

MUCH Newsletter Autumn 2022

2022 has been a busy year for us, and we've made progress in many areas over the last 12 months, which we'd love to share with you.

We hope that you'll find this newsletter interesting and please do get in touch with us if we've revived your interest in joining MUCH or being involved in other ways. Do forward it to any friends or family members who you think might be interested.

While we haven't yet found the all important site, we know that many hands make light work, and we welcome enthusiasm and energy as much as specific skills to help get this project built.

Members



Our numbers have fluctuated over the years, but we're currently a group of ten members, in 7 households, who remain committed to creating cohousing for people aged 50 and above in south Manchester.

The Covid pandemic made us appreciate the support from our friends, neighbours and networks, and reports from live cohousing groups have shown that mutual support in a cohousing community really does work. This [report](#) about lockdown life at OWCH (Older Womens CoHousing) was written by Maria Brenton, Senior Cohousing Ambassador for UK Cohousing in June 2022.

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Sites

We have made considerable progress on a couple of sites this last year. But it's only fair to say that both have now fallen through and so it's back to the drawing board again.

The first was on the Trafford/Manchester boundary, where we were looking at a plot on a site being jointly developed by Trafford Council and Trafford Housing Trust.



Very much an urban site, with great connectivity to the city centre and beyond, the masterplan for the site was for a mixed development of houses and flats around a number of courtyards, with a village green and community space on the site.

However after discussions between our architects and Trafford Housing Trust, we found it wasn't possible to fit our cohousing plans onto the masterplan. In addition, rising construction costs meant what we wanted to build wasn't financially viable.

We have also been in discussions with Manchester City Council and Great Places Housing Group (our Housing Association partner) about including cohousing on a site in Levenshulme.

The site wasn't as well connected in terms of public transport, but it is in a quiet location, adjacent to lots of green space. The orientation of the site was ideal for our proposed Passivhaus development, and our architects prepared a layout for MUCH which sat alongside some Great Places houses for shared ownership.

We spent months working with Great Places and various professionals getting cost, valuation, and viability reports and exploring different development and financial models. Unfortunately, due to prices continuing to rise in the construction market and cohousing still being a niche type of residential development, not to mention still being completely new to Manchester, we have been unable to come up with a proposal which is viable for all parties involved.

Both sites have been big learning opportunities and mean that when the next suitable site comes along we will be much better placed to move forward!

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Prospectus

This time a year ago we were about to issue a generic Prospectus with a view to sharing with potential partners. We received positive feedback but it's now time to review and update following this year's learning. We included these quotes from members in the Prospectus:

“COVID has taught me that the most important relationships are friendships. Home is refuge but can be isolating unless we create spaces for meeting and sharing”

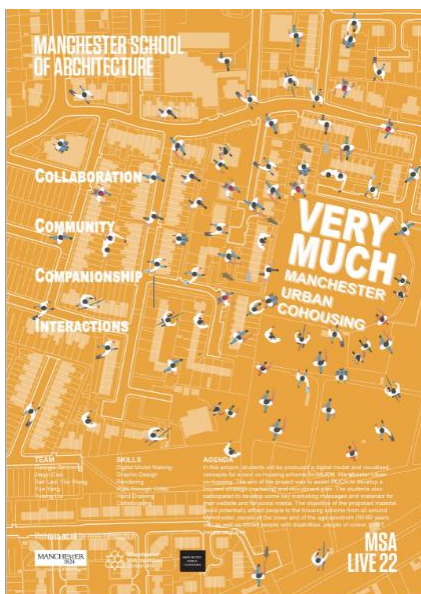
“Living in a well-insulated warm home designed for current life-styles but with reduced energy use & consideration of our carbon footprint is a very attractive prospect”

“I am naturally gregarious and as I get older, I want to live with people who are generous, creative, humorous and different. I want to help make a home that is different and fun to share”

Governance

After using a standard 'off the shelf' constitution since we became a Company Limited by Guarantee in 2013, we've worked with Wrigleys, who are specialists in cohousing legalities, on a bespoke set of Articles for cohousing, and these were agreed at our AGM in 2022. At the same time we also added a new Governance section to our Business Plan to answer some of Manchester City Council's queries.

Publicity



We signed up to take part in the Manchester School of Architecture Live 2022 project and worked with a small group of post graduate students to agree a project brief for messaging and media that we could use in a membership drive. The postgraduates recruited a team of undergraduates to work on the brief for a focussed fortnight in May. The whole experience was a little chaotic, but was an interesting exercise and we gained some useful ideas, a brochure and a [video fly through](#), which is quite entertaining if not altogether realistic!

Several members of MUCH have close connections with the universities, and we enjoyed raising awareness of designing cohousing for older people with the architects of tomorrow.

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We also worked with Isabel, an intern from MMU's RISE Intern scheme. She has been helping us redesign our website, and present ourselves in a fresher, more appealing way. We've been examining language, colour, fonts and photos, and even had a short training session on social media. Look out for the new website which we expect to launch early in 2023! We hope Isabel has learnt something from working with us as well!



Networking



We have worked closely with the [GM Community Led Homes Hub](#) since it came into being. The Hub produce regular newsletters (you can [sign up here for your own copy](#)), and hold monthly forums or visits. In August there was a day out in Liverpool to visit some inspiring community led housing, and in September a visit to the Energy House at Salford University.

As a member of the [UK Cohousing Network](#) we are also on their mailing list, and some of us are also regulars at their cohousing cafes on zoom – news, speakers and opportunities to chat to others to find out what's going on in the UK cohousing world.

We've also continued to visit other cohousing schemes both as a group and as individuals – this year's UK visits included [LILAC](#) in Leeds (including meeting the chickens!) and [Marmalade Lane](#) in Cambridge.

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Next newsletter

We're planning to include an item about Passivhaus in the next newsletter - how it can help keep our energy costs under control, as well as providing healthy homes that are comfortable to live in.

Keeping in touch

E: muchmanchester@gmail.com

Facebook: @muchmanchester

W: <https://cohousingmanchester.uk>

Twitter: @muchmanchester

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