

**Cornwall Homechoice**  
**Local Lettings Plan**  
**(Appendix 2 Allocations Policy)**

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## **Cornwall Homechoice**

### **Local Lettings Plan**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to outline how vacant Council and partner Register Social Landlord properties will be labelled and banded under the Cornwall Homechoice scheme.

Cornwall Council has developed this Local Lettings Plan in partnership with Registered Social Landlords operating in the district, and has consulted with other relevant stakeholders.

#### Advertising of Properties

Each vacant Cornwall Homechoice Partner property will be advertised openly:

- i) In a relevant local newspaper
- ii) On the Council's website
- iii) Through leaflets available at all Council Offices
- iv) In leaflets posted direct to applicants as part of the Support and Assistance Policy

Each advert will contain a brief description of the property, together with details of any other 'preference' criteria that may be applied to that property.

#### Property Banding

Each property will be advertised towards specific bands of applicants. This restriction helps to limit the number of unnecessary bids for any given vacancy.

#### Preference and Additional Labels

In order to ensure that the limited number of social housing stock that becomes available to re-let is used effectively, 'preference labels' can be used to help meet quota targets. For example, preference labels may be used to:

- i) Ensure homeless households are re-housed within a reasonable time.
- ii) Enable social tenants resident in Cornwall to transfer in order to prevent unacceptable levels of under-occupation and/or overcrowding within the housing stock.
- iii) Target adapted properties to those who require an adapted property
- iv) Help sustain rural communities.

The detail of the labels used, including preference labels, and how they help to influence the selection of applicants is explained on the following sections of this document.

### Selection of the successful applicant

At the close of each advert a short-list of applicants will be produced from the computer bidding records. For each property, the top short-listed applicant will be notified that they have bid successfully. No formal offers will be made until the applicant's details have been checked and verified.

The successful applicant for each vacancy will be the applicant who has been in the highest band for the longest period of time and that meets the requirements of the advert, such as family size, age or other preference labels criteria.

## **“Homeless” Preference Label**

### What does the label say?

- Preference given to applicants accepted as homeless by Cornwall Council.

### Definition

To fulfil the criteria, applicants must be accepted as homeless and owed a full housing duty by the authority under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

### Quota

It is anticipated that approximately 40% of general needs vacancies will need to be let to applicants who have been accepted as statutory homeless and who are owed a main housing duty by Cornwall Council.

### How will this be validated?

Verification of the applicant's 'homelessness status' will be sought from the Council's Housing Options team.

### When should the label be used?

Homeless applicants will generally be given the same level of choice under the scheme as other applicants. This label will only be used when monitoring shows that the level of voids let to homeless households has fallen below the 40% quota and there are a high number of homeless cases being accommodated in temporary housing that is impacting upon the Council's homelessness reduction targets.

### Reason for the label

The use of this label will help to manage homeless cases effectively, by ensuring the Council's housing duty to house clients is discharged in a timely manner.

**“Parish” Preference Label**What does the label say?

- Preference given to applicants with a local connection to the specific parish.

Planning Restrictions

Where planning restrictions apply, the specific criteria contained within the S106 or S52 order will override the parish connection criteria.

Definition

To qualify the applicant, or member of their household, must meet one of the following criteria:

- Residency** – (i) Currently lives within the parish and has done so continuously for the past 3 years; **or**
- (ii) Has lived in the parish continuously for 5 years at some stage in the past.

**Employment** – Currently work in permanent (regarded as 16 hours or more per week – exceptional cases will be considered on their own merit) employment in the Parish and has been so continuously for the past 3 years and this employment is not of a casual or seasonal nature.

**Family** – Has a close family member (normally mother, father, son or daughter) living within the parish and has been for the past 5 years

Quota

Parish Preference Label be applied to 50% of all social housing (Registered Social Landlords and Council) lettings in the rural areas, and in addition that it be applied to 100% of local authority lettings in rural parishes with less than 40 local authority rented dwellings.

This label will not be applied to vacancies that arise in the key urban centres and main towns of:

<b>Key Towns</b>		
Camborne Redruth Bude Wadebridge Bodmin Hayle	Helston Newquay Launceston Penzance Truro Liskeard	Saltash St Austell (inc. <i>St Blazey/Par</i> ) St. Ives Falmouth Penryn

Reason for the label

This label will be used to help sustain communities in rural and coastal locations.

## **"Transfer" Preference Label**

### What does the label say?

- Preference given to existing partner RSL and Council tenants wishing to transfer.

### Definition

An applicant fulfilling the transfer preference label will be a tenant of a Homechoice Partner Landlord, residing in Cornwall, who wishes to transfer accommodation within the County.

### How will this be validated?

An applicant's landlord is stated on the application form. This information, together with the tenancy reference, will be checked at verification stage.

### When should this label be used?

The transfer preference label can be applied to up to 25% of all properties advertised across the County.

### Band A Applicants

Due to the urgency of their housing need, applicants in Band A will be considered above applicants who meet this preference criteria, as this level of banding is only given in the most extreme of circumstances. However, if two applicants in Band A apply, the applicant meeting the transfer label will be considered in the first instance.

### Reason for the Label

The transferring of tenants allows the Council and its partner RSLs to make optimum use of the existing Cornwall Homechoice Partner's housing stock. This label helps tenants in unsatisfactory housing to move.

It is worth noting that tenants wishing to transfer properties will normally be expected to have no significant breaches of tenancy (including rent arrears).

## **“Disabled” Preference Label**

What does the label say?

- Preference given to applicants requiring an adaptation.

Definition

An adapted property is one that may contain any of the following:

- level access shower
- ramps
- stairlifts
- lowered kitchen
- ground floor kitchen and bathroom extensions.

**Fully adapted wheelchair accessible properties will generally only be let to those requiring this level of adaptation.**

How will this be validated?

This will be validated through the verification process to check an applicant’s medical details. Applicants with mobility or health problems will be expected to complete a medical assessment form, which would be assessed through the Welfare Assessment Panel.

When will this label be used?

When a property has been adapted to meet a specific need as indicated in the examples above.

Reason for the label

The reason for the label is to ensure that properties that have been adapted are used to their maximum potential.

## **"Older Persons " Preference Label**

### **What does the label say?**

#### **Older Persons Accommodation**

- State Pension Credit Age or those requiring accessible accommodation/adaptation

#### **Cat 2**

- Aged 60 and above (most schemes have lifelines fitted as part of the accommodation)

\*The age limit has been specified as under the Equalities Act 2010 the inclusion of this age is following the legitimate aim of:

- Enabling people of a particular age or age range to socialise together and
- Enabling people of a particular age to enjoy peace and quiet.

Any applicants requesting consideration for this type of property who do not meet the above criteria will be considered on a case by case basis taking into account their individual circumstances.

#### **Definition**

##### Older Persons Accommodation

In order to meet the criteria to apply for properties designated as older persons accommodation, applicants or their partners (where applicable) will need to be eligible to apply for state pension credit \* on the date of bidding/verification, or where the property is suitable for an applicant with an evidenced mobility problem.

- \*NB eligibility will change as the state pension credit age increases. The sliding range is available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

##### Cat 2

In order to meet category 2 designated as older persons accommodation, applicants or their partners (where applicable) will need to be within the stated age on the date of bidding/verification. Please note that most CAT II schemes have hardwired Lifeline units which have an additional charge.

### **How will this be validated?**

#### State pension credit application eligibility

State Pension Credit application eligibility of an applicant or applicants' partner will be verified at two stages.

## **Appendix 2**

1. On application - applications will include date of birth for each person on the application form.
2. At verification stage – applicants will need to supply evidence of their date of birth (e.g. birth certificate)

### Evidenced mobility problem

Applicants applying on the basis of mobility problems will be required to provide independent evidence from a health professional demonstrating the need for an accessible property or the need for the property adaptations

### Cat II

The age of an applicant or applicants' partner will be verified at two stages to ensure the minimum age criteria of 60 is met.

1. On application - applications will include date of birth for each person on the application form.
2. At verification stage – applicants will need to supply evidence of age (e.g. birth certificate)

Applicants will be made aware that an additional charge applies for most CAT II properties for the Lifeline service.

### When will this label be used?

This label will be used on selected properties where these properties have traditionally been let to older people. For example decommissioned sheltered housing units.

### Reason for the label

Some properties lend themselves to specific applicant groups, and/or historically allocations to these properties have been made to an older client group therefore the majority of tenants in the area are of an older age range.

## **Additional Labelling**

### **"Sheltered Housing " Label**

Sheltered housing can generally only be let to those who need and want this type of service.

#### Definition

Sheltered housing is generally intended for older people in need of support to help them to maintain their independence. Applicants need to be assessed as needing and wanting this type of service before they can be offered a sheltered housing tenancy.

#### How will this be validated?

An initial assessment of whether an applicant may be eligible for sheltered housing is carried out as a paper exercise as part of the registration process. Applicants will not be eligible to bid for sheltered housing until this assessment has been undertaken.

When an applicant has been successful in their bid for a sheltered housing vacancy they will generally be visited at home and a full sheltered housing assessment undertaken. Offers will only be made if the full assessment shows the applicant is eligible for sheltered housing.

#### When will this label be used?

This label will be used on all designated sheltered housing properties.

Sheltered properties will be advertised as "ALL BANDS" so that any applicants may apply, providing they meet the sheltered housing label criteria.

#### Reason for the label

To ensure that the properties, which are currently designated as sheltered, attract applicants who require the sheltered housing service.

Due to Supporting People legislation, there is a greater requirement to ensure that all new applicants who move into the sheltered housing stock, actually require the sheltered housing service. These properties will be subject to the sheltered housing service charge.

## **New Build Developments**

### New Build Developments – Initial Lettings Plan

When new developments are nearing completion RSL's will wish to ensure that the newly created community is as balanced as possible to help ensure the new estate has a sustainable community. A fair mixture of applicants should attempt to be gained from the initial lettings.

It is expected that this mix of applicants will reflect the local community needs, and a specific Local Lettings Plan will be drafted for each new development.

The community balance for new estates will be established by way of negotiation between the Council's Housing Needs team, Parish/Town Councillors and RSL staff at the time when the development is nearing completion, on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

### Sustainable Communities

Occasionally estates can become unbalanced and management problems can arise as a result.

Where this occurs, Cornwall Homechoice Partners Landlords may wish to develop a time limited estate plan to help re-balance the community and help combat anti-social behaviour.

#### Local Estate Plans

When an estate becomes unbalanced the relevant landlord may approach the Housing Needs Manager to develop a local estate allocations plan to help re-balance the estate.

It is expected that a mix of potential tenants will be decided upon which reflect the local community needs.

A specific allocations plan will be drafted for each estate where vacancies that arise will be targeted by labelling. The community balance on the estates will be established by way of negotiation between the Council Housing Needs Manager, Social Landlord Manager and relevant Member on a scheme-by-scheme basis.