

January 2019

Local Lettings Policy: Highfield & Parade Development - Blacon

1. Introduction

1.1 The aim of this document is to introduce a Local Lettings Policy for the new build development at Highfield & Parade area of Blacon. There has been extensive regeneration in this area and changes in housing need and affordability impact the ways we can utilise our stock effectively. This policy reflects the new housing climate and aims to ensure we have a safe, sustainable and balanced community.

1.2 This policy relates to the following properties:

- **Highfield: 19 properties in total:**
 - 8 x one bedroom flats**
 - 5 x two bedroom houses**
 - 6 x three bedroom houses**
- **The Parade: 16 properties in total:**
 - 12 x one bedroom flats**
 - 4 x two bedroom flats**

2. Background

2.1 **Highfield** - this site was once a well established public house which stopped trading in 2014. The public house was vacant for a few years and became a target for vandalism and antisocial behaviour.

The site was identified by Sanctuary Housing Group as suitable for the development but local residents voiced strong opposition to the development of the site. Their main concerns were:

- The size of the development
- The location being close to a primary school
- The allocation of the properties
- The increased traffic flow

It is essential that the allocation of the new properties helps address some of these local concerns.

2.2 Parade – this site is situated next to the Enterprise Centre in Blacon and the 16 properties listed above will be located above a ground floor health facility. This site was previously a block of flats with a long history of antisocial behaviour and it is vital for the continuing improvement in this area that the flats are allocated sensitively.

3. Policy Aims

3.1. Seeking satisfactory references from potential new tenants - ensuring that there is no history of neighbour nuisance or antisocial behaviour by the tenant, family members or visitors to the home address of the applicant. Ensuring that if they have held a tenancy before, they have kept the property in a good condition and have maintained their home in accordance with their Tenancy Agreement. If any of these issues are highlighted in a reference Sanctuary Housing would have grounds to overlook the applicant for these developments.

3.2. Rent arrears - will be investigated and addressed in conjunction with the Common Allocation Policy at point of registration with West Cheshire Homes.

3.3. Starter Tenancies will be issued to all new tenants. This allows Sanctuary Housing to end a tenancy within the first 12 months if there are significant tenancy breaches. This is to protect existing tenants and allow Sanctuary Housing to intervene with appropriate action.

3.4 Up to 3 properties within the Parade scheme will be allocated to those residents who may have complex support needs and are required to move on from temporary or supported accommodation. Criteria and exclusions will be flexible for these allocations.

3.5. This Local Lettings Policy will work in conjunction with the current Housing Management policies & procedures.

3.6 In order to maximise our ability to let properties, there are no age restrictions to those who can apply but the Lettings Team must aim to create a balanced community with a mixture of ages, sexes and employment status.

4. Implementation

4.1 Advertising

All properties will be advertised through West Cheshire Homes and an interview will take place prior to offer. Where a property becomes hard to let, we will use alternative sources to let properties.

4.2 Support Agencies

Applicants will be asked if they have any involvement from support agencies, to ensure that any support needs are addressed straight away, to ensure Sanctuary Housing are aware of any potential problems and that the potential tenant has agreed to accept and work with the support agencies involved. The fact that an applicant has support needs will not be used in any circumstances to refuse housing.

4.3 Each applicant will be interviewed. The interview panel will consist of the Housing Officer for the area and another appropriate member of staff.

5. Establishing and maintaining a balanced community

5.1 The Local Lettings policy will aim to house a mixture of households to build a balanced community. The breakdown of allocations will aim to provide equal lettings to those:

- In Housing Need
- In Employment
- Local Connection

5.2 Criteria for Employment:

One or more members of the household is and has been in employment for the last 6 months on either a full or part time basis (minimum of 16 hours per week) within the Chester area.

5.3 Criteria for Local Connection:

Local connection to Blacon, refer to criteria used in Joint Allocation Policy with West Cheshire Homes. As well as meeting these criteria, applicants must demonstrate both a commitment to the community and their ability to maintain a tenancy. This will form part of the interview process and the type of questions asked.

6. Exclusions

6.1 When a property is advertised via West Cheshire Homes, the allocation policy will exclude anyone with a negative housing history or no housing need and they will not be able to apply. When a property in this area is advertised outside CBL, those with no housing need will be considered, but the following negative housing history will result in a refusal for consideration:

- Past criminal record, relating to violence, drug dealing and antisocial behaviour within the last 5 years;
- Unsatisfactory references, evidence that the applicant is unable to conduct a tenancy in a satisfactory manner.
- Arrears over £500

7. Performance Management

7.1 Information will be monitored to ensure that the lettings are made within the criteria agreed in this policy.

8. Legal Framework

8.1 Local Lettings Policies are allowed as part of the West Cheshire Homes Joint Allocation Policy as a recognised method of creating sustainable and mixed communities.

9. Equality & Diversity

9.1 All forms will be available in other formats and languages if requested or needed by identified customers.

10. Responsibility

10.1 The Operations Manager, Housing is responsible for this policy. Implementation of the policy will be undertaken jointly by the Lettings Team and Housing Management Team.

11. Review

11.1 This Local Lettings Policy will remain in place for two years after the developments are completed and then be reviewed to determine if it is still required.