**Local Lettings Policy for a development of apartments on land off 55 Baxters Lane, St Helens.**

**Jigsaw Housing Association and St Helens Borough Council**

**October 2024**

**1. Introduction**

This Local Lettings Policy (LLP) applies to the housing site off 55 Baxters Lane under development by Jigsaw housing association. There are 28 one-bedroom apartments on the site. 8 of these are cottage style apartments in a block adjoining Baxters Lane and the remainder in second two storey block, off Baxters Lane, to be called Sand Lodge Close.

**2. Background**

Social rented housing in St Helens is let using the Under One Roof choice-based lettings system in accordance with the St Helens Borough Council allocation policy and the nomination agreement in place between the Council and Registered Providers with homes in the authority area.

The Homelessness Act 2002 enabled housing authorities to introduce flexibility into their letting policies. Local Lettings Policies were introduced as a targeted approach to implement additional flexibility to existing Choice Based Lettings Schemes which cover wider geographical areas and a range of differing estates. Local Lettings Policies enable properties to be allocated to applicants meeting the particular needs of an area. Addressing specific shortfalls at a neighbourhood level helps build and sustain balanced communities bringing them up to a similar level of other similar neighbourhoods.

Local lettings must not dominate the local authority’s scheme at the expense of statutory reasonable preference categories and if used, their nature and scope must be published alongside the allocation scheme, but may be used to achieve a wide variety of housing management and policy objectives. When used, a local letting schemes will not diverge from the overall principles of the allocation scheme and will continue to ensure the rehousing of people in housing need.

**3. Reasons and aims for a local lettings policy in this location**

Baxters Lane site is a new housing development owned and managed by Jigsaw Housing Association. It will provide one-bedroom apartments which will be occupied by single people or couples. The first lettings of all these homes are planned to take place in late 2024.

When making the first lettings Jigsaw wishes to achieve a sustainable community with a mix of employment status and circumstances, typical of more longstanding neighbourhoods. The aim is to identify tenants who will settle and contribute to the local community both socially and economically which is harder to achieve if very high percentages of residents are not economically active.

This aim will be supported by using the lettings criteria set out below in section 4. These criteria seek to

1) reflect the mix of economic activity found in most established neighbourhoods.

2) bring continuity by allowing families and individuals with existing links to the locality to access suitable housing in their community.

**4. Criteria to be used in the local lettings policy**

1. **A percentage of applicants to be employed or in training or in education.**

For lettings at the apartments off Baxters Lane, 50% (14) of the properties will be allocated to applicants who are in employment for 16 hours or more each week or full-time education/training and can evidence affordability in line with the council’s allocation policy.

1. **Priority to applicants with local connection to the location of the housing**

Preference will be given to applicants with a local connection to the wards of Peasley Cross and Fingerpost, Parr, Sutton NW or Sutton SE

In the event that either there are

* insufficient bids from applicants with a local connection who meet the minimum quota for applicants in employment, education or training

or

* insufficient bids from applicants who meet the stated local connection criteria

applicants from the wider borough of St Helens will be considered.

**Local connection is defined in the following way.**

* The applicant immediately prior to taking up the letting, had their previous home in one of the following 4 wards: Peasley Cross and Fingerpost; Parr; Sutton NW; Sutton SE; for at least two years or more.
* The applicant, immediately prior to taking up the letting was part of a household whose principal home was in one of the following 4 wards: Peasley Cross and Fingerpost; Parr; Sutton NW; Sutton SE; for two years or more.
* Applicants who have had settled employment / training for two years or more within one of the following 4 wards: Peasley Cross and Fingerpost; Parr; Sutton NW; Sutton SE;
* Once all applicants in one of the following 4 wards: Peasley Cross and Fingerpost; Parr; Sutton NW; Sutton SE; have been considered then applicants with the same connections to St Helens borough will be considered.

1. **Care Leavers**

In support of the council’s wider strategic aims with rehousing young care leavers up to the age of 25, Jigsaw agrees to accept a nominations for a care leaver prioritised by the Children We Look After / Futures (Leaving Care) team at St Helens Borough Council , for one of the 1 bed units, providing they have the expected levels of support from the local authority, such as appropriate wrap around support until the age of 21 years in place, a trustee until the age of 18 years, and with support, if requested, up to the age of 25.

This does not exclude other care leavers who may bid successfully for a unit under the wider criteria of this LLP.

**5. Application of the Local Lettings Policy criteria alongside the St Helens Borough Council allocation scheme**

For Ground floor apartments, priority will be given to those applicants who have been assessed as in physical medical need of a ground floor property.

In all other respects the provisions of St Helens Borough Council allocation scheme will apply to these lettings.

**6. Process**

Properties will be advertised on Under one Roof stating that a Local Lettings Policy applies, and that preference will be given to applicants from the wards of Peasley Cross and Fingerpost; Parr; Sutton NW; Sutton SE; The LLP will be available on the website and the advertisement will state this.

**7. Review and Monitoring**

The policy will be in operation for 12 months from the commencement of the first tenancy at the development and then subject to review, amendment, or withdrawal.