Appendix C – Valid Postcode Format

Version 1 – Published February 2015. <mark>Changes from 2014 to 2015 are highlighted in yellow.</mark>

Guidance on recording valid postcodes

All postcodes on the ILR must be in upper case.

The postcode is a combination of between five and seven letters/numbers, which define four different levels of geographic unit. It is part of a coding system created and used by the Royal Mail across the United Kingdom for sorting mail. The postcodes are an abbreviated form of address, which enable a group of delivery points (a delivery point being a property or a post box) to be specifically identified.

Full valid postcodes can be located at the Royal Mail Postcode Finder website, http://www.royalmail.com/postcode-finder.

Each postcode consists of two parts. The first part is the outward postcode, or out-code. This is separated by a single space from the second part, which is the inward postcode, or in-code.

The outward postcode enables mail to be sent to the correct local area for delivery. This part of the code contains the area and the district to which the mail is to be delivered.

The inward postcode is used to sort the mail at the local area delivery office. It consists of a numeric character followed by two alphabetic characters. The numeric character identifies the sector within the postal district. The alphabetic characters then define one or more properties within the sector.

For example: PO1 3AX

PO refers to the postcode area of Portsmouth. There are 124 postcode areas in the UK.

PO1 refers to a postcode district within the postcode area of Portsmouth. There are approximately 2,900 postcode districts.

PO1 3 refers to the postcode sector. There are approximately 9,650 postcode sectors.

PO1 3AX. The AX completes the postcode. The last two letters define the 'unit postcode' which identifies one or more small user delivery points or an individual large user. There are approximately 1.71 million unit postcodes in the UK.

Valid Formats

The following is a list of the valid formats of postcode. An 'A' indicates an alphabetic character, an 'N' indicates a numeric character.

Format		Example
Outcode	**Incode**	**Postcode**
AN	NAA	M1▼1AA▼▼
ANN	NAA	M60▼1NW▼
AAN	NAA	CR2▼6XH▼
AANN	NAA	DN55▼1PT
ANA	NAA	W1P▼1HQ▼
AANA	NAA	EC1A▼1BB

(Where ▼ represents a space)

The following characters are never used in the inward part of the postcode:

C I K M O V

Generic postcode format

All of the following postcode fields in the ILR are mandatory. If the postcode is unknown then the generic postcode of ZZ99▼9ZZ must be returned.

Current Postcode
Postcode Prior to enrolment
Delivery location postcode