

TOWN COHOUSING

THE COHOUSING APPROACH

Community-led housing projects - designing with communities in mind, HAPPI Hour | June 2026





Forms of Community-LED HOUSING...

Under the umbrella term of Community-led Housing that includes:

Community Land Trusts – affordable homes for local community. Governance by members of local community.

Co-operatives – collectively owned and managed housing. Governance by coop members.

Cohousing - creating community by designing for social interaction, and resident management.

Self & custom build – cohousing communities can be a form of group custom build. Criteria – the future resident has primary input into design & layout.

Often confused with:

Co-living: larger scale, small rental units plus shared facilities. Investment product. Run by management agent.



WHAT IS COHOUSING?

IN A NUTSHELL

Cohousing offers a **more connected, sustainable and convenient** form of living where people occupy **individual homes with additional shared spaces** and facilities which they **jointly manage** and make use of with their neighbours. It's **designed to encourage social connections** and provide opportunities for collaboration and is **usually co-designed with future residents**.

TOWN IS THE UK'S LEADING
COHOUSING DEVELOPER

ORIGIN STORY

Distinct from communal living experiments post 2nd world war, the modern form of cohousing developed in Denmark in the 1960s among groups of families who were dissatisfied with existing housing and communities that they felt did not meet their needs, particularly in respect to work-life balance.

SPREAD OF COHOUSING

Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, US, UK, Australia & New Zealand. In UK, 11 new build cohousing communities since first in 2003 representing about 320 homes.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU ABOUT COHOUSING?

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Overwhelmingly, the most popular response (mentioned 82 times) was the **sense of community**. People are looking for **connection, belonging, and a support network**. Cohousing offers a chance to **live alongside people with a shared intention** (30 times) and **combat social isolation** (18 times).

AGING WELL

Some people are looking for cohousing as **a way to age well**, with **social interaction and support** (11 times).

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability was another key theme (14 times). Cohousing can be a **more ecological way of living by sharing resources** (23 times) and **green building practices**.

MULTI-GENERATIONAL COMMUNITY

Many respondents also highlighted the **multi-generational aspect** (9 times) and a **safe and enriching environment for families with children** (7 times).



Still Green Cohousing, Wolverton



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Angel YARD COhOUSING, Norwich





Northstowe Cohousing Communities

The Hive Cohousing & Suvana Cohousing



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**Building community
during design and build
stage**

Design used to support
social interaction.

Co-design and co-
production process
starts to build the
community.

Developing group of
future residents starts
to discuss together how
the community will
work in practice.

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Community meals

Provide an opportunity for residents to cook and eat together and build community. There are lots of reasons why community meals are great and seen as the heart of a cohousing community.

Common key features –building community after completion

Shared management

The community owns the freehold and the shared areas and that resident management company enables the community to make decisions together.

Typically, there is an emphasis on **collaborative decision-making** through a combination of regular **community meetings with small working groups** taking responsibility for different aspects. There are **community work mornings** to help look after the Common House and shared garden.



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Everyday activities build **STRONG COMMUNITIES**

Common key features –building community after completion

Communities are built through everyday activities:

- A culture of people acknowledging each other and sharing conversations on the pathways.
- Making time for each other - having a cup of tea together on the terrace and eating together in the Common House.
- Taking on simple 'work' activities for the community (eg. gardening, repairing a fence, cleaning the laundry, planning an event, or cooking together). Supporting sharing of skills and experiences.



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