



Liskeard Neighbourhood Plan Workshop Tuesday 16th December 2014

Andrew O'Brien (Affordable Housing Team Leader, Cornwall Council) "S106 & Planning Gain."

Local issues, challenges and aspirations:

- Land value and completions of affordable housing
- Achieving a balance to the market. Currently skewed to the lower end.
- Liskeard already achieving a high proportion of affordable housing.
- Creating the opportunities (including housing) for professionals and entrepreneurs to live in the area. Work / live units?

Sustainability & Employment

- It was identified by several in the groups that good design of housing is essential to encourage the creation of communities and 'neighbourhoods' and connectivity.
- Identifying sites for local affordable housing such as brownfield sites (these could also be prioritised for employment sites too – although not always the most 'desirable' locations).
- Local employment was identified as a significant factor in any developments (not just housing) and it was suggested by participants that a phasing system could be used in Liskeard. For example it was suggested such as deferring housing building in favour of employment space.
- It was identified that there is a need to provide 'truly' affordable housing for local people.
- The CIL is a potential issue for the area as currently Liskeard is rated at 0% - it may be that the NP group wish to lobby CC about this.
- Some people identified that it would be beneficial to discuss applications with developers at a very early (pre-app?) stage in order to better influence schemes before they officially apply for planning.

Additional Information requested

During discussions a few points were not able to be addressed at the time in full discussion so the following links have been provided by way of an update / resource for additional information.



New Homes Bonus

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387152/NHB_Evaluation_FINAL_report.pdf

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3621905/IAR-101000526062-New-Homes-Bonus-scheme-if-spent-on-housing-how-many-homes-were-affordable.pdf>

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - this is not yet in place.

As mentioned at the meeting, Liskeard does not qualify for CIL. For clarity on the draft proposals refer to Cornwall Council webpage: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/cornwall-local-plan/community-infrastructure-levy/?page=33997>



Tim Kellet (Urban Designer, Cornwall Development Company)
"Encouraging Good Design & Sustainability"

Design involves understanding what the real picture is locally:

- How connected is an area? traditional villages and towns are a network of streets not cul de sacs
- Streets and how these can be used for activities.
- Form and layout are more important than style
- Creating places – for the community – neighbourhood centres, areas where people socialise or recreation.
- Connectivity – walking, cycling and cars. Also the mainline train station is a huge asset.

Local issues to be considered in terms of design:

- Historic towns villages and areas can show us patterns of development that work well which we could emulate. Heritage assets should be integrated well into layout
- Accessibility / topography of the area – need to understand the existing conditions to work out the most sustainable areas to develop.
- Conserving the historic town centre but also developing sustainable neighbourhood centres to support areas without facilities.

Sustainability

Design needs to take into account economic, social and environmental sustainability. Sustainability in the area will likely be impacted by topography, accessibility to facilities, connectivity to existing town, landscape, position of existing, facilities, ground conditions .

Disability Cornwall are an organisation that could be brought in to help consult on design plans. They will organise volunteers, local to the area, with various disabilities to comment on proposals. This gives a first hand view on design and has been useful for other projects in Cornwall. There is a charge for this service however it has been found to be more effective than asking a consultant to review plans.

Could the Liskeard NP have specific guidance or wording in the NP to govern design?

It could state something along the lines of developers having to abide by a Design Guide. "Building for Life" is the best starting point with reference to the detailed information and case studies in the "Cornwall Design Guide". In addition the Town Council / Neighbourhood



Plan group could be pro-active – lobby and talk to local developers, land owners and architects. Encourage good design and have conversations about what this might look like in different areas of the town. Otherwise, savvy developers can pick out any parts of a design guide and will have ‘complied’ with them in some way. It is also not enough to simply demand ‘good design’ out of a Neighbourhood Plan as the exemplars will be needed, the local and national good practice should be championed.

The NP can set a vision for design and champion it through policy.

Also encourage greater public consultation and getting people involved in design decisions. There are examples of where to visit (refer to Tim’s slides) / examples of where design has been implemented well in the UK.

The group could form a sub group to look at design and even consider involving a design professional or “design champion” to guide the group in terms of looking at local design issues on a more detailed basis and helping to set out priorities.

Must be careful of ‘glossy’ presentation of developments from developers. The group could have a sub group to look in the first instance at what design challenges and opportunities there are in Liskeard, maybe see some good schemes on a fact finding trip, talk to other neighbourhood groups who live in areas with innovative design and then go on to identify ‘who’ could be a key design professional to help guide the group on detailed design issues to help keep the NP appropriate.

There is an issue that development can ‘tick boxes’ and get passed but the reality is that it doesn’t take into account landscape, history, locality and future needs. This is where the NP can add the local detail.

Noted that building regs could provide the security that sustainability is being met, but there is an opportunity for an NP to go ‘over and above’ this. Must keep in mind viability though as if the NP demands levels of sustainability (renewable energy measures etc) it could cause development to be unviable and go on to be challenged by developers.

The Town Council / NP group might also like to consider what they can offer developers. Meaning what kind of support or assets does Liskeard have that can help encourage developers to deliver high quality developments. For example, a supportive TC can help planning permission go through for developments or perhaps the TC would offer to maintain some greenspace if it was provided by the developer etc. There are probably many things that Liskeard has to offer that can be considered.

Therefore a question for the NP group to consider as the NP is developed: How can you find ways to viably support affordable, sustainable housing?

Several people mentioned / raised the point that new houses are only being guaranteed for 80 years. This was explained as a minimum standard and in fact it is more likely that houses will survive longer, so not necessarily an issue. The example provided was that



many historic buildings wouldn't have been designed or guaranteed for hundreds of years, but they are still standing.

Planning and Design

Planning at a county level has a resource pressure and many planners are not able to fully digest and critically assess applications against design, or do not have the skills.

A few people suggested that perhaps greater discussions and pre-app stage could allow for better design to happen before designs are finalised. This is something the TC could consider encouraging and this also relies on good relationships with developers.

Prior to design taking place developers tend to calculate land value and how many houses need to be built in order for the scheme to be viable, then design to that. Once the initial valuations are done and land acquired it is very hard to make them go back and redesign schemes with less density or more S106 contributions. Therefore needs early on talks with developers to ensure that this is avoided, again early positive relationships should be fostered along with the TC knowing what it can 'offer' developers (see above).

Also not to forget that there are some areas for which high density could be appropriate – bear in mind the densities existing in our historic towns and the benefit for the sustainability of community facilities.

NP group could proactively set up groups and invites landowners, designers and developers along to discuss.

Should Liskeard use design quality as its USP for the neighbourhood plan? – ie being proactive to development in the most sustainable places with the most appropriate designs

Aesthetics or Style

This is, in fact, often mis-interpreted and not the most important thing for design quality. The best designs are "of their place" meeting the needs of today, reflecting characteristics [form or materials] of their locality. The worst thing is to badly copy vernacular buildings, it cheapens the value of real historic buildings which were built in many styles anyway.

Comments that some new buildings look drab – could be because local vernacular has been badly copied using cheap materials and in fact would it be better to be a more honest contemporary design. However it is also possible to use local traditional materials and still achieve a modern look.

Group could consider how sympathetic contemporary buildings have been successfully integrated into historic towns.



Connectivity

Mainline train station – this is a significant plus point for the town and could be an asset for developments – so long as routes to connect to the station are considered.

In terms of design a Town should be planned out to allow walking routes. When looking at proposals the group could start with considering how long is reasonable to walk to get a pint of milk? How about a Drs surgery or Post Office? You can walk 400m in 5 mins, 800m in 10 mins

What about less able people? How will they manage with the walking routes?

Best to plan now before allocations made and also look at other areas where this has been achieved (see slides).

Connectivity is physical and virtual so also need to consider how the community works together, neighbourhood focus points, social areas and recreation. Where are these? Are they accessible / walkable?

It is useful to start with streets as these are shared by everyone - cars, pedestrians, and cyclists. Streets can also determine the character of an area – using trees, overlooking front gardens, cut throughs / desire lines can be designed in too.

There is a government pressure to reduce parking but on street parking can work if it is properly planned out.



**Alan Fox (Director, Cornwall Community Land Trust)
“Community Land Trust & Community Self-Build.”**

These notes are an amalgamation of the points raised or discussed in the three CLT workshop sessions – many of these featuring in all of the group discussions, as well as some points raised by an individual group.

CCLT - Cornwall Community Land Trust
CLT – Community Land Trust
PC/TC – Parish Council or Town Council

What Can Cornwall Community Land Trusts Help with

- Can be contracted to project manage the scheme (or to link with a local project manager), offer technical support, as well as helping deliver a scheme.
- Can offer grant/general advice and loans.
- Can be bought in for a set period of time (hours/days etc)

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) - General Points

- CLTs tend to work best in high cost areas where there are no affordable homes and it is difficult for young people to get on housing ladder.
- CLTs can be tailored to needs of local people and the CLT can choose what to do (e.g. combine homes with community facility development)
- CLT mainly on exception sites (so it is affordable to buy the site).
- CLTs can have resale covenants to safeguard them.
- Local projects can look at incorporating local design, using local trade etc.
- CLTs focus on building homes but also other types of development: community gardens/orchard/farm; community pub/shops; employment space, as well as energy projects e.g. biomass.
- Good website resource www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk
- Cornwall CLT website also has information and resources: www.cornwallclt.org
- CLTS may operate under different structures or names but all are charitable organisations.
- Although CLTs mainly voluntary, they can employ a local person or buy in expertise from CCLT and others as long as contractual and all above board.



Self-Build Projects

Several attendees wanted to know a) how to kick- start a self-build project; b) is land identification the first task? c) Does such a project need to be part of a Community Right to Build (CRtoBuild)? d) How much self-build is actually involved?

Also, there was the comment that there are developers that already have considerable land options in Liskeard at present so that might impact on site identification for CLT.

- Typically, in Liskeard, the cost of project would be around 80% of open market value.
- There is a certain amount of 'sweat equity' i.e. self-builders time.
- Local labour and skills can be utilised.
- On self-build sites, the properties are not occupied until ALL properties are complete – 'self-builders' don't just work on their own property.
- A developer can access loan money (at more attractive rates) via Custom Build Serviced Plots Loan Fund and can then make available some self-build plots.
- Typically it is easier to bring in a contractor for a self-build rather than do it all yourself –particularly because of time commitment and the financing of the process (stage payment). So, potentially a mix of self-build and buy-in from a contractor, although a community can choose to do 100% of the work themselves.
- Need to have public meetings and publicity to attract those interested in self-build to make contact and register their interest.
- An NP can spark a CLT; or the PC/TC or local group which then can have domino effect. Expertise often in community but needs to be driven by enthused people getting together.
- Need to look at how much interested people can afford and whether they meet eligibility criteria.

Acquiring Land

Group interested in knowing whether existing empty buildings or above shop space could be utilised instead of new sites for CLT. Also, were interested in knowing what to bear in mind when identifying new sites.

- CLT advise to get in contact with landowners and have a discussion at early stages if specific land in mind.
- Exception site land more affordable.
- In some cases a sympathetic landowner has come forward to offer land at cheap rates in order to see such a scheme come about.
- Generally schemes above shops and empty buildings are less common (partly because these are more likely to be individual homes) However, Alan Fox cited example whereby Penwith Housing Association (PHA) purchased a shop, which was then refurbished and converted (shop remains but with flats above). Shop then leased back to original owner. PHA retained flats.
- Duchy of Cornwall tend not to sell land but negotiate very long leases e.g. 125 years. This is still workable and a new lease ideally renegotiated when 80 years or so left to run.
- Land value linked to need and what the potential market value could be realised.



Design/Type of Homes

Questions and discussions around ‘sympathetic design’ and architects.

- Can have individuality of design but this would require more detailed and individual planning permission and usually community self build is more controlled.
- Alan Leather Architects (based at Carlyon Bay); Trewin Designs (based at Holsworthy) and Kylie Lambert also ALA (who has done work in Menheniot & Duloe) all have designed sites worth looking at.
- Site visit session would be worth considering.
- Starter homes, flats and bedsits may all be required but a need not identified partly because of perception of what these are e.g. flat ‘v’ apartment; bed-sit ‘v’ studio.

Set up and Operation of CLT; and funding

- Potentially a grant through CLT network to help set up
- Will need to do market research.
- Grants and loans **may** be available to help with initial stages – setting up the corporate body, consultation and market research and applying for planning permission.
- Mainly funding via loans as less grants available now for CLT.
- Often CLTs formed because of frustration in the area because of lack of homes for local people who don’t always qualify for social housing but can’t afford market value housing
- Examples of PCs or TCs as ‘custodian’, where they are supportive and a member of the CLT. As custodian they can have a ‘golden vote’ (e.g. vetoing inappropriate changes to constitution etc) and can be a day-to-day safeguard but without necessarily being involved day-to-day.
- PC/TC membership of CLT limited to a maximum of 1 in 3.
- Cornwall Council has operated a revolving loan.
- Grants have been available for Community Right to Buy (if a site identified and the CLT has an option on land) but funding currently closed, but might re-open.
- Soft loans might be available from CCLT – but because of risk the CLT would need to present a very robust plan in order to see if this is possible.

Individual CLT examples

Attendees were interested to know why St Minver CLTs stage 1 self-build had been for bungalows. Also, whether a scheme in Camborne which gives a choice of six house designs but constructed in panels (rather than traditional build) could be an option.

- St Minver CLT decision to build bungalows for stage one based on decision by the local group, partly because it would be an easier build. See video to hear about the St Minver experience. <http://vimeo.com/12846237>
- Camborne example mentioned by attendee (and its panel construction) but this method is incredibly expensive.



- High Bickington in North Devon have a mix of development under the CLT (homes, work space as well as a biomass project). However, were able to access a lot of funding. <http://www.highbickington.org/hbcpt>
- St Just (Penwith) CLT has set up a community farm and looking at employment space.
- CCLT working with Landrake on an ‘unbalanced scheme’ (as per Andrew O’Brien definition on slides). The site will be leased to a registered provider (could be a Housing Association or even a developer) as they can draw down grant money. This can then enable a scheme for local people to be taken forward and after 60 years or so the lease can be terminated and the land reverts back to CCLT.
- Examples of CLTs with commercial arm include a) Island of Gigha, Scotland – has a trading arm Gigha Trading which operates a community wind farm. See: <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/See-it-and-Believe-it/International-inspiration/gigha>
- A CLT in Glasgow operating so that it shares profit within community.
- Bugle, Cornwall – Community meadow
- West Penwith – community orchard with chance to turn into saleable produce.
- St Just in Roseland affordable housing. Initiated by PC; local farmer provided land cheaply and local need existed.
- Duloe housing project which CCLT involved in.
- An attendee referred to Exeter’s community shop

Other

- Linkage between Neighbourhood Planning and CLT. CLT can help deliver the aspirations (often in partnership with developer or other partners).
- Community share issue a possibility but obviously shareholders need to be paid back.
- CLT Community Energy schemes tend to be more successful/effective in terms of shares/pay back although returns not as lucrative as previously
- CLT could have a subsidiary (commercial arm that could gift aid profits)
- Some CLTs have become a registered provider delivering affordable housing and providing plots; community pub; anaerobic digester project to provide income.
- Concern from some attendees that skilled workers, some landowners and prominent people not getting involved with NP and interacting within the area – which is problematic.