliverability. This includes consideration of infrastructure constraints and the phasing of development to align with future infrastructure investment.
- 3.28 The study helps ensure that priority is given to the reuse of previously developed or 'brownfield' land within the existing urban footprint, before considering the need for extensions to the settlement of the Belfast Urban Area. The RDS provides a target of 60% of all new housing being located on appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprint.

4.0 Draft Plan Strategy Policy Approaches

Housing Requirements

- 4.01 The LDP is required to identify and allocate a supply of housing land that is sufficient to meet the population growth projections for the Belfast district. Preferred option LP1 set out the general approach to be used when considering where the level of housing proposed should be located. As such, it helped to address the regional strategic aspiration contained within the RDS and SPPS to deliver increased housing density without town cramming and the RDS target of 60% new housing to be delivered on 'brownfield' land.
- 4.02 In the draft plan strategy, preferred option LP1 has been divided into two separate policies – HOU1 and SP1. The housing numbers presented in policy HOU1 are informed by the SPPS requirement to set out the overall housing provision for each settlement over the plan period. HOU1 includes indicative annual rates of housing delivery which will assist in promoting the sustainable management of waste and the efficient use of water resources over the plan period. Importantly, it is also consistent with the 'plan, monitor and manage' approach of the SPPS and is particularly important in the context of a growing population and existing infrastructure constraints that must be carefully managed.
- 4.03 The **Belfast City Population and Housing Growth Study** concluded that '*a reasonable and credible level of population and household growth sits somewhere between scenario 1 and 2.....with the evidence implying that this should be nearer to scenario 2*' (supporting baseline economic growth) - scenario 2 would require 37,000 new homes over the period 2014-2035 (21 years). This equates to **26,430** units over the 15 year plan period (2020-2035).
- 4.04 However this figure has been adjusted to account for any variance in housing provision in the 6 years preceding the plan period. Figure 5 outlines the annual figures as attained from the Housing Monitor – the shortfall to the POP housing growth figures are set out giving a total shortfall of over 6,400 units. Adding this to the 26,430 units required to support baseline economic growth gives a total requirement of **32,872** over the plan period.

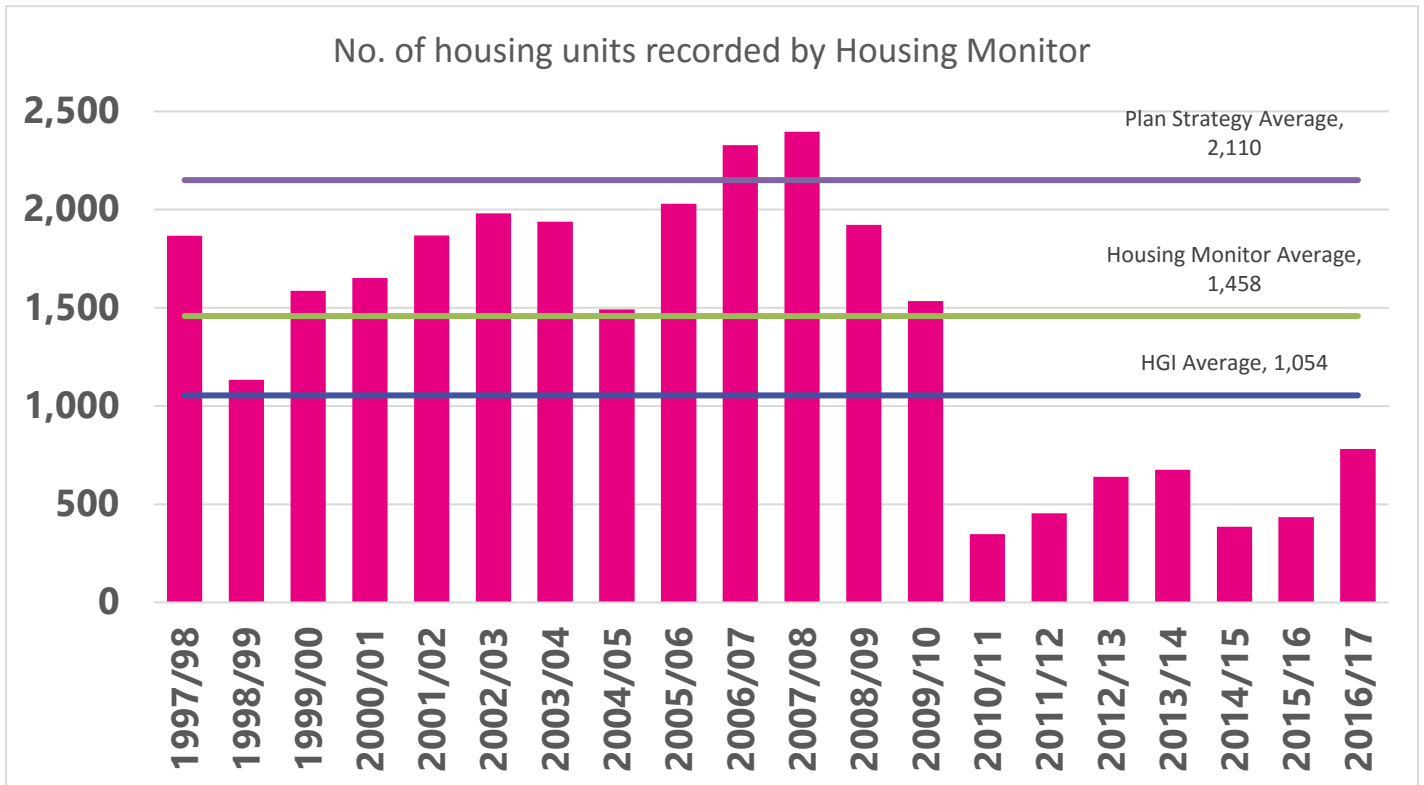
Figure 5: Housing Monitor annual delivery rates and shortfall to HGI and POP (e: est)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018e	2019e	Total
Housing Monitor Delivery	675	386	555	714	850	950	4130
Shortfall to HGI	379	668	499	340	204	104	2194
Shortfall to LDP POP	1087	1376	1207	1048	912	812	6442

- 4.05 Although the housing numbers are ambitious, Figure 6 below shows that in 2006/07 and 2007/08, before the economic crash, Belfast achieved house building levels in excess of the Draft Plan Strategy average and approached 2,000 units in four other years. Note that the figures pre-2015 have been adjusted taking into account the extended Belfast district

boundary as part of the Review of Public Administration. As noted in the POP consultation report, there are also cross boundary implications arising from the effective housing market area, which will be addressed through liaison with NIHE and neighbouring authorities.

Figure 6: Historic house building rates versus Plan Strategy, HGI and Housing Monitor annual averages



4.06 The high level **Urban Capacity Study** was prepared by Arup on behalf of Belfast City Council to demonstrate the feasibility of supplying sufficient land to accommodate the level of housing growth proposed. This study used the existing urban footprint as a basis for assessing sites for development. Key character areas were identified and both committed and new sites identified in these areas. The suitability, availability and achievability of the sites was also assessed at a high level and the yield determined based on character area, with previously approved average densities applied from the Housing Monitor.

Figure 7: UCS housing numbers

	Housing (units)				
	Committed Sites(A)	New sites		Total	
		Housing sites(B)	Housing / Employment sites(C)	Just Housing Sites(A+B)	All (100%) Housing (A+B+C)
City Centre	5,280	431	4,538	5,711	10,249
Titanic Quarter	2,637			2,637	2,637
Inner City	2,008	994	372	3,002	3,374
Wider City	4,997	2,095	48	7,092	7,140
Arterial Routes	2,807	1,034	110	3,841	3,951
Strategic Centres	1,269	64	0	1,333	1,333
Whole City	18,998	4,618	5,068	23,616	28,684

4.07 The headline figures in the UCS are presented in Figure 7 above. As can be seen, the city centre has scope to achieve over 10,000 units, with a total overall yield of 28,684. However this assumes that mixed use sites will all be built out with 100% housing. Taking a more realistic 70/30 ratio of housing to employment on mixed use sites still offers potential for over 8,000 units in the city centre. Applying a 70/30 ratio across the city overall gives a total yield of **27,163** units.

4.08 It must be noted the above figures are estimates only and that more detailed site appraisals will be required to determine potential yields at Local Policies Plan stage. There are also a number of other factors which would result in increased yield above the total figure outlined:

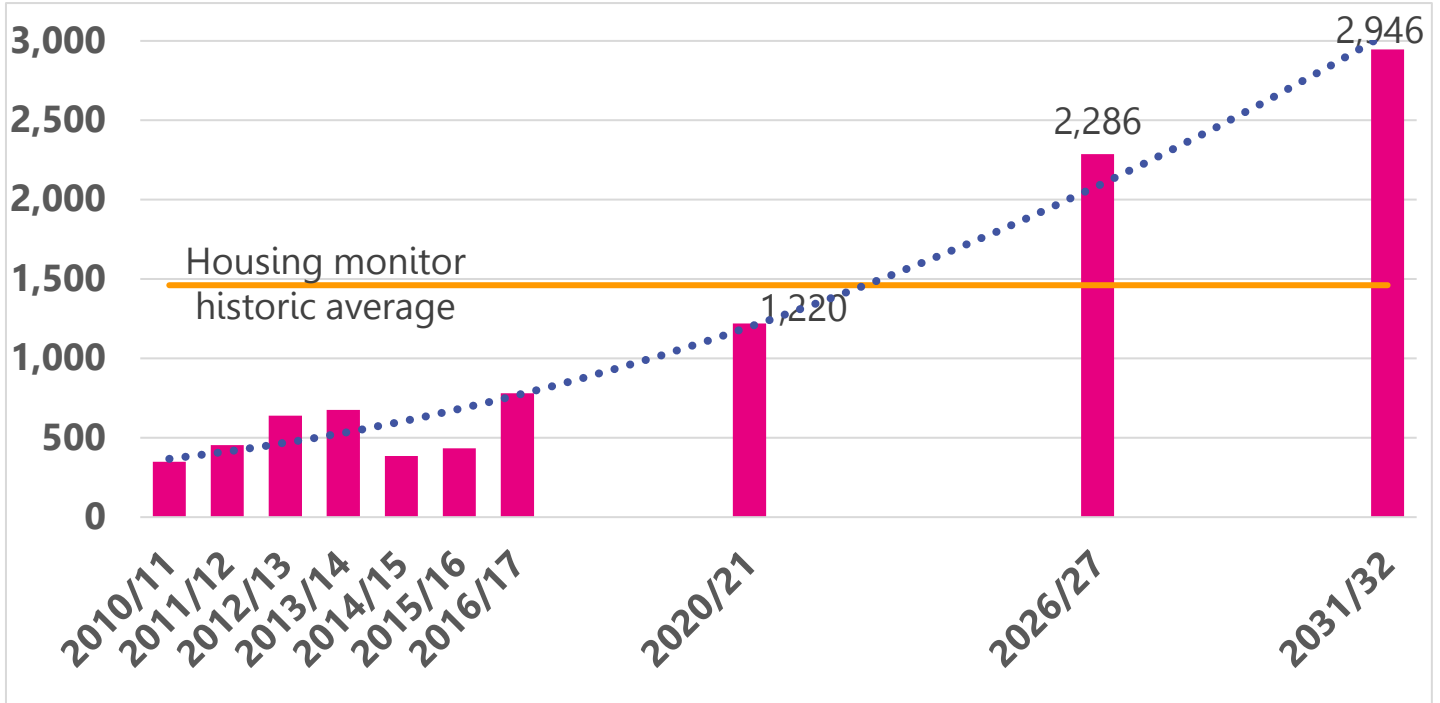
- The figure above excludes windfall allowance for sites less than 5 units of **1,410** units over the plan period.
- Allowance for windfall sites above 5 units has not been included in the capacity figures. This is estimated to be around **600** units over the plan period.
- The UCS excluded sites from outside the urban footprint as these were deemed to be an absolute constraint for the purposes of the study (despite some of these sites already having planning approval) – these amount to a potential yield of over **2,100** units.
- The UCS did not take account of other potential sources, such as vacant upper floors, green spaces, a ‘call for sites’ process, or the potential to re-zone employment land.
- Given the oversupply of employment lands and the undersupply of housing, mixed sites in outer Belfast are more likely to incorporate a higher proportion of housing.

Adding the figures above together gives a potential yield of over **31,200** units.

4.09 Indicative annual rates of delivery phased over 5 year periods in line with the total housing requirement presented in policy HOU1 (31,660) gives the following trajectory shown in

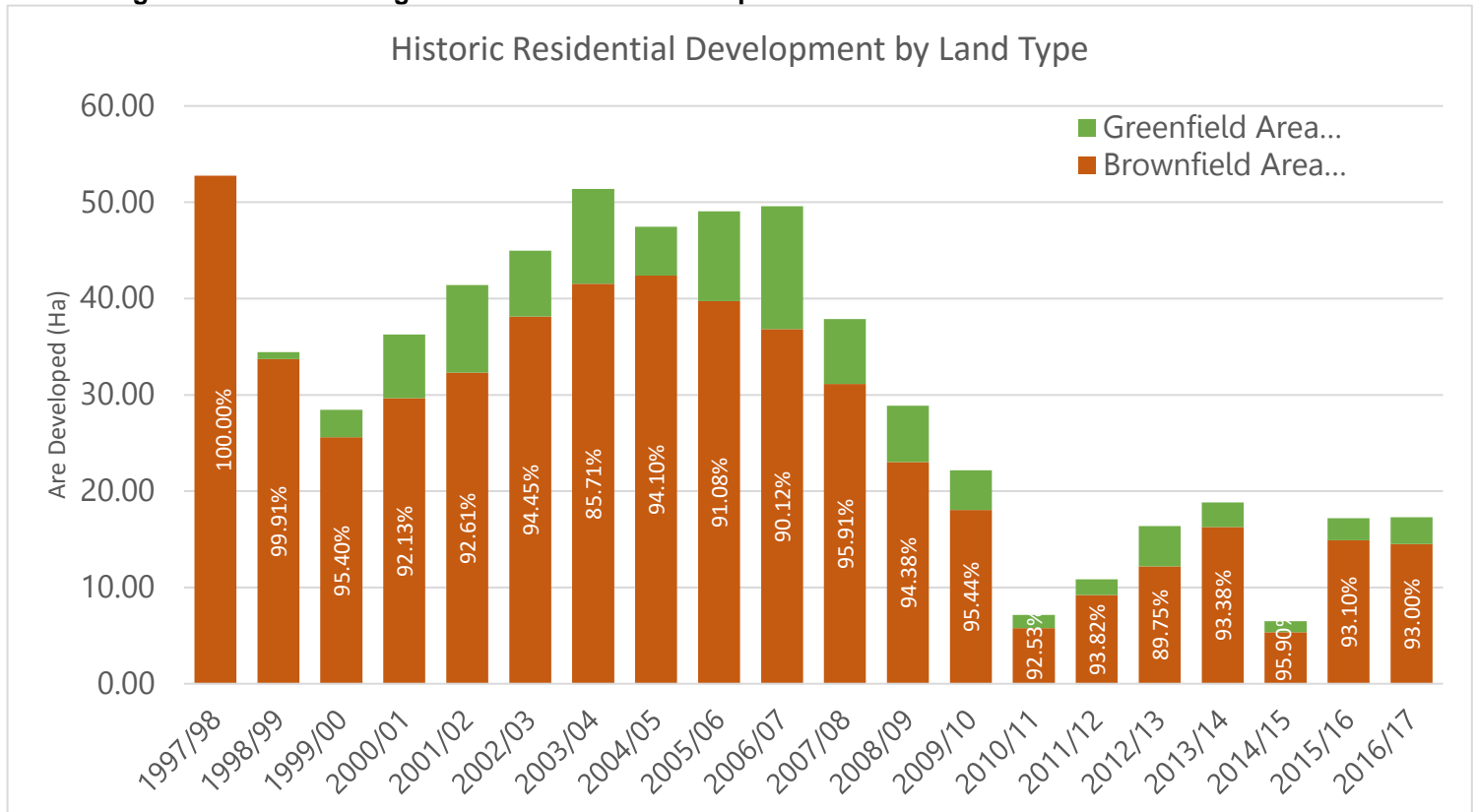
figure 8 below. As can be seen, this would mean approximately 2,900 units per annum in the final years of the plan period. The annual rate begins with a low base in 2020 which also takes account of infrastructure constraints.

Figure 8: Projected house building rates over plan period to meet growth targets



Brownfield Development

4.10 The RDS sets the target of 60% new housing to be located on appropriate brownfield sites within the urban footprint of settlements greater than 5,000 population. Figure 9 below shows the type of land on which housing has taken place in Belfast since 1997/98 according to the Housing Monitor. Historic provision has never fallen below 85% and has been as high as 100%. The average over the 20 year period is 93%.

Figure 9: Chart showing level of brownfield development in Belfast since 1997/98

4.11 Given these figures, and noting that the majority of the remaining land supply within the urban footprint is brownfield, a target of at least 90% would be more appropriate for Belfast than the RDS requirement for 60%. However, in selecting a target of 90%, by implication, this would then assume that the Council would support 10% greenfield development, which is not the intention. Therefore, it is considered more appropriate to adopt the stance in favour of all new housing being delivered on previously developed / brownfield land, i.e. in line with the sequential approach set out in the SPPS. However, subject to detailed assessment of all site proformas identified in the Urban Capacity Study, and taking account of committed sites lying outside the urban footprint, there may be some minimal need for expansion of the settlement limits.

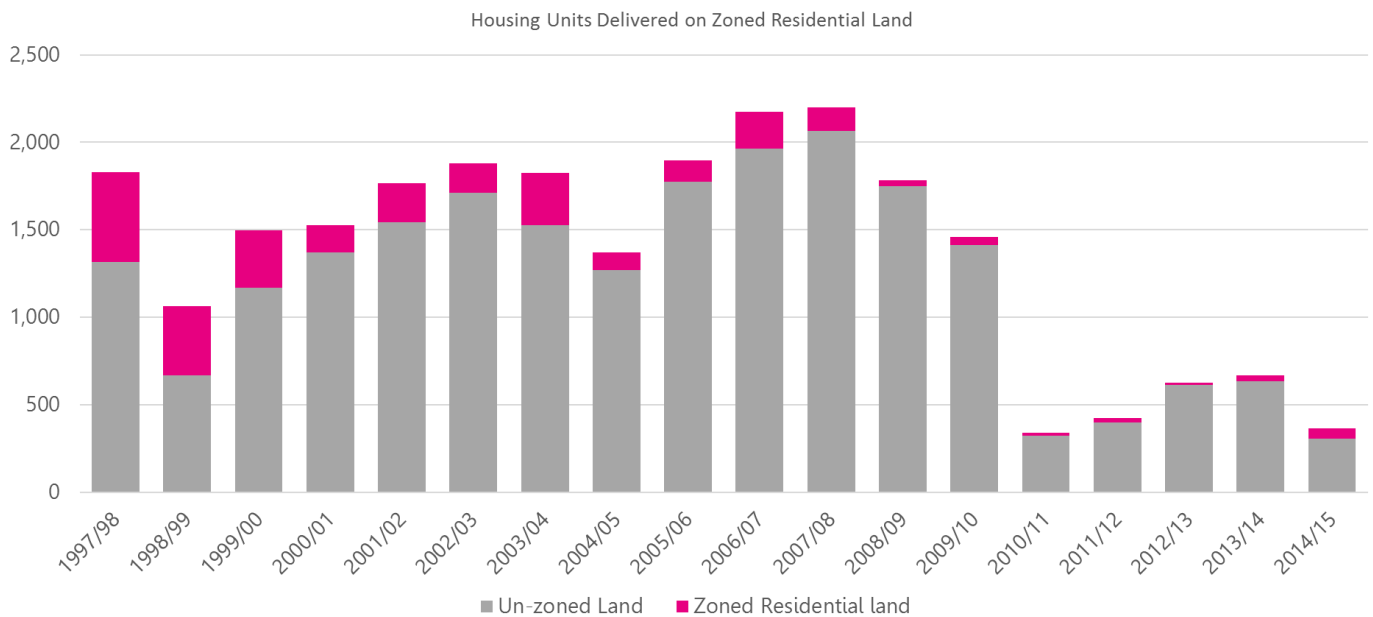
Windfall

4.12 As discussed above, in accordance with the sequential approach set out in the SPPS, priority will be given to the reuse of previously developed or 'brownfield' land within the existing urban footprint when identifying and zoning new land for housing. The SPPS also states that housing allocations in LDP's should be informed by an allowance for windfall housing – i.e unplanned sites which are not allocated for housing. The SPPS acknowledges that windfall sites can be a key source of housing supply over the course of the plan period and that full allowance should be made when determining the number of sites to identify for development in the Plan to prevent excessive zoning of housing land. It is intended that windfall allowance in the Plan would be a modest contribution given the intention to allocate

suitable housing land wherever possible to assist in meeting growth targets, and also noting that almost 19,000 housing units are already committed, i.e. with extant approval.

4.13 However, the potential impact of windfall delivery to extend the identified housing land supply, through the delivery of unexpected units, emphasises the need to undertake clear monitoring of housing delivery overall, identifying the proportion of annual delivery that has come from windfall sources. Figure 10 below outlines that, in Belfast’s case, historically the vast majority of housing units were delivered on un-zoned land – likely resulting from the delay in adopting BMAP, meaning there was a significant undersupply of zoned land through the BUAP.

Figure 10: Windfall Delivery on zoned residential land

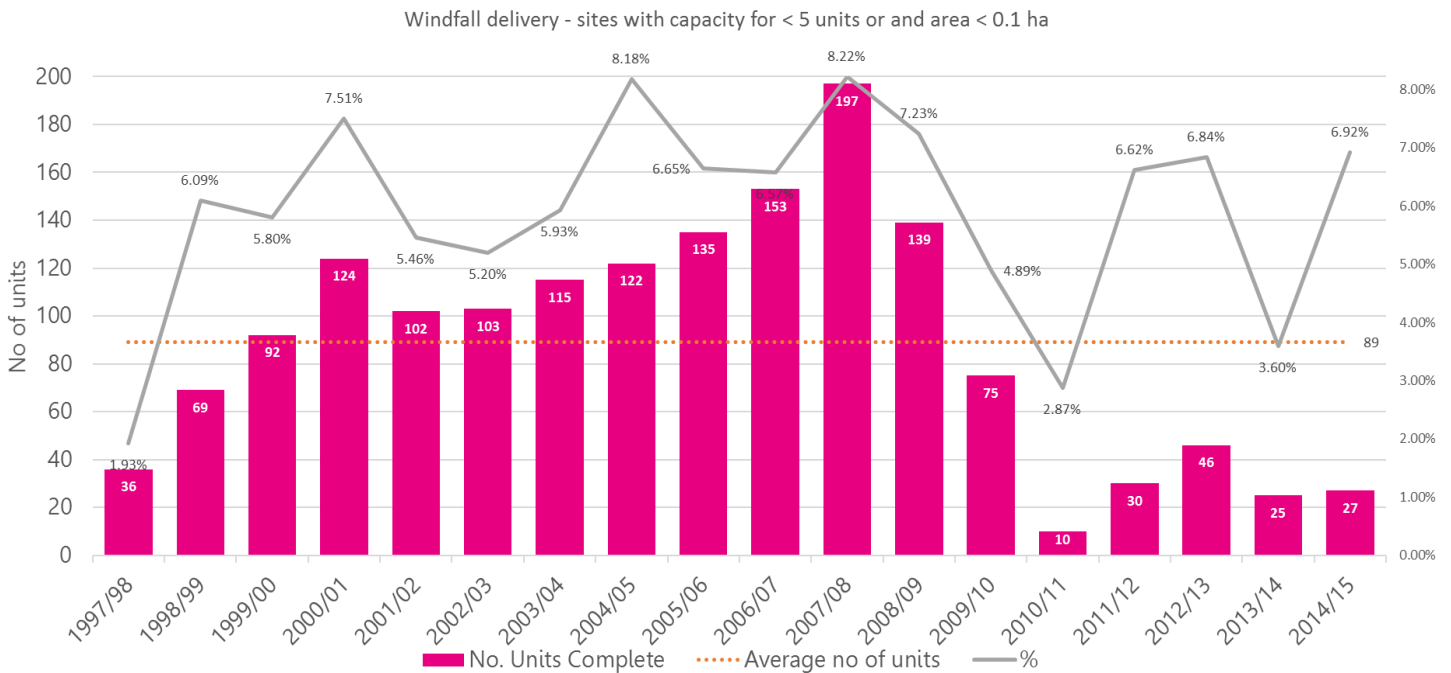


4.14 The Urban Capacity Study classifies sites less than 5 units as windfall. The graph overleaf (Figure 11) shows the historic windfall trend from the housing monitor on sites under 5 units. The UCS uses the average delivery between 2000-2015 which was 94 units per year. This is then multiplied by the 15 years of the plan period which gives **1,410** units.

4.15 In addition to this, there is a need to make some provision for sites above 5 units which come forward unexpectedly for housing over the plan period. Although the intention is to zone most suitable larger sites for housing at LPP stage, it is likely that other schemes will come forward.

4.16 There will always be some supply from this source, but it may be in the range of only 30-50 units per year, which would be **450-750** over the plan period. Assuming an average of 40 per year gives a figure of around 600 over the plan period. Adding this to the 1,400 units identified in the UCS gives an overall total of **2,000**. As already noted, it is a modest figure that reinforces the importance of a plan led system and the Council’s intention to maximise the housing land available through the use of allocations.

Figure 11: Historic windfall delivery (sites < 5 units)



Residual Housing Need

4.17 The need, if any, for further identification of land beyond the urban footprint in a settlement will be that which is residual after taking account of the urban capacity, windfall allowance and dwellings already constructed or committed. The Urban Capacity Study, prepared as part of the evidence base for the Plan Strategy, outlines two types of sites that may be utilised, if there remains insufficient land to meet the Council’s housing development needs. Type 3 sites include those which may be obtained through a review of employment zoned land, green space zoned land, conversion of vacant upper floors, or those sites previously refused for housing. Type 3 sites also include existing housing zonings, but with a view to increasing housing densities. Type 4 sites are those obtained from a ‘call for sites’ process, which aims to engage as wide a landowning audience as possible to determine any additional sites that may not have been picked up from the capacity study.

4.18 Should the above fail to provide the necessary amount of land needed, then other options could be explored, such as:

- Extending the settlement limits – the Urban Capacity Study noted sites on the Housing Monitor totalling more than 2,000 units located outside the existing urban footprint: in many cases these are committed, i.e. with extant approvals. With an expansion of the urban footprint in this regard, it would necessitate a review of the designated settlement limits.
- Neighbouring districts within the wider metropolitan area – liaison with neighbouring authorities in Lisburn & Castlereagh and Antrim & Newtownabbey may enable zoned or unzoned lands in these jurisdictions to be used for housing to accommodate some of

Belfast's population growth. Any such areas agreed would need to have excellent connectivity to Belfast, including public transport links such as BRT and rail, along key transport corridors.

This would be in line with the sequential approach, whereby all potential brownfield and undeveloped/greenfield land within the urban footprint has been exhausted, before considering any extensions to the settlement. The options above will be further explored at the Local Policies Plan stage.

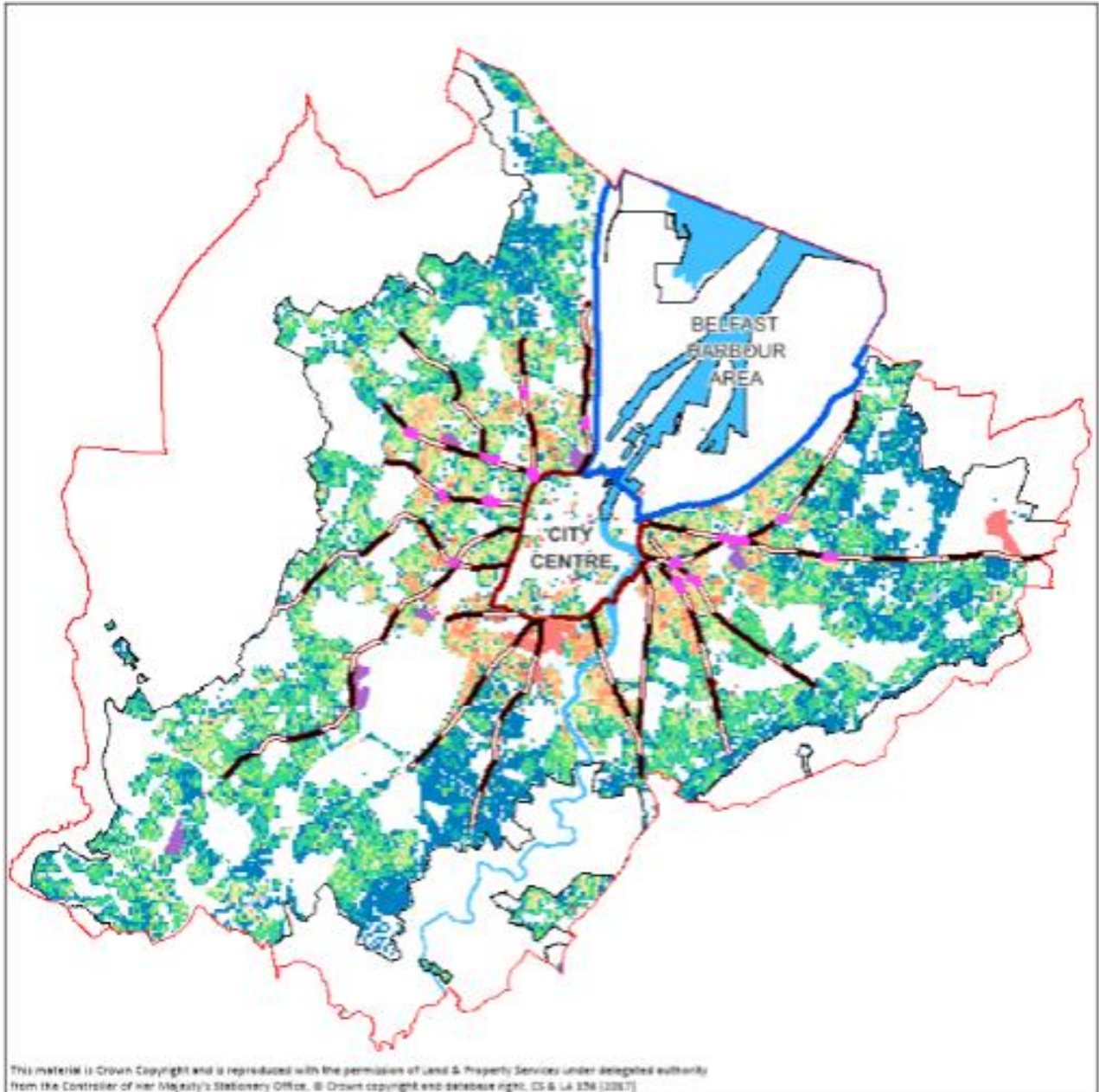
Density

- 4.19 Housing growth may be accommodated by increasing density, without town cramming, in the first instance. In accordance with the SPPS, this will need to be delivered in a sensitive way, striking a careful balance between meeting housing needs whilst ensuring well-designed developments appropriate to their locations. This will continue the approach currently set out in PPS12 that seeks to promote higher densities in town and city centres and in other locations that benefit from high accessibility to public transport facilities, whilst respecting local character, maintaining environmental quality and safeguarding the amenity of existing residents within established residential areas.
- 4.20 Increases in density are therefore most desirable throughout the City Centre and inner urban areas, as well as in other locations benefitting from good accessibility, in accordance with the guidance given in *Creating Places*. Development or redevelopment in inner urban locations or other high-density areas should be designed to create or reinforce an urban rather than a suburban setting and, conversely, development in low-density areas should aim to provide or reinforce local character and identity whilst avoiding the monotony of suburban sprawl. Opportunities for mixed use developments that incorporate an element of residential development in close proximity to other compatible uses, such as employment or community services, are also desirable.
- 4.21 In formulating an evidence base, three different approaches to density were used, as follows:
- 1) Existing residential developments
 - 2) Site specific studies of traditional housing areas
 - 3) Housing Monitor approvals

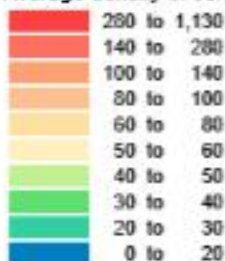
Existing residential developments

- 4.22 The existing density in the City was assessed – densities were based on the number of residential units within a 50m² grid – the fine grain enabled patterns to be seen more clearly. Figure 12 overleaf outlines the findings of this exercise. As can be seen, density increases as one moves towards the City Centre, but interestingly, there is a clear inner city / outer city divide emerging – blue and green in outer city – more red and yellow in the inner city – the white areas are largely open space or infrastructure. Densities range from 20 dph through to 280 dph plus.

Figure 12: Average densities based on 50 sq.m. city grid



Average density of 50m2 grid (Hectares)



Arterial Routes



Scale: 1: 90,000

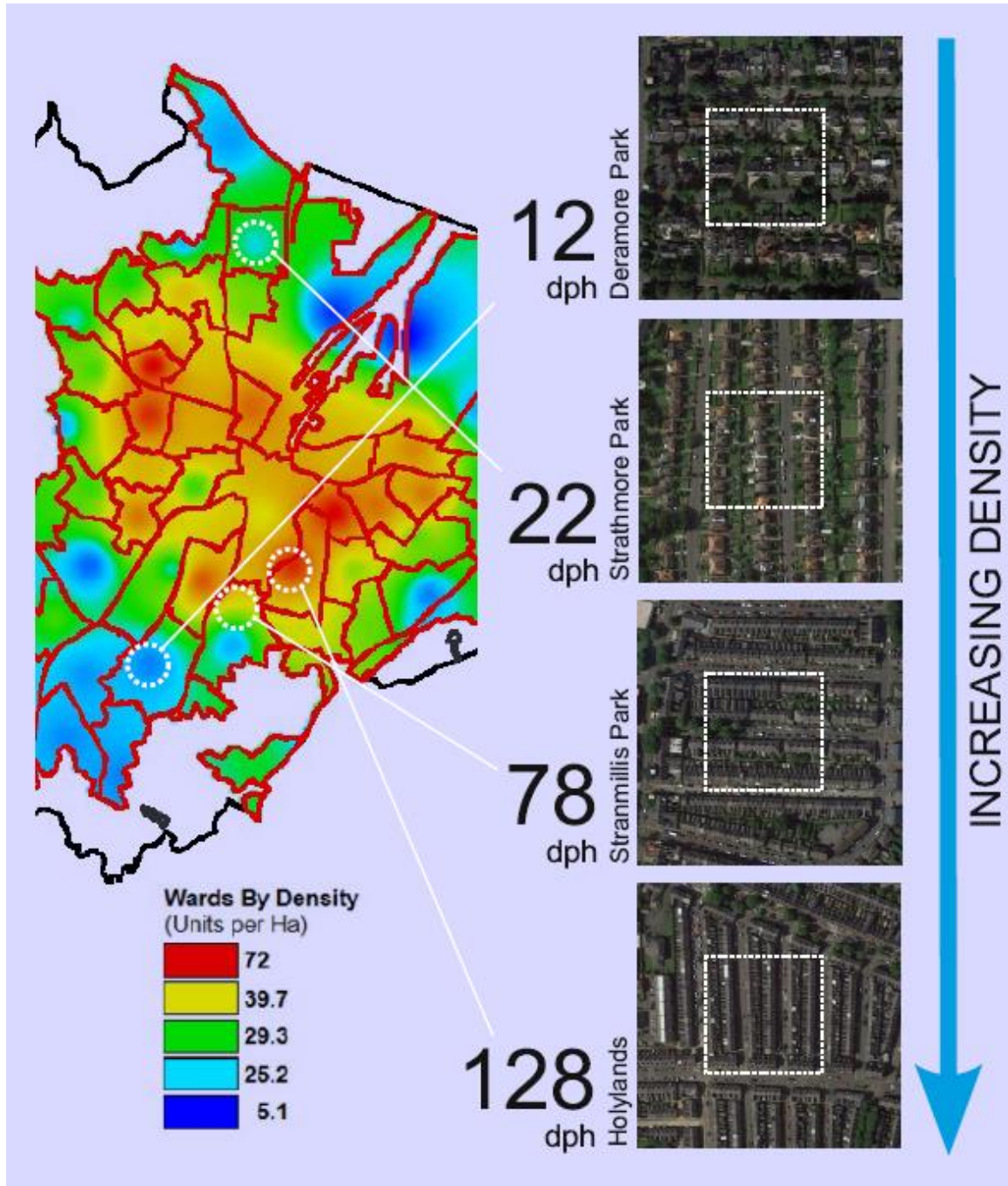


Site specific studies of traditional housing areas

4.23 The Council also assessed densities through the analysis of a number of existing residential schemes in Belfast and in other international cities, including London and

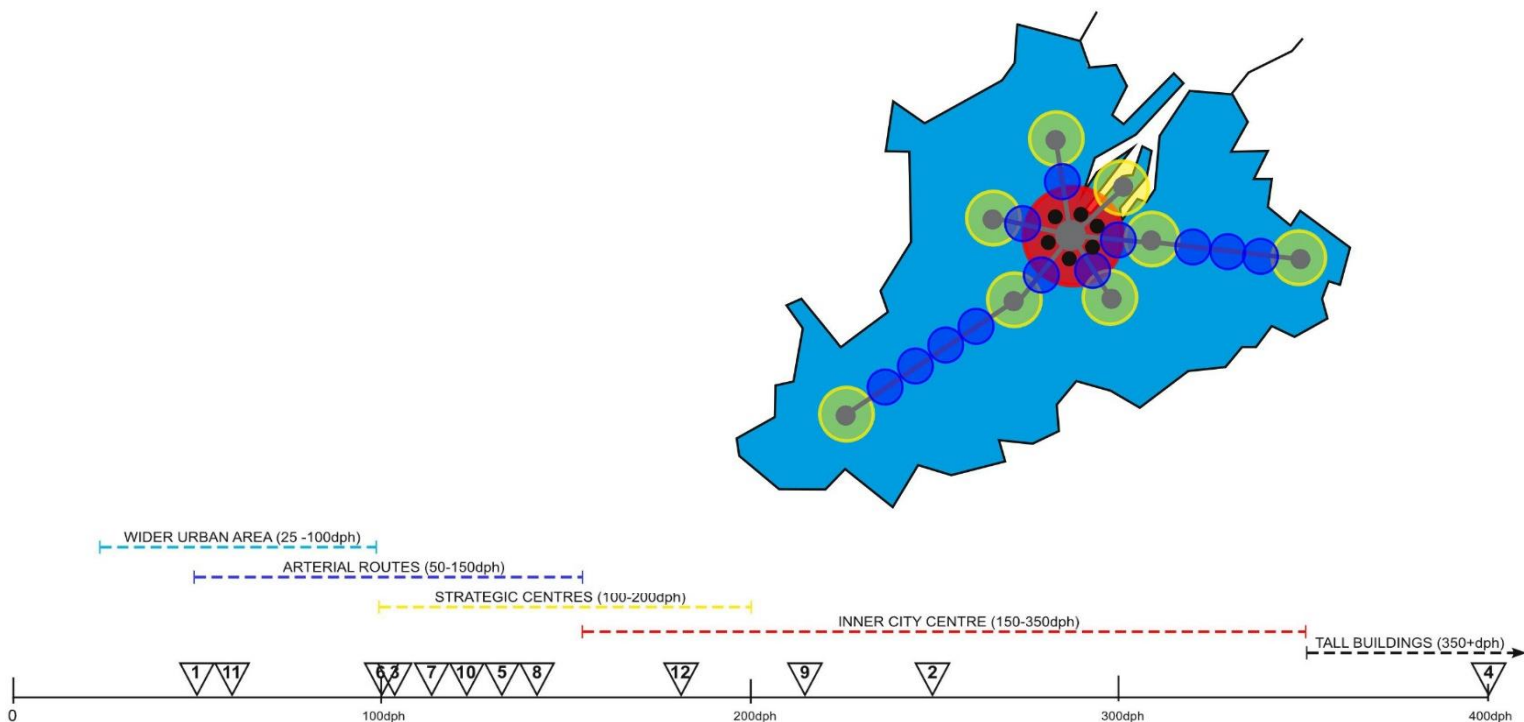
Amsterdam. Figure 13 below shows the significant spread of densities across the city, from 12dph in Deramore Park to 128dph in the Holylands. The map, based on ward areas, again clearly shows the higher densities in and around the city centre, with densities reducing with distance from the city centre.

Figure 13: Belfast Comparative Density Study



4.24 Figure 14 shows a diagrammatic map of Belfast with differing densities based on the character areas. Tall buildings within the city centre represent maximum achievable densities up to 400dph, on the right of the scale, with the wider urban area on the left of the scale. The numbers on the scale represent 12 exemplar case studies, taken from Belfast, London, Dublin, Sheffield and Amsterdam. The case studies are listed and illustrated in Appendix C:

Figure 14: Existing density map and scale, including case study references



Housing Monitor approvals

4.25 The Urban Capacity Study, commissioned as part of the LDP process, included an analysis of the densities of the city's character areas, derived from actual planning approvals in the Housing Monitor. The existing Belfast city densities (as outlined in the densities paper), together with the Housing Monitor planning approvals, were used to apply the broad density bands in policy HOU4. Figure 15 overleaf shows the UCS densities compared against those set out in the densities paper, together with the figures proposed in policy HOU4 of the Draft Plan Strategy.

4.26 The bands take into account variations within character areas through the use of higher and lower limits, allowing proposals to protect the established character and patterns of development in any particular location. The broad density ranges for the Inner City Belfast and Outer Belfast allow flexibility to adapt proposals to their context. The Inner City densities reflect a general increase in density as proximity to the City Centre (and consequently to key services and facilities) increases. Within the Outer Belfast area,

lower densities towards the periphery of the settlement are generally more appropriate, as access to local services decreases. However, proposals within or near local or district centres, along city corridors and proximate to rail stations/halts can accommodate higher densities.

Figure 15: Density comparison between approvals, density paper (all dph) and DPS

Character Area	Approved applications (Gross density)	Existing Densities Paper figures	Draft Plan Strategy comparison (HOU4)
Tall buildings in city centre	-	350+	350+
Belfast City Centre	316	150-350	150-350
Inner City Belfast	145	150-350	75-150
Arterial Routes/City Corridors	147	50-150	100-175 in inner city 50-150 in outer city
Strategic Centres	118	100-200	100-200 in district centres 75-150 in local centres
Wider Urban Area	55	25-100	25-125
Small Settlements	55	-	25-50

Affordable Housing

Affordability

- 4.27 A gap in market provision can occur if house prices rise beyond that which is affordable. Affordability is determined by price, average incomes and access to borrowing and it remains an issue in Belfast, particularly for first time buyers.
- 4.28 Since 2001, the Housing Executive has published an affordability index developed in partnership with University of Ulster to provide an evidence base for how changes in the housing market were affecting first-time buyer's ability to enter the market. This has consistently identified the wider Belfast housing market area as an area characterised by a comparatively high proportion of unaffordable housing. In 2014, 67% of the housing stock was classified as unaffordable, second only to Derry, Strabane and Limavady (68%). In 2015, this rose to 77% however in 2016 showed a slight improvement to 75%. Belfast in 2016 was also the only area in Northern Ireland with a negative affordability gap (£601 – the gap between borrowing capacity and lower quartile house prices). The NIHE research also determined that between 2010 and 2016, Belfast consistently had the highest percentage of annual income required for a deposit and also the time to save the amount needed was the highest of all local government areas in the majority of these years.
- 4.29 The NIHE, in their Housing Market Analysis of September 2017 outlined how house prices in Belfast declined sharply following the crash in 2008, before beginning to see recovery from 2013 onwards. Land and Property Services stated that the average house price in Belfast, at March 2017 was £115,868. Similar to LPS figures, the University of Ulster index indicated that average house prices in Belfast dropped 37% between 2008 and 2017 and 34% for Northern Ireland. This fall contributed to an improving picture of affordability, however Belfast remains an area with a significant affordability problem. The NIHE's Housing Market Analysis (2017) outlines that 630 intermediate homes are required annually

in Belfast over the plan period to meet affordable housing need (not to mention the close to 1,000 social homes also required annually).

Social Housing Need

- 4.30 The requirement for new social housing in Belfast has consistently increased since 2010. The five-year assessment for 2014-19 shows a need for almost 6,000 units. Approximately 75% of the social housing waiting list comprises single households, and small families. Figure 16 below shows the household composition of housing applicants as at March 2017. The predominance of single and smaller family households, together with the welfare reform agenda, will mean a high requirement for one and two bedroom dwellings.

Figure 16: Belfast Household composition of housing applications at March 2017

Type	Single person	Small adult	Small family	Large adult	Large family	Older person	Total
Applicant	452	452	2,945	141	678	1,236	10,738
App (HS)	258	258	2,089	86	458	812	7,322
Allocation	69	69	708	25	143	246	2,361

- 4.31 Social housing need is apparent in all four sectors of the city. There are concentrations of need in Ardoyne and New Lodge in North Belfast, Lower and Upper Ormeau and Lisburn Road in South Belfast, Sydenham and Willowfield in East Belfast and Poleglass/Twinbrook in West Belfast. However, the areas of highest need coincide with those areas where suitable development land is in short supply. Figure 17 below provides a detailed breakdown.

Figure 17: Detailed breakdown of social housing need in Belfast 2017-32

Settlement	Social Housing Need (units) 15 year (2017-2032)
Greater West / Shankill	
Inner West	1,653
Middle West	3,506
Outer West	1,254
Ainsworth / Woodvale	0
Ballygomartin	0
Mid Shankill	0
Lower Shankill	0
North Belfast	
North Belfast 1	4,200
North Belfast 2	0
South and East Belfast	
Upper Ormeau	750
Donegal Road	0
Finaghy	75
Lisburn Road	1,086
Lower Ormeau and Markets	660
Inner East Belfast	0
Middle East Belfast	693
Short Strand	102
Outer East Belfast	138

Total Social New Build Requirement Belfast	14,102
Annually	940

4.32 It should also be noted that the NIHE assessment of housing need incorporates homeless persons also. The NIHE is the relevant organisation in terms of assessing those presenting as homeless and the subsequent determination of full duty status. Appendix B provides more information on this issue.

Intermediate need

4.33 Intermediate housing is housing, made available to eligible households for rent or purchase, which have prices higher than the social housing sector but are below open market rates. The NIHE’s Housing Market Analysis (2017) outlines that 630 intermediate homes are required annually in Belfast over the plan period to meet affordable housing need (not to mention the close to 1,000 social homes also required annually).

Definition of Affordable Housing

4.34 The SPSS states that the LDP will be the primary vehicle to facilitate any identified need for social/affordable housing, based on an up to date Housing Needs Assessment (HNA). It defines affordable housing as social rented and intermediate housing only, with intermediate housing reflecting what was effectively available at the time, namely shared ownership housing. However, it does state that:

‘the definition of intermediate housing used for the purpose of this policy may change over time to incorporate other forms of housing tenure below open market rates’.

This is compared to the definitions set out in figure 18 below in the RDS, POP, NPPF (England) and MHCLG (England – Housing White Paper).

Figure 18: Differing definitions of Affordable Housing

RDS	SPSS	LDP POP proposal	NPPF (England)	Housing White Paper (England)
Social Rented Sector	Social Rented Housing (Housing provided to eligible households at an affordable rent by a Registered HA)	Social rented sector	Social rented (provided by local authority or registered HA and rents determined by national rent regime)	Social Rented housing
Housing benefit funded private		Housing benefit funded private rented	Affordable rented (provided by local authority or registered housing association to those	Affordable Rented Housing

rented sector			eligible for social housing – rent capped at 80% local market rent)	
	Intermediate Housing (Shared ownership)		Intermediate Housing (for sale and rent at cost above social, but below market levels)	Intermediate Housing Affordable Private Rented housing
Part of the low cost owner occupation market which can be purchased utilising 30% or less gross household income		Part of the low cost owner occupation market which can be purchased utilising 30% or less gross household income		Starter Homes Discounted market sales housing

4.35 As noted above, the latest Housing Market Analysis from the NIHE³, identifies significant social and intermediate housing need in Belfast over the 15 year plan period – with 940 and 630 dwellings respectively required annually. Together, this represents approximately 75% of the total annual housing requirement of the Council's planned growth scenario, when split evenly over the plan period. The Social Housing Development Programme, during 2016-2017 completed schemes totalling 416 units; schemes programmed for 2017-2018 total 636 units. Evidently, this build rate leaves a shortfall to the rates required over the plan period to meet need.

4.36 Given the acute need that exists, and noting the SPPS definition, the NI definition of intermediate housing may be further expanded in the future to include other innovative products to support the SPPS aim of assisting eligible households into affordable housing. Where this is the case, such additional products will be considered suitable to help meet the affordable housing obligations of policy HOU5 in the future. Such products may include:

- **Equity loans:** A 'help to buy' equity loan involves a third party (often a government agency) providing a low interest loan for part of the cost of a newly built home, which could help reduce the amount needed as a deposit to access mortgage finance.
- **Affordable rent:** Affordable rent is accommodation subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). Rents should be genuinely discounted from prevailing market rates and would not include private rentals that are subsidised by housing benefit.

³ Housing Market Analysis Update, Belfast City Council Area, NIHE, September 2017

- **Discount market sale housing:** A low cost home ownership product where a new build property is purchased at a discounted price. This discount is usually around 20% and the scheme is to help low and middle earners get onto the property ladder. Housing should be genuinely discounted below prevailing market value and, to ensure that such housing remains affordable in perpetuity, a developer or government agency may retain a 'golden share' to ensure that discounts are maintained in future sales.

4.37 The DfC are currently undertaking a review of the definition of 'intermediate housing'. This will seek to broaden the intermediate housing products available, bringing NI in line with other jurisdictions, and in accordance with the SPPS, which acknowledges that the definition of intermediate housing may change over time. As committed to in the POP consultation report, the Council, in preparing the DPS, liaised with DfC and NIHE in respect of the definition of intermediate housing. The inclusion of affordable rent as a possible future affordable housing product acknowledges the general recognition during the POP consultation of the importance of the private rented sector in contributing to housing supply.

Site size

- 4.38 Another component of a robust and workable affordable housing policy is the selection of an appropriate threshold of development for the requirement to 'kick in'. The standard UK methodology for assessing land for housing is schemes of 10 units or more on all sites greater than 0.25ha. In the Belfast context, applying a threshold of 10 or more units would reduce the number of schemes where affordable housing is required. Analysis of the urban capacity study sites suggests that the potential yield on sites greater than 5 units but less than 10 in Belfast is 1,350 units. This, at a 20% rate, would mean a reduction in potential supply of c. 270 affordable housing units. A higher threshold would also be more likely to result in single tenure developments as there is an increased likelihood of developers coming in for schemes of 9 units to circumvent the affordable housing requirements.
- 4.39 Two rounds of consultation have been undertaken on the options for a developer contributions scheme in Northern Ireland:
- The formal consultation process by DSD in 2014 following the publication of 'Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing'.
 - Structured interviews and workshops undertaken for DSD publication 'Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing in Northern Ireland – Report of Study', Three Dragons, 2015.
- 4.40 The above consultation exercise used a threshold of 5 units or more to gauge opinion. There were mixed views on this relating to the viability of smaller sites, distortion of the land market, the need for fairness across the developer community and the risk of piecemeal development. Both Government and the Housing Association sector saw access to land, through a contributions scheme or other policy option, as essential to affordable housing delivery in the future.
- 4.41 The Three Dragons Study concluded that small sites do face higher costs and there is a viability argument for including a threshold but not all small sites would be less viable than larger developments and vice versa. However, it notes that if small sites were excluded from a contribution scheme, through a size threshold, the impact on smaller developers

would be lessened. The report also recognised the potential for threshold avoidance, whereby schemes would be deliberately designed to remain below the threshold when they would otherwise be promoted as larger schemes. This has been taken into account in the wording of policy HOU5, which states that any proposed piecemeal development or artificial division to circumvent affordable housing requirements will not be permitted.

- 4.42 As noted above, a significant proportion of housing developments in Belfast are on smaller sites. In the context of Belfast therefore, 5 units has been deemed an appropriate threshold. Anything smaller than 5 units or 0.1ha is taken as windfall.

Proportion of Affordable Housing

- 4.43 The SPPS outlines that the LDP will be the primary vehicle in facilitating affordable housing requirements by zoning land or by indicating, through key site requirements, where a proportion of a site may be required for social/affordable housing. The option of zoning sites for social housing was discounted at the POP stage – this method has in the past led to the creation of single-tenure neighbourhoods, which would not assist in the objective for an inclusive society, and could compound problems associated with deprived neighbourhoods in Belfast. Moreover, zoning sites is likely to dilute the opportunity for integrated affordable housing within mixed tenure developments across the city. Similarly, the use of Key Site Requirements (KSR) for certain strategic sites only was appraised in the interim SA report, and was discounted – with a more broad-brush strategy seen as necessary to maximise numbers, given the acute affordable housing need.
- 4.44 In terms of the proportion, 20% has been determined based on two main sources of information, which form part of the overall evidence base:
- a) Housing Market Analysis, BCC update, September 2017, NIHE
 - b) Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing in Northern Ireland – Report of Study, 2015, Three Dragons
- 4.45 The HMA provided by the NIHE outlined a requirement for 940 social housing units a year until 2032, as well as 630 intermediate units per year. This gives a total need for 1570 affordable housing units per year or 23,550 units over the 15 year plan period, which equates to over 75% of the required growth rate to meet the targets set out in SP1 and HOU1. Obviously, a 75% affordable housing requirement would not be realistic.
- 4.46 Figure 19 overleaf applies differing contribution levels to the historic unit completions over the last 20 years and shows that a 20% affordable housing requirement on all sites greater than 5 units would have yielded only around 400 affordable units per year. The Three Dragons research states that a figure of 10-20% would be viable in certain parts of Belfast. Bearing in mind the significant affordable housing need, the higher end of this band would be considered the absolute minimum, necessary to redress historic under provision of social housing and to ensure that growth targets are deliverable.

Figure 19: Historical completions since 1997 (schemes of < 5 units omitted)

20% band applied			15% band applied			10% band applied		
YEAR	Total units built (schemes of less than 5 units omitted)	Affordable unit total	YEAR	Total units built (schemes of less than 5 units omitted)	Affordable unit total	YEAR	Total units built (schemes of less than 5 units omitted)	Affordable unit total
1997	3508	702	1997	3508	526	1997	3508	351
1998	1629	326	1998	1629	244	1998	1629	163
1999	1544	309	1999	1544	232	1999	1544	154
2000	1780	356	2000	1780	267	2000	1780	178
2001	1713	343	2001	1713	257	2001	1713	171
2002	2145	429	2002	2145	322	2002	2145	215
2003	2510	502	2003	2510	376	2003	2510	251
2004	2639	528	2004	2639	396	2004	2639	264
2005	1869	374	2005	1869	280	2005	1869	187
2006	2598	520	2006	2598	390	2006	2598	260
2007	2246	449	2007	2246	337	2007	2246	225
2008	4372	874	2008	4372	656	2008	4372	437
2009	2151	430	2009	2151	323	2009	2151	215
2010	1666	333	2010	1666	250	2010	1666	167
2011	1100	220	2011	1100	165	2011	1100	110
2012	513	103	2012	513	77	2012	513	51
2013	672	134	2013	672	101	2013	672	67
2014	839	168	2014	839	126	2014	839	84
2015	1140	228	2015	1140	171	2015	1140	114
2016	3560	712	2016	3560	534	2016	3560	356
TOTAL	40194	8040	TOTAL	40194	6030	TOTAL	40194	4020

4.47 Therefore, anything less than 20% is not considered realistic. In terms of anything above 20%, based on the Three Dragons research, this could result in viability and deliverability issues and may only be a possibility for larger sites at certain locations, subject to any constraints and mix of house type and tenures proposed.

Housing Mix

Housing Tenure

4.48 Belfast has a comparatively low level of owner occupied dwellings accounting for 57.25% of the district total compared to 71.86% in Northern Ireland (refer to Figure 20 overleaf). Of these 35.05% were owned outright (20.06% of Belfast total). The proportion of dwellings in social ownership is also higher in Belfast than the Northern Ireland figure (23.52% compared to 12.29%) and the proportion of private rented houses is also higher than the NI average. Whilst there are clearly variations across the city, it still provides a number of key patterns which have implications for the development plan.

Figure 20: Belfast Housing Tenure (New Belfast LGD, 2011 Census)

Tenure		Belfast			Northern Ireland		
		No.	Total	%	No.	Total	%
Owner occupied	Owns outright	65,961	188,203	57.25%	510,315	1,285,113	71.86%
	Owns with a mortgage or loan	120,129			764,777		
	Shared ownership	2,113			10,021		
Social Rented	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	53,553	77,331	23.52%	170,881	219,712	12.29%
	Housing Association or Charitable Trust	23,778			48,831		
Private Rented	Private Landlord or Letting Agency	52,964	57,101	17.37%	228,103	252,509	14.12%
	Employer of a household member	255			3,702		
	Relative or friend of a household member	2,939			16,548		
	Other	943			4,156		
Lives rent free			6,128	1.86%		31,005	1.73%
All usual residents in households		328,763			1,788,339		

Source: NISRA

- 4.49 Comparing the tenure breakdown within Belfast between the 2001 (refer Figure 21 below) and the 2011 Census (on the previous, smaller Belfast LGD boundary), the most notable change in housing tenure had been the rise of the privately rented sector. That rise may be to do with the cost of houses at that time and access to finance during the subsequent recession. Significantly, the proportion of owner occupied dwellings has decreased in recent years in Belfast and the proportion of houses in social ownership has also decreased with the proportion of dwellings in the private rented sector increasing from 11% in 2001 to 19.6% in 2011.

Figure 21: Housing Tenure from 2001 Census (old Belfast district)

District	Owner occupied	Social	Private rented and other	Vacant	Total
Belfast	63,917	35,433	12,533	2,051	113,934
Northern Ireland	436,195	132,864	41,990	5,014	526,224

Housing Type

4.50 The breakdown of Belfast’s housing stock in 2011 in terms of the type of dwellings is demonstrated below (figure 22). This demonstrates that a smaller proportion of Belfast’s housing stock is made up of detached and semi detached houses compared to the rest of Northern Ireland. However, proportions of terraced dwellings and apartments are comparatively higher (Belfast 15.28% flats in 2011 compared to 7.89% across NI), with a higher than average increase in the proportion of flats in Belfast between 2001 and 2011.

Figure 22: Households by Type (Trends over 2001 and 2011 in Belfast)

		Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Flats	Other	Total
Belfast	2001	13,091	33,503	51,799	12,357	3,184	113,934
	2011	13,470	34,960	50,667	18,430	3,068	120,595
	% change	2.90%	4.35%	-2.19%	49.15%	-3.64%	5.85%
Northern Ireland	2001	230,406	174,781	169,433	42,830	9,268	626,718
	2011	264,307	200,577	174,896	55,457	8,038	703,275
	% change	14.71%	14.76%	3.22%	29.48%	-13.27%	12.22%

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive

4.51 Following consultation on the Preferred Options Paper, Edge Analytics / Turley were commissioned to look at the mix of housing in Belfast associated with the preferred growth option (supporting baseline economic growth). Figure 23 shows that the two sizes of household that are projected to see the largest percentage increase over the plan period are 1 adult with no children and 2 adults with no children. Taken in context, this means that for every three new households forming over the plan period, 1 of these will consist of a single adult, and 2/3 of all households will consist of either 1 or 2 adults. This obviously has significant implications on the type of housing required – i.e. there will be a big growth in the number of households requiring smaller units. These findings align with the NIHE Housing Market Analysis (September 2017) which also forecasts that the largest increases to 2037 will be single person and 2 adult households (based on NISRA stats).

Figure 23: Projected Household Change by Type 2014-2035 (NISRA)

	2014	2035	Change	% of total growth
1 adult (no children)	48,836	60,655	11,819	34.3%
2 adults (no children)	36,990	49,717	12,727	36.9%
2 Person with children (1 adult)	6,507	8,208	1,702	4.9%
3 adults (no children)	12,102	16,027	3,925	11.4%
3 Person with children (1 adult)	7,672	9,636	1,965	5.7%
3 Person with children (2 adults)	3,588	3,896	308	0.9%
4 adults (no children)	5,492	7,137	1,646	4.8%
4 person with children (1 adult)	9,891	10,557	666	1.9%
4 person with children (2 adult)	1,465	1,591	126	0.4%
5 adults (no children)	1,645	1,817	172	0.5%
5 person with children (1 adult)	4,888	4,406	-482	-1.4%
5 person with children (2 adult)	380	400	21	0.1%
6 adults (no children)	460	598	138	0.4%
6 person with children (1 adult)	1,826	1,519	-308	-0.9%
6 person with children (2 adult)	100	106	5	0.0%

7+ adults (no children)	147	265	119	0.3%
7+ Person with children (1 adult)	746	697	-49	-0.1%
7+ person with children (2+ adult)	21	23	2	0.0%
Total	142,755	177,256	34,501	100%

- 4.52 Following on from this, Figure 24 below applies the composite figures evidenced across the comparator cities within the Turley report, providing an indication of the size of housing (by bedrooms) which may be required in Belfast over the plan period.

Figure 24: Implied size of housing required 2014-2035

	Change	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4+ beds
One person households	11,819	3,800	3,958	3,478	584
Households with dependent children	3,955	118	902	2,079	856
Other households	18,726	1,362	4,916	8,778	3,671
Total	34,501	5,279	9,775	14,336	5,111
%	100%	15%	28%	42%	15%

- 4.53 The table indicates that 42% of additional households may require 3 bedrooms, with 28% requiring 2 bed. A smaller requirement of 1 bedroom properties and 4+ beds (15%) would be required. The percentage of 3 beds required appears high, given the household projections in figure 21, which outline that 70% of new households forming to 2035 will be 1 adult and 2 adult households. This could be attributable to a desire for larger homes but which in many cases are not affordable. However, singles and small households also tend to buy more space as their incomes rise over their working lives. Moreover, long term rises in living standards tends to push up demand for housing space, even if the supply does not sufficiently adapt to allow people to meet these expectations.
- 4.54 Census data for UK comparator cities shows a relatively constant position in that the majority of 1 bed properties are flats and the majority of 3 and 4 bed units are houses. This is illustrated in the chart below (figure 25). Edge / Turley applied these stats to Belfast and concluded that there was a requirement for 30% flats and 70% houses over the plan period.

Figure 25: Housing Size by Type in Comparator English Cities - Census 2011

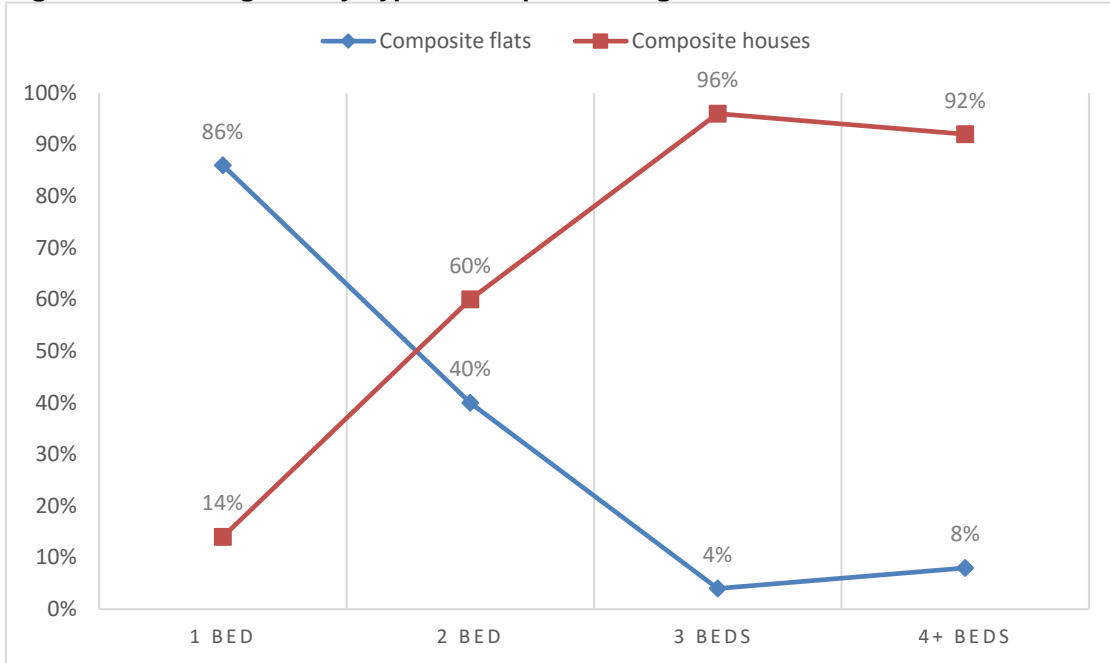
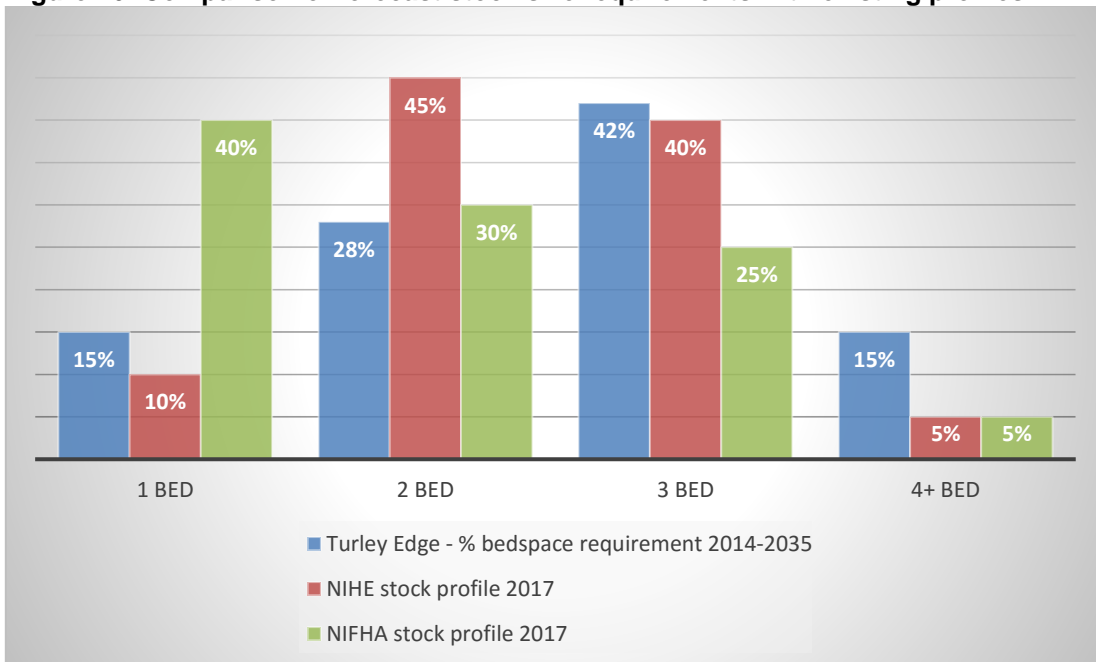


Figure 26: Comparison of forecast stock size requirements with existing profiles



4.55 This compares favourably with LPS data on existing city stock for Belfast – 80% houses and 20% flats. However, the last 7 years completions (2011-17) taken from Building Control data is closer to 50-50.

4.56 In terms of existing NIHE stock, figure 26 above shows a disparity between with the projected percentage requirements outlined by Turley/Edge. As can be seen, there is a shortage of 1 bed accommodation, a surplus of 2 bed properties and almost parity in terms of 3 bed stock. NIFHA stock shows an excess of 1-bed properties. The table below (figure

27) provides a useful comparison of the percentage of houses and apartments and 1-2 beds versus 3+ bed properties taken from differing sources.

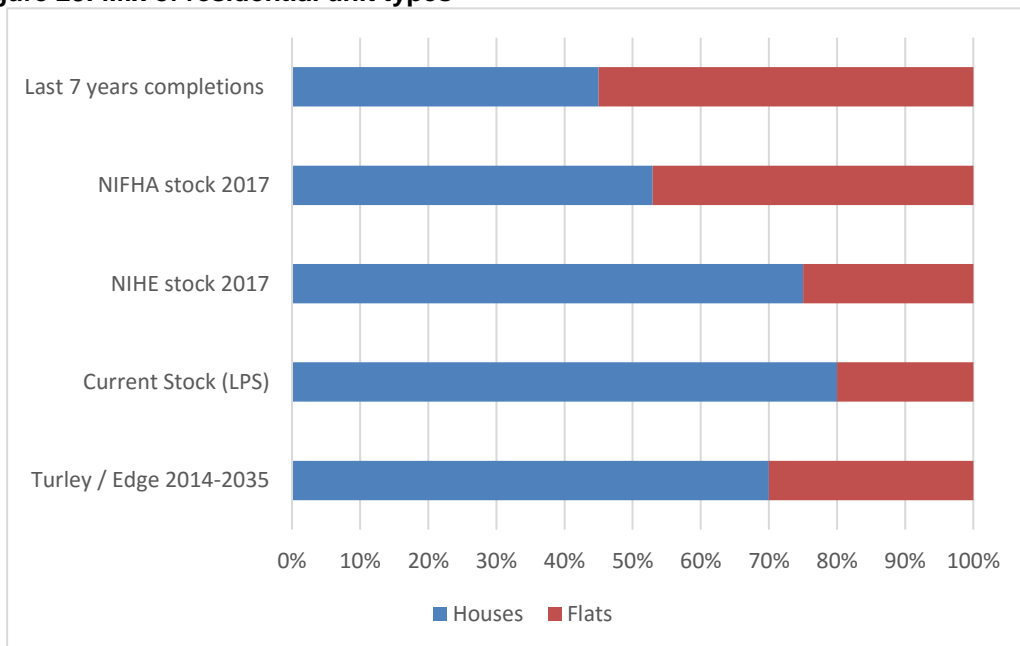
Figure 27: Comparison of stock size requirements

	Turley / Edge forecast to 2035	Existing city stock (LPS)	Existing NIHE stock - March 2017	Last 7 years completions (Building Control)	NIFHA - existing stock profile*
% Houses	70	80	75	45	45
% Apartments	30	20	25	55	40
% 1-2 beds	40	-	55	-	70
% 3+ beds	60	-	45	-	30

* Excludes shared housing and bungalows

4.57 It highlights the projected demand for 3+ bedroom homes, that twice as many houses than flats are needed, and the disparity between the percentage of new houses required against the more recent apartment growth. Figure 28 below provides a visual illustration of this, with the contrast in the top and bottom bars evident.

Figure 28: Mix of residential unit types



4.58 The last 7 years completions indicates that a shift to smaller residential units is underway, evidence that the market is reacting to changing demand. Recent delivery has been helping to correct shortfalls in existing stock – Turley/Edge data indicates a housing requirement of 30% flats whereas the LPS record of current stock outlines an 80-20 houses to flats ratio. The Building Control record of completions – 55% flats – will help to move the overall profile in the right direction.

4.59 The city centre is likely to play an important role in this, with a significant number of sites available which could accommodate new apartment development. This could see a

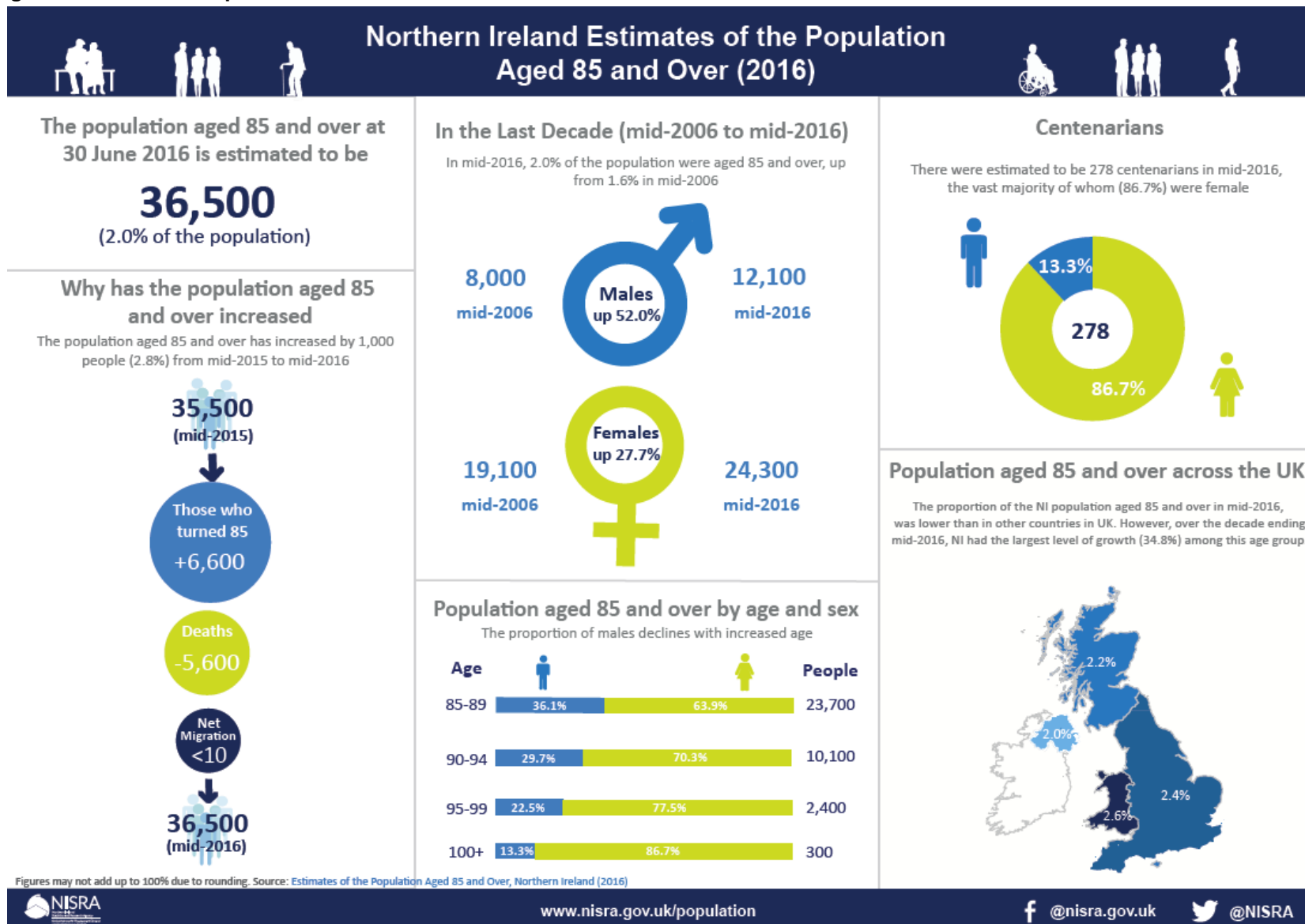
significant rise in city centre population, which has been a characteristic of other comparator cities across the UK. This is outlined in greater detail in the Population and Growth Technical Supplement.

Accessible and Adaptable Accommodation

4.60 The SPPS requires that the Local Development Plan makes provision to meet the full range of housing needs. This includes provision for those who are elderly, disabled or with any mobility issues. One of the key objectives of the NI Housing Strategy relates to the need to 'support older and disabled people to live independently if they wish to do so'. The latest NI Housing Market research also states that as the population continues to age⁴, support packages will play a vital role in helping older people, or people with a disability, to remain in their own homes for longer. Figure 29 overleaf sets out recent statistics in relation to the NI population over 85 years of age and demonstrates an ageing population whereby this

⁴ In the UK, life expectancy at birth is expected to increase by around five years between 2012 and 2037 (ONS 2013) for both men and women

Figure 29: NISRA stats published October 2017



age group are increasing as a percentage of the overall population. This is also true for those aged 65+, with a 3.6% rise in this age group in Belfast over the period 2006-2016. The *Population Profile and Growth Technical Supplement* provides additional detail on this issue.

- 4.61 The 'Lifetime Homes' standards⁵ are a nationally recognised set of criteria to make new dwellings adaptable enough to accommodate a household's changing needs over its lifetime and enable them to be lived in and visited by a wide range of people. Such standards have been widely utilised across other jurisdictions in the UK. Lifetime Homes standards currently apply to all new Housing Association social dwellings in Northern Ireland. The approach is widely acknowledged to be the best mechanism available to deliver flexible and adaptable housing to meet a whole range of needs. The Building Regulations in England were revised in 2015 to incorporate many of the Lifetime Homes Standards. There is pressure also for a similar change to the NI Building Regulations.
- 4.62 Given the ageing population and improvements in health and medicine, more people are able to lead independent lives for longer. The LDP must acknowledge Belfast's role as an age-friendly city and the inclusion of this policy is considered to assist in this regard. The preferred policy approach has taken account of the wider cost benefit analysis implications of such a requirement. The relatively minor additional costs per dwelling are considered to be outweighed by wider significant social benefits, including the current and anticipated cost of inaccessible housing, such as:
- The expense of adaptations to existing properties;
 - The cost of residential care and additional levels of social care;
 - Negative impacts of independent living, employment and social life all of which have human, social and economic significance;
 - Falls and other accidents and the health and care costs triggered;
 - Mental health impacts and effect on general health;
 - Avoidable hospital admissions and increased stays in hospital.
- 4.63 In formulating the first 6 criteria set out in draft policy HOU7, account has been taken of the 16 Lifetime Homes Standards; for the remaining criteria, the Housing Association Guide design standards for wheelchair housing have been reviewed. The tables in Appendix D and E outline the rationale used.
- 4.64 It is acknowledged that the criteria set out in HOU7 may not be strictly applied in all cases. For example, where the retrofitting or redevelopment of an older building is proposed, it may be cost prohibitive and impractical to insist on all elements being achieved. All required measures will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Wheelchair Accessible Housing

- 4.65 The NIHE Housing Market Analysis (HMA) of September 2017 notes that many households in Belfast already require accessible or adapted housing in order to lead dignified and independent lives. During 2016, there were 582 new wheelchair users registered from

⁵ The Lifetime Homes Standards have now been superseded in England and Wales by the Building Regulations (Category 2) but in NI still form part of the core design standards set out in the DfC Housing Association Guide (HAG).

within the Belfast Council area. Of the 1,884 new and existing wheelchair household's in Belfast identified during the same period, more than 250 would desire to move to somewhere more suitable to cope with a disability. This represents approximately twelve percent of the average annual housing growth allowance proposed for Belfast in policy HOU1 (just under 2,200 dwellings / annum).

- 4.66 It is recognised that developing new homes to wheelchair standard is significantly cheaper and more effective than providing adaptations to existing unsuitable properties.
- 4.67 Of those aged 65+ (45,945) the 2011 Census found that approx. 7% of these lived in households that had been adapted for wheelchair use. Whilst DfC guidance issued to Housing Associations stipulates that 7% of all new social housing should be built to wheelchair standard⁶, the Draft NI Programme for Government outcomes relating to housing include an action to increase the proportion of new build social housing which is wheelchair accessible to 10% per year. This aligns with NIHE findings, which identified 100 Belfast applicants requiring specialist wheelchair accommodation in the social housing sector and recognised that there is an overall shortage of this type of accommodation.⁷ The HMA states that this would indicate a 10% level of all new build housing in Belfast, including those in the private sectors, could be built to wheelchair accessible standard.
- 4.68 Taking account of this and given the ongoing increase in the number and proportion of people aged 65 or more, particularly those aged 85 or more, will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the design of dwellings and the need for accommodation that is accessible for wheelchair users. Accordingly, it is considered appropriate to require greater than the existing level of housing that is wheelchair accessible. Moreover, it is noted that Part R places more of an emphasis in terms of the visitor to a dwelling in terms of accessibility – however, it is contended that the homeowner / resident should be the priority in ensuring accessible accommodation that enables independent living and enables good quality of life and wellbeing. For these reasons, the LDP makes a statement of intent by acknowledging the Draft NI Programme for Government proposed action to increase the proportion of wheelchair accessible new build social housing to 10% per year, but extending this to cover all new larger housing schemes. Based on the Housing Monitor, applying a 10% threshold to all sites of 10 units or more would meet the required quota of wheelchair accommodation as set out by NIHE.
- 4.69 The table in Appendix E sets out the key elements of the DfC's HAG standards for wheelchair housing which currently applies to 10% of *social* housing but which, as set out in HOU7, it is proposed to broaden to include *all* tenures. The table also outlines which criteria have been included in the policy and the reasons why certain criteria were omitted.

⁶ The Department for Communities' (DfC) Housing Association Guide (HAG) design standards in relation to Wheelchair Housing are available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/wheelchair-housing> and are also listed in [this document at Annex A3](#)

⁷ Housing Market Analysis update, Belfast City Council Area, NIHE, September 2017

Specialist Residential Accommodation

4.70 Specialist housing provides for people with specific housing needs, particularly in relation to impaired physical and mental health and old age. The need for specialist housing is likely to increase in Belfast as there is an ageing population and relatively high levels of poor health in parts of the city. The Addendum to the Housing Growth Options report⁸ set out the 2011 Census findings in terms of Belfast residents health – with 60% of residents over 65 having only fair health, bad health or very bad health. Whilst the preference is to allow people to live independently for longer in their own homes, it is recognised that this is not always possible. Figure 30 shows the types of service available to residents, the number of schemes and providers.

4.71 Life expectancy continues to rise and the number of people of pensionable age is projected to increase by around 51% by 2035. People aged 65 and over are predicted to account for approximately 68% of the increase in people living alone between 2012 and 2037.

Figure 30: Specialised Housing Provision and Need

Type of Service	Client Group	No. of providers	No. of schemes
Accommodation Based Services	Older People	15	112
	Homelessness	19	38
	Learning Disability	8	18
	Mental Health	6	26
	Physical Disability	3	8
	Young People	5	5
		56	207
Floating Support Services	Older People	1	2
	Mental Health	2	2
	Homelessness	9	10
	Learning Disability	2	2
	Physical Disability	2	2
	Young People	2	2
	18	20	
Overall Total		74	227

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive

4.72 Whilst the POP referred to specialist accommodation for older people, consultation feedback suggested that this should include all those requiring specialist residential accommodation. This has been taken account of in the Addendum to the Housing Growth Options report which refers to residential institutions including those for older persons, those in poor health at various life stages, students etc. Policy HOU8 has been worded to take account of this.

⁸ Size and type of Housing Needed – Addendum to the Belfast City Housing Growth Options Report, November 2017

Traveller Accommodation

Travelling Community

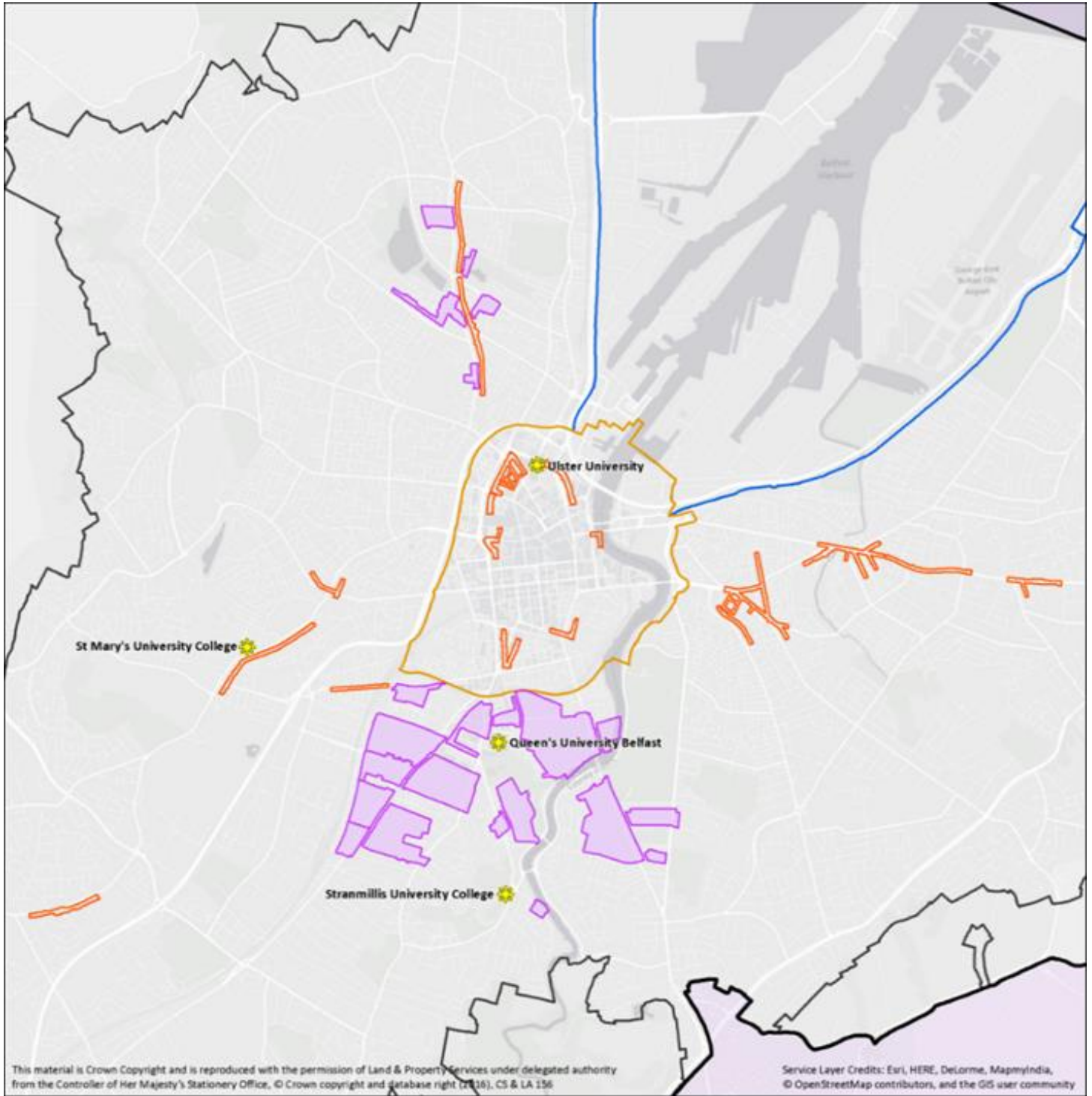
- 4.73 Currently the traveller accommodation need is reviewed on a yearly basis in conjunction with all interested stakeholders, to reflect the changing needs and aspirations of the Travelling Community.
- 4.74 In the latest NIHE Housing Market Analysis update (September 2017), it was stated that there were no Traveller Accommodation requirements identified for Belfast. Work is due to commence during 2018 on the 2019-2024 Northern Ireland Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

Housing Management Areas (HMA's) and Intensive Housing Nodes

Intensive forms of Housing

- 4.75 There is a need to meet the demand for shared housing and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are an important component of this housing provision. HMOs, alongside other accommodation options within the private rented sector, play an important role in meeting the housing needs of people who are single, who have temporary employment, students, low income households and, more recently, migrant workers.
- 4.76 Proliferation of one type of accommodation can be detrimental, however pro-active management of the numbers of specific accommodation types helps to maintain the amenity of local areas. Pro-active policies identifying appropriate locations that are able to accommodate such developments can also help to reduce the pressure in these core areas, recognising that there is a rising demand for shared forms of accommodation within the City.
- 4.77 Houses in Multiple Occupation are currently assessed against the policies in the HMO Subject Plan 2015 which provides an area based policy for HMOs in Belfast. Figure 31 below identifies 22 HMO areas, within which permission will only be granted for HMO's where the number of HMO's will not as a result exceed 30% of all dwelling units.

Figure 31: Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan 2015



Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

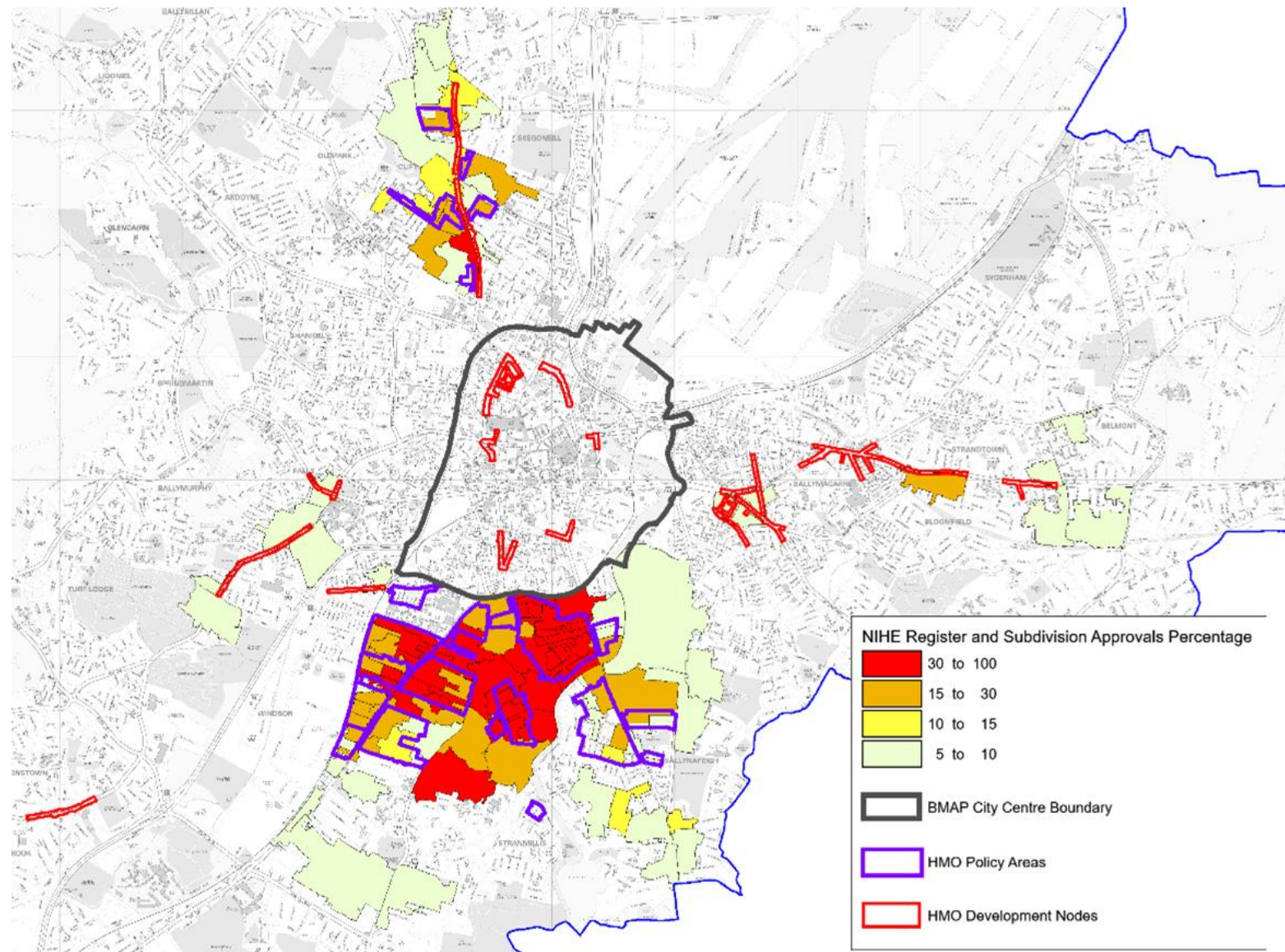
- HMO Policy Area*
- HMO Development Node*
- University/University College
- Council boundary
- Metropolitan/Settlement Development Limit
- Belfast City Centre
- Belfast Harbour Area boundary

Source: *HMO Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area (Adopted December 2008)



- 4.78 Only 2 of the 22 areas identified were under 30% HMO's at the time of the subject plans publication. In addition, 18 HMO Development Nodes were identified where planning permission for HMO's was granted. Outside HMO policy areas and Development Nodes, HMO development will only be granted where it would not exceed 10% of dwellings on the road or street.

Figure 32: Percentage of HMO's and Flat Conversions across Belfast



- 4.79 If the parameters are broadened slightly to include every small area with over 5% concentration, this is represented in figure 32 above. An interesting fact is that the areas approaching or just exceeding 10% now are the areas where the HMO nodes were previously designated (red outlines). This suggests that the node policy has been working. However, it is unclear whether this has reduced pressure on the other areas and whether there is a potential risk that these node locations could become the new problem areas in the future.

- 4.80 The existing HMO Subject Plan sets out a methodology for calculating the percentage of HMO's in an area as follows:

- “The level of multiple occupation within an area, whether designated or not, will be measured by:
- the number of HMOs recorded by the NIHE at November 2004; plus
- the number of HMO development units subsequently approved by the Department (**none since 1972**); plus
- the number of extant permissions for HMO development units (**none since 1972**)

The total number of dwelling units in a Policy Area is measured by Ordnance Survey’s Pointer database. The Pointer database includes all dwellings with an address in Northern Ireland. This assessment was undertaken across the individual Policy Area and not on a street by street basis.

4.81 Most of the policy areas identified in the Subject Plan are now well below 30% according to the NIHE’s HMO Register – refer to figure 33 below. The first column shows the Subject Plan percentages and the second column shows the NIHE Register percentages – as can be seen there is a significant difference and only 4 policy areas would be designated on the basis of this updated evidence (note that the figures in orange are over the 30% threshold).

Figure 33: HMO evidence base

HMO Policy Area	Subject Plan (%)	NIHE HMO Reg (%)
Adelaide	42	15
Atlantic	40	6
Ballynafeigh	31	6
Botanic, Holylands, Rugby	68	45
Castleton	63	16
Cavehill	35	8
Cliftonville	49	9
Donegall Road	38	3
Edinburgh Street	61	36
Eglantine	80	25
Fitzwilliam	48	16
Harleston	37	5
Jameson	29	4
Lower Ormeau	30	12
Malone	51	2
Meadowbank	42	19
Mount Charles	60	26
Sandymount	35	66
South Parade	46	6
Stranmillis	64	49
Thorndale	33	8
Ulsterville	45	26

- 4.82 Possible causes for the discrepancy could be as follows:
- Current HMO register isn’t accurate;
 - Original evidence base for the Subject Plan was flawed; or

iii. There has been a large shift away from HMOs since the Subject Plan in 2004.

4.83 In relation to the accuracy of the HMO Register, the NIHE stated:

“...at the time the Subject Plan was drafted, not all HMOs had been inspected as the Registration Scheme had only come into force in 2004. The figures provided to the Planning Department were based on a Housing Market Analysis carried out by the Housing Executive at that time. All known HMOs have now been inspected and we estimate there are now less than 200 eligible HMOs not currently registered.” (NIHE, May 2017)

4.84 This seems to eliminate the first option and raises a question in relation to the evidence base used for the original Subject Plan. Given that the original evidence base was developed from a visual survey in 2004, it is likely that it would be difficult to verify the relational status of residents sharing properties without extensive survey work.

4.85 In relation to the third option, the rationale is that people may have been getting around the HMO restrictions by sub-dividing larger properties into flats. To assess this, planning histories since 1972 were analysed, checking for approvals for:

- a) Conversion to or from HMOs; and
- b) Sub-division from houses to flats across the city.

4.86 Figure 34 overleaf presents a comparison of the Policy Areas, sorted in order of concentration as per Subject Plan. Where there are HMO approvals, it would be reasonable to assume that the percentage of HMOs would increase from the Subject Plan however this has not been the case – in all cases, the percentage change has fallen. It would also be expected that higher percentages of sub-divisions would see a corresponding fall in the number of HMOs but this is not the case. As can be seen, the sub-divisions are generally lower than the NIHE HMO Register. This again suggests the discrepancies between the subject plan data and the current evidence is caused by inaccuracies in the original 2004 data.

4.87 However, it is noted that if the NIHE Register percentages (column 3 of figure 31) – which should already have picked up any HMO approvals – are added to the sub-division percentages in column 5, the combined figures in column 6 are closer to those from the Subject Plan. Orange figures are over 30%, yellow are over 20%. Also, it is noted that it is not the same areas that have concentrations e.g. Sandymount (66% HMO's but only 6% sub-divisions). But there are some correlations e.g. Mount Charles and Eglantine, which have both low 20% on HMOs and sub-divisions.

4.88 The above findings were used to inform the methodology for measuring the level of intensive forms of housing within Housing Management Areas as set out in the justification and amplification section of policy HOU10. They have also been factored into the decision to amend the percentage threshold within HMA areas to 20% (as opposed to the 30% for HMO areas in Subject Plan). The identification of specific HMA's and Intensive Housing Nodes will be dealt with at the Local Policies Plan stage. However, as acknowledged in the

POP consultation report, the suggestion of areas to be targeted has provided a valuable indication of locations to consider when developing proposed draft policies.

Figure 34: Comparison of policy areas by concentration of HMO's / Sub-divisions

HMO Policy Area	Subject Plan (%)	NIHE HMO Reg (%)	HMO Approvals (%)	Subdivision Approvals	NIHE HMO Reg and Subdivision Approvals (%)
Eglantine	80	25	4	21	46
Botanic, Holylands, Rugby	68	45	10	18	63
Stranmillis	64	49	8	10	59
Castleton	63	16	1	14	30
Edinburgh Street	61	36	3	3	39
Mount Charles	60	26	5	23	49
Malone	51	2	0	12	14
Cliftonville	49	9	0	11	20
Fitzwilliam	48	16	5	15	31
South Parade	46	6	1	10	16
Ulsterville	45	26	4	10	36
Meadowbank	42	19	1	4	23
Adelaide	42	15	2	2	17
Atlantic	40	6	0	13	19
Donegall Road	38	3	0	1	4
Harleston	37	5	0	0	5
Sandymount	35	66	9	6	72
Cavehill	35	8	0	11	19
Thorndale	33	8	0	15	23
Ballynafeigh	31	6	0	1	7
Lower Ormeau	30	12	1	2	14
Jameson	29	4	2	1	5

4.89 Figures 35 and 36 illustrate the NIHE HMO Register and flat conversions, calculated as a combined percentage of all residential units within the Census Small Area Boundaries for the North and South Belfast Policy Areas. The darker red indicates the higher concentrations. The policy areas are highlighted in blue – as can be seen, many of the policy areas (but not all) are located where there are concentrations over 20%.

Figure 35: South Belfast Policy Areas

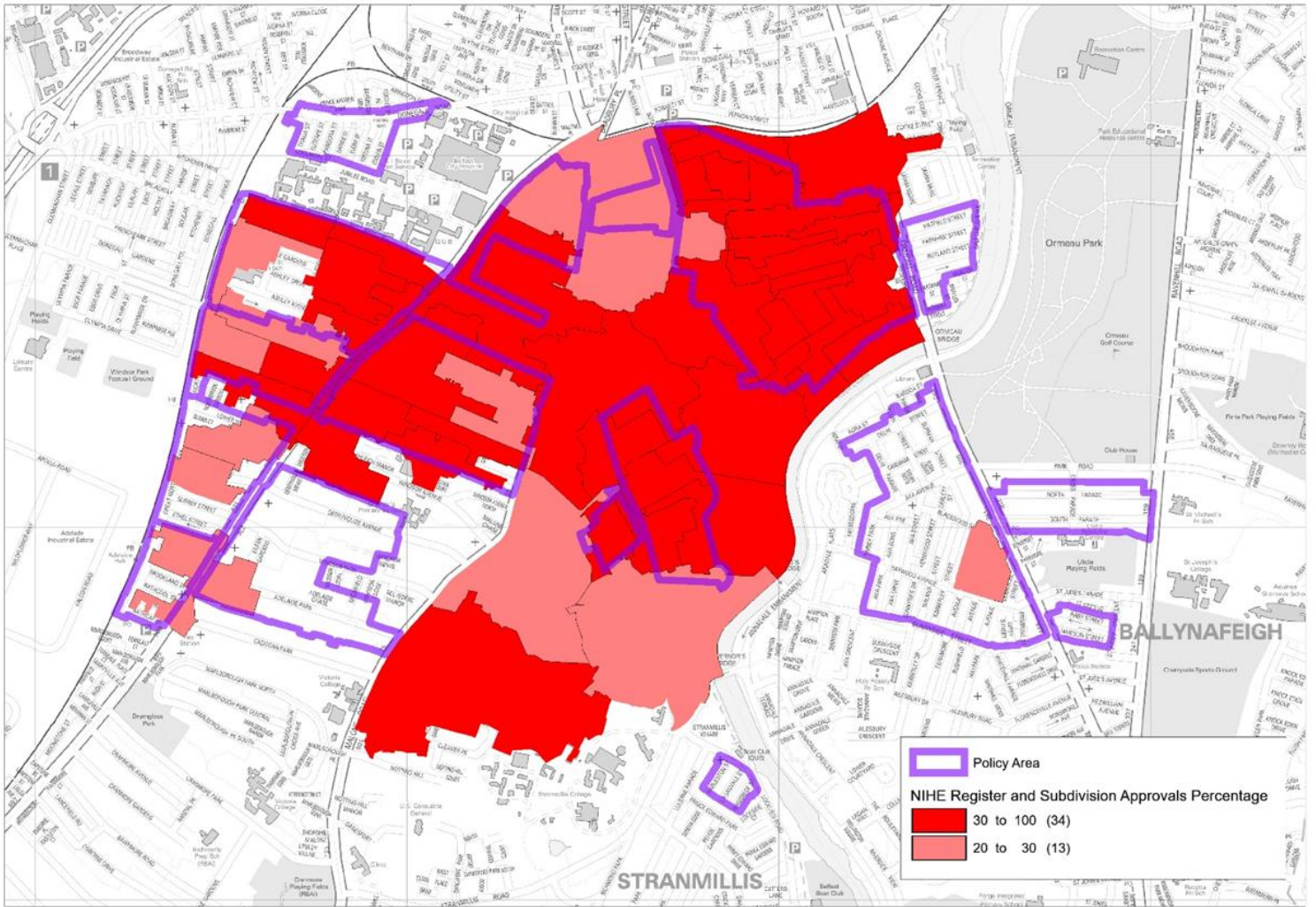
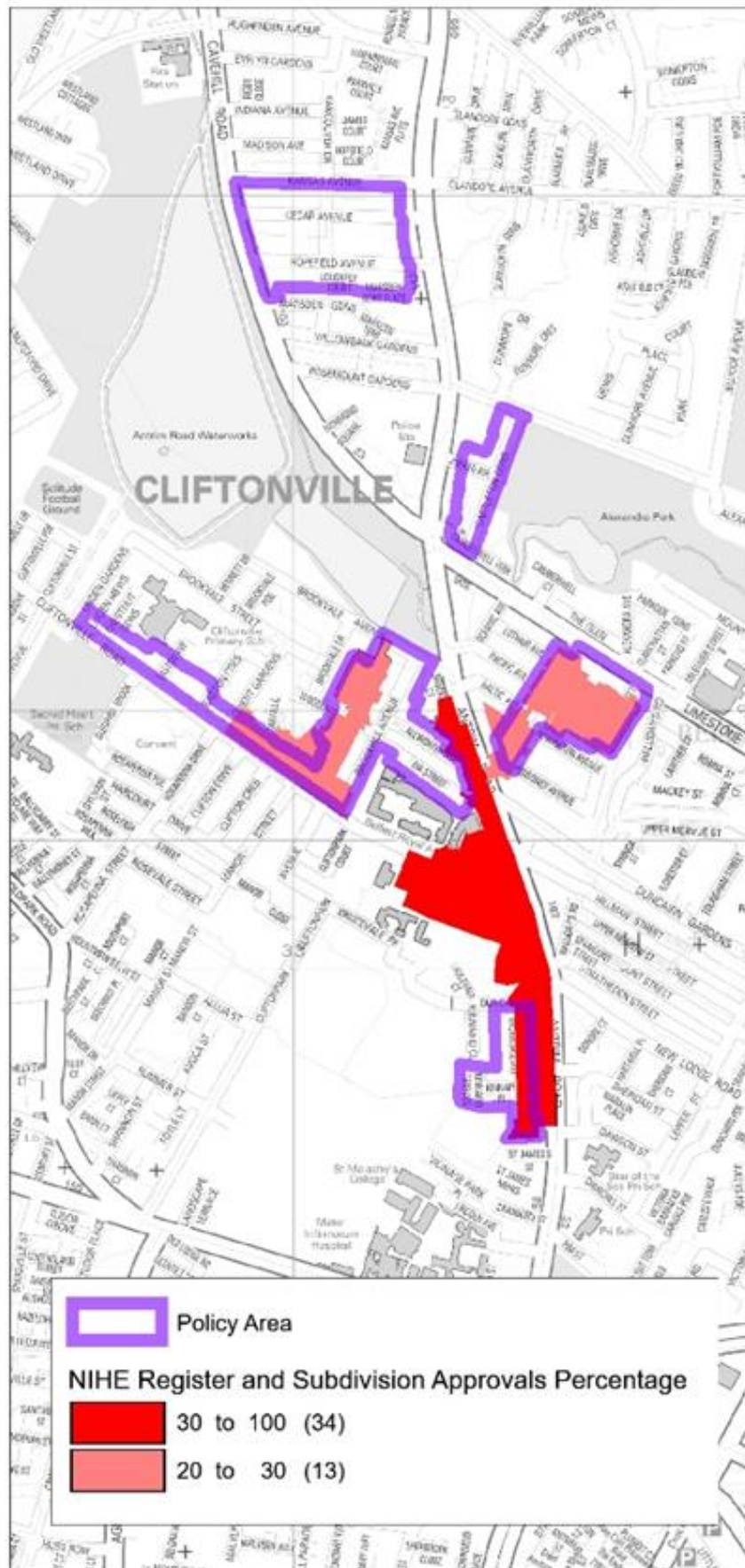


Figure 36: North Belfast Policy Areas



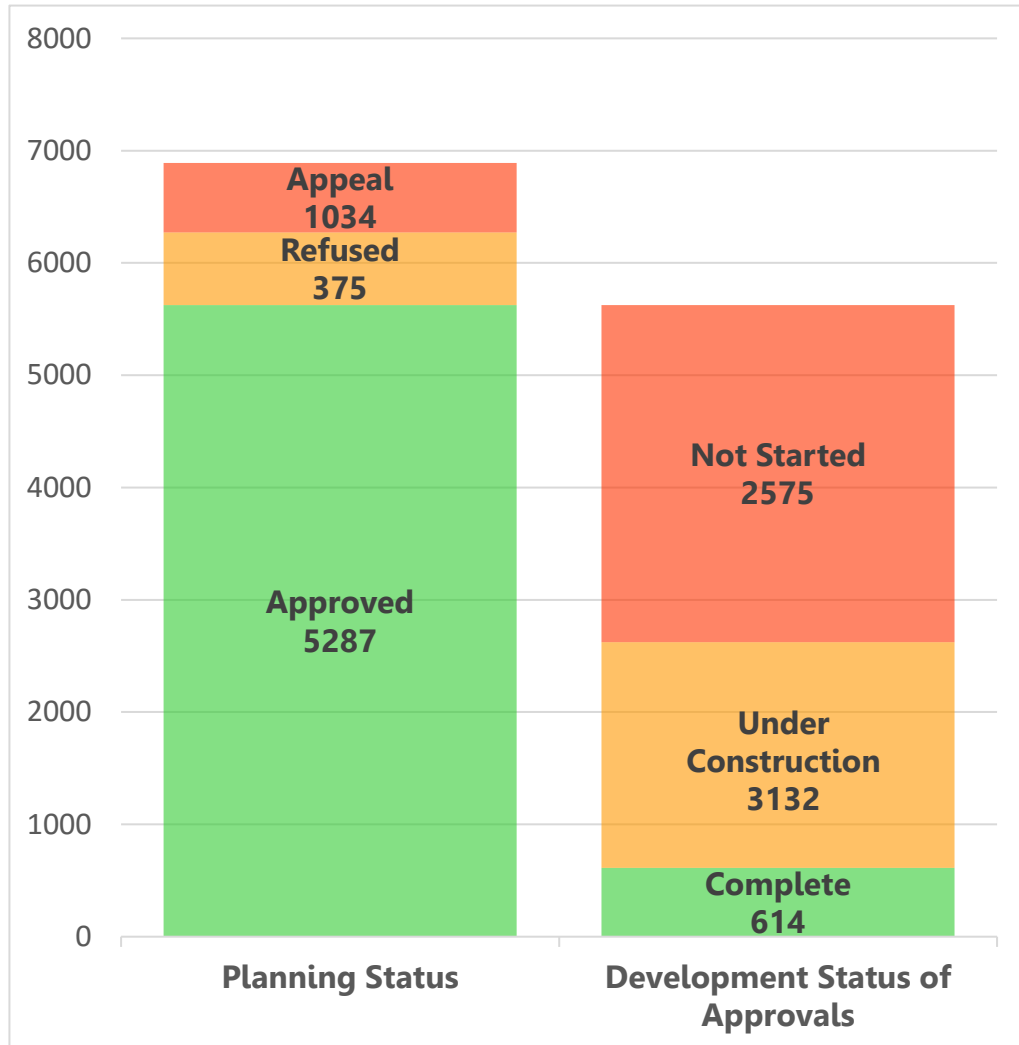
Large Scale Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation

Student Accommodation

- 4.90 The Council recognise that students studying and living in Belfast make a significant contribution to the local and regional economy. As of 2015/16, there were c.49,000 students registered across the two universities (QUB and UU)⁹. The continued growth in the number of students wishing to enter third level education in Belfast's universities and further education colleges, the re-location of Ulster University to the north of the City Centre and growth in the international student market all present significant opportunities for the city.
- 4.91 Although students are often most closely associated with HMOs, it is recognised that students can also be accommodated in university Halls of Residence, alternative forms of privately rented housing and, increasingly in Belfast, private PBMSA.
- 4.92 Well-managed accommodation can play an important role in growing the city centre population through the development of balanced communities with an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures.
- 4.93 Policy HMO7 of the Subject Plan deals with the provision of 'Large Scale Purpose Built Student Accommodation' and is the principle planning policy tool available when considering applications for PBMSA in Belfast City Centre. Whilst acknowledging the considerable economic and regenerative benefits that student accommodation brings to the city, it recognises the need to ensure that the accommodation provided for residents is of a satisfactory standard, and that the impact on neighbouring properties is not detrimental to their amenity.
- 4.94 As noted earlier, the Council introduced Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on PBMSA in Belfast. It gives extra advice and guidance to developers, the public and planning officers when working on planning applications for PBMSA developments in the City. The SPG on PBMSA was largely seen as a successful approach and will be incorporated into the new Plan Strategy. However, there will be a need to revise the SPG once the Plan Strategy is adopted.
- 4.95 Figure 37 below shows the planning status of applications for PBMSA, together with development status, as at February 2018.

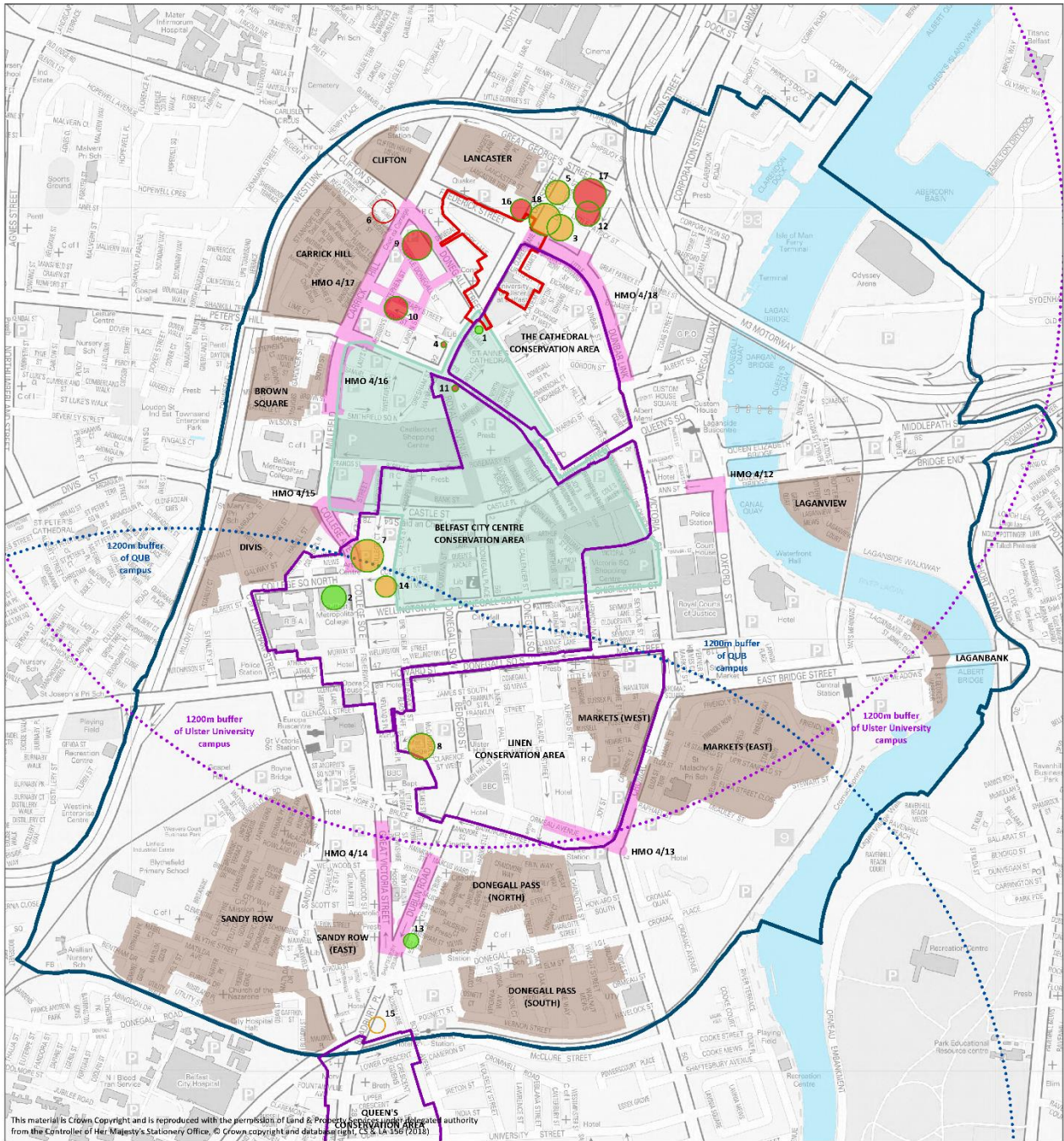
⁹ Housing Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Figure 37: Planning status of PBMSA and development status of approvals (Feb 2018)



4.96 Figure 38 outlines the location of these units throughout the city centre, also showing planning and development status, as at February 2018.

Figure 38: Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation in Belfast



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Belfast City Council
Belfast Planning Service

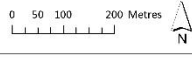
PURPOSE BUILT MANAGED STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN BELFAST CITY
- Approvals, Refusals and Live Applications (05/02/2018)

- Planning Status**
- Approved
 - Refused
 - Live application
- Development Status**
- Complete
 - Development Ongoing
 - Not Started

- Number of bedrooms**
- 10
 - 100
 - 1,000

Refer to PBMSA schedule for application details

- City Centre
- Primary Retail Core
- HMO Development Node
- Protected City Centre Housing Area
- Conservation Area
- Ulster University, Belfast Campus



Short-term let accommodation

- 4.97 Research carried out for the city of Belfast in July 2018¹⁰, found that there were 1,306 properties listed as being available for short-term let on the Airbnb website alone. The listings differ in how much of the property is available, with some listings offering the entire property, and others offering a private room or a shared room. Of the 1,306 properties listed, 62% (810) were entire home rentals, with the majority of the remaining 34% being private room rentals (there were only 2 properties offered as shared room rentals).
- 4.98 There has been a 95% increase in the rate of short-term rentals listed year on year since 2011. This gives an indication of the magnitude of the issue and has prompted the Council to take a proactive stance through the development of a stand-alone policy in the Draft Plan Strategy, which seeks to effectively manage the provision of short-term let accommodation in the city. The policy also aims to ensure that short-term let accommodation is conveniently located, has good access to public transport and management plans are provided where appropriate.

¹⁰ AirDNA, July 2018

Appendix A: Vacancy and Unfitness Levels

In order to translate the increase in households into a need for new housing units, account needs to be taken of vacancy levels and unfitness rates. The housing stock of an area includes occupied, vacant and unfit dwellings, which all influence the need for additional housing stock.

Any property that is lying empty is a wasted resource, both for the person who owns it and those looking for somewhere to live. If left vacant for a long period of time its physical condition can deteriorate and the property can become a nuisance for those living in the neighbourhood, discourage investment and lead to economic decline.

The 2011 Census recorded a figure of 44,000 vacant properties across NI (an increase on the figure of 31,600 recorded by the 2001 census). This 2011 figure differs from that set out in the NIHE's House Condition Survey of the same year, which notes the 2011 vacancy figure as 54,700 units. DfI estimate that the figure is likely to rise to over 60,000 by 2025, of which 15,300 are within the Belfast City Council Area and a further 2,300 net conversions, closures and demolitions.

Figure 39: Vacant Dwellings and Vacancy Rate by Location

	Vacant Dwellings	Vacancy Rate (%)
Belfast Metropolitan Area	12,817	4.8
Total Urban	26,152	4.9
All Vacant Dwellings	54,724	7.2

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive (based on the NIHE House Condition Survey 2011)

Between 2006 and 2011 the number of vacant properties in Northern Ireland continued to rise. In 2009 there were an estimated 12,817 vacant properties in Belfast, 4.8 percent of the stock. A high vacancy rate is particularly evident in the private rented sector, where 17,500 properties (12%) are vacant, a rate which is double that for the stock as a whole – this is due to the much shorter duration of tenancies and higher turnover rates. In the owner-occupied sector the vacancy rate is 4 per cent, while in the social sector it is lower still.

The Review into Affordable Housing completed in 2007 recommended a more pro-active approach to empty homes in both the social and private sectors as a way to addressing the lack of social and affordable homes in Northern Ireland. Research undertaken by the Housing Executive to examine the potential for bringing these properties back into use, based on secondary analysis of the 2006 House Condition Survey, revealed that the potential was much more limited than the gross figures.

Apart from new-builds not yet occupied, properties may be empty for a number of reasons. With the collapse of the housing market in current times, some may be pending re-sale or re-letting. Some may be unfit for habitation or are pending repair or improvement whilst others may be second homes not permanently occupied. These properties are currently out of use and therefore reduce the supply of available housing.

Figure 40: Vacant Properties Analysis (NI)

Category/Status	No. of Vacant Properties
Total vacant private sector dwellings	48,600
Awaiting demolition	(3,200)
Being modernised	(8,300)
Being used for another purpose (e.g. storage/office)	(2,500)
Other (resident in hospital, abroad etc.)	(5,700)
	28,900
Less than 6 months vacant	(12,900)
	16,000
Vacant holiday homes	(600)
Isolated rural vacant unfits	(2,600)
Could be brought back into use	12,800
Remaining vacant unfits	3,400
Excluding all unfit dwellings	9,400

Source: NIHE Housing Market Review and Perspectives 2015-18 (data taken from 2011 House Condition Survey)

The House Condition Survey (HCS) 2016 advises that the Northern Ireland vacancy rate is 3.7% with the Belfast Metropolitan Area at just below 5%. In 2011, the proportion of vacant dwellings recorded as unfit was 51% (28,000) compared to 44% (14,000) in 2001 demonstrating a clear link between unfitness and occupancy levels.

Appendix B: Homelessness

Homelessness is often considered in terms of persons sleeping on the streets. However, a number of alternate circumstances can also render a person homeless, for example, if they are without permanent residence and reside in temporary accommodation or engage in 'sofa-surfing'. In Northern Ireland, as at 2016, the temporary accommodation pool comprised approximately 90 statutory and voluntary sector hostels and 900 private self contained properties for emergency use. In total, there was access to almost 5,000 bed spaces. Over the past ten years, some 74,000 households have been accepted as statutorily homeless, with 50% of housing allocations going to homeless households.

The Northern Ireland Housing Statistics for 2016/2017 highlight 18,573 households throughout the region which are presenting as homeless for a variety of reasons (see Figure 36).

Figure 36: Households Presenting as Homeless by Reason 2016-17

Reason	2016-17
Sharing breakdown/family dispute	3,971
Marital/relationship breakdown	1,739
Domestic violence	865
Loss of rented accommodation	2,668
No accommodation in Northern Ireland	1,406
Intimidation ⁴	661
Accommodation not reasonable	4,119
Release from hospital/prison/other institution	435
Fire/flood/other emergency	72
Mortgage default	188
Bomb/fire damage (Civil disturbance)	53
Neighbourhood harassment	1,519
Other reasons	668
No Data on reason for presentation	209
Total	18,573

Source: Department for Communities, 2017

Of the 18,573 households, 11,889 (64%) were accepted as full duty applicants (FDA) (those that the Housing Executive has a legal responsibility towards). As at 2017, the percentage of households accepted as FDA in Belfast has increased by approximately 10% from the figures presented in 2009/2010. (see Figure 37). The homeless figures shown below have been accounted for in the Housing Executive's on-going social housing need assessment.

Figure 37: Level of Homelessness Provision in Belfast

	Number Presented	Awarded Full Duty Status
2009/10	5,345	2,717 (51%)
2010/11	5,544	2,766 (50%)
2011/12	5,285	2,493 (47%)
2012/13	5,367	2,856 (53%)
2013/14	5,329	2,506 (47%)
2014/15	5,843	3,064 (52%)
2015/16	5,664	3,316 (58%)
2016/17	5,395	3,289 (61%)

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive, 2017

Appendix C: Density Paper case studies

- 1) Parkside Development, Limestone Road, Belfast
- 2) The Bakery, Ormeau Road, Belfast
- 3) Social Housing, Templemore Avenue, Belfast
- 4) Former St. Malachy's Convent of Mercy, Belfast
- 5) Timberyard Social Housing, Cork Street, Dublin
- 6) Borneo-Sporenburg Island, Amsterdam
- 7) 266 Glossop Road, Sheffield
- 8) Donnybrook Quarter, Hackney, London
- 9) Claredale Street, Bethnal Green, London
- 10) Hammond Court, Waltham Forest, London
- 11) Newhall Be, Harlow, London
- 12) Buccleuch House, Hackney, London



PARKSIDE



THE BAKERY



TEMPLEMORE AVENUE



FORMER ST MALACHYS CONVENT



TIMBERYARD



BORNEO-SPORENBURG ISLAND



GLOSSOP ROAD



DONNYBROOK QUARTER



CLAREDALE STREET



HAMMOND COURT



NEWHALL BE



BUCCLEUCH HOUSE

Appendix D: HOU7 table – Lifetime Homes Standards

Note: Where standards listed in the table below have not been translated into policy criteria under HOU7, it is because those standards are considered to lie outside the remit of planning control.

Table outlining how HOU7 criteria a) – f) were formulated

Lifetime Homes Standard	Included in policy?	Relevant criteria
1) Parking	Yes	a)
2) Dwelling approach (to main entrance)	Yes	a)
3) Approach to all entrances	No	N/A
4) Entrances	Yes (in part)	b)
5) Communal stairs and lifts	No	N/A
6) Internal doorways and hallways	No	N/A
7) Circulation space	No	N/A
8) Entrance level living space	Yes	c)
9) Potential for entrance level bed space	No	N/A
10) Entrance level WC and shower drainage	Yes	d)
11) WC and bathroom walls	No	N/A
12) Stairs and potential through-floor lift in dwelling	No	N/A
13) Potential for fitting of hoists	No	N/A
14) Bathrooms	Yes (in part)	e)
15) Glazing and window handle heights	Yes	f)
16) Location of service controls	No	N/A

Appendix E: HOU7 table – HAG Wheelchair Standards

Note: Where standards listed in the table below have not been translated into policy criteria under HOU7, it is because those standards are considered to lie outside the remit of planning control.

Table outlining HAG wheelchair housing design standards and rationale for criteria g) – o) of HOU7

Wheelchair Housing standard (summarised from HAG)	Included in policy?	Relevant criteria
Parking spaces	Yes	h)
Approach to entrance	No	N/A
Entrance	No	N/A
Pathways	Yes	i)
Ramped areas	No	N/A
Carports (direct/covered access to dwellings)	No	N/A
Doorways	Yes (in part)	k)
Entrance area turning circle	Yes	j)
Wheelchair storage	Yes	l)
Entrance area charging point	No	N/A
Corridor/hall width & length	Yes	k)
Accessible rooms turning circle	Yes	j)
Living Room Space	No	N/A
Fire safety	No	N/A
Lift/lifting platform	Yes (in part)	m)
Natural Light	No	N/A
Fixtures and fittings standards	No	N/A
Adaptable and flexible layout	No	N/A
Accessible storage, services and fittings	No	N/A
Kitchen turning circle	Yes	j)
Connection between kitchen and eating area	No	N/A
Reachable appliances and controls	No	N/A
Uninterrupted worktop arrangement/layout	No	N/A
Remote winder type handles to windows above worktops	No	N/A
Slip resistant floor covering	No	N/A
Shelving heights above worktops	No	N/A
Space for tumble drier dishwasher and trolley/portable storage cabinet	No	N/A
Windows/glazing standards in habitable rooms	Yes (in part)	f)
Placement of controls, switches, sockets, meters, thermostats etc.	No	N/A
Automatic heating systems and controls	No	N/A
Door entry phone and remote door release	No	N/A
Layout supporting ease of access and use of fittings	Yes (in part)	j)
Wall structure	No	N/A
Additional WC	No	N/A

Shower room size and shower area	No	N/A
Bathroom turning circle	Yes	j)
Doors outward opening	No	N/A
Level access shower tray and thermostatic controls	No	N/A
Sealed impermeable floor to wet rooms	No	N/A
WC position	No	N/A
Consideration of future potential for ceiling hoist from bedroom to bathroom	No	N/A
Single lever taps	No	N/A
Knee space below basin	No	N/A
Minimum bedroom sizes (m)	No	N/A
Bedroom types (Nos.)	No	N/A
Approach, entrance/exit to other bedrooms on same level	Yes	k)
Bedroom turning circle	Yes	j)
Clearance/activity space	No	N/A
Ceiling structure and hoists	No	N/A
Built-in storage space	Yes	n)
Garden requirements	Yes (in part)	o)
Balconies	No	N/A

Belfast Planning Service

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