



## Individual Cabinet Member Report

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**Report of:** Executive Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services

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**Report to:** Cabinet Member for Housing

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**Date:** 16th March 2016

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**Subject:** Implementation of age redesignation proposals

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**Author of Report:** Suzanne Allen, Head of City Wide Neighbourhood Services

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**Key Decision:** YES

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**Reason Key Decision:** Affects 2 or more wards

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### Summary:

In March 2013 the Cabinet agreed a new Allocations Policy. The reasons for this were:

- In March 2010, Cabinet resolved to conduct a general review of the Lettings Policy to ensure that Council housing is being allocated in the most efficient way to meet local housing needs.
- The policy needs to respond to changes in legislation including the Localism Act and the new statutory Code Of Guidance.
- Since 2002 the housing market in Sheffield has radically changed. The amount of council housing has reduced considerably due to demolition programmes, stock transfer and Right to Buy, whilst demand for social housing has dramatically increased. The policy needs to address this changed environment.
- The final content of the proposed new policy has been informed by comprehensive consultation

This new Allocations Policy introduces revisions to the provision for allocating Council housing. One of these revised provisions is to

accommodation which is age designated. Specifically, the policy no longer allows for a 40+ housing designation.

In addition to the introduction of this change to the age designation provision, the Safer Stronger Communities Committee, who oversaw the development of the Allocations policy, requested that a review of all age designated accommodation be undertaken to ensure that this housing stock was being used to best effect.

This review started in September 2013. It was carried out by local area housing staff that developed a set of proposals for each estate. These proposals were based on supply and demand information, but also took account of local facilities and demographics. These proposals were considered by local tenants and residents, amended where necessary following feedback and then presented as a set of recommendations to each Local Area Housing Forum (LAHF).

These recommendations were supported by LAHF and the changes to age designated properties are now ready for implementation. These changes reflect and take account of the two aims of the review which are:

- That all accommodation currently designated for applicants aged 40+ is redesignated as either general needs accommodation or for applicants aged 60+
- That some over 60 accommodation has been redesignated to general needs where demand is low.

Confirmation is now sought from the Cabinet member for Housing that the outcomes from this review are agreed and can be implemented, and also notes that ongoing monitoring of the demand and supply of age designated accommodation will take place and that a change to that designation may take place where appropriate.

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### **Reasons for Recommendations:**

There are a number of reasons for introducing these changes:

- The Council's Allocations Policy which was agreed by Cabinet in 2013 and is due to be implemented in April 2016. The policy no longer makes provision for properties designated for applicants aged 40+ therefore these properties require re-designating to either general needs accommodation or properties designated for applicants aged 60+
- In March 2013 changes to the Council's Lettings Policy were agreed for the eligibility criteria in Section D to be amended. Twenty-five percent of all current properties designated for applicants aged 60+ have two or three bedrooms. It has become increasingly difficult to let these properties when

they become available as a majority of applicants in this age band are no longer eligible for properties with more than one bedroom. Re-designating these properties to general needs accommodation allows families and larger households to access properties with two bedrooms or three bedrooms.

- In certain areas of Sheffield a significant amount of properties were previously designated as accommodation for applicants ages 40+ or 60+. This prevents younger applicants from accessing accommodation in some areas and estates. The review has aimed to make more accommodation available across the city as general needs accommodation therefore giving younger applicants greater choice and increased housing options.
- The location of some accommodation designated for applicants aged 60+ was unsuitable due to it being physically difficult access. Where this is a factor this has been taken into account as part of the overall review. Redesignation outcomes including properties for which this has been a contributory factor are summarised in Appendices 3-8.

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### **Recommendations:**

That the Cabinet Member for Housing:

- a. Agrees the age designation proposals as set out in Appendices 3-8 to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.
- b. Notes that a review of age designated properties will take place annually to allow the Council to monitor the demand and supply of accommodation and change that designation where appropriate.

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### **Background Papers:**

**Appendix 1 - Original Equalities Impact Assessment**

**Appendix 2 - Refreshed Equalities Impact Assessment**

**Appendix 3-8 Local Area Consultations and Age Designation outcomes**

**Appendix 9 – Items of Particular note from Consultation**

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**Category of Report:            OPEN**

**If CLOSED add 'Not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).'**

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## Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

<b>Financial Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Karen Jones
<b>Legal Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Andrea Simpson
<b>Equality of Opportunity Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Louise Nunn
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities Implications</b>
YES/NO Cleared by:
<b>Human Rights Implications</b>
YES/NO Cleared by:
<b>Environmental and Sustainability implications</b>
YES/NO Cleared by:
<b>Economic Impact</b>
YES/NO Cleared by:
<b>Community Safety Implications</b>
YES/NO Cleared by:
<b>Human Resources Implications</b>
YES/NO Cleared by:
<b>Property Implications</b>
YES/NO Cleared by:
<b>Area(s) Affected</b>
<b>Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Lead</b>
<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
YES/NO
<b>Press Release</b>
YES/NO

## REPORT TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

### IMPLEMENTATION OF AGE REDESIGNATION PROPOSALS

#### 1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 In March 2013 Cabinet agreed a new Allocations Policy. The reasons for this were:

- In March 2010, Cabinet resolved to conduct a general review of the Lettings Policy to ensure that Council housing is being allocated in the most efficient way to meet local housing needs.
- The policy needs to respond to changes in legislation including the Localism Act and the new statutory Code Of Guidance.
- Since 2002 the housing market in Sheffield has radically changed. The amount of council housing has reduced considerably due to demolition programmes, stock transfer and Right to Buy, whilst demand for social housing has dramatically increased. The policy needs to address this changed environment.
- The final content of the proposed new policy has been informed by comprehensive consultation

1.2 This new Allocations Policy introduces revisions to the provision for allocating Council housing. One of these revised provisions is to accommodation which is age designated. Specifically, the policy no longer allows for a 40+ housing designation.

1.3 In addition to the introduction of this change to the age designation provision, the Safer Stronger Communities Committee, who oversaw the development of the Allocations policy, requested that a review of all age designated accommodation be undertaken to ensure that this housing stock was being used to best effect.

1.4 This review started in September 2013. It was carried out by local area housing staff that developed a set of proposals for each estate. These proposals were based on supply and demand information, but also took account of local facilities and demographics. These proposals were considered by local tenants and residents, amended where necessary following feedback and then presented as a set of recommendations to each Local Area Housing Forum (LAHF).

1.5 These recommendations were supported by LAHF and the changes to age designated properties are now ready for implementation. These changes reflect and take account of the two aims of the review which are:

- That all accommodation currently designated for applicants aged 40+ is redesignated as either general needs accommodation or for applicants aged 60+
- That some over 60 accommodation has been redesignated to general needs where demand is low.

- 1.6 Confirmation is now sought from the Cabinet member for Housing that the outcomes from this review are agreed and can be implemented, and also notes that ongoing monitoring of the demand and supply of age designated accommodation will take place and that a change to that designation may take place where appropriate.

## **2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE**

- 2.1 Once these decisions have been implemented there will be a greater choice of properties across Sheffield for applicants in the general needs category. More single person accommodation will become available for general needs applicants. This is as a result of some properties being redesignated based on lettings outcomes, and other accommodation being redesignated following the review of 60+ accommodation to ensure that best use is still being made of this housing.
- 2.2 Currently, around twenty-five percent of accommodation designated for applicants aged 60+ has two or more bedrooms. The majority of households aged over 60 are single persons or couples. This means that in line with the Council's current eligibility rules these households are not eligible to bid for properties of this size. The recommendations to change the designation of these properties to general needs accommodation will result in more two and three bedroom accommodation being available for larger households.

## **3.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY**

### **3.1 An In-Touch Organisation**

Implementation of these decisions allows the City Council to meet individual needs by giving households greater choice and control about their housing options and, ultimately, where they live.

### **3.2 Thriving Neighbourhoods and Communities**

Ensuring that the flexibilities available to the council are utilised to support and sustain community development, and contribute to neighbourhood regeneration and social inclusion.

### **3.3 Tackling Inequalities**

Implementation of these decisions supports a clear and transparent Allocations Policy to help applicants understand how they can access to social rented housing, how prescribed groups are assisted and ensures that social housing is let fairly and so as to fulfil our legal obligations

## **4. MAIN BODY OF THE REPORT**

### **4.1 Background**

The Lettings Policy sets out the criteria for rehousing. One of these criteria states that all blocks of flats and bungalows will be placed in one of three age designations. Properties are let only to people over the minimum age limit set for those properties. There are currently three age designations which are:

- Over 60 – available for people over 60 or with mobility needs
- Over 40 – available for people over 40 or with mobility needs and no children under 16
- General Needs – normally over 18 but otherwise no minimum age limit

**4.1.2** These age designation criteria have been in place since April 2004, at which time the supply and demand situation for available accommodation was different to the current high demand situation for all social housing. Currently many age designated properties have significantly lower demand than similar properties which have no age restrictions. They can be difficult to let even with a reduced or flexible eligibility and therefore have the potential to attract rent loss due to longer vacant periods.

**4.1.3** While there have been a few minor changes to some age designated accommodation, there has not been a significant review of these properties since April 2004. This means that many designations are out dated, do not reflect current demand and they prevents us from offering a greater choice to those who need housing the most.

**4.1.4** The review of the current Lettings Policy which concluded in 2012 included an extensive public consultation programme. This took place over several months and at a significant cost to the project overall. Views were sought from a wide range of interest groups and those supporting vulnerable applicants who are trying to access accommodation as well as Tenants and Residents Associations (TARA's), existing tenants and local area representatives.

**4.1.5** The review concluded with a report which was presented to Cabinet in March 2013 and which outlined the proposals for a new Allocations Policy to replace the Lettings Policy. Cabinet agreed these proposals and the implementation of the Allocations Policy, which included a change to the age designation rules. This new policy provides for just two age designations, these being over 60 or general needs.

It has therefore been necessary to review the age designation on all those properties in the current over 40 category and decide how they should be

designated in the future.

- 4.1.6** In addition to this, the cross party Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee who were heavily involved in the development of the Allocations Policy, also directed the Director of Housing to undertake a comprehensive review of all age designated properties to ensure that those in other age designations were still fit for purpose and represented the best use of Council stock.
- 4.1.7** The review of age designated accommodation has now concluded and has remained focused on these two aims throughout. These recommendations are based on lettings outcomes, so are demand led, represent the best use of Council housing stock and open up housing options to those who are vulnerable and in most need. The review also took into account evidence of such matters as age profiling, accommodation availability, some local amenities and location where access was more physically difficult due to topography or estate layout.
- 4.1.8** There are some areas to note from the consultation. Officer recommendations as a result of this review have not always been universally popular, mainly due to concerns around a perception that anti-social behaviour will increase due to younger residents in some blocks and a potential for a clash of lifestyles. Reassurance was offered throughout the consultation of the adequate provision to deal with Tenancy Management issues as they arise. There were also more specific issues on some estates and the outcomes arising from these which are detailed in Appendix 9.
- 4.1.9** The Allocations Policy is expected to be fully implemented by April 2016 once the necessary changes to IT facilities, staff training and procedural development have been completed. The outcomes from this review need to be implemented now to ensure that all preparations are in place for the implementation of the Council's Allocations Policy but also to ensure that ongoing allocations make the best use of all available Council stock.

## **4.2 Stock Information**

- 4.2.1** We have a Council housing stock of around 42,000 properties. Of these we currently have 10,897 properties which are age designated. This is equivalent to 26% of our total of housing stock. This is illustrated in Table 1 below. However, younger single people and couples are only able to access one bed or bedsit accommodation so the choices they have are comparatively fewer, yet this is where the greatest demand for our properties is.

Table 1

	<b>All Areas</b>	<b>% of all stock</b>
	41,281	100%
<b>Age designated</b>	10897	26%
<b>Adapted</b>	225	<0.01%
<b>General Need</b>	32,137	74%



Available for singles and couples under 40	5604	14%
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**4.2.2** The choices for younger people are also more restricted in areas which have a greater proportion of age designated properties than others, such as in the South, the East and North West areas.

**4.2.3** In terms of overall bidders, 87% of all the bids we receive are from people between the ages of 18-59, the remaining 13% are from people 60 and over. General needs properties also attract up to 10 times as many bidders as those properties set aside for those who meet the age restrictions. So one of the main aims of the review has been to release some age designated properties to general needs to give fairer access and offer increased options to those who need housing the most but currently have fewer choices.

### **4.3 Key Drivers**

**4.3.1** The release of more properties for single person accommodation to become available for general needs applicants is a key driver. This will be achieved as a result of some properties being redesignated based on lettings outcomes, and other accommodation being redesignated following the review of 60+ accommodation to ensure that best use is still being made of this housing. This will also provide a greater range of property types and sizes being available for applicants of all ages who wish to access Council accommodation.

**4.3.2** The Council's Allocations Policy which was agreed by Cabinet in 2013 and is due to be implemented in April 2016. The policy no longer makes provision for properties designated for applicants aged 40+ therefore consideration needs to be taken on how these properties may be designated in the future. The current letting and demand information supports redesignation of these properties to general needs accommodation or properties designated for applicants aged 60+ and these outcomes should therefore be implemented now. This will then allow the implementation of the Allocations Policy to be proceed in April 2016 unhindered in respect of this provision.

**4.3.3** In March 2013 changes to the Council's Lettings policy were agreed for the eligibility criteria in Section D of the Lettings Policy to be amended. Around twenty-five percent of all properties currently designated for applicants aged 60+ have two or three bedrooms. It has become increasingly difficult to let these properties when they become available as a majority of households in this age designation are no longer eligible for properties with more than one bedroom. Redesignating these properties to general needs accommodation allows families and larger households to access properties with two bedrooms or three bedrooms.

**4.3.4** In certain areas of Sheffield a significant amount of properties were previously designated as accommodation for applicants ages 40+ or 60+. This prevented younger applicants from accessing accommodation in some areas and estates. The review has aimed to make more accommodation available across the city as general needs accommodation therefore giving younger applicants greater choice and increased housing options.

**4.3.5** The location of some accommodation designated for older people is considered to be unsuitable and proves to be unpopular due to it being physically difficult access. Stocksbridge is an example where we currently have accommodation designated as 60+ however the topography presents accessibility issues for applicants with mobility needs which makes some properties unpopular with older people and they become difficult to let. This review has recognised where this has been a contributory factor to demand and lettings outcomes and redesignated to general needs accommodation has been recommended where this is appropriate. Summaries of all outcomes are shown in Appendices 3-8.

#### **4.4 Consultation Process**

**4.4.1** The Lettings Policy has always had provision to review and redesignate blocks of flats and bungalows when this is necessary.

This is the same provision that has been used throughout the review but the difference is that we have reviewed all the age designated stock across the City in a relatively short period of time. This has generated a number of enquiries and interest throughout the review process.

**4.4.2** Our review of age designated properties started in September 2014 with a pilot to inform the review process being undertaken on the Stannington estate.

Following the pilot, local area housing teams considered demand and availability information for age designated properties in their areas as well as the age profile of residents, the availability of alternative accommodation and local amenities were also taken into account. A set of proposals were produced for each property on each estate and these were then discussed with each local TARA. Where there is no TARA, areas set up local consultation events to discuss these proposals and seek support for them.

**4.4.3** There are 54 different TARA's who have worked with local area housing staff to consider the proposals which affect their estates. The great majority have supported the proposals put forward to them.

Some TARA's, or residents at public meetings, have raised concerns and these have either been taken on board and proposals amended and then subsequently resubmitted to the TARA for consideration, or the original proposals have remained but with an undertaking that a further review will be undertaken every 12 months to ensure that supply and demand for these properties continues at a sustainable level. Appendix 9 sets out particular issues relating to individual estates which were identified during the consultation process.

**4.4.4** In a very few cases we have worked extensively with local residents to reassure them, dispel concerns about younger people and families moving into neighbourhoods and to try to find a solution which is mutually acceptable

while being mindful that these are demand led proposals. In particular, additional consultation events were held on the Painted Fabrics estate. This estate contains a cluster of properties that include some two bedroom 60+ flats, which due to the eligibility rules have proved hard to let. Local tenants were concerned about the changes being introduced and the possibility of younger residents introducing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the breakdown of the traditional older community. Local residents have been informed about Sheffield City Councils ASB processes and procedures, which are in place and used successfully, and we have also advised that evidence does not show a link between younger adult tenants and an increased likelihood for them to cause ASB.

**4.4.5** Once these were considered by the TARA or public meeting the proposed changes to age designations were presented to the Local Area Housing Forum (LAHF) as formal recommendations. All the recommendations which have been presented to LAHF have been supported.

**4.4.6** Further details of the outcomes of the review of age designated properties, by area and by estate, is shown at Appendices 3-8 . Approval is now sought for implementation of these outcomes from the Cabinet Member for Housing.

#### **4.5 Outcomes following the review**

**4.5.1** It is important to note that no immediate changes will take place following the implementation of the revised age designations. It is only as properties which have been redesignated become available that they are advertised with the new criteria, so the changes will happen incrementally over time.

**4.5.2** Each resident who is living in a block which has had a change to the designation will receive an individual notification advising them of the change and explaining what this means for them. The Lettings Policy allows us to offer a priority to any resident who wants to move from a 60+ property and which is redesignated to general needs and we include advice to this effect to those affected in this way.

**4.5.3** Once these outcomes are implemented, there will be less age designated housing stock across the city. There will be approximately 3246 properties designated for applicants aged 60+ and an additional 4670 properties redesignated as general needs accommodation. The general needs accommodation will be a mix of flats and bungalows with one, two and three bedrooms.

**4.5.4** Once the outcomes of the review have been implemented there will be increased housing options for applicants who need to access general needs accommodation and more appropriate options for applicants who want a 60+ property.

#### **4.6 Financial Implications**

- 4.6.1** Some accommodation currently designated for people over 40 is proving difficult to let. This can be for a number of reasons. There is a greater choice for people over 40 than younger people so they have more flexibility to exercise choice. The physical locations of some properties, proximity to local facilities and availability of transport links can also make some properties unattractive to older people and again influence their decision to consider these as suitable housing options. Affordability, particularly for those who are dependent upon housing benefits may also be an issue as larger properties could be subject to benefit restrictions for some, and so become unattractive for financial reasons.
- 4.6.2** Accommodation that is not let speedily and efficiently quickly starts to incur additional void costs and rent loss. Redesignation of these properties ensures that they become available to people of all ages. It allows greater choice to a wider range of applicants, will generate increased demand and result in them being let more quickly.
- 4.6.3** Additionally, once these designations are implemented it is expected that a saving is likely on temporary accommodation budgets. This is because more accommodation suitable for younger single people, couples and families should become available for those with an urgent housing need. This will reduce the number of households living in expensive temporary accommodation and for those who are accommodated in this way it is likely that longer term accommodation becomes available sooner which would save the Council ongoing costs.
- 4.6.4** There will be no additional budgetary requirements as a result of implementing these decisions now. The Allocations Policy implementation team is already in place and they have capacity to undertake the necessary preparatory work required to implement these decisions.
- 4.6.5** There are no IT developments to implement these decisions, and therefore no associated IT costs.

## **4.7 Legal Implications**

- 4.7.1** Part VI Housing Act 1996 requires a local housing authority to adopt an “allocations scheme” and, except in defined circumstances, to allocate property only in accordance with the scheme. When framing the scheme the authority must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State and to its own homelessness strategy (approved by Cabinet in July 2010) and tenancy strategy (approved by the Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods in January 2012).
- 4.7.2** The Council has a duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty) in the exercise of its functions to have regard to

the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 4.7.3** In addition there is a legitimate expectation of consultation where public services are potentially the subject of a significant level of change. In reviewing the consultation, the Cabinet Member must be satisfied as to the following:-
- (i) consultation has taken place when the proposals are still at a formative stage;
  - (ii) sufficient reasons have been put forward for the proposals to allow for intelligent consideration and response;
  - (iii) adequate time has been given for consideration and response; and
  - (iv) the product of consultation has been conscientiously taken into account.
- 4.7.4** The public sector equality duty has been taken into account in drawing up the proposals recommended in this report, and in carrying out consultation. Regard has been had to the responses to the consultation in finalising the proposals.

## **4.8 Equality Implications**

- 4.8.1** Equalities legislation applies to organisations that provide services, including letting properties. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) on Age Designation was carried out which was presented to and considered by the cross party Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee in April 2012 at the time the Allocations Policy was being developed. This was prior to the Allocations Policy being agreed by Cabinet which was in March 2013. A copy of the original EIA is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.8.2** The provisions of the Equality Act 2010 relating to age came into force in April 2012. This means that age is a protected characteristic and that a Policy that discriminates on the grounds of age will be unlawful unless it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 4.8.3** Age designation of stock has to be justifiable which means there must be sufficient evidence to justify the continued or new Policy. Evidence must be robust which is why these outcomes are demand based rather than based on anecdotal evidence which would be open to challenge. These decisions will ensure that access to housing for all applicants who want to access social housing is fair and equitable. A renewed EIA has been carried out into the impact of the outcomes of the redesignation review, which summarises the impacts and mitigating actions. A copy of this is attached at Appendix 2.
- 4.8.4** The implementation of these outcomes will have a negative impact for

people over 40 and over 60 as they will have to compete now with all the age groups. It is also known that older people sometimes do not want to mix with younger people because of the perception that anti-social behaviour (ASB) is perpetrated by younger people and that age designation stops ASB.

In order to mitigate this negative impact we talked to residents as part of the consultation process in relation to the age designation review. We have listened to their concerns and have tried to reassure them including discussing options for older residents and ensuring that effective policies are in place for dealing with ASB incidents.

- 4.8.5** Each resident who is currently living in a property which is affected by a changed age designation will receive an individual letter explaining what the change means for them. The letter will also explain what their options are if they choose to move, how to access support, and if they are eligible, request a rehousing priority to move.
- 4.8.6** We are also mindful that in those blocks of flats which are redesignated from 60+ to general needs the tenant profile will change over time. This may be a concern for some tenants who are currently living in over 60 blocks which are changing to general needs. Some existing tenants faced with this situation may be sensitive to this type of change and may choose to move to other accommodation which is exclusive to over 60's residents.
- 4.8.7** The Lettings Policy currently makes provision for this particular circumstance and allows for the award of a rehousing priority for up to 12 months after this type of redesignation has taken place to allow those in this circumstance to move to another over 60's property. Applicants over aged over 60 will be able to apply for priority under the Lettings Policy from the date of redesignation until the policy ceases to be in force which is expected to be in March 2016.
- 4.8.8** From April 2016 those affected in this way will then be able to apply for priority under the Allocations Policy. There is no deadline for this type of application: the time since redesignation has taken place may be considered as a factor in deciding whether there is a need to move but on the other hand residents can take time to see if the redesignation genuinely affects their quality of life..
- 4.8.9** There will however be a positive impact for people under 40 as the number of properties available to this group of people increases with the removal of age banding to some properties. The removal of age banding will mean that younger people are not discriminated against.
- 4.8.10** There is also a commitment to undertake a review of the revised designations once they have been implemented. These reviews will, again, be based on demand information and lettings outcomes and will take place at least once in every 12 months. Where further changes are deemed to be necessary, these will be subject to a local consultation and the appropriate authorisation process.

## **5.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

- 5.1** An alternative is to not implement these outcomes. This presents difficulties in terms of ensuring that people of all ages have fair access to accommodation in all areas of the City. It is likely that the Council may also be subject to challenge due to a continued use of age designation policy which results in an unjustifiable restriction to certain age groups.
- 5.2** Another alternative would be to implement these outcomes but only in certain areas of the City. This is highly likely to be controversial. It would be inconsistent, would be viewed as unequitable and again could be considered to present an unjustified restriction to accommodation across the City to certain age groups.
- 5.3** Both these alternatives would also create difficulties for the implementation of the Allocations Policy and would be likely to impact on the delivery date which is currently scheduled for April 2016.

## **6.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are a number of reasons for introducing these changes:

- 6.1** In March 2013 changes to the Council's Lettings policy were agreed for the eligibility criteria in Section D of the Lettings Policy to be amended. Twenty-five percent of all current properties designated for applicants aged 60+ have two or three bedrooms. It has become increasingly difficult to let these properties when they become available as a majority of applicants in this age band are no longer eligible for properties with more than one bedroom. Re-designating these properties to general needs accommodation allows families and larger households to access properties with two bedrooms or three bedrooms.
- 6.2** In certain areas of Sheffield a significant amount of properties were previously designated as accommodation for applicants ages 40+ or 60+. This prevented younger applicants from accessing accommodation in certain areas of the city. The review has aimed to make more accommodation available across the city as general needs accommodation therefore giving younger applicants' choice and increased housing options.
- 6.3** The location of some accommodation designated for applicants aged 60+ is unsuitable due to it being physically difficult access therefore as part of the review this accommodation has been recommended to become general needs accommodation.
- 6.4** The Council's Allocations Policy which was agreed by Cabinet in 2013 and is due to be implemented in April 2016. The policy no longer makes provision for properties designated for applicants aged 40+ therefore these properties require re-designating to either general needs accommodation or properties designated for applicants aged 60+. These proposals need implementing

now to ensure that the relevant preparations are in place for the implementation of this policy.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Recommendations:**

That the Cabinet Member for Housing:

- a. Agrees the age designation proposals as set out in Appendices 3-8 to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.
- b. Notes that a review of age designated properties will take place annually to allow the Council to monitor the demand and supply of accommodation and change that designation where appropriate.