



Lettings Policy

Policy Statement

We are committed to let our homes in a way that is fair and transparent, and takes account of both local and individual needs.

Effective Date

July 2007

Scope

This policy describes how Redland makes its vacant properties available and who they will be let to.

Principles

Redland will :

- Have a fair and transparent way of deciding priority when more than one person has expressed an interest in a property.
- Produce an annual lettings plan, with residents and local authorities and agreed by the board, setting out our strategic priorities for the year.
- Advertise housing opportunities to applicants through Local Authority Choice Based Lettings (CBL) schemes, wherever they exist and enable us to meet the requirements of this policy.
- Work closely with Local Authorities, ensuring that we assist them to address their strategic priorities.
- Recognise the key role we play in meeting the needs of homeless applicants and applicants wanting to move on from supported housing.
- Make lettings in a sensitive way where serious management problems have affected a specific property

- Participate in local common housing registers wherever possible, maintaining our own separate register only where this is not possible or to meet the needs of existing tenants
- Follow the principles of the Housing Corporation regulatory guidance
- Be transparent, accessible and open in the way we let properties

Application of Policy

Housing need

We have only a limited amount of accommodation available and so we cannot help everyone who applies to us for housing. Where more than one person is interested in a vacant home, we will prioritise applicants on the basis of their housing need.

We consider housing need to be

- High Priority : for example, people who have no permanent home or have to move from their home because it is unfit, being demolished or similar, or because their medical condition makes it impossible to live there.
- Medium Priority : for example, people who are overcrowded, have medical problems which make their home unsuitable, who are suffering harassment
- Low Priority : all other applicants.

Where more than one person within a band expresses interest in a vacancy, priority will be based on the length of time people have been waiting.

We have housing in several different local authority areas, and we recognise that each will have different housing needs criteria and different strategic priorities. We will therefore work with each of the local authorities to agree a detailed scheme which meets those needs and priorities as well as the broad principles of our own objectives.

Exclusions

We may not consider people for housing in certain circumstances. Any decision to exclude an applicant will be approved by the Head of Housing, either through appropriate agreements with local authorities for the operation of local registers or on an individual basis. Each instance will be considered on a case by case basis and if we decide to exclude an applicant on any of the following grounds, then the applicant will be advised that they can appeal against our decision using our complaints procedure. Applicants will be informed of the actions that they need to take before they can be reconsidered for housing with Redland

We may exclude people who, within the previous two years have breached the terms of a tenancy for which there are statutory grounds for possession, have breached the terms of a mortgage, have committed acts of violence against staff or other residents or who, in the opinion of the Association, have a proven history of antisocial behaviour.

We may not consider for rehousing people who, in the opinion of the Association, represent a significant risk to the community. Each case will be considered on its merits after consultation with any other agencies concerned.

We will not consider those who will need additional support to enable them to meet their conditions of tenancy and

- the support needed is of a type and level that we cannot provide, and
- no other responsible body is able to provide that support, or
- after discussion with the applicant or support provider it is considered that the property would be detrimental to that person's need

Any exclusion will be recorded, and we will monitor closely the number and nature of exclusions to we ensure that we are applying our policy fairly and sensitively.

Stable Communities and Sustainable Tenancies

We attach equal importance when we allocate tenancies to making sure that, as far as possible, we make the best use of our housing and that we create the best conditions for stable communities and sustainable tenancies. In order to do this we will also consider the following factors and where appropriate may consider the needs of a community or a development over and above the needs of individual applicants. However, we will continue to use the criteria above to determine priority where more than one applicant meets the required criteria.

- On developments with 15 or more properties and a predominance of 3 bedroom houses we will actively seek underoccupation of 25% of houses (by a ratio of one spare bedroom per household) in order to achieve reasonable child densities.
- On developments which provide more than 15 flats of the same size we will consider the use of a local lettings plan to achieve a balanced community.
- Where serious management problems have affected a specific property then care will be taken to ensure that lettings affecting that property are made sensitively and with care. We identify such problems when, within the past 12 months, a property has been affected by

- serious drug misuse or drug dealing;

- anti-social behaviour which has directly affected neighbours and was caused by the previous tenant or is still being caused by another tenant;
- irresponsible pet ownership, where this has had a significant impact on the neighbourhood
- Where we recognise that developments or communities suffer such problems we will let sensitively to applicants who we consider would not cause any re-occurrence of the problem and would give confidence to the community. For instance, where serious drug misuse has affected a property we would not consider rehousing an applicant with a recent history of drug misuse
- Where any available housing incorporates specific facilities or support services then we will give preference to people with relevant needs.
- Through the use of our transfer policy (see below)

We will record and monitor the effect of the above on our lettings to ensure that our policy is fair and that we are using these criteria only where it is appropriate.

We will consider a separate, local, lettings policy at any development where there is demonstrable evidence of significant and established deprivation or other social issue. Any such policy will have clear goals and criteria (e.g. giving priority to local people where there is evidence of high turnover) and require the approval of local residents, the local authority and the Housing Corporation.

Transfer Policy

Tenants who ask us to move them into one of our other properties go through the same application process that we have for all our lettings.

Ordinarily we will not maintain a separate register of tenants requesting a transfer, but will help tenants to register on the local joint register. We will maintain a separate register only in the following circumstances.

We recognise that there are sometimes good management reasons for giving tenants the opportunity to transfer and we may agree to a transfer where a tenant, and to giving additional priority for a vacancy, where an existing tenant

- wants to move from a more popular property to a less popular property
- is overcrowded (unless by subletting or taking in lodgers); and wants to stay in the same neighbourhood
- is suffering racial or other harassment or domestic violence; or

- occupies a property with specific facilities or support services and no longer needs these

- with medical need for a transfer to a lower floor wishes to remain at the same development

And in these cases we will consider offering a vacancy directly to an existing tenant before it is advertised more widely.

We will not normally consider transferring tenants who have outstanding arrears of rent or are otherwise in breach of their conditions of tenancy.

We will set targets for lettings to tenants transferring on the above grounds as part of our annual lettings plan

Move on accommodation

The Association recognises the role general needs housing providers can play in assisting specialist providers of intensive support in freeing up accommodation in specialist projects. The Association will therefore give high priority for a proportion of lettings to applicants referred by specialist agencies approved under the terms of our supported housing policy. Resettlement and ongoing support will be provided by the agency concerned.

We will set targets for move on lettings – over and above those achieved through local housing registers – as part of our annual lettings plan.

Working with local authorities

We aim to work closely with local authorities where we have property. Our objective is to agree with each a detailed process which meets our broad criteria above as well as local needs, and which enables us to advertise our vacancies through a Choice Based Lettings scheme. Where this is possible, we do not anticipate the need for separate “nominations” agreements : we will aim to let an agreed proportion of all our vacancies using the locally agreed priorities, and a proportion to meet the specific needs of our communities and tenants as explained above. Where we are unable to reach such an agreement with local authorities we will, nevertheless, let at least 50% of all our vacancies to people nominated by the council.

The proportions agreed above will be set out annually in our lettings plan.

Procedures

We will agree individual arrangements for keeping a register of people who wish to apply, for advertising vacancies and for considering applicants with each local authority.

We have written procedures in place for staff to follow, and these set out the process for advertising vacancies, determining priorities, and letting vacant properties. We will train staff in these procedures, and ensure that they are able to provide applicants with information about applying for housing and how local schemes operate

Appeal

We will use our written complaints procedure for people to appeal if they think that they have been treated unfairly by Redland.

Monitoring and Review

We will monitor the effect of this policy to ensure that all groups have equal access to the Association's properties

We will advertise the outcomes of all our lettings

This policy will be reviewed by residents and the Association's Board every 3 years.