



## **OTHA LETTINGS PLAN 2023-24**

OTHA prepares an annual Lettings Plan which sets out how OTHA will allocate housing that becomes available in the financial year.

### **1. Aims & Objectives**

Oak Tree Housing Association is a locally based housing association, which aims to provide and manage good quality, affordable homes for people in housing need. At 31 March 2022 OTHA owned 1773 self-contained and 3 non self-contained properties for rent.

OTHA's Allocation Policy covers the letting of all properties owned by OTHA as they become vacant, excluding properties held for decant purposes.

The prime aim of OTHA's Allocations Policy is to provide good quality rented accommodation to those in greatest housing need. OTHA seeks to build balanced and stable communities.

### **2. OTHA's Allocations Policy**

OTHA developed a joint Allocations Policy to determine how properties would be let, with Inverclyde Common Housing Register partners in 2011. This is a policy based on a quota system. Some quotas are let via referrals from agreed agencies, but most lettings are via a choice-based lettings system.

Application processing is operated as a joint service through the Inverclyde Common Housing Register for the following partners:

- Oak Tree Housing Association Ltd
- Cloch Housing Association Ltd
- Larkfield Housing Association Ltd
- Link Housing Association Ltd (for properties in Inverclyde).
- Sanctuary Housing Association (for properties in Inverclyde)

#### Choice Based lettings

The Choice Based Lettings System applies to all lets which are designated to the transfer and housing list quotas will be advertised for applicants to indicate their interest in a property. Any restrictions or conditions will be clearly advertised e.g. number of stairs, household size etc.

If a property is a transfer quota, the advertisement will state that priority is to Oak Tree tenants. If no tenants apply, then it will be let to the general housing list. Tenants of Oak Tree will also be able to bid for any other property and may be allocated a property from any of the ICHR partners (provided they met the conditions and had the highest priority).

#### Direct Referrals

OTHA will accept direct referrals under Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 from the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) in relation to people affected by homelessness and community care groups.

## 2.1 Quotas

The target quotas in the current Allocations Policy in respect of **relets** by Oak Tree Housing Association are as follows:-

Source	Quota
Inverclyde Council – Referrals under Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and leases of property to provide temporary furnished accommodation. The lets will be allocated according to the agreed protocol and property management criteria including any agreed area specific policies for sensitive letting.	Estimated 15% of lets
Inverclyde Council Referrals from HSCP for people with community care needs. The aim is to make the best use of OTHA's stock, particularly adapted or amenity housing.	Estimated 15% of lets
Of the remaining lets:-	
ICHR Transfer List for existing tenants of OTHA	10% of lets
Other referrals – e.g. Inverclyde Womens Aid	Up to 5% of lets
ICHR Choice Based lettings for all other applicants	Remaining % of lets (est 85% of net lets)

For relets, lets will be made to the various quotas in rotation according to the date a relet is notified, in order to fairly distribute the house type, area and demand level between the different quotas. If it is not possible to make a let to the allocated quota due to the list or referrals or applications being exhausted, the default quota will be the general housing list.

In relation to new lets, the HTSSC decide what quotas are to be applied in advance. This usually reflects the quotas above but may be amended to take account of the nature of the building, the facilities offered and any specific client group named in the funding package or conditions of site transfer.

## 3. **Sensitive Lettings**

In rare cases, which will be documented with a proper audit trail with the reasons behind any decision, the policy may be departed from to allow for sensitive letting. The committee will be kept informed of any such cases(s), which will form no more than 5% of lets. This may occur in relation to individual lets to avoid a specific management problem arising or to deal with sensitivities. Examples of when sensitive lettings may apply would be:

- to refuse to house the perpetrator of domestic abuse close to the victim;
- to comply with Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements;
- to avoid future management problems for individuals who have already been the victim of serious and long standing problems through a previous let.
- Where an unusual opportunity to meet need arises (such as an adapted property or a particularly large property) or where a let arises in a special needs project, the decision can be taken not to apply the quota and to let in accordance with the Housing Manager's view of what will achieve the best use of the property.

#### 4. Under-Occupancy Lettings Initiative

OTHA is aware that there is a shortage of 4 and 5 bedroom properties across all the RSL housing stock in Inverclyde. Whilst newbuild developments are adding to RSL stock, the numbers of large houses remains low, relative to demand.

To make the best use of its stock and assist with demand for larger houses, OTHA will consider a voluntary Management Transfer for tenants who are currently under-occupying 4 or 5 bedroom properties to the size and type of property that fits their current household.

#### 5. Low Demand

OTHA aims to ensure fairness by the application of the Allocations Policy. However, the effect of strict application in all cases may disrupt the aim of creating balanced and sustainable communities. Some areas are affected by a higher level of multiple deprivation & social exclusion. Specific properties or house types within areas and can be classified as 'low demand'. OTHA will put into place strategies to create more balanced communities, improve tenancy sustainment and to reduce turnover.

Strategies may include a different void standard, additional services, and physical changes to the property. In addition, any strategy may include changes to the policy affecting decisions around letting specific to the areas/properties or house types including:

- Allocation of quotas
- Restriction on the use of properties for leasing temporary furnished accommodation
- Positive priority for certain groups

Sensitive letting policies must be operated within the law and so discrimination on the grounds of age, disability or other protected characteristics is prohibited.

The areas considered as low demand in 2023-24 are:-

Maple Road Flats	36
Bow Farm Flats (Murray Street and Tasker Street	24
76 Belville Street Flats	9
Total	<u>69</u>

#### 5. Homelessness

OTHA will assist in the alleviation of homelessness in Inverclyde by accepting direct applications from homeless people via the choice-based lettings housing list and by accepting Section 5 Referrals under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 from Inverclyde Council according to the terms of the agreed Section 5 Protocol.

OTHA also provides properties directly leased to Inverclyde Council for use as temporary furnished accommodation and fully supports the partnership working with HSCP to continue with the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and Housing First initiatives currently in place.

## 6. Asset Management Strategy

The Association has been considering alternatives to the traditional method of letting properties in accordance with the Allocations Policy – particularly for the properties identified as low demand because of their location, property type or other characteristics.

The Association may need to take the decision to hold properties as unlettable or consider further disposal or demolition of properties in line with the Asset Management Strategy.

## 7. Maple Road Flats

At the Management Committee in February 2020 the decision was taken to close & empty 65 unimproved properties. In January 2023 all properties in the unimproved properties were vacant and the demolition contract commenced.

It was agreed in principle to retain 36 improved properties. Funding for Ukraine longer term resettlement has been secured to carry out essential works in the void properties to bring them to a lettable standard. These properties will be let to families coming from Ukraine who wish to settle in Inverclyde.

## 8. Lettings Plan 2023-24

The table below is based on an estimate of the number of properties that are likely to come available during 2023-24 using knowledge of the previous year's relets as a guide. The estimate for 2023-24 is 158 re-lets.

General needs standard accommodation has no specific adaptations or design features that would make it suitable for any group of people.

Amenity standard accommodation has design features that make them suitable for an older person or someone with a range of low level disabilities.

Adapted accommodation may have a range of adaptations and design features to reduce barriers and to make them suitable for a wheelchair user or an individual who has restricted mobility due to disability.

The projection for the number of lets for 2023-24 is as follows:-

Area	General Needs	Amenity	Adapted	Total
<b><u>Flats</u></b>				
Tenemental flat	66	11	0	77
Bow Farm flats	3	0	0	3
New build flats	27	13	1	41
<b><u>Main door properties</u></b>				
General/LSVT	10	0	0	10
Bow Farm Main Door	16	0	0	16
Newbuild Main Door	8	2	1	11
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>158</b>

The properties will be let in accordance with the quotas as stated in 2.1 of this Plan and therefore the likely outcomes are as follows: -

Quota	Percentage	Number
Inverclyde Council – referrals under Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 & leases of property to provide temporary furnished accommodation	15%	24
Inverclyde Council Referrals of people with Community Care Needs	15%	24
Of the remaining 110 lets		
ICHR Transfer list	10%	11
Other referrals – e.g Inverclyde Womens Aid	5%	5
ICHR Housing List	85%	94
<b>Total</b>		<b>158</b>