

**Regional Planning Directorate**



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

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To

Heads of Planning (Councils)

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Your Reference:  
Our Reference:

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Dear Heads of Planning

**RE: HOUSING GROWTH INDICATORS 2016-2030**

You will be aware that the Department recently undertook an exercise to refresh the Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) set out in the Regional Development Strategy.

The work is now complete and a 2016-based Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) paper is attached for your information. The paper sets out revised HGIs, taking account of updated data for three of the components which previously made up the HGIs, namely updated NISRA Household Projections, new House Condition Survey data published by NIHE and more recent data from the NISRA Central Survey Unit combined survey sample. The updated HGIs cover the period to 2030, ensuring they better correspond with the timescale for the majority of Local Development Plans (LDPs) currently under preparation.

It is important to note that HGIs do not forecast exactly what will happen in the future. They are policy neutral estimates based on recent trends and best available data on households and housing stock. They assume that recent trends will continue into the future. They do not attempt to model existing policy or societal factors nor predict the impact that future policies, changing economic circumstances or other future events may have on housing requirements in LDPs. For these reasons those preparing LDPs should not regard the HGIs as a cap on housing or a target to be met.

Notwithstanding the above, as the HGIs are based on best available data, they are therefore an important starting point to guide the assessment of the overall housing requirement identified in the LDP. The SPPS identifies a range of further considerations that, in addition to the HGI, should also inform this housing allocation. These include the

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RDS Housing Evaluation Framework; allowance for existing commitments; urban capacity studies; allowance for windfall housing; application of a sequential approach to site identification; Housing Needs Assessment/Housing Market Analysis and transport assessments.

Rather than accepting the HGI estimate as a target to be planned for, Councils should first consider its applicability to local circumstances in the context of the above-mentioned assessments and other relevant local evidence. This may include, for example, other Council strategies/objectives (for instance in relation to urban regeneration or economic growth); the likely impact of corresponding strategies in neighbouring councils; the capacity of existing or planned infrastructure to facilitate development; or other evidence in respect of recent build rates. This is not an exhaustive overview of the types of local evidence that may be relevant.

In summary, LDPs must aim to make provision for the housing requirement considered appropriate as a result of analysis of all relevant sources of evidence, including the HGI estimates provided by this Department. This reflects the reality that appropriate LDP housing requirements are influenced by a complex range of factors within the plan area and beyond.

Councils should now take account of this revised indicator alongside all other relevant evidence gathered to date, to justify the housing requirement in the draft Plan Strategy; depending on the methodology or approach used to arrive at this requirement, this update may have a variable impact. It is important that Council can demonstrate that they have taken this revised indicator into account. I am of the opinion that it is in the interests of both Local Councils and the Department that Plans are prepared using the most up to date estimates available. This reflects the requirement for LDPs to be prepared using a sound evidence base of which the HGIs are an important element.

Yours sincerely



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**Chief Planner &**  
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Cc Council Chief Executives