

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Stephen Kelly MRTPI

Cambourne to Cambridge Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO)

Aims, Objectives and Need for the Proposed Cambourne to Cambridge Guided Busway

On behalf of South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils as part of
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP)



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1. Qualifications and Role

- 1.1. My name is Stephen Kelly. I am the Joint Director of Planning at the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP), a partnership between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. I am a Chartered Town Planner (MRTPI) with over 35 years of experience in public sector planning practice, including over 19 years in chief planner roles within four separate Local Planning Authorities.
- 1.2. I have been in my current role as the Chief Planner for the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP) since 2016. Formed to deliver the statutory functions of the Local Planning Authority on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, GCSP was responsible for delivering the adopted (2018) Local Plans for Cambridge City (CCiC) and South Cambridgeshire District (SCDC) (jointly 'the Councils'). From 2016 I was therefore involved in overseeing the evidence base, coordinating public and stakeholder engagement, and guiding the Plans through examination to adoption.
- 1.3. I am currently leading the preparation of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan on behalf of both Councils. This work includes developing the spatial strategy to guide sustainable growth across the area, ensuring that the Plan reflects the Councils' strategic objectives, responds to evidence, and is aligned with national policy. Through these responsibilities, I have played a central role in shaping the long-term planning framework for Greater Cambridge.
- 1.4. I am also directly involved in both Councils' ongoing engagement with the Cambridge Growth Company, a wholly owned company of Homes England tasked with delivering the governments ambitions for Greater Cambridge. Through membership of the Place Directors group of the Combined Authority, I also provide a strategic interface between the CiCC and SCDC and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) programmes including supporting the development of the CPCA Transport Strategy.

- 1.5. The Councils have two distinct roles in relation to the proposal. As members of the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Executive Board, the Councils have voting rights on decisions related to the commissioning of projects funded by money provided through the City Deal. Separately, the Councils are statutory consultees for the application as the local authorities for the administrative areas in which the infrastructure is proposed, pursuant to sections 10 and 11 of the Transport and Works Act 1992 and rules 21 and 23 of the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006/1466.
- 1.6. I appear at this inquiry on behalf of CCiC and SCDC in support of the application for the Cambourne to Cambridge Transport Scheme Order, made under the Transport and Works Act (1992). This evidence follows the representations and Statements of Case submitted by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council on 8 February 2025 and 11 April 2025 respectively.

2. Scope of Evidence

- 2.1. My evidence presents the Councils' position on the strategic case for the proposed infrastructure, assessing the overall planning balance and informed by the substantial engagement undertaken between the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) and Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP).
- 2.2. This Proof assesses the role of the scheme in facilitating sustainable, infrastructure-led growth, particularly in supporting strategic housing allocations at Bourn Airfield (CD4-04-00) and Cambourne West (CD4-01), and its alignment with wider transport objectives, as set out in the Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (TSCSC).
- 2.3. It summarises the justification for development in the Cambridge Green Belt with reference to both local and national policy, including very special circumstances that underpin the proposal. In doing so, it draws on the

conclusions of the Environmental Statement and the Council's independent review of supporting material in relation to open space, biodiversity, landscape and visual character, heritage assets, and other environmental matters. This evidence does not re-assess those topics in detail, which are addressed in the Applicant's relevant technical evidence (with which the Councils agree subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions) but considers them only insofar as they inform the overall planning balance.

- 2.4. The evidence also comments on relevant representations associated with the topic within the scope of this proof received during the statutory process, including those made by objectors.
- 2.5. The assessment is rooted in the adopted planning framework and is further informed by national recognition of the economic and spatial significance of Greater Cambridge. The importance of the Greater Cambridge area is well documented in national commentary, government publications and reports and commentary on the research and innovation sector, which collectively emphasise Greater Cambridge's role in supporting UK-wide economic and technological ambitions.
- 2.6. In this context, this proof concludes that the delivery of well-coordinated infrastructure to support growth is not only a local objective but a matter of wider strategic importance. The proof is therefore set within both the local policy framework and that broader national landscape that recognises the area's unique contribution to economic growth.
- 2.7. Finally, the evidence concludes by assessing the overall planning balance, weighing the benefits of the scheme against identified harms, and setting out why, in the Councils' view, the proposal is justified in planning terms.

3. The Spatial Strategy for Greater Cambridge and its development

- 3.1. The spatial development strategy for Greater Cambridge, encompassing Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District, is built around the principle of focusing growth in accessible locations in and around Cambridge, while supporting the delivery of sustainable new communities at a scale sufficient to support their everyday infrastructure needs in locations beyond the Green Belt that are nevertheless capable of being well connected to Cambridge and its economy and services by high quality sustainable transport.
- 3.2. The strategy reflects a “Cambridge-focused” approach to growth, recognising the city’s role as a centre of international economic significance, its knowledge-based economy, and the housing needs of the future workforce are critical to continued innovation-led growth. The strategy also seeks to recognise and safeguard the qualities that make Cambridge special – particularly its historic character, compact urban form, and the setting provided by the Cambridge Green Belt.
- 3.3. The adopted 2018 Local Plans for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire embedded this approach by directing most new development to:
- Previously developed land and areas for intensification of uses in accessible locations with the City of Cambridge.
 - New urban neighbourhoods on the edges of Cambridge such as Trumpington Meadows in the South West and Eddington and Darwin Green in the North West of the City.
 - Existing and planned new settlements where existing or planned public transport infrastructure can support higher densities and reduce car dependence such as Northstowe, Waterbeach New Town, Bourn Airfield (CD4-04-00) and Cambourne West(CD4-01).
- 3.4. The Cambridge Green Belt has played a key role in shaping this strategy. While protecting the historic setting of the city, the approach taken in

successive plans has involved selective release of Green Belt land at the urban edge, but only where such development demonstrably supports sustainable patterns of growth and meets the exceptional circumstances test.

- 3.5. This strategy has evolved through successive development plans since the late 1990's with each iteration reaffirming the centrality of supporting Cambridge's economic role while distributing growth in a way that promotes sustainability and efficient infrastructure delivery.
- 3.6. Following the grant of the planning permission for Cambourne in November 1996 (which was identified through The Cambridgeshire Structure Plan (1995) (CD7-51), the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) (CD7-52) identified the need to release land from the Cambridge Green Belt alongside the development of the new settlement at Northstowe. The spatial strategy in the Structure Plan was then expressed through site allocations in the Cambridge Local Plan [2006](CD7-54), the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework [2007-2010] (CD7-56), the Northstowe Area Action Plan [2007] (CD7-57), and the joint Area Action Plans for North West Cambridge [2009] (CD7-60) and Cambridge East [2008] (CD7-59). All of these plans were subject to extensive periods of public consultation and examination by planning inspectors. The strategy was endorsed and subsequently included in the East of England Plan, published in May 2008 (CD7-62).
- 3.7. The two 2018 Local Plans built upon the earlier structure plan and local plans with further proposed releases to establish new towns at Waterbeach and a new village at Bourn Airfield and the further expansion of Cambourne. The spatial strategy was supported by the 2014 TSCSC (CD7-07), which established key principles for movement across the area. Together the spatial development strategy and transport strategy underpinned the completion of the Cambridge "City Deal" between Local Leaders and the Government in 2014 (CD7-02). The City Deal is a long-term agreement between central government and local partners to invest in infrastructure, housing, and skills, recognising Greater Cambridge's national and international importance as a leading centre for science, technology, and innovation. It committed an initial

£100 million over five years, with the potential for a further £400 million subject to independent review of economic impact and required robust governance and assurance arrangements to ensure value for money. The Government's justification for the Deal reflected the critical role of the Cambridge economy in driving UK growth and the need to address transport congestion, housing pressures, and skills gaps to safeguard the area's global competitiveness. The City Deal focused particularly on "...supporting the delivery of vital infrastructure necessary to provide good quality and sustainable growth for the area for decades to come." [City Deal announcement 14 June 2014] (Ref TBC)

3.8. The planning Inspectors who examined the 2018 Local Plans concluded that the spatial strategy contained within the two local plans, including the policy requirement for a high-quality segregated bus link to support significant new development at Bourn Airfield (CD4-04-00) and Cambourne West(CD4-01) was "sound" (CD7-63) (CD7-64) . The Plans provided for 33,500 new homes and 44,000 jobs across the Greater Cambridge geography between 2011 and 2031 (CD6-01) (CD6-02).

3.9. Since 2020, the Councils have been developing a single "Joint" Local Plan for the Greater Cambridge area. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan (Preferred Options 2021) (CD6-05), discussed further in section 4 below, builds upon the adopted local plan spatial strategy by continuing to focus growth on:

- Intensification and re-use of brownfield land in the City, notably with a focus on the North East Cambridge area and Cambridge Airport
- Limited releases from the Cambridge Green Belt notably associated with the international significance of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus in Cambridge and on the edge of Cambridge, including some further Green Belt release where justified
- New settlements where comprehensive infrastructure can be planned in from the outset

- 3.10. This continuing strategy recognises that sustainable and deliverable patterns of development (including the minimising of carbon emissions from growth) (CD6-05) are best achieved when growth is concentrated along corridors where high-quality public transport, cycling, and walking infrastructure are or will be in place, thereby supporting modal shift and reducing reliance on the private car.
- 3.11. In summary, improving public transport use and performance within the Cambourne to Cambridge corridor is entirely consistent with spatial planning policy objectives, promoted, tested and consistently endorsed by local authorities (and central government) for over two decades. This long-standing strategy has prioritised infrastructure-led growth, recognising that the success of the local and national economy depends on well-connected, sustainable communities. As Cambridge continues to expand its leadership in research, innovation, and advanced industries, delivering a low carbon response to new housing and employment in locations supported by high-quality transport infrastructure remains fundamental. The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme supports this approach and is a central mechanism through which the area's planned growth can be delivered sustainably.
- 3.12. Section 4 below sets out the critical growth drivers that explain the necessity and urgency of the scheme, and how it supports the economic, spatial, environmental, and social objectives embedded within both adopted and emerging strategies.

4. Critical Growth Drivers for the Proposal and Alignment with the emerging Strategic growth Objectives

Enabling Housing Growth and Economic Development

- 4.1. The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme is a key component in converting the spatial strategy for Greater Cambridge into successful, deliverable development on the ground. Its importance lies not in identifying new sites for growth, which

the development plan has already done, but in unlocking those sites by providing the sustainable transport infrastructure they depend on.

- 4.2. To better reflect this dual role, this section separates the interlinked but distinct contributions the scheme makes to (i) unlocking housing growth, and (ii) strengthening economic development and productivity.

Unlocking and Sustaining Housing Growth

- 4.3. As highlighted in Section 3, the adopted Local Plans identify significant housing growth at Bourn Airfield (CD4-04-00) and Cambourne West (CD4-01). What now matters is not just the policy framework, but the ability to deliver these allocations in a timely, sustainable, and viable way that also respects the local and national priority to respond to climate change. In this regard, the Cambourne to Cambridge scheme is essential.
- 4.4. At Bourn Airfield, the limitation of occupations beyond 500 dwellings until a high-quality public transport link is in place (as secured by condition to the planning permission) reflects the critical role of the Cambourne to Cambridge proposals in facilitating delivery. Without the scheme, the site cannot proceed at pace or scale, delaying housing supply, undermining market confidence, and reducing the effectiveness of the plan-led strategy.
- 4.5. At Cambourne West, construction is already underway for up to 2,350 homes, and the long-term sustainability of that development, along with any future expansion of Cambourne, depends on effective integration with Cambridge City. Cambourne to Cambridge is one of the primary means by which that integration is achieved, ensuring residents have reliable, non-car access to employment, education opportunities, and services

Supporting Economic Growth, Labour Mobility, and Innovation Clusters

- 4.6. Greater Cambridge is home to globally significant employment hubs in life sciences, AI, clean tech, and advanced manufacturing. Locations such as the West Cambridge Campus, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Cambridge

Science Park, and emerging innovation sites across the city and beyond depend on access to a wide labour pool, including public sector staff, support services, and early-career researchers.

- 4.7. These sectors are essential not only to the regional economy but to the UK's global competitiveness. The Government's 2023–2025 ministerial statements (CD7-24) (CD7-28) (CD7-29) and the Case for Cambridge (2024) (CD7-01) affirm the national importance of optimising growth in Cambridge's knowledge-based economy through targeted infrastructure investment. The Chancellor's January 2025 announcement identified Cambridge as central to the future Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor, prioritising infrastructure that supports employment, housing, and research growth in "Europe's Silicon Valley (CD7-30).
- 4.8. The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme directly supports this ambition by improving access to the University of Cambridge's West Cambridge Campus, which includes over 383,000 sqm of consented R&D and academic space (CD4-05). By providing a high-quality transport corridor from emerging housing locations into this innovation campus, the scheme supports the movement of researchers, skilled professionals, and students. It enables those priced out of the Cambridge housing market to commute reliably and affordably, thereby helping the university and existing and future employers to retain and recruit talent.
- 4.9. The scheme also supports labour market access for non-car owners including young people and those who do not drive (and those on lower incomes priced out of the City housing market), widening participation in Cambridge's growth and supporting inclusive economic development. In doing so, it reinforces the Government's and the Councils' objectives for improving productivity and reducing inequality.

Strengthening Economic Integration and Workforce Mobility

- 4.10. The Greater Cambridge economy is built around internationally significant clusters in life sciences, AI, advanced manufacturing, and clean tech. However, this economic success depends on the ability of employers to access a growing workforce presenting a wide range of sector specific but also broader place and growth-related skills – including for example construction and related service support roles. The cost of housing in Cambridge City is already a known barrier, leading to growing levels of commuting.
- 4.11. The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme enhances labour mobility by reliably linking more affordable housing locations outside of the City with major job centres. It supports inclusive access to employment and education, especially for those without private vehicles, ensuring that the benefits of growth are broadly shared. The project supports the long-term competitiveness of the city by helping employers recruit from a larger, more diverse workforce base.

Supporting Research and Innovation Growth in West Cambridge

- 4.12. As highlighted above, the University of Cambridge's West Cambridge campus has outline permission (Ref 16/1134/OUT) (CD4-05) for up to 383,300 m² of academic and research floorspace across the West Cambridge site (outline consent granted June 2024, subject to s106). The Environmental Statement accompanying the outline planning application calculated a forecast workforce of c. 13,994 FTE on site. Key projects within the site include the Ray Dolby Centre (Cavendish III) and the New Whittle Laboratory. This site and its institutions therefore plays a foundational role in the UK's innovation economy and is key to maintaining Cambridge's global position in leading edge science.
- 4.13. The Cambourne to Cambridge route provides a sustainable transport spine that connects the cutting-edge research hubs in the City including West Cambridge with housing (and employment at locations like Bourn Quarter) growth areas to the west of the City. This supports cross-pollination between academia, business, and the wider regional labour market. It also facilitates sustainable travel by employees, including researchers and graduate/post doc talent from

the wider A428 corridor, including future catchments accessible via East West Rail.

- 4.14. The Scotland Farm Travel Hub further strengthens these links by offering park-and-ride connectivity and an opportunity to intercept car borne trips from the newly upgraded A428 trunk road, enhancing journey reliability and reducing pressure on road corridors.

Aligning with Sustainable Transport and Climate Goals

- 4.15. The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme was first set out as a priority intervention in the 2014 TSCSC, and its importance has been reaffirmed in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (2023) (CD6-09).
- 4.16. The strategy identifies the A428/A1303 as a corridor of significant congestion, where transformational modal shift is required. The Cambourne to Cambridge route forms a key part of that modal shift strategy, helping to:
- Provide a reliable alternative to car use between Cambourne and Cambridge,
 - Providing an opportunity to reduce congestion in the City by intercepting future private car trips towards Cambridge City from within the OxCam Growth Corridor;
 - Increasing the capacity of the Park and Ride travel hubs serving the City
 - Support high-frequency, low/zero-emission bus travel;
 - Promote walking and cycling via a parallel active travel route;
 - Deliver net reductions in transport-related carbon emissions;
 - Enable compact, infrastructure-led development.
- 4.17. The project also aligns with both local net-zero ambitions reflected in the background evidence prepared for the emerging Joint Local Plan (CD6-04) and national climate change goals, and contributes to a reduction in air pollution, car dependency, and road congestion.

Meeting the Needs of Communities and Social Inclusion

- 4.18. Both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have made clear commitments towards sustainable and inclusive growth. These are embedded not only in the adopted 2018 Local Plans but also in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (CD6-04), which places *Wellbeing and Social Inclusion* as a central theme. The Cambourne to Cambridge busway ensures that people without access to or use of a car can reliably reach employment, education, healthcare, and cultural opportunities in Cambridge.
- 4.19. The proposals accordingly reduce existing inequalities around opportunity and accessibility by connecting non driving residents of new and existing communities with the City. For businesses and employers in South Cambridgeshire, it also expands their access to talent from within the City and provides opportunities for new companies formed in the City to consider more affordable locations for scale up beyond the City (at locations such as Bourn Quarter and Cambourne Business Park) without further burdening congested road infrastructure.
- 4.20. In doing so, the scheme supports the kind of balanced, inclusive, and connected community envisaged by both local planning policy and the emerging Joint Local Plan's Wellbeing and Inclusion objectives as envisaged by SCDC Local Plan 2018 Objective S/2(e) (pp. 22–24) and Policy SC/2 (p. 203) (CD6-02); Cambridge City Local Plan 2018 Strategic Objective 15 and Policies 73–75 (CD6-01); and the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan 'Wellbeing & Social Inclusion' theme and Policy WS/HD (First Proposals, 2021 page 190) (CD6-04).

Alignment with Local, Regional, and National Priorities

- 4.21. The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme is strongly aligned with strategic planning and infrastructure frameworks:
- **Local Plan Objectives:** It enables sustainable delivery of housing and employment allocations in the adopted 2018 South Cambridgeshire and

Cambridge City Local Plans (notably SS/7 and SS/8), meeting requirements for policy directed high-quality public transport provision.

- **Emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan:** It underpins the infrastructure-first growth model set out in the First Proposals and Development Strategy Update and aligns with the low carbon growth objectives that underpin a commitment to respond positively to climate change. These documents identify Cambourne and Bourn as key growth areas and reinforce the need for investment to enable delivery.
- **Regional Transport and Economic Plans:** The LTCP 2023 and Greater Cambridge City Deal both identify the A428 corridor as a critical growth area requiring investment in high-quality public transport to support modal shift and economic inclusion.
 - **National Infrastructure and Growth Policy:** The scheme is supported by successive Government publications including:
 - “The Case for Cambridge” (March 2024) (CD7-01), which calls for delivery of infrastructure to unlock growth;
 - WMSs by the Secretary of State (24 July & 19 December 2023) (CD7-40), which highlight the need for housing and research space;
 - Ministerial letters from Matthew Pennycook MP (August & October 2024), confirming Government’s in-principle support for infrastructure to enable Cambridge’s long-term growth (CD7-24) (CD7-39)
 - The Chancellor’s Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor announcement (January 2025), which prioritises Cambridge as “Europe’s Silicon Valley.” (CD7-30)
- **Climate and Net Zero Targets:** The project contributes directly to national carbon reduction goals, aligning with the updated NPPF 2025

emphasis on low-carbon development and sustainable transport corridors.

The Emerging Local Plan

- 4.22. In line with the recommendations in the Local Plan Inspectors report (2018) (CD7-63) (CD7-64) and as a requirement of the City Deal 2014, GCSP began production of a new single Joint Local Plan shortly after adoption of the 2018 Local Plans. Recognising the considerable level of discussion through the local plan examination around the performance of the Greater Cambridge economy GCSP initially commissioned bespoke economic forecasts in order to inform the consideration of housing (and new premises) needs for the Greater Cambridge area through to 2041.
- 4.23. The publication of the economic analysis accompanied the public consultation on the “First conversation” around the new Joint Local Plan in early 2020 (CD7-49) (CD7-47). This “Issues and Options” report included calculations of housing need based on the “standard method” of 1,800 homes per year or 40,900 homes for the suggested plan period of 2017-2040. It also set out that a rough calculation based on CPIER (CD7-05) suggests that if the jobs growth identified in that report were to be achieved—around 90,000 net additional jobs by 2031 under the baseline trajectory, rising to between 135,000 and 150,000 under a high-growth scenario—around 2,900 homes a year would be needed, equivalent to 66,700 homes over 2017–2040. This compares to the 1,675 dwellings a year necessary to meet the adopted Local Plans 2018 requirement of 33,500 dwellings for 2011–2031. Forecasts of jobs and estimated housing growth for different scenarios for 2020–2041 were published in autumn 2020 and subject to stakeholder engagement.
- 4.24. Following consideration of the consultation responses and further economic modelling, in autumn 2021 the Councils published the “first proposals” (regulation 18 stage) draft Local Plan for the Greater Cambridge area (CD6-04). A further review of the economic forecasts to support the consultation draft

(CD7-47) served to increase the identified housing need for the area to 44,400 (associated with a forecast of 58,500 new jobs by 2041).

- 4.25. The First Proposals consultation draft Local Plan sought to meet that need in a number of ways, using four key themes (Climate Change, Place, Wellbeing and Inclusion and Environment and Greenspace) as a lens to review the performance of each of the different spatial options. This led to a blended spatial strategy that in addition to optimising outputs from the previously allocated sites in the 2018 Local Plans, introduced specific housing and employment allocations for the North East Cambridge area, for Cambridge Airport and by way of further new allocation for further growth at Cambourne, associated with the emerging East-West Rail proposals. In addition, the First proposals outlined potential significant further expansion of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus by way of a green belt release, reflecting the national significance of that location for UK science.
- 4.26. The Development Strategy Topic Paper published in September 2021 to accompany the Greater Cambridge Local Plan – First Proposals (Regulation 18 Preferred Options) consultation (CD7-46) identified the Councils emerging spatial strategy for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which is a blended approach to meet a variety of needs. A key component of this blended strategy is expanding a growth area around transport nodes which specifically relates to a potential expansion of Cambourne, and the improved connectivity proposed by both the East West Rail station and the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (now effectively replaced by the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge Guided Busway). The First Proposals also identified that the expansion of Cambourne as part of an integrated approach to land use and transport infrastructure could make the overall Cambourne area a more sustainable place and would be in general conformity with the NPPF which identifies that plan making should look for opportunities provided by major new infrastructure.
- 4.27. At that time, a number of specific issues affecting delivery were identified, including the availability of a sufficient water supply, key infrastructure decisions (around North East Cambridge and East West Rail) and the uncertainty of

planning reforms on the plan making process. Public consultation on the First Proposals began in November 2021 and resulted in a large number of comments being received.

- 4.28. In January 2023 following further economic modelling of the post Covid-19 economy, the Councils published an update on the development strategy for the Joint Local Plan, Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Development Strategy Update (Regulation 18 Preferred Options) (CD7-50), noting that some of the matters, notably water supply, and the decisions on the Waste Water Treatment works relocation for NEC and East West Rail remained unresolved. This report was accompanied by a further update to the economic forecast and associated housing needs assessment that revised the housing need and job forecast upwards to 51,723 and 66,600 respectively. Both Councils considered and noted the report but there was no formal consultation on these revised housing needs assessments or economic forecasts.
- 4.29. Recent progress on long-term water infrastructure planning has provided greater confidence in managing future water demand in Greater Cambridge. The establishment of the Greater Cambridge Water Scarcity Group (CD7-27) played a key role in aligning partners and enabling the Environment Agency's approval of the Water Resources Management Plan. This in turn has supported progress on a suite of strategic interventions, including the proposed Fens Reservoir and the Grafham Water pipeline which together form part of a longer-term, multi-layered approach to water supply resilience in the area.
- 4.30. Accompanying greater certainty around water supply, confirmation of the preferred East West Rail alignment, including new stations at Cambourne and Tempsford, and the ministerial statements reconfirming Government support (CD7-29) (Ref TBC), have been published. The Planning reforms announced by the Government have also included publication of a deadline for Local Plan submissions under the existing plan regime (December 2026). The Councils have accordingly made provision for a further (Regulation 18) consultation on the Joint Local Plan in Autumn 2025. Between the first proposals consultation, development strategy update and the drafting of this next iteration of the Joint

Local Plan, the Government has also published updated national planning policy which includes a revision to the standard methodology to be used by Councils in determining their local housing needs (CD7-44). The revised NPPF methodology results in a “joint” housing need (May 2025, using the latest published data sets) for the area of 2,295 new homes per annum compared with 2,111 homes per annum used at First Proposals (2021) and around 1,800 homes per annum at Issues and Options (2020). The effect of this new nationally derived “need” is to increase materially the required levels of housing that the local plan has to deliver above that of the adopted local plans.

4.31. The Councils have agreed a new Local Development Scheme in January 2025 that shows public consultation on a Draft GCLP (Regulation 18) in Autumn 2025 (CD7-48). That draft is well progressed, and the Councils expect to publish it in line with the Local Development Scheme during the inquiry into Cambourne to Cambridge. The Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) GCLP will then be published for consultation in Summer/Autumn 2026 with Submission by 12 December 2026, consistent with the transitional arrangements in Annex 1 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024, applying to plan-making from March 2025) including the 18/24-month timescales triggered from 12 December 2024.

4.32. GCSP is continuing to review the economic forecasts for the area to determine whether the new “standard method” provides a reliable basis for plan making reflecting the economic growth anticipated over the plan period. It expects to conclude on this matter ahead of the public consultation on the draft Joint Local Plan in the Autumn which will identify all of the land necessary to meet the forecast housing and employment need for the area through to 2045.

The Case for Cambridge and Governments Ambitions for the Greater Cambridge area.

4.33. In July 2023, Michael Gove MP, the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, identified Cambridge as an area where the government would seek to turbocharge growth. The Government’s Case for Cambridge

March 2024), reaffirmed the commitment in the Autumn Statement 2023 and identified Cambridge as a national growth priority, particularly in relation to life sciences, research, and innovation-led development.

- 4.34. In July 2023 the Secretary of State invited Homes England Chairman Peter Freeman to lead the Cambridge Delivery Group to explore how the government's ambitions for an additional 250,000 homes could be realised.
- 4.35. Following the change of government in May 2024, the Secretary of State, Matthew Pennycook, re-appointed Peter Freeman on 30 October 2024 to lead the Cambridge Growth Company, tasking it to accelerate development; develop the evidence base for an infrastructure-first growth plan and a long-term delivery vehicle; support cross-government engagement; and prepare a business plan (Appointment of Cambridge Growth Company, CD7-39). On 31 October 2024, in his letter "Realising the full potential of Greater Cambridge" (CD7-24), the Secretary of State re-affirmed the Government's view of Greater Cambridge's national economic role and explicitly highlighted the need for the Growth Company to tackle barriers to growth, including congestion and an inadequate transport network.
- 4.36. The Cambridge Growth Company has commissioned a suite of evidence studies seeking to understand the economic potential of the Greater Cambridge area with an expectation that the resultant growth strategy will: *"...build upon and go further than the Local Plans in terms of scale, ambition and timescale..."* (Appointment of Cambridge Growth Company Chair: Letter from Matthew Pennycook MP to Peter Freeman, 30 Oct 2024 [CD7-39]). That work has not yet been published but engagement between the Councils and the Growth Company Chair and executive makes clear an expectation that the Local Plan growth levels will be the starting point and not the limit of the government's growth ambitions articulated in the emerging local plan.
- 4.37. The Government's ambitions are underpinned by international benchmarks. The 2025 Dealroom Report ranked Cambridge as the most innovative city in the UK and Europe, and fourth globally (CD7-65). Moreover, studies

commissioned by GCSP examining the locational and spatial priorities of the knowledge intensive innovation economy (CD7-66) make specific reference to the importance of transport and infrastructure in the clustering characteristics of successful innovation ecosystems. This reinforces the importance of ensuring infrastructure capacity, including reliable and efficient public transport like the Cambourne to Cambridge project, to support globally competitive research, life sciences, and technology sectors.

Planning permissions

- 4.38. Alongside the overall housing and employment needs identified and expressed in the adopted Local Plans (2018), CCiC and SCDC have now granted planning permission for all of the strategic growth sites contained within those plans. This includes outline planning permission for 2350 homes at Cambourne West, 3500 new homes at Bourn Airfield, 727 new homes and 2000 student bedrooms at North West Cambridge and permission for 383,000 square metres of research and academic space at West Cambridge. Following extensive modelling and engagement with the County Council as Highway Authority for the area, the permission for Bourn Airfield, nevertheless limited residential occupations on this site to no more than 500 homes until such time as the high-quality busway required by policy has been provided because of the significant adverse impact upon congestion from Bourn into Cambridge along the A428/A1303.
- 4.39. The building out of these planning permissions will therefore lead to a significant number of additional person trips needing to take place in the corridor between Cambourne and Cambridge associated with an additional local population and increase in academics/workforce at West Cambridge particularly seeking to use this transport corridor at peak times.

5. Response to Objections

General Justification for the Proposal.

- 5.1. A number of objectors have questioned whether the proposal is necessary. The growth of Cambridge is a national priority. The adopted Local Plans provide a

clear and coherent spatial strategy to meet that growth need and to address the housing needs of the existing and growing population in Greater Cambridge. Planning permissions have been granted which rely upon a high-quality public transport corridor between the existing community of Cambourne and Cambridge City. Congestion on that existing corridor deprives residents, particularly those who do not drive a car including young people, from the opportunities presented by the Cambridge economy. Anecdotally, staff at Cambourne School have reported that students are unable to take advantage of work and work experience opportunities in Cambridge due to the unreliability of bus journeys into the City. Without the resilience provided by the dedicated public transport corridor, the planned additional homes in South Cambridgeshire, together with further development at St Neots (Huntingdonshire) and in parts of Bedfordshire enabled by the A428 upgrade, will place increasing pressure on this corridor. This would, in turn, lead to detrimental impacts on the reliability and quality of public transport.

- 5.2. The strategic case for the development, including considering growth beyond the adopted Local Plans is in my view therefore compelling and critical if economic growth in Greater Cambridge is not going to intensify inequality of opportunity in Cambourne and communities West of the City. From a strategic planning perspective, the Applicant's submission demonstrates that the proposals would meet the policy requirements, informed by transport modelling and assessment at both plan preparation and planning application submissions stage. Moreover, the proposals would continue to support sustainable travel patterns associated with further growth that may arise through the emerging local plan or as a result of the governments stated national growth objectives in relation to Cambridge.

East West Rail (EWR) Considerations (CPPF, Alan Treacy, CBAG)

- 5.3. Several objectors assert that the proposal is unnecessary because East West Rail (EWR) will provide sufficient connectivity between Cambourne and Cambridge. However, in my view the two proposals are distinct in scope, purpose, and timeline:

- EWR is a long-distance regional rail route intended to connect cities and regions across the arc. It will provide direct, non-stop access between Cambourne and Cambridge Biomedical Campus and then onto Cambridge City Centre. It is not likely to offer a superior alternative for trips to other parts of the City – notably sites such as West Cambridge Campus or university and college facilities located on the west side of the City or trips for workers into the City Centre core or the university.
- The Cambourne to Cambridge proposal is a high-frequency local public transport route with multiple intermediate stops, enabling people to access jobs, services, education, and amenities within but also between Cambourne and Cambridge.
- EWR is unlikely to be operational until well into the 2030s. The planning permission for the project has also not yet been secured. The proposals serve both current and future need identified in the adopted local plan and through subsequent planning permissions for new homes and workspaces.
- Complementarity: The Cambourne to Cambridge Busway complements EWR. Together, they strengthen the regional and local transport network but serve different geographies and users.

- 5.4. The Greater Cambridge area requires near-term solutions to support development in the western corridor. The proposal is the only deliverable, high-quality public transport solution capable of meeting the areas immediate needs within the necessary timeframe.

Housing Dependency: Cambourne and Bourn Airfield (CPPF and others)

- 5.5. Objectors have suggested that housing growth can proceed without the Cambourne to Cambridge proposal. This is contrary to the conclusions of the transport assessment supporting the adopted development plan policy requirements and the Local Plan Inspector (CD7-63) (CD7-64) and to the Highway Authority's conclusions formed on the basis of the transport modelling undertaken by the applicants during the consideration of the planning application for Bourn Airfield (REF S/3440/18/OL) (CD4-04.01). The developments at Cambourne West and Bourn Airfield and West Cambridge already provide for specific short-term mitigations focused on reducing the

adverse impacts arising from trips to and from the sites ahead of strategic infrastructure being delivered. The evidence submitted to and assessed by the Highway Authority as set out in the Transport Assessment for Bourn Airfield (REF S/3440/18/OL) (CD4-04.01) and in the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Transport Evidence Base: Preferred Options Update (CD6-05), concluded that while site-specific measures could mitigate some impacts in the early phases, they would not be sufficient to accommodate the full volume of trips from the completed without the delivery of the Cambourne to Cambridge scheme.

Environmental Constraints and Water Scarcity (FeCRA, Friends of the River Cam)

- 5.6. Some objectors have raised concerns about water availability in the Greater Cambridge area and suggested that growth in the western corridor should be paused or diverted.
- 5.7. The determination of the planning application for Bourn Airfield (CD4-04.01) was subject to careful consideration by SCDC for its impact upon water demand. Indeed, the decision on the proposals was deferred to provide for exploration of the impacts arising from this development in advance of the proposed investment to supplement water supply detailed in the now approved Water Resources Management Plan (CD7-70). The planning permissions secure a number of water conservation measures which have been considered by SCDC and the Environment Agency in the decision to grant planning permission for this development. In the event that the Cambourne to Cambridge project does not proceed, the housing needs (and associate water demand) arising will need to be met in an alternative location within the Cambridge Water supply area. There are no specific impacts from the project on water supply infrastructure that result in homes within this corridor being more impactful on water supply pressures than homes elsewhere in the Greater Cambridge Local Plan area.
- 5.8. Rather than exacerbating water stress, the proposal supports a planning framework that makes best use of limited resources and integrates growth with

forward infrastructure planning. Water challenges are recognised, but they are not a reason to abandon the adopted strategy or cancel or delay infrastructure necessary to meet existing needs of the area.

National Interest and Science Economy (CPRE)

- 5.9. CPRE and others argue that Cambridge's growth is excessive or nationally disproportionate. However, the following points are relevant (in addition to the points already made in sections 3 and 4 above):
- The Government through the Case for Cambridge and successive Ministerial Statements has designated Cambridge as a national economic priority.
 - The area is a net contributor to the Exchequer and a global leader in life sciences, technology, and research.
 - Housing and infrastructure are critical to maintaining and enabling the continued success of these sectors. Without affordable homes and reliable public transport, talent attraction, retention, and productivity will suffer.
 - The Greater Cambridge economic growth supports national economic growth through knowledge transfer and spillovers across the UK.
- 5.10. The proposals form a part of an integrated spatial strategy designed to deliver sustainable development as defined in the NPPF. The continuing focus upon growth across Greater Cambridge reflects its significance in realising the current governments growth mission that is unlikely to diminish in the event that this infrastructure does not proceed. Instead, the effect of the project not proceeding will be that the adverse impacts of that growth will continue to impact upon the lived experience of existing workers and communities across Cambridgeshire.

6. Compliance of the Scheme with adopted and proposed development plans and transport strategy

Policy Context and Assessment of Compliance

- 6.1. The Cambourne to Cambridge proposal engages with the following development plan documents and transport strategy:
- Cambridge Local Plan (2018)
 - South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018)
 - Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (2014)
 - The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) 2023
 - Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, February 2025)
- 6.2. These policy documents collectively support infrastructure-led growth, prioritise sustainable transport, and require that development be supported by appropriate mitigation. The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme is considered both consistent with and a delivery mechanism for key planning and transport objectives.

Site-specific Adopted Local Plan Policies

- 6.3. **Policy SS/7 (Bourn Airfield)** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) requires a “significant improvements to public transport” including:
- “Provision of a segregated bus link from Cambourne to Bourn Airfield new village across the Broadway, and on through the development to the junction of the St Neots Road with Highfields Road;*
 - Any measures necessary to ensure that a bus journey between Caldecote / Highfields and the junction of the A428 and the A1303 is direct and unaffected by any congestion suffered by general traffic;*

iii. *Provision of high-quality bus priority measures or busway on or parallel to the A1303 between its junction with the A428 and Queens Road, Cambridge;*”.

6.4. The reasoned justification for the policy indicates that:

“...a fundamental requirement for this site is that it will be a sustainable development which is highly accessible and permeable to all its residents on foot, by cycle and public transport, to support sustainable transport, recreation and health. Segregated provision for buses and cycle use provides for quicker journeys, greater use and improved safety. Together with development at West Cambourne extensive off-site transport infrastructure provision will be required to mitigate transport impacts, particularly between the new village and Cambridge.”

6.5. These provisions are explicitly reflected in the Cambourne to Cambridge scheme. The scheme is thus in compliance with Policy SS/7 and is essential for releasing the full capacity of the Bourn Airfield site (3,500 homes).

6.6. **Policy SS/8 (Cambourne West)** similarly relies on improved public transport to support its scale and accessibility. Specifically, the policy requires that:

“...The development will need to address, but is not limited to, the following (subject to detailed strategy development and to the transport assessment of development proposals):

- a) Any measures necessary to ensure that a bus journey between Cambourne West and the junction of the A428 and the A1303 is direct and unaffected by any congestion suffered by general traffic;*
- b) High quality segregated bus priority measures on the A1303 between its junction with the A428 and Queens Road, Cambridge;”*

6.7. The scheme’s design directly supports this policy requirement and enables delivery of strategic development.

6.8. **Policy 19 (West Cambridge Area of Major Change)** supports the development and densification of the West Cambridge site (which already benefitted from an earlier outline planning permission) subject to a number of provisions including a requirement for proposals to include “a comprehensive transport strategy for the site, incorporating a sustainable transport plan to minimise reliance on private cars.”

6.9. The reasoned justification behind the policy states:

“Key to the success of the new proposals will be an integrated and accessible sustainable public transport strategy (which considers all modes of travel, including public transport) to ensure that development has an acceptable impact on the surrounding transport network...”

6.10. The Cambourne to Cambridge corridor is a fundamental component of that strategy, serving future university and research development.

Other relevant Local Plan policies

6.11. **Policy 67 (Protection of Open Space) of the Cambridge Local Plan and Policy SC/9 (Protection of Existing Recreation Areas, Playing Fields, Allotments and Community Orchards)** protect existing open spaces unless adequate justification and mitigation are provided. Drawing on the Open Space Assessment prepared for the Scheme and set out in the Statement of Case (paragraphs 4.17–4.22) (CD23-16-1 REP-09 SCDC SoC) (CD23-16-2 REP-09 CCC SoC), the proposal will result in the temporary and permanent loss of certain open space areas during construction and early delivery phases (total permanent loss c. 5,380 sqm across two locations). The details of these areas, including extent and location, are addressed in the technical assessment and summarised in the Statement of Case.

6.12. Coton Orchard, which the scheme passes through in part, is designated as a County Wildlife Site and recognised as a traditional orchard of ecological value, but it is not classified as a “community orchard” under the definitions in

either Local Plan. The Councils acknowledge that the scheme will result in the loss of one veteran tree within the orchard and potential impacts upon other trees within the red line boundary of the proposals, as set out in the SCDC Statement of Case (CD23-16-1 REP-09) (paragraph 4.21), and that this has been a key consideration in assessing environmental effects. While the applicant's Planning Statement (CD1-15) (paragraph 7.8) provides further arboricultural detail, our assessment concludes that embedded design and mitigation measures, alongside biodiversity compensation, will ensure the residual effects are acceptable in policy terms.

- 6.13. Policy 67 also requires that where replacement open space is provided in an alternative location it must be fully available before the area to be lost is redeveloped, which frames the timing approach for this Scheme. In South Cambridgeshire, Local Plan Policy SC/9 requires that any off-site replacement open space is in place and open for use before the loss occurs, and that it is of at least equivalent quantity and quality in a suitable location
- 6.14. The Scheme incorporates mitigation measures and provides for the re-provision of open space within the final layout, including a replacement site of equivalent area to that permanently lost, delivered in close proximity to the affected locations and incorporating qualitative enhancements such as habitat creation, bridleways, and seating areas. To address the Policy 67 and SC/9's timing test, and recognising health-and-safety constraints around the M11 overbridge during construction, the Applicant and Greater Cambridge Shared Planning have agreed a planning condition (Draft Condition 27 as set out in the Councils' Statements of Case (CD23-16-1 REP-09 SCDC SoC) (CD23-16-2 REP-09 CCC SoC)) securing that the replacement open space will be fully available to the public on the opening of the Scheme. The Councils are therefore satisfied that, while there will be temporary construction-phase restrictions for safety reasons, the operation-stage position achieves the policy outcomes on quality, quantity and access. In addition, Section 19 exchange land has been identified within the replacement area to satisfy the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 adequacy tests. In line with the Councils' Statements of Case (paragraph 4.20), while recognising the temporary impacts, the Councils

consider the proposal compliant with relevant open space policies subject to delivery of the agreed compensatory provision and condition controls. This approach accords with the NPPF (paragraphs 103–104) and the Planning Statement concludes that, with Condition 27 in place, the Scheme accords with Policies 67 and SC/9.

- 6.15. This reprovion is designed to meet relevant policy expectations and is secured through planning conditions. In line with the Councils' Statements of Case, while recognising the temporary impacts, the Councils considers the proposal compliant with relevant open space policies subject to delivery of the agreed compensatory provision. This approach accords with the NPPF (paragraphs 103 and 104).
- 6.16. **Policy NH/14 (Heritage Assets) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) and Policy 61 (Conservation and Enhancement of Cambridge's Historic Environment) of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018)** require that development proposals protect, conserve, and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their setting. National policy at NPPF (2025) paragraphs 213–223 (CD8-01) requires that great weight be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of the degree of harm, and that any harm to significance is weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 6.17. The Environmental Statement (CD1-11.07.2) identifies that the scheme will result in *less-than-substantial harm* to the significance of certain designated heritage assets, including parts of the West Cambridge Conservation Area, Clare Hall, and other assets along the corridor. These effects arise primarily from changes to the rural or landscaped character of settings, introduction of new infrastructure into currently open views, and localised changes in visual amenity. While embedded design measures such as sensitive alignment, landscape planting, and materials reduce the degree of harm, they cannot fully avoid it. In accordance with statutory duties, the identified harm must be afforded considerable importance and weight in the decision-making process. These impacts must therefore be weighed against the scheme's public

benefits, which are considered in the Heritage Balance later in this section (see paragraph 6.42).

- 6.18. **Policy 4 (Green Belt) of the Cambridge Local Plan and Policy S/4 (Green Belt) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan** resist inappropriate development within the Green Belt unless very special circumstances (VSC) can be demonstrated. National policy at NPPF (2025) paragraph 154(h)(iii) (CD8-01) provides that local transport infrastructure will not be inappropriate development where it 1) demonstrates a need for a Green Belt location, 2) preserves openness, and 3) does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The Scheme and the Green Belt

- 6.19. The Scheme crosses designated Green Belt land, and involves the construction of new transport infrastructure, ancillary structures, and associated works that will introduce built form into currently open areas. While the scheme is designed to follow existing landscape features where possible and incorporates mitigation to reduce visual and spatial impacts, elements of the proposal would nonetheless introduce built form and associated apparatus including enclosures into currently open areas.

Application of the NPPF paragraph 154(h)(iii) tests

- 6.20. a) **Need for the location.** The corridor between Cambourne and Cambridge is the only realistic geography for a segregated, high-quality public transport link that connects the strategic allocations at Cambourne West (SS/8) and Bourn Airfield (SS/7) to the Cambridge employment hubs. There are no routes not passing through the Green Belt that can achieve this objective. On that basis, the Scheme demonstrates a location-specific need within the Green Belt.
- b) **Openness.** The permanent operational elements including the segregated carriageway, stops/shelters and canopies, platforms, bridges/overbridge works, retaining structures and cuttings/embankments, drainage features, maintenance access, fencing and lighting columns, together with associated activity, would introduce new features into views within and across the Green

Belt. While planting, landform and materials can reduce the effects, there remains a residual reduction in openness in several sections.

(c) **Purposes of the Green Belt.** The route does not lead to settlement coalescence and does not undermine the city's compact form overall; however, the identified encroachment and setting effects constitute policy conflict that must be weighed in the balance.

- 6.21. Because the Scheme does not fully preserve openness and results in some adverse impacts upon and therefore conflict with Green Belt purposes, it does not satisfy all three limbs of NPPF paragraph 154(h)(iii) (CD8-01) as set out above. The Councils therefore consider the development to be “inappropriate development” in the Green Belt to which NPPF paragraph 153 applies. Very Special Circumstances (VSC) must be demonstrated such that the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed. The VSC case is addressed under the heading *Green Belt Very Special Circumstances* later in this section (see paragraph 6.44).

Environmental Impacts Summary

- 6.22. In addition to the above considerations, the Councils have undertaken a comprehensive assessment of all Local Plan policies and the relationship with the wider environmental impacts associated with the proposed scheme, including effects on biodiversity, landscape and visual amenity, assets, noise, air quality, and water resources has been undertaken. These matters are addressed in detail within the applicant's Environmental Statement and the conclusions of the Councils on the extent to which the proposals address local plan policies is set out in the Councils' Statements of Case (Section 4.0) (CD23-16-1 REP-09 SCDC SoC; CD23-16-2 REP-09 CCC SoC) and summarised below.

A) Policies with which the scheme complies outright

- 6.23. SCDC S/6 – Development Strategy; SS/7 – Bourn Airfield; SS/8 – Cambourne West
Complies. Delivers the strategic, segregated Cambourne to Cambridge public

transport spine required to enable these allocations, supporting the Western spatial strategy.

6.24. SCDC TI/2 – Planning for Sustainable Travel; Cambridge 5 – Infrastructure & sustainable transport

Complies. Provides high-quality, congestion-free public transport and active travel connections that meet policy objectives for mode shift and network capacity.

6.25. Design policies – SCDC HQ/1; Cambridge 55–59

Complies (with parameter controls). Alignment, inclusive access, and landscape/public realm treatments respond to context; design parameters are secured by condition.

6.26. Environmental management – SCDC CC/1–CC/9; Cambridge 28, 31–36

Complies (with conditions). ES-led mitigation (SuDS, construction/environmental controls, noise/air/lighting/land) ensures acceptable residual effects.

6.27. Access/mitigation/infrastructure delivery – Cambridge 80–82 & 85

Complies. The scheme itself is strategic infrastructure; transport impacts are mitigated per policy.

B) Policies where the scheme complies subject to minor residual effects/controls

6.28. Biodiversity & trees (general) – SCDC NH/4–NH/6; Cambridge 69–71

Complies (minor residual adverse; mitigation secured). Protected trees largely retained; loss of one TPO-protected veteran tree at Coton Orchard limited through alignment and offset by habitat creation, orchard restoration, and measurable biodiversity net gain.

- 6.29. Landscape character – SCDC NH/2; Cambridge 8 (Setting of the City)
Complies (minor residual adverse). Landscape strategy and planting reduce visual/spatial effects to an acceptable level for a linear transport scheme.
- 6.30. Open space protection – SCDC SC/9; Cambridge 67
Complies (with timing condition). Permanent loss (like-for-like quantum) is offset by replacement open space of equivalent area and enhanced quality; timing secured so the replacement is fully available at scheme opening (plus Section 19 exchange-land safeguard).
- 6.31. Agricultural land (BMV) – SCDC NH/3
Acceptable in balance. Limited BMV loss is unavoidable for a fixed-corridor scheme; footprint minimised and outweighed by public benefits.

Compliance with Transport Strategies

- 6.32. The Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (TSCSC 2014) (CD7-07) was adopted by Cambridgeshire County Council and developed as a companion to the Local Plans and is a key enabler for the integrated spatial strategy for the Greater Cambridge area. It forms a core part of the evidence base for those plans and is directly referenced within their reasoned justifications (e.g., paragraphs 8.39 and 8.40 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan) (CD6-02).
- 6.33. A central premise of the TSCSC is that “sustainable economic growth will not be possible without a significant change in travel behaviour” (paragraph 2.1). It emphasises the need for high-quality public transport, cycling and walking networks to become the modes of choice for most journeys in and around Cambridge, in order to address worsening congestion, carbon emissions, and air quality impacts. This modal shift is particularly critical given the constraints of Cambridge’s historic core and the economic importance of reliable access to its employment centres.

- 6.34. The Strategy explicitly identifies the western corridor between Cambourne and Cambridge, the A428/A1303 route, as a key growth area and investment priority (pages 16–17; Figure 6 and Figure 12). The TSCSC proposes “congestion-free, high-quality public transport routes” in this corridor to support the delivery of strategic sites at Bourn Airfield and Cambourne West and to maintain access to the West Cambridge employment and research cluster (TSCSC, p.17, 22, 31). It also supports the inclusion of park and ride and active travel infrastructure along the corridor to promote modal shift and reduce reliance on car travel into the city.
- 6.35. The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme was conceived directly in response to this strategy. It is identified as a priority project in the Transport Strategy for Cambridge & South Cambridgeshire (TSCSC) Action Plan, which sets out the St Neots/Cambourne to Cambridge corridor package and requirements for Bourn Airfield and West Cambourne (Appendix H, incl. Figures H.1–H.3 and “Requirements for Bourn Airfield and West Cambourne”) (CD7-07). The Infrastructure Delivery Study (IDS) 2015 that underpins the adopted 2018 Local Plans likewise highlights the A428 St Neots–Cambridge corridor supporting Cambourne West and Bourn Airfield and presents the corridor’s programme and costs (see Section 15.3, Table 15.1, and Table 15.2) (CD7-69). The proposals have been designed to deliver the Strategy’s aims for the western corridor: a fast, frequent, and reliable public transport spine and travel hub connecting strategic housing allocations with jobs, services, and educational institutions.
- 6.36. The TSCSC also underpins the Greater Cambridge City Deal, which secured £500 million of Government funding to deliver infrastructure to unlock growth. Cambourne to Cambridge is one of the key schemes identified through this Deal (see City Deal Agreement, 2014) (CD7-02), and its delivery is important in achieving the Deal’s housing, economic, and sustainability targets.
- 6.37. In essence, the Strategy and the Local Plan are interdependent. The spatial strategy requires transport investment to succeed, and the transport strategy is designed explicitly to serve the planned pattern of development as identified

through the spatial strategy. Without Cambourne to Cambridge, the foundations of this integrated planning approach are significantly weakened, and the delivery of housing and economic growth in the western corridor becomes increasingly difficult to sustain in a manner consistent with adopted policy and national expectations.

Compliance with the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

- 6.38. The scheme also accords with the emerging plan's blended spatial strategy and its emphasis on transport-led growth around key nodes. In particular, it supports the direction of travel set out at First Proposals (Regulation 18) and carried forward in the Development Strategy Update by:
- enabling the western transport corridor to function with a high-quality, congestion-free public transport spine that underpins growth at Cambourne and Bourn Airfield;
 - aligning with the plan's infrastructure-first approach and the expectation that major growth locations are served by fast, frequent and reliable public transport from the outset;
 - advancing the emerging objectives on modal shift, climate and air quality, wellbeing and social inclusion, and net zero / nature recovery, through the provision of active-travel links, public-transport priority and green infrastructure enhancements; and
 - reflecting the plan's identification of opportunities linked to new strategic transport infrastructure (including East West Rail) by providing the corridor capacity and connectivity necessary to capture those benefits at Cambourne and along the route.
- 6.39. Taken together, these provisions demonstrate that the scheme is consistent with the objectives, allocations and policy direction of the emerging plan, even though (as an emerging document) it carries limited weight at this stage compared with the adopted development plan.

Policies Engaging Statutory/NPPF Balancing Tests

- 6.40. While the preceding assessment demonstrates that the scheme accords with the development plan when read as a whole, two areas require determination through specific balancing exercises prescribed by national policy. These are:
- the treatment of harm to designated heritage assets under the NPPF heritage balance; and
 - the treatment of inappropriate development in the Green Belt under the NPPF Very Special Circumstances test.
- 6.41. In both instances, the policy framework does not operate on a simple “compliance or non-compliance” basis. Instead, it requires that any identified harm be given due statutory and policy weight and then weighed against the public benefits of the scheme (in the case of heritage) or other considerations (in the case of Green Belt). The following paragraphs set out the Councils’ assessment of these matters in the context of the scheme and its strategic role.

Heritage Balance

- 6.42. The Councils agree with the Environmental Statement that the scheme will result in less-than-substantial harm to identified heritage assets, including parts of the West Cambridge Conservation Area, Clare Hall, and other designated assets along the corridor. This harm, which arises principally from changes to the character and appearance of settings and the introduction of new infrastructure into open views, must be afforded considerable importance and weight. Against this, the scheme delivers substantial public benefits of significant weight, including:
- the creation of a fast, reliable, congestion-free public transport spine connecting strategic housing allocations at Cambourne West and Bourn Airfield with major employment and education hubs in Cambridge;
 - critical support to the adopted spatial strategy by unlocking and sustaining the delivery of over 6,000 new homes in the western corridor;

- enhanced network resilience and capacity through the provision of high-quality active-travel links promoting increasing equality of opportunity and integration with wider sustainable transport networks;
- open-space and green-infrastructure improvements, including qualitative enhancements to replacement open space and biodiversity net gain; and
- wider environmental outcomes, including modal shift, reduced reliance on the private car, and associated carbon-reduction and air-quality benefits.

6.43. When taken together, these benefits carry substantial weight in the planning balance and are considered to clearly outweigh the identified less-than-substantial harm to heritage assets in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF (CD8-01) and the relevant statutory duties (see paras 6.16).

Green Belt - Very Special Circumstances

6.44. The scheme constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as it does not fully preserve openness and results in conflict with two Green Belt purposes — safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and, in certain locations, preserving the setting of Cambridge. These effects, which arise from the introduction of permanent operational infrastructure such as the segregated carriageway, stops, bridges, and associated works into currently open areas, must be afforded substantial weight in accordance with national policy.

6.45. Balanced against this harm are a series of interlinked public benefits and locational imperatives that, taken together, amount to Very Special Circumstances. These include:

- **Strategic transport necessity** – the only viable corridor for delivering a segregated, high-quality public transport spine linking the strategic allocations at Cambourne West and Bourn Airfield (over 6,000 dwellings) with key employment and education centres in Cambridge;

- **Delivery of adopted spatial strategy sites** – enabling the timely and sustainable build-out of housing allocations central to the 2018 Local Plans, avoiding increased car dependency and congestion;
- **Alignment with wider policy objectives** – directly supporting the Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (TSCSC) and Greater Cambridge City Deal commitments, with associated carbon-reduction, air-quality improvement, and modal-shift outcomes;
- **Integration with future infrastructure** – providing corridor capacity and connectivity to maximise benefits from East West Rail and other planned strategic transport schemes; and
- **Improving equality of opportunity for non-car users** – enabling residents of new and existing communities in the western corridor to access Cambridge’s employment, education, and services without reliance on the private car, thereby supporting inclusive economic participation.

6.46. When considered cumulatively, these factors demonstrate a clear and specific need for the proposals need for a Green Belt location whilst delivering strategic public benefits of significant weight that cannot be achieved through an alternative proposal with lesser harm. The Councils therefore conclude that the identified Very Special Circumstances are able to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, and any other identified harm, meeting the requirements of NPPF paragraphs 153–156 (CD8-01).

Overall Planning Balance

6.47. Having regard to the residual harms identified in this assessment, including the less-than-substantial harm to designated heritage assets and the definitional and purposes harm to the Green Belt, and applying the statutory and national policy balancing tests above, the Councils consider that the scheme’s substantial public benefits clearly outweigh those harms having regard to all material planning considerations. These benefits include delivering adopted housing allocations at Cambourne West and Bourn Airfield in a sustainable manner; providing a fast, reliable, accessible, congestion-free public transport

spine; securing active travel and biodiversity gains; supporting modal shift and carbon reduction; and integrating with the wider transport strategy for Greater Cambridge. Taken together, these outcomes carry very significant weight and decisively tip the overall planning balance in favour of the scheme.

Conclusion on Policy Compliance.

- 6.48. Read as a whole, the development plan is complied with. The proposal delivers a fast, reliable, and congestion-free public transport spine that is integral to the adopted spatial strategy, supports housing delivery, enhances active travel, and secures environmental benefits including biodiversity net gain, carbon reduction, and air-quality improvements. Heritage effects, while amounting to less-than-substantial harm to certain designated assets, have been afforded considerable importance and weight, are judged to be clearly outweighed by the scheme's substantial public benefits. In Green Belt terms, although the scheme constitutes inappropriate development by definition, the Councils consider that a clear and compelling case for Very Special Circumstances has been demonstrated in accordance with national policy. The proposal accords with the Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, is consistent with the NPPF, and aligns with the direction of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The planning balance therefore weighs significantly in favour of granting the Order.

7. Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1. The Cambourne to Cambridge Busway proposal is a critical component of a well-established and locally agreed framework to deliver Greater Cambridge's spatial, economic, and environmental objectives. It plays an essential role in delivering the adopted 2018 Local Plans and in aligning with the direction of travel set by the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which continues to promote a compact, sustainable pattern of growth supported by high-quality public transport.
- 7.2. The proposal is embedded in an agreed spatial development strategy. It is essential to the successful delivery of the strategic sites at Bourn Airfield (CD4-

04.01) and Cambourne West (CD4-01), and central to enabling sustainable travel choices for new and existing communities. Without the scheme, the ability to deliver these sites in line with Local Plan requirements, and the broader growth strategy, would be undermined.

- 7.3. The scheme responds directly to the critical growth drivers identified through both adopted and emerging policy frameworks. It supports the delivery of new homes, facilitates access to nationally significant employment sites, and sustains Cambridge's role as a centre of international significance in science, technology, and education. By providing reliable connectivity, the busway will enable the highly skilled workforce required to sustain innovation-led growth to live in proximity to Cambridge, reducing barriers between housing and jobs.
- 7.4. The proposal aligns fully with the Government's national priorities, including the Case for Cambridge, and with wider policy on sustainable economic growth, levelling up, and innovation. It reinforces Cambridge's unique international role and strengthens its contribution to the UK economy.
- 7.5. Environmentally, the scheme is a key enabler of modal shift, reducing car dependency, and supporting a more resilient, inclusive, and climate-conscious pattern of growth. It directly supports the transition to net zero and aligns with the sustainability objectives of both the NPPF (2025) (CD8-01) and the emerging Local Plan.
- 7.6. While the proposal does result in less than substantial harm to heritage interests and constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, these harms are limited and must be weighed against the overriding public benefits. The scheme's strategic necessity in delivering housing allocations, enabling sustainable access to employment centres, supporting modal shift, and integrating transport and spatial strategies demonstrates that very special circumstances clearly exist in accordance with paragraphs 153 and 202 of the NPPF (2025) (CD8-01). The cumulative benefits therefore clearly outweigh the identified harm.

- 7.7. The objections raised to the scheme, including those concerning need, alternatives, environmental impact, and proportionality, have been fully considered. In each case, the evidence demonstrates that the scheme is justified, that alternatives are not realistic or would not deliver the same strategic outcomes, and that impacts are acceptable when weighed against the scale of public benefit.
- 7.8. The proposal is the product of long-term planning, consistent with both Local Plan allocations and the transport strategies that support them. It is timely, necessary, proportionate, and policy compliant.
- 7.9. In my professional opinion, the Cambourne to Cambridge Busway proposal is not only justified but remains essential to the successful and sustainable delivery of Greater Cambridge's current spatial strategy and longer-term growth ambitions. It is a scheme of strategic importance, without which the planned and emerging growth of Greater Cambridge cannot be delivered in a sustainable way.

Signed:

Stephen Kelly

Joint Director of Planning

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

Date: 19th August 2025

8. Appendix 1

Outline planning permission ref: 16/1134/OUT (CD4-05) West Environmental
Statement Volume 2 Main Report

Operational phase

9.5.2 Operational phase impacts are assessed in Table 9.9.

Table 9.9 Operational phase effects

Baseline		Impact assessment				
Receptor	Value / sensitivity	Impact	Mitigation measure	Impact magnitude	Residual effect	Significance of effect
Employment	High	Once completed, the Development is expected to have a positive impact in terms of providing new, high quality academic and employment floorspace. This employment floorspace will generate positive direct, indirect and induced employment opportunities. The total number of Full Time Equivalent jobs on Site once the Development is complete is calculated to be 13,994. Of these, 8,168 are to be office jobs, 1,190 commercial dry lab and workshop, 383 retail and amenities (including food and drink), and 4,213 academic. 20 jobs will be supported by the nursery, and 20 by the assembly and leisure facilities. See Appendix 9.1, Volume 3 for assumptions and calculation process.	None proposed	High	<p>In assessing the effects of the Proposed Development, it is important to take into account those economic benefits that will be retained at a local or regional level, and which will be brought about over and above what would take place in absence of the Development. The analysis below estimates the additional employment benefits that would be generated by the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The key components of employment additionality relevant to this Proposed Development are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deadweight (the number or proportion of outputs that would be produced if the Proposed Development did not go ahead) • leakage effects (the number or proportion of outputs that benefit those outside of the intervention's target area) • displacement (the number or proportion of outputs accounted for by reduced outputs elsewhere in the target area) • economic multiplier effects (further economic activity associated with additional local income, local supplier purchases and longer term development effects) <p>Subtracting the deadweight (i.e. the level of employment provided by the existing and consented employment space only), the total number of new jobs to be created directly by the Proposed Development is estimated to be 10,129. Of these, 6,367 will be office based, 541 will be dry lab, 387 will be workshop, 308 will be retail, and 2,526 will be academic. This provides a significant proportion of the 22,100 new jobs identified by Cambridge City Council in the Draft Local Plan.</p> <p>The net additional employment benefits (including direct, indirect and induced jobs, leakage, displacement and economic multiplier effects) created by the Proposed Development are expected to be 6,600 jobs at the local level and 8,100 at the regional level. This is deemed to have a major beneficial impact of significance in terms of employment in the area. See Appendix 9.1, Volume 3 for the calculation process and assumptions used.</p>	Major beneficial Significant
Local and regional economy	High	Permanent increase in local and regional annual GVA, as well as local competitiveness, research and development and innovation, which are core economic strategic priorities.	None proposed	High	The Proposed Development has the potential of generating additional annual GVA of £378.2 million at the local level and £476.6 million at the regional level. This was calculated by converting the net employment benefits generated by the Proposed Development into Gross Value Added (GVA), using GVA per worker of £51,804 in Cambridgeshire County Council (ONS sub-regional productivity data 2012). Based on this estimate, the Proposed Development will have a major beneficial impact of significance to the local and regional economies.	Major beneficial Significant
Socio-economic policy objectives	High	The Proposed Development will generate significant numbers of jobs during both the construction and operational phases and will provide high quality employment land by intensifying land use on an edge-of-city site, which is deemed the most sustainable option for development. In this respect, the Development is expected to have a beneficial sustainability effect of moderate significance.	None proposed	High	The Proposed Development is expected to contribute to local strategic economic priorities as well as those of the wider region by supporting key growth sectors including academic, high-technology, and research and development. It will facilitate the continued development of the Cambridge Cluster and the University of Cambridge's contribution to the local and national economies. Thus, the Proposed Development will have a major beneficial impact of significance towards achieving the area's socio-economic policy objectives.	Major beneficial Significant
Security	Low	Crime and anti-social behaviour at the Site.	Adopt measures in the design and layout of the Proposed Development that will minimise anti-social behaviour and crime. This would include ensuring external areas are well lit.	Negligible	<p>Concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour at the Site during its operational phase can be mitigated to a large extent by adopting measures in the design, layout and construction stages of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The vitality of the Site will be improved as an increase in the number of Site users throughout the day due to increased employment and the evenings and weekends through the provision of shared services and sports facilities. This will help to reduce crime and the fear of crime through increased informal surveillance.</p>	Negligible Not significant

9. Appendix 2

Greater Cambridge Net Zero Carbon Evidence Base, page 11

3. Understanding carbon emissions resulting from choices about where Greater Cambridge's new growth happens

This section will include information from the following of our longer reports:

- Task B: Spatial implications analysis.
- Task D: Technical feasibility.

For carbon emissions, why does it matter where new homes go?

The carbon emitted by each person in their daily life is heavily affected by where they live. The location where we live can affect our carbon emissions because it affects:

- Whether we choose to drive a lot, because of long distances or lack of other attractive options to get around
- Whether it is quick, safe and pleasant to walk or cycle to work, school, shops and doctors
- Whether it is quick and easy to walk to public transport stops with regular fast services, so that we can avoid driving for most journeys
- How large our home is – which affects how much energy we need for heating and light, and how much material goes into making our home (because carbon was emitted to create those materials)
- What shape our home is – which affects how much energy is lost through the walls and roof (for example if it is detached or terraced), and how many solar panels we can fit on our roof compared to how much floor space we have to heat and light
- Whether there are nearby facilities that we can share (like GPs, schools and so on) – or whether new facilities have to be built to serve us, using more energy and materials.

In the local plan, Greater Cambridge has a legal duty to enable a certain amount of new homes. This number of new homes is based on the expected amount of population growth, and the number of existing residents who need another home either because they are homeless or because they currently live in overcrowded or otherwise unsuitable homes. This number can be limited by issues such as whether there is physically enough space to create these homes and enough water to support the residents. Still, the planning service must provide for as many of the necessary new homes as reasonably possible (and accompanying facilities to support the new residents).

Therefore, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service must decide where the new homes and facilities should be permitted. This decision is made based on a wide variety of factors including land availability, water availability, presence of heritage assets (natural or manmade), and presence of other valuable features like high-quality farmland or wildlife-rich habitats.

Carbon emissions are one of the pieces of information on which this decision is based. To create that information, Bioregional built a tool to work out how much carbon is likely to be emitted depending on where Greater Cambridge's new buildings are created.