



South Norfolk Home Options

South Norfolk Council's Housing Allocations Scheme

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1. Introduction

The South Norfolk Home Options Scheme contains the Housing Allocations Policy for South Norfolk Council. It also sets out the procedures that South Norfolk Council (known throughout this document as 'the Council') follows in the allocation of affordable housing in its district.

The Registered Providers (Housing Associations) that are part of the scheme are known throughout this document as the scheme landlords. These are listed at Appendix A. A copy of the South Norfolk Home Options Scheme is available free from the Council or one of the scheme landlords and is also available on the Council's website at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk.

1.1 What is an allocation?

The allocation of housing by a housing authority is defined in s.159 of the 1996 Housing Act as:

- Selecting a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by them (ie by that housing authority)
- Nominating a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by another person (ie another housing authority)
- Nominating a person to be an assured tenant of housing accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider (Housing Association)

1.2 Statement on Choice

The Council and the scheme landlords are fully committed to enabling customers to play an active role in choosing where, and in what property type and tenure they live, while continuing to house those people in the greatest housing need and complying with all relevant legislation. However, to minimise the risk of further incidents of anti-social behaviour an applicant may be restricted in their choice of area.

It is important to realise that the demand for accommodation is higher in some areas than others. In making a decision about the choices available, applicants need to consider their housing need priority against the availability of properties in any given area.

In order to meet our statutory duties, an applicant in Emergency band may be made a direct let of suitable accommodation anywhere within the district.

1.3 Overview of the Policy and Processes

The Council assesses applications from customers who would like to rent affordable homes in order to determine:

- Whether they are eligible for an allocation
- Whether they qualify for an allocation
- The level of their housing need, assessed against 5 bands.

The Council stores the information about eligible and qualifying applicants on an electronic data base known as its Housing Register. This information is shared with the scheme landlords.

Scheme landlords advertise their vacant properties in South Norfolk to those on the Housing Register, including photographs and a description, on a weekly basis. Applicants may apply/bid for their choice of properties as long as they meet the qualifying criteria for a particular property.

The successful applicant is the one who meets the stated qualifying criteria and has the highest assessed housing need (band). If there is more than one applicant in the highest band then the application with the earliest date (this is known as the band effective date) will be considered first.

Feedback is provided to applicants on the level of demand for vacant properties previously advertised. This helps applicants to make more informed choices, including looking at the other housing options promoted through the scheme.

2. Applications and assessment

2.1 Policy

2.1.1 Eligibility

Certain people from abroad, including some who are subject to immigration control, are not eligible for an allocation of affordable housing. These regulations are set by Government and updated regularly. The Council follows these regulations which are available on request.

2.1.2 Qualification

Applicants, who are eligible for an allocation, must meet one or more of the following criteria to qualify for an allocation and join the Housing Register.

- Have a housing need that places them in the Emergency, Gold, Silver or Bronze Bands (see section 2.3.3), and/or
- Have a South Norfolk local connection through one or more of the following:
 - Have lived in South Norfolk for 6 of the previous 12 months
 - Have lived in South Norfolk for 3 of the previous 10 years
 - Have a current contract of permanent employment where the job is mostly located in South Norfolk
 - Have an existing social tenancy and been in employment or training in South Norfolk for a minimum of six months and there is a reasonable expectation that the employment or training will continue for a further 12 months.
 - Have a need to move to the South Norfolk area where failure to meet that need would cause extreme hardship to themselves or others.
 - Be homeless or threatened with homelessness (within 12 weeks and who are assessed as probably having a priority need) when the local connection criteria as laid down in the homelessness code of guidance would apply
 - Be owed a Relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act, when the local connection criteria as laid down in the homelessness code of guidance would apply.

- Have been 'placed' or relocated outside the district due to illness, military service or other exceptional circumstances and lived in South Norfolk for at least 6 months prior to the placement.
- A young homeless care leaver under 21 years who has been looked after by Norfolk County Council for at least 2 years, including some time before they turned 16, under section 22A of the Children Act 1989.
- A care leaver age under 21 years, placed in accommodation in South Norfolk by another authority for at least 2 years, including some time before they turned 16, under section 22A of the Children Act 1989.
- Are living in accommodation based support services outside the district to which they were referred by or with the agreement of the Council and they lived in South Norfolk for 6 months immediately prior to the placement.
- Be a current or former member of the British Armed Forces, having left service within the preceding 5 years, as defined by s.374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.
- Be a gypsy (as defined in the Caravan Sites Act 1968) who has habitually resorted to the South Norfolk area.

2.1.3 Non- qualification

An applicant will not qualify for an allocation where:

- They have been housed by a scheme landlord, through the South Norfolk Home Options Scheme within the preceding year, unless their circumstances have changed and this leads to a new housing need that would be assessed as Emergency, Gold, Silver or Bronze.
- They have been housed through the Council's RADs (Rent Advance & Deposit scheme) within the preceding year, unless their circumstances change and this leads to a new housing need that would be assessed as Emergency, Gold, Silver or Bronze.
- They are under 18 and do not have a guarantor and cannot show they will be supported in a tenancy where the Council assesses that support is needed to sustain a tenancy.
- They, or a member of their household, have been evicted from a tenancy and has neither had a settled period of a minimum of six months nor met the criteria for reassessment, since the eviction.

- They, or a member of their household, have been evicted from a property for mortgage arrears and has neither had a settled period of a minimum of six months nor met the criteria for reassessment, since the eviction.
- They, or a member of their household, is/was responsible for paying full rent directly to a landlord and they have rent arrears and/or court costs greater than 14 weeks rent, if the rent is charged weekly or greater than 4 months if the rent is charged monthly **and** they have not met the criteria for reassessment.
- They, or a member of their household, is/was responsible for paying a 'top up' or service charge in addition to housing benefit payments that are made direct to the landlord and has 'top up' or service charge arrears equivalent of greater than 14 weeks top up amount if rent is charged weekly or greater than 4 months of the top up amount if it is charged monthly **and** they have not met the criteria for reassessment;
- They, or a member of their household, has/had their full rent paid by Housing Benefit direct to the landlord and there are rent arrears/court costs of over 14 weeks rent, if the rent is charged weekly or over 4 months if the rent is charged monthly **and** the arrears are caused by the applicant either not providing the information required to assess a housing benefit claim or making a fraudulent application **and** they have not met the criteria for reassessment;
- They, or a member of their household, has caused damage to a property and been charged for damages and/or recharges and/or court costs of over £1000.
- They, or a member of their household, has been evicted for anti-social behaviour or unacceptable behaviour and there has been no demonstrable evidence of behaviour change in settled accommodation;
- They, or a member of their household, provided false information to obtain social housing.
- They, or a member of their household, are in arrears of rent advance and deposit loan or other debt of more than £100 owed to the Council;
- They, or a member of their household, own a residential property and have the financial means to find their own housing solution.

Each application will be assessed individually and mitigating circumstances will be taken into account. Guidance on this is contained in Appendix B.

In order to be reassessed, applicants will be required to show how they may qualify. This will relate to the reasons for non-qualification and each applicant

will be told their criteria for reassessment and possible qualification. Guidance is contained in Appendix C.

Where applicants do not qualify due to debt or anti-social behaviour, when they meet the criteria to be reassessed and then qualify, they will be assessed as Bronze Band initially. They will be informed of their criteria for reassessment.

2.2 Processes

An application can be made as part of a housing advice interview. Interview appointments can be made at the Council's offices but the Housing Options team will also provide immediate advice and assistance in cases of urgent housing need. The team will provide housing advice to any South Norfolk resident, people with a local connection to South Norfolk or any person who needs to move to South Norfolk. Advice will cover the full range of housing options and will be realistic in terms of chances of success.

One interview outcome could be an application to the housing register. All supporting and verification documentation will need to be provided at the interview before an application to the Housing Register is assessed. If a vulnerable customer is unable to attend at the offices, alternative arrangements will be made.

Eligible applicants have the right to ask for any information that will help them understand how their application is likely to be treated, what preference they are likely to be given, what kind of accommodation is likely to be made available, and when it is likely to become available.

2.3 Assessment of housing need

2.3.1 Policy

All applicants who are eligible and qualify to join the Housing Register will be assessed and placed in the appropriate housing needs band that represents their household's needs.

The law requires that reasonable preference for an allocation must be made in the following cases

- (a) People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act;
- (b) People who are owed a duty by a housing authority under relevant housing and homelessness legislation;
- (c) People occupying unsanitary (unhealthy) or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;

- (d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability; and
- (e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

Preference can also be given to other categories of applications to meet local priorities.

2.3.2 Individual assessment

Applications are assessed individually to try and ensure that the scheme is not applied so rigidly as to produce a manifestly unfair outcome in a particular case.

2.3.3 The housing need bands

Each application, including applications from current or former members of the armed forces, will be assessed to determine the level of housing need of the household and placed into one of five bands:

| | |
|------------|---|
| EMERGENCY: | Urgent Priority |
| GOLD: | High Priority |
| SILVER: | Medium Priority |
| BRONZE: | Urgent/High/Medium but with reduced preference |
| LOW NEED: | No Priority (adequately housed) |

The criteria for being assessed in each band are:

EMERGENCY BAND

- Those required to move by the Police for witness protection reasons
- Applicants who, following a homelessness application to the Council, are owed the full housing duty (s193) and are currently living in temporary accommodation
- Applicants who are homeless, or become homeless and are subject to the Relief Duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act and are placed in interim accommodation who is likely to have their accommodation through no fault of their own, for which there is no legal redress, who are assessed as probably having a priority need and who are actively

co-operating with South Norfolk Council's housing advice to prevent their homelessness

- Applicants requiring urgent hospital discharge where their current accommodation is totally unsuitable for their needs
- Applicants with a combination of high (Gold Band) needs within the household
- Other circumstances, considered extreme by the Council

It is important to note that Emergency Band could be reduced to Bronze Band if the applicant(s) meet one or more of the criteria specified in the Bronze Band (reduced preference) category.

Emergency band will only be valid for 6 weeks. This can be extended where the applicant has not placed a bid because no suitable vacancy has arisen during that period. If the applicant does not meet the extension criteria, their priority will be reduced to Bronze Band and they will be directly offered the next available property suitable to their needs. If they refuse the offer of that property the Council will view any housing duty as having been discharged.

GOLD BAND

- Applicants threatened with homelessness who are likely to lose their accommodation through no fault of their own, for which there is no legal redress, in the next 12 weeks, who are assessed as probably having a priority need and who are actively co-operating with South Norfolk Council's housing advice to prevent their homelessness or are owed a prevention or relief duty by South Norfolk Council.
- A high medical need which results in an urgent need to move because current accommodation is not suitable and cannot be made suitable. If there is an imminent risk of health deteriorating as a result of the unsuitability of the applicant's accommodation should they remain **or** the unsuitability is such that daily living is severely affected and a change of accommodation could be reasonably expected to alleviate the problem. There is a clear expectation, supported by relevant health professionals where appropriate, that a change in their accommodation will have a significant impact on their health or wellbeing. While taking into account information from other organisations and professionals, the assessment of housing need in relation to the scheme's bandings is made by the Council's officers.
- A high welfare need where there is an urgent need to move and where a change of accommodation could be reasonably expected to alleviate

the problem. In the case of an applicant being a victim of domestic abuse or anti-social behaviour, this high priority would normally be guided through multi-agency information sharing and assessment.

- The current home is in serious disrepair and/or is considered to be unsafe by the Council's Housing Standards Team and this cannot be remedied by the applicant or the landlord within a reasonable timescale.
- Applicant(s) lack two or more bedrooms. The impact of the household's living situation and ability to manage may be taken into account and legislation will be used as an aid in assessment. The Council will use the following guidelines to assess the level of overcrowding:
 - A single person aged 16 or over requires one bedroom.
 - A couple require one bedroom.
 - Two children of a different sex, where one is aged 10 or over, require 2 bedrooms.
 - Rooms measuring less than 50 square feet will not be counted as a bedroom.
 - A bedroom is classed as any habitable room, excluding a single living room for family use.
- Tenants of scheme landlords, living within South Norfolk, occupying a substantially adapted property that they no longer require.
- Applicants who have a combination of medium (Silver Band) needs within the household.

It is important to note that Gold Band could be reduced to Bronze Band if the applicant(s) meet one or more of the criteria specified in the Bronze Band (reduced preference) category.

SILVER BAND

- Applicants threatened with homelessness who are likely to lose their accommodation through no fault of their own, for which there is no legal redress, in the next 12 weeks, who are assessed as not likely to have a priority need and who are actively co-operating with South Norfolk Council's housing advice to prevent their homelessness or are owed a prevention or relief duty by South Norfolk Council.
- A medical need to move where the current home is not suitable and cannot be made suitable. The accommodation is causing the applicant significant problems, but they are managing to some extent. A change

in accommodation could reasonably be expected to alleviate or significantly improve the problem. While taking into account information from other organisations and professionals, the assessment of housing need in relation to the scheme's bandings is made by the Council's officers.

- Medium welfare needs where there is not an urgent need to move but a change of accommodation could be reasonably expected to alleviate the problem. In the case of an applicant being a victim of domestic abuse or anti-social behaviour, this medium priority would normally be guided through multi-agency information sharing and assessment.
- A recognised and established household is unable to live together as there is no suitable accommodation available to them.
- Applicants lack a bathroom, kitchen or inside toilet and this cannot be remedied by the applicant or landlord within a reasonable timescale. Applicants lack cold or hot water supplies, electricity, gas or adequate heating and this cannot be remedied by the applicant or the landlord within a reasonable timescale.
- Applicants lack one bedroom. The impact of the household's living situation and ability to manage may be taken into account and legislation will be used as an aid in assessment. The Council will use the following guidelines to assess the level of overcrowding:
 - A single person aged 16 or over requires one bedroom.
 - A couple require one bedroom.
 - Two children of a different sex, where one is aged 10 or over, require 2 bedrooms.
 - Rooms measuring less than 50 square feet will not be counted as a bedroom.
- Applicants in accommodation based support services (see Appendix D for a list) assessed as ready to move on, following an interview and assessment with a housing officer and the required evidence and risk assessment being submitted from a supported housing provider. If it is deemed necessary by the Council's housing officer, a suitable support package must be arranged and there must also be a reasonable expectation that any tenancy will be sustained. Other housing options, including private rented tenancies, will also be expected to be explored. Applicants must have a clear rent account with the supported housing provider.
- Young people in local authority care who are referred for a housing advice interview as part of their pathway plan for leaving care, normally

expected to be at least 6 months prior to their 18th birthday, and who are assessed as ready to move into independent accommodation, following an interview and assessment with a housing officer. The housing officer must be satisfied that, if deemed necessary, there is a suitable support package in place and that it is reasonably expected that any tenancy will be sustained. Other housing options, including private rented tenancies, will also be expected to be explored.

It is important to note that Silver Band could be reduced to Bronze Band if the applicant(s) meet one or more of the criteria specified in the Bronze Band (reduced preference) category.

BRONZE BAND (Reduced preference)

An applicant will be assessed as Bronze Band (reduced preference) if they have been assessed, initially as Emergency, Gold or Silver Band but the Council is satisfied of one of the following:

- The applicant does not have a South Norfolk local connection (see section 2.1.2); or
- The applicant has deliberately and unreasonably refused to co-operate with South Norfolk Council to prevent or relieve homelessness; or
- The applicant has deliberately and unreasonably refused an offer by South Norfolk Council or a scheme landlord of suitable accommodation available for six months to prevent or relieve homelessness; or
- The applicant or a member of their household is/was responsible for paying full rent directly to a landlord and they have rent arrears and/or court costs equivalent to between (and including) 8 and 14 weeks rent, if the rent is charged weekly or between (and including) 2 and 4 months if the rent is charged monthly; or
- The applicant or a member of their household is/was responsible for paying a 'top up' or service charge in addition to housing benefit payments that are made direct to the landlord and has 'top up' or service charge arrears equivalent of between (and including) 8 and 14 weeks top up amount if rent is charged weekly or between (and including) 2 and 4 months of top up amount if it is charged monthly; or
- The applicant or a member of their household has/had their full rent paid by Housing Benefit direct to the landlord and there are rent arrears and/or court costs equivalent to between (and including) 8 and 14 weeks rent, if the rent is charged weekly or between (and including) 2 and 4 months if the rent is charged monthly **and** the arrears are caused by the applicant either not providing the information required to assess a housing benefit claim or making a fraudulent application; or

- They, or a member of their household, are in arrears of rent advance and deposit loan or other debt of more than £100 owed to the Council and a repayment plan has been in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months;
- The applicant or a member of their household has caused damage to a property or failed to maintain a property and been charged for damages, recharges and/or court costs of between £500 or £1000 inclusive; or
- The applicant or a member of their household has committed acts causing, or likely to cause, nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or have previously lived; or
- The applicant or a member of their household did or failed to do something which, in consequence, led to their housing circumstances becoming worse; or
- The applicant or a member of their household has significant financial resources and would be able to secure alternative accommodation at market rent. Financial resources include equity in a property, savings and income. Any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service will not be taken into account. The levels of these that trigger an assessment of ability to purchase or rent a property privately are set and reviewed by the Council according to the current housing market; or
- The applicant, following a homelessness application, has been found to be intentionally homeless; or
- The applicant, following a homelessness application, has been found to be owed the full housing duty but is not considered to be ready or able to live without support; or
- The applicant is currently living in temporary accommodation whilst a homelessness application is being assessed; or
- The applicant was previously assessed as not qualifying for an allocation due to debt or anti social behaviour and has been re-assessed as able to qualify.

In order to be reassessed, applicants will be required to show how they have met the criteria required. This will relate to the reasons for bronze band and each applicant will be told their criteria for reassessment. Guidance is contained in Appendix G.

This is not a blanket policy. In exceptional circumstances, applicants may not have their preference reduced despite meeting one of the criteria outlined above. See Appendix B for guidance.

A reduction of preference (Bronze band) will not be applied where a tenant agreed a 'safe surrender' of their tenancy with their landlord and the Council if they were not able to manage their tenancy effectively at the time. At the point of the applicant being ready for a tenancy again, priority will be assessed according to current need and circumstances. See Appendix E for guidance.

LOW NEED BAND

All other eligible and qualifying applicants including applicants in supported housing/hostels who are either not yet ready to move on or are not engaging fully with the support programme.

2.3.4 Determination of band effective date

Where two or more people from the same band apply/ bid on the same property the date that will be used to determine priority within that band is called the band effective date. This date is determined as follows:

- Statutorily homeless applicants to whom the Council has accepted the full housing duty – the date the homelessness application was made.
- All other applicants - the date their application was assessed and added to the Housing Register. This will not be until all necessary supporting evidence has been provided (this will also, usually, be their application date)

Following a reassessment, if the applicant moves into a higher band then their band effective date will be considered as the date that the Council was notified of their change of circumstances and supporting evidence provided. Alternatively, if an applicant moves into a lower band then the effective date will be the date of the original application.

2.3.5 Property size and type eligibility

Each applicant will be assessed to determine what size and type of property they are eligible for. The table at Appendix F shows how this will be assessed.

Once proof of pregnancy of at least 20 weeks is provided the unborn child will be classed as a child for the purposes of property size eligibility only; where a household already has another child (other children), the unborn child will be classed as the same sex as the youngest child.

Please note:

- Assessment will be based on the suitability of the property for the size of the household.
- Only children who live with the applicant for four or more nights a week will be considered as part of the household. We need proof of this.
- Students who live away from home at college or university will not be considered as part of the household.
- Some upper floor properties will be restricted for households without children and some will be open to all applicants who meet the criteria for the property size. This decision will be made by the landlord at the point of advertising the property.
- A person can only be on one housing application
- Some disabled applicants who require 3 bedroom or larger property may be eligible for larger properties or those with 2 reception rooms where this will meet the needs relating to their disability. Guidance can be found at Appendix J.

2.3.6 Cancellation of applications

Applications will be cancelled for one or more of the following reasons:

- The applicant requests cancellation
- The applicant's circumstances change and they are no longer eligible or no longer qualify
- The application has been active for two years and the applicant has not reapplied within 28 days of the second anniversary.
- The applicant is found to have made a false or deliberately misleading statement, or to have withheld information in connection with their application, or have not told the Council of a change in their circumstances which may affect qualification or priority.
- The applicant has not placed a bid for the preceding 12-month period
- The applicant has not responded to contact from the Council within 28 days

2.4 Processes

2.4.1 Informing customers of their assessed housing need (Band) and other information

Once an application has been assessed the applicant will be notified of the following:

- The band in which they have been assessed
- The size and type of property they qualify for
- How to access the Scheme Guide
- Their bidding number

- Their right of review of their band and property size/type eligibility

Applicants assessed as Bronze band (reduced preference) will be notified by the Council of how their application can be reassessed. Guidance can be found in Appendix C. Each case will be treated individually.

2.4.2 Change in circumstances

A change in circumstances must be notified to the Council immediately together with any supporting evidence. Failure to do this could result in an applicant not being considered for a property. This is because priority is based on the applicant's current situation. A change in circumstances will mean that the application has to be re-assessed.

Each time an applicant logs on to the Home Options website they will be prompted to check their personal details and to inform the Council of changes. Applicants who do not use the website and use other methods of bidding for properties are also expected to inform the Council of any change in their circumstances.

2.4.3 Assessments for applicants who are members of staff or elected members

Applications from elected Members and former elected Members or their close relatives will be dealt with by a relevant manager of the Council. The award of priority (housing need band) must be authorised by the Council's Chief Executive Officer.

Applications from employees or former employees of the council or partner landlords or their close relatives will be dealt with by a relevant manager of the Council. The award of a housing need band (priority) under the scheme will be authorised by the Council's Director with the responsibility for housing

2.4.4 Revision of applications

Every application will be reviewed periodically to check that the applicant is using the Home Options system to good effect and is pursuing any other suitable housing options. Where this is not apparent a housing officer will contact the applicant to discuss their situation and priority. If the applicant does not respond to officer contact within 28 days their application may be cancelled. The set revision periods are as follows:

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Emergency Band | 6 Weeks |
| Gold and Silver Band | 6 Months |

Prevention and Relief Gold and Silver band revision will be set individually as part of the personal housing plan.

2.4.5 Decisions and reviews

Where the Council decides that an applicant is ineligible or does not qualify for an allocation and to join the Housing Register, it will notify the applicant of that decision and the grounds for it in writing and also verbally where the Council believes the applicant may have difficulty understanding the implications of the decision.

Eligible applicants have the right to ask the Council to inform them of any decision about matters to be taken into account in processing their application.

An applicant can ask for a review of certain decisions made regarding their application for an allocation. These are:

- if the applicant has not been given preference (ie has been assessed as Bronze Band, reduced preference); or
- any decision about the facts of the applicant's case which has been taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to them (this would include the banding given to an applicant and the type of property that they qualify for).

A request for a review of a decision should preferably be made in writing and can be made by an applicant or a representative on behalf of the applicant. The request should be made within 21 days of the decision being received by the applicant and should include information that the applicant believes has not been taken into account already or which further supports the original application or new information.

The review will be carried out by a senior officer of the Council who has not been involved in the original decision. Reviews will be carried out within 28 days of the request being received and the applicant will receive a written review decision within a further 14 days.

An applicant does not have the right to ask for a review of a decision reached by an earlier review. If an applicant is still unhappy following the review of a decision, they can make a complaint through the Council's complaints procedures, contact the local government ombudsman, or seek further advice from an organisation such as Shelter or Citizens Advice.

2.5 False information

If an applicant knowingly gives false information, or withholds information, in order to secure a home it is likely that they will lose that home. It is also likely that they will be prosecuted and if found guilty could be liable to a fine and/or imprisonment.

3. Allocations and lettings

3.1 Policy

3.1.1 Proportion of properties for transfer tenants

Affordable properties for rent are advertised in two main categories. These are:

- Those which all applicants can bid/apply for (this will account for a minimum of 80% of available social rented properties)
- Those which only existing (transfer) tenants of scheme landlords (living within South Norfolk) can bid/apply for (this will account for up to 20% of available social rented properties, with no more than 20% of each property type in a year).

3.1.2 Direct lets

In certain circumstances the Council will allocate properties directly to applicants without the property being advertised.

Illustrative examples of direct lets are as follows:

- Where a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency or to provide temporary accommodation for a homeless family.
- Where an allocation is required to ensure protection of the public, for example, following a decision made by a Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel meeting or to fulfil agreements made with offender management services, or where a customer has been referred as part of the witness protection scheme;
- Where a customer's home is being repaired and they need to be moved from the property on a temporary or permanent basis.

A tenancy may also be offered directly regardless of other priorities, where the applicant has enjoyed an established occupancy of the property, has a reasonable expectation of a property of that type and would be a suitable tenant (e.g. former tenants of the property, non-secure or introductory tenants or carers or family members with no succession rights.)

In deciding whether to make an offer of a tenancy the Council and the landlord will consider whether the property is of a suitable size and type for the applicant's household (if it is not, then another property of a more suitable size and type may be offered) and the conduct of the applicant in terms of rent payments and tenancy conditions.

Any grounds put forward by the applicant for offering him or her the property regardless of its suitability will also be considered and in exceptional

circumstances (taking into account the length of residence, age of applicant and whether the allocation would contribute to maintaining a sustainable property) the tenancy may be offered even if this results in under occupation of the property.

A direct let requires approval by the lettings panel with the exception of those made following expiry of Emergency band or in McGrady cases. See appendix H for list.

3.1.3 Pitches for Gypsies and Travellers

Applications for these pitches are initially assessed in the same way as applications for social housing and awarded a banding.

There may be an additional assessment of any site-specific factors. The assessments will be in accordance with the latest good practice as published by the Government and will include consideration of the balance and mix in the community, therefore prioritising the long term cohesion of the site.

Extra support with the process is offered to applicants where it is needed. The application will be identified to indicate that it is for a site pitch. The pitches are not advertised on the website. The landlord will have the final say as to who to offer a pitch to and may request more than one nomination for a pitch. Appendix I provides further guidance.

3.1.4 Sensitive Lets

Sometimes landlords will request that the advertising of a vacant property is treated as a sensitive let. An example of this would be where the previous tenant has caused anti social behaviour and it is important to get the right mix of tenants in the area. This is agreed by the lettings panel and the property is advertised for transfer applicants only. The landlord and the local authority may agree that the applicant at the top of the shortlist is not suitable to be offered the property and agree to offer it to a more suitable applicant.

3.1.5 Local Lettings

Sometimes local lettings agreements are agreed for an existing property or group of properties and may allow different priorities for allocating properties. Local lettings agreements can be requested for new developments and, if agreed, be applied in addition to any local authority planning restrictions that have been put in place but will not override them. These types of local lettings will be approved by the partnership's lettings panel and reviewed annually.

3.2 Process

3.2.1 Advertising of properties

Affordable properties for rent are advertised for a seven day period from Thursday to Wednesday. Private rented properties, shared ownership properties and other housing options are advertised at all times.

Social rented properties can sometimes have 2 different rent levels of 'social rent' and 'affordable rent' and each landlord has their own criteria for which rent level applies to which type of property. This should be clearly explained on each advert, where this is relevant.

Properties are advertised on the South Norfolk Home Options website.

Vulnerable applicants who are unable to access the website will be offered a service appropriate to them to ensure that they are aware of relevant properties.

The scheme guide explains in detail how and where to access the advertised properties.

3.2.2 Minimising Voids

Sometimes properties are not bid for. In such circumstances and after consultation with the advertising scheme landlord the Council can extend the property eligibility to make it available to a wider pool of people on the register. If after it has been advertised for two cycles at the wider eligibility rating it has still not been let, the scheme landlord can request the property be advertised in neighbouring authorities and or independently. In agreeing to the request, the Council must be satisfied that properties let in this way go to eligible tenants in priority need.

3.2.3 Property descriptions

Property adverts carry a photograph of the property or similar and always have a full description of the property. This description usually includes the following information:

- Type (House, Flat etc)
- Tenure (social rented, private rented, shared ownership etc)
- Number and max occupancy of bedrooms
- Location
- Level of accessibility for those with mobility issues/wheelchair users
- Services provided (sheltered housing scheme manager, caretaker etc).
- Heating type
- Age restrictions

- Whether pets are allowed
- Availability of outside space (garden etc) and parking
- Rent and service charges (split weekly/monthly), including whether the rent is charged at social or affordable rent levels.
- Special information (location of bus routes/ other amenities etc)
- Property size category (known as the PPGC code)
- Whether it is for transfer applicants only
- Whether customers with a 'local connection' get priority
- Is the property part of a local development where under occupation might be allowed?

3.2.4 Housing for over 55s

Some accommodation is designed specifically for older people, with schemes normally for over 55s or over 60s. Residents pay an additional charge as well as the basic rent, for support services. In exceptional circumstances, younger people may be considered if they require support, and other types of accommodation are not suitable. This would be achieved through the direct let process.

The minimum age for such properties will be clearly stated when they are advertised.

Scheme landlords normally carry out a needs and risk assessment for customers to assess whether they are eligible to bid for sheltered housing properties, to ensure the services provided are appropriate to their needs.

3.2.5 Bidding/applying for properties

Provided the applicant meets the stated qualifying criteria and is on the Housing Register they can bid/apply for the property by the deadline given. Applicants can bid/apply for a maximum of two affordable properties for rent each week. All property adverts clearly state a deadline by which bids for those properties must be received.

Applicants can bid/apply in the following ways:

- Phone
- Text
- Website

The scheme guide provides these contact details and explains in detail how and where to bid.

Where it is identified that applicants are vulnerable and/or unable to bid/apply for properties themselves, the Council will agree the form of assistance that they will offer.

3.2.6 Retrospective Bidding

A retrospective bid request is a request from a registered applicant, or their authorised representative, to include a bid in a bidding cycle that has already closed. This will include requests to withdraw an existing bid and replace it with another.

A request for a retrospective bid will only be considered if;

- it is received prior to close of business on the day after the bidding cycle in question has closed, and
- any of the Home Options electronic bidding methods have been unavailable from midday, for a period of more than 30 minutes, on the last day of the bidding cycle, and
- this unavailability can be substantiated by the Home Options IT

Requests for retrospective bids must be made in one of the following ways:

- By telephone to the Housing Options team
- In person to the Housing Options team

Acceptance of a retrospective bid does not guarantee an offer of a tenancy. If a retrospective bid is received and accepted it will be entered onto the system by a member of the Housing and Advice team on the same day. The bid will then take its correct position in the short list for the property concerned and be processed in the normal way.

It is the responsibility of a Housing Options Team Leader, to ensure that the shortlisting process is suspended in the event that the criteria above have been met, and that all Partners are alerted to this fact.

The Housing Options Team Leader will alert all partners when short listing can resume. This will usually be two working days after the close of the bidding cycle in question.

A message will be added to the Home Options website once downtime has been confirmed alerting applicants to their right to request a retrospective bid.

3.2.7 Selection of the successful bids/applications:

At the end of the advertising period, applicants who have bid/applied for an affordable home for rent will be shortlisted. The successful applicant for each property will normally be the one who qualifies for the property, in the highest band and with the earliest effective date subject to the following provisions:

- Some properties have had adaptations made to them to make it easier for someone with a disability to live in them. These properties have an accessibility rating and applicants with a need for adapted properties may be given priority over other applicants even if they have a lower band, in order to make the best use of the adaptations.
- Some properties are built to either meet the housing needs of a particular parish in South Norfolk and/or have lettings criteria stipulated in planning agreements which give priority to applicants who have a connection to specific parishes or sometimes the district. This is highlighted in the advert and applicants who meet these criteria will be given priority over other applicants even if they have a lower band. In the case of gypsies (as defined in the Caravan Sites Act 1968) 'residents' includes persons who have habitually resorted to the particular parish. Where a social property for rent, that does not have these local connection restrictions applied to it, is vacated by an applicant who has successfully bid for and moves into a property in the same parish that does have local connection restrictions applied to it, the same local connection restrictions will be applied to the initial subsequent let of the vacated property.

3.2.8 Making the offer

The successful applicant will be contacted by the landlord to arrange an accompanied viewing. They will then be offered the property, if it is considered suitable and affordable and when the customer's application criteria have been verified. The landlord may request photographic identification from the applicant.

Applicants will usually be contacted within three working days of the shortlist for the property closing. If an applicant cannot be contacted following multiple attempts the next person on the shortlist will be contacted. It is the applicant's responsibility to keep the Council aware of changes to their contact details.

Applicants have up to two working days from being offered a property to decide whether to accept an offer of accommodation. If no response has been received after two days, the next person on the shortlist will normally be considered for the property.

If an applicant refuses the offer, the property will normally be offered to the next on the shortlist, and so on until the property is let.

Scheme landlords reserve the right to carry out an assessment of applicants to ensure the particular property is appropriate for their needs before contacting them or making an offer. This can include the applicant's ability to afford the rent charged. If, following such an assessment, the scheme landlord

considers the property not to be suitable for the applicant they will contact the Council to discuss the situation. If it is agreed that the property is not suitable for the applicant it would then normally be offered to the next applicant on the shortlist. If agreement cannot be reached the final decision lies with the scheme landlord.

Offers of accommodation may be withdrawn if it is found that the information supplied by the applicant was incorrect or if the customer has not informed the Council of any changes and their current situation is not accurately reflected in their Band.

3.2.9 Feedback

On each week's pages of property advertisements, the Council gives feedback on the results of the social rented properties that have been advertised.

The information provided for each property will be:

1. The location
2. Number of bids
3. Band of the successful applicant
4. Effective date of the successful applicant

The Council will never include any personal details of successful applicants in the feedback.

3.2.10 Properties not included in the scheme

Certain properties and housing schemes are not included in the Home Options scheme, for example, Housing with Care Schemes for the elderly.

However, the vast majority of vacant social housing properties in South Norfolk are let through the Scheme.

3.3 Equality

In drawing up this scheme the Council has had due regard to issues of equality and in particular to the Equality Act 2010.

The Council and scheme landlords are committed to equality of opportunity and are opposed to all forms of direct or indirect unlawful discrimination. We aim to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Specifically, but not exclusively, to meet these aims through this scheme we will:

- Make reasonable adjustments, for example the use of INTRAN, carrying out home visits, and providing extra support in using the scheme through our assisted applicants list;
- Allow some disabled applicants to bid for larger properties;
- Make all literature available in a large font and written in plain English. The Home Options website is also compatible with screen readers and has browse aloud capability;
- Recruit staff with a good awareness of equality issues and a non-judgemental attitude;
- Ensure all relevant staff are well trained so they can assist vulnerable clients to access and use the scheme;
- Offer choice to applicants over where they live and in what type of home they live, enabling them to move closer to support where it is required.
- Carry out individualised assessments that focus on the needs within the household;
- Flag identified vulnerabilities on the IT system so that staff are aware of them;
- Work closely with support agencies and advocates and take their views into account;
- Recognise that a protected factor or other vulnerability might be a mitigating factor relevant in the consideration of a penalty;
- Monitor bidding to try and ensure all groups are using the scheme successfully, and offer help where needed;
- Be clear in our decision making and aim to dispel myths where we can;
- Collect feedback on the scheme specifically relating to equality issues;
- Revise the scheme when needed to meet our Equality Duty;

3.4 Force Majeure

The Council will not be liable for any delay in performing its obligations under this policy if the delay is caused by a Force Majeure (chance occurrence or unavoidable accident for example), provided that reasonable action and notification to customers is taken by the Council.

More fully, this means, circumstances beyond reasonable control of that party, including without limitation, strikes, lock outs, acts of God, the act or omission of any governmental or other competent authority, war or national emergency.

3.5 Complaints procedure

If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the management of their application, other than where a review can be made, they should follow the Council's published complaints procedure, available on the Council's website at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk or on request.

The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and others. They can be asked to investigate complaints about most council matters including housing.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the action the Council takes, he or she can send a written complaint to the Ombudsman. A complainant must give the organisation an opportunity to deal with a complaint first, using its complaints procedure.

The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman

PO Box 4771

Coventry CV4 0EH

Tel: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint against a scheme landlord they should contact:

Housing Ombudsman Service

Exchange Tower

Harbour Exchange Square

London

Tel: 0300 111 3000

E mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

3.6 Changes to the scheme

The Council reserves the right to expand, change or alter any element of the scheme, as and when required, to meet changes in housing need, capacity, resources and legislation. Any major changes to the scheme will be consulted on with scheme landlords and agreed by the Council's Cabinet.

The Council will ensure the changed scheme is then made available to the public through its website at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk.

3.7 Monitoring

The Council holds quarterly meetings with partners and stakeholders who represent vulnerable applicants. The aims of this meeting are to:

- monitor the overall effectiveness of the scheme;
- address operational issues and agree operational changes;
- consider policy development.

Appendix A

South Norfolk Home Options Scheme Landlords

- Broadland Housing Association
- Cotman Housing Association with Places for People
- Hastoe Housing Association
- Metropolitan Housing Trust
- Orbit Housing Association
- Orwell Housing Association
- Flagship Housing Group
- Saffron Housing Trust
- Sanctuary Housing
- Clarion Housing Group (Circle Wherry)
- Victory Housing
- The Havebury Housing Partnership

Appendix B

Guidance on the Application of Mitigating Circumstances

The following are factors to be taken into account in determining non-qualification or reduction of preference.

- Physical disability
- Mental illness
- Physical illness or frailty
- Financial problems
- Support/floating support needs
- Rooflessness/homelessness
- Inability to find alternative accommodation
- Low income/benefit recipient
- Size of family (including young children)
- Special educational needs
- Learning disabilities
- Domestic/neighbour/other forms of violence which are known to have occurred
- Severe depression
- Substantial problems of debt

This is not necessarily an exhaustive list and could apply to an applicant or a member of the family. Depending on the number of factors present, the severity and their relevance to the overall situation, the effect could be:

- To lead to a non-qualification or reduction of preference on the register not being made, or reduced in time
- To lead to a non-qualification being changed to a reduction of preference.

Appendix C

Reassessment of applications where the applicant has been assessed as not qualifying for an allocation

Where an applicant has been assessed as not qualifying for an allocation the evidence must be provided by the applicant in order to be re-assessed. This will relate to the reason for non-qualification and the following guidelines apply:

a. Cause: Eviction from a tenancy for rent arrears

Evidence: Minimum six month settled accommodation with up to date rent account. Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months.

b. Cause: Eviction from a property for mortgage arrears

Evidence: Minimum six month settled accommodation with up to date rent account. Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months.

c. Cause: Responsible for paying full rent directly to a landlord and they have rent arrears and/or court costs greater than 14 weeks rent, if the rent is charged weekly or greater than 4 months if the rent is charged monthly

Evidence: Up to date rent account (where relevant) and repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments, whichever is sooner.

d. Cause: Responsible for paying a 'top up' or service charge in addition to housing benefit payments that are made direct to the landlord and has 'top up' or service charge arrears equivalent of greater than 14 weeks top up amount if rent is charged weekly or greater than 4 months of the top up amount if it is charged monthly

Evidence: Up to date rent account (where relevant) and repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments whichever is sooner.

e. Cause: Full rent paid by Housing Benefit direct to the landlord and there are rent arrears/court costs of over 14 weeks rent, if the rent is charged weekly or over 4 months if the rent is charged monthly **and** the arrears are

caused by the applicant either not providing the information required to assess a housing benefit claim or making a fraudulent application.

Evidence: Up to date rent account (where relevant) and repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments whichever is sooner.

f. Cause: Damage to a property and been charged for damages and/or recharges and/or court costs of over £1000.

Evidence: Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments whichever is sooner.

g. Cause: Eviction from a tenancy for anti-social behaviour

Evidence: Minimum six month settled accommodation with no complaints relating to behaviour.

h. Cause: They are in arrears of rent advance and deposit loan or other debt of more than £100 owed to the Council

Evidence: Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments whichever is sooner.

Where the Council assesses that, in the cases above, that an applicant qualifies for an allocation, they will be assessed as Bronze Band, reduced preference. They will need to provide the same evidence again for a further six-month adherence before they can be reassessed (see appendix G).

Appendix D

Accommodation based support services

Residents of the following services qualify to be considered for Silver Band assessment when they are ready to move on to independent accommodation.

Solo Housing

Victoria Road, Diss

Stonham

Wilkinson House, Wymondham

Genesis

Baynard House, Chedgrave

Cannell Court, Costessey

Irene Jacoby House & Rush House, Diss

St Anne's, Ditchingham

South Norfolk Supported Housing (Julian Support)

Wicklewood and Wymondham

YMCA

Supported Lodgings scheme placements

Other supported accommodation providers

Outside the district, to which the applicant was referred by or with the agreement by South Norfolk Council and they lived in South Norfolk for 6 months immediately prior to the placement.

Appendix E

Safe Surrender

A Safe Surrender may be agreed between a tenant of one of the scheme landlords in South Norfolk, the scheme landlord and the Council.

The safe surrender needs to be agreed before the tenancy is ended.

The tenant will need to give notice in the usual way. A shorter notice period may be agreed at the landlord's discretion.

The tenant must be unable to manage the tenancy satisfactorily due to illness, support or other needs which can not be met at that time.

Where possible, support will be arranged to enable the tenant to remain.

A safe surrender agreement can be reached:

Where the property is in danger of deterioration but substantial deterioration (under £500) has not yet occurred, and does not occur before vacant possession is given:

and/or the tenant is struggling to pay the rent, but the rent account is not yet more than 8 weeks in arrears (net) and does not become so before vacant possession is given.

and/or the tenant is in breach of other terms of the tenancy but this has not yet reached the level where a reduction of preference would usually be applied and does not become so before vacant possession is given.

and/or other similar circumstances as agreed between the scheme landlord and the Council.

Where a Safe Surrender is agreed, if the tenant subsequently applies to the South Norfolk housing register their priority will not be reduced for matters relating to that tenancy, unless there were issues that have subsequently become known.

Their priority will be assessed according to current need and circumstances.

If a subsequent homelessness application is made, the fact that a safe surrender was agreed together with all the circumstances at that time would be taken into account. However, the Council cannot fetter a possible future homelessness decision

Appendix F

Property size and type eligibility

Please note:

- Assessment will be based on the suitability of the property for the size of the household.
- Only children who live with the applicant for four or more nights a week will be considered as part of the household. We need proof of this.
- Students who live away from home at college will not be considered as part of the household.
- Some upper floor properties will be restricted for households without children and some will be open to all applicants who meet the criteria for the property size. This decision will be made by the landlord at the point of advertising the property.

| Household Detail | Property Group |
|--|---|
| Single applicant with no other household members | Bedsit 1 bed flat 1 bed bungalow 1 bed house 2 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor |
| Applicant with partner | 1 bed flat 1 bed bungalow 1 bed house 2 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor |
| Applicant with 1 child under 10 | 2 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 2 bed bungalow 2 bed house |
| Applicant with 1 child 10 and over | 2 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 2 bed bungalow |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>2 bed house</p> <p>2 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> <p>3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> |
| Applicant with 2 children of mixed gender both under 10 | <p>2 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>2 bed bungalow</p> <p>2 bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 2 children of the same gender both under 16 and one under 10 | <p>2 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>2 bed bungalow</p> <p>2 bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 2 children of the same gender both under 16 and both 10 or over | <p>2 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>2 bed bungalow</p> <p>2 bed house</p> <p>2 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> <p>3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> |
| Applicant with 2 children of the same gender at least one 16 or over and one under 10 | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 2 children of the same gender at least one 16 or over and both 10 or over | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> <p>3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> |
| Applicant with 2 children of mixed gender at least one of whom is aged 10 or over and one under 10 | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 2 children of mixed gender and both 10 or over | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> <p>3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Applicant with 3 children mixed gender all under 10</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow 3 bed house</p> |
| <p>Applicant with 3 children of the same gender all under 16 and one under 10</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow 3 bed house</p> |
| <p>Applicant with 3 children of the same gender all under 16 and all 10 or over</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow 3 bed house 3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> |
| <p>Applicant with 3 children of same gender at least one 16 or over and one under 10</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow 3 bed house 3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows 3 bed (2 receptions) house 4 bed bungalow 4 bed house</p> |
| <p>Applicant with 3 children of the same gender at least one 16 or over and all 10 or over</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow 3 bed house 3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor 3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows 3 bed (2 receptions) house 4 bed bungalow 4 bed house</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Applicant with 3 children of mixed gender at least one 10 or over and one under 10</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow 3 bed house 3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows 3 bed (2 receptions) house 4 bed bungalow 4 bed house</p> |
| <p>Applicant with 3 children of mixed gender and all 10 or over</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow 3 bed house 3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor 3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows 3 bed (2 receptions) house 4 bed bungalow 4 bed house</p> |
| <p>Applicant with 4 children of mixed gender all under 10</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow 3 bed house 3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows 3 bed (2 receptions) house 4 bed bungalow 4 bed house</p> |
| <p>Applicant with 4 children of the same gender all under 16 and one under 10</p> | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette 3 bed bungalow</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>3 bed house</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) house</p> <p>4 bed bungalow</p> <p>4 bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 4 children of the same gender all under 16 and all 10 or over | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> <p>3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) house</p> <p>4 bed bungalow</p> <p>4 bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 4 children of same gender at least one 16 or over and one under 10 | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) house</p> <p>4 bed bungalow</p> <p>4 bed house</p> <p>5 + bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 4 children of the same gender at least one 16 or over and all 10 or over | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) house</p> <p>4 bed bungalow</p> <p>4 bed house</p> <p>5 + bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 4 children of mixed gender at least one 10 or over and one under 10 | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) house</p> <p>4 bed bungalow</p> <p>4 bed house</p> <p>5 + bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 4 children of mixed gender and all over 10 | <p>3 bed ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed bungalow</p> <p>3 bed house</p> <p>3 bed flat/maisonette above ground floor</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor flat/maisonette</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows</p> <p>3 bed (2 receptions) house</p> <p>4 bed bungalow</p> <p>4 bed house</p> <p>5 + bed house</p> |
| Applicant with 5 or more children | <p>3 bed (2 receptions) ground floor</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | flat/maisonette 3 bed (2 receptions) bungalows 3 bed (2 receptions) house 4 bed bungalow 4 bed house 5 + bed house |
|--|---|

Appendix G

Reassessment of applications where the applicant has been assessed as Bronze Band

Where an applicant has been assessed as Bronze Band (reduced preference) the evidence must be provided by the applicant in order to be re-assessed. This will relate to the reason for reduced preference and the following guidelines apply:

a. Cause: Responsible for paying full rent directly to a landlord and they have rent arrears and/or court costs equivalent to between (and including) 8 and 14 weeks rent, if the rent is charged weekly or between (and including) 2 and 4 months if the rent is charged monthly

Evidence: Up to date rent account (where relevant) and repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments, whichever is sooner.

b. Cause: Responsible for paying a 'top up' or service charge in addition to housing benefit payments that are made direct to the landlord and has 'top up' or service charge arrears equivalent of between (and including) 8 and 14 weeks top up amount if rent is charged weekly or between (and including) 2 and 4 months of top up amount if it is charged monthly

Evidence: Up to date rent account (where relevant) and repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments, whichever is sooner.

c. Cause: Caused damage to a property or failed to maintain a property and been charged for damages, recharges and/or court costs of between £500 or £1000 inclusive.

Evidence: Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments whichever is sooner.

d. Cause: Committed acts causing, or likely to cause, nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or have previously lived

Evidence: Minimum six month settled accommodation with no complaints relating to behaviour.

h. Cause: Arrears of rent advance and deposit loan or other debt of more than £100 owed to the Council

Evidence: Repayment plan in place and adhered to for a minimum of six months or the debt has been cleared by regular payments whichever is sooner.

i. Cause: The applicant or a member of their household did or failed to do something which, in consequence, led to their housing circumstances becoming worse.

Evidence: Minimum six month settled accommodation.

j. Cause: The applicant, following a homelessness application, has been found to be intentionally homeless.

Evidence: Settled accommodation as defined by homelessness legislation.

k. Cause: The applicant, following a homelessness application, has been found to be owed the full housing duty but is not considered to be ready or able to live without support.

Evidence: Minimum six month supported accommodation and evidence they have accepted support and are able to live independently.

l. Cause: The applicant has deliberately and unreasonably refused to cooperate with South Norfolk Council to prevent or relieve homelessness.

Evidence: Minimum six month settled accommodation.

m. Cause: The applicant has deliberately and unreasonably refused an offer by South Norfolk Council or a scheme landlord of suitable accommodation available for six months to prevent or relieve homelessness.

Evidence: Minimum six month settled accommodation.

Appendix H

South Norfolk Home Options Scheme Lettings Panel

The Lettings Panel considers requests from partners for the following:

- Direct Lets
- Sensitive Lets
- Local Lettings Plans

The panel members are:

- Housing and Benefits Manager, South Norfolk Council
- 1 Senior officer, Saffron Housing Trust
- 1 Senior officer, Clarion (Circle Wherry) Housing
- 1 Senior officer, Cotman Housing Association
- 1 Senior officer, Orbit Housing Association
- 1 Senior officer, Flagship Housing Group
- 1 Senior officer, Broadland Housing Association

Members cannot consider requests from their own organisation.

Requests are submitted to a named officer at South Norfolk Council by a senior officer of one of the partner organisations, using the agreed pro-forma.

Requests are circulated to the panel members by email and a response is requested within 5 working days.

Members do not see the responses of the other panel members.

Approval decisions are made in accordance with the majority vote and recorded by South Norfolk Council.

South Norfolk Council informs the submitting partner and the panel of the panel's decision.

Appendix I

Guidance for the Allocation of Pitches for Gypsies and Travellers

The policy will be operated in accordance with the Gypsy and Traveller Site Management Good Practice Guide (Published by Communities and Local Government July 2009).

The system of prioritisation allows the landlord to retain

1. A degree of limited discretion in allocating pitches and should not be automatically bound to the household with the highest priority.
2. Discretion to offer other pitches than those applied for (eg where these may also meet the needs of the applicant, or where the household would otherwise have no choice but to reside on an unauthorised encampment).

Sites are often occupied by extended family groups and this can help to ensure good community relations on the site. In some exceptional circumstances the Council may, in consultation with the site manager, want to take account of factors which a pitch allocation may have in adversely affecting the suitability of the site as a social unit.

If as a result of an assessment of their application, the landlord has good reason to be concerned about the risk of conflict with existing residents, they should take up this issue with the applicant, and carry out a risk assessment. Refusal to allocate a pitch must be based on the merits of the application, without undue influence from those already on a site.

The landlord will also need to ensure the person nominated has provided satisfactory references. References from any previous landlord should be provided to satisfy the new landlord that the applicant and their household had left any previous accommodation in good order and settled all rent and other charges which were outstanding. Where this is not available, for example where a young applicant is applying for a pitch for the first time, the authority should ask the applicant to nominate a contact from whom a reference may be obtained. Even if a vacant pitch is available the Council should not permit occupation of a pitch until a satisfactory reference has been obtained.

The landlord reserves the right to withdraw any offer which may have been granted on the basis of incorrect information

Appendix J

Guidance on property size and type eligibility to Meet Disability Need

It is acknowledged that there is a shortage of 3 bed accommodation suitable for those that need single level access.

Where such an applicant is identified, discretion can be used to increase their PPGC code by one bedroom to enable them to bid for a larger property that would meet their disability needs. For example, a 3-bedroom parlour house with all necessary facilities on the ground floor. This discretion would only usually be used where the property identified will meet the household's needs without alteration.

Where it is decided to exercise this discretion, it should be explained to the applicant and confirmed in writing. The following points should be made:

- their code will only be altered for the relevant bidding cycle when a particular property has been identified as potentially meeting their need
- they will only be considered for properties outside their usual eligibility that have been specifically agreed by the home options team and relevant landlord, this will need to be recorded (including the property ref.) on their application before their code is altered
if after viewing it is considered that the property would not be suitable, it will not be offered to them.

The exercise of this discretion is to be used to meet the needs of applicants with a disability who could otherwise be unfairly disadvantaged by the lack of suitable properties. The short listing will still be carried out according to band and time in the usual way.