



Bristol Community Land Trust

Type of asset:	Former primary school and surrounding land
Legal model:	Community land trust
Type of community enterprise:	Not classified
Year of transfer:	2014
Type of transfer:	Freehold
Full-time staff:	1

Overview:

Bristol Community Land Trust (CLT) was launched in 2011 with the aim of identifying and redeveloping land to serve community interests. The Trust has recently completed its first project, the redevelopment of an old school into 12 housing units in Fishponds Road. The site was transferred for £1, with covenants about the redevelopment of the adjacent park land. Building on the lessons of Fishponds, Bristol CLT is currently working on a new development, which will comprise a community space and more than 40 shared ownership housing units.

Background

Bristol Community Land Trust (Bristol CLT) was launched in 2011 with the aim of identifying and redeveloping land to serve community interests. The Trust has recently concluded its first project and is currently working on the second one. The first project consisted of the redevelopment of a former school building into six housing units and an additional six new-build units on Fishponds Road. The freehold for the site was transferred for £1. Houses were self-finished, with the new residents actively taking part in the fitting out of the interiors to gain 'sweat equity'. Building on the lessons of Fishponds, Bristol CLT is currently working on a new development, in Shaldon Road. This will comprise a community space and more than 40 shared ownership housing units, with an allocations policy developed in partnership with members of a 'prospective residents' group.

People

Housing prices are on the rise everywhere in the UK, but they are particularly high in Bristol which is one of the most expensive cities in the UK. Bristol CLT was established to offer an innovative solution to this challenge. The Community Land Trust model also reflects a desire for greater dweller control over design, management and community make-up in affordable housing schemes. The board was drawn from community members and local housing activists. Bristol CLT's

vision is to develop new homes for its members and promote self-build housing across the city region, offering affordable opportunities and community based amenities to individuals that could not otherwise afford to purchase. To deliver this vision, the Trust has grown a membership of interested individuals, who each join for the affordable price of £1. This entitles them to a single vote, and is the limit of their liability. To instigate the network, a poster campaign across the city invited people interested in forming a CLT to come to a public event. The range of skill sets of individual members of the Board was useful for the success of Bristol CLT. The site on Fishponds Roads was General Fund land that required access across land managed by the Parks Dept. Dogged negotiation skills were needed to secure agreement from all stakeholders over the redevelopment plans for the site. The presence of expert members on the board, including a lifelong regeneration professional, a development officer working at the council, and the chief executive of a housing association, were invaluable in securing the first site and to bring expertise and resilience to the organisation.

Rules

Learning from their first project, Bristol CLT has supported and encouraged community engagement on their second development at Shaldon Road from the outset, reaching out to the local community as well as Bristol CLT members to develop a design brief for the site. While the local community of Lockleaze was invited to participate



in workshops and events, eventually it was only Bristol CLT members reflecting a wider, interested community in Bristol, who stayed engaged and worked together to become de facto clients for the scheme. However, just as the project was able to create rules in the interests of a community of place outside of conventional processes of local democracy, Bristol CLT has been subject to national regulations which have shaped the project. The second scheme may not include any affordable to rent properties. This is because the rental income from the 'affordable' rents alone will be unable to repay sufficient debt finance to fund construction costs. To overcome this, the established approach has been gap funding by government through the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA). However, recent policy changes have shaped the housing support funding profile to focus exclusively on home ownership. In turn, it is now extremely difficult for the CLT to deliver rent-only properties. This risks diverting it from its organisational vision. Bristol CLT is therefore looking for a new financial model to enable it to fund the development of affordable rented accommodation.

Resources

Partnership

Bristol City Council took a supportive approach to Bristol CLT, by funding a Development Officer role with responsibilities for progressing the project at Fishponds Road and finding appropriate land for development. This post was hosted by Bristol Community Housing Foundation (BCHF), a local housing association. BCHF offered personal development and support for the role. The council's investment in the position was repaid through 'enabling fees' on other BCHF affordable housing projects, meaning that the cost of seed funding Bristol CLT was not an up-front cost to the council. BCHF did this because it supports the mission and ethos of Bristol CLT. Because the partnership is based on a common vision, it has resulted in a productive and supportive relationship. In Bristol CLT's second scheme at Shaldon Road, United Communities (an amalgam of two housing associations) will bring in finance and own 18 of the housing units, with Bristol CLT developing the remaining 28.

Assets/money/funds

One of the often cited benefits to a local authority of supporting the CLT model is that it can 'turn NIMBYs into YIMBYs' in the delivery of new development, as a result of improved community support. Having considered some very difficult sites, it took some time for Bristol CLT to find a site which could meet their needs, reflecting the desire from members for the project to incorporate new build. Eventually, the site at Fishponds Road was found, incorporating new build and conversions. The open market

valuation of the Fishponds site with planning permission was valued by the council to be £286,000. The site was sold to the Trust for £1 on the condition that full market value would be returned to the council if the land were ever sold for non-housing purposes. Holding this asset meant the Trust could use the value of the land to attract finance for the capital development. Negotiations with the council also involved the parks department, which controlled the land that would give access to the site. Agreement was reached that enabled Bristol CLT to utilise land owned by the parks department in return for reinstating a wall, tarmacking and landscaping an area of the adjacent car park. This added £100,000 in costs but made the project achievable. In the second scheme, due to changing priorities within the council, the transfer is a 'deferred capital receipt'. This means that while the site will be sold to the Bristol CLT for £1, there is a legal mechanism which allows the council to capture any value created through redevelopment of the site through an 'overage' clause in the addendum to the sale.

Bristol CLT received substantial capital and revenue funding support from the Council for capacity building, predevelopment works and free land to accommodate 12 new homes in its first scheme in Bristol. However the ability of the Council to transfer land to a Community Land Trust at nil or discounted value was affected by EU State Aid Regulations which required the Council to ensure the CLT or other organisations were aware of their specific responsibilities under the legislation. This process was not as smooth as first thought and the resultant delay in agreeing contracts led to significant increase in costs and some aspects of the housing products the CLT intended to deliver ultimately had to be cut back. Compliance with EU State Aid regulations continue to be a key concern, as our survey demonstrated. This suggests that clearer statutory guidance surrounding state aid and asset transfer may be needed.

For its second scheme, Bristol CLT is working on a finance package which will include debt finance from Triodos bank or a similar ethical lender, as well as equity stakes from occupiers, some grant finance and a partnering arrangement with United Communities. Debt will be repaid through equity sales and a small continuing rental income from unsold equity.