

# HousingTimes

Spring 2017

## New affordable homes at Choristers Court, Bricket Wood

A former St Albans City & District Council sheltered housing scheme, consisting of 23 units, has been redeveloped by North Hertfordshire Homes into a scheme of 18 general needs units to be let at affordable rents to applicants from the Council's waiting list.

- The new scheme consists of a mix of one and two bedroom properties: 10 x 2 bedroom and 8 x 1 bedroom.
- The rents are: £196.96 per week for a 2 bedroom £156.00 for a 1 bedroom.
- North Hertfordshire Homes successfully applied for, and received, a total of £450 000 from the Homes and Communities Agency.
- The scheme started on site in February 2015 and was originally due to complete in May 2016. This was delayed due to the contractor going into administration. New contractors were successfully appointed and the scheme completed in February 2017.

### Did you know...

If you receive Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Income Support, your benefit will change to Universal Credit from 7 November 2017. We will provide more details in the next edition of Housing Times.



**St Albans**  
City & District Council

[www.stalbans.gov.uk/housing](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/housing)

# St Albans Council builds affordable homes again

St Albans City and District Council has just built two new houses, the first affordable homes to be completed by the local authority in a generation.



The two-bedroomed homes have been built on behalf of the Council on the site of a former bungalow in Kings Road, London Colney. The project represents a £300,000 investment by the Council.

The homes will be rented out to people in housing need who are on the Housing Register.

Cllr Brian Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Housing at St Albans City and District Council, said: "This is the first time in more than 20 years that the Council has managed the building of new homes to add to its affordable housing stock. There is a great demand for affordable housing in the District. So we are constantly looking for innovative ways to increase the number of homes for people in housing need.

"To help cater for this demand, the Council is building homes again. The homes in London Colney are the first to be completed. The Council is also building 25 new affordable homes across three disused garage sites in

Batchwood at a cost of £6m. Once built, these homes will also be added to the Council's housing stock."

As part of its strategy to increase affordable housing in the District, the Council is also working with housing associations. This can involve the Council transferring suitable sites, including disused garages and old sheltered housing, to housing associations for them to redevelop into modern homes. The Council in return acquires the right to nominate tenants from the Housing Register to occupy the new homes.

In recent years, the Council has also bought properties to add to its affordable housing stock. These have been refurbished and rented out to people on the Housing Register.

## Councillor contact:

Cllr Brian Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Housing at St Albans City and District Council.

Tel: **01582 767621**

## Partnership Working, Safer Street Campaign in Offas Way for the vulnerable

The Council works very closely with our partners, Hertfordshire Police. Towards the end of autumn in 2016 PCSO Che Ponton invited Housing Officer, Jackie Beaney, to undertake a safer street campaign in Offas Way, Wheathampstead.



On a very cold crisp October morning, PCSO Che Ponton and Jackie worked their way up Offas Way, knocking on doors to meet local residents. Jackie says that once people had recovered from the surprise of seeing a Police Officer on their doorstep, they were invited in to the warm for a chat.

*"We offered crime prevention and home fire safety advice, along with NHS information about keeping warm during winter. It was a good opportunity to remind people not to let strangers in without first checking their ID."*

Jackie thinks it was a very positive initiative. *"Residents embraced the chance to discuss safety in their neighbourhood and some took the opportunity to discuss tenancy concerns including repairs. It was good to meet some tenants who I hadn't met before, and to put faces to names."*

We hope to carry out similar campaigns in other areas too.



# All change for the Tenants' Incentive Scheme

## Trial for 6 months from April 2017

Are you finding your property too large to cope with?

Do you have difficulty with stairs?

Is your garden too big?

Are your bills too expensive?

Ever thought of moving?

### Need help to move?

Following consultation with residents, the Housing Department is improving the scheme which helps tenants to move to smaller properties more suitable for their current needs. This is voluntary and only for people who wish to move.

Currently, people who apply to transfer homes are offered a payment of £1,250 if they are moving from a two bedroom or larger property, to a one bedroom home. The Council also pays for removal costs. All tenants who are downsizing are given a high priority banding – either Band A or B, depending on their circumstances.

From April until September this year, we will be trialling two major changes:

- Incentives will be available to all tenants wanting to move to smaller properties not just those wishing to move to one bedroom accommodation.
- Tenants will have a choice of 4 options of help to move.

### The options are outlined below:

1. We will pay a full grant of £1,700 if the tenant makes all their own arrangements.
2. We will arrange and pay the cost of removals and the sum of £500 per bedroom given up.
3. We will arrange and pay the cost of removals, the cost of redecorating the new home (magnolia) and the cost of re-carpeting the new home (selected range of colours).
4. The Council will arrange and pay for the cost of removals, the cost of redecorating the new home (magnolia) and will remove unwanted furniture from the old home.

In all cases, we will also pay an additional £250 if the current property is left in a good state of repair.

We are hoping that this direct help will make moving as easy as possible for those who would like a smaller property but are worried by the process and the cost.

### Interested?

Please email [housing.options@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:housing.options@stalbans.gov.uk) or phone 01727 819355



# Leasehold repairs

## Reporting a repair

To report a repair, find out progress of an outstanding repair or give feedback about a recent repair:

- Email: [h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)
- Tel: **01727 819256** during office hours\*
- Tel: **01727 811155** outside office hours\* (emergencies only)

\*The Council's opening hours are: Monday to Thursday – 8:45am to 5:15pm, and Friday – 8:45am to 4:45pm.

You will be given a **job reference number**. Please note this down for future reference.

## Your responsibilities as a Leaseholder

As a leaseholder you are responsible for maintaining the inside of your leasehold property including:

- Internal decoration, carpets, flooring and fittings
- Furniture and appliances
- Plumbing and wiring that solely serves your leasehold property – whether located internally or externally
- Internal doors and glass in your windows\*

\*Some leases assign the leaseholder responsibility to maintain, repair and replace both the glass and frames of the window. It is important to check the lease for the exact provisions.

## Do you need permission to carry out repairs?

You'll need permission from the Council before you start some repairs, including:

- Anything that will affect the external appearance e.g. installing a satellite dish, painting the exterior or replacing the windows



- Replacement of the front door – please contact us first as all new external doors must pass specific fire regulations\*
- Loft works – any space above your leasehold property belongs to the Council (unless the lease specifically states otherwise). If you need to access the loft space to do any repairs you will need to get our permission first

\*Applies to flats and not maisonettes. A maisonette is a property unit within a larger building that has its own private entrance. A flat has a communal entrance with other flats.

## What are the Council's repair responsibilities?

St Albans City & District Council is responsible for maintaining the structure of your leasehold property and all shared areas.

This includes:

- Your building's structure including the roof, guttering, fascias and soffits
- Maintaining the shared parts of the building e.g. stairs, hallways, gardens, parking areas, lifts
- Shared plumbing/heating systems/electrics

We are also responsible for buildings insurance if the lease specifies this.

You pay for the costs of these through your service charges in accordance with the terms set out in your lease.



It was with great sadness that on 20th January 2017 we received the news that Lee Eggleton had passed away. Lee worked in the Housing Department as a Housing Officer.

Many residents will remember Lee who worked for the Council for a number of years, before re-joining in 2014 and retiring in 2015.

His colleagues will remember him fondly for his dedication and enthusiasm for his work and his great sense of humour.



# Leaks from one flat into another

Leaseholders who do not have a leak repaired in their property in a timely fashion could be in breach of their lease.

The lease sets out express covenants for leaseholders to carry out internal repairs to their property. The remedies available to us to rectify a breach of this nature include:

- The right to enter the property to carry out repairs and to recharge the costs. We do this via an injunction, or by serving a notice under Section 146(1) of the Law of Property Act 1925.
- Forfeiture proceedings if the above has not been complied with. This allows the landlord to repossess the property.

We really do not want to take such action but sometimes it becomes necessary.

## How to deal with:

### Leak from one leasehold property to another property

If the leak is due to a pipe or apparatus that serves only the leasehold property, it is up to the leaseholder to repair the leak.

We would expect the two leaseholders to deal with the leak amicably between themselves.

If damage has been caused to the leasehold property below, that leaseholder can make a claim on our buildings insurance policy.

It is important that any insurance claim is made promptly (usually within 90 days).

If the leak is to a common pipe or apparatus, the leaseholder should contact our repairs team on **01727 819256**, or via email: [h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

If you need to call outside office hours you can contact our emergency repairs line on **01727 811155**.

### Leak from council tenanted property to another leasehold property

If the leak is coming from a council tenanted property into a leasehold property, the leaseholder who is affected by the leak should contact our Repairs team on **01727 819256** (**01727 811155** outside office hour), or via email:

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)



# Mutual exchange

## Find your perfect match

Are you the tenant of a property that is too small or too big for you? Would you like to move? Finding a swap could help you to move more quickly than waiting for a transfer. St Albans City and District Council tenants can register on the Homeswapper website [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk) for free. Homeswapper is a national mutual exchange website where tenants can advertise their home for an exchange.



### Top tips

- Adverts – it is the most important part of the process
- Include photos of the outside and inside of your home
- Tidy up to show your home at its best
- Check that the rent is correct
- Describe all the advantages of your area
- Be realistic
- Respond to messages even if it's to say no thank you
- Keep any appointments that you make
- Check the website frequently – the number of properties changes constantly
- When you have found someone to swap with, contact your Housing Officer and ask for a mutual exchange form



Sorry, we haven't taken a photo yet



**Which image would attract your interest?**

### Remember

- Mutual exchange can be a quicker way of moving
- 30 families moved by exchanging in St Albans in 2016
- 90% of successful exchanges have photographs in their advert
- If you would like to discuss registering for homeswapper please email [housing.options@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:housing.options@stalbans.gov.uk) or telephone **01727 819355**
- More information is available on [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)

Satisfied St Albans mutual exchange tenants say

*"Dreams do come true and eventually I found the perfect home suited for my growing family. Don't give up."*

*"We were living in a 2 bedroom first floor maisonette and registered on Homeswapper. We were already considering properties outside of St Albans in order to increase our chances of getting the extra bedroom that we needed. We were very pro-active on Homeswapper and checked our matches regularly. One day a message came through from someone interested in our property, their house was in the same area that we lived in and was a perfect match for us. We arranged to see each other's properties within a few days and a swap was agreed. There were times when I didn't know if we would find a match but I'm so grateful every day that we did. It happened when I least expected it so don't give up and keep checking your matches."*

*"I loved being on Homeswapper as I have found my dream home and furthermore swapped places with a wonderful lady who made the swap PERFECT! Very happy!"*

*"This was the first house I looked at and messaged the tenant for a swap."*



IT'S TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE

ST ALBANS COURSES  
STARTING IN APRIL & MAY  
(EVENING SESSIONS)



12 (stone) **FIT PHIL**



28 (stone) **BIG DAVE**

**MEN  
ONLY**

COME & JOIN OUR  
**FREE 12 WEEK**  
WEIGHT MANAGEMENT COURSE

**CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION:**



**01923 496391**



**andrew.garlick@watfordfc.com**



**COMMUNITY SPORTS  
& EDUCATION  
TRUST**  
REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 1102239

St Albans District

**Health &  
Wellbeing  
Partnership**

# Your Housing Team

Following a recent restructure, we have made some changes in the Housing Management Team.

We have some vacant posts and although we have recruited to these we are waiting for the new staff to start with us. We will give more details in the next issue of Housing Times.

Area	Housing Income Team Manager Lina Clifford <a href="mailto:lina.clifford@stalbans.gov.uk">lina.clifford@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Neighbourhood Management Team Manager Sue Carroll <a href="mailto:susan.carroll@stalbans.gov.uk">susan.carroll@stalbans.gov.uk</a>
Batford, Harpenden, Southdown, Pimlico, Redbourn, Sandridge, Newgate Close, Hatfield Road, Thirlestane	Jenetta Barker <a href="mailto:jenetta.barker@stalbans.gov.uk">jenetta.barker@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Macie McCormack <a href="mailto:macie.mccormack@stalbans.gov.uk">macie.mccormack@stalbans.gov.uk</a>
Batchwood, New Greens, Camp area, Tudor Road, Valley Road area	Julia Thacker <a href="mailto:julia.thacker@stalbans.gov.uk">julia.thacker@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Rosie Alphonse <a href="mailto:rosie.alphonse@stalbans.gov.uk">rosie.alphonse@stalbans.gov.uk</a>
Sopwell, City Centre area, Telford Court, Wheathampstead	Samantha Sandiford <a href="mailto:samantha.sandiford@stalbans.gov.uk">samantha.sandiford@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Jackie Beaney <a href="mailto:jackie.beaney@stalbans.gov.uk">jackie.beaney@stalbans.gov.uk</a>
Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, Colney Heath, London Colney, Marshalswick, Park Street, Smallford	Steve Court <a href="mailto:steven.court@stalbans.gov.uk">steven.court@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Currently vacant – recruitment underway

## Useful contacts

### Reporting Repairs – daytime

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819256

### Reporting Non Emergency Repairs – out of hours

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819493

### Emergency Repairs – out of hours

01727 811155

### Property Improvements

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819489

### Housing Transfers

[edward.kelly@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:edward.kelly@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819613

### Housing Options

[contactus@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819355

### Lettings

[matthew.barnes@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.barnes@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819480

### Housing Management – tenancy and rent enquiries

[housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819301

### Housing Benefits

[benefits@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819283

### Garages

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819256

### Mutual Exchanges

[housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819301

### Citizens Advice Bureau

01727 859565

### Leasehold management

[leaseholders@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:leaseholders@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819578