

Lettings and Allocations Policy



Saffron is a housing association based in Norfolk providing quality homes and services to people across the county and in Suffolk.

We manage over 6,000 homes including affordable homes for those in housing need who cannot afford to rent or buy in the open market.

We offer specialist homes for older and vulnerable adults and are committed to providing new homes to help solve the housing crisis.

Policy Statement/Purpose

The principle of Saffron Housing Group (referred to hereafter as 'Saffron' or 'the Trust') Lettings and Allocations Policy is to set out clear guidelines to ensure that social housing is allocated fairly and according to applicants' priority need for housing, whilst taking into account efficient management of the Trust's social housing stock.

Scope of the document

Saffron is committed to ensuring that properties are allocated fairly, efficiently without prejudice or discrimination. This policy sets our guidelines on how our properties are advertised, allocated and let

Saffron aims to let tenancies that are sustainable in the long term and contribute towards stable communities.

Saffron is committed to working in partnership with Local Authorities (These include but are not limited to; South Norfolk, Breckland, Suffolk Coastal, Waveney, Ipswich, Great Yarmouth, Broadland, Norwich and North Norfolk.) in areas we operate to assist them to meet their statutory obligations to people with housing need.

Aims

- Allocate our properties in a fair, transparent and efficient way
- Be non-discriminatory and promote equal opportunities and diversity
- Ensure properties are let quickly and efficiently whilst maximising occupancy
- Ensure that properties are let with due regard to legal and regulatory obligations
- Create balanced communities and contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function

Eligibility and Assessment

The criteria applied for eligibility and assessment for housing under the Home Options scheme as administered by South Norfolk Council is detailed in the 'Home Options Scheme Guide' (available on website). Other local authorities will have their own eligibility and assessment criteria.

Applications from any person under 18 will only be considered if the applicant has someone or an agency who is prepared to act as a guarantor for the applicant until they reach the age of 18 and will act as guarantor in respect of the rent due.

Saffron expects and retains the right to insist that appropriate support is provided to vulnerable clients prior to a permanent tenancy being allocated

Saffron will carry out an Affordability Check on applicants. 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.

An applicant who is eligible for an adapted property may bid on properties without adaptations in line with the normal bidding process. Saffron would encourage applicants to bid on suitable adapted properties. As we may not be able to adapt a property to meet all their requirements.

Housing staff/closely connected person

Saffron may grant a tenancy of a dwelling to a person who is:

- a) A current employee of the organisation
- b) A closely connected person

Provided the following conditions are met.

1. The employee is not a member of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).
2. The rules of the Trust have been complied with.
3. All interests have been declared and dealt with in accordance with Saffron's Probity Policy, and code of conduct for board members, staff and involved residents
4. The employee or closely connected person has no involvement or influence over the allocation process.
5. The tenancy was allocated on the same terms and in accordance with the same criteria as it would have been allocated in connection with any other beneficiary or potential beneficiary of the trust.
6. Individuals must not seek or accept preferential treatment in the provision of benefits such as housing accommodation.

The approval of the Executive Director of Operations shall be sought before any such applicants are permitted to begin the Choice Based Lettings process. Provided that opportunities for any potential or actual conflicts of interest are resolved, approval will not be unreasonably withheld.

In all cases, the allocation of such accommodation must be approved, or pre-approved, as appropriate, by the Board of Management, for information and transparency.

Saffron must ensure that the association's funds and resources are used properly and efficiently.

Definition of a closely connected person

A closely connected person includes people closely connected to a Board member or current employee as a result of being family members or having a close association. The Code of Conduct provides a fuller explanation of who should be identified as a closely connected person.

Re-Housing of ex Saffron staff

Where staff have left the employment of Saffron and meet the qualifying criteria, they can apply for housing with Saffron

Choice Based Lettings

Saffron is committed to working closely with Local Authorities in areas where we operate in trying to satisfy the local housing need through local Housing Registers in line with the strategic objectives and legal obligations placed upon the local authority, including providing access to households who are accepted as being statutorily homeless.

This joint working is particularly reflected in Saffron's partnership status, and the letting of vacant and available accommodation through South Norfolk Council's Home Options Scheme (a choice-based lettings scheme). The Scheme is committed to providing an element of choice to those seeking rented accommodation whilst also giving reasonable preference to those in greatest, priority housing need.

Properties will be let via the relevant CBL scheme in line with the local authority allocation policy. Under the scheme, eligible applicants will be placed in a band or allocated points according to the level of their housing need as determined by the local authority and will then be eligible to register their interest, or 'bid', for advertised properties.

Saffron also works closely with other local authorities within whose areas it has stock. These include but are not limited to; Breckland, Suffolk Coastal, Waveney, Ipswich, Great Yarmouth, Broadland, Norwich and North Norfolk.

Nominations

Where our properties are not part of a 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.

Tenants who would like to transfer, may also make a housing application via the relevant schemes and be assessed by the local authority.

Independent Community Living

Independent Community Living schemes are usually allocated to those over 60, however Saffron will accept nominations from those whose needs cannot be met in general needs properties. Properties at the schemes are allocated through the local authority home options scheme.

Independent Community Living Plus/ Supported Housing

Independent Community Living Plus and specialist supported housing properties are allocated outside of Home Option schemes. Nominations are through the relevant County Council.

Other Housing Requests

We will co-operate with requests from the Home Office, government or any local authority, to house people with specialist housing requirements, for example, asylum seekers, or under the National Witness Protection Scheme. Such requests would normally be dealt with outside our normal allocations process.

Refusals/Withdrawal of an offer

We may make exceptions to the below criteria if we receive a recommendation from a current landlord or relevant support agency (e.g. probation officer) which demonstrates the applicants/nominees current suitability to hold a tenancy, and we are satisfied that there is a care and/or support plan in place that provide sufficient support to them to maintain the terms and conditions of the tenancy.

Saffron reserve the right to refuse any applicant for the following reasons:

- Where the applicant will not make best use of a specifically adapted property
- New information comes to light after an offer of tenancy is made that would make the applicant ineligible under this policy or the nominating local authority's policy
- A proposed allocation could put either the applicant or members of the surrounding community at significant risk. Evidence to support this would be required
- Affordability -where following an affordability check the rent, or proportion of rent in the case of under occupiers, is not affordable to the household. Support and signposting would be provided to help the applicant become tenancy ready for any future application
- A history of possession proceedings against them
- Rent/mortgage arrears,
 - Where there are current or former arrears of rent or service charges, or other debts owed to Saffron or any other landlord. Exceptions to this are where we have given approval to move to a smaller property because a reduction in welfare benefits/income has made the current home unaffordable
 - Current tenants must have had a clear rent account for at least 3 months at the time of application and are expected to clear any debt accrued since registering their application prior to any offer of rehousing. Former tenant arrears older than 6 years will not be considered.
 - Each applicant will be assessed on an individual basis.
- Serious tenancy breach from applicant
- Unspent criminal convictions, reporting obligations, pending criminal action and risk/harm orders
- Recent history of anti -social behaviour
- Saffron retains the right to use some discretion in the allocation of properties. Consideration will continually be given to the creation and sustaining of balanced communities.

The above list is not exhaustive, and all such applicants will have their applications for housing reviewed and assessed prior to progression or refusal

Saffron reserves the right to withdraw an offer of accommodation at any time throughout the allocation process. Such circumstances may be, but not limited to, when the property is

required for an emergency decant, a fraudulent application is identified, right to remain issues are identified, outstanding debt to the organisation is identified.

Direct Lets / Management Transfers/Sensitive Let

In exceptional cases a property may not be advertised through Home Options, or allocated through a direct nomination from a Local Authority 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

Direct let's will be considered alongside the local authority for the specific area and at the discretion of Saffron. Such as DA, Victims of ASB where serious risk to life is present

Local Lettings Plans

Saffron reserved the right to request a Local Lettings Plan with the LAs where:

- New build estates to ensure we build sustainable communities
- Where the letting criteria has changed (e.g. from sheltered to GN)
- Where there have been high numbers of ASB or High Crime Levels in an area and all new lets should be under a Local Lettings Plan
- Local lettings plans may also include specific initiatives or incentives to assist with letting available homes in areas where we have greater turnover of properties and less demand.

Mutual Exchange

Saffron will facilitate a mutual exchange of properties when requested by a tenant, subject to the incoming tenant meeting our qualifying criteria. Saffron has a separate Mutual Exchange Policy- [link here](#)

Right To Appeal

Applicants have the right to appeal a decision in relation to Lettings. The applicant may also appeal to the Local Authority as determined by the Local Authorities policy.

Equality and Diversity

Saffron are committed to respecting diversity in all aspects of our work and meeting our obligations under the Equality Act. In line with this, we welcome feedback on any aspect of this policy where there is a question over its adherence to this policy

Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

Saffron will ensure that we comply with the current regulatory requirements.

Data Protection

We are committed to applying this policy in line with the General Data Protection Regulations as set out in our Data Protection Policy

Related Documents

Decant Policy

Domestic Abuse and Relationship Policy

Starter Tenancy Policy

Succession Policy and Procedure

Tenancy Policy

ASB Policy

Neighbourhood Management Policy

Mutual Exchange Policy

Allocations and Lettings procedure. Including appeals process

Probity Policy

MONITORING & REVIEW OF THE POLICY

To ensure that there is open and fair access to social housing, the operation of the Lettings and Allocations Policy will be monitored by Saffron's Board

Consulted with CV	
Board/Committee/ Executive	Board
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Officer	Assistant Director – Housing Operations
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