



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing Lettings Policy

Date: November 2009

Service: Housing Options Team, Housing Services.

This authority believes in and promotes equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, race, religion or belief, disability, gender or sexual orientation. We try to ensure that our letting policy is fair and open and targets those with the greatest need.

Ashford – Simply Better

Ashford Borough Council's "Mission" is "to protect and improve the quality of life of every resident of the Borough, now and in the future."

We will do this by:-

- **Listening**
 - to what our community says
 - to feedback from our staff and customers
 - to what our partners tell us they are trying to achieve.

- **Learning**
 - from our experience
 - by training and developing our staff to serve the community better
 - from best practice examples

- **Leading**
 - by example
 - by representing the community's interests when the Borough is affected by the actions of others
 - by working with others for the common good

If you need help with reading or understanding this document, please take it to our: Customer Contact Centre, Civic Centre Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent., or phone: 01233 331111. We will try to provide a reading service, translation or any other format you may need.

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Statement of Choice

Fairness

Our aim is to:

- follow our policy on fair access to our service;
- ensure the widest possible access to social housing by offering people choice of accommodation, this includes alternative options in the private sector.
- give prospective tenants the opportunity to express their preferences about accommodation (wherever possible), whilst allowing us to meet the local needs of Ashford.
- promote access to all forms of affordable social housing and housing in other sectors.
- promote equal opportunity of access and participation for everyone, whatever their personal circumstances.
- not discriminate on the grounds of race, religion, sex or marital status, sexual orientation or disability.
- provide information relating to our service, giving you the opportunity to make the best choice possible regarding accessing the Council's housing service.
- ensure that Choice Based Lettings gives you a choice and a stake in where you live to assist in creating more stable, viable and inclusive communities.
- write our publications in plain English and offer translations, large print or a reading service where needed to help make an informed housing choice.
- only share the information we receive with other registered social landlords or other organisations which handle public funds or where we have an information sharing protocol such as with the police where we believe there is significant risk of harm and not with any other party and treat personal information confidentially.

Excellence

Our aim is to:

- welcome you politely and to be courteous and efficient.
- respond to the needs of our customers and our partners and ensure the views of our customers are heard.
- set out clear standards for services so that everyone knows what to expect.
- Provide anybody with re-housing advice regarding access to social or other forms of housing, both over the phone and in person.
- direct applicants to the appropriate team or agency where specialist advice is required eg, debt advice, welfare rights.
- meet our legal and strategic requirements whilst considering the needs of the local community.
- confirm in writing any decision made in relation to an application for housing.
- commit to delivering a high quality service and set clear performance standards to assist us to achieve our targets.

- reflect on the service provided by the Housing Options Team and plan into the future, allowing for continuous improvement.
- Reflect the aims of the homelessness strategy
- ensure that, where discretion is used, the decision reflects policy and is consistent and transparent.

Your Rights and Responsibilities

- you have the right to appeal on any decision made regarding access to the register, points awarded or offers of accommodation made.
- you should provide full and accurate details on all forms or correspondence in relation to your application for housing.
- you should tell us immediately if your circumstances change in any way, eg your address, family details, medical condition.
- you should reply to all correspondence sent from us needing a reply.
- If you are made an offer of property or nominated to a housing association, you should always advise the Housing Officer of your decision within the specified time scale.
- when refusing an offer or nomination you need to complete a form explaining why the property is not suitable.

1.0 Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register

1.1 Introduction

Ashford Borough Council hold a Housing Register which is intended to be a single point of entry into Social Housing for the whole of the borough of Ashford. The demand for housing exceeds supply and the register exists to enable us to prioritise those households who are in greatest need and to maximise their opportunities for re-housing.

The Council's Lettings policy and operation of the Housing Register is intended to reflect government legislation and guidance and the Council's other key policy documents and strategies, such as the local housing needs survey, the housing strategy and the homelessness strategy.

We do not intend to use this register as a true reflection of local housing need as this is measured more accurately by the housing needs survey. The register may however be used as an additional tool to help determine and measure the need of those households within the borough who have been registered with housing need points and who have a reasonable chance of obtaining accommodation via the Housing Register.

1.2 Summary

This document sets out and explains the Lettings Policy and the scheme which the Council has adopted to let all available property that it has responsibility for. This includes Council owned property, Registered Social Landlord (RSL) property to which the council has nomination rights and Low Cost Home Ownership schemes.

We let property via the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, which gives the maximum possible choice and information to applicants.

We regularly review the lettings policy. This is to ensure that it is supporting the Council's Key Targets and the Housing and Homelessness Strategies and is meeting, as far as possible, the needs of those on the Housing Register. The last review took place during 2007 to 2008.

There is not sufficient property to meet the needs of all those who apply for housing. Therefore we measure the housing need of all applicants and set priorities for those in the greatest need.

1.3 The Supply of Housing and the Demand for Housing

We manage a stock of 4,718 properties as at 1st April 2008. This is made up of houses, flats, maisonettes and bungalows. An additional 488 properties at Stanhope are owned by Ashford Borough Council and managed by Moat. There are an additional 2,060 properties within the borough owned and managed by our Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners.

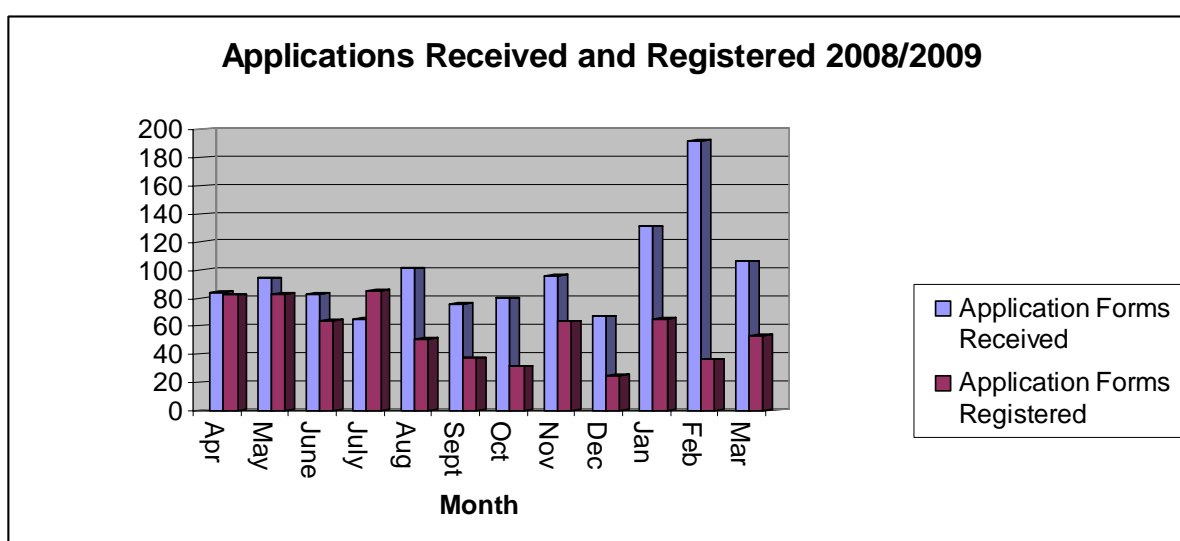
As at November 2009 the Housing Register had over 1600 applicants, the active Housing Register which is all applicants who have been awarded housing need points showed (see 4.5 also):

Housing Waiting List	940
Applicants to whom a homeless duty has been accepted	115
Transfer Applicants	439
Total	1494

During the year 2007/08 we accommodated 471 households as shown below:

Part VI offers to Housing Waiting List applicants	124
Part VI offers to homeless households to whom a full homeless duty has been accepted	14
Non secure (Part VII) tenancies offered to households for which a homelessness duty to provide temporary accommodation has been identified	120
Part VI offers to Transfer applicants	108
Part VI offers made via Housing Associations	105
Total	471

The following table shows the number of new applicants to the housing register during 2008/2009.



1.4 Stock Profile

A stock profile incorporating details of both Housing Association and Ashford Borough Council stock across the borough will be available during the late Autumn of 2008. This will be added to the allocation policy as an appendix or a copy can be obtained by telephoning one of the Lettings Officers.

1.5 Registered Social Landlords

Ashford Housing Services works in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to develop "affordable housing" within the borough.

RSL's currently provide over 2000 units of accommodation in the borough (excluding property provided within Local Needs Schemes as detailed in 8.5). The properties they have vary from one-bedroom flats to five bedroom houses as well as bungalows, Sheltered Housing and Special Need accommodation. (See 1.6 below)

These Landlords provide much of the available property in Ashford. We advertise details of their available properties along with our own on the property newsletter for the Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBLs).

Some rents are higher than others, but all are within Housing Benefit levels. Most RSL's will only accept nominations from Ashford Housing Services via the Housing Register and generally only one nomination per property is made.

1.6 RSL'S with Developments in Ashford

Name of Association	Type Of Property
Accent South Housing Association	Houses, flats, maisonettes
CDS Co-Operative Development Society	Houses and flats
New Downland Housing Association	Houses, flats, bungalows
English Rural Housing Association	Local needs houses and bungalows
Housing 21	Sheltered flats
Hyde Housing Association Limited	Houses and flats
London & Quadrant Housing Trust	Houses, flats, bungalows.
Moat Housing Society	Houses, flats, bungalows
North British Housing	Houses, flats, bungalows
Raglan Housing Association	Houses, flats, bungalows.
Salvation Army Housing Association	Flats, houses
Southern Housing Group	Houses, flats, bungalows.
Sanctuary Housing Association	Local needs houses

2.0 Aims and Objectives

The Choice Based Lettings Scheme Policies and Key Objectives are:-

- To be customer led
- To be clear and transparent
- To improve people's choices and housing options
- To ensure we help people most in need
- To comply with the legal requirements
- To make full and effective use of all housing stock
- To achieve partnership working to meet housing need in Ashford
- To achieve sustainable communities and minimise refusals of property by allowing people to choose where they live
- To ensure the widest possible choice of homes are available to people on Ashford's Housing Register
- To aid the prevention of homelessness and to meet the targets set in the Homelessness Strategy
- To provide improved information about housing demand and need
- To be fair, simple to understand and transparent in its rules
- To maximise the participation of all applicants, including vulnerable applicants, in the lettings process
- To monitor the diversity of the borough and to ensure that hard to reach groups are offered the maximum opportunity to participate.
- To monitor the applicants on the housing register and lettings by the different strands of diversity and ensure that no groups are inadvertently excluded
- To promote equality of opportunity in housing services

However well Housing Services maintain the Housing Register or develop the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, it will not change the fact that only a minority of people wanting social housing will be able to access it. This is because of the growing gap between supply and demand. A key element of the scheme will focus on alerting applicants to other options to resolve their housing problems, or to secure a move. This will be a crucial area for development as the Choice Based Lettings scheme grows over the coming years.

2.1 Housing Needs Survey and Identified Need

In 2005 Ashford Borough Council carried out a district-wide survey of housing need. The purpose of the survey was to examine the housing requirements (needs, aspirations and demands) of households across the area.

The key findings were:

- Average local incomes are not sufficient to purchase even the lowest priced homes
- Of households living within existing households 69% cannot afford to rent even the lowest priced private rented homes
- More people need two-bedroom homes than any other size
- Every year there is a shortfall of 655 affordable homes (council rented, RSL rented, intermediate rented and shared ownership) becoming available across the area

2.2 Review of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme

The Choice Based Lettings Scheme Policy has undergone extensive consultation with both customers and stakeholders; the policy has also undergone a period of legal scrutiny by Counsel and incorporates amendments to ensure that it complies with the law.

The policy is also reviewed by the Housing Options Monitoring Group which consists of members of the Tenants Forum and officers from Housing. The group is open to anyone who has an interest in the issues dealt with by the Housing Register or Choice Based Lettings.

This group has assisted in developing this Lettings Policy and will continue to meet at least on an annual basis to monitor and make amendments to the scheme as legislation, case law or local circumstances dictate.

Due to these continued improvements and the amendments needed to keep the Lettings Policy up to date, it has been agreed that minor amendments (judgement made by Head of Housing) can be made to the Lettings Policy by an Information Item going to Elected Members advising of the proposed amendment and the reasons for such amendment. An effective date, at least one calendar month ahead would also be given.

If the Head of Housing does not receive any objections, then the amendment will become Policy on the effective date. If objections are received from the Elected Members, the Head of Housing would take the proposed change of policy to the Executive.

2.3 Legal Framework

This policy complies with the requirements of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 covers:

- Lettings of Local Authority stock to new tenants
- Transfers requested by Local Authority tenants
- Lettings of Local Authority stock to current tenants of RSLs and
- Nominations that the council makes to the RSL's

It sets out the circumstances of applicants to whom reasonable preference must be given when deciding who will be offered property.

The policy takes account of the Allocation of Accommodation, Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities.

There are certain lettings, which are included within the Lettings Policy, although the rules under the Housing Act do not specifically apply to them as follows:

- Where the council needs to provide alternative accommodation for a council tenant whilst carrying out repairs or improvements to their property.
- Where the council has a duty to re-house residential occupiers following a compulsory purchase and provides suitable alternative accommodation under the Land Compensation Act 1973, s 39, or under the Rent Agricultural act 1976. Where it is not possible to provide a permanent tenancy immediately, the household will be registered with 150 points within the scheme.
- Where the council grants a secure tenancy to a former owner-occupier or statutory tenant of a defective dwelling house under the Housing Act 1985, s554 or s555.

2.4 The Lettings Policy does not apply to the Following Situations, which are also not covered by the Rules in Part VI

- Temporary accommodation provided for homeless people under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. However, people in this situation can apply for accommodation and any offer of permanent accommodation to people living in temporary accommodation will be made under this policy.
- Where the Council grants a service tenancy to a Council employee for the better performance of his/her duties.
- Mutual exchanges between Council tenants or Council and RSL tenants under the Housing Act 1985, s92.
- Where a secure tenant dies, the tenancy is a periodic one, and there is a person qualified to succeed the tenant under the Housing Act 1985, s89, then that person becomes the secure tenant.
- Where a secure tenant with a fixed term tenancy dies and the tenancy remains secure by virtue of the Housing Act 1985, s90.
- Where a secure tenancy is assigned to someone who would have qualified to succeed to the tenancy if the secure tenant died immediately before the assignment. That person becomes the secure tenant.
- Where a Court makes an order about who is to be the secure tenant under:
 - (a) the Matrimonial Causes Act 1972 section 24 (property adjustment orders in connection with matrimonial proceedings);
 - (b) the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, s17(1) (property adjustment orders after overseas divorce); or
 - (c) the Children Act 1989, Schedule 1, paragraph 1 (orders for financial relief against parents).
 - (d) Part 2 of Schedule 5, or paragraph 9(2) or (3) of Schedule 7, to the Civil Partnership Act 2004 (property adjustment orders in connection with civil partnership proceedings or after overseas dissolution of civil partnership etc).

2.5 The Basic Priorities

The Housing Act 1996 (Amended 2002) requires all Local Authorities to introduce a lettings scheme to reflect the priorities defined by the Act, and to give reasonable preference to: -

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the 1996 act (amended 2002));
- People who are owed duties by any Local Authority under Section 190(2), 193(2), 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3);
- People occupying unsanitary housing or who are overcrowded or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to disability. This includes those who have sustained serious injury, medical condition or disability as a result of service in the Armed forces.
- 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 to others)

We are, however, able to take into account the financial resources available to the applicant to meet his/her own housing need by carrying out means testing. This enables us to give less priority to an applicant who is financially able to secure alternative accommodation for at least 2 years at market rent or to buy a home.

3.0 Eligibility to be Considered for an Allocation

1. You have a housing need as defined by these policies
2. You are aged 16 years or over (4.19 tenancies for minors)
3. You must not be a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of s 160A(1)(a), (3) and (5) of The Housing Act 1996
4. No allocation can be made to 2 applicants jointly if either of them is ineligible s 160A(c)

3.1 Outside Applicants

Applicants living outside the borough may apply to join the Housing Register, but due to the excessive demand on the limited housing stock in Ashford, the priority of applicants who do not meet the local connection criteria may be reduced, see points (6.0).

If you are living outside the borough because you have been placed in temporary accommodation by Ashford Borough Council under the homelessness legislation, your priority will not be reduced if you can demonstrate that you had a local connection to Ashford as defined in 3.2 prior to the temporary accommodation placement.

If you are or have been a member of the armed forces, please see Section 4.10.

3.2 Definition of Local Connection

The definition of an applicant who has a local connection to the Ashford Borough, is as follows:

- You have your only or main home within the boundaries of the district covered by Ashford Borough Council or
- You (not a member of your household) must be in permanent paid work in the Ashford Borough (full or part-time employment of at least 16 hours per week) or
- If you live outside of the borough at present, you must have lived in the Ashford Borough for at least five out of the past ten years or
- You have an exceptional need to live within the Ashford Borough Council area as determined by a Lettings Officer. This is subject to housing need and the reasons why you wish to live in Ashford or
- You need to move to the borough to give or receive support from a close family member (for these purposes immediate family encompasses a parent or parents, a child or children, a sibling or siblings or other relationship where it can be demonstrated there is a genuine need to give, or receive support)

3.3 How you would lose your Local Connection

You would lose your local connection if:

- Since applying to join the Housing Register you have moved outside the borough and no longer meet any other local connection conditions

- You had a local connection through your employment in the area, but this has changed. If you are or have been a member of the Armed forces please see section 4.10.

3.4 Gypsies and Travellers

There is a Local Authority owned site based at Chilmington and a separate Housing Register is kept for applicants who wish to be considered for a plot on this site. Tenancies of the plots are offered on a strictly date order basis. For further information you should contact a member of the Housing Services Team on 01233 330688.

3.5 Ineligibility on grounds of Unacceptable Behaviour (removal from or not being allowed on the Register)

Under sections 160A (7) and (8) of the Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), the Council can decide to treat persons as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation if they or a member of their household have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant.

The Act says that the Council may only regard a person as unacceptable if the behaviour is sufficient to entitle the Council to a court order for possession under s 84 Housing Act 1985 on any grounds mentioned in Part 1, Schedule 2 of that Act (other than Ground 8) and if they are, at the time of the application, still unsuitable.

In making a decision about whether a person is unsuitable, the Council will consider all the circumstances but will particularly take the following into account:

1. The existence of any criminal proceedings for or convictions for criminal offences.
2. The existence of any Civil Orders or Anti Social Behaviour Orders or pending procedures for such.
3. Any Court Orders for possession or pending actions for possession.
4. Any other matters relating to the behaviour of the applicant or a member of his household.

3.6 Reduction in Priority due to Unacceptable Behaviour (Suspensions from the Register)

Section 167 (2A) of the Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) allows us to alter the housing priority of an applicant whose behaviour or the behaviour of a member of their household has affected their suitability to be a tenant.

Behaviour

The Council may remove some points for a period of up to five years in the following circumstances. Where an applicant:

- Has gained or attempted to gain property by giving false information as part of their application.
- Assaulted, threatened, verbally abused or harassed an employee, agent or elected member of the council or RSL.

- Have been convicted of financially defrauding a Local Authority

Debts – Rent Arrears and Former Tenant Arrears

We may also take into account, via s 167(2B) of the Housing Act 1996, 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 us or to another Local Authority or social landlord.

If this applies to you, your application will be registered but some points may be removed until the debt is reduced to a reasonable level. Each case will be considered on its own merits but a reasonable level is generally considered to be £400 or less.

If your application is already registered and has been awarded points but you falls into arrears which exceed £400, your priority for a property may be reduced in accordance with this policy.

If Court action is being taken to get an outright possession or a Bailiff's Warrant for eviction, no offers of housing should be made without the agreement of a Housing Operations Manager.

Worsened Circumstances

Other types of behaviour the Council may take into account are:

- “Deliberately making your housing circumstances worse”, for example by giving up secure accommodation such as with an LA or RSL without reasonable cause.

In the above circumstances some or all points may be removed for a period of up to 2 years.

3.7 Procedure for Deciding on Cases of Ineligibility / Reduction in Priority due to Unacceptable Behaviour

This decision is taken by a Lettings Officer and is based on the circumstances at the time of the application, taking account of all relevant circumstances, for example, the health of the applicant, any dependants or other factors.

A determination of an applicant's suitability to be a tenant will be objective and the decision will be taken with reference to relevant information such as Police or Environmental Services reports or by reviewing landlord's records. An applicant will be notified of a decision that they are ineligible for an allocation (whether on grounds of immigration status or on grounds of behaviour) in writing and of the grounds for the decision (s 160 (9)).

An applicant who has, in the past, been deemed ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour may make a fresh application if they consider their behaviour should no longer be held against them due to changed circumstances. Unless there has been a considerable lapse of time, it will be the applicant's responsibility to show that their circumstances or behaviour have changed. We may ask you to provide us with two references from the police, probation services or your landlord.

A person whose points are removed will be notified in writing of the decision and the grounds for it (s 167(4A)(b)) and will be advised that they have the right to request a

review of the decision . An applicant will also be notified of any conditions of which it is likely that the council will require to be satisfied before a fresh application may be successful.

If it is decided that your application will be suspended and points removed or altered for a period of time, you will be notified of this and given details of:

- Any conditions of which the council is likely to require to be satisfied in order to reinstate your points before the expiry of the period of suspension
- Your rights to a review of the decision and how you can request a review of your suspended application.

The kind of factors of which the council may indicate that it is likely to require to be satisfied in order to reinstate points or to regard an ineligible applicant as eligible on re-application are reduction of rent to a level below £400, a change in circumstances or of immigration status, improved behaviour verified by at least two independent professional bodies or neighbours who have resided beside you for a reasonable period of time.

3.9 Housing Advice

Ashford Borough Council has a team of Housing Options Officers based at the Gateway, in the Park Mall Shopping Centre in Ashford's Town Centre. The Housing Options Officers can help with advice and information regarding your best Housing Option. If it is likely that you will not be successful in obtaining Social Housing they will be able to provide advice on accessing other types of housing.

4.0 Introduction to how the Housing Register Works

To apply for housing, you need to submit a Choice Based Lettings Scheme Housing Application form. This form must be completed in full and returned with all the information required. If the form is not correctly completed it will be returned. This will delay assessment. If you need help with completing the form please ask and an appointment will be made for an advisor to assist you with completing your details.

You can get a housing application form from the following places:

- Customer Contact Centre, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford,
- The Gateway, Park Mall, Ashford
- Ashford Borough Council's Tenterden Office.
- By downloading a form from www.ashford.gov.uk/housing

Advice is available to any potential applicant who wishes to be advised on his/her prospects of obtaining an allocation under the scheme before he/she has completed and submitted an application form and on alternative housing options

We may ask more questions if we need more details, we would ask these additional questions so we can assess your degree of housing need or if we need to learn more about your previous housing circumstances.

You must provide copies of birth certificates and proof of residency for any of your children on your application (usually from child benefit payment). We also need proof of residence at your current address; this could be a copy of a utility bill, bank statement, copy of your tenancy agreement, confirmation from benefits agency or other documentation.

If you are in employment we will also ask for a copy of your P60 and your last two months payslips.

We may ask you to provide documentary proof in support of your application, including independent written confirmation of circumstances.

We may also carry out a credit reference check to establish if information given is correct.

4.1 How we Assess your Application

The Lettings Policy operates with a points system to measure the level of housing need for each application. All applicants have the right to be told how many points he/she is allocated and the basis for awarding them (s 167 (4A) (a)). All applicants are placed in the appropriate group (see section 4.5). Those applicants with the greatest need will have the highest amount of points within their group. The number and criteria for awarding housing need points are set out in section 7. We may, however, exclude applicants or reduce the priority of applicants as detailed in 3.4 and 3.5.

We provide a drop-in service on a Tuesday and Friday morning between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon at the Gateway for you to return your completed form and supporting documents. You will be able to see a Lettings Officer who will assess your housing need, using the information given on the form. At the interview you will be given an

indication of the level of priority that you would receive along with a possible timescale for receiving an offer of property. The Lettings Officer would also discuss other housing options with you.

Following the interview you may be asked to provide a reference from your landlord. We also carry out a verification of your application and this may include an unannounced visit to your property.

We tell you, by letter, how many points we have awarded and the basis for awarding them to you and try to give you an indication of how long it may take to get a property based on bidding for 3 suitable properties every fortnight. If we do not give housing need points then we will write and explain why.

An applicant has the right to request the authority to inform him of any decision about the facts of his case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to him; and has the right to request a review of any such decision about the facts of his case and to be informed of the decision on the review and the grounds for it.

If your circumstances change, you can reapply, or if you feel that the assessment of housing need is wrong you can ask for a reassessment by way of a review to the Housing Operations Manager.

Because of the high demand for housing, and the large numbers of applicants waiting for housing, being on the Housing Register does not guarantee an offer of accommodation.

4.2 Definition of a Household

The following are '**households**' for the purposes of this policy.

Members of the same family currently living together including:

- Couples married to each other or living together as husband and wife (or in an equivalent relationship in the case of persons of the same sex)
- Relatives living together, including parents and children (and step children).
- Half-relatives will be treated as full relatives. A foster child living with his foster parent is treated as living in the same household as his foster parent.

Other relatives such as grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces or cousins may be considered as part of one household if there is a permanent and independently proven need for the separate households to be housed together.

Where an applicant requests rehousing with an individual outside of their household, we will require independent confirmation that there is a permanent and significant medical or support requirement that they be considered as one household.

4.3 Means Testing

Applicants for General Needs Housing

Section 167(2A) of the Housing Act 1996 allows us to give less priority to an applicant who has financial resources available and therefore the points for an applicant with means may be reduced. A reduction in the level of points awarded may be applied where a Lettings Officer has determined that an applicant has the means to meet their housing need from their own resources. Meeting need is defined as having the income or resources to purchase privately or via shared ownership or to privately rent for a period of 2 years or more.

Income and resources are considered to be:

- A single or joint income which falls within the levels required to purchase via one of the Homebuy Schemes, taking into account the ability to get a mortgage and the size and type of property required
- Savings sufficient to pay for private rent for a period of two years. (If you have owned a property in the last 6 years and have sold it, we will ask you for proof of sale and any proceeds of sale which the applicant still holds will be taken into account in the normal way as means but the council may also treat the applicant as possessing an additional notional amount of the proceeds of sale. This is calculated by using a depreciation calculation to work out the remaining amount after taking away a multiple of the months that have passed since the sale by the average private sector rent.
- Sufficient equity within your current home to enable you to repurchase suitable property

The decision to reduce points is discretionary and all of the circumstances will be taken into account in making the decision. At the initial interview/assessment stage of an application we would discuss the various options available and would take into account any high priority debts, ie rent arrears, council tax, gas, electricity, unpaid fines and maintenance.

Where an applicant has the need for supported housing and owns their own home, the Housing Operations Manager will decide whether a reduction in points should apply on the grounds of means.

If you are an owner-occupier and need to move please give all details on your application. The Council's Lettings Officers will assess whether you can meet your housing needs from your own resources. In making this assessment we will ask you to give details of your income and savings, and two independent valuations of your property, also mortgage or other costs outstanding.

4.4 Health or Medical Problems

We ask you to complete a medical form. We give medical points on a scale of 1 – 15. A medical panel made up of designated housing officers assess these points with guidance from 'Now Medical' which is an independent organisation comprising of medically trained health professionals. In exceptional cases we will, where necessary and with the applicant's permission, contact their medical practitioner. Any relevant medical evidence provided by the applicant will be considered in the assessment.

Where other members of the household who are on the application have medical problems we add together all the medical points to give a cumulative total.

Where other members of the household have a medical condition but are not on the application, we will award half the medical points if it can be proved that having the applicant living with them is detrimental to their health.

4.5 Physical Disability

Where property for those with physical disability is needed, we take the advice of the Occupational Therapy Bureau. They advise on the property required, and on any extra adaptations needed. The points are in three bandings, which reflect the need of the applicants, in managing the tasks of normal daily living, and how their present property affects them. When an offer of this type of property is made, the offer may be subject to confirmation from the Occupational Therapist that it fully meets the applicant's needs. This will often involve both an Occupational Therapist and a specialist Local Authority Building Surveyor viewing a property with you.

Where the property doesn't fully meet your needs then an assessment will be carried out as to the nature, extent and cost of any (further) adaptations and a decision will be made about the suitability of the offer.

4.6 Groups on the Housing Register

All applicants will be placed in one of three groups which record housing need. The criteria for being placed within each group is as follows.

HWL - Housing Waiting List

The largest group on the Housing Register, it includes all applicants for general needs housing who do not yet reside within Social Housing, including applicants in supported accommodation where the support is no longer required and those who require specialist or supported accommodation. This group also includes homeless applicants where a decision in law regarding a Local Authority duty has not yet been made.

TRF - Transfer

This group is for existing Ashford Borough Council and Housing Association tenants who reside within the Ashford borough.

HML – Homeless Group

Those households who have made a Homeless application to this Authority where a duty has been acknowledged but the full duty has not been discharged. Applicants who would fall into this group include people who have been placed into Bed & Breakfast, those where a homeless application has been made but the applicant has not yet been placed into temporary housing, those who have been housed in a non-secure tenancy with Ashford Borough Council or an Assured Shorthold tenancy with a Registered Social Landlord, but who require a move to more suitable property in order to discharge the full duty and those applicants who have been temporarily housed by Ashford Borough Council into a private sector leased property.

4.7 How we Decide which Group is Offered Each Property

When allocating a property that does not have a specific local connection stipulation, or is not earmarked for applicants meeting special criteria (e.g. key workers or households with a need for an adapted property) a quota system will be operated.

The aim of the quota system will be to offer the properties advertised through the Choice Based Lettings system to applicants in different groups on the register, consistently with the statutory duties to high priority applicants. When deciding on the percentage of properties to be apportioned to each group, direct offers via 4.17 of the allocations policy will be taken into account for the HML group. The annual/quarterly quotas based on our predictions for expected voids of 470 per year based on previous activity are:

HML 25% of properties to be offered to Homeless applicants to ensure in conjunction with the Homelessness Strategy that we are ensuring that sufficient homes are made available in order to fulfil our statutory duties.

HWL 37% of properties to be offered to Housing Waiting List applicants in order to balance the needs of applicants applying for social housing for the first time with other priority groups to comply with the reasonable preference criteria

TRF 38% of properties to be offered to transfer applicants, this is to ensure that we are enabling movement within the existing stock and creating vacancies. We also need to ensure that other housing association and council tenants are moved on to ease overcrowding and again, to create mobility within the housing stock. In addition, we need to ensure that we are rehousing those tenants requiring a decant from their existing home as a result of the regeneration meeting our commitment to our Private Finance Initiative Scheme (PFI) to rehouse those tenants requiring a decant from their existing home as a result of the regeneration.

- (a) The council has the right to prioritise a group for an offer of accommodation if it is necessary to do so in order to meet its targets for lettings to each group. If a group is prioritised for the offer, the offer will be made to the applicant with the highest number of points in that group. If that applicant rejects the offer, the offer may be made to applicant with the next highest points in that group.
- (b) In the absence of any group being prioritised for the offer, the offer will be made to the applicant with highest points overall.
- (c) An offer will only be made after a person's suitability for the offer in terms of size and type of accommodation has been confirmed.
- (d) In the event that 2 applicants have the same number of points and qualify for the offer, the offer will be made to the applicant whose application to the lettings policy was made earliest.

These quotas will be monitored and adjusted on a quarterly basis and reported in the Housing Services Quarterly Report.

4.8 Property Categories

The table below shows the size and type of property suitable for different family groups.

Category	Property	
A	One bedroom flat or studio flat	Single Person or Couple (any age) including expected baby unless stated otherwise.

Category	Property	
B	Flat or maisonette with two bedrooms	Family with one or two children of same sex* /2 adults who do not live as a couple e.g. parent and adult child, adult siblings, person needing care and carer. Pregnancies not included.*
C	Flat or maisonette with three bedrooms	Family with two, three or four children. Pregnancies not included*
D	House with two bedrooms	Family with one or two children of same sex. Pregnancies not included.*
E	House with three bedrooms	Family with two, three or four children. Pregnancies not included*
F	House with four or more bedrooms	Family with four or more children. Pregnancies not included*
G	Bungalow with one or two bedrooms, or a general needs property appointed for those over 50	Couple/Single Person (over 50).
H	Haven bungalow or property within a sheltered housing scheme	Couple/Single Person (over 50) Applicants will need to have a need for supported housing as determined by a Lettings Officer or Scheme Manager.
X	A specialised property for those with permanent physical disability	Applicants with a permanent need for this property.
<p>*This applies to those who have children permanently living with them and would not normally include pregnancies. For houses, preference is given to families with children under 10 years old with the exception of Housing Association properties. For flats and maisonettes above 1st floor and without lifts, we give preference to families with children over 5 years old.</p>		

4.9 The Next Stage

Once your application has been assessed and entered onto the Housing Register, you will receive a letter, normally within 14 days of receipt of your application confirming your application details. We will:

- Explain which group you have been placed in.
- Give the size (and if applicable the type) of property you are eligible for.
- Confirm the effective date.
- Include a reminder about informing us of any change in circumstances.
- Give details of our appeal and review procedures.
- Give a registration number.

- Explain, if applicable, why an application is suspended and when the suspension will be lifted.

If your circumstances change, you must complete a change of circumstances form to enable your application to be reassessed. If you inform us of a change in circumstances without providing evidence, your application will be given the status of “Pending” until you provide us with confirmation of that change.

A change of circumstances could include a change of address, the birth of a child, a change in medical condition or threat of homelessness.

If you feel that the assessment of housing need is wrong you can ask for a reassessment.

You can ask for a copy of your entry on the computer, free. You can ask to see your personal file, but we make a charge £10 for this to cover administrative costs.

4.10 Annual Review

You will be asked to confirm each year that the information you have given on your application form is correct and that you want to remain on Ashford Borough Councils Housing Register. If you do not respond within 28 days, your application will be removed from the list.

If your application is removed, you may request a review of this decision, which must be made within 3 months of your application being removed; after this stage it would be necessary to reapply to the Housing Register.

4.11 Forces Applicants

We assess Forces applicants under the same assessment and local connection criteria as all other applicants.

However, under section 315 of the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008 which amends section 199 of the Housing Act 1996, a local connection for a serving or former member of the armed forces may also consist of:

- Residence within the borough during a previous posting
- Residence within the borough during a current posting
- Residence within the borough prior to joining the Armed Forces

Where an armed forces applicant has been previously resident within the borough, Local connection is assessed under the same criteria as any applicant. Please see Section 3.0.

We only assess the application when we have a confirmed date for discharge, where the applicant is currently serving in the Armed Forces.

A reduction in points for Forces applicants who do not meet the local connection criteria, will not be applied if an applicant can demonstrate that their welfare would be seriously prejudiced by a reduction in points.

4.12 Tied Accommodation for Farm Workers

Where Ashford Borough Council is under a duty under s 27 and 28 Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 it has the power under this Lettings Policy to make a direct offer of suitable accommodation to the occupant of the dwelling-house concerned in order to comply with that duty.

4.13 Management Moves from Social Housing

In **very exceptional circumstances only**, the Head of Housing (in their absence delegated to Housing Operations Manager Housing Options) may authorise 150 Management Move points. In circumstances where Management Move points have been awarded, this will be reported in the Housing Services Quarterly Performance Report.

Where Management Move points are awarded, they will be applied to your application for a period of 8 weeks, which will enable you to bid for property for 4 weeks via Choice Based Lettings. After 8 weeks we will review whether you have been bidding for suitable properties. If you have not made effort to bid for suitable property then we will consider removing your points, alternatively, if suitable property has not been available to bid for then we will consider extending the time that the points are placed on your application.

Consideration to awarding Management Move points would only be given in the following circumstances:-

(i) A Move Required On Grounds Such As Structural Problems with Property

Management Move points would be awarded if you are a tenant of an Ashford Borough Council property and a move is required to enable structural problems with your property to be rectified.

(ii) Discretionary Tenancy Succession Where No Rights Exist

See section 5.6 for details.

(iii) Where an Ashford Borough Council Employee With A Tied Tenancy Is Leaving Employment

Residential Scheme Managers with tied tenancies who have been satisfactorily employed by the Council for at least five years may be given management move points to obtain accommodation via the Housing Register when they leave service or are asked to leave their accommodation provided they are eligible under paragraphs 3.0 – 3.6 of the policy.

(iv) Reciprocal Arrangements Between Authorities For Enabling Cross Boundary Lettings In Cases Of Extreme Need

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is of strategic benefit to the Authority, Housing Officers may negotiate a reciprocal letting arrangement with another Local Authority. Authority to agree to a reciprocal arrangement must be obtained from the Head of Housing. In the event that authority is given, management move points may be applied to the applicant nominated by the other local authority. Points will only be applied following written

confirmation from the other Local Authority that they will reciprocate with an urgent offer to a nominee of our choice as and when required.

(v) Domestic Violence

The Home Office defines Domestic Violence as “any violence between current and former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse”

Ashford Borough Council employs a Domestic Violence Officer who works with victims of Domestic Violence to offer help and guidance and to try to resolve housing issues.

Where a case of Domestic Violence has been established and where the victim is unable to return home, the Officer will look at all the housing options available to the victim. Where no other options are available the applicant will be given 150 Management Move points and, if they have been a tenant of the council or of an RSL immediately prior to the Domestic Violence, they will be allowed to bid for a property of the type and size that match their previous home.

(vi) Crime and Disorder

Where an applicant is a victim of a serious incident of crime or disorder in their current home or in the vicinity of their current home, Ashford Borough Council will work with the Community Safety Unit to enable them to stay in their home. However, where this is not possible and where the Community Safety Unit have made recommendation, the Head of Housing may authorise Management Move points if the Council consider that it is unreasonable for them to continue to occupy their home.

(vii) National Witness Mobility Scheme

The National Witness Mobility Scheme (NWMS) is funded and managed by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform in the Home Office and works with police forces and housing authorities to streamline the process of rehousing seriously intimidated witnesses.

The purpose of this scheme is to enable witnesses to relocate outside their local authority area to a place of safety. In some circumstances within this category of management move only, the applicant may not currently be a tenant of social housing.

In cases of this nature NWMS will work with Ashford Borough Council in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homeless Act 2002. This means that we will have a duty to investigate where we believe individuals are threatened with homelessness because it is not reasonable or safe for them to remain in their current home or because they are suffering from domestic violence. Households awarded points via the National Witness Mobility Scheme will be limited to 2 per financial year.

On occasion it may be necessary for the individual to apply for housing via our Housing Register and the Head of Housing **may** consider authorising Management Move points.

Management move points can only be applied in relation to council tenants or housing association tenants whose landlords have agreed to make any vacancy available to the council.

4.14 Local Connection (Excluding Local Needs Schemes) - Sustaining Village Communities in Conjunction with the Affordable Rural Local Needs Housing Guidelines

The Council's policy is that over a two year period, 50% of properties from the Parishes listed in the tables below will be offered to an applicant who meets the local connection criteria.

When re-letting Council and RSL properties in the parishes indicated in the table below we will give priority to applicants who have housing need points and who fulfil the following local connection criteria:

- Have lived in the parish for a continuous period of at least 5 years immediately before making an application.

or

- Have lived in the parish for any period totalling at least 7 years within the previous 10 years immediately before making an application

or

- Have been employed for the previous two years in either a full-time or part-time capacity within the parish (part-time is defined as a minimum of 10 hours per week)

or

- Need to move into the parish or an adjoining parish to take up full-time employment where the role is pertinent to the local community

or

- Need to return to the parish to enable the applicant to either give or receive support to or from an immediate family member (for these purposes immediate family encompasses a parent or parents, a child or children, a sibling or siblings or other relationship where it can be demonstrated there is a genuine need to give, or receive support).

So that we can fulfil this policy, with the exception of Sheltered Housing, all vacancies within the parishes specified below will be advertised with priority to be given to an applicant who meets the local connection criteria. The only exception to this will be if the 50% has already been met.

The percentage of properties let to those with a local connection will be monitored quarterly with a report in the Housing Services Quarterly Performance Report.

The parishes this policy relates to are the small parishes that fit within the Government's definition of a small rural settlement where there is a population of less than 3,000.

They are as follows:

*Aldington	*Appledore	*Bethersden	*Biddenden	Bilsington
Boughton Aluph	Brabourne	Brook	*Challock	Crundale
Chilham and *Old Wives Lees	Eastwell	*Egerton	Godmersham	Hastingleigh
*High Halden	Kenardington	Little Chart	Mersham	Molash
Newenden	Orlestone/ Hamstreet	*Pluckley	Rolvenden	Ruckinge
*Shadoxhurst	*Smarden	Smeeth	*Stone-cum- Ebony	*Warehorne
Westwell	*Wittersham	*Woodchurch	Hothfield	*Wye with Hinxhill

*denotes a village with an existing Local Needs Scheme

NB Due to the current insufficient demand, the Local Connection policy excludes Sheltered Housing.

4.15 Key Workers

Over a 2 year period 10% of new build properties will be offered to key workers as defined below. To achieve this quota some of the new-build properties advertised on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme will be earmarked as ones in respect of which priority will be given to key workers.

The number of properties let to key workers in this manner will be monitored quarterly with a report to the Housing Services Quarterly Performance Report.

A key worker is defined as a police officer, nurse, doctor, schoolteacher, firefighter or person whose work is of particularly high importance to the well-being of the community and who works in the borough of Ashford or within a 20 mile radius from the borough boundary.

A decision of who qualifies as a key worker will be determined by the Housing Operations Manager, with a right of appeal to Members. A supporting letter from your employer may be required.

The decision as to whether an applicant qualifies as a key worker may be determined before or after an applicant has made a bid for property earmarked for priority for key workers under the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

4.16 Homeless Applicants in Temporary Council Accommodation: Offers of Permanent Accommodation

The council may directly offer a property to a homeless household as temporary accommodation. In these circumstances the Local Authority may consider offering a non secure tenancy within the councils stock or an assured short hold tenancy within RSL stock.

The tenancy will be converted to an introductory tenancy at 12 weeks where a decision has been made and a full homeless duty accepted. Where a decision has been made and a duty not been accepted the tenant will be issued with a notice to vacate and encouraged to find alternative accommodation with advice and assistance from the Housing Options team.

An applicant on an introductory tenancy which has been conducted satisfactorily for a period of 12 months will automatically be offered a secure tenancy.

Introductory tenants are usually prevented from moving via transfer within the first 12 months of their tenancy. However, applicants accepted as homeless and housed under Section 193(3) will be awarded housing needs points if there is an identified and proven need to move to alternative accommodation.

Where these points are awarded, they will be applied to the application for a period of 12 months, which will enable you to bid for property for this period via Choice Based Lettings. After 12 months we will review whether you have been bidding for suitable properties. If you have not made effort to bid for suitable property then we will consider removing your points, alternatively, if suitable property has not been available to bid for then we will consider extending the time that the points are placed on your application.

4.17 Homeless Applicants in Private Sector Leased Property: Special Bidding Requirements under CBL

Applicants to whom we have accepted a duty as homeless and who have been housed on a non-secure tenancy within a private sector leased property are required to complete a form for the Housing Register within 28 days of their tenancy commencement date.

They will be required to actively seek property via the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

If they have not successfully bid for property within the first 6 months of being registered, their application may be passed to a Private Sector Leasing Officer who will bid regularly for suitable sized property on their behalf.

- An offer of an Introductory tenancy via the Choice Based Lettings Scheme to an applicant on a non secure tenancy to whom we have accepted a homelessness duty will constitute a final offer of accommodation for the purposes of s 193(7) Housing Act 1996 which is intended to cause the homelessness duty to cease.

Should such an offer of suitable accommodation be refused then we would cease to owe the applicant a duty (HA 1996 s.193 (5)) and their non secure tenancy would be terminated.

4.18 Homeless Applicants in Temporary Accommodation (Bed & Breakfast): Special Bidding Requirements under CBL

Applicants to whom we have accepted a duty as homeless and who have been placed into Bed & Breakfast as temporary accommodation will be required to complete a form for the Housing Register within 14 days.

They will be required to actively seek property via the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

Any applicant who fails to bid for suitable properties will have their application passed to the relevant Housing Options Officer or Housing Options Accommodation Officer, who will bid on an applicant's behalf.

- An offer of an Introductory tenancy via the Choice Based Lettings Scheme to an applicant in Bed & Breakfast to whom we have accepted a homelessness duty will constitute a final offer of accommodation for the purposes of s 193(7) Housing Act 1996 which is intended to cause the homelessness duty to cease.

Should such an offer of suitable accommodation be refused then we would cease to owe the applicant a duty (HA 1996 s.193 (5)) and they will be required to find alternative accommodation within a reasonable period which will normally be considered to be 28 days.

4.19 Applicants' Requiring a Move because of a Requirement to Decant them from their Existing Property as a Consequence of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or for Any Other Reason

Applicants who need to move for the purpose of decanting them from their existing home will be allowed to bid for properties in accordance with the policies set out within this document.

If they have not successfully bid for property within the first 6 months of being registered, their application may be passed to a designated officer who will bid regularly for suitable sized property on their behalf.

Occasionally, for the purposes of meeting any targets set within the terms of the PFI, it may be necessary to make a direct offer of property.

4.20 Care Leavers: Award of Housing Need Points

Where an applicant applies to us upon leaving care and is aged between 18 and 21 and has been in care for a consecutive period of two years then they will be regarded as a vulnerable applicant and at risk without secure accommodation and will be awarded points as such.

A reduction of points for care leavers who do not meet the local connection criteria, will not be applied if an applicant can demonstrate that their welfare would be seriously prejudiced by a reduction in points. For these applicants, additional local connection criteria may be considered such as to establish a connection of some kind with the borough such as a resident family member or past residence.

4.21 Tenancies for Minors

Where an applicant is aged between 16 and 18 their application will be kept on hold until they have undergone an assessment that aims to ascertain their ability to sustain a tenancy.

If the applicant is considered to be able to sustain a tenancy their application will be activated and they will be able to bid for available properties. However, any grant of a tenancy would take effect as a trust in which a designated responsible adult would

hold the legal interest and would be subject to the applicant receiving the appropriate level of support.

If the applicant is assessed as being unable to sustain a tenancy, their application will be kept on hold until they become 18 years of age. However, where they have a specific need to be rehoused, the applicant will be referred to Social Services for an assessment and for support in exploring their options, which will include referral for supported housing if appropriate.

Any applicant aged under 18 will need to attend an appointment with their parent or guardian to see a Lettings Officer or a Housing Advisor at either the Civic Centre or at the Gateway Centre.

4.22 Sheltered Housing Schemes and Assessment

These schemes provide tenants with their own independent home and there is usually a communal area for social activities. Sheltered Housing Schemes also provide housing related support to those that need it. Most schemes are very active, with clubs, classes and social functions available.

Accommodation varies in each scheme, but normally consists of flats of various styles and sizes, and 9 of the schemes have a few one or two bedroom bungalows. There is an illustrated book about sheltered property that gives more information, if you would like a copy please contact the Housing Services Team on 01233 330688 who will be happy to send you one.

This type of property is for older people with support needs and a decision on an applicant's need and level of required support and their eligibility for sheltered housing would be made by either a Lettings Officer or by a Scheme Manager either at the time of application to the housing register or at an applicant's request.

Occasionally we will consider an applicant who is younger than 50 where this would be the best use of the property and where it provides the best solution to an applicant's needs. Some schemes run by RSLs, however, specify that you must be aged 60 or over.

If you apply for this type of property, one of our Scheme Managers will usually visit you at home to assess your points level and to make a detailed assessment of your need. A needs assessment helps us to decide whether you would be suitable for Sheltered Housing. The assessment will look at some of the following:

- Are you able to self medicate or do you require assistance
- Do you require assistance with mobility in your home
- Do you require assistance with mobility outside of your home
- Do you need assistance with organising your finances
- Do you currently have a care package
- Are you able to cope with routine household chores yourself?

Where the Scheme Manager does not consider that you are suitable for Sheltered Housing, your case would be referred to the Housing Operations Manager (Older Persons Services) for a decision.

If you are not considered suitable you may not be offered Sheltered Housing but, if you are over 50, you are entitled to apply for a bungalow under our Haven Scheme where a lower level of support is provided.

4.23 Haven Schemes

A haven bungalow is one where an alarm call facility is in place for use at any time during the day or night. The alarm is linked to the Council's Monitoring Centre who can contact the appropriate person or organisation on the tenant's behalf.

Haven bungalow's are designed for older people with lower level support needs and a decision on an applicant's eligibility for a haven bungalow would be made by either a Lettings Officer or by a Scheme Manager either at the time of application to the housing register or at an applicant's request.

If you apply for this type of property, one of our Scheme Managers will usually visit you at home to assess your points level and to make a detailed assessment of your need. A needs assessment helps us to decide whether you would be suitable for a Haven Bungalow. The assessment will look at some of the following:

- Are you able to self medicate or do you require assistance?
- Do you require assistance with mobility in your home
- Do you require assistance with mobility outside of your home
- Do you need assistance with organising your finances
- Do you currently have a care package
- Are you able to cope with routine household chores yourself?

Occasionally we will consider an applicant who is younger than 50 where it would be the best use of the property and where it provides the best solution to an applicants needs.

4.24 Applicants in Prison

If you are due to be released from prison the normal local connection criteria will not apply. There are special local connection criteria for applicants in prison as follows:

- you must have lived in Ashford prior to imprisonment or
- you must have lived in Ashford previously for at least a ten year period and
- meet all other criteria set out in paragraphs 3.3 – 3.7 of this policy

Where an applicant who is in prison does not meet the criteria stated above, a reduction in points for lack of local connection as set out in 7.0 will be applied unless the applicant can demonstrate that their welfare would be seriously prejudiced.

Points, however, cannot be awarded until your day of release; an appointment should be made to see a housing adviser at that time to discuss housing options.

4.25 High Risk Offenders – Special Arrangements

The housing of High Risk Offenders will be carried out as part of a multi-agency arrangement with the police, probation services, social services, health professionals

and other relevant bodies. An area and type of property acceptable to the council, taking into account the advice from all other agencies, will be agreed and a High Risk Offender will be offered a limited amount of choice via the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The address of the Offender will be disclosed to the relevant agencies.

4.26 Giving up a Tenancy to go to Prison – Points Awarded on Release from Prison

If a council tenant has voluntarily surrendered his/her tenancy as a result of having to serve a prison sentence of more than 12 months, upon release if he/she applies to the housing register she/he will be entitled to 100 additional points. These points will not be awarded however if the offence for which sentence was imposed was committed in the property or in the locality of the property (see 3.4).

4.27 Single Agency Assessments

Under Single Agency Assessments, Social Services, the Health Authority or other statutory sector agencies may request priority consideration for clients with special needs that are being adversely affected by their current accommodation. Examples would include a patient who cannot be discharged from hospital because their accommodation will adversely affect their condition, or a person whose mental health is being made worse by their accommodation and a move would improve their prognoses.

Referrals are given a rating of High, Medium or Low according to the severity of the applicant's situation with a corresponding amount of points. (see 7.0).

4.28 Right to Buy Applications

When a council tenant has submitted a Right to Buy application, an offer of re-housing can only be made if the tenant has not accepted their Section 125 Offer Notice, after which time the application will be suspended.

5.0 Achieving a Move

5.1 Property Inspection

We will inspect your current property before we offer other property under the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. This is to ensure that it meets the required standards, and will not result in any expense to the Council when you move out.

5.2 Assisted Moves Scheme

This scheme helps tenants who are currently living in Ashford Borough Council owned, family size accommodation and who wish to move to smaller accommodation via the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

To qualify you must be a tenant of this Council and your rent account must be at an acceptable level as agreed with the Housing Operations Manager depending on the individuals' circumstances.

You must also be aged 50 years or above and be moving from a house, flat or maisonette with at least two bedrooms to a smaller flat or bungalow. If you meet this criteria, you would be given Under Occupation points and would be advised via your registration letter that you are eligible for the Assisted Moves Scheme.

The property you move to may be owned by the Council or an RSL. We undertake all arrangements, including disconnection and reconnection of things such as telephone, T.V. cooker, washing machine. In addition we may be able to make a cash payment of up to £1560 dependent upon having a clear rent account and upon the returned property having not been subjected to abuse.

This scheme as detailed above is also extended to include any tenant left in occupation of a property adapted for the use of a disabled person where the need for the adaptation no longer exists.

5.3 Under Occupation by at Least One Bedroom More Than Required Under Lettings Policy

If you are a tenant of an Ashford Borough Council property, over 50 and under-occupying by at least 1 bedroom, but you do not meet the criteria to move via an Assisted Move, the Head of Housing will consider awarding Under Occupation points to enable you to move to a property of a size and type that is better suited to your needs.

The Head of Housing also has discretion to award these points to applicants under the age of 50 years).

These points may also be awarded to applicants who are under occupying private rented accommodation within Ashford.

5.4 Assistance for Remedial Works

Where we need to carry out any remedial work, and the nature of the work means the tenant/s cannot reasonably remain in occupation, we provide suitable alternative property. We arrange for the move and the return to the property when the work is completed. This includes disconnection and reconnection of services, telephone etc.

5.5 Mutual Exchanges

Exchanging with another tenant, either Council or RSL, is the best way of moving for those who are not on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. If you are a tenant of www.homeswapper.co.uk. Once you have entered your details into this system, the HomeSwapper website is able to look for a property match on your behalf. You would be notified by text or by email when they have found a potential match and you can also view the property details on the website which is available for use at the Gateway and at the Civic Centre. Alternatively, paper copies of applicants wishing to move are also available to view at the Civic Centre. You must get permission from Housing Services before any move is arranged. More details are available from either the Customer Services Team or the Housing Services Team.

5.6 Discretionary Tenancy Succession where no Rights Exist

The Head of Housing will consider awarding Management Move points, if the applicant was living in the accommodation in question as his/her only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death and either

- (a) had been living with the tenant for the year prior to the tenant's death; and
 - (b) is a close family member, partner or carer
- or
- (c) the applicant has accepted responsibility for the tenant's dependants and needs to live with them in order to do so

The applicant will be given a time frame of eight weeks and 4 Choice Based Lettings lists to bid and obtain property of a size deemed adequate by Ashford Borough Council for their needs. This period can be extended only if a property of a suitable size does not appear on the Property Newsletter during this period.

Alternatively, the Head of Housing may grant a tenancy of the same property to the remaining occupant, should he/she see fit and should such an allocation have no adverse implications for the good use of the housing stock and should the applicant have sufficient priority under the allocation scheme. This type of allocation is authorised as an exception to normal letting arrangements under s 167(2E) of the Housing Act 1996.

5.7 Discretionary Grant of New Tenancy after Joint Tenant Has Served Notice to Vacate

The Housing Operations Manager may authorise the allocation of a tenancy to the remaining joint tenant following the notice to vacate in the circumstances that such an allocation does not have an adverse implication for the good use of housing stock and our ability to provide for housing need. This type of allocation is authorised as an exception to normal letting arrangements under s 167(2E) of the Housing Act

1996 and would allow the remaining tenant to apply for a fresh tenancy and the council to grant it.

In the circumstances that the allocation of the property would not be a good use of housing stock and would effect our ability to provide for housing need, the existing applicant will be given a time frame of eight weeks and four Choice Based Lettings lists to bid and obtain property of a size deemed adequate by Ashford Borough Council for their needs. This period can be extended only if a property of a suitable size does not appear on the Property Newsletter during this period

6.0 Housing Need Points

The following table is a description of housing needs points applicable to all groups on the housing register and the circumstances in which they can be awarded.

Factor	Points
Lacking a Bedroom (25 points for each room lacking) These points are also applied where 2 children from different families or of different sex share a room, or where two same sex children with an age gap greater than eight years share a room	25
Where lacking a bedroom points have been applied 10 further points can be applied for each additional child (over and above the 2 children sharing)	Multiples of 10
Where there is no living room. Only awarded to couples or families who do not have access to a living room	25
Combined kitchen and living room (with child aged 16 or less, where other points are awarded)	15
Sharing a living room with another household (excludes single person households)	5
Sharing a kitchen with another household	10
Sharing a bath with another household	5
Sharing a toilet with another household	5
Currently living in a flat or maisonette above 1 st floor without a lift and a child or children under the age of 5. Points are awarded for each child under the age of 5.	Multiples of 10
Lacking a garden with child or children under 10 years old or over 50 and unable to manage own garden	5
An occupied bedroom is measured by a LGO and confirmed as having a floor level of less than 50 square feet.	5
Applicant aged between 50 and 60 and would benefit by a move to a bungalow or to sheltered housing but not if the applicant is currently occupying this form of accommodation e.g. points will not be awarded for "like to like" moves.	5
Aged 60 or over and a Scheme Manager or Lettings Officer has assessed an applicant as having a need for a Haven bungalow or for sheltered housing.	Low Need 5
	Medium Need 10
	High Need 15
Aged 60 or over and quality of life would be improved by a move to a bungalow or sheltered accommodation but not if the applicant is currently occupying this form of accommodation e.g. points will not be awarded for "like to like" moves.	10

Factor	Points
<p>Under Occupation Points</p> <p>Where an applicant is living in Ashford, aged 50 or above and currently under occupies family sized accommodation by at least 1 bedroom. (The Head of Housing has discretion to also award these points to applicants under the age of 50)</p>	40
Applicants who have been in PSL property for 28 days or more	50
Where an applicant has provided evidence that their PSL property is unaffordable	20
<p>Currently living in supported accommodation where the support is no longer required or a property which has adaptations for the disabled which are not required by the current resident / tenant.</p> <p>Awarded in accordance with support worker and MOP Protocol.</p>	75
Awarded in circumstances such as living in a sub standard property and/or lacking all amenities, living in a caravan on a site not owned by a Local Authority where no room is available within a family home and lacking all amenities or occupying accommodation without a kitchen.	15
Awarded where all amenities are available but other environmental factors such as damp are impacting on health and well being	5
Where it is not possible to provide a permanent tenancy immediately but where you are subject to the Land Compensation Act 1973 or the Rent Agricultural Act 1976	150
Where a person is vulnerable and considered to be at risk without secure accommodation. An example of this is where an applicant is required to leave supported accommodation which is not covered by the Move On Plans Protocol or care leavers who lack secure accommodation	30
s 167(2)(b): those to whom Ashford Borough Council owes the full housing duty under s 193(2) or who are being provided with accommodation under s 193(3)	50
Homeless within the meaning of Part VII Housing Act 1996 as advised by a Housing Options Officer (this will include the street homeless and people who are in accommodation which it is not reasonable to continue to occupy s 175	10
Intentionally homeless and in priority need. This points can only be awarded for 28 days from the dates of an intentionality decision from one of Ashford BC's Housing Options Officers	25 points awarded for a period of 28 days
Where a Housing Options Officer has accepted that an applicant is owed a duty under s 195 (2) persons threatened with homelessness ie likely to become homeless within 28 days, duty to take reasonable steps to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for his or her occupation.	30
Owed a duty by a local authority other than Ashford Borough Council under s 193 (2) or occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under s 193 (3) (or owed equivalent duty under Housing Act 1985)	10

Factor	Points
*Awarded where an applicant's ability to fend for themselves is restricted due to ill-health, age or other reasons and is living in a home owned by their parents and where the property is being sold (Independent written proof from the solicitor involved would be required). These points are only awarded within 56 days of the completion of sale date	50
* Awarded where an applicant's ability to fend for themselves is restricted due to ill-health, age or other reasons and where a correct Notice to Vacate has been given, but not if could be considered intentionally homeless. These points are awarded 56 days prior to the expiry of the notice	50
in order to give or receive care, access specialised medical treatment, or to take up a particular employment, education or training opportunity where failure to meet that need would cause hardship. These may also be awarded to applicants over the age of 50 and living outside of the borough that require the support of a family member in Ashford.	15
Awarded where an applicant has been placed in accommodation as a result of a Homeless Persons Application whose tenancy has been converted to Introductory and who has an identified and proven need to move to alternative accommodation.	50
Being released from prison and homeless after being in prison for a year and gave up a tenancy with Ashford Borough Council immediately prior to imprisonment	100
Management Move points on grounds such as structural problems with property, ABC resident staff leaving tied accommodation, tenancy succession where no rights exist, Domestic Violence, Crime and Disorder, a Reciprocal arrangement or as part of the National Witness Mobility Scheme (4.12)	150
Living currently and continuously in the Borough for 10 years. These points are only available to applicants who qualify for other points on at least one other ground, other than the ground of 10 years continuous residence. These points may also be awarded to applicants to whom the full housing duty has been accepted by this council but where they have been placed in temporary accommodation outside of the borough where they would otherwise have met the 10 year criteria.	15
No public transport within a 1.5 mile radius (only awarded where applicant is over 50 or has medical or disability points)	5

Factor	Points
<p>Where a member of the household has a severe, permanent disability and is unable to carry out all or most of the usual functions of daily living, and where their current property cannot be adapted (for any reason) to allow them to carry out these functions or where a wheelchair accessible property, either purpose built or substantially adapted is required.</p> <p>Where an applicant has been assessed under the 'high' category of a Single Agency Assessment referral, for example where an applicant's mental health is being affected due to being homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless, or where there is delayed discharge from an inpatient setting.</p> <p>Awarded per member of the household assessed via the above criteria.</p>	Multiples of 150
<p>Where a member of the household has a disability but can carry out all or most of the usual functions of daily living, although with difficulty. May use a wheelchair outside and/or require level access to the property, flush floor showering facilities or stair lift.</p> <p>Where an applicant has been assessed under the 'medium' category of a Single Agency Assessment referral, for example where an applicant in residential care is ready to move to independent living, or an applicant has a learning disability and lives at home, and their accommodation is affecting their mental health or that of their family.</p> <p>Awarded per member of the household assessed via the above criteria.</p>	Multiples of 75
<p>Where a member of the household has a slight disability and lives in standard accommodation, which is suitable to them, but requires minor changes such as ground floor toilet or over bath shower.</p> <p>Where an applicant has been assessed under the 'low' category of a Single Agency Assessment referral, for example where an applicant is living in overcrowded circumstances and this is affecting an already diagnosed medical condition.</p> <p>Awarded per member of the household assessed via the above criteria.</p>	Multiples of 40
<p>Awarded where a housing situation is a contributing factor to a Medical Problem and where the Medical Problem would be relieved by a move from current property</p>	1 - 15
<p>Awarded where a housing situation is a contributing factor to a family member's Medical Problem and where the Medical Problem would be relieved by the applicant moving from that property</p>	Half the 1 – 15
<p>Awarded where an applicant has sustained serious injury, medical condition or disability as a result of service in the Armed forces.</p>	15
<p>Reduction of Points linking to Means Testing Policy</p>	- 25
<p>Reduction of Points linking to Suspensions Policy</p>	- 50
<p>Reduction of Points because an applicant does not have a connection to the Ashford borough</p>	- 50

7.0 Lettings Plans and Local Needs Schemes

7.1 Existing and Future Local Lettings Plans

Local lettings plans are discrete lettings policies which form part of the main housing lettings policy. They apply to a limited part of the housing stock (whether council owned or RSL owned, to which the council has nomination rights). Under local lettings plans special criteria are applied to determine to whom properties are offered in order to address an identified social need, for example the need to build or maintain a sustainable local community.

The council may consider in relation to new housing developments, and, exceptionally, in relation to existing sites, whether there is a need for a local lettings plan.

The council will monitor the impact of any lettings plans that may be introduced into the main policy in order to ensure that, overall, the policy as a whole accords reasonable preference to applicants entitled to it under Housing Act 1996 Part VI.

Please see Appendix for a list and copies of the Local Lettings Plans that are currently in force.

7.2 Local Needs Schemes

Local needs schemes are special schemes for letting properties owned by Registered Social Landlords in rural areas. This is not housing stock to which the Housing Act 1996 Part VI applies and the schemes do not form part of the council's housing lettings policy. However, properties available for let under the schemes are advertised on the Choice Based Lettings system.

The purpose of the rural needs schemes is to let affordable rural homes to people who meet specified local connection criteria, thereby enabling people to remain in the village where they have lived and worked rather than being forced out by high house prices or rents.

The requirement to meet the special local connection criteria are stated in the Affordable Rural Housing Needs Guidelines and will be clearly stated on any advertisement for local needs properties which appear on the Choice Based Lettings system.

To find out the criteria for local needs schemes contact the Housing Strategy Officer.

8.0 Receiving an Offer of Property

8.1 Selection Procedure of Successful Applicant after the Bidding Process

Once the advertisement deadline has passed, the Lettings team will produce a report on the computer system listing each of the advertised properties and all the applicants who applied.

The successful applicant for each property will be the one who is eligible under this policy to be offered the property, with the highest points, and the earliest application date within the group prioritised for the vacancy. Decisions on which group is prioritised for the vacancy will reflect the quotas shown at 4.6. Each potentially successful applicant will be checked to ensure they still meet the eligibility criteria.

8.2 Offering a Property

The successful applicants will initially be contacted by Ashford Borough Council, either by telephone or by letter. Prior to an offer being made, the Lettings Officer will check the applicant's circumstances and ensure all the details given at the time of the application are correct. If the check is satisfactory, a formal offer, in writing will be made to the applicant. If, on making the check, the applicant is found not to be eligible for the offer, no offer will be made.

If the property to be offered is owned by an RSL then the applicants full details and a copy of their application form will be passed on to the RSL and they will contact the applicant directly.

8.3 Viewing the Property

Once the offer has been made, arrangements will be made for the applicant to see the property as quickly as possible.

Personal identification for each prospective tenant will need to be brought to the viewing. This can be in the form of a passport, driving licence or medical card.

At the viewing, the applicant will be given further information about the property, repairs to be carried out, date when the property is expected to be available, conditions of tenancy and, where necessary, advised if he/she will be awarded decoration vouchers.

The officer attending the viewing the property will ask you to read the tenancy agreement to ensure that you fully understand your obligations as a council tenant before signing it. At this point you will also be given advice about how and when to pay your rent and the expected level of behaviour once the tenancy has commenced. You are given your own copy of the tenancy agreement to keep. Please keep it in a safe place, it is an important document and details your rights and responsibilities, and ours as your landlord.

- **Receiving Keys to the Property**

At the time that you collect or receive the keys to the property we will need to know how you expect to pay your rent. If you receive benefit then you will need to bring a

completed housing benefit form (or Local Housing Allowance application form after 1st April 2008) with confirmation of income support, job seekers allowance or pension credit and birth certificates for any dependant children who will live with you. You will not be given the keys to the property without returning a completed benefit form or having paid 2 weeks rent in advance.

If you are working or are of pensionable age but are not in receipt of pension credit you will need to pay two weeks rent in advance. You must pay this at the Civic Centre before we release your keys. This is not a blanket policy and if you feel you will have difficulty finding two weeks rent money in advance then you should speak to your Area Manager at the time of viewing.

8.4 Tenancy Start Date

This will also be discussed at the time of viewing with the Area Manager but is normally the Monday following the viewing date. Keys are normally given out after 2 pm on the Friday prior to the start date.

8.5 Refusals of Property

Where a property is refused, the applicant with the next highest points within the same group, if there is one, will be considered. If there is not another applicant within that group the property will either be offered to the person at the top of a different group or re-advertised.

When a property is refused we ask you to complete a refusal form.

8.6 Elected Members Involvement in Decisions

The Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997 (SI 1997 No. 483) prevents a housing authority's elected members' involvement in allocation decisions when either:

- (a) the unit of housing accommodation concerned is situated in their electoral ward or
- (b) the person subject to the decision has their sole or main residence in the member's electoral ward

In consideration of legal guidance and best practice Elected Members will not be involved in decisions regarding the allocation of individual properties within the Ashford Borough Council area. This does not prevent a member from seeking or providing information on behalf of their constituents. Elected members remain responsible for determining allocation policies and monitoring their implementation. The regulations do not affect elected members being involved in policy decisions that affect the generality of a ward's accommodation.

8.7 Requirement to Pay Off Arrears Under Former Tenancy

Applicants who are offered new council tenancies and who owe arrears under their former council tenancy may be required, under s 167 (2B) of the Housing Act 1996, as a pre-condition to entering into the new tenancy, to enter an agreement to make regular payments to discharge the arrears under the former tenancy. This applies whether or not a possession order was made in respect of the former tenancy on grounds of the arrears.

8.8 Lower Demand properties

Where there are no expressions of interest from eligible applicants, a property will be re-advertised or used as emergency accommodation

9.0 Appeals Procedure

An applicant has a right to request a review of their application if they are dissatisfied with any decision made in relation to their housing application. The Council operates a two stage appeals procedure.

The first stage is for a request for a review to be made to the Housing Operations Manager within 21 days of receiving notification of the original decision. The decision made by the Housing Operations Manager will be notified to the applicant in writing within 28 days.

If the applicant is still unhappy with a decision then they may apply for a further review by an Appeals Panel, which is made up of Elected Members. A request of this type should be submitted within 21 days of receiving the second notification of decision and should be made to the Housing Operations Manager. A request for a further review will be passed to Legal and Democratic Services to arrange an Appeals Panel Hearing. You will receive written notification of the date of the Appeals Panel giving you at least 7 days notice.

10.0 Complaints

We aim to provide a high standard of customer care and to treat every application equally. If you don't think we have dealt fairly with you then you are free to ask for an explanation. If you are dissatisfied with our explanation then you can make a formal complaint to:

The Head of Housing
Ashford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL

Telephone: 01233 330688
Fax: 01233 330425
Email: housing@ashford.gov.uk

Your complaint will receive a written acknowledgement within 3 working days. A full response will be sent within 15 working days. If you are not satisfied with the response you have received you may contact the Deputy Chief Executive at the Civic Centre. Further information regarding Ashford Borough Council's complaints procedure is available via our website or from the Council offices.

If you are still not satisfied by our response you may wish to contact one or all of the following agencies for advice:

Citizens' Advice Bureau
10 Norwood Street
Ashford
Kent
TN23 1QU
Telephone: 01233 626185

Shelter [Kent Housing Aid]
Bull Yard
High Street
Ashford Kent
TN24 8SN
Telephone: 01323 610669

Your Local Councillor.

If you do not know who your Councillor is, a full list of Councillors is available at the Council Offices – just ask one of our staff members. The list is also available on the Council's website at www.ashford.gov.uk

Your Member of Parliament.

Damian Green MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Telephone: 020 7219 3911
Fax: 020 7219 0904
Email: greend@parliament.uk

(As a result of forthcoming changes to the boundary commission, after the next general election, the Member of Parliament for those residing within the Saxon Shore Ward will be different to the rest of the Ashford Borough)

If you have followed the Council's complaints procedures and are still not satisfied with the response you can also contact the Local Government Ombudsman Advice Team at the following address:

Local Government Ombudsman,
PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH

Advice Line: 0845 602 1983 email: advice@lgo.org.uk
Or you can visit the website www.lgo.org.uk

Appendices

Local Lettings Plans

1. Hyde Housing Association - Bramble Lane, Wye
2. Moat Housing Association – Stanhope Estate, Ashford
3. West Kent Housing Association – Pattisons Farm, Aldington
4. Sanctuary Housing Association – Belgar Farm, Tenterden
5. Swale Housing Association – Morgan Close, Ashford
6. West Kent Housing Association – Whitfield Villas, Ashford

Appendix 1 - Lettings Plan for Hyde Rented Properties at Bramble Lane Wye

Background

'Havillands' at Bramble Lane is a new development of 57 properties, built by the Folkestone Development Company, with a mixture of private ownership, shared ownership and rented dwellings. It is located to the North West of Wye, a village near Ashford, and built on a disused oil storage depot. Fell Reynolds Chartered Surveyors are the managing agents, dealing with the management of the grounds and courtyard areas. At the rear end of the site is a Nature Conservation Area, which is accessible by the general public.

Hyde Housing Association has 13 properties within this new development; the rented units are located at the front of the estate, bordering Bramble Lane.

Hyde properties are made up as follows:-

Rented – 7 properties

Plots 6, 7, 8 – 2 bed, 4 person houses (1,2 & 3 Jarman Cottages, Bramble Lane, Wye TN25 5GJ (respectively))

Plots 9, 10, 11, 12 – 3 bed, 5 person houses (1,2,3 & 4 Amos Cottages, Bramble Lane, Wye TN25 6GJ (respectively))

Shared ownership – 6 properties (For information only)

Plots 13, 14, 15 - 2 bed, 4 person houses (6,7 & 8 Havillands Place, Wye TN25 5GJ. (respectively))

Plots 47, 48, 49 - 3 bed, 5 person houses (40,41 & 42, Havillands Place, Wye TN25 5GJ (respectively))

Parties to the Agreement

A project group was set up of the relevant stakeholders listed below and including the Ward Councillor for Wye, to put in place this Lettings Plan. This is in line with Ashford Borough Council's Housing Lettings Policy, section 8.5 – Local Lettings Policy (Excluding Local Needs Schemes).

This lettings plan is an agreement between **Hyde Housing Association (Hyde)**, **Ashford Borough Council** and **Wye with Hinxhill Parish Council**.

Purpose

This lettings plan is for the rented properties managed by Hyde to which Ashford Borough Council have nomination rights. It is designed to support sustainable lettings, integration of the new tenants into the community, and to balance maximising meeting housing need with the prevention of potential management problems occurring on this site.

Aims

- To allocate to those in housing need.
- To support integration into the surrounding established community as well as the new community at the 'Havillands' development off Bramble Lane.
- To create a local thriving community.
- To provide housing for people with a local connection.
- To inhibit the problems of anti-social behaviour (ASB) reported, relating to Hyde's rented properties.
- To inhibit potential breaches of tenancy.

Allocation

Hyde has provided Ashford Borough Council with information regarding the layout and mix of the properties to enable the Council to advertise through Choice Based Lettings for the appropriate applicants. The Council will nominate one person per property, keeping a reserve list if needed. Hyde will allocate the properties and select which property applicants will be offered.

On initial let 100% of the properties will be advertised with priority to go to applicants with a local connection unless there are insufficient applicants who have a local connection.

Re-lets

For the re-letting of vacant units refer to Ashford Borough Council's Housing Lettings Policy section 4.15: (see below)

This is implemented by letting vacant property on the basis that over a period of time 50% of property on a rotation based on size and type of property is let to someone from the general waiting list with the other 50% going to someone who fulfils the local connection criteria and has a need for the size and type of property. When this is not possible because there is no applicant fulfilling the criteria we will revert to an applicant from the housing register who does not have a local connection.

With further reference to Ashford Borough Council's Housing Lettings Policy, section 4.15, specific details for nominations regarding Local Connection are:-

- Have lived in the parish/village for a continuous period of at least 5 years immediately before making an application.
- or
- Have lived in the parish/village for any period totalling at least 7 years within the previous 10 years immediately before making an application
- or
- Have been employed for the previous two years in either a full-time or part-time capacity within the parish (part-time is defined as a minimum of 10 hours per week)
- or
- Need to move into the parish or an adjoining parish to take up full-time employment where the role is pertinent to the local community
- or

- Need to return to the parish to enable the applicant to either give or receive support to or from an immediate family member (for these purposes immediate family encompasses parents, child, children, siblings or other relationship where it can be demonstrated there is a genuine need to give, or receive support).

Other criteria for nomination are:-

- Applicants and members of the household will not be the perpetrators of serious and ongoing nuisance or anti-social behaviour at their current home, or had any legal action as a result of nuisance or anti-social behaviour taken against them including a Notice of Seeking Possession.
- Applicants will not have been evicted for nuisance or anti social behaviour from any previous addresses. This will not be taken into account if the applicant can show that they have over a period of not less than 12 months rectified their behaviour.
- Applicants will not be in rent arrears for their current home, unless they can show the debt is £400 or less and they have made substantial efforts over a period of at least 3 months to clear. If arrears are due to Housing Benefit owing, applicants will need to show this is a non true debt and that they have dealt with their claim appropriately and paying any estimated contributions regularly.
- Applicants will not have been evicted for rent arrears from previous homes, unless they can show the debt is £400 or less and they have made substantial efforts over a period of at least 6 months to clear.
- Applicants and members of the household will not have a recent criminal conviction, which will impact upon the management of the tenancy or the local community.

Role of the Parish Council

The Parish Council will use their best endeavours to confirm to the Ashford Borough Council Lettings Team that selected nominees for the scheme have a local connection to Wye with Hinxhill Parish.

Signed by
 Name Sharon Williams
 Housing Operations Manager, Ashford Borough Council

Signed by
 Name David de Saxe
 Chairman, Wye with Hinxhill Parish Council

Signed by
 Name Georgina Tippins
 Principal Housing Officer, Hyde Housing Association

Appendix 2 - Local Lettings Plan for Moat Rented Properties at Stanhope

Background

Moat is building 309 new houses, 10 x four bedroom houses, 59 x three bedroom flats, 46 x two bedroom houses, 114 x two bedroom flats and 80 x one bedroom flats on Stanhope.

Over 60% of the residents have bought their homes.

The PFI scheme is situated just off Brookfield Road and is close to Ashford's town centre, Designer Outlet and Ashford International train station.

There is also a small range of shops on site including a newsagent/post office, a pub, a convenience store, a library and a fast food outlet. A bus route also goes through Stanhope to the town Centre, Ashford International station and local supermarkets.

There are three schools on the edge of Stanhope – Lynden Grove Primary School, Beaver Green Primary / Junior Community School and Christchurch Secondary School. South East Kent College is also nearby.

In a recent resident survey it was noted that three in ten residents on Stanhope are aged between 16 and 34 whilst a similar proportion are aged 35 to 44 and a fifth are aged between 45 and 54. A fifth are aged 55 or over.

Three quarters of the respondents are female.

A third of the residents are either in full time or part time employment and four in ten are not currently seeking work. 15% are retired and 7% are long term sick/disabled.

96% are white-British and 97% are heterosexual.

Of the available sample, 231 residents took part in the survey.

Parties To The Agreement

A project group was set up of the relevant stakeholders listed below, including the Ward Councillors for Stanhope, to put in place this Lettings Plan. This is in line with Ashford Borough Councils Housing Lettings Policy, section 8.5 – Local Lettings Policy (Excluding Local Needs Schemes).

This Lettings Plan is an agreement between Moat Housing Association, Ashford Borough Council and Stanhope Parish Council.

Purpose and Approach

It is the above contact, that a local lettings plan for Stanhope is proposed. It is part of a package of measures intended to support sustainable lettings on Stanhope. The range of measures include:

- Resident participation and integration
- A community art project
- A responsive housing management and repairs service

- Liaison with other agencies providing support to residents
- Refurbishment of 323 homes
- A local lettings plan

Aims of the Local Lettings Plan

- To create a social mix that reflects the wider community
- To prevent a concentration of households with similar needs
- To support the integration into the established community
- To establish sustainable tenancies
- To balance the numbers and ages of children on the estate
- To inhibit the problems of anti-social behaviour (ASB) reported, relating to Moat's rented properties
- To achieve a balance of economically active households on Stanhope
- To provide an opportunity to maintain the local community
- To create a thriving local community

Proposed Targets for Initial and Subsequent Lettings

1. Child Density

Houses will be allocated to a mix of households to balance the number and ages of children on the development.

We will aim to let 30% of houses to families with children over the age of ten years.

We will aim to restrict the number of children within 30% of the houses let, to ensure child density levels are managed.

2. Economic Background

We will aim to let 30% of new tenancies to households engaged in full or part-time employment. It is hoped to encourage and facilitate home working through the allocation of some of the larger units.

3. Local Connection

We will aim to let 30% of new tenancies to applicants who have a local connection to Stanhope as defined below:

- Have lived in the parish/village for a continuous period of at least 5 years immediately before making an application.

Or

- Have lived in the parish/village for any period totalling at least 7 years within the previous 10 years immediately before making an application

Or

- Have been employed for the previous two years in either a full-time or part-time capacity within the parish (part-time is defined as a minimum of 10 hours per week)

Or

- Need to move into the parish to take up full-time employment where the role is pertinent to the local community

Or

- Need to return to the parish to enable the applicant to either give or receive support to or from an immediate family member (for these purposes immediate family encompasses parents, child, children, siblings or other relationship where it can be demonstrated there is a genuine need to give, or receive support).

4. Additional Criteria for Nomination

- Applicants and members of the household will not be the perpetrators of serious and ongoing nuisance or anti-social behaviour at their current home, or had any legal action as a result of nuisance or anti-social behaviour taken against them including a Notice of Seeking Possession.
- Applicants will not have been evicted for nuisance or anti social behaviour from any previous addresses. This will not be taken into account if the applicant can show that they have over a period of not less than 12 months rectified their behaviour.
- Applicants will not be in rent arrears for their current home, unless they can show the debt is £400 or less and they have made substantial efforts over a period of at least 3 months to clear. If arrears are due to Housing Benefit owing, applicants will need to show this is a non true debt and that they have dealt with their claim appropriately and paying any estimated contributions regularly.
- Applicants will not have been evicted for rent arrears from previous homes, unless they can show the debt is £400 or less and they have made substantial efforts over a period of at least 6 months to clear.
- Applicants and members of the household will not have a recent criminal conviction, which will impact upon the management of the tenancy or the local community.

Local Authority Nominations

The Local Authority has 100% nominations rights on this scheme for all lettings in perpetuity. The nominations will be managed in accordance with the Nominations Agreement as agreed in the RSL Management Forum and already signed by Moat Housing and Ashford Borough Council, and also in accordance with this Lettings Plan.

Moat Housing will inform Ashford Borough Council of the target group required for re-lets in order to maintain the balance within the community as set out in this Lettings Plan.

As per the PFI Project Agreement:

“up to 50 dwellings from the service commencement date and no more than 20 dwellings following completion of the works may be occupied by individuals or families designated by the Authority as needing non-secure temporary accommodation due to homelessness.”

These dwellings will be made available on an unsecured tenancy basis in accordance with the Housing Act 1996.

Consultation

This lettings plan will be discussed with Stanhope Tenant and Resident Association and will be kept under review.

Measurement and Monitoring

The plan sets a clearly defined framework for lettings on Stanhope.

It includes monitoring and reporting arrangements to ensure accountability. It is intended to review the extent to which the aims of this plan have been achieved within three months of the initial lettings, by analysing the CORE returns completed for each letting.

It is also intended to operate the local lettings plan for two years, with an annual review, on the anniversary of the initial implementation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Stanhope Parish Council and Ward Members

- General information on local issues

Role of Ashford Borough Council

- Working within the criteria defined by this local lettings plan, advertise properties via Choice Based Lettings system and draw up short list of nominees to Moat Housing.
- Coordinate the development of the Lettings Plan

Role of Moat Housing Association

- Allocate properties in accordance with its policies and procedures, the local lettings plan & Choice Based Lettings system.
- Assist with the preparation of the local lettings plan.
- Work closely with Ashford Borough Council
- Provide information to the Ashford Borough Council Lettings Team in good time to include on the properties to be advertised list.
- Advise ABC of names of successful applicant with date of tenancy start & address details

Signed by
Name Sharon Williams
Housing Operations Manager, Ashford Borough Council

Signed by
Name Pam Millington
Neighbourhood Contracts Manager, Moat Housing

Signed by
Name Cllr Mrs Palma Laughton
Ward Member, Stanhope (Ashford) Ward

Signed by
Name Cllr John Holland
Ward Member, Washford Ward

Appendix 3 - Local Lettings Policy for Aldington Meadow, Pattisons Farm - Draft - 16th October 2008

Aldington Prison Site, Pattisons Farm, Aldington:

1. Description for Site

16 General rented properties –
Plots 5,6,7,12,13,41-43 & 61-63 – 2 bed houses.
Plots 4,8,11, 60 & 64 – 3 bed houses.

4 shared ownership properties -
Plots 56-59 – 2 bed houses.

2. Issues to Take Into Account

The development is situated on the site of the former HMP Aldington prison (Pattison's Farm Hamlet). The developer Bellway purchased the redundant site with a view to providing 70 units of accommodation, with 20 of those being affordable rent and shared ownership. The development lies within the heart of rural Kent. It is situated some 0.5km to the south of the centre of the village of Aldington, which lies approximately 8km to the south east of Ashford.

In Local Housing Need Survey, January 2007 identified forty- eight households who would be unlikely to satisfy their housing needs on in the open market.

As at July 2008 there were 15 people on the Ashford Borough Council housing waiting list requesting Aldington & Bonnington as their first choice area for housing.

This lettings plan covers the 16 rented properties managed by West Kent Housing Association to which Ashford Borough Council have 100% nomination rights. It is designed to support sustainable lettings and integrate new tenants into the existing, thriving, community giving local people in housing need access to affordable housing.

The shared ownership units are not covered by this lettings plan. However all project group members agree the principle of identifying purchasers with a local connection who meet the eligibility criteria. This will be done via discussions with the Zone Agent, currently Moat. Potential purchasers will be advised of the preferred local connection, advised to register with the Zone Agent and how to go about this.

This lettings plan has been developed to respond to the high levels of housing need within the local community as identified in the January 2007 Local Housing Needs Survey and the limited alternatives available to households with a local connection who wish to remain in the area.

3. Justification for Lettings Plan

This policy is not intended to dominate at the expense of the statutory preference categories set out in the legislation and therefore will only be utilised in exceptional circumstances where robust evidence is available.

Although this site is not an exception site, the planning brief makes comment that...
'Nominated local parishioners, certified by Aldington & Bonnington Parish Council will have first priority for occupation of the units. Should there be insufficient nominees from the local parish, the remaining units will be open to a wider range of housing nominees from within the Borough of Ashford.'

4. Project Group Members

Membership will be comprised from each of the following;
Aldington & Bonnington Parish Council – Cllr Peter Wood.
Local Ward Councillor – Cllr Richard Honey.
West Kent Housing Association– Ursula Harris & Sophie Kinzett.
Ashford Borough Council – David Jeffrey & Donna Michael

5. Lettings Plan

All successful applicants will be in housing need and identified via the Choice Based Lettings system.

100% of vacant properties will be advertised with priority to go to applicants with a proven local connection and housing need (as defined by ABC Lettings Policy and reproduced in this lettings plan), unless insufficient applicants apply. Applicants will be short listed in order of their priority under the Councils Lettings Policy. The types of properties that applicants can be considered for are set out in the Lettings Policy.

Local connection will be defined in accordance with Ashford BC's Lettings Policy:

- A resident within the parish who has been resident for a continuous period of at least 5 years immediately before making an application, or
- Someone who has been a resident of the parish for any period of (or periods totalling) 7 years or more within the previous 10 years immediately before making an application, or
- Applicants who were previously resident in the parish and whose immediate family member(s) are currently resident in the parish and have been for a continuous period of at least 10 years immediately before the housing application was made and whose family member(s) intend to remain in the parish. "Immediate family" means parent or parents, child or children, or a sibling or siblings, or
- Those who work either full-time or part-time within the parish or a neighbouring parish. Part-time in this case is defined as being a minimum of 10 hours each week.
- Applicants who need to move into the parish, or a neighbouring parish, to take up full or part-time employment (a minimum of 10 hours per week) within the parish or a neighbouring parish.
- Those who need to move to the parish to enable them to either give or receive support to or from an immediate family member. ("Immediate family" means parents, child, children, siblings or other relationships where a genuine need to give or receive support is demonstrated to the satisfaction of Ashford BC).
- Priority will be given to those with the strongest local connection which will be established by applying the criteria agreed within the Affordable Rural Local Needs Housing Procedure

For defining local connection the area of Aldington will be defined as the electoral district of Aldington encompassing Bonnington.

On the initial lettings if there are insufficient eligible candidates from Aldington then applicants from the adjacent parishes of Smeeth, Brabourne, Mersham & Bilsington will be given priority over those applicants who express an interest in the scheme.

Ensure that there is adequate time allowed for the identification of suitable applicants to reside in the properties.

West Kent Housing Association will allocate the properties and select which property applicants will be offered in line with Ashford Borough Council's Allocation Policy. Specific details for nominations are:

- Ashford Borough Council will give priority to those applicants who have a local connection as stated above.
- West Kent Housing Association will allow up to 4 people (a maximum of 2 children) to reside in a two-bed house.
- West Kent Housing Association will allow up to 5 people (a maximum of 3 children) to reside in the three-bed house.

Initial and subsequent letting of the properties to take into account any support needs of the applicants.

6. Effective Dates for Lettings Plan

- **Initial lets**

The plan will be in place for the initial lettings of all homes on the development and all lettings thereafter.

- **Subsequent lets**

Priority will be given to local applicants in housing need (as outlined above) for all void properties via the Choice Based Lettings scheme. If there are no applicants with a local connection the property will be allocated to applicants without local connection in housing need.

7. Monitoring Lettings Plan

Ashford Borough Council will monitor the impact of this lettings plan upon the electoral district of Aldington encompassing Bonnington to demonstrate that this aspect of the policy does not discriminate, directly or indirectly on racial or other equality grounds.

8. Role of Aldington And Bonnington Parish Council

- Confirm local connection of nominees for the scheme as set out in the Local Lettings Plan.

9. Role of Ashford Borough Council

- Working within the criteria defined by this local lettings plan, advertise properties via Choice Based Lettings system and draw up short list of nominees to West Kent Housing Association
- Coordinate the development of the Lettings Plan

- Allocate properties in accordance with its policies and procedures, the local lettings plan & Choice Based Lettings system.
- Monitor the local lettings plan on an annual basis to ensure it remains viable.

10. Role of West Kent Housing Association

- Assist with the preparation of the local lettings plan.
- Accept nominations from Ashford Borough Council
- Work closely with Aldington Parish Council in determining the local connection of nominations.
- Provide information to the Ashford Borough Council Lettings Team in good time to include on the properties to be advertised list.
- Advise Ashford Borough Council of names of successful applicant/s with date of tenancy start & address details

11. Role of Local Councillor

- General information on local issues.

Signed – Housing Operations Manager, Ashford Borough Council - Sharon Williams.

Signed - Housing Manager, West Kent Housing Association – Ursula Harris.

Signed – Chairman Aldington & Bonnington Parish Council – Cllr Peter Wood.

Appendix 4 - Local Lettings Policy for Belgar Farm, Tenterden

Description of Site

100% affordable housing
14 General rented properties –
Plot 1 – 3 bed mobility bungalow
Plots - 4,5,7,15 & 16 – 3 bed semi-detached houses
Plot 6 – 2-bed mobility bungalow
Plots 12,13 & 14 – 2 bed terraced house
Plots 19,20,21 & 22 - 1 bed flats

8 shared ownership properties -
Plots 2 & 3 – 2 bed semi-detached house
Plots 8, 17 & 18 – 3 bed semi-detached house
Plots 9, 10 & 11 – 2 bed terraced house

The scheme is the 2nd phase of a development known as Tilden Gill Rd, which was built by Sanctuary Housing Association in 1995.

The first phase was developed as an exception site and allocated only to applicants fulfilling specific local connection criteria. Whilst the second phase is not coming forward under exception site planning policy, there is still a considerable need for housing for people with a local connection to Tenterden. Sanctuary Hereward currently has 23 households who have made direct applications to its waiting list and the Ashford BC Housing Needs Survey 2005 showed 97 households requiring affordable housing in Tenterden. In June 2008 there were 103 households on ABC's Housing Register in housing need requiring a home in Tenterden, with a further 33 with a desire to move to Tenterden.

Purpose

This lettings plan covers the 14 rented properties managed by Sanctuary Hereward to which Ashford Borough Council have the initial 100% nomination rights. It is designed to support sustainable lettings and integrate new tenants into the existing, thriving, community giving local people in housing need access to affordable housing.

The shared ownership units are not covered by this lettings plan. However all policy group members agree the principle of identifying purchasers with a local connection who meet the eligibility criteria. This will be done via discussions with the Zone Agent, currently Moat.

This lettings plan has been developed to respond to the high levels of housing need within the local community and the limited alternatives available to households with a local connection who wish to remain in the area

Project Group Membership

Membership will be comprised from each of the following;
Tenterden Town Council – one representative
Local councillor – one representative
Sanctuary Hereward – two representatives
Ashford Borough Council – two representatives

Lettings Plan

All successful applicants will be in housing need and identified via the Choice Based Lettings system.

100% of vacant properties will be advertised with priority going to applicants who bid with a proven local connection (as defined by ABC Lettings Policy and reproduced in this lettings plan), unless insufficient applicants apply. Applicants will be short listed in order of their priority under the Councils Lettings Policy. The types of properties that applicants can be considered for are set out in the Lettings Policy

Local connection will be defined in accordance with ABC Lettings Policy:

- A resident within the parish who has been resident for a continuous period of at least 5 years immediately before making an application, or
- Someone who has been a resident of the parish for any period of (or periods totalling) 7 years or more within the previous 10 years immediately before making an application, or
- Applicants who were previously resident in the parish and whose immediate family member(s) is currently resident in the parish and have been for a continuous period of at least 10 years immediately before the housing application was made and whose family member(s) intend to remain in the parish. "Immediate family" means parent or parents, child or children, or a sibling or siblings, or
- Those who work either full-time or part-time within the parish or a neighbouring parish. Part-time in this case is defined as being a minimum of 10 hours each week.
- Applicants who need to move into the parish, or a neighbouring parish, to take up full or part-time employment (a minimum of 10 hours per week) within the parish or a neighbouring parish.
- Those who need to move to the parish to enable them to either give or receive support to or from an immediate family member. ("Immediate family" means parents, child, children, siblings or other relationships where a genuine need to give or receive support is demonstrated to the satisfaction of Ashford BC).
- Priority will be given to those with the strongest local connection which will be established by applying the criteria agreed within the Affordable Rural Local Needs Housing Procedure

For defining local connection the area the Parish of Tenterden will be defined as Tenterden North, Tenterden South, St. Michaels & Tenterden West (not including Rolvenden & Rolvenden Layne).

On first let mobility bungalows will be allocated to ensure is adequate time allowed for the identification of suitable applicants.

Consideration will be given to younger people when taking into account the occupation of the one-bed flats on the scheme.

Effective Dates for Lettings Plan

The plan will be in place for the initial lettings of all homes on the development and all lettings thereafter.

Subsequent Lets

Priority will be given to local applicants in housing need (as outlined above) for all void properties via the Choice Based Lettings scheme. If there are no applicants with a local connection the property will be allocated to applicants without local connection in housing need.

The Member of the Project Group will play the following roles.

Role of Tenterden Town Council

- Confirm local connection of nominees for the scheme as set out in the Local Lettings Plan.

Role of Ashford Borough Council

- Working within the criteria defined by this local lettings plan, advertise properties via Choice Based Lettings system and draw up short list of nominees to Sanctuary Hereward.
- Coordinate the development of the Lettings Plan

Role of Sanctuary Hereward

- Allocate properties in accordance with local lettings plan & Choice Based Lettings system.
- Assist with the preparation of the local lettings plan.
- Work closely with Tenterden Town Council
- Provide information to the Ashford Borough Council Lettings Team in good time to include on the properties to be advertised list.
- Advise ABC of names of successful applicant with date of tenancy start & address details

Role of Local Councillor

General information on local issues.

Signed – Sharon Williams, Ashford Borough Council

Signed – Neil Salter/ Helen Charles, Sanctuary Hereward

Signed - John Weller, Mayor Tenterden Town Council

Appendix 5 - Lettings Plan for Swale Housing Association Properties at Milne Road Site (Morgan Close) Ashford, Kent

Background

The Milne Road site (Morgan Close) is a new development with 100% affordable homes, which are a mixture of shared ownership and rented properties. It is located in the fast expanding and Priority Growth Area of Ashford at South Willesborough. The site was formally Allotments owned by Ashford Borough Council.

The Morgan Close is located off Milne Road, which is accessed from Osborne Road. One side of the site is bordered by a Cemetery and the other side by family housing. The area is close to Junction 10 of the M20 giving easy access to both London and the Channel ports/Tunnel. South Willesborough is approximately 2 miles from Ashford town centre and access to shops, bars, restaurants and an outlet retail centre.

There are local shops located on Church Road, Hythe Road and Hunter Road which are within walking distance from the development. There are also a large Tesco and Asda supermarket within 2 miles. The local church and primary school are also within walking distance. There is a local bus route into the town and to Ashford International railway station.

Swale Housing Association has 36 units on this new development. The properties are made up as follows: -

Rented – 24 properties

6 x 2 bed flats in a 3-storey block – plots 24-29
3 x 2 bed houses – plots 8, 11 & 12
12 x 3 bed houses – 2, 4-7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 30, 31 & 36
3 x 4 bed houses - 3, 13 & 35

Shared Ownership – 12 properties

6 x 2 bed flats in a 3-storey block – 18-23
4 x 2 bed houses – 1, 32, 33 & 34
2 x 3 bed houses – 16 & 17

Parties to the Agreement

This lettings plan is an agreement between **Swale Housing** and **Ashford Borough Council**

Purpose

This plan is for the letting of the new rented properties managed by **Swale Housing** and to which **Ashford Borough Council** have nomination rights. It is designed to support sustainable lettings on **the Milne Road Development** and to provide balance - maximising the meeting of housing need with the prevention of potential management problems occurring on this site. This will be achieved using the **Kent Housing Group “Developing Sustainable Communities “ paper**

Aims

The aims in order to achieve the above are:-

- To apply an agreed limit in child density and a spread of ages of children for the rented properties
- To allocate the flats to a wide social mixture of applicants to reflect the broader community.
- To set targets on the overall levels of economically active households in the new estate to create a balance and prevent a concentration of residents wholly dependent on benefits.
- To support integration into the surrounding established community.
- To achieve sustainable tenancies.
- To inhibit the problems of anti-social behaviour (ASB) reported relating to Swale Housing properties by excluding applicants who have criminal convictions for, or a record of, ASB, including drug related crimes.
- To agree the allocation of properties to pet owners to meet Swale Housing Swale's policies.
- To agree the relative priority afforded to applicants in different access queues.

Allocation and Proposed Targets of Initial Lettings

Swale Housing will allocate the properties and select which property applicants will be offered in line with Ashford Borough Council's Allocation Policy. Specific details for nominations are:

- Swale Housing will allow up to 2 adults and 1 child to reside in each two bed flat of which there are six.
- Swale Housing will allow up to 4 people (a maximum of 2 children) to reside in a 2 bed house.
- Swale Housing will allow up to 5 people (a maximum of 3 children) to reside in the three bed house.
- Swale Housing will allow up to 6 people (a maximum of 4 children) to reside in the 3 x four bed houses.
- Swale Housing will aim to let 30% of homes to families with children over the age of 10 years.
- Swale Housing will aim to let 30% of tenancies to households who are engaged in full time or part time employment.
- Swale Housing have requested that a maximum of 1 applicant from a move on/supported housing background - and that this should be an applicant with a proven track record and with the relevant and appropriate support
- Swale Housing will allocate the ground floor flats to those applicants with the most need, including (but not exclusively) those with medical or disability issues. Ashford Borough Council have agreed to highlight these cases. In the case of 2nd floor flats aim to allocate these to families with children over 5 years old.
In selecting nominations for the flats, Ashford Borough Council will consider that there is no lift within the block.
- Domestic pets are permitted in Swale Housing houses (but not flats) provided there will be no breach of the tenancy agreement and details are agreed beforehand at interview and stated on the housing application form.

Other relevant factors:-

- The site will be maintained by Swale Housing and estate charges for these services will be payable by all residents.
- The services provided will include communal gardening and lighting to Swale Housing land, services for the internal and external areas of the flats and including reserves for renewals. All charges will be eligible for housing benefit.

All the properties will be advertised through Ashford Borough Council Choice Based Lettings scheme and will provide Swale Housing with one nomination for each property and all relevant paperwork to support each nomination. e.g. application forms, OT and Social Services reports where appropriate, (as detailed in the Nominations Agreement)

Local Authority Nominations

The nominations will be managed in accordance with the Nominations Agreement as agreed in the RSL Management Forum and already signed by Swale Housing Association and Ashford Borough Council, and also in accordance with this lettings plan.

Consultation

This lettings plan has been drawn up in full consultation with Ashford Borough Council and Swale Housing. All parties are positive about the principles of the lettings plan, and are keen to see successful, long-term lettings achieved at the new scheme.

Ashford Borough Council

Signed by

Print Name

Designation

Swale Housing

Signed by

Print Name

Designation

Appendix 6 - Local Lettings Policy for Whitfeld Villas, Ashford - Draft 3 – 20th November 2008

Whitfeld Villas, Ashford

1. Description of Site

General rented properties

12 houses

1-12 – 2 bed houses (with upstairs study 8ft by 6.7 ft)

Houses 1 – 4 have 3 steps up to front door

6 flats

13 & 15 – 1st floor 2 bed flats

14 – 1st floor 1 bed flat

16 & 18 – 2nd floor 2 bed flats

17 - 2nd floor 1 bed flat

2. Issues to Take Into Account

The development is situated on the site of a former builder's yard, behind B & Q.

The houses have small back gardens. Each house has one parking space. The houses have a third upstairs room, which could be used as a study. This is not being counted as a bedroom under habitable room standards as the room size is too small. It will be advertised as a 2 bedroom with study room.

The flats have no gardens or outside communal space. They are above a light industrial unit, intended use office space (owned by developer). Each flat has one parking space.

The parking area has electric gates.

This lettings plan covers the rented properties managed by West Kent Housing Association to which Ashford Borough Council have 100% nomination rights. It is designed to support sustainable lettings and integrate new tenants into the existing, thriving, community giving people in housing need access to affordable housing.

As the houses have a study, these units can be made available to people who want to study or work at home. This can help to meet the Worklessness agenda and environmental impact. The option of working from home should help reduce some travel, and help meet Ashford's commitment¹ to the Nottingham Declaration on climate change.

3. Justification for Lettings Plan

This is a small development built by a local developer, originally planned for sale on the open market (with one unit for social rent). All properties will now be available only for social rent

Open market units are often under-occupied as 2 bed units are often bought by couples or single people down-sizing or new relationship.

¹ Signed by Ashford BC 11th January 2007

4. Project Group Members

Membership will be comprised from each of the following;

Local Ward Councillor – Cllr David Bradberry
West Kent Housing Association– Ursula Harris
Ashford Borough Council – David Jeffrey & Donna Michael

5. Lettings Plan

As the houses have small gardens, and the flats none, the allocation of this development needs to be mindful of potential sustainable neighbourhood problems a higher child density can give.

The flats have no lifts so will not be suitable for anyone with mobility problems. Four of the 2 bed houses have 3 steps up from the pavement to the front door, and will also be advertised as not suitable for anyone with mobility problems.

All successful applicants will be in housing need and identified via the Choice Based Lettings system.

Using the following guide for this purpose the allocation and family size limits are set at

- 8 x 2 bed houses – limit to no more than 2 children – priority to be given to families where children need a study area due to differing age range of children sharing a room.
- 4 x 2 bed houses – limit to no more than 1 child – prioritised to families where the adult / s have a need for an office for their own work or study purposes
- 4 x 2 bed flats – limit to one child – priority to be given to children aged over 10 – due to no outside space or play area.
- 2 x 1 bed flats – single person or couple

100% of vacant properties will be advertised with priority to go to applicants with a proven housing need (as defined by ABC Lettings Policy and reproduced in this lettings plan), unless insufficient applicants apply. Applicants will be short listed in order of their priority under the Councils Lettings Policy. The types of properties that applicants can be considered for are set out in the Lettings Policy.

Ashford Council will nominate suitable applicants for each property under the Lettings Policy.

Initial and subsequent letting of the properties to take into account any support needs of the applicants.

All successful applicants will be requested to adhere to a neighbourhood respect agreement.

6. Effective Dates for Lettings Plan

- **Initial lets**

The plan will be in place for the initial lettings of all homes on the development and all lettings thereafter.

- **Subsequent lets**

Priority will be given to applicants in housing need (as outlined above) for all void properties via the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

7. Monitoring of Lettings Plan

Ashford Borough Council will monitor the impact of this lettings plan to demonstrate that this aspect of the policy does not discriminate, directly or indirectly on racial or other equality grounds.

9. Role of Ashford Borough Council

- Working within the criteria defined by this local lettings plan, advertise properties via Choice Based Lettings system and draw up short list of nominees to West Kent Housing Association
- Coordinate the development of the Lettings Plan
- Allocate properties in accordance with its policies and procedures, the local lettings plan & Choice Based Lettings system.
- Monitor the local lettings plan on an annual basis to ensure it remains viable.

10. Role of West Kent Housing Association

- Assist with the preparation of the local lettings plan.
- Accept nominations from Ashford Borough Council
- Provide information to the Ashford Borough Council Lettings Team in good time to include on the properties to be advertised list.
- Advise Ashford Borough Council of names of successful applicant/s with date of tenancy start & address details.
- To let the properties within the scope of the agreed lettings plan.

11. Role of Local Councillor

- General information on local issues.

Signed – Housing Operations Manager, Ashford Borough Council - Sharon Williams.

Signed - Head of Housing (Tenants) West Kent Housing Association, Ursula Harris

Signed - Ward Councillor (Norman (Ashford)) – Cllr David Bradberry.