Appendix 1. Proposed minor amendments to the Common Housing Allocation Scheme

Paragraph number	Amendment	Existing text	Proposed text	Impact
5	*Revised text* to prevent couples from circumventing income thresholds <u>Additional text</u> to clarify existing practice	**MAKING AN APPLICATION** Married applicants, those in civil or common law partnerships and couples who wish to live together are expected to make a joint application. …. When completing an application to the Common Housing Register, applicants should include members of their household that they wish to be accommodated with them. Members of the household may include: • anyone who normally resides with the applicant as a member of their family and would be reasonably expected to do so; or • anyone who is a member of the applicant's family who does not normally reside with them but could reasonably be expected to do so; or • anyone who does not normally reside with the applicant and is not a member of their family but could reasonably be expected to live with them. Once an application has been received and all supporting evidence assessed, applicants will be notified of the preference they have been awarded	**MAKING AN APPLICATION** *Applicants who are married, in a civil or common law partnership, or otherwise part of a couple are expected to submit a joint application unless there are exceptional circumstances.* … When completing an application to the Common Housing Register, applicants should include members of their household that they wish to be accommodated with them. Members of the household may include: • anyone who normally resides with the applicant as a member of their family and would be reasonably expected to do so; or • anyone who is a member of the applicant's family who does not normally reside with them but could reasonably be expected to do so; or • anyone who does not normally reside with the applicant and is not a member of their family but could reasonably be expected to live with them. <u>When assessing whether someone could be expected to live with the applicant, consideration will be given to:</u>	Reduces the number of couples qualifying unfairly because they claim they do not intend to live together and therefore only a single income is considered against the qualifying income threshold. None. Existing practice

		and provided with guidance on participating in the choice based lettings scheme Home4U.	whether other suitable accommodation is available to them; whether they are able to manage their own tenancy; and if there is an evidenced dependency need. Once an application has been received and all supporting evidence assessed, applicants will be notified of the preference they have been awarded and provided with guidance on participating in the choice based lettings scheme Home4U.	
7	This provision no longer needed following withdrawal of NHHP policy on under-occupation and Housing Benefit reduction	**PROPERTIES SUBJECT TO RESTRICTED QUALIFICATION CRITERIA** … A proportion of one and two bedroom properties will be advertised solely for social housing tenants in North Herts who have had their Housing Benefit entitlement reduced as a result of underoccupancy. Such properties will only be allocated to tenants who meet the criteria for receiving preference on the Housing Register as set out in the NHHP policy on under-occupation and Housing Benefit reduction.	[none]	Minimal. Properties which would previously have been ring-fenced will now be available to all households registered on the CHR.
17.1.2	Preference to be removed following withdrawal of NHHP policy on under-occupation and Housing Benefit reduction	*Living in accommodation that is too big for the household* … Households in receipt of Housing Benefit whose entitlement does not meet the full rent because they have a spare bedroom, may be awarded	[none]	Minimal. No households currently on the CHR have this preference. Any future households qualifying for the CHR in these circumstances will be given equivalent preference

		preference to downsize to accommodation that meets the social size criteria. In these circumstances, preference will only be awarded if the household meets the criteria set by members of the NHHP in their policy on under-occupation and housing benefit reduction.		under discretion (see para 8.3 in main report). Some efficiency gains as operation of the policy was cumbersome in practice.
19.1	Preference to be removed following withdrawal of NHHP policy on under-occupation and Housing Benefit reduction	**Band A - High Preference** High preference will be awarded where applicants or a member of their household: … • is a tenant of social housing in the district and has had their housing benefit entitlement reduced as a result of under-occupancy **and** they meet the criteria set out in the NHHP policy on under-occupation and housing benefit reduction (see paragraph 17.1.2)	[none]	As above
19.2	Amend preference to enable more vulnerable households to better access move-on from supported accommodation	**Band B – Medium Preference** Medium preference will be awarded where: … • a single/couple household whose relief duty has been ended by NHC after being placed into supported housing, and NHC have decided it is highly likely that the main s193(2) housing duty would have been owed by NHC	**Band B – Medium Preference** Medium preference will be awarded where: … • a single/couple household has been placed into supported housing by NHC, has been assessed by NHC as being medically vulnerable and is ready to move into general needs housing	A small number of additional households (estimated 10-15 p.a.) are likely to gain this preference which will help to improve flows through supported accommodation, increasing move-on options for households who are ready for independent living and opening up spaces for new residents to take up.

				There will be a small cost (£45 per case) associated with any additional medical assessments that may have to be passed to Now Medical (who currently undertake these assessments for the Council).
22.1	Amend to clarify existing practice.	**OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION** **22.1 Homeless households** Homeless households accepted by NHC for a main housing duty have a one month period after the duty is accepted in which to exercise choice over the properties they bid for and the area in which they would like to live. After this time, if the applicant has not been successful in securing a property, staff bids will be placed on the applicant's behalf for social housing vacancies. Alternatively, the household may be made a direct offer of social housing or of a tenancy in the private rented sector. Staff bids or direct offers to homeless households placed in supported accommodation by NHC will only be considered one month after they have been assessed as ready to move to general needs housing.	**OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION** **22.1 Homeless households owed a main housing duty by NHC and households assessed as medically vulnerable in supported accommodation** Homeless households accepted by NHC for a main housing duty have a one month period after the duty is accepted in which to exercise choice over the properties they bid for and the area in which they would like to live. After this time, if the applicant has not been successful in securing a property, staff bids will be placed on the applicant's behalf for social housing vacancies. Alternatively, the household may be made a direct offer of social housing or of a tenancy in the private rented sector. The above conditions will also apply to single/couple households placed into supported housing by NHC, who are assessed as medically vulnerable and	None. Existing practice

		Staff bids and direct offers will be made on all property types and in all areas of North Herts unless there are exceptional circumstances. Applicants will retain the right to place their own bids on social housing vacancies. After the initial one month period has passed however, NHC may remove bids that have been placed by the applicant and replace them with bids on properties with a higher likelihood of success. Homeless households will be made one offer of accommodation only under the Allocation Scheme, whether this offer is a result of an applicant or staff bid or a direct offer of accommodation. This one and only offer of accommodation will be classed as a final offer of accommodation such that the Council will be deemed to have discharged its duties under homelessness legislation. Homeless households who refuse a final offer of suitable accommodation will be removed from the Housing Register. **Single/couple households whose relief duty has been ended by NHC after being placed into supported housing, where it is highly likely that the main housing duty would have been owed**	ready to move into general needs housing. The one-month period will begin once the household is assessed as ready to move to general needs housing. In all cases, staff bids and direct offers will be made on all property types and in all areas of North Herts unless there are exceptional circumstances. Applicants will retain the right to place their own bids on social housing vacancies. After the initial one month period has passed however, NHC may remove bids that have been placed by the applicant and replace them with bids on properties with a higher likelihood of success. Homeless households owed a main housing duty will be made one offer of accommodation only under the Allocation Scheme, whether this offer is a result of an applicant or staff bid or a direct offer of accommodation. This one and only offer of accommodation will be classed as a final offer of accommodation such that the Council will be deemed to have discharged its duties under homelessness legislation. Homeless households who refuse a final offer of suitable accommodation will be removed from the Housing Register.	

		Single/couple households whose relief duty has been ended by NHC after being placed into supported housing, and where NHC have decided it is highly likely that the main s193(2) housing duty would have been owed by NHC, will also have an one-month period in which to exercise choice over the properties they bid for and the area in which they would like to live. This one-month period will begin once the household is assessed as ready to move to general needs housing. These households will also receive an one and only offer of accommodation and households who refuse such an offer will be removed from the Housing Register.	Single/couple households in supported housing (and assessed as medically vulnerable and ready to move into general needs housing) will also receive a one and only offer of accommodation and households who refuse such an offer will be removed from the Housing Register.	