

Lettings Policy

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Executive Lead (Owner):	Executive Director of Customer Services					
Author (Leadership Team member):	Director of Customer Services					
Which Strategy does this support?	Landlord Resident Strategy					
Review frequency:	Every 3 years	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (state period)			
Date created:	May 2015					
Previous review date:	March 2024					
Review date:	May 2025					
Next review:	March 2027					
Current status:	Draft	<input type="checkbox"/>	Final	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
IMPACT ASSESSMENTS						
Equality Impact Assessment						
STAGE 1 completed?	STAGE 2 required?	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>		If not required, state reason:	Not carried out – update is to transfer policy onto new template.			
Customer Impact Assessment						
1) Is this one of the agreed policies requiring resident consultation? Please refer to: Our policies - Settle		Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2) If yes, please confirm resident consultation has taken place		<input type="checkbox"/>	Briefly detail changes arising from resident feedback: Not carried out – update is to transfer policy onto new template.			
APPROVAL						
Approval journey:	Executive Team	Committee				Board
		ARC	DAC	Ops	NRC	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date approved:	ED Customer Services					
Which Regulatory Standard does this Policy support?	Economic					
	Governance & Viability	Rent			Value for Money	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Consumer					
	Neighbourhood & Community	Safety & Quality	Tenancy	Transparency, Influence & Accountability		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Associated legislation	Housing Act 1996 Equality Act 2010 Regulator of Social Housing – Consumer Standards					
Associated procedures	None directly associated with this Policy.					

Does this policy contains delegated authority?	Yes
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Lettings Policy

Introduction

Settle has a legal and statutory obligation to work with local authorities to allocate affordable housing. The legislation ensures that lettings are fair, transparent and non-discriminatory and comply with the standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing. Where we have empty homes, we let them in accordance with the nominations agreements that we have in place with each local authority area. There will be circumstances where we let a home directly outside of the nomination's agreements due to an emergency, major repairs or redevelopment. We recognise the important role that we play in providing access to social housing and supporting the prevention of homelessness. This policy aligns to our Landlord Resident strategy and sets out our approach to ensure homes are allocated fairly and in ways that best meets housing need.

We'll consider the housing needs of tenants and potential tenants. We work across many local authority areas and allocate our social and affordable rent homes through their allocation schemes and in line with local authority nomination agreements. Sometimes nominations agreements will override this Policy as they are legal agreements which we must comply with.

Purpose

We know that affordable housing is in short supply and demand is high.

This Policy sets out Settle's approach to letting its empty homes. We offer both affordable rent and social rent.

- **Social rent** is a type of low-cost housing rent. It is set by a formula, often based on local incomes.
- **Affordable rent** is another type of low-cost housing. It is set typically at 80% of local market rent values and is slightly higher than social rent.

It also covers the circumstances where we may need to make a direct let, outside of the nominations process or decline a nomination due to exceptional circumstances.

Scope

This Policy applies to all residents living in a Settle home and used by all Settle colleagues, but predominantly those in Neighbourhood Services team.

The scope of this policy covers several key areas, including the assessment of housing need, the support provided to vulnerable residents, and the letting of adapted properties.

It also outlines measures to ensure that rent remains affordable, details the standards for empty homes, and specifies the legal requirements that Settle must meet as a housing provider.

Section 2 – Policy

Policy Principles

- We act in line with all statutory and regulatory obligations.
- We complete the work required on an empty home to ensure it meets our Empty Home Standard.
- We minimise the time a home is empty, to support security of tenure for those awaiting an allocation of a home
- We complete an affordability assessment for every resident moving to a new home set at an affordable rent rate.
- We identify residents with additional support needs at the start of the letting process.
- We support residents to help them settle in their new home and sustain their tenancies.
- We utilise resident feedback, including from Tenant Satisfaction Measures, to improve the lettings service.
- We are transparent about the allocations process and provide feedback on all properties let.
- We communicate proactively and work closely with the applicant being let a new home, considering their individual needs.
- We provide feedback to applicants with adapted needs, where a property cannot be adapted to meet their needs.

2.2 Policy Detail and Outcome

2.2.1 How housing need is assessed

Each local authority will hold a housing register and have an allocations policy that sets their eligibility criteria. Applicants applying for affordable housing will be assessed against that criteria and awarded priority in accordance with the local authorities banding or points system.

Settle is part of the North Hertfordshire Housing Partnership and has a joint housing register and a Common Allocations Policy with North Hertfordshire Council. Applicants assessed are given a priority Band and points for additional housing need, together with waiting time points. Applicants can then bid using their priority for empty homes advertised.

2.2.2 How are properties let

We send details of our empty homes to the local authority, with whom we have nominations agreements. They arrange to advertise the properties on their choice-based lettings schemes. Once the adverts have closed, they will shortlist the top applicant and provide us with a nomination, setting out the details of the applicant. We will carry out an affordability check, if the property has an affordable rent. If approved, we will offer a viewing appointment and if accepted, we will arrange to sign the tenancy agreement and handover the keys.

In North Hertfordshire, we advertise empty homes via our Choice Based Lettings platform, HOME4U, which we share with North Hertfordshire Council. Adverts are open for a week, and applicants can bid on the homes that meet their housing need. When the advert closes, the system shortlists applicants into a list, with the highest priority at the top. We go through each application to verify eligibility has not changed. We carry our affordability checks for affordable rents. If approved, we invite the top three

applicants with the highest priority to view. The offer will be made to the applicant with the highest priority. If it is refused, we would offer to the next applicant with the highest priority. We will arrange to sign the tenancy and handover keys.

Feedback on all empty homes let is published on the HOME4U website.

2.2.3 Affordability Assessments

To ensure our homes are affordable and tenancies can be sustained, we carry out affordability checks for all affordable rented empty homes. We will ask you to complete an online assessment form and then contact you to go through your expenditure, to ensure that you have sufficient income to cover all your costs. We provide advice on how you can maximise your income or apply for additional benefits to help you. If the empty home is not affordable, we will tell you why and advise your nominating local authority of the outcome. Some applicants do not have enough income for an affordable rented home and therefore would be advised to bid on a social rent property.

2.3.4 Declining a nomination

In exceptional circumstances we may need to decline an applicant. When this happens, we will do so in a transparent way, making decisions in line with the nominations agreements we have in place with each local authority partner. An applicant has a right to request a review of the decision not to accept a nomination and should contact their local authority area to check their review process.

In North Hertfordshire, we share the Common Housing Allocations Scheme (CHAS) with the Council. Applicants have a right to request a review. A request must be in writing and made within 21 days of the decision to decline. The applicant will be notified in writing of the outcome of a review and the reasons for the decision within eight weeks. We will review any allocation or letting decision that an applicant believes is unreasonable or unfair. We will not hold empty homes vacant whilst the outcome of the review is made.

2.3.5 Direct letting

There will be circumstances where we let homes directly to residents outside of the nomination agreements we have. These include but are not restricted to:

- Succession upon death where property is too big
- Supported move (decant) for major repairs or repairs that cannot be done in occupation
- Emergency fire, flood, high risk to life or limb
- Regeneration of your home
- Court Order under Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 or other legislation via the Family Court
- Mutual exchange
- Lettings into flexi care housing
- Offers under reciprocal arrangements with another local authority or registered provider
- Lettings to temporary accommodation to the statutory homeless
- Sensitive lettings under public protection
- Lettings under witness protection scheme.

All lettings are outlined in our Common Housing Allocations Scheme and our management transfer policy.

2.3.6 How we support vulnerable or disabled residents

Settle is committed to doing as much as is practically possible to enable residents to access and understand our services. During the lettings process, we will check to see if there are any support needs or support agencies. We will contact the support agencies to check what support is in place during the moving process. We will make a referral to our tenancy support service to help you settle into your new home and discuss what help you need.

We will arrange for interpreters where English is not your first language. We can also provide other support such as support with sign language or transferring keys documents into braille. For more information please see vulnerable customers and reasonable adjustments policy.

2.3.7 Our Empty Home Standard

When you move into a Settle home, we want you to be comfortable. Before you move in, we'll make sure that your new home is safe and meets our Empty Home Standard. Our Empty Home Standard sets out what you can expect from the condition of your new home.

We will carry out safety checks and make sure that all our homes meet or exceed the Government's Decent Home Standard, before they are let. An energy performance certificate (EPC) will be made available for you. Occasionally we may need to complete some of the works once you have moved in and we will let you know what these are when we offer you your new home.

We will provide you with a copy of the Empty Home Standard as part of your sign-up appointment.

Section 3 – Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Key Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Director of Customer Services has strategic oversight of this policy and is responsible for its review.

The Policy will then be reviewed and approved by the Executive Team for escalation to the Operations Committee, which operates under the jurisdiction of the Board, and is responsible for reviewing and monitoring this policy.

Section 4 – Compliance and Enforcement

4.1 Compliance

Details of all social housing lettings are submitted to the Governments online submission system of Continuous Recording of social housing lettings and sales data (CORE) hosted by the Departments of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

An annual self-assessment under the Consumer Standards is carried out to ensure we are meeting the required outcomes. Where outcomes fall below the standard required, action plans

for improvement are developed. The Government will assess how well landlords are meeting the standards and take action if needed.

Section 5 – Related Policies, Procedures and Key Documents

Related Policies

Affordability policy

Common Housing Allocation Policy

Disposal of Assets policy

Reasonable Adjustments and Vulnerable Residents Policy (currently separate)

Supported Move (Decant) Policy

Tenancy Policy

Related Procedures

Disposal of Assets Procedure

Managed Move procedure

Supported Move (Decant) procedure

Key Documents

2030 Plan and Asset Priorities

Development & Regeneration Strategy

Settle's Empty Homes Standard

Common Housing Allocations Scheme (CHAS)

Local lettings policies

Section 106

Decent Homes Standard

Nomination agreements /SLAs

Section 6 – Review, Approval, Publication

6.1 Review and Approval

This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner should there be a material change or if a more frequent review is required.

Section 7 – Document Control

Document Name	Lettings Policy
Approval Date	March 2024
Approved By	Executive Team
Version Number	V1.0
Version History	May 2015
	March 2024
	May 2025

IMPACT ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE		
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT ATTACHED	Stage 1	Stage 2
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
CUSTOMER IMPACT ASSESSMENT Resident feedback	Attached <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PUBLISHING REQUIREMENTS		

INTERNALLY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WEBSITE	<input type="checkbox"/>	SETTLE CONNECT	<input type="checkbox"/>
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OFFICE USE ONLY	
RELEVANT 'APPROVAL LOGO' ADDED TO COVER	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Keywords for search function</i>	