

Appendix B

Report on the designation of properties as Quiet Blocks

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To consider ending the allocation of properties under the “Quiet Blocks” criteria.

2. Background

- 2.1 Certain blocks of flats and maisonettes have been designated 'quiet blocks' and were only let to tenants aged 30 or over, with their children being at least 10 years old.
- 2.2 The practice of designating properties as quiet blocks has existed since at least 2001, and probably for a great deal longer (current records of allocation policies only go back to 2001).
- 2.3 In a report to the Housing Executive of 13 November 2007, the quiet blocks practice was one of a number being challenged in the light of an intervention into Housing Options.
- 2.4 The report stated (section 4.3)

“There are also a variety of existing policies which have developed over the years and now need to be examined and challenged in the light of the changes we are making. Examples of these include:

- The ‘second generation scheme’ which enables Havant Borough Council to make nominations to specified properties in Havant
 - **The designation of ‘quiet blocks from which allocations to families with young children have been excluded**
 - Allocations to facilitate ‘move on’ from designated supported housing schemes
 - The under-occupation scheme
 - The facilities available to tenants, regardless of their housing need, who wish to move through an ‘exchange’
- 2.5 The quiet block practice was challenged during the intervention, and it was found that the quiet block criteria was no longer being used consistently across the service, and that there was a lack of knowledge of which blocks it applied to.
- 2.6 Other reasons why the quiet blocks practice has become outdated are:
- tenants have the legal right to exchange into a quiet block, resulting in families living in quiet blocks who didn’t meet the criteria, and

- adults over 30 with children over 10 are no less likely to cause anti-social behaviour than residents outside this age group. There is also very little demand from waiting list applicants who meet this criteria.
- Sitting tenants can buy flats under the Right to Buy legislation and sell or sub-let it without this age restriction

2.7 The intervention led to a Housing Executive report on 5 February 2008 that stated (section 3.2):

“First and foremost our objective has been to create a system, which is fair to applicants, which applicants themselves can understand, and is based on meeting the needs of households with the greatest housing needs”

2.8 The report included a fully revised allocations policy, that made no mention of quiet blocks, and so from this point on, no allocations were made on quiet blocks criteria (i.e to tenants aged 30 or over, with their children being at least 10 years old).

3. Current Situation

3.1 In May 2011, a resident of Cherry Blossom Court in Buckland wrote to the city council to query if the block he lives in was still covered by the quiet blocks policy.

3.2 It was at this point that investigations revealed that the current situation is as set out in section 2 above, i.e that the practice of allocating to quiet blocks had been discontinued without formally ending the policy.

3.3 Consultation was carried out with all tenants and leaseholders via an article in the Autumn 2011 edition of House Talk magazine (see Appendix 1).

3.4 House Talk is sent to around 15,000 tenants and 2,000 leaseholders.

3.5 24 responses were received to the article. 17 responses were broadly in favour of keeping quiet blocks, 1 was in favour of ending the policy and 6 responses were neither for nor against keeping the policy. (see Appendix 2)

4. Recent developments

4.1 We were looking at designating some tower blocks as for people aged over 50 – in effect a new form of “Quiet Block”

- 4.2 But some of the tower blocks being considered have 2 or more bedrooms
- 4.3 And the welfare changes will impact on applicants of working age who under occupy a property.
- 4.4 So this proposal is currently on hold until there is clarity on both the affordability and demand for additional over 50 blocks.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That the Quiet Blocks policy is formally ended.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Due to the demand from families, who do not meet the quiet block criteria but have a greater housing need.
- 6.1 Due to lack of demand from households meeting the quiet block criteria.
- 6.2 And that the Housing Act ignores Quiet Blocks (Right to Exchange and Right to Buy)
- 6.3 And that there is no evidence that people in the age group for Quiet Blocks cause less anti-social behaviour (supporting evidence from ASB Unit required)
- 6.4 And loss of rent (will take longer to allocated designated Quiet Blocks as it would be from a smaller pool of eligible applicants than the register in total)