

## **ST JOHN'S WINCHESTER**

### **GUIDELINES FOR ADMISSION TO ALMSHOUSES**

#### **Abbreviations Used in these guidelines**

The Charity – SJW

SJW – St John's Winchester, Registered Charity Number 1174290

#### **1. Introduction**

(a) These guidelines have been prepared to inform applicants about the process of appointment of occupants to its almshouses in Winchester. We talk of appointments because almshouse occupants are not tenants as such, but beneficiaries of St John's Winchester, a registered charity. Occupants are 'licensees' in law but no occupant can be required to vacate an almshouse, save in accordance with the terms of a licence granted.

(b) SJW is a registered charity and subject to charity law and regulations enforced by the Charity Commission.

#### **2. Criteria for Admission**

- (a) The Charity's policy is to provide independent living accommodation for people aged 60 and over. Applicants must be able to demonstrate a need for social/affordable housing, have limited financial means, and in addition evidence one or more needs as described below. SJW's almshouses is a community where almshouse occupants, in addition to the support, welfare and care services available, show support to each other and contribute to the life of the community.
- (b) You may apply to the Charity if you are a resident in the City of Winchester (meaning the local government electoral district of the City of Winchester-commonly known as Winchester District), or resident in Hampshire (including an area outside Winchester District) or you are resident outside of Hampshire but have a close relative living in the City of Winchester who will visit you and generally support you in independent living. The criteria in this sub-paragraph appear in order of allocation preference.
- (c) The appointment of all occupants is at the discretion of the St John's Almshouse Appointment Panel which comprises the Director of Community Services, the Almshouse Welfare Team Manager (Registered Manager) and the Chief Executive. The deliberations of the Almshouse Panel are reviewed by a committee of the board of trustees. In assessing applications received, once satisfied that the applicant is of limited financial means, the Charity will consider other needs in allocating accommodation including housing need, the need for care, health needs, emotional and psychological and social need. Some of the matters which we consider are summarised below (although this is not an exhaustive list).

- (c)(i) **Financial Need**: To qualify for an almshouse, applicants need to be able to demonstrate they lack financial means and to show that their needs are not met by the commercial housing market.

As part of that process, every applicant is required to disclose in their application all financial assets and sources and levels/sources of income e.g. Bank and/or Building Society accounts, investment income, wages or salary, Deeds of Gifts, Government Benefits and Work Pensions etc. We will also look at an Applicant's level of indebtedness including overdrafts, loans or any other form of debt whether due now or in the future. Applicants will also need to demonstrate that payment of the Weekly Maintenance Charge is viable for them through their Pension, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit or earned income or a combination of any of these.

If an applicant has previously gifted a property, or a significant sum of money in the past 10 years, it is unlikely that they would be considered eligible for accommodation.

A lack of financial means would normally allow an applicant to qualify for housing and council tax benefits as their capital would be below £16,000.

Only those applicants whose total capital assets and savings have a value of less than £25,000, including the sale of any property in this country or abroad, and/or gifting money in the past 10 years, or whose income is at a level which would mean they would normally qualify for housing benefit or Universal Credit will be considered by the Charity. In any event, the Charity must be satisfied that its objects and Articles are being complied with.

- (c)(ii) **Housing Need**: Consideration is given to an applicant's current circumstances such as homelessness or inappropriate housing for their current/wellbeing needs.
- (c)(iii) **Care and Support**: Details of an applicant's current health needs are outlined in the application form and a medical questionnaire is completed by the applicant's General Practitioner. Our Registered Manager evaluates the information to ensure that the almshouse welfare team can provide any care and support required. There may be a need for the Registered Manager to review your assessment if 3 months has elapsed between submission of the information and your assessment. If you decide to access long-term registered care provided by the Charity this will be dealt with in a separate care agreement as outlined in our Care Guide.
- (c)(iv) **Social Need**: SJW prides itself on its strong community and the Panel will take account of the applicants' social circumstances e.g if they are experiencing loneliness or social isolation. Many occupants benefit from the social cohesion of our community. Almshouse occupants and Charity's staff organise many social activities and there are also various social clubs in which occupants are encouraged to participate if they so wish.
- (c)(v) **Emotional and Psychological Need**: For some deciding to live within the almshouses there is an identified need to live in a supportive environment addressing emotional and psychological needs. We aim to support residents to maintain their wellbeing, to enjoy their community and all it offers. We will encourage residents to adopt an active lifestyle to support their wellbeing (if so desired) whilst being reassured that they are safe and secure with access to emergency support. SJW aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness by actively encouraging residents to participate in the St John's community and by involving residents in decisions about their community, their housing and, if applicable, their care. Our community provides homes which are adapted and suitable for individuals needs in later life.

The Panel will need to conclude that the applicant is likely to benefit from, and integrate into, the almshouse community subject to individual circumstances, legal requirements and the provisions of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

For you to live in the almshouses your circumstances must show that you are capable of independent living .

You may have specific care/support needs or specific adjustments and if these can be reasonably accommodated by our welfare team or an external agency or otherwise to the satisfaction of the Panel and sustained for the foreseeable future, such needs would not be inconsistent with independent living in the almshouses.

St John's is a supportive community where respect for neighbours is highly valued; a history of anti-social behaviour in a previous accommodation setting or other context would be a factor to be taken into account by the Almshouse Panel when determining whether or not to make an offer of accommodation.

St John's has four sites in Winchester. When making a site allocation in the context of a resident application, apart from the general availability of accommodation across the almshouse estate, the Charity will take into account mobility issues, access issues, levels of disability and the level of care and support required by the resident (if any) as well as the social wellbeing of the resident.

### 3. **The Application Procedure**

- (a) All applications for almshouse accommodation must be obtained on the Charity application form, a copy of which can be obtained from the address at the end of these guidelines or from our website ([www.stjohnswinchester.co.uk](http://www.stjohnswinchester.co.uk)) or through the Head Office (Tel: 01962-854226).
- (b) *The personal data supplied by you on your application form will be held on file for an appropriate period. Some details may need to be checked with you, but none will be disclosed for any inappropriate or unlawful purpose, and we will follow the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.*
- (c) **The Charity does not maintain a rotational waiting list as such because they are obliged to assess who is in most need of accommodation when a vacancy occurs.** They do, on occasions, maintain a short list of eligible applicants whom they might be able to offer accommodation in the event of a vacancy. Placement on this list does not guarantee that the Charity will be able to offer an applicant an almshouse.
- (d) We may in addition take applications from those nominated by the Council providing all conditions of this Admissions Guidance are met.
- (e) Applicants are asked to give the names of two people who know the applicant well and are not related to them and could supply a reference. With the Applicant's permission, an approach is made to their GP to provide a medical report for assessment by our Registered Manager. The contents are treated confidentially.
- (f) No appointment to an almshouse will be made without the members of our Almshouse Admissions Panel having had the opportunity of meeting the applicant personally and providing the applicant a forum in which to ask questions about the community. It should be emphasised that an invitation to attend for a discussion does not mean that

accommodation will be offered. The format of the Almshouse Admission Panel is that the applicant will be invited to discuss their application in more detail so the Charity can understand their needs and assess whether the Charity can meet their requirements as well as whether the applicant is likely to benefit from and integrate into the St John's community. Equally, the applicant needs to make a judgement that our community is right for them.

- (g) If offered accommodation, the applicant will be invited to review the accommodation. If the applicant refuses the accommodation, it is unlikely that an alternative will be offered, and the applicant's name is likely to be removed from the list of eligible applicants.
- (h) The Charity does not offer a transfer to alternative accommodation, once an applicant is in-situ, unless the Registered Manager can confirm there are medical/health issues to support the move.
- (i) The Charity operates an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, and all applications will be considered equally and regardless of marital or partnership status, age, disability, race, religion and belief, gender or sexual orientation. A copy of the Policy will be provided to applicants as part of the application process. The Charity strives to provide high quality services to benefit almshouse occupants and those applying for accommodation in their almshouses. If you are not satisfied in some way, please refer to our Complaints and Redress Policy, a copy of which is available on the website.
- (j) The Charity will communicate the Panel's decision to applicants as soon as practicable.
- (k) If an applicant receives a communication to say their application for accommodation has been unsuccessful and closed (without an applicant interview being organised), the applicant can appeal against the decision and ask for their application to be reconsidered by the Chief Executive of the Charity at an appeal hearing.
- (l) If an applicant is interviewed for accommodation and is then advised in writing that they are not being added to the waiting list for allocation of almshouse accommodation, the applicant has a right to appeal against that decision. The applicant should lodge a written appeal initially to the Chief Executive (within 21 days of any such refusal) and their application will then be considered by the Chair of the Charity and one other trustee within 21 days of receipt of any Appeal.
- (m) If the applicant remains unsatisfied with the adjudication of the Chief Executive or the Chair Panel, then he or she has the right to refer such refusal to the Housing Association Ombudsman, details of whose services can be supplied by the Director of Community Services (see below).
- (n) These guidelines seek to be as clear as possible but if you have any queries arising you should contact the Director of Community Services at 32 St John's South, The Broadway, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 9LN (Tel: 01962-854226).
- (o) These guidelines will be reviewed on an annual basis. Next Review Date: November 2024.