

Submitted to Greater Cambridge Development Corporation: Consultation  
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## Why a Greater Cambridge Development Corporation is needed

### 1 What do you think about the current delivery of infrastructure and homes in Greater Cambridge?

Please give us your views:

Greater Cambridge's starting point is unlike anywhere else in the UK. As Europe's most innovation-intensive cluster and the second globally, the city's research and technology base has powered exceptional growth. Cambridge's economy now generates more than £25bn in annual turnover by knowledge intensive firms, employment has grown at twice the national rate for 15 years, and the University alone contributes more than £30bn a year to the UK economy. This success is nationally significant, internationally recognised, and underpins the ambition, articulated through Innovate Cambridge, to match in the next decade the innovation output achieved over the past 25 years.

However, this success also exposes the limits of the current model for delivering homes and infrastructure. Population and employment growth have far outpaced the systems needed to support them. Housing affordability has worsened sharply: median house prices are 8.8 times median incomes - rising to 11.5 for lower-income households - while average rents of £1,774 per month place acute pressure on workers across the city, including the University's 13,000 staff and those employed in the Colleges. Transport connectivity and capacity, water supply, energy capacity and resilience, and social infrastructure have similarly struggled to keep pace. These pressures are now affecting competitiveness, liveability, and the city's ability to sustain world-class research and innovation.

There are strong foundations to build on. Greater Cambridge has a progressive, pro-growth Local Plan, consistently high housing delivery, and one of the most capable planning authorities in the country - recently recognised nationally for innovation in planning, biodiversity net gain, and community engagement. Local partners have repeatedly demonstrated they can deliver high-quality growth.

However, the system as a whole remains too fragmented to meet the scale of Cambridge's needs. Governance is complex, long-term infrastructure funding is uncertain, and development-led transport delivery has resulted in piecemeal provision rather than a coherent network. Utilities constraints - particularly water and power- are already delaying nationally significant research, healthcare and innovation schemes, including the expansion of the Biomedical Campus and major transport corridors such as Cambourne to Cambridge and the South-East route.

In summary, Greater Cambridge has world-class assets and institutions, but the current model for delivering homes, transport and utilities is no longer equipped to support growth at the scale now required. What is missing is a true whole-systems approach that plans and sequences transport, energy, water, housing, skills, and placemaking as a single interconnected strategy rather than as separate, development-led components. A well-designed Development Corporation could provide exactly this: a unifying, long-term delivery structure with the remit and capacity to align these disparate elements, de-risk strategic infrastructure, and ensure the region's growth is planned, funded and delivered coherently.

### 2 What do you think about the proposal to create a centrally-led urban development corporation (UDC) in Greater Cambridge?

Please give us your views:

Against the backdrop set out in Question 1, we support the creation of a centrally led Urban Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge. If designed well, it can bring together the powers, resources and delivery capacity needed for an integrated, long-term approach to housing, infrastructure and placemaking, aligned with the area's economic strength. We welcome the Government's recognition of Cambridge's nationally significant role and the need for a more strategic approach to its future growth.

Our shared aspiration across political, academic, business and innovation partners is clear: to generate in the next decade the same level of economic and innovation output achieved over the past 25 years. This simply cannot be delivered through business as usual. Meeting the scale of need for new homes, quality transport and connectivity, world-class research space and high-quality places requires new governance, integrated delivery models and a systems approach. A Development Corporation provides an effective vehicle to enable this.

Crucially, the Development Corporation must streamline governance rather than add another layer to it. The city region's rapid growth brings complexity, and the current system - with multiple authorities and overlapping responsibilities, has made coordinated action difficult. A new Development Corporation should provide clarity, accelerate decision-making and give greater certainty to major projects. This consultation also sits alongside local government reorganisation: while separate, the combined outcome must be a simple, more coherent system for Greater Cambridge.

At the same time, the Development Corporation must maintain strong links to local democratic institutions to ensure strategic leadership remains accountable and connected to community priorities. It should also build on, rather than disrupt, the significant strengths of the existing planning service and enable the ongoing work of other delivery focused organisations such as the Greater Cambridge Partnership, which is central to maintaining momentum and ensuring continuity.

The University of Cambridge and its partners can provide the 'software' that sits alongside the 'hardware' delivered by the Development Corporation. The University's research excellence, global networks and innovation ecosystem attract talent, enterprise and investment; a Development Corporation can provide the enabling platform through coordinated spatial planning, infrastructure, land assembly, housing delivery and long-term stewardship.

Together with government's initial £800 million investment in the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor, the proposal for a Development Corporation represents a clear call to collective action. It offers a stronger framework for the University, local authorities, the NHS, industry and communities to align priorities,

accelerate delivery and maximise shared impact.

Working through the Cambridge Growth Company, we are already advancing projects of national and international importance: a new innovation hub in central Cambridge; up to 4 million square feet of commercial and academic space at West Cambridge to anchor European leadership in AI, quantum and climate research; and a further 1.3 million square feet of growth at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus in partnership with the NHS, industry and academic collaborators.

These innovation assets are at the core of Cambridge's growth story. They are places where ideas become impact, where researchers and businesses collaborate, and where creativity flourishes. A Development Corporation provides the opportunity to ensure the infrastructure, housing and transport systems needed to support this growth are planned and delivered in a coordinated, sustainable way and at pace.

## The Greater Cambridge Development Corporation

### 3 What matters most to you about the future of Greater Cambridge?

Please give us your views:

The mission of the University of Cambridge is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence. Achieving this mission depends fundamentally on Cambridge being both a globally competitive innovation ecosystem and a high quality of life for those who live, work and study here. Our priority for the future of Greater Cambridge is therefore for ambitious innovation-led growth, delivered in a way which is sustainable and benefits everyone.

First, future economic success in Greater Cambridge should translate to high quality jobs, genuinely affordable homes and improved public services for people from all backgrounds. There is a strong and shared consensus across academic, business and civic leadership in Greater Cambridge that local communities must be direct beneficiaries of future growth. This is reflected in the University of Cambridge's recently launched civic framework, which commits the University to deeper, more inclusive partnerships, greater accessibility, and long-term, place-based collaboration to ensure that its global excellence delivers tangible benefits for local communities. Any Development Corporation should embed a firm commitment to inclusive growth, ensuring that development contributes to social mobility and is equitable. At the same time, future growth must be environmentally sustainable, aligned with ambitious objectives for net zero, biodiversity enhancement, connectivity and climate resilience.

Second, the Development Corporation should ensure that Cambridge continues to thrive as a leading innovation ecosystem, with the scale and ambition required to compete internationally. This requires the coordinated delivery of well-connected (reliable and fast) innovation sites of global significance that provide the foundation for the city region's world-leading strengths in deeptech, life sciences and clean technology, directly supporting delivery of the Government's Industrial Strategy.

We should highlight that Cambridge must continue to attract the very best and brightest from around the world, while providing excellent quality opportunities locally and regionally. The Development Corporation should support a balanced innovation ecosystem, ensuring the right mix of early-stage start-ups, scaling companies and established industry, supported by high-quality workspace, infrastructure, housing and transport connectivity.

Third, long-term certainty and consistency of delivery must be central to the Development Corporation's mission. Delivering growth at the scale and pace required depends on sustained alignment between local authorities, central government, infrastructure and utilities providers, investors and delivery partners. Breaking down institutional silos and establishing stable long-term funding and delivery frameworks will be essential.

### 4 Do you have any views on the objectives of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation, as set out in the consultation document?

Please give us your views:

We welcome the objectives set out in the consultation document:

1. Transformational economic growth
2. Infrastructure-led development
3. Innovative investment
4. Environment and climate
5. Inclusion and opportunity

The ambition to deliver a significant increase in high-quality jobs and homes to help cement Greater Cambridge's status as a global centre for science, technology, and innovation should be supported. For Cambridge to succeed on the world stage, national government must back this ambition with appropriate resourcing and funding.

The barriers to growth are clear, and a successful Development Corporation will need to coordinate and drive an infrastructure-led approach to growth. Transport delivery has been particularly affected by the complexity of governance across the region. As a result, we are seeing the impacts play out daily, restricting growth, quality of place and most importantly, quality of life. The solutions are apparent, well-documented and supported. The delivery of a Mass Rapid Transit solution, combined with demand management measures and a sustainable funding model, can create a seamless system that connects people with places. This is fundamental to the success of our city region and the delivery of affordable homes and sustainable living.

The Development Corporation should act as the central coordinating force for other relevant government interventions that shape economic growth in Greater Cambridge, ensuring that core functions such as housing, transport, planning and infrastructure are aligned with wider policies on skills, foreign direct investment, industry investment, health, culture and the environment. Greater Cambridge will only reach its full economic potential if all the elements that drive productivity - skills, infrastructure, business support, housing and essential services - are aligned and easy for employers, researchers and residents to navigate. Cambridge must remain a place where both young companies and global firms can operate with ease, and where top talent

wants to build their lives. At present, several Government bodies are seeking to shape the area's economic performance, and in some cases this is acting as a blocker to growth. A more joined-up, flexible and supportive approach would help ensure public investment delivers greater impact and fully backs the Government's ambitions for Cambridge's growth.

## Proposed boundary of the Development Corporation

5 What do you think about the proposed boundary of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation, as set out in Annex B of the consultation document?

Please give us your views:

We support the proposed Greater Cambridge boundary as an appropriate and pragmatic core geography for the Development Corporation, reflecting the functional economic area of the city and its immediate hinterland.

However, the success of the Cambridge economy depends fundamentally on strong flows of people, knowledge, goods and capital across a much wider regional geography, and along strategic corridors southwards to Stansted and London, eastwards to the Agritech corridor and westwards across the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor.

The Development Corporation should be empowered and resourced to work effectively with partners across administrative boundaries, including neighbouring local authorities and, crucially, with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (which is responsible for developing and implementing the Local Growth Plan), as well as with government providers and infrastructure agencies.

The Development Corporation should play a proactive convening and coordinating role across these wider geographies. Transport and utilities infrastructure challenges demonstrate the need for a cross-boundary approach, as both networks operate at scales far beyond the proposed Development Corporation area.

## Powers and functions

6 What do you think about the phased approach we have proposed in regard to plan making powers?

Please give us your views:

The University of Cambridge fully supports allowing the Greater Cambridge Draft Local Plan to proceed to adoption, to keep momentum and provide clarity.

At the same time, the phased approach means that identifying sites and infrastructure for growth beyond the current draft plan will take time. The Local Plan is unlikely to be adopted until 2028, after which the Development Corporation will begin its own plan-making process. This sequencing could mean that additional growth opportunities are not formally planned for several years, which may constrain the Corporation's ability to advance the Government's ambition for the region at pace. Our expectation is that the establishment of a Development Corporation will accelerate the delivery of infrastructure.

However, the consultation document recognises that the Development Corporation will have the ability to bring forward development outside the draft plan where this is supported by national policy changes or other material considerations. The University would welcome this flexibility, particularly where it enables well-located, sustainable sites - those with strong accessibility, low car-dependence and clear benefits for staff, students and local communities - to come forward ahead of a future plan. This approach would help maintain momentum in delivering sustainable growth while the full plan-making process is completed.

7 What do you think about the proposals to give the Development Corporation plan making powers as set out in the consultation document?

Please give us your views:

If Greater Cambridge is to realise its growth ambition, it will require a comprehensive, area-wide plan that goes beyond the current allocation of housing and employment sites. This plan must be aligned with - and developed alongside - the full range of supporting infrastructure needed to deliver that growth. Achieving this will depend on coordinated oversight across the agencies responsible for transport, power, water, and key community infrastructure such as schools, healthcare, and recreational facilities, ensuring any additional growth can be fully supported. Therefore the Development Corporation should have plan-making powers within the boundary proposed in the consultation.

The University supports a blended approach that secures broad ownership and backing for the growth agenda. Under this model, the overall vision and scale of ambition would be set collaboratively by the Development Corporation and the new council, while key place-shaping responsibilities would remain with the new unitary council formed through the ongoing Local Government Reorganisation. This would help ensure a long-term legacy, extending beyond the lifespan of the Development Corporation, that local communities can embrace.

While a Development Corporation would have the agency and autonomy to shape greater growth and realise the full ambition and potential of Greater Cambridge, it should remain subject to the same requirements as any local plan, including strong democratic rigour through engagement and consultation with local communities.

To enable this, the University also advocates a shared-service model between the councils and the Development Corporation, drawing on the expertise of the highly skilled policy officers within the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS), who already hold deep knowledge and understanding of the local area.

8 What do you think about the proposals to give the Development Corporation powers to determine planning applications as set out in the consultation document?

Please give us your views:

It is essential that the Development Corporation is given full planning decision powers as part of its core remit, as this will provide clarity and confidence around delivery. At the same time, it is important to recognise that the determination of planning applications is not a weak point in the current system. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS) has consistently enabled high quality growth over the past two decades, delivering both strong housing numbers by national standards and exemplary design on many of the city's edge-of-Cambridge sites. The planning authority has therefore demonstrated that, where applications reach its committee, they are handled efficiently and to a high standard.

The more significant delays tend to arise not within the planning authority itself, but among statutory consultees whose priorities may not align with growth. The University's experience at Cambridge West illustrates this challenge: despite unanimous committee approval in July 2021 and agreed Section 106 Heads of Terms, a lack of engagement from the County Council and National Highways led to a 20-month delay in completing the agreement, followed by a further 15 months after the Environment Agency raised water scarcity concerns. The outline consent was not finally issued until nearly three years after committee approval, undermining certainty for a site of major national importance.

A Development Corporation could add real value by providing clearer oversight and coordination across the statutory and non-statutory bodies that influence infrastructure and utilities, helping to resolve issues earlier and maintain momentum on critical schemes. The University would support retaining the expertise of the existing GCSPS, whose local knowledge is a major asset, even if decisions are ultimately taken by a Development Corporation-led committee. This could simply involve transferring the role of the current Joint Development Management Committee to a new body under the Corporation, combining technical expertise with local representation, as proposed.

The University would suggest that there remains a single entry point for all applications and the internal process for validation of applications regardless of determining body.

9 Do you agree with using thresholds for the Development Corporation taking decision making powers? Which minimum thresholds for determining planning applications do you think are appropriate?

No

Please give us your views:

The thresholds proposed in the consultation document appear too low, and need to be considered in context. A key question is whether the Development Corporation will have the capacity to handle the volume of applications that could result from the low thresholds stated. This links directly to the University's wider point about utilising the expertise already available within the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS). If GCSPS officers continue to process applications - with decisions simply reported to a different committee - then lower thresholds could be achievable but the main benefit of any Development Corporation will be the focus at a more strategic level.

It is also important to understand how delegated authority will operate. If every application must go before the Development Corporation's committee, the thresholds as set would be too low. However, if the governance structure allows straightforward, non-contentious applications - especially smaller, non-residential schemes - to be delegated for officer approval, then lower thresholds become far more reasonable.

We support the inclusion of smaller applications that are functionally tied to larger strategic sites, as these can be critical to timely delivery. We also seek clarity on whether all Reserved Matters applications associated with a strategic site determined by the Development Corporation would also sit with the Corporation. Consistency is essential: it would be unhelpful for an outline application to be determined by one body and subsequent detailed applications by another.

10 Do you have any other views on the proposed approach to the Development Corporation's powers and functions?

Please give us your views:

The University of Cambridge supports the Development Corporation's powers to acquire land by agreement or as a last resort by CPO, and help assemble fragmented sites which can often be huge barriers to the speed of delivery. We acknowledge that University colleges are significant landowners in the city region and recommend the Development Corporation engage strongly with them.

Transport: The delivery of a world-class transport system, as is required for the region will require the strongest powers, greatest resources and most determined decision-making in order to enable the ambition of transformational growth. Within the boundary proposed in the consultation it should be that the Development Corporation is given the implementation powers to deliver transport infrastructure which follows the principles set out in the Local Transport Plan set by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).

We would support the Development Corporation working closely with existing transport authorities, such as the CPCA, and existing delivery partners to expedite the delivery of ambitious transport solutions for Greater Cambridge. This should include the exploration of Mass Rapid Transit, complementary demand management and a sustainable funding pipeline to ensure long term delivery and ongoing operational costs. This is fundamental to unlocking any growth that is truly game-changing, enabling Cambridge to continue to compete on the world stage.

There must be a consistent approach to how application sites are assessed and the strategic infrastructure is captured. Establishing this framework at the level of the Development Corporation would help ensure a coordinated, strategic approach across sites and provide greater certainty for delivery partners.

As noted throughout this response, a whole systems approach to infrastructure delivery must sit at the heart of the Development Corporation's role. With this in mind, the Development Corporation should oversee transport decisions that are central to this ambition. We therefore suggest that the Development Corporation is invested with transport powers from the outset for the identified boundary. Transport infrastructure has long represented one of the most significant constraints on the continued growth and quality of life of Greater Cambridge, with impacts extending well beyond the proposed Development Corporation boundary. A number of vital schemes have experienced prolonged delays and cost escalation, reflecting the complexity of delivering major transport infrastructure through existing arrangements.

Financing: A Development Corporation will only succeed if it has access to capital at the scale and with the flexibility required to deliver major housing and infrastructure programmes. Early public investment in enabling infrastructure can unlock strategic development opportunities and create the conditions for substantial private investment. By assembling land, delivering early infrastructure and de-risking sites, the Development Corporation can accelerate delivery and generate significant value. However, this approach requires access to upfront funding and the powers to deploy that funding flexibly.

The Development Corporation should therefore be able to raise capital directly and borrow against future income streams, including land value uplift and development receipts. Large-scale infrastructure and development programmes generate predictable, long-term revenues that are attractive to institutional investors. With the right financial powers, a Development Corporation can crowd in significant private capital. This approach would allow infrastructure investment to be financed over the long term and repaid from the value created by development, rather than relying solely on central government grant.

An over centralised funding model risks making delivery dependent on Treasury decisions over decades, creating uncertainty for investors and slowing delivery. Allowing the Development Corporation to borrow and or raise finance independently would provide greater financial sustainability and give investors confidence that long-term infrastructure programmes can proceed without being subject to short-term public spending cycles.[]

## Governance

11 What do you think about proposed local representation on the Development Corporation board, as set out in the consultation document?

Please give us your views:

We strongly support the proposal to include democratically elected local leaders on the Board. The commitment within the consultation for the Development Corporation to act as a collaborative delivery partner is essential. Strong relationships with local authorities will be crucial. Openness, transparency and meaningful engagement should be defining characteristics, ensuring that growth is shaped with communities and delivers clear and shared benefits.

We consider that the Board should also include representation from across Greater Cambridge's academic, innovation and business ecosystem. As recognised in the consultation, Greater Cambridge's success is fundamentally driven by its exceptional scientific and research intensity. The region's global competitiveness depends on the continued strength of its universities, research institutes, spinout and scale-up companies. The Board should therefore include individuals who can act as long-term custodians of this science and innovation ecosystem, ensuring that strategic decisions are informed by a deep understanding of how innovation economies function and grow.

Representatives drawn from academic and business communities would bring perspectives that operate on a different timescale to political cycles. Universities, research institutions and innovative businesses plan and invest over decades. Embedding this long-term horizon within the Board would provide stability and help maintain a consistent vision for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Alongside this, consideration should be given to incorporating meaningful community representation on the Board, helping to embed local insight and lived experience within strategic decision-making. This would support transparency, strengthen democratic legitimacy, and ensure that growth is shaped with local communities. It would directly align with the fifth proposed objective for the Development Corporation - "inclusion and opportunity".

12 What do you think about the board having expertise in areas such as planning, property development, design, environment, finance, and infrastructure delivery?

Please give us your views:

We support the proposal to appoint Board members with expertise in development, design and master planning, environment, finance, and infrastructure delivery. Given the complexity and ambition of the Greater Cambridge growth programme, the effectiveness of the Development Corporation will depend heavily on the depth of expertise represented within its governance structures.

Greater Cambridge is uniquely positioned in this respect. The University of Cambridge brings world-leading academic and applied expertise across housing, planning, civil engineering, architecture and urban design, including through the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research in the Department of Land Economy, the Cambridge Centre for Smart Infrastructure and Construction in the Department of Engineering, and the Department of Architecture.

We also note the significant academic expertise and local knowledge within Anglia Ruskin University, including the work of the Global Sustainability Institute, which conducts leading research into net-zero development, sustainable construction, and energy systems. The Institute has recently undertaken research with Cambridge Ahead focused specifically on energy demand and decarbonisation in Greater Cambridge.

In addition, the Development Corporation would benefit from drawing on the substantial policy expertise located within the city, notably through the Bennett School of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge. The Bennett School has a strong research programme focused on effective place-based policymaking, governance, and delivery, and has undertaken important work on inclusive innovation, providing critical perspectives on how economic

growth can be aligned with social inclusion and long-term public value.

## Public Sector Equality Duty

13 Do you have any views on the impacts of the above proposals for anyone with a relevant protected characteristic?

No

14 If so, please explain who, which groups, including those with protected characteristics, may be impacted and how.

Please provide details here:

15 Is there anything that could be done to maximise benefits or address any concerns you have identified?

Please provide details here:

## About you

Do you live or work in the Greater Cambridge area? Defined as the proposed boundary of the Development Corporation outlined in Annex B of the consultation.

Yes

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

If you're responding on behalf of an organisation, please provide the organisation's name and the contact details of a nominated contact.

Please provide details here:

University of Cambridge

Nominated Contact:

Mark Parsons

Head of Estate Planning

mark.parsons@admin.cam.ac.uk

What type of organisation are you representing? (if applicable)

Please choose one answer only:

Business