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## ESRI GIS AT BRACKNELL FOREST HOMES

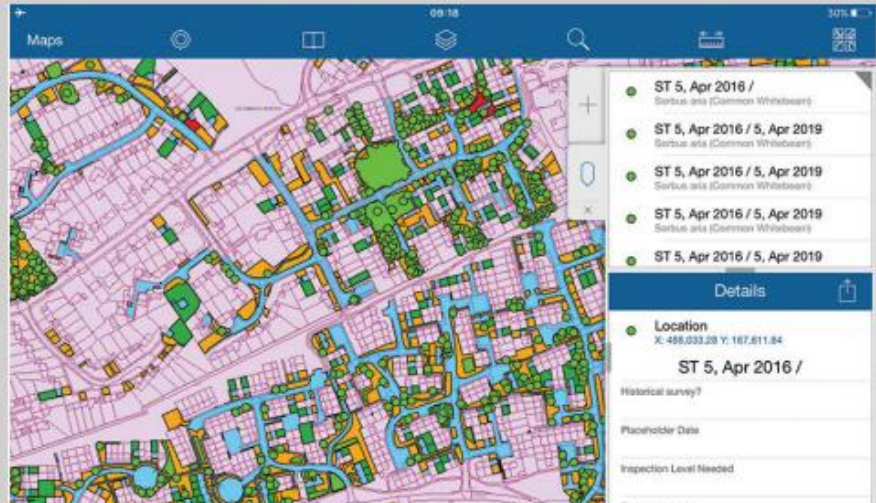
Andrew Keljarrett, Business Improvement Manager, Bracknell Forest Homes

*Bracknell Forest Homes is using a GIS system from Esri as part of our digital transformation strategy to create new streamlined processes.*

We are always looking at new areas of the business where GIS can make a difference, from reducing under-occupancy rates to minimising our exposure to tree risks; it now underpins a growing number of operational processes.



To make this possible, we introduced a mix of Esri's mobile, cloud and web-based GIS, integrated into a single mapping system, to create 'one version of the truth' that our staff can depend on. This platform approach allows us to achieve a great deal of what we need using out-of-the-box tools, avoiding expensive development costs and giving us more control. Generating new mapping apps quickly and making them



available to all of our 240 staff is now a reality. They are also easy to use, so our staff don't need any special training to get up and running and start achieving results.

### Reducing the risk of litigation

Our journey with GIS began by giving us a better method of managing our trees, reducing the risk of potential litigation. Trees are of particular importance to us because we have 10,000 to look after, in addition to our 6,000 homes and 1,000 leasehold properties. This presents us with a much larger risk from trees compared with the average housing provider. This ranges from potential damage to properties and roads to personal injury, which could potentially lead to unlimited fines or imprisonment for those involved. We needed to create the most efficient approach to tree management as possible, so risk was minimised.

And this is where GIS has excelled, helping our 'tree team' take a measured approach. Using a mobile GIS app, the team can now manage all 10,000 trees with just two members of staff, carrying out double the amount of tree surveys in a day on handheld devices, compared with the old paper-based method, which is saving us around £50,000 a year.

Out in the field, any ambiguity is eliminated because our staff can see exactly which trees belong to us and avoid any misunderstandings around which trees still belong to the council, following the stock transfer. In terms of the tree surveys themselves, operatives go out with handheld devices and can instantly see what has been done and what action needs to be taken.

### Under Occupancy Survey

**Occupancy Level**

How many bedrooms does the property have?

How many *current* spare rooms does the property have?

How many *potential* spare rooms does the property have?  
See [Shelters info on bedroom tax](#) for info on how 'spare' rooms are calculated.

**Interest**

Is the Main Tenant currently interested in moving?  
 Yes  No

Why not?  
(tick all that apply)  
 Likes their current neighbours,  Near to family,  Worried about packing up

Can BFH do anything to alleviate or remove these concerns?  
 Yes  No

Is the Main Tenant currently on the Housing Register?  
 Yes  No

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Once any necessary work has been completed, staff update the live system, so there is no duplication of effort once they return to base. Similar, adjacent trees can also be surveyed in groups which saves a lot of time, considering that dealing with a single tree can take up to 40 minutes. The central record of all tree data is held in the GIS, which means it is quicker for staff to respond to any queries residents might have about tree condition or pruning because it's all easily accessible.

The GIS approach has also allowed staff to prioritise trees for inspection, depending on their potential danger level to the public or properties. Using red, amber and green codes for different locations, we have created a more intelligent way of working, which further reduces risk. We're also looking at enhancing the mobile application to allow tree officers to create work requests for contractors within the GIS while out in the field so they don't have to wait until they are back at their desks and log-in to another disparate system.

### Reducing under-occupancy

With the introduction of new online mapping tools, we've also been able to solve other problems. We recently moved almost our entire under-occupancy process onto GIS, which is now helping to reduce under-occupancy rates.

A new mobile GIS survey app first helps staff assess the needs of tenants out in the field, with the resulting data feeding directly into the GIS. The project officer can then use various filters to examine this information using the map interface, helping to make decisions that drive the process forward.

The new method helps staff understand who might be under-occupying, assess their willingness to move and quickly examine any void properties when they become available, to see if there are tenants nearby who match the criteria. The whole process is executed within the GIS by one officer, who has no GIS expertise and didn't need any training because it's so easy to use. This significantly speeds up the process of matching candidates to more appropriately-sized properties. Overall, it is helping us to find more suitable homes for tenants and minimising the conversion costs usually involved in making larger homes more suitable for elderly residents.

### Better use of assets

We have started looking at how GIS can help make strategic, VFM-led decisions. One example is loading data about the stock condition of garages into a map application, then analysing it using variables such as location, condition, repair costs and rent revenues. This will help us make strategic decisions about how to use these garage sites better. Some examples include further investment in stock, alternative uses such as brightly-lit parking spaces or even redevelopment. This should lead to reduced long-term maintenance costs, improved facilities for tenants and create new revenue opportunities.

### Improved customer service

Other streamlined services are also based on mobile GIS, which make internal processes more efficient and reduce response times to tenants' complaints. For example, when we receive an inbound complaint about graffiti or fly-tipping, office staff drop a pin on the map with the details and assign staff in the field to carry out any necessary work. Using handheld devices, they in turn confirm tasks are complete, attach photos and then update the status. Using GIS means that not only are we fulfilling our requirements to act on complaints but we are also making use of the trends and hotspots it reveals. This allows us to modify our processes, thereby decreasing the number of requests or complaints in the future and thus reduce costs.

There's certainly a lot more we can achieve with mapping. Our plans for the future include placing more of our internal processes into the GIS to increase automation, speed up workflows and gain more strategic insights. Projects will range from looking at our assets in more depth so we can determine possible alternative uses, to adopting a more proactive stance on land sales. By continuing to examine the business to see where mapping can act as a catalyst for change, we are set to achieve yet more efficiencies and value for money.

*Andrew Keljarrett is business improvement manager at Bracknell Forest Homes.*



Dean Dickinson, CEO, Castleton Technology

## CASTLETON'S NEW CEO

*Castleton Technology has announced that it has appointed Dean Dickinson as its new chief executive officer.*

Dickinson was previously managing director of Advanced Business Solutions, part of Advanced Computer Software Group (ACS), and he was on the senior management team that sold ACS to Vista Private Equity for £725 million in March 2015.

Dean Dickinson, CEO, Castleton Technology, said, "I want to continue to collaborate with customers and make Castleton the partner of choice for social housing providers. We will continue to develop innovative solutions based on new technologies and the feedback we receive from our customers."