

Appendix 12 - Rural Lettings Plan

Background

Many local residents of the villages and parishes within the scope of the Rural Lettings Plan are experiencing problems accessing affordable housing. House prices have increased considerably during recent times; pricing many would be owner-occupiers out of the market. The already low provision of Council housing in these rural areas has been diminished by rising levels of Right to Buy sales.

Therefore in rural areas where affordable housing is becoming scarce, the Council has chosen South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA) as a partner to receive family houses (the plan does not include bungalows and flats) in these areas under a trickle transfer arrangement. SYHA will invest to improve these homes for letting to local people nominated by the Council and Rykneld Homes. The partnership is also working with Parish Councils and others to develop a better understanding of the detailed needs at a village level, and to facilitate new affordable housing developments. This will ensure that communities are sustainable in the long term, with access to amenities and affordable housing, through both 'trickle transfer' and new housing provision.

The following villages and parishes are covered by the Rural Housing Plan;

Village	Parish
Ashover	Ashover
Kelstedge	Ashover
Littlemoor	Ashover
Brackenfield	Brackenfield
Cutthorpe	Brampton
Wadshelf	Brampton
Holmesfield	Holmesfield & Barlow
Barlow	Holmesfield & Barlow
Holymoorside	Holymoorside & Walton
Woolley Moor	Stretton
Wessington	Wessington

Aims & Objectives of the Rural Housing Plan

This Rural Lettings Plan has been prepared to ensure that local people in the identified villages within the scope of the plan have access to housing within the area, where they can demonstrate a local village connection.

The objectives of the Rural Housing Plan are:

- To create and maintain sustainable communities
- To ensure that the needs of the local community are reflected within the policy
- To give people a chance to remain close to their roots and have access to affordable housing

Plan Operation

The Council, through its negotiations, has secured 100% nomination rights in perpetuity from its housing register. A Nomination Agreement has been signed by both parties. This ensures that whenever a home becomes available for letting, the Council is able to nominate a housing applicant from its own housing register.

All potential nominees will go through the same checks and references that would have been carried out before being offered the tenancy of a Council property.

At an appropriate time, before the works are complete, SYHA contact the Council and request a nomination from the housing register in order to make an offer of accommodation on a home whilst it is undergoing refurbishment works. During this period the applicant will be offered a limited amount of decoration choices on the first letting in terms of paint colour, colour and pattern of counter-tops and floor coverings in the kitchen and bathroom areas. To enable this to happen, SYHA will facilitate a 'pre-allocation' of the home to the Council's nominee

The Rural Housing Plan and Choice-Based Lettings

Further work is currently being undertaken to develop and finalise this rural housing plan, and nomination arrangements within CBL

In essence the Rural Housing Plan is a form of local lettings plan; an agreement between the Council and local tenants and residents which restricts lettings of houses in the area to certain households.

The process of determining the nomination has the following stages:

The initial stages 1 to 4 relate to the CBL process of marketing and bidding

Stage 1: Advertising

On availability, each house will be advertised via the CBL system. The normal bid cycle of one week deadline would be applied, unless otherwise agreed.

Stage 2: Labelling

Within the advert the house would be labelled "*rural lettings plan criteria applies*" as the key criteria, with a brief explanation of eligibility & procedures. Any additional home or applicant criteria and preference would then be detailed.

Stage 3: Bidding

Applicants who are on the housing register, and have completed an additional rural housing plan form, which details residency, can bid for the house in the normal ways

Stage 4: Shortlisting

Following the deadline, a short-list will be generated, which will then be ordered using the principles of the agreed rural housing plan.

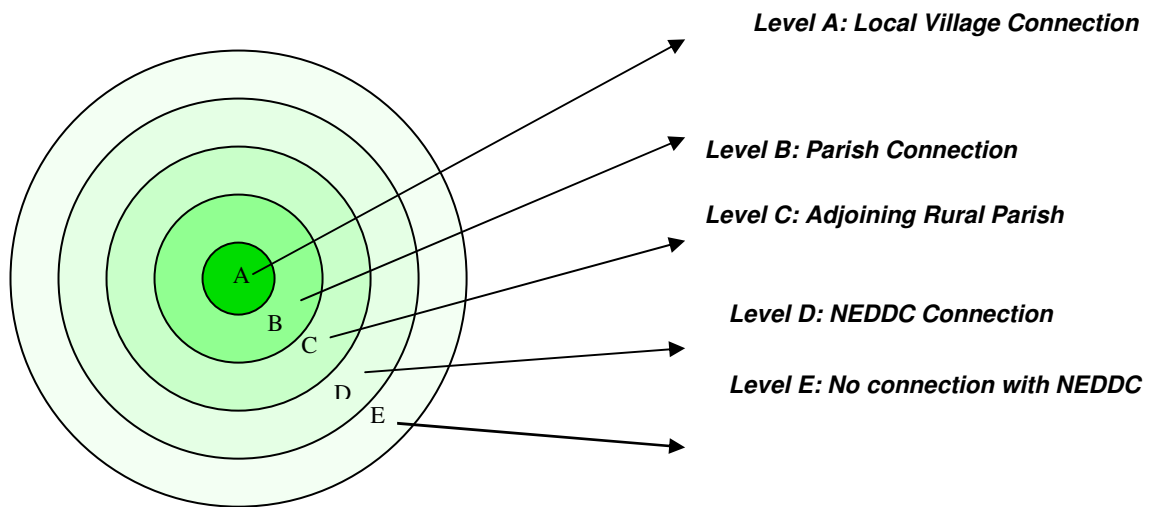
The following stages 5 to 7 relate to sorting the bids and determining the offer/nomination:

Stage 5 : Defining the village connection

Following the deadline, bids will be sorted into priority using a "5 levels of consideration principle". This principle works on a 'concentric circle' approach, the 5 levels being:

- Level A) Village Connection
- Level B) Parish Connection

Level C) Adjoining Rural Parish
 Level D) District Connection
 Level E) No District Connection



For these levels A to E, cascading through these levels will determine the initial priority. Level A applications will be considered first, with level B applications only being considered where there are no level A applications, or when all level A applications have been exhausted; continuing in the same manner through the other levels if necessary. Having determined the initial priority level, progress to stage 6 will be required where there is more than one applicant within the level.

Stage 6: Defining hierarchy through village connection sub-category

If, following the initial sort in stage 5, there is more than one application within a level, then hierarchy will be determined as set out below. Within each priority level A to E, sub categories are again taken in descending order. Applicants at higher levels will be considered first, followed by cascading down the sub categories if there are no applicants or if all applicants within a sub category have been exhausted.

Level A) Local Village Connection

This category of applicants will have a DIRECT connection with the village in which a home is available for letting.

Sub categories are as follows:

A1) Present Residency

These are applicants that currently live in the village and have expressed a wish to remain in the village.

A2) Past Residency

Past residents - but only if they moved out of the village between 1st November 2002 and 31st October 2004 because their housing need could not be met in the village due to property lettings being on hold. This will only apply to people who had to move due to their property not being big enough for their family needs i.e. an expectant applicant in a flat needed a house, applicants in a 2 bedroom house needing 3 bedrooms. Please note that this will not apply to people who move house on the Tenants Incentive Scheme for adaptation purposes.

A3) Employment

As working in the village contributes to its economic viability, applicants who hold down secure and regular employment in that village and have to travel to work will be classed as having a local VILLAGE connection. Confirmation of full-time employment must be given by the employer and provided by the applicant to support their application.

A4) Support

Applicants either giving support to someone living in the village or receiving support from someone in the village will be awarded this level of consideration. They must, however, be the main provider/receiver of the support and must support such a claim by producing documentation such as carers' allowance. The applicant must be the named person either giving or receiving care.

Level B) Parish Connection

Sub categories are as follows:

B1) Present Residency

These are applicants who will live in the same PARISH as the home ready for letting. For example, an applicant residing in Ashover would be considered as having a PARISH connection to a house in Kelstedge or Littlemoor as they are all in the same parish, and a resident of Barlow would be considered to have a parish connection to Cutthorpe.

B2) Past Residency

Past residents - but only if they moved out of the PARISH between 1st November 2002 and 31st October 2004 because their housing need could not be met in the PARISH due to property lettings being on hold. This will only apply to people who had to move due to their property not being big enough for their family needs i.e. an expectant applicant in a flat needed a house, applicants in a 2 bedroom house needing 3 bedrooms. Please note that this will not apply to people who move house on the Tenants Incentive Scheme for adaptation purposes.

B3) Employment

As working in the PARISH contributes to its economic viability, applicants who hold down secure and regular employment in that PARISH and have to travel to work will be classed as having a PARISH connection. Confirmation of full-time employment must be given by the employer and provided by the applicant to support their application.

Level C) Adjoining Rural Parish

This level includes applicants who live in an adjoining rural parish to the village where the house is available. Sub categories in this category are:

C1) Present Residents of the adjoining rural parish who wish to remain living locally

C2) Past Residency - Residents who have had to move away, due to a lack of available homes within the village, parish or adjoining parish, and who wish to return.

Level D) District Connection

Applicants not living in a village covered under the Rural Lettings Policy or one that adjoins the village where a home is on offer, but living within the boundaries of North East Derbyshire District Council will be classed as having a District Connection.

Level E) Living outside the district of North East Derbyshire

Applicants living outside the boundaries of North East Derbyshire District Council will be classed as having no connection to the area.

Stage 7: determining the nomination:

If, following the initial sorts in Stages 5 & 6, there is more than one applicable applicant(s), then hierarchy will be determined as follows:

1. Longest connection (on the basis of full years only)
2. Highest Band (as per section 9 of the general policy)
3. The applicant with the longest waiting time (as per section 9 of the general policy)