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...t of the housing market are to be given specialist support under a

Blackburn Cathedral and St Edward the Confessor Church in Mottingham, south east London, are to receive support from LivShare specialist housing consultants to support them in plans to help tackle the housing crisis and strengthen communities in the process.

The Cathedral and the church were among winners of the *Innovative Built Solutions* competition, run by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church and Community and funded by Allchurches Trust.

If successful, the projects could act as a blueprint for churches of all denominations seeking to convert land and buildings into housing.

St Edward the Confessor Church is aiming to redevelop its hall to provide up to 25 affordable flats, on top of a modernised hall to host the many community activities run by the church and other local groups. It also hopes to redevelop its vicarage and attached land to create three to four large family homes.

Vicar Revd Dr Catherine Shelley said: "We hope to provide homes for rent both for people who need to downsize, including those affected by the 'bedroom tax', as well as families priced out of the London property market."

Blackburn Cathedral will be provided with advice on seeking investors for the redevelopment of its old diocesan offices next door to the Cathedral into accommodation for refugees and asylum seeker families and single people

Revd Canon Dr Rowena Pailing, Vice Dean of the Cathedral and Canon Missioner, said: "The Cathedral is very close indeed to the offices and this would mean that people in these homes would be living next door to an existing Christian community and all that would bring in terms of fellowship and support."

The Commission's vice-chair, The Right Reverend Dr Graham Tomlin, Bishop of Kensington, said: "The Archbishop of Canterbury's Housing Commission seeks to enable churches to play their part in responding to the housing crisis, while asking the Government and others to work with us to create real change. Throughout history, churches have provided shelter to those who need it – from almshouses to Christian housing associations. The winners of Innovative Built Solutions for Churches will build on this heritage in our day."

The Commission's lead for Local Church and Community, Revd Lynne Cullens, said: "It's been really inspiring to see the imaginative and innovative ways churches are seeking to meet the need for affordable housing in their contexts.

"We are delighted that this competition has resulted in seven successful exemplar projects being developed across the country and providing for a spectrum of housing need, including refugees and asylum seekers, young people, ex-offenders and those priced out of the housing market by holiday lets."

Jeremy Noles, Grants and Relationships Manager at Allchurches Trust, said: "This is an exciting pilot project that will not only provide homes to

local families and some of the most vulnerable people in these communities, but also impart learnings that will enable other churches to follow in the footsteps of these pioneers. There is an opportunity for churches to be at the heart of providing affordable housing to those who need it most, making them even more relevant and important to local needs as they fulfil both their practical and spiritual needs.”

## Notes

- About the Commission: The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Housing, Church and Community seeks to re-imagine housing policy, with a focus on building better communities and homes, not just houses. As well as making recommendations for Government and others, it is also looking at what actions the Church can take, in partnership with others, to help tackle the crisis at local, regional and national levels. The Commission is chaired by Charlie Arbuthnot, and the vice-chair is the Right Reverend Graham Tomlin, Bishop of Kensington. For more information, see [churchofengland.org/ABCHousing](https://www.churchofengland.org/ABCHousing).
- About Allchurches Trust: Allchurches Trust is one of the UK's largest grant-making charities and gave £16.9 million to churches, charities and communities in 2018. More information can be found here [www.allchurches.co.uk](http://www.allchurches.co.uk)
- LivShare works with housing providers, local authorities, land owners and developers to provide housing for people on low income and that are often otherwise excluded, working to respond to the housing crisis currently being experienced in the UK. Their work focuses on housing that makes use of sharing and collaborative consumption; in this context the sharing element is focused on how churches can best share their lands and assets for mutual benefit of both the church and community.
- *Innovative Built Solutions for Churches*: This competition was aimed at church projects that are at a relatively early stage in their development – when there are the highest risks of failure. Each church will be offered four days of support from specialist housing consultants, LivShare Consulting, including help with harnessing the support of potential funders and partner organisations. The competition was open to churches of all denominations.

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