

Greater Cambridge Local Plan - timetable update

5 March 2024

A timetable update for producing the Greater Cambridge Local Plan – a key planning document which would ensure that growth in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire is delivered in a sustainable way for people and the environment – has been published for consideration by councillors in the coming weeks.

Councils are required to maintain up-to-date timelines for their plan-making processes. As the existing timetable for the Local Plan can no longer be met, owing to multiple external factors which need to be addressed before it can be completed, the timetable update sets out the planning service's best estimate for the Local Plan's next steps.

Both councils have existing Local Plans which were adopted (individually) in 2018. Work on the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan – the first joint Local Plan for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire – has been ongoing since 2019, with public consultations taking place in 2020, and late 2021, ahead of both councils agreeing the 'Development Strategy Update' in early 2023. Current evidence in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan identifies a need for a further 14,500 homes between 2020 and 2041, in addition to the 37,200 homes already provided for by the 2018 Plans, reflecting jobs forecast for the area.

Factors affecting the progress of the Local Plan include uncertainty about:

- **Water supply:** an issue which the Greater Cambridge Planning Service warned in January 2023 could delay existing plans for housebuilding if not addressed by Government. Government has now established a Cambridge Water Scarcity Group and allocated funding to help address the issue, but work is in the early stages
- **Transport:** next steps to enable a sustainable transport strategy that can support the Plan, addressing issues raised by the decision by the Greater Cambridge Partnership not to take forward the Making Connections proposal and to pause the Cambridge South East Transport Scheme. Local partners now need to collaborate to address these issues via the forthcoming Greater Cambridge Transport Strategy

- **Waste Water Treatment Plant:** Anglian Water's Development Consent Order process to seek to relocate its Waste Water Treatment Plant is ongoing, with a decision due towards the end of 2024. If approved, this would unlock land for a new North East Cambridge development which would be a major site in the emerging Plan
- **National planning reforms:** expected to be introduced in autumn 2024. While the intention of the reforms is to speed-up plan making, GCSP planners do not yet know what additional work may be required to update work already done as part of the emerging Plan, in order to meet new requirements. Overall, the reforms may not impact the timeline, but planners cannot be certain at this stage.

A further key uncertainty is that the Government announced its intention to significantly increase levels of development in Cambridge beyond the levels the councils have outlined in the emerging Local Plan as being needed. Government said in December its vision for Cambridge includes proposals for “northwards” of 150,000 new homes as part of a major new expansion of the city. The councils' own evidence had previously suggested the need to provide for 50,000 new homes, to support 66,000 new jobs anticipated in the area between now and 2041. The councils are seeking to understand how and in what way the Government's ambitions will interact with, and impact on, the Local Plan process.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins, said: “We have long said that water supply is a deal-breaker when it comes to the future of development in and around South Cambridgeshire. With that in mind, we welcome the recent Government remarks around addressing the area's water scarcity challenges – but these crucial issues are not yet fully resolved. Clearly before we can outline how we think Greater Cambridge could change in the years ahead, we simply must understand how these challenges will be met.

“Our aim is to make proper, coherent plans for our children and grandchildren's benefit – but right now there are important unanswered questions, on vital topics, for us to be able to do that. Balanced alongside this – we are also of course aware of the consequences of not meeting local housing needs. This includes potential increases in housing costs and commuting, adding to our impact upon climate change. We already have a pipeline of new homes and employment sites across Greater Cambridge through the 2018 Local Plans. But we really do need clarity on key issues – such as water supply – before we can confidently outline what could follow.”

Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure at Cambridge City Council, said: “There are so many moving parts, some of which are outside our control. The reality is that we need all of the pieces to come together at the right time so that we can ensure the Plan is fit-for-purpose. With the scale of development that has been identified as needed by our local planners – let alone the

amount of development suggested by Government – it's vital we get this balance right. The environment and water supply must be protected, alongside addressing the need for new homes and supporting employment.

“I hope that this update will help people to understand how these different areas of work impact on each other, whilst reassuring people that key partners are working on addressing these critical issues. Our planners remain completely committed to preparing the new joint Plan as soon as possible.”

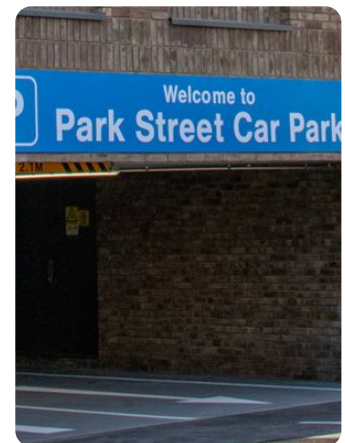
If agreed by both councils at forthcoming meetings of South Cambridgeshire District Council's Cabinet on 12 March and the Cambridge City Council's Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 19 March, GCSP will publish the Local Plan Timetable Update as an Addendum to the Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (2022) on its website.



Take part in the consultation about our shared services views on our waste and planning services whilst the four-day week has been trialled.



Taxi fares 2025/26
Leave your feedback on proposals to introduce new taxi fares in Cambridge from April.



Park Street car park now open
The newly refurbished multi-storey car park is open Monday to Sunday, 24 hours a day.

