

8. EPSOM & EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL



Epsom and Ewell is the smallest Borough in Surrey in terms of both population and size. At just 3,408 hectares (over 45 per cent of which is designated as greenbelt) and with a population of over 70,000 residents living in 30,000 households, Epsom and Ewell is one of the most densely populated boroughs in the County of Surrey. South East Plan targets identify the need to provide an additional 199 new homes annually to 2026.

The Borough is recognised for being a desirable place to live with an attractive local environment, thriving economy, low crime rates, excellent transport links and a comprehensive range of local shops and services. Demand for housing is therefore very high which is reflected in elevated local house prices. Despite the current adverse economic climate, the average house price in Epsom and Ewell during May 2009 was £284,420 - some £60,000 higher than the South East average.

As a predominantly affluent area, a significant proportion of Epsom and Ewell's residents are employed in professional occupations and a large number commute out of the area to work in adjacent London. Average household incomes are high in the Borough at over £35,000 per annum a figure which continues to rise year on year.

In contrast, there are persistent pockets of relative deprivation in a number of wards in the Borough. The combination of high local house prices and the correspondingly high incomes needed to purchase or rent even the most affordable 'entry level' property (e.g. a one bedroom flat) results in a clearly identifiable local need for affordable housing.

This is also demonstrated by the increasing number of applications to the Housing Needs Register and a greater demand for advice about homelessness and housing options. As less than 10 per cent of the existing housing stock in Epsom and Ewell is owned either by a Council or by Housing Associations it is calculated that 470 additional affordable homes are needed in the Borough each year to meet the backlog of unmet affordable housing demand.

Most of the Boroughs' existing housing stock is assessed as being in good condition. There is some evidence locally that where homes do not comply with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (particularly regarding poor insulation levels) that elderly and vulnerable homeowners and tenants are amongst the groups most likely to be affected. Demographics indicate that the Borough has an increasing population of older residents. By 2025 the proportion of the population aged over 65 is projected to have increased by over 33 per cent from 2008 levels.

The Borough is also characterised by an increasing number of younger residents. During 2007 the number of children aged under-16, has for the first time, exceeded the number of residents aged over 65. Surrey also has the fourth largest gypsy and traveller population in the UK a significant proportion of which have settled in Epsom and Ewell. Each of these demographic trends will influence future housing location, design, delivery and affordability.

Priority One: Creating Housing Opportunities

A dramatic decrease in homelessness applications and acceptances in Epsom and Ewell has been achieved in the past ten years. This has continued to be sustained through a greater understanding of the causes of homelessness locally, a proactive approach focussing on early intervention and partnership working and through the implementation of the 'Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2008 – 2013'. Securing housing in the private rented sector for households threatened with homelessness has been a key achievement for the Council. Through the 'Accommodation Finding Project' and the 'Community Housing Project' a range of services are provided both to prospective tenants and private landlords including: deposit bond guarantees and a tenancy matching, sustainment and advice service. Over 70 households a year are prevented from becoming homeless as a result.

The economic downturn poses a significant challenge to the Councils' ability to sustain the reduction in homelessness already achieved. New initiatives are being implemented in response and include; appointing a new Housing Options Advisor; allocating additional funding to the CAB to provide extra debt advice and an enhanced Court Desk Service and development of a Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

Rosebery Housing Association (the largest Housing Association in the Borough) has also signed up to a joint 'Homelessness Prevention Action Plan' with the Council which includes working on a range of jointly identified key homelessness issues including addressing under occupation and making best use of existing housing stock.

Effective homelessness prevention depends on the ongoing need to deliver additional affordable homes. Epsom and Ewell's adopted Core Strategy requires that a minimum of 950 new affordable homes are provided in the Borough between 2007 and 2022. Redevelopment of the five former long stay psychiatric hospitals in the West of the Borough is key to helping us meet these targets. During the final three

phases at Horton Lane, St Ebbas and West Park over 750 new homes will be built across the three sites, 300 of which will be affordable.

The Local Development Framework requires that 20 per cent of all housing developments with 5 – 14 dwellings and 40 per cent of developments of 15 dwellings and above are affordable. Following the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, draft guidance also indicates the need for 7 additional pitches to the 30 public pitches already provided in the Borough across two sites. Through the Site Allocations Development Plan, sites with potential to be developed for affordable housing and additional pitches will be identified.

To deliver this priority we will:

- Implement the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan (2008 – 2013)
- Work with Epsom and Ewell CAB's to promote and make timely referrals to their 'Debt Advice' and 'Court Desk Advice' services
- Increase staff training and development which focuses on debt issues and dealing with rent and mortgage repossessions
- Work with Rosebery Housing Association to address under occupation
- Continue to develop the effective working relationships already built up with local private landlords, tailoring advice and support to their expressed needs
- Carry out a review of the Council's Affordable Housing service
- Maximise the provision of high quality sustainable affordable housing of the most appropriate size, location and tenure
- Keep all published information on affordable housing requirements of developers under review and up to date
- Contribute to the development of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document
- Develop seven additional pitches in Epsom and Ewell for Gypsy & Traveller families
- Inform the process to identify land for additional Gypsy & Traveller pitches
- Review the Gypsy and Traveller site agency agreement with Surrey County Council

Priority Two: Improving Housing Standards

The vast majority of the housing stock in Epsom and Ewell is of a good standard. Advice, assistance and grant funding continues to be targeted towards households where improvements including disabled adaptations and energy efficiency measures are needed. With the introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating system the Council employed an Environmental Health Officer dedicated to identifying, inspecting and relegating hazards in the home.

In the past two years over 75 private sector homes with Category 1 and 2 hazards have been improved and a further 67 private sector homes have been brought up to the decent homes standard as a direct result of the Council's intervention. The proactive programme of inspection and licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) also continues.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council operate an in-house equivalent of a 'Home Improvement Agency' which has the responsibility for operating the Council's Disabled Facilities Grants. A subsidised 'Handyperson' scheme was recently added to this service which already includes home visiting, specification and inspection of works and assistance with benefit entitlements and grant applications. A review of this service has resulted in a new fairer points assessment process and better partnership working with Housing Associations where tenants require adaptations.

Grants are available to boost insulation levels in resident's homes and in particular, to make improvements to vulnerable householders' homes both from Warm-Front and as the result of a successful bid for Private Sector Housing Renewal funding.

Although empty homes represent a small proportion of the total housing stock in the Borough, they are often in a poor state of repair and represent an opportunity to provide additional affordable housing. The Council will continue to develop cost effective initiatives to tackle empty homes. An example of which is the 'Accommodation Finding Project' which provides advice, assistance and encouragement to empty homeowners to help them bring their empty home back into the rental market for use by homeless or potentially homeless households.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has worked with the County to refurbish both of the public gypsy and traveller sites in the Borough. The Borough Council currently manages 16 public pitches in the Borough whilst the County manages a further 14. The most recent refurbishment included installing increased energy efficiency measures and creating better utility blocks. The works are now nearing completion and were funded through a grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government with top up funding provided by the County Council.

To deliver this priority we will:

- Implement the Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan
- Promote the Accommodation Finding Scheme and advice available through the Council and other agencies to empty home owners
- Implement the Energy Efficiency Strategy
- Monitor the new Disabled Facilities Grant points assessment process
- Widely promote the new Handyperson Service to residents and partners
- Work with Housing Associations to establish a register of disabled adapted homes in the Borough
- Continue proactive identification, inspection and improvement of HMO's and the identification of properties with Category 1 and 2 hazards
- Widely promote energy efficiency and home improvement grants through the Council's website, Borough Insight, road-shows/ events and face to face
- Undertake a resident satisfaction questionnaire following completion of the Greenlands Gypsy Site refurbishment works

Priority Three: Improving Housing & Support for Vulnerable People

In common with the East Surrey sub region the largest group of people from within the wider population in Epsom and Ewell who have support needs are older people and in particular the very elderly. In just over fifteen years, the number of residents in Epsom and Ewell aged over 85 is projected to increase by over 44 per cent. This clearly has implications for housing, health and support resource availability in the Borough. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council currently supplies almost 700 Community Alarms to residents and continues to install an increasing range of Telecare equipment. The Borough Council provides accommodation and funding to voluntary sector organisations supporting older residents including *Age Concern Epsom and Ewell* and is working alongside Rosebery Housing Association in a review of its' sheltered housing services. Expansion of the in-house 'Home Improvement Agency' now includes a subsidised Handyperson Service and working jointly with the new Housing Options for Older People Service (HOOPS) provided by Anchor. The whole of Surrey, but particularly Epsom and Ewell has a high proportion of residents with mental health difficulties and with learning difficulties, partly as a legacy of the former long stay psychiatric hospitals in the County, five of which were concentrated in Epsom and Ewell. The Council continues to operate the 'Special Needs Housing Register',

the 'Community Housing project' and to attend both Borough-based and East Surrey wide Valuing People and Extra Care forums.

Day to day support for households at risk of homelessness was an area that lacked capacity in Epsom and Ewell until the recent commissioning of the Mid Surrey Floating Support Service and the new floating support service for teenage parents provided by In Touch which are both expected to have a positive effect on the reduction and prevention of repeat homelessness in the Borough, as well as helping residents referred to the service to achieve significant improvements in their quality of life. Opportunities to develop appropriate accommodation options for each of the identified vulnerable client groups in the Borough will continue to be pursued with our partners.

To deliver this priority we will:

- Work with Rosebery Housing Association and other Housing Associations with homes in the Borough to review their sheltered housing services
- Identify sites for Extra Care housing and work with partners to deliver new schemes
- Continue to promote and develop the Special Needs Housing and Support Register and the Community Housing Project
- Identify opportunities to provide specialist supported accommodation for vulnerable young people, particularly teenage parents



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Action Plan 2009-13

[To be read in conjunction with the East Surrey Action Plan]

Epsom and Ewell actions

No.	Action	Deliverable	Completion Date	Lead Person / Agency	Partners	Resources
PRIORITY ONE – CREATING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES						
1	Preventing homelessness Implement and monitor the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan 2008-13	Actions within the Homelessness Prevention Strategy completed.	2013	Housing Operations Manager	Homelessness Prevention Forum Statutory sector Voluntary Sector	Existing resources as identified in the strategy
2	Making best use of the affordable housing stock Work with Housing Associations and local advice services to encourage best use of the existing housing stock in Epsom and Ewell	HA tenants under occupying are made aware of new affordable housing developments HA's encouraged to adapt existing homes to alleviate overcrowding Publicity of national 'mutual exchange' services for HA tenants Investigate 'home-share' schemes Increased number of HA tenants taking up HomeBuy products Refer older home tenants to HOOPS service.	2013	Housing Operations Manager & Strategic Housing Manager	Housing Associations HOOPS advice worker (Anchor)	Existing resources
3	Making best use of the existing housing stock Promote the 'Accommodation Finding Project' to private landlords and estate agents	Increased no. of potentially homeless households housed in private rented homes, Empty homes brought back into use through the Accommodation Finding Scheme Increased no. of clients housed with private landlords through the 'Community Housing Project'	2013	Housing Operations Manager & Environmental Health Services Manager	Private landlords & Estate Agents	Existing resources

No.	Action	Deliverable	Completion Date	Lead Person / Agency	Partners	Resources
4	Building new homes Carry out a review of the Council's Affordable Housing service and policies to identify alternative ways of continuing to provide affordable housing	Alternative ways of delivering AH implemented to increased delivery Revised standard 'Nomination Agreement' maximises lettings	2010	Strategic Housing Manager	Housing Associations	Existing resources
5	Building new homes Complete publication of all planning policy documents advising developers on affordable housing requirements	Publish 'Site Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Document'	2010	Planning Policy Manager	Strategic Housing Manager	Existing resources
6	Gypsies and Travellers Develop seven additional pitches in Epsom and Ewell for Gypsy & Traveller families	6 pitches for gypsies and travellers and 1 additional pitch for travelling show people available for occupation	2013	Strategic Housing Manager	Planning Department & Surrey County Council	Existing resources/ subject to NAHP availability
7	Gypsies and Travellers Review the gypsy and traveller site agency agreement with Surrey County Council	New agreement in place and implemented	2009	Housing Operations Manager	Surrey County Council	Existing resources

PRIORITY TWO – IMPROVING HOUSING STANDARDS

No.	Action	Deliverable	Completion Date	Lead Person / Agency	Partners	Resources
8	Monitoring housing standards in Epsom and Ewell Implement the Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan	Action Plan delivered	2013	Environmental Health Services Manager	Private Landlords Fire Service Grants Department	Existing resources
9	Reducing empty homes Promote the 'Accommodation Finding Scheme' and advice available through the Council and other agencies to empty home owners	Increased number of empty homes brought back into use through the AFS	2013	Strategic Housing Manager & Housing Operations Manager	Communications department	Existing resources
10	Improve energy efficiency of homes Implement the Energy Efficiency Strategy	Action plan delivered	2013	Environmental Control Officer	WarmFront Energy Companies	Existing resources
11	Disabled Facilities Grants Monitor the new Disabled Facilities Grant points assessment process	New process improves efficiency and speed of the DFG application process. Waiting times reduced.	2012	Grants & Licensing Team Leader	Occupational Therapists Adult Social Services	Existing resources
12	Assisting residents with physical disabilities to access appropriate housing Work with Housing Associations to establish a register of disabled adapted homes in the Borough	Database used to help facilitate home moves as an alternative to DFG's	2013	Strategic Housing Manager	Housing Associations Grants & Licensing Team Leader	Existing resources
13	Gypsies and Travellers Undertake a resident satisfaction questionnaire following completion of the Greenlands Gypsy Site refurbishment works	Survey gives insight into future pitch design and provision	2010	Gypsy Liaison Officer	Site residents & Surrey Community Action Community Development Worker	Existing resources

PRIORITY THREE – IMPROVING HOUSING & SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

No.	Action	Deliverable	Completion Date	Lead Person / Agency	Partners	Resources
14	Older People Work with Rosebery Housing Association and other Housing Associations with homes in the Borough to review their sheltered housing services	Under utilised sheltered housing services re-modelled to meet existing clients needs or re-developed for other client groups in the Borough	2012	Strategic Housing Manager	Housing Associations Surrey Supporting People Team	Existing resources
15	Older People Identify sites for Extra Care housing and work with partners to deliver new schemes	Sites identified	2013	Strategic Housing Manager	Housing Associations & Planning Department	Existing resources
16	Support for residents with physical or mental health difficulties Continue to promote and develop the Special Needs Housing and Support Register and the Community Housing Project (CHP)	Panel meetings held monthly include wide range of specialist housing and support providers. CHP continues to successfully house clients with physical and/ or mental health difficulties in private rented sector.	2011	Housing Operations Manager & Community Housing Project Manager	Adult Social Services Housing and support providers	Existing resources
17	Young People Identify opportunities to provide specialist supported accommodation for vulnerable young people, particularly teenage parents	Supported housing scheme (new build or conversion of an existing building) developed in the Borough to provide supported housing to young people.	2012	Strategic Housing Manager	Housing Associations and Surrey Supporting People Team	Existing resources/ subject to NAHP and SP Budgets