

## **Somerton Resident Steering Group meeting: Wednesday 1 February 2023, 17.30**

### **Attendees**

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

**Residents:** Janine Clarke, Danny Davis, Gwyneth Johnson Mcloughlan, Paul Jenkins, Lynda Piper, Carol Williams, Debbie Clarke, Sharron Dennis, Matthew James, Lindsay Brown, Paul Hoare, Deborah Hoare

**Councillors:** Deb Harvey, Tim Harvey

### **Introduction**

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

### **1 Action from previous minutes**

1.1 The group were keen to visit a TopHat site to have a look at their houses that have been there for a few years. NCH organised a trip to Kent to TopHat's Kitchener Barracks site, this took place on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January 32.

### **2 Valuer**

3.1 Phill explained that we are up to 51 requests for valuations to date. Of those there are 4 that are waiting for either the valuation appointment or the report to come through. 13 have received offer letters and are in various stages of considering their offer. Six are currently within the second valuation process. There are 18 within the legal stages. We have completed on 10 buy back properties

### **3 TopHat Visit**

3.1 On Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January, Rebecca, Rachel and Prav from NCH, Terry and Andrew from Oxford Architects and 4 Somerton residents, took the journey to TopHats site Kitchener Barracks in Kent to have a look at their module homes they are building. These houses and apartments are built in a factory and taken to site to be put together. We met with Angelique Runnalls-Boulds – Client Solutions Manager at TopHat and Greg Davies – Senior Technical Manager at TopHat

3.2 Andrew showed a photo of the Kitchener Barracks site which shows a birds eye view of the whole site which comprises of houses and flats

3.3 Andrew showed a photo of the 3 bed houses, we went into one of these homes during our visit

3.4 The 3-bedroom, 3 storey houses have the front door opening onto the living room. This wasn't something that those who visited liked as the space didn't feel bog enough for a family to live in. Phillip explained that Welsh Government have said that they would not accept this type of design

3.5 The group also felt the exterior of these houses looked to blocky and not like a house

3.6 The photo also shows the level differences of this site and this is something that we need to address due to the changing level differences in Somerton

3.7 On the visit we also met with 2 residents who moved into their home on this site, 3 years ago. They were in the first phase of people moving in

3.8 They were honest and explained that in the beginning there was a delay in the moving in, but in the grand scheme it didn't have a huge impact on them. They explained that communication and snagging was an issue but it had got better

3.9 Angelique explained that lesson have been learnt and they are now on the 4<sup>th</sup> phase of their house build, so things have got better. They have also introduced a new system so if you report and snagging or repairs then you can see the progress of this and there will be a single point of contact for that issue, so you aren't dealing with numerous people

3.10 They explained that their house has triple glazing, so they rarely hear any building work going on around them, they will only hear the construction on really loud, busy days

3.11 Their electricity bills are less than when they were in their traditional built house

3.12 The residents explained that since they have lived in a module home they wouldn't now move into a traditional home

3.13 We then went to look at a 2-bed apartment, which was light, airy and really spacious

3.14 During the visit 2 residents and Rachel George were kindly invited in to the resident's home, which was a 5-bed house over 3 floors, the residents felt this home in different bedroom variations and also over 2 floors would be ideal and fit within Somerton

3.15 TopHat have lots of house type variations so our next step is to go through these and look at what fits in with Welsh Design Quality Requirement (WDQR) and what will fit in with our proposed designs

3.16 A resident asked about dimensions of the rooms. Andrew explained that we have these and we will be looking at this in line with Welsh Government requirements

3.17 A resident said about the show home we visited didn't have a lot of furniture in the bedrooms. They were all double size bedrooms and there is enough room for furniture

3.18 A resident asked Greg Davies what the lifespan of TopHat homes are and he explained it is 75 years

3.19 A resident also asked Greg once on site how long does it take to put the house together, his answer was 2 weeks

3.20 This resident also said that they believe that modular build is the way to go as there will be less disruption on site and people will be able to move into their homes a lot quicker than a traditional build

3.21 A resident asked about TopHats financial due diligence checks. Prav explained that our finance team are already undertaking this piece of work

3.22 From the visit there were like and dislikes from the residents:

**What was liked:**

- Patio Doors
- Large balcony
- The size of the 2-bed apartment
- Liked the kitchen and impressed with some of the appliances come as a standard package
- Bathrooms were a good size
- Size of the bedrooms
- Internal finishes were good
- The green communal space
- There was no vehicle cut through to each housing section

**What wasn't liked:**

- House without a hallway, front door opened straight into the lounge
- The exterior of some of the houses looked too blocky
- Gardens were small
- Balcony although a nice size it felt too enclosed

**3.23 Andrew explained that our next steps are:**

- Review the drawing we have received from TopHat to ensure they are the home layouts we use as Welsh Government compliant
- Complete all the necessary financial checks
- Review and update the project costs to reflect TopHat financial models

3.24 A resident said that when they deliver each module the kitchens and bathrooms are already in place, so when they arrive on site they just need to be plumbed in

3.25 A resident also said that these new homes will all be electric. Andrew explained that gas is being phased out as it is a fossil fuel so the new homes will be all electric

Photos from the visit to Top Hat site at Kitchener Barracks, the houses are completed and being lived in. The public open space is being completed



## 4 Refurb

4.1 A meeting was held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January with 4 members of the steering group, Prav, Rebecca and NCH Procurement Manager Sarah Kelly

4.2 The purpose of this meeting was to go look at questions we want to go out in the tender pack for the 2 pilot refurb properties, the questions we put together are around:

- Programme and Delivery
- Community engagement – How would you engage with the community during the works
- Experience of delivering similar projects, where you have achieved EPC A / Net zero
- Quality Management & Health and Safety – Standards of work, approach to snagging
- Risk Management – what risks do you foresee with this project, how will you manage these risks
- Added value – How will you add social value to the community – talks at the school, Coleg Gwent

## 5 Communications

5.1 The next community engagement event will take place at The Hope Centre on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March 3:00 – 7:00pm

5.2 We will hand deliver invites to this event to ensure every household has an invite to the event

5.3 A resident asked if we have to go back to Welsh Government if we are looking to work with TopHat. Prav explained that we do and there is a 3-stage process – Concept stage, pre-planning stage and then the planning stage

## 6 Any other business

6.1 A resident asked how many empty properties there are on the estate now. Rebecca said approx.: 40 properties

6.2 A resident said that they have noticed more properties are being shuttered. Rebecca explained that we have had to do this as there have been issues with these properties being broken into, serious fly tipping. Rebecca explained that our Estates team are out on the estate a few times a week, removing fly tipping, litter picking, cutting the grass, hedges, trees.

6.3 A resident asked about how we are going the phase the works. Prav explained that we are going to be starting with Phase 1, which is Acacia Avenue and we will be doing a detailed planning application for this site and outline planning for the rest of Somerton. As a design team we will be working together to look at the phasing of the works, as we will have the regeneration and refurbishment programme

6.4 A resident asked about the refurb works and does this mean everything will be gutted. Andrew explained that we need to take them back to the brick but the position of the rooms will stay the same, the stairs will be in the same position

6.5 A resident asked if the refurb properties will look the same as the new modular homes. Andrew explained that they wont look like the modular homes, they will look externally similar to how they do now

6.6 Cllr Tim Harvey asked about private homeowners and if they wanted to have their home upgraded. Prav explained that we haven't got to this stage but we will be looking into this

## 7 Next Meeting

Time and date of next meeting:

**Wednesday 1 March: 17:30pm – Hybrid meeting**