

WE ARE
SANDWELL!



Sandwell Council Housing Allocations Policy Review



What is an Allocations Policy and What Does it Do?

An allocations policy sets out how a local authority allocates social housing and determines who is given priority for available homes.

The Housing Act 1996 requires councils to publish a scheme that:

- Defines who can join the housing register and how applications are assessed.
- Explains how priority is awarded and homes are allocated.
- Gives **reasonable preference (priority)** to households who are homeless, living in unsuitable housing, have medical or welfare needs, or need to move to avoid hardship.

Key requirement: The scheme must be transparent, legally compliant and balance local priorities with the statutory duty to prioritise those in greatest housing need. This means complying with the Housing Act 1996, statutory allocations guidance, eligibility rules (including those relating to immigration status and no recourse to public funds), equality duties, and relevant case law.



SANDWELL COUNCIL'S CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME



Introduced:
March 2021 following
policy review and consultation



WHO CAN APPLY?

- ✓ Aged 18+ (or 16-17 in limited circumstances)
- ✓ Meets qualification criteria, including:
 - 2-year Sandwell local connection
 - Care leavers
 - Existing social housing tenant in Sandwell
 - Eligible move-on from supported accommodation
 - Armed Forces personnel/veterans



WHO CANNOT APPLY?

- ✗ Subject to immigration control
- ✗ Serious unacceptable behaviour
- ✗ Homeowners able to meet their own housing needs
- ✗ False or misleading information
- ✗ Serious rent arrears or housing-related debt
- ✗ Deliberately worsened housing circumstances

HOW PRIORITY IS AWARDED

BAND	BAND 1	BAND 2	BAND 3	BAND 4	BAND 5
PRIORITY LEVEL	 URGENT NEED (e.g. severe medical need, domestic abuse, care leavers, homelessness duty)	 HIGH NEED (e.g. overcrowding, homelessness relief duty, move-on accommodation)	 MEDIUM NEED (e.g. homelessness prevention, welfare needs)	 LOWER NEED	 ALL OTHER QUALIFYING HOUSEHOLDS



KEY PRINCIPLE:

Housing is allocated according to assessed housing need, with **Band 1** receiving the highest priority and **Band 5** the lowest.



Our Allocations Policy was written in 2020 – a lot has changed since then

THE WAITING LIST HAS GROWN

IN 2020

6,000
households



+302%

increase in just
six years

IN 2025/26

24,094
households

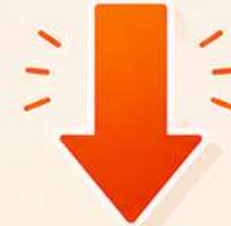


The council's waiting list has increased from **6,000** in 2020 to **24,094** in 2025/26 – a **302%** increase in just six years.

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO LET HAVE FALLEN

IN 2020/21

1,977
properties



-36%

decrease in just
six years

IN 2025/26

1,268
properties



The number of properties becoming available for let each year has reduced by **36%** over the last six years.



**WHAT
THIS MEANS**



**MORE
HOUSEHOLDS
ON THE REGISTER**

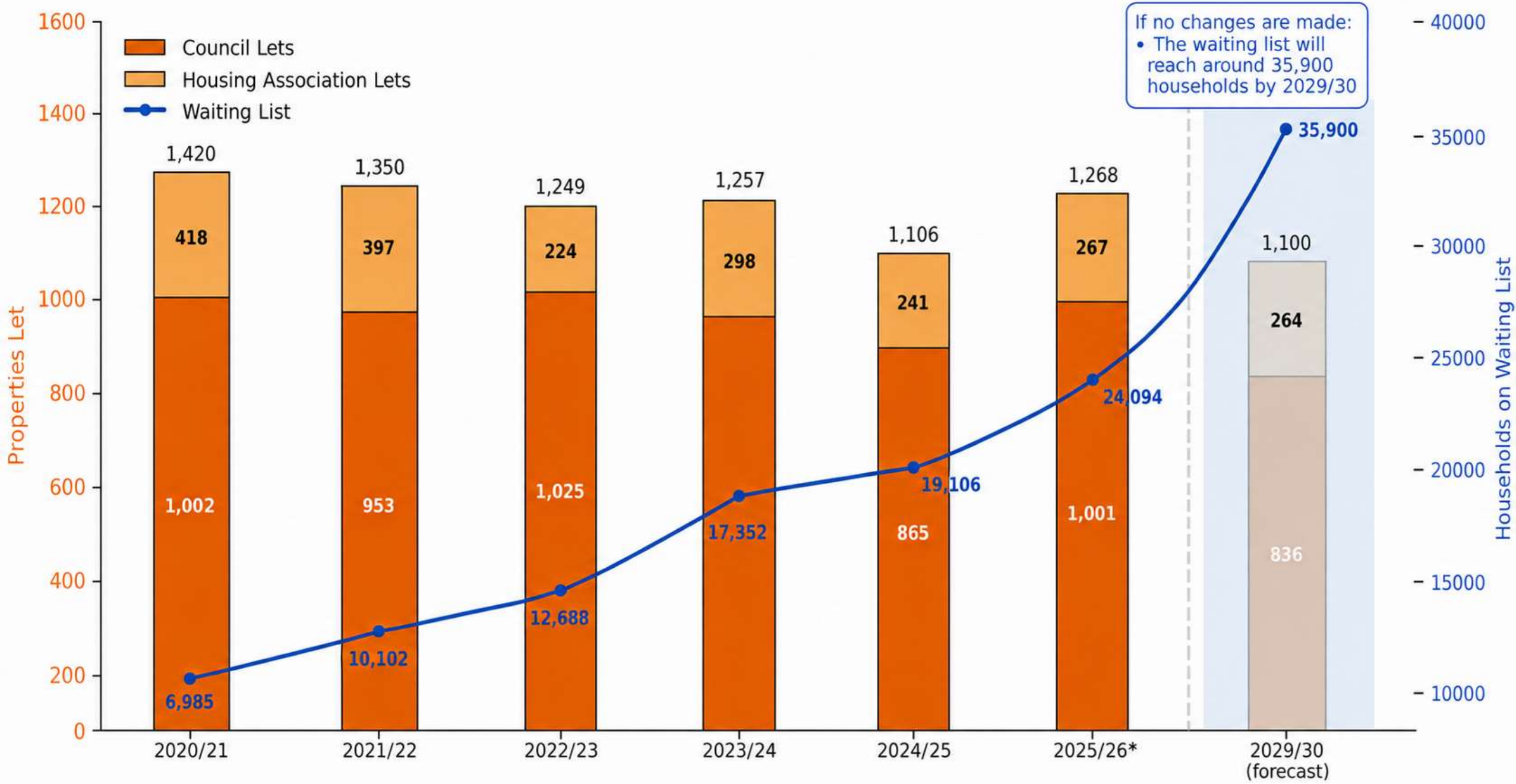


**FEWER
PROPERTIES
AVAILABLE**



**RESULTING IN
GREATER COMPETITION
AND LONGER
WAITING TIMES.**

Housing Waiting List vs Properties Let (2020/21 to 2029/30)



CURRENT TENANTS ON THE HOUSING WAITING LIST

5,976

Current social housing tenants seeking a move



Key housing needs among existing tenants are children in flats, overcrowding, medical needs, under-occupation and hardship.

What are the Options for Consideration?

Option	Benefits	Risks	Mitigation
Remove Band 5	Creates a smaller, more realistic register and reduces assessment workload.	Increased challenges and perceptions of reduced access.	Clear communication, housing advice and signposting.
Introduce a means test for Housing	Better targets social housing to those with greatest need and least housing choice.	May be seen as restrictive and reduce eligibility.	Clear affordability criteria, guidance and appeals process.
Increase local connection from 2 to 5 years	Prioritises households with stronger local ties.	May disadvantage newer residents.	Maintain statutory exemptions and discretionary provisions.
Remove children in flats priority	Better aligns allocations with need and available stock.	Could increase refusals and temporary accommodation demand.	Promote mutual exchanges and provide clear housing advice.
Prioritise households in less suitable temporary accommodation	Awards higher priority to households in less suitable accommodation, including B&Bs, overcrowded TA, or those staying with friends/family. Households in suitable self-contained TA would normally receive lower priority.	Households moved into suitable TA may see a reduction in priority and may perceive this as unfair.	Clear communication that priority reflects current housing need. Typically, less suitable TA = Band 2 and suitable self-contained TA = Band 3 .
Introduce time-limited direct offers	Allows the Council to make a single suitable direct offer to applicants with urgent needs or where rehousing is delayed. Applicants can still bid through CBL.	Reduced choice and perceptions of unfairness.	Robust suitability assessment, clear eligibility criteria, time-limited offers, review periods and appeals process.

How these Policy Changes Respond to the Housing Crisis



1



A More Realistic Housing Register

24,094 → 5,275
applicants

A housing register focused on households with a recognised housing need and a realistic prospect of accessing social housing.

2



Better Use of Limited Housing Supply

Around **1,100–1,300** homes become available each year.

The proposed scheme ensures these homes are prioritised for households in the greatest need.



1,100–1,300
homes available each year

3



Greater Focus on Priority Need



Increased priority for homelessness, overcrowding, unsuitable accommodation, urgent medical needs and safeguarding cases.

4



A More Sustainable Allocations Scheme

A simpler, more transparent scheme that better reflects housing supply, manages applicant expectations and supports the Council in responding to growing housing pressures.



5



What This Means



Fewer households on the register



More targeted use of social housing



Better outcomes for those most in need