

Local Letting Scheme Town Lane, Southport

Background

This development falls within the Kew Ward, Melling, Sefton Borough Council. The borough consists of a coastal strip of land on the Irish Sea and extends from Bootle in the south, to Southport in the north. In the south-east, it extends inland to Maghull/Melling. The district is bounded by Liverpool to the south, Knowsley to the south-east, and West Lancashire to the east. The Kew ward contains 6,349 homes of which 12.9% are (5.3%) are social rent.

This development consists of 153 newly built homes developed by Mulberry. There are 81 x homes available for Private Rent (56 x 2 bed apartments; 9 x 2 bed houses & 16 x 3 bed houses) 52 x homes available for Shared Ownership (9 x 2 bed houses; 39 x 3 bed houses & 4 x 4 bed houses) and 20 homes available for Affordable Rent (16 x 2 bed apartments; 1 x 2 bed room house & 3 x 3 bed room houses)

Our Commitment

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

This is our third local lettings scheme within the Sefton boundary. We currently have a number of local letting schemes in place within Liverpool and Knowsley.

The scheme aims 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.

In order to achieve this, we need to rehouse a good balance of tenants and a healthy mix of people with different lifestyles. On the whole 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 Sefton 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 October 2019.

There are currently 6,160 people registered on Property Pool Plus (PPP) for accommodation in Sefton. 100% of allocations for this site will be from PPP.

The following tables provide a breakdown of demand for the Borough and the specific wards based on PPP applications and bids.

- Active PPP applications in Sefton
- Breakdown of Allocations by Priority Banding for Q1 & Q2 across Sefton
- Average bids for houses within the Southport area

Active application breakdown in Sefton

Number of applications

Band A	Total 247	4.1%
A - Health/Welfare	83	
A - Homeless (owed main duty)	3	
A - Homeless Relief Priority Need	24	
A - Regeneration	67	
A - Overcrowded (2 or more bedrooms)	70	
Band B	Total 1798	30%
B - Health Welfare High	631	
B - Overcrowded (by 1 bedroom)	482	
B – Disrepair	1	
B - Under Occupation	684	
Band C	Total 1373	22.4%
C – Health Welfare Medium	740	
C – Homeless (no priority need)	34	
C – Homeless Intentional with Priority Need	0	
C – Living with family & friends	599	
Band D	Total 639	10.5%
D – No assessed need and in employment	639	
Band E	Total 1881	31%
E – No assessed need	1881	
Band F	Total 122	2%
F – Reduced priority	122	

Total	6060	100%
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Breakdown of Allocations by Priority Banding for Q1 & Q2 Across Sefton

Priority Band	Sefton No	Sefton %
Band A	39	20%
Band B	100	51%
Band C	29	15%
Band D	10	5%
Band E	17	9%
Band F	1	1%

Average bids for 2 and 3 bed houses and 2 bed apartments within Southport

01/04/18 – 01/11/19	No Advertised	No of Bids	Average Bid
3 bed houses	47	4,186	89
2 bed house	18	2,483	138
2 bed apartments	28	1,520	54

If we examine the data for the applicants who have a recognised need for rehousing, we can see that demand from the Urgent Band is low and equates to just 4%. Combined the demand for applicants included in high and medium is 53 %. We are therefore proposing to target a higher percentage of properties to these bands. Non priority bands combined demand equates to 41.5%.

We can determine from the number of bids received for 2 Bed room apartments and 2 & ,3 bed room houses in the Southport area that there is a substantial demand for this type of accommodation.

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 Town Lane, Southport, 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 suitable 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 the Common Allocation Scheme, priority for offers will continue to be given to Sefton residents or those applicants with a local connection. Applicants included in Band A – F and live outside of the Sefton Borough will be considered in accordance with the 5% cross boundary limit as stated in the Allocations Policy.

Divergence from the standard policy

The local letting scheme for these developments differs from our principal Allocation Scheme in the following ways:

- All of the properties to rent on this development will be let at an Affordable Rent (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 1 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 applicant refuses to accept a support package.

- Priority for at least 40% 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 help create a sustainable and balanced community.
- Applicants will be required to sign the Good Neighbour Agreement (**Appendix A**).

Applicants with 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 on the basis of 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 for the area as shown above. Allocating this way will ensure that those from the priority bands are given a fair chance of securing a property. This accounts for 60 % (13 properties – 10 X 2 bed room apts, 2 x 3 bed room houses & 1 x 2 bed room house) of the properties to be advertised. The remaining 40 % (7 properties – 6 x 2 bed room apts & 1 x 3 bed room house) of the properties will be advertised on PPP for applicants in

all bands with priority given to applicants who are in employed, in full time education or training to help create a sustainable and balanced community.

Band A	5	38%		
A - Health/Welfare	1 (2F)			
A - Homeless (owed main duty)	1 (2F) 1 (2H)			
A - Homeless Relief Priority Need	0			
A - Regeneration	1 (2F)			
A - Overcrowded (2 or more bedrooms)	1 (3H)			
Band B	6	47%		
B - Health Welfare High	3 (2F) 1 (3H)			
B - Overcrowded (by 1 bedroom)	2 (2F)			
B - Disrepair	0			
B - Under Occupation	0			
Band C	2	15%		
C – Health Welfare Medium	1 (2F)			
C – Homeless (no priority need)				
C – Homeless Intentional with Priority Need				
C – Living with family & friends	1 (2F)			
Band D				
D – No assessed need and in employment				
Band E				
E – No assessed need				
Band F				
F – Reduced priority				
Total	13	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 have consulted with local Elected Members and Sefton Council, and they will continue to be involved in the ongoing monitoring and review.

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, 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, 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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Executive Director

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(Date)

Reviewed

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(Director of Landlord Services)

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(Date)

Appendix A

Good Neighbour Agreement Town Lane, Southport

Aims

Residents in this development believe that everyone has a right to live in a clean, tidy and peaceful environment. This agreement sets out what residents and Torus, as the landlord, are committed to undertake, in order 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 neighbourhoods 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 our communities/neighbourhoods

Purpose

By signing this agreement, residents, Torus and partner agencies are committing to the well-being of our communities 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, environment, homes or the law. Our communities and neighbourhoods will succeed if we all work together in:

- Preventing problems happening in the first place;
- Stating what is and is not reasonable behaviour to anyone who wants to move to the developments;
- 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.
- 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 locality;
- 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 one of this development at Town Lane, Southport, I agree that looking after this locality 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 and with respect.

As a resident of this development at Town Lane, Southport, I am committed to:

- Respecting 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 breaking 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 making 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 area 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.

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

I agree with these standards and will abide by them

Name Signature..... Date.....

Name Signature..... Date.....

Signed on Behalf of Torus

Date.....