



Moray Council

**Lettings Plan
for
New Build Housing
2015 – 2018**

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Introduction

- 1.1. Since 2011, the Council has been letting new build housing. The Council intends to continue to build new housing at a rate of 500 units over 10 years from 2015. Past developments have ranged from 10 to 80 units in any one location and are completed on a phased basis. This provides a different pattern of letting than amongst older housing i.e. many houses let in one location over a short period of time. This Lettings Plan exists to help ensure these new developments become established as sustainable communities, both within the development itself, and its wider surroundings.
- 1.2. The Lettings Plan complements the Council's Allocations Policy, which has a number of objectives. Research carried out by the Scottish Government has identified that there can be tensions between objectives. The purpose of the lettings plan is to seek to minimise any such tensions. The Lettings Plan sets out how the Council will deviate from the Allocations Policy to achieve its outcome of establishing sustainable communities. The Lettings Plan will not be used as a means of 'screening out' households that may require greater support or involvement from staff.
- 1.3. The Plan reflects the statutory requirements, the regulatory framework and good practice identified through the Scottish Government publication Social Housing Allocations – A Good Practice Guide published in March 2011.
- 1.4. Consultation on the draft Lettings Plan will take place during 18 November – 17 December 2014 with registered tenant organisations in Moray, Community Councils, Area Forums, the Older Persons Reference Group (via Sandra Gracie) and any other appropriate community and equality groups. The consultation will ensure that the National Standards for Community Engagement are met. Details of the consultation will be made available on the Council's website and in Council Access Points.

2. Lettings Plan Objectives

- 2.1. The Lettings Plan has the following objectives:

Creating sustainable communities

- 2.2. The Council will seek to avoid any concentration of vulnerable and/or inexperienced households its new build developments.
- 2.3. The Council has agreed to increase supply of accessible ground floor properties to meet the needs of people with mobility issues. These are often older people. Wherever possible, these properties are built in clusters, near to services and amenities. Through this Plan, the Council will consider the mix of households housed in these clusters, with the aim of creating supportive and sustainable micro-communities. The Council will also recognise any services and facilities near to the development.

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- 2.4. In accordance with the Allocations Policy, applicants assessed as requiring a 1 bed ground floor property will also be considered for the new build 2 bed bungalows. The applicant with the highest points will be offered the property.
- 2.5. The Council may build housing in the more rural settlements of Moray. Through this Plan, the Council will regard the applicants' 1st area choice as stated in their Housing Application as the primary factor, and their points' level as secondary, with the aim of supporting the sustainability of fragile rural communities.

Best use of stock suitable for households with mobility/disability needs

- 2.6. A number of the new build properties have design features intended to benefit households with disability or mobility needs. A small number of households have a housing need which is very specialist. Often some adaptation to the design of a new build house is required, to best meet their needs. The most cost effective way to achieve this is to allocate the housing at a very early stage in construction. In all of these cases, the housing needs of the household will have been subject to detailed discussion between the household, Housing and Property, Occupational Therapy, Social Work, and any care providers.
- 2.7. Housing and Occupational Therapy staff will assess those households on the Councils' Housing List, regardless of those households existing tenure, to ensure the best use of the accessible/adapted accommodation provided through the new build.

3. The Allocations Process

Quotas

- 3.1. The Council's Housing List comprises three groups of applicant – homeless priority, waiting list and transfer list. In accordance with good practice, the Council sets a target annually for allocations to each of these groups.
- 3.2. In allocating its new build properties, the Council will not specifically apply these quotas to the developments. Instead the Council will allocate in such a way that achieves the stated objectives of this Plan.

Lettings Plan Panel

- 3.3. For each property type, all lists will be scrutinised by a Lettings Plan Panel. This Panel will comprise Officers from the Council's Housing and Property Service, with input from other relevant services e.g. Occupational Therapy, Community Care, Children and Families etc., when appropriate. The Housing Needs Operational Manager will chair the Panel.

Shortlisting and References

- 3.4. The Lettings Plan Panel will identify applicants to whom offers of housing will be made. The Lettings Plan Panel will have access to tenancy references, support and care arrangements, anti-social behaviour records etc. The Lettings Plan Panel will consider the extent to which this information might

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impact on the establishment of a sustainable community. The Panel chair will ensure that robust checks are carried out and evidence retained, in relation to applicants' current tenancy histories, support requirements, anti-social behaviour records etc.

- 3.5. The recommendations of the Lettings Plan Panel will be approved by the Housing Needs Manager. Decisions taken will be clear and proportionate. Any decision to bypass an applicant for a property must be related to the stated objectives of the Lettings Plan and will be authorised by the Housing Needs Manager. The Housing Needs Manager will ensure that a full audit trail of decisions made is maintained by the Panel, to ensure that no individuals or groups are being unfairly disadvantaged.

4. Monitoring and review

- 4.1. The operation of this plan will be reported to Communities Committee quarterly.
- 4.2. The Lettings Plan will be reviewed as part of the development of the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023.