

To: City Executive Board
Date: 14 April 2016
Report of: Head of Housing & Property
Title of Report: A Local Lettings Plan for the one-bedroom Council owned flats at Salter Close and Whitehouse Road

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	A proposal to put in place a Local Lettings Plan at Salter Close and Whitehouse Road to reduce the impact of any new lettings on existing residents following the de-designation of these flats for exclusive occupation by elderly persons.
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Councillor Mike Rowley, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Meeting Housing Needs
Policy Framework:	Housing Strategy 2015-18
Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1.	Approve the Local Lettings Plan at Salter Close and Whitehouse Road for a period of 12 months following the de-designation of the one-bedroom flats for occupation by elderly persons.
2.	To delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Property to extend the Local Lettings Plan after a period of 12 months if, after a review submitted to the Scrutiny Housing Panel, this is still considered to be required.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	A Local Lettings Plan for any one-bedroom flats Salter Close and White House Rd becoming available to let
Appendix 2	Risk Register

Introduction and Background

1. The one-bedroom flats at Salter Close and White House Road are currently designated for elderly persons and the lettings to the flats are restricted so that only housing applicants aged 40 years or older can apply for vacant properties. These flats are due to be de-designated this year, in the last phase of the citywide de-designation programme, and the minimum age restriction used to let vacant properties reduced to housing applicants aged 18 years or older.
2. There are on-going and historical issues in and around the vicinity of Salter Close and Whitehouse Road relating to noise nuisance and other anti-social behaviour. The Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team has been working with local residents and others agencies including the police to address these issues. In order to help reduce the impact of any new lettings on existing residents and to help address these issues it is proposed that a Local Lettings Plan is put in place, for the 40 one-bedroom flats owned by the Council in Salter Close and Whitehouse Road.

The Allocations Scheme

4. The Allocations Scheme sets out the Council's policy on prioritising households in housing need for offers of housing. This is available on the Council website www.oxford.gov.uk. The current Allocations Scheme was approved by full Council and came into effect on 12/12/13 and Section 2.3.2 states when it may be appropriate for a Local Lettings Plan be put in place.
5. In summary the Allocations Scheme states the following:
 - Evidence will be required of the need to vary the usual approach to allocating properties.
 - From time to time the Council may decide to develop Local Lettings Plans for specific blocks or areas, in order to develop balanced and sustainable communities and this will generally part of a wider action plan to address the issues of a locality.
 - The decision to implement a local lettings plan will be approved by the City Executive Board and be made available for members of the public.
 - Local Lettings Plans are designed to be time limited and will be monitored to ensure they do not discriminate against specific groups and overall give reasonable preference to those assessed as in housing need on the housing register over those with no or low housing need.

Designated Elderly Flats

6. The one-bedroom flats at Salter Close and White House Road are currently designated elderly and lettings are restricted so that only housing applicants aged 40 years or older can be offered properties that become available to let. All the flats were due to be de-designated from 1/4/15 as part of the wider phased de-designation of most designated elderly blocks in the City over the last 5 years. However, due to concerns over neighbourhood issues in around Salter Close and Whitehouse Rd the decision to de-designate the last phase of blocks including Salter Close and Whitehouse Rd was deferred for a year.

7. A separate report reviewing the lettings to de-designated properties over the last year will be submitted to the Housing Panel separately. In summary the report states there were no issues linked to lettings to applicants aged under 40 to other de-designated properties in Oxford over the last year and proposes the Head of Housing continues with the de-designation of the remaining properties.

Financial Implications

8. There are no financial implications.

Legal Issues

9. There are no legal implications.

Level of Risk

10. By putting in place a Local Lettings Plan this will reduce the risks that any new lettings to the flats at Salter Close or Whitehouse Road will impact adversely on the existing residents and area. See Appendix 2.

Equalities Impact

11. The Council already monitors lettings to properties becoming available to let across the City and any properties let at Salter Close and White House Rd will be included in the figures monitored.

Conclusion

12. To continue to help develop a more balanced and sustainable community at Salter Close and White House Road it is proposed that before the de-designation of the flats goes ahead that the Local Lettings Plan in Appendix 1 is put into place.

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Background Papers: None

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