

# **Frequently Asked Questions – Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust New Build Properties**

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## **1. What is Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT)?**

Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust is Birmingham City Council's brand name for building new homes across Birmingham.

## **2. Where are the new BMHT properties being built?**

The new build properties are being built in phases.

In the coming weeks and months we will be advertising properties for rent in Handsworth, Bromford, Northfield, Kings Norton, Balsall Heath, Ladywood and Saltley.

## **3. What type of properties are being built?**

Most of the new properties are houses and they vary in size from 2 to 5 bedrooms.

## **4. Are there any wheelchair adapted properties?**

Yes. One four of the sites there is one fully wheelchair accessible property. These have already been pre allocated through the Disabled Persons Housing Register (DPHR). To be considered for any adapted properties you must be registered on the DPHR and have had your need for adaptations assessed by an occupational therapist.

## **5. Will the properties be advertised on Birmingham Home Choice?**

We have already let or pre allocated some of the new properties, however, we have now started to advertise others through Birmingham Home Choice.

They will be advertised alongside all of the other properties that are available for rent from Birmingham City Council and other social housing landlords, from Thursday to Tuesday each week.

There may not be new properties advertised every week, this will depend on when they will be ready. If you are interested in becoming a tenant of one of the BMHT properties you will need to check the Birmingham Home Choice website each week or look through the Property Newsletter available for reference at libraries or Neighbourhood Offices across the city. The Birmingham Home Choice website gives details of all the places in Birmingham where you can see a property newsletter or use a computer to see all advertised properties and place a bid.

We will be advertising multiple properties of the same type and size on one advert so you should not be put off from bidding because there seem to be too many bids on the property. For example we may have 10 two bed-roomed houses on Handsworth, which will all be completed on or near to the same date, instead of having 10 separate adverts on Birmingham Home Choice we may only have one advert but short list 10 people from the list of bidders.

## **6. Can everyone on the waiting list bid (express an interest) on the properties?**

No. Earlier this year we wrote to everyone on the waiting list to ask their views about how we should decide who is offered one of the new properties. The majority of those people that responded to our letter said that the properties should be allocated to people who were already tenants with Birmingham City Council and who had asked to move.

As a result of this consultation exercise Cabinet members approved an allocation policy change, which means we will allocate the new properties to existing tenants who have asked for a transfer only. In early December we wrote again to everyone on the waiting list to tell them about the policy change.

The properties will still be allocated in priority order with those with the greater housing need being given preference over those with less housing need.

If you are a tenant with Birmingham City Council and you have applied for a move you may be able to bid for one of the new properties. You will need to have your user id and your PIN number in order to place a bid. You would have been sent these details when you registered to go on the waiting list or in any recent letters from us about Birmingham Home Choice or your housing application.

## **7. If I am successful will I be able to buy my new home?**

Not straight away. There are special rules about new build properties and generally even after 12 months when you may be able to claim a right to buy the property you will not be able to buy it with any discount.

## **8. I have tried to place a bid on one of the new properties but I couldn't. Why is this?**

There may be several reasons why you cannot place a bid. Here are some of the most common ones:

- You are not already a tenant with Birmingham City Council
- You are not registered on the waiting list and have not been given a user id and PIN number
- Your application for housing has not yet been assessed
- You have had a recent change in circumstances and we are waiting to receive more information from you or we are still processing your new circumstances
- Your application has been closed because you have not contacted us when we asked you to
- You have already been shortlisted for a property in Birmingham Home Choice.
- You are currently on offer to another property

- You have already used your bid limit in this bidding cycle (you have bid on other properties – remember you can bid on up to three properties at a time in a cycle).
- You are trying to bid on a property that is not the right size for your family. For example if we have told you that you need a property with two bedrooms you will not be able to bid on a property with three bedrooms. See **question 10** below to find out more about the size of families that we can allocate the properties to.

### **9. The bidding cycle has closed. What happens next?**

Please do not contact us to find out if you have been successful- we will contact you if you are successful. You can help us to do this by keeping us informed of any changes in your contact details, it is especially important that we have the correct telephone number for you. You can update your telephone number and contact details on the Home Connections web pages after you have logged in with your user ID and PIN.

Once the bidding cycle has closed we will look at bids in points order and check they are eligible for the property and that their circumstances have not changed since the application for rehousing was made.

### **10. How will you decide who can have one of the new properties?**

We allocate all of our properties in accordance with the Birmingham City Council Housing Allocation Scheme.

We may allocate these properties either through Birmingham Home Choice or through a direct match from our Waiting List.

We can only allocate these properties to customers who are existing Birmingham City Council tenants who are registered for a move on the waiting list.

There are also strict rules about how many people can live in each house. We will state this clearly in the property notes. For example a 3 bed room house can not be allocated to any one with more than 5 people in their household.

All customers who place a bid and who are eligible for the property will then be sorted in points priority order as with any other property. We will then carry out some tenancy and verification checks, for example to see whether there are any reasons why points priority should be reduced.

### **11. How will I know if I have been successful?**

If you are successful in being selected for one of the properties after short – listing we will then contact you to check that you are still interested in the property and to arrange a home visit from one of our officers.

At the home visit you will need to provide all the relevant proofs for yourself and your household members before an offer of one of the new properties can be made to you.

At this visit the officer will also talk to you in detail about the new property and all of its features. The new homes have been built to very high energy efficiency standards and some have new types of heating and water recycling systems.

You will also have the opportunity to ask questions and to see a plan of the house and surrounding properties.

The officer will explain to you about additional tenancy conditions and the Good Neighbour Agreement that you would need to agree to if you want to accept a BMHT home.

We will ask you to decide if you want to accept one of the new properties based on the information we give you about the property, you will then have the opportunity to view your property or a similar one at a future date.

## **12. I have had a visit and I still would like to have one of the properties I bid for. When can I go to see it?**

If you are successful, you will be invited to view a property up to 2 weeks before the property is fully finished. You may not be shown your exact property but will be shown a property of the same type and with the same number of bedrooms as the property that you have been offered.

You will then be able to have a good look around the property. There are a number of differences between our new developments and existing, older council housing. The homes will feature some of the following;

- photovoltaic panels, these look like solar panels and absorb daylight to provide you with much cheaper electricity
- rainwater harvesting
- recycling facilities
- air sourced heat pumps that provide heating for the properties

The officer showing you around the property will show you these features in some detail at the viewing. You should also be aware that some properties have both gas and electricity and some have just electricity. This will be highlighted on the advert on the website.

You will be expected to make a final decision at this stage as to whether or not you would like to accept the property. This will be your only opportunity to view the property before you move in. It is therefore advisable that you are prepared to take measurements for curtains and carpets, although we will try to provide approximate measurements for you at your home visit,

If you decide that you would like to accept the property an appointment will be made for you to sign the tenancy agreement.

### **13. How soon after I view the property can I to move in?**

It will usually be at least two weeks after viewing before the property is ready and you can move in.

You will need to have a lettings appointment after you have viewed but before you are given your keys

We can never be certain of the exact handover date this far in advance. This is because things beyond our control, such as the weather, can often cause delays. We will always keep you informed of any changes to handover dates.

### **14. What happens when I get my keys?**

The day you are given your keys is the day that you will have to move into your new home.

You must also hand in the keys to your old property on or before 12 noon on the Monday after you received the keys for your new home.

### **15. What type of tenancy will I have?**

If you accept a BMHT property you will be given an introductory tenancy for 12 months and this will become a secure tenancy after 12 months if you have not broken any of your tenancy conditions.

### **16. What if I refuse the property?**

If at any point you decide that you do not want the property you must inform the BMHT pre tenancy team so we can update your details and you will then be able to bid on further properties through Birmingham Home Choice.