

Community Wellbeing & Housing Committee



Tuesday 17th January 2023

Title	Housing Register Applications by Housing Register Banding and Calculated Bedroom Need
Purpose of the report	To note
Report Author	Karen Sinclair Group Head Community Wellbeing Ken Emerson Team Manager: Housing Options
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	Not applicable
Corporate Priority	Community Affordable housing Service delivery
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: Not applicable – For information only
Reason for Recommendation	Not applicable

1. Summary of the Report

- 1.1 This report summarises the number of applicants on the Housing Register by their Housing Register Banding and calculated bedroom need.
- 1.2 Members have approved a New Allocations Scheme which will be implemented in April 2023 following a re-registration exercise. This will ensure the Register is fully up to date

2. Background

- 2.1 By law every Local Authority has to have a scheme to show how social housing is allocated. There is no legal right to housing but eligible households are able to join Spelthorne's Housing Register and have an assessment of their circumstances.
- 2.2 The Council operate a Housing Register not a waiting list. Priority is determined by need and there is a banding system in place. Customers accepted onto the Housing Register bid for properties, which are advertised online through Search Moves. Should more than one customer in the same band be shortlisted then a priority date is applied.
- 2.3 Transparency and self-service are key elements of the Allocations Scheme. Having a web-based application form and bidding system means that customers can see how many properties are available to bid on and their relative priority.

2.4 The Housing Register is a live document, and the numbers can change rapidly as can a customer's relative position.

3. Key Issues

3.1 The below table shows the number of applicants on the Housing Register by their Housing Register Banding and calculated bedroom need.

3.2 Interpreting the data. It might appear counter intuitive, but a higher banding does not confer a sense of immediacy to a household's need. Some of the cases of Band A are existing social tenants living in property that is too large and they wish to downsize. We prioritise them to free up family size accommodation for those who need it. Other Band A clients may include for example be wheelchair users living on the second floor of a block of flats with no lift.

3.3 Similarly in Band D there are households in need but because their income is above the qualifying threshold, they are demoted to Band D. Our new Allocations scheme has a higher income threshold to rectify this. We anticipate as a result up to 261 households currently excluded due to income may have a higher banding.

Housing Register Applications by Banding and Calculated Bedroom Need							
Housing Register Banding	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom	5 Bedroom	6 Bedroom	Grand Total
Band A1	30	1	2	0	0	0	33
Band A2	4	0	1	0	1	0	6
Band B1	190	255	56	8	3	0	512
Band B2	30	22	31	13	3	1	100
Band C1	328	239	133	35	1	0	736
Band C2	72	138	144	28	2	0	384
Band D	1,048	578	172	13	3	0	1,814
Grand Total	1,702	1,233	539	97	13	1	3,585

4. Housing Register Banding

All applications are assessed and awarded a Band to reflect the level of need of the applicant and local connection. There are seven bands:

- Band A1 – Emergency / Priority (excluding transfer cases)
- Band A1 – Emergency / Priority – transfer cases
- Band B1 – Urgent need to move (excluding transfer cases)
- Band B1 – Urgent need to move – transfer cases
- Band C1 – Identified need to move – all applications including transfer cases
- Band C2 – Cases with a reasonable preference need but no local connection
- Band D – Low housing need and no 'deemed' housing need

4.1 A detailed list of the factors taken into account when awarding these Bands is set out in Appendix 1 of the Housing Allocations Policy. (attached in Appendix C with calculated need)

4.2 For Bands A1 – C2, transfer cases, where the applicant has previously been housed but now needs to move due to a change of circumstances, they have a lower priority than new applicants.

4.3 All Band A cases are reviewed on a six-monthly basis.

5. Case Study A

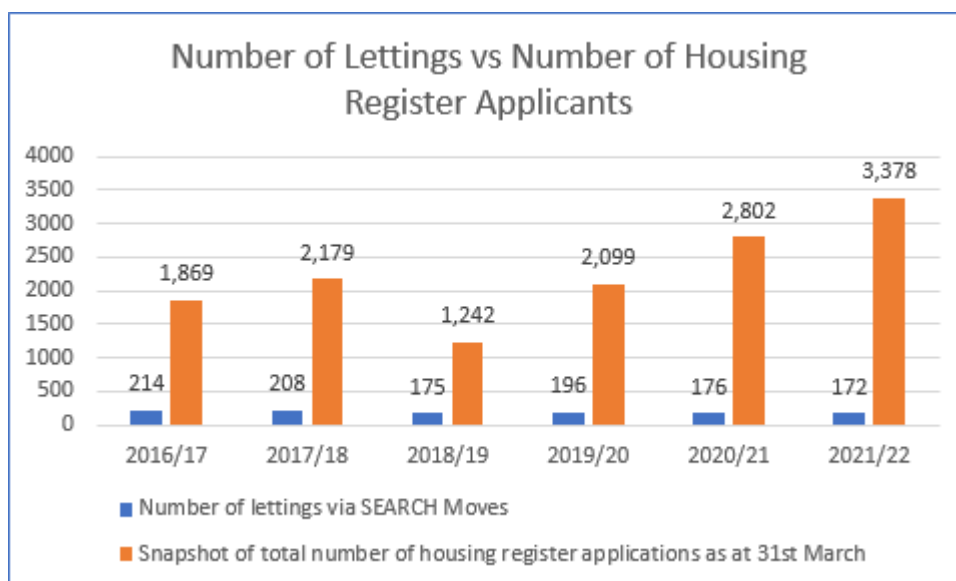
5.1 Customer A has worked for the NHS for many years. They were able to secure their home through the shared ownership scheme. Due to health issues, they were medically retired and now require a wheelchair. As a result the home is no longer suitable and they have a Band B1 on our Housing Register. As the property was bought as shared ownership there is insufficient equity for them to buy somewhere else. They are bidding for properties but the prospective landlord has rejected them as a tenant because they have an interest in the property.

6. Case Study B

6.1 Customer B is a young adult who lived with her parents on the first floor of a block of flats. She developed bone cancer and became an amputee and now requires a wheelchair. Because her parents' property was no longer suitable she became homeless and is now in our temporary accommodation. Although she is in a Band B, she has been there over a year and is highly unlikely to be made an offer quickly as many one-bedroom properties cannot be adapted and those which are bungalows or in low density blocks have an age restriction applied on the prospective tenant.

7. Demand & Supply Pressures

7.1



7.2 The Housing Register figures give a limited perspective to a complicated picture. There can be no movement without looking at supply issues and other demand issues. The above chart shows how supply has dropped over a 5 year period. A2D our largest provider have 27 new properties becoming available in February 2023. Apart from this there is no new development coming up soon and we will rely on existing properties being re-let and Knowle Green properties

- 7.3 In the last year we prevented 250 households from becoming homeless. Many of these were through accessing the private rented sector. There is a huge amount of uncertainty in the sector as a result of mortgage rate increases, changes in taxation and legal reforms around security of tenure. Some landlords are choosing to sell up and leave the sector.
- 7.4 The potential impact is an increase in households we accept the main homeless duty to. We already have the highest numbers of people in Bed & Breakfast in Surrey, and the concern is that this will increase without an adequate supply of new properties.
- 7.5 The Domestic Abuse Act places additional responsibilities on Local Authorities, one of which is that existing social tenants who are the victims of abuse are entitled to social housing if they approach as homeless. This reduces our supply of social housing and limits are options in preventing homelessness.

8. Options Analysis and Proposal

To continue to provide summary figures for number of applicants on the Housing Register by their Housing Register Banding and calculated bedroom need on a 6-monthly basis via the Council website.

9. Financial Implications

There are none.

10. Risk Considerations

Not applicable, the report is for information only.

11. Procurement Considerations

Not applicable, the report is for information only.

12. Legal Considerations

Not applicable, the report is for information only.

13. Other Considerations

No other considerations.

14. Equality and Diversity

An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out, and this assessment has not identified any significant impact on equalities. There are services and policies to support other groups who may not be able to access services or who have greater difficulty accessing settled housing (e.g., 16 to 17-year-olds, or disabled people).

15. Sustainability / Climate Change Implications

There are sustainability and climate/change concerns with social housing provision. However, the report itself does not have any impact on the Council's sustainability / climate change position.

16. Timetable for Implementation

New figures will be run on a 6-monthly basis.

17. Contact

Housing Strategy and Policy Team: HousingStrategy@spelthorne.gov.uk.

18. Background papers: There are none.

19. Appendices

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment for Housing Register Banding Report_22.09.2022

Appendix B - Summary of changes to the Allocations Scheme.

Appendix C – Calculated Need