

Cambridge Gardens, Southport Local Lettings Policy



Introduction

This Local Lettings Policy has been developed to ensure sustainable lettings to existing homes for rent at Cambridge Gardens, Southport. The allocation of a large number of apartments in a single location, increases risks to both Great Places and the wider community if appropriate and sustainable lettings are not achieved. Great Places therefore proposes to vary the standard allocations criteria for the prioritisation of applicants for these homes.

There are 91 rented apartments across 15, 2-storey blocks. The property breakdown is as follows;

40 x 1 bedroom properties
51 x 2 bedroom properties

Context

This policy seeks to complement the Property Pool Plus choice based lettings scheme. Applicants for rehousing who meet the additional criteria set out in the policy will be prioritised according to the Property Pool Plus Allocations scheme to ensure that the approach is compliant with Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) in providing the greatest priority for those who have Reasonable Preference.

The Local Lettings Policy supports all of the aims of Sefton Council's allocations policy, housing strategies and vision. Many lets have historically been through word of mouth or via Right Move; not necessarily being allocated to those in greatest housing need within the Sefton Local Authority area.

Great Places has been investing in the properties and environment to ensure the scheme remains a desirable area where people choose to live; and as such wishes to protect its asset and the community in which it is located in order to continue to do this.

68% of current residents are aged 60 or over and the scheme has historically attracted more mature applicants. There has been an increasing demand for internal transfers to ground floor accommodation alongside general tenancy turnover, which is costly for Great Places. In the past 12 months we have seen a 53% increase in termination. The increase has been due to the number of deaths and older resident needing more suitable accommodation. There is a wish to re-balance the age profile of the scheme and attract younger households and to ensure the full occupation of 2 bedroom properties.

Aims & Objectives

- To create a balanced, sustainable community, with a mix of residents successfully managing their tenancies and making a positive contribution to the local area in terms of its social economic profile and reputation

- To ensure we are allocating our properties in a fair and consistent manner whilst ensuring that existing older residents are able to enjoy quiet enjoyment of their homes, surrounded by neighbours with a similar mature outlook
- To make best use of 2 bedroom properties; specifically helping parents with part-time access to children to secure accommodation
- To reduce tenancy turnover and the number of requests for internal transfers
- Support the Council in its objectives and its statutory duty to offer Reasonable Preference in to those in housing need
- To protect the capital investment made by Great Places at the scheme through the delivery of sustainable tenancies.

Rationale

A LLP will assist with the sustainable management of a scheme meeting the needs of the current customers whilst assisting the local authority to meet their housing demand. In other schemes where Great Places has let homes in a concentrated area through a choice based letting scheme, without the application of additional lettings criteria and where properties were let solely on the basis of housing need, the results have been damaging. In one new build scheme of 19 homes there were 15 cases of ASB, 3 voids and 7 referrals for tenancy support in the first 18 months. This has occurred because most of the lettings were made to applicants in the most urgent housing need, and who are therefore often the most complicated, often with complex medical and support needs, very vulnerable households or homelessness and in priority need. A large number of lettings to these groups in a single area can be detrimental to new tenants, existing tenants, the wider community and the landlord. Where Great Places has implemented policies similar to this proposal we have experienced few problems. The approach delivers a more sustainable mix of residents from across the rehousing groups.

What is involved?

No less than 50% of available properties will be advertised on Property Pool Plus choice based lettings website using this local lettings policy criteria. Properties which require a sensitive let, eg due to the age or vulnerability of the residents living in that block, will be let outside of the LLP.

Of the 91 available properties, properties will be allocated as follows:

Ground floor accommodation:

All properties will be allocated in the first instance to those with an identified need for ground floor accommodation, subject to the additional criteria being met.

Pre-tenancy checks:

Great Places works to a 'right person, right property' ethos. All applicants will be subject to reference and affordability requirements being met. Individual circumstances are considered to ensure appropriate flexibility, but provisional offers may be withdrawn where an applicant fails to meet these requirements.

General criteria:

1 x bedroom properties will be allocated to those in highest need

2 x bedroom properties will be allocated in the following priority order:

- Those in highest housing need, with part-time access to children
- Those in highest housing need, with an identified other-need for a 2nd bedroom
- Those in highest housing need of working age, without a specific 2 bedroom need.

2 adults + 1 child maximum occupancy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This local lettings policy will be reviewed annually by Great Places to analyse the outcome of the policy and will inform future scheme-allocation decisions.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Is this a key strategic document, major policy or procedure or service change? Examples may include: Homeless Strategy/ Customer Involvement Strategy	YES		NO	
	No		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. What impact will your document or service delivery change have on the public or staff, giving particular regard to potential impacts on minority groups? Issues to consider include race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, carers and other socio-economic factors	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
		Yes		
3. Please explain your answer: Provide a narrative explaining why you gave the impact rating above.	<p>This policy relates to a small number of General Needs units of accommodation and therefore the impact is medium. However it is critical to get the balance of allocations correct in order to protect the reputation of the scheme and maximise sustainability of new tenancies.</p> <p>The policy does not seek to ring-fence properties to applicants based on their economic circumstances, and it includes equivalent priority for workers, volunteers and carers. In this way it ensures equality of access to priority for all potentially vulnerable groups.</p>			

1. If, for question 2 you have answered LOW, there is no need to continue to an Equality Impact Assessment.
2. If, for question 2 you have answered DON'T KNOW, please discuss with a member of the EIA Group who can confirm whether an EIA is required.
3. If you have answered YES to question 1, and you have identified MEDIUM or HIGH impact in 2, you should move on to an Equality Impact Assessment and complete the section below:

If you have completed a full Equality Impact Assessment please provide the following:

What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment? (Q10 from the full EIA form)

No additional actions or amendments are required. The policy does not negatively impact on any on the protected characteristics.

As a result of these conclusions what actions (if any) will be included in your business actions and wider review processes? (Q11 from the full EIA form)

There are no actions required at this stage. The annual LLP review will identify any future issues. We will also be able to review the profile of new customers to see if this changes the demographic of the scheme and increases diversity.

If you require any help please contact a member of the EIA group: EIA@greatplaces.org.uk

Policy Approval Date:	TBC
Equality Impact Assessment Date:	18/5/2021
Safeguarding impact	N/A
Policy Review Date:	N/A
Lead Team:	Customer Services
Level of Authorisation Required:	Director

Before completing this form please refer to the guidance notes provided, paying particular attention to the guidance around the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Once completed:

- **Step 1** – Completed draft EIA to be sent to the EIA Group (via email) along with the draft Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan for quality checking and possible recommendation.

Please note – It is the author’s responsibility to ensure the EIA is well evidenced and of a good quality. There must also be clear demonstrable outcomes from carrying out the EIA.

A member of the EIA Group will send any checked EIA’s back to the author with any amendments. It is the responsibility of the author to have the EIA signed off at the relevant policy group meeting or at SDLT.

If amendments are required an updated version must be sent to the EIA Group.

Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan Revision:

When a Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan is revised the associated EIA must also be revised – this revision should be proportionate to changes made. If no changes are made, no changes need to be made to the EIA.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Directorate:	
Name of Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan :	

EIA completed by:	Caroline Campion
Position:	RRM, Equity Region
Date completed:	17/5/2021

Signed off by:	
Position:	
Date of sign off (approved):	

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Pro-Forma



1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan

Cambridge Gardens Local Lettings Policy – objectives are as follows:

To ensure that those in highest housing need secure housing; to fully occupy 2 bedroom properties – to increase the number of families with a 2 bedroom need being re-housed; to help applicants with part time access to children to be prioritised (who often struggle to secure 2 bedroom accommodation); to ensure that those with a need for ground floor accommodation are prioritised for this; to manage the number of children moving onto the scheme to help ensure that the customer profile change happens gradually and doesn't unsettle the sustainability of the scheme.

**2. Who defined the terms/ scope of the Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan?
e.g. Great Places Housing Group / Council, central or regional government**

Jointly agreed with Great Places and Sefton Council.

3. Is the Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan directed or influenced by another Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan controlled by Great Places Housing Group?

Great Places Allocations Strategy

4. Are there any other Great Places Housing Group departments or external partners who share responsibility for the Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan?

No

5. What outcomes are expected from the Policy / Strategy / Procedure / Business Decision /Plan and who is intended to benefit and in what way?

The existing local residents and new residents will benefit as the LLP will help ensure sustainability of the scheme, particularly in terms of managing the number of children in mixed age blocks.
Residents with an identified ground floor need will benefit as they will be prioritised for ground floor accommodation
Great Places will benefit as by attracting younger residents with children, will reduce the average age of the scheme and reduce the turnover of the scheme
The local authority will benefit as it will bring 91 units in north Sefton into social rent and help reduce the CBL waiting list numbers. There is currently very limited social housing in the north of the borough and lettings have historically been made outside of the CBL system.

6. What factors could contribute / detract from the outcomes?

A lack of demand could detract from the outcome; however the local authority have confirmed there is an under supply of social housing in the north of the borough so a lack of demand is unlikely at this highly desirable scheme. The LLP will be reviewed annually to ensure it is achieving its objectives and allowing the opportunity to amend it then as necessary.