



Housing Allocations Scheme



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1. Introduction and Overview

1.1 Introduction

All local housing authorities are legally required to operate a housing allocations scheme that determines how social housing is allocated within their area. For this purpose, North Northamptonshire Council (the “Council”) has adopted a choice-based lettings scheme known as Keyways. The scheme sets out the rules, criteria and processes used to allocate social housing, including homes let at affordable rent, to eligible and qualifying applicants with an identified housing need in North Northamptonshire.

As is the case across much of the country, demand for social housing in North Northamptonshire significantly exceeds the supply available. Against this backdrop, the scheme enables eligible and qualifying applicants to exercise a degree of choice when bidding for homes, while ensuring reasonable preference is given to those with the greatest housing need and a local connection to North Northamptonshire.

Keyways acts as a single point of access to good-quality, affordable housing and is designed to make the application process as straightforward as possible. On a regular basis, the Council and housing associations operating in North Northamptonshire (referred to as “Keyways landlords”) advertise their available properties online at www.keyways.org.uk. All homes are allocated in accordance with the rules of this scheme.

The scheme is open to both new applicants and existing social housing tenants who need to transfer to another tenancy, whether with their current landlord or a different social landlord. Properties allocated through the scheme are mainly for social and affordable rent and are owned and managed by the Council and Keyways landlords. From time to time, a limited number of private rented and low-cost home ownership properties may also be advertised.

Properties are advertised each week from 00:01 on Thursday until 23:59 on Tuesday. Applicants may place bids on up to five properties that meet their needs. Bidding registers an expression of interest and places the applicant on the shortlist for the relevant property. Applicants who do not bid will not be considered for allocation. Applicants are strongly advised to only bid on properties they believe are suitable, as refusing an offer may result in a penalty in accordance with Section 7.9.

Some applicants will be subject to autobidding, as outlined in Section 7.4. In these cases, the system will automatically place bids on suitable properties after midnight on Tuesday, once all other bids have been submitted. Autobidding is generally applied to applicants with urgent housing needs, including those who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, or have a limited time left in their current accommodation. This approach helps to ensure that such applicants do not miss opportunities for rehousing and supports quicker access to suitable homes.

When a property is shortlisted, it is normally offered to the applicant in the highest band with the longest waiting time, known as the band effective date (as defined in Section 5.6). Only successful applicants will be contacted, although all applicants can view the outcome of their bids through their online Keyways account.

A range of tenancy types may be offered following a successful nomination, including introductory, starter, secure, assured shorthold or fixed-term tenancies. Tenancy terms are subject to the Renters’ Rights Act 2025 commencement and sector rollout. While most applicants can choose which properties and tenancy types they wish to bid for, the tenancy offered may be influenced by factors such as the applicant’s current tenure, existing landlord, property type, location and the landlord of the prospective property. Once an applicant accepts a property allocated through the scheme, their application will be marked as “housed”. Any future request for rehousing will require a new application and a fresh assessment.

In developing the scheme, the Council has consulted with a wide range of stakeholders, including landlords, current applicants, social housing tenants in North Northamptonshire, partner agencies and other interested parties.

The scheme will be kept under review to ensure it continues to meet local housing needs, responds to changes in the housing market and remains legally compliant. The Council reserves the right to make minor amendments under delegated authority by the Director of Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services, or an officer of equivalent or higher seniority within the Corporate Leadership Network, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing, where such changes support the Council's strategic housing objectives.

The Council will publish anonymised data on housing demand and allocations through the Keyways website. No personal or identifying information will be disclosed at any time.

Alongside this scheme, the Council provides a housing options service focused on preventing and relieving homelessness. The service also offers advice on alternative housing options, such as mutual exchange, private rented accommodation and low-cost home ownership. Further information is available at www.northnorthants.gov.uk.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

- Fulfil the Council's statutory duties by providing high-quality, affordable housing to those most in need, while promoting sustainable tenancies and thriving communities
- Provide people seeking housing with clear, transparent, and accessible information about the availability of social housing in North Northamptonshire, enabling them to make realistic, informed, and affordable housing choices
- Work with Keyways landlords to ensure the most effective use of housing stock across North Northamptonshire, prioritising the allocation of larger homes, specialist accommodation, and adapted properties to households with the greatest need
- Support Keyways landlords to manage their properties efficiently by minimising void periods and helping tenants sustain their tenancies over the long term
- Prevent homelessness wherever possible, meet the Council's statutory homelessness responsibilities, and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation
- Promote equality of opportunity in access to safe, secure, and affordable housing, supporting both local residents in housing need and those without a local connection to North Northamptonshire, including armed forces personnel, care leavers, people fleeing domestic abuse, and individuals seeking employment opportunities

1.3 Legislative Framework

The scheme operates within a statutory framework that applies directly to the Council and requires housing associations to "cooperate to such an extent as is reasonable in the circumstances" when offering accommodation to applicants given priority under the authority's allocation scheme. The principal legislation governing the allocation of social housing is Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended. All legislative references within the scheme relate to this Act.

The legislation requires the Council to make all housing allocations and nominations in accordance with a published allocation scheme. This scheme must set out the priorities applied to housing applicants and the procedures followed when allocating accommodation. Given the high demand for social housing and the limited supply available, the Council must determine the relative priority to be awarded to applicants in a transparent and lawful manner.

The law places a duty on local housing authorities to give reasonable preference for housing to applicants who fall within specified categories set out in the Act. While applicants who qualify for reasonable preference must have an advantage over those who do not, this does not entitle them to automatic or absolute priority. All applicants must still meet the eligibility and qualifying criteria defined within the scheme.

The statutory reasonable preference categories, as set out in Section 166A(3) of the Housing Act 1996, include:

- People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Act
- People owed a housing duty by a local housing authority under Sections 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) (or Sections 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985), or who are occupying accommodation secured under Section 192(3)
- People living in insanitary, overcrowded, or otherwise unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds related to a disability
- People who need to move to a specific locality within the authority's area where failure to do so would result in hardship to themselves or others

The Council may award additional preference to applicants who already qualify for reasonable preference and who have urgent or exceptional housing needs. Separate provision is made for granting additional preference to members of the armed forces with particular needs, as detailed in Section 5.1 of the scheme.

The Council may also reflect local priorities within the scheme, provided these do not outweigh or undermine the statutory reasonable preference categories. Overall, the scheme must operate in a way that ensures applicants within the statutory categories are given reasonable preference over those who do not fall within them.

In addition to the primary legislation, the scheme fully reflects the relevant statutory codes of guidance and secondary legislation and has been developed to align with other applicable legal requirements. The Council has also taken account of relevant strategies and its corporate plan when designing the scheme.

A summary of the scheme is available free of charge upon request. It may also be downloaded at no cost from the Council's or Keyways' websites. Paper copies can be provided on request for a reasonable charge, which will be confirmed at the time of request.

1.4 Scope of the Scheme

For the purposes of this scheme, an allocation is defined as the selection of an individual to become a secure or introductory tenant of Council-owned accommodation, or the nomination of an individual to become a starter or assured tenant of housing association accommodation.

The scheme does not apply to the following types of lettings or tenancy arrangements:

- Succession to an existing tenancy
- Assignment of a tenancy through a mutual exchange
- Assignment of a tenancy to a person who would be entitled to succeed to the tenancy
- Assignment of a tenancy carried out in accordance with a relevant court order
- The conversion of an introductory tenancy to a secure tenancy
- Changes to tenancy arrangements, including transitions from sole to joint tenancies and vice versa
- Temporary decant arrangements to enable repair or improvement works
- Lettings made by housing associations outside the scope of the service level agreement
- Properties leased to partner organisations, such as support or care providers

1.5 Statement on Choice

The Council operates a choice-based lettings system. To support applicant choice, all available properties within North Northamptonshire are advertised through the Keyways website.

Applicants may place bids on properties that are assessed as suitable for their household's needs. In certain circumstances, the Council may restrict an applicant's ability to bid, submit bids on their behalf, or make a direct offer of accommodation.

Although the Council seeks to maximise choice wherever possible, demand for social housing in North Northamptonshire significantly exceeds the supply available. In addition, the Council has statutory duties to prioritise certain applicants with housing needs. The level of choice available to each applicant is therefore influenced by their priority under the scheme, the types of accommodation they are eligible for, and the availability of suitable properties.

The Council will provide support to applicants with identified needs to help them access and use the choice-based lettings system. Where an applicant is shortlisted for more than one property, the Council reserves the right to decide which property will be offered.

1.6 Equality and Diversity

The Council and Keyways landlords are committed to promoting equality of opportunity across all housing services. We aim to deliver high-quality services that ensure applicants are not treated less favourably on the basis of any protected characteristic. No applicant will be disadvantaged by the application of any rule, condition, or requirement that has a discriminatory effect and cannot be justified by law.

Housing allocations will be made only to individuals who are eligible under the scheme. The scheme is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010, and an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

1.7 Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 establish the statutory framework governing the Council's responsibilities as a data controller when collecting and processing applicants' personal data. This legislation also defines applicants' rights in relation to their personal information and provides them with control over how their data is used in different circumstances.

The Council will ensure compliance with the GDPR, the Housing Act 1996, and the Council's Privacy and Data Protection Policy through appropriate governance and management arrangements. Applicants' personal data will be processed lawfully, and information will only be shared where there is a valid legal basis for doing so.

When processing personal data, the Council will adhere to the following data protection principles:

- Personal data will be processed lawfully, fairly, and in a transparent manner
- Data will be collected for specified, explicit, and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a way that is incompatible with those purposes
- Data will be adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary
- Data will be accurate and kept up to date
- Data will not be retained for longer than is necessary
- Data will be processed securely using appropriate technical and organisational measures
- The Council will be able to demonstrate accountability with the first principle

Information provided by applicants, together with data obtained from third parties during the application process, will be used to assess and administer applications for housing. Applicants' information may also be used for purposes permitted by law, including child protection, public protection, and the prevention or detection of fraud or other criminal activity.

Applicants have the right to access the personal data held about them by the Council, including both electronic and paper records. Personal data refers to any information relating to an identifiable individual. Requests to access personal data should be made to the Council's Information Governance Team.

1.8 Fraudulent Activity

Applicants are required to provide full and accurate information about their circumstances and to supply any supporting evidence reasonably requested. Under Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996, it is a criminal offence for an applicant, or for anyone providing information on their behalf, to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement or to knowingly withhold information that is relevant to an application.

It is also an offence for third parties to provide false information, whether or not this is done at the request or instigation of the applicant. These requirements apply throughout all stages of the application process.

Where false information is suspected or an allegation is made that relevant information has been withheld, the application will be suspended from consideration for nominations while the matter is investigated and until a decision is reached. The Council reserves the right to take appropriate legal action, including prosecution under relevant legislation, such as fraud statutes, where there is sufficient evidence.

If an investigation confirms that false information was not knowingly provided, and that relevant information was not knowingly withheld, the application will be reinstated with its original registration date, ensuring the applicant is not disadvantaged.

Where the Council determines that an applicant, either directly or through a person acting on their behalf, has knowingly provided false information or withheld relevant information, the application may be disqualified. In addition, Ground 5 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985, as amended by the Housing Act 1996 under Section 146, allows a landlord to seek possession of a property that was obtained as a result of false or misleading statements made by the tenant or by someone acting at the tenant's instigation. In such cases, the Council will take active steps to recover possession of the property.

1.9 Declaration of Interests

Councillors, board members, and employees of the Council or Keyways landlords, as well as their relatives, are eligible to apply for housing under this scheme. However, applicants must declare any such position or relationship with the Council or landlord at the time of application.

Failure to disclose this information, if identified at a later stage, may have an adverse impact on the application or any subsequent tenancy. Applicants who declare an interest will not be given preferential treatment, nor will they be treated unfavourably as a result of the declaration.

2. Registration and Assessment

2.1 How to Apply

Applicants may apply to join the scheme by completing the housing application form online at www.keyways.org.uk. Where assistance is needed, applicants can contact the Council to arrange a telephone appointment.

Once an application has been submitted, applicants may be required to provide supporting evidence. An application will only be assessed once a fully completed form, together with all requested evidence, has been received.

Applications will be assessed to determine:

- Eligibility (see Section 3)
- Qualification (see Section 4)
- Housing need (see Section 5)
- Property eligibility (see Section 6)

Applicants who do not meet the eligibility, qualification, or housing need criteria will not be accepted onto the scheme.

2.2 Household Members

Applicants must include on their application all individuals who normally live with them, or who are expected to live with them, as members of their household. Every person who will occupy any future accommodation must be declared for assessment purposes. Only one application may be submitted per applicant and household member at any one time.

Where applicants wish to include household members who are not currently resident in the UK, the application may still be accepted and registered. However, no allocation will be made to the household as a whole until all members have been reunited in the UK.

The following are recognised as eligible household members:

- A partner or spouse (who must apply as a joint applicant where eligible)
- Dependent children
- Adult sons and daughters
- Other adults who are dependent on the applicant or joint applicant

Individuals other than those listed above will only be considered as household members in exceptional circumstances, such as where they provide, or receive, substantial care. Supporting evidence will be required. The Council will determine whether an individual can be included as part of a household on a case-by-case basis.

Household Member	Criteria
Dependents	A dependent child is defined as a child aged 0–15 years, or aged 16–18 years who is in full-time, approved non-advanced education or training. The Council would normally expect applicants to be in receipt of Child Benefit for any children included as dependants.

	<p>Where there is shared parental responsibility, the Council will consider whether a child can be treated as a member of the applicant's household by assessing whether there is a sufficient level of permanence or regularity for the child to be regarded as normally resident. In doing so, the Council may also take into account the demand for, and availability of, accommodation, as well as any potential under-occupation that could arise where a child spends part of the week with each parent.</p> <p>In making this assessment, the Council will consider the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which parent has primary parental responsibility • The child's main or principal home • The address at which the child is registered with a GP, school, or nursery • The frequency and duration of the child's stays at the applicant's address • The availability of other suitable accommodation • Any court order relating to the child's residence <p>Where there is no court order in place, the Council may request the name, address, and contact details of the other person with shared parental responsibility in order to assess the child's dependency on the applicant.</p> <p>If a child does not have suitable accommodation with either parent, both parents may include the child on their application temporarily. Once suitable accommodation has been provided for the child, the other parent's application will be reviewed and reassessed accordingly. For the avoidance of doubt, where parental responsibility is shared, only one family home will be allocated to accommodate the child.</p>
<p>Non-Dependents</p>	<p>Non-dependents are defined as children of the applicant and/or joint applicant who do not meet the definition of dependents. This will generally include individuals aged 18 or over, or those aged 16–17 who are not in full-time approved non-advanced education or training.</p> <p>Where a household includes non-dependents who are capable of living independently, the Council will assess the housing needs of the household as a whole. The Council may decide not to include non-dependents on an application where their housing needs cannot reasonably be met within the available housing stock. In such cases, non-dependent household members, including adult sons, daughters, or extended family members, may be required to submit a separate housing application.</p> <p>Children who continue to live at home while serving in the Armed Forces or undertaking university studies may be included on their parent's application, as their parental address will normally be regarded as their main residence.</p> <p>In circumstances where a non-dependent is unable to live independently, for example due to a disability or severe learning difficulties, family accommodation may be considered where this supports the well-being of the household.</p>

<p>Children in Care</p>	<p>Children who are subject to compulsory or voluntary care arrangements may be included on an application, provided there is written confirmation from Social Services that the children are expected to live permanently with the applicant. The Council will also take into account any relevant court orders, including Special Guardianship Orders.</p> <p>Applicants who are fostering children may include foster children on their application where there is evidence of permanence, or where an adoption application is underway. In such cases, written confirmation from Social Services detailing the fostering arrangement or proposed adoption will be required to support the Council's assessment.</p>
<p>Carers</p>	<p>Applicants, or members of their household, who require a full-time live-in carer may include that carer on their application, where the need is evidenced by Social Services or a relevant primary healthcare professional. Similarly, individuals who provide substantial and long-term care to another person, where living together is necessary to deliver that care, may also be included as part of the household.</p> <p>Where care needs cannot be met through visiting care arrangements, this must be confirmed by Social Services. The care requirement must be significant in nature, such as the need for assistance with essential daily living activities (for example dressing, feeding, bathing, or toileting), or an assessed inability to live independently, as certified by an appropriate medical professional.</p>
<p>Split and Non-Traditional Households</p>	<p>The Council will consider applications from households where the main and joint applicants do not currently live at the same address, as well as from non-traditional households, such as friends seeking to share accommodation.</p> <p>In determining whether to accept applications from non-traditional households, the Council will take into account factors including the nature of the relationship between the applicants and the demand for, and availability of, the type and size of accommodation required.</p> <p>Where such applications are accepted, all applicants must meet the eligibility and qualification criteria set out in the scheme.</p> <p>The priority awarded to the application will be determined by the housing circumstances of the household member assessed as having the highest level of need.</p> <p>No priority will be awarded where the identified housing need could reasonably be resolved by one household member moving into accommodation already occupied by another member of the household.</p>

2.3 Household Medical Needs

Applicants, joint applicants, or members of their household who have a permanent physical disability, mobility difficulty, medical condition, or mental health condition that is adversely affected by their current accommodation must submit relevant medical evidence. The Council may contact the applicant to request

further information about the condition in order to determine qualification, priority banding, and suitable property types.

In some cases, the Council may obtain independent medical advice to assess whether the current accommodation has a negative impact on the health or mobility of any household member and to establish the extent of that impact. This advice will also inform decisions on suitable accommodation and any required adaptations.

Where specific adaptations are identified as necessary, the application will be updated accordingly. Households requiring particular adaptations will only be considered for properties that meet those needs from the outset.

The Council recognises that individual circumstances can vary and that the standard priority banding criteria cannot account for every situation. In exceptional cases, where medical needs fall outside the usual criteria, decisions on banding will be made by a Senior Officer.

2.4 Household Pets

Applicants must declare any pets that will be rehoused with them as part of their application and are responsible for keeping this information up to date, including notifying the Council of any changes such as the addition or removal of pets. As part of the assessment, the Council will decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether the applicant may bid on properties where the landlord does not normally permit pets.

2.5 Assessment and Verification

To assess and verify applications, the Council may make additional enquiries with current and former landlords and other relevant agencies. A home visit or office interview may also be arranged, and the Council will contact the applicant to schedule an appointment.

Verification will involve reviewing the applicant's full circumstances, including but not limited to, eligibility, qualification, housing need, property suitability, and any assessed community contribution. Checks will be carried out both at the point of application and again at the point of nomination, prior to any formal offer.

Where supporting documents are provided in a language other than English, applicants must supply the original document alongside a certified translation, at their own expense. Translations must be certified by the translator. The Council may arrange and fund a translation where fraudulent activity is suspected.

Before any formal offer of tenancy is made, landlords will undertake their own tenancy assessment, including an affordability check, to confirm the applicant's circumstances. Applicants who do not meet verification or affordability requirements will not be offered the nominated property, and their application may be reviewed and reassessed as appropriate.

2.6 Change of Circumstances

Applicants must notify the Council of any changes in the circumstances of any person included in their application, as such changes may affect eligibility, qualification, priority banding, or the types of properties they may be considered for. Changes to be reported include, but are not limited to:

- Changes to eligibility status
- Changes in assets or savings, including home ownership or any beneficial interest in a property
- The accrual of new housing related debt
- New criminal convictions

- A change of address
- Change of contact details
- Household members leaving the household or new members joining
- Changes in the health or wellbeing of any household member

Where the Council later identifies a change in circumstances that has not been disclosed, this may result in the application being closed, an offer of accommodation being withdrawn, or possession action being taken to recover a property allocated under the scheme.

Applicants remain responsible at all times for informing the Council of any changes to their circumstances that may impact their application. The Council may reassess applications at any stage.

In addition, all applicants are required to complete an annual online review. This ensures that the housing register accurately reflects demand within North Northamptonshire, confirms that applicants wish to remain on the scheme, and verifies that their application details are correct and up to date.

2.7 Communication

Once all necessary checks have been completed and the application has been processed, the Council will notify the applicant of the outcome. This will include:

- Whether the applicant is not eligible or does not qualify under the scheme, including the reasons for the decision and details of their right to request a review
- Whether the applicant has been accepted onto the scheme, and whether they will be placed on autobid or can begin placing bids for properties through their online account
- Their unique housing reference number and login details
- The priority band assigned to their application
- The date the application was placed into the priority band (the effective date)

2.8 Cancellation

If an applicant does not complete their application, fails to provide requested information, or does not complete their annual review within 28 days, their application will be cancelled or closed. In such cases, the applicant will need to submit a new application if they wish to be considered in the future.

The Council may also close an application where the applicant:

- Becomes ineligible for an allocation
- Requests that their application be closed
- Has been rehoused by a landlord
- Moves address without notifying the Council
- Provides false, incomplete, or misleading information
- Refuses an offer of suitable accommodation
- Fails to qualify under the scheme
- Does not place bids on suitable properties within a six-month period (in some cases, the priority band may be reviewed instead)

This list is not exhaustive, and the Council may cancel or close an application for other reasons where it is considered reasonable to do so based on the individual circumstances.

2.9 Service Standards

Upon receipt of an application, the Council will aim to meet the following service standards within 30 working days:

- Notify the applicant of the outcome of their application or request any additional information required
- Issue a decision once a fully completed application, including all relevant supporting evidence, has been received
- Confirm any updates or amendments to the application following notification of a change in circumstances
- Communicate the outcome of the assessment following completion of the annual review

The Council reserves the right to make minor amendments to the scheme under the delegated authority of the Director of Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services, or an officer of equivalent or higher seniority within the Corporate Leadership Network, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing. Any such amendments will be made where they are demonstrated to support the Council in achieving its strategic housing objectives.

3. Eligibility Criteria

Under Section 160ZA of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to assess whether an applicant is eligible for an allocation of accommodation. This applies in particular to individuals who have lived abroad or who do not have indefinite permission to remain in the UK. Only applicants who meet the eligibility requirements may be accepted onto the scheme.

3.1 Persons Subject to Immigration Control

A person who is subject to immigration control will be eligible for an allocation of accommodation only if they fall within a category of persons prescribed as eligible by regulations made by the Secretary of State.

3.2 Persons Not Subject to Immigration Control

A person who is not subject to immigration control will be eligible for an allocation of accommodation unless:

- Their sole right of residence is one that has been prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State as not conferring eligibility, or
- They are not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area or are not exempt from the Habitual Residence Test under Regulation 6(2) of the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006.

4. Qualifying Criteria

The Council will only allocate accommodation to applicants it considers to be qualifying persons in accordance with Section 160ZA of the Housing Act 1996. To be treated as a qualifying person, an applicant must meet all of the requirements set out below.

4.1 Homeowners

Applicants, including all household members, must declare whether they own a home or hold any legal or beneficial interest in land or property, either within the UK or overseas. For the purposes of the scheme, a home is defined as a freehold or leasehold property and includes shared ownership properties, lodges, caravans on holiday or static sites, and boats with a permanent mooring.

Homeowners, including joint homeowners, will not normally qualify under the scheme unless they have an urgent housing need as defined by priority Band A or Band B and do not have sufficient equity, capital, or assets (including land) to resolve their housing situation. Where an applicant is seeking to move on medical grounds, they will be expected to explore whether their current home can be reasonably adapted before qualifying under these provisions.

Applicants who have a beneficial interest in a property or hold home rights will be treated as homeowners and will not qualify under the scheme. Homeowners who have sold or transferred ownership of a property in the UK or abroad within the last five years, and who received or would have received equity of £16,000 or more, will be excluded from the scheme for a period of five years from the date of sale or transfer.

Household income and savings levels, including any deliberate reduction or deprivation of savings, may be taken into account where an applicant has an urgent housing need but could reasonably resolve their circumstances using their income or savings. This includes cases where a property is subject to a compulsory purchase order. Passported benefits and non-contributory disability benefits will not be included in income assessments.

Any lump-sum compensation payment received by a member of the armed forces for an injury or disability sustained during active service will be disregarded as savings for the purposes of the scheme.

4.2 Local Connection

Applicants who are unable to demonstrate a local connection to North Northamptonshire will not qualify under the scheme. A local connection will be considered established where any permanent member of the household meets one or more of the criteria set out below, unless otherwise stated.

Local Connection	Criteria
Residence	<p>Applicants must be resident in North Northamptonshire both at the time of application and at the point of nomination. In addition, their five-year address history must show at least two years' residence within North Northamptonshire. Residency may be verified using tenancy references, electoral register records, information held by any local authority, or third-party data sources such as Experian. Verification will be carried out at both the application and nomination stages.</p> <p>This requirement also applies to individuals who are currently living outside North Northamptonshire in institutions, hospitals, or custodial settings,</p>

	<p>provided they were resident in North Northamptonshire for at least two of the five years immediately prior to entering the institution, hospital, or custody.</p> <p>Applicants who have been placed into accommodation outside North Northamptonshire by another local authority as a discharge of a homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 will not qualify under the scheme until all homelessness duties have ended (for example, two years where duty has been discharged into the private rented sector) and they have subsequently established a further two years of residence in North Northamptonshire. In these circumstances, applicants will be required to demonstrate a total of four years' residency before meeting this criterion.</p>
Employment	<p>The main or joint applicant must be in regular employment within North Northamptonshire at both the point of application and the point of nomination. For the purposes of this requirement, regular employment is defined as working 16 hours per week or more under either a permanent contract (having successfully completed any probationary period) or with a demonstrable work history of at least six months, where there is no indication that the employment is likely to end.</p> <p>Self-employed applicants, or those whose role occasionally requires them to work outside North Northamptonshire, must demonstrate that their employment has been primarily based within North Northamptonshire for a minimum of six months prior to application and at the point of nomination.</p> <p>Applicants who are on maternity leave or sickness absence will still meet this criterion, provided they remain employed and there is no reason to believe that their employment will cease.</p>
Immediate Family	<p>Where an applicant relies on a family connection to North Northamptonshire, the relevant family member (parent, sibling, or child only) must have lived in the area continuously for at least five years immediately prior to the application (and still be resident). Residency may be verified using tenancy references, electoral register records, or information held within any local authority database. Evidence of the family relationship may be confirmed through birth certificates or records held by a local authority database.</p>
Armed Forces	<p>Certain members of the armed forces community are exempt from any residency or local connection requirements, by virtue of regulations made under Section 160ZA(8) of the Housing Act 1996 which prevents local authorities from applying a local connection test to disqualify such applicants.</p> <p>These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who are currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces or who were serving in the Regular Forces at any time preceding their application • Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease, to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their Service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving or former members of the Regular or Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service • Divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence
Right to Move	Current social housing tenants in England who are employed in North Northamptonshire, or who have been offered permanent employment within the area, and who need to relocate to avoid hardship. Appropriate supporting evidence will be required.
Current Tenants	Current social housing tenants in North Northamptonshire who occupy a property managed by a Keyways landlord, where the application is supported by that landlord.
Homelessness Duty	<p>Applicants who are owed a homelessness duty by the Council, as defined within the reasonable preference categories set out in Section 166A(3)(a) and (b) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), including those owed a duty under:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main housing duty under Section 193(2) • The relief duty under Section 189B • The prevention duty under Section 195(2) • The power to secure accommodation for applicants who are not in priority need and are not intentionally homeless under Section 192(3) • The duty owed to applicants who are in priority need but are intentionally homeless under Section 190(2)
Care Leavers	<p>Applicants who are classed as an eligible child, a relevant child, or a former relevant child, as defined by the Children Act 1989, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An eligible child, as defined by paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 • A relevant child, as defined by Section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989 • A former relevant child, meaning a person under the age of 25 who meets the definition set out in Section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989
Domestic Abuse	Applicants who are, or have previously been, victims of domestic abuse perpetrated by another person and who need to move as a result of that abuse, including from accommodation that was initially occupied on a temporary basis. For the purposes of this scheme, domestic abuse has the meaning set out in Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
Legal Agreement Site	<p>Applicants who can demonstrate a local connection to a Section 106 or village exception site, as defined within the relevant legal agreements, but who do not meet any other local connection criteria. This requirement must be satisfied both at the point of application and at the point of nomination.</p> <p>Applicants accepted under this criterion will only be eligible to bid for properties located within the specific village site to which their local connection applies.</p>

Special Circumstances	<p>In exceptional cases, and subject to approval by a Senior Officer, the Council may accept applications from individuals who are unable to demonstrate a local connection as set out above. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who need to move in order to provide or receive essential care or support within North Northamptonshire • Applicants who were resident in North Northamptonshire for a period of two years or more before moving to supported accommodation outside the area to prevent homelessness • Applicants who are unable to live in the area to which they have a local connection and who need to move elsewhere for reasons of rehabilitation or personal safety, including those managed under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) or through the National Crime Agency Relocation Team (NCA)
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4.3 Unacceptable Conduct

Applicants, including members of their household, will not qualify under the scheme where they have previously engaged in behaviour that resulted in the loss of a tenancy, or which could reasonably have led to such action being taken by a landlord. Circumstances that may result in disqualification under the scheme include, but are not limited to, those set out below.

Non-Qualifying Reason	Criteria
Housing Related Debt	<p>Applicants, including members of their household, will not qualify under the scheme where they have outstanding housing-related debt arising from a residential tenancy within the last five years that exceeds the equivalent of two months' rent liability. Housing-related debt includes, but is not limited to, current or former rent arrears (excluding support charges), rechargeable arrears, and court costs associated with either social or private tenancies.</p> <p>The two-month rent liability threshold will be calculated using the rent liability at the applicant's current or most recent address. Where cumulative housing-related debt accrued within a five-year period exceeds this threshold, the applicant will fail to qualify under the scheme.</p> <p>Any housing-related debt included within an Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA), Debt Relief Order (DRO), or Bankruptcy Order (BO) will be treated as outstanding for a period of 12 months from the date the arrangement or order is made. Where an IVA is in place, payments must be maintained and the arrangement must remain active.</p> <p>Applicants who are owed a homelessness duty by the Council and who have housing-related debt exceeding the above threshold will be individually assessed and may, in exceptional circumstances, be exempt from this criterion. Where an exemption is granted, an appropriate repayment plan must be agreed, with payments commenced and consistently maintained. This is to demonstrate to the Council and prospective landlords that the applicant is taking active and responsible steps to address outstanding housing-related debts.</p>

<p>Serious Breaches of Tenancy</p>	<p>Applicants will not qualify under the scheme where there is evidence of a serious and deliberate breach of a social or private tenancy within the last five years. A breach will be regarded as serious where, had the applicant been a local authority tenant, the Council would have been entitled to seek possession under Section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 on any of the grounds set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Act, excluding Ground 8.</p> <p>Such breaches include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent arrears • Breaches of tenancy conditions • Nuisance or annoyance to neighbours, including anti-social behaviour • Illegal or immoral use of the property • Damage to, or neglect of, the property • Conviction for an arrestable offence committed in the locality of the premises • Domestic abuse • Making a false or misleading statement to obtain a tenancy <p>Applicants who have been evicted from a social tenancy within the last five years due to subletting or abandonment of a property, or who have knowingly rented a property that was being unlawfully sublet, will also fail to qualify under this criterion.</p>
<p>Criminal Convictions</p>	<p>Applicants must declare any criminal convictions that are not spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, as amended by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. An applicant will not qualify under the scheme where a conviction is considered relevant to their rehousing.</p> <p>Relevant offences include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent offences, including assault resulting in Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) or Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH), as well as offences involving explosions or rioting • Harassment, threats of violence, or intimidation, including racially motivated offences and domestic abuse • Offences involving offensive weapons, including firearms and certain knife-related offences • Offences against property, including those under the Theft Act 1968 such as robbery and burglary, and offences under Section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1981 involving the destruction of or damage to property • Drug-related offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, including offences relating to the production or supply of controlled drugs or possession with intent to supply • Sexual offences • Offences under Part 2 of the Serious Crime Act, including encouraging or assisting the commission of any of the offences listed above
<p>Anti-Social Behaviour</p>	<p>Applicants must declare any involvement in anti-social behaviour for which they have received formal warnings or been subject to enforcement action. An</p>

	<p>applicant will not qualify under the scheme where their anti-social behaviour is considered relevant to rehousing.</p> <p>This includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure Orders issued as a result of anti-social behaviour in or near the applicant's current or former accommodation • Civil injunctions, including injunctions to prevent nuisance or annoyance • Criminal Behaviour Orders • Noise Abatement Notices served under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 • Community Protection Warnings or Community Protection Notices • Convictions for breaching any of the above measures • Other enforcement actions or prosecutions under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 <p>Anti-social behaviour will also include actions such as interference with security or safety equipment, or tampering with a landlord's electricity supply, including supplies serving communal areas.</p>
<p>Unacceptable Behaviour</p>	<p>Applicants will not qualify under the scheme where they have demonstrated unacceptable behaviour towards any Council officer, authorised agent, landlord, or their property. This includes the issuing of warning letters by the Council or any landlord, as well as any criminal or civil enforcement action taken as a result of such behaviour.</p> <p>Unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to, verbal or physical abuse, intimidation, violence or threats of violence of any kind, harassment, and the damage, defacement, or graffiti of any property.</p>

The Council does not apply the qualifying criteria rigidly and will consider each application on its individual merits. Applicants with an urgent housing need, as defined by priority Band A or Band B, are invited to submit evidence demonstrating a sustained change in behaviour.

Such evidence may include, but is not limited to:

- Evidence of regular and ongoing repayments towards previous housing-related debt
- Confirmation from a support agency that the applicant has completed training or support aimed at developing the skills required to successfully manage a tenancy
- Evidence demonstrating readiness to move on from supported accommodation

Meeting one or more of the above requirements does not guarantee acceptance under the scheme. The Council retains full discretion to determine eligibility and qualification on a case-by-case basis.

4.4 Age Qualification

Applicants must be aged 18 or over unless they meet one of the criteria for exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances may include:

- A young person who has been accepted as being owed a statutory homelessness duty following an assessment under Section 17 or Section 20 of the Children Act 1989

- A request from a local authority on behalf of one of its care leavers, where the local authority retains corporate parenting responsibility and the application has been submitted in accordance with the principles laid out in agreed protocols with Northamptonshire Children's Trust
- Any other circumstances considered appropriate by the Council

Applicants under the age of 18 cannot legally be granted a tenancy. However, where a young person is accepted under exceptional circumstances, the legal estate may be held in trust until they reach the age of 18. In such cases, a trustee approved by the Council will be required to sign the tenancy agreement on the applicant's behalf until they attain the age of 18.

4.5 No Housing Need

Applicants who are assessed as having no housing need, as defined by the priority bands (see Section 5), will not qualify under the scheme.

Applicants for whom another local authority has accepted a rehousing duty, or any other duty to secure suitable accommodation, will also be regarded as having no housing need and will therefore not qualify under the scheme.

Exceptions to this provision apply where the applicant is, or has been, a victim of domestic abuse perpetrated by another person and needs to move for reasons connected to that abuse, including from accommodation initially occupied on a temporary basis, or where the applicant is an eligible child, a relevant child, or a former relevant child.

4.6 Property Refusals

Applicants who refuse two offers of suitable accommodation within any rolling 12-month period will not qualify under the scheme (see Section 7.9). Applicants who are owed a homelessness duty will cease to qualify after refusing one final offer of suitable accommodation.

Applicants disqualified under this criterion will not be eligible to reapply for a period of 12 months from the date of the non-qualification decision.

An applicant may request a review of this decision where there has been a significant change in their circumstances, through no fault of their own, which adversely affects the household or would otherwise result in an increase in their priority band.

4.7 Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, an applicant who would not normally qualify under the scheme but who has an urgent housing need, defined as being awarded priority Band A or Band B under Sections 5.1 and 5.2, may be accepted. Such cases will be considered by a panel of Senior Officers, and other relevant professionals may be invited to contribute to the panel and the decision-making process where appropriate.

The Council retains discretion to consider individual cases where exceptional circumstances apply. This may include, for example, situations involving members of the wider armed forces community.

5. Priority Banding Criteria

The Council assigns a priority level to each housing application using bands A, B, C, and D, with Band A representing the highest priority for rehousing. Only applicants who meet the eligibility and qualification criteria will have their housing needs assessed and placed into a priority band.

Some banding categories operate with an automatic bidding (autobid) function, as outlined in Section 7.4. Applicants who do not fall within these categories will be required to place bids manually. Each banding criterion clearly states whether automatic or manual bidding applies.

5.1 Band A

The Council will place an application in Band A where the applicant meets one or more of the criteria set out below. Allocation to Band A is subject to approval by a Senior Officer.

In addition, the Council may award Band A priority in emergency situations that are not captured within the specified criteria. In such exceptional cases, the Housing Allocations Manager, or an authorised delegate, will exercise discretion in deciding whether the circumstances meet the required threshold.

Band Reason	Criteria
Homeless Main Duty (Autobid)	The applicant is owed the main homelessness duty under Section 193(2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), having been assessed by the Council as eligible, homeless, in priority need, not intentionally homeless, and having established a local connection in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Act. Additional conditions apply to this criterion, as set out in section 7.5.
Hospital Discharge (Autobid)	The applicant, or a member of their household, is unable to be discharged from hospital or a rehabilitation facility due to a lack of accommodation, or their current accommodation has been assessed as posing a serious risk to their health and cannot be made safe to allow them to return. In addition, the Council must be satisfied that the applicant is able to sustain independent accommodation, either with or without appropriate support.
Severe Medical Need (Autobid)	<p>The applicant, or a member of their household, must have a permanent medical condition or disability where remaining in their current accommodation presents a serious and direct risk that is severe and life-threatening. This criterion will only apply where the property cannot be made suitable through adaptation within a three-month period.</p> <p>This category is expected to apply only in limited and exceptional circumstances, including situations where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the household is receiving palliative care • A member of the household is permanently housebound and unable to safely evacuate the property in the event of an emergency <p>Applicants will only be considered for accommodation that meets their assessed housing needs and is likely to improve their health, well-being, and quality of life (see Section 2.3).</p>

<p>Severe Overcrowding (Autobid)</p>	<p>The applicant's household has been assessed as overcrowded, defined as requiring two or more additional bedrooms in accordance with the Council's minimum bedroom standard. The minimum bedroom standard (see Section 6.1) requires a separate bedroom for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single person (sole applicant) • A married or cohabitating couple • Two children both aged under 10 years, regardless of gender • Two children of the same gender, regardless of age, unless there is a 10 year age gap and one child is at least 16 years old <p>For the purpose of assessing overcrowding, a single parent is considered to require one bedspace and may occupy a single bedroom.</p> <p>This criterion does not apply to applicants without dependent children. It also does not apply where the overcrowding has arisen as a result of a relationship breakdown and the applicant has security of tenure. In such circumstances, applicants would be expected to explore alternative housing options.</p>
<p>Armed Forces (Autobid)</p>	<p>The applicant, or a member of their household, has an urgent housing need (reasonable preference as defined in Section 1.3), has no access to suitable alternative accommodation, and meets one or more of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are currently serving in the regular armed forces and are due to leave service, or are suffering from a serious injury, illness, mental health condition, or disability that is wholly or partly attributable to their service • They have recently ceased, or will shortly cease, to be entitled to occupy accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of their spouse or civil partner, where that individual served in the regular armed forces and their death was wholly or partly attributable to their service • They are serving, or have previously served, in the reserve forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness, mental health condition, or disability that is wholly or partly attributable to their service <p>For the purposes of this criterion, the terms regular forces and reserve forces have the meanings set out in Section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.</p>
<p>Risk of Harm (Autobid)</p>	<p>The applicant, or a member of their household, is at serious and immediate risk of harm arising from violence, threats of violence, abuse, or significant trauma, and requires rehousing in order to remain safe. The applicant must be owed a homelessness duty by the Council under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.</p> <p>The level of risk will be verified as appropriate through information from the Police and/or other relevant agencies and may include cases involving witness protection arrangements coordinated by the National Crime Agency Relocations Team. Any accommodation offered under this criterion will be subject to location restrictions, where necessary, to reduce risk and safeguard the applicant as far as is reasonably practicable.</p>

Category 1 Hazard (Autobid)	The applicant is a private sector tenant, housing association tenant, or owner-occupier, and the Council has assessed their current accommodation as containing a Category 1 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme (HHSRS). This criterion will apply only where the hazard cannot be remedied within a reasonable timeframe (for example, within six months) and where continued occupation presents a significant risk to health. The presence and severity of the hazard will be confirmed by the Council's Private Sector Housing Team.
Major Repairs (Autobid)	The applicant is a Council tenant who is required to move because their current accommodation is subject to major renovation works or extensive repairs. This requirement must be confirmed by the Housing Management Team and Housing Maintenance and Development Team. This criterion does not apply to short-term or temporary decant arrangements (for example, where improvement works are expected to take around six months).
Demolition (Autobid)	The applicant is required to move because their current home is scheduled for imminent demolition or redevelopment. This criterion applies only where the demolition or redevelopment arises from circumstances beyond the applicant's control.
Natural Disaster (Autobid)	The applicant's accommodation has become uninhabitable as a result of flooding, fire, or another natural disaster, through no fault of the applicant, and there is no reasonable prospect of the property being made suitable within a reasonable timeframe (for example, within six months).
Under Occupying Tenants with Medical Need (Autobid)	The applicant is under occupying social or affordable rented accommodation within North Northamptonshire and has an urgent medical need, as defined under the Band B criteria (see Section 5.2). Applicants awarded this priority will only be considered for accommodation with fewer bedrooms than their current home, where the property meets their assessed housing needs and is likely to improve their health, well-being, or quality of life.
Priority Sheltered Move (Autobid)	The applicant is a social rented tenant residing in a sheltered, supported, or assisted living scheme allocated through this scheme and has an urgent medical need, as defined within the Band B criteria (see Section 5.2). Their housing needs can be appropriately met by moving to alternative accommodation within the same scheme.
Supported Move On (Autobid)	<p>For this criterion to apply to any of the categories below, the applicant must be assessed as ready to move into independent accommodation, based on a recommendation from their support provider, social care service, or an equivalent professional body. At the point of referral into supported accommodation, the applicant must have required medium to long-term support rather than short-term assistance, and those support needs must now have been fully met.</p> <p>Any ongoing support package required to sustain a tenancy must have been formally assessed, agreed, and put in place. The Council must also be satisfied that the recommendation to move on is appropriate.</p> <p>This criterion will not apply where the applicant lacks sufficient awareness and/or mental capacity to accept, manage, and sustain an independent tenancy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authority Nomination Rights The applicant is currently residing in, and ready to move on from, accommodation provided by an approved supported housing provider in North

	<p>Northamptonshire where a formal agreement exists granting the Council nomination rights to vacancies. To be eligible under this criterion, the provider must be signed up to the Council’s supported move-on protocol.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care Leavers The applicant is a former relevant child who is ready to move on from accommodation provided by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust. This criterion will apply where the Council is satisfied that the application has been submitted in line with agreed protocols. • Adult Social Care The applicant is living in, and ready to move on from, accommodation provided wholly or partly by the Council’s Adult Social Care service following an assessment under the Care Act 2014. Written confirmation from Adult Social Care will be required. • Domestic Abuse Refuge The applicant is currently residing in, and ready to move on from, accommodation provided by an approved domestic abuse refuge in North Northamptonshire. This criterion will also apply to applicants living in refuge accommodation outside North Northamptonshire where a secondary local connection has been established. Any accommodation offered under this criterion will be subject to location restrictions, where necessary, to minimise risk and safeguard the applicant as far as is reasonably practicable.
<p>Releasing Adapted Property (Manual Bid)</p>	<p>The applicant is a current tenant living in social or affordable rented accommodation within North Northamptonshire that is either fully wheelchair accessible or includes a level access shower or wet room, and is willing to move to suitable non-adapted accommodation.</p> <p>This criterion will not apply where the adaptation does not provide a realistic or practical solution for other households (for example, a level access shower located in a first-floor flat). It also does not apply to applicants living in sheltered accommodation.</p>
<p>Releasing Large Family Property (Manual Bid)</p>	<p>The applicant is a current tenant living in social or affordable rented accommodation in North Northamptonshire that contains four or more bedrooms, including three-bedroom parlour houses where the parlour room is capable of being used as a bedroom, and is willing to move to suitable smaller accommodation. Applicants awarded this criterion will only be considered for properties with fewer bedrooms than their existing home.</p>

5.2 Band B

The Council will place an application in Band B where the applicant meets one or more of the criteria set out below.

Band Reason	Criteria
Homeless Relief Duty (Autobid)	<p>The applicant is owed the relief duty under Section 189B of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), having been assessed by the Council as eligible and homeless. In addition, the applicant is considered to be in priority need, is assessed as not having deliberately worsened their housing circumstances, and has established a local connection in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Act. Additional conditions apply to this criterion, as set out in Section 7.5.</p>
Homeless Prevention Duty (Autobid)	<p>The applicant is owed the prevention duty under Section 195 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), having been assessed by the Council as eligible and threatened with homelessness. In addition, the applicant is considered to be in priority need, is assessed as not having deliberately worsened their housing circumstances, and has established a local connection in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Act. Additional conditions apply to this criterion, as set out in Section 7.5.</p>
Supported Move On (Autobid)	<p>For this criterion to apply to any of the categories below, the applicant must be assessed as ready to move into independent accommodation, based on a recommendation from their support provider, social care service, or an equivalent professional body. At the point of referral into supported accommodation, the applicant must have required medium to long-term support rather than short-term assistance, and those support needs must now have been fully met.</p> <p>Any ongoing support package required to sustain a tenancy must have been formally assessed, agreed, and put in place. The Council must also be satisfied that the recommendation to move on is appropriate.</p> <p>This criterion will not apply where the applicant lacks sufficient awareness and/or mental capacity to accept, manage, and sustain an independent tenancy.</p> <p>Where supported accommodation is located outside North Northamptonshire, this criterion will generally not apply. An exception may be made where the placement occurred because it was the only suitable specialist provision available to meet the applicant's needs at the time, and the applicant has an established local connection to North Northamptonshire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>• Local Authority Nomination Rights The applicant is currently residing in, and ready to move on from, accommodation provided by an approved supported housing provider in North Northamptonshire where there is no formal agreement in place granting the Council nomination rights to vacancies. To be considered under this criterion, the referral must align with the principles set out in the Council's supported move-on protocol.</p> <p>• Vulnerable Applicants The applicant is residing in a supportive household arrangement that cannot be sustained over the medium to long term. This may include, for example, a vulnerable individual living with elderly parents who act as their carers.</p>

Urgent Overcrowding (Manual Bid)	<p>The applicant's household has been assessed as overcrowded, defined as requiring at least one additional bedrooms in accordance with the Council's minimum bedroom standard. The minimum bedroom standard (see Section 6.1) requires a separate bedroom for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single person (sole applicant) • A married or cohabitating couple • Two children both aged under 10 years, regardless of gender • Two children of the same gender, regardless of age, unless there is a 10 year age gap and one child is at least 16 years old <p>For the purpose of assessing overcrowding, a single parent is considered to require one bedspace and may occupy a single bedroom.</p> <p>This criterion does not apply to applicants without dependent children. It also does not apply where the overcrowding has arisen as a result of a relationship breakdown and the applicant has security of tenure. In such circumstances, applicants would be expected to explore alternative housing options.</p>
Urgent Medical Need (Manual Bid)	<p>The applicant, or a member of their household, has a permanent medical condition or disability that is significantly and adversely affected by their current accommodation. This criterion will apply in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the household requires ground-floor accommodation (or a stairlift) and alternative bathing facilities that are not available in the current property • A member of the household is a permanent wheelchair user, and although the current property is on the ground floor with appropriate bathing facilities, it lacks sufficient internal space, widened doorways, or level access, and cannot be made suitable or adapted • A member of the household requires medical equipment provided by a health authority or hospital, and the current accommodation cannot be altered to create adequate space for this equipment (excluding the storage of mobility scooters) <p>Applicants will only be considered for accommodation that meets their assessed housing needs and is likely to improve their health, well-being, and quality of life (see Section 2.3).</p>
Essential Care and Support (Manual Bid)	<p>The applicant, or a member of their household, needs to give or receive essential care and support that is substantial, ongoing, and cannot reasonably be provided within their current accommodation. To demonstrate this, the applicant must either be in receipt of Carer's Allowance, have a carer who receives Carer's Allowance, or have undergone an assessment by Social Services or a comparable support agency. This assessment must confirm that the care and/or support required is both substantial and essential.</p>
Under Occupying (Manual Bid)	<p>The applicant is a current tenant under occupying social or affordable rented accommodation within North Northamptonshire and is willing to move to suitable smaller accommodation. This criterion applies to households occupying two or three-bedroom properties. Applicants awarded this priority will only be considered for accommodation with fewer bedrooms than their existing home.</p>

<p>Successor (Manual Bid)</p>	<p>The applicant has been granted use and occupation of social rented accommodation within North Northamptonshire and has been recognised by the landlord as either a statutory or non-statutory successor to the tenancy. This criterion applies where the applicant has succeeded to the tenancy but not to the property itself and is therefore required to move to more suitable accommodation.</p> <p>Where the applicant has not secured alternative accommodation within six months from the date of qualification as a statutory or non-statutory successor, the Council reserves the right to place the application on automatic bidding and/or make a direct offer of accommodation, in accordance with Sections 7.4 and 7.8 of the scheme.</p> <p>This criterion does not apply to applicants who do not have a right of succession to either the tenancy or the property.</p>
<p>Employment Hardship / Right to Move (Manual Bid)</p>	<p>The applicant, or a member of their household, needs to move in order to take up or continue permanent employment in North Northamptonshire for a minimum of 16 hours per week, where remaining in their current accommodation would result in hardship. Hardship related to employment may include excessive commuting distances, the availability or affordability of transport, and other relevant factors such as medical needs or childcare responsibilities. For the purposes of this criterion, a commuting time of up to 60 minutes each way is considered reasonable. To qualify, the Council must be satisfied that a move would lead to an improvement in the applicant's circumstances.</p>

5.3 Band C

The Council will place an application in Band C where the applicant meets one or more of the criteria set out below.

Band Reason	Criteria
Homeless Relief Duty (Autobid)	The applicant is owed the relief duty under Section 189B of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), having been assessed by the Council as eligible and homeless. In addition, the applicant is considered to have no priority need, is assessed as not having deliberately worsened their housing circumstances, and has established a local connection in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Act. Additional conditions apply to this criterion, as set out in Section 7.5.
Homeless Prevention Duty (Autobid)	The applicant is owed the prevention duty under Section 195 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), having been assessed by the Council as eligible and threatened with homelessness. In addition, the applicant is considered to have no priority need, is assessed as not having deliberately worsened their housing circumstances, and has established a local connection in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Act. Additional conditions apply to this criterion, as set out in Section 7.5.
Non-Statutorily Homeless (Manual Bid)	<p>The applicant has received a decision under Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) following the conclusion of the Section 189B relief duty, in which they have been found to be homeless but not in priority need, as defined under Part 7 of the Act.</p> <p>This criterion also applies to applicants who are verified as sofa surfing across two or more addresses and who have no fixed or settled accommodation.</p>
Overcrowding (Manual Bid)	<p>The applicant's household has been assessed as overcrowded, which is defined as meeting one or more of the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiring an additional bedspace within an existing bedroom • Two children of the same gender sharing a bedroom where there is an age difference of at least 10 years, or where one child is aged 16 or over • Applicants without dependent children who are sharing accommodation with another household and are assessed as overcrowded <p>For the purpose of assessing overcrowding, a single parent is considered to require one bedspace and may occupy a single bedroom.</p> <p>This criterion does not apply where the overcrowding has arisen as a result of a relationship breakdown and the applicant has security of tenure. In such circumstances, applicants would be expected to explore alternative housing options.</p>

<p>Sharing with Others with Dependents (Manual Bid)</p>	<p>The applicant's household has at least one dependent child or a pregnant woman with a confirmed due date, sharing accommodation with their family or another household and is otherwise adequately housed.</p> <p>This criterion does not apply where the overcrowding has arisen as a result of a relationship breakdown and the applicant has security of tenure. In such circumstances, applicants would be expected to explore alternative housing options.</p>
<p>Medical Need (Manual Bid)</p>	<p>The applicant, or a member of their household, has a permanent medical condition or disability that adversely affected by their current accommodation. This criterion will apply in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the household requires ground-floor accommodation (or a stairlift) or alternative bathing facilities that are not available in the current property • A household member is currently receiving ongoing treatment from primary and secondary mental health services for a diagnosed mental health condition which is made worse by their current accommodation and would be resolved by moving to alternative accommodation <p>Applicants will only be considered for accommodation that meets their assessed housing needs and is likely to improve their health, well-being, and quality of life (see Section 2.3).</p>
<p>Ongoing Care and Support (Manual Bid)</p>	<p>The applicant, or a member of their household, needs to give or receive ongoing care and support that cannot reasonably be provided within, or from, their current accommodation. The care and/or support does not need to be substantial in nature and may apply where the applicant is not in receipt of qualifying care-related benefits and does not have involvement from Social Services.</p> <p>This may include essential practical and/or emotional support that is necessary to maintain the physical or mental well-being of the person receiving the care or support.</p>

5.4 Band D

The Council will place an application in Band D where the applicant meets one or more of the criteria set out below.

Band Reason	Criteria
Homeless Relief Duty (Autobid)	<p>The applicant is owed the relief duty under Section 189B of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), having been assessed by the Council as eligible and homeless. In addition, the applicant is believed to have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances, and/or does not have an established local connection in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Act. Additional conditions apply to this criterion, as set out in Section 7.5.</p>
Homeless Prevention Duty (Autobid)	<p>The applicant is owed the prevention duty under Section 195 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), having been assessed by the Council as eligible and threatened with homelessness. In addition, the applicant is believed to have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances, and/or does not have an established local connection in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Act. Additional conditions apply to this criterion, as set out in Section 7.5.</p>
Intentionally Homeless (Manual Bid)	<p>The applicant has received a decision under Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) in which the Council has determined that they are homeless but intentionally so, in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Act.</p>
Supported Move On (Autobid)	<p>For this criterion to apply to any of the categories below, the applicant must be assessed as ready to move into independent accommodation, based on a recommendation from their support provider, social care service, or an equivalent professional body. At the point of referral into supported accommodation, the applicant must have required medium to long-term support rather than short-term assistance, and those support needs must now have been fully met.</p> <p>Any ongoing support package required to sustain a tenancy must have been formally assessed, agreed, and put in place. The Council must also be satisfied that the recommendation to move on is appropriate.</p> <p>This criterion will not apply where the applicant lacks sufficient awareness and/or mental capacity to accept, manage, and sustain an independent tenancy.</p> <p>Where supported accommodation is located outside North Northamptonshire, this criterion will generally not apply. An exception may be made where the placement occurred because it was the only suitable specialist provision available to meet the applicant's needs at the time, and the applicant has an established local connection to North Northamptonshire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>• Care Leavers The applicant is a former relevant child who is ready to move on from accommodation provided by a leaving care service of any local authority. This criterion will apply where the Council is satisfied that the application has been submitted in line with the principles set out in agreed protocols with Northamptonshire Children's Trust.</p>

- **Domestic Abuse Refuge**
The applicant is currently residing in, and ready to move on from, accommodation provided by an approved domestic abuse refuge outside North Northamptonshire. Any accommodation offered under this criterion will be subject to location restrictions, where necessary, to minimise risk and safeguard the applicant as far as is reasonably practicable.

5.5 Band Demotion

Once an applicant's rehousing priority has been determined, the Council may reduce that priority where the applicant, or a member of their household, has deliberately worsened their housing circumstances. This may include, but is not limited to, the following actions:

- Leaving or giving up previous accommodation without first securing suitable alternative housing
- Selling a property or ending a tenancy without arranging appropriate alternative accommodation
- Accepting a property owned by a Keyways landlord and subsequently claiming it is unsuitable where there has been no change in circumstances
- Moving into accommodation known to be unaffordable, despite being aware of the financial implications
- Having a previous application closed due to failure to place bids
- Deliberately disposing of assets or capital that could reasonably have been used to secure suitable accommodation
- Causing a homelessness duty to end due to an unreasonable and deliberate failure to cooperate

There may be other situations where an applicant has moved to accommodation that is demonstrably worse than their previous housing without good reason. In such cases, the Council will consider the individual circumstances to determine whether the move was made wholly or mainly to create a housing need in order to gain priority under the scheme. Moves from suitable accommodation to housing that is overcrowded, insecure, or lacking basic amenities may be subject to particular scrutiny.

Where a decision is made to reduce an application by one priority band, the revised priority will apply for a period of 12 months from the date on which the applicant's housing circumstances were deliberately worsened.

5.6 Band Effective Date

The effective date is used to rank applicants within the same priority band. In most cases, the effective date will be the date on which a fully completed application is submitted online via the Keyways website. Where an applicant's circumstances change after initial registration, the application will be reassessed and the applicant may:

Change in Circumstances	Effective Date
Where the applicant gains higher priority and is placed in a higher priority band.	The effective date will be the date on which the higher priority band is awarded.
Where the applicant remains in the same priority band.	The original effective date will be retained.

Where the applicant loses priority and is placed in a lower priority band.	The original effective date will continue to apply.
Where the applicant becomes ineligible or no longer qualifies for an allocation.	The application will be closed. Applicants may submit a new application if their circumstances change in the future. If accepted, a new effective date will apply.

6. Property Eligibility Criteria

6.1 Household Composition

The size and type of property an applicant is eligible for will be determined by the composition of their household and their assessed housing needs, as set out below. Where an applicant's household circumstances fall outside the criteria described, a Senior Officer will decide the appropriate property size and type for which the applicant may be considered. This may include cases where there is an evidenced need for an additional bedroom, supported by a formal diagnosis and a full assessment from a relevant professional, for urgent medical reasons or where necessary to discharge homelessness duties and make best use of available housing stock.

As a minimum, households will be assessed in accordance with the Council's minimum bedroom standard, which provides one separate bedroom for each of the following:

- A single person (sole applicant)
- A married or cohabitating couple
- Two children both aged under 10 years, regardless of gender
- Two children of the same gender, regardless of age, unless there is a 10 year age gap and one child is at least 16 years old

Some applicants may also be eligible to bid for properties with one additional bedroom above their minimum entitlement, however, a lower level of preference will apply for such accommodation. The maximum bedroom entitlement will depend on household composition. Bungalows will be allocated in accordance with Section 6.5.

For the purposes of determining property eligibility, the term child or children includes both dependent and non-dependent children. Extended family members accepted as part of the household, such as step-siblings or cousins, will be expected to share a bedroom. This approach also applies to foster children.

Household Composition	Minimum Bedroom Entitlement	Maximum Bedroom Entitlement
Single Person or Couple Without Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedsit • 1 Bedroom Bungalow • 1 Bedroom Flat • 1 Bedroom House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedsit • 1 Bedroom Bungalow • 1 Bedroom Flat • 1 Bedroom House
Single Person or Couple Expecting First Child (1 to 26 Weeks of Pregnancy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedsit • 1 Bedroom Bungalow • 1 Bedroom Flat • 1 Bedroom House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Bedroom Bungalow • 2 Bedroom Flat • 2 Bedroom Maisonette • 2 Bedroom House • 2 Bedroom Parlour House
Household Expecting First Child (27 Weeks of Pregnancy) or Household with 1 Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Bedroom Bungalow • 2 Bedroom Flat • 2 Bedroom Maisonette • 2 Bedroom House • 2 Bedroom Parlour House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Bedroom Bungalow • 2 Bedroom Flat • 2 Bedroom Maisonette • 2 Bedroom House • 2 Bedroom Parlour House
Household with 2 Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Bedroom Bungalow • 2 Bedroom Flat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom Bungalow • 3 Bedroom Flat

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Bedroom Maisonette • 2 Bedroom House • 2 Bedroom Parlour House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom Maisonette • 3 Bedroom House • 3 Bedroom Parlour House
Household with 3 Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom Bungalow • 3 Bedroom Flat • 3 Bedroom Maisonette • 3 Bedroom House • 3 Bedroom Parlour House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Bedroom House • 4 Bedroom Flat • 4 Bedroom Maisonette
Household with 4 Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom Bungalow • 3 Bedroom Flat • 3 Bedroom Maisonette • 3 Bedroom House • 3 Bedroom Parlour House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Bedroom House • 4 Bedroom Flat • 4 Bedroom Maisonette • 5 Bedroom House
Household with 5 Children or More	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Bedroom Parlour House • 4 Bedroom House • 4 Bedroom Flat • 4 Bedroom Maisonette 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Bedroom House

6.2 Pregnancy

Applicants who have been assessed as having a housing need and are expecting their first child will only be eligible to be considered for family accommodation (see Section 6.3) once the pregnancy has reached the third trimester (27 weeks). Property eligibility will be reviewed at that point.

Applicants who are otherwise suitably housed will not be assessed as having a housing need solely on the basis of pregnancy. A full housing need assessment will be carried out following the birth of the child.

6.3 Family

Family accommodation is defined as a house or flat containing two or more bedrooms and benefitting from its own private garden.

Applicants whose household is made up entirely of non-dependents will not normally be eligible for family accommodation, except in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances may include:

- A confirmed need for disabled-adapted accommodation that can only be met through the allocation of adapted family-sized housing
- Non-dependent household members who are unable to live independently due to a severe learning disability and who would significantly benefit from access to a garden

A three-bedroom property with two reception rooms is known as a parlour property. Applicants assessed as having a minimum requirement for three or four bedrooms may bid for parlour properties. Where an applicant has a minimum requirement for four bedrooms, the second reception room may be used as an additional bedroom.

Applicants who are under-occupying social or affordable rented accommodation and who wish to downsize from high-demand or limited-supply properties, such as three-bedroom parlour houses or four or

five-bedroom homes, may, in certain circumstances, be eligible to bid for properties larger than those defined in Section 6.1. Any such decision will be made at the discretion of a Senior Officer.

6.4 Accessible

Properties advertised under the scheme may include one or more of the following adaptations:

- Full mobility adaptations
- Wet room
- Level access shower
- Stairlift
- External ramp
- Shower over bath
- Minor adaptations
- Lift

Where a property has been adapted, the Council reserves the right to make a direct offer rather than advertising the property through the scheme. This approach ensures the most effective use of specialist and adapted housing stock.

When an adapted property is advertised, priority will be given to applicants who require all of the adaptations provided and who will make full use of the property's other attributes. If no applicant meets this requirement, the Council will shortlist applicants based on who is best able to make effective use of the adaptations and the property overall, including use of all bedrooms, while also taking account of priority banding and effective date.

Due to the high demand for, and limited availability of, adapted social and affordable housing in North Northamptonshire, applicants seeking alternative adapted accommodation will be required to demonstrate that they have fully explored options to adapt their existing home. Evidence may include, but is not limited to:

- Reports or recommendations from relevant therapy or professional services outlining the adaptations required
- Copies of applications made, and responses received, in relation to funding for adaptations, such as Disabled Facilities Grant applications
- Written confirmation from the current landlord setting out whether adaptations can be carried out, including evidence of requests made, approvals granted, or reasons for refusal

6.5 Bungalows

For general needs bungalows without adaptations (excluding sheltered accommodation), a minimum age preference of 60 years will normally apply. These properties will be allocated in the following order of priority:

1. Applicants aged 60 or over who have a ground-floor need and require all available bedrooms
2. Applicants of any age who have a ground-floor need and require all available bedrooms
3. Applicants aged 60 or over who require all available bedrooms
4. Applicants of any age who require all available bedrooms
5. Applicants aged 60 or over who have a ground-floor need
6. Applicants of any age who have a ground-floor need
7. Applicants aged 60 or over
8. Applicants of any age

General needs bungalows that include disabled adaptations (excluding sheltered accommodation) will be allocated according to the following priority order:

1. Applicants of any age who have a ground-floor need, require the adaptations provided, and need all available bedrooms
2. Applicants aged 60 or over who have a ground-floor need and require all available bedrooms
3. Applicants of any age who have a ground-floor need and require all available bedrooms
4. Applicants of any age who have a ground-floor need and require the adaptations provided
5. Applicants aged 60 or over who have a ground-floor need
6. Applicants of any age who have a ground-floor need

For general needs bungalows without adaptations, applicants listed under priority points 1 to 4 will be shortlisted. For adapted bungalows, applicants under priority points 1 to 3 will be shortlisted. If no suitable applicant is identified following the first advertising cycle, the property will be re-advertised for a second cycle.

Where no suitable applicant is identified after two advertising cycles, the property will be offered to applicants in the remaining priority groups, using the shortlist generated from the second advertisement.

In cases involving joint applications, the minimum age preference of 60 years need only be met by one applicant. In all cases, priority will be given to households that are able to make full use of all available bedrooms.

6.6 Sheltered

Sheltered accommodation provides independent living, typically aimed at older people who have some support needs. Depending on the individual sheltered scheme, property advertisements may specify a minimum age requirement. While sheltered housing offers access to a level of support, it is not designed to meet the needs of individuals who require high levels of care or intensive support.

Applicants who bid for sheltered accommodation may be subject to further assessment by the relevant landlord if they are nominated. These assessments will consider factors such as the applicant's support needs, suitability for the scheme, and any potential risk issues, in line with the landlord's individual policies. Landlords of sheltered accommodation reserve the right to refuse a nomination where their criteria are not met (see Section 7.7).

7. Property Shortlisting and Allocations

7.1 Advertisements

To help applicants identify properties that best meet their needs, the Council will advertise all available homes with clear information on their size, location, and key features. Where possible, property advertisements will also include the following details:

- At least one photograph showing the front of the property
- The landlord responsible for the property
- The weekly rent and any additional charges payable
- An estimated date when the property is expected to become available, where known
- The deadline for applicants to register their interest
- Further relevant information, such as the heating type, any adaptations, the number of external or internal steps, the floor level, and any pet restrictions
- Whether a Local Lettings Plan applies

In some cases, similar properties may be grouped together and advertised under a single property reference. Where this occurs, applicants only need to place one bid to be considered for all properties included within that advertisement. This approach may be used, for example, when advertising multiple new build properties of the same type and size within a single development.

The scheme also allows for “any time” advertisements, which operate outside the standard weekly advertising cycle and bidding process. These advertisements may be published on any day and are intended to reduce repeated or duplicate listings. In North Northamptonshire, this facility is primarily used for certain sheltered accommodation.

Bidding opportunities through any time advertisements are in addition to the standard bidding cycles set out in the scheme. While this facility is commonly used for properties that are difficult to let, it may also be applied in other circumstances, including where allocations need to be fast-tracked. Any decision to use the any time advertisement process for reasons other than a difficult to let property will be approved by a Senior Officer.

7.2 Local Lettings Plan

From time to time, the Council may introduce a Local Lettings Plan for specific areas or developments in order to address particular local circumstances. Local Lettings Plans are intended to support the development and sustainability of safe, balanced, and cohesive communities where people want to live.

Local Lettings Plans may also be used to support applicants who make a positive contribution to their communities, such as individuals who are in employment, seeking work, or contributing through volunteering. This approach aligns with the Council’s community contribution criteria, as set out in Section 7.3, and may also be used to encourage working households to settle in particular areas.

In some cases, a Local Lettings Plan may give preference to applicants who have a local connection to a specific town or village. This is typically required to meet legal obligations arising from the original planning consent for the development. Where this applies, property advertisements will clearly state that preference will be given to applicants who meet the criteria specified in the relevant legal agreement.

For established communities, any Local Lettings Plan will be developed in consultation with existing tenants and residents. In doing so, the Council will take account of housing management factors such as tenant

mix, density, age profile, levels of vulnerability (for example, limited access to facilities for vulnerable residents), and overall community stability.

Once implemented, a Local Lettings Plan will operate for a defined period, as specified within the plan itself. At the end of this period, properties will revert to being allocated in accordance with the main allocation scheme, unless there is evidence to support the continuation or introduction of a further Local Lettings Plan. Any Local Lettings Plan in force will be clearly referenced in the relevant property advertisement. Further details on Local Lettings Plans are available on the Keyways website.

7.3 Community Contribution Criteria

In line with Section 7.2 of the scheme, the Council may allocate some properties to applicants who meet the Community Contribution Criteria. This includes individuals who make a positive contribution to their neighbourhoods and help create communities that are desirable places to live, work, and thrive. The Council recognises the value of these contributions and considers it important that such individuals are supported through access to social housing, enabling them to continue contributing to the sustainability of their local communities.

For the purposes of this section, the term applicant refers only to the main and/or joint applicant on an application and does not include other household members. To qualify under the Community Contribution Criteria, applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. Positive residence history

Applicants must demonstrate a current positive residence history, which includes:

- No ongoing culpable involvement in antisocial behaviour or criminal activity
- No breaches of tenancy conditions within the past five years
- No outstanding recoverable housing related debt
- No unspent criminal convictions

2. Contribution to the community

Applicants must also contribute to economic growth or make another meaningful contribution to their community. This may include:

- Working households
- Individuals engaged in volunteering
- People undertaking education or training
- Current members of the Armed Forces
- Registered foster carers
- People with disabilities and older residents

Further information on each category, including the minimum requirements needed to qualify, is available upon request.

7.4 Autobid and Manual Bidding

Most applicants are able to choose which properties they wish to bid for and are expected to place bids regularly on suitable accommodation. Where an applicant does not bid on appropriate properties for a continuous period of six months, the Council may review their priority banding or close their application. The Council also reserves the right to vary an applicant's property size eligibility where necessary to reflect urgent housing needs or to assist in discharging homelessness duties.

In some cases, an applicant's ability to bid may be removed and their application placed on automatic bidding (autobid) to ensure their housing need is resolved in a timely manner. Autobid means that the system will place bids on the applicant's behalf for properties that offer the best prospect of a successful nomination, such as achieving the strongest queue position at the close of the bidding cycle. Autobids are submitted automatically at one minute past midnight at the end of each bidding cycle, after all manual bids have been placed.

To enable the autobid system to operate effectively, applicants may be required to provide additional information or evidence to ensure that bids are placed for suitable properties in terms of size, features, and location. Applicants who are not subject to autobid will continue to place bids themselves through their online account.

All applicants are entitled to place up to five bids during each bidding cycle. Any successful bid will be treated as a formal offer of accommodation, and the refusal sanctions set out in Section 7.9 will apply.

Whether an applicant is required to use autobidding or manual bidding is primarily determined by the relevant priority banding criteria, as detailed in Section 5.

7.5 Homelessness Duties

In accordance with Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), the Council may bring a homelessness duty to an end by making a single offer of suitable accommodation of any tenure. This may include an offer of private rented accommodation that complies with the Suitability of Accommodation Order 2012. The Council will ensure that any accommodation offered is made in line with its Discharge of Homelessness Duties (Accommodation Offers) Policy.

All applicants who are assessed as being owed a homelessness duty will have their ability to bid removed and will be placed on automatic bidding (autobid). This approach enables the Council to prevent or relieve homelessness as quickly as possible and to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation.

Failure to engage with the nomination, viewing, or verification process, where this results in the withdrawal of an offer, will be treated as an implied refusal of a final offer of accommodation.

Where an applicant is shortlisted for more than one property, the Council will decide which property will constitute the final offer. This decision will take account of the applicant's individual circumstances, the readiness of the property to be let, and the need to maximise the number of allocations to homeless households within that allocation cycle.

7.6 Highest Bidder

The Council reserves the right to exercise discretion and may decide not to make an offer of accommodation to the highest-ranked bidder for an advertised property where, having considered all relevant circumstances, doing so would not be in the best interests of the applicant, other individuals, or the effective management and use of housing stock.

This discretion may be applied in a range of circumstances, including but not limited to the following:

- Where there is a history of domestic abuse and the Council considers that the location of the property is too close to the perpetrator, meaning the applicant's housing needs would not be safely or appropriately met
- Where the Council identifies potential risks to community safety, as outlined in Section 7.9
- Where a financial assessment carried out by the landlord and the Council determines that the accommodation would be unaffordable for the applicant

- Where an offer would conflict with the applicant's assessed housing needs, for example where priority has been awarded due to a need to move to a specific area to provide or receive care and support, and the property offered would not meet that need
- Where an applicant's support needs are such that they would be likely to have a significant adverse impact on other residents within a scheme, or where the landlord would be unable to manage those needs or associated risks effectively

7.7 Offers

Applicants who are successful with a bid will be contacted directly by the Council. If the Council is unable to make contact within 24 hours, the applicant will no longer be considered for the property and will be bypassed on the shortlist. Where an applicant verbally accepts an offer, the landlord that owns the property will then contact the applicant to provide further information and progress the letting.

Each landlord operates its own procedures and reserves the right to:

- Request appropriate identification for all household members
- Verify information provided by the applicant, including checks relating to rent arrears and criminal convictions
- Place an offer on hold where the applicant's circumstances have changed and these changes have not yet been assessed by the Council
- Withdraw an offer where verification checks identify issues not declared on the application
- Withdraw an offer of sheltered accommodation where the applicant does not meet the landlord's own eligibility criteria
- Withdraw an offer where a notice to vacate has been rescinded or the property is no longer available to let
- Withdraw an offer where verification confirms the applicant is not eligible or does not qualify under the scheme
- Withdraw an offer following a financial assessment that shows the accommodation would be unaffordable
- Carry out an inspection of the applicant's existing accommodation
- Withdraw an offer where an applicant fails a property inspection
- Remove a property from advertisement where it has been advertised in error
- Require up to four weeks' rent to be paid in advance
- Require rent to be paid by direct debit
- Require the completion of a tenancy workshop, pre-tenancy training, or an equivalent programme

Applicants must confirm directly with the landlord whether they wish to accept an offer. Timescales for responding may vary between landlords. Where an applicant fails to respond to the landlord or the Council within the specified timeframe, the offer will be withdrawn on the basis that it is not being accepted.

Applicants will only be matched to one property at any given time. Once matched, applicants will be unable to place further bids and will be bypassed on any other active shortlists until the outcome of the matched property has been finalised.

7.8 Direct Offers

In certain circumstances, the Council may choose not to advertise a vacant property through the scheme and may instead make a direct offer of accommodation to an applicant. Any direct offer will be treated as a formal offer, and refusal will be subject to the same sanctions set out in Section 7.9. Decisions to make direct offers must be approved by two Senior Officers.

Direct offers may be made in a range of circumstances, including but not limited to the following:

- Where the Council considers it inappropriate for an applicant to participate in the standard allocation scheme. In such cases, applications will be considered on an individual basis and a full range of housing options explored. This may include applicants placed within North Northamptonshire through the National Crime Agency Relocations Team, or applicants subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) at Level 3, or Level 2 where a risk management plan is in place and the assessed risk has reduced as a result
- Where the Council makes a direct offer in order to bring a statutory homelessness duty to an end and to ensure the effective use of housing stock
- Where a landlord participating in the scheme is required to permanently relocate a tenant in order to carry out major modernisation, refurbishment, or rehabilitation works to the existing property
- Where it is necessary to provide suitable alternative accommodation to a statutory or non-statutory successor within the statutory 12-month timescale
- Where a joint social tenant has served notice to quit and the remaining tenant is assessed as being able to continue occupying the property, subject to landlord agreement
- Where the property offers a specialist housing solution, or is in particularly limited supply, such as large family homes or properties with disabled adaptations
- Where the Council determines it is necessary to temporarily suspend the normal operation of the scheme due to exceptional circumstances, such as a public health emergency. Decisions of this nature will be taken by the Director of Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services, or an officer of equivalent or higher seniority within the Corporate Leadership Network, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing
- Any other situation where the Council considers a direct offer necessary to make best use of housing stock or to respond effectively to emerging local housing needs

7.9 Refusals

Applicants for whom the Council has accepted a homelessness duty are subject to specific provisions, as set out in Section 7.5. All other applicants may place up to five bids in each bidding cycle and may refuse one suitable offer of accommodation without penalty. Where an applicant refuses two suitable offers within a rolling 12-month period, their application will be disqualified for a period of 12 months from the date of the second refusal. A new application submitted during this disqualification period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, such as where there has been a significant and unavoidable change in household circumstances or an increase in priority banding.

An offer of accommodation may take the form of a formal written offer from a landlord or a verbal nomination made by the Council. For joint applications, a refusal by either the main or joint applicant will be treated as a refusal for the household, and consent from both parties is not required. Failure to engage with the nomination, viewing, or verification process, where this results in the withdrawal of an offer, will be treated as an implied refusal.

Landlords retain the right to refuse a nomination in accordance with their own tenancy policies. Where this occurs, the landlord must provide the applicant with written reasons for the decision. Applicants may request a review of the decision within 21 days of receiving notification by contacting the landlord directly.

The Council works closely with the Police, Probation Service, community safety partnerships, and housing providers to manage and mitigate risks within communities. Where information relating to an applicant or their application gives rise to community safety concerns, the Council reserves the right to restrict or refuse offers of accommodation in certain locations.

In addition, the Council may implement a Local Lettings Plan for specific areas or developments to address community safety or related concerns, as outlined in Section 7.2.

8. Right of Review, Appeals and Complaints

In accordance with the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the Council. This includes decisions to refuse admission to the scheme or any decision that affects an applicant's housing application.

Applicants who believe a decision is incorrect must first submit a written request for an initial review, clearly setting out the reasons for their request. This will be considered by a Housing Allocations Officer.

If the applicant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of the initial review, they may then request a formal review of the decision.

8.1 Requesting a Review

The applicant, or their authorised representative, must submit a written request for a review to a Senior Officer within 21 days of receiving the written decision. Where it is not practicable for the applicant to provide their reasons in writing, they or their representative may present the reasons for requesting a review in person or by telephone.

8.2 Formal Review Decision

A Senior Officer will review the original decision and consider the reasons provided for requesting the review. The outcome will be determined based on the information and evidence available at the time the review is carried out. Where necessary, a Senior Officer may request additional information from the applicant to help inform the decision, which will be made in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

The applicant will receive written notification of the review outcome, including the reasons for the decision, within eight weeks of the Council receiving the review request. This timescale may be extended where a longer period is agreed with the applicant.

The Council's decision following a formal review is final and may only be challenged through judicial review.

8.3 Landlord Reviews

In certain circumstances, a Keyways landlord may decide not to proceed with the offer of a tenancy. This may include situations where an applicant does not pass the required verification checks or where a financial assessment carried out by the landlord shows that the rent would be unaffordable.

If an applicant wishes to request a review of such a decision, they, or their authorised representative, must submit the request in writing directly to the relevant Keyways landlord within 21 days of receiving the written decision.

8.4 Comments, Compliments and Complaints

Applicants who wish to provide a compliment, comment, or complaint about the Council or the operation of the scheme may do so in accordance with the Council's Customer Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy. Applicants who wish to raise a comment, compliment or complaint about a Keyways landlord should contact the relevant landlord directly.

Applicants may refer their complaint to the relevant independent Ombudsman service. These bodies are operated independently of the Council and housing providers and exist to ensure that local authorities and housing landlords meet required service standards.

Council Complaints

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Landlord Complaints

(Housing Associations / Registered Providers)

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 1484

Unit D

Preston

PR2 0ET

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Appendix A Glossary

Word	Description
Adaptations	Alterations made to a property to enable a disabled household member to safely access and use the home and its facilities. Examples include stairlifts, wet rooms, level access showers, and ramps.
Affordable Rent	A form of rent that is not subject to the national social rent regime but is controlled so that rent does not exceed 80% of the local market rent.
Applicant	An individual who applies to the Keyways scheme, including joint applicants.
Autobid	A function that places bids automatically on an applicant's behalf for properties that offer the strongest likelihood of a successful nomination, such as the highest queue position at the close of a bidding cycle. Autobids are submitted at one minute past midnight at the end of each bidding cycle, after all manual bids have been placed.
Band	The priority level assigned to a housing application by the Council. Applications are placed into priority bands A, B, C, or D, with Band A representing the highest priority for rehousing.
Bid	An expression of interest placed by an applicant for a property advertised on the Keyways system.
Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	A housing allocation system that enables applicants to express preferences for where they wish to live, within the limits of their assessed property eligibility.
Decant	A process whereby a tenant of a Keyways landlord is required to temporarily move to alternative accommodation to allow essential repairs, maintenance, or improvement works to be carried out to their home.
Effective Date	The date used to prioritise applicants within the same priority band. This is usually the date a fully completed housing application is submitted via the Keyways website.
Eligibility	A term describing whether a person is eligible or ineligible for an allocation of social housing under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 and associated immigration legislation.
Fixed Term Tenancy	A tenancy granted by a social landlord for a defined period, typically five years.
Habitual Residence Test	An assessment of whether an applicant's residence in the United Kingdom is settled in nature, taking into account factors such as length and continuity of residence, employment, future work prospects, and family connections.
Housing Allocations Scheme	The framework that sets out how North Northamptonshire Council and Keyways landlords allocate social housing across North Northamptonshire.
Keyways Landlord	A social landlord that owns housing stock in North Northamptonshire and advertises vacancies through the Keyways scheme. This includes North

	Northamptonshire Council and housing associations, also known as Registered Providers.
Letting / Bidding Cycle	The period during which properties are advertised and bids can be placed. New properties are advertised weekly from 00:01 on Thursday until 23:59 on Tuesday. Properties are not advertised on Wednesdays, except for “any time” adverts (see Section 7.1).
Main Duty	A homelessness duty owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to households that are eligible, homeless, in priority need, unintentionally homeless, and have established a local connection.
Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)	A statutory framework through which agencies such as Probation, the Prison Service, and local housing authorities work together to manage individuals who pose a serious risk of harm to the public.
Mutual Exchange	A permanent swap of accommodation between two social housing tenants, where each household moves into the other’s property.
Non-Statutorily Homeless	A term used to describe homeless people or households to whom a local housing authority does not owe a legal duty to provide settled accommodation.
Nomination	The process by which a local housing authority refers an applicant from its housing register to a landlord for an offer of accommodation.
Prevention Duty	A duty owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to eligible households that are threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
Rechargeable Arrears	Costs arising from damage to a property caused by a tenant, their household, or visitors, or from negligence during a tenancy, which can be recharged to the tenant.
Registered Provider (RP)	A housing association or not-for-profit organisation registered with Homes England and the Regulator of Social Housing to provide social or affordable housing.
Relief Duty	A duty owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to eligible households during the first 56 days after they have become homeless.
Right to Move	Statutory government guidance (March 2015) enabling social tenants who are in employment, or have an offer of employment, to establish a local connection and receive priority for rehousing where a move is required to avoid hardship.
Qualifying Person	A class of applicants determined by the local housing authority to qualify for Keyways. Only qualifying persons are eligible to join the housing register.
Queue Position	The applicant’s ranking on a shortlist for a property at a given point during the bidding cycle. Queue positions may change throughout the cycle. A higher position increases the likelihood of being allocated the property. Some advertisements specify preference criteria that may affect queue position, such as the need for specific adaptations.

Senior Officer	A senior member of the Housing Allocations Team, Head of Service, or a more senior officer responsible for the Housing Solutions Service, including Director or Executive Director.
Service Level Agreement	An agreement between North Northamptonshire Council and certain Housing Associations that sets out the proportion of properties to be allocated through the Keyways scheme.
Sheltered Housing	Housing that is primarily allocated to older people who have identified support needs and can live independently with some level of support.
Shortlist	A list of applicants who have placed bids for a particular property advertised through Keyways.
Skipped	<p>A term used when an applicant has bid on a property but has been bypassed on the shortlist. Reasons may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The property being unsuitable for the applicant's needs • Changes in circumstances identified through enquiries, including housing related debt • The application of Local Lettings Plans • The property having adaptations intended for disabled applicants
Social Housing	Housing owned by a local authority or housing association and let at rents controlled by national rent policies.
Succession	The process by which a tenancy passes to another person following the death of a secure tenant. This may include a spouse, civil partner, or partner living as such, and in some cases other family members, depending on the tenancy agreement. Anyone who takes over a tenancy in this way is known as a successor, and succession must be formally confirmed by the landlord.

Appendix B Accountability

Document Version Control	
Author (Post holder title):	Housing Allocations Manager
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For internal publication only or external also:	Both
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Change History		
Issue	Date	Comments

Consultees	
Internal	External
All Internal Departments	General Public and Local Residents
All Members / Councillors	North Northamptonshire Council Tenants
	Applicants and Prospective Applicants
	Housing Associations / Registered Providers
	Statutory and Voluntary Organisations
	Local Town and Parish Councils

Accountability		
Granted approval level (CLT / committee)	Approval Date DD / MM/ YYYY	Who is responsible for delivery of the policy
Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee	02/09/2025	Executive Director of Place Director of Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services
Executive	12/05/2026	Executive Director of Place Director of Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services