

Strategic Housing Partnership Rep report:  
recent community housing activity in B&H  
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Strategic Housing Partnership

The SHP has just signed off the new Housing Strategy which can be found here:

[http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/1%20Housing%20Strategy%202015%20\(Final\).pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/1%20Housing%20Strategy%202015%20(Final).pdf)

It's different in approach from the 2008 version, but the problems are the same, and unfortunately us all being in the grip of austerity measures doesn't make it very likely they'll be solved any time soon. However, the good thing is that the value of community housing is recognised, and has a section to itself, in which the following intentions are stated:

1. Promote the concept of Community Housing.
2. Explore the viability of Community Land Trust and wider community housing development options when land is available with a focus on maximising the social value of new developments where appropriate.
3. Explore the use of commercial properties for co-operatives where compatible with City Plan policies.
4. Share information on development opportunities with the Community Housing Network.

All Housing Association new build is either for sale or shared ownership, and there's a general understanding amongst the Registered Providers that 'affordable' isn't affordable to those on low or even intermediate incomes. The question posed by Cllr. Bill Randall, Chair of the partnership and the Housing Committee is "who is going to house the poor?" and there aren't a lot of hands going up.

On the brighter side however, the council is embarking on a small but useful programme of new build itself. HRA funds of £16.5 million will provide 93 new homes, including the Brooke Mead extra care scheme. This averages at £177,000 each though, which even taking into account the weighting on the extra care side, is rather a lot. We need to find cheaper financial models! See below...

With the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme, several small 'garage sites' are in development and a design competition will commence shortly for the remaining unallocated sites.

Community Housing Network

The Network made a lot of headway during the housing strategy consultation phase, and has met with all political parties and housing officers, and gained general support for the aim of fully participating in the development of new housing at 'social' rents. I have suggested that any new council housing built could be transferred to the CLT where it will be protected from the Right To Buy, and this was well received! All parties are agreed that the Right To Buy has gone far enough.

Next on the CHN agenda is to help shape the action plan arising from the Strategy, which will be the real test of its usefulness. CHN members are exploring innovative finance models based on

'modern methods of construction' (flatpack to you and me) with prices of £40k being touted for a 2 bed house.

### Community Land Trust

Still in formation but getting closer to registration every day, the Steering Group was awarded a grant of £10k to bring in expertise in governance, business planning, and to begin the process of community engagement. Meetings with the Trust for Developing Communities have been very positive, and the Steering Group will be undertaking community engagement training with them.

### Overview

The lynchpin in all of the above vis a vis answering Bill's question is the future of the Urban Fringe and other council owned sites in the city. If the Planning Inspector smiles on Brighton, and accepts the City Plan in July, then one potential outcome is the transfer of Urban Fringe sites into the CLT. This will safeguard the city's land for the commonhold in perpetuity, and its use will be determined by the city - the residents, neighbourhoods, communities of interest, small businesses, etc - rather than private developers who would rather be building profit generating luxury apartments and some S.106 at 'affordable' rents on the side - well out of sight of course. Not that there isn't a role for all that, but not at this moment in this place, huh?

If the Inspector doesn't like the Plan, we will be back to the National Planning Policy Framework and a free for all, a land grab and in all likelihood - sorry I'm so cynical - dwellings not built to high eco standard we need. If there is anxiety about what might be built in your backyard, then fear the developers, not the community builders - that's like fearing the neighbours themselves.

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