

## HOOK NORTON COMMUNITY HOUSING PROJECT



Homes for Hooky December 2018

At the end of August 2018 we selected Charlie Luxton Design as the architects for the Hook Norton Community Housing project and in September 37 of the people interested in living in the homes were invited to participate in a Community Housing Vision & Design workshop. This proved a creative and lively meeting where the community and the architects collaborated on ideas that will inform the initial design and layout of the site. The team at Charlie Luxton Design presented a set of visual possibilities for the project then listened to the wide ranging needs of the community, from detailed daily living requirements to imaginative suggestions for the communal facilities. Once again it was impressive how thoughtful and vibrant the discussions were, culminating in a dynamic exchange of views that were captured on film by Antenna Films for Channel 4. We had enthusiastic feedback from those present and many found the question of what we need as opposed to what we would like, thought provoking and stimulating. The architects went away brimming with information and are presently working on three different solutions to the challenge and gathering technical expertise that will inform the feasibility study.



We have commissioned land, contamination and flood surveys to be carried out on the site, which is completely overgrown and in order for them to be implemented successfully a pathway needed to be cleared. The fabulous Green Gym responded to the challenge and in another example of community activity, cheerfully hacked their way through the inhospitable brambles and opened up an entire footpath adjacent to the all weather pitch. At least fifteen lost footballs were unearthed from the

tangled branches!

Cherwell District Council own the land for the community housing project and we meet regularly with members of their Housing Strategy team who are supportive of the project. They provide valuable advice and have been to Hooky to visit the site and are helping to prepare a detailed report to be assessed by their senior executives. This will hopefully enable us to decide the terms of the transfer of the land to a newly formed Community Land Trust that will be set up to deliver and run the project. It is great to report that Councillors John Donaldson and Hugo Brown attended our most recent meeting and confirmed their backing for community led housing which has provided an encouraging and positive boost for the Hook Norton project.

The next step is to complete the feasibility study in December and analyse the potential costs in detail. We recently viewed the architect's provisional site designs and layout, illustrating options for different sizes and density of the homes. It was exciting to see some of the community ideas such as a communal meeting space and shared plant growing areas come to life. As a result the project now seems a step closer to realisation and as soon as the designs are developed we will share them with the community.

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