

Swale Borough Council Allocations Policy Consultation

Swale Borough Council has completed the consultation around the changes we are proposing to make to our Allocations Policy.

The consultation took place over 8 weeks from 6 August until 2 October 2020.

The online survey had 93 responses and 46 comments. Responses overall were positive and in favour of the changes to qualification criteria and banding reasons.

Responses

Answer Choices	Responses	
A member of the public	89.25%	83
A statutory agency	0.00%	0
A registered provider (housing association)	3.23%	3
A Councillor (of Local Authority or Parish)	2.15%	2
A voluntary or charitable organisation	3.23%	3
Other	2.15%	2

Questions relating to changes in Qualification

Question 2 – Residency requirement length reduction

	Responses	
Agreed	47.31%	44
Disagreed	52.69%	49

This question resulted in a split with overall in favour of keeping 4 years.

Question 3 – Increase of income threshold to reflect current market rents

	Responses	
Agreed	76.09%	70
Disagreed	23.91%	22

This proposal was supported by the majority of respondents.

Question 4 – Proposed taper amounts

	Responses	
Agreed	76.09%	70
Disagreed	23.91%	22

This proposal was supported by the majority of respondents.

Question 5 – To take account of employment in the Borough where residence is not meet

	Responses	
Agreed	56.99%	53
Disagreed	43.01%	40

This question resulted in a split with overall in favour of accepting employment.

Questions relating to changes in Banding

Question 6 – Increase banding for households who are Swale Full Duty homeless cases

	Responses	
Agreed	79.57%	74
Disagreed	20.43%	19

This proposal was supported by the majority of respondents.

Question 7 – Increase banding for households who require works through Disabled Facilities Grant

	Responses	
Agreed	94.62%	88
Disagreed	5.38%	5

This proposal was strongly supported by the majority of respondents.

Question 8 – Increase banding for disabled children who require their own bedroom

	Responses	
Agreed	90.32%	84
Disagreed	9.68%	9

This proposal was strongly supported by the majority of respondents.

Question 9 – Rural housing band

	Responses	
Agreed	68.82%	64
Disagreed	31.18%	29

This proposal was supported by the majority of respondents.

Question 10 – Comments

Respondent Comment	Response
Allocation of an extra bedroom for families where one or more of the adult applicants have children from a previous relationship that require a room for visitation or over night stays.	Bedroom calculation is already set out in policy. The policy does not include provision for an extra bedroom and this is not being considered as has not been consulted on.
We think the rural exception special priority banding should also apply to homes developed by Community Land Trust s.	Wording will be revised to include Community Land Trust's who will be registered and need to advertise their properties.
Residency in the Swale district should be increased to a minimum of 5 years to be considered for council housing.	Comment disagreeing with residency proposal.
Only to say as a former Swale support worker I'm glad to see these proposed changes as they will be much more helpful.	Comment supporting.
If possible couldn't the council have all new housing in Swale being built have a percentage of these houses for social housing as part of the permission of the new builds (ie for every 100 new homes built 10 have to be for social housing)	This is dealt with through the Council's Local Plan and cannot be considered within the Allocation's Policy.
Review long term tenants to see if they can and want to be downsized.	Policy awards Band A for existing social tenants in Swale who are under occupying.
Less waiting time for someone in band c minor overcrowding with opposite sex children sharing into their teenage years and want their own rooms for privacy especially girls of puberty age	The banding policy has to prioritise those in greatest need and we cannot allocate to lower bands due to waiting time.
Include mental disability in band A not just physical ones	All medical bands already include both physical and mental health.
My concern is that priority lies with single mothers without employment but not for medical reasons. The majority of couples who find themselves in this position are hard working and take our mortgages and exist as best they can. Single mothers without work, but have no medical reason, should not be allowed to be placed into brand new accommodation on social housing policies in new build estates.	There is no priority for single parents. Households with children are assessed the same whether single or a couple.
Consider Borden for housing and stop flooding Sheppey with over allocation and total lack of improvements in infrastructure and services.	This cannot be considered in the Allocation's Policy.
If someone has been on the register for three years, to move up a band or be offered to join other council areas nearby	The banding policy has to prioritise those in greatest need. We are not proposing to increase band based on waiting time and this is not being considered as has not been consulted on.
I would like to see more accommodation for homeless people ie a shelter	This is dealt with through the Council's Homeless Strategy and cannot be considered within the Allocation's Policy.
For those that have been on the register for a long period of time to be moved up or have some type of priority where bidding is concerned. It's just ridiculous for a family to be bidding for 3 years in band c and not getting anywhere.	The banding policy has to prioritise those in greatest need. We are not proposing to increase band based on waiting time and this is not being considered as has not been consulted on.
Applicants with unsafe home due to not having provision for adaptations to be band A	Households requiring a fully wheelchair adapted property are Band A.
I am shocked at the enormous gap between number of housing applications and housing units available to let between 2018/19. In Faversham alone, I am concerned at the recent figure of over 200 people 'sofasurfing', and therefore the number of vulnerable people living without secure shelter and protection. I am further concerned at recent planning applications for luxury development housing (e.g. in Conyer) which, in the context of present affordable housing needs, is beyond comprehension.	Comment regarding lack of affordable housing.
Just to reinforce support for Band E rural exception site	Comment supporting

properties. This will ensure homes developed on these sites are available to applicants with a local connection, fulfilling the purpose of the schemes in Swale's rural areas.	
I agree that people on band c because they have children who cannot share a bedroom due to medical reasons should be moved to band b	Comment supporting
I agree that should change banding for households with children with disabilities needing an extra bedroom	Comment supporting
Number of people in relation to bedroom size should be taken into account no matter sex of children. A more thorough assessment rather than a general banding. Maybe a home visit to make assessment.	Bedroom need and overcrowding calculation already set out in Allocation's Policy. We cannot consider changing as this has not been consulted on.
Make it easier for someone who needs a house to get one, or lower the rent prices so people can afford, also if you was to buy a house you have to get into debt before purchase House because of the deposit you need	This would be for National Government to set primary legislation.
On a personal matter, my Granddaughter is aged 25 and has lived in Sittingbourne since birth. She is single and has a 7 year old son, and is expecting a baby in October 2020. At present, as she has been told she cannot be placed on the waiting list for a "council house", she is living in one room in her Mother's house. Additionally, she has an acrimonious relationship with her Mother's live in partner, and is desperate for a home of her own. She is also in full employment, currently in Maidstone. Is there any way the proposals can be amended to give people like her consideration?	An applicant must have a housing need defined in the Allocation's Policy. An applicant living in a family home who had their own bedroom would not be overcrowded but would be considered if they had another housing need.
Changing the length of residency would be of particular help to Supported Living as many who come to us with a high level need work hard to reduce this level of need and would not clarify for exceptional circumstances if they came from out of area.	Comment supporting
Full housing benefit should only be paid for a limited time to those able to work, to give them incentive to get a job. Those in social housing need to be monitored and moved on if causing disruption and not allowed further housing if they do not respect the house and area.	Assistance with housing costs is determined by national policy. The registered providers are responsible for managing their tenants.
Look after your residents of swale already before people from outside of swale	Comment disagreeing with residency proposal.
Island housing for island people-and agreements with any other housing associations or councils should NOT be allowed	Comment regarding housing development.
The wording under Part 3, refusals, could be misinterpreted. It states that "Applicants with a full accepted homeless duty by Swale Borough Council will be entitled to refuse one suitable offer of accommodation..." which could be taken to mean they are able to refuse one offer but then still receive another, where as I assume you intend for that 1 offer to be a final offer.	Agree this will be reworded.
You lot have no idea about people if you think that it is ok to do what you propose. There is already 1000,a waiting for housing and by doing what you proposed you will double the amount of people waiting for housing. With no housing for them to go into . What you need to do first is build more social housing. Get the waiting list down. Instead of keep on let's developments being build with so called affordable housing for people to buy. No one is gonna be buying in next few years. Loads of people have or will lose there jobs because of Covid. What is needed is some common sense here about what is going to happen. Look forward look ahead but don't bring in these new changes when social housing can't cope already with how many people need it. Just common sense really.	The proposed Allocation's Policy is to reflect the housing need of households already living in the Borough. Trying to artificially reduce the number of households waiting does not resolve the problem or demonstrate need when new housing is proposed.
This new policy is much fairer and will ensure homes go to	Comment supporting

those most in need rather than those who have been in Swale longest	
How is it that Swale [affordable housing] is advertised in the known London SE postal boroughs Plumstead on through to Walworth with no paid employment within Swale. Resulting on a burden on council tax, housing benefit & other central government qualifying payments?	Only applicants on Swale's housing register can apply for affordable rented housing in Swale. Properties are advertised online so although someone who did a search could see the properties they could not be considered for them.
I am a band c have been for three years I need more space I have a child with autism and adhd and three other children why are people getting b band for having same amount of children with same as me two kids with special needs and yet I am on a c band and waiting time just the same as them and why is it I am minor over crowed but yet sharing a bedroom with one of my daughters	Comment about individual application.
The impact that family may have on residents already living in the immediate neighbourhood. As I have been subjected to a hideous situation for more than 8 years due to social housing neighbours, and have had little support from local council or housing agencies to fix problems that social housing occupants have caused. Also, can you change the criteria that social housing occupants must adhere to, once in their new allocated home, so that repeats of our current situation so not occur again.	Comment about tenant conduct once housed which will be dealt with by the registered provider.
Will allowing those wishing to move on from supported accommodation to be in Band B mean that some will use that route to gain access to social housing?	Move on from supported accommodation is an existing band reason and no change has been proposed in the revised policy.
I believe housing should go to local people first then who have a family connections and then who is employed in swale and who live out side	Comment regarding residence.
I would propose those who are awarded band A already living in social housing should be re homed by their housing association In my opinion a landlord should have a duty of care in that respect to already existing tenants.	Properties are advertised so that a under occupying tenant can choice from any landlord. The property they vacate will then become available for another nomination.
I propose that families that need more bedrooms due to overcrowding because of children be in band B.	Households lacking two or more bedrooms are Band B.
Those that have 2 children or more in a one bedroom property should be allocated to band B as it can cause families stress like me self who lives in a upstairs 1 bedroom flat currently with 4 people in a one bedroom, 2 adults and 2 children.	The overcrowding calculation is defined in the Allocation's Policy. Lacking one bedroom will be minor overcrowding.
Why not give me an emergency band A of 2 years a property rather than band b and band c clients?	Some applicant's in Band A are waiting for fully adapted properties. If a property they have bid for cannot be adapted to meet their needs they will be bypassed property will be offered to the next applicant on the shortlist.
Should not consider people who have not lived in swale area for short time otherwise they can move here to jump the queue	Comment disagreeing with residency proposal.
Since in Swale the demand for social housing is considerably greater than the number of homes available, I'm not sure what the objective is in increasing the number of people on the waiting list when there isn't enough housing for those already on it.	The proposed Allocation's Policy is to reflect the housing need of households already living in the Borough. Trying to artificially reduce the number of households waiting does not resolve the problem or demonstrate need when new housing is proposed.
Taking into consideration a band b for medical conditions not qualifying in band A.	We are not proposing to include a new medical band reason. This is not being considered as has not been consulted on.
Current residents who have medical need should not be penalised for earning above the set income thresholds. Many will not be in a position to buy or privately rent but will want to maintain their independence by working for as long as possible	We are proposing to increase the income taper.

<p>You should consider people that have extensive health problems that need to move closer to family for help</p>	<p>We are not proposing to include family connection at this time. This is not being considered as has not been consulted on.</p>
<p>Would like to see the evidence and data for the proposed changes. Re homeless families with primary school children should be housed so the children can be within the town or village of their existing school</p>	<p>The review has been based on updated legislation and Government guidance. Households are able to bid through Choice Based Lettings so can choice to bid in a specific area rather than the whole Borough if they want.</p>
<p>Please think more of people that need the housing in the local area, I know of people that have been waiting for years on the council list and not been able to get anywhere even with children with disabilities. Please keep the 5 years in local area.</p>	<p>Comment disagreeing with residency proposal.</p>
<p>I am on the housing list and have a band C. I have mental health issues and an 8 year old son. I have a neighbour who is smoking weed regularly (we live in a small block of flats). This smell makes my health worse and gives me severe headaches. His landlord is aware and I have involved the police now. I have told housing this and still I can't get any further help to move even though this is effecting my health and my son. I was told I will have to wait at least 4 years before I have a chance of getting a property. I have tried to move privately but because I am on benefits due to my health no other landlord will help me despite the fact I can get a reference from my current landlord and have never been late on paying my rent. Some help for people in my situation would be a great idea.</p>	<p>Comment about individual application.</p>
<p>I think that more people should be considered for housing so many people who are on a low income and cannot afford private rent are not even looked into as this has been the way for many years also many people from outside our area are considered which is wrong. I'm sure nothing will be done to help people who really need housing and not ones that cheat the system which also seems to be the case.</p>	<p>Our Allocation's Policy has a residency requirement already.</p>
<p>10 responses were No to whether there where any comments or suggestions and 34 skipped the question.</p>	