



Courtesy: Yolande Barnes, Bartlett Real Estate

Flexible Homes

28/09/2021

- **Housing that is flexible and adaptable gives people agency.** Flexibility can be thought of as enabling a change now, while adaptability allows changes to be made in the future.
- **The starting point for flexible design is to think of homes as places, not ‘units’.** If you start with the design of the place, the design of the home will follow. And we need to shift the focus from place making to place keeping... flexibility is key to that shift.
- **Covid has shown that people have been more comfortable in cellular spaces inside the home, and with access to private space outside.** House price changes have shown that people prefer human scale, people-friendly ‘stewarded’ environments in smaller, connected polycentric settlements with good access to nature.
- **The housing market’s focus on profit-driven ‘standard products’ in an international investment market works against flexibility, and space in homes is controlled as never before.** But the planning system can be flexible – if you can sell the public benefits of what you are doing. The key is to make flexibility the core focus of the brief and to present a compelling narrative – have the conversation!
- **The team you choose to take on the development journey is vital to get right.** If you are looking at benefitting from Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) this will need to include an MMC Advisor from the outset to ensure you can deliver high quality placemaking.
- **Central to flexibility is having ‘third spaces’ inside which can be used in multiple ways, couples with un-visible outside private space – and buffer spaces beyond, for the community to adapt to their needs.** Keeping the possibilities open builds stable communities.
- **Practical solutions are central to flexibility – details such as pocket doors open up options for use of space.** Parking courts are the principal design being promoted, but this design is not sustainable in the time of climate change. And when providing for home based working, on size doesn’t fit all – four variables to consider are occupation, the nature of the family, the space available and the personality of the home-based worker.
- **Designing for social value can be achieved by setting out the desired social impact and working through the outcomes you need to achieve it.** Social values leads to cost savings – but while they can be represented financially they are the tip of the iceberg and the less measurable parts are the most valuable.



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Speakers:

Yolande Barnes, Bartlett Real Estate

Grant Leggett, Director & Head, Boyer London

David Birkbeck, Design for Homes

Teresa Borsuk, Senior Advisor, PTEA Knights Park Cambridge

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Attendees: 66