



# MEMO

<b>TO</b>	Greater Cambridge Planning Service	<b>FROM</b>	WSP
<b>DATE</b>	29 January 2026	<b>CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	Public
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Regulation 18 Consultation		

Policy S/NEC: North East Cambridge (relevant policy criteria)	TCE/WSP Response
<p><b>Vision and identity</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. North East Cambridge (NEC) will be transformed into a thriving and inclusive new district that builds on the strengths of Cambridge’s existing innovation hubs including Cambridge Science Park, St John’s Innovation Park and Cambridge Business Park, while enabling them to evolve to meet future needs. At its heart will be a vibrant quarter that is walkable and low-carbon, bringing together world-class businesses, high-quality homes, services and cultural amenities, and welcoming public spaces. Designed to embed accessibility and meet every day needs locally, it will provide all that residents need and reach out to integrate and support surrounding neighbourhoods and the wider city</li><li>2. The relocation of the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant (CWWTP) together with enhanced public transport and active travel connections, will unlock the full development potential of North East Cambridge. This will enable intensification of commercial and industrial space alongside the provision of significant new housing and civic spaces. Together these elements will create a diverse mixed-use place rooted in innovation, sustainability and a strong sense of place. The district will be anchored by a new centre at the heart of a vibrant new urban quarter, supported by a network of high-quality public spaces, educational facilities and community infrastructure. North East Cambridge will grow as a district that is socially and economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable</li></ol>	<p><b>Policy S/NEC (1-2)</b> - TCE is <b>supportive</b> of the vision and identity set out in Policy S/NEC, specifically the policy support for NEC (including specific reference to Cambridge Business Park, which is an integral part of NEC) and employment-led development and intensification of the existing science and business parks, taking advantage of the site’s highly sustainable location.</p> <p>However, TCE is concerned that <b>policy criteria 2</b> does not align with Policy S/DS (Development Strategy) – the current wording of Part 2 reads as if the relocation of the CWWTP is essential “<i>to enable intensification of commercial and industrial space alongside the provision of significant new housing and civic spaces</i>”, however this is not the case and as Policy S/DS criteria 2(a)(i) states that if the CWWTP relocation does not take place there is still policy support for “<i>employment-led development and intensification of the existing science and business parks taking advantage of the site’s highly sustainable location</i>”.</p> <p><b>Policy criteria 2 should therefore be removed</b> given the conflict with Policy S/DS and the fact the remainder of the NEC policy criteria covers the aspirations and spatial framework for NEC.</p> <p><b>Alternatively, as a minimum, policy criteria 2 should be amended</b> to repeat the wording from Policy S/DS and thereby remove the focus on the CWWTP relocation ‘unlocking’ and ‘enabling’ development at NEC, which is not critical to achieving employment-led intensification of existing science and business parks.</p>

**Uses**

3. The comprehensive regeneration of North East Cambridge will deliver a balanced, vibrant mixed use district across its 182 hectares. The area provides a gateway to the City and is the largest urban regeneration opportunity in Cambridge. It is a significant mixed-use development with capacity for approximately:

- a) 8,350 new homes, including around 5,500 homes on the existing CWWTP site;
- b) Up to 320,000 square metres (Gross Internal Area) of additional business floorspace (Use Class E(g));
- c) Additional 27,300 square metres (Gross Internal Area) of industrial floorspace for mid-tech, light industrial, and creative industries;
- d) Safeguarded uses include the Waste Transfer Station, Aggregates Railheads, and Cowley Road Bus Depot, which must be maintained unless relocation is secured; and
- e) A new district centre around Cowley Road will provide the social, cultural, and commercial heart of North East Cambridge. It will include retail, community, leisure and cultural uses around active frontages and high-quality public spaces

4. Minimum on-site provision of community and cultural uses will include:

- a) Two primary schools, with land reserved for a third if population triggers are met;
- b) Visual and performing arts hub (studios, gallery/museum, theatre/community space);
- c) Library and community centre;
- d) Health hub;
- e) Formal outdoor sports courts and a five-court indoor sports hall; and
- f) Community gardens and food-growing spaces.

5. Facilities should be co-located where possible, reducing travel needs, creating lively neighbourhood hubs, and strengthening the sense of community.

**Policy S/NEC (3) - The GCSP must urgently re-consider the quantum of development stated in Policy S/NEC and completely re-draft policy criteria 3(b) and 3(c). Additionally, amendments are required to policy criteria 3(e) regarding the new district centre, for the reasons set out below.**

**Policy criteria 3(b) and 3(c)** - It is unclear what evidence base or data the employment floorspace figures are derived from, however the 320,000sqm of Use Class E(g) floorspace is not at all reflective of the current situation in NEC in terms of consented/committed schemes and emerging development proposals which are of significant scale. For instance, Trinity College’s emerging proposals at Cambridge Science Park (as stated in the EIA Scoping request (ref: 25/04309/SCOP)) for up to 611,000sqm GEA of new and retained Use Class E(g), B2 and/or B8 employment floorspace. Coupled with TCE’s emerging Cambridge Business Park scheme which would provide up to c.173,500sqm GEA employment floorspace, the emerging Cambridge Science Park and Cambridge Business Park schemes alone would significantly exceed the 320,000sqm specified in policy criteria 3(b) and there are numerous other consented/committed schemes that provide employment floorspace in addition to this within NEC. It is critical to the growth and success of NEC that the floorspace figures are re-visited and updated to ensure that policy does not unduly restrict growth.

Furthermore, once a more appropriate employment development quantum is established, the policy should also remove reference to “up to...” as this is not consistent with the national planning policy which requires plans and policies to take a positive approach to delivering growth and to, as a minimum, meet its objectively assessed needs. Including the words “up to” in the policy criteria would unduly restrict employment development in NEC and it must therefore be removed from 3(b) and clear reference to all development quanta being a “minimum” must be included.

**Policy criteria 3(e)** - the policy should be amended to reference the need for the CWWTP re-location to take place in order for the district centre to be fully

	<p>realised, otherwise it could risk placing an undue burden on surrounding development in NEC to contribute to the new district centre. <b>Policy criteria 3(e) should be amended</b> as follows:</p> <p>e) <i>Subject to the relocation of the CWWTP, a new district centre around Cowley Road will provide the social, cultural, and commercial heart of North East Cambridge. It will include retail, community, leisure and cultural uses around active frontages and high-quality public spaces</i></p>
<p><b>Built form</b></p> <p>7. The built area of the development as shown on the Spatial Framework diagram will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Mid- to higher-density development with taller buildings in well-justified locations, primarily around the proposed district centre and fronting Milton Road;</li> <li>b) A well-articulated urban skyline that responds to the setting of the city, key views and integrates varied rooflines and silhouettes;</li> <li>c) A strong design character that draws on industrial heritage (such as waterworks and sidings) while embracing architectural innovation;</li> <li>d) Mixed-use development will blend living, working, and leisure to create a dynamic, human-scaled environment;</li> <li>e) Proposals must avoid closed ‘campus-style’ layouts and promote openness and inclusivity, providing public access to green spaces, roof terraces, cafes, and community facilities;</li> <li>f) Development should maximise local benefits, including access to jobs, training, and skills opportunities, so the district supports both innovation and social inclusion</li> <li>g) The scale of NEC allows for a wide range of housing types and tenures, creating well-balanced, inclusive communities;</li> <li>h) Housing will be integrated with neighbourhood facilities, streets, and public spaces to encourage walkability, social interaction, and a sense of community;</li> <li>i) NEC is anchored by Cambridge Science Park, St John’s Innovation Park, and Cambridge Business Park, which drive the local and national innovation economy. Commercial development will be</li> </ul>	<p><b>Policy S/NEC (7) - Policy criteria 7(a)</b> and the requirement for ‘<i>mid to high density development with taller buildings in well-justified locations, primarily around the proposed district centre and fronting Milton Road</i>’.</p> <p>The policy criteria should be less prescriptive and rather than focusing mid to high density development and taller buildings around the ‘proposed district centre’ (which is predominantly reliant on the CWWTP relocation and Hartree scheme coming forward, both of which remain uncertain during the plan period) and fronting Milton Road.</p> <p>TCE’s emerging Cambridge Business Park scheme proposes mid to high density development with taller buildings in the centre and eastern parts of the site set away from Milton Road which are considered well-justified and appropriate locations that would contribute positively to the emerging NEC context and townscape. To focus such density and taller buildings around Milton Road and the proposed district centre would risk restricting the quantum of development that could come forward within parts of NEC that are not fronting Milton Road or ‘around the proposed district centre’ when in reality such density and height can be robustly justified in other locations whilst meeting the broader aspirations of NEC policy.</p> <p><b>Policy criteria 7(a) should therefore be amended</b> to remove reference to “<i>primarily around the proposed district centre and fronting Milton Road</i>”.</p> <p>As for <b>policy criteria 7(i)</b> (trip budget) TCE would reiterate its comments in relation to parts 19 to 24 of</p>

<p>delivered through intensification of existing employment parks and mixed-use development around the district centre and local centres, including land adjacent to Cambridge North Station. This level of development will require enhancements to sustainable travel and adherence to the identified trip budgets;</p> <p>j) NEC will continue to play an important strategic role in providing industrial functions that support the wider Cambridge economy and contribute to local employment. Existing industrial capacity will be retained and consolidated around Cowley Road Industrial Estate, with additional industrial floorspace for mid-tech, light industrial, and creative industries;</p> <p>k) Industrial areas will be designed to support economic activity while being visually integrated and accessible, avoiding isolated or closed-off sites; and</p> <p>l) Clustered local centres will complement the district centre, forming a vibrant urban quarter that supports daily life, promotes walkability, and encourages community interaction.</p>	<p>the NEC policy below.</p>
<p><b>Nature</b></p> <p>11. North East Cambridge will deliver an exemplary green and blue infrastructure network that will enable everyone to lead healthy lifestyles, protect and enhance Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan 2024 – 2045 biodiversity, and help mitigate the impact of development on climate change. This is to be achieved through:</p> <p>a) The provision of an integrated network of parks, squares, play spaces and water features, that seamlessly joins with and is accessible to the strategic networks outside of the North East Cambridge Area, such as to the River Cam and Chesterton Fen;</p> <p>b) Embedding nature across all development typologies, including green roofs, trees, habitat corridors and urban greening;</p> <p>c) Meeting 20% Net Gain on-site and the protection/enhancement of hedgerows and water bodies, including the First Public Drain; and</p> <p>d) The provision of community food growing, informal play and health-focused green spaces within every neighbourhood.</p>	<p><b>Policy S/NEC (11) - Policy criteria 11(c) should be amended</b> to include a clause that facilitates (where justified and suitably mitigated) the removal of hedgerows and vegetation to create crossings of the First Public Drain and in doing so achieve the desired north-south connectivity enhancements / contribute to achieving the vision for NEC. As drafted, policy criteria 11(c) causes tension with other NEC policy criteria, namely the desire for wider connectivity enhancements and improved linkages with the surrounding area.</p> <p><b>Policy criteria 11(c) should be amended</b> as follows:</p> <p><i>“The protection and enhancement of hedgerows and water bodies, including the First Public Drain, <b>unless removal of hedgerows or vegetation is justified and suitably mitigated to facilitate crossing points over the First Public Drain to improve connectivity with Cowley Road.</b>”</i></p>

### Managing development trips

19. Additional development at NEC could exacerbate existing traffic pressures. The approach is not to increase highway capacity but to shift travel towards walking, cycling, public transport, and other sustainable modes.

20. A vehicle trip budget that seeks no increase in the number of vehicles using the highway network serving the NEC area, will limit total peak-hour vehicle trips in the NEC area and at individual development sites:

- Milton Road Access: AM 3,900 vehicles / PM 3,000 vehicles;
- Kings Hedges Road Access: AM 780 vehicles / PM 754 vehicles

21. Within the above budgets, only minor changes to Milton Road accesses are needed. Most mitigation will come from enhanced public transport, active travel, and mobility solutions, avoiding major highway expansion. Development approaches must contribute to a low-car dependency, high-accessibility environment that supports active travel choices and overall district connectivity.

### Vehicle Trip Budget compliance

22. Trip budgets are proportionally assigned to individual development sites and must be addressed through transport assessments and travel plans. Proposals must align with the North East Cambridge High Level Transport Strategy (2021).

23. Development proposals must not exceed their site trip budget. Conditions or Planning Obligations will ensure any breaches are corrected or restricted to bring trips back in line with the applicable trip budget.

24. Development must be consistent with the strategic and local transport mitigation plan prepared by the Local Highways Authority which outlines necessary infrastructure, including sustainable transport measures, indicative costings, phasing, and potential delivery via Section 106 or CIL.

**Policy S/NEC (19-25)** - TCE is **supportive** of the promotion of sustainable modes of transport and modal shift. However, whilst TCE is supportive of the concept of a trip budget as a means of encouraging more sustainable modes of transport, TCE simply **cannot support the trip budget specified**, not least because the figures specified are the same as those in the 2021 draft AAP which we understand were taken from the North East Cambridge High Level Transport Strategy (2021).

Despite significant changes to plans for the NEC area and the requirement to update the development quanta stated in **policy criteria 3**, the associated Position Statement and NEC trip budget requirements have not been updated and that is in no way reflective of what is currently happening on the ground in terms of committed and emerging developments in 2026. As drafted, the policy is relying on an evidence base from 5 years ago that was intended to underpin policies in the now defunct NEC Area Action Plan – a plan and evidence base that was never scrutinised or endorsed by the Planning Inspectorate. Furthermore, the policy requires that trip budgets are proportionally assigned to individual development sites and must be addressed through transport assessments and travel plans and that “development proposals must not exceed their site trip budget”.

The trip budget needs completely re-visiting alongside the review of the development quantum for NEC to ensure it does not place an overly restrictive burden on or stifle development in NEC and **policy criteria 22-24 updated accordingly**. To maintain the policy as drafted would undermine the NEC policy and there is a real risk that the emerging Local Plan would fail to deliver on its objectives. Additionally, more flexibility should be introduced in the Local Plan to enable developments such as Cambridge Business Park to develop realistic and high-quality proposals that can still achieve high levels of transport sustainability. In light of this required update, the car parking figures referenced in **policy criteria 25(a) should also be reviewed and updated**.

<p><b>Lifespan</b></p> <p>31. Comprehensive and coordinated delivery is essential. All development must:</p> <p>a. Be brought forward through a comprehensive Outline Planning Application covering the full site, supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Parameter plans for land use, density, height, movement and green infrastructure</li> <li>ii. A Strategic Design Code guiding quality, form and materials</li> <li>iii. A Phasing and Infrastructure Delivery Plan aligned with key triggers</li> <li>iv. A Stewardship Strategy to ensure long-term maintenance and governance of public realm and facilities</li> <li>v. Engage meaningfully with local communities and stakeholders through every stage.</li> <li>vi. Be subject to independent design review, with updates to the Strategic Design Code as phases evolve;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Policy S/NEC (31)</b> - TCE is <b>supportive</b> of the requirements to accompany outline planning applications within the NEC area. However, reference to a ‘comprehensive Outline Planning Application covering the full site’ is misleading and needs re-drafting. ‘Full site’ referenced in the NEC policy could be read as an Outline Planning Application being required for the entire NEC area, which it is assumed is not the intention as it would not be practical or realistic to do so given the many different sites and land ownerships that make up NEC.</p> <p><b>Policy criteria 31 should be amended</b> as follows:</p> <p><i>“31. Comprehensive and coordinated delivery is essential. All development <b>in NEC</b> must: a) Be brought forward through a comprehensive Outline Planning Application covering the <del>full</del> <b>relevant</b> site, supported by...”</i></p>
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