UPDATE ON THE PROPOSED GREATER CAMBRIDGE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

To:
Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Leader

Council, 16 July 2026

Report by:
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Wards affected:
All

Director Approval: Chief Executive Robert Pollock confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to the Cabinet/Cabinet Member for decision.

1.	**Recommendations**
1.1	It is recommended that Council notes the report.
2.	**Purpose and reason for the report**
2.1	This report provides a short update for all councillors on the proposed Cambridge Development Corporation.
3.	**Alternative options considered**
3.1	No alternative options were considered, as the report relates to public consultation by government on proposals for a Greater Cambridge Development Corporation
4.	**Public consultation on proposals for a Development Corporation**
4.1	In February 2026 government published proposals for a centrally led Urban Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge. The stated aim of the proposed Development Corporation is to accelerate economic growth. It is proposed to have powers and

	resources to address key constraints, including housing affordability, transport congestion and wider infrastructure capacity. The government's full proposals for a Development Corporation are published here: [Establishing a Development Corporation in Greater Cambridge - GOV.UK]
4.2	The government ran a consultation on the establishment of a Development Corporation between 4 February and 1 April 2026. The consultation drew 773 responses, mostly from people living or working in Greater Cambridge.
4.3	On 3 June 2026 the government published its analysis of the responses. The analysis focussed on 745 out of the total 773 responses, including responses from the following categories: 617 individuals, 40 local government bodies, 52 private sector/professional bodies, and 36 interest group/voluntary organisations. 28 responses sit outside the analysed categories. Government published its analysis here: [Greater Cambridge Development Corporation: Analysis of consultation responses and next steps - GOV.UK]
4.4	The consultation revealed strong consensus on the scale of existing challenges. Respondents widely agreed that infrastructure delivery has been fragmented, slow and unable to keep pace with population and economic growth, particularly in transport, water, energy and social infrastructure. Housing affordability emerged as a critical issue, with supply failing to match demand despite relatively high delivery rates, particularly for social and affordable housing. Overall, there was a shared view that these constraints could undermine quality of life, limit economic potential, and threaten the area's global competitiveness, while future growth must also protect the environment, heritage and character of the region.
4.5	Overall a majority of respondents (59%) "opposed" or "mostly opposed" the creation of a centrally led Greater Cambridge Development Corporation, while 26% were "supportive" or "conditionally supportive". It is not possible to identify the percentage of people who were "conditionally supportive", as government combined "supportive" and "conditionally supportive" into a single category in the published responses
4.6	There were contrasting views on the proposed Development Corporation between different groups:

	• 49% of individuals, 47% of interest groups and voluntary organisations and 60% of local government respondents were opposed. Only 25% of individual, 25% of interest groups and voluntary organisations and 23% of local government respondents were either supportive or conditionally supportive. This was due to concerns about reduced local democratic accountability, governance complexity, and environmental risks. • 67% private sector organisations were supportive or conditionally supportive and only 8% were opposed. They tended to see a Development Corporation as a mechanism to coordinate infrastructure, unlock investment and deliver a long-term growth strategy.
4.7	Across all groups, even among supporters, there were consistent conditions: the need for strong local representation, transparency, meaningful community engagement, and clear environmental safeguards. There was also broad agreement that infrastructure-led development, sustainability, and inclusive growth should sit at the heart of the corporation's objectives.
5.	**Cambridge City Council response to Development Corporation consultation**
5.1	The Council submitted a response to the consultation. This was discussed at Council on 19 March 2026 and at Cabinet on 24 March prior to submission. The papers for these meetings can be viewed here: • Report to Council 19 March 2026 • Summary of comments made by Councillors at Council 19 March 2026 • Report to Cabinet 24 March 2026 • Minutes of Cabinet 24 March 2026
5.2	The Council welcomed the government commitment to additional investment in Greater Cambridge to tackle key infrastructure challenges including water scarcity, sewage capacity, electricity supply, housing affordability and transport issues. However, the Council expressed several key concerns about the proposed Development Corporation:

	• Despite the award-winning performance of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, the Development Corporation is being given exceptional powers over planning and development across a very large and mixed geography. • A lack of evidence to justify the proposal to give the Development Corporation spatial plan-making powers after the conclusion of the current emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. • A lack of evidence to justify setting the proposed threshold for the Development Corporation to determine planning applications for development of 'strategic sites' at the relatively low level of 250 or more homes or 5,000 square metres or more for new commercial buildings. • A democratic deficit. Most of the members of the Development Corporation board will be appointed by government rather than elected locally, which risks undermining local democratic oversight over where new homes and jobs come forward and reduces the ability of local people to shape the future of the area through their local councils.
6.	**Government decision and next steps**
6.1	In response to the consultation, the government concluded that the challenges facing Greater Cambridge require a "step change" in infrastructure delivery and confirmed its intention to establish the Development Corporation. It argued that existing arrangements cannot provide the scale of coordination, powers, and long-term investment needed, and that a centrally led body will combine national influence with local input to accelerate infrastructure and housing delivery.
6.2	The government has committed to strengthen community engagement, embed environmental and equality considerations, and ensure local leaders are represented, while maintaining that the corporation will be essential to enable sustainable, infrastructure-first growth and developing the region's national economic potential.
6.3	On 4 June 2026, the government laid a statutory instrument, The Greater Cambridge Development Corporation (Establishment) Order 2026. This order identified the 'red line' boundary as the whole of Greater Cambridge, named the urban development corporation as the 'Greater Cambridge Development Corporation' and noted that it will be governed

	by Schedule 26 to the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. The Order was scrutinised by a House of Commons committee on 8th July and will be considered by the House of Lords before it rises on 23 July. The Order is expected to come into force on 23rd July 2026. Further legislation will follow in the Autumn to provide the 'Powers and Functions' the Development Corporation will require to operate, including conferring plan-making and development management powers.
6.4	The Council has used the relatively limited influence it has during the parliamentary process to raise our concerns about the establishment of the Development Corporation: • The Leader met the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Matthew Pennycook in June, along with the Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, to raise concerns. • The Council has briefed peers and MPs from all parties to raise the Council's concerns through the parliamentary process. Lord Andrew Lansley tabled a non-fatal Regret Motion in the House of Lords[1] on 10 June.
6.5	Officers continue to liaise with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Cambridge Growth Company about the impact of the Development Corporation on the shared Planning Service and will monitor the development of the further legislation expected in the autumn.
6.6	Following a public recruitment process, David Hill has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation. David's background and the announcement can be found here: David Hill appointed as new CEO to lead Greater Cambridge Development Corporation. This appointment is expected to be confirmed by the Interim Board of the Development Corporation at its inaugural meeting.

[1] Motion of Regret on a Statutory Instrument - House of Lords Business - UK Parliament.

6.7	The Development Corporation may hold an interim Board meeting once the Order comes into force, expected on 23 July, in order to put in place essential governance arrangements (finance, legal etc., interim Board members).
7.	**Vision and Corporate Plan**
7.1	The establishment of a Development Corporation links to the following elements of the council's Vision: • Decarbonisation and sustainability are central to prosperity • Innovation benefits people and planet • Development is sustainable and inclusive • Democratic accountability is genuine and accessible It also links to these priorities in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027: • Leading Cambridge's response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies and creating a net zero council by 2030 • Building a new generation of council and affordable homes and reducing homelessness
8.	**Consultation, engagement and communication**
8.1	See 4.2 – 4.7 in this report for a summary of the responses to the government consultation on the establishment of a Development Corporation
9.	**Implications**
9.1	**Relevant risks**
	No direct risks from this report. As noted at 5.2 above, if the Development Corporation is established by Parliament as an entity, and subsequent legislation is introduced in the Autumn, plan-making powers (following the conclusion of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan) and the ability to determine planning applications for 'strategic sites' (250 or more homes) will transfer from Greater Cambridge planning authorities to the Development Corporation. This will impact on the council's ability to directly shape where homes and jobs come forward in Cambridge and will negatively affect the capacity and capability of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service in future.

	Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)
9.2	No direct implications. A Government decision on which proposal for unitary councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will be implemented is expected before the Commons recess on 16 July 2026. Any new unitary council that includes Cambridge will need to work closely with the Development Corporation in future. The consultation notes that if a new unitary for Greater Cambridge is established on a different geographical footprint than the current proposed Development Corporation, the Development Corporation's geography may need to be adjusted to bring it into line.
	Financial Implications
9.3	No direct impact from this report. The establishment of a centrally led Urban Development Corporation with planning powers could have potentially harmful effects on the financial sustainability and resilience of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.
	Legal Implications
9.4	No direct impact from this report.
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
9.5	No direct impact from this report. Responsibility for completing an EQIA rests with MHCLG.
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
9.6	No direct implications from this report.
	Procurement Implications
9.7	No direct implications from this report.
	Community Safety Implications
9.8	No direct implications from this report.
10.	**Background documents**

10.1	• MHCLG Consultation paper Establishing a Development Corporation in Greater Cambridge - GOV.UK • MHCLG analysis of consultation responses: Greater Cambridge Development Corporation: Analysis of consultation responses and next steps - GOV.UK • Report to Council 19 March 2026 • Summary of comments made by Councillors at Council 19 March 2026 • Report to Cabinet 24 March 2026 • Minutes of Cabinet 24 March 2026
11.	**Appendices**
11.1	None
	To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact David Kidston, Head of Strategy and Policy, tel: 01223 457043, email: david.kidston@cambridge.gov.uk