

Somerton Resident Steering Group meeting: Wednesday 6 September 2023, 17.30

Attendees

NCH: Pravin De Silva, Phillip Lott, Rebecca Sluman, Sally Dixon

Oxford Architects: Terry Lai, Tony Mullins

Residents: Deb Clark, Sharron Dennis, Paul Jenkins, Janine Clarke, Linda Clarke, Gwyneth Mcloughlin Johnson, Lynda Piper, Danny Davis, Rebecca Watts, Carol Williams

Councillors: Deb Harvey, Tim Harvey, Alex Pimm

Introduction

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

1 Actions from previous minutes

1.1 It was mentioned that next to the steps from Aberthaw Road down into Somerton there is also a ramp, which was fenced off years ago and now it is overgrown with brambles. We have emailed Newport Norse and they are going to look into this.

2 Project Plan

2.1 Prav advised there were no changes to the project plan this month and the timescales are still the same and this is what we are working to.

3 Design Update

3.1 Ground investigation surveys have been carried out on the slab area on Acacia Avenue, this land is owned by NCC. We needed to carry out these surveys to check what is below this slab.

3.2 We will also be carrying out parking surveys in September, we haven't been able to carry them out earlier as you cannot carry out this survey during the school holidays as it does not give a true reflection of parking in the area.

3.3 NCH have also been contacting residents to find out about car ownership on the estate, it is good to get this information as highways are consulted on the planning application, it gives us the ability to be able to confirm parking numbers, so we get the parking provision at the right level and ensure areas do not look like car parks.

3.3 We will also be carrying out a scan of the utility services that are underground on Acacia Avenue in the coming months to ensure we know where all the gas, water and electricity services are located

3.4 Tree and ecological surveys are ongoing and will be wrapped up over the next few months.

3.5 Gas and water monitoring that was taking place at Acacia Avenue and the woodlands behind Laburnum Drive have now finished.

Regeneration

3.6 Option 1 for Acacia Avenue has been further designed since the steering group meeting in August, this was the option that the group felt would suit Acacia Avenue – Phase 1

3.7 Tony went on to show the design work that has been carried out on Acacia Avenue. Tony explained that this design shows 1 and 2 bed apartments, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses.

3.8 There has been a reduction in the number of the apartments along Chepstow Road, due to the level difference with Chepstow Road. This is to ensure there is enough amenity space at the back of these apartments for the residents living in them.

3.10 On the 3 bed houses car parking will be running down the side of the houses.

3.11 A resident asked if there would be 3 bed, 4 person houses, Tony explained that we haven't designed any of those house types. Rebecca explained that in Newport City Council policy there isn't 3 bed, 4 person houses.

3.12 A resident asked how far from the Chinese takeaway will the flats be built. Tony explained that the flats will be 3 meters away, there needs to be a balance as the urban designers would not like too much space and with the 3 meters we can get scaffolding up to build the block.

3.13 Tony explained that at the ground floor level, there will be bike storage and bin store area. Tony explained that the bin store area will be designed with cross ventilation.

3.14 Prav and Tony explained that we are concentrating on the Acacia Avenue site, and we have submitted a pre-application to Newport City Council planning department. During this time we will be looking at the designs of phases 2-5

3.15 We have received an email to confirm that the pre-application for Acacia Avenue has been received and should take approx. 3-4 weeks to get comments back from the planning team.

3.16 We will be developing the house types for Acacia Avenue and then will present them at the next steering group meeting.

3.17 We will be reviewing the step and ramp access from Aberthaw Drive down into Somerton.

3.18 We will be working with the engineers and energy assessors to further develop the designs of the energy ratings for the houses and apartments.

3.19 We will look at the comments from Newport City Councils planning department to further develop the master plan, the other areas / phases of Somerton.

3.20 A visit was carried out on the 10th August to Taylor Lane, they are a company that provide timber frames for houses and apartment blocks. 2 steering group members, Councillor Deb Harvey and Rebecca Sluman and Phillip Lott attended the visit.

3.21 We visited the head office of Taylor Lane where they showed us each department and what their role is, from those designing the floor plans, roof structure, from the architects designs to the team that work out the costings for these designs.

3.22 We then visited 2 factories where we saw the wall panels being put together in one factory and in another where the flooring and roof trusses were being made.

3.23 We then visited a development site 10 minutes from the factory, this site is being developed for private sale and social housing. We had the opportunity to go in both.

3.24 A resident that came on the visit explained that it was strange seeing the different stages of a house being built.

3.25 A resident asked if they preferred the TopHat or Taylor Lane designs, the resident that attended stated they preferred the Taylor Lane house as they feel the houses would fit better within the Somerton estate as new builds and among the private homes that are remaining.

3.26 The resident explained that the tour was really good and the gentleman we met from Taylor Lane knew the process from start to finish and the flexibility they have for the layout of the inside of the homes is great. Rebecca explained that we will be working now on the internal layout of the houses.

3.27 Tony explained that Taylor Lane have been building homes for a very long time and the precision to detail in the factory is phenomenal.

3.28 The resident explained that when we went to site to look at the houses, you couldn't tell which house was private or social. Tony explained that they use a term called "tenure blind" so that you would not be able to tell which house is owned outright, social housing, shared ownership etc.

3.29 We looked at a 3 bed house that would be for social housing and the group were very impressed with it and it felt homely even though there was no furniture in these properties, it just felt good.

Refurbishment

3.30 Terry advised that the Design Team has put together options to meet EPC C the new specifications have been issued to tenderers and costs have been received. The Design Team are currently reviewing these costs.

3.31 A question was asked about futureproofing on refurb properties. Prav explained that the current specification is in line with the new regulations.

3.32 Prav advised that the design team is working with NCH internal colleagues to understand the best solution for Somerton Estate. Further updates will be reported back to the RSG next month.

4 Communications

4.1 Newsletters were sent out in the post on Friday 1st September, 2nd class so they landed through peoples letterbox in readiness for the 7th September.

4.2 Tony explained that NCH will have a trailer out in Somerton on Thursday 7th September from 10am – 4pm

4.3 Newport City Homes and the Councillors will be holding a surgery for residents to come and have a chat with us about the regeneration / refurbishments plans for Somerton on Thursday 7th September 7 – 8pm

5 Any Other Business

5.1 A resident asked about private houses that homeowners who do not want to sell. Prav explained that we are not buying properties in an ad hoc manner, and we are looking at a phased approach now to the phases that we will be working too.

6 Next Meeting

Time and Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 4th October: 17.30 - Hybrid Meeting

