

## **South Derbyshire District Council**

### **Allocations Policy Review March 2019**

#### **Consultation Document**

#### **Introduction**

The current Allocations policy has been in place since 2014. It has been reviewed in the light of the supply and demand for social /affordable rented properties in South Derbyshire and the provision of owner occupied and private rented accommodation. This has also considered the relative affordability of property in these sectors.

The review has also considered the varying demand for different types and sizes of accommodation offered and the designation of properties for certain age groups and household types.

The review has also incorporated the impact of the Homeless Reduction Act which was introduced in April 2018.

The review project team included colleagues from the Strategic Housing, Housing Options and Business Support teams.

#### **Overall provision:**

The review found that the overall provision of accommodation by SDDC and partner providers through relet and new build properties makes a significant contribution to meeting housing need in the area.

However, there are extreme variations in supply and demand for properties dependant on their location, property size, property type and designation, (whether they are for families/single people or people over 60).

#### **Family Properties**

The demand for family properties (2 or more bedroomed houses) is generally high whilst the supply of new or relet properties is relatively lower than for other types of property. There may be an emerging issue of slightly lower demand in areas close to district boundaries and areas with little or no existing stock of Council or other affordable housing.

#### **Other General needs Properties.**

The demand for these properties (one and two bedroomed flats) from households under the age of 60 is relatively high and the supply of these properties in particular from SDDC is commensurate with this.

#### **Sheltered Properties**

Demand for sheltered properties is relatively lower than for other properties. This is particularly the case with one bedroomed flats. Conversely the supply of these properties from SDDC stock is disproportionately high.

#### **Location**

Demand for all properties is highest within the urban core. Demand is lowest (especially for sheltered properties) in more rural areas where facilities, services and public transport may be limited.

#### **Allocations Policy Proposals:**

##### **Choice Based Lettings**

It is proposed to retain the Choice Based Lettings approach. This offers the opportunity to provide an open and transparent method of advertising allocating and letting properties, rather than reverting to a 'points based' system. This method provides for both a greater level of choice for applicants and also a more internet friendly service for customers. There are however improvements needed in the way properties are advertised and the information about properties provided to potential tenants.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

It is proposed to retain the current eligibility criteria with a change to the criteria around local connection; this will assist in the allocation of harder to let property and/or property close to district boundaries and nearer to settlements in other districts. This would be to allow applicants for sheltered flats and bungalows without a local connection but with a housing need as described in Bands A and B of the current policy to join the Housing Register in Band C only. These households will be offered accommodation only where there are no other eligible applicants with a local connection.

### **Retain current banding system.**

It is proposed to retain the current Banding system for applicants in order to differentiate between levels of housing need and ensure that reasonable preference is given to households with the highest need.

### **Income and Affordability**

South Derbyshire has the highest average household net income in Derbyshire of around £39000 pa. There are also has higher levels of employment than the rest of Derbyshire. The area also has slightly higher levels of owner occupation than the rest of the East Midlands and a smaller than average private rented sector.

The current allocations policy income eligibility limit of £32000 may make it difficult for households with a lower than average income to find suitable accommodation. It may also restrict the ability of households to join the register in order to obtain social properties let at affordable rents.

It is proposed to increase this threshold for household income to £40000 pa.

### **Lettings Quotas**

The current policy employs a quota system to allocate properties across the different priority bands. The review was unable to ascertain any benefit of adopting this approach and also that it may actually disadvantage households with a higher housing need. It is proposed to remove this from the policy and carry out allocations based on housing need.

### **Reflect homeless Legislation**

As with existing practice, all clients accessing the Housing Solutions service will be provided with housing advice and assistance appropriate to their circumstances.

Applicants will be expected to co-operate with a personalised housing plan (PHP) in which mutually agreed steps are set out between the applicant and their case worker to resolve their housing situation before a crisis occurs.

The current Allocations Policy allows applicants owed a 'prevention' or 'relief' duty under the conditions within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 to be placed into priority banding A to assist in resolving their housing need.

If the Local Authority is not able to prevent homelessness, the duty to relieve is actioned. If homelessness cannot be relieved and it is established that a main duty is owed, applicants will move into the Emergency Band (E).

Care leavers will be deemed to have a local connection in the area where they received care or, if different, any area where a connection can be established. The Council will consider using its discretion with regard to accepting a local connection for Care Leavers that have been placed in the area by another Local Authority.

### **Local Lettings Plans**

The current Allocations Policy allows for the use of 'Local Lettings Plans' to manage allocations and lettings on specific estates and new developments. This will be retained and encouraged in order to ensure the sustainability of both new and existing housing where there is evidence of a need to do so.

### **Sheltered and Adapted housing**

The current policy allows for the allocation of Sheltered Housing and specifically adapted housing to people under the age of 60 with a disability who are in receipt of Personal Independence Payments with the 'mobility component' or Higher Rate Disability Allowance. The review team view this threshold as being too high and may actually make it more difficult for disabled people who do not receive this type of benefit to access housing.

It is proposed to reduce the threshold to allow households with a disability and in receipt of PIP or DLA generally to be allocated sheltered or specially adapted housing, subject to the existing policy requirements that these properties must provide a suitable and sustainable home.

### **Armed forces**

It is proposed that the policy is adapted to reflect the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant of which The Council are a signatory.