

# Somerton Resident Steering Group meeting: Wednesday 6 July 2022, 17.30

## Attendees

**NCH:** Pravin de Silva, Phillip Lott, Rebecca Sluman,  
**Oxford Architects:** Andrew Brown, Terry Lai

**Residents:** Janine Clarke, Danny Davis, Gwyneth Johnson Mcloughlan, Simon Goom, Debbie Clarke, Rebecca Watts, Lindsay Brown, Tasneem Ahmed, Carol Williams, Ceri Antonen, Brian Stevenson, Barbara Taylor, Sharon Dennis

**Councillors:** Debbie Harvey, Timothy Harvey, Alex Pimm

## 1 Introduction

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

## 2 Actions from previous minutes

2.1 Prav explained that we would go through the minutes from the previous meeting during the meeting as the issues are picked up in the meeting agenda. Everyone was ok with this

## 3 Project Plan

3.1 Prav explained that we have hit our key milestones for the month of June, which were to get the floor surveys completed in 2 of the void properties. Surveys on the retaining walls have also take place and we are awaiting the report.

3.2 We are looking to carry out surveys on Newport City Council (NCC), at the back of Laburnum Drive, this will take time to sort out as we will need a license from NCC to carry out these surveys. **NCH to keep the group updated on this progress**

3.2 For July we will be working through further design proposals for different areas

## 4 Valuer

4.1 Phillip explained that Jones Battye are making good progress, we have had 5 offers that have been accepted, of those 3 are in the legal stages with solicitors. 14 offer letters have been sent out and there are a further 9 letters to prepare and send out (23 in total). Jones Batty are working through the remaining valuations.

4.2 There are a few homeowners that have requested a second valuation, this is going through and the homeowners are in the process of getting a second valuer out so there can be negotiation on the price

## 5 Refurbishment Activity

5.1 Rebecca explained that the 10 intrusive surveys have been completed along with the floor surveys in 2 of the properties. We have received the draft reports from Curtins who carried out these surveys, this only came back yesterday. Curtins are working on roof calculations and once they have these finalised they will produce their final report to us.

5.2 Once we receive the final report we will be able to look over their findings and put together a plan and specification for carrying out works to 2 pilot properties.

5.3 A Cllr asked if we knew what properties we will be using as the pilot properties, we stated that they would be 16 Linden Road and 24 Hawthorne Avenue

5.4 A resident said that there are a number of properties in Somerton that have been empty for years and the issues would have got worse over the years. Prav explained that we know these properties have issues and this is why we need to get a refurbishment specification put together to ensure these issues don't arise again

5.5 A resident asked if these properties will be let in the usual way and that families will be living in them. Rebecca explained that yes, these 2 properties will be let via home options. Prav explained that we would want to monitor the property and support the residents living in there to ensure there are no issues arise and the refurbishment has been a success

5.6 A Cllr asked if the 2 properties that are being refurbished are different in layout. Andrew explained that they are 2 different property layouts, but they have the same issues. The refurbishment works will be almost identical but will differ slightly due to the layout of both properties

5.7 A Cllr asked what contractors we will be using. Prav explained that we are not at this stage as yet, but we would like to get members of the steering group involved in the process of selecting contractors

5.8 A Cllr asked what are the timescales for the 2 pilot properties. Prav explained that we need to design the specification, we are also looking at the properties being carbon neutral so we will be looking at air source heat pumps, PVs on the roof.

5.9 Residents were asking why there are so many voids in Somerton. Prav and I explained that there are a number of reasons why these properties have empty. Prav explained that these properties are empty and we want to bring empty homes back into lettable homes either through the refurbishment or regeneration project.

## 6 Design Update

6.1 Andrew summarised what we looked at during last month's meeting, which was design updates for Acacia Avenue from pre-application comments, Hawthorne Fosse, we shared 2 initial design concepts, Sycamore and Hawthorne Avenue, we shared 2 initial design concepts and the design principles for Laburnum Drive and the 2 pilot schemes that will be taken forward for refurbishment

6.2 We went to Somerton Primary School and spent the day there, we carried out activities with 4 classes aged 7-1. Activities included drawing what they thought a front of a house should look like, they coloured in and were creative with a 'Welcome to Somerton' sign and finally they had a go at building a bridge between 2 benches and seeing whose bridge held up with weight being applied to it. It was such a fantastic day getting to meet the children who live in Somerton and finding out what they like/don't like about the area, what they would like to see improved and changed. We will be carrying on engagement with the school through out the project.

6.3 Somerton Masterplan - A map was shown outlining the 3 areas that have regeneration proposal to date, Acacia Avenue, Hawthorne Fosse and the corner of Sycamore Avenue and Hawthorne Avenue. These plans are conceptual and could change.

6.4 **Potential areas for Regeneration** – These areas could include, Libeneth Road, Laburnum Drive, a section of Sycamore Avenue, Somerton Crescent, Ashley Road, Poplar Road, Acacia Avenue and 2 corners of Sycamore Avenue and Hawthorne Avenue.

6.5 The group agreed that regeneration is needed in Acacia Avenue and Laburnum Drive

6.6 Prav explained that as a steering group we need to work together to look at potential sites for regeneration and refurbishment. There is lots of work that happens before we get to show any potential sites, a constraints plan is put together, surveys are carried out on the levels on the site, what services there are underground, drainage surveys.

6.7 A resident stated that there are flats on Laburnum Drive and those residents do not want to be living in a building site. Phillip explained that we will be getting in contact with the housing provider of those flats to make them aware of our plans

6.8 Cllrs and residents thought it would be best if we focus our time on Acacia Avenue and get that built so the residents of Somerton can see what the new homes will look like and this will help gain and build up trust with the people on Somerton

6.9 A Cllr thought that we also need to look at Libeneth Road as there are lots of issues that need sorting out

6.10 Andrew explained that NCH have ambitions beyond than looking at individual sites and they want to use the steering group as a sounding board for looking at the

wider estate and not just individual sites. Whatever site is looked at first it will be delivered in phases in terms of construction

6.11 A resident asked about what plans are there is people do not want to sell their homes. Phillip explained that other options will be looked at, such as retaining the privately owned homes that we cannot buy back and designing up plans around these houses being retained.

6.12 A resident asked can they have something in writing to say that NCH will not go down the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) route to give homeowners some piece of mind. Prav explained that we are looking to purchase properties where homeowners want to see and we have already started this process.

6.13 Prav explained that we need to take Somerton as a full estate as there are areas that have the same issues as Acacia Avenue. We need to take a masterplan approach and concentrate on other areas such as Hawthorne Fosse, we have been engaging with the school as there are issues with access to the school, it isn't visible and hidden away.

6.14 Terry explained that we need the masterplan approach and we are constantly looking at individual areas but then we need to zoom back and look at the estate as a whole. There are lots of requirements that we need to hit that if we can't do it in one area then it needs to be provided else where this is why we have to look at Somerton as a whole

6.15 If we look at senior accommodation which was initially put into Acacia Avenue but after the community consultation event and feedback from the group, this may not be the best location for it, so we have to re look at other options. Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) is another requirement we need to meet and this may not be possible on Acacia Avenue due to the levels of the site, so we need to think of other possible locations for this

6.16 A resident asked why can't we finalise plan for Acacia Avenue as showing lots of different areas isn't helping. Terry explained that different sites will move at a different speed due to NCH ownership, condition of the properties, the number of vacant properties etc

6.17 **Potential areas of Refurbishment** –The top of Hawthorne Avenue, Hawthorne Square and Palm Square. We have looked at these areas as potential refurbishment areas due to level of NCH ownership, lower proportion of properties have damp issues identified in the surveys carried out

6.18 these are the areas that are well located for refurbishment this doesn't meant that other areas won't be added into the scheme, but they are areas that we think are currently suitable for refurbishment

6.19 **Potential areas to be not in the Regeneration proposals** – these areas are Linden Road and Somerton Road.

6.20 A residents asked could private home owners be involved in the refurbishment scheme. Prav explained that we will be looking into these options. The resident

asked if home owners in Linden Road and Somerton Road could opt into the refurbishment scheme. Prav explained as they may not be in the regeneration plans then they would not be able to opt in

6.21 Prav explained that from the first meetings we have come along way. A resident explained that we should of come out with a design plan for Somerton from the first communications came out so everyone didn't have years of worrying about what is happening to their home

6.22 A resident stated that what we have been shown today is a massive improvement and a huge step forward in what NCH are thinking for Somerton

6.23 Prav explained since the first communications came out about the plans for Somerton we have come along way with our communication with the monthly steering group meetings, consultation events, newsletters and we are planning another community consultation event for the Autumn.

6.24 Prav explained that we want this to be a joint approach with the steering group and not be NCH and residents working against each other. We want to get the views and experiences of people living in Somerton to ensure we provide the right approach for the estate.

6.25 A resident asked what types and percentages of tenures there will be, Prav explained that the properties we are designing will be tenure neutral and when we are at that stage we will look at different tenure types

6.26 A Cllr Asked that can we ensure that residents of Somerton have first refusal of the new properties being built and refurbished. Rebecca explained that Somerton residents will take priority and we will be speaking with and working with every household / family to see what their preferences are

6.27 Next community event is planned for the end of September, at the next meeting we will look at how we want the event to look, how best to show the information we want to consult on, should we do anything different or keep to the same format

Time and date of next meeting:

**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 17:30pm – Hybrid meeting**