



Still Green Cohousing

Prospectus

‘Approach old age with courage and hope.
As far as possible, make arrangements for
your care in good time, so that an undue
burden does not fall on others.’

Quaker founder, George Fox, 1656

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Still Green members

This prospectus has been written for prospective members, for our partners in the development process (our development partner TOWN, Milton Keynes City Council, Milton Keynes Development Partnership, planners and investors), and for other stakeholders interested in our proposals (neighbours in Wolverton, others in the UK cohousing network).

Our project is to build a socially inclusive and self-reliant neighbourhood in a cohousing scheme for members aged 50 years and upwards. Resident members – both owner-occupiers and tenants – will have their own separate homes and also share rights to and responsibilities for certain common facilities. Still Green Cohousing is proud to be the future occupier of Block C of the “Love Wolverton” development on the old Agora site on Church Street in Wolverton, Milton Keynes. Block C will include 29 sustainable apartment homes, a common house and communal facilities.

Cohousing is a way of forming a community where members know each other well and provide support to each other in a neighbourly way. Residents also make all the decisions about the management of their community in a consensual way instead of leaving decisions to a landlord or council. It is an “intentional community” rather than one that grows by chance, enabling the members to take control of their housing situation rather than putting themselves in the hands of a large and potentially expensive institution.

Fuel poverty and care of older people in the community are issues of national and local policy throughout the UK. This scheme addresses these issues by providing well-insulated homes and supportive neighbours within a secure and high-quality environment.

Still Green is incorporated as a Community Interest Company. It is managed through an elected Board, regular General Meetings, and Action Groups.

Reaching the point of building has involved drawing on knowledge and expertise in the UK and Europe. We have visited established senior cohousing schemes in Holland and schemes at all stages of development in the UK. We have had discussions with developers and land-owners of several different sites in Milton Keynes (including one ‘near miss,’ where complications with the site and financing meant we had to withdraw).

Still Green members are excited to now be involved in the regeneration of part of Wolverton, Milton Keynes. Having worked for several years with “Love Wolverton”- <https://lovewolverton.co.uk> (a partnership between Developers TOWN and MKCC), we now have a finished design and a contractor to build and (as of August 2023) are in the process of finalising costs on this exciting project. It is about building a neighbourhood and a community, not just homes.

The work of a Cohousing scheme does not end with moving into the finished scheme – this is where the work begins to shape our own community and support the surrounding neighbourhood.

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1 VISION

Still Green aims to create a highly sustainable, socially inclusive and self-reliant neighbourhood, based on cohousing principles and focussed on the needs of people aged 50+.

All those involved (members and our Developer TOWN) aspire to:

- ❖ **Provide cohousing** - where residents (members) live in their individual dwellings but also share some facilities (e.g. a common house, guest rooms, gardens, shared tools)¹. Experience in other countries shows that cohousing works best at a scale of 20-30 units, which is why we have 29 flats in the Wolverton development.
- ❖ **Cater for those in the 'second-half-of-life'** - the scheme aims to provide a positive alternative to the limited choice of housing options currently available for those over 50. We expect to have members of a wide age range (from 50 to 80+) and that members will want to remain involved in the wider society of Wolverton for many years.
- ❖ **Be green and sustainable in the way we live** - we aim to create a green development, one with gardens and trees but also one with the highest practicable standards of sustainability.
- ❖ **Provide housing of mixed tenure, owned and rented** - and to include people in very different financial circumstances.
- ❖ **Have homes designed by the people who live in them not by others** - Still Green members have been involved in the design and are keeping a close eye on all changes to the design and specification.
- ❖ **Provide mutual support and deepening friendships** - to all who live within the community. We envisage friendships developing naturally among us as we share responsibilities, common interests and the things that are important to us. We hope for a place where we can be ourselves and are accepting of each other, and where we look out for each other (without peering in on each other).
- ❖ **Share our experiences** - so that others wanting to create similar communities can benefit from our experiences. Just as we have learnt from other cohousing and green-build projects, so we expect in due course to offer information about our project to others interested in these matters.

Our aspirations for senior cohousing are discussed further in **Appendix 1** – “On the neighbourhood, homes and relationships we seek”.

2 TO WHAT ENDS?

People have joined us as members for many reasons. Those attracted to the idea of cohousing will usually be experiencing a combination of 'pushes' and 'pulls'. Push factors include the need to 'downsize' from the much-loved family home; a concern to have neighbourly support (so as to avoid being a burden on distant family); or wanting to make

¹ Until recently co-housing was a rarity in the UK. Now Still Green is one among a growing number of groups forming across the country <http://www.cohousing.org.uk/>

the most of a fixed income. 'Pull' factors include wanting to live more sustainably and the prospect of being part of a strong community in one's later years. The scheme has to meet these varied needs and aspirations if it is to be successful. But it should not be seen as just being about meeting members' private concerns.

The Still Green Cohousing community wishes to be an active part of the wider community of Wolverton, to be a demonstration of a different way of living in older age, and to showcase what it is to live successfully in sustainable housing.



There are several keen gardeners in Still Green

In many places in the UK, due to deficiencies in government policy, older people have to live in poorly designed housing, which is expensive to heat, with limited practical and social support leading to poor social, physical and mental health.

How to live a fulfilled and healthy older age are matters most people know they will need to consider sooner or later, like it or not. Many organisations, companies, public bodies and charities have developed various solutions to these issues - retirement complexes, assisted living, sheltered housing, and, ultimately, care homes.

Too often, however, these solutions are expensive or restrictive, or they are part of very large schemes to obtain economies of scale, or they are limited to the most frail and needy. By contrast, senior cohousing, such as Still Green in Wolverton, promises support without institutionalisation, since neighbourly concern can delay and reduce the need for bought in care services, and at lower cost. In addition, self-management replaces some paid services and so reduces corporate overheads.

These issues are complex and are discussed further in **Appendix 2** – “Still Green as a Contribution to Public Policy”.

The essential point is that the issues that Still Green is addressing are more than the idiosyncratic concerns of those who have chosen to join: they are central matters in current housing and social policy, and what works for us might work for others.

In tackling these challenges, we see ourselves as part of the loose-knit social movements that are exploring different forms of living and/or ageing together. We continue to learn a great deal from visiting other communities and projects.

Like them we are hoping to develop our own exemplary scheme: one that shows what can be done by people like us in situations like ours. A different group elsewhere would do things differently but our experience can still inform and encourage others - so we look forward, in due course, to sharing that experience.

In developing our cohousing community, we join a long and honourable tradition of self-organised social experimentation in housing – the Garden City movement, the co-operative housing movement, the Camphill Communities, self-build communities and eco-villages, as well as the many and varied cohousing schemes in the UK and across Europe

These considerations mean that, as a group, we have a social purpose as well as our individual purposes. A scheme that does not work for us as individuals or couples, will fail, and will have nothing except negative lessons to offer the wider society.

So, part of what it means for the scheme to work for us separately is that it succeeds socially, that the resident members form a convivial and mutually supportive environment. This social success can never be guaranteed but, like any other companionable group, we are stronger for having some shared purposes that go beyond our own private concerns. Thus, our private, shared and public purposes are intertwined.

3 ORGANISATION AND LEGAL FORM

In 2014, following several years of discussion and planning, Still Green incorporated as a **Community Interest Company (CIC)**. This hybrid form combines an ‘asset lock’ (vital for the receipt of public/charitable funds), scope for different sorts of members, and the integration of individual, group and social purposes.

The CIC’s objects are: “... to carry on activities which benefit the community and in particular (without limitation) to expand the choices for housing and good neighbourliness among those aged over 50 years by establishing and providing a cohousing scheme in which members may live and by sharing the experience of doing so with other interested persons.”

Our **Articles of Association** enable us to operate initially as a developer and thereafter as a distinctive type of Residents Association.

The company will:

- ❖ **Promote membership** and uphold the terms of membership.
- ❖ **Own the freehold of the land** (although now a 999-year lease will replace the ambition to hold the freehold)
- ❖ **Own, manage and maintain the common house**, the common gardens, and any other shared facilities.
- ❖ **Own, manage and maintain the rental property**, including setting rents and charges; OR enter into partnership arrangements with a housing association or other body to provide and maintain the rental properties.
- ❖ **Support and oversee the sale and letting of apartments** to members who wish to become residents of the cohousing scheme.
- ❖ **Support and oversee the life of the neighbourhood** in any other ways that serve the purposes of members, including entering into partnership arrangements with providers of services and facilities wanted by members.
- ❖ **Facilitate the documentation and sharing of the experience** of creating and running the neighbourhood.

Beyond the legal documentation, Still Green Policies & Procedures (SGPP) sets out in ordinary language the way we are organised, our values and practices on important matters, and the way we make appointments and decisions. It is and will remain an evolving document.

Much has still to be decided, and we will need to make changes and additions as we face new challenges. New members receive the current version on joining. Individuals can become members of Still Green once they have attended a meeting as visitors, discussed and learned about the project and cohousing more generally, been accepted as potential members and paid the commitment fee.

Now that the project is about to be built, a further requirement of membership is that potential members must choose and reserve a vacant property and pay 1% of the purchase price. There are also supporting members who pay an annual fee and the provision for 'waiting list members' when a suitable property is not available to reserve. Seniority in membership (taken from the date of membership) confers rights to choosing a property and until exchange of contracts moving to a property which becomes available, as well as to a choice of other spaces (parking spaces, bike parking, etc.)

The membership criteria and application process are set out in **Appendix 3**.

The Board, chosen by members at the Annual General Meeting, meets monthly, or more often if needed. General meetings of members are held every two months (or more frequently if necessary). In both contexts our practice is to make decisions by consensus, through careful preparation, listening and reflection.

The origins and early years of Still Green are summarised in **Appendix 4** and this may help in understanding why we manage our affairs as we do. Between general meetings most of the work is progressed by individuals and small groups working on particular issues.

4 WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE?

Many years of hard work, discussion, disappointment and compromise led to us working with the developer TOWN and then (with false starts) to the site in Church Street, Wolverton, where Block C, within the wider “Agora Redevelopment Scheme”, was redesigned for our purpose.

Redesigning part of a scheme has meant some compromises, but the result is something that meets most of the ideals we set out from the start.

Site location



Still Green’s new home will be in Wolverton.

The site is on Church Street, Wolverton, which is, effectively, the high street for Wolverton. Wolverton, although now part of Milton Keynes, is a town in its own right. It was the first railway town in the world, being founded by the London and Birmingham Railway Company in 1838. Most of its housing stock is Victorian or Edwardian red brick terraces.

The site is very close to shops and services of all sorts, as well as being served by buses from all over Milton Keynes. It is close to Wolverton train station, which has trains northwards to Northampton and Birmingham and southwards to Milton Keynes Central and London.

Formerly on the site was a 1970s shopping centre, The Agora (which was generally disliked) and car park. The Agora was demolished in late 2022.

Site configuration

We favoured what might be called a mini ‘village green’ – where homes in a range of building sizes and styles overlook a central garden, with parking around the perimeter. We have achieved something close to this with apartments on three floors (ground, first and second) overlooking a central courtyard garden. Each apartment has dual (or three) aspects with in most cases windows overlooking the garden as well as the streets.

Ground floor flats have front doors onto the streets and backdoors onto the garden whilst first and second floor flats have front doors onto internal walkways with balconies overlooking the garden. Stairs and a lift serve the upper floors and there are, in addition, staircases from the walkways into the garden.

Shared facilities

These include the Common House (with kitchen), the courtyard gardens, a guest room, a multi-purpose room, laundry and a bike-store. Other common facilities include those that one would expect in any block of flats, such as a rubbish/recycling bin store, lift, etc.

These will be funded initially by a slightly higher cost for each of the cohousing flats, and they will require a modest service charge for running costs and maintenance that will be collected with the general service charge for the apartments. However, as members are in charge of how much these charges are, they will be transparent and reasonable and as small as is prudent.

Visits to senior cohousing schemes in other countries (even before a site was identified) helped in highlighting the facilities that are actually used. In consultation with the developers and mindful of cost and space constraints we agreed what should and could be included.

The design will be to a high standard of sustainability; not quite Passivhaus standard but still very energy efficient. This means apartments will have low running costs and low carbon emissions. It is likely that air source heat pumps will be used for space and hot water heating. There will be no gas on site. In addition, we envisage that the whole site will be served by a local electricity grid including shared solar PV electricity. This we hope will further reduce electricity costs.

Ownership and management of the rental units

Current plans are for four apartments rented at social rents. Further work on the ownership and management on these apartments is in progress. Whatever method is used Still Green wants those who rent to be members and as much part of the community as those who own their own apartments.



Still Green will be at the centre of the “Love Wolverton” development

Those who rent will need to meet the membership criteria of Still Green and contribute, as best they can, to the running of the cohousing community. It is likely that there will also be a few apartments owned by members who will be rented until such time as the owner/member can move to Wolverton through retirement or a job change. As far as possible we shall be working with the owners of those apartments to ensure that they are let to people who will contribute and be involved in the community.

First residents – the importance of the age profile

The social success of the cohousing scheme requires that initial residents have a spread of ages from 50+ to 80+. The importance of this point becomes obvious if one considers what would happen if nearly all the initial residents were (say) aged 70-80: essentially, they would grow old together - and the character of the neighbourhood would change accordingly.

Likewise, the scheme would be transformed if the next generation of potential residents put off joining until they were 75 or 80 (or if those at this age were willing to pay the most for properties on sale).

Either or both of these possibilities would mean the scheme would become, in effect, a sort of informal and erratic sheltered housing for the already frail. This means that the initial cohort of residents must be spread across the second half of life; and that, normally, those joining later, after the initial members, are aged (say) 65 or below. This spread of ages will not and need not be precise; nevertheless, without some clear expectations and rules

around this point the character of the scheme cannot be preserved. This means the leases have restrictions on who can purchase.

A 'managed market' for the re-sale and rental of homes will be needed. In working this out we will follow the experience and best practice of other co-housing schemes as well as advice from experts. Leases have already been drawn up (informed by members' wishes) but the day-to-day rules for operation of our housing still need confirming and this will be done, as always, by consensus after discussion amongst members.

Such arrangements are normal in other UK housing for older people (for example, The English Courtyards Association; <https://cognatum.co.uk/faqs/> as well as other co-housing schemes in Europe and the US.

The creation of an attractive and socially vibrant neighbourhood is the single most important way of ensuring a pool of non-resident 'waiting list' members who want to be involved with a view to becoming residents in the future. Such waiting lists of would-be residents are the norm in cohousing and in other age-restricted housing schemes.

In the absence of a 'waiting list' member wishing to buy a unit of the size that has become available, a time limit will be set (between 8 and 12 weeks) for attracting a new member as a purchaser. If this time-limit is not met the property may be sold on the open market. If a mortgage company has repossessed a property this time limit would not apply.

A fall-back would be for Still Green itself to buy and then let the unit for a period, but this will only be possible once the company has accumulated funds and would only be done after members had agreed this as a policy.

5 HOW MUCH WILL IT COST? - PRICES AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY

There is a current price list for the apartments for sale.

When considering costs, members and potential members have to factor in the additional benefits: high sustainability; the character of the neighbourhood, offering enhanced support and security; a 'future-proofed' home; use of shared facilities, including the common house, garden, guest room etc; involvement in running the community, and fewer formalities.

Some of these, like the high design standard and the shared facilities, will add to the building costs. However, we have taken 'good value-for-money' to mean that members can see the relationship to local market prices for properties of a comparable size - and decide if it is right for them.

An apartment in Still Green will be a premium product with many special features, this means prices are slightly higher when compared with a similar-sized, conventional flat or house elsewhere in Wolverton. Put another way, co-housing involves trading some private space (say, one less bedroom) in return for much more shared space (the common house and garden, laundry, guest room, etc.).



Getting to know each other on a walk after a pub lunch

6 WHAT IS BEING BUILT? - PROJECT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The drawings and picture (see pg. 10) show what the physical building in Wolverton will be like and where it will be. They also show what some typical flats will be like and the arrangement of the walkways and the shared garden BUT what is being built is more than a physical building, it is an intentional community.

To this end members are already meeting, not just for business but for social events, such as shared meals and walks. Full formal meetings are held every two months in Milton Keynes and informal socials in between times.

In addition, individual members or small groups of members, meet each other for shared meals and activities and some formal business meetings are held on-line. Members also share ideas and comments via an on-line message board that sometimes has to stand-in for actually meeting until such time as we are all co-located in Wolverton.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - On the neighbourhood, homes and relationships we seek

A series of discussions and workshops explored what cohousing might mean for the growing group that became Still Green. We read about, visited and discussed co-housing; we shared hopes and fears; reflected on the experience of our parents and grandparents in their later years; appraised what we like about our current living arrangements and their limitations; and considered the economics of ageing. The notes that follow condense recurring themes from these sessions, as captured originally in notes and on flip charts. But reading this compilation is no substitute for prospective members working out for themselves what they want from cohousing.

- ❖ **Peace of mind** – the security that comes from knowing that people are looking out for us, from affordability, from belonging without being obliged always to join in, from having someone to turn to on simple maintenance issues.
- ❖ **Continuity** – enabled by units designed with the requirements of later years in mind, and even the scope for further down-sizing within the neighbourhood.
- ❖ **Contact and support** – shared activities of all sorts, avoiding the “I’ve not seen anyone all day” syndrome, being able to choose who to ask when help is needed, having nearby friends who know you and who will help handle health and care systems if one suffers a sudden decline.
- ❖ **Continuing engagement with the world** – be it continuing economic activity (full, part-time, casual or voluntary work), facilitating visits by our children and grandchildren, or participating in the wider opportunities around us.
- ❖ **Simplicity** – walking to local amenities, reducing outgoings, being able to live with less ‘stuff’ (through sharing), reducing our ‘footprints’, and growing our own.
- ❖ **Design with nature** – living in an attractive built and natural environment, offering gardens, trees and aspects that go well beyond what we could enjoy in separate houses.
- ❖ **Relational maturity** – because we know we are the problem as well as the solution, and that some difficult collective decisions will still arise. So we need transparent structures, and to be accepting of each other’s foibles and weaknesses.

While these are important as reference points, when presented in this way they can seem a bit idealized and unreal. They may even suggest a monoculture, rather than the mix of very different lifestyles represented. In fact, our discussions recognized the dilemmas that arise when different aspirations conflict, and our own ambivalences about some of what we seek.

Yes, we want community! – but hold on, that should not be at the expense of personal space and autonomy or involve *too much* responsibility for others... We want close friendships within the neighbourhood – but no way do we need cliques.... Likewise, we are keen on self-management and everyone having their say – but whoa! Don’t expect us to spend every evening in meetings... We want lots of activity and engagement – except of course when we want to be left alone in peace and quiet... We insist on a beautiful, well-located and highly sustainable neighbourhood – that is also simple and affordable, of course.

Recognizing these ambivalences and trade-offs suggest another way of expressing our hopes. We are seeking **affordable quality** and a **fulsome simplicity**; **connected autonomy**; **selective engagement** and **permeable boundaries**; *lively occasions* and also **companionable silences**; **flexible policies** and **'good enough' decision-making....**

Finally, the inevitable tensions among our aspirations, both individual and collective, mean accepting that there will be no end point in developing our neighbourhood. It will be more organic than that. The shared facilities will need to be reviewed - and changed, extended or retrenched. Arrangements for shared meals, gardens, maintenance, or membership, will need adjustment and re-balancing. New needs will emerge, new people will replace those who pass on, new ideas will be suggested. It will keep developing – and we do not need to get everything right first time.

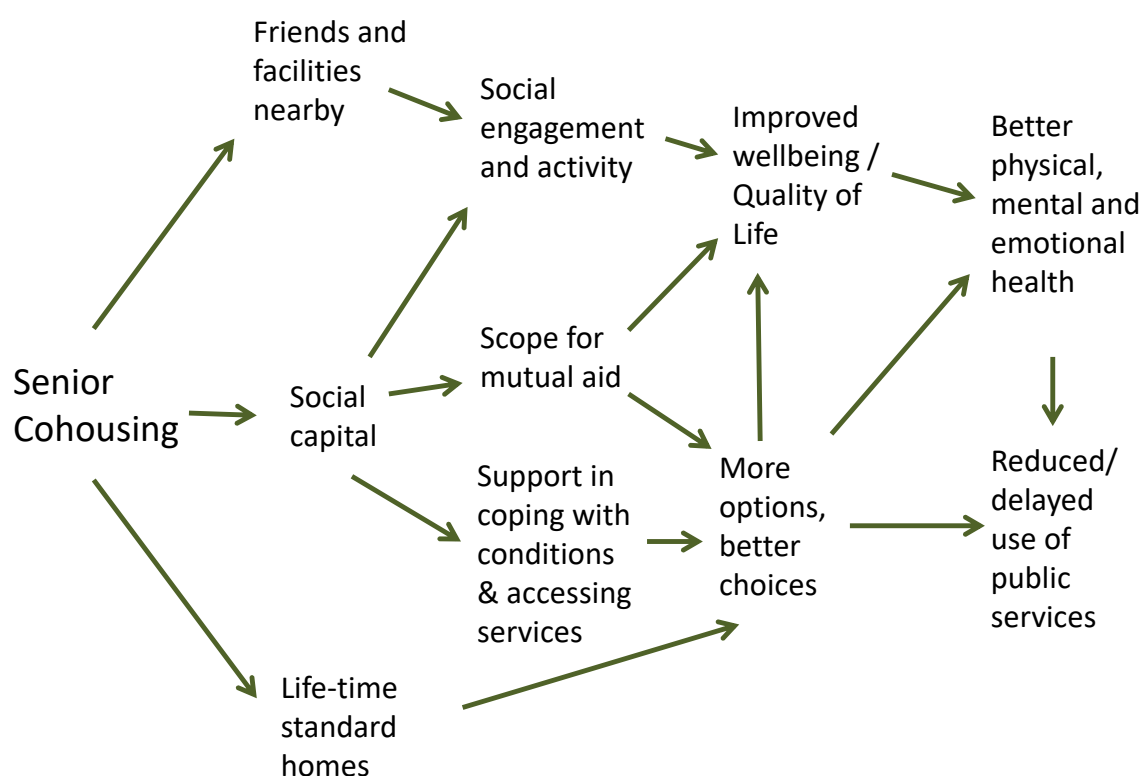
Appendix 2 - Still Green as a contribution to public policy

Still Green contributes directly to several public policy agendas – including the encouragement of the custom build market and the imperative of more sustainable development, notably the push towards zero-carbon building. However the strongest connection – if only in terms of the potential for a positive impact on public finances – is with the challenges of the housing, health and social care of 'our ageing population'.

Viewed negatively, this is a looming public policy disaster much discussed in the press: ever-increasing numbers of elderly people whose families live far off, requiring ever more elaborate health and social care services, for longer periods. Simplifying ruthlessly, such analyses assume that we are the problem: most of us will require the services of a formal system to compensate for the shortcomings of ways of living into which we will myopically decline. We do not doubt for a minute the need for those formal health and social care systems; but they have limits. In health, prevention is better than cure, while for much ordinary social support and assistance, mutuality trumps dependency on professional (ie, impersonal) systems in terms of both cost and quality.

Crucially, our health and well-being are not *done to us*, but created *by* and *with us* (they are *co-produced*, in the jargon). And if we are part of the solution *as well as* part of the problem, our living longer ceases to be an intractable challenge. Indeed, viewed positively, this is a marvellous opportunity previously bestowed on a lucky few in each generation: to remain active, enjoying family, companionship and security, to fill the space given by reduced responsibilities with new or postponed interests, to engage with friends and to be there for them; and to continue assisting each other and contributing to the community as one's energy allows.

The links between senior cohousing and desired policy outcomes are summarised in the diagram below. Most of these separate causal links are well established in the relevant academic and policy literatures. However, the long-term research to establish the overall strength of the relationship between senior cohousing and the desired outcomes still needs to be undertaken.



Appendix 3 - Membership criteria and application process

If you want to know more, look at our website www.stillgreencouhousing.org and contact us through the website or by email to stillgreenweb@gmail.com. You will be invited to our next meeting as a visitor. It will either be a General Meeting or a social event, which happen on alternate months so that as a group we have the opportunity to meet together each month. You will also be invited to have a phone conversation with a member about yourself, what you are looking for and what is currently happening in Still Green. These occasions are important – they will help you understand the nature of the project, what it will involve, and the current state of play. It also provides you with a chance to clarify with others what you are looking for in terms of housing in your later years.

Thereafter, you will be welcome to attend General Meetings and social events, and to become involved for a period of up to four months. This is a chance to get to know the existing members, and to consider whether this scheme may be right for you. After attending a meeting and visiting the site, you can apply to become a member by completing a simple application form. Following this a zoom meeting with our membership group takes place before you are invited to become a member and pay the appropriate fees.

Membership is primarily for those wishing to be part of a cohousing scheme and willing to contribute time, energy and money to make it happen. We also have some ‘supporting members’ who want to assist the project or to stay in touch with it and have made major contributions in the past. As more and more of our homes become reserved we are

introducing a 'waiting-list' membership for people who want to live in the community but for whom there is not a suitable property available at that time.

Additional conditions for membership are:

- ❖ At least one resident in each household should be aged 50 or older, though there can be exceptions.
- ❖ Members wish to help create and live in a highly sustainable, socially inclusive and self-reliant neighbourhood and are expected to participate in the planning and development of the scheme.
- ❖ Members are expected to join in the governance and management of the project.
- ❖ Members pay commitment fees or subscriptions depending on the category of membership.
- ❖ All members must sign up to our values and principles

Our values and principles

- ❖ In Still Green – part friendship group, part business – how we deal with each other is particularly important. So we ask applicants to *consider, discuss and form a view* on the following values and principles, which the current members hope can continue to underpin our neighbourly relationships.
 - Respect for each other*** - some of the things this means for us are having, and expressing, goodwill towards each other; treating each other with consideration and as equals; being open to the insights and concerns others have; and accepting each other as we are.
- ❖ ***Personal responsibility*** - we are all crew, there are no passengers – albeit we may contribute in very different ways at different times, according to our gifts and experience. We take responsibility for our own failings – we try not to bluster or blame others.
- ❖ ***Valuing our relationships*** - this may require effort, seeking ways to be considerably truthful, to listen hard and communicate gently, keeping 'short accounts' rather than accumulating points of complaint or bearing grudges.
- ❖ ***Consensual decision-making*** - we are concerned with the process, not just the result – and good process may require extensive preparation. Deliberating together is not the same as arguing. 'Straw votes' can be informative, but making decisions by voting can easily become divisive. With difficult issues, especially, we need to seek creative solutions and the common ground. The aim is to agree ways forward, to set out a remit for action and for clear accountability.
- ❖ ***Authority and trust*** - we believe authority comes from the task, from seeing what really needs doing, more than from role or seniority. We believe those holding positions of responsibility must earn trust, and then be trusted (and supported). The same applies to professionals we have selected to work for us. Everyone cannot and should not be involved in everything.

Does this mean the supportive neighbourhood we seek depends on finding *special people* who are always conducting themselves well, and never have bad days? Certainly not. In fact, it needs ordinary people – we are all crooked timber – but ordinary people who are willing to be on special terms with each other, and *to join the adventure that requires*. For those terms can only be suggested in principles and values (as above); they have to be discovered, evolved and lived together, as best we can.

Appendix 4 - Origins and development

Still Green grew out of a small group of Milton Keynes Quakers who, prompted by a visit to Hartrigg Oaks in York in 2009, began discussing the issues associated with ‘downsizing’, growing older, and the need for additional support.

This group gradually focused on cohousing, and began reading and investigating more systematically. In 2012, an initial Prospectus was prepared; a group of seven visited several long-standing senior cohousing schemes in Holland; financial planning began; and we introduced formal membership arrangements under an interim constitution (as an unincorporated association - ‘Third Age Cohousing, Milton Keynes’).

From very early on it was apparent that the scheme could not be limited to Quakers (there would not be enough of them wanting to try cohousing in Milton Keynes) - even if those involved had wanted this (they didn’t). So, from its early days the group has welcomed non-Quaker members.

The Milton Keynes Quaker Meeting is best understood as a sponsor of Still Green. It has provided many supporting members who have donated funds as well as vital time and energy even though they will not become residents. The Meeting House facilities have been available to Still Green for meetings, free of charge.

Once the neighbourhood is established the Articles of Association of Still Green CIC provide for one (external) non-member Director to be a Quaker. That said, the Quaker Meeting is in no doubt that Still Green has to ‘leave home’ and make its own way in the world.

Understanding these origins may be helpful for new members because the early members of Still Green - like any founding group - were setting the tone and style of the embryonic organisation. And they tried to do so in terms of values and practices that were important to them. Thus, one element of our original vision for Still Green was that it have ‘a Quakerly ethos’. This was explained in terms of the central Quaker values of simplicity, truthfulness, equality and peace, and respect for the inclusive spirituality of the Religious Society of Friends².

However, it became apparent that for non-Quakers such references raised questions and concerns more than they provided answers and reassurance. So now the ethos we are seeking is expressed in more familiar ways, and the statement of values and principles used

² For those who have not previously encountered Quakers it may be worth mentioning that they do not have a creed – so there is no requirement to believe particular things. In fact MK meeting counts Buddhists and ‘non-theists’, among its members and regular attenders; and it has cordial relations with the MK Humanist Society.

in the membership application form has been revised in secular terms. Similarly, our decision-making and organizational processes, based on a search for a deep consensus around what is required, still echoes some Quaker practices, but should stand or fall in their own right.

For further information, visit www.stillgreencohousing.org

For the avoidance of doubt, this document simply sets out the current thinking of those who are Still Green members at this time, and is subject to change as our thinking evolves. Nothing in this Prospectus can or should be taken as making a contractual offer or undertaking.

Revised and updated in August 2023 from the original Still Green Prospectus, published January 2015. © Still Green (Third Age Cohousing) CIC 2023

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For further information, visit stillgreencohousing.org

For the avoidance of doubt, this document simply sets out the current thinking of those who are Still Green members at this time, and is subject to change as our thinking evolves. Nothing in this Prospectus can or should be taken as making a contractual offer or undertaking.

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