Archie Homes

Allocations Policy

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Policy checklist	
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Author	Archie Homes
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Archie Homes will provide this policy, on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, in audio or other non-written format, and in a variety of languages.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out Archie Homes' approach to allocating our affordable rented homes and ensures we provide customers with a home which meets their needs. We consider the needs of the existing community when letting homes, and the impact of creating a new community when allocating new build homes. We work with Local Authorities to ensure those in housing need are prioritised for our available homes.

1.2 This policy is aligned with the Regulatory Standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing.

2.0 Aims & Objectives

2.1 This policy aims to:

- Make the best use of Archie Homes' homes, ensuring customers' needs are matched with our available homes.
- Contribute to the creation of sustainable communities and tenancies.
- Work with our Local Authority partners to meet their statutory duty.
- Comply with the regulatory framework, and other relevant legislation.
- Ensure lettings made to our colleagues and involved customers are fair, transparent and do not conflict with their employment roles and responsibilities.

3.0 Allocating Homes

3.1 Archie Homes operates across several Local Authority areas and offers 100% nomination rights to the Local Authorities.

3.2 Local Authorities provide reasonable preference to those with housing need, and Archie Homes' participation with the Local Authority scheme ensures those with housing need have priority access to our homes.

3.3 The Local Authority policy describes the types of properties eligible applicants can apply for, how eligible applicants will be prioritised, and the method of allocating homes. In most cases Local Authorities use choice-based lettings systems where customers can express interest in available homes.

3.4 Archie Homes works with our partner Pinnacle who deliver the allocations and lettings service on behalf of Archie Homes. Pinnacle carry out lettings fully in adherence with this policy. Archie Homes meets with Pinnacle on a weekly basis to oversee the lettings process and Pinnacle's performance.

4.0 Transfers

4.1 Archie Homes will consider a transfer in exceptional circumstances, subject to suitable properties being available. We will work with the relevant Local Authority to facilitate the transfer. Exceptional circumstances include:

- Emergency Health and Safety Issues.
- Exceptional cases of Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment, including serious or targeted hate crimes.
- Elderly or disabled customers living in severe hardship as their home is unsuitable.
- Financial circumstances causing unnecessary hardship.
- Domestic Abuse.
- Safeguarding Issues.

4.2 Customers seeking to transfer to another Archie Homes property who are not eligible for a transfer may still apply for housing through the Local Authority scheme. Customers may also be able to swap home through a mutual exchange.

4.3 Where Archie Homes is seeking to rehouse customers as a permanent decant, Archie Homes will work with the customer and the Local Authority to identify a suitable alternative property.

5.0 Local Lettings Policies

5.1 Archie Homes will work with local authorities to develop Local Lettings Policies when an alternative letting approach is required to redress tenancy sustainability, or to maximise the positive impact from the letting of new build homes.

6.0 New Build Homes

6.1 When allocating new build homes, Archie Homes aims to achieve sustainable homes and communities that are attractive to customers and support the Local Authority in its objectives and statutory duty to offer reasonable preference to those in housing need.

6.2 Archie Homes will ensure the requirements of the S106 agreement are met and allocate 100% of lets through the Local Authority scheme.

7.0 Mutual Exchanges

7.1 Archie Homes will support customers to exchange homes through a mutual exchange, in accordance with the Tenancy Standard. Customers seeking to transfer will be required to register for a mutual exchange and Archie Homes will provide advice and assistance, in line with eligibility criteria and statutory guidance.

7.2 A decision to grant or refuse a mutual exchange will be communicated with customers and landlords, in line with the standards and timescales outlined in the guidance.

8.0 Refusals

8.1 There may be some circumstances where a household is not suitable for the property and in these cases Archie Homes, working with Pinnacle and the Local Authority may refuse an applicant. The reasons for refusal below may apply to all lettings including mutual exchanges and transfers. Archie Homes reserves the right to use any information received in decision making.

8.1.1 Debt – where it is identified that the applicant has a former housing related debt either owed to Archie Homes or another landlord, Archie Homes will consider the circumstances to form a decision on whether to allocate a property. The factors considered include how long ago the debt was accrued, the total amount of the debt, the cause of the debt, whether a repayment plan had been agreed and whether the customer had complied with it, and whether the customer's circumstances have changed significantly. Archie Homes will consider each case individually.

8.1.2 Antisocial Behaviour – If there is evidence that the applicant or member of the household has acted and/or been identified as perpetrating antisocial behaviour which makes them unsuitable to be a customer in the property. This will only be in circumstances where the nature and severity of the antisocial behaviour is a serious threat to Archie Homes colleagues, customers or the community. Consideration will be given to how long ago the incidents occurred, if the behaviour was related to the previous address, how the individual has conducted themselves since, and if the customer's circumstances have changed significantly.

8.1.3 Criminal Behaviour – If an applicant or member of the household has been convicted of a serious offence that is unspent, and they may pose a threat or risk to our customers, colleagues or the community the application may be refused. Consideration will be given to how long ago the incidents occurred, if there were factors involved which were related to the previous address, and how the individual has conducted themselves since the conviction. Examples of serious offences include:

- Offences relating to hate crime
- Public order offences, nuisance, vandalism, breach of an injunction
- Dealing, supplying or cultivating controlled drugs
- Burglary, robbery, theft
- Violence
- Indictable offences

8.1.4 Unmet Support Needs – Applicants with unmet support needs, where Archie Homes is unable to identify suitable and sufficient support working with partner agencies may be refused a tenancy.

8.1.5 False Information – If an applicant is found to have deliberately provided false information that is relevant to a housing application, or has deliberately withheld information, which has resulted in improved chances of being offered a home, the applicant may be refused an offer of accommodation.

8.1.6 Tenancy Breaches – Applicants may be refused where there is evidence that the applicant or member of the household has seriously breached a tenancy agreement or has behaved in a way that would constitute a breach of tenancy conditions. The breach will be considered if it would be reasonable for a court to grant a possession order, or if it renders the applicant unsuitable to be an Archie Homes customer. Examples include:

- Not ending a tenancy in accordance with the terms of the tenancy agreement.
- Malicious damage to a property.
- Deliberately withholding information which has resulted in improved chances of being offered a home.
- Unwilling to comply with any imposed conditions of tenancy such as support.

8.1.7 Pets – Archie Homes will consider if an applicant with a pet can be offered a home. It may be appropriate to refuse the offer of accommodation, for example for customers living within a block of flats with communal entrances.

8.1.8 Overcrowding – when offering the property would cause overcrowding.

8.1.9 Ineligible – The applicant is a prescribed as ineligible by the Secretary of State.

9.0 Lettings to Archie Homes employees and Involved Customers

9.1 Archie Homes employees and involved customers are eligible to apply for homes in the same way as any other applicant via the Local Authority lettings system. Employees are required to discuss their intentions with the Head of Housing & Support before applying for or expressing interest in an Archie Homes property. This will enable advise and support to be offered to the employee and to consider the potential for any conflicts of interest and how they may be managed.

9.2 Additional steps are taken to ensure that the allocation has been made fairly and that the individual is able to manage any actual or perceived conflicts between work and home. This also applies to employees who are existing customers looking for a transfer to another property.

9.3 Employees or involved customers applying for accommodation will be subject to the same refusals criteria as any other applicant. Archie Homes reserves the absolute right to refuse an offer of accommodation outside of the standard refusals criteria if the offer is deemed to be inappropriate.

9.4 Archie Homes will ensure lettings to employees and involved customers are fair, transparent and appropriate, and will seek approval from the Group Director of Housing and Support, and the Archie Homes Board.

10.0 Additional Guidance for Mutual Exchanges

10.1 There are, by law, 11 grounds on which a Local Authority or Housing Association can withhold or refuse consent to a mutual exchange:

- Ground 1: There is a Possession Order on the property.
- Ground 2: A Notice of Seeking Possession has been served.

- Ground 2a: The tenant or any member of his household has behaved in an anti-social way and action including possession proceedings, injunctions, anti-social behaviour orders or a demotion order against them are in place or are being sought.
- Ground 3: The property is bigger than is needed by the family wishing to move into it.
- Ground 4: The property is not big enough for the family wishing to move into it.
- Ground 5: The property is tied accommodation.
- Ground 6: The landlord is a charity and the proposed new tenants moving into the property would conflict with the objects of the charity.
- Ground 7: The property has special features that make it suitable for occupation by a physically disabled person who needs it and if the exchange took place there would no longer be such a person living in the property.
- Ground 8: The landlord is a Housing Association or Housing Trust that lets properties to particularly vulnerable people and if the exchange took place there would no longer be such a person living in the property.
- Ground 9: The property is supported housing for people with special needs and if the exchange took place there would no longer be such a person living in the property.
- Ground 10: The property is the subject of a management agreement where the manager is a Housing Association and there are specific arrangements in place that the proposed new tenant is not willing to participate in.

10.2 Requests for mutual exchanges from customers with assured tenancies may be reasonably refused on the grounds specified in section 91 of the Housing Act 1985. Where a household has breached a tenancy agreement it is also possible (under Part IV, S92 (5) of the Housing Act 1985 (Assignment in General)), to make consent to an exchange conditional on any breaches being remedied or obligations performed. This will be at the discretion of Archie Homes. Requests for mutual exchanges where one party has a 1 year (or longer) fixed term assured shorthold tenancy at a social rent or a flexible tenancy may be reasonably refused on the specified grounds contained in Schedule 14 of the Localism Act 2011.

10.3 The refusal criteria set out in section 8 of this policy may also be applied to any request for a mutual exchange.