

# UK Cohousing Network Manifesto

## What is Cohousing?

Cohousing communities are intentional communities, created and run by their residents. Each household has a self-contained, private home as well as shared community space. Residents come together to manage their community, share activities, and regularly eat together. Cohousing is a way of resolving the isolation many people experience today, recreating the neighbourly support of the past. This can be established on your street, with empty homes, or through new builds.



# Benefits of Cohousing



## Diversify Housing Supply to Help Hit Targets

To achieve ambitious housing targets, we must diversify our housing supply. The current market, dominated by private developers, cannot meet these targets alone. Local authorities and housing associations also face constraints. Cohousing, along with community-led housing and self-builds, can gain local support, deliver desired homes, and potentially contribute 15% of new housing with proper backing.



## Delivering Value for Money, Sustainability, and Long-Term Benefits

Our national planning guidance (NPPF) strives for sustainable development across economic, social, and environmental dimensions to address the crises we face. Cohousing, resident-designed and managed, inherently promotes sustainability, enriches local resources, and fosters lasting social connections.



## Multigenerational Housing for an Ageing Population

**“The number of people aged 80 and over in the UK is expected to more than double to six million by the middle of 2037, according to figures published by the Office for National Statistics.”**

The UK urgently needs suitable housing for its ageing population. Cohousing offers a supportive environment that helps people live independently and healthily for longer. These developments provide flexibility in tenure and home size, respond to local needs, and foster social capital.



# Current Barriers to Growth



## Community Access to Land for Homes

Despite verbal support from local authorities and public sector landowners (NHS, MoD), there is a significant gap in land access for community-led housing. Authorities and developers must make land available for self and custom builds, which cohousing schemes can utilise. Eurozone countries demonstrate that this approach can deliver over 50% of new homes.

## Suitable Finance

Inconsistent financial support during site acquisition and planning stages and a lack of a clear legal framework hinder growth. Regional support varies, as seen in areas like the GLA and Manchester.



# Our Ask from a New Government

## **£150 Million Guarantee Fund to Level the Playing Field for Communities**

We call for an expanded guarantee fund to facilitate the purchase of assets deemed valuable by the community, including housing and undeveloped land. This fund should include a stream directed towards developing new sector-based intermediaries to attract more private capital and deploy it across multiple projects at a larger scale. Early-stage financial support in the form of loan underwriting and grants should be provided, based on clearly defined gateways to mitigate risk, including local authority planning buy-in at the pre-application stage.

## **Community-Led Housing Growth Lab**

We propose the establishment of a CLH Growth Lab to provide technical support in developing 'off the shelf' legal and financial models for groups, lenders, landowners, and planners. An endowment should support the development of delivery and finance intermediaries necessary for scaling community ownership. These could include specialist developers of community assets, enablers that help communities partner with the private sector, or acquisition vehicles for buying existing or newly built assets.

## **5% Allocation of Land for Community Solutions**

Allocating 5% of annual housing builds to community hands, similar to European practices, would significantly enhance community wealth. Supporting community ownership fosters inclusive, sustainable development, boosting social capital and economic resilience.

## Time for a Legal Definition

A clear and firm definition of cohousing is essential to help landowners, local authorities, funders, and the public understand and support these initiatives.

## Fourth Delivery Arm for National Housing Delivery

The Public, Private, Housing Association/Charity arms of housing delivery in the UK won't be enough to meet our housing needs and so we ask the government to recognise and support an existing Fourth Arm of Housing Delivery in the UK - community led housing, self and custom build, citizens working together to meet their housing needs.



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