

CAMBRIDGE AHEAD RESPONSE TO THE NORTH EAST AREA ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION

Cambridge Ahead welcomes this opportunity to respond to the draft North East Cambridge Area Action Plan consultation. Our comments here follow directly from our input to the development of the next Local Plan for Greater Cambridge in February of this year.

Plans for North East Cambridge should reflect that it is a key employment site for the City, with significant scope for employment creation in high-value knowledge intensive industries, and therefore should contain ambitions for higher levels of employment than have currently been identified.

The North East Cambridge site has the unique and enviable position of being the strategic growth site best served by public transport with the railway, busway, motorway linked to the park & ride site, and cycling and walking connectivity. Therefore, strategic planning for this site should be ambitious in making best use of this connectivity to maximise high-value job creation for the future of Greater Cambridge.

Our input to the Local Plan for Greater Cambridge was based on the recommendations made by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) and was supported by significant data and modelling. It put forward a spatial vision which we believe will unlock high-value jobs, spread Cambridge clusters outwards across a wider footprint, support major shifts towards sustainable travel and improve the environment and sustain quality of life for local people.

Central to our proposal was the densification of five strategic employment sites, to be supported by strong public transport connectivity. These would support the high levels of employment growth in the city, which in recent years has been significantly higher than forecast and are set to continue. The Cambridge North East Site is identified as one of these key employment sites because of the current low-density nature of the site and because of its position along key transport corridors into the city.

The proposals set out in the draft North East Cambridge Area Action Plan do not meet the level of ambition that we believe is required to support future employment growth in the area. A higher level of commercial allocation should be considered to expand the available floor space and create capacity for many more new jobs in the area. Analysis from the Centre for Business Research shows that employment on the existing three parks within the area; Cambridge Science Park, St John's Innovation Centre and Cambridge Business Park, is already at 12,500. Proposals to create space for 20,000 jobs would therefore only leave an available capacity of 7,500 for future growth over the next 20 years.

The modelling to support our spatial vision suggested that for the North East Cambridge area as a whole, there exists potential for between 29,200 and 38,700 jobs by 2041.

Cambridge Ahead recognises the uncertainty created at the current time by the Covid-19 pandemic. The long-term implications on employment growth potential are of course yet to be known. But our view is that whilst the footprint of commercial space and use of the transport network may vary, the employment creation opportunity of Cambridge (and therefore this strategic site) is unlikely to vary



dramatically over the period to 2041. We feel that bringing data and insight to the table that helps us collectively understand more about what the impact will be on our economy is now crucial, which is why we are working with partners locally to develop a number of short-term and long-term research inputs. However, even allowing for a slower level of growth than previously anticipated the Area Action Plan proposals do not go far enough. We must ensure that in the current environment of uncertainty, we do not miss an opportunity to plan in the right way for the future.

As we develop plans for North East Cambridge, to guide the long term development of the area over the next 20 years, it is essential that we take the opportunity to support jobs and continue to enhance the Greater Cambridge economy. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service in any way we can to overcome barriers which might exist to higher levels of densification on the site, rather than risk missing this crucial opportunity.