

Local Lettings Plan

New Era



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CONTENTS	PAGE
Introduction	Page 2
Objectives	Page 2
Eligibility	Page 3
Prioritising	Page 3
Duration & Review	Page 4

Local Lettings Plan

New Era

1. Introduction

1.1 Dolphin Living is a housing charity that provides housing for people on modest incomes living or working in central London. It is a Westminster based charity and is working to deliver 1000 rental homes in inner London by 2020. Most of these homes are being delivered in new build developments. Where opportunities arise, Dolphin Living is also growing its portfolio by acquiring existing homes in the private rented sector. Dolphin Living acquired the New Era Estate from Westbrook Partners in December 2014.

1.2 The estate consists of 14 one, 70 two and 12 three bed roomed apartments as well as 12 commercial units. Unusually, previous landlords had not increased rents to market levels and consequently, although the majority of flats are let on assured shorthold tenancies, they were paying rents that represent 45% to 50% of market rent. Following the acquisition by Westbrook, the tenants mounted a very effective and vocal campaign to protect themselves from substantial rent increases.

1.3 As part of our commitment to implement a demonstrably fair rent setting policy tenant interviews were conducted identifying five overcrowded households, fifty households under-occupying by one bedroom & three households under-occupying by two bedrooms.

1.4 This local lettings plan aims to better meet the housing need of New Era tenants, maximise the number of tenants eligible for a personalised rent¹, ensure the financial viability of the New Era rent setting policy and support Dolphin Living in achieving its broader charitable aims of helping those on modest incomes living or working in Westminster and central London generally.

2. Objectives

2.1 To better meet the housing need of original new era tenants²

2.2 To maximise the number of original new era tenants eligible for a personalised rent.

2.3 To achieve a balanced mix of incomes ensuring the financial viability of the estate

2.4 To minimise anti-social behaviour through the vetting of new tenants moving in to the estate and the use of probationary arrangements.

2.5 To ensure properties are let in a fair and transparent manner

2.6 To provide an opportunity for the residents and workers of Westminster on low to middle incomes to rent homes they can afford

¹ New era rent setting policy paragraph 4.1 sets out tenants who are ineligible for a personalised rent, including overcrowded tenants & those under-occupying by two bedrooms.

² Original new era tenants are defined as current New Era tenants who have held a tenancy of a New Era property continuously since 19th December 2014.

Local Lettings Plan

New Era

3. Eligibility

Dolphin Living's properties on the New Era estate are let at subsidised rents and, consequently we will only let our homes to applicants who:

- Have a gross household income of no more than the mayoral income limit for accessing intermediate housing which are at present; £71,000 per annum when eligible to rent a one or two bedroom home or no more than £85,000 per annum when eligible to rent a three bedroom home
- Are unable to purchase a suitable home to meet their housing needs on the open market
- Do not already own a home or will have sold their current home before they rent
- Have a household composition that will mean they fully occupy the bedrooms of the property (see the Dolphin Living bedroom standard for more information)
- Provide satisfactory credit, landlord & employers references
- In the case of new lets,³ meet a minimum income level requirement
- In the case of new lets, be able to demonstrate they can afford the rent without needing housing benefit

5. Prioritising

5.1 The following criteria will be applied in the prioritisation of applicants and the allocation of apartments:

- a) Under-occupying or overcrowded New Era tenants and those with a medical need to move:
 - i. New Era tenants who are currently under-occupying by **2** spare bedrooms and who wish to downsize
 - ii. New Era tenants who are currently under-occupying by **1** spare bedroom and who wish to downsize
 - iii. New Era tenants who are overcrowded
 - iv. New Era tenants where either they, or a member of their household, has a severe illness which means they can no longer live in their home (as confirmed by a medical assessment)
- b) Existing local authority or registered provider tenants within the London borough of Hackney who are employed in the city of Westminster
- c) Other residents in the London borough of Hackney who are employed in the city of Westminster
- d) Residents living within the city of Westminster who are employed in the London borough of Hackney
- e) Other eligible applicants not falling within the categories above, who live in the city of Westminster

Local Lettings Plan

New Era

- f) Other eligible applicants not falling within the categories above, who are employed in the city of Westminster
- g) Other eligible households not falling within any of the above categories

5.2 Homes will be offered to applicants from the highest priority group first and cascaded down to the next priority group, until all available homes have been allocated. Where two applicants from the same priority group wish to accept an offer, offers will be made to:

1. The applicant with the lowest household income for one bedroom properties (followed by earliest registration date should a tie exist between applicants)
2. The applicant whose household has the greatest housing need for the number of bedrooms for a two bedroom property (followed by lowest household income, then earliest registration date should a tie exist between applicants).

6. Timescale and Review

6.1 The Local Lettings plan will be in effect for three years. At the end of this period a full review will be carried out by the Lettings & Allocations manager.

³ New lets are defined as any tenancies granted on a New Era residential property to any tenant(s) who have not held a tenancy of a New Era residential property continuously since 19th December 2014