

Project structure and accountabilities

3.1 Background.....	1
3.2 Participants and structure.....	1
3.3 Service Specification	2
3.4 Core Partners	2
3.5 Service Provider	2
3.6 Management, Review and Communications	2
3.7 Cost and phasing.....	3
3.8 Payments	4
3.9 Availability and copyrights	4

Chapter 3. Project structure and accountabilities

The SHMA is being carried out under the structure of a Service Level Agreement (SLA). This is the agreement to provide research work to complete a sub regional strategic housing market assessment, assisted by the HMA project team, guided by the Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board (CRHB). A summary of this agreement is included below to explain the relationship between the different partners at the outset of the SHMA work.

3.1 Background

In 2005 the then ODPM published draft guidance on Housing Market Assessments (HMAs). This is currently being updated, and is referred to in PPS3 published in November 2006. HMAs replace housing needs surveys as a measure of the functioning of local housing markets, the detail of what is needed and how to collect the data being outlined in the draft guidance. As the guidance is being updated, this SLA requires the County Research Group (CRG) to continually review its approach and methods in line with any new guidance forthcoming.

A HMA should be based on existing, secondary data to a far greater extent than has previously been the case. The extensive use of secondary data means that much of the work can be carried out “in-house” rather than by external consultants. This “in-house” approach has several benefits. It should be cost effective, efficient, allow a flexible approach to the work, work through the existing strong partnership and increase the integration of housing market planning with other plans.

The Cambridgeshire Housing Sub Region, through the Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board, wished to proceed with its HMA in the light of forthcoming negotiations on specific strategic sites, and to support the development of each authority's housing policies and guidelines within their individual Local Development Frameworks. The partners involved have agreed to share resourcing of the central core of research work to support the HMA and its development in future.

3.2 Participants and structure

The Cambridge sub-region local authorities and other partners meet monthly as a housing group, known as the Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board. The meeting addresses the supply and management of housing and matters connected with it across the sub-region. It includes senior representatives from each of the seven local authorities, together with Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons, GO-East, the Housing Corporation and National Housing Federation. The Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board is supported by topic groups, which progress specific housing issues.

The Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board has agreed to work together to undertake our housing market assessment. However we are very keen to involve our partners across the sub region to make sure the work is as useful as possible to all of us, and reflect the wealth of knowledge and understanding of housing and related issues for our part of the world. Cambridgeshire County Council brings the necessary relevant research and statistical expertise to the partnership. Research and intelligence expertise is essential, particularly with regard to the maintenance, development and interpretation of basic information, which requires a degree of continuity of investment and specialist knowledge. As well as the County Research Group, we will look to commission new research where needed.

To progress the project in good time, a HMA Project Team will meet every 3 weeks for the initial phase, to discuss issues, interpret planning and other guidance, and ensure the CRG work is focussing on the issues of greatest priority and that the local authorities are contributing all the information needed to progress the research. The Team will also progress consultation with the HMA Partnership and support communication and consultation on the project, as well as more routine matters such as finances, project brief and specifying the expected outputs.

Beyond the first phase, the project team will review it's work plan and agree on how best to progress the HMA into the future – i.e. as a separate team or as part of an existing meeting's work programme, in order to keep the assessment current and take every opportunity to apply, review and develop it, again in close consultation with the HMA Partnership.

3.3 Service Specification

The objective of the Agreement is to undertake a housing market assessment for the Cambridge sub region in line with government guidance, the requirements set out in PPS3, and the CLG guidance note Delivering Affordable Housing. The precise scale and nature of work to be undertaken during each financial year is subject to negotiation and agreement between the partners involved.

There will be a core of work common to all seven local authorities, with additional elements defined locally, according to local needs and priorities. A broad outline of phases are given below. The project brief contains more detail and further discussions will clarify the priorities for the project as time progresses.

3.4 Core Partners

These are: Cambridge City Council, East Cambridge District Council, Fenland District Council, Forest Heath District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons and English Partnerships.

3.5 Service Provider

Research Group, Office of Corporate Services, Cambridgeshire County Council

3.6 Management, Review and Communications

Regular Project Teams will be held which may discuss performance and priorities for the period ahead, though these issues may also be dealt with through other less formal contact, and by discussion at other forums.

The initial agreement is for the period 1st September 2006 to 31 May 2007. Either CRG or the Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board may give 1 months notice prior to 31 May 2007 if the agreement is not to continue from then.

After 1 June 2007 the agreement may be ended by either the CRG or the Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board giving a minimum of 6 months' notice effective from 1 April in any financial year. Should one of the local authorities decide to withdraw from the HMA, they will give 6 months' notice effective from 1 April in any financial year. The Project Team (including CRG) will recommend how to proceed to the Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board, who will decide on the best option to pursue.

3.7 Cost and phasing

The HMA work divides into two separate phases. Phase 1 runs from Autumn 2006 to May 2007, and consists of a huge gathering of secondary data by the CRG, and primary research as necessary to ensure a robust assessment of the housing market, sufficient to support LDF housing and related policies.

Phase 2 consists of the continual building of data and knowledge over the years, refining and adding issues as resources, time and circumstances allow. These areas of work will be agreed through the HMA project team in consultation with the HMA Partnership as time progresses.

- Phase 1, September 2006 to May 2007. By May 2007 the key outputs to link to LDFs, as specified in the brief must be available for each authority. From end May 2007 to the end of March 2008 these key outputs will be developed, further secondary data collected and updated, and further areas of primary research identified and prioritised in preparation for April 2008.
- Phase 2, April 2008 onwards. Continual updating of secondary data and commissioning of new primary research as agreed.

There are three main groups of funders:

- **Local authority “full” participants** who have agreed to contribute £57,000 over the first 5 years of the project from 2006/7 to 2010/11. Authorities may vary the “spread” of their contributions over the 5 years provided each party contributes the same amount overall.
- **Local authority “observer” participants** are authorities who cannot participate fully in the sub regional HMA work from its start in 2006/7, having completed surveys on housing need and housing markets recently. Instead they would contribute £10,000 over the first five years, in return for:
 - Secondary information to compare with other LA's in the sub region, bringing in Suffolk County's data for the 2 Suffolk local authorities.
 - Comparison of the observers' primary data to the results of the other 5 participants' HMA giving a broader context for the observers' primary research results.
 - The option to participate more fully in later years, once they can participate more fully, they could buy in to primary research as the opportunity arises. Being "in" at the start of building a foundation of information, which will be built on year by year. Not participating early on will definitely hamper the opportunity to fully participate later, as much of the data will build up as time progresses.
 - Sharing cross-boundary data to provide further context and understanding of local housing markets, including the effects of larger settlements and sites on every authority in the sub region, linking to creating lettings policies for growth funded schemes and for new communities.
 - Information gathering by the Research Group on the private letting market.
 - Being a named participant in the sub regional HMA.

The observers are asked to contribute any information already available from existing studies at no additional cost, to enable their financial contribution to be put to best use.

- **Other agencies** – Cambridgeshire Horizons and English Partnerships are the funding partner agencies, contributing various amounts to the project over its life. These agencies also form part of the Project Team. Other non-contributing agencies also form part of the project team, including GO-East and the Housing Corporation and contribute time and advice to the Team, though not financial resources. Other partners will be encouraged to participate, to ensure the relevant expertise and advice is available for the Assessment.

3.8 Payments

CRG will invoice each participant for amounts agreed, within the financial years specified but otherwise at their discretion. Each full participant will contribute funding over the 5 year initial period, and the observer participants will contribute a lower amount, kept under review, until such time as they are able to participate more fully. Horizons and English Partnerships agree to contribute discretionary amounts to support the Assessment.

3.9 Availability and copyrights

The study will be owned by the Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board. The final report and updates will be made publicly available on paper (which if requested may be charged for) and on the internet both at the Cambridgeshire Horizon's website and through links from each Project Team participants' website, at their discretion. Local needs information aggregated to an agreed level will be made available, but access to individual surveys will be protected to participating local authorities only. All information will conform to the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Each participating local authority may be asked to supply information from their Council Tax Register, for the purposes of primary research, although this will not include individuals' personal information. Each participating authority agrees as part of this SLA to supply this information as and when required. In the event of any personal information being handled, this will be treated in compliance with Data Protection Act principles around privacy and disclosure.