

Land at Gog Magog Way, Stapleford

Axis Land Partnerships is promoting land at Gog Magog Way Stapleford for delivery of new residential and associated land uses.

The Site & Proposal

The site has an area of approximately 14.3ha and currently comprises agricultural land.

Proposed uses are for the delivery of new housing along with supporting infrastructure such as public open space (including an extension to the consented Countryside Park), sustainable drainage features and ecological enhancements. The site is estimated to have a capacity of up to around 400 dwellings. A conceptual masterplan is provided to illustrate how this level of development might be appropriately provided across the site area.

Suitable forms of vehicular access (including pedestrian & cycle access) can be provided from Gog Magog Way.

The site lies in close proximity to the proposed Cambridge South East Transport project (CSET) and is located between two proposed stops (one on Haverhill Road to the east and one on Hinton Way to the West). When it is delivered CSET will provide a high quality multi modal transport corridor between the site and Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) & Addenbrookes Hospital. It is important to note that development in the proximity of CSET can contribute towards delivery of the project and can also enhance the business case of the project by way of provision of additional users in proximity of the public transport nodes.

In addition, the site lies a short walk and cycle from Shelford railway station which itself is one stop south (approximately a 3 minute journey) of the new Cambridge South railway station, which is scheduled to open in early 2026.

Additional parcels of land under separate ownership that lie adjacent to the west of the Site are also promoted separately by Axis Land Partnerships. If consolidated into a single site allocation (including the existing draft allocation in this area - see ref. S/RSC/HW) the sites could deliver a comprehensive form of development to contribute towards housing and other development needs in the area. An illustrative conceptual masterplan is therefore provided to indicate how this comprehensive form of development might be appropriately arranged across the combined site area. We judge that a comprehensive form of development of this nature could deliver up to around 1250 new dwellings in this location alongside supporting infrastructure and community uses.

Alignment with National Strategy for Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC)

National Growth Strategy for Cambridge

In 2023, the then Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, presented a vision of significant growth in and around Cambridge, with particular focus on the life sciences sector and the pivotal role of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC). Peter Freeman, then Chair of Homes England, was appointed to chair a new Cambridge Delivery Group.

The government's commitment to accelerating growth in Cambridge was restated in Michael Gove's Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) of 26 March 2024¹ and the accompanying Case for Cambridge, with funding for key transport schemes and the development of growth plans relating to the CBC as well as the announcement of the creation of a Growth Company for Cambridge.²

A further WMS of 8 May 2024³ set out specific policy support for 'the early expansion and coherent delivery of this foremost UK life sciences cluster' at CBC. This WMS recognised that housing provision is a barrier to the growth of CBC. The new Growth Company was therefore tasked with supporting 'the accelerated delivery of any associated housing development and the provision of appropriate levels of affordable housing to meet the housing needs of those working at the campus'.

On 4 July 2024 a general election saw a change in Government, with Labour winning and forming a new Government. However, this change in national politics did not affect the continuing focus on Greater Cambridge as a location for significant growth. In his letter to local leaders of 23 August 2024,⁴ and then in his WMS 31 October 2024,⁵ the new Minister of State Matthew Pennycook confirmed the new Labour Government's support for 'ambitious and high-quality sustainable growth in Cambridge and its environs'. The leading role of Peter Freeman was also confirmed with his appointment to a new Cambridge Growth Company.

Supporting the Growth of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus

Alongside the evolution of national policy on Cambridge growth, Cambridge Biomedical Campus Limited (CBC Ltd), which brings together the tenants and landowners of the existing campus, commissioned Lichfields to carry out a review of the future housing needs of the growing campus workforce. The April 2024 report, entitled Cambridge Biomedical Campus Housing Study⁶ suggests that the major challenges for housing provision are affordability and travel accessibility.

With the number of people working at CBC anticipated to grow from 22,000 now to 40,000 in coming years, additional housing demand will be significant. The 2024 Housing Study concludes that there is a need for 4-5,000 affordable homes across tenures. Clearly it would be beneficial both to life sciences/medical business/organisations, and employees alike for homes to be built close to these jobs and with access via existing sustainable transport.

¹ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-03-26/hcws390>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-case-for-cambridge>

³ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-05-08/hcws447>

⁴ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66cdf3f68e33f28aae7e1f67/housing-minister-letter-to-greater-cambridge-leaders.pdf>

⁵ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-10-31/hcws181>

⁶ <https://cambridge-biomedical.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CBC-Housing-Study-Report-Final-May24.pdf>

The 2024 Housing Study does not assess individual sites for their contribution to the housing needs of CBC. Rather, it sets out on page 6 ‘specific asks’ for strategic sites within each of three travel time zones: central catchment, middle catchment and wider catchment. Having regard to the map on page 6, the Site is identified to lie within the middle catchment, and the ask for this area is:

2. Sites well connected but further away from CBC, within our middle catchment, may be suitable to meet our central catchment asks, but otherwise should:

- reflect our ‘basic ask’ providing affordable homes suitable for CBC workers;
- consider provision of housing to meet our specific housing needs of those in the biomedical sectors and professions; and
- reflect our principles on placemaking and enhance accessibility to CBC.

The 2024 Housing Study includes travel times maps for CBC on pages 6 and 25-27. While we agree that these maps give a good overview of the relative travel times, we believe that there is an insufficient level of granularity to guide policy makers.

We have therefore undertaken travel time modelling for the two most relevant modes of transport relevant to the site: cycling and train. The travel isochrone plans are appended to this submission. For cycling, the Site benefits from existing segregated cycle links into the CBC by way of the DNA cycle path, although it is important to note that cycle accessibility to the CBC will be further improved as part of the CSET project. Our modelling shows that cycle access to the Biomedical Campus can be achieved with a travel time of no more than 12 minutes. For train journeys, the Site has excellent pedestrian and cycle links to Shelford station, which will have direct rail services to Cambridge South station when it is opened in early 2026. Journey times from the station to Cambridge South will be approximately 3 minutes. To Cambridge Central the journey time is around 5 minutes.

Growth of the CBC is of international importance, and recognised as such by successive governments. One of the principal barriers to growth is the availability of affordable and accessible housing in close proximity to the CBC. The Site would make a substantial contribution to the identified need for both market housing and, in particular, affordable housing, in a location just a few minutes from the Campus via existing and proposed high quality public transport corridors and which therefore could potentially be linked to employment at CBC.

Helping Deliver a New Local Plan

The strategy for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan set out in the First Proposals is ‘to direct development to where it has the least climate impact, where active and public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live, whilst ensuring all necessary utilities can be provided in a sustainable way’ (S/DS).

Most of the development identified for potential allocation in the First Proposals document prepared by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS) (either existing allocations or new ones) is in locations where the required public transport does not currently exist and the delivery of which is outside the control of the Councils (e.g. Cambourne new allocation, Bourn Airfield, Waterbeach, Cambridge Airport). Other than faster delivery at Northstowe, no significant new allocations have been proposed that utilise and benefit from already functioning public transport infrastructure that has capacity, notably the rail network.

The Site is located in close proximity to existing high quality public transport corridors including the Shelford to Cambridge rail link and the DNA cycle path.

Furthermore, it should be noted that while previous Local Plans have tended to focus additional housing growth to the west, north west and north of the city of Cambridge in locations including Cambourne, Bourn Airfield, Northstowe, and Waterbeach, most of the growth in jobs and employment has taken place to the south and south-east of the city in locations such as the CBC, Babraham Research Campus, Granta Park, the Genome Campus, Melbourn Science Park, and the Chesterford Research Park – indeed significant additional jobs growth in these locations is predicted to occur over the new plan period. Given the significant job growth to the south of Cambridge (both past and future) it is clear that some additional housing growth should be directed to these areas, and particularly in locations that benefit from existing public transport infrastructure such as close to Shelford railway station, rather than on proposed public transport infrastructure yet to be built, which may not ultimately be delivered.

The 2021 First Proposals suggested an average annual housing delivery rate of 2,111 (against a standard method requirement at that time of 1,769 dwellings). The 2023 Development Strategy Update proposed an increase to 2,463 homes per year, an uplift of 7,392 homes over the plan period (not including any buffer for flexibility). Since then, in December 2024, the standard methodology for calculating housing need has been revised, with the annual requirement for Greater Cambridge now standing at 2,309 per year. The local housing evidence base for the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan scheduled for consultation in Autumn 2025 will be revisited.

In addition, the 2023 Development Strategy Update recognised that higher levels of housing growth present delivery challenges. One way of dealing with this suggested in 2023 is a stepped housing trajectory, with higher rates later in the plan period. However, it will be difficult to meet further increases in identified housing need using existing approaches.

The site is readily deliverable with minimal external dependencies. High quality public transport infrastructure and segregated cycle routes, as required by the Local Plan strategy, already exist. Delivery of the site could begin within 3-4 years of allocation, with the majority of the up to 400 homes completed within the first half of the plan period. Therefore, as well as potentially contributing towards the specific needs of CBC, this Site would enable the Greater Cambridge Councils to produce a sound and deliverable local plan, providing housing close to the major concentration of jobs and reducing the need to travel long distances.

Conclusion

The Site is an excellent opportunity for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan to allocate growth for a sustainable development that can be delivered early in the plan period, that supports the growth of the internationally important CBC, that lies on an existing high quality public transport

corridor within a few minutes of Cambridge South and Cambridge Central. The site lies in close proximity to the CSET busway project and could contribute towards the delivery of the project and enhance its business case. This Site is a strong strategic fit with both national and local policies.

Furthermore, the site along with adjacent land parcels also promoted to this Site Submission process presents an opportunity for larger comprehensive development in this highly sustainable location.