

Riverside Birkenhead

Background

The Riverside development is situated on the Duke Street area of Birkenhead, between Park Road North and Beckwith Street near Birkenhead Park Station. There is excellent travel routes with bus and rail routes within walking distance.

Torus Developments, in partnership with HMS, are working together to provide 3 three - bedroom houses and 10 one - bedroom 2 storey walk up apartments.

All properties will be let on an affordable rent basis. The properties are modern in design and constructed to an extremely high standard. They include the latest energy efficient products including new boilers, new central heating systems, double glazed windows and doors. These energy efficiency upgrades will result in lower fuel bills for new tenants. Further benefits include high quality modern kitchens and bathrooms.

Our Commitment

Torus understands the very important role we have to play in meeting the housing needs of customers on the housing register within Wirral and positively contributing to neighbourhood sustainability and cohesion.

We currently have a number of local letting schemes in place within Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley & Wirral. The scheme aims to contribute 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. In order to achieve this, we need to rehouse a good balance of tenants and a healthy mix of people with different lifestyles. Overall, however, the content of our local letting schemes do not diverge from the overall principles of the allocation scheme and we remain committed to rehousing people in need.

We will consult with officers and Elected Members within Wirral over the content of the local letting scheme; and it is our intention, with the support of this local letting scheme, to advertise 100% of the properties on Property Pool plus (PPP). This approach reinforces our commitment to make sure applicants on the waiting list can maximise their rehousing opportunities via our new build schemes.

We are committed to creating sustainable neighbourhoods and want all our tenants to be able to live happy, healthy and full lives. We understand a local letting policy in isolation will not achieve this aim and that a joined-up approach across all services within Torus is required.

Demand and lettings potential

Information provided by the Property Pool Plus Partnership June 2021

There are currently 12,566 applications registered on PPP of which 7,324 require 1 bed room and 1,531 require a minimum of three bedroomed accommodation in the Local Authority" Wirral.

100% of allocations for this site will be from PPP. The following tables provide a breakdown of cases by specific needs band across Wirral.

Band/Sub Band		
Band A Total	213	2%
A- Health/Welfare (Urgent)	47	
A- Homeless (owed main duty)	5	
A- Homeless Relief in Priority Need	100	
A- Regeneration	15	
A- Overcrowded (2 or more bedrooms)	46	
Band B Total	1,393	11%
B- Health/Welfare (High)	793	
B- Overcrowded (1 bedroom)	293	
B- Disrepair	302	
B- Under occupation	1393	
Band C Total	831	7%
C- Health/Welfare (Medium)	498	
C- Homeless / Prevention (no priority need)	20	
C- Homeless (intentional with priority need)	313	
C- Living with family and friends	831	
Band D Total	614	5%
D- No assessed need and in employment	1747	
Band E Total	9,255	73%
E- No assessed need	3490	
Band F Total	260	2%
F- Reduced priority	188	
Grand Total	12,566	

If we examine the data for the applicants who have a recognised need for rehousing across the borough, we can see that demand from the urgent band is low and equates to just 2 %. However, we recognise that applicants in this band require rehousing due to urgent needs and we are therefore proposing 30% (3) of the properties are made available to applicants in this band.

We are proposing 50% (5) of the properties are made available to applicants included in Band B and 20% (2) made available to applicants in Band C

Aims of the Local Letting Scheme

A local lettings scheme introduces flexibility into agreed allocation policies and the purpose of this local letting scheme for the development at Riverside, Birkenhead, is to achieve balanced, cohesive communities and sustainable tenancies. This scheme aims to make a significant contribution to the overall sustainability of the area by helping to identify tenants, who will settle and contribute to the local community; ensuring tenancies are sustainable for the long term.

To help us achieve this we will aim to:

- Create a stable environment and feeling of safety and wellbeing within the estates, creating safe places to live that people are proud of and want to live in;
- Maintain current performance in terms of void turnover by improving the quality of the living environment and minimising anti-social behaviour, using robust processes and partnerships.
- In accordance with Common Allocation policy, priority for offers is given to residents on the Wirral and no more than 5% of the properties overall should be allocated to applicants from outside of the area.

Divergence from the standard policy

The local letting scheme for this development differs from our principal Allocation Scheme in the following ways and takes into account the 2019 indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) for the location whereby it was recognised that 115,000 (35%) of residents in the borough are living within the top 20% of deprived areas:

- All of the properties to rent on the development will be let at affordable rents (80% of market rent). All tenants will be awarded the standard Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement but, in the event, any existing Torus tenant with protected rights accepts a tenancy, they will keep these rights.
- The provision of one reference will be requested. If an applicant has held a tenancy, then references will be requested from either the current or previous landlord and any offers may be overlooked if references are not provided or are unsatisfactory. However, all applications will be considered on an individual basis in this respect.
- Prospective tenants must attend a pre tenancy interview and financial assessment / benefits check to establish applicants' financial status and suitability for the scheme. This approach is standard practice for Torus and was adopted because of rent levels and welfare reforms.
- Applicants with support needs where no support package is in place will be encouraged to accept support. If a tenancy has failed previously due to support issues the offer may be withdrawn if the applicant refuses to accept a support package.
- Priority for at least 40% (4 properties) of the properties will be given to applicants who are in employment or full-time education/training (where they can demonstrate they have sufficient finance to pay rent). However, offers will be made in accordance with priority need. This criterion is to offer opportunity for local residents in employment or full time training to remain in the area and help create a sustainable and balanced community. , and is in line with the general aims and principles of the allocations policy. The majority of properties, i.e. 60%, will be allocated with no preference to employment or full time education / training in recognition of the fundamental aim of the allocations policy which is to allocate accommodation to those most in need i.e. those with a reasonable preference in bands A to C.

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- Applicants will be required to sign the Good Neighbour Agreement

Applicants with a criminal record and history of antisocial behaviour will be considered in the context of whether they are suitable to be a tenant. If there is concern their activities have not abated and will have a negative impact on these properties, neighbours or surrounding estate, the offer may be withdrawn. This will be subject to information provided through a police check.

Where an applicant is rejected based on their criminal record or past antisocial behaviour, they will be notified in writing with an explanation as to why they are deemed to be unsuitable to be a tenant and giving advice as to what steps are available to them to make them suitable to be a tenant in the future.

Selection Process

All affordable rent allocations managed by Torus on this development will be subject to the agreed criteria and 100% of the properties will be advertised via PPP. Future voids will continue to be advertised on PPP, advising applicants that a local letting scheme is in place and applicants will be required to satisfy the strict criteria already specified. We will continue to give priority to suitable applicants in accordance with the appropriate banding and date order system. This local letting scheme will be reviewed annually.

Applicants will be invited to attend a formal interview (pre-tenancy assessment) before an offer is confirmed, whereby the local letting criteria, good neighbour agreement and any additional checks that may be necessary, will be discussed in detail. During this interview, applicants will be required to demonstrate they understand their responsibilities as a tenant to respect their neighbours and are capable of maintaining and sustaining their tenancy.

The following targets are being proposed in relation to the demand from the waiting list as for 1 bedroomed accommodation. Allocating this way will ensure that those from the priority bands are given a fair chance of securing a property, whilst ensuring those in Band A urgent housing need are provided with a proportionately higher opportunity to secure accommodation.

Band	1 bed apts
Band A	3 (30%)
Band B	5 (50%)
Band C	2 (20%)
Band D	0
Total	10 (100%)

In the event, there is insufficient demand:

Properties will be re advertised via PPP to applicants in all bands.

Consultation

In developing this policy, we will consult with local Elected Members and Wirral Council.

Managing the Policy

All new tenants will be visited within 4 weeks of their tenancy start date to complete a settling in visit and will receive further home visits by Torus staff after 3, 6 and 9 months to determine their suitability to continue with the tenancy. During the visits, the following will be discussed:

- any issues raised by the tenant and/or any support needs;
- any tenancy matters including the rent account, any complaints/ASB, and property damage.

Intended Outcomes

It is intended that by implementing changes to the way allocations are carried out and to allow a change of tenure within the area, the aims of the policy will be met and this will help us to create/sustain balanced and sustainable communities.

We will monitor and review the policy within 10 months of first lettings using the following as indicators of the success:

- Turnover of voids
- Numbers of offers to let a property
- Average void period
- Rent loss
- Average length of tenancy
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Customer satisfaction survey

Approved

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Regional Director

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(Date)

Riverside, Birkenhead

Good Neighbour Agreement

Aims

Residents of Riverside believe that everyone has a right to live in a clean, tidy and peaceful environment.

This agreement sets out what residents and Torus as a landlord are committed to do to make this happen.

We are all different and need to be tolerant of each other's' lifestyles. This agreement aims to provide a set of common principles and standards that we can all meet, in order to achieve a neighbourhood where

- we are happy to live and get along with our neighbours
- we respect each other
- we are given support and good services from our landlord and other partner agencies working in the area

Purpose

By signing this agreement, residents, Torus and partner agencies are committing to the well-being of the estate and understand that a 'Good Neighbour' approach and tolerant attitude is needed from everyone.

We will make a united stand against anyone who does not respect their neighbours, their environment, their homes or the law. This community will succeed if we all work together.

Torus and partners agencies are committed to working with the Riverside residents:

- Preventing problems happening in the first place;
- Stating what is and is not reasonable behaviour to anyone who wants to move to the estate;
- Not tolerating crime, nuisance, harassment, or anti-social behaviour
- Supporting residents and witnesses who work with us to tackle and prevent nuisance and harassment;
- Taking all complaints of anti-social behaviour seriously and dealing with them sensitively, appropriately and as confidentially as possible;
- Helping and encouraging you, as residents, to sort out problems between yourselves;

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Good Neighbour Agreement

- Working closely with other agencies to deal with the whole of the problem;
- Making empty properties safe and secure as quickly as possible and acting promptly when residents report properties empty ;
- Not tolerating wilful damage, neglect or vandalism anywhere on the estate;
- Making sure every resident enjoys the right to peaceful enjoyment of their home;
- Using all the legal tools and powers, we have to tackle nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

As a resident of the Riverside Estate I agree that looking after this area is not just the landlord's responsibility; what I do is also vital.

I want to live in an area which is clean, tidy and safe, and where neighbours treat each other well.

As a resident of the Riverside Estate I am committed to:

- Respect other people whatever their age, background or lifestyle and being considerate about how my lifestyle may affect others, within my home and the local community;
- Showing tolerance and reasonableness before complaining; and talking to my neighbour to resolve issues in the first place
- Not break the tenancy conditions or the law;
- Letting children play. If children harass or disturb others then complaints are justified and parents must be reasonable in their response;
- Not dropping litter or dumping rubbish and will make sure that my rubbish is properly bagged and put out for collection on the allocated day;
- Not allowing damage to the property of other residents, or areas of this estate, including graffiti;
- Not playing loud music late at night, or at other times to the annoyance of my neighbours or other residents;
- Reporting incidents of nuisance or crime;
- Watching out for other people and their property and keeping a look out generally to help make this estate a safe place to live;
- Making sure that the front of my home and communal areas are kept clean and tidy so that visitors to the estate can see that we care about where we live;
- Keeping my dog/pets under control at all times. I will clean up after my dog/pets and will not let it bark/make noise to the annoyance of other residents.

Riverside
Good Neighbour Agreement

By signing this agreement, I accept responsibility for myself, visitors to my property and any other household members.

NameSignatureDate ...

Signed on Behalf of Torus