

RURAL URBAN SYNTHESIS SOCIETY

# Chair of Trustees Role briefing pack

January 2017



# Message from the RUSS Chair

Thank you for your interest in becoming Chair of the Rural Urban Synthesis Society (RUSS).

This is an opportunity for someone who wants to be part of a cutting edge, high profile community-led housing project. This is a fantastic opportunity to improve your experience, expand your network, and work with the RUSS members to develop a pioneering local solution to London's housing crisis.

I've been involved with RUSS from the outset. The experience has been extremely rewarding - I've met some fantastic people and enjoyed being part of a local movement creating positive change in our community. I've learned so much and derived great satisfaction from being an ambassador and campaigning for more community-led, affordable housing. As the Founding Chair, it's time for me to step down. I'll still be involved in RUSS and am excited to see what fresh leadership will bring – particularly since you'll be joining such a supportive, enthusiastic and knowledgeable team of Trustees.

RUSS is committed to equality and diversity. As a community-led organisation, we're keen for our board to reflect the diversity of our local population, as well as increasing representation of BAME communities and women within the community-led housing sector. As such **RUSS is particularly keen to receive applications from these demographics for this position.**

We're open to having a co-Chair arrangement – to make the time commitment manageable and to enable people with a diversity of experiences to apply.

Community-led housing is increasingly being seen as a solution to the housing crisis in the UK, and RUSS is at the forefront of this movement. This is therefore an exciting time to join the organisation. Over the past year we have strengthened our board, governance and project management processes as we prepare to embark on the construction of our first housing development. We're also recruiting an Operations Director, who will work closely with the Board. You would join an organisation as it transitions and grows, playing a vital role in its future development and ensuring its strategy and operations are driven by the communities it serves.

Please feel free to contact me for an informal chat – I look forward to hearing from you.

Kareem Dayes  
RUSS Chair

# About RUSS

RUSS was set up by the direct descendants of a community-led housing initiative that delivered two highly acclaimed housing projects in London in the 1980s. These projects enabled ordinary people to build their homes using a technique developed by architect Walter Segal. The residents designed the lay-out of their homes, according to the needs of their lifestyle, and undertook most of the construction work themselves.

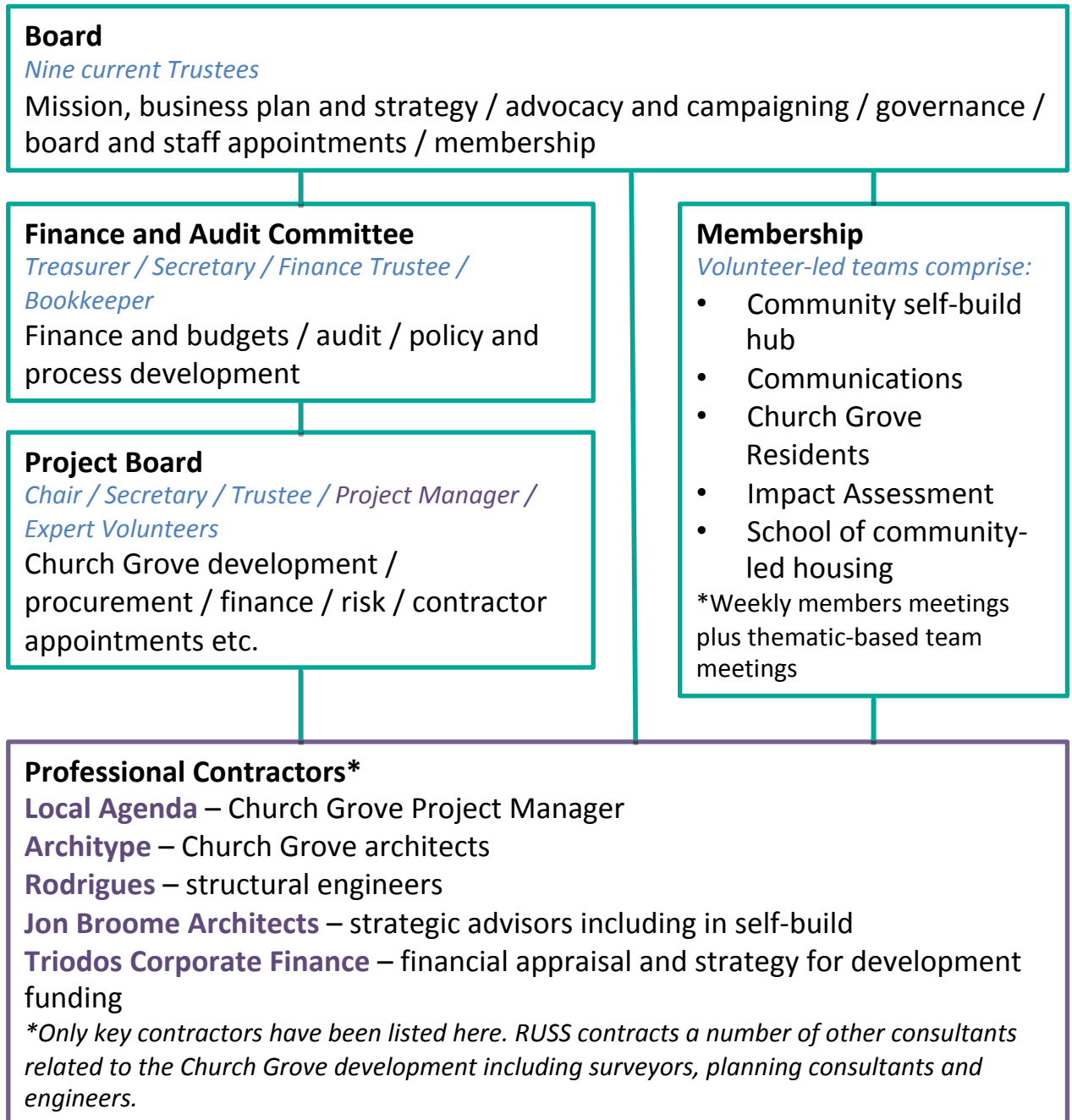
RUSS is now building on this legacy by replicating and updating the model for the 21st century. Established in 2009, it has grown from a small group of friends meeting around a dinner table to an organisation with over 700 members. It is formally constituted as a Community Land Trust, registered as a Community Benefit Society with charitable status through HMRC.

In summer 2018, we'll start construction of our first development at Church Grove in Lewisham. Church Grove is an £8.6m pioneering 33-home affordable housing development. One to four bedroom homes will be available on a mixture of tenures including shared ownership, affordable rent and social rent. The development is led by the community, with the design underpinned by sustainability, community and affordability principles. Residents have co-designed the neighbourhood and will help to build the homes. RUSS was selected (via a competitive process) by Lewisham Council to undertake the project and signed a development agreement in 2016. A planning application was submitted in October 2017, with a decision due in the next couple of months.

The organisation has a skilled and diverse board of Trustees and retains a team of expert consultants to help it manage its activities. Volunteers are central to the work of the organisation and lead on many aspects of our work.

Over the next few months we will move through the planning determination period, construct a community hub on-site, appoint a main contractor, commence the groundworks and train up residents to be part of the build process. We'll also recruit a skilled Operations Director, who will be managed by the Chair.

# Current structure



## Colour coding

Volunteers Professional contractors

# Chair Role Description

Please note that this is an unpaid role.

## Purpose of the role

- To lead RUSS collaboratively with the board of trustees and active members
- To maintain relationships with existing stakeholders
- Cultivate new beneficial relationships for RUSS
- Be a guardian of RUSS' Rules and Principles
- Help steer RUSS through RIBA stages 4 - 7 on its first housing scheme in Lewisham – Church Grove
- Provide an aspirational future vision which is underpinned by a deliverable strategy and business plan

## Key responsibilities and tasks

- Attend monthly board meetings (80% minimum)
- Attend monthly members meetings (50% minimum)
- **Help ensure that RUSS membership and governance is representative of its surrounding communities including underrepresented groups**
- Attract new active members to RUSS
- Management of Operations Director
- Meet with stakeholders
- Meet with potential partners and collaborators
- Communicate progress to RUSS membership and local community
- Board engagement
- Speak on RUSS' behalf at public events and in the press
- Be a Champion of community-led housing and in particular Community Land Trusts

## Role description

**Skills Required** (*not expected to have all of these to begin with, some may be developed over time*)

- Excellent communication and good public speaking
- Understanding of community-led housing sector and social housing sector
- Understanding of the house building industry
- Connection to London and in particular south London. A Lewisham connection is desirable but *not* obligatory
- Ability to cultivate new leaders from within the membership and voluntary team
- Chairing or facilitation
- Ability to form strong relationships

## Role description (cont.)

### Core Behaviours

- Strong capacity for collaboration and working in a team
- Creative thinking
- Problem solving
- Self-managing
- Organised
- Quick learner
- Ambitious
- Committed to making a positive social impact

### Experience (*Desirable not necessary*)

- Working with large groups of people collaboratively
- Working on design, architecture and/or construction
- Working with diverse groups of people
- Working with multiple stakeholders

### Time commitment

- Attend 2 - 3 meetings per month
- 2 hours of preparation for meetings (1 hour for each meeting above)
- 2 - 3 hours per week actioning outcomes from above meetings (minimum)
- Additional time for speaking at events as and when needed
- Additional time for meeting with stakeholders and potential partners as and when needed

**Please note that we are open to receiving applications for a co-Chair position – to spread the workload and enable people with a variety of skills and experiences to apply.**

## Application process

To apply for the role, please send a copy of your CV and a supporting statement (max 2 sides of A4) explaining why you're interested, and what you would bring, to [kareem@theruss.org](mailto:kareem@theruss.org). The deadline for applications is 5pm on Wednesday 28 February 2018. Please specify in the letter if you would be unable to attend interview on one of the scheduled days.

For more information and an informal chat, please call Kareem on 07548 885 609.

## Interviews

Currently scheduled to take place on 24 / 25 March 2018.



# RURAL URBAN SYNTHESIS SOCIETY



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