

## Basildon Borough Council identify surge in Annexe projects using NEXUS

Basildon Borough Council entered into a shared service agreement with Brentwood Council around five years ago, managing their revenues and benefits administration and collections with the primary goal of achieving significant cost savings. Basildon itself is comprised of five areas; Basildon, Laindon, Wickford, Pitsea and Billericay and represents a significant portion of tax collections across the two Authorities. Across both Basildon and Brentwood the shared service is collectively responsible for collecting council tax from around 114,500 properties and business rates from 7,540 commercial properties.

### Driving cost efficiencies and value for the shared service

As part of trying to drive efficiencies and ultimately cost savings, Basildon Borough Council attend industry events and conferences to try and identify technologies that can deliver value for the shared service. It was at one of these events they identified the NEXUS missing and altered assessments locator and following a discussion with Cheryl Falder, Revenues & Enforcement Manager at Basildon Borough Council, it was clear the solution could prove useful.

Cheryl comments *“although we have a team of visiting officers with great local knowledge regularly visiting empty properties for signs of occupation and looking at new property developments, there are some properties that*

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*NEXUS helps identify those missing or altered properties we just wouldn't necessarily be aware of. Our visiting team are great at keeping on top of properties, so we were surprised at what was uncovered.*

*Cheryl Falder,  
Revenues & Enforcement Manager,  
Basildon Borough Council.*

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St Martin's Bell Tower, Basildon

*are just tucked away. You can't see them and you don't know what additional developments have taken place until they are brought to your attention. This is where NEXUS helps, we are very good at keeping on top of new builds, using planning records to identify properties that have changed and monitoring properties coming in and out of the VOA listings but we had no mechanism in place to identify missing or altered assessments outside of this.”*

### Identifying property band changes

Using the NEXUS Managed Service, the Council now get a monthly pdf report, which is taken and imported into their Civica system and used as evidence to prompt investigations into properties. These are allocated to the visiting team to go and visit to confirm the accuracy of the information provided in the report. The Council send out letters to the occupier of the properties in question and make appointments for the visit. In most cases occupiers are unaware that the conversion or extension of a garage into a living space, for example, has resulted in an increase to their existing council tax banding or that there will be an additional hereditament liable for council tax.



BasildonCouncil

During these visits additional photos are taken and additional information captured to support the creation of eBARS which are completed by the visiting team and submitted to the VOA for banding with a recommendation of when that property should be back-dated to.

#### **Examples of missing and altered properties**

In one particular case the NEXUS solution found a flat in a block of six flats which had never been added to the banding list and never paid council tax. A land registry and electoral register check found that the same person had occupied that property since the flats were built, meaning that there was a case for the council tax charge to be back-dated to the date the flats were built.



The Mother and Child Statue, Basildon Town Square

Cheryl goes on to say *“NEXUS helps identify those missing or altered properties we just wouldn’t necessarily be aware of. Our visiting team are great at keeping on top of properties, so we were surprised at what was uncovered. In one case, a chalet built in a garden was being taxed as a Band A property when the main property was demolished. The problem arose when a new property was built and went unnoticed, with just the chalet being taxed. This has now been identified and the balance of what is owed equates to around £8,200 in additional revenue for the Council.”*

Another example uncovered by NEXUS was an annexe taken back to 2006 which has benefited from 50% family discount for some of the period and exemption for unoccupied annexe for a period of time too. Overall the charge created was in excess of £9,000 which has since been paid in full.

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**Cheryl Falder,  
Revenues & Enforcement Manager,  
Basildon Borough Council.**

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#### **Results being achieved for the shared service**

Using the NEXUS Managed Service, the Council have so far been able to investigate 32 domestic and NNDR properties since the start of the year. Of these properties, 75% have been annexes, where additions have been made to existing properties to create separate living space. Cheryl comments *“NEXUS has enabled us to get our database up to date on all local properties, helped us more accurately handle billing, providing more transparency and is an effective audit tool.”*

In terms of the monthly reports delivered by NEXUS the Council have found the floor plans to be useful, particularly as a large percentage of matches found have been alterations. Similarly the google images provided from 10 years before and from present day, ensure there is a good evidentiary trail to back up and support any claims they are making both with the occupier and the VOA.

Cheryl concludes *“We have used Destin Solution products in the past and have a good working relationship with the team, whom are very responsive. We know we can drop the team a quick email with any issues and they are dealt with.”*

Basildon & Brentwood Councils have successfully been able to pool their resources, enabling them to reduce costs and invest in technology. This has helped to generate previously uncollected revenue, further improve efficiency and give added value to tax payers in both Authorities.