



Appendix 5

East Cambridgeshire survey results



Local Government Reorganisation

All survey analysis for East Cambs

November 2025



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

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Executive summary

- East Cambridgeshire District Council has now undertaken three separate sets of engagement relating to Local Government Reorganisation. Overall, there have been 1,818 responses from people in East Cambridgeshire
 - Engagement 1: An initial survey of East Cambs residents
 - Engagement 2: A county wide public survey
 - Engagement 3: A survey on Option B

The findings typically show:

- There is a very strong appreciation of the services East Cambs provides, and a strong fear this will be lost under LGR. Residents particularly value low tax and responsive services
- Overall residents have a negative association with LGR and a feeling this is something that is being done to people rather than anything they have a choice in

Cont.



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Executive summary cont.

- The district is divided on which option they prefer. While there is a growing acceptance of Option B, people who do want Option B see it as the lesser of two evils, rather than something they aspire to
- People who are endorsing Option B want to preserve local identity/ character and are worried about loss of control and identity under Option A
- People who are endorsing Option A are doing so because they do not have anything in common with Peterborough and want alignment with Cambridge benefits (prosperity, jobs, hospitals). They want to maintain the positive relationship East Cambs has with Cambridge
- There are high levels of fear / anxiety associated with LGR and low levels of hope/optimism
- People are sceptical about the surveys generally and feel there is a lot of political bias associated with them



Engagement 1:

Survey East Cambs residents



Key data findings

The full survey analysis can be [found here](#). Overall the survey was completed by 890 people.

The areas which people felt most strongly about were:

- having local councillors who understands and knows the local area (93% said it was very important)
- giving local communities a say in how much housing development takes place and where it goes (93% answered “yes” to a yes / no question)
- maintaining financial stability (89% said it was very important)
- helping to create safer environments (85% said it was very important)
- having a councillor who is elected from a broad range of ordinary people (82% said it was very important)



Key data findings cont.

The areas which people felt least strongly about – but still felt strongly - were:

- supporting community initiatives (53% said it was very important)
- maintaining sustainable housing growth (59% said it was very important)
- supporting environmental initiatives, such as planting trees and helping hedgehogs (59% said it was very important)
- championing sustainable travel (63% said it was very important)

Location

- people were split between whether they looked towards Cambridge (53%) or kept their focus within the district (44%) when it came to work, socialising, or shopping. Only 1% said they looked towards Peterborough and 2% referenced Cambridge and Peterborough



Review of comments

- 78% do not support the idea of councils merging (8% do and 14% are not sure).
- 93% felt it was very important to have access to a local councillor
- 92% would like to be engaged more on the issue



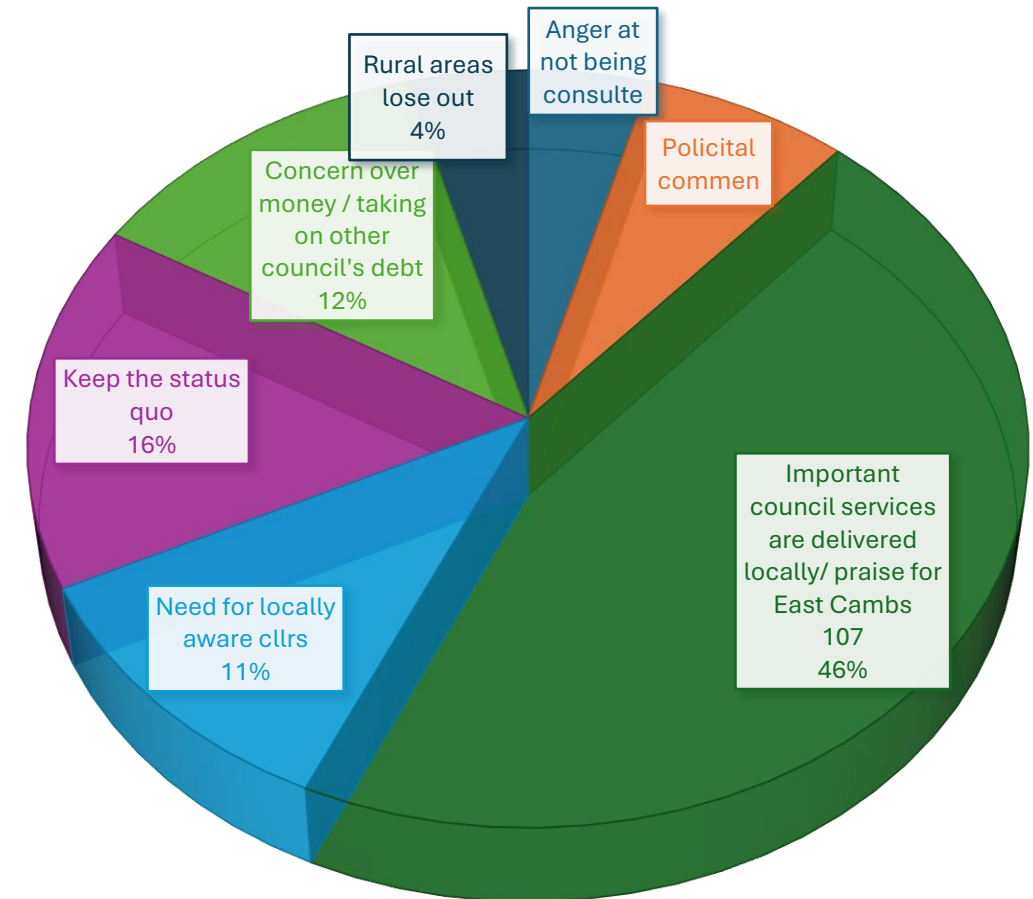
ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS

304 people choose to make an additional comment. An analysis of the sentiment of these comments show:

72% expressing deep concern, anger, or fear about losing local representation, worsening services, and political motives

There is strong pride and attachment associated with East Cambridgeshire District Council

There was a general feeling that if LGR does happen then residents would more strongly align with Cambridge connection *“if it must happen, choose the lesser evil.”*



Engagement 2: County wide survey – analysis of feedback from East Cambs residents



Overview

Public and stakeholder surveys recently ran across the whole county for a six-week period, closing before the end of July. More than 3,000 surveys were completed, and online focus groups also took place.

The full results analysis can be found here:

- [Public engagement questionnaire results \(PDF, 5.03MB\)](#)
- [Stakeholder engagement questionnaire results \(PDF, 346.2KB\)](#)
- [Focus groups results \(PDF, 383.72KB\)](#)

This document focuses on the 679 responses from people based in East Cambridgeshire. Of these 317 chose to add an additional comment.



Summary of survey data findings relevant to East Cambs

- 82% of people from East Cambridgeshire said they were very concerned about being overlooked in Local Government Reorganisation
- East Cambs residents had the highest satisfaction rate with services (63 percent compared with 45% average in the other areas)
- East Cambs residents had the strongest sense of community (76% compared to 62% average in the other areas)
- East Cambs residents thought they had the best value for money when it came to Council Tax (52% compared with an average of 26% in other areas)
- And when it comes to the importance of protecting local identity 54% of people in East Cambs said this was important compared to 35% on average from the other councils
- Only 15% made a comment on geography
- 45% of residents run their lives inside East Cambs

Note the following pages do not take account of the focus groups or stakeholder surveys



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Analysis of comments for County-wide survey

Overall sentiment

Mostly negative with pockets of conditional positivity

Negative sentiment

The negative tone is driven by worries about:

- loss of local identity and representation
- fears of unfair funding or debt-sharing “we are the only council in the black and they want us to bail out others”
- declining rural services – losing village identity, “small is beautiful,” worried about having no say
- distrust of central government motives
- concern about being attached to Peterborough/ Fenland – Residents say there is no cultural, social or economic alignment, and they are worried about worse services and higher taxes
- risks to health, social care, planning, and infrastructure – too many houses and pressure on schools, health services and roads



Analysis of comments for County Survey cont.

Positive sentiment

- hope for protection of East Cambs' strengths
- hope of a Cambridge- aligned authority – people see benefits in transport integration, economic growth, science and tech centre alignment, shared identity, easier travel to services, protecting existing service quality
- hope for simplified systems, but not impersonal ones



Engagement 3: Option B survey



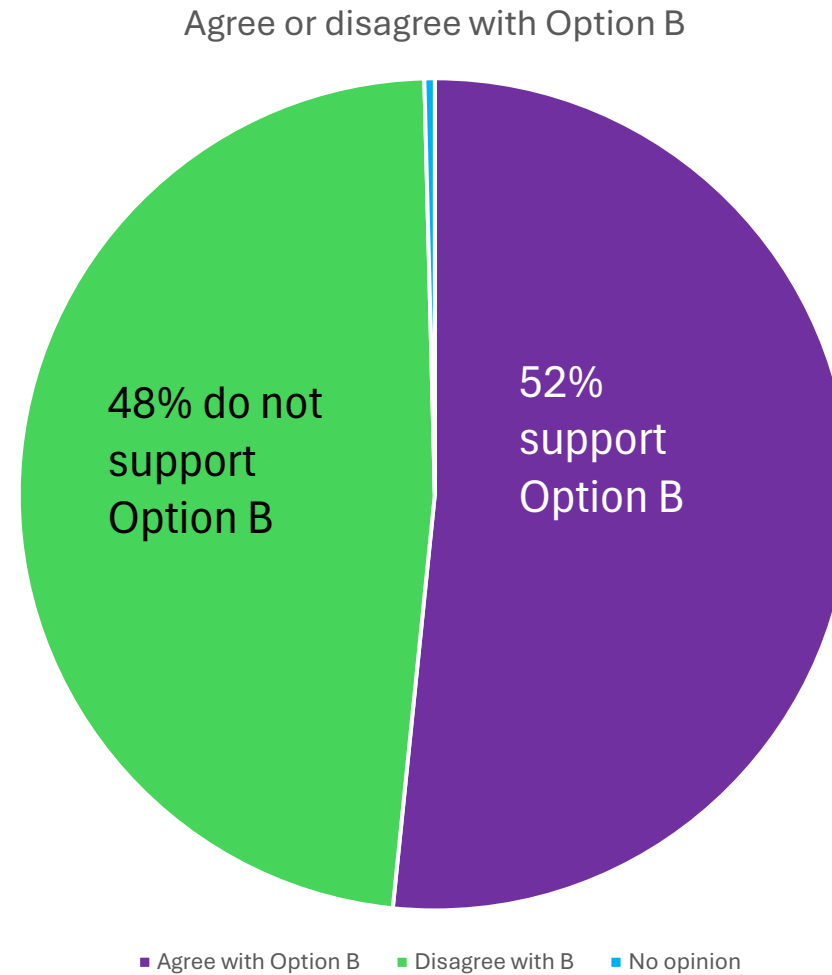
Engagement 3: Option B survey

- East Cambridgeshire District Council recognises many people in the district are nervous of Option B and supportive of Option A
- To help inform the public more about Option B, the council ran an “Option B for Me” campaign. This comprised of press releases, a PowerPoint presentation for parish councils and stakeholders, web text and social media posts with the aim of informing people of the benefits of Option B and potential disbenefits of Option A
- The culmination of this campaign was a survey which asked residents how much they agreed or disagreed with Option B
- The survey was open to the public between 29 September and 19 October 2025. The majority of respondents completed the survey online, however, paper copies were available in the council’s reception area and were provided on request
- In total 249 people completed the survey



How people voted

The split between people who support Option B and those who do not is very close (52% are in favour and 48% are against)



What the survey tells us

- The split between people who support Option B and those who do not is very close (52% are in favour and 48% are against)
- The fact 60% chose to comment shows people were passionate about the topic
- Analysis of the comments of those who support Option B are doing so out of anger, distrust, frustration, and concern about proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), rather than through a positive endorsement of Option B. In summary they do not want Local Government Reorganisation in the first place and see Option B as damage limitation
- Analysis of the comments of those who do not support Option B show people are strongly negative toward Option B and predominantly positive toward Option A — with a smaller minority expressing negative or neutral views about any change at all
- People are not just choosing between A and B — they're reacting emotionally to a sense of threat to identity, democratic fairness and quality of life



Analysis of comments from the public survey

Sentiment Category	Approx. Proportion	Description
Negative	~65%	Strong frustration, anger or mistrust about the process, political motives, or proposed reorganisations
Positive	~20%	Either supportive of Option A (alignment with Cambridge) or Option B (alignment with rural areas) when seen as beneficial for community identity or services
Neutral / Analytical	~15%	Comments offering reasoning, analysis, or conditional support (“if managed properly”).



Review of public comments

- **Overall sentiment:** Moderately negative (weighted average sentiment ≈ -0.4 on a -1 to $+1$ scale)
- **Dominant emotional undertone:** *Frustration + fear of misrepresentation*

Negative sentiment drivers

- 1. Distrust in motives** — strong belief that the reorganisation is politically motivated
- 2. Loss of identity and local voice** — fear of being “swallowed up” by larger urban areas
- 3. Financial anxiety** — debt, higher council tax, and cross-subsidising poorer areas
- 4. Infrastructure neglect** — especially transport and rural service provision

Positive sentiment drivers

- 1. Cultural and economic alignment with Cambridge** — jobs, schools, healthcare, commuting
- 2. Hope for better investment** — infrastructure, transport, housing
- 3. Desire for efficiency and modernisation** — fewer layers of bureaucracy, stronger governance
- 4. Rural protection (for some)** — those supporting Option B value preserving rural character



Comments in support of Option B

- Option B is obviously the best choice for all of us.
- This is the best option for East Cambs... I would rather not be in with Peterborough as we have nothing in common with them and then have huge debts.. However, we do not want to be with Cambridge or South Cambs due to the political make up and track record of the county council regarding ECDC and once again they have huge debts... Best Option is to leave ECDC alone as we are a well run council area..
- It appears to me to be the common sense option to protect and best serve the interests of the East Cambs residents
- I want to have local access to services in Ely not in Cambridge or Peterborough so Option B is best
- The thought of being associated with Cambridge City and South Cambridge fills me with horror. The fact that it would produce the biggest Council Tax rise for me is a significant factor against that option and the fact that a 4-day week is the norm for those who would control our workforce is unthinkable
- Need less house building so anything to avoid Cambridge
- I believe Option B gives the best chance for rural communities to have a stronger say on how the future looks for them. Central Cambridge should not be the controlling voice for rural communities.



Analysis of comments from people who support Option B

Overall negative sentiment (dominant tone)

Most comments express anger, distrust, frustration, and concern about proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), Option A / association with Cambridge:

- **Loss of local control and identity**
“We must keep our identity and uniqueness and not become Cambridge overspill.”
“This is an attack on local democracy.”
“Keep us away from GCP.”
- **Distrust of Cambridge/South Cambs leadership and debt**
“We will be saddled with its debt.”
“Cambridge has a poor track record with budgets and spending.”
“Why should we take on any of this recklessly incurred liability?”
- **Concern of being ignored or overshadowed**
“East Cambs residents will be overlooked and ignored.”
“Our voices will be drowned out by the enormous Cambridge needs.”
- **Anger at government imposition and waste**
“Stop wasting our money!”
“It is nothing short of outrageous that the government is pushing through this reorganisation.”

Positive / hopeful

Some comments show optimism — mainly about preserving local voice and rural representation under Option B:

“Option B would retain all that is great about East Cambridgeshire.”

“It appears to be the common-sense option to protect East Cambs residents.”

“Option B keeps councils together with rural interests.”

Mixed / conditional sentiment

Some comments accept that change may be inevitable but prefer Option B as the lesser evil:

- **Option B seen as “best of bad choices”**
“If things can’t remain, this seems the best alternative.”
“Of the options presented, Option B is far better than Option A.”



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Comments from people who do not support Option B

- Cambridge is the place that feels like the local centre of gravity and with which I feel the most connection. Peterborough feels remote and irrelevant. Why would choose to unite with a place I feel no connection with over a place I do feel connected to.
- It doesn't make sense to align with Peterborough/northern part of the county. It is too far away to have the interests of East Cambs and is not connected to the area.
- Option A makes much better sense. People (like me) in East Cambs look naturally to Cambridge as their near neighbour, especially for health care, rather than Peterborough which is twice the journey time away by rail and a very difficult road journey.
- This reorganisation is a missed opportunity to create sub-regional councils based around Cambridge and Peterborough based on travel to work areas. Whatever comes out will be something of a bodge.
- East Cambs should not be run from Peterborough. We need influence with our nearest neighbours.



Summary of concerns for people who do not want Option B

Concern of being forced into an unwanted merger (Option B)

Many comments show concern about being linked with Peterborough or Fenland.

“We have nothing in common with Peterborough.”

“Why would we want to be aligned with somewhere so far away?”

Underlying concerns:

- being pulled into an area that’s poorer, less connected, and less ambitious
- losing the economic and cultural advantages of being part of the Cambridge area

Concern of losing local identity and representation

Many residents worry their distinct local character and voice will be diluted or ignored under a bigger authority.

“Ely will be swallowed up.”

“Our voice won’t count.”

“We’ll be governed by people who don’t know this area.”

Underlying concerns:

- becoming just another small part of a remote bureaucracy
- local priorities (heritage, village life, planning) being sidelined

Concern about financial waste and bureaucratic chaos

Some comments express frustration that reorganisation means spending money on process, not on services.

“Why can’t we just stay as we are?”

“We don’t need another layer of government.”

Underlying concerns:

- council funds being wasted on LGR instead of real local needs
- disruption to how things currently work

Concern about political manipulation and dishonesty

People fear the exercise is rigged or pre-decided.

“This survey is biased.”

Underlying concerns:

- decisions are being made behind closed doors for political gain, not public benefit
- their feedback won’t actually matter



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What the combined surveys are telling us



Overview of what all the surveys are telling us:

Praise for East Cambs

Out of all the councils, East Cambs received the highest amount of praise from its residents

- East Cambs consistently outperformed the other councils in the county wide survey
- People appreciate sound financial management and low council tax
- People appreciate access to council services and councillors
- People are concerned they will somehow lose the positive attributes they associate with East Cambs
- Why can't we stay as we are come through very strongly



Overview of what all the surveys are telling us:

Option A v Option B

Option A received more positive endorsement in the first two surveys. This shifted to 52% support for Option B in the third survey highlighting people are becoming:

- More aware of the potential benefits of Option B
- More sceptical of Option A
- Overall though, residents attribute positive association with Cambridge and a negative association with Peterborough



Overview of what all the surveys are telling us:

Option B

While the shift is moving more towards support for Option B, those who are supporting it are more concerned about preserving what exists, rather than excitement about improvement. They see it as the lesser of two evils.

- Want to preserve local identity/ character
- Worried about loss of control and identity under Option A
- Distrust of Cambridge and South Cambs leadership and debt
- Fear of overdevelopment
- Loss of voice / overshadowed by Cambridge - Rural priorities being replaced by city growth targets.
- Hope for collaboration among like minded districts – preserving the rural voice
- Strong accessible local representation (councillors)



Overview of what all the surveys are telling us: Option A

People who are endorsing Option A are doing so because they see Option B as irrelevant, regressive and damaging to East Cambs' future

- They do not have anything in common with Peterborough
- Want alignment with Cambridge benefits (prosperity, jobs, hospitals)
- They feel a natural affinity with Cambridge – culture, transport, health, shopping, work and education
- They are worried about becoming a small part of a remote council



Overview of what all the surveys are telling us: Emotional response

Fear and anxiety

People's fears and anxieties are focused around the following

- Loss of identity/ local voice / being forgotten
- Higher council tax
- Inheriting debt from other authorities
- Cross-subsiding poorer areas
- Links to Peterborough will reduce services quality, access and investment

Cultural and geographical allegiances

- Pride and attachment to East Cambs
- Pride and attachment to Cambridge
- Concern and a feeling of no attachment to Peterborough
- Value rural allegiances, esp Hunts and Fenland

Hopes

- Better investment – infrastructure, transport, housing
- Strong “hopes” alignment with Cambridge
- Want to preserve local identity and voice
- Efficient joined-up services
- Transparency and honest governance
- Value for money
- Desire for efficiency and modernisation
- Protecting rural character

Political frustrations

- Strong belief that LGR decisions will be politically motivated
- Distrust for national government
- Politically biased consultations
- Concern the council won't listen anyway - tokenistic





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