

Planning Update | September 2018

Development & Planning:

The Cambridge & Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER)

The Cambridge and Peterborough Independent Commission released its Independent Economic Review of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough on Friday 14th September. The Commission was established by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority in June 2017, and is chaired by Dame Kate Barker.

The aim of the report is to identify the steps needed to facilitate further growth in the region whilst maintaining a high quality of life for the people who live and work there. The report draws some very important conclusions for the area and suggests 14 key recommendations. The most significant of these are outlined below.

Key Recommendation #3

The UK Government should 'adopt a 'Cambridge or overseas' mentality towards knowledge-intensive (KI) business in the area, recognising that, in an era of international connectivity and footloose labour, many high-value companies will need to relocate abroad if this area no longer meets their needs. Ensuring that Cambridge continues to deliver for KI businesses should be considered a nationally strategic priority.

KI businesses are those which have a focus on the creation of new knowledge (research) and the commercialisation of it at their centre. A premium is therefore placed on fast access to the latest insights. If such businesses cease to hold 'knowledge leadership' in their area of expertise, they will quickly become extinct.

KI businesses have been witnessed to 'cluster' together, in a process known as agglomeration. Cambridge is the only viable cluster in the UK, and is therefore considered to significantly contribute to national economic output. Should there be a lack of space in the locality for KI businesses to expand, then it is likely that they would move activity abroad elsewhere in Europe. Consequently, enough land needs to be available for KI businesses to grow, and in turn ensure that Cambridge continues its role in boosting the national economy.

Key Recommendation #5

There should be a review of housing requirements based on the potential for higher growth in employment than currently forecast by the East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM). This review should take into account the continuing dialogue between the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Centre for Business Research on employment numbers as well as the impact of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc. This should be used to set new targets which are likely to be higher than those already set – at the very least adding on accumulated backlog.

The current Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) across the area is 4,670 dwellings per year. However, over the last ten years' total delivery has fallen short by just under 10,000 houses. Consequently, this deficit needs to be taken into account and thus the OAN should

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subsequently be revised. The Commission believes that it may be necessary to build in the range of 6,000 – 8,000 dwellings per year over the next 20 years, in order to address the aforementioned deficit and in turn ensure that there are enough homes to accommodate the increase in employment growth in the locality.

Key Recommendation #6

The Combined Authority should embed placemaking in their forward planning, by i) revisiting the Quality Charter to audit how well developments and regeneration projects since its publication have met the criteria, ii) renewing and updating the Quality Charter, and iii) demonstrating how other plans (particularly the Non-Statutory Spatial Plan) can serve to create better places. This should include a concern for the quality of place in existing communities, and an area-wide environmental strategy.

The look and feel of dwellings in particular can have a significant impact on their desirability, and how welcome they may be among the communities in which they are built. In addition, the provision of green spaces, leisure, and shopping options will bring people onto the streets and foster community spirit. For many of the high-skilled workers based in the area who could live and work in numerous prestigious places across the globe, the high quality of life is a deciding factor. Sacrificing this in the pursuit of development at all costs could be extremely damaging in the long term. By prioritising good quality development, residents will find it easier to accept new developments.

Key Recommendation #7

A package of transport and other infrastructure projects to alleviate the growing pains of Greater Cambridge should be considered the single most important infrastructure priority facing the Combined Authority in the short to medium term. These should include the use of better digital technology to enable more efficient use of current transport resources.

A failure to invest in the development of infrastructure in and around Cambridge is the single biggest endogenous risk to growth facing the area. This is due to the fact that the growth witnessed to date has not been matched by basis infrastructure. It is therefore considered that the following major transport infrastructure programmes should be delivered:

- The upgrading of the A10, bringing Ely and its environs into the Cambridge travel work area;
- The introduction of bus franchising for those in less well-off areas, where other forms of public transport would fail any cost-benefit calculation;
- The provision of digital technology (such as the app 'City Mapper') to assist the integration of different forms of public transport; and
- The construction of the Cambridge Autonomous Metro.

Summary

The CPIER has made it clear that the Cambridge and Peterborough Area is one of national importance in terms of contributing to the economy. Consequently, the area should focus on the rapid, yet good-quality delivery of residential, employment, and infrastructure development. This should be a key consideration for the preparation of emerging local plans in the area.

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