



## **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Community-Led Housing Support Service**

Review of service (Jan-2022 – Mar-2023) and proposal for service  
(Apr-2023 – Mar-2024)

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## Background

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Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority outsourced its technical support for the delivery of community-led housing to Eastern Community Homes for 15 months from 1 January 2022.

This included work with community-led housing groups in Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland districts and the Peterborough unitary authority area. East Cambridgeshire District Council supports its own service delivery for community-led housing.

Eastern Community Homes is the community-led housing hub for the East of England, providing a central point of information for the development of all forms of community-led housing. Working alongside members - community groups, local authorities, housing associations and technical advisors - its vision is 'to enable people to realise their vision of building sustainable homes and creating inclusive communities'.

Cambridgeshire ACRE is the accountable body for Eastern Community Homes and therefore the contract holder for this Combined Authority contract.

This report provides a review of the service provided during the 15 months of this contract and goes on to propose how a community-led housing support service might be provided for a further 12 month period and the associated cost.

## Context for delivery

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Community-led housing can have a huge positive impact on communities and people's lives. There is a desire from local people to protect and improve their places and this represents a huge change. The medium of such change is local people leading the development of community-owned homes. These homes can be genuinely affordable to rent meaning communities aren't displaced, young people can have security, shops and schools remain open and prices are protected in perpetuity, meaning, future generations will benefit from these homes as well.

The delivery of community-led housing takes time. There is a need to continue to support a strong pipeline of projects that will eventually enable groups to reach the stage of building their own homes. The Combined Authority's active support of community-led housing enabling and the allocation of grants to groups has allowed the community-led housing pipeline for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to be progressed and sustained over this period.

In addition, groups and communities are realising that a growing number of people living in both urban and rural areas will have little access to housing through the traditional housing market. Many are also concerned about rising rents becoming unaffordable. This has driven a renewed interest from communities, town and parish councils and individuals investigating community-led housing as an option and the first stages of support for these groups has been provided.

However, there have been some understandable barriers to the progression of community-led housing projects during this contracted period including:

- COVID-19 continuing to impact, with people's concerns about coming together still evident, meaning community-led housing groups have needed to re-form and re-consider their pre-COVID plans. Advisors have been working with these groups but it has taken time for them to move forward again after such an impact.
- The cost-of-living crisis has impacted on some specific groups, particularly, those that are voluntary sector-led, for example providing services to the homeless or people with disabilities. For these groups, they are finding additional pressures from their 'day jobs' causing them to delay their plans to develop community-led housing for their specific clients.
- The housing sector has continued to experience material shortages, labour shortages and price increases causing uncertainty and being off-putting for some groups.
- Finding suitable land in both urban and rural areas has cause significant delay and this has not been helped by the delays to the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is needed to provide stability for planning and development.

- Significant changes to funding community-led housing from Government with the withdrawal of the Community Housing Fund (CHF) slowing delivery and with projects finding site acquisition difficult, particularly where some upfront purchase is required due to a lack of substantive finance that the Community Housing Fund would have provided.

# Review of service delivery over term of contract

## Activity with community-led housing projects (Jan-2022 – Mar-2023)

A list of 13 groups requiring support was provided by the Combined Authority when the service was commissioned. Eastern Community Homes has provided 1:1 support to these groups via an accredited community-led housing advisor and raised awareness of community-led housing to enable new groups to come forward, then supported these groups with applications for start-up and technical support grants from the Combined Authority.

Below we summarise the progress made by each community-led housing group during the period. Clicking on the group’s name will re-direct to a case study on the Eastern Community Homes website. For reference the stages of community-led housing development are:

- Group – Deciding group structure, governance model and legal form;
- Site – Finding and securing a site or building for the project;
- Plan – Working with a range of professionals to design a scheme and obtain planning permission;
- Build – The process of building or renovating homes for the project;
- Live – Residents living in the homes and the focus shifts to managing and maintaining the homes.

Group Name	Location / District	Stage of CLH development at start of contract	Current stage of CLH development	Activity over contract period
<a href="#">Suvana Cohousing</a>	Cambridge / Cambridge City	Group / Site	Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular attendance at trustee meetings.</li> <li>• Review of business plan and legal model underway.</li> <li>• £100k grant fund application in progress, this will be to assist with financial/business planning costs, marketing of the group.</li> </ul>

Group Name	Location / District	Stage of CLH development at start of contract	Current stage of CLH development	Activity over contract period
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-creators scoping workshop arranged for Apr-2023 to allow time for marketing to be complete. This will help to identify the type of scheme the group want to create.</li> <li>• Future plans to look at scoping a scheme with a feasibility/viability professional so this can be used in partnership / development conversations in the future.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Histon &amp; Impington Community Land Trust</a>	Histon & Impington / South Cambridgeshire	Group / Site	Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at trustee meetings as needed.</li> <li>• Financial appraisal training provided to group.</li> <li>• Case studies of relevant, local CLTs presented to the group to help inform group's next steps.</li> <li>• Supported group in understanding supplementary planning documents and what could be</li> </ul>

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				<p>done to encourage SCDC to do the same.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed and visited potential development sites that had been identified under a call for sites in 2021.</li> <li>• Support provided to group when meeting with potential development partners and landowners such as Laragh Homes, Hundred Houses and Chivers.</li> <li>• Review of current trustee and group membership. Plan implemented to undertake a marketing campaign to engage local community.</li> <li>• Housing Needs Survey undertaken by Cambridgeshire ACRE. Although not directly linked to the CLT, will provide an evidence base should a site come forward.</li> <li>• Ongoing discussions with Chivers, CHS, Hundred Houses and</li> </ul>

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				<p>Eastlight Homes as possible partnership routes. Support and advice provided by Eastern Community Homes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently reviewing possible sites with partners. Next steps are for the group to review these and check whether details can be released for ECH to arrange a feasibility session based on a real-life example.</li> </ul>
<p>Rebel Acres Co-operative</p>	<p>Peterborough / Peterborough</p>	<p>Group / Site</p>	<p>Site / Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group are mostly self-sufficient – membership and overall group governance is well maintained.</li> <li>• Support provided in relation to working with the local authority to foster good relationships.</li> <li>• Set-up networking between Rebel Acres and Suvana as group ethos is similar.</li> <li>• Supported with bringing forward their start-up grant</li> </ul>



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				<p>application to further the project. The funding will likely be used to secure a land / property agent to help find a suitable project site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently investigating retrofit opportunities as securing land is proving difficult for the group. A potential site has been identified and ECH are supporting enquiries into this.</li> </ul>
<p>Cottenham Community Land Trust</p>	<p>Cottenham / South Cambridgeshire</p>	<p>Group</p>	<p>Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular email, telephone and online contact with some members of the group.</li> <li>• Housing needs survey undertaken by Cambridgeshire ACRE providing evidence of need in the community.</li> <li>• Ongoing conflict within the group that needs to be addressed before moving forward. Eastern Community Homes have advised</li> </ul>

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				<p>on this situation and the group are in the process of addressing the situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future plans to remarket and reinvigorate the CLT once the conflict has been resolved. This will include a marketing campaign and exploring the possibility of connecting with other local groups who could benefit the project.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Houghton &amp; Wyton Community Land Trust</a>	Houghton & Wyton / Huntingdonshire	Group	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish Council group did not initially engage with Eastern Community Homes.</li> <li>• First meeting was held in late 2022 in person to discuss the group's intentions and aspirations.</li> <li>• Discussions are underway with the group and local authority to find a way forward which achieves the group's aims but also fits</li> </ul>

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				<p>with local planning policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A housing needs survey has been discussed with the group as this is something they would like to pursue in the future.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Oakington Retirement Community</a>	Oakington / South Cambridgeshire	Group / Site	Group / Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings held with the group in early 2022 to discuss progress and current activity taking place.</li> <li>• Focus on getting the group incorporated so they could draw down the start-up grant they had been approved for.</li> <li>• Worked with group to support pre-planning discussions with SCDC. The group decided they wanted to progress these discussions prior to incorporating.</li> <li>• Eastern Community Homes has made regular attempts to contact the group but engagement has ceased. We will re-</li> </ul>

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				engage support if the group gets in contact.
Wisbech Community Lane Trust	Wisbech / Fenland	Group	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial discussions held with group to document ideas, vision and aims for the project.</li> <li>Slow progress as group members are from various organisations so bringing them together can be challenging.</li> <li>We are planning to use the Wayshaper Toolkit, a decision-making tool to help guide community led housing groups, to hold a workshop with the aim of incorporating the group once this is completed.</li> </ul>
It Takes a City Community Land Trust	Cambridge City / South Cambridgeshire	Group / Site	Site / Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisory requirements as directed by trustees.</li> <li>Group were contacted and introduced to Eastern Community Homes.</li> <li>The CLT have expressed interest</li> </ul>

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				and are currently progressing an application for the £100,000 grant fund to support their planning application
Cambridge Living Future Community Land Trust	Cambridge City / South Cambridgeshire	Group / Site	Group / Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of engagement from the group has hindered progress and ability of ECH to provide support.</li> </ul>
Waterbeach Community Land Trust	Waterbeach / South Cambridgeshire	Group / Site / Plan	Site / Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of engagement from the group has hindered progress and ability of ECH to provide support.</li> </ul>
Great Staughton Community Land Trust	Great Staughton / Huntingdonshire	Plan / Build	Build	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CLT is currently in the final stages of completing its first development (est. completion Mar-2023).</li> <li>Attended group site meeting in late 2022 including obtaining images of the scheme during the development phase.</li> <li>The group is looking at the early stages of developing a second scheme. They are</li> </ul>

Group Name	Location / District	Stage of CLH development at start of contract	Current stage of CLH development	Activity over contract period
				<p>currently in the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan via Cambridgeshire ACRE and AECOM and reviewing identified sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eastern Community Homes are providing support as directed by trustees.</li> </ul>
Girton Town Charity	Girton / South Cambridgeshire	Live	Live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No advisory requirement.</li> <li>• Group were contacted and introduced to Eastern Community Homes.</li> <li>• Receive communications and updates from ECH via newsletter, email and social media.</li> </ul>
Great Shelford Parochial Charities	Great Shelford / South Cambridgeshire	Live	Live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No advisory requirement.</li> <li>• Group were contacted and introduced to Eastern Community Homes.</li> <li>• Receive communications and updates from ECH via newsletter, email and social media.</li> </ul>

Group Name	Location / District	Stage of CLH development at start of contract	Current stage of CLH development	Activity over contract period

## Wider community-led housing facilitation and support

A new [support offer](#) to encourage individuals and groups to step forward has been sent by direct email to all Parish and Town Councils and other interested voluntary groups.

Two events were held online. One networking event for existing groups to come together to share their own community-led housing journey was attended by two groups and one to promote the enabling support available and the opportunities of the Combined Authority's community-led housing grants to new groups was attended by 11 groups.

## Working with local authorities

We have strengthened our engagement with Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland districts and the Peterborough unitary authority area through holding engagement meetings to discuss projects and providing support with future policy developments for community-led housing, particularly in new developments such as Waterbeach, where there could be opportunities for providing some housing at scale. A Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Community-Led Housing Partnership of the five local authorities has been formed and is meeting twice a year to share progress and knowledge.

## Membership of Eastern Community Homes

### ([www.easterncommunityhomes.com](http://www.easterncommunityhomes.com))

Through this contract, the Combined Authority has also been a member of Eastern Community Homes as the community-led housing hub for the region. The hub maintains a membership of 18 local authorities across the region leading community-led housing policy and planning guidance, as well as encouraging strategic policies and procedures to be put in place to support community-led housing projects. The Local Authority network has met once during this contract to discuss and learn more about the [Wayshaper Toolkit](#), a decision-making toolkit for community led housing groups created to accelerate the planning of community led housing projects by providing a framework for informed decision-making.

Eastern Community Homes also held a regional conference and networking event for local authorities over the contracted period titled “Community-led Housing at Scale – How community-led housing can help deliver sustainable growth in the Ox-Cam Arc”. This took place in March 2022 and was attended by 82 local authority representatives.

Eastern Community Homes is currently consulting on a [new strategy for 2023 - 2028](#) and is recruiting new members to its Board. This is to ensure the Board has sufficient expertise and experience in housing, planning, housing development and organisational management to steer the work.

Eastern Community Homes is an active member of the Community Land Trust Network and also regularly takes advice from Cohousing UK and the Confederation of Cooperative Housing. These national partners support our work by providing specialised technical support and increasing the awareness of community-led housing. We also contribute to the National Local Authorities Community-Led Housing Network.

**Combined Authority grant funding applications status**

Eastern Community Homes promotes and supports groups to make applications for grants provided by the Combined Authority. These grants unlock some of the barriers to progression, particularly, those that stop groups setting-up or accessing early-stage technical support. A summary of the status of grant applications is provided below:

**Start-up Grants**

Community group	Date grant approved	Status	Explanation	Notes
Houghton & Wyton Community Land Trust	15-Mar-2021	Not progressed as expected.	Not yet incorporated.  Application made by Houghton and Wyton Parish Council who are looking to form a Community Land Trust. They are first progressing with completing	2-year drawdown period about to expire.  A new application will be required if proposals are to progress.  <b>Eastern Community Homes recommendation:</b> A new revised application is submitted once the Parish Council feels ready to form an



Community group	Date grant approved	Status	Explanation	Notes
			a Housing Need Survey in the Parish during 2023.	incorporated community-led housing group. Eastern Community Homes continues to work with group to support incorporation and the housing needs survey.
Oakington Retirement Community	15-Mar-2021	Not progressed	Not yet incorporated.  Not responding to ECH communications for support.	2-year drawdown period about to expire.  A new application will be required if proposals are to progress.  <b>Eastern Community Homes recommendation:</b> A new revised application is submitted if group reforms. Eastern Community Homes continues to communicate with those involved via newsletter and event invites.
Rebel Acres Co-operative	21-Jun-2021	Progressing	Now incorporated.  Delay caused by COVID and group establishment.	Awaiting bank account details and formal documentation.  <b>Eastern Community Homes recommendation:</b> Support has been given to the group to incorporate so they can draw down the grant award. The funds will be used to support the next step where Eastern Community Homes will support with the commissioning of a land

Community group	Date grant approved	Status	Explanation	Notes
				agent to search for suitable land.

### Technical Support Grants

This grant was agreed by the Combined Authority in September 2022.

Community group	Status	Notes
Suvana Cohousing	Submitted application Feb-2023	Grant to support review of financial plan, marketing and publicity of group to engage more co-creators (members) who wish to live in the community.
It Takes a City Community Land Trust	Submitted application Feb-2023	Grant to support requirements of planning application for micro-communities of smaller homes.
Great Staughton Community Land Trust	In preparation to submit Jun-2023	CLT developing a second phase of housing. Awaiting land appraisal under Neighbourhood Plan work and then need funds to bring forward second CLH site in Parish.

# Proposed service delivery for 2023/24

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## Objectives

For the next financial year, our overall objectives for the Combined Authority Community-Led Housing Service would be:

1. To complete more in-depth work with the 7 engaged community-led housing groups to enable them to progress to finding suitable land and finance to bring forward homes.
2. To widen engagement across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with other individuals, groups and defined communities who may benefit from delivering affordable community-led housing as a place to live.
3. To develop our partnership with the district authorities to enable better support for community-led housing policy and planning guidance and to encourage strategic policies and procedures to be put in place to support community-led housing projects to come forward.
4. To enable new groups to establish themselves using the Wayshaper tool to enable effective decision-making at the set-up stage so each group has a defined project plan to take forward their ambitions.

## Proposed delivery plan

The proposed delivery plan for 2023/24 is outlined below:

Delivery actions	Target outputs
<p>To maintain a team of technically qualified and experienced Housing Enablers that support groups throughout all stages of community-led housing development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide in depth support to 7 groups to enable them to progress their plans for CLH towards the build stage.</li> <li>• Provide project planning support to 7 groups enabling them to stay on-track with their projects post COVID.</li> <li>• Provide support to 5 new groups, guiding them through the start-up phase and using the Wayshaper tool to help facilitate</li> </ul>

Delivery actions	Target outputs
	group cohesion and decision making in the early stages.
Maintain 'Community-Led Housing Partnership', networking local authorities, housing associations and community-led housing groups to bring forward new projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise the meetings of the local authorities group meeting 2 times a year to strengthen work with them to help bring forward development sites suitable for CLH.</li> <li>• Develop stronger links with housing associations that are willing to give support to groups with the financing and building of houses.</li> </ul>
To work with The Combined Authority to bring forward applications to the two community-led housing grant schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support groups with planning their applications and bring them forward to the Combined Authority.</li> <li>• Monitor the delivery of these grants more closely so that groups stay on-track to delivery their objectives.</li> </ul>
Engage with communities, through online seminars and digital marketing to raise their awareness of how community-led housing can make a better place to live and work for us all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run 2 online seminars to raise awareness of community-led housing for defined communities, including people who are younger, older, homeless, students, LGBTQ+, key workers and veterans..</li> <li>• Send 2 direct emails to defined community groups providing details of the support offer for Community -Led Housing in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.</li> <li>• Extend the social media, blogs and website information to promote relevant news items, useful technical information and case studies of CLH successes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.</li> </ul>
Work with neighbourhood planning groups to encourage them to identify specific sites for community-led housing; and to include	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run 1 seminar for neighbourhood planning groups to integrate CLH delivery into</li> </ul>

Delivery actions	Target outputs
policies around affordability and stipulations for a local connection criteria in their plans.	Neighbourhood Planning delivery across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

## Staffing

The service will be delivered by Cambridgeshire ACRE’s Community-Led Housing Enabler, Jenna Brame (2 days per week), and be led by Kieran Carr, Economic Programmes Manager. Both are accredited community-led housing advisors. Eastern Community Homes maintains a network of specialist technical advisors that can be called upon to support groups as their projects’ progress.

## Cost

Cambridgeshire ACRE will charge £22,926 + VAT for the delivery of this work, invoiced quarterly in arrears.

## Queries and follow-up

Should you have any queries or wish to follow up on this proposal please contact:

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