

Chichester District Council Case Study

The story of the local authority's approach to community-led housing

Basic summary

- **Local housing market characteristics**
 - Rural
 - High housing demand
- **Region:** South East
- **Partners:** Locality, National CLT Network, Hastoe Housing Association and Green Oak Housing Association
- **Main outcome:** A mapping exercise led to 26 initial expressions of interest, with eight committed groups now moving forward.

Key message: Chichester District Council (CDC) has been developing its support for community-led housing (CLH) over the past year. It has a proven track record in enabling and delivering rural affordable housing schemes. The Council sees CLH as a way of delivering homes for specific local needs which very few registered providers (RPs) now deliver. This case study shows the steps taken by an authority in a high value area to gear up its support for CLH.

1. *The story: what was the problem that needed addressing?*

CDC is a rural authority with high housing demand. It is one of the least affordable places to live in outside London. Its top three local housing market challenges are:

- Income to house price ratios. The lower quartile housing price to employment based earnings ratio is 12.6.
- Meeting the needs of the most vulnerable households, such as care leavers, homeless people, single people under 35 years of age, and large, low income families.
- Difficulty in delivering small rural affordable housing schemes. Delivery is mainly focused in more urban settlements and RPs are moving away from delivering small schemes, focusing on economies of scale.

CDC does not own any housing stock. It actively enables the development of new affordable housing, on market sites, rural exception sites and on registered provider land. It intends to develop temporary accommodation for homeless households on a council site.

2. *Why is Chichester District Council supporting CLH?*

CLH is seen as supporting the following of the Council's strategic priorities:

- Maximising the supply of local homes to meet the needs of local people.
- Making effective use of existing stock, whilst maintaining sustainable communities.
- Enabling local people to find their own solutions.
- Providing additional support for those who need it, particularly vulnerable people and homeless people.

CDC supports CLH in order to:

- Increase the overall supply of housing.
- Deliver affordable housing which remains affordable in perpetuity and is not subject to the voluntary right to buy.
- Deliver small rural schemes to meet the needs of local communities.
- Provide local control and accountability, and in doing so gain local support for housing development proposals.
- Deliver housing for specific local needs which few RPs now provide, such as young people and older people downsizing in the private sector.
- Harness the expertise and capacity of existing community groups and volunteers within communities to deliver local housing.

3. *How Chichester District Council has developed its support for CLH schemes*

Chichester DC (CDC) has been developing its support for CLH over the past year. The review of the Housing Strategy recognised the need to support CLH to help meet local needs. The Council is currently reviewing its Local Plan, and this will provide an opportunity to include policies which support CLH.

Over the past 12 months the council has extensively promoted the benefits of CLH. Presentations on CLH have been delivered to full council, all parish councils that requested a meeting, and community forums. An article was placed in the council magazine, which goes to every household in the district, setting out the benefits of CLH and the support the Council can offer. A mapping exercise led to 26 initial expressions of interest, with eight committed groups now moving forward.

The Council has a dedicated full time rural housing enabler, offers grant funding towards land, and has allocated capital funding for a revolving loans pot. In the first instance, council officers attend a meeting with the interested party and present the benefits of CLH. CDC is setting up a triage and support service, referring interested groups to Locality, a national network of community-led organisations. Locality will provide the group with a bespoke support package to move the project to the detailed feasibility stage. CDC will provide further technical support to gain planning permission and help to deliver the housing.

The Council's grant from DCLG's Community Housing Fund has been allocated to additional housing enabling and planning resources, early stage support to help groups set up, and feasibility and technical support up to the planning permission stage. It is also being used to set up a support network and make grants towards land purchase.

4. *Partnership work in Chichester to support CLH.*

The Council is drawing on the experience and expertise of partners to increase the support available for CLH:

- Locality, The National Community Land Trust Network and The Wessex CLT Project have provided advice and support to the Council in setting up its support service.

- Locality is providing early stage support for new community groups looking to deliver housing for local people.
- Hastoe Housing Association and Greenoak Housing Association can provide development and management expertise to groups or provide partnership agreements depending on the group's requirements.
- The Council has recently engaged with local churches, Nationwide Building Society, local technical consultants, land owners, existing community groups and local alms trusts to explore their capacity to support CLH.

5. Homes that will be produced by CCLH schemes in Chichester:

It is intended that CLH will deliver housing to meet the needs of a diverse range of local people. Affordable homes developed will be affordable in perpetuity. However, there may also be a need for market homes to meet local needs such as older people downsizing.

With regard to delivery on rural exception sites, the affordable homes would be secured through a s.106 agreement. It would be expected that such homes are let at no more than 80% of market rent, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, or sold as intermediate housing to local people as set out in the Council's [Planning Obligation and Affordable Housing SPD](#). This includes shared ownership, shared equity, and discounted market sale.

6. Lessons learnt and what the Chichester District Council will do next:

A survey of parishes and community groups was conducted to identify the barriers to CLH and identify how best to support groups. The perceived barriers are:

- Land availability
- Lack of volunteers / capacity
- Financial barriers
- Lack of technical support
- Planning restrictions
- The subject is complex and difficult to explain.

The key comments regarding how CDC could improve / support groups are set out below:

- Site identification, planning advice and land negotiation
- Identification of funding , advice on legal formats and incorporation
- Technical support
- Initial set up workshops
- Housing needs assessment
- Project planning
- Community engagement and business planning
- Organisational and governance support / training

These findings were taken into account when devising the CLH support framework.

The Council will set up a CLH Chichester District Forum to share information, facilitate peer to peer support and run workshops. The inaugural meeting will take place November.

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