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Book

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Characteristics of Cohousing Neighbourhoods

Further detail on the essential characteristics of cohousing neighbourhoods¹ :

(a) Designing for ‘intentional neighbourhoods’

Cohousing communities have been developed within discrete neighbourhoods whose layout makes deliberate use of architectural and design features to maximise intentional and incidental social contact between neighbours. A familiar example of this is that private internal rooms where people spend a significant amount of time (like kitchen areas) are placed to look out towards external communal spaces where neighbours are walking or relaxing, in order to generate spontaneous opportunities for residents to make visual or verbal contact together.

Cohousing neighbourhoods are moreover invariably vehicle-free, with the use of any cars restricted to parking or garage areas at the edge of the neighbourhood area, in order to maximise other space for pedestrian and leisure use. There may be some small individual garden areas for household use, however these are generally modest in size in order to encourage neighbours to meet and mix together in the neighbourhood's wider open and recreational spaces.

(b) The minimum provision of private and common facilities

All households in cohousing neighbourhoods have private and self-contained accommodation – i.e. they all have sole private use of their own domestic living, eating, cooking and washing spaces. This is, however, usually supplemented by other facilities within the wider neighbourhood that are shared and used by all

the community's households. Such shared facilities could include a laundry, guest accommodation, and rooms for craft and hobby activities – some cohousing settings have barns, greenhouses, garages, workshops, and a sports ground!

The design and location of a common building or common house is crucial, since it will be a venue for communal facilities, as well as the place where community members come together, particularly to share meals. While there is no standard blueprint for such “common facilities”, a minimum would be that they allow for the preparation and enjoyment of sharing meals and be of a sufficient size for all the households and community members to meet together for joint activities, whenever this is desired.

(c) Community size and scale to support community dynamics

Cohousing communities have recognised that there is an important balance to achieve between creating a common sense of identity in a neighbourhood, and sustaining a sufficient level of privacy for each household. In practice, this means that cohousing communities recognise that the scale of their settings has to pay attention to both personal and interpersonal dimensions – to how big or how small it is. There is a recognition that the sense of being part of a ‘community’ nevertheless needs to accommodate times when some households may choose or need to be private and not feel obliged to participate in communal activities, without their absence constraining other communal activities or dynamics.

There is also the recognition that the total size of the neighbourhood population should enable all members to know one another and be known on a personal basis, and not be so large a group that such familiarity is too difficult to sustain. If cohousing has one key ‘sustainable dynamic’ it is arguably this attention given to the scale of neighbourhood development. It should not be so small as to be over-powering in pressing households to interact constantly together, but neither too big as to be beyond sustaining meaningful contact and relationships with the other households in that neighbourhood. While individual households will obviously vary in their separate make-up of ages and sizes, a rule-of-thumb from Danish commentators for a viable size of the wider community is that the

number of adults will be somewhere between about ten and forty.

(d) Residents' control and management of their own neighbourhoods

The residents of a cohousing neighbourhood are always responsible for all the aspects of its creation and operation. This invariably starts in the managing of formalities for the planning, design and financing arrangements required at each stage of the neighbourhood's development, and often includes making and then managing professional appointments to carry out the different construction, legal and technical necessities of such development.

The residents will also be collectively responsible for managing the neighbourhood and its facilities. Any difference between the individual tenure of households will not matter here – all the households will collectively agree to ‘rules’ of the neighbourhood, have a say in choosing new member-households in the future, and share and agree the ongoing costs of the neighbourhood and communal facilities and any other service charges.

Note

1. An abridgement of text taken from ‘Thinking about Cohousing’, Diggers & Dreamers Publications, 2004.

Appendix B:

Some Distinctions Between Cohousing and Community Land Trusts

Given the above restatement of cohousing's core characteristics, it would perhaps be a little pedantic to repeat verbatim how cohousing has been distinguished in the past from other kinds of neighbourhood or community housing provision. What is more appropriate is to take a moment to reflect on how cohousing may compare with the attention given to the growing popularity of Community Land Trusts (CLTs), as a focus for providing new and affordable housing for local people.

The growing interest in the development of Community Land Trusts in the UK already attests to how they might address local community and housing needs. Some CLTs are principally focused on achieving a local and shared land-use, such as for food production, rather than on built development for housing purposes; what follows looks principally at housing-centred CLTs. In a spirit that is certainly akin to the promotion of cohousing projects, CLTs want to establish sustainable local housing in which local people will have a clear lead. The design of CLTs could even incorporate the essential characteristics of cohousing neighbourhoods, if its promoters were so minded, and a sensitive suggestion of the facilities of a cohousing-shaped CLT being available to other local people in its vicinity, might strengthen a CLT's potential to gain support from a host community! In the main, however, plans for CLT provision in the UK have been small in scale – certainly smaller in scale and site size than what Appendix A states as a fundamental minimum for cohousing projects. This would suggest they would be below the size for a recognisably cohousing 'dynamic' to emerge.

The range in the motivating and decision-making factors behind CLT schemes is also extremely broad, to the extent whereby an acceptable 'accountability' to local people does not require the resident-managed approach of cohousing areas. At one end of this spectrum of projects are CLT bodies whose ambitions are largely steered by the households looking to be housed in CLT property. At the other end, however, CLT bodies are demonstrating a more 'philanthropic' attitude, whereby local members of a community wish to secure new resources in order to build local affordable housing for local households in need – but to be organised through a Management Board structure that is comprised of local supporters, rather than from the households themselves. (Securing charitable status for the CLT body may indicate that it will not be open to ultimate control by resident households themselves.) To date, the main CLT provision in the UK has principally been of the 'philanthropic' kind. Their focus has been very firmly on securing the means to provide affordable housing for local households (both to rent and for low-cost ownership). A strong motivating factor for CLT developments has been to provide new housing that can fit with the fabric of each host community, rather than a specific approach to developing any wider intentionally-minded neighbourhood. This has

also meant that such CLT projects have not sought to provide the kinds of the other shared neighbourhood facilities that would go into a recognisable cohousing area, along with the residential dwellings.

What is however very telling about the growing momentum of the UK's CLT movement is the relative acceptance of the concept of 'land trusts' by both local decision-takers and wider policy makers, and the degree of success this is already producing for schemes on the ground. CLT's overt promotion of local affordable housing is likely to be a crucial factor in gaining local support, as the provision of such housing is at the front of many current local priorities, before that of creating whole new neighbourhoods. This contrasts fairly starkly with the reception experienced by many cohousing proposals during the past few years, where, despite the commitment and hard endeavours of groups looking to secure cohousing-focused resources, a similar degree of local support and success has simply not been achieved. Is this because local supporters of CLT schemes are more likely to have direct access to local land, than cohousing's proponents? Or is it because local CLT ambitions can proceed on smaller sites than would be feasible for cohousing development? It should no longer be the case that cohousing is seen as only providing for more affluent households, rather than those in need (as sought by CLTs). The examples of the Threshold and LILAC schemes clearly demonstrate that cohousing is now making real advances in the range of tenures it can provide in the UK: there are certainly no longer grounds for seeing such developments as incompatible with equivalent-sized CLT proposals.

Appendix C:

What Research Would Be Useful for Understanding Cohousing in the UK?

CRISTINA CERULLI AND MARTIN FIELD

Communal, mutual and collaborative models of residential development are increasingly emerging as powerful propositions to address the changing social, environmental and economic contexts in which they

are taking place. In both 'user-produced' and academic literature there is evidence of a renewed, growing interest in communal housing solutions and in shared and collaboratively developed facilities for recreation and living, alongside a corresponding interest in any increased participation in neighbouring and community activities.

One of the key underlying themes in academic and non-academic literature is the link between communal forms of living and wellbeing with particular reference to the implicit encouragement of neighbouring activities, social interaction and the strengthening of a 'sense of community'. Research into neighbourhoods, social interaction and wellbeing highlights the need for studies looking at neighbourhood and community boundaries as they are used and experienced, rather than as defined by census data. Communal housing is in many ways a 'special case', as social interaction and the rethinking of community boundaries are often central to both their development and day-to-day running. By studying the ways in which social interactions develop within different types of communal housing and in their surrounding neighbourhoods, research should help develop a wider understanding of what is distinct in communal housing schemes from their wider socio-economic context.

Research and academic networks such as the 'International Association of People-Environment Studies', the 'Intentional Communal Studies Association' and the 'Utopian Studies Society' have been exploring the interrelation of people and the environment for years. Other networks of like-minded community endeavours – such as the 'Fellowship for Intentional Communities' and the 'Global Ecovillage Network', have devoted close examination to how sustainable communal housing models offer the potential to reduce building footprints, energy use and living costs. Books and articles that systematically expand on the potential for a more egalitarian and equitable society routinely examine how communal housing typically questions the conventional division of public and private space, and the notion of caring, both for others and for the environment. Indeed, this is often cited as one of the main drivers behind collaborative and co-operative schemes.

However, despite this extensive work there is still something of a lack in the literature of systematic study into

the exemplars of communal housing projects, and their wider spatial and architectural significance in a given historic context. Research into the areas of wellbeing, social interaction and the built environment to date has tended to remain discipline-specific: psychology has tended to focus on the sense of community and use patterns of 'neighbourhoods', while public health and urban planning often approach 'wellbeing' through comparing attitudes of relocated residents. Few texts make explicit reference to the actual design of intentional communal housing developments or attempt to make salient connections to them. There is a need for cross-disciplinary research on the actual design of communal housing and neighbourhood schemes and for wider discussion around the socio-economic impact of developing and living in such settings.

In order to gauge the limits and opportunities for cohousing development in the UK today, and to explore what type, model and focus of research might offer support here, it will help to situate cohousing within the wider context of communal housing and neighbourhoods research, whilst also looking at pulling together information on the kinds of research currently taking place and examining what drivers have brought that forward.

A few themes for potential research into UK Cohousing settings are noted below:

Holistic understanding of precedents

Whilst there is no shortage of histories and accounts of some types of communal housing, there is relatively little on what has ante-dated cohousing as a communal form, nor on what other housing or neighbourhood forms had been influenced by any such precedents, at the time when they were being promoted. For research to inform contemporary practice and design there is a need to study the impact of cohousing-type models at individual and community level in their historic context, and to examine any social and wellbeing implications for current trends and opportunities on communal and collaborative projects.

Design and spatial arrangement

Notwithstanding the substantial literature that exists on how to design cohousing communities, much less research has been published that has given a critical look at the 'hardware' as well as the 'software' of cohousing developments – communal places need

to be analysed in terms of their spatial arrangement and balance of public, private and mediating spaces, and compared against what has been 'asked' of them. Feedback is required from cohousing residents as the mediators, evaluating how their localities perform in practice, how buildings are used and interpreted over time, and if they satisfy their respective original design intentions.

Costs and resources

There is a prevalent belief that cohousing must be a fairly expensive form of built development, at least in the UK, given that such settings appear to include more facilities than conventional or new housing estate layouts. Hard data is required to support or challenge that view, and to provide a more transparent set of insights into the different kinds of operational costs and benefits once schemes have been created.

Perceptions from 'communal users'

There is an opportunity to conceptualise research around cohousing in UK in a way that aligns with the ethos of it being a lived-in example of 'collective production'. User (resident) perceptions will include all kinds of related experiences and views on the project's procurements and what has constituted 'success', as well as on its conflicts, crises and 'failures'. Research then becomes a review of a collaborative effort where multiple voices and perspectives are invited and where prior conventions in terms of authority, legitimacy and professional recognition may be challenged.

Appendix D: The UK Cohousing Network

The UK Cohousing Network was formed following the Lancaster Cohousing Conference in February 2005 and has become the key body providing information and advice on cohousing schemes in the UK.

The Network is a Company Limited by Guarantee (No 6313462), with a registered address at the Community project in Lewes (15 Laughton Lodge, Laughton, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 6BY.) It operates via a Board that is comprised of people from established and forming cohousing groups, giving their time voluntarily.

The aims of the Network are:

- To develop as a resource point for individuals and forming-cohousing groups
- To develop and maintain the cohousing website
- Promote & signpost conferences, seminars and workshops on cohousing issues
- Raise awareness of cohousing and promote this via the media
- Undertake lobbying & policy development with government contacts
- Provide an advice point for formal bodies and professionals in the planning, housing, development and community design sectors
- Seek ways of making cohousing as financially accessible as possible

In its initial stages, the Network secured a small grant from the Cooperative Fund to help it become established, and it looks regularly at making applications to other grant-making bodies to secure funds that can help cover its modest overheads. For example, it has been able to secure funds from the 'Age Unlimited' programme developed by National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) to help promote and develop opportunities for Older Peoples' Cohousing projects. This project is typical of the area of work with which the Network is keen to engage – policy development, combined with practical advice for how particular projects could get off the ground. As already mentioned, the Network was a part of the Commission for Mutual and Co-operative Housing, and members have continued to contribute to the development of the Mutual Housing Sector Group (chaired by Nic Bliss, who edited the Commission's report) in order to have a clear and consistent national advocacy of all kinds of community-led housing and neighbourhood initiatives.

The basic members of the UK Network are UK cohousing groups and projects. Its current modest size means it is not able to generate levels of membership contributions for it to operate on a par with larger organisations that have full-time personnel. The Network Board is

therefore looking at how it can develop to meet the needs of different interests in cohousing; how it might regularise contact with groups and established communities; and at the finances to help it and cohousing become more sustainable.

Information about the UK Cohousing Network website: **www.cohousing.org.uk**. Users who access the Network's web-pages will be able to find the following kinds of information :

- A mix of general articles and explanations about cohousing for individuals interested in cohousing and for professional and media contacts.
- A map of the UK with icons giving the location of all current groups and projects.
- A description of various completed (established) cohousing communities.
- A list developing groups and the stages of their individual work.
- A series of links to various resources in the UK and abroad: web-links; books, DVDs and other publications; case studies; and courses.
- A series of archives that give media articles and references, and a summary of information and news presented over time by the UK Network.

New items of information flag themselves up when the website is immediately accessed – such as a new document that summarises frequently-asked questions and answers about cohousing and scheme development .

The website also provides a form of bill-board to advertise cohousing property that could be up for sale in different locations, and on other cohousing-related investment opportunities (for example, LILAC has used this facility to promote the possibility of investment in co-op loan stock).

Finally there is a 'contact us' facility that allows users to send in a request for information or submit comments. At times this is combined with a survey to collect views on an aspect of the Network's engagements.

[Note: like all websites there is a constant process of development and refinement in order to try and keep its format and content as topical and applicable to as many users as possible – the Network welcomes feedback on what the website could contain and how to maximise its benefit to cohousing groups.]

Appendix E: Books and Websites

Further resources

The following is a select list/contact details of recent publications and other reports related to cohousing:

Thinking About CoHousing: the creation of intentional neighbourhoods, Martin Field, Diggers & Dreamers Publications, (2004), ISBN: 0-9514945-7-0

[Diggers & Dreamers original publication on cohousing in the UK, still providing a useful presentation of what groups should consider to gain support for local schemes.]

Living Together – Cohousing Ideas & Realities Around the World, Dick Urban Vestbro (ed.) – Proceedings of International Collaborative Housing Conference, Sweden, (2010), ISBN: 978-91-7415-738-3

[A variety of pieces that convey the breadth of approach taken at this auspicious conference, including the main speakers and short summaries of the different workshops.]

Sustainable Community: learning from the cohousing model, Graham Meltzer, Trafford, (2005) ISBN: 1-4120-4994-6

[Material compiled for a PhD award, containing some useful overviews of cohousing schemes established in the US]

Affordable Cohousing : turning vision into reality

[Background note to event on 24 May 2010 hosted by Hanover and supported by the UK Cohousing

Network, the National Housing Federation and Age UK, Hanover Housing, (2010)]

Draft National Planning Policy Framework, Department of Communities & Local Government, HMSO, (2011), ISBN: 978-1-4098-3048-1

[The Coalition Government's framework to encourage greater community participation in UK planning issues, while also helping to stimulate more house building and supply.]

An Action Plan to Promote the Growth of Self Build Housing, The Report of the Self Build Government-Industry Working Group, National Self Build Association, 2011

[An Action Plan and set of proposals for how to stimulate community-led house-building, including of cohousing schemes, with detail of UK cohousing projects as examples.]

Community Right to Build, www.communities.gov.uk/righttobuild (2011)

[Detail of the Coalition Government's referendum-led process for local community-backed schemes to secure a practical 'right' to build new projects on identified sites.]

Homes and Community Agency website (2011) on land disposals:
www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/land-and-development-opportunities

[New web-based information on how the Agency is intending to dispose / sell public land and assets.]

The Land & Society Commission Report, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, (2011)

[An independent report from a Committee established by the RICS to examine 'how all parts of the property industry can support communities' in the context of the Coalition Government's plans for 'localism' – contains very useful recommendations.]

Who should build our homes?, archived publication from CABE – Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/listing?tag=Housing&tagId=22&type=publications>

[A variety of perspectives on what interests or formal bodies should be encouraged to be engaged with future house-building, including a couple of visions for community-led approaches like cohousing and other Land Trusts.]

Bringing Democracy Home, Nic Bliss (ed.), Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing, (2009), ISBN: 978-0-9564332-0-6

[A milestone in the recent attention given to modern examples of 'mutual' housing provision, with significant mention of cohousing projects, and the background to the formation of the Mutual Housing Sector group that includes representation from the UK Cohousing Network.]

Anchors of Tomorrow : a vision for community organisations of the future, Community Alliance, (2009)

[A key summary document from the 'community development sector' of how community-owned assets can be a cornerstone of sustainable neighbourhood development.]

Financing Co-operative and Mutual Housing, Blaise Lambert (ed.), <http://www.cch.coop/bcmh/docs>, Confederation of Co-operative Housing, (2010)

[A form of 'manifesto' from the Mutual Housing sector looking to identify key housing bodies and local authorities willing to become engaged in plans for new 'mutual' housing schemes, utilising a framework for significant funding from the private finance sector.]

What is Mutual Home Ownership?, www.cds.coop/about-us/mutual-home-ownership

[Detail on this relatively new form of collective ownership in the UK, as being used by LILAC in Leeds.]

www.homeandcommunities.co.uk

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www.amazon.co.uk/

Also useful help/info/training from:
<http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/>