



Lancaster City Council

Housing and Property: Council Housing

Local Lettings Policy

January 2025

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Effective from	Jan 2025
Approved by	PL
Review date	Jan 2027
Revision number:	1.0

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1. Local Lettings Plans

1.1. Background and Purpose

1.1.1. The purpose of this policy is to set out how Lancaster City Council will manage local lettings plans effectively and consistently. This document is supplementary to our Allocation Policy. It explains how we will deal with new requests for local lettings plans, as well as how we will review existing local lettings plans. It is intended to be fair, easily understood and transparent.

1.2. Legal Framework

1.2.1. Legislation provides for local lettings plans in accordance with Section 166A (6)(b) of the Housing Act 1996 as it enables housing authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the statutory reasonable preference categories, provided that overall, the authority is able to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Act.

1.3. What is a Local Lettings Plan?

1.3.1. A local lettings plan allows local housing authorities, which includes Lancaster City Council, to make an adjustment to the Allocations Policy and to allocate particular properties to people of a particular description. A local lettings plan may be applied to:

- a particular type of property, for example bungalows or 'cottage style' flats.
- properties in a specific location, for example an estate or a specified area or a block(s) of flats.
- specialist accommodation, for example supported accommodation for a particular client group such as customers with a learning disability or rough sleepers.

1.3.2. A local lettings plan will set out specific criteria that customers must meet, to be made an allocation, regardless of any reasonable preference category that may apply to them.

1.3.3. In addition to the specific criteria set out in a local lettings plan, other property criteria under Lancaster city Council's Allocation Policy may apply. If so, this will be detailed on the property advert.

1.3.4. Applicants will only be considered for a property if they meet the advertised criteria.

1.4. Reasons for a Local Lettings Plan

1.4.1. Historically, in Lancaster, local lettings plans have been used to set a maximum or minimum age restriction for particular properties which are detailed in the weekly advertising of properties.

1.4.2. Other than age restriction, local lettings plans can be used to:

- a) Help meet unmet needs within a locality.
- b) Help to target the best use of properties in higher demand areas.
- c) Help to promote properties which are in low demand and help the regeneration of an area
- d) through different management arrangements.
- e) Help to tackle homelessness.
- f) Encourage greater community cohesion and sustainability.

- g) Respond to housing management issues, where problems of anti-social behaviour, nuisance or crime occur.

1.5. Potential Local Lettings Plan Criteria

1.5.1. The additional criteria for allocation introduced as part of the local lettings plan will depend on the reason for the implementation of the plan and the desired outcome. The Council will be able to evidence why the additional criteria will achieve the desired outcome. Additional criteria can include, but is not limited to:

- Age restrictions
- Family composition
- Employment type e.g., key worker
- Level of support needs
- Local connection to area
- Criminal convictions
- History of tenancy issues
- History of substance or alcohol abuse issues
- Exemption to the qualification requirement
- Exemption to any financial qualification criteria
- Assessed need for specialist accommodation or adaptations
- At risk of vulnerability, because of learning, mental or physical disability

1.6. Introducing New, and Reviewing Existing, Local Lettings Plans

1.6.1. There are several circumstances or ‘triggers’ which can lead to the consideration of a new local lettings plan and the review of an existing local lettings plan. These include:

- Analysis of lettings, customer demand, customer profiling and other relevant feedback information undertaken by Lancaster City Council, which indicates that there may be an emerging need to consider a new local lettings plan or the removal or amendment to an existing one.
- A request from the housing management service in response to:
 - local circumstances and knowledge.
 - dialogue with existing or potential customers.
 - significant and well evidenced local management problems.
 - evidence of significant unmet demand.
 - evidence that an existing local lettings plan is proving a barrier to housing particular customer groups.
- the need to promote the overall regeneration of an area through the application or removal of a local lettings plan.
- proposed new housing developments that require a local lettings plan to meet a particular need.
- the need to meet funding criteria for specific schemes.

1.6.2. There will be a quarterly review of local lettings plans, except for specialised accommodation such as extra care and sheltered housing.

1.6.3. The review of an existing local lettings plan will be completed by applying the same procedures for a new one, as set out in this document. This review process will ensure that local lettings plans are still appropriate to the local housing context and the strategic objectives of Lancaster City Council.

1.6.4. In the event of one of the above circumstances or ‘triggers’, the procedures for determining a local lettings plan for properties owned by Lancaster City Council will be applied. The outcome of this process may result in the introduction of, a continuation of, an amendment to or the removal of a local lettings plan.

1.7. The Decision and Review of a Local Lettings Plan

1.7.1. The decision to introduce, continue, amend or remove a local lettings plan will be made by the Council Housing Manager and approved by the Allocations Policy Review Group.

1.7.2. Quarterly reviews of all local lettings plans will be completed to monitor the effectiveness of the overall plan.

1.8. Advertising Properties in Accordance with a Local Lettings Plan

1.8.1. Properties that are subject to a local lettings plan will be advertised in the normal way, through the Choice Based Lettings system, unless the local lettings plan states otherwise.

1.8.2. Where a local lettings plan is in place, the advert will be amended to clearly show that there is a plan in effect. The advert will specify what criteria is being applied.

1.9. Ensuring Choice and Fairness for Applicants

1.9.1. It is acknowledged that, by introducing local lettings plans, the choice for applicants is generally reduced. Therefore, the availability of alternative properties in each area will always be considered. When developing a local lettings plan, consideration must be given to ensure that:

- a local lettings plan is tailored to meet the specific objectives that have been identified.
- local lettings plans do not dominate the overall allocations scheme.

1.10. Related Policies and Procedures

1.10.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- Allocations Policy

2. Procedures for Determining a Local Lettings Plan for Properties Owned by Lancaster City Council

Set out below is the process by which local lettings plans will be decided. This stage-by-stage approach indicates what actions are needed and who is responsible for specific actions throughout the process. A flowchart which summarises the process and provides a quick overview is included at Appendix 1.

2.1. Stage One – Recommending a Local Lettings Plan be Introduced

2.1.1. The Community Housing Manager, Choice Based Lettings Manager, Housing Manager, Community Safety Manager or Income Manager may recommend that a local lettings plan be introduced for a particular property, block or group of properties. The recommendation is made to the Council Housing Manager or Chief Officer for consideration.

2.2. Stage Two- Understanding the Local, Area and City Context

2.2.1. The recommendation will consider the properties and area within the boundaries of the local lettings plan proposal, as well as information relating to wider housing need including, where applicable:

- The number of properties affected and the property type(s).
- Information on the household and customer profile of existing residents and how it is anticipated this may change because of the proposal being made.
- Details of specific problems that need to be addressed through the introduction of a new local lettings plan, including incidents of anti-social behaviour, crime or vandalism and how these will be positively addressed through the introduction of a local lettings plan.

2.2.2. The Council Housing Manager or Chief Officer will consider the information provided and may request additional information if required.

2.3. Stage Three – Deciding on, and Recording, the Proposal

2.3.1. The Council Housing Manager or Chief Officer will make the decision on whether the proposed local lettings plan should be implemented. All such decisions on new local lettings plans will be presented for final review and approval by the Allocations Policy review Group. Existing local lettings plans will also be reviewed, quarterly, by the Allocations Policy Review Group.

2.3.2. The decision to implement a new local lettings plan will be documented in the minutes of the Allocations Policy Review Group Meeting.

2.4. Stage Four – Implementation

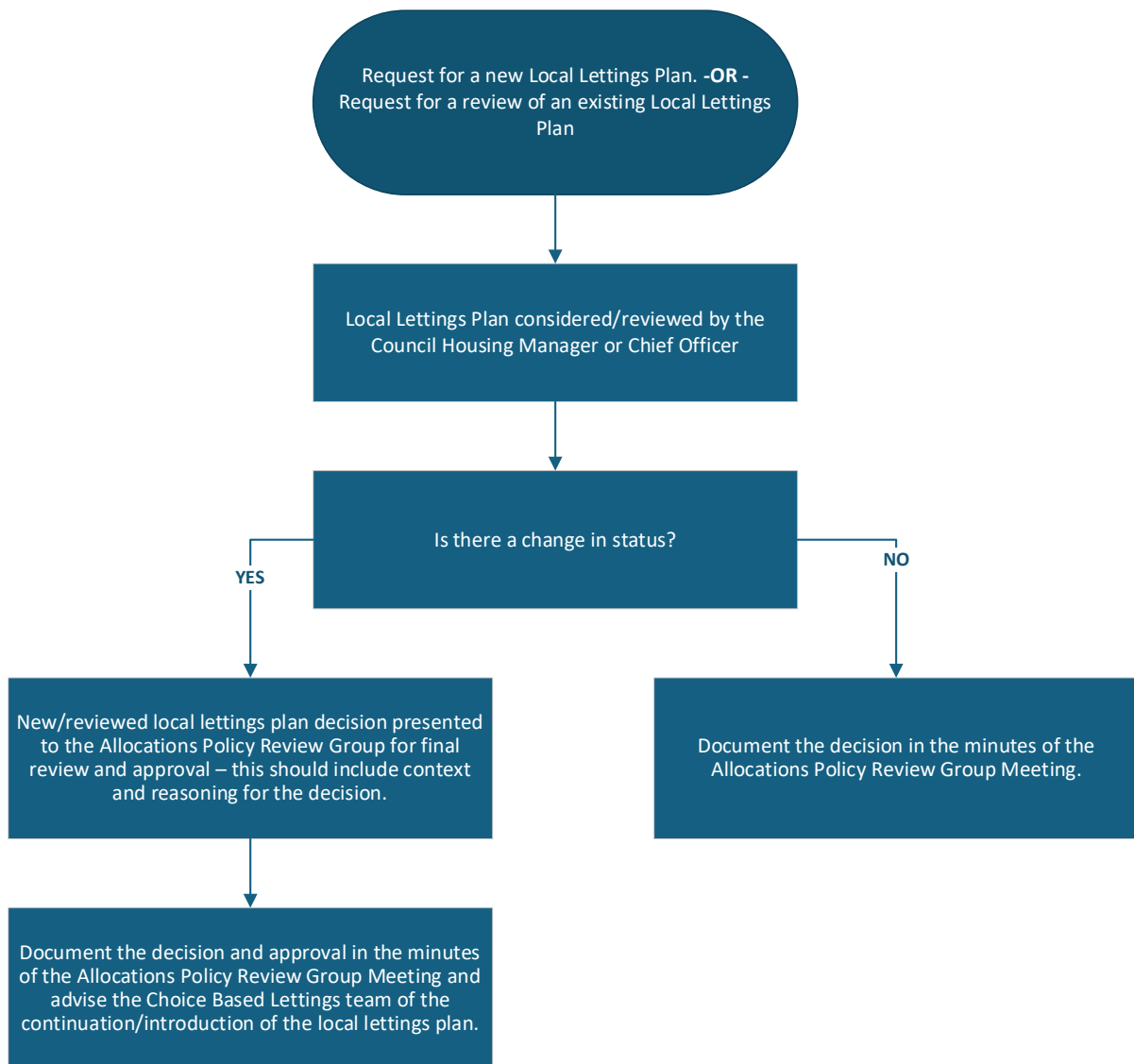
2.4.1. The Choice Based Lettings Team will ensure any properties advertised will be done so in accordance with the local lettings policy.

3. Requests for Local Lettings Plans by Registered Providers of Housing (RP's)

3.1. The Council requires registered providers, with whom it has nomination rights, to seek approval from Lancaster City Council, prior to implementing a local lettings plan. This is most common at the initial development stage, whereby a request will be sent to the Choice Based Lettings Manager.

3.2. Any such request will be considered by the Council Housing Manager or Chief Officer and reviewed by the Allocations Policy Review Group, as set out in Stage Two.

4. Appendix 1: Designation Flow Chart



5. Appendix 2: Proposed Local Lettings Plan – Decision Sheet

Address:

Background:

Allocation Criteria:

Under Occupation:

Where there are no bids for a two-bedroom flat from eligible households assessed as needing two bedrooms then the unit can be offered to qualifying two person households with an assessed need for one bedroom. Where no such households bid, then the unit may be offered to a single person. In these circumstances we may refer the applicant(s) for a financial assessment to ensure the tenancy is affordable.

Review of Policy:

This policy, its application, and its effectiveness will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Allocations Policy Review Group.

Decision:

I approve / do not approve this Local Lettings Plan.

Signed: _____

Date: _____