

A new way of finding a home to rent

January 2008



Homeselect
Great Yarmouth & Waveney
Lettings Partnership

About Homeselect



Homeselect is a new way people can apply for council and housing association homes in the Great Yarmouth and Waveney areas. It lets you apply for a home of choice instead of having to wait for an offer somebody else thinks is suitable.

Homeselect is run by Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Waveney District Council in partnership with Broadland, Cotman, Guinness, Orbit Orwell, Suffolk Heritage and Wherry Housing Associations.

Applicants for housing now need only to join one lettings scheme for council and housing association properties across both areas. Virtually all council and housing association housing is let through the Homeselect scheme.

People applying for housing are placed in one of three bands, according to their housing need. The Gold band reflects high housing need, Silver band reflects medium housing need and bronze reflects that you have a low housing need.

Homes becoming available are advertised each fortnight in the **Great Yarmouth and Waveney Advertisers**, on our special property hotline, **01493 846140**, and on our website (www.homeselect.org.uk).

Each fortnight, registered applicants are able to apply for a maximum of two properties of their choice.

How do I apply?

You will need to fill in the application form, which is in this pack. Please read the notes on the front of the form before you complete it. Once you have completed the application form we will assess your housing need and place you in one of 3 bands: gold, silver and bronze.

When you join the scheme, we will tell you which band you are in, give you your Homeselect registration number, tell you the date from which your banding applies and also advise you about the property size and location of the properties you can apply for.

Remember that registering with Homeselect is no guarantee of re housing because of the severe shortage of homes available. You may wish to refer to the booklet called Housing Options which is available to

download from our website (www.homeselect.org.uk). If you do not have access to the internet, please contact us on 01493 846140 - selecting option 5.

Application date

The length of time you have your priority awarded from is important if more than one person applies for an advertised home.

- Normally your priority will be awarded from the day we receive your application.
- However, if you are accepted as homeless, the date will be the day the council made its decision.
- If your circumstances change and your priority increases this increased priority will be awarded from the date your circumstances changed, i.e. you have moved address.
- If you have an 'emergency card', the date will be the day it was issued.

What if my circumstances change?

- If you move home while registered with Homeselect, you will need to complete a new form so that we can look again at your housing need.
- If your circumstances change, perhaps because you have a baby, your medical condition worsens, or you are about to become homeless, then you will need to complete a new form.
- If this means you move to a higher band, then your application date will be the date we receive your new form or the date on which the new priority was awarded. If you move to a lower band, then the original date will still apply.

What sort of home can I apply for?

The type of home you can apply for will be based on the number of people living with you.

- For example, if you're a couple or live on your own, you can normally only be considered for 1 bedroomed accommodation

- If you have a child, 2 children under 10, or 2 children of the same sex, you can apply for 2 bedroomed accommodation
- If you have 2 children of the opposite sex, or 3 children, you can apply for 3 bedroomed accommodation.

These are just examples, and your family's circumstances might mean you can be offered a different size home.

We will tell you when you register what types of homes you can apply for. There is a map in this pack which shows where housing association and council properties are located.

- Some properties are designated for older people, for example sheltered housing (sometimes called “warden service”).
- Some properties have special features which make them more suitable for people with a disability or mobility problem. The advert will give details of any special features, and our letter symbols are there to help advise people with mobility problems as to whether the property is suitable for their needs. Properties of this kind are likely to be reserved or prioritised for people with a disability.
- Some developments may have “no pets” or other special rules.

The advertisements will give you all the essential information you need. More information about the location and amenities in the area is on our website. You may wish to refer to the booklet 'What if somebody in my household has a mobility problem or is disabled?', which is available to download from our website (www.homeselect.org.uk). If you do not have access to the internet, please contact us on 01493 846140 - selecting option 5.

How do I contact Homeselect ?



Ring 01493 846140

- to get more information about the scheme and your application pack
- to find out about properties available or to apply for a property

Or

- Check our website at www.homeselect.org.uk



1

Do I need to move?

Remember, only a small minority of applicants, mostly people with high needs, can be rehoused each year. And moving house is a disruptive process.

Whether you're a home-owner, a private tenant, council or housing association tenant, we may well be able to assist you to stay put by improving your situation.

Or we can provide information about other ways of securing a move. You may wish to refer to our 'Housing Options' leaflet, which is available to download from our website (www.homeselect.org.uk). If you do not have access to the internet, please contact us on 01493 846140 - selecting option 5.

Studying the feedback on each advertisement for available properties will help you assess availability. We also provide up-to-date information about the numbers of properties in each area and vacancies in the last year, on our website. This should help you consider your options.

2

Apply to go on the Homeselect register

You've considered your options and want to apply to the scheme.

Provided you are 16 or over** you can apply. However, there are some exclusions from the scheme. See section, "Who can be excluded from the scheme?".

Complete the application form carefully, following the detailed notes. If you have a health or mobility problem which is made worse by your current housing, or which we need to know about to ensure we offer you a suitable home, complete the 'Self-assessment of disability, health and housing needs' form enclosed with this pack.

***Note if you're under 18 when you are offered housing, we may apply conditions for example, we may require a guarantor and/or ask you to accept a support package.*

3

Confirmation

The Homeselect team will assess your application. You will be sent a letter confirming you are registered.

It will tell you

- The priority band you're in (see the guide to the 3 bands at the back of this leaflet)
- Your application date
- The size, type and location of the home you can apply for
- Your Homeselect registration number
- Date of birth of the first applicant on your application form.

Keep this confirmation letter handy. You'll need the information to find a home.

You will no longer need to re-register your application every year, but we will check on whether you want to stay registered from time to time.

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Find a home

Each fortnight, homes are advertised in the property section of both the Great Yarmouth and Waveney Advertisers. If you live in the Waveney area but do not receive an Advertiser, a copy of the advert will be posted to you. Details can also be picked up from council and housing association offices. You can also find out what's available by visiting the Homeselect website, www.homeselect.org.uk or you can call our property hotline on 01493 846140 - option 1.

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Applying for a home

When you see a home you like in your band or a lower one and you meet all specified requirements you have **7 days to apply**

- By telephoning Homeselect on 01493 846140 and selecting option 2. You will be able to use our automated bid line to place your bids.

- In order to use the automated bid line you will be asked to login into the system. The login instructions will ask you for your application reference number and date of birth of the first person on your application form.

Once you are logged in you will be able to make a maximum of 2 bids. When you make these bids you will be informed of your position at the time you make your bid. **However you should be aware that this position will change as other applicants make or remove bids before the end of the bidding cycle.**

You will also be informed when:

- you have already bid on a property
- you have already used your 2 bids
- you are not eligible for a property. This could be because you are not in the advertised band, the property has restrictions placed on it or you do not require the size of the property.

If you need assistance in applying for a property, please select option 3 on our telephone system.

Remember you have 7 days to bid and bidding early will make no difference!

- By using the website: www.homeselect.org.uk
- **Great Yarmouth** – Town Hall, Greyfriars House, Gorleston Area Housing Office or South Yarmouth Area office
- **Waveney** – The Navigator at Lowestoft Library or the Beccles local office, Market Street, Beccles.

When you bid have these details with you:

- Your name and current address
- Your Homeselect registration number
- Date of birth of the first person on your application form.
- The reference number of the property you are interested in

You can bid for up to 2 properties each fortnight.



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Selection

If there is more than one eligible applicant for an advertised home, we select the one in the highest band, who has been registered the longest and who meets all the specified requirements.



7

Offer

If your application is selected, a housing officer will visit you to check the details of your application and make sure there are no problems, before making an offer.



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Feedback

In each fortnightly advertisement, we will also print details of how many people applied for previously advertised properties and the date successful applicants registered to join the scheme. **This information will help you decide where you have the best chance of being rehoused and help you consider if you should look at other housing options.**



What happens if I have a medical problem or disability?

- You will need to fill in the 'Self-assessment of disability, health & housing needs' form in the application pack. This asks you about your medical condition and any special needs, why your current home makes your condition worse, and why you want to move.
- With your permission, we may need to ask your social worker, health specialist or another professional who knows about you and your condition to fill in a special circumstances assessment form.

We may arrange for an occupational therapist or a housing officer to visit you to assess your needs in more detail. We'll let you know if this is necessary.

- Your application will then be assessed for possible medical or welfare priority. Our decision will be based on your condition, the effect of your current housing on your health and how your condition might be helped if you move to another home.
- We will inform you of the decision in writing. If you disagree with the decision and can provide more information, you can ask for your case to be looked at again.

My home is in poor condition - what should I do?

- The Homeselect application form will ask you about the condition of your present home. If you are a private tenant or home owner and tell us it is in poor condition, we will arrange for an expert, usually an environmental health officer or housing officer, to come and inspect your home. They will work with you and your landlord to resolve the problems. If the problems are substantial and cannot be resolved they may make a recommendation to Homeselect to change the banding of your application.

What if I don't agree with the band that my application has been placed in?

- If when we write to you about your banding, and if you do not agree with it, you can appeal. You have 28 days to tell us why you think

we are wrong. If you wish to appeal, please contact Homeselect (01493 846140) and we will send you a form to complete so that you can give us more information that might help in your appeal.

Who can be excluded from the scheme?

- Asylum seekers and some groups of people subject to immigration control under Asylum and Immigration law are not legally entitled to apply to the scheme. We will need to look into your circumstances if you appear to come into one of these groups
- We may also exclude an applicant from the scheme if we are satisfied that they or a member of their household are guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour (for example, serious anti-social behaviour) which makes them unsuitable as tenants.
- Unacceptable behaviour - for example, an applicant deliberately worsens their housing circumstances or has breached tenancy conditions - may instead result in our reducing the priority of application. We may require them to meet certain conditions before they are offered a property under the scheme, though they will be able to remain on the Homeselect register.
- Where we exclude or impose a penalty on an applicant, we will let them know in writing. They will be able to appeal against that decision.

Homeselect - Banding



Homeselect is a simple and clear way of finding a home to rent, either from the Council or Housing Association operating in the Great Yarmouth and Waveney areas.

It is designed to give applicants a choice of where they live and ensure that those in the greatest need are given the highest priority.

Homeselect uses a banding system – **gold, silver and bronze** – to identify need, with those in the gold band being given the highest priority and those in bronze the lowest.

The details on the next few pages show clearly what we take into consideration when deciding which band an application is placed in.



Gold band



- You are severely overcrowded (your family needs at least 2 more bedrooms than now) and you are in long-term accommodation
- You're a council or housing association tenant with 2 or more spare bedrooms and willing to move into a smaller home
- You're suffering from serious harassment, violence, or threat of violence
- You are assessed as having high medical, disability or welfare need
- You live in the private sector and have severe disrepair/poor condition problems which can't be remedied
- You're assessed as needing to move on urgently from hostel accommodation with a support package (silver band could instead be awarded)
- You're in hospital ready to be discharged but your home is assessed as being quite unsuitable and unable to be adapted
- You live in the private sector, identified as having medium disrepair/poor conditions which can't be resolved AND medium medical/welfare priority
- You have been accepted as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness and in priority need by either Great Yarmouth Borough Council or Waveney District Council.*

**Homeless applicants will normally receive this level of priority for a period of up to a maximum of 12 months, or until suitable accommodation has been found. They will be expected to actively apply for suitable accommodation.*



Silver band



- You are overcrowded (your family needs an extra bedroom or you have regular access to a child/children not permanently living with you)
- You share kitchen **and** bathroom facilities with non-family (eg as lodgers or in long-term bedsit type accommodation)
- You're a council or housing association tenant with 1 bedroom spare and willing to move to smaller accommodation
- You live in the private sector and have disrepair/poor condition problems which can't be resolved
- You are assessed as having medium medical, disability or welfare needs**
- You're in exceptional financial hardship making it difficult for you to maintain your home
- You live outside the area but have proven need to live here for work/support purposes to avoid hardship
- You have 2 or more children living with you, at least 1 under 7, and live above the ground floor
- You have been accepted as unintentionally homeless by either Great Yarmouth Borough Council or Waveney District Council; you are threatened with homelessness for no fault of your own

***If 2 people in your family have medium medical, disability or welfare priority, we will assess whether higher priority overall should be awarded.*



Bronze band



- You live in a property which is adequate for your family in terms of size and facilities
- You have a local connection but have no proven need to move into the area
- You have no local connection **and** no proven need to move into the area
- You are an owner occupier and have sufficient resources to assist yourselves (high medical/welfare or disrepair problems or a need for specialist housing may override this)

Emergency card

Sometimes applicants find themselves living in such severe living conditions that they have to move urgently. In these circumstances, an emergency card may be issued.

- This will only be given in exceptional circumstances on the basis of substantial evidence.
- Emergency cards will normally only be granted for 3 months.
- If they haven't been used in that time and suitable properties have been advertised, we will review your emergency status.



**This booklet is available
in larger print - ring 01493 846140
www.homeselect.org.uk**