

LPT4 Comparator Case Study - Cambridge (DRAFT)

1. Context

Background

Cambridge is an historic (civil) city formed where historic trade routes converged on the River Cam at the edge of the low-lying fenland area. Formerly a small market and university town, the population has grown rapidly from 61,000 in 1930 to 158,000 in 2011 (UK Census) of which 29,000 were students. The city has seen substantial economic growth from its university research knowledge base, tourism and from people commuting to London by rail or M11. This is reflected in the very high house prices and a 'tale of two cities' marked by extremes of income between wealthy home owners and council tenants. The Gini coefficient of 0.46 is the highest in the UK.¹

The city has a tight green belt and has extended into adjoining districts. New settlements have been developed on the former airfields and military bases nearby, eg Cambourne, Bourn, Waterbeach etc.

To the north, the A14 forms a bypass. This is part of TERN (Trans-European Road Network) highway and the principal route from the East Coast ports to the Midlands.² Cambridge and the A14 are highly congested. To relieve congestion, a guided bus route has been built along the disused St Ives railway line. A light rail project – CAM (Cambridge Autonomous Metro) - had been proposed including a cross-rail type underground railway below the city centre. There are five P&R sites.

The combination of the flat topography, the high number of students and the university's restriction on them owning cars contribute to the very high rate of cycling. 54% of the population cycle regularly: the highest in the UK. The multi-storey bike park near Cambridge Station below the Ibis Hotel has 2,850 spaces and is the largest in Europe. Elsewhere, two, 200-space, covered bike parks are located nearer the station.

The historic city centre is pedestrianised in which cycling is allowed on most streets. Access by blue badge holders is allowed but parking restricted to designated bays. Control is exercised by ANPR and street patrols.

There is one bus station in Cambridge and a hub at the railway station. There are two railway stations. The main one is a mile east of the city centre. Another, Cambridge North has been built on the Peterborough line. A third, Cambridge South is proposed near Addenbrooke's Hospital.

Stansted International Airport is 30 miles to the south via M11 or rail. Cambridge Airport has developed on the site occupied and owned by Marshall's, a major aero-industry employer. In 2019, the firm announced its intention to relocate the airport and aero-business to Cranfield University, Bedfordshire - 30 miles from Cambridge. Which will release a very large site for housing and employment.

Cambridge is the eastern pole of the proposed Oxford-Cambridge strategic corridor including Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Bedford and St Neots along which the disused lengths of the

¹ Oxford is 0.45. 68% of Cambridge's adult population have higher education qualifications.

² It is alleged that the Pentagon made a substantial contribution to the upgrading of this route in Cambridgeshire as part of the preparations for its proposed second cruise missile base at Molesworth.

former Varsity Line is to be reconstructed. Proposals for a strategic road corridor were scrapped in 2020 following residents' objections from rural Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire



Governance

The city of Cambridge is a shire district, one of five districts in the shire county of Cambridgeshire. The City of Peterborough is a unitary authority. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough formed a Combined Authority in 2017. The city council is Labour-controlled. The county council and other district councils are Conservative-controlled with periodically strong Liberal-Democratic representation. The Elected Mayor elected for the combined authority in May 2021 is a Huntingdonshire Labour councillor. Despite polling only 32% of first round votes, he beat the sitting Conservative in the second round to reach 51%. One of his first decisions was to scrap the CAM Metro for which the estimated cost had risen to £4bn. In the same 2021 elections, Conservatives lost their historic control of the Cambridgeshire county council to an anti-Tory coalition – more evidence perhaps of what commentators call the inversion of England's political geography in which the younger, graduate population of the South becomes the 'red wall', and the North becomes the 'blue'.

Thumbnail of current transport provision

The main bus station is located at the edge of the city centre at Drummer Street. Bus services are provided in Cambridge by Stagecoach. Most services use the bus station and the railway station. Others are routed nearby. The guided busway – locally called the Busway – is the longest in the world. It connects Huntingdon and St Ives to Cambridge of which 16 miles is along dedicated, former rail routes. Its routes diverge at the built-up boundary to the city and converge again at the railway station before extending south to Addenbrooke's Hospital along the route of the former Varsity Line.

Cambridge has two railway stations within its boundaries. Services are operated by Cross Country, Great Northern, Thameslink and Greater Anglia. Cambridge is 55 miles from London.

2. Transport planning

Local transport plans

The combined authority's first transport plan was prepared by consultants, Steer and was approved in 2020 for the period 2020-35. The population of the combined authority was 841,000 (est 2015). The population of Greater Cambridge was 158,000 in 2011.

Priority objectives of the Plan

'The vision for the Local Transport Plan is to deliver a world-class transport network for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that supports sustainable growth and opportunity for all. The vision is intended to capture the aspirations for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's transport network, reflecting our ambition to provide:

- *'A world-class transport network' – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough aspire toward a transport system of the highest quality on a global stage, which meets the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.*
- *'Sustainable growth' – the network will support the delivery of future economic and housing growth across the region that enhances overall quality of life, supports the transition to a net zero carbon economy and protects or enhances the environment.*
- *'Opportunity for all' – the network should support access to jobs, services and education for all, irrespective of income, age, ability, location, or access to a car.*

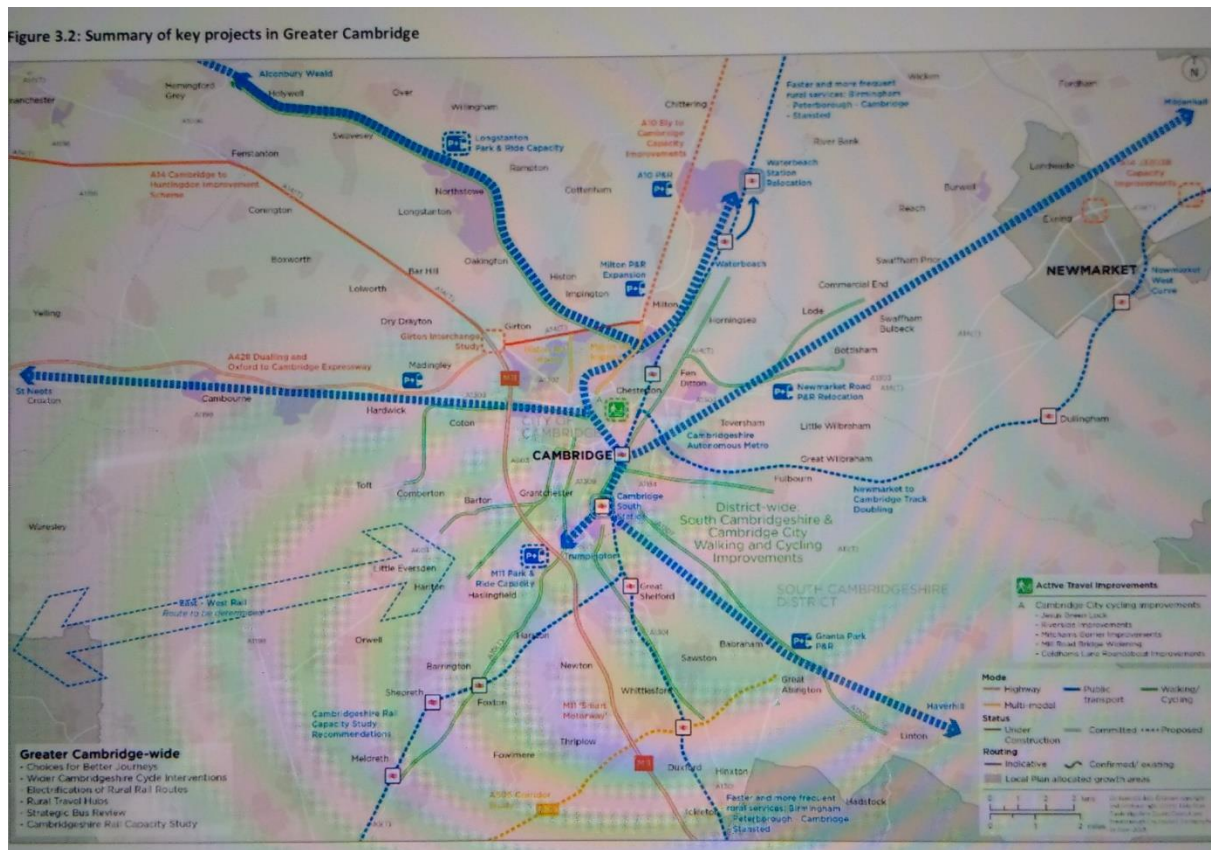
The high-level goals outline what wider outcomes the Authority want the transport network in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to achieve. They are fully consistent with the guiding principles outlined in the Mayoral Interim Transport Strategy Statement and Growth Ambition Statement:

- *Economy: Deliver economic growth and opportunity for all our communities.*
- *Society: Provide an accessible transport system to ensure everyone can thrive and be healthy.*
- *Environment: Preserve and enhance our built, natural and historic environment and implement measures to achieve net zero carbon' (by 2050)*

Guiding principles are: supporting economic growth and distributing prosperity; integrating spatial planning; reducing the need to travel; modal shift from driving; preparing for the 'future of mobility'; greening transport infrastructure; supporting social mobility; and, conserving biodiversity.

Strategic approach

Cambridge and the adjoining suburbs and settlements in South Cambridgeshire are categorised as Greater Cambridge and the subject of a separate LTP 'daughter strategies'.



Principal policy measures

There are no specific policies for Cambridge. Instead there are 112 ‘county-wide’ policies summarised in tables designed to secure the ten stated ‘objectives’ policy themes and ‘policy descriptions’. For example:

Table 4.1: Policy Summaries

Objective	Policy theme	Policy description	Policies
Support new housing and development to accommodate a growing population and workforce, and address housing affordability issues	Enabling development	The transport policy and types of infrastructure and services required to enable sustainable development	<p>Deliver strategic transport and complementary connectivity infrastructure.</p> <p>Early engagement with developers. Secure developer contributions for strategic and local infrastructure</p>

There are separate objectives for the ‘modal policies’ for walking, cycling, public transport, rural transport services, coach, train, local road network, parking and ‘making long-distance by car’. However, no modal split is given. Presumably, these and other metrics and indicators are given in a separate appendix somewhere.

What the LTP seems to describe is a long wish-list of desirable outcomes with no recognition of competition between them or of the resources required. There is little sense of priority or political choice.

My overall impression is that this LTP is rather like a poor student's exam paper. Which throws all the potential answers into the mix whilst not identifying or clarifying the questions.

Modal shares

Not specified.

Key performance measures

To be researched

Provision for disabled travellers

None specified although included in primary objectives.

3. Relevance to York

Useful lessons and pointers

Cambridge, like York, is an historic, former market town with a tightly-defined green belt. The Greater Cambridge population is similar to York. Both attract international tourism. Cycling is also higher than other cities. Both have 30,000 university students. They also have good rail links.

Any aspects which make it less relevant to York

Cambridge has a far stronger economy based on technical, research spin-offs from its world-class university. By comparison, York is de-industrialising and de-skilling. Cambridge is exceptionally attractive to large-scale, inward investment and in-migration. The colleges considerable hard and soft influence and resources. Road congestion was earlier and more severe.³ The city has responded favourably to and proposed the redevelopment of former airfields and military bases for new settlements whereas York has historically discouraged proposals for similar bases on its periphery. The River Cam is not a significant barrier.

Demonstrator new neighbourhoods

Yes, a substantial number have been developed or are proposed along or near transport corridors.

One, Cambourne is eight miles to the west of Cambridge on the dual carriageway to St Neots. Built by national housebuilders on the former airfield and incorporating three historic villages, it has 4,300 houses 12,000 residents, four primary schools, one nearby secondary school, a large supermarket and doctors surgery etc. The large business park includes the headquarters of South Cambridgeshire district council. Cambourne will grow to 7, 000 houses and 20,000 residents.

Another, Waterbeach, a former army base to the north of Cambridge, was designated as a 'new town' by South Cambridgeshire district council in its local plan for 6,500 homes and the Cambridge Innovation Centre. Waterbeach railway station is nearby.

³ Thirty years ago, I learned that the council's planning committee had abandoned site visits because of traffic congestion.

Northstowe with guided bus?

Best practice in engagement and consultation

Not stated but likely to be exhaustive given the number of settlements involved and vocal parish and town councils.

Possible contacts

To be researched.

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