

# Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP)

## Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan Consultation

### Cambridge Approaches

Comments related to: **Cambourne, Cambourne North**

#### Summary

This consultation response critiques the Rail Integration Study for Cambourne's expansion. It highlights that adding 13,500 houses would triple trip demand, yet EWR's own 2023 data shows only 3% of Cambridge commuters would use the railway – the remaining 97% would drive. The plan lacks quantitative evidence that roads won't exceed capacity. While EWR's business case claims credit for 25,000 new houses, it only serves 3% of commuters. The response argues GCSP must prove rail mode share can reach nearly 100% to avoid overwhelming the road network, warning that ideology-driven planning may fail commercially, citing poor Northstowe sales as a cautionary example.

#### EWR Cambourne Rail Integration Study

1. The rail integration study on page 8 sets a budget of 2,500 trips as a capacity for the Cambourne external road network <sup>1</sup>. Given the complaints about rush hour delays into Cambridge with the existing size of Cambourne then one assumes that we are close to the capacity in places already. The rail integration document merely states the capacity and does not indicate current or projected trip counts.
2. Adding 13,500 houses to Cambourne north of the A428 would increase the trip demand by a factor of around three over current level, so we assume that EWR is intended to serve all of this extra demand – i.e. close to 100% rail mode share at least for trips to Cambridge. This is presumably why we understand all the new houses north of Cambourne have been allocated towards the business case for EWR.
3. The May 2023 Route Update announcement provided a Trip-End model, the results of which were based on hard evidence from the 2011 census about commuter market shares and rail mode shares in the Cambridge area <sup>2</sup>. The results can be found in Appendix 4 of their Economic and Technical Report and show that 3% of the Cambridge commuters would use EWR to commute to Cambridge. One assumes that the other 97% would use the road.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://consultations.greatercambridgeplanning.org/sites/gcp/files/2025-12/EBGCLPCRIRP1Dec25.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ewr-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/public/Route-Update-Announcement/9a2d6ec314/ETR-Appendices-2023.pdf>

4. The November 2024 Transport Update Report analysed in detail the impact of EWR on the local road network, however it did not include any additional housing<sup>3</sup>. That's because they assumed that housing proposals would sort out their own solutions to keep the external trips below the capacity of the road network. This was curious because EWR's financial model assumed around 25,000 new houses at Cambourne and took the entire economic output of those houses towards its business case while providing transport for only 3% of the commuters.
5. GCSP are therefore correct to worry about rail integration in Cambourne North, but need to go beyond a qualitative statement to show how the rail mode share would grow way beyond 3% and towards 100% to make this viable. At the very least they need to produce some quantitative results to show that the road network would not breach its capacity. This seems very unlikely to be the case.
6. What works in London and other big cities with highly developed public transport systems at both the origin and destination stations cannot be assumed to work in Greater Cambridge where the car is still the dominant form of transport. GCSP also need to show that if extreme measures are made to push people onto inadequate public transport then the houses will be so unattractive that they do not sell and hence the development stalls. The sales figures of only 71 houses being sold in Northstowe in the year to July 2025 reported by Stephen Kelly may be an indication that these measures make the expensive houses there unattractive. If the housing plan is driven by too much ideology rather than building what the market actually wants and needs, then it will fail.
7. A similar situation is developing around Tempsford, also on EWR and the A428. The EWRCo. Trip-End model referred to earlier had a 2% rail mode share for commuters from Tempsford to Cambridge. Even with spectacular rail integration there, allowance should be made for a lot of extra A428 road traffic passing through Cambourne.
8. The next iteration of this Local Plan needs to demonstrate that the housing plan at Cambourne and Tempsford will not overwhelm the capacity of the local road network. It is clear that EWRCo. are not taking responsibility for this.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/public/2024-con-docs-/b9bfa9d5ca/Transport-Update-Report-online-PDF.pdf>