

Allocation Policy

2021 Draft

Version Control	
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Version 2	Produced 22 February 2021
Version 3	Produced 1 March 2021

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** to be completed after the document is agreed.

Introduction

The purpose of the Allocations Policy is to target the available supply of social housing so that the most vulnerable residents in the borough are protected and help goes to those most in need of it, including those working households on lower incomes.

The Council is committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of housing within the Borough. However, the ability to enable and offer choice will be balanced against the availability of homes and the requirement to ensure that those in greatest housing need are given priority for housing.

This policy is designed to ensure consistency and fairness in the allocation of housing, to ensure the lettings process is clear, transparent and accessible to all and to ensure that housing applicants are able to make informed decisions about their housing, including considering alternative housing options (such as low cost home ownership).

The Council is required under Section 166A of the Housing Act 1996 to have a Housing Allocations Scheme for determining priorities and to advise on our procedures in selecting a household for Local Authority or other Social Housing Registered Provider (RP) (through a nominations agreement or agreed process) for accommodation.

The document explains how the Council will allocate its social housing properties and make nominations to Registered Providers of Social Housing (e.g. housing associations) within the Borough where the Council has nomination rights. However, individual registered providers have their own allocations schemes and tenancy policies, and these will apply where appropriate. For some specialist housing schemes there will be separate methods of allocating the properties (e.g. extra care) where the support need is considered, as well as the housing need.

This policy deals with the assessment of applications for housing and it is not a statement of how the Council deals with homelessness in detail. There are separate processes and procedures for dealing with homeless applications.

Any person can approach the Council's Housing Options team for housing advice and assistance. However, affordable housing is limited in Brentwood and the Council no longer holds an "open" register. There is a requirement for applicants to meet certain residency qualification criteria and this limits who can be considered to join the register. This is in accordance with the neighbouring Local Authorities to the borough of Brentwood.

Where the Council is unable to accept an applicant onto the Housing Register, the Council will provide advice, support and signposting the applicant to alternative routes into housing, if possible and where appropriate.

Aims and Objectives of the Allocation Policy

The key aims and objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure those in housing need are given preference for housing, in accordance with the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the relevant Codes of Guidance.
- Allow the Council to better manage its Housing Register and make the best use of its housing stock to meet local needs, local circumstances including to help promote safe, balanced and sustainable communities.
- Encourage work and mobility.
- Consider appropriate priority for tenants who want to downsize, thereby releasing larger accommodation.

- Contribute to the prevention of homelessness.
- Ensure all sectors of the community have equal opportunity for a decent home.
- Ensure that the process of applying for a home is open, fair, transparent and easily understood.
- Contribute to the reduction of the number of voids occurring and to the length of time properties remain empty.
- Recognise and address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people.
- Collect data on housing need as reflected in the housing register to inform central government and other statistical returns.
- Prevent housing register fraud.

Regular Review of the Allocations Policy

The Council will keep the Allocation Policy under regular review and make changes as needed.

Where changes are minor or where the changes are required urgently for legal reasons, these changes will be approved by the relevant Strategic Director or Director of the Council in conjunction with the portfolio holder. Significant changes to the policy will be taken to the Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee for approval.

Before implementing any major changes to the Allocation Policy (such as any amendment affecting the priority of a large number of applicants), the Council will ensure our key stakeholders have a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals. We will:

- Publicise the proposed changes on the Council's website.
- Send a copy of the draft scheme (or proposed alteration) to every Registered Provider with which it has nomination arrangements, Local Authorities that border the Borough and to our other key statutory and voluntary agency partners.

Following agreement of the updated policy an updated policy document will be uploaded to the Council's website.

The Council will seek to inform applicants of any changes to this policy by publishing the detail on the Council's website and in any relevant user guides.

There are a number of timescales that are highlighted in the policy and these are subject to change depending upon staff resources and the level of demand for the services. Any changes to the timescales will be highlighted on the Council's website and in future editions of this policy.

There are a number of appendices attached to this policy and these are also subject to change. Appendix three covers the financial circumstances of applicants and this will be subject to an annual review.

This Allocations Policy is in accordance with the following Statutory Provisions and Local Policies:

- Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.
- The Localism Act 2011.
- The Allocation of Accommodation: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities in England 2012.
- Providing Social Housing for Local People – Statutory guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England 2013.
- Right to Move – Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Authorities in England 2015.
- Housing and Planning Act 2016.
- Homeless Reduction Act 2017.
- The Council's Corporate Strategy, Tenancy Strategy, Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy.
- Any other relevant legislation and guidance.

Offering Choice

The Council's housing is allocated through "HomeOption", a choice-based lettings system.

Properties are advertised on a weekly cycle through the HomeOption website, and applicants have to express an interest for any vacancies that arise.

In the majority of cases, properties are offered to the applicant with the highest number of points who has expressed an interest, and, if that applicant refuses, to the next highest pointed applicant until the property is accepted. The bids are reviewed after the closing date and the assessments are based on the priority of the applicant. The offer of accommodation is not based on which applicant made the bid earliest in the bidding cycle.

The exception to the award of properties on the highest level of points will be where a property has been identified suitable to be prioritised for those with specific medical needs (e.g. a property adapted with special features), those with a need for ground floor accommodation, ex-warden properties located on sheltered housing sites where there is a need to be mindful of the occupants of the neighbouring properties, a "sensitive let" is required or the property is being advertised in accordance with a specific local lettings plan.

Some properties are advertised as being a 'sensitive let'. This means there are restrictions as to who can be shortlisted for these properties. Sensitive lets involve enhanced checks and references, to make sure that any successful bidder is suitable for that property or area.

For some properties they may be identified for management moves or where households have succeeded to a tenancy. In those cases a direct allocation may be used rather than through the bidding system. These properties would not appear in the weekly bidding cycle.

Equality and Diversity

The Council operates an equality and diversity policy and is committed to delivering a fair and equitable service that is appropriate and accessible to all sections of the local community.

The Council has given due regard to the Equality Act 2010, particularly Chapter 1 protected Characteristics and Chapter 2 Prohibited Conduct.

The implementation of the Allocation Policy requires effective monitoring and the Council will monitor the effectiveness of this Policy, including its impact on different populations in the community. For this reason a number of questions are asked during the application process that help the Council ensure that the policy is implemented in a fair and non-discriminatory way.

It is important that the Allocations Policy is clear and understood by applicants. Information can be made available in a variety of formats and languages through the Council's website.

Housing and Transfer Register

The Council administers a Housing Register for people in need of housing. There are two separate registers:

HomeSeeker Applicant	People who are not already Brentwood Borough Council tenants or tenants of housing providers (normally registered providers and housing associations) or do not hold a Social Rent or Affordable Rent Tenancy, who are in Housing Need and qualify for Social or Affordable Housing.
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Transfer Applicant or HomeOption

People who are already Brentwood Borough Council tenants or tenants of housing providers (normally Registered Providers and Housing Associations) who had been nominated to that tenancy by Brentwood Borough Council.

Applying for the HomeSeeker Register

To apply to go on the HomeSeeker Register you must complete an application form via the Council's website.

If you need any advice on your eligibility to join the Register or you need assistance in completing the form on-line please contact the Council. A response will be provided within 28 calendar days.

Information on the Allocation Scheme will be made available in alternative formats and languages on request.

We will register your application from the day all required information has been provided. If you do not include all supporting documentation requested with your application and you do not respond to our request for documentation within 7 calendar days the application will be withdrawn.

A home visit may be conducted at any time to verify information you have provided to us. If you are visited then you should co-operate with the council representative conducting the visit or this may result in a delay in assessing your application or the application being cancelled.

Once all supporting documents have been received to register your application you will be notified within 28 working days the outcome of your application, specifying your assessed bedroom need and housing need points and you will be sent a Home Options Welcome pack.

Choice-Based Lettings (HomeOption)

The Council advertises homes available on HomeOption, a choice-based lettings system.

Properties will be advertised on a weekly basis via www.homeoption.org, and applicants express interest for properties of their choice.

The advertising cycle carries a strict deadline; if expressions of interest are made after closure of the cycle then they will not be considered.

Applicants are able to make three expressions of interest per cycle in the following ways;

- Internet via www.homeoption.org.
- Automated telephone system.
- Text Message.

In some cases, vulnerable applicants will be contacted directly by Housing Options staff to provide assistance, and staff will make expressions of interest on their behalf.

Adverts will provide as much information as possible about the property (where known) and who is eligible to express an interest.

It is the applicant's responsibility to fully review the advert before submitting an expression of interest. If in the event an applicant is successful for offer and subsequently refuses the property this will be counted as a refusal.

Applicants may express interest for homes according to their bedroom need.

An applicant may choose if they wish to express an interest on a property which is one bedroom short of their assessed need. However, Registered Providers may reserve the right to refuse a nomination if they consider this will result in overcrowding. If this property is refused it will not be considered as a reasonable offer.

Dependent children are defined as those for whom the applicant would normally receive Child Benefit, and who are living with the applicant as their main home. Other persons are regarded as adult members of the household.

The term dependent child includes children who are adopted or otherwise defined in legislation, but does not include children who do not live permanently in the applicant's home or who have their main home elsewhere (i.e. parental access arrangements are in place).

From the Transfer Register, most applicants can express expression on any type of property, which are advertised.

Housing Advice Service

The Housing Options team provides free housing advice to everyone in the borough. We will help you explore your choices in a clear way.

This is available whether you:

- Own your home.
- Are a leaseholder.
- Privately rent.
- Rent from the Council (or a Registered Provider or Housing Association).
- Are looking for somewhere to live.
- Are homeless.

We aim to prevent homelessness, to raise awareness of housing rights and responsibilities and to improve the quality of all types of housing in the community. Whatever the circumstance, we will treat everyone with sensitivity and respect.

We will help you explore your choices in a clear way. Sometimes a longer, private interview is best and we will suggest a further appointment. With your permission, we might talk to your landlord, mortgage lender or family. We will tell you about other helpful organisation's and how to contact them.

It will help us to advise you submit as much evidence as possible. An email will be sent to you requesting the information to be provided.

Proof of your income is useful too. Where you have an entitlement to any benefit, we will make sure you are receiving as much as possible.

If you are a landlord, please bring in as much background information as you can.

If you have come from another country, please provide your original passport or letter from the Home Office or any other information about living/working here in the U.K., this includes the EEA settlement status documentation to be provided.

Other affordable housing solutions

The Council has nomination rights to other "Intermediate Housing Options" which may provide applicants with alternative housing opportunities and may include, but is not limited to:

- Government Home Buy Scheme.
- Low Cost Home Ownership (part rent, part buy).
- Rent to Buy products.
- Intermediate rented accommodation.

To apply for the Intermediate Housing Options in Brentwood (which the Council has nomination rights to) applicants must:

- Be eligible to register on the Council's Housing Register.
- Have sufficient income and/or borrowing capacity. The Council will review the cost of the mortgage, rent and service charges and assess ability to sustain these costs based on not more than 30% of a household's gross income being spent on monthly housing costs.

Where more than one applicant has registered an interest in purchasing a home the Council will give priority in the following order:

- Transfer list applicants.
- Applicants with the greatest housing need.
- Applicants who have a bedroom requirement for the size of accommodation available.
- A local connection to the Borough.
- Key workers where properties are designated as key worker housing.

Mutual exchanges

A mutual exchange is where two or more tenants can apply to 'swap' homes. This can be between Brentwood Borough Council and any other Local Authority or Registered Provider of Social Housing.

You may register your property for mutual exchange via the national Homeswappers website www.HomeSwapper.org of which Brentwood Borough Council is a registered Partner.

Fixed Term Tenancies

The Council supports the principle of five-year fixed term tenancies (also called flexible tenancies) to all new tenants. The tenancy includes an Introductory term of 12 months, during which the landlord must satisfy itself that a tenancy can be sustained and meet all the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement.

After the fixed term of 5 years (a 12 month introductory tenancy followed by a 5 year fixed term tenancy), the Council will expect that the majority of tenancies will be renewed unless there are any of the following changes in circumstances:

- Significant increase in tenant's financial circumstances.
- The property has become under-occupied by at least one bedroom.
- The property is significantly over-crowded and a larger property is required. The transfer application would be assessed and awarded additional points in line with the Allocations policy.
- The property was allocated to meet a specific need which is no longer present, for example a member of the original household had a disability but no longer lives there and the adapted property is no longer needed by the household.
- The terms of the tenancy have been breached, this could include: neglect of property, rent arrears, failure to occupy or anti-social behaviour.

The exception to this is the Council does not support the provision of fixed term or flexible tenancies in sheltered housing or other special needs housing meeting long term needs, where a secure tenancy will usually be offered after the expiry of the initial introductory tenancy.

The Council's Tenancy Strategy will be published on the Council's website and reviewed on a regular basis.

Registered Providers will provide tenancies in accordance with their own tenancy policy.

Eligibility to join the HomeSeeker Register

The following table sets out the eligibility criteria to join the HomeSeeker Register.

Age Criteria	
•	You are aged 18 or over.
•	<p>You are aged between 16 and 17 years old and the Council has a duty under the Homeless Legislation and there is a responsible Guarantor who will guarantee you will abide by the terms of a tenancy.</p> <p><i>However, in most cases, if you are aged under 18 years old and are not supported by a family or guardian and are without adequate housing or support, you will be eligible for an assessment by Essex County Council to establish whether you are in a "Child in Need" under Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989. If so, you will be the responsibility of Essex County Council to provide accommodation.</i></p>
Eligibility	
•	<p>You are a British Citizen who has lived continuously in the UK.</p> <p><i>If you are a British Citizen who has not lived continuously in the UK, or you are a non-British citizen, you may qualify for the Housing Register, depending upon whether you satisfy the Statutory Eligibility Test.</i></p>
Capacity to maintain a tenancy	
•	<p>In considering whether you have the capacity to maintain a tenancy, we will make a determination on a case by case basis.</p> <p>We will need to know whether you have any physical, learning, mental health problems or any other medical factor. If so, we will consider whether they may affect your ability to maintain a tenancy or if you would be able to maintain a tenancy with provision of appropriate care and support.</p> <p>In making our assessment, we will have full regard to the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation and good practice. We will seek the advice of appropriate professionals and support Groups. If we consider that you can only maintain a tenancy with support, you must be willing to co-operate with such support as we consider necessary.</p>
Housing Need	

•	Your current home has been assessed by the Council as unaffordable.
•	The size of your current home is not in accordance with your assessed bedroom need.
•	You are unable or have been refused permission to adapt your current accommodation to meet your mobility or medical needs.
•	You are in private rented accommodation and hold an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.
•	You are living with friends or family but you only have the right to occupy the home with the Householders agreement.
•	You do not have any accommodation available to you.
Financial Criteria	
•	<p>Any applicant and their household that in the Council's opinion does not have sufficient funds to meet their own housing needs in the private rented sector or through home ownership (including shared ownership).</p> <p>Included as Appendix Three to this policy is the financial criteria used by the Council to determine whether or not someone can join the HomeSeeker register.</p> <p>The criteria will also be used to determine if following a change in a household's financial circumstances if they can remain on the HomeSeeker register or be offered a property through the HomeSeeker register or the transfer register.</p> <p>The financial criteria in Appendix Three will be reviewed on an annual basis.</p>
Note	<i>Any applicant and their household that in the view of the Housing Services Manager is found to have disposed of assets by means of "deprivation of assets" within the last 5 years will not qualify for the Housing Register for two years after the date of original application.</i>
•	Any compensation payments or lump sums received for an injury or disability sustained on active service by members of the British Armed Forces will be excluded.
Local Connection	
•	You currently live in the Borough and have done so continuously for the last 5 years.

•	You are over 55 and require sheltered accommodation, you have a strong family connection with a family who have lived in the Borough continuously for the last 5 years and you can demonstrate you need significant support from them. A strong family connection is considered to be a parent or child, and to provide support to them to maintain independent living or receive support from them to maintain your independent living.
	You are over 55 and require Sheltered Accommodation due to your medical needs. This would be subject to assessment.
Note:	<p>Residence in the Borough must be by the person's own choice. Therefore people who have been placed into a residence in the Borough (e.g. part of a prevention or relief duty by another Local Authority, Supported Housing or detained through the Mental Health Act) will not be accepted as having a Local Connection.</p> <p>For those households placed in the Borough in temporary accommodation by another Local Authority (i.e. not Brentwood Borough Council), this time will not count as a local connection for the purposes of this Allocations Policy.</p> <p>Foster and care leavers housed in the Borough not through their choice are the exception to this.</p>
Exceptions to the Local Connection Criteria	
British Armed Forces Personnel	
•	You are serving in the regular forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to your service.
•	You have formerly served in the regular forces.
•	You have recently ceased (or will cease to be entitled) to reside in Ministry of Defence (MOD) accommodation following the death of a spouse or civil partner.
Other	
•	You are a foster or care leaver and have been placed outside of the Borough.
•	You have been accepted as part of the witness protection programme.
Retaining a Local Connection	
You will retain a local connection with the Borough if you meet the residence qualification detailed above and you are temporarily living outside of the Borough.	

•	You are receiving medical or respite care.
•	You are living in supported housing.
•	You are studying at a school, college or university.
•	You are serving a custodial sentence in the UK of less than 12 months or adhering to bail conditions.
•	You have been provided accommodation outside of the Borough by the Council pursuant to a duty to discharge the homeless legislation, including a homeless relief or duty or discharge of homeless duty. Residency time accrued under this arrangement will be regarded as equivalent in all respects that of residency within the Borough.

Refusal to join the HomeSeeker Register

You may be refused acceptance onto the HomeSeeker register if any of the following apply:

- We consider that you or a member of your household have behaved in an unacceptable way which would make you unsuitable to be a tenant which may be proven by;
- Conviction of an offence.
- Evidence which would be presented in court action for possession had a tenancy not ended by other means.
- An eviction granted by the court because of a breach of a tenancy.
- You have given us false or misleading information in an attempt to join the Housing Register. In such circumstances, you will be ineligible to re-apply for a minimum of 5 years. We may also consider further prosecution under the Housing or Fraud Act.
- If you own a property in the UK or abroad,
- If you hold a secure or assured tenancy elsewhere.

The Council will take into account all relevant factors such as health, dependents and the individual circumstances of the applicant when making decisions based on reasonableness and proportionality.

Eligibility for the Transfer Register

You can join the Transfer Register if you are tenant of Brentwood Borough Council or if you were nominated to your current Registered Provider tenancy by the Council.

You may be refused acceptance onto the transfer register if any of the following apply:

- We consider that you or a member of your household have behaved in an unacceptable way or anti-social behaviour and further action is being taken against you.
- You are currently in rent arrears to a value greater than 4 weeks gross of the property you have a tenancy for and have been in arrears for longer than 3 months.
- You owe any other type of arrears on other accounts, including: bed and breakfast arrears, temporary accommodation arrears, rent arrears, Mesnes Profit arrears, court costs, removal costs, re-charges, former rent deposit payment. This list is not exhaustive and may include other debts.

- Your property has been assessed and has fallen into disrepair due to tenant neglect or willful damage.

Applicants or members of their household who take part in, or have taken part in anti-social behaviour or unacceptable behaviour in the last 24 months, for which there is evidence (e.g., written warning letters, a court order or a conviction) may not be included on the Transfer Register. Such behaviour includes (but is not limited to):

- Harassment.
- Violence.
- Drug dealing.
- Eviction for anti-social behaviour.
- Using the property for illegal or immoral purposes.
- Behaviour resulting in the issue of a demoted tenancy.
- Arson or other criminal act involving property or a danger to life.
- Hate crime.
- Racial abuse.

Property Entitlement

The following table sets out the types of property, whether they can be applied for by HomeSeeker or Transfer applicants and the associated priority category.

Property Type	HomeSeeker	Transfer	Priority category
House	No	Yes	n/a
Bungalow	Yes	Yes	Priority will be given to those on the transfer register when allocating a property of this type unless where specified. Further preference will also be given to any applicant with a need to move to ground floor accommodation on medical, mobility or disability grounds.
Sheltered Bungalow	Yes	Yes	Priority will be given to those on the transfer register when allocating a property of this type unless where specified.
Flats/maisonettes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Ground floor property	Yes	Yes	Priority will be given to those on the transfer register when allocating a property of this type unless where specified. Further preference will also be given to any applicant with a need to move to ground floor accommodation on medical, mobility or disability grounds.

Properties with adaptations	Yes	Yes	Priority will be given to those households where there is a clear match between the features of the adapted property and the needs of the applicant.
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Only Transfer Applicants may express an interest in houses. HomeSeekers may only express an interest in flats or maisonettes due to the relatively small number of houses within the Borough and the high demand for transfers to houses or bungalows from existing tenants of the Council or Council Nominated Tenants of Registered Providers who may have been waiting a considerable number of years.

There are very few four-bedroom properties in Brentwood that will become available through this scheme and it is likely to be necessary for you to consider expressing an interest for a larger type of three-bedroom property.

The point' scheme determines the offer after the expression of interest cycle closes. However, there is an exception where a property is advertised giving priority to those with a medical need for a particular type of property (e.g., ground floor or specifically adapted for those with mobility or disability need).

Medical conditions and disabilities

Medical priority may be awarded if the medical condition is aggravated as a direct result of the property that is occupied (but not the local environment or the surrounding area).

The Council will consider medical information in relation to applicants or permanent members of the household, and assessed to be members of the household. We will consider the nature of the medical condition or disability, how your current accommodation affects your health and how moving to alternative accommodation will improve that condition.

Applicants who indicate that they or anyone in their household have an illness or disability, which they feel is affected by their current home, or who may be vulnerable on physical or mental health grounds and in need of settled accommodation are requested to complete a medical self-assessment form.

The medical assessment will be assessed by a Housing Options Officer. If it is considered that we have sufficient information detailing how the current accommodation is affecting a medical condition or disability then the application will be referred to the Council's Independent Medical Advisors for assessment.

In certain circumstances, the Council may write to the applicant's GP, hospital consultant, Occupational Therapist or other professionals involved and request further information.

The Independent Medical Advisor will take into account all the relevant factors and will recommend the priority that the application should receive on medical grounds.

A reassessment of health needs will only be carried out when the Council has reason to believe it necessary and which may result in an applicant's medical priority being increased, decreased or removed.

The award of medical points will only relate to the current home, therefore if you move to alternative accommodation then the medical points will be removed. The applicant will need to demonstrate that there has been a significant change to medical needs and this will need to be supported by evidence.

If you are applying for accommodation due to a medical condition, mobility or permanent physical disability but your current home can be adapted or improved easily then no medical priority will apply. You will be asked to pursue an application for the adaptation and advice will be provided on this.

If you require alternative accommodation that requires adaptations due to a long term disability or mobility issue then the Council will require an Occupational Therapist report detailing what adaptations would be required.

If you require significant support to live independently and you are moving from a supported housing scheme or from a scheme registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) the Council will request a medical assessment to demonstrate that independent living can be achieved.

Medical applications will not be assessed if an applicant has not provided all of the information required to register an application, if there are current rent arrears or you are considered to be deliberately worsening your housing circumstances by failing to maintain the property to an acceptable standard.

There are three levels of medical priority that could be awarded on assessment:

<p>Priority 1 (High)</p>	<p>Critical risk to life or significant risk to health</p> <p>The applicant or a permanent member of their household needs to be moved urgently as they have a life threatening or serious risk to their physical or mental health which cannot be alleviated in their current home with or without adaptations.</p> <p>The applicant or a permanent member of their household is currently in hospital and cannot be discharged into their current home with or without adaptations.</p>
<p>Priority 2 (Medium)</p>	<p>Moderate risk to health</p> <p>The applicant or a permanent member of their household is experiencing difficulties or that adaptations cannot be made to their current home and a move to alternative accommodation would reduce the effect considerably.</p>
<p>Priority 3 (Low)</p>	<p>Low risk to health</p> <p>The applicant or a permanent member of their household is experiencing low level difficulties in their current home and a move to alternative accommodation may reduce the effect.</p>
<p>No Priority</p>	<p>No risk to health</p> <p>The applicant or a permanent member of their household has a medical need but moving to alternative accommodation would not alleviate the condition.</p>

In addition to medical priority, additional mobility recommendations may be considered if relevant:

- An accessible home is required because the applicant or a permanent member of their household is a full-time wheelchair user.
- A level access shower is required.
- There is a requirement for ground floor accommodation only.
- The property not above first floor (if this is not lift assisted).

Following the assessment, the Council will write to you to confirm the outcome. The Council may:

- Award additional points to your application.
- Award a recommendation for ground floor, level access or adapted accommodation.
- Take no action if the medical condition is not being affected by your current accommodation.

If the medical condition changes significantly after the assessment, a further medical self-assessment form should be completed together with any supporting evidence. We may require a reassessment if:

- You have been awarded a priority 1 or priority 2 medical award to move but have not participated in HomeOption for 3 months.
- You have been awarded a priority 2 or 3 medical award to move but you have not fully participated in the HomeOption for more than 6 months.
- You move to alternative accommodation (if you have maintained your application).

We will remove medical points if:

- You have medical priority level 1 or 2 points and you have refused an offer of suitable accommodation.
- You have any level of medical priority but wish to accept a property which is not in accordance with the medical recommendations

Welfare and Economic Circumstances

In assessing welfare or financial issues or needs, we will use our discretion and consider each application on its merits. The Council will have regard to reasonableness and proportionality in deciding whether there is a significant housing need to register an application and to award any additional priority to the application.

There may be an urgent need for settled accommodation because of risks posed to an applicant's welfare, which other applicants would not face. For example, there may be case and support needs which make it important that settled accommodation is available so that these needs can be met and support services arranged, to the applicant will face hardship if unable to give or receive support.

The Council will contact carers, Social Services or other support workers as appropriate to conduct a joint welfare/support assessment. This is to ensure that any ongoing support needs are identified. Joint working with other agencies may also identify ways to enable applicants to stay in their current home with appropriate support.

Following the assessment, we will confirm the decision in writing to you.

The Council may refuse to award points or award lower points where the Council has reason to believe an applicant has deliberately contrived their living arrangements and made their circumstances worse to achieve more points and a higher priority for housing.

Affordability

Changes to welfare benefits under the Welfare Reform agenda including the under-occupation change (benefit cap), Universal Credit and housing benefit changes have resulted in affordability issues for households dependent on welfare benefits.

In the event that the Council or a Registered Provider decides that the household does not have the means to pay the rent this may result in an offer not being made.

Awarding Discretionary Priority

Where the defining features of an application (e.g. need for a specifically adapted property) are considered to be so exceptionally severe as to warrant immediate rehousing, the Council reserves the right to make a direct offer outside of the framework of the Allocation Policy.

Criminal Convictions

Applicants will be required to complete the declaration on the application form setting out any criminal convictions, anti-social behaviour orders or any other type of injunction that relate to the applicant or any person listed on the application that will be rehoused with them. This will be in line with the criteria used to register on the housing register.

Failure to disclose such information or update the Council in relation to any new convictions are likely to result in the application being cancelled.

The Council reserves the right to make any enquiries with any relevant law enforcement agency or any other agency as necessary to verify information stated on an application and to disclose any information in relation to the above to any relevant organisation as deemed appropriate.

The Council may conclude that applicants who hold a criminal record (as set out above) may be deemed ineligible or be suspended from the register. The Council will have regard for the seriousness of the offences and their materiality as to the possible conduct of the tenancy granted. In addition, the Council may choose to limit the areas or types of accommodation that an applicant may express an interest in.

The Council may also suspend an applicant from expressing an interest in accommodation via HomeOption. In these circumstances the Council may choose to make a direct offer of accommodation to an applicant where they would have sufficient points to do so and would otherwise be eligible for accommodation.

This clause is not intended to contravene the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974). Spent convictions covered by this Act do not need to be disclosed.

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)

This section covers applicants who have been guilty of antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse, hate crime or who have been violent or aggressive to the Council's staff or staff of a Registered Provider.

Where an applicant, joint applicant or a member of the applicant's household has been subject to a formal sanction by a landlord or other body due to antisocial behaviour. This can include Notices, ASBOs, ASBNs, ABCs, convictions, injunctions and warning letters. This list is not exhaustive.

Disqualification will be for an initial period of two years from the time of the action taken against the household for ASB. The applicant may reapply after the disqualification period, and will be required to provide evidence of improvement in the behaviour (e.g. successful maintenance of a tenancy).

The following categories of people will also be regarded as guilty of antisocial behaviour.

- Perpetrators of domestic abuse – evidence will be sought from the Police and/or other supporting agencies.
- Perpetrators of Hate Crime – evidence will be sought from the Police.
- Applicants or members of their household having a gang affiliation - evidence will be sought from the Police.
- Applicants, or joint applicants, who have behaved in a violent or aggressive manner to employees of the local authority or its agents and Registered Providers.

Re-housing of offenders

Re-housing of dangerous offenders will be carried out in full consultation with the other relevant agencies to minimise the risk to the public and to influence the successful long-term resettlement of the offender, thereby also minimising the risk of re-offending.

Where appropriate the Council may seek accommodation out of the Borough to assist in achieving suitable accommodation.

Suspended applications

Your application may be registered and suspended. This means that you will not be able to make an expression of interest for any properties advertised.

Your application may be suspended for the following reasons:

- To allow investigation should we be advised of a change in your circumstances, for example, change of address, or if there is any change to your household.
- To allow an investigation, where we believe that fraudulent or deliberately misleading information has been provided.
- If you are currently detained in a prison operated by HM Prisons.
- If you are living in tied accommodation or serving in the British Armed Forces, your application will be deferred until you have received formal notification that you have to leave.
- If you live in a supported housing scheme - your application will be deferred until notification is received that you are nominated for move-on accommodation.
- If you are an accepted Homeless Household who has been referred to a supported housing scheme by the Council, your application will be deferred until notification is received that you are nominated for move-on accommodation.
- If you have been assisted into private rented accommodation through the Council's rent deposit scheme, your application will be deferred for the duration of the assured shorthand tenancy.
- Where you or any adult listed on your application have rent arrears or any other debts owed to the Council.

Change of Circumstances

Applicants must keep the Council informed of any changes (including financial and income changes) in their circumstances.

If this results in a points change, applicants will be informed in writing of their new points, the reason for it and the applicable priority date, and the right to request a review of the decision.

You must complete the on-line form immediately to inform the Council of any change in your housing circumstances (including your address and changes in household size) as it may affect the assessment of your application and may result in the withdrawal of any offer of accommodation.

Notification of changes of address is the responsibility of the applicant and are not automatically passed to the Housing Options Team by other Council departments.

If you do not notify us about a change of circumstances, particularly a change of address, your application will be cancelled. If you have moved to an alternative property for longer than 12 months then you will be required to re-apply for the Housing register.

Annual Review

Every year, you are required to renew your application on-line on the anniversary date of your application. You will be notified when you are required to submit a new form and asked to provide further documentation as needed.

Your application will be re-assessed under the current Allocation Policy according to your current circumstances. This may result in either a reduction or increase in your points. If you are no longer eligible to remain on the Register and are removed from the Register you will be advised of this in writing.

If you do not complete the form within 28 calendar days then you will be issued one further reminder. If you fail to return the form within 7 calendar days your application will be removed from the register without further notice.

Registration Dates

The effective date is the date that the application is received. However, if all the necessary documentation is not provided in order to make an assessment within 28 calendar days of receipt of the application, the effective date will be delayed until all the necessary information is received.

Removals from the Housing Register

Before removing an applicant from the Housing Register, the Council will provide written notice. The notice will include the reasons for the removal and their right to request a review of the decision.

Cancelled applications

Your application will be cancelled if:

- You request it.
- You become ineligible for housing.
- You do not return a review application form within the required timescale.
- Where you move home and do not provide a contact address for the Council's housing department to contact you.
- When you have been housed by another registered provider.
- If you are a tenant and you have completed a mutual exchange.
- If you have provided fraudulent or misleading information.

When your application is cancelled, we will write to you to notify you.

If you have been highlighted as a vulnerable applicant, we will contact you or your representative to check your circumstances before cancelling your application.

If your application has been cancelled you have the right to request a review of that decision.

If you wish to re-apply to the housing register at a later date your new effective date will be the date you reapply.

Confidentiality and access to information

A housing application is confidential between you and the Council. The Council will not discuss your application with any third party, including family members, advisors or advocates unless you have given us written consent to do so. The exceptions to this include:

- Where we are required by law to make such disclosures or in accordance with an information sharing protocol (e.g. to the police in connection with the prevention and detection of crime).
- As part of the processes to verify the data supplied by you on your application.
- Where you have particular support needs without which you would not be able to maintain a tenancy.
- To the landlord of housing to which you are nominated.

You have the right to request from us any information which will help you to understand:

- How your application has been assessed under this Policy, including in particular whether you are likely to be regarded as a member of a group of people who are to be given reasonable preference.
- Whether accommodation appropriate for your needs is likely to be offered to you.

Housing applicants have the right to request from the Council any information regarding the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been taken into account in considering whether to allocate accommodation to them.

Requests for access to information held must be made in writing to the Council's Data Protection Officer.

Transfer applicants

If you are a tenant of Brentwood Borough Council, any offer of accommodation will be subject to your property having passed a 'home inspection' to ensure that the property can be immediately re-let without remedial works or decorations being completed.

If following the inspection, it is considered that works are required then you will be required to complete these works before an offer can go ahead. Alternatively, the Council can agree to re-charge the costs of these works which would be payable in advance.

If it is considered that you have caused any damage or re-decoration is required after the inspection and you have moved out, the cost of the works will be recharged to you. Any future transfer will be subject to you clearing any debt owed to the Council.

If you are a tenant of Brentwood Borough Council or a Registered Provider (e.g. a housing association) you will not normally be made an offer until the rent account for your current home has been clear for the 3 months prior to an offer being made. Any other debt owed to the Council or other Registered Provider, including but not limited to, sundry debtor account or court costs relating to the tenancy of your home or garage must also be clear of debt or a confirmed repayment arrangement in place.

If you are a tenant of Brentwood Borough Council and you have rent arrears or any other debt owed to the Council but you wish to downsize to smaller accommodation (thereby freeing up larger size family accommodation) then the under-occupation allowance will be paid less any outstanding debts owed to the Council.

Homeless applicants

The council has a statutory duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, to secure housing for those who fall within the criteria as described in the legislation and are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 calendar days.

The council has adopted a homelessness prevention approach to all enquiries relating to homelessness and in every case will seek to prevent the applicant from becoming homeless by using a variety of interventions.

Such interventions may include negotiating with landlords to extend a private rented sector tenancy, assisting with securing a private rented sector tenancy with the help of a tenancy deposit guarantee, or mediation with family or friends to allow an applicant to remain in their present home

In exceptional cases, where a full housing needs appraisal establishes that the council would otherwise owe the full homelessness duty to assist under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, we are able to negotiate to enable an applicant to remain in their present home on a short term basis only.

This may be an offer of accommodation secured by one of the following:

- The council securing suitable accommodation with a private sector landlord.
- The applicant bidding under choice based lettings.
- The council bidding on behalf of the applicant.
- The council making a direct allocation of suitable accommodation.

Discharge of duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.

In cases where homelessness prevention interventions are unsuccessful, the Council may refer the case to the homelessness team for an assessment under homelessness legislation. Where a full duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 is triggered, the applicant will be given temporary accommodation, which may be accommodation in the private rented sector or in the council's own housing stock. While we will try to offer accommodation in our own area, this may not always be possible and in some circumstances an offer of temporary accommodation will need to be made out of area. Offers of temporary accommodation will be made according to the availability of such accommodation. No choice of temporary accommodation will be given.

This may be an offer of accommodation secured by one of the following:

- The council securing suitable accommodation with a private sector landlord in accordance with the Council's Discharge of Homelessness Duty into the Private Sector.
- The applicant bidding under choice based lettings.
- The council bidding on behalf of the applicant.
- The council making a direct allocation of suitable accommodation.

Refusal of an offer to homeless or homelessness prevention applicants - whatever option results in an offer of suitable alternative accommodation, this will be considered a final offer of accommodation and only one such offer will be made.

Where this offer is made in discharge of a section 193 duty and is refused, if the applicant is occupying temporary accommodation they will be required to vacate this accommodation and make their own arrangements for their future housing. Applicants may request a review of a decision.

Applicants being considered under homelessness prevention measures will also be required to make their own arrangements for their future housing.

The Council considers that this approach is consistent with the Council's homelessness prevention agenda and also supports the commitment to ensure that applications from homeless households do not dominate allocations to the detriment of other applicants who also have a reasonable preference for an allocation of housing.

Review of decisions on final offers of accommodation under section 193 - under the terms of the Housing Act 1996 section 193 (2) Part VII as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, an applicant has the right to a review of the suitability of a final offer of housing in discharge of the final duty owed under this legislation.

Reviews must be requested in writing within 21 calendar days of the date the applicant was notified of the decision. An applicant may accept a final offer of accommodation and at the same time request a review on its suitability and applicants will be encouraged to take up this option to ensure that if they lose their appeal they will still have accommodation available to them.

Victims of domestic abuse

Applicants who have fled the Brentwood Borough due to domestic abuse may retain a local connection if they wish to return within 12 months of fleeing the area. Supporting information will be sought from the police to confirm that returning to the borough is a safe area.

Applicants applying to join the Housing Register from outside of the district in order to flee violence, threats of violence and domestic abuse are required to seek assistance from this council via a Homelessness application, under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered Housing Schemes are independent living homes connected to an alarm system, which is then responded to by the Housing Support Officer or the main control Centre depending upon the nature of the communication.

Usually, only applicants over 55 years of age are able to make an expression of interest for Sheltered Housing. However, there may be certain circumstances where younger applicants with support needs can be considered for sheltered housing.

There are some Registered Provider schemes that only accept applicants over the age of 55. When these properties are advertised the age criteria will be clearly identified.

The Council's Sheltered Accommodation falls into two broad types:

- Properties within a sheltered housing flat block ("In-House" schemes). Most In-House schemes offer the added reassurance of access to a Housing Support Officer and a range of supportive communal facilities and additional security. This type is more suited to those with higher support needs.
- Properties separate from the In-House scheme, but grouped in small clusters ("satellite" schemes). These homes are still linked to the alarm system. There are either no or very limited communal facilities.

If we think you may be suitable for sheltered housing the Council will carry out an assessment to see what would suit your needs best. If you live outside the Borough, we will visit you at your relative's address or ask you to attend one of the sheltered schemes. If you have a partner who is under 55 years of age, your application will be assessed to see if you are both suitable for a sheltered scheme.

Once the assessment has been completed you will be advised in writing which type of accommodation you will be able to make an expression of interest for under Choice Based

Lettings. If we do not think sheltered housing will meet your needs, we will suggest alternative housing options.

For In-House and Satellite Schemes, you must normally be 50 years or over with the exception of some Registered Provider Sheltered Schemes. Following receipt of an application you will be required to have a sheltered housing assessment to determine your suitability for Sheltered Housing.

Extra Care accommodation

Some Registered Provider schemes offer even more on-site support, such as 24-hour on-site carer support. If you require extra care accommodation, your application will be considered by a multi-agency panel to assess your eligibility. This will also include an assessment of your needs by Social Care.

Due to the limited availability, vacancies in extra care schemes will be allocated to suitable applicants outside of the HomeOption scheme.

Adapted properties

Properties particularly designed for or accessible to people with disabilities will be clearly marked on HomeOption and the adverts that are used. If your housing needs are of sufficient priority and you have an identified requirement that has been assessed by the Council's Medical Advisor you will be given priority when expressing an interest for these properties.

Where more than one such expression of interest is received for a particular adapted property, the normal points and medical assessment criteria will be used to decide who will receive the offer.

All applicants who need a home suitable for wheelchair users will need to provide a report from an Occupational Therapist before an offer can be considered.

For existing tenants where major aids and adaptations are required and have been refused them, one direct offer of an alternative adapted property will be made. The property may have suitable adaptations fitted or be a property that is suitable for adaptation.

Priority for people giving up a disabled adapted property

Disabled adapted properties are in short supply. Tenants occupying but who no longer need (either for themselves or a member of their household) accommodation with adaptations that would meet a particular demand for another household, will be prioritised to enable them to vacate the adapted property.

Awarding priority to people who have succeeded to a larger property than they require

Under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1985 the Council can require a Statutory successor in these circumstances to move to another more suitable property. To facilitate such a move the successor must apply to transfer through the Housing Register. They will be awarded additional points and the applicant may bid for up to 12 months.

If an applicant has been granted a tenancy under the Council's 'Local Policy' but is under-occupying the property then they will be made one direct offer of alternative accommodation in accordance with their assessed bedroom need.

If no bids have been made after six months or a property has been refused then a Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP) or Notice to Quit (NTQ) will be issued and legal action taken as necessary before twelve months from the death of the tenant has elapsed.

Management Transfer

A management transfer is where a transfer is approved for a Council tenant.

Full details of why a transfer is needed must be provided to the Council's tenancy management team for a decision to be made.

Applicants will be offered rehousing options suitable for their housing needed under this policy and this is likely to be a "like for like" move (i.e. the same sized property) unless their circumstances have changed and the applicant is under-occupying their property.

The assessment of the size of property needed will be based on the household's current permanent household and will not include lodgers or any other non-permanent members of the household.

The applicant will be made one suitable direct offer of accommodation.

Local Lettings Plans

Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) are agreed local plans for the allocation and letting of homes within an agreed community or location or across a type of property. The LLP sets out how properties will be allocated in exceptional circumstances to meet area specific needs.

Section 167(E) of the Housing Act 1996 enables local authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a description, whether or not they fall within the "reasonable preference" categories, provided that overall the authority is able to demonstrate compliance with Section 167 of the Act. This is the statutory basis for LLPs.

LLPs may be used under this Allocations Policy to achieve wider objectives for the Borough and to make best use of the stock, including (but not limited to):

- To support the regeneration of the Council's stock, such as the use of property guardians and to guarantee residents impacted by regeneration are provided with alternative accommodation.
- Create mixed and sustainable communities.
- To manage the composition of households on new estates.
- Attract key workers to the borough.
- Provide accommodation to members of the British Armed Forces.
- Ensure properties that suited to people with adaptation needs are prioritised.
- Consider child density within communities.

The Council will also work with Registered providers to develop LLPs for new developments and disadvantaged areas.

Where LLPs exist these will be made clear on the adverts used in the Choice Based lettings scheme.

Offers to Council Employees, Councillors or their Relatives

Where an offer is being made to a Council employee, Councillor or one of their relatives for friends, the relevant Strategic Director/Director must authorise the offer before it is made.

Reciprocal Arrangements with other Landlords

From time to time other local authorities may request in exceptional circumstances, assistance with accommodation for a particular applicant whose needs cannot be met in their borough. Such requests will be considered based on an assessment of priority and the suitable vacancies available.

Viewings and offers

After the close of the advertising cycle, a shortlist of eligible applicants will be compiled. The shortlist will identify the order of applicants with the highest priority in regard to their points. In the event that two or more applicants have the same priority points then preference will be given to the applicant that has been on the register longest.

The successful applicant will be invited to view the property. In some cases, properties are advertised in advance to them being 'ready to let', so applicants may not be able to view the property immediately. In this instance, an applicant will not be able to express interest in any other properties whilst they are still 'under offer'.

When you express an interest, you must ensure that if you are successful you can view the property as soon as possible when we contact you. If we cannot contact you, or you cannot view the property within 2 working days, then we may have to bypass you for that offer.

In exceptional circumstances, we may decide not to offer a property to an applicant who would otherwise be successful if it is considered by doing so that they could put any person at risk of harm.

Joint tenancies will normally be offered to couples where marriage, civil partnership or a committed partnership is shown. A committed partnership will be shown by a long-term commitment to the home, for at least twelve months. The Council will need to be assured of the likely continuance of a partnership, and that there will be no adverse legal implications from a joint tenancy for good use of the housing stock and the ability to provide housing need.

For accepted homeless households a sole tenancy will be offered to the person in priority need only. After 12 months the tenant can apply to amend this to a joint tenancy.

We must not grant a joint tenancy to two people if any one of them is a person from abroad who is ineligible. While ineligible family members must not be granted a tenancy, they may be taken into account in determining the size of accommodation which is to be allocated.

We may withdraw an offer of accommodation if:

- There has been a change in your circumstances.
- You are assessed as not eligible for the property.
- An error has been made in the advertising criteria.
- You do not respond to an offer of accommodation or cannot view the property within the required timescales.
- You do not move into your new property within the agreed timescale.
- You have provided false or misleading information in your application.
- You are unable to clear any outstanding arrears.

Bypassing of offers

The Council reserve the right to bypass an offer of accommodation while short listing in the following circumstances:

- A property is purpose built or significantly adapted for a person with a physical disability.
- Some properties may be subject to a Local Lettings Policy and certain groups of applicants may not be eligible for a nomination. The Local Lettings Policy will be agreed between Brentwood Borough Council and the Registered Provider whose property is being advertised.
- Other reasons why a sensitive let or allocation is necessary.

- The property is ground floor with level access and to ensure it is occupied by an applicant with a recognised medical need for ground floor accommodation.
- Existing tenants, whose existing property has been specifically adapted for their needs or a member of their household, may only express an interest in suitable properties that may accommodate their medical need at no further cost to the Council.
- The property is not in accordance with the applicant's assessed medical needs.
- An applicant has pets and the property is not suitable or not permitted for pets.
- A nomination is refused by a Registered Provider or Housing Association as it would not meet their rules concerning: household size, pet ownership etc.
- An existing tenant of Brentwood Borough Council, any other Local Authority or Registered Provider and have breached their tenancy and therefore not eligible for an offer. This includes rent arrears of more than 3 months gross rent or an agreed arrears repayment arrangement has been breached, anti-social Behaviour or the property is in a poor state of repair due to neglect or damage that is the tenant's responsibility.
- Outstanding council tax or housing benefit in relation to any property.
- Non-payment of rechargeable repairs.
- Non-payment of Bed and Breakfast or temporary accommodation arrears.
- Non-payment of any former rent arrears, service charges or any legal costs as a result of previous actions relating to any former tenancy or leasehold property.
- Non-Payment of Removal costs.
- Money owed from the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme.
- Non-payment of any loan paid by the Council in regard to any previous private tenancy.
- Council Tenants actively seeking to buy their existing home under 'Right to buy'.
- A former tenant of the Council who has any type of outstanding debt owed.
- The Council is satisfied that an applicant or member of the household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour, which is serious enough to make them an unsuitable tenant.
- An offer of a particular property, if the Council and in certain circumstances, in conjunction with the Police/Probation it is deemed necessary for such a restriction to safeguard public interest, having regard to community safety and cohesion.

Refusal of offers

Choice-Based Lettings (HomeOption)	
HomeSeeker	Where a HomeSeeker refuses two reasonable offers of accommodation within 12 months then the application will suspended for 12 months. Where a homeseker refuses three reasonable offers of sheltered accommodation within 12 months then the application will be suspended for 12 months
HomeSeeker owed Prevention/Relief assistance	Where an Applicant refuses one reasonable offer of accommodation the prevention/relief points will be removed, and your application will be suspended pending re-assessment.
HomeSeeker owed Supported Housing Points	Where an Applicant refuses one reasonable offer of accommodation the supported housing points will be removed, and your application will be suspended pending re-assessment.
Homeless Applicant	Where a Homeless Applicant refuses one reasonable offer of accommodation the duty to house you under the Housing Act will end, and your application will be suspended pending re-assessment.

Transfer Applicant	Where a Transfer applicant refuses two reasonable offers of accommodation within 12 months then the application will be suspended for 12 months. Where a transfer applicant refuses three reasonable offers of sheltered accommodation within 12 months then the application will be suspended for 12 months
Exempt from Choice-Based Lettings (Exception to Policy/Direct Offer)	
HomeSeeker	Where a HomeSeeker refuses one reasonable offer of accommodation any additional priority will be removed but can remain on the Housing Register.
Transfer Applicant	Where a transfer applicant has refused one reasonable offer of accommodation for an urgent management move. Any additional priority will be removed but can remain on the Transfer register.
Succession Applicant	Where a household has been accepted for a succession (i.e. they are a family member) and they are under-occupying their property or have no need for an adapted property the Council will make one direct offer of accommodation. Where a household has succeeded to a tenancy (i.e. they are a civil partner) and they wish to move to smaller accommodation or non-adapted accommodation the Council will make up to two direct offers of accommodation.

Where an applicant refuses an offer, it will be considered as a refusal unless one of the following circumstances applies following an applicant's appeal.

- The size of the property is not suitable in accordance to Policy.
- The applicant has significant medical needs that render the property unsuitable, which is supported by the Council's Medical Advisor.
- The offer is in an area whereby the applicant may be at significant risk of harm and there is supporting police evidence.
- The property is in a location which will prevent reasonable access to family support or specialist medical or health facility where a member of the household has a severe long term limiting illness or permanent or substantial disability where their quality of life or health would be severely affected.
- The property is in a location which will deny reasonable access to a specialist education establishment for a member of the household who has particular special educational needs which would result in severe deterioration in that person's wellbeing.
- The acceptance of a property may cause proven financial hardship.

In exceptional circumstances the Council's Housing Services Manager may exercise discretion to make a further offer of accommodation.

Time-Limited categories for expressing an interest

In addition, this also applies to those not owed a Statutory Homeless Duty but have been awarded additional points for:

- Supported Housing Applicants.
- Prevention or Relief points.
- Priority 1 or Priority 2 medical award.
- Fear or threat of violence points.

The applicant will be expected to bid within 7 calendar days of the award of points. This is in line with the weekly bidding cycle. If the applicant does not bid but there are suitable properties available then one direct offer will be made via the auto-bidding route.

Exceptions to Policy

In exceptional cases there may be a need for urgently allocating a property to someone who is not able to deal with the usual requirements of Choice Based Lettings. In such circumstances the applicant will be matched to a property outside the normal expressions of interest process.

This applies to (but is not limited to):

- Severe Harassment / intimidation requiring urgent re-housing, strongly supported on Police advice (management transfer).
- National Witness, mobility/multi-agency protection panel cases.
- If you have to move out of your council property to allow major repairs to be completed. (You will then return to your original home upon the completion of repairs).
- Properties allocated as temporary accommodation on a non-secure license basis (e.g. accommodation provided to homeless households).
- Properties leased to other agencies or organisation's for specific housing or tenant purposes.
- Decants for tenants whose homes are to be demolished, redeveloped or undergo major refurbishment and a move will be a permanent or temporary one.
- Emergency Re-Housing, as a consequence of fire or flood.
- Persons requiring a specially adapted property.
- Hard to Let properties.

Other circumstances that may fall outside of the Allocations policy are:

- Assignments of tenancies by mutual exchanges.
- Tenants transferring from introductory tenancies to fixed term tenancies or secure tenancies in the same property.
- Assignment of tenancy by succession.
- Where court orders are made under one of following; Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 or Children Act 1989.
- Statutory Succession of tenancy or Local Policy tenancies.

Right to Review

This section sets out the procedure for reviewing the following decisions:

- Not to put someone on the Housing or Transfer Register (or exclude them from bidding) who has applied to be put on it or to remove someone from the Housing Register other than at his or her request.
- That an applicant is ineligible for an offer.
- Other decisions relating to this Policy, including awarding points and priority dates.

Applicants may request a review of the decision to exclude their application at any time during the exclusion period. If the original decision to exclude the application is upheld, the suspension will continue for the remaining period. If the exclusion is overturned the application will be re-activated immediately.

Procedure for carrying out the review

A request for a review must be made within 28 calendar days from the day on which the applicant is notified of the Council's decision and the reasons for it. The Council has discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable.

An officer senior to the officer making the original decision (and who was not involved in making the original decision) will carry out these reviews.

The officer carrying out the review will complete an investigation, taking careful note of the relevant legislative requirements, Statutory Instruments and the prevailing Code of Guidance. If not already received, they will invite the applicant to make written representations or, if the applicant is unable to do this or would be disadvantaged by this method, the reviewing officer may hear oral representation. In some cases both written and oral representations may be allowed and the applicant may appoint someone to act on their behalf in making them.

In reviewing a decision on ineligibility for an offer, the reviewing officer will determine (where appropriate) whether the applicant has remedied the reason for the ineligibility being imposed.

Where an applicant is excluded because they have sufficient financial resources to meet their own housing needs, they would need to prove a change in their financial circumstances that removed the reason for their exclusion.

Where the applicant is excluded due to a breach of their tenancy, they would need to demonstrate, for example, that they have modified their behaviour e.g. by paying off rent arrears, remedying damage or allowing repairs to be carried out. If legal action has been withdrawn or a Court Order has been given in favour of the tenant, then the local authority will carry out a review.

If the reviewing officer finds that the officer who took the decision did not take relevant information into account they will refer the file back to that officer for re-consideration of their original decision as part of the review process.

The reviewing officer will notify the applicant of their decision within 8 weeks of the request for a review (although this time limit may be extended by agreement with the applicant). Where a review is requested the applicant has the right to be informed of the review decision along with the grounds.

Decision which the Reviewing Officer can make

The outcome of the review could be one of the following:

- Original Decision Upheld: the letter will give the reasons supporting the review decision.
- There is no right to request a review of the decision reached on this review.

In cases of exclusion from the Register or of ineligibility for an offer, the applicant will be advised (as appropriate):

- A fresh application will be considered if the applicant was ineligible due to being subject to immigration control and the applicant's immigration status has changed.
- Applicants/ex-applicants who have been excluded from the Housing Register on grounds of serious anti-social behaviour must demonstrate good behaviour for the period of their exclusion (i.e. 2 years) before a fresh application will be considered.
- Applicants or any member of their household who knowingly gave false/misleading information or withheld information will not have a fresh application considered for 5 years.
- Applicants who have assaulted a member of staff must demonstrate good behaviour for 5 years before a fresh application will be considered.

- When the applicant has paid off rent arrears, remedied damage, legal action has been withdrawn or they can prove that a local connection has been established they can apply to have the ineligibility for an offer removed from their file.

Original Decision Quashed: the letter will explain what action the Council will take as a result and their reasons for doing so and the application will be reactivated immediately.

Applicant provides the Reviewing Officer with New Information (i.e. information not known to the officer who took the original decision): the review will end and the file will be returned to the Registration Officer for fresh enquiries to be made and a fresh decision to be issued. In such cases applicants will be advised of their right to request a review of the new decision.

Where an applicant has been excluded at the discretion of the senior manager or relevant panel (e.g. MAPPA, supported housing panel) the applicant would need to appeal against the recommendation.

An applicant has the right to request:

- Such information to enable him/her to assess how the application is likely to be treated.
- Whether housing appropriate for their needs is likely to be available and how long it is likely to be before an offer is made.
- A local authority to inform them of the facts of the case that are likely to be taken into account when considering whether to allocate accommodation to the applicant.
- Notification in writing of a decision that they fall within a lower preference category on grounds of behaviour and the reasons for it.
- A review of the decision to give lower preference on the grounds of behaviour, of the facts considered and of any decision to exclude them from the Policy.

Where an applicant has not been considered suitable for independent living an assessment of their medical needs may be referred to the Council's Medical Adviser.

Complaints

The Council has a formal complaints procedure. Applicants can use the complaints procedure if they believe that:

- Something has been done badly or wrong in the service delivery.
- Something has not been done that should have been done.
- The service has not been delivered in accordance with the policy.
- If they have been treated in an impolite or discourteous manner

All complaints will be investigated and the applicant will receive a written response within the timescale set out in the complaints policy.

Full details of the Council's complaints process can be found on the Brentwood Borough Council website.

Confidentiality

Personal information provided to the Council by Housing applicants is confidential. In normal circumstances, this information is only disclosed to other housing providers (i.e. housing associations) where an applicant has successfully placed a bid on one of their properties so that they can determine whether an offer of accommodation can be made. Applicants give their consent to making the disclosures in completing the Housing Register application form.

The Council's Housing Register is registered under the General Data Protection Act (GDPR) 2017, and information on it including medical information is received, held, and disclosed only for

registered purposes. We deal with all applications in a confidential manner, and applicants have the right to see information on their file relating to their application, except where this involves confidential third party information.

If an applicant is not eligible, does not respond to the annual review or is removed from the Housing Register, their assessment form will be kept for two years before being destroyed.

Personal information is only disclosed to other parties with the applicant's specific consent or in exceptional circumstances where disclosure without consent is warranted. These are defined as follows:

- Where there are over-riding legal, social or public interest considerations, e.g. there is a risk of serious harm to the person themselves or others if the information is not disclosed.
- Where information is required by a local authority department in order to carry out statutory functions or by external auditors.
- Where information is required by the police as part of a criminal investigation.

Medical information obtained from the applicant's GP or other healthcare staff cannot be passed on without prior consent from the professional(s) involved.

The information obtained from Social Services cannot be passed on without consent of the relevant member of staff, or in their absence the relevant Team Manager.

At the lettings stage, where an allocation is made into Council-owned property, the content of the application file is passed to the Council's Housing Management Service to form the basis of the tenancy file.

Where a nomination is made to a Housing Association's property, the Housing Register application is retained by the Council but relevant information may be copied to the new landlord where applicable.

The Council will take disciplinary action against any employee who makes use of any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, or who passes it to others who might use it in such a way. A report to the police will be made if it appears that a criminal offence has been committed.

The fact that a person is an applicant to the Housing Register shall not be divulged (without their written consent) to any member of the public.

Access to Personal Information

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, applicants have the right to see personal information held about them by the Council. The legislation covers both manual and computerised records and applies to all information recorded since 1 April 1989. It also includes records made before that date if these are needed to make sense of subsequent information.

In order to request access to personal information, applicants must write in to the Housing Needs Manager. The Council will require proof of identity such as bank card, birth certificate or driving licence, before an access request can be processed.

The requested information will be provided to the applicant within a maximum of 56 days. A charge of £10 will be made. Files are edited where necessary, for example to exclude information restricted by law or evidence provided by a third party (e.g., healthcare professional). In the latter case, information can only be released if the professional concerned has given their written consent. Applicants wishing to see information provided by third parties must seek consent from the professional(s) concerned, asking for a letter of confirmation to be submitted to the Council.

When the information is ready it will be made available to be collected from the Civic Offices unless the applicant confirms in writing for it to be sent through the post to a specific address.

If the applicant considers that the personal information held by the Council is inaccurate, they may request that it is amended or removed from their file. In the event of a disagreement, the information will remain on file and the applicant's comments will be recorded on the file.

Disclosure of information may be denied by the Council in any of the following circumstances:

- The information could prejudice criminal proceedings.
- The information is subject to Legal Professional Privilege.
- A medical or care professional is of the opinion that disclosure could result in risk of serious harm to the person concerned or to others as a result of disclosure.

Fraud

Any household that has committed fraud will be suspended from the registers operated by the Council for 5 years.

It is an offence under Section 171 Housing Act 1996 if, in seeking assistance with housing from the Council, if you:

- Knowingly or recklessly give false information to the Council.
- Knowingly withhold information, which the Council reasonably requires you to give in connection with your housing application.

It is an offence under the Housing Act 1996 to obtain accommodation on the basis of false or deliberately misleading information. When housing has been allocated on the basis of false or misleading information, legal action may be taken to obtain possession of the property. Cases will be referred to the Council's Head of Legal Services who will undertake investigations and which may lead to prosecution.

If you are found guilty of such an offence, you could be liable to a fine, currently a maximum of £5,000 and could also result in:

- Criminal prosecution or caution
- Imprisonment for up to 6 months
- Cancelling of the housing register application. You would not be allowed to re-apply within 5 years.
- Possession proceedings for any tenancy you have obtained as a result of giving or withholding false information or withholding information.

People who have sublet a social tenancy

Any applicant, joint applicant, or member of the applicant's household who has had property recovered from them as a result of subletting a social tenancy will not qualify for the Housing Register for a period of 5 years.

Debts Owed to the Council

Applicants with any outstanding housing debt or debt to the Council will be suspended from the Housing and Transfer Registers.

The exception for housing debts is where there is a proven issue of affordability in their current accommodation or there is an identified Category 1 hazard in the accommodation they reside.

We may also take into account, in accordance with S166A(5) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), current or former tenancy arrears due to non-payment of rent, charges for use and occupation or due to damage to the property owed to this Council, another Council, social or private landlord, and claims made against a Rent Deposit Bond provided by the Council.

In these circumstances the application will be registered but may be suspended until the debt is reduced to a reasonable level. A reasonable level is generally considered to be £400 or less, or no more than four weeks rent arrears or the applicant can provide a repayment plan agreed with the applicant's landlord and can evidence payment against the plan for the last 6 months, at the time of being verified for a property.

If the application is already registered but falls into arrears which exceed £400 or four weeks rent, the application may be suspended until the situation is remedied.

Each case will be considered on its own merits.

Where applicants have lost their accommodation through non-payment of rent and have been found intentionally homeless they will be excluded from the Housing Register for a period of 2 years (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

Where an application is suspended for the above reasons the applicant will be notified in writing of the decision and the grounds for it (S166A(5)).

If Court action is being taken to get an Outright Possession Order or a Bailiff's Warrant for eviction, no offers of housing will be made without the agreement of the Housing Services Manager.

Registered Providers (i.e. housing associations) participating in the choice-based lettings scheme may have policies which prevent them offering a tenancy to an applicant who has former tenant arrears with another local authority or other Registered Providers.

Generally, applicants who have housing related debt will not be entitled to have an allocation of housing. Housing related debt includes (but is not limited to):

- Any current or former tenant rent arrears or charges for use and occupation owed to any local authority, registered provider or private sector landlord.
- Unpaid sundry debts owing to any local authority, registered provider or private sector landlord, including any rechargeable debts. or court costs.
- Any unpaid Right to Buy discounts from previously owned property.
- Any tenancy deposit or rent in advance loans provided by the council that remain unpaid; or tenancy deposit guarantees that have been provided by the Council and remain unpaid. Unpaid rent that was lawfully due to be paid to any local authority or registered provider landlord or any private sector landlord, but such unpaid rent is now unrecoverable in law because of bankruptcy proceedings.
- Outstanding council tax debts.

Rent arrears - current tenant of the council or a registered provider

In cases of current tenant rent arrears, the application will remain suspended until such time as they have made a repayment commitment to clear the debt and are making regular payments of an agreed sum which they have maintained for a period of at least six months without missing a single payment; and the arrears have reduced to a figure that is equal to or less than 4 weeks payable rent.

However, the applicant will be expected to continue making regular payments of the agreed sum until the debt is cleared. In the event that the applicant is successful for an offer of accommodation, all debts must be paid to allow the offer to go ahead.

If payments are missed then the application will again be suspended until the arrears are cleared or payments have been made satisfactorily for at least a further six months.

If arrears are still outstanding where the applicant is owed a Statutory Homeless duty and is successful for an offer of accommodation to discharge the homeless duty, if the outstanding debts cannot be cleared they will be expected to sign an agreement to continue the agreed payments after they have moved. Applicants, will not be able to apply for the transfer register until all debts have been cleared.

Moving into a council property

When you are offered a property, you will be asked to move into the property on the agreed date. You will be asked to make the appropriate arrangements to move in and to end the arrangements for existing accommodation.

If you are in receipt of benefits you will need to check on whether or not your housing costs will be affected and in particular if you are intending to claim housing costs for two properties at the same time.

If you are existing Council tenant completing a transfer you will be expected to end your existing tenancy as agreed with the Council. There may be exceptional circumstances that mean that you will have access to two properties for a period of time, however these situations will be in the minority and tenants of the Council will be expected to hand in their existing home as soon as possible.

If the home seeker or transfer applicant does not move into their new property within the agreed timescale, the Council may withdraw the offer of accommodation for the new property.

Deliberately worsening circumstances

The Council has the discretion to withhold priority from and suspend or exclude applicants where there is concern that the applicant may be trying to worsen their own circumstances by, for example, moving other people into their current property, or moving into accommodation which is too small for their needs, or where it is suspected that a fraudulent application has been made.

Applicants who have given up a home that they owned, rented, shared or had rights to but chose to leave or dispose of within the last 5 years of an application being made may be disqualified from the Housing Register for 5 years from the date that the applicant gave up their home.

Appendix 1 The Points Scheme

The Council operates a points based scheme to assess the priority of each application. All eligible applicants will be awarded points in accordance to their level of housing need.

	HomeSeeker	Transfer
Lack of facilities		
No inside WC	20	
No bathing facilities	20	
No facility for permanent mains supply hot water	20	
No facility for permanent mains supply piped water	20	
No Kitchen	20	
No facility for fixed Heating	20	
Health & Safety Rating system (HHSRS)		
Any type of Category 1 Hazard identified	50	50
High disrepair assessment where the Council is satisfied that it is evidenced by the Applicant/Landlord that the issue cannot be reasonably be resolved by the landlord within 6 months and by continuing to occupy the accommodation will pose a considerable risk to the applicant's health.	200	200
Closing or demolition order	95	95
Size/type of property		
Shared bathroom or WC	5	
Shared Kitchen	5	
Shared Lounge	5	
Shared or no garden		10
High Rise property		20
No. of Bedrooms		
Each bedroom short of that required for size and type of household (based on size of properties allocated), unless evidence exists that overcrowding is deliberate	15	15
Every dependant or non-dependant child in excess of two sharing a bedroom (every additional child is awarded an additional 10 points, for example, 2 further children = 20 points)	10	10
Anniversary points		
Each year on the list	15	15
Medical and Disability Circumstances		

<p>Priority 1 (high): Critical risk to life or health The applicant or a permanent member of their household needs to be moved urgently as they have a life threatening or serious risk to their physical or mental health which cannot be alleviated in their current home with or without adaptations.</p> <p>The applicant or a permanent member of their household is currently in hospital and cannot be discharged into their current home with or without adaptations.</p>	500	500
<p>Priority 2 (medium): Moderate risk to health The applicant or a permanent member of their household is experiencing difficulties in their current home and a move to alternative accommodation would reduce the effect considerably.</p>	200	200
<p>Priority 3 (low): Low risk to health The applicant or a permanent member of their household is experiencing low level difficulties in their current home and a move to alternative accommodation may reduce the effect.</p>	50	50
<p>No Priority No risk to health The applicant or a permanent member of their household has a medical need but moving to alternative accommodation would not alleviate the condition.</p>	0	0
Additional other medical recommendation only.	-	-
A requirement to move from a general needs property or sheltered satellite scheme to an In-House Sheltered Scheme to receive additional support.		100
Economic circumstances		
An applicant is currently in employment in the Borough and has been so for 6 months for a minimum of 16 hours per week.	30	30
An applicant is currently in employment outside of the Borough or carries out voluntary work and has been so for 6 months for a minimum of 16 hours per week	20	20
An applicant is receiving a state benefit in relation to a pension, disability or medical need (may include in relation to that of dependent children) and are unable to seek employment due to this.	20	20
British Armed Forces		
You are serving in the regular forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to your service.	50	50
You have formerly served in the regular forces.	20	20
Under-occupation		

Applies to existing Brentwood Borough Council tenants and RSL tenants, where Brentwood Borough Council nominated them to their existing RSL tenancy. Points are awarded for the size of the property you are vacating		
4 Bedroom House		3000
3 Bedroom Flat		2000
3 Bedroom House		2000
2 Bedroom Flat		1000
2 Bedroom House		1000
2 Bedroom Bungalow		1000
1 Bedroom Flat		500
1 Bedroom House		500
1 Bedroom Bungalow		500
Social and Welfare Circumstances		
Your needs within this factor will be assessed according to the strength of support received from statutory agencies e.g., Social Care, Education Welfare Services or Health Services		
Level 1 In extreme circumstances on police advice by an Inspector or above or where other statutory agencies have made a strongly supported referral that you or a member of your household are in immediate danger from the effects of violence (including racial attacks) or threats of violence or physical, emotional or sexual abuse in your current home and the allegations have been investigated and proven on a balance of probabilities within the last three months and it is deemed safe for you to reside or continue to reside in the Borough. Your points will be reviewed every 3 months	500	500
Level 2 Households where parents had previously resided together for a minimum of 12 months with dependent children and are forced to live apart and it would be reasonable to consider that they would normally be expected to reside together	200	200
Level 3 Households where there are dependent children, and one or more child is aged over 10 and of the opposite sex have to share a bedroom	100	100
Level 4 Households with dependent children all aged under 10 and one or more are of different sex have to share a bedroom	50	50

Level 5 Households with all dependent children over (same sex) and sharing a bedroom	10	10
Level 6 Households with one dependent child or pregnant Or Households who are confirmed as accepted to be eligible for a fostering or adoption scheme	10	10
Lacking Security / Homeless		
Level 1 Immediately able to remain but could receive short notice to leave at any time. Main examples, HM Forces, Tied tenancy, AST, Institutional Care or license agreement	5	
Level 2 (Prevention/Relief) Notice received to leave private rented accommodation having presented a valid notice –and it has subsequently been verified. e.g., you have received formal notice to leave your home but it is not immediately about to happen (Points will be reviewed every 56 days)	95	
Level 3 Homeless Applicant owed a Duty under S193(2) or 195(2) (or the Housing Act 1985 equivalent) (Main duty to homeless or threatened)	195	
Non-Priority Homeless You are Homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) a person not in priority need who does not have accommodation that is legally and physically available to occupy, not intentionally so and have a local connection. This covers single homeless and rough sleepers including residents of night shelters	50	
Priority Intentional Homeless You are Homeless and owed a duty under S190(2). This covers intentionally homeless applicants but who are in priority need or S192(3) and occupying accommodation secured at the Council's discretion, where not in priority need	50	
You have recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled to reside in Government/MOD accommodation following the death of a spouse or civil partner	95	
Insecure Accommodation		
You have been accepted as Statutorily homeless and placed in any form of temporary accommodation secured for you by Brentwood Borough Council and for every week in that accommodation.	Per week 10	
You have been accepted as Statutorily homeless and have secured temporary accommodation in a refuge or supported housing and for every week in that accommodation	Per week 10	

You have been accepted as statutorily homeless and are making your own temporary arrangements, and for every week spent as such	Per week 10	
Supported Housing Schemes		
The Supported Housing Scheme in which you live has adhered to an agreed protocol with the Council and advises that you have met the move on requirements	200	
Local Connection		
You have lived within the Brentwood Borough for 5 years	30	30
You can evidence a strong family connection to the Borough and they have lived continuously in the Borough through their own choice for the last 5 years (Over 55's, requiring Sheltered Accommodation)	15	
Armed Forces		
Members of the Armed Forces and former service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge	15	
Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the armed forces leaving services family accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner	15	
Serving or former members of the reserve forces who need to move because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result	15	
Moving within the Borough		
You can demonstrate a need to move to a particular locality in Borough. Where failure to move would cause hardship to yourself or others, for example, to give or receive care, or to take up a particular employment or education opportunity.		15

Appendix 2 Bedroom entitlement

Homeseekers

Studio
Single Person
One Bedroom Need
Couple/Single Person
Couple/Single Person who is pregnant
Couple/Single person who has a child under 2 years
Couple/Single person who is pregnant and has a child under 2 years
Couple/Single person who has a non-permanent resident carer
Two Bedroom Need
Couple/Single Person with one Child over 2 years
Couple/Single Person with one Child over 2 years and Pregnant
Couple/Single Person with two children (same sex) over 10 years
Couple/Single Person with 2 children both under 10 years
Couple/Single Person with a permanent resident carer
Three Bedroom Need
Couple/Single Person with 2 children (different sex), one or both are over 10 years
Couple/Single Person with 3 children or more

Transfer Applicants

One Bedroom Need
Couple/Single Person – no children
Couple/Single Person or couple and pregnant
Two Bedroom Need
Couple/Single person with one child
Couple/Single person with one child and pregnant
Couple/Single person with 2 children both under 5
Couple/Single Person with a permanent resident carer
Three Bedroom Need
Couple/Single person with 2 + children one or more over 7
Four Bedroom Need

Appendix Three Financial Circumstances

The following financial criteria will be used to establish whether or not a household can join the housing register or offered a property if their circumstances have changed since joining the housing register or transfer register.

If an applicant has income and/or capital, which would enable them to purchase a suitable property (including low cost home ownership) or afford private rented housing in the Borough they will not qualify for entry onto the Homeseekers Register.

In order to determine this the Council will undertake a financial assessment, which may include the following and is not an exhaustive list:

- The total income of the applicant/partner.
- Any capital, assets or savings available to the applicant/partner.
- Average property prices in the Council area for the type of accommodation needed by the household.
- The ability of the applicant/partner to service the required mortgage or rent payments based on a realistic assessment of their financial position and commitments.

Single person households who earn £30,000, and non-single person households with incomes over £50,000 a year, or applicants who have assets or savings over £16,000 or more will not normally be allowed access to the Homeseekers Register. Such applicants will be given advice on the various low-cost home ownership schemes open to them.

Under-occupying Council tenants shall not be subject to the above income thresholds.

Applicants for sheltered housing shall not be subject to the above income thresholds and are expected not to have an income greater than £30,000 for an individual or £50,000 for a couple, or more than £150,000 savings or capital.

The income and savings thresholds outlined above will be reviewed annually by the Council and the details of any updates will be published on the Council's website.