

Chorlton Cohousing Design Brief

05 November 2020

Who are we

Chorlton Cohousing (CCH) is a small group based around Chorlton-cum-hardy, Manchester. We are looking to develop cohousing in the locality focussed on the needs of people aged 50 and above. We are interested in being part of a community-influenced, larger development of Ryebank Fields, Chorlton, if this goes ahead. Otherwise we will continue to explore other opportunities in south Manchester.

Our Purpose:

The aim is to build a highly sustainable, socially inclusive¹ and self-reliant community based on the principles of cohousing; focussed on, but not exclusive to, the needs of people aged 50 and above². We aspire to offer a supportive environment, enabling independent living for as long as possible. Residents will live in their own individual dwellings designed to support and adapt to their needs as they age. Some facilities will be shared, including a multi-purpose communal space for social events, meetings, shared meals and exercise; guest rooms, laundry and garden. These will promote opportunities for social interaction and encourage a strong community.

Homes.

We anticipate the cohousing development will comprise about 24 dwellings (between 10 and 40 dwellings is considered appropriate to support community dynamics for easy informal communal contact) within an overall development of 120 properties.

These cohousing dwellings will mostly be a mix of one and two bedroom apartments within one, or possibly two blocks of flats. There is also demand, and possibly room, for a small terrace of two bedroom houses⁶. An indicative breakdown of dwelling/tenure preference figures is available from the Questionnaire results.

The cohousing would ideally be arranged around a shared garden/allotment akin to a 'village green'. All dwellings should include some form of private balcony or outside space, preferably overlooking green shared space⁷.

Ideally, to keep communal areas pet free, there will be provision for pet owners at ground level with direct access to private outside space⁸.

Shared Facilities.

We also need to provide a range of shared facilities for the cohousing group, conveniently located in the apartment block(s) or a separate 'Common House' close to and easily accessible from the cohousing (ideally direct internal/covered access). The aim is to provide informal spaces filled with natural light, plants, etc. to meet, sit & chat, integral to the layout of communal areas.

These should include:

- An accessible, flexible space for use as a communal meeting room/ dining room/ lounge⁹ linked to outside space. Ideally this should be capable of accommodating all residents plus guests (total 40?) but able to be easily subdivided, and include storage space for when tables & chairs are not required. It should also include accessible hygiene facilities and a kitchen, where we can cook and share meals for each other several times a month.
- Accessible guest room. Possibly two en-suite rooms capable of being easily used separately or by a family together¹⁰.
- A laundry/drying room & a suitably located outdoor drying area¹¹.
- A small office/meeting room (4 people), secure & private for company admin & document storage¹². Possibly shared with CCLT.

- Individual residents' storage for suitcases, big items, etc. Possibly lockable storage in individual 'cages' of approx. 2m² in a larger room or in cupboards adjacent to apartment front doors?
- Storage for shared tools, vacuum cleaners, step ladders, etc. Conveniently located for access from all dwellings.
- Carefully sited bins & recycling collection points within easy access from both individual dwellings & the common kitchen.
- A secure, sheltered cycle/mobility scooter store with charging facilities and maintenance space¹³.
- A central communal garden/allotment, possibly with some seating and shelter. Plus a 'garden shed' for secure storage for shared garden tools¹⁴. Provision of outside power, water butt(s) &/or tap.

We anticipate that the communal meeting room will be a community space for shared meals, film club, etc. Having this room in the common house and to some extent separate from the residential block could provide greater flexibility to be more outward looking, open and welcoming to the wider community. It could also allow greater opportunities for some sharing of the facility & income generation to offset costs, hired for purposes such as yoga, WI, private parties, etc. There is an outside chance that a similar suitable space is provided as a 'community benefit' from the wider development & be available for CCH to hire for larger events. This would allow the communal meeting room to be omitted from the cohousing scheme and instead provide:

- A small lounge capable of seating 12-20 people, with facilities for preparing tea & coffee, etc. and washing up¹⁵.

Transport.

The cohousing area should be fully accessible, pedestrian/cycle/mobility scooter friendly and largely car free, while providing necessary service and easy disabled access.

Visitor & disabled parking to be provided adjacent to the common house. Also limited temporary vehicle access to the apartment block entrance for drop off & large deliveries. Parking should otherwise be limited and away from the housing and garden.

Parking for residents' cars¹⁶ or car-share¹⁷ vehicles. (50-75% but potential for 100% - e.g. could be flexible outdoor space if not required for parking). We will be carrying out a more detailed study of the views, needs, current & planned car ownership of CCH members to inform this decision.

A higher than normal proportion of wider 'disabled' parking spaces should be provided. There should also be adequate provision for charging of electric vehicles¹⁸.

Cost

We aspire to high quality, high performance homes and wish to be realistic about costs. However, at the same time the cohousing needs to be affordable, inclusive and appropriate to the surrounding area. We strongly hope that costs can be contained at the lower end of the price range.

Sustainability

It is very important that the design, construction and running of the cohousing community meet high levels of environmental sustainability¹⁹ to make a contribution to Manchester's ambitions to be a zero-carbon city by 2038.

It is important that, as far as practical:

- The building is constructed using highly sustainable methods & materials²⁰.
- The building construction is robust, for a long lifetime and low lifetime maintenance costs²¹.
- The building is energy efficient & sustainable to run²².

- Low carbon heating & ventilation is provided²³, probably mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR)²⁴.
- Solar power generation & efficient on site usage is maximised²⁵.
- Consideration is given to the potential benefits, & problems, of a roof garden/green roof shared with solar panels.

We aspire to achieving Passivhaus²⁶ and Code for Sustainable Homes level 6 certifications as the preferred way of meeting these aims.

<https://www.passivhaustrust.org.uk/>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5976/code_for_sustainable_homes_techguide.pdf

Age friendly & future proof

CCH is focused on homes for people aged over 50. It is important that their particular requirements and potential future needs are taken into account & that the Cohousing as a whole is designed to be 'age friendly'. We anticipate the design will meet, and where practical exceed, 'Lifetime Home' standards²⁷ and good practice. <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/revised-design-criteria.html>

It may be that not all homes should initially reach the highest level of accessibility standards, but it is important that all are designed so that they can be adapted in future, whether for ageing or disability. In particular:

- Criterion 7 – Circulation Space. Bedroom measurements should be based on king size beds rather than standard size or for a hospital nursing bed with room for a carer to access both sides.
- Criteria 10 - An accessible WC with shower drainage to be provided at entrance level in all dwellings.
- Criteria 14 - Accessible bathrooms providing easy access, to be provided in every dwelling close to the main bedroom. Option of bath, easy access bath or walk in shower with seat. Floor drainage & plumbing to allow easy adaption to an accessible floor level shower even where a bath is installed initially.
- Dwellings with two or more bedrooms to have both an accessible bathroom and a second accessible WC with shower drainage²⁸. A proportion (50%?) might be acceptable as only some members demand a second WC, but standardised design is likely to be cheaper. Fitting out could be omitted with drainage connections & pipework sealed to allow use as store room. Cost/benefit will need consideration.
- 2nd bedrooms should be large enough for twin beds or single bed plus home office.
- Consider the needs of people with poor mobility, wheelchair users, visually impaired, blind, hearing impaired & deaf²⁹. Also dementia friendly. E.g.:
 - Easy, lift access to all areas and levels.
 - Contrasting colours, delineation strips on front & top of steps, tactile hazard warning paving, drop kerb crossings, etc.
 - Acoustics to reduce overwhelming reflected/background noise, particularly in communal areas. Provision of a hearing loop in main communal room?
- The design of Lifetime Homes makes it easy for wheelchair users to visit the property, but does not necessarily provide full wheelchair access throughout the home. At present we are not aware of a specific need/demand for designated wheelchair housing within the cohousing. <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/lifetime-homes-and-wheelchair-design.html>

Security & communications

Consideration needs to be given to security & access systems for dwellings and the different areas within the site.

- How best to control/manage access to communal areas for residents, visitors, carers, services & tradesmen?
- Arrangements short & longer term access.
- Different methods appropriate for different situations and occupants.
 - Hotel style card access to Common House &/or guest rooms?
 - Code pads?
 - Key safes for carers, service providers or tradesmen?

The personal security of residents within their homes probably requires:

- Provision, or easy future installation, of a personal alarm and security system (telecare) and emergency pull cords.
- A telephone land line connection to every dwelling to ensure communication in event of power failure. Ready to connect personal alarm/telecare.

Communication provision will probably include:

- High speed fibre broadband connection to each dwelling, the Common House and office³⁰.
- TV/IT broadband connection in living room & bedrooms/home office. Is wired Ethernet connection needed or is Wi-Fi adequate?
- Wi-Fi to be enabled throughout the cohousing to maximise the potential for technology to support the communication & functioning of cohousing & wellbeing³¹.

Aesthetics

All structures to have an attractive external appearance complementing the surrounding area & properties.

Rooms should be pleasant & airy with ample natural light. Temperature controlled with maximum views from dwellings & sitting areas.

Careful consideration should be given to the orientation of the buildings to try ensure that all dwellings benefit from optimum daylight and solar gain, whilst avoiding overheating.

High quality sound proofing is required between dwellings and around communal areas³².

Retain and protect existing trees as much as possible to the benefit of the environment and screening of both the cohousing and neighbouring properties.

Protect and enhance the natural environment through habitat diversity, wildlife corridors and sustainable drainage.

Maintenance

A set of design and as constructed drawings are to be made available on completion/ hand over.

These should include details of the 'Lifetime Home' provisions and guidance on potential future upgrading/adaption.

A costed Maintenance Schedule is required as a basis for planning & managing future maintenance of the buildings, and also to aid building a shared sinking fund to finance this work when required.

Footnotes referenced to the November 2019 Chorlton Cohousing Membership Questionnaire results.

- ¹ Q2 Socially inclusive – Largely in agreement
- ² Q3 Focused on the needs of people aged 50+ – Largely in agreement but should it be exclusive
- ⁶ Q22-24 Dwelling type/size – Varied support & demand. Detailed breakdown available.
- ⁷ Q29 Private balcony or outside space – Strong agreement
- ⁸ Q26/27 Pets in home/shared spaces – Big issue. Wide split between pet owners & those averse to pets.
- ⁹ Q15A/16A Meeting/dining room & kitchen – Strong agreement to need but some against sharing
- ¹⁰ Q15B Guest rooms – Strong agreement
- ¹¹ Q15E Laundry – Strong agreement
- ¹² Q15F Office – Some support (but considered necessary)
- ¹³ Q15I Secure storage for cycles & mobility scooters – Strong agreement
- ¹⁴ Q15K/L Garden – Strong agreement
- ¹⁵ Q15C Lounge/ sitting room – Strong agreement
- ¹⁶ Q30 Allocated parking – Weak demand but allocated parking important for some.
- ¹⁷ Q15G/31 Car share scheme or car club – Some support/strong interest
- ¹⁸ Q32 Electric vehicle charging – Strong agreement but 1 against
- ¹⁹ Q11 Sustainability in the design, construction and running of community – Strong agreement in principle
- ²⁰ Q12A Highly sustainable construction – Strong agreement in principle
- ²¹ Q13 Robustly constructed for a long lifetime & low lifetime maintenance – Strong agreement
- ²² Q12B Building is energy efficient & sustainable to run – Strong agreement in principle
- ²³ Q12D Low carbon heating & ventilation – Strong agreement in principle
- ²⁴ Q12E Well ventilated using MVHR – Significant support in principle but some negative
- ²⁵ Q12F Solar panels and electricity generation – Strong agreement in principle
- ²⁶ Q12C Passivhaus standards – Significant support in principle
- ²⁷ Q5 Age friendly and to 'Lifetime Home' standards – Strong agreement in principle if cost acceptable
- ²⁸ Q28 Second wc/shower – Big Issue. Wide split with some strong demand & some against
- ²⁹ Q6 Design for poor mobility, wheelchair users & the visually or hearing impaired – Strong agreement in principle if cost acceptable
- ³⁰ Q33 Broadband – Strong agreement
- ³¹ Q34 Wi-Fi enabled – Strong agreement
- ³² Q14 Sound proofing – Strong agreement