



Housing Allocations Policy

Strategic Housing Services

October 2011

'Moving with Dacorum'

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1. Policy Introduction

The Housing Allocations Policy outlines the Council's approach to registering and assessing applications for Council housing (including Tenant transfers) and nominations to housing associations and comprises the Council's statement on choice based lettings. More detailed guidance will be available to Applicants in the form of a leaflet that will provide a greater level of information to help them with accessing the service and understanding their assessment.

Dacorum Borough Council is aiming to develop a strong partnership with its housing providers within Dacorum coming together to develop a shared vision and policy for letting affordable housing in the Borough. This should lead to an integrated service across the Borough, which should improve access for housing Applicants, create better opportunities for mobility for Tenants and housing customers and create opportunities to share advertising and other services. The partnership is called Moving with Dacorum.

The Moving with Dacorum Partnership includes the following organisations:

Dacorum Borough Council	Circle Anglia Ltd
Guinness Trust	Genesis Housing Group
Hanover HA	Paradigm HA
Aldwyck HA	Metropolitan Housing Trust
Hightown Praetorian and Churches HA	Warden HA
William Sutton HA	Shaftesbury HA
Co-Operative Society Development Ltd	Abbeyfield Society

Each Registered Provider (RP) has its own Allocations Policy and the partnership aims to ensure broad compatibility with this Policy. These different policies mean that each Landlord may have different rules about who is eligible for a property. The Allocations Policy for each RP should be available on their website, or by contacting their offices.

House prices in Dacorum are amongst the highest in the country, pricing many households out of the market and resulting in a significant demand for social rented accommodation. The recession has further exacerbated the situation as an increasing number of households find themselves unable to pay their mortgages or access the private sector rental market. Like many local authorities, numbers on the Council's housing register have almost doubled since 2003 from 3,465 to over 6,000. It is therefore essential that the Council makes best use of its housing stock and operates a transparent and fair allocations policy.

2. Aims

The aims of the service are to:

- Help meet the housing needs of households across Dacorum, in the most effective way;
- Meet legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in Appendix B;
- Contribute to achieving the Borough's priorities with particular regard to equality, choice, eliminating poverty and disadvantage, achieving successful communities and meeting housing need;
- Meet the statutory requirements of Dacorum Borough Council, whilst working genuinely in partnership with partner Landlords to deliver a common vision for a fair and accessible service;
- Operate a Single Housing Register;
- Provide a simple to use, customer-friendly lettings service for affordable housing vacancies in the Borough;
- Set up joint services which will improve the experience for our customers and simplify the application process;
- Give preference to those with a local connection to Dacorum;
- Simplify processes and procedures for Landlord organisations advertising their vacancies;
- Make the best use of the Council's housing stock, in order to maximise rehousing opportunities.

3. Choice

The Housing Allocations Policy meets the obligations of housing legislation which stipulates that the scheme shall include a statement of the Council's policy on offering people who are to be allocated housing accommodation:

- a. a choice of housing accommodation or
- b. the opportunity to express preferences about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.

This Policy considers that to provide choice whilst continuing to meet housing need is the best way to ensure sustainable tenancies and to build settled and stable communities, as Tenants are more likely to meet their tenancy obligations, maintain the property in good condition and stay there for longer.

This Policy seeks to offer a choice of housing options to the widest number of Applicants, including those with specialised needs. Applicants are given the opportunity to express their choice of accommodation and this choice will be maximised to cover a wide range of housing options, including RP vacancies, private rented tenancies, mutual exchanges, supported housing and low cost home ownership options.

The Policy meets the statutory requirements for the allocation of social housing by ensuring that appropriate priority is given to Applicants with multiple needs and that reasonable preference is given to those with the most urgent housing need.

The partnership advertises the majority of vacant stock through the scheme. Applicants are given advice and assistance to allow them to make informed choices about the type of accommodation which best meets their housing needs and aspirations. The property adverts provide important information about the property attributes, to enable Applicants to make informed decisions about which accommodation they want to be offered.

4. Equality and Diversity

Moving with Dacorum is committed to promoting equality of opportunity in housing services and has procedures in place to ensure that all Applicants and Tenants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity.

The Moving with Dacorum Partnership members will:

- Adhere to the Commission for Racial Equality's "Code of Practice in Rented Housing";
- Offer a translation service to anyone who needs it in order to access housing services;
- Adhere to the Equality and Diversity Policy developed by the Dacorum Borough Council;
- Provide written information in other languages or alternative formats such as Braille or large print;
- Provide a Minicom service.

Effective monitoring of homelessness, the housing register and lettings outcomes will be regularly undertaken and the evaluation of this fed back into policy and service development.

4.1 Vulnerable Applicants' Procedure

Moving with Dacorum will identify Applicants who may need support from the information contained in the application form.

Where it is evident from the application form that a person may require support, contact will be made to establish what support or advice is required. This may in some cases require a home visit to assess a person's needs.

A Vulnerable Applicant's Policy and Procedure has been produced to enable Moving with Dacorum to identify potentially vulnerable people who may have difficulties in accessing suitable accommodation.

4.2 Marital Status and Cohabiting Couples

Civil partnerships and couples living together 'as husband and wife' who have not married or formed a civil partnership will have equal treatment with married couples in the Policy.

5. The Housing Register

The Council has a housing allocation scheme for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation. Lettings will only be made from the Housing Register. Within the Housing Register, priority is determined by date of application, the number of points and the respective priority band – please refer to section 7.

Moving with Dacorum operates an open housing register: all members of the public are able to apply for housing within the Borough. There may, however, be some occasions where an Applicant is not eligible for housing as set out in paragraph 5.3.

5.1 Eligibility

To join the housing register Applicants must:

- Be over the age of 16 years;
- Be habitually resident in the common travel area (England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man);
- Not be subject to immigration control or be an Applicant from abroad unless the Applicant is a “qualifying person” as described by law;

An Applicant may not be eligible if he/she, and/or a member of the same household, has engaged in unacceptable behaviour (see 5.3).

5.2 16 and 17 Year Olds

Applicants aged 16 or 17 years will be entitled to apply for accommodation and will primarily be considered for supported housing. The Council will consider the housing and support needs of young people planning to leave care and their progress in sustaining their occupation of supported housing. Where a prospective Tenant is under the age of 18 years, the Council may seek to obtain a rent guarantee or indemnity from a third party until the Tenant is 18. The guarantor will be expected to take responsibility for the rent arrears if the Tenant fails to make proper payments.

5.3 Unacceptable Behaviour

If the Applicant, or any member of the same household, has engaged in unacceptable behaviour serious enough in the Council’s opinion to make him/her an unsuitable Tenant he/she may be refused registration. Unacceptable behaviour is behaviour which may entitle the Applicant’s Landlord to a possession order under Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985. This relates to entitlement to possession on the following grounds:

- Nuisance or annoyance to neighbours;
- Conviction of using the property for illegal or immoral purposes;
- Domestic violence causing the other party to leave;
- Damage or neglect to the property;
- Conviction for an arrestable offence committed in the locality of the property;
- Rent arrears.

An Applicant may be refused registration whether or not the matter has been taken to Court.

Where someone is refused registration due to his/her behaviour, or that of a member of the same household, he/she has the right to request a review of that decision (as outlined in section 14).

Please also see under “Other Assessment Factors” in 7.6 below.

5.4 Councillors, Council Employees and their Close Relatives

Councillors, Council employees and their close relatives can apply to join the housing list. Any such association with the Council must, however, be clearly stated and disclosed on the application form.

If any such Applicant applies for housing or makes a successful bid the Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration) will be informed and must approve the shortlist letting prior to the formal offer being made.

6. Applying to the Housing Register

6.1 Application Form

To apply to join the housing register Applicants are required to complete a housing application form which can be done by:

- Applying online at www.movingwithdacorum.org.uk
- Visiting the Council's Civic Offices in Hemel Hempstead and (part time access) at Berkhamsted and Tring;

6.2 Assistance for Applicants

Applicants:

- Will be offered advice and support if they require assistance with completion of the application form;
- Can only have one active application as the main Applicant on the housing register at any one time;
- May include anyone that may reasonably be expected to live as part of the same household on the application form.

Acceptance onto the housing register is not a guarantee that an offer of accommodation will be made. This is because demand for accommodation within the Borough significantly exceeds supply.

6.3 Confirmation of Identity

Before an offer of accommodation can be made an applicant is required to provide proof of his/her identity and address, together with confirmation of anyone else he/she wishes to be considered for housing as part of the application. An Applicant may send original documentation to the Council by recorded delivery or bring originals to the Customer Services Unit so that copies may be taken. Details of the documentation required can be found in *Appendix C*.

6.4 Changes in Circumstances

If an Applicant's circumstances change, it is his/her responsibility to update his/her application online or contact the Housing Options team. He/she will be required to evidence any change in circumstances e.g. birth of child, birth certificate required; being threatened with eviction, notice to quit required. If the Applicant fails to inform the Housing Options team of a change in circumstances and is subsequently offered accommodation, the offer may be withdrawn.

If any member of the Moving with Dacorum partnership is unable to contact the Applicant using the information provided, the application will be removed until such time as up to date contact information is provided. If this is as a result of a change in circumstances, the Applicant will remain suspended until proofs of the change are provided.

6.5 Fraudulent Applications

If an Applicant does not disclose the full facts, gives false information or does not inform the Housing Options team of any important changes to his/her situation between the first contact and the time a decision about the case is made, he/she may be breaking the law. Anyone doing so

may be prosecuted by the relevant Landlord and if found guilty may be ordered to pay a fine. The Applicant may also lose any property that has been allocated to him/her through repossession of his/her home by the Landlord.

6.6 Deliberately Worsening Circumstances

Where there is evidence that an Applicant has deliberately worsened his/her circumstances in order to qualify for additional points on the register, his/her application will have points deducted for a minimum of one year.

Examples of (but not limited to) where someone may have deliberately worsened his/her circumstances would include:

- Selling or transferring a property that is affordable and suitable for the Applicant's needs in order to qualify for a higher band on the register;
- Moving from an assured/assured shorthold tenancy to insecure, overcrowded accommodation with family or friends in order to qualify for a higher band;
- Moving family, friend and/or any other household into the property in order to qualify for a higher band.

For an Applicant to have deliberately worsened his/her circumstances there must be evidence that it would have been *reasonable* for the Applicant to have remained in his/her original accommodation.

An Applicant who has, or has had, rent arrears with a Landlord (social or private), and/or who has, or has someone in the same household who has, engaged in other forms of unacceptable behaviour, may be considered to have deliberately worsened his/her circumstances (where the Applicant's behaviour is not unacceptable to the level that it has been decided he/she should be ineligible for housing).

Where an Applicant has made no attempt to rectify his/her previous unacceptable behaviour he/she will be considered to have deliberately worsened his/her circumstances and will have points deducted, until efforts have been made to rectify the circumstances.

6.7 An Applicant's Household

In most cases, only someone who is living with the Applicant as part of the same household on a permanent basis at the date of registration, or children born after registration, can be included in the application.

Dependent children (under 18 or in full time further education) joining the household, where it can be evidenced that the Applicant is the sole legal guardian, will be considered as part of the household if they have lived as part of their family for a minimum of 12 months and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Dependent adult relatives who have joined the household because they are unable to live independently may be considered as part of the household. Such cases will need to be referred to the Council's independent Medical Adviser.

6.8 Proof of Access to Children

The Council will check to make sure that any arrangement for access to children does take place and will need to see proof such as Court papers or a letter from both parties' Solicitors confirming the arrangements between the two parties. Where the Applicant has staying contact with children for less than 50% of the time, the children will not be counted as part of the same household when assessing bedroom requirements. Where two Applicants have equal staying contact with their children, evidence of the child's main and principal home is required when assessing bedroom requirements.

6.9 Renewal of Applications

Applicants are required to renew their applications every twelve months to demonstrate that they wish to remain on the Housing Register. An Applicant who does not renew in the due month will be issued with a reminder letter asking him/her to respond within a set time. If the Applicant fails to respond in that time he/she will be removed from the housing list. An Applicant wishing to return to the housing list will need to make a fresh application.

In exceptional circumstances, when the Applicant has been prevented from renewing his/her application (e.g. due to hospitalisation) his/her application may be reinstated. Decisions on the reinstatement of applications will be made by the Strategic Housing Group Manager.

6.10 Removal from the Housing Register

Applicants will be removed from the housing list in circumstances such as:

- At their request, in writing;
- Where they have failed to renew their application at the appropriate time;
- Where they have knowingly withheld or given false, misleading or incomplete information to obtain a tenancy;
- Where they no longer meet the eligibility criteria to remain on the list, or the Council has evidence to suggest that they should never have been registered;
- Where they experience a change in circumstances which means they no longer qualify to remain on the list;
- When they have accepted an offer of accommodation from the Council or other housing provider;

This list is not exhaustive.

When the application is cancelled, the Council will write to the Applicant or his/her representative to notify him/her. Where the Applicant has been highlighted as vulnerable, the Council will contact him/her to check his/her circumstances before cancelling the application. All Applicants whose applications have been cancelled have the right to ask for a review: further details can be found in Section 14.

If the Applicant wishes to re-join the housing register at a later date this will be treated as a new application and a new registration date will apply.

7. Assessment of Applications

7.1 Checks and Assessment

Upon receipt, application forms and accompanying documentation will be considered and appropriate checks carried out. Applications will be considered on the basis of eligibility and information provided on the form and supporting documentation. The scheme will assess all Applicants according to their levels of housing need whilst facilitating more choice of accommodation to its Applicants in accordance with relevant guidelines and in the light of appropriate advice. Upon registration, eligible Applicants will have their applications assessed in accordance with the Council's Points scheme – see *Appendix A*, and be placed into one of five bands:

Band	Points
Platinum	90 and above
Gold +	70 - 89
Gold	51 - 69
Silver	25 – 50
Bronze	0 – 24

7.2 Reasonable Preference

Reasonable preference will be given to the following categories of Applicant:

1. Applicants who are homeless; this includes households who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need;
2. Applicants who are owed a duty by any housing authority or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority;
3. Applicants occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
4. Applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds and
5. Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in the Borough of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

There is, however, no requirement in law to give equal weight to each of the reasonable preference categories.

Factors that will be taken into account include:

- The financial resources available to the Applicant;
- The behaviour of the Applicant (or any member of the same household) which affects his/her suitability to be a Tenant; examples may be unacceptable behaviour or rent arrears;
- Any local connection between the Applicant and the area covered by the allocations scheme.

Additional preference can also be given to people with exceptional circumstances in urgent housing need, such as victims of domestic violence, racial harassment, witnesses of crime and victims of crime at risk of intimidation amounting to violence and people with urgent medical reasons.

7.3 Homeseekers

Homeseekers seeking affordable housing will be persons who are not currently Tenants of the Council within Dacorum and who have not been accepted by Dacorum Borough Council as statutorily homeless. Once a general need Applicant has applied for housing and provided the relevant information he/she will be advised of their points and related band and allowed to bid.

If a general need Applicant has previous arrears with a private or social Landlord the Applicant may be deemed to have deliberately worsened his/her circumstances and have points deducted, thus moving him/her into a different band. If, however, the Applicant has been making regular payments (for over 6 months) in an attempt to clear the debt, he/she may be eligible for bidding. General need Applicants are advised of the number of bedrooms they can bid for at the point of applying.

7.4 Transfers

Under this Policy existing Dacorum Borough Council Tenants can register for a transfer and will be assessed, pointed and banded accordingly. At the point of applying, the Housing Options team will contact Tenancy Services and request that a Landlord reference is completed. A transfer Applicant will not be activated and eligible to bid until the reference is completed. The reference will include:

- Right to transfer;
- Clear rent account;
- Satisfactory condition of the property;
- Lack of unacceptable behaviour.

A request for a transfer on management grounds will only be considered where there are exceptional circumstances, e.g. where a multi-agency assessment highlights sufficient imminent personal risk to any member of the household.

If an Applicant is a joint Tenant of a Registered Provider or Council accommodation and wishes to give up his/her part of the tenancy to live elsewhere, he/she will be registered and eligible to bid for accommodation. If the Applicant is successful in bidding, he/she will be required to relinquish his/her interest in the tenancy before a formal offer can be accepted.

7.5 Homeless Applicants

Applicants who are homeless, or believe they are under threat of losing their homes will be assessed under a separate housing approach. The Housing Solutions Team will identify each Applicant within one of the following categories:

Statutorily Homeless

Applicants with a homeless duty accepted by the Council will be expected actively to bid for suitable accommodation. These Applicants will be monitored and where an Applicant is not bidding for suitable accommodation a member of staff will actively work with him/her to ensure he/she bids when suitable properties become available.

An Applicant with a homeless duty accepted by the Council will be considered to have an urgent need for accommodation and will, therefore, be expected to accept an offer of a property for which he/she has bid. Should the Applicant refuse a property, the homelessness duty will cease unless

the Applicant has submitted a valid reason for refusal in writing to Dacorum Borough Council within 2 working days of viewing the property.

When the Council's duty to a homeless Applicant ceases due to one offer being refused, he/she will be re-pointed accordingly and still allowed to bid. Any temporary accommodation provided by Dacorum Borough Council will, however, be withdrawn.

If working with the Applicant to encourage involvement in the bidding process is unsuccessful, the Housing Solutions Team may then bid on the Applicant's behalf in order to make him/her a final offer of accommodation and discharge the duty.

Where the Applicant has been accepted under the homelessness legislation, the Council will cease to be subject to the homelessness duty if the final offer of accommodation is considered to be suitable and reasonable to occupy, subject to any request for review the Applicant may submit to the Council.

Intentionally Homelessness

An Applicant who has been found to be intentionally homeless can register his/her need and will be awarded fewer points. If any such Applicant or any member of the same household has engaged in unacceptable behaviour, 5.3 above will also apply. The intentional homelessness category will not be considered when assessing multiple needs, as the Applicant will be considered to have deliberately worsened his/her circumstances.

No Fixed Abode

Applicants with no fixed abode will be awarded points where it can be demonstrated that they have no entitlement to other accommodation.

Move On

The Council has arrangements with providers of specialist accommodation to support vulnerable homeless Applicants or young people in moving on into independent living. The Council will consider such requests in consultation with the support provider in order to ensure the person is ready to move on and can be given reasonable preference.

7.6 Other Assessment Factors

Local Connection

A local connection with the Borough of Dacorum is:

- Normal residence in the Borough of Dacorum for at least 6 out of the last 12 months (with the exception of those referred to and living in Supported Accommodation from outside the area);
- Normal residence in the Borough of Dacorum for 3 out of the last 5 years (with the exception of those referred to and living in Supported Accommodation from outside the area);
- Close family association with, for example, parent, grandparent, sibling or child of at least 18 years old who has been living in the Dacorum area for at least 6 out of the last 12 months;
- Permanent employment for 16 hours or more per week in the Borough of Dacorum;
- Membership of Her Majesty's Forces, and have served for at least five years.

Applicants with a local connection to the area covered by Moving with Dacorum will be given preference over Applicants with no local connection within the same band.

In some rural locations, further local connection restrictions may apply to properties subject to planning conditions, restricting occupancy to people from a particular village or locality.

Village Lettings Policy

Applicants wishing to be considered for a village property will need to demonstrate that they meet the following local connection criteria (in priority order) –

- Normal residence in the Village for at least 6 out of the last 12 months or normal residence in the Village for 3 out of the last 5 years;
- Close family - parent, grandparent, sibling or child of at least 18 years old who has been living in the Village for at least 6 out of the last 12 months;
- Permanent employment for 16 hours or more per week in the Village;

Applicants will be assessed according to their level of local connection and their degree of housing need. In some cases an Applicant with low housing need, but a strong local connection (as set out above) to a village may be allocated a property over someone else with higher housing need but a lesser local connection.

Unacceptable Behaviour

All eligible Applicants will be considered for suitable accommodation through Moving with Dacorum, including Applicants who have engaged in unacceptable behaviour as referred to in 5.3 above.

Applicants with current or previous rent arrears which are not serious enough to warrant a decision that they should be ineligible for housing will, however, normally be required to maintain a consistent repayment plan, with terms which are reasonable in all the circumstances, for a minimum of 6 months.

Any Applicant with personal or household-related incidence of unacceptable behaviour (other than rent arrears, which is covered immediately above), which is not serious enough to warrant a decision that he/she should be ineligible for housing, will normally be expected to have maintained a successful tenancy for 1 year since behaving unacceptably or demonstrate that the person who had engaged in such unacceptable behaviour is no longer part of the Applicant's household.

If an Applicant within this category is successful in bidding for accommodation, and the managing Landlord is minded to refuse the application, owing to new information which has come to light, the Landlord must advise Moving with Dacorum in writing of the reasons for refusal.

The managing Landlord will be required to write to the successful Applicant advising him/her why he/she is not being considered for the property and setting out the process of appeal as indicated in section 14.

Housing in Disrepair

Moving with Dacorum will require the Council's Environmental Health team to visit the Applicant's home and assess the condition and hazards of the home. Subject to the outcome of the inspection Environmental Health may make a series of recommendations including, in circumstances where

the property is considered dangerous, award of additional points. However, this assessment will not include overcrowding as this is considered separately.

Overcrowding

Moving with Dacorum will consider overcrowding with reference to lack of bedroom space for persons who permanently live with the Applicant.

Waiting Time

The date of application will be determined by the date the application has been received by the Housing Options team.

Medical Grounds

Moving with Dacorum will only consider the medical condition of an Applicant or a member of the same household where it can be shown the person's needs are:

- Urgent in so far as a medical condition or disability is directly affected by his/her housing circumstances and will deteriorate unless more suitable housing is provided or
- Non-urgent in so far as a medical condition or disability may be directly affected by his/her housing circumstances and may deteriorate unless more suitable housing is provided.

Circumstances that will not normally be considered for medical assessment include

- Asthma
- Children with behaviour issues
- Pregnancy
- Overcrowding
- Minor illness
- Poor conditions in the home such as damp
- Temporary disability such as a broken limb
- People otherwise adequately housed.

Applicants will be asked to provide supporting evidence and complete a medical self-assessment form. Only qualifying assessments will be reviewed by the Council's Medical Adviser, along with any other medical report or occupational therapy report. The medical adviser will advise on the relative medical priority of the Applicant and his/her household and any other re-housing needs, such as a need for ground floor accommodation.

Social or Welfare Needs

This would include, for example, if an Applicant needed to move to a different neighbourhood or Borough in order to give or receive care or to access medical treatment. The term 'Welfare' is intended to encompass not only care or support needs, but also other social needs which do not require ongoing care and support, such as taking up employment, education or training opportunities.

Applicants Financial Resources

In principle, homes provided through Moving with Dacorum are for allocation only to people on low incomes who have limited savings or assets. Such people will find it difficult to meet their housing needs in the market.

There will be a limit on Applicants' financial resources so that anyone over the threshold will have Points deducted. Each case will be assessed against the following factors:

- Income
- Capital and Savings
- The local housing market and interest rates
- Ability of an Applicant to meet his/her housing need in the market place.

8. Access to Bidding

8.1 Access, Points and Advertising

Moving with Dacorum will provide a range of access points to help and support Applicants in bidding for a home. Further details are available in the guidance.

Moving with Dacorum will advertise all properties and Applicants will be invited to place a bid for the properties for which they are eligible. Adverts will provide a description of the type and size of the property, any services provided, details of the rent and any service charge, Council tax band and any restriction placed on the property. The properties will be open for bidding on Thursday 00:01am and will close on Monday 23:59 pm. There may be occasions when the Applicant with the greatest number of points in any given band may not have the highest priority. This may be because:

- The Landlord needs to let the property sensitively, e.g. where there is a single property on a street, or in an estate or within a block of flats that has been a cause of significant problems and the Landlord is concerned to be sensitive to the neighbours with the new Tenant; this approach may also be taken for properties in the immediate vicinity of the property in question, for a fixed period, by agreement with Moving with Dacorum;
- A local lettings plan may be in place;
- The property is specialist accommodation, such as extra care housing for older people.

8.2 Excluded Dwellings

There are some exceptions to the Policy based on Primary and Secondary Legislation:

- Mutual Exchanges between Tenants of RPs or Councils (including those arranged via national schemes such as Homeswapper).

The following cases are also exempted:

- Where a Tenant dies (whether secure, assured or fixed term) and a succession takes place;
- Where a secure or assured tenancy is granted by order of a Court under Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, or Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, or Children Act 1989;
- Where an Introductory Tenancy, Assured Shorthold Starter, or Probationary Tenancy becomes an assured or secure tenancy;

- Where a Tenancy is demoted by Court Order, or, following the expiry of the Demotion period, where a Demoted Tenancy reverts to secure tenancy status.

Occasionally the Moving with Dacorum Partnership will exclude properties from the letting system. This may include the following occasions:

- Where a property is allocated to a relative or carer of a Tenant who has died, but there is no statutory right for that person to succeed to the tenancy;
- Changes to a tenancy that do not result in a vacancy e.g. from joint to sole or sole to joint tenancy;
- A vacancy is required to enable Dacorum Borough Council to discharge its duty to statutorily homeless households;
- A vacancy is required for a customer with acute support needs from supported housing;
- A Landlord needs to rehouse an existing Tenant temporarily in order to carry out repairs, renovation or refurbishment;
- A vacancy is required under the high risk offenders' protocol;
- A vacancy is required because a Moving with Dacorum Partnership member has management reasons to provide accommodation;
- Other exceptional circumstances agreed by the Housing Options team, in consultation with the Strategic Housing Group Manager.

At the end of each year, Moving with Dacorum will publish how many excluded dwellings have accrued.

8.3 Adapted Properties

General needs properties that have been adapted to meet the needs of disabled people will be offered in the first instance to those Applicants requiring adaptations. In the unlikely event no such person is available and the property is considered to be suitable, it may be used as temporary accommodation for a homeless household until such a household is identified.

8.4 Ground Floor

Ground floor flats will be prioritised to those evidencing a need for ground floor accommodation, particularly in retirement and sheltered housing schemes. Customers requiring ground floor accommodation may therefore be ranked above those who have not demonstrated a need for ground floor accommodation.

8.5 Sheltered Housing and Extra/Flexi Care

Sheltered housing properties are designed for people aged 60 or over or aged 50+ with specific housing support needs. Sheltered housing will be available to Applicants who wish to transfer and downsize from a general needs property or can demonstrate in an assessment that they require the level of housing related support offered in this type of accommodation.

Extra Care and Flexi Care sheltered housing services provide an alternative form of care for frail older people whose needs are beyond the provision available within traditional sheltered housing. An Extra Care/ Flexi Care Housing Panel will determine and prioritise the housing related support and care needs of Applicants. (Further information can be found in the Extra Care and Flexi Care policy).

9. Short listing

9.1 Bidding

Moving with Dacorum will publish vacancies each week. Short listing is an automated process providing a systematic and transparent approach to placing Applicants in their correct positions. The list of bidders is based on the standard short listing criteria indicated below:

1. Points and bands;
2. Local Connection with the Borough;
3. Registration date.

9.2 Refusals by Applicants

Where an Applicant refuses an offer of a property for which he/she has placed a bid, Moving with Dacorum will consider whether or not the refusal is reasonable. If the refusal is considered unreasonable, the Applicant will be advised in writing of this and given the opportunity to appeal.

If an Applicant unreasonably refuses 3 properties for which he/she has bid, his/her application will have 40 points removed for a period of 6 months. Applicants will be advised of the potential consequences of refusing properties after the first and second unreasonable refusals.

9.3 Disabled Applicants

Consideration will be given by the Landlord to extend both the notice period given to accept or reject an offer of accommodation and/or the tenancy commencement date in circumstances where a disabled person requires such additional time on account of his/her disability.

9.4 Offer of Accommodation

A successful Homeseeker Applicant will be offered an Introductory Tenancy for a period of 12 months. If the Tenant sustains this tenancy in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement, a secure tenancy will be granted.

A successful Applicant for a housing association vacancy will be nominated to the Landlord. Some of these housing providers operate their own procedures in the allocation of their properties. This means that an Applicant will need to meet their selection criteria, for example income limits, before an offer of accommodation is made by them.

10. Village lettings

Allocations will be made using the 'cascade approach' set out below. Priority will be given to Applicants already resident within the local area (in priority order)

- Normal residence in the Village for at least 6 out of the last 12 months or normal residence in the Village for 3 out of the last 5 years;
- Close family connections - parent, grandparent, sibling or child of at least 18 years old who has been living in the Village for at least 6 out of the last 12 months;
- Permanent employment for 16 hours or more per week in the Village;

If no suitable Tenants can be found, this cascade approach will be applied to those living and/or working in neighbouring parishes.

If no Applicants can show any local connection to the village, the vacant property will be allocated to the Applicant who has the highest level of points.

Villages requiring a local connection in Dacorum: Aldbury, Bovington, Chipperfield, Flaunden, Flamstead, Great Gaddesden, Gaddesden Row, Kings Langley, Little Gaddesden, Long Marston, Markyate, Northchurch, Potten End, Wilstone and Wigginton.

11. Reasons for Overlooking an Applicant.

It is the responsibility of the Housing options team to advise the Applicant that he/she has been overlooked for a property, detailing the reason for this, which will include where:

- The Applicant does not meet an age criterion;
- The Applicant does not meet the Local Lettings Plan;
- There has been a history of unacceptable behaviour in the area and the Landlord is working on regenerating the area;
- There is a need for a sensitive letting, as described previously.

12. Reasons for rejecting an Applicant

RPs or the Council may need to refuse an Applicant, if further evidence comes to light after the initial assessment or when signing up the Tenant. In that case, it is RSP's/Council's responsibility to inform the Applicant of the reasons, which could include the following:

- The area is unsuitable or the Applicant has engaged in unacceptable behaviour, including accrual of current or previous rent arrears;
- The property is unsuitable for Health and Safety reasons;
- The Applicant is suspected of making a fraudulent application.

13. Lettings Plan

Local Lettings Plan

The Council may agree a local lettings plan for specific areas or developments to reflect local circumstances. These will have regard to housing management issues such as the objective of social inclusion, age range of Tenants, vulnerability of Tenants and community stability. Under the local lettings policy some properties may be allocated to Applicants who do not fall within the reasonable preference categories.

The Council will work with statutory and voluntary agencies in the provision of suitable accommodation to meet a housing specific need or demand within the community as far as reasonably practicable.

The Council will produce quarterly bulletins and annual lettings reports detailing the level of points at which each advertised property was offered and let.

14. Reviews and Appeals

The Council will provide an open and fair review and appeals process, in accordance with the legislation, with appropriate support being offered. Applicants have the right to request a review of Moving with Dacorum Partnership decisions on the following grounds:

- They consider they have not been awarded the correct points and banding;
- Not having their application included on the Moving with Dacorum register or
- Removal from the Moving with Dacorum register other than at their own request;

Any review request must be made in writing to the Moving with Dacorum team within 21 days of receipt of notice of points and banding status. The Review will be conducted by a Senior Officer who was not involved in the original assessment. If the Applicant does not agree with the outcome of the review, he/she will be advised of Dacorum Borough Council's complaints procedure and ultimately for the potential for a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Homeless Applicants are subject to a separate Request for Review process.

If an Applicant is unhappy with a partner Landlord decision to refuse him/her for a vacant property he/she will be required to follow the Landlord's appeal/complaints procedure.

15. Exceptions to Policy

In very exceptional circumstances the Assistant Director - Planning, Development and Regeneration (who has responsibility for the Strategic Housing service) has delegated authority to award additional priority to Applicants and to amend the eligibility criteria. All exceptions will be monitored and reported on a monthly basis to the Corporate Director of Housing and Regeneration.

Appendix A - Points scheme

Homelessness	
All people who are homeless (within the meaning of part VII of the Housing 1996 Act); this includes people who are intentionally homeless, and those who are not in priority need	5
People who are owed a duty by the housing authority under homeless legislation, part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)	45
People who are owed a duty by the housing authority under the homeless legislation, part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) will also be provided with a priority card for the first six weeks following their accepted as homeless decision	50 additional points for 6 weeks only
Move on from supported housing projects	50
People with No fixed abode	10
Condition of property	
Minor disrepair where the property would meet a category 2 hazard from D,E,F under the HSSA rating system	5
Major disrepair – where a property meets a category 1 hazard (at least 1 hazard)	15
Sharing kitchen and/or bathroom facilities	10
Lacking kitchen/and or bathroom facilities	15
Overcrowding	
For each person lacking a bedspace (maximum 5 spaces)	15
Inability to separate children of different genders sleeping in same room	
Where eldest is age 5 to 9	20
Where eldest is age 10 +	10
Children in Flats	
Children in first floor flats and above	10
Under Occupation (Dacorum Borough Council Tenants only)	
Under occupation – points are awarded for every bedroom under-occupied and the Tenant is willing to move to a smaller property. Please see Appendix F for more details on the Transfer Incentive Scheme and Tenants Removal Scheme.	20

People who need to move on medical grounds, including grounds relating to disability	
Urgent medical needs	40
Non urgent medical needs	10
People who need to move on social or welfare grounds	
Urgent social or welfare needs	25
Medium social or welfare needs	10
Local Residence and Local Connection to Dacorum	
Applicants meeting one of the criteria listed below - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal residence in the Borough of Dacorum for at least 6 out of the last 12 months (with the exception of those referred to and living in Supported Accommodation from outside the area); • Normal residence in the Borough of Dacorum for 3 out of the last 5 years • Close family association with, for example, parent, grandparent, sibling or child of at least 18 years old who has been living in the Dacorum area for at least 6 out of the last 12 months; • Permanent employment for 16 hours or more per week in the Borough of Dacorum; • Membership of Her Majesty's Forces, who have evidence of previous residency in the Borough, as a result of a former posting in the area, while serving in the Armed Forces. 	40
Additional factors	
Exceptional Management grounds (approved by Strategic Housing Group Manager) Where an immediate move is agreed following detailed risk assessment into incidents of serious domestic violence, hate crime etc (Applicants will only be made one Direct Offer of accommodation)	50
Reduction in points – subject to review after one year unless otherwise stated	
Unacceptable behaviour (other than rent arrears)	Minus 40
Deliberately worsened your circumstances	Minus 40
Rent arrears (reviewed after 6 months although flexibility may be agreed if there are exceptional circumstances in consultation with the Strategic Housing Group Manager and/or Tenants and Leaseholders Group Manager)	Minus 40
Applicants Financial Means	Minus 40
Have received three reasonable offers (reviewed after 6 months)	Minus 40

Points are based on accumulation in order to determine housing need.

Band	Points
Platinum	90 and above
Gold +	70 – 89
Gold	51 - 69
Silver	25 – 50
Bronze	0 – 24

Appendix B - Legal and Regulatory requirements

This Allocations Policy has been written to meet legal and regulatory duties, including the following:

- Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities, November 2002 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for local housing authorities, August 2008 Department of Communities and Local Government
- Fair and flexible: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (Dec 2009)
- Housing Act 1985
 - s.84 of the Housing Act 1985 – grounds for possession
- Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
 - Persons from Abroad (s.160A(1) of the Housing Act 1996)
 - Eligibility (s.160(1)(b) of the Housing Act 1996)
 - s.160A(9) of the Housing Act 1996 – ground for receiving a written decision
 - s167 (2) of the 1996 Act – Reasonable preference
 - Part 7 of the 1996 Act – Homelessness
 - section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3)
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Housing Act 2004
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Section 106 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – local needs
- Equalities Act 2010
- Other circulars and statutory guidance

Appendix C -Eligibility

Applicants wishing to be registered on the Council's Housing List will need to provide the following documentation before an offer of accommodation can be made:

- Proof of identification for every Applicant on the register (photo drivers licence or passport);
- Proof of address, (Utility bill, bank statement, Council tax statement/bill dated within the previous 3 months);
- Proof of residency of children (Child Benefit award letter, Child Tax Credit award letter, court order);
- Proof of pregnancy (maternity notes, letter from GP);
- Proof of income/benefits (bank statement, wage slips, DWP documentation);
- If owner/occupier of property, most recent mortgage statement;
- Confirmation of immigration status and workers registration certificate (if relevant) for persons from abroad;
- Medical evidence (GP or occupational therapist report assessing the suitability of the Applicant's current accommodation);
- Notice of eviction (notice to quit from Landlord);
- Proof of local connection to Dacorum if you live outside the Borough – examples include letter from your employer, proof of addresses of immediate family.

Appendix D – Monitoring and review

The scheme will be closely monitored by the Strategic Housing Team to ensure that it is operating equitably and fairly. This will include:

Number of applications received
Number of applications registered within ten working days
Number of applications excluded from the register
Number of inactive Applicants
Number of properties advertised by type, area and Landlord
Number of properties with s106 local connection required
Number of bids and method of bidding
Number of bids for each property by band
Profile of those bidding, e.g. ethnicity, transfer, homeless Applicant
Number of accepted offers by band
Number of tenancies refused at sign up & reasons
Number of properties with multiple adverts and no bids
Number of review requests
Number of complaints
Number of properties excluded from choice based lettings
Mobility across the Borough

Other information will be collected in order to complete government returns and in order to assess any additional area of operation, as appropriate. The Council will review the Policy annually and minor amendments may be made. Should any significant amendment be required, consultation would be undertaken with relevant stakeholders prior to a decision being made.

Appendix E - Bedroom eligibility

The Policy aims to give Applicants some choice in deciding how many bedrooms they require to meet the needs of their household and reflecting Applicants' ability to pay their housing costs. Any expected child can be included as part of the household when calculating minimum bedroom requirements.

Household make-up	Minimum Bedroom	Maximum Bedroom
Single person	1 Bed	1 Bed
Couple	1 Bed	1 Bed
Single or Couple with 1 Child	2 Bed	2 Bed
Single or Couple with 2 Children (both under 10yrs)	2 Bed	3 Bed
Single or Couple with 2 Children (one of which over 10yrs)	2 Bed	3 Bed
Single or Couple with 3 Children (all under 10yrs)	3 Bed	3 Bed
Single or Couple with 3 Children (one of which over 10yrs)	3 Bed	4 Bed
Single or Couple with 4 Children (all under 10yrs)	3 Bed	4 Bed
Single or Couple with 4 Children (one of which over 10yrs)	3 Bed	4 Bed
Single or Couple with 5 Children (all under 10 yrs)	3 Bed	5 Bed
Single or Couple with 5 Children (one of which over 10yrs)	4 Bed	6 Bed*
Single or Couple with 6 or more Children	4 Bed	6 Bed*

*Currently there are no six bedroom properties in the Borough. The Council will work with families with 5 children or more in order to consider how best their need can be met

Dacorum Borough Council Housing Stock profile

General needs

Bedsits	261
1 bed flats	2307
2 bed flats	1087
3 bed flats	80
1 bed bungalows	509
2 bed bungalows	22
2 bed maisonettes	32
3 bed maisonettes	103
1 bed house	67
2 bed house	1698
3 bed houses	1969
4 bed houses	457
5 bed houses	4

There are 32 sheltered housing schemes and approximately 60 elderly persons properties.

Appendix F – Transfer Incentive Scheme / Tenants Removal Scheme

Available for Tenants over 50 years of age transferring to more suitable accommodation, from 2, 3, 4 bedroom dwellings (flats, maisonettes and houses). The Council knows that many older Tenants would like to move to smaller, more suitable accommodation, but are put off doing so by the thought of all the upheaval and the cost of moving.

In order to help Tenants who do wish to move from 2, 3, 4 bedroom properties to designated Elderly Persons accommodation or, in the case of those people transferring from 3 or 4 bedroom accommodation, either a designated elderly persons dwelling or a General Needs 2 bedroom flat, the Council will FREE OF CHARGE:-

- 1) Arrange and pay for your furniture to be packed and moved.
- 2) Take up and relay your carpets, or if they do not fit provide new carpets including fitting and underlay in the elderly persons dwelling up to an agreed amount.
- 3) Make an allowance for curtains in the new dwelling to an agreed amount, if existing curtains do not fit.
- 4) Arrange for your cooker to be disconnected and to be refitted at your new home, or supply a new electric cooker.
- 5) Arrange and pay for relocation of your washing machine.
- 6) Pay for your telephone to be transferred.

The Council will also make you a one off payment once your transfer has been completed; the amount payable is in accordance with the following scale:

Elderly Tenants moving from 4 bedroom house - £1000.00
Elderly Tenants moving from 3 bedroom house - £750.00
Elderly Tenants moving from 2 bedroom house - £500.00
Elderly Tenants moving from 2/3 bedroom flat - £500.00

To be considered for this scheme, you will need to be registered for a transfer and have enough points on our transfer list to qualify for a move to smaller accommodation.

If you would like to discuss your prospects for a transfer please contact the Housing Reception or the Housing Options team at the Civic Centre.

TENANTS REMOVAL SCHEME – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

At the present time Tenants have the option of either:

- a) Being moved under the existing terms of the scheme, with the Council making all the necessary arrangements, or:
- b) The Tenant being paid a fixed rate payment of £1,275 on completion of the move for all their expenses, with the Tenant or relatives making all the arrangements (receipts are not necessary on this basis).

Please note this payment is in addition to the variable payment, which is dependent on the size and type of the property vacated.

**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC HOUSING TEAM
TELEPHONE: HOUSING OPTIONS TEAM - 01442 228080**