

## Local Lettings Plan for Mill Lane, Sevenoaks.

### 1. Introduction

This local lettings plan sets out the strategy, tools and targets to guide the letting of 4 affordable rent properties at Mill Lane, Sevenoaks by Town and Country Housing Group. The properties are managed by Town & Country Housing Group and Sevenoaks District Council has nomination rights via the choice based lettings scheme. The plan is designed to support sustainable lettings in accordance with the Kent Sustainable Communities Protocol.

The development is in Mill Lane in Sevenoaks. It is located one mile from Sevenoaks town centre, shops and station, and is on a number of bus routes to town centre.

The aim is to establish a balanced and sustainable community as well as meet housing need whilst preventing potential management problems on the development. It is essential that the social housing scheme is successful and the development is an attractive place where people want to live.

### 2. Property Type & Tenure Mix

The development consists of shared ownership and affordable rented units.

	Tenure	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	Total Units
Mill Lane	Affordable Rent	2	2	0	0	4
	Shared Ownership	0	2	0	0	2
Total		2	4	0	0	6

The affordable rented units are made up of 4 flats which are situated in one block:

Block 1 (general needs)

- 2 x 1 bedroom 2 persons general needs flat
- 2 x 2 bedroom 4 persons general needs flat

**There are designated parking spaces for all the residents**

### **3. Objectives of the Lettings Plan:**

The main objectives of the Plan are:

- To establish a balanced community, by letting flats to a mix of applicant types and household sizes
- To achieve a child density and occupancy level that will encourage sustainability, and allow for the children to be best accommodated
- To allocate to those in housing needs
- To provide a stable environment in the flats and eliminate the chance of anti social behaviour in the blocks as well as ensure that the residents feel safe.
- To ensure that the residents are not disadvantaged by living in social housing and have good provision of opportunities created by living in an area of good reputation.
- To discourage anti social behavior by encouraging all tenants to sign up to the 'Good Neighbour Agreement'

### **4. Details of Lettings Plan**

In line with the aims of the Kent Sustainable Communities Protocol, we wish to ensure that the development has a mixture of residents which reflects the local community.

### **5. Prioritisation of economically active applicants**

Where possible, at least 50% (approximately 2) homes will be let to households where one or more members are either employed on a permanent basis, or actively seeking employment whilst in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance. Our approach will be to prioritise offers of housing to applicants that meet the criteria set out below. Information about current employment will be identified when applicants are invited to be interviewed for the properties, and will need to provide proof.

1. A permanent employment contract of 16 hours per week or more
2. Self-employed
3. Training for employment
4. A long term temporary contract for a period of at least 12-months
5. Self employed

Measures for the impact and success of this objective will be that a minimum of 50% of new tenants are in employment at first let. The measure of success will be the number of applicants in work at the time they moved into their new homes.

## **6. Accommodation specific criteria:**

### **Family size homes:**

- The two bedroom four persons' flats have a maximum occupancy of two children. Exceptions will be made to allow one child to occupy where there is a proven medical need for them to have a double room

### **One bedroom flats:**

The one bedroom flats will be allocated to one person or a couple.

### **Other criteria:**

- We will not house applicants who own their own homes or a property elsewhere unless it has been agreed to because of the applicant's disability issues. In such instances, TCHG reserve the right to reject a nominee from the Council where an applicant has sufficient financial resources from the equity on their home to purchase housing either outright or through the shared ownership scheme or has sufficient income to rent privately at market rent.
- For reasons of community stability, we will aim to have 50% of tenants in employment.
- We will allocate no more than 1 of the homes to a household assessed as vulnerable where adequate long term support package is in place. TCHG will carry out a Needs and Financial Assessment for all nominees, in line with their Affordability Policy. An applicant may be excluded if they seem unlikely to be able to meet the conditions of general needs dwelling without additional support and we are unable to determine that appropriate support is available and in place at the time of letting.

## **7. Nomination rights**

The allocation of the affordable rented homes will be subject to the existing nominations agreement between the Council and TCHG. The initial and subsequent letting of the affordable rented homes will be carried out via the Kent Home Choice Lettings Scheme. However, Sevenoaks District Council reserves the right to make direct allocations to some of these homes.

This lettings plan provides a guide on the eligibility criteria that will be applied to the assessment of nominations. In order to comply with this Lettings Plan, applicants may not be considered in strict priority order. The homes will not be let above the maximum child density.

## **8. Financial Planning**

All successful applicants who are identified as in need of financial and budgeting skills will be required to sign up to support to help ensure that they are able to manage the tenancy and will not get into financial difficulties.

## **9. Use of Fixed Term Tenancies**

New social housing tenants who move into the properties will be granted an affordable fixed term tenancy with an initial probationary period of one year. Following successful completion of the probationary period, a fixed term affordable rent tenancies for a period of five years will be granted. Tenants transferring from local authority that have a secure tenancy or from other housing association homes with assured tenancy will be issued with an assured tenancy. All applicants will be required to provide two proofs of identification prior to being offered the tenancy of one of these properties. Where possible one of these will be photo identification. Proof of income/benefits will also be required. One proof of identification is also required for all members of a household.

## **10. Good Neighbour Agreement**

All successful applicants will need to sign up to the "Good Neighbour Agreement" that will form part of the tenancy agreement. This will set a positive tone about expected behaviour and offers all new residents a sense of security and confidence in the landlord to be professional and prepared to deal with problems of anti social behaviour. It will also include the requirement to attend resident engagement functions.

## **11. Pets**

There will be no pets allowed at the flats except for guide or hearing dogs as they are not suitable for the appropriate care of animals. Pets will also not be allowed to 'visit'. The communal areas and the outside communal space are not suitable for animals.

## **12. Laminated/Wooden Flooring**

Laminated and wooden flooring will not be allowed in the flats.

## **13. Nomination Process**

All of the affordable rent homes within this development will be advertised by TCHG via the Kent Home Choice Lettings scheme. The advertisements will clearly state that a Lettings Plan applies which gives preference to those applicants with a local connection/economically active/number of children per household.

Applicants wishing to be considered for homes including existing tenants seeking a transfer must be included on Sevenoaks District Council housing waiting list. When vacant properties are advertised, applicants should bid in the usual way. At the close of bidding, a shortlist of applicants that have placed bids will be

produced. The highest priority applicant that meets the criteria stipulated in the local lettings plan will usually be offered the property. In the event of two or more applicants sharing the priority band, their registration date order will be used to determine priority.

#### **14. Shortlisting**

One bedroom flats will be advertised by floor levels and not by their individual addresses. Where home seekers have expressed an interest in vacant properties by placing a bid, the manager of the Sevenoaks District Housing Register will verify the case and carry out the following checks:

- Applicants and members of the household will not be the 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 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. In such instances, a risk assessment will be completed.
- Applicants will not be in rent arrears for their current home. 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-dependent deductions) regularly.
- Applicants will not have been evicted for rent arrears from a previous home.
- Applicants will not have been previously evicted from an RSL property.
- Applicants will not have any outstanding or current tenancy notice for any breaches of tenancy.

The top applicants will be invited to be interviewed for the property. Risk assessments will be done and individual needs will be determined. TCHG will also conduct a robust financial and needs assessment for all prospective tenants to ascertain their capability to afford future rent payments and ensure all support levels are met. Proof of eligibility to access public funds will also be confirmed at the interview.

Town and Country Housing Group will contact the Sevenoaks District Housing Register to discuss applicants who may be bypassed in order to create a sustainable community, in line with the Local Letting Plan.

#### **15. Shared Ownership Flats**

The 4 shared ownership properties provided by TCHG shall be nominated to in accordance with the Council's adopted Protocol via the Help to Buy agent.

#### **16. Monitoring & Review**

This Lettings Plan will be reviewed by TCHG, the manager of the Sevenoaks District Housing Register and the Council on an annual basis. Tenants will be consulted if necessary for their input to make any amendments/changes to the way future vacancies are let.

The review may consider:

- Turnover of vacancies
- Failed tenancies and the reasons why
- Households accessing/needing support services
- Anti-social behaviour and the impact this may be having
- General tenant satisfaction

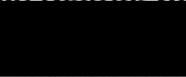
#### **17. Role of Sevenoaks District Council / Sevenoaks District Housing Register**

- Provide nominees in accordance with the current Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocations Policy.
- Joint monitoring of the local lettings plan with TCHG on an annual basis to ensure it remains viable.
- Carry out the verification of potential applicants.

#### **18. Role of Town & Country Housing Group**

- Advertise properties via Choice based Lettings
- Carry out a needs, risk and financial assessment on all applicants
- Co-ordinate the development and joint monitoring of the local lettings plan with Sevenoaks District Council and the manager of the Sevenoaks District Housing Register.
- Advise Sevenoaks District Housing Register on names of successful applicants.

**Sevenoaks District Council**

Signed..........  
Name.....Hayley Brooks.....  
Position...Head of Housing & Health.....  
Date.....24 March 2017.....

**Town & Country Housing Group**

Signed.....  
Name.....  
Position.....  
Date.....

**For the Sevenoaks District Housing Register**

Signed..........  
Name.....Deborah White.....  
Position...Housing Director.....  
Date.....24 March 2017.....

