



# Homes for Hooky

---

## Hook Norton **Community** Land Trust Annual General Meeting

7.30pm on Tuesday 17 September 2024

at

The Hook Norton Brewery Malthouse Kitchen

Members present – 14

Non-members present - 12

Apologies – 11

---

## MINUTES

### 1. Welcome & Apologies for absence

Cathy Ryan, Chair of HNCLT, gave a warm welcome to everyone attending the 2024 AGM and ran through the order of the Agenda.

### 2. Chair's Report on the affairs of HNCLT – Cathy used presentation slides to run through the official business of the evening. The slides can be viewed [here](#).

#### • Our Journey

- Following 7 community consultations going right back to 2018, our [Journey Map](#) is a good reminder of how much involvement the community has had in this unique development. No other developer bringing new homes to the village has asked the community what they want and need, and one of the most striking comments during the consultation was the comment that “without affordable and sustainable housing, the heart will leave the village”.
- Fuel Poverty exists in our village, and both the excellent thermal qualities of the homes, and the discounted power provided by [SNRG](#) make these homes more affordable for residents.
- Homes for Hooky went from a dream to a reality when Cherwell District Council (CDC) agreed to transfer the land at a price that made the whole project viable.
- Initial hopes were that the homes would go to people with a local connection to Hook Norton, which has been the case in the affordable homes allocated by CDC.
- Initial fears were that the scheme wouldn't get planning permission, but with an incredible amount of work behind the scenes, and in particular the work of the local architectural design team [Charlie Luxton Design](#), planning permission was granted in May 2020.

#### • The Project

- The Bourne Green site includes
  - 8 Affordable homes to rent (4 x 2-bedroom, 2 x 3-bedroom and 2 x 1-bedroom).
  - 4 x 2-bedroom homes for sale at market value.
  - A community building with shared facilities, including a co-working space, a spare room and a therapy room - both for hire.
  - A smart microgrid that uses renewable energy generated on site, to power the homes, Sports and Social Club, and EV charge points (shared by the residents and Hooky Car Club).
- The project has attracted attention from other communities, some of whom have been to visit the site in the hope that they could replicate all or some of the project components.
- This is the first time that a microgrid has been included in a UK scheme of less than 30 homes.
- HNCLT have now been nominated for at least 5 awards.

- **Membership**
  - HNCLT Membership opened in March 2021, and we now have 74 members.
  - We have a further 237 people who have registered an interest and want to be kept informed on progress of the project.
  - We have 77 people who have invested in the Community Share Raise, some of whom who will become new members.
- **HNCLT Partnerships:**
  - **Charlie Luxton Design** (CLD) - appointed in 2018 as our architectural designers following a tendering process. CLD worked with HNCLT and the community during the consultation period to ensure that the design of the homes reflected what the community needed and wanted at that time.
  - **Greencore Homes** - an award-winning Oxfordshire based sustainable building company, based in Bicester. They build climate positive homes and HNCLT are delighted to be working with them on this project.
  - **SOHA** (South Oxfordshire Housing Association) our 'Registered Provider', who will lease and manage the homes.
  - **Cherwell District Council** (CDC) - transferred the land to HNCLT at a price that made the project financially viable. They have and will continue to work with SOHA to allocate the affordable homes, giving priority to people with a local connection.
  - **Hook Norton Low Carbon & SNRG** - developing the smart microgrid for the site, which includes solar PV (photovoltaic) on the roofs and a battery for power storage.
  - **Hook Norton Sports & Social Club** – facilitated access to the site during the development phase and worked closely with HNCLT throughout the process. Cathy gave particular thanks to Phil Rolls for his support.
- **Progress during 2023/24**
  - **Construction** of the homes was remarkably fast, taking just 9 months for the main building phase, thanks to the off-site construction of the highly insulated panels at the Greencore Bicester factory.
  - **Landscaping** on the site has transformed what was a building site, to an attractive green area for everyone to enjoy, and further planting will take place in the autumn following donations from **Wyatts** and **Nicholsons**.
  - **Our Community Share Offer** was launched in February on the **Ethex Platform**. **The launch event** was attended by 46 people, and the Share Offer has now secured just over 50% of the £500,000 target. The Share Offer will close on 20 October, and Cathy urged people not to leave investment to the last minute. She noted that this is an ethical way to invest, to help community assets to grow, thrive and remain in community ownership.
  - **The Microgrid** was completed, and the homes are now benefitting from the Smart Energy System. SNRG will continue to monitor the data provided, in order to maximise efficiency.
  - **Our Open Day** in May attracted over 100 visitors, and Greencore handed over the keys to the first of the completed homes.
  - **Soha Housing** took on the 'affordable homes' leases, and the management of those 8 homes in June, and everyone was excited to welcome the first residents to their new homes in July. Cathy briefly explained the **Allocations Process**, and how CDC ensured that priority was given to applicants who met the local connection criteria. CDC passed on the successful nominations to Soha, who then carried out their own due diligence ahead of signing contracts with the new residents.
  - **The Press** have been very keen to interview residents and HNCLT board members, and articles have appeared on TV (BBC South), Radio and in Newspapers (The Times, Banbury Guardian, Oxford Mail etc).
  - **Awards and Nominations :**
    - **Unlock Net Zero Award** - on 26<sup>th</sup> June, HNCLT and Greencore Homes were announced as winners of the 'Collaboration of the year award' for new development projects.
    - **The Inside Housing Award** – In July, HNCLT and Soha were confirmed as finalists for the Best Affordable Housing Development – less than £5m.

- **The Oxford Climate Awards** – In September, HNCLT were confirmed as finalists for two awards :
      - Green Building and Design Award.
      - Innovation in Climate Action Award.
    - **Building Awards** – HNCLT are finalists for the Net Zero Award.
    - **Evening Standard Housing Award** – HNCLT have been shortlisted for an award.
  - **The Community Building** was completed at the end of August, providing a flexible communal space. The Hooky hub, an existing Hook Norton Low Carbon initiative, moved into the main area at the beginning of September and are now enjoying all the benefits of the thermal efficiency and sound proofing. The self-contained ensuite bedroom will soon be furnished and available for hire, and the second ensuite room will be available for local practitioners to hire as a Therapy Room.
  - **The Market Value Homes** were valued at leasehold prices between £275,000 and £292,000 in March. They were initially marketed locally, then more widely with College and County Estate Agents. Fairfax in Chipping Norton will take over the marketing by the end of September. Feedback has been positive, and provisional offers have been received, but none of them have been proceedable.
- **The Year Ahead :**
  - **A Celebration Party** will be organised for the residents to all get together on the green. Representatives from the Hooky Car Club and the Hooky Hub will be there to offer information about the benefits of their schemes, and SNRG will be invited to run through the optimum use of the microgrid.
  - **The Community Share Raise** closes on 20 October, and funds from that and the sale of the market value homes will be used to pay off the project loan that we have relied on through the building phase.
  - **The Management Company** will be formed, and amongst other things, they will set up contracts for communal space management.
  - **A Landscaping Group** will be formed to manage and contribute to the landscaping elements.
  - **A Residents Committee** will be formed so that everyone has a chance to air their views.
  - **The Sale of the Market Value homes** will be completed.

Cathy noted that the Board is always keen to welcome new Board members, particularly now that the project is entering a less technical phase. We are urgently in need of a treasurer, a position that would suite someone with a financial acumen, but also with some creative/business skills.

In the absence of a company treasurer, Richard Brown (HNCLT Board Member) ran through the finance slides, which include a Profit and Loss Sheet and a Balance Sheet, based on draft accounts provided by our accountant - David Mant, from Abraham and Dobell.

### 3. Financial report and adoption of the annual accounts - 01/04/23 to 31/03/24

- Richard ran through the main Income and Expenditure lines, explaining that the Cost Recovery income was from an ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), which was paid retrospectively, and relates to expenditure in the previous financial year.
- The loan interest is higher than expected, due to delays in the sale of the affordable leaseholds and Community Share Raise income.
- Richard noted that details of the financial plans can be found in the [HNCLT Business Plan](#).

Richard invited questions from the floor, with just one being raised:

What will HNCLT do if they can't sell the Market Value Homes?

- HNCLT would consider an additional Community Share Offer, along with a Donations drive to cover any deficit in project funding.
- Another option would be for HNCLT to rent out the properties, either with Soha purchasing them as affordable homes, or with private individuals renting them.

#### 4. Appointment of Auditor

- The proposed resolution – to apply audit exemption in accordance with UK law was circulated to members with the Agenda.
- Richard explained that due to the size and income of HNCLT, the company doesn't have to have an external audit, (which can be very costly) as long as a majority of members agree to apply the audit exemption rule.
- HNCLT would then continue to pass annual accounts on to an accountant to review and verify.
- The accountant used for the current year and proposed for the following year, is Abraham & Dobell.
- Richard proposed that we apply audit exemption in accordance with UK Law, and the proposal was carried unanimously by a show of hands (13 members in favour and 0 against).

Cathy then handed over to Charlie Luxton – Company Secretary for the Election of Board Members.

#### 5. Election of Board Members

- Charlie noted that due to the 3 yr election period for Board Members, none of the current 7 Board members need to stand for re-election this year.
- 5 Board members have stepped down during the year for a variety of personal reasons, including Tim Lunel, who has been involved with the project from its earliest conception, and who held the role of Company Treasurer until March this year.
- Charlie thanked all those who have been involved for the past challenging year, including those who have stepped down. He noted the extensive work carried out by Fiona Brown, and in particular her time and skills with local council and legal negotiations, bearing in mind that she doesn't actually live in Hook Norton.
- The need for additional Board members, and in particular a Company Secretary was noted. Other tangible roles such as Landscaping and Community Building management leads are also needed.
- Cathy thanked the newest Board members for joining. Rachel Cronin, who moved into one of the homes in July, and has supported the project over the past years, and Grant Appleton, who has been involved with HNCLT this year as a Community Shares Coordinator. HNCLT received grant funding specifically for that role, which has included an enormous amount of work with promotional activities and social media postings.
- If anyone is interested in joining the Board, they should speak to one of the existing Board members, or email [hello@hooknortonclt.org.uk](mailto:hello@hooknortonclt.org.uk), or fill in the [Board Application Form](#)

The official business closed at 20.23 and a short refreshment break was taken ahead of Cathy introducing the following speakers :

**Sean Woodcock**, our newly elected Labour MP spoke about the current housing crisis and how he and the Labour Party will be working towards solutions to that crisis. Notes from Sean's speech and Charlie Luxton's response to that can be viewed [here](#).

**Hannah Crawley**, one of the new residents spoke about the comfort of her new home, and the sense of security it has given her, following a few roller coaster years.

**Rachel Cronin**, another new resident spoke about her concerns for people forced to live in satellite towns due to high house prices in villages, and her fears that she would never be able to afford to live independently in the village she teaches in and loves so much.

Notes from Hannah and Rachel's experiences can be found [here](#)

Following the presentations, Cathy thanked the speakers and everybody who attended, and all those who have contributed to making the Homes for Hooky project such as success.

Cathy closed the meeting at 21.05.