

**Somerton Resident Steering Group meeting**   
**Wednesday 2 February 2022, 17.30**

**Attendees**

**NCH:** Rachel George, Pravin Da Silva, Llyr Morris, Wesley Ford, Rebecca Sluman, Laura Palfrey, Cheryl Jackson, Nathan Davies

Oxford Architects: Terry Lai, Andrew Brown

**Residents:** Barbara Taylor, Paul Hoare, Deborah Hoare, Debbie Clarke, Lindsay Brown, Danny Davis, Halima Begum, Simon Goom, Janine Clarke, Mandy Corten, Richard

**Councillors:** Cllr John Guy

Apologies from Cllr Deb Harvey Action NCH (Newport City Homes), Rachel to provide Cllr Harvey with an update

**Please note**

This meeting was held as an online meeting due to the situation with Covid-19 at the time. Residents were contacted individually in advance to discuss arrangements.

**1** **Introduction**

1.1 Everyone was offered the opportunity to introduce themselves

1.2 Rachel advised we would continue to hold these meetings online as we want to proceed in the safest way due to Covid-19. Rachel explained Nexus House will be the most appropriate venue for holding a hybrid meeting effectively as the technology to support a hybrid meeting is available. Rachel advised that if members of the steering group would like to meet in person, we are able to arrange transport to and from a meeting at Nexus House. **Action NCH, transport arrangement, book meeting room**

1.3 Rachel reminded the steering group to use the chat function and to raise their hand to participate in the meeting

1.4 Rachel advised the steering group to think about how we share information from the meeting and if the way we do this is by sharing the recording. Rachel asked the steering group for their views and permission to record the meeting. A resident suggested recording the meeting will ensure accuracy and Rachel agreed recording will be useful for future communications. Rachel stated going forward we will record the RSG meetings. Wesley started the recording

1.5 Rachel advised residents that the agenda can be seen on screen and shared that the meeting will go through the minutes and actions, updates, project plan, communications, financial advisor, refurbishment activity, survey letters and survey, design principles and standards with Andrew and Terri

**2.** **Update on actions from last meeting**

2.1 Rachel explained NCH stated they would contact the steering group to agree the TOR. The TOR document has been sent with spare copies to each member. Rachel asked that they are signed and returned so that as a group we have agreed standards and a safe space to participate in the meetings. Rachel advised if anyone has any concerns or questions about the TOR to contact NCH

2.2 Rachel explained though this wasn’t noted in the minutes as an action she has included it in the update. NCH has changed the boundary of one of the areas in the mapping. This is to make sure the areas and the information will be as clear as possible ready for the newsletter we will be preparing

2.3 Rachel stated we agreed to send the communications plan and the minutes and comments from the last meeting. This has been actioned and the steering group was asked to notify us with any comments regarding these

**3.** **Project Plan**

3.1 Pravin shared the Project Plan and confirmed that Rachel had explained the plan to the steering group in the last meeting. Pravin gave an update on the work NCH has been doing in line with the plan. Pravin confirmed in January we worked on the survey findings, a presentation was delivered by Llyr showing the mapping of each zone and the work NCH had undertaken in appointing a financial advisor which hasn’t been successful. Pravin explained NCH are continuing to progress in finding a financial advisor and to assist we have separated it into 3 services. Pravin included that NCH have developed a Voluntary Purchase FAQ for homeowners

3.2 Pravin advised the steering group that NCH has been focusing on the development aspect of the project, considering the areas and sustainability. NCH has also initiated discussions with Newport City Council

3.3 Following Pravin’s update on the stage we are at within the plan the steering group were asked if they had any questions

**4** **Communications - activity tracker and case studies**

4.1 Laura updated the steering group with her communications activities since the last meeting which included initiating contact with stakeholders and partners in Somerton. This included schools, Family Intervention Team Health Officer, Police, housing associations, shops, and other key support people within Somerton. Laura advised the steering group she is currently informing them throughout this process and taking on board their feedback

4.2 Rebecca initiated a discussion regarding the newsletter, stating that we would be sending these quarterly with the first one going out in March. Rebeca stated as previously discussed we would include the findings from the MD surveys and update from the RSG

4.3 Rebecca asked the steering group what content they feel should be included. Rebecca shared the idea of a ‘meet the team’ section. Suggestions from the group included:

* An update on what stage of the plan we are on and what to expect
* Points of contact for residents if they have any questions

4.4 Rebecca advised the group NCH were looking at organising a face-to-face event in the community and asked for views and feedback on days, times, and locations

4.5 Rachel clarified that we would advertise this event in the newsletter, and the event would be open to all residents of Somerton. Rachel stated that we would be looking at the design and the design standards prior to the event and this could be included in the event. Suggestions from the group included:

* Meetings and events to be held at a time that doesn’t exclude people who work
* Hope Centre as a venue
* A suggestion for meetings to be held after 6.15pm

4.6 Rachel explained when the steering group last met NCH talked about case studies we had been working on. When NCH were looking at the options appraisal process there were concerns from residents about the moving process and the voluntary purchase process for homeowners. Rachel discussed NCH had carried out the process of re-housing people within regeneration schemes and buying back homes from homeowners on a voluntary basis. Rachel stated previously this had been undertaken through good relationships and cooperation with the residents. Rachel advised the group we have spoken with people who have been through this process, and they have allowed us to create case studies. Rachel described how the case studies were created using video and the participants were interviewed being asked about their experience of the process, their thoughts, feelings and if there was anything NCH could improve

4.7 Rachel advised NCH had created a montage of these interviews and played the montage to the steering group. The steering group were asked for their views and opinions and whether this would be a to share with the wider community. Comments from the steering group included:

* They appeared happy with the move, they all seemed settled in their new surroundings
* The houses looked nice, with the gardens
* The video came across more like an advert than an information montage

4.8 Rachel responded to the statement about the video being portrayed as an advert, explaining that we take note of their comment, but this genuinely wasn’t scripted, it was the answers they gave individually when interviewed

4.9 Pravin advised the steering group the same who worked on Cot Farm would be working on the Somerton project

4.10 A comment in the chat stated, I haven’t had anyone come and talk to us about what we would like and what my options are. I am a homeowner. **Action NCH**, to address how we plan to discuss options with homeowners

4.11 Rachel asked the steering group if they have any other views to let NCH know and we can possibly share the montage on social media at the event or through any other communication channels

**5** **Financial advisor and FAQ document**

5.1 Pravin provided an update; we had a submission for the Financial Advisor, but we haven’t had a response for the evaluation side of the role. We are currently working with the Procurement Team to explore other avenues to recruit

5.2 Pravin explained NCH will continue to update the steering group on the progress of recruiting the Financial Advisor

5.3 Pravin stated that NCH have shared the FAQs for homeowners and if the steering group have any comments, they can share that with NCH by contacting us

5.4 Pravin explained Philip Lott who is leading the acquisition is not in attendance today but will be joining us at a later date and speaking to homeowners who are considering selling their properties

**6** **Refurbishment activity**

6.1 Pravin stated that based on MD survey reports, mapping and key findings in terms of cracking and types of damp, what we are concentrating on at this stage is a couple of NCH properties to do a pilot run. Now we are working with our internal Maintenance Team as well as the Design Team to establish what we need to do to take it further. We may need to do more intrusive surveys to understand the level of work we need to undertake and once we gather all this information, we will start looking at specification, keeping residents posted as we are progressing

6.2 Rachel added it’s important for the steering group to see that as well as taking forward regeneration proposals NCH are also taking forward the proposals for a refurbishment scheme, where we have said where regeneration might not be possible, NCH will look at refurbishment

6.3 Rachel explained the specifications we need to take forward will not just be to remedy any damp, but also look at how be bring those properties to zero carbon

**7** **Survey letters**

7.1 Llyr introduced this section by explaining, last time we met NCH presented the different findings for each zone, what we have been working on is how we are going to share that information with you. As you can appreciate there is a lot of information to share. Llyr advised letters will be shared with residents who participated in the survey with the findings of the surveys

7.2 Rachel gave an apology for the survey results not being sent to residents by the end of January as NCH originally agreed and advised the process of sending individual letters incorporating any previous work in each home is taking longer than anticipated and NCH plan to finalise and send these in the next few weeks. **Action NCH**

**8** **Survey**

8.1 Llyr shared his screen and explained we now added the original 50 surveys that were carried out by Michael Dyson in the options appraisal stage, to the 189 surveys carried out more recently, which means that we have surveyed a total of 231 properties out of 353. Following adding the additional surveys to the mapping it has affected the overall percentage of damp in 3 different areas with the prevalence of damp increasing in each.

8.2 Llyr explained moving forward NCH will work on the boundaries of each area as requested in the last meeting. **Action NCH**

**9.** **Design – principles and standards**

9.1 Andrew shared his screen. Andrew explained the last meeting was a starting point for Oxford Architects to move the design process forward. Andrew advised since the last meeting they have been reviewing local area, looking at key existing features and possible opportunities to enhance each area, key principles and standards, feedback from 2021 engagement, and how to identify areas and next steps over the next few months, in terms of strengths and opportunities. Andrew explained they have been looking at feedback from residents about existing areas in Somerton and identifying initial areas of focus, gathering this information, and informing the development team

9.2 Andrew provided a summary of the external factors affecting access into Somerton and how these can be improved, including pedestrian access, the allotments and school access

9.3 Andrew discussed the visibility throughout Somerton and gave an overview of areas with poor visibility encouraging ASB (Anti-Social Behavior) and poor access. Andrew stated that an opportunity is to look at how we can increase visibility, also including an array of good homes and open public spaces

9.4 Andrew informed the group of the key principles and standards we will adhere to and shared these with the steering group on the screen, these included:

* Welsh Government Guidance

- Beautiful homes

- Lifetime homes

- New Dwellings SPG 201

- Space Standards

* Placemaking and Public Realm
* Placemaking Wales Charter
* Planning Policy Wales 10
* Equality and Diversity Drainage
* Sustainable Urban Drainage
* Zero Carbon
* Modern Methods of Construction
* Secure by Design

9.4 Andrew stated they wanted to share the resident feedback and shared the slide which included a summary of resident feedback from the initial engagement sessions in 2021

9.4 Andrew discussed the feedback from the RSG in the last meeting and stated the key aspects of their feedback which included

* Improve links to the school
* Improved links to Hope Community Centre
* Car parking

9.5 Andrew explained that we will soon be at the stage where we decide initial areas of focus and begin to develop design proposals to share in the next meeting. There are several factors to inform that focus which include

* Findings of the damp surveys
* The conditions of the homes
* Homeownership
* The views of residents
* Void properties that are already uneconomic to be brought back into use
* Opportunities to make significant improvements to the area

9.6 Andrew stated Oxford Architects will continue to build relationships and lines of communication with the steering group, using the information gathered to identify potential areas for regeneration, redevelopment, or refurbishment

**10**  **Any other Business**

10.1 A resident stated, some homes are uneconomic to bring back into use because they have been left empty too long, some over 2 years. Rachel responded to this advising they were looked at the time they became empty

10.2 A resident mentioned valuations. Rachel responded that as mentioned NCH haven’t been able to appoint a valuer, NCH wanted this to be open to everyone in Wales. NCH have access to a framework in which NCH can select advisors, NCH will include residents in the selection process

10.3 A resident asked, when was the last time a house became vacant and someone else was housed in the same property? Rachel responded that she believed this happened recently, Rachel advised she would find the exact dates. **Action NCH**

10.4 A resident asked, when will you know which areas are going to regenerated and which will be refurbished. This was answered that NCH are aiming to get to this stage by September as previously discussed and contained in the project plan

10.5 Rachel asked if anyone had any thoughts on the standards NCH had to meet or any other general questions. There were no other questions or statements

10.6 Residents suggested

* Starting the meetings later than 5pm
* Holding the meeting in the community

Rachel responded NCH had tried to hold the meeting in the community, however this wasn’t successful with the technology available. Rachel added that NCH would be looking to hold the event in the community and not virtually

10.7 A question was asked by the steering group, while we are waiting will there be an estate clean up? The boarded-up houses are being used to dump rubbish. Rachel answered we recently had our maintenance teams on the estate as a drive to tidy up the estate and the empty homes. Rachel advised Laura would be able to give an update on this. Rachel advised we would take their feedback and look at what we can do to tidy that up. **Action NCH**

10.8 Rachel thanked the group for their time and advised if they wanted to talk to NCH about anything discussed in the meeting to get in touch