

## North Devon District Council: Harnessing the potential of community-led housing



### The project

The council has made it a priority to harness the power of communities to secure their own affordable housing for local people in rural, as well as urban deprived areas. The general housing supply in the North Devon housing market is limited and pushes up open market rents, with some communities having holiday accommodation forming as much as 50% of the total stock.

North Devon Council therefore utilised a £668,000 allocation from the Community Housing Fund 2016-17 and contracted Middlemarch Community-led Housing to work with communities the council knew had both a housing need and were supportive of affordable housing.

The project started with four parish councils. The council grew this by funding a Rural Housing Enabler from Devon Rural Housing Partnership to generate a pipeline of interested parishes. In 2018-20 the council bid for £95,497 (alongside 10% council match funding) of revenue funding to support this pipeline.

Effective empowerment of officers by the council's Executive led to communities accessing revenue funding for housing needs surveys, legal set-up fees, National Community Land Trust Network membership, marketing costs, small start-up grants, as well as feasibility and planning grants for those more advanced schemes.

North Devon now has eight formal Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in the parishes of Lynton & Lynmouth, Morteohoe, Parracombe, Combe Martin, Georgeham, Ilfracombe, Braunton and West Down.

### **The benefits**

There has been amazingly high levels of both political and officer support across the council for community-led housing. This has included:

- Monitoring of the programme via an officer/member Board every 12 weeks.
- Planning removing the charge for pre-apps for all Community Land Trust (CLT) schemes to aid viability.
- The Estates team securing Brownfield Land Release Funding and gaining approval from Committee to transfer council owned land for a CLT scheme.
- Community-led Housing forming a section in the council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
- Planning policy supporting CLT work and it being represented in neighbourhood plans.
- Most importantly, all CLT Steering Groups are made up of volunteers, so the success of community-led housing is thanks to these individuals for their time, hard work and commitment; to Middlemarch for their amazing technical support and to Ward Members, Parish Councillors and Parish Clerks for their support and enthusiasm.

Morteohoe was one of the first CLTs in North Devon. With the passion and energy of the community, the CLT, parish councillors, the parish clerk, the ward member, the National Trust, Middlemarch, Aster and council officers, the scheme is soon to become a reality. The scheme has confirmed high levels of external funding, huge community support and willing delivery partners/landowner on board. Together, Homes England and Aster put in almost £3 million of funding into North Devon. To gap-fund the remainder of the scheme the council needed to provide £630,000 (£30,000 per unit) and in June 2022 Members approved the required funding to provide 21 social rents in the village.

The eight current schemes alone have the potential to deliver almost 150 affordable homes for local people. To put this into perspective, this means that the pipeline of community-led affordable housing schemes could deliver the same amount as the average year's general affordable housing completions (2017/18 to 2021/22) across the Local Housing Authority's area (North Devon and Exmoor National Park).