

Land East of Cherry Hinton – Connectivity and Proximity to Rail Stations.

Introduction

Land East of Cherry Hinton is a highly sustainable location within close proximity of the new Cambridge East Station (7 mins cycle), the existing Cambridge Rail Station (14 mins cycle) and also Cambridge South Station (20 mins cycle). Its close location to these transport hubs and key employment locations is clearly set out in the attached plans. The recent proposed updates to the NPPF supports development on sustainable sites in close proximity to rail stations and Land East of Cherry Hinton fulfils these criteria. We set out below how this site meets these new criteria and provides a unique opportunity to realise a high-quality new neighbourhood in a sustainable location, with good existing and proposed infrastructure and limited constraints.

Proposed reforms to the NPPF

The government published a consultation proposing significant reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 16 December 2025. The consultation runs until 10 March 2026, with the revised NPPF expected to come into effect in late Spring.

Among the proposed changes, the new Framework will include:

- A default ‘Yes’ to development in sustainable locations
- Support in principle for development around railway stations
- Continued emphasis on identifying and developing in areas of ‘grey belt’ and ‘low-quality green belt’

Although the Greater Cambridge Plan (GCP) is being brought forward under the existing Local Plan system¹ and will therefore be assessed against the current version of the NPPF (December 2024), Paragraph 2 within *Annex A: Implementation* of the consultation states.

“Development plan policies which are in any way inconsistent with the national decision-making policies in this Framework should be given very limited weight, except where they have been examined and adopted against this Framework. Other development plan policies should not be given reduced weight simply because they are adopted prior to the publication of this Framework.”

¹ On the basis that it is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination before 31st December 2026.

The GCP must therefore have regard to the *'direction of travel'* in national planning policy and the emerging themes in the consultation. The following areas are believed to be particularly relevant to our proposed development on Land East of Cherry Hinton (LECH).

Sustainable Development

The achievement of sustainable development remains at the heart of the Framework and will continue to underpin plan-making and decision-making. *Policy S3: Presumption in favour of sustainable development* applies a *'presumption in favour'* of sustainable development, subject to compliance with other relevant policies in the Framework.

LECH provides a highly sustainable and complementary location for mixed-use development as part of the new neighbourhoods within Cambridge East.

Policy S5: Principle of development outside settlements provides a default 'yes', where at least one of the ten criteria is met. These include:

- *Development for housing and mixed-use development which would be: within reasonable walking distance of a railway station which provides a high level of connectivity to jobs and services, physically well-related to a railway station or a settlement within which the station is located; is of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure; and where the development would not prejudice any proposals for long-term comprehensive development in the same location;*
- *The development of land allocated for that purpose in the development plan;*
- *Development which would address an evidenced unmet need (including, but not limited to development proposals involving the provision of housing...) and where the development would:*
 - i) *be well related to an existing settlement and be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure*

LECH is capable of meeting the majority of these criteria and provides a unique opportunity to realise a high-quality new neighbourhood in a sustainable location, with good existing and proposed infrastructure and limited constraints.

Development around railway stations

The new Framework places a strong emphasis on the role of railway stations and the potential of land around them to accommodate development. Specific references include:

- *Policy S2: Producing a spatial strategy*, which encourages the allocation of sites for development on land around railway stations
- *Policy S5: Principle of development outside settlements*, which provides a presumption in favour of development outside of settlement boundaries that are either within walking distance of railway stations or physically well-related to a railway station or a settlement within which the station is located.
- *Policy L3: Achieving appropriate densities*, which promotes higher densities of residential development (a minimum of 40 or 50 dwellings per hectare) where sites are either within walking distance of a station or the station is defined as ‘*well-connected*’
- *Policy GB3: Altering existing green belt boundaries*, which encourages green belt boundaries to be altered where this would release land for development around stations

In 2025, the East West Railway Company (EWRC) confirmed its proposals will include a new Cambridge East station close to Cambridge City Airport. This will provide improved public transport connectivity to central Cambridge and beyond for existing and forthcoming development within Cambridge East. Full passenger services between Oxford and Cambridge are due to be completed by mid 2030, which is within the plan period for the GCP.

The LECH site is located adjacent to Springstead Village and the forthcoming development at Cambridge Airport that will accommodate the new Cambridge East Station. It therefore meets criterion ‘*h*’ within draft Policy S5 of being ‘*physically well-related to a railway station or within a settlement which the station is located*’. With EWRC’s commitment to the new railway station, the draft Framework requires GCP to maximise the development potential of the surrounding land, including the LECH site.

Grey belt and low-quality green belt

Draft Policy *GB2: Assessing existing green belt land* is clear that the preparation of spatial strategies should be informed by ‘*an assessment of the strategic role of green belt within the strategy area*’. It goes on to state that ‘*the strategic assessment should be used to help develop the spatial development strategy and to identify whether there are areas where green belt boundaries may require further consideration through the preparation of local plans.*’ Policy *GB3: Altering existing green belt boundaries* lists a range of circumstances where green belt boundaries should be altered. These include circumstances where:

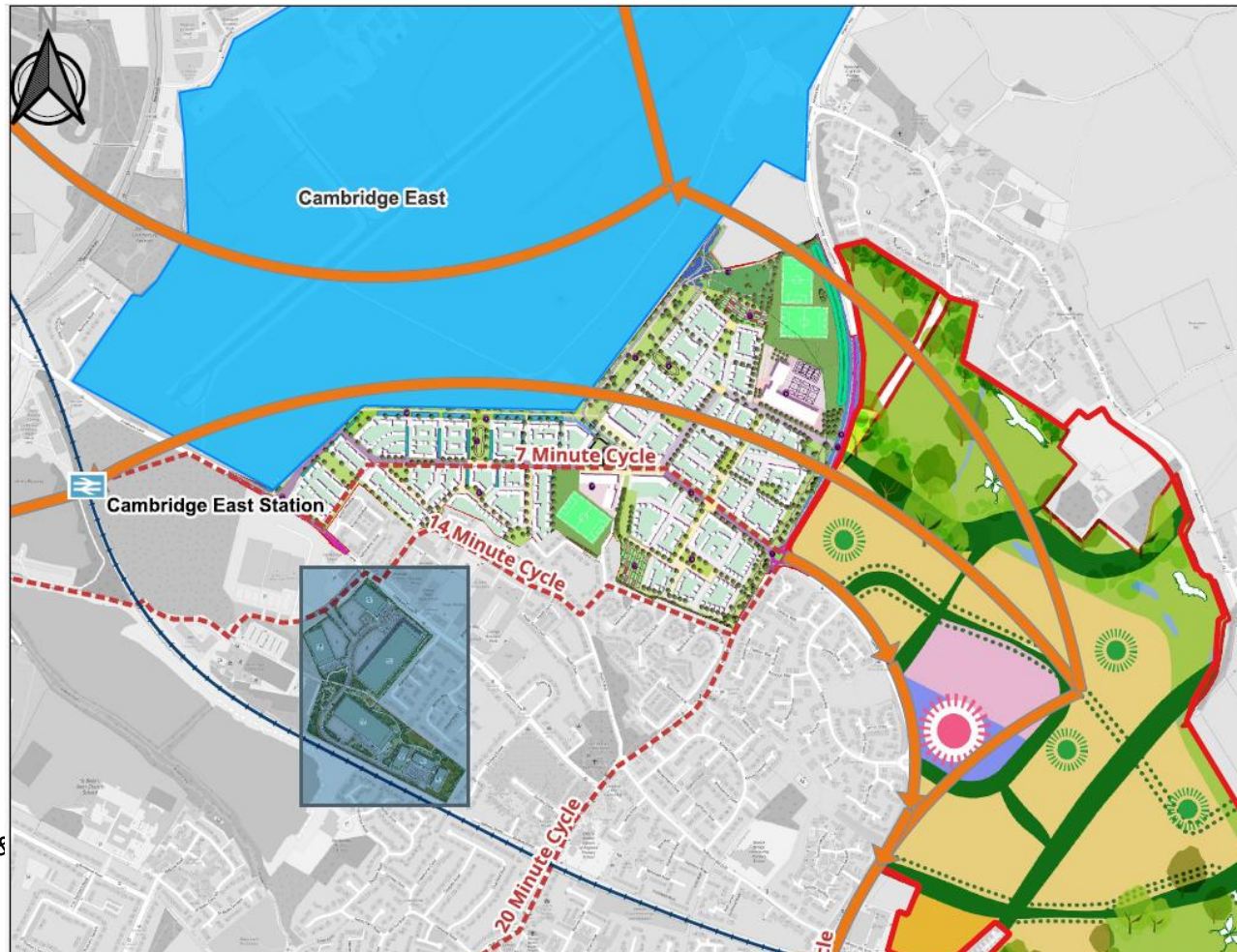
- *This would enable the development of land around stations*
- *Optimising the density of development in line with policy L3 (which encourages higher densities of development on land around railway stations)*

- *Assessing whether sufficient suitable sites can be identified outside the green belt [to meet identified development needs]*

Draft Policy GB7: *Development which is not inappropriate in the green belt*, states circumstances when development within the green belt should not be considered '*inappropriate*'. These include:








- Development of '*grey belt*' sites, that would meet an identified need, are in sustainable locations and, in the case of major development involving housing, would meet the '*Golden Rules*'
- Development for housing or mixed use development that would be within reasonable walking distance of a railway station, be physically well-related to a railway station or a settlement within which the station is located; be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure; not prejudice any proposals for long-term comprehensive development in the same location and in the case of major development, comply with the '*Golden Rules*'.

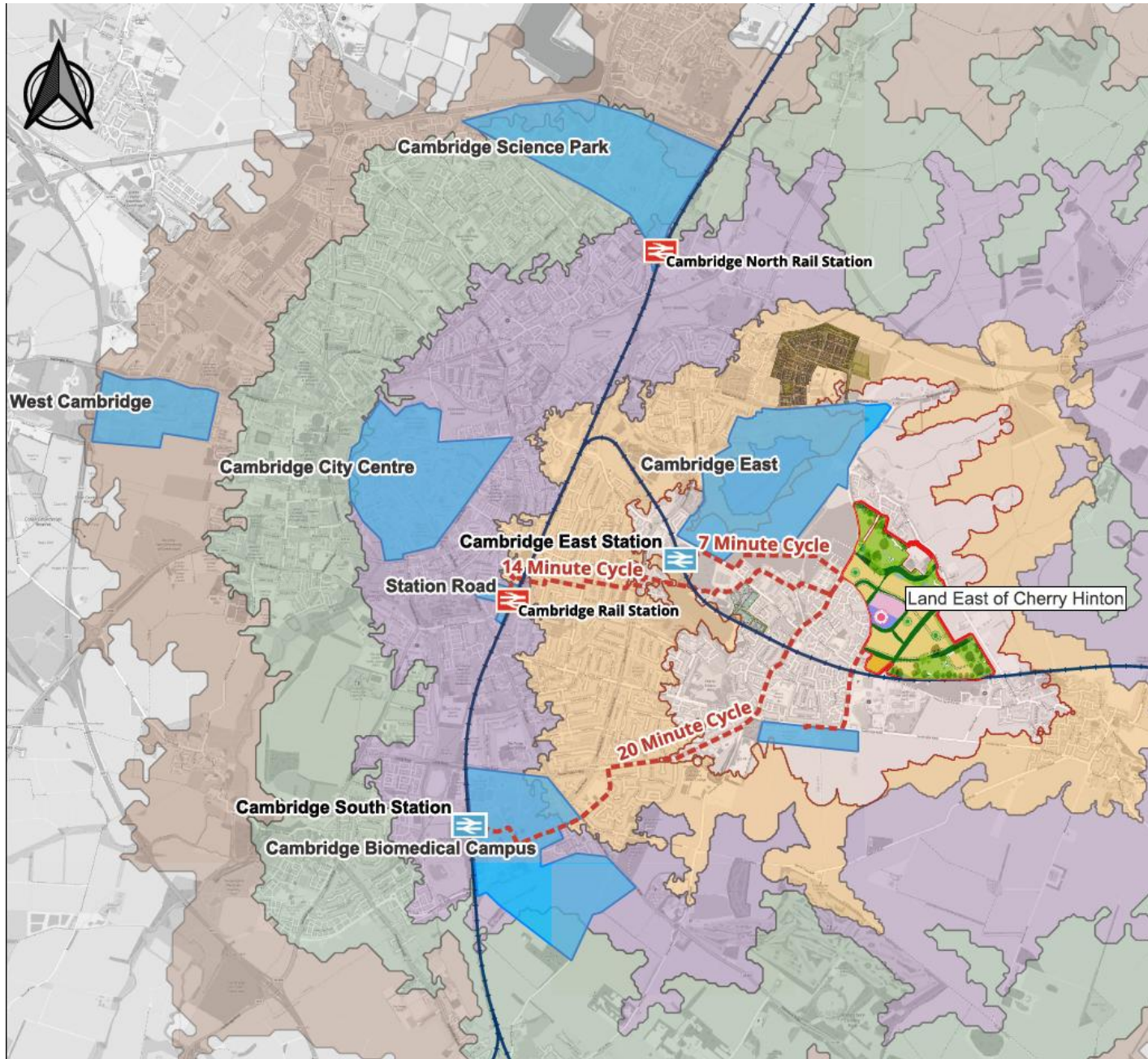
We believe that development at LECH is capable of meeting both of these criteria and, therefore, presents an important opportunity for development within the strategic growth area of East Cambridge.



Title:
Land East of Cherry Hinton
Local Movement Diagrams

Legend:

-  Proposed Railway Stations
-  Existing Railway Lines
-  Active Travel Movements
-  Potential future route to Cambrid
-  Strategic Destinations
-  Land East of Cherry Hinton
-  Red Line Poly



Title:
Land East of Cherry Hinton
Local Connections Context

Legend:

- Proposed Railway Stations
- Existing Railway Stations
- Existing Railway Lines
- Potential future route to Cambrid
- Strategic Destinations
- Land East of Cherry Hinton
- 25-30 Minute Cycling
- 20-25 Minute Cycling
- 15-20 Minute Cycling
- 10-15 Minute Cycling
- 10 Minute Cycling

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