

Housing Allocations Policy 2018

Summary of the Proposed Key Changes

Proposed Change	Detail of proposed changes	What we do now	Rationale for changes and the potential impact
i. Removal of Band E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have reduced the number of priority Bands by condensing the existing five (A-E) to four (A-D). Reasons for changes; 	<p>Currently the number of bands is five (A-E) covering a number of priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Band A – Emergency and highest priority Band B – Urgent need Band C – Identified housing need Band D – Low level of need and limited local connection Band E – No need and /or no local connection 	<p>This will enable us to categorise priority need more efficiently and effectively, and to reduce confusion for applicants.</p> <p>Allows for a more flexible structure through which we can allocate properties in an increased and timely manner.</p> <p>Increasingly we need to assume an improved client centric approach with people being dealt with as individuals and on their own merits, delivering fairness at all times. This will require careful, closer and more intelligent management of the Register. The revised Policy takes into account this style of approach.</p> <p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>The impact of this change is considered low but positive. Ongoing review of the new categorisation will monitor the application, efficiency and effectiveness of this change.</p>
ii. Removal of the age limit for Sheltered Housing – now Housing with support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our recommendation is that the age limit is removed, and sheltered accommodation should be based on need rather than age. 	<p>Currently applicants aged 60 and above with a low level support need are allocated Sheltered housing.</p>	<p>It is felt that the “sheltered” concept is no longer fit for purpose in modern approaches. People aged 60+ no longer feel they need “sheltered” accommodation and yet there are younger people who have housing support needs who would benefit from the bricks and mortar schemes with more support targeted at those vulnerable people (of any age) who really need it.</p> <p>Allows applicants of all ages to be considered for ‘Housing with Support’ and not restricting applicants of a certain age.</p> <p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>The revised criteria for Housing with Support accommodation will ensure that there are appropriate properties for all of those people, regardless of their age, who are independent but need a low level of support. This also includes people who can live</p>

			<p>independently with the aid of an appropriate care package. Applicants who are disabled may also be considered for this type of accommodation.</p> <p>The positive impact of this recommended change is the creation of an inter-generationally mixed housing community, where people of different ages and similar needs, can offer additional support to each other. Also the opportunity to socialise with different age groups will promote increased health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The recommended change will allow the Council to utilise its housing with support accommodation more appropriately and to offer it to the most vulnerable people and those in most need irrespective of age.</p> <p>The recommended change to 'housing with support' accommodation (previously sheltered accommodation) does not affect the right to buy as these properties remain compliant with the criteria set out in paragraphs 7, 9, 10 or 11 of Schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985, and the Council will use the accommodation for those people who are exempt from right to buy due to a physical disability, mental disorder or who are over 60 with a low level of support need.</p>
<p>iii. Greater emphasis on the use of the Private Rented Sector (PRS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly, with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, enactment due 3 April 2018, we will have to seek options within the PRS for those to whom we owe a Statutory Duty as opposed to people waiting for social housing Overall, the new Policy requires more commentary 	<p>Currently the Private Rented Sector is in part being utilised to prevent homelessness where possible.</p>	<p>As the number of Council-owned properties reduces, the need for accommodation has increased and the Council will have a legal duty to prevent and relieve homelessness from 3 April 2018.</p> <p>The Private Rented Sector is a key tool which can be used to help applicants deemed to be able to afford this option.</p> <p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>The impact of this recommended change is to open up greater opportunity, choice and pool of properties for people based on affordability.</p>

	around the use of PRS in a number of different situations – i.e. PRS Access Scheme		
iv. Local Connection changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants must live in the Borough for at least the previous 2 years before they can be included on the Housing Register ▪ Applicants who do not live in the Borough must have permanent employment in the Borough for a minimum of 35 hours per week (unless unable to do so on grounds of disability) and have done so for at least 2 years continuously before they can be included on the Housing Register ▪ Applicants who wish to establish a local connection through close relative living in the Borough for at least 5 years must provide evidence that there is a support or welfare need, either for the applicant(s) or the relative who is a local resident ▪ Social Housing tenants in England who qualify under the Right to Move criteria 	Currently the Policy states that the Local Connection criterion is set at one year for prospective applicants.	<p>The recommendation is to change the current criteria for a 'local connection', from one year to two years, for both living and working in the Borough. Currently the requirement for 'Local Connection' lacks uniformity with local housing areas but by changing our criteria to reflect neighbouring authorities, this will reduce the number of applicants to our Register who are currently granted access via this route.</p> <p>For establishing a 'Local Connection' through a close relative, the period is set at five years in line with the new legislation, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p> <p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>The impact of this change is relatively low, however it does bring the Council's Policy in line with neighbouring Boroughs criteria, thus reducing the number of applicants attracted to the Council's Housing Register through this route.</p>
v. Applications from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single applicants maximum 	Current criteria is £30,000	The recommendation is for income, savings and asset limits to

those with financial resources	<p>gross income per year changed from £30,000 to £25,000 in line with THL income criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Savings and/or assets changed from £30,000 to £16,000 Applicants who have sold a property in the last 7 years will be asked to provide evidence of the sale and details of any capital gained from the sale. Applicants will be disqualified if they disposed of capital without making adequate housing arrangements, for example, by gifting the capital to relatives or friends. 	<p>for both gross income and savings/assets.</p> <p>Ownership of, or an interest in, a property, whether locally or elsewhere (within the UK or outside) is a financial resource. Currently there is no timescale considered when an applicant registers.</p>	<p>be reduced. Income limits to reduce in line with the average wage and Thamesway Housing Limited (THL) income criteria to £25,000 (prev. £30,000), and savings/assets levels to £16,000 (prev. £30,000) in line with Housing Benefit regulations.</p> <p>In addition, the new Policy incorporates a timescale for applicants who have sold a property within the last 7 years. This clarifies the criteria regarding disposal of capital without making adequate housing arrangements.</p> <p>The recommended change brings the Council's Policy into line with neighbouring Boroughs.</p> <p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>The impact is relatively low.</p>
vi. Under Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the applicant is a tenant of a Housing Association and where they will release a home with one or more bedrooms over their current housing need under this Policy, and their landlord agreed that their vacated property will be offered to the Council for nomination by the Council, outside of established Nominations Agreements. 	<p>The current policy is silent on this point.</p>	<p>Currently in certain cases, those applicants who have downsized from a housing association property are accepted as Band B, without the housing association property being released for advertising via Hometrak. This recommended change now stipulates that for those people wishing to downsize from a Housing Association property that we will only accept them onto the Housing Register as long as the Housing Association releases the property for re-advertising through Hometrak.</p> <p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>The recommended change ensures that the Council gains benefit for the downsizing process from Housing Association properties by receiving family homes onto Hometrak.</p>
vii. Reasonable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who do not meet 	<p>The current policy is silent</p>	<p>Amended as a result of new legislation for which the Council is</p>

<p>Preference - no Local Connection</p>	<p>the qualification criteria and have no Local Connection but who have been assessed as having an exceptional or emergency need to move, as authorised by the Housing Needs Manager in consultation with the Strategic Director - Band C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants assessed as falling into one of the Reasonable Preference groups, but where there is no Local Connection to the Borough of Woking as authorised by the Housing Needs Manager in consultation with the Strategic Director - Band D 	<p>on these points.</p>	<p>required to follow.</p> <p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>This recommended change will have a positive impact on those who not have previously been considered.</p>
<p>viii. Refusal of offers/failure to view</p>	<p>Applicants will be placed into Band D (low priority) in the following circumstances;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who, having successfully bid for a property, refuse to accept it, twice within 12 months for no evidenced reason and assessed as an unreasonable refusal by an Allocations Officer. Emergency Management transfers in Band A who refuse one suitable offer of rehousing where they have an existing transfer application 	<p>The existing policy lacks clarity in this area and is too loose on how refusal of offers/failure to view are dealt with. Currently applicants are granted two refusals (no timescale) before applications are reassessed.</p>	<p>The existing policy lacks clarity in this area and is too loose on how refusals of offers/failure to view are dealt with. Currently applicants are granted two refusals (no timescale) before applications are reassessed. The recommendation is for a clearer definition of circumstances where an applicant refuses a property and clear reasoning for re-banding applicants including timescales (12 months).</p> <p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>This recommended change is a positive impact for Housing Officers as procedures are clearly stated and applicants who refuse/fail to view will get reassessed sooner, more consistently and re-banding where appropriate. In terms of the impact on those applicants who are actively bidding although miss out on offers, this recommended change will ensure that they have an increased chance of being successful.</p>

	<p>live at the time of the management transfer request.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who, having successfully bid for a property, fail to view a property without a reasonable cause and as assessed by an Allocations Officer. 		