

Local Lettings Plan

Between Exeter City Council and Westward Housing Group
for properties currently known as Cotfield Street, Exeter EX2 8EE

The postal address will be 18-22 Cotfield Street, Exeter EX2 8EE

1. Purpose of Local Lettings Plan

This Local Lettings Plan has been prepared to assist in the initial letting of 8 (eight) properties by Westward Housing Group at Cotfield Street, Exeter EX2 8EE. This plan has been agreed following a series of anti-social behaviour incidents at Cotfield Street

The residents at Cotfield Street have been subject to persistent anti-social behaviour, potentially drug related nuisance, noise, threatening behaviour and intimidation which has left local residents feeling very vulnerable.

The contents of this document will be used to prepare the advert for promoting the development under the Devon Home choice scheme, and will assist with the final selection of successful applicants.

It also aims to meet housing need whilst preventing potential management problems on site.

2. Initial Lettings

Initial lettings will go through Devon Homechoice in accordance with the requirements of the Exeter City Council Allocations Policy and this Lettings Plan, and in agreement with Exeter City Council.

3. Objectives of the Local Lettings Plan

The objectives of this Local Lettings Plan for Cotfield Street Exeter, Devon are to:

- to allocate to those in housing need;
- to give respite to the community from possible future antisocial behaviour from new allocations in the area.
- to ensure the Westward Housing and partner agency resources (police) can be directed to other areas of need
- create a community which is sustainable;
- to reduce potential anti-social behaviour (ASB) and breaches of tenancy;
- ensure the new community blends smoothly with the existing community;
- ensure that the needs of the local and wider community are reflected within the new development;
- attain a mixture of child density and occupancy levels to encourage sustainability;
- make the best use of the housing stock.

4. Breakdown of Property Types

- 5 x 1 bedroom, 1 person Flat;

- 3 x 2 bedroom, 2 person Flat;

5. ASB and Tenancy Breaches

- Applicants and members of the household will not be perpetrators of serious and/or ongoing nuisance or anti-social behaviour at their current home, or had any legal action as a result of nuisance or anti-social behaviour taken against them including a Notice of Seeking Possession;
- Applicants will not have caused a nuisance that has resulted in action i.e second ASB letter, Injunction or service of a Notice of Seeking Possession by the council or another social housing landlord. This includes action against a tenancy through environmental health or planning legislation.
- Applicants will not have been cautioned or prosecuted for the possession or supply of illegal substances within the last 5 years.
- Applicants will not have been evicted for nuisance or anti-social behaviour from any previous addresses. Discretion may be exercised if the applicant can show that they have over a period of not less than 2 years rectified their behaviour;
- Applicants and members of the household will not have a recent criminal conviction which will impact upon the management of the tenancy or the local community. (Applicants and members of the household with recent criminal convictions will have their circumstances discussed in partnership with Westward Housing Group);
- Applicants will not be in rent arrears for their current home where a Notice of seeking Possession has been served. If arrears are because of a delay in Housing Benefit such that a Housing Benefit payment is owing equivalent to the whole of the arrears, applicants will need to show this is the case and that they have dealt with their claim appropriately and are paying any estimated contributions (e.g. non dependant deductions and bedroom tax) regularly;
- Applicants will not have been evicted for rent arrears from any previous home or have a history of persistent refusal to pay rent. Westward Housing Group will investigate the circumstances surrounding rent arrears. An assessment will be made as to whether the applicant has made reasonable efforts to remedy this and appropriate arrangements for repayment of debts are in place and can be demonstrated.

6. Other Criteria

- For reasons of community stability, we will aim to provide a balanced community of equal proportion of working and non working households;
- Westward Housing group have the right to refuse an applicant if:
 - Existing care or support packages cannot be guaranteed at the new property;
 - The applicant is acutely vulnerable and has no history of ongoing and/or sustained engagement with support services;
 - The needs of the applicant cannot be met by the services available at older persons accommodation schemes.

- Following a nomination Westward Housing Group will make an assessment of an applicants needs. If the assessment indicates that an applicant is considered to be vulnerable for any reason then Westward Housing Group will endeavour to arrange suitable support from the start of the tenancy. However an applicant may be turned down:
 - Where there is an acute vulnerability and no history of ongoing and sustained engagement with support services;
 - Where an existing care package cannot be guaranteed at the new address and no other support is available;
 - Where Westward Housing Group has been unable to arrange suitable support;
 - Where the level of support required would seriously undermine Westward Housing Groups ability to support other residents in the neighbourhood.

7. Monitoring of Lettings Plan

Westward Housing Group will monitor the impact of this lettings plan to demonstrate that it does not discriminate, directly or indirectly on any equality grounds.

8. Allocation Process

An advert will be prepared for submission to the Exeter City Council Home choice allocations scheme. The advert will describe the property types and sizes available for letting. The standard information with regard to property attributes and rent levels will be included.

The properties will be openly advertised to all bands.

Upon closure of the bidding process applicants will appear on the shortlist in band and date order. The final selection of applicants to be verified for the vacancies will depend upon their application band (housing need), the length of time they have been in this band, and the overall aims and objectives of this Local Lettings Plan. This may require some applicants to be considered before others irrespective of their relevant banding and dates.

9. Verification and Selection of Final Applicants

Devon Homechoice will forward the highest banded applicant who meet the requirements of this lettings plan, to Westward Housing Group who will arrange to complete the verification process. References will be sought from existing and previous landlords to establish the conduct of current tenancies. Westward Housing Group will notify Devon Homechoice when offers have been made and accepted by successful applicants, and will provide Devon Homechoice with the reasons for refusing any nomination.

10. Equality

This lettings plan is intended to work alongside the Equal Opportunities and Equality & Diversity Policies of both Westward Housing Group and Devon Council. It should ensure

that the letting process does not discriminate against households and enables applicants with diverse needs to access accommodation on this scheme. The aim is to create a new community which will reflect the diversity of the community within Devon.

11. Terms of Tenancy

The terms of the tenancy will be as per Westward Housing Group standard Tenancy conditions.

Applicants will normally be offered a starter tenancy for the period of one year. Following this, if they have conducted their tenancy in a satisfactory manner, their tenancy will become a fully assured tenancy.

12. Future Lettings

All future lettings on this development will be let to the highest banded Devon Homechoice applicant in accordance with Westward Housing Group and Exeter City Council's Allocations Policy.

Signatories to the Agreement

Agreed on behalf of Exeter City Council by:

Agreed on behalf of Westward Housing Group Association by:

Date: