



# HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Allocation Policy Summary Document (2019)

## **Introduction**

This summary policy document outlines the following:

- Why do we need a Housing Allocation policy
- Who can apply for to join the Housing Register
- How to join the Housing Register
- How applicants are assessed and prioritised for housing
- Reasons for removal from the Housing Register
- How the Council allocates housing
- Accepting an offer
- Refusal of offers for housing
- Reviews of applications
- Further information/contact details

### **Why do we need a Housing Allocation policy**

Every local authority must have a housing allocation policy (hereinafter referred to as “the full policy”).

In Hertsmere Council (“the Council”) the demand for social housing is very much greater than the number of homes available. Therefore, it is usually only possible to assist those with the highest of housing needs.

Acceptance onto the Housing Register is not a guarantee that an offer of social housing accommodation will ever be made. Even those assessed as having a high priority for housing will generally wait a considerable time before receiving an offer of accommodation

The Council does not own any housing stock. However, the Council has nomination rights of between 75% and 100% of vacant properties owned by Housing Associations within the borough. The housing allocation policy endeavours to make the best use of housing stock and to help those who are most vulnerable and in need of affordable housing.

### **Who can apply for to join the Housing Register**

Affordable housing will only be allocated to those households who are eligible. To join the Housing Register, applicants must also be a ‘qualifying person’. In addition, all applicants must also have:

- 1) A local connection to Hertsmere Council
- 2) Insufficient financial resource or income to resolve their own housing need
- 3) Must be able to demonstrate a housing need

*Please see paragraphs 38 to 44 of the full policy for further details.*

### **How to join the Housing Register**

Applications must be made at [www.hertsmerehomes.org.uk](http://www.hertsmerehomes.org.uk). Applicants are required to provide independent documentary proof in support of their application.

*Please see paragraphs 45 to 47 of the full policy for further details.*

### **How applicants are assessed and prioritised for housing**

If the Council is satisfied that an applicant is eligible, has a local connection and qualifies to join the Housing Register, an initial assessment will be made, based on the information given in the application form and any other information available or requested. The application will be prioritised based on how urgent the need for housing is and will be placed in the appropriate bedroom category for their household size and in one of the five priority bands A to E. The details of the priority bands are as follows:

<b>Bands</b>	<b>Description of each band</b>
<b>Band A</b>  <b>Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Life threatening or emergency medical need which would be alleviated by moving to alternative accommodation.</li><li>• Applicants needing to move urgently where there is an imminent serious risk of harm if they remain in their current accommodation.</li><li>• Emergency Housing Social Welfare Need</li></ul>
<b>Band B</b>  <b>Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Urgent Medical Need – which would be alleviated by moving to alternative accommodation</li><li>• Urgent Housing Social Welfare Need</li><li>• The council has accepted a duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Applicants will only be made one offer of accommodation in this band; this offer could be an offer of private rented accommodation.</li><li>• The applicant is releasing a social housing adapted property - An applicant releasing an adapted property will be awarded Band B if the following criteria are met:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) The property is a social housing property in Hertsmere and has what the Council defines as a major adaptation, and</li><li>(b) There is a current need for a property with that adaptation.</li></ul></li><li>• The applicant is in a supported housing scheme where the council has agreed move on arrangements in place. The applicant must be ready to move into independent accommodation verified by their support or</li></ul>

	<p>keyworker. Applicants will be made only one offer of accommodation in this band.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant is under-occupying their home by one or more bedrooms - social housing tenants residing in Hertsmere only.</li> <li>• The applicant is releasing a one bedroom general needs property to move to age restricted accommodation – social housing tenants residing in Hertsmere only.</li> <li>• The applicant is a young person leaving care. Applicants will only be made one offer of accommodation in this band.</li> <li>• The applicant or their partner is in the armed forces or a veteran with a minimum of two years’ service; has a local connection to Hertsmere under the Housing Act 1996 Part 6 and meets at least one of the criteria listed in Bands C to E.</li> <li>• The applicant has been awarded management transfer status by their landlord. – This applies only to tenants of social landlords in Hertsmere where the council has 100% nomination rights to vacant properties.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Band C</b></p> <p><b>Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant medical need which would be alleviated by moving to alternative accommodation.</li> <li>• Significant Housing Social Welfare Need.</li> <li>• The applicant is assessed as lacking two or more bedrooms.</li> <li>• The applicant is assessed as lacking one bedroom where there are 2 children of opposite sexes sharing a bedroom and one child is over 10 years old.</li> <li>• The applicant is a retiring or redundant member of council staff in Tied Accommodation (Service Occupiers) – Employed by Hertsmere Borough Council or Hertfordshire County Council only.</li> <li>• The applicant has dependent children, or is expecting their first child, living in insecure accommodation, e.g. with family or friends, and lacking a bedroom or sharing facilities.</li> <li>• The applicant is in a supported housing scheme within Hertsmere where the council has agreed move on arrangements in place and the applicant has refused one suitable offer whilst in Band B.</li> <li>• The applicant is a young person leaving care and the applicant has refused one suitable offer whilst in Band B.</li> <li>• Applicants to which the council has accepted the full housing duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reductions Act 2017). The applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 but do not meet the local connection requirement of the Council’s Housing Register under part 6 of the HA 1996. Applicants will only be made one offer of accommodation in this band; this offer could be an offer of private rented accommodation.</li> <li>• Applicants who are owed the relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and who are placed in temporary accommodation pending decision. Applicants will only be made one offer of accommodation in this band; this offer could be an offer of private rented accommodation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants owed the prevention duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or homelessness has been prevented. The applicant is assessed by the council as in priority need and the applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Applicants will only be made one offer of accommodation in this band.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Band D</b></p> <p><b>Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant is assessed as lacking one bedroom.</li> <li>• Applicants who are owed the relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and assessed by the council as not in priority need and the applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Applicants will only be made one offer of accommodation in this band.</li> <li>• Applicants who are owed the prevention duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or homelessness has been prevented. The applicant is not in priority need and the applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Applicants will only be made one offer of accommodation in this band.</li> <li>• Applicants where the council has agreed they are homeless but has decided that they are not in priority need or that they are intentionally homeless and the applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.</li> <li>• Applicants where the council has ended the full housing duty because of a refusal of a suitable offer of accommodation; the applicant is still homeless and the applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.</li> <li>• Applicants who are owed the relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 assessed by the council as likely to be in priority need. The applicant has refused one suitable offer whilst in Band C.</li> <li>• Applicants where the council has prevented homelessness, the applicant is still living in insecure accommodation and the applicant has refused one suitable offer whilst in Band C. The applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Band E</b></p> <p><b>Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants aged 50 and over with a local connection but do not fall into any of the criteria in Bands A to D and are applying for age restricted housing.</li> <li>• Applicants who are owed the relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act (“HRA”) 2017, assessed by the council as not in priority need and the applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. The applicant has refused one suitable offer of accommodation whilst in Band D.</li> <li>• Applicants where the council has ended the HRA relief duty because of a refusal of a suitable offer of accommodation; the applicant is still homeless and the applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996</li> <li>• Applicant living in insecure accommodation. e.g lodging with a non family member, with family, friends or short term hostel/homeless accommodation.</li> <li>• Applicants where the council has prevented homelessness, the applicant is still living in insecure accommodation and the applicant has refused one</li> </ul>

	suitable offer whilst in Band D. The applicant has a local connection to Hertsmere under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.
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Applicants will be given a “priority date” which will identify priority within the bands. Initially, the priority date will be the date of registration. Should an applicant’s circumstances change, and their band changes, so may the priority date.

Please note that members of the Armed Forces and the Reserve Forces are not required to demonstrate a local connection to Hertsmere in order to join the Housing Register. This means that these applicants will be allowed to register for housing as long as they fall into a reasonable preference category. The Council will also give additional priority to such applications.

The Council allocates properties through a system of Choice Based Lettings. The Council is committed to an Allocations Policy that offers more choice to those seeking housing and enables people to make informed decisions about their housing options. The table below indicates the size and number of bedrooms an applicant can bid for:

<b>Household size</b>	<b>Bedroom need</b>
Single person (not part of a larger household)	studio/1 bedroom
Single person with staying access to one child	studio/1 bedroom
Single person/couple	1 bedroom
Single person/couple with staying access to two or more children	1 bedroom
Single person/couple (where expecting first child)	1 bedroom
Couple or single person and one child	2 bedrooms
Couple or single person and two children of the same sex, both children under 16 years	2 bedrooms
Couple or single person and two children of different sex, both children under 10 years	2 bedrooms
Couple or single person and two children of the same sex, where one child is 16 years or older and there is an age gap of 5 or more years	3 bedrooms
Couple or single person and two children of the opposite sex, where one child is 10 years or older	3 bedrooms
Couple or single persons and three children of any age	3 bedrooms
Single person with four children of any age	3 bedrooms

Couple with 4 or more children of any age	3 bedrooms, 3 bedroom with dining room or 4 bedrooms
Couple or single person with 5 or more children of any age	4 bedrooms

*Please see paragraphs 53 to 60 and 96 to 199 of the full policy for further details.*

### **Reasons for removal from the Housing Register**

The Council will remove an application from the Housing Register if:

- The applicant request this in writing
- The applicant dies or no longer meet the qualifying criteria
- The applicant repeatedly fails to respond to correspondence
- The applicant’s housing needs have been met
- The applicant made no bids for a period of 18 consecutive months
- The applicant failed to notify the Council of a relevant change of circumstances
- The applicant gave a false or misleading statement or withheld relevant information in their application

*Please see paragraphs 89 to 94 of the full policy for further details.*

### **How the Council allocates housing**

The Council allocates properties through a system of Choice Based Lettings. The Council is committed to an Allocations Policy that offers more choice to those seeking housing and enables people to make informed decisions about their housing options.

The Council will always offer the applicant a property that meets their housing needs, in a location that is suitable for the applicant, and as close to services and support they require. Properties will be allocated to the applicant with the greatest housing need i.e. on a higher priority band.

The Council allocates properties by:

- **Advertising** – Available properties will be advertised daily on the Hertsmere Homes website and applicants can bid for up to 3 properties at any one time. All vacant homes will be advertised in the first instance for a minimum of 5 days. Applicants should only bid for properties that are suitable for the size of their household.

- **Direct lets** - In a limited number of cases, the Council may allocate a property directly to an applicant. Properties allocated this way may not be advertised on the choice based lettings scheme.

Priority for ground floor flats and bungalows will generally be given to applicants with an assessed medical need for ground floor accommodation or where there are agreed mobility issues.

Where an already adapted property requires further adaptations to make it suitable for the applicant, the Council will make an assessment in consultation with the housing association as to whether or not the property is suitable for the applicants needs prior to an offer being made.

*Please see paragraphs 131 to 160 of the full policy for further details.*

### **Accepting an offer**

If a successful bid is placed, applicants must have their circumstances and housing conditions verified before the Council can nominate the applicant to a Housing Association for an offer of accommodation. The verification process may be carried out by the Council or the relevant Housing Association. Verification may include a home visit where appropriate.

The Council will also check with credit rating agencies and the land registry, where appropriate and necessary, to determine whether the applicant has accommodation available to them elsewhere and whether they have undeclared sources of income and/or savings.

*Please see paragraphs 161 to 169 of the full policy for further details.*

### **Refusal or withdrawal of offers for housing**

Applicants other than those detailed below may refuse two offers of accommodation they have successfully bid for without sanction. If an applicant refuses a third offer of accommodation that the Council deems suitable their application will be removed from the Housing Register. In exceptional circumstances, the landlord or Council may withdraw an offer of accommodation.

*Please see paragraphs 170 to 184 of the full policy for further details.*

### **Decisions and reviews of applications**

The Council may review applications annually, namely on the anniversary of the date of registration, or at any time it feels necessary. If this is the case, applicants will be asked



to confirm whether they wish to remain on the Housing Register and whether there has been any change in their circumstances. If an applicant fails to renew their application within the specified time period they will be removed from the Housing Register.

All applicants have the right to request a review if they are unhappy with the Council's decisions. The Council will notify the applicant of its decision in writing, with the reasons explained. Applicants have a right to request for a review of the decision. This request must be made in writing within 21 days of receipt of the original decision, and it must include reasons for requesting the review.

The review will be considered and a decision will normally be given within 56 days. In complex cases it may not be possible to give a decision in 56 days and it may take longer. Where this is the case the applicant or their legal representative will be notified in writing prior to expiry of the 56 day period.

*Please see paragraphs 87 to 88 and 185 to 193 of the full policy for further details.*

#### **Further information/contact details**

For further information please contact the Housing Options team of Hertsmere Council on 020 8207 2277 or visit [www.hertsmere.gov.uk](http://www.hertsmere.gov.uk)

Further information is also available directly from Hertsmere Homes' website: [www.hertsmerehomes.org.uk](http://www.hertsmerehomes.org.uk).

A full copy of the Council's Housing Allocation Policy can be found on its website: [www.hertsmere.gov.uk](http://www.hertsmere.gov.uk)