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The Confederation of
Co-operative
Housing

CCH Case Study: Bright Green Futures | Researcher: Philippa Hughes | Date: July 2020

Bright Green Futures

An enabling developer approach





At a glance

- **Private company who develop housing schemes of water tight shells for self-finish on plots to be sold to individuals**
- **Purchasing plots also gives access to a communal garden and a community centre which at the end of development are handed over to a community organisation that Bright Green Futures supports the residents in establishing**
- **Residents are self-selecting**
- **The first project, The Courtyard, consisted of 2 houses, 4 flats, a communal garden and a community room in central Bristol, now fully occupied**
- **The second project, Water Lilies, a 33 unit development on the outskirts of Bristol - 15 mins from the city centre is in development**
- **Bright Green Futures is a value led eco- developer, focused on creating zero carbon, future proof, healthy communities to the highest design standards and creating communities that support each other**
- **Winners of the Best Eco Aware Community Housing Initiative and Best Sustainable Housing Development in 2019**



Photos





Overview

Bright Green Futures is a private company that develops self-finish, zero carbon homes on a housing scheme designed as an intentional community for sale to private individuals.

As a developer, Bright Green Futures obtain planning permission, design the scheme and take on the financial risk of schemes by buying the land, paying for construction of the neighbourhood and watertight shells of houses which are then sold. They see their strength as being able to achieve community led housing schemes in two to three years rather than the longer times that many community groups, that start from the ground up, can face.

All units involve an element of self-finish, though there is a range of options for future residents in terms of how finished the properties are when they arrive. The residents will also have access to communal outdoor spaces and a community centre to be collectively owned by a resident's organisation. The scheme is designed with input from 'pioneer' residents who buy-in early in the development. The homeowners will individually own their house and their plot of land. Residents purchase their plot through private mortgages or through buying outright. Bright Green Futures hope to increase the range of options available to include more affordable housing options in a mixed community setting in future developments. The Bright Green Futures model allows individuals to self-select into zero-carbon, intentional communities without needing to do the groundwork of forming the group, identifying land, obtaining planning permission, contracting construction, securing finance, and carrying risk themselves through development.

So far, Bright Green Futures has developed The Courtyard in Bristol and construction work is ongoing on

the Water Lilies, a 33-unit site. Bright Green Futures is already looking for land for their next project.

With support from Bright Green Futures, residents form a community group who collectively own the communal land in the neighbourhood and the community centre and are responsible for its maintenance. As the scheme is nearing completion Bright Green Futures will run a series of workshops with the future residents which will determine the constitution of the new organisation and how it will be incorporated. Bright Green Futures will then hand over ownership, and responsibility for, these communal assets to the group.

Bright Green Futures is a private company and all land and assets of the company are owned by the founder. The financial model is based on making enough profit from schemes to sustain the company and generate enough profit through sales of the houses to finance the start of the next scheme. The recent scheme is mostly financed through borrowing from Homes England on commercial terms that will be paid back through the sale of the houses. Although the loan is on commercial terms, Bright Green Futures has found Homes England to be a supportive partner where a commercial bank would have wanted a more profitable track record and have not been interested in the complications of the community led/self finish elements. A significant challenge for the company has been planning construction that aligns with the values of the company but is cost-effective. They chose not to pursue becoming a housing association as they enjoy the freedom to focus on

zero-carbon and community space that not being tied to grant funding allows. However, this means they are only able to utilise private finance and therefore can only offer housing units for sale at prices which cover their costs and provide enough profit to sustain the company. Although being a private company and not a registered provider of social housing has left Bright Green Futures unable to access grant funding for their projects, they find it enables them to centre their values as an organisation (which they share with their customers) of environmentally sustainable living within a community.





Quotes

“Personally I find our model really interesting because I am used to working in the public/voluntary sector where the organisations I have run have been very grant dependent and dictated by national/local government policy or Trust Fund criteria. It makes an organisation’s long term strategic planning and sustainability very precarious. The pros of being privately funded are that you are free to pursue your companies own values and priorities, at your own pace but of course the con is that it is much harder to offer affordable housing. We have offered large bursaries to our pioneer self builders, but i’d like to see us being able to access public funding for some affordable housing along side privately financed houses. We are also increasingly approached by other community led housing groups for advice and guidance and this is something i’m very keen to offer within the next year or so”

Caroline Pringle

Bright Green Futures



Learning points

- **Private finance can be used to develop housing with community led aspects, though lack of grant funding means most plots must sell at market rates to cover costs and generate enough profit to sustain the model**
- **The current system of house building maintains a strict distinction between affordable and market housing and it is difficult for schemes to accomplish both**
- **Housing can be developed in a highly environmentally sound manner with elements of communal living by a private purpose driven company**
- **Private and professional development organisations are able to accomplish schemes more quickly than community groups**

