**Local Lettings Policy for former Newton Community Hospital, Bradlegh Road, Newton-le-Willows**

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

**October 2024**

**1. Introduction**

This Local Lettings Policy (LLP) applies to the housing site at the former Newton Community Hospital under development by Torus. The 39 homes on the site will be as follows:

24 x 1 bedroom apartments

15 x 2 bedroom apartments

**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**

The former Newton Community Hospital site is a new housing development owned and managed by Torus Housing Association. It will provide one and two bedroom apartments which will be occupied by single people, couples and, in smaller numbers, households with one child. The first lettings of all these homes are planned to take place in late 2024.

When making the first lettings Torus 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 former Newton Community Hospital,

* a minimum of 43% (10) of the 1 bedroom properties and
* a minimum of 40% (6) of the 2 bedroom 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 Newton-le-Willows East and Newton-le-Willows West.

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 the of Newton-le-Willows East and Newton-le-Willows West ward 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 the of Newton-le-Willows East and Newton-le-Willows West ward area for two years or more.
* Applicants who have had settled employment / training for two years or more within the of Newton-le-Willows East and Newton-le-Willows West ward
* Once all applicants in of Newton-le-Willows East and Newton-le-Willows West ward 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, Torus agrees to accept a nominations for a care leavers prioritised by the Children we Look after 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 and a trustee until the age of 18 years. 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 the two bedroom apartments, priority will be given to those people who will fully occupy the property in the first instance.

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 Newton-le-Willows East and Newton-le-Willows West ward. 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.