



Annual Report - September 2021

Introduction

This report covers our first two years, as we initially came together in the summer/early autumn of 2019, and started our formal meetings in October of 2019.

What progress have we made?

- We secured a £4,000 grant which funded our legal set-up costs and other incidental expenses.
- Launched a website and a Facebook page and designed/printed a leaflet.
- Opened a bank account with Triodos, and we've had discussions with them about what they might be prepared to fund.
- Organised and attended two training courses (the 'Vision and Values' event with Ecomotive, and the first Seeds of Change course on 'Consensual Decision Making').
- Undertook study visits to three similar recently completed cohousing schemes (Marmalade Lane, Colchester and New Ground).
- Identified our site preferences, and registered on various self and custom registers.
- Developed a good relationship with several key councillors and some officers at Cheltenham Borough Council; we have also got to know key people on the planning team at Stroud.
- Built a good relationship with the Glos Community Led Housing Hub.
- Finalised a detailed Directors/Members Agreement.
- Formally registered as a company (in the summer of 2020).
- Developed a document on how we deal with new applicants who want to join us.
- Joined the UK Cohousing Network.
- Set up an interim filing system on Dropbox.
- Produced an accommodation schedule that lists our total space requirements.
- Calculated some guideline figures on what it might cost to build the scheme.
- Researched car sharing and live in-support options.
- Undertaken discussions with three potential developer partners (Bright Green Futures, Igloo Regeneration and TOWN).
- Age UK Glos supplied us with a supporting statement.
- We spent a great deal of time exploring a site in Cheltenham, designing an outline scheme, liaising with architects and council officers, only for the council to 'mothball' the project in July 2021.
- We have investigated a total of 25 potential sites, and rejected many of them (for one reason or another). There are still more being explored further – in Cheltenham and Stroud.

In addition to these practical achievements, I think we have bonded well as a group, with the core members getting to know each other quite well, and the workload shared reasonably evenly. This was all achieved during the Covid pandemic.



Members undertook study visits to Marmalade Lane (left) in late 2020, and Cannock Mill Cohousing (right) in the summer of 2021.

It was hugely frustrating that the council's plans for the site in Cheltenham were 'mothballed' when it seemed we were getting quite close to securing it, but we have now picked ourselves up, and we are chasing other opportunities with increased vigour.

As we enter our third year, I believe we have learned a lot from the training courses, the visits we have undertaken and the work we've done to date investigating potential sites.

Going forward I suspect our main priority will again be securing a suitable plot of land. We all must remind ourselves that it is very unlikely that we will find a 'perfect site' and that some compromising will be needed.

Over the next few months I believe we will benefit from developing a solid Business Plan for Horizon Cohousing Gloucestershire, as this will help us all get to grips with some of the many challenges we will encounter on the journey; for example, how much can we realistically afford to spend on the overall development, and how will we can raise the funds to pay for the land/build the homes.

Now that the pandemic is hopefully behind us, I also hope we can have more face-to-face contact and social interaction.

I would like to formally thank everyone in the group for all your sterling work and support over the last two years, and I am confident that we will make further significant progress over the coming 12 months.

Ted Stevens
Chair
Horizon Cohousing Gloucestershire