

INTERMEDIATE RENT LETTINGS POLICY





Our lettings policy for Intermediate Rent homes

1.0 Overview

1.1 Nectar Homes is the brand name for the home sales, letting and property management service provided by Knightstone Housing Association Ltd. Although the home you are interested in renting may be marketed and managed by Nectar Homes, your landlord will be Knightstone, a charitable housing association and registered provider of affordable homes.

1.2 Through our Intermediate Rent scheme, if you are eligible, you could rent a home, new or second-hand, at less than the market rate. The rent charged is normally in the region of 20% lower than the market rent for a similar home in the same area, although this will vary from scheme to scheme.

1.3 Intermediate Rent is provided for people who are not usually eligible for a social rented home and are not yet ready or able to commit to buying a home or who have difficulty securing a mortgage. Intermediate Rented homes are let on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy basis, often with a 6 month contract period but this can be longer.

1.4 This policy explains how we will decide how to let homes under the Intermediate Rent scheme.

1.5 The policy takes into account our status as a charitable housing association. We follow the guidance on the housing need and affordability of customers for our homes set out in Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' Charity Commission guidelines. These guidelines require our policy to be based on affordability as well as ensuring those who can obtain satisfactory housing in other ways are not assisted by Intermediate Rent. For more information about this, please see the Charity Commission's website at:

www.charity-commission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/homeown (or ask us for a copy).

2.0 Qualifying criteria

2.1 Who can apply?

To qualify for Intermediate Rent you will:

- not currently own a property

- be unable to buy or part-buy a suitable property on the open market

In addition, to qualify for an Intermediate Rented home you must:

- be in employment for at least 16 hours a week
- be earning less than £25,000 p.a. (single person household) or £30,000 p.a. (joint). Income requirements will vary from area to area and we may seek to alter these criteria according to local needs. If we do this, it will be agreed in advance with the relevant local authority first
- be a UK resident or have indefinite leave to remain or have adequate employment for the duration of your tenancy

2.2 In some instances your local authority may also apply its own lettings criteria. For example you may also need to have a local connection to the area where the property is located. Sometimes this requirement can be strictly imposed by a planning condition. In other cases, you may just either have to live or work in the same district as the property. Whatever the situation, this information will be contained within our brochure and our Intermediate Rent team will be on hand to provide you with any further details you may require.

2.3 Exceptions to qualifying criteria

2.3.1 In exceptional circumstances, so long as you can demonstrate that you have no other reasonable housing options, you may still be considered for a property even if you do not meet all of the criteria. In these circumstances we will ask you to support an application with written evidence.

2.3.2 Such exceptional circumstances might include (but are not limited to):-

- homeowners in the process of discharging their interest in another property due to a relationship breakdown and whose equity interest and/ or income are insufficient to support a further outright or New Build HomeBuy purchase
- applicants whose income would ordinarily be sufficient to support an alternative tenure, but whose disposable income is severely restricted by commitments such as childcare or maintenance payments.
- where an applicant has an income level that could support low cost home ownership or outright purchase but has insufficient deposit to meet lenders' minimum requirements.

2.3.3 If you do ask us to treat your application as exceptional, we will consider your request and let you know whether or not we can offer you a tenancy. In some circumstances we may decide to ask the local authority or the Tenant Services Authority (our regulator) for their view, before making a decision.

3.0 Applying

3.1 Viewings

3.1.1 You will be invited to viewings of suitable properties and will be provided with key information such as likely monthly outgoings, your responsibilities as an assured shorthold tenant and local amenities.

3.2 After your viewing

3.2.1 If you decide to apply for a tenancy, you will be invited to complete an application form and return it to us as quickly as possible. You will then be considered along with other interested parties, if we have received more than one application for the home you are interested in.

3.3 Verification of your application

3.3.1 We can only progress a letting when we have received all of the following information from you:-

- Proof of addresses (e.g. a Utility bill).
- Proof of identification (e.g. photocopy of passport or drivers licence).
- Proof of landlord (e.g. rent book or letter of confirmation).
- Proof of earnings (photocopy of last three months wage slips).
- Proof of savings (e.g. photocopy of building society pass book).
- The credit history of applicants may be checked with a credit referencing agency (sometimes by a letting agent if one has been instructed to act on our behalf). Applicants that have undischarged County Court Judgements against them are unlikely to be considered.

3.3.2 If you are offered a property, we may conduct a Land Registry search (whilst completing the sales transaction) to confirm that you do not own a property somewhere else. If this check indicates that you do own another property (or did recently), that we are unaware of and is not being disposed of, our offer may be withdrawn.

3.3.3 If a letting agent has been appointed to act on behalf, they would carry out the checks detailed in 3.3.1.

3.4 Joint applications

If you make a joint application for a tenancy, both of you must be named on the tenancy agreement.

3.5 Holding fees

3.5.1 In most instances we will ask you for a holding fee to secure the property whilst we draw up your tenancy. This will usually be £150 if you rent the property direct through Nectar Homes but this amount may vary if a letting agent is appointed to act on our behalf. You can ask a member of our team about this if you are unsure about this.

3.5.2 Once a property has a let agreed, we do not accept further applications for the home unless the existing letting falls through. In these circumstances we would offer the property to the next highest qualifying applicant.

4.0 Letting and affordability criteria

4.1 We are usually able to allocate a home with one bedroom more than your immediate need, if one is available. This means if you are a single person household or a couple with no children you usually have the choice to rent either a one or two bedroom home - unless a larger household applies for the same property at the same time. In this situation, the larger household would be judged to be in greater housing need and would take priority.

4.2 In addition to household size we will also take into account any special circumstances relating to your application, this would include but is not limited to:

- households where a family member has a disability
- households where a family member is elderly or has special needs
- applications from local authority or housing association tenants
- if you are homeless or at risk of being homeless.
- if you are moving for work or social reasons

4.3 The table shows the size of home some typical households are able to apply to rent:

	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	3 or more bedrooms
Single Person	✓	✓		
Couple (no children)	✓	✓		
Single/Couple + 1 child		✓	✓	
Single/Couple + 2 children, same sex		✓	✓	
Single/Couple + 2 children, diff. sex			✓	✓
Single/Couple + 3 or more children			✓	✓

4.2 The lettings process

4.2.1 Before approving your application, in most instances we will ask your local authority to support your application by requesting a local nomination from them. This is because local authority policies may govern who can apply.

4.2.2 If local lettings criteria apply:

- where there is more than one candidate per property, your local authority may be asked to decide the order of priority given to all applicants. Where the local authority does not give the order of priority, and all applicants are judged to be in equal housing need, the offer of a tenancy will be in date order of application.

5.0 Equality and diversity

5.1 Nectar Homes complies with Knightstone's Equality & Diversity policy and will not discriminate against you on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, medical condition or age. In order to demonstrate that our policies are fairly applied, we monitor all applications and sales reports via a continuous recording system, although this monitoring will not affect our final decision about how to let a home.

6.0 Time scales

6.1 We will do everything we can to help you into your new home in the shortest possible time and we ask that you do your best to work with us to achieve this goal.

6.2 We will normally expect you to move in within two weeks of receiving your holding fee but this does rely on you supplying all the information we need to process your application and set up your tenancy.

7.0 What do I do if I am not happy with the lettings process ?

7.1 If you feel that you have not been treated fairly for any reason, or have any complaint about the lettings process, please contact the Head of Homebuy Sales at Knightstone's central office in the first instance. Knightstone's complaints procedure can also be used. A copy of this is available from any of our offices or on our website at www.nectarhomes.co.uk.

8.0 Additional information

8.1 All our Intermediate Rent homes will be let as set out in this policy.

8.2 There is no limit to the number of applications you can make (unless local restrictions apply) and our Intermediate Rent team will be happy to advise you on any points which you may be unsure about.



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Our Intermediate Rent scheme aims to assist people who are able to afford more than social rents but who cannot afford to access Low Cost Home Ownership options (such as NewBuild HomeBuy) in the short term. If you are eligible, you could rent a home, new or second-hand, at less than the market rate. The rent charged is normally 20% lower than the market rent for a similar home in the same area.

This policy explains how we will decide to let homes under the Intermediate Rent scheme. It applies to both new homes and re-lets of existing properties. From time to time, local arrangements, usually requested by the local authority, will require us to vary our policy. Where this is the case, any variations will be made clear to all applicants.

The policy takes into account our status as a charitable housing association. We follow the guidance on the housing need and affordability of customers for our homes set out in Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' Charity Commission guidelines. These guidelines require our policy to be based on affordability as well as ensuring those who can obtain satisfactory housing in other ways are not assisted by Intermediate Rent. For more information about this, please see the Charity Commission's website at:

www.charity-commission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/homeown (or ask us for a copy).

2. Qualifying criteria

Who can apply?

Intermediate Rented homes are provided for households who, effective from 1st January 2010, have been assessed as eligible by the Local HomeBuy Agent using the following criteria:

- Total household income must be less than £60,000 and you must be unable to afford to buy a suitable property on the open market without assistance.
- Applicants must be able to afford 80% of the local market rent from their own means, without further assistance. For example, if you are in receipt of Housing Benefit you would not be eligible.
- Applicants should make a commitment to enter home ownership through low cost home ownership products in the short to medium term (within five years) and be able to demonstrate how the discounted rent will enable them to save a deposit.

If you have different circumstances

In certain circumstances, so long as you can demonstrate that you have no other realistic housing options open to you, you may still be considered for a property even if you do not meet all of the criteria. In these circumstances we will ask you to support an application with written evidence.

3. Applying

Viewings

You will be invited to viewings of suitable properties and will be provided with key information such as likely monthly outgoings, your responsibilities as an assured shorthold tenant and local amenities.

After your viewing

If you decide to apply for a tenancy, you will be invited to complete an application form and return it to us as quickly as possible. You will then be considered along with other interested parties, if we have received more than one application for the home you are interested in (please see section four: “Lettings and affordability criteria”).

Verification of your application

We can only progress a letting when we have received all of the following information from you:-

- Proof of addresses (e.g. a Utility bill).
- Proof of identification (e.g. photocopy of passport or drivers licence).
- Proof of landlord (e.g. rent book or letter of confirmation).
- Proof of earnings (photocopy of last three months wage slips & bank statements).
- Proof of savings (e.g. photocopy of building society pass book).
- The credit history of applicants may be checked with a credit referencing agency (sometimes by a letting agent if one has been instructed to act on our behalf). Applicants that have undischarged County Court Judgments against them are unlikely to be considered.

If you are offered a property, we may conduct a Land Registry search (whilst completing the sales transaction) to confirm that you do not own a property

somewhere else. If this check indicates that you do own another property (or did recently), that we are unaware of and is not being disposed of, our offer may be withdrawn.

If a letting agent has been appointed to act on behalf, they would carry out the checks detailed above.

Joint applications

If you make a joint application for a tenancy, both of you must be named on the tenancy agreement.

Holding fees

In most instances we will ask you for a holding fee to secure the property whilst we draw up your tenancy. This will usually be £150 if you rent the property direct through Nectar Homes but this amount may vary if a letting agent is appointed to act on our behalf. You can ask a member of our team about this if you are unsure.

Once a property has a let agreed, we do not accept further applications for the home unless the existing letting falls through. In these circumstances we would offer the property to the next highest qualifying applicant.

How many times can I apply?

There is no limit to the number of applications you can make (unless any local restrictions apply) and our Intermediate Rent team will be happy to advise you on any points which you may be unsure about.

4. Letting criteria

We are usually able to allocate a home with one bedroom more than your immediate need, if one is available. This means if you are a single person household or a couple with no children you usually have the choice to rent either a one or two bedroom home unless a larger household applies for the same property at the same time. In this situation, the larger household would be judged to be in greater housing need and would take priority.

In addition to household size we will also take into account any special circumstances relating to your application, this would include but is not limited to:

- households where a family member has a disability
- households where a family member (including children) has special needs or is elderly
- applications from local authority or housing association tenants
- if you are homeless or at risk of being homeless.
- if you are moving for work or social reasons

The table shows the size of home some typical households are able to apply to rent:

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Single Person	✓	✓		
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Single/Couple + 1 child		✓	✓	
Single/Couple + 2 children, same sex		✓	✓	
Single/Couple + 2 children, diff. sex			✓	✓
Single/Couple + 3 or more children			✓	✓

The lettings process

Before approving your application, we will confirm with the Local Homebuy Agent that you are registered with them. If you are not registered with them, we can assist you with this.

If local lettings criteria apply and where there is more than one candidate per property, your local authority may be asked to decide the order of priority given to all applicants. Where the local authority does not give the order of priority, and all applicants are judged to be in equal housing need, the offer of a tenancy will be in date order of application.

5. Equality and diversity

Nectar Homes complies with Knightstone's Equality & Diversity policy and will not discriminate against you on grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

To demonstrate that our policies are fairly applied, we monitor all applications and sales reports via a continuous recording system, although this monitoring will not affect our final decision about how to let a home.

6. Timescales

We will do everything we can to help you into your new home in the shortest possible time and we ask that you do your best to work with us to achieve this goal.

We will normally expect you to move in within two weeks of receiving your holding fee but this does rely on you supplying all the information we need to process your application and set up your tenancy.

7. What do I do if I am not happy with the lettings process?

If you feel that you have not been treated fairly for any reason, or have any complaint about the lettings process, please contact the Head of Homebuy Sales at Knightstone's central office in the first instance. Knightstone's complaints procedure can also be used. A copy of this is available from any of our offices or on our website at www.nectarhomes.co.uk.