

Lending for community-led housing

Ecology specialises in supporting properties and projects that promote sustainable communities and lifestyles. If you are an existing community-led housing provider, or you are developing a new project, we have available a bespoke mortgage product range and the support of an experienced team to assist you.

Lending for community-led housing

We see social housing provision, an increase in affordable homes and the development of new vibrant housing communities as key parts of a more sustainable housing mix. We want a wide range of people to have the opportunity to buy, rent or share high-quality, energy efficient housing in their local area, whether urban or rural.

Who do we support?

We specialise in mortgages for a range of tenures and types of occupation. We support the renovation of poor quality, derelict and empty properties, which many other lenders may reject, and we encourage the construction of energy efficient new homes. Our mortgages for community-led housing are here to support:

- **New and established housing co-operatives**
- **Housing associations**
- **Community Land Trusts**
- **Cohousing and members of cohousing groups**
- **Community self-builders**
- **Mutual Home Ownership Societies**
- **Self-help housing and homesteading.**

In addition to providing housing development mortgages to community-led groups, we are keen to work in partnership with you to promote the availability of residential and shared ownership mortgages to your members on a site specific or design specific basis where your project meets our ecological criteria.

What do we support?

We'll consider lending on a wide range of properties, including those that would often be turned down by other lenders, for example:

- **Rescuing a derelict building**
- **Converting a disused building into a home**
- **Buying back-to-back houses**
- **Ecological new builds.**

We take a balanced view of the social and ecological merits of each case when considering support for community-led housing proposals. We do not necessarily require your property to meet high ecological standards to lend, although naturally we encourage improvement, especially where there are evident low-cost opportunities to better the energy rating of your property.

If you are intending to build or undertake **renovation or conversion** work as part of your plans, we will expect the measures proposed to meet our ecological criteria via the use of energy efficient measures and sustainable materials.

Whilst there are no fixed or rigid definitions of what constitutes an eco home, we do require an appreciable standard of energy efficiency for all the **new build** projects we support. New homes must be built to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate level B (SAP 88+) rating for us to consider lending. For more details on some of the eco-friendly materials and energy efficient measures we do encourage, please see our **What we lend on** leaflet.

Housing co-operatives are expected to have a **minimum** of four independent resident members to qualify for an Ecology mortgage. Please note that a family unit will be considered as one such independent member. We require 50% of adult resident members to be in paid employment or be able to evidence a regular income.

We will not lend to provide “bridging” support where repayment of part or all of the borrowing requested is dependent on the sale of other property owned by the co-operative or its’ members.

We **don't** lend on large scale buy-to-let projects to private landlords or on holiday homes, which inflate housing prices and take residential property out of the reach of local people and communities.



Residential mortgage arrangements for community housing projects

Whether you are funding your community housing project through Ecology or not, if you are building new homes that meet or better our minimum ecological standards, buyers could be eligible for a residential mortgage with the Society. They could benefit from an interest rate discount reflecting the energy efficiency of the home once completed and certified. (see *Our C-Change discounts* leaflet for details).

Our shared ownership mortgages are available from a minimum share of 25%, at our standard variable rate and also include our C-Change discounts. We can lend up to 95% of the share value for buyers purchasing a property under shared ownership arrangements.

For community-led group proposals, it's always a good idea to discuss your designs or development at an early stage with us. We can then assess our capacity to provide residential mortgages for members and provide an indication as to how many units we may be willing to mortgage on completion on any given site, subject to assessing the circumstances of individual applicants.

For full details of our current terms for residential borrowers, including our terms for shared ownership mortgages, please refer to our *Current residential rates and charges* leaflet and *Our C-Change discounts* leaflet.

Residential mortgages and shared ownership mortgages for individuals or individual members of groups are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

THE PROPERTY MAY BE REPOSSESSED IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS.

Key features

- We offer a straightforward, individual approach. We consider each application individually and where appropriate, a site visit may be arranged with you to discuss your project.
- Mortgages are available on a capital and interest repayment basis, with interest-only periods available to support new developments, subject to eligibility.
- Mortgage terms are available from 10 years up to 40 years, subject to eligibility.
- You can borrow up to 80% of the property's value, subject to eligibility.
- We will consider lending funds up front on land or the unimproved value of a building with outline planning consent.
- Stage release payments are available as the value of property is increased through building or renovation work, subject to our maximum loan-to-value at any given time.

Community-led housing mortgage products for co-operatives, associations, limited companies and other organisations are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

For details of our current terms for community-led housing please refer to our *Current commercial rates and charges* leaflet.

Contact

Because we take an individual approach to every mortgage, we like to discuss your project with you before you make a formal application, to make sure it fits our criteria and to answer any questions you have.

You can contact our Business Development Team on **01535 650 774**, or you can email us at commbiz@ecology.co.uk or write to the Society. When you get in touch with us, it's helpful if you can provide us with some basic information about your project:

- what you want to do (especially the environmental aspects of your project)
- how much you'll need to borrow
- how you intend to finance it.



Other useful contacts

Radical Routes is a network of co-operatives working for positive social change and can usually provide help when setting up a co-operative. For more information and details of their publications, visit www.radicalroutes.org.uk, call 0845 330 4510 or email info@radicalroutes.org.uk.

Co-operative and Community Finance can lend to housing co-operatives where a mortgage is being offered by a primary lender, such as Ecology, to provide the balance required to purchase or renovate a property. For more information, visit www.coopfinance.coop/borrow.

Catalyst Collective offers housing co-op registration and support. For further details visit www.catalystcollective.org, or email info@catalystcollective.org.

The UK Cohousing Network is the UK's umbrella organisation for established and forming cohousing groups. The aims of the Network are to promote cohousing and provide a resource and advice point for new and forming cohousing groups. Visit www.cohousing.org.uk for more information.

The National CLT Network is the national body for Community Land Trusts. It supports and promotes the work of CLTs. Visit www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk for more information.

Solving problems

Our aim is to provide a high standard of service to all our customers. However, occasionally things can go wrong. When this happens, we want to put matters right as quickly as possible. If you do have a complaint about any aspect of the service you have received, please contact us straightaway. We have an established complaints procedure, a copy of which is available on request. This explains how we will try to resolve your complaint and how, if you are still not satisfied, and you are eligible, you can ask for it to be investigated impartially by the Financial Ombudsman Service whose address is: Exchange Tower, London, E14 9SR or you can visit their website financial-ombudsman.org.uk.



Ecology Building Society was rated as an ethical Best Buy for our mortgages, ISAs and savings accounts by Ethical Consumer magazine in its product guide rankings.



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