



# Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Area Plan Submission - Report

Who are you:	Group
Name:	Common Ground Community [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Reference:	GDKLAP-225742
Submission Made	January 30, 2024 11:11 PM

## Topic

Compact Growth - Housing - Population Growth

## Submission

Submission to Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Area Plan

By Common Ground Community-Led Housing  
(Previously Common Ground Co-housing)

Contact Name: Michael Reidy  
[REDACTED]

Website: [commongroundclh.ie](http://commongroundclh.ie)

For the Attention of:  
Administrative Officer,  
Planning Department,  
Wicklow County Council,  
Station Road,  
Wicklow.

The purpose of this submission is to propose the inclusion and support of Community-Led Housing in the Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Area Plan as a viable means of addressing housing demand and delivering affordable housing and sustainable community development in this locality. This submission, firstly describes what community-led housing is and secondly demonstrates how the model has proven to be successful in addressing housing needs in resilient and sustainable communities in the UK and other countries.

### What is Community-Led or Co-housing?

Co-housing or Community-Led Housing (CLH), first emerged in Scandinavia in the 1960s as a response to community needs and there are now many such communities across the UK, Europe and worldwide. Since the 1990s, it has gathered momentum in Britain where, with the practical support of local authorities, there are now around 20 well-established projects and over 60 in total. [Note: For a more inclusive list of established, developing and forming co-housing communities in the UK please refer to <https://cohousing.org.uk/information/uk-cohousing-directory/>]

A CLH community is typically made up of private dwellings and additional shared communal facilities such as a common house with a community kitchen and dining room. Such arrangements provide a balance between privacy and community. Depending on the community's interests, other shared facilities can also include workspaces, craft rooms, teenage/play spaces, and gardens/allotments, amongst others.

CLH communities are democratically self-managed with residents involved in the design and planning of the community from the outset. The design emphasises how homes and public space can be used to encourage community interaction, e.g. parking is positioned on the periphery of the site creating space for safe play. Costs are kept down and waste is minimised by sharing facilities, such as washing facilities, cars and tools. CLH communities range from new developments built to the highest eco-standards, to refurbishments of farms and industrial buildings in urban, rural and suburban locations.

### Support for Community-Led Housing

There is a growing awareness of the importance of Community-Led Housing in Ireland. It is under consideration at the statutory, academic and crucially, community levels in Ireland as a viable solution to the problems of affordability and sustainability in the Irish housing landscape. In June 2019, SOA

(Self Organised Architecture) held an International Cohousing Conference at which the LDA (Land Development Agency), HBFI (Home Building Finance Ireland), and CFI (Community Finance Ireland) made presentations alongside speakers from co-housing communities and representatives from local authority agencies in the UK, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands who actively support co-housing communities in their countries. As one of the most developed co-housing groups in the country, Common Ground CLH was invited to give a presentation on our journey to date.

Local Authorities in Britain and other European countries have realised that supporting well-run CLH communities can address many of their priorities, including:

1. The need to build affordable housing. CLH communities are designed around utilising many shared facilities, keeping costs down;
2. The need to create supportive neighbourhoods. CLH projects are initiated and designed by intentional communities who invest a lot of time, energy and expertise in formulating robust governance structures to smooth the processes involved in households living in close proximity to one another;
3. CLH communities typically reach out to the wider community, offering their shared spaces for social, educational, economic, and cultural activities which bring huge benefits to the wider areas in which they are based;
4. Being a part of an intentionally supportive community is beneficial for the wellbeing of all members, which means that they are better able to support each other at every stage of life. This community self-care reduces the demand on state services;
5. CLH community facilities frequently provide space for co-working hubs or live/work units, space permitting;
6. By designing both buildings and lifestyle around ecological considerations, CLH communities are models of sustainable living at every level.

How Community-Led Housing in general and Common Ground CLH in particular, can be a positive addition to both housing and community life

**Sustainability:** The establishment and maintenance of an eco-friendly lifestyle is one of Common Ground CLH's core values, therefore we are hoping to locate in or near one of the existing towns to access public transport and services and reduce car dependency.

**Affordability:** Groups across Europe, the Americas and increasingly, Britain find that by acquiring land themselves and building smaller homes with a lower environmental impact, designed around shared facilities and open spaces, costs can be kept to a minimum thus ensuring affordability.

**Building community:** Several of our members are already deeply involved in providing a diversity of community services outside of Common Ground CLH. The wider community will also be welcome at many of the varied cultural, educational and health-related activities and events that will be based in our community house. As well as providing a supportive community for ourselves, we will be actively involved in enriching the life of our locality, not unlike the valuable contribution Cloughjordan Eco-village has made to its surrounding area.

**Economic sustainability: Live/work units, co-working hubs:** Many of our members would prefer to work in a co-working hub or set up studios, therapy rooms or workshops on site, space permitting. We are keen to create a positive contribution to the economic life of the locality. Our neighbourhood will be a hive of activity during the day, not a dormitory town. By saving on commuting, this increases peoples' productive use of their day and supports local shops and cafes. **Crime Prevention:** Co-housing developments are effective community watch areas, with strong community awareness, oversight and security built into the design.

## Conclusion

We believe that supporting Community-Led Housing is an excellent way to build sustainable, climate-responsive, affordable communities that greatly enhance the areas in which they are based and we believe that this has the potential to be a key solution to providing sustainable, supportive and affordable communities in Wicklow. Therefore, we propose that Community-Led Housing be included as a viable option to deliver affordable housing in the Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Area Plan and that Wicklow County Council actively prioritise and pilot Community-Led Housing for sustainable shared resource use and community formation.

## Common Ground Community-Led Housing

Common Ground Community-Led Housing is a group of 10 households who have come together to build an affordable, environmentally low-impact and mutually supportive cohousing community. CGCH comprises 17 adults and 11 children living or working close to North Wicklow. Our members work in many fields including education, health, disability services, small business, horticulture, as well as architecture, the Arts and IT.

Many of us are unable to access mortgages individually under the current lending criteria, but nonetheless are paying large rents. To find a solution to the impact the current housing crisis is having

on us and our families, we came together in September 2018 formally. Common Ground Community-Led Housing was formed with a view to create a housing community that is affordable, low-impact and holistically sustainable.

As a group we have a lot of experience in working in and creating community and have prioritised building good personal and working relationships between members. We have committed to bi-weekly meetings of task teams, monthly whole group meetings and community building weekends. Many of our members are active in Common Ground co-operative, a skills and resource sharing community-based group dedicated to promoting a co-operative and low-impact lifestyle based in Bray. Our intention is that our community-led housing facilities will support as many, if not more activities and resources for the wider community as Common Ground currently does in Bray. Coming together to build homes with a low environmental impact, and living lightly by sharing our facilities as well as our community spirit, is a significant way for us to live affordably and enjoy residing within a warm, supportive and well-governed community.

## **File**

Common Ground Community-Led Housing - LAP submission.docx, 0.02MB

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Local Authorities in Britain and other European countries have realised that supporting well-run CLH communities can address many of their priorities, including:

1. The need to build **affordable housing**. CLH communities are designed around utilising many shared facilities, keeping costs down;
2. The need to create **supportive neighbourhoods**. CLH projects are initiated and designed by intentional communities who invest a lot of time, energy and expertise in formulating robust governance structures to smooth the processes involved in households living in close proximity to one another;
3. CLH communities typically reach out to the wider community, **offering their shared spaces** for social, educational, economic, and cultural activities which bring huge benefits to the wider areas in which they are based;
4. Being a part of an intentionally **supportive community** is beneficial for the **wellbeing** of all members, which means that they are better able to support each other at every stage of life. This community self-care reduces the demand on state services;
5. CLH community facilities frequently provide space for **co-working hubs or live/work units**, space permitting;
6. By designing both buildings and lifestyle around ecological considerations, CLH communities are **models of sustainable living at every level**.

## How Community-Led Housing in general and Common Ground CLH in particular, can be a positive addition to both housing and community life

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