

DEMAND FOR LARGE FAMILY HOMES

Report of the Head of Housing Options and Homelessness

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents an overview of the current demand for 4+bedroom homes by looking at the number of households on the housing register and balances this against the number of larger family homes that were available for allocation during 2020/21.
- 1.2 The report also provides information on the actions being taken to increase access to larger family homes through purchase, extensions and other means.
- 1.3 The report also highlights the Home Release Scheme which is available for tenants who are currently under occupying a larger family home and are looking to move somewhere smaller.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the level of demand for larger properties and the number of properties that were re-let during the financial year 2020/21.
- 2.2 To note the measures being taken to increase the availability of larger family homes.

3. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Derby Homes have responsibility for managing the Housing Register and supporting the Council in meeting the housing needs of our customers in the city.

4. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 Nationally it is well documented that demand for social housing continues to rise more sharply than the supply of more homes. Locally we see a similar picture. There are currently 7,833 applicants on the housing register with 4,969 of these people having expressed an interest in a property over the past 12 months and considered to be active applicants.
- 4.2 The table below provides a breakdown of all properties that are managed by Derby Homes, showing the size and type of homes:

Property Size	General Needs	Supported Living	Percentage of stock
0 bedroom	6	29	0.3%
1 bedroom	1905	1976	30.6%

2 bedroom	3047	339	26.7%
3 bedroom	5181	7	40.9%
4 bedroom	147	1	1.2%
5 bedroom	23	0	0.2%
6+ bedroom	13	0	0.1%
Total	10,322	2,352	

Properties that are 4 bedrooms or more represent just 1.5% of the total stock or 180 general needs properties as a number.

4.3 The Allocations Policy 2020-25 provides the framework to determine the priority of the customers seeking social housing through Derby Homefinder. The Policy enables the Local Authority to:

- Identify those people in the greatest housing need and help them decide where they would like to live
- Prevent people from becoming statutory homeless
- Make best use of the housing stock and suggest other housing options to applicants
- Ensure that the Council's legal duties are met
- Reduce the number of properties refused by applicants and ensures properties are let as quickly as possible
- Enable applicants to be informed of vacancies which arise and express an interest ensuring the allocation of social housing offers realistic and informed choice for all
- Provide fair and equal access to social housing irrespective of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief and age
- Award appropriate priority to customers who fall within the Housing Act 1996 'reasonable preference' categories
- Award appropriate priority to customers that fall within the 'local preference' categories, as defined by Derby City Council.
- be flexible with percentages of available accommodation to each band, which will be reviewed periodically to ensure best use of housing stock, meeting the demands of the City.

4.4 In total there are currently 304 households on the housing register that require a property with 4 or more bedrooms. This breaks down further to:

- 16 households needing 4 bedrooms only
- 263 households needing 4 or 5 bedrooms
- 23 households needing 5 or 6 bedrooms
- 2 households needing 6 or 7 bedrooms

These households will currently be living in homes which are too small for the size of their family.

4.5 During 2020/21 there were only thirteen 4+ bedroom homes that became available for reletting. It is recognised that relying on the stock turnover alone will not make any progress in meeting need. Therefore, there is agreement between the Council and Derby Homes to continue purchasing larger family homes from the open market, extending existing homes where possible and including large homes in new build schemes.

- 4.6 As can be seen in paragraph 4.4 we are currently looking at 263 households who are needing 4-5 bedroom homes. Relying on social housing stock alone is not an option to meeting this level of need and we therefore need to continue to work with other registered housing providers and private sector landlords to secure homes of a suitable size for these families. Some customers continue to express a desire to stay in Council accommodation but to meet their housing need this may not always be possible.
- 4.7 Of course it is important that we continue to increase the supply of new larger family homes but a significant issue arises where larger family homes are under occupied. This means that we are not making the best use of the housing stock available to us. Dealing with under occupation is not straight forward though and most of our tenants, being Secure Tenants can not be forced to move from homes where they are under occupying. The under-occupation charge (bedroom tax) does apply to people of working age and tenants may choose to pay the charge rather than move to a smaller home.
- 4.8 The Home Release Scheme provides an incentive for families to release larger family homes that they no longer require and want to move to a smaller property. The scheme offers a payment of £584 to any household that wants to release a larger property and move to a smaller home as well as arranging and paying for removals, disconnecting cookers, and washing machines.

In 2019/20 78 homes were released through the scheme and in 2020/21 a lesser number of 34. These figures will also include a number of 3 bedroom homes that have been released by people moving to smaller accommodation.

We continue to promote the Home Release Scheme as a means of making the best use of our stock.

- 4.9 As mentioned above most tenancies are Secure Tenancies which give the tenant the right to remain in their home so long as basic obligations are met. Local Authorities can though introduce a Tenancy Strategy which permits the use of flexible tenancies. A flexible tenancy would be one which is reviewed after a set period of time to ensure that the full facilities of the home are still required, as such this would provide a means to managing under-occupation. The Council recognise that there are both advantages and disadvantages to the use of flexible tenancies, particularly for properties that are in high demand. There is a current consultation on the use of a Tenancy Strategy but there will be no changes to the current tenancy arrangements until feedback is assessed and a decision taken on any further consultation and formal approval processes.

5. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not Applicable – this report was requested by the Operational Board for information/discussion purposes.

IMPLICATIONS

7. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The financial provision for the purchase, conversion and building of new homes is already contained within existing budget provision.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:

Consultation
Legal and Confidentiality
Council
Personnel
Environmental
Equalities Impact Assessment
Health & Safety
Risk
Policy Review

If Board Members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact:

Name / Title / 01332 888 / Email @derbyhomes.org

Background Information: None

Supporting Information: None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Finance Director/Derby Homes Accountant	Michael Kirk	19.04.2021
Company Solicitor	Taranjit Lalria	19.04.2021
Head of Service (Operational Board reports)	Matt Palmer	19.04.2021
Managing Director	Maria Murphy	30.04.2021