

**LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN**  
**PENTYLANDS, HIGHWORTH, SWINDON**

**Working in Partnership with Swindon Borough Council**

**&**

**Aster Communities**

**The Aims & Objectives**

To work with Swindon Borough Council to achieve a sustainable and balanced community which can contribute to meeting the varying housing needs of applicants who are included on the Swindon Homebid common housing register.

To create a safe and secure environment in which tenants can live peacefully and harmoniously and with a commitment in helping to create and maintain a vibrant community.

Whilst the Lettings plan is designed to afford the best possible chance of creating and maintaining a stable and safe community, Aster Communities is committed to assisting Swindon Borough Council to meet housing need in the area. However, the existence of the lettings plan may mean that vacancies will not always be allocated to the applicant who can demonstrate the greatest housing need. Applicants with a lower priority may be considered for any allocation if their housing may help to maintain a stable community.

**The Area – Pentylands**

The Pentylands development is situated on the outskirts of the small market town of Highworth. It is within walking distance of the High Street where there are a number of shops and businesses. There is a local library closely together with schools, churches and various clubs. There is also a regular bus service through to Swindon.

In view of the density of accommodation, sensitive allocations are required to ensure any anti-social behaviour (ASB) and noise nuisance are kept to a minimum.

**The Scheme**

The scheme comprises of 16 units in total; 11 of which are Affordable rents and 5 are for New Build Home Ownership. This will be a 2 x phased handover from November 2013

1 x parking space per household (not allocated)

There is no play area

**Tenancy Type**

All new applicants will be given a Starter Tenancy which may be converted into an Assured Tenancy after 12 months. This decision will be made at a 12 month review meeting and will be subject to the conduct of the tenancy throughout this period.

If any breaches of the tenancy are identified at any point within the initial period Aster Communities will decide whether to extend the period of the Starter Tenancy or to bring the tenancy to an end.

If a decision is taken to end the tenancy, the tenant has the right of appeal.

## **Lettings**

As Aster Communities does not maintain its own waiting list and supports Swindon Borough Council' (otherwise known as 'the Council') Homebid, the Council has 100% nomination for the initial vacancies that arise (as per deed on nomination rights)

The vacancies will be advertised through Swindon's Choice Based Lettings System entitled 'Swindon Homebid. The property advertisement will be worded in order to ensure this Local Lettings Plan is in place.

In an effort to achieve and maintain community stability, nominations will be sought in respect of applicants in order to try and maintain a good mix for the community taking into account economic status, scheme layout and household size, age and make-up. Agreement will be reached prior to advertisement between Aster and Swindon about households that should receive priority when bidding for this new stock.

These homes will be let on Affordable Rents in accordance with the Deed and will be let as follows;

- To those on the housing register or housing transfer list.
- Immediately before taking up occupation of a rented unit has his/her only principal home in the Borough of Swindon or a local connection with the Swindon area.
- Has a member of the household who has a parent, adult child, brother or sister whose only principal home is in Swindon.

## **Local Connection**

In view of the lack of affordable housing within the Highworth area these properties will be shortlisted to those with a strong rural connection. The criteria for this will be used as stated in Swindon Borough Councils Allocations Policy. This will only apply to the first lets.

## **Exclusions**

Any refusal will be made in accordance with Aster Communities guidelines.

For existing RPs or Council tenants their present accommodation must be in good decorative order and maintain a clear rent account.

On receipt of a nomination a home visit will be made by the relevant Aster Communities colleague. All applicants will be required to answer specific questions relating to their present and past conduct and that of household members. Aster Communities will require the applicants consent to contact previous landlords or other agencies for confirmation if required.

Some new customers, who may not have held a successful tenancy previously, may be requested to attend 'Ready to Move' tenancy training and this will be a condition of the tenancy offer.

Aster Communities reserves the right to withdraw any offer made, where applicants fail to attend this course without providing reasonable notice.

On receipt of a nomination a home visit will be made by the relevant Aster colleague in an effort to provide reasonable preference to those applicants who can demonstrate;

1. For any internal transfers, applying through the CBL system, must have a clear rent account and no current breaches of their tenancy.
2. In order to seek to attain and maintain the base targets contained within the local lettings plan, under-occupation by no more than 1 bedroom will be permitted to ensure that child density levels do not exceed manageable levels. Consideration will be given to the proposals to be introduced by Welfare Reform and families advised of the reduction in Housing Benefit for under-occupied property.

All applicants may be required to answer specific questions relating to their past conduct or the past conduct of household members and Aster Communities may require the applicants consent to contact previous Landlords or other agencies for confirmation.

### **Ethnicity**

The lettings plan is intended to work alongside the equal opportunities policies of both Swindon Borough Council and Aster Communities. It should ensure that the assessment and nomination process does not discriminate against households and enables applicants with diverse needs to access accommodation on this scheme. The aim is to ensure that the community at Pentylands reflects the diversity of the community within the Hyde Road area.

### **Monitoring and Review**

Careful monitoring of the allocations process and the management of the scheme will routinely take place as an on-going process and as a minimum at every turnover of the tenancy in order to identify at the earliest possible time the area might need to be reconsidered in respect of future allocations within the scheme.

The following should be carefully monitored by Swindon Borough Council and Aster Communities;

- Number of refusals of offers and reasons
- Number of transfers out of the area being requested and the reasons for this
- Number of Mutual Exchanges out of the area being requested and the reasons for this
- Number and type of complaints
- Number of children housed by age group
- Ethnicity of those housed
- Origin of applicant
- Number of re-lets
- Reasons why tenants have chosen to leave the area

Monitoring of the lettings plans should formally be undertaken by Aster Communities and Swindon Borough Council on an annual basis. The purpose of the annual review will be to;

- Identify trends and common complaints
- To consider targets met or exceeded
- To review as allocations progress and, where considered necessary, set new targets
- To consider overall success of the lettings plan at a review in six month