

APPENDIX 1



HARBOROUGH RP PARTNERING PROTOCOL

March 2022

Background

1. Registered Providers of Affordable Housing (RPs) are independent, housing organisations registered with the Homes England (HE) under the Housing Act 1996. Most are Not-for-Profit housing associations but some are for Profit Organisations. There are also trusts, co-operatives and companies.
2. RPs provide access to a range of rented homes including houses, flats and bungalows to suit the needs of the individual. The opportunity to rent specific properties, in particular areas, will depend upon availability. RPs also provide a range of low cost affordable home ownership options for people wanting to aspire to home ownership.
3. Homes for rent are the core business of most Registered Providers along with low cost ownership schemes and support to homeowners who are elderly, disabled or vulnerable. Registered Providers also have expertise in property development and refurbishment, housing management and community regeneration and consultation.
4. The Council has a statutory responsibility to maintain a register of those in housing need and have an allocations policy in place to allocate available affordable housing. This allocations policy is developed by Harborough District Council Specifically to meet local need. RP Providers also have their own systems to manage the moves of tenants within their own housing stock.
5. Existing tenants and those seeking affordable housing are able to use the Choice Based Letting (CBL) system under which available properties to let are advertised. Harborough's CBL system is known as **HARBOROUGH HOMES** which provides a web based system for registered home seekers to bid for all available rented as they become available. The allocations policy helps determine the successful bidder. This information is then passed to the Registered Provider who will under the lettings process.
6. New affordable housing developments come about either through refurbishment / redevelopment within existing properties or the acquisition of new build properties which developers provide on sites arising from a S106 obligations.

Current Position

The District Council has adopted a partnering approach to development activity relating to affordable housing within the District. This means that Harborough works with providers who are registered with the Homes England (**Registered Providers**) and who are committed to helping meet locally defined housing need. Most additional provision is obtained through funding associated with planning obligations linked to the grant of planning permission. Planning policy currently requires at least 40% of new dwellings on sites of above 10 or more to be provided in affordable tenures. This requires developers to agree with one or more **or** our partners to build and transfer of homes into the ownership of a selected provider. Other schemes may be funded through grant aid to providers by HE. Most of the Registered Providers (**RP's**) are Housing Associations (not for profit organisations with charitable status) however some are 'for profit' organisations

Introduction

The purpose of this protocol is to set out the nature of a Preferred Partner arrangement between Harborough District Council and our Preferred RP Partners.

This agreement is intended to focus on the delivery of affordable housing in the District and ensure that Preferred Partners can contribute to the strategic aims of Harborough District Council.

This agreement is a statement of intent by all parties involved in the Partnership, to undertake to use all reasonable endeavours to meet the principles through partnership working. The Parties do not intend to create formal legal relations and this Protocol is not to be understood as a formal legal contract between the parties, and no legal partnership between them is intended or is to be implied

Objectives

The main objectives of the Preferred Partner arrangement is to:

- Deliver affordable housing in line with Harborough's housing objectives.
- Develop and maintain a range of affordable rented housing and low cost home ownership options to meet identified needs within Harborough District.
- Optimise resources to develop affordable housing in the district.
- Maximise the investment of public and private funding.
- To identify land and buildings for new housing development in accordance with the Council's Core Strategy and principles.
- Create balanced, sustainable communities which encourage community cohesion.
- To contribute towards the delivery of the Council's Strategic Housing aims, assist in monitoring affordable delivery, and meet with the Council's Housing and Enabling officer as and when required and via prearranged periodic meetings

Roles and Responsibilities Harborough District Council

- Be the lead agency in identifying local housing needs and developing an overall housing strategy.
- Support agreed bids from RPs to the Homes England for social housing grant funds.

- Develop affordable housing opportunities by negotiating with developers on sites that qualify for an affordable housing provision and fund via transfer receipt/land.
- Maintain a list for developers of Preferred RP Partners
- Monitor and review the performance of RP Partners on affordable delivery and collate year end totals of rented and intermediate delivery in the District
- Review the Preferred Partnering arrangement as and when required.
- Co-ordinate partnership meetings and the dissemination of information.
- Consult RP partners on Council functions and Policy affecting Housing services, particularly around The Council's Local Plan, SPD, Government guidance.

Preferred Partners will

- Work to deliver of affordable housing in Harborough District
- Work with Harborough District Council to bring forward bids for funding from Homes England which meet local priorities.
- Ensure that public funding allocated to RP's is taken up effectively to agreed timetables with the Homes England and the Local Authority.
- Seek to reinvest Recycled Capital Grant Funding proceeds from the sale of Harborough properties within the District.
- To advise Harborough District Council when it becomes aware of a development opportunity, so that the strategic objectives may be better met through effective consultation.
- Work to development programmes and timetables agreed with the Council's Housing Enabling Officer, wherever practical.
- To negotiate on site provision under the advice of the Council's Housing Enabling and Planning officers and ensure provision/ delivery is in line with the Councils Local Plan / SPD and the provision of the relevant S106 Agreement.
- Partner RPs will endeavour to ensure the basis upon which offers are made to developers (in line with Planning) Policy) achieve a level playing field. However, RP's will be left to their own devices to submit offers to developers. This is not a matter for the Council to be involved in.

- Consider joint development with other RPs, where this is considered appropriate. Work in partnership with Homes England and other funding agencies to optimise funding for affordable provision in the District.
- All RP Partners operating in the District are expected to meet the housing needs in the District and in doing so will endeavour to deliver Intermediate Housing Products as part of the development programme.
- Co-operate with and support each other as appropriate and share good practice, expertise and knowledge about the development, management and provision of affordable housing and care and support services.
- Its acknowledged that there will be occasions when it is appropriate for an RP to rationalise their housing stock which can result in disposal of some of its existing stock. RP Partners must consult the local authority prior to any disposals within the District, and that the proceeds of any sales will be reinvested in their social housing within the District
- **Fully engage in Harborough Homes - The Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme.**
- Facilitate innovation in affordable housing delivery through sharing of experience.

Rent and Service Charge Levels

- RP Partners acknowledge the importance of achieving and maintaining rent levels which are affordable to tenants on low incomes and do not form a barrier to employment.
- RP Partners are expected to develop new homes within rent caps and or rent restructuring criteria as revised in the future.

Lettings and Nominations

- The lettings and sale of properties under this Agreement will be carried out in accordance with the Harborough Homes Nomination Agreement between Harborough District Council and the RP for each development.
- Harborough District Council expects maximum nomination rights to all properties owned and managed by RPs, and that the properties are placed on The Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme in the first instance.
- Harborough District Council will work to offer nominations within agreed timescales to limit RP void rates.

- RP Partners will operate in accordance with the nominations procedure for The Council and ensure that information on properties such as location, rent, service charge, accessibility, council tax and any other important information is provided. RP partners are also expected to provide confirmation of new tenancies to The Council as part of the sign up procedure for a new tenancy.
- The marketing and allocation of homes developed for Low Cost Home Ownership or intermediate rent will be carried out in conjunction with the Regional Home Buy Agent or as required by Government guidance in the administration of the First Homes initiative.
- **All RP Partners are required to sign up to Harborough Homes Service Level Agreement**

Supported Housing

- It is expected that an element of supported housing will be included in the development programme, as specified by Harborough District Council. In addition, RP Partners may be asked to work in Partnership with specialist housing providers to deliver new provision.

Social Inclusion and Community Development

- All Partner RPs to this Agreement are committed to creating and sustaining balanced communities, and will work together to develop local lettings policies and sensitive lets where necessary and other management policies and procedures to ensure that this is achieved.

Process for New additions to the preferred Partner List

Frequently we will receive approaches from RP not operating in Harborough District who wish to be included on the Council's preferred Partner list.

Each approach is viewed and assessed independently. **The process adopted in assessing each enquiry is as follows:**

Initial contact is followed up with a introductory meeting a follow up meeting will be arrange as further detailed discussion is required

The Prospective RP will be required to submit a written statement of interest detailing its background, areas of activity why they wish to be included, how properties are managed, track record etc.

They must be able to demonstrate a clear commitment to developing affordable housing in Harborough District

The report is reviewed initially by the Council's Housing and Enabling Officer,

Then presented to the Departmental Manager for Community Services and The relevant Portfolio Member.

Bar any issues arising the RP will be informed and all being well - The RP will be listed on Harborough's Preferred Partner List.

The process of developing a formal working relationship will commence initiated by the Council's Housing and Enabling Officer.

The RP will commit to working with Harborough Homes the Council's CBL Team and signing up to its protocols – Service Level Agreements / Nominations Arrangements etc.

Bi-annual meetings will be pre-arranged to discuss and agree affordable bids, S106 Matters, site acquisitions other opportunities for housing development etc.

Harborough District and Partner Joint Commitment Agreement

Signature of Partners

For and on behalf Platform Group

Signature:Date:.....

Name.....

For and on behalf of Harborough District Council

Signature:.....Date:.....

Name: