

To: Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Title of Report: Enabling Community Led Housing; approval of Business Case

Date: 26 November 2024

Report of: Paul Staines, FOP Programme Manager

Status: Open

Executive Summary and Purpose:

This report invites the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) to approve a Business Case- attached as an appendix- for a project to commission Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) to provide an enabling service to Oxfordshire residents who are interested in the development of Community Led Housing (CLH) , including self-build housing.

How this report contributes to the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision Outcomes:

The Strategic Vision as set out [here](#) has an ambition to deliver well-designed homes, sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure, and affordability to meet the needs of our county.

Recommendations:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership approve the Community Led Housing Business Case, attached at Appendix 1 of this report.
2. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership agree to fund the implementation of this business case to the value of £38,000 from the Housing and Growth Deal Capacity Fund.

Appendix:

Community Led Housing Business Case.

Introduction

1. In 2022 FOP commissioned a study of Community Led Housing (CLH) in Oxfordshire. The study, funded by Homes England concluded that to enable a step change in the delivery of Community Led Housing (CLH), Oxfordshire had to address several key issues. One of these was the availability of advice and guidance for community groups looking to develop CLH, to assist them to develop their aspirations to the point where they have a viable deliverable project.
2. The response to this report led to councils jointly funding a two-year programme with Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) to provide an advice resource that

aspiring community housing groups could access to enable them to move forward with the process of conceiving and then planning for a CLH development in their community.

3. This resource has also been bolstered by a successful bid by CFO to government to fund a Rural Housing Enabler, also initially for one year to March 2025 but with a hoped-for extension. This resource complements the councils by reaching out to parish councils and local landowners to attempt to promote small scale rural exception sites. CLH housing is often seen by these groups as a preferred route for the development of affordable housing on exception sites as it maximises community control over the housing.
4. The business case attached as an appendix to this report proposes to build upon these resources. It recognises -as the councils' current project does- that fledgling CLH groups struggle to configure themselves and understand how to take the next steps on their journey, and whilst the current resource is invaluable, it does rather require the CLH groups to proactively communicate with CFO/Councils and to be established and organised enough to do so.
5. This new additional resource will allow the capacity for an outreach element to the enabling service to fledgling CLH groups, helping them to conceive of their vision of a development and enabling them to benefit from the advice service that CFO offers on the council's behalf.
6. Whilst the primary focus of the project is CLH. There is a strong crossover with the councils' duties to those residents who are interested in self-build housing. This is because several applicants to councils' self-build registers are interested in developing as part of a group and therefore align closely to the aspirations of councils to develop CLH. In West Oxfordshire, for example six such groups have registered an interest in self-build housing on the council's register.
7. FOP will recall that this project is one of a suite endorsed by the working group of Leaders and senior officers in September 2023 and subsequently approved by FOP in November 2023.

Governance

8. A dedicated Steering Group, chaired by CFO and comprising representatives from all the councils has been established and held its first meeting in late October. This group is charged with establishing detailed targets for the project and reporting on progress to FOP, through the Executive Officer Group, which will function as project sponsor.

Financial Implications

9. The grant proposed for the project is £38,000 across the life of the project to March 2026.
10. The grant will be funded from the Growth Deal Capacity Fund and provision has been made for this project in the budget.
11. A funding agreement that will set out the basis for the grant payment will be drawn up by the lead authority for this project, West Oxfordshire District Council. This will allow for the necessary approvals before the grant is paid to CFO.

Legal Implications

12. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

13. This report summarises the business case- attached as an appendix- that sets out the basis for a project to enable Community Led Housing. It details the strategic case, the financial and governance implications and recommends that FOP approve it for implementation.
14. FOP is asked to approve the business case for the project to enable Community Led Housing

Background Papers

None

Report Author:	Paul Staines – FOP Programme Manager
Contact information:	paul.staines@southandvale.gov.uk