

**Press release: Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021**

**New partnership to support Bristol faith groups addressing the housing crisis**  
*End-to-end project management solution will build affordable housing and revitalise community spaces*

A new local partnership will offer a complete project management solution for property-owning faith groups in the region seeking to develop their sites for impact and purpose. Partners Elim Housing Association and Bristol & Bath Regional Capital (BBRC) will together work with faith leaders to determine the best use of their site, project-manage development and identify suitable managers for the homes. The end-to-end solution will offer an opportunity for faith groups who seek to use their physical assets in a mission-aligned way but lack the expertise to develop their idea.

The local partnership follows the release this weekend (21<sup>st</sup> February) of a new report of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York's Commission on Housing, Church and Community, titled 'Coming Home'. The report calls on churches to take a greater role in meeting housing need in local communities, including through use of existing assets.

Paul Smith, CEO of Elim Housing and former BCC Cabinet member for housing, said: *"Our partnership with BBRC and faith groups will put into practise, in a local Bristol context, the intentions of the Archbishops' report. We will enable groups to step up and play the active role in their communities that many want to. We aim to bring forward two successful schemes per year, which will make a meaningful contribution to Bristol's housing and homelessness crises. At the same time this will significantly strengthen the presence and mission of faith groups in their local community"*

Many churches and other faith groups own underused land and property but have a desire to use these assets to increase their social and community impact. In some cases, these groups are also struggling with repair costs associated with outdated properties and, in some cases, dwindling congregations. Faced with these issues, many faith groups must consider closure and sale of buildings.

Elim and BBRC are offering an alternative – to work with organisations to develop, or redevelop, sites, to provide housing to those in need and to regenerate Church and community facilities, which are often vital centres of the community. This will enable faith groups to both further their social and community mission and retain ownership of the property.

Elim is a respected housing association which provides supported housing and social housing as well as Gypsy & Traveller schemes across the West of England and Wales. Bristol & Bath Regional Capital is a not-for-profit company that bridges the gap between ethically motivated investors and high impact projects.

BBRC will work alongside each faith group to build an understanding of its ambitions and assess potential options for development on the group's site. BBRC will then work with the group to co-design a potential development that would suit its needs and ambitions and take it forward to achieve planning permission. Elim will then use its considerable expertise to build-out the scheme and, upon completion, take on the management and operation of the affordable residential properties long-term on behalf of the faith group.

The signing of this agreement builds on both partners' experience collaborating with charitable groups to develop housing schemes. In 2015 Elim worked with Victoria Park Baptist Church to build 10 homes alongside a modern community and worship space on the

Church-owned footprint. BBRC and Elim are also currently working with Haven Community CLG, a charity in Knowle West (Bristol), that runs a day centre for adults with disabilities and learning difficulties. This project would result in demolition of the existing run-down day centre and build in its place a modern, purpose-built day centre facility and supported housing for the Haven's client group.

Simon David, manager of the Haven said: *“Our charity did not have the professional knowledge to pursue how we might construct affordable homes for adults with additional needs, whilst developing a bespoke Centre for the charity to ensure a sustainable future operation of the charity. BBRC brought expertise to scope the potential project, the stages, outline timelines and indicative costs and introduced us to potential partners. This led us to engage with Elim, who share a similar ethos to ourselves, to further develop themes and ideas. We are working with them both to develop a solution that meets the intentions of both our Charity and the Housing association”*



Paul Smith, Chief Executive of Elim Housing, said: *“In many ways this takes Elim back to its roots of regenerating unused church land to reduce homelessness and meet local housing need. We are excited to be working with BBRC in a partnership which sees an alignment of both our values and objectives.”*

Ed Rowberry, Chief Executive of BBRC, said: *“BBRC’s mission is to create positive social change by using social investment and putting communities in the driving seat. Elim has an exceptional reputation for partnership working and supportive tenant management and we are therefore thrilled to be taking forward this exciting initiative”*

We are always interested in talking to groups with an ambition to grow their impact. To hear more email [homes@bab-rc.uk](mailto:homes@bab-rc.uk).