

Colyton CLT Steering Group Meeting

Thursday 12 April 10.00am

Attendees: Alison Ward (WCLTP); Jay Lambe (WCLTP); Brian Norris; Charles Hill; Phil Johnson; Jan Brand; Barry Hedges; Paul Arnott; Mark Mann; Paul Lowe (East Devon District Council).

Apologies: Sue Southwell (Devon Communities Together)

1. Introductions

Each attendee introduced themselves and explained why they wished to participate in the group.

2. The purpose of a CLT steering group

Alison explained that the purpose of the CLT steering group is to set up the legal vehicle that will be the Community Land Trust; to explore the options for an affordable housing project (for people with a local connection in perpetuity); to recommend an option to the wider community after thoroughly considering the options; and, if the community supports the recommendation, to initiate feasibility work on the site, engage with professionals to fully develop the scheme where appropriate, and engage with suitable housing associations partner to deliver the affordable homes.

It is important that any land owner wishing to include their land as an option for the CLT to develop homes on should not be in the initial steering group, at least until the site to be developed has been chosen. Two group members, Jan and Barry explained that they did not consider that their land was an option for the CLT homes at this stage - the primary focus of the group being the former Ceramtec site. If all other options were exhausted they would reconsider.

3. Outline programme for a Colyton CLT project

According to a recent housing needs survey, there is an identified need for 36 affordable homes for local people on Colyton. The Ceramtec site in Sidmouth Road Colyton has been vacant for a while. Homes England are the landowner and have drawn up plans for 78 homes to be built on the site. A public consultation event was held on 6th February by Homes England on the proposal. To date there has been no feedback on the event to the Parish Council or Local Authority. Jay advised that under the Local Plan 50% affordable housing would be required as part of the scheme. However, the current masterplan does not identify affordable homes. The CLT could potentially take on the affordable homes if Homes England agree.

Given the interest by the community in the site and the intention to form a CLT Jay advised Homes England of the interest and drafted outline Heads of Terms that a CLT might consider seeking for Colyton. Homes England have not responded to those draft Heads of Terms.

A number of Housing Associations are keen to work with Community Land Trusts and there are a variety of models available for delivering a CLT project. Wessex CLT Project support a partnership approach working with a Housing Association partner to deliver an affordable housing scheme.

Homes England are the Government's Land Agent and are tasked with delivering solutions to the housing crisis. Jay advised that the Ceramtec site had been bought originally for the starter homes initiative, but this was now unlikely to proceed, hence Homes England were focussed on recovering its investment in purchasing the site and carrying out feasibility and design work. It need not make a profit. There is a tight timeline as Homes England are hoping to get a (planning) pre-app in place in April with a planning application being submitted shortly afterwards. The current timeline suggests marketing of the site in the Autumn. Without the input of the community the affordable homes may be prioritised for local people in Colyton, but with a looser cascade if local people are not immediately available and the community will have less control. Jay and Paul have both spoken with Homes England in preparation for the advent of a CLT, and Homes England are aware of the community's intention to form a CLT, but they are not being open about their plans yet and are probably working out issues of viability.

Homes England have a Developer Partner panel that they will look initially to sell the site to with outline planning consent. If the developer doesn't have a housing association partner already they will go to the open market to get the best price for the affordable units. Jay and Paul suggested that if the Ceramtec site did not deliver the full quota of affordable homes (currently 39, based on 50% affordable) then there was an opportunity for another CLT led development for the affordable homes the community wants to meet the shortfall. The group wished to pursue the Ceramtec site as the best opportunity available at the moment. Jay explained that if the Ceramtec site obtained planning consent and the affordable element was agreed in full this would effectively negate the delivery of a CLT scheme in the town. Paul endorsed this view.

The CLT group noted the position but wish to pursue communication and negotiation with Homes England.

It was raised that many in the community would like to have more workspace on the site, including one of the group members who could make use of expanded space. There is a concern that the Homes England plan is to cut down business units to make more space for building homes.

It was suggested that some of the land could be registered (if applicable/appropriate) as an asset of community value/or Town or Village Green (see under section 15 of the Commons Act 2006 land that: "a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality, or of any neighbourhood within a locality, have indulged as of right in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for a period of at least 20 years.")

to protect it for the benefit of the community. It was also raised that there is a need to provide for older people, as there are currently no bungalows in the indicative scheme produced by Homes England.

Paul explained that East Devon District Council held funds that the CLT could access once formed to progress their plans.

The group felt that it needed to move quickly to become a credible body to negotiate with Homes England proactively.

4. Incorporation of a CLT

Alison explained that the next step would be to have a special meeting just to consider the legal form of the CLT, and that this could be done quite quickly. A Community Land Trust is a legally defined concept and needs to adopt a legal form that meets the legal definition. Alison will discuss at the forthcoming meeting the various features of the different legal forms available to the group, and help them to

choose the most appropriate one for them, and then help the group to set the organisation up. The usual legal form that is recommended is a Community Benefit Society.

In order to register the CLT there needs to be people willing to be founding board members, and there will need to be volunteers for the roles of Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.

5. Communications with the wider community

Colyton is a busy community, and so there is potential for confusion and clear communication will be important as is timing. There is a community magazine, Church magazine, Friends of the Library group, and Parish Council website, amongst other ways to promote and inform the community about the CLT. Group members felt that a simple word press website would be useful, and this could be connected to the Parish Council website.

6. Next Steps

It was agreed to hold the next meeting quickly to expedite the establishment of the CLT, it will be held on 11.30am on Wednesday 18 April at the Reece Strawbridge Centre. This meeting will just focus on the legal form of the CLT and will not be considering the housing project in any detail.

Jay will contact the group to set the next date of the project steering group.