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Cohousing scheme and Treehouse open doors for eco homes event

Open Eco Homes offers curious members of the public the opportunity to learn more about environmentally-friendly homes in Cambridge from the people who live there. **Adrian Peel** reports.

The under-construction Cambridge Mosque and an award-nominated new-build home known as 'The Treehouse' on St Barnabas Road will be among the sites welcoming visitors on October 8 and 14 as part of the annual Cambridge event, Open Eco Homes.

The open day, which this year opens 13 innovative homes across Cambridge, Girton and Impington, gives people the chance to learn how to cut their energy use and create cosy dwellings by talking to ordinary householders who have already done it themselves.

The retrofits at each location are all very different. "What people get from an Open Eco Home tour is inspiration and good advice from people who have already done it," explained organiser Allan Shepherd. "As well as the tour, we make a guide for each home so people get the details of relevant contractors, technologies and techniques for creating the home they want.

"This year there will be an award-nominated home from German eco-constructors, Baufritz, impressive DIY and contractor-led renovations, a co-housing development and Pease House High Street in Girton, a beautiful family self-build with a rammed earth wall at the heart of

a heat management system, regulating solar thermal gain."

K1 Cambridge – now known as Marmalade Lane – will also be taking part. A community-inspired cohousing project currently under construction on Orchard Park in Cambridge – expected to be completed by June of next year – the scheme is backed by Cambridge City Council and offers a range of low-energy Swedish Trivselhus homes built around a shared space and large communal garden.

Notable for its environmental and energy efficient credentials, Marmalade Lane will open its doors, so to speak, on Saturday, October 14 for a talk and tour. The first scheduled tour – for 30 people – at 3.30pm booked up extremely quickly, so another has been arranged for 12pm.

Jan Chadwick, one of the directors of Cambridge Cohousing Ltd and a future resident of the development, told the *Cambridge Independent*: "We were asked by Allan about whether we would like to participate, and of course it's a classic fit really for Marmalade Lane because the environmental credentials that we will have – the closed frame, the air-force heat pump, mechanical ventilation heat recovery, the fact that we will only have electricity on site, not gas – seemed very much linked to how we approach things, and also the

fact that being cohousing we've got a shared economy.

"So it's not just the eco nature of the homes we're building that is of interest, but the fact that we're going to be using collectively fewer resources as a group. We participated last year but didn't have anything to show, other than a field!"

Jan continued: "This time we're really excited because not only will we be doing the presentation, but we'll have a bit of the frame to show people – our developer is sending a big chunk of frame down so people can look at the construction of a Trivselhus closed frame system.

"Also we'll be able to take people around the site so they can actually see work in progress, and see how the whole thing is coming together."

Billed as 'Europe's first eco-mosque', Cambridge Mosque will boast a wide range of environmental features, from heat pumps to rainwater harvesting – as well as being an important and beautiful piece of architecture.

Award-nominated The Treehouse is built by Baufritz and features one of the most insulated factory constructed wall systems in Europe, as well as mechanical ventilation with heat recovery and an array of other environmental features.

Technologies on display include



Retrovive, an innovative underfloor insulation system by Devana Insulation.

Said Allan: "Most of us are living in older houses that need improving. Our householders use a mixture of DIY and bought-in solutions like Retrovive underfloor insulation to make their



The eco-homes open to visitors over the next couple of weeks

Macfarlane Close, Impington (1960)

Open Sunday, October 8 at 10.30am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm

High Street, Girton (1920 and 2012)

Open Sunday, October 8 at 10.30am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm

Saint Margaret's Road, Girton (1930)

10.30am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm

K1 Cambridge (2017)

Open Saturday, October 14 at 12pm. The 3.30pm slot is fully booked

Chesterton Road (1896)

Open Sunday, October 8 and Saturday, October 14 at 2pm and 3.30pm

Madingley Road (2010)

Open Sunday, October 8 at 2pm and 3.30pm (both now fully booked) and Saturday, October 14 at 10.30am (now fully booked), 12pm, 2pm (now fully booked) and 3.30pm

Silverwood Close (1930s)

Open Sunday, October 8 at 10.30am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm

The Cambridge Mosque (2017)

Open Saturday, October 14 at 10.30am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm

St Barnabas Road - 'The Treehouse' (2016)

Opens Sunday, October 8, though is fully booked

Eltisley Avenue (1902)

Opens Sunday, October 8 and Saturday, October 14 at 10.30am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm

Rathmore Road (2015)

Opens Sunday, October 8 and Saturday, October 14 at 10.30am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm

Topcliffe Way (1963)

Opens Sunday, October 8 at 10.30am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm and Saturday, October 14 at 10.30am and 12 noon

■ openecohomes.org

homes more cosy and energy efficient.

“From simple and cheaper draught-proofing solutions to renewable energy, the range of ideas is quite impressive. Household-ers tend to combine the eco-retrofit work with other work that needs doing, building an

extension, adding a dormer, replacing the roof. This makes economic and cosy sense.”

Along with the 3.30pm showing at Marmalade Lane, the tour at St Barnabas Road – the Baufritz-designed Treehouse with numerous ecological features – is also fully booked.

■ Visitors to Open Eco Homes can book tours via openecohomes.org.uk or by phoning 01223 301842. Homes are open on October 8 and 14 and offer four tours per day, with a maximum of eight people on each tour (except K1, which can take up to 30 people). All the tours are free.

Media photographs Open Eco Homes 2017, sourced by Open Eco Homes

