

Draft Planning Policy Statement 22: Affordable Housing

Comments by

Northern Ireland Environment Link

24th September 2014

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) is the networking and forum body for non-statutory organisations concerned with the environment of Northern Ireland. Its 65 Full Members represent over 90,000 individuals, 262 subsidiary groups, have an annual turnover of £70 million and manage over 314,000 acres of land. Members are involved in environmental issues of all types and at all levels from the local community to the global environment. NIEL brings together a wide range of knowledge, experience and expertise which can be used to help develop policy, practice and implementation across a wide range of environmental fields.

These comments are made on behalf of Members, but some members may be providing independent comments as well. If you would like to discuss these comments further we would be delighted to do so.

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NIEL welcomes the opportunity to comment on *Draft Planning Policy Statement 22: Affordable Housing*. NIEL broadly supports the development of affordable housing in Northern Ireland – we would like to see more of it, and in mixed developments. We commend DoE and DSD for demonstrating cross-Departmental working on this issue. We emphasise the importance of the policy context in terms of designing and constructing high quality residential and urban places and spaces – these guides and strategies (for example, the RDS, the SPPS, Creating Places, Living Places) should underpin all development in Northern Ireland.

In regard to thresholds, we agree with the threshold of 5 units and a contribution of 20% set out in draft PPS 22 and DSD developer contributions. This threshold is particularly important for rural areas where smaller developments are common and will ensure equal access to affordable housing for all areas.

NIEL would support the implementation of ‘option 2’ outlined in the Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment for the provision of affordable housing through a system of developer contributions. This option brings the greatest economic, social and environmental benefits for Northern Ireland.

We would suggest that the PPS 22 affordable housing Policy AH 1 and the justification text are incorporated in full within the SPPS, to ensure in the long term affordable housing policies are retained at a regional level.

NIEL supports the more detailed comments and recommendations of Community Places.