

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Review of Bearscroft Farm Local Lettings Plan
Meeting/Date:	Cabinet – 22nd November 2018
Executive Portfolio:	Cllr R Fuller, Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development
Report by:	Housing Needs and Resources Manager
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

The Council's Lettings Policy provides the legal framework as to who may be accepted onto the Council's housing register and how those households are prioritised for the available socially rented housing within the district. Local lettings plans may be adopted as an appendix to the Lettings Policy as a means of varying the lettings scheme to create more mixed communities, for example by setting aside a proportion of vacancies for applicants who are in employment. They are often used on the initial lettings on new build estates.

The Council adopted a local letting plan with Cross Keys Homes in February 2017, for the initial 51 affordable rented homes being developed at Bearscroft Farm site. The intended aim of plan was twofold:

- To apportion the allocation of properties equally between households in the various priority bands on the housing register; and
- To ensure that properties are apportioned between households both in and out of employment.

Cabinet requested a review of this local lettings plan after its implementation and this report gives feedback on these initial lettings. Although it will take several years to determine whether the initial lettings on a new build development site fully achieve their aims of creating a more mixed and balanced community this report provides analysis of the two main aims of the plan as applied to the initial lets that have now been completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet are invited to note and comment on the review of the initial lettings on the Bearscroft Farm development site.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To review the initial letting of the 51 affordable rented properties on the Bearscroft Farm development site.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY

- 2.1 The Panel requested a twelve month review of the local lettings plan. Delays in the completion of the phases that contained these properties meant that this review was not possible until the initial lettings were complete, hence this report being delayed until now.
- 2.2 The local lettings plan set the following targets as to how the initial lettings should be apportioned:

Band A - 17 Applicants of which 8 to be allocated to applicants where one tenant is working. No more than 8 households moving from homelessness temporary accommodation.

Band B - 17 Applicants of which 8 to be allocated to applicants where one tenant is working

Band C - 17 Applicants of which 8 to be allocated to applicants where one tenant is working

- 2.3 The initial lettings were apportioned as follows:

Band	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	Total	Number in work
A					
Phase 1	3	8	4	15	5
Phase 2	1	1		2	2
8 of the households from band A moved from temporary accommodation					
B					
Phase 1	1	7	3	11	6
Phase 2	1	3	2	6	5
C					
Phase 1	6	4	1	11	5
Phase 2	4	2		6	4
Total	16	25	10	51	27

- 2.4 Although 7 households from band A were in work at the point of allocation compared to a minimum target number of 8, this was agreed with Cross Keys Homes given that a higher proportion of households were in employment overall compared to the plan's original aims.

3. KEY IMPACTS

- 3.1 Although it is too early to determine the success of this lettings plan Cross Keys Homes have provided positive anecdotal feedback on the first months of the new tenancies - *'From a CKH perspective the local lettings plan has worked well and we have had a negligible rate of incidents in the area of ASB, rent arrears, requirement for a Neighbourhood Manager to visit the site'*. As housing associations often encounter issues with a proportion of tenancies on new

developments the early signs are that the Bearscroft development has made a positive start to delivering a mixed and balanced community.

4. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The Review of Bearscroft Farm Local Lettings Plan was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) at their meeting on 8th November 2018.
- 4.2 A Member commented that due to previous disagreements regarding Bearscroft Farm, the Plan should be referred by the current name of the site, Romans Edge, so that local residents can become more accepting of the site.
- 4.3 A query was raised regarding the provision for people with disabilities, however it was noted that such a provision would be for the Council's Letting Policy and not the Local Lettings Plan being discussed.
- 4.4 Provision for residents from Godmanchester was raised, however it was confirmed that the plan contained no local connection criteria and that as one of the District's larger development sites, the development contributes to the housing needs of the District as a whole. The issue of providing for local need in the rural areas of the District is covered by the use of rural exception sites. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) will be reviewing the use and practicalities of rural exception sites.

5. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISION

- 5.1 Cabinet are invited to note and comment on the review of the initial lettings on the Bearscroft Farm development site.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Local Lettings Plan - Bearscroft Farm, Godmanchester](#)

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