

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Tenants Strategic Group – 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### New Build Council Housing Programme – Update Report

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Housing

Report Author: Chris Brown, Assistant Director Development and Regeneration

#### 1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

*The report is to update the Tenants Strategic Group on the ambitions and scheme updates on the Council's New Build Housing Programme.*

#### 2. Recommendations

*The Tenants Strategic Group is asked to note this report and progress on the new build housing programme.*

#### 3. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

- A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report. However key risks in the delivery of 100 homes over 30 years include:
  - Competition pressure on the Housing Revenue Account including statutory compliance, low carbon retrofit of existing stock and changes in government policy
  - Cost inflation including the impacts of covid, departure from the European Union and Phosphate mitigation to gain planning permission
  - Financial matters including the availability of subsidy, inflation, and interest rates

#### 4. Background and Full details of the Report

- SWT has an ambition to build 1000 new homes over 30 years.
- The eight Laxton Road apartments reported at the last meeting of the TSG are the first of these homes to be completed. The Laxton Road properties were completed in January to building regulation standards and have now set a quality benchmark for future developments to aspire.

- The Directorate has sought to improve on the Laxton Road standard by ensuring all new homes will achieve the Council's 2030 zero carbon aspiration and the Government's 2050 Zero Carbon target.
- The development schemes highlighted in this report will meet the 2030 and 2050 zero carbon requirements either on the first letting or as the national grid decarbonises or if tenants use green tariffs without the need for additional measures in the future.
- Over one hundred of the properties in the current programme will be zero carbon in occupation at their first letting as a result of high standards of insulation and onsite renewable heat and power.
- As new zero carbon homes are completed the directorate will need to consider change its approach towards maintaining, letting and advising tenants to help keep properties in good repair and for tenants to maximise their fuel cost savings.
- The following schemes will all achieve the 2050 zero carbon standard without additional investment.
  - Seaward Way, Minehead – 54 new homes starting on site this financial year
  - NTWP, Taunton – 228 new homes over four phases and a new community facility – Phase A is 47 new homes starting on site in August
  - Zero Carbon Home Pilot and Oxford Inn – Up to 61 Homes – the next stage is to gain planning permission for these schemes following consultation
- The short-term aim of the directorate is to deliver 347 new homes by 2028. In addition, a number of low carbon retrofit schemes are emerging which will be brought to the Tenants Strategic Group for information over the next few months.

### New Build Council Schemes

#### Seaward Way, Minehead

- After a year's work on our Seaward Way scheme at Minehead the directorate has received Planning Committee consent to build 54 homes.
- Classic Builders have been successful in bidding for the construction tender, and we have started work with them to refine the design and low carbon measures. Classic Builders were the main contractor at Laxton Road.
- Following a lead-in period start on site is anticipated in late summer this year. With some phases ready from early 2023, it is anticipated that the build will take just under two years to complete.
- In line with the Council's declaration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, the homes will be zero carbon in use.
- Local people in housing need living in or having connections to Minehead will have priority in obtaining one of these innovative homes for rent.



(Seaward Way, Minehead)

### Zero Carbon Affordable Homes Pilot and Oxford Inn

- The Council has provided a budget to build sixty-one zero carbon homes for rent over six sites.
- Public consultation has commenced encouraging the public to have their say about a planning application for the first 40 homes at various locations in Taunton.
- The sites include the vacant Oxford Inn where eight new homes are being proposed. Other sites include a site currently used for temporary accommodation (Wheatley Crescent) and the programme also includes four underused garage sites (Churchill Way, Wheatley Crescent and Charter Walk). The consultation for these scheme is underway and accessible through our website.
- The schemes will deliver a range of property types and sizes and some accessible homes.
- The homes will be highly insulated making them very energy efficient and zero carbon in use. The site will be fossil fuel free, and hot water and central heating supplied primarily using on-site renewable sources.
- This scheme is the first Council development which will be required to have a phosphate mitigation strategy before planning permission will be granted. The HRA is working on an innovative solution which if supported by Natural England will lead to a solution for other council led schemes for the HRA, town centre regeneration and homelessness.



(scheme impression on the site of the Oxford Inn)



(New Zero Carbon Homes on an underused garage site)

### **North Taunton Woolaway Project (NTWP)TWP**

- Residents have been patient as they had seen little activity on the ground of the North Taunton Woolaway Project (NTWP) since the demolition of Phase A properties last summer.
- The Council and ENGIE have now agreed the contract to build the first phase of the project and the first 47 of 228 homes.
- The design of the homes and community building have been significantly influenced by residents from the estate and architects have interpreted the thoughts of the community into the design of the homes, community building and public space.

- The first phase will include a range of property types including 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses, 1 and 2 bedroom flats, bungalows and the community building.
- All properties will be built to at least the national space standard, which is circa 15% larger than the space standard for the current Woolaway homes.
- All homes will provide better space for mobility for residents, people visiting the properties and a number of properties will be fully wheelchair accessible homes specially designed to provide tenants with the space and adaptations required to meet their health needs.
- All homes will benefit from low carbon measures, including high standards of insulation in the fabric of the building (walls, roof, floor and triple glazed windows) and homes will also benefit from low cost heat and power through photovoltaic panels and batteries which will produce and hold electricity. Air source heat pumps will be installed to produce low cost heat.
- A range of other measures will be put in place, including those which reuse and recycle heat generated in the homes and smart technology, so tenants can understand how efficiently they are using energy. It is calculated that for a typical property fuel savings to the customer will be between 60%-80%.
- These homes will also use around 80% less carbon in occupation than new build homes built to the basic government building regulation standard. The properties will be compliant with the government 2050 targets and will be zero carbon on first let if tenants use green electricity tariffs.
- Preparation is currently underway to get the five Phase A sites ready for works, with groundworks starting in August. New homes will start to be complete and ready for occupation from forty-six weeks after the groundworks start. The NTWP team is working with ENGIE to prepare the contract for the next phases which will include the demolition of homes in the new year and an additional 51 homes.



CGI showing Phases B, C & D in the setting of Phase A, E and existing properties. (North

### Taunton Woolaway project phases A, B and C)

- This major regeneration project has benefitted from residents influencing the designs and approach taken by the Council. The Implementation Working Group (IWG) and design group over several years have helped ensure the voice of the customers are heard and have improved the scheme through their commitment and hard work.
- The project is moving to a new phase where five working groups will help monitor progress. The working groups have unlimited spaces for tenants plus seats for residents from the wider community, Councillors, and organisations with specific contributions. The working groups are hosted by SWT and ENGIE. The working groups have terms of reference and the following aims;
  - Works and low carbon working group - this working group will monitor the works proposals of the contractor to check the requirements agreed during the consultation are being delivered. The group will also consider the promises made to the project through the contract and tender process. Other roles of the group will be to explore low carbon housing solutions, refurbishment specification and the planning application process for phases B-E.
  - Environment and green space working group – this working group will check the requirements already agreed by residents in relation to green space, open space, highways, verges, and boundaries during the consultation are being delivered. They will have a particular role in considering options to go forward to resident consultation on the green space in the neighbourhood. The working group will consider how the neighbourhood supports ecology, biodiversity, healthy lifestyles and complements the Taunton garden town principles.



(North Taunton Woolway Project public space)

- Employment and training working group – This group will work with Engie and training and employment external partner specialists to maximise the employment, training, and skill development to residents of North Taunton. The group will monitor the effectiveness of the contractor in delivering the opportunities required through the contract.
- Community facility working group – this working group has a specific focus of considering sustainable options for the community facility to be built during phase A of the project. The community facility will be a shared NTWP office and community space during the lifetime of the project however at the end of the project the facility will need to be self-sustaining. The working group will work with the council and its partners to explore and create a sustainable business case. The community facility has been designed in such a way that it can be cost effectively converted to two homes at the end of the project if a community facility is not viable.
- Communication working group – this working group will monitor the council's communication strategy and help the council in practical ways such as checking the messages and language used by the council are appropriate and helpful to residents. The group will encourage the Council and Engie to ensure information continues to be shared with residents in a timely way and extend the formats available to customers.
- The NTWP recently delivered a project through the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QPLS) who worked with the community to decorate some of the hoardings funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- A trip to the Quantock Hills was arranged as part of an initiative to encourage engagement with our natural heritage.

- NTWP residents and the local community engaged in the hoarding painting and the trip. The trip was a great opportunity to get close to nature and wildlife nearby and bring your inspirations back to the neighbourhood for the community mural.
- The community mural is accessible to all and will be complemented by future visions of the scheme.



(North Taunton Hoarding Project inspired by Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme)



## 5. Links to Corporate Strategy

- *Building 1000 new build homes by 2050 is one of the main Council strategies.*
- *The council has declared a climate change emergency and zero carbon homes fits with the council's ambition to achieve zero carbon by 2030.*

## 6. Finance / Resource Implications

- There are no financial implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report

## 7. Legal Implications (if any)

- There are no legal implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report

## 8. Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)

- *The council has declared a climate change emergency and zero carbon homes fits with the council's ambition to achieve zero carbon by 2030.*

## **9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)**

N/A

## **10. Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)**

- There are no equality implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report
- New build homes programme is providing affordable rented accommodation which will be accessible through the home finder scheme.
- The developments are primarily general needs accommodation build to M2, M3 and M4 standards. This means that all properties are accessible for people with mobility needs and some properties are fully wheelchair accessible.
- Homes are a range of sizes from 1 bed apartments to 5 bed houses.

## **11. Social Value Implications (if any)**

- *The NTWP in particular seeks to encourage an economically stronger community and inspire an uplift in quality of life indicators including employment, training and health outcomes.*

## **12. Partnership Implications (if any)**

N/A

## **13. Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)**

- *The NTWP in particular seeks to encourage an economically stronger community and inspire an uplift in quality of life indicators including employment, training and health outcomes.*

## **14. Asset Management Implications (if any)**

None directly to do with this report

- *The NTWP is replacing defective non-traditional woolaway homes with new low carbon homes*

- *The zero carbon affordable homes and oxford inn schemes are replacing poor quality or redundant HRA assets with new affordable homes*
- *The Seaward Way project is using a council owned asset in the west of the district to build the first council homes in the West for over thirty years.*

**15. Data Protection Implications (if any)**

N/A

**16. Consultation Implications (if any)**

No implications directly to do with the recommendation in this report

**17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)**

N/A

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No** (delete as appropriate)
- **Cabinet/Executive – No** (delete as appropriate)
- **Full Council – No** (delete as appropriate)

Reporting Frequency:  **Once only**       **Ad-hoc**     **Quarterly**  
 **Twice-yearly**       **Annually**

**List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)**

Appendix A	None
Appendix B	
Appendix C	

**Contact Officers**

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*(IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES REGARDING THIS TEMPLATE PLEASE CONTACT THE GOVERNANCE TEAM [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk))*