

District Councillor report to Parish Councils March 2026

Greater Cambridge Local Plan – update

More than 4,500 responses were received from residents, community groups, and local organisations during the recent consultation on the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan which closed on 30th January. The Plan, which will apply to both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City, sets out proposals for where new homes and employment space could be located to meet the area’s future housing and economic needs. It also considers the infrastructure required to support growth, including utilities, public services, green spaces, and community facilities.

All comments received are now being reviewed and will help inform the next stage of work on the Plan. A further consultation is planned for later this year, ahead of the Plan being submitted to Government for examination. Updates and further information are available at www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/local-plan.

Local Government Re-Organisation

A reminder that the Government’s consultation for local government re-organisation closes on 26th March. The consultation is our chance to have our say on the proposals for the structuring of local government within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and I encourage you to put in your views, if you haven’t already. The Government will make a final decision on which local government structures are put into place this summer, and new unitary councils are then due to begin operating in a shadow capacity from May 2027, with full implementation expected in April 2028.

Call for transparency

My motion was also supported by all councillors for the Leader of the Council to share all notes and materials from their meeting with government on the four-day working week was also passed. This was voted down by the Liberal Democrats at a previous council meeting, I was pleased they changed their mind and will now share those details. It’s such a shame that we’ve had to wait all these months to find out what happened when this could have been avoided when they could have voted for this the first time.

Standing in the name of Councillor Graham Cone

“This council instructs the leader, and anyone present at the meeting on behalf of the district council to share with all councillors any materials, minutes or notes taken in the recent meeting with government to discuss the four-day week.”

Support for Hospitality

I was pleased that our motion to support pubs and shops was also unanimously passed this time after failing to reach support and an agreement at the last council meeting. Our pubs, high street shops and the hospitality sector are the life and soul of our communities. The motion was as follows:

Standing in the name of Councillor Heather Williams

“Council supports in principle the abolition of business rates for our local pubs, high street shops and the hospitality sector, recognising the strain that they place on local businesses.

Council further notes and supports proposals to strengthen high streets and hospitality, including cutting VAT by 5% for hospitality, accommodation and attractions until April 2027.

Council recognises that there are differing views as to whether or not there should be an alternative to business rates, but believes that should the system be reformed, the government must ensure changes won't negatively affect local government finances.”

Water saving measures

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, the shared planning service for Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, has received Government funding of over £5 million to deliver part of the Greater Cambridge Water Efficiency Programme and help address local water scarcity. The funding was provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Government has committed to ensuring there is adequate water supply and wastewater capacity to support sustainable growth in Greater Cambridge. The Water Efficiency Programme aims to introduce water saving initiatives and enable sustainable development to proceed in the short term, while water companies deliver major medium term infrastructure improvements. These include the proposed Grafham pipeline transfer and the new reservoir in the Fens, both of which are expected to be completed in the 2030s.

While I am pleased to see the Government providing this funding to support water efficiency and sustainable growth in Greater Cambridge, I do have some concerns about how it will be spent. If a significant portion is directed towards improvements to council buildings, that risks appearing somewhat inward looking. I would much rather see this investment used to support local businesses in becoming more water efficient, or to help our council tenants reduce their water use and household bills. Focusing the funding more directly on residents and the local economy would, in my view, deliver broader and more visible benefits to the community.

Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge

The consultation on the proposed Greater Cambridge Development Corporation closes on 1 April, and I encourage residents to take part and share their views.

The proposal would create a new body with planning powers for Greater Cambridge. This could mean that some planning decisions are taken by the Development Corporation rather than by locally elected councillors. It is therefore important that people understand what is being proposed and how it may affect their area.

As Chair of Scrutiny, I invited Peter Freeman to attend a meeting and provide councillors with the opportunity to ask questions directly about the proposed Development Corporation and how it would operate. This helped ensure members were able to explore the detail of the plans and raise issues on behalf of residents.

I was also disappointed that the council voted down a proposal that would have given the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Mayor greater influence in the process through a mayoral development corporation model, which would have meant decisions were influenced by a directly elected office holder.

At the last Full Council meeting, I submitted the following question:

From Councillor Graham Cone:

“Given we now see the true extent that the power grab from Westminster could be, does the Leader regret not supporting a mayoral development corporation where we would at least have democratically elected decision makers in charge?”

South Cambridgeshire is a largely rural district, and decisions made now will shape our villages, communities and countryside for many years to come. Making sure local knowledge and local views are considered will be an important part of the process.

You can read the full proposal and respond to the consultation on the GOV.UK website under “Establishing a Development Corporation in Greater Cambridge.”

*Thank you for taking the time to read my report; if you have any questions or want to discuss any of the issues raised email me on graham.cone@councillor.online or ring 07595 361 285 (please leave a voicemail if I am unavailable) **Councillor Graham Cone***