



Housing Allocations Policy consultation

Open date: 11 July 2024

Close date: 22 August 2024

Name: Choice Based Lettings Team

Email: housingconsulteecomments@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Overview

We are currently reviewing our housing allocations policy and want your feedback on the proposed changes.

We are required to have a housing allocations policy to determine the procedures that are followed when assessing the eligibility of applicants and to allocate housing stock. The policy details how applicants, via the Bucks Home Choice scheme, can apply to the housing register, what the eligibility requirements are, how the assessment process works, and how housing is allocated.

View the [current housing allocations policy](#) on the Buckinghamshire Council website.

We are proposing the following changes to our allocations policy:

- create a Buckinghamshire-wide housing area and remove legacy district boundaries
- increase the number of years to qualify for residency from two to five years.
- introduce residency requirements for the over 55 exception group
- strengthen the priority for households in temporary accommodation
- strengthen the priority for households that have been assessed as homeless and are not in temporary accommodation
- redefine the requirements for households under-occupying affordable housing that are willing to downsize
- clarify when the Council may use automatic bidding to proactively match priority households with available housing
- clarify when the Council may allocate a property directly to an applicant

- revise bedroom standards for households with children over the age of 18

If the proposed policy changes are adopted, reregistration will be required, in which case applicants will be prompted to reregister when logging into their Bucks Home Choice application. The Choice Based Lettings team will then reassess their application against the provisions of the new policy and issue a reassessment decision which would include the right to a statutory review.

We want to hear feedback on the proposed changes from current and prospective housing tenants, Buckinghamshire residents, and our partners.

We are also making the following changes to comply with legislation and government guidance, and are therefore not consulting on them:

- update the local connection exceptions list to include households fleeing domestic violence (to comply with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021)
- updates to the local connection exceptions list to include households on government defined settlement schemes (e.g. Ukrainians, Afghans)
- updates to the priority banding list to strengthen the priority given to armed forces veterans and their spouses

Related documents and links

Before you respond to this activity, please have a look at the following documents, available at yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com:

- [Summary of proposed policy changes](#)
- [Proposed allocations policy](#)

How to have your say

You can tell us your views in one of the following ways:

- complete the online survey at yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com
- complete, and return, a printed version of this document
- if you require additional support to complete the survey, please call our customer service team on 01296 585168

If you have any questions about this activity, please email us at housingconsulteecomments@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Please tell us your views by 11:59pm on Thursday 22 August 2024.

What happens next

Once the consultation has closed, we will consider the comments received and make amendments to the draft policy where relevant. The policy will then be finalised and go forward for adoption at Council by the end of 2024.

Privacy

We will use the information you provide here only for this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details. For more information about data and privacy, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

If you have questions about data and privacy, please email us on dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. Or write to our Data Protection Officer at Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF.

Housing Allocations Policy consultation – printed survey

1) Create a Buckinghamshire-wide housing area and remove legacy district boundaries

In April 2020, Buckinghamshire Council became a single unitary council, replacing Buckinghamshire County Council and Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe District Councils.

We are proposing to reflect this in the housing allocations policy by removing the legacy district areas and instead creating a Buckinghamshire wide housing area within which local connection will be determined.

Currently, an applicant can only qualify to register for the legacy district areas to which their local connection applies. For example, an applicant with a local connection to the legacy Wycombe District area will at present only qualify to register for rehousing in the legacy Wycombe area, and not in the rest of the county.

The proposed change to remove legacy district boundaries will result in an applicant's local connection being assessed against the whole Buckinghamshire

Council area. This would mean that an applicant with a local connection to anywhere in the Buckinghamshire Council area will automatically qualify to register for rehousing anywhere in that area. For example, an applicant living in High Wycombe will be able to bid on properties advertised in other parts of the county.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to remove legacy district boundaries?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

2) Increase the number of years to qualify for residency from two to five years

There are consistently more people on the housing register than there are houses available, so to help ensure that the available houses are going to the people who need them most, we are proposing to increase the number of years an applicant must have a local connection to the Buckinghamshire Council area in order to qualify for the housing register.

We are proposing to increase this from two years to five years. This would result in a person needing to have lived or worked in Buckinghamshire for five years preceding the date of their application to the housing register.

There will always need to be exceptions to the local residency requirements, and details about who is on the exceptions list can be found in Section 2.3.3 of the [proposed allocations policy](#) (PDF 425KB).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to increase the number of years an applicant will need to qualify for residency from two years to five years?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

3) Introduce residency requirements for over 55s with no local connection to Buckinghamshire

The current policy allows applicants over the age of 55 with no local connection to the Buckinghamshire Council area to qualify to the register for sheltered housing specifically for over 55s.

We are proposing to introduce residency requirements for this group of applicants to ensure that those qualifying for over 55s specific housing have a local connection to the Buckinghamshire Council area and that the sheltered housing available is allocated to residents of Buckinghamshire.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to introduce residency requirements for those over 55?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

4) Strengthen the priority for households in temporary accommodation

We are proposing to strengthen the priority banding of households placed in temporary accommodation by Buckinghamshire Council to help this priority group to move on from Council-funded facilities.

This change is intended to reduce the time homeless households stay in temporary accommodation. This would help decrease the overall need for temporary accommodation and reduce the cost to the Council.

Please see the [Summary of Changes document](#) (PDF 800KB) for priority banding definitions.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to strengthen the priority for households in temporary accommodation?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

5) Strengthen the priority for households that have been assessed as homeless and are not in temporary accommodation

We are proposing to strengthen the priority banding of households that have been assessed as homeless to enable this priority group to have a greater chance of being allocated housing through the Bucks Home Choice register.

This change is intended to increase the number of these households being allocated housing instead of staying in temporary accommodation. This would help decrease the overall need for temporary accommodation and reduce the cost to the Council.

Please see the [Summary of Changes document](#) (PDF 800KB) for priority banding definitions.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to strengthen the priority for households that have been assessed as homeless and are not in temporary accommodation?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

6) Redefine the requirements for households under-occupying affordable housing that are willing to downsize

We are proposing to allow households that are under-occupying their social housing tenancy (in terms of number of bedrooms) to deviate from the bedroom standard if they are willing to relocate to a smaller property. For example, this change would allow a single person or a couple sized household that is occupying a property with three bedrooms to downsize to a property with two bedrooms.

This change is intended to result in a greater number of applicants relocating to smaller properties, releasing the larger properties for allocation to priority households that need them.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to redefine the requirements for households under occupying affordable housing that are willing to downsize?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

7) Clarify when the Council may use automatic bidding to proactively match priority households with available housing

We are proposing to allow an application to be set to automatic bidding in the software where appropriate. This means that the choice-based lettings system would automatically place bids on advertised properties that match the applicant's requirements, such as bedroom need, type of property and floor level requirements in identified cases.

Automatic bidding will be implemented for applicants in priority groups who are not actively engaged in the bidding process on Bucks Home Choice by using their three bids each week on properties that meet their household needs.

The policy would be amended to clarify that automatic bidding can be used in cases of priority applicants, and/or applicants who request or otherwise need support in bidding.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to use automatic bidding to proactively match priority households with available housing?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

8) Clarify when the Council may allocate a property directly to an applicant

We are proposing to include previously homeless households placed in temporary accommodation under a relief duty to the list of applicants that the Council reserves the right to directly let a property to. This means that the property would not be advertised through Bucks Home Choice but directly let to an applicant. A direct allocation would only be offered to this priority group in certain circumstances.

These changes are intended to reduce the time households spend in temporary accommodation, help decrease the overall need for temporary accommodation and reduce the cost to the Council.

Find out more about relief duty on the [government website](#).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to add homeless households placed in temporary accommodation under a relief duty to the list of applicants the Council reserves the right to directly allocate housing to?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

9) Revise bedroom standards for households with children over the age of 18

We are proposing to make changes to how bedroom standards are applied to households with children over the age of 18. Currently, children over the age of 18 are not eligible to be included within the household and are therefore not factored in when calculating the bedroom standard the household is eligible for.

The proposed change would allow children over the age of 18 to remain eligible as part of the household and be factored into the household's bedroom standard if they might reasonably be expected to reside with the main applicant.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed revision of bedroom standards for households with children over the age of 18?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

Any other comments

If you have any other comments on the proposed changes to the allocations policy, please tell us here:

About you

10) Are you:

Please tick (✓) one option

- I live in Buckinghamshire
- I work in Buckinghamshire
- I study in Buckinghamshire
- I represent or own a business in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a community or voluntary group in Buckinghamshire
- I am an elected representative in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a Parish / Town Council or Town Committee in Buckinghamshire
- I work for Buckinghamshire Council
- I am currently registered on Bucks Home Choice
- Other (please give details below):

11) How did you find out about this consultation?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Local media (newspaper, radio, TV, website or newsfeed)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, Nextdoor or LinkedIn)
- Buckinghamshire Council website or Your Voice Bucks website
- Email or newsletter from Buckinghamshire Council

- Buckinghamshire Council staff or other professionals
- Through working at Buckinghamshire Council
- Friend or family member
- Local community or special interest group
- Councillor, town/parish council or community board
- Other (please give details below):

12) Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation (e.g. a business or voluntary group)?

Please tick (✓) one option

- As an individual (got to question 14)
- As part of an organisation

13) On behalf of an organisation

Please provide the following details:

Name of organisation:

Job title:

End of survey if responding on behalf of an organisation

For individuals - more about you

We want to hear from as many people as possible to understand the views and needs across Buckinghamshire. The following questions help us see if the communities we serve have had the opportunity to be heard through this activity.

All questions are optional. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

14. What is your postcode?

We want to understand the views of people living in different areas. You don't have to provide your postcode, but it helps us plan and make considered decisions.

15. What is your age?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different age groups.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Under 16
- 16 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- Over 85
- Prefer not to say

16. Do you consider yourself to have a disability / disabilities, impairment(s) or long term health condition(s)?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of disabled people, people with impairments and people with long term health conditions.

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Disability / disabilities
- Impairment(s)
- Long term health condition(s)
- No

Prefer not to say

17. Are you:

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different sexes.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

18. How would you describe your ethnicity?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different ethnicities.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Asian - British
- Asian - Bangladeshi
- Asian - Chinese
- Asian - Indian
- Asian - Pakistani
- Any other Asian background - Please give details below
- Black - African
- Black - British
- Black - Caribbean
- Any other Black, African or Caribbean background - Please give details below
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - Mixed or Multiple Ethnic backgrounds British
- Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background - Please give details below
- White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British

- White - Irish
- White - Gypsy or English traveller
- White - Irish Traveller
- White - European
- Any other White background - Please give details below
- Other ethnic group - Arab
- Other ethnic group - Arab British
- Other ethnic group - Please give details below
- Prefer not to say

Please give other details here:

End of the survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please return your completed survey by 11:59pm on 22 August 2024. You can:

- email it to housingconsulteecomments@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- post it to the Choice Based Lettings Team, Buckinghamshire Council, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe HP11 1BB