



Leeds Community Homes: Promoting Community-Led Housing

Reviewing the benefits of community-led housing in Leeds and beyond

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1. Purpose and Scope of this Report

This report has been commissioned by Leeds Community Home (LCH) and compiled by Andy Bagley of Real-Improvement, an independent consultant specialising in impact measurement and evaluation. It brings together evidence of the benefits and positive outcomes achieved by community-led housing projects in Leeds and elsewhere in the UK. This aims to demonstrate the value of investment in community-led housing in Leeds and Yorkshire, and should also help LCH itself to review further opportunities and develop its future strategy.

Information in this report is based on evidence that already exists rather than new research. The examples quoted draw on a wide range of projects in Leeds and beyond. Whilst there is a wealth of background information available on the anticipated benefits of community-led housing, this report focuses on practical examples of how these benefits have been realised in practice.

This highlights the potential for community-led housing to deliver outcomes beyond 'bricks and mortar' – outcomes which achieve positive changes for residents, communities, other organisations and the wider environment. Not all developments will deliver all these outcomes, and some of them could also be delivered by public or private developers. However, in many cases community-led housing is in a better position to implement new and innovative approaches that achieve real change.

The subsequent sections of this report demonstrate outcomes from a range of different perspectives. The source of information is quoted for each example shown, although the author cannot guarantee that this is fully up-to-date.

1.2. What is Community-Led Housing?

The following definition of community-led housing comes from the National Community Land Trust:

The Community-led housing sector bodies have agreed a definition of Community-Led Housing that is based on core principles:

1. A requirement that meaningful community engagement and consent occurs throughout the process. The community does not necessarily have to initiate and manage the development process, or build the homes themselves, though some may do.
2. The local community group or organisation owns, manages or stewards the homes and in a manner of their choosing.
3. A requirement that the benefits of the scheme to the local area and/or specified community group are clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity e.g. through an asset lock.

"The community" for this purpose will vary for different schemes, as illustrated by the examples in this report.

Broadly, community-led housing projects fall into two categories:

- (i) Refurbishment of existing derelict or empty properties to bring them back into use as homes
- (ii) New build, where new homes are built from scratch

Community-led housing can also encompass a variety of different approaches, such as:

- Cohousing – a purpose-designed community of individual homes built around shared space and communal facilities
- Community Land Trust – a non-profit organisation that develops and manages housing on behalf of the local community
- Cooperative – where assets, and in many cases the homes themselves, are jointly owned by all residents
- Self/custom build – where a group of people collaborate to build their own homes on land which they own or lease
- Self-help – involves groups of local people bringing back into use empty properties that are in limbo, which members of the group will then move in to.

A wide range of organisation structures and legal models can support these various approaches.

1.3. Leeds Community Homes

LCH currently has two roles:

- (i) As a Community Land Trust (CLT), leading local community-led developments. In January 2017 it successfully raised £360,000 through a community share offer to create its first sixteen 'People Powered Homes', as part of Leeds' emerging Climate Innovation District (CID), close to the city centre. Nine of these will be tenanted at social rent, the other seven sold for around 2/3 of full market value. LCH will ensure that all these homes remain permanently affordable. LCH is also pursuing a second proposed new development at Mistress Lane, Armley.
- (ii) As a Community Housing Hub, supported by Power to Change, acting as a focus and centre of expertise for other community-led housing projects across North and West Yorkshire.

This report makes reference to LCH's work in the first of these roles, although most examples illustrate the wider potential of community-led housing, which LCH aims to support through its hub role. Currently, it is providing intensive support to four groups – Otley CLT, Yorspace (York), Shangri-Leeds co-housing, and a new group in Beeston yet to be named – and is in touch with many others.



Section 2: Outcomes for Residents

2.1 Affordability

For the residents who live in its homes, community-led housing offers affordability in situations where they might otherwise not be able to afford it. For many residents this can make the difference between staying in the communities they have lived in for many years or having to move away¹:

Example: St Minver CLT, Cornwall

Rock, in the North Cornwall parish of St Minver, is a popular holiday destination where many properties were being bought by outsiders as second homes. This had the effect of inflating prices and pricing local people out of the market. In 2006, a CLT was established, and purchased land from a local farmer to build 4 two-bedroom and 8 three-bedroom detached bungalows. Initial work was financed through a council loan, which was repaid through mortgages as the new homes were built.

Local people were then able to purchase these homes at well below the market rate for the area, and all properties were occupied by the end of 2008. Future affordability is safeguarded through a Section 106 agreement with a resale covenant which transfers obligations to subsequent owners. Together with a pre-emption agreement that gives the CLT first refusal to purchase a property or nominate a purchaser, this ensures that any re-sales are capped at just 31.3% of open market value.



Local Authority tenants have a Right to Buy (RTB) the homes they live in, and the government is considering extending this Right to Buy to assured tenants of housing associations on a voluntary basis. NCLTN is currently seeking to ensure that exemption from RTB will apply permanently to all community-led housing programmes. In the meantime, provisions such as the one above ensure that affordability is maintained in perpetuity for each development.

¹ Source: The Self-Build Guide, <http://www.the-self-build-guide.co.uk/st-minver-community-land-trust.html>

2.2. Creating Communities

In many community-led developments, the benefits to residents go beyond affordability. They can provide mutual support, shared facilities and reduced social isolation which have a positive impact on the way people live²:

Example: Older Women's Co-Housing (OWCH), Barnet

OWCH is a group of 26 women over 50 who have created their own community in a block of purpose-built flats in Barnet, North London. Their aim was to create a way of living where residents can maintain their independence whilst enjoying the benefits of a shared and mutually-supportive community.

All residents have their own flat; there are 25 such flats, 17 owned and 8 rented at social rent by Hanover Housing Association, which collaborated with OWCH on the project. There are also communal spaces, such as lounge/dining areas, laundry and the garden. Residents were involved in every aspect of design and build, and continue to manage all aspects of how the community operates, with everyone contributing in some way.

Residents eat together once a week and share many other activities as well as simply looking out for each other. The result is a community where people feel safe and supported, and avoid the social isolation that so many older people experience. In turn, many believe that this reduces their need for other support from health and social services, and will enable them to lead longer and happier lives.



² Source: Older Women's Co-Housing, <http://www.owch.orh.uk>

2.3. Enhanced Future Prospects

In these the previous examples whilst affordability was critical, residents were able to contribute to the cost of their new homes. This is not always the case for people who need affordable housing. The following examples, both from Leeds, illustrate how self-help principles can help to overcome this problem, and can greatly enhance people's skills and future prospects³⁴:

Example: Frontline, Leeds

The Frontline Project in Leeds was a true self-build project initiated more than 20 years ago, when a group of unemployed young men (and one woman) from the Chapeltown area were trained and then built 12 brand-new houses near Oakwood. Over 18 months they did almost all the construction work themselves, with the exception of gas, electricity and some specialist fitting. They then moved into these houses with 25% ownership through "sweat equity", and the option to buy out the remaining 75% from Leeds Federated Housing over time. Through working on the project, participants also gained qualifications to at least NVQ Level 3.

Today, all the original team are understood to be in work, mostly in the construction industry and some with their own companies. Around a third still live there, a third own their property and are renting it out or have family living there, and the rest have sold and moved on.

Example: Canopy Housing, Leeds

Canopy Housing Project renovates empty and derelict properties in Leeds, to create decent homes for people who are homeless. It does this using volunteer workers, some of whom become Canopy tenants in these properties. Canopy helps these tenants achieve a home of their own – one they feel particularly attached to as they have worked on it themselves.

Many Canopy volunteers come from disadvantaged backgrounds. They learn new skills, gain experience and confidence, increase their social contacts, and enhance their employment prospects. A Social Return on Investment (SROI) study in 2015 found that 76% of its volunteers thought that working with Canopy improved their chances of finding a permanent job, and that 13 volunteers, mostly long-term unemployed, had found permanent jobs the previous year.

The SROI study also demonstrated many other benefits for volunteers and tenants, including:

- Better physical and mental health
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- New friends and improved family relationships
- Feeling safer and financially more secure

Overall, the study concluded that Canopy delivered just over £5 of social value for every £1 invested in it.

³ Source: *Canopy Housing Project: Self-Help Housing*, Real-Improvement 2017 (Frontline example based on information from one of the project founders)

⁴ Source: *Canopy Housing Project: Social Return on Investment*, Real-Improvement 2015



Finally, even where residents have not built or renovated their homes, community-led housing provides opportunities for participation and engagement that significantly improves residents' lives⁵:

Example: Giroscope, Hull

Giroscope, based in Hull, is a self-help project similar to the Canopy example quoted above. Whilst some of its tenants are former volunteers, it also houses many people who have not helped with renovation. It carefully considers the people it houses and the support it gives them after they have moved in. Further, almost all Giroscope's properties are in the same area of Hull (90% are within 10 minutes' walk of its office), and it works hard to create a sense of community amongst its tenants – its office has an 'open-door' policy and most of its staff also live in the local area. Its work to maintain this community are key to its success and the progress its tenants have made; Giroscope now has some tenants who have been there more than 20 years.

⁵ Source: *Canopy Housing Project: Self-Help Housing*, Real-Improvement 2017 (information from interview with Giroscope's Director)

Section 3: Outcomes for Local Communities

3.1. Communities around Community-Led Housing Locations

Community led housing can benefit the local communities around these developments, as well as residents themselves. For instance, it can help people to stay together in their local communities, so that these communities can remain sustainable rather than decline as people get older⁶:

Example: Hudswell Community Charity

Hudswell is a small village in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It is a working community, not dominated by second or holiday homes; nevertheless, house prices in the area make it very difficult for the local community to grow or acquire new housing. The community charity, established over a century ago to support Hudswell residents, owned land near the centre of the village and decided to use this to provide three new homes for local people.

Finance came from the charity's reserves together with a loan from Charity Bank and support from Richmondshire District Council. Work began in March 2017 and was completed by the end of the year. The charity selected as residents two young families with long-standing local connections and an older lady who needed support from her daughter in Hudswell. As well as providing new homes for these residents, the project has helped the local community stay together and continue to thrive.



⁶ Source: Locality, https://mycommunity.org.uk/case_study/hudswell-community-charity-investing-in-new-affordable-housing/

Regeneration of neighbourhoods can also benefit other local people, even where their own homes are not part of the development. The following example is not strictly community-led housing, but provides strong evidence of how such benefits can be achieved⁷:

Example: Vineburgh, North Ayrshire

Cunninghame Housing Association is based in Ayrshire in Scotland. In 2009 it took over 306 dilapidated properties in the Vineburgh area of Irvine from North Ayrshire Council, and began a five-year programme of refurbishment and renovation. On completion, it commissioned a detailed Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis from independent consultants to assess the overall impact of the programme.

As well as benefits to tenants of the refurbished properties, this analysis also measured outcomes for other residents who lived nearby, through a sample of 50 interviews. This demonstrated that the local community benefitted from the programme, even though their own homes had not been affected, through the improved appearance of the neighbourhood, increased community spirit linked to reduced antisocial behaviour, and a general feeling of being safer and less stressed because of the better environment.

3.2. The Community of Leeds

For current LCH projects, 'the community' is essentially Leeds – although more local community engagement is planned for the potential future development at Mistress Lane. Community ownership, encourages cohesion, mutual support and feeling of being part of the Leeds community, as the following quotes from LCH shareholders testify⁸:

"This is all about making our money work in Leeds, for Leeds"

"Anything we can do to improve affordability is a good thing"

"Affordable housing is inaccessible to so many people"

Although it may be less important for some LCH shareholders, they can also expect eventually to receive a financial return on their investments, currently proposed as 2% annually from 2020. This reflects the way some other community-led organisations already work⁹:

⁷ Source: Cunninghame Housing Association Social Return on Investment Analysis <https://cunninghame-housing.org>

⁸ Source: Leeds Community Homes: <http://leedscommunityhomes.org.uk/>

⁹ Source: Headingley Development Trust <http://www.headingleydevelopmenttrust.org.uk/homes> (latest figures via social media 30/4/18)

Example: Headingley Development Trust

Founded as a community benefit society in 2005, Headingley Development Trust supports a range of community projects in the Headingley area of Leeds. These include Headingley Homes, which aims to provide affordable homes for long-term residents of the area. It currently owns one house and leases several others, to let to individuals and families at social rents.

Some of the Trust's current funding comes from a community share issue, launched in early 2018 with the aim of raised at least £280,000 – the Trust recently announced that this fund has reached over £400,000. Investors will receive a 2% return, with interest accruing from 2018 and the first payments being made in 2019.

Use of derelict or brownfields sites for new homes also reduces the pressures on green space. In Leeds, community-led housing focuses on inner-city or inner-suburb areas; all the existing and planned community-led developments in Leeds (Citu, LILAC, Headingley Homes, Chaco, Mistress Lane, Shangri-Leeds) are in inner-suburb areas of Leeds, with many providing the opportunity to redevelop derelict or brownfield sites. This in turn reduces the pressure on green space in and around Leeds.; none of these developments significantly affects existing green space in Leeds or green belt areas around the city.



Section 4: Outcomes for Local Authorities

4.1. Providing More Affordable Housing

The growth in Leeds' population makes housing an important priority for the city. The Council's current housing strategy identifies the need for 70,000 new homes to be built by 2028. Whilst the contribution of community-led housing is likely to be small compared to this total, it nevertheless plays its part in helping the city to grow and prosper through raising new money for housing¹⁰:

Example: LCH and Headingley Development Trust, Leeds

LCH has brought £360k of new funding for housing in Leeds, without needing Local Authority support, through the money it has raised via its initial share offer. Headingley Development Trust has achieved something very similar, with more than £400,000 raised so far through its latest share offer.

The Canopy Housing Project in Leeds (see Section 2.3), working in partnership with two other community-led organisations, Latch and Gipsil, also helped to bring in £1.8m investment from central government through the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme. Matched with £2.2m in loans and other grants, this generated a £4m programme in Leeds creating more than 50 homes.



These financial inputs are enhanced for Local Authorities through the government's New Homes Bonus scheme. Although recently revised, this scheme still provides Local Authorities with around £4k of funding over a four-year period for each newly-available home in the area.

4.2. Preserving Green Space

Section 3.2 highlights how community-led housing can help protect green space by using other land. This can also enable the development of smaller, more difficult-to-build-on sites which may be less attractive to commercial developers. ChaCo (Chapeltown Co-Housing) is an example of this. The site is relatively small, next to a busy main road, and has contamination issues, so commercial developers were not interested. Chaco plans to develop sustainable and affordable homes for up to 33 households, as illustrated here¹¹:

¹⁰ Source: Leeds Community Homes <http://leedscommunityhomes.org.uk/>

¹¹ Source: Chapeltown Cohousing <http://chapeltowncohousing.org.uk/>



4.3. Community Commitments

Community-led housing also provide a new and innovative way for Local Authorities to meet S106 requirements for affordable housing¹²:

Example: Citu partnership with LCH

Citu Group Ltd is the company building the CID in Leeds. S106 requirements for this development are being met by the homes that will be managed by LCH. LCH believes this is the first time a non-registered housing provider has fulfilled this role.

This approach also fulfils the Council's obligations under the Social Value Act 2012, which requires it to consider social value as a factor in any contracts it awards. Leeds City Council has gone further by producing a Social Value Charter which commits it to working in partnership with communities and the Third Sector, and aims to add value to society and the local economy whilst minimising damage to the environment. This too is fully met by community-led housing projects.

¹² Source: Leeds Community Homes <http://leedscommunityhomes.org.uk/>

4.4. Reduced Demands on Health and Social Care Services

There is clear evidence that people's need for statutory health and social care services is increased if they are lonely and socially isolated¹³. Community-led housing can create a living environment where people are in frequent contact and "look out for each other", reducing loneliness and providing mutual support¹⁴.

Example: Older Women's Co-Housing (OWCH), Barnet

The OWCH group is detailed in Section 2, and reduced isolation is one of its main aims. The group quotes an example of a lady who fell ill and suffered short-term memory loss. She was looked after by neighbours for several days until she recovered, in a situation where she might otherwise have had to go to hospital.



¹³ Reference: *Investing to Tackle Loneliness*, UK Cabinet Office & NESTA, June 2015

¹⁴ Source: Older Women's Co-Housing, <http://www.owch.org.uk>

Section 5: Outcomes for the Local Economy

5.1. Suppliers – New Jobs and Apprenticeships

Local traders and services can benefit through increased business if CLTs use local suppliers¹⁵:

Example: Leeds Empty Homes Doctor

Empty Homes Doctor works in Partnership with Leeds City Council to bring empty properties back into use as homes, by providing personalised support to owners of empty properties and publicity through its web site and social media. A social impact analysis of its work in May 2015 estimated that in 2014-15 it had generated more than £340k in increased income to local business including estate agents, solicitors, surveyors, EPC providers and tradespeople (builders, plumbers, electricians) involved in bringing an empty property back to the standard needed to sell or let.



Some of this increased income is likely to be invested in new jobs and new apprenticeships, which further benefits the area in terms of increased employment.

Suppliers to these local businesses can also expect to benefit from such expansion¹⁶:

Example: Middlesbrough CLT

Middlesbrough CLT began as a group of residents campaigning against demolition in the Gresham area of the town. They later developed into a pro-active housing organisation and negotiated with Middlesbrough Council to acquire properties in the area around the demolition area. They now have seven properties, two of them converted from derelict shops.

The CLT prioritised having a local impact through benefiting local business, and state that 100% of their funding was spent in Middlesbrough, with less than £100 spent outside the immediate local area. This has supported the chosen local contractor to expand their business and take on two full time employees and a further two apprentices.

¹⁵ Source: *Leeds Empties: Social Impact and Social Value Evaluation Report for 2014-15*, Real-Improvement 2015

¹⁶ Source: *Building a Legacy: The Impact of Empty Homes Community Grants Programme in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside*, University of Birmingham Housing and Communities Research Group 2015

5.2. Local Service Industries

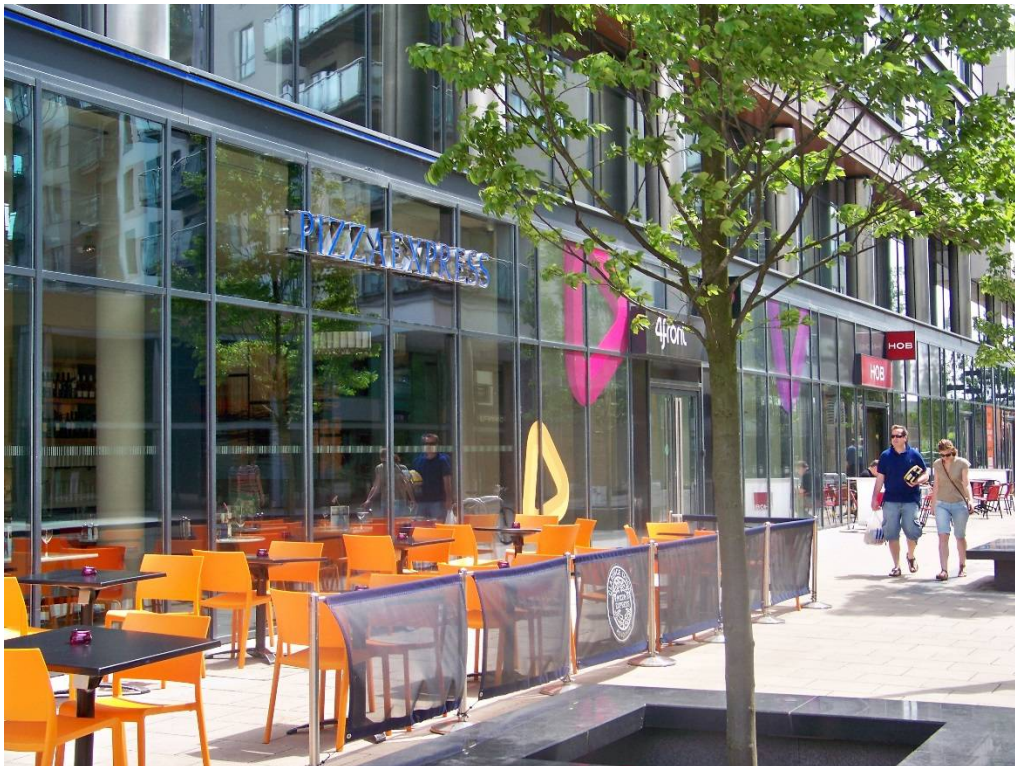
There is a further benefit where local service industries, such as retail and restaurants businesses are able to grow, in part due to new developments¹⁷:

Example: Lyvennet Community Trust

Lyvennet Community Trust, based at Crosby Ravenworth near Penrith in Cumbria, was set up in 2009 as a CLT, and completed work on a development of 12 new houses in 2012. Ten of these are rented and two are shared ownership. Along with this development, the Trust also led other community initiatives including an anaerobic digester, nursery provision and a cooperative to run the local pub.

The local pub, the Butchers Arms, had closed in 2009 due to illness of its owners. A community share offer was launched to purchase and refurbish the pub, and it reopened in August 2011. (Prime minister David Cameron was there on the day and was allowed to officially open the bar but not the pub itself because “it’s a community project and will be opened by the community”!). The business, owned by 297 community shareholders, now employs two full-time and nine part-time staff, and provides good food in a warm and pleasant environment.

In a similar way, the CID development in Leeds expects to have a positive impact on shops and restaurants in the nearby Leeds Dock area.



¹⁷ Source: Lyvennet Community Trust web site <http://www.lyvennetcommunitytrust.org/> and Lyvennet Community Pub web site <http://www.lyvennetcommunitypub.com/aboutlcp.html>

Section 6: Outcomes for the Environment

6.1. Environmentally-Friendly Construction

CLTs' focus on community benefits can be both local and global, and often involves innovative and environmentally-friendly construction techniques¹⁸:

Example: Goodwin Development Trust, Hull

Goodwin Development Trust was established in Hull in 1994 and is now a social enterprise employing more than 200 people on a wide range of community-based projects. Its Goodwin Community Housing programme has achieved the city's first development to attain Level 5 in the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSFH). The social housing development at Villa Place uses energy-saving materials and innovative design. Features include solar power, triple-glazed windows and doors, low energy light fittings and a communal rainwater harvesting system together with grey water recycling to minimise water usage.



A further example relates to Passivhaus standard, meaning that the development is as eco-friendly, and therefore as cheap to heat and run, as is technically possible¹⁹:

Example: Saffron Lane, Leicester

In 2013, Saffron Lane Neighbourhood Council persuaded Leicester City Council that a 13-acre area of derelict land was ideal for community-led housing and bought the land from them for £1. They then leased it to emh group, who created 68 eco-friendly homes ranging from one-bedroom flats to four-bedroom houses, all for affordable rent. As well as addressing priority housing need in the area, the new homes will have a dramatic impact on fuel poverty, with some homes costing just £13 per year to heat. The Passivhaus standard involves the highest standards of insulation combined internal heat recovered and circulated by a Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR) unit. The site is believed to be the largest Passivhaus development in the UK.

¹⁸ Source: Premier Modular case study: https://www.premiermodular.co.uk/uploads/files/12565_-_Goodwin_Trust_-_Villa_Place.pdf

¹⁹ Source: Locality Case Study: <http://locality.org.uk/projects/communityled-housing/case-studies/saffron-lane-eco-homes/>

6.2. Other Environmental Benefits

Design and location can also facilitate reduced car usage, through transport access and car-sharing, and can enable community-led housing to achieve other environmental benefits²⁰:

Example: LILAC, Leeds

LILAC stands for Low Impact Living Affordable Community, and is a co-housing community of 20 eco-build households in West Leeds. The homes are constructed using prefabricated wall panels built of straw and timber, which dramatically reduces the volume of CO₂ used in the construction process as well as greatly improving insulation. LILAC residents also reduce their impact on the environment through a car-sharing scheme, and through sourcing as much as they can locally, including growing food on their allotment.



Citu expect the proximity of the CID site to Leeds city centre to reduce car usage, and are considering a car-sharing scheme.

All these initiatives contribute to improved air quality in their local area, as well as wider aspects of global warming.

²⁰ Source: LILAC web site <http://www.lilac.coop/low-impact-living/>

Section 7: Outcomes for Wider Society – Beyond Leeds

LCH acts as a hub for information and contacts, providing workspace, sharing expertise and promoting the benefits of community-led housing across West and North Yorkshire. The aim is to support other community-led housing projects, and promulgate the benefits described in this report.

The innovations that community-led housing can generate should have wider benefits too. New design and construction ideas, such as those being used by Citu at the CID development in Leeds are likely to influence the wider construction industry and housing market. Use of new and smaller-scale building companies also helps the house building industry become more diverse and resilient, reducing the risk of over-reliance on large companies (as recently demonstrated by the Carillion experience).

This wider role of community-led housing is recognised by central government. In a speech to the Community-Led Housing Conference in November 2017, Housing Minister Alok Sharma said²¹:

“You are designing and developing houses that you and your neighbours are proud to call home.

Homes that, from the word go, are an integral part of your communities.

Homes that are not just affordable now, but are affordable forever.

That are models of high quality design, energy efficiency and innovation.

And it’s not just the people in those homes who benefit.

Because your work raises the bar for the entire housing market.

Pushing up expectations of design quality.

Powering the growth of modern methods of construction.

And, by supporting smaller-scale building companies making the house building industry more diverse and resilient.”

All of this helps to generate greater public awareness of community-led housing options, increasing the impetus for more and more community-led housing projects in the future. Whilst most projects may be small-scale at present, the potential exists for community-led housing to become a major movement and force for change nationally.

²¹ Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/community-led-housing>

Section 8: Conclusions

The many potential benefits of community-led housing can best be summarised by viewing them from different perspectives. Whilst not every development will offer all of these, positive outcomes can include:

For residents:

- Affordability, in perpetuity
- Creating communities: shared living that facilitates mutual support and reduces isolation
- Enhanced future prospects, through gaining skills and work experience

For local communities:

- Helping local communities stay together
- Improving the area and providing a better living environment
- Encouraging cohesion, mutual support, and a greater sense of community

For Local Authorities:

- Providing more affordable housing
- Preserving green space
- Strengthening commitment to social value
- Reduced demands on health and social care services

For the local economy:

- Increased business for local companies
- New jobs and apprenticeships
- More business for local service industries

For the environment:

- Environmentally-friendly construction
- Improved air quality
- Wider environmental benefits

For wider society:

- Developing new more sustainable ways of living
- Demonstrating new and innovative construction methods
- Helping to make the house-building industry more diverse and resilient

Whilst this report has not attempted to quantify these outcomes in detail, all of them deliver measurable social value in return for the investment needed. Community-led housing is a growing part of the housing sector, and LCH is well placed to help communities in Leeds and beyond achieve real benefits for current and future generations.