

Report of the Community Planning Officer

Report to the Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 20th September 2012

Subject: Letting Board Code Revisions and Public Consultation

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
Headingley		
Hyde Park and Woodhouse		
Kirkstall		
Weetwood		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: N/A		
Appendix number: N/A		

Summary of main issues

1. The Area of Special Advertisement Control has been in operation in inner north west Leeds since 2006. Within this area the Council seeks to restrict the display of letting boards through the implementation of an agreed set of rules known as the Letting Board Code.
2. Since 2011 the Area of Special Advertisement Control has witnessed a growing instance of poster-style advertisements being displayed in windows of residential properties. The display of such adverts is considered to be contrary to the spirit of the Letting Board Code. However, at present the Code does not specifically address the display of adverts in windows.
3. In response to this the Council is proposing revisions to the Letting Board Code to restrict the display of advertisements in windows. These revisions will be the subject of a four week public consultation where comments from interested parties are invited by the Council.

Recommendations

4. Members are asked to note the contents of the report and comment as they feel appropriate.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report is intended to advise Ward Councillors on proposed changes to the Letting Board Code which operates in inner north west Leeds.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Letting Board Code is a set of rules which determine how and where letting boards can be displayed on residential properties in the Area of Special Advertisement Control (also known as the Regulation 7 Direction area) in inner north west Leeds. The Area of Special Advertisement Control covers parts of the wards of Headingley and Hyde Park and Woodhouse.
- 2.2 The Letting Board Code is also operated, on a voluntary basis, outside of the Area of Special Advertisement Control in the Area of Housing Mix as designated by Policy H15 of the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review 2006. The Area of Housing Mix covers the whole or parts of the wards of Headingley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse, Kirkstall and Weetwood.
- 2.3 Further background to the Letting Board Code can be found in the Draft Letting Board Code Guidance Note (September 2012) contained in **Appendix 1**.

3 Main issues

- 3.4 The Council intends to make changes to the Letting Board Code in order to address an area where the Code is currently silent. This is in relation to the display of 'To Let' Boards internally in windows of properties.
- 3.5 Since 2011 the Area of Special Advertisement Control has witnessed a growing instance of poster-style advertisements being displayed in windows of residential properties. These advertisements are often much larger than the 'To Let' boards allowed by the Letting Board Code. The display of such adverts is considered to undermine the spirit of the Letting Board Code. This type of advert can cause considerable harm to the visual amenity and character of local streetscenes where such posters are displayed in significant numbers.
- 3.6 Although the internal display of adverts is not restricted by the Regulation 7 Direction, the Council does have other planning enforcement powers to prevent the display of such adverts. In order to allow a flexible approach to the display of 'To Let' boards in response to this emerging issue, the Council has made amendments to the Letting Board Code and accompanying guidance notes. These amendments have been made in consultation with ward members from Headingley and Hyde Park and Woodhouse wards and key stakeholders including the INWAC Planning Sub Group and the Council's Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group.
- 3.7 The draft revised version of the Letting Board Code is currently subject to public consultation and can be viewed in **Appendix 1**. The public consultation period will run for four weeks from Wednesday 19th September to Wednesday 17th October 2012. Comments are invited from all interested parties. Once comments have been considered, the Council will determine whether or not to confirm the

changes to the Letting Board Code. If the Council decides to confirm the changes these will come into effect before the end of the 'Board Free' month of November.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 The proposed changes to the Letting Board Code are currently the subject of public consultation.

4.1.2 Prior to the public consultation officers met with the following groups to gain a steer on the proposed changes:

- Headingley and Hyde Park and Woodhouse Ward Members – meeting held on Tuesday 22nd May 2012.
- Inner North West Area Committee Planning Sub Group – meeting held on 13th June 2012.
- Private Sector Strategic Working Group – meeting held on 12th July 2012.

4.1.3 The feedback from the above meetings was positive with no objections being made to the principle of the changes. Members of the Planning Sub Group have raised concerns about encroachment on the privacy of tenants by displaying letting boards in windows. These comments have been taken on board and the supporting text of the revised Code has been amended to reflect this.

4.1.4 The public consultation period will run from Wednesday 19th September to Wednesday 17th October 2012. The consultation has been advertised on the Council's website, in the local press, and by Site Notice at local shopping centres within the Area of Housing Mix. Interested parties including landlord groups, university and student groups, and community groups have been informed of the consultation by email.

4.1.5 If the Council decides to confirm the proposed changes to the Letting Board Code the intention is to do this before the end of November 2012; the 'Board Free' month. The Council will write to landlords at this time informing them that the changes have come into effect.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.6 There are no specific equality considerations arising from this report. As such it has not been necessary to prepare an Equality Impact Assessment.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The importance of place making through the planning process is emphasised in the Council's Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy. The Draft Core Strategy states that "place making will be embedded into the planning process which has led to the creation, protection, and enhancement of buildings, places and spaces that are valued by people". It is considered that the Letting Board Code is in-keeping with the objectives of the Draft Core Strategy.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The revisions to the Letting Board Code have been carried out by the City Development Planning Enforcement Team with assistance from the Inner North West Community Planner. The Community Planner is funded from the Area Committee Wellbeing Fund and works alongside existing Council resources.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications as this report aims to advise members and so does not relate to a key or major decision.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 There are no significant risks identified in this report.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The proposed changes to the Letting Board Code are considered to address an issue where the Code was previously silent; the display of adverts internally in windows of residential properties. The proposed changes will strengthen the Council's position to take action against the display of adverts in windows which are not compliant with the revised Code. This in turn will allow the Council to work towards the wider objective of the Letting Board Code; to protect the visual amenity and character of streets within the Code area.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and comment as they feel appropriate.

7 Background documents

- 7.1 None