

LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN FOR CHELTENHAM BOROUGH HOMES

THE BREWERY, CHELTENHAM.



Summary

The purpose of the plan is to support Cheltenham Borough Homes ownership of properties being obtained under a Section 106 agreement at The Brewery development in Cheltenham by considering measures to maintain low levels of anti-social behaviour and crime, and to support more sustainable and cohesive community.

The properties being acquired are 5 one bedroom flats situated on the ground, first and second floors, with a communal entrance hallway. The flats are of a good size and are therefore suitable for single persons and for couples. They are located in Cheltenham town centre and are therefore close to all amenities. There is no outside space with any of the flats and there are no parking facilities, however, parking is available on the adjacent road by obtaining resident parking permits.

This plan details the suggested lettings strategy to mitigate potential issues with the introduction of a new group of residents into an existing community or into an area in which CBH has not traditionally managed any social housing property.

The properties will be made available to let at an 'affordable rent' level and a tenant affordability assessment has been added into the lettings process. This assessment will also review the potential effect of proposed changes to Housing Benefit entitlement for applicants, for example, claimants aged under 35 and those aged 18 to 21 for whom there could be significantly reduced benefit entitlement. Whilst this cannot exclude any applicant who may be affected from consideration for the properties, plans to encourage employment must be included to support sustainability of tenancies.

The Local Lettings Plan

The reasons for this Local Lettings Plan are to assist CBH in managing the risk and to help ensure the sustainability of a tenancy in an area where there is little or no social housing.

CBH will use this Local Lettings Plan to cover both initial and future lettings of the properties to help maintain a balanced and sustainable community.

Therefore, the Local Lettings Plan is proposed to include allocation and exclusion criteria as follows:

Allocation

- 20% of the properties will be given to existing CBH tenants in housing need in the following order: emergency, then gold followed by silver band.

If there are no existing CBH tenants in emergency, gold or silver bands, the properties will be allocated to tenants of other RSLs in housing need who are residing in Cheltenham in order of banding need as detailed above.

The remaining 80% of the properties will be allocated in the following order:

- Applicants in housing need and registered on Homeseeker Plus with a local connection to Cheltenham in order of banding need as detailed above.
- Other applicants in housing need and registered on Homeseeker Plus with no local connection to Cheltenham in order of banding need as detailed above.

Exclusions

CBH reserves the right not to offer tenancies to:

- persons for whom a Possession Order had been obtained relating to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), or who had previously been evicted for ASB or who had been the subject of an injunction for ASB within the last 5 years.
- households where the tenants or members of their family are persons with a history of ASB at current or previous tenancies within the last 3 years. Each applicant will be considered on a case by case basis and will include the applicant's response to informal actions such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and the length of time since the last report of ASB.
- persons with high support needs who have failed to accept support or do not have adequate support in place and who may impact on neighbouring properties
 - persons who have arrears on their current rent account of 8 weeks or more, former tenant arrears of 8 weeks or more, or rechargeable repairs and/or Court Costs greater than £500
 - persons who have less than 8 weeks rent arrears, former tenant arrears of 8 weeks or more or rechargeable repairs and/or Court Costs greater than £500 AND who have not kept to an agreed repayment plan, having missed a minimum of 3 months consecutive repayments. The only exception would be if current arrears are totally due to affordability issues with paying the bedroom tax or other welfare reform issues and in these circumstances, each case would be assessed on an individual basis.
- persons who have caused a deterioration of the condition of their current property, its garden or its fixtures and fittings due to ill-treatment, waste, neglect or default. This will include any unauthorised alterations.

Right to Acquire

In general, Assured (non-shorthold) Tenants have the right to acquire and if the qualifying conditions are met, these tenants may have a statutory Right to Acquire their home,

either as Freehold or as Leasehold. However, with these properties, Assured (non-shorthold) Tenants will not be able to exercise this right as Cheltenham Borough Homes does not hold the freehold or sufficient interest in the property to grant a lease exceeding 21 years; this will be advised when any of the properties are placed on Homeseeker Plus, when any offer is made and at sign up before the start of the tenancy. A special clause will be included in the Assured (non-shorthold) Tenancy Agreement to inform regarding this. The time a tenant spends in the tenancy at this development may count towards a discount for purchasing another property should the tenant move to another Cheltenham Borough Homes or other Social Landlord property where it is possible to purchase under Right to Acquire or Right to Buy.

At present, CBH Assured Tenants do not have the Right to Buy and this needs to be considered by applicants when bidding for these properties if they currently do have the Right to Buy (or have held qualifying tenancies in the past which may make them eligible for the Right to Buy), as they will no longer have this right at these properties.

Assured Shorthold Tenants do not have the Right to Acquire.

Process

The properties will be advertised using Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus, and including details of the local lettings plan criteria.

When the bidding cycle has ended a list will be produced of all applicants who have bid on the property. These applicants will be ranked by the Homeseeker Plus system according to housing need.

The highest placed CBH tenant will be contacted and their application assessed in line with this LLP.

A visit will not be arranged if CBH already has evidence that the applicant does not meet the Lettings Plan criteria, and the process will then move to the next ranking applicant.

If the applicant meets the criteria, an affordability assessment will be conducted.

If the property is found to be affordable then a visit will be made.

The reason for the visit will be twofold:

- to identify any existing housing management issues which will not have been flagged through the Homeseeker Plus bidding process; this will include an inspection of the applicants' current accommodation.

and

- to provide the applicant with details about the properties included in this Local Lettings Plan.

A record of all evidence collected, known, given or received will be kept for the Lettings Plan.

Review

This local lettings plan is regarding both the initial and the future lettings at the development and will be subject to a periodic review to be undertaken 12 months after the initial lettings and every 12 months thereafter.

Date of this Local Lettings Plan

This plan, whilst agreed between CBC and CBH on (date)_____ will be dated immediately prior to the letting of the first homes on this development.

Parties to the Agreement:

Stafford Cruse - Head of Finance and Reporting

Cheltenham Borough Homes

Signed _____

And

Caroline Walker – Head of Community Services

Cheltenham Borough Homes

Signed _____