

Rushmoor Borough Council
Directorate of Community and Environmental Health and Housing

Local Lettings Policy, Wellesley, Aldershot

Introduction

Wellesley is a large development of the southern part of Aldershot Military Town to be developed by Grainger Plc in partnership with Rushmoor Borough Council. It offers the opportunity to create a sustainable new community to include provision of new homes and contributing to the regeneration of Aldershot.

The development will provide up to 3,850 new homes of which 1,347 will be affordable homes, for a mix of rent and shared ownership, to be delivered in phases.

As the development evolves a lettings plan will be used in each phase to assist in creating a balanced and sustainable community that is integrated successfully with market housing.

This policy contains information on the range of principles that might be contained in individual lettings plans. The content of lettings plans will be enforced on a phase-by-phase basis and may include some or all of the principles addressed in the policy.

Tenure

Total Affordable Housing homes (65%)	Affordable Rent homes	Intermediate homes e.g. shared ownership	Market Housing	Total homes
1347	808	539	2503	3850

The affordable housing includes:

Type of property	Bedroom size	Affordable Rent	Intermediate Homes e.g. shared ownership	Total
Flat	1	160	215	375
Flat	2	81	108	189
Flat	3	1	0	1
House	2	242	108	350
House	3	202	108	310
House	4	121	0	121
		808	539	1347

All affordable rent properties are to be let on affordable rents for a five-year assured short hold tenancy (AST) following a 12-month starter tenancy.

In order to comply with this letting plan, applicants may not be prioritised by band order and properties will not necessarily be let at maximum child density. Applicants will be prioritised as set out in the lettings principles.

Authority to develop a lettings plan (Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996)

The Council has the power under S167(2e) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, which allows local authorities to establish local lettings policies to enable them “to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description” in order to achieve a housing policy objective.

Nomination rights

The Council has nomination rights to 100% of the affordable housing on first let and 75% nominations on subsequent lets. The Nomination Requests provided to the Council for re-lettings must include all adapted properties and a mix of size and types of Affordable Rental Units as agreed with the Council

The lettings plan will apply to all lettings to which the Council’s nominations apply.

The aims of the letting policy are:

To make best use of our housing stock within social rented housing whilst meeting the needs of the community

- Ensure a balanced new community, by including a mix of applicant types and household sizes
- Achieve a mix of child density and occupancy levels that will encourage stability
- Create movement in our existing housing stock

This will be considered at each development phase.

Considering Tenancy History

The lettings plan will aim to ensure that up to 40% of tenants on first let are housing association tenants with a good tenancy history and 40% to be allocated to residents with a good tenancy history and privately renting. The remaining 20% to be allocated to first time tenants e.g. living with family or friends.

In order to assess a nominee’s ability to successfully sustain a tenancy, Grainger Trust will look at the last settled accommodation, previous rent arrears and any history of antisocial behaviour within the last 5 years.

Households where any member is currently engaged in anti-social behaviour or criminal activity or who have been engaged in unacceptable behaviour in the past five years as defined in RBC housing allocation policy may not be considered.

Those who have been engaged in unacceptable behaviour in the past 24 months will not be considered.

A copy of the terms of condition of tenancy and exclusion policy is available to applicants on request.

All new lettings will be subject to a financial assessment to check benefit entitlement and affordability.

Use of starter tenancy

All successful applicants will be issued with starter tenancies for the first 12 months of their occupation.

Definition of Employment

Households where the applicant or their partner is in employment

The lettings plan will aim to achieve that 50% of tenants on first let are in employment. Employment includes the following:

- A permanent employment contract (contracted to be at least 16 hours per week)
- A long term temporary contract (more than 12 months)
- Self employed
- Actively looking for work, to be supported by evidence of receiving JSA
- Approved job-related training
- Past working history will be considered if the applicant has recently become unemployed
- Those households where at least one member of the household volunteer for a non-profit organisation or registered with the charity commission. Volunteers must have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least six months for minimum of ten hours per month

Medical and Welfare Needs

In the affordable rented properties, no more than 20% of households (1bed and 2 flats, and 2bed house) will have medical/welfare needs as categorised by the definition below:

10% - High
20% Medium
70% - Low

Where applicants have a support need a support package must be in place

High – High medical and welfare needs (Care programme and tenancy support services in place)

Medium – Medium medical and welfare needs (support from statutory and voluntary agencies, tenancy support in place, but no formal programme)

Low- Low medical and welfare needs but able to live independently or with some support i.e. tenancy support

Definition of child density

The child density is the number of children under 18 years, expressed as a percentage of the total population of the affordable rented units of the scheme.

Consideration should be given to the number of children to adults in an individual family as well as to the range of ages to make sure that as far as possible that the concentration of high child density and concentration of children of similar ages are avoided.

The lettings plan will aim to ensure that a maximum child density of 50% is applied based on the size of the scheme and recommended child density levels.

In calculating child density, single parents should be considered as a couple.

Women who are more than 28 weeks pregnant will be considered on the basis that they already have a child and their bedroom requirements will be assessed accordingly.

Household composition

In order to create a stable community the lettings plan is intended to have at least a five-year term. This will be achieved by not allocating all units to the maximum number of occupants or by ensuring that those with children who are currently expected to share a bedroom are at appropriate ages to allow the family to remain in their property for at least 5 years.

Accommodation Specific Criteria

Flats

For ground floor flats and wheelchair units priority will be given to applicants who have a specific health need for ground floor and/or wheelchair units accommodation on their housing allocation application. They will be given priority above applicants without this need.

We aim to achieve 75% occupation by single people
25% by couples

No pets are permitted in the flats

Wheelchair units

The number of wheelchair compliant units will be agreed on a phase-by-phase basis. For these units priority will be given to applicants who have a specific health need for wheelchair accommodation on their housing allocation application. These will be given priority above applicants without this need.

Supported flats: Adults with Learning Disabilities (Six)

Tenants of the supported flats will be expected to have an assessed care need and receive support as required. Tenants moving into this accommodation will be nominated in partnership with HCC Adult Services.

Under Occupation

We aim to assist under occupiers finding it difficult to maintain a property where it is too large for their needs or they are experiencing financial hardship whilst making available much need family homes in the borough.

Where an applicant chooses to down size the vacancy created may be used to achieve a chain let.

Overcrowding

To make best use and enable movement in our existing stock preference may be given to existing housing association tenants who have been assessed by Rushmoor BC as lacking a bedroom

Where there is an opportunity, two, three and four bedroom properties may be used to house transfer tenants to achieve a chain let.

Chain Letting

Chain letting is an important approach in managing and securing the best use of existing housing within the social rented housing. It ensures that as many tenants as possible are housed in accommodation that is suitable for their needs and encourages mobility of tenants

(a) 1st phase

A housing association tenant under-occupier moves into a new build property Wellesley releasing a larger property (2 bedroom plus)

(b) 2nd phase

- The property released by the under-occupier will be used to house overcrowded households. Existing HA tenants will be given preference.

(c) 3rd phase

The property released by the overcrowded householder may revert to the first phase to be used to house an additional under-occupier OR be used to house an applicant in the housing allocation pool. Preference is given to existing tenants.

Allocations procedure

- Grainger Trust will advise Rushmoor's senior housing officer of the properties for letting, at least 5 weeks prior to handover
- Rushmoor BC will advertise the properties on Rushmoor Home finder in accordance with the lettings plan
- Once bidding has closed, Rushmoor BC will pass on a list of prioritised applicants.
- Grainger Trust will advise Rushmoor BC when tenancies have been accepted and will show how the lettings comply with the lettings plan.

- In order to comply with this lettings plan applicants may not be considered from the housing allocation pool in band order and properties may not be let at maximum child density.
- The council will send the top three applicants for each property for consideration by Grainger Trust. The top applicant will be invited to view the property

Monitoring

Careful monitoring of the allocations process and management of the scheme will be undertaken by Rushmoor Borough Council to consider the overall success of the lettings plan and identify any trends /commons complaints.

On Initial Lets, Grainger Trust will inform RBC of any refusals of offers and the reason.

A scheme profile will be compiled annually by Grainger Trust, including the following:

- Analysis of CORE lettings returns on each new letting (including information on letting to people needing adaptations)
- Analysis of transfer requests to include;
 - Reasons why tenants have chosen to terminate the tenancy
 - Number of mutual exchanges being requested and the reason for this
- Level of voids during the year and number of letting to nominees from Rushmoor's Housing Allocations Pool
- Analysis of housing management activity on the site (to include antisocial behaviour work and Notice of Suspended Possession (NOSPS) served for breach of tenancy).
- Rent arrears

Rushmoor Borough Council will assess the outcome of the lettings at Wellesley at the completion of each development phase. Based on the monitoring outcomes variations in the lettings plan for future LLP's at Wellesley may be considered.