

UNLOCKING DEVELOPMENT SITES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING A LONDON COMMUNITY LAND TRUST GUIDE



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AUTHORS
OLIVER BULLEID
HANNAH EMERY-WRIGHT
SEM LEE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

London has a significant housing crisis that shows no sign of improving, with fewer than 6,000 housing starts in 2025 against an annual target of 88,000. Even when new homes are built, they are often the ‘wrong’ type of housing – too expensive for local people, with few or no affordable homes, and providing very little benefit to the local community.

But what if new housing were shaped and built by and for the local community, and was genuinely affordable for local people on average incomes?

What if public land could be made available to community organisations to build the affordable homes that are desperately needed for key workers and others, enabling them to stay in their communities and contribute positively to London life?

What if we viewed publicly owned land differently and saw it as a community asset – not to be sold and exploited, but instead developed to meet local community needs and deliver long-term benefits?

This can all be achieved through community-led housing, often developed by Community Land Trusts working in partnership with local authorities and others.

Community-led homes provide genuinely affordable housing for those in housing need, enabling local people to remain in their communities with stable and affordable homes. In doing so, they contribute to community wealth building and strengthen community cohesion.

This guide examines the delivery of community-led and genuinely affordable housing on small sites in London, focusing on the experiences of London Community Land Trust.

It is aimed at those facilitating housing delivery within local authorities, the Greater London Authority, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, as well as anyone interested in Community Land Trusts and community housing. It presents an alternative approach to delivering genuinely affordable homes.

Split into short chapters outlining the development process and illustrated with real case studies, the guide demonstrates the potential of Community Land Trust housing on

smaller sites. It also highlights the opportunity to scale this model significantly, providing genuine additionality to affordable housing delivery.

With the right support from the Greater London Authority and local authorities, Community Land Trusts could deliver many thousands of new homes across London.

Two of the case studies included in this guide are located in the London Borough of Lewisham and together provide 48 homes. Both schemes have recently been completed on public land by Community Land Trusts and provide all homes at affordable levels for local people.

Imagine if each of the 32 London boroughs found a way to support and work with Community Land Trusts to achieve similar outcomes. This could lead to more than 1,500 new affordable homes each year – a highly achievable goal and one that should be encouraged.

The impacts of poor-quality and unaffordable housing on health, life chances, and quality of life are well documented. At a time of immense pressure on housing in London, this guide presents an alternative, people-centred approach to delivering new homes – homes that are developed by and for the local community. ●

INTRODUCTION

Community-led housing (CLH) has emerged as an innovative approach in response to London's housing crisis, offering a new delivery model that places local communities at the heart of development.

This best practice guide examines how the delivery of community-led housing on small sites in London can be supported and scaled, focusing on Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and drawing extensively on the experience of London CLT and other CLT groups across London.

It reveals that successful Community Land Trust projects on small sites in London are built on strong community engagement from the outset, with ongoing participation crucial to project success. However, identifying suitable small sites remains a significant challenge, with community groups often offered the most complex plots, which are expensive and difficult to develop. The planning system presents another major hurdle, as it does not yet fully recognise or accommodate community-led housing delivery, leading to delays and complications.

Community-led housing on small sites offers a valuable model for creating affordable, community-centred homes in London. With appropriate support and policy frameworks, this approach has the potential to make a significant contribution to addressing London's housing needs.

This guide is organised into chapters that broadly follow the development process, with an emphasis on community-led best practice. It is intended to support groups new to development, assist local authorities and the Greater London Authority, and inform wider policymakers seeking to increase housing supply and unlock housing delivery.

At the end of the guide are a number of case studies, both completed and ongoing, illustrating real-world challenges and solutions. These case studies provide examples of success within this emerging sector and offer hope, guidance and inspiration to those embarking on, or supporting, community-led, affordable housing development.

This report would not have been possible without the time and generosity of the many stakeholders interviewed for the original report, which was delivered with funding support from the Greater London Authority. ●

Stories poured forth about the crippling costs of rent and home ownership, with markets that were out of reach. Neil Jameson, TELCO's Founding Executive Director, who had trained under the Industrial Areas Foundation in the late 1980s and brought Saul Alinsky's organising model to the UK, decided that housing needed to be a central plank of Citizens UK's agenda.

Dave Smith, Founding Executive Director of London CLT, on the podcast *'On Common Ground'*¹

Glossary

Citizens UK – CUK

Community Benefit Society – CBS

Community Housing Fund – CHF

Community-Led Housing – CLH

Community Land Trust – CLT

Community Infrastructure Levy – CIL

Community Steering Group – CSG

Community Share Offer – CSO

Development Plan Document – DPD

Financial Conduct Authority – FCA

Greenwich Citizens Housing – GCH

Registered Provider – RP

Discount Market Sale – DMS

London Community Land Trust – London CLT

Supplementary Planning Document – SPD

Rural Urban Synthesis Society – RUSS

Housing Revenue Account – HRA

Residual Land Value – RLV

Resident Management Company – RMC

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – RICS

1

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE

Community-led development differs from mainstream housing provision because it is genuinely people-led and has the potential not only to increase housing supply, but also to provide health and wellbeing benefits for communities.

Led by community groups, it can foster positive and mutually beneficial relationships among communities, local authorities, and stakeholders. These collaborations aim to achieve a shared objective: providing more genuinely affordable homes for direct local benefit across London, while at the same time improving neighbourhoods. Successful community-led development depends on robust partnerships across sectors and effective engagement with the communities the development is intended to serve.

Community Support

London CLT works closely with community organisations such as Citizens UK and its member institutions to build support and momentum within local communities. Community organising tactics were instrumental in the early stages of London CLT's establishment, and this partnership working continues to play a crucial role in maintaining community engagement throughout the long and often challenging process of securing development sites.

London CLT typically holds open member meetings to discuss forthcoming negotiations. These meetings enable the community to collectively shape the CLT's negotiating position and priorities, including permanent affordability, community-led design, and long-term control and stewardship of CLT homes. This emphasis on community participation and decision-making helps local members remain engaged and invested in the process.

Organisational Structure

London CLT has adopted a tripartite board structure, with representation from residents, community members, and wider stakeholders, in line with the traditional American CLT model. London CLT now has more than 4,000 members, each of whom pays £1 to become a shareholder in the organisation and can then elect a volunteer Board of Directors. The Board, in turn, oversees an executive team responsible for managing operations.

The organisation is a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society, registered with the FCA, and governed by a set of rules outlining the objectives of the CLT and its agreed operational processes, as shown in **Figure 1**.

To ensure genuinely locally led and community-focused long-term decision-making, each London CLT project or campaign has a local Community Steering Group (CSG) during the development stages, while completed developments have a Resident Management Company (RMC) responsible for long-term stewardship. More on RMCs can be found in **Chapter 9**.

London CLT, working across a range of developments in London, acts as the legal, technical and financial guardian of each project. This allows the organisation's knowledge and experience to be applied effectively while ensuring genuinely community-led development through individual Community Steering Groups for each scheme.

Political Support

CLT success requires political support at multiple levels: regional backing from GLA officers; local support from council leaders, housing cabinet members and ward councillors; and operational buy-in from council officers. This multi-level advocacy is essential for identifying development sites, securing funding, and delivering CLH projects.

For example, Greenwich Citizens Housing (GCH) was originally established by two local councillors – Councillor Anthony Okereke, the current Leader of Greenwich Council, and Councillor Mariam Lolavar. GCH worked to gain political support from the council leadership at the time, including securing recognition of CLTs within the council's housing strategy. This was crucial in ensuring that CLTs could contribute to affordable housing provision within the Borough.

Despite CLH being supported as a form of affordable housing delivery within the Mayor's



Citizens House
community workshop
Image: Archio

London Housing Strategy², CLT developments among London councils remain limited. However, the potential for policies that support community-led housing has already been demonstrated by councils across London and elsewhere.

East Cambridgeshire District Council provides a compelling example. Its CLH Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)³ has supported the development of numerous CLTs throughout the Cambridge growth area. A standout success is the Palace Green Homes Kennett Garden Village⁴ project, integrated within a 500-home garden village development.

Under this initiative, the CLT will retain ownership of 30 per cent of the new homes and hold the freehold of all shared community facilities, ensuring long-term community control and benefit.

This demonstrates how well-structured and supportive policies can successfully deliver CLT

developments while maintaining community ownership and management – an approach that could offer valuable lessons for London boroughs. ●

“The London CLT at St Clements has never just been about delivering permanently affordable homes. It’s more than that. It’s about community, social justice and, quite simply, contributing towards happiness in life.”

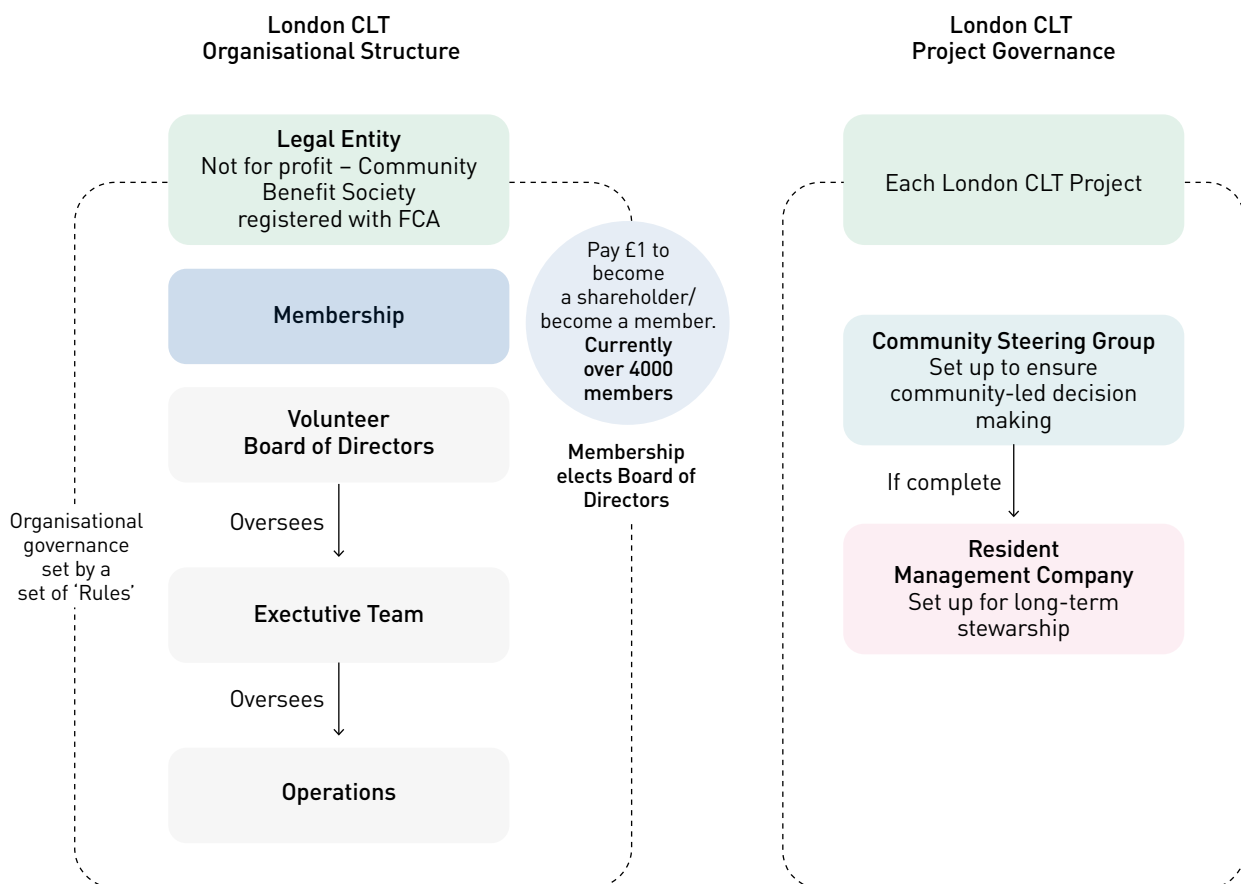
Dave Smith, on the podcast
‘On Common Ground’

Other Types of CLT Governance

There are alternative models for CLT governance. One example is the Rural Urban Synthesis Society (RUSS), another London-based CLT. RUSS was initially established to manage a single site-specific development using a 'consensus decision-making' approach based on 'open engagement' and non-hierarchical resident and board participation. This fosters a strong sense of ownership and commitment among community members. As a group, RUSS has established a set of 10 principles used to guide decision-making. The organisation has grown through its extensive community network and has helped galvanise volunteers. The project involved a range of self-build and

self-finish options. Some volunteers hoped to become future residents, although resident selection was ultimately managed through a formal lottery process at a fixed point in time. The CLT also recognised the importance of continuity and maintaining collective decision-making from the pre-completion stages through to long-term occupation and management.

See also **Figure 1** – London CLT Organisational Structure below.



Best Practice

- Collaborate with community organisations that are active locally. These organisations can help galvanise communities, build local capacity and awareness of CLTs more effectively.
- Use engagement activities that actively involve communities throughout the development journey. Particularly effective approaches include:
 - ‘Choose your architect’ initiatives, allowing the community to participate in selecting the project architect and feel empowered by the process.
 - Involving local residents in co-designing projects during the pre-planning and planning stages.
 - Engaging and informing the wider community when meetings and workshops are held.
- Deliver engagement activities beyond housing related issues where they resonate with the community. For example, the Shuffle Film Festival, held during the development of St Clements, helped strengthen local relationships and raise awareness of the CLT.
- Consider back-to-back sales agreements as an alternative route for delivering CLT homes within schemes led by other developers.
- Establish governance structures that genuinely reflect community diversity and encourage participation.
- Create Community Steering Groups (CSGs) made up of local residents aligned with the organisation’s mission to help identify community needs and guide project objectives.
- For completed developments, establish Resident Management Companies (RMCs) to enable residents to oversee long-term management, finances and community stewardship.
- Where CLT development is not reflected in local housing policy, prioritise lobbying councillors and MPs to secure commitments for CLT homes and developments.
- Work with organisations such as Citizens UK that have established relationships with councils and community groups, helping to build political support and local goodwill.
- Encourage councils to develop Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) or Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that explicitly support the delivery of community-led housing.

2

FROM NEGLECTED SITES TO COMMUNITY ASSETS

Land for development in London is in short supply, and the challenges are particularly pronounced for groups seeking to deliver community-led housing. Private sector sites are often unaffordable and out of reach for community groups wishing to develop genuinely affordable housing, leaving public land as the only viable option.

Within the public sector, there are competing pressures on every development site, ranging from council-led delivery and alternative uses to private sale for capital receipts. Community-led housing is rarely at the forefront of local policy priorities and, consequently, sites generally only come forward following political pressure or when identified by community groups.

Identifying Sites

Publicly owned land that does come forward for community-led development often presents complex challenges. There is usually a reason why it has not previously been developed – such as planning constraints, below-ground services, difficult access, flood risk, or impacts on existing buildings. Many of the sites available for community-led development are difficult to bring forward, and identifying suitable small sites for CLH in London remains a significant challenge.

London CLT, working with local community groups and Citizens UK, has historically identified potential development sites and campaigned for their release for affordable housing, building political support along the way. Similarly, Lewisham Citizens carried out site walks across the Borough around members' locations and compiled a list of small sites, based on local knowledge, that had not previously been identified by the Council.

This demonstrates how working with CLTs presents an opportunity for local authorities to identify and develop sites that might otherwise remain unrecognised or undeveloped.

Ealing Council, working with Ealing Citizens and a supportive Council Leader, has made a concerted effort to identify and assess sites across the Borough, taking a more coordinated approach rather than relying on individual organisations to identify sites independently. Following a community campaign, the Borough made a political commitment to deliver 100 CLT homes, and officers are now reviewing land ownership and site opportunities with

the ambition of releasing sites for CLH through the GLA's Small Sites Small Builders⁵ portal. London CLT supported this process by providing a site requirements document (see **Appendix 1**) outlining the typical requirements for a small site suitable for CLH.

Development Potential

Establishing whether a site has genuine development potential is an essential part of the pre-development due diligence process. Sometimes risks are known and solutions can be identified. For example, RUSS's Church Grove project was raised on mini stilts to ensure it sat above flood level. However, risks are not always identified at an early stage, as was the case with Felixstowe Road in Greenwich, (**Appendix 2d**) by London CLT, where a culverted river had been incorrectly mapped, requiring the scheme to be redesigned once its true location became known.

One common theme within CLH is that projects often succeed despite development and site complexity. At Citizens House, the site suffered from poor access, significant overlooking issues and proximity to a primary school. Yet the scheme secured planning permission with more than 100 letters of community support – a testament to genuine local belief in, and commitment to, the project.

There is now a growing opportunity to better understand land holdings and development potential through the use of AI. This type of mapping exercise can help councils and community groups identify land suitable for affordable housing development. Russell Curtis, Founding Director and Architect from RCKa Architects, has begun exploring this approach through the use of a small-sites identification AI tool⁶. Another digital tool, Blocktype,⁷ allows users to automatically assess planning requirements and viability for potential sites.

Surveys

Reducing development risk requires as much information as possible to be known about a site, both in terms of physical conditions identified through surveys and wider issues such as legal rights of way or use restrictions.

Local authorities can play an active role in de-risking the development process as part of good practice in public asset management and procurement. Once a site is deemed suitable, the local authority could help 'ring-fence' the land, effectively reserving it for CLT development.

Ownership and Transfer

There are two principal methods of transferring land from public ownership to a CLT group. The first is a negotiated transfer to an identified local group capable of delivering genuinely affordable housing for local people. The second is a competitive bidding process, restricted to registered organisations such as CLTs.

London CLT has experience of both approaches:

- At Citizens House, the land transfer was negotiated with LB Lewisham, with a 250-year lease transferred for a nominal sum of £1. Heads of Terms were agreed, setting out key criteria – including pricing strategy and allocation policy – to ensure that shared objectives were clearly established from the outset.

- For the Greenwich projects, the Council elected to undertake a competitive process restricted to CLTs and requiring design proposals to be submitted. These proposals needed to detail the size and tenure of homes, alongside costs and viability assessments. Although this involved additional work for bidders, it enabled the Council to run a transparent and open transfer process that complied with procurement requirements. London CLT was successful in securing both Greenwich sites, with the freehold transferred at a nominal land value of £1. As all homes were genuinely affordable and grant-funded, the development appraisal demonstrated a residual land value (RLV) of zero.

Land costs are typically one of the principal factors driving up housing prices. Local authorities are permitted to dispose of assets for 'less than best consideration' where wider public benefits, such as affordable housing, can be demonstrated. Once councils become open to the principle of a below-market RLV – determined according to affordability, project costs and anticipated grant support – opportunities emerge for additional sites to come forward for CLH.

London CLT has demonstrated practical experience of this approach through the GLA Small Sites Small Builders portal. It has secured successful bids for Cable Street in Tower Hamlets (41 homes) and Christchurch Road in Lambeth (30 homes, currently on hold pending planning). Both projects are located on TfL-owned land, with long leases due to transfer at the start of construction.

However, implementing this approach presents challenges within the local government framework. While the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)⁸ methodology for valuing affordable housing land typically results in a nominal RLV in London, councils must still demonstrate 'best consideration' in land transactions. The complexity depends largely on the land's existing use:

- For existing housing land, the process is relatively straightforward. General consents allow councils to provide financial benefits to purchasers to order to achieve affordability objectives.
- For non-housing land, the situation is more complicated. Without policies supporting CLH or strict affordable housing requirements for small sites, Section 151 officers may argue that councils could secure higher returns through open-market housing sales.

This highlights the importance of a supportive policy framework, particularly the value of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) for small sites, in enabling affordable housing initiatives. ●

⚡ **One common thread with CLH is that projects often succeed despite the development and site complexity.**

⚡ **Many of the sites that become available for community-led development are challenging for any type of development, and identifying suitable small sites for CLH in London continues to present challenges.**

⚡ **Working with CLTs presents an opportunity for local authorities to identify and bring forward sites that would otherwise not be developed.**



Citizens House
community workshop
Image: Archio

🔊 **[Councils] could save money through not requiring each CLT, when tendering, to go and get all their own surveys... if a council has made a decision to dispose of land to a community organisation, they could enable some of that preparatory work with the GLA or with the council so that it's paid for once, rather than by separate organisations competing. 🗨**

Eleanor Margolies, Resident at RUSS

🔊 **One of the biggest issues, once you're in the system with a local authority or landowner, is that you feel like you're reinventing the wheel when transferring the land. A standardised process for land transfer and legal agreements could save time and money. 🗨**

Michelle Huggins,
Development Consultant for London CLT



Plan diagram,
Citizens House

Best Practice

Local authorities should take an active role in de-risking the development process as part of good practice in public asset management and procurement.

Ensure supporting surveys are completed as early as possible before land is transferred to a CLT organisation.

Make small sites with development potential available through the GLA Small Sites Small Builders portal or directly through local authorities.

Develop a standardised process for releasing land for CLH projects, supported by Local Plan policies.

Establish affordable housing and community-led development as strategic priorities within local authority land disposal strategies.

Adopt a low Residual Land Value (RLV) approach where appropriate to support genuinely affordable housing outcomes.

Use AI and digital mapping tools to identify potential development opportunities and assess viability more efficiently.

Ring-fence suitable publicly owned sites for community-led housing once initial viability has been established.

Support CLTs with early-stage due diligence and survey information to reduce duplication, costs and procurement barriers.

3

THE COST OF COMMUNITY LAND TRUST DEVELOPMENT

For CLH projects to succeed, costs need to be manageable, with appropriate budgets and resourcing for all parties involved. This includes not only the community group itself, but also those facilitating the project – including, for example, council teams involved in site identification and the legal transfer of land.

At the same time, the true value of a project – financial, social and wider community benefit – needs to be identified from the outset. Project objectives must broadly align between the land provider (such as a council or the GLA) and the CLH group.

In London, the affordable housing threshold refers to the minimum number of homes in a development that triggers mandatory affordable housing requirements. Currently, developments with 10 or more homes are required to provide affordable housing contributions, either through on-site affordable homes or financial contributions. Developments of nine homes or fewer are generally exempt from this requirement.

In the case of London CLT, building nine affordable homes to avoid the threshold is technically possible, but not optimal, as it takes advantage of the planning policy threshold without achieving meaningful scale. The management effort involved in delivering 10 homes is broadly similar to that required for 40 homes, meaning larger projects are generally more viable while also delivering more homes.

Project Costs

As noted earlier, community-led projects are often difficult to develop because the sites available have significant constraints. This can create financial viability challenges through increased build costs and delays during planning or procurement. CLT groups have frequently navigated these complexities successfully, demonstrating resilience and ingenuity in turning challenges into opportunities and delivering affordable homes on sites that might otherwise remain undeveloped.

CLT project costs can broadly be divided into the following categories:

i. Site Acquisition

Costs include land value (if any), legal fees relating to land transfer and Stamp Duty Land Tax. Most CLH projects aim to deliver genuinely affordable homes for those in housing need, and this objective is generally only achievable where land is acquired at a low or zero Residual Land Value (RLV).

ii. Development Management

This covers consultant fees, project management and internal staffing costs, surveys and planning fees. On larger schemes, these costs may account for as little as 10 per cent of overall construction costs. However, on smaller and more complex projects, they can rise to as much as 20 per cent, with a corresponding impact on development viability.

iii. Construction

Construction costs, including contingency, represent the largest proportion of any development budget and are becoming increasingly challenging due to sustained construction inflation in recent years.

Citizens House, completed in early 2023, was delivered at a contract sum of £2.5million for 11 homes – approximately £227,000 per home – equating to £3,600/ m² gross internal area on a constrained site with difficult access and surrounding buildings. Current London CLT projects are estimated at approximately £4,000/ m² gross internal area as of early 2025.

iv. Sales and Allocations

For CLH projects, sales and allocations are relatively low due to consistently strong demand for genuinely affordable homes. Nevertheless, it remains important to allow sufficient time and resources for the sales and allocations process, including marketing and applicant engagement.

To maintain trust within the community, London CLT ensured that the allocations process (see **Figure 3** for breakdown) was as transparent and fair as possible. The process typically began around 12 months before residents moved into their homes, allowing adequate time for marketing, applications, reviews and selection.

Community organisations should also consider the implications of existing tenancy agreements for prospective residents. Understanding notice periods and rental obligations can help build realistic handover programmes and avoid unnecessary difficulties for residents, particularly those in the private rented sector. Allowing greater flexibility and contingency within the programme can provide increased certainty.

v. Financing and Viability

CLH groups generally lack substantial reserves or existing capital and therefore rely on grants and development finance to support project delivery and cashflow.

For smaller CLT schemes, the GLA has provided development finance through Big Issue Invest at rates close to the Bank of England base rate (3.75 per cent in early 2026), as demonstrated at Citizens House. Larger projects typically require commercial lending, often at rates of approximately 4.5 per cent above the base rate (around 8.25 per cent in early 2026), resulting in significantly higher interest costs.

One of the key challenges facing many CLTs is securing revenue funding during the early stages of a project, before capital funding becomes available. Without adequate funding for organisational capacity and early-stage development work, it can be difficult to progress schemes to the point where they are able to attract investment. The different types of financing are outlined in **Figure 2**.

Rising construction costs and higher interest rates have made achieving financial viability

increasingly difficult, requiring careful balancing of costs and projected income.

Different community-led projects also deliver a range of affordable tenures. Church Grove, developed by RUSS in Lewisham, includes both social rent and affordable homes for sale. London CLT currently operates a single-tenure model, providing homes for sale to key workers and households on average incomes. Purchase prices are linked to local average incomes, with all future resales based on the same principle to maintain permanent affordability.

Funding Types

Most CLT groups lack significant assets or cash reserves, making funding more difficult than for established developers. In the early stages, many organisations rely heavily on volunteer capacity and small grants from supportive organisations such as Community Led Housing London, which has historically helped fund initial feasibility work.

London CLT was able to support the early stages of the Citizens House project using surpluses generated from the sales of CLT homes at St Clements, recycling funds from one project into the next. This supported staff costs, community engagement and pre-planning work. London CLT also raised £500,000 through a Community Share Offer to support design and development work on Citizens House and other schemes.

In response to sector-wide funding challenges, both revenue and capital funding mechanisms have evolved through the GLA, most notably via the Community Housing Fund between 2019 and 2026. Revenue grants provided through the GLA have enabled groups such as London CLT and NW3 CLT to progress projects through to planning stage, with funding often recycled across multiple projects over time.

The Community Housing Fund also provided capital grant support for Citizens House and other CLT schemes through bespoke grant agreements.

	Definition	Challenges/Barriers	How is it secured?
Revenue funding	<p>This refers to the funding required to develop a project from initial idea through to planning consent.</p> <p>Identifying and securing appropriate revenue funding, whether through grant or other sources, is essential to allow the project to proceed.</p>	<p>Harder to secure than capital funding, as planning risk is generally a barrier.</p> <p>Needed before any capital funding can be accessed.</p>	<p>Grants – e.g., CHF revenue grant.</p> <p>CSOs – e.g., London CLT's CSO</p> <p>Development surplus from other projects, although unlikely for start-up CLTs.</p>
Capital funding	<p>This is the upfront funding required for the actual construction and development of the project.</p> <p>Capital funding can come from a variety of sources, such as loans, grants, community shares, etc.</p> <p>Securing the necessary capital is crucial to being able to physically build out the planned development.</p>	<p>Usually, larger sums than revenue funding.</p> <p>Can often be secured through loans because there's a physical asset with planning permission as security.</p>	<p>Development loans – e.g., Big Issue Invest fund.</p> <p>Grants – e.g., CHF capital grant.</p> <p>Investor equity such as CSOs – e.g., London CLT's CSO.</p>

Figure 2: the different types of finance available to CLTs

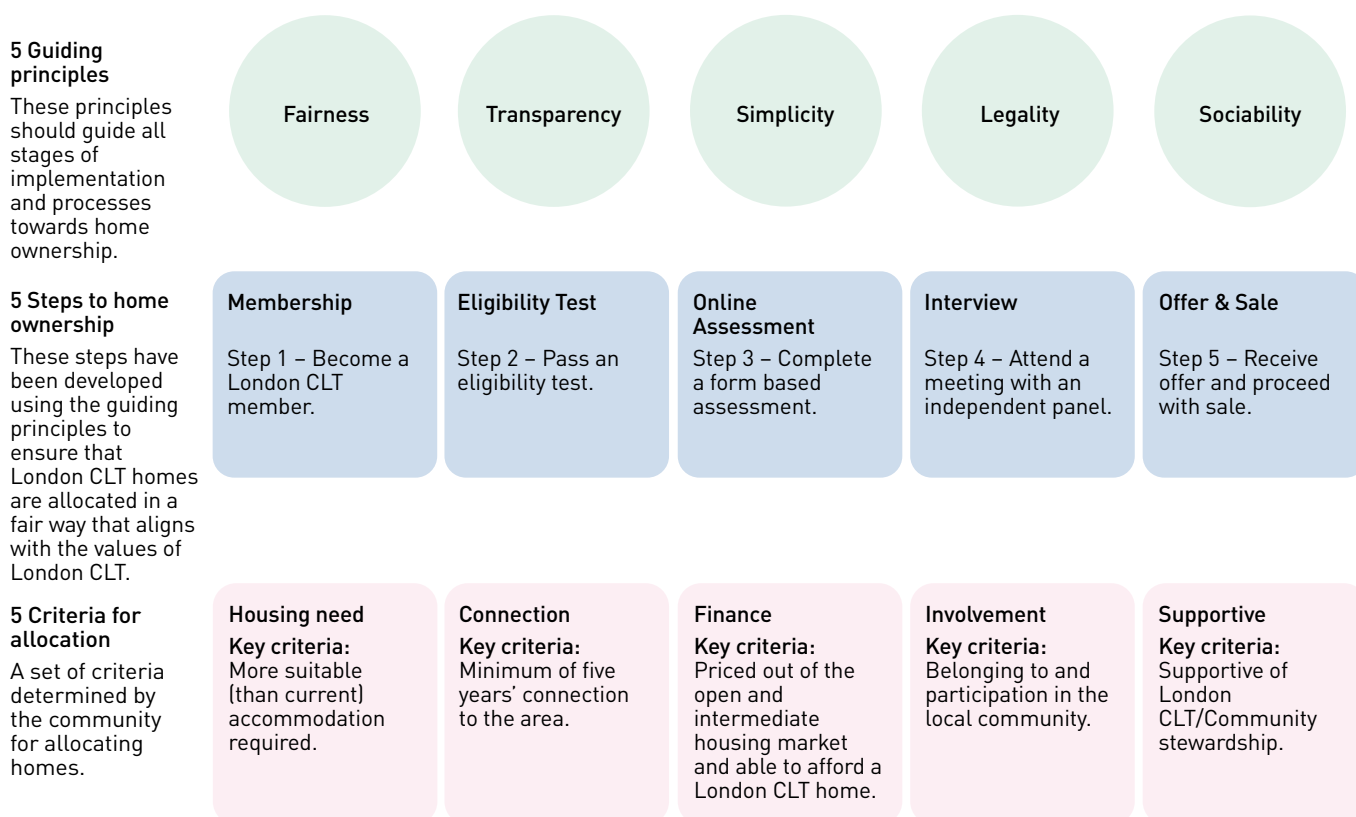


Figure 3: London CLT's housing allocations policy (condensed) Full figure can be accessed through London CLT's website and also found on page 47 (Figure 4).

However, it has recently been confirmed that the Community Housing Fund will not continue beyond projects with construction starts before September 2026. This creates a significant funding gap, particularly for at-risk development costs incurred prior to planning permission.

All work undertaken before planning permission is secured is speculative. Securing loans without planning consent or a legal interest is extremely difficult. Traditional developers and housing associations often rely on internal reserves during these high-risk stages, whereas CLTs may struggle to raise sufficient funds despite their long-term potential.

Several funding pathways could help support CLTs during early project stages:

- Right to Buy receipts, which allow local authorities to direct up to 40 per cent of council house sale receipts towards new affordable housing projects, provided they are matched with 60 per cent funding from other sources within five years.
- Section 106 contributions, through which developers provide financial contributions towards affordable housing and supporting community infrastructure.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, particularly local CIL, where boroughs are required to allocate 15-25 per cent of receipts towards community-prioritised projects.

Development Finance

Development finance must ultimately be secured against future scheme income and often covers the majority of project delivery costs. Lenders typically require CLTs to demonstrate the ability to cover at least 110 per cent of first-year interest payments, making higher levels of grant support critical in securing funding.

London CLT has experimented with a range of different development approaches. For its pilot scheme at St Clements in Tower Hamlets, the organisation partnered with a major developer, Galliford Try/Linden Homes, and affordable housing provider, Peabody, under an 'agency model'. Under this arrangement, London CLT purchased homes at a pre-agreed affordable price upon practical completion, funded through residents' mortgages.

This approach avoided the need for substantive borrowing and enabled London CLT to reinvest sales surpluses into future projects.

For smaller projects, the GLA has provided access to a £10 million development finance fund administered by Big Issue Invest. This has supported projects such as Citizens House and Church Grove by RUSS in Lewisham.

At Citizens House, £2.5 million of development finance was secured at interest rates close to the Bank of England base rate at the time. As homes were sold, the finance was repaid incrementally, reducing interest liabilities. Average interest costs equated to approximately £500 per month per home, representing a manageable risk.

By contrast, the larger Cable Street scheme, financed through a commercial lender at higher interest rates, could incur interest costs of approximately £100,000 per month if all 40 homes remained unsold – around £2,500 per month per home.

There is therefore a strong case for increasing the scale of development finance available to the community-led housing sector. A new fund in the region of £50-100 million could help bridge the gap between smaller projects supported through social finance and larger schemes that currently depend on more expensive commercial borrowing. ●

📌 In London, the affordable housing threshold refers to the minimum number of homes in a development that triggers mandatory affordable housing requirements.📌

📌 If there was a collaborative process that could connect the viability process, valuations, and support the CLT in applying to the funds that they are eligible for, then this could help streamline a lot of the process that currently feels disjointed.📌

Michelle Huggins,
Development Consultant for NW3 CLT

📌 Make processes easier with standardised grant agreements. Now there is one for revenue grants, capital grant funding could also be standardised, rather than requiring extra support for an unnecessarily complex process.📌

Levent Kerimol, Chief Executive at
Community-Led Housing London

See also – **Figure 2:** The different types of finance available to CLTs

See also – **Figure 3:** London CLT's housing allocations policy (condensed)

Full figure can be accessed through London CLT's website and also found in **Figure 4.**

Best Practice

- Consider a range of affordable and mixed tenures, including Discount Market Sale (DMS), social rent and affordable rent, while prioritising early engagement with Registered Providers (RPs) to test delivery approaches.
- Ensure developments include an appropriate financial margin, even for not-for-profit CLTs. London CLT targets a minimum margin of 6 per cent to attract development finance and generate surpluses that can be reinvested into future projects.
- Explore social investment, creative fundraising and pooled finance models to support future CLT developments as the sector matures.
- Use crowdfunding and Community Share Offers (CSOs) to help fund early-stage development work.
- Layer multiple funding streams strategically, including Right to Buy receipts, Section 106 contributions and CIL funding, to strengthen project viability and long-term sustainability.
- Increase access to social investment and affordable development finance to support the growth of the CLH sector.
- Explore soft loans and ethical lending options through organisations such as Ecology Building Society and Nationwide Foundation.
- Begin conversations with lenders at an early stage, recognising that moving from an agreement in principle to secured lending requires careful preparation and planning.
- Develop more standardised grant agreements and funding processes to reduce unnecessary complexity and administrative burden.
- Prioritise long-term affordability models that link housing costs to local incomes and protect affordability for future generations.

4

BUILDING THE RIGHT TEAM

The transition from successful community campaign to delivered homes requires a fundamental shift in approach. Where early stages rely on grassroots organising, political pressure, and volunteer energy, the development phase demands professional project management, technical expertise, and systematic co-ordination of multiple specialists.

This transformation presents both opportunities and risks for community-led projects. The challenge lies in maintaining the community's vision and democratic involvement while navigating the complex world of architects, engineers, contractors, and regulatory requirements. Unlike established developers with in-house teams and extensive experience, CLTs must build their development capacity from scratch, often learning through experience with their first project.

London CLT's journey from campaigning organisation to direct developer illustrates how community groups can successfully manage this transition. The key is recognising what expertise exists within the community group and what must be brought in from outside. Most CLTs will require professional project management support to co-ordinate the technical team, manage budgets and timelines, and liaise with funders.

However, critical decisions about design, procurement, and community engagement should remain firmly under community control.

This chapter explores how to structure the development team, manage transitions through different project stages, and maintain community leadership while accessing the professional expertise required for successful delivery.

Project Management

The role of project manager is one of the key appointments that should be established early in the project lifecycle. Many CLH groups will have neither the expertise nor the capacity to act as professional project managers themselves.

At London CLT, each project is managed by an experienced external consultant who provides professional support to the organisation, liaises directly with the design team, and takes responsibility for budgeting, viability and programme management.

The client project manager also assists with selecting and appointing appropriate consultants, such as architects and engineers, and ensures that suitable professional indemnity insurance arrangements are in place.

On larger developments, such as the 40-home project at Cable Street, an employer's agent consultancy may also be appointed to provide additional support with cost management, programme oversight and co-ordination of the design team. In these instances, the client project manager remains in place, acting as the interface between the employer's agent and London CLT.

The client project manager also plays a crucial role liaising with GLA funding programmes and is ideally placed to prepare and administer grant applications, which are often fundamental to the success of CLH projects.

Project Stages

A CLH project shares many similarities with conventional housing development, but there are also important differences. These include community involvement throughout the process, campaigning for development land, alternative funding mechanisms and long-term community stewardship following completion.

The project stages outlined below reflect a typical community-led project once a group has been established and are based on London CLT's Citizens House project in Lewisham.

i. The Campaign – Securing a Development Site

This stage is covered in more detail in Chapter 2, including how to identify and campaign for sites, as well as the process for bidding for and transferring land to CLT groups.

A key aspect of site selection is ensuring it has genuine development potential and is financially viable. Feasibility and viability assessments are required, typically involving input from an architect, cost consultant and project manager. Once a site is considered viable in principle, legal work can commence on land transfer and Heads of Terms can be prepared.

To support CLH delivery in London, the GLA established and funded Community Led Housing London, a dedicated support organisation designed to create the infrastructure needed to deliver on CLH policies and improve access to funding. Informally known as ‘the Hub’, it has enabled groups without capital reserves to research and prepare bids for development sites, helping community projects that progress that might otherwise have stalled.

While GLA funding through the Hub has provided valuable support for specific development sites, it generally does not cover the early stages of building political support and identifying land opportunities. This remains an area where additional support could unlock further development opportunities.

As Cheryl Scott, Development Manager at London CLT noted, there remains a strong need for ‘campaigning to raise awareness of CLTs amongst communities, and funding to support this work’.

ii. Funding – Securing Funding Through to Planning Consent

Once a site has been identified, the next stage is securing sufficient funding to support the project through to planning permission.

Citizens House in Lewisham achieved this through a Community Share Offer, raising £500,000 between 2016 and 2026 to support this and other projects.

More recently, funding has also been available through the Community Housing Fund. Following submission of a revenue grant application, sufficient time should be allowed for the GLA review and approval process. The GLA prepares an internal report and requires panel review and formal sign-off before funding agreements can be issued. In complex cases, this process can take between six and nine months from application to having a signed grant agreement in place.

iii Design Team

The client project manager can advise on the expertise required and identify the key consultants needed for most community housing developments. The principal consultants within the design team are generally:

- **Architect** - responsible for design and overall co-ordination. It is important to appoint an architect with experience in community-led housing and specialist knowledge of housing policy and regulations. London CLT typically draws up a shortlist of potential architects, known to have the technical capability, with the final selection made by the CSG. This process ensures that the architect and the community have confidence in each other and a commitment to work together in partnership. The architect may also design the landscape, or alternatively a separate landscape architect can be engaged.

- Cost consultant or quantity surveyor – responsible for preparing cost estimates or ‘cost plans’ at each design stage. These costs are then used to inform a financial viability appraisal – which, in the case of London CLT, is prepared by the client project manager, considering all development cost and income.
- Planning consultant - the input of a planning consultant is critical for project success, particularly as community-led projects are often on sites with significant planning risk. The planning consultant liaises with the local planning authority; and assembles and reviews the level of information needed to make a planning application.
- Structural and environmental engineers - responsible for developing technical design strategies and providing information for costing purposes. These services may be delivered through one multidisciplinary consultant or through separate specialist appointments.
- Other specialist consultants - depending on the site and its complexity, additional expertise may be required, including ecology, arboriculture, transport, acoustics, air quality, flood risk. Early appointment of these specialists is important to minimise the risk of redesign later in the process.

iv. Design Development Through to Planning Decision

It is essential to prepare a clear project brief at the outset of the design stage. This should establish targets and ambitions relating to the type and size of homes, alongside wider community aspirations such as shared spaces and community gardens.

London CLT uses the brief to establish project criteria – for example, requiring all homes to be dual-aspect and avoiding ground-floor bedrooms. Professional consultancy input is then needed to translate the brief into viable design proposals that respond to the site context while remaining financially deliverable. This consultant team is generally referred to as the ‘design team’, led by the architect, who co-ordinates input from engineers and other specialists as the design evolves.

Throughout this stage, community engagement plays a vital role in shaping the project through regular meetings between the architect and the CSG. These meetings support meaningful local participation and enable a co-design process as the scheme develops. Wider public engagement is generally led by the CSG.

Community engagement not only improves design outcomes but can also generate strong support for the planning application. In the case of Citizens House in Lewisham, more than 100 letters of support were submitted, demonstrating strong community backing and helping facilitate a smoother route to planning approval.

To manage planning risk, design proposals are reviewed with planning officers during pre-application meetings to ensure broad compliance with planning policy before a formal planning submission is made.

The period from commencement of design work through to submission of a planning application will typically take around six months. However, more complex sites may require longer timescales, particularly where redesign is necessary to respond to planning feedback.

Achieving planning permission is a major milestone and critical to securing finance for the next stages of development. ●

Citizens House
community workshop
Image: Archio



🔑 **Key differences relate to community input at all stages; campaigning for development land; alternative means of funding support; and long-term community stewardship upon completion.**

🔑 **Unlike established developers with in-house teams and extensive experience, CLTs must build their development capacity from scratch, often learning through experience with their first project.**

🔑 **Achieving planning permission is a significant milestone and critical to attracting finance for the next stages.**

🔑 **Massive community involvement meant people had a say and there were minimal objections to the planning application, which was unheard of.**

James Ringwood, Lewisham Council

100

The number of letters of support from Lewisham Citizens for the Citizens House project.

Best Practice

- Prepare a clear project brief at the beginning of the design stage to establish ambitions relating to home types, housing standards and wider community priorities such as shared spaces and gardens.
- Appoint a development/client project manager early in the project to oversee budgeting, viability, programme management and co-ordination between the organisation, consultants and funding bodies.
- Ensure the client project manager acts as the key interface with GLA funding programmes and takes responsibility for preparing and administering grant applications.
- Engage an employer's agent consultancy on larger developments to provide additional support on programme management, cost control and design team co-ordination.
- Use Community Steering Groups (CSGs) to participate directly in consultant selection, particularly in appointing architects with suitable technical expertise and commitment to community-led development.
- Prioritise architects and consultants with experience in community-led housing and collaborative design processes.
- Undertake regular community engagement throughout the design process to support co-design, strengthen local support and improve planning outcomes.
- Engage specialist consultants early in the process to minimise planning risks and avoid costly redesign later in the project.
- Allow realistic timescales for grant approvals and planning processes, particularly where projects involve complex sites or multiple stakeholders.

5

PLANNING PATHWAYS FOR CLT DEVELOPMENT

The current planning system does not make explicit provision for CLH. However, recent revisions (December 2023) to the National Planning Policy Framework do now support the sector through a new ‘community-led exception’ policy, whereby land not previously designated for housing might be suitable for community-led development and allowing only community-led groups to explore this potential.

New and robust planning policies need to be established to effectively condition land use to support CLT development in specific sites or areas. This could be achieved through developing SPDs specifically for small sites designated for CLH with defined affordability levels, or through named site allocations in local or neighbourhood plans.

Once these new planning policies are in place, they would define clearer opportunities for community-led housing, while simultaneously restricting market-led development on these sites. In turn this would inform the RICS valuation process, typically resulting in a nominal Residual Land Value that makes projects financially feasible for CLT groups.

CLTs and the Adoption of Discount Market Sale (DMS)

CLTs often adopt the Discounted Market Sale (DMS) model because it allows them to deliver affordable housing without requiring Housing Association or Registered Provider (RP) status. Under DMS, homes are sold at a discount to their market value, with the discount typically remaining in perpetuity for future buyers. However, this creates challenges within the planning system because DMS is primarily recognised as a CIL relief product, rather than being consistently identified as an affordable housing product across all London boroughs.

The classification of DMS impacts how these homes are counted towards borough affordable housing targets, potentially making it harder for CLTs to gain planning approval for their projects. This misalignment between CLTs' preferred delivery model and local planning priorities creates additional hurdles for CLH groups trying to deliver permanently affordable homes.

Another alternative route for securing affordability and delivering CLH has been through Section 106 agreements as part of a larger mixed-use development. This offers a robust legal framework within the planning permission process. These agreements

allow CLTs to embed specific affordability requirements into their developments, detailing crucial elements such as initial sales prices, future price calculations, eligibility criteria, and local income-linked formulas.

The strength of Section 106 lies in its ability to establish permanent affordability by mandating that all future sales adhere to the same affordability criteria, thereby preserving the discount in perpetuity. Currently, drafting Section 106 agreements for CLT projects often requires bespoke drafting, and a more standardised process could help ease the pathway for CLT delivery.

There can also be cultural issues within local authorities and planning departments, whereby CLT development is not yet widely recognised as a form of housing delivery. This lack of recognition means that, for each project, CLTs often have to over-explain the model to planning officers, which can be time-consuming and delay the process.

There are ways in which local authorities have supported development pathways for CLT development. At a local level, East Cambridgeshire District Council has implemented an SPD specifically supporting Community-Led Housing. In London, Southwark Council has shown support, initially through the Southwark Land Commission, and more recently through the Affordable Housing SPD (2024), which now recognises and supports CLT housing, including Discounted Market Sale, as a type of affordable housing.

How Can Planning Policy Support CLH?

National planning policy reform provides an opportunity to support community-led housing as a provider of genuinely affordable housing.

This should be accompanied by formal recognition of CLH models, such as CLTs, as distinct affordable housing providers within planning policy. The framework should create clear pathways for groups to access development finance without requiring RP status, while standardising grant agreements and funding processes to reduce risk and complexity.

Each London planning authority has specific housing needs and aims to meet these through a required range of different home sizes. Many community-led projects have an ambition to provide larger homes for families and multi-generational living. However, where sites are small and costs are high, it is often more economically viable to build smaller homes, as they require fewer materials and land while still generating sales income. Therefore, there needs to be a careful balance in the mix of homes to maintain project viability. Community-led schemes are ultimately guided both by the needs of their communities and by what the site's financial viability can support in terms of housing mix.

Planning – Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The CIL requires new developments to contribute towards local infrastructure costs. Generally, community-led affordable housing is exempt from CIL payments, although CLT groups need to be mindful of specific requirements within each borough.

Planning – Application

A planning application requires a complete submission package, including application forms, a planning statement, drawings, a Design and Access Statement, specialist reports, and a fee based on the number of homes. Once the application is validated, it receives a reference number and becomes publicly accessible for review. ●

LB Southwark Affordable Housing SPD (2024) now recognises and supports CLT housing, including Discount Market Sale, as a type of affordable housing.

Recent revisions (December 2023) of the National Planning Policy Framework now support the sector through a new 'community-led exception' policy, where land not previously designated for housing might be suitable.

East Cambridgeshire District Council have implemented an SPD specifically supporting Community-Led Housing.

National planning policy reform provides an opportunity to support community-led housing as a provider of genuinely affordable housing. While planning decisions are officially set at eight weeks for minor applications (under 10 homes) and 13 weeks for major applications, in reality timelines are often exceeded.

Best Practice

- Recognise CLT delivery as a distinct route for affordable housing provision within local planning policy. This would help streamline the planning process and reduce the need for repeated explanation of the CLT model.
- Develop local planning documents and strategies specifically supporting CLH, as demonstrated by Southwark Council's Affordable Housing SPD and East Cambridgeshire District Council's CLH SPD.
- Introduce specific regional and local planning policy support for CLH delivery to help provide additional affordable housing supply and contribute towards government housing targets.
- Standardise Section 106 agreements for CLT developments to reduce complexity, legal costs and delays.
- Support the formal recognition of Discounted Market Sale (DMS) as an affordable housing product across London boroughs.
- Create clearer pathways for CLTs to access development finance without requiring Registered Provider status.
- Use planning policy to secure permanently affordable homes through income-linked resale mechanisms.
- Consider simplified Community Right to Build Orders as a practical planning mechanism to support CLH delivery.

6

PROCUREMENT

This chapter focuses on the construction procurement phase of community-led housing (CLH) projects.

Types of Contract

The procurement process in CLH represents a critical phase that begins after securing planning permission, when contractors competitively bid to construct the development.

Groups can choose between several procurement approaches, with Design and Build being a common route in which contractors take responsibility for both completing the design and determining construction methods.

This is London CLT's preferred approach, as it can help reduce consultant fees and minimise the risk of cost escalation during construction. Alternatively, groups might pursue part self-build and self-finish approaches like those implemented by RUSS.

The entire procurement process typically spans around six months and is divided into three key stages: tender preparation, contractor pricing, and final negotiations leading to contract signing.

For groups seeking detailed guidance on procurement options, Community-Led Housing London's hub website is a valuable resource, offering comprehensive information about different approaches and their implications.

The Tender Process

It is possible to tender a project on the same information prepared for a planning application. However, at that stage there is generally insufficient detail to guarantee that the required quality standards will be achieved, and this approach is not recommended for CLT schemes. CLH projects benefit from developing additional design detail with community input throughout the process.

London CLT's Greenwich projects demonstrate this approach, with architects specifying key elements such as landscaping, entrances, balconies, and internal layouts to ensure quality standards.

Working with the employer's agent, who helps prepare the employer's requirements, the team will also develop a project specification. Together with the detailed drawings, this information will be priced by selected contractors.

The employer's agent represents the client's interests and helps prepare the employer's requirements and the detailed documentation specifying what contractors must deliver. The tender typically involves four to six pre-selected contractors with relevant experience.

Community-led projects can include broader social value requirements in the tender documentation, such as local apprenticeships or school engagement programmes, making these community benefits part of the contractor's contractual obligations.

Negotiation and Contract

Once tenders have been returned, it is common for two potential contractors to submit broadly similar prices, in which case a clarification process takes place to ensure a like-for-like comparison of tender returns. If the tender returns are above the cost plan estimate, a value engineering exercise will usually be required.

Citizens House in Lewisham received a £3 million tender return, with savings of £500,000 required to meet the £2.5 million budget.

Savings were made across the project – including, for example, replacing precast concrete panels with vertical brickwork that achieved a similar appearance.

Once contract negotiations are complete and a contract sum has been agreed, development finance can then be finalised.

Alignment of site possession during the lead-in period – usually ranging from one to three months depending on project complexity – is crucial for CLH groups, as it avoids the need for interim site security and complex insurance

arrangements that would typically be managed by larger organisations such as housing associations.

Any planning conditions requiring action can also be reviewed during this handover period to ensure a smooth transition of site responsibility and ongoing monitoring through a planning conditions tracker. ●

Groups can choose between several procurement approaches, with Design and Build being a common route where contractors take responsibility for both completing the design and determining construction methods, reducing risk for CLT groups.

Alignment during the lead-in period prior to construction, usually ranging from one to three months depending on project complexity, is crucial for CLH groups.

£3m tender return for Citizens House in Lewisham with £500K of savings needed to meet the budget of £2.5m.

Best Practice

- Consider Design and Build procurement routes to reduce project risk, minimise consultant costs and provide greater cost certainty during construction.
- Develop detailed design information beyond planning-stage drawings before tendering to ensure quality standards are protected throughout procurement and construction.
- Retain strong community involvement during procurement and design development to ensure the project continues to reflect local priorities and aspirations.
- Appoint an employer's agent to represent the client's interests and help prepare clear Employer's Requirements and tender documentation.
- Select contractors with relevant experience of community-led or affordable housing projects wherever possible.
- Embed social value requirements within tender documentation, including apprenticeships, local employment opportunities and community engagement activities.
- Allow sufficient time for tender clarification and value-engineering exercises where tender returns exceed available budgets.
- Align site possession and contractor mobilisation carefully to minimise interim security, insurance and management costs.
- Monitor planning conditions proactively through a planning conditions tracker to support a smooth transition into the construction phase.

7

CONSTRUCTION

This chapter focuses on the construction phase of community-led housing (CLH) projects. It is both rewarding and challenging. Finally seeing homes take shape after years of campaigning and planning, while managing complex decisions, cashflow, and quality control.

Two recently completed projects, both in Lewisham, demonstrate that CLT developments can be delivered successfully by local communities. Church Grove, by RUSS, completed in 2024 with 37 new homes; and Citizens House, by London CLT, completed in early 2023 with 11 homes.

Key Management Approaches

Community-led organisations typically lack the specialised expertise needed to manage construction contracts effectively. To address this gap, London CLT engaged an employer's agent for the Citizens House project, who served dual roles as contract administrator, representing the organisation's interests, and Clerk of Works, monitoring construction quality and documenting monthly progress.

The organisation also adopted an early contractor involvement approach, entering into pre-agreements with its chosen contractor rather than pursuing a traditional two-stage tender process. Both London CLT and RUSS worked with the same contractor, Roof, through design-and-build contracts, in which the contractor took responsibility for completing design work alongside construction.

Costs and Cashflow Management

The financial management of construction requires careful attention to cashflow and payment structures. A contingency budget of around 5% is recommended to allow for unforeseen additional costs.

Construction costs are typically paid in arrears and monitored through overall project cashflow. Monthly valuations and payment requests are reviewed by the employer's agent before client approval.

London CLT demonstrated good practice by drawing down only the loan amounts required in line with monthly valuations, thereby reducing interest payments.

Upon completion, the construction loan was partially repaid using capital receipts from each home sale and fully repaid following the final sale. The project's ability to remain financially viable while delivering high-quality affordable homes demonstrates effective project management and strong contractor performance, even when facing budget adjustments.

Handover and Completion

The handover process represents a significant milestone for the entire community, particularly for new residents. Before handover can take place, thorough quality-control checks and snagging inspections must be carried out to identify and address any defects.

At Citizens House, completion was delayed by two months, from December 2022 to February 2023, due to wet weather and the redesign of landscaping works after the discovery of a gas pipeline in an unexpected location.

It is recommended that pre-sales assessments are conducted early, residents secure mortgages in principle, and a two-month margin is built into communicated handover dates.

Planning handovers for spring or autumn can help mitigate weather-related complications, as external works are particularly vulnerable to winter conditions. This additional buffer enables residents to plan more effectively for potential delays while giving developers greater flexibility in managing external factors beyond their control.

London CLT engaged an employer's agent for their Citizens House project, who served dual roles as contract administrator representing their interests and as Clerk of Works.

Both London CLT and RUSS worked with the same contractor through single-stage design-and-build contracts, where contractors take responsibility for completing design work alongside construction.

Conducting pre-sales assessments early, ensuring residents have mortgages in principle, and building in a two-month margin of error, when communicating hand over dates is preferable.

48

New homes delivered in total at Church Grove and Citizens House

Best Practice

- Engage an employer's agent during the construction phase to oversee contract administration, monitor quality and manage project reporting.
- Consider early contractor involvement approaches to improve collaboration, reduce procurement risk and strengthen programme certainty.
- Use Design and Build contracts where appropriate to streamline responsibility for both design completion and construction delivery.
- Maintain a contingency budget of around 5 per cent to help manage unforeseen construction costs and design changes.
- Monitor construction cashflow closely through monthly valuations and payment reviews to maintain financial control throughout the build programme.
- Only draw down development finance in line with actual expenditure to minimise unnecessary interest payments.
- Undertake thorough snagging and quality control inspections before handover to ensure homes meet agreed standards.
- Carry out pre-sales assessments and secure mortgage agreements in principle early to reduce delays at completion stage.
- Build realistic contingencies into handover programmes, including at least a two-month allowance for delays caused by weather or unforeseen site issues.
- Where possible, schedule handovers during spring or autumn to reduce the risk of weather-related delays to external works.

8

ALLOCATIONS

A transparent allocations policy is essential for showing how projects serve their intended demographic and align with local authority requirements to ensure housing benefits the local community. These policies typically consider borough-wide housing needs assessments while focusing on specific criteria relevant to the community-led housing model.

For London CLT's discount market sale homes, with genuinely affordable prices linked to average local incomes, the key criteria are housing need, a connection to the local area, and being priced out of remaining in the community.

Allocation Timing

At Citizens House, London CLT ran the allocation process during the construction period so that all homes were allocated in advance of completion. This enabled future households to meet before moving in and begin forming an informal residents' group. It also allowed time for homes to be reallocated prior to completion, as circumstances inevitably change, and for new applications to be considered.

Fair Selection Process

The application review process for Citizens House was designed to be thorough and fair. Each application was reviewed multiple times by different people, including staff and board members.

A scoring system was used, weighted towards housing need, although the exact details of the system were not shared with applicants in order to prevent gaming.

As an additional safeguard, an external allocations panel reviewed and interviewed pre-screened applicants to provide an independent perspective.

A copy of London CLT's allocations policy can be viewed on the London CLT website here. <https://www.londonclt.org/housing-allocations-process> and in **Figure 4**.

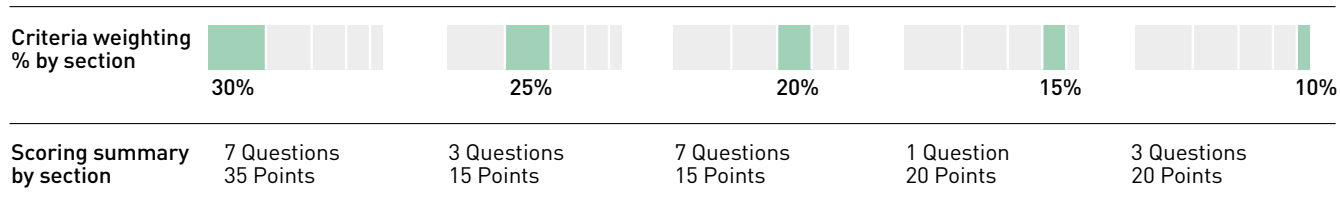
See also **Figure 4** – Housing Allocations Overview ●

⚡ A transparent allocations policy is essential for showing how projects serve their intended demographic and align with local authority requirements to ensure housing benefits the local community. 7

⚡ London CLT offered in-person assistance with completing applications and ran workshops on responsibilities, financial management, and group dynamics for successful applicants. 7

	Fairness	Transparency	Simplicity	Legality	Sociability
<p>5 Guiding principles</p> <p>These principles should guide all stages of the implementation and processes of the steps to home ownership.</p>	<p>Allocation of units will be determined solely on the extent to which the criteria have been met and therefore will be free from discrimination.</p> <p>Example in process: Work with support, community and advocacy groups to help individuals with application process. E.g. those with limited English skills.</p>	<p>Applicants will receive feedback on their application. It will be clear in the process which level of personnel are making decisions throughout.</p> <p>Example in process: If and when any part of the process changes, to make every effort to ensure all applicants are made aware of this change and reasons for the change.</p>	<p>The ability to demonstrate the meeting of the allocation criteria will be made as simple as possible.</p> <p>Example in process: Benchmark our application process against others to ensure it is as succinct and simple as possible</p>	<p>Allocations made in accordance with the Disability and Discriminations Act & the Race Equality Act. Process adheres to GDPR 2018. Financial transactions and services offered</p> <p>Example in process: Seek support and guidance from legal experts on the policy and the more detailed process.</p>	<p>The policy and applications process must be such that it can be applied to a large number of applicants and can be replicated on various London CLT sites.</p> <p>Example in process: Ensure resource is in place to implement the policy.</p>
<p>5 Steps to home ownership</p> <p>These steps have been developed using the guiding principles to ensure that London CLT homes are allocated in a fair way that aligns with the values of London CLT.</p>	<p>Membership</p> <p>Step 1 – Become a London CLT member.</p> <p>This shows support for London CLT and involvement in the process.</p>	<p>Eligibility Test</p> <p>Step 2 – Pass an eligibility test.</p> <p>This is a precursor to the formal application. By being transparent about what will be expected in the next steps and also using a simple format, the eligibility test aims to save people time when considering whether to apply for a London CLT home.</p>	<p>Online Assessment</p> <p>Step 3 – Complete a form based assessment.</p> <p>This step ensures all key criteria are met (as determined in the criteria for allocation). Each application will be scored according to how well they meet the criteria. Evidence of criteria will be requested at this stage. E.g. Proof of living conditions.</p>	<p>Interview</p> <p>Step 4 – Attend a meeting with an independent panel.</p> <p>The panel includes board members and third party reps. Top scoring applicants will be invited for an interview to verify their application. The number of applications invited for an interview will match actual housing availability.</p>	<p>Offer & Sale</p> <p>Step 5 – Receive offer and proceed with sale.</p> <p>Preferences matched as fairly as possible. E.g. Disabled and access requirements prioritised over 'nice to have' requests. Undertake training on responsible home ownership. Terms signed, external advisors engaged to complete sale.</p>
<p>5 Criteria for allocation*</p> <p>A set of criteria determined by the community for allocating homes.</p>	<p>Housing need</p> <p>Key criteria: More suitable (than current) accommodation required.</p> <p>Summary: Questions determine need based on current situation inc. overcrowding, lack of privacy, affordability, distance from community, impact on disability, security and other.</p> <p>Example question: How does the size of your current home impact you?</p>	<p>Connection</p> <p>Key criteria: Minimum of five years' connection to the area.</p> <p>Summary: Questions determine connection based on whether they are a resident, cumulative time lived in area, connection to area through family, work, community group etc. to the area.</p> <p>Example question: State the length of your residency in the area.</p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Key criteria: Priced out of the open and intermediate housing market and able to afford a London CLT home.</p> <p>Summary: Questions determine both financial need and eligibility from income to saving and debt status.</p> <p>Example question: State your regular monthly income.</p>	<p>Involvement</p> <p>Key criteria: Belonging to and participation in the local community.</p> <p>Summary: Question determines applicant's past, present and future involvement in the community (excluding London CLT involvement).</p> <p>Example question: Describe how you are linked to the local community. (Past, Present & Future).</p>	<p>Supportive</p> <p>Key criteria: Supportive of London CLT/Community stewardship.</p> <p>Summary: Questions determine if the applicants values align with London CLT's.</p> <p>Example question: How important is providing affordable housing to buy in London? (choose between very important and not important at all).</p>

* Information provided here is based on results of a survey completed by London CLT members in 2017/18 prior to allocating London CLT first homes.



Best Practice

- Develop a robust communications and outreach strategy for allocations. Early engagement with the community is critical, alongside improving wider awareness and understanding of CLTs as organisations.
- Ensure communications activity forms part of a broader organisational strategy, rather than focusing solely on the allocations process.
- Begin planning the allocations process at least one year before residents move into the development. This allows sufficient time to establish the Resident Management Company (RMC) and support residents in taking ownership of it.
- Ensure the allocations process includes:
 - An objective scoring system
 - Independent external oversight or validation
 - Accessibility and application support
 - Clear and transparent communication throughout.
- Provide practical support for applicants, including in-person assistance with applications and workshops covering responsibilities, financial management and community living.
- Allow flexibility within the allocations process so that homes can be reallocated if applicants' circumstances change before completion.

9

HANDOVER AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

The completion of construction marks a pivotal moment in any community-led housing project, but it represents far more than the end of a development process. For Community Land Trusts, handover signals the beginning of a new phase focused on long-term community stewardship and resident empowerment.

Unlike conventional housing developments, where residents simply move into completed homes, community-led projects require a thoughtful transition that prepares residents to become active stewards of their shared community.

Resident Management

The handover process for the Citizens House project was a carefully planned transition that began well ahead of completion in order to prepare residents for their new homes and roles within the CLT community.

The handover process involved comprehensive workshops covering management responsibilities, financial planning, and collaborative decision-making. London CLT's Communities Manager facilitated sessions explaining voting rights, budget management, and group dynamics, helping to prepare residents for their community roles.

The transition included strong resident engagement, with representatives from every household attending preliminary management meetings. London CLT staff initially served as named members on the Resident Management Company (RMC), providing continuity and support while residents developed confidence and management skills.

When formal responsibility transferred, residents showed remarkable enthusiasm, opting for four voting board members rather than the suggested three in order to distribute responsibilities more broadly. This demonstrated genuine commitment to shared governance and provided positive indicators for long-term sustainability.

Long-term community stewardship is at the heart of London CLT's approach. Success encompasses neighbourhood building and innovative community development, with the gradual transfer of control ensuring resident communities become genuine stewards of their shared environment, transforming housing developments into thriving, self-sustaining communities.

This process begins well before residents move in, with the goal of empowering residents to actively manage their community.

As Oliver Bulleid, Executive Director of London CLT, notes. 'We need to take a long-term view to empower residents to take on sustainable stewardship. Success isn't just about building homes – it's about providing safe, genuinely affordable homes within a framework that allows individuals and communities to thrive and flourish.' ●

👉 We need to take a long-term view to empower residents to take on sustainable stewardship. Success isn't just about building homes – it's about providing safe, genuinely affordable homes within a framework that allows individuals and communities to thrive and flourish. 🗨️

Best Practice

- Support residents to build confidence and agency through structured workshops covering key aspects of community living and management.
- Provide workshops on management structures and responsibilities to help residents understand the legal and practical aspects of managing their homes and shared spaces.
- Offer financial and budgeting workshops to support residents with both personal budgeting and the financial management of the community.
- Facilitate workshops on group dynamics and collaboration to help establish strong and effective community relationships from the outset.
- Consider establishing a Resident Management Company (RMC) to enable residents to lead and manage the development after completion.
- Ensure ongoing support through a dedicated Communities Manager or equivalent role to provide continuity and long-term stewardship support beyond the initial move-in period.
- Begin resident engagement well before completion and handover so that residents are prepared to participate actively in governance and decision-making.
- Encourage broad resident participation in governance structures to strengthen shared ownership, accountability and long-term community resilience.



10

CONCLUSION

Community Land Trusts represent a viable approach to delivering genuinely affordable housing on small sites in London, as demonstrated through successful projects like Citizens House, Church Grove, and London CLT's Greenwich development sites.

Top left: Citizens House
home owner
Bottom left: Citizens House
planning submission
Images: Archio

They also provide genuine additionality to housing supply, often bringing forward projects that would not have proceeded through other delivery routes. This additionality, if supported and funded correctly, could contribute significant numbers of new affordable homes for local people in housing need.

At the same time, these developments not only provide new homes but help to improve neighbourhoods through the transformation of run-down pockets of neglected land and the strengthening of community cohesion and community wealth building.

Strong community engagement proves fundamental from project inception. London CLT's collaborative approach with Citizens UK and local organisations has been essential for building support, securing land, and maintaining momentum throughout lengthy development processes.

Their tripartite board structure, with resident, community, and stakeholder board members, ensures genuine community engagement and encourages long-term stewardship.

Land acquisition for development remains the most significant challenge in London's competitive market. Sites released for community development through the GLA's Small Sites Small Builders programme show early promise, and it is hoped that more and larger sites could be released through this programme.

At a local level, individual boroughs are encouraged to collaborate with CLTs to identify suitable sites and reduce development risks before transfer.

Funding presents ongoing challenges, particularly for early-stage costs. While the Community Housing Fund provides crucial grant support, this fund has not been renewed, and the resulting lack of funding certainty prevents CLTs from planning for growth.

Strategic use of Right to Buy receipts, Section 106 contributions, and the Community Infrastructure Levy could better support early-stage development.

Planning systems remain complex, with many authorities unfamiliar with CLT models. Supportive planning policies through Supplementary Planning Documents or Development Plan Documents are essential.

Looking ahead, continued policy support, sustainable funding, and standardised processes could unlock significant potential for community-centred development in addressing London's housing crisis.

A decent, secure, and affordable home is a human right, and a key determinant in future life opportunities. Community-led housing has the potential to change lives for the better, long term, but will only thrive if the right conditions, funding support, and development sites are available and readily accessible. ●

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Oliver Bulleid – Executive Director, London Community Land Trust and Co-Author of this Guide

Sem Lee, Founder & Director, Ouri Labs Ltd and Co-Author of this Guide

Christine Bowles, Communications & Operations Manager, London Community Land Trust

Janet Emmanuel – Board Member, London Community Land Trust

Claire Bennie – Director, Municipal

Peter Brierley – Assistant Director, Citizens UK

Meredith Bowles – Director, Mole Architects

Tom Chance – CEO, National Community Land Trust Network
Lev Kerimol – Director, Community Led Housing London

Peter Davey – Retired Housing Consultant, NW3 Community Land Trust

Hannah Emery Wright - Communities Manager at London Community Land Trust and Co-Author of this Guide

Calum Green – Director of Advocacy and Communications at Involve

Mellis Haward – Director of Archio

Stephen Hill – Director, C20 futureplanners

Michelle Huggins – Independent Development Manager

Councillor Mariam Lolavar – Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Borough of Sanctuary

Eleanor Margolies – Resident at Church Grove

Beverley Nomafo – Programme Director, Leathermarket CBS

Councillor Anthony Okereke – Leader of the Royal Borough of Greenwich

Sanya Polescuk – Architect and Co-Founder, NW3 Community Land Trust

Tom Randle – Senior Associate, Levitt Bernstein

James Ringwood – Housing Delivery Manager, London Borough of Lewisham

Cheryl Scott – Associate Adviser and Development Manager, London Community Land Trust

Osama Shoush – Strategic Lead, Southwark Council

Anurag Verma – Chair, Rural Urban Synthesis Society

Rhiannon Winstanley-Sharples – Community Organiser at the Centre for Theology & Community

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Sites requirement document developed by London CLT can be accessed here: https://www.londonclt.org/_files/ugd/9b1760_bfb43657f42c475cbef43c4cbeb52a3e.pdf

Appendix 2 – Case studies of CLT projects. Each case study is explained in more detail the following pages.

2A. CITIZENS HOUSE, BRASTED CLOSE – BY LONDON CLT

2B. CABLE STREET – BY LONDON CLT

2C. SUSAN ROAD – BY LONDON CLT

2D. FELIXSTOWE ROAD – BY LONDON CLT

2E. CHURCH GROVE – BY RUSS

2F. DALEHAM GARDENS – BY NW3 CLT

2A CITIZENS HOUSE, BRASTED CLOSE LONDON CLT



Citizens House
Image: Archio

Project description

Initiated by the local community, this project delivered 11 new homes built on a local authority garage site in Sydenham and existing residents involved in the process. The homes are genuinely affordable and protected in perpetuity.

Community group and structure Lewisham Citizens, part of Citizens UK (CUK), held an assembly with 400 people before the local elections in 2014 and persuaded the then Mayor of Lewisham, Sir Steve Bullock, to work with local people to deliver CLT homes in the borough.

After extensive community site walks and a local membership drive, Lewisham Citizens brought in London CLT to discuss specific potential sites with the council.

They also engaged with residents and neighbours and gradually built up a Community Steering Group to help with the plans.

Key Challenges

- Funding – As the design stages took place before the CHF was available, funding to support pre-development and planning stages was not readily accessible.

- London CLT's first development – a steep learning curve in building the team and developing the knowledge required.

- Site constraints – restricted construction access, plus a gas main running underneath the site.

- Reliance on external consultants – introduced additional cost, and the potential risk of not becoming an intelligent and knowledgeable client.

Successes

- Securing grant funding – Capital grant funding through the GLA's CHF addressed the viability gap, allowing all homes to be genuinely affordable to local people on average incomes.

- Completing construction – The construction phase progressed well, with project quality maintained throughout the design-and-build contract.

- Maintaining budget – There was a budget and grant uplift during the project; however, the construction contract was delivered on budget. A major achievement for both the project team and the contractor on such a small, complex site.

- Resident selection and engagement – London CLT started the home allocations process during the construction phase, ensuring most homes were allocated prior to completion.

- RMC – This was set up before completion, with resident engagement, to ensure smooth handover on completion.

2A CITIZENS HOUSE, BRASTED CLOSE LONDON CLT

Site in Numbers

- 2023 completion.
- 0.1 hectares site area.
- 11 homes in total.
- Density: 110 homes per hectare.
- DMS price based on median income.
- 65 per cent of open market value.
- Six two-beds at £272,500.
- Five one-beds at £215,000.

Financing

- Grant – GLA CHF.
- Big Issue Invest Construction Finance.
- Community Share Offer – London CLT CSO.

The Site

- The site was identified by the local community who lobbied the council to release it for community-led affordable housing.
- LB Lewisham retained the freehold and sold a long leasehold of 250 years to London CLT.
- The site went through a process to confirm the residual land value (RLV) and was subsequently transferred for a nominal value of £1, based on being developed for genuinely affordable homes. Use of the site was restricted to affordable housing in perpetuity, based on London CLT's model of sales linked to average incomes.

Grant Funding

GLA capital grant through the CHF to help fund procurement and construction and address the viability gap for the London CLT DMS homes with prices set at levels affordable to local people on average incomes.

Development Finance

- Construction finance of £2.5m through Big Issue Invest's £10m London Housing Fund, supported by the GLA.
- In 2016 London CLT raised £500,000 through a CSO, to support this and other projects.

Political Buy-In

Support from Lewisham council officers and local councillors ensured that the site was able to be transferred to London CLT, on the condition that genuinely affordable homes for local people would be built there.

Pricing

- Home prices are set at affordable levels, accessible for local people on average incomes in Lewisham.
- Any resale is also linked to average income, ensuring affordability in perpetuity.

Procurement

The local community selected:

- The architects from a shortlist of four and remained involved throughout including with the procurement of the successful construction company.

Community Engagement Summary

- The campaign began in 2014 with Lewisham Citizens.
- Extensive community involvement in the design process.
- Regular community events, workshops and meetings.

- A CSG formed in 2017.
- Over 100 people applied for 11 homes.
- London CLT's first direct development.
- RMC formed by the residents.

The Project Team

- Archio Architects was selected through a community voting process.
- Roof was selected as construction company.

Project management

- A CSG of local residents shaped project decision making.
- London CLT provided legal and financial management, with external consultant support.
- Handover
- The first residents moved in at the beginning of 2023.

Allocations Process

- Allocations process developed by CSG with a focus on fairness, transparency, and local connections.

Management and Stewardship

- Residents and local people continue to manage and make decisions over shared spaces.
- The RMC formed, with residents as Directors of the RMC and able to decide how their homes are maintained and managed in the long term.
- The RMC is able to hire (and fire if needed) the managing agent, thereby retaining control over service charges and key decisions for their development. ●

2B. CABLE STREET LONDON CLT



Top: Cable Street entrance view
Left: A community vision for Cable Street, Shadwell
Image: Levitt Bernstein

Project Description

A tight-knit Shadwell community is working to transform a disused TfL site into London CLT's largest Community Land Trust CLT project, with 41 homes, green spaces and a community room.

Community group and Structure A community group was established in 2016 by the director of the Centre for Theology and Community, and the local church.

The group worked with the East London Mosque through CUK to carry out neighbourhood mapping and identify potential sites.

The CSG, which initially comprised 12-15 members, experienced fluctuations in engagement over time and at one stage fell to just five active members. The project is supported by a core team of 12-13 people, primarily from the church, alongside Muslim leaders and local residents committed to affordable housing.

Key Challenges

- Site complexities and costs - The scale of the development challenges and associated costs was initially underestimated, partly because of the site's proximity to the railway.

- Negotiating with institutional bodies – The project faced challenges negotiating land values and securing adequate grant support, and at one point risked losing the site.

- Maintaining community engagement – Sustaining momentum and involvement over a long period, particularly during delays and setbacks, proved difficult.

- Funding and affordability issues – Land costs, limited grant funding, and mismatches between affordability metrics and local income levels raised concerns within the community.

Successes

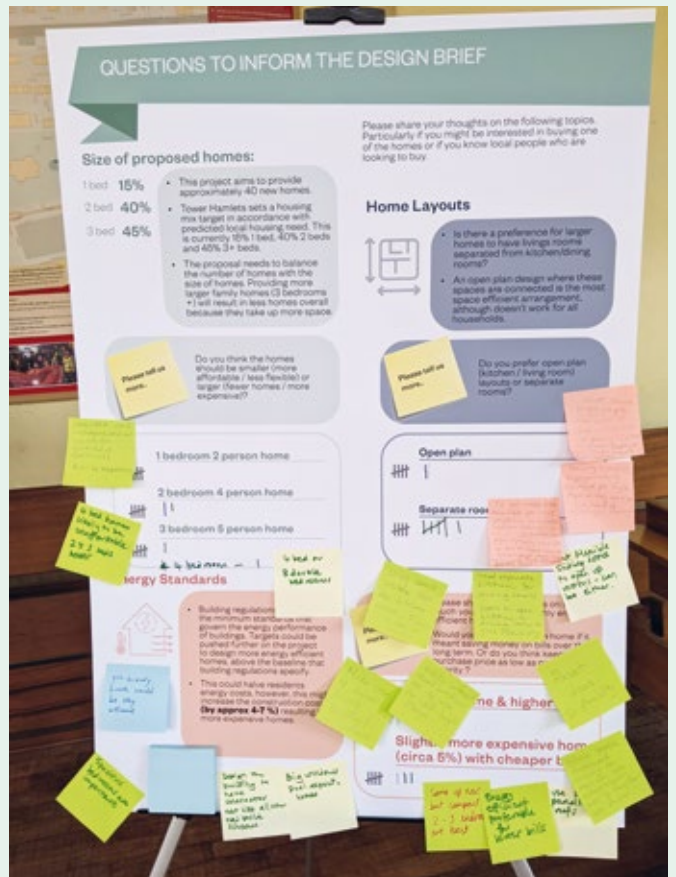
- Initial site acquisition – The community successfully identified and secured the Cable Street site through the GLA's Small Sites Small Builders programme in 2018.

- Political support and public commitments – The project gained support from key political figures, including the local mayor, Deputy Mayor of London Tom Copley, and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.

- Community mobilisation – When the project faced the potential loss of the site in August 2023, the community mobilised to support it, re-energising local involvement and bringing back previously disengaged members.



Cable Street
community workshop
Images: London CLT



2B. CABLE STREET LONDON CLT

Site in Numbers

- Estimated completion: 2028 (currently at pre planning design stage).
- Site area: 0.2 hectares.
- Total homes: forty-one.
- Density: 205 homes per hectare.
- DMS pricing based on median income.
- Homes priced at 65 per cent of open market.

Financing

- Grant funding: GLA Community Housing Fund (CHF)
- Development finance: To follow, likely through a commercial loan of up to 65 per cent GDV.
- Community Share Offer: London CLT community share offer support secured prior to CHF funding.

The Site

- A community-led campaign identified the site's potential.
- The site is owned by TfL and was brought forward for community-led housing through the GLA's Small Sites Small Builders programme in 2018.
- London CLT successfully secured the site through a community bid in 2018.
- At bid stage in 2018, the development appraisal indicated a residual land value (RLV) of £2.1 million, based on genuinely affordable homes and grant support of around £50,000 per home.
- Subsequent increases in build costs and interest rates have created viability challenges. However, with increased grant support the project remains viable, although potentially with a reduced RLV.
- The site is restricted to affordable housing in perpetuity, based on London CLT's model of linking sale prices to average local incomes. TfL retains the freehold and London CLT holds a 250-year lease.
- An agreement for lease remains in place until the main lease is transferred following planning approval and at the start of construction on site, subject to conditions being met.

Grant Funding

- GLA revenue grant through the Community Housing Fund (CHF) to support the pre-planning and planning stages.

Political Buy-In

- Strong backing from political leaders, including the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and Deputy Mayor for Housing Tom Copley.

Community Engagement Summary

- Campaign initiated by the local church and East London Mosque.
- Formation of the Community Steering Group (CSG).
- Long-running, locally driven campaign for affordable housing.
- Neighbourhood Walk for Affordable Housing in 2016.

-
- Public meetings and community events, including a Community Brief event and a 'Choose Your Architect' event.

-
- Regular community meetings and drop-in sessions.

-
- Stall at Watney Market to engage local residents.

The Project Team

- Levitt Bernstein Architects selected through community voting process.
- London CLT acting as development manager, supported by Potter Raper Ltd.

Project Management

- The Community Steering Group (CSG) of local residents helped shape decision-making.
- London CLT provided legal and financial management with support from external consultants. ●

2C. SUSAN ROAD LONDON CLT



Susan Road, Greenwich
Image: Archio



Susan Road community event; Susan Road choose-the-architect event
Images: Archio

2C. SUSAN ROAD LONDON CLT

Project Description

On a site identified by the local community, seven new homes will be built. All homes will be genuinely affordable and protected in perpetuity.

The site is in Kidbrooke and is currently occupied by garages. Local residents have identified the need for a safer, greener pedestrian route to Kidbrooke Parade.

Susan Road and Felixstowe Road were sites identified by the council. They then prepared a thorough and well-managed process for handing those sites to a community-led partner. The process was quick and galvanised the community to co-create the submission.

Community Group and Structure

Led by Greenwich Citizens Housing, a volunteer-run local campaigning group for affordable housing in Greenwich in the form of a CLT, which was established in 2018.

In 2022, GCH and London CLT were selected by the local council to steward two sites in Greenwich through a competitive bidding process, marking a significant milestone in the campaign's history.

Key Challenges

- Site complexity – The site is small, split into two parcels of land across a road, and, potentially challenging to develop viably on its own.
- Funding delays – The GLA revenue grant took six to nine months to secure, causing delays.
- Financial viability – Concerns about financial viability without the connection to the other project in Greenwich.

Successes

- Efficient bundling – The project was successfully bundled with a larger site (Felixstowe Road), allowing for efficiencies in design, legal processes, and community engagement.
- Council collaboration – There was a proactive and positive relationship with Greenwich Council, which helped streamline the process.
- Timely progress – Despite some delays, the project moved forward relatively quickly from site acquisition to planning application.
- Funding secured – Susan Road has confirmed approved capital funding from the GLA's CHF.

Site in Numbers

- Estimated completion: 2026
- Planning consent granted
- Site area: 0.07 hectares
- Total homes: 7
- Density: 100 homes per hectare
- DMS price based on median income
- 65 per cent of open market value

Financing

- Grant – GLA CHF, both revenue and capital
- Development finance – likely to be with Big Issue Invest
- CSO – London CLT CSO support prior to CHF

The Site

A community-led campaign identified the site's potential in 2018. The site is owned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich and was brought forward for community-led housing by the Borough in late 2021.

London CLT was successful with a community bid in 2022. At bid stage, the development appraisal indicated an RLV of zero (£1), based on genuinely affordable homes, and with grant support of around £100,000 per home.

Subsequent increases in build costs and interest rates have led to viability challenges, although with increased grant support the project is viable.

Use of the site is restricted to affordable housing in perpetuity, based on London CLT's model of sales linked to average incomes. Freehold title will be transferred to London CLT, with restrictions to ensure continued use for community-led affordable housing.

Grant Funding

- GLA revenue grant through the CHF to support pre planning and planning stages.
- GLA capital grant through the CHF, agreed in principle, to support procurement and construction stages.

Political Buy-In

Working with local Greenwich councillors to lobby for commitments for affordable community-led homes, Greenwich Council agreed to release two sites for CLT housing in 2021.

Community Engagement Summary

-
- GCH is a volunteer-run local campaigning group.
-
- Extensive outreach with local people since 2018.
-
- Community-led design process with local involvement from the outset.
-
- Open-air gathering in December 2019 to meet local residents.
-
- Community Steering Group (CSG) formed, inviting local people to join.
-
- Regular workshops and local outreach events.
-
- ‘Choose Your Architect’ day held in November 2022, involving more than community members.
-
- Workshops to update the wider community during the design and planning application process.

The Project Team

-
- Archio Architects selected through a community voting process.
-
- London CLT as development manager, with support from a development consultant.

Project Management

-
- A CSG of local residents shaped project decision making.
-
- London CLT provided legal and financial management, with support from an external consultant. ●

2D. FELIXSTOWE ROAD LONDON CLT



Felixstowe Road,
Greenwich; Felixstowe Road
community workshop
Images: Archio

Project Description

On a site identified by the Royal Borough of Greenwich, nine new houses will be built. All homes will be genuinely affordable and protected in perpetuity.

The site, in Abbey Wood, is currently occupied by vacant garages. It has associated problems with anti-social behaviour and drug use.

The site is overgrown and disused, offering an opportunity to create a safe play street and community green spaces.

Susan Road and Felixstowe Road were sites identified by the council. They then prepared a thorough and well-managed process for handing those sites to a community-led partner. The process was quick and galvanised the community to co-create the submission.

Community group and structure

Led by GCH, a volunteer-run local campaigning group for affordable housing in Greenwich in the form of a CLT, which was established in 2018.

In 2022, GCH and London CLT were selected by the local council to steward two sites in Greenwich through a competitive bidding process, marking a significant milestone in the campaign's history.

Key Challenges

- Site complexity – The site has a culverted below ground river, which has restricted development to within the footprint of the existing garages.

- Funding delays – The GLA revenue grant took six to nine months to secure, causing delays.

- Financial viability – Concerns about financial viability without the connection to the other project in Greenwich.

Successes

- Efficient bundling – The project was successfully bundled with a smaller site (Susan Road) allowing for efficiencies in design, legal processes, and community engagement.

- Council collaboration – There was a proactive and positive relationship with Greenwich Council, which helped streamline the process.

- Timely progress – Despite some delays, the project moved forward relatively quickly from site acquisition to planning application.

- Funding – Felixstowe Road has funding through to planning and is likely to receive capital funding from the GLA's CHF.

2D. FELIXSTOWE ROAD LONDON CLT

Site in Numbers

- Estimated completion: 2026.
- Planning application submitted.
- Site area: 0.16 hectares.
- Total homes: nine.
- Density: 56 homes per hectare.
- DMS price based on median income.
- 65 per cent of open market value.

Financing

- Grant – GLA CHF, revenue secured and capital anticipated.
- Development finance – likely to be with Big Issue Invest.
- CSO – London CLT CSO support prior to CHF.

The Site

- The site is owned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich and was brought forward for community-led housing by the Borough in late 2021.
- London CLT was successful with a community bid in 2022. At bid stage, the development appraisal indicated an RLV of zero (£1) based on genuinely affordable homes and with grant support of around £100,000 per home.
- Subsequent increases in build costs and interest rates have led to viability challenges, although with increased grant support the project is viable.
- Use of the site is restricted to affordable housing in perpetuity, based on London CLT's model of sales linked to average incomes. Freehold title will be transferred to London CLT, with restrictions for continued use for community led affordable housing.

Grant Funding

- GLA revenue grant through the CHF to support pre planning and planning stages.
- GLA capital grant through the CHF is anticipated to support procurement and construction stages.

Political Buy-In

- Working with local Greenwich councillors to lobby for commitments for affordable community-led homes, Greenwich Council agreed to release two sites for CLT housing in 2021.

Community Engagement Summary

- GCH is a volunteer-run local campaigning group.
- Extensive outreach to local people since 2018.
- Community-led design process with local involvement from the outset.
- Open-air gathering in December 2019 to meet local residents.
- CSG formed, inviting local people to join.
- Regular workshops and local outreach events.
- ‘Choose Your Architect’ day held in November 2022, involving more than 50 community members.
- Workshops to update the wider community during the design and planning application process.

The Project Team

- Archio Architects selected through a community voting process.
- London CLT as development manager, with support from a development consultant.

Project Management

- A CSG of local residents shaped project decision making.
- London CLT provided legal and financial management, with support from an external consultant. ●

2E. CHURCH GROVE RURAL URBAN SYNTHESIS SOCIETY



Church Grove, Lewisham
Image: RUSS

Project Description

The Rural Urban Synthesis Society (RUSS) is a CLT with the aim of creating sustainable, community-led neighbourhoods with affordable housing.

The ambitious Church Grove scheme of 36 homes offers part self-build opportunities and affordable homes for local people.

RUSS has also self-built its community hub, which is available at discounted rates for use by local community organisations such as the Ladywell Society, local choir group, Ladywell Gardeners, etc.

Community Group and Structure

The founding chair drew on his experience of growing up on Walters Way and living in Sanford Co-op, to gather a community of supporters and raise funds to incorporate a Community Benefit Society in 2009.

They built membership, giving anyone the opportunity to become a member of RUSS by buying a £1 share, which gives them a vote on the decision-making board. Individuals can buy more shares but do not receive more votes.

RUSS has an active membership with over 1,100 members, running education and outreach programmes. The level of organisation has also grown significantly, with consultants hired and staff employed, while continuing to be volunteer-run and maintaining open member meetings.

Key Challenges

- Competition between Community Land Trusts (CLTs) for the same sites – CLTs were invited to compete for the same site, which is resource - intensive, especially for voluntary organisations.
- Lack of land and need for grant funding – RUSS develops sustainable neighbourhoods containing affordable housing across multiple tenures, including shared ownership, discounted sales and rental homes, and requires both revenue and capital grant funding to deliver projects.
- Navigating the complex land acquisition process – RUSS had to go through a tender process with the council, which involved meeting various criteria and conditions before the land could be transferred.



Church Grove, Lewisham
community self-build
Images: RUSS

-
- Management of rental homes: RUSS is working towards becoming a registered provider so that it can manage all homes in its multi-tenure model.

Successes

-
- Development caters for different income levels and ages – RUSS looked at income levels across Lewisham and Greenwich to determine the appropriate mix of tenures, including social rent, London affordable rent and London Living Rent.
-
- Involvement of community organisational resilience through the involvement of future residents, volunteers, and members.
-
- Strong residential community - delivering landscaping schemes, managing the self-build hub, developing the residents' association.

-
- Fruitful and supportive partnership with GLA and Lewisham Council – the project was able to overcome financial hurdles.

-
- RUSS provides and delivers educational programmes that help others build knowledge on how to deliver community-led housing.

-
- Wider awareness of community-led housing – RUSS held workshops in schools to spread awareness and this helped to engage the local community and build support for their approach.

Site in Numbers

-
- Completed in 2023.
-
- Site area: 0.3 hectares.
-
- Total homes: 36.
-
- 16 properties available on fixed equity.
-
- 12 homes for shared ownership.
-
- 2 shared homes (with 6 rooms) for affordable rent.
-
- 6 homes for social rent.
-
- Self-build hub of approximately 50m² for community use.
-
- Community playground for Lewisham.
-
- Density: 120 homes per hectare.

Financing

Grants and loans at an early stage from CAF Venturesome, Tudor Trust, Locality, Lewisham Council, BPA and the GLA supported pre-planning and planning.

Construction was part-financed through the following:

- GLA Community Housing Fund capital grant
- Senior lender - Triodos Corporate Finance
- Subordinate development finance – Big Issue Invest

The Site

• The site was council-owned and in Lewisham and had been vacant for a number of years.

• It was identified by the community and proposed for community-led housing to the local council.

• The site was secure through a competitive bid process, and RUSS was successful with its bid.

• The site was designated for community-led self build housing.

Grant Funding

- GLA early-stage grant.
- CAF Venturesome support for pre-development.
- GLA capital grant for construction.

Political Buy In

• Support from Lewisham Council due to the Borough's historic self-build legacy (Walter Segal).

• Initial council interest in community-led housing.

• Site secured through a tender process.

Procurement

The project was procured on a JCT Design and Build contract, with Roof selected as the main contractor.

Note: This is the same contractor for the London CLT project at Citizens House, also in Lewisham and constructed at a similar time.

Community Engagement Summary

-
- £1 membership scheme with over 1,000 members
-
- Education and outreach programmes
-
- Co-design sessions with residents
-
- Active residents' group involved in decision-making
-
- Regular community events and workshops

The Project Team

-
- Shepherd Epstein Hunter (principal architect)
-
- Architype and Jon Broome Associates
-
- Stockdale - Project Manager and Contract Administrator
-
- Client representative- HUSH
-
- Project management and consulting
-
- Roof (main contractor)
-
- JCT Design and Build

Project Management

-
- RUSS as development manager, with the Church Grove project board consisting of paid staff
-
- Volunteers, expert advisors and the professional project team. Hiring consultants while maintaining a volunteer base. ●

2F. DALEHAM GARDENS NW3 COMMUNITY LAND TRUST



Project Description

NW3 CLT is a registered CLT based in Camden. It was formed in 2015 after the council was selling off council properties in the NW3 area to the highest bidder without providing any affordable housing.

The CLT has been trying to acquire and develop sites for affordable housing in the NW3 area with a focus on council-owned sites.

Community Group and Structure

It was set up by three initial members: Sanya Polescuk; a local councillor; and a local friend (who later became NW3 directors).

There is a £1 membership fee to encourage broad community participation. Most of the engagement has been through local leafleting, social media, public meetings and social gatherings.

The organisation built legitimacy through persistent community engagement and local press coverage. It has also attracted housing association professionals as members to further its credibility.

The CLT has secured its first development site from Camden Council, having obtained planning permission in February 2024.

The CLT is working to deliver 50 per cent affordable housing on its first project – operating with a 5 per cent projected surplus to enable commercial borrowing.

Key Challenges

- Identifying and accessing small sites’ owned by the council – NW3 CLT found it difficult to access any of the small sites available within the Borough.
- Local authority’s capacity to adapt to community-led organisations – Councils have systems set up to work with larger developers. This was particularly difficult for NW3, as there were multiple rounds of approvals and paperwork requested even after previous milestones had been reached.
- Community opposition – Local residents mounted complaints against the development plans, expressing suspicion about the CLT’s motives.

Successes

- Securing the 11-home site from the Council – NW3 CLT was able to agree with the Council to purchase the site. The Council had initially planned to sell it on the open market.
- Building partnerships – The CLT has developed partnerships with local councillors, including one with a portfolio for development. They have also worked with housing associations and organisations such as Voluntary Action Camden.
- Initial funding secured – The CLT secured some early-stage funding from sources like the CLT Network to develop its business plan for the site. This helped to strengthen its case to the Council.

Site in Numbers

- Planning obtained in February 2024.
- Minimum 50 per cent affordable homes agreed.

Financing

- £500 grant from the National CLT Network for the website.
- Individual private donations from members.
- Community Led Housing London funding for business planning and project management.
- Development finance likely to be through Big Issue Invest.

The Site

-
- Council-owned building in Camden NW3
-
- Secured through negotiation with the Council.
-
- Draft 250-year lease agreement.
-
- Minimum 50 per cent affordable housing requirement.

Grant Funding

-
- National CLT Network initial funding.
-
- Community Led Housing London support for business planning.
-
- GLA CHF grant support.



Daleham Gardens, Camden
Image: Mole Architects

2F. DALEHAM GARDENS NW3 COMMUNITY LAND TRUST



Community workshops;
Images: Mole Architects
and NW3



Political Buy-In

- Initial Liberal Democrat councillor support

- Built cross-party support (Labour and Liberal Democrat).

- Unanimous cabinet approval in September 2020.

- Local party involvement through Labour Party membership.

Community Engagement Summary

- £1 membership scheme

- Local leafleting and social media outreach

- Public meetings and social gatherings

- Persistent community engagement, building legitimacy

- Housing association professionals as members

The Project Team

- Mole Architects

- Professional project management support

- Housing association partnerships

- Voluntary Action Camden collaboration

Project Management

- Set up by three initial members.

- Built credibility through professional partnerships.

- Working to deliver 50 per cent affordable housing.

- Operating with a 7.5 per cent projected surplus ●



Website: londonclt.org
Email: info@londonclt.org
Facebook: facebook.com/londonclt
Instagram: instagram.com/londonclt
Linkedin: uk.linkedin.com/company/londonclt
Bluesky: bsky.app/profile/londonclt.bsky.social