

Somerton Resident Steering Group meeting: Wednesday 5 July 2023, 17.30pm

Attendees

NCH: Pravin DeSilva, Rebecca Sluman, Sally Dixon, Emily Martins,

Oxford Architects: Tony Mullin, Terry Lai

Residents: Janine Clarke, Linda Clark, Danny Davis, Paul Jenkins, Gwyneth McGouglin-Johnson, Carol Williams, Raqia Mahmood

Councillors: Alex Pimm

Introduction

Rebecca advised the group that the meeting was being recorded, there were no objections:

1 Action from previous minutes

1.1 There were no actions from the previous minutes

2 Introductions

2.1 Tony Mullins introduced himself, he is taking over from Andrew Brown at Oxford Architects as Andrew has moved on

2.2 Everyone else introduced themselves to Tony

3 Project Plan

3.1 Prav showed the project plan, as we first showed it at June's month, so wanted to go over it with the group again

3.2 Prav explained that the project plan hasn't changed from last month

3.3 Prav explained that we are working on our plan to submit the planning application by the end of this year

3.4 Prav showed the phasing plan which shows the areas we are looking to working in order, this also shows the timeline for these phases

4 Design Update

4.1 Tony explained at June's meeting we looked at, the area map which now reflects area 4 is now as a regen area. Area 12 and 13 are now refurbishment areas

4.2 We explained that we were also going to look at what other MMC options are out there for us to explore

4.3 We would be going through the tender information that has been provided for the 2 refurb properties

4.4 We also discussed the newsletter we are putting together and the community consultation event that we want to hold

Regeneration

4.5 For the areas we are looking to regenerate we have had ground investigations surveys carried out on land belonging to NCC on Acacia Avenue and Laburnum Drive (woodland area), these surveys have finished now, there is now a monitoring period for these surveys which will take place of the next few weeks, they will be monitoring the water level and gases in the ground

4.6 Over this summer, we will have an update on the tree survey and bat survey. We have had acoustic surveys carried out and a transport survey. During the transport survey some of the equipment was vandalised on Somerton Road. This road was re-surveyed and the equipment was left intact

4.7 Tony explained that we have updated the Acacia Avenue design, as we are no longer including the shop and the garages to the rear of the shop within our plans

4.8 A resident asked if the shop is staying where it is, Prav explained that it is. We commissioned a commercial surveyor to speak to the shop owner, unfortunately we can not pay what they are asking. As a social landlord we need to ensure we follow the advice from the experts and we can not be paying over and above what something is worth, therefore the shop will be staying where it is

4.8 We have a meeting arranged for the 11th July with the design team and the new head of planning at Newport City Council Andrew Ferguson. Tony explained that this is a great opportunity to meet Andrew and go through the design proposals for Somerton. This meeting will take place in Somerton so we can walk Andrew through the plans

4.9 Tony explained that we have been looking at other companies for Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and we have been in contact with a company called Taylor Lane and we have decided to use them on the Acacia Avenue site

4.10 Tony explained that due to the complexity and the lever difference on Acacia Avenue then Taylor Lane offers the flexibility we need, where TopHat unfortunately doesn't offer any lever of flexibility in their house types

4.11 We are now progressing our designs and house types with Taylor Lane

4.12 Prav explained that we did a visit to TopHat and this was a good opportunity to look at their properties they are building

4.13 Prav explained that TopHat are a modular where the houses / flats are built in a factory and transported to site. Taylor Lane use a timber frame system of Structural Insulated Panels (SIP)

4.14 Prav explained the reason we are using Taylor Lane is:

- The quality of the product is the same as TopHat
- There is a saving of £1m if we use TopHat
- There is more flexibility with the Taylor Lane product
- Taylor Lane have been in the construction industry for nearly 40 years
- They have a factory in Wales and one in Hereford

4.15 We are looking to arrange to visit to one of their schemes, so we can see their finished houses. Prav explained that he and Emily have visited and it was a really good visit. The group would also like to see the factory where these panels are made as well as a housing scheme they have been involved with. [NCH to look into this](#)

4.16 Cllr Alex Pimm asked how many houses Taylor Lane have built, Prav explained that we don't have the figures to hand. [NCH to look into this](#)

4.17 A resident asked if in further phases will we be looking at other companies, Prav explained that there could be but at the minute we are focusing on Acacia Avenue

4.18 Terry explained that with TopHat there were strict uses of the houses, they have to be all in a line and cant be staggered. There were only 4 house types that were suitable for Somerton. This isn't suitable for Acacia Avenue due to the levels of the site

4.19 Tony showed photos of houses that Taylor Lane have been involved with. Cllr Alex Pimm asked where the nearest site is, Prav explained that the sales director will get back to us with some site we can visit and we will arrange a visit and hopefully members of the group would like to along on the visit as well

4.20 Tony explained that in relation to TopHat and Taylor Lane from the view of their products from a fabric first approach to the design of the building for the u values, sap rating and sustainability these companies are identical in what their product offers and will perform exactly the same way in energy efficiency as well

4.21 Last month we explained that we had received approval from the information we submitted to Welsh Government for our concept submission, below are some of the comments we received:

- Secure by Design Gold standard is a requirement for the scheme
- Include information on the procurement strategy within the next submission
- Develop house types and include elevations in future submissions
- Improve opportunities for active travel – cycle paths
- Indicate location for home office with each home – this would be a designated space in a room and not an extra room
- All information provided meets with Welsh Design Quality Requirements (WDQR) 2021
- Vision and design quality requirements are well described

4.22 Prav explained that we have design work to carry out now we will be using Taylor Lane, and will be providing this information in the pre-planning application to Welsh Government

Refurbishment

4.23 We have received tender submissions, from 4 contractors. We received 1 return within the pre-tender estimate that we had put together the 3 other submissions were higher than the cost we put together. We went back to all 4 contractors to ensure their costs were accurate

4.24 In the meantime Welsh Government have changed their frameworks from zero carbon and EPC A to EPC C on retrofit properties. EPC is the Energy Performance Certificate that every property must have

4.25 We have asked the 4 contractors to price for the works to provide costs of works to achieve EPC C for the 2 pilot properties. An EPC is a report to show how energy efficient a property is and how well it performs

4.25 Tony explains that whether we are looking at EPC A or EPC C from the point of view of a fabric first approach with a high insulation value and high air tightness rating, regardless of EPC A or EPC C they are the 2 most important to ensure that we don't lose heat from the building in the first place. We will be ensuring the design of the building will be the most energy efficient as possible, so it will take longer for

you needing to put the heat on and having to have the heating on. Therefore the properties will stay warmer for longer

4.26 Terry explained that if we are working to EPC C then in the future we can retrofit items to push it up to EPC A, if the guidance was to change as we are taking a fabric first approach is the building works, such as insulation, changing the windows etc. We could retrofit a heating system by taking out the gas boiler and using renewable energy to get the property up to EPC A

4.27 A resident asked how long it would take to refurbish at a property. Prav explained that currently we have said it would take 6months to refurbish a property

4.28 Tony went onto explain that it is good that we are having 2 pilot properties so we can get a handle on the works that we are carrying out to ensure when we roll out the refurbishment works to the other properties, we will have a better understanding of the issues we may come across and we will learn lessons for the pilot properties

4.29 A resident asked if we are still on track to start the works at the end of July. Prav explained that due to the guidance from Welsh Government we have to explore the EPC C options, so we won't be starting at the end of July

4.30 Tony explained that once a contractor is on board there will be a traffic management plan and we can stipulate to the contractor not to have deliveries at school drop off and pick up times

4.31 A resident asked about working on refurbished properties with a homeowner next door. Tony explained that we would get a party wall surveyor on board, and they would do a survey of the homeowners property and take photos of the shared wall. If any issues such as cracks appear due to the works, then they will be repaired

5 Communication

5.1 Tony explained that a newsletter has been drafted and will be going out to Somerton residents in the next few weeks

5.2 Rebecca attended Junes Councillor surgery at the Hope Centre

5.3 We are still working towards a community consultation event; no date has been set as we need to look at the designs now we are looking to use Taylor Lane

6 Any other business

6.1 Alex Pimm asked about the empty properties, Prav explained that we are looking at the TACP funding that is available we are working with Welsh Government and Newport City Council

6.2 Cllr Alex Pimm asked if there is a timescale. Emily explained that we are waiting on timescales from Welsh Government to advise when the funding will be available. In the meantime, we are looking at all the empty homes and what we are hoping to do to each property, we should be able to offer more information at the August meeting

6.3 Rebecca explained that there are 3 properties that we are working with voids to get the works carried out on these properties so they can be relet

6.4 A resident asked if we are boarding up the properties that we are buying back. Prav explained that we may not shutter up every property. Rebecca explained that we may not secure all the properties we have put alarms in some properties, these alarms are now video alarms

6.5 A resident asked if we can put notices on the external walls to say that the property has an alarm in – [NCH to look into this](#)

7 Any other business

7.1 A resident asked when we get planning approval will there be any restrictions that the contractors can work. Tony explained that a planning decision notice will come with conditions and that will include operating hours

7.2 A resident asked about vehicles / wagon entering Somerton and turning onto Somerton Crescent. Tony explained that we can get a highways engineer to carry out a tracking programme on their computers to ensure that they can safely negotiate the corner. The design team will put together a pre-construction information pack and it will flush out all these questions and risk, these are put to the contractor and they will have to write a construction phase health and safety plan, which answer all the questions

7.3 A resident asked can we ask each contractor that has put in a bid for the works, what percentage of profit each have added to the bid they have submitted. Prav explained that we can not ask this question

8 Next Meeting

Time and date of next meeting:

Wednesday 2nd August: 17:30pm – Hybrid meeting