

HOOK NORTON COMMUNITY HOUSING PROJECT



Homes for Hooky - October 2018

The Hook Norton Community Led Housing initiative is at an exciting stage, having received the support of the village for a small affordable group of homes on a piece of disused council owned land adjacent to the Sports & Social Club. The results of the first survey in April identified 37 people who were actively interested in living in the homes on completion.

We recently sent a detailed follow up survey to the 37 potential occupants in order to formally establish the need for affordable housing in Hooky and to request information that will help the project architects begin imagining the layout of the site and design of the homes.

The follow up surveys have now been independently analysed and have provided the evidence required by Cherwell District Council that Hook Norton has a proven need for affordable, community-led housing that is also sustainable. This evidence is a necessity before the council can consider supporting the release of the land to the community, for the purpose of community-led housing. Once the detailed feasibility study is completed this Autumn, a new organisation will be set up to deliver and run the project, the most popular model being the formation of a Community Land Trust.

In August four architectural practices submitted impressive bids to develop the next phase of the project and together with members of the Low Carbon Hub, we interviewed them at the LCH office in Oxford. Each practice presented conceptual sketches of how the site might potentially look and discussed how they would approach engaging the community to contribute their ideas, which will ultimately determine the design of the site and the size and shape of the homes and their surroundings.

Each practice approached the tender in a different way with fascinating results but it was unanimously decided that Charlie Luxton Designs had the most imaginative and thoughtful interpretation and they were selected as the project Architectural Designers. They had also thoroughly researched the sustainability and communal aspects of the build and were positively excited about the prospect of working together with the local community.

The 37 interested in living in the homes are invited to a collaborative workshop with the newly appointed design team, on 27th September at the Sports & Social Club, to begin setting out the vision for the design of the housing and communal facilities. It promises to be an exciting and creative evening and by the time this article is printed Charlie and his team of architects will be involved in the alchemical process of bringing everyone's ideas to life.

A production company for Channel 4, Antenna Films, have already begun documenting elements of the engagement process and recently filmed some of the potential occupants of the homes on the site, exchanging ideas about the project and why they think an alternative, creative approach to local housing is needed.

Cathy Ryan

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