

Notes from Sean Woodcock's Speech at the HNCLT AGM on 17/09/2024

Sean's first introduction to the HNCLT project was in June, when he was invited to, and attended the Open Day event. He was very impressed by the scheme and thanked all those involved with delivering it.

Sean has a background, and a particular interest in Social Housing, and was present at the CDC Planning Meeting where the HNCLT scheme was unanimously approved. Sean noted how rare a unanimous approval is, indicating the impressive nature of the application.

Tackling the housing crisis is a big priority for him and the whole Labour party. They see too many instances of families in unsuitable temporary accommodation, and couples forced to live with parents, putting their own lives on hold because there just aren't enough homes for everyone.

There are currently around 8.5 million people with some sort of un-met housing need.

There are 140,000 children (**a record number**) living in temporary accommodation.

There are 1.6 million children living in freezing houses with mould and damp issues.

Sean believes that there is a price to pay for every child who can't fulfil their potential because of unsuitable accommodation.

In our area, 200 households are put in temporary accommodation.

There are nearly 2,000 on the CDC housing waiting list, which is 4 times what it was in 2013.

At that time, the average house prices were around £120,000 less than they are now – a 50% increase.

One suggested solution has been to use empty properties for housing, but in Cherwell the number of residential dwellings empty for 6 months or more is less than 500. With the council waiting list standing at nearly 2,000, the only solution is to build more homes.

There are also other options to explore, such as opening up empty retail spaces in the town centre for residential use. Sean noted that there are brownfield sites around Banbury that can and should be developed. More council houses should be built and there should be a requirement for developers to provide it, and not opt out of it through viability assessments.

Home ownership, with a garden for children to play in, is a common British aspiration, which is why the Labour Party has reintroduced mandatory housing targets.

Sean noted the legal barriers that prevent building on what are technically Green Belt areas such as abandoned garages and car parks, which they believe should be reclassified as Grey Belt land. These areas are often close to transport links and useful infrastructure, unlike the fields that are often gobbled up by speculative developers.

The wider picture also needs to be considered. As well as providing homes for families, other families are gaining an income from the building of those homes, and local businesses gain from their custom. This is how Sean believes we can build a future for our country.

Sean thinks that the reason many local communities resist new homes is often because the housing is of the wrong type, in the wrong place - it doesn't come with the schools, GP surgeries and green spaces that make communities, not just streets, and it doesn't come with the affordable and social housing that local people need. He believes that these must be written into any future developments.

The Labour Party recognises that it's not a choice between housing and the environment. They believe that we can have economic growth and protect nature, and want to draw up new policies for planting trees, restoring habitats and helping wildlife thrive.

They want to support the building of homes with access to green space and nature on their doorsteps.

Labour will ban no fault evictions, and give first-time buyers 'first dibs' on new developments in their communities, with a comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme for those who don't have access to the bank of mum and dad.

Sean thanked HNCLT for playing their part in providing secure affordable sustainable homes for people in need, and noted that he will be speaking about the project at the upcoming Labour Party Conference.

Charlie thanked Sean, and responded to his speech with the following comments noted :

- The current system is failing to produce the sort of housing that we need.
- In recent years, Hook Norton has had around 160 new homes built.
- The village was advised to create a Neighbourhood Plan to empower the local community. A lot of work went in to creating the [Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan](#), and along with the aim to create local housing for local people, one of the objectives was to limit the size of any individual development to around 25 to 30 houses. Large developments of around 80 have been turned down by Cherwell planners due to that clause, but when taken to the Secretary of State, the decisions have been overruled and approved as simply 3 consecutive 25 homes applications being delivered simultaneously.
- The negative impact on the local infrastructure and facilities has led to anger and resentment.
- When housing came up at the 2016 HNLC AGM, the community were asked what sort of housing was needed, which ultimately led to the formation of HNCLT, and the desire to provide affordable, sustainable local housing, prioritising those in need with a local connection to Hook Norton.
- The Labour Party intends to build 1.5 million homes to fix the housing crisis, but unless they ask communities what sort of housing they need, and take note of Neighbourhood Plans drawn up by those communities, they will fail to fix the crisis or retain the faith of voters.
- Standard developers are failing to take note of embodied carbon issues and if the 1.5million new houses are built by developers using current standards, 90% of our carbon allowance will be used by housing alone, without considering transport, heating and other carbon costs, which is simply unsustainable and will make it impossible to reach anything like Net Zero.
- HNCLT have tried to create an exemplar for a new way of providing housing :
 - Ask what the community needs/wants and more importantly listen to the responses and act on them;
 - Make buildings 'low energy' efficient;
 - Consider embodied carbon when building and delivering new homes;
 - Consider the energy (grid) requirements – there will not be enough power in the current UK grid for 1.5 million more homes. Microgrid's need to be considered;
 - Make sure that new developments are physically connected to existing community homes and facilities;
 - Consider transport and car clubs / car sharing schemes;
 - Consider co-working opportunities for local people;
 - Consider communal food growing areas;
 - Give value to the health and happiness of the community.

Most importantly, build for people and not for profit.