



## Report to the Special General Meeting

Marshfield Community Centre, December 7<sup>th</sup> 2016, 8.0pm

### Chair's Report

This Special General Meeting is the culmination of the process to establish a Community Land Trust in Marshfield, to ensure it is accountable and that it operates for the benefit of Marshfield society. Through the appointment of the Board of Directors tonight we complete the process of becoming a democratic, not-for-profit, Community Benefit Society.

Marshfield Community Land Trust grew out of a concern, which is shared by an increasing number of communities who are developing Community Land Trusts, to ensure a degree of local self-determination and to provide a model of decision-making which aims to be open and transparent and to keep communities informed and engaged in decisions that affect them, particularly in areas such as the provision of affordable housing.

There are now over 170 Community Land Trusts across England and Wales receiving publicity through programmes such as Country File and articles in national newspapers. The growth in CLTs is frequently prompted by resistance to developers with little local knowledge and sensitivity and this was a catalyst for the development of Marshfield CLT.

This was initially driven by Oliver Shirley who worked with Wessex Community Land Trust Project to call a well-attended public meeting in January 2016 where the potential for a Marshfield Community Land Trust was explored with the initial focus aiming to provide affordable housing for people with a local connection. There was considerable enthusiasm for this idea and a number of people volunteered to form a steering group with the aim of setting up a fully formed CLT.

This group went through a steep learning curve as we sorted out various procedures and identified what needed to be done to become a Community Benefit Society with an incorporated legal status and responsibilities and the ability to hold assets in perpetuity for the benefit of the local community. That status was acquired at the beginning of July. At that point CLT was required to have a Board of Directors with formal accountability and obligations and those from the steering group who wished to be a director were identified in the application for incorporation made to the Financial Services Authority.

Following incorporation the CLT has been able to recruit members. Membership is open to anyone who supports the aims and values of the CLT and buys at least one share. We now have a membership of 150. All members are required to sign that they recognise they are bound by the aims and values and by the code of conduct of the CLT.

Various aspects of governance have been developed since incorporation at the beginning of July. The CLT is bound by the Rules of being a Community Benefit Society which give detailed instructions on various aspects of behaviour and responsibilities for both members

and the Board of Directors whose overriding responsibility is to try and ensure that the CLT operates for the benefit of the community.

Our website makes available the documents which show the details of the emergence of Marshfield CLT including the initial paper by Wessex Community Land Trust Project, our mission statement and aims and values, the CLT code of conduct, our communication policy, equal opportunities policy and details of the site selection process. We also have, after much time-consuming bureaucracy, a fully functioning bank account which while it does not have much money in it, signals our aspirations for the future.

The site selection process has occupied much of the time of the CLT. Selecting a site has been a long and careful process and we have reviewed all potentially available land within Marshfield both within and outside the development boundary. This selection process is still underway. We expect to consult on a site or sites at a village meeting early in 2017. Should our choice be considered appropriate by the village we will then move into the feasibility stage which will eventually lead to a planning application and an agreement with a housing association who will then take on the risks of building and managing the accommodation.

We currently are beginning the process of selecting professional colleagues to work with us to provide legal support and the range of professional services required to submit a planning application. We can apply for up to 50K to fund the planning application process and there are indications that the government may reinstate grants for initiatives such as ours.

We also wish to clarify the extent to which the detail of the 2013 Housing Needs Survey still has validity and are looking to secure as much information as possible from residents both those who live in and those who work in Marshfield. We are hoping to hold a number of workshops during 2017 which will update the 2013 data.

Finally I would like to thank those who have been helpful in supporting the Community Land Trust. The Parish Council have supported us a variety of ways including an initial grant to help with our running costs and in permitting us to use the Tolzey Hall as our business address and allowing us to hold our meetings there. We are a separate organisation and not answerable to the Parish Council but it is very helpful to have their support and be able to have dialogue with them about the aims of the Community Land Trust.

Through our various stages we have been very well supported by the Wessex Community Land Trust Project in the persons of Alison Ward and Steve Watson who provide support for community land trusts across the south-west. They are working with over 20 organisations in various stages of development and their expertise and experience has been invaluable for us. We shall be relying to a considerable extent on their support as we move forward to actually realise our affordable homes project.

I would also like to say thank you to Fay Shirley who has provided us with a considerable amount of support in the presentation of our material and gave us the design of our logo. I thank the Board and steering group members also who have ensured we have had wide-ranging discussions with different opinions expressed but always in a constructive manner with a focus on our overarching aims. I am sorry that one of the board members Howard Finnegan is not standing due to pressure of work and I would like to thank him for the energy and thinking he is brought to the CLT.

And lastly I would like those of you who have become members of Marshfield Community Land Trust and in so doing have shown your support for the aims and values of the CLT. We now face the challenges of securing a site, finding appropriate building designs, submitting a planning application, dealing with the finances of housebuilding and the new relationship of working in partnership with a Housing Association. Your membership helps to give us the confidence to believe that in spite of all these challenges, we will prevail. Thank you all very much.