

Policy title: Newcastle Great Park – Localised Lettings Policy General Need Properties

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Purpose: N/A

Scope: N/A

Definitions: N/A

Associated documents: N/A

Date for review: January 2022

Responsibility: Head of Housing (North)

Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Newcastle Great Park (NGP) is located three miles North West of Newcastle City Centre, close to the A1 road.
- 1.2 The NGP is a private sector development led by Persimmon Homes and Taylor Wimpey. It incorporates housing, education, retail and commercial proposals, contained within a number of land areas – these can be summarised as follows:
 - Business Park
 - Residential 2,500 homes
 - Commercial – Sage building etc.
 - Education – New First School
 - Town Centre – supermarket, extra care scheme, restaurants, cafés, retail units, hotel, crèche, PCT health centre, private hospital and sports and leisure facilities.

2. General Needs Allocations Newcastle Great Park

- 2.1 It is Bernicia's general policy to give reasonable preference to applicants in accordance with their housing need, however this policy also identifies circumstances where it is necessary to make best use of available stock and allocate tenancies which are sustainable in the long term and contribute to stable communities.
- 2.2 The general policy allows for a local lettings agreement to be implemented, which can be tailored to the specific needs of the local community or designed to retain the purpose for which the housing is developed.
- 2.3 The general needs affordable housing development at NGP was identified primarily to help with the housing requirements of key workers within or adjacent to NGP and/or to encourage take up of employment opportunities presented in and around the area. It is considered appropriate therefore to operate a localised lettings policy at this development in support of this.
- 2.4 Government support of this approach is highlighted in the Communities and Local Government statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England - Fair and Flexible. This recognises the benefit and necessity in some instances of local lettings policies.
- 2.5 In addition, Bernicia has adopted the Regular of Social Housing tenancy standard covering allocations which outlines that registered providers must let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They must take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants and should demonstrate how their allocation processes:

- make the best use of available housing
- are compatible with the purpose of the housing
- contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities.

The above objectives concur with our proposals for allocations at NGP, specifically:

- Creating more mixed communities by setting aside a proportion of vacancies for applicants who are in employment or to enable existing tenants to take up an offer of employment.
- Attracting key workers into the area by giving them priority for properties even though they may not fall within any of the reasonable preference categories.

The focus of this Policy is the allocation of all general needs properties within the Great Park.

3. Localised Letting Criterion

3.1 The Localised Lettings Policy will operate for allocation of all general needs properties within the Great Park with the aim of:

- Retaining the original principle of the development.
- Achieving a sustainable and balanced community.
- Responding to housing need.
- Retaining the Original Principle of the Development (Primary Banding)

Firstly applicants will be banded into those who meet the following criteria:

- a. Key workers of businesses within or adjacent to NGP.
- b. Applicants in employment.
- c. Applicants participating in dedicated training schemes or back to work initiatives.

A minimum of 60% of allocations will be to applicants satisfying the above criteria.

For clarity the remaining 40% of allocations may or may not comply with a to c above but will be banded and prioritised in accordance with criteria 3.2 below.

3.2 Having satisfied the above criteria, allocations will then be prioritised, in accordance with housing need, as identified by the Tyne & Wear Homes CBL.

3.3 Any Exclusion Policy as operated by Tyne & Wear Homes CBL and Bernicia remain in effect and may be applied as part of this policy.

3.4 Households with support needs will be welcomed in accordance with the bandings and eligibility as detailed above.

3.5 In accordance with Bernicia's Tenancy Policy all new allocations to general needs properties within the Great Park will be awarded Starter Tenancy. A starter tenancy is a periodic assured shorthold tenancy that runs initially for a

period of 12 months. Provided that the tenancy is conducted satisfactorily it will automatically default after 12 months and become an assured tenancy.

3.6 Tenants on a starter tenancy will broadly have the same rights as on an assured tenancy in areas such as:

- Right to repair
- Right to succession
- Right to be consulted

But will not have the:

- Right to take in lodgers
- Right to improve or claim compensation for improvements
- Right to exchange
- Right to acquire.

3.7 Tenants on starter tenancies will also need to keep to the other terms of their tenancy agreement in the same way as assured tenants. The difference is they do not have the same security of tenure afforded by a secure or assured tenancy.

3.8 We aim to offer 100% of initial lettings as nominations to Newcastle City Council.

This will reduce to 50% of relets thereafter. This may be varied by mutual agreement between Bernicia and the Council following review of the implementation of this Policy. However as the vast majority of allocations will be made via Tyne & Wear Homes CBL scheme, the agreed nominations quota will be exceeded.

4. Monitoring

4.1 Bernicia will regularly monitor a number of sustainability indicators for stock within the area including information relating to:

- Resident profile
- Demand indicators – waiting list/voids and terminations etc.
- Customer satisfaction with services provided.
- Complaints.
- Issues associated with the area and housing demand.

5. Term of this Agreement

5.1 The terms of this Localised Lettings Policy will operate for allocation of Great Park general needs stock until 31st March 2022. Following this the policy will be reviewed in consultation with partners to determine an appropriate approach for allocations thereafter.

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