PERFORMANCE, ASSETS AND STRATEGY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 November 2025
5.30 - 9.00 pm

Present: Councillors Porrer (Chair), Gawthrope Wood (Vice-Chair), Clough, Dalzell, Davey, Griffin and Sheil

Also present Councillors: Bennett, Bick, Divkovic, Gardiner-Smith, Holloway, Martinelli, Payne, S. Smith, Swift, Thornburrow and Young

Officers:
Joint director of planning for the Greater Cambridge Share Planning Service: Steven Kelly
Deputy director of planning for the Greater Cambridge Share Planning Service: Heather Jones
Planning Policy Manager: Jonathan Dixon
Planning Policy Team Leader: Stuart Morris
Planning Policy Team Leader: Terry De Sousa
Planning Policy Team Leader: Lauren Wilkinson
Planning Policy Team Leader: Lizzie Wood,
Planning Policy Team Leader: Max Laverack
Committee Manager: Matthew Stickley
Meeting Producer: Sarah Michael

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/21/P&A Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Pounds.

Councillor Sheil joined the committee online.

Apologies were given for non-committee members in the meeting transcript so were not recorded here.

25/22/P&A Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Davey	25/2/PAS	Personal: Was a director at Cambridge United Football Club.

25/23/P&A Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were published just before committee so would be attached to the next meeting agenda.

25/24/P&A Public Questions

A list of public questions was publishing on the meeting page available via: Agenda for Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 4th November, 2025, 5.30 pm - Cambridge Council

Responses to public questions and supplementary questions are included below:

Question from Mr Antony Carpen regarding Greater Cambridge Local Plan

Please could the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service consider commissioning an academic who has researched neuroarchitecture at the University of Cambridge and how building facades impact the physical and mental health of people who live and work in the built environments of such places. (See https://www.ribaj.com/products/facade-design-psychology-neuroscience as an example).

Please also invite Humanise at https://humanise.org/ (working in a similar field) to submit evidence on their research and how it might apply to a growing Cambridge.

Given the pioneering research they are doing in the growing sphere of neuroarchitecture, I believe having evidence bases from them would have a positive impact on the development of the emerging local plan and result in new buildings, developments, and urban spaces that are less mentally harmful than the ones constructed in recent years.

Councillor Porrer as Committee Chair referred the question to Cabinet where the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport would respond.

Supplementary question:
The question picks up on a whole series of new research that was coming out of the pioneering field of neuroarchitecture. Concerned that the documentation contains little reference to recent findings on the mental and visual distress caused by contemporary architecture in Cambridge. Research now demonstrates that scientists can measure changes in brain activity and chemistry in response to these environments, highlighting their impact on well-being.

Councillor Porrer as Committee Chair referred the question to Cabinet where the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport would respond.

25/25/P&A Greater Cambridge Local Plan

Jonathan Dixon, Planning Policy Manager, presented the report.

These minutes cover the general debate, specific recommendations are included in Cabinet papers available Appendix K - Actions from Scrutiny meetings and proposed modifications.pdf available in the shared Cabinet with South Cambs Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 25th November, 2025, 5.30 pm - Cambridge Council. It is only the first part of the document of Appendix K as the second half was South Cambs recs.

Members discussed:

i. Queried consultation details. When would it occur, how would it be managed and what would it look like?

   Officers said there would be engagement through the digital page which allowed people to comment policy by policy on every single element of the plan. Comments could also be received via email, but preferred web-based feedback.

A range of consultation events were proposed in-person and via online webinars.

ii. Queried differences in policies between the 2018 Local Plan and the current one?

Officers said everything Councillors had previously relied upon would be included. There had been five iterations of the National Planning Policy Framework since 2018 so there would be differences and updates.

iii. Expected numbers of homes and jobs.
   a. How the Local Plan could get the correct balance between providing decision makers with planning guidance to refuse unsuitable applications balanced against allowing scope for developments that would provide much needed dwelling units.
   b. The need to provide long-term suitable and suitably equipped spaces for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

   Officers said the expected target numbers of homes and jobs were deliverable. The Local Plan would ask for 40% affordable housing on sites coming forward via planning applications. The needs of specific groups such as older people, students plus gypsies and travelers had been considered.

iv. What was the safety margin for number of houses/jobs before Officers had to start looking at releasing green belts for development?

Jobs and homes were just two factors among various ones that would have to be considered, it was not possible to say housing need would get to a certain figure and would then need to go in the green belt.

v. Traffic and infrastructure.
   a. Sites needed appropriate infrastructure such as schools and doctor surgeries, and connection links to access them.
   b. Encouraging less car use.
   c. Availability of parking.

d. National road/rail freight needs and impact on infrastructure in/near the city. Members asked for clarity on infrastructure coming forward.
e. Queried if the guided busways are being future proofed to be able to run light rail if the funding were to become available?
f. Impact of vehicles on air quality.
g. Future proofing all transport strategies to make sure they could accommodate future needs. Members were supportive of initiatives such as first and last mile delivery hubs where people could pick up deliveries close to but not necessarily within the city.

Officers said developers, the Combined Authority, the Cambridge Growth Company and Homes England could assist in infrastructure delivery once the City Council as planning authority identified what key infrastructure items were required.

Officers said the local plan identified a need for new logistics space and had been quite clear this was targeted towards meeting the logistics needs of this city and wider greater Cambridge area but not seeking to establish this section of the A14 as a national freight location.

Officers said a plan to deliver light rail would have to be evidenced based and a Transport Strategy come from the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The draft local plan did not include light rail.

vi. Discussed climate change, biodiversity and green spaces.

vii. Water supply and sewerage/wastewater.

a. Concern about water supply.

viii. The draft local plan sets a target of 20% biodiversity net gain in larger developments but not in smaller developments for viability reasons. Developers could deliver net gain offsite. Residents who were going to live on those sites deserved and needed biodiversity benefits.

Officers said on-site biodiversity net gain was prioritised above off-site biodiversity net gain. This was prescribed in legislation.

ix. Requested policies on, plus monitoring and enforcement of:

b. Renewable energy.
c. Grey water systems in housing and allotments.
d. Green roofs.
e. Retrofitting.
f. Healthy new developments policy. How to plan for where facilities such as takeaways, gambling and betting shops should and should not be located as part of the local plan? Also affordable workspaces for creative industries.

x. Members wanted to strongly support the ambitious nature of the Local Plan regarding climate change, the net zero and biodiversity net gain policies. Wished to protect wildlife corridors. Wished to ensure any active travel corridors were balanced with the active travel use (to provide where needed but not when unnecessary).

xi. There was a real issue with big developments where roads were not built to adoptable standards. Asked for the policy to have an aspiration that all roads should be built to adoptable standards otherwise they could be sold to a management company which created fee issues.

xii. Impacts on the plan from local government reorganization (LGR), Cambridge Growth Company and Combined Authorities. These were external dependencies.

Officers said it was not uncommon for local authorities to come together with different local plan time horizons or indeed different local plans with different time horizons within them. If different councils were brought into the mix to form a unitary the next Plan could be adjusted to accommodate them.

Peter Freeman and the Cambridge Growth Company were invited to the 9 December PAS Scrutiny Committee so questions about the impact/view of Cambridge Growth Company could be discussed then.

xiii. Local authorities should retain their role in planning policy development.

xiv. Merging some of the current Area Action Plans and Neighbourhood Plans into the new Local Plan.

Officers said South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council had several Area Action Plans which had the same status as

the Local Plan. Upon adoption of the new Local Plan, Officers proposed that the Area Action Plans would no longer form part of the Local Plan for a number of reasons, including that Central Government encouraged a one-stop shop for the Local Plan.

The Committee voted to continue sitting past the three-hour guillotine.

xv. The marketing of dwellings on online platforms.

xvi. Members/Officers could only be mindful of material considerations in planning policy application and enforcement. Another difficulty was Central Government's suggestion it would consult on changes to land use classes to make these more clear-cut. This made enforcement action by Council Officers difficult when they tried to take action against temporary accommodation or temporary changes of use as they might be described as permanent residential homes with holiday accommodation or temporary accommodation uses.

xvii. Discussion of permitted development rights.

a. How to resist a change from ancillary use of an annex into a short-term let. There was no policy protection currently. A resident could build out their ancillary use to put a family in and then turn it into a short-term; which the Council would find difficult to refuse.

xviii. Policy should include reference to reasonable management fees for co-living, houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) or build to rent properties.

xix. Discussion of student accommodation policy/provision and use of student accommodation by staff. Roughly 25% of accommodation could be used by staff. Student accommodation used by staff should be treated as normal accommodation and meet the same standards such as provision of community space.

Officers said the Council had a requirement to meet the housing needs of all members the community. This included students, older people, disabled people, people with drug or alcohol dependencies. An evidence base of need had been developed.

xx. Discussion of space standards for housing. There was a wish to strengthen the policy for HMOs and self-builds to ensure sufficient living space and amenity space was provided.

Officers said criteria three of the HMO policy set out HMOs that require planning permission must meet internal space standards and the external space standards set out in the residential space standards policy of the Local Plan.

RESOLVED:
To feedback comments to Cabinet.

25/26/P&A Work Programme

The Committee reviewed the work programme.

Members agreed to:

i. Note that Peter Freeman, Chair of the Cambridge Growth Company, had accepted an invitation to the committee's 9 December 2025 meeting.
ii. Consider the budget.
iii. 3CICT would come in March 2026 and potentially some key performance indicators.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

CHAIR