

# Shropshire Rural Housing Association



**SHROPSHIRE  
RURAL HOUSING**  
ASSOCIATION

## **ALLOCATION POLICY**



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**1. OVERALL AIMS**

Shropshire Rural Housing Association seeks to provide affordable rented housing to meet identified local housing needs in rural Shropshire

The Association's development programme is aimed to meet local housing need by concentrating its operations within existing rural communities to prevent migration of individuals away from stable communities and those areas where they would prefer to live.

In order to meet the affordable housing needs of local people in rural communities across Shropshire, the Association reserves the right to apply local connection criteria additional to those set out in the Shropshire Council Allocation Policy and Scheme. Specifically, the Association may in the first instance require local connection to a Parish or cluster of Parishes, including where a planning condition relating to the property/ies does not apply.

The Allocation policy of the Association aims to ensure that the allocation of individual tenancies is clearly demonstrated to operate fairly, constructively and efficiently to ensure properties are allocated to people in most housing needs and have strong local connection to the community.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Association's policies on Diversity and Equal Opportunities. The operation of this policy should be capable of demonstrating that discrimination of any groups or individuals has not taken place.

**2. ALLOCATION POLICY**

In June 2011 Shropshire Rural Housing became a member of the Shropshire Homepoint choice based lettings system. All SRHA properties are let using the system with the exception of the 4 houses at Home Farm, Preston upon the Weald Moors which, due to the fact they are in the Telford Council administrative area, are advertised locally using this Policy and the local lettings plan approved by Telford and Wrekin Council in 2021.

As members of the Shropshire Homepoint scheme, we agreed to abide by the Shropshire Council Allocation Policy and Scheme as adopted by Shropshire Council. The Shropshire Allocation Policy and Scheme was reviewed during 2022 with an amended scheme being introduced from March 2023.

Applications for housing and allocations of homes will be made under the Shropshire Council Allocation Policy and Scheme. Copies of the scheme are available on Shropshire Council's website, Shropshire Homepoint or by request at our main office.

Where this policy gives individual landlord's discretion over allocation criteria the statements in this policy will apply.

The Association will continue to honour all Section 106 local connection planning agreements and local lettings plans in force on our housing schemes when accepting nominations from the Shropshire Homepoint system.

In the absences of a Section 106 planning agreement or local letting plan, preference will be given as follows:

- To applicants with a local connection to the parish in which the housing scheme is situated.
- If there are no applicants for the property from applicants from the parish then preference will be given to applicants from adjoining parishes with a population of below 3000.
- In the event that there are no suitable applicants from the categories above preference will be given to applicants with a local connection to the county including settlements with populations over 3000.

### **3. LOCAL CONNECTION CRITERIA**

To ensure that occupiers are genuinely local, it is necessary for them to demonstrate local connections to the Town or Parish area where the settlement in question lies.

**If a Section 106 planning agreement is in place local connection will be as defined in the agreement (copies are available from SRHA).**

Where a Section 106 planning agreement does not apply applicants will be required to meet two of the following criteria for at least one of the members of the household:

- Their parents will permanently resident in the local area at the time of the applicant's birth;
- They were a permanent resident of the local area for at least five years as a child, and attended a local school'
- They are currently permanently resident in the local area and have been resident for a period of three years;
- The have previously lived or worked in the local area for 15 continuous years as an adult;
- They are currently employed or usually carry out self-employed work within 5km of the settlement or parish for at least one year's duration & at least 20hours per week:
- They have a confirmed written offer of permanent full-time work in or close to the settlement (within 5km) or the parish;
- Their parents currently live in the local area, or another close family member\* who provides or requires a substantial degree of support is currently resident in the local area and have been resident for a period of three years;
- If over 55, they have a close family member\* currently living in the local area

- Can demonstrate with written evidence active community involvement sustained for at least the previous two years i.e. (voluntary work with the Church or school helping with events, outings, fundraising, providing support delivering shopping to residents)

\*Close family member is defined as – parents, grandparents, son, daughter, grandchildren or sibling.

In exceptional circumstances & where support is required family member may include extended family, non-family association, each case determined on its own merits, refer to S4.4, P.2 in the Shropshire Council Allocation Policy March 2023.

#### **4. LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN**

SRHA may from time to time agree a Local Letting Plan with Shropshire Council to achieve particular objectives in a neighbourhood or geographical area. Where a Local Letting Plan is in place priority will be given to applicants who directly meet the criteria of the plan. Advertisements on Shropshire Homepoint for properties included in a Local Letting Plan will specify the required criteria.

#### **5. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND BANDING**

All applications will be via Shropshire Homepoint and SRHA have adopted the banding scheme under the adopted Shropshire Homepoint Affordable Housing Allocation Policy and Scheme.

#### **6. APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

All applications must be made to Shropshire Homepoint. SRHA will not operate its own housing waiting list. We will offer advice and assistance to applicants to Shropshire Homepoint and act as advocates for bidding purposes when appointed by the applicant.

#### **7. ALLOCATION PROCEDURE (See appendices for Local lettings plan procedure and Section 106 procedure)**

The allocation of properties will follow procedures set out in the Shropshire Council Policy and Scheme March 2023.

Sensitive Lets – SRHA may from time to time identify specific letting criteria for a property to achieve wider community objectives. Where a sensitive let is identified priority may be given to applicants that meet the required criteria. Advertisements will specify the required criteria.

Direct Lets – we reserve the right to undertake direct lets as set out in the Shropshire Allocation Policy and Scheme to meet the needs of our existing customers.

Adapted Property – priority will be given to people requiring adaptations provided and advertised on Homepoint.

When we receive completed bid lists from Shropshire Homepoint we will rank each applicant based on their priority on the bid list and the qualification as set out in sections two to four of this policy.

Local connection is defined in Sections two and three will be paramount consideration. If more than one applicant qualifies for the allocation we will offer the property to the applicant with the highest banding. If two qualifying applicants have the same banding then priority will be decided on date of application.

### **Joint Tenancies**

Unless specifically requested otherwise, all tenancies where appropriate, will be joint tenancies.

### **False or Misleading Information**

Applicants may be asked to provide documentary evidence in support of the details stated in the Homepoint application.

The deliberate giving of false information by any applicant may lead to their registration on Homepoint being cancelled or suspended, the withdrawal of an offer of accommodation, or the loss of their tenancy.

### **Confidentiality**

All information given to us by applicants will remain private and confidential, and will not be revealed to any third party without the applicant's written authority.

### **Equality**

***(This Section to be updated in line with any future policies adopted by the Association covering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)***

Shropshire Rural Housing Association is committed to a policy, which promotes and ensures equal opportunities for all sections of the community in which it operates throughout the whole sphere of its activities.

The Association is opposed to discrimination of any grounds be they race, nationality, religion, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other ground which cannot be fully justified. The Association will also work to counter and eliminate harassment and victimisation of its residents or staff, which may arise on any of the above grounds.

In particular the Association will: -

- Continually monitor the membership of its governing body to ensure that its composition fully reflects and represents the community it serves
- Actively seek to identify minority groups, particularly BME groups that may exist within the community but were previously unnoticed by the Association.
- Promote racial equality throughout that community especially among its residents, members and staff.
- Ensure that access to its buildings, housing, services and to the employment opportunities it creates is fully open to the whole of that community and shall not be denied to anyone on any of the grounds mentioned at paragraph two above.

- In support of the above, ensure that full and adequate training in the promotion and maintenance of racial equality is provided to its members, volunteers and staff.
- Where it is seen to be necessary or desirable, develop new housing and improve existing housing to meet the needs of the requirements of any identified BME sections of the community.
- Ensure that its contractors and consultants are made fully aware of this policy and that they also promote such a policy within their own organisations.

### Size of House Allocated

The Association generally allocates properties according to the size suitable for the household using the criteria listed in the table below. Households will usually be able to choose the floor level on which they want to live (depending on property type) unless there is an assessed need for a particular floor level. For example, if priority for ground floor accommodation is recommended on medical grounds.

Only the Associations schemes that include family houses.

Household	Properties usually considered suitable
Single person of working age <sup>1</sup>	1 bedroom flat
Single person of working age with LAA/LAS need	1 bedroom ground floor flat or bungalow
Single person over working age	1 or 2 bedroom flat or bungalow
Couple both of working age <sup>1</sup>	1 bedroom flat
Couple with one or both of working age with a LAA /LAS need	1 or 2 bedroom ground floor flat or bungalow
Couple with one or both over working age	1 or 2 bedroom flat or bungalow
Pregnant woman with no other children	1 or 2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with one child	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with two children aged under 10	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with two children aged under 16 of the same gender	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with two children of different gender, where one or both children are aged 10 or over	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with three children	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with four children	3 or 4 <sup>2</sup> bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Family with five or more children	4 or 5 <sup>2</sup> bedroom house
Household needing 2 bedrooms where all are adults	2 bedroom flat or maisonette

<sup>1</sup> Working age includes anyone who is under State Pension Credit age at the time

<sup>2</sup> Depending on age and gender of children

The Association will not allocate a house where the occupants will be overcrowded or have more than one surplus bedroom, according to the above guidelines.

SRHA reserves the right under this policy to under-occupy homes by up to one bedroom in the interests of provided local families with local housing.

If an allocation takes place that leads to under occupation, it is expected that for working age applicants the size of property for which they are entitled is in line with the DWP bedroom standard, however if applicants can demonstrate that they are able to pay rent with or without recourse to Housing Benefit, they may be considered for a property with an additional bedroom, this being subject to availability.

### **SRHA Additional Local Connection (L.C.) & Under-Occupancy Priority Order:**

#### **Bungalows**

2 Bed Cat 1 & 2 (under-occupy if no L.C.)

1 Bed Cat 1 & 2 request nomination

2 Bed Cat 3 Able to re-refresh bid list & allocate from original bids received but go out to Shropshire.

#### **Houses**

2 Bed Would not under-occupy due to best use of stock

3 Bed Cat 1 & 2 close bid list if not meet criteria & under-occupy

2 Bed Cat 1 & 2 request nominations for 2 Bed if no L.C. then

3 Bed Cat 3 Shropshire allocate from original bid list

4 Bed Same process as above.

**For the schemes with a S106 planning agreement in place we will, fully fill 2 bed houses, for 2 bungalows & 3/4 bed houses, we will give priority to Cat 1, requesting nominations to under-occupying before going out to Cat 2 adjacent parishes & Shropshire.**

#### **Housing Debt**

Applicants with housing debt such as tenant arrears, council tax arrears and mortgage arrears are eligible for allocation of a home as long as the total debt is not greater than £250.

If housing debt is below £250 there must be a repayment plan in place and a history of making a minimum of six consecutive payments of the agreed amount.

#### **Convictions and unsuitable behaviour**

SRHA will consider previous convictions and behaviour of applicants, and undertake a risk assessment before an offer is made. SRHA will take account of any recent change in circumstances and demonstration of good behaviour is undertaking its risk assessment.

SRHA reserves the right to refuse an allocation where the risk assessment indicates that the sustainability of the community will be threatened through making an allocation to the applicant, however the principles set out in our Equality and Diversity Policy will apply.

#### **Mutual Exchanges**

**A 'mutual exchange' takes place where two tenants agree to exchange houses with each other.**

The Association permits mutual exchanges between its own tenants and tenants of other Housing Associations and Local Authorities.

Such exchanges will generally be subjected to the following conditions:

- Overcrowding or under occupation or more than one bedroom will not occur as a result of the exchange.
- Both tenants must have clean rent records and must not otherwise be in breach of their tenancy agreement. Where arrears are as a direct result of the Housing Benefit spare bedroom subsidy and the applicant is moving to a smaller property then we will accept a mutual transfer request where arrears are not greater than £250 subject to an agreement being made with the landlord for payment of the arrears.

The Association must be satisfied that a genuine exchange is taking place.

Where there is a Section 106 Agreement in force, any exchange must comply with the terms of the Agreement.

Both parties must make request for Mutual Exchange in writing to the Association or through registrations on the Homepoint mutual exchange system and be approved by the Association.

**Management Transfers**

'A Management Transfer' takes place when a tenant moves from one Association property to another property owned by the Association that is more suited to their needs.

Transfer applications will be accepted in the following circumstances:

- Where a household is under occupying a property
- Where a household is overcrowded and requires a larger house
- Where a member of the household has a medical condition, which requires a transfer to a house in a different location or to a house with adaptations to meet their needs.
- Where overcrowding results from a near relative joining the house. In this instance, near relative means either the parents or the children of the Association's tenants.
- Where, in the opinion of the Association, there are exceptional social circumstances, which require a transfer of the household from a particular property.
- Where there is a Section 106 Agreement in force, any transfer must comply with the terms of that Agreement.

Transfer will normally only be considered for tenants who have held their current tenancy for at least 12 months.



## **Appeals Procedure**

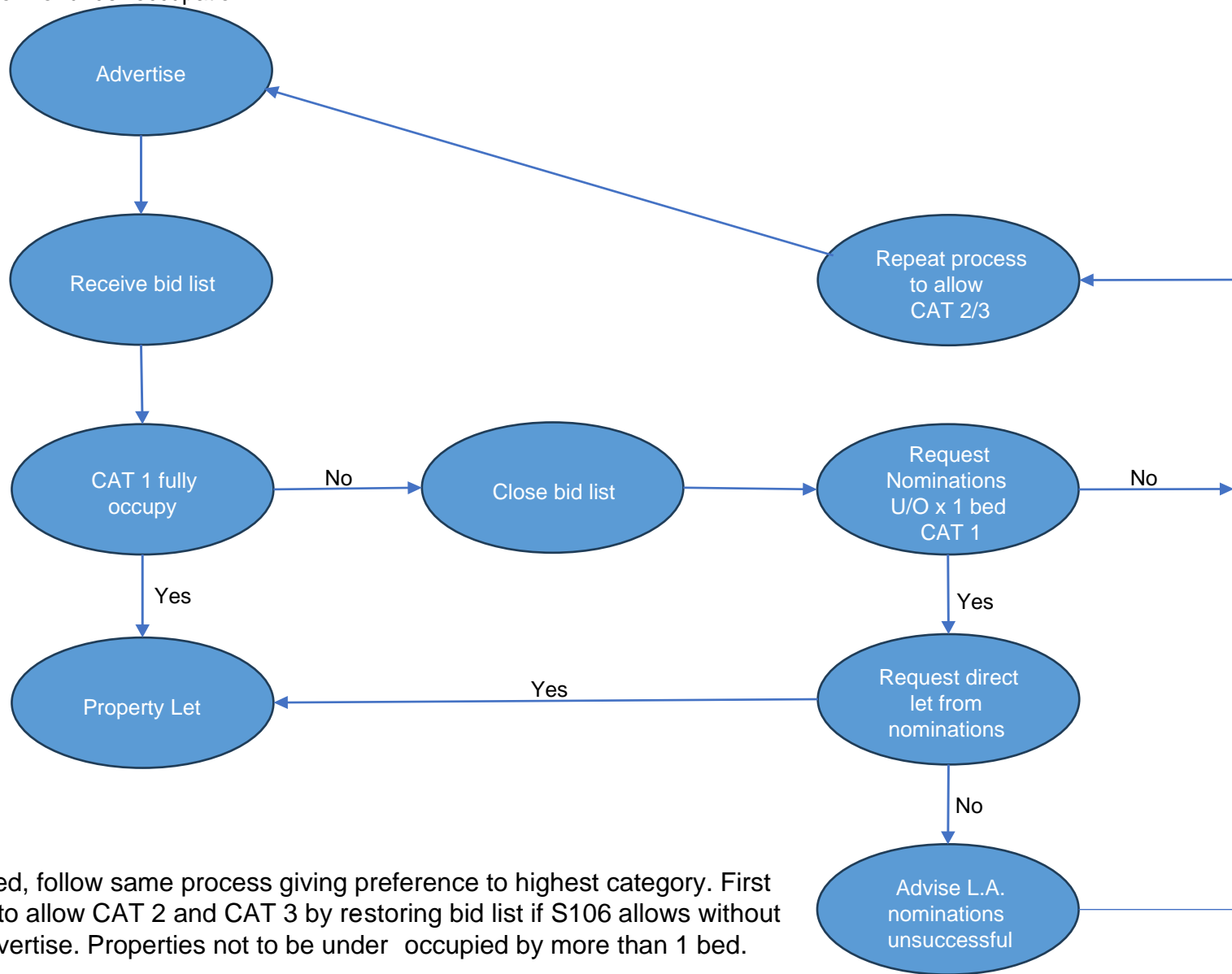
Should an applicant for a tenancy with the Association, who has placed a bid through Shropshire Homepoint fail to be allocated they may appeal against the decision using the Associations complaints procedure. If the complaint is related to their Homepoint registration, banding or acceptance of bids the complaint should be referred to Shropshire Homepoint under their published complaints procedure.

## **REVIEW OF POLICY**

The Association will review its policy on Housing Allocations from time to time to meet the needs of new legislation.

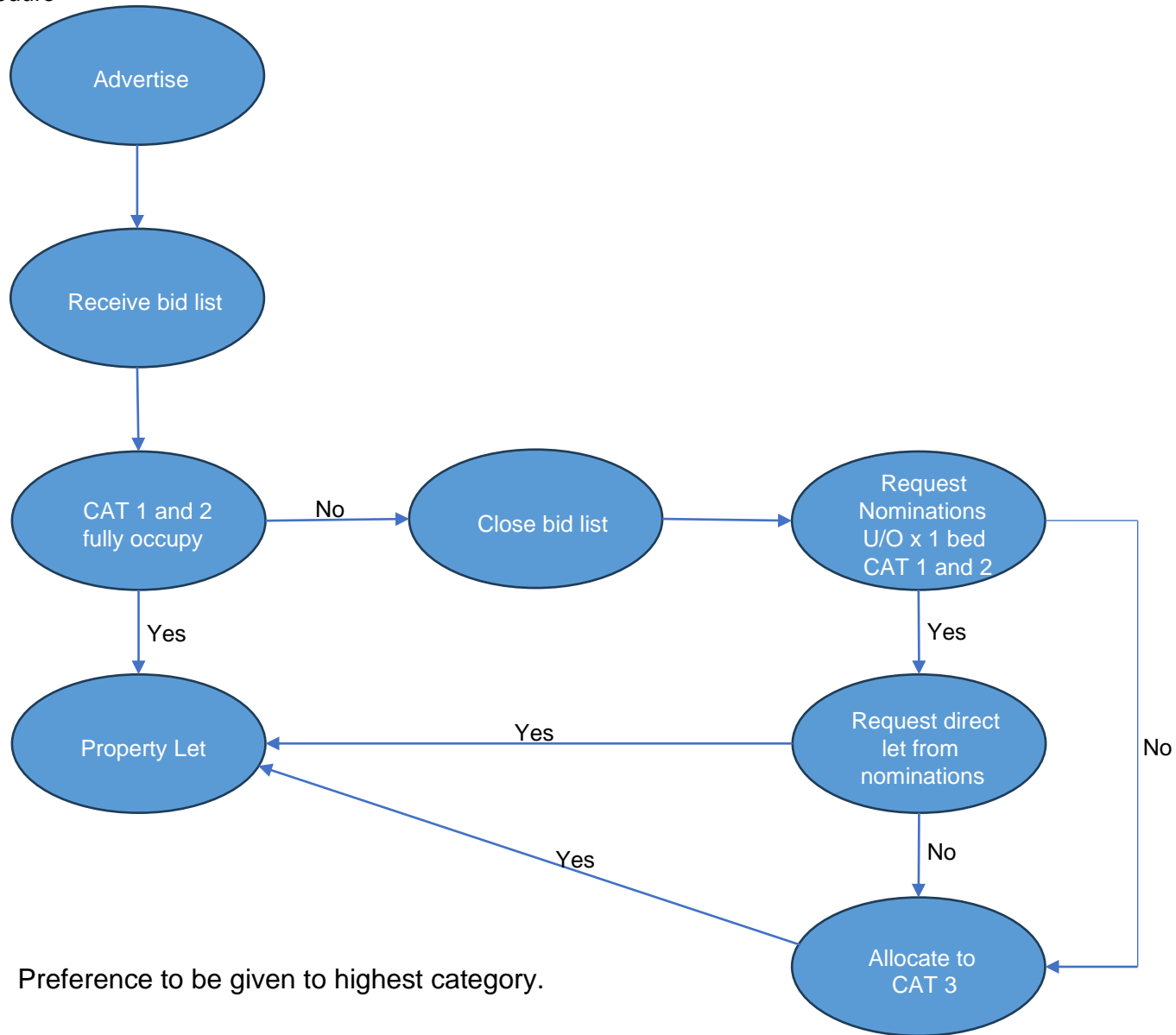
**Next Review: No later than July 2027.**

S106 allocation procedure to allow for under-occupation



When re-advertised, follow same process giving preference to highest category. First re-advertisement to allow CAT 2 and CAT 3 by restoring bid list if S106 allows without the need to re-advertise. Properties not to be under occupied by more than 1 bed.

SRHA local lettings plan procedure



Preference to be given to highest category.