

Local Letting Scheme  
The Orchard, Pensby Road, Wirral

## Background

Situated in the Pensby area of Wirral, 347 Pensby Road is the location of Torus' new development; The Orchard. The site, which formerly housed a vacant care home, has been re-developed into a 3-storey apartment block comprising of 15 x 2 bed room apartments for Affordable Rent. This high quality development benefits from a communal garden and a total of 13 car parking spaces. The scheme is due to complete in February 2021.

All 15 units will be advertised via Propertypool plus (PPP)

## 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.

This is our first local lettings scheme within the Wirral boundary however; we currently have a number of local letting schemes in place within Liverpool, Knowsley and Sefton.

The scheme aims to make a 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. 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.

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.

## 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 Orchard is to achieve a balanced, cohesive community 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 community, 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 Wirral residents. Applicants included in Band A – F and living outside of the Wirral 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 the developments 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 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, and an unsatisfactory reference may result in the re-assessment of the Property Pool Plus application in line with the Property Pool Plus Policy.
- 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 due to welfare reforms and rent levels;

- Applicants with support needs, where no support package is in place, will be guided and 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 7 (46%) 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 a criminal record and/or a history of antisocial behaviour will be considered in the context of whether they are suitable to be a tenant in line with the Property Pool Plus Policy. If there is concern their activities have not abated and will have a negative impact on these properties, neighbours or surrounding community, an offer may not be made or 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 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.

## Selection Process

All affordable rent allocations managed by Tours on this development will be subject to the agreed Torus/PPP lettings 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 financial/affordability 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.

All properties will be advertised via PPP but priority for at least 7 (46%) 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.

In accordance with Torus policy priority will be given to those applicants who can demonstrate full occupation of the property and can demonstrate they have the finance in place to pay the rent.

### **In the event there is insufficient demand:**

Properties will be re advertised via PPP to applicants in all bands and consideration will be given to those who under occupy subject to affordability.

### **Consultation**

In developing this policy, we have consulted with Wirral 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**

.....  
Executive Director (Date) .....

**Reviewed**

.....  
(Regional Director) (Date) .....



## Appendix A

### Good Neighbour Agreement The Orchard, Pensby Road, Wirral

#### 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 The Orchard, Pensby Road, Wirral, 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 The Orchard, Pensby Road, Wirral, 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;
- Being considerate for other residents /visitors welfare and property in/around the community and generally help make/keep this community 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;
- Not having a dog or cat living with me .

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

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

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

Signed on Behalf of Torus .....

Date.....