

HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 24

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Community led housing – site identification update		
Date of Meeting:	13 November 2019		
Report of:	Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove has a well-established and active community housing sector and a history of community housing schemes. The city's Housing Strategy, Fairness Commission Report and City Plan recognise and confirm the council's commitment to community led housing in the city highlighting its importance in helping to meet a key priority of improving housing supply in the city.
- 1.2 The Housing Committee Work Plan 2019-23 agreed at Housing Committee on 18 September 2019 includes a commitment to community led housing in the city and identifies that a report will be brought to this committee identifying suitable sites to work in partnership with the Brighton & Hove Community Land Trust for development. This report provides an update on progress with site identification.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Housing Committee:

- 2.1 Note the progress to date with identifying sites for community led housing in the city.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) has a long history of working with housing co-operatives and supporting community led housing. Community led housing can involve building new homes (on council or privately owned land), returning empty homes to use and buying or managing existing homes. Each of these opportunities exists within Brighton and Hove and are being actively explored by the Brighton and Hove Community Land Trust (BHCLT).

- 3.2 In December 2016 the Government announced a new Community Housing Fund to help councils that had the least affordable homes or the highest density of second homes. The Community Housing Fund aims to put local groups in the driving seat, help build capacity and support local projects, now and into the future. The council received a grant of £464,540 which was subsequently awarded by the council in October 2017 to BHCLT working in partnership with Co-operative Housing in Brighton & Hove (CHIBAH) and Mutual Aid in Sussex (MAIS) to deliver a community led housing programme. The initial programme ended in March 2019 but the BHCLT have subsequently received a further community led housing hub enabling grant of £150,000 from Community Led Homes in order to continue to their work until March 2021. The Hub is also exploring other funding streams in order to continue working beyond this date.
- 3.3. The Community Housing Fund from Homes England has £163m available up to March 2020 to deliver additional homes by the community-led sector. The fund has provided additional resources to further enhance community led housing in the city, supporting groups of people to come together and organise, or build, their own affordable homes. This fund covers both revenue and capital bids, with bids welcome until the fund is fully committed or until 31 December 2019 (whichever occurs first). Several bids have been submitted successfully to Homes England by the land trust and co-operatives in the city to support pre-development costs on schemes coming forward. At present it is not known if funding will be extended beyond the current timelines.

Site identification – council owned sites

- 3.4 A pathway has been developed for council owned sites to ensure there is a clear route for considering when land or building opportunities may be considered for community led housing. Reports of sites taken through this pathway are initially considered by the cross-party Housing Supply Members Board with further discussion with BHCLT thereafter. This pathway offers context, transparency and mutual understanding of the circumstances under which community housing development may be considered, including: our priorities around delivery of the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme; the potential disposal route (lease or sale of freehold); conditions attached to the disposal, including best consideration, nominations rights and development of sites to an appropriate density. Any schemes coming forward would then be subject to consideration by Housing Supply Members Board, Housing Committee and Policy & Resources Committee.

Current projects

Plumpton Road

- 3.5 Bunker Co-op who is on site to deliver a self-build housing scheme on a piece of council land which has been leased to them through a council pilot project. Two family homes will be built for rent, which will be let within affordable rent levels to applicants including those from the Housing Register and to which the council will be able to nominate future tenants.

3.6 **Coldean Lane (Sites 21a & 21C)**

In relation to community led housing, Housing & New Homes Committee (25 September 2017) resolved to fully explore opportunities with providers, including consideration of sites 21a and 21c in Coldean. Initial proposals for a mixed development of residential and community sports facility were brought forward earlier this year by the Coldean Community Organisation and BHCLT. Pre-planning advice was sought. The BHCLT, working with Coldean Community Organisation will now bring forward new proposals which will be considered in the context of the overall potential of the site.

3.7 **Dunster Close, Hollingdean**

Housing Committee on 18 September 2019 and Policy & Resources on 10 October 2019 approved the recommendation for disposal by lease of two areas of housing land to Bunker Co-Operative to develop new affordable housing. This is subject to Bunker obtaining planning consent, securing funding and entering a nominations agreement with the council. Terms of the lease will also be negotiated between the council and Bunker.

Future council owned sites

3.8 Further work is being undertaken to identify other suitable sites in the city.

3.9 The council have regular monthly meetings with the BHCLT with a standing agenda of information sharing and any specific initiatives as well as updating progress on existing schemes and reviewing sites which are of interest both in public and private ownership. This exchange of knowledge and ideas helps to maintain close working ties and assist in progressing further development opportunities.

Enabling role

3.10 The council is also supporting community led housing in the city through a range of work, including:

- Reviewing the possibility of loans through public works loan board (PWLB). The BHCLT will be submitting a business case for consideration.
- Discussion on including community-led housing within S106 Agreements with developers is also underway.
- Actively supporting bids for funding made to Homes England.

3.11 The council has successfully bid for funding from Homes England to fund a post to support community led housing work until March 2020. Recruitment to this position is underway.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY OPTIONS

4.1 This report provides an update on identifying sites for community led housing in the city and confirms the council's commitment to supporting community led housing in the city. The pathway that has been developed for council owned sites as mentioned in paragraph 3.4 will outline the circumstances when development can be considered and the options available for each site.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Raising awareness and engaging with communities is key for BHCLT. BHCLT aims to connect local people who want to start their own housing projects and raise awareness and build knowledge about housing with local people, the council and others who work in housing.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report provides an update on the site identification work that is taking place between the council and the BHCLT. This alongside other projects being progressed by the BHCLT and co-operatives on buildings/land in private ownership creates a vibrant programme of activity to increase affordable housing in the city.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Financial Implications:

It is not anticipated that there will be any capital or revenue costs incurred as a result of this report.

A full due diligence process on each business case will be undertaken by Finance on the proposals to lease council owned sites to Community led housing organisations. To date one lease agreement has been assigned Bunker to a Co-Operative Housing, subsequent leases will be agreed in accordance with the proposed business plan. The agreed ground lease payments are payable directly to the council.

The review being undertaken around the proposal to lend money to external organisations is subject to individual approval. A full assessment of the impact of this proposal will be brought back to Housing Committee and Policy & Resources Committee for approval. Any proposal will need to comply with the councils Financial Management and Treasury management Policies and will need to pass the tests to ensure state aid rules are complied with.

Finance Officer Consulted: Craig Garoghan Date: 21/10/2019

7.2 Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications to draw to Members' attention arising from this report which is for noting. The legal implications for each new site will be assessed at the relevant time.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 04/11/19

7.3 Equalities Implications:

Community led housing allows local people to take control of their housing and creates alternatives to the limited choices that may be available in the local

housing market. Community led housing offers a range of tenures benefiting a range of people and communities including older or vulnerable people. An increase in housing supply may also extend opportunities to accommodate households on the Housing Register who are on housing need including vulnerable groups.

7.4 Sustainability Implications:

Community led housing provides a housing option that enables people to remain in their local area and ensure neighbourhood services remain sustainable. Community led housing developments can benefit from being innovative with environmentally sustainable design.

Any Other Significant Implications:

7.5 Public Health Implications:

Community led housing creates and demonstrates alternative ways of living which can have a positive impact on wellbeing. Furthermore improvements to neighbourhoods will have a positive health impact on residents.

7.6 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Community housing can create opportunities to make use of empty buildings and vacant land which may otherwise become subject to anti social behaviour.

7.7 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

Community led housing provides another option for increasing housing supply in the city and providing permanently affordable housing.

7.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

Every new home built helps meet the city's pressing housing needs and deliver the first priority in the council's Housing Strategy 2015 of improving housing supply.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices None

Documents in Members' Rooms None

Background Documents

Community Led Housing update report: Housing & New Homes Committee 14 March 2018

