



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

## Garden Communities



© Crown copyright, 2018

*Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.*

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

This document/publication is also available on our website at [www.gov.uk/mhclg](http://www.gov.uk/mhclg)

If you have any enquiries regarding this document/publication, complete the form at <http://forms.communities.gov.uk/> or write to us at:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF  
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

For all our latest news and updates follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/mhclg>

August 2018

ISBN: 978-1-4098-5317-6

# Contents

Foreword	4
Prospectus aims	5
What do we mean by garden communities?	5
Assessment criteria	5
Government offer of assistance	8
Application process	9

## Foreword

It has been more than a century since Ebenezer Howard first outlined his idea of the garden city. He had a vision of places where people could work, raise families, travel easily and enjoy green spaces.

While the bleak industrial backdrop of Howard's Britain is a thing of the past, the need for great places to live is as strong as ever. Everyone deserves a decent, affordable and secure place to call home. Yet this most basic of needs can often be a struggle to achieve. Today's average house price is eight times the average income. Young people are half as likely as their parents to own their own home: a whole generation has been held back through no fault of its own.

The government is tackling this challenge from every angle. Since 2010, we have delivered more than a million homes. By the mid-2020s, we aim to have increased housebuilding to an average of 300,000 net new homes a year.

But it's not just about getting the numbers up. We don't have to make a false choice between quality and quantity. We can – and must – have both, and well-planned, well-designed, locally-led garden communities have an important part to play in meeting our housing needs.

As Ebenezer Howard recognised, we need to build places people are happy to call home, places where they can come together to form thriving communities, places that lift our spirits whether we live in them or merely pass through.

Our Garden Communities Programme renews this idea for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This prospectus sets out our vision and expectations for high-quality place-making across this country. It's a fresh opportunity to stimulate economic growth in new places, and a chance to aspire beyond identikit housing and town centres that look like anywhere and nowhere. It's a call to developers, investors, local authorities and local enterprise partnerships to build communities with local character, good employment opportunities, strong services, integrated and accessible transport, innovative uses of technology – and beautiful green spaces.

Our current programme supports 23 places that will deliver over 200,000 homes by the middle of the century. This prospectus is an important further step. We want to champion ambitious councils who see garden communities as a central to their plans for housing and growth. And we want to support the partnerships – between central and local government, and local government and the private sector – that will be key to delivering those plans.

We look forward to working with you to deliver the homes our country needs, but more importantly, to build the communities our country deserves.

We encourage local authorities and their private sector partners to come forward and tell us how we can assist them in delivering their vision for new garden communities.

## Prospectus aims

1. This prospectus invites bids for ambitious, locally supported, proposals for new garden communities at scale. In return for tailored assistance to help design and deliver the vision for these places, we expect local areas to deliver significant housing and economic growth. We will look to assist as many as we can, in locations where there is sufficient demand for housing.

## What do we mean by garden communities?

2. This prospectus does not prescribe a single template for a garden community. Each garden community we choose to assist will have its own clear and distinct sense of identity.
3. Equally, this is not about creating dormitory towns, or places which just use 'garden' as a convenient label. This is about setting clear expectations for the quality of the development and how this can be maintained (such as by following Garden City principles). We want to see vibrant, mixed-use, communities where people can live, work, and play for generations to come – communities which view themselves as the conservation areas of the future. Each will be holistically planned, self sustaining, and characterful. Whilst we do not want to impose a set of development principles on local areas, we expect that the garden communities to which we offer assistance will embrace the key qualities set out at paragraphs 13 a-j. Successful proposals will demonstrate how they are hard-wiring these qualities in from the start, supported by long term legacy and stewardship arrangements.

## Assessment criteria

4. To be considered for government assistance, proposals for a new garden community must meet the criteria below.

### Scale

5. These new garden communities should make a significant contribution to closing the housing supply gap. We will prioritise proposals for new Garden Towns (more than 10,000 homes), but will consider proposals for Garden Villages (1,500-10,000 homes) which are particularly strong in other aspects. For instance, demonstrating exceptional quality or innovations, development on predominantly brownfield sites, being in an area of particularly high housing demand, or ability to expand substantially further in the future.
6. Proposals can be for a discrete new settlement, or take the form of transformational development of an existing settlement, both in nature and in scale. All proposals must be of sufficient scale to be largely self-sustaining and genuinely mixed use as per paragraphs 13 b and c.
7. Where the garden community is proposed to take the form of transformational development to an existing settlement, it needs to meet the criteria set out in this prospectus. In addition, these proposals must highlight the transformational outcomes expected for the settlement as a whole (economic, environmental and social).

## Strategic fit

8. These new garden communities should offer opportunities for significant long-term housing and economic growth in a local area.
9. All proposals must demonstrate how the new garden community fits with the housing need for the housing market area, including expected future population growth. We will prioritise proposals which respond to housing need in high demand areas. We also particularly welcome proposals which release more land through local plans to meet local housing need, and / or go above local housing need.
10. All proposals should demonstrate how the new garden community fits with wider strategies to support economic growth and increase productivity. We expect to see ambitious proposals which create a variety of new jobs and the timely delivery of infrastructure necessary to underpin this.

## Locally-led

11. Strong local leadership is crucial to developing and delivering a long-term vision for these new communities. All proposals should have the backing of the local authorities in which they are situated, including the county council in two-tier areas. We are particularly interested in proposals which demonstrate collaboration across local authority boundaries. To ensure that the potential local growth benefits have been considered, it will be desirable for proposals to have the support of the Local Enterprise Partnership, where the area has one.
12. Proposals should set out how the local community is being, or will be, engaged and involved at an early stage, and strategies for continued community engagement and involvement. We are clear that local communities – both current and future residents – must have a meaningful say in developing the proposal from design to delivery.

## Garden community qualities

13. High quality place-making is what makes garden communities exemplars of large new developments, and all proposals must set out a clear vision for the quality of the community and how this can be maintained in the long-term, for instance by following Garden City principles. Although we are not imposing a particular set of development principles on local areas, we do expect proposals to demonstrate how they will meet and embed the key qualities below.
  - a. **Clear identity** – a distinctive local identity as a new garden community, including at its heart an attractive and functioning centre and public realm.
  - b. **Sustainable scale** – built at a scale which supports the necessary infrastructure to allow the community to function self-sufficiently on a day to day basis, with the capacity for future growth to meet the evolving housing and economic needs of the local area.
  - c. **Well-designed places** – with vibrant mixed use communities that support a range of local employment types and premises, retail opportunities, recreational and community facilities.
  - d. **Great homes** – offer a wide range of high quality, distinctive homes. This includes affordable housing and a mix of tenures for all stages of life.

- e. **Strong local vision and engagement** – designed and executed with the engagement and involvement of the existing local community, and future residents and businesses. This should include consideration of how the natural and historic environment of the local area is reflected and respected.
- f. **Transport** –integrated, forward looking and accessible transport options that support economic prosperity and wellbeing for residents. This should include promotion of public transport, walking, and cycling so that settlements are easy to navigate, and facilitate simple and sustainable access to jobs, education, and services.
- g. **Healthy places** – designed to provide the choices and chances for all to live a healthy life, through taking a whole systems approach to key local health & wellbeing priorities and strategies.
- h. **Green space** – generous, accessible, and good quality green and blue infrastructure that promotes health, wellbeing, and quality of life, and considers opportunities to deliver environmental gains such as biodiversity net gain and enhancements to natural capital.
- i. **Legacy and stewardship arrangements** – should be in place for the care of community assets, infrastructure and public realm, for the benefit of the whole community.
- j. **Future proofed** – designed to be resilient places that allow for changing demographics, future growth, and the impacts of climate change including flood risk and water availability, with durable landscape and building design planned for generations to come. This should include anticipation of the opportunities presented by technological change such as driverless cars and renewable energy measures.

## **Deliverability and viability**

14. We recognise that delivery of a new garden community is a complex, long-term project, which will deliver homes over a number of decades. That is why it is important for us to have confidence that proposals are deliverable, with an integrated approach to infrastructure, housing, business investment, employment and development.
15. We do not expect to see a detailed delivery plan at this stage, but we do expect to see credible outline proposals which demonstrate consideration of.
  - a. **Delivery models and timescales** – including the strength of existing commitments and partnerships, such as with master developers and land owners.
  - b. **Infrastructure requirements** – including access to road, rail, utility considerations (including high-speed broadband, flood, water supply, sewerage and waste), and plans for health, education, and other core social infrastructure.
  - c. **Opportunities to capture land value** – including through land acquisition and assembly, to help fund the long-term delivery and management of the garden community.

- d. **Access to finance and private sector investment** – including through direct investment, developer contributions, patient long-term finance and other opportunities attractive to investors.

### **Delivery time scales and accelerated delivery**

16. We will prioritise proposals that offer a strong prospect of early delivery and a significant acceleration of housing delivery. They should consider the scope for innovative ways to deliver new homes, such as off-site construction, custom build and self-build, as well as providing opportunities for a diverse range of house builders. Priority will be given to proposals that can demonstrate how build out will be achieved at pace, whilst maintaining quality.

### **Government offer of assistance**

17. Garden communities within the current programme receive a tailored package of Government support that includes resource funding, expert delivery advice from Homes England and cross-government brokerage to resolve barriers to delivery.
18. Proposals must set out which aspects of the support package below will best help enable delivery. Government will look to agree a package of support tailored to suit the scale and ambition of proposals.

### **Resource funding**

19. Assistance could include seed capacity funding to enable delivery. This funding could, for example, be used to ensure the local authority has dedicated skilled, staff in place; fund the preparatory studies required to deliver high quality garden communities; and / or the sustained community engagement needed to develop a locally-supported vision. Experience from the current programme has shown the value of this funding in helping support the design and delivery of garden communities.

### **Delivery advice and support**

20. Homes England has a major role to play in enabling the delivery of new homes and attracting private sector investment. We will work with successful proposals to establish what aspects of the Homes England offer, including the potential for capital investment or loans, will best drive delivery of the garden community.

### **Delivery vehicles**

21. Delivering a new garden community requires long-term strategic thinking and robust delivery arrangements. There are many forms that this could take – from arrangements such as joint venture companies, to Development Corporations.
22. We will work with successful proposals to help them work through the detail of the most appropriate delivery arrangements to ensure main partners can take key decisions effectively, and how private sector finance can best be utilised.
23. Whilst we are not prescribing any particular model, for proposals at scale, a Development Corporation may be an appropriate vehicle to consider. We have taken action to enable the creation of new locally accountable New Town Development Corporations. These vehicles can help provide long-term certainty to private investors,

resolve complex co-ordination challenges, invest directly in infrastructure that unlocks development, and use compulsory purchase powers to help lay out a new town.

### **Cross-government brokerage**

24. The garden communities we commit to supporting will be a priority for delivery. We can play a key role across government to help overcome barriers to delivery and broker solutions to unblock issues that arise.

### **Peer learning and networking opportunities**

25. The garden communities currently part of the programme are part of a Garden Villages and Towns Forum that provides useful dissemination of good practice and facilitates peer-to-peer support. We will extend an invitation to join the Forum to any new garden communities selected to be part of the programme.
26. Drawing on experiences and good practice from the garden towns and villages that currently form part of the programme, an on-line Garden Communities Toolkit has been developed to provide a useful resource for those thinking about planning and delivering a garden community.

### **Bespoke offer – you tell us**

27. We ask proposals to consider what additional Government assistance would enable delivery. Where real ambition is demonstrated, Government is always interested in hearing more about proposals for Housing Deals, particularly in areas of high demand.

## **Application process**

### **Who can apply?**

28. Proposals are invited from local authorities and private sector partners (such as master developers or land owners). Proposals submitted by private sector partners must be expressly supported by the local authority.
29. We particularly welcome joint proposals from one or more local authorities, as well as proposals which demonstrate support from developers and / or landowners.
30. For proposals within the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor, Government will continue to work with local partners to consider how the delivery of new homes and settlements can best support the overarching vision for the axis. This includes the contribution these places can make to the National Infrastructure Commission's finding that up to 1 million homes will need to be built in the corridor by 2050, if the area is to maximise its economic potential.

### **How to apply**

31. Proposals should be submitted via MHCLG's DELTA portal by 9 November 2018. Guidance on the evidence to provide in proposals is set out in the DELTA portal. To gain access to the portal, please contact MHCLG at [gardencommunities@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gardencommunities@communities.gsi.gov.uk) Proposals must be able to demonstrate clearly that they meet the eligibility requirements set out in this prospectus. They should also provide an indication of the Government assistance they are seeking.

32. We expect the submission of a proposal to have been preceded by a period of engagement with the Department and Homes England, and encourage initial contact to be made as early as possible.

### **Selecting Garden Communities for assistance**

33. Proposals selected for assistance will satisfy all criteria set out in this prospectus, but this will be a competitive process in which priority will be given to those which best do so. If necessary we may carry out a period of further engagement once proposals have been submitted to collect the evidence necessary for a decision to be made.
34. The announcements of government assistance does not in any way pre-judge the planning process, nor fetter the Secretary of State's discretion in relation to statutory decisions such as the designation of a new town.

### **Further information**

35. For further information or to discuss a proposal ahead of submission please contact MHCLG at [gardencommunities@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gardencommunities@communities.gsi.gov.uk)