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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is seeking to procure a planning / engagement specialist to support the Government in developing an approach to engaging local audiences (both stakeholder groups and the public) throughout the process of developing up to four new or expanded settlements in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (OxCam Arc) aligned with new stations along the East West Rail (EWR) Central Section. The specific locations under consideration are Bedford, St Neots/Tempsford, Cambourne and Cambridge.
- 1.2 We are seeking to appoint planning engagement specialists who are experienced in developing engagement strategies within or across regional areas with demonstrable knowledge of how to engage a wide range of stakeholders and communities with varying knowledge and interests to secure local buy-in. We expect the potential providers to formulate a multi-method strategy that will enable the Government to raise levels of engagement in and local awareness of the development proposals and the delivery vehicle(s) chosen to bring them forward.
- 1.3 The strategy should incorporate both an overall approach to engagement across the area and specific measures that target each location under consideration, whilst setting out a clear route for the programme to meet any statutory requirements for consultation.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

- 2.1 MHCLG is responsible for government policy relating to housing, planning and building, local growth, local government, integration and community cohesion. Its job is to create great places to live and work right across the country. It is a ministerial department, supported by 13 agencies and public bodies. The engagement strategy will support a programme of work delivered by a joint MHCLG-Homes England (HE) team.

3. BACKGROUND TO REQUIREMENT / OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENT

- 3.1 At Budget 2020, the Government announced that it would explore the case for up to four new Development Corporations in the OxCam Arc at Bedford, St Neots/Sandy, Cambourne and Cambridge, which includes plans to explore the case for a New Town in the Cambridge area, to accelerate new housing and infrastructure development.
- 3.2 The programme of work in the OxCam Arc seeks to determine the appropriate delivery vehicle in this context – whether that is a development corporation or an alternative model – and to develop locally-supported visions for the future of these places. See [Annex A](#) for further detail on delivery vehicle options.
- 3.3 The Budget commitment followed the selection in January 2020 of the preferred route corridor for the EWR between Bedford and Cambridge (EWR Central Section) and builds on the Government's investment in new dual carriageway on the A428. Together these will help create the conditions and opportunity to



bring forward well-connected, sustainable development in a strategically important area and support the Government's ambitions for new homes.

- 3.4 We have committed to working collaboratively with local partners and want to engage with communities to give residents and stakeholders in the EWR Central Section area a meaningful voice in the early development stages of the proposed new or expanded settlements. We want to do this by adopting a best practice approach, going beyond statutory requirements on public engagement and consultation, including the use of digital approaches where appropriate to raise participation levels as the proposals are developed.
- 3.5 The objectives of this commission are therefore to:
- 3.5.1 develop an evidence-based engagement strategy for the programme that sets out the phases and methods of activity until delivery vehicles have been established at the chosen locations (~mid 2022);
 - 3.5.2 clearly set out a route for the programme to meet any statutory requirements for consultation across the area and specifically each of the four potential development sites Bedford, St Neots/Tempsford, Cambourne and Cambridge; and
 - 3.5.3 secure local buy-in for the strategy by working with local partners to build on established channels of engagement and recommending methods to engage hard to reach groups.

4. DEFINITIONS

Expression or Acronym	Definition
The Arc	The Oxford-Cambridge Arc
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
HE	Homes England
EWR	East West Rail
EWR Co.	East West Rail Company - the delivery body of EWR
Supplier	The successful bidder for this commission, with whom MHCLG will have a contract

5. SCOPE OF REQUIREMENT

- 5.1 This programme of work represents an opportunity to set the standard for creating sustainable, economically important, beautiful places both in the OxCam Arc and on a national level. Thorough engagement with communities and stakeholder groups - both on development plans and the delivery vehicle(s) to take these forward – will be key to its success and in securing local backing for the proposals.
- 5.2 Depending on the chosen delivery vehicle there are various statutory requirements for consultation that must be met and should be reflected in the



engagement strategy. Issues on which to consult local authorities, the public and businesses may include: the new town/development area; the establishment of a delivery vehicle; and the Strategic Environmental Assessment report.

- 5.3 In addition to the statutory minimum, we are interested in developing a ‘best practice’ approach to engagement, particularly during the early stages of the work where widespread engagement is not a statutory requirement. Key to the successful delivery of the Government’s Budget commitment will be gaining trust and buy-in from local stakeholders by being transparent about how we will involve them in the process, and listening and responding to their views, concerns and questions.
- 5.4 The engagement strategy should be developed with awareness of other interventions within the OxCam Arc, both those being undertaken within MHCLG (e.g., the Spatial Framework) and projects with key interdependencies led by other government departments or external agencies (e.g., EWR Co.). Relevant information, including separate MHCLG-led engagement that may run alongside this programme, would be provided to the supplier.
- 5.5 The supplier will be expected to deliver an engagement strategy which clearly sets out the following for each period of engagement:
- 5.5.1 **Strategic Objectives:** We will set out why we are conducting activity, what information we hope to gather and what we plan to do with that information once we have collected it. We will also consider the extent of our engagement and be transparent about what is in scope to be influenced by stakeholders and the public. The way in which the engagement is framed will be a key consideration, for example the stage at which we choose to engage on specific development options or whether we take a less bounded approach based on canvassing local opinion and ideas.
- 5.5.2 **Sequencing:** The strategy should be timebound and needs to set out an engagement approach from spring 2021 to ~mid 2022, at which point we expect to have established up to four delivery vehicles to bring forward development (timings are indicative/subject to change). A holistic approach should be taken to ensure that methods of engagement are time-efficient, phased appropriately (e.g., to factor in statutory and non-statutory requirements, as well as any interdependencies) and are sensitive to the different contexts of each identified place across the EWR Central Section area. We will expect the supplier to work closely with the planning, digital and comms teams at MHCLG and HE to ensure the strategy is aligned with our wider approach, including alignment with any engagement we need to undertake to support environmental assessments.
- 5.5.3 **Audiences:** The EWR Central corridor and specifically the areas identified for growth opportunities (Bedford, St Neots/Tempsford, Cambourne and Cambridge) are home to a wide and diverse stakeholder landscape with strong interest in this work. Delivery



vehicles established by central government could be perceived as a top-down approach to planning which could lead to public opposition if engagement is not conducted properly. As the work develops, we need to demonstrate that we have engaged extensively across different audiences ranging from local authorities, universities and businesses to residents, workers and local communities. An effective engagement strategy will need to adapt engagement methodologies according to specific audience groups and locations.

- 5.5.4 **Implementation (method):** The type of engagement incorporated into this strategy should be innovative and ambitious, going beyond the statutory engagement requirements for the relevant planning legislation. Methods of engagement should be adopted to meet the specific needs of our target audiences with consideration given to timing and accessibility – and we expect the strategy to adopt a multi-method approach so that we can reach different groups and build in flexibility in light of Covid-19 restrictions. Potential options should cover digital options and more traditional methods of engagement (e.g., virtual youth parliaments and town hall events, respectively).
- 5.6 The supplier will be expected to forecast delivery costs and timings for each recommendation.
- 5.7 We will be looking to work with a planning/development engagement specialist who can demonstrate the following:
- 5.7.1 Experience of using a robust evidence base to inform place-specific engagement solutions to complex planning/development issues and identify effective routes to different audience groups;
 - 5.7.2 Experience of delivering engagement strategies with a wide range of target audiences including stakeholders and communities with varied knowledge, interests and buy-in;
 - 5.7.3 Experience of delivering engagement strategies which targets ‘hard to reach’ audiences with an ability to communicate sensitively and authentically;
 - 5.7.4 Experience of delivering engagement strategies which target with young people, viewing them as equally important stakeholders;
 - 5.7.5 Experience of incorporating innovative digital solutions into engagement strategies to maximise reach;
 - 5.7.6 Experience of overseeing engagement strategies that were managed by multiple stakeholders;
 - 5.7.7 Experience of working with government communications and on policy consultations;



5.7.8 Examples of the above, which should be included in supplier bids.

6. THE REQUIREMENT

- 6.1 We require a communications specialist to develop an engagement strategy to support the development of up to four new or expanded settlements between Bedford and Cambridge, and the work exploring the case for development corporations to bring them forward. The strategy should set out an approach from Spring 2021 to ~mid 2022 (indicative/subject to change), when (subject to due process) we expect to have established the appropriate vehicles in each location.
- 6.2 The engagement strategy should be evidence-based, drawing on examples of best practice and what has worked in similar contexts elsewhere (nationally and internationally). The supplier will be required to undertake an audience segmentation exercise to better understand the stakeholder landscape and include recommendations for how to engage hard to reach groups, especially young people, who will be central to the development of any new or expanded settlement. Recommendations may include new and innovative forms of engagement but should supplement more traditional methods to ensure the strategy is inclusive and wide-reaching.
- 6.3 There are two high-level questions on which we would like to engage the public across the four locations, the details of which will vary by location to ensure engagement is localised and meaningful for individuals in the area:
 1. The ‘what’ – the principles and plans of the proposed developments. Consideration here must be given to how we can engage thematically in each phase (e.g., around housing, employment, infrastructure and the environment) and how this engagement can be most effectively timed to feed into other programme workstreams.
 2. The ‘how’ – the delivery vehicle(s) that will be established to bring forward the developments. The design and structure of the chosen delivery vehicle(s), whether a development corporation or another model, will be key in securing local buy-in and in ensuring that communities have a material stake in the future of the new or expanded settlements.
- 6.4 The strategy should also set out a clear and realistic route for the programme – across each of the four locations – to meet any statutory requirements for consultation, which will ensure the public can have a meaningful say in the development process and to mitigate the risk of delays and/or additional public expenditure due to legal challenge. As further work and evidence is required before the Government can decide which delivery vehicle is most appropriate in each location, a degree of flexibility must be built into the strategy to allow for different options. The supplier should also note that while the Government is looking at ‘up to four’ places, the policy programme is developing and should any of the places be ruled out we will inform the supplier to focus the strategy on the other places.



- 6.5 We expect the supplier to facilitate the co-design of the strategy between MHCLG, other government departments and local partners (e.g., local authorities and businesses) to ensure that we are building on any existing channels of engagement owned by our partners, whilst identifying opportunities to integrate more innovative solutions into our approach and ensure engagement is led at the appropriate level.
- 6.6 The supplier will be expected to gather insight and map existing methods of engagement for local plans adopted by local authorities in EWR Central Section area; and to align any approach with any engagement being undertaken separately by local authorities (e.g., on local plans). See [Annex B](#) for further details.
- 6.7 There is potential for the services of the supplier to be extended from the strategy development phase to the delivery phase. The successful supplier may therefore be retained if suitable, however MHCLG may choose to run a new procurement for the delivery phase or any further strategic planning.
- 6.8 The OxCam Unit's in-house comms and engagement team will remain responsible for the delivery of the wider communications strategy for the OxCam Arc. The supplier will be expected to work closely with the comms and engagement team to:
- 6.8.1 tap into the pre-existing working relationships the team holds with local partners; and
- 6.8.2 ensure that the new/expanded settlements engagement strategy is aligned to the programme's wider communications objectives.
- 6.9 The engagement strategy will need to be GDPR compliant throughout. The supplier will be expected to outline how data requirements will be met or considered for each recommendation in the strategy.

7. KEY MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

- 7.1 The Contract milestones / deliverables set out below are intended as a guide to inform the project's timeline. The supplier may suggest an alternative plan of work that better meets the project's objectives, but any changes must be discussed and agreed with MHCLG.

Milestone / Deliverable	Description	Timeframe or Delivery Date
1	Insight gathering (1) – facilitate initial project planning and stakeholder mapping workshop with programme delivery team.	Within month 1 of Contract Award
2	Insight gathering (2) – attendance at area-based working groups (formed of local government officers) to discuss ideas gathered to date and outcomes for the work going forward.	Within month 1 of Contract Award



3	Insight gathering (3) – gather information from local partners to understand existing channels and scope of engagement.	Ongoing from month 1 until final strategy report
4	Strategy development (1) – facilitate workshop(s) with delivery team and representatives of key stakeholder groups.	Within month 2 of Contract Award
5	Strategy development (2) – produce first draft of engagement strategy alongside evidence base for recommendations; delivery team to respond with initial feedback.	Within month 2 of Contract Award
6	Strategy development (3) – revised strategy to be presented to MHCLG and local partners; final comments to be collated and implemented.	Within month 3 of Contract Award
7	Finalise strategy (1) – final strategy to be presented to MHCLG OxCam Programme board for sign off.	Close of contract
8	Finalise strategy (2) – final strategy and supporting contextual report to be shared with MHCLG-HE delivery team for sign off.	Close of contract
9	Strategy and contextual report signed off by OxCam Unit.	Close of contract

8. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION / REPORTING

- 8.1 The supplier will be required to provide monthly management information as requested by MHCLG which will be defined by the volume of work delivered. At a minimum, the supplier will provide short interim reports following each mapping and workshop exercise which sets out top level summaries of information gathered and planned next steps. Exact arrangements will be agreed at an initial meeting between the supplier and MHCLG.

9. VOLUMES

- 9.1 The supplier will be expected to deliver at least two workshops to relevant partners from local authorities in the EWR Central Section (see [Annex B](#)) area to map stakeholders and gather local insights. These workshops will need to include all necessary representatives of MHCLG and local partners. The supplier will also be expected to attend at least one of wider OxCam Arc governance meetings in relation to this work during the duration of the contract.



- 9.2 There will be a phased induction and initial ideas gathering period following contract award in March and April. Activities will include:
- 9.2.1 Presentation to programme delivery team of previous engagement activities across or within a region that the supplier has facilitated or delivered;
 - 9.2.2 Meeting with programme delivery team and local partners to agree ways of working; and
 - 9.2.3 Stakeholder mapping, research, and planning.
- 9.3 The induction and initial insight gathering period will include more detailed planning to determine exact volumes. The contract will require flexibility throughout in order to respond to the needs of the MHCLG-HE delivery team and local partners.
- 9.4 The supplier will be expected to deliver a comprehensive engagement strategy which covers all stakeholders and/or audiences identified in the insight gathering stage. The strategy should set out both an overall approach to engagement in the East West Rail Central Section and more targeted measures that are focused on the four specific areas. All recommendations included in the strategy should be evidence-based (with information on how they have been previously effective in similar scenarios) and should meet any statutory requirements for consultation.
- 9.5 The supplier will also be expected to present both the draft and final engagement strategy to the MHCLG OxCam Programme Board to secure senior sign off. This may be in the form of remote presentations via Microsoft Teams or similar functions.

10. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- 10.1 The Supplier will be expected to continually improve the way in which the required Services are to be delivered throughout the Contract duration.
- 10.2 The Supplier should present new ways of working to the Authority during monthly Contract review meetings.
- 10.3 Changes to the way in which the Services are to be delivered must be brought to the Authority's attention and agreed prior to any changes being implemented.

11. SUSTAINABILITY

- 11.1 The OxCam Unit encourages the supplier to adopt sustainable practices throughout the study such as using virtual meetings where appropriate, use of public transportation to attend any meetings or visits and reducing the use of printing where possible.



12. QUALITY

- 12.1 We anticipate there being a regular (likely to be remote and monthly) working level group involving relevant suppliers and officials, chaired by the OxCam Unit. This could be supplemented by a fortnightly call with the programme delivery team. Suppliers will also need to report on a semi-regular basis to the MHCLG OxCam Programme board for sign off.

13. PRICE

- 13.1 The indicative price range for this work is £40,000 to £50,000 ex VAT. Prices may be submitted below this range, but any abnormally low bid will be investigated as a matter of course.
- 13.2 MHCLG reserves the right to exclude any bids that exceed £50,000 ex VAT.
- 13.3 The Supplier is required to provide a price for the work outlined above, along with a blended day rate for when additional work is commissioned.
- 13.4 Prices are to be submitted by completing Attachment 4 - Price Schedule and uploading to the Bravo e-Sourcing portal excluding VAT.

14. STAFF AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

- 14.1 The Supplier shall provide a sufficient level of resource throughout the duration of the Contract in order to consistently deliver a quality service.
- 14.2 The Supplier's staff assigned to the Contract shall have the relevant qualifications and experience to deliver the Contract to the required standard.
- 14.3 The Supplier shall ensure that staff understand the Authority's vision and objectives and will provide excellent customer service to the Authority throughout the duration of the Contract.

15. SERVICE LEVELS AND PERFORMANCE

- 15.1 The Authority will measure the quality of the Supplier's delivery by:

KPI / SLA	Service Area	KPI/SLA description
1	Interim outputs	The supplier will provide interim outputs in line with key milestones and deliverables (section 7)
2	Second outputs	The supplier will provide interim outputs in line with key milestones and deliverables (section 7)
3	Final outputs	The supplier will provide final outputs in line with key milestones and deliverables (section 7)

- 15.2 If the required service levels are not met and contract deliverables are sub-standard, the OxCam Unit will establish a performance steering group to assess shortfalls with the supplier and develop a short-term performance improvement



strategy. If there is no improvement and contract deliverables are unlikely to be met, the OxCam Unit will proceed with an exit strategy to terminate the contract early.

16. SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY REQUIREMENTS

- 16.1 All information provided must be used by the supplier only for the purposes of tender production and, if appointed, the subsequent commission. If not awarded this contract, the bidders are expected to immediately destroy all documentation through a confidential shredding and/or disposal process.
- 16.2 The supplier must seek express permission to publicise their appointment and to use any of the findings in presentations, reports, articles, examples, company literature or similar. The Client reserves the right to refuse such requests or to ask for 'anonymisation' of information beforehand.

17. PAYMENT AND INVOICING

- 17.1 Payment can only be made following satisfactory delivery of pre-agreed certified products and deliverables (set out in section 7.1).

18. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

- 18.1 Contract management will involve regular virtual review meetings. The frequency of these meetings will be reviewed in line with delivery milestones. We will establish a regular steering group to review progress against deliverables, and to ensure that supplier(s) have access to key MHCLG personnel and information to enable them to carry out their work.
- 18.2 Attendance at Contract Review meetings shall be at the Supplier's own expense.

19. LOCATION

- 19.1 The location of the Services will be carried out at the supplier premises with regular virtual meetings with the OxCam Unit.
- 19.2 All works will need to be delivered remotely whilst social distancing restrictions are in place.