

OVERVIEW

Each district of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is different; hence we have developed distinct strategies for the geographical areas of Peterborough, Greater Cambridge, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, and Fenland. These are set out in this chapter, and each reflects local transport constraints, opportunities, and patterns of growth.

Each strategy outlines the major schemes expected to be delivered within each area to deliver our objectives, both directly by the Combined Authority and in partnership with other local and national stakeholders. Some aspects of the strategies are, by necessity, still under development and hence all schemes will need to demonstrate value-for-money and affordability, together with alignment with our strategic priorities before they are able to proceed.

Each strategy is set out below, and includes:

- Summary of recent and planned growth, and local transport constraints;
- Progress and projects delivered to date; and
- Transport schemes to help deliver each strategy.

DRAFT

EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Background

East Cambridgeshire is a largely rural district with a population of approximately 81,000, centred around the cathedral city of Ely to the north-east of Cambridge. Along with Ely, there are two other urban settlements – Littleport and Soham. Approximately 45% of the district’s population live in these three settlements, with the remainder spread between approximately fifty villages and hamlets.

The district benefits from an attractive rural environment, including the special landscape and ecological value of the Fens, numerous historic villages, and the famous Anglican cathedral within Ely.

Ely forms the centre of East Cambridgeshire, acting as the district’s main employment hub, and forming the key leisure, retail, and education centre. The district also has close connections to Cambridge. According to the previous Census, 21% of East Cambridgeshire residents commute to work in Cambridge. Many others work elsewhere, with only 40% of employed people who live in the district also working there. This trend is likely to have increased further and it is anticipated that the 2021 Census results will show this. Reliable, high quality transport links, in particular to the Greater Cambridge sub region are key to supporting the district’s economy.

Recent Developments

Recent years have seen significant growth in East Cambridgeshire, with the population growing by 11% in the decade to 2017, greater than anywhere else in Cambridgeshire. Ely has been the focus for much of this growth and is strongly associated with the success of the Greater Cambridge economy. However, other than the recent construction of the Ely Southern Bypass and the new railway station at Soham, there has been limited delivery of major new transport links.

The *East Cambridgeshire 2015 Local Plan* sets out the district’s proposals to grow by 11,500 dwellings and 9,200 jobs by 2031, typically focused on the fringes of the largest settlements of Ely, Soham and Littleport. This includes:

- 4,000 homes within Ely, including 3,000 at Ely North;
- 2,300 homes within Soham, focused on the eastern and southern edges of the town;
- 1,500 within Littleport; and
- 1,900 within smaller villages in East Cambridgeshire.

The development of a major employment site on the edge of Ely- Lancaster Way and the Leisure village present challenges in terms of encouraging active travel use to access these sites. It is important to have a combined land use and transport approach to ensure access is provided for all modes.

Transport Challenges

As with neighbouring Huntingdonshire and Fenland districts, East Cambridgeshire residents rely heavily on the private car for their journeys due to the lack of a high-quality public transport offer. Approximately 79% of trips to work within the district are made by private car or van. Other than the A14 to the south, highway transport is limited to a network of rural, single- carriageway A-roads such as the A10. These roads can suffer from traffic congestion, air pollution and safety issues for all modes, especially those associated with slower agricultural traffic and HCVs. Ely’s historic city core suffers from localised congestion and significant HCV traffic, due to the routeing of these vehicles that undermines its attractiveness as a destination for tourism and shopping. In addition, certain areas of the city are not pleasant to walk and cycle within and through, therefore a careful balance is required between the need for access and retaining a thriving a diverse High Street.

Many of the district's rural roads have poor safety records, with a combination of high traffic speeds, mix of traffic types and substandard alignments leading to a higher-than-average number of serious and fatal collisions. High-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, particularly outside of Ely, is extremely limited. Within this rural district it has been and will continue to be difficult to adhere to the government's guidelines (LTN/120) due to the nature of the infrastructure (roads). This means that active travel is unattractive, thereby contributing towards greater levels of congestion from shorter car trips and a deterioration in local air quality.

East Cambridgeshire, and particularly Ely, is well-served by the rail network, with direct services to Kings Lynn, Cambridge, London, Norwich, Stansted Airport, Peterborough and the Midlands and the North West. However, some services, particularly on the Kings Lynn – Cambridge – London corridor especially during peak times, suffer from severe overcrowding. Whilst other services such as those to Ipswich are too infrequent (two hourly) and do not offer a genuine, realistic, and attractive options for many. In addition, the complex junctions north of Ely act as a key constraint on capacity and make it difficult to run additional train services for both passengers and freight. In order to truly realise the full potential of Soham Station, double tracking, and the provision of the Snailwell Loop is necessary to allow for direct hourly services to serve the community.

Regular bus services are limited to key corridors from Ely to Cambridge via Stretham and Waterbeach, to Newmarket via Soham and to March via Chatteris. However, services are particularly limited during the evenings and at weekends, reducing their ability to provide a genuine, attractive alternative to the private car increasing the sense of social exclusion and isolation for those without access to one. East Cambridgeshire does benefit from a range of community transport services, including flexible 'Dial-a-Ride' services and community car schemes. There is significant scope to create a more integrated, multi-modal transport network, with integrated ticketing, better and seamless connections, and interchange between modes.

Progress to date

Several major improvements to the transport network within East Cambridgeshire have recently been delivered, helping the district support growth and improve quality of life for residents. Completion of the Ely Southern Bypass in 2018 has eased congestion around Ely by better connecting Stuntney Causeway and Angel Drove. In addition, it significantly improved safety by removing the need for heavy commercial vehicles to use the railway level crossing and avoid an accident-prone low bridge. The key scheme was delivered through effective partnership working, with funding provided by Cambridgeshire County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, the Combined Authority and Network Rail.

However, in terms of other highways improvements aimed at relieving congestion and safety, so far only smaller and interim junction improvements have been delivered, largely on the A142 corridor, with more long-term solutions for this corridor under investigation.

Improvements have also been made to pedestrian access over the River Ouse, by constructing a new walkway attached to the bridge that faces towards Ely. This link provides connectivity between the Fen Rivers Way and Ouse Valley Way footpaths, providing a new circular walking route for residents and visitors to Ely.

Enhancements have been made to the Kings Lynn to Ely, Cambridge, and London rail route, with eight-car trains now in operation between Ely and Kings Lynn, facilitated by the completion of longer platforms at Littleport station. In addition, Soham Station opened in 2021 and will make rail travel easy for people in Soham and the nearby villages.

Our Approach

East Cambridgeshire, reflecting its rural geography and the lack of an integrated high-quality public transport and active travel network, remains heavily reliant on its highway network, particularly to travel between and within its towns, villages, and hamlets. Population growth, combined with increased long-distance commuting and a successful local economy, means that investment in tackling key 'pinch points' across the network is necessary. This alongside funding for sustainable transport, is required to reduce congestion, improve journey time reliability, and address the underlying safety and health concerns.

Capacity is most constrained on the A10, which links Littleport, Ely and Waterbeach to Cambridge. This route suffers from peak-time congestion that adversely impacts on all modes, as well as having a poor road safety record. We will prioritise investment to improve journey time reliability for drivers and freight movements and address safety issues for all modes along this corridor, particularly in relation to junctions and capacity. In addition, we will provide for a new high-quality segregated off-road facility for pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders along the route's length from Ely to Cambridge. In addition, work will continue on the A142 capacity study, and we will work with partners to assess and develop potential solutions to the A14/142 junction.

This will be accompanied by investment in the parallel rail route, with the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) scheme facilitating additional rail services to Cambridge, as well as additional services to Peterborough, Ipswich, and Norwich. We continue to work with Network Rail to deliver additional capacity through the Ely area for the benefit of passenger and freight services. The EACE project will help to deliver additional rail services, including to Cambridge, Kings Lynn, Peterborough, and Ipswich, and provide the capacity for any future services to Wisbech. The scheme should ensure more reliable journeys for all passengers whilst providing additional capacity for freight services between Felixstowe and Nuneaton, hence reducing the need for freight to be transported by heavy goods vehicles along the A14.

The benefits brought about the implementation of the EACE will be maximised by the double (twin) tracking of the Ely to Soham route. These two schemes will provide much-needed additional capacity, create new journey opportunities, and deliver faster, more frequent rail journeys for passengers, whilst maintaining highway access for residents and businesses in Queen Adelaide. These schemes form part of a rail package for the area that also includes the Snailwell Loop and Dullingham Loop.

Together with improvements to our rail network, we will explore how these services can be better integrated to provide a seamlessly integrated public transport network including improved timetabled connections, interchange facilities and common ticketing. These improvements in delivering an integrated and high-quality public transport network, will ensure that it genuinely acts as an alternative to the private car, allowing everyone to easily access employment, education or key services elsewhere and thereby reduce social inclusion. We also recognise the importance, in terms of accessibility, of ensuring public transport fares are affordable, so we will work with bus and train operators, as well as Local Authority partners to help deliver solutions for this.

A new Park & Ride provision on the A10 corridor at Waterbeach will link to central Cambridge and the North East Cambridge area. This alongside the relocation of the Newmarket Road Park & Ride site, will increase the capacity of the Park & Ride offer to the east of the city. These form part of the GCP's Cambridge Eastern Access proposals and will help to limit the impacts on Cambridge of car-based trips originating in East Cambridgeshire, by intercepting more of these trips before they reach the city. This is an important tool in reducing carbon emissions, assisting in our fight against climate change and ensuring that we meet the stated ambition of a 15% reduction in car mileage. However, East

Cambridgeshire District Council does not support Congestion Charging, Road Pricing, or a Work Placed Parking Levy.

To accompany improvements to our strategic transport links, we will prioritise investment in and support for our local public transport network, ensuring access of opportunity for all. Our proposals for the bus network, as set out in the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), will deliver frequent, reliable services along key corridors in East Cambridgeshire. These could include links to and between key conurbations such as Newmarket, Soham, Ely, March, Chatteris, Sutton, Ely and of course Cambridge.

We have and will continue to work closely with partners and East Cambridgeshire District Council to deliver their recently adopted bus services strategy. The New Bus Services for East Cambridgeshire prospectus sets out a series of proposed bus service improvements, which are a combination of new scheduled services, improvements to existing services and demand responsive transport services (DRT). Following the DRT trial in West Huntingdonshire the success, efficiency, viability, and cost effectiveness of the scheme will be assessed ahead of extensive extended rollout of DRT across East Cambridgeshire. This will be investigated and delivered if appropriate to improve connectivity to key destinations such as employment, education, health, retail, and other services. This will improve greater connectivity with transport interchanges on key corridors such as railway stations and public transport interchanges to ensure better connected communities are delivered across the district.

In relation to the above, we will continue to support localised community transport and demand-responsive services to provide improve accessibility for all. This will reduce social exclusion by providing access for those located in rural villages without access to a conventional bus service and those individuals without access to a private car.

It is our aim that these investments in public transport, will be supported by walking and cycling improvements to make longer- distance journeys to, from and within East Cambridgeshire quicker and more reliable. In addition, a safe, integrated transport network will allow residents new access opportunities to employment, health, leisure, and retail opportunities destinations to whilst supporting the region's overall growth aspiration and ambitions. Improvements to both road and rail will ensure that public transport continues to offer an attractive and viable alternative to the private car and reduce car dependency; whilst those whose journey is better suited to the private car will be able to travel on more reliable, less congested, and safer roads.

We will continue to investigate, develop, and deliver proposals for new, high-quality infrastructure that will be accessible for all, including pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders across the East Cambridgeshire district. This includes such things as high-quality cycleways and safe crossings throughout Ely (such as the BP roundabout) and the main urban settlements, particularly in areas of planned housing growth. An example of this is a proposal for a new segregated route between Ely and Soham. It is important to connect the rural areas and villages with key services by upgrading existing links and providing new links where required. This focus on active travel and horse riders will help to make it a safer and more attractive option for local trips within and between our towns, villages, and hamlets. More journeys on foot and by bike will help to alleviate traffic congestion and improve air quality, whilst allowing those without access to a car – such as teenage children – more independence and opportunity to travel. We will achieve this through close, partnership working to ensure a link between the emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Active Travel Strategy.

East Cambridgeshire District Council has recently adopted a key strategy related to walking and cycling. The *East Cambridgeshire Cycling and Walking Routes Strategy* identifies new cycling and walking routes that will create better links to employment, learning, healthcare and wellbeing support, shopping, leisure facilities. The networks of routes will be focused on and around public transport hubs and town centres, to make cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey. In addition, the District Council has recently commissioned Sustrans to produce feasibility studies for a number of new cycle routes and to complete the Wicken to Soham cycle route. Feasibility studies will give a better understanding of the factors that need to be considered to successfully deliver the package of cycle routes.

Continued support for electric vehicles will ensure we deliver the aims and objectives of the East Anglian Alternative Fuels Strategy and ultimately help us to reduce carbon emissions thereby ensuring we continue to our drive towards net zero and improve the local air quality across the district.

Effective planning and provision of sustainable transport options for new developments, in conjunction with highway improvements where required, will help to promote healthy lifestyles, and improve air quality, while ensuring that the district continues to offer an outstanding quality-of-life. Connectivity with and to, the new railway train in Soham will help to support new developments by making the town a more attractive place to live, improving public transport links and offer a real alternative to the private car for residents.

Strategic Projects

North / South

The A10, and the parallel Cambridge to Kings Lynn railway line, form the main transport links between Ely and Cambridge. They enable travel between Fenland, East Cambridgeshire, West Norfolk, and Cambridge, and directly serve key centres on the northern fringe of Cambridge and on the routes themselves. The Cambridge Science Park and neighbouring innovation centres and business parks on the northern fringe of Cambridge are home to an exceptionally high-performing cluster of high-tech and knowledge-based businesses. Because of their position linking these employment sites to residential areas in Ely and beyond, the road and rail links are in high demand and therefore very busy, particularly at peak times when there is extensive congestion.

The A10 Ely to Cambridge Improvement project includes a package of transport measures and options designed to address these challenges, with the longer-term aspiration of reducing congestion, and therefore improving the efficiency and performance of the A10 between Ely and Cambridge for all modes of travel, whilst not detracting from achieving our climate change and net zero aspirations.

Improvements to the highway network through a series of enhancements to junctions, such as to the A142/Lancaster Way roundabout and the A142/A10 ('BP') roundabouts, will help to support employment development; for example, at the Grovemere and Lancaster Way Business Parks. As part of these works it will be essential to deliver the cycle/pedestrian crossing over the A10 near to the BP roundabout in order to make the Active Travel option attractive. These improvements, will provide a safe route for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians, helping to provide attractive alternatives to the private car. Some of improvements to the Lancaster Way and the 'BP' roundabout have already been delivered on an 'interim' basis, whilst further investigations are undertaken to understand how best to deliver a longer-term solution.

Further work is planned to prioritise specific capacity and safety improvements to the A142 corridor, where a high proportion of fatal collisions remain a local concern.

East / West

We will continue to work with Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk Council to investigate potential options for junction improvements at Exning, Junction 37, where the A142 from Soham and Ely meets the heavily congested A14, and at Junction 38, where the A14 and A11 (towards Norwich) converge. The congestion at these pinch points is not only a safety concern but also has knock- on impacts on journey time reliability.

Local Projects

Active Travel Improvements

East Cambridgeshire District Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2023 included a promise to champion and improve the strategic cycle and footpath network across the district. A list of priority routes has been developed so that the Council has a set of schemes that are ready to submit when funding becomes available.

The District Council sought the views of residents around where they would like to walk or cycle to but cannot due to a significant barriers including:

- The maintenance level of the infrastructure;
- Street clutter obstructing the footpaths;
- Insufficient street lighting; and
- There not being safe crossing points along the route.

In addition, supporting infrastructure such as cycle parking, adequate signage and promotion of existing routes are also needed to encourage people to use active travel across the district.

The *East Cambridgeshire Cycling and Walking Routes Strategy* was adopted in November 2021, with the District Council prioritising a number of routes and commissioning Sustrans to produce feasibility studies. These studies will enable the District Council, and subsequently the Combined Authority, to gain a better understanding of the potential barriers and an estimate of the total cost.

Once this work has been completed, we will endeavour to obtain further funding for feasibility studies for other routes and to implement the much-required infrastructure within the district in a timely and effective way.

Rail improvements

It is important that parallel upgrades to the level crossings at Queen Adelaide be provided as part of the EACE scheme, which will support the need to deliver additional rail services, while ensuring that road network access for residents and businesses in Prickwillow, Queen Adelaide and North Ely is maintained. The EACE has already been subjected to initial public consultation. Further development to the scheme and another round of public engagement is due in 2022. Subject to funding, a final round of public consultation will commence in 2023, before a Transport and Works Act Order is sought prior to its submission to the Secretary of State, currently proposed for 2024.

Ely

By far the largest housing allocation within the district is planned for the north of Ely, with approximately 3,000 homes at the Church Commissioners site to the east of Lynn Road and the Endurance Estates site between Lynn Road and the A10. To support the sustainability of this development, enhance accessibility and reduce transport related emissions, it is essential that reliable and frequent bus links are provided to and from the development, ensuring access to Ely city centre

and the railway station. This link must be aligned with the overarching public transport network and strategy to ensure a seamless integrated of the bus services. In addition, an extensive package of pedestrian and cycle links to connect the development to the rest of the city and key nearby local centres and services is imperative.

In addition to EACE, improvements are planned to public transport interchange facilities, pedestrian and cycle access and car and cycle parking at Ely Railway Station. These improvements aim to facilitate access to the rail network in the district, thereby improving residents' and visitors' ability to access key destinations.

North of the Ely North Junction, all three lines cross the B1382 at Queen Adelaide. Since increasing the number of trains will have an impact on traffic and safety at the level crossings, work has also been undertaken to assess highway investment options on the B1382 to mitigate the local impacts of unlocking the strategic benefits to the rail network to ensure that highway access to Queen Adelaide, and neighbouring settlements, is maintained.

Soham

Soham has also been allocated significant growth within the Local Plan, with 2,300 additional homes by 2031 concentrated on the southern and eastern edges of the town. Despite a population of more than 10,000, the town's railway closed in 1965, and public transport provision is now limited to infrequent rail and bus services.

Following the opening of a new railway station at Soham we will continue to lobby Network Rail for the doubling of the track capacity between Ely, Soham, and Newmarket. This will include the rebuilding the 'western curve' at Newmarket that is currently being explored for the longer-term which could support additional services, including direct to Newmarket and Cambridge.

