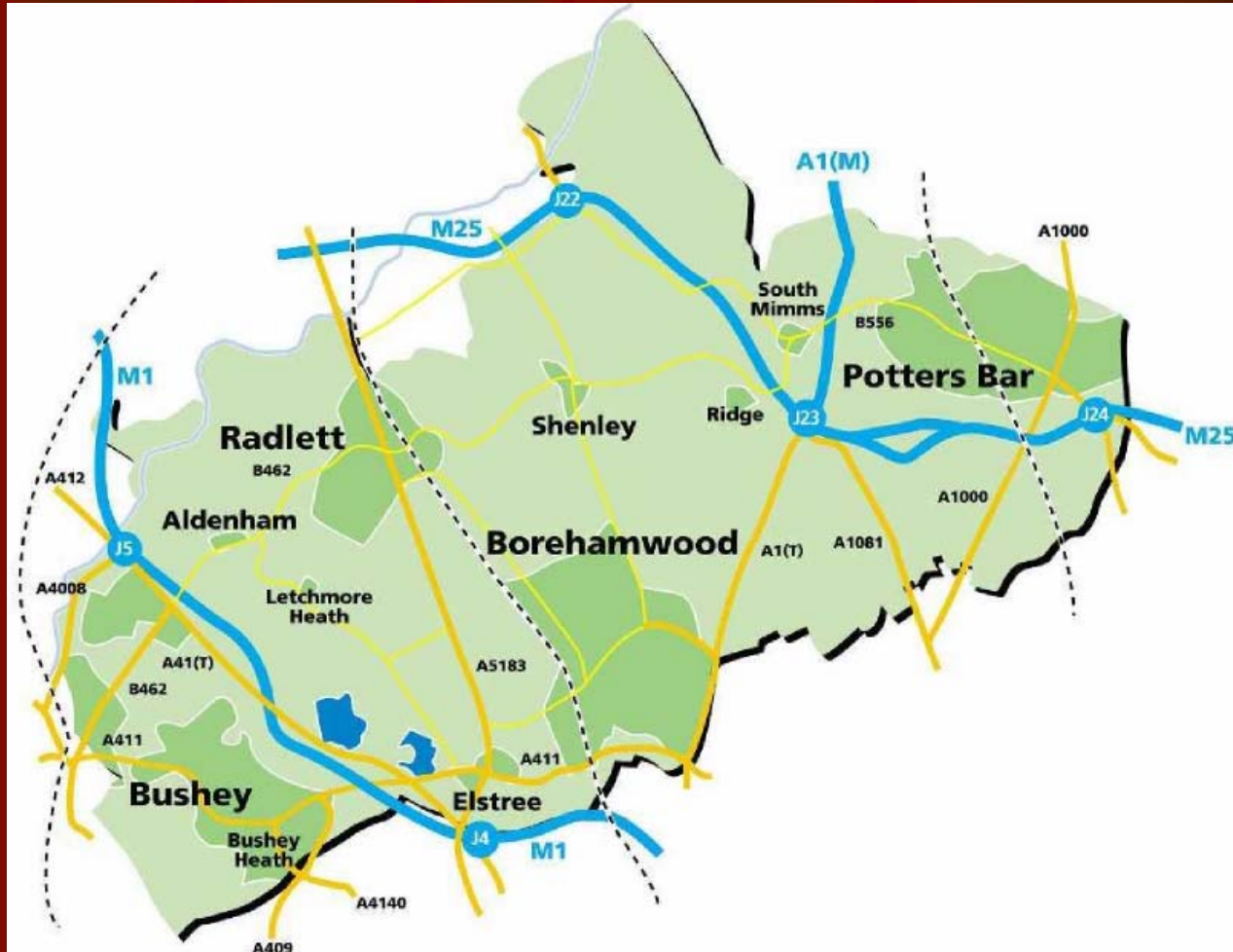


Increased homelessness – the implications for stock-retaining councils

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11 November 2011

Hertsmere Borough Council



The borough of Hertsmere (1)

- Created in 1974
- North of London – neighbouring boroughs are Harrow, Barnet and Enfield.
- One of the smallest boroughs in the East of England.
- One of the most heavily populated boroughs in the East of England.
- Main settlements of Borehamwood, Bushey, Radlett, Shenley and Potters Bar
- 80% of the borough is Green Belt.

The borough of Hertsmere (2)

- A very affluent borough with an attractive environment.
- A considerable amount of in-migration.
- Very high demand for private and social housing from outside the borough
- Very buoyant housing market, both sales and rental.
- Excellent transport links to London.

The borough of Hertsmere (3)

- Very deep pockets of deprivation
- Considerable housing need and social problems within the borough itself
- 2010 – 60% of homelessness applications came from just 5 of Hertsmere's 15 wards
- Approximately 6,000 affordable homes
- April 2011 – 2,145 households in housing register
- April 2010–March 2011 – only 247 social rented homes became available for letting.

The borough of Hertsmere (4)

- Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer in March 1994.
- Transferred to two housing associations.
- 91% of affordable housing in the borough is owned by Affinity Sutton Housing Association and Aldwyck Housing Association.
- Hertsmere Council retains homelessness, allocations, affordable housing development, private sector housing, and housing policy and strategy.

Homelessness in Hertsmere in 2010 – the top five reasons in descending order:

1. End of a privately rented tenancy
2. Households asked to leave by family or friends
3. Non-violent relationship breakdown
4. Mortgage problems/arrears
5. Domestic violence

Between 1 January and 31 December 2010 a total of 384 households approached the council for assistance as homeless.

How have we dealt with homelessness in the past?

1. Home visits/conciliation work
2. Homeless at Home
3. Rent Deposit Scheme
4. Tenancy Liaison Officer service for landlords and tenants of the private rented sector.
5. Use of council-owned self-contained accommodation as temporary housing.

Homelessness – our biggest challenges

- A) The Welfare Reform Bill
- B) The changes in the housing market
- C) The pressures of In-Migration
- D) Allocation of Social Housing

The Welfare Reform Bill (1)

- April 2011 – increase in Non-dependant deductions
- April 2011 – Local Housing Allowance limits on payments
- January 2012 – Local Housing Allowance shared accommodation rate applies to Single People up to the age of 35.

Welfare Reform Bill (2)

- April 2013 – Housing Benefit: Size criteria/Under-occupancy reduction
- April 2013 – Benefit capping
- April 2013 – Reform of the Social Fund
- April 2013 – Introduction of Universal Credit and Direct payments (payment of benefits directly to tenants rather than landlords)

Welfare Reform Bill (3)

Possibilities?

- More adult children aged 18+/young families asked to leave by families?
- More non-priority homeless households aged under 35?
- Increase in rent arrears and evictions among residents of the private rented sector?
- Increase in rent arrears and evictions among residents of the social rented sector?

Welfare Reform Bill (4)

Possibilities?

- More demand for, and supply of, accommodation in non-self-contained accommodation in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)?
- Possible need for more registration, licensing and inspection of HMOs?

The Changes in the Housing Market

- Housing for sale – prices remain buoyant even if local residents are priced out of the market.
- Increased demand for privately rented homes from people who might otherwise have purchased their homes.
- Decrease in Local Housing Allowance among residents in receipt of benefits.
- Private landlords need much bigger incentives to work with the Council.

The pressures of in-migration

- The borough is very much part of the North London housing market.
- Historic high demand for housing in Hertsmere from residents of the London boroughs because of housing need: domestic violence, other types of violence, wants to be near family.

BUT: AS YET NO EVIDENCE OF THE LOCAL PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR BEING DOMINATED BY HOUSEHOLDS FROM OUTSIDE THE BOROUGH.

Allocation of Social Housing

- Choice-based lettings since December 2008
- Lack of understanding of the system can lead to homelessness
- Open access to Hertsmere Housing Register.

Welfare Reform Bill: Response (1)

Working with housing associations and the Citizens Advice Bureau

- Supporting the preparation of new policies e.g. under-occupation
- Information and training for council staff
- Information campaigns for local residents.
- Pre-tenancy workshops
- Improved partnerships with CAB, Home Start, health visitors, Community Action Hertsmere.

Welform Reform Bill: Response (2)

- Making use of a Discretionary Housing Benefit fund.
- Housing Options for single people:
re-designation of unpopular sheltered housing for general needs homes for single people (non-priority homeless)

The changes in the housing market: response

Making best use of existing housing –
private and social housing:

- Private Sector Leasing
- The PLACE Scheme (Private Leasing Agreements Converting Empties)
- Under-Occupation scheme
- The Living Over The Shop scheme (LOTS)

The pressures of in-migration: response

- Private sector leasing to give private landlords a major incentive to work with Hertsmere Council
- Better promotion of low cost home ownership schemes
- New local connection criteria for the housing register:
 - ~ permanent employment
 - ~ residence in the borough
 - ~ residence in the borough among close relations.

The Allocation of Social Housing: response

- Better communication on Choice-Based lettings
- New local connection criteria
- New under-occupation scheme – freeing up more family-sized homes (scheme designed for older and younger households).

Overall:

- A new Housing Strategy
- A new Homelessness Strategy
- A continually updated Local Investment Plan.
- An updated knowledge of the borough's whole housing market.
- Constant monitoring and analysis

NEW CHALLENGES MAY HAVE ARISEN BY
NOVEMBER 2012

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