



Local Lettings Schemes

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To approve the temporary applications for Local Lettings Policies at the locations detailed in section 2.10 & 2.11 below until 31.12.07.
- 1.2 To note an ongoing review of designated blocks of flats within the City and receive a further joint report from Derby City Council Housing Options Centre and Derby Homes on the outcomes and recommendations of this review by 31 October 2007.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The use of local lettings schemes by local authorities, ALMO's and registered social landlords has increased significantly in recent years.
- 2.2 Local lettings schemes are lettings schemes put in place for a specific area or estate which differ from the mainstream rehousing policy used by the organisation. Set up in response to particular local circumstances, local lettings vary widely. All need to include a clear commitment to equalities and provide of clear and accurate information to applicants. To be effective local lettings schemes need to be part of a package of measures, such as more intensive housing management and multi-agency working.
- 2.3 Local lettings schemes can differ from mainstream rehousing policies in a number of ways, these include
 - **Disregard eligibility rules.** This is offering households accommodation larger than they need, to, for example reduce levels of child density in a specific area. It could also include special provisions that family accommodation may only be offered to households with non-dependant/older children.
 - **Age restrictions/Designation.** This particularly relates to flats and the issues created by households with young children living in close proximity to more elderly/mature neighbours.
 - **Excludes applicants with a history of crime/asb.** This may be because an area has a particular problem with crime or anti-social behaviour. Care must be taken to ensure that such mechanisms adhere to the law.
 - **Encourage applicants with certain characteristics.** Characteristics could include employment status or other groups under-represented in the community.

- 2.4 Local Lettings Schemes were introduced in October 2003 in Osmaston, Cowsley and Old Sinfen. The intention was to bring sustainability into these areas whilst balancing the needs of vulnerable tenants. All three areas suffered from low demand and above average turnover.

In addition to these areas a number of temporary 'hot spots' were identified: Britannia Court, Terry Place and Booth Street, Gerard Street and Oak Tree and Elm Tree Avenue.

In March 2006 the estate wide local lettings schemes were evaluated and found to have reduced the problems that they were introduced to tackle. Management view was that with ongoing housing management expertise it would be appropriate to revert to allocating properties within the general allocations policy, with a few area specific exceptions. Local Housing Boards approved this development and 'hot spot' local lettings schemes were discussed and reviewed at regular meetings between Derby Homes and Derby City Council Housing Options Centre.

- 2.5 On 9 March 2007 the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Social Cohesion and Housing Strategy was asked to consider a number of requests made by Derby Homes for Local Lettings Schemes.

- 2.6 Two requests were declined in respect of:
- Gerard Street – City Centre
 - California Gardens – Manor Road/Burton Road

Concern was expressed in terms of potential discrimination in relation to age and disability issues. Specific legal advice has been sought to clarify how age and disability (mental health) issues can be addressed without disadvantaging particular groups or individuals.

- 2.8 The current policy relating to designation of blocks (age restrictions) has been in operation for many years and no longer reflects the demand expressed through the housing register when viewed alongside the availability of properties in the City.

A joint review is in progress between Derby Homes and Derby City Council Housing Options Centre. Recommendations will reflect the make-up of the housing register (demand) and the areas of choice and availability of properties within areas across the City and will compliment other work to achieve a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation within the City. These recommendations are expected by October 2007 and will be presented to both Derby City Council and Derby Homes Local Housing Boards.

- 2.9 Derby Homes are requesting that a continuation of current local lettings schemes for the flats listed above in paragraph 2.6 and summarised in 2.10 below, is agreed until 31 December 2007, or completion of the review, whichever is the earliest.

- 2.10 **Gerard Street Flats.** This relates to the three blocks of flats (27 1B units) at the Macklin Street end of Gerard Street which are in very close proximity to the centre of Derby's bars and nightlife. Derby Homes have provided intensive housing management to these blocks for a number of years now and this has in part been aided by restrictive/sensitive allocations. The ground floor flats are predominantly occupied by elderly residents. We aim to sustain the community by trying to allocate to residents over the age of 30 and giving preference to those in employment.

2.11 **California Gardens.** The scheme comprises 54 one bedroom flats. The existing local lettings scheme in operation at California Gardens was introduced in 2005 following a number of incidents of anti-social behaviour within the scheme. The majority of residents are mature and enjoy a quiet and sedentary lifestyle and through a petition requested a return to the original policy of designating the block to over 40's only.

Residents have recently contacted Derby Homes, through the Local Housing Board expressing concern at a lack of consultation in reverting to an open allocations policy for the scheme.

For more information contact:	Maria Murphy, 01332 711012, e-mail maria.murphy@derbyhomes
Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. Income obtained from these charges will offset the costs involved in taking formal enforcement action. It is considered easier and less bureaucratic to set a standard fee in this way rather than charging in each case on a pro-rata basis.
- 1.2 The annual review of the charge is necessary to take account of inflationary pressure and any unforeseen costs not apparent at this stage.

Legal

2. The power to charge for enforcement is contained in section 49 of the Housing Act 2004.

Personnel

3. None.

Equalities impact

4. None

Corporate priorities

- 5.1 Charging for enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004 contributes to corporate priority CP6a by improving Council services and CP 6b by increasing value for money.

Breakdown of activities involved in enforcement action

The activities which typically need to be taken in determining whether to serve a hazard awareness notice, improvement notice, take emergency remedial action, make a prohibition order or a demolition order, carry out a review of a suspended improvement notice or prohibition order and subsequently identify any action to be specified in a notice / order and serving of the notice / order are as follows...

- a) travel to and from the relevant dwelling
- b) inspection of the relevant dwelling
- c) preparation of an inspection report
- d) preparation of a Housing Healthy and Safety Rating System assessment
- e) preparation of a 'Most Appropriate Course of Action' report
- f) preparation of an informal letter to the landlord inviting consultation
- g) preparation of a specification of work / action required to be specified in a notice
- h) preparation of the legal documentation
- i) checking of the legal documentation by Team Manager
- j) service of notice/order.