

Report to Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Well-being

Subject: Local Lettings Policy

Date: December 2017

Author: **Development and Economic Regeneration Manager**

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

This report seeks to gain approval from the Portfolio Holder for the adoption of a local lettings policy for the allocation of properties on new developments in the borough.

Key Decision

No

Background

The Council's Choice Based Lettings and Housing Allocations Policy, adopted by the Council in February 2013, sets out how people can apply for social housing in the borough of Gedling and governs how priority is given to different applicants. The policy allows for the use of local lettings policies in particular areas or estates "to help create sustainable communities". Paragraph 23.2 states:-

23.3 Local Lettings Policies

These are policies that have been agreed with the landlord to help create sustainable communities. They are restricted to particular areas or estates and each have different criteria to meet the objectives of each scheme. The property advertisement will tell you if there is a local lettings policy in place and what the criteria are.

There are a number of new developments in the borough of Gedling which are currently nearing completion. The registered providers responsible for the management of social housing on those developments have contacted the Council to request the use of a local lettings policy for the initial allocation of the properties to ensure that those new communities are sustainable.

The purpose of a local lettings policy is to create mixed and sustainable communities which reflect the wider population of the borough. If we used the

standard allocations policy, then this would see all the properties allocated to those in the greatest need (i.e. those in band 1), and whilst each new development must assist those in the greatest need, by enabling some of the properties to go to applicants from band 2 and giving a small quota of the properties to those in work, education or training, we are better able to create a more varied and sustainable neighbourhood.

It is proposed to adopt a generic local lettings policy, attached at Appendix 1, which can be used for the allocation of new build properties when requested by the registered provider. The Local Lettings Policy has therefore been developed to encourage the creation of sustainable communities from the first letting of new built homes.

The proposed Local Lettings Policy covers issues such as :-

- Quota for those applicants who are either in employment, education or training;
- Importantly those applicants who are in receipt of disability benefits or who are carers are excluded from the above criteria on the grounds of equality;
- A split of applicants from band 1 and 2 to enable those applicants in band 2 to have the opportunity to be considered for a property. This is particularly useful for those applicants in band 2 with medical needs.

The reasons for these proposed changes to the standard housing allocations policy are:

By introducing this mix we are better able to create mixed and diverse communities, supporting those who are in work, education or training, and also ensuring that some of the properties are offered to those applicants in band 2 who have, for example, medical needs etc. The Local Lettings Policy will also ensure that the majority of those new homes still go to those in the greatest need, for example, homeless applicants.

If all the properties were allocated to applicants in band 1, which would happen without the use of a local lettings policy, then there would be a disproportionate level of vulnerability and need which would not reflect the wider population and may not assist with the development of a stable and settled community.

Proposal

It is proposed that the Council adopt the Local Lettings Policy which will be implemented to govern the first allocation of new built homes, when requested by the relevant registered provider, to facilitate the creation of thriving and sustainable communities. The Local Lettings Policy will also improve the equity of the allocation of these properties to applicants in the two highest bands on the Council's housing register.

Alternative Options

Not to have a local lettings policy for the allocation of new build properties.

The risk here is that if the standard housing allocations policy was followed then the properties would be allocated to applicants in this highest band on the

housing register, which may see a disproportionate level of vulnerability and need, and would also limit the opportunities for those applicants with high medical needs in band 2 to be considered for properties.

Financial Implications

None

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 Local Lettings Policy
2. Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Choice Based Lettings and Housing Allocations Policy – February 2013

Recommendation(s)

That the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Well-being:

- a) Approves the Local Lettings Policy for the initial allocation of new build properties when it is requested by the relevant registered provider; and
- b) Delegates authorisation to adopt and implement the Local Lettings Policy on individual new build developments to the Service Manager for Development and Economic Regeneration.

Reasons for Recommendations

- a) To aid a more equitable allocation of scarce resources and also assist in the creation of thriving and sustainable communities.
- b) To enable the Service Manager for Development and Economic Regeneration to work efficiently with our registered providers to allocate new homes in a prompt and equitable manner.

Appendix 1

LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY (LLP) FOR NEW BUILD DEVELOPMENT

Purpose of this Local Lettings	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the allocations process for new built homes produces a thriving and sustainable community from the outset.

Policy	<p>Therefore, while the Homesearch Choice Based Lettings and Housing Allocations Policy adopted by Gedling Borough Council in February 2013, will remain the overarching mechanism against which allocations will be made in the borough, changes to the principle policy have been made for lettings to new developments to encourage the creation of a settled and sustainable communities.</p> <p>The local lettings policy will only be used for the first allocation of new build properties.</p>
Marketing of the Development	<p>All properties will be advertised on Homesearch, the Council's Choice Based lettings scheme. Interested parties will need to be registered and accepted onto Homesearch in order to bid and be eligible for an allocation of a property.</p> <p>Properties will be allocated to households in accordance with the Homesearch allocations policy and for the first allocation of new build properties the additional requirements of this Local Lettings Policy will be applied.</p>
Allocations criteria	<p>In order to achieve a balanced community, it is proposed that the following criteria will be used</p> <p>4 bedroomed house</p> <p>Preference will be given to families with 3 or more dependent children, (depending on ages and genders).</p> <p>3 bedroomed house</p> <p>Preference will be given to families with 2 or more dependent children, (depending on ages and genders).</p> <p>2 bedroom flats & houses</p> <p>Preference will be given to families with 1 or 2 dependent children, (depending on ages and genders).</p> <p>1 Bedroomed properties</p> <p>Couples and single people without children</p> <p>Resident Carers</p> <p>An extra bedroom will be allocated for those households with resident carers.</p> <p>Note: Proof of overnight care is required, and could be provided by, for example, an Occupational Therapist or Social Care officer.</p> <p>Banding split</p> <p>Up to 75% of applicants from band 1</p>

	<p>Up to 25% of applicants from band 2</p> <p>Employment, Education and Training status</p> <p>25% of these properties will have a preference for those who are in employment or who are in full time higher education or training. Those working less than 20 hours per week will need to be in receipt of in work benefits in order to be able to sustain the tenancy financially.</p> <p>The remaining 75% will have a preference to applicants who are currently in receipt of out of work benefits.</p> <p>Applicants with disabilities</p> <p>Applicants who are unable to work due to age or disability or because they are the full time carer of a disabled child are able to bid on and will be considered for any of the properties.</p> <p>Disability is defined as those who receive mid to high rate DLA or PIP for mobility or care.</p> <p>An applicant who is the main carer of a disabled child will need to be in receipt of Carer's Allowance and DLA or PIP for the child.</p>
Nomination of Bidders	In addition to the checks carried out by the Council the registered provider may also conduct further checks, such as pre-tenancy assessments.
Final decision on allocation	The registered provider will have the final decision on who the property will be allocated to, not the Council.
Termination of the Local Lettings Policy	This Local Lettings Policy will apply to first lets on practical completion of the scheme.
Monitoring and Review	Gedling Borough Council will monitor the outcomes from the Local Lettings Policy on an annual basis.
Equal opportunities	Gedling Borough Council has completed an Equality Impact Assessment which is attached.

Equality Impact Assessment

Name of project, policy, function, service or proposal being assessed:	Local Lettings Policy for the allocation of homes on new developments.				
Main objective	The purpose of the local lettings policy is to ensure that the allocations process for these new homes produces a thriving and sustainable community from the outset.				
<p>What impact will the Local Lettings policy for the first allocation of new build developments have on the following groups? Please note that you should consider both external and internal impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External (e.g. stakeholders, residents, local businesses etc.) • Internal (staff) 					
Please use only 'Yes' where applicable		Negative	Positive	Neutral	Comments
Gender	External			✓	

Gender Reassignment	Internal			✓	
	External			✓	
	Internal			✓	
Age	External	✓			Applicants have to be 18 years and older to be eligible to join the Council's housing register
	Internal			✓	

<u>Marriage and civil partnership</u>	External			✓	
	Internal			✓	
<u>Disability</u>	External		✓		Any applicant who is in receipt of either mid to high rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or a Personal Independent Payment (PIP) for mobility or care is excluded from the 25% employment requirement and the 75% of applicants who are required to be in out of work benefits so are not disadvantaged by the employment criteria
	Internal			✓	
<u>Race & Ethnicity</u>	External			✓	
	Internal			✓	

<u>Sexual Orientation</u>	External			✓	
	Internal			✓	
<u>Religion or Belief (or no Belief)</u>	External			✓	
	Internal			✓	
<u>Pregnancy & Maternity</u>	External	✓			The occupancy standards applied by most housing associations define a set occupancy (household size) for each property type. This is largely based on housing benefit payment rates and ensures the best use of the stock, and proposes the following occupancy standards 1 bed = single applicant or couple, no children. 2 bed = families with 1 to 2 children. 3 bed = families with 2 or more children. 4 = families with 3 or more children. An extra bedroom will be allocated for those households with resident carers.
	Internal			✓	

<p>Other Groups (e.g. any other vulnerable groups, rural isolation, deprived areas, low income staff etc.)</p> <p>Please state the group/s: Residents' groups Rural and inner city communities</p>	External			✓	
	Internal			✓	

Is there any evidence of a high disproportionate adverse or positive impact on any groups?	Potentially –	The proposal is to allocate 75% of the new homes to applicants from band 1 and the remaining 25% to applicants from band 2. This is to enable those applicants with high medical needs (in band 2) to have an opportunity to be considered for these properties and also to ensure that the registered providers do not have 100% of tenants in the most urgent housing need, to better reflect the wider community and facilitate the creation of a settled and sustainable community.
Is there an opportunity to mitigate or alleviate any such impacts?	No	The age restriction relates to the legal ability to hold a tenancy agreement although there can be exceptions when a guarantor is used. There can also be complications with housing benefits for persons under 18s who could be considered as minors and therefore the responsibility of Children's Services.
Are there any gaps in information available (e.g. evidence) so that a complete assessment of different impacts is not possible?	No	

In response to the information provided above please provide a set of proposed action including any consultation that is going to be carried out:

Planned Actions	Timeframe	Success Measure	Responsible Officer
Monitoring	Annual	Duration of tenancies Compliance with tenancy conditions i.e. payment of rent and avoidance of anti-social behaviour	Alison Bennett

Authorisation and Review

Completing Officer	Alison Bennett – Development and Economic Regeneration Manager
Authorising Director	John Robinson – Chief Executive
Date	
Review date (if applicable)	