

**Report of : Housing Leeds**

**Report to: Director of Environments & Neighbourhoods**

**Date:**

**Subject: Local lettings plan for the new development at Middleton Park Grove , managed by Accent**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Middleton Park	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. Approval is sought for the Local Lettings Plan for the new affordable homes at the Middleton Park Grove, Middleton, managed by Accent

**Recommendations**

2. Approve the Local Lettings plan for Middleton Park Grove development managed by Accent.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Local Lettings Plan for the new affordable homes at the Middleton Park Grove, Middleton, managed by Accent.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 In September 2009, the Head of Affordable Housing formed a project group to develop the Local Lettings Policy Framework for Affordable Housing. This was to allow lettings within a specified area or to specified groups of people to be made to customers outside the reasonable preference groups. To ensure a consistent and transparent approach a framework was required to deliver Local Lettings Plans for new affordable housing developed by the Affordable Housing Strategic Partnership as recommended by the Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board. The framework needed to be consistent with the recommendation agreed by Executive Board (July 2009) for new affordable housing schemes across the City.

## **3 Main issue**

- 3.1 The Middleton Park Grove development will provide 12 units of accommodation, which will be a mix of 2 and 3 bedroom houses. All 12 properties will be available as affordable rents. It is estimated that the properties will be ready for occupation from March 2015. The Local lettings plan will apply to all units of accommodation.
- 3.2 The template for all Local Lettings Plans has been approved previously through the delegated decision process. The key elements of the Local Lettings Plan for this scheme, taking into account the local circumstances and property types are set out in the preference order below;
  - Local Connection
  - Overcrowding/Underoccupancy
  - Priority need
  - Employment/training
  - Band C.
- 3.3 The Council will require Accent to;
  - 3.3.1 Undertake additional 'vetting' checks on all listed household members prior to letting, including follow up of references to determine previous tenancy management issues, national insurance number verification, employment verification, and in depth checks for previous rent arrears
  - 3.3.2 Provide additional support and intensive management to customers with support needs to ensure that customers can live independently and sustain their tenancy

- 3.3.3 Use starter tenancies (similar to the Councils introductory tenancies) where tenants are given reduced security of tenure for the first twelve months, to ensure then can maintain an agreed standard.
- 3.3.4 Set up a tenancy management programme for all new residents on affordable housing developments that includes;
- Intensive monitoring during the starter tenancy period to instigate early action for breach of tenancy agreement
  - Periodic inspections to confirm identity, condition of property & family make up
  - Resident group liaison to assist in maintaining good standard and sustainability
- 3.4 The Leeds Homes team will liaise with Accent over the setting and achievement of nomination targets for the Middleton Park Grove site. All units on the scheme are subject to a 100% nomination right on the first lettings and 75% on re-lets thereafter.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.5 The Middleton Park Grove site has been subject to consultation with the Middleton Park Ward Members. As a result of the consultation the local lettings plan was amended to reflect ward member feedback and concerns.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in partnership with Accent. Additional flexibilities have been applied to the allocation criteria to prevent any customers being discriminated against indirectly.
- 4.2.2 Accent will be required to monitor lettings made under the LLP by BME group and age, and benchmark with lettings made to comparable Accent properties with no LLP.
- 4.2.3 Leeds City Council to monitor lettings to customers in housing need through the nominations agreement.
- 4.2.4 In exceptional circumstances customers with a disability, an urgent housing need, with caring responsibilities or other special circumstances may be exempted from the requirements of the LLP where this may be seen to cause discrimination. This would be in agreement with LCC and Accent.

### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 Existing nomination agreements would need variations to take into account the changes implemented in the new Local Lettings Plan.

#### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 Resources are required from within Housing Leeds for the drafting of the individual plan, the consultation work with local ward members and residents, the advertising of the developments in the Leeds Homes Flyer and website, assisting with the nominations and the monitoring of the plans on a long term basis to assess if aims are being met and adhered to.
- 4.4.2 These resources have been identified from current staffing and therefore no additional resources will be required.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 As a Local Authority Leeds City Council will ensure that the Local Lettings Plan is available publicly on request and is transparent. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the plan before implementation.
- 4.5.2 Allocations will be closely monitored to ensure lettings are being made in line with the agreed plan and done fairly.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 There is a risk that Accent, in partnership with Leeds City Council may receive complaints from some customers who may not be offered a property. This has been taken into consideration when agreeing the criteria for the allocation of properties to ensure that lettings will be made fairly and in accordance with the Equality Impact Assessment. There will be robust mechanisms for shortlisting in place. Complaints and queries will be dealt with promptly and openly.

### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Leeds City Council must implement a lettings plan to the new affordable housing development sites. Leeds City Council is within its rights to impose allocation criteria to properties built by RSL's under nomination and S106 agreements.
- 5.2 It is appropriate to take advantage of this opportunity and impose a lettings plan which can be shaped to benefit and meet the needs of the customer of Leeds.

### **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Approve the Affordable Housing Local Lettings Plan the development at Middleton Park Grove (see Appendix 1) & Equality Impact Assessment (see Appendix 2).

### **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 Copy of proposed Local Lettings Plan and Equality Impact Assessment are attached.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

