

# Faith in Affordable Housing

**Alastair Murray – Deputy Director, Housing Justice**

**Tracey Bessant – Project Worker, FiAH**



## USING CHURCH ASSETS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING





# How did FiAH evolve?

## Ecumenical research group

- Archbishops' Commission on Rural Areas (1990)
- Churches National Housing Coalition (1994)
- Affordable Rural Housing Commission (2006)
- Scottish Churches Housing Action (2006)
- Building and Social Housing Foundation (2007)



QUAKER  
HOUSING  
TRUST



Commission for  
Rural Communities  
Tackling rural disadvantage



HOUSING  
JUSTICE  
Christian vision in action



Homes &  
Communities  
Agency



UNIVERSITY OF  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE  
at Cheltenham and Gloucester



greentea  
architectsllp



TENANT  
SERVICES  
AUTHORITY



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



# FiAH guide purpose



- Demonstrate practical Christian concern
- Practical help to churches/share good practice
- Provide advice
- Reconcile social and pragmatic objectives
- Highlight options for stewardship
- Encourage partnerships



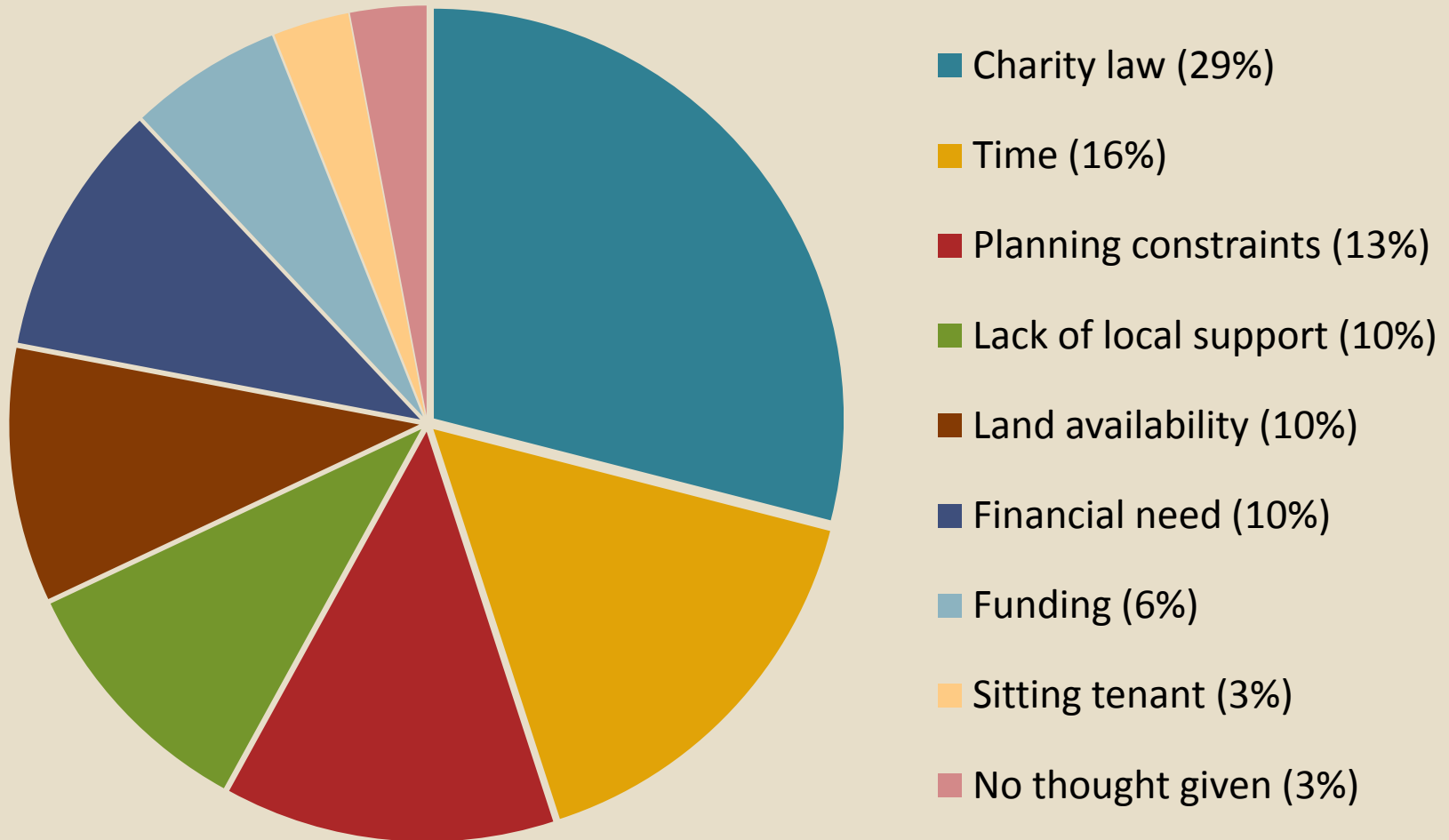
# Methodology



- Survey 03/08 to property personnel of main Christian denominations
- 12 C of E dioceses had sold/leased land since 01/2000 solely for AH
- 4 C of E dioceses, 2 Methodist churches and a United Reformed church had converted buildings
- Site visits
- Desktop research
- Correspondence with Charity Commission



# Survey – obstacles to development



Base for this question: 26 respondents (19 C of E)



# CHARITY LAW

## Section 36 of the Charities Act (1993)

- Achieve the best terms, or further the objects of the charity.

## Charity Law confirmation that:

- The Doctrine of Christianity enables the 'best value' test to be passed.
- Written objectives do not need to provide specifically for those in housing need.
- If a disposal is furthering a charity's purposes, then it can be made at less than best price.

**'Many people would understand that part of the doctrine of Christianity is the assistance of poor and needy people and therefore activities towards those ends could be seen as a means of advancing Christianity.'**

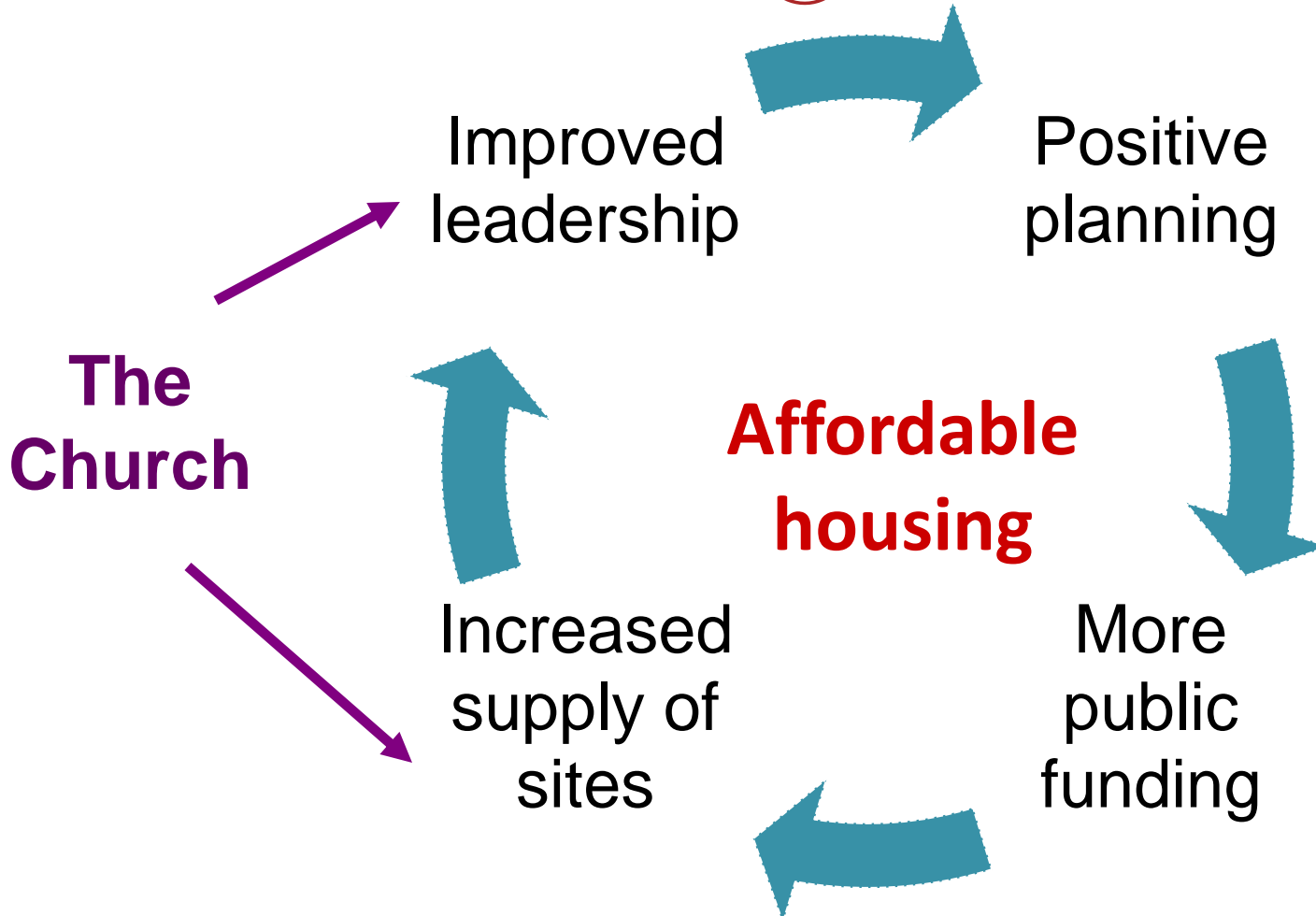


# FiAH guide

[www.fiah.org.uk](http://www.fiah.org.uk)

- **Free and interactive.** Contains info on:
  - Charity law
  - Policies relating to ownership/how property can be redeveloped (e.g. auditing, churchyards, listed buildings)
  - Organisations that can help
  - Viability, assessing need, planning considerations, valuing sites, financing schemes, tenure and occupancy
  - Case studies

# Making it happen





# Barriers from case studies

Poor  
networking

Working objectives  
taking priority

Different priorities  
of land agents

Land costs



Inadequate  
consultation

Lack of knowledge/  
understanding of need

Long  
timescales

# Good practice from case studies

Adopting a creative/  
long-term view of land  
disposal

Good internal  
liaison

Land  
audits



Good  
negotiation

Assessing housing need

Engaging the community/  
congregations

Forming  
partnerships



**New Ambleside Ecumenical Parish Centre (2006)**



- Old church and hall are now 15 AH
- Many original external features retained, including stained-glass windows



**Old Ambleside Methodist Church (2006)**





# Exeter Diocese (Plymouth)



- Average Plymouth income = £23K, average house price = £168K (house price ratio almost 8 times average income)
- Review of diocesan assets initiated by previous Bishop of Plymouth, Rt Revd John Garton
- A partnership was formed and charter drawn up to address large churches and need for AH
- Arrangement with Sarsen HA exchanging old churches on 125 yr lease for newer, smaller ones, often with community space
- Sarsen pays the diocese's legal and design fees



- Post-war garden suburb
- Efford Ward is one of the 20% most deprived in England and Wales
- Community Forum obtained funding from SWRDA to create sustainable neighbourhood



**St Paul's Church, Torridge Way, Efford (2007)**  
**Photo: Revd Stephen Payne**





- Demolished old church & hall and developed a new community building with a dedicated smaller space for a church
- The old church was converted into a 40-flat Extra Care scheme
- New church was built on old library site. New library built as part of Extra Care scheme



## St Paul's Church

Photo: Revd Stephen Payne



# St James's Church Centre, Alnwick (URC)



- **Grade II listed church in a Conservation Area**
- **Urgent renovation needed – estimated at £1m**
- **Congregation wanted affordable housing**
- **Local developer purchased hall to offset quota share requirement on nearby open-market site**
- **Sale amounted to 50% of redevelopment costs.**
- **Opened May 2008. Distinctive features maintained and extensive community space.**





## St James's Church Centre, Alnwick (URC)

Photo: John Spence

# St James's Church Centre, Alnwick (URC)



Before



After



# St James's Church Centre, Alnwick (URC)



Before

After



# What now?



**Funding from Tudor Trust, Quakers Housing Trust, Housing Justice, others, for a part-time project worker for a 3 year pilot to:**

- Implement findings of the guide
- Establish and maintain links with church property managers
- Build strong working relationships with partner organisations, e.g. Registered Providers
- Promote opportunities through conferences etc.
- Maintain a database and online records



# Any questions?



**Alastair Murray, Housing Justice  
Charity Centre, 22-25 Finsbury Square,  
London EC2A 1DX**

**020 7920 6440**

**[a.murray@housingjustice.org.uk](mailto:a.murray@housingjustice.org.uk)**