

## **Report from the Chair & Directors for 2019-20 (AGM 26 November 2020)**

### **Dwynwen Stepien - Chair**

This is our second year of operating, and it has been very different from our first year!

Emsworth Community Land Trust (ECLT) came into being in August 2018 to work with others to ensure the Emsworth Victoria Cottage Hospital site was not sold off to the highest bidders. And it is great to see the work continuing on the site to develop a modern GP surgery despite the difficult conditions of 2020.

We are now working on developing the Redlands Grange site for community use. Given the childcare, community and youth needs in the area, particularly with the rate of growth, the need for a new centre is clear. We now have outline plans for an early years, youth and community centre that we have started to consult on virtually and hope to hold more public consultation from October onwards. Raising the capital and local fundraising will be our challenge for 2020-2021.

And it is good to report that in joining up with other community groups, we were part of saving the Emsworth Library. Emsworth Community Association will be working with the library service to re-site it in the Community Centre.

Our HOUSING AND COMMUNITY NEEDS survey was finalised in February 2020. The response rate was really strong and it has given us the feedback we need to move forward. The survey indicates that there is already a significant shortfall in affordable housing in the area and that, over the next 5 years, this will grow to more than 200 homes, mainly for small or lone households. The shortage of facilities for young people was also highlighted.

We are continuing our work on supporting the development of the town centre, working closely with the Business Association and Residents Association. To have a thriving community and we want to maintain the town centre and its development. We will be intending to work with Havant Council on our project for South Street in the coming year.

We now have 399 of members and have a board of Directors with the passion and expertise to take forward projects and ideas that have stalled during our difficult last six months. 2020-2021.

Finally I would like to thank all the support we have received from our members and wider community including our 3 Ward Councillors and our County Councillor.

The following reports outline the work we have begun. We will outline our plans for 2020-2023 over the coming months.

## Objective 1 – Affordable Housing

### Mike Ridley, Director

The findings of the Emsworth Housing Needs Survey (2019) were published in early 2020 and are posted on the ECLT website. A selection of the findings and conclusions:

- Emsworth has a lower proportion of social rented housing than Havant District as a whole and the national average
- Our housing is expensive when compared to Havant district
- House purchase is out of the reach of low income groups unless they have a substantial deposit (much larger than 10% of purchase price)
- There are high cost barriers to new households establishing themselves in the ward and to growing households moving to larger properties. This has created a pent-up demand which can only be released at present by moving outside of the town.
- The 'affordable' rented housing being delivered by the current and planned pipeline of development is beyond the resources of many of those in housing need for whom a more highly discounted 'social' rent is necessary.
- Amongst responders the priorities identified for action were:
  - public service workers
  - 1<sup>st</sup> time buyers
  - small (1 and 2-bed) houses for singles and small families
- A supply of smaller units and specialist housing products for older residents is needed to meet a demand for downsizing and increase the supply of larger properties available

Many of these will come as little surprise to residents but we now have an authoritative evidence-base to underpin our initiatives and advocacy with HBC and other bodies.

It has been noted before that the nature of the land economy in Emsworth (scarcity, high cost, lack of exception sites) makes it very difficult to get conventional community-led housing projects off the ground. Also that while the pipeline of affordable housing from commercial schemes under s106 agreements is significant, its mix, character, rental terms and allocation to tenants is not necessarily sensitive to the local needs of our community.

Against this backdrop a principal focus of the CLT remains to influence the drafting of s 106 deeds so that the scarcities noted in the Needs Survey are met by at least some of the new housing in these commercial schemes. Discussions with HBC were put on hold with the onset of the pandemic but have now been resumed.

While the opportunities for direct development by the CLT are limited by the lack of sites we remain vigilant to opportunities: any suggestions brought forward by members or others will be enthusiastically received and investigated.

We reported last year the potential for the regeneration of the zones bordering the South Street car park area and a feasibility study has yielded an encouraging result. Again, progress has been interrupted by the pandemic but this remains very much a live proposition for a few affordable homes or to create a community fund for application elsewhere in the town.

Finally, we have maintained a close relationship with our friends at Westbourne Community Trust, sharing and learning from each other's experience and exploring opportunities for cooperation.

## **Objective 2: Youth and Community Space**

### **Dwynwen Stepien, Director & Ellie Turnbull, Director**

In our first year we identified a range of local needs and these were confirmed this year through our household survey

- increasing concern about the lack of facilities for young people, especially as there is no secondary school within the town to provide a focus. This limits the ability for young people to be active and engaged in positive activities and in turn, this can occasionally result in anti-social behaviour
- a growth in housing in the north of the town, but without a corresponding growth in community infrastructure. As a result, there is a fear that the new housing will be soulless without the ability for residents to meet each other
- insufficient childcare in the area to support the growing population in the north of the town.
- we are also aware of the impact that Covid 19 has had on young people's mental and physical health

We are therefore keen to see the development of an Early Years, Youth and Community facility to meet these needs. Now that the GP surgery will be relocated on the hospital site the plot of land off Redlands Grange has become available.

We have continued to work with the YMCA and ERA to explore the development of facilities for young people and the wider community on this parcel of land.

We made a funding proposal to Havant Council (under CIL Levy) for a detailed feasibility at Redlands Grange site. This was approved in February 2020 and the work was commissioned, the results of this will be known in early 2021. This will help us undertake detailed work on the site to identify the facility that could be built. We have been involving local residents, young people and the council in this opportunity through consultation via Facebook. We have been unable to hold consultation meetings due to the Covid 19 restrictions but will endeavour to do this as soon as the situation changes.

We needed to start a dialogue with young people and decided that a fun day was the way to do this. The Young People day which was held in February was a great success with over 100 young people attending. The day was organised by the ECLT and the YMCA with the assistance of the Emsworth Young People steering group and the day was sponsored by FECH.

On the day 20 volunteers were on hand to make sure the day went smoothly.

There were an exiting range of activities including samba drumming, art classes, circus skills, table tennis, hockey, the ever popular NERF guns and many more.

Young people were asked to put forward suggestions for the type of activities they would like to have in Emsworth. Suggestions included trampolining, dance, cinema DJ, cookery, games room. The idea of a hang-out space for young people was very popular.

### Objective 3. **Maintaining and generating a thriving town centre**

Shirley Farmer; Theo Schofield

ECLT's work in 2019 had laid important foundations on which to maintain and build a thriving town centre. The results of our extensive interviews conducted with shops, businesses and others were presented to a newly refreshed Emsworth Business Association in December 2019. There was much interest in pursuing new opportunities and identifying innovative ways to help local traders, and above all, a feeling of optimism.

However, in March and again today, a shutdown of many aspects of UK life caused by COVID 19 has left only essential shops open. So, what lessons can we draw from the crisis that has had such a devastating impact on small local businesses and communities?

Firstly, people have stayed loyal to the relationships they have built with Emsworth's shops, cafés, producers and suppliers. Secondly, they have discovered that most goods and services they need may be found in Emsworth. Thirdly, they are enjoying new found connections such as personal service, recognition, being 'looked out for', having items delivered or sourced especially for them, and finally, rediscovering a sense of connection and community which had been in danger of slipping away.

In this changed and challenging environment the ECLT continues to work closely with the EBA and other community groups. We share the aim of promoting the viability of the businesses in the town centre, making it an attractive place to live, work and visit. The challenge is to reconcile the wish for people to be safe, in a pleasant environment, which encourages footfall, with space for sitting, meeting and events on the one hand, with the need for access and parking on the other.

Prompted by the barriers in the town introduced to achieve social distancing, the ERA, in collaboration with the ECLT, commissioned Thomas Davies of Helyer Davies, Architects, based in Emsworth, to conduct a review and produce a drawing which would be a basis for discussion, consultation, and hopefully some action, to improve the centre of Emsworth.

The key proposals are to enlarge the pedestrian area in St Peter's Square, to make the High Street and Queen Street one way through the town, with widened pavements and a defined cycle route, while preserving access and short-term parking.

The plan was published in the EMS, and the subsequent consultation was very positive, and raised other issues, including a 20mph speed limit, a safe crossing in North Street between the car park and the new surgery, and improved signage and wayfinding in the town.

The Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan, which is based on wide public consultation, is due to be approved next year, also contains proposals to create a successful town centre and the challenge now find ways of implementing all these ideas.

To that end, a sub-group of Directors have started to meet together regularly to explore the feasibility of these ideas, involve potential partners, particularly our councillors, and identify possible sources of funding. The aim is to have a five-year programme for us to work together and achieve some real change.