

## PRESS RELEASE

29.03.21

### **Building Garden Communities will be the future for post-pandemic living**

Garden Communities can help lead the future of post pandemic living was the message echoed by architects, builders, developers and local authorities as at the Building Garden Communities Conference on 25 March.

With keynote speeches by Christopher Pincher, Minister of State for Housing, Fionnuala Lennon, Homes England's Head of Garden Communities and Professor Carlos Moreno - the pioneer behind the 15-minute city concept – they revealed the plans and ambitions for garden communities in Kent, Essex and across the UK.

Christopher Pincher emphasised the importance of making garden communities resilient and future proof. In his keynote speech, he said: "It's not just a numbers game - it's about building places that people are really happy and proud to call their home. Places that have the opportunity to become vibrant communities to live and to work and to bring up a family now and for generations to come."

In his opening speech Christian Brodie, SELEP Chair highlighted: "We have an opportunity to be bold, we have the opportunity to consider the form of our towns and city centres, our transport corridors and the streets where we live."

Fionnuala Lennon agreed noting: "Building garden communities is not for the faint hearted. You need vision, patience, resilience, fortitude, persuasion, collaboration and deep pockets to see it through."

Professor Moreno highlighted the importance of net zero ambitions in creating and adapting cities and developments. He said: "We need to fight against climate change. To do that we need to change our urban life. Our current urban life is not sustainable, we need to build vibrant communities and for that proximity is key."

Chaired by Katy Lock, Director of Communities and Project Delivery, TCPA, a wide range of expert speakers took part in panel discussions throughout the morning - focusing on placemaking, transport and infrastructure, supporting the local economy and building back better. Speakers included Andrew Taylor, Group Planning Director, Countryside; Ian Piper, Chief Executive, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation; Coby Tomlins, Project Lead for Dunton Hills Garden Village, Brentwood Council; Tara Gbolade, Co-Founder Gbolade Design Studio; Richard Davidson, Director, Willmott Dixon and David Ames, Executive Director, Letchworth Garden City, plus many more.

Speakers discussed how creating a community that supported not just homes but the workplace was one of the key drivers for Garden Communities, considering how to reimagine the high street to create bespoke community workspaces alongside the amenities and infrastructure needed to support workers.



The concept of collaboration ran throughout the sessions which took place too, with the key takeaway from the conference being that by working together, across the supply chain and between the public and private sector, the ambitions for sustainable, healthy and affordable garden communities can be realised.

Collaboration with existing communities and a need to be flexible and quick to adapt to changing needs were also key points raised throughout the morning of discussion, with COVID-19 demonstrating how things can be progressed quickly when the drive is there to do so.

The Building Garden Communities Conference, supported by South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent Housing and Development Group and Essex Developers Group attracted more than 200 delegates from across the public and private sector. Countryside, Willmott Dixon, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and Anglia Ruskin University also partnered with the conference.

SELEP Chair Christian Brodie said: "I am delighted at the success of our Garden Communities conference. Our desire to bring everyone together, to share expertise and perspectives at an event like this, predates the COVID-19 pandemic, but the events of the last year have accelerated some important trends and the discussions today were more relevant than ever.

"We have a unique opportunity to revitalise how we live and work, for the better - to make full use of innovative technology that can improve our day-to-day lives, to make green energy and sustainability a driving force for future housebuilding, and to take what this pandemic has taught us about how we live and work, and use those lessons to create a better quality of life for future generations.

"This event has provided a fantastic platform to highlight the real benefits that Garden Communities can bring to the South East. We will be taking these forward into the next steps in delivering our new Recovery and Renewal Strategy. I'd like to thank our partner organisations and all of those involved in organising the day - including our fantastic speakers - for making this conference such a success."

To find out more about the Building Garden Communities programme please visit the website [www.gardencommunities.co.uk](http://www.gardencommunities.co.uk)

**-ENDS-**

For more information please contact:

Natasha Cobley  
[ncobley@wlcreative.org.uk](mailto:ncobley@wlcreative.org.uk)  
**07741 660090**