

Community Land Trust ('CLT') Update

Following the public meetings and discussions held in the Village Hall on 10th April (Annual Parish Meeting of Electors) and 7th May (Sixpenny Handley and a Community Land Trust) regarding the initiation of a CLT we would like to bring you up-to-date with recent developments.

Firstly, a little background ...

The initiative of setting up a CLT was proposed by the Parish Council.

You may remember the Parish Council carried out a Housing Needs Survey a couple of years ago. The results of that survey identified a need for ten to twelve affordable houses for families and individuals within our community who cannot afford market value housing, but wish to live and work in this community.

The purpose of a CLT is usually to initially obtain land and build affordable homes, but it can also, once created, assist in other community led projects such as retention of post offices, pubs, creation of office space, sustainable energy schemes etc.

Most importantly, the housing scheme allows the CLT to manage the allocation of these homes, with input from the wider community, to ensure they are purely for the benefit of local people. The housing association would not be able to allocate the housing.

Land and how the scheme works ...

The Government has a policy whereby land that would not normally be eligible for development (e.g. outside the defined development boundary) can be purchased by the CLT with a grant. This policy is called the 'Rural Exception Site Policy'. A brief outline of the scheme is as follows:

- The CLT identify a suitable piece of land that a landowner is happy to sell at Exception Site value. (Unless, of course, we have a benevolent landowner amongst our community that would be happy to sell land within the development boundary at a similar value.)
- Subject to regular planning law and consent, the CLT then purchases the land with a view to building the houses in conjunction with a housing association.
- The CLT identify a suitable housing association (we have three possible contenders in this area) taking into account cost requirements, environmental and sustainable issues and aesthetics.
- The CLT then lease the land to the chosen housing association for, say, one-hundred and twenty-five years.
- The housing association, then in conjunction with the CLT (and subject to planning and consent), build the homes.
- The housing association manage and maintain the affordable homes, again with assistance from the CLT.
- On expiry of the lease, the land and the homes revert to CLT ownership.

Where we are now ...

With the assistance of the Wessex Community Land Trust Project, who have assisted and supported eighteen similar projects in the South West since 2010, we have held some initial meetings with the following purposes:

- To formally set up the membership and paperwork relating to a CLT for the Sixpenny Handley and Pentridge Parish.
- To create a short-list of possible development land. Respondents to the Housing Needs Survey suggested various sites which the Parish Council then rated. Some of these sites, e.g. the recreation ground were felt completely unrealistic, so these such sites, including those liable to flooding, have been removed from the list.
- To contact landowners for initial discussions.

We have had good interest in the meetings so far, with approximately ten to twenty attendees at each meeting. We have volunteers to sit on the Board of the CLT and intend there to also be a Parish Council representative to ensure a strong link between the two bodies.

Next Steps ...

There has been some concern that the establishment of the CLT or its purpose is not known in the wider community, which is one of the reasons for this article.

We are volunteering our time and services to the CLT for the good of the community, based on the work previously carried out by the Parish Council. Hence we are completely open to comment and suggestion and intend this to be just the first of these updates to ensure everyone who wishes to has their say.

Over time we would also hope other members of the community would get involved, if not to be part of the CLT, then to offer expertise and advice as and when needed.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank you.

Simon Parker, proposed Chairman

Jenny Chapman, proposed Secretary