

## TENTERDEN COMMUNITY LAND TRUST BULLETIN FEBRUARY 2021

### Introduction

Although in the present circumstances it has not been easy to make progress in the way many of us had hoped, I want to bring Members and supporters of Tenterden Community Land Trust (TCLT) up to date with some of the things that have happened over the past few months together with issues that the Board are considering at the moment.

### Housing Needs Survey

The key message in the survey results was that there is a demonstrable need for affordable housing in Tenterden. Let me emphasise how important this fact is. A well conducted survey has been carried out using recognised methods by a highly competent organisation, and its findings must now be recognised by central and local government, by planners, developers, social housing providers, banks, and, if it needed reminding, by our community.

Those of us who have lived in Tenterden for some time know how difficult it is for our children to find an affordable home here. Even young professionals who come to take up jobs here can find it difficult. Another finding was that older people who want to downsize their accommodation cannot find housing of an appropriate size. If we do not strive to address these issues our community will become progressively unbalanced and its character will suffer. Many of us have suspected that the affordability and availability of housing in Tenterden for local people needs addressing. Now we have the evidence to prove that is the case.

The Survey with its results, together with TCLT's Response to it, can be found on the TCLT website. I encourage everyone to have a look, take its findings to heart and join us.

### TCLT Policy Development

We have adopted two policies to guide our future working. The first concerns engagement with developers and landowners. The overriding need, given the results of the Housing Needs Survey, is to find a site to develop. To do so, we have to engage with people who are in a position to bring that about. Without such a declared policy, TCLT, as a community membership body, could encounter objections to holding such discussions.

The second policy was to define the role and responsibilities of the Chair, an important part of making TCLT a business-like organisation.

Both policies can be viewed on our website.

### Annual General Meeting

We have been concerned at the practicalities of holding the AGM during the pandemic. Fortunately, given the date of our formation, the AGM does not need to be held just yet. The due date is within 6 months of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Whilst we hope that within that timescale it will be possible to meet physically, we are in the process of changing our Rules so that we can hold an AGM virtually if need be. We have been advised we do not need to confirm that change through the AGM itself.

### Membership

We want to achieve a substantial and growing membership. We would like a large pool of energy and ideas. Please encourage others to join, and if you have indicated to us you wish to join, please get in touch and complete the necessary form. Many of you have already paid your £1 or more for membership, and only need to complete and return a membership form to become a member and have a vote.

We are looking for members to join the Steering Group with a view to moving onto the Board. We need a range of talents and most of all, enthusiasm and commitment.

## Looking for a Site

We are open minded about the precise location of a site. The key requirement that it enables us to develop housing which is truly affordable.

With the research we have done, it has become more evident that a TCLT development could be small scale of perhaps 10 – 12 houses on what is called a rural exception site. These are sites which would not normally be developed but are justified because of the proven need for affordable housing in a rural community.

There could be more than one such site, although we will probably only have the resources to find and develop one site at a time. We would also consider other forms of development, such as taking on affordable housing on an allocated development site. It seems this is less likely to happen, as developers often like arrangements with established housing associations to do this.

Wherever the site or sites may be, there is likely to be an element of controversy. In a special place like Tenterden, that is to be expected. But if we are to preserve both a sense of fairness and of continuity in our community, and preserve its character, sympathetic development is vital.

Some of you may think that, given the results of the Housing Needs Survey, 10-12 houses will not address the scale of the problem. We say it will be 10-12 local families who are housed who would not otherwise be housed, and that unless we make a start, nothing will happen.

The Board welcomes approaches from members of the public or landowners with suggestions of particular sites. There would need to be discussions with the Ashford Borough Council planners, and not all sites will be suitable to proceed to application, let alone permission, but we are going to start the process of site selection. As I say, any thoughts welcome.

## Who will TCLT house?

The basic proposition is that TCLT will provide truly affordable housing for local people. How to define local people? The Board have begun work on a set of criteria based on years of residence and other forms of local connection. We have also said we would like to house key workers, but what is a key worker? The experience of Covid-19 suggests the definition should be widely drawn.

We will consult the membership and the Town and Borough Councils on the TCLT Allocation policy, including any such criteria, in due course. In the meantime, thoughts from any reader on the definition of “local people” and “key worker” are welcome.

Finally, do keep in touch with us with your ideas. This project is very much about the future of our community which is important to all of us.

***Mark Ellender***

Chair TCLT