

Appendix A Waterloo Empty Homes Project

Introduction:

Following Waterloo's successful 2011-2012 Empty Homes allocation the Group are looking to build upon this success and roll out the programme across key areas in the East and West Midlands where a significant need has been identified, these include, Lincoln, Warwick, North Warwickshire, Tamworth and the Derbyshire Dales. In all of these areas regular meetings and discussions have been on going with relevant officers of the Local Authority.

Waterloo feel that the diverse urban and rural settings they are looking to work in will require innovative approaches to bringing empty properties back into use which will provide valuable and unique case studies to the Homes and Communities Agency.

As part of the overall empty homes programme Waterloo Housing Group are committed to using local apprentices and the provision of training and employment opportunities for local people where ever possible, as detailed in their pilot HCA allocation in Lincoln.

Summary of Waterloo's Approach:

- A project group with each Local Authority will be set up to deliver the programme and to ensure regular communication between all partners and value for money.
- Properties will be identified in partnership with the relevant local authority through various routes including Council Tax data, LA Empty Homes Officers, survey information and private landlord forums.
- Properties will be leased from the owner on a minimum of a 5 year lease (initial discussions with owners from the pilot project indicate this would be their preferred length of lease).
- Once a landlord has been identified the property will be surveyed and the extent of refurbishment work needed will be established. There will be a minimum requirement to meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- Additional energy grants will be explored including the 'Green Deal'.
- Refurbishment works will be carried out.
- Tenants will be identified from the local waiting list or choice based lettings system.
- The property will then be let at an Affordable Rent. Management and maintenance will be carried out by Waterloo Housing Group's local housing management teams.

- The landlord will receive a proportion of the rental income over the lease period.
- At the end of the lease period the property will be returned to the landlord in good repair, still at a lettable standard.
- There is the opportunity for the landlord to continue to rent the property through a private sector leasing scheme or social lettings agent.

Tamworth:

- A significant need has been identified by the Council with 147 empty properties across the Borough.
- The bid forms part of a wider project and commitment to tackling empty homes by Tamworth Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council.
- Both Authorities will be making capital contributions towards the project, as detailed in the bid template to the HCA (£90,000 per authority).
- In 2011-2012 Tamworth were successful in bringing 40 properties back into use.
- A project team has been in operation for the last 6 months which consists of Waterloo Housing Group, Southwark Habitat for Humanity, Staffordshire County Council and Tamworth Borough Council.
- The project aims to bring 5 empty properties per year (over a 3 year period) back into use for General Needs housing and in addition another 5 properties over the course of the 3 year programme as supported housing for people with physical or learning disabilities.
- Where identified additional adaptations to properties will be made to cater for vulnerable adults, such as walk in shower rooms and handrails etc.

The project will work in partnership with a voluntary sector group called Southwark Habitat for Humanity who engage with young people aged 17-24 who are not in education and employment to gain work experience, skills and training opportunities.