

## Lettings Plan for Hitches Lane, Fleet

### Purpose of the Lettings Plan:

This local lettings policy has been prepared to assist in the letting of 64 properties for affordable rent at Hitches Lane, Fleet by Thames Valley Housing Association, to contribute to establishing a balanced and sustainable community, which integrates successfully with the market housing.

Property type	No of properties
1 bed 2person flat	20
2bed 3person flat	3
2bed 4person flat	11
2bed 4person house	16
3bed 5person house	12
4bed 6person house	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>

The development at Hitches Lane provides a total of 120 affordable homes for a mix of rent and shared ownership, to be delivered in phases. The affordable housing includes:

Phase	Expected handover date	Tenure	Mix	Total no of units
1A	Oct 2010	S/O	12x1b2pf; 6x2b3pf	18
1B	Oct 2010	Rent	3x2b4ph; 1x3b5ph	4
1B	Oct 2010	S/O	12x1b2pf; 12x2b3pf; 3x2b4ph	27
2	2011/12	Rent	4x2b4ph; 4x3b5ph	8
3	2011/12	Rent	8x2b4ph; 2x4b6ph	10
4	2011/12	S/O	1x2b4pf	1
4A	2011/12	Rent	18x1b2pf; 3x2b3pf; 7x2b4pf; 1x2b4ph; 7x3b5ph	36
5	2011/12	Supported housing	2x1b2pf; 4x2b4pf	6
5	2012/13	S/O	4x1b2pf; 6x2b3pf	10
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>120</b>

### Principles of the Lettings Plan:

The principles of the Lettings Plan for Hitches Lane are:

- To establish a balanced community, by including a mix of applicant types and household sizes
- To achieve a mix of child density and occupancy levels that will encourage sustainability

In order to comply with this Lettings Plan, applicants may not be considered in points order and properties will not necessarily be let at maximum child density.

**Authority to develop local lettings policies:**

The Council has the power under s167 (2e) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories or not. However, in operating local lettings policies, housing authorities will need to ensure that, overall, reasonable preference for allocations is given to applicants in the reasonable preference categories; and that their local lettings policies do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, on racial or other equality grounds, as set out in Paragraph 5.26 of the Allocations Code of Guidance issued in November 2002.

**Nomination rights:**

The Council has nomination rights to 100% of the affordable housing on first lets and a minimum of 75% nominations on subsequent lets, in line with the existing Nomination Agreement.

**Blackwater Valley Nominations:**

As part of the nomination sharing arrangement for larger housing sites in the Blackwater Valley, neighbouring local authorities have rights to a share of the nominations on this site and this lettings plan will apply equally to applicants from neighbouring authorities. The number of affordable rented homes that will be shared with other authorities are set out in Appendix I.

**Employment:**

The lettings plan will aim to ensure that at least 50% of tenants on the first let are currently in employment including:

- A permanent employment contract
- A long-term temporary contract – more than 1 year
- Self-employed
- Tenants who are working more than 16 hours per week
- Training for employment

Information about current employment will be identified when applicants are invited to view.

**Child density:**

Child density is defined as the number of children under 18, expressed as a percentage of the total population. Single parents are considered as a couple when calculating child density. Priority will be given to establishing a balance between older and younger children by seeking a range of children's ages in each phase.

A child density of 40% applies to the 2bed flats and 2, 3 and 4bed houses across the development.

**Household composition:**

In order to create a stable community, the Lettings Plan will aim to ensure that households who move into the properties will be able to remain there for at least five years. This will be achieved by not allocating all properties to the maximum number of residents or by ensuring that those with children who are sharing are of appropriate ages to allow the family to remain in their property for five years.

**Use of starter tenancies:**

All successful applicants who are not moving directly from a housing association property will be issued with starter tenancies for the first 12 months of their occupation. Tenants transferring from other housing association homes will be issued with a similar tenancy, depending on their current tenure.

**Rewarding good tenants:**

The lettings plan will aim to ensure that all lettings are made to tenants, who have a good tenancy record, including:

- No breaches of their tenancy agreement, for example, for anti-social behaviour
- A clear rent account for at least 30 of the past 36 months (in the current climate, there may be tenants who have paid their rent regularly and on time, but have had a period when, for circumstances beyond their control, there has been a delay in rent payments, eg awaiting a claim for Housing Benefit)
- Not owe any other debts to their landlord or the Council

Prior to applicants being invited to view, an assessment of 'good' tenant status will be confirmed and references will be sought from private landlords.

**Accommodation specific criteria:****One bedroom flats:**

Applicants moving into one bedroom flats may have a range of support needs. A maximum of 20% of applicants with ongoing tenancy support needs can be included in this accommodation.

**Ground floor flats:**

Applicants with a requirement for level access accommodation will be prioritised for ground floor flats

**Supported flats:**

Tenants of the supported flats will be expected to have an assessed care need and receive support as required. Ground floor supported accommodation will be fully wheelchair accessible. Tenants moving into this accommodation will be expected to be full-time wheelchair users.

### **Allocation process:**

- Thames Valley Housing Association (TVHA) will advise the Council of the properties to be advertised for letting, at least 4 weeks prior to handover.
- The units will be either advertised on Hart Homes or through choice-based letting schemes in neighbouring authorities as part of cross-boundary nomination arrangements.
- The Council will send the top applicant for each property to TVHA.
- The top applicant will be invited to view the property.
- Phased handover will enable the review of lets to take place throughout the allocation process

### **Monitoring**

An estate profile will be compiled annually by TVHA, including the following:

- Summary of CORE lettings returns
- No of voids during the year
- Analysis of housing management activity, including anti-social behaviour work

Neighbouring authorities should keep a record of how they have applied this local lettings plan to their share of the allocations.

Hart District Council will assess the outcome of the initial lettings at Hitches Lane when all the properties are let.

## Appendix I:

### Blackwater Valley Nominations

As the host authority, Hart District Council will be entitled to nominations on an initial 50% of the nominations, plus an additional 7% share.

Local Authority	% of nominations
Bracknell Forest	5
Guildford	8
Hart	57
Rushmoor	12
Surrey Heath	6.5
Waverley	7.5
Wokingham	4
Host premium	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

If one or more of these authorities does not wish to take part in the nomination sharing for this scheme, their percentage entitlement will be re-calculated among the partners according to the shares in the table, with any balance going to the host authority.

### Nomination sharing matrix

The matrix has been modelled applying the above percentages to the number of units in each size property category. Wokingham's share has been redistributed to the authorities based on their percentages.

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total	Percentage
Bracknell	1	2	1	0	4	6%
Guildford	2	2	1	0	5	8%
Hart	12	18	7	2	39	61%
Rushmoor	2	4	1	0	7	11%
Surrey Heath	1	2	1	0	4	6%
Waverley	2	2	1	0	5	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>64</b>	

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Extract from Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings (Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities) August 2008**

#### **Local lettings policies and advertising criteria, labelling**

- 4.68 Section 167(2E) of the 1996 Act enables housing authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories. This is the statutory basis for so-called “local lettings policies”. Local lettings policies may be used to achieve a wide variety of housing management and other housing policy objectives. So for example, local lettings policies may be used to reduce the proportion of older children/young adults on an estate to reduce the incidences of anti-social behaviour; or to deal with concentrations of deprivation by setting aside a proportion of vacancies for applicants who are in employment.
- 4.69 Local lettings policies may be operated in conjunction with a choice based lettings scheme. However, authorities need to bear in mind that any local lettings policy will restrict the choice available to some applicants, and may lead to choice based lettings schemes which are more complex and less transparent.
- 4.70 Where operating local lettings policies, housing authorities will need to ensure that, overall, reasonable preference for allocations is given to applicants in the reasonable preference categories; and that their local lettings policies do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, on racial or other equality grounds.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it will not usually be appropriate to apply local lettings schemes to more than a limited part of a local authority’s stock (or stock to which the authority has nomination rights). Local lettings policies should be monitored as to their effectiveness and reviewed regularly so that they can be revoked where they are no longer appropriate or necessary.
- 4.71 Where authorities intend to operate local lettings policies, this should be made clear on the face of the allocation scheme. However, since local lettings policies will often be time limited, it may not be practicable for the detailed policies to be included in the allocation scheme. One way to get around this would be for the allocation scheme to include a general statement about the intention to implement local lettings policies and to set out the detail of any local lettings policy in a separate document or documents which could be revoked or revised as appropriate. Where this approach is adopted, local lettings policies should be published and should include an explanation of the policy which should be evidence based wherever possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 5.26 of the Allocations Code of Guidance issued in November 2002.

## **Advertising criteria – “restrictive labelling”**

4.72 Where accommodation is allocated by means of a choice based lettings scheme, housing authorities may wish to attach criteria (known as “advertising criteria” or “restrictive labelling”) to particular accommodation which is advertised specifying, for example, that:

- only people of a particular description may apply for that particular accommodation or
- people of a particular description will be given preference for that particular accommodation

4.73 Restrictive labelling may be used, for example, to give effect to a local lettings policy (see paragraphs 4.67 to 4.71) or to a target-based system (see paragraph 4.38 to 4.43), or to match people with access needs to accessible accommodation. It is important that the practical application of such labelling should be operated in accordance with criteria or policies which are set out clearly in the authority’s allocation scheme, and that the effect should not be directly or indirectly discriminatory. Where an authority uses restrictive labelling, it should monitor the impact to ensure that it continues to comply with its duty to give reasonable preference to applicants in the reasonable preference categories.