

# CCIN Housing Commission on community-led housing

Summary of discussion at the Croydon Evidence Session 24.11.2016

## 1. Introduction

The second evidence session of the Housing Commission was held on 24 November 2016 in Croydon. The objectives of the evidence session were to identify:

- challenges and barriers for community-led and community-based housing groups in respect of engagement with local authorities
- challenges and barriers for local authorities to engage with and support community-led and community-based housing groups
- policy responses or strategies that can be adopted by councils to respond to these challenges and barriers
- case studies that could be followed up as examples of good practice
- views on what the products of the Housing Commission should be
- tools/materials/resources of practical use to local authorities to support and encourage community led housing – to shape HACT’s project to develop a toolkit
- views on what a pledge for local authorities on community-led housing should contain.

People attending included representatives from community-led housing (CLH) schemes, local authorities and CLH support agencies and policy experts (Appendix 1).

Three themed discussions were each preceded by presentations (agenda is at Appendix 2):

### 1. **What are the challenges and barriers to the development of community-led and community-based housing schemes?**

Presentation: Nic Bliss, Head of Policy at the Confederation of Co-operative Housing – ‘Developing community led housing and local authorities’

## 2. How have challenges and barriers been overcome? What opportunities are there for developing or supporting new schemes?

Presentations:

- Dinah Roake, Vice-Chair, Brixton Green – ‘Lessons learned from Somerleyton Road: ways of working to support co-production and participative democracy’
- Jeff Endean, Housing Strategy & Programmes Manager – ‘How and why Lewisham Council is enabling resident-led development’
- David Palmer, Cooperative Housing Project Manager, Wales Co-operative Centre – ‘How Community-led and Community-based Co-operative Housing Schemes in Wales can be supported in the current climate, and the opportunities available’

## 3. What should the products of the Housing Commission be?

Presentation: Jon Fitzmaurice OBE, Director, Self-Help Housing Network – ‘A toolbox for community-led housing’

## 2. Headline ideas for action

- Website [www.ccinhousing.co.uk](http://www.ccinhousing.co.uk) and blog set up by December 2016
- Obtain backing for Commission from key national players to enable it to form a key part of the national dialogue on CLH
- Report for political leadership and chief officers highlighting the benefits of CLH and how it can help councils achieve their aspirations and strategic objectives
- Case studies showing positive outcomes, what went wrong, how barriers were overcome
- A business case for CLH
- Regional support hubs for local authority collaboration on CLH
- An IT platform for sharing free, live, accessible information
- Technical toolkit with FAQs and solutions to common issues
- A Local Authority Pledge on CLH – commissioners to report back on the draft
  - Recruit 20 local authorities to sign up to the pledge by September 2017
  - Local authorities to commit to peer learning
  - KPIs on CLH in job descriptions
- Facilitate access to training on co-operative principles for councils
- Signpost to information on small sites – as they could offer CLH development opportunities.

## 3. Detailed findings

### 1. Challenges and Barriers

#### *Challenges and Barriers for Community-led and Community-based Housing*

- Difficulty in contacting a designated officer with expertise at the council to deal with and support groups and act as a champion for CLH across the council, and the lack of resources in many councils to employ such a person
- Getting people from different council departments to work together. Problems arise from the division of responsibilities within councils and the lack of a person with an overall vision
- Lack of accessible information about CLH policy and contacts on local authority websites
- Getting the right mixture of community enthusiasm (buy-in) and local authority-enabled

policy support for CLH groups; it takes a lot of work to develop a viable group to make a CLH scheme a success

- Access to affordable land: council disposal processes can favour developers in terms of timescales and price sought. CLH groups are disadvantaged by:
  - being priced out by councils seeking to maximise a financial return rather than assist CLH; e.g. an assessment process for bids gave a 60% weighting to the capital receipt and 40% for deliverability and social value
  - councils giving three weeks to bid for land, unachievable for CLH groups which have to bid for funding for an architect as a first step
  - the team disposing of land rarely including officers in the local authority who are concerned with the CLH strategy.
- Access to support/professional services
- Ensuring CLH is accessible for unemployed, lower income households.

### ***Challenges and Barriers for Local Authorities***

- Lack of political leadership on CLH in some local authorities
- Lack of local authority officer knowledge and understanding of CLH; councils are losing expertise and resources and becoming less able to devote the necessary time and level of input that CLH schemes require
- Council officers are often sceptical about CLH - a major obstacle to CLH even when there is political support. They are focussed on major issues around managing the housing and homelessness crisis and discharging statutory duties. Within councils' current resource constraints, officers find it difficult to understand how CLH fits into their strategy for dealing with these priorities. CLH is perceived to be a desirable, but not an essential or critical area of work, and is therefore often ignored. Councils need to recognise how small sites contribute to larger solutions.
- Council officers often favour large-scale development which is perceived as requiring less input and being quicker to build. They are concerned at the time it would take to get a CLH scheme built and prefer to stick to business as usual. However, experience of CLH has led some councils to change their view.
- Local authorities must consider a range of housing build options (like specialist or sheltered housing) to meet the multiplicity of need identified through their needs analyses. They question to what extent CLH schemes can meet that range of need.
- Pressure to use capital receipts from the sale of assets to address budget challenges
- Lack of a clear CLH offer setting out the added value that CLH can bring to local authorities
- Lack of knowledge of how to establish the level of demand for CLH
- A wide range of CLH organisations for local authorities to deal with
- Councils may not be set up for co-production with communities – officers with the relevant skills are required
- Lack of resources for tenant empowerment programmes.

## 2. How barriers can be overcome

- A top down policy approach is a common theme in successful areas
  - A political champion is needed within the council's leadership - political buy-in is a fundamental first step
  - It is essential to have a link between clear political ambition and organisational processes that will make it happen – Lambeth Council is a good example
  - The Pledge for local authorities on CLH should be used to give officers clear strategic direction
  - Chief Executives could have CLH objective in their JDs.
- There should be a named officer within councils with expertise in CLH who can act as a champion within the authority. Ideally this person would act as a project officer to enable initiatives to come forward and to co-ordinate and work across all the different council services. Successful schemes are often the result of successful contacts within the council.
- Council websites should have a portal for CLH, with information on CLH, policy and contact details of officers
- Briefing and acquainting officers with CLH and addressing potential problems and perceived barriers could help to change attitudes towards the coproduction of housing solutions with communities. Knowledge and expertise on CLH could be shared among local authorities through peer to peer communication and support:
  - Council officers working on successful CLH schemes meeting officers with equivalent roles in other councils to champion CLH from the local authority perspective and share models
  - An experienced dedicated council officer to store learning and implement across various local authorities, that each part-fund the cost post
  - A 'flying squad' of experts supporting officers in less experienced local authorities
  - In all cases, local authorities should be enabled to develop bespoke responses to their local circumstances and empowered to innovate
- Local authority housing strategies should specifically support CLH
  - including CLH as part of their affordable housing requirement
  - Including CLH in the development agreement as part of a larger development
- Communities should be engaged at the beginning of the master planning process
- Local authorities can identify demand for CLH by:
  - Setting up a register of people and organisations interested in CLH (like the self-build register)
  - Using their housing need surveys to identify demand for CLH product
- Reviewing their allocation policy, conducting a marketing exercise and inviting people on the register to a series of public meetings with expert CLH support organisations; people self-select by attending and following up.

### **Examples**

#### ***Lewisham Council approach (small scale, incremental)***

- Lewisham's [Housing Strategy](#) (pp.20, 31) supports groups of residents to commission/ build their own affordable homes, e.g. through community-led self-build and CLTs

- Rationale for supporting community-led development:
  - Helps develop smaller, trickier sites that larger organisations find uneconomic
  - Harnesses people's energy and drive
  - Offers a way of managing local concerns over residential development
  - Delivers new homes and communities that people want to live in
  - Allows denser development: public space is smaller, communal space is larger
  - Guarantees new homes remain affordable in perpetuity
- A council site with access, flood risk and contamination problems would have provided 9 homes if sold. RUSS community-self build will provide 33 affordable homes (5 social rent nominated by council, 28 shared equity selected by ballot)
- London CLT will provide 15 homes for affordable sale on a council estate garage site previously marked for council-led infill development that will be transferred to CLT.
- Want to get to scale, releasing packages of sites
- Want to see if local government/public sector can help with development finance
- Want to develop a streamlined land disposal route for CLTs and see if local authorities can resource time intensive disposal routes at a cross-borough/regional level.

#### ***Lambeth approach (larger scale): Somerleyton Road, Brixton Green***

- Co-production (co-design and co-delivery) between Lambeth Council and Brixton Green: a community-led and council facilitated scheme of 301 new homes (including 66 extra care); retail; nursery; children's centre; chef school; theatre; workspaces
- Brixton Green is a non-profit registered community-benefit mutual society
- 100% rented (social rent; intermediate rent; market rent), at least 40% at target rents
- Lambeth Council contributed: design cost, 250-year lease of council land; capital receipt from sale of 2 sites in form of grant of 30% of building costs. It established the steering group and worked with Brixton Green to develop a financial model that generates a revenue stream that makes it possible to interest private investors. Rental income will cover lease payments for the land, repairs and contingencies, running costs and repayment of loans over 30-40 years.
- Political will is essential. Trust has been built over time. Community ownership has developed.
- Lack of skills, experience and clarity of purpose have been the biggest challenge

#### ***Welsh examples supported by Wales Co-operative Centre (WCC)***

- Welsh government started revenue funding to develop CLH groups, paid through WCC. In 2010 there was very little CLH in Wales; now 25 projects are being developed:
  - Loftus Village – 19 homes (4 shared ownership) funded by s.106 through Newport CC and developed by Seren Group as part of a larger development
  - Home Farm – 41 social rent homes developed by Cadwyn HA which will grant a lease to the Co-op; most tenants pre-allocated from Cardiff CC waiting list
  - Old Oak – 27 intermediate rent homes initiated by Carmarthenshire County Council which provided land and paid grant to a HA to develop it. The HA will own the homes and have a management agreement with the co-operative. The coop members have been drawn from the council's waiting list.
  - Plans are being developed for cohousing schemes in Mold and Cardiff for people with learning disabilities
- Prudential Borrowing: Public Works Loan Board funding has been used by Merthyr Tydfil

County Borough Council for Taf Fechan Housing Co-op and Gelldeg and Gwynedd County Council are considering using the same funding for a rolling Community Land Trust fund in North Wales.

- WCC and the Confederation of Co-operative Housing have trained tenant groups to run the co-operatives.
- Lessons learnt:
  - Bespoke arrangements are developed by stakeholders to meet local requirements (income levels, urban/rural locations)
  - Local people respond enthusiastically when given the opportunity
  - Strong partnerships develop between communities, councils and housing associations; councils, sceptical at first, have become enthusiastic

### ***Other examples***

- East Cambridgeshire is a good example of an enabling authority in an area where affordability is a problem due to low incomes:
  - it has embedded CLH in its policies and work plans,
  - its Local Plan and supplementary planning documents have a commitment to CLH – there are 6 CLTs with more being set up
  - it provides seed corn funding to allow CLH groups to develop schemes
- Bristol City Council is leasing land to the community.

### ***Opportunities***

- CLH provides opportunities around refurbishment of empty homes to return them to use, the use of Right-to-Buy receipts, and asset transfers. The Commission should address these options as well as new housing.
- Local authority and housing association asset disposal strategies should consider the potential to sell to CLH groups at less than best consideration.
- Community-led housing development can help to overcome opposition to residential development in their area. Working with communities in a locality to help them to find common ground with their different views and needs can create a vision for the area where they can see their interests reflected.
- Reviewing the location of small and tricky sites that might be too difficult and expensive to develop, and assessing the degree of local engagement, could identify opportunities for CLH schemes
- Financial support can be obtained through local authority section 106 agreements with developers
- The Greater London Authority is adapting its mechanisms to support CLH
- Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are particularly strong in some parts of the UK; given local authority representation on them, LEPs might offer a means to engage those councils that are less receptive to CLH.
- In rural areas, where local authorities' landholdings are small, churches often have land but may believe they must be sold at best consideration and fail to see the potential in providing it at a discount for CLH schemes. Similarly, private landowners might be persuaded to provide their land at a discount to CLH groups to support their interest in ensuring local workers important to their business have affordable accommodation.

### 3. Products of the Housing Commission

- The general point was made that the products should make use of what is already in place, for example build on the work of the CLH alliance; they should avoid reinventing the wheel.
- **A report** on the principles of CLH and what it seeks to achieve, and how it can assist local authorities in achieving their aspirations and objectives around issues such as social value, economic prosperity, sustainable communities, employment and training, and reduction of anti-social behaviour. It should promote successful schemes and identify a cluster of successful groups and councils, busting myths to convince politicians to support CLH.
- **Bitesize case studies** that provide reassurance through showing positive outcomes, savings, problems and how they have been overcome, and providing key contacts. These should:
  - Include issues affecting rural areas, where local authority landholdings are small and other sources need to be sought, such as the Church and sympathetic private landowners
  - Address neighbourhood planning and the role of town and parish councils in 3-tier council arrangements
  - Provide information tailored for local authorities at different stages of engagement with CLH.
- **A toolbox of technical information** on legal issues, scale, enabling, overcoming barriers. It could include FAQs or a troubleshooting guide addressing common issues (e.g. Stamp Duty Land Tax) that can hold up developments for weeks or months, when others have found solutions (see below for detail on contents)
- **Regional support networks** to link local authority officers with experience of CLH to those in authorities without much experience of CLH. This is an essential complement to the toolkit, and should take account of local circumstances, building on existing local networks or umbrella organisations working in the area. They could:
  - Offer peer to peer support to sell the benefits of CLH and get local authorities to buy into the principle
  - Benefit from local authority pledges to support these networks – through help in kind (expertise, help in kind, like a hot-desking facility).
  - Encourage local authorities to employ a point person in each area – or a facilitator to bring the right people together in their region
  - Promote cross-boundary working.In addition, the Commission should encourage co-operative Councils to share their experience with other councils; councillors should connect with other politicians to encourage them to support CLH
- **A local authority pledge on CLH** - backed by organisations such as the CIH and NHF and widely promoted. A survey on the pledge could be used to identify councils' level of knowledge and experience of CLH and their potential role in regional support networks. An action plan should set out how CCIN member authorities included in the Housing Commission will deliver CLH (based on their pledges)
- **A communications plan**, starting now, should set out what the Commission wants to achieve, get into key conferences, send out progress reports and attract early national

political and QUANGO/NGO support, creating an anticipation for the final products. The Commission should take account of policy developments, such as the forthcoming Housing White Paper, Supported Housing Consultation and any changes to implementation of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and perhaps inform government policy like the forthcoming Community Housing Fund (£60m)

- **An exit strategy** setting out how the products would be maintained and developed after the Commission ended in September 2017. The LGA could link with the CCIN to promote this work with clarity and pace to all local authorities in the UK.
- **Other suggestions** on what the Commission should encourage were:
  - A jointly-owned vehicle to support CLH, e.g. a community benefit society like Plymouth Energy, with local authority officers seconded to it. Others could come together to invest in this vehicle
  - Training on co-operative principles for each co-operative council and capacity building for as many areas and groups as possible
  - Links to databases identifying small site development opportunities as these might be suitable for CLH groups
  - Some contributors suggested that information for CLH groups should be included on the commission website, not just information for local authorities; for example, a process map on the various stages CLH schemes will go through, issues that may arise and their implications; and information on what CLH groups should take to local authorities. Other contributors said that there was a lot of information already available.

***What the toolkit should contain:***

- Contributors said that there is a strong body of tools and practice for CLH that people including council officers could draw on. Duplication could be avoided by holding documents on one server and using different platforms to access them according to the audience (local government officers, CLH groups). Some people suggested linking it with the community-led housing alliance – network, platform (single source of information) – supported by BSHF funded by Nationwide Foundation
- One page briefing on the CLH offer, the business case for CLH
- Guidance on producing a business case for working with CLH, setting out the advantages of CLH schemes as opposed to standard affordable housing schemes, referencing the Social Value Act 2012 and covering:
  - Number of people housed
  - Economic prosperity
  - Employment - Jobs created
  - Long-term management – wider community involvement
- Advice on Management and Governance – ensuring it is rigorous and directed to the business case objectives.
- A process map on the various stages in supporting CLH schemes, what issues may arise, with signposting for further sources of information
- A planning component on the potential to build CLH into Local Plans and the pre-application process enabling officers to respond knowledgeably and responsively to a pre-application enquiry (which is often what initiates contact with a local authority on CLH)



proposals)

- Solutions to common issues that have already been developed: legal guidance, leases, etc.
- Ways of engaging communities and groups other than the usual partners (like preferred RPs)
- An IT platform or wiki hub platform that provides free, live, accessible information that is shared, a platform for everybody who works together, with volunteers joining a working group to run the website.

#### Next steps

- Reports on the evidence session distributed – December 2016
- Commission Website [www.ccinhousing.co.uk](http://www.ccinhousing.co.uk) and blog set up – December 2016
- Four phases of the Commission
  - Phase 1: Research – gathering evidence during Spring and Summer 2017
  - Phase 2: Establish relationships
  - Phase 3: Win commitment to CLH ('Pledge') - 20 councils signed up by Sept 2017
  - Phase 4: Final Report & Products launched September 2017
- Commission ends September 2017

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## APPENDIX 1

## ATTENDEES AT EVIDENCE SESSION, CROYDON, 24 NOVEMBER

ATTENDEE	ORGANISATION TYPE
Jackie Cottingham, Faith in Affordable Housing Co-ordinator, Housing Justice	Campaign organisation
Dianne Williams, Moat House Community Trust	Community Anchor
James Newton, Yorspace, York	Cohousing Group
Susannah Bird, Yorspace, York	Cohousing Group
Carol Young, Integrating Young People and Housing, Nottinghamshire	Community Housing Group
Mark Peters, Founder of Start Again CIC	Self-help
Jeremy Monk-Hawskworth, Founder of Black Country Make CIC	Community Housing Group
James Irvine- Abundant Earth Community	Community Housing Group
Dinah Roake – Vice Chair of Brixton Green	Community Land Trust
Andy Bates, Leathermarket Manager, Leathermarket JMB	Community Land Trust
Jonathan Rosenberg, West Kensington and Gibbs Green Community Homes	Community Land Trust
Calum Green, Community Organiser (Affordable Housing) London Citizens/ Citizens UK	Community Land Trust
Gabriel Magee, Founder of Castle Living Options, Northern Ireland	Supported housing project
Tony Newman, Leader - Croydon Council	Local authority
Jamie Audsley, Deputy Cabinet Member for Economy and Jobs – Croydon Council	Local authority
Sarah Ireland, Director of Strategy, Communities and Commissioning – Croydon Council	Local authority
Mark Fowler, Director of Gateway and Welfare Services, Croydon Council	Local authority
Mark Meehan, Director of Housing Need, Croydon Council	Local authority
Charlotte Rohan, Head of Strategy (Place), Croydon Council	Local authority
Elaine Wadsworth, Head of Housing Strategy and Commissioning, Croydon Council	Local authority
Kirsteen Roe, Head of partnerships and engagement, Croydon Council	Local authority
David Jaques, Development Manager, Cardiff City Council	Local authority
Sarah Hall, Housing Strategy Manager - York, North Yorkshire & East Riding	Local authority
Jeff Endean, Housing Strategy Manager, Lewisham Council	Local authority
Lee Page, Resident Involvement Manager, Southwark Council	Local authority
Maja Luna Jorgensen Area Manager, North West London, Housing and Land Directorate, Greater London Authority	Local authority
Louise Duggan, Tottenham Regeneration, Haringey Council	Local authority
Stephen Hill, Director C2O futureplanners	Policy expert
Tom Chance, Policy Officer, Housing and Planning APPG National Housing Taskforce: New sources of supply workstream	Policy expert
David Palmer, Cooperative Housing Project Manager, Wales Co-operative Centre	Funding and support organisation
Glenn Bowen, Director, Wales Co-operative Centre	Funding and support organisation
Glenn Heaton, Project Manager, Phases Social Enterprise	Self-help

Dave Smith, External Affairs Manager (London), National Housing Federation	Support organisation
Jon Fitzmaurice OBE, Director, Self-Help Housing Network	Support organisation
Nic Bliss, Head of Policy, Confederation of Co-operative Housing	Support organisation
Catherine Harrington, Director, National CLT Network	Support organisation
Louise Cannon, Award Manager, UnLtd	Support organisation
Anna Kear, Chief Executive, UK Cohousing Network	Support organisation
Tessa O'Sullivan, Rural Housing Enabler, Action with Communities in Rural Kent	Support organisation
Tom Warder, Housing and Community Engagement Team Leader, Sussex CLT	Support organisation
Debbie Wildridge, Development Manager, CLT East	Support organisation
John Gillespie, National Development Director, Community Self-Build Agency	Support organisation
Gareth Hepworth, CEO, Habitat for Humanity GB Homes	Support organisation

## APPENDIX 2

**Co-operative Councils Innovation Network**  
**Housing commission on Community-led Housing**  
**Evidence Session Agenda**  
**Thursday 24 November 2016 – 11.00 to 15.00**  
**Jurys Inn, Wellesley Road, Croydon CR0 9XY**

TIME	SESSION
10.30 – 11:00	Registration and refreshments
11.00 – 11:05	<b>Welcome address</b> Councillor Tony Newman, Leader of Croydon Council (Chair of Housing Commission)
11:05 – 11:15	<b>Presentation 1: Challenges for community-led housing, current levels of local authority support and recent developments</b> Nic Bliss Head of Policy, Confederation of Co-operative Housing
11.15 - 11.35	<b>Table discussion 1</b> <b>What are the challenges and barriers to the development of community-led and community based housing schemes?</b> To focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges and barriers for the community led housing groups in engaging with/receiving support from councils</li> <li>Challenges and barriers for local authorities to engage with local communities and support community-led housing projects</li> </ul>
11.35 – 11.50	Plenary session with feedback
11:50 – 12:15	<b>Presentation 2: three presentations of approx. 8 mins each</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lessons learned from Somerleyton Road: ways of working to support co-production and participative democracy <b>Dinah Roake, Vice-Chair Brixton Green</b></li> <li>How and why Lewisham Council is enabling resident-led housing development <b>Jeff Endean, Housing Strategy &amp; Programmes Manager, Lewisham Council</b></li> <li>How community-led and community-based Co-operative housing schemes in Wales can be supported in the current climate, and the opportunities available <b>David Palmer, Co-operative Housing Project Manager, Wales Co-operative Centre</b></li> </ul>
12.15 – 12:45	<b>Table discussion 2</b> <b>What projects have been successful in overcoming these barriers? What opportunities are there to develop or support new schemes?</b> To include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What policy responses or strategies can be adopted by councils to support/ stimulate community-led and community-based housing schemes?</li> <li>Give examples of successful projects arising from positive council action (to be followed up as examples of good practice)</li> </ul>
12:45 – 13:30	<b>LUNCH (45 MINS)</b>
13:30 – 13:45	Plenary session with feedback
13:45 – 13:50	<b>Presentation 3: A toolbox for community-led housing</b> Jon Fitzmaurice OBE, Director, Self-Help Housing Network
13:50 – 14:30	<b>Table discussion 3</b> <b>What should the products of the Housing Commission be?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How should we support community leaders and councils to enable the development of new community-led and community based schemes?</li> <li>What tools/materials/support would be of practical use to councils?</li> </ul>
14:30 – 14:55	Plenary session with feedback
14:55 – 15:00	<b>Next steps and close</b> Jamie Audsley, Deputy Cabinet Member for Economy & Jobs, Croydon Council