

Cleveland Road Affordable Rent Development Local Lettings Plan

Introduction

The City of Wolverhampton Council's Allocation Policy recognises that from time to time certain housing stock would benefit from a local lettings plan where the needs are not met by way of the main Allocations Policy. This Local lettings Policy (LLP) builds on the City of Wolverhampton's New Build Properties Local Lettings Plan and is designed to complement the plan whilst recognising the need to ensure lettings made at Cleveland Road are sustainable into the future.

This LLP relates to 74 affordable rent apartments within the Cleveland Road Development of which there will be:

- 15 one-bedroom two person apartments - Affordable Rent
- 59 two-bedroom three person apartments - Affordable Rent
- Four ground floor apartments are to be designated as accessible to applicants with a disability, the apartments will benefit from:
 - a. wet rooms with disabled accessible sanitary ware and fully lined ply walls with associated grab rails
 - b. wheelchair accessible door openings and frame protectors
 - c. rise and fall base units to kitchen
 - d. corridor doors and main entrance door - electronic door openers linked to fire alarm
 - e. disabled parking - 2 spaces to be designated

Location

The site is located in the southern part of Wolverhampton City Centre, within Ettingshall ward. There are a number of industrial and business uses located to the east and south of the site. Beyond these the area predominantly comprises residential development. The site sits within walking distance of the town centre, with a large range of amenities for future residents at the site to use. The site is well linked to the town centre and its amenities, providing entertainment, job opportunities and education within walking distance. There are good transport links in close proximity giving easy access to Birmingham and surrounding areas.

Scope

This plan relates to the first let of properties and relets within the first 12 months, after which the nominations agreement between CWC and whg whereby 50% of relets will be let in accordance with the Council's main Allocations Policy.

This plan relates only to whg's affordable rent apartments that form part of the Cleveland Road development. There are also a number of houses being developed

by whg as part of the development, giving CWC 100% of nomination rights for first let of these properties, that will be let in accordance with the CWC's New Build LLP.

Objective

A local lettings plan is considered necessary to create sustainable tenancies that contribute to a cohesive, vibrant community and enhance the quality of life for new and existing residents. This is in accordance with CWC's Council Plan priority, Better Homes for All and whg's corporate plan priority to deliver high quality homes and services to our customers.

The key objectives of this lettings plan are:

- To prioritise the allocation of properties to households who have a local connection to Wolverhampton
- Support the regeneration of Wolverhampton City by ensuring that a balanced and sustainable community is created from first let onwards
- To minimise anti-social behaviour and potential harm to Wolverhampton's regeneration plans by ensuring first and all subsequent lets are carefully considered and closely managed.

Once let this will further be supported through housing management by whg:

- Adopting a schedule of tenancy visits at 1 month, 6 months and 9 months to assess how tenancies are being conducted and identify support where needed
- Encouraging and facilitating active participation in the community by ensuring new customers are engaged in community commitment
- Maintaining cleanliness to communal areas and eliminate animal nuisance in the apartment block.

Letting Plan Criteria

Applicants must be eligible for the specific property type to be considered for it. Eligibility criteria and household categories are set out in whg's Allocation Policy.

It is proposed that properties will be offered to customers on the following terms:

- 50% of first let's will be from applicants nominated by CWC and will be subject to the Council's New Build LLP. This will include all of the homes designated as accessible to customers with a disability.
- 50% of first let's will be advertised in the first instance by whg on Homes in the City. Adverts will follow similar lettings criteria as described in section 3 and 4 of CWC's New Build Properties LLP.
 - a. Homes will be advertised in the first instance to CWC applicants, registered on Homes in the City.
 - b. Priority will be given to existing low-income working households*, so a balanced and mixed new community is created and maintained.

- c. Band 4 applicants will be eligible if properties are let before the changes to the Allocations Policy agreed at Cabinet January 2020 are implemented, which will see the closing of Band 4.
 - d. In the event that properties advertised by whg through Homes in the City are not let after the first round of bidding, whg will advertise properties via its Housing Register and by other media where appropriate.
- For properties advertised to existing applicants, additional priority will be given to households with an agreed local connection to the area of the development, in accordance with the local connection criteria set out in CWC's Allocations Policy. In order to establish local connection, the applicant must be able to demonstrate at least one of the following criteria in addition to any housing need criteria:
 - a. Giving or receiving essential support which is evidenced by professional support e.g. hospital, social services etc., this can also be confirmed by the Council's medical advisor.
 - b. Needs to be close to family/child minder for help with child care etc. which is necessary for the applicant to find/remain in work and travelling from one part of the City to leave children at childcare and then travelling on to work/education has cost, time, disruption implications etc. Difficulties must be able to be evidenced.
 - c. Long term residency - 5 years out of the previous 10.
 - d. Working in the area where the job includes early starts/late finishes.
 - e. Children in school in the area.
 - f. Cultural reasons e.g. to be near place of worship, community facilities etc.

For the 50% of first lets from whg advertised through Homes in the City and future lettings in accordance with its allocation policy:

- All applicants will be interviewed by a Community Housing Officer prior to offer, who will reinforce with the potential customer the importance of their tenancy obligations, inform them of our anti-social behaviour policy and of our expectations generally of their conduct.
- Applicants must provide all the evidence required to verify their application. The applicant and their household must provide proof of identity, residence and suitability before an offer is deemed to be valid. Any applicant unable to provide suitable references will not be offered a property.
- Known and proven perpetrators of domestic abuse, racial harassment or violence will not be considered.
- Applicants deemed unsuitable for an offer of this or any other property because of unacceptable / anti-social behaviour in accordance with whg's restricted access policy will not be offered a property.
- All customers must undertake a Tenancy Sustainability Assessment prior to an offer of accommodation.

* Low income households - In accordance with whg's status as a registered charity, are considered to be applicants/joint applicants who are working with an income less than the threshold determined by whg:

- Single applicants with a gross annual income less than £40,000.
- Joint applicants with a combined gross income less than £50,000.

How the Local Letting Plan will be applied

The allocation of homes through this LLP will be done in partnership between CWC and whg:

- Applicants will need to have a live housing application on Homes in the City;
- Properties being let under this local letting plan will be advertised on Homes in the City. Adverts will be clearly marked as set out in the lettings plan criteria.
- Eligible applicants will need to bid on properties within the advertised bidding period.
- When the bidding period comes to an end, contact will be made with the applicant who:
 - a. Is eligible for that property
 - b. Has the highest priority based on the criteria outlined in the LLP.
- The applicant will be contacted to request that they supply evidence of their housing circumstances, their identity and the identity of those moving with them. If the applicant fails to provide this evidence within a reasonable amount of time the applicant will be by passed and contact will be made with the next applicant on the shortlist.

Ending the Local Lettings Plan

A review in 12 months (following completion of first let) and extension by agreement. The review should consider management experience, whether the objectives of the LLP are being achieved, impact on neighbourhood sustainability and equalities. If the LLP is proving effective in its aims it would be extended for a further year, following which time it will come to an end.