

District Report

Cllr Richard Williams

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Planning and Housing Delivery

Housing delivery across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire remains above the level required by the current adopted Local Plans. In 2024–25, over 2,200 new homes are expected to be completed across the area, compared with an annual requirement of approximately 1,600. Longer-term planning documents anticipate around 50,000 additional homes by 2040.

Housing affordability continues to be a significant issue locally, although this reflects wider regional and national trends across the South and East of England. Planning decisions continue to be taken by elected councillors, with applications assessed against adopted policy, infrastructure capacity, and environmental considerations.

Government Consultation on a Cambridge Development Corporation

The Government is consulting on the establishment of a Cambridge Development Corporation covering Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. If implemented, this would represent a substantial change to existing governance arrangements, transferring powers over planning, transport and certain infrastructure functions from elected local authorities to a new, appointed body for up to 25 years.

The consultation document suggests that a development corporation is required to address constraints on growth, including water supply, housing affordability and transport congestion. However, many of the major water infrastructure proposals cited, such as the Fens Reservoir near Chatteris and planned transfers from Grafham Water, fall outside the proposed development corporation area. It is therefore unclear how the corporation would directly accelerate delivery of these schemes.

In relation to housing, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire councils have approved and are delivering significant levels of new development. The consultation does not identify specific major developments that have been refused and could only proceed under a development corporation model. Employment growth has also been strong, with substantial new commercial and laboratory floorspace approved and delivered in recent years.

Transport is a key element of the proposal. The consultation argues that a development corporation could provide “coordinated ambition” for long-term transport solutions. Currently, strategic transport powers sit with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, led by an elected Mayor, who has set out proposals including potential light-rail schemes. The consultation also refers to the development corporation acting as a “backstop” should existing authorities fail to deliver agreed transport outcomes, raising questions about future decision-making and accountability.

During a recent presentation to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at South Cambridgeshire District Council, Peter Freeman, Chair of the Cambridge Development Corporation, outlined that its work would be expected to proceed in two phases. The first phase would focus on shaping and then implementing the emerging Local Plan. A second, longer-term phase would involve the development of new plans for future growth beyond the Local Plan period. In this context, he indicated that future development could be focused on existing transport hubs, including railway stations. This could have particular relevance for settlements such as Whittlesford, which already has a mainline rail connection.

The consultation raises wider questions about the balance between accelerating growth and maintaining local democratic oversight. Any change of this scale would have long-term implications for how planning and transport decisions are made across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and merits careful consideration by parish councils and residents.

The consultation can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/establishing-a-development-corporation-in-greater-cambridge/establishing-a-development-corporation-in-greater-cambridge>

Local Government Reorganisation Consultation

The Government has opened a public consultation on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, seeking views on different structural options for replacing the current two-tier arrangements with new unitary authorities. The consultation considers four proposals submitted by councils across the area, including “Option B”, which is supported by South Cambridgeshire District Council (alongside Cambridge City and East Cambridgeshire District Councils) and would create two unitary councils: one for Greater Cambridge (Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire) and one for North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Residents, parish councils and local organisations can respond directly to the Government’s consultation via the official portal:

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough/>