

Individual Executive Decision Notice

Report Title	Local Lettings Plan - Cleveland Road
Decision designation	GREEN
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Buhpinder Gakhal, Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing
Wards affected	Ettingshall
Accountable director	Ross Cook, Director of City Environment
Originating service	City Housing
Accountable employee(s)	Michelle Garbett Tel: 01902 552954 Email: michelle.garbett@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	City Environment Leadership Team 30 March 2021

Summary

This report sets out the rationale for City of Wolverhampton Council's (CWC) Local Lettings Plan (LLP) for 74 future new affordable rent properties being developed by Walsall Housing Group (whg. Nb. Whg do refer to their acronym with lower case letters).

Delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, in consultation with the Director for City Assets and Housing was approved for the purpose of local lettings plans as part of the Allocations Policy Cabinet Report, February 2020

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing in consultation with the Director of City Environment are recommended to:

1. Approve the LLP for 74 new build affordable rent properties at Cleveland Road, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Signature:

Signature

1.0 Background

- 1.1 City of Wolverhampton Council's (CWC) Allocations Policy satisfies the requirement for the Council to have a scheme which sets out the housing priorities, and the process to be followed, in allocating Council owned or Register Provider housing accommodation both to first time applicants and transferring tenants. This requirement is set out in Part VI Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996.
- 1.2 The policy recognises that from time to time certain housing stock would benefit from a local lettings plan (LLP) where the needs are not met by way of the main Allocations Policy.
- 1.3 whg are in the process of developing 74 properties for affordable rent, at Cleveland Road, Wolverhampton, WV2 1BP. The development consists of 15 one-bedroom apartments, 59 two-bedroom apartments and four ground floor adapted apartments designated as accessible to applicants with a disability.

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 Under the terms of a Nominations Agreement between CWC and whg; 100% of first lets for new build properties that have received public subsidy should be offered as nominations to applicants on the Council's housing register. CWC and whg have worked together to develop a LLP that honours the 100% nominations, has due regard to the Council's New Build Local Lettings Plan, adopted by Cabinet in July 2019, but also provides some flexibility to whg in achieving the aims of developing the scheme at Cleveland Road.
- 2.2 It is proposed that properties will be offered to customers on the following terms.

On the first let of all the new build properties developed:

50% will be let to applicants nominated by CWC and will be subject to their New Build Local Lettings Plan. This will include all homes designated as accessible to customers with a disability.

50% 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 the Council's New Build Local Lettings Plan:

- 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 own Housing Register and by other media where appropriate.

2.3 For 50% of first and future lettings, whg will advertise its homes to applicants in accordance with its allocation policy:

- a. 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 their expectations generally of their conduct.
- b. 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.
- c. Known and proven perpetrators of domestic abuse, racial harassment or violence will not be considered.
- d. 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.
- e. All customers must undertake a Tenancy Sustainability Assessment prior to an offer of accommodation.

3.0 Evaluation of Alternative Options

3.1 Option 1: Adopting a LLP negotiated between CWC and whg works to ensure 100% of properties are offered as nominations, helping to relieve housing need in the city, particular in the local area. Using the city's New Build Local Lettings Plan as a basis for allocating these properties will:

- a. ensure the stability and sustainability of this new community
- b. ensure the existing community remains balanced and sustainable and are not destabilised by giving some priority to those with a local connection to the area;
- c. ensure there is opportunity for those households on the housing register who are in greatest housing need to access new build homes.

3.2 Option 2: If properties were all let in accordance with the Council's Allocations Policy, the majority of properties would be let to the Emergency band.

3.3 Emergency Band includes cases where:

- a. applicants who are homeless and are owed the main duty including when they have become homeless or the Relief Duty has come to an end and they have been assessed as being in priority need and unintentionally homeless;
- b. there has been a Multi-Agency Panel review and immediate rehousing is required;

- c. a substantially adapted or purpose-built property is required. This category includes those applicants covered by regulations which apply to members and former members of the Armed Forces and having particular regard for those injured or disabled in action;
- d. a substantially adapted (two or more adaptations in the property) or purpose-built property is being freed; or
- e. an appointed Occupational Therapist has decided the applicant's property is unsuitable for the applicant or a member of their household needs and where adaptations would cost in excess of £5,000 or cannot be carried out due to the construction of the property.

3.4 On new build developments there is a concentration of new households settling in a compact area. Under the main Allocations Policy there is a concern that allocating primarily to the Emergency Band is not the best way to create a new settled community. There is also concern that allocating primarily to the Emergency Band may be detrimental to community cohesion. This option is therefore not recommended.

3.5 Option 3: If all of the properties were let in accordance with the Council's New Build Properties Local Lettings Plan, this would not reflect the ask of whg to advertise any properties that have not managed to be let through Homes in the City, through their own systems, as is allowable under the nominations agreement they have with the Council, achieving their aims for investing in the city.

4.0 Reasons for decision

4.1 It is recommended that the Council adopt option 1, letting properties in accordance with the LLP at appendix 1 that has been developed based on discussions between CWC's Housing Strategy and whg as the Council's Allocation Policy recognises that from time to time certain housing stock would benefit from a LLP where the needs are not met by way of the main Allocations Policy. This LLP builds on the Council's New Build 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.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from recommendation of this report as these properties are being developed and managed by whg and will be allocated by Wolverhampton Homes as per the nominations agreement.

[JM/24022021/A]

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 Section 166A(6)(b) of the 1996 Housing Act enables local authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories, provided that overall the authority is able to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of S. 166A(3). This is the statutory basis that allows local

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authorities to adopt LLPs for certain parts of the social rented stock within their area. The proposed LLP is compliant with the legislation and statutory guidance in this area.

[RP/15062020/B]

7.0 All other implications

- 7.1 An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken, which demonstrates positive outcomes from implementing the LLP from an equalities perspective.
- 7.2 The LLP aims to give those in greatest housing need to greatest opportunity for accessing suitable housing. This can help alleviate issues such as homelessness, overcrowding and the need for an accessible home. Satisfying households housing needs should have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

8.0 Schedule of background papers

- 8.1 Allocations Policy, Cabinet, 19 February 2020
- 8.2 [Local Lettings Plan -New Build Properties, Cabinet, 10 July 2019](#)

9.0 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Local Lettings Plan, Cleveland Road