

# Pocket moves to rental sector with Westminster council deal

Affordable housing to be built on former BT repeater site will be followed by more schemes for key workers

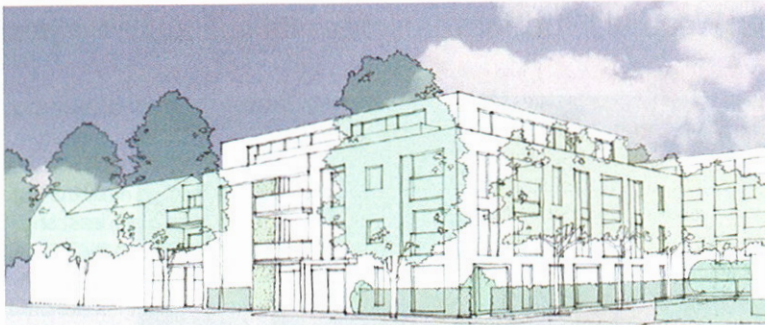
BY HANNAH BRENTON

Bite-sized flat developer Pocket Living is teaming up with Westminster City Council to deliver an affordable rented scheme in the heart of London.

Westminster has acquired the former BT repeater site on Ashbridge Street from Telereal Trillium using a pot of money generated from section 106 agreements.

The deal at Ashbridge Street is expected to be the first of a wider roll-out of at least three more sites across the central London borough to house key workers such as nurses.

Pocket – which specialises in delivering smaller one-bed flats sold at a 20% discount to the market rate – will act as development manager to create a 38-unit discount rental scheme, which



is expected to be worth more than £12m. The partnership between the council and Pocket aims to address a shortage of affordable homes for low-to-middle income Londoners in central London.

Nick Cuff, land director at Pocket, told *Property Week*: “We had been exploring with Westminster the idea of acquiring

on their behalf small infill sites in central London where they can use their section 106 monies that they have built up from off-site contributions.

“We are looking at a range of other sites that could deliver a number of different buildings across central London for intermediate rent with a Pocket-branded building.”

The scheme at Ashbridge Street marks a new initiative for Pocket as it has so far largely delivered for-sale one-bed homes.

Cuff said the rental homes could help tenants get onto the housing ladder and create a new audience for Pocket’s for-sale product.

It will also be the first pilot of Pocket’s two-bed two-person 592 sq ft flats designed for sharers.

Rents in the building could be as low as 50% of market rent, but are likely to be pegged to incomes.

Pocket, founded by Marc Vlessing and Paul Harbard in 2007, was backed by the Greater London Authority in 2013 with a £21.7m loan for 10 years.

The developer will now draw up a planning application for the council expected to be submitted this autumn.