

City of York Council Housing Services

Local Lettings Initiative for downsizing scheme at Lowfield Green CYC new build scheme, York

1.0 Taken to the North Yorkshire Home Choice Board: 28.04.2021 Introduction

- 1.1 The development to which this Local Lettings Initiative (“LLI”) relates forms part of a larger scheme of 140 mixed tenure homes that is being developed by the City of York Council, at Lowfield Green, Acomb.
- 1.2 The social rented element of the scheme consists of 28 homes: 3x one bed apartments, 2x two bed apartments, 6x two bed bungalows, 11x two bed houses, 5x three bed houses, 1x four bed house.
- 1.3 In addition to these social rented homes, there will be 28 homes for shared ownership and 84 homes for open market sale.
- 1.4 The shared ownership element comprises: 1x one bed apartments, 3x two bed apartments, 5 x two bed bungalows, 6x two bed house, 13x three bed house
- 1.5 The open market element comprises: 2x 1 bed apartment, 7x 2 bed apartments, 11 x 2 bed houses, 15x 2 bed bungalows, 42x 3 bed houses and 7x 4 bed houses.
- 1.6 The apartment block is serviced by a lift and occupancy of the apartments across all tenures (i.e. market sale, shared ownership and social rent).

There is a permanent age restriction for this property of 55 years or over.

If social rented tenants are allocated a property where age restrictions apply, At least one tenant must match this age criteria. Non tenant partners (including spouses and civil partners) of sole tenants who do not fit this age criteria may be permitted to reside in the property, however permission must be sought from housing services before the start of residency.

Household members must be over the age criteria as specified. Tenants must seek permission from housing services for any household members to reside in the property that do not meet this criteria before residency.

If applicants succeed to the tenancy and are under the age criteria, the Council reserve the right to allocate them a suitable alternative property. The lease will also include provision to require ID for any tenant living in the home that is not named on the lease and any lease transfers will require approval.

2.0 Aims of the LLI

- To create a scheme that is sustainable through initial allocations
- To use the 5 apartments and 2 bed bungalows to support under-occupying
- Social housing tenants living in the City of York to move into a high-quality new build flat or bungalow, releasing a family house for re-let.
- To provide housing for households with a connection to York.

3.0 Downsizing objectives

3.1 Within the City of York there is a well-evidenced need for two and three bedroom family houses however, there are many barriers making it difficult for under-occupying households who wish to move to a smaller home to do so notably: a lack of suitable smaller homes in the nearby area, removal and related costs and the need for practical support during the move.

3.2 The new housing scheme at Lowfield Green, Acomb will deliver a range of one, two and three bedroom homes for social rent, including two bedroom bungalows and one and two bedroom apartments. The site lies in an area which is well served by a good range of local facilities, shops and bus services into the city. As such it offers a rare opportunity through a local lettings plan to promote downsizing and release much needed family accommodation.

3.3 It is intended to use the social rent apartments and bungalows to offer a move for primarily under-occupying social tenants. For the apartment block this will be for tenants that are 55 years or over.

3.4 This initiative earmarks plots 5, 6,11,12,18 in the apartment block and bungalow plots 3,4,7,11,12 for the purposes outlined in 3.3 above.

4.0 Letting Initiative

4.1 All of the properties built for rent on this site will be advertised through the North Yorkshire Home Choice (“NYHC”) lettings scheme (or allocations policy that replaces this for social housing allocations)*.

* The exception to this will be any properties that have been designated for families or individuals with specific identified unmet needs. An example of this will be families with complex disabilities and / or needs where these needs cannot be met or not substantively met in other available properties or properties potentially available in a reasonable timescale.

A Direct Let request will be made to the City of York Council’s Head of Housing:

- with full details of the case / family / inability to meet needs elsewhere for consideration

- no less than two weeks before advertising of the identified property where no major adaptations are needed
- as early as possible in the development process where major adaptations or specific design is needed .

Households referred must meet the general criteria of the NYHC policy or the allocations policy that replaces this for social housing allocations.

- 4.2 All applicants (in the first instance) will be required to have a local connection to the following wards within the City of York local authority area:

Acomb
Westfield
Holgate
Dringhouses & Woodthorpe

- 4.3 An applicant will be deemed to have a local connection if they satisfy any of the following criteria in relation to any of the four wards:

- Currently live in the ward areas as described in 4.2 and has been resident for at least 6 out of the last 12 months; or
- Has lived within the area for at least 3 years out of the last 5 years; or
- Has a close family member residing in the area that has done so for the last 5 years. (mother, father, adult son, adult daughter, adult brother, adult sister); or
- Has regular permanent employment full or part time (not casual or seasonal) with a company or organisation based within the area. (such employment to regularly be for at least 16 hours per week) or;
- Has a need to move to the area to take up an offer of regular permanent full or part time employment in the area (such employment to regularly be for at least 16 hours per week); or
- Has an essential need to live close to another person, to provide or receive care or support, in the area, and who has been resident in the area for the last 5 years,

- 4.4 If no applicants meet the criteria set out in 4.3 above then applicants with a **connection** to the City of York local authority area will be considered if they satisfy any of the following criteria in relation to **any** ward within the City of York local authority area:

- Currently live in the area and have been resident for at least 6 out of the last 12 months; or
- Has lived within the area for at least 3 years out of the last 5 years; or
- Has a close family member residing in the area that has done so for the last 5 years. (mother, father, adult son, adult daughter, adult brother, adult sister); or
- Has regular permanent employment full or part time (not casual or seasonal) with a company or organisation based within the area. (such employment to regularly be for at least 16 hours per week); or
- Has a need to move to the area to take up an offer of regular permanent employment in the area (such employment to regularly be for at least 16 hours per week); or

- Has an essential need to live close to another person, to provide or receive care or support, in the area, and who has been resident for the last 5 years,

4.5 If no applicants meet the criteria set out in 4.4 then applicants living in the North Yorkshire Home Choice area will be considered.

5.0 Prioritisation for downsizing

5.1 For apartments and bungalows priority will be given (in the first instance) to downsizers.

5.2 All applicants (in the first instance) for apartments must be:

- a) downsizing households and all household members must be aged 55 or over unless given express permission by the City of York Council
- b) the maximum size household for a one bedroom apartment is 2 persons
- c) the maximum size household for a two bedroom apartment is 3 persons

5.3 All applicants (in the first instance) for bungalows must be:

- a) downsizing households and all household members must be aged 60 or over
- b) the maximum size household for a two bedroom bungalow is 3 persons

5.4 Downsizing households will be prioritised in the following order:

- a) Release of a 3 bedroom house in the four wards stated above
- b) Release of a 2 bedroom house in the four wards stated above
- c) Release of a 4+bedroom house in the four wards stated above
- d) Release of a 3 bedroom house in other City of York Council wards
- e) Release of a 2 bedroom house in other City of York Council wards
- f) Release of a 4+ bedroom house in any City of York Council ward

5.5 If no applicants meet the downsizing criteria set out in 5.3a) then households where all members are over 55 and meet criteria 5.3 b) and 5.3 c) will be considered.

5.6 If no applicants meet the downsizing criteria set out in 5.2 a) then households that meet criteria 5.3 b) and 5.3c) will be considered

5.7 Within a)-f) above and the tenant age criteria, applicants will be ranked in accordance with the NYHC policy or the allocations policy that replaces this for social housing allocations. Applicants can be considered for a two bedroom apartment even if they have a one bedroom need, as long as this would be affordable.

5.8 Applicants must meet other NYHC policy (or allocations policy that replaces this for social housing allocations) criteria for transfers such as not being in breach of their tenancy. However, in accordance with the policy an exception

may be made for rent arrears which have solely arisen because the tenant is under-occupying the property and is affected by a reduction in Housing Benefit because of their under-occupation. This would be agreed between CYC and the current landlord, providing the new tenancy is affordable.

- 5.9 Health and well-being and other housing needs of the applicants will be taken into account when considering requests for and accommodation on a specific floor level.

The same criteria will apply to future lets, and the scheme will be reviewed after 3 years.

6.0 Houses selection criteria

- 6.1 Bids will be accepted as normal and a shortlist created of bidders as per NYHC policy or the allocations policy that replaces this for social housing allocations, with the exception that no more than 30% (5 no) of the two and three bedroom houses will be let to accepted homeless / potentially homeless families
- 6.2 Preference will be given to families that will fully occupy with the minimum number of children. This is to keep child density at a reasonable level whilst avoiding families being caught out by the change in Housing Benefit regulations where benefit is lost due to under occupation. This is demonstrated in the table below.

	2 bedroom house	3 bedroom house
One / Two adults with one child.	✓	
One / Two adults with 2 children, both the same sexes and both aged under 10.	✓	
One / Two adults with 2 children of different sexes, one aged 10 years or over.		✓
One / Two adults with 3 children		✓

One / Two adults with 4 children		✓
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7.0 Bungalow selection criteria

7.1 Applicants can be considered for a two bedroom bungalow even if they have a one bedroom assessed need, as long as this would be affordable.