

Chairman's Review of Activities in 2020 and to date for the Annual General Meeting

Another unusual Annual General Meeting but I assure you that the Trustees of East Bergholt Community Land Trust have continued to work hard on your behalf during 2020 and during the first half of 2021.

During the last 18 months our activities have been dominated by two things:

- The two large developments proposed in the village that have now received Planning Permission.
- The Pandemic

The Two "Large Developments"

Both the Moores Lane and Heath Road developments received planning permission during the summer of 2020 together with the smaller development at Hadleigh Road.

I have mentioned before how the imminent approval of 250 new homes in the village has not made landowners sympathetic to releasing pockets of land to the CLT.

We have consistently and publicly said that if the developments went ahead, we would seek to obtain some of the 75 to 80 affordable homes that would be imposed on the Developers as a condition of their Planning Permissions.

During discussions with Babergh and the two developers, Countryside and Hills, it became clear that although Hills (Heath Road) only had outline planning permission, it was likely that Heath Road development would start on site before Moores Lane (Countryside). At the time of writing we believe that Hills may achieve detailed planning permission on the 4th June and start soon afterwards.

We have therefore been working with all parties to try and obtain some of the 25 affordable homes on Heath Road for the CLT. If successful we could decide who would occupy our homes and ensure that they remain in the community's ownership.

The issues are detailed and complex and we continue to need patience, perseverance and your support in our negotiations with all parties. If we are able to reach agreement in principle, we will require funding which we anticipate will be a mix of grants and bank loans.

Whilst we have been focusing on the Heath Road development, we have not ignored Moores Lane and have spoken to Countryside about trying to acquire some of the affordable homes on their site when it proceeds to development.

Pandemic

Like most organisations, East Bergholt Community Land Trust has used the internet to continue to operate with e-mail and virtual meetings between Trustees and third parties.

I am grateful for the hard work of some of our Trustees who helped to transform our website and transfer our e-mails and files to Outlook and the Cloud. We are also grateful to Babergh and Homes England who funded the digital changes. The amount of time that I have saved

handling thousands of e-mails and attending many virtual meetings during the last 18 months is considerable, and I know that it has helped us all to work more efficiently and effectively.

Although we have managed to continue liaising with third parties, Covid issues generally including the lack of personal contact, have affected progress. It has been particularly noticeable in our dealings with Babergh. The Council has had to respond to the emergency diverting staff from their normal duties at the same time as managing a change in personnel. Despite the challenges, we believe that we still have a good working relationship with Babergh and appreciate their support in seeking to bring affordable homes to the Parish.

Other Opportunities

Although our energies have been largely focused on obtaining some of the affordable homes on the two large developments, we have continued to look for and consider other opportunities to develop our own small development. It is clear from speaking to other CLTs that there are many advantages in developing one's own housing. If any member is able to suggest or assist us in obtaining a site or building ripe for conversion, we would be very grateful.

Members Involvement

We recognise our responsibility to share news of our activities with our members and the wider community in the Parish. Through the Parish Magazine and Facebook, we have provided updates on our activities but have not managed to arrange for you to meet our Trustees directly at Public Meetings. Members have had the opportunity to attend our virtual AGM 2021. In the future we intend to offer the opportunity for members to attend part of our regular Trustee meetings. The Trustees are always happy to speak to members and answer questions about what the CLT is doing.

Whilst the Pandemic has prevented us from having open meetings and presentations for members, we will aim to have similar events as soon as possible and hopefully when we have some positive news to share about new homes for the community.

Finance

During 2020 the CLT received a grant from East Bergholt Parish Council to assist with our general administration and operational costs. Babergh District Council approved a grant to prepare a Business Case for the acquisition of Affordable Homes and the funds were received in January 2021. We are grateful to both organisations for the real assistance that they have provided to allow us to continue to operate.

Our Finances remain manageable and give us sufficient resources to capitalise on opportunities that we believe will arise during 2021 and beyond, although we will clearly require additional project funding as described above.

During 2020 we identified the need for more direct financial control when we applied for loans for project funding. We have recently appointed a qualified part time Financial Controller to work with us.

Conclusion

I would like to thank all the Trustees and our Secretary who have given up their time for East Bergholt Community Land Trust during a difficult period. It is through their hard work that we hope to be in a position to provide "Homes for the Community" if we can successfully obtain affordable homes on Heath Road and securing other homes elsewhere in the future.

Whilst Trustees do have to spend time working on EBCLT matters, it is rewarding. We do need some additional Trustees with specific experience to join the Board. If you are interested, please contact me or any of the other Trustees.