



BUILD BELONGING

Let's turn developments into strong communities with a sense of belonging and relaxed neighbourly living.

Patio dining at Kroyer Hus, a compatible development in Copenhagen

Custom built cohousing can add significant social value to developments, addressing isolation, raising well-being and quality of life.

We have a unique and innovative approach to engender a sociable and mutually supportive culture in new housing, with residents taking collective decisions over common spaces.



Conversations across the courtyard at Sofielunds Kollektivhus, Malmö

Not only does our approach create social value long into the future, but it can also secure reservations and sales prior to construction, smooth the planning process, and remove long term liabilities.

@CLHLondon
www.communityledhousing.london



We work with schemes or blocks of between 5 and 25 units to create a close-knit yet diverse community.

Any mix of tenures and unit sizes can work, as the community is formed around the project. This may include older people downsizing to live in a more mutually supportive community, as well as young couples and families. Intergenerational living with neighbourly mutual support has shown significant social value.

CLH London is part of a small housing association, working across London and the South East, who may be able to act as Registered Provider partner if required. We would seek a local lettings policy to get nominations at an earlier stage than is common.

We apply five inter-related elements during the development process to create a sociable and mutually supportive culture, with residents taking collective decisions over common spaces.



Shared gardens at Big Yard, a developer enabled 'Baugruppe' in Berlin

Design Advice

The 'bare bones' of a scheme must provide a fertile substrate for community to grow around.

- **We advise on simple design strategies that can create a greater sense of sociability, without making schemes more difficult to fund or build.**

These can be introduced around RIBA stage 1, where there is some intention to proceed with a scheme (for example an option on the land and basic capacity and viability have been established).

Our advice relates to the layout of private and shared spaces:

- Ensuring safe and welcoming spaces for people to walk, play, spend time, and increase chances of informal interaction.
- Positioning routes and front doors to steer use and activity.
- Ensuring car parking and other barriers to interaction are out of the way.
- Connections to ground floor spaces, or community spaces, lobby spaces, cycle storage, or bins.
- Allowing natural light into stairwells and corridors through atria, lightwells, and slot windows.

We also advise on areas of detail that can be omitted or deferred for resident input later.



Atrium corridor with natural light makes space for neighbour interaction

Resident Marketing

We see the 'marketing period' starting before a planning application. Having units reserved / pre-sold prior to construction reduces risk. We can also help allocate affordable homes early on by agreeing local lettings policies with councils.

In organic CLH groups, there are usually a few founder members who define the initial values of a group, and others who join through the process.

- **We embed the intention and use our networks of interest to bring prospective residents together.**
- **There is a continuous invitation to take part in forming the community.**

Residents who join earlier in the process have more influence on decisions about how the group and the project works. Early members create an authentic personality to the scheme.

- We invite early members to name the scheme, design the logo, and discuss what they seek in neighbours, to set the tone of marketing.
- We provide training for members to consider allocations or selection criteria, where relevant.
- We encourage members to promote the scheme, both to new residents, and through planning, with their ambitions for the place they want to live in.

These activities also contribute to *forging community*.

Community Customisation

Our *design advice* will identify elements that can be left optional or undetermined, allowing flexibility for incoming residents to make collective decisions.

- **We provide training and capacity building in collective governance and decision-making.**
- **We establish a collaborative design process to make an informed contribution, and a positive case through the planning process.**
- **We also advise on Community Infrastructure Levy exemption for custom build at planning.**

Some elements of the design can be agreed after planning permission, and once residents have visited other cohousing schemes. These include:

- the details and furniture of common parts
- the planting and paving of shared yard/garden spaces to support social community life.
- gates or boundaries to shared spaces to give a sense of identity.

We help residents make collective decisions about the use of any ground floor non-residential space. How it runs, whether it is open to the wider community, or a flexible shared extension of living, guest rooms, playrooms, or workspace.

Customisation could also include individual kitchen fit outs to give greater control where it matters most.

Forging Community

The above activities in resident marketing and customisation also help to forge a cohesive group and community culture, which creates a mutually supportive, neighbourly environment.

- **We facilitate strong group formation, by organising opportunities for prospective neighbours to meet, cook, and eat together; visit other cohousing schemes together; and develop decision-making approaches.**

We use a number of community facilitation tools that help people open up and trust each other including:

- Sharing circles
- Non-violent compassionate communication workshops.
- Music or ecstatic dance in bonding exercises, allowing non-verbal interaction and expression without judgement.

We nurture and facilitate members to share their own passions and run their own activities.

We encourage residents to choose or create processes and take ownership of their culture and organisation.

A Lasting Culture

For a community culture there needs to be some form of responsibility and obligation. Collective ownership and management are reasons for people to get together, engage, and discuss their home together. Social relationships are reinforced as a by-product.

- **We advise on forms of Resident Management, with each household becoming a director of a mutual company that holds the head title after all units have been occupied, giving collective responsibility for management of common parts.**
- **We provide training and capacity building in management and long-term ownership.**
- **We can help with any transfer of the site or block upon completion for management purposes, and draft management agreements where relevant.**

Our vision is that:

- Residents plan and plant lush shared gardens together, and organise the use of common rooms.
- People are relaxed to leave furniture, toys, art or plants in corridors and staircases, with main entrances seen as a 'second front door'.
- Neighbours chat and offer help or small favours. They celebrate birthdays and other occasions.
- Children are free to run into each others houses and adapt their own spaces.
- Residents feel they belong to the community and have a say about what goes on there.

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