

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM UK EXPERIENCE?

Neil Murphy . TOWN . 12th October 2021

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CASE STUDY: MARMALADE LANE COHOUSING, CAMBRIDGE

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Marmalade Lane

CONTEXT

- Last-but-one parcel of large urban extension to north of Cambridge (Orchard Park)
- 800 homes already delivered speculatively by volume housebuilders during 2000s
- Good masterplan but undermined by poor design and construction and excessive parking requirements
- Area had a reputation for transience and low engagement
- Parcel "K1" owned by Cambridge City Council which was approached by activists to pilot community-led housing
- Developer competition won by TOWN in 2015
- Scheme completed in 2018





GROUNDBREAKING

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Workstreams





Marmalade Lane

LOW-CARBON APPROACH

- Fabric-first design approach
- Timber-based, modern methods of construction
- Triple glazing
- Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR)
- Air source heat pumps



Marmalade Lane

CUSTOMISATION

- Units ranged from 1-bed flats of 50m² to 5-bed houses of 125m², within a street-based approach.
- Selling space, not bedrooms.
- Customers chose internal layouts from a series of options
- External finish choices including brick and front door colour

COMMON HOUSE

Shared meals, guest rooms and, laundry and flexible spaces




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CAR-FREE LANE

Space for safe play and neighbourly interaction



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A woman with long brown hair and glasses is smiling broadly and waving her right hand. She is wearing a dark jacket over a blue shirt. The background is a brick wall.

**““IT WAS GREAT TO BE INVOLVED WITH
THE WHOLE JOURNEY OF DESIGN AND
DEVELOPMENT. IT MEANS YOU MOVE IN
WITH A REAL SENSE OF OWNERSHIP
BEYOND YOUR FRONT DOOR AND HAVE
ALREADY GOT TO KNOW MANY OF YOUR
NEIGHBOURS.”**

**"I NEVER PLAY IN MY OWN GARDEN.. I
CAN GET AWAY FROM MY BROTHERS AND
SISTERS**

Laila, Marmalade Lane



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Conclusion

LEARNING POINTS



- Dividing line in UK housing is between speculative and purposive development - cohousing is a subset of community-led housing which is itself a subset.
- Support of local authority and/or long-term institutions is important – they control land
- Top-down (skills, capacity, finance) meets bottom up (community participation)
- The urban block is a good scale to combine masterplanned settlement growth, community development capacity and 'Dunbar's number'
- The challenge is scaling-up innovation – UK terrible at learning from exemplars because oligopoly = weak competition and low innovation