

# Allocations Policy

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1. Falcon Rural Housing Limited (“the Association”) exists to provide genuinely affordable, good quality rural housing within the counties of Somerset and Devon. It strives to be an ethical organisation working closely with District and Parish Councils to meet proven local housing needs with the support of local communities, whilst delivering tenant services as a priority.
2. Most vacant properties will be offered via the Choice Based Letting (CBL) services maintained by the local authority for that area and any applications made direct to Falcon Rural Housing will be advised to register with the relevant CBL service.
3. All applications from the CBL services will initially be screened to ensure that any local connection criteria, as stated in the Section 106 Planning Agreement for the scheme, or under the Association’s own local connection criteria (as set out as Appendix A to this document) and reiterated in the CBL advertisement are satisfied. All potential tenants identified after the screening process will complete a Falcon Rural Housing application form and will be interviewed in their own home whenever possible. This is to ensure that the information supplied can be verified and is up to date. It also gives the potential tenant face to face contact with the Association and the opportunity for all parties to ask any questions and interact prior to the commencement of any potential tenancy.
4. Once the local connection has been established, tenancies will then be offered taking into account all aspects of the applicants' housing need as per CBL services and the Association’s own findings at interview, but particular regard will be paid to the following matters:-
  - Access to alternative accommodation
  - Existing housing conditions and the length of time experienced
  - Homelessness or impending homelessness
  - Ability of applicant to cope with the housing offered to live independently
  - Social factors, e.g. Loneliness and/or need to move nearer family
  - Employment and/or employment opportunities
  - Any other factor the Association considers should be accounted for, which extend beyond the scope of the CBL requirements e.g.) underoccupation or overoccupation of a property if deemed appropriate, families with children in flats that are first floor or above, etc. These examples are not exhaustive, but each case will be assessed on each individual circumstance
  - Any outstanding rent arrears with the Association or indeed any other landlord,
  - Any history of neighbour disputes and/or anti-social behaviour,
  - Criminal record(s)

The Association reserves the right to make the final decision when allocating a property and in some circumstances it must be noted that this may differ from the allocation priority as indicated by the CBL services.

5. The Association will only consider applications from owner occupiers if there are special circumstances that make it impractical for them to acquire suitable housing on the open market. However, the Association must always assume in the first instance, that this has already been assessed by the Local Authority CBL system.
6. Already having a tenancy of a council house or other affordable rented property must not debar the resident from applying to the Association for alternative accommodation. This is because full account will be taken of the use to which the property will be put once vacated. The Association will always make best use of existing stock whenever as is practicable.

7. Each of the Association's developments is specifically designed to meet the identified priority housing needs of a village and its immediate environs. In letting each property the Association will have regard to meeting needs and may accordingly vary and extend its general Allocation of Tenancies Policy in order to do so

8. Mutual exchanges between tenants will be allowed where the incoming tenant has a local connection and fulfills either the S106 definition of local connection or the Association's own criteria, so long as both parties have written permission from their landlords to execute the mutual exchange.

9. The Association will treat all applications with the utmost confidentiality. All applicants will be assessed objectively and be treated fairly and consistently. Each applicant has the right to inspect the personal information supplied by them and recorded with their application at the registered address of the Association (Falcon Rural Housing Limited, Falcon House, 3a South Street, Wellington, Somerset TA21 8NR) by prior appointment (in accordance with the Association's Data Protection and Access to Personal Information Policy).

10. All applicants interviewed will receive notification in writing as to whether they have been offered a tenancy or not. The Association's decision is final and will not be overturned once a tenancy is offered unless further information that was not disclosed at interview stage comes to light and puts the local connection / housing need into doubt.

<b>Policy information</b>	
Policy owner	Managing Director
Reviewed by	Samantha Southam
Last review completed	July 2016
Next review due	July 2020
Approved & recommended by Management Committee	July 2016
Adopted by Full Board	28 June 2018

## APPENDIX A

# Local Connection Criteria

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Falcon Rural Housing Association exists to provide good quality and affordable rented housing for those people with strong local connections to the rural communities of Somerset and Devon.

Schemes developed by the Association are normally on land subject to Section 106 Planning Agreements which restrict occupancy to people with a local connection who are in housing need. The local connection terms in the Section "106" are set by the Planning Authority. However the Association will work closely with the Parish Council in each area to establish how they would define a local connection to their village and this would then be negotiated, with the agreement of the Planning Authority, into the Section 106 as the defined local connection criteria.

Sometimes, however, due to the Association's core principles, the Section 106 as set by the Planning Authority may not be deemed rigid enough to meet the Association's objectives. Consequently, the Association has its own, additional adopted Local Connection Criteria which are as follows:

Local need affordable housing will be occupied by a person(s) (and their dependent / family) with a proven housing need who cannot afford (to rent or buy) accommodation in the locality and who meets one or more of the following definitions:

- a) The applicant (or a member of the permanent household as stated on the application) has a minimum period of 5 years' permanent and continuous residence in the Parish;
- b) The applicant (or a member of the permanent household as stated on the application) has a minimum period of 5 years' permanent and continuous residence in an adjoining parish;
- c) The applicant (or a member of the permanent household as stated on the application) is not now resident in the parish or an adjoining parish but has a local connection with the parish including a period of permanent residence of 5 years or more within the last 20 years;
- d) The applicant has a strong local connection to the parish in the form of a close family member living in the parish or adjoining parish for 5 years or more (close family member means Mother, Father, Siblings and in some cases Grandparents if the need to live close to them is to give or receive support arising from proven age or medical reasons); or
- e) The applicant (or a member of the permanent household as stated on the application) needs to live close to their place of work in the parish or an adjoining parish. This criterion applies to permanent employment only and the contract for employment must be over 20 hours per week.

### Note:

These criteria are the benchmark set by the Association, but we reserve the right to amend these criteria if requested by either the Local Authority or Parish Council and there is reason for the Association to do so.