



Local Connection in Social Housing

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Key Legal Principles

- Councils are required to have an Allocations Policy that sets out how social housing is allocated.
- We are required to give ‘reasonable preference’ to people in certain categories, including:
 - People who are homeless;
 - People the local authority has placed in temporary accommodation;
 - People who are overcrowded or in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
 - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability);
 - People needing to move to a particular place to give or receive support (usually involving a family member).
- We are required to make sure through the application process that people are eligible for social housing and are honest about their circumstances.

The Practical Impact of the Legal Principles

- If we are required to have an Allocations Policy by which social housing is let, we have to hold some sort of housing register;
- The means to access permanent social housing is through the Housing Register;
- Applicants have to provide evidence of:
 - Who they are and who is in their household;
 - Where they live and their right to be there;
 - Their personal circumstances, including assets and income; and
 - Any factors they think we should take into account (e.g. medical information).
- Inevitably, it takes time to register someone and check their details.

A Brief Outline of the Process

- People apply online or via the Council by booked phone appointment or face to face on a computer.
- Their application is prioritised and placed in a 'band' from A to E
- Vacant social rented housing across 7 districts is advertised weekly online;
- A new batch of properties is uploaded each week at midnight on Wednesday;
- For people who do not have access to the internet, we issue a free newsletter;
- Around 30 landlords participate in the scheme
- People registered can 'bid' for up to 2 properties each week online, by text or by phone or via the Council placing bids on applicants behalf.
- At the end of the weekly cycle, the top 3 applicants – usually those with the highest band and longest date are invited to view the property by the landlord

Rural Exception Sites

- Village developments outside the normal village boundary are known as 'Rural Exception Sites'.
- There are 2 sites in Pebmarsh – Hamsters Close and Pearson Close.
- These sites are known as 'exception' sites because they are an exception to normal planning policy and an exception in the way they are allocated.
- The section 106 agreement sets out in what way the lettings policy will differ from the Council's Allocations Policy.

This 'screenshot' shows how the screen appears if you apply and log in to view properties

- You can either view all of the properties or just those that you are eligible for (as shown here).
- The website shows you:
 - all of the properties of the correct size for your household; and
 - where you would be in a shortlist at that particular point in the weekly bidding cycle.
- You can bid for 2 properties in each weekly cycle.

Some important features:

- You can view the properties each week without logging in.
- There is no obligation to bid and even if you do and are successful, you can refuse the offer of a property without any penalty.

The screenshot displays the Gateway to HomeChoice website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Mobile site', 'Accessibility', 'Help', 'My account', 'Messages', and 'Logout'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'Home', 'Our partners', 'Information', 'Property search', 'Housing Options', and 'My to do list (1)'. The main content area is titled 'Our help videos' and 'Property search results'. A search bar allows users to filter properties by location and distance (set to 5 miles). Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'List view' and 'Map', and a dropdown menu for sorting results (set to 'Lowest cost first'). Three property listings are shown, each with a 'No Photo Available' placeholder image. The first listing is a '3 bed house in Halstead Town' with a total cost of £115.27 Weekly (52 weeks), closing date of 06/11/2019, and added on 31/10/2019. It is a Social Rented property with property ref 101680, managed by Clarion. The user is eligible with a queue position of 22. The second listing is a '3 bed house in Great Notley Garden Village' with a total cost of £121.51 Weekly (52 weeks), closing date of 06/11/2019, and added on 31/10/2019. It is a Social Rented property with property ref 101722, managed by Clarion. The user is eligible with a queue position of 35. The third listing is a '3 bed house in Braintree Town' with a total cost of £134.47 Weekly (48 weeks), closing date of 06/11/2019, and added on 31/10/2019. It is a Social Rented property with property ref 101692, managed by Flagship. On the right side, there is a 'Refine results' sidebar with various filters: 'Suitable properties' (checked), 'Properties I have bid on' (unchecked), 'Local Authorities' (Braintree District Council checked), and 'Affordable Rent' (No checked, Yes unchecked).

Recently let properties

Greater Haven CBL properties let between 02/10/2019 and 01/11/2019

Offers are not always made to the top person on the shortlist, to cater for exceptional situations (for example, local lettings policy).

[List View](#)
[Map](#)

30 properties found

[View these results in table format](#)


2 bed flat in Pebmarsh

Property Ref: 100440

Local Authority: Braintree District Council

Address: Pearson Close Pebmarsh Essex
CO9 2FE

Bedrooms: 2

Property Type: Flat

Band: C

Effective Date: 11/04/2019

Primary Preference: Village Connection

No of Bids: 140

Affordable Rent/Social Rent: Social rent



2 bed bungalow in Castle Hedingham

Property Ref: 101148

Local Authority: Braintree District Council

Address: New Park Castle Hedingham CO9
3HH

Bedrooms: 2

Refine results

Property ref

Local Authorities

- Babergh District Council (15)
- Braintree District Council (30)
- Colchester Borough Council (28)
- East Suffolk Council (18)
- Ipswich Borough Council (26)
- Maldon District Council (7)
- Mid Suffolk District Council (10)
- Suffolk Coastal District Council (0)
- Waveney District Council (0)

Address

Bedrooms

The website shows the outcome of previous advertising once properties are occupied. By default, it shows the lettings for the last 4 weeks.

The page here includes the letting of the property in Pearson Close that was recently advertised.

When the housing association send in details of a property to be advertised that is on a rural exception site, staff at the Council make sure that the property details indicate all of the neighbouring villages that are considered if no-one from the village itself comes forward.

The 'screenshot' here shows what staff see behind the scenes. In this case, staff have selected Twinstead as one of the neighbouring villages.

Open all / Close all

Jump to: ****Please Choose**** ▾

References	Top	Bottom
Landlord:*	Suffolk Housing Society	
Local Authority:*	Braintree District Council	
Landlord property ref:	183_000_0005	
Void ID:	78840	
Void start date:	01/09/2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)	
Property ID:	100440	
Priority Information:	Priority will be given to applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• with a local connection to this area<ul style="list-style-type: none">• with the highest band• with the oldest date	
Local Lettings Policy Applies:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Address details	Top	Bottom
Flat Reference:	5	
Street Number:		
Address 1:*	Pearson Close	
Address 2:	Pebrmarsh	
Address 3:	Essex	
Address 4:		
Post code:*	CO9 2FE	
Area:*	Pebrmarsh	
Cascade Areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inimley St MaryTuddenhamTuddenham St MartinTunstallTwinsteadUbbeston	

Eligibility details	Top	Bottom
Minimum client age:	0	
Sheltered:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Homeless applicants only:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Transfer applicants only:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
S106 Local Connection Required:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Minimum bedroom requirement:*	1	
Maximum bedroom requirement:*	2	

Cycle details	Top	Bottom
Cycles:	Aug 8	
Direct match:		

General details	Top	Bottom
State:		
Allocation scheme:*		
Accommodation type:*		
Property type:*	Flat	
Supported Housing:		
Intermediate Housing:		
Floor in Building:*		
Contact:*	Maia F	
Number of adverts:		
Calculate advert summary:		
Advert summary:	2	
Tenancy Type:		
Tenancy length:		
Other Details:		

Facilities	Top	Bottom
Garden:*	Comm	
Heating type:*	Air source	
Lift Details:		
Parking Facilities:*	Off Street	
Bathroom Facilities:*	Bathroom with WC	
Warden:		
Personal Assistance Alarm:		
Entryphone:		
Double Glazing:		
Dining Room:		
Stair Lift:		
Steps up to Property:		

As people place their 'bids' for properties using the website, the computer system places their bids in order of their Band; applicants in the same Band are ordered by the date of their application.

If it is advertised that priority will be given to applicants with a local connection, then the system places everyone with a connection above everyone else.

This screenshot shows the screen the staff see in the 'back office'. In this screenshot the shortlist first sorts everyone who has a local connection (Column 1) followed by Band (Column 2) and then Date (Column 3)

Property ID: 78415
Landlord: English Rural Housing
Property Ref:
Address: 8 , Castle Shot, Great Bardfield, CM7 4BJ

Accommodation Type: 1 Bed
Advert Type: Social Rented property
Status: Offer accepted

Filters
 Adapted Category Cox
 Total occupants being rehoused
 Eligible for special needs bungalow
 Show withdrawn bids

Description: Property with a Local Connection

1 2 3 4 5 6 Next >>>

	Name	Local Authority	Armed forces priority	Application Type	No Of Additional Occupants	Local Connection to Area	Connection to Landlord	Adapted Category	Band	Owner Occupier	Local Connection	Effective Date	Registration Date	State	
1		Colchester Borough Council	No	Direct applicant	0	Yes	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	Yes	09/05/2009	09/05/2009	Skipped: Doesn't meet criteria	
2		Braintree District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	Yes	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	Yes	31/08/2014	07/10/2013	Skipped: Doesn't meet criteria	
3		Braintree District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	Yes	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	Yes	28/01/2015	28/01/2015	Skipped: Unable to contact	
4		Braintree District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	Yes	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	Yes	01/05/2015	31/01/2014	Skipped: Doesn't meet criteria	8
5		Braintree District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	Yes	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	Yes	01/07/2015	01/07/2015	Offer accepted	
6		Braintree District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	Yes	N/A	N/A	E	No	Yes	04/06/2014	04/06/2014	Property offered elsewhere	
7		Colchester Borough Council	No	Transfer	0	No	N/A	N/A	B	N/A	Yes	10/09/2014	10/12/2013	Property offered elsewhere	9
8		Maldon District Council	No	Transfer	0	No	N/A	N/A	B	N/A	Yes	24/11/2014	14/11/2012	Property offered elsewhere	7
9		Colchester Borough Council	No	Transfer	0	No	N/A	N/A	B	N/A	Yes	13/05/2015	01/05/2015	Property offered elsewhere	8
10		Babergh District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	No	N/A	N/A	B	N/A	Yes	18/05/2015	22/01/2015	Property offered elsewhere	
11		Braintree District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	No	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	Yes	18/02/2011	18/02/2011	Property offered elsewhere	7
12		Braintree District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	No	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	Yes	08/01/2013	08/01/2013	Property offered elsewhere	7
13		Braintree District Council	No	Direct applicant	0	No	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	Yes	19/02/2013	19/02/2013	Property offered elsewhere	7



Key Messages

- All mainstream social housing is let through the Council's Housing Register;
- Registration is straightforward but there is a time delay before your application can be made 'active';
- You will only be offered a property if you are registered and 'bid' for a property;
- Because of the local connection requirements, if you want to stay/return to the village you stand a good chance of securing a home when one becomes available.