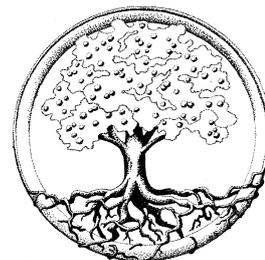


COLE STREET FARM COHOUSING COMMUNITY

THE THRESHOLD CENTRE
Cole Street Farm, Cole Street Lane,
Gillingham, Dorset SP8 5JQ
www.thresholdcentre.org.uk
info@thresholdcentre.org.uk



NEWSLETTER – August 2006

Planning

Despite eloquent local and national strategies for more sustainable development, achieving this within current planning policies is not at all easy. Our application faces new challenges, and we would value your support.

The planning officers have not yet put our proposal to the Development Control committee, although it is well overdue. We hope it will be held on September 12th and we have written to the Leader and Chief Executive to request this.

The delay has raised a new challenge. North Dorset District Council has exceeded its allocation of new housing, and must cut back on new approvals. Hence it will be more difficult for them to approve this proposal, which is an exception to policy. We therefore need to make the strongest case we can to the planning officers and committee members.

It would help us a lot if you can write a letter of support by August 25th. Address it to Mr. Andrew Williams, North Dorset District Council, Norden, Salisbury Road, Blandford, Dorset DT11 7LL.

The Threshold Centre, Cole Street Farm, Ref. 2/2006/0105

Please use your own words, but some of the key points you may wish to emphasise are:

- Pilot demonstration and training centres for highly sustainable development are urgently needed.
- Cohousing offers major benefits of sustainability, affordability and social support, and exemplars of it are highly desirable.
- This project meets important unmet needs both locally and nationally.
- It is an appropriate re-use of existing buildings with less traffic generation than previous permitted uses.
- It will contribute to local economic and skills development.

Publicity

The weekend *Telegraph Property Section* recently featured The Threshold Centre in an article entitled '*Growing old – together*' about the advantages of cohousing for the 'soon reaching retirement and above'. Although this is not quite how we see ourselves, the enthusiastic response we received (blocking the answerphone mail box for a couple of days) was overwhelming, indicating what a huge need there is for this kind of development for this age group.

On Wednesday 9th August *You and Yours* on *Radio 4* will be devoted to the growing number of single person households with cohousing as one answer to the growing environmental problems faced because of them. The Threshold Centre will be featured, and we wait with bated breath to see which bits of the interviews will be used!

Programme of Events

Unless otherwise stated, the cost of weekend courses (from 7pm Friday to 5pm latest on Sunday) is £90 including lunch, tea/coffee & snacks. Accommodation, breakfast and evening meal at the Threshold Centre is £35 per night. A non-returnable deposit of £20 is requested to book a place on a course and £20 deposit for B&B. Concessions may be available, please apply in writing.

We are introducing a new option into our programme for potential/would-be cohousers. It is called the *Cohousing Taster Weekend* and we feel it could prove useful for groups to have the opportunity to spend time living and organising time together. We would offer:

- Use of the farmhouse on a self-catering basis – kitchen, dining and sitting rooms accommodation.
- An excellent selection of the best books on cohousing, group forming, etc.
- Option of one or two shared meals with members of our core group, eg. Friday supper, Sunday lunch.
- Option of a discussion session with a member of our core group, to help you draw on our experience.

If you are interested, please contact us with an indication of the package you would like, the number in your group, and potential dates.

Dates: Mutually convenient dates can be arranged

Times: 7pm Friday to 4pm Sunday or by negotiation

Cost: £50 per person for the weekend – extra services by negotiation

September

Ongoing Meditation: 8pm – 9pm first Thursday in each month (7th September) Open Meditation led by members of the Threshold Centre. Payment by donation.

Creating Cohousing - what cohousing is and how to get started. Whether you are just starting your exploration, or in the perplexing thick of it, and whether you're an interested individual or already part of a group, we aim to help with your questions. Led by Threshold Centre residents. (See also November 17th – 19th)

Date: 7pm Fri. September 8th – 4pm Sun. September 10th

Open Meeting for potential Phase 2 members and those interested in visiting. Please book.

Date: Sunday September 17th 11am – 3pm (Bring and share vegetarian lunch.)

October

Ongoing Meditation: 8pm – 9pm first Thursday in each month (5th October). Open Meditation led by members of the Threshold Centre. Payment by donation.

November

Ongoing Meditation: 8pm – 9pm first Thursday in each month (2nd November). Open Meditation led by members of the Threshold Centre. Payment by donation.

Open Meeting for potential Phase 2 members and those interested in visiting. Please book.

Date: Sunday November 5th 11am – 3pm (Bring and share vegetarian lunch.)

Creating Cohousing - what cohousing is and how to get started. Whether you are just starting your exploration, or in the perplexing thick of it, and whether you're an interested individual

or already part of a group, we aim to help with your questions. Led by Threshold Centre residents.

Date: 7pm Fri. November 17th – 3pm Sunday November 19th

December

Ongoing Meditation: 8pm – 9pm first Thursday in each month (7th December). Open Meditation led by members of the Threshold Centre. Payment by donation.

New Year Retreat

Dates: 7pm Friday 29th December – after lunch Monday 1st January 2007

Cost: £150 incl. full board.

Report on The Way of Council (with Pippa Bondy)

I found this course enormously helpful, offering different ways to help truthful communication, and importantly, listening. We covered much ground over the two days. We looked first at setting up the physical space in which council is to be held, then discussed exactly what council is, and why this way of communicating has value in our society today – not just something borrowed from the ancients for the sake of it. We looked then at the guidelines for council – active listening without judgement or preconceived ideas, speaking truthfully and spontaneously (without rehearsing the speech), speaking always from the ‘I’ – not generalizing, and finally confidentiality. We then went on to look at various forms of council, the role of witness and the role of the facilitator. At the end of the day our ‘homework’ was to take a walk in the spirit of council, which we then relayed the next day in any form we chose. I believe each participant came away with much to consider – I certainly did.

A message from Alison Vine

Having attended a Cohousing workshop at the Threshold Centre I am now very interested in making contact with anyone from the Sussex/Brighton area who has also been to a workshop, is signed up for one, or thinking of doing one. It would be nice to meet up in order to share ideas and explore possibilities. My email address is alison@fairmount-Ltd.co.uk

For further details of any of our activities, please contact Caroline/ Gay /Michael at 01747 821929 or e-mail info@thresholdcentre.org.uk. If you would like details about hiring our group space, please phone 01747 821929 and leave a message for Jane.

Summer at Cole Street Farm

We have been lucky enough to be visited again by Honza (a student from Czech Republic) to help with our everlasting maintenance. Since his visit last year his English has improved hugely and having finished his law degree, this year he has been studying economics. So we hope that preparing and priming large numbers of wooden window frames will have proved a welcome change! Certainly he has been very lucky with the weather and his tan is spectacular. We cannot thank him enough for his consistent hard work, uncomplaining as ever.

The swallows have also returned to nest in the wood shed and the timber barn. I wonder if it is just my imagination, but there don’t seem to be as many as last year. Having removed the ivy from the farmhouse last year and had repointing done, this summer we are having a go at clearing the front ‘garden’ of quantities of stone, black plastic and old iron nails and taming the huge Pampas grass clump. We have planted a blue Hibiscus and are dividing the glorious Montbretia that has been flourishing unchecked.

Once again we enjoyed the Gillingham Festival, taking full advantage of the wonderful selection of plays, gigs and activities on offer – thanks to Mark (Buzz the bee-man) White and his team for making it fantastic yet again.