

In some cases members pay rent for their accommodation; in others members either buy or build their own house. In addition there is often a financial contribution for shared facilities, services and resources and members are expected to provide so many hours in one form or another to the collective enterprise. They are also expected to take part in communal activities such as meals, meetings, work projects and social occasions, but this will depend on their time, willingness and choice. Cohousing is perhaps more organised and planned than other forms of intentional community in terms of legal structures and tenancy agreements. At the same time it is also looser and less demanding than other forms of intentional communities and allows members to have more choice in just how much community they might want and when. There is not a shared economy and there is no expectation of a shared belief system.

The most common pattern is for a group of like-minded people to plan their cohousing project together over many years as they seek to raise capital funds, design their buildings and their layout and put together the tenancy arrangements, membership selection criteria, management and governance procedures and collective agreements and policies before building the buildings and infrastructure and eventually moving in. The intention is to build community during the planning phase. In other situations a group might buy existing property and 'retrofit' it to serve their needs. Either way, the emphasis in cohousing is on self-governance, involvement and mutual support while retaining a sense of personal privacy, independence and autonomy.

Most cohousing projects are a Company Limited by Guarantee, an Industrial and Provident Society or a Community Interest Group. They may operate in partnership with a not-for-profit Housing Association, sometimes with a level of state funding for affordable housing and social housing. There might also be legal regulations to do with becoming a Registered Social Landlord and a House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO).

-Andrew Plant (2013)