

WARM UP

1 According to what you have studied about cohousing decide if the statements below are true (T) or false (F). Then go to page 68 and check your answers.

- 1 All the families in a cohousing community live in rented houses. _____
- 2 The local council chooses what facilities to give these communities. _____
- 3 Cohousing communities can only be found in the countryside. _____
- 4 Neighbours interact and help each other. _____
- 5 People who live in a cohousing community save money and energy. _____

GLOSSARY

to commute: *fare il pendolare*
from scratch: *da zero*
vegetable patches: *orti*
to heat: *riscaldare*
insulation: *isolamento*
double-glazing: *finestre con doppi vetri*
shade: *ombra*

Sustainable cohousing

When planning a cohousing project, some main points should be taken into account to guarantee its success and sustainability. Location for example, is of prime importance as the community should be situated in proximity of public transport facilities, at walking or cycling distance from the community, in order to drastically reduce the use of cars. Alternatively, offices and workshops can be included in the cohousing community so that people don't have to commute at all.

Restructuring an old, abandoned industrial estate means that areas of the city which would otherwise be left to fall into degradation may be recuperated and used efficiently. Besides, fewer building materials and less energy are used when transforming already existing buildings rather than constructing from scratch.

When constructing, houses should be grouped close together to save on land and resources, so fewer side streets are necessary and there is more space for gardens and vegetable patches.

Houses which are attached to each other are also less expensive to heat in winter and to keep cool in summer, so energy costs are greatly reduced. The same goes for flats built one on top of each other. In addition, all buildings should have good insulation, double-glazing, and be able to make the most of natural light in order to save on electricity.

The cost of building materials can also be kept to a minimum by constructing small houses, which will have lower energy bills and maintenance costs. The building materials themselves should be environmentally-friendly, having as little impact on the environment as possible. Materials should be recyclable, produced locally and should be long lasting.

A centralised heating system can also be installed which will save on energy and money. Moreover, buildings should be constructed so that they make the most of energy generated by the sun, as well as taking advantage of fresh breezes and shade. Finally, roofs should be designed facing south so that in the future solar panels may be installed. All these efforts and features will ensure that the community is not only a good place to live in, but also sustainable from an environmental point of view.

Adapted and translated from *Cohousing e condomini solidali* ed. by M. Lietaert

ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 Why is location important for the sustainability of a cohousing community?
- 2 What are the advantages of restructuring old buildings as opposed to constructing new ones for a cohousing community?
- 3 Why is it better to avoid building single detached houses in a cohousing community?
- 4 What should be taken into account when choosing building materials in order to make the project sustainable?

WRITING

3 Describe what characteristics you would include in a cohousing community to make it sustainable.