

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 January 2025
5.30 - 7.20 pm

Present: Councillors Nestor (Chair), Baigent (Vice-Chair), Bick, Clough, Divkovic, Griffin, Porrer and Swift

Executive Councillor: Thornburrow (Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure)

Officers:

Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly
Deputy Director, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and 3C Building Control: Heather Jones
Strategic Planning Manager: Caroline Hunt
Senior Policy Planner: Mark Deas
Principal Planner: Rachel Lambert
Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe
Meeting Producer: James Goddard

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/1/PnT Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

25/2/PnT Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Baigent	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge Cycle Campaign
Councillor Clough		Personal: Member of South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum
Councillor Nestor	25/31/PnT	Personal: Member of the Advisory Panel of Cambridge Connects

25/3/PnT Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/4/PnT Public Questions

Members of the public asked a number of questions, as set out below.

Question No 1:

- i. In last month's Devolution White Paper, the Government committed to the creation of Unitary Authorities in areas currently served by two tiers of local government.
- ii. What steps have been agreed to facilitate increased cooperation and coordination with East Cambridgeshire District Council, which decided in October to commence preparation of a new Local Plan?

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure responded.

- i. Cooperation with our neighbouring authorities was an important part of the Plan making process, and Officers continued to engage with the Council's neighbours.
- ii. The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlighted that local planning authorities and county councils (in two-tier areas) continued to be under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), included on this committee agenda, documents activities undertaken towards meeting the requirements.
- iii. There was on-going engagement with East Cambridgeshire and the other surrounding local authorities. The process and outcomes were documented in the Statement of Common Ground and Statement of Compliance which form part of the Local Plan evidence base. Draft versions of these were published alongside the First Proposals Consultation and would be updated at the draft plan stage.
- iv. The Council would also be requested to comment on the proposed new Local Plan for East Cambs District Council at the appropriate stages in the consultation process.
- v. The devolution white paper outlined the commitment of Government to creating unitary authorities and the Council would be considering the implications in due course. However, no discussions had been started in respect of Local Plan preparations. The Council has continued to progress with the emerging joint Local Plan for Greater Cambridge.

Supplementary Question:

- i. Since publishing the Devolution White Paper, the Government had made it clear that it expects local authorities to agree on a single unitarization proposal for each local area and not to submit competing proposals. Had there been any initial discussions between the City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council regarding how these proposals would be developed for Cambridgeshire.

The Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Discussions were taking place, but the Shared Planning Service was not involved at this stage. It was hoped as discussions developed, the Service would become involved given the importance of the future Local Plan and future planning matters.

Question No 2:

- i. Could a property within a conservation area replace wooden windows with UPVC windows? The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning webpage with information about windows in conservation areas says

Doors and windows

*These are important features which add to the attractiveness of buildings and streetscapes. Changes to the size or location of window and door openings need planning permission. Replacement materials used in exterior work should be **like** those already in use. (My emphasis).*

- ii. Is a UPVC a material 'like' wood?
- iii. A link to the webpage from which the quote above here is taken:
<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/design-heritage-and-environment/historic-environment/conservation-areas/what-needs-permission-in-a-conservation-area/#a2>

The Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Regulations currently stated that in a conservation area if wooden windows were replaced it was important that the change must meet the details of the existing windows, this meant the same colour, the glazing pattern and the proportion of the window. But it was not a specific requirement that they remained wooden windows, if the replacement met the criteria of the appearance as outlined, it would be possible to change to UPVC windows.

Question No 3:

- i. The proposals from East West Rail confirm that they would be carrying out work at the Cambridge-Newmarket chord by the Beehive Centre and Cambridge Retail Park. Coldham's Road which has the Cambridge

Museum of Computing and Plurabelle's Bookstore are also on the other side of the railway line.

- ii. Given RailPen's acquisition of both the Beehive Centre & Cambridge Retail Park, and their substantial plans for the former (and in time, most probably the latter), please could Cambridge City Council amend its draft responses to the consultation and urge East West Rail to open negotiations with RailPEN for contributions towards exploring the possibility of a suburban or light rail stop built around Coldham's Lane Bridge. I've described how this could happen in principle in a blogpost at <https://cambridgetownowl.com/2024/12/31/cambridge-city-council-says-east-west-rail-should-build-an-eastern-entrance-to-cambridge-railway-station/>
- iii. At public consultations, the representatives for RailPen have confirmed that Network Rail has not approached them regarding rail-based transport. Please could the council use its offices to ensure that Network Rail and its successors, Great British Rail commence exploratory talks to identify what might be possible regarding a rail/light rail link for The Beehive Centre, and thus substantially reducing any future motor traffic to the redeveloped site.

The Executive Councillor responded with the following:

- i. The Council would ensure through its ongoing engagement with EWR that reference was made to the proximity of EWR's draft Order Limits and safeguarded area to strategic development sites within the City, including Beehive Centre & Cambridge Retail Park. However, there were no firm proposals for a light rail link, or any other transport connections within the area specified.
- ii. Should the proposals for East West Rail evolve to include new transport infrastructure capable of serving this part of the City, or the emerging Transport Strategy promote such a solution, Officers would expect to engage with those proposals at that time.
- iii. Officers had noted EWR Co's consultation response to the Beehive application (23/03204/OUT) which raised no objection. However, requested that a condition was applied requiring details of any development of land within the East West Rail safeguarded area to be agreed with East West Rail Company prior to the submission of reserved matters.

Supplementary question:

- i. The latest update received from Parliament regarding the restructure of Unitary Authorities, Government would expect local government to be restructured by 2028.

- ii. Had tried to lobby RailPen to contribute towards a suburban or light rail station around Coldham's Lane Bridge and it seemed they have been waiting for someone else to take the initiative; the Council and East West Rail were of the same mindset.
- iii. Would encourage the City Council to sit down with RailPen, East West Rail and the Department of Transport to agree funding for at least a feasibility study given the huge transport demands not just from the Beehive Centre but also the Cambridge Retail Park.

The Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Noted the comments made and stated there did used to be railway unloading point on the site.
- ii. Any forthcoming development on site should consider future proofing to allow for adaptability to accommodate for new transport needs, such as a station, which would have a positive impact in the area.

Question No 4:

- i. Referred to the Annual Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 1 April 2023 to 31 Mar 2024 which is an impressive document, and I am grateful to the officers who have put so much time into its preparation.
- ii. My main question is about the number of housing units completed in the annual monitoring period (AMP) which is the nine months since the end of the monitoring report and the forecast completion in the balance of this current monitoring year.
- iii. Para 3.6 says: in the AMP 249 dwellings were completed of which 20 were affordable houses (Para 3.19). The affordable housing completion number is also shown in the tables in the appendices on p.192 and p.197.
- iv. I would like to ask how many houses at social rent were completed in Cambridge in the AMP. What are equivalent figures for total completions, affordable housing completions and social rent completions in the nine months to the end of December 2024?
- v. And what are the equivalent three figures for the balance of the current AMP (January - March 2024)?

The Executive Councillor replied with the following:

- i. Believed the question related to the data for the nine-month period from April-December 2024 and then anticipated data for January-March 2025, in which case the Council did not have the data.

- ii. The AMR was for April 2023 to March 2024, and data that the question related to would come from the housing completions monitoring, which was only carried out annually.

Supplementary question:

- i. To clarify, the question concerned the period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and the affordable housing completions and how many houses at social rent were completed in Cambridge in that period.

The Senior Policy Planner advised the following:

- i. Cambridge Investment Partnership was a key provider of affordable housing in the City and their programme just happened to have a dip in 2023-24. This was exacerbated by a scheme currently under construction actually demolishing 36 dwellings in 2023-24 which will be replaced by 70 new affordable homes over the next two years. Over half of these would be at Social Rent.
- ii. There remain significant commitments for affordable housing on strategic sites in the city.

The Executive Councillor responded:

- i. The previous year to this reporting period there had been 316 completions and reiterated that the completion rate would increase again.

25/5/PnT Authority Monitoring Report 2023-24

Matter for Decision

The report referred to the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for Greater Cambridge 2023-2024.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Agreed the Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for Greater Cambridge 2023-2024 (included as Appendix A) for publication on the Councils' websites.
- ii. Delegated any further minor editing changes to the Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, Authority Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 2023-2024 to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Senior Policy Planner.

In response to Members' questions the Senior Policy Planner, Planning Policy Manager and Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. Did not believe that the AMR had implications for the Duty to Cooperate. The AMR reported on the progress that the Council had made on the Duty to Cooperate.
- ii. The total number of new houses built in Cambridge during the report period was low. The annual Housing Trajectory Report had predicted a smaller figure, so this was no surprise to Officers.
- iii. This reporting period was always going to record a low number of completions, there were some schemes that had been completed the year before, with other schemes not yet started.
- iv. The Housing Trajectory Report did anticipate high levels of growth in future years. Officers had begun the process of updating the housing trajectory for next year. The Government's new housing targets for Cambridge and the surrounding areas would have significant implications for the Council's ability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply going forward.
- v. Officers would be writing to all developers of schemes of ten or more dwellings requesting profiles of their buildout rates to update the HJR.
- vi. The Housing Trajectory Report would show site by site where and when housing completions were expected. The current report demonstrated that the Council has a five-housing land supply which meant planning policies could be considered up to date.
- vii. Most permissions (planning applications) had applied water related conditions. Officers had looked at the few applications where conditions relating to water had not been applied. Some had gone to successful appeal and the Inspector had not applied the condition when the Council would have done. The remainder were a small number of holiday lettings where it had not been appropriate to apply the water conditions and single dwellings.

- viii. Therefore, the total number of new houses in the reporting period which had been conditioned regarding water was higher than 90%. There were only two non-residential permissions where water conditions had not been applied as one was for temporary use and the other due to its small size was deemed not appropriate.
- ix. The water conditions had been applied to all strategic sites.
- x. The purpose of the AMR was to demonstrate how effectively Local Plan policy was working.
- xi. The AMR highlighted the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the importance of the Council's planning committees and services which continued to find ways to support the delivery of new homes, including affordable homes in the City rather than just South Cambridgeshire.
- xii. The Housing Trajectory Report and AMR could be viewed at the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website on the monitoring page at the link: [Monitoring delivery in Greater Cambridge](#)
- xiii. District centres within Cambridge were being monitored by Officers. There had not been any significant deterioration in this area.
- xiv. It was difficult to monitor the change of use for retail units as some changes of use no longer required planning permission.
- xv. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment had been completed. Work was being undertaken to look at potential sites and stopping places.
- xvi. More recent engagement with the Government through the Cambridge Delivery Company continued to explore how the Council could be more confident in the future delivery of affordable and new house and the appropriate infrastructure.
- xvii. A report will be presented at the February meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee which would provide an update on the Cambridge 2050 project.
- xviii. In response to questions around why fewer Neighbourhood Plans were coming forwards in the City Council area, officers expressed a view that that it was potentially easier to develop a neighbourhood plan in a rural location where there was a parish council who were able to start the plan process. In a non-parish area, there had to be a group of people who were willing to work together and organise a neighbourhood development order in the first instance.
- xix. Neighbourhood Plans sometimes come forward because those in the local area had specific planning objectives that they were seeking to deliver beyond those set out in the adopted Local Plan. Therefore, the lack of Neighbourhood Plans in Cambridge was not necessarily a bad thing.

- xx. Noted the comment that it was important to ensure that growth was sustainable.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

25/6/PnT Draft Response to East West Rail Non-Statutory Consultation

Matter for Decision

The report provided an update on the East West Rail (EWR) Development Consent Order (DCO) as well as setting out details and proposing the Council response in respect of the non-statutory consultation currently being undertaken by East West Rail Co., which commenced on 14 November 2024 and is due to end on 24 January 2025.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Noted the commencement of the non-statutory consultation for the EWR project, which began on 14 November 2024 and will continue until 24 January 2025.
- ii. Agreed that the content of the Officer's report and the schedule of feedback/responses (Appendix B) would comprise the formal consultation response from the Council, and delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Economic Development to submit the report on behalf of Cambridge City Council subject to any changes made by the Executive Member and any minor amendments required in the interests of accuracy or clarity.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Planning Manager.

In response to comments from Members Principal Planner, Strategic Sites (EWR DCO Lead) responded:

- i. Noted the list of comments made by Councillor Porrer.
- ii. Officers were actively encouraging East West Rail to engage with residents.
- iii. Would be providing feedback to East West Rail on the lessons learnt from the process so far, both positive and negative.
- iv. One of the lessons learnt from earlier rail project implementation in Buckingham, was that honesty was the best policy with residents and businesses. If there was going to be disruption for several weeks, it was important to tell the truth, so those effected could plan for such things.
- v. Noted the comment that a second entrance to Cambridge main station would be welcomed and would be of considerable use to those living in Romsey Ward; a station in Cherry Hinton was very much needed.
- vi. Comments in the response had been collated from technical officers which could be expanded upon in dialogue with the EWR team, these also requested additional detail on some of those mitigation requirements.
- vii. As the project progressed, and further engagement took place, Officers would push for a more intense dialogue between East West Rail and the host authorities.
- viii. Would take on board all the comments raised by the Committee and would discuss further with the Executive Councillor.
- ix. The response would be updated and amended to reinforce the comments made where necessary.
- x. Would continue to encourage as many people to respond to the consultation as possible.
- xi. The proposal showed from Cambridge Station along the existing line to Cherry Hinton a turn back, which was currently a single line, however, had noted it was previously a twin track.
- xii. There was a Cambridge East Station in the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) strategic vision so hoped that this proposal would become reality.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

25/7/PnT Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable)

Matter for Decision

This report provided an update regarding the Local Development Scheme (LDS), which was a timetable to produce a new or revised development plan documents that set out the planning policy framework for Greater Cambridge.

The LDS was prepared jointly between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council as the plans in preparation are both joint plans for the authorities' combined area.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Agreed the Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable) 2025 at Appendix 1 of the Officer's report be confirmed as the Local Plan Timetable
- ii. Approved the Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable) 2025 be shared with Government and be published on the Greater Cambridge Planning website, superseding the Greater Cambridge Development Scheme 2022.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Planning Manager.

In response to comments from Members, the Strategic Planning Manager, the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Noted the comment that extending the Plan period seemed sensible to accommodate the growth required.
- ii. Members would be kept informed as Officers moved forward with the Local Plan preparation to produce a Plan which could be submitted to the Secretary of State by December 2026

- iii. The Government were aware of key issues that sat behind the emerging Local Plan through the Cambridge Delivery Company, discussions with the Combined Authority and other external stakeholders.
- iv. In all the engagement, opportunities were being taken to highlight the work on the emerging Local Plan and issues raised, with Ministers, through the CPCA and the Water Scarcity Group
- v. Had stressed the significance of the decision on the Development Consent Order as part of Cambridgeshire's growth ambition with all external partners.
- vi. Would expect to bring a report on progress at a future meeting.
- vii. The proposal to submit the Greater Cambridge Local Plan by the end of December 2026, was not just about the proposed sites in the area but highlighted the Council's policies, standards and quality. Would continue to engage with South Cambridgeshire District Council and opposition parties on this work.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None.

25/8/PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

25/8/PnT a Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options consultation response

The decision was noted.

25/9/PnT Officer Delegated Decision

25/9/PnTa Delegated Officer Decision: South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan – Receipt of Examiners Report and Decision to Proceed to Referendum

The decision was noted.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

CHAIR