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# Small Site Requirements for Community Led Housing

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## 2 Intended Audience

This document is to facilitate and simplify the search for suitable sites in public ownership, to allow for their successful development as community led housing and provide additional new homes that would otherwise not be built.

It is aimed at those in government, the GLA, local authorities, and public land holders who are looking to improve the delivery of affordable homes on public land and are open to working with the community to provide community led and genuinely affordable housing to those priced out of their community.

## 3 Background

London Community Land Trust (London CLT) is a community led housing developer, working with local communities to deliver genuinely affordable homes. <https://www.londonclt.org/>

A Community Land Trust is a way to provide genuinely and permanently affordable homes, with the homes owned and managed by the community.



Community led housing offers another way of developing homes, working with and for the local community, and providing high quality housing for those in housing need – often keyworkers and those on average incomes who have been priced out of their community.

London CLT has two completed projects, at St Clements in Tower Hamlets and our award-winning Citizens House in Lewisham. In 2025, London CLT was also recognized as RIBA Client of the Year, in recognition of its work to provide high quality affordable homes.

We have support from the GLA and a number of London Boroughs to find sites within public ownership to develop for community led housing. As of January 2026, London CLT has a pipeline for over 100 homes for completion over the next 5-year period, acting as developer on sites in public ownership.

The purpose of this document is to set out Community Land Trust site requirements to allow identification of suitable development sites within public ownership for affordable housing.

Following identification of a suitable site, there is generally a bid process to identify a suitable community led development partner. The site is then transferred and developed for genuinely affordable Community Land Trust housing for local people.

If successful with a bid, then London CLT, working with the local community, then take on full responsibility for the development project - legal, technical and financial – from start through to completion, occupation and ongoing stewardship.

## 4 Housing Need and Political Support

There is a housing crisis across London and not enough genuinely affordable homes. Without addressing additional delivery models, the number of homes required will not be met through traditional routes.

As of early 2026, there are shocking statistics in relation to affordable housing in London, and associated impacts:

- 1 in 21 children in London are living in temporary accommodation – more than 1 child out of every classroom – at a cost of £5.5m per day, and over £2 billion per year.
- In 2025, only 5,500 new homes started construction in London, out of a target of 88,000 homes required by the GLA – only 6% of the number required.

The current delivery models are not working, and alternative delivery models, such as Community Land Trust homes should be embraced as ways to unlock new housing delivery, and for those in need of genuinely affordable homes.

London CLT campaigns for political support to bring forward community led and genuinely affordable homes on land in public ownership and works with both the GLA at a strategic level, and with individual London Boroughs to identify development sites that are suitable for community led housing.

At present, there are often development sites that have been identified by London Boroughs but remain financially unviable or without sufficient resources available to develop. There is a strong case for community groups to be given the opportunity to take forward such stalled projects, working in partnership with councils to deliver much needed affordable housing for local people.

## 5 Types of Development

London CLT has two principle development models:

1. Direct Development – typically for smaller sites: London CLT act as the developer and funder and takes on sites from Local Authorities, to develop community led, genuinely and permanently affordable housing for local people. An example of this type of development is the recently completed Citizens House in LB Lewisham, for 11 new homes on the site of run down garages on the edge of a low-rise council estate. <https://www.londonclt.org/citizens-house>
2. Indirect Development – typically for larger sites: London CLT work with a developer (either private or local authority) and help shape the development with community input. London CLT then acquire the intermediate affordable homes, and manage the allocation and sales process, ensuring homes go to local people in housing need. Our project at St Clements in Tower Hamlets is an example of this, <https://www.londonclt.org/st-clements> with 23 CLT homes out of a total development of 252 homes, and with the site managed by the Ricardo Community Trust in perpetuity.

In terms of affordability, London CLT ensures all homes are genuinely and permanently affordable, by linking the sale price of homes to the median average salary for the borough, with resales on the same basis. The homes are made affordable and viable by having grant support from the GLA and typically with zero site purchase value.

This document, because it is focused on Small Site requirements, looks at the first of the two development types – Direct Development.

## 6 Small Sites – Definition and Density

The London Plan, Policy H2 (Small Sites), notes that small sites should play a much greater role in housing delivery, and encourages local councils to identify, map, and release small sites (under 0.25 hectares) specifically for small builders and community-led projects.

The London Plan, Policy H2 defines a small site as below 0.25 hectares in size, or 2,500m<sup>2</sup>. For comparison, this is the equivalent of a square sized 50x50m, or about one third of a full-sized football pitch.

For reference, the London CLT project, Citizens House in LB Lewisham, has a site area of around 0.1 hectares (1,000m<sup>2</sup>) and contains 11 homes, with a mix of 1- and 2-bedroom flats, giving a density of 111 homes per hectare. At the same density, a small site at the maximum defined size of 0.25 hectares, could provide up to 28 homes.

Again, for reference, the London CLT project, at Cable Street in LB Tower Hamlets, has a site area of around 0.17 hectares (1,700m<sup>2</sup>) and a design 41 homes, with a mix of 1-, 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom flats and maisonettes, giving a density of 240 homes per hectare. At the same density, a small site at the maximum defined size of 0.25 hectares, could provide up to 60 homes.

## 7 Small Sites Requirements - Direct Development Model

This section has been prepared as an initial response regarding what type of development site might be appropriate for Community Land Trust homes.

It is often challenging to prepare requirements in the abstract, and this section should be seen as a starting point, and we would welcome informal discussion with interested parties when potential sites are identified.

We have set out below initial parameters to assist with identification of suitable sites:

1. Community Support
  - A site that has potential for local community support – ideally a development site that not only provides affordable homes for local people but also has the potential for wider improvements – e.g. a rundown garage site being brought back to life with new homes and new public space.
  - A site that does not take away existing amenity or open space, unless broadly supported by the community.
2. Location
  - Initially borough wide, and all locations within the borough will be considered.
3. Size
  - Minimum site potential for 10 homes. Potentially some flexibility here if a number of sites could be developed at the same time. Likely to be a minimum of around 0.1 hectares (1,000m<sup>2</sup>).
  - Maximum 50 homes potential, although some flexibility here if a bit over. Likely to be close to the maximum area defined for a small site of 0.25 hectares (2,500m<sup>2</sup>).
  - Potential to look at a number of sites together using standardized types – eg. 4 sites, each with capacity ranging from 10-20 homes (average 15 homes per site), could bring forward 60 homes.
4. Site Type

- Either standalone development sites within an existing context.
  - Potentially a site parcel or standalone development block as part of a larger masterplan redevelopment.
  - Could be a site that has progressed with some or all design development, but is currently stalled due to being financially unviable, or lacking development finance – e.g. With planning, but on pause.
5. Constraints, Access and Capacity
- A site where the constraints are known and identified, ideally with all services plotted, and other likely constraints such as overlooking and daylight/sunlight identified.
  - A site that is not overly constrained – e.g. below ground services/ adjoining buildings/ railways etc. While development sites in London will often have challenges, an overly constrained site will result in less homes, more complex layouts, more expensive homes, take longer to develop, and may result in an unviable project.
  - A site that has suitable access for construction, refuse collection and fire access. This does not necessarily mean a site with a street frontage, but it does require suitable access.
  - Ideally, an initial capacity study will have been carried out to identify constraints and opportunities and local planning context, together with a massing and area study to give an indication of likely numbers and types of homes.
  - A site that has a realistic chance of planning success, in relation to its setting, surroundings, and planning policy and any applicable planning restrictions.
6. Quality
- A site that has potential for high quality homes in a setting suitable for residential use - i.e. situated in an appropriate area and away from negative impacts such as poor air quality, excessive noise, etc.
  - A site where development will not unduly impact on existing homes and surrounding amenity.
  - A site that has the opportunity to improve its setting through housing development and create better public realm or improved public space.
7. Affordability/ Viability
- A site where genuinely affordable homes can be developed as a viable proposal with grant support from the GLA. To achieve this, typically a site is acquired with zero site value, with conditions to ensure that only genuinely and permanently affordable homes are provided.
8. Site Transfer
- A clear site transfer process to be set out to establish any bid requirements and realistic timelines.
  - An understanding of the legal ownership and any restrictions within the land title deeds.
9. Legal Holding
- Either long leasehold or freehold, with conditions to ensure only genuinely and permanently affordable homes are provided.



## 8 Contacts

London Community Land Trust is a not-for-profit community led housing developer, with over 5,000 members and an experienced delivery team. We are keen to support any public land holders with an ambition to provide new affordable homes for their community. Please do contact us:

General enquiries:	General	<a href="mailto:info@londonclt.org">info@londonclt.org</a>
Development opportunities:	Oliver Bulleid	<a href="mailto:oliver@londonclt.org">oliver@londonclt.org</a>
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