



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

Submission to Department for
Communities and Local Government

Right to Build Vanguards



South Cambridgeshire District Council
Expression of Interest

www.scambs.gov.uk

Introduction

We have developed an ambitious proposal over the last month. We are confident of its delivery and summarise key elements in this submission, together with a suggested programme. Our proposal is set out against the award criteria. We commit to achieve the milestones set out in the prospectus, to secure at least 100 new plots, and to deliver self or custom built homes on the ground over the next year. We have agreement to continue to work collaboratively with Cambridge City Council to develop and deliver the Vanguard programme across the Greater Cambridge area, and within the context of our City Deal.

Award Criteria

The ambitiousness and deliverability of the local authority's outline plan to deliver (and ideally, to exceed) the requirements of the vanguards against the identified milestones, to the extent that this goes beyond what the local authority planned to deliver anyway.

Without the impetus of the vanguard programme, our plans would have consisted of:

- Continuing to process the K1 co-housing planning application for 40 homes on the northern fringe of Cambridge, but not conducting a review to capture the lessons for the district and also with wider application
- Words of encouragement in the Northstowe Housing Strategy but no suggestion that custom or self build homes would be a requirement of the s106.

In developing this submission, we have developed a work programme that far exceeds what we had already planned. This is described in the Proposed Programme Plan below, and illustrated in the appendices. We will:

- Commit to meet the core requirements of the programme, namely, to open and promote a register for people to register an interest; and to make suitable serviced plots available during the course of the programme and beyond. Draft criteria for the register and actions to bring forward plots are set out in appendices below.
- Conduct an early review of the K1 co-housing scheme in order to apply the lessons to the Vanguard programme.
- Deliver schemes and share learning from projects focussed on large-scale developments and village sites including rural exception sites, as well as all other data agreed.
- Run a design competition in order to promote the Vanguard programme, demonstrate the variety and potential of right to build, and attract designers and developers to such projects.
- Explore the local demand for co-housing, custom build, self-build and community land trusts, as well as other mechanisms that are suggested.
- Provide in-house advice and support to people interested in developing their own homes through our housing delivery company.

We are confident of our ability to deliver for a wide-range of reasons, and believe we are ideally placed to participate in the Vanguard programme. As a summary:

- We have delivered the K1 co-housing scheme in partnership with Cambridge City Council and therefore have practical experience as well as knowledge to draw on.

- Through supporting and enabling the K1 scheme, we have built effective networks. We will draw on these to provide external advice and support for the Vanguard programme. We will also use these networks to promote the register that we will launch in October.
- As a growth area, we are delivering large scale strategic sites. Taylor Wimpey has offered to participate in the Vanguard programme at its development at Cambourne. This is a new village of 4250 homes, at the stage of building out the last 950 homes, with additional proposals for further homes on the edge of the village.
- We have a strong record of delivering rural exception sites, completing 420 new homes over the last eight years. Laragh Partnerships has offered to include six sites in the Vanguard programme.
- We are delivering Northstowe, a new town of 10,000 homes, with the Homes and Communities Agency submitting the Phase 2 application for 3,500 homes this August. We have agreement, in principle, to include self and custom build in the s106 Agreement.
- We host the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings system, and are therefore ideally placed to procure an additional module from Locata to deliver a register for people interested in building their own home, and for landowners willing to offer plots.
- We have our own Housing Company, and are setting up a Housing Delivery Vehicle. Therefore we are well-positioned to provide advice and support to people interested in self or custom build from our in-house team.
- We have political support, and our Vanguard programme will be led by the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transportation. He is committed to developing a new understanding of affordable housing, that is, housing affordable for local people.

The amount of land the authority envisages being able to secure to meet local demand, from its own land and other sources.

We expect to secure more than 100 plots to be available for custom or self build. We have set a cautious target as we do not know how many landowners and developers will want to participate, nor how many people will register interest in purchasing plots.

Our estimation is based on the following data:

- Taylor Wimpey is implementing planning consent to build 950 homes at Cambourne. They are 'delighted' to work with this project, and have identified potential for 5 plots over the next year with additional in future years.
- Laragh Partnerships is another housebuilder that is 'keen' to participate. They have identified sites in six villages with approximately 90 plots. We expect around 15% of these to be made available for custom build, as the sites are rural housing exception sites.
- K1 co-housing group has submitted a planning application for 40 homes at Orchard Park.
- The Homes and Communities Agency is due to submit an outline planning application in August, for Northstowe Phase 2 including 3,500 homes. In principle, it is agreed that the s106 agreement will include a commitment to provide land for custom build. This is expected to make at least 50 plots available.
- There is potential for up to 40 plots to be made available at Fen Drayton.
- Further plots will be identified through pro-actively contacting developers and agents and through general marketing of the scheme.
- We have retained our housing stock, but own little land, and therefore have not included any plots from land we currently own.

The level of resource grant funding that the local authority has indicated it requires

We estimate that we require £50,000 of grant funding to cover:

Procurement of database (Locata)	£15,000
Provision of specialist advice	£15,000
Marketing and Promotion	£3,000
Design Guide	£2,000
Project Officer	£15,000
Total	£50,000

Past record of positive actions the local authority has taken (as a local planning authority or otherwise) to address demand for custom build housing in its area.

In 2009, we provided the funding for a study to test the feasibility of self-commissioned housing on a site at Orchard Park. This was a collaborative project with the landowner, Cambridge City Council. The outcome of the initial study was positive, and led to further phases to promote the scheme and bring it to delivery. Further detail is provided in the case study below.

The overarching intention for Orchard Park was that it should act as a pilot study for the inclusion of self-build within strategic growth sites. Orchard Park is a new housing development of 900 homes on the edge of Cambridge, not the usual choice for people wanting to commission or build their own homes. The continued success of this project has given us confidence to include self-build and other imaginative housing models in the housing strategy for Northstowe Phase 2. Northstowe is a planned new town of 10,000 new homes, with construction of Phase 1 due to commence later this year.

In 2011 the Council developed a Supplementary Planning Document in consultation with residents of a former Land Settlement Association at Fen Drayton. The SPD allows energy efficient homes to be constructed outside of the Council's normal policies. Thus far 8 bespoke homes have been approved under this scheme. There is potential for 40 more plots to be brought forward.

K1 Co-housing Scheme at Orchard Park

The Council took the initiative to research the potential for a custom build scheme as part of the Orchard Park development on the north of Cambridge. In conjunction with the City Council who own this site in Orchard Park, a Co-housing group has been recruited and supported to develop a detailed client design brief for a community of 40 households. We assisted the planning process by agreeing a special Planning Performance Agreement for a more detailed Outline Planning Application, which has recently been submitted, as well as unique access for the cohousing group to present their scheme at our Design Review Panel. The Co-housing Company have benefitted from the government's Community Led Support Project to assist with the cost of making this planning application.

Our aspirations for the project, to justify our support, were to demonstrate that the higher design and construction standards associated with cohousing projects were achievable in everyday development locations. We hope that this project will serve as an exemplar to other house builders in growth areas, expanding their ideas of what house purchasers might really want if given the opportunity to input to the design of their homes and more importantly the layout of new developments. The layout of sites is often the most disappointing aspect of most developers' design approach.

The Orchard Park Community Council has also been highly supportive of the K1 project, and is looking forward to welcoming a substantial number of active community members to the new neighbourhood.

The opportunity each expression of interest presents for the Right to Build Vanguard Programme to include areas which differ in terms of their geographical location within England and their urban/rural/suburban character.

South Cambridgeshire is consistently recognised as one of the top places to live and work in the country due to its thriving economy and quality of life. The district is a largely rural district which entirely surrounds the city of Cambridge. It comprises over 100 villages.

As a growth area, we are a fast growing district and in 2011 had a population of 146,800 people, greater than the city of Cambridge. The district has become home to many clusters of high technology research and development uses. Key sites are the Cambridge Science Park, Wellcome Trust Genome Campus, Babraham Research Campus, and the proposed development at North West Cambridge to meet the long term growth needs of the University of Cambridge.

The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out the requirement for development to provide 22,000 additional jobs and 19,000 new homes in the district between 2011 and 2031. A large proportion of the housing requirement will be met by the delivery of major sites. Some of these are on the edge of Cambridge and others are in new settlements. There are also 900 homes allocated in 9 villages. The major sites include:

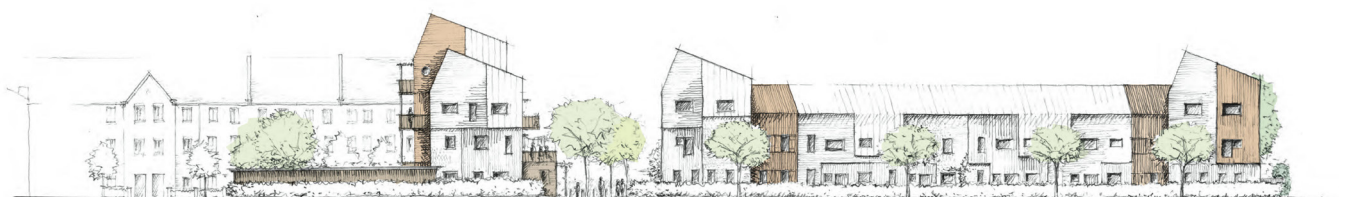
- Northstowe, new town with a total of 10,000 homes (5000 by 2031).
- Waterbeach, new town of 8,000 – 9,000 homes (1400 by 2031)
- Bourn Airfield, new village of 3,500 homes (1700 by 2031)
- Cambourne, a further 2000 homes.

Based on past trends, we expect that ‘windfalls’ (unknown sites that will come forward on land that is not allocated) will deliver 2,800 dwellings between 2011 and 2031. Windfalls include rural exception sites for affordable housing and over the last eight years, 420 dwellings were delivered on 27 rural exception sites in South Cambridgeshire. These sites met identified local need.

As part of the City Deal agreement for the Greater Cambridge area, we have committed to provide an additional 1,000 homes. It is expected that these will primarily be provided through an increased delivery of rural exception sites for affordable housing. The Vanguard programme will have potential to add an exciting new strand to this programme, and to create greater variety on our major and medium sized sites.



SOUTH



WEST

Proposed Programme

September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">i) Agree milestones, project plan and funding agreement with DCLGii) Appoint external advice and supportiii) Establish steering groupiv) First meetings with Cambridge City Council, and with interested landownersv) Establish links with National Self Build Association and other relevant bodies including local builders serving the self-build marketvi) Agree criteria for the Right to Build Registervii) Commission module for the registers of interested people and plots of land - to link to the Housing Register and Choice Based Lettings Schemeviii) Agree Promotion Strategyix) Recruit Project Officer
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">i) 'Go Live' with the Right to Build Register Phase 1 for interested peopleii) Market the Register including media launch and promotion through existing groupsiii) Launch design competition for an identified site, in association with the National Self Build Association, if agreed, and based on its SelfBuild on a Shoestring Ideas Competitioniv) Promote the scheme to local planning agents and local housebuilders, at Agents Forum and through email-shotv) Promote the scheme to major housebuilders, including at Northstowe Housebuilders Breakfastvi) Commence project with Taylor Wimpey and Laragh Homes to assess impact on viability of inclusion of custom build on mainstream housing sitesvii) Identify rural exception site to test inclusion of custom build
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">i) Draft updated Affordable Housing SPD, considerations will include self build housing, and the use of self-build plots to provide cross-subsidy on rural exception sitesii) Determine Planning Application for K1 co-housing scheme, and issue joint press releaseiii) Conduct review of the K1 co-housing process, identifying lessons for other sites in the district and elsewhereiv) Promote custom build to parish councils, including those developing Neighbourhood Plans at Planning Parish Forumv) Contact developers with unimplemented planning permissions to seek interest in making plots available for self-buildvi) Contact landowners covered by the Fen Drayton Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Engage with Chamber of Commerce and Cambridge Ahead to consult with employers regarding housing need and appetite for custom build amongst their employees
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) 'Go Live' with Phase 2 of the Right to Build Register for landowners ii) Launch register of plots iii) Hold inaugural Meeting of Right to Build Forum for registered applicants, to share good practice and provide network opportunities. Thereafter to meet regularly iv) Review progress, refine project as necessary, and provide first monitoring report
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Hold inaugural meeting of Forum for Landowners, if agreed through earlier engagement ii) Continue to promote and develop the registers iii) Develop 'match-making' linking interested people with landowners iv) Develop business plan for the continuation of the project, including the provision of advice and support potentially through the SCDC Housing Delivery Company, and including facilitation of access to funding
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Include custom build housing within draft s106 Agreement for Northstowe Phase 2 (3,500 homes) ii) Continue to promote and develop the registers iii) Identify particular plots for enabling support to submit planning applications and delivery homes iv) Review progress, refine project as necessary, and provide second monitoring report
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Start on site for K1 Co-Housing Project ii) Review existing self-build initiatives to bring new impetus to activity levels iii) Develop succession plan/exit strategy
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Assess feasibility of call for land in connection with village and Neighbourhood Plans for sites that could be used for primarily affordable custom build projects. These could be vested in community land trusts, drawing on experience of East Cambridgeshire. We would work with Foundation East, acting as the East of England Community Land Trust Umbrella body.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Review progress, and provide third and final monitoring report ii) Implement succession plan, and mainstream the Vanguard programme

Appendices

Proposed Project Team and Governance

The Vanguard will have an officer steering group consisting of:

Jo Mills, Director of Planning and New Communities

Alex Colyer, Executive Director for Corporate Services

Stephen Hills, Director of Housing

The steering group will guide and oversee the Right to Build Project.

The steering group will meet monthly to ensure the project achieves agreed milestones, and resolve identified issues. The steering group will set up working groups to develop the register, and to find and make available plots.

The officer steering group will report regularly to the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transport.

Forums will be set up to bring together interested landowners and developers, and also to bring together people interested in purchasing a building plot for their primary residence. Further detail regarding frequency of meetings and terms of reference will be developed with each group, but in the initial stages it is expected that the forums will meet at least every two months. The forums will have a consultative and developmental role assisting in the working groups, and contributing to the overall shaping and promotion of the project.

Dedicated Advice and Support

South Cambridgeshire District Council has had a long term interest in self-commissioned housing, and considerable in-house experience. In addition, we have established a long-term relationship with Stephen Hill and Adam Broadway, the advisers to the Orchard Park Co-Housing Group. Stephen and Adam both have extensive experience in this field.

Stephen Hill brings a wealth of housing and community project experience. A member of the RICS he has been instrumental in bringing forward new housing initiatives and a leading consultant for Community Land Trust and community housing led projects across the UK.

Adam is a town planner and housing association development expert. He has delivered a range of housing projects across East Anglia.

Both Stephen and Adam have worked for the leading sustainability consultancy Beyond Green which provides high level strategic advice on housing and development initiatives across the Country. They are associates of Cambridge Architectural Research Ltd and have a passion for creating sustainable new communities.

It is planned that Stephen and Adam will provide support during the lifetime of the project, at the level of approximately one day per week. They will carry out work on the project, and help to compile monitoring and review data and analysis. The detail of the assignment will be agreed once the overall agreement is in place with DCLG.

Custom Builder Registration Criteria

Our Development Plan is employment led, and therefore from our early work, we expect to give priority to:

- Households currently living and working, or moving to work, in the Cambridge Sub-Region
- Households seeking to 'downsize' for their retirement and freeing up an existing home in the Cambridge Sub-Region
- Individuals and organisations interested in promoting or being part of a group scheme, like cohousing, cooperatives or community land trusts, (or a mix of these elements) with an emphasis on affordable and sustainable living.

Sourcing Land Supply

We will work with local housing providers with access to land through existing ownership or control that are already allocated in the Local Plans, consented, or likely to receive a consent for a suitable scheme within a normal timeframe. We already have 'in principle' commitment from Taylor Wimpey and Laragh Partnerships.

We will set out a menu of design, construction and contracting options to be agreed for each site.

We will use the National Community Land Trust and Cohousing UK Networks to promote the scheme, and share best practice. To inspire confidence, we will use the Orchard Park scheme to get media coverage and demonstrate a successful project.

We will review sites with unimplemented planning permissions, that may have stalled due to lack of credit, or be stuck in 'bad bank' loan books. We will ask the landowner/ developers if they are able and willing to bring the site forward. This could be through a turnkey design and build contract for 'off plan presales', through selling to registered enabling partners or direct to registered custom builders.

We will identify opportunities for custom build within current and future rural exception sites – to ease viability and as part of mix of tenure and house types.

We will encourage inclusion of custom-build within large sites, using Orchard Park, Cambourne and Northstowe as the first examples.

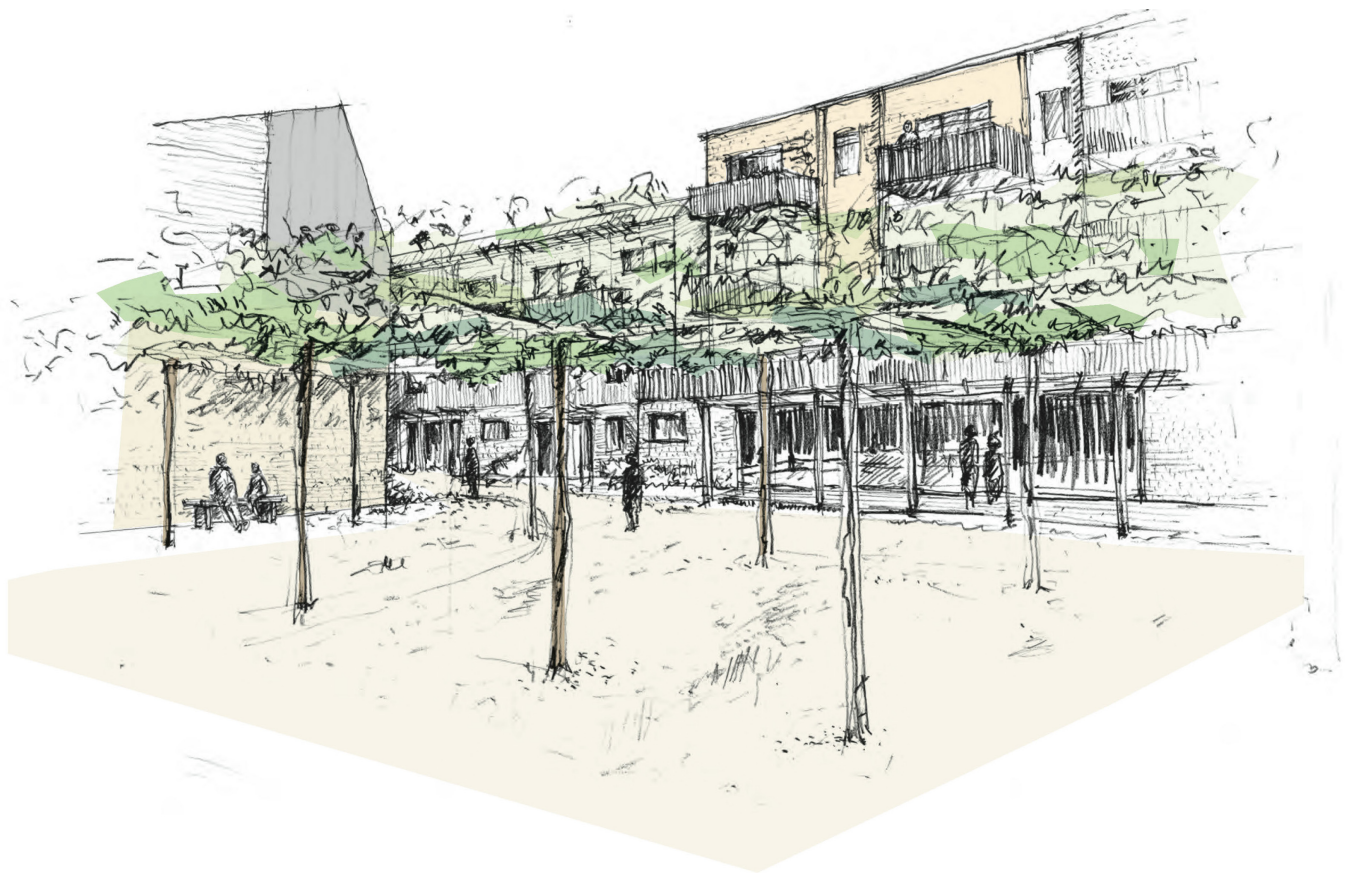
We will promote custom build to parishes developing Neighbourhood Plans, and include Community Housing and Right to Build Housing in either a dedicated or affordable housing SPD.

We will issue a call for land in connection with village and Neighbourhood Plans for sites that could be used for (primarily) affordable custom build projects that could be vested in community land trusts, drawing on the success of a similar initiative in East Cambs. We would work with Foundation East, acting as the East of England CLT Umbrella body.

We will use our housing delivery company to provide advice and support to landowners/ developers and to self-builders. This will include facilitating access to funding opportunities.

Design and Build Competition

Design and Build proposals will be invited for a development of 10 - 20 custom build homes on an identified site, and ideally in the new village of Cambourne. In partnership with the landowner/ developer, the Council would award the site to the best proposal depending on the quality and value of the submissions. This national competition could be launched in October with initial expressions of interest required in November. A full competition brief could be issued to shortlisted bidders in December. Submissions could be invited from house builders, housing associations, or constructors who must be able to buy the sites, on a Build Now, Pay Later basis, and take the full development and marketing risk, if required. Competitors would be connected to the Council's register of custom builders, and both the Council and preferred bidder(s) will coordinate marketing and recruitment of custom build households. The focus of the design element of the competition will be to showcase a range of house types suitable for households, working at home and locally, and older people downsizing that reflect the character of Cambridge villages and will encourage greater public support for moderately priced but high quality homes in village locations. Taylor Wimpey has indicated that it would happily sponsor this competition.



VIEW TO THE COMMON HOUSE FROM THE SQUARE



VIEW DOWN THE PEDESTRIANISED LANE

Drawings of Proposed K1 Orchard Park self-build scheme (currently at pre-application stage) - designed by Jim Ross and Isobel Taylor, Cambridge Architectural Research Ltd

