



1. **High cost of speculatively developed housing?** Cohousing removes developer profit (which can be up to 20%).

2. **Lack of provision of houses by developers and government?** Cohousing allows people to take the provision of housing into their own hands.

3. **One-size-fits-all nature of many developer and local authority housing projects?** Cohousing allows residents to design their own homes and neighbourhoods.

4. **Lack of community and quality common spaces in developer and public housing and modern urban environments?** Cohousing fosters community and gives value to common space and a good quality shared environment.

Problems with conventional housing provision in Ireland, and solutions provided by Cohousing:

Why Cohousing?

Who We Are and How You Can Get Involved

SOA is a collective with the simple goal of improving the quality of living environments in Ireland by making new forms of housing available.

Our members and supporters represent a growing diversity of skills and expertise, and we are always open to new contributions and ideas.

If you would like to get involved, either to contribute time or expertise, or to join a group of people planning to create their own homes, please get in touch, or pop along to one of our workshops, Cohousing Cafes, or other public events.



CoHousing Primer

What is Cohousing?

Cohousing is an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches, but generally describes a situation where a group of people come together with the intention to organise and provide their own housing.

Cohousing usually combines private accommodation with communal or shared spaces or facilities. Cohousing allows people to decide for themselves on matters such as how their own dwellings are organised and the extent of shared facilities and community spaces desired.

Cohousing also allows people to decide for themselves what form of housing is suitable for their own lifestyle and life-stage and offers the possibility to realise this affordably and sustainably and to benefit from the creativity of common endeavour and resulting community.

Cohousing is community-oriented and is non-speculative and affordable. It offers an antidote to standard, anonymous, one-size-fits-all, profit-driven approaches to housing.

So Why Don't We Have CoHousing Already?

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

While this way of providing homes is commonplace elsewhere in Europe it is still relatively unknown or misunderstood in Ireland.

FINANCE

Financial institutions here are unfamiliar with providing construction or mortgage finance to self-organised housing groups.

LEGAL STRUCTURE

While the necessary legal structures already exist in Ireland, their use for this purpose is currently unfamiliar.

OUR AIM IS TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES

By organising public events to share information and build a network of potential participants.

By raising awareness among decision makers through direct engagement, public events, and growing grassroots pressure.

By supporting pilot projects.

By spreading the word through publishing, video, social media and everything else.



Organise Your CoHousing

Every group is different and every group is more than the sum of its members. Deciding on aims and priorities is a social and cooperative process of future neighbours that runs parallel to the building process. The process aims to bring clarity to every member's voice and vision within the context of the group for democratic decision making among equals.

A Framework For Organisation

1. Hold regular meetings organised well in advance
2. Compile minutes of your meetings
3. Rotate the chair at meetings
4. Record agreements in writing
5. Decide on voting rules (for example, consensus or majority decision making)
6. Divide work according to expertise
7. Decide on a spokesperson
8. Plan in simple steps

Events

SOA hosts regular and one-off events:

COHOUSING HERE CONFERENCE

A 2-day event scheduled for June 2019 in Dublin. This event will see invited speakers from various European countries describing how cohousing works in their cities and countries. Speakers have been chosen for their expertise in areas which currently present difficulties in Ireland, such as finance and land provision. This event is aimed at everyone from the general public to policy makers, local authorities, lenders and others involved in the housing provision in Ireland.



COHOUSING CAFES:

An event to be run every few months in order to bring interested groups and contributors together. Our first two cohousing cafes took place in Dublin and Limerick and more cafes are in the works. Entry is free and all are welcome.

COHOUSING WORKSHOPS:

Smaller open meetings held more regularly. If you would like to come along please email us.

Further Information

If you're interested in finding out more, the following websites and books are worth a look:

WEBSITES

www.cohousing.org.uk
www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk
www.cohousing-berlin.de
www.id22.net
psh.urbamonde.org
www.lilac.coop
www.communityliving.ie
www.owch.org.uk
www.communityfinance.ie
www.laborda.coop

BOOKS

Cohousing Cultures
Institute for Creative Sustainability (Jovis)

Cohousing Inclusive
La Fond & Tsvetkova (Jovis)

Selfmade City
Ring (Jovis)

Translating Housing: Berlin to Belfast
Sheridan (DSD)

A Right to Build
Parvin, Saxby, Cerulli, Schneider
(University of Sheffield)

Spreefeld Cohousing Berlin, Germany



A development of 3 apartment buildings by the Spree river. Completed 2014 this project has a cooperative structure. The development includes live-work units, community spaces, and guest rooms. There are 60 apartments in total forming a total living space of 8000sqm complimented by over 700sqm of shared spaces.

Lilac Leeds, UK



LILAC stands for Low Impact Living Affordable Community. This community developed housing with a legal financial structure designed to ensure affordability for all residents based on their incomes. Members pay back the construction costs through rent over a period which suits their means. Once repaid only running costs are required.

Possible CoHousing Models

CO-OP Group

Members own shares in co-op and live in homes at an affordable rent.

- 1 FORM GROUP** Agree on membership, general location, type of homes and community spaces, general financing and tenure model.
- 2 FORM LEGAL STRUCTURE** Members form co-op with constitution and become members.
- 3 ORGANISE FINANCE** Members provide equity for co-op depending on means. Balance of finance raised through ethical lenders or state bank (based on the provision of affordable housing).
- 4 ORGANISE SITE** Seek land at a reduced cost from the local authority (this is essentially affordable housing) or on a leasehold basis through a CLT (Community Land Trust). Agree on purchase of site if planning approved.
- 5 DESIGN** Members collaborate with designers to design homes and shared spaces, and apply for planning permission.
- 6 CONSTRUCTION** Co-op gets construction finance from commercial lender. When construction is complete construction finance is repaid with long-term finance.
- 7 LIVING** The community manages shared spaces. Long term finance repaid by co-op from affordable rents paid by members.
- 8 IF YOU MOVE ON** Share in the co-op can be sold but the value can be controlled to preserve affordability.

Building Group

Members own units outright with some limitations.

- 1 FORM GROUP** Agree on membership, general location, type of homes and community spaces, general financing and tenure model.
- 2 FORM LEGAL STRUCTURE** Members form a legal entity with constitution to manage the process.
- 3 ORGANISE FINANCE** Members individual mortgage approvals to the total value of the project.
- 4 ORGANISE SITE** Seek land on the open market or at a reduced cost from the local authority or on a leasehold basis through a CLT (Community Land Trust). CLT rules can be used to control resale prices if desired. Agree on purchase of site if planning approved.
- 5 DESIGN** Members collaborate with designers to design homes and shared spaces, and apply for planning permission.
- 6 CONSTRUCTION** Company gets construction finance from commercial lender. On completion, finance is repaid by with draw-down of mortgages.
- 7 LIVING** The community manages shared spaces. Mortgages paid back on individual units by members.
- 8 IF YOU MOVE ON** Unit can be sold but the value can be controlled to preserve affordability.

New Ground OWCH Barnet, UK



The OWCH (Older Women's Cohousing) community was formed by 26 women from different backgrounds who previously lived alone. Their housing consists of 25 self-contained flats of varying sizes, along with a common space and shared facilities. 17 of the flats are owned through 250-year leaseholds, while 8 flats are social rentals.

R50 Berlin, Germany



A 7-storey apartment building surrounded by balconies in the centre of Berlin. The project was financed by the 19 households who would become residents. Provision of land was assisted by the local authority, and the group had an explicit aim to consider community benefits in its decision making. The finished building includes ground floor communal space and rooftop deck.