

Why a Greater Cambridge Development Corporation is needed

1 What do you think about the current delivery of infrastructure and homes in Greater Cambridge?

Often housing development runs ahead of necessary infrastructure. There are many examples, but in our area major retirement provision in Stapleford and Shelford has gone ahead without for example noticeable increase in GP provision.

At present most buildings are not constructed sustainably, eg with effective insulation, grey water recycling

We need more affordable, social and council housing. Cambridge is a very unequal city with a lot of poverty.

2 What do you think about the proposal to create a centrally-led urban development corporation (UDC) in Greater Cambridge?

Too many layers of governance. We are just about to have a major reorganisation to merge District and County Councils. And we already have a successful Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service. If more resources are needed they should go to existing or already planned bodies.

3 What matters most to you about the future of Greater Cambridge?

That it should be physically sustainable (adequate jobs, housing, water, green space) and a pleasant environment in which to live, and where governance is democratically accountable to its citizens.

4 Do you have any views on the objectives of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation, as set out in the consultation document?

We disagree with your basic tenet that "Sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people" (Ministerial foreword). There are many reasons why this is not the case; in fact growth, particularly rapid growth, often leads to unequal distribution of wealth and degradation of the environment, and can cause many of the problems you hope to solve. (Rather like the opening of new roads to alleviate congestion simply leading to greater numbers of vehicles.) Rapid growth locally has already led to a noticeable perception of over-population: more traffic congestion, and degradation of the roads profoundly compromising safety and ease of travel. This is constantly exacerbated by construction works during new developments. And there is huge pressure on our natural environment from a recreational sense too: people

and dogs visiting our remaining important landscape areas such as ancient woodland and chalk grassland, such as the Magog Down in Stapleford.
Other objectives sound good, but not if just as adjuncts to the growth agenda. We need to improve life for people already here, not attract greater numbers.

Proposed boundary of the Development Corporation

5 What do you think about the proposed boundary of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation, as set out in Annex B of the consultation document?

Boundaries are always difficult to draw. This is necessarily a compromise; no strong views since we do not support the creation of the GCDC in the first place!

Powers and functions

6. What do you think about the phased approach we have proposed in regard to plan making powers?

Planning is the responsibility of local councils. We already have a successful Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service. If more resources are needed they should go to existing or already planned bodies. The proposed GCDC would be given too much power, and with limited accountability to local citizens.

7 What do you think about the proposals to give the Development Corporation plan making powers as set out in the consultation document?

We are concerned that the DC may supersede the democratically agreed Cambridge Local Plans.

We already have a successful Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service. If more resources are needed they should go to existing or already planned bodies.

8 What do you think about the proposals to give the Development Corporation powers to determine planning applications as set out in the consultation document?

Planning is the responsibility of local councils. We already have a successful Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service. If more resources are needed they should go to existing or already planned bodies.

We are wary of terms such as 'consult' 'consider' and 'appropriate' - they can easily be exploited.

9 Do you agree with using thresholds for the Development Corporation taking decision making powers? Which minimum thresholds for determining planning applications do you think are appropriate?

Planning is the responsibility of local councils. The funds, and any additional powers this corporation would be given, should instead be made available to local councils.

We already have a successful Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service. The proposed GCDC would be given too much power, and with limited accountability to local citizens.

If the GCDC were created, the use of thresholds seems sensible. Planning criteria should include sustainability (eg use of recycled materials in building, water conservation, attention to climate change); focus on affordable housing; environmental improvement eg provision of green and recreational space.

10 Do you have any other views on the proposed approach to the Development Corporation's powers and functions?

We are concerned that this body will apparently have considerable powers, and will be using them in favour of a goal (rapid growth) that we do not agree with.

Governance

11 What do you think about proposed local representation on the Development Corporation board, as set out in the consultation document?

There is no detail about voting rights. It is unclear whether the 4 democratically-elected leaders mentioned will be included within the 5 members appointed by the Secretary of State, or in addition. If the latter the elected members will be in a minority. If the former, they will almost certainly be in a minority, unless other democratically elected members than those specified (eg other councillors) are also invited.

12 What do you think about the board having expertise in areas such as planning, property development, design, environment, finance, and infrastructure delivery?

Expertise is important. Priority should be given to experts who will prioritise environmental and sustainable considerations and who have in-depth local knowledge.

Public Sector Equality Duty

13 Do you have any views on the impacts of the above proposals for anyone with a relevant protected characteristic?

No

14 If so, please explain who, which groups, including those with protected characteristics, may be impacted and how.

No comment.

15 Is there anything that could be done to maximise benefits or address any concerns you have identified?

Scrap the rapid growth goal.

Focus on

- environmental sustainability
- raising the living standards of less well-off residents, for example by investing in sustainably built council houses and affordable homes

Organisation

If you're responding on behalf of an organisation, please provide the organisation's name and the contact details of a nominated contact.

Please provide details here:

2G3S (Going Green in the Shelfords, Stapleford and Sawston) is a non party-political environmental group set up in 2015.