

New Housing Development at Bush Heath Lane

As many residents will be aware, Linfoot Homes in conjunction with South Warwickshire Rural Housing Association are currently building new homes, designed principally for local residents and people with a strong local connection. There will be 13 homes of varying styles to rent and 9 available to buy outright. It is expected that the development will be completed around the beginning of 2011. The following information has been obtained from Martin Cowan, Housing Advice Manager, Stratford District Council regarding the District Council's policy of "Home Choice Plus" which will decide the allocation of the rented houses:

FOR RENTED HOMES:

"- all allocations of new affordable (social) housing schemes in Stratford District area are carried out through Home Choice Plus. Home Choice Plus is the waiting list system which is administered by the District Council's Housing Advice Team.

- any household who are interested in social housing in the area need to be registered on Home Choice Plus. **Applicants who are not registered will not be able to apply for social housing.**

- Home Choice Plus is a "choice based lettings" scheme - most CBL schemes operate in the following way:

i) applications are placed in "bands" according to the housing need of the applicant. Applicants in the same band are then placed in date order so those who have been waiting longest will be considered first.

ii) vacant properties are advertised through the Scheme (this includes new developments)

iii) applicants are able to express an interest in properties by "bidding" (this is not a financial process, just expressing an interest)

- social housing vacancies are advertised via Home Choice Plus. Registered applicants are able to see what properties are available in a number of ways (via the Home Choice Plus website; via the property line; via a paper newsletter)

- applicants are then able to "bid" on a property they are interested in a number of ways (via the Home Choice Plus website; via the bidding phone line; via text message; via contact through Council offices)

- bidding cycles last for one week. At the end of the week, the system will generate a short list of all applicants who have bid on the property. The shortlist will be in housing need order, with those with the highest need at the top of the list.

- for new build rural housing schemes in our District, there will be a section 106 in place which defines who will be a "qualifying person" for the purposes of an allocation. The District Council will also have nomination rights which means that the Housing Advice Team will do the short listing and nominate qualifying persons to the owning housing association.

- the section 106 agreements can differ, but almost always include the following ways that an applicant can demonstrate a local connection:

i) birth in the parish

ii) residence in the parish for at least 12 months

iii) employment in the parish

iv) previous residence in the parish, but had to move away due to lack of affordable housing

v) residence of immediate family in the parish (mother, father, sister, brother) for at least the last 5 years

- the Housing Advice Team will obtain documentary evidence to confirm a genuine parish local connection. It is worth noting that the local connections listed above are of equal value. It is not the case that 5 years residence in the parish provides a stronger local connection than 1 year. The connections are of equal weighting - what determines which applicants are nominated will be their housing need.

- when short listing for properties where a local connection is required, the Housing Advice Team will work through the shortlist and disregard any applicants who do not meet the local connection criteria. When this has been done, the remaining applicants will then be listed in housing need order, with those with the greatest need at the top of the list.

- the Housing Advice Team will then provide nominations to the relevant housing association.

Key messages:

- all households interested in new affordable housing must be registered on Home Choice Plus (households who fail to register will not be offered housing)
- all properties will be advertised via Home Choice Plus
- applicants must place bids if they are interested in properties **(applicants who don't bid will not be offered housing)**
- the above process will be applied for all new housing schemes. Households who have completed a housing needs survey or told the parish council they are interested still need to register on Home Choice Plus and place bids for properties."

Useful links below:

- Home Choice Plus website: <http://www.homechoiceplus.org.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/2.aspx>
Contact Stratford District Council, Housing Advice Team on 01789 260861 or e-mail housingadviceteam@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Further advice can also be gained by contacting your District Councillors, Beverley Mann, Tel 614977 or e-mail Beverley.Mann@stratford-dc.gov.uk or Richard Tonge, Tel: 613116 or e-mail Richard.Tonge@stratford-dc.gov.uk

FOR PRIVATE HOUSING

The nine private houses, of varying sizes are being marketed by Linfoot Homes in association with Evans Hardy Bromwich. It is expected that further details of the houses, including price guides will be available in the autumn. The S106 criteria giving preference to people with a strong local connection will also apply. For further information, please contact Linfoot Homes on 01789 488208.

A plan of the layout of the scheme is also available to view at the Parish Office, Unit 2, Bull Ring Business Centre, Church Terrace, Harbury, telephone 614646 or e-mail clerk@harbury-pc.gov.uk

Harbury Parish Council