



Subject:	Intermediate Rent Development of Policy and Model: Consultation
Date:	8 th December 2021
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to consider the Council's response to the public consultation by the Department for Communities (DfC) in relation to the introduction of an Intermediate Rent model for the housing market. The closing date for this response is 14 January 2022.
1.2	In summary, the important potential role for an intermediate rent product would be supported to help meet affordable housing need and that the proposals within this consultation are a significant step in the right direction. However, it is considered that a number of key questions need to be carefully considered before it can be fully determined if the product proposed is truly deliverable in a Northern Ireland context.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the Intermediate Rent Development of Policy and Model: Consultation document (Appendix 1); and • consider and if appropriate approve the appended draft response to the consultation for submission to the DfC in advance of 14 January deadline (Appendix 2).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Regional Development Strategy 2035 recognises that the provision of more affordable housing helps to build strong balanced communities. Additionally, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement acknowledges the role of the development plan as the primary vehicle for facilitating identified need by zoning land for housing and indicating where a proportion of site may be required for affordable housing.</p>
3.2	<p>The Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) draft Plan Strategy (dPS) contains an ambitious policy approach to the provision of a minimum of 20% affordable housing as a proportion of all housing schemes of 5 units or more.</p>
3.3	<p>The definition of affordable housing has recently been expanded to include the category of intermediate housing for rent alongside social housing and intermediate housing for sale. This represents an important aspect in facilitating the development and delivery of new affordable housing models, such as Intermediate Rent, into the housing market here. It is acknowledged that increasing social housing alone is not the only solution, and that growing the supply of other affordable products can help address housing need in its broadest sense.</p>
3.4	<p>Northern Ireland presently supports social renting through both the housing association sector and the Housing Executive. It also has a long established shared ownership model, where the primary provider, the Co-Ownership Housing Association, also provides a market rental model which returns rent to the tenant in the form of equity to support access to home ownership – Rent to Own.</p>
3.5	<p>There is however no affordable rent provision at present aimed at tenants who cannot or do not wish to access home ownership but would be unlikely to attain sufficient points on the Common Waiting List to have a realistic chance of accessing social housing in an area of choice.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Intermediate Rent Development of Policy and Model: Consultation</u></p>

	<p>In a statement to the NI Assembly in November 2020, the Communities Minister set out an ambitious housing programme and introduced new housing options including Intermediate Rent. This new product supports the SPPS aim of assisting eligible households into affordable housing and will help meet the affordable housing obligations of Policy HOU5 set out in the draft Belfast Local Development Plan 2035.</p>
3.7	<p>The consultation on an Intermediate Rent policy and model was launched by the DfC on 18th October and is attached at Appendix 1. Although, the Council are extremely supportive of the delivery of this new product, it is not possible to provide a definitive view on the specific product proposed until there is better understanding on how the model will be delivered in practice.</p>
3.8	<p>Therefore, the draft response at Appendix 2 sets out a number of aspects of the proposals that we believe merit further considerations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for new affordable housing product(s); • The need for a single programme operator; • Funding mechanisms; • Construction and quality standards; • Setting the appropriate rent level; and • Deliverability.
3.9	<p>In summary, the important potential role for an intermediate rent product would be supported to help meet affordable housing need and that the proposals as set out within the consultation documentation represent a significant move in the right direction. However, it is considered that a number of key questions need to be carefully considered before it can be fully determined if the product proposed is truly deliverable in a Northern Ireland context.</p>
3.10	<p>Officer's from across Council are due to meet with DfC officials on Friday, 10th December 2021 to discuss the consultation proposals. Should anything arise from that meeting that would require amendments to the response as proposed at Appendix 2, an updated report will be brought to the CG&R Committee meeting in January for approval, in advance of the response being submitted to DfC by 14th January.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Financial and resource implications</u></p> <p>There are no resource implications associated with this report.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Equality implications or Good Relations implications/Rural needs assessment</u></p>

	The DoC have published an accompanying Section 75 Equality Screening document on their website and a Rural Needs impact assessment has also been produced and is available on request.
4.0	Appendices - Document attached
	Appendix 1: Intermediate Rent Development of Policy and Model: Consultation, Department for Communities Appendix 2: Draft Council consultation response