

Ashford Borough Council Housing Statement 2018-2023: Consultation Draft

Response by Tenterden Community Land Trust Initiative

Introduction

Tenterden Community Land Trust Initiative is a recently formed Steering Group of longstanding residents with strong community connections, collectively concerned to address the challenge of securing truly affordable housing in perpetuity for local residents. The Town Council has a watching brief over our activities.

The Steering Group aims to assess realistic options to obtain affordable housing outcomes, through the creation and operation of a formally constituted Community Land Trust (CLT). The Steering Group has accessed support from the Community Land Trust Network, which is the official charitable body empowered to assist CLTs throughout the country.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to comment on the Housing Statement 2018-2023.

Comments of Tenterden CLT Initiative.

We recognise that this is a strategic level document and that detail will follow in subsequent individual strategies.

- We welcome the document and support the three overarching priorities especially as they relate to the delivery of homes that residents can afford, health and wellbeing, and prosperity.
- We suggest that an additional priority should affirm a commitment to quality in respect of aesthetic and technical design, including energy efficiency and sustainability.
- We welcome the commitment (stated in the paragraph following the three priorities) to *“explore and develop new ways of working with a range of organisations. This will open up opportunities to maximise resources, bring forward new ventures and improve outcomes for all partners and residents.”*
- We suggest that it would be especially beneficial to specifically recognise the strong encouragement now forthcoming from government for community led housing projects and specifically the announcement on 2 July 2018 of a £163 million Community Housing Fund, to supplement the £60 million previously made available to local authorities from 2016. We envisage our initiative and others elsewhere could make a significant contribution to achieving truly affordable housing across Ashford’s rural areas.
- In support of the previous point, we draw attention to the Ministerial Foreword to the Community Housing Fund Prospectus, recently published by Homes England:-

“As a result of the close engagement and creativity of local people, the community-led model typically delivers high design quality, high standards of construction and energy efficiency,

and uses progressive, innovative building techniques. It supports the smaller house building companies and helps sustain the local economy by providing homes that are affordable at local incomes. For all of these reasons, the Government wishes to see the community-led housing sector grow”

- In light of the above we would urge that Ashford’s Housing Statement should provide a specific context that recognises and encourages community–led housing initiatives
- We propose that the text should recognise that Ashford Borough Council will itself seek funding from the Community Housing Fund; firstly to support local initiatives by community groups; and secondly because grants for infrastructure necessary to enable development by community groups may only be applied for by the Borough Council.
- We welcome the realism of the recognition in Section 4 of the Housing Statement dealing with the requirements of the Local Plan *“that the overall affordable housing need cannot be met in full through these policies alone.”* This certainly reflects perceptions in Tenterden where Section 106 Agreement affordable housing is widely regarded as still unaffordable by many households.
- We note and welcome in Section 6 that the forthcoming individual strategy on Affordable Housing Supply and Allocation will address as a key area *“potential mechanisms such as joint ventures, developing an affordable housing property company etc”* to achieve housing that is truly affordable in relation to local incomes. We would suggest adding a reference to community led projects here. We would wish to develop our project in close harmony with the Borough Council and would welcome the opportunity to comment on this individual strategy in due course.

Conclusion

We are very pleased to have had this opportunity to introduce the Tenterden Community Land Trust initiative and to comment on the Draft Housing Statement.

We very much hope that the Council will provide clear encouragement within the final document for community-led initiatives within the Borough, and to place itself in a position of leadership, by providing a contextual framework for our project and others, particularly acknowledging the will of government, and the resources it has put in place to undertake practical activity.