

# NWDA HOUSING POLICY

## Strategic Overview

The NWDA has a limited role in funding housing and related activity. The NWDA will only provide funds to support some aspects of housing schemes where there is a direct and demonstrable economic benefit, subject to resource availability. This note sets out criteria against which the NWDA will consider the benefits and appropriateness of providing funding.

The term 'housing funding' is used to mean any activity where the NWDA is providing financial support for projects that require capital expenditure on land remediation, land assembly and, in a limited number of cases, housing construction.

All proposed housing schemes must have a clear economic focus. This will be the key criteria to be applied by NWDA staff in assessing new proposals for housing investment from the single programme, and to focus the delivery of existing legacy schemes

## Strategic Criteria

The overriding objective for the NWDA is to achieve the sustainable economic development of the region. The reclamation of brownfield land is an important part of this agenda. Its re-use for housing is just one element, albeit an important one. In addition, any housing related proposals coming forward to the Agency will need to demonstrate a clear economic impact if they are to be considered. Housing schemes that are focussed primarily on the improvement of housing conditions alone, for example through the treatment of Local Authority estates and Registered Social Landlords properties, are very unlikely to meet this criterion, or to receive Agency support.

Within this there are four principal priorities determining the use of Agency funds for housing purposes:

### **1. For HMRA pathfinder areas**

The agency will provide gap funding only if all or most of the following conditions apply

- The housing assistance proposed is part of a comprehensive and agreed regeneration funding strategy which is well founded in relation to the needs and opportunities in the housing and labour markets and a sound assessment of the existing land use of the area.
- In the case of clearance or acquisition, NWDA powers are being used as a last resort if those of the local authority or EP are not appropriate.

- All mainstream resources (including EP, whose remit has been extended to include housing) for housing investment should have been fully exploited before NWDA funding is considered.
- NWDA investment should be focused on bringing forward mixed-use schemes with a clear economic content that improve the liveability of towns and cities.
- The proposed scheme will bring forward brownfield land for sympathetic and sustainable development, and develop innovative solutions to housing problems.

## **2. For non-HMRA pathfinder areas**

The Agency will continue with its present policy of only funding some aspects of housing schemes (mainly via land acquisition and reclamation) as part of a wider mixed use regeneration scheme that will result in significant economic outcomes and will strengthen the economic base of communities.

## **3. Rural areas**

The Agency will support the activities of rural housing associations (following guidance from the Housing Corporation) where investment in affordable housing can be shown to contribute to the economic viability of communities.

## **4. Supporting activity**

The Agency may fund the following activities

- Research and development to support the work of the regional housing board and to increase the impact of housing investment on the economy of the northwest.
- Strategic training and business development activity that maximises the economic impact of housing investment in the northwest and contributes to the regeneration of deprived communities.

## **Housing Criteria**

Those proposals that satisfy these strategic criteria, will also have to satisfy the following criteria which will be used to assess the suitability of project ideas at Initial Assessment Stage.

- The project must fit within the approved district housing strategy and link to the regional housing strategy priorities.
- The project will not have a negative impact on the surrounding housing market (ie HMRA pathfinder areas)

- The project can demonstrate a positive impact on the economic sustainability of the area.
- The project is of good architectural, design, landscape and energy efficiency quality, as shown by a design statement which has been endorsed by a design panel.

### **Project Specific Issues**

The key questions at the Detailed Appraisal stage will include the following.

- How the scheme will generate economic benefits for the target area, including:
  - the number of jobs and new businesses, value of investment etc;
  - how the scheme will enhance the economic sustainability of the area;
  - the impact on mainstream service provision ie schools and social services; and
  - whether there is good public access and infrastructure to the scheme
- How the project will contribute to the delivery of the regional housing strategy, including:
  - provision of new affordable housing stock to meet regional targets;
  - improvements in the quality of housing against the decent homes standard; and
  - attraction of private investment on unused brownfield land etc.
- How the project will contribute to the wider regeneration for the targeted area, including:
  - links to the existing regeneration strategy for the area (including neighbourhood renewal strategies); and
  - identifying the significance of the housing element in achieving the regeneration goals – ie changes in resident population, tenure, income levels, etc.

- Demonstrate how the housing investment fits within the needs of the wider housing market, including:
  - whether the new housing serve a particular community need;
  - there are specific issues of displacement of population – particularly with regard to the HMRA areas; and
  - whether, in relation to private sector housing, a levy can be applied to contribute to remediation costs/social housing/environment and access works.
- Investigate the construction methods of the project.
  - whether the scheme offers opportunities for innovative practice in terms of materials (reuse of building materials/sustainable energy use), or in terms of the design of the building relative to use and the surrounding environment;
  - whether the scheme has an acceptable design statement;
  - whether the NWDA could use this scheme as an exemplar of good practice.

### **Evaluation**

Proposers of schemes hoping to receive NWDA funding, whether directly or as part of a funding package, will need to make arrangements to monitor and evaluate the effect of the schemes

- on the immediate housing area, for example through an analysis of housing market characteristics, including house prices and activity levels, and
- on the surrounding area, for example by an analysis of the effect the scheme may be having on the supply of key workers.