
Lettings Policy



April 2026 | This policy relates to Elmbridge Borough Council Residential Properties



Elmbridge
Borough Council

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1. Introduction

Elmbridge Borough Council allocates its directly owned housing stock in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. This policy sets out how properties are allocated and how applicants are prioritised.

The council's stock comprises three categories:

- General needs accommodation let on longer-term tenancies as social rented accommodation
- Homes let as temporary accommodation to homeless households, thereby helping the council meet its legal duties around homelessness
- Homes purchased through the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) where the lettings are initially limited to particular households in the UK via the Afghan Resettlement Programme or the various relocation schemes for Ukrainians, such as Homes for Ukraine

With the exception of homes let as temporary accommodation in relation to our legal duties around homelessness, most vacancies will be allocated to households on the council's Housing Register in accordance with the council's Housing Allocations Policy. A limited number may be offered to existing council tenants requiring a transfer where a clear housing need is identified.

This policy does not cover mutual exchanges, succession or decants, which are addressed in separate housing policies.

We will ensure that our lettings approach supports sustainable tenancies by taking into account affordability, property suitability, and any known support needs at the point of allocation

The council does not manage its housing stock directly and has appointed Pinnacle to undertake day-to-day management in accordance with this policy.

2. Objectives

We aim to:

- Allocate our properties to households in accordance with the priorities of our Housing Allocations Policy
- Operate a lettings process that is simple, transparent and fair

- Support the council in meeting its duties around homelessness and in seeking to minimise the use of nightly-paid temporary accommodation and out-of-borough placements
 - Ensure responsible lettings through proportionate affordability assessments
 - Make full and effective use of housing stock, including seeking to minimise the periods of time that properties are empty
 - Promote equal access for all eligible applicants
 - Comply with relevant legislation and regulatory standards
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3. Definitions

3.1 Choice-Based Lettings (CBL)

The process whereby available social housing properties are advertised, and eligible applicants express interest. Applicants are shortlisted in accordance with the council's Housing Allocation Policy. The council's CBL scheme is called Search Moves and its hosted online at: [Search Moves - Home](#)

3.2 CORE

The Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing (CORE) is a national data collection system managed on behalf of the UK Government. Registered providers are required to submit information on all social housing lettings and sales to monitor trends and inform housing policy.

3.3 Housing Register

The register maintained by Elmbridge Borough Council of applicants assessed as eligible, qualifying, and in housing need under the council's Housing Allocations Policy.

3.4 Direct Let

A property allocated outside the choice-based lettings bidding process in circumstances defined within this policy and the council's Housing Allocations Policy, including emergencies, safeguarding cases, homelessness duties or management moves.

3.5 Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)

A government-funded programme through which the council acquires properties to meet specific housing needs. Most are allocated to support Afghan and Ukrainian resettlement, with a proportion used as temporary accommodation to address wider homelessness pressures. The fund provides grant funding to enable local authorities to purchase homes and respond to both resettlement and homelessness housing need.

3.6 Management Move

A transfer arranged outside the standard allocation process for existing tenants facing significant risk or hardship, such as domestic abuse, confirmed safeguarding concerns, or emergency health and safety issues.

3.7 Mutual Exchange

A process that allows secure tenants to swap their homes with another eligible tenant, subject to landlord consent and compliance with statutory and policy requirements.

3.8 Temporary Accommodation

Short-term housing provided to households to meet the Council's statutory homelessness duties, typically under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. Temporary accommodation is not intended as a permanent housing solution.

3.9 Service Tenancy

A tenancy granted to an employee where occupation of the property is required for the performance of their duties. The right to occupy the property is linked to their employment.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The council has appointed Pinnacle to undertake the day-to-day management of its housing stock in accordance with this policy and relevant legislation.

The council's housing team is responsible for the selection and approval of prospective tenants, ensuring that allocations are made in line with the council's Housing Allocations Policy and statutory requirements.

Pinnacle is responsible for arranging property viewings, undertaking affordability and pre-tenancy checks where applicable, completing tenancy sign-ups, and ensuring that all relevant information is provided to prospective tenants prior to letting.

Pinnacle will also notify the council where a nomination is refused or where any concerns arise prior to letting, to enable appropriate oversight and decision-making.

The council retains overall responsibility for ensuring that allocations are carried out in a fair, consistent and compliant manner.

5. Use of Housing Stock

The council manages a mixed portfolio of housing which includes general needs accommodation and properties used as temporary accommodation to meet its statutory homelessness duties.

The council may, at its discretion and having regard to housing demand and supply within the district, change the use of properties between general needs housing and temporary accommodation.

Such changes will normally take place when a property becomes vacant and is available for re-letting. In some cases, a property used as temporary accommodation may be converted to a longer-term tenancy for the existing occupant where this supports the council's housing objectives and statutory duties.

All decisions regarding the use of stock will be made in a proportionate and consistent manner, taking into account demand, availability of suitable accommodation, and the council's wider housing responsibilities.

6. Allocating Housing Stock – General Needs

Subject to any agreed exceptions, all lettings of council-owned general needs properties will be made in accordance with the council's Housing Allocations Policy and through Search Moves, the council's choice-based lettings scheme.

The council's Housing Allocations Policy complies with the legal requirements of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), alongside other relevant legislation, regulations and government guidance. By allocating general needs homes in accordance with this policy, we will seek to ensure that lettings comply with all relevant statutory requirements and that priority is given to households with an identified housing need.

Properties are advertised through Search Moves. At the close of each bidding period, applicants will be shortlisted and prioritised in line with the Housing Allocations Policy and any specific criteria set out in the property advertisement.

Nominations will then be forwarded to our appointed managing agent, who will undertake a separate assessment to ensure the household is suitable and meets any additional requirements set by the council.

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted and given the opportunity to view the property prior to a formal offer of accommodation being made, subject to the completion of any required affordability and suitability assessments. Where a nomination is refused by the managing agent or the council, the applicant may request a review of the decision in accordance with the Reviews of decisions section of this policy.

The Council is required to submit information on all social housing lettings through the Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing (CORE) system, ensuring compliance with national data reporting requirements

Further information on eligibility and qualification criteria, how applications are prioritised, how special circumstances are considered, and how unacceptable behaviour may affect an application can be found in the council's Housing Allocations Policy, available at: <https://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/housing/applying-for-social-housing/>

7. Allocating Housing Stock – Temporary Accommodation

Elmbridge Borough Council has a statutory duty to secure temporary accommodation for certain households who approach the council as homeless and who are eligible for assistance as per Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended in the Homelessness Act 2002.

Where it is necessary to use council-owned housing stock to discharge this duty, all nominations for temporary accommodation will be made by the council's Housing Solutions team. Properties allocated for this purpose will be used in accordance with homelessness legislation and our agreed policies and procedures.

8. Allocating Housing Stock – Local Authority Housing Fund

The council has used and continues to use, the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to increase the supply of housing available to meet a range of housing needs. A significant proportion of these properties support the UK Government's humanitarian response to Afghan resettlement and the displacement of households following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In addition, a proportion of LAHF properties have been secured to address wider homelessness pressures and are used as temporary accommodation. The LAHF provides grant funding to enable local authorities in England to acquire housing for this purpose, strengthening the council's ability to meet both resettlement commitments and general homelessness duties.

The allocation of LAHF properties will be carried out in accordance with the funding conditions and Memorandum of Understanding in force at the time the property was acquired, and in compliance with any associated Government guidance applicable to the relevant funding round.

From the date of the adoption of this policy, any first let or relet of a LAHF property on a longer-term tenancy (or conversion of a LAHF property from temporary accommodation to a longer-term social housing tenancy), will only be made to a household meeting the eligibility criteria laid down by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and must be registered on the council's housing register

Where appropriate and in conformity with the conditions of the LAHF funding, the identification and selection of qualifying Afghan or Ukrainian households to take up tenancies in LAHF accommodation, will be undertaken by the council's housing team, through collaboration between the Strategy, Enabling and Resettlement Team and Housing Solutions. For properties reserved for households being resettled through the Afghan Resettlement Programme under round 4 of LAHF, the council team will ask that the Home Office (or its representative) put forward a household of suitable size for the property.

Longer-term, LAHF properties originally restricted to letting to qualifying Afghan or Ukrainian households, will be made available to meet wider housing needs, whether that be to meet general homelessness pressures (for use as temporary accommodation) or as use as general needs social housing. Officers will ensure that when such properties become available for re-letting, that checks are carried out and that, if the LAHF conditions allow, the properties be made available for a wider use.

The council is required to submit information on all social housing lettings through the Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing (CORE) system, ensuring compliance with national data reporting requirements.

Where LAHF properties are used as temporary accommodation to meet wider homeless pressures, nominations will be made in accordance with the approach set out in the Temporary Accommodation section of this policy.

9. Allocating Housing Stock – Service Tenancies

The council holds a small number of service tenancies, which are linked to specific employment roles where occupation of the property is required for the effective performance of duties.

Given the limited number of these properties, their future use will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Where a service tenancy becomes available, the council will determine whether the property continues to be required for operational purposes or whether it should be re-designated for alternative use, based on the service needs at that time.

10. Affordability Assessments

We are committed to ensuring that its lettings practices do not contribute to financial hardship or indebtedness for applicants. As a responsible landlord, we will only allocate properties to applicants who can demonstrate that the accommodation is affordable, and that the tenancy is likely to be financially sustainable from the outset.

Affordability assessments, undertaken by our managing agent, are designed to safeguard both the applicant and the landlord. These assessments will consider a range of financial factors to determine whether the applicant can reasonably meet their rental obligations. Affordability assessments of LAHF properties will be carried out in partnership between our managing agent and officers within our Strategy, Enabling and Resettlement Team.

Affordability assessments will take account of:

- The applicant's estimated disposable income after deducting rent and all other essential or priority expenditure.
- A requirement that applicants who are economically active must have a minimum disposable income of at least £30 per week after all essential outgoings have been taken into consideration.
- Any restrictions to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit entitlement that may affect the applicant's ability to cover their rent, such as the benefit cap or the shared accommodation rate applicable to most applicants under the age of 35.

- The availability of any additional funds linked to the Afghan Resettlement Programme (e.g. the integration tariff) or Ukraine programmes that can be claimed by the council and used to support the integration of households, including to help families with meeting their rental obligations,

11. Eligibility

Lettings to our general needs social housing stock will be made in broad conformity with the council's Housing Allocations Policy. That policy sets out the detailed rules on eligibility, and applicants should refer to it for comprehensive information. In brief, the same criteria used to determine eligibility for joining the council's housing register will also apply when assessing access to the council's social rented housing.

Under these criteria, certain persons from abroad, including those who are subject to specific forms of immigration control, as well as individuals who are not deemed to be habitually resident within the Common Travel Area, will not be considered eligible for the council's social housing. These restrictions ensure compliance with statutory requirements relating to the allocation of social housing.

Prospective tenants who have applied and been nominated through the council's Housing Allocations Policy will normally have been assessed as eligible prior to nomination. We will seek confirmation of this eligibility as part of the nomination process. On occasion, we may require further verification checks to be undertaken before an allocation is confirmed, particularly where additional evidence is needed to establish entitlement.

All prospective tenants will be required to undergo Right to Rent checks before a tenancy is granted. These checks will be carried out by our managing agent to ensure compliance with immigration legislation and to verify that the household is legally permitted to occupy rented accommodation in the UK.

12. Ineligibility

We may consider applicants ineligible for an allocation of housing for a number of reasons in line with Elmbridge Borough Council's Housing Allocations Policy which should be referenced for more details, but these include:

Unacceptable behaviour

Where the applicant or any member of the household who will move with them has

engaged in evidenced anti-social behaviour or criminal activity and where we assess that an applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant due to this behaviour. All applications will be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Fraudulent applications and tenancy fraud

Where an applicant or a member of the household is discovered to have knowingly or recklessly made false statements or knowingly withheld information in respect of their housing and where the council excludes them from the housing register and/or where the applicant or member of the household is discovered to have previously committed tenancy fraud and is subject to a period of disqualification from the housing register.

Applicants who own a property

Applicants or a member of their household who own or part-own a property, either in the UK or abroad, will not be eligible (unless the applicant is assessed by the council as having a reasonable preference for accommodation under the Housing Act 1996 (Part VI) as amended).

Applicants with income above an income threshold

If the joint household income is greater than £60,000 gross per year then a household will not be eligible to be granted a secure tenancy with the council (unless the applicant is assessed by the council as having a reasonable preference for accommodation under the Housing Act 1996 (Part VI) as amended). We will apply the income threshold set within the council's housing allocation policy, noting that the thresholds are due to be reviewed at least annually.

Applicants with savings over a threshold

If a household has savings of more than £30,000 an applicant will not be deemed eligible for a letting of one of the council-owned housing stock unless the applicant is assessed by the council as having a reasonable preference for accommodation under the Housing Act 1996 (Part VI) as amended).

Applicants with a debt to the council

Where an applicant, or a member of their household, has an outstanding housing-related debt to the council, including but not limited to rent arrears, service charge arrears, or rechargeable repairs, whether as a current or former tenant, they may be

deemed ineligible for an allocation of housing. Each case will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the level of debt, any repayment arrangements in place, and whether the applicant is engaging to reduce the debt.

Refusal of Nominations

In addition to the ineligibility criteria set out above, there may be circumstances where a nomination is refused following shortlisting or prior to a formal offer being made. This will typically arise following further checks or assessments undertaken by the council or its appointed managing agent.

A refusal may occur where the applicant does not meet the requirements of the tenancy or where, based on the information available, the council considers the household to be unsuitable for the specific property.

Where a nomination is refused, the decision will be recorded with clear reasons, and the applicant will be informed of the outcome. Applicants have the right to request a review of the decision in accordance with Section 13 of this policy.

The council will ensure that all decisions are made in a fair, consistent and proportionate manner.

13. Property Type Eligibility

We will apply the same property eligibility criteria as set out in Elmbridge Borough Council's Housing Allocations Policy. To make the most effective use of its housing stock, we will seek to maximise occupancy of its properties in line with that policy.

For longer-term tenancies, bedroom entitlement will be assessed in accordance with the Department for Work and Pensions guidelines on bedroom entitlement for Housing Benefit and the housing costs element of Universal Credit.

For clarification purposes this is set out below:

Household Bedroom Need	Bedroom Need
Adult person – single	Bedsit / One Bedroom
Adult couple	One bedroom

Household Bedroom Need	Bedroom Need
An overnight carer	One bedroom
Two persons / children of the same sex with less than a ten-year age gap	One bedroom
Two persons / children of different sex both under 10 years of age	One bedroom
Two persons / children of the same sex with more than a ten-year age gap where both are under 16	One bedroom
Two persons / children of different sex, of whom at least one is over 10 years of age	Two bedrooms
Two persons of the same sex with more than a ten-year age gap and where at least one is 16 or over	Two bedrooms

We may, in exceptional circumstances, exercise discretion to apply these criteria flexibly where this is considered reasonable, proportionate and consistent with our legal duties and agreed policies.

For properties used as temporary accommodation, the council may apply these criteria more flexibly, including permitting a degree of over-occupation where necessary to meet urgent housing need. Any such decision will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the suitability of the property, the needs of the household, and relevant statutory duties and guidance.

14. Overcrowding and under occupation

We recognise that changes in household circumstances may result in accommodation becoming overcrowded or under-occupied. In order to make best use of its housing stock, particularly larger homes, we will support households whose

accommodation is no longer suitable and will seek to identify more appropriately sized housing where possible.

Assessments of overcrowding and under-occupation will be made with reference to the bedroom entitlement set out in this policy and the council's Housing Allocations Policy.

We also acknowledge the financial and well-being impacts of accommodation that do not meet household needs. Under-occupation may result in reduced Housing Benefit or Universal Credit entitlement and increased household costs, while overcrowding may adversely affect health, wellbeing and household relationships.

Residents wishing to move due to overcrowding or under-occupation will be advised to:

- **Apply to the council's housing register** ([Register for rehousing](#)). Eligible applicants will be assessed and prioritised in accordance with the council's [Housing Allocations Policy](#), taking into account their need to move because of overcrowding or to downsize.
- **Register on the Home Swapper scheme** (<https://www.homeswapper.co.uk>) to explore potential mutual exchanges.

Our managing agent will provide support with mutual exchange applications and ensure they are processed within statutory timescales.

15. Management Moves

A management move may be granted where an existing tenant faces a significant, evidenced risk in their current accommodation, or where remaining in the property would cause serious hardship. These moves are considered outside of our housing allocations policy and will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances.

Circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Serious domestic abuse.
- Confirmed safeguarding concerns.
- Victimisation, harassment, hate crime or gang-related threats, including cases linked to anti-social behaviour.
- A medical or professional report confirming that the home is no longer suitable, for example where it is urgent health or welfare needs where remaining in the home would cause serious hardship.

- Under-occupation in exceptional hardship circumstances, where Housing Benefit or Universal Credit restrictions are causing significant financial difficulty and a move is necessary to sustain the tenancy.
- Emergency health and safety issues such as fire, flood or other events requiring immediate decant.
- Situations where essential works to a property require the tenant to temporarily or permanently move out.

All requests for a management move will be assessed by our managing agent, in consultation with representatives of the council. Decisions are made on merit and must be supported by appropriate evidence, such as police reports, safeguarding information or medical documentation.

Residents granted a management move will usually receive one direct offer of suitable accommodation. The property offered will be of an appropriate size and type to meet the identified need.

In some cases, particularly where the reason for the move relates to risk or threat, the managing agent may require that the offer is outside the locality where the risk has been identified.

Due to the limited size of our housing stock, the feasibility of offering a suitable property within six months will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and all management move decisions will be subject to availability and may require consideration of alternative housing options where appropriate.

Tenants may remain on, or apply to join, the council's Housing Register.

16. Direct Lets

We may, in certain circumstances, make a direct offer of accommodation to an applicant on the council's Housing Register without advertising the property through Search Moves. The situations in which a direct let may be made are set out in the council's Housing Allocations Policy.

In exceptional cases, an allocation may also be made outside of the council's Allocations Policy. This will only be permitted with the express written consent of the council's Head of Housing Services or the Housing Solutions Manager following consultation with the managing agent. In such cases, the prospective tenant must meet the statutory eligibility criteria for social housing as defined by the Housing Act 1996 and associated regulations and must successfully pass all required Right to Rent checks.

All direct lets will be recorded and monitored to ensure transparency, consistency, and appropriate use.

17. Review of decisions

If an applicant is dissatisfied with a decision made under this policy, they may request a review of that decision. Review requests must be submitted in writing to the council or its managing agent within 21 days of being notified of the decision.

Upon receipt of a review request, the managing agent will acknowledge it as soon as reasonably practicable. The review will be undertaken by a senior officer who was not involved in the original decision.

The reviewing officer will consider whether the decision was made in accordance with this policy and any relevant statutory requirements. The review may also take into account any relevant new information provided by the applicant.

A written outcome will normally be provided within 28 days of receipt of the review request. The outcome will set out the reasons for the decision and any appropriate next steps.

If the applicant remains dissatisfied following the review, they may pursue the council's complaints procedure.

18. Tenancy Policy

For information on our approach to tenure types, tenancy rights, tenancy sustainment, tenancy fraud, future use of our accommodation and the management of Local Authority Housing Fund properties, please refer to our Tenancy Policy.

19. Equality and Diversity

We are committed to fair and equal access to housing. This policy is applied in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate, and information will be provided in accessible formats on request. Allocation outcomes will be monitored to ensure fairness and inclusion.

20. Data Protection

All personal data will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Providing false or misleading information may result in cancellation of an application or tenancy enforcement.

21. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner where required due to legislative or operational changes. Responsibility for monitoring compliance and implementation lies with the Housing Services team.

From April 2027, following Local Government Reorganisation, responsibility for reviewing this policy will transfer to East Surrey Council. Any future review may also form part of a wider consolidation of housing policies across the new authority.

22. Legislation and regulatory standards

Relevant legislation and regulation include, but are not limited to:

- Housing Acts 1988 and 1996
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Localism Act 2011
- Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- Homelessness Act 2002.
- Immigration (Residential Accommodation) (Prescribed Requirements & codes of practice) (Amendment) Order 2016
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Homelessness Prevention Act 2017
- Regulator of Social Housing - Tenancy Standard – Consumer Standard 2024
- Renters Rights Act 2025