

Response to Consultation

Date: 30 September 2008
Consultation: Belfast City Centre Westside Regeneration District

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents 40 housing associations. This includes the 33 associations registered and regulated by the Department for Social Development (DSD). Collectively, these associations provide 30,000 good quality, affordable homes for renting or equity sharing. Further information is available at www.nifha.org

Background

The Federation is grateful to our colleagues within the DSD, to ensure that our members have been given the opportunity to comments on this proposal.

General Comments

NIFHA welcomes the overall concept of the Westside Regeneration plan for Belfast city centre. Having discussed this proposal with our members, we would like to make the following specific points in relation to the published consultation:

1. Those responsible for the implementation of the plan must ensure that the proposed “sense of place” gives due consideration to mixed use development and in particular, prioritise the incorporation of social and affordable housing.
2. It is important that the planners are advised to take account of accessibility issues for those who may require special assistance, particularly in light of prescribed efforts to retain the original character of street areas and frontage.
3. All relevant stakeholders must be made aware that city centre living should not be confined to the development of the private sector alone, but mixed development must be encouraged in order to create and promote a healthy and well-balanced society.
4. The development of a high quality market, is a very welcome aspect of development and the Department should strengthen its links with the social economy network so that any new employment opportunities should focus particularly on including those living in close proximity to these market places. Our members have also intimated that the future of a vibrant city centre will be determined by a sensible mix of residential and commercial use.

Submitted on behalf of NIFHA by:

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