NewStart Feature: a new StART for regeneration in London?

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When the local NHS announced plans to sell two-thirds of St Ann's Hospital site in Tottenham to a private developer, locals were worried it would price many ordinary people out of the market.

Although planning permission had been granted for 470 homes on the site, only 14% would be 'affordable' in the true sense of the word which meant that over 80% would be sold at market value.

Strong opposition to the hospital selling off the land resulted in a group of local residents banding together and the St Ann's Redevelopment Trust (StART) was born. Registered as a Community Land Trust (CLT), its priority was to ensure affordable and long-term housing was built on the site with a keen focus on environmental features.

'Too many neighbours, fellow parents and friends were having to leave the area as house prices are unaffordable,' says Peter Green, a local resident and parent.
'Anything that could stem this problem was welcome. From the first day I heard about what the community was trying to do at St Ann's, I supported them.'

**Grand designs**

In 2016 StART set about crowdfunding and successfully raised £25,000 for architects (firms 6a and Maccreanor Lavington) to produce a masterplan for St Ann's. It proved there was overwhelming support for a housing development that was community-led, designed and managed.

A hospital has stood on the site since the late 19th century and was initially known as the North Eastern Fever Hospital, treating patients suffering from fever and diphtheria. It’s architecturally unique and includes both historic buildings and landscaped gardens with a public space known as the Peace Garden at its centre.

'It was very difficult to decide which buildings to keep and which should come down,' says Tony Wood who is a director and treasurer of StART.

'In the end, we compromised on keeping six of the historic buildings with the idea being the administration building would become the community hub,' he adds.

The CLT’s vision includes the construction of four new apartment buildings within the grounds along with retaining and restoring key public spaces such as the Peace Gardens. With mental health services continuing to run from the remainder of the site, StART was keen to integrate existing NHS services into the development which would provide some supported housing, training courses and plans for a therapeutic garden.

**Collaboration with the GLA.**

However, when it became clear the CLT would not be able to raise the funds to buy the land and keep it in public ownership, they approached the Greater London Authority (GLA) for assistance. On May 14th this year, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, announced the GLA had purchased St Ann's hospital site as the first purchase of the £250m Mayoral Land Fund.

'Late last year I announced my plans for a new Land Fund to buy sites – and at St Ann's we are showing what we can achieve,' said Mayor Khan in May.

'Not only will my intervention unlock this site, but it will allow us nearly to double the number of homes, and crucially increase six-fold the number of affordable homes that had previously been given planning permission.'

The Mayor’s purchase of the site ensures at least 50% of the homes built are genuinely affordable but StART has far more ambitious plans to make 100% of the homes genuinely affordable. However, to achieve this aim they will need to raise £50m from share issues, philanthropy and state funding.
Affordable housing

The London Borough of Haringey, where St Ann’s is situated, is one of the most deprived boroughs in the country ranking 30th out of 326 English authorities. In 2017, the borough had 9,194 households on its housing waiting list with the average private rent being £1400 per calendar month and average house price costing almost 16 times the average income.

StART say they have consulted widely on a new allocation policy which means that no household would have to spend more than one third of its income on rent or mortgage. Proposed monthly rents, for example, would be £625 per calendar month for a one bedroom flat and £735 for a four bedroom house. Also to ensure homes are genuinely affordable in perpetuity, there would be no right to buy on rented properties.

The CLT proposes to build 800 homes which is almost double the number that the site was originally given planning permission for.

‘There was some opposition to the higher density’ says director Tony Woods, ‘but much of it went away when people realised it would help to create many more affordable home for local people.’

Will Community Land Trusts help solve the housing crisis?

In 2010 there were 36 Community Land Trusts but by 2018, this number had risen to 290 across in England and Wales. CLTs (a form of community-led housing set up and run to develop and manage local homes) have developed 826 permanently affordable homes to date and are working to develop an additional 5800 in the next few years.

Their potential is huge, according to Kate Moss, Professor of Criminal Justice at Wolverhampton University.

‘With fewer new homes now being built than at any other time in the last thirty years, community-led housing initiatives have the potential to help address the current shortage of affordable housing across the UK,’ she says.

‘The principle of local residents having a shared stake is equitable and can make schemes work better because people are both collectively and individually invested in a place.’

It’s an ethos that StART is proud of and Tony Wood says St Ann’s Redevelopment Trust is one of the UK’s biggest and most ambitious community-led housing projects to date. Negotiations are ongoing with the GLA to ensure that St Ann’s includes community-led development on the site.

‘We have seen CLTs building 20-30 houses across the country and StART is passionate about upscaling that,’ says Tony.

‘It is taking on a huge challenge and nothing like this has been done before.’
To read more about StART visit their [website](https://newstartmag.co.uk/articles/a-new-start-for-regeneration-in-london/).

Tilly Rubens
Freelance journalist.

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