



Oadby and Wigston Borough Council Home Seeker's Guide

LEICESTERSHIRE — Choice Based Lettings —

Your guide to finding a new home in Leicestershire

Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings is a partnership between councils and housing associations covering seven council areas in Leicestershire. Please note this scheme covers all of Leicestershire but not the City of Leicester itself. A separate lettings scheme covers the City.

This guide tells you how choice based lettings works. You can find out:

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If you do have any queries, or need some help, please contact us:

Telephone: 0116 2888961
Website: www.leicestershire-homes.org.uk
Email: housing@oadby-wigston.gov.uk
Offices: Council Offices, Station Road, Wigston, Leicestershire. LE18 2DR.

Opening times:

Monday to Thursday: 8.45am to 4.45pm
Friday: 8.45am to 4.15pm



How does it work?

Every two weeks the seven councils in Leicestershire publish lists of available properties. As well as properties to rent from the councils and housing associations, there will be details of tenants who want to swap.

Once you have registered with one of the councils you will be able to use your reference number to put up to three bids on at a time for those properties that interest you. Please note, these are not bids for money, but just to show you want to be considered for the property

When bidding closes the person at the top of the list will be contacted and offered the property. If they cannot take it then the next person on the list will be considered and so on until the property has been let.

www.leicestershire-homes.org.uk

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

▼ Step 1 – Joining the Housing Register

To apply you must be at least 16 years old. Most people will be eligible to join the list. Those who may be turned down include those who have a history of anti-social behaviour against neighbours and those who have only recently come to live in the UK or are only in the county temporarily.

Application forms are available from any of the councils. The quickest way to register is to fill in the form on-line. You need to decide which of the seven councils you want to deal with your application. This will be the one covering the area where you want to live. It is important that you complete all the parts of the form that apply to you and submit proof of identity (some form of photo ID is needed) and any other supporting documents the form asks for. If you have children and they are going to live with you, you will also need to provide proof in the form of Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit payments. We are also asking for proof of income and savings.

The form is quite long but answering all the questions will help us to decide what help and advice we can offer you in your search for housing. If someone in your household has any medical problems or mobility difficulties, then you will be sent a separate form to fill out as well.

If you are eligible to join the register you will be sent a registration number and instructions on how to start bidding for vacant homes. We will also tell you about

any restrictions in the type of property you can bid for and what your level of priority is. This is done by placing your application in one of four bands of need. Home Seekers in all bands can bid but those in the higher bands will have a better chance of success. If you are not eligible to register you will be given a reason why. If you are unhappy with the decision, you can appeal.

Please note that there are long waiting lists for council and housing association rented properties and waiting times are long. If you have an urgent need for housing there may be other options you can consider. Ask for housing advice from your council.

Each council publishes a full statement of its Allocations Policy. All registrations and all decisions on lettings must be in accordance with this policy. You can see each council's statement by going onto the council web site.

Changes of circumstance

If your circumstances change after you are registered, you must tell us so we can re-assess your priority. We will always make checks at the point of making an offer and if your details are not up to date the offer may be withdrawn.

▼ Step 2 – Giving you the right priority

With there only being a limited number of council and housing association properties in the Borough, it is important that they go to the people who are most in need. We do this by using priority bands.

When you apply, your application will be put into one of the four bands:

- Low Housing Need
- Medium Housing Need
- High Housing Need
- Priority Housing Need

The table on the following page explains the circumstances that you need to have in order to go into the bands.

▼ PRIORITY HOUSING NEED

Homeless - where there is a legal duty on the Council to offer housing

Emergency medical need

Emergency welfare need

Multiple/complex housing needs

Housing management priority

Displaced agricultural workers

▼ HIGH HOUSING NEED

Has 2 or more qualifying Medium Housing Need categories

Home seekers where there is overcrowding by two or more bedrooms

In supported accommodation and approved for move-on or independent living

Under-occupying social housing which is in high demand

▼ MEDIUM HOUSING NEED

Other Homeless households

Poor housing conditions

Medical need affected by housing

Welfare need affected by housing

Short-term accommodation

▼ LOW HOUSING NEED

No local connection to the sub-region (Leicestershire)

Has the financial means to provide their housing

Owner or joint owner of property with no medical or welfare needs

Owes a housing related debt and there is no arrangement to pay or a payment plan has not been kept

Guilty of behaviour which affects suitability to be a tenant

Transfer applicant only eligible for a like for like move

Joint tenant of social housing property where the other party will not be moving

Only interested in HomeBuy/Shared ownership options

Deliberate worsening of housing circumstances to get higher priority

If your circumstances change, and you let us know, then you may move into a different band.

Financial Assessment

If you have enough income or savings to buy or rent a home suitable for your needs, or to put right problems with your current home, you will normally be placed in the low priority band. There are certain reasons where this will not apply (for example where there are specialist needs which cannot be met in the local housing market – e.g. wheelchair standards)

The following thresholds will be used to assess whether a household has sufficient means to meet their needs in the private housing sector.

	Income limit £	Equity limit £	Savings limit £
Blaby	42,000	31,000	16,000
Charnwood	45,000	30,000	17,000
Harborough	58,000	35,000	22,000
Hinckley & Bosworth	45,000	29,000	17,000
Melton	47,000	29,000	18,000
North West Leicestershire	42,000	27,000	16,000
Oadby & Wigston	41,000	30,000	16,000

These figures are based on the following:

Income Limit – The lowest income required to buy an averagely priced home in the district with a 10% deposit and borrowing no more than 3.5 times combined income.

Equity Limit – The equity limit is based on the applicant(s) having equity equivalent to 25% or more of the average price within the lower quartile of house prices in the district (i.e. the cheapest 25%). It is assumed this could be used to put down a deposit on a new home or be released and used to rent privately.

Savings Limit – The savings limit is equivalent to 10% of the cost of an average priced home in the district. It is assumed that the applicant(s) could use this as a deposit to buy a home or use it to rent privately.

If the household fails any one of these three tests then they will be registered in the Low Priority Band. The threshold amounts will be reviewed annually.

Mobility needs

If you have physical disabilities that mean you have problems getting around your home, we will assess your needs. We will then aim to match you to properties which are suitable for you. We do this by using a 'mobility key' symbol on adverts which will guide you on which properties to bid for.



The above are examples of some of the symbols used. The mobility keys are those in red with letters inside (and these are letter A – F) as described below:

- A) My legs cannot support my weight and I need to use a wheelchair when indoors and outdoors.
- B) I use a wheelchair but can walk a short distance. I cannot climb steps and stairs.
- C) I do not use a wheelchair but walk with difficulty. I cannot climb steps and stairs.
- D) I do not use a wheelchair. I find it difficult to walk but can manage 1 or 2 steps.
- E) I need a downstairs toilet.
- F) I have a disability or a medical problem, such as kidney dialysis or epilepsy, that needs accommodation which does not fall into the above categories.

There are various other symbols used and these are explained on the web-site. Some examples are above: minimum age 60, communal garden, sheltered housing, number of bedrooms.

▼ Step 3 – Finding out about properties that are available

All council and housing association vacancies will be advertised every two weeks.

You will be able to find the adverts by:

- Going to www.leicestershire-homes.org.uk
- looking on your council's website, or
- looking at the housing options newsletter, which will be published every two weeks. This will be available at all the council offices, customer service centres and libraries.

The adverts will give you details of the property landlord, the address and features of the property. It will also show any restrictions on who can bid for the property. For example:

- some properties are only for single people or older people
- the number of people in your household will also affect which properties you can bid for.
- some properties may be restricted to existing tenants needing to move to more suitable housing.

See the tables at the back of this leaflet, which explain what size and type of property you can bid for.

By advertising all the properties available for letting,

you will get to see how often the type of property you are interested in comes up for letting.

If you have a genuine reason why you are not able to use the website to see the property adverts, or cannot get to see a copy of the newsletter at one of the distribution points, then we can mail you a copy. We only post out Housing Options newsletters to those who have no other way of seeing the property adverts. If you think this applies to you, then please ask. If you need it we can provide a large print version as well. Contact details are on the back of the guide.

Property adverts - What to look out for:

- Read the adverts carefully for any restrictions that might apply to you.
- There are symbols on the property adverts to show any restrictions on who can bid for a property.
- If you have pets please look carefully at the symbols advertised with the property before bidding. Some landlords do not allow pets in certain types of property or restrict the number of pets.

What do the symbols mean?

Types of property

Choice based lettings property

Rented property for eligible people on the housing register

Mutual exchange property

Mutual exchange property for eligible current council or housing association tenants to swap with each other

Shared ownership property

A property for people who may be able to buy a part share in a property

Private sector property

An approved property available from a private landlord available to anyone

Property details



Bedrooms – The number of bedrooms in this property



Disabled – The property is suitable for people with a mobility need



Own garden – This property has its own garden



Maximum age – This property is only available to people of the age shown and below.



Minimum age – At least one household member must be the age shown



Sheltered – This is a sheltered property



Off road parking – This property has off road parking



Supported – This is a supported housing scheme

▼ Step 4 – Bidding for advertised properties

'Bidding' is the word we use for selecting properties you would like to be offered. You are not making a bid of money. You will have three bids to use each fortnight.

You can make your bid:

- On-line via the website
- by telephoning the free-phone number 0300 011 0129
- by texting your bid from a mobile phone (see the later section on how to do this)
- Calling in at a Council Customer Service Centre

If you cannot bid yourself, we encourage you to get the help of a relative or friend. If you are getting help from an advice agency or support worker then they may also be able to help you place your bids.

If for genuine reasons you are unable to place your bids then the council can arrange to make bids for you.

If you cannot easily get access to the internet, remember that all the public libraries in Leicestershire provide free internet sessions. Using the web site is easy. Come into any of our offices and we will show you how.

To place bids you will need to know your registration number and have chosen a memorable date. You also need to make a note of the advert reference for the property you are interested in.

Bidding starts at midnight on Wednesday every other week and closes at midnight on the following Wednesday. Newsletters, posters and the web site all show our deadline for receiving bids. Late bids will not count.

You can place your bids at any time during the bidding period. There is no 'first come, first served'. When you bid, you will be told if there are any other bids for that property and where your bid is in the queue. Your position in the queue of bids will be set according to the band that your application has been placed in and the length of time you have been waiting. For most adverts, priority will also be given to home seekers who have a connection with the local area.

What counts as a Local Connection?

- live permanently in the district
- have lived in the district for at least 6 months in the last 12 months, or for at least 3 out of the last 5 years.
- Have permanent employment in the district
- Have close relatives living in the district
- Have other special circumstances that need to be taken into account

Some properties are available to all homeseekers, whether or not they have a connection to the area.

If you are not near the top of the list, then you can undo the bid and change it to another property. Please remember your queue position can change if others bid after you.

If your details do not match those set for the property, you will not be able to bid for it. The web site or ansaphone will tell you the reason.

▼ How to bid by phone

We use the word bid as shorthand. It does not involve any money and just means you are telling the council or housing association that you are interested in their property.

Start by calling the telephone bidding line 030 00 11 0129 and follow the instructions you hear. This is an automated voice service but you will soon get used to using it.

You will need to have to hand:

- Your reference number
- Your memorable date
- The reference numbers of properties you want to bid for

You will need to use the numbers on your telephone keypad and the # key.

First select your preferred language, then when you are asked, enter your reference number. You will hear:

"Please enter 1 to confirm your reference number is correct"

If the number is right Press 1.

Next:

"Please enter the day of the month of your memorable date followed by the # key" Use 01, 02, 03 etc.

"Please enter the month of your memorable date followed by the # key" Use 01,02,03 etc

"Please enter the year of your memorable date as a four digit number followed by the # key" For example 1969.

You will then hear:

"Thank you, your details match our records"

To place your bids **Press 1**

You will hear:

"Please enter the reference number of the property you want to bid for"

This is the number next to the picture on the advert.

Press 1 to bid.

Press 2 to confirm your bids or change them

Press 3 to exit

How to bid by text message

1

Turn on your mobile and go to text messaging

2

Type your unique reference number followed by a space

3

Type your memorable date password followed by a space – use 2 digits for a day and month and 4 digits for the year e.g. 16/03/1975

4

Type the first property reference number followed by a space.
If you have finished bidding go to step 6.

5

Type the second property reference number followed by a space



6

Send the text message to 07537402597



7

You will receive a text message confirming that your bid(s) have been made or, if they have not been made why they have not been made.



▼ Step 5 – Being matched to a property

As mentioned in the previous section, bids are prioritised according to the band that the application has been put in, length of time waiting and local connection to the area.

The property will then be matched with the homeseeker who has made a valid bid and is the first in the queue.

Provided the top matched home seeker is eligible to receive the offer, they will be contacted by the council or a housing association within a day or two of the end of bidding.

You will have a chance to view the property before you decide whether to accept it or not.

Unsuccessful home seekers will not be contacted.

If a homeseeker turns down an offer, there is no penalty. However, if you refuse seven offers you will be interviewed about the reasons before you can go on bidding.

Checks

The council or housing association will also need to make checks to make sure you are not disqualified in any way from being offered the property. Checks may cover previous tenancies, rent arrears, credit checks and any missing proofs from your application.

You need to be aware that most housing associations have their own rules on lettings and may decide not to accept the home seeker at the top of the list. If a home seeker is overlooked in this way, they will be given a reason.

Once you have seen the property and are happy with it and all the checks have been successfully carried out, you may be offered the tenancy. Normally this should not take more than a week.

While you are being considered for an offer, you will not be able to put on any more bids.

▼ Step 6 – Feedback

For all properties that we let, we will publish the details of the band and waiting time of the successful homeseeker (we will not give out any details of the actual person or household that has been offered the property).

We will publish tables of results for each set of adverts. You will find these on the web site and in the housing options newsletter. The table will show how many bids were made and the band and date of the winning bid. This will help you make better choices next time you bid.

Sometimes a property is let without being advertised, if there is an urgent need to do so. We will still include these properties in the results tables.

Looking to move further afield

To help home seekers who want to move to another area, the councils have created a county-wide pool of properties open to anyone registered with the scheme. You will not need a local connection to be considered for these properties.

Look out for these adverts on the web site and in the extra pages in the newsletters. You can use one or more of your three bids on these properties. The pool will include a wide range of sheltered properties for elderly people and also specialist housing for people with physical disabilities.

Time limits for home seekers in the Priority and High Housing Need bands

We expect Home seekers who have a high priority to be bidding regularly for suitable properties as they come up. Home seekers in the Priority band will have their priority reviewed every 12 weeks (six sets of adverts). If they have not been bidding for properties available to them, their need for housing may be changed and their priority reduced.

For home seekers in the High Housing Need band, their priority will be reviewed after 24 weeks, or 12 sets of adverts.

Moving between bands

If your priority changes and you are put into a higher band, your effective date will change from the date you applied to the date you were given the higher band. This will make sure that those who have been in Priority and High bands for the longest get offers first.

If the change in band is because of a homeless application being made then the date used will be the date the home seeker presented them self as being homeless.

If you are moved back down to a band you were in before, then you will be given back the date you had when you were last in that band.

More housing options

Find out about how to do a **mutual exchange** by looking at the page on the web site. If you express an interest in an exchange then, this can be advertised on the web-site. Alternatively if you are looking to move nationally then you can register your interest in an exchange with www.homeswapper.co.uk. If your landlord is not a member of Homeswapper you will be charged for this service. Homeswapper can send you matches from anywhere in the country.

We also advertise opportunities to buy a home using the **HomeBuy** scheme. You can also look on the www.HomeBuy.co.uk web site. Shared ownership significantly reduces the cost of buying a home. Look out for the adverts in the newsletters and on the web site. If you are having difficulty arranging a mortgage, the HomeBuy service can give you advice.

There may also be adverts for **private renting** in your area. All our advertised landlords are prepared to accept tenants who need to apply for Housing Benefit.

If you do not have the money for a deposit your council may have a scheme to help. Contact your local Housing Services team.

Do you think you might become homeless? If you are at risk of losing your home, for whatever reason, we have trained advisers on hand to help you. Ring today and ask for an appointment.

▼ Properties home-seekers can bid for

▼ 1. General needs housing

	Single Person	Single person with access* to children	Couple	Couple/ lone parent plus one other	Couple/ lone parent plus two others	Couple/ lone parent plus three others***	Couple/ lone parent plus four or more others
Studio flat	✓	✓					
1 bedroom flat	✓	✓	✓				
1 bedroom house	✓	✓	✓				
1 bedroom bungalow	✓	✓	✓				
2 bedroom flat	(✓)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
2 bedroom house	(✓)		(✓)	✓	✓		
2 bedroom bungalow	(✓)		✓	✓			
3 bedroom house				(✓)	✓	✓	✓
3 bedroom flat/ maisonette				(✓)	✓	✓	✓
3 bedroom parlour** house					✓	✓	✓
4+ bedroom house						(✓)	✓

Notes

* A single person with children who do not live with them all the time

** A Parlour House is a house with a separate dining room.

*** Households with three dependents, with one or more over the age of sixteen, may be entitled to bid for four plus bedroom houses.

() In some locations these properties may be available to smaller households

Where a household contains a pregnant woman the expected child counts as an extra member of the household.

▼ 2. Sheltered accommodation for older people and others with a support need

	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	✓	✓	✓

Age rules vary between 55 and 65 depending on the landlord. Age limits will be shown on the property advert. The age limit usually applies to the oldest partner in a couple.

If you need this guide in a different format, for example, large print or Braille, please ask us. If you want the guide translated into another language, you can do this using Google Translate on our website.

LEICESTERSHIRE

— Choice Based Lettings —



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