Simon Wasser UDCP Cohousing Dissertation

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Delivering cohousing in England: the role of planning authorities

An exploration of the barriers and enabling factors to successful delivery

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18164135

This dissertation is being submitted to the Faculty of the Built Environment and contributes to the requirements for the award of MSc Urban Design and City Planning at University College London.

I declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that ideas, images and data, as well as direct quotations drawn from elsewhere, are identified and referenced.

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Abstract

Cohousing is a growing form of community-led housing in England that aims to build stronger community networks through design and self-governance. Some of the key challenges for cohousing schemes include gaining access to land and planning permission. This paper explores the role of local planning authorities in enabling the delivery of cohousing in England. The research is focused on the case of Marmalade Lane, an award-winning cohousing scheme in Cambridge. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders involved in the delivery of the scheme to understand the decision-making process. Enabling factors identified in the research include: cohousing champions within the council; access to council-owned land; and a partnership with an experienced developer. This cohousing scheme was instigated by the council which was a significant factor in its deliverability. Council-led cohousing schemes are not common in England and much can be learned from this approach.

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I would like to thank my supervisor Wendy Clarke for her support and guidance over the past six months. Thanks also to my lecturers at the Bartlett School of Planning for their stimulating classes that led me to pursue this line of research.

I would like to thank Sustrans for supporting this Masters and also to Frances Wright, founding resident of Marmalade Lane, who showed me around the scheme and kindly introduced me to other stakeholders for interviews.

Lastly I would like to thank my family for their support, in particular my wife Georgina for her encouragement throughout this course.

About the author

Simon has 10 years experience working in a range of community settings. Passionate about places and people, he specialises in collaborative design, community engagement and sustainable transport at Sustrans.

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Simon is completing his Masters in Urban Design and City Planning this year, part-funded by Sustrans.

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Abbreviations

CLH – Community Led Housing

DCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government

NaCSBA – National Custom & Self Build Association

SME – Small or Medium size enterprise

UKCN – UK Cohousing Network

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Why cohousing?

"Living in cohousing is a way to live my values: I want to use fewer resources, I believe in the power of community. The consensus process is creative and fascinating, and it stretches me to think in terms of what is in the best interest of the community, and not just in my individual self interest."

"Our children will grow up with the experience of an extended family around them. How rare that is these days. I look forward to letting my son play in the common areas without fear of cars and knowing that there are more eyes than just mine keeping him safe. He will be able to have friends to come home to, and as he grows, adults to learn from and confide in."

Ashland Cohousing residents[1]

Cohousing is a growing area of community-led housing (CLH) which aims to address social isolation and build community through design and self-governance (McCamant and Durrett, 1994). Cohousing is an intentional community of private dwellings with communal facilities such as gardens, common rooms and workspaces. Cohousing estates are designed and managed by residents, which aim to build strong relationships and a culture of mutual support (Tummers, 2016).

The UK is facing a wide range of social challenges in towns and cities today. As cities grow in population and traditional community structures decline, more people are living alone and support networks are at risk (Vestbro, 2000; Tummers, 2015). The concept of cohousing developed in Denmark in the 1960s as a response to these challenges by increasing opportunities for social interaction and collaboration in housing developments, where residents can rely on their neighbours, much like a traditional village.

Prior to the modern welfare state, it was the village community that met the needs of people across the lifecycle. Today, social care is in crisis, with populations aging and funding cuts impacting on service provision. Modern care homes are out of date, expensive to run

[1] Ashland Cohousing (Available at: https://ashlandcoho.com/)

and fail to cultivate agency in later life (Brenton, 2013). Cohousing models for older people aim to promote interdependence between residents, enabling a self-sufficiency which is dignifying and reduces the burden on the state (Scanlon, 2015).

People also often talk about the crisis of affordability in housing. *How can we build more affordable homes?* We have a responsibility to ask another important question: *how do we live and what is the impact of this on sustainability and sociability?*

Cohousing is rising in popularity in Western Europe and the US, yet remains on the margins in the UK. Despite much research on its social and health benefits, there are relatively few studies on the challenges of cohousing *delivery and the planning context*, particularly in the UK (Droste, 2015; Tummers, 2016). This dissertation aims to shed light on the planning dimensions of cohousing schemes and understand the factors impacting on their delivery.

1.2 The role of planning authorities in delivery of cohousing

Cohousing is more common in northern Europe and the US compared to the UK. Part of the reason for the higher number of schemes in Germany is due to proactive planning policies (Tummers, 2015). These policies have provided funding and subsidised public land to groups wishing to build their own homes, alongside a historic culture of self-building (Hamiddudin & Gallent, 2016).

Contrary to this, the UK has been slower in the adoption of alternative housing provision, with volume housebuilders such as Barratt Homes dominating the market in. Power operates in this relationship between developer and local planning authority as large developers can ultimately provide access to major investment and deliver homes at scale. This dynamics puts small or medium enterprise (SME) developers and community-led housing groups at a disadvantage as they are seen less favourably by planning authorities and find it harder to borrow capital from lenders (Tummers, 2015).

Conventional housing typologies[2] are further reinforced within the planning system through local plans and development design codes which prevent cohousing from becoming a

[2] Conventional housing typologies are here defined a private dwellings which do not have shared ownership of a common house, communal garden or workspace and are not collectively designed or managed by residents as is the case with cohousing developments.

mainstream option (Curtin and Bocarsly, 2008). The ideologies surrounding housing design are complex. Demand for conventional private housing has been high for many years and is a notable departure from pre-industrial times where families lived more communally. The question remains whether our desire for privacy and independence is socially constructed, or something innate. The further question is whether this *perceived* demand for conventional housing is driven by the consumer, or indeed driven by a housing market which has not stopped to reflect on itself for generations. If cohousing was readily available on the UK market, would more people choose it?

1.3 Research gap

There are many studies on cohousing from a wide range of disciplines. The majority focus on the social benefits (Choi, 2004, 2013; Larsen, 2019; Network *et al.*, 2019); the architectural design (Williams, 2005a); sharing economies (Jarvis, 2011); and the impact of cohousing on the wider community (Fromm, 2012).

This dissertation will focus on the planning context in which cohousing schemes are delivered, thus addressing an identifiable gap in the research and problematic for the sector (Droste, 2015; Tummers, 2016; UK Cohousing Network, 2018). The research will focus on a single in-depth case study – *Marmalade Lane, Cambridge* – and analyse the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders involved in its delivery.

1.4 Research aim and objectives

Research aim

Cohousing is recognised as having many and varied barriers to delivery compared with conventional developer-led models of housing provision. The research aims to explore the role of local planning authorities in the delivery of cohousing schemes in England and to uncover how local authorities become enablers or barriers to delivery. I hope to provide recommendations for planning policy and practice which will facilitate further provision of cohousing schemes in England.

Research question

In the absence[3] of specific government policy and guidance around cohousing in England and with central government funding for community-led housing currently in jeopardy[4], what can local planning authorities do to support emerging cohousing projects?

Sub questions

What role did the local planning authority play in overcoming the barriers to delivery of a successful cohousing scheme in Cambridge, England? A case study of *Marmalade Lane*.

How can changes to planning policy and practice in England enable more cohousing schemes to be delivered?

Scope of research

It is beyond the scope to assess the nuances of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish planning context of cohousing, therefore this research will focus on the English planning system alone.

Cohousing refers to a housing design methodology (defined in the literature review) which is part of the broad umbrella of community-led housing in England.

Delivery refers to the process of developing a housing scheme, involving the pursuit of land, planning permission, finance, partnerships and construction.

Objectives

1. Approach the research study through primary and secondary research methods.
2. Define and critically assess the debates around cohousing.
3. Define and critically assess the community-led housing sector.
4. Define and explore the barriers to cohousing delivery.
5. Explore the role of local planning authorities in the delivery of cohousing schemes.
6. Understand the key actors involved in the delivery of cohousing schemes and explore their relationships.

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[3] Granted, there are a range of policies (explored in this research) which have impacted on community-led housing supply in England, but there is currently no explicit legislation or government guidance on cohousing specifically.

[4] Available at: http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/what-we-do/our-campaigns/community-housing-fund

7. Develop a conceptual framework for the research around the role of planning in enabling the delivery of cohousing.
8. Select the case study based on conceptual framework criteria.
9. Analyse the findings of the research in light of the literature review and framework criteria.
10. Provide recommendations for UK planning and housing policy and practice.

1.5 Dissertation structure

- Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature, defining cohousing, evaluating the existing evidence and developing a research framework.
- Chapter 3 outlines the methodology for the research.
- Chapter 4 analyses the findings in relation to the literature review.
- Chapter 5 concludes the research and provides recommendations for planning policy and practice.

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 What is cohousing?

Cohousing is an intentional community of private homes around shared facilities. Commonly short for *collaborative housing*, cohousing schemes seek to develop strong social networks through the design and collective management of a housing development (McCamant and Durrett, 1994).

A number of recent studies have sought to conceptualise cohousing and there is a broad consensus on its definition (Beck, 2020; Czischke, Carriou and Lang, 2020; Lang, Carriou and Czischke, 2020). For the purpose of clarity, this research will conceptualise cohousing based on key characteristics identified in the literature. This will help frame the scope and limitations of the findings. The key characteristics of cohousing are as follows:

Intentional communities

Residents typically share a vision and set of values, motivated by a desire to build mutual support and closer relationships with neighbours (McCamant and Durrett, 1994).

Shared space

Shared spaces are designed in order to encourage incidental social contact, such as shared gardens and a common house where neighbours can socialise and build relationships (Lang, Carriou and Czischke, 2020).

Cohousing schemes are usually characterised by car parking at the edge of the development, allowing for pedestrianised streets which encourage social interaction, increase dwell time and facilitate outdoor play among children (Jarvis, Scanlon and Fernández Arrigoitia, 2016).

Sharing economy

Cohousing schemes usually pool resources such a tool libraries, a workshop, a laundry room and guest bedrooms. This saves space in individual homes and reduces the need for surplus resources such as multiple lawnmowers, lowering the carbon footprint and household costs (Jarvis, 2011). Indeed, Tummers' (2016, p.2036) literature review found cohousing communities to "introduce pluri-value instead of monetary-based economic models of living."

Size

Cohousing developments vary in size between 4 – 50 units, with the average being around 20 units. This size range balances diversity and economies of scale with a level of intimacy not possible in larger schemes (Beck, 2020).

Resident groups leading design and development

Cohousing schemes are most often community-led *self-build* schemes, project managed by future residents, and co-designed with the people who will live there (Chiodelli, 2015). Schemes vary between those led by residents, or schemes delivered in partnership with a developer or local authority (Hudson *et al.*, 2019).

Self-governance

Residents own and manage shared resources and operate working groups who make decisions about facilities as well as legal and financial matters. Case studies have shown this to improve relationship building, trust and mutual support (Ruiu, 2016; Brenton, 2017).

Conversely, the model has been found to be time intensive and challenging when managing differing opinions in reaching a consensus (Scanlon and Fernández Arrigoitia, 2015).

Organised socials

For example, residents share a regular meal on a weekly basis in the common house. Case studies have shown this to improve relationship building (Ruiu, 2016; Brenton, 2017; Beck, 2020)

Privacy

While shared spaces and closer social relationships are a key dimension of cohousing, privacy is also critical. Private, self-sufficient homes with their own kitchens and living spaces are an essential criteria and ensure a balance between privacy and sociability (Chiodelli and Baglione, 2014).

Cohousing should not be confused with co-living. Co-living refers to shared living arrangements where residents share a kitchen and living space in a single unit alongside larger communal facilities, such as those found in student accommodation (Mathisen et al, 2012).

Environmental values and design

Although not a necessary characteristic by definition, cohousing groups are often driven by sustainability values. The majority of cohousing projects contain units built to Passivhaus or equivalent energy efficiency standards and renewable energy production is common (Beck, 2020).

This research is focused on the delivery of cohousing schemes as characterised above. Figures 1-5 highlight the common features found in cohousing schemes.

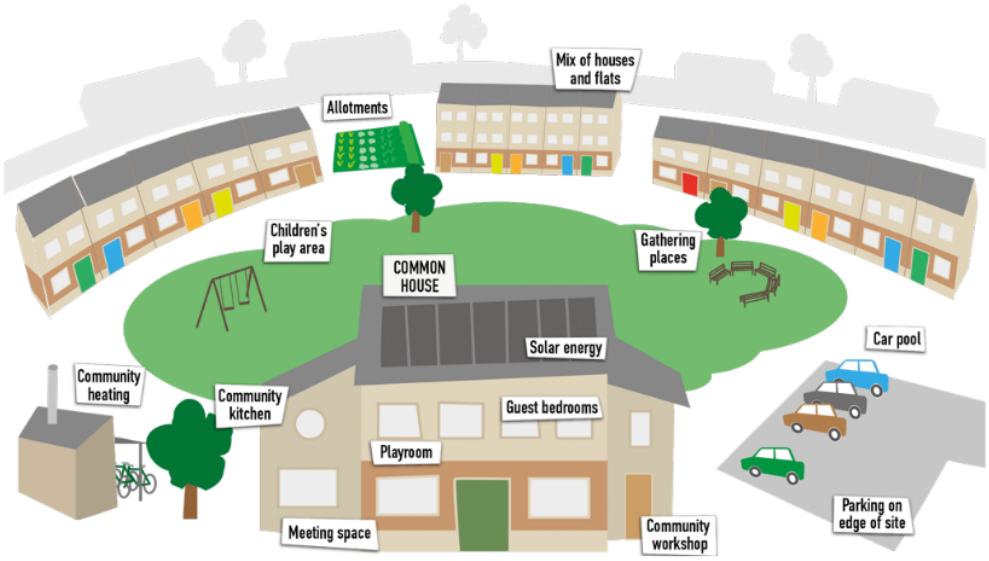

Figure 1. Cohousing Illustration (UK Cohousing Network, 2018). (Source: UK Cohousing Network).

Figure 2. Car-free street and "near-to-Passivhaus standard" units at Marmalade Lane, Cambridge. (Source: Mole Architects).

Figure 3. Shared garden and private balconies at LILAC, Leeds, balancing shared community space with a need for privacy. (Source: L.I.L.A.C.)

Figure 4. Common house for shared meals and socials at Lancaster Cohousing. (Source: Lancaster Cohousing).

Figure 5. Typical stakeholder co-design process (Source: Cohousing Live)

2.2 Origins of cohousing

The modern cohousing movement originated in Denmark in the 1960s. It was driven by a group of parents who believed conventional housing segregated families from each other. Architect Bodil Graae wrote a magazine article called *Children Should Have One Hundred Parents* (Graae, 1967), calling for housing options which built stronger social relations and reciprocal care. Jan

Gudmand Hover, who designed Denmark's first cohousing scheme *Sættedammen*, was inspired by visits to 1960s communes in California as well as the growing feminist movement of the late 60s. This counter-culture critiqued societal gender roles and the unequal distribution of childcare (Hayden, 1980). Early advocates believed that creating space for communal life alongside self-contained units would overcome the limitations of the nuclear family, enabling families to share care responsibilities, while meeting needs for privacy (Larsen, 2019). Despite common misconception, cohousing schemes are not communes. The cohousing model includes private, self-sufficient homes alongside communal space, akin more to a traditional village than a shared house (Scott-Hunt, 2007).

Cohousing grew in popularity across Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany over the 1970s and '80s due to cultural trends around community living as well as proactive planning policy which is explored in section 2.5 (Tummers, 2015).

Cohousing experienced a *second wave* in the late 1980s when American architects Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett visited pioneering projects in Denmark and returned to the US to design the first cohousing project in north America: Muir Commons in California. (McCamant and Durrett, 1994).

It is only since the 1990s that cohousing has become more common in the UK. Currently though, there are only 21 completed projects in the UK (with a further 60 in the pipeline) compared with 600 in Germany (Hudson *et al.*, 2019).

Cultural barriers

These low numbers in the UK are an indicator of arguably the most significant barrier to cohousing becoming mainstream: cultural attitudes. Through a process of urbanisation over the last 200 years, people have tended towards independent living, anonymity and a need for privacy (Harari, 2011). Privacy has become the pinnacle of *civilised* accommodation in the UK today. This is why the idea of cohousing is still on the margins.

2.2 Why cohousing?

Context

There are a number of historical and societal trends which cohousing attempts to address. Since the industrial revolution and 19th century urbanisation, housing stock has tended to provide

accommodation for individual families without shared facilities. Coupled with the rise of the car and on-street parking, this way of living has restricted the amount of incidental social interaction families are able to have on a daily basis (Williams, 2005b).

Alongside this, Harari (2011) argues that the rise of the welfare state and the rise of the market economy over the past century have taken on responsibilities which were previously the domain of local community members. Education, health and social care are today managed by external institutions. These trends have set the foundation for a political individualism we take for granted in Western society today.

And while modern education and social care systems have afforded individuals the freedom to pursue other things in life (i.e. work), there are side effects to these trends: the gradual breakdown of community networks and the rise of social isolation (Putnam 2000). A recent study found that there are 3 million people living alone in the UK and experiencing mental health difficulties due to their isolation. This figure is estimated to rise by 4 million by 2039 (CLH, 2019).

Nearly 1 million people do not have someone they can call for companionship. 51% of people would like someone they can rely on in their local area and 73% of Britons do not know the names of their neighbours (CLH, 2019). These statistics rise with age, and isolation among senior people is now considered a life threatening condition (Brenton, 2013).

Social benefits

There is now a growing body of international research evaluating the health and wellbeing benefits of cohousing and the extent to which it promotes community. Community is defined in a variety of ways depending on context, but defined here as a group of people who share norms and values in a particular place and know each other by name (Barton, 2016). As outlined above, cohousing aims to make it easier for people to build community by virtue of communal areas, collective decision-making and shared rituals.

A number of studies have found cohousing to increase community networks (Droste, 2015); build trust and mutual support (Brenton, 2008); promote social capital (Ruiu, 2016); reduce resources through sharing economies (Jarvis, 2011); and address social isolation (Scotthanson and Scotthanson, 2004).

However, findings of recent systematic literature reviews highlight the limited evidence base for these claims. (Tummers, 2015, 2016; Tummers and MacGregor, 2019; Lang, Carriou and Czischke, 2020). Tummers and MacGregor (2019) found the majority of research studies to be

based on individual case studies and call for more robust, systematic, quantitative and longitudinal studies on the social impact of cohousing projects, in order to inform government policy.

Having said this, systematic evaluations drawing on larger samples can be found. Choi (2004, p. 1214) surveyed 536 senior residents across 28 cohousing projects in Denmark and Sweden. The majority of residents felt they were "very much satisfied with and even proud of their living arrangement" due to increased self-reliance and sense of community. Clearly questionnaires such as these are subjective, rendering them somewhat inconclusive but they provide an encouraging foundation for further research.

There is growing recognition from health researchers on the value of cohousing, particularly for older people in improving social networks and mental wellbeing (Brenton, 2013). These factors can enable in(ter)dependent living in later life and reduce the need for institutional care (Scanlon and Fernández Arrigoitia, 2015; Brenton, 2017; Quinio, 2018).

Fernandez et al (2018) evaluated the impact on resident wellbeing of the first year of the Older Women's Cohousing scheme in London and found the design and collective management processes to improve wellbeing. There are however no UK-wide evaluations of cohousing schemes beyond single case studies and this is an important area for further research. Despite this, a growing evidence base from across Europe allows for reasonable comparisons with the UK context (Tummers and MacGregor, 2019; Czischke, Carriou and Lang, 2020).

Planning dimensions

From a planning perspective, cohousing can often be a more efficient use of land compared with conventional detached rural or suburban typologies. Cohousing can achieve higher densities through shared space, reduced parking space allocation, and include a combination of terracing and apartment blocks (Williams, 2005a). However, the typically low number of units found in cohousing schemes is a problematic for more dense, urban contexts where land is at a premium and councils are focused on delivering the highest level of units as possible. Countering this, there are examples of higher density retrofit cohousing schemes (Sanguinetti, 2015) and an emerging market of urban cohousing schemes adopting apartment block typologies with internal and rooftop shared spaces. See *The Commons* scheme in Melbourne (Riedy et al, 2019).

Changing working patterns

The cohousing model could also address the need for more local co-working space as people begin to work from home more commonly after Covid-19. A common house could include

shared workspace and resources such as printers and projectors. See emerging examples such as Ambos in Cornwall[5]. There is limited research on workspace in cohousing, however this burgeoning area has been explored in the context of co-living schemes such as *The Collective*[6] in London (Popowska, 2017).

Environmental impact

In addition to sharing economy practices which aim to reduce consumption and waste, cohousing schemes often aspire to environmental sustainability principles such as local energy generation and on-site water treatment. Daly's (2017) literature review, although requesting further research, found the existing evidence in favour of cohousing schemes being more environmentally sustainable than conventional housing options.

Criticism

Cohousing has been criticised for reinforcing social homogeneity and not encouraging diverse communities due to the financial barriers of purchasing land (Chiodelli and Baglione, 2014; Sanguinetti, 2015). Hamiddudin & Gallent (2016, p.381) also found that group-build schemes can become exclusionary through community 'self-selection' and therefore fail to 'deliver against the needs of all households'. Further to this, the often middle-class demographic of cohousing groups risk becoming inward looking and not benefitting the wider area (Chiodelli, 2015).

Considering the value and scarcity of land in urban contexts, there is an argument that the local authority's priority should rightly be the provision of social housing. If one of the aims of sustainable housing provision is to promote social wellbeing and cohesive communities, perhaps this is best done through social and affordable housing provision (Chiodelli, 2015).

But this argument distracts us from why cohousing might be supported by government funding and planning policy. Cohousing and social housing are not mutually exclusive. There is certainly a crisis of supply and affordability in the housing sector and social housing is a critical tool in addressing inequality and promoting resilient communities. But evidence around the social and environmental benefits of cohousing is growing. If the challenge of affordability can be addressed in cohousing, this may set a precedent for socially and environmentally sustainable housing models. Schemes such as LILAC in Leeds are doing just this (Chatterton, 2013).

[5] Available at: https://www.ambos.org.uk/how-it-works
[6] Available at: https://www.thecollective.com/

2.3 Community-led housing sector

Community-led housing can be defined as housing which is 'shaped and controlled' by local people, serving local community needs (Smith Institute, 2016: 4).

Community-led housing is seen by some as a response to the dominant volume housebuilding paradigm in the UK, which some argue inhibits design innovation and limits the extent to which communities can participate in the design and management of their own neighbourhoods (Hamiduddin and Gallent, 2016). Indeed, Wallace et al. (2013) viewed community-led and self-build housing as essential means of diversifying housing supply and building resilience in the aftermath of the subprime mortgage crisis of 2007-2010.

Cohousing schemes sit within the ecosystem of the community-led housing sector. The tables in Appendices 1-3 define and evaluate a number of different community-led housing models found in practice.

2.4 Barriers to cohousing delivery

Due to the inclusion of shared spaces such as a common house and shared gardens, the overall build cost of cohousing is often higher than conventional housing developments which can be a barrier to the viability of affordable units (Chatterton, 2013). Annual management fees for shared spaces could be viewed as a barrier to prospective residents, however service charges are an inevitable requirement in leasehold developments either way. The key difference is that cohousing residents are expected to participate in regular working groups to develop the scheme from inception and manage the estate once completed. This is labour-intensive, on a voluntary basis, and often leads to prospective residents dropping out due to fatigue (Scanlon and Fernández Arrigoitia, 2015).

Beyond these challenges, the barriers to delivery of cohousing schemes are similar to those of any community-led housing scheme. These include the breakdown of resident group cohesion and challenge of consensus decision-making (Weeks *et al.*, 2019); extensive timescales for delivery (Scanlon and Fernández Arrigoitia, 2015); access to land and competition with large developers to achieve economies of scale (Williams, 2008); lack of expertise around planning

and development among group members (Tummers, 2015); gaining planning permission and access to bank finance (Tummers, 2016).

This dissertation is specifically focused on the issue of planning context, gaining planning permission and the role of the local authority.

2.5 The role of local planning authorities in cohousing delivery – international perspective

Although each country has a different policy context and culture making it difficult to achieve direct comparisons, it is helpful to highlight certain examples in contrast to the English planning system (CNUK 2019).

During the 1970s and 80s, a growing movement of community-led housing developed in Denmark and the Netherlands in response to rising house prices and increasing demand for alternative housing options. The Dutch government recognised the social value of cohousing which in turn influenced proactive state subsidy programmes and strategic local authority land allocation for cohousing and community-led housing which led to a demonstrable increase in delivery (Larsen, 2019).

In line with this, Szemo et al (2019, p. 407) found that "without collaboration with local authorities, the failure rate of newly emerging [cohousing] projects is likely to increase, whereas applying instruments such as land allocation and funding security not only increases the number of projects but also contributes to local agendas for urban development."

This is in contrast to the second wave of US cohousing schemes in the 1990s which were predominantly funded by the private equity of residents without policy changes to the planning system (McCamant and Durrett, 1994; Williams, 2005, 2008). Despite this, there are still a number of cases of US local authority-led low interest loans for affordable cohousing schemes (Garciano, 2011).

In Germany, regional planning policy has formally recognised Baugruppen (group-build) developers since the 1990s. Vauban, Freiburg, which I have visited on a study tour, is the best known example of a neighbourhood which was zoned for group-build custom plots on public land, allowing groups of residents to purchase subsidised public land and instruct architects to

design their own apartment blocks, some of which are cohousing schemes (Hamiduddin and Gallent, 2016).

2.6 The role of local planning authorities in cohousing delivery – English perspective

Policy context

There has been a steady rise in community-led housing provision in England since the Localism Act 201 which sought to decentralise planning decisions from central government to local authorities and from local authorities to local communities. The act has enabled parish and locality groups to develop their own neighbourhood plan, providing greater influence on development in their area. Neighbourhood planning is however complex and requires expertise which is currently a barrier to community-led housing groups (Smith Institute, 2016). The *Community Right to Build* legislation also enables communities to develop assets for community benefit, subject to local referendum, without the need for planning permission.

A predecessor to the Localism Act was the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 which recognised Community Land Trusts (CLTs) as corporate bodies in order to streamline interactions with the planning system. CLTs grew by 2121% (from 14 to 311) between 2009-2019 in part due to devolution policies (Bradley and Starling, 2017; CLH, 2019).

The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 legislation[7], further supported by the Self-build Regulations 2016,[8] has influenced the *group build* community-led housing sector by virtue of the *self-build portal* which residents can use to log their interest in self-build to the council. Local authorities now have a statutory duty to allocate land for serviced self-build plots in their local plans. Community-led housing loosely falls under the remit of *self-build* and it is interesting to note that since the legislation was introduced, 55,000 people have registered interest in a self-

[7] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding#:~:text=custom%20housebuilding%20register%3F-,The%20Self%2Dbuild%20and%20Custom%20Housebuilding%20Act%202015%20(as%20amended,own%20self%2Dbuild%20and%20custom

[8] Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/22/contents/enacted

build plot. A recent unpublished assessment by the National Custom and Self-Build Association's *Right to Build Taskforce* found that 58% of local authorities are now acknowledging their duty in local plans. The graph below illustrates a significant increase in local authority support for self-build housing since the 2015 legislation was introduced:

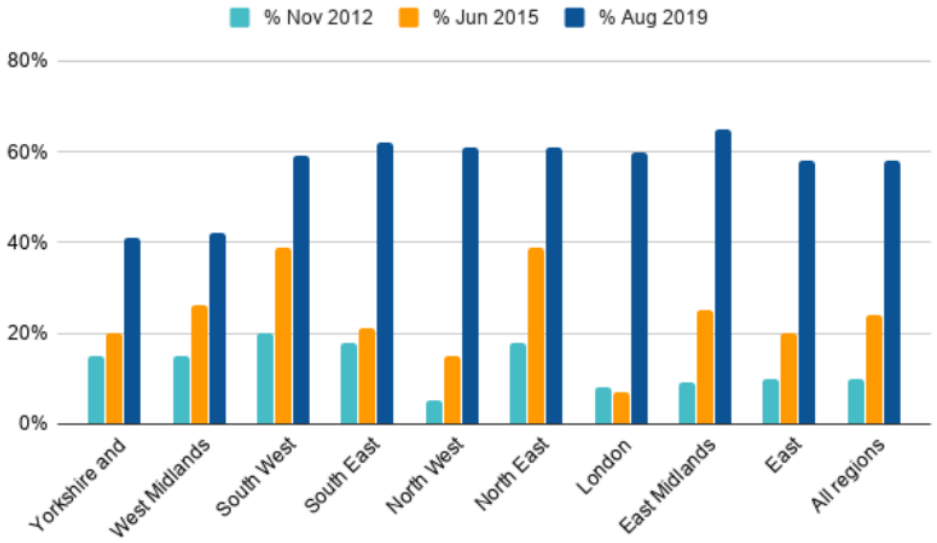

Figure 6. Proportion of Local Planning Authorities with adopted or emerging local planning policies supporting Custom and Self Build housing (England). (Source: Right to Build Taskforce, National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA, 2020)). Reproduced by author (2020).

NaCSBA (2019) found that 45% of local authorities had met their duties to allocate land for self-build plots, although they note that these statistics are not yet robust.

This should be put in an international context. Although more recent figures are not available, the graph below illustrates how self-build occupied only 10% of UK housing supply in 2011 compared with other Western nations.

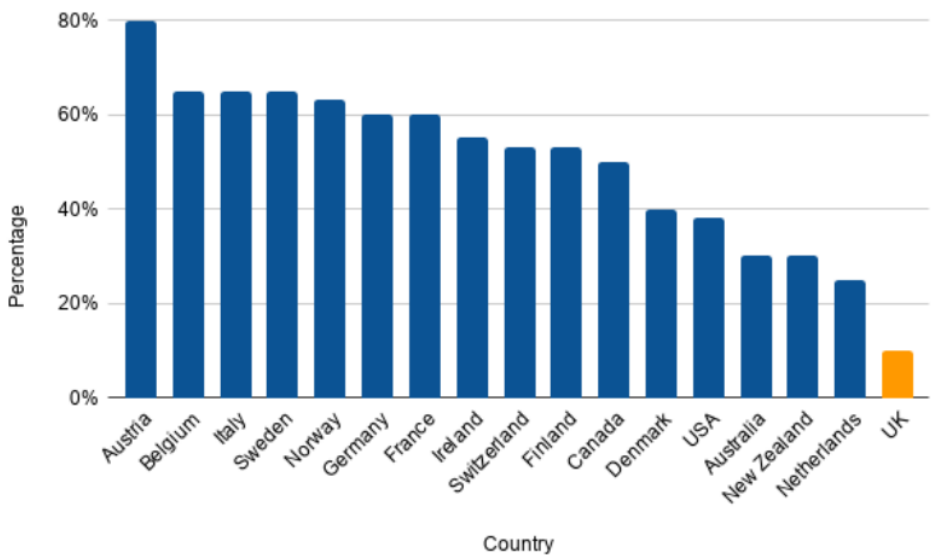

Figure 7. Self-build sector by nation. (Source: DCLG, 2011). Reproduced by author (2020).

Granted, these figures will have risen in the UK as a result of the 2015 legislation, but this data still demonstrates major cultural differences in housing provision in the UK compared with other countries.

The application of these findings to this cohousing study is limited however. There is currently no data on the number of community-led housing or cohousing schemes which have been granted planning permission or allocated plots via the English self-build portal. More systematic research should be conducted in this area to provide a clearer picture of the situation, but the above findings at least indicate that the self-build sector is growing and that new legislation can lead to tangible change in practice.

With regard to provision of affordable housing via community-led schemes, The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)'s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) *Rural exception site policy* enables local authorities to permit development for affordable housing on greenfield sites which would otherwise not receive planning permission. This is a common route for community-led housing groups wishing to gain planning permission (Hudson *et al.*, 2019).

Housing England's Community Housing Fund is also open to any community housing group, but (Hudson *et al.*, 2019) found a close partnership with a developer and the local authority to be an enabling factor in securing this funding.

Planning practice

Chatterton (2013) found champions within the planning authority as well as elected politicians to be important factors in the success of planning permission and accessing council-owned land for a cohousing scheme in Leeds.

Williams (2005b), although focussing on US case studies, proposed that study tours inviting council officers to visit existing cohousing schemes allowed them to gain a better understanding of the development process and build trust in future cohousing planning applications they receive.

Housing England and the Power to Change Trust have part funded the development of regional community-led housing hubs which support and inform local authorities and prospective community housing groups. There is currently no research on the impact of these hubs on the delivery of community-led housing or cohousing schemes.

2.6 Conclusion & Research framework

This area of research is not well covered by the literature and more work can be done to crystallise the key issues of the planning context in English cohousing delivery. In an attempt to consolidate the existing literature, the following diagram outlines a framework for understanding the role of local planning authorities in enabling the delivery of cohousing schemes.

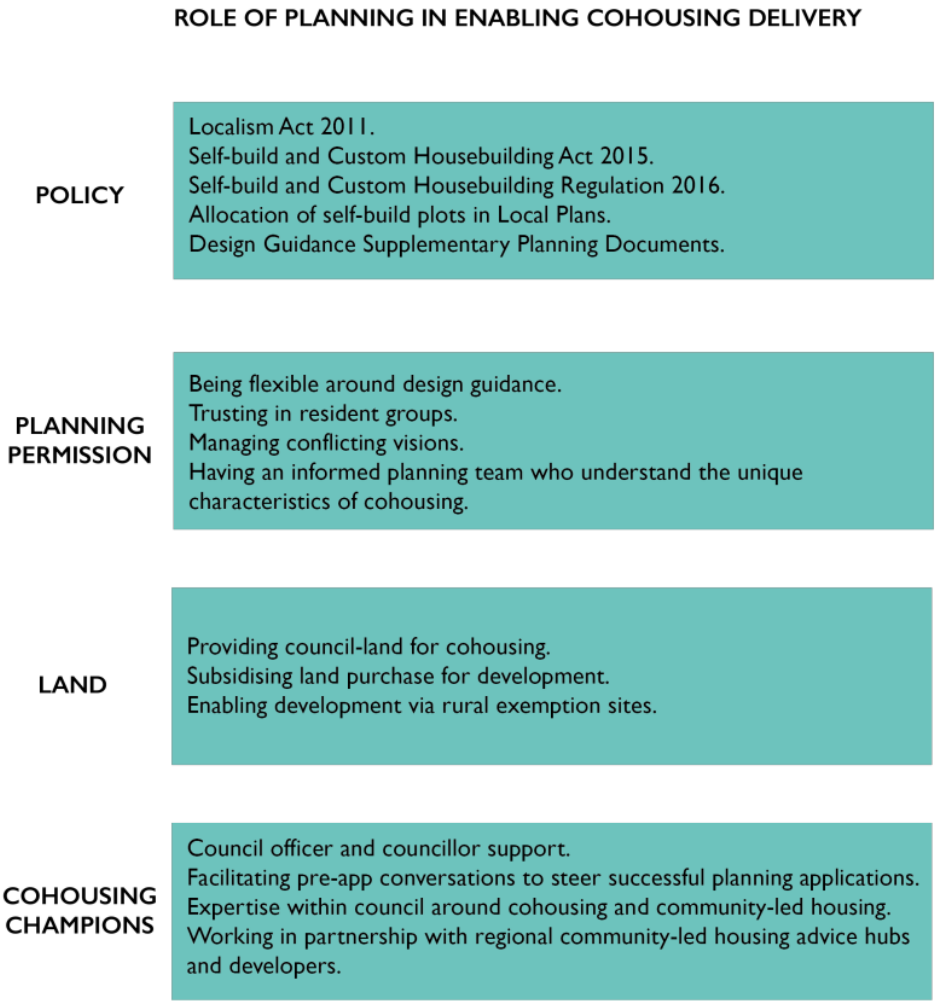

Figure 8. Research framework (Source: author).

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Methodology overview

This section provides an outline of the research methodology. A combination of desk-based primary and secondary data was captured using a range of qualitative and quantitative methods.

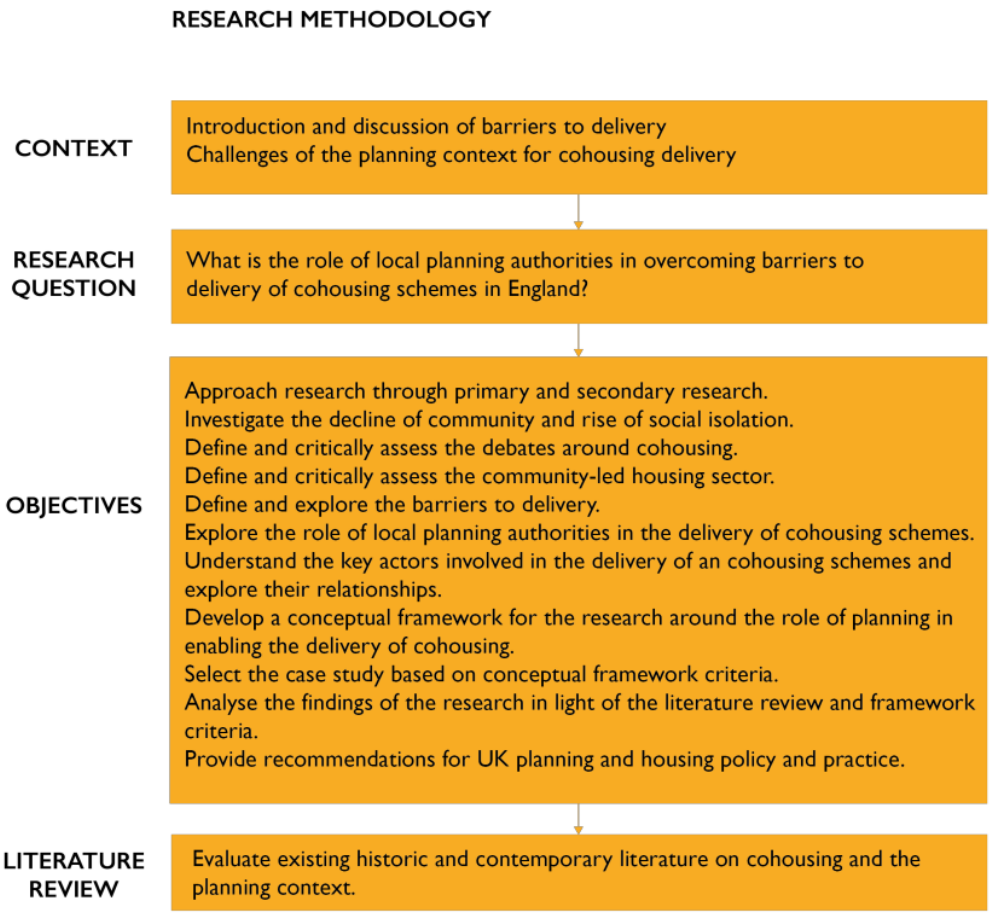

Figure 9a. Research methodology – Stage 1. (Source: author).

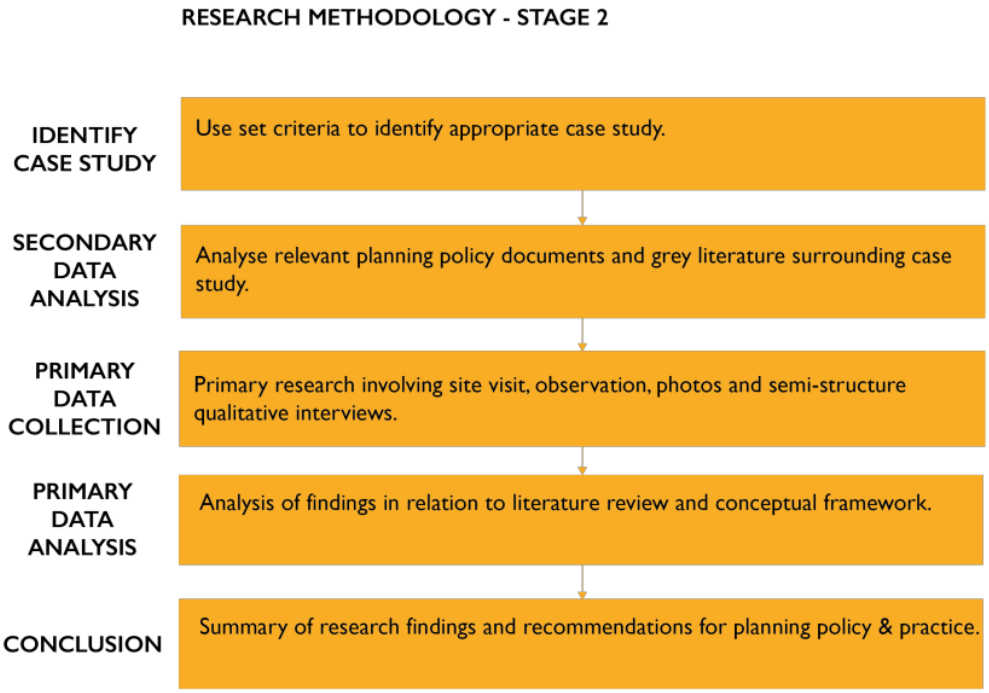

Figure 9b. Research methodology – Stage 2. (Source: author).

3.2 Selecting a case study

Marmalade Lane case study was selected in light of the research framework and based on the following criteria:

- A cohousing scheme as defined in 2.1 of the literature review, with a common house and units ranging between 4 – 50.
- A scheme identified as *self-build* community-led housing by the local authority.
- A scheme which was collaboratively designed and delivered between a resident group, professional consultants and the local authority.
- A scheme located in England, impacted by the English planning system.
- A scheme which has gained planning permission and has successfully been delivered and now occupied by residents.

Bridport Cohousing scheme was originally selected, however it proved difficult to reach a sufficient number of stakeholders for interview. It was helpful to have contacts from a number of schemes, which allowed me to swiftly focus on a different case study from a long list (Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

I made a site visit to Marmalade Lane in September 2019 in preparation for this research and received a guided tour by founding residents. This gave me a deeper insight into the real life dynamics of a cohousing scheme and allowed access to a wide range of interviewees via *snowballing* (Noy, 2008). A reflective diary was kept which enabled me to keep track of insights throughout the research period (Nadin and Cassell, 2006).

Figure 10. Study tour organised by author with colleagues from Sustrans, founding residents from Marmalade Lane and two officers from Cambridge City Council, 2019. (Source: author)

Figure 11. Marmalade Lane on study tour, 2019. (Source: author)

3.3 Secondary data analysis – planning policy and informal literature

A qualitative contents analysis of national and local policy documents and informal literature surrounding the scheme was conducted which provided an insight into how cohousing and community-led housing is interpreted and represented (O'Leary, 2004).

The following key words were used in search exercises:

Cohousing

Community-led housing

Self-build

Planning permission

Land.

Table 4. Policy Documents Analysed

Document	**Year**
Localism Act	2011
Orchard Park Design Guidance SPD	2011
Self-Build and Custom Building Act and Regulations	2015, 2016
Cambridge City Council Local Plan	2006, 2018
South Cambridgeshire Local Plan	2004, 2018

3.4 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were selected as a method in order to delve deeper into the issue and go beyond the insights of statistical analysis (Ryen, 2011). However, while focusing on a single case study allows for a more in-depth understanding of an issue, the extent to which one can generalise is viewed by some as limited compared to systematic studies involving a large sample of case studies (Nunkoosing, 2005; Wiles, 2012). On the other hand, Flyvbjerg (2006) for example argues that single case studies can indeed provide generalizable evidence for a particular class. In light of these challenges though, this dissertation will avoid drawing grand

conclusions, instead highlighting issues for further research and studies with larger samples. Nonetheless, a qualitative study is arguably the best approach for understanding the nuanced relationship dynamics and decision making process of key actors in planning practice, allowing us to move beyond the limitations of simplified definitions and fill in the gaps of our understanding (Damianakis et al, 2012).

Although validation bias is a risk when testing hypotheses through qualitative research (the participant tells the researcher what she thinks they want to hear), this is not relevant to the current research as I am not testing a hypothesis, instead I am exploring the nature of a particular issue (Norris, 1997).

I had originally developed generic questions for all participants, however I consequently adapted the questions in order for them to be targeted at specific stakeholders. This allowed me to focus my questions, ensure relevance and capture a broader picture of the issues.

3.5 Analysis

Interview quotes have not been taken as objective data but instead as the perspectives of individuals, which have been contextualised, critically-assessed and cross-referenced with the literature review (McLellan et al, 2003).

The analysis section has been structured by the research framework and findings have been organised into the following themes:

a. Policy

b. Planning Permission

c. Land

d. Cohousing Champions

3.6 Limitations

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, UCL's research policy restricted the opportunity to conduct a second site visit or face-to-face interviews.

In-person interviews were replaced by a combination of audio and video (AV). Despite their remote nature, AV interviews can still enable intimate and meaningful conversations to take place. Having said this, calls do impact on rapport and non-verbal cues (Iacono et al, 2016) and this was taken into account.

3.7 Research ethics

My supervisor reviewed my research risk assessment, ethical pro forma and interview consent form. Informed consent was obtained from interviewees. See appendix for these documents.

Alongside the written introduction to the research, participants were informed of the aims and objectives at the beginning of the research and were invited to ask questions at the beginning and the end of the session. Interviewees were also reminded that their cooperation was voluntary and that they could end the call whenever they wished. (Greg et al, 2013).

Consultation fatigue was avoided by keeping interviews to 30-45 minutes and strict timekeeping was observed to ensure participants remained satisfied with the experience.

UCL data protection policy was abided by as I did not collect personal data such as age, nationality or gender. Interview data was stored on my computer and will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation (Longhurst, 2003).

Chapter 4. Analysis

4.1 Case study context

Marmalade Lane cohousing project was built on the last remaining vacant plot of Orchard Park – a housing-led urban extension in north Cambridge on council-owned greenfield land – comprising 900 homes. The sale of the plot – K1 – fell through in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and the council were looking for options. The idea for a cohousing project was initiated by officers from the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Authority (Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire) who visited Freiburg, Germany in 2011 and were inspired by the neighbourhood of Vauban. Cambridge officers approached a local cohousing group in Cambridge with a proposition to develop a scheme on public land. The council then instructed developer TOWN and Swedish sustainable house builder Trivelhus to work in partnership with the council and the *K1* cohousing group. The design was coproduced with prospective residents and developed by Mole Architects.

The scheme was completed in December 2018 with residents moving in over the course of a year. There are 42 homes on the 12 acre plot.

Energy efficiency and the use of sustainable building materials were important to the cohousing group who were able to influence the design. The homes are built with Swedish cross-laminated timber, triple-glazed windows and high quality insulation. Glazing is south, east or west facing to maximise thermal gain and homes are powered by air source heat pumps. There is no gas on site and fittings are chosen for low water use.

Marmalade Lane has won a number of awards from the RIBA and RTPI and is recognised by the government's *Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission*[9] as a leading example of an innovative community-led custom-build housing scheme. This dissertation is the first piece of formal research to be produced on the scheme and contributes to a small body of interdisciplinary

[9] Marmalade Lane is referenced in the Commission's recommendations report, Living with Beauty. However, the report does not provide guidance on the planning context in which this scheme was successfully delivered. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/861832/Living_with_beauty_BBBBC_report.pdf. (Accessed on: 18th August 2020).

literature on cohousing in the UK. There are currently few papers to focus specifically on the planning context of cohousing in England or indeed internationally.

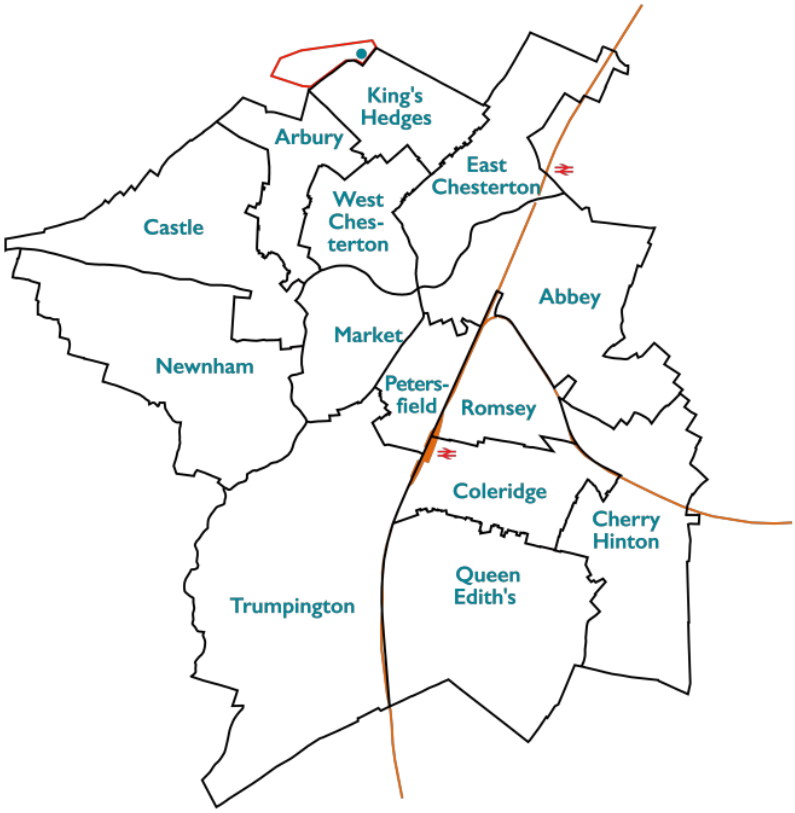

Figure 12. Marmalade Lane is located in Orchard Park District (red boundary), an urban extension on the northern border of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District. Orchard Park is the responsibility of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Authority (Source: author).

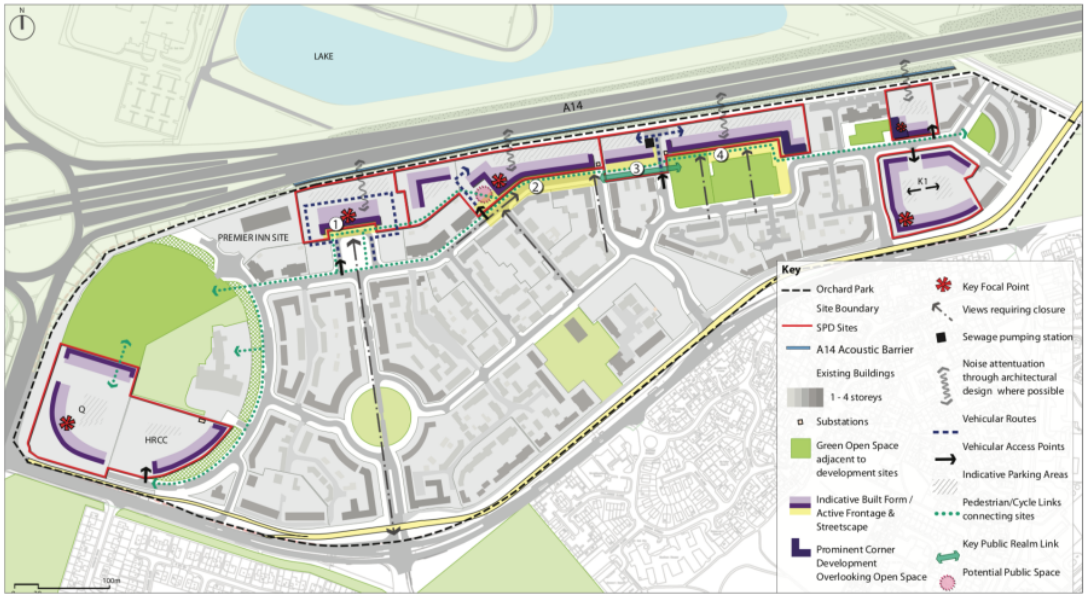

Figure 13. K1 plot to the east of the district, as identified in the Orchard Park Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document, which was adopted in 2011. (Source: South Cambridgeshire District Council).

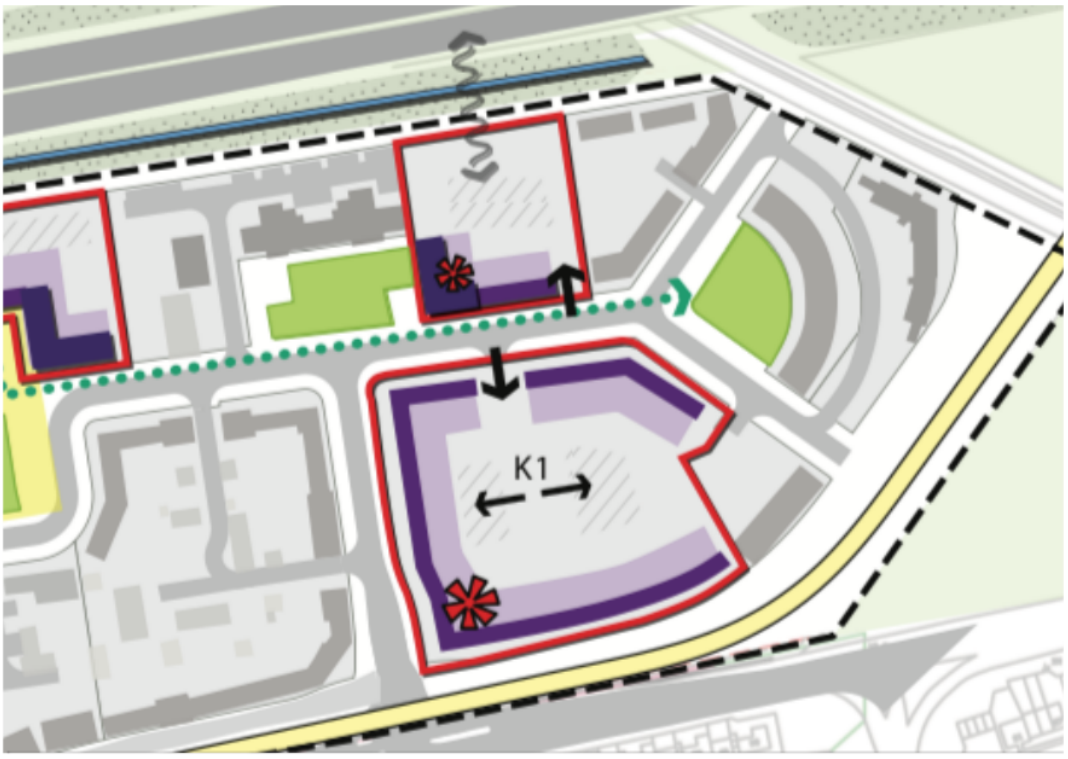

Figure 14. K1 plot close up. It is interesting to note that the internal courtyard of plot K1 was originally proposed for parking (hatched lines) and vehicle movement (arrows) in the SPD. Figure 15 (below) illustrates the final outcome of the community-led design process: a car-free communal garden courtyard. A significant departure from the conventional design code. (Source: South Cambridgeshire District Council).

Figure 15. Terrace typology, semi-private gardens and communal garden courtyard. (Source: TOWN)

Figure 16. Marmalade Lane Common house with industrial kitchen, multi-function event space, children's crèche and 3 guest bedrooms which can be booked for visitors. (Source: TOWN)

Figure 17. Entrance layouts which encourage social contact. (Source: TOWN)

Figure 18. Masterplan illustrating pedestrianized street in the north, parking to the east side of the development, communal gardens and the common house in white. (Source: Mole Architects).

Figure 19. Marmalade Lane visualisation. (Source: Mole Architects).

Procurement Process - Timeline

The following information has been drawn from the interviews and scheme documentation.

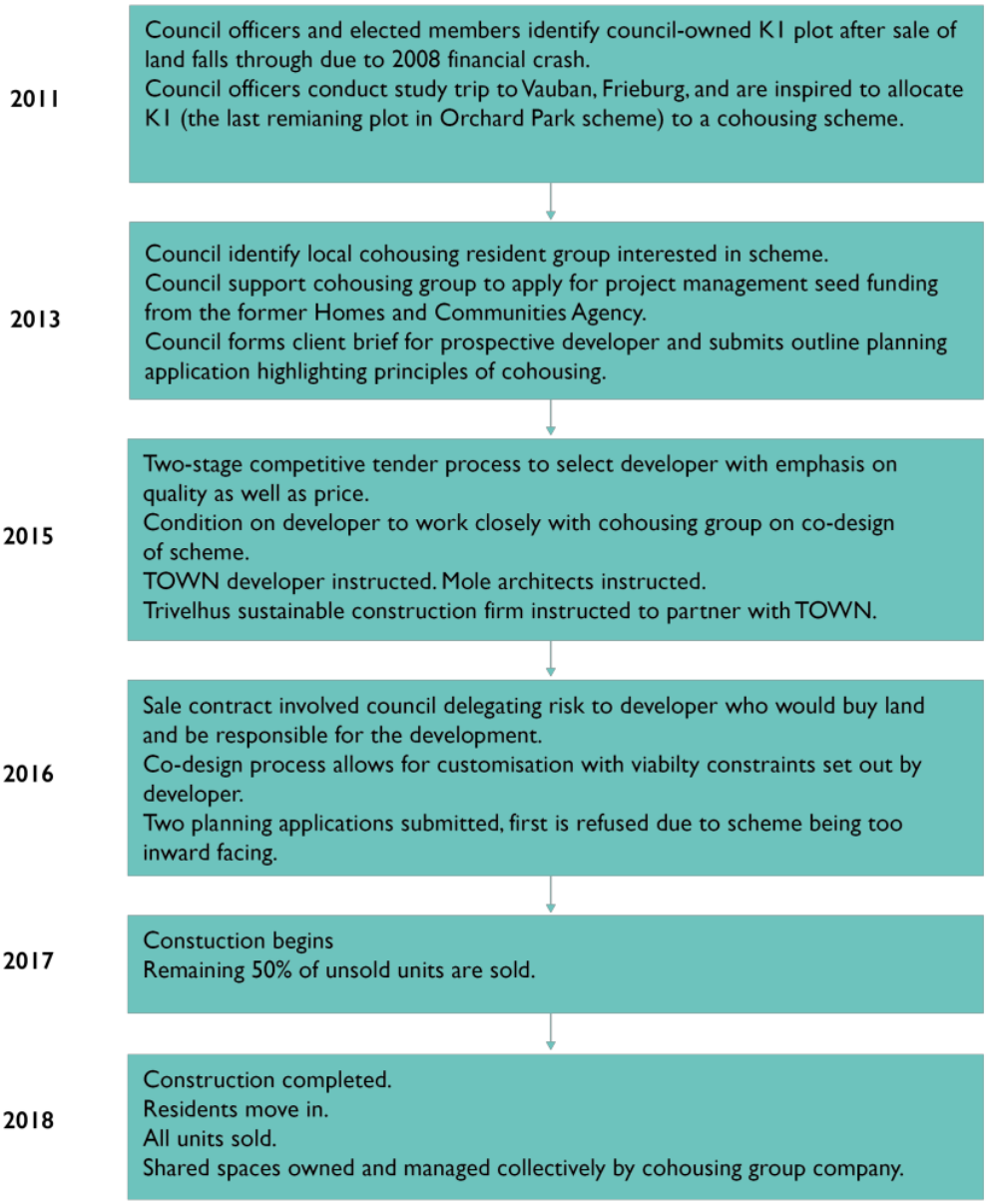

Figure 20. Timeline of Marmalade Lane Cohousing Scheme (Source: author)

4.2 Discussion overview

The following sections provide an analysis of the primary data gathered through interviews. The discussion has been divided into key themes identified in the conceptual framework. Insights have been cross-referenced with findings from the literature review. Where the current research departs from the existing literature, this has been identified and evaluated. Currently there is minimal academic research on the UK planning context for cohousing beyond advocacy group literature. Learning from this discussion will hopefully contribute to a growing area of research.

I conducted 8 interviews with the following stakeholders who were involved in the development of the case study:

- Founding resident A, hereby Resident A
- Founding resident B, hereby Resident B
- Developer
- Planning consultant
- Local Authority Planning Officer, hereby Planning Officer
- Local Authority Land & Asset Manager, hereby Land Manager
- UK Cohousing Network Representative, hereby UKCN Rep
- Community-Led Homes Representative, hereby CLH Rep

I contacted the architect but an interview was not possible. Names and official job titles will remain anonymous.

Figure 21. Key words identified from interview transcripts. (Source: author)

4.3 Policy

"*Schemes come forward in spite of everything rather than because of*" Planning Consultant, 2020

This viewpoint is up for debate considering the idea behind Marmalade Lane was actually initiated by the council, who consequently identified a cohousing group to work with. The local authority land manager (2020) claimed "*initial funding from DCLG*[10] *for a project manager was key*," and the application for this was "*supported by the council*" (Resident A, 2020). These varying attitudes highlight the challenges of complex collaborative planning dynamics and the ambiguous relationship between planning institutions and practitioners (Scanlon and Fernández Arrigoitia, 2015).

The project began in 2011 when there were no policies relating to cohousing, community-led housing or self-building in either combined authority's local plans (dated 2004 & 2006). However, the Localism Act 2011 was introduced that year which *"did have an impact on attitudes within the council*" (Planning officer, 2020). This is in line with Bradley and Starling (2017) who identified a culture shift within planning authorities and local community groups since the 2011 legislation.

Considering development of the scheme was well underway before the introduction of the Self-Build Act 2015, it is unlikely this legislation was an enabling factor, however the developer (2020) claimed that the "*self-build register has definitely helped the recent community-led schemes [they] are working on as councils have a statutory duty to allocate land now."* This is in line with the most recent unpublished research from NaCSBA (2019) outlined above.

Having said this, there are limitations on the extent to which this legislation is supporting community-led housing, as "*the original hope of the 2015 [Self-build] act was that it would cover all bases. But arguably this policy alone is not enough to properly catalyse community-led housing."* (CLH Rep, 2020).

The planning officer (2020) noted that there were challenges in engaging with the cohousing group and initially accepting their planning application in part due to the planning team not understanding the principles of cohousing design, and the contradiction to the existing design code for the wider Orchard Park development (South Cambs District Council, 2011). The planning officer suggested a need for new national government guidance on planning for

[10] Department for Communities & Local Government (former name)

cohousing, which "*would provide a methodology for local planning authorities.*" Guidance of this kind would be in line with practices found in the German context where self-build is a mainstream form of housing supply (Droste, 2015).

In conjunction with the proposition for new national guidance, there were debates among respondents as to whether new legislation is required to catalyse community-led housing specifically. The developer is currently lobbying government around a new "*Community-led Housing Act*" which they argue would "ensure that council's have a statutory duty to allocate land in their local plan for community-led and group build schemes." This proposal would be more specific than the self-build policy which currently includes community-led housing schemes. It might indeed build a better understanding and respect for community-led group build schemes.

"*The problem is you sometimes you have a fully completed housing development with 5 incomplete single household self-build plots on it, each at different stages of development. Group self-build could be more attractive as the plots are larger and delivered by a single developer which improves their chances of being delivered on time*" (Developer, 2020*).*

A representative from the UK Cohousing Network (2020) however claimed that a new act was not necessary and instead suggested "*that councils should use the self-build act alongside s106 or CIL exception legislation to agree with a developer part of a site for cohousing.*" [11]

Contrary to this, the planning consultant (2020*)* suggested that "*advocacy is more important than policy. Better support for regional community-led housing hubs would be great*", which would build expertise among planning departments and the development sector.

Clearly there are top-down and bottom-up approaches to enabling delivery of alternative housing. Marmalade Lane is a pioneering scheme that has demonstrated new models of delivery which in turn is influencing policy. The latest local plans from Cambridge City and South Cambs Council (2018) have explicit policies on community-led housing partly as a result of the success of this scheme.

Taking a broader view of the sector today, evidently legislation does have an impact on practice, and the Self-Build Act is testament to this. This provides a compelling evidence-base for new community-led housing legislation. However, there is currently no mention of a new English

[11] The future of s106 in England is however in currently in jeopardy of being abolished. Available at: https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/section-106-reform-could-cut-affordable-housing-by-a-fifth/5107417.article

community-led housing act in the literature and these insights provide fertile ground for sector debate and further research.

4.4 Planning permission

"*People have grown to expect private gardens with a 6 foot fence and two parking spaces. The planning system is geared to this cultural bias*" Resident B, 2020

"*If you want something different, conventional rules don't apply*" Planning Officer, 2020

Cultural norms in consumer society around housing design are reproduced and reflected in planning policy and design codes (Curtin and Bocarsly, 2008). This was the main source of conflict in Marmalade Lane: the cohousing group's aspirations for shared gardens, pedestrianized streets and reduced parking spaces were a departure from the planning authorities conventional design codes and expectations for a new development.

"*The main issue with the planners was the car parking. The wider development – Orchard Park - has 1.5 spaces per unit, the group wanted fewer*" (Resident B, 2020).

Planners were concerned about the future sale of properties with reduced parking spaces. However the group argued that prospective purchasers would buy into the ethos of cohousing and have different expectations. Indeed, since completion, and even with the final agreement of 1.25 spaces per household, there are now 11 spare parking spaces which residents *"use for the kids play equipment."* (Resident A, 2020). If the community can prove to the council that these spaces are never used, they may be entitled to convert them back into grass. The use of car pools and the reduced need for private cars at Marmalade Lane echoes the literature on many other cohousing schemes, which should be noted by future planning authorities (Chatterton, 2013; Tummers, 2015; Jarvis, Scanlon and Fernández Arrigoitia, 2016). The car park was a factor in why the first planning application was rejected, however this was partly due to its location.

From the planning authority's perspective, the initial plans were *"too inward facing*." "*Planning was important to sense check the design. A development must be put in context and not have its back to the surrounding area*." (Planning Officer, 2020).

"Car parking on the frontage of another street was not fair. The council were right to amend this" (*Resident B, 2020*). Both founding residents were in agreement with this point, however Resident A noted that generally speaking, "*the planning authority was a barrier to our cohousing vision*".

It is interesting to look at the success of the completed project and the innovations in urban design it has been able to achieve. The local authority are evidently enjoying the critical acclaim of the scheme, however resident B (2020) adamantly claimed that "*the whole development was designed by the people who are now living in it. This is why it is a success. The council are taking the credit!*" In line with Hamiddudin and Gallant (2016), these findings illustrate how bottom-up initiatives inform mainstream planning practices. Raising the profile of pioneering schemes can lead to local policy change, as is the case with the Cambridge Shared Planning Authority.

Nonetheless there are still many challenges in accommodating the collaborative design process necessary for cohousing. "*We found the degree of customization the developers wanted to offer the group a challenge*" (Planning Officer, 2020). As councils are increasingly expected to deliver more with fewer resources, the prospect of increasing the scale of community-led housing poses a challenge for local authorities (Lang and Mullins, 2015). When one combines this with cohousing group members who "*lack understanding of the planning system*" (Resident A, 2020), the process is slow and iterative. Despite this, something which Lang and Mullins (2015) do not mention is the prospect of the council hiring a dedicated self-build and CLH officer who can facilitate groups and streamline the planning process. Cambridge planning authorities instructed a dedicated officer at the later stages of the development with the view to retaining expertise gained in the process.

However, it was the recruitment of a specialist project manager, as well as the council-led appointment of a developer which allowed for professional representation of the resident group in planning matters. This mitigated against a lack of expertise within the cohousing group and "*lowered the risk*" for the planning authority who owned the land and were responsible for delivering a scheme in the public interest (Land manager, 2020). This partnership approach to cohousing delivery is a burgeoning area of practice and more research should be done to assess its dynamics and efficacy beyond the existing literature (Williams, 2005b; Garciano, 2011; Hudson *et al.*, 2019).

4.5 Land

Alongside gaining planning permission, access to land is one the biggest barriers facing cohousing groups (Scanlon and Fernández Arrigoitia, 2015; Tummers, 2015, 2016; Hudson *et al.*, 2019).

Marmalade Lane, among a small yet growing number of English cohousing case studies[12], was delivered on council land and this became a significant enabling factor in the success and viability of the scheme. Due to the economic climate in which the scheme was conceived, the cost of land was more affordable for the developer. However, in addition to this, "*the council was able to draw from its sustainability policies to justify a slightly subsidised price*" which reflected the social value being delivered by cohousing (Land Manager, 2020). This was an interesting finding, considering (Szemzo *et al.*, 2019) found that in both the UK and Hungarian case studies, local authorities largely felt justified to sell land only for delivery of affordable housing, or to maximise profits for public gain. The social value of prospective cohousing schemes was not a consideration in their decision-making. In line with Ferrari (2015), more research on the social value of various types of housing development would be welcome, and the extent to which this is reflected in local planning policy around land allocation.

Contrasting this is the case of Germany, where some local authorities have recognised the benefits of cohousing and have zoned land at an affordable fixed price for group-build initiatives (Droste, 2015; Hamiduddin and Gallent, 2016). Considering council officers and elected officials from Cambridge initially visited Freiburg and drew inspiration from this form of governance, perhaps Marmalade Lane can be viewed as an early British pilot of this approach. The key difference is that in Vauban, flexibility around custom building was permitted from the beginning, which streamlined the planning process (Hamiduddin and Gallent, 2016), whereas Orchard Park already had a fixed design code which did not align with cohousing principles.

Another notable aspect of this scheme was the instruction of an SME developer.

"*Regarding access to land, it is just so hard for resident groups or even SME developers to compete with larger volume house builders due to economies of scale and lack of trust from the council.*"

"*When you add cohousing into the picture, it's another layer of complexity for developers which increases the cost*" (Developer, 2020).

Despite the K1 plot originally earmarked for a large volume housebuilder, TOWN was eventually instructed due to its expertise in stakeholder engagement and collaborative design. This process was indeed "*highly resource intensive*" (Developer, 2020), but learning from the experience has informed their approach moving forwards and has led to a number of

[12] Available at: https://www.chapeltowncohousing.org.uk/ in Leeds; Available at: https://yorspace.org/ in York.

operational efficiencies. For conventional developers, this dimension of cohousing development is beyond the scope of their business plan, and proves to be a barrier for prospective community groups seeking to instruct a development partner (Weeks *et al.*, 2019).

Whilst this may be the case in today's sector, the planning consultant (2020) argued that "*there is a role for cohousing land allocation in a larger volume housebuilder site. Traditional developers can learn from cohousing schemes about housing design, community building and place character. They could use this to their advantage.*" Perhaps then there is scope for local authorities to do more in allocating group build cohousing plots in larger sites from inception.

With regard to Homes England-owned land, the developer (2020) noted that Homes England "*could make procurement of land easier to enable smaller group custom build and community-led housing schemes."*

"*Homes England do actually sell lots of land to SME developers, but the plots are typically a minimum of 50 units which is getting big for a cohousing group*" Land Manager (2020).

In light of this discussion, one of the key challenges for cohousing schemes proposed on council land is around public justification. Cohousing schemes are usually smaller in scale and involve additional costs (e.g. the common house). As most require the private equity of prospective residents, affordable units are often not viable (Boyer and Leland, 2018; Jakobsen and Larsen, 2019). Therefore in most cases councils do not consider it a priority. Having said this, Marmalade Lane Cohousing was able to deliver the same number of units as the original volume house builder was expected to achieve. Other English cohousing schemes[13] have been able to deliver affordable units through cross subsidy of private sale and partnerships with housing associations.

Cohousing strictly speaking refers to a design methodology – shared spaces and collective management. These principles can be applied to many different forms of housing tenure or legal entity. The question remains whether these design principles will merge into mainstream practice.

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[13] Available at: https://bridportcohousing.org.uk/ (Dorset); available at: http://www.thresholdcentre.org.uk/

(Dorset); available at: https://www.owch.org.uk/ (London)

4.6 Championing cohousing

"*There is a mythology around Marmalade Lane, that it was a community-led scheme. This really was a council-led scheme*" (Resident A, 2020).

"*There was at least one officer and one councillor who got cohousing and could see the social value of the co-design process and the community benefits*" (Developer, 2020).

Confirming the findings of Chatterton (2013), having champions in the local authority was key to enabling the scheme.

"*There were definitely champions in the council who were critical for the success of the scheme. One officer left the council for a while and the project ground to a halt until they returned*" (Resident B, 2020).

This highlights that although Marmalade Lane was initiated by the council, without the on-going capacity and enthusiasm of specific individuals, the scheme was in jeopardy of failing. Even in scenarios where policy is adopted into local plans to support a certain cause, this alone is not sufficient to realise a scheme. Lang & Mullins (2015) found that beyond the rhetoric of legislation and policy, the real work of delivering schemes takes place in the political dynamics of working relationships between stakeholders, as well as the capacity of council officers.

As mentioned above, in an attempt to overcome these constraints, South Cambs council did eventually hire a dedicated self-build and CLH planning officer. This is a good example of investment in championing and demonstrates how new forms of planning practice and knowledge can become institutionalised (author's reflective diary, 2020).

Despite the specific support of certain individuals, "*it would have been better if the planning team engaged with the group much earlier on*" (Resident A, 2020). "*There was a lack of understanding of the planning perspective from within the group itself*" (Planning Officer, 2020) and this could have been remedied with earlier engagement from the planning team.

Paradoxically, one respondent claimed that "*the first step is the education of the local planner*" (CLH Rep, 2020). This may demonstrate that knowledge and understanding was lacking in both parties. In a pioneering scheme such as this, the residents lacked knowledge of the formal planning process, and the planning authority lacked knowledge of cohousing and co-design methods. Clearer government and local authority guidance could resolve these issues for other

councils embarking on a cohousing scheme for the first time, with a degree of learning to be expected in practice.

However, beyond this early period of trust formation (Szemo et al 2019), the planning consultant (2020) claimed that "*this scheme was successful because it took a partnership approach to delivery, involving the cohousing group, the developer and the local authority in a manner which went beyond ordinary procedure*". Informal meetings and workshops, alongside formal processes and a spirit of flexibility were the key to successful relationship building.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

In the interest of clarity, the research question has been stated again below. The conclusion aims to summarise the findings of the research and ultimately respond to the original question.

Research question

In the absence[14] of explicit government policy and guidance around cohousing in England and with central government funding for community-led housing currently in jeopardy[15], what can local planning authorities do to support emerging cohousing projects?

Sub questions

What role did the local planning authority play in overcoming the barriers to delivery of a successful cohousing scheme in Cambridge, England? A case study of *Marmalade Lane*.

How can changes to planning policy and practice in England enable more cohousing schemes to be delivered?

[14] Granted, there are a range of policies (explored in this research) which have impact on community-led housing supply in England, but there is currently no explicit legislation or government guidance on cohousing.
[15] Available at: http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/what-we-do/our-campaigns/community-housing-fund

5.1 Summary of research

"*No one size fits all. Every scheme is different. Every place is different.*" Planning consultant, 2020

Cohousing is an innovative model of community-led housing which is receiving more attention in England today. Cohousing is an intentional community of private dwellings clustered around shared spaces designed and managed by residents. There is a growing body of evidence on its benefits, which include increased social interaction, community building and environmental sustainability (Choi, 2013; Tummers, 2016; Brenton, 2017). A more systematic and quantitative evidence base is required if we are to move beyond individual qualitative case studies and assess the long term impact of cohousing communities. This was the conclusion of the planning officer (2020) interviewed: "*what we really need now is a 10 year evaluation of Marmalade Lane, compared with other schemes around the country. What happens next? How sustainable is it?*"

Cohousing is an encouraging response to the challenges of social isolation and eroding community networks. Whilst the current evidence-base around the social benefits of cohousing is inconclusive, case studies such as this provide evidence of its viability within the English planning context.

This research set out to understand the role of planning authorities in the delivery of cohousing schemes in England. This is an under explored area in the literature and the aim was to uncover the decision-making process behind the most famed cohousing scheme in the country. Through the use of a successful case study – Marmalade Lane in Cambridge – the research explored how local authorities can better enable cohousing groups to overcome common barriers including access to land and planning permission.

Four key themes were identified in the literature – policy, planning permission, land and championing – as areas where local planning authorities have the potential to significantly enable cohousing. However the reality of planning is complex. Even in a successful example such as Marmalade Lane, cooperation among stakeholders proved challenging and success was reliant on key individuals who believed in the project. The differing vision and expectations between the planning authority's design guidance and the cohousing group was a key bone of contention and eventually led to an unsuccessful first planning submission. Provision of parking and the pedestrianisation of streets were the heart of the issue and lessons can be learned from this. Local authorities must acknowledge these key cohousing design principles from the outset and not pit them against their conventional design policies, which "do not apply".

Beyond these setbacks, a process of collective knowledge-building among stakeholders around the design and local constraints eventually led to a shared plan which all parties were satisfied with.

Marmalade Lane is a rare example of a council-led cohousing scheme in England. This feature, alongside access to subsidised public land and an effective developer partnership, were the key ingredients of success.

But, "no one size fits all", and prospective cohousing groups cannot assume to have access to public land, or a proactive local plan. Or perhaps they should? Emerging from this research were a series of policy and guidance proposals from practitioners in the field which may go some way to formalising the process of delivering cohousing and community-led housing. The English sector is now dominated by a small number of large-scale volume housebuilders delivering new developments, many of which exemplify "mediocre" housing design and car-dominated streets as seen in the most recent National Housing Audit (Place Alliance, 2020, p.7)[16]. Perhaps now is the time for local authorities to diversify their list of housing providers and provide land for cohousing in their local plans. Explicit government planning guidance on cohousing, a renewed community housing fund and a new Community-led Housing Act might all contribute to enabling more cohousing schemes.

Beyond formal legislation, it is local championing from council officers and councillors that can either *make or break* the success of a scheme. Increasing awareness and knowledge of cohousing among local authorities might then increase the number of officials who recognise the value of cohousing and advocate for it.

5.2 Limitations of research

A single qualitative case study will always be limited in its scope and wider application, however this method allowed me to interrogate the complex relationship dynamics and perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders involved in the delivery of a scheme (Damianakis et al, 2012).

I was aware of my own biases and assumptions and I took into account the personal

[16] The author conducted surveys of new housing estates across the Midlands in 2019, contributing to *A Housing Design Audit for England* (2020), which assessed the place quality of 142 housing-led developments across England. Available at: https://indd.adobe.com/view/23366ae1-8f97-455d-896a-1a9934689cd8

perspectives of those interviewed. Quotes were used as departure points for wider discussions rather than taken as facts or evidence (Rose, 1997).

With regard to the impact of legislation such as the Self-build and Custom Building Act 2015, more systematic and robust research should be done to understand the impact of this legislation not only on the contents of local plans, but on local authorities' statutory duty to genuinely broker land (public or private) for the allocation of serviced self-build plots. Furthermore, there is ambiguity around the proportion of self-build portal registrations that are from community-led housing groups and cohousing groups compared with single-dwelling applicants. A clearer picture of this would help in the debates around whether to introduce new legislation specifically for community-led housing.

5.3 Recommendations

This is an interesting time for cohousing and a critical period for community-led housing. Prospective community groups around the country are eagerly awaiting the government's 2020 Autumn Budget where they are expecting an announcement on the latest Community Housing Fund[17]. The previous 3 year fund terminated on 31st March 2020 and many projects are reliant on these grants to catalyse schemes which are already in development.

Marmalade Lane is the first council-led cohousing scheme in the UK and one of a small handful to be built on public land. Evidently this conceptualisation is contested– after all, the council could not have delivered a cohousing scheme without the commitment and perseverance of a community group who spearheaded a bold new vision over many years. Perhaps *council-instigated* is a fairer description of the process. Either way, credit must be given to the shared planning authority for believing in this vision, allocating the land, procuring a developer and ultimately investing enough energy for it to succeed. This council-instigated approach has wide application across England and is an opportunity for local authorities to pilot cohousing schemes on public land, ensuring greater control over the process.

With regard to policy, this research highlights that, at least within a single group of planning practitioners, the jury is out over whether a new community-led housing act is necessary for enabling the sector. Some argue that the legislation is already there in the form of the Self-Build

[17] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-housing-fund

Act 2015. Others believe that more explicit legislation around group-building would stimulate a culture change within planning policy and practice. Either way, it is clear that new planning guidance from government on the principles and practice of cohousing would streamline the planning process and enable schemes to proceed with fewer obstacles. This requires a culture of flexibility with regard to design codes and a willingness for councils to try something different. But the benefits are continuing to emerge and the more schemes that are delivered, the stronger the knowledge base.

Further systematic research into the current state of affairs at a national level would be helpful. Understanding the proportion of cohousing schemes to successfully gain planning permission across England and the devolved nations would be helpful, as would a qualitative study of why applications are rejected. Learning from this would assist both planning authorities and prospective cohousing groups.

Marmalade Lane is an entirely owner-occupied scheme and despite endeavouring to deliver social value, it is not affordable to many. As has been noted, more research should be done to understand why few cohousing projects are able to deliver affordable units (Garciano, 2011; Chiodelli, 2015; Boyer and Leland, 2018). This challenge is beginning to be addressed in England[18] but more can be done through policy and funding. Solving it will enable cohousing to become a more realistic option for local authorities seeking to meet strategic objectives around social and affordable housing.

Policy aside, this research reveals the importance of local authority championing in the delivery process. Council officers and elected members who understand the vision of cohousing are critical for the success of schemes. Cambridge Shared Planning Authority alongside others such as York City Council[19] are now leading the way in building capacity to support community-led housing by creating dedicated self-build planning officer roles. These roles would not exist without the determination of pioneering schemes requiring new forms of expertise within planning authorities. They are testament to the relationship between grassroots initiatives and institutional culture change.

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[18] Available at: https://bridportcohousing.org.uk/ in Dorset; available at: http://www.thresholdcentre.org.uk/ in Dorset; available at: https://www.owch.org.uk/ in London

[19] Available at: https://www.york.gov.uk/SelfBuildCustomHousing

Indeed, as society emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, there is an opportunity to reimagine the systems around us. Now more than ever, new models of living are needed, ones that encourage mutual support and embody environmental sustainability. Perhaps there is something to learn from cohousing.

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Appendix 1 - Types of community-led housing

Type	Description
Community Land Trust (CLT)	CLTs are bodies set up by local communities to buy land, build affordable homes for sale and rent and steward the affordability of these homes in perpetuity by capping future sale prices (Moore and McKee, 2012). The legal bodies underpinning CLTs are typically community interest companies limited by guarantee.
Housing Co-operatives	Housing co-operatives are organisations collectively owned and managed by residents. Individuals provide a nominal deposit (5-10% of the unit build cost) and buy equity in the co-op in monthly instalments. When residents leave, they can sell their shares but are not able to leverage profit from a potential increase in market value. (Chatterton, 2013).
Cohousing	Cohousing refers to design principles rather than any specific legal structure or tenure form. Cohousing schemes can be fully privately owned, mixed tenure or co-operatively owned (Larsen, 2019). However, due to a common need for personal capital when building schemes, some have criticised it for not being an affordable option (Garciano, 2011; Chiodelli, 2015). In response to this challenge, we are now seeing more cohousing schemes which do provide affordable units, for example

	Bridport, LILAC and Yorspace Cohousing groups who are supported by government affordable housing grants (UK Cohousing Network 2019; (Hudson *et al.*, 2019).
Self-help Housing	Volunteers working together to refurbish empty homes and bring them back to use (Ward 2019).

Appendix 2 - Funding sources for community-led housing

This table outlines the typical funding sources for community-led housing in England:

Funding source	**Description**
Finance loan	Mortgage from a bank. Challenging to secure as a group of residents compared with a conventional developer due to lack of trust (Weeks *et al.*, 2019).
Cross-subsidy	Subsidising affordable units through the sale of private homes (CIH, 2018).
Personal equity of members	Common among all community-led housing schemes including cohousing; necessarily exclusive to higher income groups (Chiodelli, 2015).
Community shares	Low interest shares offered to investors interested in social value (Yorspace, 2019).
Trust grants	Trusts such as Power to Change who provide funding to community groups developing housing in public interest (Power to Change, 2019).
Government grants	Homes England's Community Housing Fund has provided £163 million to schemes from

	2018-2020, however the future of the fund is under review[20].

Appendix 3 – Cohousing delivery approaches

The below table outlines the range of delivery methods found in practice (Williams, 2005a)

Delivery approach	**Description**
Resident-led	Residents manage delivery process but groups can lack expertise and often find it difficult to secure finance and land.
Developer partnership	Resident group instructs developer (private or housing association) to act on their behalf in negotiation process. This often enables access to greater capital and influence in securing land and planning permission.
Speculative developer-led	Developer builds cohousing scheme with view to finding future buyers. Although resident-led groups often speculatively build schemes before selling all properties, there are no developer-led cases in UK. America has more cases but Williams (2005a) found these schemes to be less socially successful in the long term than community-led schemes.
Council-led partnership with cohousing group (author included based on case study, Marmalade Lane, Cambridge[21]	In Marmalade Lane, Cambridge, the council were interested in developing a council-owned plot for cohousing, as a previous developer sale had fallen through. The council identified a local cohousing resident group and worked

[20] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-housing-fund

[21] Available at: https://marmaladelane.co.uk/uploads/MarmaladeLaneCohousing_Press_Release_30July2019.pdf

	with them to instruct a developer for the site[22].

Appendix 4 - Case study longlist

Name	**Cohousing definition criteria met**	**Location**	**Planning permission gained, land and finance secured**	**Size**
Bridport Cohousing	Yes	Dorset, England	Yes	53
Yorspace	Yes	York, England	Yes	21
Chapeltown Cohousing	Yes	Leeds, England	Yes	22
Lancaster Cohousing	Yes	Lancaster, England	Yes	40
Marmalade Lane	Yes	Cambridge, England	Yes	42

Appendix 5 – Interview Questions (example)

The role of planning in cohousing delivery

Planning Officer – Interview questions

1. What was your role in the Marmalade Lane cohousing project?

[22] Available at: https://www.slideshare.net/bhclt/planning-for-communityled-housing-the-story-of-marmalade-lane-cambridge

2. Please could you provide a brief history of the scheme and how it came about?

3. What do you see as the key challenges of cohousing delivery from a local planning authority perspective?

4. What are the key barriers for prospective cohousing resident groups?

5. Tell me about your criteria for allocating council land for a cohousing scheme?

6. Tell me about the process of gaining planning permission.

7. How did you manage co-design decision making with regard to bespoke plans for the scheme?

8. How did the local planning authority enable the cohousing scheme to overcome barriers to delivery?

9. How can we change planning policy and culture to enable more cohousing/community-led housing schemes in the UK?

10. How can we change the mainstream ideologies around housing and increase demand for cohousing?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 6 – Risk Assessment

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

FIELD / LOCATION WORK

The Approved Code of Practice - Management of Fieldwork should be referred to when completing this form

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/estates/safetynet/guidance/fieldwork/acop.pdf

DEPARTMENT/SECTION MSC URBAN DESIGN AND CITY PLANNING

LOCATION(s) Bartlett school of planning

PERSONS COVERED BY THE RISK ASSESSMENT

SIMON WASSER

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK

COLLECTING PRIMARY DATA SURVEYS

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted online and over the phone. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, a site visit will not be possible.

Consider, in turn, each hazard (white on black). If **NO** hazard exists select **NO** and move to next hazard section.

If a hazard does exist select **YES** and assess the risks that could arise from that hazard in the risk assessment box.

Where risks are identified that are not adequately controlled they must be brought to the attention of your Departmental Management who should put temporary control measures in place or stop the work. Detail such risks in the final section.

ENVIRONMENT	The environment always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this hazard
e.g. location, climate, terrain, neighbourhood, in outside organizations, pollution, animals.	Climate – appropriate clothing will be worn depending on weather. LOW risk

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk
	work abroad incorporates Foreign Office advice

x	participants have been trained and given all necessary information
	only accredited centres are used for rural field work
	participants will wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the specified environment
	trained leaders accompany the trip
x	refuge is available
	work in outside organisations is subject to their having satisfactory H&S procedures in place
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

EMERGENCIES	Where emergencies may arise use space below to identify and assess any risks
e.g. fire, accidents	Fire or accident at home where research is being conducted LOW risk

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

	participants have registered with LOCATE at http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/
	fire fighting equipment is carried on the trip and participants know how to use it
x	contact numbers for emergency services are known to all participants
x	participants have means of contacting emergency services
	participants have been trained and given all necessary information
	a plan for rescue has been formulated, all parties understand the procedure
	the plan for rescue /emergency has a reciprocal element
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

FIELDWORK	1	May 2010

equipment	Is equipment used?	Yes	If 'No' move to next hazard If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks
e.g. clothing, outboard motors.	Laptop failure LOW risk		

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

	the departmental written Arrangement for equipment is followed
	participants have been provided with any necessary equipment appropriate for the work
x	all equipment has been inspected, before issue, by a competent person
x	all users have been advised of correct use
	special equipment is only issued to persons trained in its use by a competent person
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

lone working	Is lone working a possibility?	YES	If 'No' move to next hazard If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks
e.g. alone or in isolation lone interviews.	Working alone from home LOW risk		

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

	the departmental written Arrangement for lone/out of hours working for field work is followed
	lone or isolated working is not allowed
	location, route and expected time of return of lone workers is logged daily before work commences
x	all workers have the means of raising an alarm in the event of an emergency, e.g. phone, flare, whistle
x	all workers are fully familiar with emergency procedures
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

Appendix 7 – Research information and consent form

Project Title

Affordable cohousing delivery: the role of planning

Researcher

Simon Wasser

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research project being undertaken by a Masters student from the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London (UCL).

Before you decide whether or not to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what participation will involve. Please read the following information carefully, feel free to discuss it with others if you wish, or ask the research team for clarification or further information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Why is this research being conducted?

The research aims is to explore the role of local planning authorities in the delivery of affordable cohousing schemes in England. The research aims to uncover how local authorities can become enablers or barriers to affordable cohousing schemes. The author hopes to provide recommendations for planning policy and practice which will facilitate further provision of affordable cohousing schemes in England.

Why am I being invited to take part?

As you are involved in the Chapeltown Cohousing scheme in Leeds, it is helpful to speak to a range of stakeholders to better understand the delivery process.

Do I have to participate?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you do choose to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw from the research at any time with no consequences and without having to give a reason.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

If you do choose to participate, you will be invited to an online interview exploring the issues highlighted above. The interview will be conducted on Zoom. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will be audio recorded (and transcribed at a later date). You will have the opportunity to see the interview transcript and agree any amendments with the researcher after the interview is concluded.

What are the advantages of taking part?

There are no immediate benefits for participating in this project and no financial incentive or reward is offered, however it is hoped that this project will inform future planning policy and practice around affordable cohousing delivery in the UK.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

We anticipate no significant disadvantages associated with taking part in this project. If you experience any unexpected adverse consequences as a result of taking part in the project you are encouraged to contact the researcher as soon as possible using the contact details on page 2 of this information and consent sheet.

If I choose to take part, what will happen to the data?

The interview data will be anonymised at the point of transcription and identified by a general identifier (e.g. 'Planning officer A' or 'Planning consultant B' or a suitable pseudonym). A record of participant identities and any notes will be kept separately and securely from the anonymised data. All data and information affiliated with this project will be securely stored on an encrypted computer drive and physical documents will be stored securely on University property.

The data will be only used for the purposes of this research and relevant outputs and will not be shared with any third party. The anonymised data may be utilised in the written dissertation produced at the end of this project, and this dissertation may then be made publicly available via the University Library's Open Access Portal, however no identifiable or commercial sensitive information will be accessible in this way.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

It is anticipated that the data collected in this project will be included in the dissertation produced at the end of this project, submitted for the award of a Masters degree in Urban Design and City Planning at University College London (UCL). You will not be personally identified in any of the outputs from this work, and attributions and quotations will be anonymised. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of any outputs stemming from this project please ask the contact below who will be happy to provide this.

Contact Details

If you would like more information or have any questions or concerns about the project or your participation please use the contact details below:

Primary contact

Role	MSc student
Email	simon.wasser.19@ucl.ac.uk
Supervisor	Wendy Clarke

Role	MSc dissertation supervisor
Email	wendy.clarke@ucl.ac.uk
Telephone	n/a

Concerns and / or Complaints

If you have concerns about any aspect of this research project please contact the MSc student contact the student in the first instance, then escalate to the supervisor.