
RUSS Allocations Policy

V.6

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RUSS – General Allocations Policy

General Objectives

RUSS aims to create neighbourhoods of genuinely affordable, sustainable homes within a mixed and well-integrated community, offered on various tenures to suit the needs of different income groups within each project's target area. Project-specific allocations criteria will apply on specific projects, such as at Church Grove or any future RUSS projects (see Appendices). RUSS wants to create a fair and open selection process for potential residents.

General Criteria

Fulfilling the criteria in each of the three areas will determine qualifying status of residential applicants, regardless of any specific criteria relating to a particular project conducted by RUSS.

1 Affordability

Determined by:

- ...an *inability* to afford to purchase a suitable local home
- ...an *ability* to afford a RUSS home

Tests for the above to be determined for each project.

2 Local Connection

Determined by:

- Residence – must have lived in the determined project area (specified in each individual project allocation policy) for a period of 2 years or more in the last five years prior to the initial deadline date for expressions of interest (see individual project appendix for relevant dates) or...
- Employment - existing full time or part-time employment. Those retired from employment must have worked in the Borough for a minimum of 2 years immediately prior to retirement. Those who can demonstrate that they are self-employed and will be operating from a base in LBL; or...
- Studying – existing full time or part-time student on a course from a recognized educational institution located in the project area. For the avoidance of doubt, those taking short term courses, evening classes or ad hoc studying will not be considered to be full or part-time students; or...
- Other – demonstrate other special circumstances that create a link to LBL (not including residence in hospital, armed forces accommodation, holiday lets or prison).

For example, family connection, community group membership or significant volunteering commitment.

Tests for the above are detailed in each specific project policy.

3 Community Commitment

Determined by:

- ...a demonstrable commitment and/or wish to work with RUSS to further its objectives, maintain its ethos and support the aims of the Community Land Trust (CLT) as detailed in the RUSS Rule Book.
- An application to be a member of RUSS prior to the ballot date of any specific RUSS project. Applications may be processed post ballot by the Secretary or membership team but a share offer must have been paid for prior to the day of the ballot.

Cooperative Applications

Whilst, for the purposes of this Policy, a cooperative does not have a legal definition RUSS is assuming that applications as housing cooperatives are coming from a group of individuals bound by a common purpose of living together in one or more households. Therefore, the policy on cooperatives is as follows:

- RUSS requires that cooperative applications are legally constituted (as a Community Interest Company, Not For Profit, Club, Society or Community Organisation for example) prior to application and can provide documentary evidence that the aims and objectives of the cooperative are in line with those of RUSS and that the cooperative has a local connection to the specific project.

1 For single household cooperatives

RUSS welcomes applications from single-household cooperatives. A 'lead' applicant (see section on 'Applying for a RUSS Home' below) will be expected to pass the same eligibility criteria as any other individual applying for a RUSS home as the 'lead' for that household. However, in order to ensure that the eligibility criteria are met in the future, as well as at the point of application, RUSS will require any successful housing cooperative to enshrine the eligibility criteria in its constitution or similar relevant document.

2 For multiple household cooperatives

For the purpose of the current Allocations Policy, RUSS will not be soliciting applications from those cooperatives that wish to occupy more than one property. Individuals from larger cooperatives are welcome to apply either as individuals or form single-household cooperatives, as above.

Advertisement of Properties

Initial release of properties

At least, 6 months prior to expected completion of any new RUSS housing and for existing, as soon as a vacancy is known, RUSS will:

1. Advertise internally

RUSS will seek expressions of interest from those individuals already on its register of members.

2. Advertise publically

RUSS will solicit expressions of interest in its properties through local media (e.g. – ‘Lewisham Live’ newsletter, the Newshopper newspaper, other local press as appropriate, etc.) and via the RUSS website.

3. Liaise with the relevant Local Authority

RUSS will advise the relevant Local Authority the actual or projected availability of RUSS homes via an agreed channel (to be confirmed by the Local Authority). RUSS will assist the Local Authority in advertising available properties to appropriate candidates through the Council’s nominated communications routes – for example, through the Local Authority’s single housing register, and any publication channels (housing and community lists or magazines) that the Local Authority may operate.

Application Procedure

RUSS will receive expressions of interest in its properties by post, email, online via its website, or through an agreed process of nomination from the relevant Local Authority. Specific procedures may be adopted for particular projects.

Each application will have a named individual, who meets the eligibility criteria and is the ‘lead’ applicant for that property. This can be any adult over the age of 16 who wishes to apply to live in a RUSS home. At the point of application, not all potential or actual

members of the household need to be identified. A review of the household's eligibility will be undertaken following the initial ballot as part of determining if and how the edibility criteria have been fulfilled.

Applicants that satisfy the General and Specific Allocations Criteria will then be asked to enter into the following, or similar process as determined by RUSS prior to any project:

Expression of Interest

Ballot

Declaration of Interest

Contract

Applicant meets the above criteria and informs The RUSS.



Applicants will be divided into suitable tenancy groups and a ballot will be held for each group



Applicants will be asked to provide or attend the following:

- Written Application*
- Financial Information*
- Interview by independent panel*



Successful applicants will be required to enter into a contractual arrangement with The RUSS.

Special Circumstances – The initial ‘self-build’ of RUSS homes

RUSS will require a Selection Procedure to establish its initial group of self-builders. This Selection Procedure will align with the Application Procedure outlined above, but will include further assessment stages to be agreed with RUSS’s training and self-build partners. For example, it is likely to require further detail at Interview stage, and a different contractual arrangement to a standard application for occupancy.

Decisions

Decisions on applications following the ballot shortlisting are made on behalf of The RUSS by its Board of Directors, and applicants have the means to appeal a decision.

For the avoidance of doubt, there is no formal appeal process designated for the results of the ballot alone.

Management of Waiting Lists

After the ballot a series of lists will be drawn up as follows:

- Resident List- those successful in the ballot
- Short List- the first two households on each waiting list
- Long List- all other households that applied before ballot date
- Late List- applications accepted after ballot date

Applicants can make an application for more than one RUSS project but only be on one resident list or short list at any one time.

In the event that a long list is exhausted applicants on other long lists will be given the opportunity of first refusal to enter a ballot to fill the resident list.

The list will then be completed with the late list applicants and failing this the applications process will open again from the start and a new open ballot undertaken.

Moving Pools

If long list applicants choose to move pools within a project they will move to the end of the long list of the destination pool.

The Russ Board and Management Team reserves the right to accept or decline requests to move pools in the scheme.

Any decision will be based on the spirit of the allocations policy and fulfilling the defined charitable aims of the society.

These can briefly be described as 'providing affordable housing for local people and providing amenities to those most in need'.

The numbers of applicants on each list will not be made public after the ballot as this gives an advantage to late applicants.

However, those considering moving pools can request this information from the RUSS Secretary (anne@theruss.org).

Long list applicants wishing to move pools should email the Secretary at anne@theruss.org, formally withdrawing from the current pool, and submit a new application, correctly completed, for the pool they wish to join.

The Secretary will acknowledge receipt of both requests by email, and confirm the new waiting list position to the applicant. Pool changes will be treated on a 'first come first served' basis, according to date of email posting.

Right of Appeal

If an applicant feels that the decision made about their application is unfair, they may submit an appeal, in writing, to The RUSS at its registered address. A Panel of at least two RUSS Members plus one additional independent person will then hear the appeal within 15 working days. Members of the Appeals Panel will not have been involved in the earlier decision making process. The decision of the Appeals Panel will be binding on all parties.

RUSS Equality and Diversity Policy

In line with the RUSS Equality and Diversity Policy no person or group of persons applying for accommodation will be treated less favourably than any other person because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical disability or marital status or any other factor that is strictly prohibited by law.

RUSS is seeking to address local housing need, and as such will endeavour to advertise its properties in such a way that a significant cross-section of the local population will have an opportunity to express an interest.

Review of the Allocations Policy

This policy will be reviewed by The RUSS from time to time to ensure that it continues to uphold the aims and objectives of the organisation and meet the needs of its beneficiaries and in a fair and transparent way.

Signed for RUSS _____

Position _____

Date _____