

Draft Option to return policy

Guy Chaundy

Background

- Tenants and owners are often required to move in order to deliver housing regeneration through BMHT.
- The Council has a legal obligation to offer suitable alternative housing.
- This would normally involve the resident being registered and bidding for suitable properties anywhere in the city
- Often the availability of properties that meets the needs and aspirations of these residents, who often do not want to move, is limited.
- This can have a negative impact on delivering timely clearance and so affect the regeneration scheme.
- It also has the potential to break up communities who may wish to remain together

Purpose

- The draft proposals aims to provide housing regeneration schemes with a clear approach to managing the rehousing process in an efficient, timely and fair manner.
- It would enable Council tenants and residents where we have an obligation to provide alternative accommodation, including where residents are affected by a Compulsory Purchase Order, the option to return or move straight into the new development, where the scheme design allows.
- It is not a policy or strategy in regard to how redevelopment is delivered but focused on the rehousing/returning element.
- There will be a need for scheme specific Local Letting Plans to be in place allowing for sufficient flexibility to adapt a rehousing programme to the requirements and circumstances of individual regeneration schemes.

Who

- Although the policy is primarily aimed at BCC secure tenants who are affected by rehousing proposals it recognises that Owners and private tenants subject to a CPO and where the Council owes a rehousing duty, need to be included.
- Owners who wish to purchase on the development are already given priority over new builds on the scheme where there are properties for sale.

How

- All rehousing will still need to be in line with the existing Allocation scheme at the time in regard to eligibility and qualification.
- It applies to qualifying residents and households who reside in the area up to the point of the scheme being approved and LLP agreed. Not to those who move in after or leave before.
- Residents who are required to move prior to new suitable properties being built will have 1 option to return to the new scheme once the properties have been built.
- Where the phasing of the scheme allows and where it can be achieved, there is the option for a single move into the new build.
- These details will be captured in scheme specific Local Letting Plans.

Contd

- Only 1 statutory home loss payment can be made
- Individual claims for disturbance comp will be assessed by the Councils surveyors in BPS as is the case now.
- This may lead to increase scheme costs where there are '2 moves'. This will need to be considered on a scheme by scheme basis in regard to affordability
- Individual Equality impact assessments will be completed as part of the individual scheme LLPs

The draft policy recognises:

- The need for consultation and information gathering at the earliest opportunity is important to understand the numbers and profile/need of affected residents wishing to return and the property.
- Through this initial consultation residents should be formally asked to record their interest, or not, and once the decision to proceed is made they will be formally classed as a 'returner' at the rehousing registration stage.
- Only those residents captured as a returner at this stage will retain their option to return.

Contd.

- Early identification of those to be registered as 'returners' may help inform scheme design, where this is achievable.
- Support will be offered for those eligible, once registered, in the bidding process.
- Early consultation and information gathering as to profile and aspirations of affected residents is essential.
- Potential for development mix to be influenced by local need – where achievable in the proposed development.

Contd

- Some would not qualify as determined within the Councils Allocations scheme. This includes evidence of Fraud, unacceptable behaviour, rent arrears that cannot be covered through home loss compensation.
- The size of the alternative accommodation offered will depend upon the number and ages of the individuals who have been determined as part of the eligible household at the time of the Council decision to rehouse.
- If this changes during the redevelopment this may impact on the ability to move back into the scheme, depending on availability of properties to which they are now eligible for.

Rehousing options

- A. Move straight into one of the new homes built - If new homes are built elsewhere on the secure tenant's estate we will aim, if possible, for tenants to move directly into their new home.
- B. Get priority award in line with current allocation policy to bid for properties outside of the defined regeneration area. If the tenant wants to move to a vacant property advertised through the Councils choice-based lettings scheme they will be given the relevant priority award as determined by the allocation policy.
- C. Accept a rehousing offer but have the option to return to the new homes when construction is complete - If it is not possible to complete the new homes before the secure tenant moves out of their old home, the tenant will be rehoused until construction of their new home is complete.

Contd

- In all circumstances, the Council will make 1 offer as a returner.
- After the acceptance or refusal of a direct offer to a returner this will remove the option to return.
- All offers/allocations will be in line with the Councils Allocations scheme in regard to eligibility etc.

Questions?