



Notes from Cambridgeshire Sub-Regional HAs and Enablers Forum

Friday 27 July 2018 - 10am – 1pm

SCDC's offices (Swanley Rooms A & B)

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| 1. Introductions and Apologies |
| <p>Nigel Howlett, CHS (chair) Helen Reed Cambridge City Council Nicola Hillier, Stonewater Julie Fletcher, South Cambs John LeFever, Hastoe Phil Murton, Icen David Ousby, South Cambs Frank Mastrandrea, Huntingdonshire DC Azhar Ahmed, Cross Keys Fiona Coulson, Clarion Lesley Clarke, bpha Uzma Ali, SCDC Helen Fortune, Accent Andy Chapman, Luminus Alex Fury, Muir Lisa Davis, West Suffolk Sue Beecroft, The Housing Board (notes)</p> |
| 2. Matters arising from the last forum on 20 October 2017 |
| <p>Sue – send round CPCA structure diagram and fill as many gap as possible. Lesley – will circulate info on help to buy</p> |
| 3. Adapted housing and development ; discussion and information sharing with Julie Fletcher, Head of Housing Strategy at South Cambs DC |
| <p>NH introduced – CHS not being asked to develop new build adapted properties as much as in the past. Are others? General consensus was no.</p> <p>Julie (SCDC) – would like to compile a list from the housing register at SCDC of people needing, so can work towards getting property delivered via the s106. Local plan – inspectors comments still awaited – no blanket requirement for adapted but will develop in line with specific individual household needs.</p> <p>Action: Ask HAs to send info on anyone with specific needs who is not on the register. Have also been trying to identify other specialist housing needs. County research group has been working on it and report due out soon. Physical and other disabilities.</p> <p>The other side of the coin is properties that are already adapted. Could start in SCDC and roll out</p> |

further?

Adaptations policy review is just about adapting existing properties, not about building new.

SCDC has worked with bpha to add DFG and adapt a home at Northstowe.

Difficult to allocate people to properties, properties may be fitted out as a standard while disabilities vary a great deal.

Starting to look at delivering a shell to building regs, then work with customer and OTs to make it right for them, within the budget. Otherwise leads to a void loss etc.

Frank (HDC) – people’s circumstances can change, need to specify site mix years beforehand. Always look for some 2 beds to full wheelchair standards – could be flats. Then work with special needs officer and RP to look at specific need nearer the time. Lots of pressure on DFG budget. Matching the person to the property is tricky and the time needed is sometimes long. Might ask for 2 or 3 in each development in the town.

David O (SCDC) - at Northstowe have found if lifetime homes, quite easy to use DFG to put lift or other adaptations in. Conversion not as difficult. Can then line up the people coming forward in housing need with those homes. Lots of homes are not wheelchair standard – might be accessible but not adaptable. Helps cater for the ageing population and possible smaller number of households need fully wheelchair accessible. More adaptable standards mean more flexibility.

Lisa (West Suffolk) – often the need gets identified at a late stage. Trying to put a list together of stock they have, and who might be requiring adapted properties. If developers are shrinking unit sizes conspires against the adaptability. Level access and GF bathroom are a major positive.

John (Hastoe) – on rural sites – when identify needs within the info gathering for rural exception sites, then pre-allocate, so specific designed for customer; have been doing for 10 years and not failed on this yet. Need willing RP to take the risk, and need LA involvement due to pre-allocation. Designing early so very little DFG is needed which makes more acceptable to LA.

Lesley (bpha) - Garage sites sometimes help. Can use RCGF for adaptations in some cases. Need to find a design of property which is adaptable, have to consider relet after current household leaves.

Helen (Cambridge City) - Helen Rhodes is adaptations pathway officer recruited by County Council. Looking at pathways, and identifying ways we can shift thinking further upstream. Mentioned 2 other new members of staff at county to provide housing advice to young and older people.

Samantha Lee: Children’s specialist housing adviser and Ruth Oakley: Adults housing adviser

Julie (SCDC) – fully compiled list at SCDC of needs. Speak to Helen Rhodes on links with DFG pathways and 2 new people

Lisa (WS) – RPs often not great data on homes which are already adapted. Struggle over time and lots get adapted. RPs do stock condition surveys periodically – depends if survey picks this up adequately. Also annual returns? However adaptations are put in AND TAKEN OUT.

New build could be a good place to start.

John - Hastoe has only had 2 requests in the past 11 years for adaptations – so are reconsidering the need to build to lifetime homes standard. Might be better to find a specific different property than it is to adapt. Outcome awaited. For Hastoe it's a dilemma as there may be very little choice in that village.

Julie (SCDC) – Can't insist on Lifetime Homes within the local plan – struggled with the evidence needed to adopt within the plan. What is feeling from RPs?

Fiona (Clarion) – it's expensive but useful. Rural is often a less confined site and layout more spacious – differs from urban settings.

Azhar (Cross-Keys) - In Peterborough have 20% requirement, lounge and kitchen very small but meets the standard. Really becomes too small to live in sensibly if add the under-stairs loo – not useful for most people. Also means the living spaces are very restricted.

David (SCDC) - Not just affordable, also market housing. Forecasts high need for care, much higher than in the past. Population changes mean all tenures will accommodate more people with needs. Nothing like the current local plan figures, but next one will need to consider this, so more care plus more "regular" homes adaptable.

John (Hastoe) – also need to consider needs of downsizers so develop some smaller homes to release larger homes in village. One village is now requesting a hybrid idea where also have market housing mixed with affordable housing on a rural site, and LA asking if can incorporate some adapted. Discounting in perpetuity by 20% on the market sale, with LA support, as it's designed for elderly downsizers.

Andy (Luminus) – believe Places for People is championing getting planning for a house which is fully extendable, so start with a basic 2 bed get planning for a basic extension and ability to extend into the roof. Involves work with planners. Andy to see if can find some more info.

Fiona (Clarion) - did on a home in Wisbech, put the foundations in and left it at that. Will the info be held in the long term, do we continue to "know". Do they renew the planning permission every 5 years? Would have 'permitted development rights'?

Nigel (CHS) – Interesting and complex issue. Sometimes the OT assessment process only allows them to remain in band A if they are applying for what the OT has specified. If they compromise, are no longer band A.

David (SCDC) Need to be meeting needs as specified close to practical completion on the site, not too far off. Northstowe has a lot of larger units which helps with the flexibility. Pipeline is reasonably healthy. Local Plan must help us deliver accessible and adaptable across the piste.

Lesley (bpha) – looking for more land-led schemes, which might enable to look at specific designs. Harder to deliver due to economics but LAs very supportive where there is a specific need for larger units or specialist. Can either purpose for individuals or make sure homes are adaptable in future.

Pre-application stage might be the time to think about identifying them.

Nigel - If we can't resolve, disadvantage to family and cost to state is huge. Real benefits associated.

ACTIONS

Julie F: Will ask when info is needed on adapted properties and people in housing need, for Home-Link.

Sue Bee: to Investigate returns and info provided by RPs on adaptations.

Also whether stock condition surveys are any help.

Investigate the planning terms of the Clarion / Wisbech home with foundations, is the info held long term, does FDC continue to "know" and will they renew the planning permission every 5 years?

Would it have 'permitted development rights'?

Andy C : See if can find some more info on the Places for People approach, getting planning for a house which is fully extendable, so start with a basic 2 bed get planning for a basic extension and ability to extend into the roof.

Helen R: Will talk to Helen Rhodes to connect her into this.

All

- Julie will be asking RPs to send info on anyone with specific needs who is not on the housing register for SCDC. And will ask about already adapted homes.
- RP surveys – can you help Sue investigate what is held within your organisation's property records?
- West Suffolk survey – all RPs encouraged to respond to Lisa
- Can everyone talk within own organisation to see what's available or can be made available?
- Could we develop a best practice list of things, to help with these situations?
- Any ideas or best practice, please share with Nigel and Sue.

4. Homes England issues

New funds

Added £1.67bn to deliver range of tenures including social rent in districts where more than £50 difference between social and private rents - all but Fenland and Peterborough in our area. Through Continuous Market Engagement process.

Has anyone had social rent approved yet? No. Agreed important to ask for it; if we don't ask for any social rent we shouldn't be surprised if gets withdrawn.

Helen R – met with Becky Ashley – gather they don't want 'affordable rent' converted to social rent to get more grant into and existing scheme, want it to be new schemes on IMS. Discussion - could it be presented to HE as an additionality or viability case?

West Suffolk workshop – Sage undertook not to exceed LHA. Though on individual schemes the only way they are able to do that, though only a few offers coming through.

Lesley C - Is there an appetite to change definition in s106, restricting to not-for-profit organisations? If HCA regulated and delivering on tenure, would be tricky for the LA.

Also, are there issues about using For Profit organisations to manage the units?

How do we know if they are sticking to the LHA rent level? How do the districts monitor the s106

delivery, esp interesting in London where 'for profit' RPs have sometimes not honoured the s106.

Julie F – don't think we legally cannot work with them if they are meeting the s106 commitment. Meeting Sage this afternoon, will ask about management arrangements etc. Look for detailed wording in the s106 agreement.

WSuff: All but 1 RP sticks within LHA, but are winning a lot of sites. Endless meetings but no change. 50% of their rents are above LHA, not going to people in greatest need. When UC comes in will cause problems for the people being allocated these homes.

HE Strategic partnerships

Signed deals with a number of partners

Want this to be default funding model.

Community led housing

Money available up to 2021

Must be in perpetuity - Not sure how right to buy will apply or not.

To orgs providing expertise, not just affordable housing.

Money for councils to bid for

SCDC looking at it, timescales very tight, need worked up schemes by Sept and start on site by April 2019. Will struggle with that timescale.

City – need to quickly spend devolution money and RTB receipts so suspect won't be bidding for it.

Care and support specialist housing fund

Extended to 2021, CME again.

Await announcement on funding of support

Also county's on-going work to cut expenditure on housing related support so does not lead to great confidence to bid.

Fiona C – used some of the money to remodel sheltered housing. Sounds like more flexible now.

5. Combined Authority issues

Changes in personnel, policy and approach to dealing with devolution money for grant funding.

Roger Thompson new director of housing – will be coming to September's housing board.

Mayors policy = not overkeen on housing associations, lots of money going to CLTs esp Palace Green Homes (ECDC's development vehicle).

Quick win funding still not coming through yet.

Issues:

- for affordable rent, regulation and the law requires an agreement from Homes England in order to charge LHA rents. Currently seems no way to charge affordable rents for the CA Alex Francis trying to resolve. Could it not be called AR but treated as AR? If written into s106 as SR or AR, are hamstrung by that.
- Some HAs not going to bid any more to CA. Too difficult. It's not an attractive funding route while HE has money and fewer restrictions and less admin than CA, esp if loans not grant.

Homes England is smoother and easier route for RPs to get similar funding. CA keen on seeing cashflows and viability. Plus point is that CPCA could fund unviable s106 agreements.

- Some HAs have lots of CLT experience – eg Hastoe on their 9th now in Lavenham, which is all affordable. CPCA model for CLTs is mostly market with a bit of affordable – very different approach.
- Might CA argue they have tried to fund HAs, but HAs are not delivering. It was felt important to HAs to put schemes to the CPCA. Helps provide evidence if their approach is too bureaucratic.
- GCP is an alternative funder. They have capital. Like to do a loan deal borrowing very cheaply. Willing to engage, so if have schemes in City and SCDC take them to Niamh Matthews as GCP contact. Very keen to deliver AH.

Action: Sue to add Niamh’s email address for contact purposes:

Niamh.Matthews@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

6. Homes for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (HCP) update

Many RPs active in the area attend this meeting as a united front to work with the CPCA.

Chair change to Claire Higgins from Cross Keys homes.

Funding of lead person for HCP to drive forward the work

Group within HCP has set up a delivery vehicle called Evera; 4 associations: Cross Keys, Flagship, Longhurst, Hyde. Evera will develop but not hold the investment. May involve other partners. Azhar will bring more information back in October.

7. Update from enablers

Cambridge City

- Recruiting Joint housing development officer to take forward enabling on growth sites on edge of city, closing date today!
- Joint housing strategy being developed “Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy”. GCP supporting. Will go out to consultation later due to changes at SCDC.

Huntingdonshire

- Local Plan – examination started. Reconvenes in September.
- Moving forward on growth sites at St Neots and Loves Farm
- If RPs have sites, esp marginal sites, please get in touch as encouraging so as to keep up the 5 year land supply performance

South Cambs

- DO is moving to another role in SCDC, not the growth sites
- Northstowe Phase 2 starting, Phase 1 going well.
- Look on youtube for Grosvenor footage - all coming on stream:
<https://www.northstowe.com/exciting-new-film-shows-progress-at-northstowe>
- Waterbeach – urban and civic involved, needs to include 40% AH as its such a large site.
- Expecting application for Bourne airfield by end of July.
- Cambourne is finishing up now, Cambourne West will be starting soon.
- WING should be coming fairly soon, conditions being discharged.
- SCDC new administration – green focus. Looking at supporting more sustainable development.

AH = one of the top priorities, including social rents and other new models. Key worker housing of interest, to reduce pressures on hospital staffing etc.

- Hastoe working with Adnams of Southwold, to meet those needs as can't retain staff. Doing 3 schemes. Has done 130 PasivHaus, heating and hot water costs very low so no fuel poverty. Did this to offset the move from social rent to 'affordable rent'.
- South Cambs – now have 5 year land supply. Imminently should get Local Plan back from inspector. Want to look to exception sites now the 5 year land supply is more or less sorted.
- NPPF was published Tues/Weds this week – need to review this as starter homes are in there etc... might mean need for new policies of one sort or another.

West Suffolk

- April next year will form one council, no longer Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury; will align local plans and revising joint housing strategy. Tenancy strategy will go to cons alongside the housing strategy.
- Key objective – RPs not allowed to go above LHA rate.
- Affordable Housing SPD will come out Sept / Oct
- Conference Oct 16th at Apex at BSE – **SB to forward the invite**

NPPF

- Will need to agree on definitions of affordable housing
- Rent to buy – what is it etc. If not delivered by an RP how do you manage / control it?
- Starter homes: Need to review the NPPF to make sense of it all.
- Does not take account of rural housing – CLA will be opposing it.

8. Update from the Cambridgeshire Regional Housing Board (CRHB)

Changed name from Cambridge sub-regional housing board (CRHB) to 'The Housing Board'. New logo and updated Terms of Reference here <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/housing/local-housing-knowledge/our-housing-network/crhb/>

- Lots of Combined Authority discussion: Roger Thompson coming in Sept
- The Housing Board wants to be the co-ordinating body and working with other partners, raise profile with CPSB and with CPCA
- Homelessness trailblazer – new duties to tackle homelessness together. 2 year project, end of Year 1 now.
- Housing related support and county's new role, links to the districts. Plans to cut funding for housing related support.
- Sue to add link to affordability analysis. You can find it here <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/affordability-analysis/>
- Sheffield-Hallam report provides a starting point for the conversation about need for extra care housing. Need to resurrect the work of the older peoples' accommodation board. How can we use the report to influence that?

Action: Take back to housing board agenda. Need to get a plan together

9. Any other business

Julie – looking to standardise s106 agreements. Thinking as part of this might need a deed of nomination to the RP as helps strengthen position and partnerships. Clarifies local connection, mix,

sizes etc. Looking at that at present.

Action: Managed standardised MIP clauses. Request to make that part of the deed of nomination. **If you have this from other LAs, please share with Julie.**

10. Dates of future meetings: All to be held at SCDC's offices

- Friday 12 October, extended to 13.45 to include lunch provided by Cambridge Cleantech with case studies from Ecolution and elevator pitches of new building tech products
- 18 January 2019 10.00 – 1300

Meeting notes and agendas are now available here

<https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/housing-provider-enabler-forum/>