



# EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE



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# OVERVIEW

Each district of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is different; hence we have developed distinct approaches for the distinct geographical areas of Peterborough, Greater Cambridge, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, and Fenland. These are set out in this chapter, and each reflects local transport constraints, opportunities, and patterns of growth.

Each approach outlines the major schemes expected to be delivered within each area to deliver our objectives, both directly by ourselves and in partnership with other local and national stakeholders. Some aspects of the strategies are, by necessity, still under development and hence all schemes will need to demonstrate value-for-money and affordability, together with alignment with our strategic priorities before they are able to proceed.

This section includes:

- Summary of recent and planned growth, and local transport constraints;
- Progress and projects delivered to date; and
- Transport schemes to help deliver each strategy.

# BACKGROUND

East Cambridgeshire is a largely rural district with a population of approximately 88,000, centred around the cathedral city of Ely to the north-east of Cambridge. Along with Ely, there are two other urban settlements – Littleport and Soham. Approximately 45% of the district's population live in these three settlements, with the remainder spread between approximately fifty villages and hamlets.

The district benefits from an attractive rural environment, including the special landscape and ecological and agricultural value of the Fens, numerous historic villages, and the famous Anglican cathedral within Ely.

Ely forms the centre of East Cambridgeshire, acting as the district's main employment hub, and forming the key leisure, retail, and education centre. The district also has close connections to Cambridge. According to the previous Census, 21% of East Cambridgeshire residents commute to work in Cambridge. Many others work elsewhere, with only 40% of employed people who live in the district also working there. Reliable, high quality transport links, in particular to the Greater Cambridge sub region are key to supporting the district's economy.

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Recent years have seen significant growth in East Cambridgeshire, with the population growing by 5% in the decade to 2021, greater than anywhere else in Cambridgeshire. Ely has been the focus for much of this growth and is strongly associated with the success of the Greater Cambridge economy. However, other than the recent construction of the Ely Southern Bypass and the new railway station at Soham, there has been limited delivery of major new transport links.



The *East Cambridgeshire 2015 Local Plan* sets out the district's proposals to grow by 11,500 dwellings and 9,200 jobs by 2031, typically focused on the fringes of the largest settlements of Ely, Soham and Littleport. This includes:

- 4,000 homes within Ely, including 3,000 at Ely North;
- 2,300 homes within Soham, focused on the eastern and southern edges of the town;
- 1,500 within Littleport; and
- 1,900 within smaller villages in East Cambridgeshire.

# TRANSPORT CHALLENGES

In common with much of Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire is a predominantly rural district which brings its own challenges in terms of accessibility to services, viability of bus services and reliance on the private car, with approximately 78% of trips to work within the district made by private car or van. The need for improved active travel links was the most commonly cited issue in East Cambridgeshire in the most recent consultation on the LTCP, followed by the need for improved connectivity of transport services in rural areas and the need for new train stations and lines.

## BUS SERVICES

The current bus service offer for East Cambridgeshire is very limited. Many of the services are not direct or convenient due to long journey times and do not provide a viable alternative to the private car. Some communities have no bus service at all. Accessible and affordable public transport is essential for many rural residents, yet both bus services are reducing, and bus use is declining, a trend exacerbated by the

COVID-19 pandemic. Low population density and longer distances to travel make practical and commercially sustainable public transport difficult in rural areas.

East Cambridgeshire does benefit from a range of community transport services, including flexible 'Dial-a-Ride' services and community car schemes. There is significant scope to create a more integrated, multi-modal transport network, with integrated ticketing, better and seamless connections, and interchange between modes.

## RAIL SERVICES

Whilst rail provision in the district is arguably better than that for buses, it clearly only serves certain areas directly. Ely is well-served by the rail network, with direct services to Kings Lynn, Cambridge, London, Norwich, London Stansted Airport, Peterborough and the Midlands, and the North West. However, some services, particularly on the Kings Lynn–Cambridge–London corridor especially during peak times, suffer from severe overcrowding. Whilst other services such as those to Ipswich are too infrequent (two hourly) and do not offer a genuine, realistic, and attractive option for many. In addition, the complex junctions north of Ely act as a key constraint on capacity and make it difficult to run additional train services for both passengers and freight. To truly realise the full potential of Soham Station, double tracking, and the provision of the Snailwell Loop is necessary to allow increased capability (new and quicker routes) and capacity (headway) to serve the community.

## ACTIVE TRAVEL

High-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, particularly outside Ely, is extremely limited. A public consultation held by East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) in 2020 asked people to identify new cycling and walking routes which we and ECDC could prioritise to complete gaps in the network, especially those that will encourage more local walking and cycling journeys to access places of education, employment, health care, public transport, and essential services. A list of priority routes has been developed so that we have a set of schemes that are ready to submit when funding becomes available. Despite the 2011 Census revealing that in East Cambridgeshire,



12% of travel to work trips are under 2km, only one in seven are made by active travel modes. There are various barriers that exist which prevent people from considering using active travel modes for their journeys. Particularly in rural areas of the district, the dominance of travel by car and road space allocation, the poor condition and connectivity of any existing active travel networks, and the conflicting needs of different roads users are among the reasons that people give for using the private car instead of active travel modes. Within this rural district it has been and will continue to be difficult to adhere to government's LTN 1/120 guidelines due to the nature of the infrastructure roads. Without investment in active travel infrastructure, travel by these modes is unattractive and is unlikely to increase.

## HEAVY COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

Other than the A14 to the south, the highway network in the district is comprised of rural, single-carriageway A-roads such as the A10. These roads can suffer from traffic congestion, air pollution and safety issues for all modes, especially those associated with slower agricultural traffic and HCVs. Ely's historic city core suffers from localised congestion and significant HCV traffic, due to the routing of these vehicles that undermines its attractiveness as a destination for tourism and shopping. In addition, certain areas of the city are not easy to walk and cycle within and through, therefore a careful balance is required between the need for access and retaining a thriving and diverse High Street.

## ROAD SAFETY

Many of the district's rural roads have poor safety records, with a combination of high traffic speeds, mix of traffic types and substandard alignments and maintenance leading to a higher-than-average number of serious and fatal collisions.

## PROGRESS TO DATE

Improvements to the transport network within East Cambridgeshire have recently been delivered, helping the district support growth and improve quality of life for residents. Completion of the Ely Southern Bypass in 2018 has eased congestion around Ely by

better connecting Stuntney Causeway and Angel Drove. In addition, it significantly improved safety by removing the need for heavy commercial vehicles to use the railway level crossing and avoid an accident-prone low bridge. The key scheme was delivered through effective partnership working, with funding provided by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), ECDC and Network Rail.

However, in terms of other highways improvements aimed at relieving congestion and safety, so far only smaller and interim junction improvements have been delivered, largely on the A142 corridor, with more long-term solutions for this corridor under investigation. The Lancaster Way roundabout (linking the A10 and the A142 at Ely) has notably relieved congestion and improved conditions for active travel users.

Improvements have also been made to pedestrian access over the River Great Ouse, by constructing a new walkway attached to the bypass bridge that faces towards Ely. This link provides connectivity between the Fen Rivers Way and Ouse Valley Way footpaths, providing a new circular walking route for residents and visitors to Ely.

Soham Station opened in 2021 making rail travel easier for people in Soham and the nearby villages. Enhancements have also been made to the Kings Lynn to Ely, Cambridge, and London rail route, with eight-car trains now in operation between Ely and Kings Lynn, facilitated by the completion of longer platforms at Littleport station.

## ALTERNATIVE FUELS AND TECHNOLOGY

Twenty-four electric charging points are currently being installed in car parks in Ely and Soham and ECDC are also in the process of procuring ten new refuse collection lorries that run on hydrotreated vegetable oil.



# OUR APPROACH

## VISION

Our vision is:

It is our aim that investments in public transport, will be supported by walking and cycling improvements to make longer- distance journeys to, from and within East Cambridgeshire quicker and more reliable. A safe, integrated transport network will allow residents new access opportunities to employment, health, education, training, leisure, and retail destinations whilst supporting the region's overall growth aspiration and ambitions.

Improvements to both road and rail will ensure that public transport continues to offer an attractive and viable alternative to the private car and reduce car dependency; whilst those whose journey is better suited to the private car will be able to travel on more reliable, less congested, and safer roads. Effective planning and provision of sustainable transport options for new developments, in conjunction with highway improvements where required, will help to promote healthy lifestyles, and improve air quality, while ensuring that the district continues to offer an outstanding quality-of-life.

## ACTIVE TRAVEL

We will continue to investigate, develop, and deliver proposals for new, high-quality active travel infrastructure that will be accessible for all, including pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders across the East Cambridgeshire district. This will be done in line with the draft ***Cambridgeshire Active Travel Strategy*** (September 2022) and based around the following '4 Es' principles:

- Embrace Active Travel as a transport priority in Cambridgeshire;
- Enhance the existing network of pavements, footpaths, cycleways, bridleways, and other public rights of way so it is connected and fit for purpose;
- Expand existing routes to create a well-connected, safe, joined up active travel network;
- Encourage modal shift to active travel modes through a variety of initiatives focussed on encouraging and supporting behaviour change including micro-mobility.

It is important to connect the rural areas and villages with key services by upgrading existing links and providing new links where required. This focus on active travel and horse riders will help to make it a safer and more attractive option for local trips within and between our towns, villages, and hamlets. More journeys on foot and by bike will help to alleviate traffic congestion and improve air quality, whilst allowing those without access to a car – such as teenage children – more independence and opportunity to travel. Development of active travel schemes in the district will be guided further by schemes identified in the ***Cambridgeshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan***, developed by CCC and the East Cambridgeshire Cycling and Walking Routes Strategy, developed by ECDC.

## BUS SERVICES

To accompany improvements to our strategic transport links, we will prioritise investment in and support for our local public transport network, ensuring access of opportunity for all and improve social equality. The principles set out in our Bus Strategy, particularly around bus travel in rural areas will guide how funding is directed to support an improved bus network in the district. Demand responsive and community transport will be part of the solution, as will closer integration of different travel requirements, such as education, social care, and health transport. Our proposals for the bus network, as set out in the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), will deliver frequent, reliable services along key corridors in East Cambridgeshire. These could include links to and between key conurbations such as Newmarket, Soham, Ely, March, Chatteris, Sutton, Littleport and of course Cambridge.



We have and will continue to work closely with partners and ECDC to deliver their recently adopted **Bus Services Strategy**. The New Bus Services for East Cambridgeshire prospectus set out a series of proposed bus service improvements, which are a combination of new scheduled services, improvements to existing services and demand responsive transport services (DRT).

Following the DRT trial in West Huntingdonshire the success, efficiency, viability, and cost effectiveness of the scheme will be assessed ahead of a rollout of DRT across East Cambridgeshire. This will be investigated and delivered if appropriate to improve connectivity to key destinations such as employment, education, training, health, retail, and other services. This will improve greater connectivity with transport interchanges on key corridors such as railway stations and public transport interchanges to ensure better connected communities are delivered across the district. Also proposed new services will be based on the Ely Zipper model (see strategic section for more information) including fewer stops, shorter journey times, hourly service, and travel in one direction in the morning, which is reversed in the afternoon. As well as being frequent, services also need to operate to regular clock face timetables to encourage use.

We will continue to support localised community transport and DRT services to provide improved accessibility for all. This will reduce social exclusion by providing access for those located in rural villages without access to a conventional bus service and those individuals without access to a private car.

## RAIL SERVICES

We continue to work with Network Rail to deliver additional capacity through the Ely area for the benefit of passenger and freight services. The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) project will help to deliver additional rail services, including to Cambridge, Kings Lynn, Peterborough, and Ipswich, and provide the capacity for any future services to Wisbech. The scheme should ensure more reliable journeys for all passengers whilst providing additional capacity for freight services between Felixstowe and Nuneaton, hence reducing the need for freight to be transported by heavy goods vehicles along the A14.

The benefits brought about by the implementation of the EACE will be maximised by the double (twin) tracking of the Ely to Soham route. These two schemes will provide much-needed additional capacity, create new journey opportunities, and deliver faster, more frequent rail journeys for passengers, whilst maintaining highway access for residents and businesses in Queen Adelaide. These schemes form part of a rail package for the area that also includes the Snailwell Loop and Dullingham Loop. Improvements to the Snailwell Loop will provide rail passengers from Soham with a direct route to Cambridge, while the Dullingham Loop and surrounding infrastructure are required to enable two trains per hour between Ipswich and Cambridge, which would increase the number of passenger services calling at the Cambridgeshire stations of Dullingham and Kennett and Newmarket.

Together with improvements to our rail network, we will explore how these services can be better integrated to provide a seamless public transport network including improved timetabled connections, interchange facilities and common ticketing. These improvements in delivering an integrated and high-quality public transport network, will ensure that it genuinely acts as an alternative to the private car, allowing everyone to easily access employment, education or key services elsewhere and thereby reduce social exclusion. We also recognise the importance, in terms of accessibility, of ensuring public transport fares are affordable, so we will work with bus and train operators, as well as Local Authority partners to help deliver solutions for this.

It is important that parallel upgrades to the level crossings at Queen Adelaide be provided as part of the EACE scheme that will support the need to deliver additional rail services, while ensuring that road network access for residents and businesses in Prickwillow, Queen Adelaide and North Ely is maintained. The project must ensure full road access through Queen Adelaide as an integral part of the rail improvement scheme. EACE has already been subjected to initial public consultation. Subject to funding, a final round of public consultation will commence in 2023, before a Transport and Works Act Order is sought prior to its submission to the Secretary of State, currently proposed for 2024.



## PARK & RIDE PROVISION

It is recognised that in a predominantly rural area, it will sometimes not be practical for people to complete their entire journey by active travel modes or by using public transport provision. Park & Ride can help to reduce the number of vehicles - and their associated impacts on the environment and congestion - entering Cambridge by intercepting vehicles before they get into the congested city centre. New Park & Ride provision on the A10 corridor at Waterbeach will be investigated as this would provide a convenient link to central Cambridge and the North East Cambridge area. This could alongside the possible relocation of the Newmarket Road Park & Ride site increase the capacity of the offer to the north and east of the city.

## HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

East Cambridgeshire, reflecting its rural geography and the lack of an integrated high-quality public transport and active travel network, at present is heavily reliant on its highway network, particularly to travel between and within its towns, villages, and hamlets. Population growth, combined with increased long-distance commuting and a successful local economy, means that investment in tackling key 'pinch points' across the network is required. This, alongside funding for sustainable transport, is required to reduce congestion, improve journey time reliability, and address the underlying safety and health concerns.

Capacity is most constrained on the A10 that links Littleport, Ely and Waterbeach to Cambridge. This route suffers from peak-time congestion that adversely impacts on all modes, as well as having a poor road safety record. We will prioritise investment to improve journey time reliability for drivers and freight movements and address safety issues for all modes along this corridor, particularly in relation to junctions and road capacity. In addition, we will look to provide for an improved environment for active travel users and horse riders including the investigation of a new high-quality segregated off-road facility for the length of the A10 between Ely to Cambridge. In addition, work will start on a A142 capacity study where we will work with partners to assess and develop potential solutions to the A14/142 junction and Junction 38.

## CARBON

Continued support for electric vehicles will ensure we deliver the aims and objectives of the *East Anglian Alternative Fuels Strategy* and ultimately help us to reduce carbon emissions thereby ensuring we continue our drive towards net zero. Focus going forward will be on the Electric Vehicle infrastructure and supporting Electric Vehicle charging points in our rural areas.

Also, noting the Park & Ride provision described above form part of the GCP's City Access proposals and will help to limit the impacts on Cambridge of car-based trips originating in East Cambridgeshire, by intercepting more of these trips before they reach the city. This is an option to aid reducing carbon emissions, assisting in our fight against climate change and ensuring that we meet the stated ambition of a 15% reduction in car mileage.

# STRATEGIC PROJECTS

## NORTH / SOUTH

The A10 and the parallel Cambridge to Kings Lynn railway line form the main transport links between Ely and Cambridge. They enable travel between Fenland, East Cambridgeshire, West Norfolk, and Cambridge, and directly serve key centres on the northern fringe of Cambridge and on the routes themselves. The Cambridge Science Park and neighbouring innovation centres and business parks on the northern fringe of Cambridge are home to an exceptionally high-performing cluster of high-tech and knowledge-based businesses. Because of their position linking these employment sites to residential areas in Ely and beyond, the road and rail links are in high demand and therefore very busy, particularly at peak times when there is extensive congestion.





The A10 Ely to Cambridge Improvement project includes a package of transport measures and options designed to address these challenges, with the longer-term aspiration of reducing congestion, and therefore improving the efficiency and performance of the A10 between Ely and Cambridge for all modes of travel, whilst not detracting from achieving our climate change and net zero aspirations.

Improvements to the highway network through a series of enhancements to junctions, such as to the A142/Lancaster Way roundabout and the A142/A10 'BP' roundabouts, will help to support employment development; for example, at the Grovemere and Lancaster Way Business Parks. As part of these works a feasibility study will be continued to deliver the cycle/pedestrian crossing over the A10 near to the BP roundabout in order to make the active travel option attractive. These improvements will provide a safe route for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians, helping to provide attractive alternatives to the private car. Some of improvements to the Lancaster Way and the 'BP' roundabout have already been delivered on an 'interim' basis, whilst further investigations are undertaken to understand how best to deliver a longer-term solution.

East Cambridgeshire District Council at the present time, do not support the GCP's 'Making Connections' proposals.

## EAST / WEST

We will continue to work with Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk Council to investigate potential options for junction improvements at Exning, Junction 37, where the A142 from Soham and Ely meets the heavily congested A14, and at Junction 38, where the A14 and A11 (towards Norwich) converge. The congestion at these pinch points is not only a safety concern but also has knock-on impacts on journey time reliability.

Also noting the Lancaster Way business park is a key employment site, further work will continue to prioritise specific capacity and safety improvements to the A142 corridor, where a high proportion of fatal collisions remain a local concern.

# LOCAL PROJECTS

## ACTIVE TRAVEL IMPROVEMENTS

ECDC has recently adopted a key strategy related to walking and cycling. The ***East Cambridgeshire Cycling and Walking Routes Strategy*** identifies new active travel routes that will create better links to employment, learning, healthcare and wellbeing support, shopping, and leisure facilities. The networks of routes will be focused on and around public transport hubs and town centres, to make cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey. In addition, ECDC has recently commissioned Sustrans to produce feasibility studies for a number of new cycle routes and to complete the Wicken to Soham cycle route. These feasibility studies will give a better understanding of the factors that need to be considered to successfully deliver the package of refined cycle routes.

Supporting infrastructure such as cycle parking, adequate signage and promotion of existing routes are needed to encourage people to use active travel across the district.

Building on the success of the existing Ely Zipper bus service, the Ely Zipper (Sutton) would serve the villages of Sutton, Mepal, Witcham and Witchford and provide them with an hourly service into Ely to access the hospital, Ely Leisure Village and also to Ely Station and Market Street to connect to other public transport services. Buses would also call at the Lancaster Way Enterprise Zone and run early morning and evening services to enable commuting.

This service would support the CPCA's BSIP proposals by providing a regular bus service to those areas not on the CPCA core bus network. This bus service will deliver improved connectivity to public transport, improve links to employment areas, local shops and services and support better connected communities. A reduction in car use and congestion, will improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions, and deliver wider social and economic benefits to the areas it serves.



## ELY

By far the largest housing allocation within the district is planned for the north of Ely, with approximately 3,000 homes at the Church Commissioners site to the east of Lynn Road and the Endurance Estates site between Lynn Road and the A10. To support the sustainability of this development, enhance accessibility and reduce transport related emissions, bus services and pedestrian and cycle links will be provided to and from the development, ensuring access to Ely city centre and the railway station.

## SOHAM

Soham has also been allocated significant growth within the *Local Plan*, with 2,300 additional homes by 2031 concentrated on the southern and eastern edges of the town. Despite a population of more than 10,000, the public transport provision is now limited to infrequent rail and bus services.

Following the opening of a new railway station at Soham we will continue to lobby Network Rail for the doubling of the track and capacity between Ely, Soham, and Newmarket. This will include the rebuilding of the Snailwell Loop at Newmarket that is currently being explored for the longer-term which could support additional services, including direct to Newmarket and Cambridge. As part of the Market Town Funding the Soham to Wicken cycle path has been funded.

Connectivity with and to the new railway station in Soham will help to support new developments by making the town a more attractive place to live, improving public transport links and offering a real alternative to the private car for residents.

## LITTLEPORT

Littleport is a small market town but has experienced significant growth also and although it has a station, the bus services and walking and cycling need investment and improving.

