

Brighton & Hove City Council Case Study

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

Basic summary

- **Local housing market characteristics**
 - Urban
 - High housing demand
- **Region:** South East
- **New build and refurbished homes. Example given:** Fully mutual self-build housing co-op
- **Partners:** Co-operative Housing in Brighton & Hove (CHIBAH), Brighton & Hove CLT,

Key message: Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) has a long history of supporting community-led housing (CLH), with relationships built over many years. It has integrated CLH into its strategic approach to increase housing supply. A pilot scheme will show that CLH can create additional affordable rent homes at no cost to the HRA by building on a small challenging council site. BHCC is planning further measures to increase support for CLH.

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

Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) is an urban authority with high housing demand. The top three local housing market challenges are

- Increasing population
- Affordability
- Limited opportunities for new development

The authority has retained its housing stock and is actively building new social housing.

2. *Why is Brighton & Hove City Council supporting CLH?*

BHCC recognises the community housing sector as a partner in meeting its priority to 'improving housing supply' in its Housing Strategy. Community led housing is represented on BHCC's Strategic Housing Partnership. CLH is referenced in the Council's adopted [City Plan Part 1](#), in which BHCC undertakes to ensure that opportunities for community land trusts, community-led development, right to build and housing co-operatives are brought forward/safeguarded as the council conducts an assessment of potential housing sites in order to maximise housing opportunities that meet local housing needs

BHCC's Fairness Commission Report (2016) recognised the importance of including community housing within an integrated supply of housing. It included recommendations to offer brownfield sites to local organisations such as co-ops to develop affordable social housing for local people. It also recommended setting up a revolving fund by 2018 and an advice hub to support the work of housing co-operatives, self-build groups, community land trusts and energy co-ops. This is reflected in the proposals put forward to the DCLG regarding the Community Housing Fund.

3. *Who is benefitting or will benefit from CLH schemes in Brighton and Hove?*

The latest new build scheme will benefit family households in housing need identified through the housing register.

4. *How does Brighton & Hove City Council enable CLH schemes to develop?*

BHCC has a long history of working with housing co-ops. The authority has taken a number of measures to encourage CLH, including enabling access to land, helping co-ops identify private

sector empty properties and providing advice and support from council officers on issues such as business modelling, pre-planning application advice and funding bids.

The Council has worked with Co-operative Housing in Brighton & Hove (CHIBAH), a network of seven local housing co-operatives, to meet shared goals, supporting them in their business modelling and helping them to identify empty properties in the private sector. BHCC has also supported co-ops through joint work on short life lease end and lease renewal issues, and supported them in funding bids as needed.

BHCC has an open door policy with regard to contact from CLH groups. It contacts a number of CLH groups on the self and custom build register (although not all of those on the Register are CLH) and also meets with the sector as needed.

In 2012 BHCC supported local housing co-ops and community groups in their successful bid under the communities' element of the Government Empty Homes Programme 2012-15 which provided funding that enabled purchase of two houses for local co-operatives. Lately, BHCC has worked with Brighton & Hove Community Land Trust, CHIBAH and MAIS (Mutual Aid in Sussex) to develop a proposal to support CLH through an application to DCLG's Community Housing Fund.

5. *Examples of homes that have been/will be produced by CLH schemes in Brighton & Hove:*

A local co-op manages a pre-built scheme of 11 BHCC properties and their lease is just about to be renewed for a further twenty years. The council has a Nomination Agreement and new tenants are sought through the Housing Register. Local co-ops own a number of street properties.

A current example of a new build scheme is Bunker Co-op, a fully mutual housing co-op, who are about to start a self-build housing scheme on a site that BHCC has leased to them. Two family homes will be built for affordable rent at no cost to the HRA. They will be let to housing register applicants and the council will be able to nominate future tenants to them. Tenants will have no right to buy.

This co-operative pilot has been agreed as part of BHCC's small site strategy. It will be built on a small, challenging former council garage site. Approaches to RPs, developers and large construction firms to procure a development partner were unsuccessful. Self-build was seen as the most viable approach to bring the land into use. As the site has nil value for development of affordable housing, the agreed ground rent of £500 a year is considered to be best consideration for leasing this land.

Bunker Co-op is supported by the local co-op network and the Confederation of Co-operative Housing with the feasibility study, business plan and project management. Members will be involved in most stages of the build, in particular site clearance, electrics, decorating, plumbing, carpentry and external cladding, under the supervision of professionals who will certify the work.

The co-op will fund the project costs with 80% covered by a building society loan and 20% by loanstock from other co-ops. A grant from a local charity funded the first round of architects' costs.

Rent will be 46% of average market rent, benefiting from the 'sweat equity' of co-op members/tenants in constructing, managing and maintaining the homes. The homes will not be subject to the right to buy.

To see the committee report which gives further details of the scheme click [here](#).

6. *The Challenges to enabling CLH and what Brighton and Hove CC will do next*

The major challenges that BHCC faces in enabling CLH are:

- Lack of resources to explore/expand development
- Limited availability of land and
- Affordability.

BHCC aims to tackle these using the allocation from the Community Housing Fund to build on existing networks and expertise by setting up a new hub model to utilise potential funding to expand the CLH sector and provide additional homes in the city. The hub aims to do this by:

- broadening awareness of CLH, engage communities and run events
- finding and realising sites and properties
- providing project and group support and assessment
- providing revenue funding for CLH partners and groups in a range of grants to support:
 - training and awareness raising,
 - the costs of the incorporation of new groups
 - the seeking of funding and land, initial viability studies and financial planning
 - community engagement, site investigation fees, design and costs associated with obtaining planning consent
- potentially providing capital funding for specific schemes – as a grant or a revolving fund.

Contact

Emma Kumar,
Housing Strategy & Enabling Team,
Brighton & Hove City Council
Emma.Kumar@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Direct Line 01273 293297