



Chesterfield Borough Council

DRAFT Local Lettings Plan Hard To Let Properties

June 2017

Introduction and Supporting Information

Chesterfield Borough Council currently owns and manages 9303 properties for residential lettings. 34% (3119) of these properties are flats.

The Council operates a choice based lettings system to allocate and let properties. This is guided by the Choice Based Lettings Allocations and Transfer and Allocations Policy.

Over the previous twelve months we have experienced a considerable reduction in the number of bids placed on our 1 and 2 bedroom flats on our choice based lettings system. This has resulted in lengthy void periods where these properties types are remaining empty.

This causes a reduction in the receipt of rental income from these properties but also has a detrimental visual impact on our estates and neighbourhoods.

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is to enable the letting of hard to let flats and reduce the number of empty properties on our estates.

The Council's current Choice Based Lettings Allocations and Transfer Policy only allows applicants to join the housing register and apply for properties if they have been continuously resident in the Borough for 12 months or more or employed in the Borough on a permanent or long-term contract (12 months minimum) for 16 hours or more.

This plan will allow applicants from neighbouring Local Authorities Bolsover District Council and North East Derbyshire District Council that do not meet the above residency criteria to join the Council's housing register and apply for hard to let flats.

Applications, Banding and Points

All applications received from people who do not meet the residency criteria within the Choice Based Lettings Allocations and Transfer Policy will be placed into General Band 2 on our choice based lettings system.

Preference will always be given to applicants from the Chesterfield Borough area and those that meet the residency criteria. Where no bids are received on properties from applicants that meet the residency requirement then consideration will be given to bids from people from out of the area who do not meet the criteria.

All applicants who do not have a local connection to the borough will be awarded a total of 3 months additional waiting time for every 25 points they would otherwise have accrued as shown under the Points section in the Allocations and Transfer Policy as shown below:

Medical points **50-100 points**

Awarded following the completion and assessment of a medical form

Armed Forces **100 points**

Awarded in line with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces)(England) Regulations 2012

We will monitor allocations made and may, subject to high demand, introduce a lettings quota in order to balance the needs of all applicants in need of accommodation

Under-occupation **80 points per bedroom extra up to a maximum of 160**

Applicants will be assessed in line with the bedroom standard

Preventing Homelessness **70 or 100 points**

70 points will be awarded to applicants who are threatened with homelessness but have accommodation that they can stay in for more than 28 days. These points will be time restricted for three months

100 points will be awarded to applicants who have approached the Council for homelessness assistance pending a decision and have a priority need and local connection with the Borough. These points will be time restricted for 2 months. 100 points will also be awarded to MOPP referrals

Overcrowding (not bedroom standard) **80 points per bedroom lacking, up to a maximum of 160 points**

The overcrowding criteria for children within the household is that points will be awarded in the following circumstances:

- children of the opposite sex, the eldest being 4 years old or more, having to share a bedroom
- children of the same sex, where the age difference is 5 years or more, having to share a bedroom
- points will be awarded if non-related children under the age of 16 are having to share a bedroom

The **Housing Options Manager** has discretion to alter these ages to take into account changing demand and/or supply factors, performance to date on achieving the targets, and the relative needs of the priority groups between themselves.

If an applicant indicates that they are overcrowded as per the bedroom standard, the Housing Solutions Officer must carry out a home visit, if necessary, to assess the need prior to referring to Environmental Services.

Overcrowding points will not be awarded if an applicant moves from accommodation which is suitable in size for the household, to accommodation which is smaller than required.

Hardship/Welfare

25 – 100 points

Applicants who need to move on welfare/medical/hardship grounds will normally fall in to one of the following categories:

- a mental illness or disorder
- a physical or learning disability
- chronic or progressive medical conditions
- infirmity due to old age
- the need to give or receive care
- the need to recover from the effects of violence or threats of violence or abuse
- ability to fend for self-restricted for some other reason
- young people at risk
- people with behavioural difficulties
- need for adapted housing and/or extra facilities
- need for sheltered housing
- need for ground floor accommodation
- need to be near friends or relatives on medical grounds
- household within a household

Hardship/ Welfare

25/50/75/100/200

Critical or Crisis Medical Needs

200

Medical General

50-100

Low Level Medical

50 points

There are several different levels of points to reflect the wide range of hardship, medical and welfare needs and its impact on the applicants housing situation.

Review

The Lettings Plan will be reviewed after 12 months of implementation.

Equalities

All applicants will be considered individually. Chesterfield Borough Council Housing Options will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and provide evidence for the reason for refusing accommodation to an applicant.