

# PRESS RELEASE



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Listening Learning Leading

## **New plans drawn up for redeveloping sheltered housing in Woodcote**

New plans for redeveloping Olga Mowforth House, part of a sheltered housing scheme in Woodcote have been drawn up, in response to feedback given from the local community last year. The outmoded sheltered homes, once facing an uncertain future and the possibility of closure, will now be redeveloped into 12 brand new apartments for older people, as well as affordable rented family homes.

Over the past five months, a working group including representatives from South Oxfordshire District Council, Soha Housing and Woodcote Parish Council have met regularly to develop plans for the future of the site. The group was set up last year, following a public meeting in September 2008 where residents of the village registered their concerns about the proposed closure of Olga Mowforth House, a sheltered housing scheme in Folly Orchard.

The group is now presenting the plans for the redevelopment of the home, which includes 12 brand new one and two bed apartments for older people, including a community room and laundry. The development would also include building up to 12 new affordable homes.

Soha has committed to producing the highest quality new housing, with the support of both the parish and district councils. There has also been considerable cooperation from local landowner, Jonathan Ede, of Ede Builders Ltd.

John Howell MP was active in bringing together the working group to discuss solutions to meet housing need in the area. He said, "I am delighted that a proposal for the future of Olga Mowforth House has been put forward which we can all support. It is fantastic that a situation which originally started with a fair degree of disagreement has now been resolved with such goodwill and I congratulate all those who have worked hard to make this happen."

Cllr Dorothy Brown, South Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet Member for housing, welcomed the proposals:

"This is excellent news for the community of Woodcote. Where Olga Mowforth House was previously facing an uncertain future, now through the commitment of all the partners, and after listening to feedback from the community and the residents of the home, we will now be able to offer improved housing for the existing residents, as well as much needed new family homes in the area."

Karen Woolley, Vice Chairman Woodcote Parish Council said:

“Woodcote Parish Council had two objectives with regard to the proposed development of this site.

Firstly, to ensure that it would include the provision for sheltered affordable housing for the elderly, and secondly that current residents of Olga Mowforth House could live in the existing building until a replacement is built. I am delighted to say that both objectives have been accomplished, due to the willingness of all parties to work together towards a mutually beneficial solution. This is truly an example of what can be achieved by good communication and a spirit of co-operation by all those involved.”

Maureen Adams, Director of Operations and Customer Services at Soha Housing said, “By working closely with the community, we have been able to tackle sensitively the problem of unpopular bedsit accommodation. I am pleased that working with local partners, we have been able to develop a solution that I am confident we can all be proud of.”

## **Ends**

## **Notes**

It is anticipated that the scheme will take some 2 years (from now) to complete. It is still subject to the usual funding processes and to receiving planning consent in the usual way.

The manager and residents of Olga Mowforth House have been kept informed and were all presented with the proposals at a meeting last week. They are supportive of the approach being taken.

It is hoped the work can be phased so that the new accommodation is built alongside the existing Olga Mowforth building. That way, it will not be necessary to move the current residents during the work (Unless they choose otherwise).

## **Background**

Reasons for the redevelopment of Olga Mowforth House include:

- bedsit accommodation of the sort in Olga Mowforth House is unpopular across the district and is not up to standard for modern day living.
- It is unsuitable for people with mobility problems, who need extra space.
- The council’s approach is to work with housing associations to replace outmoded sheltered homes with high quality lifetime homes for older people.

The working group recognised the need to continue to provide support services alongside good quality accommodation