



OTHA LETTINGS PLAN 2022-23

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 2021 OTHA owned 1716 self-contained and 4 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
Management Transfer of existing OTHA tenants who require to be rehoused as a result of disposal or demolition of their property or as part of the Under-Occupancy Letting Initiative	Up to 5 relets
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.

2.2 Former Ravenscraig Hospital Site

The new build site at the former Ravenscraig Hospital Site, Greenock is a development of 71 properties and it is estimated that they will be completed between April and December 2022.

The housing mix is as follows:-

Size	Type	Number
1 bedroom	Cottage Flat	2
2 bedroom	Wheelchair adapted flat	7
2 bedroom	Cottage Flat	11
2 bedroom	House	15
3 bedroom	House	32
3 bedroom	Wheelchair adapted house	1
3 bedroom	Wheelchair adapted bungalow	1
4 bedroom	House	2
Total		71

Homeless/Section 5 Referrals

The policy of allocating up to 15% of lets to Section 5 referrals would mean that 10 houses were let in this category. There is not generally a large demand from Section 5 referrals for 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties therefore the proposal is to only allocate a maximum of 5 to this category. It is likely that the referrals will be split across the house types, depending on the needs of the individuals referred.

Community Care Referrals

It is very positive that there are a significant number of properties that are either wheelchair adapted or level access. The cottage flats are two stories only so the upper flats will have one flight of stairs which may make them suitable for families or individuals with medical needs.

It is hoped that the Association can maximise referrals for these properties to make sure that the features of the properties are put to the best use so it is hoped that the 15% quota to Community Care Referrals can be met.

The properties being developed by Link that will be managed by Larkfield Housing Association are over a very similar housing mix which will mean that the development is adding to the stock of specially adapted housing and large houses in Inverclyde. There is an identified shortfall of both these house types so this development is a welcome addition.

Management Transfers

This development is an opportunity to rehouse the remaining tenants from the flats in Maple Road that are due to be demolished. Additionally the Association has an ongoing Under-occupancy initiative which assists OTHA tenants living in 4 or 5 bedroom properties to move to a smaller property. It is estimated that up to 7 properties in this development may be used for this purpose.

Transfers

The quota for relets has generally been 10% of net lets. In this development this would mean 5 properties were advertised as “priority to Oak Tree tenants”. Existing tenants would also be able to apply for all the advertised properties and could be successful in being rehoused.

This development is likely to be the last, large scale development for some time and there is the opportunity to meet the housing need of existing tenants – particularly those who are overcrowded, under-occupied or have medical needs.

It is proposed that the transfer quota be increased to 20% of net lets for this development only and the following property types and sizes be prioritised to Oak Tree tenants.

2 bedroom cottage flats	2
2 bedroom houses	2
3 bedroom houses	5
4 bedroom houses	1
Total	10

Sensitive Letting

The Joint Allocations Policy and the Lettings Plan both allow an element of discretion in particular circumstances when there is evidence to support the decision. An example of this could be to restrict the number of children in an area where there is already an over concentration of that type of household.

The cottage flats in the Ravenscraig development are 10 blocks of flats, 7 of which have a two bedroom wheelchair flat on the ground floor and a two bedroom flat above.

Allowing a potential element of under-occupation for the first floor flats may provide a more balanced household mix for these properties and reduce the overall child density. There will be 49 family houses of varying sizes available overall.

Therefore, it is proposed that when the upper 2 bedroom flats are being advertised for let, applicants on the 1 bedroom list will also be able to apply.

The proposed lettings plan for Ravenscraig is as follows:

Quota	Total no	Percentage
Section 5 Referrals	5	7%
Community Care referrals (via HSCP)	11	15%
Management Transfer	7	10%
Of the remaining 48 properties		
OTHA Transfer List via ICHR	10	21%
Other referrals (Womens Aid)	2	4%
ICHR Housing List	36	75%
Total	71	100%

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 particular 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 2022-23 are:-

Maple Road Flats	101
Bow Farm Flats (Murray Street and Tasker Street)	24
76 Belville Street Flats	9
9 Hope Street	7
Total	<u>141</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 with a view to demolition over a 3 year period and in principal to retain 36 improved properties.

However, demand and void loss will continue to be monitored closely and if the remaining improved properties remain as low demand, a phase 4 (year 4) demolition project could be taken forward.

The Association have agreed to apply Management Transfers to residents in the unimproved blocks this would allow properties to be identified that would suit the needs of those households needing to move. It would also mean that the timing of the moves could be planned to assist with the regeneration process.

8. Lettings Plan 2022-23

The table below is based on an estimate of the number of properties that are likely to come available during 2022-23 using knowledge of the previous year's relets as a guide. The estimate for 2022-23 is 165 re-lets.

General needs standard accommodation has no specific adaptations or design features that would make it suitable for any particular 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 2022-23 is as follows:-

Area	General Needs	Amenity	Adapted	Total
<u>Flats</u>				
Tenemental flat	69	9	0	78
Bow Farm flats	6	0	0	6
New build flats	38	12	1	51
<u>Main door properties</u>				
General/LSVT	9	0	0	9
Bow Farm Main Door	10	1	0	11
Newbuild Main Door	9	0	1	10
Grand Total	141	22	2	165

The properties will be let in accordance with the quotas as stated in 2.1 of this report 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%	25
Inverclyde Council Referrals of people with Community Care Needs Management Transfers (up to a maximum of 5)	15%	25
Of the remaining 110 lets		5
ICHR Transfer list	10%	11
Other referrals – e.g Inverclyde Womens Aid	5%	5
ICHR Housing List	85%	94
Total		165