

HERSTMONCEUX COMMUNITY LAND TRUST – REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2021

Herstmonceux Community Land Trust is building 17 homes at Strawberry Field, Windmill Hill. 8 will be sold to assist finance the project, 4 will be offered as shared ownership to assist those with lower income or deposit, whereby the CLT retains a percentage interest in the value of the home and 5 will be retained in perpetuity by the CLT for rent to those with local family or residence connections.

Following planning consent in November 2019, promised government grants were frozen and Wealden DC was required to revise its planning policy and with it our planning consent. As we re-negotiated these issues Covid 19 lockdown struck adding delay and uncertainty. Fortunately, the credibility of the project and the advance work by our Project Team released the grant from Homes England and Wealden DC Planning Committee passed our revised plans with enthusiasm. These 3 issues did have a ripple effect and the project is running 6 months behind original schedule.

With the detailed design stage and land purchase completed we were able to secure offers of construction finance and invite tenders for construction. Four companies were called forward for a detailed examination of their processes, costs, site management and direct interview. Each were required to address how they would manage the site traffic, parking, information to the local community and access to the on-site public footpath. In recent days we have chosen a 'preferred main contractor' and contract discussions are in hand.

Preparatory activity has included a 13-trench archaeological survey (with nil results) and installation of dormice nest boxes in hedgerows and adjoining woodland to be monitored for 3 years. The old leylandii trees along the public footpath have been reduced to 1.5 m with the trunks to be removed later in the year. The hedgerow has been trimmed where we are required to move the site entrance by 12m. These and an imminent CCTV survey of the sewer adjacent the site are in conformance with our planning consent and associated licences.

The CLT has the expertise and support of our architects Nicholas Champkins and Irina Bardakhanova (Bardakhanova Champkins Architects of Lewes and Tallinn) and Tom Warder, Action in Rural Sussex (Community Housing Hub). Special recognition is due to Joe Ayres who owned Strawberry Field and supported the vision of the project over the 4 years it has taken to bring CLT community homes close to reality in Herstmonceux. For around 50 years the site grew strawberries and became known locally as Strawberry Field. The CLT wishes to recognise the history and will apply to Wealden DC for Strawberry Field to be the address of the new homes. We would welcome local support and that of the Parish Council in our application.

The aim is for work to start-on-site in July 2021 with a build time of 12 months. As activity starts, we will give updates to the immediate neighbours and wider community in co-operation with the main contractor. You can follow us on www.community21.org entering HerstmonceuxCLT in the search box. You can support Herstmonceux CLT by purchasing a £1 share to become a member and email Herstmonceuxclt@gmail.com for more information.

Alan McInnes

Chairman, Herstmonceux CLT.

April 2021