



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

FODC206

FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Position Paper 13

Housing Allocation

November 2015

Housing Allocation

Purpose: To provide members with details of housing allocations for Fermanagh and Omagh settlements for the development plan period 2015-2030.

Content: This paper provides information on:

- (i) The regional policy context for housing allocations in Fermanagh and Omagh;**
- (ii) An overview of housing zonings within the current the Area Plans for Fermanagh and Omagh;**
- (iii) Consideration of the Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) as contained in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the options for housing allocations.**

Recommendation: That the Council notes the provisional housing allocations as calculated using household projections and agree that this paper be updated upon receipt of revised HGIs later in 2015.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This is one of a series of papers being presented to the Planning Committee as part of the preparatory studies aimed at gathering the evidence base for the new local development plan.

1.2 The purpose of this paper is to provide Housing Allocations for the urban and rural areas for the period 2015 – 2030 based on the current Housing Growth Indicators provided in the RDS 2035. It should be noted that DRD are currently in the process of revising the HGIs for Northern Ireland and upon receipt of the revised HGIs, it is recommended that this paper be updated using those figures.

1.3 This paper has been informed by the settlement evaluations which proposed a settlement hierarchy for Fermanagh and Omagh District. Based on the RDS objective of achieving balanced growth and taking account of the HGIs in the RDS 2035, options for allocating housing land across the settlement hierarchy are considered. The consequences of the preferred option for allocating housing land has also been assessed in relation to existing commitments and housing land supply identified within the Northern Ireland Housing Monitor

2014-2015. The position arrived at in this paper will have to be revisited if the current HGIs are revised. The preferred option will be subject to Sustainability Appraisal.

2.0 Regional Policy Context

2.1 The Regional Policy Context is provided by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and regional planning policy statements.

a) Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

2.2 The RDS sets policy directions for the provision of housing that aim to deliver development in a more sustainable manner. This means providing additional housing in the Hubs (SFG 12) and sustaining rural communities living in smaller settlements (i.e. smaller towns and villages) and the open countryside (SFG 13). It is important to reinforce our vibrant rural communities so that they do not begin to decline at the expense of the main urban centres/hubs.

2.3 In accordance with this objective, the RDS, sets a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located in appropriate “brownfield” sites¹ within the urban footprints² of settlements greater than 5,000 population (RG 8). In Fermanagh and Omagh, there are two settlements which have a population significantly greater than 5,000 – Enniskillen (13,823) and Omagh (19,659)³.

2.4 The RDS identifies regional housing needs as Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) across Northern Ireland. HGIs have been produced as a guide for the preparation of development plans and the figures are an estimate of the new dwelling requirement for the former 26 districts for the period 2008-2025. The HGI has been set at 6,800 dwellings for Fermanagh and 6,100 in Omagh District. When projected on a pro rata basis to 2030 the end of the plan period, the figures are 8,800 for Fermanagh District and 7,898 for Omagh District (Table 1)

Table 1: HGI Projected Figures to 2030

DISTRICT (HISTORIC)	HGI PROJECTED TO 2030
FERMANAGH	8,800
OMAGH	7,898
TOTAL	16,698

2.5 However, recent advice from DRD is that the HGI figures are currently being revised. DRD have stated that the revised figures will be closely based on the most recent NISRA household projections figures (NISRA March 2015) and that, accordingly, there is likely to be a significant reduction in the revised HGIs.

¹ Brownfield sites are sites within a settlement limit which are or were occupied by a permanent structure. These may include underused buildings or vacant buildings for example. May also be referred to as “Previously Developed Land”

² The urban footprint of a settlement limit is the continuously built up area which has a formal urban use.

³ Figures taken from Key Statistics for Settlements, July 2015 (Census 2011)

b) Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

- 2.6 The SPPS aims to underpin the regional guidelines in the RDS by promoting a more sustainable form of development, encouraging more housing within existing urban areas, encouraging good design and achieving balanced communities.
- 2.7 When allocating land for housing developments, the SPPS advises that LDPs should be informed by:-
- The RDS Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs)
 - The RDS housing evaluation framework – which takes account of the varying capacities of settlements and will assist councils in making judgements on the allocation of housing growth
 - Allowance for existing housing commitments i.e. dwellings already constructed, approvals not yet commenced and residential development proposals likely to be approved.
 - Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) which should be devised to provide an evidence base for the allocation of land to meet specific types of housing needs such as affordable housing, social housing, supported housing or traveller accommodation.
 - Urban Capacity Studies – an assessment of the potential of brownfield sites to provide housing land, the availability of infill sites and the potential to reuse existing urban buildings.
 - Windfall housing i.e. housing sites from previously developed land within the urban footprint which may become available during the lifespan of the development plan.
 - Application of a sequential approach and identification of suitable sites for settlement of over 5,000 population.
 - Housing Needs Assessment/Housing Market Analysis (HNA/HMA) – provides an evidence base of land required to facilitate the right mix of housing tenures including open market and special housing needs.
 - Transport Assessments – these may be required for certain sites for residential use to achieve integration with public transport and other alternatives to the car.
- 2.8 In keeping with the SPPS, Local Development Plans (LDPs) should contain a number of measures, including:
- Set out the overall housing provision for each settlement.
 - Zone sites for housing in larger settlements which are sufficient to meet the identified need and identify sites in smaller settlements where it anticipated that most new housing will be located. In the latter case, this will be done through Housing Policy Areas (HPAs).
 - Set density levels for housing sites appropriate to the scale and location of the character of the area.
 - Identify settlements where the HNA has found an affordability pressure.
 - Zone land or include policy, as appropriate, to reflect the needs arising from the demand for second homes (This is not as pressing an issue in Fermanagh and Omagh as in other parts of the country).

- 2.9 It should be noted that the SPPS has removed all reference to the designation known as Dispersed Rural Communities (DRCs) which currently exist in PPS 21. However, their removal should not preclude the Council considering their inclusion in the LDP as they could provide locations for rural housing where the normal controls could be eased to allow for sympathetic housing development of a scale and density which will not affect the character of the locality. Suggested criteria for their designation may include evidence of community activity associated with a focal point such as a church, local hall, sports club, public house etc. In other rural areas, the council could bring forward at local plans stage, policies which state what kind of housing development will be permissible in rural areas e.g. infill sites, reuse of existing buildings or replacement dwellings.

c) Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS 12) - Housing in Settlements

- 2.10 PPS 12 reinforces the policy aims of the SPPS in that some of its policy objectives are to:
- Achieve more sustainable patterns of development
 - Encourage more housing in urban areas
 - Encourage an increase in density of housing in urban areas, where appropriate to the setting and character of the area.
- 2.11 When allocating housing growth, PPS 12 also lists the same considerations as those listed in the SPPS, namely:
- HGIs
 - Existing housing commitments
 - Urban Capacity Studies
 - Housing Needs Assessment
 - Windfall housing

3.0 Existing Area Plans and Housing Zonings

- 3.1 Both the Fermanagh and Omagh Area Plans established a settlement hierarchy upon which future development or growth was based. In both plans, the main town would be the focus for most development with the smaller towns and villages identified as local centres serving the needs of their rural hinterlands. However, there is a distinctive difference between the two plans in that the Omagh Area Plan uses a fourth tier below village level which comprises of small settlements or hamlets. These settlements could accommodate small groups of dwellings or single dwellings as long as their size, character and identity were preserved.
- 3.2 Fermanagh, therefore, has 39 villages compared to 9 in Omagh and they vary greatly in size, form and function and capacity to accommodate growth. For the purposes of this paper, and following on from the Strategic Settlement Evaluation Paper, it is felt that the approach used in the Omagh Area Plan should be adopted so that a four-tier settlement hierarchy consisting of main

towns, local towns, villages and small settlements is used within the new Local Development Plan.

- 3.3 In terms of housing provision, the dominance and strategic importance of the main towns of Enniskillen and Omagh within their respective districts was recognised in the Settlement Strategy of each Plan. In addition to land zoned for housing, the urban areas defined within the development limits of the main and local towns contained significant areas of unzoned or white land. In both Plans, the housing objectives were to identify sufficient land for new housing in the main and local towns to provide a choice of housing sites in convenient locations to support a range of dwelling types to meet different housing needs, and to protect the character of existing residential areas. Land was not zoned in villages or smaller settlements in order to allow flexibility.

(a) Omagh Area Plan 2002

- 3.4 The plan concentrates large scale land use zonings including housing in the main town of Omagh. The majority of housing land zonings are found in Omagh town where some 213 hectares were allocated. Additionally, approximately 46 hectares were allocated between the three local towns of Fintona, Dromore and Carrickmore.
- 3.5 Housing can also be accommodated within the settlement limits of 9 villages and 24 hamlets or small settlements although no land has been zoned for housing within these settlements. It should be noted that the status of some of the 24 small settlements may be revised in the incoming plan and this has been considered and recommended within the revised settlement hierarchy contained in the Strategic Settlement Evaluation Paper.

(b) Fermanagh Area Plan 2007

- 3.6 The plan concentrates large scale land use zonings including housing in the main town of Enniskillen. Approximately 170 hectares of land were allocated to housing although this reduced to 155 hectares with the development of the South-West Acute Hospital on one of the zonings. In addition, nearly 80 hectares were allocated between the two local towns of Lisnaskea and Irvinestown.
- 3.7 Housing can also be accommodated in the 39 villages although no land has been zoned for housing within these settlements. It should be noted that the status of some of these settlements as “villages” may be revised in the incoming plan and this has been considered and recommended within the revised settlement hierarchy contained in the Strategic Settlement Evaluation Paper.

4.0 Housing Need – Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) for the Plan Period

- 4.1 Having set out the regional policy context and how it relates to housing allocation, it is important to attempt to ascertain what the housing need is for

the Fermanagh and Omagh District over the incoming plan period. This will primarily be achieved by using the housing growth indicators (HGIs). However, as explained earlier, this can only be done on a provisional basis at this time using the current HGIs and taking account of household projections. It is anticipated that the HGIs will be revised downwards in line with the household projection figures and the allocations will be revisited at that time.

- 4.2 The 2012-household projections published by Northern Ireland Statistical Research Agency (NISRA) indicate lower levels of growth than previously suggested by the 2008-based projections. Thus, the number of households in Fermanagh and Omagh is likely to increase by only 4,337 between 2015 and 2030⁴ compared to 8,000 as suggested in Position Paper 2 Housing (November 2014). As the new HGI figures are unlikely to be available before autumn 2015, this paper will proceed to use current HGI figures but bearing in mind that there is a strong possibility that they will be revised downwards.
- 4.3 The existing HGI figures in the RDS 2035 cover the period 2008-2025 and therefore have to be extrapolated to 2030 (the end of the incoming plan period) using a simple pro rata calculation as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Existing and Projected HGI Figures

Former LGD	RDS HGI Figure (2008-2025)	Per Year/ Pro Rata Figure	HGI Figure 2008-2030 (Pro Rata X 22)
Fermanagh	6,800	400	8,800
Omagh	6,100	359	7,898
Totals	12,900	759	16,698

- 4.4 Whilst the overall HGI figure between 2008 and 2030 would be 16,698, the portion of this coinciding with the plan period 2015-2030 would equate to 11,385 (759 X 15) which is considerably in excess of the household projection figure of 4,337 for the same period.

5.0 Options for Housing Allocation

- 5.1 The Housing Paper set out what the options were for council when considering housing allocation. That paper stated that the settlement growth strategy which was part of the Population and Growth Paper should be adhered to when deciding how housing should be allocated across the settlement hierarchy. The settlement growth hierarchy aims to:
- Focus major population and economic growth on the two main hubs. In terms of housing, this means large scale housing land being zoned in these hubs;
 - Provide balanced growth in smaller towns with a degree of housing development being provided for;

⁴ 2012-based Household Projections 2012-2037, published 26-03-2015, NISRA

- Maintain villages as important local services centres with small housing developments being acceptable;
- Provide opportunities for individual dwellings or small groups of dwellings in the open countryside or in Dispersed Rural Communities.

5.2 To aid discussion, three options were identified within that paper based on regional policy, existing household levels in 2001 and the proposed settlement growth strategy. In all three options, the proportion for the smaller towns, villages and small settlements remained the same reflecting the need to sustain, consolidate and revitalise these settlements. Since then, the household figures from the 2011 Census have been released and these options have been revised as follows:

OPTION 1

This option would seek to maintain the status quo in terms of housing allocation in each of the former local government districts and would be based on the level of housing in the respective settlement hierarchy categories as per the 2011 Census. This would mean that each settlement would be allocated a share of the new housing allocation based on its existing share in 2011 with the countryside receiving the remainder (Table 1).

Table 1: OPTION 1

Settlement Category	Main Towns	Smaller Towns/ Villages/Small Settlements	Countryside
% of HGI	33%	26.2%	40.8%

OPTION 2

This option would seek to directly meet the RDS target of 60% all new housing to be located in the two main hubs of Enniskillen and Omagh. The proportion for the smaller towns, villages and small settlements remains the same as the existing share of households in 2011, with the remaining balance allocated to the countryside. This would result in 13.8% being allocated to the countryside (Table 2).

Table 2: OPTION 2

Settlement Category	Main Towns	Smaller Towns/ Villages/Small Settlements	Countryside
% of HGI	60%	26.2%	13.8%

OPTION 3

This option would seek to achieve a balance between options 1 and 2 in order to endeavour to strive to meet regional policy growth by still focusing on the hubs but at a lesser figure than the 60%, and sustaining the smaller settlements and the countryside in accordance with the growth strategy. Thus, the main towns would receive an allocation of 46.5%, the proportion to smaller towns and villages and small settlements remains the same with the remainder being allocated to the countryside (Table 3).

Table 3: OPTION 3

Settlement Category	Main Towns	Smaller Towns/ Villages/Small Settlements	Countryside
% of HGI	46.5% (based on average % of options 1 and 2)	26.2%	27.3%

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 As previously discussed in Position Paper 2, each of these options has its pros and cons. If Option 1 is chosen, there would clearly be no shortage of land across the settlements, particularly in the two main towns. However, this option does not satisfactorily meet the RDS objective of focusing growth on the hubs as the small towns, villages and the countryside would together receive twice the allocation of the two main towns.
- 5.2 In adopting a strong urban focus as presented in Option 2, there would be an opportunity to zone more housing land in the two hubs based on an allocation of 10,019 dwellings compared to the current total commitments and housing land supply of 7,331 dwellings. The rural allocation would amount to 2,304 dwellings over the plan period with the allocation to the small towns and small settlements remaining at 4,374 dwellings.
- 5.3 Option 3 affords more weight to the rural areas but still maintains an urban focus. This would result in an allocation of 7,765 dwellings between the two hubs which is broadly in line with existing housing land supply. However, this option would also allow for 4,558 dwellings in the rural area which, based on existing rates of permission, would represent a very generous provision over the plan period. This would not be in keeping with the RDS and SPPS with their emphasis on sustainable development in the countryside.
- 5.4 As the policy direction for rural housing in the LDP has yet to be established, it is not possible at this stage to come to any conclusions on what portion of housing should be allocated to the countryside. However, a suggested starting point could be based on existing rates of permissions for rural dwellings achieved under the current policies set out in PPS 21. Given that there was an annual average rate of 185 dwellings between 2012 and 2014 (see para.6.19

of Position Paper 2 Housing), there could potentially be 2,775 dwellings required over a 15 year period. This is equivalent to approximately 16.6% of the HGI which is only slightly higher than the portion for the countryside set out in Option 2, and would result in a slight decrease in the allocation to the main towns (57.7%).

- 5.5 All the figures in the options are based on an overall HGI figure for 2008-2030. When applied to only the 2015-2030 period - i.e. 11,385 - the number of dwellings allocated to each settlement category will be reduced. Based on NISRA's 2012 -2037 household projections, the figures are also likely to be lower again when DRD release the new HGIs.
- 5.6 The aim of the SPPS with regard to the countryside is to manage development in a manner which strikes a balance between protection of the environment from inappropriate development, while supporting and sustaining rural communities consistent with the RDS. In light of this, Members' views are sought on Option 2, taking into account the adjustment outlined in paragraph 5.3 as this option better reflects the policy thrust of the RDS and SPPS. Once a clearer picture has emerged on the Council's rural policy direction for the LDP, these figures will be revisited, taking into account the revised HGIs. It should also be noted that where some settlements require additional dwelling units, this does not imply that additional land outside the settlement will be required as many of the settlements have undeveloped and uncommitted land within their existing settlement limits.
- 5.7 Appendix 1 shows the existing share of households in 2011 in relation to existing housing land supply (Annual Housing Monitor 2015) for each settlement.