

APPENDIX

Analysis of Choice Based Lettings offer refusals 2011/12

Introduction

During the 2010/11 financial year 313 Council owned properties were let in South Cambridgeshire. In this period there were 281 refusals. A refusal is classed as a property that has been verbally accepted by the applicant following a telephone conversation with the Lettings Team and then refused at a later date. The timescale involved may vary; for example, an applicant may call back later in the day to say they have changed their mind or they might decline the property a few days later after a viewing. It is not uncommon to have multiple refusals on one property. One property for example, recently had 9 refusals. Many of these will be quick phone calls declining the offer. The impact on void times can therefore vary depending on the situation.

Total Lets & Refusals Council properties 2010/11

	Total lets	% lets	Total refusals	%refusals	Refusal to lettings ratio
All lets	313	100	281	100	0.9:1
General needs lets	195	62.3	103	36.7	0.5:1
Sheltered lets	118	37.7	178	63.3	1.5:1

Reasons for refusals

The five most common reasons for refusing a property are summarised below:

Refusal reasons

Refusal Reason	Number of Refusals	% of all refusals
Would prefer a larger property	35	12%
Dislikes Neighbourhood/estate	31	11%
Prefer to be near to existing support	27	9%
Medical Reasons preventing moving	24	8.5%
Have another offer which they prefer	15	5%

The most common refusal reason reflects the fact that many applicants refusing properties are older applicants who are looking to downsize property. They are eligible to bid for one and two bedroom properties and, following a

viewing, may decide that the property on offer is smaller than they had realised, particularly if the applicant has bid successfully on a one bedroom property. In these situations applicants are advised to focus future bids on two bedroom bungalows instead. This trend is further illustrated by the fact that the five most frequently refused properties are all sheltered housing properties and four of these have only one bedroom.

A significant number of applicants decline offers because, on consideration, the property is too far away from their existing support networks. The rurality of the district and the limited availability of public transport exacerbates this issue. Although applicants are advised to consider these issues before bidding, it is not uncommon for an unsuitable early bid to be placed. It is only once a property has been viewed that the full impact of all the considerations to take into account are fully recognised and, in the majority of situations, subsequent bids are placed with greater consideration of these issues.

Management of refusals

Only 17 applicants can be termed as serial refusees with one applicant refusing 5 properties, 8 applicants refusing 4 properties and a further 8 applicants refusing 3 properties each. In all of these cases the applicants were bidding for sheltered housing properties and were bidding from the lower priority bands. In these situations the applicant is contacted to try and establish why the properties have been repeatedly refused and the steered towards more suitable properties where possible.

Officers in the Housing Advice and Options service collaborate closely to monitor the refusal level amongst applicants with a high priority housing need, particularly those classed as statutorily homeless. In these situations Officers can place bids on behalf of applicants and can also make direct lets to homeless applicants. Failure to accept the direct let can, in certain situations, mean the Council has no further duty to house the applicant.

The Council's void performance does not include sheltered housing properties and therefore only the refusals for general needs properties will potentially impact on the recorded void times. Given that the hardest to let properties are sheltered bungalows and that no general needs properties appear on the low demand list, the indications is that regular refusals of general needs properties has a minimal impact on void performance. In addition, the measures undertaken by the Housing Advice and Options service to monitor non-bidders and the level of refusals, particularly amongst high priority bidders, should provide further reassurance in this respect.