Cambridge Sub Region Enablers Liaison Group

Notes of meeting 20th June 2017

Present: Sue Beecroft, Uzma Ali, Julie Salisbury, Kim Langley, Julian Adams, Olivia Manton, Frank Mastrandrea, Sue Beecroft

Apologies: HCA, Caroline Hannon, David Ousby

1. Notes of last meeting.

Help to Buy information access, still of concern to Enablers. Julia Drewett is being as helpful as possible but data is still required and new limitations are hampering analysis. Group to monitor but consider raising with HCA (via Nick Enge)

1. Size/ standards review.

Some RPs have raised concerns on declining standards proposed by developers and reduced ability to influence.

West Suffolk has asked RPs about space standards preferences; Kim is trying to seek standards which are an average of the space standards suggested by their responses.

Sue B has done some work on this including consideration of ‘Techincal Advice Note’ the initial draft of which she circulated to the group. This could form the basis of a sub-regional standard but might have to be discussed by Chief Planning Officers Group. FM said that we need to be mindful that Government guidance is LPAs have to justify space standards via a Local Plan that has been subject to Examination in Public. Sue was seeking comments from sub regional RPs linked to some earlier discussion which took place at The RP liaison Group.

1. HCA Update

No HCA representative present

1. Devolution

FM summarised the ‘headline’ Combined Authority issues and updates:

1. The CA portfolio leads have been announced (Cllr Topping, Leader at SCDC is the Housing lead).
2. The Mayor has announced a 100 day plan which includes

* Announce the first wave of new affordable housing schemes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
* Commission a feasibility study to consider how off-site construction methods can be used to speed up housing delivery.
* Launch the development of a strategy to accelerate delivery of 100,000 new homes across our area.
* Promote Community Land Trusts across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
* Lead a ‘Building for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Conference’ for housing developers, builders and housing providers to discuss key issues for this sector including workforce capacity and skills.

1. A programme of ‘quick win affordable housing schemes is being prepared.  This will be presented to the CA Investment Working Group on 10th July and the Combined Authority Board on 26th July.  David Keeling is the lead on this with input from the LAs.  All schemes will SOS by 31st March 2018.
2. Consultants (New Edge) have been recruited to prepare a draft governance structure for the CA for the remaining housing programme.
3. Sue Beecroft is leading on preparing the CA Housing Strategy with input from LAs.
4. A report on modular construction has been commissioned (to be confirmed).

There was then a discussion about the challenges of securing additionality. This requires improving on the outcomes which might otherwise have been achieved and potentially securing above policy levels Affordable Housing. Some examination of how current processes can be adapted to maximise opportunities for investment will be required which the Group will need to consider in further detail. Added complication is that a ‘pipeline’ of schemes will have requirements (enshrined in s106s) with agreed outcomes in respect of Affordable Housing. The Group should also examine how it can introduce CA subsidy to overcome Viability challenges from developers.

An understanding of the bidding process, New Edge’s role and that of any replacement negotiators that are appointed would also be required.

1. Self/Custom Build

Julie said that they have approximately 50 people on the register and the CLG ‘New Burdens’ funding has been secured but without a fully developed policy West Suffolk is unsure what to do next and asked others what they were doing. FM said that for HDC this is effectively the responsibility of the planning department and he would enquire. He said however that he thought HDC had fewer applicants and number was roughly in balance with potential land available through landowner enquiries. Uzma said SCDC had roughly 600 on their register and she too would enquire (of Laurence Castle?).

1. AOB

Sue B reminded the group of ‘Build to rent’ (affordable private rented housing) which may be an alternative to accelerate housing delivery.

Julie said West Suffolk is considering moving to form one single council – timescales for this are currently unknown.

FM confirmed that a’ Myth Buster’ tour of rural exception sites in HDC and SCDC is being arranged. He said that the next draft of the Local Plan which includes a new approach to exception sites would be considered by Cabinet this week as would HDC’s Housing Strategy.

1. Date of next meeting

FM asked about frequency of future meeting. Consensus was that quarterly meetings were still appropriate; FM will therefore confirm future dates by email.