

# Shannon Chamber Submission to Chambers Ireland

**Re: Consultation on the National Housing Plan 2025–2030**

**Date:** 29 April 2025

**Submitted by:** Shannon Chamber

**On behalf of:** Our business members and regional stakeholders

## Introduction

Shannon Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the National Housing Plan 2025–2030. Housing availability, affordability, and adequacy are central to economic growth, regional development, workforce attraction and retention, and community well-being.

Drawing on feedback from our members and regional stakeholders, this submission outlines actionable recommendations that we believe will directly support the Government’s target of delivering 300,000 new homes over five years and create a more agile and responsive housing system.

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## Key Recommendations

### 1. Planning Reform for Strategic Delivery

- **Limit objections to local stakeholders:** Introduce legislative changes to restrict planning objections to individuals or organisations with a direct and demonstrable local connection to the proposed development. This would reduce spurious or ideologically driven delays while preserving the right of genuine local stakeholders to participate.
- **Rebalance local authority powers on density and height:** Amend planning guidance to prevent local authorities from rejecting developments solely based on height or density variations with surrounding structures. National strategy must take precedence to enable compact growth, as envisioned in the National Planning Framework.

## 2. Enable Greater Housing Supply in Both Urban and Rural Areas

- **Permit more rural housing:** Revise restrictive rural housing policies that prevent people from living in or returning to rural communities, while maintaining sustainable development and environmental standards.
- **Simplify house extension regulations:** Streamline planning exemptions and reduce regulatory burdens for homeowners wishing to extend existing properties. This provides incremental housing solutions, particularly for intergenerational living and growing families.

## 3. Promote Pragmatism in Crisis Response

- **Recognise urgency over perfection:** Embrace a more flexible approach to design standards where appropriate, enabling faster delivery of homes. As during the Covid-19 crisis, a pragmatic motto— *“Perfection is the enemy of good”*—should guide implementation of emergency and transitional housing strategies.

## 4. Adopt Modern Construction Techniques

- **Invest in modular and prefabricated housing:** Encourage local authorities and approved housing bodies to adopt off-site construction methods which can significantly reduce build time, improve quality control, and ease pressure on traditional construction supply chains.

## 5. Address Financial Barriers for SMEs in Housing Delivery

- **Facilitate access to low-cost funding:** Small and medium-sized developers face critical challenges accessing affordable finance. We recommend that the State intervene through:
  - Direct funding schemes
  - Guarantees for SME developers
  - Collaboration with banks to unlock finance at more competitive rates

## Recommendations for Public Procurement and Housing Policy Reform

### 1. Reform Public Procurement Regulations

Remove state-specific restrictions on public procurement processes and adopt a nationally standardised, commercially competitive tendering framework.

- Emphasize the importance of evaluating tenders based not solely on cost but on long-term value, quality, and performance. The lowest bid does not necessarily represent the most economically advantageous outcome over the lifecycle of a project.
- 2. **Promote Modular and Factory-Built Housing Solutions**

Encourage the adoption of modular and prefabricated housing by implementing supportive policy measures, including:

  - The development of a standardised grading system for modular housing design and construction quality, analogous to the Building Energy Rating (BER) scale. For example:
    - **Grade A1:** Premium specification — highest quality materials, advanced construction techniques, superior insulation, and energy efficiency.
    - **Grade B1:** Mid-range specification — balanced quality and affordability.
    - **Grade C1:** Entry-level specification — compliant with minimum standards.
  - Introduce tiered grant assistance corresponding to each specification level, ensuring that financial support aligns with construction quality and sustainability outcomes.

## Conclusion

Housing is no longer just a social issue—it is a competitiveness issue. Lack of affordable and available housing is now a barrier to enterprise growth, inward investment, and regional talent retention. We urge the Government to take bold, decisive actions that prioritise speed, scale, and strategic alignment with national priorities.

Shannon Chamber and our members stand ready to support this mission and work with Government at all levels to achieve it.

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