

Allocations Policy

Purpose	This policy sets out guidelines on how our properties are advertised, allocated and let
Owner	Head of Housing Services
Related documents	<p>Tenure Policy</p> <p>Succession Policy</p> <p>Management Move Procedure</p> <p>Mutual Exchange Procedure</p> <p>Lettings Procedures</p> <p>Downsizing Assistance Scheme</p> <p>The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing – Tenancy Standard</p> <p>Decant Policy</p> <p>Income Management Policy</p>
Approved by	<p>Executive Operations Director</p> <p>Housing Director</p> <p>Community Gateway Group</p>
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Eastlight aims to provide a range of affordable housing for people who cannot afford to obtain housing in the open market.
- 1.2 Eastlight is committed to working in partnership with local authorities to assist them to meet their statutory obligations to people with housing need.
- 1.3 Eastlight recognises how important it is for Eastlight's customers to be able to access alternative housing solutions to address housing need.
- 1.4 This document explains how Eastlight's customers can apply for one of our properties, who gets what property and why, and how properties are advertised.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy sets our guidelines on how our properties are advertised, allocated and let. Lettings to intermediate or key worker accommodation are outside the scope of this policy.

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Eastlight aims to provide affordable, well-managed, rented accommodation to those in housing need or with reasonable preference.
- 3.2 We will:
 - Let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way.
 - Take into account the housing needs and aspirations of our customers and potential customers
 - Demonstrate how we
 - Make the best use of available housing
 - Ensure lettings are compatible with the purpose of the housing
 - Contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities
 - Implement clear application, decision making and appeals processes

4. AIMS AND OUTCOMES

- 4.1 Eastlight advertises and allocates most of its homes through Gateway to Homechoice Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme, a sub-regional scheme consisting of a single housing register and a choice-based lettings scheme for allocating social housing across seven Local Authority areas of Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Maldon and Mid Suffolk.
- 4.2 Housing need is assessed using a sub-regional Common Allocations Policy for properties advertised through Gateway to Homechoice CBL scheme. This is a banding system and considers housing need and time waited on the register.

Details of how the scheme works and how people are assessed can be found on (www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk). Further details regarding the allocation policies of properties outside Gateway to Homechoice operating area can be found on the websites in Appendix A.

- 4.3 We will advertise 100% of our new build properties within the Gateway to Homechoice area through the CBL scheme and normally 100% of our relets but can retain 25% of our properties to offer to our own tenants by way of management moves should we need to do so where we are legally allowed to do so.
- 4.4 Where our properties are not part of Gateway to Homechoice CBL scheme they will be allocated through direct nominations from local authorities and housing need will be assessed through that Local Authority's allocation policy. We can also allocate 25% of these properties to our own tenants by way of management moves should we need to do so.
- 4.5 In exceptional cases a property may not be advertised through Gateway to Homechoice, or allocated through a direct nomination from a Local Authority not part of Gateway to Homechoice, and a direct let may be made – for example:
 - If a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency e.g. fire or flood
 - To enable a management move
 - To facilitate a move while a property is being repaired
 - When a customer's existing property needs to be demolished
 - To meet the requirements of those with specific housing needs
 - If it is specifically adapted and meets a particular need of an applicant
 - If it is needed to provide temporary accommodation or to fulfil a statutory duty for a succession case
- 4.6 In such cases, and to ensure transparency, this will still be reported in the feedback section of the CBL scheme showing that a direct let has been made.
- 4.7 The CBL scheme aims to make allocation services responsive, efficient, and fair. We advertise properties we have available to let and invite applicants to register an interest in properties they would like to rent from us.
- 4.8 We will advertise vacant properties every week. To ensure the best use of properties we may arrange multiple viewings with applicants where the CBL scheme supports this option. Viewings may be done in person or virtually.
- 4.9 Advertisements will include details of:
 - Location
 - Property type
 - Floor level (if flat)
 - Number of bedrooms
 - Any special features, e.g. adaptations, garden
 - Any restrictions on applicants who are eligible
 - Rent and service charges

- 4.10 Applicants can bid for properties they are eligible for and will be able to bid on a certain amount of properties (according to the CBL scheme) per advertising cycle.
- 4.11 There may be certain unforeseen circumstances that arise when a property is advertised via CBL but must be subsequently withdrawn during a bid cycle. This might be because the property is required by a temporary decant or management move.
- 4.12 If an Eastlight customer is considering a move we will expect their existing property to be in a good condition, prior to their move. A reference visit will be made when they apply to the register to move and we may refuse to give a reference until the property is in a good condition. This decision may be waived if the customer needs to move urgently.
- 4.13 When an Eastlight customer is offered a move an exit visit will be carried out and if the condition of the property is poor and they are moving internally we may consider withdrawing the offer of a move.
- 4.14 Our Lettings procedures contain full working details on how Eastlight allocate their properties.
- 4.15 Eastlight may carry out an Affordability Check on applicants, in particular where bids are placed on an affordable rent property, where there is a significant change of household make up, property size and/or do not currently receive any form of benefit but may be entitled to.
- 4.16 The completed Affordability Check will deem whether a property is affordable or unaffordable, and this will be used to assist in the decision whether a property will be allocated.
- 4.17 If an applicant wishes to appeal the decision in relation to affordability, this can be done through our appeals process which is set out in the Affordability Check procedure.
- 4.18 In circumstances where the prospective tenant has a history of bad payment, has been consistently in arrears or has previous courts orders for rent arrears we may ask them to demonstrate a six month clear rent account before they are offered a property. Each applicant will be assessed on an individual basis.
- 4.19 A customer will not be offered a move until their rent account is clear unless there are extreme circumstances which means the customer needs to move urgently or are downsizing and the payment offered offsets the rent debt.
- 4.20 Homes particularly designed for, or accessible to, people with disabilities will be advertised as such, to help applicants with those needs to identify them.
- 4.21 Homes which have been adapted to a very high level may not be included in the CBL scheme and will be directly allocated. The Head of Housing Services in consultation with the team that manages the Local Authority's Housing Register will decide whether the home is to be part of the scheme.
- 4.22 An applicant who is eligible for an adapted property may bid on properties without adaptations in line with the normal bidding procedure but they will be

encouraged to bid on suitable adapted properties as we will not normally adapt a property if they choose to move to a property that is not adapted.

- 4.23 Some housing developments, particularly in villages and where Eastlight has built properties as part of a Section 106 Agreement, may have been designated for people with a local connection to that area. This means that only applicants with a local connection to the area will be given preference for that property.
- 4.24 In some circumstances Eastlight may decide to let properties on a slightly different basis from normal in the interests of building a strong and sustainable community or to deal with particular local issues. The set of criteria where this applies will be called a “local lettings scheme”. This could be used also to improve difficult to let areas and/or to tackle anti-social behaviour. In such cases this will be clearly labelled in the property advert. The decision to apply a local lettings plan will be jointly made by Eastlight and the Local Authority in which the property is situated.

5. DEFINITIONS

CBL – Choice Based Lettings

Gateway to Homechoice – CBL partnership which covers 7 local authorities areas which include: Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Maldon and Mid Suffolk.

6. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1 Eastlight will ensure that we comply with the current regulatory requirements.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 7.1 Equality and diversity within lettings will be monitored and a report will be produced annually to ensure that lettings are in line with demographics of the community.

8. REVIEW

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or if there are legislative changes.

9. DATE OF POLICY

April 2021

Appendix 1

For properties in the Local Authority Areas of of Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Maldon and Mid Suffolk properties are allocated using Gateway to Homechoice allocations scheme which can be found on www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk

For homes in the Tendring Area properties are allocated using Tendring's allocation policy which can be found on www.tendringdc.gov.uk

For homes in the Chelmsford Area properties are allocated using Chelmsford's allocation policy which can be found on www.chelmsford.gov.uk

For homes in the Uttlesford Area properties are allocated using Uttlesford's allocation policy which can be found on www.uttlesford.gov.uk