



Save to Buy Policy

Regulation and Legislation	This policy links to: Governance and Financial Viability Standard; Homes England (HE) Capital Funding Guide; Greater London Authority (GLA) Capital Funding Guide Housing Acts 1985, 1988, 1996, 2004; Regulator for Social Housing – Regulating the Standards; Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Prospectus.
Supporting documents	Tenure Policy, Complaints and Customer Care Policy, Letting of Homes Policy, Rent Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Debt Service Charge and Other Arrears Policy, Reviewing Tenancies Procedure, Anti Bribery and Probity Policy
Scope	This policy applies to customers renting save to buy homes under the various marketing names present and future. (Rent to Buy, London Living Rent, Rent to Shared Ownership and Aspire to Buy). Colleagues within Customer, Property, Finance Sales and Homes Directorates.
Reference to “Orbit” means Orbit Group which consists of Orbit Group Limited, Orbit Housing Association Limited, Orbit Homes (2020) Limited, Orbit Treasury Limited and Orbit Capital Plc.	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 ‘*Save To Buy*’ is a generic term used by Orbit, which describes schemes which allow working households to rent a home at a lower than market rent (usually up to 80% of market rent) providing them with the opportunity to save for a deposit over time to purchase their first home.
- 1.2 At the end of the tenancy period the customer is expected to be able to purchase the property they are living in. The product is not intended for long-term rental.
- 1.3 Orbit has a number of ‘*Save To Buy*’ products
 - Rent to Buy
 - London Living Rent
 - Aspire to Buy
 - Rent to Shared Ownership.

All of the schemes share commonalities and the same principle, i.e. supporting customers with home ownership. However, there are differences between each in relation to allocation criteria, length of tenure, rent setting, marketing and what can happen to the property if the customer does not purchase.

- 1.4 ‘*Save To Buy*’ is not regulated nor subject to the Rent Standard (Rent to Buy and London Living Rent). Aspire to Buy affordable rent is subject to the Rent Standard. However, Orbit must follow the additional regulations in the Homes England (HE), or Greater London Authority (GLA) Capital Funding Guides to be compliant when offering and managing these homes.

- 1.5 The purpose of this policy is to deliver Orbit's 'Save To Buy' products in line with the HE and GLA Capital Funding Guides and Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Prospectus. It will also clearly set out our approach to these schemes for both customers and colleagues.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 Orbit aims to provide a varied housing offer to promote sustainable, mixed tenure communities.
- 2.2 The provision of 'Save To Buy' homes supports working households by providing another option and assistance towards homeownership for those customers who are looking to buy a home but don't currently meet the criteria for shared ownership. It also supports Orbit's goal of promoting thriving, sustainable communities.
- 2.3 In allocating and managing these homes, Orbit will ensure financial viability is always maintained and will pursue non-payment of rent, service charges or other debts owed to Orbit in line with our Debt Service Charge and Other Arrears Policy.
- 2.4 The viability of these schemes is dependent on properties being sold. Therefore, Orbit aims to maximise the number of sales achieved; however, customers are not contractually obliged to purchase.
- 2.5 If the customer is not able or does not want to pursue the purchase of their home at the end of the tenancy period, housing options will be discussed and signposted. However, continuation of renting the property long term will not be the norm (in line with the Capital Funding Guidance requirements and purpose of the schemes) and tenancies can be ended.
- 2.6 Orbit will meet all legal and regulatory requirements, including money laundering and fraud on completion of sale.

3. Policy

3.1 Allocation and eligibility

- 3.1.1 'Save To Buy' homes are not subject to local authority nomination rights and customers do not need to be registered on local authority housing registers to be eligible, although Orbit may choose to work with local authorities to identify potential tenants.
- 3.1.2 Below are the criteria that must be satisfied for all schemes. In addition, there are also some scheme specific criteria.
- Applicants must be at least 18 years old.
 - Applicants must not own or have any interest in any residential home.
 - Applicants must be working at the time of allocation and intend to buy their own home in the future.
 - Applicants are unable to buy a home on the open market, including being able to access shared ownership.
 - Applicants must have a household income sufficient to make rental payments and save for a deposit.

- Applicants must pass a pre-tenancy assessment, which will include Right to Rent checks, credit checks, proof of income, current and previous tenancy checks, affordability assessment and demonstrate the ability to save for a deposit. Third party agents may be used to assist with these assessments.

3.1.3 Any existing Orbit customers with security of tenure who wish to move to one of these homes will need to serve the prescribed Form no.8 Notice on Orbit, acknowledging their reduced security of tenure.

3.1.4 Household composition must not exceed available bedrooms and lead to statutory overcrowding. Under occupation will be considered, but preference will be given to those households who match the property size.

3.1.5 Orbit will let a 'Save To Buy' home to an Orbit colleague provided they meet the criteria and have gone through the allocation process. They will not be given priority over other applicants. Orbit's Probity & Anti Bribery Policy must be followed.

3.1.6 Applications will only be processed when fully completed and supported with all the relevant documentation and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to scheme specific allocation criteria.

3.1.7 Applications will be processed and assessed fairly and consistently. Where applications are rejected, we will give the reasons why and applicants will have the option to appeal the decision.

3.2 Tenancy deposits and advance rent payments

3.2.1 Applicants must be able to pay one month's rent in advance and a deposit of one month's rent before signing up for the tenancy. Rent will be expected to be paid in advance by direct debit or standing order.

3.2.2 The Deposit will be lodged with the Government backed Deposit Protection Service (DPS). This ensures the customer's deposit is held securely and independently for the duration of the tenancy. Orbit will register the deposit with the DPS and provide the customer with the prescribed information within 30 days of receipt.

3.2.3 On termination of the tenancy, the deposit is repayable to the outgoing customer, less any costs owed to Orbit in respect of rent (including service charges), damage to the property or other rechargeable items, unpaid rent and charges, costs of any enforcement actions by Orbit e.g. court fees.

3.3 Tenure and rent

3.3.1 'Save To Buy' tenancies will be let as assured tenancies and rent is determined by the relevant Capital Funding guide.

3.3.2 Rents will increase in line with Orbit's Rent Policy, regulation and Capital Funding Guides.

3.4 Reviews

3.4.1 During the tenancy reviews will be carried out annually on the anniversary of the tenancy commencement.

- 3.4.2 During the tenancy the customer will be expected to save sufficient amounts towards a deposit to be able to access mortgage finance or a home purchase plan. The reviews are an opportunity for Orbit to remind / discuss with the customer their progress towards meeting this goal.
- 3.4.3 At the final review, in most circumstances, it is expected the customer will be able to obtain mortgage finance or a home purchase plan.
- 3.4.4 However, if the customer cannot or does not want to purchase the property or a share of, discussions will be undertaken with the customer to understand their future housing requirements and signposting to alternative housing options.
- 3.4.5 Customer circumstances will be considered. However, remaining in the property and continuing to rent will not be the norm and will only be considered where exceptional housing need exists, which cannot reasonably be resolved by other housing options and where the customer does not exceed the income limits for these homes.
- 3.4.6 As part of the final review, where a customer is not proceeding to purchase, or if a customer terminates their tenancy, Orbit will conduct an options appraisal as to the future management of the property in line with:
- Individual circumstances of the customer
 - HE and GLA grant funding conditions
 - Strategic Asset Management strategies
 - The need to make best use of resources and prevailing market conditions
 - Best financial option to maintain financial viability of the scheme
- 3.4.7 It is the general expectation that when customers cannot purchase, they will be expected to end their tenancy through the standard process by service of 'notice to quit' or Orbit will take legal action to gain possession.

3.5 Sales

- 3.5.2 Rent to buy properties will be sold at market value set by a qualified RICS surveyor.
- 3.5.3 At any point and when it is allowed, if the customer is able and would like to purchase outright, a market valuation will be sought, and a purchase price agreed. If the customer wishes to purchase under Shared Ownership, they will follow the Shared Ownership process and be required to fulfill shared ownership criteria.
- 3.5.4 Where homes are sold (outright or shared ownership), or converted to market rent, the normal grant recovery obligations apply.
- 3.5.5 For all units outside London – Homes England (HE) Capital Funding Guide will apply.
- For all units inside London – Greater London Authority (GLA) Capital Funding Guide will apply.

3.6 Tenancy management and tenancy rights

- 3.6.1 All tenancies will be managed in line with our tenancy management policies and procedures in relation to breaches of tenancy and arrears will be managed in line with Income Collection policies and procedures.

- 3.6.2 The right to mutual exchange does not exist for these homes.
- 3.6.3 Customers will receive full repairs and maintenance services. These services will be provided up to the point where customers purchase a share of their property. Orbit reserves the right not to carry out improvement works to the property, where the customer has given intention to purchase.
- 3.6.4 Customers will receive all the usual tenancy management support including (not exhaustive) arrears management, investigation of complaints, and responding to reports of anti-social behaviour.
- 3.6.5 The Preserved or Voluntary Right to Buy, do not apply to these schemes.
- 3.6.6 Rent to Buy is only available on specific homes where grant was secured and cannot be transferred to other Orbit homes.

3.7 Appeals

- 3.7.1 Where customers disagree with a decision to end the tenancy, or are ineligible for the product, they may submit an appeal in writing within 10 working days of the decision.
- 3.7.2 Orbit will review the decision within 15 working days and notify the customer in writing at the earliest opportunity if the appeal has not been upheld, and before the date at which possession proceedings may begin.

4. Data retention

- 4.1 Data retention will be managed in accordance with Orbit's data schedule and legal obligation:
- Successful application (including supporting information) and tenancy records – lifetime of the tenancy and then to be treated as former tenancy records for 6 years after offer accepted
 - Unsuccessful applications – 1 year
 - Core (continuous recording of lettings and sales form) – as long as necessary to support social housing policy.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Lettings Service – specialist lettings	Marketing, Allocations & Lettings
Lettings Lead + 1 Team Manager	Appeals - allocations
Neighbourhood Management Service	Tenancy Management
Neighbourhood Management Services	Tenancy Reviews
Head of Lettings	Appeals – Tenancy Termination
Income Recovery	Income Recovery
Repairs, Customer Safety, Estate Management	Property
Home Ownership Services Team	Shared Ownership Sales
Head of Lettings & <i>Finance</i> / <i>SAM</i>	Option Appraisals
SAM – Empty Homes Sales team	Outright empty homes sales
Home Ownership Services Team	Aspire/Rent/LLR Sales

6. Performance controls and business risk

- 6.1 Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Head of Lettings. All colleagues are responsible for making sure they keep to and deliver this policy.
- 6.2 We will monitor performance via the following measures. These will be reported monthly to the Head of Lettings. These measures will be used to determine the success of the schemes and to improve service delivery.
- Number of rejections and refusals of applicants – scheme completion
 - Voice of the Customer (1st let) – scheme completion
 - Arrears level by scheme
 - Completion of sales and values to existing customers
 - Option appraisal outcomes
 - Empty Homes sales outcomes
- 6.3 We will engage with customers and seek their feedback by monitoring of voice of the customer, first Impressions and complaints.

6.4 Orbit will carry out a fundamental review of this policy every three years subject to legal, regulatory changes or in accordance with the agreed Policy Review programme.

7. Essential information

7.1 All Orbit policies and procedures are developed in line with our approach to the following, data protection statement, equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) approach, complaints and customer care policy and our regulatory and legal obligations to ensure we deliver services in a lawful manner and treat people equally and fairly. Orbit's privacy policy can be accessed on our website www.orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/publications/policies/

EA	Equality Analysis was completed on 31.01.23 and is available to view.
DPIA	An initial DPIA screening was carried out on 11.10.22. A full DPIA will be carried out in relation to the procedures underpinning this document.
Consultation	Internal: Departments within Customer, Property, Finance, Homes and Governances directorates
	External: Shakespeare Martineau
Applies to	Lettings, Rent Compliance, Income Collection, Tenancy Management, Strategic Asset Management, Homeownership, Homes & Finance

Document control

Status

Approved

Date Issued

Mar 2026

Version

v1.0

Uncontrolled if Printed

Title	Save To Buy Policy	ID 571
Doc Type	Policy	Review Cycle 3 Yearly
Circulation	All Departments	Classification Public

Doc Level 2

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		Date
Approved by	Executive team	Feb 2026
Next review		Feb 2029

Extension date	Extension reason	Approved by

Revision History

Version Number	Date	Comments / Reason for revision
v1.0	Mar 2026	Published

Appendix

A1. Rent to Buy Capital Funding Guides

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/capital-funding-guide/2-rent-to-buy>
- https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/15_section_3_housing_for_rent_12-11-21.pdf
- <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/homesforlondoners-affordablehomesprogrammefundingguidance.pdf>