

# Community-led Housing Toolkit 4

How to deliver your project

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## Introduction: What and who is this guide for

This is a guide for groups who have decided to develop a community-led housing project and are looking for practical advice on how to develop and deliver it. It can be used by newly established groups, or by existing community groups interested in branching out into the delivery of a community-led housing project.

### How should you use it?

Use it to help you deliver the housing identified in your project plan. Property development is complex and all projects are different, so the advice contained in this guide will not be definitive, but is intended to provide a general overview.

If you download and print this guide, write answers to the points raised in the text boxes shown. This will help you record your progress. Links to further sources of support and information are listed at Appendix A.

Though all elements of this toolkit could be handled concurrently, we suggest that for ease of use you try to complete each process in this guide before you move onto the next.

# Step One: Professional teams

## Making the right selection

Moving from feasibility work to detailed project planning and management is a crucial step on the road to a successful community-led housing project. It often takes place alongside the process of gaining funding. Detailed design proposals are necessary in order to gain full planning permission. In addition, more accurate costings can be made on the basis of more detailed plans.

Land for the project may have already been acquired. If this is not the case, the acquisition should be moved to an advanced stage to avoid unnecessary spend on projects which cannot ultimately proceed.

### How is the project managed?

As the project moves on, defining precise project elements, detailed plans, costs and permissions are usually overseen by a professional project manager - often a chartered surveyor, architect or other built environment professional. This project manager will very often be part of a professional team.

### What is meant by professional team?

The professional team is the practice or group of practices and individuals that will formulate the development proposals and help to manage and deliver the project. Often it will be led by an architectural practice. However, it can also include other professionals, such as engineers and quantity surveyors.

Consider how you wish this role of project manager to work and how you will work with the professional you appoint. You may decide to continue working with the individual or organisation that assisted you with feasibility works, or that now is the time to bring in another professional to manage the project going forward. Whichever route you choose, you should ensure that the decision is made objectively and with the agreement of the whole group.

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### **How do we make our requirements clear?**

A good project brief is absolutely essential as a basis for selecting a professional team and communicating your [requirements](#) to them. Be sure to choose a professional team that has the necessary disciplines, experience and skills to design a scheme that meets your requirements, and those of the local planning authority.

The aim is to obtain the best value for money for the available budget and to ensure that you achieve the design quality you are looking for.

### **What should a project brief include?**

Briefs vary greatly, but there are certain essential elements that should be included:

- Details of your group
- The nature, aims and purpose of the proposed housing
- Any special standards or regulations that the development should meet (for example, environmental standards)
- The available budget
- Any other relevant information (social, economic, environmental)
- The skills, experience and range of professional disciplines required.

The brief should also set out the required content of any expressions of interest, such as:

- Response to the brief
- Fee proposal
- The project team
- Capacity to deliver within the timescale
- Previous project examples
- Due diligence information, such as details of insurance, bank accounts, and references.

The feasibility study and any other relevant documentation may also be made available.

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### **How do we make the selection?**

Expressions of interest may be invited either through open competition or through invitation. Funders may also stipulate certain requirements for inviting tenders, so check whether these apply to your project before you begin the selection process.

Often selection is based on a combination of written proposals and interviews. If there are several submissions, the written proposals could be used to shortlist those invited to interview.

Clear criteria and scoring or marking mechanism should be developed as a basis for selection and your group must formally agree on the final selection.

## Step Two: Working arrangements

### Working with professional teams

Agreeing on who does what, and who will take responsibility for key aspects of the development project is key to a successful outcome.

#### What's the first step?

Following the appointment of the professional team, a meeting should be held to run through the brief and discuss working arrangements. This will often include clarification of:

- The main contacts for your group and the professional team
- Liaison with your group, including regularity of meetings
- Procedures for agreeing different stages of work and amendments
- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Responsibilities held by your group and the professional team.

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### What needs to be handled by professionals?

These roles may vary greatly and could depend on the available skills within your community group, the available budget and the nature of the project. However, you are likely to need professional help to cover the following;

- Detailed designs and plans
- Obtaining consents
- On-site project management at the construction phase
- Contract management (contractors)
- Health and safety issues.

There are many different types of contract for professional support. Your project manager can usually provide advice on these. It is essential that the contract sets out clearly the responsibilities and tasks to be covered by the professional team, those covered by your group and the arrangements for liaison and approvals between them.

Also take care to ensure that you have strong governance and are able to exert appropriate controls over the professional team. The appointment of professionals is a matter that must be agreed by the whole of the group's management team and/or board. However, it is often useful to have one person as the main point of contact for the management team or board, to liaise with the professional project manager. The contract you agree should stipulate how the following responsibilities are handled:

- Financial management
- Contract management
- Liaison with funding bodies, partners and stakeholders
- Liaison with the professional team and contractor
- Preparing and submitting administrative and financial returns to funding bodies
- Monitoring

- Developing and/or agreeing solutions to unforeseen circumstances
- Reporting on progress, including any issues, problems or changes.

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### **How flexible can project budgets be?**

Ideally, the costs determined at feasibility stage will allow you to identify funding possibilities and will not change significantly as the project progress. However, there needs to be some flexibility on this as detailed design and planning work can result in changes to early budget figures.

If you have already identified the maximum level of funding or borrowing that can be achieved in relation to the project, you will need to control your costs very tightly. Ultimately, key decisions around the financial aspects of the project will need to be agreed by the group as a whole.

As detailed plans are produced, estimates may be broken down to give a clearer idea of the costs of different aspects of construction. These detailed costings will provide a basis for financial monitoring at the delivery stage.

### What are the common problems groups encounter at this stage?

It is easy to let a project run away with you during the detailed planning stages. Deciding on the finer points of a project can result in significant increases to overall costs - as can unexpected fees or requirements linked to site or infrastructure requirements. Stay focused and in control.

Misunderstandings may often occur as a result of inadequate briefing to the professional team, or inadequate detail in the contract. So ensure that the contract is carefully considered and that your team has the information it needs to work on your behalf.

There are often unforeseen issues, which require changes to be made. However, be watchful that your group does not backtrack or change decisions unnecessarily. This can lead to time delays, cost increases and strained professional relationships. In the worst cases, it can cause projects to fail due to inadequate resources.

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## Step Three: Design process and consents

### Navigating the detailed design process

There are various stages in designing the detailed development proposal. Certain design points may have been included in the feasibility study. Although these may change, take care that changes do not have implications affect the scheme's capital costs and/or income potential.

#### Why is design so important?

Decisions taken at the design stage can have serious short and long-term implications for how well a development functions, its running costs, sustainability, social inclusion, quality of life and durability. Together, these can make the difference between an exemplar scheme or a project that needs redeveloping in 25-30 years.

When working with limited budgets, this can mean trade-offs between keeping capital costs low and longer-term operational costs. For example, investment in high performance construction in terms of insulation and heating can greatly reduce energy use and running costs when the development is occupied.

The design of buildings and places, streets and spaces can have a significant impact on human well-being and quality of life. Bear these in mind when working up your project. Design and standards cover a wide range of issues including:

- Pedestrian convenience and ease of movement
- Quality of the public realm, including streets and spaces
- Making sure car parking is well integrated and does not dominate
- Safety and natural surveillance
- Room size and internal standards flexibility home working room height and size
- Response to topography, landscape, historic contexts, etc.

The Design Council's [Building for Life 12](#) tool provides a useful checklist of design considerations:

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### **What else should we be doing at this stage?**

Detailed plans will also allow the construction costs of development proposals to be estimated. This will ensure that the costings used at the feasibility stage were accurate and provide a basis for moving to the construction stage.

### **What about planning and other consents?**

Detailed plans will be required for the submission of an application for planning permission and to obtain building regulations approvals. Planning permissions may be granted subject to conditions or subject to the signing of a Section 106 Obligation. These can restrict development, require certain works to take place or require details to be agreed. More advice can be found at the [Planning Portal](#). Also see Appendix C.

Appointed professional teams will often take responsibility for liaising with regulating bodies and gaining necessary consents, though this may not always be the case, especially for smaller and less complex projects. It is often useful to seek pre-application discussions with the local planning authority, prior to making the formal application for planning permission.

Plans with yet more technical detail will be required to inform the actual construction process. [The Royal Institute of British Architects](#) (RIBA) has a scale of project stages, reflecting these different levels of detail.

The whole detailed planning process needs to be monitored and co-ordinated carefully by the project group. A failure to adequately oversee and agree work at this stage can lead to significant problems including rising costs, unwanted amendments or unnecessary delays.

Regular meetings with the project manager are necessary to check that details of the ongoing project are fully known to your group and that they are agreed and understood.

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### **Is there funding available to help with progress towards planning permission?**

Community Buildings Project Support funding of up to £40,000 is currently available to help groups cover the costs involved in moving a project from the feasibility stage to the submission of a planning application. See [http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/community-housing/?\\_a=funding](http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/community-housing/?_a=funding). This funding can cover a wide range of costs including for example, architect fees, site surveys and planning advice.

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## Step Four: Construction

### Delivering the scheme on the ground

There are several ways of running a construction project. This section examines some of the most common approaches.

#### How do we start?

Before commencing on the construction of the project, it is essential to agree how your group is going to oversee and control it. The best course of action is to set up a project board or group or sub-committee with delegated responsibility to act on behalf of the organisation as a whole.

Here's a suggested format for this grouping:

- The Chair and/or CEO of the project group
- The Treasurer or lead finance trustee
- The group's project co-ordinator
- The architect (project manager)
- The contractor's construction manager

The project board would establish its own terms of reference. These might include:

- The frequency of meetings
- A communications strategy
- Arrangements for monitoring progress
- Arrangements for monitoring finances
- Sign off of completed works
- How delays or contingencies will be dealt with
- Arrangements for ensuring quality and achievement of contractual standards.

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### What are the different construction options?

In broad terms there are three main routes to delivery of the project, each with varying levels of risk to the project group. The approach to construction should really be agreed as early as possible and certainly as part of the detailed planning and costing of the project, as each option may affect overall costs in different ways:

**Trade Packages:** This involves developing the project in a series of packages of work such as joinery, electrical, plumbing and heating. These are provided by different contractors. This is the riskiest option for project groups, requiring the appointment of their own construction project manager, who oversees and manages all works. It may be applicable in projects involving minor alterations or for groups with strong construction management skills and experience. For larger works it is generally disliked by funding organisations, which prefer the appointment of a single contractor.

**Traditional Contract:** This involves the employment of a professional design team to produce full working drawings, with the appointment of a single contractor on a build-only contract basis. This is less risky than a 'trade package', but the group still retains an exposure to risk including, but not limited to, changes in design, errors of the professional team and certain other matters specified within the selected contract. However, traditional contracts also mean that the project group and design team maintain control of the construction phase. This is an important factor in achieving quality.

**Design and Build:** This method involves employing the professional designer to undertake a concept design, establishing the basic requirements of the project group. This is then put out to tender to various contractors to provide the detailed design and construct the agreed scheme. This transfers most financial risk from the project group to the contractor, but the project group loses much control over the detailed design of the project. This creates a different kind of risk based on quality and detail of execution. So great care is required when selecting the contractor to ensure the submitted scheme and specifications meet the group's needs. This is the format most usually used when a housing association or other developer is brought in to work with a project group to take a project idea through to completion on a partnership basis. As the budget is pre-determined and the scheme is developed to a lesser extent, Design and Build development can be subject to poor quality of detail and finishes, though this is not always the case.

Standard forms of contract have been developed by the construction industry for all of the above by a variety of bodies including the [Joint Contracts Tribunal \(JCT\)](#), [New Engineering and Construction Contract \(NEC\)](#) and many others.

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### How do we approach contractor selection?

Take advice from your project manager, consider all the options and ensure your group is in agreement. Many groups begin by using a pre-qualification process which involves offering a number of contractors the opportunity to simply express an interest in taking on the works.

Remember that some projects select contractors at the same time as the design team. So design teams and contractors will team up to express an interest in the work and they are appointed as a package.

### How does tendering work?

Once you have chosen on the most suitable method of construction, the project can be offered to the short-list established from the pre-qualification stage or to the open market to provide tenders.

It is good practice to approach several contractors to ensure impartiality. A suitable system of marking the contractor's responses is advisable when considering the alternatives and may be essential to satisfy certain funding bodies. Criteria for assessing contractors usually include issues like capacity, track record, skills, experience and availability.

The appointment of the contractor may be led by the professional team, working with you, or you can lead it yourselves. The professional team will be working closely with the selected contractor, so their input into the selection process is important.

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### **Who actually oversees construction?**

If the trade packages or traditional contract options are adopted, the professional team will remain involved throughout the project, overseeing the construction works. Usually, there would be a project manager within the professional team with responsibility for managing the contractor's site activities. This role requires them to work very closely with your group's overall project manager.

If the method chosen is Design and Build, the process is different. Once the scheme is detailed enough to appoint the contractor, the project passes to the contractor who is then responsible for completion of the design and the management of construction. This involves a lower level of involvement by the project group's representative. The contractor will be required to report on progress and issues, though this may not happen as transparently as in trade packages or traditional contract options.

There can be advantages to Design and Build, especially in terms of lower costs to the project group. These advantages include having a single point of contact, the speed of progress and a set budget for construction. However, your group will need to monitor quality assurance, because the design professionals are not as involved. This could reduce your control over the project during the construction phase and could lead to compromises in quality.

### **What about defects that are revealed after the construction phase is complete?**

Building contracts generally contain a period beyond initial completion of works called the 'defects liability period' during which any defects in the works must be corrected at the contractor's expense. This period is typically six months, but can be up to two years. An appropriate period must be agreed at the outset.

## Appendix A: Prompter and links

RIBA Plan of Work:

<https://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Professionalsupport/RIBAPlanofWork2013.aspx>

Community-led Housing Grants and Support:

[http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/community-housing/?\\_a=funding](http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/community-housing/?_a=funding)

Contracts Information:

<http://www.jctltd.co.uk/>

<http://www.neccontract.com/>

Planning Resources:

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>

Design- Building for Life 12

<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition>

Community-led Regeneration Toolkit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-led-regeneration-toolkit>

Eligibility Criteria for Funding for Community-led Development from the 2015-18 Affordable Housing Programme:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-led-development-eligibility-criteria>

Funding for Self and Custom Build:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/custom-build-serviced-plots-loan-fund>

The Self-Build Portal:

<http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/>

The National Custom and Self-Build Association:

<http://www.nacsba.org.uk/>

Draft Planning Practice Guidance for Self and Custom Build:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding-draft-planning-practice-guidance>

National Community Land Trust Network:

<http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/home>

UK Cohousing Network:

<http://cohousing.org.uk/>

The Confederation of Co-operative Housing:

<http://www.cch.coop/>

Locality

<http://locality.org.uk/>

## Appendix B: Building for Life 12

[Buildings for Life 12](#) contains twelve headline questions, followed by a series of additional questions. These provide a useful checklist for considering housing design, taking account of a range of design, sustainability and community considerations. The twelve headline questions are as follows:

### Integrating into the neighbourhood

- 1. Connections** - Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones, while also respecting existing buildings and land uses around the development site?
- 2. Facilities and services** - Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?
- 3. Public transport** - Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?
- 4. Meeting local housing requirements** - Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?

### Creating a place

- 5. Character** - Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?

**6. Working with the site and its context** - Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including watercourses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?

**7. Creating well defined streets and spaces** - Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?

**8. Easy to find your way around** - Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?

## Street and home

**9. Streets for all** - Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?

**10. Car parking** - Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?

**11. Public and private spaces** - Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?

**12. External storage and amenity space** - Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles?

## Appendix C: Consents and regulations

Your professional team will be able to advise you on the full range of relevant consents and regulations including for example:

### Building Regulations, Fire and Access

Building regulations are universally applicable to all building works whether new build or alterations to existing buildings. The Local Authority or the professional team will be able to provide guidance on such matters. Building regulation submissions are made in addition to and separately from planning applications and are subject to payment of fees. Building regulation matters may be resolved with either the Local Authority or licensed independent practitioners. The regulations are concerned with the structural integrity and physical performance of development. They require building works to meet minimum standards of construction in areas such as foundations, walls, floors, roofs, electrical installations, utilities, fire resistance and escapes, ventilation, disabled access, and building performance (e.g. insulation and energy efficiency).

### Infrastructure and Access

Addressing deficiencies in access or infrastructure may add considerably to the cost of delivering development. Planning permissions may require contributions to infrastructure through Section 106 obligations. These are agreements made with developers requiring them to provide or pay for certain specified infrastructure, such as high improvements. There may also be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which requires payments to be made to the local authority, based on the scale and kind of development. Whilst community organisations are exempt from the CIL, they are not exempt to Section 106 requirements. For more information, see <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/applications/decisionmaking/conditionsandobligations>

### **Special Designations**

Any special status of land or buildings should be checked. These may have varying implications in terms of the suitability of sites or buildings. For example, green belt status will preclude most kinds of development. Some landscape designations may trigger European Union (EU) requirements for environmental assessment and may restrict development potential. For more information, see <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/environmental-impact-assessment/>

### **Listed Building Consent**

Development involving conversion or additions to listed buildings may introduce a need for Listed Building Consent. Early discussion with the local planning authority is advisable.

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