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# Soft Market Test

For

Cambridgeshire County Council Construction Framework 2026

# Section 1: Introduction

## General Requirements

* 1. The purpose of this document is to briefly explain to suppliers the business and technical requirements and the expected scope of this requirement in order that suppliers can explain the relevance of their experience to the requirements.
  2. Suppliers can find out more about the Procurement and Commercial Teams tender process, role and strategies via the [Supplying to the Council](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/supplying-to-the-council) webpage.
  3. Suppliers should also note that Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) also evaluates Social Value within its tender process where appropriate.
  4. **Please note:** this market testing exercise is **not** an invitation to tender or a request for formal expressions of interest. This document does not form any part of an invitation to tender. CCC is issuing this request for **information only**. Any supplier invited to present to CCC is doing so to support market research only and to help make any potential procurement process more focused and efficient. No supplier selection or supplier preference is implied.

## Confidentiality and Freedom of Information (FOI)

* 1. **Please note:** all information included in this Soft Market Testing is confidential and only for the recipients’ knowledge. No information included in this document or in discussions connected to it may be disclosed to any other party without prior written authorisation.
  2. All responses will be treated confidentially. However, please be aware that we are subject to the disclosure requirements of the FOI Act and that potentially any information we hold is liable to disclosure under that Act. For this reason, we strongly advise that any information you consider to be confidential is labelled as such. In the event that a request is subsequently made for disclosure under FOI the request will be dealt with in accordance with the legislation.

## Background

Cambridgeshire County Council currently have 2 frameworks covering Construction Requirements, both of which are mature in terms of being the latest iterations of similar frameworks held by the Authority for several years.

The Design & Build (D&B) Contractor Framework commenced in November 2021 and put in place a framework of Contractors to carry out Design and Build services across a variety of properties within the geographical boundaries of Cambridgeshire. It concludes in November 2025.

The formation of the Lots is:

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| --- | --- |
| **Lot Number** | **Lot Value** |
| Lot 1 a) | £1m - £2,499,999m |
| Lot 1 b) | £2.5m - £4,499,999m |
| Lot 2 | £4m - £7,999,999m |
| Lot 3 a) | £7.5m - £10,999,999m |
| Lot 3 b) | £11m - £15,499,999m |
| Lot 4 | £15m+ |

Each Lot has 5 providers. Whilst most projects to date have purely been for our Education Capital Team to construct new schools or extend existing ones, we have also used it to remodel Household Recycling Centres, and previous iterations of the framework have been used to construct our Corporate Headquarters in Alconbury, Adult Care Homes and Libraries

Every project is awarded via further competition to the providers within each Lot based on a mixture of Quality and Price.

The contractors are expected to primarily undertake Design & Build services for education capital projects, but the scope of the framework also includes adult social care, offices, community and public buildings. The framework covers construction works and includes but is not be limited to, new build, demolitions, capital replacements, extensions, repairs and renovation programs.

The framework providers are building contractors who are supported by a number of architectural consultancies and other appropriate specialist consultants as required. The framework providers were appointed to the framework through the NEC Framework Agreement, and Works are procured using NEC 4 Engineering Construction Contract (ECC) and Professional Services Contract (PSC).

Separately, the Minor Works Framework concludes in April 2026, and covers a variety of projects in different Lots, based on value of work and Discipline:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Lot Number** | **Discipline and Lot Value** |
| Lot 1 | Building Fabric Works £0 - £149,999 |
| Lot 2 | Building Fabric Works £150,000 - £499,999 |
| Lot 3 | Building Fabric Works £500,000 - £1m |
| Lot 4 | Mechanical & Electrical Works £0 - £74,999 |
| Lot 5 | Mechanical & Electrical Works £75,000 - £500,000 |

The scope of projects currently put through this framework is wide, ranging from small jobs and minor works to building services replacement and refurbishment work; from "handyman" work to replacement of failed building elements such as roofs and refurbishing facilities such as kitchens and toilets as well as minor building modifications. This framework is mainly used by the Education Capital Team as with the D&B Framework above but is also used by colleagues in our Rural Estates and Facilities Management teams, for projects such as constructing/refurbishing Agricultural buildings and ventilation work including decarbonisation on our Corporate Estate and in Local Authority-maintained schools.

Each Lot has 6 providers. Every project is awarded via further competition to the providers within each Lot, with the lowest compliant bid being awarded the contract.

Works are procured using JCT suite of Construction Contracts and Professional Services Contract (PSC).

## Soft Market Test Timetable

* 1. Please read this document and if you feel that your organisation is able to contribute to this exercise please complete the questionnaire at the end of this document and return, via email to [Jon.collyns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jon.collyns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) by **5pm on Friday 14th March 2025.**

4.2 Potential responders will not be prejudiced in any future procurement processes by either responding or not responding to this soft market test exercise.

It is envisaged that a formal Procurement process following this engagement shall take place in the summer of 2025, for a contract start of 1st April 2026. All organisations responding to this document will be notified when the resulting tender is published.

# Section 2: Identification of Requirement

## Current Situation

As stated at Section 3 above, the Authority currently has 2 Frameworks. It is felt that the current pipeline for the period 2026-2030 does not justify a major works framework; however, there is forecast demand for a continuation of the Minor Works framework, potentially slightly increasingly its scope.

The purpose of this engagement process is to gauge the market’s responses to some key areas of the procurement process, with a view to designing a process most likely to attract interest and competitive bids from providers.

## Our Requirements

6.1 The current thinking of the project team is that there is not the forecast pipeline for significant new builds within Cambridgeshire to justify the cost and time of reprocuring our own Major Works Framework, and any projects that do come forward can be sourced via external frameworks or an open tender.

6.2 It is felt that the current Minor Works Framework can be expanded in a replacement framework to cover higher values and potentially cover some of the smaller work currently put through our D&B Framework.

6.3 It is envisaged that this new framework has 6 Lots:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Lot Number** | **Discipline and Lot Value** |
| Lot 1 | Building Fabric Works £0 - £149,999 |
| Lot 2 | Building Fabric Works £150,000 - £499,999 |
| Lot 3 | Building Fabric Works £500,000 - £1m |
| Lot 4 | Building Fabric Works £1m - £5m |
| Lot 5 | Mechanical & Electrical Works £0 - £500,000 |
| Lot 6 | Mechanical & Electrical Works £500,000 - £1m |

Bidders may be restricted to only bidding and achieving a place on some of the Lots, please see the question in the table below to confirm your thoughts and preferences on this.

1. **Background – Social Value**

The Authority are currently working on the implementation of the Match My Project online portal to support their delivery of place based Social Value. Match My Project will be where businesses can find, and support Cambridgeshire based community and other related projects.

Please note that the platform will be there to support the delivery of Social Value but that other outcomes could be included within process.Please see the main [Match my project](https://matchmyproject.org/) website to see where the Cambridgeshire portal will be once it is in launched in 2025.

In addition, there are some videos:

* An Introduction to Match My Project for Community Organisations - [MMP intro for Community Orgs](https://vimeo.com/859395473/ed40320689)
* An Introduction to Match My Project for Supply-Chain - [MMP intro for Businesses](https://vimeo.com/868771473/516477e028), How to post Job and Training Opportunities to Match My Project (Supply-Chain Partners only)
* [How to post a job](https://vimeo.com/845970399?share=copy) which shows the Match My Project user journey for businesses, including signing up and finding projects to support, getting started on a project, and giving feedback on the [Match My Project](https://vimeo.com/matchmyproject) platform for your information.

# Section 3: Supporting information

Please note: you do not need to resize the table; it will automatically adjust to fit your response.

## Section A: Organisation and Contact Details

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| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| Name and Head Office Address of your Business |  |
| What if any local connections do you have with the authority? |  |
| What if any experience do you have of working within Cambridgeshire? |  |
| Contact Details (Name, Mobile No. and email) |  |

## Section B: Questions

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| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| Do you think the Lot strategy as set out above is appropriate? |  |
| If yes which Lot(s) would your organisation be interested in bidding for? |  |
| How do you consider it is best to award work under the framework; please enter your thoughts on all options below and your view on which is most attractive:  Option A: Further Competition to all providers on the relevant Lot for every opportunity, using a mix of qualitative assessment and pricing based on the specific project in each case  Option B: A Further Competition to all providers on the Lot for every opportunity based purely on lowest price on the specific project in each case  Option C: Awarding work based on the outcome of the original tender exercise, so the first placed bidder in each lot provides a competitively priced submission, and if they are unable to service the requirement then the bidder who finished second is given the opportunity, and so on down the list |  |
| What do you consider the optimum number of organisations to be on each Lot (assuming that every project is sent to all bidders within that lot as a further competition). This does not need to be the same number for every lot. |  |
| Assuming the Lot structure is as stated at 6.1 or similar, the Authority may restrict the number of Lots any bidder could bid for, to ensure each Lot only featured bidders who would prioritise bidding for such work if awarded a place.  If we were to restrict the number of Lots your organisation could have a place on to a maximum of 3, which Lot(s) would you prioritise bidding for and why? |  |
| If your organisation was interested in bidding on the proposed Lot 4 (Fabric £1m - £5m), please could you expand on whether your company has the skills and expertise required to deliver school extensions, including considering the extra requirements from BB103, DfE guidance, using project milestones etc? |  |
| What do you consider the most sensible method to evaluate pricing when establishing the Lots, given that all projects issued will be individually priced? Use of a sample project, rate cards for various disciplines and a % figure on Overheads and/or Preliminaries are possibilities, but we welcome the view from bidders on alternative options. |  |
| Where you hold similar contracts to that discussed here, how have you captured the Social Value benefits you have delivered for the public body in question? Please include any systems you have and do use to capture Social Value in this regard. |  |
| Where possible CCC like to demonstrate Social Value benefits by supporting Local (Cambridgeshire-based) providers; do you consider this as a barrier to bidding for the opportunity? Note: this does not mean that we will only contract with Cambridgeshire-based providers. Please also confirm if you consider that Social Value should be treated differently in the lower valued proposed Lots. |  |
| When this procurement is published it shall fall under the [Procurement Act 23](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-act-2023-short-guides/the-procurement-act-2023-a-short-guide-for-suppliers-html) Legislation. This legislation allows Contracting Authorities to let either “Open” or “Closed” frameworks.  A brief explanation of the difference is detailed below at Appendix 1.  The current thinking of the Authority is to let a “Closed” framework, very much in the style of Frameworks as they currently exist, with a maximum length of 4 years and closed to any new entrants, but we would welcome the market’s view on this issue. |  |
| Some mandatory accreditations such as GasSafe, NICEIC will be mandatory for bidders to hold in certain Lots; in addition, CHAS elite membership or the SSP equivalent will likely be required for all Lots, in line with use of the [Common Assessment Standard.](Common%20Assessment%20Standard.)  CCC are keen to understand what barriers may be perceived as precluding organisations from bidding for this opportunity, either relating to specific accreditation or any other factors. |  |
| Is there anything we could do to encourage bidders to bid (within reason)? |  |
| Please add in any further suggestions and comments relevant to the requirement stated above that you feel will benefit CCC for its procurement process.  Please DO NOT provide marketing or promotional literature. |  |

**Appendix 1: Open & Closed Frameworks under PA23**

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| Area | “Closed” Framework | “Open” Framework |
| Maximum Duration | 4 years | Maximum 8 year term (with minimum reopening periods) final framework in the scheme to expire 8 years from the day the first framework was awarded |
| Number of Suppliers | No minimum or maximum | Minimum of 2 suppliers, no maximum to take advantage of the maximum 8-year term |
| Can the number of Suppliers be limited | Yes | Yes |
| Ability to add additional suppliers throughout the term | No, suppliers are fixed from point of award to termination (up to 4 years) | Yes, when the framework is reopened |
| Awarding contracts (calling off) | Award with or without further competition | Award with or without further competition |