

**Public**  
**Key Decision - Yes**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Local Lettings Plans – Alconbury Weald and Future Plans

**Meeting/Date:** Cabinet – 18th March 2021

**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development

**Report by:** Housing Needs and Resources Manager

**Wards affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

The Council's Lettings Policy provides the legal allocations framework as to who is accepted onto the register, how the register is administered and how the majority of social rented housing in the district is let.

Local lettings plans (LLPs) are a means of varying the lettings scheme, for example on new developments where a large number of social rented properties are being delivered at the same time and the aim is to create a mixed and balanced community. As a variation to the Council's lettings scheme each LLP has to be formally adopted as an appendix to the Lettings Policy.

This report highlights the next development site that is likely to be subject to an LLP and requests that delegated authority be given to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development, to adopt that and future LLPs.

### **Recommendation(s):**

That Cabinet is:

### **RECOMMENDED**

**To give authority to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development, to adopt future Local Lettings Plans.**

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 As the local Housing Authority, the Council is required by law to have an allocations scheme for determining priorities in the allocation of social rented housing. The Lettings Policy is the Council's allocations scheme.
- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to explain the why Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) may be used and request that Cabinet give authority to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development, to adopt future Local Lettings Plans.
- 1.3 Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) can be adopted to help achieve broader objectives in addition to those of the Lettings Policy, especially on larger developments; or can help to address or prevent particular issues from arising in a defined area. Examples of how LLPs may be used include:
  - To help maintain or achieve mixed, balanced and sustainable communities
  - To make best use of new and/or existing homes
  - To help meet the local council's broader strategic objectives
  - To help meet housing management objectives
  - To help meet specific local needs or address particular local issues
  - To help meet local needs in rural areas through giving priority to people with a local connection
  - To enable people to move back into the area where they have had to move out for redevelopment to take place

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council previously adopted an LLP on the initial lets of Cross Keys' affordable rented homes at the Romans Edge development site in Godmanchester. The initial lettings of these properties were apportioned equally between households in the various priority bands on the housing register as well as between households both in and out of employment. The feedback from Cross Keys in 2018 was that this worked well with a negligible rate of incidents of ASB, rent arrears, or a requirement for a Neighbourhood Manager to visit the site. Although LLPs will not prevent incidents happening altogether, they can play an important role in contributing to the early establishment of mixed and balanced communities particularly on new development sites.
- 2.2 The Overview & Scrutiny Panel welcomed the approach to provide a mixture of housing (tenants) and recommended that the lessons learnt and the best practice followed at Romans Edge be replicated on other development sites in the district where appropriate.
- 2.3 With a number of new development sites in the pipeline discussions are starting to take place with developers and housing association partners about putting LLPs in place on the initial lets of properties that will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme.
- 2.4 The first of these sites is likely to be at Alconbury Weald where the developer is working with the Council and a housing association landlord

to deliver an additional 124 rented homes. These properties are likely to start to become available from April/May this year.

### **3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY**

3.1 The Panel discussed the Local Lettings Plans – Alconbury Weald and Future Plans at its meeting on 4th March 2021.

3.2 A concern was raised regarding a democratic deficit if future local lettings plans are going to be enacted via delegated powers. However, it was recognised that this would allow for more flexibility on the timescales.

3.3 A comment was made that local lettings plans should not distort the waiting list, however it was noted that local lettings plans are highly specific and care is taken not to override the general lettings policy.

3.4 The Panel supported the use of local lettings plans in helping to create mixed and balanced communities and encourage the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

### **4.0 KEY IMPACTS / RISKS**

4.1 Where a number of new-build rented properties are delivered in quick succession in one location there is a risk through the normal lettings process that there may be a concentration of households with similar issues. This may include things such as a higher proportion of households not in employment, and an LLP can help minimise these risks by helping establish a more balanced and mixed community.

### **5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

5.1 Where it is felt that an LLP may be required for any of the reasons highlighted earlier in 1.3, discussions will take place with the housing association or registered provider of the housing. If an LLP is required, this will be negotiated with the housing association/registered provider and approved by the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development.

### **6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

6.1 A key priority within the Place based agenda of the Corporate Plan is to improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet current and future need. LLPs have a role to play in helping achieve this through the letting of rented housing to delivering balanced and mixed communities within new and existing communities.

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Section 166A(6)(b) of the 1996 Housing Act enables local authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories,

provided that overall the authority is able to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of s. 166A(3). This is the statutory basis that allows local authorities to adopt Local Lettings Plans for certain parts of the social rented stock within their area.

- 7.2 The authority for delegating functions to Officers is contained in Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 14 of the Local Government Act 2000.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no resource implications associated with this report.

## **9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 9.1 It is recommended that authority be given to the Chief Operating Officer, to adopt Local Lettings Plans, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development, to allow the timely adoption these plans, as required, in particular as new homes are being delivered.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Link to [Romans Edge \(previously known as Bearcroft Farm\) Local Lettings Plan](#)

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

Name/Job Title Jon Collen – Housing Needs & Resources Manager  
Tel No: 01480 388218  
Email: [Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)