

# **Frequently Asked Questions: Bolton Council Allocations and Lettings Policy Update 2024**

## **What is an Allocations & Lettings Policy?**

The Allocation & Lettings Policy is a technical document for the purpose of setting out the basis on which the housing register is managed and how social rented properties available to let within the district are offered to customers.

The policy covers all aspects of registration, priority banding, advertisement and shortlisting, and covers all legal aspects covering the processes.

The policy is however not a replacement for the individual lettings policies that all the independent social landlords also have. As such, this policy is to be viewed as an overarching framework whereby certain responsibilities sit with the Council and others with the partner landlords.

## **What is Bolton Council's role in the Allocations & Lettings Policy?**

Bolton Council manage the Homes for Bolton Choice Based Lettings system on behalf of the Bolton Community Homes social housing provider partnership. All the properties managed through this process are owned by independent organisations, notably:

- Clarion Housing Group
- Great Places Housing Group
- Irwell Valley Housing Association
- Places for People Group
- Mosscares St Vincent's Housing Group
- Onward Homes
- Bolton at Home

Whilst Bolton Council does not have any housing stock itself, the Council is still required by law to have in place a policy that covers the wide range of aspects associated with the allocation of social housing.

## **Why are we consulting on the Allocations & Lettings Policy?**

The policy periodically requires updating to meet the requirements of new legislation and changes to practice.

Bolton Council has recently reviewed the Allocations and Lettings Policy and now wishes to consult with the public and other stakeholders so we can account for a wider range of views about the policy document.

## **What changes are being consulted on?**

**\*Note:** Much of the policy document remains unchanged.

The changes proposed include only minor policy changes with the majority of policy document changes reflecting practical procedure and process alignment. As such there are no major changes to policy.

The requirement to reflect homelessness changes in the priority banding system is a requirement of Housing legislation and therefore the policy is being updated to reflect legislative requirements.

The changes are:

- i. To reflect the duties to prevent and relieve homelessness contained within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in the allocations scheme, including an alignment of suitable offers across part VI Allocations and Part VII Homelessness. (Refer to section 4.3)
- ii. To update the Policy document to reflect Government guidance and best practice. Updated references to legislative requirements throughout, including Appendix 3, notably: Data Protection 2.4; Equality Act and Homelessness Prevention Act.
- iii. To provide more clarity for assessing officers and applicants for how the rules contained in the policy will be applied. For example, the rule for how applications from current or former tenants, with a housing related debt, will be applied and clarification on households and property size requirements:
  - Arrears (Refer to section 3.3.2)
  - Property size requirements (Refer to section 4.7)
- iv. To provide more clarity for officers assessing applications on the housing need criteria applicable for awarding the top 2 bands for urgent and high housing need priority. (Refer to Appendix 1).
- v. To provide a revised definition of 'local connection' to ensure any connection has been secured 'by choice', thereby better enabling Bolton Council to manage applications from those placed into the area by neighbouring authorities. (Refer to sections 4.3 and 4.4).

## **Does the policy or consultation affect the availability of properties available?**

The policy and consultation do not ultimately affect the overall availability of properties and level of demand, rather it is a means of managing the challenges of extremely high demand and relatively low availability in a

fair and transparent way. As such, this is not consultation as to what and how many properties need to be built, or other issues affecting access to housing such as affordability.

## **How do I engage in the consultation?**

We now invite stakeholder, including Bolton residents, partners, businesses, and any other interested party, to make comments as part of the required consultation exercise.

You can submit your comments by email to: [consultation@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@bolton.gov.uk) or in writing using our freepost address (you do not need a stamp):

**Freepost RTTT-YTEL-YSXS,  
Consultation & Research Team,  
2nd Floor, Town Hall,  
Victoria Square,  
Bolton,  
BL1 1RU**

If you wish to speak to one of the team directly, please telephone **01204 334875**, leaving your name, contact details, and the title of the consultation you are interested in discussing: *'Allocations and Lettings Policy Consultation'*.