



Thorverton Community Land Trust

A note on Eligibility and Prioritisation for access to the affordable housing in the Silver St project, in particular the importance of Local Connection

This note is not a definitive statement: it is a guide, drawing on similar arrangements elsewhere, to what the CLT hopes and expects to be put in place, through negotiation with Mid-Devon DC (the Planning Authority) and Hastoe Housing Association. Once the negotiations are concluded, the deal will be enshrined in a s106 Planning Obligation and an associated Local Lettings Plan

Further, and more definitive, information will be made available as the project progresses

Eligibility & Prioritisation can be disaggregated into four broad, inter-linked, criteria, all of which have both an Eligibility (or Threshold) component and a Prioritisation component:

- (i)** Local Connection
- (ii)** Geographical Priority
- (iii)** Registration with Devon Home Choice
- (iv)** Housing Need

There may also be some other specific policies in the s106 directly relevant to lettings. An example would be how mutual exchanges work

The firm intention will be that applicants passing the Local Connection tests, and also the linked Geographical Priority test, even with a low level of housing need, will take priority over applicants with a higher level of need but without the relevant connection or geographical priority.

(i) Local Connection (to the geographically prioritised parish)

This is mainly an eligibility/threshold test, but it can also have a prioritisation component (eg 'a' below taking priority over 'b' and 'c').

'Local Connection' to a given parish is likely to mean something along the following lines

- a) people who have been ordinarily resident in the parish, for a period of x years (3? 5?)
- b) people not resident in the parish but either employed in the parish on a permanent basis, or self-employed with a permanent work base in the parish, for a continuous period of x years and for at least y hours per week
- c) people who can demonstrate a close family connection, one in which a caring dependency can be identified, to the parish. One definition of close family connection is where the person's mother father son or daughter or sibling has been ordinarily resident in the parish for a continuous period of x years.



(ii) Geographical priority

The Local Lettings Plan is likely to set out what is informally known as the ‘cascade’ of geographical priorities, probably something along the following lines:

- a) Thorverton parish
- b) neighbouring parishes
- c) the rest of Mid-Devon
- d) the rest of Devon
- e) everywhere else

(iii) Registration with Devon Home Choice

Applicants for rented housing will be required to be registered on the Council’s Housing Register, known as Devon Home Choice.

Registration with DHC is also likely to serve as a ‘tie-break’ prioritisation – the household who has been registered for the longest having the priority.

(iv) Housing need

Applicants will have to pass at least one, and quite possibly two, ‘threshold’ tests with respect to their housing need:

- (a) that of the definition of housing need to be set out within the Local Lettings Plan. See Appendix 1 for an example of this.

and

- (b) that of being eligible for at least Band E of Devon Home Choice (Band E is for the lowest level of need). Devon Home Choice’s website is worth a visit.

Appendix 1

A possible definition of Housing Need:

living in ‘Substandard’ accommodation – that is which is not appropriate from a health or safety perspective, regardless of any particular household’s circumstances. This includes accommodation/property which is: structurally unsound, or in serious disrepair, or not self-contained, or suffering from serious dampness or cold or infestation, or lacking basic amenities. Or

living in ‘Unsuitable’ accommodation – that is which is not appropriate for day-to-day living taking into account the particular circumstances and reasonable aspirations of the household in question, the broad test of reasonableness being what a mainstream social landlord would expect to provide for the household in question. Relevant considerations include:

- excessive costs to the household (including costs of ‘using’ the accommodation, such as heating)
- overcrowding, for example where different sex children aged 10 or over have to share a bedroom with a sibling, or where there are more than two children in a bedroom, or where rooms such as kitchens and living room are used as bedrooms
- risk of the household’s occupation of the accommodation being brought to an end without reasonable cause and against their wishes
- not enabling the meeting of the needs of a person with an infirmity, a physical disability or specific social or care needs.

Topics yet to be discussed:

- should there be a direct financial assessment of applicants’ income & assets, to check that they cannot reasonably afford the open market?
- to what extent, in what circumstances, should ‘under-occupation’ be allowed?

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