

Introduction

The extent of the issues identified with Mellish Court and The Gables means that residents will need to move from these blocks either to allow refurbishment works to take place or to demolish and rebuild the blocks. This paper details the level of assistance that residents and landlords will be given in finding and securing alternative housing.

The housing options available are dependent on tenure and the Council's proposed offer to each group is set out in relation to the following -

- (1) Council Tenants
- (2) Resident Leaseholders
- (3) Non-resident Leaseholders
- (4) Private Tenants of Non-resident Leaseholders

1. Council Tenants

Council tenants will need to be rehoused from these blocks. They will, therefore, be given priority under the Council's Allocation Policy and awarded Band A status for a move. They will be allowed to give their area of choice and will be offered accommodation that meets their household need i.e. if they are three bed need currently living in a one bedroom flat, they will be offered a three bedroom property.

In anticipation of the need to rehouse tenants, the Council is carrying out needs assessments to understand their preferences and establish the size of property they need. Residents are being requested to make an application to join the Housing Register and officers are assessing and prioritising these in accordance with the Allocations Policy.

Housing staff will work with households to understand and take account of personal circumstances and provide support. Where there is a need for a household to move to a different part of Milton Keynes due to the availability of accommodation, staff will support the household to maintain their links to existing schools and services as much as is possible, for example by helping with travel planning. Financial assistance will also be provided to cover the costs of moving home. Consideration will also be given to provide financial support to help with school transport if needed.

Where a household does move out of the local area but maintains a local link and wishes to move back, that household will be given priority to move back to the area when a property that meets their needs becomes available. Equally, if tenants would prefer to stay in the home they have moved to, they will be able to do so.

As the buildings are close to empty, there may be a need for some households to move in to temporary accommodation if it is not possible to offer them a Council or Housing Association home at the point where they need to move for health and safety reasons. The Council will seek to minimise the time that households need to spend in other forms of accommodation before more suitable accommodation is made available.

Housing Offer

Once the housing need and preferences have been established, we will then seek to find a new home, which meets their housing need and where possible the household's preferences. A total of three offers of a suitable new home will be made. However, there may be occasions where a household's preferences cannot be met in the timescale required by the health and safety led rehousing process. In this event, the Council will make a decision around the suitability of the final offer of a new home and there will not be an opportunity to appeal this decision. However, all tenants will have a Right to Return to the estate as set out below.

A housing offer will be made based on the household composition as at 3 September 2020. If the household composition has changed since this time, additional checks will need to be made to verify occupancy to confirm that any additional people are part of the household, which will usually require the address at Mellish or The Gables being their principal home for the previous 12 months.

Although the Council will seek to rehouse households according to their needs, larger households who require larger homes may need to temporarily move into smaller properties if properties with the required number of bedrooms do not become available within a reasonable timescale. These families will be given the highest priority to move to an appropriate size home when a suitable home becomes available which is not needed to rehouse other households from the affected blocks. The current housing needs assessment data indicates the prevailing need from both blocks is for one and two bedroom properties.

Those who are currently under-occupying their home will be able to move under the Under-Occupation Scheme. Under-occupation payments will also be made for any bedrooms relinquished.

Right to Return

It is proposed that tenants required to move from the area will have a right to return when suitable property becomes available to meet their needs. Tenants who do wish to return may need to wait for a suitable property to become vacant or for a property to become available in a newly built block if and when those are approved and built. It is proposed that those wishing to return will receive one offer of a home suitable to their housing need at that time, and unreasonable refusal of this will be deemed to end their Right to Return. Residents can return to their original home if the Council decides to undertake the refurbishment works. In both cases, only one home loss payment will be made when the household moves out of the tower block, however, reasonable disturbance payments will be paid to facilitate both the initial move and subsequent return.

Local Lettings Plan

In order to meet the Right to Return for any new homes that are built, a Local Lettings Plan is proposed to ensure that future lets on the sites are prioritised for tenants from Mellish Court and The Gables who have had to move out of Bletchley or Wolverton due to the refurbishment/redevelopment and who wish to return.

It is proposed that properties will be offered to households in the following order of priority -

1. Tenants from the blocks with children in local schools.
2. Tenants from the blocks that receive support from family living in the local area.
3. All other tenants from the blocks.

In the event of tenants having equal priority, properties will be offered to the tenant with the earliest start date to their tenancy in the blocks.

Home Loss Payments

Council tenants will be eligible for a Home Loss Payment. The amount is set annually and the maximum amount currently payable under The Home Loss Payments (Prescribed Amounts) (England) Regulations 2020 is £6,5000. This is payable in full to tenants who have lived in their current property for 12 months or more. Tenants who have lived in their current property for 11 months or less will be paid a pro rata amount based on multiples of 1/12th (i.e. if a tenant has lived in their property for six months they will get 6 x 1/12th of £6,500 or £3,250). The Council will deduct any outstanding housing related debts owed to it (e.g. rent arrears) from the amount payable.

Disturbance Payments

These payments will be made to cover the cost of reasonable expenses incurred by residents in their move, such as the disconnection and reconnection of electric cookers, removal expenses etc. Reasonable disturbance payments will be paid to facilitate both an initial move and up to one subsequent move.

2. Resident Leaseholders

For the purpose of this policy, a resident leaseholder is defined as a leaseholder who resides in one of the blocks. The Council will make the following statutory offer to resident leaseholders -

- The full market value for their current property.
- A further payment equal to a Home Loss payment, 10% of the market value currently with a minimum of £6,100 and a maximum of £61,000.
- A disturbance payment to cover the costs of moving.

In addition, we are working on developing an equity share offer to support resident leaseholders that wish to remain living within Milton Keynes and we will consult leaseholders on this.

3. Non-resident Leaseholders

Non-resident leaseholders will be offered the full market value for their current property plus the Basic Loss payment of 7.5%.

4. Private Tenants of Non-resident Landlords

If the landlord of a private tenant is unable to assist them with alternative accommodation, they will be able to apply on the housing register and if they are eligible, we will assist with an offer of housing. If they are not eligible, assistance will be given to find housing in the private sector.