



EASTINGTON COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (ECLT) LIMITED

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Report to Parish Council re: Solar Fund - September 2019

Match Funding for Project Two application for Homes England Grant

1. Background

The 2019 Housing Needs Survey (HNS) will be reported in detail to Council shortly. Draft reports show a continuing need for affordable homes over and above the 23 homes ECLT is facilitating at Claypits.

ECLT intends to respond to the HNS with a new proposal, Project Two, for which grant funding is available (in principle) from Homes England (HE). This HE Project Grant replaces a similar grant from Locality (another Government agency) which supported ECLT's Claypits project.

In 2016, Council voted £6,000 in match funding, from the Solar Fund to ECLT, thus supporting the Locality grant applications, totalling £79,000 in 2016, 2017 and 2018

This report asks that the Solar Fund again provides that "seed corn" to bring a large government grant into the Parish.

2. 2019 Solar Fund application

ECLT has supplied an official application form to be considered by the Solar Fund in the sum of £8,000.

Confirmation that this sum would be available as match funding would allow ECLT to formally apply to HE for a Project Grant of just over £100,000. If the HE Grant is not awarded, ECLT would not draw down the Solar Fund monies.

The precise HE Grant application will be finalised in October, once the HNS is made public and the scale of the requirement is known. Experience from the Claypits project is that ECLT had to rely on the goodwill of our Housing Association partner, Aster Homes for payment of legal fees and engineering studies, which HE is now encouraging ECLT to fully fund from the HE Grant source.

It is clear government policy to encourage community-led bodies like ECLT. There are now over 350 Community Land Trusts in England, building a pipeline of over 15,000 affordable homes.

ECLT would be shaping Project Two within the Neighbourhood Development Plan of 2016 (NDP), with the attendant public meetings and stages of consultation with Parish Council, observed in the Claypits project.

A Registered Society under the Co-operative and Community Benefits Societies Act 2014, registration number 7425

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3. Why now?

The Solar Fund is only considered in September and March each year and ECLT would require the match funding by October 2019.

To wait to March 2020 would miss grant availability deadlines at HE, some of whose monies will be withdrawn after March 31st 2020.

The sooner ECLT applies, the larger the amount of grant can be guaranteed from HE. These government budgetary pressures are partly why the normal 10% match funding rules can be relaxed and HE will accept £8,000 even if the Project Grant is in excess of £100,000

A second time pressure lies in the Stroud DC review of the Local Plan, which is partially complete. If ECLT and Eastington Parish are seen to be actively implementing the NDP, Stroud DC will be happy to leave us to complete our 15-year plan. In statute, our NDP is an integral part of the Local Plan.

Recommendation:

Parish Council are recommended to provide match funding of £8,000 from the Solar Fund. The grant would be conditional on ECLT successfully obtaining a substantial Project Grant from Homes England.

Tom Low

Secretary ECLT

August 2019