Volterra

# Land at South Trumpington

## Employment and housing needs case

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British Land

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# 1. Executive summary

1.1 This Employment and Housing Needs Case has been prepared on behalf of British Land in support of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan 'Regulation 18 Consultation' exercise. The promoter, British Land, owns the Site at South Trumpington, Cambridge and are committed to promoting the Site through the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

1.2 Greater Cambridge is one of the UK's most vital economic assets, home to the largest life sciences cluster in Europe, world-class research institutions, and emerging sectors like AI, Genomics, and Semiconductor Design. With an economy generating £51bn annually, it stands as Europe's fastest growing technology sector, supported by key manufacturing, data storage, and logistics industries that ensure day-to-day operations, and contributes £1bn to the Treasury, making it a global hub of innovation and a cornerstone of the UK's growth strategy.

**£51bn** In **annual turnover** generated by the Cambridge City region.

**308** Greater Cambridge generates **308 patents** per 1,000 residents, **twice the national average.**

**£1bn** Cambridge contributes at least **£1bn annually to the exchequer.**

**£30bn** The University of Cambridge's **total net UK economic impact in 2021/22.**

**1st** **Highest ranked city in the world** for innovation per capita.

**5,000** Greater Cambridge is Europe's largest technology cluster, home to over **5,000 knowledge intensive firms.**

1.3 The Government stated on 28 August 2024 that Greater Cambridge has a vital role to play in this Government's mission to kickstart economic growth. The Cambridge Growth Company has been tasked with identifying the growth capacity of the city region. In addition to the Local Plan preparation, the Cambridge Growth Company is currently developing the evidence but we understand that a core tenant is for "one or more contiguous urban extensions of the city" as a core component of the vision for the growth of Cambridge and the plans are to go further than the local plans, in terms of scale, ambition and timescale.

1.4 The latest evidence on need in Greater Cambridge undertaken by Iceni in September 2025 identified an objectively assessed need for 73,200 jobs and an associated requirement for 48,132 homes (an annual need of 2,292). While the area's stated intention is to meet this need within the plan period, this will now likely need to evolve to align with the Government's broader growth agenda while ensuring the vision can be achieved sustainably, considering infrastructure capacity and deliverability.

1.5 In the context of this broader growth agenda, Iceni's analysis provides a useful foundation for understanding employment and housing need in Greater Cambridge. However, it predates the forthcoming work being led by the Cambridge Growth Company, which is explicitly focused on enabling a more ambitious scale of growth. The Growth Company is developing a new evidence base, with the intention of going beyond the current local plan approach in both scale and ambition.

1.6 Given Cambridge's position at the forefront of the UK's innovation economy, the next stage of evidence will need to test whether Iceni's identified level of need is sufficient to support that ambition. This next phase of plan-making will be critical in assessing whether planning policy and land allocations can genuinely deliver

against the Government's objectives, maintaining Greater Cambridge's global competitiveness and fully capturing emerging opportunities in life sciences, AI and other innovation-led sectors.

## Need for employment space

1.7 Demand for commercial space in Greater Cambridge has been driven by the commercialisation of research at the University of Cambridge, strong global investment in high growth companies, and a thriving start-up and scale-up ecosystem. The area's world-leading innovation and high venture capital inflows has created strong continuous demand for modern, high quality commercial space.

1.8 These trends have led to an imbalance between supply and demand for office and lab space. While lab stock has grown by 232% since 2002, and office space by 59%, availability remains critically low. In 2021, lab vacancy rates were at an unprecedented 0.5%, and in mid-2024 office availability stood at just over 8.0% across Greater Cambridge. Demand for floorspace far outstrips supply, with average annual take-up meeting only 49% of R&D requirements and 69% of office needs.

1.9 Adding to these pressures is the outdated nature of much of Greater Cambridge's commercial stock. Around 70% of the total stock was built before 2000 and fails to meet the needs of modern occupiers. The market evidence points to a pronounced "flight to quality", with occupiers prioritising premium locations and high-quality stock over older accommodation, particularly where businesses are competing for highly skilled staff and need spaces that actively support collaboration and innovation.

**Why here?**

1.10 Retaining and attracting major research/R&D facilities and employers, such as AstraZeneca, is key to the success of the Cambridge region and the UK plc. The top end space has to be in the right location in order for Cambridge and the UK to fully realise its potential in this sector given the competition globally. The site offers the opportunity to do just that.

1.11 In September 2024, Greater Cambridge published evidence on the locational and accommodation needs of key sectors of life science and ICT. The site performs well on many of the key criteria identified in that report, including:

- **Accessibility and location** – getting staff to their place of work is critical. In that context, South Trumpington is a prime location for sustainable development, supported by existing and emerging transport infrastructure, including the Trumpington Park and Ride, Cambridge South Railway Station, the South West Travel Hub, the Melbourn Greenway, and East-West Rail. These strong transport links, combined with its proximity to the CBC and a well-integrated network of active travel routes, will enhance connectivity, reduce car dependency, and create a vibrant, community-oriented environment.
- **Proximity to clusters and growth areas** – the Iceni report, which assesses the employment and housing need within Greater Cambridge, notes that proximity to research centres such as CBC is a key locational priority for some businesses. South Trumpington is located near CBC and well located to maximise the benefits of agglomeration,[1] a key focus of the government.
- **Importance of place-based business destinations** – South Trumpington will be a vibrant, high-quality development, offering a rich mix of cafes, restaurants, leisure facilities, and expansive public open spaces. This amenity-driven environment will create a dynamic and attractive destination for residents, businesses and employees.

[1] The Site is located to the southwest of Cambridge City Centre. Land to the west of the Site forms Trumpington Meadows Country Park. To the south is the M11, beyond which is currently agricultural but is the site of the South West Travel Hub (SWTH) facility. To the east is the A1309 Hauxton Road, and land further east is also in agricultural use. To the north is the development of Trumpington Meadows, which continues to be developed. Part of the Site is currently used as construction welfare/ logistics associated with Trumpington Meadows.

- **Space for start-ups and scale-ups** – South Trumpington has potential to include areas for these emerging businesses, enabling them to grow within the Cambridge ecosystem. British Land's Innovation Advisory Council, led by senior academics and industry experts, further ensures that the commercial could be successful if tailored to life sciences and innovation-focused occupiers.

**Underestimating future demand and delivery challenges**

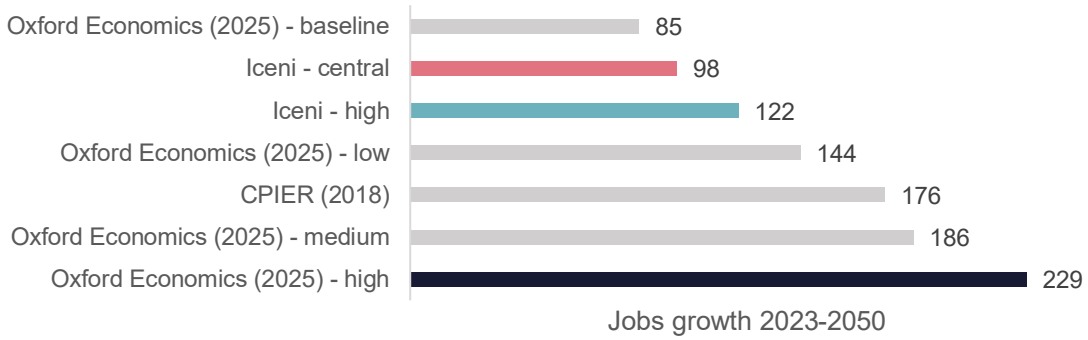
1.12 The Iceni report provides an analysis of Greater Cambridge's commercial space requirements based on job forecasts, historical completions, and market signals. It is estimated that there is a need for 1.22 million sqm of commercial floorspace between 2024 and 2045, with R&D space accounting for almost half of this need.

1.13 Iceni's approach to calculating these requirements combines three evidence sources: employment growth forecasts, recent development trends (completions), and market signals such as vacancy rates and take-up.

1.14 The final figures blend these inputs, applying buffers for market flexibility (10%) and vacancy (7.5%). For office space, Iceni adopt the central employment scenario directly. For R&D, they set a target slightly above the employment-based projections but below recent gross completions. For industrial space, they rely primarily on the 10-year market absorption rate rather than employment forecasts, recognising the limitations of modelling this sector through labour demand alone.

1.15 While this approach provides a structured framework, several aspects warrant scrutiny. The choice of employment scenario, the treatment of historical suppressed demand, the absence of a replacement factor for ageing stock, and the reliance on pipeline supply that may not materialise all affect the reliability of the final figures.

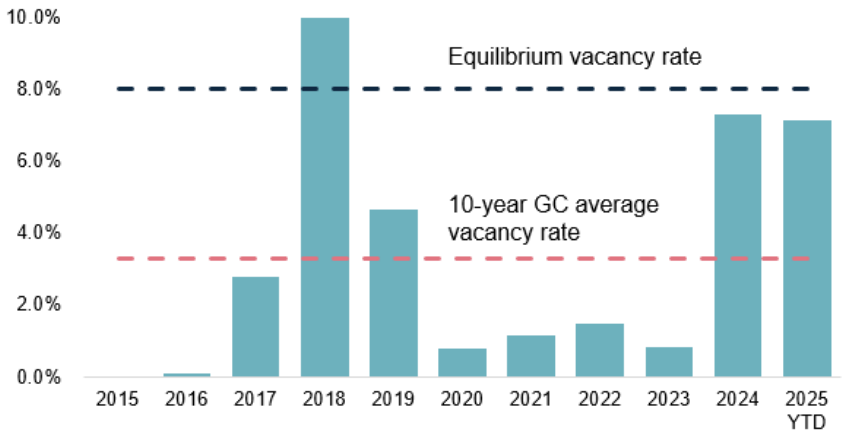
1.16 This required need reflects a central scenario of 73,200 jobs planned for over the period of 2024-2045. Iceni themselves, and other bodies, identify higher employment growth potential reflecting more ambitious growth, which would see a much greater spatial requirement. The most ambitious scenario published to date sees job projections of over twice (229,000) as high as Iceni's central scenario (this is done over the period of 2023-2050 to allow for comparison, and so Iceni's central scenario rises from the 73,200 from 2024-2045, to 98,000 over 2023-2050).




1.17 The Iceni central scenario estimates further do not fully account for suppressed demand, where a persistent lack of available supply has constrained potential growth over the past decade.[2] The following chart

[2] The report's definition of 'R&D' encompasses a wide spectrum of high-tech and innovation-focused activities, including (but not limited to) biotechnology, MedTech, AI, software development, gaming, and advanced manufacturing. This ensures that the commercial space requirements reflect the diverse needs of Greater Cambridge's thriving technology and life sciences ecosystem.

illustrates that R&D vacancy rates in Greater Cambridge have consistently remained below the equilibrium or frictional vacancy level necessary for a healthy market, highlighting this unmet demand.




1.18 Additionally, the estimates focus on net additional floorspace but overlook the need for gross completions to replace ageing or converted stock. Between 2011/12 and 2023/24, data from the Iceni report shows gross completions for R&D space exceeded net completions by 15%, indicating that a dynamic market requires a higher level of gross supply to meet net demand.

1.19 While the Iceni reports provides a valuable foundation, we believe it underestimates the scale of future demand and overestimates the certainty of delivery. Suppressed demand, the need to replace ageing stock, and challenges in delivery all suggest that Greater Cambridge faces a greater shortfall in employment floorspace than currently anticipated, particularly for sites required to retain and enhance Cambridge's global competitiveness in this area. Deliverable sites like this one at South Trumpington will therefore be vital for supplying the flexible, high-quality spaces needed to support the region's strategic growth sectors – particularly as local policy evolves to reflect the Government's intensified focus on Cambridge's role as a driver of national economic growth.

1.20 Although the pipeline quantum looks substantial on paper for offices and labs, planning permission is not the same as delivery.

1.21 The pipeline identified is reliant on a small number of very large schemes: the ten largest commitments account for over half of all outstanding floorspace, and the top twenty account for around three quarters. If even a handful of these stall or are scaled down, the headline supply picture changes materially. Many of these are large, complex projects where phasing, viability and delivery risk are heightened.

1.22 The Council's Office and Laboratory Employment Trajectory (2024) underscores these delivery risks. It shows that a significant share of commitments are at outline stage or have flexible use class permissions, meaning the eventual mix of office versus lab space can shift prior to delivery. As the Council's own evidence notes, proposed developments can change through reserved matters and in response to market conditions, especially where applications are outline or for mixed E(g) components — introducing uncertainty over the type and timing of space that ultimately comes forward.

1.23 High construction costs, infrastructure requirements, and broader economic conditions could further affect whether developers build out all the space they have permission for, and when. A nominal surplus of permitted floorspace does not guarantee that occupiers will have suitable, available space when needed if developers phase construction, defer starts, or shelve projects. Indeed, some local planning reports commissioned by the Councils specifically highlight the importance of monitoring anticipated availability and delivery phasing as part of updating the trajectory and Local Plan evidence base.

1.24 The 2025 EHEU's acknowledgement that additional space will likely still be required in the 2030s despite the current pipeline further underlines that the pipeline must not only exist on paper but be deliverable in a timely manner to truly meet demand.

**Need for mid-tech and logistics**

1.25 A wide number of sectors support the function of the Greater Cambridge economic eco-system. One key component being mid-tech which supports R&D by bridging the gap between research and production, providing facilities for prototyping, testing, storing and scaling innovations, and enabling the translation of discoveries into commercial products.

1.26 Iceni's latest work has identified a critical shortfall of industrial space in the pipeline, with only 28,595 sqm of net supply identified to meet a need of 317,000 from 2024-45. Future development at South Trumpington has potential to provide mid-tech space to allow companies spun out of Cambridge's research centres to build things in Cambridge (rather than relocating production elsewhere). Mid-tech space also creates more diverse job opportunities (mid-skilled technicians etc), aligning with inclusive growth goals.

1.27 Given its location, and accessibility, future development at South Trumpington also has the potential to provide facilities which directly support the operations of strategic organisations in the City such as CBC or CUH.

## Housing need

**Local challenges**

1.28 Housing affordability is a significant challenge for many in Greater Cambridge, with median house prices in Cambridge reaching £490,000 and house price-to-earnings ratios at 11, rising to 14.8 times earnings for those on lower incomes in the health sector. A key challenge for employers is accessing a talent pool/employee base.

1.29 Cambridge's average rent of £1,800 per month further demonstrates the issue, making it the local authority in the East of England with the highest rents outside those in close proximity to London (St Albans, Watford and Three Rivers). These challenges highlight the urgent need for housing solutions tailored to the needs of existing and future working residents to sustain economic growth and support critical sectors like healthcare.

**Meeting housing needs through strategic development**

1.30 Under the central scenario for employment growth (73,200 jobs), the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan states an economic-led housing need of 2,292 dwellings per annum, almost exactly aligned with the current Standard Method figure of 2,295 per annum. A more bullish employment scenario would generate a higher housing need. Iceni's higher scenario of 90,900 jobs for instance produced a housing need of 2,829 per annum.

1.31 Greater Cambridge report a housing supply of 5.5 years. However, there are reasons to question whether this supply is all deliverable. This reported figure has a strong reliance on large scale new settlements and urban extensions. Past delivery rates show that there may be a need for further flexibility to be built in.

1.32 British Land is engaging with important local employers including Cambridge Biomedical Campus and Cambridge University Hospital to discuss their housing need. The CBC Housing Study is clear that many of the 22,000 employees struggle to find housing and the limited affordable housing options affects the ability of CBC employers to recruit and retain staff. British Land will continue to work with CBC and CUH to understand housing need of current and future workers at this strategically important site – with the potential to provide affordable and/or key worker housing.

## Summary

1.33 A shortage of housing and employment space in this part of Greater Cambridge means we are missing key opportunities to cluster development at the most accessible locations, particularly those that can enhance and support existing key sectors, including a thriving technology ecosystem (AI, data science, software development), robotics, healthcare, and biomedicine near the CBC and other major employers. Delivering the right space in the right location is critical. The government emphasises the importance of contiguous urban extensions to maximise the benefits of agglomeration, making growth in this location essential to support strategic clustering and meet future needs. The site at South Trumpington can deliver that.

1.34 This strategically accessible site, with no barriers to delivery, is uniquely positioned to help Cambridge cement and strengthen its role as a European centre for technology development, innovation and life sciences, whilst offering the potential to deliver much needed homes close to high density employment clusters such as CBC, minimising need to travel.

1.35 South Trumpington stands out from other sites in the pipeline:

- **Location and accessibility**. Adjacent to Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Europe's largest clinical research campus, with connectivity via Trumpington Park and Ride, Cambridge South Station, the South West Travel Hub, Melbourn Greenway, and future East-West Rail. Few pipeline sites can match this combination of cluster proximity and sustainable transport access.
- **Addressing the scale-up gap**: In their 2024 report, Iceni identify that 40% of R&D space should serve scale-up businesses (500–2,500 sqm), yet this segment remains acutely underprovided. South Trumpington's scale allows dedicated provision for growing firms that might otherwise relocate or be acquired before reaching their full potential.
- **A complete ecosystem**: The site can deliver office, laboratory, mid-tech, logistics, and housing together, creating the critical mass and mix of uses that individual smaller sites cannot provide. This enables the co-location of research, production, and commercialisation that drives innovation.
- **Homes where they're needed**: Proximity to CBC and other major employers means housing here directly addresses recruitment and retention challenges. Entry-level house prices in Cambridge are nearly 14 times CBC worker earnings; affordable and key worker housing in this location would make a tangible difference.
- **Inclusive growth**: Cambridge's economic success has not been evenly shared. Employment and skills programmes, affordable workspace, and local procurement commitments can ensure the benefits of development reach existing communities. British Land is committed to delivering this on all projects and has an excellent track record, ensuring that the community benefits in line with their Sustainability Strategy.
- **Greater delivery confidence at the right time.** Wider Greater Cambridge supply is heavily dependent on timing and build-out, and evidence notes delivery has been limited in recent years, with some schemes more realistically coming forward post-2030. In the Council's 2024 trajectory, completions in 2020–23 total 73,363 sq m, while a significant share of future supply is phased later in the plan period. South Trumpington offers a more credible near-term proposition at a point when demand for high-quality lab/R&D space remains strong.

# 2. Introduction

2.1 This Employment and Housing Needs Case has been prepared on behalf of British Land in support of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan 'Regulation 18 Consultation' exercise.

2.2 The promoter, British Land, owns the Site at South Trumpington, Cambridge and are committed to promoting the Site through the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

2.3 British Land have a strong reputation of delivering state-of-the-art developments, in the best strategic locations, built and managed to British Land's industry-leading standards. They do this by bringing together their unique expertise in the delivery of complex developments, as well as their award-winning sustainability practices.

2.4 The submission, which this document forms part of, demonstrates that the Site is suitable, achievable, and deliverable for allocation and, ultimately, development, subject to future planning permission(s).

## Purpose of the report

2.5 The purpose of this report is to support British Land's Sites Submission Consultation submission as part of the emerging Local Plan process. The report:

- Examines existing baseline conditions in relation to employment and housing;
- Explores the need for commercial and housing development in Greater Cambridge; and
- Sets out the opportunity of the South Trumpington development to meet identified commercial and housing needs in Greater Cambridge.

2.6 This report concludes that there is significant need for both commercial and housing development. A key strength of future development at South Trumpington is that it does not only contribute to the overall need for commercial and housing development, but that it can provide something that others can't – a state-of-the-art development in a truly accessible location, where resident and employees amenities are on hand and active travel or public transport is the obvious choice. Further, as appropriate, this development could be tailored to existing businesses looking to expand, or external global occupiers that specifically chooses to locate in Cambridge, close to established sectors such as those at CBC. It can operate also operate as its own cluster of knowledge and creativity with the potential to also become a place-based business destination, with space for start-ups, scale-ups, and housing.

## The vision for South Trumpington

2.7 The Vision is to provide an exemplar and deliverable growth proposition for Cambridge, offering a rich mix of uses to potentially include, floorspace for a wide range of jobs (Offices, Science and Technology, R&D, Mid-Tech), a range of housing types including affordable and/or essential worker housing, community facilities, mobility hubs, complementary retail and workspace, and supporting infrastructure. There is an opportunity to extend the Country Park and provide routes through, connecting into the neighbouring Trumpington Meadows local centre.

## The opportunity

2.8 The Opportunity is to provide a deliverable growth proposition for Cambridge: a mixed-use urban extension comprising a range between 400-1,000 homes and up to 260,000 sq. m (GEA) of other floorspace including flexible employment uses and supporting infrastructure. The range of floorspace and land use is necessary

for flexibility at this early stage of the planning process as explained more fully in the supporting 'Vision Document' (AAM) and will be explored further through design evolution and pre-application discussions with Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS).

2.9 To inform the submission, an Illustrative Development Option has been prepared. The Illustrative Development Option as shown in the Vision Document represents a commercially led, mixed-use proposal for the Site (approximately 225,000sq.m GEA and approximately 400 homes). The proposals have the scope to change throughout the process up to the maximum range (of above), subject to design evolution, viability and/or securing additional grant funding. The Opportunity seeks to promote the Site for Use Classes B, E, F, C1, C3 and Sui Generis.

# Report structure

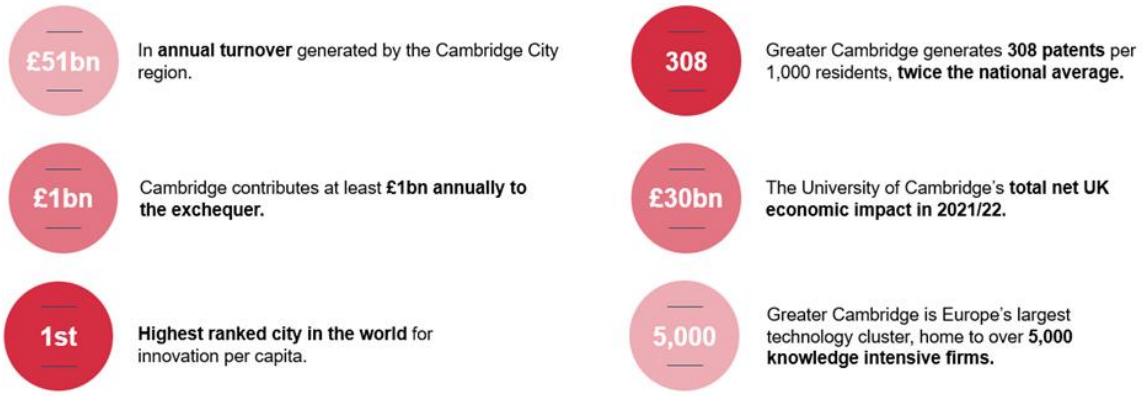
2.10 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **The Greater Cambridge context:** This section covers what makes Greater Cambridge a unique growth hotspot;
- **Why now?** This section explains why timely action is needed to meet Greater Cambridge's economic and community needs. It highlights the need for new commercial space in this location to support the region's innovation ecosystem and then reviews the urgent housing need;
- **Why here?** This sections covers why the South Trumpington site is the perfect location for delivering high quality commercial space and housing in an accessible location near key employment centres;
- **The opportunity**: An infographic summarising the opportunity; and
- **Conclusion**.

# 3. The Greater Cambridge context

Greater Cambridge has experienced remarkable economic success, driven by its world-class research institutions, thriving high-tech and life sciences clusters, and its ability to attract and retain global talent. However, sustaining this success – and unlocking the full potential of the region – requires continued growth. Without it, Cambridge risks losing its competitive edge, limiting its contribution to the UK economy, and stalling progress in critical sectors.

## What makes Greater Cambridge unique?




*Source: Cambridge Ahead, 2024. General Election 2024: The Cambridge Contribution to UK Ambitions Metrics*

3.1 The Greater Cambridge region forms a key part of the evolving UK Industrial Strategy introduced by the new Labour Government.[3] The Industrial Strategy is focused on places making the most of their unique strengths.

3.2 The uniqueness of the Greater Cambridge economy is well documented. It has several attributes that enable the clusters to thrive:

- Access to a highly skilled labour pool and source of entrepreneurs related to the universities;
- Knowledge spillovers and informal learning facilitated by the scale of the sector clustering and interaction between academics, institutions and business; and
- Depth of the supporting supplier base across the range of professional services such as financial and legal.

3.3 Greater Cambridge is one of the UK's most vital economic assets, home to the largest life sciences cluster in Europe, world-class research institutions, and emerging sectors like AI, Genomics, and Semiconductor

[3] Department for Business and Trade, 2024. Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy

Design. With an economy generating over £50bn annually and contributing £1bn to the Treasury, it is a global hub of innovation and a cornerstone of the UK's growth strategy.

3.4 Greater Cambridge's blend of world-class universities, cutting-edge research institutions, and a thriving technology cluster has laid a strong foundation for sustained economic growth. As a result, Cambridge has become one of the most productive cities in the UK.

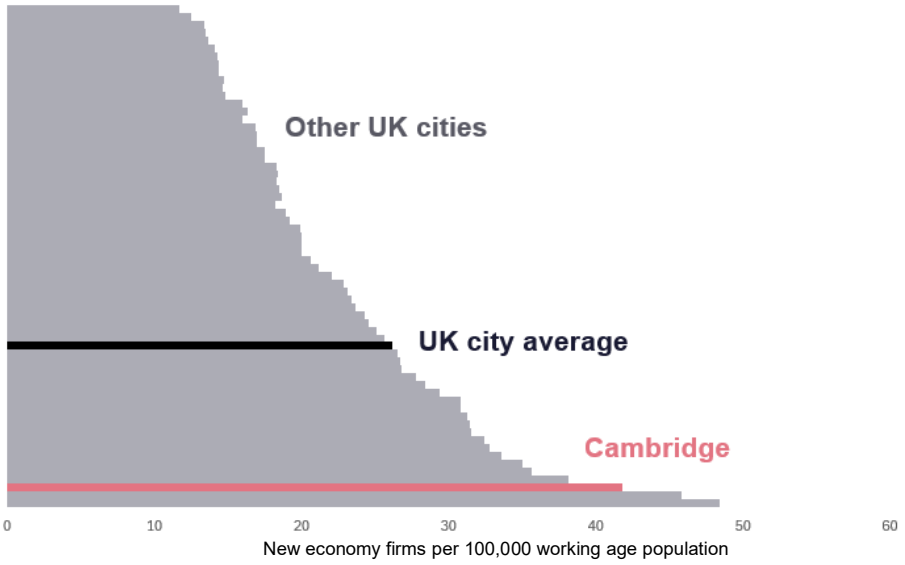
3.5 The University of Cambridge consistently ranks among the top 10 universities worldwide, excelling in subjects such as materials science, engineering (chemical, mechanical, aeronautical, manufacturing, and electrical), and electronics. This provides a steady pipeline of highly skilled graduates, supporting the local workforce and the region's innovation ecosystem.

3.6 Cambridge boasts Europe's largest tech cluster, with over 5,000 knowledge-intensive firms. As of May 2024, 24 businesses born in Cambridge have reached $1bn 'unicorn' status. Recently, Cambridge earned the title of the 'unicorn capital of Europe', with 47.9 unicorns per million inhabitants, far outpacing Luxembourg (17.4) and Oxford (12.9).

3.7 At the forefront of new technologies, Cambridge's knowledge-intensive firms are driving innovation in software, robotics, telecommunications, and gaming. These sectors are pivotal to boosting the UK's productivity and contributing to the national economy. As of 2023, Cambridge ranks as the second highest city in the UK for new economy firms per 10,000 working-age residents, reflecting the calibre of its institutions and talent pipeline.

**Figure 1 – Cambridge has the third highest proportion of new economy firms of all cites in the UK**

New economy firms per 10,000 working age population (2024)




*Source: Centre for Cities, 2025. Cities Outlook 2025*

*Note: New economy firms are defined as new, high-growth industries that are on the cutting edge of technology and are believed to be the driving force of economic growth and productivity.*

3.8 The blend of a high-productivity tech cluster and a globally respected talent pool has significantly increased demand for premium commercial space to support both established firms and emerging market entrants. Cambridge's appeal to knowledge-intensive firms is reinforced by its high-calibre workforce, further driving the demand for commercial space.

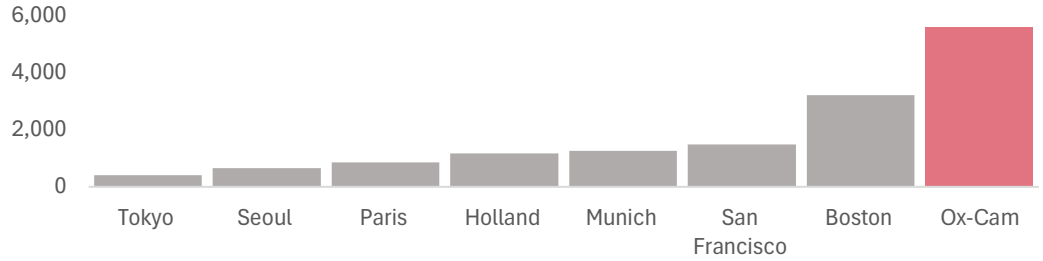
## The Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor

3.9 Cambridge forms a key part of the announced Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster.[4] This initiative is supported by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, major companies like AstraZeneca and Airbus, investors, and top universities. The plan focuses on transforming the region into a global powerhouse for science and technology. Government now refers to this as the "Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor".[5]

3.10 The OxCam region is one of the most innovative regions globally, with a leading amount of scientific publications per capita.

**Figure 2 – The Oxford-Cambridge region is one of the most innovative globally**

Scientific publications per capita across regions




*Source: PublicFirst, 2025. Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster*

3.11 A recent report for the Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster has identified that if the full growth potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster is achieved, the region could add an extra £25bn in Gross Value Added compared to today.

# Why continued growth in Cambridge is essential

3.12 Greater Cambridge's innovation ecosystem and high-value sectors have long played a critical role in driving the UK's productivity and global competitiveness. However, in order for the region to sustain and enhance this position, continued growth is fundamental for several reasons:

- **Maintaining global competitiveness**: Cambridge's unique strengths in life sciences, AI, and semiconductor design have placed the region at the forefront of the UK's industrial strategy. To remain globally competitive in these rapidly evolving sectors, Cambridge must be able to attract new businesses, scale existing firms, and retain world-class talent. Failure to accommodate growth risks ceding ground to international rivals.
- **Supporting the UK's economic and fiscal health**: Cambridge's economy contributes over £50bn a year and provides £1bn directly to the Treasury. Continued expansion of high-value industries will deliver a multiplier effect throughout the national economy, creating quality jobs, stimulating supply chains, and boosting exports. Constraining growth would limit these benefits and weaken the UK's overall economic resilience.
- **Addressing emerging societal and technological challenges**: from clean energy and healthcare innovations to AI-driven productivity gains, the firms born in and attracted to Cambridge are developing critical solutions to today's biggest challenges. Growth in Cambridge's R&D-intensive sectors

[4] PublicFirst, 2025. Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster

[5] HM Treasury, 2025. Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor

accelerates the pace at which new technologies and treatments can be translated into real-world impact.

- **Ensuring a sustainable talent pipeline**: by nurturing a thriving ecosystem, Cambridge can continue to attract and develop a highly skilled workforce drawn from both its universities and global talent pools. As emerging industries demand specialised expertise, enabling growth secures the future of this talent pipeline and, in turn, sustains the region's long-term innovation capacity.
- **Reinforcing the Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster**: with the government's recognition of the Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster as a key growth engine, Cambridge's expansion is integral to maximising this strategic initiative. Achieving the full potential of the Supercluster – including the projected £25bn in additional GVA – depends on the ability of Cambridge to accommodate and integrate new businesses, research institutions, and collaborative ventures.

3.13 In short, continued growth in Cambridge is not only vital for the region's prosperity but is also integral to maintaining the UK's global leadership in knowledge-intensive industries. By ensuring that infrastructure, commercial space, and local skills align with rising demand, Greater Cambridge can remain a powerhouse of innovation, providing lasting benefits to both the local community and the wider UK economy.

# 4. Why now?

4.1 This section explains why timely action is needed to meet Greater Cambridge's evolving economic and community needs. It first highlights market dynamics and gaps in office and R&D space, demonstrating how constrained supply and rising rents threaten the region's innovation ecosystem. It then examines the important mid-tech and logistics sector, followed by an assessment of employment forecasts, policy context, and the overall shortfall in commercial floorspace. Finally, the section reviews the urgent housing need, particularly around affordability and alignment with Local Plan targets, showing how strategic sites like South Trumpington can address these challenges and sustain Greater Cambridge's future growth.

## Commercial need

4.2 Cambridge's exceptional growth and global reputation as a hub for innovation have not only driven economic success but also created significant demand for high-quality commercial spaces to support its ecosystem of research institutions, start-ups, and scale-ups.

## Market dynamics and gaps in office and R&D space

4.3 Greater Cambridge's commercial market has seen rapid growth in recent years, driven by its thriving R&D[6] and life sciences sectors, and the development of innovation and technology related to software, robotics and data analytics. Despite this expansion, demand for office, R&D and lab space continues to outpace supply, leading to low availability, rising rents, and growing pressure on the market.

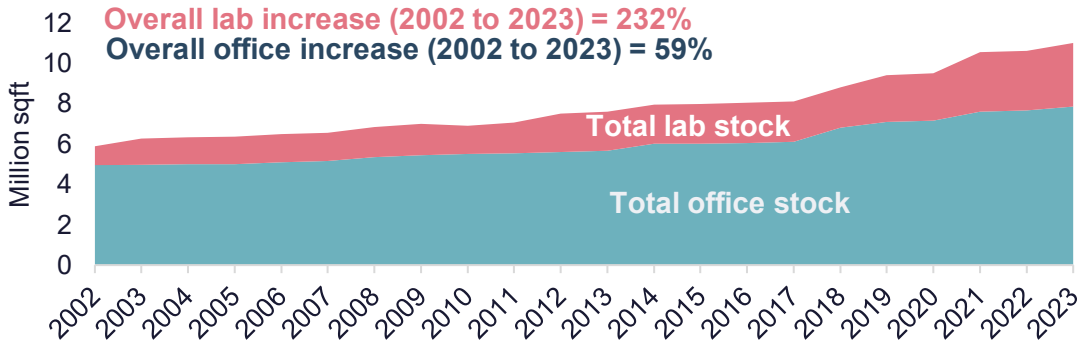
### Historic growth in commercial stock

4.4 Since 2002, Cambridge has experienced significant growth in its office, R&D and lab stock. Office floorspace has increased by 59%, while lab stock has grown at an even faster rate of 232%, reflecting the surge in demand from life sciences and high-tech firms. Today, the region has approximately 7.9m sqft of office space and 3.2m sqft of lab space.

[6] For the purposes of this report, "R&D" is used broadly to include high-value, innovation-driven activities in life sciences, technology, software, advanced manufacturing, robotics, data analytics, and other related fields. It also acknowledges the essential supporting industries – such as logistics and data infrastructure – that underpin daily operations within these sectors.

**Figure 3 – Lab space has seen significant growth across Cambridge**

Supply of office and lab floorspace in Cambridge (2002 – 2023) (sqft)




*Source: Bidwells, 2024. Cambridge: Office & Laboratory Occupational Market Update: The Beehive Centre Redevelopment*

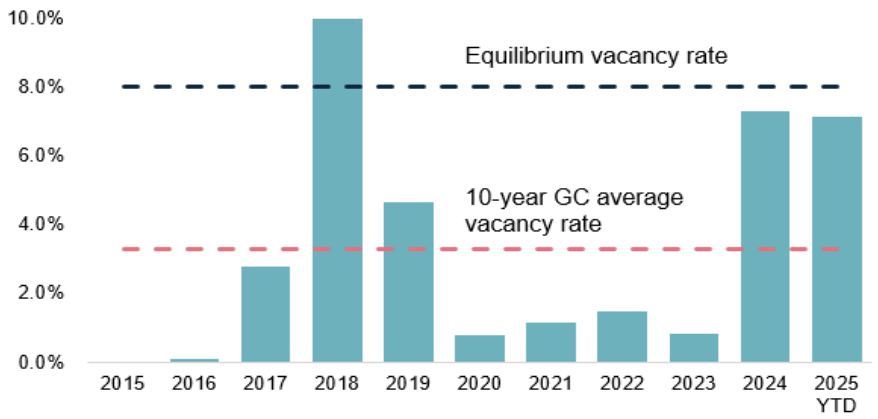
4.5 This expansion has also shifted the balance of Cambridge's commercial market. Lab space now constitutes 29% of total commercial floorspace, compared to just 16% in 2002, highlighting the growing importance of R&D within the local economy.

## Low availability despite expansion

4.6 The availability of R&D space in Greater Cambridge has been constrained over the past decade, with vacancy rates reaching as low as 0.5% in recent years (see **Figure 4**).[7] Such tight conditions highlight the urgent need for new supply to meet market demands.

**Figure 4 – The vacancy rate in Greater Cambridge for R&D floorspace has been consistently below 8%**

Vacancy rates for office and laboratory floorspace (2015 – 2025 YTD) (as defined by CoStar)

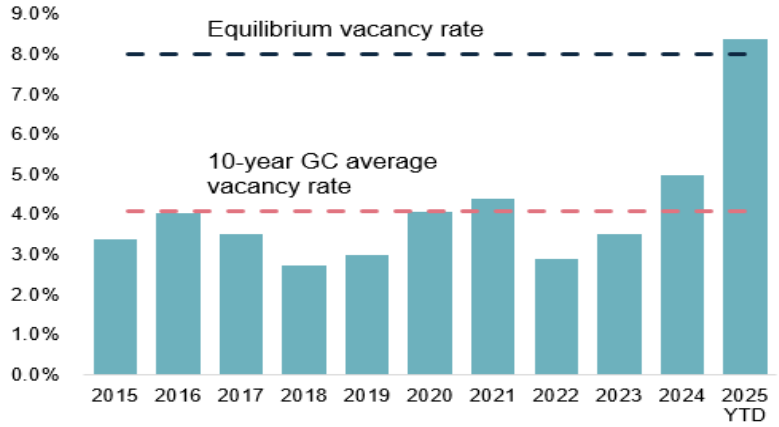



*Source: CoStar, 2025.*

[7] CoStar, 2025.

**Figure 5 – Similarly, the vacancy rate in Greater Cambridge for office floorspace has been consistently below the equilibrium vacancy rate**

Vacancy rate for office floorspace in Greater Cambridge (2015 – 2025 YTD) (as defined by CoStar)

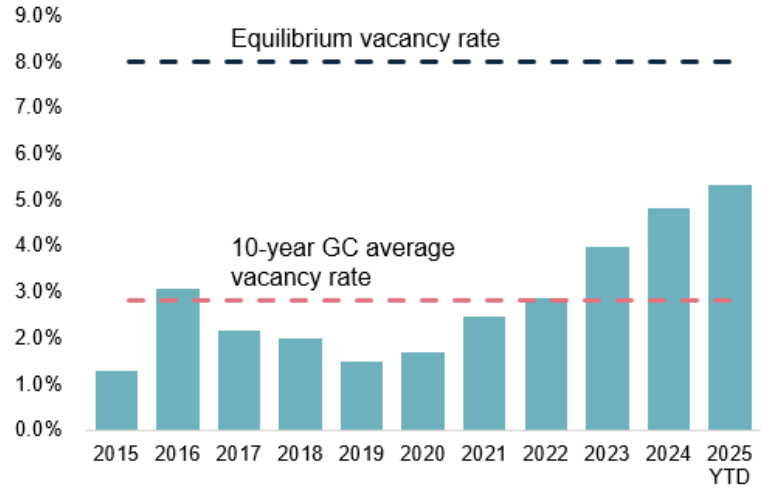



*Source: CoStar, 2025.*

4.7 The situation is even more pronounced in Cambridge City, within which the site sits. **Figure 6** shows that Cambridge City's 10-year average R&D vacancy rate sits at just below 3%, well below both the 8% equilibrium and the Greater Cambridge average. For most years between 2015 and 2022, vacancy remained below 3%, indicating virtually no slack in the market. Even with recent increases to around 5% in 2024-25, vacancy remains below equilibrium levels. This geographic specificity matters: sites closer to the city centre and key clusters like Cambridge Biomedical Campus experience stronger demand pressures than the Greater Cambridge average suggests, and South Trumpington is positioned within this tighter market geography.

**Figure 6 – Within the city centre specifically, the office vacancy rate is very low**

Vacancy rate for office floorspace in Cambridge City (2015 – 2025 YTD) (as defined by CoStar)



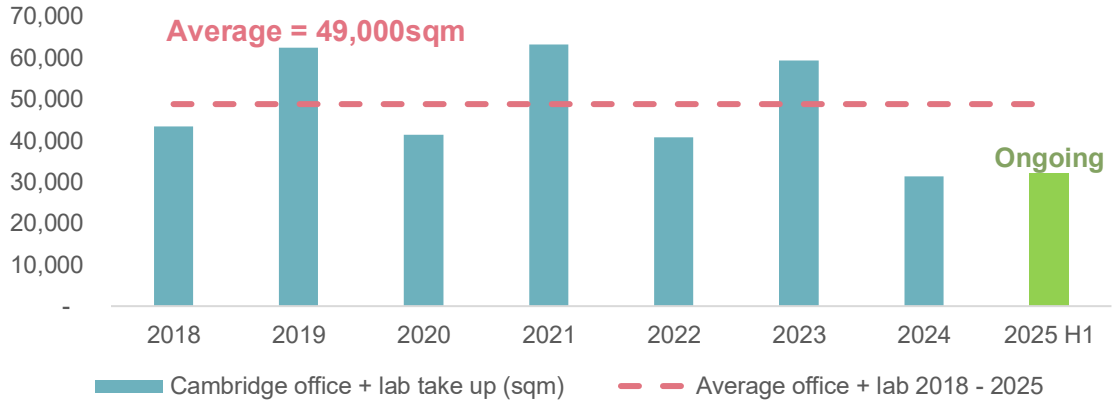

*Source: CoStar, 2025.*

## Demand and take up trends

4.8 Demand for commercial floorspace in Cambridge has been persistent, with annual take-up averaging 49,000 sqm since 2018 (see **Figure 7**).

**Figure 7 – There has been consistently high take-up of office and lab floorspace in Cambridge since 2018**

Take up of office and lab floorspace in Cambridge (2018 – 2024) (sqm)

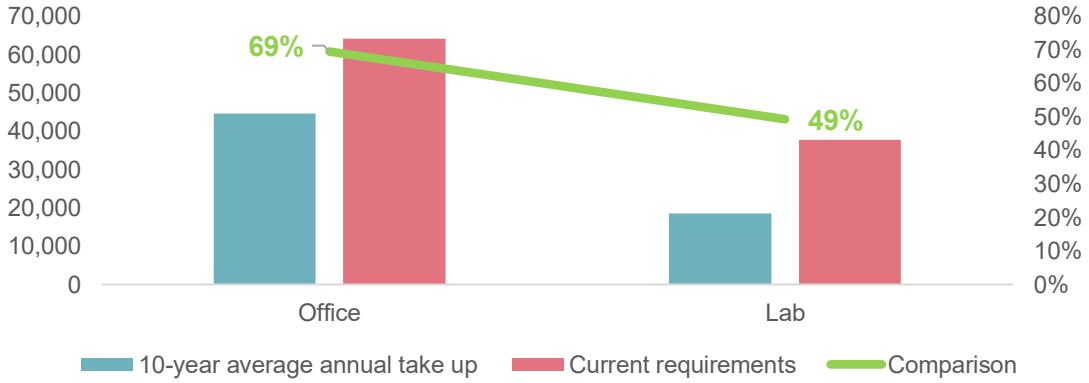



*Source: Savills, 2025. Spotlight: Golden Triangle Offices & Laboratories*

4.9 A recent Bidwells study indicates a current requirement of just over 60,000 sqm for office space and just under 40,000 sqm for lab space in Cambridge. **Figure 8** shows the current annual requirement for both office and lab space has exceeded the average take up of office and lab floorspace across Cambridge over the last 10-years. The average take-up for office space represents 69% of the current office requirement, while R&D take up meets just 49% of demand, highlighting the widening gap between what the market can deliver and what is required to sustain growth.

**Figure 8 – Current demand for office and lab space is higher than average take-up**

Current office and lab requirement in Cambridge compared to average take-up over the last 10-years




*Source: Bidwells, 2025. Offices and Labs: Cambridge – Arc Market Databook*

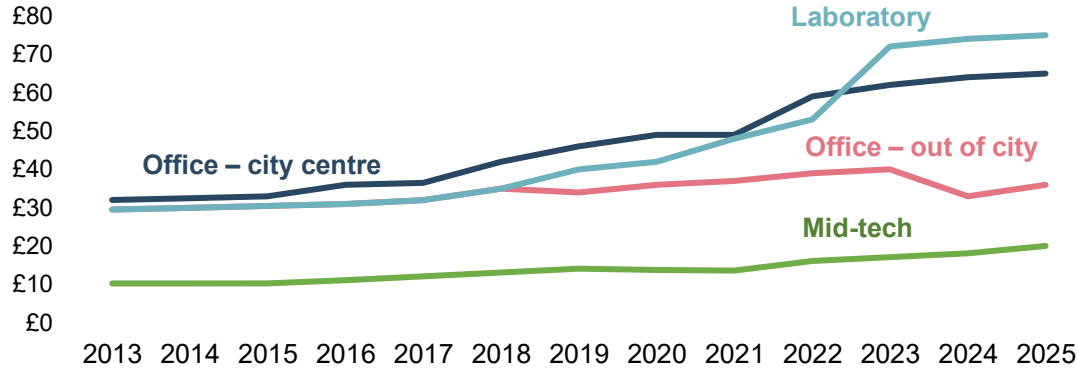
## Rising rents due to supply constraints

4.10 The supply-demand imbalance is further reflected in the steep rise in rents across the region. Laboratory rents have increased by 154% since 2013, with city centre office rents up 103% and mid-tech rents rising by 96% (see **Figure 9**). This sharp increase demonstrates the critical need for new, high-quality commercial developments to enable Greater Cambridge to maintain its position as a global leader in innovation.

4.11 Recent market evidence shows that prime laboratory rents in Cambridge are now being quoted at around £77 per sqft, and this upward pressure is expected to continue.[8] Indeed, Savills anticipates fitted laboratory rents in Cambridge could approach £100 per sqft by 2026 as the shortage of fitted space persists.[9]

**Figure 9 – Commercial rental values in Cambridge have been increasing substantially**

Rental value per sqm of different types of commercial floorspace in Cambridge




*Source: Savills, 2024. Spotlight: Golden Triangle Offices & Laboratories*

## Challenges in the existing commercial supply

4.12 A key challenge to meeting the need for office, R&D and lab space is the outdated nature of the existing commercial stock. While the region has seen considerable expansion in its commercial space over the years, much of the available supply consists of older, less desirable properties that fail to meet the needs of modern occupiers, particularly those in R&D and life sciences.

4.13 Approximately 70% of Greater Cambridge's commercial space was built before 2000, and these properties have the highest availability rates.[10] Market reports highlight a "flight to quality" in Cambridge's commercial real estate. Take-up activity is concentrated on Grade A office and new lab developments such as One Cambridge Square, while older or secondary buildings record higher availability and are less attractive to occupiers seeking modern, high-spec R&D and office space.[11]

4.14 The preference for modern, high-quality spaces highlights the inadequacy of the existing stock. Businesses seeking state-of-the-art labs, R&D space and offices often struggle to find suitable options, as availability is

[8] Cushman & Wakefield, 2025. UK Life Science Marketbeat Report

[9] Savills, 2023. Life Sciences Outlook

[10] CoStar (2025)

[11] Savills, 2024. Spotlight: Good growth for Cambridge

primarily concentrated in older buildings that are no longer fit for purpose. The shortage of premium facilities is particularly critical for R&D occupiers, who require cutting-edge infrastructure to support their activities.

## Importance of mid-tech and logistics

4.15 The recent evidence base update notes that industrial demand "has risen considerably in recent years and supply has failed to keep pace." This is due to growth in manufacturing, warehousing (including e-commerce logistics), and related "mid-tech" uses.[12] Greater Cambridge's booming population and businesses drive more demand for warehouses (for construction materials, consumer goods, lab supplies, etc.), but very little new industrial land has been allocated in the past decade.

4.16 Mid-tech supports R&D by bridging the gap between research and production, providing facilities for prototyping, testing, and scaling innovations, and enabling the translation of discoveries into commercial products. These spaces allow companies spun out of Cambridge's research centres to build things in Cambridge (rather than relocating production elsewhere). It also creates more diverse job opportunities (mid-skilled technicians etc), aligning with inclusive growth goals. While not yet fully recognised in national policy, mid-tech overlaps significantly with life sciences and advanced manufacturing, spanning use classes between R&D and storage.

4.17 Examples of thriving mid-tech operators in the area include The Technology Partnership (TTP Group) and Cambridge Consultants. TTP, a technology and product development company based in Cambridge with an expanding global presence, has grown its workforce. Meanwhile, Cambridge Consultants – another world-leading product development and technology consultancy – continues to scale its operations and employ hundreds of engineers, designers, and mid-skilled technicians. Their expansions illustrate the dynamic, high-growth nature of mid-tech in Cambridge, highlighting the region's capacity to nurture a broad range of technology enterprises.

4.18 The 2025 Greater Cambridge Warehouse and Industrial Space Needs report notes Greater Cambridge's policy position on mid-tech. They confirm that there are mid-tech firms seeking space, requiring "a mixed space typology for R&D prototyping and testing, often associated with university start-ups or hose connected with science park businesses".[13] This report notes further evidence of a growing demand for space in this sector:

- **Rapidly evolving space needs:** "Based on engagement feedback, mid-tech occupiers are most likely to see rapid changes in space requirements as the business evolves. This would include occupying 'mixed B' class space able to carry our wet/dry lab R&D, production, storage / distribution and write up space starting at of 90-500 sqm (1,000 - 5,000 sqft) and rising through scale up towards 1,900 sqm (20,000 sqft). Beyond this a business might be seeking a more formal and larger production facility more akin to a B2 manufacturing plant."
- **Lifecycle role for businesses:** "There are examples of mid-tech / advanced manufacturing businesses in Greater Cambridge who have moved up through several industrial premise sizes and having reached c.1,900 sqm (20,000 sqft) would need to look beyond to a wider area for a next expansion. This may involve expanding their production phase nationally or internationally once the local test phase is completed. For some businesses the mid-tech phase is effectively a life cycle stage of prototype testing that can be a stepping stone, if successful, to a much larger operational requirement for mass production. This could be a national of international premises search."

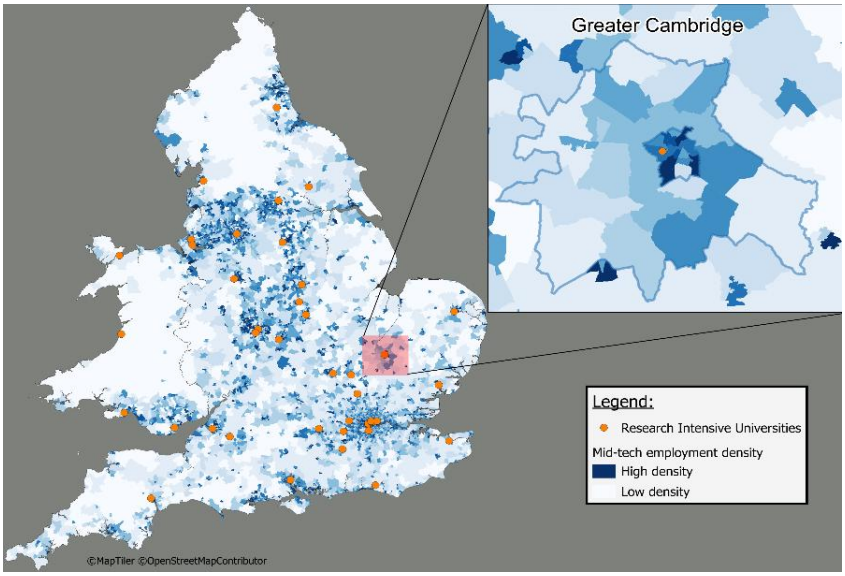
4.19 **Figure 10** evidences how Cambridge is one of the nation's central hubs for mid-tech activity.

[12] Iceni, 2023. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update

[13] Iceni, 2025. Greater Cambridge Warehouse and Industrial Space Needs report

**Figure 10 – Cambridge is a hub for mid-tech employment**

Mid-tech employment density (jobs per hectare) by MSOA




*Source: ONS, 2025. Business Register and Employment Survey.*

# Identified need

4.20 The current adopted local plans for Greater Cambridge collectively plan for 44,000 jobs between 2011 and 2031, split equally between Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (22,000 jobs each).

4.21 The Emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan identifies a higher employment need of 73,200 additional jobs for the period 2024–2045.[14]

4.22 There is a further high scenario, which projects a need for 90,900 jobs over the same period (see **Table 1**). This reflects updated evidence and highlights the growing ambitions for the region's economic development.

[14] Iceni, 2025. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update

**Table 1 – The employment needs across Greater Cambridgeshire have been significantly uplifted at the latest update**

Total and yearly employment uplift need

| Metric | Greater Cambridge Adopted Local Plans (2011 – 2031) | Greater Cambridge Emerging Local Plan (2024 – 2045) – central scenario | Greater Cambridge Emerging Local Plan (2024 – 2045) – higher scenario |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plan period jobs need | 44,000 | 73,200 | 90,900 |
| Yearly uplift | 2,200 | 3,486 | 4,329 |

*Source: Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, 2015. Development Strategy Update. Greater Cambridge, 2023. Development Strategy Update*

4.23 The Government stated on 28 August 2024 that Greater Cambridge has a vital role to play in this Government's mission to kickstart economic growth. The Cambridge Growth Company has been tasked with identifying the growth capacity of the city region.[15] A core ambition of the Cambridge Growth Company is for one or more contiguous urban extensions of the city […] in order to maximise the benefits of agglomeration."[16]

## Commercial floorspace needs

4.24 The Iceni report provides an analysis of Greater Cambridge's commercial space requirements based on job forecasts, historical completions, and market signals. It is estimated that there is a need for over 1.2 million square metres of commercial floorspace between 2024 and 2045, with R&D space accounting for almost half of this need.[17] **Table 2** shows the breakdown by use class, and shows how this is an increase compared to the previous identified need in the 2023 Iceni report. In particular, there is a notable increase in need for space in the industrial and warehouse sector of 117,000 sqm, recognising the importance of sectors such as mid-tech have to play in the wider Greater Cambridge ecosystem.

[15] Appointment of Cambridge Growth Company Chair: Letter from Matthew Pennycook MP. Published 31 October 2024.

[16] Appointment of Cambridge Growth Company Chair: Letter from Matthew Pennycook MP. Dated 30th October 2024.

[17] Iceni, 2025. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update

**Table 2 – R&D accounts for almost half of the projected employment floorspace need**

Employment floorspace need by sector

| Sector | Recommended need (2020 – 2041) (sqm) | Recommended need (2024 – 2045) (sqm) |
|---|---|---|
| Office | 289,700 | 302,600 |
| R&D | 600,000 | 600,000 |
| Industrial / warehouse | 200,000 | 317,000 |
| **Total** | **1,089,700** | **1,219,600** |

*Sources: Iceni, 2023. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update; Iceni, 2025. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update*

4.25 These targets are derived differently for each use type:

- **Office:** Iceni adopt the central scenario labour demand result directly. They discount the higher scenario (349,500 sqm) and gross completions (534,900 sqm) on the basis that hybrid working patterns post-COVID will reduce office space needs per worker. Net absorption figures (600,900 sqm) are also discounted as potentially inflated and not reflecting post-COVID market conditions.
- **R&D:** Iceni set the target higher than both the central (454,400 sqm) and higher (593,900 sqm) labour demand scenarios. However, they set it below the gross completions figure (636,700 sqm), noting this was inflated by a single large hospital expansion (c.60,000 sqm) in 2018-19. Iceni acknowledge that recent low delivery in 2021-23 may have artificially lowered the completions trend.
- **Industrial:** Iceni reject both the central (132,400 sqm) and higher (156,000 sqm) labour demand scenarios as too low. Instead they base the requirement on the 10-year market absorption rate (270,000 sqm), with standard flexibility and vacancy adjustments bringing this to 317,000 sqm. This sits well below gross completions (407,500 sqm) but substantially above both net completions (61,700 sqm) and the labour demand models.

## Reasons for underestimating commercial needs

4.26 There is reason to believe that Greater Cambridge's real need for space may be above that of the requirements set out in **Table 2**. In August 2024, the Government highlighted Greater Cambridge's key role in driving economic growth, tasking the Cambridge Growth Company with identifying the region's growth capacity. The company is developing an evidence base, with plans to *exceed local plans* in scale and ambition.[18] Ambition of this scale can only be met with sufficient infrastructure.

**1 – The use of conservative employment projections**

4.27 The identified need for space in the office and R&D sectors as shown in **Table 2** is underpinned by the employment projections in Iceni's central scenario. There are several indicators that job growth is likely to be higher than Iceni's central scenario:

- **Iceni's higher scenario:** Iceni suggest that the higher growth scenario (see **Table 1**) is plausible and show that Greater Cambridge has experienced sustained periods of stronger than modelled demand.
- **CPIER forecasts suggest higher growth:** The Cambridge and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) developed employment forecasts that are almost 60% higher than Iceni's central scenario of a similar period (115,500 vs 73,200). Independent assessment by the University of

[18] Appointment of Cambridge Growth Company Chair: Letter from Matthew Pennycook MP. Published 31 October 2024.

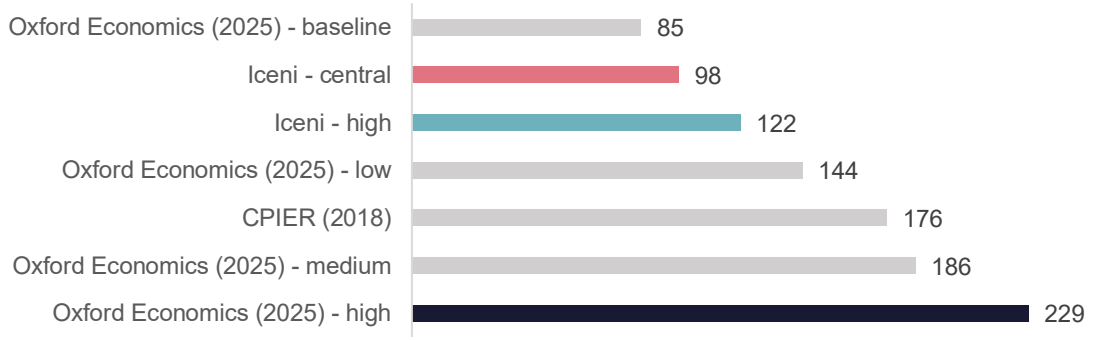
Cambridge concluded that CPIER "could be regarded as a fair and level-headed assessment of the employment growth potential of the city region."

- **Cambridge Ahead data shows substantially higher recent growth:** Research by the Centre for Business Research at the University of Cambridge shows actual job growth of 4.5% per year from 2018–2024, compared to only 1.5% captured in official ONS data.[19] Cambridge Ahead's methodology uses Companies House data verified through direct checks with local employers, making it more accurate than ONS survey-based methods. Iceni's forecast growth rate of 1.3% per year appears conservative when compared with this more reliable evidence, particularly as Iceni acknowledge the Cambridge Ahead data but do not incorporate it into their modelling.
- **Oxford Economics modelling shows significantly higher potential if constraints are removed**: Oxford Economics recently developed multiple scenarios for Greater Cambridge's growth potential. Iceni's central scenario (73,200 additional jobs 2024-2045) falls below all Oxford Economics scenarios except the baseline forecast. The Oxford Economics baseline represents a policy-neutral outlook with no interventions, projecting that Cambridge will not maintain its historical growth pace. By contrast, Oxford Economics' low, medium and high scenarios (118,000 to 286,000 additional jobs up to 2045) model what could be achieved if significant interventions are delivered, including 100,000-150,000 new homes, 22-33m sq ft of commercial floorspace, and supporting infrastructure.[20]

4.28 **Figure 11** illustrates higher employment growth potential outlined in alternative studies relative to those used in Iceni's 2025 EHEU. This employment growth is presented over 2023-2050 rather than the plan period of 2024-20245, this is to allow for comparison purposes across the different forecasts. For example, Iceni's 90,900 jobs in the higher scenario is from the period of 2024-2045 in EHEU 2025. Projecting forward the average annual growth this factors in, results in a total of 122,000 new jobs over 2023-2050. This approach is taken with all scenarios.

**Figure 11 – By 2050, the Oxford Economic high scenario would result in 130,000 more jobs than what is forecast in Iceni central forecast**

Potential growth scenarios inferred by Cambridge employment growth studies (2023 – 2050)




*Source: Iceni, 2025. EHEU 2025; Cambridge Network, 2025. Cambridge Ahead: Gold-standard research: Cambridge growing faster than UK economy; MHCLG, 2025. Greater Cambridge: Growth Scenarios; Cambridgeshire Futures Modelling Team, Martin Centre for Architectural and Urban Studies. Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge. Measuring the impacts of the housing and transport infrastructure gaps on employment growth in the Greater Cambridge city region ( Version 3c; August 2024).*

*Note: These employment projections are not all over the same time period, however the projections are annualised to allow for indicative comparison over the draft plan period.*

[19] Cambridge Network, 2025. Cambridge Ahead: Gold-standard research: Cambridge growing faster than UK economy

[20] Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/. Accessed December 2025

### 2 – Suppressed demand due to constrained supply

4.29 Over the past decade, the commercial property market in Greater Cambridge has been supply-constrained within high-demand sectors like R&D, product development, software, robotics and life sciences. This constrained supply has prevented the market from meeting its full growth potential in these key sectors or national and global significance. The concept of suppressed demand arises when a market operates below equilibrium, meaning there is unmet demand that would have materialised had adequate supply been available.

4.30 The Cambridge innovation economy is globally competitive, attracting international firms and contributing about £1 billion annually to the Exchequer. This unmet demand not only risks limiting Greater Cambridge's growth but also challenges the UK's global innovation leadership.

4.31 Net completions over the past decade fail to capture this suppressed demand, as they only reflect the constrained market environment. Historical data indicates that Greater Cambridge could have attracted significantly more growth in key sectors if supply levels had allowed the market to function at equilibrium.

4.32 One of the clearest market signals of suppressed demand is persistently low vacancy rates. It is broadly accepted that, in a well-balanced property market, a certain level of empty space is healthy. An 8% vacancy rate is often cited as the 'equilibrium', allowing for normal tenant movement and choice without excessive pressure on rents.[21]

4.33 As evidenced earlier in this report (**Figure 4, Figure 5** and **Figure 6**), Greater Cambridge's vacancy rates for R&D have been consistently below this 8% equilibrium. For much of the 2010s, R&D property vacancy in Greater Cambridge has hovered around 1%. This indicates that there was effectively no slack in the property market. The situation is more pronounced in prime locations. For instance, for the Cambridge City area (which the South Trumpington development sits partially within) office 10-year average vacancy rate sits at only 2.8%.[22]

4.34 In recent years, vacancy rates have started to rise toward normal levels in 2024-25. However, this should not be misread as a sign that demand has been met. Rather, it represents only the beginning of relief after many years of suppressed demand. The prolonged period of sub-equilibrium vacancy throughout the 2010s and early 2020s indicates substantial unmet demand that has accumulated over more than a decade and has not been fully addressed by recent supply increases.

4.35 Wider market signals of suppressed demand in Greater Cambridge's office and R&D sectors include:

- **Rising rents**: Greater Cambridge has seen notable rental growth even in recent years, outpacing inflation. Prime office rents rose on the order of 4% in 2023–24, with lab rents not far behind, signalling that demand has continued to exceed supply (forcing prices up). This rental uplift is a direct consequence of tenants competing for too little space.
- **Pre-letting of new developments**: When quality space is delivered, occupiers snap it up in advance. A prominent example is Arm's expansion. The tech company pre-let the entire 95,000 sqft Optic building at Peterhouse Technology Park before it even opened. Other recent examples include Samsung pre-letting 35,000 sqft of Grade A space at One Cambridge Square, and Siemens pre-letting a similar amount of space in Brooklands.[23] This illustrates demand concentrating on prime new space rather than

[21] This figure was used in the London Office Policy Review 2017, which notes that past London Plan EiPs have recommended adding 8% additional to the floorspace projections to allow for a frictional rate of vacancy. This is broadly consistent with Greater Cambridge evidence (Iceni, 2023, Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update) where 7.5% is added to need to allow for choice and churn.

[22] CoStar, 2025

[23] Knight Frank, 2023. Cambridge Market

older stock. Such ongoing pre-lets of key schemes illustrate how pent-up demand quickly absorbs any new supply coming to market.

- **Unmet active requirements**: Industry analysis in mid-2025 found active requirements totalling around 100,000 sqm for offices and labs in Cambridge (see **Figure 8**). This means many companies are actively searching for space. Savills observes that the delivery of upcoming lab projects "will enable an increase in take-up", since the supply of this product was historically constrained.

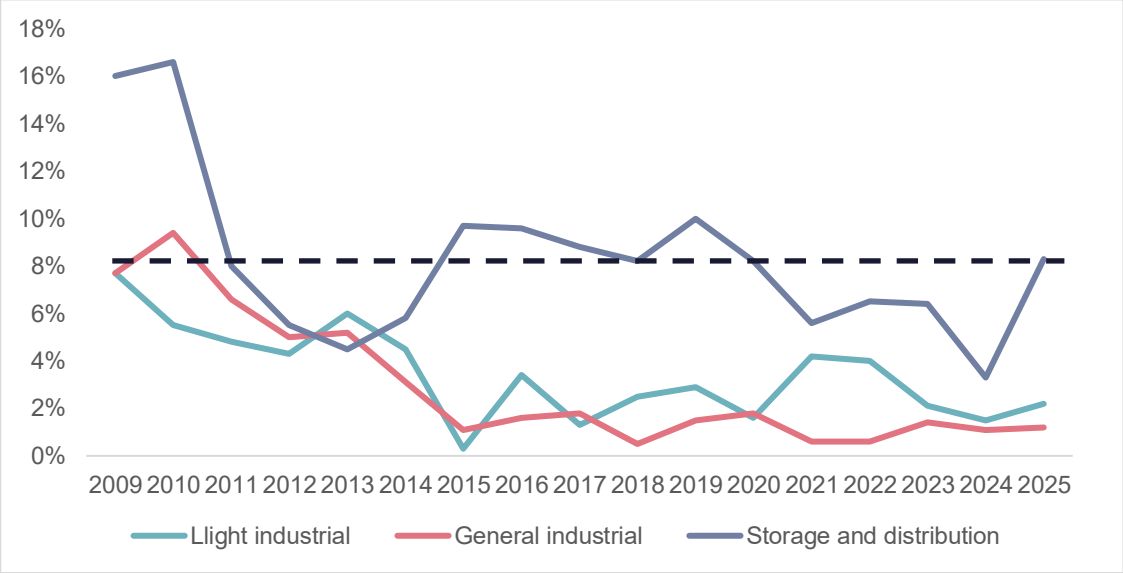
4.36 In practice, recognising suppressed demand means planning for more floorspace than a straight-line trend of past net completions would suggest. Iceni note that detailed calculations regarding suppressed demand have not been considered for office and R&D markets. Iceni suggest that these sectors align more closely with labour demand models and cite difficulty in obtaining good time series data for net absorption in the labs / R&D sector. Planning for these sectors therefore builds in no allowance for recovering from historical suppressed demand.

4.37 The explicit recognition and quantification of suppressed demand has, to date, typically been applied primarily in relation to industrial land rather than office or R&D space. This sector has also experienced constrained availability in Greater Cambridge.

4.38 For the industrial / warehousing market which has also experienced constrained availability (dropping below 5% vacancy rate in recent times), Iceni do address suppressed demand in paragraph 5.22 of the EHEU 2025. The most recent figures from CoStar show a vacancy rate below 8% for light industrial, general industrial and storage space (see **Figure 12**).

**Figure 12 – The vacancy rate across light industrial and general industrial space has remained consistently below the frictional vacancy rate over the past ten years**

Vacancy rate by employment use (%, 2009-2025)




*Source: CoStar, 2026. CoStar Analysis*

4.39 However, Iceni generally avoid detailed suppressed demand models as they do not align with Planning Practice Guidance. Although Iceni estimates that the final industrial need of 317,000sqm would be "approximate to the recommended" need at a 5% availability rate, this final figure was entirely driven by applying the standard 7.5% vacancy requirement and a 10% flexibility margin to the market absorption trend

(estimated at 270,000sqm). Therefore, while the outcome approximates a suppressed demand calculation, the methodology did not include a dedicated model for recovering past suppressed requirements. Including such requirements would see a substantial increase in the need.

**3 – The need for gross completions**

4.40 The Iceni forecasts focus on net additional floorspace, which refers to the net increase in commercial stock after accounting for space lost to conversion or obsolescence. However, this approach does not fully reflect the need for new floorspace, as it overlooks the necessity for gross completions to replace ageing, less desirable, or converted stock.

4.41 The Iceni report itself acknowledges that a dynamic market requires a higher level of gross completions to sustain net growth. Historical data supports this. Between 2011/12 and 2023/24, data from the Iceni report shows gross completions for R&D space exceeded net completions by 15%, indicating that a dynamic market requires a higher level of gross supply to meet net demand.[24] **Table 3** summarises gross and net completions for different sectors, showing that gross completion have been much higher than net for some sectors. This demonstrates that maintaining a dynamic and competitive market capable of attracting high-value occupiers requires significantly more supply in gross terms than the net figures suggest.

**Table 3 – Gross completions exceed net completions for all floorspace types**

| Sector | Net completions | Gross completions | Gross-net % uplift |
|---|---|---|---|
| B1 Mix | 92,900 | 130,900 | 41% |
| Office | 145,100 | 388,900 | 168% |
| R&D | 413,400 | 475,300 | 15% |
| Light industrial | 17,700 | 65,300 | 269% |
| Industrial | -26,200 | 120,900 | - |
| Warehousing | 33,300 | 159,900 | 380% |
| **Total** | **676,200** | **1,341,100** | **98%** |

*Source: Iceni, 2025. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update*

4.42 Despite this, the Iceni report does not recommend incorporating a replacement allowance, citing positive market outcomes and viability in Cambridge. This position appears inconsistent with the historic data, which highlights the essential role of replacement space in sustaining growth and meeting future demand.

**4 – The need to replace aging stock**

4.43 The need to plan for extra gross floorspace is especially important given the age profile of Greater Cambridge's commercial stock (as discussed in **paragraph 4.10**). A large portion of existing employment premises are old and increasingly unfit for modern business needs. According to the most recent available CoStar data, 70% of commercial stock across Greater Cambridge was built before 2000.[25]

[24] Iceni, 2025. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Needs Update

[25] CoStar, 2025

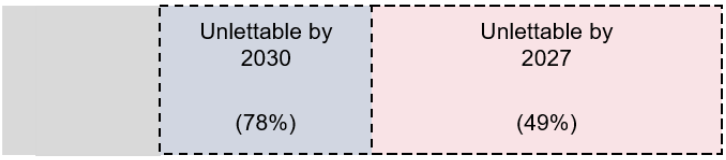
4.44 Commercial lettings in England and Wales are currently prohibited if the property has an EPC rating of F or G. Since April 2023, this applies to all leases, including ongoing tenancies, unless an exemption is registered.[26]

4.45 In 2021, the Government proposed tightening Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards to require EPC C by 2027 and EPC B by 2030. These proposals were paused in late 2023. The current Government has not reinstated the timetable but has signalled support for raising standards in future.[27]

4.46 While the precise trajectory remains unclear, regulatory pressure to improve energy performance is expected to grow. A significant share of Greater Cambridge's older stock may become unlettable or commercially obsolete over the next decade, reinforcing the case for proactive renewal and additional development. Up to 78% of commercial stock in Greater Cambridge risks becoming unlettable in the near future (see **Figure 13**).

**Figure 13 – A large proportion of commercial stock across Greater Cambridge is set to become unlettable due to Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards**

EPC rating of non-domestic stock across GC (2025)




*Source: DLUHC, 2025. Energy performance of buildings data England and Wales: Non-domestic*

4.47 The 2025 EHEU report applies a replacement uplift for industrial and warehouse uses, acknowledging that a proportion of future development will be needed to renew ageing stock. This approach reflects the reality that net floorspace figures understate the actual volume of space that must be delivered to support a functional market. However, no equivalent uplift is applied for office or R&D space, despite evidence that these sectors have also seen gross completions significantly exceed net growth. Much of Greater Cambridge's office and lab stock dates from before 2000 and is no longer suited to modern occupier needs. The decision to account for replacement in industrial forecasts but not for other key sectors is inconsistent and risks underestimating the true scale of development required to support economic growth.

# Employment trajectory and supply

4.48 The Iceni analysis provided a trajectory of employment floorspace commitments as of April 2024, based on a comprehensive review of planning permissions and local plan allocations.[28] This included key sites identified in the First Proposals, such as Cambridge East, CBC, North East Cambridge, and Babraham. **Table 4** summarises the demand and supply balance presented in the 2025 EHEU, confirming a positive balance of supply for office and R&D space, but a shortfall regarding industrial space.

[26] Mishcon de Reya LLP, 2025. A guide to MEES: The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

[27] CBRE, 2025. What can we expect from the upcoming changes to Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards?

[28] Iceni, 2025. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Needs Update

**Table 4 – Iceni identify a positive balance of supply for office / R&D space, however a shortfall for industrial space**

Needs / supply floorspace balance (sqm)

| Use | Need (2024 – 2045) | Net supply (as of 2024) including losses / commitments | Supply (assigned to main categories | Balance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Office | 303,000 | 117,000 | 337,000 | 35,000 |
| Office / R&D | - | 320,000 | - | - |
| R&D | 600,000 | 547,000 | 707,000 | 107,000 |
| Industrial | 317,000 | 29,000 | 29,000 | -288,000 |
| Total | 1,219,600 | 1,073,000 | 1,073,000 | -147,000 |

*Source: Iceni, 2025. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Needs Update*

## Delivery challenges

4.1 Although the pipeline quantum looks substantial on paper for offices and labs, planning permission is not the same as delivery.

4.2 The pipeline identified is reliant on very large schemes: the ten biggest account for 53% of all outstanding floorspace commitments, and the top twenty for three quarters. If only a handful stall or down-size, the headline-supply picture changes materially. Many of these are large complex projects which make delivery difficult.

4.3 There are several risks and uncertainties that mean not all consented space will materialise as projected:

- **Permitted schemes facing delays:** The Council's Office and Laboratory Employment Trajectory (2024) shows that many of these schemes face material delivery risks.[29] The trajectory document confirms that "commitments include sites that have planning permission for employment uses and/or have been allocated for employment uses," including "approvals subject to S106 agreements and those applications currently held up by Environment Agency objection." This results in a large gap between permissions and what is onsite. The Council's Annual Monitoring Report records 267,497sqm of office and R&D space with full or reserved matters consents at March 2024, yet only 51,211sqm or 19% was under construction.[30] In other words, not all permissions counted as commitments are capable of being delivered in the short term.
- **Phasing and post-2030 delivery:** The Growth Sectors Study (2024) that underpins the EHEU 2025 notes that relatively little new lab space was actually delivered between 2020 – 2023, even as demand

[29] Greater Cambridge, 2024. Office and Laboratory Employment Trajectory

[30] Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (2025), Annual Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge covering the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024. Appendix 2 has tables and charts which breaks down the figures. I have used the tables titled "Net amount and type of committed employment floorspace (square metres) by status" and calculated the figures for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire and summed B1, B1a and B1b to estimate office and R&D floorspace. The B1 figure may include a bit of light industrial (B1c) space but this is not expected to materially affect the numbers.

surged.[31] Many of the pipeline projects are slated for 2025-2030, but "some schemes may more realistically be brought forward post-2030". In other words, a chunk of the supply is likely to come later in the plan period, potentially leaving near-term needs unmet.

- **Changing plans and uses:** Many commitments are in outline or flexible-use form. This means the eventual mix of office versus lab space can shift. The Council's own study cautions that proposed developments can change upon reserved matters and market conditions, "inevitably the categorisation of proposals involves professional judgement and it is of note that proposals can change, particularly where applications are outline or for E(g) or B1 mixed components".[32] For instance, a site earmarked as "office / R&D" may deliver more lab space if that's what investors prefer, or could be delayed if market sentiment cools. This fluidity means the quantum and type of floorspace delivered might diverge from the current assumptions, and leave an undersupply in some of the subcategories of space.
- **Market and viability factors:** High construction costs, infrastructure requirements, or economic downturns could affect whether developers build out all the space they have permission for. A nominal surplus of permitted floorspace does not guarantee occupiers will have space when needed if developers phase construction or shelve projects. The 2025 EHEU's acknowledgment that additional space will likely be required in the 2030s despite today's pipeline underlines that the pipeline must not only exist but be deliverable in a timely manner to truly meet demand.[33]

## Summary

4.4 While the Iceni reports provides a valuable foundation, it underestimates the scale of future demand and overestimates the certainty of delivery. Suppressed demand, the need to replace ageing stock, and challenges in delivery all suggest that Greater Cambridge faces a greater shortfall in employment floorspace than currently anticipated. This underscores the importance of sites like South Trumpington in providing the flexible, high-quality spaces needed to support the region's strategic growth sectors.

4.5 We plan to explore these findings further with the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS) as part of the Local Plan process, ensuring that emerging evidence on specific demand and supply constraints is fully considered. By linking this analysis directly to the Local Plan, we can help shape a more robust and responsive strategy that addresses the region's dynamic growth needs.

# Housing need

In order for Greater Cambridge to perform its role in contributing to the UK economy, new and affordable housing is critical for it to reach its full potential and ensure that national, regional, and local objectives are met

## Greater Cambridgeshire: a victim of its own success?

4.6 Greater Cambridge has seen rapid population growth since 2000, which has placed pressure on its housing supply. As illustrated in **Table 5**, this population growth in Greater Cambridge has been fuelled by working

[31] Iceni Projects, 2024. Greater Cambridge Growth Sectors Study: Life science and ICT locational, land and accommodation needs

[32] Iceni Projects, 2024. Greater Cambridge Growth Sectors Study: Life science and ICT locational, land and accommodation needs

[33] Iceni Projects, 2025. Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Needs Update 2024-2045

age residents. Overall, the number of working age residents in Greater Cambridgeshire increased by 25% between 2010 and 2024, compared to 9% across the East of England, and 8% across England.[34]

**Table 5 – Population increase across Greater Cambridgeshire has been driven by working age residents**

Population growth by age group and geography (2000 – 2024)

| Area | Aged 0 to 15 | Aged 16 to 24 | Aged 25 to 49 | Aged 50 to 64 | Aged 65+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cambridge | **34%** | **30%** | **44%** | **43%** | **19%** |
| South Cambridgeshire | **31%** | **22%** | **18%** | **38%** | **81%** |
| East | 14% | 16% | 12% | 32% | 50% |
| England | 8% | 19% | 10% | 31% | 41% |

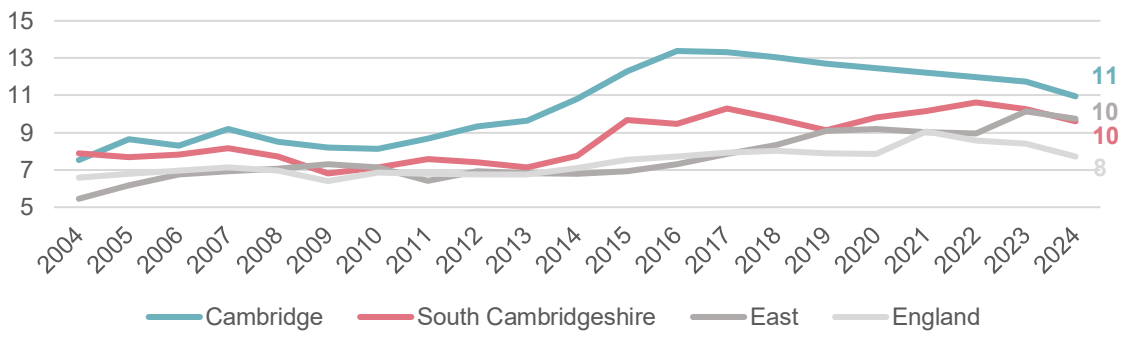
*Source: ONS, 20235 Population estimates – local authority based by single year of age*

## Greater Cambridge affordability

4.7 The house price to earnings (HPE) ratio is a metric used to assess the affordability of housing in a particular market. It compares the median or average house price The area to the median or average annual earnings of households in that area. A high HPE ratio suggests that houses are expensive compared to local incomes, indicating potential affordability challenges for prospective homebuyers. Cambridge (11) has a higher HPE ratio relative to regional (10) and national rates (8). South Cambridgeshire HPE (10) is in line with the regional average (10) in 2024, but has been above it for the majority of the last decade, as shown in **Figure 14**.

**Figure 14 – The house price to earnings ratio in Cambridge has grown at a much faster pace than geographical comparators**

House price to median earnings ratio across geographies (2004 – 2024)




*Source: ONS, 2024. Housing affordability in England and Wales: 2023*

[34] ONS, 2023. Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age

## An expensive place to live

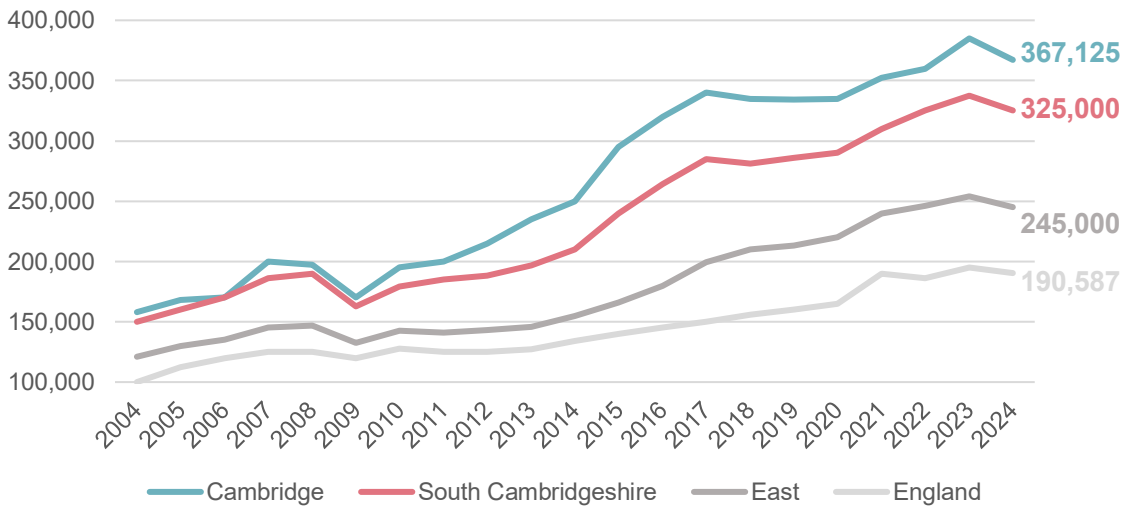
4.8 The East of England has some of the highest house prices in England, coming third out of the nine regions. The median house price in the region is £335,000, 16% higher than the national average of £290,000. Within the East of England there are distinct clusters of unaffordability.[35] The areas on the boundary of Greater London, for example, have high median house prices, whilst most areas in the north of the region have relatively lower house prices.

4.9 As employment has grown at a faster rate than the housing stock, Cambridge has become another one of these clusters of unaffordability, with the city itself having a median house price of £490,000. This rise in house prices has not been matched by wage growth, contributing to unaffordable nature of the area. South Cambridgeshire prices are also high, averaging at £425,000.

4.10 This is particularly clear for entry level housing. Lower quartile house prices in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire are within the top 11% and 19% of all local authorities, respectively. **Figure 15** illustrates how the price of entry-level housing has increased over time, with Cambridge seeing a rise in price of 98% from 2004, and 69% from 2010.

**Figure 15 – The price of entry-level housing in Greater Cambridgeshire has increased at a rapid pace**

Lower-quartile house prices across geographies over time (2004 – 2024)




*Source: ONS, 2025. Price Index of Private Rents (PIPR), UK: monthly price statistics*

## High rents alongside high house prices

4.11 Rental prices across Greater Cambridgeshire are also expensive relative to geographical comparators. The average rent in Cambridge is almost £1,800 per month, higher than the regional and national average of £1,300 and £1,400, respectively. This places Cambridge in the top 10% most expensive local authorities in England.[36]

[35] ONS, 2024. Housing affordability in England and Wales: 2023

[36] ONS, 2025. Price Index of Private Rents (PIPR), UK: monthly price statistics

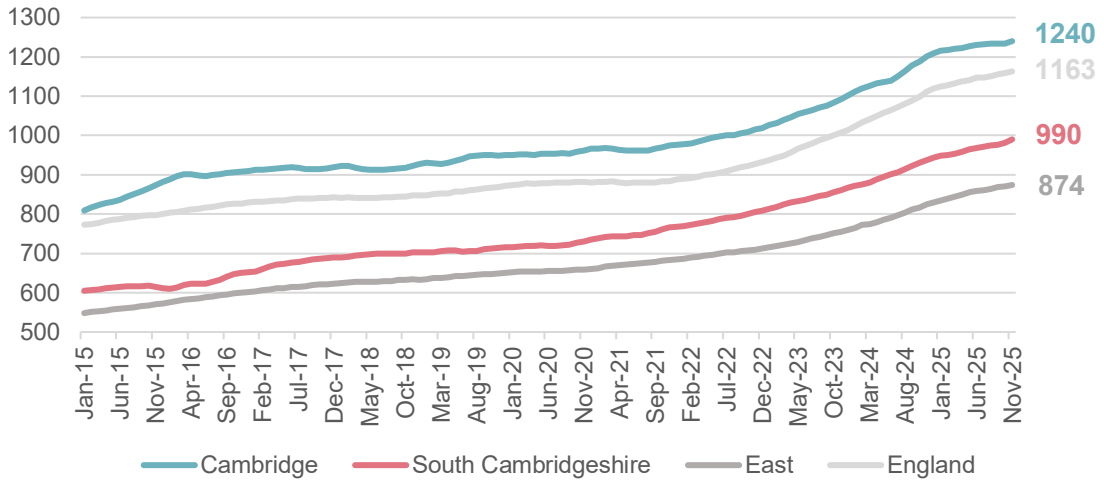
4.12 Whilst cheaper than Cambridge, rents in South Cambridgeshire remain above the regional average, standing at £1,300 per month. This places South Cambridgeshire in the top 24% most expensive local authorities in England.

4.13 The two local authorities are amongst the most expensive in the East of England to rent in, with Cambridge only being surpassed by St Albans, Watford, and Three Rivers, all of which are influenced by their proximity to London, leaving Cambridge is the most expensive non-commuter town in the East to rent in.

4.14 These high costs extend across the rental stock, with entry level properties being more expensive in Cambridge than in comparator geographies (see **Figure 16**).

**Figure 16 – The rental price of a one bed property in Cambridge is 42% above the regional average**

Monthly rent for a one-bedroom property by time and geography




*Source: ONS 2024. Private rental market summary statistics in England*

# What is the overall need?

4.15 The currently adopted local plans for Greater Cambridgeshire collectively plan for 34,000 homes between 2011 and 2031.[37]

4.16 As previously mentioned, the first proposals for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan were published in 2021. In January 2023, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning published a 'Development Strategy Update' which suggested that anticipated levels of employment were higher than initially thought. The Development Strategy Update suggested that Greater Cambridge should plan for 52,000 additional homes between 2021 and 2041.

[37] Cambridge City Council, 2018. Cambridge Local Plan; South Cambridge District Council, 2018. South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

**Table 6 – Indicative housing targets in forthcoming local plans**

| Area | First proposals (superseded) (2021) | Development Strategy Update (2023) |
|---|---|---|
| Greater Cambridge | 44,400 | 52,000 |

*Source: Greater Cambridgeshire Shared Planning, 2021. Greater Cambridge Local Plan – First Proposals; Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, 2023. Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Development Strategy Update*

4.17 Iceni's 2025 EHEU provides a further update by translating the revised employment scenarios into implied housing needs using a jobs-to-homes methodology.

4.18 Under the central scenario (73,200 jobs), Iceni estimate a housing need of 2,292 dwellings per annum (dpa) almost identical to the current Standard Method figure of 2,295 dpa. This equates to 48,132 dwellings over the plan period. Under the higher employment scenario (90,900 jobs), the implied housing need rises to 2,829 dpa, equivalent to 59,409 dwellings over the plan period.

**Iceni's most recent evidence base identifies a need for 48,132 dwellings, but this rises to 59,409 with the more ambitious higher scenario for growth.**

4.19 Given the evidence presented above that Iceni's employment forecasts are likely too conservative, the housing implications may also be understated. If a more ambitious growth trajectory is adopted – such as Iceni's own higher scenario – the associated housing requirement of 2,829 dpa would apply, or potentially higher should be considered if the Oxford Economics and Cambridge Ahead projections are deemed to be more appropriate to support Greater Cambridge's economic potential.

4.20 The South Trumpington site is a unique opportunity to deliver housing to helped meet a more aspirational jobs target, and is also well located to commuter towns outside of Greater Cambridge, which can help bring in skilled labour from other local authorities.

4.21 GCSP demonstrated a housing supply of 5.5 years in April 2025.[38] However, there are reasons to question whether this supply is all deliverable. However, this has a strong reliance on large scale strategic sites. Past delivery rates show that there may be a need for further flexibility to be built in.

4.22 British Land support the emerging Development Strategy and support the sequential approach to locating development as per draft policy SD/S. However, concern remains over the short-term deliverability development on the edge of Cambridge and a perceived reliance on large scale new settlements such as Cambourne North and Grange Farm. Whilst these allocations are not challenged or recommended to be withdrawn British Land note significant lead in times and effort to deliver such sites must be considered. It is argued this may challenge the short-term delivery of the emerging Local Plan's growth ambitions. As a solution it is recommended GCSP should consider potential alternative sites within the edge of Cambridge that can serve to meet the identified needs for development on the edge of Cambridge urban area which can absorb the risk of larger sites not delivering as anticipated. It is demonstrated in the supporting documents with this Regulation 18 response, how Land at South Trumpington can contribute to achieving this.

[38] Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (April 2024), Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Housing Land Supply Report

# 5. Why here?

The South Trumpington site is a unique opportunity to deliver high quality commercial space and housing in an accessible location near key employment centres.

## The evolving geography of innovation

5.1 Recent years have only increased the critical role that geography plays in driving collaboration and innovation. In the wake of the pandemic, demand for laboratory and office space has increasingly centred on high-quality, sustainable locations that support a collaborative culture and meet the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards of both investors and skilled workers. Over the past 50 years innovation has been spatially dominated by clusters such as Silicon Valley – suburban corridors of isolated campuses, accessible only by car and with limited emphasis on quality of life. But the geography of innovation is changing – a new model, innovation districts, urban areas with clusters of knowledge-producing organisations, has taken over. Out of town business and science parks are still important to the economy but they are increasingly legacy models of growth.

5.2 The concept of clusters – ecosystems of interconnected firms, individuals, and institutions – is widely recognised as a key driver of economic growth in modern, knowledge-based economies. Innovation is, in many respects, a "contact sport" that thrives on informal interactions, proximity, and shared resources. The Bidwells/YouGov R&D Business Survey (2021) highlights that the most sought-after science and city district locations now offer strong public transport links, a high quality of life, and ready access to complementary businesses and research institutions.[39] Organisations place greater weight on these factors to extend recruitment reach, entice highly skilled staff, and enable the cross-pollination of ideas essential for cutting-edge R&D.

5.3 In this context, the South Trumpington site exemplifies the attributes that modern innovation clusters demand. It has excellent active travel and public transport connections and offers an amenity-rich masterplan designed to support healthy lifestyles. By providing flexible, state-of-the-art employment space for labs, R&D, office, mid-tech and supporting space in a sustainable setting, it offers the foundations for a next-generation innovation district, poised to meet global challenges and remain competitive on the international stage. It offers the potential for a new highly accessible district in its own right, and/or one that can complement and build upon the success of nearby clusters such as CBC.

## Locational advantages and connectivity

### Why South Trumpington?

5.4 Future development at South Trumpington offers a prime location for sustainable development, supported by a strong foundation of existing and emerging transport infrastructure. The area benefits from established connectivity features such as the Trumpington Park and Ride, the guided busway linking to the CBC and Cambridge Railway Station, and a well-integrated network of local cycle routes. Its proximity to the strategic road network further enhances regional accessibility, making it an ideal location for future growth.

[39] Bidwells, 2023. Cambridge office and laboratory occupational market update – the Beehive Centre

# Local accessibility

5.5 Future development at South Trumpington is well-positioned to support local living and reduce reliance on private vehicles. It is near essential local facilities, such as schools and shops, and has the potential to facilitate further innovation and knowledge sharing with major employment centres like the CBC through further clustering. The development will integrate mixed-use elements, combining jobs, leisure, and residential spaces. This design ensures that residents can meet their daily needs within walking or cycling distance, supporting a sustainable and community-oriented lifestyle.

5.6 The accessibility of South Trumpington is complemented by its thoughtful layout, which incorporates public amenities alongside sustainable transport routes. The integrated design will also attract a wide range of users, from families to professionals working at nearby employment hubs.

# Wider accessibility

5.7 The Site already benefits from strong strategic connectivity as a southern gateway to Cambridge, and this is expected to strengthen further through planned interventions including the Cambridge South West Travel Hub, Cambridge South Railway Station, the Melbourn Greenway, CSET, and (in the longer term) East West Rail. Together, these schemes will improve access by rail, bus, and active travel, reinforcing the Site's alignment with regional and national objectives for sustainable, low-carbon mobility.

5.8 As of December 2025, beyond the Greater Cambridge resident population of 320,000, analysis indicates that over 880,000 people live within a 90-minute public transport journey time of the Site. Around 560,000 of these are of working age (16–64).[40] This points to a substantial accessible labour market extending well beyond Greater Cambridge itself, supporting recruitment across a wider region (including for specialist and higher-skilled roles).

5.9 While it would not be realistic to assume that everyone within this catchment would commute daily, the scale and breadth of the accessible population matters: it increases the depth and resilience of the labour pool, improves choice for employers, and supports a range of commuting patterns (including hybrid working).

5.10 This is particularly important for an innovation economy, where agglomeration benefits depend on frequent interaction. The Site's value is therefore maximised where it is genuinely convenient to reach the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) and other cluster nodes via high-quality public transport and active travel. The planned opening of Cambridge South station (expected June 2026), designed to improve access to the Biomedical Campus, materially strengthens everyday connectivity, supporting more regular collaboration across the wider cluster.[41]

5.11 Improved connectivity also supports a more inclusive, low-carbon growth model. It expands the effective labour catchment, reduces reliance on private cars, and makes collaboration, knowledge exchange and access to opportunity more routine.

5.12 When open, Cambridge South station is expected to provide direct or improved rail connectivity to key destinations through:[42]

- Up to nine trains per hour between Cambridge South and Cambridge:
  - Half-hourly Great Northern fast trains to/from London Kings Cross (hourly on Sundays);
  - Half hourly Great Northern semi-fast Monday to Friday peak service to / from London Kings Cross;

[40] ONS, 2025. Mid-year population estimates 2024

[41] Retrieved from: https://www.networkrail.co.uk/. Accessed December 2025

[42] Retrieved from: https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/. Accessed December 2025

- Hourly off-peak and weekend Great Northern stopping service to / from London Kings Cross;
- Half-hourly semi-fast Thameslink service to/from Brighton (hourly on Sundays);
- Up to two trains per hour to/from Stansted Airport (provided by Greater Anglia and CrossCountry);
- Two Greater Anglia trains per hour to/from London Liverpool Street (four trains per hour at weekday peak times).

- From 3 to 5 trains per hour to/from Ely:
  - Hourly Great Northern trains to and from King's Lynn (half-hourly during most of the morning and mid-afternoon Monday to Saturday).
  - CrossCountry trains to/from Peterborough, Leicester and Birmingham New Street running hourly.
  - Greater Anglia will provide an hourly service to/from Norwich, operating only during off-peak times.

5.13 In combination with the South West Travel Hub (planned near M11 Junction 11 to support reliable onward travel into Cambridge), CSET, and enhanced active travel links (including the Melbourn Greenway's connection into Trumpington and the Guided Busway path), these improvements strengthen the Site's role as an accessible employment location serving Greater Cambridge and a wider regional workforce.

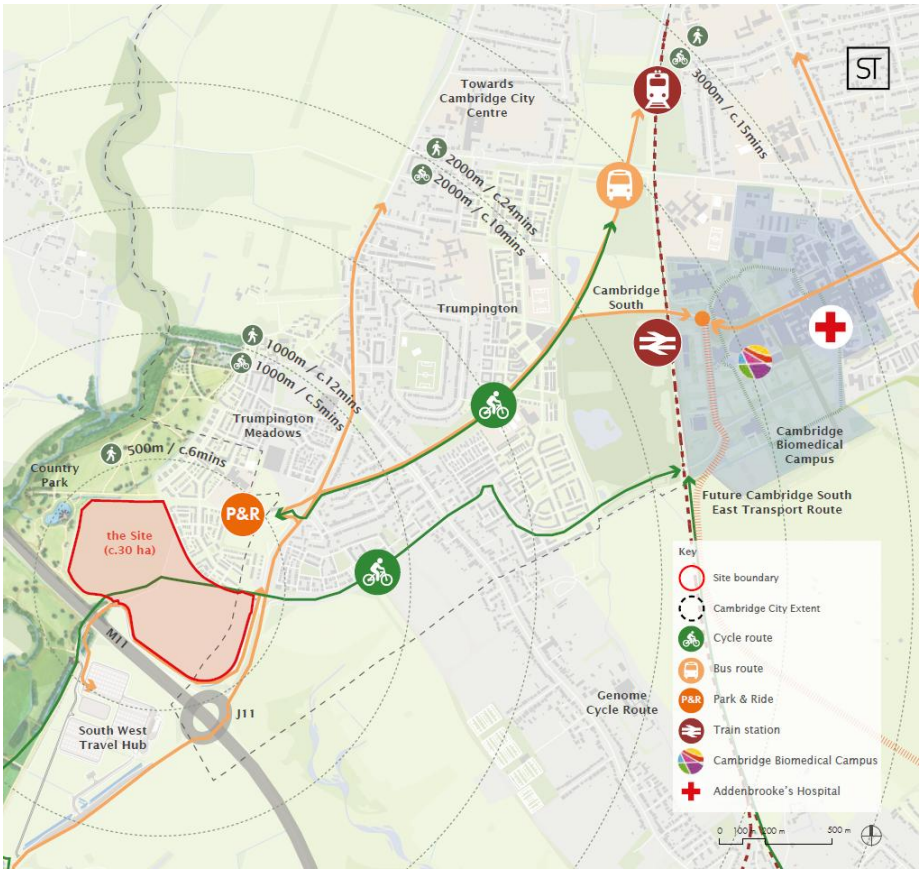
## Healthy living and active travel

5.14 A central feature of the proposals are their emphasis on active travel and healthy living. Future development can be integrated with an extensive network of active travel routes that connect it to key destinations, including Cambridge City Centre via Trumpington Road, the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, Addenbrooke's Road, and the Melbourn Greenway. These routes will provide seamless connections to leisure and employment hubs, including the CBC.

5.15 South Trumpington also benefits from its proximity to recreational routes, such as those at Grantchester Meadows and Trumpington Meadows. These leisure routes promote physical activity and create opportunities for outdoor exploration, making South Trumpington an attractive location for families and professionals.

**Figure 17 – The Site is well-connected by active travel routes**

Active travel routes in and around the Site




# Masterplan design principles

5.16 The masterplan for South Trumpington incorporates innovative design principles to promote sustainability and enhance the quality of life for residents. Parking areas will be consolidated into residential podiums and a dedicated Mobility Hub, minimising surface-level parking and freeing up space for active uses. Streets within the development will prioritise walking and cycling, creating child-friendly environments that encourage community interaction and outdoor activity.

5.17 Dedicated cycle routes will provide direct connections to key corridors and gateways, ensuring that cycling remains a convenient and efficient travel option. In addition, the development will feature public transport hubs that seamlessly link South Trumpington to the South West Travel Hub and the busway.

# High quality environment and placemaking

5.18 The masterplan at South Trumpington prioritises sustainability and quality of life. It integrates mixed uses – housing, employment space, and leisure – so that residents can meet their daily needs within walking or cycling distance.

5.19 The site is adjacent to Trumpington Meadows and will provide an extension to the country park, significant provision of public open space, and a rich and diverse habitat for wildlife. It will also provide new local community infrastructure.

## Proximity to clusters and growth areas

5.20 One of the key remits of the CGC is to ensure that "one or more contiguous urban extensions of the city must be core components of the vision the Growth Company brings forward, in order to maximise the benefits of agglomeration."[43] Agglomeration refers to the phenomenon where businesses, particularly those in knowledge-intensive industries, benefit from clustering together. This clustering drives productivity through creating opportunities for innovation, collaboration and sharing resources. It allows firms to exchange ideas, attract skilled workers, and access specialised suppliers, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of growth.

5.21 This logic is particularly strong for life sciences and related knowledge-intensive activities, where innovation relies on rapid feedback loops between research, clinical practice, data, specialist equipment and commercialisation pathways. The Greater Cambridge Growth Sectors Study is explicit that proximity requirements vary by sub-sector: "Some businesses need to be in close proximity to clinical research centres such [the] Cambridge Biomedical Campus, but others are able to operate on a non-clinical campus, depending on sector specific focus".[44]

5.22 The important implication is that a wider "halo" of high-quality employment space close to a clinical anchor is not a second-best option. It is often the enabling condition that allows the cluster to expand without diluting what makes it globally competitive. Non-clinical R&D, computational biology, medtech design, diagnostics, regulatory functions, corporate innovation teams, CRO/clinical operations support, and scale-up space for spin-outs can all benefit from being near a clinical core, even where they do not need to sit inside it. This is how mature life science clusters grow: they develop a portfolio of complementary locations, all close enough to tap the same labour market, partners and institutional assets.

5.23 In this context, bringing forward an employment site at South Trumpington, in very close proximity to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC), is strategically well aligned with the CGC remit. CBC is hosts (and sits alongside) major hospitals and research capability, and is described by NIHR Cambridge BRC as "Europe's largest health research area".[45] By locating additional employment space close to this clinical and research concentration, and ensuring it is integrated through high-quality active travel and public transport connectivity. South Trumpington can function as cluster-supporting capacity: space that enables growth, spin-out formation and inward investment to remain in Greater Cambridge, while still allowing firms to access the CBC ecosystem quickly.

5.24 The closer firms are to a clinical research centre, the easier it is to build the working relationships that underpin translational innovation through joint projects with clinicians and researchers, faster iteration between lab and clinic, and participation in networks that create partnerships, licensing and co-development). An employment site nearby can capture these benefits without competing for the most constrained "on-campus" footprints, offering space for teams that need frequent interaction with CBC institutions but do not need to be physically embedded within hospital or core research buildings every day.

5.25 Proximity to a major cluster makes it easier for firms to access specialist suppliers (equipment, lab services, specialist fit-out, regulatory support, data and analytics capability) and to benefit from shared or nearby infrastructure. The Cambridge cluster is explicitly shaped by these ecosystem dynamics, including global

[43] Appointment of Cambridge Growth Company Chair: Letter from Matthew Pennycook MP. Dated 30th October 2024.

[44] Iceni, 2024. Greater Cambridge Growth Sectors Study: Life science and ICT locational, land and accommodation needs

[45] Retrieved from: https://cambridgebrc.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/. Accessed December 2025

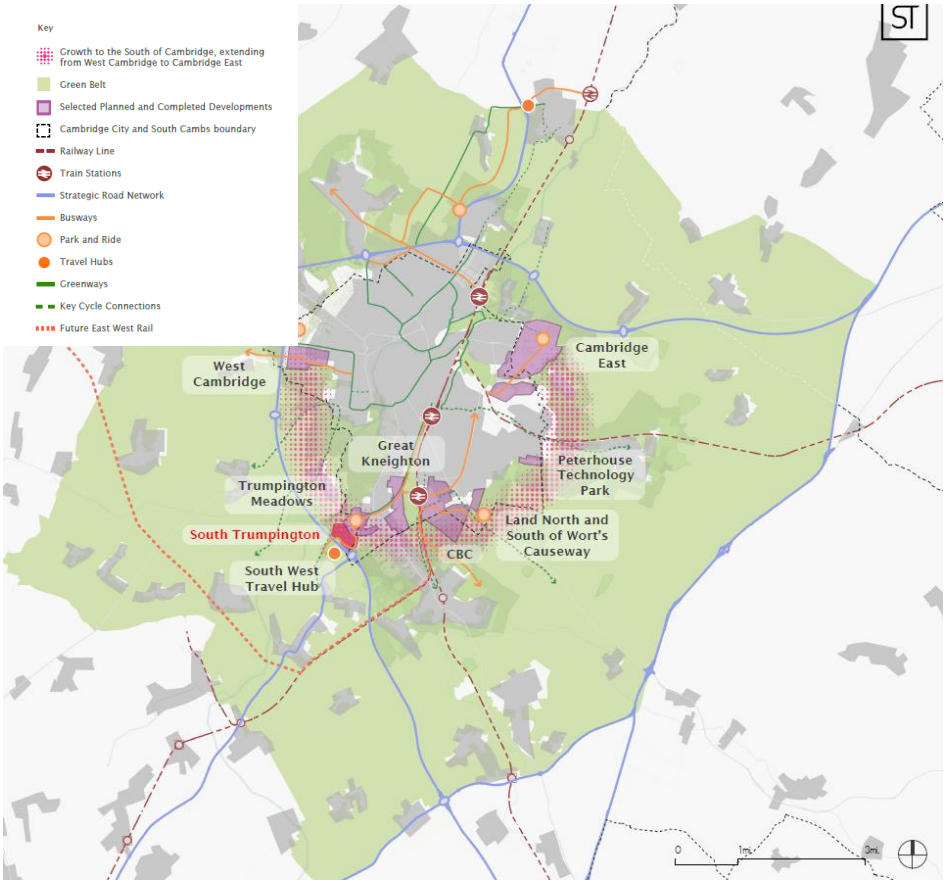
R&D presence and cross-sector partnerships. For example, AstraZeneca states that it moved its global headquarters to Cambridge to be part of the collaboration opportunities of the Cambridge ecosystem and is now involved in extensive science-led partnerships across the region. [46]

5.26 Being able to locate near CBC is itself a market signal. It reduces information asymmetries for investors, partners and recruits because it implies access to a proven innovation ecosystem. The presence of globally recognised anchors reinforces this: CBC explicitly presents itself as a hub where academia, healthcare and industry come together, and Cambridge's partnership narrative with major industry players frames the city's life science ecosystem as a reason for global headquarters and R&D location decisions.

[46] Retrieved from: https://www.astrazeneca.co.uk/about-us/uk-sites/cambridge. Accessed December 2025

**Figure 18 – The site is in a prime location to support agglomeration**

The Proposed Development in the wider Cambridge cluster




# Need for new homes near employers

5.28 The previous section showed the need for new homes in Greater Cambridge to support the growing population. These homes must be provided in the right locations, near major employment centres, to retain and attract talent.

5.29 One prominent example is that of CBC, where their own Housing Study identified that many of the 22,000 employees struggle to find housing and the limited affordable housing options affects the ability of CBC employers to recruit and retain staff.[47] Key findings from the CBC housing study include:

- Entry-level (lower quartile) house prices in Cambridge are 13.7 times the earnings for CBC workers, and this ratio rises to 14.8 times for those in the lower-income brackets within the health sector, emphasising the dire state of housing affordability for key workers;
- 38% of workers at CBC describe their ability to meet current housing costs as 'moderately stretched' (27%) or 'very stretched' (11%);

[47] Lichfields (April 2024), Cambridge Biomedical Campus Housing Study.

- 30% of CBC workers are currently unable to afford rents in the open market and are therefore in need of affordable rented housing; and
- 14,000 – 16,000 affordable homes are needed to meet current and future needs of CBC employees.

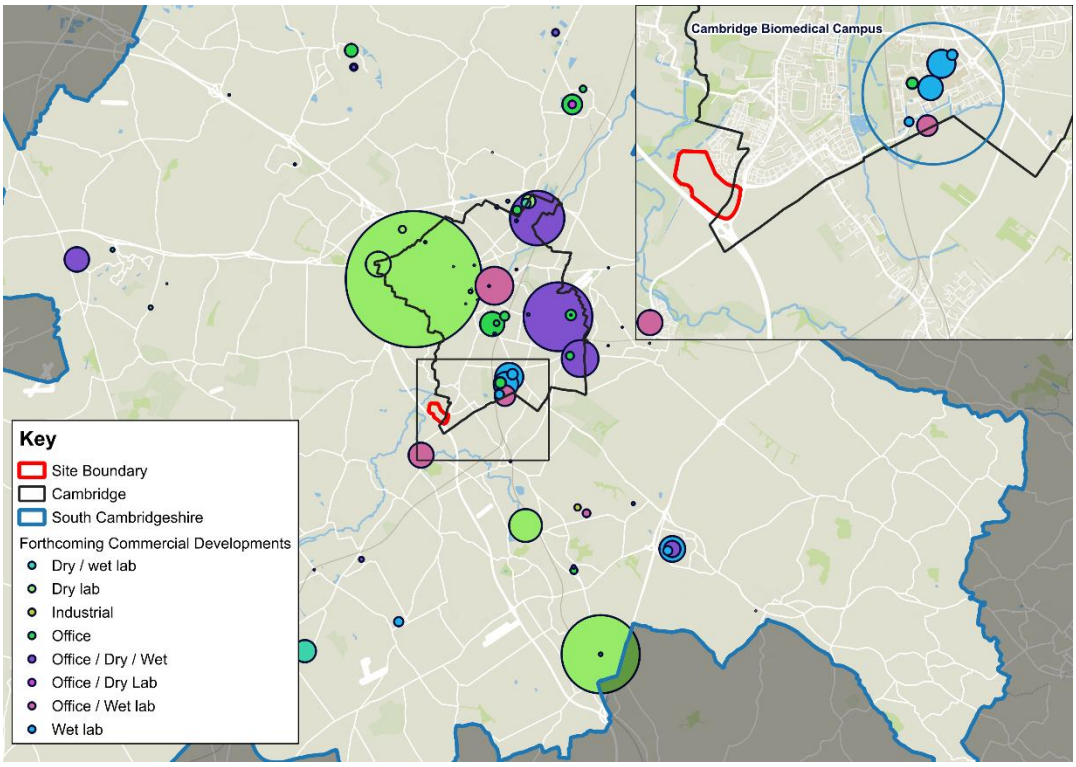
5.30 Whilst the site is well located to potentially support CBC's own housing needs, the above is one example across the City, that would apply equally to other sectors and businesses. British Land is committed to working with the Greater Cambridge authorities to discuss their housing need, and ensure future development at South Trumpington makes the most positive impact. Placing housing near workplaces reduces commuting distances and car dependency. This is key for a sustainable future, and cannot be recognised in all locations.

# Pipeline gap

5.31 Analysis of the Greater Cambridge commercial and housing pipeline suggests that supply is concentrated in central and western parts of the city. As the figure below shows, the commercial pipeline is largely elsewhere in GC. The Site is well placed to provide a better distribution of development and benefit from agglomeration benefits, for example with CBC and other nearby employers.

**Figure 19 – The commercial pipeline coming forward across Greater Cambridgeshire is weighted towards central and western Cambridge**

Commercial pipeline coming forward across Greater Cambridgeshire



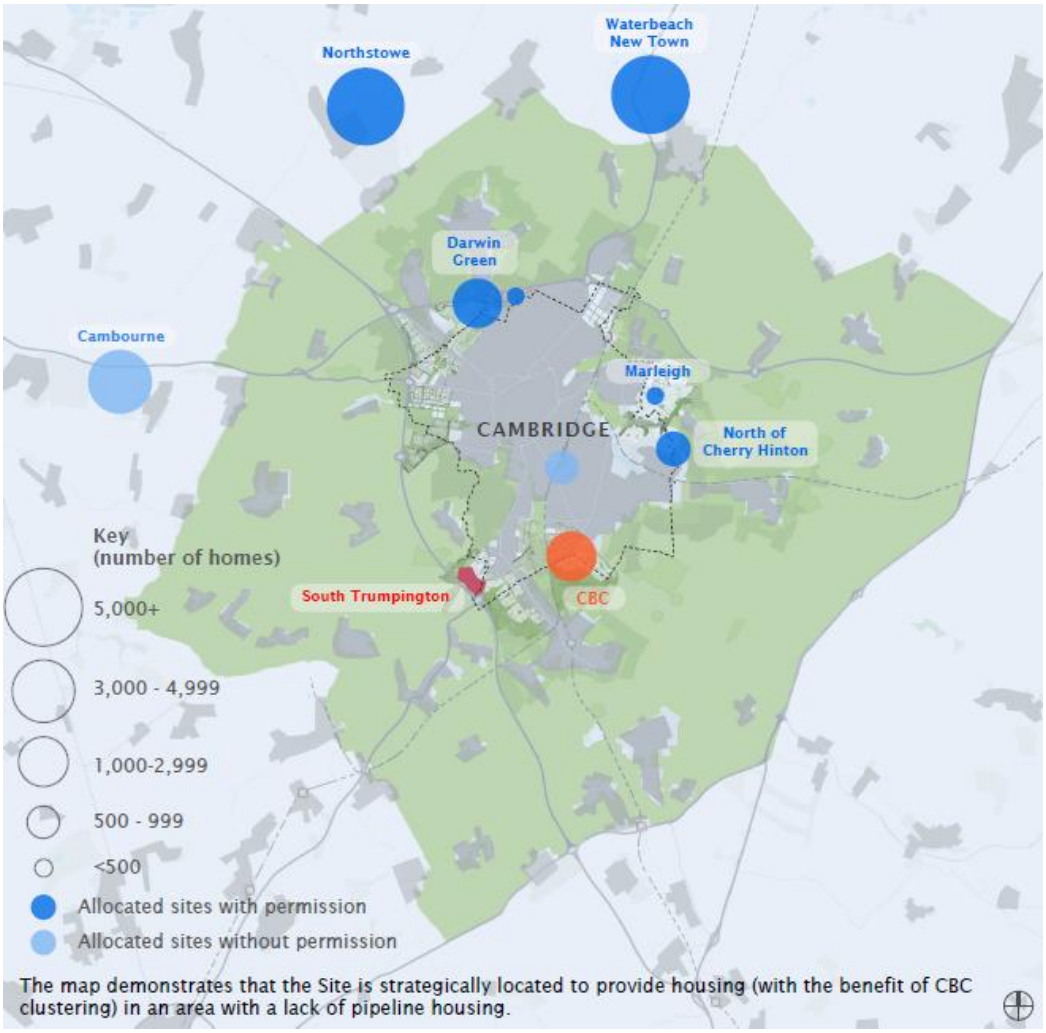

*Source: Volterra research; Iceni, 2024. Greater Cambridge Office and Laboratory Employment Trajectory*

5.32 The same applies to housing. There lies an opportunity to deliver further residential development in the south of Cambridge (building on the "Southern Fringe" sites), where active/public transport is strong and

being enhanced through the delivery of the South West Travel Hub, Cambridge South Station and CSET. This serves the potential to locate new housing in the most accessible locations alongside jobs and clusters of development such as CBC, where there is one possible example here to help fully capitalise on the potential of the campus. The key is getting the correct type of residential development in the right location, to ensure the staff working in key sectors and clusters such as CBC can readily access work, and businesses can reach their full potential. The figure below shows that there is limited pipeline near the site.

**Figure 20 – There is a limited housing pipeline in the area surrounding CBC**

Housing pipeline of allocated sites across Greater Cambridge



## Need for world class space that attracts global investment

5.33 Future development at South Trumpington would deliver the highest quality commercial workspace alongside amenity space. This place-based approach is critical in attracting global firms, who increasingly seek high-quality, flexible space that supports collaboration and staff well-being.

5.34 Overall, South Trumpington's potential to integrate commercial and residential development, proximity to major employment centres, robust transport connections, and strong emphasis on placemaking positions it as a critical site for Cambridge's future. By delivering the right type of space – in the right place – the development will address housing needs, support agglomeration, and help the city maintain its status as a global innovation leader.

# A deliverable proposition in the right location

## Commercial contribution

**The Proposed Development would provide up to 260,000 sqm (GEA) of versatile commercial floorspace for offices, labs, retail, conference and public use.**

Under the Illustrative Development Option, indicative estimates suggest that the Proposed Development could support:

**3,800 – 6,700** new jobs created directly by the development. Workers are expected to generate £9m - £17m in annual worker expenditure.

**4,400 – 7,700** net additional jobs, with 2,400 – 4,300 likely to be filled by Greater Cambridge residents, accounting for job shifts (displacement) and new economic activity (multiplier effects).

**£316m - £573bn** in annual GVA generated by the commercial uses.

**£95m - £229m** in annual tax receipts supported by the commercial operations.

## Housing contribution

**The Proposed Development will deliver between 400 and 1,000 homes**

**which would provide affordable housing.**

**This contribution would represent between 17% and 43% of Greater Cambridge's annual housing requirement.**

The Proposed Development would high-qualitying offer, complete with strong amenities and a high quality environment.

The housing offer would be strategically placed to support major employment sites such as the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

This housing would be brought forth in an area with a weak housing pipeline.

## Conclusion

**There is an urgent need for high quality office space, and homes in an accessible location. If this is not provided in the right location, then Cambridge, and potentially the UK, will lose out to other innovation districts.**

# 7. Conclusion

7.1 Greater Cambridge is one of the UK's most important innovation economies, and government ambitions for the Cambridge Growth Company and the Ox-Cam Growth Corridor reflect that national significance. However, the evidence is clear that growth is being constrained by the basic ingredients that make clusters work: the right workspace, in the right place, delivered at the right time, alongside homes people can afford.

7.2 On the commercial side, the market is signalling sustained undersupply. R&D vacancy has fallen as low as 0.5%, far below a balanced market level, and Cambridge City remains tighter than the wider area. Conditions consistent with suppressed demand rather than "demand being met". Average take-up has been around 49,000 sqm per year for office and lab combined, yet current requirements are materially higher (c. 60,000 sqm office and 40,000 sqm labs). The result is rising costs: since 2013, lab rents are up 154%, with major increases also seen in offices and mid-tech space, pressures that risk pushing investment decisions away from Greater Cambridge.

7.3 The supply pipeline does not remove this risk. Permissions are not the same as delivery. At March 2024, only 19% of consented office/R&D space was under construction. At the same time, the area is managing a major "replacement" challenge, 70% of stock was built before 2000, and a significant proportion may become commercially obsolete as energy performance standards tighten. This means Greater Cambridge needs new, high-quality space that is deliverable, not just theoretical capacity on paper.

7.4 The case is even stronger when the wider ecosystem is considered. Iceni's own balance identifies a large industrial shortfall of 288,000 sqm. This is crucial space that supports scaling, production, servicing and logistics. Without this "mid-tech and enabling" layer, growing firms are more likely to stall, split their operations, or relocate.

7.5 Housing constraints are equally acute and directly affect labour supply. Cambridge house prices are around £490,000, and affordability ratios rise to 14.8x earnings for lower-income health workers. The CBC evidence indicates that 30% of workers cannot afford market rents and that 14,000–16,000 affordable homes are needed to meet current and future needs. Locating new homes close to key employment centres is therefore not optional: it is a practical requirement for recruitment, retention and inclusive growth.

7.6 Future development at South Trumpington provides a unique opportunity to deliver sustainable, well-connected growth in the right location. The development will deliver a strategic extension of Cambridge, integrating employment space for R&D, mid-tech, and logistics to support the wider innovation ecosystem. Its proximity to several large employers and established clusters such as CBC, alongside emerging transport infrastructure like Cambridge South Railway Station and the East-West Rail, ensures that businesses, researchers, and workers can operate in an environment that encourages collaboration and efficiency. The government has been clear that future development in Greater Cambridge must include contiguous urban extensions to maximise agglomeration benefits, and South Trumpington is ideally positioned to achieve this.

7.7 Beyond employment, this site will deliver much-needed housing, with the potential to provide affordable and/or key worker housing. This commitment could provide a real solution to the recruitment and retention challenges facing critical employers, ensuring that the city's economic success is matched by an inclusive and sustainable housing offer. Future development will also embrace mixed-use principles, creating a vibrant, high-quality environment with access to green space, community amenities, and active travel routes, reducing reliance on private cars and embedding sustainable growth.

7.8 If Greater Cambridge is to realise its full potential, it must deliver the space to support it. South Trumpington offers a deliverable, strategic, and well-planned solution to the city's most pressing challenges. Without

action, the UK risks losing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to cement its place as a global leader in science, technology, and innovation. With it, Cambridge can continue to power the nation's economic future.

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