



SITE IDENTIFICATION PLAN

Note: In this paper: CLT = community land trust

CDC = Chichester district council

SIPC = Stedham with Iping parish council (PC);

TCPC = Trotton with Chithurst PC

RPC = Rogate PC;

The foundation of any CLT is the identification of suitable sites or buildings for its purposes. Like most CLTs, START's first priority is to provide affordable housing and the identification of suitable land or buildings for this can be an extensive and complicated process – often with no guarantee of success – so we have started the process already, even before putting time and resources into project planning.

Context

1. An important element of creating a plan for site identification is to assess the level of need for affordable housing. RPC had been discussing this with CDC since late 2016 and CDC and they carried out a housing needs survey in March 2017, and this was built into the neighbourhood plan it is developing. Formal surveys have not yet been conducted in the other two parishes, but SIPC estimated its needs through a survey as part of the development of its neighbourhood plan and TCPC has a small enough parish to be able to estimate its needs quite easily. Full housing needs surveys will probably be needed in all 3 parishes before START makes any formal application for funding of new homes.
2. In the meantime, we are using the following estimates of probable need across the three parishes, figures in brackets were those that emerged from the RPC housing needs survey):
 - 15-25 affordable rented units (10-15)
 - Up to 15 shared ownership units (up to 10)
 - Up to 10 market rented units (up to 6)

Factors in identifying suitable sites

3. There are numerous issues to consider during the identification process of suitable sites. The following is a list of key consideration but further issues may be identified:
 - Proximity to housing, town centres, places of employment and community facilities
 - Public transport links
 - Vehicular access
 - Infrastructure: roads, school, facilities, drainage etc.
 - Existing lawful uses
 - Valid consents for other uses or development
 - Planning policy context
4. There are five main options available for procuring a site:
 - a. **Purchase of land allocated for housing** - Buying private land allocated for housing can be difficult if the local land market is very competitive unless you have a lot of money, a partner able to bid for you, or a land agent to help. Within Chichester District these types of site have proven to be out of reach of community-led housing organisation due to affordability.
 - b. **Purchase of land that would be considered an exception site within the planning framework** - An exception site is land identified outside of settlement boundaries and as such do not command the high land value of a full development site. To obtain planning permission for an exception site the units have to be delivered as affordable housing and protected in perpetuity. To secure planning consent there also has to be evidence of housing need within the locality and evidence that all other potential sites have been considered.
 - c. **Purchase of property restricted by covenant to affordable housing development** - Within the district's Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of social housing, in 2001, CDC transferred land other than housing which was protected by covenant to deliver affordable housing. These sites consist of garage and amenity sites.

- d. **Community asset transfer** - The transfer of ownership and/or management of land or buildings from a statutory body (such as a parish council) to a community based organisation at less than market value for local social, economic or environmental benefit.
- e. **Leasehold** - A leasehold is an ownership of a temporary right to hold land or property in which a lessee or tenant holds the rights of a property by some form of title from a lessor or landlord.

Exception sites

- 5. Rural exception sites are considered the best option for CLTs, as they involve land which would not usually get planning permission for 100% market housing. This would usually suggest a lower land value – often agricultural land value – so a CLT can provide a significant uplift in value to the owner without paying full market housing land prices. The development and occupancy of each rural exception site is controlled through a legal agreement, which the developer signs with the council prior to the issue of the planning application decision notice. This agreement ensures that the houses developed on the exception site remain affordable in perpetuity, if the first occupier moves on. The affordable housing provided on rural exception sites can only be used to meet a clearly identified local housing need and is subject to strict occupancy clauses.
- 6. The National Planning Policy Framework defines rural exception sites (RES) as “small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection”.
- 7. The **South Downs National Park** defines their strategy for exception sites in policy 35 of their local plan as follows:

“Proposals for new residential development of 100 per cent affordable housing outside of settlement boundaries as shown on the Policies Map will be permitted, provided that the following are met:

- f. Affordable housing is provided in perpetuity;
- g. The site selection process has considered all reasonable options, and the most suitable available site in terms of landscape, ecosystem services and overall sustainability has been chosen;
- h. The scale and location relates well to the existing settlement and landscape character; and
- i. It is shown that effective community engagement has fed into the design, layout and types of dwellings proposed.

The size (number of bedrooms), type and tenure, (for example, social and affordable rented, intermediate, shared ownership or older people’s housing) of affordable homes for each proposal will be based on robust and up-to-date evidence of local community need.

Occupancy conditions and local connection criteria will be applied to affordable housing to ensure local needs are met. Specific criteria will be determined by the local housing authority, in close partnership with established community-led and legally constituted organisations or CLTs where applicable.”

Procedure for the identification of sites

- 8. The following procedure is proposed:
 - a. START and CDC’s community-led housing officer agree a list of potential sites on provided mapping;
 - b. CDC’s community-led housing officer creates map locating all sites for quick identification;
 - c. List of sites is sent to the local planning authority for preliminary comments;
 - d. CDC’s community-led housing officer searches the planning portals for any previous planning applications;
 - e. START and CDC’s community-led housing officer collate all information gathered and carry out SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity and threat) analysis of the sites, grouping them into priority “RAG” (red/amber/green) priority groups;
 - f. Landowners of high potential sites are identified through the local knowledge or land registry;
 - g. START leads on negotiation with landowners.

Negotiation

9. START will use a letter based on a CDC template to initiate contact with landowners. If any of these are successful it will be the responsibility of START to lead on the negotiation, but with the support of CDC's CLH officer.

Terms of reference

10. For any site where landowner negotiation suggests there is potential to take things further, START (with support from CDC's community-led housing officer) will draw up terms of reference to ensure that all parties are happy with the actions proposed to draw up a formal options agreement.

Options agreement

11. An 'option agreement' would give START the future opportunity, for an agreed period of time, to buy a piece of land or property at a fixed future purchase price, and usually involving a deposit which would be lost if a deal is not completed during that time. The main purpose is to give START time to develop plans and raise the funds to deliver the project, at which point we can take up the option to buy the land.

Community involvement

12. START intends to use the procedures above to attempt to reach a list of viable properties – ie those which the planning authority is prepared to consider (subject to suitable applications), and where the owner is prepared to sell at a reasonable price. The START board believes (based on the experience of other CLTs and community-led housing schemes) that making any list of proposed site public before negotiating with landowners could significantly raise the price it would have to pay for the land.
13. The board's intention, therefore, is to follow these procedures and then to arrange public meetings to consult the public on the proposed sites. As a community-owned and managed body, we want to make sure we have community support before proceeding to the (expensive) next stages of paying for architects, planning consultants and contractors or developers to start the planning and development process.