



WESTBOURNE
COMMUNITY
T R U S T

Report to the AGM on Progress of the Trust November 2020

Background to the Trust

Westbourne Community Trust was formed by a group of local residents in November 2018 as a community land trust whose main purpose is to deliver affordable housing within the Parish and other community projects that will make the Parish a better place to live. Forming the Trust was considered a necessary response to criticisms about the lack of affordable housing in the Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan. This issue was highlighted by a Government Planning Inspector in October 2017, in his review of the draft plan. The idea to form Westbourne Community Trust therefore originally came from Westbourne Parish Council. Although the Trust is a key partner organisation of Westbourne Parish Council it operates independently. However, there are WPC representatives on the board of trustees.

Currently there are 6 trustees as follows

Frank Campbell – Chair
Piers Mason – Vice Chair
Sue Jackson – Treasurer
Cllr Richard Hitchcock - representing Westbourne Parish Council
Patricia Goodhew
James Brigden

In addition to the trustees listed above there is one co-opted board member, Cllr David Mack who also represents the interests of Westbourne Parish Council but has no voting rights. Also, Cllr Roy Briscoe, who is the Chichester District Council ward councillor for Westbourne, attends Board meetings in an observer capacity again without voting rights. During the previous 2 years, as the Trust has become established and taken forward its work, there have been other local residents involved as trustees who have needed to step back from involvement due to other commitments. The Trust would particularly wish to thank Avril Hardy, Emily Cowdry and Martin Yallop for the support they provided as trustees during the time of their involvement.

Governance and Membership Arrangements

The Trust was incorporated as a legal entity in November 2018 by registering as a Community Benefit Society with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Its registered number is 7872. The FCA is

the regulatory body for the Trust and the annual accounts of the Trust must be submitted to the FCA for scrutiny. The Trust is also registered as an exempt charity with Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs. The Trust has appointed Morris Crocker as its accountants and they have now prepared the accounts for the period from the inception of the Trust until 31st March 2020. These accounts have been published on our website at this link They have now been submitted to the FCA. The Trust is also a member of the National Community Land Trust Network which is the national representative body for community land trusts. It provides support and advice on the operation of community land trusts and related policy issues.

The rules of the Trust as an organisation are set out in its registration document and they are available for inspection at this link

Anyone who is interested and supports the work of the Trust can become a member. Becoming a member requires the purchase of a share in the trust with a minimum value of £1.00 for which the Trust issues a share certificate. The membership of the Trust within the local community, has grown to 108 members, all of whom have purchased a minimum of a £1 share. Some have purchased additional shares and or made cash donations to support the work of the Trust. We would like to thank all our members for their continued support and the funding they have donated.

New members are always welcome to join the Trust, especially those who are willing to become involved in its work and potentially have skills to contribute as a trustee.

Funding

The Trust has been able to secure funding from various sources to support its work. The funding can be summarised under the following categories

- Start-up funding from Chichester District Council and the National Network of Community Land Trusts. This funding enabled the Trust to set up operations and register as a legal entity.
- Funding from members for shares and donations to support the Trust's work
- Funding for site investigations provided by Chichester District Council
- Funding for technical work to support the submission of a planning application provided by Chichester District Council and Homes England

The details of this funding and the expenditure to date are set out in the accounts. The funding received so far including the money not yet spent is intended to cover the costs of setting up the Trust and securing a planning permission. The funding for the capital costs of any construction work are yet to be secured and work on this will not commence unless and until such time as planning permission is obtained and the Trust decides to take the project forward. It is intended to cover the cost of construction by applying to Homes England and other funding bodies for grant funding. Any funding gap that cannot be secured by direct grant will be subject to borrowing that can be funded from the income stream from the proposed housing.

Review of the Trust's Activities

The Trust's primary objective has been to bring forward a proposal for affordable housing in the village that can be made available for local people who cannot afford to purchase or rent a home on

the open market. Our efforts have been substantially focussed on a project for building affordable housing on a site at the rear of 30 to 56 Mill Road. A summary of the work on this project is provided below.

However, the Trust is also interested in providing or supporting a wide range of community projects that will improve the quality of life for the local community. Other projects that we are interested in taking forward either independently or in collaboration with partner organisations such as the Parish Council include,

- Improved recreational facilities
- Environmental and nature conservation projects
- Parking provision within the village
- Support for local business, including starter units
- Traffic calming measures within the village
- Local tourism projects
- Local transport schemes
- Establishing a hub for community services

Whilst projects on the above themes remain strongly within the scope of the Trust's thinking the immediate priority is to deliver much needed affordable housing for local people. Finding a suitable site for this project and undertaking the preparatory work to bring it forward has been the main activity undertaken so far by the Trust.

The Trust's Achievements

Since the trust was formed the following milestones have been achieved

- Establishing the Trust as a legal entity
- Securing the commitment and support of trustees with the necessary skills to deliver the Trust's objectives
- Approving the various policies and governance arrangements for the Trust's operations
- Commissioning a Housing Needs Survey as baseline evidence for an affordable housing project
- Holding 3 rounds of public engagement and consultation on the proposals for affordable housing at the Mill Road site at key stages in the evolution of the scheme
- Securing sufficient funding for the Trust's operations and the preparation of a planning application
- Appointing architects to undertake the design work for the affordable housing project at Mill Road and to oversee the making of a planning application
- Commissioning a significant amount of technical work from specialist consultants to support a planning application
- Developing effective liaison and consultation with local residents, local landowners, and partner organisations to ensure that the proposals for affordable housing incorporate a wide range of additional community benefits
- Submitting a planning application that had been developed with significant public consultation

The Mill Road Affordable Housing Project

The Trust started to develop its ideas for the development of the land at the rear of 30 to 56 Mill Road in February 2019. At that time there were two public consultation sessions at the Meeting Place, to launch the Trust and share the early findings of its work, which indicated that the land at the rear of 30 to 56 Mill Road had emerged as a preferred option from the various sites that had been examined. The search for a site was based on the work that had been undertaken in the Neighbourhood Plan where a wide range of possibilities had already been examined including the land at the rear of Mill Road. Chichester District Council own this land and it is currently leased to the Parish Council. There had previously been proposals for redevelopment by the District Council and there was a willingness to sell the land to the Trust for the purposes of affordable housing. Therefore, there was an opportunity for the Trust to purchase the site at an affordable price.

After the initial public consultation, discussions also took place with The Parish Council, Westbourne Primary School, Westbourne Allotment Association and the landowner of the agricultural land to the north of the site. The purpose of these consultations was to ensure that these key parties were fully aware of the proposals and together we could consider ways in which the ideas for the affordable housing scheme could be improved by including additional elements to benefit the local community.

As a result of these discussions and the discussions with residents in Mill Road, the following key elements were included in the scope of the project.

- Off-street parking for Mill Road residents
- A new building within the allotment site to provide storage for Westbourne Parish Council and storage for the Allotment Association together with a WC and kitchen for their exclusive use
- A new pedestrian gateway into the school playground which would allow the school direct access to the park.

The Trust then appointed architects to prepare an initial scheme, and in July 2019 there were two further public consultation sessions, one at Westbourne Primary School and another at the Church Fete. At both July 2019 sessions a detailed scheme was displayed of the proposals for the affordable housing and the other elements of the scheme. During this consultation 58 residents completed a response form and of those 85% supported the scheme. Many useful comments were made to inform the next stage of the design of the proposals.

Following this consultation the Trust modified the details of the scheme to take into account the comments of residents and then held discussions with Chichester District Council to obtain their views on the proposal and consider any additional work that should be undertaken to support a planning application.

The Trust had by the Autumn of 2019 secured sufficient public funding, mainly from Homes England and Chichester District Council to carry out all the necessary technical work to support a detailed planning application. During the autumn and following spring of 2019/20, the following work was commissioned from a range of specialist consultants.

- Detailed architectural designs for the layout of the site and the proposed dwellings

- Design and Access Statement
- Topographical Survey
- Ground Conditions Survey
- Ecological Survey
- Arboricultural Report
- Drainage Report
- Transport Impact Assessment / Highways Report
- Road Safety Audit
- Travel Plan
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment
- Housing Needs Survey
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Sequential Test
- Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment

Prior to submitting a planning application, in March 2020, the Trust carried out a third round of public consultation to establish whether there were any additional comments on the scheme that might require changes to the final details. During this consultation, several points were raised by residents that led to detailed modifications of the submitted scheme. The planning application was then submitted in April 2020.

Many elements of the final scheme have been included in direct response to public comment and the desire of the Trust that the project should be more than just an affordable housing proposal and should include features that will improve the quality of community facilities in the Parish. It is proposed to retain 62% of the existing park area as public open space and to significantly invest in improved play facilities.

The scheme now proposed involves: -

- 12 new affordable homes to rent to local people including, two 3-bed homes, four 2-bed homes, six 1-bed homes
- Appropriate parking space and internal amenity space for those homes
- Parking for the allotments and users of the park
- New off-street parking spaces on Mill Road to ease parking congestion
- New play equipment to replace the existing outdated equipment
- A new multi-use games area (MUGA) to replace the existing sports court
- Replacement of the skatepark
- A new jogging track around the park
- A new storage unit to be provided for the allotment association and the parish council which will include a WC and kitchen facility for the exclusive use of the Allotment Association
- New fencing along the boundary to the allotment site
- A new pedestrian footpath link across the park directly into the Westbourne Primary School playground
- Extensive off-site tree planting on land to the north of the site to provide screening from the open countryside
- A temporary access for construction traffic on land to the north of the site, direct from Foxbury Lane, to avoid congestion in Mill Road
- Nature conservation features to enhance bio-diversity

The planning application has now been under consideration by Chichester District Council for approximately 7 months. The Trust and its advisers have responded to various matters that have been identified by the Council and provided additional information or made modifications to the scheme as appropriate. The Trust had expected that a decision would have been taken by the Council at this stage, having dealt with the issues raised by the Council.

However, a new issue has been identified that also affects all types of residential development in the Solent area. Natural England have raised an objection to all types of residential development that drain ultimately into the Solent (including Chichester and Langstone Harbours) unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is “nitrate neutral”. Over many years, excess nitrate emissions have been causing high levels of concentration in the Solent waters with an adverse impact on their quality and biodiversity. Existing and new residential use and agricultural use both generate significant nitrate emissions through sewage processing at wastewater treatment plants and surface water drainage. The approach that Chichester District Council and Natural England now require is to find a way of mitigating any additional nitrate emission from all new residential development.

The requirement to make residential development “nitrate neutral” generally involves finding a way of minimising the level of emission as far as possible and then mitigating any residual nitrate emission by setting aside agricultural land and using it for nature conservation purposes. The Trust is now seeking a solution to this problem which must be resolved before the planning application can be decided. All residential proposals where the drainage leads ultimately to the Solent waters cannot be approved without a solution to this nitrate issue. We are currently discussing this with agricultural landowners and nature conservation organisations to try and find an appropriate solution.

Next Steps

The most critical next step for the Trust is to find an effective way of making the proposed development “nitrate neutral”. Once we have achieved this it will then be a matter for Chichester District Council to make a decision on the planning application. We have been advised that there are no other outstanding issues that the Council requires us to resolve or to provide further information at this point. If we are able to secure planning permission, the next steps for the Trust will be to secure the necessary funding for construction and prepare for implementation of the scheme. This will require finalising the acquisition of the land, preparing detailed construction drawings and selecting a building contractor on a competitive basis.

Frank Campbell
Chair of Westbourne Community Trust