

## Meeting of the Powerstock & District CLT Steering Group

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014, 6.30pm at the Marquis of Lorne

**Present:** Vanessa White (chair), Lynne McLaughlin, Keith Rixton, Nerissa Jones, Tim Connor.

**In attendance:** Victor Crutchley (landowner), Steve Watson (WCLTP), Rob Aspray (Hastoe Housing – part).

**Apologies:**, Judith Griffies, Phillip Ward, Steve Poole, Catherine Bonnett (WDDC)

### Meeting with Western Design Architects

Phil Easton

Nicola Yeates

1. *Please tell us about your practice.*

NY leads on HA work. PE started the practice in 1986 and it now employs 16 people. They have built many affordable homes for several HAs and, more broadly, have won 33 design awards. The mantra is that affordable homes should not look like ‘social housing’ but should look like mainstream housing. The practice is based in Tarrant Hinton.

2. *How would the work on this project be handled within your practice? Can you tell us more about experience of the person who would be doing most of the work?*

NY would be in charge of the design and planning application, overseen by PE.

3. *Why are you keen to work with us on this project?*

PE designed a house in Powerstock and the practice has tended to do a lot of work in and round the nearby villages including Corscombe, Toller and Maiden Newton. PE lives on a farm and the practice specialises in rural architecture.

4. *How would you design attractive homes within an AONB to an affordable housing budget?*

NY starts with the internal space. Hastoe has space standards but doesn’t have standard floor areas as such and PE says that this is helpful because it afford more flexibility in design. It is important to achieve good internal space standards in order to meet the HCA’s standards but also because this is very important to the residents. The overall layout is also a key consideration for the architect and the most would be made of the south facing aspect of the site. Regarding facing materials there may be a requirement for stone (from the Council, because the site is in an AONB) although there will of course be cost constraints.

5. *For this project, you would be working for the P&DCLT because we are leading the project and have grant for pre-development costs from the HCA. We would ask you to comply with Hastoe’s Employer’s Requirements and, post planning, you may be novated to the contractor. Are you comfortable with these arrangements?*

Some quality can be compromised in the procurement process unless the commissioners of the project (i.e. the CLT and Hastoe) ensure that certain components are met. PE would be

pleased to be novated to the contractor because this provides more control over detailing. PE recognises that detailing is often where there is significant costs and we will all need to agree on the trade-off between costs and quality.

6. *How would your design for these homes help to meet Code for Sustainable Homes level 4?[Supplementary: Do you have any experience of designing to Passivhaus standards?]*

The CSH is going to be discontinued but WD has plenty of experience of designing to high energy efficiency standards. They would be happy to work to Passivhaus standards if it can be afforded but the site may be too expensive to be able to accommodate this.

7. *As a community-led project, it is important that we consult with the wider community about the design. Can you tell us about your experience of community consultation?*

WD has plenty of experience of consulting with Parish Councils, public meetings and drop-in sessions. This happens at an early enough stage to be able to make changes, although there are rarely any major changes. WD develops 3D animations to help people visualise how the scheme will look.

8. *Are you comfortable with our aim of making a planning application by March 2015 (i.e. to comply with the terms of our grant)? What experience do you have of working with the Council's planning department?*

Yes, the timescale is fine.

9. *If selected, can you confirm that you would be willing to work with us for a fixed fee (i.e. inclusive of all costs and expenses)? This is important because our grant for pre-development costs is fixed.*

Yes.

### **Etchingam Morris Architects**

Adrian Morris

Mike Etchingam

1. *Please tell us about your practice.*

AM is an architect, ME is an architectural technician. They were formerly separate businesses but joined forces in 2004 and have completed over 500 projects since then. Formerly to that, both worked for the renowned Ken Morgan Architects. EM prefer to draft planning drawings by hand and perspectives are produced by hand-drawing on photographs. This provides a better feel for the materials than computer aided design. It is a small practice of 3 or 4 people plus some freelance technical support. AM and ME being very much hands on. Based in Ringwood.

2. *How would the work on this project be handled within your practice? Can you tell us more about experience of the person who would be doing most of the work?*

AM would be the contact at the practice initially, supported by ME; with AM taking the lead in due course.

3. *Why are you keen to work with us on this project?*

EM hasn't done a significant amount of work with HAs but it is sector they have done some and it's the sort of work they would like to do more of. AM loves West Dorset and has designed a scheme in Abbotsbury Glebe which has been an inspiration for the design of many others, including Poundbury. They have no preconceptions about architectural style; preferring to design each scheme to suit its circumstances. They are not looking for the design to 'shout' but to fit comfortably within its setting.

4. *How would you design attractive homes within an AONB to an affordable housing budget?*

Clearly, EM doesn't know the budget yet but the practice believes that simple design can be the most attractive and the least expensive. They mentioned one cottage in Powerstock which has small windows and a plain entrance and is a beautiful, simple building. Rational design and ease of construction can help compensate for the cost of materials. In terms of the aspect from Powerstock, long rooflines would need to be avoided; the combination of angled and stepped rooves with a combination of thatch, roof tiles and corrugated iron helping current buildings to look settled. Designs that are not full 2-storey can help i.e. with the upper storey is converted into liveable roofspace.

5. *For this project, you would be working for the P&DCLT because we are leading the project and have grant for pre-development costs from the HCA. We would ask you to comply with Hastoe's Employer's Requirements and, post planning, you may be novated to the contractor. Are you comfortable with these arrangements?*

EM has no problem with working to Hastoe's standard specification. EM is working with another HA - Guinness Hermitage – and would expect the specification to be similar. EM checked with Hastoe that various finishing materials could be considered and Hastoe confirmed that many different types have been used on Hastoe schemes. EM has no problem with being novated to a contractor and has worked for developers in the past.

6. *How would your design for these homes help to meet Code for Sustainable Homes level 4? [Supplementary: Do you have any experience of designing to Passivhaus standards?]*

EM has developed to CSH4 in the New Forest. They have no experience of Passivhaus. They believe that there is the potential for a community energy source such as a communal boiler, or heat source/ground source/heat exchange. EM asked Hastoe about their experience of Passivhaus. Hastoe confirmed that they have several schemes of this type and are incorporating some features into more traditional projects (such as triple glazed windows). EM prefer open fires and Hastoe is receptive to wood burners because these help to maintain the fuel efficiency of homes (the Marshwood CLT scheme has been designed to allow for the retro-fitting of wood burners.)

7. *As a community-led project, it is important that we consult with the wider community about the design. Can you tell us about your experience of community consultation?*

EM fully supports consultation with the wider community and has some experience of this. It is important to enable people to have their say, including opponents.

8. *Are you comfortable with our aim of making a planning application by March 2015 (i.e. to comply with the terms of our grant)? What experience do you have of working with the Council's planning department?*

EM has worked with West Dorset Council before and is comfortable with the proposed timescale.

9. *If selected, can you confirm that you would be willing to work with us for a fixed fee (i.e. inclusive of all costs and expenses)? This is important because our grant for pre-development costs is fixed.*

Yes. EM recommends that the feasibility stage is at an hourly rate and then the detailed design is at a fixed rate. But they would also consider a fixed fee for all services providing the possible variations of time are covered.

10. *Do you have any questions for us?*

EM said that they would be ready to start straight away, subject to the initial due diligence being completed. In due course there will be questions about the way the infrastructure would work in terms of safe access past the forge and a turning circle for emergency vehicles. The horse chestnut tree would need to be considered in any design. EM recognises that the existing businesses are part of the village and need to be respected as such.

## **Discussion**

There was a discussion about the choice of architects. Everyone felt that neither had said anything to rule themselves out and that either would do a good job. On balance, EM was preferred because they had given careful consideration to the site and the village already, had demonstrated in their expression of interest that they are very keen on the project and were likely to be well received in any consultations with the wider community.

The only issue was their capacity, as a relatively small project, to see the project through to completion. Rural housing projects can be unpredictable and more time may be required than expected at the outset. It was agreed that WCLTP would clarify their understanding and commitment to providing whatever resources will be needed, within a fixed fee (inclusive of expenses), before their appointment would be confirmed by P&DCLT. If this commitment is not forthcoming then WD would be preferred on the same basis.

Action: SW/VW