

Report of : Housing Leeds

Report to: Director of Environment & Housing

Date: June 2016

Subject: Local lettings plan for the new development at Copper Beech Avenue, Bramley, managed by Salvation Army Housing Association

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Bramley and Stanningley	<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 type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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 Copper Beech Avenue site, Bramley, managed by Salvation Army HA.

Recommendations

2. Approve the Local Lettings plan for Copper Beech Avenue development managed by Salvation Army HA.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Local Lettings Plan for the new affordable homes at the Copper Beech Avenue site, Bramley, managed by Salvation Army HA.

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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Although this development does not fall within the Affordable Housing Strategic Partnership, Salvation Army HA are keen to introduce a Local Lettings Plan that follows the same principles.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The Copper Beech Avenue development in Bramley will provide 54 units of accommodation, which will be a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom flats and 2 and 3 bedroom houses. All 54 properties will be available as affordable rents.
- 3.2 Salvation Army HA has an agreement in place with Leeds City Council that 75% of the total number of the properties will be allocated to Nominees from the Leeds Housing Register. The remaining 25% will be let directly by Salvation Army HA.
- 3.3 13 of the properties are ready to let imminently and therefore have been advertised through Choice Based Lettings for customers to bid on in the usual way.
- 3.4 It is estimated that the remaining properties will be ready for occupation from July 2016. The Local lettings plan will apply to the remaining 75% (27 units) of the units of accommodation.
- 3.5 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;

75% (20)	of the properties to be advertised in priority order (ie based on housing need) and customers must meet <u>one</u> of the following criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In employment
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowded • Under-occupied and freeing up a social rented home • Customer with disabilities who needs adapted property to meet their needs • Member of former members of HM armed forces
25% (6)	of the properties will be allocated in Date of Registration Quota order
All customers	will be expected to have a local connection to the Bramley Ward area and a good tenancy history.

3.6 The Council will require Salvation Army HA to;

3.6.1 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

3.6.2 Provide additional support and intensive management to customers with support needs to ensure that customers can live independently and sustain their tenancy

3.6.3 Use starter tenancies (similar to the Council's introductory tenancies) where tenants are given reduced security of tenure for the first twelve months, to ensure then can maintain an agreed standard.

3.6.4 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

3.7 The Leeds Homes Team will liaise with Salvation Army HA over the setting and achievement of nomination targets for the Copper Beech Avenue site. All units on the scheme are subject to a 75% nomination right on the first lettings and 50% on re-lets thereafter.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.5 Salvation Army HA held an open day in March 2016 which was attended by the local community, staff from Leeds City Council and two Bramley Ward Members.

4.1.6 The Copper Beech Avenue site has been subject to consultation with the Bramley Ward Members. There have been no concerns raised regarding the proposal for the Local Lettings Plan or the criterion.

4.1.7 **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.1.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in partnership with Salvation Army HA.

4.1.2 In a recent High Court case, Ealing council's allocations policy was found to have discriminated unlawfully due to the way preference was given to existing tenants and people in employment. As a result, additional flexibilities have been applied to the proposed allocation criteria for the Copper Beech development to prevent any customers being discriminated against indirectly.

4.1.3 These are listed in the EIA, but in summary the LLP will mean that when shortlisting SAHA will consider all cases individually, including any mitigating factors to make sure any decision to bypass is proportionate and can be justified. This includes assessment of the 'good tenancy record' and employment criteria, which will cover households who aren't able to take up paid work, eg carers, disabled customers, retired people etc.

4.1.4 Salvation Army HA will be required to monitor lettings made under the LLP by BME group and age, and benchmark with lettings made to comparable Salvation Army HA properties with no LLP.

4.1.5 Leeds City Council to monitor lettings to customers in housing need through the nominations agreement.

4.1.6 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 Salvation Army HA.

4.2 **Council policies and City Priorities**

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

4.3 **Resources and value for money**

4.3.1 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 on the Leeds Homes 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.

4.3.2 These resources have been identified from current staffing and therefore no additional resources will be required.

4.4 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.4.1 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.

4.4.2 Allocations will be closely monitored to ensure lettings are being made in line with the agreed plan and done fairly.

4.5 Risk Management

4.5.1 There is a risk that Salvation Army HA, 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 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 for the development at Copper Beech Avenue, Bramley (see Appendix 1) & Equality Impact Assessment (see Appendix 2).

7 Background documents¹

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

¹ 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.