



# Case Study

## Project Management

July 2023

**SLCC**  
For Local Council Professionals®



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## Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)

Founded in 1972, SLCC has gone from strength to strength, starting with just 50 members, and now representing clerks to over 5,000 councils in England and Wales.

As the professional body for local council clerks and senior council employees, we ensure that our members are equipped with the necessary knowledge, training, and skills to thrive within their role and best support their council and community.

SLCC is a vibrant member focused organisation which helps local council officers to develop and grow professionally and so be able to better serve their councils and the communities they support.



## Local Council Consultancy (LCC)

To further the service provided, LCC was launched in late 2018 by SLCC as an additional capability to its advisory and membership services. It draws on the wide and deep expertise of SLCC and seeks to provide councils with a value for money, sector-leading consultancy service.

LCC operates on a 'profit-for purpose' basis, reinvesting all surpluses to further the development of professional clerks and, through them, the development of the whole sector.

LCC services are delivered by our team of associates and Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualified clerks who are grounded in core public service values, a number of whom have worked in principal authorities and are now in the town and parish council sector.

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## INTRODUCTION

Andrew Maliphant Associate Consultant at LCC shares this project management case study, focusing on the development of a Community Land Trust for Longhope to deliver local affordable housing. The piece also shares learning outcomes from the project.

## PROJECT BRIEF

Longhope Parish Council had seen an affordable housing development by a local housing association flounder on the issues of the chosen site, high development cost, and a lack of community support. Forest of Dean District Council then encouraged the parish to consider developing their own approach to the issue by setting up a Community Land Trust (CLT). The initial project steering group meeting chaired by the parish council chairman on 1st May 2018, identified the following pathway:

- Group - set up a steering group, recruit members of the community, agree what we want the CLT to achieve, incorporate and develop a business plan
- Site - find a suitable site, including investigating any potential problems.
- Plan - work up a full planning application, with detailed plans for homes and get planning permission
- Build - there are lots of options from building them ourselves, using a local contractor or leaving it to a partner housing association
- Live - once people are living in the homes, we may work as their landlord, or oversee a managing agent or landlord we've partnered with, as well as decide how to use any surplus for the benefit of the community.

The meeting went on to agree to set up a Community Land Trust and:

- To work with providers of affordable housing; statutory authorities; advisory and voluntary bodies; builders and local businesses; local groups and individuals who support the cause
- To consult with and represent the wider community
- To secure the permanent protection of the Trust's affordable housing so that it cannot be lost to the commercial market
- To include sustainability in the design and building of affordable housing and a whole life cost approach to minimise annual energy and maintenance costs
- To deliver value for money in construction, maintenance and operations.

Andrew Maliphant the parish clerk had championed this approach, and due to his past work experience was appointed as project manager.

## STEERING GROUP

An initial steering group membership of eight people was drawn from members of the recent and successful Neighbourhood Development Plan steering group, whom the parish council chairman had encouraged to keep working together.

Extended links with all sections of the community were important to help ensure effective community involvement.

All publicity drafted by the project manager including fliers, posters and an expression of interest form encouraged local people to join in, and two more members came forward at the first public meeting in November 2018.

As the project developed, there was a clear need to create a legal entity that could raise and spend money and sign legal agreements. With technical assistance from the National CLT Network, Longhope Community Land Trust Ltd was established as a community benefit society in March 2020, with the project manager as Secretary. Two more local people came forward at the first AGM to join the board.

## BUSINESS PARTNERS

Forest of Dean District Council were natural supporters of the project and attended steering group meetings. They also created a grant fund for new CLTs which was instrumental in helping the project through its early stages, including paying for a solicitor to draw up the purchase agreement with the landowner.

It was clear from the outset that a housing association partner was needed, not only for their expertise but also for their capacity to draw down funds from central government. The project manager contacted the three local housing associations, but for different reasons they gave their apologies for not taking part.

Aster Group, a housing association which covers the south of England, is the leading exponent of CLT and housing association partnership projects, having completed 13 such schemes to date, including two elsewhere in Gloucestershire. Aster was invited to a steering group meeting to make a presentation and were thenceforth adopted as the housing association partner. Aster also brought its regular partners, Quattro Design architects and construction firm, EG Carter & Co Ltd.

The choice of architect needed to be made jointly by Aster and the CLT. The project manager organised a tendering process, and Quattro Design were formally appointed as the project's architects.

## SITE

Longhope Parish Council had originally thought that land they owned behind the village hall could be a suitable site for new affordable housing. However, on behalf of the community, this possibility needed to be tested against other options within the village.

The project manager contacted the National CLT Network as an obvious source of advice and found they would provide a few days of free professional advice in the early stages of a project. One of their associates (already involved with a CLT in nearby Nailsworth) came to Longhope and reviewed thirteen potential sites, identifying nine for further consideration in whole or in part. The chairman also contacted the owners of a greenfield site on Church Road in the middle of the village which had been considered for affordable housing in the past, and the owners agreed that site could be considered as well.

Further site visits followed with local planning officers and utility companies, and it was found that the site behind the village hall was not suitable because a sewage pipeline across the site prevented the building of enough houses to make the project viable. There were also serious concerns over levels, flood risk, and access. The project manager created a chart for each of the potential sites, scoring them positively or negatively against key factors such as location, highway access, prospect of planning approval and benefit to the community. The steering group including Aster agreed the final scoring which showed only the Church Road site with an overall positive score – a main determining factor was the willingness of the landowner to sell at agricultural value rather than market housing value.

When the choice of site was shared with the community, there were naturally several questions asked, not least by the immediate neighbours. The project manager ensured that publicity was spread widely, including door-to-door leaflet drops by members of the steering group. Some negative reaction gradually subsided but not all, and the community also had the opportunity to object at planning application stage.

## PLANNING APPLICATION

Quattro Design produced plans for twelve houses on the site. The house designs included all the desired environmental elements and were also based on the outcome of the local housing needs survey organised by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council as part of their regular activity, which reported in February 2020. Aster arranged site visits by various specialists looking at all the necessary elements including drainage, electricity supply and the impact on wildlife.

Aster duly made the planning application, and all was going well, until at a very late stage in the process, it was found that Natural England had just changed its rules around bat flight and forage routes, and the existing bat study did not cover all the relevant points. As this was September 2021, and the study could only be carried out between May and September, the planning process was put on hold for nine months.

## BUILD

Without formal planning approval, construction by EG Carter & Co Ltd could not begin. Prior to the submission of the planning application, the purchase agreement with the site owners had been negotiated and signed between three parties – the owners, Aster and Longhope Community Land Trust Ltd. This leaves only planning approval in the way of developing the site.

## TENANCIES

One of the natural requests from the local community was whether only local people – including the twenty families identified during the housing needs survey – would become the occupants of the new houses. The answer was yes, provided they applied when the vacancies were advertised prior to the completion of the new homes. Should there be insufficient Longhope people to take up tenancies, then they will be offered to adjacent parishes on a cascade basis nominated by the CLT. The steering group had already agreed that the houses would be rental only, not for sale, and housing applications would go through the District Council in the normal way, except that local people would go to the front of the queue.

It was also agreed that Aster would manage the properties on behalf of the CLT, following its well-established procedures for managing CLT housing. The CLT would receive £4 per week from each of the 12 dwellings.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### Achievements:

- The necessary involvement of necessary experts went well - to the extent that the project was very well supported with technical advice on every topic
- The partnership with Aster proved to be absolutely the right choice
- A side agreement was drawn up with Aster regarding the provision of a fruit tree orchard on the Latchen Room site as a carbon offset/ public amenity
- The necessary project development funding was available from the District Council
- While the government's grant fund for CLT developments had not been renewed, ordinary government housing grants were felt to be sufficient for the purpose
- As we could not hold public meetings due to covid restrictions, the project set up a CLT website and Facebook page, which proved to be a good decision.

### Challenges:

- While the steering group and subsequent community benefit society kept going, some individual members dropped out for personal or work reasons
- One reason was sympathy with the reaction from site neighbours, and some members of the community felt they had not been involved early enough
- Delays in the legal agreement (partly down to the solicitor), the sudden departure of a key member of the steering group and the planning communication issue remind us that working with people is a key element of any project.

Overall, professional advice that the project would take at least three years to complete was found to be true!



## CUSTOMER FEEDBACK



Having undertaken three years of Longhope CLT progress we are reaching the final stage when a planning application has been submitted. The CLT finds itself frustrated over the postponement of the application due to a change in environmental rules, which we are certain can be rectified and overcome for re-submission to Forest of Dean District Council in September 2022.

Mike Phelps, Past Chairman  
Longhope Parish Council

To find out more visit [www.localcouncilconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.localcouncilconsultancy.co.uk)  
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