

Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan for consultation

– Frequently Asked Questions

This document was last updated on 16 December 2026.

Introduction

What is a Local Plan?

Every local authority is required by Government to prepare a Local Plan for the future development of their area. Local Plans provide a basis for longer term decision making, setting out how a local area will change over a 15 year period or longer. They identify how many homes and jobs are needed, where development should go to meet these needs, and what infrastructure is needed to support this. National planning policy set by the government requires Greater Cambridge to plan to meet its needs through its Local Plan. Plans also identify wider strategic priorities for the area and set policies to ensure these are met. These priorities are then used to guide development and by the local authority to inform decisions on planning applications. The policies generally cover a wide range of issues, such as how the natural environment and historic places should be protected and enhanced, how development can be managed sustainably and contribute to reducing the impact of climate change, and how places can be designed to support community development and cohesion.

How is it prepared?

Local plans are prepared by local planning authorities. Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have agreed to work together to prepare a joint Local Plan covering all of Greater Cambridge. Preparing a Local Plan is a complex task, involving multiple stages of drafting and many different tasks. To get to this stage, we have created a robust evidence base to understand local needs and issues, including site assessments, flood risk assessments and environmental assessment. The content of the plan has also been shaped by a series of consultations with the community and other stakeholders to inform the plan's

content. In between these, we have been working closely with key partners and stakeholders, whose work will ultimately ensure our Plan can be delivered, and with other local authorities in the area whose own Plans may be affected by ours.

Collectively, these inputs have helped to shape a vision and key objectives, and led us to a preferred strategy for the area which will ensure these are met.

How can communities and individuals get involved?

Our plan has been informed by several consultations including the First Conversation in 2020, the First Proposals in 2021 and a huge amount of feedback in recent years.

We are now holding a public consultation in the draft local plan, which includes specific policies and sites that we want your feedback on. This is a key opportunity to shape the plan, and we would like to encourage anyone with an interest in the future of the Greater Cambridge area to take part. We will be holding a range of events during the consultation available on our website:

Feedback from this consultation will help shape the final version of the Plan, which will be consulted on for a final time in summer 2026 before it is submitted to Government to be examined.

How can you comment on the Plan?

The easiest way to comment on the draft Local Plan is via our consultation system at: <https://consultations.greatercambridgeplanning.org>

This requires you to login (or register if you are not already a user). It allows you to leave comments and add attachments, and it means we can get in touch with you if we have any questions. You can comment on all or just some parts of the Plan such as the chapter you find most relevant to you.

If you have difficulty using our online consultation system, please contact us via our dedicated email: localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org as we would be happy to help.

If you have difficulty commenting online, please contact the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Policy Team on 01954 713694 or email us at localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org

Alternatively, you can make comments in writing. You can request a response form to complete by emailing or calling us using the details above. Completed response forms should be emailed to localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org or posted to: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Policy Team, South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6EA.

Where can I view a paper copy of the Plan?

The consultation documents can be viewed:

- on the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service website www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/local-plan
- by appointment at Cambridge City Council's Customer Service Centre: Mandela House, 4 Regent Street, Cambridge, CB2 1BY (phone 01223 457000);
- at South Cambridgeshire District Council Reception: South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA (phone 01954 713000) during normal opening hours;
- at Cambridge Central Library (7 Lion Yard Cambridge CB2 3QD) and Cambourne Library (Sackville House, Sackville Way, Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6HD) during normal opening hours.

How does the consultation feedback influence the Plan?

We consider all the feedback we get through consultation, and assess it carefully alongside other evidence that we are gathering. It helps us understand your priorities for both the big picture strategic questions, and more localised or specific comments. We will make changes to the Plan when these comments raise something that merits a change being made.

At each consultation stage, we update and republish a Consultation Statement which sets out how feedback received so far has been taken into account. You can find the current Consultation Statement in our document library.

After this stage what happens next?

The government expects us to finalise and submit our Local Plan for an examination in public by the end of 2026. To meet this deadline, we will be working hard to consider your feedback so we can publish a final draft of the Local Plan for consultation in Summer 2026. We will also be drawing up further evidence to support further targeted development of our policies.

What does this mean for neighbourhood plans in the area?

Made neighbourhood plans form part of the development plan, and remain in force as the Local Plan progresses, and following its adoption. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the Local Plan for the area. This means that individual policies within neighbourhood plans may be superseded by a more recent policy in the Local Plan. Should there be conflict, this must be resolved in favour of the most recently adopted policy. While there is no requirement to review or update a neighbourhood plan, communities may decide to progress an update to ensure the policies remain up-to-date and to avoid conflict with the Local Plan. Minor (non-material) updates to a neighbourhood plan may be undertaken at any time with our consent, but a more substantive update would require new rounds of consultation, an examination and a referendum. We will continue to work with communities to support emerging neighbourhood plans, including advising them to ensure any potential for conflicts with the emerging Local Plan are minimised.

What does this mean for our Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)?

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) remain in force as the Local Plan progresses, and we expect that they will continue to remain in force following its adoption. We will continue to monitor whether any updates may be required to SPDs in light of the draft Local Plan, and in the context of proposed reforms to the planning system.

What makes a sound Local Plan?

At end of the plan making process, Local Plans are examined by an independent examiner, to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal and

procedural requirements and whether they are sound. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) states:

“Plans are ‘sound’ if they are:

- a) Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- b) Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
- c) Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the Statement of Common Ground; and
- d) Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.”

Strategy

How many new homes and jobs are needed?

Our evidence has explored how many new jobs we expect in the area, taking into account the strength of the local high-tech industries and life sciences sectors which are nationally important. We anticipate around 73,300 additional jobs will be created in Greater Cambridge between 2024 and 2045. Our plan responds to this by planning to deliver at least 48,195 additional homes between 2024 and 2045, or 2,295 per year.

Our existing adopted plans mean that we have a strong foundation to build on. We expect places that are already planned and being built, like Darwin Green on the edge of Cambridge and the new towns at Northstowe and Waterbeach, along with windfall sites (sites that were not allocated that come forward via the planning applications process), to deliver around 37,865 homes by 2045. We have identified sites that will deliver around 13,460 further homes by 2045 to meet the needs and

provide headroom above this to ensure the target is met. We also plan further development for needs of specific employment sectors, and to ensure we have a sufficient flexible supply of employment land.

Why are you planning for so much development?

There are two answers to this: 1) The government requires us to plan for this housing figure as a minimum, but 2) we think planning for this figure will limit increases in unsustainable commuting into the area.

For more context on the first point, national policy requires that plans as a minimum should meet their “local housing need”, calculated using the [standard method](#). This is the figure we are planning to meet within the draft plan.

For additional context on the second point, noting the strength of the Greater Cambridge economy, throughout the plan-making process we have continually sought to understand the housing figure that would be needed to support the most likely forecast for jobs, on the basis that not providing for this figure would risk further increases in unsustainable commuting into the area, with associated impacts for carbon emissions and air quality. Our most recent evidence shows that the standard method minimum housing figure would support the most likely forecast for jobs, which should limit further unsustainable commuting into the area.

How did you decide where new homes and jobs should go?

We considered a wide range of alternative strategies to consider the pros and cons of meeting needs in different locations. You can find information about them in our strategy topic paper and evidence library.

Our development strategy aims to direct development to where active and public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure, including parks and other green spaces, as well as space for wildlife, can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live. We have sought to make the most of brownfield land, and to use the land we have identified efficiently.

We applied the following order of preference to identify development needs, reflecting the sustainability of different locations to accommodate development:

- Within the Cambridge urban area;
- On the edge of Cambridge whilst considering the impact on Green Belt purposes;
- At Cambourne and new settlements; and
- In the rural area at Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres.

How have you considered the Green Belt in planning for the area?

The Cambridge Green Belt was established to preserve the unique character of Cambridge, maintain and enhance the quality of its setting, and prevent communities around Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city. Whilst building on the edge of the city to meet development needs has benefits in terms of proximity to the jobs and services of the city, it would also cause harm to those Green Belt purposes. We think there are other ways that the development needs we have identified can be met sustainably. The only Green Belt releases we have identified in our draft Plan are to meet the very specific needs of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and the Babraham Research Campus.

Why have you not released land on the edge of Cambridge in preference to less sustainable locations at Cambourne and Grange Farm?

We carefully considered all reasonable alternative locations for meeting our 2025 housing and employment needs, including comparing the benefits and challenges of sites on the edge of Cambridge against an expanded Cambourne, and Grange Farm new settlement. A key point to note is that Government attaches great importance to Green Belts, and the Councils can only release land from the Green Belt if they consider that exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

We recognise that edge of Cambridge Green Belt sites are likely to perform better than Cambourne or the Grange Farm new settlement in supporting trips by sustainable modes of transport, being closer to existing jobs and services. However, all site opportunities on the edge of Cambridge in the Green Belt would have high

harm to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes, and could put pressure on Cambridge's infrastructure.

Cambourne and Grange Farm can perform well in transport terms – as well as Northstowe and Waterbeach. These sites also present unique opportunities. Cambourne is focused at the location of the proposed East West Rail station and is an existing, growing new town, and the proposed Grange Farm new community is in a unique location close to existing and expanding rural business parks and connected to Cambridge Biomedical Campus and Cambridge by high quality public transport). It is in a high jobs growth area that has not seen substantial housing provision in recent plans.

In summary, given the scale of our development needs, the opportunities and challenges at edge of Green Belt locations, Cambourne and Grange Farm, noting in particular: the harm of releasing further land on the edge of Cambridge in the Green Belt; the opportunities at Cambourne and Grange Farm, and that industrial needs sites that could meet our identified needs lie outside the Green Belt, the Councils conclude that our general development needs alone do not provide the 'exceptional circumstances' required in national policy to justify removing land from the Green Belt on the edge of Cambridge in this Local Plan.

Notwithstanding, for site specific reasons we have concluded that exceptional circumstances exist to justify release from the Green Belt at Cambridge Biomedical Campus. Further review of site specific reasons for releasing land from the Green Belt on the edge of Cambridge has not identified further sites where exceptional circumstances exist.

The plan is reliant on significant provision of infrastructure which is not delivered by the Councils. How can we be sure it will happen on time?

Delivery of the sites included in this plan, which will contribute to meeting our Vision for Greater Cambridge, is reliant on the provision of a significant level of infrastructure – in particular water supply, waste water treatment, and a sustainable and effective transport network. Delivery of this infrastructure is the responsibility of a

range of local and national partners. As such, delivery of the plan's vision relies on these partners reflecting the strategy for Greater Cambridge in their own strategies and delivering on these in a timely way.

The Councils continue to work with the responsible organisations and with Government, including to ensure that they understand the need for these challenges to be resolved in time to support the Local Plan. Beyond this, the Plan includes careful qualifications referencing those external factors. We continue to carefully monitor and consider external factors against the proposals set out in this draft local plan. However, regardless of the spatial strategy or distinct site and policy allocations, these matters would apply to a greater or lesser extent to any emerging local plan. Accordingly, it is considered that progression of the plan remains appropriate at this time.

Sites

When will the Cambridge Airport site become available for development?

Marshall Group announced plans in 2019 to leave Cambridge Airport. They announced in late 2025 that they would no longer be moving some of their operations to Cranfield, and were exploring different sites. However, they are still intending to vacate the site later this decade, enabling the site to deliver a new urban quarter for the city.

Why is more land proposed at Cambridge Biomedical Campus?

Cambridge Biomedical Campus is a key location for medical research and healthcare, recognised at a national and international level. The current campus has some amazing buildings and institutions, but it suffers from a poor layout, under used spaces, and a lack of facilities for its staff and visitors. In addition some of its buildings, including the Addenbrooke's hospital building itself, are aging. If it is to maintain and develop its role as Europe's leading centre for medical research and health science then significant improvement is required. To meet the future needs of the campus and to enable the improvement of the existing campus the Draft Local Plan identifies the release of an area of Green Belt south of the campus,

accompanied by enhancement of green spaces and the landscape adjoining it. However, development will only be allowed if it is accompanied by the right infrastructure, that will deliver the range of supporting services and facilities that workers, visitors and residents need and will contribute towards the goal of making it a world class campus.

Why do you still have a policy for North East Cambridge when the government funding for relocating the Waste Water Treatment Works has been withdrawn?

The area around Cambridge North Railway station and Cambridge Science Park offers significant opportunities for development to meet needs for homes and jobs and also to provide better integration with the areas and communities surrounding.

We have been preparing a plan for this area for several years, including planning for development on the site of the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant which was planned to leave the location. In August 2025 the [Government withdrew funding for the relocation of the wastewater site](#). This has created uncertainty as to whether the earlier published vision for North East Cambridge remains achievable.

For this draft Local Plan we have retained the allocation for North East Cambridge as previously set out in our emerging Area Action Plan, noting the significant benefits that a mixed use development at this site would bring. However, noting the uncertainty of delivery, we have not counted the full homes or employment floorspace from the NEC vision in our calculations of supply provided by the plan. We will need to refine this vision when we know more about Anglian Water's new plans for their site.

Why have you identified a New Community south east of Cambridge (at Land adjacent to A11 and A1307 at Grange Farm)?

Creating a new community in this location provides an opportunity to deliver new homes near to the three existing science campuses in this area, and where planned improvements to public transport which would offer connections to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and the city of Cambridge. The homes would be supported by services and green spaces that respond to the new community's setting.

Why haven't you allocated Cambridge Science Park North?

Our employment evidence has not highlighted sufficient need for the scale of mid-tech development proposed. Our evidence shows that, taking into account other committed sites, the need for additional Mid-Tech employment floorspace in Greater Cambridge can be met without allocating additional land at Science Park North. Development of Cambridge Science Park North would result in significant negative landscape impacts and lead to the encroachment of development to the north of the A14, significantly altering the gap between Histon & Impington and Milton. The Cambridge Green Belt Study (2021) identifies that release of land in this area would result in a very high level of harm to the Green Belt.

Why does the Eddington Policy not include affordable housing?

North West Cambridge was released from the Green Belt through exceptional circumstances to meet the needs of the University. Market housing was needed to help make the site viable.

50% key worker housing was required in the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (AAP), defined as: 'Cambridge University and College Key Workers Staff employed by Cambridge University and its Colleges which the University accept as a priority for housing having regard to their level of housing need and their contribution to the functioning and success of the University and its Colleges. This could also include staff employed by other organisations whose presence in Cambridge is directly related to the presence of the University such as the Medical Research Council and other research facilities.'

The draft plan policy seeks to ensure these provide a mix of units for workers at all levels, including non-academic or teaching staff, so that new affordable homes are accessible to both academic and non-academic staff in housing need.

The University have submitted a Housing Need assessment confirming there is an outstanding accommodation need to support academic and non-academic staff.

The policy requires 2,000 student rooms, the same number that were originally allocated in the North West Cambridge AAP. The Housing Needs of Specific Groups study includes consideration of student needs. This was informed by engagement with Universities and colleges on their anticipated growth, captured in Appendix 12 of the Development Strategy Topic paper. There is an overall need of around 2,000 student units until 2033. Delivery of student homes at Eddington will be important to addressing this need and for the longer term.

How will the Cambourne North allocation relate to the surrounding villages such as Elsworth and Knapwell?

The Councils are keen to retain the unique identities of the villages surrounding the Cambourne North allocation. To help with this we are proposing the Cambourne Forest concept around the west, north and east of the allocation, both to provide a significant area of green space for local communities, but also to provide a green buffer between the villages and the new development. We anticipate that the shops, services and facilities that Cambourne North will enhance provision in this area west of Cambridge, and we want to enable residents of nearby villages to access these, without creating negative associated traffic impacts. We are keen to hear from people through the consultation on what could the Cambourne Forest and expansion of Cambourne include in terms of services and facilities as well as how best people from surrounding villages could access them sustainably.

Climate Change

How has the Local Plan responded to the challenges of climate change?

Climate change is a key priority across the Councils' plans and strategies, but the Local Plan is a particularly important tool for implementing change. How Greater Cambridge mitigates and adapts to climate change is a key theme of the Plan and runs through many of its policies.

Our development strategy promotes a pattern of growth that locates development close to low carbon transport modes, reducing harmful emissions. Our policies for shaping the form of development meet and, in many cases, go beyond nationally set standards, supporting the transition to net zero carbon by 2050. This includes establishing a positive framework for renewable energy projects in the right locations, requiring new development to reduce heat and power demand wherever possible, preventing new development from being connected to the gas grid, and setting rigorous standards for water efficiency in new development.

The availability of a sustainable water supply is a particular challenge in Greater Cambridge, and alongside preparation of the Local Plan, the Councils have been working closely with the Government's Water Scarcity group which is working to identify and bring forward a range of solutions.

Do your plans stop building on the floodplain?

We carefully considered flood risk when considering which sites should be developed. We used flood mapping to avoid areas that were known to be at risk, and did more detailed assessments of individual sites to ensure they would stay safe when they were developed. We also considered the impacts of climate change which is expected to increase risk in some areas in the future.

Biodiversity and green spaces

Will the plan provide new green space and protect existing spaces?

The Local Plan aims to ensure that development leaves the natural environment better than it was before. A rigorous assessment of Greater Cambridge's existing network of open spaces was undertaken to inform the Local Plan, to ensure these spaces are properly protected but also identify gaps in our green infrastructure network and spaces which could benefit from improvements. The draft Local Plan identifies 14 strategic green infrastructure initiatives to help restore our area's habitat networks and provide more green spaces for people to enjoy, including for example the River Cam Corridor, and North Cambridge Green Space. New green space will

be delivered across many of our proposed development sites, and we will secure financial contributions from other developments to contribute to other enhancement projects elsewhere.

How will the Local Plan improve biodiversity with so much development?

The draft Local Plan will require all new development to increase biodiversity by at least 10% above the development site's baseline level of biodiversity before it is developed (referred to as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)). It also requires major development to provide a minimum 20% BNG.

Great Places

How will the Local Plan ensure that buildings are well designed and built to a high quality?

Our [Great Places theme](#) policies focus on good design, but all the thematic policies across the plan are relevant to ensuring that development meets our needs and mitigates its impacts, for example [Policy CC/DC: Designing for a changing climate](#). These policies will be used to guide decisions regarding planning applications. For our largest developments, a strategic design code will be required as part of the planning application, establishing clear rules and guidelines tailored to the requirements of the site, that can apply across multiple phases of development.

Jobs

How does the Local Plan support the Greater Cambridge economy?

The draft Local Plan will continue to support Greater Cambridge's diverse, fast-growing, dynamic economy, maintaining the area's global reputation for education, research and innovation and supporting other sectors to thrive. We have proposed a flexible supply of land across a wide range of locations, which will allow our main employment centres to continue to flourish and compete on a global scale, whilst fostering job creation across different sectors at other growth locations across Greater Cambridge. Our proposals are based on a wide range of evidence, including

jobs and floorspace forecasts to 2045, and other specialist studies that have looked at our different sectors.

Does the Plan support other kinds of jobs as well at the science and technology ones?

As well as supporting key sectors such as life sciences, technology and research and development, we have also responded to the needs of other growing sectors such as logistics and distribution and the cultural and creative industries, to ensure our economy remains competitive and diverse, and to secure a wide range of different jobs for the people of Greater Cambridge. The draft Local Plan supports different sizes of business, ensuring that employment development provides a mixture of different unit sizes and securing space for start-ups and affordable workspaces. We also recognise the key role of the tourism industry for Greater Cambridge, which makes a significant contribution to the economy and maintains many jobs. The draft Local Plan therefore seeks to meet increasing needs for visitor accommodation by supporting new hotels in key locations.

Homes

Will the plan help deliver affordable housing?

The draft plan requires 40% of new homes to be Affordable Housing, provided at a cost below market rates to meet the needs of those who cannot afford to buy or rent at market prices. Our policies also support innovative housing products, such as self-build, build to rent and co-living. We also require housing to meet specific needs including for older people and for Gypsies and Travellers

Why are we only asking for 40% Affordable Housing?

The policy requires “at least 40% of the new homes on site as affordable housing” – this is not a cap, and could be exceeded. Our whole plan viability assessment shows that 40% would be viable for major developments across Greater Cambridge, irrespective of their use class, but that a higher percentage would impact on the viability and delivery of sites.

Can't the plan do more to limit the effects of housing turning to short term lets such as via Airbnb?

The application of policy is currently limited by the use class order not classifying short term let as a separate use. Government have indicated this is under review, but currently the policy cannot do more.

Transport and Infrastructure

Is there enough water supply to support the plans?

At earlier stages we said we would only plan to meet the identified growth needs if there was a sustainable water supply available to support it. We've been exploring the issues through the Cambridge Water Scarcity Group which was set up by the government to tackle water issues. It includes experts and agencies like DEFRA and the Environment Agency.

New Government-led infrastructure like the Grafham Water pipeline (due by 2032) and the Fens Reservoir (mid-2030s) will increase supply and reduce pressure on our local sensitive chalk streams. The Draft Local Plan includes policies to ensure development is timed appropriately and uses water efficiently. Beyond 2040 new water sources will be needed, and regional water plans are already outlining the sort of measures that can be planned for that don't rely on taking water from the chalk aquifer.

Is there going to be enough capacity for dealing with sewage properly, particularly as funding was withdrawn for the new Cambridge waste water treatment works?

The Government's announcement that it will not be funding the relocation of the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant means that there is currently uncertainty around the programme for future waste water treatment serving Cambridge. However, Anglian Water are exploring options for increasing capacity on their current site, to ensure it can meet current and future needs.

Investment will also be needed at other water treatment works to serve the allocations proposed in this plan. Anglian Water have started work on a new Drainage and Waste Water Management Plan (DWMP), a statutory plan they are required to prepare which identifies how they will accommodate future growth needs.

The government announced on 13 October 2025 that they have instructed Anglian Water to accelerate planning for wastewater infrastructure upgrades required to accommodate development and growth, and that this will report to government by early 2026.'

Can transport networks support the sites identified?

We have modelled the impact of the impact of the plans on the transport networks to see where improvements would be required. The larger new sites we have identified are already on transport routes that are planned to be improved. Cambourne for example will benefit from East West Rail as well as the Cambourne to Cambridge public transport scheme and A428 improvements. The Grange Farm new settlement would be connected to the Cambridge South East Transport scheme (CSETS). For each strategic site included in the plan we have set out the transport requirements for that site, including the design of development, transport policy requirements such as trip budgets, and physical infrastructure such as the schemes listed above. Detailed consideration of issues such as local traffic impacts will be considered at the planning application stage.

Alongside our new Local Plan, a Greater Cambridge Transport Strategy is being prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. The Combined Authority has published a [Statement of Intent](#) ahead of the draft Local Plan consultation confirming its commitment that it will be prepared in time to support the submission of the Local Plan. The Transport Strategy will also set out solutions to address the congestion challenges experienced in Cambridge area.

What about other infrastructure like electricity?

Growth in homes and jobs means more demand for electricity. Significant grid reinforcement will be required to support the development strategy. A Local Area

Energy Plan (LAEP) is being prepared for the county to inform future infrastructure planning including with UK power networks. This will help to ensure upgrades are delivered ahead of when they are needed.