

**Report Title Here****Local Lettings Plan Request Johnsons HQ, Litherland**

Date of Issue:	May 2025	
Date of Decision:	May 2025	
Report to:	Cabinet Member Housing & Highways	
Report of:	Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth & Housing)	
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member Housing & Highways	
Wards affected:	Litherland	
Is this a key decision:	No	No
Included in Forward Plan:		
Exempt/confidential report:	No	

**Summary:** To seek approval to agree to a Local Lettings Plan for Johnsons HQ, development in Litherland.

**Recommendation(s):**

(1) That Cabinet Member approves the use of a Local Lettings Plans by Plus Dane for the new development at the former Johnsons site in Litherland.

**1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations**

1.1 Plus Dane housing association are pursuing a New Build scheme at the former Johnson site in Litherland through a Section 106 Planning Agreement.

The development consists of 67 homes, of which the property breakdown is as follows:

- **12 apartments (6 one beds and 6 two beds)**
- **55 houses, which are a mixture of two-, three- and four-bedroom homes, of which:**
  - 21 – two-bedroom houses
  - 27 – three-bedroom houses
  - 7 – 4-bedroom houses

1.2 Plus Dane propose the use of a Local Lettings Plan (LLP) to allocate the properties on the site. The Council's own Allocations Policy (Property Pool Plus) Section 2.2 states:

*Local Letting Schemes*

*4.3.1 The local authority and registered providers can use local lettings schemes to achieve a wide variety of housing management and policy objectives subject to agreement with the local authority. The following list is intended to be illustrative and in no way prescribed or definitive:*

- 1. Allocating accommodation in rural villages and giving priority to applicants with a connection to a particular parish.*
- 2. Creating more mixed and/or sustainable communities.*
- 3. Dealing with a concentration of deprivation.*
- 4. Ensuring properties that are particularly suited to being made accessible (e.g. ground floor flats) are prioritised for those with access needs.*

*Property Pool Plus Housing Allocation Scheme Procedure*

- 5. Relocating essential workers such as teachers, nurses and police officers within a reasonable travelling distance from their work.*
- 6. Supporting people in work/volunteering or who are seeking work or seeking volunteering opportunities.*
- 7. Dealing sensitively with lettings in rural areas to sustain communities by giving priority to those with a local connection of more than two years.*
- 8. Where a child to adult ratio could be lowered on an estate where there is high child density or, conversely, young single people could integrate into an estate where there is high ratio of older persons.*
- 9. Where there are reasons to positively discriminate due to age, for example accommodation is only suitable for applicants under the age of 35 years, or over the age of state pension entitlement.*

1.3 The statutory basis for "local lettings policies" is within Section 167(2E) of the 1996 Housing Act which enables accommodation to be allocated to people of a particular description, that fall within the reasonable preference groups or provides that additional priority can be given to people in any of those preference groups.

In 2010, the Communities and Local Govt Department and Chartered Institute of Housing issued a Good Practice guide for the use of Local Lettings Plans. This recognises that Local lettings policies may be used to achieve a wide variety of housing management and other housing policy objectives. For example, local lettings policies may be used to “protect existing stable communities”, and “improving community stability and cohesion”. The guidance also describes the use of ‘Sensitive Lettings’ which can be used to address specific issues, such as the make-up of a particular block of flats, ie. having the ability to by-pass applicants to avoid potential lifestyle clashes that could arise by rehousing certain groups of applicants under one roof.

- 1.4 The PPP Allocations Policy is principally designed for the allocation and letting of individual properties. In many new-build developments housing associations are letting multiple properties at the same time; in this case 76 new affordable rented homes. The proposal from Plus Dane, below, sets out their reasoning for an LLP and how the LLP would operate.
- 1.5 In summary, 60% of homes will be prioritised to applicants who are in employment. All applicants will be subject to financial assessments to ensure affordability and sustainability

#### **Apartment block breakdown**

Flats Band %	One bed (6)	Two beds (6)	Employment (60%*) 1b	Employment (60%*) 2b
Band A 40%	3	3	2	2
Band B 40%	2	2	1	1
Band C 20%	1	1	1	1
Total	6	6	4	4

#### **Houses breakdown**

House Band %	Two bed (21)	Three beds (27)	Four beds (7)	Employment 2b (60%)	Employment 3b (60%)	Employment 4b (60%)
Band A 40%	9	11	4	5	7	2
Band B 40%	8	10	2	5	6	1
Band C 20%	4	6	1	2	4	-
Total	21	27	7	14	16	3

The remaining 40 % of homes will be allocated to applicants who can demonstrate they are making a community contribution as set out the in the Property Pool Plus allocation policy, namely:

- Engaged in voluntary, active resident involvement or unpaid employment for at least 16 hours per week for at least 6 months. This includes Regular or Reserve Armed Forces Service.
- Engaged in further or higher education, either part-time or full-time, for a minimum of one term.
- Unable to be involved or participate in the community due to an illness, disability, age, gender or any other characteristic or circumstance.

In the event of insufficient demand, Plus Dane will discuss alternative letting strategies with the LA.

For the apartment blocks, for any ground floor accommodation, Plus Dane's approach will be:

- Flats – Ground floor - in the first instance will be offered to applicants who need ground floor for health reasons.
- Fully adapted wheelchair accessible flats will be offered to applicants with a wheelchair need

## **2. Financial Implications**

2.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this Local Lettings Plan.

## **3. Legal Implications**

3.1 Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996 requires Local Housing Authorities to have an Allocations scheme for determining priorities in allocating housing accommodation.

## **4. Risk Implications**

4.1 There are very little risk associated with the approval of this Local Lettings Plan.

## **5 Staffing HR Implications**

5.1 There are no direct staffing implications as a result of this decision.

## **6 Conclusion**

6.1 The proposal will assist Plus Dane (the provider) achieve a balanced community and a mix of people for this large new build development in Litherland, whilst still providing housing for those residents most in need.

## Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The Council could withhold approval from Plus Dane to operate a Local Lettings scheme, although this could be disadvantageous to both the community that they are trying to create and to the Council's working relationship with the organisation.

### **Equality Implications:**

The equality Implications have been identified, and risk remains, as detailed in the report.

### **Impact on Children and Young People:**

This will have a positive impact on children and young people, particularly on those who are allocated these new build properties in Litherland.

### **Climate Emergency Implications:**

The recommendations within this report will have a Neutral impact.

There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report. Any climate emergency implications arising from matters referred to in the Cabinet Member Report will be contained in reports when they are presented to Members at the appropriate time.

## What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

### **(A) Internal Consultations**

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD/8049/25) has been consulted and notes the report indicates no direct financial implications for the Council in respect of these proposals.

Chief Legal and Democratic Officer has been consulted and has no comments on the report (LD/6149/25).

### **(B) External Consultations**

The ward councillors have been consulted when the LLP was formulated, and Cabinet Member has since been briefed and agreed to the LLP.

### **Implementation Date for the Decision :**

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Cabinet Member decision.

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**Appendices:**

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix A; Local Lettings Plan Johnsons HQ, Litherland

Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment Johnsons HQ, Litherland

**Background Papers:**

Merseyside Property Pool Plus Allocations Policy <http://www.propertypoolplus.org.uk>

## Appendix A

# Local Lettings Framework

Plus Dane Housing

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**Johnsons HQ, Litherland, Sefton L21**

## Introduction

This Local Lettings Policy (LLP) has been developed to deliver sustainable lettings for the new build homes at Johnsons HQ, Litherland.

The scheme is a development of 67 homes, split as follows:

- 12 apartments (6 one beds and 6 two beds)
- 55 houses, a mix of 2-, three- and four-bedroom homes. (21 x 2b, 27 x 3b and 7 x 4bedroom)

Plus Dane therefore proposes to vary the standard allocations criteria for the prioritisation of applicants for these homes.

In addition, we aim to protect the capital investment made by Plus Dane through the delivery of sustainable tenancies.

## Aim of the framework

The aim of the Local Lettings Policy is to make a significant contribution to the overall sustainability of the scheme by helping to identify suitable tenants, who will settle and contribute to the local community, ensuring tenancies are sustainable for the long term thereby safeguarding the significant investment being made in the new homes.

As Johnsons HQ is a new development, we want to ensure that we create a balanced and sustainable community from the beginning by identifying suitable tenants who will settle and make a positive contribution to the local community, ensuring tenancies are sustainable for the long term.

We aim to achieve this by housing a mix of different households, with different lifestyles and economic profiles, whilst at the same time, still providing housing to residents in housing need.

# Background

Johnsons HQ, set in the Litherland electoral ward of Sefton, is Plus Dane's new build scheme of 67 homes. Handovers are scheduled to take place from August 2025 through to December 2025.

## Demand and letting potential

The figures below provided by Property Pool Plus on 3 April 2025, demonstrate the demand for homes across Sefton is as shown however, it should be noted that the figures shown cannot identify which area of Sefton or what type of accommodation an applicant would prefer to move too, so not all registered may want to move to Bootle.

follows:

Band / Bed need	1	2	3	4	5	7	Grand Total
Band A	254	114	42	28	10	1	449
Band B	672	520	256	119	5		1572
Band C	661	496	188	17	1		1363
Grand Total	1587	1130	486	164	16	1	3384

Current PPP allocation by Band for homes in Bootle for 2024-25 was as follows:

	1 bed Flat	2 Bed Flat	2 bed house	3 bed house	4 bed house	Grand Total
Band A	28	8	20	12	1	56
Band B	8	6		20		14
Band C	3	3		1	1	6
Grand Total	39	17	20	33	2	76



# Proposal for scheme

The content of this framework does not diverge from the main principles of Property Pool Plus (PPP) Allocation Policy, and we remain committed to rehousing people in housing need.

The Local Lettings Policy will apply to the first and any subsequent lets within the first 12 months of the scheme and is intended to create a mixed scheme of applicants.

Homes will be advertised through Property Pool Plus; however, we intend to include a local lettings criterion to ensure the sustainment and reputation of the new development and the community.

It is intended that a local lettings policy will apply on the first let or any first lets within the first 12 months of the scheme, to safeguard the reputation of the development and the significant investment being made in the new homes.

Specifically, this means for this scheme that priority for applications will be given to those who:

- Are economically active to ensure an economic balance of incomes and to prevent a concentration of resident's wholly dependent on benefits
- Have a local connection to Sefton
- Are local volunteers, making a contributing to the local community.
- Do not have a history of criminal or anti-social behaviour.

Under this framework, to help us achieve the letting criteria, the following targets are proposed:

- A split between housing need bands as detailed in the table below to ensure we have a scheme of tenants with different lifestyles to help create a sustainable development
- 60% of homes will be prioritised to applicants who are in employment. All applicants will be subject to financial assessments to ensure affordability and sustainability

Flats Band %	One bed (6)	Two beds (6)	Employment (60%*) 1b	Employment (60%*) 2b
Band A 40%	3	3	2	2
Band B 40%	2	2	1	1
Band C 20%	1	1	1	1
Total	6	6	4	4

- (As it is not possible to allocate to the exact 40% number, priority will be rounded up to Band A.

House Band %	Two bed (21)	Three beds (27)	Four beds (7)	Employment 2b (60%)	Employment 3b (60%)	Employment 4b (60%)
Band A 40%	9	11	4	5	7	2
Band B 40%	8	10	2	5	6	1
Band C 20%	4	6	1	2	4	-
Total	21	27	7	14	16	3

- (\*60% of 55 – 33).

The remaining 40 % of homes will be allocated to applicants who can demonstrate they are making a community contribution as set out the in the Property Pool Plus allocation policy, namely:

- Engaged in voluntary, active resident involvement or unpaid employment for at least 16 hours per week for at least 6 months. This includes Regular or Reserve Armed Forces Service.
- Engaged in further or higher education, either part-time or full-time, for a minimum of one term.
- Unable to be involved or participate in the community due to an illness, disability, age, gender or any other characteristic or circumstance.

- In the event of insufficient demand, we will discuss alternative letting strategies with the LA.

## Proposal detail

We **will** give 60% preference to applicants in continuing employment, making a continuing contribution to the community

To ensure we create a balanced community on first letting, we may give preference to an applicant who fulfils this requirement above another applicant in greater housing need.

We **will** give preference to households able to demonstrate a stable and continuing employment history. All applicants will be subject to financial assessments to ensure affordability and sustainability.

We will **not** allocate to any household who have previously held a tenancy and are unable to provide satisfactory tenancy references for the preceding 2 years. For those households who have not held a tenancy before, an alternative reference such as one from an employer will suffice.

We will **not** allocate to any household that has been investigated and formally served with a written warning for breach of tenancy within in the previous 2 years.

We will **not** allocate to any household with unspent convictions, recorded against them in the last two years that would make them unsuitable to be a tenant. This includes criminal convictions and / or warnings for anti-social behaviour which may pose a risk to others or undermine the safety of the surrounding community.

All cases will be reviewed, and an assessment carried out to determine eligibility. Where an applicant is rejected based on their criminal record or past anti-social behaviour they will be notified with an explanation as to why they are deemed unsuitable to be a tenant and given advice as to what steps are available to them to make them suitable to be a tenant in the future.

We reserve the right to withhold any offer of accommodation if the qualifying applicant has an offending history associated with any of the following activities:

- Illicit drug related activities
- Serious Anti-Social Behaviour
- Any other offence deemed serious enough to pose a high-risk to neighbourhood stability

If there is concern activities have not abated and will have a negative impact on our homes, neighbours or surrounding community, an offer may not be made or withdrawn.

# How the Local Lettings Plan will be applied

## Selection Process

The homes will be advertised on Property Pool Plus advising applicants that a Local Letting scheme is in place and applicants will be required to satisfy the criteria specified.

We will continue to give priority to suitable applicants in accordance with the appropriate banding and date order system but shall give priority to those in employment where they can demonstrate they have sufficient finance to pay the rent.

Applicants given priority for employment should be working 16 hours or more at the close of the bidding cycle and be able to provide as evidence a contract of employment, letter from employer and/ or recent wage slips.

Volunteers must have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to close of the bidding cycle and be volunteering up to the point of offer and have been volunteering for a not-for profit organisation or a charity registered with the charity commission.

Applicants will be required to fully occupy the property in line with current bedroom eligibility needs.

In keeping with our Lettings Policy for allocating flats, the LLP does not alter our approach which is:

- Flats – Ground floor - in the first instance will be offered to applicants who need ground floor for health reasons.
- Fully adapted wheelchair accessible flats will be offered to applicants with a wheelchair need

Before any offer is made, all applicants will be required to undergo a formal interview, including a full reference check, when the local letting criteria and any additional checks that may be necessary will be discussed in detail.

As part of the interview process, all applicants will undergo an Entitled to assessment to ensure they are claiming their full benefit entitlement. In addition, to ensure the sustainment of the scheme, as a matter of course each applicant will be offered a tenancy sustainment referral to our in-house floating support team and, if required, will be sign-posted to debt management support if it is needed.

## Appeals

Applicants have the right to request a review of a decision made in relation to their application. Reviews will follow the Property Pool Plus Review process. The request for a review can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. Details of the appeals process are detailed in the Property Pool Plus allocation Policy

# Monitoring, Conclusion and Review

If the approach described above does not deliver a mix of residents to achieve sustainability of the scheme an alternative approach will be implemented.

Any decision to move to an alternative approach will be discussed and agreed with Property Pool Plus.

It is intended that this Local Lettings Policy shall apply to the first lets only. When a property on this development becomes available in the future, it will be advertised in accordance with our general Lettings Policy.

We will use the following indicators to measure the overall success of this Local Lettings Plan.

- Average length of tenancy
- Turnover of homes
- Number of Anti-Social Behaviour reports

## Appendix B

EIA-Rapid Impact Assessment	
<b>Name of policy:</b> Local Lettings Policy – Johnsons HQ Bootle	<b>Is this a new service or policy?</b> New
<b>Person responsible for assessment:</b> Gaynor Nicoll	<b>Date completed:</b> 7 April 2025
<b>What are the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy or service?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The aim of the Local Lettings Policy is to make a significant contribution to the overall sustainability of the area by helping to identify suitable tenants, who will settle and contribute to the local community, ensuring tenancies are sustainable for the long term. The policy supports our lettings policy objectives which are to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ensure our homes are let in a fair, transparent and efficient way;</li><li>support the local authority's strategic housing function;</li><li>give people choice through participation in choice based letting schemes;</li><li>make best use of available stock and create sustainable communities</li><li>minimise the time that properties are left unoccupied;</li><li>allow us the opportunity to market our homes in a diverse, accessible, and innovative way.</li></ul></li></ul>	
<b>Who does the policy or service affect?</b> <p>All customers who express a wish to move to Plus Dane's new development at Menlove Avenue, Woolton</p> <p>.</p>	
<b>1. Working through the questions below, are there any concerns that:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the policy or service could affect people differently because of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion belief or social economic circumstances, or</li><li>that the needs of people in any of these groups will not be met?</li></ul> <p>(NOTE: For comments that apply to all diversity strands, rather than repeat the comment against each strand, complete the summary box below)</p>	

Characteristic	Impact	Summary:
<b>Ethnicity</b> People from different <b>ethnic</b> background including travellers & gypsies)	No <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LLP will apply equally to all applicants irrespective of Race or Religious belief</li> <li>Where there are language difficulties / language limitations, the services of a translation service will be utilised.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender</b> Between <b>men &amp; women</b>	No <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LLP will apply equally to men and women.</li> <li>Applicants can speak with either a male or a female Officer to discuss their housing needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> People with difference <b>sexual orientations</b>	No <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LLP will apply equally to all applicants irrespective of sexual orientation.</li> <li>Same sex couples are recognised within the bedroom standard criteria</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b> People of different <b>ages</b> including young, older people and children	No <input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LLP will apply equally to all applicants aged 18 years and over</li> </ul>
<b>Disability</b> (including mobility, hearing, HIV, visual impairment, and people with mental health problem)	No <input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LLP will apply equally to all applicants irrespective of their disability.</li> <li>Accompanied viewings are offered to all customers and we will discuss any support needs with all customers to ensure provisions are in place for the start of the tenancy.</li> <li>We can arrange a British Sign Language interpreter if required at viewing or sign up, for hearing impaired customers</li> <li>Residents with an identified ground floor need will benefit as they will be prioritised for ground floor accommodation</li> </ul>

<b>Faith / religious belief</b> People with different <b>religions</b> or <b>beliefs</b>	No <input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LLP will apply equally to all applicants irrespective of faith or religious belief</li> <li>• Applicants with a religious preference for a shower will find we have showers installed over the bath</li> </ul>
<b>Transgender</b> Peoples whose <b>gender identify</b> is different from that assigned at birth	No <input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LLP will apply equally to all applicants irrespective of their gender identity</li> </ul>
<b>Other socio-economic factors</b> such as an emerging communities, people living in geographical areas, migrant workers, people with a criminal record, people on low income	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the LLP 60% of allocations will be prioritised to applicants in employment, however the LLP is not 100% ring-fenced based on economic circumstances, it includes 40% equivalent priority for volunteers and carers and those not able to make a community contribution due to illness, age, gender or any other characteristic or circumstance</li> <li>• Credit checks will be undertaken for all applicants who are to proceed to an offer</li> <li>• Entitled too benefit assessments will be completed for all applicants. This is to ensure the customer is claiming all benefits they are entitled too which in turn helps ensure they can meet their rental obligations meaning we do not set them up with a tenancy they will be unable to afford and sustain.</li> <li>• All applicants are required to provide a week's rent in advance. This is in line with the terms of the tenancy agreement. Where applicants are unable to do this, we will not proceed with the offer. This requirement is explained at advert stage and during the pre-allocation stage giving applicants sufficient time to understand the requirement. consider.</li> <li>• Applicants with an offending history that make them unsuitable to be a tenant will be excluded from the</li> </ul>



		<p>first lets. This is a necessary restriction which applies to all characteristics for the reputation of the scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scheme has a local connection criteria giving priority to applicants with a local connection to the Woolton area. Although this will disadvantage applicants not from the local area, this will ensure local residents are given a priority benefit for much local needed accommodation. This criterion will affect all protected characteristics</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary of impact assessment:</b></p> <p>The impact assessment is medium</p> <p>The age impact is unavoidable due to the funding requirements for the scheme.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the Local Lettings Plan may impact on applicants from all protected characteristics due to the additional lettings criteria, such as the requirement to be in employment, requirement to have a local connection and those who may have an offending history. This impact is necessary to ensure we get the balance of allocations correct to protect the reputation of the scheme and maximise sustainability of new tenancies</p> <p>This impact has been mitigated by introducing a % of lets between each band, widening the reach of applicants who can be housed.</p> <p>This impact is temporary as it relates to the first let of the scheme to ensure its long-term viability and community contribution. As Johnsons HQ development is a new development, we want to ensure that we create a balanced and sustainable community from the beginning by identifying suitable tenants who will settle and make a positive contribute to the local community, ensuring tenancies are sustainable for the long term.</p> <p>We can only achieve this by housing a mix of different households, with different lifestyles and economic profiles, whilst at the same time, still providing housing to residents in housing need.</p> <p>The LLP reinforces our commitment to the local area and provides an opportunity for applicants with a real commitment to the area to be priorities and this will be applied to all protected characteristics.</p>		

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