

LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND (LAHF) LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN

(Effective from March 2023, Expiry date 30th November 2023 unless an extension to the acquisition of homes under this initiative is agreed in writing with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)

1. Local Lettings Plan Summary

Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) has been allocated £2.36 million in grant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to provide 21 affordable homes through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF). One of these homes must be at least 4 bedrooms, and must be allocated to a household currently living in 'bridging accommodation' (e.g. hotel accommodation provided in the UK by the Home Office) and who have been accommodated via one of the following schemes:

- [Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme \(including British Nationals under this scheme\) \(ACRS\);](#)
- [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\);](#)

The remaining 20 homes must be provided to those who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or who live in unsuitable temporary accommodation (including bridging accommodation) and who are accommodated via any of the following eligible schemes:

- [Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme \(including British Nationals under this scheme\) \(ACRS\);](#)
- [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\);](#)
- [Ukraine Family Scheme \(UFS\);](#)
- [Homes for Ukraine Scheme \(HFU\)](#)
- [Ukraine Extension Scheme \(UES\)](#)

Owing to the considerable need for accommodation anticipated locally from the three Ukrainian schemes (the UFS, HFU and UES schemes respectively), this Council will prioritise 20 of the 21 homes acquired from the LAHF or sourced from existing stock to individuals on these schemes. However in the absence of any identified need from these three schemes, then households from the remaining schemes will also be considered. (Please see section 3.3 below.)

The specific purpose of this Local Lettings Plan (LLP) is to assist with the allocation of 21 homes through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to support the integration of eligible Ukrainian and Afghan households into local communities for an initial period of 8 months, until November 2023. [Cheltenham is proud to be a nationally recognised town of sanctuary](#), and this Local Lettings Plan demonstrates our steadfast commitment to supporting and welcoming individuals fleeing the war in Ukraine and the occupation of Afghanistan.

2. Local Lettings Plan for a large family in ‘bridging accommodation’

As outlined above, 1 x four bedroom (or larger) property out of the 21 additional properties secured through the LAHF will be ring-fenced to accommodate a household currently living in ‘bridging accommodation’ (e.g. hotel accommodation provided in the UK by the Home Office)

The Home Office will direct match an eligible household into this 4 bedroom (or larger) property via the Countywide International Resettlement Coordinator. As such, the allocation and prioritisation criteria for this single 4 bedroom + home (either secured through CBC’s existing stock, or acquired from the open market) will be determined by the Home Office via the Countywide International Resettlement Coordinator.

This allocation must be made by 30th November 2023 (or as otherwise agreed in writing with DLUHC).

3. The Local Lettings Plan covering the remaining 20 properties

Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) will use this Local Lettings Plan (LLP) to cover first lets for the remaining 20 properties acquired through the LAHF (or sourced from CBC’s existing stock) up until 30th November 2023 (or as otherwise agreed in writing with DLUHC).

The primary objective of this local lettings plan is to facilitate Ukrainians fleeing from the war in Ukraine and Afghan nationals who have fled the occupation of Afghanistan to settle into local communities across Cheltenham, either within existing CBH stock, or within properties acquired through the LAHF.

3.1 Exclusion Criteria

CBH reserves the right not to offer a tenancy at properties covered by this Local Lettings Plan to a person where the applicant(s) and/or any other person attached to the application who are:

- Currently ineligible for and/or are not currently registered on [Homeseeker Plus](#)
- Unable to meet the qualifying criteria for the [eligible schemes](#) outlined above, or do not meet the eligibility requirements outlined within the LAHF prospectus (as updated from time-to-time)

3.2 Allocations Process

- Eligible applicants originating from the three Ukrainian schemes (HFU, UFS, UES) will be identified by CBH Housing Options Team following referrals from relevant agencies and/or as a result of direct approaches by applicants. Properties will be

directly matched by CBH Housing Options to eligible applicants within the relevant Ukrainian or Afghan schemes.

- The highest placed applicant identified in accordance with the prioritisation criteria (as set out in 3.3 below) will be contacted, and their application will be assessed in line with the criteria outlined within 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 CBH 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.
- Where two or more eligible households fall into the same category of need as defined by the prioritisation criteria, priority will be given to the eligible household(s) who are highest ranked in terms of their band position (and band date) on Homeseeker Plus choice based lettings scheme (as updated from time-to-time)
- If the applicant meets the Local Lettings Plan criteria, contact will be made with the applicant to provide information about the available property and to clarify their support needs etc. This will then be followed-up with a pre-tenancy viewing ahead of the applicant moving into the property.

3.3 Prioritisation Criteria

In order to ensure that the 20 properties secured through the LAHF (or sourced from existing stock) are fairly and transparently allocated via direct matches to eligible households by CBH Housing Options in line with the LAHF Memorandum of Understanding, the level of priority need will be determined in accordance with the following list (in order of priority):

1. Eligible Ukrainian households with a local connection to Cheltenham within the HFU, UFS or UES schemes who are currently homeless and/or rough-sleeping, who are currently placed in temporary accommodation by Cheltenham's Housing Options Service (either in Cheltenham, or outside of County), or are currently sofa surfing.¹
2. Eligible Ukrainian households with a local connection to Cheltenham within the HFU, UFS or UES schemes threatened with homelessness (where a household is within 56 days of being made statutorily homeless, as defined by [Section 1 of the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act](#)).
3. Any eligible Ukrainian households at risk of homelessness with a local connection to Cheltenham within the HFU, UFS or UES schemes (where the current landlord or sponsor has given notice that they intend to end any renting or hosting arrangement, but the arrangement is due to end in more than 56 days).

¹ Local Connection is defined as set out in <https://www.homeseekerplus.co.uk/choice/content.aspx?pageid=130>; with the exception that anyone living in Cheltenham at the time of their application will qualify as having a local connection to Cheltenham, regardless of their time spent residing in this area.

4. Eligible Afghan households, who will be direct matched to available properties by the Home Office through the Countywide International Resettlement Coordinator, as set out in the [ring-fenced Afghan stock Local Lettings Plan](#) above.²

4. Making Best Use of Existing Stock

The LAHF Prospectus provides clear guidance that local authorities do not have to directly allocate the 21 additional properties acquired using LAHF funding to individuals on the [eligible schemes](#). The prospectus enables local authorities to flexibly use existing stock to house the Ukrainian and Afghan cohorts on [eligible schemes](#), provided that 21 additional properties are added to the local authority's overall stock portfolio. Owing to the considerable need arising from the three Ukrainian schemes (with 88 households currently residing in the HFU scheme alone as of February 2023) CBC has elected to prioritise 20 of these properties to those currently registered to the three Ukrainian schemes (the HFU, UFS, and UES schemes respectively) through the LAHF funding programme.

In practice, this Local Lettings Plan (LLP) will seek to allocate at least one household for every property acquired through the LAHF funding. For example, if the first home was acquired on 1st June 2023, CBC will commit to housing at least one household by or within a reasonable time period of 1st June 2023, (either in the newly acquired home, or within the Council's existing stock portfolio). This is so that if existing homes are utilised instead of the newly acquired homes, then we can still ensure that eligible households are accommodated within the currently agreed target deadline of 30th November 2023 for the acquisition of 21 properties.

5. Local Lettings Plan Monitoring

CBH commits to monitoring the lettings process as set out above, and reporting on the following key indicators to relevant CBC officers on a monthly basis:

- (i) Number of offers made;
- (ii) Number of offers refused;
- (iii) Number of tenancies started, along with tenancy start dates

6. Local Lettings Plan Review

This Local Lettings Plan will automatically expire on 30th November 2023, unless an extension is agreed in writing between the Council and DLUHC regarding the acquisition of

² This would be in addition to the 1 property ring-fenced to accommodate the Afghan cohort who households who are currently residing in bridging hotels.

the 21 properties. In any event, this Local Lettings Plan will expire following the acquisition of the 21st property.

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 expiry date of the Local Lettings Plan) of the Local Lettings Plan in consultation with appropriate representatives from DLUHC to identify any potential future actions related to the Local Lettings Plan. Any decisions taken regarding the future approach towards this Local Lettings Plan will be informed by the latest factual evidence and data available to officers.