

Item

LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY



To:

Councillor Richard Johnson, Executive Councillor for Housing

Housing Scrutiny Committee 15/01/2020

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Local Lettings Policy sets out Cambridge City Council's (CCC) position on the management of its own social housing stock through the use of Local Letting Plans. A Local Lettings Plan is a set of guidelines or criteria governing which households can be allocated accommodation in a specific designated area. Local Lettings Plans are used to help create balance and cohesion where either a specific set of circumstances need to be addressed or where there are wider strategic objectives, such as helping to support the local economy.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Policy included in Appendix A

3. Background

- 3.1 The statutory basis for this document resides in section 166A (6) (b) of the Housing Act (1996). This directive gives local authorities the ability to allocate social housing accommodation outside of 'reasonable preference' groups, as defined in Appendix B of this document.
- 3.2 The Local Lettings Policy (2019) will replace the Local Lettings Policy (2017) which was agreed at Officer Level and which has been the main source of guidance for Officers when developing Local Lettings Plans for social housing stock. The decision to review the Policy was based upon a need to highlight the importance of incorporating evidence-based criteria within Local Lettings Plans; help guide Officer decisions so that they are consistent with the wider Council housing strategy and set out the Council's position in regards to Local Lettings Plans outcome monitoring and review.

4. Policy content

- 4.1 The Local Lettings Policy and the use of Local Lettings Plans are only applicable to two social housing scenarios:
- For relets in a specific area using current housing stock
 - For first-time social housing lets on a new development
- 4.2 Section 3.2 and 3.7 of the Local Lettings Policy gives examples of the objectives that may inform a Local Lettings Plan (See Appendix C). These lists are not exhaustive and seek to give an idea of what a Local Lettings Plan might contain. In each Local Lettings Plan the criteria underpinning the objective will be clearly defined. For example, an objective of a Local Lettings Plan may be to create a balance between those households in work and those out of work. The criteria supporting the objective might require 40% of the households allocated homes in that area to be working 16 hours a week or less. This may be in response to a specific set of circumstances or events, or to fulfil a requirement as set out in the 'Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-23'. Evidence supporting the decision to include the objective or criteria will be provided to the Housing Services Managers prior to approval.

- 4.3 It is also vital that (where data can be sourced) the approach to monitoring the criteria is identified and this is clearly linked to the review stages of the Local Lettings Plan. For example, if 40% of all properties should be allocated to households with at least one member in employment, then the Officer responsible for the Local Lettings Plan will be required to monitor activity against the 40% target.
- 4.4 The ability for the Council to allocate housing through Local Lettings Plans will be balanced with a clear regard for equalities implications. Officers responsible for completing Local Lettings Plan will be required to complete Equality Impact Assessments (EQiA) alongside the Local Lettings Plan. The EQiA will be reviewed at the same time as the Local Lettings Plan.
- 4.5 Local Lettings Plan will be reviewed at the following stages:
- every 3 years for **relets in a specific area using current housing stock**
 - **for first-time social housing lets on a new development** as soon as the homes have been let or sooner
 - for **all Local Letting Plans** bi-annually by the Housing Services Managers

The purpose of the review is to ensure the following:

- that all equalities implications are reviewed and the EqIA updated if necessary
- that where groups are being prioritised there is clear evidence demonstrating why this is the case
- that the desired objective for each Local Lettings Plan is on course and appropriate measures put in place where this is not the case (e.g. the development of a new Local Lettings Plan)

4.6 The Councils ability to ensure that particular groups are not being disadvantaged is also central to the Local Lettings Policy. For example, in cases where a Tenant with a history of drug or alcohol abuse or anti-social behaviour makes an application. In these cases the Officer will seek advice from the professionals supporting the Tenant to determine suitability.

5. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

This Policy will not have significant financial implications on residents. The ability to flexibly allocate housing will ensure that the Council can be proactive in the management of its own housing stock. This will have a positive financial impact as it will lead to better use of council resources.

(b) Staffing Implications

It is expected that the Policy and Procedure will provide clarity to staff by setting out expectations in regards to Local Lettings Plans content, evidence, monitoring and review.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

The potential impact on protected characteristic groups has been considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment (EQiA). The introduction of this Policy will not have equality implications on Council residents as clear mechanisms have been put in place to ensure robust monitoring of objectives and outcomes. Officers will also be required to complete and submit an EQiA alongside each Local Letting Plan for agreement and approval by the Housing Services Managers.

(d) Environmental Implications

None

(e) Procurement Implications

None

(f) Community Safety Implications

None

6. Consultation and communication considerations

This Policy has been shared with Housing Scrutiny Committee (HSC) Resident Representatives, and their feedback considered and included as appropriate.

7. Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

8. Appendices

- A. Local Lettings Policy (2019)
- B. Reasonable Preference Groups (Housing Act 1996, Section 167)
- C. Local Lettings Plan Template

9. Inspection of papers

If you have queries about this report please contact:

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Appendix A



Local Lettings Policy
- FINAL DRAFT.docx

Appendix B

The Housing Act (1996) states that there are five groups of applicants where reasonable preference must be considered:

a) People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII (7) of the Housing Act 1996

b) People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act

- 190(2) - eligible for assistance, homeless, in priority need and intentionally homeless
- 193(2) - eligible for assistance, homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless
- 195(2) - the prevention duty owed to persons who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness

c) People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions

d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability); and

e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)

Appendix C



Local Lettings Plan Cambridge City Council



INSERT NAME AND
POSTCODE HERE

This document will be made available to the public via the Cambridge City Council website.

Landlord	
Total no. of properties covered by this Local Lettings Plan (LLP)¹	
Breakdown of affected properties by type and size²	
Reasons for introducing the LLP What is the objective? Evidence to support objective (please reference sources e.g. neighbourhood plans, recent ASB/Police report). Have local residents been consulted and what are their views? What are the risks to achieving the objective? How will these risks be mitigated? How will you know the objective has been achieved?	
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed? If yes, please provide a link to the document. If no, please provide reasons why.	

¹ Please only include the properties that this LLP covers (i.e. this may not be all the properties in the development)

² For example: 2x2 bedroomed ground floor flats

<p>How we propose to let the properties covered by the LLP</p> <p>Details of how allocation/shortlisting of properties will be managed.</p>	
<p>How long is the LLP being requested for?</p> <p>Timescale for implementing the plan and the date of review (please see Local Letting Procedure for guidance)</p>	
<p>Criteria agreed by³:</p>	<p>Name (City Homes Housing Services Manager)</p>
<p>LLP approved by:</p>	<p>Name (Housing Advice Services Manager)</p>
<p>Date of Lettings Plan:</p>	

³ Housing Strategy Manager to have sight of the LLP before it is sent to the Housing Advice Services Manager

Staff Guidance – Examples of reasons for introducing the LLP	
Please note the examples below are to be used by staff as a guide to identifying LLP objectives. It should not be considered a definitive list.	
<u>For re-lets in a specific area using current social housing stock</u>	<u>For first-time housing lets on a new development</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help meet particular unmet needs within an area • Help regenerate areas • Help to ensure that affordability of homes is taken into account when they are let • Help promote homes in areas which tend to attract fewer bids through Home-link • Encourage greater community cohesion and sustainability • Respond to particular housing management issues where problems of anti-social behaviour, nuisance or crime occur (including environmental crime such as fly tipping and dog fouling) • Address an imbalance of residents from different age groups or family type within existing developments • Giving those in acute need the opportunity to bid for homes in the context of the Council's Housing First programme • Take into account any restrictive covenants associated with the land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a balance between those in and out of work to support the local economy • Give priority to people working within an agreed geographical radius of the development; although ensuring that priority is available to employees of a range of employers and employment types • Create a mix of household types and children's ages • Give priority to households whose children currently attend schools in the catchment area • Ensure specialist housing, for example disability adapted homes may be reserved for households who require them • Provide a balance between households that will need additional support and those that will not • Allow for under-occupation of some homes • Identify the balance to be struck between existing social tenants and home-seekers • Ensure some homes are available for let nearer to completion, where homes have been advertised through Home-Link well in advance of them being available to let • Enable households whose needs have more recently been assessed to bid • Give those in acute need the opportunity to bid for homes in accordance with the Council's Housing First programme