BHCLT



Brighton & Hove Community Land Trust
Urban Fringe Manifesto

THIS IS A DRAFT 01/02/2021



"We are very lucky to live in a city Surrounded by the South Downs National Park (SDNP). This means that the city (apart from along the coast) is not sprawling into other towns and we retain a green border and important ecosystems on our edges, in contrast to the farmland beyond that can be ecologically barren."

Our Urban Fringe is precious and will require management to maintain, improve and to enable public enjoyment which opens housing potential within the context of nature-led stewardship. The difficult task of the City Plan is to balance the need for new housing with protecting our special environment.



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During the adoption of City Plan part 1, the Council was required by the independent Planning Inspector examining the Plan to look much more positively at all housing opportunities to help address the city's significant housing shortfall. This included looking at Urban Fringe sites; including those with local designations such as open space and sites of nature conservation importance. The Inspector was not persuaded that the protection of many of the sites was justified without further detailed assessment as most did not have a national environmental designation.

- As part of the established procedure, in June 2015 an independent report [(i)] assessed that **30,120 additional homes** would need to be built between 2014 and 2030 to keep pace with demand.
- The figure that was proposed by the Government Inspector and identified as the overall housing target in the City Plan is 13,200 which represents **just 44% of the need**. The Council successfully argued the special case for the city and its geography; sandwiched between the sea and the SDNP.
- Despite its focus on brownfield land within the city, The City Plan Part One (CPP1) clearly established that some housing development (around **1,000 new homes**) on some of the city's Urban Fringe sites will be required to contribute towards the city's significant housing needs. The development suggested represents using **only 7%** of all urban fringe land assessed.



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- Because they are identified in the City Plan, the allocated sites help the Council protect the rest of the urban fringe from speculative development.
- The allocated sites have the potential to provide new publicly accessible open space and management for nature conservation**, ecological improvements and better stewardship** as a result of the developments coming forward.
- There is also potential for food growing alongside the new developments.
- Much needed family and affordable housing (Brighton and Hove is one of the most expensive areas in the UK to live [(ii)]
- Around 6% of the total housing target of 13,200 dwellings is projected to come from Urban Fringe sites.
- **Council owned sites offer opportunities to meet the housing needs of local communities including support for community-led development, community right to build and housing co-operatives** as well as much needed income for the Council for investment in housing and other priorities.
- Potential for higher standards of sustainability, which the Council should require in the developments.







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- If the Urban Fringe sites were removed from the plan, it is likely that it will be found to be 'unsound' by the examining Inspector, who will refer back to what was agreed as part of the adoption of CPP1.

- None of the city's neighbouring local planning authorities have been able to contribute in any significant way towards the shortfall in Brighton & Hove's housing requirements and **it is not possible to meet in full the housing need from brownfield sites alone**. This is why the Inspector required the Council to look at the Urban Fringe sites.
- Just identifying enough theoretical sites to receive the 2030 target total, isn't enough to satisfy the Planning Inspectorate's demand for housing land. It is also about achieving defined targets for actual annual delivery.
- The failure to achieve these targets means that any planning application could evade local planning control and be subject to the national planning frameworks presumption in favour of development. In practice, even if the council refused planning permission for a housing development, the developer would be able to achieve consent through an appeal to the National Planning Inspectorate.
- And the effect of this is that the whole of the Urban Fringe in BHCC is **'open season' to development** unless afforded protection by a national designation such as impact on the setting of the SDNP (South Downs National Park), an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) or heritage asset.
- Local planning decisions by councillors would **hence be at much greater risk** of being overturned at appeals, and it would be much harder to resist inappropriate development on the urban fringe and elsewhere in the city.
- In effect, the land at the urban fringes is **more vulnerable if these sites do not remain allocated for housing.**
- This being the case, we will look at ways which provides housing on these sites and the other benefits identified above while **enhancing ecology and biodiversity**.

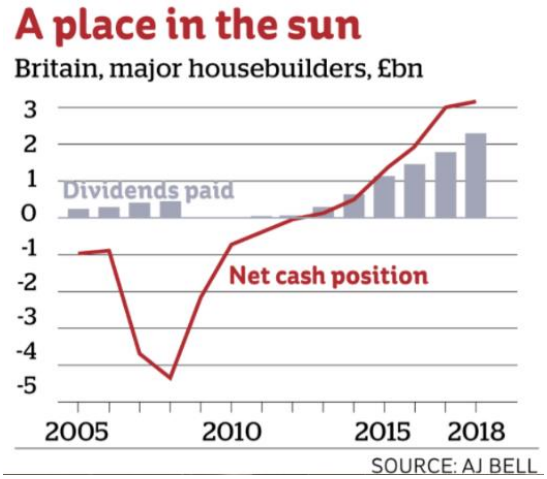




"We know that the 'business as usual' type of housing development is carried out with profit at its heart."

We know that the 'business as usual' type of housing development is carried out with profit at its heart. The four biggest housebuilders in the UK; Persimmon, Bellway, Taylor Wimpey and Barratt produced approx. 60,500 homes in 2019-2020 out of a total of around 170,000 (35%)

Persimmon, Britain's largest housebuilding firm, posted profits of £1.1bn for 2018, its highest ever, in the midst of a housing crisis.



The existing profit-led model of development at best ignores the ecology of a site and at worst destroys it.

Alongside this, these type of housing developments create estates with very little thought given to the 'community' that is being created by default.

However, we are in a climate and biodiversity emergency and **this 'normalised' approach HAS to change**.



"In contrast, BHCLT want to provide much needed affordable homes for local people, that recognises the value of the ecology of urban fringe sites and will enable them to be managed and enhanced for future generations."

CLTs have at their heart an **asset lock** which legally ensures that developments carried out by CLTs are retained by the community for the community in perpetuity.

We know that very often there is a huge gap between the rhetoric and the reality and that quite rightly people are tired of developments that promise much and deliver very little, or worse still destroy much loved environments for profit. We ask only that we are judged by our actions, where we are led by and directly answerable to the community.



Profit-driven housing is everywhere

But it could be more like this!

Bosco Verticale, Milan



Or this!

Siedung, Halen Switzerland



Or this!

Marmalade Lane co-housing, Cambridge



Community Led Housing on these sites can offer the following benefits;

- **Genuine community involvement** in the design and construction of the homes; the people who design and build the homes are the people that live in them.
- **A nature led approach,** the ecology of these sites is precious and will be not only retained but enhanced and managed long term. We will be working towards the 'Building With Nature' Accreditation - https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/ which provides a framework of quality standards, an assessment and accreditation service, and national awards recognising the design and delivery of high-quality green infrastructure to ensure stewardship and improvement of land and peoples connection to nature.
- **Sustainable building,** because the homes are in community ownership forever, there is a real drive to make them as energy efficient as possible over the long term. We work closely with

- Brighton and Hove Energy Services Coop (BHESCo) https://bhesco.co.uk/ as well as designing the fabric of buildings to Passivhaus standards.
- **Affordable;** with people power and other innovative ways of funding and building costs can be driven down, resulting in affordable homes that stay affordable forever. In addition, the BHCLT is non profit-making, so there is no need to factor in the usual profit margins for the developer.
- **Delivering social value;** community-led housing can deliver real benefits to the residents and the local area; a feeling of belonging, cross generational support, shared facilities etc

It's easy for mainstream developers to sound ecologically and community conscious. We believe that actions speak louder than words, so an example of the work that the community group and housing coop **Bunker (supported by BHCLT)** have recently completed is the two new family homes created at a disused garage site in Plumpton Road, Brighton.

The two homes were built on a site leased from Brighton and Hove City Council and provide a **safe and economically secure environment** for the families who previously lived in insecure, damp and expensive private rented accommodation.

Bunker's two super insulated eco-homes at Plumpton Street Brighton were built using a modular system of cross laminate timber panels



In addition, BHCLT and the **Coldean Community Organisation (CCOrg)** have already started work to steward the precious chalk grassland on an urban fringe site in Brighton allocated for housing. This land has been neglected over time and invasive sycamore and other trees and shrubs have grown starving the chalk grassland of light.

Coldean Community Organisation
...for people not profit





Volunteers removing invasive saplings to restore the chalk grassland at Coldean

BHCLT believe that this approach could create an exemplar project which could then be used as a basis for **truly responsible and sensitive ecology/landscape-led housing development in the UF**. This approach starts with getting to know the land and what it holds, making links with **local people** who can help us to **appreciate** it and **restore** it, then **maintain** it and **steward** it. Only then will we consider building on it and only if appropriate.



"There are lots of inspiring examples of Community Led Housing across the country."

find out more at the National Community Land Trust Network and Community Led Homes.



Lion and Lamb cohousing Worcestershire



Lilac co-housing, Leeds



“Public land for public good”

We have suggested to Brighton and Hove City Council that Council owned Urban Fringe sites should be approached as **"public land for public good**" and could only be developed with meaningful **community engagement**, **biodiversity** and **ecology** at the heart alongside **100% affordable and 0% carbon** housing outcomes. With this in mind, we suggested that development on Council owned Urban Fringe sites should be led by BHCLT working in partnership with community stakeholders and CLH groups.

We would like **all stakeholders** who have an interest in the Urban Fringe of our city to **participate in this discussion** and give us your views. With this in mind we will be organising events and spaces to discuss and decide the future of development on these sites. To participate in this become a member for just £1.

Keep in touch to hear about upcoming events and opportunities

Follow us on social media and visit our website if you would like to be part of our vision for a better and fairer housing future for Brighton & Hove.



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Glossary and References

References

(i) "Objectively Assessed Need for Housing: Brighton & Hove" Prepared by GL Hearn Limited, 280 High Holborn, London WC1V 7EE. June 2015. https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/article/inline/GL%20Hearn%20HSG%20OAN%20Rprt%20%20Jun%202015.pdf

(ii) https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoresidencebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian
Brighton and Hove Ratio of median house price to median gross annual salary in 2019 = 11.33, outside London only Cambridge (12.66), Oxford (12.55), St Albans (12.77) were higher.

Glossary

- **Urban Fringe** – or Rural/urban fringe – the area at the very edge of the city beside the countryside.
- **City Plan Part 1** – Adopted on 24 March 2016. The over-arching development plan for the city along with the retained policies from the adopted Local Plan of 2005. See here
- **City Plan part 2 -** The role of the City Plan Part Two is to support the implementation and delivery of City Plan Part One; to build on the strategic policy framework; to identify and allocate additional development sites and to set out a detailed policy framework to assist in the determination of planning applications. It has still not been adopted, although it has been in development since June 2016. It is expected to be adopted in Spring 2022. See here
- **Planning Inspector** - The Planning Inspectorate is a Government agency whose job is to make decisions and provide recommendations and advice on a range of land use planning-related issues across England and Wales. The Planning Inspectorate most commonly are involved in appeals against planning decisions made by Local Authorities. See here
- **Brownfield Land –** any previously developed land, a greenfield site refers to any land that hasn't been previously developed.
- **Community Led Development (CLD) –** refers to the process of working together to create and achieve locally owned visions and goals. Can include community led housing (CLH) see here.
- **Community Right to Build -** The Localism Act allows for community organisations to bring forward a 'community right to build order' which is a type of neighbourhood development order. See here
- **Housing Cooperatives -** Co-operatives, be it housing or business, are not-for-profit and democratic organisations run for and by their members. See here
- **Heritage Asset -** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. For more info see - https://historicengland.org.uk/
- **Asset Lock -** In general terms this means a provision within the constitution of Community Land Trusts or Community Interest Companies to ensure that assets are only used for the benefit of the community. See here and here.
- **Cross Laminated Timber -** CLT is an engineered timber product made from gluing together layers of solid-sawn timber with good structural properties and low environmental impact (where sustainably sourced timber is used). See here
- **Chalk Grassland –** or Calcareous grassland is an ecosystem associated with thin basic soil, such as that on chalk and limestone downland. See here