



ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Villages Housing Association Limited

Original Issue Date:

Last Review Date: May 2008

Next Review Due: May 2010

Author: Bernie McConnell

Approved by VHA Board: 13 June 2008

The Villages Housing Association Limited
This document may not be copied, reproduced, or used in any way, either
whole or in part, without prior permission.

Version Control

(Summarises revisions to the document)

Version Number/ Date	Revision Details	By (person)	Approved by	Board approval date
1				
2	Completely re-written.	Bernie McConnell (Area Director FH)	Jackie Bradley and Anne Jackson	13 June 2008

Distribution /Alert

This document and subsequent changes to it will be distributed to/alerted to the following staff members or groups:

Team Managers	All managers
Team Members	All staff
Board Members	All board members



ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Contents

1	Policy Objectives.....	4
1.1	Local Lettings Policy	4
1.2	Multi-Storey Flats and 3 Storey Flats	4
1.3	Other Designated Areas	5
2	Principles of the Policy	5
3.1	Band One.....	6
3.2	Band Two.....	6
3.3	Band Three	9
4	Mechanisms for Allocating Properties.....	9
4.1	Allocations to Local Authority Nominations & Choice Based lettings	9
4.2	Allocations to Applicants within Bands One and Two	9
4.3	Allocations to Applicants within Band Three.....	10
5	Lettings to People Under 18	10
6	Lettings to Owner Occupiers.....	10
7	Sheltered Housing.....	10
8	Application Review	11
9	Right to Information and Review of Decisions	11
10	Publicising our Service.....	11
11	Relevant Legislation and Regulatory Compliance	11
12	Risk Implications.....	11
13	Policy Monitoring.....	12
14	Overriding Principle	12

1 Policy Objectives

The Villages Housing Association Limited ("The Association") is committed "To be more than just a landlord - working in partnership to create an environment for communities to flourish". We will do this by delivering services which fulfil our objectives and ensure that sufficient new and existing customers choose to live in Villages properties, thereby leading to sustainable communities.

To succeed in building sustainable communities, the Association aims to ensure that our Allocations Policy is fair and accessible. It is designed to assist us in allocating properties to people who are in housing need and who want to live in particular communities.

The Association will ensure that, in implementing the Policy, its legal obligations whether pursuant to its objectives or otherwise are met and will make every effort to ensure that those in need whether through financial hardship, old age or infirmity, are provided with accommodation and relevant associated facilities.

For the purposes of this Policy, "applicant" is a person who wishes to apply for re-housing, including existing Villages tenants.

The Association will deal fairly with all applicants regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, religion/faith, gender, disability, marital status or sexual orientation. The Association remains committed to maximising opportunities for applicants to choose where they live and enhance mobility.

This Policy will apply, in so far as appropriate, to all of our rented properties, with the exception of those areas where Local Lettings Policies apply. To create or maintain stable communities we may from time to time use a Local Letting Policy. Any such Local Letting Policy, which will be consistent with our objectives, will only concern a specific area, block or scheme and will be designed to solve or prevent particular problems and to achieve balance, harmony and well-being in a community.

1.1 Local Lettings Policy

Local Lettings policies are designed to promote sustainability, a sense of community and to achieve balance, harmony and well-being in a designated area.

The Association's Local Lettings Policies apply to multi storey flats, three storey flats, and specific areas where there is an identified history of long standing anti-social behaviour.

1.2 Multi-Storey Flats and 3 Storey Flats

Applicants in the following categories **will not be*** offered properties in multi storey flats and three storey flats: -

- Applicants with children under 16 years who live with them full time.
- Applicants with dogs and/or cats.
- **in exceptional circumstances this rule can be overridden by approval of the Project/Housing Manager. An example may be where an applicant needs multi- storey accommodation for specific needs, disability or mental health issues AND their carer is a child under 16years.**

Applicants in the following category **will be** offered properties in multi storey flats and three storey flats: -

- Applicants with access arrangements to children under 16 years e.g. following separation from a partner.

1.3 Other Designated Areas

When a vacancy occurs in a designated area the Association reserves the right to offer the property to applicants who are likely to contribute to the achievement of balance, harmony and well-being in a community. This may result in under-occupation.

2 Principles of the Policy

This Allocations Policy provides us with a simplified mechanism for allocating properties, which is easy to explain to applicants and assists us in allocating properties to people who want to live in particular areas, thereby increasing satisfaction.

This Policy will be used in conjunction with our Suspension Policy.

3 Banding Criteria

Applications will be prioritised based on a banding system and then date order within each band

The 'banding' system will group all accepted applications according to their circumstances into one of three bands, (see below). Vacant properties will be offered to applicants in housing need from bands one and two.

Allocations to applicants who do not have a housing need, (i.e. those in band three) will only be made when vacant properties are not required by applicants who are deemed to be in housing need and it is consistent with the objects of the Association.

In exceptional circumstances, properties may be allocated outside of the normal Allocations Policy at the discretion of the Association.

The requirements of the Suspension Policy will apply.

3.1 Band One

Housing Need - Emergencies (Evidence will be required)

Applicants who meet the Association's objects because they are in housing need and require accommodation urgently for the following reasons.

Decants/Demolition	A Villages tenant who needs to be (a) decanted temporarily or permanently for works to take place at his/her property that cannot be done or are impractical to do if he/she remains in occupation, or (b) re-housed because his/her existing property requires demolition.
Serious Medical Condition	An applicant who has a life-threatening or terminal medical condition or where a move would be beneficial to the applicant's health even in the short term.
Serious Harassment/Anti-Social Behaviour	An applicant who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is being subjected to serious harassment e.g. racial or sexual • Is being subjected to serious anti-social behaviour. <p>In such circumstances, officers will make thorough investigations and consult where applicable with the applicant's current landlord and/or other agencies.</p>
Domestic Abuse	An applicant who needs to move due to abuse from his/her partner or (a) member(s) of his/her family. NB Evidence will not be required in these circumstances

3.2 Band Two

Housing Need - General (Evidence will be required)

Applicants who meet the Association's objects because they are in housing need and require accommodation for the following reasons.

Other Medical Condition	An applicant or family member moving into the proposed household, whose current accommodation is unsuitable in view of their medical condition.
--------------------------------	---

Homelessness	<p>An applicant who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been accepted as statutory homeless, or potentially homeless within 28 days, by the local authority • Is owed a full re-housing duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.
Decants/Demolition	<p>An applicant who is a tenant of another Registered Social Landlord (RSL), Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) or Local Authority (LA) who needs to be decanted for major works or demolition. This includes permanent moves.</p>
Overcrowding	<p>An applicant living in a property with inadequate bedroom provision. A bedroom is required as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A couple living together including same sex partners • Each family member (not couples) over 18 years of age • A single parent • Children age 5 or over, if of a different sex to other children • People whose medical condition requires that they be in a bedroom of their own.
Property In Poor Condition	<p>An applicant living in a property:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With no basic facilities; e.g. properties with no washing or toilet facilities • With basic facilities shared with people other than family members • With basic facilities in insanitary condition.
Temporary Or Insecure Accommodation	<p>An applicant living in either temporary accommodation (e.g. hostel/refuge) or with an insecure tenure (e.g. served notice).</p> <p>This excludes applicants who are housed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.</p>
Family Living Apart	<p>An applicant with a child or partner who will reside at the tenancy but is currently living in separate accommodation.</p> <p>They do not need to have lived together before.</p>
Inability To Pay Rent/Mortgage	<p>An applicant who is unable to afford the rent/mortgage in their current accommodation, providing it is through no fault of their own.</p>
Children In Flats And	<p>An applicant with children under 10, living in</p>

Maisonettes	<p>accommodation on the first floor or above.</p> <p>An applicant with children under 16, when living in multi-storey accommodation (tower blocks).</p> <p>The age of the children will be determined at the date of the application.</p>
Older / Vulnerable People	<p>An applicant who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finds it difficult heating or maintaining their home for a reason related to their old age or vulnerability • Would benefit from living in sheltered or supported accommodation • Lives above ground floor and is unable to manage stairs • Has a medical condition which would make a move beneficial • Is experiencing social isolation. <p>A person shall be deemed to be 'older' if they are aged 55 or over at the date of the application.</p>
Support Needs	<p>An applicant who needs to move to either provide support, or to receive support.</p>
Relationship Breakdown	<p>An applicant who needs to secure alternative accommodation, as a result of the breakdown of a relationship.</p> <p>This excludes applicants who have caused the breakdown as a result of domestic abuse. Evidence can be from proof of convictions, a victim statement, police or solicitor information or witness statements.</p>
Education And Training	<p>An applicant who is in full time education or undertaking employment training in the locality.</p>
Pregnancy	<p>An applicant who is, or will be, in housing need because the applicant or a member of the applicant's family is expecting a child.</p>
Other Circumstances	<p>An applicant who needs rented housing but cannot obtain this on the open market whether because of his/her economic circumstances or otherwise where the provision of accommodation is within the Association's objects.</p>

3.3 Band Three

Sustainability – Applicants with no ‘housing need’

Independent Living	An applicant with a desire to live independently.
Local Connection	An applicant with a local connection. An applicant will be deemed as having a connection with the locality they wish to move to, if one or more of the following criteria apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They have family living in the area• They have previously lived in the area• They have children attending school in the area• They wish to make a positive and supportive contribution to the local community
Economically Active	An applicant who is currently working in the locality or an applicant who needs to move either: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to take up a firm offer of employment or• to be closer to current employment
An Association Tenant Who Wishes To Move To Another Property	An Association tenant (excluding a tenant with a starter tenancy) who does not qualify above but wishes to move to another Association property for whatever reason.

Existing Association tenants with an identified qualifying housing need will be placed into Band One or Band Two according to their housing need.

Existing Association tenants who wish to move but have no identified qualifying housing need will be placed in Band Three.

4 Mechanisms for Allocating Properties

4.1 Allocations to Local Authority Nominations & Choice Based lettings

The Association remains committed to working in partnership with Local Authorities to assist them in discharging their statutory duties by means of nominations and/or choice based lettings. The properties offered to each authority will be determined at the discretion of the Association in accordance with any arrangement or agreement in force from time to time with the relevant authority subject to any conditions and limitations which they may contain.

4.2 Allocations to Applicants within Bands One and Two

Applicants will be listed in order of the date they registered for accommodation and normally allocations will be made in date order within

each band. However, it may be appropriate in some situations to override date order. For example, Band One is designed to respond to applicants in emergency situations and the Association may decide, in its discretion, that applications should not be responded to in date order. In addition it may decide, in its discretion, that a particular applicant is not suitable for a particular property and a later applicant should be offered a tenancy of that property. These circumstances will be strictly monitored and approved by senior members of staff.

Subject to the above, when a vacancy occurs, an offer of accommodation will be made to the longest standing applicant in Band One requiring that type of property.

If the offer is refused (and there are no other suitable candidates in Band One) then the property will be offered to applicants requiring that type of property in Band Two in order of the date of application.

4.3 Allocations to Applicants within Band Three

Allocations to applicants who do not have a housing need within Bands One and Two, (i.e. those in Band Three) will only be made when vacant properties are not required, and are not likely in the near future to be required, by applicants who are deemed to be in housing need.

We will take account of the size of a household when considering offers of accommodation to ensure that we make best use of our stock and do not cause overcrowding or significant under-occupation. We will operate flexibly when matching people to properties and will respond to the particular needs of communities.

5 Lettings to People Under 18

The Association does not normally allocate properties to people under the age of 18 years. However, in exceptional circumstances we will consider applicants referred through recognised agencies with the appropriate levels of support.

We will consider the young person's housing and support needs and their individual circumstances in making this decision. Our primary objective will be to ensure that a young person receives reasonable levels of support to sustain their tenancy.

6 Lettings to Owner Occupiers

Owner Occupiers can apply for re-housing if a housing need can be identified and it is intended that their current property is to be sold.

7 Sheltered Housing

Sheltered Housing is normally offered to applicants who are aged 55 years or over, or over the age of 50 years and in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

8 Application Review

In order to ensure that our waiting lists are up to date, the Association requires applicants to confirm their continued interest in re-housing at least annually. At this point, any changes in circumstances that may affect their application will be recorded.

Applicants who fail to confirm their continued interest may, at the discretion of the Association, lose their priority.

Applicants whose circumstances have changed, and as a result, are placed in a different band, will maintain their original date of application. At this point, we will also provide applicants with information about their opportunities for re-housing.

9 Right to Information and Review of Decisions

An applicant has the right to request information about any decision relating to their re-housing request, e.g.:-

- to suspend the applicant.
- to place the applicant in a particular band.
- to allocate a particular date to the application.

If the applicant remains dissatisfied with our response to such requests, the Associations Complaints Procedure will be explained and the Complaints Form issued.

10 Publicising our Service

The Association will ensure that advice and information about its Allocations Policy and demand for stock is made available.

11 Relevant Legislation and Regulatory Compliance

Housing Corporation Regulatory Code

Housing associations have a duty to co-operate (as is reasonable in the circumstances) with local authorities in offering accommodation to people with priority on the authority's register (or waiting list), and in assisting the local authority to discharge its housing functions, particularly to the homeless. These duties are set out in Part VI S.170 and Part VII S.213 of the Housing Act 1996.

12 Risk Implications

Failure to follow the principles of this policy could result in breach of the Housing Association Regulatory Code and our commitment to sustainable

communities and providing equality of opportunity. The Deputy Chief Executive will oversee allocations procedures and monitor performance against targets.

13 Policy Monitoring

Targets will be set for: -

- Percentage of properties let at the recommendation of the Local Authority under any nominations agreements or similar arrangements
- Percentage of properties let on first offer
- Re-let times
- Amount of Void rent loss
- Percentage of allocations to BME applicants
- Percentage of stock becoming vacant
- Percentage of customer satisfaction with property
- Percentage of properties unavailable to let
- Percentage of properties available but not yet let

This policy and the Association's performance against targets will be monitored by:

- Collection of Housing Corporation national performance indicators on an annual basis and comparison with peer organisations.
- Quarterly Monitoring Reports to Stockbridge Village Estate Management Committee (SVEMC) and Fitton Hill Estate Management Committee (FHEMC).

This Policy will be reviewed twenty four months from the implementation date.

14 Overriding Principle

Notwithstanding anything contained in this Policy or any associated documents, the Association cannot be obliged to take any action or refrain from taking any action which is not permitted by or otherwise in accordance with its objects from time to time.