

# Homes England ramps up development pipeline to support the housing market

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- The land has the capacity for 5,000 new homes across the country.
- Several major acquisitions were completed in the lead up to financial year-end, demonstrating how the agency is taking a long-term view of housing demand in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Homes England, the government's housing agency, has revealed that it acquired 19 sites in the last financial year worth £180 million, with the land having the capacity for 5,000 new homes across the country.

Of these, several major acquisitions were completed in the lead up to financial year-end, demonstrating how the agency is taking a long-term view of housing demand in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing to develop a strong pipeline of projects to support the recovery of the housebuilding sector.

In its role as a master developer, Homes England is able to acquire challenging or stalled sites which have been unable to progress without public sector intervention and use its resources and expertise to unlock them for development and bring them back to market, ultimately resulting in much-needed new homes.

The recently acquired sites include the 37-hectare Panshanger Aerodrome in Welwyn Garden City, which will bring forward one of the region's largest housing developments with the capacity for 815 homes. It is expected that 30% of the new homes will be affordable and the development will also include a new primary school, a community centre and self-build plots. Homes England will deliver the infrastructure on site before marketing the site to developers in parcels, accelerating the delivery of new homes.

In Birmingham, the agency has acquired a 2.5-hectare parcel of land in Digbeth from Birmingham City Council. The Montague Street site is the final acquisition the agency has made of four land parcels in the area, which will create one of the largest development sites in Birmingham city centre with the total capacity for 1,000 new homes and 25,000 square metres of employment space.

In Bristol, the 10-hectare Brislington Meadows has been brought into the agency's ownership from the local authority and private landowners, with the capacity for 300 much-needed new homes. Allocated in Bristol's Local Plan since 2014, the site had been stalled until Homes England's intervention to unlock development. The site is expected to deliver a minimum of 30% affordable housing.

Additionally, the acquisition of 81 hectares of land in Darlington will see

construction of 800 new homes as part of the Burtree Garden Village. Representing just under half of the total proposed Garden Village site, Homes England has entered into a collaboration agreement with lead developer Hellens Group and will work together with adjacent landowners on site-wide infrastructure to enable delivery of the entire scheme.

And, just south of Rugby, Warwickshire, the agency has acquired land totalling 65 hectares from Warwickshire County Council, which is expected to deliver over 900 homes. Delivery of infrastructure and a link road, which is crucial to the wider South West Rugby expansion, will accelerate the pace of construction of the new homes.

Simon Dudley, interim Homes England Chair, said:

“It is testament to the hard work and dedication of colleagues and our partners that we’ve met such a strong year-end at this challenging and unprecedented time.

“I want to reassure the sector that Homes England is very much open for business and investing in a long-term pipeline of development opportunities to support market recovery.

“The need for new housing will remain a priority, so we will continue to do business with partners across the sector to create opportunities for future development and support the government’s housebuilding objectives.”

Stephen Kinsella, Chief Land and Development Officer at Homes England, said:

“As a master developer, it’s crucial that we continue to create development opportunities and provide a pipeline of sites for housebuilders of all sizes, despite the challenging situation the industry is facing.

“In the long-term we will still have a housing shortage, so by continuing to acquire difficult sites and addressing the barriers which have previously stopped them moving into production, we’re making sure we can deliver on the agency’s mission to accelerate the construction of new homes while addressing the short-term disruption caused by the impact of coronavirus.”

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## **[£10m to boost tree planting in second auction of Woodland Carbon Guarantee](#)**

The Forestry Commission has today (Tuesday 14 April) announced that £10m will be available in the second auction of the Woodland Carbon Guarantee. Land managers across England are encouraged to [sign up to the scheme](#) by 5 June,

ahead of the next auction which will take place online from 8 to 19 June.

Launched in November 2019, the Woodland Carbon Guarantee is a £50 million scheme that aims to help accelerate woodland planting rates and permanently remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Successful participants will be offered the option to sell Woodland Carbon Units to the government over 35 years at a guaranteed price set by auction and protected against inflation, providing new income for land managers who help businesses compensate for their carbon emissions.

This announcement follows the success of the first auction which closed in February 2020 and saw 18 contracts offered by the Forestry Commission to help stimulate the creation of 182 hectares of new woodland, specifically to help combat climate change.

Sir William Worsley, Chair of the Forestry Commission, said:

The Woodland Carbon Guarantee is the first scheme of its kind to provide land managers with long-term certainty of a guaranteed payment rate for carbon, which their trees lock up and store.

I'm excited to announce that the first auction has successfully encouraged projects in parts of the country where new planting has been lower in recent years, and across a good range of woodland types.

There is no reason to delay applying and to plant trees now – I strongly encourage all land managers thinking about planting to sign up ahead of the second auction in June.

The outcome of the first exploratory auction in February paves the way for larger scale projects to secure funding in forthcoming auctions. A series of auctions will take place every six months for up to five years.

Speaking of the benefits of the Guarantee, Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

Trees are a precious natural asset and, as a natural carbon sink, are a vital part of the fight against climate change.

In addition to providing long-term income support to land managers for creating new woodland, it is our hope that this Guarantee will play an important role in developing the domestic carbon market in future.

Greg Beeton, Divisional Partner & Agricultural Business Consultant from project developer Brown & Co, said:

We have a long standing involvement in woodland creation so it was great that we were able to help identify landowner clients of ours which could benefit from the Woodland Carbon Guarantee.

We were excited to see that a number of our clients were successful in the first auction and will now be able to capitalise on the support that the scheme provides, by planting woodland to replace areas of unproductive farming land for example.

I would certainly encourage landowners to consider the many benefits of the Guarantee. The support provided by the Forestry Commission was fantastic and the scheme could potentially provide new longer term income streams for landowners that can complement more traditional farming incomes.

The government manifesto commits to increase planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025. This spring a new English Tree Strategy will be consulted on, looking at policies to expand, support and increase public engagement with woodlands.

[Apply for the Guarantee here.](#)

ENDS.

- We are continuing to hold the auction on 8 – 19 June 2020 and currently will close applications on 5 June, but we will keep this under review.
  - All application forms including the auction process are completed online in line with [latest government guidance](#).
  - The successful applicants of the second auction will not be expected to plant their trees until the next tree planting season (winter 2020/21).
  - The Woodland Carbon Guarantee can be used alongside other grants and funds available to plant new woodland as long as Additionality rules under the Woodland Carbon Code are met.
  - The Woodland Carbon Guarantee is a long-term contract and recipients won't receive immediate payments. Instead, land managers will receive a guaranteed income for delivered carbon units at agreed dates over 35 years if they wish to sell carbon units to the government.
  - Before you apply for the Guarantee, you will need to have registered with the [Woodland Carbon Code](#), which provides the tools and information required to plan your woodland and calculate the amount of carbon that it will remove from the atmosphere. The woodland will also need to comply with the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard.
  - [More information on the scheme and how to apply can be found here.](#) For frequently asked questions please see this [Q&A](#).
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# UK space technologies to boost NHS Coronavirus response

The UK space industry has some of the brightest minds in the country and is well placed to support the unprecedented national effort to overcome the biggest threat the UK has faced for decades.

Satellite data and drone technology can help meet challenges such as delivering test kits, masks, gowns and goggles, managing infectious disease outbreaks and supporting the health and wellbeing of the nation.

An initial £2.6 million is being made available to fund a number of projects to develop hi-tech solutions to these challenges, in a joint initiative with the European Space Agency (ESA) in support of NHS England.

The NHS – like any health service around the world – only has a limited number of doctors, nurses, and specialist equipment. In addition to lifting capacity of the NHS and asking everyone to stay at home to slow the spread of the virus, the Government has called on industry and the UK's world-leading universities to back the national effort, developing technology and equipment – from hand sanitiser to ventilators – to support the NHS.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

From new advanced software helping speed up cancer diagnoses to satellite communications connecting GPs to patients virtually, the UK space sector has been world leading in applying its innovations to supporting our brilliant NHS.

This new funding will ensure that the latest innovations will be on the frontline of tackling the unique problems the coronavirus outbreak has created, helping medical staff to focus on delivering world-class care.

Professor Tony Young, the NHS national clinical lead for innovation, said:

Everyone in the NHS is working hard to tackle the coronavirus pandemic and provide the best possible care for all our patients, and to do this we've looked outside the health service as well as to existing NHS services, including actively seeking to work with private sector providers and other businesses who can support NHS care.

This is a global crisis that would overwhelm any health service on earth without strong action from the public and their public services, which is why the NHS is looking to industries across the world – or indeed from out of this world – for new and exciting

innovations that could help improve the care we provide to patients or help the NHS respond to this pandemic.

The space-enabled solutions could include satellite communications, satellite navigation, Earth observation satellites or technology derived from human spaceflight. The UK continues to be a leading member of ESA, which is independent of the EU, having committed a record investment of £374 million per year in November 2019. This funding to support the coronavirus response comes from ESA's Business Applications Space Solutions fund, which the UK is the leading investor in.

Nick Appleyard, Head of Downstream Business Applications at ESA's European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications in Oxfordshire, said:

Even in normal times, satellites and space technology offer solutions to our needs in connectivity and inclusion, in resilience and logistics, and to support healthcare provision in even the most extreme situations.

The current circumstances challenge the space business community to show just how much it can offer, to help us through this a once in a century event. Speed is of the essence, so let us act without delay.

Space is already playing an important part in healthcare. UK start-up company Lanterne recently announced a free app to help people observe social distancing to slow the spread of coronavirus, using GPS satellite data and AI technologies.

Last year the UK Space Agency provided £5 million for new health technologies inspired by working in space to support NHS England. These included providing real-time diagnosis of bowel cancer, developing more compact 3D X-ray machines and a mobile app that provided exercise plans free from air pollution for those with medical conditions such as asthma.

Meanwhile the UK Space Agency's International Partnership Programme uses UK expertise to support healthcare projects all over the world, including forecasting and providing early warning of dengue fever outbreaks in Vietnam through Earth observation satellites and using telecommunications to extend the reach of basic medical healthcare into remote areas in Nigeria.

The UK Space Agency and UKspace trade body are also working together to help the space sector respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

The UK space sector employs 42,000 people and generates an income of £14.8 billion each year, while supporting £300 billion of wider economic activity through other industries with satellite services such as navigation, communications and Earth observation.

Find out more and [apply for funding](#)

## Notes to editors:

The funding is for projects which will address at least one of the following:

- Logistics within the health delivery system, e.g. with drone deliveries
- Managing infectious disease outbreaks
- Population health and wellbeing
- Recovering health system function and handling backlogs after the crisis
- Preparedness for future epidemics

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## [Former Olympics director leads work to protect clinically vulnerable people](#)

Chris Townsend OBE has been appointed to lead the government's shielding programme to protect those at highest risk from coronavirus, the Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick MP has announced today (14 April 2020).

Mr Townsend, previously Commercial Director for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, will spearhead the huge cross-government effort to ensure that clinically vulnerable people who are advised to shield will receive the vital food and medicine they need.

The government's shielding effort is already underway, and around 250,000 boxes of essential food have already been delivered by wholesalers to those at highest risk across the country, with hundreds of thousands more to follow in the coming weeks.

In these unprecedented times, delivering support on this scale to protect the most vulnerable is a huge and evolving task bringing together national and local government and the food industry. Mr Townsend's breadth of experience makes him the ideal candidate to champion these efforts to protect the most clinically vulnerable in society.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

I am delighted to confirm Chris Townsend has been appointed to lead the huge cross-government effort to support and protect the most vulnerable during this difficult time.

Our number one priority is ensuring the health and wellbeing of everyone during the coronavirus emergency and Chris brings a wealth of experience with him as he steps in to oversee our shielding programme.

Chris has held a number of major roles including CEO of Broadband UK and Commercial Director at Chelsea Football Club. He played a

key role in London 2012 and knows exactly what it takes to recreate the unity and community spirit needed to deliver this vital programme of support to the clinically vulnerable.

Chris Townsend, Chief Executive Officer of the Shielding Programme said:

I am proud to lead the government's shielding programme and determined to do all I can to ensure those most at risk get the support they need.

This is a top priority and I call on everyone to remember the important role they have to play in stopping the spread of coronavirus and to shield those most at risk.

There are around 1.5 million people who fall into the clinically vulnerable group in England. This includes those with reduced immune systems or with severe respiratory conditions.

As part of a series of measures to protect those at highest risk of coronavirus, the packages, which are being left on people's doorsteps, contain essential food and household items such as pasta, fruit, tea bags, tinned goods and biscuits for those who need to self-isolate at home but have no support network of family or friends to help them.

The number of deliveries of food boxes will increase week on week, as the department works in partnership with the food industry, local government, emergency services and voluntary groups to ensure that essential items can be delivered to those who most need them.

### [Chris Townsend OBE Biography](#)

He has left his role as Commercial Director at Chelsea Football Club and volunteered three months of his time to lead the programme.

He will not be paid for this role.

### **Additional information on shielding**

- On Sunday 22 March, we published [guidance for the most at-risk group](#), or 'clinically extremely vulnerable', on shielding and how they can protect themselves from coronavirus.
- Shielding is an advice measure to protect clinically extremely vulnerable people who are at very high risk of serious illness from COVID-19 because of a specific health condition by advising them to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.
- It means taking steps to minimise interaction between clinically extremely vulnerable people and others, limiting their potential exposure to COVID-19 and minimising the chances of them catching the virus.
- The shielding measures include staying at home at all times for a period

of 12 weeks including not going to buy food or medicines.

- Expert doctors in England have identified specific medical conditions that, based on what we know about the virus so far, place someone at greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- There are around 1.5 million people in England who fall into this extremely vulnerable group and require shielding.

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## Secretary of State for Northern Ireland welcomes additional funding to tackle coronavirus

- Treasury has now committed a total £340m to support the effort in Northern Ireland
- People in Northern Ireland also benefit from a range of UK-wide measures including £330 billion worth of UK Government backed loans, the Job Retention Scheme and the UK-wide PPE strategy announced last week

The Northern Ireland Executive will receive an extra £200m – a total of £340m – as a result of a boost to the Coronavirus Emergency Response Fund, announced today (Monday 13 April 2020) by the Chancellor Rishi Sunak.

The funding will help the devolved administration at Stormont meet its urgent priorities across public services in Northern Ireland as it works closely with the UK Government to tackle the pandemic.

Welcoming the additional funding, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP, said:

“This Government has promised to do everything in its power to help this country defeat coronavirus – protecting people, their jobs and their loved ones.

“This additional funding for the Northern Ireland Executive delivers on that promise by bolstering support for our fantastic public services and their staff – making sure they have the resources they need to meet the exceptional challenges presented by this outbreak.

“We are united in our commitment to tackling coronavirus and working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive as part of our UK-wide effort to fund urgent health priorities at this very challenging time.”

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

“Our public services and its incredible staff are bravely working with immense resolve and skill to keep us safe. We depend on them, which is why we’re giving them the extra funds, tools and resources they need to tackle the virus.

“From the start, I’ve been clear our vital public services will get whatever they need to protect this country and its people from Coronavirus. We are delivering on our pledge.”

People in Northern Ireland also benefit from a range of measures that are supporting people across the UK. Businesses in Northern Ireland have access to £330 billion worth of UK Government backed loans and the Job Retention Scheme and on Friday the Health Secretary announced the UK-wide PPE strategy. This means our heroic front-line workers across the country have the protection they need to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

At the Budget on 11 March, the Chancellor said he would do everything in his power to help Britain defeat Coronavirus. He initially set aside a £5 billion fund as a rapid response, and said that whatever extra resources needed by the NHS and public services would be provided.