**INFORMATION**

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| **Policy Name** | **New Build Allocations Policy**  **Watchmaker Court - The Watchfactory Phase Two** |
| **Effective Date(s)** | **June 2024 – December 2024** |
| **Approved By** | **Director of Communities** |
| **Approval Date** | **May 2024** |
| **Policy Owner/Dept** | **Director of Communities** |
| **Policy Author** | **Director of Communities** |
| **Review Date** | **December 2024** |
| **Policy Framework Ref** |  |
| **Version Number** | **6** |

**Version Control**

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| **Version** | **Date** | **Changes** | **Approver** |
| **1** | **14/05/2024** |  | **Sarah Smith** |
| **2** | **15/05/2024** | Number of applicants on HRA – to be reflective of those over 50+ rather than all ages. Insertion of number of transfer applicants on HRA under occupying by one or two beds.  Preference to Knowsley applicants for first round of lets.  Staggered advertising. |  |
| **3** | **20/05/2024** | Proportion/ percentage of properties by banding/transfer applicants amended. |  |

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| --- | --- |
| **Relevant National Standards or Regulation** | * Consumer Standards 2024 * Rent Standard |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Relevant Legislation** | * Housing Act 1988 * Housing Act 1996 * Homelessness Act 2002 * Equality Act 2010 * Localism Act 2011 |

1. **Purpose**

This policy aims to effectively manage the affordable rent homes located at Watchmaker Court, part of The Watchfactory Phase Two development in Prescot.

1. **Scope**

This policy applies the affordable rent homes located at Watchmaker Court, The Watchfactory Phase Two, Prescot in Knowsley. The development consists of 31 one and two bed affordable rent apartments. The properties at Watchmaker Court are expected to commence hand over in June 2024.

The mix of **31** affordable rent units included in this local lettings policy is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Property type and size | Number of units |
| Apartment – 1 bed (2 person) | 22 |
| Apartment – 2 bed (3 person) | 9 |

1. **Background and Context**

Livv Housing Group own and manage approximately 13,000 general needs and older persons homes in Knowsley for affordable and social rent.

There is an identified need for affordable housing within the Prescot area.

1. **Demand**

Livv Housing Group is committed to allocating our affordable housing to meet local housing need. The aims of this policy are to ensure that the new homes we develop support the national housing crisis, support local housing need and also contribute to the overall viability and sustainability of the area. It is crucial that we ensure tenancies are sustained and that these have a positive impact on the local area.

As at May 2024, there are currently circa 628 active applicants aged 50 and over who are eligible for a home (within Bands A - C priority need bands) on Property Pool Plus within the Knowsley sub region. The breakdown of these applicants by banding is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Knowsley Housing Band | Number of applicants aged 50+ |
| Band A | 78 |
| Band B | 346 |
| Band C | 204 |
| **Total** | **628** |

1. **Allocation criteria and selection**

100% of new allocations will be advertised through Property Pool Plus, in accordance with the criteria detailed within this policy. The principles in this policy do not diverge from the overall aims of the allocations scheme. Property adverts for homes at Watchmaker Court will clearly state on the advert that allocations are subject to this policy which will help applicants when making a choice about whether to bid on the property.

To meet housing need and to ensure that we are achieving a sustainable mix of customers living at Watchmaker Court, the allocations will be split with a % in each band that is reflective of the overall demand within that band.

We will allocate these apartments to applicants over the age of 50 due to the development being funded solely for the purpose of older persons accommodation. This will also help to create a sustainable community as all other apartments within The Watchfactory Phase Two development are for Extra Care applicants who have been allocated a property via the Extra Care Housing Panel.

This will also support with our approach to make the best use of our homes and with Knowsley Borough Council’s aim to ‘right size’ homes across the borough, making more, larger family homes available to meet demand. As of May 2024, there are currently circa 143 current social housing tenants who are under occupying their property by either one or two bedrooms. The breakdown of these applicants is as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Knowsley Housing Band | Underoccupied by one bedroom | Underoccupied by two bedrooms | **Total** |
| Band A | 5 | 39 | 44 |
| Band B | 93 | 4 | 97 |
| Band C | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| **Total** | **99** | **44** | **143** |

* All homes will be allocated to applicants over the age of 50.
* All homes will be allocated to Knowsley residents for the first round of lets.
* All homes will be allocated at affordable rent (80% of the market rent) and customers will be offered either an Assured Shorthold (starter) or full Assured tenancy agreement (where they have already held a starter tenancy in a previous home).
* All homes will be allocated on a % basis across Band A – B housing need Property Pool bandings, with preference for a % of homes to be allocated to social housing tenants who are currently under occupying as set out in the table below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Knowsley Housing  Band | Property size | | Total | % |
| 1 bed | 2 bed |
| Band A | 8 (4x for transfer tenants currently under-occupying) | 4 (2x for transfer tenants currently under-occupying) | **12** | **40%** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Band B | 14 (7x for transfer tenants currently under-occupying) | 5 (2x for transfer tenants currently under-occupying) | **19** | **60%** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Total | 22 (11x for transfer tenants currently under- occupying) | 9 (4x for transfer tenants currently under-occupying) | **31** | **100%** |

* Applicants will be required to provide satisfactory references. If the applicant has held a recent tenancy (within the last 5 years), one reference should be from their landlord. Any decision not to offer a tenancy would be made by Livv Housing Group in line with their own allocations policy and procedures.
* Where preference is given to current social housing tenants under occupying their existing property with a particular housing band, properties will be advertised with restrictions to reflect the particular housing band and preference to transfer applicants. The shortlisting officer will exhaust the shortlist for transfer applicants to check they are under occupying their current property by either one or two bedrooms. Priority in the first instance will be given to those who are occupying a four bedroom property and have been identified as under occupying the property. In the event that this preference is exhausted and there are no transfer applicants who meet the criteria, the property will be allocated to the applicant with the earliest eligibility date for the particular housing band on the shortlist, which may include non-transfer applicants.
* In the event that there are no suitable applicants on the shortlist with the required housing band stated on the advert, the property will then be re-advertised to all housing bands in line with the Property Pool Plus Allocation Scheme rules.

Property adverts will be staggered over a period of five weeks with six properties advertised each week. This will allow Livv Housing Group to shortlist properties in line with the local lettings policy and to also provide applicants with multiple opportunities to bid for several homes within the same development.

1. **Management arrangements**

* All applicants who are made a subsequent offer will have an interview and we will complete a financial assessment to ensure that they are able to sustain the tenancy. Successful applicants will have a face to face sign up where the terms of their tenancy agreement will be explained.
* Successful applicants will be required to have a new tenancy visit within the first month of their tenancy.

1. **Consultation**

Livv Housing Group has consulted with housing colleagues, Local Councillors and Knowsley Borough Council. Consultation will continue throughout the implementation of this policy with the review of allocations with Knowsley Council to ensure the approach set out in this policy meets the needs of the applicants and existing customers. This will continue throughout the review period.

1. **Risk Management**

Failure to implement this policy could result in the Group being adversely affected by high turnover at these schemes if homes were let to a high number of younger single people or younger families. The wider scheme is predominantly for older customers with care needs and this LLP would provide more sustainability and a sense of community. There is a risk of impact on associated management costs and dissatisfaction from our existing customers.

1. **Data Protection, Record Storage and Retention**

Data regarding successful applicants will be stored and managed through our IT systems, CRM, Orchard and Documotive. There are no additional GDPR requirements associated with this policy.

1. **Equality and Diversity**

We assess our policies and provision of services to ensure that no individual or group is treated less favourably because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age.

Livv Housing Group have completed an Equality Impact Assessment in relation to Watchmaker Court, Prescot which is attached in Appendix A. The impact of which identifies no or low impacts for any protected groups of people.

1. **Communication**

This policy will be communicated with all internal staff and stakeholders.

The policy will be available on the Livv Housing Group website and also available to applicants registering through Property Pool Plus choice-based lettings scheme via the Property Pool Plus website.

1. **Performance Management and review**

KPIs will be reported including average re-let time, occupancy and void rent loss.

Specific KPIs will be reported on the voids within this scheme this will include;

* Turnover
* % of failed tenancies within the first 12 months
* No. ASB cases reported
* Customer satisfaction

1. **Review of this Policy**

This policy will be reviewed after 6 months following implementation.

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment

**New Equality Impact Assessment Questions and Considerations**

Please do not attempt to complete this document without first considering the Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit. If you have any further questions or need any clarification, please contact the EDI Manager for information.

We use the term ‘policy’ as shorthand on this form for the full range of policies, strategies and procedures. We use the term ‘people’ on this form in relation to colleagues, customers, stakeholders and partners.

All policies should;

* Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
* Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of others
* Encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low
* Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not. This involves having regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding

**Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Policy Title | Local Lettings Policy |
| New or review | New |
| The main aims and objectives.  Consider:  **What** you are doing? | All customers will benefit, as the policy clearly sets out what service they can expect as well as how they can access it.  The purpose of this policy is to set out our approach to allocating our affordable housing to meet local housing need. The aims of this policy are to ensure that the new homes we develop support the national housing crisis, support local housing need and also contribute to the overall viability and sustainability of the area. It is crucial that we ensure tenancies are sustained and that these have a positive impact on the local area.  We have consulted with local customers, local Councillors and colleagues. It was agreed that allocating to older customers would support a community feel alongside the extra care customers in the rest of the scheme. |
| **Why** you are doing it? | As at May 2024, there are currently circa 628 active applicants aged 50 and over who are eligible for a home (within Bands A -C priority need bands) on Property Pool Plus within the Knowsley sub region.  To meet housing need and to ensure that we are achieving a sustainable mix of customers living at Watchmaker Court, the allocations will be split with a % in each band that is reflective of the overall demand within that band.  We will allocate these apartments to applicants over age of 50. This is to create a sustainable community as all other apartments within The Watchfactory Phase Two development are for Extra Care applicants who have been allocated a property via the Extra Care Housing Panel.  This will also support with our approach to make the best use of our homes and with Knowsley Borough Council’s aim to ‘right size’ homes across the borough, making more, larger family homes available to meet demand. As of May 2024, there are current circa 143 current social housing tenants who are under occupying their current property by either one or two bedrooms.  Funding for this development requires accommodation to be ringfenced for this age group.  Applicants under 50 will be affected but will be able to bid for other homes on PPP. |
| **Who** will be impacted by the policy in terms of customers, colleagues or partners**?** | Applicants and existing customers |
| **Who** will benefit? | Applicants and existing customers, specifically people over the age of 50 who require more suitable housing to meet their needs and people currently under-occupying who are financially impacted. |
| Author | Director of Customer Relationship Management |
| Date | 16/05/24 |

**Test for Relevance**

Does the policy affect people?

If yes, is there a potential that the way in which the policy affects different people will be unequal, inequitable or unfair in any way?

If yes, a full equality analysis should be completed below. If no, you do not need to complete a full EQIA but you must provide your reasoning here with sign off from your line manager;

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| N/a | |
| **Approving Manager:** | **Signature:** |

**Full EQIA**

**Impact assessment as per characteristic.**For assistance with completing this section of the form please refer to the Equality Analysis guidance and in particular Appendix 1.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Protected Characteristic or group | Impact;  Positive, negative or neutral | Details of the impact and considerations given | | Action plan to address inequalities as to impact |
| Disability and mental wellbeing | Positive | Potential applicants may have additional challenges in accessing suitable homes within the borough. | | By allocating to a specific band and age group, we are targeting these homes to those with greatest need of that accommodation type. As individuals get older, they are more likely to acquire a disability and require suitable housing.  We have specialist teams who talk customers through the process at the start of their tenancy and throughout and ensure any reasonable adjustments are made to meet their needs.  We regularly provide financial wellbeing information via Livving magazine and social media. |
| Sex | neutral | All customers have equal access to services and support. | |  |
| Sexual Orientation | neutral | All customers have equal access to services and support. | |  |
| Gender reassignment | neutral | All customers have equal access to services and support. | |  |
| Race, ethnicity or cultural heritage | neutral | Customers may struggle to access information. | | All homes will be advertised via Property Pool Plus. A clear, easy to understand policy and guidance is available on KMBC’s website and can be made available in various formats on request.  Customers have access to an online portal and online support/ advice on our website.    We have specialist teams who talk customers through the process at the start of their tenancy and throughout and ensure any reasonable adjustments are made to meet their needs. |
| Age | Negative and Positive | Applicants over the age of 50 will have more suitable properties to consider. People aged under 50 will not be considered for the properties. Customers may struggle to access information. | | By allocating to a specific band and age group, we are targeting these homes to those with greatest need of that accommodation type. This will ensure that people aged 50 and over are able to live in accommodation that is more suited to their needs by increasing the supply of this type of accommodation. Funding for this development requires accommodation to be ringfenced for this age group.  This will free up other properties advertised to all ages on the social housing register which people under the age of 50 can be considered for.  All homes will be advertised via Property Pool Plus. A clear, easy to understand policy and guidance is available on KMBC’s website and can be made available in various formats on request.  Customers have access to an online portal and online support/ advice on our website.    We have specialist teams who talk customers through the process at the start of their tenancy and throughout and ensure any reasonable adjustments are made to meet their needs. |
| Marriage, civil partnership, inc single status | neutral | All customers have equal access to provide feedback | |  |
| Pregnancy, maternity and adoption | neutral | All customers have equal access to provide feedback | |  |
| Carer status | neutral | All customers have equal access to provide feedback | |  |
| Socio economic background | neutral | Customers may struggle to access information. | | All homes will be advertised via Property Pool Plus. A clear, easy to understand policy and guidance is available on KMBC’s website and can be made available in various formats on request.  Customers have access to an online portal and online support/ advice on our website.    We have specialist teams who talk customers through the process at the start of their tenancy and throughout and ensure any reasonable adjustments are made to meet their needs. |
| Intersectionality |  |  | |  |
|  | | | | |
| **Approving Manager: S Smith** | | | **Signature: S Smith** | |