

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
Planning Policy Team
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

30 January 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Innovate Cambridge Response to the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan

We write to provide a high-level response to the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan (Regulation 18) published for consultation on 1 December 2025.

Cambridge is the UK's most investable hub for science

Cambridge is a national economic asset where early-stage life sciences and deep tech companies have raised £7.9 billion since 2015. International investors are now involved in nearly 40% of all deals, up from just 7% a decade ago. Cambridge is top in Europe for deep tech venture capital investment per capita, and second globally, after the Bay Area in billion-dollar companies (unicorns) per capita.

Cambridge's innovation ecosystem has grown by almost 80% in the past decade, from 473 active companies in 2015 to 848 in 2025. Since 2015, the region's life sciences and deep tech ecosystem has scaled faster than any UK region on an investment-intensity basis. Cambridge leads in life sciences investment, attracting £2.49 million per company in 2024. Across all sectors, Cambridge companies raised £1.6 million in equity per company in 2024, a 385% increase since 2015 and the strongest growth of any UK region. Cambridge is also strong in growth-stage companies, with the area raising £42.8 million per company on average, higher than any other region in the UK.

As impressive as this track record is, there is still more potential. We aim to support more innovation-led growth for the region and the UK through initiatives such as the Cambridge Innovation Hub, with Government's commitment of at least £15m in cornerstone funding for a 2.7-acre site designed to unite science, capital and entrepreneurship at the heart of the city's innovation ecosystem.

Innovate Cambridge

Innovate Cambridge's mission is to accelerate innovation and ensure pioneering discoveries are successfully translated for local and global impact. We connect government, academia and business to deliver an aligned innovation strategy for the region and strengthen our position on the global stage, creating opportunities in Cambridge and across the UK.

Launched in 2022, working with Founders and Partners including the University of Cambridge, Cambridge Enterprise, Cambridge Innovation Capital, Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Anglia Ruskin University, Innovate Cambridge is underpinned by a partnership with over 200 organisations and Charter Signatories and over 500 key stakeholders united as a single, powerful engine for growth.

Our blueprint of ambitious targets includes doubling the number of new companies formed, venture capital investment and rate of unicorns produced in addition to generating 60,000 net new jobs. Learn more here: www.innovatecambridge.com

Overall comments on the Draft Local Plan

We recognise the significant work that has gone into the draft Local Plan and the deep stakeholder engagement that has gone into its development. We welcome the opportunity to comment and the ambition of the plan.

Our primary concern for the draft Local Plan is to ensure that the international importance of Cambridge as a globally significant innovation hub is enhanced – supporting creation of new companies, enabling company retention and scale-ups and attracting global corporates and foreign direct investment, while ensuring the local community benefit. The enablers of sustainable growth, including sustainable transport systems, affordable housing, lab and office space, health care facilities, culture and diversity, green and open spaces and good quality of life, are critical for this.

Overall, we welcome the underlying vision for Greater Cambridge *‘to be a place where impacts on our climate and environment are significantly reduced, balanced with the continued flourishing of our internationally significant innovation economy, and an increase in the quality of everyday life for all our communities.’* and the recognition of the importance of the innovation infrastructure that underpins growth. The Local Plan is a key lever for Cambridge’s future growth and ambition.

We are pleased to see recognition of the importance of building on the foundations of existing clusters and campuses as a key part of the strategy for growth and particularly the careful consideration of key research centres of excellence (public and private) for Cambridge, including the Southern Cluster; Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Babraham Research Campus and Granta Park (life science innovation from bench to bedside); Eddington and West Cambridge (an innovation hub for deep tech, computer and materials science); Cambridge Science Park and Cambridge Science Park North (mid-tech and advanced manufacturing); and Wellcome Genome Campus (genomics).

It is important that this strategic, system-wide approach continues to be embedded so that start-up companies are next to each other, relevant research capabilities and companies at different stages of growth creating critical mass and maximum chance of success to scale. We welcome the Plan’s support for developments that strengthen clusters, including its recognition that the Cambridge ecosystem requires a diverse range of commercial space to accommodate different stages of business growth.

As Cambridge Ahead have commented, we would like to see the Plan more explicitly recognise the value of existing innovation infrastructure and the benefits of intensifying and expanding the parks and clusters to fully realise agglomeration benefits. The Plan acknowledges the increasing overlap between disciplines and the important role that major campuses and business parks play in supporting discovery, translation and innovation within an increasingly connected ecosystem.

Housing: We welcome the Local Plan's commitment to delivering an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures to support diverse and inclusive communities and the acknowledgement of the important role of employer-led housing which has been particularly impactful in delivering specialist housing at pace, supporting Cambridge's growth. The spatial planning of significant numbers of new homes and a new settlement adjacent to key strategic sites where high-growth companies are located is positively received and will support company growth and retention in the region. Given the opportunity and strategic importance of the Ox-Cam corridor to deliver UK growth, it is positive to see the vision and ambition to optimise East-West rail.

Transport: We welcome the commitment to a vision-led approach to transport planning for new developments. Congestion is one of the major constraints on the Cambridge economy. System-wide alignment, given the dependence on infrastructure delivered by other bodies, will be key to unlocking growth potential and joining up across current and evolving land-use, transport and growth planning strategies.

Overall, we support the major themes and strategic priorities to encourage a flourishing, dynamic and mixed economy, improve access and opportunity to a wide range of jobs and affordable homes and create attractive places where people want to live, work, visit and play.