



## Applying for a home in Cherwell

A guidance note from  
Cherwell District Council

# Homechoice

This leaflet explains how to apply to Cherwell District Council for housing. Please keep the leaflet in a safe place as you may wish to refer to it in the future.

## The Allocation Scheme

The Allocation Scheme tells you who can join our Housing Register and how priority for accommodation is decided between different types of applicant.

The full Allocation Scheme can be downloaded from [www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk) or you can ask for it to be sent to you.

## A single allocation scheme for all areas

The map shows the area formed by the partnership arrangements.

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We have formed a partnership with three other councils to create a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme and an agreed framework to assess housing applications. The other three councils that we are working with are:

- Oxford City Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- The Vale of White Horse District Council.



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## Who can apply to join our Housing Register?

You can apply for accommodation if you are aged 16 or over. There are special rules if you are 16 or 17 years old.

We aim to process all applications within 20 working days and let you know the result in writing.

## Who can't apply to join our Housing Register?

You can't apply to join the Housing Register if:

- you are subject to immigration control
- you or a member of your household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be a tenant.

**If we decide you can't come onto our Housing Register we write to you and tell you why.**

## Can I apply if I am an owner occupier or own a property?

If you are an owner occupier or own a property you can apply to our Housing Register. You will automatically be placed in Band 5. However, if you can show you need alternative accommodation and you don't have enough resources to sort out accommodation for yourself, we will carry out an assessment of your housing needs.

### **A need for alternative accommodation might include:**

- medical conditions
- disability
- frailty
- serious disrepair
- possession action
- acute financial hardship.

## How do I apply?

**You can get an application form by:**

- telephone
- personal visit to our offices
- post (write to the address on the back of this leaflet)
- email to [housing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:housing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)
- download from [www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk) or [www.oxfordshirehomechoice.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshirehomechoice.org.uk)

## How do you decide who has priority?

### The law says we must give reasonable preference to you if you:

- are homeless
- are threatened with homelessness and in priority need
- occupy insanitary or overcrowded housing or live in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- need to move on medical, welfare or disability grounds
- need to move to a particular locality to prevent hardship.

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### We can also take into account:

- your financial resources
- any behaviour of you or your household which affects your suitability to be a tenant
- any local connections.

When we have considered all the information about your housing circumstances, we put you into one of five bands.

## Local connections

There are three types of local connection that we can take into account.

### Village or parish connection

For some housing schemes there are planning restrictions requiring that vacancies should go in the first instance to people who have a connection with the village or parish.

Qualifying village or parish connections are that the applicant or joint applicant must:

- have lived in the village for the last 5 years
- be employed in the district for a minimum of fifteen hours per week and the employment is not of a short-term nature
- have 10 years previous residence in the village if not currently residing there
- be over 60 or with a disability requiring support on health grounds from close relatives currently living in the village
- have close relatives living in the village for a period of at least the last five years.

We check village connections prior to making nominations to our housing association partners.

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## District connection

The following rules are used to define a district connection:

- the applicant or joint applicant is permanently resident in the district and that residence is of their own choice
- the applicant or joint applicant was previously resident in the district as a matter of choice and the period of residence was either:
  - at least six out of the last twelve months or
  - three out of the last five years
- the applicant or joint applicant is employed in the district for a minimum of fifteen hours per week and the employment is not of a short-term nature
- the applicant or joint applicant must have close relatives in the district.

A district connection is not established where the applicant is:

- in prison within the district or
- detained in the district under the Mental Health Act.

## Sub-regional connection

Applicants who have a district connection to any one of the four councils automatically have a sub-regional connection.

## Close relatives

Close relatives are defined as parents, children, siblings, grandparents or grandchildren including step relatives, where there is evidence of frequent contact, commitment or dependency. To qualify the relatives must live in the district now and have been continuously resident for a minimum of five years.

## What are the five bands?

Once accepted as eligible to join the Housing Register, your housing needs are assessed and you are placed in one of five bands. The bands are numbered 1 to 5. Applicants in Band 1 are assessed as having the most urgent need and those in Band 5 have little or no housing need.

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## What factors do you take into account for banding?

A summary of the banding scheme is set out below.

Band	Banding reasons
<b>Band 1</b>	Exceptional circumstances
	Under occupation by two or more bedrooms – Social landlord tenants only
	Housing management moves including decants
	Succession – Social landlord tenants only
	Prohibition/demolition notices
	Statutory overcrowding
<b>Band 2</b>	Urgent social or welfare
	Urgent health or disability
	Under occupation by one bedroom – Social landlord tenants only
	Move on from supported accommodation
	Priority homeless
	Overcrowded because two or more bedrooms short
	Compound needs from Band 3
<b>Band 3</b>	Significant social or welfare
	Significant health or disability
	Unsatisfactory housing – Category 1
	Overcrowded because one bedroom short
	Insecure tied accommodation
	Insecure private rented accommodation
	Non-priority homeless/no fixed abode
	Compound needs from Band 4
<b>Band 4</b>	Moderate social or welfare
	Moderate health or disability
	Unsatisfactory housing – Category 2
<b>Band 5</b>	Adequately housed
	Sufficient financial resources
	Nil priority

Once we have processed your application you are told your band, your date of registration and the number of bedrooms in a property you can apply for.

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## Date order

Two dates are used to sort out the order of priority when deciding who to nominate for a property. These are:

- the registration date – the date your application was received
- the effective date – the date an applicant is assessed for Band 1.

The registration date applies to anyone in Bands 2 to 5. The effective date is used for Band 1. The date is changed to when the circumstances arose which caused the applicant to be granted Band 1.

## How we calculate over-crowding and under-occupation

The following rules are used to decide whether you have either too many or too few bedrooms available for your use when assessing your application. The overcrowding rules apply to all applicants on our housing register except homeless applicants who are assessed differently. The under-occupation rules only apply to council or housing association tenants living within the boundaries of the four councils and on our housing register.

- each couple or a single parent will require their own room

- each additional adult over the age of eighteen will require their own room
- two children may share a room unless:
  - they are of opposite sex and the oldest child is aged seven or more
  - they are of the same sex and the oldest child is between ten and fifteen **and** the age gap is ten years or more
  - they are children of the same sex and the oldest child is sixteen or over and the age difference is five years or more

Where the household includes a pregnant woman the baby will only count in the calculation once it has been born.

Our calculations take into account the number of rooms available in the property and their best use and the relationship of each person to the other.

## Social and welfare assessment

We have agreed a common set of criteria for staff to assess applicants who fall into this category. If you are assessed under this category you may be placed in Band 2, 3 or 4 depending on the severity of your needs.

## Health and disability assessment

We have agreed a common set of criteria to assess applicants who fall into this category. If you are assessed under this category you may be placed in Band 2, 3 or 4 depending on the severity of your needs. If you have a disability we will take this into account and assess the level of your mobility as follows:

- **Mobility 1** – you require level access into and throughout the property
- **Mobility 2** – you require wide door ways and electric switches placed at a height to suit disabled applicants
- **Mobility 3** – you require some disabled adaptations which may include; level access shower, stair lift, walk in bath
- **Mobility 4** – you require a purpose built or fully adapted property because you use a wheelchair at all times.

## Compound needs

If you are in Band 3 or 4 and have compound needs, that is, you are assessed for more than one of the qualifying criteria in the same band you will usually be upgraded to the next band.

**Compounding is not available for those placed in Bands 2 or 5.**

## I'm on the Housing Register – what next?

Once your application has been agreed you can start to apply for properties that are advertised through Choice Based Lettings (CBL). However, if your application has been suspended you are not allowed to apply for properties.

## Why would my application be suspended?

We have to carry out a number of checks on anyone who applies for housing. If you are a tenant in the private sector or a tenant with a council or housing association, we will contact your landlord for a tenancy report. If it is unsatisfactory because of rent arrears or other breach of your tenancy agreement we may suspend your application.

We will also need proof:

- that you are who you say you are
- that you live where you say you live
- about any children on your application
- of pregnancy if anyone on your application is pregnant
- and other matters as required.

**Your application will remain suspended until you have provided all the proofs we ask for.**

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## Annual review of applications

Once you have been accepted onto the Housing Register we will contact you once a year so that you can renew your application.

We close your application if you fail to respond to the annual review. We will consider re-instating your application if you contact us within 12 months.

## Removal from the housing register

**You will be removed from the Housing Register if you:**

- are not eligible for housing
- request your removal in writing
- don't renew your application at the annual review
- don't provide information we have asked for.

## What if my circumstances change?

**You must tell us. You can do this by :**

- telephone
- notifying us in writing.

We will send you a new application form if necessary.

We will then look at your application again. While we do this your application is suspended and you cannot be considered for accommodation.

## Rural lettings schemes

We believe that it is important to keep rural communities alive. This means we try to make sure that people who have a connection with a rural community also have the best opportunity to live there. When we let properties in a village a certain number are reserved for people who have a village connection.



## What kind of property can I apply for?

The table sets out the type and size of property you can apply for. It is based on your family size.

Household size	Number of bedrooms
Single person	Studio or 1 bedroom
Couple	1 bedroom
2 applicants not couple	2 bedrooms
Household with 1 other	2 bedrooms
Household with 2 others	2 or 3 bedrooms
Household with 3 others	3 or 4 bedrooms
Household with 4 others	3 or 4 bedrooms
Household with 5 others	3, 4 or 5 bedrooms
Household with 6 others	3, 4 or 5 bedrooms
Household with 7 or more others	4, 5 or 6 bedrooms

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## Tell me about offers of accommodation

Our aim is to make a provisional offer of accommodation to the applicant at the top of the shortlist. The general rules for short-listing are:

- those in Band 1 will be looked at first
- then those in Band 1 with a district or sub-regional connection will be considered before those without
- if there is more than one applicant in the highest band with a district or sub-regional connection then the applicant who has been waiting the longest will be top of the list

- if there is no one in Band 1 who has applied we will go through the same process checking Bands 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Sometimes there are special rules for properties for the disabled or schemes for the elderly. We may also have to meet quotas for transfer and other types of applicants. When we advertise these properties we make it clear in the advert that special rules apply.

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## What happens if I refuse an offer?

That depends. If you are in the Band 1, and have applied for a property which you then refuse, your application may be re-assessed and you may finish up in a lower band. This will give you less chance of making a successful choice in the future.

If you are not in Band 1, you can apply for properties until you are successful and want to accept the offer of accommodation. We may review your application if you continually refuse offers of accommodation.

Remember that if you are top of a shortlist once it does not guarantee you will be top of other shortlists in the future.

## What rights do I have?

**If you apply for accommodation with us you have the right to:-**

- free advice and information
- ask for a summary of the Allocation Scheme
- ask for help in making your application
- see the full Allocation Scheme
- ask for information about how we assessed your application

- ask for information, which will enable you to assess whether accommodation is likely to be made available, and if, so, when
- have information about your application kept confidential.

## Information about decisions

**We will write to you:-**

- if your application is suspended
- when we make your application active
- if it is decided that you are not eligible because of your immigration status
- if it is decided that you are not eligible because of unacceptable behaviour by you or a member of your household.

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## What can I do if I'm unhappy about a decision?

You can ask us to re-consider our decision. Your request should be in writing and explain why you want to have your application looked at again.

## Choice Based Lettings

If you want to know more about Choice Based Lettings please ask for our information booklet "*It's your choice*".

# How to contact us

We hope that you have found the information in this booklet useful. For more details, or if you have any queries relating to the booklet please contact the address below:

Housing Services  
Cherwell District Council  
Bodicote House  
Bodicote  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire OX15 4AA

Phone: 01295 252535  
Textphone: 01295 221572  
Fax: 01295 221522  
Email: [housing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:housing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk)

Call **01295 252535**  
or visit **[www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk)**

This information can be made available in alternative formats including Braille, large type, audio tape, and other languages on request. Please phone 01295 227001.

Jezeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać: 01295 227001

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਸਾਡਾ ਵਾਰੀ ਬੁਕਲੈਟ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਜਾਣਾ ਚਿੱਠ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਵੋ। 01295 227001

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。01295 227001

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