



## Draft Local Plan for Greater Cambridge Response from the Cam Valley Community Rail Partnership

### About the Cam Valley Community Rail Partnership

The Cam Valley CRP was launched in 2025 as an expansion of the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership, which was established in 2013. The new name reflects the addition of Whittlesford Parkway, Shelford and Cambridge South Stations.

Together, this geography covers a significant reach across South Cambridgeshire local rail services, which, with the advent of Cambridge South Station, holds the potential to transform local commuting and travel patterns for work, education, health and leisure, in favour of rail, and supported by active travel and other public transport, but only if longstanding access barriers are addressed.

The CRP is supported by Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Network Rail, Govia Thameslink Railway, Greater Anglia, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, the Parish Councils of Meldreth, Melbourn, Shepreth, Foxton, Shelford and Whittlesford, local businesses and local schools. The CRP is accredited by the national Community Rail Network with recognition by the Department for Transport.

The aims of the CRP include:

- To recognise the key role of rail to the local community and to promote it as first-choice sustainable mode of transport
- To improve and enhance station environments and promote biodiversity projects in connecting communities
- To support initiatives developed jointly with the rail industry and Local Authorities in integrated travel plans.

As an accredited CRP, we provide a unique link between local communities, the rail industry and local government, grounded in lived community experience. In line with the themes of the Department for Transport's Community Rail Development Strategy, one of our core activities is "Providing a voice for the community", and it is in this spirit that we are responding to the Draft Local Plan consultation. All the issues outlined below have been raised by our constituent partners.

### Draft Local Plan and local rail

The Cam Valley CRP supports the principles of sustainable growth underpinning the Draft Local Plan. Our comments particularly relate to policies on sustainable transport, active travel and public transport integration, and development strategy.

We are mindful of ambitious national growth plans for Greater Cambridge, and of potential and already developing new towns, rail stations and other transport infrastructure, including East West Rail.

Existing local rail networks in the South Cambridgeshire Cam Valley CRP area, and the advent of Cambridge South Station, hold huge potential to positively contribute to sustainable travel.

## Village Stations: accessibility

Focussing only on new settlements could produce missed modal-shift opportunities in existing communities. We are concerned that existing local rail stations within the CRP area hold unrealized potential to better serve the wider community, held back due to accessibility constraints including:

- Safe active travel/multi-use paths needed to reach stations from neighbouring villages (eg Sawston to Whittlesford Parkway, Thriplow and Fowlmere to Foxton, Whaddon to Meldreth)
- Lifts and ramps needed for full accessibility (especially Whittlesford Parkway and Meldreth)
- Long and uncertain level crossing barrier downtimes within village settings can be a barrier to rail service access (Shelford, Shepreth, Foxton). Mitigations of this problem, to improve passenger confidence, are needed.
- Wayfinding and mapping for active travel access to local rail stations is poor or missing.
- While some strategic planning for better accessibility at some stations has taken place, little has been realized (Whittlesford Masterplan, Foxton Travel Hub).
- Bus connections to stations should be a priority, and linking to strategic sites' Section 106 agreements
- An integrated station access strategy for local stations should be actioned, both for on-site accessibility and for active travel access to and from nearby and neighbouring communities.

The improvements we have outlined will require partnership funding. In that context, we ask how S106 and CIL monies generated by new developments will be distributed beyond communities of most significant growth.

## Cambridge South: onward travel

We look forward to the opening of this new station, which will be a brilliant addition to the local and regional rail network. Its full potential depends on access and onward travel factors at both ends of the passenger journey. An integrated access strategy for Cambridge South should include safe, direct pedestrian and cycle routes, clear wayfinding, and seamless interchange with bus and shuttle services.

Onward travel from Cambridge South to destinations within the Cambridge Biomedical site and in particular health services, as well as education, employment and other destinations outside of the CBC campus area, should be simple and clear. At the time of writing, that simplicity and clarity is missing.

The potential of Cambridge South to assist in mitigating the problem of Cambridge road congestion, which in turn hampers the reliability and effectiveness of local bus services, depends in part on addressing the local rail station accessibility issues outlined above: difficult access to local rail will inevitably prompt other travel choices including the private car, contributing further to road congestion and associated problems.

## Conclusion

Potential to transform travel choices from communities in the vicinity of existing Cam Valley CRP rail stations depends on ease of station access and passenger confidence.

Significant new projects within the new Local Plan for new residential communities and associated infrastructure could disproportionately absorb resource and attention away from improvements to existing transport network infrastructure, currently held back by often simple accessibility constraints. Investment in existing stations represents a low-cost, high-impact opportunity fully aligned with net-zero commitments.

Ambitious commitment is needed to unlock the potential of existing rail infrastructure.

Susan van de Ven, Chair, Cam Valley CRP

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