

CVCLT Newsletter
November 2021

Big news: we're almost ready to show you our plans for High Street, HB

So many of you have asked us for so long what is happening about the old 'High Street' site in Hebden Bridge (off Heptonstall Rd). Now, finally, we have some real news.

We've been working long and hard on completely new proposals on this land (once densely packed back-to-backs, demolished in the 1960s). And we're now ready to show you what we and the architects have done, to get your thoughts and feedback.

We will be holding drop-in consultation sessions in the foyer of HB Town Hall on **Fri 26 and again on Sat 27**, both days from 10am to 1pm. Please do call by!

What's different from last time?

Of course we were disappointed when our original plans were narrowly turned down by the Planning Committee in 2019. The scheme had attracted a lot of support, with the need for sustainable, affordable homes in Hebden Bridge widely acknowledged. However, we also received a significant number of objections on issues such as air quality, inappropriate materials and the prominence of the scheme. As we said then, we weren't going to ride rough-shod over people's concerns by taking the easy route of going to a Planning Appeal.

What we have now is a new, substantially different scheme, which we genuinely believe will meet neighbours' concerns. The buildings will be much further away from Bridge Lanes, to the north side of the old track, tucked into the hillside, rather than cantilevering out towards Bridge Lanes.

The land opposite Bridge Lanes

As the proposed new development won't now affect the overgrown grassy area on your left as you drive into Hebden Bridge from Todmorden, we will be able to landscape the area and plant much more effectively for both visual and functional amenity. Plants can absorb pollutants, and floodwater, and CO2, so we have a chance to improve the habitat and bio-diversity.

We're interested in a discussion about how this land should be cared for by and for the community. Do you like the briars and undergrowth? Would you prefer something a little more kempt? (Would you be prepared to wield a spade or garden fork?!)

How we're proposing to proceed

If you've read past newsletters, you'll know that we are planning to progress High Street in partnership with the local housing association Connect Housing. Connect are offering to handle the responsibility of the construction process (they have much more expertise than us). At the end, we will take ownership of about half the homes. (We will also be the freeholder of the whole site).

Connect have been genuinely good partners with us as we have worked with them on the new High Street plans.

We need to go to planning soon

Although the Victorians managed to squeeze in about 100 houses on the High St site, these days the terrain makes building here expensive. We don't yet know for sure that the 20-home development will be possible financially. We are looking for sizeable grants from West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Homes England – but they each need the reassurance of a planning decision before they will contribute.

This is not ideal (a bit of a Catch 22) as it means that we cannot give certainty to the local community just yet. But the simple truth is that without having planning permission we would never know what the decision on funding would have been.

Additionally, inflation in the building market is very high, with prices and availability volatile. We're telling you this now, just in case later on it becomes clear that the scheme is simply too difficult financially.

Now for something completely different...

Good news: we've heard that we have been awarded £13,000 (from the Calderdale Council and Calderdale Foundation Zero Carbon fund) for professional advice on how we can retrofit the upstairs maisonettes in Crown St, HB, which we are anticipating taking over from the council on a long lease. Once the legal transfer is complete (early 2022) we will be getting to work on this. It's a pilot scheme – we'd love to be able to do more retrofitting of existing empty homes in the future, and this will help us gain experience.

Hold the front page!

Agh, we had fun and games when the Halifax Courier ran a completely inaccurate headline on their website saying that the council was about to dispose of the whole of Jerusalem Farm to the CLT. (Not so: we're talking to them about leasing the empty cottage there, that's all). Fortunately, we got the headline removed, and there's now a very good story available about exactly what we're proposing. Find it here: <https://www.halifaxcourier.co.uk/news/people/delight-after-plans-revealed-for-cottage-at-jerusalem-farm-to-be-brought-back-into-use-3444492>

Paul's first month in post

Our Executive Manager Paul Brannigan has written this: "Thanks to the Trustees my first month in post has been so enjoyable, informative and full of ideas. I visited other Land Trusts in Wooler, Lancaster, Keswick and Liverpool and was inspired by how they have worked with their community to create affordable housing, community centres and commercial premises. In Wooler they turned a former workhouse into a thriving building that houses the police, a library, tourist information, a building society and community groups. In Lancaster they generate their own hydro-electricity and use biomass for heating their co-housing. I have also learnt of the many challenges that have to be overcome to turn ideas into reality. The recipe for success appears to be dedication, knowledge, perseverance, good partners and the occasional leap of faith! I am looking forward to making my contribution to the CLT's work."