

LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This Local Lettings Policy sets out Cambridge City Council's (CCC) position on the management of its own social housing stock through the utilisation of Local Lettings Plans. It seeks to standardise the approach to Local Lettings Plans and highlight the considerations that Officers should have when determining Local Lettings Plan criteria.
- 1.2 A Local Lettings Plan is a set of guidelines and/or criteria governing which households can be allocated accommodation in a specific designated area. A Local Lettings Plan allows CCC to pro-actively allocate and manage its housing stock. CCC's ability to manage allocations to social housing stock through Local Lettings Plans is covered under section 5.17 of the CCC Lettings Policy (2018). All homes will continue to be let through the Home-link scheme.
- 1.3 This document seeks to replace the Local Lettings Policy (2017) which was agreed at Officer level and has been the main source of guidance for Officers when developing Local Lettings Plans for council homes.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Under the legal requirements of the Housing Act (1996), all local housing authorities must give 'reasonable preference' to those applicants on the housing register who are within one or more of the groups defined in [Appendix A](#).

- 2.2 This document sets out CCCs position in regards to its ability to allocate council accommodation to people of a particular description, **whether or not** they fall within one or more of the 'reasonable preference' groups. The statutory basis for this policy is section 166A (6) (b) of the Housing Act (1996).
- 2.3 It is vital that Officers are aware of the importance of consultation with communities at the outset, as well as any equalities implications.

3 APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

- 3.1 Local Lettings Plans can be used in either one of two types of scenarios:
- **For re-lets in a specific area using current CCC housing stock** where lettings needs to be sensitive to local circumstances, to help address issues such as recent anti-social behaviour (ASB), criminal activity or drug/alcohol related nuisance
 - **For first-time social housing lets on a new development** where lettings need to enable the creation of balanced/mixed sustainable communities at the outset and/or help support the local economy
- 3.2 **For re-lets in a specific area using current CCC housing stock** the Local Lettings Plan may contain criteria that will:
- 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
- 3.3 The evidence which supports the criteria, for example data from the Safer Communities Team (such as Neighbourhood Plans), police reports, data from other relevant agencies, or other evidence must be provided as part of the Local Lettings Plan.
- 3.4 Local Lettings Plans should **not be used as a form of discriminatory practice** to exclude vulnerable members of the community, or to unreasonably restrict levels of choice.
- 3.5 Applicants should **not** be disregarded where they have historical problems that have not been an issue for the last three years. For example:
- History of substance or alcohol misuse more than 3 years ago
 - History of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) or other relevant criminality more than 3 years ago

3.6 Applicants **may** be disregarded if they have had episodes of criminality (or other issues as described in section 3.5) in the last 3 years. In these cases CCC will seek to make contact with professionals working with the applicant to determine suitability.

3.7 When developing a Local Lettings Plans for **first-time social housing lets on a new development**, the Housing Officer will work collaboratively with key stakeholders to develop a Local Lettings Plan which may include one or more of the following:

- Economic activity to create a balance between those in and out of work
- Giving 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
- A mix of household types and children's ages
- Give priority to households whose children currently attend schools in the catchment area
- Specialist housing – for example disability adapted homes may be reserved for households who require them
- Providing a balance between households that will need additional support and those that will not
- Allowing for under-occupation of some homes
- Identifying the balance to be struck between existing social tenants and home-seekers
- Ensuring 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

- To enable households whose needs have more recently been assessed to bid
- Giving those in acute need the opportunity to bid for homes in accordance with the Council's Housing First programme
- Other reasonable criteria that will help achieve the outcomes listed in section 3.1

3.8 When developing a Local Lettings Plan it is important that any equalities implications are carefully considered. CCC is committed to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011):

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be completed for this Policy and also for each Local Lettings Plan.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 The Local Lettings Plan will be drafted by an Officer responsible for tenancy management in that area. Please see the Local Lettings Plan template and procedure for guidance on the types of activities that will help achieve the desired outcome. All current Local Lettings Plans are published on the Cambridge City Council website at <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/local-lettings-plans>

- 4.2 The City Homes Housing Services Manager will be responsible for **agreeing** the criteria of the Local Lettings Plan. The Housing Advice Services Manager will be responsible for **approving** the Local Lettings Plan and ensuring there are no inconsistencies between the approach to Local Lettings Plans for council stock and the Local Lettings Plans agreed with other registered providers for new developments.

5 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 5.1 All Local Lettings Plans will be reviewed within a set period of time:
- **For re-lets in a specific area using current housing stock** these will be reviewed within 3 years
 - **For first-time social housing lets on a new development**, these will be reviewed once all the new homes have been let or sooner if appropriate.
- 5.2 The overall use of Local Lettings Plans will be monitored by Housing Services on a bi-annual basis. The purpose of the review will be to ensure that the original objective of the Local Lettings Plan has been met, and where this is not the case appropriate mechanisms put in place to ensure a solution is found and lessons learned. This is in addition to the wider objective of ensuring that particular groups of applicants are not, in effect, being excluded from large parts of the city.

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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 B

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1. EqIA Template

(<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/6056/eqia-template.pdf>)

2. Local Lettings Plan

<https://councilanywhereorg.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/CCC-HousingServices/EYplOMo4ACRJjot5kGclUPEBv9uiHkQJBlfZ7rzjiUrQMw?e=1NGrKp>