



SPECIFICATION

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is seeking to award a contract to carry out the sustainability appraisal scoping stage (including a scoping report) for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc's new/expanded settlements programme.
- 1.2. In spring 2020, the government committed to examining and developing the case for up to four new/expanded settlements, including whether the case supported a link to the proposed East West Rail 'central section' between Bedford and Cambridge and/or dedicated delivery vehicles, such as development corporations, to bring these settlements forward. The four new/expanded settlements being considered are:
 - Cambourne
 - Tempford/St Neots
 - Bedford
 - Cambridge
- 1.3 The areas of focus are located within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, which is recognised by the government as a national economic priority area and a government designated priority policy project for economic recovery and growth. The Arc presents a unique opportunity for infrastructure delivery and development to bring forward a legacy of sustainable, well-planned new places for people to live in and businesses to thrive.
- 1.4 Initial concept masterplanning looking at viable new/expanded settlements in the Arc has identified significant opportunities for sustainable development and regeneration, and MHCLG and Homes England have established a dedicated multi-disciplinary team to further examine and develop these opportunities as options to consider. This team includes seconded-in resource from the Environment Agency's National Environmental Assessment and Sustainability (NEAS) team.
- 1.5 The team is part of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Unit (OxCam Unit), which is based in the Housing Delivery Directorate of MHCLG. MHCLG is responsible for government policy relating to housing, planning, building safety, local growth, local government, integration and community cohesion.
- 1.6 Separately, the government is also developing a Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. If successfully brought forward, the intention is that the Framework will set national planning and transport policy for an area that spans Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. A sustainability appraisal is being undertaken for the Spatial Framework and is currently at the scoping phase. A scoping report will be published alongside a consultation on the 'vision' or objectives for the Spatial Framework in summer 2021.

2. Background

- 2.1. MHCLG will carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the new/expanded settlements programme. The SA will assess the social, economic and environmental impacts of the preferred options and their reasonable alternatives and will ensure that sustainability is embedded from the outset. The SA will include a Strategic



Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) pursuant to:

- EU SEA Directive 2001/42/EC¹, and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations)
- EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EC² and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regulations)

- 2.2. We are seeking a specialist partner to deliver an SA scoping report to be published later this year or in early 2022 (possibly as part of a wider non-statutory consultation on the government's vision for any proposed new settlements programme). This will ensure that the SA is integrated early into any plan-making process and is therefore able to influence the anticipated new settlements programme by identifying impacts and helping deliver against social, economic, and environmental objectives.
- 2.3. This tender is only for the SA scoping stage, which will include the production of a scoping report. Procurement for the subsequent SA/HRA stages will take place as a separate, later, commission.
- 2.4. In delivering against any environmental objectives, the new/expanded settlements programme will be considering various existing government commitments and targets. Relevant drivers include:
- the UK net zero target (pursuant to the Climate Change Act 2008)
 - the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 to be at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline
 - commitments within the 25 Year Environment Plan and Clean Growth Strategy

3. Objectives

- 3.1 To ensure that the SA scoping stage, culminating in an SA scoping report, is carried out robustly and to high standards.
- 3.2 As well as demonstrating that sustainability is being placed at the core of our decision-making, this work will fulfil requirements under the SEA and HRA regulations and will support and inform further stages of the sustainability appraisal.

4. Scope

Through undertaking the SA scoping stage and producing an associated scoping report, the consultant shall:

- a) Review and collate an environmental, social, and economic evidence base to support SA scoping for all four potential new settlement locations (as detailed in section 1.2). This should take the form of:
- (i) a systematic review and concise summary of the existing evidence available

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

² Directive 92/43/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora,



- (ii) analysis of patterns and trends within the data
- (iii) analysis of future trends and how the baseline is likely to develop if the new settlements are not in place
- (iv) analysis of gaps and uncertainties regarding environment and sustainability-related evidence
- (v) a plan, policy and programme review including a description of the plan, policy or programme, key themes, and the identification of key interactions and conflicts with the new/expanded settlements

Note: Whilst the government has committed to examine opportunities at the four areas of focus detailed in section 1.2, it is likely that work will progress at different speeds and take different approaches for the different locations. In delivering the SA scoping report, the supplier will need to work with the programme team to understand the status of the work in different locations. The SA scoping report will need to reflect the realities of the programme whilst meeting regulatory requirements.

- b) Identify key strategic issues from the baseline review and the plan, policy, and programme review.
- c) Identify opportunities for improvements, including environmental and social outcomes which can be delivered as part of the new settlements programme in line with government policies and commitments.
- d) Identify the relevant designated sites which will need to be included in the HRA.
- e) Identify Water Framework Directive (WFD) waterbodies which will need to be considered by the WFD assessment.
- f) Provide a framework for the SA assessment, which will set out a broad picture of how the assessment will be carried out and will include information on:
 - (i) The approach to alternatives
 - (ii) Secondary effects and inter-relationships
 - (iii) Cumulative effects (including those relating to all proposed settlements' areas of focus as well as those which may occur through consideration of other relevant projects/schemes)
 - (iv) How HRA, WFD Assessment, Health Impact Assessment (HIA), and Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be carried out to inform the SA
- g) Produce a formal SA scoping report that is based on a structure and format issued by the consultant and agreed by the client. The SA scoping report will:
 - i) Encompass items 4a) to 4f)
 - ii) Follow a document template provided by the client
- h) The consultant will ensure that all reports are prepared in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 requirements and duties, demonstrate consideration of 'reasonable adjustments' for people who have a disability, and demonstrate compliance with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) No.2 Accessibility Regulations 2018.

All documents produced for online publication must meet the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 \(WCAG 2.1\)](#) conformance level AA. Documents must be produced in an accessible format that can be read by people who use assistive technologies.



All final versions of digital documents must be tested for accessibility to the WCAG2.1 AA standard, prior to delivery. The supplier must provide evidence that all final versions of digital documents they deliver have been tested for and comply with the A and AA criteria of the WCAG2.1 standard.

Further guidance on how to meet WCAG2.1 AA is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

- i) Support stakeholder engagement activities by:
 - (i) Developing documents, presentations, and visual materials, such as digital story maps
 - (ii) Attending relevant meetings and workshops
 - (iii) Managing and analysing stakeholder comments received during the sustainability scoping stage. This will involve collaborating with the programme team and any external supplier(s) involved in developing and coordinating the wider public consultation. The supplier will be expected to store and maintain any data collected during the consultation securely and according to the principles set out within the Data Protection Act 2018.
- j) Work collaboratively with the programme team and other relevant teams, attending key meetings and workshops. Separate to this tender, a supplier is being commissioned to develop our wider evidence base. Aspects of this work will be relevant to the SA scoping stage, so the consultant will need to collaborate with the supplier undertaking this work.
- k) Contribute to the development of the SA methodology through raising issues, suggesting ideas and approaches, and providing feedback on related work.
- l) The consultant shall have access to and utilise required specialists as required. This could include, but is not limited to, landscape architects, archaeologists, ecologists, etc.
- m) The consultant shall, following their own internal quality review, issue drafts and the final scoping report to allow for a 10 day client review period. The consultant shall provide a minimum of two iterations of drafts prior to the final scoping report.

5. Constraints on how the consultant provides the services

- a) The consultant shall ensure that appropriate use is made of existing data, to avoid duplicating work already undertaken. In addition, any other existing sources known to the consultant should be utilised.
- b) The consultant shall ensure that the SA scoping stage and report takes into account the SA scoping work already undertaken for the OxCam Arc Spatial Framework. The scoping report will need to utilise some or all of the evidence base within the Spatial Framework, which will be dependent on its status/stage of development as it is currently being developed.
- c) Reflecting the relationship between the potential strategic objectives of the proposed Spatial Framework and the potential future delivery of new/expanded settlements within the Arc, the sustainability themes identified within the Spatial Framework's scoping report shall inform the SA scoping stage of the new settlements. These



themes are as follows:

- (i) **Sustainable leadership** – how sustainability will be considered in the management and direction of the new or expanded settlements
- (ii) **Resilience** – consideration of strategic risks, resource efficiency and future needs
- (iii) **Communities** - impact on existing communities and planning for future occupants, their health and wellbeing. Accounting for equality in the development of new communities and infrastructure, access to the environment and social infrastructure.
- (iv) **Biodiversity** - protection of existing sites and corridors of biodiversity value, and incorporation of net gain and supporting the recovery and resilience of biodiversity.
- (v) **Air quality** – impact of the programme on air quality
- (vi) **Climate change** - performance in contributing to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 target; adaptation to the effects of climate change, with specific reference to flood risk.
- (vii) **Historic environment** - protection of existing heritage and anticipated change resulting from the programme
- (viii) **Water** - water resource provision and management; changes and benefits to the water environment.
- (ix) **Land use and landscape** - effects on existing land use and likely change; protection of existing valued landscapes and anticipated effects on landscape character
- (x) **Transport** - consideration of transport and movement; provision of new infrastructure, the impact on existing transport networks and associated sustainability effects.
- (xi) **Infrastructure** - impact on existing infrastructure (e.g. utilities, digital networks and communications) and the likely resulting change to infrastructure provision.
- (xii) **Economy** – consideration of labour pool availability and the skills required to support economic growth, and the explorations of opportunities to further inwards investment, promote skills development and create jobs.

6. Specifications or standards to be used:

The consultant will require experience and an understanding of the application of:

- a) the SEA Regulations and HRA Regulations
- b) the SEA Regulations within a Sustainability Appraisal context
- c) the SEA Regulations and HRA Regulations across a wide geographic area
- d) identifying environmental and social opportunities



7. Format and ownership of outputs

Digital outputs of all work should be provided to the MHCLG and Homes England client team at the completion of the work. The rights to the work completed will be held by MHCLG, this includes the final outputs as well as editable files. The consultant team will be required to support the detailed handover of this work to other consultant teams that may be appointed in the future and should allow for this.

8. Price

The indicative price range for this work is £30k - £50k ex VAT. Prices may be submitted below this range, but as a matter of course we will investigate any abnormally low bids.

The tender will be assessed using an 80:20 split based on quality/price respectively.

9. Key dates/milestones

Milestone	Deliverable Description	Timeframe
1	Commencement start date	Within 1 week of contract award
2	Output: initial draft SA scoping report	Within 7 weeks of commencement date
3	Output: final draft SA scoping report	Within 10 weeks of commencement date
4	Output: final SA scoping report ready for publication and checked for accessibility compliance (as detailed in 4h))	Within 12 weeks of commencement date