

## **Cabinet Meeting 24 March 2026**

### **Agenda Item 11: Consultation on the Establishment of a centrally Led Urban Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge**

#### **Addendum Report**

Pursuant to Paragraph 4.2 of the main report, this addendum report provides a summary of the comments made by Councillors at the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026 to consider the matter. Following an extensive discussion of the consultation proposals, Councillors' comments are summarised below:

#### **Summary of Comments made by Councillors**

1. The majority of Councillors who addressed the meeting acknowledged that Greater Cambridge faces significant infrastructure challenges that cannot be solved locally without national support – and felt that a properly funded Development Corporation could be a means to resolve some of these systemic challenges.
2. These include limitations in water supply, wastewater treatment, electricity grid capacity, communications infrastructure, and transport systems. Some Councillors suggested that the ambitions for infrastructure needed to go further - to include social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, community facilities, culture and the arts.
3. Councillors also highlighted challenges from housing affordability, the availability of skills opportunities and current significant levels of commuting.
4. Councillors also recognised the convening role that a centrally led development corporation could play. They encouraged the Government to consider how the Development Corporation could apply more ambitious criteria, especially around environmental performance/obligations that exceeded the standards in current and emerging policy nationally.
5. However, a number of comments from Councillors challenged the justification for the specific form of the proposed Development Corporation, particularly

having regard to its significant size and geography, suggesting that the Government's consultation needed to demonstrate more clearly the vision and plan for the area.

6. Almost all Councillors who spoke raised concerns about the lack of democratic accountability. This was compounded because the Government has not explained where development would take place, how it would be funded, or how decisions would be made. One Councillor nevertheless commented that the Government itself is an accountable body - albeit to the electorate nationally.
7. Some Councillors considered that the Development Corporation should include a board composed of elected representatives and members of the wider community, including charities and civil society organisations. A view was expressed that the role of citizens' assemblies and delegated budgets should be considered. This would ensure that decisions might better reflect local priorities rather than being dominated by national interests.
8. Councillors noted that communities in Cambridge have historically accepted growth because it has been shaped through democratic processes and public engagement. Removing this involvement could weaken community consent and generate conflict that could ultimately slow progress.
9. Some Councillors expressed concerns about the environmental risks associated with the undefined (but significant) scale of growth contemplated by the Government to be delivered by the Development Corporation, especially as this had not been set out in the consultation material. It was also suggested that a specific focus should be given to safeguarding and improving the area's chalk streams
10. A number of speakers considered that the proposals were disproportionate and poorly justified, particularly in the context of the anticipated new Unitary Authority for the area.
11. A Councillor expressed concern that the implications of the decision were not being fully explored in the consultation process underway, and proposed that the Council should require Government to hold a local referendum.
12. Some speakers also raised concern about the lack of clarity in the consultation on how oversight and scrutiny of the Development Corporations' work and decisions would be undertaken.

13. A large number of Councillors who addressed the meeting outlined their opposition to the transfer of development management and local plan-making powers. Councillors who spoke on the topic considered that this transfer of powers was unnecessary and unjustified, especially given the strong performance of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.
14. Councillors also commented on the scale and ambition of the Joint Local Plan already in preparation and the significant number of homes within existing planning permissions (and the emerging local plan), suggesting that a centrally led Development Corporation could help to accelerate housing delivery.
15. Councillors suggested that a better approach would be one of collaboration with the Council and its Shared Planning Service rather than the transfer of statutory planning powers to the Development Corporation. This would preserve local expertise and democratic oversight while allowing coordination on large projects.
16. The government's decision not to transfer transport powers to the Development Corporation was viewed as inconsistent. Transport infrastructure is widely recognised as a major barrier to growth and better quality of life in Cambridge, yet the proposals focus primarily on planning powers instead.
17. A Councillor also expressed a view that the planning role should be more strategic – to cover consideration of development beyond the Greater Cambridge area.