

Lettings Plan for all Rosebery Housing Association's general needs rented housing in Parkviews, Hook Road, Epsom

This plan has been drawn up by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) and Rosebery Housing Association (RHA) for all initial lets of affordable rented housing at Parkviews, Hook Road, Epsom.

Principles of the Lettings Plan

The aim of this Lettings Plan is to establish some additional criteria for the allocation of the affordable housing at Parkviews and to set out the overall lettings targets in order to help achieve, as far as possible, a socially, economically balanced and sustainable community.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is committed to meeting the priority housing needs in the letting of all social housing in the borough. Households are prioritised through the Housing Needs Register according with the Council's allocation policy and points system. However for Parkviews the final selection of suitable applicants will be made in accordance with this lettings plan. In order to comply with this Lettings Plan it is possible that applicants may not be considered from the Housing Needs Register in points order. If there are no shortlisted applicants who meet the Lettings Plan criteria then the allocation will be made to the household who has the closest match to the criteria and who is in greatest housing need.

The Lettings Plan criteria will apply to all lettings of the affordable rented housing on phase 1 of Parkviews.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has nomination rights to 100% of the affordable housing on first let and 75% nominations on subsequent lets.

Properties will be advertised through the Council's Choice Based Letting system, Epsom & Ewell Home Choice. Up to 10% of properties will be advertised through the East Surrey Home Choice scheme.

Background

This scheme is a new residential development comprising of 69 affordable homes delivered by Rosebery Housing Association

The development is phased with handover expected as follows:

Phase 1, July – December 2010

Phase 2 -4, January 2011 – Aug 2012

The Lettings Plan has been prepared to assist in the initial letting of 26 rented homes in Phase 1.

The affordable housing comprises of the accommodation shown below in Table 1.

General Needs Housing	
7 x 1-bedroom flats	
8 x 2-bedroom houses	
8 x 3-bedroom houses	
6 x 4-bedroom houses	
TOTAL	29

Lettings criteria that will apply to the whole of the affordable housing

Economic Mix

A mix of households between those dependants on welfare benefit and those in employment will assist in achieving a social economic mix and will help avoid a high concentration of deprivation. The Lettings Plan will aim to make sure that up to 30% of tenants on first lets are in stable employment. Stable employment includes at least one adult in the following:

- permanent employment contract
- long term temporary contract (more than one year)
- self employed
- tenants who are working more than 16 hours per week
- training for employment

Applicants not in employment will be referred to the HELP project for a “better off in work calculation”.

Established /new household mix

One way of achieving a mix between established households and newly forming households is to have some initial lettings set aside for transfers of existing Housing Association tenants. A target of 5 units of all lettings is to be set aside for existing social housing tenants needing to transfer as follows.

2 x 2-bedroom houses	To be offered to RHA tenants looking to downside from their existing property
1 x 3-bedroom houses	1 to be offer by RHA for a reciprocal transfer
1 x 3-bedroom houses	To be offered to RHA transfer applicants
1 x 4-bedroom house	To be offered to RHA transfer applicants

Note: The Borough Council has 100% nomination rights to all of the units on Parkviews for the Housing Needs Register. All vacancies arising from the transfers will be offered to the Borough Council to ensure that the Council has 100% nomination rights to a least the same number of units. This will fall outside of the normal nomination agreement.

Downsizing

In order to free up three and four bedroom properties, consideration will be given to existing social housing tenants wishing to downsize. If no suitable transfer applicants can be found the properties will revert back to EEBC for nomination.

Tenancy sustainment & prevention of anti social behaviour

In order to reduce and or prevent the likelihood of anti-social behaviour and to promote positive behaviour and community safety all residents will be required to sign a neighbour agreement. This will highlight what is expected of tenants as good neighbours, make clear what activities are considered anti-social and what Rosebery Housing Association will do in response to anti-social behaviour including what legal action will be taken.

In order to assess an applicant's ability to successfully sustain a tenancy Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will look at their behaviour in their last settled accommodation including previous rent arrears and any history of antisocial behaviour. In accordance with the EEBC's allocation policy an applicant will not be considered for nomination where there is a current history of rent arrears or anti social behaviour by any members of the applicants' household. In order to verify this, checks will be made against EEBC's Nuisance

Prevention Group records for reports of ASB within the last 12 months and checks will be made to see that a tenant's household has conducted a tenancy satisfactorily.

A copy of the terms of condition of tenancy and exclusion policy is available to applicants on request.

Use of Starter Tenancies

Successful applicants for Parkviews phase 1 who are existing Housing Association tenants will be issued with Assured Tenancies. All other successful applicants will be issued with Starter Tenancies. A starter tenancy is an assured shorthold tenancy that runs for an initial period of 12 months. Provided the tenancy is conducted satisfactorily it will automatically default to an assured tenancy after 12 months.

Further information on the use of Introductory Tenancies is available to applicants on request.

Accommodation specific criteria

Household Composition

In order to create a stable community the Lettings Plan is intending to have at least a five year life achieved by not allocating all units to the maximum number of residents or by ensuring that those with children who are sharing are of appropriate ages to allow the family to remain in their property for at least 5 years.

There are a number properties that have been built to Lifetime Homes criteria. Those who have a specific need for this type of accommodation will be given priority above those without this need.

Child age mix and child density

Mixing the number of children from particular age ranges should help avoid pressures on local schools and other children's facilities. Reducing child density can help take into account future family growth (which in turn reduces the need for transfers). The target is to achieve the following mix of all children in the affordable rented housing.

EEBC		
3 x 1 bedroom flats		Max 2 adults aged 55 +
4 x 1 bedroom flats		Max 2 adults
2 x 2 Bedroom Houses		To be offered to RHA tenants looking to downside from their existing property
3 x 2 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults - max 1 child (under 5)
1 x 2 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults - max 1 child (6 or over)
2 x 2 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults & 2 children (at least 1 child under 16)
1 x 3 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults - max 2 children (of opposite sex & at least 1 child under 16)
1 x 3 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults - max 2 children (of same sex with 5yr + age difference & at least 1 child under 16)
4 x 3 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults - max 3 children (at least 1 child under 16)
1 x 3 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults - max 3 children (at least 1 child under 16). RHA reciprocal transfer
1 x 3 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults - max 3 children (at least 1 child under 16). RHA transfer
5 x 4 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults & up to 4 children (at least 1 child under 16)
1 x 4 Bedroom Houses		1/2 adults & up to 4 children (at least 1 child under 16). RHA Transfer
TOTAL	29	

Allocations procedure

Properties will be advertised through the Council's Choice Based Letting system, Epsom & Ewell Home Choice. Up to 10% of properties will be advertised through the East Surrey Home Choice scheme.

All properties advertised will be labelled with the eligibility criteria for that property. The final selection of suitable applicants will be made in accordance with this Lettings Plan.

Prior to nomination EEBC will carry out any verification required, which may include a home visit. If the applicant is ineligible for an offer, does not meet the letting criteria or has not provided the required documentation to verify their circumstances the Council will overlook them and move on to the next applicant on the shortlist. Where the applicant is eligible for an offer and the verification is completed, a formal nomination will be made by letter with an opportunity to view the property.

The top two applicants will be shortlisted and the top applicant will be offered an accompanied viewing of the property and will be given first refusal.

Property allocation will be made by Rosebery Housing Association and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. Selected applicants will be shown a site map and invited to view a show home. The applicant at the top of the shortlist will be given 24 hours after viewing a property and receiving an offer, to accept or refuse the offer. If they accept the offer applicants will then be suspended on Epsom & Ewell Home Choice and will not be able to bid on further advertised properties. If there is no response to an offer of accommodation after 24 hours, the offer will be withdrawn and this will be treated as a refusal and the second applicant will be contacted to arrange a viewing.

All applicants will be interviewed by RHA and will be required to attend a good neighbourhood meeting prior to tenancy sign up.

Monitoring

This agreement subject to a 6 monthly review between the Council and Rosebery Housing Association to assess the effectiveness and impact on any Housing Needs Register nominations and local housing need. Based on the monitoring outcomes variations in the lettings plan may be considered for future phases on Parkviews.

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