



Response to Consultation

Date: 16 January 12
Consultation: DSD Community Consultation

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents registered and non-registered housing associations in Northern Ireland. Collectively, our members provide 37,000 good quality, affordable homes for renting or equity sharing. Further information is available at www.nifha.org

General Comments

NIFHA welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation document which has received a largely favourable response by our members. The document does not indicate where it will sit within the overall Housing Association Guide and we anticipate that this will eventually form part of the Housing Management Guide. The Federation and its members recognise and welcome the valuable contribution that consultation and involvement of the community can bring to the development or acquisition of dwellings in a particular location.

This guidance around consultation is therefore appreciated as a model to define how and when consultation with communities should be carried out and illustrating the benefits consultation of this kind should bring to Housing Associations and the communities they work in.

Specific Comments

The Federation notes, and has passed on the details to our members of the requirement for Housing Associations to make a pre-contract request to the landowner to ascertain if any restrictions or covenants exist in the lease or contract which may prohibit the Association from purchasing units for use by social tenants. We appreciate that this may reduce the amount of nugatory work, for our members, by their progressing with off the shelf purchases only to discover that they are prevented from allocating them to tenants for social housing because of restrictions within the lease or contract.

However our members have raised concerns that the consultation process may extend the time required for development if communities identify a number of concerns which all have to be addressed prior to the scheme progressing. Whilst our members are broadly sympathetic to concerns within some communities with the provision of social housing they suggest that the standard of housing developed and the range of housing services provided would normally bring enhancements to those communities.

Consultation with communities can at times be intensive in terms of staff hours but we hope that focussed and effective consultation will bring overall benefits to the communities, the Housing Associations and their tenants in the longer term.

We hope you find our comments useful.

Submitted on behalf of NIFHA by:

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