

Cohousing Woodside

Development Plan issue 1 : JUNE 2013

www.cohousingwoodside.co.uk



INTRODUCTION

This document sets out a description of the stages through which Cohousing Woodside has progressed so far, together with an understanding of the timeline, key milestones and cost contributions. It describes the decisions we have taken and our relationships with key stakeholders – most importantly, with Hanover Housing Association (HHA), our development partner. It is essentially an iterative document which will be updated periodically as things move on.

It is not a detailed account of how the future community intends to live or how it will run itself. This will be developed gradually by Development Members.

KEY POINTS

- One member of each household must be over the age of 50 by March 2016
- All members are expected to participate actively in the life of the community
- Each home is private to those who live in it, but the Common House and gardens, owned by all members, is central to cohousing life
- Cohousing Woodside aspires to high standards of sustainability in all areas
- We aim to build a diverse, inclusive and friendly community

1. ORIGINS

In July 2011, a group of Muswell Hill residents heard about the impending sale of St Luke's Hospital. They formed the North London Sustainable Housing Partnership (NLSHP) to provide a community voice on the future of the site with a view to setting up a cohousing community there.

In the Autumn of 2011, the group began discussions with **Hanover Housing Association (HHA)**, a leading specialist provider of high quality retirement housing and related services for older people. Hanover eventually made a successful bid for the site, referencing its relationship with NLSHP in its proposal.

Once Hanover acquired the site, cohousing on the St. Luke's site became oriented towards people of fifty and over, but not precluding younger family members. Members of NLSHP who wanted to work with this opportunity created Cohousing Woodside (CW) as a new group, registering a separate company in April 2012.

2. CORE VALUES OF COHOUSING WOODSIDE

OUR VISION :

'To create a community that is sustainable, inclusive and diverse, where people participate, have their own space, share resources and are proud of and happy with where they live'

The following principles were agreed at a group workshop:

Life in Cohousing Woodside will aim to

- be self governing
- share decision making
- maintain a balance between privacy and community

Our community will be

- welcoming
- part of the St Luke's community
- part of a wider Muswell Hill community to which we want to contribute

We will maintain

- responsibility for ourselves
- openness and transparency
- mutual respect and trust
- co-operation for the greater good of the community
- tolerance
- neighbourliness
- respect for the planet, minimising our impact

and we will meet our individual obligations to the group

3. DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

The Cohousing Woodside scheme will occupy the north-west corner of the six acre **St Luke's site**, adjacent to Grand Avenue.

The entire site development is being designed by **Pollard, Thomas, Edwards (PTEa) architects**. Pioneer cohousing members have participated in designing our dwellings and Common House through a number of PTEa workshops. These consultations are currently suspended, as the St. Luke's development is awaiting planning permission.



3.1. THE COMMON HOUSE AND COMMUNAL SPACE

The overall layout of the cohousing project is designed to encourage neighbourliness and social contact, as well as sustainable lifestyles.



The Common House is central to the cohousing way of life. It is at the heart of any cohousing development. It will provide a shared space for activities like communal meals, parties, meetings, workshops etc. Each household will own a share of the Common House.

Hanover has requested that the Common House be made available for hire to other St. Luke's residents a certain number of days per year.

Pioneer members have chosen to minimise private outdoor spaces in favour of maximising communally owned gardens and allotments. It is intended that maintenance will be the responsibility of the community, as will upkeep of all common spaces. Roads on the St Luke's site are private.

3.2 CARS

We hope to keep cars to a minimum, although there will be emergency vehicle access and some parking for wheelchair users and mobility scooters. Car parking will be underground and purchased in addition to units. Car sharing is also an aspiration of the group.

3.3 INDIVIDUAL HOMES

We intend around 30 dwellings, ranging in size from one-bedroom flats to 3 bedroom houses. Lifetime Homes standards will apply and where there are stairs, there will be lifts. Each dwelling will have a balcony or a patio. Sketches of current plans and elevations are on the architecture page of [our website](#).



Unlike the rest of the St Luke's development, which will be built to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, CW dwellings will be built to a certified **Passivhaus standard** of energy efficiency. This high level of air-tightness, insulation with heat exchange ventilation will mean that the dwellings will require little space heating, a hedge against expected rising energy prices.

Unit prices have yet to be determined but will include shared use of the common facilities. Each owner therefore effectively owns a share of the common house and amenities. Further rights and obligations will be detailed in the Project Agreement with HHA and other CW documents.

All dwellings will be connected to the St Luke's site combined heat and power (CHP) system. The CHP plant will provide individually metered and billed hot water and heating. Households will be free to choose their own electricity supplier. There will be no gas supply to the cohousing dwellings.



Hanover, as the freeholder, has a pet-friendly policy for its housing stock and CW welcomes members with pets.

4. DEVELOPMENT FINANCE/ BUYING AND SELLING/ OWNERSHIP

4.1 TENURE

It was our original intention that Cohousing Woodside should enjoy a mix of tenures: ownership, shared ownership and social rental. Sadly, it has not proved possible to include social rentals in the development, while at the same time preserving cohousing membership principles. For shared ownership, we await information from Hanover as to whether this is feasible for our project.

4.2. PRICES

For Development Members, prices will be market values less a discount of 10% or less a retained equity of 15% (a charge on the property will entitle Hanover to recover this retained equity as realised profit on the first subsequent sale). Currently, there are ongoing negotiations over what constitutes a fair market value for the properties and CW has hired valuers Jones, Lang, Lasalle (JLL), to advise on this. There is a time constraint that relates to the discount arrangements, as they are intended to tie in early purchasers who are ready to give an assurance of a sale and they will not be available after a certain date (to be notified). Unit prices will be fixed on signing individual purchase contracts with Hanover, at which point, a 10% deposit will be payable. Development Members will, effectively, be purchasing off-plan.

Service charges are as yet unknown but must be factored in to expectations. We will seek to minimise these where possible by carrying out management tasks and functions ourselves. Once owners take possession of the finished units, CW will collect service charges, apportioned on Net Internal Area (NIA) to cover running costs, maintenance and development expenses. Service charges will be payable in advance in monthly instalments agreed at the start of each charge year and CW will build up significant sinking funds to offset future periodic commitments and enhancements.

4.3. BUYING A PROPERTY

All owners will be required to sign up to the ethos and values of Cohousing Woodside as detailed in section 2 above. We strongly discourage property purchases solely for investment purposes. Sub-letting is permitted where tenants sign up to the same values and obligations.

Properties in CW are all leaseholds and individual households will buy a long-term lease directly from Hanover (999 years, subject to confirmation). Once all CW units have been allocated and sold, individual leases with Hanover will then be acquired by Cohousing Woodside Ltd., under a single Head Lease. CW Ltd will from then on manage the project on behalf of all residents, in accordance with the obligations and covenants of this Head Lease. All members remain responsible for their own legal and financial affairs throughout this process.

Legal agreements between Hanover and CW are under negotiation. The scheme's standard leases will have been checked for ease of subsequent conveyancing by individual buyers.



4.4. ALLOCATIONS

Choice of units in the scheme is based on seniority of membership (date of payment of fees)

in Cohousing Woodside. In case of competing interests for a particular dwelling, allocations will be made on the basis of length of membership and number of meetings attended. Other factors, such as disability requirements or levels of active participation in the group may be taken into account by an allocations committee. After all units have been allocated, those



interested will be encouraged to join a Waiting Pool, pay £30 subscription p.a. and sign up to CW's core values.

4.5. SELLING-UP

Marketing and valuation will be the entire responsibility of the vendor member or their executor. The vendor will give notice of the proposed sale to CW which will do its utmost to facilitate a quick and easy sale. If CW is unable to find a buyer among its residents or Waiting Pool within the agreed period, the vendor can then sell on the open market – provided the

purchaser accepts CW membership criteria.

5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

5.1. SELF-GOVERNANCE

Cohousing Woodside Ltd. is a company limited by shares, registered in England and Wales, created to take responsibility for the community's legal and financial obligations.

All arrangements for governing the day-to-day life of the community will be agreed by the group itself. Structures and agreements entered into so far must be regarded as provisional and 'in draft' only, until we reach a stage where they can be reviewed and agreed by a stable critical mass of 15 member households.

The group has engaged **Trowers & Hamblins solicitors** to act for CW Ltd in relation to legal agreements with Hanover. They are currently holding fire, while Hanover awaits a successful planning application. Trowers & Hamblins also act for several other cohousing groups.

5.2. CURRENT STRUCTURES

The group's current mechanism for organising CW meetings and for liaising and negotiating with stakeholders is its Steering Group consisting of:
Maria Brenton (coordinator), Hinchee Hung (treasurer), Jill Sutherland, Rosalie Wilkins (membership secretary).

This is a provisional arrangement prior to reaching a 'critical mass' of member households. It is intended that once this is reached, our arrangements should be subject to review and to other members putting themselves forward for committee and ad hoc project roles. We strongly encourage this sharing out of roles and responsibilities, as it presages our future together as a collaborative community.

5.3. DECISION-MAKING

So far it has been mooted that key decisions which affect the common life of the group shall be made by all members acting together in consensus. The precise mode of reaching consensus, with fallbacks for dissent, has yet to be developed and agreed. We need further development work to agree which decisions should require consensus, which can be delegated and to whom.

5.4. FUTURE STRUCTURES

It is envisaged that once construction is completed and CW takes up residence, day to day management will be undertaken by a Residents Association and its committees. It is expected that all residents will take part.

6. MEMBERSHIP OF COHOUSING WOODSIDE

6.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Cohousing Woodside currently operates as a membership organisation with individual members. We meet every two weeks (alternating between a business meeting for members and a general meeting with shared meal to welcome visitors). Up to completion of construction, members are known as 'Development Members'.

To become a Development Member, you are required to attend three meetings, apply to the membership secretary and submit an application form. This signifies your adherence to Cohousing Woodside's collaborative way of working and your commitment to the values listed above in section 2. There is an expectation that partners also attend meetings.

Membership requires a non-refundable payment of £250 per individual towards a seed fund to develop Cohousing Woodside. This does not guarantee the allocation of a unit within the scheme but it does entitle you to a voice in decision making. There are likely to be further calls for money to support the work of the group. We expect that Development Members will become the future residents of the Cohousing Woodside community. If you do not wish



to make a commitment at this point, you may become a Friend of the group for an annual subscription of £25. This entitles you to continue to attend meetings but not take part in decision-making.

Once the group is more firmly established and as we learn more together, we will revise conditions of membership and entry to the community for the future.

Latecomers to Cohousing Woodside will be required to match the financial input of Development Members. Unspent contributions to the CW development fund are refundable on practical completion net of each unit's share of common costs. Hanover currently commits to proceeding with the cohousing scheme provided the total units are 'substantially subscribed' at a critical point to be agreed. Hanover has the right to sell the remaining units on the open market at full market value subject to cohousing membership conditions.

7. DEVELOPING THE GROUP

7.1. DEVELOPMENTS SO FAR

The group has participated in a number of training workshops, such as on 'values and visioning' and consensus decision-making, as well as discussion sessions relevant to the future life in cohousing. As membership 'churn' always occurs in the early days of a group such as ours, it is inevitable that these group building activities may have to be repeated a number of times.

7.2. ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS

We plan a series of participative workshops to anticipate life in Cohousing Woodside post-2016. Join us to discuss the values and life-style the group wishes to commit to and to agree a development agenda to get there. We also need the opportunity to get to know each other as future neighbours. The first of these will be the workshop 'Getting real with cohousing' on June 30th for members, friends and visitors.

We seek to learn from other cohousing communities and strongly encourage new members to take advantage of visits, courses and open days run by such groups as The Threshold Centre, Dorset and the Springhill Community, Stroud. Cohousing Woodside is an active member of the UK Cohousing Network. See www.cohousing.org.uk

8. THIS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Building the group is more important than developing the buildings.

CW's Development Plan will be constantly updated and revised. The current file will be available via the [CW website](#) and each update will be flagged up in our "[news](#)" blog pages. You can sign up online to follow this blog.

Currently in June 2013, we are mounting a fresh recruitment drive focussing on building group solidarity and group agreements. Negotiations with Hanover, agreed design details, agreed purchase prices and further legal agreements await the granting of planning permission.