

LEICESTERSHIRE

— Choice based lettings —

CHARNWOOD HOMESEEKERS GUIDE

Your guide to finding a new home in Leicestershire

Leicestershire choice based lettings (CBL) is a partnership between councils and Housing Associations covering the seven council areas in Leicestershire. Please note this scheme covers all of Leicestershire but does not include the City of Leicester itself.

As well as a choice of social housing lettings, the service offers a range of other housing options and advice for people wanting to move home.

This guide tells you:

- How to join the Housing Register
- About the band system
- Which properties you can 'bid' for
- How to make bids



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1. WHAT IS CHOICE BASED LETTINGS?

Choice based lettings, or CBL, is an approach to letting social housing which makes lettings arrangements more transparent by advertising the council or Housing Association properties that become available.

Homeseekers are able to see how many council or Housing Association homes become available and have more control over the lettings process as they can 'bid' for the properties they are interested in.

CBL does not increase the amount of available social housing but it provides homeseekers with accurate information on how many homes are actually available, where these homes are located, and their chances of being housed.

2. HOW DOES LEICESTERSHIRE CBL WORK?

Every week, the seven councils in Leicestershire publish details of all available properties to rent from the councils and local Housing Associations. There will be house exchange opportunities, and in some areas, properties from private landlords will be available.

Once you have registered with one of the councils, you will be able to use your registration number (or login number) to bid every week for up to two properties that interest you. When bidding closes, the person at the top of the list will be contacted and offered the property. If this person cannot take the property, then the next person on the list will be offered the property, and so on, until the property has been let.

The information in this booklet is for people who are registered with Charnwood Borough Council. People looking for housing are referred to as homeseekers.

Please note there is high demand for properties and a long wait for accommodation is likely for many homeseekers. If you have an urgent need for housing, there may be other options you can consider. For housing advice on your housing options, contact the Housing Needs team on 01509 63 4567.

3. JOINING THE HOUSING REGISTER

If you would like to join the Housing Register you need to be registered with Charnwood Borough Council or another district council in Leicestershire.

3.1 WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO JOIN THE HOUSING REGISTER?

To join the Housing Register you must be aged 16 years or over (homeseekers under the age of 18 years may not be eligible for all property types from all landlords). Some people are ineligible to join the Housing Register including:

- Certain people from abroad as defined by legislation (please ask for more information)
- People the council considers to be unsuitable to be a tenant, for example, those with a history of persistent arrears or antisocial behavior
- People with no local connection to the Leicestershire sub region
- People with the financial means to meet their own housing needs
- Social tenants who are still on introductory or probationary tenancies

To join the Housing Register you will need to complete and return a **Housing application form**. These are available from:

- Charnwood Borough Council offices
- Download a form at www.charnwood.gov.uk
- Or telephone:
 - Customer Services on 01509 263151
 - Housing Needs on 01509 634567

Please make sure you fill in all parts of the application form. Remember to provide all the proofs you are asked for – returning the form without all the necessary proofs could delay registration of your application.

The information you give us on the application form will help us to decide on your eligibility to join the Housing Register, what band your application will be placed in, and whether you also need extra help and advice.

If you are eligible to join the Housing Register, we will tell you:

- Your **registration number**
- Your **effective date of registration**
- The **band** your application has been placed in

If you are not eligible to join the Housing Register, we will tell you why. If you disagree with the decision, you can appeal to Charnwood Borough Council.

For more information on how to appeal, see Section 8 below.

All registrations and decisions on lettings are made in accordance with the council's CBL Allocations Policy and this can be viewed at

<http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/housingpoliciesandinformation>.

4. HOW THE BAND SYSTEM WORKS

The council aims to house those people in greatest need and does this through the band system. Homeseekers are placed in bands according to their housing circumstances and level of housing need.

Councils and Housing Associations have a responsibility to ensure that people in urgent housing need do not become homeless. However, we aim to ensure that homeseekers in a variety of different circumstances have a chance to be offered a new home.

Housing and transfer homeseekers will be assessed and placed in one of 4 bands. Homeseekers in each band will be placed in date order – so the homeseeker with the oldest registration date will have the highest position in that band. The date used is either the date your application was registered or the date you moved into a higher band.

4.1 THE 4 HOUSING BANDS

Please note that the following are only brief descriptions and full details can be found in the CBL Allocations Policy.

| PRIORITY BAND |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households accepted by the council as homeless |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency medical need |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency welfare need |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple/complex housing needs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing management priority |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displaced agricultural workers |
| HIGH BAND |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeseekers with 2 or more different housing needs from the Medium band |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeseekers who are overcrowded and short of two or more bedrooms |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeseekers in recognised supported accommodation and approved for move-on or independent living |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social tenants under-occupying accommodation which is in high demand |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeseekers with a tenancy which is adversely affected by welfare reform |
| MEDIUM BAND |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless households |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeseekers with poor housing conditions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeseekers with a medical need to move |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeseekers with a welfare need to move |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeseekers with insecure accommodation |

LOW BAND

- Homeseekers with the financial means to provide their own housing but who require supported or sheltered accommodation
- Owners or joint owners of a property with equity of less than the threshold specified in the CBL Allocations Policy **and** who do not have any medical or welfare need to move
- Homeseekers with security of tenure and no welfare or medical need to move
- Homeseekers who owe a housing debt and are not maintaining a re-payment plan
- Homeseekers who are guilty of behaviour which affects their suitability to be a tenant
- Joint tenants of a social housing property where the other party will not be moving
- Homeseekers who are only interested in HomeBuy or shared ownership options
- Homeseekers who have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances to get higher priority for housing

4.2 MOVING BETWEEN BANDS

A homeseeker's band will change if their level of need changes. When a homeseeker moves up to a higher band, their effective date will change to the date they moved into the higher band.

The exception is homeseekers moving to the Priority band because the council has a full homelessness duty to them. In this case, the effective date will be the date they presented as homeless.

If a homeseeker moves to a lower band, their effective date will be the date they were previously in that band. If the homeseeker has not been in that band previously, they will retain their current effective date.

4.3 FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

If you have the financial means to buy or rent a home suitable for your needs or to put right problems with your current home, you will normally be excluded from the Housing Register. Specific income, equity and savings levels are used to define this and they can be found in the CBL Allocations Policy.

4.4 MOBILITY NEEDS

If you need ground floor accommodation, accommodation that has been specially adapted or you have a mobility problem, then you will be asked to complete a mobility assessment form.

There are 6 self-selection mobility categories and the homeseeker must select the category which best describes their mobility needs.

4.5 SELF-SELECTION MOBILITY CATEGORIES

| CATEGORY | SELF-SELECTION CATEGORY | PROPERTY TYPE |
|--|--|--|
|  A | My legs are unable to support my weight and I need to use a wheelchair when indoors and outdoors | A property that is fully suitable for a wheelchair to be used inside and outside |
|  B | I use a wheelchair but can walk a short distance; I cannot climb steps or stairs | A wheelchair accessible property with no steps or stairs |
|  C | I do not use a wheelchair but walk with difficulty; I cannot climb steps or stairs | A property with level access from the street, with no steps or stairs |
|  D | I do not use a wheelchair; I find it difficult to walk but can manage one or two steps | A property with no stairs but 1 or 2 steps |
|  E | I need a downstairs toilet | A property with a ground floor toilet and has stairs or steps |
|  F | I have a disability or a medical problem (e.g. kidney dialysis or epilepsy) requiring more suitable accommodation which does not fall into any of the above categories | A standard property suitable for homeseekers who need more space for equipment or which is more suitable for their needs |

4.6 LOCAL CONNECTION

To qualify as having a local connection, you must:

- Have lived in the borough for at least 6 months in the last 12 months
OR at least 3 years in the last 5 years

- Have employment in the borough for a minimum of 12 months
- Have close relatives living in the borough for at least 5 years

Other situations may be taken into account in exceptional circumstances.

There are additional rules that apply to some village housing schemes and in these instances offers can only go to homeseekers who have a connection to the village or a neighbouring parish area.

4.7 TIME LIMITS FOR HOMESEEKERS IN PRIORITY OR HIGH BANDS

We expect homeseekers who are in the High band and Priority band to bid regularly for suitable properties.

Homeseekers in the Priority band will have their application reviewed after 8 weeks. Homeseekers in the High band will have their application reviewed after 16 weeks. Your band may be changed at this review if you have not been bidding for suitable properties that are available.

5. HOW PROPERTIES ARE ADVERTISED

Vacancies for council and Housing Association properties are advertised every week. You can find the adverts:

- On the council's website
- In the property listings newsletter
- At all council offices
- In local libraries across the borough

Advertising all the properties available for letting allows you to see how often the type of property you are interested in comes up for letting.

If you have difficulties viewing the adverts, please contact Housing Needs on 01509 63 4567.

The property adverts will tell you about available properties and:

- Who can bid for the properties (see page 12 for more information)
- Who the landlord is
- Location of the property
- Size of the property and other features (for example, adaptations)
- Rent
- Age and other requirements – the symbols (pictures) in the advert will tell you if there are age requirements or other restrictions on who can bid for the property
- Where available, a photograph of the property or a similar type of property will be provided. If you are viewing online, you will be able to access information about the local area and facilities

Remember that your household will need to match the property details in order for you to be able to bid on the property (for example, a family with one child will not be able to bid for a house with 4 bedrooms).

6. PROPERTY ‘BIDDING’

‘Bidding’ is the word we use for homeseekers selecting properties they would like to be offered. Bidding does not involve money in any way.

6.1 PROPERTIES YOU CAN BID FOR

The table below shows the type of properties your household type will usually be able to bid for. Individual property adverts will specify the age criteria, if applicable, and which household types can bid for that particular property.

| PROPERTY TYPE | HOUSEHOLD TYPE | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--|--------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| | SINGLE PERSON | SINGLE PERSON WITH ACCESS* TO CHILDREN | COUPLE | COUPLE / LONE PARENT PLUS 1 OTHER | COUPLE / LONE PARENT PLUS 2 OTHERS | COUPLE / LONE PARENT PLUS 3 OTHERS | COUPLE / LONE PARENT PLUS 4 OR MORE OTHERS |
| Studio flat | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| 1 bedroom flat | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| 1 bedroom house | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| 2 bedroom flat | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| 2 bedroom house | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| 2 bedroom bungalow | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| 3 bedroom house | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3 bedroom flat | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4+ bedroom house | | | | | | (✓) | ✓ |

* Single person whose children do not live with them on a permanent basis

Please note that Charnwood Borough Council has a very small number of houses with more than 4 bedrooms. Allocations to these properties will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

6.2 SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

Sheltered accommodation with support, a scheme manager or a fitted alarm call system is available for older people and those with a support need. Details of the support available and any age restrictions will be specified in the property advert.

| | SINGLE ELDERLY PERSON | YOUNGER SINGLE PERSON WITH SUPPORT NEEDS | ELDERLY COUPLE |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--|----------------|
| Studio flat | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 1 bedroom flat | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1 bedroom bungalow | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2 bedroom flat | | | ✓ |
| 2 bedroom bungalow | | | ✓ |

6.3 AREA CHOICES IN CHARNWOOD

| LOUGHBOROUGH | VILLAGES (1) | VILLAGES (2) |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Ashby Road Estate | Anstey | Rearsby |
| Warwick | Barkby | Ratcliffe on the Wreake |
| Knightthorpe | Barrow | Rothley |
| Thorpe Acre | Beeby | Seagrave |
| Nottingham Road area | Birstall | Shepshed |
| Shelthorpe Road | Burton on the Wolds | Sileby |
| Shelthorpe | Cossington | South Croxton |
| Leicester Road area | Cotes | Swithland |
| Derby Road area | Cropston | Syston |
| Town Centre | East Goscote | Thrussington |
| Town Centre Ashby Road | Hathern | Thurcaston |
| Forest Road | Hoton | Thurmaston |
| | Mountsorrel | Ulverscroft |
| | Newtown Linford | Walton on the Wolds |
| | Prestwold | Wanlip |
| | Queniborough | Woodhouse Eaves |
| | Quorn | Wymeswold |

6.4 MAP OF CHARNWOOD



If you are eligible to bid for the property (see the table on page 12 for information about properties you can bid for), there will be no restriction on the areas you can choose within the district(s) where you have a local connection.

To help homeseekers who want to move outside the Charnwood area, there will be some properties open to anyone registered with the scheme. These adverts can be found on the website under 'Leicestershire properties'. You can use one or both of your bids on these properties.

6.5 MATCHING

Once the bidding has closed, a list will be compiled of everyone who has bid for the property. Homeseekers with a local connection to the borough will be considered before those without a connection. Homeseekers will then be placed in order, by band, as follows:

- **Priority** band households will appear first
- **High** band households will appear second
- **Medium** band households will appear third
- **Low** band households will appear last

Where there is more than one homeseeker in any band, the effective date will be the deciding factor – so people with the highest need, who have been waiting longest, will get priority.

6.6 SELECTION

Provided the top matched homeseeker is eligible to receive the offer, they will be contacted when the bidding closes. If offered the property, homeseekers will be able to view the property before they decide whether to accept the property or not.

Unsuccessful homeseekers will not be contacted.

6.7 REFUSALS

If a homeseeker turns down 3 offers of suitable accommodation, their application will be suspended for 6 months. Failing to respond to a suitable offer of accommodation or failing to attend an arranged viewing, may count as a refusal.

6.8 CHECKS

Before an offer is made, final checks will be made on the details of the household with highest priority – this is to make sure information on the homeseeker's application form is correct and they are still eligible for housing.

It will be at this stage that we check things like rent arrears (missed rent payments) – homeseekers with rent arrears of £300 or more who have not kept to a payment plan for at least 12 weeks will not normally qualify to be offered a property. Housing Associations may also run credit checks.

If details have changed or the homeseeker no longer meets the criteria, an offer will not be made and we will pass to the next homeseeker on the list.

6.9 FEEDBACK

Feedback is when we tell you about who was top of the list. As we cannot contact everyone who bids to tell them the result, we will publish tables of results for each set of adverts – these are available on the website and in the property listings newsletter.

The tables show how many bids were made, the band of the successful bid, and the date of the successful bid. This feedback will help you make better choices next time you bid.

7. HOW TO 'BID' FOR A PROPERTY

Bidding does not involve any money but means that you, the homeseeker, can tell Charnwood Borough Council which properties you are interested in. You can bid online, by phone or at the council offices.

7.1 ONLINE VIA THE WEBSITE

- (a) Type www.leicestershire-homes.org.uk into the address bar of your internet browser
- (b) Click on **Charnwood Borough Council**. You can save the page in your Favourites so that you can find it easily next time you bid
- (c) Click on **Login/My Account** and enter your registration/login number and memorable date. Your login will be confirmed and existing bids will be shown
- (d) Click on **Property Search**
- (e) Select your search options and click on **Search**

- (f) A summary of all the properties matching your search will be shown. If you are eligible to bid for a property, the advert will have an **Apply Now** button
- (g) Click **Apply Now**
- You will be shown the full property details and asked to **Confirm** your bid
 - If your bid is accepted, your queue position will be shown
 - If your bid is not accepted, a reason will be shown

Remember, if you have already used 2 bids, you will not be able to bid for any more properties. If you would like to bid for another property, you will need to withdraw one of your bids and then bid again.

7.2 BY PHONE

- (a) You will need to have the following information:
- Your registration number
 - Your memorable date
 - The property reference number for each property you are bidding for
- (b) Call the telephone bidding line on **030 00 11 0129** – this is an automated voice service and you will need to follow the instructions you hear. You will need to use the number keys on your keypad and the # key

Calls are charged at the local rate – call charges may vary with different phone service providers.

8. APPEALS

In certain circumstances, under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), you may have the right to request a review of decisions concerning your housing application.

If a homeseeker does not agree with a decision made by the council about their application, or a decision which affects their housing application, they have the right to appeal. Homeseekers may appeal:

- If the council decides not to allow you to access the council's lettings scheme for accommodation
- If the council refuses to reinstate a homeseeker's application which has been cancelled
- About the facts of your case which have been, or are likely to be, taken into account when considering whether an allocation is made to you
- If you believe that your application has been assessed incorrectly and placed in the wrong band
- Where a homeseeker wants to be considered for a property type that they are not eligible for

If a homeseeker is matched for a Housing Association property but is refused by the Housing Association, they should appeal to the Housing Association to review its decision.

8.1 HOW DO I APPEAL?

The council will notify you in writing of any decision it makes on your application. To appeal a decision, you should write to the **Housing Needs Manager, Charnwood Borough Council, Southfield Road, Loughborough LE11 2TT** within 28 days of the decision letter date. Documents which support your appeal should be forwarded within 14 days of your appeal letter.

If making an appeal in writing is difficult for you, the council will consider alternative arrangements. Please contact the Senior Allocations and Lettings Officer, at the above address, to discuss this.

The council considers that 28 days is sufficient time to request a review. However the council may be prepared to consider requests after this time depending on the circumstances of the case. Contact the Senior Allocations and Lettings Officer, at the address above, to discuss this.

8.2 GETTING HELP AND ADVICE

For independent help and advice, contact The Bridge Housing Advice Centre, the local Citizens Advice Bureau, a solicitor, or other advice agency.

9. MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

9.1 ARE YOU ALREADY A SOCIAL HOUSING TENANT?

If you are already a social housing tenant, you could **mutual exchange** with another social housing tenant. To do this, register your interest in an exchange with Housing Services or at www.homeswapper.co.uk.

Homeswapper can send you matches from anywhere in the country. If your landlord is not a member of Homeswapper, you will be charged for this service.

9.2 SHARED OWNERSHIP AND HOMEBUY SCHEMES

Shared ownership significantly reduces the cost of buying a home. Look out for the adverts in the newsletters and on the website. We also advertise opportunities to buy a home using the **HomeBuy** scheme. For more information, see www.emhomebuy.org.uk.

9.3 DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BECOME HOMELESS?

If you are at risk of losing your home for any reason, our housing advisers are on hand to help you. Contact Housing Needs on 01509 63 4567.

Housing Needs
Charnwood Borough Council
Southfield Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 2TT
Tel: 01509 634567
Email: housing@charnwood.gov.uk

This information is available in different formats. To access these please phone (01509) 634560.

এ তথ্যদি অন্যান্য মাধ্যমে পাওয়া যায়। এসব পেতে হলে দয়াকরে (01509) 634560 এ নাম্বারে টেলিফোন করুন।

這資料具不同的格式，請致電 (01509) 634560 索取。

आ माहिती जुद्धी जुद्धी पद्धतिओमां उपलब्ध छे. ते भेणववा माटे कृपा करी आ नंबर पर फोन करो (01509) 634560.

यह जानकारी अलग-अलग प्रारूपों में मिल सकती है। इनको पाने के लिये कृपया यह नंबर डायल कीजिये (01509) 634560.

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