

## Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions Policy

<p><b>Scope</b></p>	<p>This document sets out the Council’s policy for the acquisition of privately-owned properties for use as temporary accommodation for households towards whom a duty to secure accommodation, in accordance with Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act and the Homelessness Code of Guidance.</p> <p>It describes the acquisition of private sector properties for use as temporary accommodation. This policy applies to both existing and future applicants.</p>
<p><b>Approved by</b></p>	
<p><b>Approval date</b></p>	
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<p><b>Document owner – Portfolio Holder</b></p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Social Housing</p>
<p><b>Review</b></p>	<p>We will keep this policy under constant review. We will update it based on any changes in legal or local context.</p>

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document sets out the Council's policy for the acquisition of privately-owned properties for use as temporary accommodation for households towards whom a duty to secure accommodation in accordance with Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act and the Homelessness Code of Guidance.
- 1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with the Council's Placement Policy for temporary accommodation and private rented sector offers.
- 1.3 The Council does not have units of temporary accommodation (TA) within its own owned and managed stock, and as a result we depend on the supply of privately-owned properties to meet our obligations to provide temporary accommodation to homeless households. Changes to the local housing market and other factors largely outside the Council's control have made it challenging to obtain properties for use as temporary accommodation in the borough that meet the standards that are required. This policy is intended to ensure that enough numbers of suitable properties are obtained for the anticipated demand for temporary accommodation. The policy, and associated demand projections, will be reviewed periodically as required.

## **2.0 Key principles**

- 2.1 The approach of the service to the acquisition of properties is informed by the following key principles:
  - The objective of the service is to procure enough units of TA to meet the anticipated demand for properties in each financial year.
  - Where possible these units will be in the borough, however the service may acquire properties in other locations where it appears the supply of units in the borough will not be enough for the anticipated demand.
  - Where there is a shortfall in the number of 'in borough' units, the Placement policy will be applied to determine which households are offered those units, and which households will be offered properties in other locations
  - In addressing the shortfall, the service will endeavour to acquire units in locations which are close to Enfield in order to minimise as far as possible the distance between the borough itself and the location of TA being offered to households who cannot be accommodated within the borough.
  - Where the demand for accommodation is such that it is unlikely to be possible to acquire sufficient properties for all homeless households in Enfield and surrounding areas, the service may acquire properties in other locations, which can be offered to homeless households applying the approach set out in the Placement Policy
  - In making decisions on the acquisition of properties for TA, the service may consider the resources available for the provision of TA, the

difficulties of procuring enough units of TA at affordable prices in the borough, and the practicalities of acquiring accommodation in surrounding areas.

- Where there is a requirement for disabled adapted accommodation the team will link up with the councils 'Grants and Disabled Adaptions Team' to procure, carry out works required, and fund through a Disabled Facilities Grant (where appropriate) to provide suitable accommodation for the homeless household.
- In relation to the procurement of suitable disabled adapted accommodation our aim is to facilitate discharge our duty to the private sector via our ethical lettings agency, 'Enfield Let' or direct with a private landlord

### **3.0 Temporary accommodation provision – general**

3.1 The service currently acquires privately owned properties for use as temporary accommodation via a Dynamic Purchasing System operated in partnership with other boroughs.

### **4.0 Potential demand for temporary accommodation**

4.1 The acquisitions policy assumes that it may be necessary to procure properties beyond the borough itself and the surrounding areas. All properties procured under the policy will be as close to the borough as is reasonably practicable, given the financial constraints within which the service operates and the practical difficulties which can prevent units being procured in the borough or nearby boroughs. The allocation of properties will take into account the councils Placement Policy.

### **5.0 Instructions to suppliers**

5.1 As the procurement of individual properties is vested in the managing agents working on the service's behalf, the service must ensure that the suppliers' actions are compliant with the acquisitions policy.

5.2 The decision whether to use a particular property which is being offered by a supplier is made by the service and must be informed by applying the key principles of the acquisitions policy.

5.3 The managing agents who procure TA on the service's behalf are aware of the Council's requirements and of the TA Acquisitions Policy.

5.4 All managing agents are under a standing instruction to procure as many properties as possible in the borough, and to procure properties as close to the borough as possible when considering other areas.

5.5 Where it may be possible for suppliers to deliver cost-effective arrangements for TA in other areas, managers in the service are authorised to approve these arrangements where it appears clear that:

- a) Based on trends in supply and demand the service cannot be confident of comprehensively meeting its obligations to homeless households

using only the properties likely to be acquired in the borough and surrounding areas, and

- b) It is likely there will also be a shortfall in the number of available units located in areas between the borough and surrounding areas and the location of the potential acquisition, and
- c) The properties in question meet the physical standards set out in the Councils minimum property standards for TA, and
- d) The properties being offered represent good value for money when considered in the context of the service's overall expenditure on TA.

5.6 Where units are acquired in other areas by applying the above criteria, the Placement Policy will be applied in the process of matching each individual property to a homeless household. Each property will only be offered to an applicant when the service has satisfied itself that it is suitable for the homeless household, taking into account the household's individual circumstances and the characteristics of the property.

## **6.0 Process for acquisitions**

6.1 The process by which individual properties are offered to the service by suppliers is set out in the relevant Service Specification documents for each type of TA procured under the Dynamic Purchasing System.

6.2 Before agreeing to the use of a specific unit, officers in the service are responsible for ensuring a) that the acquisitions process in the relevant Service Specification has been followed, and b) that the acquisition of the unit is consistent with the principles of the acquisitions policy as set out above.

6.3 Where there are not likely to be enough units in the borough to meet demand, officers in the service can authorise the acquisition of properties in surrounding areas in order that it will be possible to meet the service's obligations.

6.4 When properties have been acquired the service will go on to consider which households should be offered them, applying the Placement Policy.

## **7.0 Financial considerations**

7.1 The difficulties experienced by the service in procuring TA in the borough and surrounding areas are largely related to the wider housing market and the availability to owners and landlords of other options which are more financially attractive (including letting properties to households not dependent on Housing Benefit) In light of this the service keeps under review the rent charges and other financial incentives it offers to managing agents and property owners, and will implement increases in these incentives where there is a business case for doing so.

7.2 The service is under an obligation to provide services within the budgetary limits set by the Council, and to seek value for money in all its dealings with third parties. For these reasons it is not possible for the Council to pay 'asking rents' for properties in the borough, or in any area, where to

do so would create a severe financial imbalance between the maximum obtainable rent (based on the Housing Benefit subsidy arrangements for temporary accommodation) and the amount payable to the agent or owner. In seeking to provide suitable accommodation in the borough or as close to it as possible the service cannot set aside its obligations to the Council Taxpayer and other sources of funding. These considerations represent a significant impediment to obtaining as many units of TA in the borough or nearby as would be desirable to fulfil the principles of the acquisitions policy and the Placement policy.

- 7.3 Notwithstanding the constraints described above, the service and the managing agents with whom it works in partnership are committed to maximising the supply of properties in borough for use as TA. The acquisitions policy reflects this aspiration while taking account of the difficulties in procuring enough units of TA in the borough, and the practical and financial impediments in obtaining properties of a sufficiently high standard.
- 7.4 In dealing with potential acquisitions under this policy, the service also has regard to the right of homeless applicants to request a review of the suitability of any temporary accommodation provided to them under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996, and of the requirements of the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.