

# Investing in community buildings

Locality, with Clitterhouse Farm

**locality**  
the power of community

*Community buildings are not just places — they are long-term infrastructure that deliver Pride in Place, better services, and financial and social returns for councils and communities.*

## Why community buildings matter (1)

**Responsive to local needs** - Community-owned and community-run assets are shaped by lived experience, making them more likely to be used for what local people genuinely want and need.

**Keeps wealth local** - Investing in community assets supports neighbourhood-level service delivery, local skills, employment and enterprise—ensuring social and economic value stays in the place it's created.

**Strengthens local capacity** - Organisations that own or control their buildings and land are more stable, more sustainable, and better able to plan, grow and attract investment.

**Builds civic pride and identity** - Community assets often embody local history, culture and identity, giving people a shared sense of ownership, belonging and pride in place.

## Why community buildings matter (2)

**Creates spaces to connect** - Community assets provide vital social infrastructure—bringing different parts of the community together and playing a key role in tackling loneliness and isolation.

**Enables co-production and partnership** - They create trusted, neutral spaces for collaboration with local authorities, health bodies and other partners, supporting more tailored services and the incubation of new community ideas and ventures.

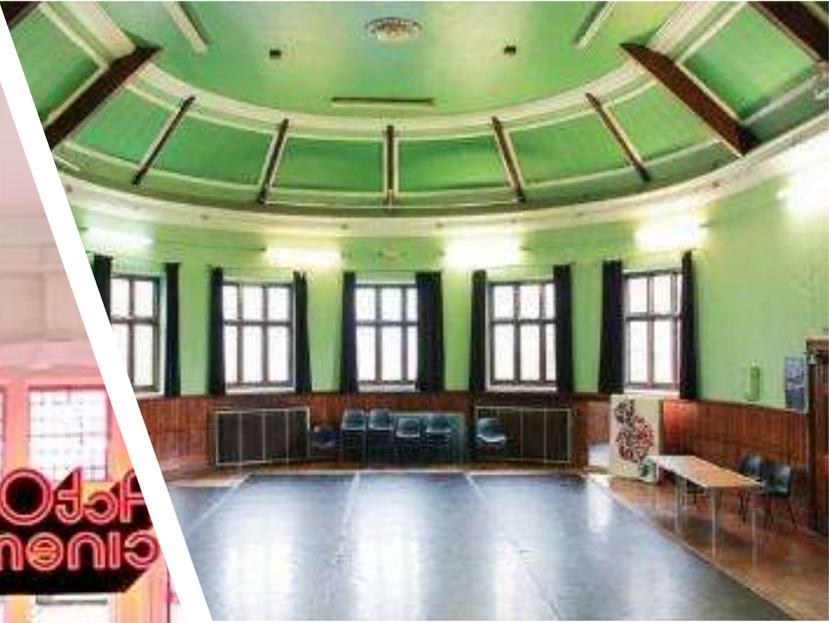
**Builds resilience to future shocks** - The pandemic demonstrated that places with strong community assets were better able to mobilise quickly, respond to crises and support vulnerable residents.

## Cost of doing nothing

Doing nothing is not neutral — it actively costs councils and communities money, social value and trust.

- Empty building vs thriving community asset
- Rising liabilities vs shared stewardship





# Policy timeline

**Local Government Act 1972:** broad disposal powers

**Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review 2007:** No blueprint, only recipes

**Localism Act 2011:** Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value)

**2022-25 Community Ownership Fund (£150m):** assets "at risk"

**General Disposal Consent 2003:** legal power to transfer at undervalue (up to £2m)

**Push vs Pull:** Shift from community demand to council-driven disposals

**Save our Spaces:** 4,000 public assets sold annually

**Forthcoming:** Community Right to Buy

## Myth-busting

- **Communities lack skills or interest. Reality:** Many groups have strong governance and entrepreneurial capacity. Support is available.
- **Assets will be “captured” by one group. Reality:** Legal structures (CIO, CIC, asset locks) prevent private benefit.
- **It’s too politically sensitive. Reality:** Precedents demonstrate that community ownership enhances the council's reputation and fosters community trust.
- **It means freehold only. Reality:** Typically, it’s a long lease, although length is important for funding (funders need 25+ years).
- **It’s a financial liability for groups. Reality:** Yes, if there isn’t a viable plan, but it can be a springboard for long-term success.
- **It’s a financial risk for councils. Reality:** CAT reduces maintenance liabilities and unlocks social value.
- **It’s just about saving old buildings. Reality:** It’s about creating vibrant, multi-use space for future needs, including new build, housing and much more.

## Practical solutions for councils

- Develop a strategy (for consistency, transparency & decision making)
- Publish surplus assets list
- Standardise processes: EOI, Business Plan guidance, Lease template
- Secure long leases (25+ years)
- Aftercare

## Stages and roles

- **Identify surplus assets and audit:** Property, community, regeneration teams
- **Publish pipeline & invite EOIs:** Communications, community engagement, sector partners
- **Assess EOIs and shortlist:** CAT panel (Property, Legal, Finance, Community, etc)
- **Business plan development:** Community group + council + external support
- **Negotiate Heads of Terms:** Legal, Property, Finance
- **Transfer and monitoring:** Community liaison

## Lessons

- Leadership from the top of the council
- Start with community *need*, not just saving a building
- Secure long-term tenure for viability
- Blend income streams (enterprise + grants)
- Build governance capacity early
- Use phased development to manage risk

## What it needs

- **Strong group** – with a wide range of skills – leadership and buy in
- **Tenacity** – it takes time
- **Advice** – wide skills on the board, professional support
- **Peer support and advice** – approach people who have been there and done that
- **Courage** – focusing on a building rather than a spread of activities

# THE CLITTERHOUSE FARM PROJECT



GROWING • CREATING • CONNECTING

## Community Engagement ‘The process starts and ends with listening’

- Paulette Singer – Founder and Director
- Our Yard at Clitterhouse Farm
- [www.ouryard.org](http://www.ouryard.org)
- Insta: clitterhousefarm

An illustration on a light orange background shows two stylized human figures from the chest up, facing each other. The figure on the left has vertical stripes, and the figure on the right has horizontal stripes. Between them is a large, tangled black scribble representing a thought bubble. The text is overlaid in white.

# The day I met a Community Organiser

‘Don’t do for others what they  
can do for themselves’

# Brent Cross Development



## 'It's got an energy of its own' - fight to save historic Clitterhouse Farm, in Cricklewood

24TH SEPTEMBER 2014



'It's got an energy of its own' - fight to save historic farmhouse

By Anna Slater

Share    1 Comment

Campaigners are fighting to stop the historic farmhouse a suffragette lived in from being bulldozed so they can turn it into a "living entity".

**J.A. Clark & Sons Funeral Directors**  
Independently owned and managed family run company serving Barnet and its surrounding areas since 1890

## The Site Timeline

1715



1300

1700

1800

1900

2000

1926



2013 Clitterhouse Farm Project founded to save the buildings from demolition



1910



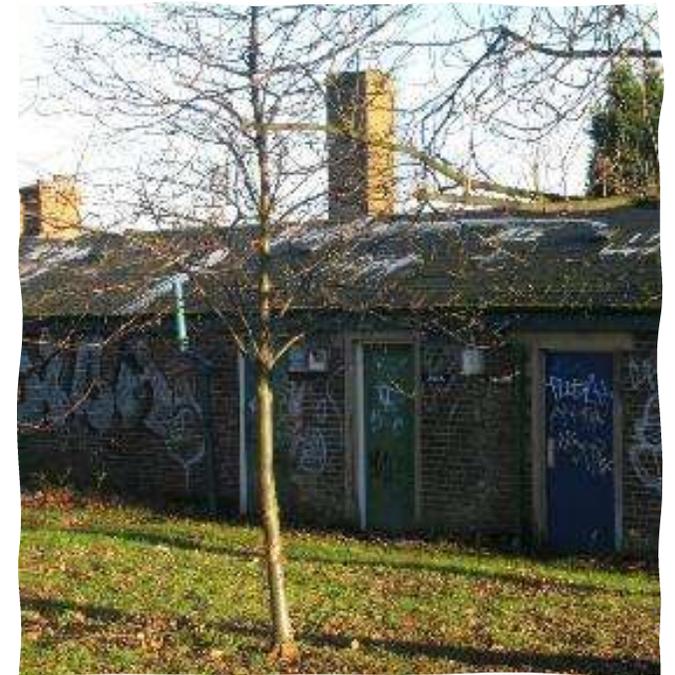
2019





**Fostering a sense of Stewardship**

# Fostering a sense of stewardship

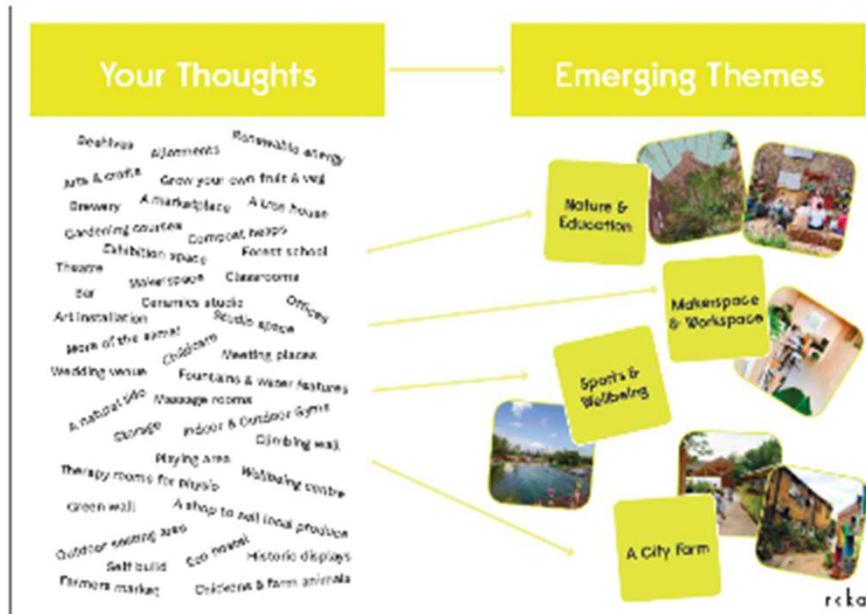




# Events as Active consultations

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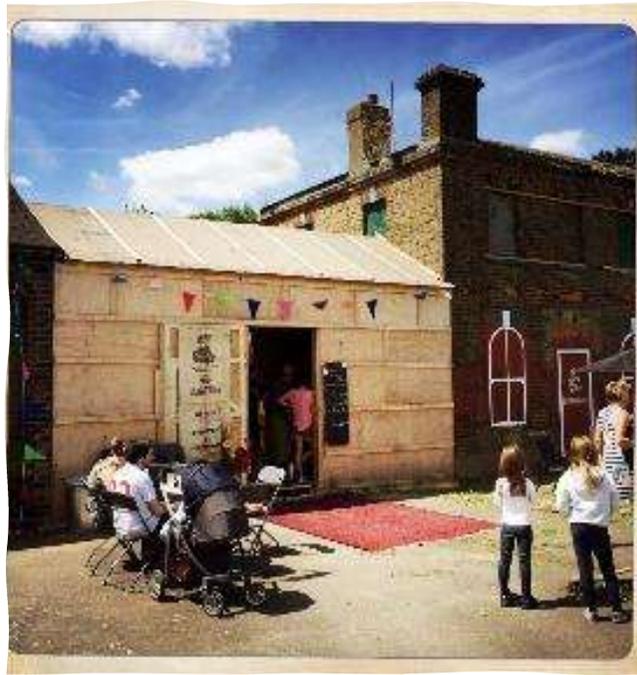
# Community Communication



## Project Timeline







# Café as a heartbeat – First iteration

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**Café 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Iteration –  
Testing the  
Community  
Buy- in  
through  
Crowdfund**

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## THE CLITTERHOUSE FARM PROJECT

# CROWD FUND

## THE FARM CAFÉ AND WORKSHOPS



We are crowd-funding to transform our existing pop-up café into a larger, multi-use space for our community, a grade II listed refurbished workshop space for local enterprise.

Our target: **£102,221**

Deadline: 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2018

[www.spacehive.com/thefarmcafe](http://www.spacehive.com/thefarmcafe)

Our successful solution for community café at Clitterhouse Farm, a pop-up and no longer for pop-up. We were successful in raising the money we need to demolish and rebuild a new and much larger multi-use space. The expanded café will provide a full suite of tables and play a central role in our ability to connect with and work alongside our community, where we can host events, meetings and workshops throughout the year. We want our café to be available to all, and that will help us to build a broader base of community support for the vision we set.

Alongside the café expansion, we have three large workshop spaces. The workshops will also serve as a community space for local enterprise, providing a space for local businesses to meet, work, and develop. Through active construction we will be able to build a broader base of community support for the vision we set.



105

spacehive

## The Farm Café and Workshops

By Clitterhouse Farm Project 3 miles Delivery



271  
backers

£99,187  
raised

Clitterhouse Farm

# Café – 2<sup>nd</sup> Iteration

# Our Garden

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Meet our wonderful community of creatives at Our Yard:

## Our Collective

### Isher Dhiman

Artist



I am a London-based, award-winning mixed media artist, arts facilitator, and Associate Lecturer at the London

### Jenny Lawy

Stay n Play Facilitator



Hi I am an anthropologist, secondary school Geography teacher, a mum of one, a widow and a firm believer in the

### Vladanka Manceva

Pressed Flower Artist



I create traditionally slow pressed flower artwork, using flowers, leaves, grasses and weeds. I grow lots of

# Bringing it back to basics

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# The Future

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## Phase 2: Design Response



Paulette Singer – Founder and Director

Email: [paulette@clitterhouse.com](mailto:paulette@clitterhouse.com)

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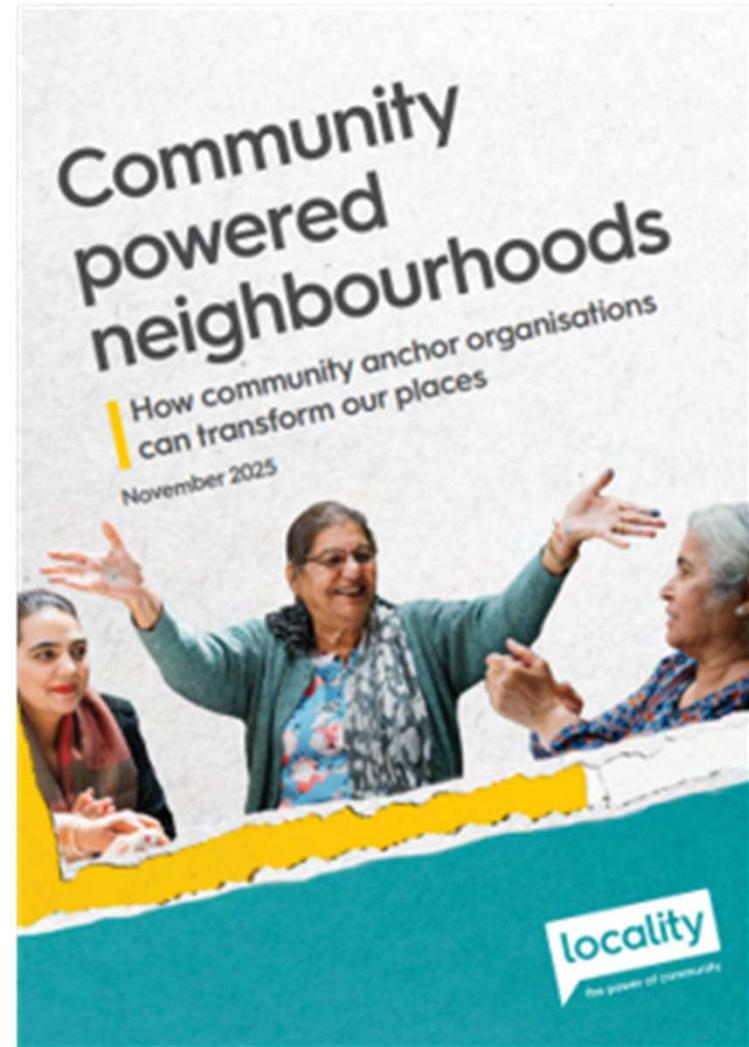


## Questions and Answers



## Beyond assets – we're here to help councils and boards

- Training and capacity-building for Board members.
- Facilitation of inclusive community-led decision-making processes.
- Expertise in the “powers and tools” in the policy toolkit, i.e. Neighbourhood Planning, ACV and CAT.



## Get specialist advice and support

Our team of local experts cover:

- Governance
- Business planning
- Financial resilience
- Community engagement & impact
- Marketing & communications
- Collaboration
- Ownership of land & buildings

Contact us: 0207 336 9435; [consultancy@locality.org.uk](mailto:consultancy@locality.org.uk)

www. [www.locality.org.uk/services-tools](http://www.locality.org.uk/services-tools)

Locality supports local community organisations to be strong and successful. Our national network of over 1,600 members helps hundreds of thousands of people every week. We offer specialist advice, peer learning and campaign with members for a fairer society. Together we unlock the power of community.



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[locality.org.uk](http://locality.org.uk)

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