

Annual Report - September 2022 – September 2023

Introduction

This report covers our fourth year of operation.

What progress have we made?

- In February 2023 we organised our first-ever recruitment event at the Stroud Sub Rooms – there was an excellent turn out, lots of media coverage and we secured around 20 new members. Since then, we have organised various sessions with the new members – visiting our current potential sites and a local cohousing scheme, briefing them on the complexities of development and generally getting to know everyone.
- As our search for suitable sites has progressed we have got increasingly better at identifying those plots that have real potential; and those that we can quickly reject as ‘non-starters’. These mean we are chasing far fewer ‘rainbows’, and we are zeroing in quickly on sites that have real promise.
- Two sites are currently looking especially encouraging – one in the centre of Stroud, that should be able to accommodate 10-12 homes, and one in Nailsworth that is large enough to take 6-7 apartments. A common feature of both these sites is that we aren’t in competition with developers who are also seeking to buy them – this means we have more time to work out the best way to progress things.
- We are currently preparing a detailed Pre-App for the Stroud site, which should take place in October 2023. Our preliminary soundings with the planning and conservation team have been encouraging and we believe the latest design we have developed will cost a lot less to build than an earlier concept. Alongside the Pre-App we also be obtaining prices from key sub-contractors, so we can be confident the project stacks up financially.
- Towards the end of 2022 we also undertook a Pre-App for the plot we have identified in Nailsworth. This went extraordinarily well, with Stroud’s planners endorsing the principle of our design wholeheartedly. We have also engaged a specialist property lawyer to help us resolve some technical/right of access issues on this site, which will hopefully help us clear another ‘hurdle’ in the push to progress development.
- In addition to these two current opportunities, we have continued to scour the area exploring other possible sites. This has included evaluating plots in Cheltenham (2), Cirencester, Stroud (4), Cainscross, Slimbridge, Inchbrook, Brimscombe and Chalford.
- We have also started to explore the complicated world of construction contracts, risk registers and the sort of legal agreements we may need to get in place in the build-up to the construction phase. Our overall knowledge of the property development process has grown enormously over the last year, thanks to the huge time some of our key members have contributed.



Our recruitment event in Stroud was well attended and resulted in around 20 new members joining the group.

We are still some way off starting to build our first scheme – but, if the planners like our Stroud proposals, and the financial figures stack up, we could be on site by this time next year.

Our finances are in reasonable shape, and we have a modest balance in the bank. The Founding Directors have so far contributed around £300 each.

I would like to formally thank everyone in the group for their sterling work and support over the last year, and I am confident that we will make further significant progress over the coming 12 months.

Ted Stevens
Chair
Horizon Cohousing Gloucestershire

September 2023