

Appendix 1 Summary of proposed changes

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL NOMINATION POLICY PROPOSED CHANGES	
Proposed change	Background and aims
<p>Band E (See section 12 of Policy)</p> <p>Band E applicants will be removed from the register apart from the exceptions below.</p> <p>New applicants who would have been Band E will not be able to register with the exception of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing association tenants in Watford or where WBC would have nomination rights to the resulting vacancy • Homeseekers over 60 for designated older persons accommodation only. <p>An online self assessment tool will indicate whether an applicant should proceed to making a housing application and will signpost to other options as appropriate.</p> <p>We are investigating how to retain information on those attempting to register but subsequently refused, for data analysis and communication purposes.</p>	<p>To manage expectations and encourage use of other housing options.</p> <p>To reduce the workload associated with processing applications who will not be housed</p> <p>Currently approaching 4,000 in band E of whom 44% have never bid and 72% have not bid in the last year. Only 45 lets to Band E last year of which 33 were to sheltered housing.</p> <p>32% of Band E applicants are currently living outside the borough of Watford.</p> <p>Other Herts Choice Homes partners have dispensed with general needs Band E.</p>
<p>Residency connection (See sections 12.13 and 12.14)</p> <p>In order to join the housing register applicants must be living in Watford now and have lived here for 5 out of the last 6 years.</p> <p>This is a tightening from the previous 3 out of the last 5 years or 6 months out of the last 12 months.</p> <p>There will be exceptions including armed forces (statutory requirement) and tenants of housing associations in Watford or where WBC would have nomination rights.</p> <p>Another exception is made for people such as care leavers who have been placed in temporary accommodation outside of the borough although they originate from Watford and people with</p>	<p>In order to manage demand for social housing in Watford while allowing mobility amongst social housing tenants.</p> <p>Other Herts Choice Homes partners have increased local connection to a requirement of 3 – 5 years.</p> <p>Since the tightening of their criteria, significant numbers of their applicants are now applying to Watford.</p> <p>369 households have a connection through relatives and 87 through work. Of these households, only 16% have a recognised housing need.</p>

<p>disabilities to whom the council owes a homelessness duty but where a private sector property could not be adapted, also households accepted as homeless on the grounds of domestic violence.</p>	
<p>Deletion of local connection via close relatives or local work.</p> <p>Existing applicants will be removed from the register.</p>	<p>In order to manage demand for social housing in Watford.</p> <p>Some applicants with a connection through work live in neighbouring boroughs such as Dacorum, Harrow, Three Rivers, Hertsmere.</p> <p>Watford has excellent travel connections which enable commuting to work so that it is not necessary to live in the borough in order to work there.</p> <p>There is not the capacity to cater for the needs of those living outside the borough who will need to seek alternative housing options or change relocation plans in a different way than relying on social housing in Watford.</p>
<p>Overcrowding and bedroom entitlement (see section 13)</p> <p>Singles/couples without children who have shared access to a living room will be considered adequately housed if they have their own bedroom.</p> <p>Previously assessed as needing sole use of a living room too.</p>	<p>Competition for 1 bedroomed accommodation is high. There is now demand from underoccupiers impacted by spare room subsidy and those who are pregnant.</p> <p>The aim is to prioritise those in the greatest housing need.</p>
<p>Bedroom entitlement is already aligned to housing benefit regulations except for over 16s.</p> <p>Unborn children do not count towards bedroom entitlement.</p> <p>Change proposed to allow own bedroom for same sex siblings where one is over 16 and there is a 7 year age gap.</p>	<p>To ensure households are not placed in a property too large to be covered by housing benefit.</p> <p>To relieve pressure on 2 bed accommodation and allow a better housing solution which is within housing benefit regulations.</p>
<p>Priority for statutory homeless (see Appendix A)</p>	

<p>Reducing priority for statutory homeless households from B to C</p> <p>The proposal is to retain Band B assessment for households applying as homeless before the revised Policy implementation date.</p>	<p>In order to prevent homelessness where possible by reducing the inequality between applicants in overcrowded situations sharing with friends/family and those applying as homeless.</p> <p>Less competition for underoccupiers (Band B) so increasing opportunities for chain moves and homelessness prevention where there are spare room subsidy issues.</p> <p>To facilitate discharge of homelessness duty into the private rented sector rather than solely into social housing</p>
<p>Priority for Prevention of Homelessness Partnership POsH nominations (see section 12.7)</p> <p>Reduced from Band B to C in line with statutory homeless households.</p>	<p>In order to remain in line with the banding given to statutory homeless households. If this was not undertaken, those accepted as statutorily homeless would have a lower banding than those nominated by POsH where the council does not have a duty to rehouse.</p>
<p>Bidding time limit for statutory homeless (see section 14.2)</p> <p>Increase “free choice bidding” time limit from 4 weeks to 8 weeks for statutory homeless households</p>	<p>To reflect the change in banding from B to C and enable some choice while reducing potential for suitability reviews in some cases.</p>
<p>Financial hardship</p> <p>Removal of financial hardship priority</p>	<p>It is no longer possible to award meaningful priority due to the numbers of households impacted by Welfare Reform and the economic crisis.</p> <p>This criteria was not often used under the former Policy.</p>
<p>Insecure Housing</p> <p>Removal of priority for insecure housing</p>	<p>Removal of priority for insecure housing which had previously been in place to recognise the situation of people living at home with parents. Discrepancy between homeless households and those overcrowded at home is being addressed in a different way through the banding change of homeless households from B to C.</p>

<p>Quotas</p> <p>Removal of quotas previously in place as targets for letting to bands D and E</p>	<p>E will largely be discontinued and the reviewed priorities listed above are intended to balance lettings appropriately, alongside local lettings policies and ringfencing for transfers which are already in place.</p>
<p>Housing Panel</p> <p>Housing Panel replaced by Housing Officers with reviews to be carried out by a more senior officer</p>	<p>The restructure within the Housing Service makes former arrangements where 2 managers form a panel to review complex cases and their decision can in turn be reviewed by a more senior officer unnecessary and unviable.</p>
<p>Local lettings plans (see section 14.10)</p> <p>May be applied to whole or part of larger schemes</p>	<p>In the case of large developments where units will come on stream at the same time, local lettings policies can have a disproportionate impact on the functioning of the Nomination Policy and limit the opportunities for those in greatest housing need to an unforeseen extent. Including a provision to apply local lettings to parts of schemes where appropriate seeks to address this issue.</p>
<p>Refusals of properties (see section 14.9)</p> <p>Provision to remove applicants from the register for 6 months if 3 properties are refused</p>	<p>Last year there were 199 refusals against 395 lettings. These are costly to receiving housing associations and the council in terms of rent loss and staffing and place more pressure on those subsequently offered to move more quickly.</p>
<p>Adequate resources (see section 12.10)</p> <p>Homeowners will not qualify for the housing register</p> <p>Trigger for a financial assessment which may find that applicants have sufficient resources to meet their own housing need and therefore not qualify for the register:</p>	<p>In order to prioritise those in most need of social housing.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Household capital or savings of £16,000 or more• Total household net income equal to or greater than four times the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rental level of a suitable property annually (with the 1 bed LHA rate being used to assess the income of single people including those who are under 35).	
<p>Worsened circumstances (see section 12.11)</p> <p>Guideline for reviews of cases where banding has been reduced due to a deliberate worsening of circumstances set at 1 year.</p>	<p>In order to be clearer about when cases are likely to be reviewed.</p>