

# ITEM 12 – APPENDIX G

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 17 MARCH 2014

#### EXECUTIVE – 1 APRIL 2014

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#### Title:

### **OCKFORD RIDGE: LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN**

**[Portfolio Holder for Housing Operations: Cllr Carole King]  
[Wards Affected: Godalming Ockford & Central]**

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#### Summary and purpose:

This report presents the draft local lettings plan for Ockford Ridge. Establishing a local lettings plan will help to ensure that a balanced and sustainable community is maintained and that tenants affected by the redevelopment and refurbishment plans know how the new homes will be allocated.

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#### How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

This report relates to the Council's Corporate priority of providing more affordable housing in the Borough for local people in housing need, understanding residents needs and contributing towards the health and wellbeing of local communities.

#### Financial Implications:

There are no direct funding implications on the Council from the implementation of this local lettings plan, but the proposal may impact on individual tenants who are receipt of benefit and choose to move to accommodation that is one bedroom larger than their assessed need.

#### Legal Implications:

The departure from the Council's standard allocation scheme is appropriate in the case of the Ockford Ridge redevelopment project, on the basis that existing tenants are not choosing to give up their tenancies. It is entirely reasonable that tenants are not required to join the Housing Register where the Council itself is asking them to move home while the redevelopment takes place.

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#### **Background**

1. The Council has embarked on an ambitious investment programme at Ockford Ridge. To ensure that a balanced and sustainable community is maintained and that tenants affected by the redevelopment and refurbishment plans know how the new homes will be allocated, a local lettings plan has been prepared.

2. The local lettings plan has been drafted in collaboration with colleagues in the Housing Needs and Tenancy & Estates Teams, and consultation has taken place with Ward Councillors, local residents and the Community Consultative Group.
3. The local lettings plan differs from the Council's approved allocation scheme in the following ways:
  - Tenants at Ockford Ridge will not be required to join the Housing Register if they wish to remain on the estate. The housing needs of each household will be assessed during home visits prior to moving and enable the Council to take into account individual circumstances in allocating a new home.
  - The bedroom size criteria set out in the local lettings plan are more generous than the Council's allocation scheme. Many tenants currently under occupy their homes at Ockford Ridge and it was clear from the initial consultation that they were reluctant to move to much smaller accommodation. However, the introduction of the under-occupation charge for working-age households in receipt of Housing Benefit means that there is a financial disincentive for moving to a property larger than their needs. Advice will be provided to all tenants to ensure they consider affordability in making their housing choices.
4. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Local Lettings Plan for Ockford Ridge, and suggested that a flow-chart be added to illustrate the options and potential outcomes at each stage of the programme, and that care be taken to ensure the final document was written in 'plain English'.

## **Consultation**

5. The following consultation has been carried out:
  - An outline of the local lettings plan principles were included in the newsletter sent to Ward Members and all households at Ockford Ridge in October 2013, and readers were asked to send in their comments.
  - Discussed with the Community Consultative Group in October 2013.
  - Discussed with tenants at consultation events at Green Oak School on 6 and 11 November 2013, and at home visits with all tenants affected by the re-development.

## **Conclusion**

6. The local lettings plan for Ockford Ridge will help to maintain a balanced and sustainable community and make it clear to local residents how the new properties will be allocated.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Local Lettings Plan for Ockford Ridge be approved and adopted.

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## DRAFT

### Local Lettings Plan for Ockford Ridge

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of establishing a local lettings plan for Ockford Ridge is to ensure that a balanced and sustainable community is maintained and that tenants who are affected by the redevelopment plans know how the new homes will be allocated.

Waverley's allocation scheme allows for local lettings plans 'on a new housing development or a modernisation or refurbishment scheme, if it is considered that the usual advertising of such vacancies will not achieve a balanced and sustainable community'.

This local lettings plan has been agreed in partnership with Waverley Borough Council, ward Councillors, local residents and the Ockford Ridge Community Consultative Group.

#### **Principles**

##### **When tenants will need to join the Housing Register**

1. All council tenants within the redevelopment areas who wish to move to a new build home on the estate will be moved directly by the Council. They will not be required to join the Housing Register.
2. All council tenants within the redevelopment areas who wish to move away from the estate will be required to join the Waverley Housing Register, subject to the usual verification checks, and bid for another home through Waverley Homechoice.
3. If a tenant wishing to move away is not currently in housing need (e.g. under occupying, overcrowded, significant medical factors) they may not qualify to join the Housing Register until planning permission is granted for the new development, which means that they will have to wait until this time before they can join.
4. When planning permission has been granted, tenants affected by the next phase of the development will be moved into a higher band on the Housing Register to increase the opportunity to bid successfully for a property in an area of their choice. This band increase will take place on a phase by phase basis.
5. Tenants who are not sure initially whether they wish to stay on Ockford Ridge or move away are advised to join the Housing Register when planning permission is granted. This will not prevent them from choosing to stay on the estate but will keep their options open if they decide to move elsewhere.

##### **Assessment of housing need**

6. All council tenants affected by the new development who wish to remain at Ockford Ridge will have their housing needs and requirements assessed by the Council to take into account any special requirements e.g. disabled adaptations. The assessment will

take account of the composition of the household as it exists at the start of the consultation process.

7. Six months before the demolition of the phase they are part of is due to take place, all tenants will be visited by the Council to confirm their housing choices. This is when tenants will be asked to make the final decision about whether they wish to remain at Ockford Ridge permanently or move elsewhere.
8. Where there are separate households living within one property, only one new tenancy will be granted to replace one existing tenancy.

### **The size of home a tenant will be expected to move to**

9. Where tenants are currently under occupying their home and wish to move to a new build home, they will be offered the following choices:

Current number of bedrooms	Bedrooms needed under Waverley's allocation scheme	Actual choices
3	1	1 or 2 bedrooms
3	2	2 or 3 bedrooms
2	1	1 or 2 bedrooms

10. The changes introduced by welfare reform mean that tenants under pensionable age who rely on Housing Benefit to help with their rent are only entitled to Housing Benefit for the number of bedrooms they need. Tenants moving to accommodation that is larger than they need will be expected to confirm that they understand that they will have to pay the shortfall in their rent from their remaining income. The Council strongly recommends that tenants understand the financial impact on their household of choosing accommodation that is larger than they need and ensure that they can afford to pay their housing costs. The Council will provide support to tenants in making their choices.
11. Where properties are identified for refurbishment, existing council tenants will be able to continue to occupy their existing home, if that is their choice. However, if they would like to move to a new build home that better meets their housing needs (in line with the bedroom sizes set out above), the Council will seek to find a suitable property as part of the redevelopment programme.
12. Where under occupiers wish to move away from Ockford Ridge, they will need to join the Housing Register and will only be eligible for housing which meets their housing need, as assessed under the bedroom requirements of the Council's allocation scheme. They will not be able to bid for accommodation that is larger than they need.

### **Allocation of the new homes**

13. The Council will identify tenants for new build homes at Ockford Ridge by direct matching, based on information on household composition, housing need, time in current property and preference for particular location, collected by Waverley staff during home visits. The first priority will go to tenants with the most housing need; second priority will be by length of time in their current property.

14. All new properties that are not required for tenants living in the redevelopment areas will be available for tenants living in the areas identified for refurbishment.
15. All new properties that are not required by Ockford Ridge tenants will be advertised through Waverley Homechoice.

### **Temporary accommodation**

16. It is intended that tenants in the early phases of the redevelopment are offered temporary accommodation in a comparable property at Ockford Ridge while the building works take place. Wherever possible, in later phases, it is hoped that tenants can move directly into a permanent new home constructed in an earlier phase.
17. Where temporary accommodation is required, it will be at Ockford Ridge.
18. Where tenants are required to move into temporary accommodation, the Council will pay a disturbance payment for the move to a temporary home and another disturbance payment for the move to a permanent home.

### **Other issues**

19. Wherever possible the Council will take into account requests to move close to existing neighbours or family members if they are in the same phase of the development.
20. Tenants living in the redevelopment areas who are required to move will receive a statutory Home Loss payment, currently set at £4,700, in addition to a disturbance payment to cover the costs of moving.

## **Ockford Ridge Local Lettings Plan: Summary**

It is recommended that the following principles should apply to the Ockford Ridge lettings plan:

- Tenants living in the redevelopment areas who want to stay at Ockford Ridge will not be expected to join the Housing Register, but will be directly matched to a new property based on their household circumstances
- Tenants living in redevelopment areas who want to move away from Ockford Ridge will be expected to join the Housing Register, after planning permission has been granted, to enable them to bid for another home in an area of their choice
- Tenants living in the areas identified for refurbishment will have an opportunity to bid for new homes that are not required by tenants living in the redevelopment areas, before being advertised on Waverley Homechoice
- Tenants who are currently occupying their homes will be able to move to a new home that is one bedroom bigger than their need, taking into account the impact of affordability when making this choice. If a household has a 1 bedroom need and currently lives in a 2 or 3 bedroom home, they will be able to move to a 2 bedroom home
- Tenants who are currently occupying their homes and want to move to another area will not be able to bid for accommodation that is larger than they need
- Where there are separate households currently living within one property, only one new secure tenancy will be granted to replace one existing secure tenancy
- Wherever possible, tenants will only need to make one move directly to a permanent home, particularly in the later phases, but where temporary accommodation is offered, it should be at Ockford Ridge
- Wherever possible, the Council will take into account requests to move close to existing neighbours or family members if they are in the same phase of the development