

TELFORD HOME CONNECTIONS

Telford & Wrekin Housing Allocations Scheme

Priorities for social housing
in Telford & Wrekin

How social housing is
allocated in Telford & Wrekin

Working with local Registered Providers

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TELFORD HOME CONNECTIONS

TELFORD & WREKIN'S HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out Telford & Wrekin Council's Housing Allocations Scheme. It provides the basis for the allocation of social housing vacancies in the borough and describes how these properties will be let. It also helps to inform how the Council and local Registered Providers (RPs) [housing associations] will work together in the future.
- 1.2 Although the Council no longer has its own housing stock, it still has a number of important housing responsibilities relating to preventing and addressing homelessness and providing housing advice and assistance. This includes the provision to make housing allocations through nominating to RPs who own or manage homes in the borough. Local authorities are not under a duty to maintain a housing register (or 'housing waiting list').
- 1.3 The main purpose of this document is to set out Telford & Wrekin Council's key objectives and priorities to be considered by housing providers in the allocation of the social housing in the borough. This includes who is eligible for social housing in the borough and the Council's priorities for housing allocation. The Policy describes how the Council will determine the relative priority of potential vacant properties to which it has nomination rights. It applies to homes for rent and for low cost home ownership.
- 1.4 The document describes:
- Background to this document and its purpose
 - The strategic and operational context in Telford & Wrekin
 - The current options available for meeting housing need and the arrangements for accessing them.
 - How housing need is assessed and prioritised
 - The legal and statutory framework
 - The Council's priorities for the allocation of social and other forms of affordable housing.
 - The key principles that the Council would like RPs to have regard to in the development or review of their Tenancy Policies.
 - Future monitoring and review arrangements.
- 1.5 Social housing is one of a number of options to meet local people's housing needs. The Council is working in partnership with registered providers (RPs) and local housing developers to increase the supply of new social housing in the Telford &

Wrekin. It is also working closely with local private landlords to develop the private rented sector in the borough

- 1.6 All local housing authorities are required to have a local Housing Allocation Policy and Allocation Scheme which sets out priorities between applicants for housing and describes the procedure to be followed when allocating housing accommodation. Local housing providers are expected to have regard to this in making their housing allocations, including when receiving a nomination for housing from the local housing authority (the Council).
- 1.7 Under the Homes & Communities Agency's (HCA) Consumer Standard, RPs will have their own allocations policy which states how they will let their properties. While the Council has a right to nominate to RP properties, the RP is still entitled to check whether the nomination is acceptable to them under their own policy, and can refuse any nominee that would be disqualified. Many RPs also have local lettings policies which are agreed with the local authority which relate to specific housing developments or geographic locations.
- 1.8 Local authorities must also prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy. This is included at **Appendix 1** and sets out the matters to which registered providers are to have regard in formulating their policies on tenancies.
- 1.9 The overall aim of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy is to ensure that affordable housing in Telford & Wrekin is allocated fairly and objectively to those in greatest need. It has regard to the legislative requirements and codes of guidance & regulations set by the Government and the HCA. It is also intended to meet the following specific objectives:
- Enable everyone to make **informed choices** about their housing options
 - **Prevent homelessness and help people resolve their housing problems** by giving advice and assistance to everyone
 - Explain the **council's priorities** for those in housing need and to housing providers and other organisations
 - To make sure that the housing needs of **vulnerable** applicants and those in **priority need** are given reasonable preference
 - Enable the **best use to be made of all available housing** in the social sector, and all other affordable housing types within the borough
 - Encourage **sustainable communities**
 - Enable **those who do not have a housing need** (as identified within this policy) to secure their own accommodation by providing them with advice on the housing options available
- 1.10 The Council must comply, and demonstrate its compliance, with the Equality Act 2010 by assessing the impact of its Allocation Policy on the protected groups. This is particularly significant when exercising its freedom under the Localism Act 2011 (see below) to disqualify applicants.
- 1.11 This document will be of interest to a number of groups including local housing providers, organisations working with people who need housing and people in housing need. The Council will consult with these organisations and groups as part of the process of preparing this document.

2. The Context

Introduction

- 2.1 The Council's Housing Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy must be framed in the local strategic and operational context, as both are key to meeting local housing needs.

The Local Housing Market

- 2.2 There are around 14,000 housing association homes in Telford & Wrekin. The Wrekin Housing Trust is the largest Registered Provider (RP) in the borough with some 10,300 homes. There are three other large RPs – Bromford, Bournville Village Trust and Sanctuary – who together own 2,700 homes. There are also a number of other housing associations and social housing providers in the borough with a combined stockholding of around 300.

- 2.3 Over the last 10-15 years the local housing market has become more like the country as a whole. Key local housing market trends include:

- A significant increase in the size of the private rented sector locally.
- A slight fall in total housing association stock
- New social housing vacancies (relets) have remained stable.
- There is an estimated net shortfall of 1,240 affordable homes for local people every year. The majority of these should be for rent. The cost of entry level housing is on average eight times greater than household incomes (2009).
- Housing affordability varies across the borough with higher affordability/income ratios and lack of supply in certain parts including the rural area and Newport.
- There is a continuing need for supported and specialist accommodation to meet the needs of older people and people who are vulnerable.
- Long term empty homes in the borough are comparatively low.

- 2.4 While local efforts to prevent homelessness are effective, it continues to be a significant issue in the borough:

- Whilst families with children are still the group most commonly accepted as homeless, the proportion of acceptances has decreased and the heads of the household tend to be young
- Acceptances for domestic abuse have increased significantly
- 16/17 year olds represent a significant proportion of acceptances, although there has been a general decline.
- All local agencies are seeing significant numbers of people discharged homeless from institutions
- Rough sleeping is increasing, as is single, non-statutory homelessness.
- There is an increase in short term housing and the requirement for appropriate move-on accommodation to prevent blockages.

- 2.5 The population of the borough continues to rise and there is significant new house building:
- Total new build completions are currently between 800 and 1,000 homes each year.
 - Within the above, total affordable completions of between 200 and 300 new homes each year.
 - Of the above, a strong supported and specialist housing programme, including Extra care housing and bungalows.
 - Also a small number of new affordable homes in the rural part of the borough.
- 2.6 National welfare reform (specifically the removal of the spare room subsidy or 'bedroom tax') has had a significant impact on the nature of housing demand. As a result some housing providers in the borough are experiencing:
- increasing demand for smaller properties as under occupiers seek to downsize
 - an increase in 'difficult to let' family size properties
 - increasing competition for smaller accommodation between downsizing households and those in housing need.
- 2.7 Welfare reform also introduced the shared accommodation rate for private tenants who are under 35 years of age and claiming local housing allowance. Claimants are unlikely to be able to afford self- contained accommodation in the private rented sector, adding to the overall demand for one-bedroom social houses.
- 2.8 These changes have led some housing providers to review their own housing allocation policies. Providers are also developing more new homes that are smaller, including new one bedroom flats and houses.
- 2.9 RPs are now able to let new and relet homes at *affordable* rents at up to 80% of open market value, rather than at *social* rents set in relation to local house prices and incomes. They are also able to offer 'flexible' or fixed term tenancies.

The Local Policy Context

- 2.10 The Council's overall ambitions for the borough and its residents are described in the following documents:

The Community Strategy (2013) was agreed with partners and describes the Council's cooperative approach, which aims to work with residents and communities, partner organisations and other local authorities to stretch resources, deliver local objectives, meet needs and narrow gaps between the most and least deprived communities.

The Strategy sets out four *themes* including:

'Live – we want to ensure that the Borough continues to be a place people choose to live and feel they belong whatever their background. We will continue our efforts to raise educational attainment, improve health and address health inequalities, improve housing for all and work to ensure that all of communities are safe and feel safe'.

Medium Term Plan

The **Council's Medium Term Plan (2013/14 to 2015/16)** describes seven key objectives including:

- We will protect and support our vulnerable children and adults
- We will ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well-maintained.
- We will regenerate those neighbourhoods in need and work hard to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing.

2.11 The following strategic document also provide a context for the Housing Allocations Policy (and Tenancy Strategy). Their respective priorities are:

Housing Strategy (2010 – 13)

- Promoting the development of sustainable housing
- Housing led regeneration
- Good housing for all

Homelessness Strategy (2014 – 17)

- Prevent homelessness
- Have appropriate housing pathways, including advice and support, for homeless households.
- Good homes for all.

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3. Accessing Social Housing in Telford & Wrekin

Background

- 3.1 Telford & Wrekin Council transferred its housing stock to a number of RPs in 1999. The Council does not now have its own housing stock and all social housing in the borough is owned and managed by RPs. However, the Council still has important housing responsibilities which contribute to providing opportunities to improve the borough and resident's lives.
- 3.2 While not a landlord, the Council it is still the strategic housing authority for the borough. It has duties under the Housing Act 1996 related to preventing and addressing homelessness and providing housing advice and assistance. These include the provision to make allocations through nominating to Registered Providers (housing associations) who own or manage homes in the area. The Council's broader housing responsibilities include meeting local housing needs (including the needs of the most vulnerable) and making best use of borough's housing stock.
- 3.3 Up until 2014 there was an open housing register (waiting list) for most of the social housing in the borough. Up until then social homes were allocated through a choice-based lettings arrangement – 'Choose Your Home' (CYH). Following the closure of CYH in 2014 there are now a number of alternative local mechanisms in place (see below).
- 3.4 The Council has continued to make nominations to the four largest RPs where a customer is:
- accepted as homeless
 - potentially homeless
 - in very poor housing (as defined by Environmental Health)

The RPs may then give the applicant an over-riding priority for housing. While this is an option, the shortage of two bed room properties (the most frequently required home) may lead to long waits and excessive stays in temporary accommodation.

Following the Localism Act the Council also partly meets its statutory duty to arrange temporary accommodation for those accepted as homeless through properties owned by private landlords. Offers of privately rented accommodation are also used to prevent homelessness.

Accessing Social Housing in Telford & Wrekin

- 3.5 Telford & Wrekin Council does not operate a Housing Register (waiting list). A Register is run by 'Homes Direct', while The Wrekin Housing Trust operates its own managed arrangements (see below). Other RPs may operate their own register, seek nominations from The Council or advertise vacancies as they arise.

3.6 Following the closure of CYH there are now **two** separate methods of letting *most* of the affordable homes in the borough, depending on the landlord:

- **The Wrekin Housing Trust** (700 – 800 vacancies per year).
The Trust operates a managed lettings process – '[Rent a Home](#)'. Applicants must complete an online application, at the end of which they are told whether or not they have been accepted into a small applicant pool retained for homes that are more frequently available. As one applicant in the pool accepts an offer and leaves the pool another can be accepted. Offers are made according to date of acceptance in the pool. Homes are advertised as they become available – there is no regular advertising cycle. Former applicants are not held in a list – applicants have to complete a new online application every time they apply for consideration.

WHT also advertises 'Featured Homes' – properties less frequently available or less popular. Anyone may apply for one of these, but still has to complete the online application before being considered. Homes are offered on a *first come, first served basis*.

- **Sanctuary, Bromford and Bournville Village Trust** (total 200 - 300 per year)
These three RPs now advertise their homes in Telford & Wrekin on the [Homes Direct](#) choice-based lettings scheme website. This is similar to the previous local arrangements under *Choose Your Home*. This was set up in July 2013 by Lichfield District Council together with other local authority and RP partners. It is used in a number of local authority areas in conjunction with the respective housing allocation policies.

There is a weekly advertising and letting cycle and applicants make bids on advertised homes. Each RP also has their own allocations policy and may also require additional commitments from applicants.

3.7 There are also a number of other RP and social housing providers in the borough who have a smaller housing stock. These include:

- Anchor Trust
- Boughey Roddam
- Habinteg
- Hannover
- Home Group
- Housing & Care 21
- KiP
- Maninplace
- The Abbeyfield Society
- YMCA

Homes may be let using various criteria, for example age, geographic location. Full contact details are provided in **Appendix 2**.

3.8 All Registered Providers also have their own allocation policies and applicants for housing must meet their respective eligibility criteria.

Telford & Wrekin's Housing Options Service

- 3.9 Anyone needing advice or assistance with their housing situation may contact the Council's Housing Options Service. A Housing Options Officer can provide information on a range of matters including:
- Applying for social housing
 - Finding a accommodation in the private rented sector
 - What to do if homeless or facing eviction
 - Applying for shared ownership housing
- 3.10 The Council's [Housing Options Service](#) offers free, independent housing advice on a range of housing options to everyone regardless of whether they own their own house, rent from a housing association or from a private landlord or lodge with someone else.
- 3.11 The Service will:
- Provide housing advice to an individual based on their circumstances
 - Determine if the individual has a housing need and assess this need in relation to the Council's Housing Allocation Policy
 - Where the individual is facing eviction or homelessness to establish when alternative accommodation will be needed.
 - Identify if the individual needs help to retain their home or if moving home is the only option.
 - Identify if the Council is likely to have any homeless duty to the person
 - Assess the individual's financial circumstances so as many alternative housing options can be suggested.
- 3.12 The outcome will depend on the circumstances of the case, but the focus will be on trying to prevent homelessness and ensure that an individual is housed appropriately. Outcomes may include:
- Support to access social housing with a local RP
 - Support to access privately rented housing
 - Negotiations with landlords to prevent homelessness and enable people to remain in their current home.
 - Provision of advice and assistance to access service which will support individuals in their homes and enable them to main their tenancy.
- 3.13 The Council will work proactively to prevent homelessness wherever possible. In some cases the Council will provide temporary accommodation including:
- whilst it investigates a case under homelessness legislation.
 - to some households who appear to be homeless and who are prioritised under homelessness legislation.

Temporary accommodation will only be used as a last resort for a short period of time in cases there no other suitable housing options are available. This may be in Council managed accommodation, a housing association property or in the private rented sector.

Other Services

3.14 Following the closure of *Choose Your Home* the Council has developed two new services to help local people to meet their housing needs:

- **Telford Housing Options**

An [online housing assessment tool](#) which asks housing applicants a series of questions. It then uses responses to filter their housing needs and generate a personalised housing options report. This provides a range of tailored advice including, for example, advice on mortgage rescue, adapting homes or opportunities to access accredited private rented accommodation via *Telford Homefinder* (see below).

Where social housing is identified as a viable option (taking account of the shortage of supply in relation to demand), customers will receive information on likely waiting times and links to the WHT and Homes Direct websites. Where the customer is homeless or threatened with homelessness they will be directed to the Council's Housing Options Team (see above).

- **Telford Homefinder**

A web-based [Lettings Agency](#) managed by Telford & Wrekin Council which advertises private rented accommodation where the landlord and property have been accredited by the Council. This is linked to the Housing Options Assessment tool and is also a stand-alone Lettings Agency website.

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4. Legal and Statutory Requirements

4.1 The 1996 Housing Act (amended) requires all local housing authorities to:

- Have a Housing Allocations Policy that complies with relevant legislation and regulations
- State how social rented homes in their area will be let (e.g. offering a choice of housing accommodation, or the opportunity to express a preference)
- Make all allocations (and nominations) in accordance with the Policy
- Publish a copy of the Allocations Scheme and make it available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy.

4.2 Even though Telford & Wrekin does not have its own housing stock it must still adopt and publish a Housing Allocations Policy as, by law, it allocates homes when it:

- Nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority or.
- Nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider.

4.3 Allocation Policies must give reasonable preference to applicants with certain housing needs:

- Applicants who are homeless. This includes applicants where there is a statutory duty to rehouse as well as applicants who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need.
- Applicants occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- Applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability.
- Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

4.4 The Council is expected to work with local RPs to ensure that those in most housing need (as defined by its policy) are given preferential access to available social (or affordable) rented homes. The framework for the co-operation between a local authority and local RPS is provided by:

- **The 1996 Housing Act.** This states that where a local housing authority so request, a registered social landlord shall co-operate to the extent as is reasonable in the circumstances in offering accommodation to people with priority under the authority's allocation scheme.
- **The HCA's Consumer Standard.** This expects that RPs shall co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing function, and their duties to meet identified local housing. It includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements.

This may be expressed in a Nominations Agreement with an RP. The proposed content of these agreements is set out in **Appendix 3**.

Current Guidance

- 4.5 Whilst there have been several codes of guidance on Housing Allocation schemes since the Housing Act 1996, the most recent is *The Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England, 2012*. This includes the legislative changes and flexibilities introduced by the Localism Act, 2011.
- 4.6 There are a number of new statutory requirements:
- Local authorities must frame their allocations policy by reference to their homelessness and tenancy strategies.
 - The right to a review (appeal) is extended to applicants that are determined not to qualify for the register, including the right to be informed of the decision of the review and the grounds for it.
 - Authorities must not disqualify the following applicants on the ground that they do not have a connection with the authority's district:
 - members of the Armed forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge
 - bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces following the death of their spouse or partner
 - serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service. In addition, injured members of the forces or their bereaved spouses must be given additional preference compared to others with similar housing needs.
- 4.7 The Localism Act also gave each local authority the freedom to disqualify certain types of applicants. Examples may include:
- People with no local connection – either a term of residence in the area, or a strong connection with it.
 - People with no housing need or who do not fall within the reasonable preference groups.
 - Owner-occupiers (unless they cannot afford to meet their own housing needs)
 - People with a history of severe tenancy breaches (including rent arrears) or antisocial behaviour.
 - People who have worsened their own housing circumstances
 - People who have refused offers, failed to attend viewings or not actively engaged in the property application process.
- 4.8 The Localism Act also introduced the requirement for each local housing authority to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy. This must set out the matters to which Registered Providers are to have regard in formulating their own policies on tenancies. RPs are now no longer required to let general needs homes on the most secure form of tenancy possible but can now offer tenancies on shorter terms. Telford & Wrekin Council's Tenancy Strategy is set out in a separate document.
- 4.9 Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to equal opportunities in housing. We will ensure that priority for housing is based on housing need and housing policies are fair to all sections of the community regardless of age, disability, gender, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

5. Priorities for the Allocation of Social Housing in Telford & Wrekin

Overview

- 5.1 This part of the Allocation Policy describes the Council's priorities for the allocation of social housing in Telford & Wrekin. This includes:
- Who is **eligible** for the allocation of social housing in the borough
 - How the Council wishes to use the **flexibilities** provided by the Localism Act
 - Local **priorities** – including the statutory reasonable preference groups and additional local priorities.
- 5.2 The policy and processes are intended to be as clear and simple as possible. The Council will use the Allocations Policy as the basis for working with local RPs, taking account of local needs and priorities. The Policy also reflects the Localism Act and the impact of welfare reform. From time to time this policy may be reviewed to reflect local circumstances.
- 5.3 The Council's Allocation Policy uses a priority banding system to assess the relative housing need of applicants. Applicants are also prioritised within specific bands by date of their application. There are four priority bands (see below) which are similar to those used by Homes Direct (see 3.6 above). Nominations to RPs will be prioritised by Band first, and then by length of waiting time.

Eligibility

- 5.4 The Secretary of State has determined that the following groups of people are ineligible for social housing (and also homelessness assistance) and should not be made an offer of accommodation:
- Those subject to immigration control and not re-included by Regulations
 - Those persons from abroad prescribed by Regulations to be ineligible.

Flexibilities

- 5.5 Under the Localism Act (see page 13 above) local housing authorities have the freedom to disqualify certain types of applicants or give them a lower priority. The Council wishes to promote the following flexibilities in its Allocation Policy

Local connection

Priority for all forms of social housing should generally be given to local people. This includes established local residents and those who have a strong local connection with the borough including significant previous residence, local employment or family links. The definition of local connection used by the Council is set out in **Appendix 4**.

While there is currently a general shortage of housing supply in relation to need, in some areas the supply of certain property types, such as three/four bed family homes or certain types of specialist housing, may be greater than current demand, leading to long empty property times. Applicants who do not meet the local connection definition are not excluded from applying for social housing. They may however be placed in the lowest priority band.

Housing applicants will be given the opportunity to establish a local connection, for example there they have no connection elsewhere, are fleeing domestic abuse, need to move to take up work or supply an essential service, or need to support relatives or be supported).

Armed forces personnel discharged within the last five years will have a right to local connection.

No housing need

Applicants with no identified housing need will qualify for the lowest priority band. In some areas there may be an imbalance of supply and demand for certain property types and there is a need to avoid long empty property times.

Owner-occupiers

Applicants who have the resources to meet their own housing needs would generally not be supported in the allocation of social housing, except where they have high housing needs and are unable to help themselves.

People with a history of tenancy breaches

RPs' own allocation policies may disqualify an applicant from being offered housing. However the Council cannot apply this to accepted homeless households. Where the Council wishes to nominate an accepted homeless household who has previously breached their tenancy (e.g. left with rent arrears) it will discuss the individual circumstances with the RP.

People who have worsened their own housing circumstances

Where an applicant has deliberately worsened their own housing circumstances they may be placed in the lowest priority band. However the Council will take into account the applicant's circumstances, e.g. the welfare of children.

People who have refused offers of properties or failed to attend viewings.

As the Council does not have its own housing stock this qualification is not relevant. RPs may include this in their own allocation policies and the Council will ask to be informed if they are refusing a nomination for this reason.

Priorities

- 5.6 The Council's Allocation Policy and priorities for housing are based on a banding system. There are four bands under which the potential housing circumstances of applicants may be considered. The bands take into account applicants who should be given 'reasonable preference', 'additional preference groups' and local lettings priorities. Registered Providers should consider these when allocating their general needs homes. The Council will use this banding to help determine where it is able to offer assistance and support to secure other forms of housing, e.g. private rented housing.

5.7 The Council wishes to see 'additional preference' given to the following groups:

- Those who would otherwise become homeless, which a planned move could prevent
- Those supported by council homelessness prevention initiatives
- Those whose health will significantly deteriorate without a move
- Those moving on from supported or specialist accommodation
- Those in adapted properties where the adaptations are no longer required
- Those needing to move to take up employment or to make it easier to get to work
- Households living in overcrowded accommodation
- Those who are underoccupying a home which could be used to provide a home for a larger family

These apply to General Needs Housing. Also see 'Supported and Specialist Housing' below.

5.8 The Allocation Policy is currently based on **four** Priority Bands:

- Band A - Emergency and high priority
- Band B - Urgent need to move
- Band C - Identified housing need
- Band D - Low housing need

Full details of the specific needs in these bands are set out in **Table 1** below.

5.9 The Council will also prioritise nominations by the date of their housing application.

Table 1. Allocations Policy - Priority Bands

Band	Criteria	Examples of need
Band A	Emergency and high priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Statutory Homeless applicants who are owed a full housing duty ▪ Medical emergency ▪ Move to allow major repairs, modernisation or redevelopment ▪ Overcrowding and short of 3 or more bedrooms ▪ Ongoing domestic violence or harassment that can only be resolved by moving home ▪ Applicants leaving the armed forces ▪ Under occupying by 1 or more bedrooms.
Band B	Urgent need to move	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other homeless applicants and those who are under threat of being homeless ▪ Applicants moving on from supported or specialist accommodation (with the agreement of the provider) ▪ Overcrowding and short of 2 bedrooms ▪ Lacking basic facilities ▪ Families with children under 10 years old living in upper floor flats with no lifts ▪ Loss of tied accommodation ▪ Applicants needing to move to take up employment or to make it easier to get to work.
Band C	Identified housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who have been approved as foster or adoptive parents and require an additional bedroom to facilitate a placement ▪ Applicants who need to be closer to family and friends ▪ Applicants with any other reasonable housing needs ▪ Overcrowding and short of 1 bedroom ▪ Sharing facilities with another household ▪ Property in minor disrepair
Band D	Low housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who have no identified housing need ▪ Applicants who have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances ▪ Applicants who owe debt to a current or previous landlord for rent, service charges and other property related recharges and don't have an agreement in place.

5.10 The Council may vary these bands or priorities from time to time but will consult on any proposals to change the bands or priorities.

Local Lettings Plans

- 5.11 Local Lettings Plans may be used by the Council and RPs to allocate homes to specific groups of people whilst still taking account of allocation priorities. LLPs should not discriminate directly or indirectly on any equality grounds.
- 5.12 The agreement of a LLP will normally be linked to a planning consent for a new housing scheme and included as part of a S106 Agreement for that development. They may also relate to existing homes. LLPs in Telford & Wrekin should cover all affordable tenures including rent and low cost home ownership (shared ownership or similar).
- 5.13 The Council will work with RPs in the borough to identify neighbourhoods, areas and schemes which would benefit from a local lettings plan (LLP). LLPs may be used to:
- Enable the allocation of all new schemes to a mix of tenants in order to develop a sustainable community
 - Enable an existing community to become more sustainable
 - Allow those living in rural areas, or areas of high demand in relation to supply, to have priority for schemes in their village or locality.
 - Enable more sensitive lettings on schemes which have high levels of anti-social behaviour.
- 5.14 LLPs will include details of:
- Aims and objectives
 - Letting criteria, for example age, household size/composition, personal circumstances, employment, local connection.
 - Types of tenancies
 - Scope and duration
 - Monitoring and review arrangements
 - Equalities Impact Assessment
- 5.15 LLPs may also be agreed in other circumstances where there is evidence that local communities would benefit from such a plan and there is no significant adverse impact on other communities.
- 5.16 The Council will work with RPs on the preparation of LLPs to ensure that they are agreed formally before a property is advertised or allocated. In addition:
- The equalities impact of a LLP will be considered before it is agreed.
 - LLPs will have clear criteria which are published when a property is advertised.
 - All LLPs will include a formal date for a joint review to ensure that they are still appropriate and relevant.

Local Connection Policies

- 5.17 In rural parts of the borough and some other areas, e.g. Newport, the Council will use its planning powers to influence the initial allocation and subsequent relet of all new social properties (for rent or low cost home ownership). These will be restricted in the first instance to established local residents of the parish (or those that that have a strong local connection to it) and who have a housing need. This will be achieved by the use of a legal S106 agreement linked to the planning consent which will set out the local connection criteria and the timescales after which the search for applicants

can be widened out. In rural areas and certain other areas the Council will seek to work closely with the respective Parish Council or equivalent. Full details are provided in **Appendix 4**

- 5.18 Most of the existing social properties in rural parishes are not subject to a legal agreement restricting their allocation to applicants with a local connection. However the Council will encourage RPs to relet them in future using LLPs to prioritise applicants with a local connection.

Shared Ownership Housing

- 5.19 The local connection criteria and allocation processes described above will also apply to other forms of affordable housing, including shared ownership housing in rural parishes and other selected areas. These homes should be advertised through the mechanisms described in 3.6 above. They may also be promoted in other ways, e.g. local newspapers, newsletters or websites. The Council also strongly encourages RPs to advertise these properties through the local [Help to Buy Agent](#). Applicants should demonstrate that they are unable to afford to buy on the open market in the location where they have a local connection and are also able to afford their full housing costs.

Supported and Specialist Housing (including Extra care housing)

- 5.20 Some forms of supported and specialist housing in the borough is not under the scope of this Housing Allocation Policy. This accommodation will be allocated to applicants with housing and care/support needs in a different way, generally following a joint Housing and Care Pathway.
- 5.21 Potential applicants may be referred to this form of housing by a key worker from housing, social care, health or probation. For some schemes applications may be invited. There are schemes available for:
- Younger people
 - Older people
 - Ex-offenders
 - People with mental health needs
 - Drug and alcohol abuse
 - Victims of domestic abuse
 - Homeless people
 - Adults with learning disability
 - Adults with a physical or sensory disability
- 5.22 Some supported or specialist accommodation may be for short period, perhaps between 6 months and 2 years. Some accommodation may be long term or a 'home for life'.

6. Working with Local Registered Providers to meet Housing Needs

- 6.1 Under the HCA's Regulatory Framework, RPs will co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing function and their duties to address homelessness and meet identified housing needs. As part of the process of developing a new Housing Allocation Policy the Council will agree new formal arrangements with local RPs to nominate housing applicants to a proportion of their vacant affordable homes
- 6.2 The Council will negotiate an Overarching Nominations Agreement with the main local RPs. It will request nomination rights for 50% of RP vacancies (initial lettings and relets). In the first instance this will focus on priority housing applicants (including people who are statutorily and non-statutorily homeless) which will be managed through its Housing Options Team. Where the Council has provided free or discounted land, or other material assistance, it will request 75% nomination rights. The Council will ensure that its nominations are appropriate and timely to help create stable neighbourhoods and keep people housed adequately. Nominations by the Council will be through a formal operational process agreed with RPs (See Appendix 3).
- 6.4 The Council will work closely with local RPs to ensure that tenancies are sustained. It will help ensure that nominated applicants receive full support and practical assistance to achieve and maintain a tenancy. These measures will complement existing social inclusion, employment preparation and tenancy sustainment initiatives by RPs.
- 6.5 Nominations may also be linked to planning consents for new developments and included in S106 agreements. In addition Local Lettings Plans will be agreed to support housing allocations (where appropriate) to established local residents or those with a strong local connection (see page 18 above).
- 6.6 The Council will monitor its nominations on a monthly basis. It will use the existing Housing Partnership Meeting as the forum for discussion between Council Officers and the RPs. This will also consider the impact of current and future reforms to welfare benefits, the incidence of homelessness (including the geography and make up of housing need) and the implications of some RPs taking a more commercial approach to allocations. A full evaluation of nominations will be undertaken as part of an annual review of the Housing Allocations Policy.

7. Conclusions and Next Steps

- 7.1 The Council will consult formally on its draft Housing Allocation Scheme and Policy with partners and stakeholders. The draft document will be reviewed following the consultation and a final version will be published and distributed as soon as possible and 31st October 2015 at the latest. A summary version will also be produced.
- 7.2 Prior to the finalisation of the document the Council will undertake a full impact assessment.
- 7.3 The Council will monitor the implementation of the Scheme and Policy regularly with RPs and stakeholder and undertake a full formal review after two years. Partners and stakeholders will be involved in the review. The Council will consult on proposals for any significant changes.
- 7.4 Following the publication of the final document the Council will:
- Work with local RPs to agree a formal nomination agreement for General Needs housing.
 - Work with local RPs to review current Local Lettings Plans and agree common principles for their preparation.

These actions will be completed by 31st December 2015 at the latest.

REFERENCES

- The Housing Act, 1996
- The Localism Act, 2011
- Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (2012). DCLG
- A New Approach to Supporting Housing Options. Telford & Wrekin Council Cabinet, 26th June 2014.
- Homelessness Strategy, Telford & Wrekin Council (2013)

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APPENDIX 1

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL TENANCY STRATEGY

Introduction

Under the Localism Act 2011 local housing authorities must prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy. This must set out the matters to which registered social housing providers (RPs) are to have regard to in formulating or reviewing their policies on tenancies. RPs should be actively informed of the direction provided by the Tenancy Strategy and consider it every time they review their policies.

Under the Localism Act RPs no longer have to let general needs homes on the *most secure form of tenure* possible, but can offer a 'flexible' or fixed term tenancy on affordable and social rented homes. All RPs must set out their approach to tenure in their own tenancy policy. This explains:

- The kind of tenancies they will create
- The circumstances in which they will do this
- The length of tenancy terms
- The circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted

Links are provided below to the tenancy policies of the largest RPs in the borough:

- [Bromford Housing Group](#)
- [Sanctuary Housing Group](#)
- [Bournville Village Trust](#)
- [The Wrekin Housing Trust](#)

Use of Fixed Term Tenancies

The Council's preference is for use of secure, lifetime tenancies. However it recognises that RPs have the flexibility to offer fixed term tenancies of various lengths. Where RPs do use fixed term tenancies it is requested that they consider the following:

- A minimum 5 year fixed tenancy, wherever possible. This provides greater stability and certainty for tenants and families. It will also help to create a sustainable community.
- Longer tenancies (for example, 10 years) are used where the property is specialist or adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person.
- Lifetime tenancies are used for sheltered housing or extra care housing.
- Shorter tenancies (for example, two years) are used where someone is expected to move on to more permanent accommodation or requires short term housing.
- Tenancy type to be maintained when a tenant transfers within an RP's stock.
- Fixed term tenancies are not used to address breaches of tenancy, where there are existing legal remedies
- The termination of fixed term tenancies should not be linked to household income.

Where a fixed tenancy is used, RPs should give tenants appropriate advice and information about their housing options at the time of letting and when a carry out a tenancy review.

The Council expects RPs to renew all fixed term tenancies other than where the tenant's circumstances have changed significantly, e.g. significant under occupation, where specialist housing is no longer required. In these cases tenants should be treated sensitively and offered a more suitable home with the same or other RP.

The Council supports the use of introductory or probationary tenancies by RPs for new tenants.

Reviewing a Fixed Term Tenancy

RPs should set out within their Tenancy Policy how frequently a fixed term tenancy will be reviewed and the factors that will be considered, e.g. size of property/family composition, special features/adaptations and the continued need for them. The review should assess a tenant's circumstances and explore their available housing options.

A tenant should be given at least six months notice if an RP is planning to end a tenancy. The RP should give reasons for the decision to end a tenancy and information on how to make an appeal.

RPs should formally notify the Council's Housing Options Team immediately where they have taken a decision not to renew a tenancy.

A tenant should be allowed to remain in their property at the end of the tenancy until a suitable alternative has been found.

The Council will work with local RPs to monitor the use of fixed term tenancies, including their review, renewal and termination.

Affordable Rents

The Council recognises that many new fixed term tenancies for social housing are at *affordable* rather than *social* rents. It will monitor the extent to which affordable rents are actually affordable to people in housing need, particularly in the light of national welfare reforms. In some cases or geographic areas the Council will encourage the letting of social homes at social rents. The Council also expects RPs to consult with it over proposals to convert social rented relets to affordable rents.

Nominations

Telford & Wrekin Council expects to retain its nomination rights to social housing vacancies. It will seek the assistance of local RPs to use these to discharge or meet its statutory duties and strategic housing responsibilities.

APPENDIX 2

CONTACT DETAILS

Telford & Wrekin Council

Service	Telephone	Web site
Housing Options	01952 381925.	http://www.telfordhousingoptions.co.uk/
Homelessness	01952 381925	http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/200117/homeless
Telford Homefinder	01952 381875 / 381877	http://www.telfordhomefinder.co.uk/

Registered Providers

Organisation	Telephone	Web site
Bournville Village Trust	0300 333 6540	https://www.bvt.org.uk/
Bromford	0330 1234 034	http://www.bromford.co.uk/
Sanctuary	0800 131 3348 / 0300 123 3511	http://www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk/
The Wrekin Housing Trust	01952 217100	https://www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk/

Other Organisations

Organisation	Telephone	Web site
KiP Project	01952 256007	http://www.thesalvationarmykipinformationproject.org/
Maninplace	01952 259204	http://maninplace.org.uk/home.html

APPENDIX 3

DEVELOPING HOUSING NOMINATION ARRANGEMENTS WITH REGISTERED PROVIDERS

Nominations must be appropriate and timely to help create stable neighbourhoods and keep residents housed adequately. The Council's formal nomination agreement with Registered Providers will include the following:

- definition of a 'net letting' (or 'true void').
- a nomination entitlement figure (or range of figures applicable to different circumstances) expressed as a percentage of net lettings (or true voids).
- the respective roles of the Council and the RP in selecting and prioritising applicants.
- the agreed method for identifying and counting referrals to the RP as a nomination and for counting lettings to nominations.
- grounds for the refusal of nominations by the RP and a dispute resolution mechanism where Council and RP are in disagreement.

The nomination agreement will also include relevant operational issues, e.g.

- the nominations process (e.g. whether 'applicant-led' or 'vacancy led').
- the number of nominees to be referred to each vacancy (where 'vacancy led').
- the information about vacancies and nominees to be supplied by respective parties.
- an agreed procedure for the acceptance and rejection of nominees.
- agreed timescales for each stage of the process.
- arrangements for performance monitoring and review

APPENDIX 4

LOCAL CONNECTION

Defining a Local Connection

For the purposes of this Allocation Policy a *local connection* to the borough as whole will be considered to be:

- Lived in the borough for three of the last five years *or*
- Employed in the borough or have a firm offer of employment in the borough (employed means anyone working more than 16 hours per week in the borough, but excluding casual work) *or*
- Returning to live in the borough having lived there previously for not less than three years *or*
- Have close family in the borough who have lived there for at least three years (Close family means a close relative such as a parent, grandparent, adult child, grandchild, adult sibling, common-law partner or civil partner) *or*
- Need to live in the borough to care for, or receive care from close relatives (same definition as close family) *or*
- Have special circumstances which the local authority may consider to warrant the applicant living in the borough

Local Connection and Rural Parishes in Telford & Wrekin

The Rural Area of Telford and Wrekin includes the following parishes:

- Chetwynd
- Chetwynd Aston & Woodcote
- Church Aston
- Edgmond
- Ercall Magna
- Eyton upon the Weald Moors
- Kynnersley
- Lilleshall & Donnington (rural part)
- Little Wenlock
- Preston upon the Weald Moors
- Rodington
- Tibberton & Cherrington
- Waters Upton.
- Wrockwardine (rural part)

For the purposes of this Allocation Policy a *local connection* to a rural parish will be considered as:

- Lived in the parish for three of the last five years *or*
- Employed in the parish or have a firm offer of employment in the parish (employed means anyone working more than 16 hours per week in the parish, but excluding casual work) *or*
- Returning to live in the parish having lived there previously for not less than three years *or*
- Have close family in the parish who have lived there for at least three years (Close family means a close relative such as a parent, grandparent, adult child, grandchild, adult sibling, common-law partner or civil partner) *or*
- Need to live in the parish to care for, or receive care from close relatives (same definition as close family) *or*
- Have special circumstances which the local authority may consider to warrant the applicant living in the parish

'*Cascade arrangements*' will operate as follows:

- a) If within one month of the property being advertised no applicants who meet the above local connection criteria can be identified, the property can be allocated to persons who have a local connection to bordering parishes provided that they are within the Borough of Telford and Wrekin.
- b) If within a further month no applicants who have a local connection to bordering parishes can be identified, the property can be allocated to persons who have a local connection to any rural parish in Telford & Wrekin.
- c) If within a further month no applicants who have a local connection to any rural parish in Telford & Wrekin can be identified, the property can be allocated to persons who are housing need and are normally resident in the Borough of Telford and Wrekin.

A Local Lettings Plan will be agreed between Telford & Wrekin Council, the local Parish Council and the Registered Provider. This will ensure that properties are allocated in accordance with the criteria, without individuals' information being shared.