

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Consultation – Cambridge Ahead Response

Planning is fundamental to the future of the Cambridge city region, determining how and where development takes place. Planning decisions have a significant impact on economic growth as well as quality of life and affect all of the core areas of our work at Cambridge Ahead from housing to economic development, skills to transport. Engaging in planning policy is therefore an essential facet of our work towards a sustainable and inclusive future for the region.

From July-September 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government consulted on proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a set of wider planning policy proposals. The reforms are part of Government's efforts to enact its growth mission, and its promise to take a "[growth-focused approach to the planning system](#)".

This short note summarises the CA response to the consultation, which focuses on key issues most relevant to the Cambridge city region including the provision of infrastructure that meets the needs of local communities, responding to high levels of growth, and effectively planning across administrative boundaries and functions.

The key messages of the CA response are:

- We support the reintroduction of mandatory housing targets, which provide an important baseline incentive for local authorities to plan to deliver the necessary level of housebuilding
- Within this context, local authorities should retain the flexibility to analyse local growth trajectories to meet their unique challenges in high-growth areas like Cambridge – an employment-led approach to assessing housing need has led to a higher level of ambition than the proposed revised Method in the area's emerging Local Plan
- There is a growing imperative to address the Cambridge city region's wide ranging 'Infrastructure Gap'. This covers a broad definition of 'infrastructures' including housing, transport, water and energy as well as education, healthcare, community and green spaces.
- Addressing this Infrastructure Gap would bring significant benefits both in terms of quality of life and contribution towards the Government's growth mission
- Strategic spatial planning serving the functional economic area of Cambridge and across administrative boundaries is essential to addressing the Infrastructure Gap, strengthening quality of life, and unlocking the region's full potential
- Alignment between planning and any future approach to economic growth, including the expected Industrial Strategy, is needed to help meet the needs of priority sectors
- There is a long-term need to improve the capacity and pace of the planning system, which is partly caused by chronic underfunding of local government
- Planning policy should encourage greater flexibility of types and tenures of genuinely affordable housing, especially focused on meeting the needs of underserved groups such as young people
- High quality densification has the potential to increase the viability of public services and transport in fast-growing areas like Cambridge
- Cambridge is an area that can deliver, both by making a significant contribution to the Government's growth mission and by effectively enacting progressive policies