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# Greater Cambridge Housing Delivery Study

Barton Willmore

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Housing Delivery Study**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 For the first time, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are working together to create a joint Local Plan up until 2040 to ensure that there is a consistent approach to planned growth in Greater Cambridge. This will set out a joint vision and objectives for the long-term development of the area, together with evidence of future levels of growth, agreed levels of additional housing and the broad spatial approach to realise the growth needs of the area. The emerging Local Plan is proposed to be adopted in 2023 but its start date is likely to be 2017, because this is the most recent year for which data is available to provide a baseline to monitor against. This housing delivery study therefore covers the period 2017-2040.
- 1.2 The emerging plan will need to strike the right balance between high growth needs and the character of what makes the area unique. It will also need to consider how the economic success of the area is not hampered by inadequate transport infrastructure, housing delivery and other infrastructure needs. Along with housing and economic drivers, the development strategy for Greater Cambridge will need to tackle sustainability in a holistic way, rebalancing growth in the area to respond positively to issues such as health and wellbeing, community, biodiversity, green infrastructure and climate change.
- 1.3 This report aims to identify what level of housing need is required in the area up until 2040 and what implications settlement hierarchy policy, strategic growth sites and future transport interventions might have on the future direction of Greater Cambridge's housing delivery strategy. Accordingly, the report is structured as follows:
- Housing Need and Supply
  - Current Housing Delivery Strategy
  - Proposed Transport Infrastructure
  - Summary Implications for Greater Cambridge Housing Delivery Strategy

## 2.0 HOUSING NEED AND SUPPLY

### Housing Need

- 2.1 The starting point for deciding how many homes need to be planned for in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan is an assessment of housing need. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) expects strategic policy-making authorities to follow the 'standard method', as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) *Housing and economic needs assessment*. The standard method uses a formula to identify the *minimum* number of homes expected to be planned for, in a way which addresses projected household growth and historic under-supply. The standard method identifies a minimum annual housing need figure; it does not produce a housing requirement figure nor does it reflect economic growth requirements as this is usually informed by a detailed Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- 2.2 The minimum housing need under the standard method is calculated by setting the baseline household growth projection over 10 consecutive years, then adjusting it based on the affordability of the area (using median workplace-based affordability ratios) and finally capping the level of any increase an individual local authority can face depending on the current status of its strategic housing policies.
- 2.3 The standard method housing need calculation for Greater Cambridge is provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Standard Method Housing Need Calculation for Greater Cambridge**

Standard Method Housing Need Calculation	Cambridge City	South Cambridgeshire	Total in Greater Cambridge
1. <i>Setting the baseline</i> Annual household growth for 2019-2029 (MHCLG 2014-based household projections)	+4,177 = 418 per annum	+8,115 = 812 per annum	12,292 = 1,229 per annum
2. <i>An adjustment to take account of affordability</i> Apply an adjustment for affordability where the ratio is above 4.0 (ONS 2018 median workplace-based affordability ratios)	12.95 = factor of 1.559	10.25 = factor of 1.391	
<b>Result</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>1,129</b>	<b>1,780</b>
3. <i>Capping the level of any increase</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing policy requirement</li> <li>• Cap of +40%</li> </ul> Hence no cap is required	700 980	975 1,365	1,675 2,345
<b>Comparing the Standard Method Need figure with the existing Policy Requirement Per Annum</b>	<b>-49</b>	<b>+154</b>	<b>+105</b>

*Barton Willmore analysis of MHCLG 2014-based household projections and ONS 2018 median workplace-based affordability ratios*

2.4 The standard method indicates a minimum need of **1,780 homes per year** compared to the current combined requirement of 1,675. This revised annual need amounts to 40,940 homes for the 23-year period of 2017-2040 for Greater Cambridge.

2.5 The PPG sets out that assessing housing need is the first step in the process of deciding how many homes need to be planned for. The PPG reiterates the following commitment (paragraph 10):

**“The government is committed to ensuring that more homes are built and supports ambitious authorities who want to plan for growth. The standard method for assessing local housing need provides a minimum starting point in determining the number of homes needed in an area. It does not attempt to predict the impact that future government policies, changing economic circumstances or other factors might have on demographic behaviour. Therefore, there will be circumstances where it is appropriate to consider whether actual housing need is higher than the standard method indicates.”**

2.6 It includes the following circumstances:

- Growth strategies, for example where funding is in place (e.g. Housing Deals);
  - Strategic infrastructure improvements that are likely to drive an increase in homes;
- or
- An authority agreeing to take on unmet need for neighbouring authorities.

2.7 The area between Oxford and Cambridge, incorporating the county areas of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire forms a core spine that the Government recognises as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (the Arc). Productivity in the Arc as a whole is around 2.55 % higher than the UK average<sup>1</sup> and subject to sufficient investment in housing and infrastructure there is potential to support 1.1m new jobs and increased economic output of £163bn per annum<sup>2</sup>.

2.8 To understand the area’s potential, the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) published its ‘Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc’ (2017).

This recommended that current housing delivery rates will need to double up until 2050 to realise the Arc's economic potential. This level of growth would require significant investment in new transport infrastructure from Government in the form of a new East West rail line and an Expressway connecting Oxford to Cambridge. To firm up its commitment to the Arc, the Government made a joint declaration with local authorities in 2019 setting out a collaborative approach to meeting the Arc's ambitions and the desire to establish a joint Advisory Group.

2.9 The economic ambition of the area is also a key issue for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Current growth strategies in the area are being facilitated through the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) and the City Deal, which was signed with the Government in June 2014 and provides £500 million of grant funding to deliver infrastructure to support growth in the area. Through the City Deal, there is the commitment to prepare a joint Local Plan and deliver 1,000 additional new homes on rural exception sites by 2031. These affordable homes are to be delivered over and above the housing requirements of the Local Plans. South Cambridgeshire Council does not expect this surplus delivery to be achievable until after 2020/21.

2.10 In 2017, the Combined Authority established the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Commission to develop an authoritative evidence base on the economic performance of the area and inform choices on local policy priorities and strategic investment. This resulted in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER, 2018) , which reported that:

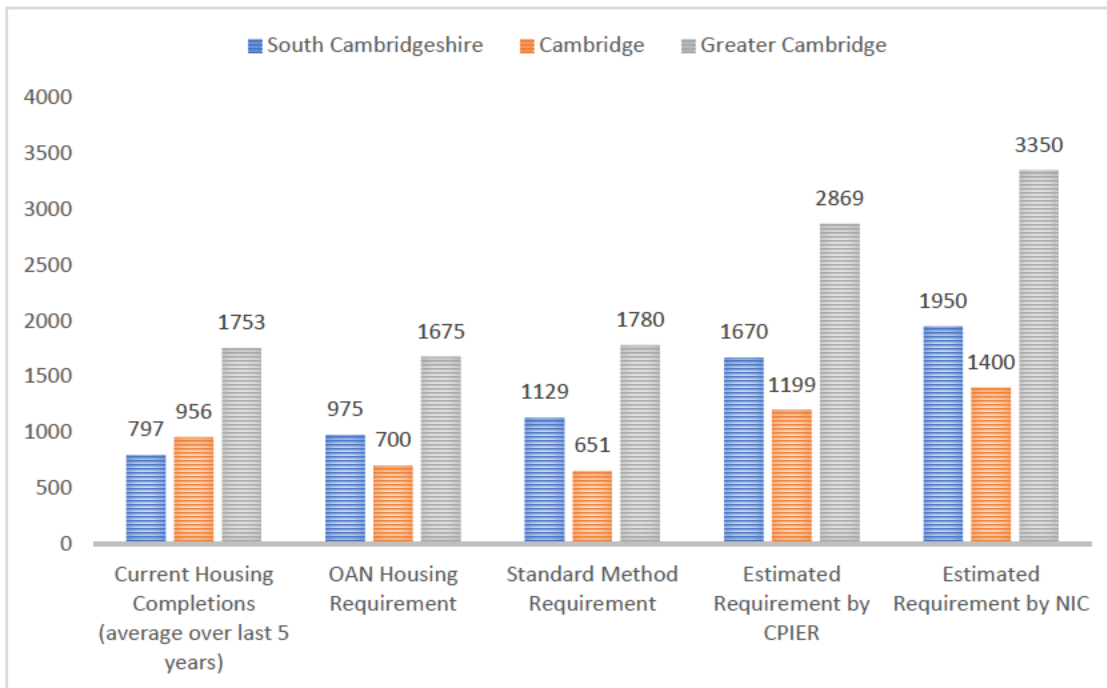
**"Growth in employment has not been matched by corresponding house-building, or developments in infrastructure. Consequently, house prices have soared and journey times have increased as congestion has intensified. This has meant that many have been forced to endure unpleasant commutes, or been priced away from the city altogether due to the unaffordability of rents. This is bad for both people and businesses, and we believe is an unsustainable approach to growth."** (CPIER, 2018, p.9)

2.11 To address this deficiency the CPIER indicated that housing supply across the area should be in the range of 6000-8000 homes per year over the next 20 years based on the potential for higher growth in employment than currently forecasted. This is a substantial uplift in housing

levels compared to the current objectively assessed need of 4,670 homes and confirms that economic growth will be a key driver for re-assessing housing requirements in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

2.12 In reviewing the scenarios presented by both CPIER and the NIC, it is evident that a *transformational* level of housing delivery would be required to accommodate the predicted economic needs of the area, as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Summary of Differing Annual Housing Need Scenarios**



*Barton Willmore analysis of CPIER, 2018, Greater Cambridge, 2019<sup>3</sup> and NIC, 2017<sup>4</sup>*

2.13 Figure 1 shows that current housing completions are almost on par with the minimum housing need identified using the Government’s standard method. However, to keep up with estimated economic growth over the next 20 years, using the upper housing range recommended by CPIER will mean a 71% uplift in housing supply compared to the current objectively assessed need (OAN) set out in the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans (2018). In stark contrast, the NIC’s recommendations to double the current OAN would mean another 1,675 homes delivered each year to reach a total of 3,350 homes per annum.

2.14 The emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan will therefore need to review housing requirements based on the potential for higher growth in employment than accommodated

in the current Local Plans. Such figures go well beyond the calculated standard method requirement as estimated by leading bodies such as the CPIER and the NIC. Applying these indicative higher figures would result in a need to deliver 65,987 – 77,050 homes between 2017-2040. This would require a review of land available to support a further net additional, **29,587 – 40,650** homes during the Local Plan Period over and above the 36,400 homes that already have permission or are allocated in the adopted 2018 Local Plans, as summarised in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Summary Housing Growth Needs in Greater Cambridgeshire Up Until 2040**

Existing Commitments	36,400 homes
Target Need under CPIER Scenario	65,987 homes
Target Need under NIC Scenario	77,050 homes
<b>Outstanding Unmet Need</b>	<b>29,587 - 40,650 homes</b>

### Housing Supply to 2040

- 2.15 The Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five Year Housing Land Supply (2019) projects a total supply of 38,402 homes by 2031 against the objectively assessed need of 33,500 homes. Allocated Fringe Sites in Cambridge, as shown in this trajectory, build out by 2028-2030 whereas allocated new settlements, such as Northstowe, Waterbeach and Bourn continue to deliver housing beyond 2031. Table 3 below highlights the potential delivery scenarios of the current growth sites post 2031.

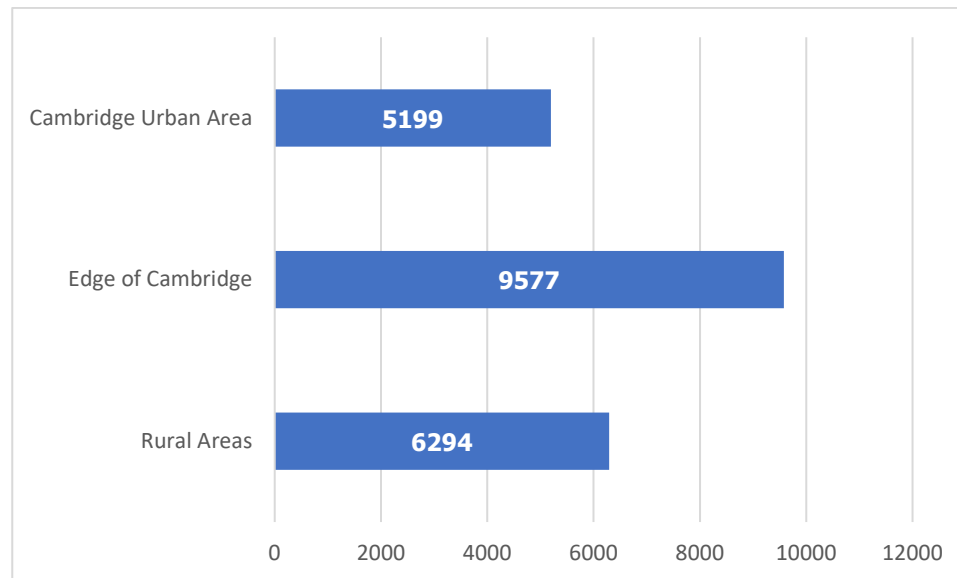
**Table 3: Potential Delivery Scenarios for Growth Sites in Greater Cambridge**

Growth Site	Assumed dwellings per annum (DPA) (based on current trajectory)	Approximate completions 2017- 2040 based on assumed DPA
Bourn	150	2,675
Northstowe	250	5,084
Waterbeach	250	4,650
Cambourne West	150	2,350
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,759</b>

*\*Above estimations based on 'Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five Year Housing Land Supply, 2019'*

- 2.16 The four growth sites listed above will continue to deliver housing up until 2040 and beyond in some cases, representing 41% of the 36,400 homes already in the pipeline between 2017 - 2040 and around a fifth of the housing needs indicated by the CPIER. Under the current plan, the high proportion of housing from strategic sites has potential to put housing delivery at risk through overreliance on single growth sites, particularly new settlements.
- 2.17 Other strategic growth sites already identified at North East Cambridge (near Cambridge North Train Station) and Cambridge Airport have the potential to cumulatively deliver approximately 20,000 new homes with opportunities for densification, but these will take a long time to deliver and will only contribute a proportion of this housing up until 2040. Estimates based on the average 8.7 year lead-in times and 139 dwelling annual build out rates in Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners 'Driving housing delivery from large sites: What factors affect the build out rates of large scale housing sites' (NLP, 2018) would give approximately 2,224 homes up until 2040, albeit North East Cambridge may take longer to start due to its brownfield status. This would result in remaining need for 27,363 – 38,426 homes based on the CPIER and the NIC scenarios.
- 2.18 Greater Cambridge, however, has a strong track record of housing delivery on the urban fringe sites across the two administrative boundaries. Allocated sites such as the 'southern fringe' have experienced high annual build out rates (see Table 4), high quality design, policy compliant affordable housing and very high levels of sustainability facilitated through new/enhanced community facilities and transport infrastructure. As such, urban fringe sites present highly sustainable locations for transitioning to low/zero carbon developments and lifestyles.
- 2.19 The NIC scenario and the growth plans for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc at this point in time are not sufficiently advanced to give any certainty to such levels of growth in Greater Cambridge. The CPIER growth scenario, however, is based on forecasted economic growth levels in the area and presents significant challenges for the emerging Local Plan. The remaining need for 27,363 homes under the CPIER scenario would, when pro-rated in line with the current development strategy, result in the following distribution of housing need shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Greater Cambridge's Potential Additional Unallocated Housing Need to 2040 (CPIER Scenario)**



2.20 As can be seen in Figure 2, a substantial amount of additional housing could be required in rural areas if this distribution is taken forward. In purely quantitative terms this would mean delivering around 60 homes in each of the 106 rural settlements as a minimum (excluding new towns). The capacity of villages to accept this level of growth in a sustainable way, however, is an important matter which is explored in the next sections.

### **Implications for Greater Cambridge Growth Strategy**

2.21 The success of Cambridge's economic growth has placed increasing pressure on the sub-regional housing market, creating historic undersupply and resulting in increasingly unaffordable house prices and rents. To maintain current economic growth it is abundantly clear that a *transformational* level of housing delivery will be required both within Cambridge, the edge of Cambridge and rural areas to balance the development strategy. The majority of this housing delivery is currently predicated on seamless delivery at major strategic growth sites (principally new settlements); however, such delivery is skewed to the north of the district and places an over-reliance on single growth sites, requiring significant infrastructure investment. The emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan will therefore need to balance growth needs with other sustainable locations for development, including well connected locations on the edge of Cambridge and a supply of small-medium housing sites in rural settlements. It is evident that not all villages will be able to accommodate the level of growth indicated above and so more sustainable villages will need to accommodate proportionally more growth. In doing so, it creates opportunities to rebalance housing needs throughout the district, ensure sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed (as per para.59 of the NPPF) and improve the sustainability of the wider area. Whilst growth on the edge of Cambridge has the benefit of being able to foster more sustainable travel patterns and promote change in behaviours, a greater focus on small-medium housing sites in rural areas also presents multifarious benefits from a sustainability perspective (as per para.78 of the NPPF), as outlined in Section 3 of this study.

### 3.0 CURRENT HOUSING DELIVERY STRATEGY

3.1 Previous plans for the Greater Cambridge area have prioritised development within a sustainable hierarchy starting first within Cambridge City, then on the edge of Cambridge, at new settlements close to Cambridge, and lastly at better served villages. This section provides an overview of the current Local Plan's dependence on strategic sites and limitations to sustainable growth in the area supported by evidence of:

- slow delivery rates;
- concentration of large sites to the north of the district;
- ability of the market to absorb the predicted build out rates;
- lack of diversity in the market (supported by Letwin Review findings);
- ongoing affordability crisis and travel/commuter constraints; and
- settlement hierarchy limitations.

#### Delivery Rates

3.2 Greater Cambridge has seen several large-scale strategic housing sites and long lead in times for new settlements such as Cambourne and Northstowe, the latter of which comprises 10,000 homes. This study has reviewed the local analysis of build out rates for large-scale strategic housing sites against the other housing delivery categories in the Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five Year Housing Land Supply (2019). Table 4 below summaries the findings of this review.

**Table 4: Assumed Build Out Rates in Greater Cambridge**

Development Site Category	Average Dwellings Per Annum	Number of years of completions
New Settlements and Fringe Sites	250	4+
Sites of 100-199 in South Cambridgeshire	60	3
Sites of 50-99 homes in South Cambridgeshire	38	2
Sites of 10-49 homes in South Cambridgeshire	15	1

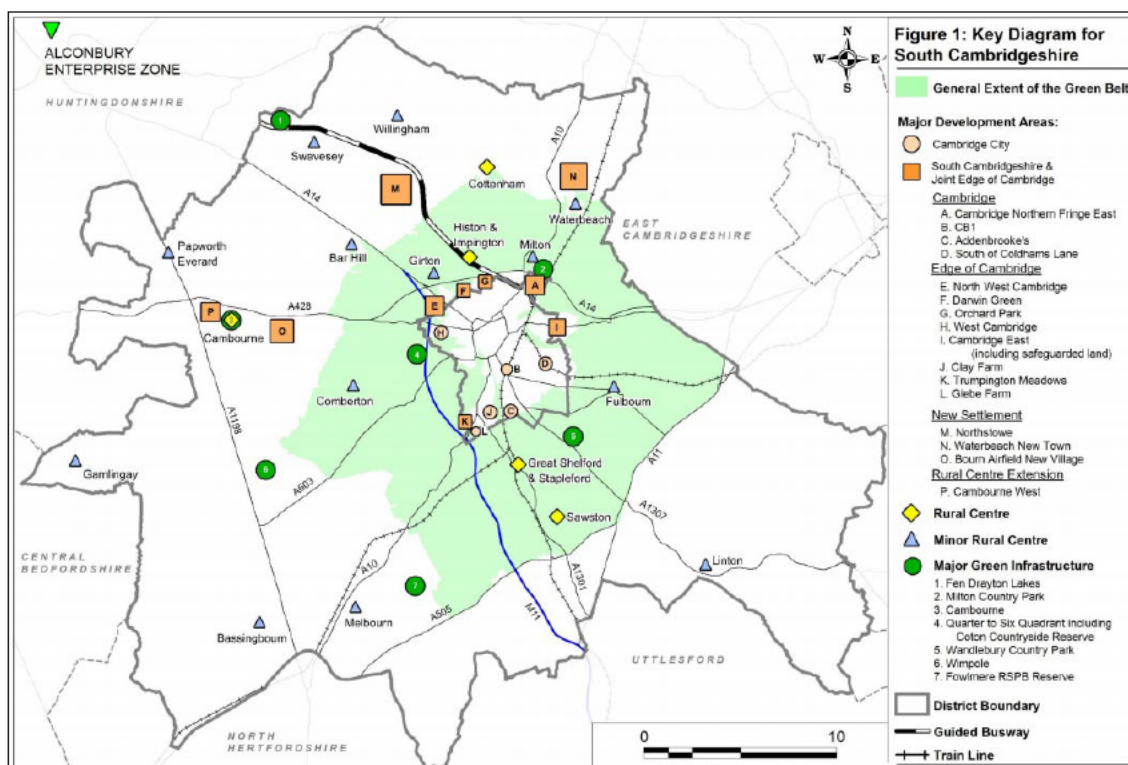
*Source: Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five Year Housing Land Supply (2019)*

3.3 Generally, large sites deliver more housing each year on average, but the advantage of smaller sites is that they tend to build out quicker and have shorter lead-in times overall when considering the planning approval process. This is confirmed in the 'Driving housing delivery from large sites: What factors affect the build out rates of large scale housing sites' (NLP, 2018), which shows that the time after receiving detailed planning permission to delivery of the first dwelling for smaller sites of less than 500 dwellings is 1.7-1.8 years and for larger developments of over 2,000 dwellings it is 2.9 years.

**Concentration of Large Sites to the north of South Cambridgeshire**

3.4 The majority of Greater Cambridge's allocated large-scale housing development is located to the north of the district, as identified in the 'Major Development Areas' in Figure 3. This reflects the proximity of these large growth sites to key transport routes such as the M11, A14, A428, A10 and Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, cheaper land prices and less sensitive landscape.

**Figure 3: Current Development Strategy in Greater Cambridge**



Source: South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2018

3.5 It is worth noting the historic concerns about development south of the city. A good example being the failed Eco-town proposal, Hanley Grange, Hinxton, which was widely resisted by the community, district and county councils, and Cambridgeshire Horizons. At the time this was in part because development was to be focussed at Northstowe. Other issues were raised and any large-scale development, such as a new town, may face similar opposition to those faced by Hanley Grange, e.g. concerns regarding:

- Distance from the centre of Cambridge (it was 15 kilometres);
- Relative remoteness from Cambridge;
- Traffic impact on A1301/A1307 into Cambridge;
- Poor sub-regional access;
- Potential to attract commuters to London and Stansted;
- Potential flood risks and Ground Protection Zones; and
- Low landscape suitability.

3.6 However, the pressure for development is now vastly greater than in the 2000s, as recognised with the recent approval of 1,500 homes at the Wellcome Genome Campus in Hinxton. Housing development within the southern half of the GCLP area, with good links to road, rail and sustainable transport modes should be considered. Small-medium sites have a key role to play here in redistributing housing delivery in the area and sustaining housing supply throughout the local plan period.

### **Absorptions Rates and Diversity in the Market**

3.7 The Letwin Review, published in October 2018, placed a clear emphasis on the need to tackle the homogeneity of homes on offer and diversify the types and tenures on offer on large sites. The argument being that, by doing so, market absorption rates increase as a greater variety of house types are available. Build out rates can also increase, as house builders are not trying to sell lots of the same product all at once. While the Review focusses on sites of over 1500 dwellings, the principle can apply to small-medium sized sites, as these are able to provide a variety of house types, tenures, sizes and mix in a wider variety of locations.

3.8 Current housing mix policy in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 requires a mix of housing sizes, namely: at least 30% 1 or 2 bedroom homes; at least 30% 3 bedroom homes; at least 30% 4 or more bedroom homes; with a 10% flexibility allowance that can be added to any of the above categories taking account of local circumstances. The Strategic Housing

Market Assessment, however, needs updating in order to establish if this mix is still appropriate as affordability will increasingly be a factor.

- 3.9 It is anticipated that, due to soaring house prices, the market will require a greater proportion of smaller units and more rental. It is notable that the area has yet to see any Build to Rent (B2R) schemes emerge, although Brookgate is proposing 1000 B2R units on its site at North Cambridge. It is also worth noting that, in terms of affordability, B2R may not be the only solution as rents tend to be as much as 9.3%<sup>5</sup> higher due to the better quality, maintenance and facilities generally provided. Alternatives for the delivery of market rental properties may need to be explored e.g. through the Councils' own building schemes, policy, and, if possible, incentives.

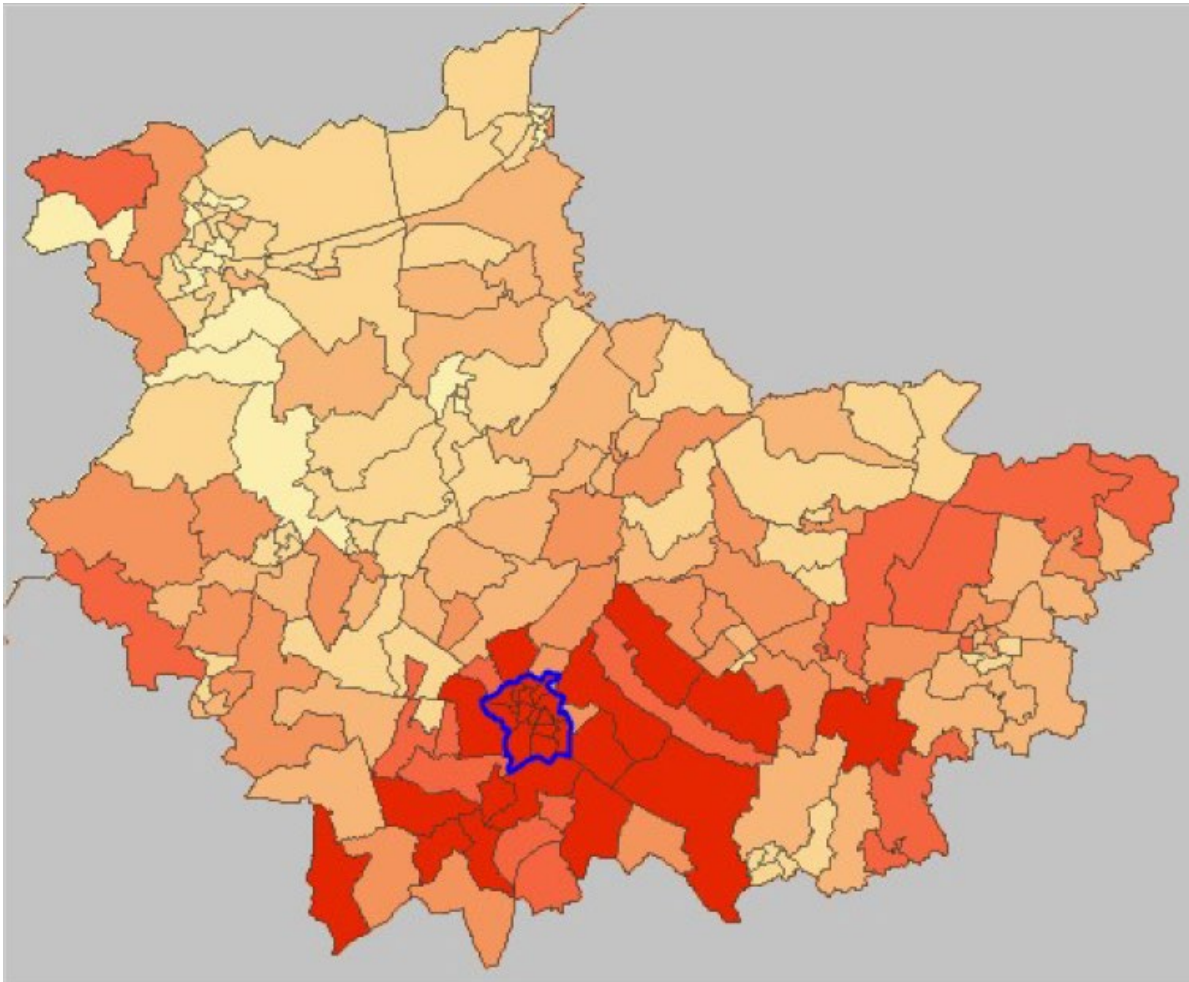
### **Affordability and Travel Constraints**

- 3.10 The latest housing report 'Detailed affordability analysis: Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire' (2017) prepared by Savills on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council indicates the low levels of affordability within the City and South Cambridgeshire. Households with incomes of less than £45,000 are facing a lack of supply of suitable units. Although new market supply was found to be high, it was not well aligned with local incomes. Sales levels have been supported by investors and higher salaried earners including London commuters. As a consequence, the private rented sector has grown.
- 3.11 There has been an increase in the 'professional, scientific and technology' and human health and social work' sectors of employment. It stated that: "Housing that is affordable to potential incomers is therefore a critical factor in ensuring jobs can be taken up, contributing to better productivity and continuing economic growth" (page 34). Private rented housing has increased due to decreasing affordability and a lack of access for lower income households. This has notably grown for professional couples and families and caused a knock-on impact on household formation and out migration by younger people (especially in the 30-44 year old bracket).
- 3.12 Housing is more affordable in South Cambridgeshire compared to Cambridge, however, there needs to be an increase in supply. The report finds that for South Cambridgeshire a household income of £30,000 can afford a one-bedroom market unit for a single person or couple, a two-bedroomed unit would be borderline affordable for a single person or couple with a child,

but a three or more bedroom house would be unaffordable for a single person or couple with two or more children.

- 3.13 Geographically, this problem manifests itself most notably to the southern and eastern half of the district, as shown in the darker red shading in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Median Price Compared to Median Income in Greater Cambridge and Surrounding Areas**



*Source: Housing Market Bulletin: Issue 41, page 12: Median price compared to median income*

- 3.14 The Savills' report looked at a case study of Cambourne to establish if it is still affordable when the cheaper house prices are combined with the greater costs of travelling into Cambridge. It notes that house prices are approximately 50% cheaper than the equivalent in Cambridge and as such are more affordable to a wider range of households and incomes. It assumes a first time buyer, purchasing a property in the lower quartile value. It then factors

in travel costs per annum including free parking, council parking if travelling by car or a weekly pass for the bus. It notes that travel costs are a substantial addition to the outgoings of those on lower incomes. It concludes that "For renters there is less difference in housing costs so the impact of the commuting costs is felt more strongly, two bus season tickets added to rent make Cambourne more expensive than Cambridge" (Savills, 2017, p.40).

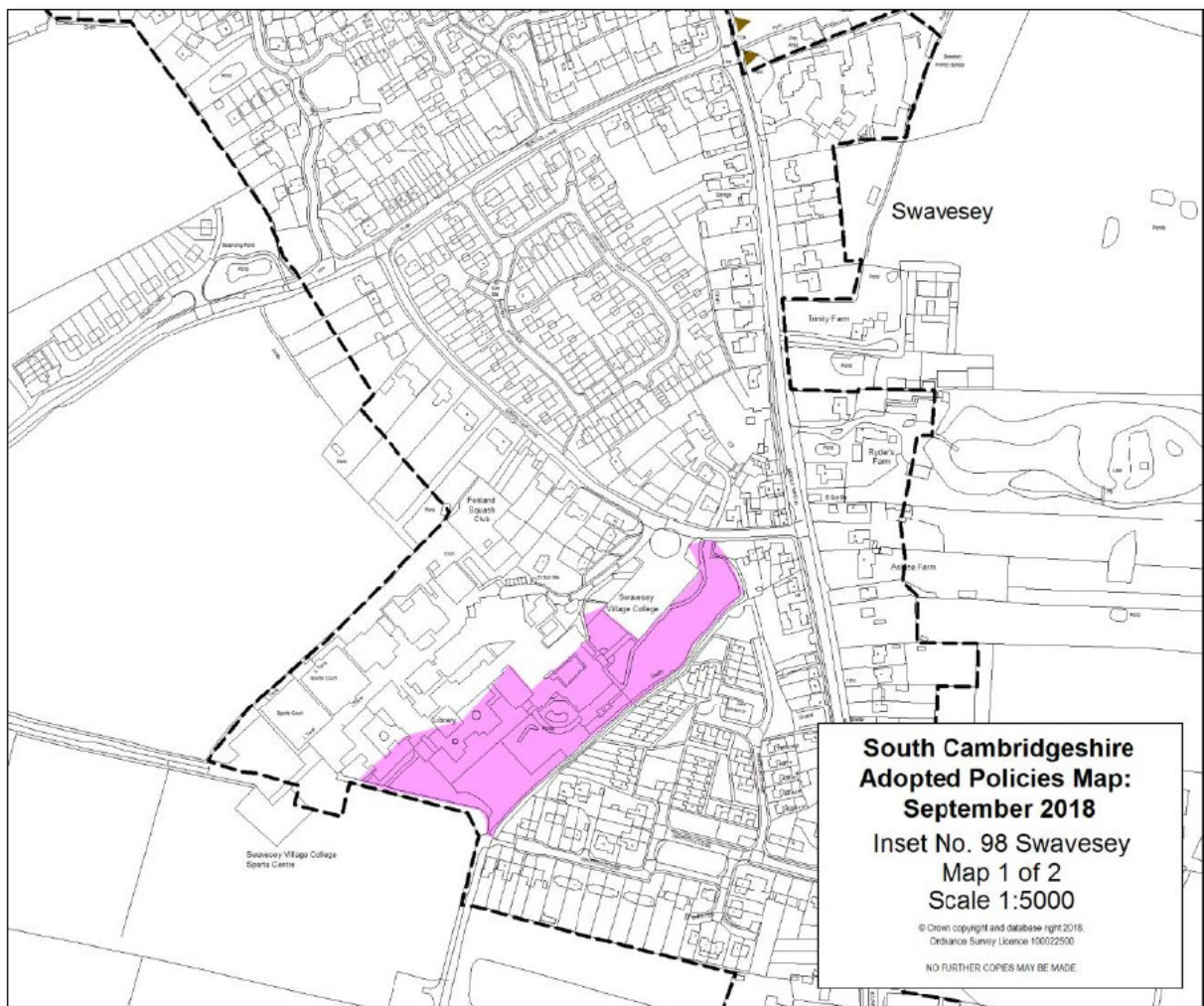
- 3.15 This demonstrates that affordability is not a straightforward factor and that to be genuinely affordable, housing outside of the City must be provided alongside affordable travel options, including on foot, cycle and public transport. This is essential if Cambridge is to attract needed low income earners and improve affordability and access to housing for a broader spectrum of the population.

### **Settlement Hierarchy**

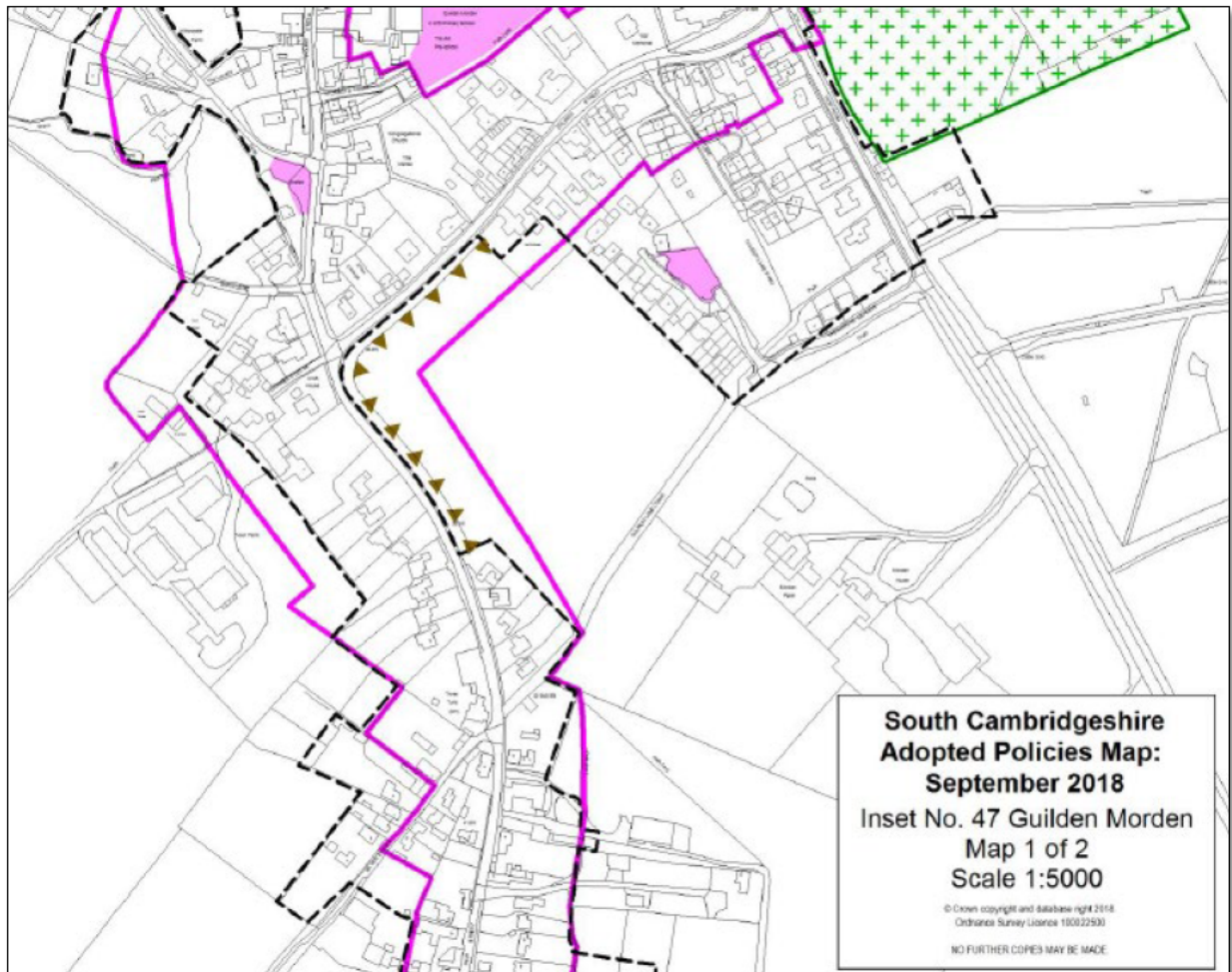
- 3.16 The adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) sets a framework (boundary) for each village, outside which development is heavily restricted. This is intended to protect the countryside from gradual encroachment, and guard against incremental growth in less sustainable locations away from services, facilities and public transport. The plan does allow affordable homes to be built outside village frameworks, where there is evidence of local need for affordable housing, as an exception to normal policy (so-called 'rural exception sites').
- 3.17 The adopted 2018 Local Plan categorises villages into four different types according to how 'sustainable' they are in terms of access to shops, public transport and local services. This is intended to restrict growth in the smallest villages, where transport alternatives to the car are often limited, and where there is a need to travel for basic services like schools. The category limits how many homes can be built on a single development within each limited settlement boundary, as follows:
- Rural Centre: No limit;
  - Minor Rural Centre: 30 dwellings;
  - Group Village: 8 dwellings or exceptionally 15 dwellings on brownfield sites; and
  - Infill Village: 2 dwellings or exceptionally 8 dwellings on brownfield sites.
- 3.18 Frameworks have been defined to take account of the present extent of the built-up area and planned development, but the level of planned development has been notably limited by the

application of the above settlement hierarchy. This is evident in the categorisation of 83% of South Cambridgeshire's villages as 'Group' or 'Infill' categories allowing only developments of 2-8 dwellings on greenfield sites. This restrained approach further compromises growth opportunities in villages when considering the tightly drawn settlement boundaries set out in the current Local Plan adopted Policies Maps. Such boundaries have created little room for villages to grow and have given very little indication as to where expansion might be appropriate. An example of this restrictive approach is provided in the adopted policy maps for Swavesey and Guilden Morden shown in Figures 5 and 6, which delineates settlement boundaries tight to rear garden boundaries and gives little indication of where sustainable housing growth might occur.

**Figure 5: Swavesey Village Framework**



*Source: South Cambridgeshire Adopted Proposals Maps 2018*

**Figure 6: Guilden Morden Village Framework**

*Source: South Cambridgeshire Adopted Proposals Maps 2018*

- 3.19 Such restrictive growth has contributed to the “sustainability trap” coined in the Taylor Review back in 2008, where too many communities are caught in a planning system that directs benefits of new development away from their communities. The review recommended that planners should move away from asking “is this settlement sustainable?”, to “will this development enhance or decrease the sustainability of this community – balancing social, economic and environmental concerns?”. For instance, technology and digital connectivity and social capital have huge potential to strengthen rural economies and provide amenities fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century communities but very few local authorities consider such assets in their sustainability assessments<sup>6</sup>.

- 3.20 The NPPF (2019), paragraph 78 empathises with this view and states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities to promote sustainable development. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements development in one village may support services in a village nearby.
- 3.21 The ability of new development to support rural services is pertinent given the loss of rural services experienced in recent years. During 2010-2016 rural areas in South Cambridgeshire lost 11% of library services, 6% of general stores, 5% of post offices and 3% of scheduled bus services<sup>7</sup>. The impact of these service losses on rural communities is accentuated when considering pre-existing low service levels compared to better served, urban areas. Other economic, social and environmental problems emanate from the historic lack of growth opportunities in villages, as follows:
- Lack of housing choice and options, and fewer affordable homes;
  - Changing demographic balance of communities (more wealthy and older people and fewer poorer or younger people and families) impacts on demand for local services, particularly schools, post offices and public transport, and so their overall viability;
  - An erosion of family and community ties as younger family members move away for housing and jobs;
  - Missed opportunities for S106 contributions and investment;
  - Long distance commutes for those who are forced to live further out;
  - Lack of economic development and fewer opportunities to work locally and more sustainably;
  - Lack of broadband and digital facilities; and,
  - Increased levels of commuting and need to travel for services leads to greater challenges for offsetting carbon and mitigating climate change.
- 3.22 This continued decline in village vitality and the necessary footfall to maintain revered villages services and facilities such as shops and pubs, is a problem that can be reversed. Housing and transport infrastructure are key to addressing this decline in rural areas and should be addressed through the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. A renewed approach to the settlement hierarchy could, for instance, consider new sustainability appraisals for each village that weigh up both the existing levels of services and the future sustainability enhancements brought about by housing or employment development. Such enhancements might include:

- Transport improvements (discussed in Section 4) that better connect villages to surrounding larger settlements, employment areas or service centres;
- Local transport enhancements that provide more sustainable travel options to services and facilities and/or ease of access for satellite villages surrounding larger or better served settlements e.g. new footpaths/cycleways, real time bus stops;
- Increasing capacity of local community facilities to better serve local needs;
- Provision of new community services and facilities e.g. play areas, new business incubators, broadband connection;
- New housing that provides different sizes, types and tenures to meet the needs of different groups in the community and supports a greater demographic mix;
- Provision of much needed affordable housing;
- Local employment generation;
- New or enhanced access to public open space and recreation (i.e. health and wellbeing gains); and
- Net gain in biodiversity and opportunities to 'scale-up' local green infrastructure networks.

3.23 Out of the issues listed above, transport infrastructure plays a key role in facilitating sustainable travel patterns and access to wider services and facilities. As such, this will be an important issue for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan and therefore warrants further discussion. Section 4 of this study reviews the implications of the emerging transport provisions in the area up until 2050.

### **Implications for Greater Cambridge Growth Strategy**

3.24 Previous plans for the Greater Cambridge area have prioritised development within a sustainable hierarchy starting first within Cambridge City, then on the edge of Cambridge, at new settlements close to Cambridge, and lastly at better served villages.

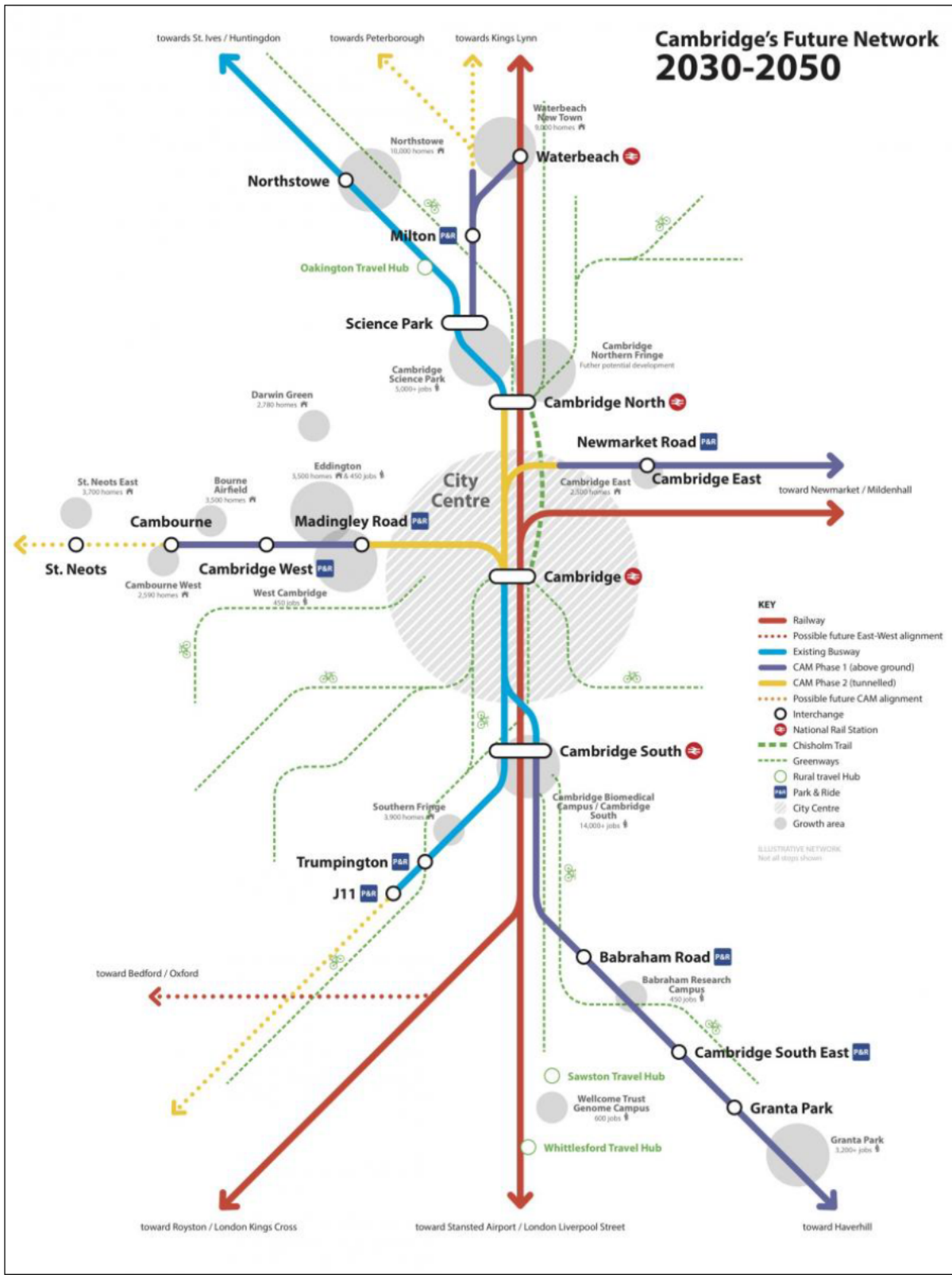
3.25 As outlined in Section 2 of this study, there appears to be a growing reliance on major strategic growth sites (principally new settlements) to deliver future housing delivery, which poses inherent risks in terms of slower absorption rates, lack of housing diversity, longer lead-in times and lack of housing distribution particularly to the south of the district where affordability is generally worst. By aligning the Greater Cambridge housing strategy to boost the supply of small-medium housing sites in rural areas there is significant opportunity to

direct housing to sustainable locations and promote sustainability enhancements within rural communities. This produces a number of benefits for rural settlements as outlined in this study and addresses an historic undersupply of housing in these areas and the decline of village services and facilities. To facilitate these improvements, it is clear that village settlement boundaries will need to flex in appropriate locations based on several sustainability criteria. Such criteria should consider the transformative nature of new housing and infrastructure, in particular the emerging transport provisions in the area identified in the next section.

## **4.0 PROPOSED TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 4.1 Transport issues will need to be considered at the earliest stage of plan-making and the NPPF advises that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of sustainable transport objectives. Paragraph 103 states that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in plan-making.
- 4.2 Tackling peak-time congestion in and around Cambridge is a key issue for the emerging Local Plan with Greater Cambridge Partnership aiming to reduce traffic levels by 10-15% by 2031 (based on 2011 traffic levels)<sup>8</sup>. Of people who work in Cambridge, 40% live in Cambridge and 28% live in South Cambridgeshire<sup>9</sup>. With average cycling levels amongst South Cambridgeshire more than double the national average and the City boasting the highest mode share of cycling in the country there is much potential to reduce congestion in the area and manage patterns of growth linked to new investment in public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure. The blueprint for this has been presented in the draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport Plan with infrastructure schemes already being implemented by the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership in relation to £100 million of government funding up until 2020.
- 4.3 The illustrative summary in Figure 7 (overleaf) shows the range of sustainable transport proposals planned for the area.

Figure 7: Cambridge's Future Transport Network 2030-2050



Source: Greater Cambridge Partnership (2019)

**a) Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM)**

4.4 The Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) will provide a high frequency metro services between employment hubs and high-tech clusters of Greater Cambridge. Service routes will reach out north to link to the existing Guided Busway to St Ives, west towards St Neots, south west to Trumpington, south east to Haverhill and northeast towards Mildenhall.

**b) Transport Interchanges**

4.5 Complementing the CAM will be a better integrated network of local bus services, connecting the suburbs of Cambridge and smaller towns and villages to employment centres across the area and the CAM network. Park and Ride sites will be better integrated into the surrounding local transport networks acting as travel hubs with interchange between the CAM, local bus, demand responsive transport, and the walking and cycling network. Transport interchanges are planned at Cambourne, Cambridge West, Madingley Road, Northstowe, Milton, Cambridge Science Park, Cambridge North, Waterbeach, Cambridge East, Trumpington, Cambridge South, Babraham Road, Cambridge South East and Granta Park.

**c) Greenways**

4.6 There are 12 Greenways planned that will connect local villages with the city via all weather non-motorised routes. The proposal includes Greenway connections to the following settlements:

- Waterbeach
- Horningsea
- Swaffham
- Bottisham
- Fulbourn
- Linton
- Sawston
- Melbourn
- Haslingfield
- Barton
- Comberton
- St Ives

**d) Rural Travel Hubs**

- 4.7 Rural Travel Hubs are planned as small flexible transport interchanges at key locations in South Cambridgeshire, facilitating more sustainable transport networks and aiming to reduce car trips between Cambridge and the surrounding villages. Potential hub locations have been proposed at Oakington, Linton, Shepreth, Swavesey, Foxton, Meldreth, Whittlesford, Sawston, Comberton and Cambourne. The most advanced of these is Oakington, which has been subject to public consultation with potential pilot schemes also in Sawston and Whittlesford.

**e) East West Rail and Cambridge South Station**

- 4.8 On 30 January 2020, the East West Rail Company announced a preferred route option between Bedford and Cambridge with a new station earmarked for Cambourne in South Cambridgeshire. Services are proposed to run between Oxford and Cambridge before 2030, which gives scope to create a transport interchange at Cambourne, opening up connections for surrounding rural settlements and providing swift access to Cambridge and the St Neots/Sandy area (new station).
- 4.9 Plans are currently being developed for Cambridge South Station to serve the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and new housing developments across the Cambridge Southern Fringe. Public consultation on the proposals began on 20 January 2020, which includes three potential locations for the new station and potential for integration with the Guided Busway to better connect surrounding rural areas with this key employment area. Proposed timescales for the station show a targeted opening date before 2025.

**Implications for Greater Cambridge Growth Strategy**

- 4.10 Cambridgeshire's future transport network looks set to be transformed by a suite of interventions designed to tackle congestion within the city and better connect the wider area through sustainable transport options. Key transport corridors radiate out from the city to provide enhanced linkages to surrounding service centres such as St Ives, Waterbeach New Town, Newmarket and Mildenhall, St Neots and Royston and Haverhill. At a more granular level, villages located within or near to these corridors or transport interchanges gain much better and potentially quicker access to key services, facilities and employment areas in Cambridge and the surrounding large settlements. Opportunities may also exist to promote

new villages within or near to these transport corridors, directing growth to the most sustainable locations and creating a sufficient scale of development to incorporate new community infrastructure with long lasting benefits for residents.

## **5.0 SUMMARY IMPLICATIONS FOR GREATER CAMBRIDGE HOUSING DELIVERY STRATEGY**

- 5.1 This study has identified what level of housing need is required in the area up until 2040 and what implications the existing development strategy and future transport interventions might have on the future direction of Greater Cambridge's housing delivery strategy. The findings of this study are summarised below, along with recommendations for future strategic policy making in the area.

### **Housing Requirement**

- 5.2 The success of Cambridge's economic growth has placed increasing pressure on the sub-regional housing market, creating historic undersupply and resulting in increasingly unaffordable house prices and rents. To maintain current economic growth it is highly likely that a *transformational* level of housing delivery will be required both within Cambridge, the edge of Cambridge and rural areas to balance the development strategy. This could mean a requirement to deliver around 27,363 additional homes in Greater Cambridge until 2040.
- 5.3 The majority of this housing delivery is currently predicated on seamless delivery at major strategic growth sites (principally new settlements); however, such delivery is skewed to the north of the district and places an over-reliance on single growth sites. The emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan will therefore need to balance growth needs with other sustainable locations for development, including a supply of small-medium housing sites in rural settlements to ensure sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed (as per para.59 of the NPPF). In doing so, it creates opportunities to rebalance housing needs throughout the district and improve the sustainability of the wider area. Whilst growth on the edge of Cambridge has the benefit of being able to foster more sustainable travel patterns and promote change in behaviours, a greater focus on small-medium housing sites also presents multifarious benefits from a sustainability perspective (as per para.78 of the NPPF), as outlined in Section 3 of this study.

### **Existing Development Strategy**

- 5.4 Previous plans for the Greater Cambridge area have prioritised development within a sustainable hierarchy starting first within Cambridge City, then on the edge of Cambridge, at new settlements close to Cambridge, and lastly at better served villages. Settlement

frameworks have been drawn up to restrict growth in rural areas and direct the majority of development towards the most 'sustainable' locations. This has unfortunately contributed to the "sustainability trap" coined in the Taylor Review back in 2008, where too many communities are caught in a planning system that directs benefits of new development away from their communities.

- 5.5 The current development strategy also presents growing reliance on major strategic growth sites to deliver future housing delivery, which poses inherent risks in terms of slower absorption rates, lack of housing diversity, longer lead-in times and lack of housing distribution particularly to the south of the district where affordability is generally worst.
- 5.6 By aligning the Greater Cambridge housing strategy to boost the supply of small-medium housing sites in rural areas there is significant opportunity to direct housing to sustainable locations and promote sustainability enhancements within rural communities in accordance with paragraph 78 of the NPPF. This produces a number of benefits for rural settlements as outlined in this study and addresses an historic undersupply of housing in these areas and the decline in village services and facilities. To facilitate these improvements, it is clear that village settlement boundaries will need to flex in appropriate locations based on several sustainability criteria. Such criteria should consider the transformative nature of new housing and infrastructure, in particular the emerging transport provisions in the area.
- 5.7 When coupled with growth on the edge of Cambridge, which has the benefit of being able to foster more sustainable travel patterns and promote change in behaviours based on supporting and enhancing existing infrastructure, there is a real opportunity to provide the growth that is needed through a sustainable development strategy tailored to the different locations and able to enhance existing communities through a balancing of the three overarching principles of sustainability; being social, economic and environmental considerations.

### **Transport**

- 5.8 Cambridgeshire's future transport network looks set to be transformed by a suite of interventions designed to tackle congestion within the city and better connect the wider area through sustainable transport options. Key transport corridors radiate out from the city to provide enhanced linkages to surrounding service centres such as St Ives, Waterbeach New Town, Newmarket and Mildenhall, St Neots and Royston and Haverhill. At a more granular

level, villages located within or near to these corridors gain much better and potentially quicker access to key services and facilities in Cambridge and the surrounding large settlements. Opportunities may also exist to promote new villages within or near to these transport corridors, directing growth to locations which are or can be made sustainable (para.103 of the NPPF) and creating a sufficient scale of development to incorporate new community infrastructure with long lasting benefits for residents.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> MHCLG, (2019), The Oxford-Cambridge Arc, Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners.

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Econometrics and SQW, (2016), Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Oxford, Northampton Growth Corridor - Final Report for the National Infrastructure Commission.

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge City Council & South Cambridgeshire District Council, (2019), Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five year Housing Land Supply: Main Document

<sup>4</sup> National Infrastructure commission (NIC), (2017), Partnering For Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc.

<sup>5</sup> Home Owners Association, (2019), What is Build to Rent? (<https://hoa.org.uk/advice/guides-for-homeowners/i-am-buying/build-to-rent/>)

<sup>6</sup> Country Land and Business Association Limited (2018), CLA Policy Briefing 3, Sustainable Villages – Making Rural Communities Fir For The Future.

<sup>7</sup> Cambridgeshire Acre, (2016), Cambridgeshire Rural Services Survey: Results Report.

<sup>8</sup> Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership,(2019), (<https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/transport/transport-projects/cambourne-to-cambridge/cambourne-to-cambridge-background/>)

<sup>9</sup> Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, (2019), The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport Plan: Evidence Base.

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