

SAXON WEALD

LETTINGS POLICY

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Next Review: June 2028

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Saxon Weald's approach to allocating and letting its social and affordable rent properties. It covers general needs, retirement, extra care and supported housing but does not include market rent or shared ownership.
- 1.2 This policy is supported by the Lettings Procedure, the Starter Tenancy Procedure, the Mutual Exchange Policy and a number of nominations agreements and protocols held with our local authority partners. It should also be read in conjunction with the Tenancy Policy.
- 1.3 We would like to thank those customers involved in the review of this policy for their valuable support and insight.

2.0 Definition and scope

- *General needs housing* – housing for single people, couples and families who can live independently without additional support.
- *Retirement housing* - housing for older people generally characterised by having additional services of a scheme manager, an emergency alarm call system and communal facilities.
- *Age-restricted housing (general needs)* – housing built specifically for older people but providing no additional services.
- *Supported housing* – housing for groups of people who require specific and intensive support and/or care services (commissioned by the local authority).
- *Extra care housing* – housing for older people, who require specific and intensive care and/or support, that provides 24-hour on-site care services (commissioned by the local authority).
- *Nomination* – a 'nomination' is when a household is appointed to us by a local authority or other relevant agency.
- *Nomination Agreement* – agreements that are in place between Saxon Weald and individual local authorities (LA) that set out the basis on which the LA can make nominations to our empty properties.
- *Transfer* – a transfer is when an existing Saxon Weald tenant moves to another property of ours via our own waiting or transfer list.
- *Choice-based lettings* – a method of allocating adopted by some local authorities where the prospective tenant 'bids' for an available property.
- *Allocations panel* – multi-agency panel set up to co-ordinate and agree the allocations for extra care and supported housing.

- *Right to rent check* – this is a legal requirement for all landlords. The check must be made before the start of any tenancy confirming that the tenant or lodger has the right to rent a property in England.

3.0 Legal and regulatory framework

3.1 Legislation

- **Housing Act 1996** – This Act governs the allocation of properties to applicants. Local authorities must have an allocation scheme for determining priorities and must ensure that they only allocate to 'eligible persons'.
- **Localism Act 2011** – This amended the Housing Act 1996 and gives local authorities more freedom about who can go on their waiting lists.
- **Immigration Act 2014** – This act places a duty on a landlord (or a tenant taking in a lodger) to carry out a 'right to rent' check on each letting. Each adult occupier, not just the named tenant, must have the right to rent.

3.2 Regulation

The Regulator of Social Housing's Tenancy Standard sets out that registered providers must:

- Allocate and let their homes in a fair and transparent way that takes the needs of tenants and prospective tenants into account.
- Support tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence. Where a registered provider ends a tenancy or licence, they must offer affected tenants advice and assistance.
- Offer tenancies or terms of occupation that are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock.
- Meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements or terms of occupation.

4.0 Policy

General approach

- 4.1 Saxon Weald has a fair, transparent and inclusive approach to letting its homes that meets legislative and regulatory requirements. We will adapt our services to meet the specific needs of different customer groups, make reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities and ensure our documentation is available in accessible formats and languages other than English, where required.
- 4.2 We will provide guidance and advice to those wishing to move to alternative accommodation and support with making applications if necessary.
- 4.3 When letting our homes, we will aim to make the process as easy and accessible as possible for our customers. We will operate a digital first approach and will encourage those customers who can self-serve to complete forms, supply documents, access information and sign forms digitally. Where customers are unable to do this we will provide support where needed and tailor our approach to meet their needs, including working with support agencies and advocates.
- 4.4 We will promote the benefits of 'downsizing' to those who may be under-occupying their homes and pro-actively seek suitable alternative housing for those who wish to move from a family sized home to retirement or extra care housing.

- 4.5 We will promote and enable mutual exchanges and provide free subscription to the national HomeSwapper website - <https://www.homeswapper.co.uk>.
- 4.6 Where a property has been adapted, we will aim to match these properties with applicants who will benefit from these adaptations.
- 4.7 We will ensure all our properties are let in a safe, clean condition that meets our lettable standard.

Working with others

- 4.8 We work across multiple local authority areas and allocate our social and affordable rent homes in accordance with their allocation policies and in line with joint nomination agreements. Sometimes nominations agreements will override this Policy as they are legal agreements that we have to comply with.
- 4.9 We also work with a small number of other agencies providing them with accommodation to support their charitable objectives. These include, but are not limited to, armed forces veterans, rough sleepers, domestic abuse survivors and refugees.
- 4.10 Notwithstanding the commitments in our nomination agreements, priority for re-housing will always be given to Saxon Weald customers who we have asked to move because their home is being disposed of or redeveloped.

Supporting sustainable tenancies

- 4.11 To ensure the long-term sustainability of tenancies we complete affordability and vulnerability assessments for all new tenants and where existing tenants are moving to a rent that is higher than they currently pay. The Starter Tenancies Procedure provides details of the criteria and associated risk assessment.
- 4.12 We will take and keep photographic identification of new tenants to tackle tenancy fraud and make sure our homes continue to be lived in by the people named on the tenancy agreement.
- 4.13 We will provide additional advice and support through:
- Providing detailed information on becoming a Saxon Weald customer and holding a tenancy with us, the services we offer and the support available.
 - Offering translation services to applicants who do not speak English as their first language and others who have difficulties with written English.
 - Working closely with applicants and partner agencies to identify any vulnerability or support needs and ensure support packages are in place.

5.0 General needs lettings

- 5.1 Saxon Weald does not hold a register for general needs housing. All new general needs tenants are nominated to us from the relevant local authority.
- 5.2 We have the right to refuse a local authority nomination in certain circumstances. These include:
- Where the potential tenant(s) or a potential member(s) of their household has been the perpetrator of anti-social behaviour to the extent that there has been a breach of any previous tenancy or licence agreement.

- Where the potential tenant(s) has been evicted from, or has left a property where they held the tenancy, because of rent arrears or any other debt related to the property.
- Where the applicant is not able to afford to pay the rent and any other charges (either with support from benefits or not).
- Where impending legislation means that the applicant may not be able to afford the rent and other charges once the legislation is introduced.
- Where the applicant requires a package of care and/or support in order to sustain a tenancy and there is no certainty that this will be provided.
- The applicant is under the age of 18.
- Where a household would be under-occupying the property they have been nominated to.
- Where a property, or its location, is not suitable for the applicant due to their circumstances (including health related circumstances).

5.3 As we do not hold a housing register for general needs housing, existing customers who have a housing need can apply to the relevant local authority or carry out a mutual exchange with another social housing tenant. The exception to this is where they want to move to age-restricted or retirement accommodation (see section 6.0).

5.4 In exceptional circumstances, there may be a need to urgently find alternative accommodation for a household who may be at risk of harm (for example, in some cases of domestic abuse). In these cases, we will facilitate a move from within our own stock. These are called 'management transfers'.

6.0 Lettings for retirement and age-restricted housing

6.1 Saxon Weald holds a waiting list for people over the age of 55 who wish to move into retirement or other age-restricted housing. Where local authority nominations agreements are in place for retirement or age-restricted housing, these will take precedence over our own waiting list.

6.2 The waiting list is open to anyone who meet the eligibility criteria.

6.3 Applicants are assessed on a points-based system. Priority will be awarded to those in housing need, those financially unable to purchase or rent privately, and those with a local connection.

6.4 Generally, we will not accept applications from households already in age-restricted and retirement stock unless there is a specific housing or medical related need to do so.

7.0 Extra care and supported housing

7.1 Each extra care/supported housing scheme is subject to an individual nominations agreement.

7.2 Although the nominations agreements vary, each allocation involves Saxon Weald, the social care authority and/or the housing authority. Together, these parties agree the suitability of the applicant(s) and make the decision on the allocation on a case-by-case basis.

7.3 Saxon Weald will conduct its own assessment to ensure the applicant is suitable for the scheme and the appropriate care and support package is in place. We can

only offer a tenancy if the applicant's care and support needs can be met by a suitable care plan that can be delivered by the on-site care provider.

8.0 Allocating properties outside our nominations agreements

- 8.1 Appendix 1 provides details of the nomination rights we have with each of the local authorities we work in.
- 8.2 In some of these local authority areas, Saxon Weald has the right to a specific percentage of property relets. Where this is the case, we use a points-based system to allocate these properties to existing customers or to retirement housing applicants, see Appendix 2.
- 8.3 If a suitable match for a property is not found through the points-based system, we will support other organisations in the following ways:
- Assist other local authorities with their refugee re-settlement schemes.
 - Allocate properties to Southdown Housing Association customers through their Independent Living Scheme.
 - Assist the homelessness charity, Turning Tides, with their Housing First project.
 - Lease properties to Horsham District Council to avoid families moving into bed & breakfast accommodation out of the district.
 - Lease properties to the 'You Trust', to support survivors of domestic abuse.

9.0 Letting Saxon Weald homes to staff and Board members

- 9.1 Staff and Board members can only be granted a general needs tenancy if they are nominated to us via the local authority or through a mutual exchange. Staff and Board members can apply for retirement or age-restricted housing and are subject to the same qualifying criteria as any other applicant. Any offer of tenancy to a member of staff or Board member must be approved by an Executive Director and reported to the Board at the next available Board meeting.

10.0 Appeals and complaints

- 10.1 Potential or existing tenants who are refused an offer of tenancy following a nomination or are excluded from the direct waiting list have the right to appeal against the decision. An appeal will result in a review of the original decision by the Assistant Director - Housing, or someone who has been given delegated authority to act on their behalf, and a response will be given within 10 working days.
- 10.2 If a customer wishes to complain about the service they have received under this Policy, this should be handled through our complaints policy, which is governed by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

11.0 Monitoring and review

- 11.1 We produce an annual report that provides details of all the lettings that have taken place along with information relating to the households' protected characteristics to ensure lettings are fair, transparent and inclusive.

11.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if there are substantial changes in legislation or best practice.

12.0 Equality and diversity

12.1 We will carry out an Equality and Customer Impact Assessment (ECIA)¹ of this policy to ensure and evidence that the lettable standard is fair and equitable for different customer groups and does not present any barriers to new or prospective tenants.

12.2 Equality and diversity affect all aspects of our business and, as such, its principles are integral to everything we do. As a landlord and employer, Saxon Weald aims to recognise and respond positively to people’s differences, while providing equality of opportunity in relation to the services we provide and support.

12.3 This means that no person or group of people, seeking housing, services, employment or contracts from us, will be treated less favourably because of their or their partner’s, family’s, friend’s or associated person’s protected characteristics, which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Version	Amendment	By	Date
5.0	Changes due to welfare reforms	Les Marjoram	Dec 2012
5.1	Change to reflect different monitoring procedures	Les Marjoram	May 2014
5.2	Minor changes to reflect altered practices and processes	Les Marjoram	Sep 2014
5.3	Insertion of section on hard to let properties	Les Marjoram	Sep 2015
6.0	Comprehensive policy re-write bringing general needs and retirement policies into one document	Kath Hicks	Jul 2016
6.1	Additional clause added to section 5.4	Kath Hicks	Dec 2016
6.2	First point within 6.2 removed and replaced with link to government guidelines	Kath Hicks	Mar 2017
6.3	Clarifying staff and Board application process – section 9.2.	Steven Dennis	Mar 2018
6.4	Definition of right to rent check added in section 2, and Immigration Act 2014 added to section 3. 8.3 added to ensure that applicants have right to rent	Les Marjoram	Sep 2018
7.0	2.0 Clarity regarding definitions for each property type. 4.0 Enhanced policy statement identifying other agencies we might work with to reduce homelessness and our need to provide balanced communities.	Les Marjoram	Jul 2019

¹ The ECIA for this policy is planned for 2026/27.

	8.0 & 9.0 Clearer criteria classification for lettings outside nomination process. 12.0 E&D update		
7.1	Changes to equality and diversity statement following review by ET	Nikki De Sousa	Jul 2021
8.0	Minor updates plus the inclusion of a statement on the provision of reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities.	Kath Hicks	Jul 2022
8.1	Interim review to update policy criteria highlighting the need to complete affordability and vulnerability risk assessments (para 4.5) and enabling customers to move with arrears (para 5.6). Section 5.5 has been amended to strengthen clarity regarding the essential nature of management moves.	Les Marjoram	Nov 2022
8.2	Additional management transfer reason added to 5.	Les Marjoram	Aug 2023
9.0	Three-yearly update incorporating feedback from Policy Review Group.	Les Marjoram AD Housing	Jun 2025
9.1	Sections 7.2 and 7.3 updated to reflect allocations process in place.	Les Marjoram AD Housing	May 2026

Appendix 1 – Percentage of relet properties to which the local authority can nominate a household.

Local Authority	Nomination agreement %
Arun	100
Basingstoke & Dean	100
Brighton & Hove	100
Eastbourne	100
Eastleigh	100
Havant	100
Horsham	50
Lewes	100
Mid-Sussex	100
Rother	100
Southampton	75
Wealden	100
Worthing	100

N.B. To date, all general needs new build properties are 100% nominations from the local authorities but each agreement is negotiated separately for each scheme developed, so this can alter.

Appendix 2 - GUIDE TO THE ALLOCATION OF POINTS FOR RETIREMENT ACCOMMODATION AND MANAGEMENT TRANSFERS

Category	Points award	Notes
Management Transfers (General needs and retirement customers)	350	<p>Examples of where these points may apply include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious risk to personal safety or life, for example, domestic abuse, harassment, intimidation or abuse. • Emergencies where homes are damaged by fire, flood etc. and the repair work will take such a period of time that it would be disruptive to normal life. • Households who must be moved on police advice, as a member of the household would pose a threat to the community. • To re-house households whose properties need to be vacated because they require major works or are due to be demolished (see the Decant Procedures). • Where antisocial behaviour between two households has exhausted our procedures without resolution and the most suitable outcome for all parties would be to move one of them. • Where severe overcrowding is leading to uncontrollable mould growth, despite our best efforts to resolve it, resulting in an unacceptable risk to the household.
Homelessness (Retirement applicants only)	300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who are living in temporary accommodation. • Sofa surfing. • At risk of imminent eviction and a bailiff's warrant has been issued.
Property release / under occupation (General needs and retirement customers)	300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where households are under occupying their home and a transfer would free up a larger property.
Domestic abuse/ ASB (Non-Saxon Weald applicants only)	300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These points will only be awarded where there is a real and imminent threat to the health and safety of the applicants. • Serious risk to personal safety or life, e.g., domestic abuse, harassment, intimidation or abuse. • Supporting evidence must be provided.
Medical (critical) (Retirement applicants only)	300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants are no longer able to manage in their current home, and it cannot be adapted to meet their medical needs. • Applicants have a critical life limiting health condition.
Risk of Homelessness (Retirement applicants only)	200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who are living with family or friends due to relationship breakdown. • Applicants who have been served with a Section 21 or Notice to Quit.
Medical (mobility /disability) (Retirement applicants only)	200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has mobility/disability condition but can manage in their current home. • Applicant has mobility/disability condition but has the option to move to alternative suitable accommodation in the private sector.

Category	Points award	Notes
Unsuitable accommodation (Retirement applicants only)	200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant is living in caravan/mobile home. • Commercial or Farm Dwelling.
Living in borough (Retirement applicants only)	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately housed and resident in borough.
Relocation / moving closer to family (adequately housed) (Retirement applicants only)	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately housed and is not resident in borough
Owner Occupiers (adequately housed) (Retirement applicants only)	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not eligible for housing until property has been sold or exchange of contracts can be provided.