



Council Garages Policy

1 August 2017

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Northampton Borough Council owns approximately 2,800 garages in various locations throughout the borough (see **Appendix 1**) and these garages are managed, on the Council's behalf, by Northampton Partnership Homes.
- 1.2 Most of the garages are situated in blocks of garages on designated garage sites, or underneath blocks of flats. Some are situated on their own or in pairs.
- 1.3 When a garage becomes available, it will be let to an applicant on Northampton's Garage Register in accordance with this Council Garages Policy.

2. Overall aim of this policy

- 2.1 The overall aim of the Council Garages Policy is to ensure that Northampton Borough Council's garages are allocated fairly and efficiently and that they are kept in a good state of repair, are well managed and are fully occupied.

3. Eligibility for a garage

- 3.1 In order to be considered for a council garage, applicants must first join Northampton's Garage Register. The Garage Register is administered, on the Council's behalf, by Northampton Partnership Homes.
- 3.2 Anyone who is aged 18 or over and residing in the Northampton Borough is entitled to apply to join the Garage Register. However, an application will be refused (and the applicant will be considered not eligible to join the Garage Register) if:
 - They are renting their home and/or garage from Northampton Borough Council and they are currently in arrears with their rent;
 - They have previously rented their home and/or garage from Northampton Borough Council and have failed to pay off their arrears;
 - They are residing in the Borough and are liable for a council tax debt, or other debt, to Northampton Borough Council; and/or
 - They are residing in the Borough and have a history of poor behaviour. (This may include, for example, criminal or anti-social behaviour, vehicle nuisance and/or previous breaches of tenancy conditions and/or garage licence conditions).
- 3.3 No applicant will be able to let more than two garages.
- 3.4 If Northampton Partnership Homes decides that an applicant is not eligible to join the Garage Register, it will inform them in writing, setting out its reasons.

4. Use of the garage

- 4.1 A garage must normally be used for the garaging of a privately-owned motor vehicle (a car, a van, a motorised scooter, a motorbike, an off-road bike, a trailer or a boat) that is owned by the applicant or someone living in the applicant's home.
- 4.2 If a garage is not going to be used for the garaging of a privately-owned motor vehicle, Northampton Partnership Homes (on behalf of the Council) will need to provide its written consent before the applicant / licensee is permitted to use the garage to store personal belongings in line with the terms and conditions of the Garage Licence Agreement.
- 4.3 At its discretion, Northampton Partnership Homes may withdraw its consent for the garage to be used for personal storage by giving 4 weeks' written notice.
- 4.4 The licensee shall not be permitted to use the garage or the land surrounding the garage for the following purposes including, but not limited to:
- The operation of a business or charity (including the storage of materials);
 - Displays or advertising;
 - Residential use (including temporary overnight / daytime accommodation);
 - Accommodation for animals or reptiles;
 - Repairs, servicing, modifying or re-spraying any vehicle. (Minor, routine maintenance of the nominated motor vehicle may be carried out);
 - The use of power tools and/or any equipment requiring a flame (whether protected or not);
 - The storage of gas bottles;
 - The storage of combustible or volatile substances other than those within the fuel tank or mechanisms of the motor vehicle kept in the garage;
 - Any criminal, immoral or illegal purpose, including selling or using illegal drugs, or storing or handling stolen goods.
- 4.5 The licensee shall not be permitted to make any structural alterations to the garage or to assign, sub-let or part with the possession of the garage.
- 4.6 The Council and Northampton Partnership Homes shall not be held responsible for the loss or damage of any property brought into the garage. Licensees are expected to take out adequate insurance to cover their property and belongings.
- 4.7 If a licensee moves home and it is no longer feasible for them to continue using the garage for their privately-owned motor vehicle, they will be required to relinquish their garage licence by providing one week's notice.

5. How to apply for a garage

- 5.1 To apply for a council garage, applicants must complete a Garage Application Form, identify the neighbourhood(s) in which they would be willing to rent a garage, and provide Northampton Partnership Homes with all of the information that it needs in order to assess their application and its level of priority.
- 5.2 Applicants will be required to provide proof of their identity and home address and, where appropriate, proof of ownership of the motor vehicle they are intending to park in the garage. If the applicant has been issued with a 'Blue Badge' parking permit, they must provide Northampton Partnership Homes with sight of this.
- 5.3 The registration of a garage application may be delayed or cancelled if Northampton Partnership Homes is not provided with all of the information it has requested.

6. Prioritising applications

- 6.1 Council garages are allocated on the basis of applicants' 'Band' and 'effective date'.
- 6.2 Applicants are placed in the 'Band' that best reflects their circumstances. Their 'effective date' is the date that their application has been assessed and registered.
- 6.3 Priority will be given to applicants who are on the Garage Register and are currently renting their home from Northampton Borough Council. However, if none of the tenants on the Garage Register express an interest in renting a particular garage, the garage will be offered to other applicants on the Garage Register.
- 6.4 Applications will be prioritised on the basis of their circumstances – Band A1 being the highest and Band B9 being the lowest – and their 'effective date':

BAND A – Tenants who are currently renting their home from Northampton Borough Council	
1	Applicants who are considered by Northampton Partnership Homes (in consultation with the Council's Head of Housing and Wellbeing) to have an urgent need for a council garage or already have a council garage and require an emergency transfer to another garage.
2	Applicants who have a disability (or reside with someone who has a disability) and are in possession of a valid 'Blue Badge' permit, own a motor vehicle that they wish to park in a garage and live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is situated.
3	Applicants who have a disability (or reside with someone who has a disability) and are in possession of a valid 'Blue Badge' permit, own a motor vehicle that they wish to park in a garage and live in another neighbourhood where there are no other available garages.
4	Applicants who own a motor vehicle that they want to park in a garage and live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is situated.
5	Applicants who own a motor vehicle that they want to park in a garage and live in another neighbourhood where there are no available garages.
6	Applicants who require a second garage because they own at least two motor vehicles that they want to park in a garage.
7	Applicants who do not own a motor vehicle but live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is located and wish to use the garage for personal storage.
8	Other applicants who do not fall into any of the above categories but, at the discretion of Northampton Partnership Homes, merit consideration.

BAND B – Residents of Northampton Borough who are currently not renting their home from Northampton Borough Council

1	Applicants who are considered by Northampton Partnership Homes (in consultation with the Council's Head of Housing and Wellbeing) to have an urgent need for a council garage or already have a council garage and require an emergency transfer to another garage.
2	Applicants who have a disability (or reside with someone who has a disability) and are in possession of a valid 'Blue Badge' permit, own a motor vehicle that they wish to park in a garage and live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is situated.
3	Applicants who have a disability (or reside with someone who has a disability) and are in possession of a valid 'Blue Badge' permit, own a motor vehicle that they wish to park in a garage and live in another neighbourhood where there are no other available garages.
4	Applicants who own a motor vehicle that they want to park in a garage and live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is situated.
5	Applicants who own a motor vehicle that they want to park in a garage and live in another neighbourhood where there are no available garages.
6	Applicants who require a second garage because they own at least two motor vehicles that they want to park in a garage.
7	Applicants who do not own a motor vehicle but live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is located and wish to use the garage for personal storage.
8	Local businesses that are operating in the neighbourhood in which the garage is located and wish to use the garage for staff car parking.
9	Other applicants who do not fall into any of the above categories but, at the discretion of Northampton Partnership Homes, merit consideration.

6.5 The 'banding system' cannot cover every eventuality. Where Northampton Partnership Homes considers that an applicant's circumstances are so exceptional as to merit them being awarded additional priority and offered a garage that they would not normally be offered under the garage allocations scheme, they should consult the Council's Head of Housing and Wellbeing who has the discretionary power, under this Policy, to award additional priority where this is justified.

6.6 When the applicant has been accepted onto the Garage Register, Northampton Partnership Homes will write to the applicant, confirming the 'Band' in which they have been placed, their 'effective date' and their application reference number.

7. Allocation of garages

7.1 When a garage becomes available, Northampton Partnership Homes will review the Garage Register and offer the garage to the applicant who has the highest priority. This will be determined by the 'Band' they are in and, where there is more than one suitable applicant within a particular Band, determining the earliest 'effective date'.

7.2 If the applicant with the highest priority does not respond to the offer within 7 days of being made the offer, the garage will be reallocated.

7.3 Applicants who accept an offer of a garage must sign and return a Garage Licence Agreement within 7 days of accepting the offer. If they fail to do so, the offer will be withdrawn and the garage will be reallocated.

7.4 Garage licensees who wish to apply for a transfer to a different garage must complete a Garage Application Form and, if they are offered a transfer to another garage, they must complete a Termination of Garage Licence form.

8. Repairs, maintenance and cleaning

8.1 It is the licensee's responsibility to:

- Keep the garage (including the door, gutters, fixtures and fittings and hardstanding) in a clean and tidy condition, and to make good any damage that can be attributed to them;
- Notify Northampton Partnership Homes immediately of any defect or repair needed to the garage or compound area, including the drains and other services;
- Permit Northampton Partnership Homes and its agents and contractors – upon giving reasonable notice of 7 days, except in an emergency – to enter the garage and inspect the state of repair, cleanliness and/or use of the garages, and do any repairs that are required to the garage and/or adjoining garages;
- Keep the garage door closed and locked when not in use, and keep the gate to the garage compound (where one exists) closed and locked, and not provide anyone with the keys or copies of keys.

8.2 It is Northampton Partnership Homes' responsibility to:

- Undertake urgent repairs when these are needed for health and safety reasons or to protect the integrity of a garage's structure; and
- Undertake planned maintenance to garages on a cyclical basis.

8.3 If a garage requires substantial repairs, Northampton Partnership Homes will endeavour to offer the licensee a suitable alternative garage.

9. Rent charge arrangements

9.1 Garage licences are weekly and can be terminated by giving a week's written notice.

9.2 All garage rents are charged weekly, but must be paid monthly in advance. Unless otherwise agreed with Northampton Partnership Homes, the licensee must pay their garage rent by direct debit.

9.3 Licensees who are currently not tenants of Northampton Borough Council are charged more for a garage than tenants of Northampton Borough Council. Licensees who are not living in the town centre are charged more for a town centre garage than someone who is living in the town centre.

- 9.4 Although garage rents are liable to increase in April each year (subject to 4 weeks' notice being given), the rents for the year commencing 3 April 2017 are as follows:

GARAGES OUTSIDE THE TOWN CENTRE	
Council tenant living in the Borough	£8.99 per week
Non-council tenant living in the Borough	£10.79 per week (£8.99 + £1.80 VAT)

- 9.5 Where a town centre garage is let to someone who is living outside of the town centre, a 'surcharge' is applied to the weekly garage rent:

GARAGES IN THE TOWN CENTRE	
Council tenant living in town centre	£8.99 per week
Council tenant living outside town centre	£23.27 per week (£8.99 + £14.28 surcharge)
Non-council tenant living in town centre	£10.79 per week (£8.99 + £1.80 VAT)
Non-council tenant living outside town centre	£27.93 per week (£8.99 + £14.28 surcharge + £4.66 VAT)

- 9.6 Northampton Partnership Homes will pursue the recovery of any garage rent arrears and this may involve the repossession of the garage if the licensee owes rent on the garage and/or they are a council tenant and owe rent on their home.

10. Ending a garage licence

- 10.1 Licensees who wish to end the licence of a garage must do so by giving Northampton Borough Council one week's written notice by completing and submitting a Termination of Garage Licence form.
- 10.2 If the licensee fails to return the garage keys to Northampton Partnership Homes by 12.00 Noon on the Monday after they have submitted a Termination of Garage Licence form, a week's rent will be payable and will be charged to the rent account.
- 10.3 If the garage keys have still not been returned by the end of the week in which they were due to be returned, a lock change will be arranged. Northampton Partnership Homes will send a letter to the licensee, advising them that a lock change has been ordered and the cost of the lock change will be recharged to them.
- 10.4 The licensee must leave the garage in a clean and tidy condition and, when it is handed back, all of the rubbish and items that are no longer required must have been removed from the garage. Failure to clear the property of rubbish and/or personal possessions will result in the licensee being charged for their removal.
- 10.5 If the licensee dies, the next of kin will be given a maximum of 4 weeks to return the keys. The licence will then be terminated on the first Monday following the return of the keys. Where no keys are returned, a lock change will be arranged.

- 10.6 Northampton Partnership Homes will serve one week's notice on garage licensees who are in breach of the terms of the Garage Licence Agreement.
- 10.7 Northampton Partnership Homes may also serve notice on a garage licensee if major works are required to the licensee's garage or garage site, or it is decided to redevelop, dispose of, or change the use of the site. In such instances, Northampton Partnership Homes will try to provide the licensee with at least 4 weeks' notice and to offer an alternative garage if there is one available.

11. Complaints

- 11.1 If an applicant or licensee is dissatisfied with the way in which Northampton Partnership Homes has dealt with them in relation to a garage application and/or the allocation or management of a council garage, they should follow Northampton Partnership Homes' complaints process, as set out on its website:

<https://selfserve.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/customer-feedback/>

14. Review of this Policy

- 12.1 The Council Garages Policy will be reviewed jointly by the Council and Northampton Partnership Homes at least once every two years, or as circumstances arise.