

Housing allocation consultation – Frequently Asked Questions

Why are you planning to change the way you allocate social housing in Camden?

We need to make sure our scheme prioritises those who would benefit from housing the most. We allocate around 1,000 homes a year, but have 28,500 applications for housing. We receive an extra 300 applications every month.

We propose to change the rules on who can apply so we can focus on applicants who live in the borough and need our help most.

We can't house everyone who asks us for a home. We're working hard to increase the supply of homes in Camden with our programme to build new, genuinely affordable homes, and bring empty properties back into use, but demand still outstrips supply. With homes in such high demand, we have to ensure they go to local people who would benefit the most. We also need to help people we can't house to find alternatives.

When did you last update your housing allocation scheme?

The scheme was last updated in 2007. A set of interim changes were agreed by Cabinet in October 2013 which, amongst other things, increased points awarded to care leavers and gave more points to some groups ready for independent living.

You know your allocation scheme is not giving priority to those who need it most – why haven't you changed it before now?

Allocations schemes are complex policy statements. Any changes to the scheme don't mean we have more housing to allocate, but changes who gets priority for the stock we do have.

Any proposals need to be carefully modelled to see what the effects of potential changes would be. Given the importance of housing as an issue for local people, it is only appropriate that careful consideration is given to the impact of any proposed changes on applicants for social housing.

You want to close the housing register to people who haven't lived in the borough for very long. What message does this send to people when you are always saying you want Camden to be a place for everyone? It's not is it?

This is about making sure we make the best use of our limited supply of housing stock and use it to provide homes for those who would benefit the most, like homeless families and people fleeing abuse and harassment. We have no choice but to prioritise because we simply can't house everyone who asks us to.

Currently our housing register is open to anyone in the country who wants to apply for housing in Camden. When we first asked the public about possible changes to the way we allocate social housing in the borough, in April 2013, there was strong support for limiting the housing register to local people.

While the Camden Plan is about making Camden a place for everyone, we must acknowledge that we cannot house everyone who asks us to and we have to prioritise.

Your proposals could see 18,000 households told they have no chance of being helped to find housing by Camden Council. What would you say to these people who may have been relying on you to help them?

We can only house around 1,000 households each year. We currently have around 28,500 applicants on the housing register and we receive an extra 300 applications every month. Out of all the applications we have, 60% of applicants have never made a bid on a property.

All this means that the majority of applicants can never be housed by the council. By operating a fairer and more transparent system, we can ensure that applicants who have very little chance of being allocated housing are supported to access other options. If the proposals are approved and you are no longer able to be on the housing register, you will be helped to find alternative ways to find suitable accommodation or improve your present housing situation.

You say there are 1,000 applicants on more than one application for housing. How has duplication been allowed to happen for so long?

In the past, applicants have been able to register for housing as part of their family's applications or as part of their own household. Given the shortage of larger accommodation, we are encouraging residents to make informed choices about who they wish to live with in the future and which type of application increases their prospects of being housed. We think that this is fair given the shortage of larger properties and our desire to have an honest conversation with residents.

What sort of sanctions might you impose on applicants who refuse multiple offers of housing? Why hasn't this been done sooner as it must cause a lot of wasted time and effort?

At this stage, we are not suggesting any form of sanction for applicants who refuse multiple offers of housing. We believe that working with residents individually to help resolve their housing situations and support them to bid on properties effectively will lead to more successful lettings in shorter periods of time and ensure their housing need is met in a timely way. Imposing sanctions on applicants who refuse multiple offers of housing may be something the Council wants to consider in future if applicants continue to fail to attend viewings or accept suitable offers, making it harder for the council to allocate homes effectively.

Is this just a money-saving exercise?

If the proposals are approved, it is forecast that they will reduce the cost of managing the allocation process by £500,000. However, the priority here is to ensure we have a scheme that is clear and transparent and gives priority to local people who would benefit from housing the most.

If you have any further questions, please email hsu@camden.gov.uk or telephone 020 7974 5519.