



Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council



Information for Residents

Housing Allocations – Getting on the Housing Register

The Parish Council has no role in the allocation of affordable or social housing in the Parish.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council does not own any council housing but does have access to many social rented and affordable homes in the borough through its partnerships with housing associations. TWBC holds the register for 'Homeseekers' and 'Transfer tenants' and this information sheet is to provide residents in Brenchley and Matfield with guidance on how they can apply for social and affordable rented homes in the Borough.

Choice Based Lettings

The Borough Council does not allocate homes. It works in partnership with other Kent councils, through Kent Homechoice, and with a number of housing associations to allow applicants to apply or 'bid' for available homes in which they are interested. In order to do that, applicants must first apply to join the Housing Register.

Who is able to apply to the Housing Register?

Anyone may contact the Borough Council for housing advice and assistance. However, as social housing in the borough is limited, the Council no longer holds an open housing register. To apply for housing, an applicant must be eligible, meet the qualification rules, have a local connection to the borough, and have a housing need. The rules for all of these are explained below

Both Homeseekers and Transfer tenants are only able to include family members, dependants, spouses or people with whom they are in a relationship, on their application. Friends and other acquaintances are not able to apply together, unless there is evidence that there is a need for 24-hour live-in care, and the other person provides that care.

Eligibility

TWBC cannot accept applications from people who are subject to immigration control and who do not have access to public funds in the UK. An applicant must also be habitually resident in the United Kingdom. Any family members who are not currently living in the United Kingdom cannot be included on an application.

Local Connection

Applicants must have a local connection to the borough in order to be able to apply for housing. A local connection is gained through either the main or joint-applicant which meets one of the following:

- Have been living in settled accommodation in the borough for the last three years (definition of settled accommodation is detailed in the full policy).
- Have previously lived in settled accommodation in the borough for five out of the last 10 years.
- Have immediate family (Mother, Father, Brother, Sister, children aged over 18) who have lived in the borough continuously for the last five years.
- Be employed in the borough, with a permanent contract of paid employment that has been continuous for the previous six months, or self-employed for the previous six months where there is evidence that the main area of work is in the borough.
- Serving or former members of the armed forces (honourably discharged within the past five years), injured members of the Reserved Forces or bereaved spouses/civil partners of the armed forces who lost their partner due to military service and have to leave Ministry of Defence family accommodation.

Housing Need

Only applicants who have a housing need will be able to apply for housing. To be considered to be in housing need, the applicant must meet at least one of the housing need criteria detailed in the 4 bands on TWBC website: <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/housing/affordable-housing/housing-register> Should more than one of the housing need criteria be met, then the applicant will be placed into whichever band has the highest priority.

Qualification rules

As social housing is very limited, the following qualification rules have been set to make sure that the households in the highest need are prioritised.

- Household income, savings, capital or investments must not exceed the financial limits set in the policy. These limits will be reviewed annually and may change, so check the full policy or contact the Council for more information if required.
- In most circumstances, applicants who own their own property will not be able to apply.
- Applicants who have or have had significant housing-related debt with a private/social landlord or Borough Council will not normally qualify to apply unless there is robust evidence of a regular payment plan in place. Such a payment plan will be monitored.
- Applicants who have been involved in committing on-going anti-social behaviour (including any member of their household) will not qualify to apply.
- Applicants who do not have a local connection to the borough will not qualify to apply.
- Applicants not living in the UK, except certain members of the armed forces, will not qualify.
- Applicants who are under 16 years of age will not qualify.

How to apply to join the Housing Register

Applicants will need to complete an application form and provide identification and proof of residence for each person on the application form.

Application forms are completed online at <https://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk/choice/default.aspx> by clicking 'Register'. Once you have submitted a form online, TWBC will not be able to proceed with the application until you provide copies of the relevant identification and supporting information listed at the end of the application form.

In exceptional circumstances a paper version of the application may be requested from the Housing Needs Team at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council by telephoning 01892 526121 and asking to speak to the Housing Needs team or dropping into the Tunbridge Wells Gateway. You can drop copies of your identification and supporting information for your online application into the Tunbridge Wells Gateway, or by post to:

The Housing Register Team, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS

Rural Housing Schemes

Some housing association homes have legal restrictions due to the planning agreement made before the property was built. These homes can only be let to Homeseekers or Transfer tenants who have a proven local connection to the specific parish where the property is based (Brenchley and Matfield Parish is included in this system) or in some circumstances the immediately neighbouring parishes as a back-up.

These homes will be clearly advertised to invite bids from Homeseekers or Transfer tenants that meet the local connection criteria. Only bidders who meet the parish or back-up parish connection will be considered for those properties.

The local connection rules for parishes can vary, but generally the household must meet one or more of the following:

- Have lived in the Parish continuously for the last three years or have previously lived in the Parish for a total of five years out of the last 10 years.
- Have immediate family (Mother, Father, Brother, Sister or children over 18 years old) who currently live in the Parish and have continuously done so for the last five years.
- Be in or about to take up full time employment in the Parish.
- Provide an important service that requires residence in the Parish.

If anyone has any questions regarding their application they can email allocations@tunbridgewells.gov.uk or call 01892 554151.

Further information including the full TWBC Housing Allocations Policy and the information booklet with details on how to bid on properties can be found on the TWBC website at:

<http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/housing/affordable-housing/housing-register>

Shared Ownership

Details for applying for shared ownership via a new Help to Buy Agent for the South region called Radian can be found at:

<https://helptobuyagent3.org.uk/user/>