



Pet Policy

2024 -2027

Version 1 -2nd January 2024

Table of Contents

Policy Statement and Overview	2
Permission required	3
Ownership rules and content of application form	4
How many pets per property	5
Pet behaviour	6
Appeals and legal obligations	7

Policy statement

Ashford Borough Council Housing recognises that pet ownership can be very beneficial for the wellbeing of our tenants, improving mental health, reducing loneliness and can help maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

This policy is for all our tenants to allow pets in all our properties whilst ensuring the wellbeing of every animal and the surrounding community.

The council will liaise with the dog warden and animal welfare organisations to ensure the best possible advice, information and expertise are readily available to help tenants look after their pet.

This policy aims to make it clear what pets tenants can or cannot keep at their property and how we expect them and the tenants home to be looked after.

Can you afford a pet?

Looking after a dog or cat can involve a significant financial commitment, including food, equipment, vet bills and medicine. It has been estimated in recent years that the average annual spend can be around £1,183 on a pet dog and £1,028 on a cat. Allowing for an average lifespan of six to eighteen years, the total cost of pet ownership adds up.

Looking after your pet and home

Tenants should also consider how they will exercise their pet, what happens if they becomes unwell or are no longer able to look after it, holiday arrangements and the potential extra cleaning in the home.

Choosing a pet?

When choosing a pet, we recommend that tenants seek a pet that needs rehoming from an animal shelter. This will help reduce third party breeding.

More information

For further information on the Animal Welfare Act and other advice about keeping pets go to www.rspca.org.uk

Permission for new tenants or new pets for existing tenants

We will give permission to a tenant to keep a pet if the property is suitable and they are able to take on the responsibilities of looking after the pet. We will also take into consideration whether the tenancy has been breached in any way, for example but not limited, rent arrears due to nonpayment of rent, no access for urgent or mandatory repair works, antisocial behaviour or not looking after the property as set out in the tenancy agreement.

Tenants who wish to have a pet in their home will be asked to complete a pet application form, this is for either a dog or cat and tenants will confirm and provide evidence that these animals have been neutered and microchipped.

We will usually give consent to changes tenants might need to make to their property suitable to accommodate your pet, such as a cat flap, as long as it is agreed that removal and making good the changes are undertaken by the tenant if changes are no longer required, the tenant moves away and the any changes do not affect fire safety. Tenants are not permitted to have a cat flap if a door to their property opens onto a communal hallway in a block of flats.

Permission for breeding or selling animals will not be allowed in any Ashford Council Housing property and appropriate tenancy enforcement will be undertaken if this behaviour is identified.

If a tenant wishes to temporarily foster or home a pet for a short period of time, they must speak with their Neighbourhood Housing Officer to discuss and ask for permission, which will always be confirmed in writing.

Existing tenants

The policy does not apply retrospectively for tenants who already own pets. Tenants will not be allowed to home more than the allowed number of pets when existing pets pass away.

If a tenant already has a pet that we are not aware of, we will expect to be notified by the tenant, and they will be asked to sign a pet contract and be expected to look after the pet according to this policy.

Pet ownership rules for dogs and cats

- Tenants may not breed animals or offer for sale any animal at the property. It is recommended that animals are neutered to prevent breeding.
- All dogs must wear a collar with ID tag and lead in any communal area.
- Dog fouling needs to be cleaned up straight away and disposed of appropriately.
- Tenants are responsible for ensuring their garden is secure.
- All cats and dogs must be microchipped, and the microchip number must be provided to Ashford Borough Council.
- All pets should have the appropriate vaccinations and be regularly treated for fleas and worms if appropriate.
- It is recommended that you purchase pet insurance for your cat or dog.
- Cat and dog flaps must not be installed without councils prior consent.
- Dead pets must be buried or disposed of in a responsible and safe manner.

Pet application form

The following information will be requested on the pet application form:

- Breed, age, and sex of cat or dog..
- What veterinary practice the cat or dog is registered to.
- Who the primary and secondary carer of the pet will be.
- What type of home you live in.
- You will be asked to provide details on how you will provide care, exercise and training for your pet.
- Nominated person and contact details who will care for the pet in an emergency.
- You will need to provide the microchip number for your pet.
- You will be asked to provide insurance details for your pet if you have a policy.

A copy of the application form can be found on our website www.ashford.gov.uk/pet-policy Alternatively, please get in touch using the contact details at the end of this policy document.

Permission for new tenants or new pets for existing tenants

Please see below to see how many cats or dogs can be homed in each type of property.

Property type*	Property size	Amount of pets
All general needs houses	One bed	One dog or one cat
	Two bed+	Up to two dogs and two cats
All general needs flats in a block	Any	One small** dog or one house cat
Temporary accommodation	Any	One small dog or one cat**
Dahlia independent living properties	Any	One small dog or one house cat

*Small dog would be no bigger than a Highland Terrier

**We cannot give permission for pets in any temporary accommodation that is owned by a third party. We can grant permission for pets in temporary accommodation owned by Ashford Borough Council where the living space is entirely self-contained (i.e. standard self-contained flat, house or maisonette)

Assistance dogs

We will make reasonable adjustments to enable tenants to have an assistance dog on a case-by-case basis.

Keeping an XL Bully dog

If you want to keep your XL Bully dog following the introduction of the new legislation in January 2024, you must apply for a Certificate of Exemption by 31 January 2024 and provide your Neighbourhood Housing Officer with the evidence of this for your house file records.

Useful link: www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-certificate-of-exemption-to-keep-an-xl-bully-dog

Pets you do not need permission for

Ashford Borough Council tenants do not need permission to keep a reasonable number of caged house birds and small caged animals like hamsters, rabbits etc. However, breeding and selling is not permitted and if tenants are found to not be looking after their home well, we may prevent you from having any caged animals or birds. Any food stored outside for your pets must be in a sealed container to reduce the potential infestation of vermin.

Animals we will not give permission for

- Wild animals
- Livestock or farm animals
- Endangered species or any dogs identified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or any subsequent legislation. If a tenant is identified as owning a dangerous dog we will liaise with the tenant and the local authority and if the dog is put on the index of exempted dogs (IED) we may allow you to keep the dog in the property as long as you keep to the terms of the exemption certificate.

Withdrawing permission to keep a pet

We may withdraw permission for you to keep your pet if you are in breach of your tenancy agreement or this pet policy. If permission is withdrawn this will be confirmed in writing to you. You will be required to rehome your pet.

Nuisance behaviour caused by your pet

- Fouling in a communal staircase, walkways, courtyards or any communal area or dwelling including tenants own property. Tenants are responsible for cleaning up any mess immediately.
- Injuring or frightening anyone into thinking they might be injured.
- An animal out of control or a danger to other residents.
- Failing to keep a pet on a lead in all communal areas.
- Making a noise that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to others.
- Allowing an animal to cause damage to an Ashford Borough Council property.
- Failing to comply with the terms of any dog control notice or similar notice issues by the relevant authority.

Keeping a pet without permission being granted

If we have evidence that you are keeping a cat or dog without permission, we may consider taking the following actions:

- Request you apply for permission within 14 working days.
- Instigate relevant tenancy enforcement action if you fail to complete an application and/or your application is refused and you do not rehome your pet.
- Serve a Community Protection Warning Notice.
- Serve a Community Protection Notice.
- Instigate legal proceedings.

Appeal process

If you are not granted permission to have a pet or permission is withdrawn, you can request an appeal in writing to the Neighbourhood Services Manager within 14 days of your application being refused. Decision will be made within 14 days of receipt. If an appeal is not upheld, your pet will need to be rehomed within 14 days of receipt of the decision in writing, unless a different timescale is agreed with the council.

Please write to: Neighbourhood Services Manager, Ashford Borough Council, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL. Or email: housing@ashford.gov.uk marking your email for the attention of the Neighbourhood Services Manager.

Appeal process

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes owners responsible for ensuring their animals welfare needs are met.

These include the need:

- For a suitable environment (place to live)
- For a suitable diet.
- To exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
- To be housed with or apart from other animals (if applicable).
- To be protected from pain, suffering, injury, and disease.
- Minimum age of pet ownership is 16 years.

Anyone who is cruel to an animal or does not provide for its welfare needs may be banned from owning animals, fined up to £20,000 and/or sent to prison.

Dog owners can be prosecuted if their dog attacks a person in their own home or in any public place. This includes any attack on assistance dogs



Contact

Neighbourhood Housing Team

Ashford Borough Council, Tannery Lane,
Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL

www.ashford.gov.uk/housing

housing@ashford.gov.uk

01233 330688