

## HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

### Report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing Lead Member: Councillor Colin Hamilton

#### DECLASSIFICATION OF 45+ PROPERTIES

##### Purpose of Report

To consult the Housing management Advisory Board on the principal and approach to declassifying around Council 1071 homes (around 20% of the Council's entire stock), which are currently restricted for allocation to those applicants aged 45 years and over.

##### Recommendation

The Board is asked to say whether it agrees with the principle and approach to declassification.

##### Reasons

To enable the Board to consider that matter and provide its views which will be reflected in any subsequent report to Cabinet.

##### Background

In line with the following 2023/24 Council Corporate Business Plan action, a review of age restricted properties has taken place:

*Review declassification of age restricted properties, to support the faster re-let of properties.*

##### Stock Numbers

The Council owns more than 5,450 homes to rent. Around 2,000 (37%) of the homes have a minimum age designation (60+ sheltered housing, 60+ age-designated bungalows or 45+ age designated flats. Over 1,000 (20%) of the homes have a 45+ age designation.

Designation	Overall stock
No age restriction	3,463 (63%)
45+	1,071 (20%)
60+	923 (17%)
Total	5,457 (100%)

1,071 homes, or nearly 20% of the stock, are restricted for allocation to those applicants aged 45 and over.
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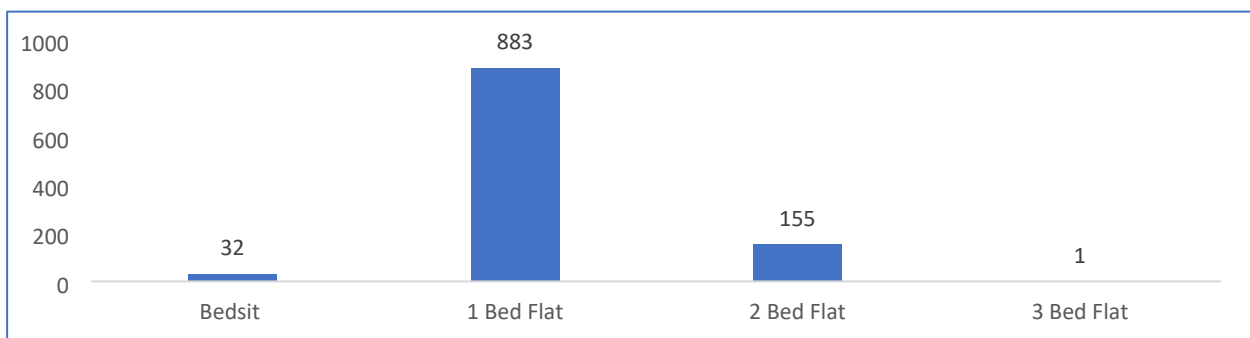
Properties that currently have a 45+ age designation do not have any features / services specifically for persons aged 45 years or over.

Therefore, people aged under 45 are currently excluded from 45+ accommodation based on their age, rather than because the accommodation is particularly suitable for people with a specific set of housing needs.

There is no current proportionate justification for having a category of housing specifically for people aged 45+. There is a risk of the Council breaching equalities legislation, therefore. Currently, people aged under 45 are excluded from that stock solely because of their age.

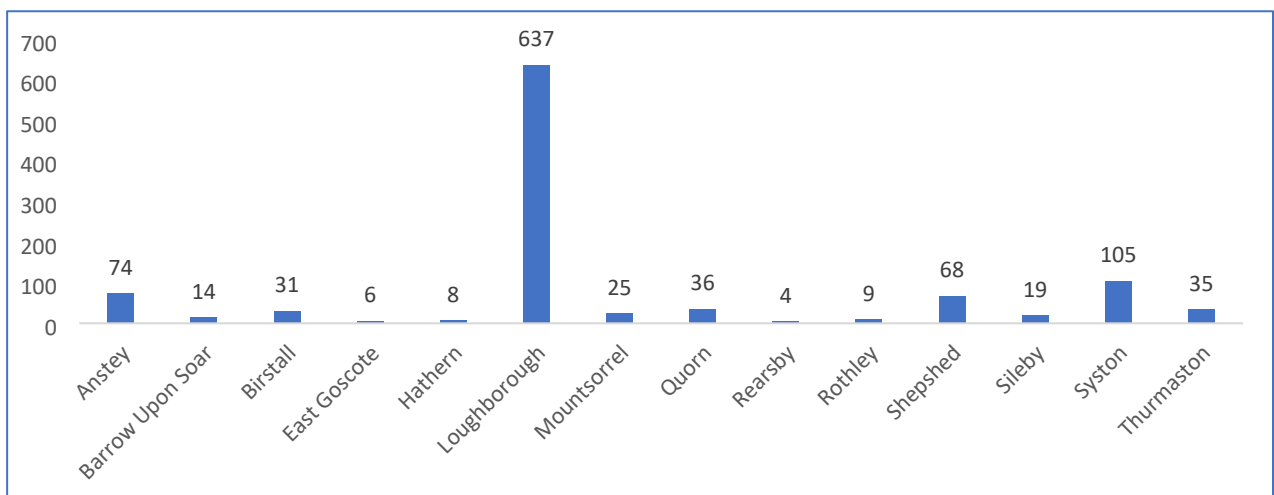
### Stock Composition

Most of the 45+ age designated homes are one-bedroom properties. The chart below shows the distribution by property type and bedroom number.



### Location

The majority (60%) of the 45+ age designated homes are located within Loughborough or Syston. The chart below shows the distribution by location.



### Age of Current Tenants

The age profile of current tenants in accommodation classified for those aged over 45 is set out in the table below.

Row Labels	Count of Tenants (There are more tenants than properties due to joint tenancies)	Percentage
0	1	0%
0-44	39	4%
45-59	426	39%
60+	624	57%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>100%</b>

Currently, although the properties are designated 45+, tenants may have others living with them (partner, children etc.) that are aged under 45.

### Voids (empty properties)

75 properties with a 45+ age designation are currently void:

- 46 (61%) of these properties have recently been advertised for the first time / are due to be advertised for the first time once they are expected to be ready to let within the next 28 days.
- 26 (35%) of these properties have already been unsuccessfully advertised via the choice-based lettings system on at least 1 occasion since becoming void (i.e., they received no bids or the list of bidders was fully exhausted) and are currently being re-advertised or being considered for temporary placements for homeless applicants or use as decants for existing tenants.
- 3 (4%) of these properties are currently under offer.

Over the last 3 financial years (1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023) 1,154 properties became void. Higher proportions of the properties with a 45+ age designation have become void than properties with no age restrictions:

Designation	New voids	Overall stock	New voids as a percentage of stock
No age restriction	617	3,463	18%
45+	274	1,071	26%
60+	264	923	29%
Total	1,154	5,457	21%

Over the last 3 financial years (1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023) 907 void properties were relet. Average relet times were significantly higher for properties with a 45+ age designation than for those without an age restriction:

Designation	Average relet times
No age restriction	118 days
45+	145 days
60+	227 days

### Housing Need Data

On 16<sup>th</sup> August 2023 there were 915 households on the housing register. The following table shows a breakdown by age profile of the main applicants and household bedroom need:

Age	1 bed	2 bed	3+ bed	Total
18 to 44 years	191 (44%)	236 (77%)	153 (86%)	580 (63%)
45 to 59 years	101 (23%)	56 (18%)	22 (12%)	179 (20%)
60+ years	140 (32%)	13 (4%)	3 (2%)	156 (17%)
Total	432 (47%)	305 (33%)	178 (19%)	915 (100%)

This data indicates that there is a higher overall level of need for social housing within Charnwood from applicants aged below 45 years (63%) than from applicants aged 45 years or over (37%), and a higher level of need for all sizes of properties from applicants aged below 45 years than from applicants aged 45 years or over.

44% of the applicants on the housing register who have a need for 1 bedroom properties are currently unable to bid for the 1 bedroom 45+ age restricted properties.

77% of the applicants on the housing register who have a need for 2 bedroom properties are currently unable to bid for the 2 bedroom 45+ age restricted properties.

The data shows there is a high need for properties for people aged under 45, however currently this accommodation cannot be accessed by that cohort. Best use of stock to meet identified housing need is not therefore being made.

### Demand / bidding activity data

Over the last 3 years, 126 45+ age designated homes have been advertised through the Council's Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme. On average 3.5 bids were received for each available 45+ age designated property advertised. Bedsits were the

most unpopular property type, receiving 1.7 bids on average per property with one bedroomed flats receiving on average 3.7 bids per property. In contrast, one bedroomed general needs flats with no age restriction receive on average 14 bids per property advertised and two bedroomed flats 9 bids.

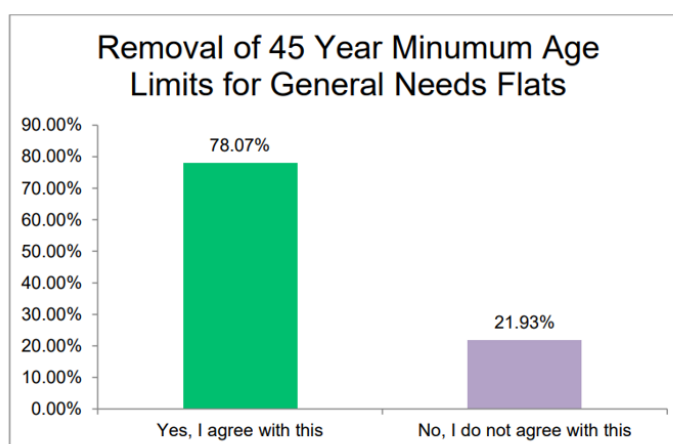
Over the last 3 years (1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023) there have been a disproportionately high number of incidences where properties with an age designation that have been advertised have been refused by bidders, advertised unsuccessfully (i.e., no bids received, or the list of bidders was fully exhausted) and/or had to be advertised multiple times.

Designation	No bids received	Bids received but list fully exhausted	Repeat advert
No age restriction	20	72	41
45+	558	298	793
60+	12,486	286	14,588

The data indicates that properties with a 45+ age designation are significantly harder to let than properties with no age restriction.

### Consultation Previously Undertaken

In 2017 as part of the consultation for the current Housing Allocations Policy a survey of stakeholders was undertaken. This included applicants on the housing register. Stakeholders were asked (as part of a suite of questions) whether they thought the 45+ age criteria should be removed. The response result is below.



### Risks Associated with Declassification

Declassifying accommodation is likely to result in a relatively slow change in the age composition of accommodation with properties only being let to people aged under 45 as they become vacant. Tenants will have moved into their current homes understanding that it is designated for people aged 45+, so this will be a significant change. Many affected tenants are aged over 60 and may be concerned and distressed about younger people moving into the accommodation. The level of

satisfaction amongst those tenants with the housing service is likely to reduce. Family members may also be dissatisfied.

Additional demand on anti-social behaviour (ASB) and tenancy management teams may arise due to ASB and differences in lifestyle.

There is a risk existing tenants in 45+ accommodation may wish to move to alternative accommodation, increasing stock turnover at a time when void services are under pressure. There are several new initiatives being mobilised to improve void performance, including the procurement of contracted resources for the repair of standard and major voids. Recruitment to permanent members of staff in the allocations team is also in progress. Additional void volumes are likely to compromise progress on improving performance.

Residents affected by declassification that wished to move would, and subject to other checks being undertaken, fall into Band 2 *High Housing Need* under the Council's Housing allocations Policy. There is however a limited amount of suitable stock in sheltered accommodation available to tenants aged over 60+; much of it is small bedsits with no bath or shower facility within the dwelling and a very small kitchen. This accommodation is unlikely to meet the aspirations of older people. Properties categorised as general needs 60+ are few.

#### Approach to Declassification

The approach to declassification and mitigation of the above risks is set out in the below table.

<b>Draft Recommendation to Cabinet</b>	<b>Reason</b>
That the Director of Housing and Wellbeing be authorised to remove the 45+ age classification from the 1071 properties at Appendix 1, and that (see below):	To support compliance with equalities legislation, and the meeting of housing need.
This be completed in four phases at broadly six-month intervals, with the first phase of properties being declassified in the Summer of 2024.	To enable additional capacity currently being put in place to manage voids and allocations to be mobilised, and to put further resources in place to mitigate any increase in demand on tenancy management services.
The declassification of properties in each phase progress in consultation with the Lead Member for Public and Private Sector Housing, and subject to the successful management of demand on services arising because of declassification.	To allow for monitoring of the impact on services, performance, and any increased movement in the housing stock.

That targeted communication with affected tenants take place on a phased basis i.e., rather than writing to all affected tenants at once, communications will be issued to tenants in advance of each phase of declassification. Initial generic information will be placed in the tenant newsletter, including information relating to the phased nature of implementation.	To reduce the risk of a significant increase in demand on services and movement in the housing stock creating more voids at a time when services are already under pressure.
That tenants be advised of the decision and the reasons for declassification, and provided with the opportunity to feed back any specific concerns so they may be responded to.	To support effective communication, reassure and provide information to tenants, and provide the opportunity for any specific issues to be responded to.
That the order of phases be based primarily on the meeting of housing need, with a particular focus on areas where there are more empty properties (voids). Tenancy management factors have also been considered including levels of ASB and tenancy support needs.	To support the meeting of housing need and to mitigate against increases in demand on services.
That one additional ASB Officer and one additional Tenancy and Estate Management Officer be recruited to, for a period of three years and that the HRA revenue budget be increased to accommodate this.	To mitigate any increase in demand on tenancy management services and to provide capacity to respond to specific tenant concerns and provide support.

### Further Policy Justification

The declassification of 45+ properties will support compliance with the *Tenancy Standard* defined by the Regulator of Social Housing which sets out that:

*Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants.*

*They shall demonstrate how their lettings:*

- (a) *make the best use of available housing*
- (b) *are compatible with the purpose of the housing*
- (c) *contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities*

It is expected long term. achievement of the following void loss KPIs set out in the Council's Corporate Business Plan 2023-24 will be supported:

- *Percentage rent loss from void properties (Proxy Target) Age restricted properties.*
- *Percentage rent loss from void properties (Proxy Target) Non age restricted properties.*

Appendices                      Appendix 1 - Summary of Properties Currently Classified 45+

Background Papers              CABINET – 19TH OCTOBER 2017 ITEM 6 CHOICE BASED LETTINGS HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

Available at:

[https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/papers/cab\\_19\\_october\\_2017\\_item\\_06\\_choice\\_based\\_lettings\\_housing\\_allocations\\_policy/Cab%2019%20October%202017%20Item%2006%20Choice%20Based%20Lettings%20Housing%20Allocations%20Policy.pdf](https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/papers/cab_19_october_2017_item_06_choice_based_lettings_housing_allocations_policy/Cab%2019%20October%202017%20Item%2006%20Choice%20Based%20Lettings%20Housing%20Allocations%20Policy.pdf)

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## Appendix 1 - Summary of Properties Currently Classified 45+

Address	Area	Number of properties
Albion Street	Syston	3
Ashfield Drive	Anstey	11
Barrow Street	Loughborough	5
Beacon Road	Loughborough	21
Blenheim Road	Birstall	4
Bottleacre Lane	Loughborough	4
Bowler Court	Loughborough	9
Brookside	Rearsby	4
Bryan Close	Barrow Upon Soar	8
Burns Road	Loughborough	12
Canal Street	Thurmaston	4
Caters Close	Anstey	4
Catherines Close	Quorn	4
Chapel Close	Syston	11
Chapman Street	Loughborough	71
Chestnut Court	Mountsorrel	25
Church Lane	Anstey	16
Derby Road	Loughborough	14
Dormer Court	Hathern	8
Durham Road	Loughborough	11
Edward Street	Anstey	8
Fleury Court	East Goscote	6
Garendon Green	Loughborough	21
George Deacon Court	Loughborough	16
George Toon Court	Syston	30
Gloucester Avenue	Syston	37
Greenway Close	Rothley	5
Harlech Close	Loughborough	6
Hickling Court	Loughborough	38

Hume Street	Loughborough	15
King Edward Road	Loughborough	19
Knightthorpe Road	Loughborough	13
Lacey Court	Shepshed	48
Latimer Court	Anstey	10
Longcliffe Road	Shepshed	20
Lovett Court	Sileby	19
Melton Road	Syston	5
Melton Road	Thurmaston	4
Milton Street	Loughborough	4
Moirs Street	Loughborough	46
Moor Lane	Loughborough	30
Newton Close	Barrow Upon Soar	6
Oakham Close	Loughborough	14
Old Hall Close	Thurmaston	27
Oxford Court	Syston	19
Paper Mill Close	Anstey	25
Park Court	Loughborough	35
Park Road	Loughborough	9
Pevensey Road	Loughborough	22
Pinfold Gardens	Loughborough	29
Revell Close	Quorn	12
Rockingham Road	Loughborough	10
Selbourne Court	Loughborough	11
Selbourne Street	Loughborough	4
Staveley Court	Loughborough	53
Stirling Avenue	Loughborough	4
The Mills	Quorn	20
Toothill Road	Loughborough	31
Tuckers Close	Loughborough	19
Walter Hull Court	Loughborough	13

Wanlip Lane	Birstall	27
Warwick Way	Loughborough	17
William Street	Loughborough	11
Woodgate	Rothley	4