

Aster Group is the overarching brand name of Aster Group Ltd and all of its subsidiaries.

1 Scope

- 1.1 We recognise the importance of pets for households; in terms of companionship, improving wellbeing (both physical and mental), and bringing joy and comfort to customers.
- 1.2 We also recognise that reported nuisance from pets is an issue that can impact our ability to manage our homes, estates, and communities.
- 1.3 The aims of the policy are to:
 - Provide clear and consistent advice for potential and current pet owners about when it is, and is not, acceptable to keep pets.
 - Encourage responsible pet ownership amongst customers.
 - Minimise any issues or complaints relating to animals within Aster owned / managed properties.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all customers, leaseholders, shared owners, and their household members, of domestic properties owned or managed by Aster Group, with the exception of care homes.
- 1.5 Pets that are visiting one of our properties will be treated as being the responsibility of the customer for the purposes of this policy.
- 1.6 The Tenancy Agreement or lease may include a clause regarding pet ownership. This policy does not change, modify or vary any tenancy or lease term, which must be considered alongside this policy.

Definitions

- 1.7 Aster defines a pet as a domesticated animal that is kept for companionship. This does not include livestock, although we will consider requests for adequately housed rabbits or chickens. Permission for cockerels will not be given. These considerations will take account of the nature and type of the property.
- 1.8 We consider 'caged pets' to be any small animal that is kept in a cage, tank, hutch, or vivarium, such as reptiles, birds, small mammals, or invertebrates. This includes fish in a pond. We will not grant a customer permission to install a new pond, nor will retrospective permission be granted for ponds installed without permission.
- 1.9 We define an assistance animal as one which has been specifically trained to assist disabled people, and which has been qualified by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK) or an equivalent organisation in another country. Examples may include, guide dogs, hearing dogs, or seizure alert dogs.

Pests

- 1.10 Pets can be linked to pest infestations. We have developed a policy and a guidance notes to give practical advice for colleagues dealing with complaints of pest infestations.

- 1.11 We expect pet-owning customers to be mindful of how they could avoid attracting pests, for example not leaving food outside or not regularly cleaning outdoor hutches or cages.
- 1.12 Where we can evidence a customer's pet has caused a pest infestation, we would hold them responsible for remedying the issue, and any costs associated with this.
- 1.13 Animal defecation must always be cleaned up immediately.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 We will consider any permission request to keep a pet and will not refuse permission unreasonably, save in circumstances where a lease or tenancy has an absolute prohibition on keeping a pet and to grant permission will place us in breach of any other agreement, such as a head lease or a s106 planning agreement.
- 2.2 There are certain times when we will refuse permission to keep a pet. These could include but are not limited to:
- If the animal is banned or the dog breed is considered dangerous (as per the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991/7) and does not have a valid exemption certificate.
 - Any venomous animals that do not have a valid exemption certificate
 - If a customer is in serious breach of their tenancy
 - Where a property is overcrowded
 - If there has previously been pet related anti-social behaviour or nuisance by the customer or members of their household
 - If the customer requires a pet flap to be installed in a fire door or UPVC door
 - If there is concern that the customer will be unable to meet the duty of care required under Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act
 - If the property is unsuitable for the type of pet requested, this includes consideration of the need to enter and leave a property through communal areas
 - Requests to keep an endangered species
 - If the customer already has a number of pets
 - Where a local planning condition prevents the keeping of pets
- 2.3 If a customer is in rent arrears with no payment plan in place, we will not normally grant permission for a pet. This is because we would have concerns about the affordability of a pet and managing the associated costs of responsible pet ownership. We can review this decision once the arrears have been addressed and / or a payment plan has been kept to for a period of 6 months.
- 2.4 If there is reason to believe that a pet will be used for breeding or commercial purposes, we will not grant permission. We will also revoke permission if it becomes clear an animal is being used for breeding purposes.
- 2.5 We will grant permission for assistance animals providing there is sufficient supporting documentation, and the property is suitable. If the property is unsuitable, we will consider supporting or signposting the customer with a move to a more suitable home.
- 2.6 We will consider requests for permission for an outdoor pet such as a house cat or dog if the property shares a communal entrance into a shared internal area on a case-by-case basis. We would insist the dog is kept on a lead in all shared and communal areas. An example of this would be a block of flats, Housing for Older People or one of our Care Homes. This includes visitors bringing pets to the property.

- 2.7 Should Aster have to sanitise or clean an internal communal area because a customer's pet has urinated, vomited or defecated, we reserve the right to recharge the cost of the clean to that customer. If there is an infestation of any kind, we would refer to our Infestation and Pests Policy.
- 2.8 We will allow the keeping of a number of caged pets in homes where we wouldn't normally allow cats or dogs. The property must be appropriate to accommodate such pets, and the pets or their habitat must not cause any deterioration to the condition of the property and must not be excessive in number.
- 2.9 We will consider a maximum number of pets per home and this would not normally exceed a total of 2 pets. However, we can consider this number on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.10 Where pets or animals are kept without permission, or where permission has been revoked, Aster will consider tenancy enforcement where it is reasonable and proportionate to do so. When a customer is found to have a pet and does not have permission, Aster will work with the customer to ensure they are compliant with their tenancy, and consider if granting retrospective permission is appropriate.
- 2.11 Aster actively encourages responsible pet ownership among their customers and within their properties. Customers are responsible for the health and welfare of their pets.
- Dog owners should fully comply with any relevant laws, including those relating to microchipping, registration and muzzling in public where applicable, and the Code of Practice for the welfare of Dogs-
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/697953/pb13333-cop-dogs-091204.pdf
 - Cat owners should fully comply with any relevant laws, including those relating to microchipping, and the Code of Practice for the welfare of Cats -
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/697941/pb13332-cop-cats-091204.pdf
- 2.12 If a customer has been granted written permission for a pet prior to the implementation of this policy, we will allow permission to continue for the current pet(s).
- 2.13 We will appropriately manage any nuisance caused by pets, and will follow our policies and procedures in managing any complaints received. Anything considered statutory nuisance should be referred to the Local Authority to lead on investigations and/or enforcement.
- 2.14 We can withdraw any permission granted if pets within or close proximity to the home are causing a nuisance. Things we consider to be nuisance include, but are not limited to:
- Dogs barking excessively (one-off instances or short periods of barking would not be considered nuisance.)
 - Attacks or aggressive behaviour on or towards other people or animals
 - Animal mess not being cleaned up by the owner
 - Pets not being kept under control (including being on a lead in communal areas & gardens when being exercised) including lunging at others
 - Pets causing damage to a property, possessions, or gardens
- 2.15 Where appropriate we will work with residents to address pet-related issues or any circumstances affecting the owner which have led to these issues. This may include referrals to specialist animal welfare organisations for information, advice, and guidance.

- 2.16 Where a pet owner fails to engage with these efforts, or if the level of nuisance, cruelty or neglect is significant, we will take more serious action. This may include making a referral to the local authority and/or police, requiring the animal to be rehomed, and where proportionate, taking tenancy enforcement action. Where a decision has been made, requiring the animal to be rehomed, we will allow this to take place within a reasonable timeframe. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.17 It is illegal for a dog owner to allow their dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place. This includes any incidents where injury occurs or there is a fear that an injury might occur. We will report all such incidents to the police, and this may result in tenancy enforcement action and/or criminal prosecution.
- 2.18 We recognise cats are roaming animals and do not consider them entering or messing in gardens to be a nuisance. We would expect customers to find their own amicable resolution if they are having an issue with a neighbour's cat.
- 2.19 We will act on reports of mistreatment of pets, and will work with RSPCA or any partner agency with concerns about pet welfare.
- 2.20 We will work with our partner agencies if animals are left in our homes that may have been abandoned, or if the customer has been evicted.
- 2.21 Customers are responsible for any damage caused by their (or their visitors) pets and we will follow our Recharge Policy to recover any costs for repairs or cleaning as a result of pet damage. This will include damage caused by fitting a pet flap to a uPVC or composite door without prior permission.
- 2.22 Customers will not be allowed to bury a dead pet in their garden or communal area under any circumstances.
- 2.23 We may ask customers to keep animals in a separate room when we visit customers homes.
- 2.24 We will make it clear when we advertise homes for letting if they are not suitable for pets.
- 2.25 If a customer wants to mutually exchange into a property where pets are not allowed, we may refuse the exchange if they are not willing to rehome their pet or give conditional consent requiring the rehoming of any pet.
- 2.26 We will take individual circumstances into account and apply case by case discretion when implementing this policy. We will consider all relevant factors, including but not limited to the nature of property, and any current or previous complaints, the age, size and type of pet, any personal circumstances of the customer and any relevant circumstances of neighbours.
- 2.27 Should a pet pass away, the customer will be expected to apply for permission for a new pet in line with this Policy and their Tenancy Agreement. Previous permissions are pet specific and do not permit the customer to keep a new pet without obtaining further permission.
- 2.28 Any complaints regarding the implementation of this policy will be dealt with in line with our Complaints Policy and Procedure.

3 Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 We will hold policy overview sessions for teams who are responsible for implementing the policy and make these sessions available for all colleagues within the business. We will monitor attendance of these sessions, and of colleagues who have confirmed having read the document through Asternet, 6 months post-implementation.
- 3.2 We will review complaints that are received and logged to identify if any learning could improve the policy.
- 3.3 We will monitor pet related incidents, complaints and ASB cases logged by the Neighbourhood and ASB teams.
- 3.4 We can report on workflows to ensure process is being followed correctly, including spot checks and / or audits.
- 3.5 The effectiveness of this policy will be continuously monitored, and the embedding of the policy scrutinised after 12 months by the *Operational Scrutiny & Assurance Panel*
- 3.6 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review.
- 3.7 We will use data to monitor cost implications of implementing this policy.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

- 4.1 Guidance note for pest infestations – tenanted properties.
- 4.2 Lettings Policy
- 4.3 Lettings Procedure
- 4.4 Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- 4.5 Tenancy Policy
- 4.6 Neighbourhood Management Policy
- 4.7 Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- 4.8 Recharges Policy
- 4.9 Mutual Exchange Procedure
- 4.10 Business at Home Procedure
- 4.11 Infestation and Pests Policy

5 Governance			
Effective From:	24/10/2024	Expires:	24/10/2027
Policy Owner:	Darren Brazil - Regional Operations Director		
Policy Author:	Paul Helms – Policy Officer		
Approved by:	<i>Customer Services Leadership Team</i>		
Delegation Matrix Reference:	R055.14	Version Number:	V2.00

Aster Group is our overarching company brand and comprises the following companies and charitable entities. Aster Group Limited, Aster Communities, Synergy Housing Limited, Aster Treasury plc, East Boro Housing Trust Limited, Central and Cecil Housing Trust, Enham Trust, 55 London, Aster Foundation, Aster Living, Aster 3 Limited, Aster Homes Limited, Aster LD Limited, Aster Property Limited, Aster Solar Limited, Silbury Housing

Holdings Limited, Silbury Housing Limited, Central & Cecil Innovations Limited, and Central & Cecil Construction Services Limited.