

# Individual Executive Member Decision

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<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Local Lettings Plans for Arcade Mews and Maidenhead House</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Individual Executive Member Decision
<b>Date on which Decision is to be taken:</b>	16 January 2012
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	ID2404

**Purpose of Report:** To approve a Local Lettings Plan to manage the allocations at Arcade Mews, Newbury and Maidenhead House, Newbury.

**Recommended Action:** That the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport Policy, Housing and Economic Development approve the adoption of the Local Lettings Plans as appended to this report, for Arcade Mews, Newbury and Maidenhead House, Newbury, subject to an annual review.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** Arcade Mews and Maidenhead House are two town centre blocks of flats owned by Sovereign South & West. The blocks both suffer from vandalism and anti-social behaviour. The proposed Local Lettings Plans seek to introduce sensitive lettings to the blocks to try and reduce these behaviours.

**Other options considered:** N/A

**Key background documentation:**

Portfolio Member Details	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Alan Law - Tel (01491) 873614
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	alaw@westberks.gov.uk
Contact Officer Details	
<b>Name:</b>	Mel Brain
<b>Job Title:</b>	Housing Strategy & Operations Manager
<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 519403
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	mbrain@westberks.gov.uk

## Implications

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**Policy:** The Council's Allocations Policy was adopted in December 2006. The policy states that "Local Lettings Plans will be developed on a site by site basis to address the requirements of that specific area".

The policy goes on to say "Where these policies are in place, the lettings will be carefully monitored to ensure reasonable preference is given to people in the reasonable preference categories, and that the policies do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, on racial or other equality grounds. Information about particular local letting schemes will be available from the relevant social landlord and will appear on the Choice Based Lettings advert for individual properties".

**Financial:** There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**Personnel:** N/A

**Legal/Procurement:** Section 167(2) of the 1996 Act requires that the Council must give 'reasonable preference' to certain groups of people through the Allocations Policy. It is permissible to implement Local Lettings Plans so long as the overall scheme ensures that reasonable preference is given to people in the reasonable preference categories, and that the policies do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, on racial or other equality grounds.

**Environmental:** The Local Lettings Plans are seeking to reduce anti-social behaviours and vandalism which can have a negative environmental impact.

**Property:** N/A

**Risk Management:** N/A

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** Attached at Appendix A

## Consultation Responses

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### Members:

**Leader of Council:** Councillor Graham Jones.

**Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:** Councillor Brian Bedwell - generally looks okay but concerned over car parking.

**Ward Members:** Councillor Roger Hunneman

Pleased to see that Sovereign acknowledge that these flats are unsuitable for families. Confirms the antisocial behaviour problem which is exacerbated by the flats

proximity to the night time economy.

Considers it is worth trying this Lettings Plan in order to reduce the problems which have occurred over the years. Would like to have feedback on its success or otherwise, following annual review.

Asks whether creating the plan with its conditions for these particular properties creates pressure elsewhere on stock for single males, possibly out of work and on benefits.

On balance, supports the proposals.

**Opposition  
Spokesperson:**

Councillor Tony Vickers - supports the measures in 2.6-2.9 but questions whether the preference categories in 2.4 will prove suitable. Also asks whether creating the plan with its conditions for these particular properties creates pressure elsewhere on stock for single males, possibly out of work and on benefits.

**Local Stakeholders:**

Sovereign South and West

**Officers Consulted:**

June Graves, Head of Social Care Commissioning & Housing

Cathy Dodson, Housing Options Team Leader

Elizabeth Wallington, Housing Register Officer

**Trade Union:**

<b>Is this item subject to call-in.</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by O&SMC or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Supporting Information

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### 1. Background

- 1.1 Sovereign South & West (SSW) own and manage Arcade Mews and Maidenhead House. Both are blocks of general needs flats, situated directly within Newbury town centre, immediately adjacent a mix of commercial/retail and residential properties including several pubs and takeaways which are open late in to the evening. There are no communal gardens or drying areas at any of the sites and there is no designated car parking.
- 1.2 The flats are unsuitable for families and are occupied principally by younger people, of whom 80% are in receipt of benefits. Due to their location, both blocks experience anti-social behaviours and vandalism, from residents, their associates and non-residents.
- 1.3 SSW have approached the Council and requested that a Local Lettings Plan (LLP) be put in place for each block, in order to manage and reduce the behaviours in the accommodation, and to try and create a stable community within the schemes.
- 1.4 Section 167(2) of the 1996 Act requires that the Council must give 'reasonable preference' to certain groups of people through the Allocations Policy. It is permissible to implement Local Lettings Plans so long as the overall scheme ensures that reasonable preference is given to people in the reasonable preference categories, and that the policies do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, on racial or other equality grounds.

### 2. The Proposed Local Letting Plan

- 2.1 The objectives of this Local Letting Plan are as follows:
  - (a) to create a community that is sustainable
  - (b) to ensure that current and future residents feel safe and content in their homes and have the same opportunities as any other resident
  - (c) to minimise any possible stigmatisation of residents living in these properties
  - (d) to protect the public and residents from nuisance/anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the town centre
  - (e) to create a sense of community within the blocks.
  - (f) to promote a sense of pride within the blocks
  - (g) to reduce turnover and potential refusals of properties
- 2.2 The existence of the LLP may mean that vacancies will not always be allocated to the applicant who can demonstrate the greatest housing need. Applicants with a lower priority may be considered for an allocation if their housing may help to maintain a stable community

- 2.3 Currently, 75% of vacancies are advertised through the West Berkshire Homechoice scheme for bidding by applicants on the Common Housing Register.
- 2.4 It is proposed that preference will be given to applicants who:
- (1) Are living and working within West Berkshire
  - (2) Are living outside of West Berkshire but are employed within the district for a minimum of 16 hours a week (proof will be required)
  - (3) Applicants who are key workers (definition as set out in the Thames Valley Key Worker Study DATE) and who have a local connection to West Berkshire through work or residence
  - (4) Social Housing tenants who are giving up family accommodation and are able to evidence a well-managed tenancy
  - (5) Couples, at least one of whom meet the above criteria
- 2.5 The aim is to achieve a balanced community with 50% of residents employed and 50% unemployed and a mix of single and couple households.
- 2.6 Applicants with a known history of convictions for criminal or anti-social behaviour, drug abuse or drug dealing will not be considered for accommodation within the scheme. Bids will not normally be considered from those who have housing related debt or an outstanding notice for any breaches of tenancy with a registered social landlord. Applicants will not have been previously evicted from a council tenancy or a RSL property
- 2.7 Where any of the issues in section 2.6 are identified, the Council will check with other partner agencies, such as the Police, Probation Service, Primary Care Trust, Drug and Alcohol Action team, etc. on the suitability of the applicant to be housed at Maidenhead House or Arcade Mews before the offer is sent out.
- 2.8 Applicants moving into one bedroom flats may have a range of support needs. Based on the town centre location of the schemes, a maximum of 20% with high/medium needs (tenancy support services, additional support services from statutory or voluntary agency) can be included. Applicants with support needs should have an established support package in place and must be prepared to continue to accept this support once in the property until the support provider agrees that it is no longer necessary
- 2.9 As the LLP changes the allocation preferences for these two schemes, it will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is achieving its objectives and to ensure that the LLP is still required.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 **That the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport Policy, Housing and Economic Development approve the adoption of the Local Lettings Plans as appended to this report, for Arcade Mews, Newbury and Maidenhead House, Newbury, subject to an annual review.**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment – Stage 1

Appendix B – Proposed Local Letting Plan for Arcade Mews, Newbury and Maidenhead House, Newbury