

DSD PRESS RESPONSE TO THE DETAIL 07/06/12

Since coming into office last year, Minister McCausland has sought to more closely align housing and regeneration responsibilities within the Department to deliver more sustainable solutions to tackle disadvantage and target resources across the Department at those in greatest need.

As part of the annual approval of the Social Housing Development Programme, the Minister had several meetings with NIHE to discuss the draft programme presented to him and at the conclusion of those discussions was pleased to approve the Programme as submitted by NIHE. No schemes have been fast tracked.

During the last year the Department has been working closely with the Housing Executive to identify areas and communities that need a more strategic and sustainable approach to redevelopment that housing alone cannot deliver. The Housing Executive are already developing new proposals for the Doury Road in Ballymena whilst further work to regenerate Dunclug and Rathenraw are also being considered. These communities, like those in Lower Oldpark, Tigers Bay, Upper Long Streets, Ballysillan, Lower Shankill, Parkside and Queen Victoria Gardens need not just new, but better housing. Many of these estates have suffered from poor and unfit housing for many years with vacant homes blighting them and attracting anti social behaviour.

Waiting list data itself is just one snapshot of housing need, it does not and will never be able to capture the wider issues of unfit and dereliction that poor and empty homes bring on communities around them. For example, in the Upper Long Streets area of the New Lodge, an area of high housing need, we will demolish up to 190 older unfit homes and replace them with half as many new modern homes. Whilst this will actually reduce the overall number of houses available, it will tackle the level of unfit and blight and create a more sustainable housing mix to serve the community for many generations to come.