

# Homefinder Lettings Policy

## Proposed Policy Changes

The following table outlines the changes that Ashfield & Mansfield District Council propose to make to the Homefinder Lettings Policy. The changes reflect feedback from applicants and residents following recent consultation and takes account of changes to Government guidance on the allocation of social housing.

As part of the consultation process we welcome your comments on the proposed changes.

Section 5 – Joining the Housing Register			
Proposed change	What the Policy currently says?	Reason for change	Likely impact
<p>Introduce a maximum income and savings threshold to join the Housing Register. Applicants with more than the stated figure will not qualify for social housing.</p> <p>These are proposed to be;</p> <p>£34,000 for a family £25,000 for a single/couple</p> <p>Or £6,000 in savings</p>	<p>The Policy does not include an income and savings limit.</p> <p>Currently an applicant does not qualify to join the Housing Register if they are assessed as having the financial resources to buy a property suitable their needs.</p>	<p>Social housing is in exceptionally high demand. Applicants who can afford to rent or buy a suitable home should be encouraged to do so.</p> <p>The income and savings limits will be reviewed each year. The figures reflect the minimum needed to afford accommodation in the private sector.</p>	<p>New and existing housing applicants whose income or savings exceed the stated figure will not normally qualify to join the Housing Register.</p> <p>Currently, approximately 300 applicants in housing needs 1-3 has a stated income above the threshold levels and so would not qualify to join the Register.</p> <p>Savings figures have not previously been requested and so will need to be checked at the point of offer for existing applicants.</p>
<p>To consider as non-qualifying (exclude) homeowners.</p> <p>The exception to this being owners with a very urgent housing need and who do not</p>	<p>Homeowners are eligible to join the Housing Register and are placed in housing need band 5 unless they have a very urgent rehousing need, defined as a priority Band 1 need. In these circumstances, their band</p>	<p>Social housing is in exceptionally high demand and Gov't guidance is that owner occupiers should only be considered for rehousing in exceptional</p>	<p>New housing applicants who are homeowners and who apply for housing will be unable to join the Housing Register unless there are exceptional circumstances.</p>

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have the financial resources to meet their own needs.	1 is honoured, subject to financial assessment.	circumstances, something that will be achieved.	Existing housing applicants who are home owners are currently placed in housing need band 5 (unless they have a very urgent need). Their housing application will be closed and they will not be considered for social housing (see band 5 below for figures)
To consider as non-qualifying (exclude) applicants who owe a current or former housing related debt to a private landlord of £1000+.	Applicants with a current (not former) debt to a private landlord qualify to join the Housing Register. Their application is demoted to housing need band 4, a low priority band, if they owe a current debt. No action is taken against those with a former housing debt.	To ensure consistency across all housing tenures as social housing tenants who owe £1000+ as a current or former debt do not qualify to join the Housing Register.	New housing applicants with a significant housing will not be able to join the Housing Register and be considered for social housing.  The change should encourage efforts to resolve disputes and housing debts.
To not apply a local connection requirement to survivors of domestic abuse or care leavers.	The current Homefinder Policy sets out a local connection requirement for applicants to join the Housing Register.  The Policy includes some flexibility, based upon the circumstances of each application.	The change is in accordance with new government guidance and the expectation that a local connection requirement should not apply to these 2 particular groups	It will make the process of applying for housing easier and quicker for survivors of domestic abuse and care leavers.  It is unlikely to change demand for social housing as the numbers in either group who apply and are advised they do not qualify to join the Housing Register are minimal.
To establish a local connection through family members, the family member must have lived in the district for 10+ years and must either provide the applicant with essential support or receive essential support from the applicant.	An applicant can establish a local connection, in order to join the Housing Register, if they have immediate family (parents or children) who have lived in the district for 5 or more years. There is no support requirement	To ensure there is a clear reason and purpose for residents who currently live outside of the district to join the Housing Register.	Approximately 2% of applicants establish a local connection through family members. On that basis, the impact will be minimal.  Officers will investigate if these households provide or receive support before making a decision on the status of their Housing Application.

## Section 7 - Banding Scheme

Proposed change	What the Policy currently says?	Reason for change	Likely Impact
Remove housing need band 5 for all new housing applicants and for existing	Housing need band 5 captures housing applicants who wish to move but who do not have an	The Housing Register should focus on assisting those households in housing need.	Currently, 50% of new housing applicants are placed in housing need band 5 upon assessment. In addition, 3204 existing band 5 applicants

applicants registered with Mansfield District Council. .	<p>identified housing need, that is to say their current home is assessed as being suitable for their needs.</p> <p>It also captures owner occupiers, except those with a very urgent housing need.</p>	Lettings data shows that applicants in band 5 have very little chance of being rehoused as almost 100% of family homes are let to applicants in bands 1 and 2.	<p>registered with Mansfield DC are in band 5, these applicants will not qualify to join the Housing Register.</p> <p>Existing Band 5 applicants who are registered with Ashfield DC, 2244 in total, will be eligible to remain on the Housing Register. .</p>
Consider eligible for housing need band 1 social housing tenants in the Ashfield and Mansfield Districts who are under occupying their home.	Social housing tenants living in the District, who are under occupying their home, are placed in housing need band 2 when they apply to move.	<p>To ensure the best use of made of housing, releasing under occupied family homes for families in need.</p> <p>On many occasions band 2, the current priority band, is not high enough to rehouse the tenant and thereby facilitate the property's return.</p>	<p>It will increase the number of applicants in housing need band 1. Currently 71 social housing tenants in Ashfield have band 2 priority for under occupying their home.</p> <p>Increasing the number of applicants in band 1 will further reduce the likelihood of applicants in band 2, 3 and 4 being rehoused.</p>
Consider eligible for housing need band 1 Nottinghamshire care leavers, as part of the Care Leaver Offer.	Care Leavers are eligible for band 2 on welfare grounds for a period of 6 weeks. Their application is moved to housing need band 1 on welfare grounds if they are not rehoused within that period.	Due to the demand for housing, care leavers are not rehoused whilst in band 5. Placing them immediately in band 1 will ensure they are rehoused more quickly.	The number of care leavers who apply for rehousing is very small. The impact will be negligible.
Consider eligible for housing need band 2 applicants in supported housing who are ready to move on from supported housing.	Applicants in supported housing are eligible to be considered for band 2 on welfare grounds.	A number of different housing circumstances are considered on 'welfare grounds'. It can be confusing for applicants, hence the proposal to create a bespoke band 2 for this particular need.	<p>It will improve clarity and understanding and should help free up bed spaces in supported housing.</p> <p>It will not change the number of applicants in housing need band 2 as those ready to move on from supported housing are already placed in that band.</p>
Remove band 3 'Golden tenant' for social housing tenants.	Currently social housing tenants living in the District, who have adhered to their tenancy conditions for a minimum of 12 months are can be placed in housing need band 3. They do not need to have a housing need.	The Housing Register is focused on applicants with a housing need. Those currently with band 3 'Golden Tenant' status do not have a defined housing need. Making this changes ensures consistency.	<p>Currently, 239 Ashfield housing applicants and 257 Mansfield applicants have band 3 'Golden Tenant' status. Those applicants will not qualify to join the Housing Register unless they can prove a housing need.</p> <p>In 2024/5 13 applicants with this band 3 reason were rehoused.</p>

Remove band 3 eligibility for families with children lacking a garden.	Applicants are eligible for band 3 if they live in a flat above ground floor or they lack a garden.  This only applies if they did not have young children when they moved into the property.	Increasingly, families are living in flats, it is a standard property type of choice.	There are currently 37 applicants registered with Ashfield District Council and 79 with Mansfield district Council with band 3 status for this reason.
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## Section 10 – Bedroom standard

Proposed change	What the Policy currently says?	Reason for change	Likely Impact
To change the age at which families with children of different sexes are considered eligible for an additional bedroom to 8 years.	Currently, children of different sexes can share a bedroom to the age of 10. After that age, they are eligible to be considered for separate bedrooms.	It is taking longer to rehouse families, often years. Reducing the age, will help ensure that families are rehoused to a larger home before the children are too old.	It would enable families to be considered for larger properties slightly sooner and will reduce the likelihood of them having to move again.

## Other Minor changes

<b>Proposed changes</b>
<b>Section 3.3 Reasonable adjustments</b> Current policy wording adjusted to be clear that reasonable adjustments can be provided to applicants to ensure they can actively participate with the rehousing process.
<b>Section 5.4 – Qualifying to joint the Housing Register.</b> Current policy wording adjusted to be clear the Homefinder landlords will liaise with partner agencies as part of investigating an applicant's behaviour as part of determining their suitability to join the Housing Register.  Current policy wording adjusted regarding the definition of employment for the purpose of demonstrating a local connection to the district.
<b>Sec 5.12 – Elected Council Members and officers</b> Include a requirement for elected members and council employees to notify Homefinder Lead Officers when they join the Housing Register.
<b>Sec 6.2 – Assessing Applications</b>

Current Policy wording adjusted to state there are 4 and not 5 housing need bands and a change to the description of the bands.

**Sec 8.9 – Poor Housing conditions**

Wording removed from Policy relating to poor housing conditions and the removal of band 3 priority for applicants who are sharing cooking, washing and living facilities.

**Sec 8.11 - An applicant offered employment or an apprenticeship**

The policy wording has been adjusted so there is clarity regarding when priority is given to applicants needing to move for employment purposes.

**Sec 8.22 – Young children**

The proposal is to remove band 3 priority for applicants, specifically families with young children who live above ground floor and/or lack a garden. The change reflects the fact that living in a flat rather than a house is an acceptable form of housing and on its own does not mean the applicant has a housing need.