

Planning Update | November 2017

Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge

Development & Planning:

Chancellor announces up to 1 million homes to be built in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Phillip Hammond reiterated the Government's commitment to the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor in his budget speech of 22nd November 2017. He set out a vision for the axis to become 'a growth corridor similar to Silicon Valley that nurtures the UK's innovative industries'¹.

In HM Treasury's paper, 'Helping the Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford corridor reach its potential', the Government sets out its commitment to housing and economic growth, setting 'out an initial package of infrastructure investment, planning and development measures that together are intended to kick-start a process of meeting the area's full long-term potential'.

The announcements on the corridor were informed by the recently published National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) report entitled 'Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc', published on 17th November 2017.

National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC's) Recommendations

The National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC's) report, 'Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc's' 'central finding is that rates of house building will need to double if the arc is to achieve its economic potential'. This equates to up to 1 million homes being built in the corridor by 2050.

To deliver this it suggested a number of key opportunities for growth over the next 30 years, supported by major new infrastructure such as East West Rail and the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. Proposals could include:

- The re-establishment of Milton Keynes as a development location of national significance growing through intensification and expansion to a population of over 500,000;
- Development between Bicester and Bletchley supporting a population of hundreds of thousands;
- Concentrated growth in the Marston Vale between Milton Keynes and Bedford around key rail nodes;
- Major development around Bedford supported by enhanced road and rail connections;
- Expansion in and around the Sandy area potentially supporting the development of a large town around the confluence of the East Coast Mainline and East West Rail; and
- A new garden town west of Cambridge to provide a satellite community for those working in the city.

“rates of house building will need to double if the arc is to achieve its economic potential”



¹ Paragraph 1.1, Helping the Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford corridor reach its potential (HM Treasury, November 2017)

Planning for the area's long-term housing needs

The Government welcomed the findings of the NIC's report and stated that up to 1 million new homes will be built in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor by 2050 in order for the area to maximise its economic potential. It recognizes *'that in order to enable the corridor to meet its full economic potential there needs to be an integrated approach to planning and delivery of infrastructure, homes and business growth'*²

A housing deal has been agreed with Oxfordshire seeking to deliver a target of 100,000 homes in the county by 2031 in return for a package of support for infrastructure and economic growth. It proposes to work with the central and eastern parts of the corridor to agree additional deals in 2018.

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

The Government has set out its commitment to delivering an Expressway of *'high-quality east-west roads between Oxford and Cambridge'* (such as the A428 upgrade between Caxton Gibbett and Black Cat), key elements of which will be built between 2020 and 2025. The Government will complete the detailed design work on the 'missing link' between the M1 at Milton Keynes and Oxford enabling it to be ready to open by 2030. A decision on the preferred route will be made by summer 2018.

East West Rail

Funding has been confirmed for Network Rail to deliver phase 2 of the western section of East West Rail from Bedford to Bicester, and Milton Keynes to Princes Risborough, with the intention of running passenger services along the new lines in 2023.

A private and independent East West Rail Company will be established with the aim of accelerating delivery of the central section of East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge; it proposes that services will commence by the mid-2020s.

Other measures announced include the reopening of the Cowley branch line in Oxford with a new station at Cowley, match-funding for Cambridge South railway station, and the commissioning of a new Network Rail report on rail growth in Cambridgeshire up to 2043.

Summary

Strutt & Parker will be reviewing the government's actions on the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor as they progress, and be on hand to provide up-to-date guidance and advice throughout the forthcoming consultations.

“accelerating delivery of the central section of East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge...”



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² Paragraph 1.3, Helping the Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford corridor reach its potential (HM Treasury, 2017)