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Press Release | **EMBARGO: 29 March 2023**

Groundbreaking permanently affordable homes designed by local community open in Lewisham

London Community Land Trust, Lewisham Citizens, Lewisham Council & Archio Architects

London Borough of Lewisham, 29 March 2023 – After ten years of campaigning by local people through Lewisham Citizens, 11 genuinely and permanently affordable homes for local people are now complete at Citizens House, the first community land trust in London that has been directly created by the community using London CLT's unique affordability model, in partnership with Lewisham Citizens, Lewisham Council and the Greater London Authority.

Previously an underused garage site, Citizens House's 11 new homes are genuinely affordable because home prices are linked to average incomes in Lewisham. 2-bedrooms are priced at £272,500 and 1-bedrooms are priced at £215,000, approximately 65% of the market price for homes in the same neighbourhood, meeting the needs of local people who otherwise would be priced out of their communities. When residents move out, they must resell their homes at prices continually linked to local incomes, meaning they will be permanently affordable for generations to come.

Citizens House is now home to nine families who have just moved in, with two families in the process, all of whom have roots in Lewisham, including local teachers, artists and NHS workers. To be eligible for one of the homes, the new residents had to have a strong 5-year connection to the Borough of Lewisham, demonstrate a serious housing need, show their involvement in their local community, and have sufficient income and savings to get a mortgage.

The homes are being delivered by **London Community Land Trust** who work with local residents and organisations across the city to deliver homes and community spaces. Community land trusts (CLTs) are set up and run by ordinary people to design, develop and manage homes and other assets for local communities, acting as long-term stewards of land.

This project started as a campaign by local people through **Lewisham Citizens**, part of Citizens UK, which enables communities and local leaders to come together with the power and strategy to make real change. Concerned about the lack of affordable homes in their neighbourhood, local residents decided to do something about it as a community. Since then, nearly 500 Lewisham residents have become members of London CLT and local people have led the entire project, making all key decisions on the political campaign, land, home prices, design, planning and management. Community members selected and collaborated with key partners including BPM, Roof and Archio, who were chosen by local residents through a "choose the architect" vote and a series of public workshops. The land for the project, previously an underused garage site, was provided by Lewisham Council and the development forms part of their Building for Lewisham programme, which is delivering new social and affordable housing for local residents across the borough.

With a total construction cost of £2.5m, Citizens House was funded by £1.1m in grants through the Mayor of London's £38m Community Housing Fund; the Big Issue Invest London Housing Fund, supported by the Greater London Authority; and London CLT community shareholders.



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Janet Emmanuel, Assistant Headteacher at Sydenham School, Chair of the project's Community Steering Group, said:

"Citizens House would not be here without a genuine collaboration between Lewisham Citizens, Lewisham Council and London Community Land Trust. It's amazing what we can achieve when we unite and work together. I became involved in the campaign from the beginning because I have three children who I knew would struggle to buy a home and live in the borough we all love. Citizens House and Unity Way provides young people like my children the chance to live, work and contribute to Lewisham."

James Neligan, a new resident at Citizens House, said:

"Since we moved into Citizens House in January, everyday we have felt a sense of satisfaction and general happiness that we have become homeowners. This is something we had as recently as 18 months ago resigned ourselves to never being achievable, despite both having full time, fairly well paid jobs. The flat itself is brilliant- bright, spacious, well kitted out and built with care, you can tell it hasn't been hastily thrown up by a developer only concerned about their profit margin. I believe that the Community Land Trust model could help thousands of people similar to us in London and beyond, I really hope London CLT get future funding and support to continue this forward thinking, more benevolent approach to the broken housing market."

Ralitsa Angelova, a new resident at Citizens House, said:

"It really changes how you feel when you know you are living in your own home. Yes, you have a mortgage to pay but you are no more wasting money on rents, you are paying off 100% of your home. And this is what makes the CLT affordable homes scheme stand above others - you are not paying just part of a shared ownership plus mortgage plus rent like some other affordable homes schemes. Yes, there are rules to follow but again, they are far more favourable than the rules that come with other schemes. The main thing is you are owning your home 100%. Knowing this changes your brain chemistry - you feel secure and stable. You are more productive and more content. This influences positively all other aspects of your life. You feel you are standing on a firm foundation and you are hopeful for the future."

Kes Gill-Martin, a new resident at Citizens House, said:

"Moving into the CLT has been completely transformative. Knowing that I'm part of a community, that I'm buying into something bigger than myself, rather than paying a landlords mortgage, is great. It's also changed the way me and my partner have been able to think about our futures, our lives. We've never had such stability to rely on, to depend on, to have as a basis for our plans and dreams."

"I also love the CLT model. It's amazing to be in good housing that not only works for me on a practical level, but also aligns with my values, my politics, my belief in community. I also love the fact that if we ever move out then the flat will be made available to the next person who needs it, on the same basis as us. It shows that making flats that are permanently affordable is possible, and actually quite straightforward. Which is so important now after we've seen so much social housing that has been sold off to the private sector without being properly replaced."



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Emma Evangelista, a new resident at Citizens House, said:

"I am 33 years old and have lived in my family home in Forest Hill since I was born. I have worked at a local primary school for over 10 years and through my work I've built a strong connection to my local community. I have spent my whole life saving up in the hopes that I would be able to move out and stay in the area, close to my mum and close to the job that I love, but as soon as I started looking, I realised that the prices of property in the area were something I would never be able to afford on my salary. My only options were to rent an apartment that I couldn't afford and watch my savings disappear, or to move out of London, away from my friends, family and community.

"In 2022 when I stumbled upon the Citizens House CLT I almost didn't apply as it seemed too good to be true, but I'm so thankful that I did. One year later and I have just moved into my dream apartment, a short walk from both my job and my family home. It's warm, modern, energy efficient and getting to know my neighbours before even moving in has been an added bonus! I am eternally grateful to the London CLT and I hope that more projects can be green lit to help others that are in the same situation."

Alex Ingram, a new resident at Citizens House, said:

"I've spent the last decade bouncing around flats in London, lodges and houseshares and it's felt like I've had to keep my life packed up, or at least ready to move. Now that I have a secure home I've been able to lose the boxes and also organise my flat to suit my needs. It is so liberating to have a home that provides space for me to live, work and keep my connection to the community, and indeed build it stronger."

"I remember a few years back I got lost cycling home in Lewisham and found myself cycling into dead end streets full of derelict parking garages. I'd just moved home and it drove me mad seeing such a bad use of space, when we need more homes. I am so happy now to be in a home that has taken a space like that and made it into modern, affordable housing."

"I'm really glad that my home is not just affordable now, but will stay an affordable home, with a price linked to local incomes. I don't want to have to change jobs just to stay in London and keep my links to my local community - a decent home at a fair cost seems extraordinary, but it should be the least we can expect."

Peter Brierley, Assistant Director at Citizens UK and Lead Organiser with London Citizens, said:

"Citizens House in Lewisham will stand as a permanent reminder of the power of communities. This project was led by local people refusing to accept that something as essential as housing is unaffordable for so many. Members of Lewisham Citizens organised, built power and presented decision makers with practical and pragmatic ways of tackling Lewisham's housing crisis. Our hope now is that this is the first of many."



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Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development, said:

"With soaring house prices and a rental market that is under considerable strain, building more genuinely affordable homes in London remains one of the Mayor's top priorities.

"Community-led housing is a key part of this mission and I am delighted that after a decade of hard work, Citizens House is ready to offer eleven new permanently affordable homes to the people of Lewisham. I have followed the progress of this development closely and I know it will make a huge difference to the residents living there and the local community as a whole. Putting communities at the heart of our housing decisions is an essential part of our work to build a better, fairer, more prosperous London for all."

Damien Egan, Mayor of Lewisham, said:

"Citizens House in Sydenham is Lewisham's first completed community land trust development. 11 new homes have been built, all of them at permanently affordable rates. It's a great project and I'm pleased the Council were able to release land to work with London CLT, Lewisham Citizens and the GLA to make it a reality."

Oliver Bulleid, Executive Director at London CLT said:

"It's an exciting time for London CLT - Citizens House is our first direct housing project and shows that communities working together and with support from Lewisham Council and the GLA, can identify development opportunities and then work constructively together to make them happen. We are delighted that this project not only provides high quality new homes but also improves the neighbourhood, and is paving the way for our other developments across London, including 41 homes in Shadwell, 21 Passivhaus homes in adjoining Greenwich, and 31 new homes in nearby Lambeth, plus other projects in the pipeline."

Mellis Haward, Director at Archio Architects said:

"Architecture is so much more than the finished building, and it has been an honour to work collaboratively with local people on these utterly community-led and affordable homes. As designers we listened to the hopes and concerns of local residents and incorporated their input into the designs, including the layout and materiality of the playful public space outside the homes, which is a direct result of many co-design workshops."

Danyal Sattar, Chief Executive at Big Issue Invest said:

"Our job at Big Issue Invest is to get money to communities to finance their needs. Building genuinely affordable homes for local people is such a hard thing to do and I'm honoured that we have been a small part of this journey. As a local Lewisham resident, I could not be happier to see this happening a short journey from my own home."



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Tom Chance, Chief Executive at the National CLT Network, said:

"London CLT demonstrates that communities can build wealth and community cohesion by building high quality affordable homes. Citizens House takes the total number of homes built or bought by CLTs in England to over 2,000. There is huge potential to scale their activity, and that of other CLTs, especially if more councils and developers choose to partner with communities through CLTs."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Please contact sylvia@londonclt.org for more information and images.

Citizens House Community Opening Celebration on 2nd April: Local community members and partners from across the city will celebrate the opening of Citizens House together on 2nd April with local campaigners, Lewisham Citizens, and politicians from Lewisham Council and the Greater London Authority.

Design of Citizens House:

Following an extensive co-design process with residents and local community members, a three-to-four storey building was developed that faces onto a landscaped courtyard with community cohesion embedded into its design, encouraging new and existing residents to interact and integrate over time. For example, the staggered balconies allow residents to talk to each other across the main facade, and the extra wide walkway to the rear allows space for meeting with neighbours and for children to play.

Located on a highly constrained site, the building has a stepped profile to address the change in height between the surrounding developments and has been carefully positioned to fit into the existing layout of the estate, whilst minimising impact on neighbouring residents and the school. A series of insets have been carved into the block to bring light into the centre of the building. The exterior is made up of a pale brick, with a central winding staircase at the rear, and solar panels on the roof.

The building has also been positioned to open-up an existing pedestrian route into a new shared public space. This space was co-designed with local residents to facilitate events such as the estate summer barbecue. It is important to acknowledge the trust residents have put into the design process from the outset – the architects began the project by running a three-day co-design workshop from a temporary office on site. This allowed them to begin designing in collaboration with local people and sent a strong message that their interests were central to the process.

London Community Land Trust (CLT) is a community-led nonprofit organisation working with local people to create genuinely and permanently affordable homes and community spaces, putting Londoners back in charge of how their neighbourhoods change.



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It was the first CLT in the capital to sell homes, starting with its flagship project at St Clements in Tower Hamlets with 23 homes, and now continuing with its first direct development and fully community-led project at Citizens House in Lewisham with 11 homes.

Homes are genuinely affordable because prices are linked to average local incomes, based on data from the Office for National Statistics. Homes should not cause financial stress and residents should not spend more than a third of their income on housing costs. Homes remain permanently affordable because when residents move out, they must resell their homes at rates continually linked to local earnings.

London CLT works to acquire and steward land so it is in the hands of the local community in perpetuity, with the goal that the homes it creates on that land make a difference in people's lives, creating stability, sanctuary, security and community. Its support for local groups means they can have ownership of CLTs without having to reinvent the technical and practical understanding and relationships necessary to enable their delivery. London CLT has a total of 10 projects across 6 London boroughs, with 34 homes built to date and a pipeline of 150+ new homes in development. www.londonclt.org

Lewisham Citizens are part of national charity Citizens UK, which uses broad-based organising to build people's power, lead change for the common good, and strengthen civil society institutions. We have diverse alliances across the UK made up of over 550 civic organisations who develop their own local agendas whilst also uniting around campaigns across the country. Organisations work together to make change by winning concrete commitments from public and private sector power holders. www.citizensuk.org

Lewisham Council's Building for Lewisham programme: Like the rest of London, Lewisham is facing a severe shortage of social housing, with 10,000 families on the Council's housing waiting list and 3,000 families in temporary accommodation. The Building for Lewisham programme is delivering new social and affordable housing for local residents, helping to tackle the housing crisis. www.lewisham.gov.uk/BuildingForLewisham

Big Issue Invest: Founded in 2005, Big Issue Invest (BII) is the social investment arm of The Big Issue which extends the organisation's mission to dismantle poverty through creating opportunity. BII offers loans and investment from £20,000 to £3 million to social enterprises and charities across the UK. The capital raised by BII is from private sources and not from sales of the magazine. Big Issue Invest currently manages £42.8m.

Since 2005 we have provided £44 million in impact loans to more than 400 hundred social enterprises, alongside nearly £27 million in larger and more patient investments across coming from three major funds with a committed capital of nearly £43 million. www.bigissueinvest.com

Archio are architects creating buildings, places and strategies for local authority regeneration companies, housing associations, select private developers, cohousing and community-led groups. We believe that regeneration is most effective when design teams, councils and local communities



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co-produce visionary approaches that enrich lives. Our focus is on working with purpose-led clients who have a long-term interest in the vitality of the communities they operate in. www.archio.co.uk

Rooff (www.rooff.co.uk) and **BPM** (www.bpm-london.com) were the construction companies for Citizens House.