

Background

This policy was last reviewed in 2016 and sets out how Wem Town Council considers applications from people wishing to rent a Housing Association property who state they have a local connection to Wem.

The applications are currently verified first by Conexus for legitimacy and are then sent to the Town Council for approval. Currently the properties with local connection criteria attached to them are some properties on Oak Avenue and on Vaughns Place. The Town Council receives under 10 applications a year.

The Town Clerk has delegated authority in consultation Mayor and Deputy Mayor to determine local connection applications.

There are no major proposed changes to the policy

Confirming Local Housing Connection Policy

This Confirming Local Connection Policy was agreed by the Council at the Meeting held on 28.4.16.

Introduction

A number of housing developments being built in Shropshire by private developers and housing associations state that applicants for affordable housing schemes on the development (including shared ownership and build your own affordable home scheme) must demonstrate a Local Connection to the Town. The Town Council as a partner in this process is required to verify the validity of applicants claim to have a 'Local Connection' with that specific area.

Determining a Local Connection

The determination of local connection is a matter of fact - applicants either meet the criteria or they do not. The criteria adopted by Housing Associations in Shropshire is outlined in Shropshire Council's Type and Affordability of Housing Supplementary Planning Document and is reproduced below:

At least two of the following criteria for at least one of the members of the household must be met:

- Their parents were permanently resident in the local area at the time of the applicant's birth;
- They were in permanent residence in the local area for any period of five years as a child attending a local school, (or who for special reasons attended a school outside the local area but would have been expected to attend a local school but for those special reasons);
- They don't currently live in the local area but have previously lived there for 15 continuous years as an adult;
- They are currently employed or routinely carry out self-employed work within either the local area or 5km of the site;
- They have a confirmed written offer of permanent work within either the local area or 5km of the site.

- They can demonstrate active community involvement in the local area sustained for at least the previous two years, or are determined by the Town Council as having some other form of strong connection with the local community and/or its hinterland
- Their parents currently live in the local area, or another close family member who provides or requires a substantial degree of support currently lives in the local area;
- If over 55, they have a close family member currently living in the local area.

The Town Council has been advised by Shropshire Council of the following:

Local Area: Local Area is defined as being the 'Town' area, i.e. geographic boundary of Wem Town.

Community Involvement: There is not a prescriptive list identifying what is deemed to a community activity, however, it is largely activities that socially enhance the life of a community. Any activities which are personal recreational activities and not necessarily for wider community benefit are not considered under this criteria.

To consider whether applicants have a 'Local Connection' under the scheme, Wem Town Council requires an application form provided by the Housing Association, signed by the applicants, explaining how they meet the criteria.

The letter should be supported by independent evidence (for example - Birth Certificate, School Records, Rental Agreements, Work Contracts, License Agreements, Utility Bills, Oral Evidence, Supporting statements from known members of the community). **The approval of evidence may be undertaken by the Housing Association but the staff member who approves any evidence to support a local connection application must also sign the application form to state they have done this.**

Shropshire Council requires the Town Council to confirm satisfaction of 2 elements of the criteria. However, it would assist the Town Council in its assessment if the applicants covered as many of the criteria as possible.

~~The Town Council will then consider the request at the next available meeting of its verification committee.~~

The Town Clerk will then consider the application under delegated powers

The Town Council reserves the right to ask for:

- further clarification and/or
- further supporting evidence and/or
- an interview with at least 2 members of the Council.

It should be noted that confirmation of the applicants Local Connection by the Town Council does not in itself constitute support for a proposed development. Any planning application submitted to Shropshire Council under the 'Build Your Own Affordable Home' Scheme will be considered separately on its planning merits by the Town Council