



Lettings and Allocations Guide

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1.0 Introduction

The Association's policy sets out how we allocate properties that become available for letting. Because of the differences in supply and demand in our different areas, there may be some local variations. Local letting plans may also cover some schemes or areas.

Arhag remains committed to meeting and highlighting the needs of refugee and migrants either through direct housing provision or through partnership with key stakeholders.

1.1 Housing Need

Arhag seeks to house those in greatest need whilst:

- Making best use of available stock
- Ensuring equal access for all sections of the community according to their needs
- Achieving sustainable communities and assisting in the creation of stable communities
- Helping existing tenants to exercise real choice

1.2 Equality and Diversity statement

All applicants for housing and those housed by the Association are treated fairly and equally irrespective of race, colour, nationality or ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital or employment status, religion, beliefs or creed.

We will also work closely with occupational therapists and local authorities to facilitate recommended aids and adaptations, where practical to enable our tenants remain independent in their current accommodation.

We will arrange translation of documentation on request or arrange for an interpreter as appropriate to ensure no applicant is disadvantaged.

2.0 *Housing Applications*

2.1 Who can we rehouse?

2.11 Permanent tenants of Arhag who:

- Are not in rent arrears
- Have not been evicted because of rent arrears or other tenancy breaches or
- Do not have a pending court hearing because of a serious breach of their tenancy agreement
- Are not subject to anti-social behaviour action.

2.12 Nomination from local authorities

Provided they are over 18 years at the date of nomination.

As a registered social landlord we have a duty to assist local authorities in the areas we operate by offering a percentage of our available homes to people nominated by the local authority. Our aim is to achieve a minimum 50% of one-bedroom homes and 75% of family homes. In some cases the percentage agreed with the local authority will be higher. These proportions relate to “true voids – **see appendix A**

2.13 Arhag Hostel referrals

Nomination from the Keogh Road hostel provided

- The referral quota for the financial year has not been exceeded
- Tenants are not in rent arrears
- Tenants have not been evicted because of rent arrears or other tenancy breaches or
- We have applied to the court for possession of your home because of a serious breach of your tenancy agreement

2.2 If we decide that you are not eligible to be considered for an offer of housing we will write and tell you why.

If we say you are not eligible, you can appeal against our decision – (see **page 11**). We will consider what you tell us again and review our decision and let you know the outcome.

If you are a tenant and we are able to offer you a transfer, you must not allow anyone to remain in the home after you have left.

2.3 How to join the housing list?

Everyone must complete either a housing or transfer application form in full. We cannot register anyone without all the information and we will return the form to you if you have not answered all the questions:

2.31 We ask questions in order to decide:

- Whether you are eligible to be considered for an offer of housing
- Your priority
- Your housing needs
- Whether your application is honest

If we are able to help you with housing, we may share the information you provide on your application form with another social landlord if we believe they are better able to help you.

We also ask about your ethnicity and any disability in particular so that we can check that our policies and practices are not discriminating either directly or indirectly, against any ethnic group or against people because of a disability.

2.32 Verifying your application

You will need to be able to confirm;

- Who you are
- Who is in your household and their relationship to you (for example we will need to confirm that any children you have included on this form live with you and are permanently in your care. We usually do this by checking child benefit payments or income support documents).

The transfer application form tells you exactly which documents you will need to provide with your application.

2.33 What happens next?

We will acknowledge your transfer application form within 5 working days of receipt.

Once we have received all of the information that we need we will assess your application within 10 working days and write to you notifying you of;

- Your level of housing points
- Your band category
- The target size and attributes of the property you may be offered
- Your position within the band; and
- Other housing options you may wish to consider

We will also advise you, how long on average you are likely to have to wait for the size of the home you need.

If you say you will only consider a home or type of home in a local authority area where we have a small number of properties, you may wait a long time even if you are top of the transfer list. If you need to move urgently we advise that you consider the majority of local authority areas and other housing options which may increase your chances of an earlier move.

Please note that the above applies to transfer applicants and hostel referrals only. Local authority nominations are usually for specific vacancies.

3.0 Housing points and priority bands

Everyone applying for housing will initially have their housing needs priority assessed within a very simple point's scheme:

3.1 The points scheme

There are three point levels:

- 100 points for 'decant' tenants, tenants that are under occupying and want to move into smaller homes and 'A' medical cases (see [page 11](#) for explanation of medical priority).
- 40 points for urgent management transfers (see [page 11](#) for explanation of urgent management), severe overcrowding (two or more bedrooms short), 'move on' offers, and agreed mobility cases
- 10 points for 'B' medical cases priorities (see [page 11](#) for explanation of medical priority), less severe overcrowding (one bedroom short)

Once your points have been calculated, your application will then be put in one of the bands, in date order, with the oldest case first.

3.11 Your priority date will either be:

- The date we received your application for housing or
- The date we awarded your present priority, for example the date medical priority was awarded
- Or the date you told us about a change in your circumstances, that changed you band e.g. the birth of a child.

Whichever is the latest.

4.0 Letting bands

Every applicant will be placed in one of the following bands based upon the points their case attracts:

Band	Points range
Urgent	100 – 240
Priority	40 – 90
General	10 – 30
Reserve	0

- 4.1 The **urgent band** will include tenants whom ARHAG needs to move and people with 'A' medical priority (see [page 11](#) for explanation of medical priority).
- 4.2 The **priority band** will include people who are overcrowded and require two or more bedrooms than they currently occupy. It will also include applicants, hostel referrals and urgent management transfer cases.
- 4.3 The **general band** will include applicants who are either overcrowded by one bedroom or have been awarded a 'B' medical grade (see [page 11](#) for explanation of medical priority).
- 4.5 The **reserve band** will include applicants who are adequately housed with no medical or extra bedroom needs, but want a change of environment.

Which band you will join will usually be determined by one main factor, rather than by a number of different factors, some perhaps relatively minor.

4.6 *How it works*

If a tenant joins the general band when they initially applied for a transfer, but subsequently became severely overcrowded (two bedrooms short). The date they notify us of the change in writing or in person (with supporting documents) is the date their application will join the "priority band". This ensures, they do not leapfrog other urgent cases.

5.0 Allocations

Applicants will be considered for an offer in date order, within each band, except in particular circumstances as listed under exceptions.

5.1 Exceptions

There may be situations where it will not be appropriate to offer a property to the applicant on top of the list, this may be because:

- The applicant at the top of the list does not yet have sufficient support to live independently (hostel referrals) or is in rent arrears.
- The applicant at the top of the list is not suitable or eligible for the vacancy e.g. if they require a disabled adapted or ground floor property, but the vacancy is not adapted or above the ground floor.
- The allocation of the property would be likely to result in serious estate management difficulties
- A mix of applicants is required to establish a balanced community
- A vacancy is subject to a local lettings plan – (See [page 18](#) for explanation).
- Arhag needs to move a tenant urgently where the property is unsafe, urgently required for demolition or major works.

6.0 *Bedroom allocation*

Arhag needs to decide how many bedrooms you need because of the shortage of larger homes. We must make sure that the supply of larger homes goes to those who need them most.

In some instances, if your home is suitable, we may consider an extension to provide the number of bedrooms that you need.

Arhag must also decide whether to include any additional people joining your household in the assessment of your housing need. Generally, agreement will be only given where this is essential, for example, where care is being provided on a long term basis.

6.1 **General bedroom standard**

- Single adults will be allocated a studio, bed-sit or one-bedroom flat
- Adults living as a couple (whether as part of a larger household or not) will be allocated a double bedroom.
- A single person or couple with children will be allocated one double bedroom plus sufficient bedrooms for the children.
- Adults over 18 years of age will be allocated a separate bedroom
- Children of different sexes aged over 10 will be considered to require separate bedrooms.

7.0 Viewings

Arhag operates multiple viewings. This means, more than one household will be invited to view the same vacancy, on the same day.

This is to ensure homes are let as quickly as possible and those who are in need of a home are rehoused faster.

7.1 Applicants invited to view a home will receive an offer letter prior to viewing the home.

The offer letter will include the following information:

- Information about the home offered i.e. rent details, size and address
- Information and documentation you should bring along with you to the viewing/sign up.
- An estimated or actual tenancy date
- Number of housing applicants invited to view a vacancy, including the priority of each applicant invited. For instance, if three applicants are invited to view a vacancy, the offer letter will state whether they are the first, second or third priority.

If the first priority applicant refuses the offer, but the second priority applicant accepts the offer, the second applicant will be able to accept the offer and so on.

- Information on refusing an offer and the appeal process.

7.2 Refusal of offer and appeal

All housing applicants who refuse an offer must complete a refusal of offer and appeal form, detailing their reasons for refusal.

Where an applicant is a nominee or referred through choice based lettings, the relevant local authority will be notified of the refusal reasons, and are responsible for determining the outcome of the appeal process, if relevant.

Where an applicant is a current tenant, Arhag will review the reasons for refusal and an outcome of the review will be communicated to the appellant within 5 working days of the viewing date, detailing the outcome of the review and the reasons for the decision.

The appeal process will consider whether reasons for refusal are justified or not, taking into consideration the suitability of the offer and reasons given by the applicant. For example, if you refuse an offer of suitable accommodation because it is or not on the main road or because you cannot purchase the property under the right-to-buy, it will not be deemed a justifiable reason for refusal. However, if you have since had a baby after your original application and the bedroom size of the property is no longer adequate for your needs (see page 8 – bedroom allocation), it will be considered a justifiable reason for refusal and the offer will be withdrawn.

A suitable offer is defined as an offer of a suitably sized home (see page 8 –bedroom allocation), that is within selected areas of choice and in-line with medical recommendations, if any.

Please note that applicants may be asked to view homes before re-servicing works are complete. In such cases, we will explain what works are being or will be carried out and an estimated timescale for completion of works at the viewing. All homes offered will be fit to let and meet Arhag's lettings standard before applicants are given keys to their new home.

Where reasons for refusal are justified, the offer will be simply withdrawn and the applicant's band date will not be affected.

If the reasons for refusal are not considered to be justified, the outcome will be to amend the date of application to the date of the refusal i.e. their application date, becomes their refusal date. This means their housing application moves from the top of the queue to the bottom, and may have to wait a long time for another offer.

8.0 Medical Priority

Medical assessment forms should be completed for each person within the household with a medical or health need.

You can request medical assessment forms when you request a transfer application or we will send you a medical assessment form, if you indicated a health or medical problem on your transfer application form.

There is no need to supply a doctor's letter with your transfer application form. Completed medical assessment forms will be sent to an Occupational Health Advisor for assessment. If the Occupational Health Advisor requires more information, they will contact your doctor directly.

Medical priority reflects the extent to which a serious medical condition is affected by your current home and we award two levels of medical priority, 'A' and 'B' grade, both of which will reflect an urgent need to move due to health problems.

Only if you have a severe health problem that is seriously affected by your housing are you likely to be awarded medical priority.

For example, an application from a person with severe mobility problems who is unable to manage any stairs, but lives on the ground floor in a block with level access and central heating, may not attract any medical priority. However, if the same person was living on the third floor of a block without a lift, they may be awarded medical priority.

We do not award priority for health problems like asthma or depression unless these are very severe. Neither do we give medical priority for health problems that are temporary for example

those associated with pregnancy or after an accident or surgery where a reasonable recovery is anticipated.

8.1 Medical grading

'A' medical priority is only given in most urgent cases: where a person is at risk due to the inadequacy of their home, or is housebound within it.

'B' medical priority will be awarded to other urgent cases where circumstances do not merit an 'A' grade. In these cases more suitable housing would make a substantial improvement in the quality of life of that person.

Whilst we will consider the health needs of all the people within the household, we will only award one overall grade.

8.2 Reviewing medical priority

Medical priority may be reviewed:

- As part of a routine review of cases or
- To maintain consistency of decision making over time or
- In response to a specific change in circumstances or
- When additional information becomes available
- If changes in amenities in the home have been carried out e.g. adaptations
- Where there has been significant change in health problems and the applicant requests a review or
- Where an offer of housing that we consider suitable is refused

9.0 *Urgent management transfers*

An 'urgent management transfer' status is appropriate where there is threat to life and limb if the person is not moved and there is no alternative effective remedy. It will include harassment on the grounds of race, sexual orientation or disability as well as domestic violence.

Reasonable enquiries will be made to judge the severity of the threat or risk and to ensure that a move will minimise future risk.

Due to the limited number of stock we have, ARHAG will seek to arrange reciprocal lettings with other social housing landlords including the local authority where appropriate. Where immediate temporary accommodation is required, affected tenants will be advised to contact their relevant local authority.

9.1 **Reviewing urgent management transfer cases**

Where an 'urgent management transfer status has been awarded, it will be reviewed every three months. If the circumstances no longer merit the status, the priority will be removed.

Priority may be removed, either;

- As part of an overall review of priorities
- In response to a change in circumstance
- Where an offer of alternative accommodation we consider suitable is refused

10.0 Under Occupation Scheme

Tenants currently occupying homes larger than their need and want to move into a smaller property will be awarded priority points to reflect under occupation and ensure a quicker move to release larger homes for overcrowded families.

Where necessary, we will also work closely with the local authority to facilitate a quicker move.

Under-occupation points will also be awarded to transfer applicants within the priority band that wish to accept a smaller property than they require. For instance, under occupation points will be awarded to a family currently living in a two-bedroom home, entitled to a four-bedroom home under our current policy, but are willing to accept a three-bedroom home.

This will be applied at the written request of the tenant and is to facilitate a quicker offer.

11.0 Transfer reviews

We will conduct a review of all transfer applications every two years for applications that are at least a year old at the time of the review.

The purpose of the review is to confirm that transfer applicants are still interested in moving, to check whether there are any changes in circumstances and that we have up-to-date information.

If a transfer applicant fails to respond to a review, it will be deemed that they are no longer interested in a move and their transfer application will be cancelled.

If a tenant reapplies after their original application has been cancelled, their application date will be the date they reapply.

12.0 Right to information and a review

Every applicant has the following rights regarding the provision of information

- To request general information that will help them to assess how their application will be treated, whether appropriate housing is likely to be made available and how long it will take
- To be informed of any decision about their circumstances which are likely to be taken into account when considering whether to allocate housing to them
- To be informed of any decision that they are unsuitable to become a tenant which is likely to be taken into account when considering whether to allocate housing to them.

Additionally, all applicants have the right to ask for a review of a decision in the following circumstances.

- Where their application has been given no preference due to a decision about their behaviour
- Where their application has been cancelled.

Where an application has been cancelled or considered non-eligible, applicants can request a review within fourteen days of our decision.

13.0 Aids and adaptations

Arhag will fund and carry out minor adaptations for instance grab rails, or assist residents access Disabled Facilities Grant from the local authority to fund major adaptations such as level access showers or stair lifts, to enable residents remain in their current home if they wish to or temporarily pending a suitable offer.

14.0 Housing Options

14.1 HomeBuy

Homebuy was introduced in April 2006 to enable local authority and housing association tenants, key workers, and other first time buyers who would otherwise be unable to purchase a home outright, to get a foot on the ladder of home ownership.

All applicants applying for HomeBuy must meet the following basic criteria;

- Must not be able to buy a home suitable for your housing needs within a reasonable travelling distance of your work place, without assistance
- Must be a British or EU/EEA citizen or have indefinite leave to remain in the UK. Applicants without indefinite leave to remain and interested in purchasing a home, must be able to demonstrate that they are able to raise a mortgage with an acceptable lender and that they can afford and sustain home ownership in the longer term. These cases will be assessed based on their individual circumstances.
- Must have savings or access to at least £4000 to cover the cost of buying a home
- Must be employed on a permanent contract of employment or;
- If you are a key worker we can consider you if you are employed on a temporary contract as long as:
 - there are at least 6 months remaining on the contract
 - the contract was issued at the outset for at least 12 months
 - there is a reasonable prospect of the contract being extended
- You must sell your existing property if you own one
- You must have a good credit history

Applicants must also demonstrate they can sustain home ownership

14.11 New Build HomeBuy - formerly known as shared ownership

An applicant can purchase a share of the equity in a new home, built with public subsidy, or on public sector land, or through the First Time Buyers Initiative.

Eligible applicants are, key workers, existing social tenants, those on the housing register, and other first time buyers.

The share you buy depends on how much mortgage repayments, rent and service charge you can afford. The minimum share you must purchase is 25%. For instance, if the value of the home you wish to buy is £200,000, the value of your mortgage will be £50,000 and you will pay a subsidised rent on the remainder.

In most cases you can start buying more shares in your home after a short time and in some cases straight away. Where you own a share in your home, the costs will usually be less than if you were buying the property outright or paying at the market rent.

14.12 MyChoiceHomeBuy

MyChoiceHomeBuy is a government funded, low-cost-homeownership product that enables eligible applicants to choose and purchase a home of their own on the open market with the help of a flexible equity loan:

- You are free to raise your mortgage with any high street bank or building society (adverse credit lenders are not allowed)
- On top of your mortgage you will receive a government equity loan for up to 50% of the purchase price
- Any savings or contribution from family/friends above £10,000 can be used to “top up” your purchase price without affecting your government equity loan.

- There is a low monthly charge on the MyChoiceHomeBuy of 1.75% which will increase by RPI plus 1% annually.

You will need to repay all equity loans if you sell the property.

Applicants are set an individual maximum price limits based on their own financial status. Under this scheme applicants are free to find a home of their own choice on the open market but must make sure the home is in reasonable condition. Applicants are generally advised to avoid properties that have serious faults which will cost over £3500 to repair. If you are a key worker, you also must make sure that you choose a property that is no more than 90 minutes travelling distance from your place of work.

The main benefits of this scheme are as follows:

- It allows you to move out of rented accommodation and own a home of your own
- You do not need to have a deposit like most people buying on the open market
- In most cases, buying on the scheme is more affordable than buying a home without the scheme's help.

14.13 Ownhome

This scheme is provided through a partnership between Places for People and The Co-operative Bank. With Ownhome home buyers will need to buy a minimum of a 60% share in the value of their property with a mortgage from The Co-operative Bank and a 40% share coming as an Ownhome equity loan from Places for People.

After the first 5 years of ownership a fee will be payable on the Ownhome loan - starting at a fixed rate of just 1.75% interest per year for the next five years, and then increasing to 3.75% interest per year from year eleven. Buying the remainder would not incur any premium or extra charges on the mortgage, and customers can

choose from a range of competitive deals including fixed rate and tracker options.

14.14 London-Wide Initiative (LWI)

The London-Wide Initiative (LWI) operates in inner and outer London, and is a government-backed scheme for key workers run by English Partnerships, the national regeneration agency, in collaboration with the Housing Corporation. A range of 15 development sites across inner and greater London has been purchased by English Partnerships to deliver new homes under the initiative. The government shares the costs and the benefits of homeownership with purchasers in order to make these homes more affordable.

LWI is a shared equity rather than a shared ownership scheme. In a shared ownership scheme purchasers pay both a mortgage on their share of the property and rent on the part retained by a landlord. Under the LWI scheme, the Government funds and retains part of the property but purchasers do not have to pay anything to finance the Government's stake. This can make LWI homes more affordable for key workers on lower incomes by reducing home ownership costs as a percentage of monthly income.

Key features of the LWI scheme

- Buyers will fund their stake through a combination of savings and mortgage and will be responsible for any mortgage repayments relating to their stake.
- Buyers must be employed in a key worker occupation as defined by the Government. Key workers living and working in the London boroughs where LWI operates will be prioritised but key workers from a wider area may be considered.
- Eligible buyers may have a maximum household income of £60,000.

- Government will assist with around 50 per cent of the full purchase price.
- No rent or interest is paid on the Government-retained stake.
- LWI homes are offered on a leasehold basis.
- Buyers own the property, but their financial stake in their home is limited to the percentage of the value that they buy.
- If the buyer decides to sell, the Government shares in any increase in value of the property based on its level of investment.
- Buyers can sell their LWI home on the open market regardless of the price they paid.
- In some but not all LWI schemes, buyers can purchase more of the equity of the property over time. This is called staircasing.

14.15 First Time Buyers Initiative (FTBI)

FTBI makes more affordable homes available to first time buyers priced out of the housing market. It is part of the Government's new "HomeBuy" low cost home ownership initiative.

It enables aspiring first time buyers, who cannot otherwise afford to buy a new home, to purchase a new property with an affordable mortgage and with Government assistance (min £25,001) on a designated FTBI development. The Government then has an entitlement to a share of the future sale proceeds which will be equal to the initial percentage contribution required to assist the buyer. This enables a FTBI buyer to take out an affordable mortgage (minimum 50% of the total purchase price) on which they make repayments.

For the first three years of FTBI home ownership there is nothing to pay on the amount which the Government contributed. After three years buyers will pay a fee to Government (through a HomeBuy Agent) of one per cent per annum on the amount Government funded. This fee will increase each year by a fixed percentage reaching a maximum of three per cent after five years in the property.

Because it is made affordable, FTBI is a “stepping-stone” to assist buyers into full home ownership.

When owners sell their FTBI home, they will repay Government’s contribution by way of a share of the sale proceeds. So if Government initially assisted the purchase with a 25% contribution, the repayment will be 25% of the total value when it is sold.

FTBI homeowners can also choose to reduce the amount payable to Government at any time by making repayments at the prevailing market value. The minimum additional repayment is ten per cent of the market value. Repayments will reduce the Government’s entitlement to a share of the future sales proceeds and also the fees payable by buyers after three years of ownership.

14.16 Rent to HomeBuy – Rent now buy later

Under this scheme you can move into a newly built home and pay rent at only 80% of the market value for a fixed length of time. At the end you get to choose whether to buy or not to buy.

It is an opportunity to try before you buy. You get to move into a brand new home and enjoy the home as if you own it, to give you time before you make the next step. The homes are built specifically for ownership. This means you get a good quality specification, usually including a fitted kitchen and bathroom, a 10 year NHBC guarantee, and often desirable features such as balconies, allocated parking and en-suite bathrooms. You don’t always get these extras if you rent privately.

Some housing providers are offering incentives to make becoming a home owner easier when the time comes to buy. You also get all the benefits of being a resident of a socially responsible Registered Provider. Registered Providers are committed to making your home affordable to help you on the way to ownership. You will get predictable and clearly set out rents and service charges, and a

housing management service to offer you help and advice after you move in.

This option gives you choice and security. You can choose to rent or buy, but either way you can choose to move into a quality, affordable home.

14.17 Intermediate rent scheme

Through the intermediate rent product, you can rent a brand new or refurbished home at less than the market rate. The rent charged is normally 20% to 30% lower than what you would expect to pay for a similar home in a similar area if you were renting from a private landlord and you have the assurance that your home is built, managed and let by a Registered Social Landlord.

This option has traditionally only been available to key workers, although due to the current economic climate, this choice is now available to other home seekers who do not qualify for social rent homes and who cannot afford to buy a home of their own outright.

Intermediate rent is a great housing option for people who are not ready to commit to buying a home or who have difficulty securing a mortgage at the moment. Intermediate rent homes are usually let on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy basis with a 6 month contract period.

14.2 Housing Register Application

Anyone can apply to go on the local authority housing register either within or outside the local authority they currently reside.

Local connection is usually required, but following changes in the law governing housing in February 2003, housing applicants are now able to register with any local authority. However, assistance via this method is dependant on the priority awarded to your application and the availability of resources within the area and

local authorities generally give preference to housing applicants who have a local connection.

Local connection could be gained via residency, employment, close family ties, etc. Please note that tenants of registered social landlords are not prohibited to apply and remain on the housing register, though it is expected that you will move out of the property and give up your tenancy, should you be made an offer of alternative accommodation.

Please contact the housing needs section of the local authority you wish to reside and complete a housing register application form.

14.21 Choice based lettings

Choice based lettings allow you to bid for available council properties you are interested in provided you have a current active Housing Register application. It's a system that allows customer choice, rather than homes being allocated by the local authority via a waiting list

All available properties are advertised through local authority publications and websites. People looking for council and housing association homes within the borough can then bid for homes through the website, by phone, by text message, or by filling in special coupons.

Applicants can see the full range of available properties and can apply for any home to which they are matched. Priority is given to those with urgent needs, but where possible properties are allocated on the basis of who has been waiting the longest. Authorities provide feedback that helps applicants to assess their chances of success in subsequent applications.

14.3 Mobility Schemes

There are mobility schemes such as Lawn, Seaside and Country Homes, and mutual exchange.

To register or make an application for either the LAWN or Seaside and Country Homes scheme, please visit www.housingmoves.org.uk or contact Housing Moves on **08450 21 20 20**

14.31 LAWN Scheme

The Lawn scheme is a landlord referral scheme which helps social housing tenants in England to look for alternative housing opportunities across the country. Opportunities are generally available outside of the south east.

This scheme offers residents another choice of where they would like to live. In areas of lower demand for housing, it is possible for tenants to be offered a home that better meets their needs, such as a house with a garden; and rents tend to be lower than they are in the London area.

14.32 Seaside and Country Homes Scheme

The Seaside and Country Homes scheme is a housing mobility scheme that offers households in Greater London the opportunity to move to the southwest coast from Cornwall, through the countryside from Shropshire to Cambridgeshire, over to Norfolk and Lincolnshire in the east.

The scheme is open to residents where at least one member of the household is 60 or above. In cases where other members of the household are under 60 years of age they must be either the partner, joint tenant or registered carer of the lead applicant. Applications with more than two applicants are not considered.

14.33 Mutual Exchange

Permanent Arhag tenants have the right to swap their home with another permanent Arhag tenant or a permanent tenant of another registered social landlord or local authority.

This is an effective way of arranging your own move and in most cases a quicker way to move.

Before you exchange, you must get our permission and your 'exchange' partner must get their landlord's permission before you arrange to move. There are certain circumstances where we can refuse your request for example if you have a current court order or if you or the incoming tenant will either be substantially under-occupying or overcrowding the property.

How to apply

If you wish to exchange your home with another permanent tenant within Arhag you can request a mutual exchange register form to register on the internal mutual exchange register. We will try and match interested parties, display the register in our reception area and publish details in our quarterly newsletter.

If you wish to exchange with a permanent Arhag tenant or a permanent tenant of another registered social landlord or council tenant, you can register online at www.homeswapper.co.uk. Arhag is registered with HomeSwapper and all Arhag tenants can register with HomeSwapper free of charge. Once registered, Arhag will be notified and we will authorise your registration once we have confirmed your eligibility.

Other sites you may wish to register to find an exchange partner include:

- www.exchangeuk.co.uk
- www.tenantsfirst.com
- www.u-exchange.com

- www.ukhomeswap.co.uk

14.0 Lettings Plan

The letting plan is a guide used to estimate the number of properties that will become vacant within a particular financial year and how we intend to allocate such vacancies.

It will also be used to advise applicants on the likely time it will take to rehouse you and used to monitor our performance against nomination agreements and ensure an appropriate balance of property allocation between the different categories of applicants on the transfer list.

The lettings plan will be updated annually to reflect current issues and needs.

14.1 Local lettings plan

For new developments of 10 properties or more, Arhag has a duty to ensure a mixed and balanced community to ensure community cohesion and sustainability.

In implementing a local lettings plan, Arhag will work with the local authority to agree a local lettings plan with the following objectives;

- To create communities which are sustainable.
- To ensure the new community blends in smoothly with the existing community.
- To ensure that the needs of the local and wider community are reflected within the new development.
- To attain a mixture of child density and occupancy levels to encourage sustainability.

15.0 Appendix A

15.1 True voids

- Voids within new build/newly acquired or newly rehabilitated schemes
- Voids created through tenant moves to another landlord where no reciprocal arrangement exists
- Voids created through tenant transfer to another borough
- Voids created by the death of a tenant where there is no statutory right to succeed
- Voids created by tenants buying their own property in the private sector
- Voids created by eviction or abandonment of property
- Void created by decants

15.2 Non-true voids

- Voids created through tenant transfers where tenants move within the borough in which their original home was situated.
- Voids created through a mobility scheme where a reciprocal arrangement exists
- Voids created by decants who are returning
- Void created by mutual exchanges