

Allocations Policy

Linked strategies	Transforming Our Future
Version	3.0
Date Approved By	Board (27 February 2020)
Policy Level	1
Agreed by Union	n/a
Date Effective	27 February 2020
Date of Next Review	February 2023
Policy Owner	Head of Housing and Support Services

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 We will let our homes in such a way to support the creation and development of balanced and sustainable communities, whilst giving reasonable preference to those in priority housing need.
- 1.2 We will let our properties using the appropriate Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system operated by, or on behalf of the relevant local authority.
- 1.3 We will aim to be responsive to individual needs and preferences, considering relevant diversity and support issues. Our approach to lettings will be transparent, flexible, fair, non-discriminatory and effectively controlled.
- 1.4 We will participate in national, regional and local exchange schemes so that those wishing to move are given every possible opportunity.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to new applicants seeking to be housed by Greatwell Homes alongside existing customers of Greatwell Homes who wish to transfer within our housing stock.
- 2.2 Greatwell Homes offer several housing products which consist of;
 - Social or Affordable housing for rent (this includes general needs accommodation and independent living for over 55s)
 - Market Rent
 - Shared Ownership
 - Rent Plus
 - Rent to Buy

This policy applies to our social and affordable rent and market rent tenancies.

- 2.3 The allocation of temporary accommodation is not covered by this policy. This is covered by a separate service level agreement. Shared ownership leases and Rent to Buy tenancies are covered by our Home Ownership policy and Rent Plus tenancies are governed by the conditions set out by Rent Plus as the property owner.
- 2.4 The types of tenancy we will grant to applicants and customers housed by Greatwell Homes are set out in our Tenure Policy which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

3 Definitions

3.1 Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

These schemes are usually established by partnerships of local authorities and housing associations. CBLs are designed to introduce an element of choice for people who apply for council and housing association homes by requesting applicants to place bids on properties they are interested in. Amongst those who have placed a bid, the allocation of the property is based upon a priority-based assessment of need.

3.2 Nominations Deed / Agreement

An agreement between a housing association and local authority in which the two organisations agree to work in partnership to address housing need in the local area. The agreement will set out an agreed percentage of properties that the local authority can nominate applicants from the waiting list to, with the remaining amount being let by the association.

4 Policy Principles

- 4.1 Through operation of this policy, we will demonstrate compliance with our duty under s. 170 of The Housing Act (1996) which obliges social landlords to work co-operatively with local authorities to offer accommodation to those in priority housing need through a CBL scheme.
- 4.2 We will ensure we are compliant with our obligations with the nominations deed that was agreed as part of the stock Transfer Agreement and also with nominations agreements made as part of new housing developments.
- 4.3 We will ensure compliance with the relevant legislation and regulation, specifically the Tenancy Standard.
- 4.4 Through operation of this policy we will demonstrate effective use of our housing stock to meet the needs of applicants and customers.
- 4.5 We will be fair and transparent in the allocation of housing to applicants and customers and have a clear and auditable process in cases where housing is offered to staff, Board members or those closely connected to them.

5 The Housing Register

- 5.1 We will make use of the single housing register, managed by, or on behalf of the relevant local authority.
- 5.2 In doing so, we recognise that different local authorities may have different policies in place to reflect local issues of supply and demand.

6 Allocating Homes

6.1 Social and Affordable Rent Tenancies (General Needs and Independent Living)

- 6.1.1 Applicants will bid for homes in accordance with the rules associated with the relevant CBL scheme.
- 6.1.2 As part of the registration process, the local authority will assess each applicants' circumstances and support needs.
- 6.1.3 Applicants nominated to Greatwell Homes by the local authority will have their circumstances and support needs assessed by the relevant Neighbourhood Housing Officer before an offer of accommodation is made.
- 6.1.4 This assessment will assess issues such as affordability, sustainability, previous conduct and support needs.
- 6.1.5 Nominees assessed as 'medium' or 'high' risk will be referred to either the Housing Services Manager or Income Services Manager (or the relevant senior officer in their absence) to agree what measures need to be put in place to minimise the risk of tenancy failure.
- 6.1.6 Ultimately, Greatwell Homes reserves the right to refuse a nomination if the evidence shows the tenancy on offer is unlikely to be sustainable. In these circumstances we will provide the nominee with our reasons, alongside advice on what they can do to improve their situation.
- 6.1.7 In cases where an offer of accommodation is recommended in conjunction with partnership forums (such as Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - MARAC) we will ensure that a robust risk assessment is completed by the relevant agencies prior to any offer being made to ensure the property is both suitable to the applicants needs whilst also not presenting unacceptable risks to residents and customers.

6.2 Market Rent Tenancies

6.2.1 Market rent properties do not form part of our social or affordable housing stock and are not subject to nomination rights by the local authority.

6.2.2 Market rent tenancies will be made available via external websites, including www.greatwellhomes.org.uk

6.2.3 Offers of market rent tenancies are made by the Intermediate and Market Lettings Officer and are subject to their reasonable discretion.

7 **Offers of Accommodation**

7.1 All applicants made an offer of housing will be;

- Made an offer in writing
- Given the opportunity to view the property
- Provided with information about the type of tenancy to be offered
- Provided with information about the rent and service charges payable

7.2 Any applicant(s) found to have deliberately and / or knowingly provided false information as part of an application for housing will not be offered a tenancy and we will refer the applicant to the local authority to consider closing their application for housing.

7.3 If a tenancy has already been granted by the time that the false information is discovered then we will consider legal action to gain possession of the tenancy using ground 17, schedule 2 of The Housing Act (1988) amended 1996.

8 **Refusals**

8.1 We may refuse a nomination for housing in the following circumstances;

1. Where the applicant, or a member of their household wishing to be housed with them, has engaged in and/or been found guilty of unacceptable behaviour within the last 3 years where such behaviour is considered serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Association.

Behaviour will be deemed as unacceptable if, had the applicant/s or a member of their household been at the time a tenant of Greatwell Homes, possession would have been sought.

2. There is evidence of rent arrears within the last 18 months.

In such cases we will reconsider the nomination where the debt is cleared in full or where we can see consistent payments to repay the debt over a six-month period.

3. The applicant owes former tenant arrears to Greatwell Homes in excess of £250.

In such cases we will reconsider the nomination where the debt is cleared in full or where we can see consistent payments to repay the debt over a six-month period.

4. There is evidence of wilful neglect of a previous property within the last 18 months.
5. We believe that the applicant would not be able to sustain a tenancy for example due to affordability reasons or the level of support required is above what we are reasonably able to provide (ourselves or via partners).
6. The applicant is shown to be making a false or fraudulent application that deliberately created their position of housing need.
7. If an offer of a tenancy would conflict with our Homes' charitable status, our objectives or our code of conduct
8. Where an applicant has applied for or has a Debt Relief Order (DRO) in place.

- 8.2 Any decision by Greatwell Homes not to proceed with an offer of a tenancy will be shared with the relevant local authority who will advise the applicant and confirm the reasons for refusal.

9 Local Lettings Policies

- 9.1 In the interest of sustainable or manageable communities, we may implement a local lettings policy from time to time and in agreement with the relevant local authority
- 9.2 Local lettings policies may be applied in connection with planning conditions for new developments or to manage emerging issues in an area (anti-social behaviour, for example)

10 Internal Transfers

- 10.1 The nominations deed, which forms part of the Transfer Agreement reserves 25% of void properties in the Borough of Wellingborough for internal transfers.
- 10.2 We will ensure that customers who apply for internal transfers will be assessed and prioritised using the same criteria as all other applicants.
- 10.3 Any customer who has held a tenancy with us for more than 12 months may seek a transfer to another property managed by Greatwell Homes if their circumstances determine their existing property as unsuitable for their needs.
- 10.4 In exceptional circumstances we may waive the 12-month criteria.
- 10.5 Transfer applications are conditional upon the customer fully adhering to the terms of their tenancy agreement. In particular this will cover the payment of rent and other housing related charges (such as rechargeable repairs) and the condition of the property and garden.
- 10.6 Where customers are found to be in breach of their tenancy agreement, they will be given a reasonable amount of time to rectify the breach. In cases where the breach is not remedied in the agreed timescale, the offer may be withdrawn, and further offers will not be made until the breach is remedied.

11 Management Moves

- 11.1 We retain the right to carry out management moves or 'direct lettings' within our stock where individual circumstances require a letting outside of our established policy. This might be in circumstances where a customer is fleeing violence or significant harm, or where a property has certain adaptations that would benefit a customer with additional needs.
- 11.2 In cases such as these, we will seek independent evidence from partner agencies and other professionals to highlight the need.
- 11.3 In circumstances where we need to temporarily transfer a customer in an emergency (such as a fire, serious flood or redevelopment), we will apply our Decant Policy and procedure which are separate to this policy.

12 Independent Living

- 12.1 Independent Living accommodation is designed to help customers remain independent with choice and control over their own lives. Tiered levels of support are available which is flexible to meet the changing needs of customers over time.
- 12.2 Allocations for independent living properties are subject to local lettings policies and we will generally only accept nominees who are over the age of 55. We will consider nominees younger than 55 where they are in receipt of higher rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

13 Allocations to Staff Members, Board Members and their close relatives

- 13.1 In cases where a nominee is a member of Greatwell Homes staff, or a Greatwell Homes Board member, we will ensure that the service provided is consistent with other applicants and no preferential service is given.
- 13.2 To ensure transparency, all offers of accommodation made to staff or their close relatives will be reviewed by the Housing Services Manager and signed off by the Head of Housing and Support Services.
- 13.3 All offers of accommodation made to Board members, or their close family will be reviewed by the Housing Services Manager and signed off by the Executive Director of Customers.
- 13.4 In all cases a Declarations of Conflict of Interest form will be completed in accordance with the Disclosure of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

14 Feedback, Comments and Complaints

- 14.1 Complaints or queries made in relation to an applicant's current circumstances, waiting time or banding will be managed by the relevant local authority in accordance with their policy.
- 14.2 Complaints or queries made in relation to services provided by Greatwell Homes in relation to this policy will be managed in accordance with our Customer Concerns and Complaints Policy.

15 Implications for Customers

- 15.1 A privacy impact assessment (PIA) has been completed for this policy and a copy is

available upon request.

- 15.2 Implications for customers include possible upset caused by disclosing personal information (such as previous criminal or anti-social behaviour, or medical information) which is used to determine their suitability for a property and the collection of data that is not relevant for the purpose collected.
- 15.3 These risks are mitigated by ensuring that staff apply good standards of customer care and ensuring that appropriate data sharing agreements are in place.
- 15.4 The application of this policy will support the delivery of our Customer Charter. In particular our commitment to delivering great homes.

16 Information Sharing & Confidentiality

- 16.1 We will work in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Guide to General Data Protection Regulation (2018).
- 16.2 We will do this by;
- Setting up information sharing protocols with relevant partner agencies
 - Ensuring information is stored effectively (restricting access where appropriate)
 - Only sharing information where there is a legal obligation to do so

17 Service Development

- 17.1 We are committed to providing a high-quality service relating to allocations and will evidence this by;
- Staff training for all frontline staff tasked to deliver the service
 - Learning from customer feedback
 - Consulting customers prior to making changes to services
 - Internal audits of the service
 - Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) reviews

18 Performance Management

- 18.1 We will make use of the following performance information to monitor and report on the effectiveness of the service. Some of these will be reported regularly to local authority partners as set out in the Transfer Agreement and include;

- Monthly voids and lettings reports showing the accumulative totals for 25% / 75% split
- Weekly commencement dates for properties let that week
- Weekly Direct lets reports showing reasons for the direct let
- Quarterly reports showing average re-let times
- Regular reporting to the Government via the CORE website.

19 Responsibility and Decision Making

19.1 The table below illustrates the structure for responsibility and decision making in relation to this policy

Person Responsible	Scope
Head of Housing and Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall responsibility for ensuring that all activities are undertaken, and all performance measurements are met • Responsible for signing off offers of accommodation made to staff and Board members
Housing Services Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the day-to-day application and adherence to this policy • Responsible for ensuring that void periods are minimised
Neighbourhood Housing Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for conducting pre-tenancy interviews with nominees and assessing risk of tenancy failure • Responsible for conducting viewings at void properties
Neighbourhood Housing Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for ensuring that records are up to date • Responsible for liaising with the local authority to receive and manage nominations
Intermediate and Market Rent Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the allocation of market rented properties.

20 Review

- 20.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with changes in legislation, whichever is the sooner. Updates or recommendations for changes will be presented to the Board for approval.

Associated Policies	Associated Procedures
Local Authority Allocations Policies	
Tenure Policy	Tenure Procedure
Tenancy Changes Policy	Tenancy Changes Procedure
Mutual Exchange Policy	Mutual Exchange Procedure
Adaptations Policy	Adaptations Procedure
Customer Concerns and Complaints Policy	Customer Concerns and Complaints Procedure
Decant Policy	Management Move Procedure
Disclosure of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality Policy	Core Input Procedure