

District Councillors' Report to Parish Councils – March 2025

Greater Cambridge Five Year Housing Land Supply Position Update

In December 2024 the Government published an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and revised Standard Method for identifying local housing needs. Both applied immediately, with no transition phase. Overnight this increased the housing need figure for Greater Cambridge by 1,000, from 1,726 dwellings per year to 2,309. This is despite the fact the Council has -already- given permissions for over 36,000 dwellings which have not yet been built.

Measured against this new requirement, Greater Cambridge went from having a supply of land for housing for 6.5 years down to 4.6 years for the 2024 to 2029 period. This triggers a "tilted balance" in favour of granting permission for sustainable development, although the December 2024 NPPF introduces new caveats to ensure this only applies to high-quality development in sustainable locations. The gap in five-year supply is relatively small. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service will be exploring with partners how development can be speeded up, and whether new sites can be identified. The next update to the housing trajectory will be published in April 2025.

Local Plan: Site Submission Update

Last week, South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council will ask landowners, developers and site promoters for an update on site submissions as part of the preparation of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. Since 2019, the councils have received around 700 sites through the 'Call for Sites' process, where interested parties have submitted sites to us for potential allocation in the new Local Plan. Officers have assessed these sites, and more, but have not been registering any further sites or additional information on existing sites since May 2022 in order to complete assessments and manage the flow of information submitted to us.

This latest part of the process launched on Friday (14 February) and closes on Friday 7 March. Ahead of the proposed consultation on the draft Local Plan this autumn, the councils are launching a three-week update exercise where promoters can submit new sites or updated information, so planning colleagues will have the most up to date information as we prepare the Plan. We also hope this will help speed up the Plan making process. This is all just a normal part of the Plan making procedure. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service intend to publish any new sites or information we received in the summer, with any assessments published in the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment alongside the draft Local Plan.

This is not related to the Councils' recently published update on new housebuilding targets for this area, which is being undertaken solely to inform the joint Local Plan process.

Consultation: Four Day Week (note – also in Feb report)

People can now share their views on South Cambridgeshire District Council's services during a trial of a four-day week.

Anyone anywhere can respond to a full public consultation which started on Monday 27 January. The consultation is open for eight weeks, closing at 11.59pm on Sunday 23 March.

South Cambridgeshire residents can **access the consultation online**. Any South Cambridgeshire residents who would prefer to complete a paper survey can email **communications@scambs.gov.uk** or call 01954 713 000.

Given South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City councils share some key services - Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and Greater Cambridge Shared Waste -- residents of Cambridge City are also being encouraged to comment on their experiences of using these services.

The information gathered during the consultation will help South Cambridgeshire District Councillors decide on the next steps for the four-day week at the Council.

The consultation has been set-up so that residents can share their views on how they have found Council services since January 2023 -- when a trial of a four-day week began.

The Council announced plans to trial a four-day week -- where people deliver 100% of their work, in around 80% of their hours, for 100% of their pay -- to help address acute recruitment and retention issues.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr John Williams, said: "We'd really appreciate residents taking the time to respond to this consultation. It's always been our plan to give residents, businesses, parish and town councils and community groups the chance to share their views. We want to understand your experiences of services you've received during our four-day week arrangements. So, we are very pleased to have now started that process. Our approach is designed to ensure those who have used our services during the four-day week arrangements can quickly and easily share their views - though anyone, anywhere is welcome to submit comments."

The idea of the four-day week at the Council is to help attract and keep talented colleagues in an incredibly competitive local employment market. It is also to help improve services by filling vacant posts permanently, rather than relying on more expensive agency staff. Regularly changing staff, or using agency staff to cover, is both costly and disruptive to services for residents.

Last summer, an **independent report by two universities** into the Council's performance during its four-day week trial was published. Of 24 key performance indicators monitored by the Council, analysis by the Universities of Cambridge and Salford found 22 improved or remained the same. There was also a financial assessment of the trial, which outlined a known full year cost saving of £371,500. The Council's opening hours have been maintained so it has been open for business just as it was before the trial -- with longer opening hours on Wednesdays too.

Cllrs Paul Bearpark, Judith Rippeth and Anna Bradnam