

## NORWICH'S FIRST COHOUSING COMMUNITY GETS THE PLANNING GREEN LIGHT

On 21st March 2024, Angel Yard Cohousing celebrated a significant milestone, securing planning consent from Norwich City Council.

Angel Yard Cohousing, with TOWN and architecture practice Archio, submitted a proposal for a 34-home community on a brownfield site in Norwich. The design features a range of homes from one-bedroom flats to three-bedroom houses, arranged in three blocks around a large communal garden.

The proposals include a Common House, located at the centre of the community, with a kitchen and dining area which provides space for shared activities, community events and celebrations. Residents will also have use of communal laundry facilities, shared guest bedrooms and a 'library of things' including tools, equipment and household items.

Angel Yard Cohousing formed in 2008 and now has 34 member households. The group acquired the site on Sussex Street in 2015, with the aim of developing a 'diverse, multigenerational community founded on the principles of shared amenity, neighbourly support and environmental responsibility'. TOWN was appointed as Development Manager by the cohousing group following the success of Marmalade Lane Cohousing in Cambridge.

Originally submitted in June 2022, the application scheme was modified in response to feedback from Norwich Society and Historic England. The architecture sensitively acknowledges the historical 'yards' of Norwich, one of which formerly occupied the site, and references the distinctive characteristics of neighbouring streets.

Sustainability is central to the proposals for Angel Yard, which will be built using low carbon materials to deliver homes that are highly energy-efficient and contribute to lower energy bills for residents. All homes have been designed with dual aspects to maximise natural light and ventilation, renewable energy will be generated from solar photovoltaic panels and heat from highly efficient air-source heat pumps. A pool of shared electric vehicles will minimise transport emissions.

The design evolved through a series of codesign workshops over a 10-month period, between Archio, TOWN and Angel Yard members, ensuring that the development realises the group's collective aspiration for a sustainable, multi-generational and mutually supportive community.

For more information about Angel Yard Cohousing Group and the proposals for the site visit <https://www.angelyard.org.uk/>.

Gemma Holyoak, Development Manager at TOWN, said:

*"This is truly an amazing milestone for the Angel Yard project. Norwich's first cohousing community will provide high-quality, low-energy homes designed by and for future residents. The scheme provides renewable energy, is targeting Passivhaus certification and importantly, as a cohousing project the group can reduce in-use demand for space and resources with shared amenity and management. It's fantastic working with a committed group of people, with a common vision for sustainable, neighbourly living."*



Development Manager and Planning Consultant	TOWN
Architects	Archio
Mechanical and Electrical Engineering	Joel Gustafsson Consulting
Structural Engineering	Simple Works
Landscape Architect	Farrer Huxley
Quantity Surveying	Crowle Consultancy
Ecology	Hopkins Ecology
Fire Consultant	Design Fire Consultants
Principle Designer	Archio
CDM Client Adviser	Monaghans
Building Control	Socotech

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

### Proposed Development

- 34 new cohousing homes, comprising 1,2 and 3-bed flats, and 3-bed houses.
- 2 homes to be made available for Social Rent to adults with learning disabilities.
- A 232m<sup>2</sup> ancillary Common House (C3 Use) and ancillary spaces;
- A 763m<sup>2</sup> shared garden for all residents, including access to a small workshop space;
- 70 bicycle parking spaces provided on-site.

### Site and history

The site is a 0.27ha brownfield site located north of Norwich City Centre, and owned by Sussex Street Cohousing CIC. The industrial buildings at 70-72 Sussex Street were demolished in 2013 and the majority of the site is mostly vacant, with the exception of small builder's merchant operating from there.

Sussex Street Cohousing CIC bought the site in 2015 with a previous planning permission, and appointed TOWN as Development Manager in 2019 to develop plans with the membership which responds to their brief.

### Consultation

Angel Yard Cohousing members, and prospective residents, have been engaged in the scheme design from the outset, working up a Client Brief that TOWN and the design team have used as a reference while developing proposals for a full planning application.

The codesign process took the form of online and in-person workshops over a 10-month period covering all design decisions including shared living, private amenity, communal circulation,

dwelling layouts, elevation design and landscape proposals. The codesign process allowed for an iterative development of the design.

Angel Yard Cohousing organised a community exhibition over 3rd-4th December 2021 at St. Augustine's Church Hall, supported by TOWN and Archio.

### Angel Yard Cohousing

Angel Yard Cohousing first came together in 2008 with a shared vision for a sustainable cohousing community in Norwich.

The group currently comprises of 33 households. A core group have committed thousands of hours to the development, while welcoming new members and building the community via online and In-person events.

TOWN started supporting the group in 2019 and were appointed in 2021 as Development Managers, and have been working in partnership to develop the proposals submitted in the planning application. The cohousing group have financed the project up to planning, with many members investing in the project at an early stage.

<https://www.angelyard.org.uk/>

### Cohousing

Cohousing is a community-focused way of living, based on key principles:

- Each household has a self-contained home and private outdoor space;
- Each household benefits from the common house and shared garden;
- Future residents are involved in the design process and shaping of the homes and community;
- Residents manage their community, and look after the maintenance of the development post-occupation;
- Cohousing groups are open to new members and often play an active role in their wider local communities.

### TOWN

TOWN delivers homes and neighbourhoods that improve people's quality of life, enable more sustainable ways of living and improve the wider places they are part of. TOWN's first completed scheme, Marmalade Lane Cohousing in Cambridge, won numerous awards including the inaugural RICS award for Social Impact and the prestigious 2020 RTPI Silver Jubilee Cup, and is widely recognised as a pioneering example of community-led, developer-enabled placemaking.

<https://www.wearetown.co.uk/>

### Archio

Archio is an award-winning architecture practice that was founded with a mindset to cultivate a culture of innovation, enabling design solutions that tackle major societal challenges. Working with clients, local authorities and community groups, the team listens and respond to the everyday issues facing people and their neighbourhoods. Architecture provides the tools to improve physical and emotional health, and this is best achieved when people move together to

co-produce more visionary models that enrich lives, as demonstrated by the recently completed Citizen's House in Lewisham for London Community Land Trust.

<https://www.archio.co.uk/>

#### UK Cohousing Network

The UK Cohousing Network is a membership organisation with a mission to enable communities to create better places to live by reducing isolation and loneliness, and by sharing facilities and services to reduce living costs. UKCN is a resource for members interested in Cohousing, enabling them to share information, advertise related services and connect to discuss shared issues and learning. UKCN aims to make cohousing more accessible, helping to shape policy and the public funding environment to make future schemes possible.

<https://cohousing.org.uk/>