

Choice Based Letting

Garage Allocation System

Introduction

This is the choice based garage allocations policy for Tamworth Borough Council through which the Council makes garages available to rent to its tenants and other local residents.

Key Aims & Objectives

The overall aim of this policy is to ensure that Tamworth Borough Council's garages are allocated fairly and efficiently to maximise rental income and that garages remain occupied.

This policy has been developed with a view to meeting the following principles and key objectives;

- To operate a garage allocations system that offers informed choice for all;
- To ensure that every application is dealt with fairly and consistently irrespective of their race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age;
- To operate a choice based garage lettings system that is simple, easy to understand, transparent, open and fair;
- To assist those customers who are vulnerable in accessing the scheme

Equality and Fairness

Tamworth Borough Council will ensure its policies and practises are non-discriminatory and will promote equal opportunity by preventing and eliminating discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age. The scheme will be accessible, responsive and sensitive to the diverse needs of individuals.

Eligibility

We operate a garage register, subject to eligibility, which means that anyone aged 18 years and over can apply to be placed on the garage register. Furthermore, sixteen and seventeen year olds that occupy their own property and can provide proof that their tenancy will be held on trust for them by an adult until they reach the age of 18, can apply (this is for legal reasons as a minor under the age of 18 cannot be granted a tenancy).

Tenants of the Council will not be eligible to apply for or rent a garage if they have any outstanding current or former housing or garage rent arrears with Tamworth Borough Council.

All applicants must provide two forms of proof of their current address (a tenancy agreement, utility bill, bank statement will be acceptable), and must prove they have a motor vehicle (namely their current registration car

document). Applicants with a disability must produce their disabled persons blue badge permit.

Use of Garage

A garage must only be used for the garaging of a taxed and roadworthy motor vehicle (a motor vehicle can include a car, van, motorised scooter, motorbike, off road bikes, trailers and boats), owned by person/s living at the applicant's address or where the applicant is disabled, their nominated driver. Where garages are in hard to let areas, this condition may be relaxed at the discretion of the letting officer and tenants will need prior written permission to store other items.

The Tenant shall not be permitted to assign, sub-let or part with the possession of the garage.

The Tenant shall not be permitted to carry on a trade or business of any kind or use the garage as a workshop.

Garages must not be used for any criminal, immoral or illegal purpose, including selling or using illegal drugs, or storing or handling stolen goods.

No applicant will be permitted to rent more than two garages.

The Council shall not be held responsible in respect of loss of or damage to any property brought onto any garage premises. Tenants will be expected to take out adequate insurance to cover their belongings brought into any garage premises.

If the tenant changes address and it is no longer feasible for them to continue to use the garage for motor vehicle storage, they will be required to relinquish their tenancy by giving one week's notice to the Council.

How to apply

An application can be made by completing a garage application form and providing the information requested. The registration of an application may be delayed or cancelled if the information requested is not provided.

The purpose of the application form is to correctly identify the garage priority for each customer. Once an application has been registered customers will be notified of;

- The date of registration ;
- The priority category they will be placed in
- Application reference (for expressing an interest in garages)
- Details of the regulations and conditions of holding a garage tenancy
- Guidance booklet `A Guide to Finding a Garage`

Prioritising Applications

Within the choice based garage lettings scheme policy Tamworth Borough Council will have a priority category system based on garage need. We will use it to assess the garage need of the applicant and will advise them which category reflects their need most appropriately.

Category one is given the highest priority working down to category four being the lowest.

- **Category One**

For Council tenants that are registered disabled and require or have a motor vehicle to aid their mobility.

- **Category Two**

For non Council residents that are registered disabled and require or have a motor vehicle to aid their mobility.

- **Category Three**

For Council housing tenants not included in category one.

- **Category Four**

For non Council residents not included in category two.

The Bidding Process

Available garages will be advertised weekly on the Council's website and in the reception area of Marmion House.

Applicants can express their interest in as many garages as they wish.

Customers can bid via telephone, email the website, or visit Marmion House in order to place bids on advertised garages. Advice and support will be provided to customers who need it, to ensure they are able to use the scheme to bid for properties.

Short Listing & Allocating Garages

Bids will be placed in the order of priority e.g. category 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Within each category there will be prioritisation. Priority will be given to applicants who live within the same locality area as the available garage (with exception to points 1 & 2 listed below). The date that an application was placed will be used to prioritise the bids.

1. **Town centre garages:** for a range of town centre garages priority will firstly be given to surrounding local residents (see appendix one for details). The date that an application was placed will also be used to prioritise the bids.

2. **Garages adjoining properties:** for garages that are adjoining properties, priority will firstly be given to the applicants whose flat or house adjoins the available garage. The date that an application was placed will also be used to prioritise the bids.

Once the bids are prioritised, the available garage will be offered to the person that comes to the top of the category. If no one accepts in that category it will be offered to the person on top of the next category group and so on.

If two or more customers within the same category and locality area have bid for the same garage, their application date will be used to determine the higher priority. If the date is the same, whichever customer bid for the property first will be successful.

Prior to an offer of a garage being made a check will be run to ascertain if the prospective tenant has incurred any current or former housing rent or garage rent arrears debt with Tamworth Borough Council. If this is the case they will be informed that a garage will not be allocated unless the debt is cleared within 7 days of an offer.

Applicants will not be offered a second garage if there are other applicants still waiting for a first garage.

Viewing a Garage

An applicant who is offered a garage will be given 48 hours view the garage and accept the offer.

If the applicant refuses the offer, there is no limit to the number of further offers that can be made.

Accepting a Garage

If the applicant chooses to accept the offer, they must sign a garage tenancy agreement which details the terms and conditions under which the garage tenancy will be held .

Dealing with Termination

Tenants who wish to end the tenancy of a garage must do so by giving the Tamworth Borough Council 7 day's written notice.

The garage must be left in a clean and tidy condition. All rubbish and items no longer required must be removed from the garage. Failure to clear the property of personal belongings or rubbish will result in the tenant being responsible for the cost of removals.

Where tenants fail to return the keys by 12 noon on the Monday following the termination of the tenancy then a weeks rent shall be payable and charged to the rent account. If by the end of that week in which the keys were due to be returned they have still not been received, a lock change will be arranged. A letter shall be sent to the tenant advising that a lock change has been ordered and the cost will be recharged to them.

If the Tenant dies, next of kin will be given a maximum of 2 weeks to return the keys. The tenancy will then be terminated on the first Monday following the return of the keys. Where no keys are returned a lock change will be arranged.

Tenants can rent a garage without interference from Tamworth Borough Council as long as they, their friends and relatives and any other person visiting the garage (including children) do not break any of the conditions in the Garage Tenancy Agreement including conditions in relation to rent arrears. If the conditions are broken, the Council may serve the tenant with notice to quit and take possession of the garage as well as recharge any associated costs to the tenant.

Garage Exchange

The tenant of a Tamworth Borough Council garage can exchange their tenancy with another Tamworth Borough Council garage tenant by mutual consent with the agreement of the Council. In such circumstances, each tenant will be required to sign a fresh tenancy agreement in relation to the garage that they exchange into.

Tenants of the Council will not be eligible to apply for a garage exchange if they have any outstanding current or former garage rent arrears.

Transfers

Existing tenants of garages can join the register so that they can be considered for a garage in a more convenient area or to apply for a second garage.

Tenants of the Council will not be eligible to apply for a garage transfer if they have any outstanding current or former rent arrears.

Rent Charge Arrangements

Weekly Garage rents from April 2012	
Tenancy held by:	weekly rent
Tamworth Borough Council tenant	£9.14
Council tenant – Disabled Blue badge holder	£8.22
Private tenant (Council tenant rate plus VAT)	£10.97 (includes £1.71 VAT)
Private Disabled blue badge holder (Council tenant disabled rate plus VAT)	£9.87 (Includes VAT £1.54)
Town Centre	Premium charge of extra 60p per garage is charged, on top of rent, if tenant rents town centre garage but lives outside garage vicinity.

If the tenant of the garage is not also a council tenant, VAT will be payable on the garage rent.

The Council has the right to change the rent at any time, but generally we review our charges once a year. If we are going to change the rent we will give tenants at least two week's notice.

The Council will pursue rent arrears recovery and this may involve repossession of the garage if the tenant owes more than 4 weeks rent.

Tenants may pay their rent by the following methods: direct debit, online, paypoint or post office outlets and telephone.

Appeals

If an applicant is dissatisfied with a decision made regarding their garage application or allocation, they may appeal in writing to the Housing Options Manager at Tamworth Borough Council. The applicant will receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days and informed of the outcome within 21 days working days.

APPENDIX ONE

Short Listing & Allocating Garages

For a range of town centre garages: for a range of town centre garages (listed below) priority will firstly be given to surrounding local residents (see list below). The date that an application was placed will also be used to prioritise applications.

Garage Locations	Priority Given to surrounding local residents
Town Centre garages off Lichfield Street, Tamworth include: Deveraux House Stanhope House Peel House Strode House Weymouth House Balfour Harcourt House Townsend House Sunset Close	Priority will be given to residents living at Sunset Close, Deveraux House, Stanhope House, Peel House, Strode House, Weymouth House, Balfour, Harcourt House, Townsend House.