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News > Cambridge News > South Cambridgeshire Council

South Cambs confirms three sites for joint Cambridge homes plan amid 'past mistakes' warning

Councillor Bridget Smith, leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, said supporting infrastructure needed to be in place before building new homes.

NEWS By [Hannah Brown](#) Local Democracy Reporter
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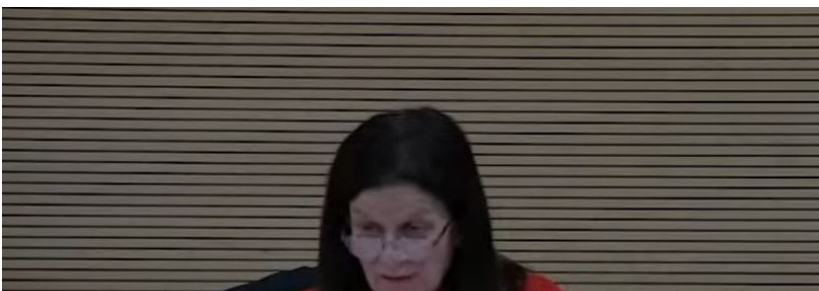
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Councillor Bridget Smith said: "We cannot replicate mistakes of the past having houses and employment sites built before there is the water and infrastructure to support them." (Image: South Cambridgeshire District Council)

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South Cambridgeshire 'cannot replicate the mistakes of the past' when planning and building new homes across the district. Councillor Bridget Smith, leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, said it was a "firm commitment" that future development would be "infrastructure first".

Cllr Smith made the comments when discussing an update on the authority's joint local plan at cabinet meeting earlier today (Monday, February 6). The district council is preparing a local plan with [Cambridge City Council](#) that will guide development across the Greater Cambridge area.

The cabinet agreed to confirm three development sites as part of the local plan - North East Cambridge, Cambridge East, and the [Cambridge Biomedical Campus](#) - which have also previously been agreed by the city council. Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins, lead cabinet member for planning, said the sites on the edge of Cambridge were considered to be the "most sustainable locations".

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Cllr Smith said that having higher density consolidation sites could help prevent dispersal of homes across the district. She said this could mean higher buildings in those areas, explaining that lower buildings could as a consequence see more land released for development.

However, Cllr Smith said the higher density sites need to have "proper place making" including green spaces. She said the authorities needed to make sure places were built where people want to live, where people can "see the sky", and are also good for people's health and wellbeing.

The number of homes forecast homes needed across [Cambridge](#) and South Cambridgeshire between 2020 and 2041 has increased since the first proposals of the joint local plan from 44,400 to 51,800. The number of jobs also forecast as being created in the area has also increased from 58,400 to 66,600.

Cllr Hawkins said the authority was not in the position to confirm the new forecast figures as actual targets yet, saying growth needed to be "sustainable". She said: "Greater Cambridge continues to be a growth area and we cannot get away from this. Some other parts of the country love to have our growth, but do not. We have to make that growth happen in a sustainable way."

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Cllr Hawkins said one of the things that would impact whether the increase housing forecast could be met in a sustainable way was water supply. She said this was the responsibility of the water authority, and that the plans made it clear that the preferred options for development were “dependent” on evidence showing there would be “adequate water supply without unacceptable wider harm”.

Cllr Smith said the joint local plan would be the “greenest local plan” prepared by the authority, adding environmental considerations would determine the strategy. She said the authority would be “keeping a close eye” on the water resources management plan. She said: “Our firm commitment is infrastructure first, this does not just mean roads and bus ways, but water.”

“We cannot replicate mistakes of the past having houses and employment sites built before there is the water and infrastructure to support them, that is a firm commitment.” Cllr Smith said it was not the authority’s intention to see more homes built where there was “no strategic infrastructure” and would be “detrimental to the environment”.

Councillor Heather Williams, leader of the Conservative opposition at the district council, questioned references to building in the green belt within the plan, highlighting a motion previously agreed by the council to protect the green belt. Cllr Smith said nothing had changed since the motion and said it was “still the intention to protect the green belt”. She said the authority had to “conform with national planning policy” that said exceptional circumstances needed to be shown before green belt land could be released for development.



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