

## **CEO Forum held in Cambridge by The Housing Forum and calfordseaden - 1st October 2015**

### **"The Growth of Housing in Cambridge"**

**Key words: strategic expansion, design quality, standardisation, utilities, affordable housing.**

The conclusions of the CEO Forum were

- Cambridge can now see the culmination of a very long period of private and public sector working together to grow housing. This growth has been a long time coming, following many years of local plan reviews but the outcome has been a range of strategic extensions with potential to grow the city in key locations at (all numbers below are approximate): Southern Fringe 3,500 homes; NW Cambridge 3,000 homes; and Station Quarter 600 homes.
- For the future will be expansion at Northstowe with 10,000-15,000 homes, Bourne 3,000 homes and Marshall's Airport site 1,500 homes. More development is due to the North of the City at Waterbeach and to the west of Alconbury.
- Quality must be at the centre of design with intelligent replication and customer sensitivity adapting standardised house types. European and particularly Dutch influences have changed the paradigm of city living in Cambridge.
- Water and energy suppliers are not planning sufficient investment in infrastructure to support growth.
- Affordable homes delivery through s106 is now difficult to achieve due to rent reductions and supply side issues which create inflationary pressures.
- An offsite supply chain cannot be too specialised as very limited sources of supply add to risk.



In his opening remarks, **Ben Furr** introduced **calfordseaden**, a multi-disciplinary practice with a range of Cambridge projects now supported by a local office. The practice is committed to playing its part in making the development of Cambridge and the surrounding Eastern Region a success.

The focus of the forum is on both private and public sector development - are adequate numbers being delivered? - are we delivering in terms of affordability? - and, are we ensuring that new homes will be a credit to Cambridge in years to come?

**Alan Carter** set out the strategic housing perspective - buying housing in Cambridge city is expensive with housing costs likely to be at least 9 times the salary for those on medium

wages. But good aspects of the response of the market are evident at the city's southern fringe where exemplar quality housing has been built. The city council has retained its housing stock and has ambition to build but the July budget with 1% rent cuts in social rents over the next 4 years presents them with finding £6m HRA savings, equivalent to £160m reduction in the longer term budget plan. The council is consequently putting a pause on development plans. The growth of Cambridge has been supported through City Deal with a significant investment in infrastructure and transport connections. 3 local councils – Cambridge City, Cambridge County and South Cambridgeshire have worked together to attract £500m new investment in transport as a part of City Deal. This is government grant and more may follow if the evidence is that the economic out-turn has improved as a consequence.



The Hill Group have strong presence in Cambridge and **Andy Hill** covered their growth over the past 16 years, from contractor to house builder. The key driver in the growth of the city is Cambridge University's world class status and the University's ambition to retain that status against global competition. More patents are registered in

Cambridge than in all Europe, so attracting innovation and

business close to Cambridge is essential. The housing offer must be there to support this otherwise, innovators will go to other countries. One significant challenge in the city is that traffic circulation is constrained by historic buildings so developers have to find other solutions. Central Cambridge house prices are not affordable - since 2007, prices have risen by 35-40%.

Average numbers of 600 new homes p.a. were built in the years to 2007 and numbers have grown since then towards 1,200 p.a. across all tenures. There are huge variations (up to 50%) in prices according to location across the city. Hill and Countryside lead the way in design, specification and quality. Quality is great news for the customer, with architecture led design offering the customer better choice and customisation.

Northampton is also growing as **Mike Kay** set out and although different from Cambridge, has the advantage of infrastructure and good roads. House prices are 7.4 times average wages in Northampton town but up to 12/13 times average in the surrounding shire county. Population growth in Northampton is 36% above the national average and the local ambition is to deliver 27,000 new homes. Progress has been helped by the County Council £100m rolling local infrastructure fund set up a few years ago which has "kick started" development.



In January 2015, the new ALMO Northampton Partnership Homes was created. With no major overall programme of investment needed for decent homes, the focus is to concentrate on service delivery. So far, there has been no local authority house building and the council has



outsourced a number of services. A significant challenge is neighbourhood investment in estates regeneration - needed to create places where people aspire to live.

**Mike** and **John Spence** of **calfordseaden** covered Advantage South West who had its own land and design templates building successfully in rural, suburban and urban locations changing facades and house types to adapt to living requirements of

residents.

The following took part in the CEO Forum

- 🏠 Teresa Borsuk, Partner, PTEA
- 🏠 Alan Carter, Head of Strategic Housing, Cambridge City Council
- 🏠 Andy Chapman, Director of Finance, Luminus Group
- 🏠 Joe Cook, Executive Director Sales & Development, Aldwyck Housing Group
- 🏠 Stuart Fort, Director of Operations, Axiom Housing Association
- 🏠 Andy Hill, Chief Executive, Hill Group
- 🏠 Nigel Howlett, Chief Executive, CHS Group
- 🏠 Sarah Ireland, Director of Development & Sales, bpha
- 🏠 Mike Kay, Chief Executive, Northampton Partnership Homes
- 🏠 David Keeling, Director of Development & Sales, Cross Keys Homes
- 🏠 Tracy Lavers, Executive Director of Development, Hanover
- 🏠 Tim Leathes, Development Director, Urban & Civic
- 🏠 David Potter, Director (Technical) New Homes and Communities, Countryside Properties (UK)
- 🏠 Dave Poulter, Partnership Housing & Strategic Bid Director, Wates Living Space
- 🏠 Ben Furr, Partner, calfordseaden LLP (Host)
- 🏠 John Spence, Partner, calfordseaden LLP (Co-Host)
- 🏠 Chris Willis, Partner, calfordseaden LLP (Co-Host)
- 🏠 Shelagh Grant, Chief Executive, The Housing Forum (Co-Host)

**WITH THANKS TO CALFORDSEADEN FOR HOSTING THIS EVENT**