

QUESTIONNAIRE TO COHOUSING GROUPS – MAY 2020

Responses requested by 25 May

East Midlands Community Led Housing (EMCLH) has been commissioned by UK Cohousing Network (through funding made available from the national Community Led Homes alliance) to produce a new ‘UK Cohousing Guide’ that can contain advice and information for use by Cohousing projects at all stages of their project’s development.

This questionnaire is designed to get some first feedback from projects and cohousing groups on the kind of advice and information they have found helpful for their projects, or the kind of advice and information they have wanted to obtain. The questions **are not** designed at this stage *to provide* such advice – that will be part of the guidance material drafted in the following few weeks.

A key use has been made of the ‘project pipeline’ format and phases promoted by Community Led Homes for use within the community-led housing sector. This format used to describe ‘cohousing tasks’ below is a means of depicting a project’s development through core tasks and responsibilities summarised under the phases : GROUP / SITE / PLAN / BUILD / LIVE.

GROUP - a project’s starting stage, building up initial membership, its legal status and its vision to live in shared neighbourhood

SITE - seeking a suitable site (or existing property to remodel) for cohousing, and some initial partners to support this vision

PLAN - the formal design, approvals and costings for an identified site and confirming other partnerships, as required

BUILD - the construction and completion stage, with on-site contractors being appointed and managed by group or its agents

LIVE - building work is completed, properties are occupied, and the new community is living as a shared neighbourhood

Please provide the name of your **Cohousing project** here :

Please supply **contact details** for your project (name and e-mail) :

Please return your replies by **25 May 2020** to : [.martinf@emclh.co.uk](mailto:martinf@emclh.co.uk) & jonathan@coherentvisions.com. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

The following questions have been formulated in relation to different aspects of Cohousing development. In the main these questions invite a tick for a response, however the 'pilot' testing of them received advice back to us that there should be sufficient focus on how groups form and how they undertake a constant process to develop their ongoing skills and capacities. The first set of questions therefore includes a few more places for your comments than the other sections.

For the sake of clarity, EMCLH is using the following summary description of 'Cohousing' projects and aspirations that are based on the intentions of members to live as a group of neighbourly households and that, *taken together*, will sufficiently distinguish these projects from other collaborative housing or neighbourhood initiatives.

"Cohousing projects have:

- a design of the physical form and layout of neighbourhoods to maximise incidental and organised contact between residents;
- self-contained accommodation plus significant common facilities and spaces, of which a 'common house' is a crucial setting for communal activities : common facilities operate as shared extensions to the houses and their amenities;
- a size and scale of each neighbourhood setting that is appropriate to underpinning the sustainable community dynamics in that neighbourhood and for meaningful relationships between its households;
- decisions taken under the control of the residents and it is the group that manages and is responsible for overseeing the co-design, co-development and co-organisation of the shared neighbourhood."

Is this summary helpful as a description of your project and its aspirations?

YES / NO

Comment (if needed):

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GROUP STAGE: Initial and ongoing group development

G1. When you first set up your group, what information on 'Cohousing projects' did you want in your first six months?

Comment:

G2. What has your project done to identify or find potential members interested in living in a 'shared neighbourhood'?

Comment:

G3. What has your project done to agree any key 'decision-making' procedures for how it operates?

Comment:

G4. Has your project wanted advice on how to deal with potential times of conflict (inside the group, or with partners.....)?

Comment:

G5. Where have you sought advice on constitutional / governance structures? *[tick all that apply]*

- Local Community Voluntary Service or body supporting community initiatives []
- National CLH organisation / CLH Advisor []
- Regional / local "Community Led Housing Hub" []
- Solicitor / source of legal advice []

Online research by group member (s) []
Other (please state:) []

What is your formal / legal status now:

G6. Did your group get external advice *at an early stage* on:

- forming its core vision for the future Cohousing community? YES / NO
- agreeing decision-making or conflict resolution procedures? YES / NO
- exploring a financial model that could assess the viability of sites and plans? YES / NO
- exploring ways to put together financial plans for potential investors or lenders? YES / NO
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If YES, where did this advice principally come from?

G7. How has your group sought to maintain its overall capacities and control of all aspects of the project's development?

Comment:

G8. What succinct advice would you give a new cohousing group about a constitutional identity or choices of governance, and other matters relevant to the group's ongoing control of its project?

Any other comment / hindsight from the Cohousing group on the demands of the 'GROUP' phase?

SITE STAGE: Finding a site.....

S1. How has the group searched for sites or property? *[tick all relevant]*

- Contact with local authority
- Evaluation of formal planning documents, like Local Plans
- Contact with local housing associations
- Contact with estate agents / land agents / auctions
- Contact with local housebuilders or property developers
- Local media / newspapers
- Site-hunting or investigation on foot
- Other sources (please state:.....)

Is more advice wanted on making such searches YES / NO

	Advice will come via group's members	General advice / training is wanted	External advice to be contracted
S2. Does your group need help in assessing if potential sites or properties could be feasible for its Cohousing project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S3. Does the project need guidance on 'design principles' applicable to a cohousing neighbourhood and its dynamics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S4. Does the project require advice on appointing architects, designers, project managers or financial advisors for project development tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
S5. Does the group need advice on finalising the acquisition of an identified site or property, or on obtaining finance for this?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any other comment / hindsight from the Cohousing group on the demands of the 'SITE' phase?

PLAN STAGE : Plans, approvals and partnerships.....

	Advice will come via group's members	General advice / training is wanted	External advice to be contracted
P1. Does the group need advice on understanding its local planning policies e.g. section 106; exception sites; CIL?	[]	[]	[]
P2. Does the group need advice on promoting its project to the local authority officers responsible for the delivery of affordable housing?	[]	[]	[]
P3. Does the project need advice on the design and dimensions of the Common House and other shared facilities in the new neighbourhood?	[]	[]	[]
P4. Will the project require advice on the sets of professional skills required to obtain the formal approvals for a project to be ready to 'start-on-site'?	[]	[]	[]
P5. Does the project need advice on how it can provide more than one housing tenure (e.g. for rent, leasehold, or for sale) in a combined project?	[]	[]	[]
P6 Does the project know where to seek advice on the potential mixture of finances that could be required for a project to be ready to 'start-on-site'? YES / NO			
P7. Does the project know where to seek advice on assessing 'risk'? YES / NO			

Any other comment / hindsight from the Cohousing group on the demands of the 'PLAN phases?

BUILD STAGE : construction works and appointments

	Advice will come via group's members	General advice / training is wanted	External advice to be contracted
B1. Does the group need advice on understanding its roles as both the client and the commissioner of building services?	[]	[]	[]
B2. Does the group know what is involved in hiring & supervising your own project manager, and controlling quality outcomes?	[]	[]	[]
B3. Does the group know what is involved in issuing tenders and appointing contractors?	[]	[]	[]
B4. Does the group need advice on how to keep its wider membership involve during the construction works, especially if problems arise?	[]	[]	[]
B5. Does the group know where to seek advice on what finances are needed to meet construction commitments, and when to obtain funds from members, if that is to be required?	[]	[]	[]

Any other comment / hindsight from the Cohousing group on the demands of the 'BUILD' phases?

LIVE STAGE : occupation and resident life in a shared neighbourhood

	Advice will come via group's members	General advice / training is wanted	External advice to be contracted
L1. Has your group looked at advice for what decision-making structures could be most useful to respond to a shared neighbourhood lifestyle and perhaps to any issues of potential conflict in the future?	[]	[]	[]
L2. How has your group considered any shared legal responsibilities required to run the residential community?	[]	[]	[]
L3. Will the group need advice about the ongoing funding and future management of the shared facilities?	[]	[]	[]
L4. Will the project need advice on how it will manage new membership applications and future sales or tenancy allocations?	[]	[]	[]

Any other comment / hindsight from the Cohousing group on the demands of the 'LIVE' phase?

FINAL POINTS

Please indicate in what 'phase' you would put your project: **GROUP / SITE / PLAN / BUILD / LIVE**

Is your group interested in being contacted by EMCLH as part of this work to create a new UK Cohousing Guide? **YES / NO**

If YES, please provide the best contact details:

Will your group be interested in participating in any Roundtables or webinars organised by EMCLH in June 2020? **YES / NO**

Do you have views on what format(s) of advice on 'Cohousing' matters can be most, or what the CLH Hubs could provide?

YES / NO

Have you any other comment you would make on the needs of your project and the matters raised in this questionnaire?

YES / NO

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.