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Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate  
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B.C.C.R.D.

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Dear 

## Comments on the Draft West Side Regeneration Plan

Please find enclosed comments on behalf of the NIHE in response to the above plan.

### 1. General

The Housing Executive welcomes the draft regeneration masterplan proposed for this sector of the city, and in particular is supportive of the lead role DSD will play in the implementation of a strategic comprehensive approach.

### 2. Housing Provision

The Housing Executive welcomes the proposals for the provision of mixed-tenure 322 housing units in the area. The Department envisages 20% of these units being affordable, by which we assume is meant a combination of social and low cost privately owned housing. This should be clarified by the Department in the final document.

The overall trend in Belfast has been one of rising waiting lists with supply failing to meet this increasing demand. The annual Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) calculates a requirement of 6,182 units for Belfast, the next five years (2008-13). During the same period the Social Development Programme records an anticipated supply of an additional 4,799 units. The programme falls short of meeting the housing need by approximately 1,457 units. In view of this shortfall the Housing Executive believes that the majority of the 20% affordable allocation should be social housing. The social and other affordable housing should be "pepper-potted" throughout the housing development so that it is fully integrated.

The Affordability Index indicates that there is a high demand for affordable housing in Belfast, especially for first time buyers, with no house sales deemed affordable in 2007. The University of Ulster quarterly house price index for the first quarter of 2008 has shown a decline in average house prices in Belfast. However, despite the downturn in the housing market, house prices are still out of reach to many first time buyers; with house prices in Belfast averaging £254,011. Tightening lending criteria from banks in response to the credit crunch has also meant that first time buyers are finding it more difficult to obtain a mortgage. Increasing deposits and a higher price of borrowing compounded with high house prices in relation to incomes, has meant many first time buyers are finding it increasingly difficult to access the housing market.

The Housing Executive would want to promote any new social housing as "shared future" and to encourage applications from all sections of the community. Residential provision should include an element of wheel-chair accommodation.

### **3 Access**

The quarter will have wide range of mixed provision including residential, retail and public space. It is the view of the Housing Executive Board that traffic management and calming is critical giving priority to pedestrian areas and ensuring that older people and people with disabilities have access to all areas.

### **4. Linkages**

It is our belief that this regeneration plan should not be developed in isolation but should actively seek to complement the wider investment / regeneration activity proposed in the Lower Falls Masterplan, the West Belfast Strategic Regeneration Framework and the Greater West Belfast Housing Strategy.

I trust you will find these comments helpful.

Yours faithfully



**P McIntyre**  
**Chief Executive**