

To: City Executive Board

Date: 3rd September 2008

Item No:

Report of: Head of Community Housing and Community Development

Title of Report: Local Lettings Plan For John Kallie Court

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To introduce a management & lettings plan to consolidate the current use of this scheme, as retirement home with a high proportion of black & minority ethnic community residents

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Ed Turner

Report Approved by

Board Member: Councillor Ed Turner

Legal: Jeremy King

Finance: Mark Jones

Policy Framework: Allocations Scheme; Corporate Plan; Black and Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy 2006-2009

Recommendation(s): City Executive Board is asked to agree to the introduction of a Local Lettings Plan for John Kallie Court, as set out in this report

Background

1. John Kallie Court is owned and managed by Oxford Citizens Housing Association.
2. It is a sheltered housing scheme of 37 flats (31 no. 1-bedroom and 6 no. 2-bedroom), off Gillian's Way, Cowley Marsh ward. There is also an adjoining 3-bedroom house used as a supported living

scheme for three older ladies with learning disabilities, which does not form part of this proposed Local Lettings Plan.

3. The scheme was built in 1994 by OCHA in partnership with Oxford Spectrum Housing Association and with the support of Oxford City Council. The partnership’s aim was to provide sheltered housing with a multi-cultural environment. Specifically, to provide housing “aimed predominantly but not exclusively at low income members of the black and other ethnic minority communities living in Oxford and surrounding areas”¹. It is the only sheltered housing scheme of a similar nature in Oxfordshire². Spectrum ceased trading in 1998 and OCHA has since taken full management of the scheme.
4. Oxford City Council has 100% nomination rights into the scheme through the Oxford Register of Affordable Housing (ORAH).
5. Oxford has a higher than regional and national average population from black and minority communities, making up 12.9% of the population compared to 8.7% in England and Wales. The City now has the third highest number of people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups in the South East after Slough and Reading.
6. John Kallie Court is able to provide a very appropriate service for elders from Black and Asian ethnic groups particularly. The location of the scheme in Cowley Marsh ward is particularly good – the ward having the largest concentration of a BME group per ward in the city (6.9% Pakistani in the 2001 census).
7. Currently the scheme continues to successfully house people from a wide ethnic spread, 69% from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, and 31% White British, as follows:

Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	1
Asian or Asian British Indian	5
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	1
Black or Black British African	1
Black or Black British Caribbean	9
Black or Black British Other	1
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	1
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	2
Mixed Other	1
White British	13
White Irish	1
White Other	5
Not known	1

¹ 1994 management agreement between OCHA and Spectrum, Schedule 6.

² Anchor Court, York Place, St. Clements is the only other sheltered housing scheme in the County providing a particular BME focus, in that case for Chinese elders.

8. However, there is no written agreement between Oxford City Council and OCHA to confirm the policy to seek to sustain this ethnic mix. Hence this proposed local lettings plan.

Purpose of the Local Lettings Plan

9. To formalise the existing aim of the scheme to provide sheltered housing with a highly multi-cultural environment. This meets the demand from BME elders for such a scheme, which is currently unique in the City and the County. Such a scheme facilitates services targeted specifically at the needs of this community. The scheme is able to provide a multi-faith area for prayer and worship; an Asian lunch club, and other weekly activities.
10. Specifically, to maintain the diversity of the scheme at around 75% of residents from a range of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups, and 25% White British.
11. Nationally and locally, BME households are over-represented amongst those who are homeless or in housing need. In spite of this above-average level of need, BME households are under-represented in sheltered accommodation in the city, comprising of 8.9% BME households (Oct '06), compared to 12.9% in the city population as a whole, and 19.3% on the housing register (from BME Housing Strategy 2006-2009), and this plan will go a small way towards redressing this imbalance.

Management Initiatives

12. OCHA has a variety of management arrangements in place to promote the quality of the scheme as BME-specific, including:
 - A dedicated Sheltered Housing Officer for the scheme in recognition of the additional time required for communication, resident involvement, individual support and community investment work (other OCHA Sheltered Housing Officers have two schemes to manage);
 - Links with professionals and community leaders with specific expertise on issues from a BME perspective;
 - Collaboration with Age Concern's Asian Development Worker to run a weekly Asian lunch club and other activities;
 - Use of Language Line for interpretation and translation services.
13. The Housing Corporation have confirmed their support for a Local Lettings Plan, provided:
 - It is sustainable as communities change (which could be ensured through annual review);
 - It supports balanced communities (which the proposed lettings proportions would).

14. The County Council Supporting People Team have confirmed their support for the BME focus of the scheme through a new three-year contract let from 1 April 2007.

Lettings Proposals

15. It is proposed that nominations to John Kallie Court seek to maintain the diversity of the scheme at around 75% of residents from a range of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups, and 25% White British.
16. This may mean giving preference to people from BME groups, dependent on the ethnic profile of the scheme at any given time. If BME groups were under-represented, first priority would be given to people from Black or Asian groups, second priority to other minority ethnic groups.
17. Other factors, such as urgent housing need in situations where the scheme provides the most suitable accommodation available, will be taken into account between OCC and OCHA in making nominations and lettings. The aim will be to sustain the diversity of the scheme, but not to fetter discretion in nominations and lettings.
18. This process will not affect the assessment of applications or housing need band priority awarded, and the Council will continue to prioritise reasonable preference groups through the Allocation Scheme. This proposal will only be used to sometimes provide a restriction to applicants, outside of the targeted groups, being offered property in this block.
19. This Local Lettings Plan will be reviewed annually, by the Allocations Manager and OCHA officer jointly, to ensure it continues to operate effectively and to meet a genuine need. The plan will be re-submitted to Executive Board at least every five years, should officers wish to recommend it's continuance.

Recommendations

20. Board is asked to support the introduction of a Local Lettings Plan for John Kallie Court on this basis.

Report Author: Dave Scholes
Housing Needs Manager
01865 252636
dscholes@oxford.gov.uk

There are no background papers.