

Kingston

Local Lettings

Plan

April 2016

LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN FOR KINGSTON

Between South Hams District Council and
DCH and Guinness Trust

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1 Purpose of the Local Lettings Plan

This local lettings plan has been created in order to allocate the future vacancies of the 34 affordable rented properties owned by DCH and Guinness Trust in Kingston. South Hams District Council has worked with Kingston Parish Council in the preparation of this document.

A local lettings plan for Kingston was recommended in the Housing Needs Report for Kingston, which was undertaken by Community Council of Devon in June 2007, as a key element of the development of the Kingston Parish Plan. The Parish Plan notes that affordable housing for local people is second on the villagers' list of priorities. The first, and closely linked priority, is to maintain a sustainable village. The Housing Needs Report found that 8 households were in need of affordable housing, however instead of building new affordable housing in Kingston, the study recommended the creation of a local lettings policy, to address the high turnover rate of the existing social housing and thus address some or all of the housing need identified.

The contents of this document will be used to prepare the shortlist of nominations for the properties at Kingston and will assist with the final selection of successful applicants. The purpose of this document continues to be considered fit for purpose and a review of this has taken place in March 2016, this will be reviewed on an annual basis. The next review will take place in March 2017.

2 Impact of Current High Turnover Rates of Social Housing in Kingston

Guinness Trust has experienced a significant high turnover of their 14 properties since the initial lets in 1992 and 1993. This equates to a 32% turnover per year and has resulted in only 9 of the current tenants having lived on the estate since 2004. This leaves little opportunity for the estate to achieve any amount of stability.

The issues facing DCH are different; they have many elderly residents who have been tenants for long periods of time. However there are likely to be changes over time and it is essential to avoid the same situation arising as that on the Guinness Trust estate.

3 Objectives of the Local Lettings Plan

The objectives of this Plan are to:

- i) Address the high turnover and subsequent instability of the existing affordable housing. This will be measured by a continuously improving target, set to reduce turnover by 10% per year, however it will not be measured until 5 years have passed because of the small number of properties involved
- ii) create and maintain a community, which is sustainable, whilst adhering to Devon Home Choice
- iii) ensure the needs of the local and wider community are reflected within the estates
- iv) attain a mixture of child density and occupancy levels to encourage sustainability

4 Breakdown of Property Types

There are 34 units of affordable rented accommodation.

DCH owns:

- 3 x 2 bedroom houses
- 2 x 2 bedroom bungalows
- 15 x 3 bedroom houses

Guinness Trust owns:

- 10 x 2 bedroom houses
- 4 x 3 bedroom houses

5 Local Lettings Sequential Selection

For the purpose of this lettings plan, the definition of a qualifying local connection will mean an applicant must fulfil at least one of the following criteria, with (i), being the highest priority and (v), the lowest.

- i) a person who has immediately prior to such nomination had his or her main residence within the parish of Kingston
- ii) a person who is or was a serving member of the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and elects to join the Kingston branch
- iii) a person who has permanent employment in Kingston for the last year
- iv) a person who has moved away but has had his or her main residence within the parish of Kingston for three out of the last five years or seven out of the last twenty years
- v) a person who has a strong local connection with Kingston by reasons of birth or family ties in that their parents or grandparents, or siblings or non dependent children aged over 16 who have lived in the parish for the last 10 years

Affordable housing is typically allocated at full occupancy i.e. a single person is usually eligible for a 1 bedroom home rather than a 2 bedroom home. In order to enable properties in Kingston to be allocated to local residents, a degree of under occupation WILL be agreed if a suitable fully occupying applicant cannot be found.

Reasonable preference will be given to applicants who meet the above criteria (i –v).

If the Council is unable to make a nomination in the manner referred to above then it shall apply the above criteria to any one of the surrounding parishes of Ringmore, Bigbury, Modbury and Holbeton. If the Council is still unable to make a nomination then they will refer to Devon Home Choice and consider on the basis of housing need.

The final selection of the successful applicants will depend primarily upon their ability to meet the selection criteria as set out in paragraph 5 and secondly their banding level in Devon Home Choice.

6 Household Size/Child Density

As the properties have maximum occupancy levels, it is anticipated that no property will be under occupied by more than one bedroom.

7 Future Lettings

Future vacancies on these estates will be let in accordance with this plan. The success of the plan will be monitored and reviewed by South Hams District Council, Kingston Parish Council, Guinness Trust and DCH on an annual basis.

The Registered Providers (Guinness Trust and Tor Homes), will monitor the effectiveness of the plan by recording reasons why future voids occur and reporting these reasons back to South Hams District Council as part of the annual review.

8 Equal Opportunities

The Council is committed to equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practise in service provision and seeks to promote social inclusion.

Every effort will be made to ensure that housing applicants are treated fairly and sensitively. Applicants who are eligible to join Devon Home Choice will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or for any other reason. Devon Home Choice complies with the Equalities Act 2010.

The plan will be amended and updated in order to conform to new housing and other relevant legislation and case law and to ensure that they do not operate in a way that discriminates against or disadvantages any particular group.

A 360 Assessment has been carried out on the Council's overarching Local Allocations Policy, which this Local Lettings Plan will sit under, no direct impact was found.

9 Review of Decisions

If the nomination is refused by the Registered Provider, then the property will be held vacant until discussions have taken place between the Registered Provider and South Hams District Council. However, if the nomination is refused by the applicant, a new nomination will be provided through the Devon Home Choice waiting list.

Applicants may ask for any decision about their housing application to be reviewed. Applicants will be advised of their right to a review of decisions about their housing application when notified of the decision. They must make a request for a review in writing, within 21 calendar days of their notification of the decision they wish to have reviewed.

The applicant should specify what decision they wish to be reviewed, the reason why they wish it to be reviewed and provide any additional evidence to support their case.

The review should be undertaken within 8 weeks, by a senior officer who was not involved in the original decision. The applicant must be advised in writing of the outcome of the review. If there is likely to be a delay in completing the review, the applicant must be advised of this in writing, with the reasons for the delay and the expected completion date of the review.

Applicants cannot request a formal review of a decision about allocations or nominations, apart from homeless applicants to whom the Council has accepted a full homeless duty, who then can seek a review of the suitability of the accommodation for their needs.

Allegations that an applicant has obtained a nomination, allocation or tenancy through false information will be investigated if there is evidence to do so.

10 Complaints Procedure

The Council has a complaints procedure which can be used by any housing applicant, or other customer of Council services, if they feel that they have not been treated satisfactorily. The following is the link to the Council's corporate complaints policy. A hard copy is available upon request.

www.southhams.gov.uk/article/1805/Comments-and-Complaints