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## Note argumentaire de la contribution

Ce livre propose de poser les étapes importantes dans l'élaboration du projet. Comme son titre l'indique, il s'agit d'un guide qui vous suivra pas à pas en vous donnant les éléments et les événements clés que vous devrez prendre en considération.

Pour les aspects juridiques et économiques, il est évident qu'il sert d'exemple mais en Grande-Bretagne. N'oubliez pas de vérifier les conditions chez vous.

## Mots-clés

COHOUSING - LEGAL STRUCTURES - BUSINESS PLAN - OBSTACLES - COMMUNITY PROJECT - GROUP LIVING SCHEMES - VALUES AND PRINCIPLES - DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS - MODELS

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## Preface

It might be thought that UK Government policy on sustainable communities should offer a clear support for the aspirations of community-minded groups seeking to create new neighbourhoods in which they could live. That there still remains such little experience of new neighbourhood development being led by the households that will reside in them suggests this is still far from being common.

This book examines the potential of CoHousing in the UK, and how it stands out from other models of neighbourhood development(s) in offering a very tangible route towards the creation of new and 'sustainable' neighbourhoods. It seeks to provide practical and strategic advice to those whose ambition is to turn the concept of CoHousing into a new neighbourhood reality, and to those who could give their support to such ambition.

It will examine:

- the 'identity' of the UK CoHousing 'world'
- what assists or impedes making new communities
- the development of mixed tenure communities
- how CoHousing & communal living arrangement could fit within wider UK housing and design developments

The material includes consideration of what motivates the formal agencies that routinely involve themselves in new community projects, plus some examination of where and how public resources are usually directed. Lastly the book encourages CoHousing Groups to evaluate their own resources and at times, limitations, through a series of practical frameworks developed to cultivate a methodical approach to satisfying each necessary step of the development process.

The development of modern 'sustainable' communities and the planning of ambitious new settlements (like Poundbury) is clearly set to continue. This publication should complement such high-level initiatives by its focus on communities at street-level. CoHousing provides a very real blueprint around which new neighbourhoods will thrive, once opportunities have been provided for their creation.



## Introduction - Setting the Scene

Over the past 150 years, the UK has been host to an evolving and colourful creation of new communities and innovative neighbourhood environments. Local housing developments were pioneered by house-building co-operatives, set up to fund and build properties for their members and families. Socialist and utopian groups set up new communities to have explicitly egalitarian and non-exploitative lifestyles. There was the philanthropic town-planning of visionary industrialists such as Rowntree and Cadbury, who sought to foster a vibrant community ethos within innovative & self-supporting suburban developments. Finally there was the Garden Cities movement, inspired by Ebenezer Howard, which extended this community development focus across a wide range of urban and suburban settings, and which sought to provide a radical new model for planning new urban areas. Its legacy remains influential, both in the community detail explored by Coates (2001), and in its intellectual vigour that Ward & Hall (1998) have used to challenge modern assumptions about city growth. The success of such development, at least in terms of popularising housebuilding for new settlements, led in no small part to the massive development of state-funded 'council housing' throughout the UK, and ultimately nurtured the New Towns programme in which to settle, and at times resettle, the nation's sprawling population.

These early initiatives had been more than just an approach to solving housing needs. Explicit in the 'utopian' and socialist aspirations of the 19th and early 20th Centuries communities described by Pearson (1995) and Hardy (2001), was the desire to share local facilities in such neighbourhoods, beyond merely living on the same street or in the same building. This desire has been echoed by the substantial number of co-operatives, communes and other egalitarian groups (like squatter initiatives) started in the 1960s & 70s (see Neville 1974). Some were clearly attempts to turn to 'shared living' in the context of a wider but less flexible contemporary society, although a number were developed as specific reactions against the intervention of central government plans. The

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extent and effect that government plans to demolish older housing stock accommodated the changing fashions for town planning & estate improvements have been the subject of many commentators from Turner (1972), Seabrook (1984), Ward (1985), to Young & Lemos (1997). It is salutatory that so many have commented on the consequence that such redevelopment had on local communities, especially to diminish previous neighbourhood identities.

It is more than interesting, therefore, that the concept of 'community' appears to have such a central role in a great deal of current discussion about the merits or challenges of the contemporary social environment. In key government policy initiatives - Urban and Rural White Papers, consultation papers for Planning and Health service reforms, and high-profile regeneration imperatives like 'Urban Renaissance', 'neighbourhood renewal' and 'social exclusion' - the concept of 'community' is put forward as a central value around which so much effort should revolve. A publication like the DETR's (2000) Millennium Villages and Sustainable Communities is explicit in putting a positive worth on connecting a sense of modern 'community' with the policy imperative to promote 'sustainability' in new settlements. It is not necessarily clear, however, what are the key features or characteristics of such 'community', nor whether a particular action or combination of actions will result in a 'community' being created, or strengthened, or made 'sustainable'. Much is usually written about key elements to 'sustain' the life of a community - usually in terms of the economic factors like income and work, or the potential for addressing environmental issues, like energy supply and waste management and local transport, or the deciding factors of the local housing market. Much less is heard about what nurtures the life of actual households within the neighbourhood area identified as the community environment they could regard as 'home'.

Often the concept (and particularly the perceived lack) of what is essential to a healthy 'community' seems to come forward within wider debates on 'social exclusion', invoked to describe something pathological or damaged within parts of our towns or cities. Attention is perennially

focused upon addressing what has appeared to have broken down within the social relationships of such areas. It is, however, not clear what models of relationships are being used as the yardstick against which such examination is done. Contemporary writers on housing policies like Balchin (1995) & Brown (1999) explore the role for housing resources to administer to ailing or needy households, but offer little comment of what basic housing approaches could do to support alternative community-minded ideals. Consideration on the provision of new neighbourhoods seems at best a rehearsal of views for where this might be arranged. The debate between Schoon & Hall (2002) about accommodating urban growth in 'new towns' or through the masterplanning of 'urban extensions' is a debate about spatial preferences, rather than a re-evaluation of the process for how new neighbourhoods are built. Too often the sole inclusion of local people in such processes is via some general 'consultation' exercise focused upon broad principles of land allocation rather than upon eliciting clear statements of local residents' desires.

What is absent from much discussion of 'community' initiatives is a sufficient understanding of what impact can be achieved through the presence of 'intentionality' in neighbourhood communities - i.e. what has brought a household or group of households to that location in the first place. At least one major recent attitudinal survey has pointed to how 'belonging to a community' seems integral to individual personal well-being (see [www.wellbeing.com/survey2002](http://www.wellbeing.com/survey2002)) yet an awareness of this interest in deliberately 'collective' living arrangements is largely absent from the wider debate on 'community' well-being. A shared desire for some kind of 'intentional community' - a collective or collaborative approach to neighbourhood life alongside similarly-minded others - has clearly underpinned the development of the 'utopian' models of the communities like the inter-war example of the Isokon project in Highgate (see also Hardy, Coates et al). It is not, however, something confined to the past. The continual setting-up of new communities and new communal groups over the past few years, as documented by periodicals like *Diggers & Dreamers*, is ample demonstration of the interest in innovative or col-



lective living arrangements. (And while it has recorded the vast majority, the Directory still makes no attempt to call itself a completely comprehensive record of all the communal living groups in the UK!). A particular inspiration to many of the new groups is that of CoHousing - a contemporary model for modern intentional neighbourhoods. The successful ability of such neighbourhoods to mix private and communal life confidently together have become powerful attractions to people searching for modern flexible living arrangements.

CoHousing brings a deceptive simplicity to the business of creating new communities - either in new or existing neighbourhoods. It is rooted in the successful developments of 'intentional communities' abroad, where a strong body of CoHousing practice has established clearly successful neighbourhoods that are still thriving years after being established. For example, the Danish CoHousing community at Jystrup still had two-thirds of its original member-households twenty years after its conception and creation, and a waiting list from second-generation households : it would be interesting to see what contemporary housing settings could demonstrate that degree of stability. CoHousing is able to do this partly because it is clear about how to support an intention to create a shared neighbourhood and partly because it is a recognisable alternative to the orthodoxy of so much modern housing that only caters for separate nuclear households.

To hear CoHousing described, however, is not always to hear what stands it apart from other settings for collective living. It has been variously likened to a modern form of co-operative accommodation, or shared accommodation, or as an ecovillage, or as a new idea for a commune - or some other combination(s) of such terms. None of this helps those new to the concept to be clear about just what CoHousing offers to communities, nor how to know where this is distinguishable from other community ideas. There are also core elements of a CoHousing neighbourhood without all of which, it will not function as a CoHousing enterprise and, in all likelihood, the neighbourhood will not demonstrate the kind of qualities that has attracted people to the concept in the first place.