

LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN FOR CHELTENHAM BOROUGH HOMES

Evenlode Avenue, CHELTENHAM (1BED FLATS)

(EFFECTIVE FROM October 2021)

Summary

The purpose of the plan is to support CBH initiatives to increase tenancy sustainability and customer wellbeing in the Evenlode Avenue area.

The Local Lettings Plan

CBH will use this Local Letting Plan to cover the *first lets of all flats within Evenlode Avenue, Whaddon, Cheltenham* in order to maintain as balanced and sustainable a community as possible, where each resident has maximum opportunity to thrive. This *Local Lettings Plan* does not represent a long-term lettings strategy for *these flats*, or indeed any further properties within the Evenlode Avenue locality. For the purposes of this Local Letting Plan, it covers the flats contained within the following blocks;

- 4-7
- 8-11
- 12-17
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29

Exclusion Criteria:

CBH reserves the right **not** to offer a tenancy at flats within Evenlode Avenue to a person where the applicant(s) and/ or any other person attached to the application are:

- Persons for whom a Possession Order has been obtained relating to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) or who has previously been evicted for ASB or who has been the subject of an injunction for ASB within the last 5 years.

- Persons with a history of ASB at a current or previous tenancy within the last 3 years. Each applicant will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will include the applicants' response to informal actions such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and the length of time since the last report of ASB.
- Persons with high support needs who have failed to accept support *after all reasonable endeavours have been undertaken and exhausted to provide support* or do not have adequate support in place and who may impact on neighbouring properties. *Each applicant will be considered on a case-by-case basis considering their life circumstances and assessments will include consideration of the wider circumstances underpinning failed and/or limited engagement with support services.*
- Persons who have caused a deterioration of the condition of their current property, its garden or its fixtures and fittings due to ill-treatment, waste, neglect or default. This will include any unauthorised alterations.
- Persons owing any monies such as current tenant arrears or former tenant arrears of 8 weeks or more including any other housing debt such that the Registered Provider would be able to apply for a possession order, or significant (i.e. £500 or more) rechargeable repairs invoices to CBH or another Registered Provider, **AND** who have not kept to an agreed repayment plan having missed a minimum of 3 consecutive repayments.

When applying the above exclusion criteria, CBH will consider the individual circumstances of each applicant, for example where domestic abuse may have contributed to reports of anti-social behaviour or a deterioration of the condition of their current property.

Process

The properties will be advertised using Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus, and the advert will include details of the local lettings criteria.

When the bidding cycle has ended a list will be produced of all applicants who have bid on the properties. These applicants will be ranked by the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus system according to housing need.

The highest placed applicant in housing need will be contacted and their application assessed in line with the criteria outlined in this Local Lettings Plan.

If there is evidence that an applicant does not meet the Local Lettings Plan criteria the process will then move to the next ranking applicant. At the same time we will inform the applicant of the reason they have not been successful and of any steps that they need to take to prevent further bypasses for the same reason

If the applicant meets the Lettings Plan criteria an affordability assessment will be carried out.

If the property is deemed to be affordable for the applicant then a visit will be made. The reason for the visit will be:-

- To identify any existing housing management issues which will not have been flagged through the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus bidding process; and
- To provide the applicant with details about the property.

Providing all is acceptable then a viewing of the property will be arranged with the Lettings Officer.

Review

This local lettings plan will be subject to an annual review by Cheltenham Borough Council in consultation with key CBH Officers to ensure it continues to fulfil the needs and criteria as initially intended and to determine whether an extension to or amendment of the Local Lettings Plan would be appropriate”.

In exceptional circumstances where the Local Lettings Plan is not functioning as initially intended, the Council may seek to hold an early review, (prior to the annual review) of the Local Lettings Plan in consultation with appropriate representatives from Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH).

Background

There are three blocks of 8 flats, 24 in total. All of the flats are one bedroom and are *owned by Cheltenham Borough Council and managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes*. Evenlode Avenue is located on the east side of Cheltenham, off Whaddon Road.

The flats are classed as general needs, with a mixed demographic of residents, however in general, residents are over the age of 35 years.

One of the flats, 21 Evenlode Avenue, was a property identified and used within the Housing First Project. Due to the nature of the individual that was allocated the address, there was a huge increase in anti-social, criminal and drug activity within the area, with the Housing First tenant currently in prison and subject to possession proceedings.

Due to the other individuals being attracted to the property occupied by the Housing First tenant, a vulnerable female, with significant learning difficulties, was identified by this group, who subsequently began to 'cuckoo' her flat and take money from her. CBH's ASB Team worked in partnership with the Police to obtain a Closure Order on 26 Evenlode Avenue, as well as safeguard and move the female tenant to safe accommodation.

A further vulnerable female, at 10 Evenlode Avenue, has now been targeted, and the Police and CBH are currently working to deal with that situation around further criminality, drug use and disorder.

As a result, residents within Evenlode Avenue have been adversely affected and experienced high levels of nuisance behaviour, with criticism being levelled at GCC, CBC and CBH for the initial Housing First allocation. A report to CBH's Board of Directors regarding the situation is currently being compiled by Nick Such, CBH Tenancy Services Manager, such has been the level of concern and disruption

This Letting Plan is designed to minimise the risk of further, similar issues within Evenlode Avenue and therefore protect the residents as far as possible, whilst giving some respite and stability to the area.

In dealing with the high level of Anti-Social behaviours experienced within several properties in Evenlode Avenue, significant resource has been expended by CBH and Gloucestershire Police. The incidents of criminality, including a serious assault, drug and alcohol fuelled disorder, noise and domestic arguments over the past ten months have been disproportionate to the size of the area and has severely stretched the resources that the Police and CBH ASB Team has. A repeat of similar issues within the same location risks further costs to agencies, as well as significant reputational damage to CBC and CBH, should we not show due diligence in the letting of the property going forward.
