

HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 English Rural Housing Association is a specialist housing provider working in villages across England to provide affordable homes for local people. We work in partnership with local authorities and parish councils to ensure the homes we provide continue to meet original objectives.
- 1.2 The Association provides mixed tenure development with homes available to rent on an assured tenancy or to buy on a shared ownership leasehold basis. Because of statutory rural safeguards rented homes can not be purchased by tenants and the maximum percentage that can ever be owned by a shared owner is 80%. These measures are in place to ensure affordable rural developments remain available on an affordable basis in perpetuity. Rents are set inline with Housing Corporation guidelines.
- 1.3 Developments are designed to meet the housing needs of the communities in which they are situated, with dwelling sizes and types having been established on a parish wide needs survey.
- 1.4 Every application will be dealt with in a fair way and in accordance with our Equality and Diversity Policy. The Association will also treat applications confidentially as required by the Data Protection Act. We will however provide appropriate details on applicants to our partners and regulatory bodies for recording and monitoring purposes. Local connection information will also be shared with parish council members for verification.
- 1.5 It is a criminal offence to provide false or fraudulent information when applying for a property. Any applicants caught doing so will have their application disqualified or may risk losing their home should evidence later come to light that they submitted false information during the application process.

2. WHO QUALIFIES

The majority of the Association's housing stock is available on a local needs basis, with qualifying criteria detailed in a binding Section 106 or Nominations Agreement. The Association will work with these documents to ensure that homes are allocated accordingly, working with local authority or homebuy partners as required. Where homes are not available on a local needs basis the Association will work with partners to find an appropriate nomination for the property, and where possible ensure preference of a local applicant.

The Association will work with the parish council and local authority to ensure potential applicants are aware of the homes available and how they can apply and qualify for them.

The Association will hold one central mailing list on which households interested in applying will be able to record their contact details. Those recorded on this list will be notified when an appropriate vacancy becomes available and invited to apply. The list will be updated from time-to-time to ensure information held is current and accurate. Length of time on the mailing list will not carry any priority as all applicants are assessed on case basis when a vacancy arises.

Working with the scheme specific requirements the Association will look to house applicants who lack the resources to obtain a decent and suitable home that meets the needs of their household circumstances. Applicants with the means to secure their own accommodation locally will not be considered for a vacancy.

Those applying for a shared ownership property should be able to raise sufficient capital to purchase the specified equity share, but not be able to afford the outright purchase of property suitable to their needs in the village in which they are applying to live.

The Association will request detailed financial information from all households applying for a property and be sure that affordability levels are clearly identified, including other costs such as ground rents, services charges and insurance where applicable. Financial advice is not available from the Association but we will highlight known mortgage lenders to those wishing to purchase a shared ownership property and support tenants wishing to seek appropriate benefits.

The Association reserves the right not to offer a home to;

- a household with a record of any nuisance or antisocial behaviour;
- a household with an undischarged county court judgment for debt;
- any other household with a financial or behavioral history that may make them unsuitable tenants for the property or development. Any decision taken on this basis will be based on the application form and supporting evidence gathered as part of the assessment process;

3. APPLYING FOR A HOME

3.1 The Association will work with established arrangements when seeking applicants for vacancies. This could include taking nominations or marketing the property locally or a number of different measures. Those wishing to apply for a vacancy will be sent a comprehensive pack detailing the location and type of property, costs, details on how to view (if appropriate), outline of the qualifying criteria, details on viewing arrangements (if appropriate) and a clear deadline for returning application forms.

3.2 An initial assessment of applications will be carried out by an assessment panel consisting of 2 members of staff once the application deadline has passed. This assessment will examine applications to ensure they meet three basic criteria which are:

- applicants have a genuine housing need suitable for the type of property
 - applicants have appropriate financial resources
 - applicants fulfill specific qualifying criteria
- 3.3 Should no appropriate applicants be identified then the Association will work with appropriate partners and use agreements to continue seeking a suitable applicant.
- 3.4 Once the initial assessment has been carried out a shortlist will be prepared and all applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application within 7 days. Those shortlisted will be contacted by the Association and an appointment will be made to visit them in their current home and assess them further.
- 3.5 The Association reserves the right to request additional supporting material from applicants or make further enquiries about them should it be necessary or appropriate.
- 3.6 Shortlisted applicants will be assessed against the Associations points system detailed in Appendix 1.
- 3.7 Following the assessment a report will be completed summarizing the application assessment forms and submitted along with the forms and a recommendation. These documents will be considered by an allocations panel consisting of 2 members of staff, other than the staff member who interviewed the applicants. The allocations panel will review the report and confirm the allocation. If two or more applicants are equally eligible for a vacancy the number of points awarded for local connection will be used as a way of prioritising applicants. Should eligibility still remains equal, the allocations panel will decide on the successful applicant based on the level of local connection. In the event of any disagreement or doubt the Association's Chief Executive will have the deciding vote.
- 3.8 Applicants will be notified of the allocations panel decisions within 7 days of the determinations
- 3.9 As a preference the Association will look to allocate 2 or 3 bedroom properties to families or households consisting of 2 or more people and 1 bedroom to single households and couples. Although given the specialist qualifying criteria and nature of the homes we are providing this is by no means prescriptive.
- 3.10The Association operates a separate Transfer and Exchange Policy and this will therefore not be detailed within this document.

4. APPEALS

The Association looks to operate a robust and transparent allocation procedure and all applicants have the right to appeal or to request a copy of their Interview Assessment Form. Any appeals or requests should be made within 10 working days of the decision notification. Appeals should be made in writing and directed to the Operations Manager/Director. They will then be investigated and appropriate actions or responses will be taken. A response will be sent within 10 working day.

5. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This policy has been drafted to assist the Association in the allocation of its housing stock and ensure an effective and efficient service for those applying for a property. The Policy is designed to accommodate the specialist requirements of local needs rural homes and ensure compliance with both regulatory and statutory obligations as well as accommodating scheme specific nominations and qualifying arrangements.

Name of document:	Housing Allocations Policy and Procedure
Author:	Martin Collett, Operations Manager
Reviewed by:	Residents – virtual forum; HM Panel
Approved by:	Board of Management
Officer(s) responsible for implementation:	All staff
Date approved:	tbc
Review date:	April 2010

English Rural Housing Association

Housing Application – Interview Assessment Form

Scheme:.....

Applicant(s) Name:.....

	√	Eligible Points	Points Awarded
1 LOCAL CONNECTION			
A i) applicant lives in the village/parish and has done for minimum period stated in sec.106, if applicable. <i>no. of years:.....</i> or ii) previous residency in village/parish and/or with close relatives living there. and/or iii) current or imminent employment in the village/parish (check terms of sec.106) or B i) lives in adjacent village/parish (named in sec.106) or ii) previous residency in adjacent village/parish and/or iii) employment in adjacent village/parish C Keyworker Employment:.....		6 6 2 2 2 1 2	Max.10

2 COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION (if all other factors equal)		2	
<i>Details of activities:</i>			

3 SECURITY OF TENURE			
Shorthold tenancy		2	
Tied accommodation		4	
Lodging with friends/relatives; licence		4	
Under notice to quit/possession proceedings		8	
B&B, hostel or other temporary accommodation		8	

4 HEALTH & MOBILITY			
If 'yes' answered to any application form questions:- Major - <i>details</i>		5	
Minor – <i>details</i>		2	

5 SOCIAL NEED			
i)	Separated children & parents through lack of appropriate accommodation.		4
ii)	Separated childless couples		2
iii)	Need to give support to close family members – <i>details:</i>		2
iv)	Need to receive support from close family <i>details:</i>		2
v)	Social Isolation – lack of access to private transport; difficulties with public transport, access to shops, schools etc.		2
6 HARASSMENT			
i)	Domestic violence		Up to 6
ii)	Family tension/serious nuisance <i>details:</i>		2

7 PRESENT ACCOMMODATION			
A)	Serious disrepair		2 each item
i)	external doors/windows		
ii)	damp/mould – health risk		
iii)	damaged/leaking roof		
iv)	unsafe element (stairs/electrics etc)		
B)	Inadequate or missing facility		
i)	no adequate bath/shower		
ii)	no inside wc		
iii)	no adequate h/w supply		
iv)	no adequate kitchen/cooking facilities		
v)	inadequate heating		
C)	Occupation of a towing caravan		3
D)	Occupation of a mobile home		1
E)	Overcrowding – each bedroom lacking		2
F)	Underoccupation – each bedroom unused (only applicable to rented housing & for LA & other RSL applicants)		1
G)	i) sharing facilities with own family		2
	ii) sharing facilities with non-family		4
	i) sharing facilities with family & partner		4
H)	Inappropriate family accommodation.		
i)	children under 10 in upstairs flat		2
ii)	elderly & infirm persons above 1 st floor.		4
iii)	children under 10 with no garden		2
iv)	children under 10 with shared garden or with difficult access.		1

8. Financial Details	
Rent statement/payments checked (if applicable)	
Salaries/wages/savings checked (s/o applicants)	
Mortgage offer checked (if available)	

Reasons for Applying for Accommodation

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Any other comments

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.....

Signed by Interviewer:.....

Date:.....

Date:	Signed:	Total Points:
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**English Rural
Housing Association**

Interview Report



Date report submitted:	
Author of report:	
Void property address:	
Description of property (eg.2 bed. rented)	
Rent per week/sale price and %age purchased:	
Does the local authority operate a CBL system?	
Date nomination request submitted:	
Date nomination(s) received:	
No. of nominations received:	
Is property subject to a sec.106 agreement?	
Total no. of applications received:	
No. of applicants shortlisted for interview:	
No. of applicants unable to register with CBL:	
Has the parish council verified local credentials?	
If 'no' please explain:	

Report on Applicants

Applicants' preferred choice of type and tenure: (rent/so; house/bung.etc)	
Name(s) and age(s) of applicant(s):	
Name(s) and age(s) of dependent(s):	
Current address:	
Previous address if less than 5 years at present address:	
Local connection:	
Does this meet the sec. 106 requirements?	
Are applicants registered with or have they been nominated by the local authority?	
Current accommodation and living arrangements:	
Current financial circumstances of applicant(s):	
Total points awarded:	
Housing Manager's observations/comments:	
Where was interview held?	
Was all the required documentation supplied either with the application or subsequently at the interview?	
Comments on the supplementary documentation (head office)	

The above to be completed for each applicant interviewed

Allocation decision:

Allocation recommendation:	
Summary of this decision:	
Comments from the allocation panel:	
The allocation decision is that the property be offered to:	
Signature of allocation panel member 1:	
Signature.....	
Date.....	
Signature of allocation panel member 2:	
Signature.....	
Date.....	

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