Affordable Housing – Report from Mike Ridley

We have previously described the obstacles to providing community-led housing in Emsworth being high residential land values and the absence of the ‘exception sites’ which rural CLT’s can capitalise on but which are non-existent in an extensively developed urban ward. Opportunities lie mostly through a partnership with Havant Borough Council enabling reallocation of publicly owned land or using their planning powers to give us a role in the allocation of s106 properties generated from the commercial development pipeline.

The CLT enjoys excellent working relations with HBC at both councillor and officer levels and we are encouraged by the support that we are receiving. HBC wants us to succeed and provide an example to inspire community groups across the borough. Unfortunately the pressures created by the pandemic have left scarce capacity for HBC to support our initiatives in practical ways and we have struggled to gain any traction in 2021. We hope a degree of normality will return over the coming year and the situation will improve.

The special characteristics of community-led housing are that it should be focused on local needs and remain affordable in perpetuity. These are necessary conditions for our participation in a project and must be assured in any partnership agreements. The 2020 Housing Needs Survey is the evidence-base for our priorities.

Looking forward to the practicalities of development we have had discussions with Housing Associations, developers and advisers about business arrangements which deliver our objectives while benefiting from their competencies and financial clout. We have agreed to work with Middlemarch Associates, a specialist consultancy which has worked with over 50 CLT’s and evolved a development model which should work well for us. We look forward to putting it into action!