Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is seeking to procure a specialist engagement consultant to support the Government in developing a comprehensive approach to engaging local audiences (both stakeholder groups and the public) throughout the development of a Spatial Framework for Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

1.2 We would like to appoint engagement consultants 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 buy-in. We expect the potential providers to formulate a multi-method strategy which will enable the Government to raise local engagement and awareness of the Arc initiative, through a phased (non-statutory and statutory) engagement and consultation process, to inform the development of the Spatial Framework.

1.3 We also expect the potential provider to offer expert solutions for accessing harder to reach groups and communities through traditional and digital methods such as Property Technology (PropTech) to ensure any planned engagement from now until 2023 is wide and meaningful.

2 BACKGROUND TO THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

2.1 MHCLG's job is to create great places to live and work, and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area.

3 BACKGROUND TO REQUIREMENT / OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENT

3.1 At Budget 2020, it was announced that the Government plans to proceed with the development of a Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The Government intends to support the realisation of the Arc's transformation economic potential by taking a coordinated, long-term, cross-boundary approach to planning for economic and housing growth, infrastructure and environmental improvement in the area.

3.2 Our preferred approach to delivering on the Budget announcement would see an Arc-wide framework developed and implemented as centrally-led spatially-specific policy or guidance and supported by relevant environmental assessments. Relevant local authorities would continue to be responsible for development plans, but all planning decisions (including local plan-making) within the relevant region would need to have regard to the Arc Spatial Framework as both a statutory and a material consideration (akin to the function and status of the National Planning Policy Framework).

3.3 We are committed to working collaboratively with local partners and want to engage with communities to give residents in the Arc a meaningful voice in development of the Spatial Framework. We want to do this by adopting a best practice approach throughout, going beyond statutory requirements on public engagement and consultation, including by using digital approaches where appropriate to raise participation levels as the framework is developed.

3.4 To deliver on this, we need to develop a robust, yet agile, engagement strategy for the Spatial Framework which sets out the phases and methods of activity over the course of its development (which we envisage would be 2-3 years). This approach will need to be co-designed with local partners to secure buy-in locally, build on established channels of engagement and enhance access to communities in the Arc. This strategy should periodically capture our objectives for engaging, the audiences we need to target, and how activity should be sequenced.

4 DEFINITIONS

Expression or Acronym	Definition
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
OxCam Arc	Oxford-Cambridge Arc
PropTech	Property Technology

5 SCOPE OF REQUIREMENT

5.1 At Budget 2020, the Government committed to developing, with local partners, a long-term Spatial Framework to plan strategically for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc up to 2050. This framework would give certainty to businesses and developers around locations for new housing and employment and plan for the right infrastructure to meet the social, environmental and economic needs of residents.

5.2 Alongside the commitment to work collaboratively with local partners, the Government also stated its intention to put residents, communities and businesses at the heart of the Spatial Framework's development. There was a commitment to deliver thorough engagement and consultation to ensure the framework is developed in an inclusive way.

5.3 The Spatial Framework presents the first opportunity for Government to publicly engage across the Arc - but this must be delivered in a strategic and methodical way to maximise impact and maintain authenticity. There is scope to adopt a 'best practice' approach to engagement, particularly during the Spatial Framework's initial development phase where widespread engagement is not a statutory requirement. Key to the successful delivery of the Spatial Framework 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 supplier will be expected to deliver an engagement strategy which clearly sets out the following for each period of engagement:

5.4.1 **Objectives:** We will need to 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 also need to consider the boundaries of our engagement and be transparent about what is in scope to be influenced by stakeholders and the public. Decisions will need to be made about the style of

engagement whether it be policy-specific and bounded or more deliberative as this will influence which methods of engagement are adopted.

5.4.2 **Audiences:** The Arc is home to a wide and diverse stakeholder landscape who will have an interest in the Spatial Framework's development. A framework could be perceived as a top-down approach to planning which could lead to public opposition if engagement isn't conducted properly. As the Spatial Framework is developed, we will need to demonstrate that we have engaged extensively across different audiences ranging from local authorities, universities and business to residents, workers and local communities. An effective Spatial Framework engagement strategy will need to adapt engagement methodology according to specific audience groups.

5.4.3 **Implementation (method):** The type of engagement incorporated into this strategy should be innovative and ambitious, going beyond the statutory engagement requirements for planning policy. 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.

5.4.4 **Sequencing:** The strategy should be timebound and will need to set out an engagement approach from now until the final publication of an OxCam Spatial Framework (2020-2023). A holistic approach should be taken to ensure that methods of engagement are time sensitive and phase appropriate (i.e. statutory and non-statutory). We will expect the appointed supplier to work closely with the planning, digital and comms teams at MHCLG to ensure the strategy is aligned with our wider approach including to ensure alignment with any engagement we need to undertake to support environmental assessments.

5.5 The supplier will not be expected to set out a detailed plan for delivery of the recommendations of the strategy, although they will be expected to forecast delivery costs and timings for each recommendation in the strategy.

5.6 We will be looking to work with an engagement specialist who can demonstrate the following:

5.6.1 Experience in delivering engagement strategies targeting wide audiences, ideally on strategic plans across regions. (although this is not essential);

5.6.2 Experience of using a robust evidence base to inform engagement solutions and identify effective routes to different audience groups;

5.6.3 Experience of delivering engagement strategies with a wide range of target audiences including stakeholders and communities with varied knowledge, interests and buy-in;

5.6.4 Experience of delivering engagement strategies which targets "hard to reach" audiences with an ability to communicate sensitively and authentically;

5.6.5 Experience of delivering engagement strategies which target with young people, viewing them as equally important stakeholders;

5.6.6 Experience of incorporating innovative digital solutions into engagement strategies to maximise reach;

5.6.7 Experience of overseeing engagement strategies that were managed by multiple stakeholders;

5.6.8 Experience of working with government communications and on policy consultations.

6 THE REQUIREMENT

6.1 We require an engagement specialist to develop a comprehensive engagement strategy to support the development of a Spatial Framework for the OxCam Arc. The strategy should set out an engagement approach beginning in autumn 2020 up until 2023 when a final Spatial Framework is expected to be published.

6.2 We expect the engagement strategy to be evidence-based, drawing on evidence of best practice and what works elsewhere (nationally and internationally). Any proposed methods of engagement will need to be supported by evidence of where these solutions have been previously impactful in similar cross-regional scenarios. The supplier will be required to undertake an audience segmentation exercise to map out market ready solutions to reaching our target groups, particularly young people.

6.3 The strategy will need to encompass the wide range of stakeholders in the Arc, including local authorities, business and communities, setting out suitable methods for engaging these different audience groups. This will require extensive stakeholder mapping to assess our audience groups and identify any established engagement channels belonging to these stakeholders e.g. Local Authorities. It should also set out a phased framework for engagement over the next 3 years with consideration given to our objectives, audiences, implementation and sequencing at each phase. The strategy will need to be ambitious; satisfying requirements for statutory consultation – even during periods of non-statutory engagement.

6.4 Diversity and inclusion should be at the heart of the strategy. The supplier will be expected to include recommendations for extending activity to harder-to-reach groups, particularly young people. This could include digital tools or other proven methods of community engagement. This should not replace traditional engagement methods, particularly the specific requirements for statutory consultation, but be recommended in addition to ensure any proposed engagement is as wide-reaching as possible.

6.5 The supplier will also need to facilitate the co-design of the strategy between MHCLG, other government departments, and local partners 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. The supplier will be expected to gather insight and map existing methods of engagement for local plans adopted by Local Authorities in the Arc; and to align any approach with any engagement being undertaken separately by local authorities (e.g. on their local plan). This will allow us to better understand how our target audiences

our currently being engaged and identify how we can build on existing methodologies.

6.6 Consideration must be given to how we can engage thematically in each phase (e.g. around housing, employment or infrastructure) and in different local areas across the Arc to ensure any proposed engagement is localised and made meaningful to individuals living or working in the Arc.

6.7 There is potential for these services to be extended for future phases of delivery. The appointed supplier may be retained to deliver these services 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 (a) tap into the pre-existing working relationships the team holds with local partners and (b) ensure that the Spatial Framework engagement strategy is aligned to the programme's wider communications objectives.

6.9 There will be a period of induction to the OxCam Unit's stakeholders to support the supplier's initial phase of stakeholder mapping. The comms and engagement team will support suppliers on building their knowledge of the Arc's stakeholder landscapes and wider interdependencies, to ensure the supplier's work is informed and strategic.

6.10 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 following Contract milestones/deliverables shall apply:

Milestone / Deliverable	Description	Timeframe or Delivery Date
1	**Insight gathering (1)** – facilitate initial project planning and stakeholder mapping workshop with OxCam Unit	Within month 1 of Contract Award
2	**Insight gathering (2)** – attendance at Arc Local governance meeting to discuss ideas gathered to date and agree outcomes for the ideas gathering 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 MHCLG and representatives of local partners to being co-design of strategy	Within month 2 of Contract Award
5	**Strategy development (2)** – produce first draft of engagement strategy alongside evidence base for recommendations; OxCam Unit to respond with initial feedback	Within month 2 of Contract Award
6	**Strategy development (3)** - revised strategy to presented to MHCLG and local partners at local governance meeting 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 OxCam Unit 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 consultant will provide short interim reports following each mapping and workshop exercise which sets out top level summaries of information gathered and planned next steps.

9   VOLUMES

9.1   The Arc is made of 31 Local Authorities which include 4 county councils, 21 district authorities, 5 unitary authorities, and one mayoral combined authority. The Arc's local governance structure is currently made up of representatives of these authorities who meet once a month. The supplier will be expected to attend at least two of these meetings in relation to this work during the duration of the contract.

9.2   It is also expected that the supplier will deliver at least two workshops during the duration of the contract to map stakeholders and gather insight. These workshops will need to include all necessary representatives of MHCLG and local partners.

9.3   There will be a phased induction and initial ideas gathering period following contract award in early October, running to the beginning of November. Activities will include:

  9.3.1   Presentation of previous engagement activity across or within a region of which the supplier has facilitated or delivered;

  9.3.2   Meeting with OxCam Unit and local partners to agree ways of working; and

  9.3.3   Stakeholder mapping, research, and planning.

9.4   The induction and initial insight gathering period will include more detailed planning to determine more exact volumes. The contract will require flexibility throughout in order to respond to the needs of the OxCam Unit and local partners.

9.5   The supplier will be expected to deliver a comprehensive engagement strategy which covers all of the stakeholders and/or audiences identified in the insight gathering stage. All recommendations included in the strategy should be evidence-based with information on how they have been previously effective in similar scenarios.

9.6   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 SOCIAL VALUE / SUSTAINABILITY

11.1   Not applicable due to short term nature of the contract.

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 OxCam Unit's project 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 Supplier is required to provide a price for the work outlined above, along with a blended day rate for when additional work is commissioned.

13.2 Prices are to be submitted by completing Attachment 4 - Price Schedule and uploading to the Bravo e-Sourcing portal up to a maximum value of £41,500 excl 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 (as set out in section 5.6).

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	Target
1	Insight gathering phase	Summary of key findings of insight mapping provided to MHCLG within 1 week of exercise taking place. Metrics of reach (i.e. number of LAs engaged with) to be provided for this phase.	95%
2	Strategy development phase	Draft strategy with supporting evidence base report to be provide within 2 months of contract award	100%
3	Finalise strategy phase	Final strategy and evidence base to be presented to MHCLG OxCam Arc programme board within 3 months of contract award	100%
4	General contract management	Monthly report of engagement to date, with evidence of progress against milestones and deliverables	100%
5	Expert advice	Requests for ad hoc expert advice from MHCLG to the supplier to be acknowledged within 1 working day.	95%

6	Timely delivery	Delivery of agreed reports/objectives to be achieved within the agreed deadline	100%

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   Not applicable.

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)

17.2 Before payment can be considered, MHCLG must receive an invoice which must include a detailed elemental breakdown of work completed and the associated costs.

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.