

# **THE DEVELOPING TREND OF CO-LIVING IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BRITAIN.**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the potential for further development of co-living models in Britain. Co-living has not yet been fully explored as a viable housing solution that could help diversify the British housing stock. There is a growing need for more flexible housing that can provide for a wide variety of people, particularly young adults, and the elderly. With an epidemic of loneliness sweeping over Britain, creating housing that enables connections and fosters community is more important than ever. Wellbeing has moved to the forefront of the built environment professions agenda, with more focus on how design can improve people's wellbeing.

## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS CO-LIVING? .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: PURPOSE BUILT STUDENT ACCOMMODATION AND CO-WORKING DEVELOPMENTS IN SUPPORT OF CO-LIVING. ....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 – CASE STUDY EXAMPLES: OLD OAK AND SPRINGHILL COHOUSING COMMUNITY. ....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CASE STUDY ONE: THE COLLECTIVE’S OLD OAK, LONDON. ....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CASE STUDY TWO: SPRINGHILL COHOUSING COMMUNITY, STROUD. ....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: SUGGESTED STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS SURROUNDING THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CO-LIVING IN BRITAIN.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>18</b>

# INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will investigate the growing trend of co-living developments in twenty-first century Britain by analysing similar developments like co-working and purpose-built student accommodation to provide insight into the potential future of co-living in Britain. There will also be an investigation into two co-living case study examples based in the UK. The case studies have been chosen to compare both recent and older developments to discuss successes and pitfalls in their designs. The objective of this thesis is to understand and suggest how the concept of co-living, if developed further, could provide a new flexible form of housing in Britain, helping to diversify the rigid housing market.

The first chapter will define the term 'co-living' in relation to the thesis and set out the definition and principles of the concept. Next, a brief discussion surrounding misconceptions of the term 'co-living' and what this means about the public's perception of housing and neighbourhood development. The final points explored are the meaning of 'home' and how it has changed for millennials and continues to change with the rise of generation Z, following a brief look into the ideas around the subscription economy and how this might feed into future housing models.

The second chapter explores purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) and co-working developments as evidence to support further development of co-living in Britain. The first half explores PBSA and its growing success, making suggestions about how PBSA may contribute to changing co-living attitudes. The focus then moves to co-working spaces with an exploration into WeWork, a globally recognised provider of collaborative office space.

The third chapter examines co-living through two Britain-based case studies. The first example, The Old Oak based in London, is one of the newest co-living developments gaining lots of attention from developers across the country. It caters to young professionals in London and provides a co-living arrangement similar to PBSA. The second study will be into the Springhill Cohousing community in Stroud. This is a traditional cohousing model designed and managed by its residents. The chapter aims to establish whether the projects are successful and how they might benefit future co-living developments.

The final chapter reviews suggested strengths and weaknesses affecting the further development of co-living in Britain. The strengths focus on public wellbeing, the increased popularity of the sharing and circular economies, and environmental sustainability. The weaknesses involve a lack of policy guidance, standardised housing models, and issues around inclusivity.

## CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS CO-LIVING?

The definition of co-living is broad and stems from a long history of how settlements have evolved. For this dissertation, co-living will be portrayed as a form of housing typology and not a casual phrase. Shafique (2018) defines co-living as, “a form of housing that combines private living space with shared communal facilities. Unlike flatshares and other types of shared living arrangements, co-living explicitly seeks to promote social contact and build community”. It is important to note that cohousing, a form of co-living, has its own definition and principles. The difference as stated in the same report is that cohousing “prioritise resident and community governance. Typically, residents and sometimes the wider community are actively involved in the planning, development, and management of the co-housing community”. The many branches of co-living can be traced back as far as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with ties to the feminist, utopian, and communalist movements. The concept was believed to have originated in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where different groups displayed different motivations for setting up co-living communities. Even with these differences, there is a clear goal to create a community-orientated way of living.

The principles of co-living can vary, just like the definition. Co-living settlements until now have been developed by groups of people out of a common belief or necessity. Even with this fact, the focus has always been around fostering community and creating deeper connections between people. In twenty-first century Britain, where polarization is a growing problem (Hobolt et al, 2020), fostering community and encouraging interaction between different groups of people, is more important than ever.

The term co-living presents a raft of perceptions and bias in Britain. The broad terms and associations make it difficult to understand what co-living can offer. Its evolution through history has seen it associated with a large array of projects and developments. Communes are the most notable example, as they have been associated with cults that follow strong ideologist and radical views. The main reason for such bias is the lack of public awareness and openness to alternative ways of living. British people value privacy, Rivers (1992) described it as the “special quality of English privacy”. There is a fundamental lack of choice in the UK housing market. Developers put focus on meeting housing targets instead of the changing ways in which people want to live. Steele (2020) described it as “a housing solution that does not address these way-we-live issues may deliver thousands of residential boxes but will make little impact on the welfare of the people, now or in the future”. The focus on traditional forms of housing and neighbourhood development means there is a notion that significantly different neighbourhood developments are “worryingly unorthodox” (Field, 2004).

The second half of this chapter will explore what a home is in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. This dissertation will focus on ideas about the home in British society from the end of The Second World War until now. The home has evolved extensively, with the British consensus of what a home is constantly changing. This is especially true for the generational cohorts, specifically millennials (born 1981-1996) and generation Z (born 1997-2012). Up until the 1950s, it was a “normative assumption that the home is bound up with family, the key site for sexual activity, reproduction, and nuclear family life” (Jones, 2004). It is hard to define exactly what a home is in 21<sup>st</sup>-century society. Through research, it is clear the home presents a multidimensional concept (Mallet, 2004). A home is more than just the four walls that contain it. Mallet (2004) writes “home is (a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of state of being”. Today in Britain, homes are becoming flexible spaces that reflect changing attitudes, whether that’s households made of nonfamiliar groups, or homes that function as a workplace. These evolving attitudes should be met with equally innovative solutions for more diverse and flexible housing (Shafique, 2018).

The home has begun transitioning into a marketable service. This stems from the concept of subscription culture, a pay-as-you-go structure that is different from the traditional pay-per-product or service structure (Timalsina, 2020). Exploration into how this can be applied to how we live and house ourselves has been coined, living as a service or LaaS (Timalsina, 2020). Laas and subscription culture are capitalising on the notion that ownership is becoming less of a priority as concepts such as the sharing economy increase in popularity. With the younger generation growing up learning to control every aspect of their life through a device, it makes sense that such ideas are carried through new housing models. Organisations like The Collective and student accommodations have married together housing with additional services, such as gyms, cinemas, bars, and office space. The growing success of this commercialisation of accommodation has seen huge advances and will continue to be developed further in the future of housing in Britain.

## CHAPTER 2: PURPOSE BUILT STUDENT ACCOMMODATION AND CO-WORKING DEVELOPMENTS IN SUPPORT OF CO-LIVING.

Over the last decade, there has been a steep rise in the investment of privately developed, purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) in the UK (Savills, 2020). PBSA provides an attractive option for university students as the design tends to be trendy and provides more variety than university-funded accommodation. Most models now provide additional services such as gyms, cinemas, bars, and game rooms. PBSA provides a form of communal living centered around flats that have private bedrooms and share a kitchen living area. This Model introduces and encourages a new way of living to the younger generations. Between 2018 - 2019, 2.8 million students were studying at higher education establishments in the UK (Universities UK, 2020). PBSA models originally catered more to international students, however, with the increase of sites available more British students signed up and used the facilities. In 2018, around 30% of first-year British students lived in privately built student accommodation, which was a 22% increase from five years prior (Knight Frank and UCAS, 2018). This increase means more students are experiencing and growing with the idea of co-living and will expect to see this replicated in some form after their studies. This is evident in the increase of HMO (house of multiple occupancy) and flat-sharing tenures prevalent in large cities. Even if young people were not priced out of the housing market it is possible, they would still opt to house share due to their prior experience whilst studying.



*IMAGE 1 Bedroom (PBSA Zenith, Cardiff)*



*IMAGE 2 Flat Kitchen (PBSA Zenith, Cardiff)*



*IMAGE 3 Communal Area (PBSA Zenith, Cardiff)*



*IMAGE 4 Gym (PBSA Zenith, Cardiff)*

Co-working spaces are shared office spaces that encourage a collaborative approach to work (Pinto, no date). They provide a flexible workspace that can add to the collaborative culture of a company by encouraging users to be mobile and physically explore their office more than the traditionally assigned desk model. Co-working spaces nurture a sense of community through open design, allowing users to feel more connected to those around them. This connectedness encourages different groups within a business to collaborate with each other and develop stronger bonds. In the UK, co-working spaces have risen in the last decade. In 2019, it was recorded that almost 17% of the world's flexible co-working spaces took up residency in the UK (Cushman & Wakefield, 2020). This increase suggests a changing attitude towards the workspace and the need for individual spaces. With the increase of freelance culture and self-employment, the option for flexible workspace reduces the expenses associated with ownership and rent providing more freedom.

Purpose-built student accommodation and coworking spaces can provide evidence that co-living is worth exploring further. The large co-working company, WeWork, is a relevant example of how the two have influenced each other. WeWork is a global provider of flexible subscription-based office spaces. The company provides co-working spaces for entrepreneurs, freelancers, remote workers, and anyone looking for a temporary space to work (Boyte-White, 2020). For a monthly subscription, customers have access to all office spaces in and outside of their country of residence, plus additional benefits like Wi-Fi and networking events. WeWork, after its huge success in providing flexible coworking schemes, created WeLive, a co-living scheme for young professionals. WeLive follows the same design of PBSA with small personal spaces and large luxury community spaces. This type of co-living has appeared in multiple cities around the world, with several developments in the UK. Co-working and PBSA introduce new ways of thinking about how space can be shared. The new co-living models based on PBSA especially provide a glimpse into the possibilities further development could entail.





*IMAGE 5 WeWork Paddington, London*

*IMAGE 6: WeWork Paddington, London*



*IMAGE 7 WeWork Co-work Space*

*IMAGE 8 WeWork Office Pods*

Additionally, the situations regarding the housing market and generation rent provide incentives to further develop co-living. It has become increasingly difficult in the last decade for young people to get onto the housing ladder and become homeowners. This leaves young people with no other options but to rent. Since 2000, the UK has seen a huge increase in the private rental sector; England alone now has over four million households renting privately (Harvey, 2020). The lack of accessibility to affordable housing has led to young people holding back and staying with their parents longer, as they cannot afford to leave and support themselves. The Young Women's Trust coined the term 'suspended adulthood' after their survey of 18–30-year-olds in 2016 showed that young people struggle to progress in life at the same rate their parents would have done at the same age (Intergenerational foundation, 2016).

On the other side of the argument surrounding suspended adulthood, younger people are also choosing to rent because they do not want to be limited by homeownership and mortgages. Young people are allowing themselves time to explore, experiment, travel, and understand their likes and dislikes. Current millennials and generation Z focus more on themselves instead of past generational groups whose focus was on marriage and starting a family. Supporting this argument is Reza Merchant, the founder of The Collective, one of Britain's newest and largest co-living developments. He interpreted the suspended adulthood phenomenon in a light that supports the further development of co-living models:

Where previously we moved straight from adolescence into adulthood, we now take our time to become more socially liberated and culturally diverse, experimenting to find out what – and who – we love, before committing to it in adulthood. (Mairs, 2016).

Instead of dwelling on the negatives, Merchant highlighted the new ways in which young people are challenging themselves to discover and explore their options more. He argued that this will only increase the demand for rentable co-living schemes, as they provide freedom and affordability that is not as available on the housing market (Mairs, 2016). He also believes that renting is the way forward, describing how “we will all be homeless” in the future and move to “a model of subscription homes or providing living as a service” (Mairs, 2016). The use of the term homeless is most likely to reflect the move from homeownership to renting rather than homeless in the literal sense.

Surprisingly, the shift to renting a property in England has seen its biggest increase in the 35–44-year-old age bracket (Harvey, 2020). Furthermore, increasingly older people who are entering retirement age have also shown more interest in renting a property, as it provides greater flexibility to fit around their lifestyle (Harvey, 2020). Co-living, especially intergenerational co-living, could provide an effective solution for those at a later stage of life. The current options available to the ageing population who do not require additional support are limited. Options range from staying in their current property or moving to a retirement village or more commonly in urban settings retirement apartment blocks. The lack of choice and yearning to stay independent means elderly people mainly stay in their homes; a report from Age UK (2018) found that 93% of ageing households remained in mainstream housing. Retirement villages and apartment blocks in the UK have a history of hidden costs and usually decrease in value due to the luxury price tag placed on them when first purchased (Bonsignore, 2017). They only aim to serve one group in society, whereas if it were replaced with an intergenerational co-living model, it could serve a wider age demographic, stopping the segregation of older people from the general population. It is estimated by 2025 there will be 14.3 million people over the age of 65 in Britain. The need for flexible housing is only going to increase, co-living could provide a solution to help aid the housing crisis now and in years to come.

## CHAPTER 3 – CASE STUDY EXAMPLES: OLD OAK AND SPRINGHILL COHOUSING COMMUNITY.

In this chapter, there will be an analysis of two examples of co-living residence in the UK: The Collective's Old Oak Common in London, and Springhill cohousing community, Stroud. The chapter aims to explore the

### CASE STUDY ONE: THE COLLECTIVE'S OLD OAK, LONDON.



*IMAGE 9 Old Oak, London*

The first case study is The Collective's Old Oak Common in London. The scheme caters to young professionals working in the city, it was opened in 2016 and is one of the largest co-living facilities in Europe. It has 546 rooms and several communal areas for socialising. The company also provides a multitude of other services for its residents including laundry and bi-weekly cleaning of the wider communal and kitchen areas.

The Collective's marketing model is inspired by providing living as a service (LaaS), which is a branch of the subscription economy. The subscription economy is about providing access to a product or service through the selling of a reoccurring subscription instead of the more traditional one-time transaction (Campbell, 2020). The ideas around living as a service are expanding and can be seen in examples such as purpose-built student accommodation, where the goal is to create a rounded experience instead of providing a bare property one must make into a home.



Providing living as a service has introduced the idea of providing everything a person would need in one place. Combining services and living opens a new concept to how we live, and what our homes should provide. It provides a level of convenience, freedom, and commitment-free living. It could be argued that this convenience may encourage traits of laziness in the younger generation. They may grow to expect this form of living, especially those who have experienced living in purpose-built student accommodation during their studies. Merchant proclaimed that "in theory, you wouldn't have to leave the building if you didn't want to, because you have everything at your fingertips" (Mairs, 2016). This raises issues around wider community engagement. If everything is provided in one place, then people may become lazy and not wish to venture further into the wider community. This could create closed communities and affect economies outside of the one created within the co-living scheme itself.

The design concept for this co-living scheme follows very closely that of purpose-built student accommodation. Residents have the option of an ensuite room within a flat or a studio flat. The personal spaces are small but supplemented with a diverse set of large common areas. This seems like a logical step, as it will feel familiar to those stepping into the adult world after graduating. From the design, it would suggest less of a permanent residence and more of a temporary step that provides its tenants with a manageable space to allow them to develop and experience independence. This is evident during the current covid-19 pandemic, where The Collective found their resident numbers at the Old Oak dropped, suggesting residents returned to other dwellings, possibly family homes (Philips, 2020). This would infer that the connection towards the residence is not yet valued the same as the traditional home. On the other hand, this could also be down to the type of tenure occupants opted for, or the reason for their stay. The need for some to live near the workplace became unnecessary during the pandemic, with many now only returning part-time to the office.



*Image 10 Bedroom, Old Oak*



*Image 11 Communal Area, Old Oak*



*Image 12 Co-working Space, Old Oak*

The Old Oak as a co-living model has worked extremely well. The model provides all the essentials under one price for its residents, which makes it a very attractive offer, especially for the millennial age group the concept it catered towards. Subsequently, this seems like a logical step for those who have just moved out of student accommodation after completing their studies. The model provides a sense of familiarity which can be comforting when moving to a new residence, it allows for young adults to ease into new adulthood responsibilities. For the younger generation who will pass through the PBSA system, co-living will become more normalised and carry associations of home, with more seeking out similar living arrangements when leaving the family unit.

## CASE STUDY TWO: SPRINGHILL COHOUSING COMMUNITY, STROUD.



*Image 13 Springhill Cohousing Community*

The second case study is Springhill Cohousing Community in Stroud, Gloucestershire. This project is a cohousing scheme, a branch of co-living. The development was founded in 2000 by David Michael and his wife and completed in 2005. Springhill caters to a variety of ages; the only requirement is that residents follow the rules and values set out by the founding committee. The entire scheme was planned and managed by its intended residents, a common theme in cohousing schemes. The project was recognised as the first new-build cohousing scheme in Britain and was commended with an award for its contributions to sustainable community development (Newton, 2009).

The Springhill project takes inspiration from cohousing which follows its own set of principles. The main difference, as highlighted at the beginning of the thesis, is the sustained involvement of the intended inhabitants throughout the life of the project (Field, 2004). This key principle is what sets cohousing apart as a branch of co-living. It helps to create a strong sense of belonging, due in part to the level of responsibility handed to the residents through design, management, and upkeep of the build. This involvement produces a level of personalisation and pride in the communities it creates. Unless designing a self-build, there are few opportunities to be involved in the design of housing as a consumer in the UK. Field (2004) commented, “there is a substantial lack of awareness of political decision-making at all levels – local, regional and national”. It is not a part of the public’s awareness to think about how new housing stock is designed, even though it is the main factor they will consider during the purchase. Cohousing puts the power in the hands of the end-user by allowing them to make contributions to the development of the site. This can have a huge impact on how long a person stays in their property as they can design in measures to aid flexible use of space.

However, this is also the reason for its small number of successful developments, accounting for only one percent of British housing stock (Shafique, 2018). Cohousing settlements have historically been designed and created by independent groups through self-funding. Independent groups can have little to no experience in construction, design, and other skills required to build such a project. Funding also makes this a difficult venture as there is little support offered by the government to assist in the development of these sites.

Regarding Springhill’s audience, the community does require members to follow a set of established principles to qualify for housing. These principles are not governed by an accredited person only the community itself. Sargission (2012) describes how contemporary cohousing advocates are “nonideological, they attempt to distance themselves from radicalism and extremism”. The problems lie with what one deems to be too ideological or radical. People have varying opinions and will not always agree on the same things. The positive in Springhill is that these principles can be reviewed and updated as the community evolves.



The site is made up of thirty-five separate dwellings, a mix of three, four, and five-bed houses and flats. The project is not aimed specifically at a particular group of people, which is evident in its diverse set of dwellings. However, the location and setting do lend themselves to attract older people and families. The last census of the site in 2018 identified seventy-nine adult occupants and twenty-seven children (Foundation for International Community, 2018). This would suggest that a high percentage of occupants are family units. The dwellings are all situated around a central common house, where optional community activities take place. This is reminiscent of traditional elements of village design which adds again to the narrative of attracting an older class of people. The extensive site is positioned in a location that is approximately ten minutes' walk from town and the train station. This means residents are not cut off from the surrounding facilities and can still feel motivated to engage with the wider community.



*Image 14 Site Map of Springhill, Stroud*

The exploration in this chapter highlighted some of the strengths and weaknesses related to the two case studies. The first case study, the old oak, is becoming a vastly popular form of co-living among the younger population. Its attractive social activities and low maintenance living provide a suitable environment for young professionals working in the city. Its likeness to recent forms of student accommodation also provides a sense of familiarity to those leaving university education.

The second case study, Springhill Cohousing Community, is one of the oldest co-living developments in Britain and has maintained a well-connected community of varying age groups. The design of the development puts more focus on private dwellings, which attracted older groups of people and family units. The two case studies provide positive insight into the success co-living developments can achieve in Britain. They also show how versatile co-living developments can be concerning the design and intended users. For the future, it would be interesting to see how new developments tackle private and shared spaces and how new intergeneration groups are formed.



## CHAPTER 4: SUGGESTED STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS SURROUNDING THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CO-LIVING IN BRITAIN.

This chapter will start with a discussion of strengths supporting further development of co-living in Britain. There will be an analysis of three main points: personal wellbeing, contributions to the sharing and circular economy, and environmental sustainability. Following this, the issues that weaken the argument for further development: legal policy, creating a standardised design model, and inclusivity.

Co-living can provide the optimal conditions for social interaction between people. It goes one step further than the current traditional residential layout by creating more opportunities for people to engage with each other. One of the main principles of co-living is to facilitate active communities and create deeper connections between people. For this reason, co-living would be a logical way to help tackle the epidemic of isolation and loneliness crippling the UK's young and old population (Pyle and Evans, 2018). Loneliness and isolation can affect various aspects of people's lives making them more prone to issues such as depression, unproductiveness, substance abuse, unhealthy diets, and much more (Studio Weave, 2020). In older generations, it can be detrimental to their health, with serious consequences like an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia (Griffin, 2010). With the rising trend and focus of designing for wellbeing within the built environment, further development into how co-living can be incorporated into the UK housing market could be part of the solution, with the potential to "serve major policy goals for local and national" targets. (Patel, 2018)

A study conducted by the Mental Health Foundation found that nearly 34.8% of people did not feel connected to their community (Griffin, 2010). The study also highlighted that the general sense of community across Britain has declined significantly in the last thirty years. Some argue the British people have exhausted their need for individualism. Cacioppo (2008) shared this thought "A rising tide can indeed lift a variety of boats, but in a culture of social isolates, atomised by social and economic upheaval and separated by vast inequalities, it can also cause millions to drown". It is evident that housing needs to be thought of holistically and not just a numbered target to hit. Co-living can provide an option for those who are more likely to be affected by feelings of isolation.

Another reason to consider the further use and development of co-living schemes is the growing interest in the sharing and the circular economy. The sharing economy is an economic principle that is constantly evolving and is a business trend that is growing dramatically (Miller, 2019). Shor (2014) writes that the "sharing economy activities fall into four broad categories: recirculation of goods, increased utilisation of durable assets, exchange of services, and sharing of productive assets." The concept of co-housing would come under 'the sharing of productive assets.' Current residential design is biased towards providing

private dwellings for families. Each property is a copy of the next providing the same four spaces to eat, sleep, wash and relax. The sharing economy interprets the current house building trends as inefficient and isolating (McLaren and Agyeman, 2015), therefore it is important to provide a variety.

The circular economy aims to minimise waste. WRAP (2021) states it “is an alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life”. This could be applied to co-living concepts depending on the context in which they are placed. Where space is at a premium in large cities, co-living schemes provide a new avenue to explore when considering adaptive reuse strategies. Populating an old building through adaptive reuse would help support the notion of the circular economy. The introduction of co-living schemes, especially intergenerational schemes, would provide an alternative option to owning a house. This could help make the housing market more mobile by freeing up housing stock. People looking to downsize from their family home would be the ideal market for this as it would provide a flexible downsizing option freeing up a family home for someone else to raise their family in. The two principles together can work towards a more circular residential sector.

A further benefit of co-living is the opportunity it creates for low-impact sustainable living. Co-living may provide an environment where having fewer possessions becomes normal and more emphasis on sharing resources creates a more sustainable environment. The group of people most attracted to co-living, 18–30-year-olds, are more consciously aware of the environment and how their actions impact upon it. Research has shown that younger people are looking at how the services they use impact the environment. They want to consume products that are sympathetic to the increasing pressures of climate change. Co-living models can embrace these demands and provide a more sustainable way of living in urban areas.

The most recent co-living structures lend themselves well to the use of new modern methods of construction (MMC). Methods like prefabricated construction are proven to be more efficient ways of constructing buildings as they create less waste than traditional masonry construction. Construction waste is one of the biggest contributors to landfills, in 2016 it was estimated that 60 million tonnes of construction and demolition waste were produced in the UK (GCB, 2020) with almost a third ending up in landfills.

One of the first issues facing the further development of co-living models in Britain is a lack of legal policy guidance. Co-living models require standards to be outlined by the government as they currently do not exist. This is due to co-living models not being a commonly used residential model. The lack of legal guidance causes a variety of issues, including its suitability for low-income housing. Currently, there are no minimum space requirements set out for developers to follow. Guidance must be put in place to maximise the potential success of co-living schemes. This is especially important when designing private living areas, Coldwell

(2019) expressed the opinion, “co-living places are trying to squeeze every living space into the same building, which makes it unliveable for the long-term”. In current models, like the Old Oak, the private quarters are small bedrooms. Occupant’s sacrifice having large private spaces to accommodate the range of shared spaces. This strategy currently works well for the young professional but may start to lose its appeal for those in later life. A minimum space requirement will prevent exploitation and maintain tenants’ rights to quality housing. The minimum requirement will help create a framework for designing the right balance between shared and private spaces.

A second challenge facing the development of co-living is creating a functioning model that can be applied to a variety of situations. It is hard to standardise co-living as it has come about in so many forms across the world. This makes it difficult to determine a particular design style. This may cause issues if a standard model cannot be formed. It may be deemed too much of a risk for investors and developers who would prefer the financial safety of proven traditional housing models. It has been suggested that the top-down approach of co-living did not perform as well as ‘grass root’ schemes (Field, 2004). In the more established form of co-living, cohousing, the main principle is user engagement through the design process. This can be successful but can also cause issues when participants lack the technical understanding of residential planning. On the contrary, the reason for the success of some cohousing projects is down to personalisation, moving away from the standardised form of housing. Each community is unique, it may follow loose guidance but ultimately designs according to the intended resident’s needs.

The third challenge around co-living is the attitudes around it being niche and not inclusive. Due to historic co-living developments born out of necessity or collective values, it is argued this could lead to groups detaching themselves from society. Steele (2018) stated, “there is a risk that co-living communities can become insular and disconnected from the broader neighbourhood”. Shafique (2018) reported how “sociological studies confirm that co-housing inhabitants are predominantly well-educated, middle-income households”. These are important facts to consider for the future development of co-living, making sure it is an inclusive model that is made accessible to members of society. A similar issue to this lies in the attitudes towards the concept of co-living by the public and some developers. There are varying levels of scepticism towards co-living, Martin field (2004) wrote, “modern social engagement has placed privacy and separateness above other interactions”. British culture has evolved to champion homeownership and privacy. In a report by Quinio and Burgess (2019), “property ownership is still a very ingrained culture, particularly among older people, and this influences perceptions of housing and inheritance”. In Britain, a home is an investment and viewed as an asset to accrue financial equity for oneself in the future. This attitude towards our homes might make it difficult to encourage exploration of alternative options. This could also be affected by the lack of public awareness around the types of housing alternatives. In the same report, it highlighted that “people do not hear about it, and therefore do not know that it is an alternative option”.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is important to note that co-living assets are still in their infancy in Britain. The above analysis highlights how further implementation of co-living could benefit the people of Britain and the housing market. Evidence suggested from similar developments (co-working and PBSA) have encouraged positive attitudes towards shared spaces. The key point from this discussion is the importance of diversifying housing stock by looking to forms of housing outside of the normal. Co-living is extremely broad in its capabilities and the potential benefits it can provide is an enticing reason to continue further development of co-living assets. Even though models do not follow strict designs, a move away from standardised housing may be what is needed to improve the lives and wellbeing of the population.

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