



GUILDFORD  
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# **Tenancy Strategy 2025-2034**



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## 1 Executive Summary

This Tenancy Strategy sets out how Guildford Borough Council expects affordable housing providers in our area to manage tenancies fairly, consistently, and in a way that meets local housing needs.

We want to make sure that affordable housing, as a scarce resource, is used in the best possible way; providing for those who need it most, while supporting strong, stable communities.

All councils must publish a Tenancy Strategy to guide how housing providers support tenants, keep communities strong, make homes affordable and meet local housing needs in a changing environment. We expect our partner affordable housing providers to consider this Tenancy Strategy when developing their own Tenancy Policies.

This strategy brings together the goals of Guildford, ensuring a clear and joined-up approach to:

- **Make the best use of affordable housing** by offering the right tenancy to the right household.
- **Support tenants to maintain stable homes**, especially vulnerable people and families.
- **Help people move on when they no longer need affordable housing**, to ensure people are living in homes that match their needs and so that others can benefit.
- **Encourage mixed, sustainable communities** where people feel secure and connected.
- **Prevent homelessness** and support tenants to succeed in their tenancies.
- **Tackle under-occupation and overcrowding** by encouraging rightsizing moves where homes no longer match household size or need.

This Tenancy Strategy is aimed at:

- **Affordable housing providers** working in Guildford
- **Tenants and residents** of affordable homes in our area
- **Anyone in housing need** in our area



## 2 Introduction

Guildford Borough Council understands how important it is to manage housing in a way that is strong and sustainable. Our goals are to make sure residents in council and other affordable housing provider stock have safe, good quality, genuinely affordable homes.

We aim to make Guildford a thriving and inclusive place to live, work and do business. This Tenancy Strategy will support the Council to progress our 5 key priorities set out in our Corporate Strategies (see Appendix 1).

This Tenancy Strategy outlines our vision for tenancy management from 2025 to 2034. It focusses on supporting tenants, keeping communities strong, making homes affordable and meeting local housing needs in a changing environment. It aligns with the Tenancy Standard from the Regulator of Social Housing published in April 2024.

The objectives of this strategy are to make the best use of the affordable housing stock and meet the housing needs of Guildford and Waverley residents who can't afford a home from the private market.

The Strategy is aligned with the objectives of

- [Guildford Borough Council Corporate Strategy 2024-2034](#)
- [Guildford Borough Council Housing Strategy 2025-2034](#)
- [Guildford Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2034](#)
- [Guildford Local Plan; Strategy and Sites 2015-2034](#)
- [Guildford Borough Council Affordable Housing Statement](#)
- Housing Act 1985
- Localism Act 2011
- Homes England Affordable Housing Programme

The Localism Act 2011 requires councils to create a Tenancy Strategy.

This Tenancy Strategy gives guidance to affordable housing providers on what they should consider when setting their own tenancy policies.

This Tenancy Strategy will contribute to the 5 key themes from Guildford's Housing Strategy 2025-2034:

Deliver decent, sustainable homes people need and can afford	This strategy encourages registered providers to prioritise affordable long-term, stable tenancies that help families settle and thrive. It encourages affordable rent levels and promotes social rent where viable, to ensure affordable homes are available to households in need.
Improve the quality, standard, safety and accessibility of our homes and housing services	By setting expectations for housing associations and the council's own stock, it provides the framework to deliver a consistent, high-quality tenant experience.
Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping	By encouraging tenancy security, this strategy seeks to reduce homelessness caused by short-term or insecure housing.
Decent and affordable homes	This strategy ensures that new tenancies are linked to homes that are safe, warm, and well-maintained.
Improving housing options and opportunities	The strategy promotes delivery of a variety of affordable tenures to reduce the reliance on the private rented sector and help the widest range of residents by providing options that are matched to their needs.

This Tenancy Strategy is supported by the Council's Tenancy Policy and the policies of our affordable housing providers, which explains in more detail how each provider manages its own housing. Tenancy Policies include the types of tenancies the social landlords will offer, how tenancy transfers and succession (when someone else takes over a tenancy) work, how the landlord deals with tenancy fraud, and how it helps tenants keep their homes and avoid eviction.

The Council expects affordable housing providers to follow the guidance in this Tenancy Strategy when creating or updating their own policies, so that tenants and people applying for housing know what kinds of tenancies are available in the area.

### 3 Purpose

The Localism Act 2011 made it mandatory for all Local Authorities to have a Tenancy Strategy. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced revised Economic and Consumer Standards to be introduced alongside a new Statutory Code of Practice from April 2024. All registered housing providers are expected to adhere to these.



The standards relevant to this strategy are:

- Rent standard.
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard (information about landlord services)
- Tenancy standard (Tenancy sustainment and evictions)
- Tenancy standard (Tenure)

The purpose of this strategy is to set out:

- The types of tenancies we will grant and the length of these.
- The circumstances in which certain tenancies may be issued.
- The circumstances in which a tenancy may or may not be reissued at the end of the fixed term, in the same property or in a different property.

## 4 Context

Guildford Borough Council is working with its partners to tackle shared housing challenges. This approach reflects the need for better coordination between neighbouring councils, especially as housing demand rises, homes become less affordable, and national policies continue to change and in the context of Local Government Reorganisation.

The Tenancy Strategy gives affordable housing providers a consistent set of guidelines across both areas. It helps make sure that affordable homes are managed fairly, efficiently, and in ways that support strong, sustainable communities.

Housing pressures in Guildford reflect wider trends seen across Surrey and the Southeast. In 2024:

- The average house price in Surrey was around £523,000 – much higher than the England average of £297,000 (ONS, March 2024).
- The median private rent in the Southeast was £1,150 per month, compared to £850 nationally (ONS, 2024).
- In Guildford, the average private rent for a two-bedroom home was over £1,350 making housing hard to afford for low-income households.
- Housing waiting lists are growing. As of early 2025, Guildford had over 2,200 households on its register, including many in urgent need.

The council is continuing to see increased demand for housing from people affected by the cost-of-living crisis, domestic abuse, and homelessness. These issues are made worse by an ageing population, high housing costs and the need for more accessible and supported homes.

National housing policies also continue to shift. Changes include:

- Greater use of fixed-term tenancies
- Affordable rent models (up to 80% of market rent)
- New rules from the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023
- [An emphasis on social rent](#)

The Tenancy Strategy responds to these national changes but also keeps flexibility for local needs and will be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect the changing context.

This Tenancy Strategy aims to:

- Make better use of all affordable housing
- Better match between homes to household need
- Build balanced, integrated and resilient communities.
- Ensure transparency and fairness across affordable housing providers

## 5 Council approach

We want to make sure that people in Guildford can afford to live in social homes in the borough. That means rents need to be at a level that local people — including low income working households and those on benefits — can realistically afford without having to cut back on essentials like heating and eating.

When we think about whether a home is affordable, we look at:

- **Local incomes** – Many people in our boroughs working in lower-paid jobs cannot afford to buy or rent on the open market. Rent levels need to reflect what people in our communities actually earn and can afford on local incomes.
- **Local housing costs** – Guildford has high private rents and house prices, so it's especially important that we protect genuinely affordable housing options, which is why we both prioritise social rents. Being clear about our expectations from the outset about the rent levels we need creates an even playing field between affordable housing providers when acquiring sites. Rent levels should be set out clearly in the s.106 agreement.
- The Council is committed to delivering **Locally Affordable Homes** that local workers and households on low incomes can afford. Social rents for households on the lowest incomes remain a priority for the Council and should be provided on new developments whenever possible. However, where this is not viable, affordable rents should be capped at 70% for 1 and 2 beds and 65% for 3 and 4 bed homes (including service charges) or the current Local Housing Allowance rate for the area; whichever is lower, in order to be affordable to local households.
- **Different affordable tenures** – We support a range of affordable housing tenures, including social rent (the lowest level), capped affordable rents, and shared ownership. We aim to make sure the right tenure is offered based on a person's financial situation.

Our goals are to:





- **Support tenants to maintain their tenancies** by ensuring rents are not set at levels that lead to arrears or eviction.
- **Prevent homelessness** by keeping rents within reach for people on lower incomes or in housing need.
- **Work with affordable housing providers** to make sure new and existing homes are as affordable as possible, especially in rural and unaffordable areas.

We will also consider how other essential out goings — like energy bills, travel, and childcare — which affect people's ability to afford their home. We are committed to helping residents live in secure, good-quality homes they can afford now and in the future.

## 6 Guidance for providers

Affordable Housing Providers are expected to work in partnership with the Councils and other agencies to ensure no household is left without advice and support.

Guildford Borough Council expects all registered providers operating in the boroughs to adopt tenancy policies that:

- Support sustainable communities and tenant stability.
- Make efficient use of the affordable housing stock.
- Comply with the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenancy Standard.
- Align with the council's Housing Allocations Scheme.

Where a tenancy is due for review, Affordable Housing Providers should carry this out at least six months before expiry.

Reviews must take account of:

- The tenant's ongoing housing need.
- Suitability of the property (e.g. size, adaptations).
- Compliance with tenancy conditions.

Where a tenancy is not to be renewed, Affordable Housing Providers must give at least six months' notice and provide clear reasons. At the end of a fixed-term tenancy, Affordable Housing Providers should offer tenants advice and assistance to secure alternative accommodation if renewal is not appropriate. This includes referrals to the relevant Council housing options team, in line with homelessness prevention duties.

Affordable Housing Providers must publish their Tenancy Policies and share them with the Councils upon request.

Affordable Housing Providers may issue a range of tenancy types where they demonstrate a clear and consistent policy. Where fixed term tenancies are used, the councils prefer the minimum recommended length to be five years. Shorter two-year fixed terms may be suitable in some circumstances, such as where accommodation is linked to a short-term support package or where the tenant's circumstances are expected to change significantly in the near term.



Affordable Housing Providers are supported to offer longer fixed terms or lifetime tenancies where this is appropriate to meet housing need and promote stability.

We encourage our provider partners to align with our approach.

## 7 Monitoring and review

The Council will monitor the effectiveness of this Tenancy Strategy to ensure it meets its objectives of promoting sustainable communities, making best use of the housing stock, and supporting households in housing need.

The Tenancy Strategy will be subject to a formal review every three years, or sooner if there are significant changes in national housing policy, local housing need, or following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Interim monitoring will be carried out annually to track key outcomes and identify emerging issues.

## 8 Collaboration and Governance

This Tenancy Strategy has been developed collaboratively by Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils, reflecting shared priorities and governance arrangements. The Councils are committed to ensuring that this strategy remains effective, evidence-based, and responsive.

Responsibility for oversight lies with the relevant Council Committees, who will receive monitoring reports and approve revisions to the strategy.

Officers from both Councils will continue to work together to ensure consistent application, with alignment through joint working groups and collaboration across housing services.

In the context of potential Local Government Reorganisation, the Councils will ensure that tenancy policies and practices continue to align and will use this Tenancy Strategy as a framework for future collaborative governance.

## 9 Equality Impact Assessment

We are committed to ensuring that all policies, procedures and decisions relating to this Tenancy Strategy are subject to Equalities Impact Assessments.

This process helps us to identify, understand and mitigate any potential adverse impacts on tenants, applicants and stakeholders while promoting fairness, consistency and positive outcomes.

The assessments will be reviewed periodically to ensure the strategy continues to support equitable access, transparency and high-quality housing services.

### Supporting the Armed Forces Community Covenant

We are proud to support the [Armed Forces Community Covenant](#). This means we are committed to making sure that people who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.



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When it comes to housing, we understand that members of the Armed Forces can face unique challenges – such as moving frequently, being away from home, or needing support when leaving the service.

As part of our Tenancy Strategy, we:

- Make sure that veterans and serving personnel are not put at a disadvantage when applying for social housing.
- Give [extra priority to former members of the Armed Forces](#) who have urgent housing needs, under our Allocations Scheme
- Work with housing providers to make sure their policies also support the Covenant.
- Help Armed Forces families to stay in stable homes, especially during times of transition or hardship.

Our goal is to ensure that no one is unfairly treated because of their service, and that the Armed Forces community can access secure, suitable, and long-term housing in our borough.



## 10 Appendices

### Appendix 1: Corporate Strategy Priorities

#### ***Priority 1: A more sustainable borough***

*We will deliver new developments which have resilience, sustainability and biodiversity embedded into them through Local Plan policies to ensure all affordable homes are healthy living environments, thermally comfortable, efficient and well-adapted to climate change.*

#### ***Priority 2: A more prosperous borough***

*We will support the local economy by building social rented homes that local workers on low incomes can afford. This underpins essential services including health, care and support services as well as leisure and hospitality. Affordable housing supports rural villages to retain young families and thriving businesses.*

#### ***Priority 3: A more inclusive borough***

*New development must reflect the diverse needs of our residents at all stages in their lives. We will collaborate more closely with Adult Social Care partners to build the right homes for older people and those with specialist needs. Prioritising social rented housing will ensure homes are genuinely affordable for people who need them most. Affordable homes prevent people from becoming trapped in poverty.*

#### ***Priority 4: Decent and affordable homes***

*Developments will be informed by a better understanding of changing needs across the borough. Our policies to shape type and tenure of new supply will be determined by robust, up-to-date evidence.*

#### ***Priority 5: A resilient and well-managed council***

*We will use our financial flexibilities and assets as a local authority to fund and develop more affordable homes.*



## Appendix 2: Glossary

Affordable Rent	Affordable Rented (AR) housing is social housing that can be let at up to 80% of local market rents. This is in contrast to social rented housing, which has to be let at 'target rents' which are set by the Government and usually between 40 % and 50 % of market rents. The increase in rent is to be used to fund new social housing development.
Affordable Housing (NPPF Definition)	The Government's definitions of 'affordable housing, affordable housing for rent, First Homes, discounted market sales housing and other affordable routes to home ownership' are defined in Annex 2 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or any future guidance that replaces it, meaning housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market.
Affordable Housing Provider	A registered provider of social housing within the meaning of Section 80 (1) of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, or alternatively a body providing affordable housing.
Allocation Scheme	Document which describes how the Council assesses and prioritises applications for housing and decides which applicant will be offered a Council or Housing Association Home
Assignment	Transferring your tenancy to someone else
Assured Shorthold Tenancy	The most common form of tenancy in the private sector. Assured Shorthold Tenancies give the tenant the right to occupy a property for a fixed period of time, provided that they keep to the terms of their tenancy agreement. At the end of the fixed period of time (often 12 months), the landlord or the tenant has the right to terminate the tenancy.
Assured Tenancy	Another form of private sector tenancy, commonly used by RP's. Assured Tenancies give the tenant the right to remain in the property unless the landlord can prove to a court that they have grounds for possession. The landlord does not have an automatic right to repossess the property when the tenancy comes to an end. Until recently, RP's usually granted 'lifetime' Assured tenancies.
Banding System	Based on housing needs, places households into groups according to how urgent their housing need is, as set out in the Council's Allocation Scheme
CBL	Choice Based Lettings (the system of allocating housing, in which properties are advertised each week and applicants can register an interest in their preferred properties. See also Guildford Homechoice and Homeselecta
Corporate Plans	Key strategic document, setting out vision and plan for how the Council will meet its key objectives
Demoted Tenancy	A type of tenancy created by a court when a Council or Housing Provider gets a demotion order from a court. These Orders are awarded to tackle anti-social or nuisance behaviour. The Demotion Order replaces a Secure Tenancy with a Demoted Tenancy.



Downsizing	Moving from a larger property to a smaller one
Easy Move	Scheme operating in Waverley for Council tenants who are under occupying and looking to downsize
Eviction	Removal of a tenant from a rented property by the owner or landlord
Flexible Tenancy	A flexible tenancy is a tenancy that is for a fixed period of more than two years. Proposed to be phased out from Guildford borough general needs accommodation through the adoption of the new strategy.
Guildford Homechoice	The Council's method of allocating council and partner RP properties. Properties are advertised each week on the Homechoice website and are allocated to applicants who express an interest in order of their priority on the housing register.
Homes England	A national housing agency launched in 2017, replacing the Homes and Communities Agency. Remit is to facilitate delivery of new homes where most needed, with a sustained improvement in affordability.
HomeSelecta	A choice based lettings scheme operating across Hart, Rushmoor, Guildford and Waverley. Each local authority opens up a proportion of vacancies to applicants from the neighbouring authorities in order to give applicants more choice and greater mobility.
HomeSwapper	Online mutual exchange system to enable social housing tenants to swap their homes.
Housing and Homelessness Strategies	Required by the Homeless Act 2002. Should include a review of the current levels of homelessness and the services and accommodation available to meet the needs of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
Homeless Prevention Duties	Requires a local authority to take reasonable steps to help people who are at risk of becoming homeless
Introductory Tenancy	<p>A public sector residential tenancy granted for a 12-month trial period, which can be extended by 6 months, after which the tenant may become a Secure tenant, provided the landlord has not brought possession proceedings during the trial period.</p> <p>The tenancy may become a Flexible tenancy at the end of the Introductory tenancy period, provided a written notice was served on the tenant before the start of the Introductory Tenancy advising on ceasing to be an Introductory Tenancy, the tenancy would become a Secure tenancy that would be a flexible tenancy for a term certain and specifying the length of the term. Flexible tenancies are not used in Waverley.</p>
Licence	A personal permission to use a property for a period of time in accordance with the terms of the licence. A licensee does not have exclusive possession of the property.



Lifetime Tenancy	A tenancy that can only be ended via a court order, i.e. if the terms of the tenancy are breached. Tenants who currently have a lifetime tenancy will not be affected by the changes.
Localism Act 2011	Legislation aimed to help councils and communities make more choices about local services, planning and how things are run
Locally Affordable Homes:	Homes which are affordable to Waverley or Guildford workers and/ or low-income households living in Waverley or Guildford, according to the Council's latest evidence source.
Local Government Reorganisation	The process of changing the structure, functions and responsibilities of Councils
Local Lettings Plans	A policy used to ensure a community is balanced and promotes community cohesion, usually for new developments
Mutual Exchange	When two (or more) Secure or Assured tenants swap tenancies (and homes) with each other (normally by assignment).
National rent regime	The regime under which central government sets the guideline rents for social rented properties.
Non-secure tenancy	Non-Secure tenancies are provided under the Council's duties to provide temporary accommodation for homeless persons. In order to terminate and gain possession of a property the Council must service a Notice to Quit but is not required to prove any statutory ground
ONS	Office for National Statistics, the UK's main body for producing official data and statistics
Overcrowding	Not having enough separate bedrooms for your household members, taking into account their age, sex and relationship
Probationary Tenancy	See Introductory Tenancy. Normally used by RP's.
Possession Proceedings	Legal processes Landlords need to follow when evicting a tenant who will not leave
Registered Provider (RP)	<p>All providers of social housing, including the Council, are now known as 'Registered Providers' or RP's. Housing Associations were formerly known as Registered Social Landlords (RSL's).</p> <p>There are two types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-profit RP's</li> <li>• Profit-making RP's</li> </ul> <p>Most former RSL's are now non-profit RP's. Some former RSLs (for example A2 Dominion) have both a non-profit and a profit-making arm in their structure, so that they can use the most appropriate arm depending on the situation.</p>



Regulator of Social Housing	Handles all regulatory oversight of social housing providers in England, for a viable, efficient and well governed social housing sector to be able to deliver quality homes and services.
Rightsizing	Finding a home that is right for you and better suits your needs; now and in the future.
RSL	Registered Social Landlord (see Housing Association) - now known as a Registered Provider.
Safeguarding	Protecting children and adults at risk from abuse, neglect, maltreatment or significant harm
Secure Tenancy	The vast majority of local authority tenants and housing association tenants whose tenancies began before 15 January 1989, are secure tenants and have a range of additional rights covered in the Housing Act 1985.
Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023	Introduced to change how social housing is managed and raise standards
Social rented housing	Social rented housing is rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and other registered providers of affordable housing, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.
Starter Tenancy	See Introductory Tenancy. Normally used by RP's.
Succession	A legal term for passing a secure tenancy to another person on the death of the tenant
Tenancy Fraud	When a social home is being used by someone who is not entitled to occupy it
Tenancy Policy	A policy that sets of the type of tenancies that will be offered by a social housing provider
Tenancy Strategy	This Council document setting out how affordable housing providers in the area are expected to manage tenancies fairly, consistently, and in a way that meets local housing needs.
Transfer	Moving to another home owned by a social landlord.
Under-Occupation	Where someone is assessed has having more bedrooms in their accommodation than they need





### Appendix 3: Table of comparison of tenancy types

Tenancy Type	Circumstances determining the type of tenancy granted
Assured shorthold tenancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The property is not intended to be a home for life (e.g. supported accommodation)</li><li>• The landlord cannot grant a lifetime tenancy because the use of the property is time limited (e.g. because they lease the property or it is earmarked for demolition)</li></ul>
Demoted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A secure tenancy can be demoted to a 12-month introductory tenancy if the tenant has engaged in housing related anti-social behaviour by application to the Court.</li><li>• This removes a number of tenancy rights and reduces tenancy security.</li></ul>
Flexible Tenancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A fixed-term tenancy granted for a specified period rather than for life. Flexible tenancies under this strategy will only be used in supported housing, where they help ensure that accommodation is aligned with residents' support needs and makes best use of specialist housing provision.</li></ul>
Introductory/Starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All new tenants for 12 months, extendable by 6 months.</li></ul>
Lifetime/Secure/ Assured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Council's preferred option for all new general need tenants following successful completion of an introductory/starter tenancy, with some limited exceptions.</li><li>• Existing lifetime tenants transferring to another tenancy</li><li>• Lifetime tenancies must be retained for those tenants who held them on the day that section 132 of the Localism Act 2011 came into force.</li></ul>
Non-secure tenancies (including license agreements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People in temporary or emergency Council accommodation under homelessness legislation.</li><li>• Tenants that have been temporarily decanted from an existing tenancy.</li><li>• People living in supported housing schemes such as hostels.</li></ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Defined in Tenancy Policies of individual RPs or permissible by law</li></ul>