

14 September 2016

Environment & Housing Management Committee

**Local Lettings Plan: Fawters Close Garage Site
Redevelopment**

Report of: *Helen Gregory, Acting Head of Housing and Benefit Services*

Wards Affected: *Hutton East, Hutton North & Hutton Central*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The properties to be built on the Fawters Close site have been approved for use for older people's affordable housing for rent, to be retained in Council ownership. Approval was granted by Committee on the 23rd September 2015 for this new development scheme.

1.2 The proposed Lettings Plan will prioritise those applicants on the Transfer List who are aged over 60 and under-occupying an existing social housing property. The anticipated benefits of this will include:

- Releasing larger properties to the General Stock for Home Seeker and Transfer applicants who are in potentially overcrowded accommodation.
- Providing a more targeted approach to older people requiring affordable housing.
- Creating wider 'move on' within the CBL allocations system

1.3 The new development scheme is intended to bring the following advantages to both the Council and its tenants and customers.

- Meet local housing need for older persons
- Enhance our under – occupation offer to encourage older persons to down-size (release larger homes for families)
- Invest the Right to Buy Capital Receipts;
- High quality new build affordable housing;
- The opportunity for the Council to retain the development in Council ownership
- Provide a low level of support on a weekly basis to enable independent living

An “Enhanced Under-Occupation Offer” will benefit the new tenant in providing a tailored service to vulnerable older persons to ensure that the core objectives of this Garage Site Redevelopment programme are realised.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee formally approve the appended Local Lettings Policy.**
- 2.2 That the Committee formally approve the “Enhanced Under-Occupation Offer”.**
- 2.3 Approve the Rent policy application as per paragraph 8 of the Lettings Policy.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The allocation of Council and Housing Association properties to applicants on the Housing Register is principally conducted through Brentwood Borough Council’s choice-based lettings (‘CBL’) Home Options system.
- 3.2 The Allocations Policy 2014 is the core document which directs the principles for lettings and allows for allocations to be made outside of the CBL system.
- 3.3 The proposed Local Lettings Plan will allow for direct allocations of older people’s affordable housing for rent following the principles contained within the Allocations Policy 2014.
- 3.4 It is proposed that where a tenant is moving from an under-occupied property that the following “Enhanced Under-Occupation Offer” will be made, with relevant expenses being met from existing budgets:
 - The under-occupation allowance currently available under the Allocations Policy 2014 will remain in place on the same conditions. Essentially £1000 per under-occupied bedroom will be paid to the tenant less any outstanding debt owed to the Council. (E.g. If a current single tenant is in a 3 bedroom house they are under-occupying by 2 bedrooms. £2000 would therefore potentially be payable).
 - The physical move process, if required by the applicant, will be undertaken by the Council or its agents and the cost will be met by the Council.

- An appointed Officer will ensure a smooth move-in process and will assist where necessary with practical resolutions, such as organising removals , utility company changes.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 The attached Lettings Plan outlines a viable allocations mechanism for the new-build properties on the Fawters Close site.
- 4.2 There is research to support that with elderly residents, financial incentives alone do not encourage them to down-size their properties to a new smaller home. It is extra support and help with organising the move that is more beneficial i.e. organising removals, help with packing, liaising with utility companies etc. We are therefore proposing an ‘enhanced under-occupation offer’ to provide extra support and act as an incentive.
- 4.3 The Lettings Plan and “Enhanced Under-Occupation Offer” are in line with the recognised housing need and to the direct benefit of successful applicants, and the indirect benefit of larger families who need access to larger properties. The approach should generate movement within General Housing Stock accordingly.
- 4.4 The rent on each affordable rent property (acquisitions and new-builds) will be in accordance with the Rents Policy 2015. The Lettings Plan will provide a transparent and coherent mechanism for disposal of the properties.

Following a successful direct offer with the tenant/applicant, an “Enhanced Under-Occupation Offer” will be made. The purpose of this offer is to enable a smooth incentivised process for moving; with the key benefit of releasing family-sized properties where they are under-occupied.

- 4.5 The full methodology and implementation guidance is as per the appended draft Lettings Plan.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

The proposed policy will allow the Council to:

- Target affordable housing supply within the Borough.
- Broaden the housing range for residents.
- Expand housing options indirectly for homeless households through move on’ within General Stock.
- Implement the Welfare Reform agenda (which Brentwood Council is committed to, particularly within existing written policy)

- Structure the Council's approach to housing, in particular relevant to the Local Development Plan.

6. Consultation

6.1 Resident and stakeholder consultation events were conducted on the 12th and 13th September 2015 and feedback was given on the wider Garage Site Redevelopment proposals.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 The Council's Corporate Plan aims to:

- Broaden the range of housing in the Borough to meet the needs of Brentwood's population now and in the future and;
- Achieve a better mix of housing to meet Brentwood's needs, including a wider range of housing solutions for older people.

7.2 The Lettings Plan aims to:

- Maximise allocations efficiency; by enabling movement within existing Council stock and potentially releasing larger accommodations into General Stock.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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8.1 Any relevant cost incurred as part of the 'Enhanced Under-Occupation Offer' will be met within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

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8.2 There are no immediate legal implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

8.3 None.

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

9.1 None.

10. Appendices to this report

Appendix A - Draft Lettings Plan

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