

South Norfolk Council Gypsy and Traveller Sites Scheme Allocation Policy

Policy Aim

To provide a fair, transparent and accountable method of allocating pitches on Gypsy and Traveller sites in South Norfolk where South Norfolk Council (the council) has partnership arrangements.

Policy Objectives

- To provide nominations for vacant pitches that gives priority to those who are in most accommodation need who have a local connection with South Norfolk
- To assist in the maintenance of a cohesive and sustainable site community as part of a wider neighbourhood.

Policy

The council will maintain a register of people who are eligible to apply for a pitch on a site in the scheme.

Applicants for the register will be required to complete and submit a pitch application form.

The council will use the information provided on the form to assess the eligibility of applicants for entry on the register and therefore eligible to be nominated for a pitch on a site in the scheme.

Where the site is managed and/or owned by a housing association or other body (managing agent), the managing agent will make the final decision on whether to accept the person nominated for the pitch.

The council and the managing agent will not discriminate against anyone applying for a pitch on the grounds of:

- ethnicity or national origin,
- race, colour or nationality,
- sex
- marital status,
- disability or age
- religion or belief,
- sexuality

Each application will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. When assessing the application consideration will be given to need, local connection and community cohesion.

Where possible the council will seek references from previous landlords/referees and check any information submitted as part of the application.

When assessing priority for pitch nominations the council we will use the following criteria;

- Homelessness or threat of homelessness
- Recent housing history (previous three years)
- Local connection with South Norfolk
- Living in overcrowded circumstances
- A victim of violence or harassment
- Health and medical factors
- Age or disability factors
- Need to support another site occupant
- Social factors
- The need for children to attend a particular local school
- Other support needs
- Community cohesion

An application to go on the register may be refused if

- There is no proven local connection with South Norfolk
- False information is provided
- Failure without reasonable cause to provide suitable and valid references.
- A history of violence/sexual offences or drug mis-use (in which case applicants would be directed to a more appropriate service).
- A recent history of not paying site charges or rent without due cause.
- A recent history of persistent and/or serious contravention of site rules at a previous site.
- A history of anti-social behaviour.

Assessment of the priority of an application

Qualification

Points will be awarded as follows for a substantial local connection with South Norfolk and for references confirming compatibility with the site community

20 points - A substantial local connection with South Norfolk

20 points - Adequate references provided and compatibility with the community demonstrated

Priority needs assessment

20 points - Homelessness or threatened with homelessness where the homelessness is established as non-intentional

10 points - Links with the local community such as schooling, other support being provided locally or family connections on site.

10 points - Victim of violence or harassment

10 points - Additional medical or social factors

10 points - Additional needs through age or disability

10 points - Living in overcrowded or unsanitary conditions

Nominations

South Norfolk Council will maintain a register for vacancies pitch arising on sites in the scheme and provide a nomination to the managing agent of the site when a vacancy occurs.

The managing agent retains the right to accept or refuse the nomination and to seek further nominations as necessary.

The nomination to a pitch will generally be made to the applicant with the most points. If two or more applicants have the same number of points the applicant longest on the register at the time of the vacancy occurring will be nominated.

However the Council reserves the right to nominate another applicant after taking account of factors such as the support needs of another occupant of the site or the community cohesion of the site.

The managing agent will consider the nomination and, if satisfactory, will offer the pitch to the nominee.

Reviews

The applicants will have the right to ask for a review of certain decisions made regarding their application. These are

1. A refusal to accept the applicant onto the register.
2. Any decision about the facts of an applicants case which has been taken into account in considering whether to make a nomination to the managing agent.
3. A refusal by the managing agent to accept a nomination from South Norfolk Council.

A request for a review of a decision must be made in writing or verbally to the Housing Renewal Manager at South Norfolk Council.

The request should be made within 21 days of the applicant receiving notification of the decision.

Review requests raised in respect of 1 and 2 above will be considered by the council's Assessment Review Panel. The panel will comprise two senior housing officers and a suitably experienced officer from a neutral organisation i.e. Traveller Liaison.

Review requests raised in respect of 3 above will be considered through the managing agents formal procedure.

Reviews will be considered within 28 days of the request being received and the applicant will receive a written (or appropriate) response outlining the result of the review within a further 14 days.

An applicant does not have the right to ask for a review of a decision reached by an earlier review.

Guidance notes and a plain English version of the policy will be produced in appropriate formats and provided to applicants with the register application form.