

Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) consultation Response from Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Green Parties

Overarching comments

The consultation document is less a strategy and more a list of aspirations with some mentions of schemes that are already taking place. It lacks any sense of the magnitude of the challenges, or the scale and urgency of the changes that we need to make to address them. It states that *“All future transport projects for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough will be guided by the plan.”* However, the Greater Cambridge Partnership is proceeding with numerous projects and consultations regardless of how the LTCP develops. There is little evidence that this plan is the top-down strategy that is needed and which it purports to be.

We need a set of SMART objectives for transport in our region, which are clearly linked to outcomes (along the lines of the vision and goals given in the draft LTCP) and agreed with the Combined Authority, Greater Cambridge Partnership and individual local authorities. Transport documents subsequently published by these bodies should set out costed, time-limited action plans and explain how they will work alongside other on-going plans to achieve the agreed objectives.

Below we offer some more detailed comments on specific sections of the draft LTCP. Please note that we have not looked at the Local Area Strategies other than that for Greater Cambridge.

LTCP Vision, goals and objectives

- We support most aspects of the vision, but we strongly reject the inclusion of “economic growth” in this as it is not necessarily a good measure, or driver, of wellbeing. Cambridge, for example, has experienced high and sustained levels of economic growthⁱ but is among the UK’s most unequal citiesⁱⁱ, while 68% of its residents lack access to quality green spaceⁱⁱⁱ. Connectivity and transport policies must be based on a vision that seeks social justice and the well-being of the region’s population, not growth for growth’s sake. The necessary redistribution of wealth will lead to economic growth in some areas which are currently deprived, but this is very different to pursuing endless growth everywhere.
- The climate goal/ objective to reduce emissions to net zero by 2050 is entirely inadequate in the face of the current climate emergency. The LTCP documentation mentions the recommendations of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate (CPCA), but these do not appear to have been understood or taken on board by the LTCP authors. The CPCA report in 2021 stated that *“There are only about 6 years remaining before the CPCA region will have exhausted all of its ‘allowed’ share of emissions to 2050, if it is to play its share of delivering the UK’s critical Net Zero target. Well before the six years is up action is needed to reduce emissions in line with UK targets.”* The LTCP must be amended to reflect clearly the CPCA’s recommendations.

Strategy for transport in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

- We strongly disagree with the approach stated in the draft strategy: *“We will support highway infrastructure and enhancement schemes such as upgrades to the A47 [and] dualling of the A428.”* While we accept that private car use will remain a necessity for some in the short-medium term, investing in road infrastructure actively works against the stated aims of the strategy. If the strategy is successful in significantly reducing car use, a proportion of the current road capacity will become surplus to needs. It is contradictory and uneconomic to continue to increase road capacity while working to reducing car use. Road building schemes are irreversible, have huge negative impacts on biodiversity and remove valuable food-producing land, and incur large operational and embedded carbon costs. The only investment in the road network should be repairs and other works which are necessary to address safety issues.
- We agree that the LTCP has a role to play in reducing inequality, but the aim *“to spread ... growth from places like Cambridge and Peterborough, further into the region”* is not the way to achieve this. The region has insufficient water to meet the current population’s needs, let alone keep up with the planned levels of growth^{iv}. Within Cambridge, growth has brought benefits for some but also led to problems including congestion, massive inflation in house prices resulting in many people being unable to afford to live in the city, and loss of green space and biodiversity in a declared biodiversity emergency. Rather than aiming to spread that model further into the region we need to be looking at how to allow people to prosper while radically reducing our environmental footprint. This idea is encapsulated in the Doughnut Economic model^v.
- One of the aims listed under ‘Connectivity’ is supporting the growth strategies set out in Local Plans. This aim is strongly at odds with elements of the LTCP vision and objectives (particularly those relating to climate and environment) and we do not think this should be an aim of the LTCP.
- We welcome the focus on providing good internet connectivity to all to tackle inequality. It would be useful to elaborate on how this provision of digital infrastructure will be supported by other initiatives such as the free Connecting Cambridgeshire to ensure that it genuinely addresses digital exclusion (e.g. helping people with broadband charges, supporting adult IT literacy).
- The wording on the natural environment is extremely weak in the summary (*“The draft LTCP aims to build in space for nature”*) and not much better in the full draft plan. It conjures up images of sparse grass verges and sickly trees alongside new concrete busways. We need a firm commitment to protecting existing green space, with full environmental impact assessments before going ahead with potentially damaging projects. Any loss of the Green Belt must be properly compensated by new Green Belt land replacement. We note that these principles are frequently not followed at present, for example with the pushing through of the Cambourne to Cambridge busway plan, which will harm a significant area of Green Belt land while opening up the area to the threat of further development.
- The strategy would be greatly strengthened by more explicit references to the need to reduce overall car use and how this would contribute to the aims and objectives. For example *“Cutting air pollution through reduced congestion”*: the strategy must make clear that this is about reducing total polluting vehicles on the road, not just

about reducing traffic jams (which is traditionally tackled in the short term, although exacerbated in the long term, by increasing road capacity).

- In addition to the measures mentioned in the strategy, a way to help people move away from private car ownership would be active promotion of car sharing schemes and car clubs such as Enterprise, with incentives re car charging and parking.
- We welcome the reference to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate recommendation for a 15% cut in car mileage, but call on the Combined Authority to commit to an even more ambitious goal. The reduction in mileage should be an explicit objective of the strategy - it's not enough to say the strategy "*supports it in many ways*". Information is needed on how progress towards this target will be monitored and reported.

Local Area Strategy for Greater Cambridge

- We agree with the listed 'key transport challenges' (congestion, climate, public transport, air pollution, long commutes and car use) and strongly welcome the recognition that further planned growth will exacerbate all of these.
- We oppose the Cambourne-Cambridge and Waterbeach-Cambridge busways. Smarter Cambridge Transport have comprehensively demonstrated that investing in existing active and public transport infrastructure would achieve far more to reduce car use, at far less financial and environmental cost^{vi}.
- We welcome and support the focus on cutting car use through improving public and active transport but would like to see an equal focus on Travel Demand Management measures (such as congestion charging) in the plan. While we strongly agree that good alternatives like cheaper more reliable, more frequent and better quality public transport must be in place, we believe that Travel Demand Management measures will also be essential if we are going to make the radical reductions in traffic needed. We support in principle the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) proposals to fund improvements to public transport through a fair and transparent charging mechanism. We favour a Workplace Parking Levy in the immediate term and would support a congestion or pollution charge if properly researched. Charges for private cars were a key element of the GCP proposals for the bus network, but the draft LTCP seems to downplay this fact.
- The draft LTCP states that "*travel hub capacity will be enhanced to enable people to join the sustainable transport network further from Cambridge. The travel hubs will link up bus, cycling (including facilities for e-bikes) and walking networks and capacity enhancements to the Park and Ride provision. This will see an additional 10,000 Travel Hub spaces provided through the extension of existing sites and the addition of new sites along key corridors.*" It is not clear what is meant by "capacity enhancements to Park and Ride" or "additional Travel Hub spaces". We would strongly oppose any increase in car parking space provision, if that is what is meant. We support Travel Hubs in the sense of Smarter Cambridge Transport's description of locations that would be accessed by "*walking, cycling, local and demand-responsive buses, and pick-up/drop-off by community transport and private cars. Any car parking provided should be a local decision, based on local need.*"^{vii}

ⁱ <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/21120>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/18-01-12-Final-Full-Cities-Outlook-2018.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Barboza, E.P. *et al.* (2021) Green space and mortality in European cities: a health impact assessment study. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(21\)00229-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00229-1)

^{iv} <https://wre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/WRE-Emerging-Plan.pdf>

^v <https://doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics>

^{vi} Comment on the Waterbeach busway: <https://www.smartertransport.uk/a-vision-for-waterbeach-transport/>. Report on the Cambourne busway and alternatives: <https://www.smartertransport.uk/cambourne-to-cambridge-in-highway-proposals-for-high-quality-public-transport-scheme/>.

^{vii} <https://www.smartertransport.uk/why-every-village-should-want-a-travel-hub-but-not-a-park-ride/>