

Housing Allocations Scheme proposals 2024	
Executive Summary	<p>NNDC is responsible for assessing and addressing housing need in the District. The Council's Allocation Schemes sets out the rules, criteria and procedures that determine how we allocate affordable homes to households in North Norfolk.</p> <p>The current Allocations Scheme has broadly been in place for over 14 years and now requires review to ensure that it is fit for purpose and that there is a consistent and fair approach for our Registered Provider (RP) partners to letting homes to meet the greatest housing needs.</p> <p>Following consultation with partner RPs a draft new Allocations Scheme was produced.</p> <p>Customers and other stakeholders were consulted on the draft new policy and their views are included in this report.</p> <p>Implementing any major changes to our allocations policy would require significant IT changes and work for the Housing Options team. An implementation plan will need to be developed to introduce the new policy in the most cost effective and least disruptive way possible.</p>
Options considered	<p>The Allocations Scheme is a statutory policy of the Council which must be relevant and effective, not providing an up-to-date Allocations Scheme in line with current legislation is not an option</p> <p>Options for implementation of any new Allocations Scheme will need to consider the impact on staff, budgets and customers to ensure effective delivery of change</p>
Consultation(s)	<p>RP partners Customers of "Your Choice Your Home" Partner organisations / advice agencies NNDC Councillors Town & Parish Councils Staff across housing / housing related teams</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the proposed allocations scheme summarised in this report and attached as Appendix A • Gives delegated authority to officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Peoples' Services, for the implementation of the revised allocation scheme over the next 18-months within allocated service budgets.
Reasons for recommendations	<p>To ensure the Council has an effective Allocations Scheme in place – a statutory policy of the Council</p>
Background papers	<p>Report to Cabinet 15th April 2024 - Housing Allocations Policy 2024</p>

Wards affected	Districtwide
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Peoples'

	Services
Contact Officer	Nicky Debbage, Housing Strategy & Delivery Manager, nicky.debbage@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Meeting our Housing Need.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	An effective Allocations Scheme will help the council tackle housing need and potentially reduce the cost of temporary accommodation for homeless households the Council has a duty to accommodate
Council Policies & Strategies	NNDC Housing Strategy 2021-2025 Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020- 2024

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes
Has the public interest test been applied	NA
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	NA

1. Purpose of the report

This report summarises the proposed new Allocations Scheme and the results of public consultation on the revised policy, and recommends agreement of the new Allocations Scheme, with implementation to be phased over the next 12-18 months.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1 North Norfolk District Council is the statutory housing authority and responsible for understanding and tackling housing need in the District. To do this the Council holds a common waiting list of applicants for affordable homes in the District. The Council is also responsible for the Allocations Scheme, which sets out the rules, criteria and procedures that determine how we allocate affordable homes to households in North Norfolk. We last reviewed our scheme in 2018, since then the scheme has been updated to reflect changes in the law, and minor changes as allowed by the scheme. To ensure that people have homes that meet their needs, that we give priority to those in greatest need, and make the application process easier; we have undertaken a review of our current Allocations Scheme.
- 2.2 The current Housing Allocation Scheme involves a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system. This is referred to as “Your Choice Your Home”. CBL allows registered, eligible households to ‘bid’ (i.e. register an interest) for available properties, with success based on assessed priority and date. Most homes are then offered to the bidder with the highest priority/oldest date. However,

for homes on Rural Exception Sites the criteria are different, and homes will be offered to those who bid and have the strongest local connection.

- 2.3 The major challenge with our allocations policy is that demand for affordable housing far exceeds available supply (there are c.2,500 on the housing list and around 250 homes available per year). Therefore, a review of the housing allocation scheme seeks to meet the following aims:
- Ensure people in the greatest housing need have the greatest opportunity to access suitable housing that best meets their needs
 - To prevent and relieve homelessness and reduce placement in temporary accommodation
 - Make effective use of available housing stock
 - To meet legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act 1996 Homelessness Act 2002 Localism Act 2011 and Homeless Reduction Act 2017
 - To help contribute to the development of sustainable communities;
 - Make the housing process accessible, transparent, fair and easy to use
 - Provide information about the availability of homes to enable applicants to make realistic choices about their housing options
 - Be more efficient and user friendly for applicants, the council, housing associations and other partner organisations
- 2.4 Whilst the Council is responsible for the current allocations policy, its effectiveness relies on partner RPs working with us. An RP could choose to hold their own waiting list and allocate their homes according to their own allocations policy. Currently all the main RPs choose to work with the Council and use our housing list and allocations policy to let their homes. The only exception to this is the smaller, community led organisations who let homes using their own allocations policies (e.g. Homes for Wells who prioritise key workers). In addition, all participating RPs have the ability to allocate up to 20% of their lets to their own tenants who want/need to move home. It is key that any review of our allocations scheme is carried out in partnership with our RPs. Therefore, the review has been overseen by a Working Group consisting of the main RP partners (Victory / Flagship, Broadland, Orbit, Hastoe).
- 2.5 Initial customer feedback was also sought to develop the Allocation Scheme proposals. 545 people completed a survey open to all customers of Your Choice Your Home - approximately 30% of people on the register. This has given us valuable insights into how customers feel the current allocations process works and helped shape proposals for the new Scheme.
- 2.6 Whilst partners' and customers' views are important in shaping the Allocations Scheme, in reality much of the allocation policy is governed by legislation, which identifies groups that must be given reasonable preference or additional preference. The key legislation is set out in the Housing Act 1996 Part VI as amended by the Homeless Act (2002), the Localism Act 2011, and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Other legislation is also relevant, some of which (e.g. that relating to members of the Armed Forces or those suffering domestic abuse) has changed since we last agreed our Allocations Scheme and needs to be reflected in any new policy.

3. Context for Review of the Allocations Scheme

3.1 The key facts on housing need and supply of affordable housing (based on housing allocations for 2023/24) are:

- The Allocations Scheme covers c. 6,500 affordable homes (rented & shared ownership) across eight RPs, 78% of these homes are Victory Homes
- There were (as at 1/4/24) 2,454 households on our housing list and 258 homes were available in 2023/24.
- 1,125 households approached the Council as homeless / threatened with homelessness in 2023/24 (a 12% increase from the previous year)
- 406 households in 2023/24 were initially assessed as Homeless or threatened with Homelessness (a 7% increase from the previous year), and over the year 189 were placed in Temporary Accommodation
- 478 households on the list are in the most urgent need,
- The list is split relatively evenly between single people/couples and families, although families with children are the largest group on the Housing Register (those applicants in the highest need)
- 48% of the homes available in 2023/24 were 1-bed, there was only one 4-bed home available.

3.2 The key issues identified that the allocations review needs to consider are:

- An overall shortage of affordable housing and the increase in housing demand through both homelessness and those wishing to access more affordable accommodation due to loss of private rented tenancies
- Policy on Choice – whilst the Council is committed to enabling people to play an active role in choosing where they wish to live, the housing pressures faced within North Norfolk will limit the degree of choice that we are able to offer along with the legal responsibility the Council has to ensure that those in greatest housing need are given priority for affordable housing

3.3. A range of changes to allocations have already been used over the last 3-4 years to try to deal with the overwhelming level of need for affordable homes:

- During the pandemic emergency powers were used to ensure those in the most unsuitable accommodation were housed, so all properties were withdrawn from being advertised through Your Choice Your Home and instead allocated directly.
- A phased return to choice-based lettings was then used, with one in every three lets going directly to those in TA or otherwise likely to go into TA.
- A further 6-month pilot was tested to speed up rehousing for homeless households, which involved awarding a Priority Card to all clients accepted as having a main housing duty (i.e. homeless)
- Since September 2023 a pilot blended approach has been used with our main RP partner Victory, with 1 in every 5 lets used by Victory to move existing tenants (their transfer quota), 2 in every 5 lets nominated by NNDC (homeless households) and 2 in every 5 lets through CBL

3.4 The pilot blended approach in place since September 2023 has helped reduce the number of households in TA and the length of time households spend in TA before securing a home. However, this approach is a pilot and cannot, within the rules of the Allocations Scheme, continue indefinitely.

Therefore, the Council must decide whether a new policy should be introduced.

4. Proposed New Allocations Scheme

- 4.1 Following initial partner and customer consultation a proposed new Allocations Scheme was developed, which was the basis for statutory consultation with customers and partners that has taken place over the summer. A more detailed summary is included in Appendix A but below is a very brief overview of the proposals.
- 4.2 **Overall Model** - The proposed Allocations Scheme uses a blended system – meaning some homes are let through CBL, some are matched and nominated by NNDC, and some will be allocated by RPs using their (up to) 20% transfer quota. This approach allows the Council to respond more flexibly to acute housing need.
- 4.3 **New bandings system** - The proposed Allocations Scheme is simplified with a single housing register with five bands A – E, with A being for applicants in the highest needs. The banding criteria seeks to be more responsive to individual needs and allows the Council to be more flexible, whilst continuing to be transparent about the way social housing is allocated in North Norfolk. It also introduces eligibility for people who are under occupying social housing and want to downsize, this is in order to free up family sized accommodation.
- 4.4 **Eligibility to join the housing register** - The proposed Allocations Scheme will require all applicants to re-apply and those assessed as having no housing needs will not be allowed to join the register.
- 4.5 **Local Connection** – the new scheme will remove eligibility for the Housing Register to those who do not have a local connection to North Norfolk. There will be a number of statutory exemptions to this (for example those fleeing domestic or armed forces personnel).
- 4.6 **Financial resources** – the scheme will amend the current savings and income threshold to ensure that only applicants who do not have the resources to resolve their own housing situation are permitted to join the Housing Register.
- 4.7 **Bedroom eligibility** – the Allocations Scheme will follow the Government's Bedroom Standard. This is a relatively ungenerous standard but reflects the shortage of family homes.
- 4.8 **Local Letting Policy** - The proposed Allocations Scheme will move to simpler local connection criteria with two bands: a stronger 5-year connection and a lesser 2-year connection to a parish or adjoining parishes.
- 4.9 In summary the proposed new Allocations Scheme should better reflect local need for affordable homes, ensure homes go to those in the highest need (or strongest local connection in the case of local lets), allow nomination of high priority applicants helping to reduce or avoid the need for placements in TA, be more transparent, and eventually manage customer expectations and reduce the number of households on the list who have little prospect of accessing affordable housing.

5. Consultation outcome

- 5.1 The Allocation Scheme is a statutory document, and formal consultation is required as the proposals represent significant changes to the allocation scheme. Formally there is only a requirement to consult with Registered Providers who have social housing units in the North Norfolk District, but it is good practice to widen consultation to local communities, including those likely to be affected by the proposals. Therefore, we have consulted:
- Registered Providers of Social Housing in North Norfolk, including community led housing organisations (most of whom would not be directly impacted),
 - Local residents likely to be affected by any changes to policy, including those currently on the housing register,
 - Key partners and voluntary organisation's likely to be affected by the policy including internal council directorates, town and parish councils and Norfolk County Council.
- 5.4 Consultation information was also available on the council's, giving any other interested parties the opportunity to have their say. The focus of consultation was the areas highlighted earlier in the report, namely:
- Overall approach – moving from fully choice-based lettings to blended approach.
 - Changes to the way in which people qualify – Local Connection and Housing need
 - The new banding scheme
 - Other categories of change – including financial threshold, bedroom eligibility,
 - Refusals and Suspension from the register
 - Local Lettings
 - What it means for applicants currently on the register.
- 5.5 A full summary of the online consultation responses is provided in Appendix B. Overall, the consultation received 461 online responses. Most responses were from North Norfolk Residents (69%), with the vast majority also being current applicants. The analysis of the responses shows that overall, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each of the proposals. The table below summarises the levels of support for each of the proposed changes

	For	Neutral	Against
Qualification			
Local Connection	80.92%	7.02%	10.96%
Housing Need	50.55%	20.04%	28.18%
Savings	58.01%	13.44%	25.97%
Income	84.09%	5.96%	8.18%
Property Ownership	81.49%	9.26%	7.67%
Behaviour – ASB	86.33%	8.20%	4.10%
Housing Related Debt	46.70%	24.14%	26.21%
Revised Banding System			
Single Register	58.95%	25.94%	7.81%
Band A	77.97%	13.37%	5.49%

Band B	71.33%	17.71%	6.74%
Band C	63.91%	17.71%	6.74%
Band D	61.81%	24.12%	9.30%
Band E	60.85%	20.45%	13.97%
Delivery Model			
Hybrid Approach	58.04%	22.36%	14.32%
Bedroom Eligibility			
Revised Bedroom Standard	60.10%	24.24%	9.09%
Local Lettings Provision			
Simplified Criteria	74.94%	14.94%	8.36%
Bidding and Refusals			
Refusal Quota		8.70%	13.81%
Remove from Register	56.15%	17.18%	22.05%
Demonte on Register	68.72%	12.31%	14.87%
Requirement to bid	59.13%	12.85%	25.15%

5.6 Of the proposals with the lowest levels of support:

Housing Need (28% against) - Much of the feedback around housing need related to single parents with access to children, working households currently housed but struggling with high unaffordable private rents, the perception that it is a waiting list and if you have been on it a long time you should get a house and not be pushed to the back of the queue, existing social housing tenants and local people should be prioritised over others. Other comments related to how it could create an incentive for people to make themselves homeless to gain priority for housing, which is unfair to others in need.

Housing Related Debt (26.21%) – Feedback related to needing context around individual circumstances. If the claimant has repeatedly refused to help repay or has exhausted all options, then their case should be looked at and potentially removed from the housing register. They should not automatically be excluded from joining the register.

Savings (25.97%) - Comments from people who disagreed with the proposal relate to everyone's circumstance being different and not all who have equity will have a liveable income and therefore even those with jobs, income, and capital need to be given advice regarding their options. Other comments relating to savings felt that the limit was too low and should be higher.

Requirement to bid (25.15%) - Feedback mostly related to the lack of suitable properties becoming available in the first place and that it is not realistic to expect people who work or have children at a particular school to bid for properties outside of these areas. Other feedback related to people's ability or confidence to bid independently and proactively, and we should only consider removing if we are confident that support was offered and declined.

Refusals – Removing applicants from the Register (22.05%) - Those who disagreed with the proposal and provided comment felt that there was little clarity over what constituted a 'suitable' offer and voiced concern over the quality of information available relating to the properties which are very

different when viewed in person, which then results in a refusal. Another viewpoint expressed the need to make sure applicants are supported to understand what a suitable offer of accommodation means and by removing people we will not reduce demand but potentially create other demand in other areas, such as homelessness.

- 5.7 Having considered the above feedback we are satisfied that the proposed allocation scheme does offer enough flexibility to consider individual circumstances, and discretion will be applied when exceptional circumstances are identified. Clear communications on the changes to the allocations policy will be essential. This will provide an opportunity to better explain areas of the policy that have raised concerns and to be able to address some of the negative comments received as part of the consultation. Many of these comments may have derived from a lack of understanding of the detail of the policy and areas where the council will have discretion in the policy to deal with exceptional cases.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 It is clear from the consultation responses that there is broad support for the proposed Allocations Scheme and the reasons behind why we are proposing changes (i.e. the overall shortage of affordable homes). However, to implement the new policy fully would require significant resources – both in terms of budget for the IT changes required but also in work for the Housing Options Team.
- 6.2 Implementation of the full new Allocations Scheme will require significant IT changes. This will include a new on-line application form, the ability to restrict bidding (so only those eligible can bid), to shortlist bids as required (e.g. to prioritise homeless households), to assess need and place applicants into the new bands, to identify local connections, etc. The estimated costing for these changes from our IT supplier Locata is £35-50k. However, for some parts of the policy there are choices around the implementation approach, and it may be possible to identify 'work arounds' that do not require a full IT solution.
- 6.3 Staff (both Housing Options but also wider staff such as Customer Services) will need to be retrained on the new policy and on the IT changes. To implement the changes a new online application form will be needed, and all applicants will need to reapply for housing, and their circumstances and housing priority will need to be reassessed. This will mean much work in itself, but will also lead to many customer enquiries, concerns and potentially complaints.
- 6.4 Many of the staff in Housing Options are funded from government or other grant (e.g. Rough Sleepers Initiative or Homeless Prevention Grant) and on fixed term contracts – over half of the teams are affected. At this stage we do not know what funding will be available from these grants 2025/26. So, whilst there is budget available in this financial year (2024/25) to implement much of the change, we are uncertain about future funding and may need to amend plans for implementing the new Allocations policy to align with the resources available.
- 6.4 Further work on options and the cost benefits of different approaches will now be undertaken to help develop an implementation plan. The plan will be

developed in partnership with Locata our IT partner, and with RP partners to Your Choice. The implementation plan will need to reflect the funding available, at this stage we believe the changes can, with careful planning, be delivered within existing budgets.

7. Corporate Priorities

An effective Allocations Scheme which ensures the right homes go the right applicants will help the council deliver its key corporate priority – Meeting our Housing Need.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

The outcome of review of the Council's Allocation Scheme will have an impact on access to homes and implications for the use of TA for homeless households.

As set out above, there are resource implications to changes to the Allocations Scheme which we believe can be met from existing budgets. However, if there is a significant reduction in the grant the council receives for housing in 2025/26, then a separate business case will be made for funding any remaining implementation changes.

Comment from the Section 151 Officer

There is sufficient funding within the 2024/25 budget to cover the cost of making the required changes to the existing Locata system so that we can implement the new housing allocations policy. However, if we're unable to do this work in 2024/25 then as there is no guarantee of funding for 2025/26 this will need to be added as a risk in the operational risk register. Confirmation of whether the budget can be carried forward will be sought

9. Legal Implications

As set out in the report, the Allocations Scheme is a statutory policy, and many aspects of policy are governed by legislation. The proposals in the new Allocations Scheme adhere to the relevant legislation which has been confirmed by Eastlaw.

Locata are our existing IT supplier for YourChoiceYourHome, procured through the local government G-cloud and have a 3-year contract from October 2024. Procurement have advised that the changes associated with the new Allocations Scheme represent an update and can be dealt with as an amendment to the existing contract without the need for formal procurement.

Comment from the Section 151 Officer

The Council needs to have an allocations scheme to provide a fair, lawful and transparent process on allocation.
The report indicates that major changes may involve significant IT changes. Whilst the software provider would need to be involved, so too would the Council's own IT department – with sufficient notice and allowance for resourcing purposes.

10. Risks

By working in partnership with our partner RPs we have ensured that the proposed Allocations Scheme is acceptable to them, and they remain in partnership, using our housing list and Allocations Scheme for letting their homes.

Modelling of the impact of proposed changes has been undertaken, together with an initial equalities impact screening to ensure there are no unforeseen consequences and no negative equalities implications of changes.

There is a reputational risk to the Council if communications on the review are not clear and if those affected by the review are dissatisfied with the process or the outcome. This is particularly key as all existing applicants will need to re-apply to join the housing list and some will no longer qualify.

11. Net Zero Target

No direct implications

12. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

An Equalities Impact screening has been completed on the proposed changes to the allocations scheme to ensure the council meets its legal obligations under the Equality Act. This is attached as Appendix C.

Appendix C shows that the housing register is made up of a range of different groups in need, the initial screening has assessed how the changes are likely to affect applicants with protected characteristics. Overall, the Allocations Scheme has many provisions in place to meet the needs of particular households in the protected groups (disabled people; the elderly people with support needs), and we have provisions to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances and where a negative impact may arise.

Further analysis and a full impact assessment will be brought forward with the final Allocations Scheme.

13. Community Safety issues

No direct implications

14. Conclusion and Recommendations

NNDC is responsible for assessing and addressing housing need in the District. The Council's Allocation Schemes sets out the rules, criteria and

procedures that determine how we allocate affordable homes to households in North Norfolk.

The current Allocations Scheme has broadly been in place for over 14 years and now requires review to ensure that it is fit for purpose and that there is a consistent and fair approach for our Registered Provider (RP) partners to letting homes to meet the greatest housing needs.

Following consultation with partner RPs a draft new Allocations Scheme was produced. Customers and other stakeholders were consulted on the draft new policy and their views are included in this report.

Implementing any major changes to our allocations policy would require significant IT changes and work for the Housing Options team. An implementation plan will need to be developed to introduce the new policy in the most cost effective and least disruptive way possible. This will be done in partnership with Locata our IT supplier and our Registered Provider partners.

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Agree the proposed allocations scheme summarised in this report and attached as Appendix A
- Gives delegated authority to officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Peoples' Services, for the implementation of the revised allocation scheme over the next 18-months within allocated service budgets.

Summary of Proposed Allocations Scheme

1. Overall Model

The proposed Allocations Scheme involves a **blended system** – meaning some homes are let through CBL, some are matched and nominated by NNDC, and some will be allocated by RPs using their (up to) 20% transfer quota.

This proposal is in line with the current pilot approach, i.e.

- 1 in every 5 lets will be used to move existing tenants
- 2 in every 5 lets will be let from nominations by NNDC
- 2 in every 5 will go through CBL

However, the proposed policy is written in a way which means that the Council and RP partners can agree to change these proportions. For example, if acute housing need subsides the model could go back to all (outside of 20% RP transfer quota) homes let using CBL.

Choice based lettings has many positive aspects; it is a more transparent approach to allocating homes where customers can see how many people are bidding and the likelihood of them getting a property. All available properties are advertised and customers are able to choose whether to bid, rather than being allocated a home that they may not have chosen. However, CBL may also raise unrealistic expectations – i.e. there is no real choice for the vast majority of applicants. It may also mean those in the highest need do not bid on a home that would meet their needs, but ‘hold out’ for a better option (that probably does not exist). For the RPs, CBL can also mean delays in lettings whilst dealing with applicants who have placed bids on multiple properties or who refuse a property in the belief they will be offered an alternative, more attractive, property.

There are equally pros and cons to a system where applicants and homes are matched by NNDC. This approach can speed up the letting process and ensure those in the greatest need are offered a home. Matching, and removing an element of choice, may also mean making better use of existing homes. However, customer choice is removed, and it is a less transparent system. There is also the risk that applicants will be allocated a home they do not want, and this could lead to poor tenancy sustainment.

A blended approach is felt to be the best balance of both models

2. New bandings system

The proposed Allocations Scheme is simplified with a single housing register with **five bands A – E**, with A being for applicants in the highest needs.

Currently we have three separate registers within the housing list – the Housing Register (those in the highest needs – Priority Card, Band 1 or Band 2, and including high need existing social housing tenants), Housing Options (those in lower need), Transfer (those in lower need who are existing social housing tenants). This is confusing and the proposed Allocation Scheme seeks to move to one register or list, with five bands (A to E). The banding aims to prioritise housing need, where those assessed as being in the highest need are in Band A. Those in Band E have lower needs but would be eligible for specific housing, for example housing with care or Local lettings homes on exception sites.

The banding criteria seeks to be more responsive to individual needs and allows the Council to be more flexible, whilst continuing to be transparent about the way social housing is allocated in North Norfolk. It also introduces eligibility for people who are under occupying social housing and want to downsize, this is in order to free up family sized accommodation. The new banding is summarised below:

- **Band A** – includes households who are owed a main housing duty (i.e. homeless), those who cannot be discharged from hospital as they have no suitable housing, those with a severe medical condition and detrimental effects from current accommodation, members of the armed forces with an urgent housing need, those fleeing domestic abuse and, in a refuge, or other temporary accommodation.
- **Band B** – includes applicants threatened with homelessness and owed a Homeless Prevention Duty, those who are overcrowded according to the Government’s bedroom standard, those with an urgent medical condition that is seriously adversely affected by their current accommodation, those needing to move to give/receive essential care/support, those under-occupying who want to downsize.
- **Band C** – includes homeless/threatened with homelessness households who do not have priority need, those in lower-level overcrowding situation, households with (or expecting) children sharing with others, households with a non-urgent medical need to move.
- **Band D** – includes homeless/threatened with homelessness households who have worsened their housing circumstances and/or do not establish a local connection to North Norfolk, households without children who are sharing with others.
- **Band E** – as set out above households with limited need but who are seeking specific housing such as extra care or local lettings homes.

3. Eligibility to join the housing register

<p>The proposed Allocations Scheme will require all applicants to re-apply and those assessed as having no housing needs will not be allowed to join the register.</p>

The new scheme seeks to ensure that allocations are made to applicants with an identified housing need. All households currently on the Housing Options or Transfer register (those in lower need) have little prospect of being re-housed. All applicants will be invited to complete a new application in case there has been any change in circumstances which might improve their banding. Those assessed as having no housing needs will not be allowed to join the register.

4. Local Connection

The proposed Allocations Scheme will require all applicants to **have a local connection to North Norfolk** to join the register.

The new scheme will remove eligibility for the Housing Register to those who do not have a local connection to North Norfolk. A local connection will be through continuous residency in North Norfolk for the last 3 years or lived in the district for at least 3 out of the last 5 years, employment in North Norfolk for a minimum of 16 hours per week, or Immediate family members (parent, adult sibling or adult child) who has lived in the area for a minimum of five years continuously. There will be a number of statutory exemptions to this (for example those fleeing domestic or armed forces personnel, however, this change will potentially reduce the number of people eligible to join the list.

5. Financial resources

Those **with income or savings above the threshold** will not be able to join the housing register

The scheme will amend the current savings and income threshold to ensure that only applicants who do not have the resources to resolve their own housing situation are permitted to join the Housing Register. The income threshold is proposed as where a household's gross taxable income is more than £60,000 per annum. The permitted savings threshold will be in line with the capital sums for Universal Credit purposes, which is currently £16,000. Additionally, applicants that own or part own a freehold or leasehold property will be unable to join the housing register, although there will be the ability to allow discretion where exceptional circumstances apply.

6. Bedroom eligibility

The Allocations Scheme will follow the **Government's Bedroom Standard** to determine how many bedrooms a household is entitled to

The Allocations Scheme will follow the Government's Bedroom Standard, meaning a bedroom for each of the following: a couple, a single person aged 21 or over, two children under 10 regardless of sex, two adolescents aged 10-20 of the same sex. This is a relatively ungenerous standard but reflects the shortage of family homes.

7. Local Letting Policy

The proposed Allocations Scheme will move to **simpler local connection criteria** with two bands: a stronger 5-year connection and a lesser 2-year connection to a parish or adjoining parishes

Whilst the majority of home will be allocated according to need, some homes have different local letting arrangements. Some of these are bespoke and relate to the owning organisation of the homes, but most are homes on rural exception schemes

which are let to those with the strongest local connection. The current local allocations agreement involves seven bands of local connection, with A being the strongest and G the weakest. The current local lettings allocations agreement can be confusing and often results in contention. As the current agreement looks through all local connection cases first (need is considered to prioritise between applicants within the same local connection band) it may result in homes being let to households with a weak local connection and limited housing need. The new scheme proposes a much simpler system, with just two bands of local connection. Homes would be let by local connection band first, then highest needs banding, then longest time spent on the housing register.

- **Band 1** local connection would include: anyone who is living in the parish or adjoining parishes and has lived there for at least five years, or has been employed there for at least five years, or lived there for five out of the last ten years or has immediate family member who has lived there for at least five years.
- **Band 2** local connection would be very similar, but the time required would be two years. In the unlikely situation there was no applicants with a Band 1 or 2 local connection the home will be allocated in line with the normal Allocations Scheme, i.e. to the applicant in the highest need.