

Leeds 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:** Yorkshire and the Humber
- **New build and refurbished empty homes. Examples given** include co-ops, cohousing, community benefit organisation.
- **Partners:** Leeds Community Homes, Gipsil, Canopy, LATCH and other CLH groups

Key message: Leeds City Council provides an example of a local authority that is working with a community-led housing sector that plans to scale up

Leeds Metropolitan District is an urban area enjoying relative economic growth. While there is a shortage of affordable housing to rent and buy, the number of affordable housing completions achieved in Leeds in 2016/17 was the highest in many years. Leeds City Council (LCC) has a track record of supporting community-led housing (CLH). Local CLH initiatives could enable the sector in Leeds to grow significantly.

How and why Leeds City Council enables CLH schemes to develop

Keen to encourage the diversification of affordable housing supply routes, LCC works with CLH providers to identify opportunities to develop new homes. It adopts a flexible approach to affordable housing policy, while ensuring that housing register applicants can access the homes produced. CLH is also embedded in its [Empty Homes Strategy 2016-19](#).

The City Council supports CLH through:

- **Leadership:** LCC has a political champion of CLH and there is strong support for CLH at Chief Executive and director level; an officer champion is based in the Housing Growth Team.
- **Officer time:** to enable CLH groups to access external funding, identify sites for projects especially from public land disposals, and develop projects that comply with planning policy.
- **Funding:** Using RTB receipts to fund 30% of the capital costs of new build, off the shelf and purchase and repair projects by members of Leeds Affordable Housing Framework (including [Leeds Community Homes](#), [Gipsil](#), [Canopy](#) and [LATCH](#)), subject to conditions.
- **Disposal of land:** LCC has leased empty properties to CLH organisations for 99 years at a peppercorn rent, enabling them to raise finance to buy long term empty homes. Disposals at less than best value are unlikely, due to budgetary constraints, but LCC can allow an exclusivity period on the sale of a council site to help a CLH project raise development funding.

Examples of current CLH schemes being developed in Leeds

LCC is currently working with a number of CLH groups to deliver a range of schemes:

- [ChaCo](#) is being supported to progress plans for a development that will produce a 29 unit [cohousing scheme](#) with common house, four self-build plots and 30 affordable rented flats for over 55s, in partnership with Unity Housing Association. Rents will be no higher than LHA rates.

- [Shangrileeds](#), a 15-25 unit cohousing scheme, is being supported with a site search.
- [New Wortley Community Association](#), having secured feasibility funding from Power to Change, has approached LCC regarding the use of a council site for a development.
- [Leeds Community Homes](#) (LCH) is a community benefit organisation, formed in 2016 by CLH partner organisations in order to work at scale. LCH aspires to deliver 1000 new affordable homes in 10 years. It will host a citywide CLH enabler, to be developed with funding from Power to Change. LCH has raised £360,000 through a community share offer to fund the purchase of its first 16 permanently affordable homes. The homes are being provided as part of onsite s106 Affordable Housing obligations for a development in the cities climate innovation district. The Council is a public and proactive supporter of LCH. It is exploring how it could support LCH to achieve its aspiration.

Next steps for Leeds City Council

LCC's future policy on CLH, to be set out in a forthcoming report to its Executive Board, will include practical responses to help, support and encourage CLH.

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