StART allocations and lettings policy

This document sets out StART’s proposed system for allocating the “general needs” category of rented housing. It is also proposed that this allocation system is used for the accommodation set aside for older people.¹

The allocation scheme sets out qualifying criteria that applicants for housing must meet. It goes on to explain how tenants will be chosen from all the qualifying applicants.

Background

In 2015, Haringey Council granted planning permission for a housing development on the St Ann’s site with a requirement that only 14 per cent of the homes be “affordable”². Following consultations with people in the local area, StART is seeking to provide a higher level of truly affordable, secure, good quality housing for local people, especially those who otherwise are unable to rent affordably in Haringey. StART defines “rent affordably” to mean spending no more than one third of gross household income on rent.

StART also wants to create a development that retains the site for the benefit of the wider community by providing additional facilities and amenities for other local residents. We envision both the housing and the facilities being community-led developments that are responsive to the needs of the people who live there already or who have strong connections to the area.

Pre-application stage

StART recognises that finding out about housing opportunities, accessing information and completing applications is more difficult for some people than others. Before opening the application stage, we will consider these issues in detail, and attempt to identify and minimise obstacles to accessing the application process.

This could include:

- linking up with community groups and other organisations (e.g. healthcare providers and schools) to spread information and reach as many people as possible
- information stalls and drop-in sessions
- translation of information into community languages and accessible formats
- offering help to complete application forms.

¹ Properties for sale at market price and below market price and other types of rented property (e.g. supported accommodation) will be dealt with separately.
² The definition of affordable in this context can mean up to 80% of market rent levels.
PART A  QUALIFYING CRITERIA

In order to qualify to apply, a household must meet all of the following four criteria.

1. Income and Capital Thresholds

Applications for rental properties will be open to households with gross annual income and capital that is at or below the threshold level fixed by StART for the number of bedrooms they require.

1.1 Calculating the Bedroom Requirement

The table below sets out how StART will calculate the number of bedrooms that a household requires:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bedroom Requirement</th>
<th>Median income multiplier</th>
<th>Income threshold (based on median gross household income of £34k pa)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (single person)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>£34k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (two people, living as a couple)</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>£42.5k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>£51k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>£59.5k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>£68k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The system for calculating property size and which threshold is applicable will include some provision for exceptional circumstances, such as where a person needs their own room because of a disability.

1.2 Income thresholds

The proposed income thresholds below have been calculated with reference to the average (median) gross household income in the area around the St Ann’s site. This median income level was estimated to be about £34,000 in 2012/13. The income thresholds vary according to the calculated Bedroom Requirement for the household. This is because we assume that the more people there are in a household, the greater the living expenses are likely to be for that household.

The annual income threshold according to the number of bedrooms required is as follows:

Income means gross household income and includes all income.

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3 The thresholds are based on a multiplier of median income, so they can be updated easily in future, but we also compared them to current rental market levels. If the relation between local median incomes and rental market levels changes significantly by the time of the actual allocation, the multipliers may need reassessing nearer the time.
1.3 Capital limits

The capital limit for rental properties is 50 per cent of the applicable income threshold. Capital includes all property, savings and investments, except pensions.

Personal possessions, other than property, will not be treated as capital.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bedroom Requirement</th>
<th>Median Income multiplier</th>
<th>Capital threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (single occupant)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>£17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (two occupants)</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>£21,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>£25,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>£29,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£34,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Local connection

Applications will be open to people who live, work or have a strong connection with Haringey, and to people who live in other boroughs but within one mile of the St Ann's site. Some households will be exempt from meeting this criterion, e.g. people granted refugee status within the last six months, people fleeing violence, people from travelling communities.

3. Supporting the aims of START and contributing to the community

Applicants and tenants will be encouraged, but not required, to become members of START. They must confirm that they are willing to respect and support the vision and aims of START.

When offered a tenancy, potential tenants will be asked to attend induction sessions which explain the values and aims of START and the obligations of the landlord and tenant. One-to-one sessions will be arranged for applicants who need this.

There is an expectation that people who live on the site will contribute to the community as they are able to. START will try to create an environment in which opportunities for participation from tenants are plentiful and varied. START will consider barriers to participation and try to address these.

It is also recognised that the degree to which people can or want to participate in their community is varied and all contributions need to be valued.

4. Right to Rent

The ‘right to rent’ is a concept introduced by the Immigration Act 2004. It means that landlords can commit an offence if they rent to someone who does not have a ‘right to rent’. In very simple terms, someone does not have a ‘right to rent’ if they are in the UK without a legal right to enter, remain or reside.

START has no control over this aspect of qualification and will have to comply with whatever the legal requirements are at the time, or risk prosecution. More information can be found here:


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4 This corresponds with the START membership criteria.

5 The degree of responsibility START has for checking the “right to rent” depends on the eventual set-up of the housing allocation and management.
PART B: Allocation

Initial allocation

1. Pre-application stage – assessment of need, intensive advertising, outreach etc. for a period of time (to be determined).

2. Application stage – applications open for a period (advertising outreach continues, assistance with forms etc. to be provided). Applicants may apply for two property sizes. This may benefit households who expect their size to increase or decrease within the near future. However, the income threshold will be based on the Bedroom Requirement for the household size (see Part A, 1.1, Calculating the Bedroom Requirement).

3. Application stage closes.

4. Lottery stage
   - A separate lottery will be drawn for each size of property. Applicants can enter a maximum of two lotteries (i.e. for two different-sized properties)
   - The lottery will have a system of weighting or bands to ensure that:
     a) At least 25% of successful applicants are in the lowest quartile for gross household income
     b) At least 25% of successful applicants are not in the lowest quartile for gross household income

5. Each applicant drawn via the lottery is assessed to check they meet the qualifying criteria. Further information/evidence requested if needed.

6. StART will also check that the applicant is eligible for the property size they have applied for. Applicants have time to request a review of the decision concerning the number of bedrooms they require.

7. StART contacts applicants confirming whether or not they qualify. Anyone who does not qualify is given reasons for this decision and a period within which to request a review of the decision.

8. Successful applicants will be made an offer of accommodation. If the offer is not accepted, a further draw will take place and an offer will be made to another applicant.

Allocation of subsequent vacancies

1. Vacancies will first be offered to existing tenants of StART.

2. Vacancies not taken up by existing tenants will be offered to other applicants.