

Affordable Housing Statement- Dowker Street, Milnsbridge, Huddersfield

Background

First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) is the largest landlord in Oldham providing over 60% of all socially rented homes. FCHO was formed for the benefit of the community. Its charitable objects shall be to carry on for the benefit of the community in providing and managing housing, including social housing, and providing assistance to help house people and associated facilities.

The Dowker Street site is situated approximately 3 miles west of Huddersfield town centre in the area known as Milnsbridge. Once an outlying village it is now a part of the larger built-up conurbation of the town and benefits from a small district centre with a number of local shops and services. The Council classify this site as a stalled site which currently has a lapsed planning consent. Our proposal will unlock this brownfield site which has become a blight on the area.

The scheme is being part funded with grant from Homes England.

This Statement sets out the provision of affordable housing on the Dowker Street development by addressing each of the five points within the conditions.

a) The numbers, type, tenure on the site of the affordable housing provision to be made

- 16 x 1 bed apartments for Affordable Rent
- 8 x 2 bed apartments for Affordable Rent
- 8 x 2 bed houses for Affordable Rent
- 6 x 3 bed houses for Affordable Rent

b) The timing of the construction of the affordable housing and its phasing in relation to the occupancy of the market housing;

Indicative Start on Site: Qtr 1 2024

Indicative Practical Completion: Qtr 4 2026

Phasing plan to be agreed with Westshield Ltd.

These dates are indicative at this point and are subject to timings concerning the Planning process and any subsequent conditions to be complied with.

c) The arrangements for the transfer of the affordable housing to an affordable housing provider or the management of the affordable housing if no Registered Social Landlord involved;

The affordable housing will be owned and managed by First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO). A sale agreement will transfer the ownership from the landowner to FCHO, prior to development taking place.



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d) The arrangements to ensure that such provision is affordable for both first and subsequent occupiers of the affordable housing; and

Criteria for Eligible Persons – Rented Properties - Each affordable rent within the Development shall initially and at any time subsequently upon a vacancy arising, be available to rent by eligible persons who live within the area.

In addition, each affordable rented unit shall initially and all subsequent times upon a vacancy arising be let to a person who are adjudged by the Council or Registered Provider (whichever the case be) to be in Housing Need in accordance with the Council's Allocations Policy or equivalent thereof.

Where there are multiple eligible applicants for a unit, priority should be given to households who:

- a) Are in Housing Need
- b) Require that size and type of property to meet their needs

e) The occupancy criteria to be used for determining the identity of occupiers of the affordable housing and the means by which such occupancy shall be enforced.

FCHO will ensure the properties remain as affordable as follows: Affordable rent properties will be let at 80% of the open market rent in line with Homes England guidelines "and will not exceed the Local Housing Allowance

The properties will be available to applicants in housing need and eligibility criteria being met.

Strategic importance to Kirklees and Homes England

The site is allocated for housing within the Local Plan and was promoted as part of the Local Plan release process for housing, due to the slow pace of housebuilding across the district to meet demand. Furthermore, Kirklees have provided their support for the current site plan and mix. The site is a stalled brownfield site with lapsed planning dated November 2012. Kirklees Council's Brokerage Service exists to promote stalled sites such as these which are a blight on the area. Unlocking this site will provide the expected housing outputs, but also provides further economic benefit to area including local employment and training opportunities. Furthermore, the project will provide a much-needed injection of local spend in the neighbouring businesses by tradespersons and consultants visiting the site. The benefit to the Council is the additional income it will receive from Council Tax as a result of the additional new home occupiers.

FCHO have consulted with Kirklees Council's Strategic Housing team regarding the proposals. They have confirmed there is an undersupply of affordable housing in this location and the scheme mix will redress the current imbalance of supply versus demand. Kirklees Council have offered their support via the pre-application planning brokerage service resulting in positive amendments to the original site plan.

Affordable Housing Proposal

The proposal is for 38 units made up of one, two and three bedroom flats and houses, all for Affordable Rent.

Evidence shows that, whilst there has been an increase in average incomes, income levels remain relatively low and are of course going to have a significant impact on the ability of residents to enter the property market or their choice of accommodation, with high deposits of up to 25% restricting access to the housing market. Not only will the issue surrounding deposits further prevent many people from entering the housing market, but it may also affect existing owner occupiers who wish to sell their property and downsize or consider alternative accommodation.'

The proposed development at Dowker Street is a great opportunity to utilise the Affordable Rent product to provide much needed affordable housing, working to address the issues highlighted above. The scheme will not only provide high quality housing but also actively promote training and local labour opportunities which will be coordinated through our Directions team within the organisation.

Strategic importance to First Choice Homes Oldham

FCHO's current Development Strategy has a mandate from its Board to expand operations outside of the Oldham Borough into neighbouring local authority areas, which include Calderdale and Kirklees. Affordable homes delivery in these areas of West Yorkshire are lower than their local authority counterparts. Therefore, FCHO have secured Registered Provider partner status with Kirklees and Calderdale with the intention to meet their local priorities and pro-actively bring forward stalled brownfield sites for delivery.

The Dowker Street units will contribute to expanding FCHO's strategic objectives and also spread the cost of day-to-day management of future customer service at a local level, providing better value. The development will also be a welcome addition to the 55-unit scheme currently under construction in Netherton less than 15 minutes' drive away. On this basis alone it is a strategic fit for FCHO as begins to increase a strong neighbourhood profile of our housing offer in Huddersfield.

Yours sincerely,

James Lawton
Development Manager