

## Equalities Analysis - Rural Lettings Policy

<b>Impact</b>		<b>Lead Officer</b>	Colin McDonald
<b>Date of EqA</b>	24/3/15	<b>EqA Review Date</b>	25/4/16
<b>Why are you completing the equality analysis?</b>			
This is a proposed new policy.			
<b>What are the main purposes of the policy, strategy or service area?</b>			
<p>This policy covers all rural general needs social rented housing properties in South Somerset. It does not cover those properties which are governed by relevant section 106 planning agreement restrictions. The aim of this rural lettings policy is to enable people to remain in or return to a locality to which they have a local connection. The local connection eligibility criteria are defined in the policy document.</p> <p>One of the objectives of the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan is to make effective use of South Somerset's housing stock, and the possibility of a rural lettings policy was included in the draft strategy. Following formal consultation the Council adopted the Implementation Plan in December 2014, including the commitment to develop such a policy along the lines suggested.</p>			
<b>Evidence</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Registered Social Landlord Stock Database - collected by SSDC</li> <li>- A draft policy was drawn up by the strategic housing unit in January 2015, with copies sent out to parish/town councils, district councillors, relevant housing associations, internal consultees such as operational housing, and the community land trusts for Norton Sub Hamdon and Queen Camel. A seven-week consultation period then took place, ending on 12 March 2015. Finally, the revised draft will be considered by the district executive on 2 April 2015.</li> <li>- Mendip District Council's Rural Lettings Policy</li> </ul>			
<b>Supporting Documentation/Links</b>			
<p><a href="http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/702605/housing_strategy_implementation_plan.pdf">http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/702605/housing_strategy_implementation_plan.pdf</a>  <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/section/167">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/section/167</a>  <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/section/106">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/section/106</a>  <a href="http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-datasets/">http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-datasets/</a>  <a href="http://www.local.gov.uk">http://www.local.gov.uk</a></p>			

### **Effect on Protected Characteristic**

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) requires that all local housing authorities have a written policy that determines the priorities and procedures to be followed when letting social rented housing. Reasonable preference must be given to defined groups as per section 167(2) of the 1996 Act and accordingly no policy can disregard this as it would be open to challenge. The defined groups are as follows:

- people who are homeless;
- people who are owed a duty to be rehoused;
- people occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing;
- people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds;
- people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

However, section 167(2E) and section 167(3) enable local authorities to let properties to people of a particular description where there is a clear need for this approach. Given the lack of affordable housing in some more rural parts of this district the council wishes to clearly define under what circumstances restrictions would apply. This rural lettings policy identifies those parishes where it will apply for any future general needs vacancies within the district (excluding new builds or those subject to relevant section 106 agreements).

In order to ensure that the above obligation is met, this lettings policy has been drawn up with the intention that it will affect no more than 6% of the overall stock, thus retaining 94% of housing stock for all other applicants. It is also noted that being in one of the defined reasonable preference groups and having a local connection are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

We have considered the possible effect on Gypsies and Travellers. It is not always easy for Gypsies and Travellers to prove a local connection and the very nature of this policy is to give primacy to local connection; however, efforts have been made to keep this impact to a bare minimum: no more than 2% of all vacancies in South Somerset are expected to be affected by this policy. This small percentage, combined with the fact that most Gypsies and Travellers in any case do not choose bricks and mortar, means that any possible impact on this protected characteristic will be very small.

### **Please comment/explain how you will meet the General Equality Duty (GED)?**

The General Equality Duty has been met.

As outlined above, consultation has taken place with all relevant groups. Homefinder Somerset is monitored via the county-wide Homefinder Somerset monitoring board. Any impact this policy has on trends will be monitored where appropriate by this board. The impact of this policy will be reviewed by the council's scrutiny committee three years after implementation. It is not anticipated that any further reviews will be required.

This policy will apply to the accommodation (which has no section 106 agreement in place) within the defined parishes in accordance with the policy's criteria. However, the list of affected parishes may alter as and when stock levels change and, thus, Appendix 2 is subject to change. It is anticipated that the council's Strategic Housing Unit will review relevant stock levels at least annually.

The policy will also be presented to the Gypsy and Traveller Forum.

<b>Lead Officer Sign Off</b>	Jo Morgan	<b>Date</b>	25/03/15
<b>Equalities Steering Group Comments</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>Equalities Officer Approval Comments</b>	Jo Morgan	<b>Status</b>	