

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date:	Decision maker: Strategic Director of Housing
Report title:		Folajimi Apartments (Former Cherry Gardens School) – Local Lettings Plan	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		South Bermondsey	
From:		Perry Singh - Director Housing Needs & Support	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Strategic Director of Housing approve the local lettings plan for twenty six new homes at Folajimi Apartments where up to 50% of the properties will be allocated to existing tenants within the local area, and the next 25% of properties allocated to homeless households owed the main housing duty by Southwark. All remaining properties will be advertised via the housing register.
2. That the Strategic Director also note the further criteria applied to residents of the local lettings scheme:
 - i. Residents of the local lettings scheme will be drawn from:
 - Charles MacKenzie (Housing Block)
 - Rouel Road Estate
 - Eveline Lowe Estate
 - ii. Direct Offers will be made to homeless households owed the main housing duty. This will be a final offer of accommodation where refusal of a suitable offer will result in the cessation of the main housing duty and the discharge of Southwark's statutory functions in relation to homelessness.
 - iii. Prospective tenants will be required to have less than four weeks' worth of rent arrears or £50 if claiming housing benefit at the point of application and point of offer.
 - iv. Households can only move upon successful completion of pre-tenancy inspection and interview as per section 5.26 of the councils published allocation scheme.
 - v. Only households assessed as being in housing need (bands 1-3) will be allocated a property through the local lettings scheme. Households will be

prioritised in existing priority bands and awarded priority stars in accordance with the council's published allocations scheme.

- vi. Requests for additional bedrooms above the assessed need will not be considered unless they are made on medical grounds that are confirmed by a Housing Solutions medical assessment.
- vii. All households will be permitted to move into new homes which are one room less than their assessed bed need for three or more bedroomed properties.
- viii. Households will not be permitted to move into new one or two bedroom homes if the property is below their assessed bed need.
- ix. Households on the general register living outside the defined local lettings area or owed the main housing duty will not be permitted to move into any of the new homes if the property is below their assessed bed need.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3. In line with the council's target to produce 11,000 new homes by 2043, planning permission was granted to proceed with the development of new council homes located at Folajimi Apartments.
- 4. The development at Folajimi Apartments includes twenty six new homes that are scheduled for completion in June 2024.
- 5. This development has a total of twenty six homes comprised of different property sizes and has been made in consultation with the local residents within the Estate.
- 6. All twenty six properties will be listed as social housing tenancies.
- 7. Southwark's Housing Allocations Scheme sets out the criteria according to which properties will be allocated. The scheme also provides for the use of local lettings schemes in order to meet the housing needs of tenants within the area.
- 8. Demand of social housing within the borough continues to outstrip supply where there are 17,926 households registered on the housing register. Recent figures from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 the council received 3,935 applications but was only able to allocate 1,464 homes through either a nomination to a housing association or Southwark council property.
- 9. One of the aims of the housing allocations scheme is to enable local tenants in housing need to remain within their communities and not to have to re-locate outside of the area to find suitable accommodation.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

10. All lettings for the new build schemes located at Folajimi Apartments will comply fully with Southwark Council's Housing Allocations scheme.
11. It is proposed that 50% of the initial lettings of the new homes will be allocated to Southwark Council tenants currently living on Charles Mackenzie, Rouel Road and Eveline Lowe Estates.
12. These lettings will be delivered to maximise the housing solutions to the local community and to deliver the Fairer Future promise of, homes for all.
13. Following the initial lettings, and in line with the Council's annual lettings plan targets for 2024/25, secondary lettings of up to 25% of homes will be allocated to homeless households owed the main housing duty by Southwark Council through direct offers.
14. These lettings are in response to the escalating pressure around homelessness, rising numbers in temporary accommodation, difficulties meeting statutory duties as a result of scarcity of supply, poor conditions in available supply and spiralling costs to the council's general fund as the cost of every unit increases substantially, including increases in rates for existing provision.
15. Following the first round of lettings to the local area and direct offers to homeless households, a second round of lettings for all remaining homes will be advertised to the housing register as a whole.
16. The Council has also considered whether there are any residents borough wide that have been affected by developments of shared ownership homes where council tenants have not had or will not have the opportunity to benefit from local lettings. There are currently no past or active shared ownership developments this applies to and therefore no additional residents have been identified to be part of the local lettings plan.
17. Percentages of allocated properties will be rounded up to the nearest whole number. For example, 25% of twenty six properties will be rounded up to seven properties.

Neighbourhoods

18. The local lettings approach contributes to the council's key priorities to create and support neighbourhoods. It enables those already living and contributing within local communities to benefit from the development of homes in their area.

Narrowing the gap

19. The letting of new social homes, at affordable rent levels, supports residents on lower incomes efforts to access genuinely affordable housing, improve their housing conditions and support them to narrow the gap in life chances for themselves and their families.

People powered

20. In the longer term it supports residents by enabling them to put down roots and contribute to local, community powered decision making in their area. Choice Based Lettings and the local lettings process enables residents to make choices about where they want to live, enabling them to select a homes in the local community.

Policy implications

21. There are no Key policy implications or amendments required.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

22. Awarding priority to existing tenants within the estate recognises the fact that the development of new homes may cause disruption and on some occasions lack of amenities.
23. The groups that are affected, and deemed able to apply for the homes as “local” tenants are the tenants within the immediate vicinity of the estate where the property has been developed.
24. The allocation of these homes will be conducted in accordance with the councils published allocation scheme, which is already subject to its own community impact assessment.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

25. An equalities Impact assessment was carried out on 29th May 2024. No adverse findings was found as part of the findings from the assessment.
26. This scheme follows the successful local lettings of new developments such as Pelier Street, East Dulwich Estate, Nunhead, Clifton estate, Masterman and Willow Walk.

Health impact statement

27. There are no health impact implications arising as a result of this policy.

Climate change implications

28. Folajimi Apartments was submitted to planning on 18 May 2020 and no climate change implications statement was produced however full details in relation to energy efficiency and carbon offsetting are set out in the energy statement.
29. The scheme has extensive green roofs as part of the energy and sustainability strategy.

Resource Implications

30. None.

Legal Implications

31. The concurrent provided by the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance is set out at paragraphs 46 to 52 below.

Financial implications

32. None.

Consultation

33. The Communities service team, Resident Services team, New Homes Delivery team and the Housing Solutions service have been working in partnership with the local tenants, to design a Local Lettings scheme for the initial allocation of the new build scheme for Folajimi Apartments.
34. These meetings have been conducted over a number of months and an agreement has been reached with the residents, tenants, and local elected members of the council for the geographical area for the Local Lettings area. The local lettings area covers Folajimi Apartments including the following properties/buildings:
 - Charles MacKenzie
 - Rouel Road Estate
 - Eveline Lowe Estate
35. 3749 residents and businesses were invited to view proposals at public consultations and exhibitions. Three public consultations were held, 2 exhibitions and a consultation telephone line and email address was operated.
36. The new homes sit next to the Charles MacKenzie Estate and will consist of the following social rented properties:

Property size	Number of units
1 bed flat	7
2 bed flat	5
2 bed houses	2 (2 wheelchair access units)
2 bed maisonette	1
3 bed flat	1
3 bed maisonette	10
Total	26

37. Therefore, it is anticipated thirteen properties will be allocated to existing tenants of Southwark Council living within the area identified within section 34 of this report, and, seven properties will be allocated to homeless households.
38. As at the 29th May 2024, ninety eight households located within the local lettings area were registered on our Homeseach Bidding Scheme. Forty two of those households have been assessed as having a housing need and are listed in a priority band 1-3. The priority listed households are broken up below:

Priority category	1 bed need	2 bed need	3+ bed need	Total count
Under occupiers	1	5	0	6
Management transfers	1	0	1	2
Overcrowded households	1	8	11	20
Statutory overcrowded households	0	0	0	0
Medical needs	1	0	7	8
Accessible housing requirement	1	3	1	5
Sheltered housing	1	0	0	1
Total	6	16	20	42

39. The above table shows a mixture of household compositions including 1, 2, and 3 bedroom households. Therefore it is anticipated these households will benefit from the new development within the local area. This includes the provision of sufficient accessible properties for the local residents in housing need.
40. There are no sub households listed on the housing register within the identified forty two households on the Estates. Therefore it is expected that

they will free up properties that will be available to other residents on the housing list.

41. As a result, there is sufficient demand to warrant priority being given to tenants within the defined local area. Any increase in the local lettings area for the new homes will generate unnecessary demand and likely to raise expectations above what can be delivered as part of this local lettings scheme.
42. Letters will be sent to qualifying tenants on the register in advance to inform them of the upcoming development. This will include details of the available homes, qualification criteria listed above and dates when the properties will be available on the Homesearch bidding website.
43. The local Resident Services Officer will work with the Housing Solutions service to help identify additional households within the local lettings estates that are in housing need but not registered on the Homesearch bidding scheme. Such cases will be expedited in order to permit the households to bid on the new homes.
44. The homes will be advertised in advance of the completion of the homes on Folajimi Apartments. The first 50% of homes will be advertised to the local tenants, the next 25% will be directly offered to homeless households while the remaining properties will be advertised once we have given a full opportunity for local tenants to register their interest.
45. The information listed on the website will promote the features of the new build homes and ensure the full listing of the local lettings scheme is available for the households listed on the Homesearch bidding scheme.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance

46. In accordance with the requirement under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 to have a scheme for determining priorities and procedures in the allocation of its housing, the council has in place a main housing allocations scheme. The scheme gives effect to the statutory requirement to give reasonable preference to certain groups of housing applicants.
47. Generally, the council must not allocate council housing (or nominate an applicant to a housing provider with whom it has a nominations agreement) except in accordance with its main allocation scheme.
48. However, under s166A(6) of the 1996 Housing Act, the council may depart from its main allocation scheme and put in place local lettings schemes which prioritise particular groups of applicants for particular properties, provided the

cumulative effect of such schemes does not displace the system of reasonable preference set out in the main allocation scheme.

49. Paragraph 7.10.1 of the council's current main allocation scheme provides that the council may decide to operate one or more Local Letting policies within Southwark. The need for such schemes will be clearly defined and relate to specific areas or types of property that will benefit from this type of proactive initiative.
50. Paragraph 7.10.4 of the Council's main scheme further provides that 'Local Lettings policies will be reviewed on a regular basis and equality impact assessments undertaken with consultation undertaken with customers and communities before a Local Lettings Plan is agreed'.
51. The law requires that consultation must be undertaken when proposals are at a formative stage and include sufficient reasons for the proposal and time for interested parties to respond. The Cabinet member is required to take into account the outcome of the consultation when making a decision on the recommendations and is referred to the consultation section of this report.
52. The report confirms that the proposed scheme is in line with the local lettings policy incorporated in the main allocation scheme.

Strategic Director of Finance

53. No comments sought.

Public Sector Equality duty (PSED)

54. The Equality Act 2010 requires the council, when taking decisions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.
55. The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. The duty also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in relation to (a) above.
56. When taking decisions on the exercise of council functions conscious thought must be given to the PSED, including having regard to any equality impact assessment carried out, in particular, where any possible disproportionate

effects on groups sharing protected characteristics are identified, the mitigation proposed. The cabinet member is referred to the community impact section of this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Perry Singh, Director Housing Needs & Support		
Report Author	Alex Herd, Housing Choice and Supply Manager		
Version	1 st Draft		
Dated	18 th September 2024		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services		Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			