

APPENDIX 1

South Hams District Council

Draft Local Allocations Policy July 2010

South Hams District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone.

This policy and all associated documentation and leaflets can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in any other languages, on request.

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CONTENTS	Page
Scope of the Policy	3
Introduction	3
Objectives of the Policy	4
Local Connection	4
Down Sizing - Tenant's Incentive Scheme	5
Under Occupation	7
Exceptions to Devon Home Choice	7
Supported Housing Schemes	8
Meeting the needs of the physically disabled	8
Publicity	8
Diversity & Equal opportunities	8
Policy Review	8

South Hams District Council

LOCAL ALLOCATION POLICY

1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 This Local Allocations Policy sets out how the Council will deal with specific local issues outside of the Devon wide choice based lettings system called Devon Home Choice. The document also sets out 'exceptions' to the Devon Home Choice Scheme i.e. where the Council will allocate outside the scheme.
- 1.2 In exceptional circumstances South Hams District Council reserve the right to depart from any aspect of the policy. Any decision to depart from the policy will be taken by the Housing Advice Manager in conjunction with the Executive Member for Housing and the Head of Customer Services.
- 1.3 Homes delivered in the Dartmoor National Park or on exception sites within South Hams are controlled by very specific criteria relating to the housing needs in a particular parish. This criterion will be set out within the S106 Agreement relating to the specific site.

N.B. The Devon Home Choice Policy is a separate document and should be read in conjunction with this policy

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 South Hams District Council is committed to providing housing at affordable levels for local people. As affordable housing in the District is highly sought after, the Council's allocation scheme called Devon Home Choice prioritises people in the greatest housing need.
- 2.2 The Housing Act 1996 as amended requires all Councils to give 'reasonable preference' in their allocation schemes to groups in high housing need such as the homeless, those who need to move on welfare and medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they can move to a particular locality within the district. However, new statutory guidance from Department of Communities and Local Government 'Fair and flexible: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (2009) states:

"While local authorities must demonstrate that, overall, reasonable preference is given to applicants in all the reasonable preference categories this does not mean that they must give equal weight to each of

the reasonable preference categories. Local authorities may wish to take into account local pressures”.

2.3 This guidance reinforces and adds to the flexibilities local authorities have within the allocation legislation to meet local pressures by:

- adopting local priorities alongside the statutory reasonable preference categories
- taking into account other factors in prioritising applicants, including waiting time and local connection
- operating local lettings policies

2.4 A copy of the document is available on the Communities and Local Government website - www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1403131.pdf

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE LOCAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

3.1 This Local Allocation Policy seeks to address some of the Districts local pressures. The specific policies or initiatives included in this document are: -

- **Local Connection Policy**
This enables 50% of all new affordable rented homes to be set aside for applicants in housing need (bands A,B and C) who have a local connection to a Parish
- **Tenants Incentive Scheme**
This provides priority to applicants who wish to downsize from their existing accommodation by placing them in a higher need band
- **Under – Occupation Policy**
This enables an element of under occupation in new schemes where appropriate

4. LOCAL CONNECTION

4.1 On all new affordable housing schemes, 50% of rented dwellings will be set aside for households who are in housing need and have a connection to the Parish.

4.2 A household has a connection with the Parish in any of the following circumstances:-

- (i) Resident for 6 out of the last twelve months or 3 out of the last five years, where this has been out of choice
- (ii) Family connection of such person in the parish (immediate family who have lived in parish for 5 years)
- (iii) Any periods of ordinary residence of the person in the parish and
- (iv) Whether the person has permanent employment in the parish

A household considered to be in housing need will have been placed in Devon Home Choice bands A, B or C.

5. TENANT'S INCENTIVE SCHEME

- 5.1 There is a shortage of affordable housing in South Hams, particularly family housing, This situation is clearly evidenced by both district wide and Parish housing needs surveys.
- 5.2 One of the priorities of the Housing Strategy is to 'meet affordable housing needs'. Maximising the use of the existing social rented housing stock by reducing under occupation is a key element within this and is supported through preferential banding under the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.
- 5.3 It is recognised that moving house, particularly for the elderly, can be difficult, stressful and costly and that barriers to moving to more appropriate accommodation can often be emotional as well as practical or financial.
- 5.4 The key objectives are:
- To maximise the use of the existing social rented housing stock in the South Hams.
 - To free up family sized units within the existing social rented housing stock by offering an incentive to move to smaller accommodation. The incentive to include a package of support where appropriate.
 - To increase the amount of family sized accommodation available.
 - To find out more about barriers to tenants moving from large accommodation and to find out more about their rehousing needs.
- 5.5 The Council will offer the Tenant's Incentive to households seeking to move within RSL (Registered Social Landlord) housing stock who meet the following criteria:

- Are an existing Housing Association tenant on an Assured tenancy, living in the South Hams District area and whose Housing Association landlord confirms that the nomination rights for the property being vacated will be given to South Hams District Council.
- Are in a family sized unit – 2 bedrooms or larger
- Want to move to a property that is at least 1 bedroom less
- Are registered on South Hams District Council's housing register
- Where the move will not result in overcrowding

5.6 The Incentive will be set at a rate of:

- £2,000 fixed payment, and
- £1,000 per bedroom released

For example:

- Household A who moves from a 3 bedroom property to a 1 bedroom property will receive £4,000 in total. This is made up of the £2,000 fixed payment and £2,000 for releasing 2 bedrooms.
- Household B who moves from a 2 bedroom property to a 1 bedroom property will receive £3,000 in total. This is made up of the £2,000 fixed payment and £1,000 for releasing 1 bedroom.

5.7 These incentive payments could be used by the household in any way they wish but are intended to help with removal expenses.

5.8 Older people will also be able to benefit from practical support. This will be arranged between the Housing Association and South Hams District Council. An agreed rate of £300 per case will operate. The nature and extent of the support will be agreed individually with the tenant moving, in line with their needs. The cost for the support will be deducted from the incentive payable.

5.9 The scheme will be administered via Housing Association's internal transfer policies, with tenants indicating that they wish to move to a smaller property being prioritised. All units freed up by the scheme will be allocated to people on South Hams District Council's housing register, in accordance with the usual procedures.

5.10 The Scheme will be marketed locally and within Registered Providers to maximise take up from existing tenants who are under occupying. It will be made clear that this is a limited offer until the remainder of the budget is spent.

- 5.11 Outcome monitoring will take place at 3 stages in order to meet the objective of learning about the barriers to moving, especially for the elderly - feedback from the home visit, accompanied viewings and then on successful completion of a move.
- 5.12 The scheme is financed through the Housing Capital Programme Budget on a match funded basis with partner housing associations and will be monitored quarterly.

6. UNDER OCCUPATION

- 6.1 When a dwelling becomes vacant it is allocated based on housing need and the number of people that make up the family unit. This means a household is allocated a dwelling which meets their existing needs in terms of bedrooms i.e. a single person or a couple would be allocated a one bedroom dwelling.
- 6.2 In order to take a more flexible and sustainable approach to the development and allocation of new affordable housing, the Council is looking to reduce the number of one bedroom dwellings and increase the number of two bedroom dwellings on new schemes.
- 6.3 This approach will help to make better use of land and enable singles and couples to remain in their home/community if they decide to have or have increased the size of their family. The approach also provides older people the opportunity to live in a dwelling which enables family members or carers to support them when necessary.
- 6.4 A percentage of two bedroom dwellings will therefore, where appropriate be set aside for older persons who wish to down size (see Down Sizing Initiative above).
- 6.5 In terms of single persons and couples, where appropriate, a percentage of two bedroom dwellings will be made available for under occupation.

7. EXCEPTIONS TO DEVON HOME CHOICE

Supported Housing Schemes

- 7.1 It is inappropriate to advertise vacancies in certain supported housing schemes as they have been developed to meet very specific needs.
- 7.2 The allocation process for such schemes will be agreed outside this allocation policy. The allocations will be agreed between the Council's housing officers, Social Services and the housing association and will be

developed to meet the very specific needs of the client and to sensitively manage the lettings of the scheme

7.3 List of supported housing schemes exempt from Devon Home Choice, within South Hams:-

- Westville, Kingsbridge
- Barnabas Project, Dartmouth
- Highland Villa, Ivybridge
- Belmont Villa, Ivybridge
- Redworth Terrace, Totnes

Meeting the needs of the physically disabled

7.4 Properties that have been adapted for the disabled will be advertised as such through Devon Home Choice to ensure the property is let to an applicant with the need for this type of accommodation *e.g. preference will be given to an applicant with the need for a level access shower.*

7.5 However, there are occasions when the needs of a disabled household cannot be met within the general housing stock and a specific property needs to be built. In such circumstances close liaison will take place between the Council, Social Services and the Registered Provider to ensure the property is built to meet the specific needs identified. In this case the property will not be advertised through the Devon Home Choice Scheme

8. PUBLICITY

8.1 This policy is a formal Council document and is not intended to be used as a publicity document

8.2 Full details of the Devon Home Choice Scheme and the Council's policies will be produced in leaflet format and on the Council's website in a user-friendly format

9. DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

9.1 South Hams District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone

9.2 This policy and all associated documentation and leaflets can be made available in large print, braille, and tape format or in any other languages, on request

10. POLICY REVIEW

- 10.1 The Council's allocation policy will be monitored regularly and reviewed and updated annually
- 10.2 The Devon Home Choice scheme and Policy are regularly reviewed and any changes are implemented only after majority agreement amongst all Devon Home Choice partners.