



The Board of Directors' Report to the Annual General Meeting: 9th September 2017

1. At the December Special General Meeting, 2016, the Board's report focussed largely on the various processes required to establish a Community Land Trust and set up a democratic not-for-profit community benefit society which operates for the benefit of Marshfield, holding assets in perpetuity for the community.
2. This report looks at the Board's activities since that meeting, which have focussed on finding a site for affordable housing. That process has been time consuming and complex which is to be expected given the context of housing development in England which is in part associated with issues about the release of land for housing.
3. In December we had been optimistic that we would be able to consult the village on a possible site early in 2017. We were not in a position to do this and have come to recognise that securing land and planning approval is a long process. We have the advantage that whereas land outside settlement boundaries would not normally be given planning permission, a CLT is more likely to gain approval and we hope that will help in our search eventually.
4. We have reported in All Around Marshfield that the site selection process has occupied much of the time of the CLT. Trying to find a site that is available has been a long and careful process. We have reviewed 31 potentially available sites both within and outside the settlement boundary using both South Gloucestershire criteria about access, land levels, relationship to the existing village community, likelihood of archaeological remains and also local criteria to reflect our knowledge of the local environment, views into and out of the village, impact on the village etc.
5. We also have received informal feedback from South Gloucestershire planners which while not a determining factor in the site selection process has been useful in giving us an understanding of the context within which planners view new developments in Marshfield.
6. From the original 31 sites, we identified seven sites which most closely fitted our criteria and a further four which had some potential but did not match so many criteria. Throughout this process we have maintained our initial position that we should keep details of any landowners we approach confidential.
7. We have now been in contact and talked to all the 7 owners of our first group to see if any of the sites are available. 3 owners knew straightaway that they had other plans for their land and in the other 4 cases we have had different degrees of contact and negotiation.
8. The time involved in these negotiations has in some cases been very considerable. We started talking to the owner of one site in which we were particularly interested last September and have been involved in negotiations since then. This has involved six meetings, 3 heads of terms documents setting out the process involved, 2 meetings with South Gloucestershire Council officers, 8 telephone calls with SGC officers and over 300 emails. While this is not typical, exploring each site has required face-to-face meetings, setting up documentation and then if there appeared to be possibilities, negotiating to see if some agreement could be reached. But that now seems highly unlikely.
9. Of the 7 sites, we still have two sites that are not completely out of the running but the pace at which we are moving means we have decided that we need to contact owners from our second small group of sites recognising that we may not be able to secure any from our first group. We have recently begun that process.

10. We understand from other CLTs that finding a site is often a very slow process and compromises have to be made – Lyme Regis for example has taken 2 years to secure a site which is removed from the settlement boundary but they are now well underway to deliver their affordable housing project.
11. Finding an available site is only the beginning of the process the CLT must undertake to ensure it acts in the best interest of the community. When we have a preferred site we will consult with the village to get their feedback and support. Should our choice be considered appropriate we will then mount a feasibility study which will explore the design and number of housing units, set up a partnership with a Housing Association who will then take on the risks of building and managing the accommodation and obtain planning approval. The MCLT does not have financial resources and is operating on behalf of the community and cannot take risks. It is only at the point when the project can be seen to be viable that the final commitment is made to buy a site and to go ahead with our affordable housing project.
12. While we have been pursuing site selection vigorously we have also developed our knowledge and expertise of affordable housing. Marshfield CLT belongs to the National Community Land Trust network and that keeps us informed about significant policy developments in housing and provides a network that allows the considerable number of CLT scattered across the country to operate collectively. An example of that is the decision taken recently to try and deal with extortionate leasehold payments. Small leasehold payments are an important source of income for CLT's and we are part of a national campaign to ensure CLT's do not punished for the bad practice that is going on in sectors of the housing market.
13. Members of the board have also attended the National CLT conference in London, a Southwest CLT conference on research into various projects in the south-west and we are currently planning to attend a local Bristol conference and possibly another in London.
14. We also have made contacts with local CLTs in the south-west, learning from them while also sharing our recent experience of developing a CLT. We have recently been asked to attend a meeting of a local embryonic CLT to share our experiences with them. These contacts help us to learn from each other while also helping to sustain the network of CLT's and the motivation of those who belong to them.
15. Currently the CLT is focusing on its affordable housing project but CLTs have a long term perspective and a range of objectives. We are open to other initiatives that are of benefit to the village and can ensure that assets are retained in perpetuity. CLTs in the south-west have been concerned with a wide range of developments and if any of you have a project that you think might fit with MCLT objectives please tell us what you want and get involved. We also hope to attract a more diverse range of people to join our Board, so again, please let us know if you would wish to be involved.
16. The Board is anxious to maintain communication with our members and the wider village community. AAM allows us to give a regular report on new developments and the MCLT website is up to date with news and allows anyone to raise questions or comment on MCLT activities.
17. The Board wishes to thank all those who have supported MCLT. We continue to receive advice and support from the Wessex CLT Project whose expertise and experience is invaluable. We are pleased we have a strong membership and grateful to the Parish Council who have continued to support us a variety of ways as have our 2 district councillors. All this support helps keep us motivated and we intend to pursue our search for a site for affordable housing until we are successful.