



The right size to thrive, local enough to care

Simpler councils, stronger services

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough | Greater Cambridge



Foreword: A vision for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

As leaders from three distinct political traditions, we are united today by a shared conviction: that the future of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough must be built on stronger public services, a fairer and more resilient economy, and a model of local government that is fit for the decades ahead.

Local Government Reorganisation offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape our system so it works better for our residents, businesses, and communities.

We believe Option B provides the strongest foundation for that future.

Our region's potential and current challenges

Our region is remarkable. Cambridge is home to a world-leading innovation cluster of national strategic importance. Peterborough is one of the UK's most entrepreneurial cities. Our market towns and rural communities are vital contributors to the country's food security, advanced manufacturing, and environmental leadership.

However, our current arrangements - seven councils with overlapping responsibilities - are too complex and constrained to meet the challenges ahead. These include rising demand for social care, the need for major infrastructure and housing investment, and the national mission for growth that is dependent on our region's success.

Why Option B is the right solution

Option B offers a balanced, coherent, and future-focused solution. It creates two unitary councils of the right scale to deliver excellent services while remaining firmly rooted in local identity.

This reflects the economic reality of our region:

two complementary engines of growth, each capable of standing on solid financial and strategic foundations, and each contributing to the prosperity of the whole.

Option B provides the governance, stability and strategic clarity needed to unlock global investment and support sustainable expansion.

- **South:** The proposed Greater Cambridge unitary aligns directly with the government's ambitions for a world-leading science, technology, and innovation powerhouse. The new council could focus on the specific demands of this high-growth economy: housing delivery, skills, infrastructure, and global competitiveness.
- **North:** The North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unitary has the scale and resilience to protect essential services, particularly in areas with higher levels of vulnerability and need. By combining the industrial and logistics strength of Peterborough with the agricultural and manufacturing base of the Fens and the market towns of Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire, the new council can strengthen its economy and reinvest in public services where they are needed most.

Shared prosperity and financial resilience

Together, these two councils create the conditions for a virtuous circle: coherent economies generating stable tax bases, financially resilient councils able to invest in prevention and high-quality services, and healthier, more vibrant communities that, in turn, support growth, now and into the future. This is how we ensure that opportunity is shared across every community, not just those that are already thriving.

Our solution uniquely delivers a region of two economic equals, is shaped to deliver growth, offers projected £42.8 million in savings with a pay-back period of just four years, creates the right scale for sustainable public services, and



Runners taking part in Peterborough's Great Eastern Run



The River Nene passing through Wisbech

commits to local area working built on flexible, resident-led engagement.

Alternative proposals create significant imbalance or lack the financial resilience required for the long term. They would either place too much statutory service need in one part of the region, form councils without the necessary scale, or lead to higher implementation costs and weaker outcomes for key public services.

Option B best meets the government's tests for financial sustainability, economic coherence, and democratic accountability, making it the fairest and most deliverable option for every part of our region.

Commitment to collaboration

We have engaged in this process with an open mind and a spirit of collaboration, with six of the seven councils contributing to the development of this proposal.

We have listened carefully to residents and stakeholders. People want simpler access to services, leadership that understands local places, public money spent wisely, and investment in fundamentals like health, transport, community

facilities, and affordable homes. They also want reassurance that both rural and urban voices will be heard. Option B answers those concerns.

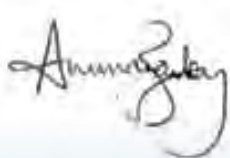
Despite our political differences, we agree that the wellbeing of our communities comes before party lines. We are committed to working together and with our residents and partners to co-design our new unitary authorities.

Option B is not just a proposal for new structures; it is a long-term pathway to stronger services, fairer outcomes, and shared prosperity across the whole region.

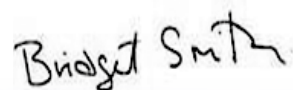
It is a proposal for confidence, ambition, and pride in our incredible region that is so important to the success of the nation.



Councillor Cameron Holloway
Leader, Cambridge City Council



Councillor Anna Bailey
Leader, East Cambridgeshire District Council



Councillor Bridget Smith
Leader, South Cambridgeshire District Council



Market Square in Huntingdon



The village of Harston, South Cambridgeshire

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Executive summary

Context

In December 2024, the government launched the White Paper on English Devolution. It asked areas with two-tiers of councils, like Cambridgeshire, to create fewer, single-tier unitary councils. Peterborough was included because it is a relatively small unitary council with fragile finances.

Local government arrangements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are amongst the most complex in England: seven councils, four different types - city, district, unitary and county; a Mayoral Combined Authority; and the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Our councils all face financial challenges, and rising demand for social care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and affordable homes. The government views reorganisation as a once in a generation reform to establish stronger councils equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and empower communities.

All Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils have been working collaboratively on Local Government Reorganisation.

While consensus has not been achieved on a single proposal to present to government, Option B has been worked on collaboratively by three councils and therefore has the most support of the remaining options.

Five options for reorganisation have been considered, known as options A, B, C, D and E.

While this document contains several references to option C, which has been developed and discussed locally, it has not been submitted by any Cambridgeshire council as a preferred option.

However, we felt it important to leave references to option C in our proposal to demonstrate how it was included in our analysis.



Artistic flair in Ramsey by artist Si Mitchell



The Whittlesey Festival in 2025

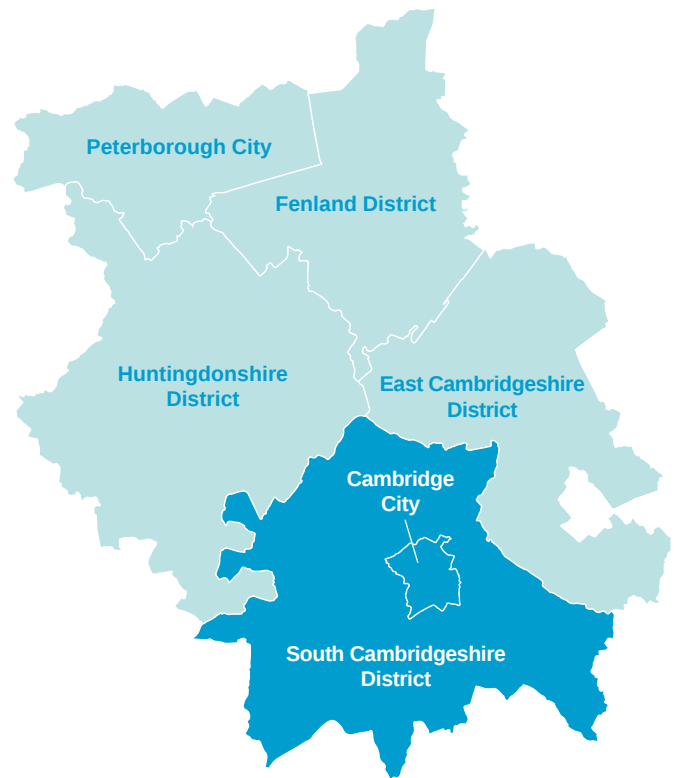
Option B

Option B replaces the seven existing councils with two financially resilient unitary councils that have similar sized and complementary economies.

Each unitary council will have unique strengths and differing local needs. Each requires distinct strategies to deliver services that will improve outcomes for local communities.

Working in partnership with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, each council can work together to accelerate growth, fund excellent public services, unlock housing capacity and overcome our region's challenges.

The right size to thrive, and local enough to care: simpler councils, stronger services.



North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

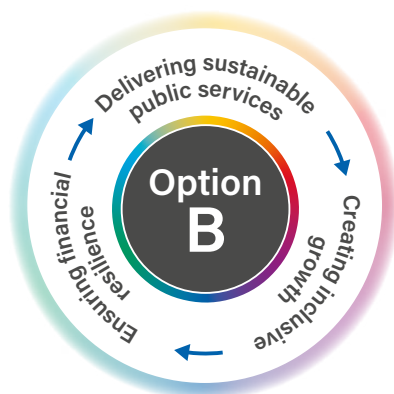
A new unitary council serving 612,000 people, comprising Peterborough, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, and elements of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Improved financial resilience means our councils can invest more in growth initiatives and high-quality services that deliver better outcomes for our residents, businesses, communities and visitors.

Greater Cambridge

A new unitary council serving 322,000 people, comprising Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and elements of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Option B will create a 'virtuous circle' by playing to each council's economic strengths, we can maximise our growth potential and deliver excellent public services.



Increased economic growth will expand each council's tax base, strengthening their budgets and financial resilience.



Feedback from residents

Residents are open to change. Their support for reorganisation is conditional on new councils delivering tangible improvements: simpler access, greater responsiveness and investment in frontline services.

Residents want diverse local identities to be respected and would prefer new councils to take a locality or place-based approach to service delivery.

Local partners tended to emphasise the importance of maintaining continuity of service provision during reorganisation as well as the reform leading to sound council finances.



When asked if they supported option B, 63.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and 29% did not.

Feedback from the public and businesses about unitary council priorities

Operational focus

- Improving council services
- Better responsiveness
- Councillors with good local knowledge

Future investment

- Health infrastructure
- Transport and connectivity
- Community facilities

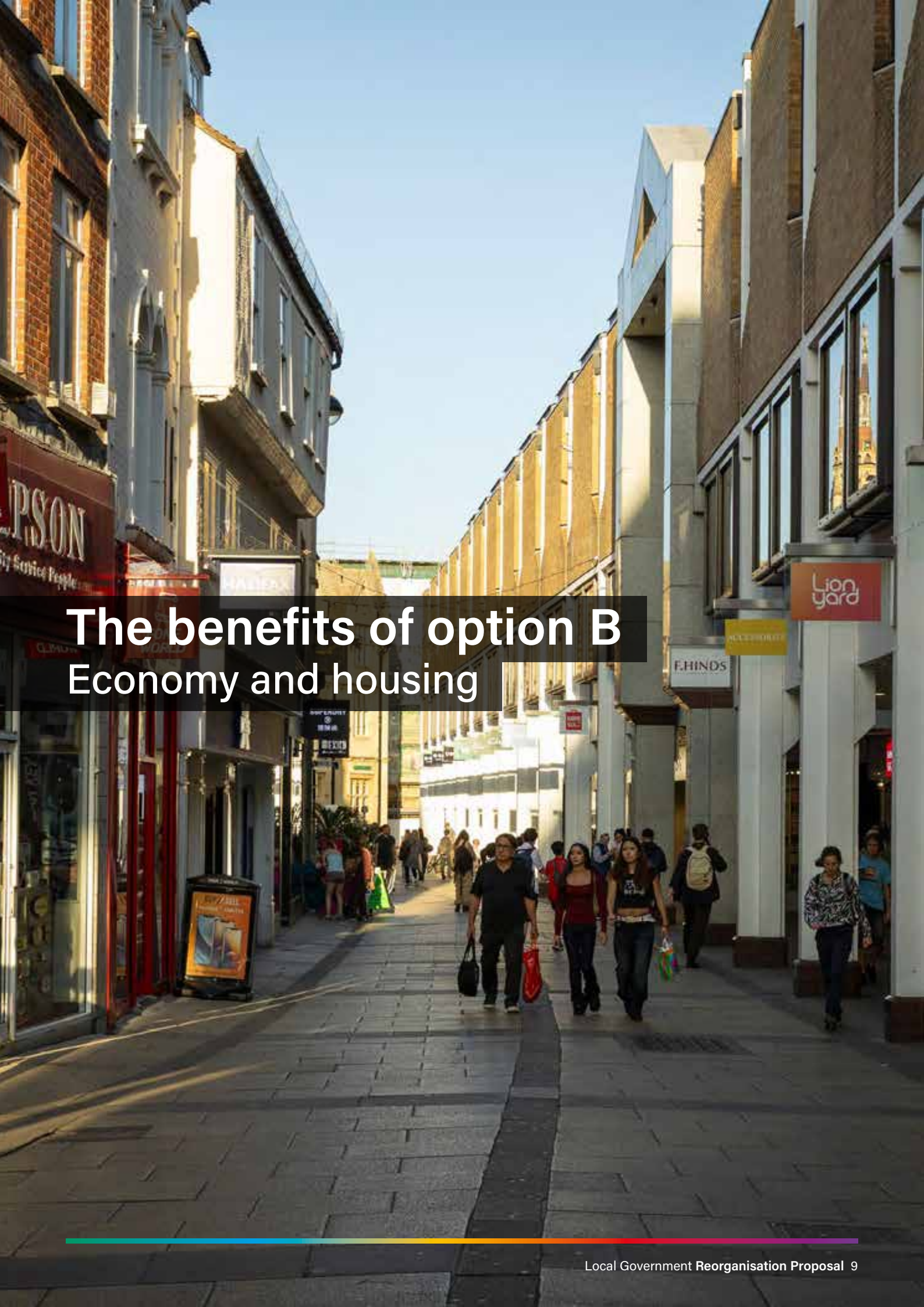
The case for two new unitary councils

- Single unitary council: not legally possible within an existing Mayoral Combined Authority area.
- Two unitary councils: independently assessed as the most financially sustainable over the long-term.
- Three unitary councils: independently assessed as being too costly to implement and not financially sustainable, leading to worse outcomes for our residents.

Comparison against government criteria

Option B performs best when measured against the government's key criteria for Local Government Reorganisation.

Government criteria for reorganisation	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E
Economy and housing	3	5	3	2	2
Financial resilience	3	4	2	1	1
Sustainable Public Services	4	4	3	2	2
Collaboration	3	4	3	2	3
Devolution	4	4	4	4	4
Democracy and engagement	4	4	4	4	4
Overall (out of 30)	21	25	19	16	16



The benefits of option B

Economy and housing

Shoppers and traders at Ely Market



The benefits of B: Economy and housing

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has one of the most important regional economies in the UK. We make a significant contribution to UK GDP (1.4%), innovation, and international competitiveness.

Our proposal meets the government's criteria for sensible and equitable economic areas. Both councils will have distinct but complementary strengths; high growth prospects that support strong tax bases and financial resilience; and streamlined governance that accelerates housing delivery.



Benefit 1

A sensible balance built on the region's functional economic areas, which creates two councils of national economic significance without undue advantage for one area.

Option B achieves the best economic balance for the region - North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough £20bn (GDP, 2023 ONS latest estimates) and Greater Cambridge £17bn. Both

councils would be ranked in the top 20 by economic size in the UK (excluding London).

Both councils reflect the realities of the region's functional economic areas.

The geography of each new unitary builds upon established labour and housing markets, and consumer spending patterns. A very high proportion - around 88% - of working residents will live and work within their new council area, which government guidance suggests is ideally suited to being a key characteristic of unitary councils.

Both councils will have national influence and contribute equally to the region's economic coordination via the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). Option B is the most future-proof of the three options; offers better long-term viability than option A (and C); and is better positioned for future needs than option A (and C).

Over time Greater Cambridge's economy will grow more rapidly than North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's, but the gap between the two economies would be far greater in Options A and C.

- **Option B in 2040:** Greater Cambridge's economy will be 10% larger than North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's.
- **Option A in 2040:** the southern unitary council's economy will be nearly 50% larger than the northern unitary council's.
- **Option C in 2040:** the southern unitary council's economy will be 100% larger than the northern unitary council's.

Overall, option B is the most balanced outcome. Options A and C struggle to meet the government's criteria as one council would have an undue economic and fiscal advantage over the other.



New homes at Cambourne



Benefit 2

Two economies with distinct and complementary strengths to support the region's growth ambitions.

Option B creates two councils representing distinct economic areas with complementary strengths and the scale to attract national and international investment.

The proposal pairs North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - a nationally significant industrial powerhouse that has expansive agriculture and production facilities; with Europe's leading knowledge intensive innovation cluster centred in Greater Cambridge.

Both economies are interconnected, providing spillover benefits to each other and beyond. These complementary strengths can facilitate mutual interdependence rather than competition to support the region's shared prosperity.

Each area contributes in different ways to the region's economic punch. Each council can focus on and develop its core economic advantages and potential.

This will enable a clearer prioritisation of key sectors in the National Industrial Strategy and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan.



Benefit 3

Two councils capable of maximizing the housing and infrastructure potential of the whole region sustainably.

Our proposal aligns new councils with housing markets, planned housing growth and infrastructure investment patterns. This will ensure sustainable development that supports economic objectives while meeting environmental targets.

The economic coherence and scale of the two councils will provide confidence for investors and remove cross boundary barriers to housing and commercial development.

As a large council, North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will be able to take a more strategic approach to its infrastructure and homebuilding

needs. This will also reduce the risk of the council being forced to choose between land for food or homes.

The Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan identifies need for around 77,000 new homes, and over 2 million square metres of commercial floor space.

The government has identified Greater Cambridge as a key growth area. Aligning a unitary council with a government-led Development Corporation will support the rapid housing, business and infrastructure development needed to meet the needs of its high-growth economy.

"The economic growth of Cambridge has been a phenomenal success and the city and its environs are home to the most intensive science and technological cluster in the world. Yet, Cambridge's continued position as a world-leading centre of innovation is dependent on tackling infrastructure deficiencies, commercial accessibility and housing affordability."

Matthew Pennycook, Minister of State for Housing and Planning (October 2025)

Students at Peterborough's Anglia Ruskin University



Ramsay, Huntingdonshire





The benefits of option B

Financial sustainability

Farming at West Watting



The benefits of option B: Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability is key to successful local government reorganisation and is one of the underlying principles driving our decision to make the case for option B. Councils need to balance their budgets if they are to meet rising demand, improve delivery of public services, grow their economies and deliver more housing.



Benefit 4

Substantial savings will be delivered - £42.8m in the base case and £57.3m in the stretch case - with a payback period by Year 4.

Rigorous financial modelling has been undertaken using real budget data assured by Chief Financial Officers from all Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils. The analysis demonstrates option B creates two financially resilient councils that can generate substantial and achievable savings.

Our **base-case scenario** projects total annual savings of £42.8m by 2032/33, achieved through reduced duplication, digital transformation, and preventative approaches that address demand at source rather than managing failure.

Our **stretch-case scenario** increases annual savings to £57.3m with more ambitious service transformation, deeper integration of social care and housing services, and enhanced productivity. This represents what is possible when councils have the right scale and capacity for their local needs to genuinely innovate.

The **£57m implementation investment** across both new councils achieves **full payback by 2031/32 – within four years of vesting day**. From that point forward, the savings compound year-on-year, delivering cumulative **net savings of £167.4m by 2035/36**. This is reorganisation that pays for itself and continues to deliver value for our communities.

Critically, these savings create fiscal headroom to invest in the improvements our residents deserve, rather than simply managing decline. Option B provides the financial foundation for councils that can thrive and deliver excellent services, not just survive.



Benefit 5

Balanced and equitable finances across both new councils providing a strong buffer to ensure local services can be funded in the future.

Option B is the most financially viable for the whole area through aligning economic geography with governance.

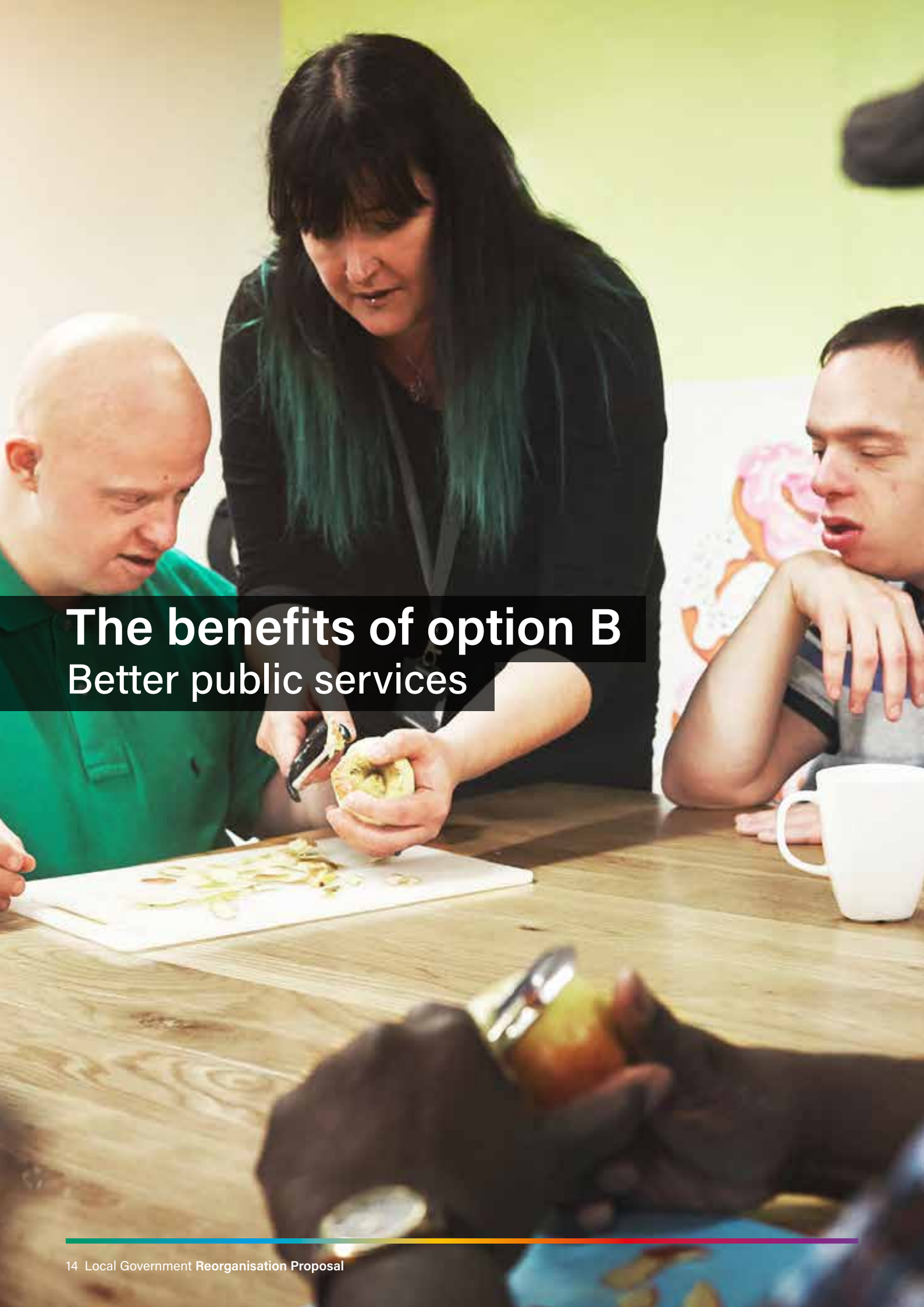
It ensures that the northern unitary has the scale and financial capacity to achieve long-term sustainability and address areas of high public service need.

The southern unitary benefits from a sound tax base that accompanies economic growth, allowing it to fund essential services and meet the needs of a rapidly growing population.

Option B creates two councils that perform best on key measures of financial sustainability:

- **Funding-to-budget ratio:** more funding available than budgets they inherit from existing councils, which creates financial certainty at the outset
- **Reserves:** most balanced split of combined reserves (approximately £200m to each) to manage unexpected spending pressures, meet the costs of volatile high-demand services and ensure continuity of provision
- **Debt:** the lowest level of debt gearing of all options - 38% in Greater Cambridge and 58% in North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Peterborough City Council has high debt gearing and below average council tax. If Peterborough becomes part of a larger unitary council the financial resilience of the whole region will improve, which is fairer and more sustainable for residents.

A woman with long dark hair is standing and peeling an apple with a peeler. She is looking down at the apple. To her left, a man with a shaved head and a green shirt is looking at the apple. To her right, a man with short dark hair is sitting at the table, looking at the apple. The table is wooden and has a white cutting board with apple peels on it. A white mug is on the table. The background is a plain wall.

The benefits of option B

Better public services



Benefit 6

Better financial resilience to future proof services for residents.

Our proposal will create two councils that are the right size to meet the rising costs of demand-led, statutory 'people services' (including adult social care, children's social care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and homelessness), which make the biggest call on council budgets.

Our existing children's services are 'inadequate' or 'require improvement'. Reorganising local government is an opportunity to deliver excellent children's services with the ambition to be outstanding.

While Greater Cambridge is smaller in population, it would be above the median size for councils that have Ofsted rated 'outstanding' children's services, and, it would have a higher forecast children's social care grant per child than several of those outstanding councils.

As a larger council, North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will have the financial scale needed to meet the higher levels of demand that exist in Peterborough and Fenland, particularly for adult social care and costly specialist services such as children's residential placements. This council will have the buying power where it is needed most to reshape care markets.



Benefit 7

Greater fairness and better outcomes for all residents.

Option B has the most equitable social needs distribution for key people services that are the priority for government. This means that Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will both have lower needs initially and over the long term than option A (and C).

Under option B the difference in the needs within each council's population are also narrower. All other options create greater inequality of social needs.

Option B separates higher-growth, lower-need Greater Cambridge from higher-need, predominantly rural North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This will support differentiated service strategies across distinct but complementary geographies. Specialisation means a better local offer, tailored to the needs of residents.

It will also allow clearer commissioning, workforce

planning and risk management strategies than option A (or C). Over time these comparative advantages could also improve the productivity and efficiency of the region's public services.

Each council is the right scale to work for the statutory social challenges it faces.



Benefit 8

Localised approach to service delivery with partners and communities that prioritises prevention and early intervention.

Option B will provide a platform for prevention and early-intervention, which will reduce costly crisis spending.

The new councils will join the national 'Test, Learn, Grow' programme to redesign services through a place-based approach. They will build on the preventative services already provided, use existing community centres and establish Best Start Family Hubs as the backbone of this approach.

Both new councils will adopt neighbourhood-based models of service delivery. This will enable them to begin the journey to genuinely integrate social care, education and health services with housing, community safety and the wide range of preventative services currently provided by district councils to meet residents' needs.

In North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in particular, a localised, 'patch-based' approach will help ensure that services meet the diverse needs of market towns, villages and rural communities across the area.



Benefit 9

Putting residents first when transforming services.

Our proposal will create two new unitary councils with statutory people services that are 'safe and legal' from day one.

Where cross-boundary collaboration offers better outcomes and value for money, the new councils will maintain or establish joint commissioning and cooperation arrangements.

We will create plans for public service reform during the transition period, so that the two new unitary councils can take forward transformation opportunities once they are established.

In addition to neighbourhood working, service integration and early intervention, these will also encompass co-designed services, whole-system approaches and digital transformation.



The benefits of option B

Local identity, democratic representation, and community engagement



Benefit 10

Delivering strong democratic accountability that respects our distinct historic identities.

Option B builds on historic identities and local governance arrangements that have developed across our region over a millennia.

The North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unitary mirrors the historic counties of Huntingdon, The Isle of Ely (including Fenland) and The Soke of Peterborough. The Greater Cambridge unitary reflects the smaller, historic County of Cambridge.

Our proposal will reduce the total number of councillors in the region from 331 to 190 during the four-year transition period.

That number of councillors is appropriate to support good governance and ensure strong democratic accountability and representation in both councils - 125 in North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and 65 in Greater Cambridge.

The average number of electors per councillor will be around 3,400.

influence decisions that shape their lives, which would increase the public's trust in local government.

If our proposal is successful, we will embark on detailed rounds of engagement with local communities, businesses and other key partners to codesign resident engagement pathways with local communities.



Benefit 11

Enhanced community voice through inclusive and flexible, place-based arrangements, including Resident Engagement Pathways.

Our proposal will enhance community engagement by adopting a flexible approach to governance arrangements across the region to reflect local community needs and existing best practice.

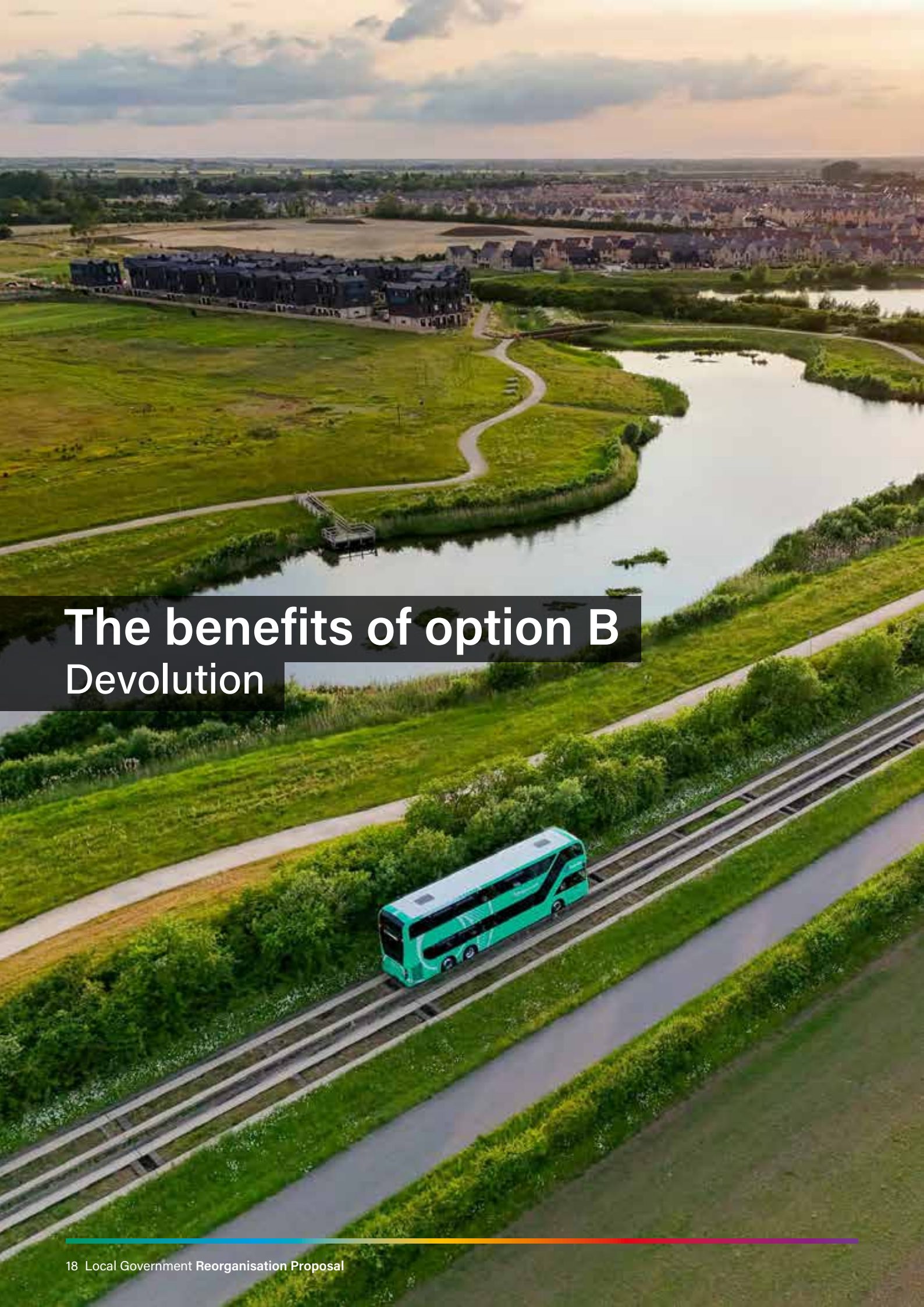
This could involve a range of different mechanisms: structured approaches that make use of parish councils and area committees, and more informal settings such as neighbourhood forums and councillor drop-ins.

Our Resident Engagement Pathways (REPs) proposal offers the inclusivity and responsiveness that residents and stakeholders have asked for, without overly relying on formalised neighbourhood committees.

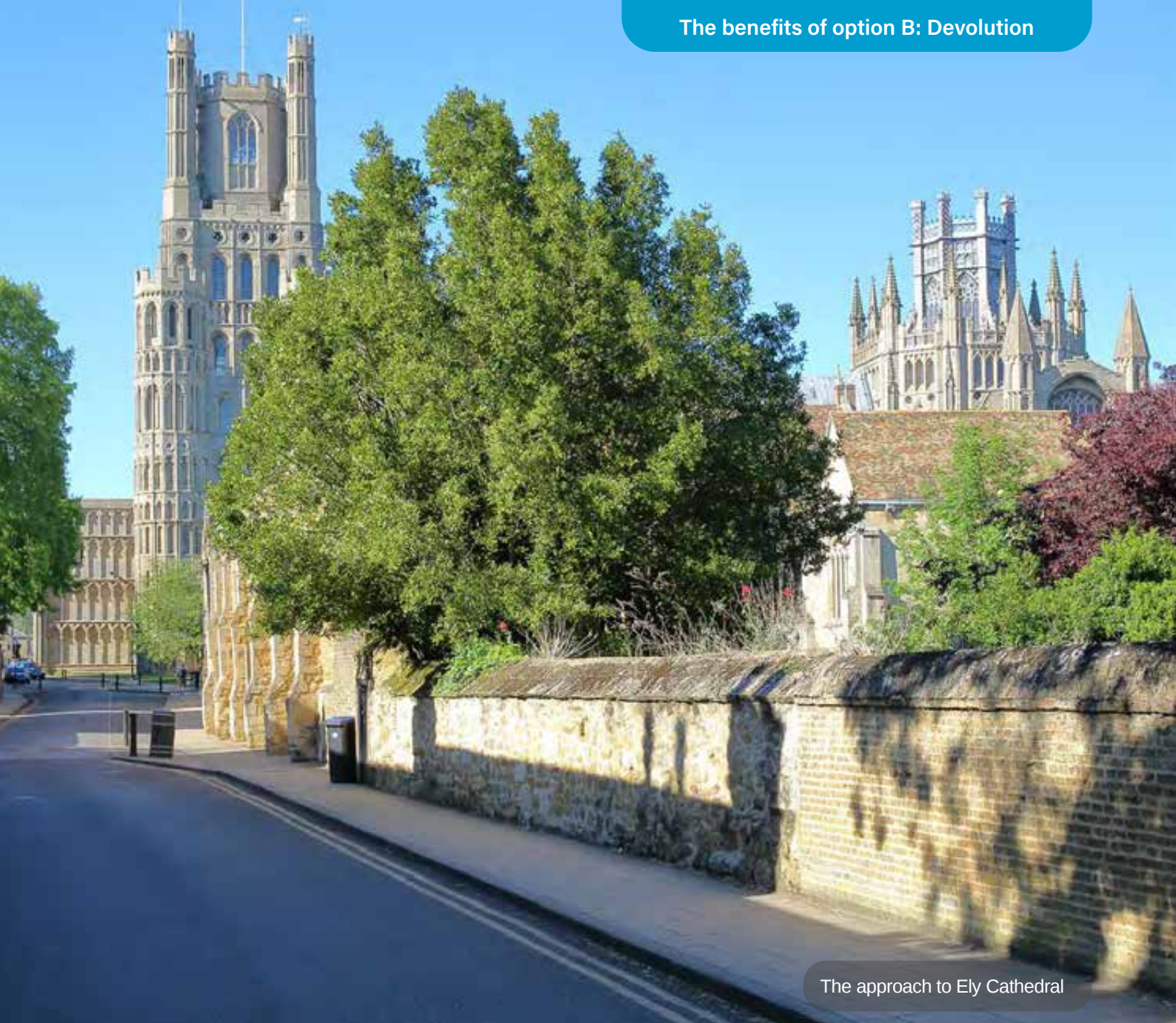
This will ensure different communities with distinct needs and interests will have a clear route to



(top) Meeting local stakeholders at South Cambridgeshire Hall



The benefits of option B Devolution



The approach to Ely Cathedral



Benefit 12

Unlocking the full potential of devolution through balanced economic governance.

Option B will establish constituent councils with similar sized yet distinct and complementary economies within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) area.

With two councils of national significance ranked in the top 20 by GDP outside London, the Mayor and constituent council leaders will be well positioned to influence government and achieve better policy outcomes.

Our proposal ensures strategic decisions on growth,

transport, skills and investment reflect the distinct strengths and needs of both the Greater Cambridge, and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, economies.

This will also support a more equitable partnership for regional economic coordination to maximise the benefits of devolution. Neither unitary would dominate the region's economic policy agenda, which would benefit the whole area, including delivery of the CPCA's strategic growth plans.

The new Central East Integrated Care System will align its 'place' footprints to match new unitary councils as indicated by the government and NHS¹. We anticipate, subject to Mayoral approval, that the Central East ICS would provide a co-opted CPCA board member.

Introduction to Local Government Reorganisation

In December 2024, the government launched the White Paper on English Devolution 'Power and partnership: Foundations for growth', promising a "rewiring of the state."

It proposes new Mayoral Strategic Authorities with more local powers over transport, skills, planning, regeneration, public safety and public service reform.

The White Paper requires areas with two-tiers of councils, like Cambridgeshire, to change to fewer, single-tier unitary councils.

Unitary councils provide services previously delivered by both district and county councils.

The government's reorganisation plans include some

existing unitary councils, such as those that are adjacent to affected areas judged to be too small, or financially unsustainable. As a result, Peterborough has been included.

All eligible areas in England have agreed to submit reorganisation proposals.

The reason for change

The government has stated that ending the two-tier system and replacing it with a single tier is a once-in-a-generation reform.

It wants to create stronger local councils, that are equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and empower their communities.

All councils in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have been single-tier or unitary councils for some time.

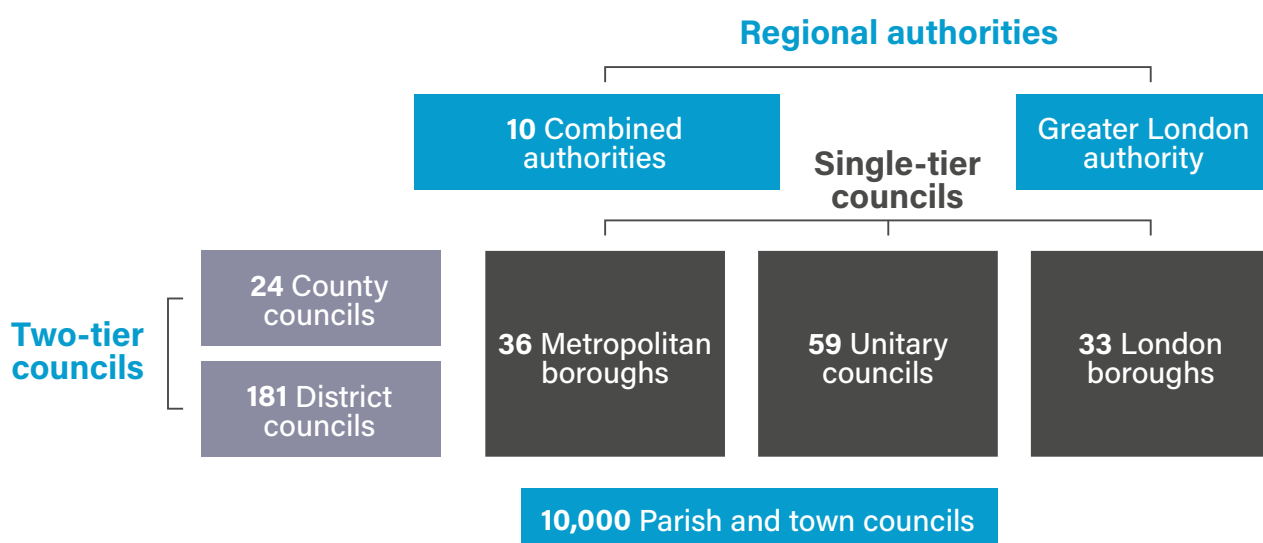
Cambridgeshire may have the most complex local government arrangements in England.

We are a two-tier area with county, city and district councils; a unitary council – Peterborough; a Mayoral Combined Authority; and the Greater Cambridge Partnership established to deliver the £1 billion 'City Deal'.



A view over the Mill Pond, Cambridge

Local government structures in England



This diagram represents the key local government structures in England.

Performers at the 2025 Whittlesey Festival



“With one council in charge in each area, we will see quicker decisions to grow our towns and cities, and connect people to opportunity.”

Alison McGovern, MP, Minister of State
(Housing, Communities and Local Government).

Ministers believe that simpler and stronger local government will help to drive up living standards – the government’s number one mission.

What this means for residents

Change is coming. But it must be shaped carefully, with local people and communities at the centre.

Across England, the public recognise that local government is critical to the quality of life in their local areas².

Reorganisation offers the chance to build more resilient, responsive and sustainable councils for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that deliver better outcomes for our residents.

Reorganisation will bring:

- Easier access: one council to contact for all local services
- Stronger local leadership through clearer accountability
- Simpler structures that reduce bureaucracy and costs, and deliver better services for residents

- Greater financial resilience for councils
- A clearer focus on jobs, skills and growth
- New opportunities for collaboration across councils, health, police, business, the voluntary sector and communities

But challenges will remain:

- Over the next two years English councils face a £6bn funding gap - the difference between demand for services and annual budgets
- The need and cost of providing some services is rising – homeless accommodation, support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and social care as our population ages
- Local government reorganisation needs to be funded locally – the government will not finance the transition costs to new councils

This is just the beginning of the process. If our proposal is successful, we will embark on detailed rounds of engagement with local communities, businesses and other key partners to design councils that are fit for the future.

Riverside tranquility in Huntingdonshire



What this means for our councils

The Minister for Local Government wrote to all our councils inviting proposals to create new unitary councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Council Leaders responded and agreed to submit proposals to reorganise all local councils in our area.

From April 2028, all local councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will cease to exist. They will be replaced by unitary councils.

As Cambridgeshire and Peterborough already has devolved powers through the CPCA, this will become a Mayoral Strategic Authority taking on additional powers under the government's reforms.

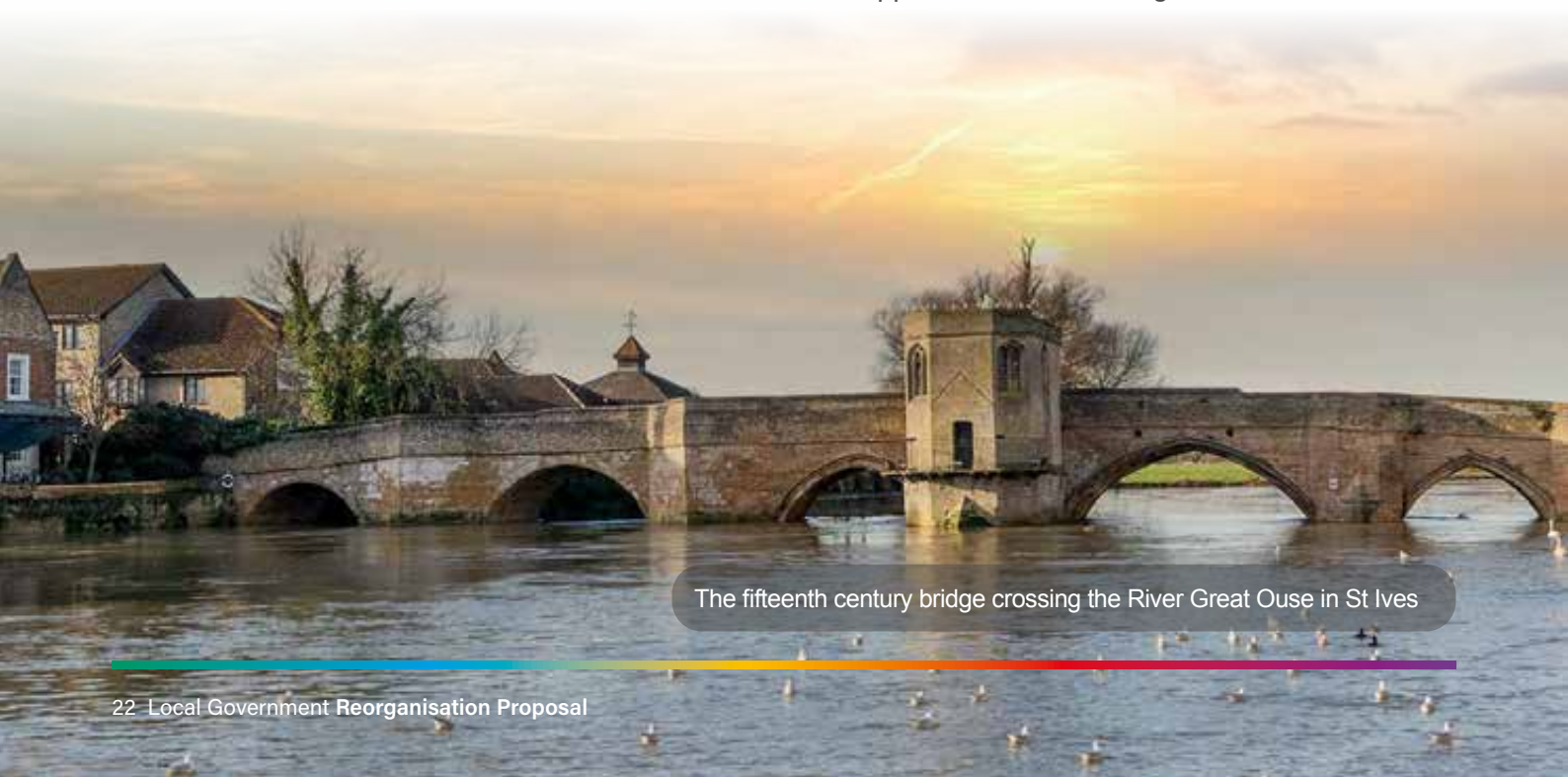
What successful reorganisation looks like

The government has set out some tests it will apply to the proposals it receives.

These include:

- **Financial resilience:** "the right size [of council] to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks"
- **Economy and housing:** "sensible economic areas that support growth", "with a strong and fair tax base that does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area" and helps "to increase housing supply and meet local needs"
- **Sustainable public services:** "prioritising the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services to citizens" with "consideration given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety"
- **Democratic representation and community engagement:** "enabling stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment"
- **Collaboration:** "Demonstrate how councils have worked together and engaged" to develop reorganisation proposals in the interests of the whole area
- **Devolution:** "new unitary structures must support devolution arrangements".

The March St George's Fair, 2025 © Amy Fox



The fifteenth century bridge crossing the River Great Ouse in St Ives

Local Government Reorganisation: building blocks at a glance

GDP per head	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Rank 2025	Population aged 65+	Core local authority spending power per resident	Total Council Tax inc. all precepts	Key challenges
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£57,831
(the highest in the area)

255
(20% least deprived in England)

11.4%
(youngest population in the area)

Cambridge has higher resources, lower deprivation, and a younger population — but it has financial, housing, and infrastructure pressures driven by high growth and population increases.

£925
(one of the highest in the area; no parish councils)

£2,355
(+£11 above average for Shire areas)



£27,002
(second lowest in the area)

242
(20% least deprived in England)

21.1%
(older rural population)

£897
(lower end of resources ; parish councils average spend per resident £102)

£2,367
(+£23 above average for Shire areas)

East Cambridgeshire appears less deprived by rank, but its lower income and ageing profile hint at rising social care pressures.



£23,162
(lowest in the area)

42
(20% most deprived in England)

23.4%
(oldest demographic)

Fenland faces combined social and economic pressures: high deprivation, an ageing population, and the lowest GDP per head - despite relatively high spending power per resident.

£931
(highest, reflects greater needs; parish council average spend per resident £63)

£2,442
(+£100 above average for Shire areas)

Local Government Reorganisation: building blocks at a glance (continued)



£31,022
(mid-low in the patch)

249
(20% least deprived in England)

20.5%
(ageing faster than Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire or Peterborough)

Huntingdonshire sits in the middle across most metrics but has a noticeably older population; not as deprived as Fenland, but less economically dynamic than South Cambridgeshire or Cambridge.

£897
(lower end of the area; parish council average spend per resident £89)

£2,378
(+£34 above average for Shire areas)

£36,839
(3rd highest but below national average)

51
(20% most deprived in England)

14.4%
(lower than average, a demographic advantage)

Peterborough has the highest child deprivation and a younger demographic, but not the highest resources due primarily to a low council tax base — reinforcing existing challenges as a smaller unitary council facing both city and rural pressures.

£915
(below Fenland, above most others; average spend per resident in parished areas £46)

£2,218
(-£148 below average for unitary councils)

PETERBOROUGH
CITY COUNCIL



£42,330
(2nd highest)

281
(least deprived in the area, 10% least deprived in England)

19.8%
(above average — demographic challenge, with related social care pressures)

South Cambridgeshire combines affluence and resources with a steadily ageing population; the deprivation score is the lowest, suggesting less immediate social pressure than neighbours.

£900
(just below Cambridge; average parish spend per resident £92)

£2,391
(+£47 above average for Shire areas)

Council Tax Band D per authority area (2025/26)

	City/ District share	County share	Local Authority Total	Average parish precept	Total including all precepts	Comparison to England averages
Cambridge	£232.13	£1,700.64	£1,932.77	n/a	£2,355.41	+£11 shire areas
East Cambridgeshire	£142.14	£1,700.64	£1,842.78	£101.53	£2,366.95	+£23 shire areas
Fenland	£254.79	£1,700.64	£1,955.43	£63.46	£2,441.54	+£100 shire areas
Huntingdonshire	£165.86	£1,700.64	£1,866.50	£88.54	£2,377.68	+£34 shire areas
South Cambridgeshire	£175.40	£1,700.64	£1,876.04	£91.98	£2,390.66	+£47 shire areas
Peterborough	n/a	n/a	£1,749.42	£46.43	£2,218.49	-£148 unitary areas

Peterborough has parished and non-parished areas; Cambridge does not have parish councils; average parish precepts for local authority areas include zero-rated parish precepts; averages have not been weighted by parish populations. The England average Band D parish precept in 2025-26 is £92.22.

The England average Band D council tax 2025/2026 is £2,280. Average Band D can be compared by type of local government arrangements. In London, the average Band D council tax in 2025/2026 is £1,982; in metropolitan areas £2,289; in unitary areas £2,366; and in shire areas £2,344.



Peterborough's Art Deco outdoor lido

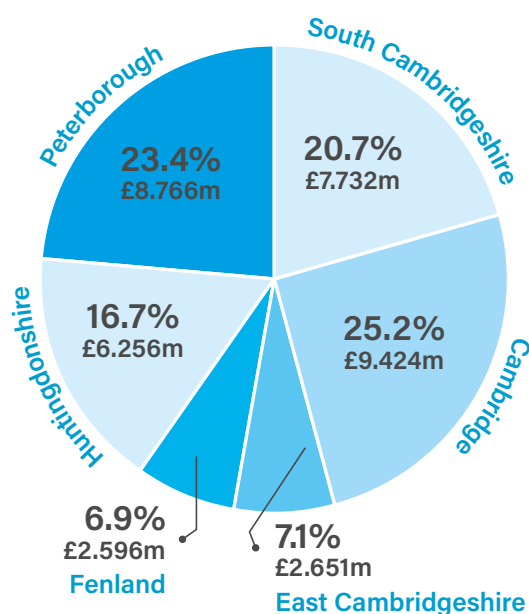
Overview of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Economy, housing and infrastructure

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy generates around £37.5bn GDP annually³. Our region helps to power the government's ambitions for growth.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has the third highest GDP per capita of any Mayoral Combined Authority area, behind only the West of England and Greater London⁴.

GDP 2023 by local authority in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



We combine urban dynamism with thriving market towns and flourishing business parks, creating a dynamic and highly resilient rural-urban economy.

Peterborough, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire make up nearly 70% of the region's economy.



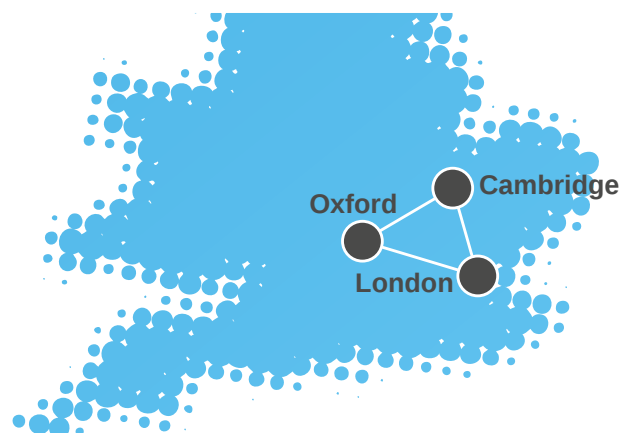
Peterborough is the UK's second most improving city in PwC's Good Growth for Cities Index 2023

Our region sits at the confluence of two strategic growth corridors that make up the 'Golden Triangle'

- Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor
- London to Cambridge - the UK Innovation Corridor

Our region is anchored by two of England's most dynamic and rapidly expanding cities: Cambridge and Peterborough.

The 'Golden Triangle'



Peterborough has one of the highest business formation rates in the UK. It's a great place to start a new business. Its affordability and regional connectivity also make it an attractive base for distribution, manufacturing, and a notable cluster of environmental firms. Its growth rate is double the national average at 1.5-2.5% annually over the last few years⁵.

The **Cambridge city-region** contains 36 research parks, global companies, a world-leading university, and a thriving startup and investor community. This innovation cluster contains 26,000 companies which attracted the 2nd and 3rd highest proportion of innovation grants in the UK. Jobs growth among knowledge-intensive firms has been consistently increasing at 6% year-on-year.

£217m
South
Cambridgeshire



£419m

Value of Innovation
Grant received by
businesses as of 2023

£202m
Cambridge



Life Sciences

Employment: **47,637**

Annual Turnover:
£16.5 billion

Annual GVA Growth
Rate: **3%**

Key Sub-Sectors:
**Novel Therapeutics
Omics
Medical Technology**



Advanced Manufacturing

Employment: **35,144**

Annual Turnover:
£12.8 billion

Annual GVA
Growth Rate: **4%**

Key Sub-Sectors:
**Defence and Digital
Robotics
Battery Technologies**



Agri-Tech

Employment: **2,560**

Annual Turnover:
£922 million

Annual GVA
Growth Rate: **3%**

Key Sub-Sectors:
**Agri-Science
Automation
Digitalisation**



Digital and Defence

Employment: **36,861**

Annual Turnover:
£13.4 billion

Annual GVA Growth Rate: **5%**

Key Sub-Sectors:
**Artificial Intelligence
Quantum Technology
Cyber**



Energy and Clean Tech

Employment: **2,177**

Annual Turnover:
£738 million

Annual GVA Growth Rate: **3%**

Key Sub-Sectors:
**Built Environment
Water Management
Digital Platforms**

From Agri-Tech to AI: diverse economies

Our region hosts enterprises and centres of excellence across multiple sectors that directly support the government's National Industrial Strategy.

The Fens provide a fifth of the nation's crops and a third of its vegetable production; they are vital to the nation's food security⁶.

NIAB (The National Institute of Agricultural Botany) and Ceres Agri-Tech, founded by Cambridge Enterprise, and Agri-Tech East are developing solutions to tackle hunger, disease resistance and climate change.

The University of Cambridge supports 86,000 jobs and delivers an estimated economic impact of £30bn across the UK annually⁷.

Anglia Ruskin University in Peterborough has been a catalyst for skills development, social mobility and prosperity with the aim of attracting 12,500 students by 2032.





Peterborough

Home to comparethemarket.com (BGL Holdings), the second largest locally owned company, and the most profitable in the area. Renowned for diesel engines, Perkins has its UK HQ in Peterborough and is the fourth largest foreign-owned company in Cambridgeshire.



Fenland

Known as the 'breadbasket of Britain', Fenland is home to some of the UK's leading food brands, including Princes, McCain and Nestlé, and is the HQ for H. L. Hutchinson, a leading farming innovation company with an annual turnover of £276m.



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

East Cambridgeshire

Ranks fifth in UK for number of international exporting businesses. It has the largest locally owned company by turnover (£550m): G's Fresh Ltd, located in Barway near Ely, and operates in Europe and USA.



Huntingdonshire

HQ for mega employers including Anglian Water with over 4,500 employees, Hilton Foods Group nearly 3,000 employees and £1.2bn turnover; and advanced manufacturing, such as Paragraf, a graphene electronics spinout from Cambridge University.



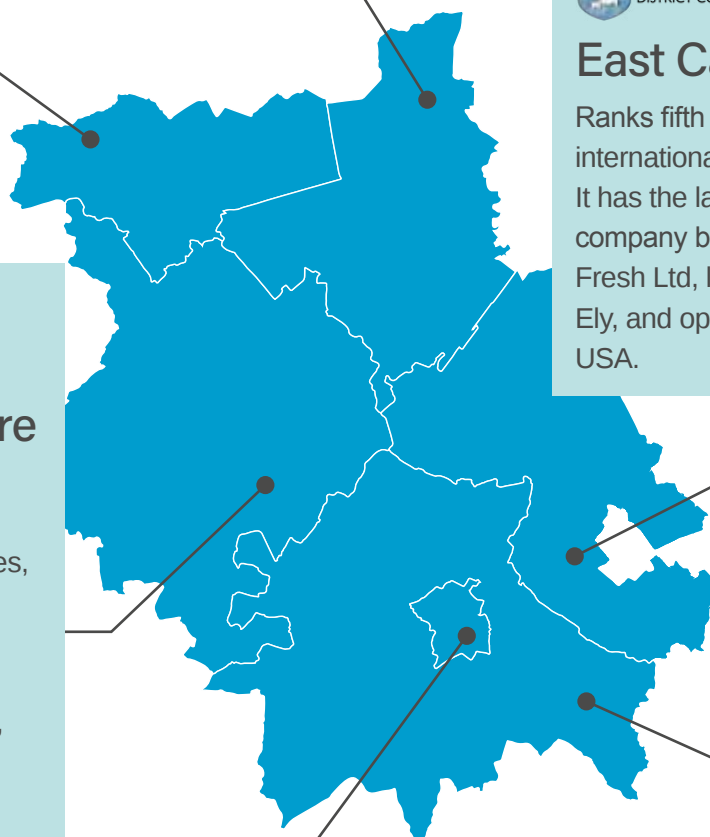
Cambridge

The unicorn capital of Europe, with 26 companies that have grown to a public valuation of over \$1bn (ARM, Darktrace, Bicycle Therapeutics, CMR Surgical). HQ for Astra Zeneca the UK's third-largest publicly traded company. If ARM was listed on the FTSE 100, it would be the UK's fourth-largest company by value.



South Cambridgeshire

Home to Cambridge Science Park and the Wellcome Genome Campus. The latter played a key role in developing Covid vaccines. Wellcome is also the largest grant-making organisation in the UK. Last year, its global grants totalled £967m - more than the combined total of the top 10 other philanthropic organisations in the UK.





Development along the banks of the River Nene in Peterborough

Cambridge Can: bring AI to life

The Greater Cambridge Area is home to over 5,000 innovation-driven companies, including 120 AI-powered companies which employ 13,000 people and have a combined turnover of £6bn.

The region can lead the way in bringing the UK's vision for AI to life.

Benevolent AI enables scientists to uncover new insights from data, helping to accelerate innovation and increase the probability of discovering successful new drugs.

Fast Growth Cities Network

The Fast Growth Cities Network comprises: Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Norwich, Oxford, Peterborough and Swindon.

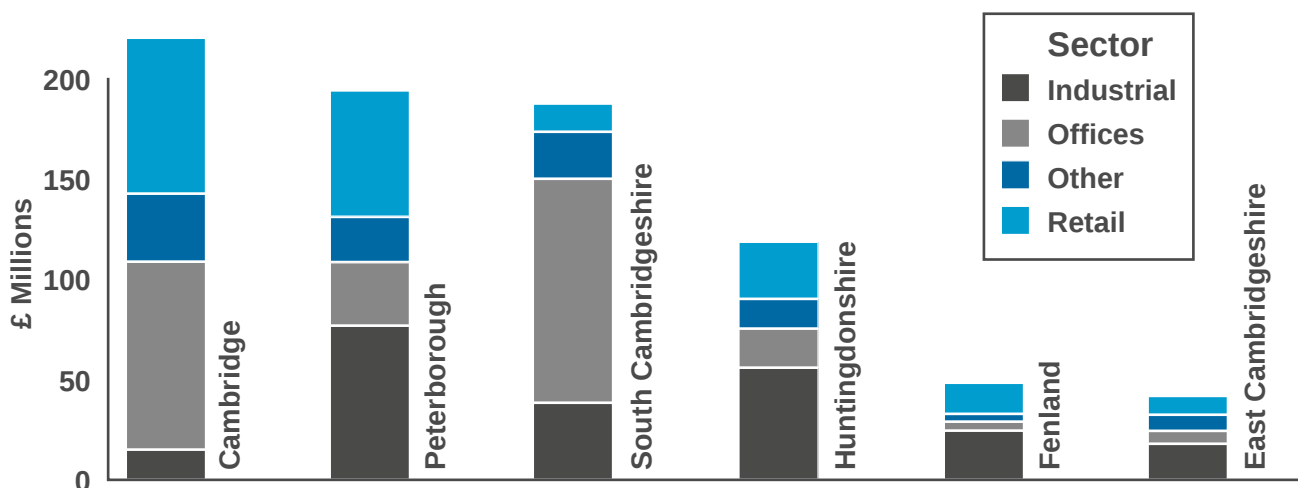
These cities are recognised for their strong local economies, significant contributions to the national economy, and potential for further growth.

Business Rates

Total ratable values by local authority can be used to understand the variation between different areas' economic make-up.

This illustrates the strength of the office-based knowledge economy in the south, and industrial strength of the north.

Implied rateable value by sector and area



Regional connectivity at a glance



The **A1** and the **M11** connect the region to London and the North, while a network of A roads link regional centres with small towns and villages



The nationally important **East Coast Main Line** runs through the region, enabling rapid transport to Scotland, the North East and London. Other routes connect to Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Hertfordshire



London Stansted airport, in bordering Essex, is well connected by road and rail to the region



Freight to and from the Port of Felixstowe passes through the region, and local riverine ports provide access to the North Sea

74%

Most self-contained:

Peterborough

39%

Least self-contained:

South Cambridgeshire

+22,527

Largest net importer of workers:

Cambridge

-4,444

Largest net exporter of workers:

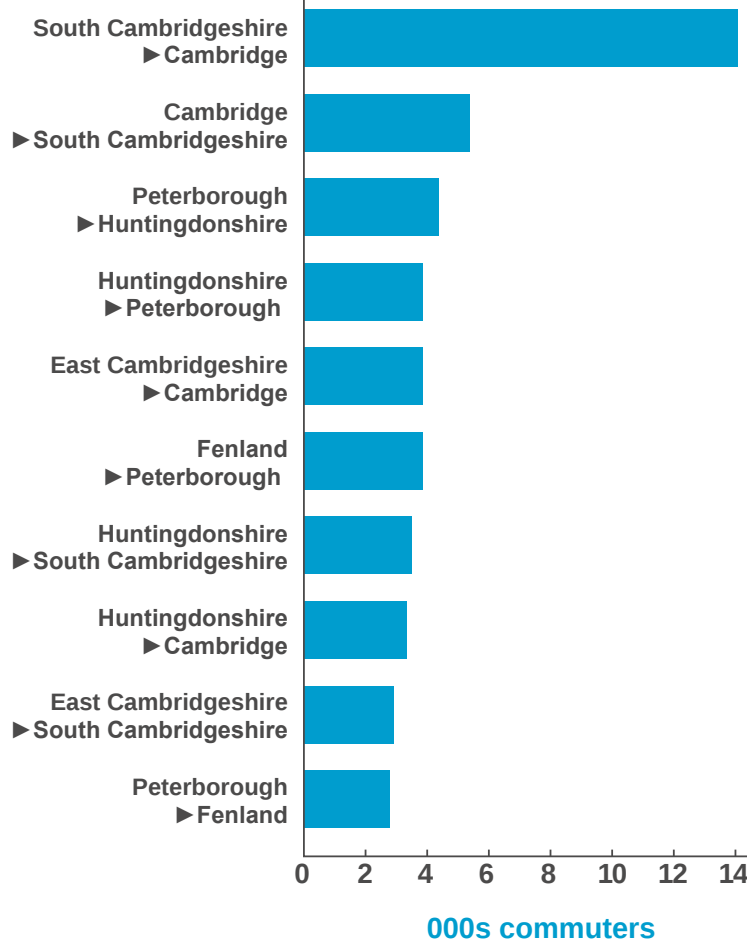
East Cambridgeshire

14,014 people

Biggest single flow:

South Cambridgeshire to Cambridge

Top inter-authority commuting flows (Census 2021) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



Regional consumer patterns

The catchment area of our major cities for High Street shopping reveals a different pattern of consumer behaviour compared with commuter flows.

Peterborough's catchment area is the 21st largest in the UK with over 393,000 people⁹.

The number of people who are drawn to shop regularly in Cambridge is 323,000, the 27th largest in UK.

While around a third of East Cambridgeshire residents shop in Cambridge, roughly half remain local, using Ely as their primary centre¹⁰.

When not using their own city's High Streets, London is the next most popular shopping destination for residents of Peterborough and Cambridge.

Housing

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have distinct housing markets.

In the majority of areas, average monthly private rental costs are below the England average of £1,386 per calendar month¹¹.

Only in Fenland and Peterborough are average house prices below the national average of £291,000.

The north of the region is more affordable relative to average incomes. Cambridge has the third highest house prices of any UK city behind Oxford and London¹³.

Housing growth varies across the region. Peterborough has had the highest total increase in additional homes over the last 10 years.

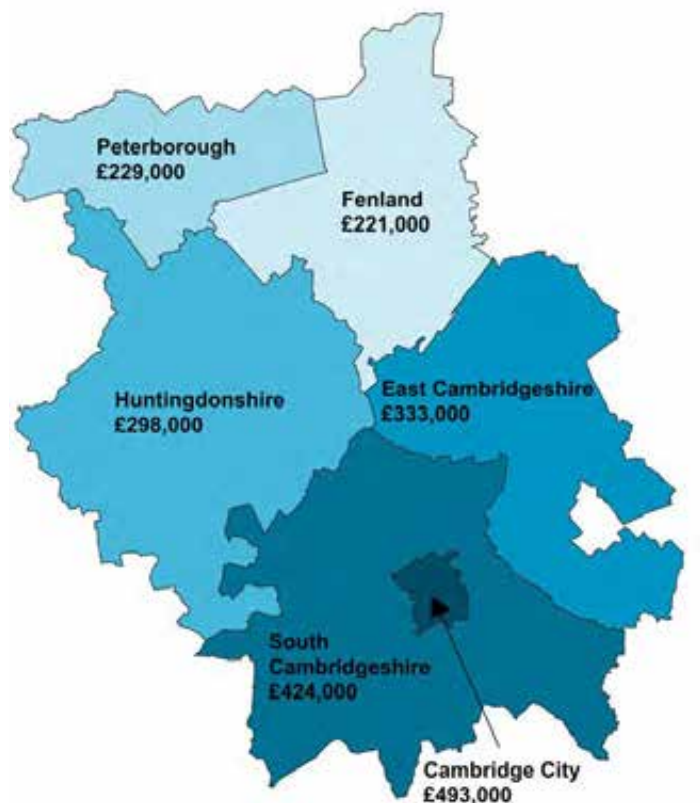
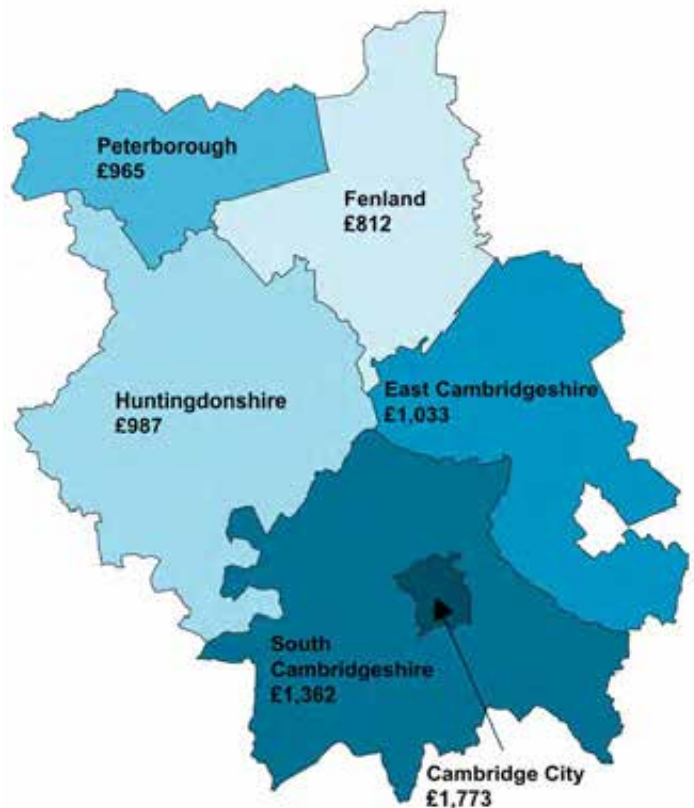
Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire have also seen significant increases in the total number of homes. During the 2010s the number of homes in Cambridge increased by 16% - a higher proportion than any other city in England¹⁴.

Delivering affordable and high-quality housing is an issue of national importance.

With the right support and resources, our region is ideally placed to underpin the government's national aim of building 1.5 million new homes over the next five years.

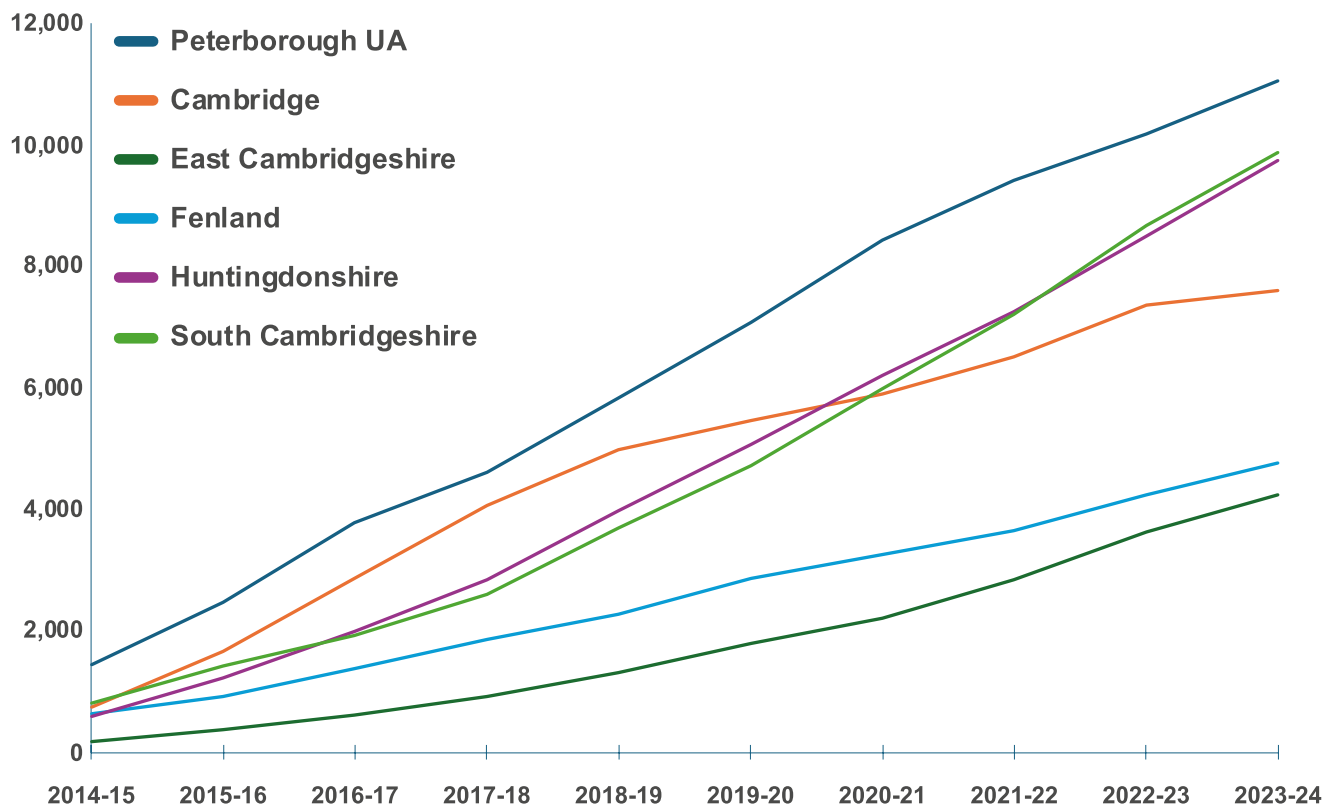
Housing markets in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire operate in a different context to the rest of the region.

Average private rental (PCM) and house prices¹²





Cumulative net additional dwellings (2014-15 to 2023-24)¹⁵



Infrastructure and skills

Accelerating housing and economic growth to provide jobs and affordable housing hinges on bold investment in three essentials: infrastructure, connectivity, and skills.

Infrastructure and connectivity

Water scarcity is a critical barrier to attracting investment and delivering new homes and commercial development.

As one of the UK's driest regions, limited reservoirs and wastewater capacity coupled with climate change and population growth, are increasing the pressure on water resources.

Major infrastructure projects must be delivered urgently, as set out in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Growth Plan¹⁶.

Fens Reservoir

Anglian Water working in partnership with Cambridge Water is proposing a new reservoir in the Cambridgeshire Fens that will secure water supplies to meet the needs of future generations.

The new reservoir will supply enough water for up to a quarter of a million homes every year.

In addition to these challenges, the provision of digital infrastructure varies across the region. Broadband and mobile coverage in rural and newly developed areas can act as a barrier to inclusion¹⁷ and business productivity, particularly when compared with international competitors.

Energy is also a challenge. The grid capacity is limited in some areas. This slows the rollout of renewables and clean technology and impacts some of our key sectors, including Agri-tech and food processing, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and digital technologies.

Without investment in energy supply and grid upgrades, we will not be able to power our growth ambitions.

Energy infrastructure

A new 240MW substation for the West of Peterborough will deliver power to new homes and businesses with more reliable energy.

Sunnica is planning a new 500MW energy farm with solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage in East Cambridgeshire.



An impression of the planned Fens Reservoir



A solar farm at Six Mile Bottom

Skills and education

Our industrial strengths, engineering, digital, health, and life sciences, depend on a steady supply of skilled workers. Nearly 1.1 million people will live and work in the region by 2040.

Supporting training, upskilling, and education is vital to ensure that future jobs are filled by local people, and retain the competitiveness of the region.

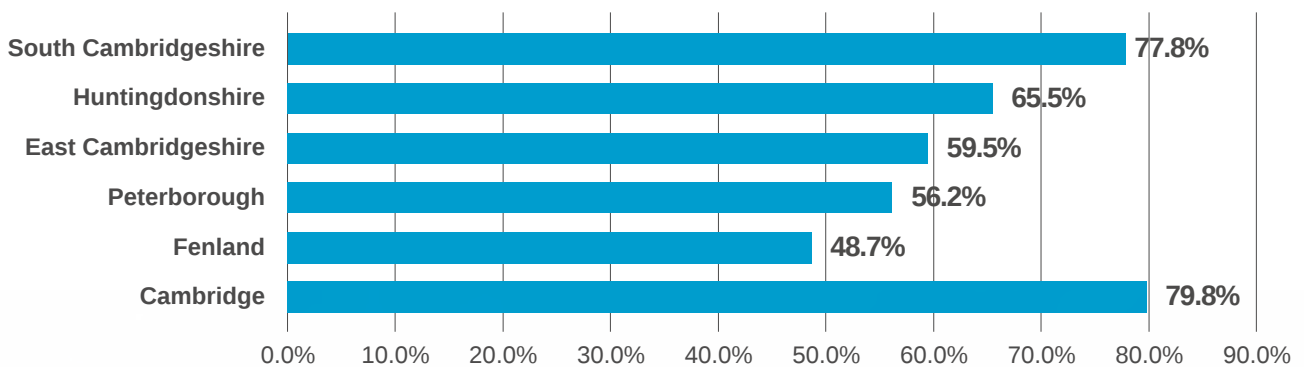
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough averages 2–3 percentage points below the England average of 65% for the proportion of 16-64 year olds with A Levels, BTEC National and advanced

apprenticeships. However, there is significant regional variation.

Skills gaps are greatest in the following sectors: information and communication; hotels and restaurants; transport and storage; and social work¹⁸. High rates of economic inactivity are also a challenge in parts of the region, including Fenland, threatening to entrench inequalities over the long term.

It is crucial that targeted interventions to reduce skills gaps are supported in order to increase business competitiveness, up-skill residents to meet future labour market demands and support economic growth.

16-64 year olds with A Level or equivalent qualification (RFQ3+) by local authority



Anglia Ruskin University in Peterborough

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough: Environment, demography, and quality of life

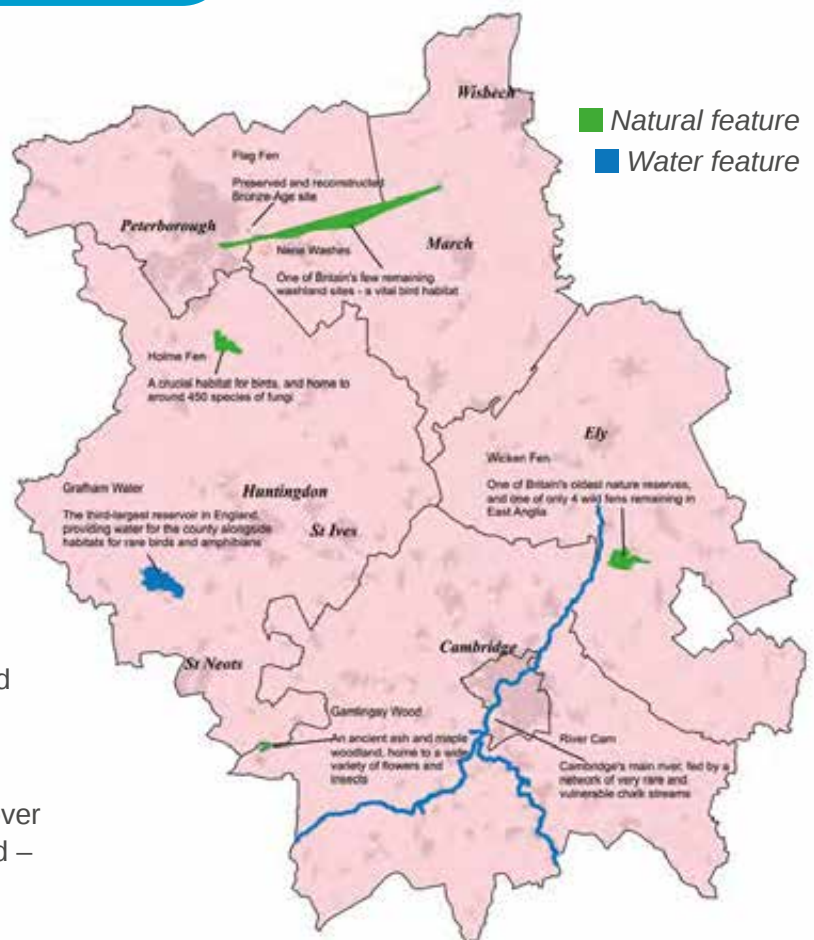
Environment

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have a diverse natural landscape: rare chalk streams, ancient fens, and nationally significant reserves.

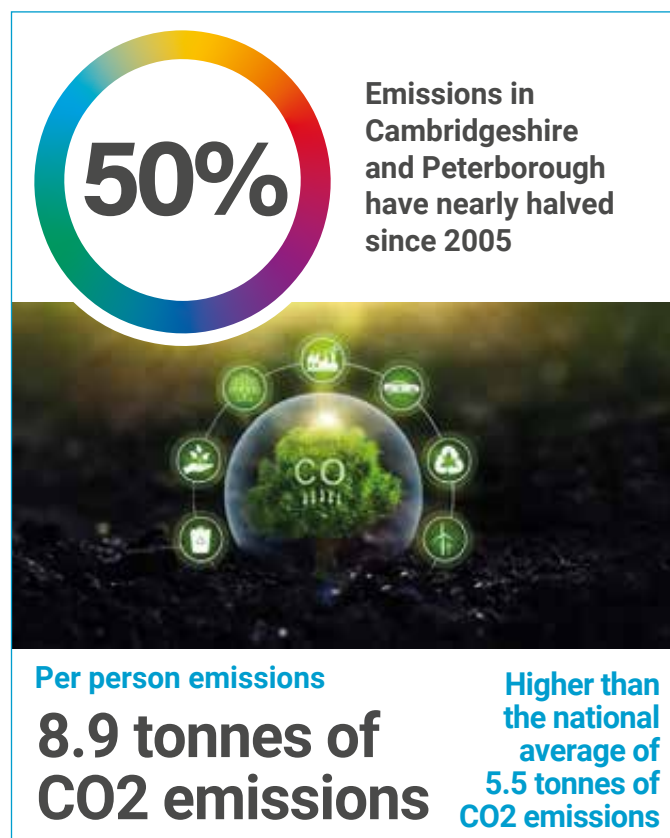
The area is home to 27% of England's peatland¹⁹, which plays a valuable role in promoting biodiversity, minimising flood risk and storing carbon. Peatland is concentrated in East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire.

Fenland and East Cambridgeshire contain over a third of England's Grade 1 agricultural land – the most productive farmland.

The region has above-average biodiversity - 8.6% is classified as nature rich compared with a nationwide average of 6%. This is mainly semi-natural grassland and broadleaved woodland, which play critical roles in carbon storage, water regulation and supporting wildlife.



Urban growth and land-use changes are putting pressure on our ecosystems. The area has experienced extreme weather in recent years. The second highest UK temperature was recorded in Cambridge in 2019 at 38.7 degrees Celsius.



Distribution of peatland²⁰



Demography

An area's demography is the fundamental driver of service demand. Core statutory services such as social care and education are affected hugely by the population profile of the area.

The region has an estimated population of 934,000 in 2024, with a possible upper bound of 965,000²¹.

Age profiles vary across the area, with younger populations in cities and ageing populations in market towns and rural areas.

Cambridge and Peterborough are the most ethnically diverse areas in the region, with 25% of their populations self-identifying as being from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Market towns and rural areas in Fenland (4.1%), East Cambridgeshire (5.5%), Huntingdonshire

(7.6%) and South Cambridgeshire (11%) are less ethnically diverse than the national average (19%).

Two-thirds of the population of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough live in urban areas²².

Cambridge is entirely urban, while Peterborough is classified as over three quarters rural, though nearly 90% of the population live in its urban areas.

Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, and South Cambridgeshire are the most rural areas. Though predominantly rural 89% of Fenland residents live in urban areas.

Population growth has been greatest in Cambridge and Peterborough. Both were ranked in the top 5 fastest growing UK cities between 2011-2024. Rural areas such as East Cambridgeshire and Fenland have had population growth close to the England average.

Total population

Peterborough...223,500



Cambridge...149,500



Huntingdonshire...190,500



Fenland...105,000



South Cambridgeshire...172,500



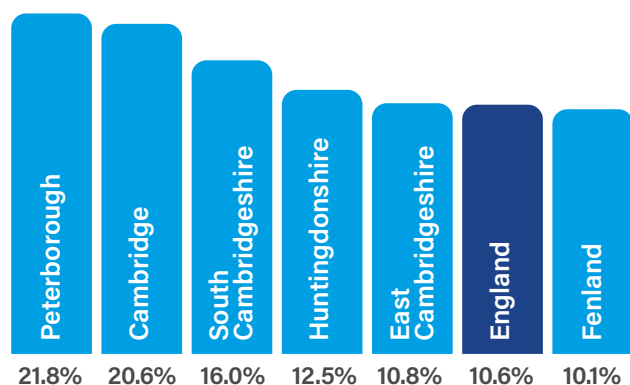
East Cambridgeshire...93,000



Age profiles of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



Population growth 2011 - 2024



The population will follow national demographic trends, which will lead to a large relative increase in the proportion aged over 65.

These trends will place additional demand on adult social care, which in Cambridgeshire was recently rated by the Care Quality Commission as 'good'. Peterborough City Council is awaiting the outcome of its inspection.

A high proportion of population growth is due to planned housing development in urban areas and city fringes.

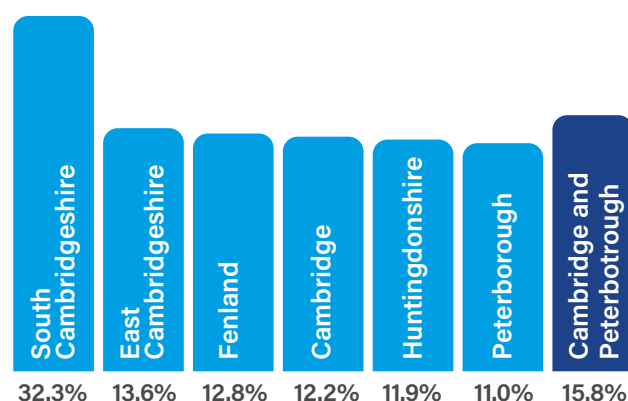
The most significant population increase is expected in South Cambridgeshire due to the tight boundary around Cambridge and expansion of new settlements in Northstowe, Waterbeach and Cambourne.

This single district accounts for around 32.8% of the region's total population growth to 2040.

Population forecasts 2025-2040²³

The population is forecast to grow by nearly 16% or around 150,000 people by 2040 to nearly 1.1m people. The region will then account for 1.7% of England's total population.

Forecast Population growth 2024 - 2025



Life chances, health and quality of life

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has a varied distribution of social needs, life chances and health outcomes.

Deprivation

Rural areas such as South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire have relatively low levels of deprivation, though there is a notable pocket of deprivation within Huntingdon town.

Fenland and Peterborough are notably more deprived than other areas in the region.



Taking a break with a coffee at Ely Market

Deprivation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Local Authority	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Rank (2025)	Decile relative to all England LAs
Fenland	42	20% most deprived
Peterborough	51	20% most deprived
East Cambridgeshire	242	20% least deprived
Huntingdonshire	249	20% least deprived
Cambridge	255	20% least deprived
South Cambridgeshire	281	10% least deprived



The revised Indices of Multiple Deprivation published in 2025 provides a more nuanced view of each local authority area than their overall average rank suggests:

- Though one of the least deprived councils in England, South Cambridgeshire is in the 20% most deprived in relation to 'barriers to housing and services'
- Fenland ranks first in England in relation to 'education, skills and training deprivation'
- Peterborough has the region's lowest 'income' rank and is in the 20% most deprived on that domain of all English local councils
- In Cambridge, only one neighbourhood ranks in the most deprived 20% in England
- Huntingdonshire is the least deprived authority in our region in relation to 'living environment', while Cambridge is the region's outlier with the lowest score by far as it is entirely urban.

An urban-rural divide is evident in other metrics.

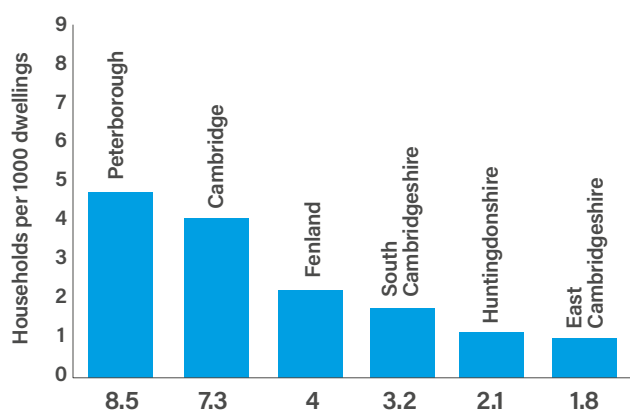
Temporary accommodation rates are rising in urban settings and market towns. Rates are highest in Peterborough (8.5 per 1,000 dwellings) and Cambridge (7.3), compared with much lower levels

in rural districts, reflecting housing stress in urban centres.

Child poverty is particularly concentrated in Peterborough, with over 20% of children in poverty, in Fenland the figure is moderately lower at 16%. The rest of the region has significantly lower levels of child poverty, ranging from 8.5% in Cambridge to 6.4% in South Cambridgeshire²⁴.

There is a complex pattern of social mobility amongst families with children eligible for free school meals (FSM).

Temporary accommodation households per 1,000 dwellings March 2024



Pupils on Free School Meals (FSM) in Peterborough and North-East Cambridgeshire parliamentary constituencies perform worse than their peers in South Cambridgeshire on a range of employment metrics.

Cambridge notably has the region's lowest rate of FSM children that go on to attain higher paid jobs²⁵.

Ofsted rates the overall effectiveness of children's services at Cambridgeshire County Council as 'requires improvement', and at Peterborough City Council as 'inadequate'.

SEND provision in Cambridgeshire similarly 'requires improvement', while in Peterborough it has been identified as having 'significant weaknesses', with evidence of recent improvement.

overall life expectancies, at 82.9 and 82.6 years respectively. Cambridge features a difference of 12 years' life expectancy between different wards in the city, with an overall figure of 82.9 years.

In East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, outcomes are similarly varied. Women in Alconbury live on average 10 years less than those in Ely South ward.

In the 2021 census, 50% of residents living in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire reported 'very good health', placing them within the top 40% of all areas in England and Wales.

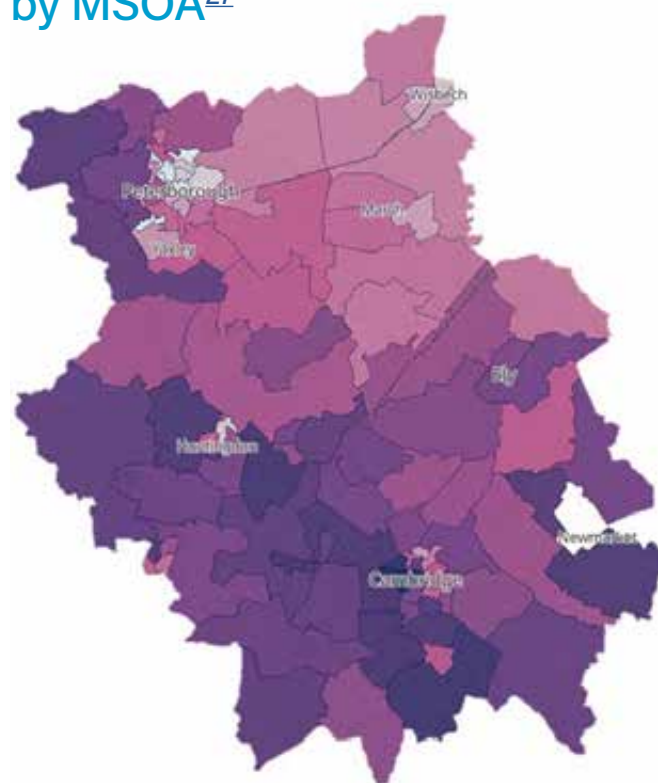
East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire residents are placed near the average. Fenland and Peterborough ranked in the bottom 20%, each reporting around 42%²⁶.

Healthy life expectancy (HLE) – the average number of years a person lives free from serious disease or disability – shows even deeper divides in the region.

The highest area, in west Cambridge, sees an HLE of 73.5 years. Meanwhile, in north Peterborough, it is 55.8 years.

This has profound implications for quality of life, alongside labour force participation and social care demand.

Healthy life expectancy by MSOA²⁷



Chatteris Midsummer Festival – with thanks to Lesley Allen

Health outcomes

Life expectancy is equally varied across the region. South Cambridgeshire has amongst the highest life expectancy at birth in the county, at 83.7 years. The north of the county has a notably lower life expectancy, with Peterborough the lowest at 78.9 years.

East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire see high



Waiting Room

Key public services

Fire and Police

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local councils share the same geographic footprint as Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue and Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

LGR is not expected to have a disruptive impact on how these public services operate and how they deliver services in future alongside new unitary councils.

NHS

The NHS is going through a period of significant reorganisation too.

From April 2026, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) will be abolished and merged with Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB and Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB.

Together, they will form a larger NHS Central East

ICB cluster. This is part of a national plan to reduce running costs by 50% and achieve economies of scale.

In future, some services will be commissioned at a regional level or by each ICB cluster. There will also be scope for joint commissioning of neighbourhood health services with new unitary councils.

Most patient-facing services, such as GPs and urgent care should remain locally led.

Hospital services

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board serves around 1.2m people.

Hospital catchment areas are geographically large and do not map closely with local government administrative boundaries. Proposed changes to ICB footprints will embed larger regional patterns of commissioning and hospital attendance.

Annually around 425,000 people receive hospital treatment from Cambridge University Hospitals, North West Anglia Hospital Trust or Royal Papworth.

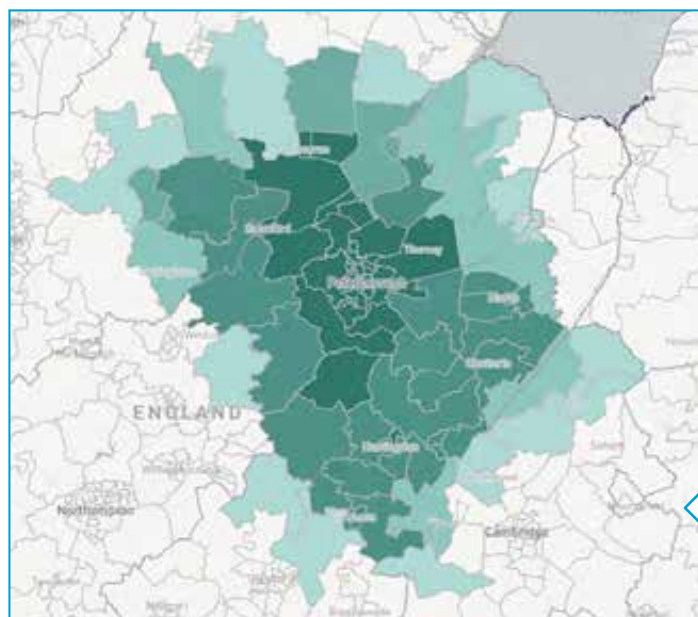
Our hospitals also treat 135,000 people - about one third of the annual total - from out of our area, mainly from Suffolk, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire, Essex and Bedfordshire.

Nearly 10% of our residents receive treatment in hospitals outside our area. Most notably from East Cambridgeshire to the West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, and from Fenland to Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn.

The Royal Papworth Hospital Trust has an 'outstanding' rating from the Care Quality

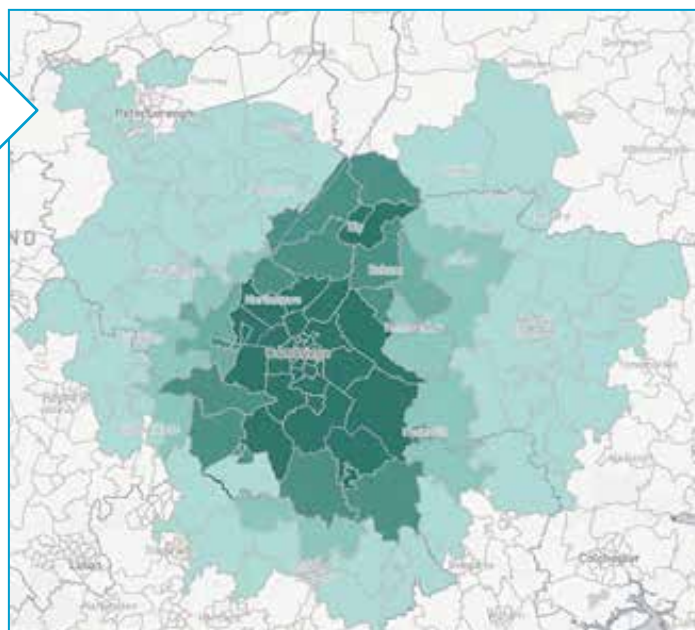
Commission (CQC); NWA Foundation Trust 'requires improvement'; and Cambridge University Hospitals Trust, including the Rosie Hospitals is 'good'.

Community health services provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) have been rated 'requires improvement'; and Cambridgeshire Community Services Trust, which provides services across the east of England have been rated 'outstanding' by the CQC.



Patient spread of NWAFT Hospital Trust

Patient spread of Cambridge University Hospitals Trust



Patient spread of Royal Papworth Hospital Trust

What our communities told us

Engaging with our communities and stakeholders

All seven councils committed to engaging the public across the region together. The goal was to develop a shared understanding of how residents, stakeholders, and staff feel about LGR and their priorities or concerns regarding the creation of new unitary councils.

Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire carried out further surveys to collect more information about our specific proposal.

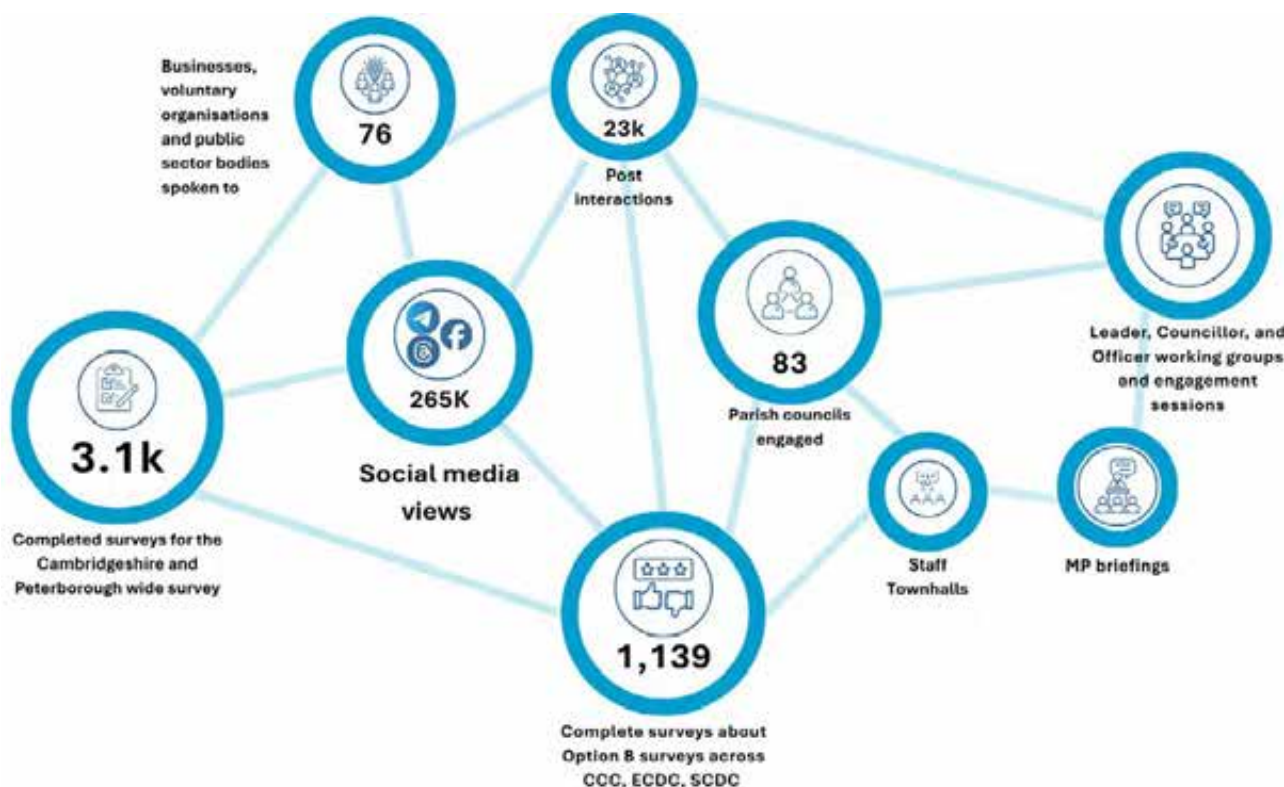
This joint engagement across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was anchored by a residents’

survey, complemented by focus groups in each council area and a separate survey for stakeholders.

The results of the joint survey are set out below, followed by the results of the additional local surveys. The findings have been reflected in the development of our proposal.

We found residents and stakeholders are open to change, but want reassurances about service quality, representation, and local identity.

Successful reorganisation will require balancing efficiency with community voice, embedding decision-making closer to people, and designing unitary councils that respect the diverse identities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.



Feedback from the public and businesses about unitary council priorities

Operational focus

Improving council services

Better responsiveness

Councillors with good local knowledge



Future investment

Health infrastructure

Transportation

Community facilities





The East Cambridgeshire village of Cheveley

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough survey findings

We engaged 2,407 residents, 767 staff, and 231 stakeholders, who represent a broad cross section of the region. The findings show strong appetite for local government reorganisation, but only if it delivers better services, stronger local voice, and clear accountability.

Support for change

- Residents, staff, and stakeholders overwhelmingly support reorganisation, frustrated by the complexity of multiple tiers.
- Backing is conditional on tangible improvements: simpler access, more responsive councils, and investment in frontline services.
- People in rural areas, particularly East Cambridgeshire and Fenland, worry about being overlooked or left behind; stakeholders also fear loss of local representation.

Trust and accountability

- Trust in decision-making is low (net –4). Residents want confidence that decisions reflect their community, not a one-size-fits-all model.
- Stakeholders stressed the importance of local

councillors with genuine local knowledge, robust scrutiny, and clear engagement channels.

- Parish and town councils, alongside voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partners, are seen as vital to grounding services in community priorities.

Priorities for new unitary councils

- Top resident priorities: health infrastructure, transport, and community facilities.
- Businesses emphasised economic infrastructure, efficiency, and streamlined delivery.
- Both groups demand faster response times and councillors who understand local contexts.

Balancing scale and local voice

- Residents leaned towards larger councils of 400,000–500,000, recognising benefits of scale but wary of losing local identity.
- Nearly half of stakeholders preferred smaller councils of 300,000–400,000, reflecting community identity and fears of remoteness.
- Focus groups revealed the central tension: larger councils bring efficiency and resilience, but smaller ones offer closer connection.

Current performance

- Councils scored well on digital services (+44) and councillor knowledge (+43) and typically those in rural districts felt their local Councillor understood their community.
- Weaknesses: investment in services (–32), reducing complexity (–46), and unclear points of contact – except in Peterborough’s single unitary model, which residents praised.
- This demonstrates the practical value of simplifying structures.

Community identity

- Community belonging is generally strong (+43), though uneven: residents in East Cambridgeshire reported higher rates of belonging (76%) than Peterborough (47%)
- Residents want unitaries that reflect the distinct character of each area.
- Older residents placed a higher value on community connection, whereas younger residents consistently reported weaker community connections. This highlights the need for tailored engagement.

Stakeholder priorities

- Foundations for success: local representation, service efficiency, and financial stability.
- Opportunities: cost savings, economies of scale, reduced bureaucracy.
- Risks: loss of local voice, disruption during transition, and balancing urban and rural demands.
- Investment priorities: health, transport, local economy, and digital connectivity.
- Critical success factors: responsiveness, devolved powers, and clear implementation planning.

Additional community engagement

Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire undertook additional engagement exercises to inform residents about the benefits of LGR, and specifically how our proposal could lead to better outcomes for residents.



These engagement exercises included a short survey and public forums.

East Cambridgeshire District Council led #OptionBforMe engagement focused on the benefits to residents of being in a larger rural unitary, how a larger unitary would provide financial resilience and give the rural areas a stronger combined voice.

The Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire engagement emphasised the joint working already embedded in Greater Cambridge and the need for a unitary council to focus on the specific economic and housing needs of the growing city-region.



Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

890 responses

69% of respondents either 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' with option B, while **24%** either 'Disagreed' or 'Strongly Disagreed'

The most common name suggest for the new unitary authority was **Greater Cambridge**.

Additional comments revealed that many supporters view it as **a sensible option, due to shared economic and cultural ties**.

Many comments in opposition revealed **disagreement with LGR overall**. Others expressed preference for alternative options.



East Cambridgeshire

249 responses

52% expressed support for option B, while **48%** did not support option B.

Of those who supported option B, a majority did so out of an **opposition to merging with Cambridge**, especially regarding **concerns of being overshadowed** by the city.

Of those who did not support option B, many were **unhappy about merging with Peterborough and Fenland**.

Many of these responses highlight a cultural connection with Cambridge instead.



Residents and stakeholders consistently told us they value councils and councillors who understand their local areas and reflect their communities.

They emphasised the importance of ensuring that the new unitary authorities represent and protect the distinct cultural identities of each area.

If our proposal is successful, we will embark on detailed rounds of engagement with local communities, businesses and other key partners to design councils that are fit for the future.



East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire: complex local affinities

Survey findings from East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire – the two central districts of the region – reveal that both areas have strong connections in multiple directions.

To the south, some communities share practical, economic, and cultural ties with Cambridge, as well as Bedford and Newmarket; and, to the north, with Peterborough and Suffolk, and other neighbouring areas.

These connections include commuter flows, consumer patterns, shared service footprints, and community identities.

At first glance, the southern connections might suggest a case for including East Cambridgeshire and/or Huntingdonshire within a Greater Cambridge unitary.

However, deeper analysis suggests residents are apprehensive about these scenarios.

The feedback suggests residents fear their districts becoming peripheral within a Greater Cambridge unitary council. For example, 81% of residents in East Cambridgeshire expressed concerns their interests could be overlooked.

The public engagement demonstrated that

residents fear a new council could find its local priorities overshadowed by the Cambridge high-growth agenda.

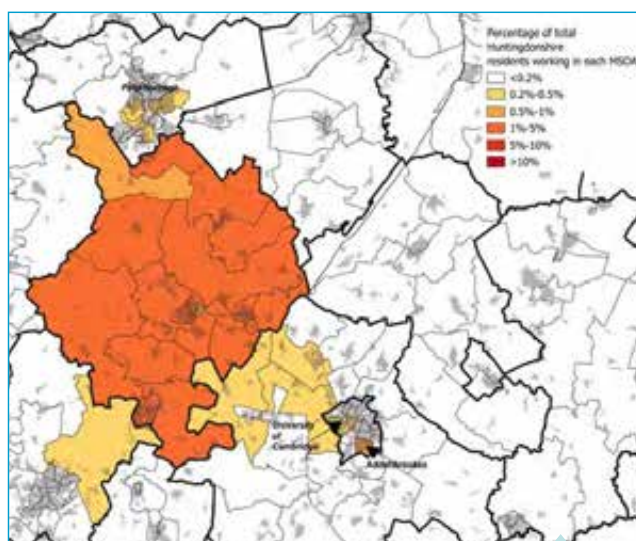
Existing factors may reinforce these concerns about voice and influence.

Greater Cambridge functions as an integrated system — anchored by an internationally significant economy, a shared Local Plan, and Greater Cambridge housing, transport, and infrastructure strategies, a portfolio of shared services and a history of partnership complemented by cohesive governance.

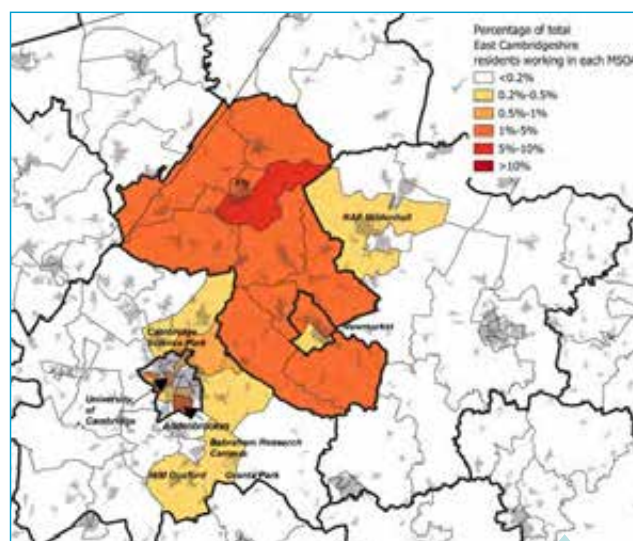
The Greater Cambridge growth agenda now has direct government backing through the Cambridge Growth Company and the recently announced Development Corporation.

As a result, East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire residents may ultimately feel they would have greater voice and influence within a northern unitary.

A large, predominantly rural, North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unitary council would arguably share a stronger community of interest with the issues around voice and influence they have raised.



The working locations of Huntingdonshire residents illustrates the importance of rural employment across the district and the pull of urban areas.



The working locations of East Cambridgeshire residents illustrates a key employment concentration in and around Ely.



Options appraisal

Introduction

This section provides a balanced appraisal of the five lead proposals to government from councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Each proposal is assessed against the government's six key reorganisation criteria:

- economy and housing
- financial resilience
- sustainable public services
- collaboration
- devolution, and
- democratic representation and community engagement

The appraisal shows that option B best supports inclusive, sustainable public services and provides the strongest foundations for economic growth and housing across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Better economic prospects have a direct and positive impact on the fiscal outlook for local government through stronger business rates and council tax growth. As a result, this option can enable both new councils to be financially resilient and have better funded public services. Option B also supports devolution, democratic representation, and community engagement.

Option A



Option B



Option C

Not submitted to government



Option D



Option E



Option	Unitary 1	Unitary 2
A	Northwest unitary	Southeast unitary
	Peterborough Fenland Huntingdonshire County Council functions	Cambridge East Cambridgeshire South Cambridgeshire County Council functions
	519,000 population	415,000 population
	£1,057 budget per head	£945 budget per head
B	North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Greater Cambridge
	Peterborough East Cambridgeshire Fenland Huntingdonshire County Council functions	Cambridge South Cambridgeshire County Council functions
	612,000 population	322,000 population
	£1,055 budget per head	£916 budget per head
C <i>Not submitted to government</i>	Northeast unitary	Southwest unitary
	Peterborough East Cambridgeshire Fenland County Council functions	Cambridge Huntingdonshire South Cambridgeshire County Council functions
	421,500 population	512,500 population
	£1,105 budget per head	£926 budget per head

Option	Unitary 1	Unitary 2	Unitary 3
D	Northwest unitary	Central unitary	Southern unitary
	Peterborough Parts of Huntingdonshire County Council functions	East Cambridgeshire Fenland Parts of Huntingdonshire County Council functions	Cambridge South Cambridgeshire County Council functions
	292,000 population	320,000 population	322,000 population
E	Northeast unitary	Central unitary	Southern unitary
	Peterborough East Cambridgeshire Fenland County Council functions	Huntingdonshire County Council functions	Cambridge South Cambridgeshire County Council functions
	421,500 population	190,500 population	322,000 population

Scoring

The table below provides a generic appraisal of one, two and three unitary options for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough against the MHCLG criteria

for LGR. It demonstrates that overall, two unitary options meet the criteria, but one unitary and three unitary options only partially meet the criteria.

MHCLG criteria for LGR	One Unitary	Two Unitaries	Three Unitaries
Economy and housing - Sensible economic areas; helping to increase housing supply and meet local needs. Seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government	Not viable. Government has indicated there must be at least two principal authorities in Strategic Mayoral Authority.	4	2
Financial resilience - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks		4	1
Sustainable public services - Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens in particular adult social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness		4	2
Collaboration - Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views. Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance, and evidence of local engagement		4	3
Devolution - New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements		4	4
Democratic representation and community engagement - New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment		4	4
OVERALL (out of 30)	N/A	24	16

Nature, waterways and homes in Huntingdonshire

The table below provides an appraisal of the five options (A-E) considered by local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It demonstrates

that overall, option B meets the MHCLG criteria. Options A and C partially meet the criteria, while options D and E only slightly meet the criteria.

1.Does not meet criteria	2.Slightly meets criteria	3.Partially meets criteria	4.Meets criteria	5.Exceeds criteria

A summary of the rationale for the scoring is set overleaf and a detailed appraisal of each option in Appendix 3 - Detailed options appraisal.

MHCLG criteria for LGR	Option A	Option B	Option C*	Option D	Option E
Economy and housing - Sensible economic areas; helping to increase housing supply and meet local needs. Seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.	3	5	3	2	2
Financial resilience - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks	3	4	2	1	1
Sustainable public services - Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens in particular adult social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	4	4	3	2	2
Collaboration - Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views. Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance, and evidence of local engagement	3	4	3	2	3
Devolution - New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	4	4	4	4	4
Democratic representation and community engagement - New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment	4	4	4	5	4
OVERALL (out of 30)	21	25	19	16	16

*Not submitted to government

Economy and housing

- **Option B** will create two councils of most similar economic size (in terms of GDP, employee numbers and business turnover) now and over the longer-term.
- **Option B** is more 'future-proofed' than option A (and C). Over time Greater Cambridge's economy will grow more rapidly than North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's (10% more by 2040), but the gap between the two economies would be far greater in option A (50% in 2050) and option C (100% in 2050). Option A (and C) would result in one unitary having an undue economic and fiscal (business rates) advantage over the other.
- **Option B** creates two unitary councils that reflect distinct, nationally significant economic geographies, that are complementary and provide spillover benefits to each other. The southern 'innovation' unitary will reflect the footprint of Cambridge's internationally significant knowledge economy (life sciences, AI and clean-tech). The northern 'powerhouse' unitary will be amongst the largest in England, with nationally significant sectors (advanced manufacturing, digital, defence, logistics and agri-tech) supporting a balanced, dynamic and resilient economy.
- By aligning governance and public service delivery most closely with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's three functional economic areas and housing markets, option B will

support inclusive and sustainable economic and housing growth and maximise the sub-region's contribution to national economic growth.

Financial resilience

- **Option B** is the clear choice for financial sustainability. Using a balanced scorecard approach, it delivers the most equitable and resilient solution for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a whole. It gives both new councils the financial resilience needed for long-term stability, reducing the risk that essential local services cannot be funded.
- **Option B** delivers both immediate sustainability and long-term value. Full payback of the initial implementation costs will be achieved by 2031/32 (Year 4 after vesting). Option B will deliver annual recurring savings of £42.8m by 2032/33 (Year 5), and cumulative savings of £167.4m by 2035/36 (Year 8).
- **Option B** is the only proposal that genuinely addresses regional inequality for Peterborough and northern Cambridgeshire. It ensures the northern unitary has both the scale, financial resources and resilience, and capacity to tackle entrenched deprivation and inequality.
- **Option B** also aligns economic geography with governance. By matching council boundaries to areas designed for growth, it creates the conditions for economic expansion to generate the tax base needed to fund improving public services – a virtuous cycle that benefits all our communities.



Public services

- **Option B** is more likely to deliver high-quality and sustainable public services than Options A and C, because resources will be divided more equitably across the whole area.
- The size of the northern unitary will also help balance the higher social care needs and levels of deprivation in Peterborough and Fenland, creating a council with needs that will be below the national average, whereas option A (and C) will create smaller councils with more concentrated demand. The fast-growing economy of the southern unitary will provide the tax base needed to meet the increasing social care needs of a rapidly growing population.

- Both new unitary councils will develop neighbourhood services tailored to meet distinct local needs. Public services will be better aligned to how people live and work, which will help meet community needs and reduce demand failure. A localised approach will also allow both councils to determine spending and strategies around prevention and early intervention.
- In the longer-term, option B will best support improvement of children's services (from current "inadequate" and "requires improvement" Ofsted ratings), adult social care services and SEND provision in the area through new delivery models and opportunities for prevention and transformation²⁸.

Collaboration

- **Option B** has involved the most collaboration between councils of all the proposals. Three of the seven councils (Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire) are supporting the proposal, and three other councils (Huntingdonshire, Fenland and Peterborough) have significantly contributed to its development.

Democratic representation and community engagement

- **Option B** best reflects current and historic local identities and enables local communities to influence the future of their area. The northern unitary will be large enough to accommodate distinct local governance and community engagement arrangements to meet the diverse needs of urban Peterborough, market towns and rural villages. The southern unitary reflects the Cambridge city region and has a coherent, interdependent identity that makes sense to local people and how they live their lives.
- The southern unitary will reflect the historic county geography of Cambridgeshire, while the northern unitary will contain the three historic counties of Huntingdonshire, Isle of Ely and the Soke of Peterborough.

Devolution

- **Option B** creates two economically balanced constituent member councils. This will result

in more balanced representation around the CPCA table than other options, resulting in more effective strategic decision-making. It will also minimise the risk of policy, investment or delivery bias towards either member council.

- **Option B** will support the CPCA more than other options to deliver growth, jobs and housing across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area by allowing plans, strategies and investments to focus on each area's unique strengths and challenges, whilst creating opportunities to harness the complementary strengths of each area.
- **Option B** will support the government's continued focus on the Greater Cambridge economy as a driver of UK economic growth. The geographic alignment between the Greater Cambridge unitary and the Cambridge Growth Company will enable more coherent governance of economic growth, infrastructure and housing issues. It supports delivery of the government's growth ambitions for Cambridge and the CPCA's Local Growth Plan.



King's Parade, Cambridge



Our proposal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

All options for local government reorganisation have been carefully appraised against the government's criteria. Our proposal scores the highest and is the clear front runner.

'Option B'

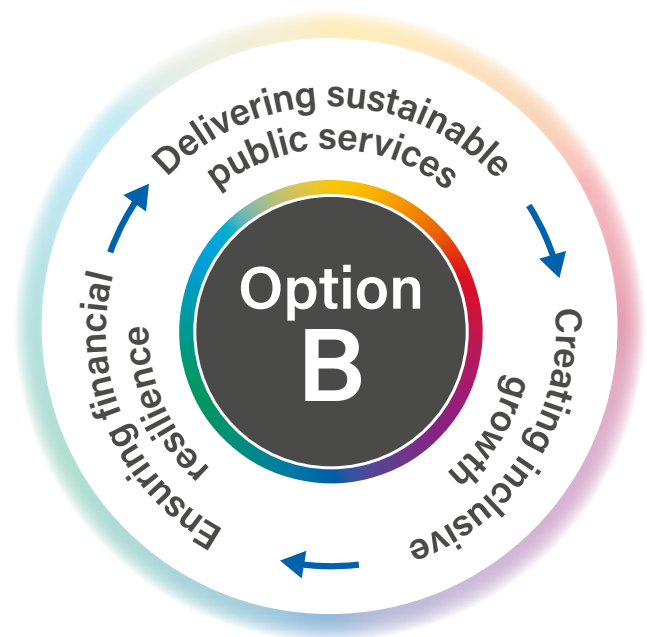
It will deliver better services for residents because it builds on the area's strengths and opportunities for growth and public service reform.

Inclusive growth and public service reform

Growth and public service reform go hand in hand and are vital to the success of our area and the wellbeing and prosperity of our residents.

Taking advantage of the growth potential of our region's unique economies requires councils that can think and act at the right scale.

Our proposal will deliver that change by creating a North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Council and a Greater Cambridge Council.



The benefits of option B

1. A sensible balance built on the region's functional economic areas
2. Distinct and complementary economies
3. Alignment of housing and infrastructure investment
4. Substantial and achievable savings will be delivered
5. Balanced and equitable finances across both new councils, now and in the future
6. Better financial resilience to future poof services
7. Greater fairness and better outcomes
8. Localised approach to service delivery
9. Councils committed to putting residents first when transforming services
10. Respect for distinct historic identities
11. Enhancement of community voice through flexible, place-based engagement
12. Unlocking the full potential of devolution through balanced strategic governance

Economy and housing

Economy and housing

Balanced and inclusive: two functional economic areas of national importance

Government Criteria...to support and create “sensible economic areas that support growth [...] with a strong and fair tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area” and help “to increase housing supply and meet local needs ”

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough already have one of the UK’s most important regional economies. LGR can deliver additional economic benefits for residents and businesses in both proposed new authorities.

There will be a single front door for growth, infrastructure and housing decisions. Each Council will have the capacity to promote and attract new investment and jobs.



Each council will be anchored by two of England’s most dynamic and fast-growing cities - Cambridge and Peterborough - and complemented by rural areas and market towns creating strengths across multiple critical growth sectors.

Outside London, both councils will be in the top 20 authorities by GDP in the UK²⁹. They will both have the attention of the Government and the ability to influence and deliver regional and national policy.

Our proposal delivers on the Government’s economic and housing objectives for Local

Government Reorganisation:

1. A sensible balance built on the region’s functional economic areas, which creates two councils of national economic significance without undue disadvantage for one area.
2. Two economic areas with distinct and complementary strengths, and spillover benefits to support the region’s growth ambitions
3. Two councils capable of maximizing the housing and infrastructure potential of the whole region sustainably

Our proposal creates the scale and focus needed to accelerate inclusive growth so important for local jobs, the national economy and council finances.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 612k population

The regional backbone of industrial production and distribution, including key rail freight routes and motorways. The area boosts nationally significant advanced manufacturing, logistics and agri-food. Key growth sites are located along the A1/A14/A47 corridors, the Fens provide critical national food supply.

With £20.3 billion GDP and over 250,000 employees, generating £40 billion annual business turnover, this unitary council would represent one of England’s most diverse and resilient industrial powerhouses.

Greater Cambridge, 322k population

Europe’s most successful science and technology cluster, ranked second globally for innovation³⁰. The area contains a high value bio-medical and AI-tech ecosystem, anchored by the world-renowned science and business parks and the University of Cambridge.

With £17.2 billion GDP and 226,000 employees generating £80 billion annual business turnover it’s in the top 15 largest UK employment clusters and have one of the highest densities of knowledge intensive businesses in the world.

Three compelling economic benefits

Benefit 1: A sensible balance that reflects the regions functional economic areas

Economic balance for the region

The two council geographies are different sizes, but each has a similar size economy.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's has a slightly larger economy, around £20bn compared to Greater Cambridge at £17bn (Gross Domestic Product, ONS 2023)³¹.

Both councils will also have fiscal balance. They will have a similar total rateable value of commercial space at around £400m per annum.

If economic trends continue and populations increase as forecast, by 2040 the Greater Cambridge economy will be 5-15% larger than North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough³².

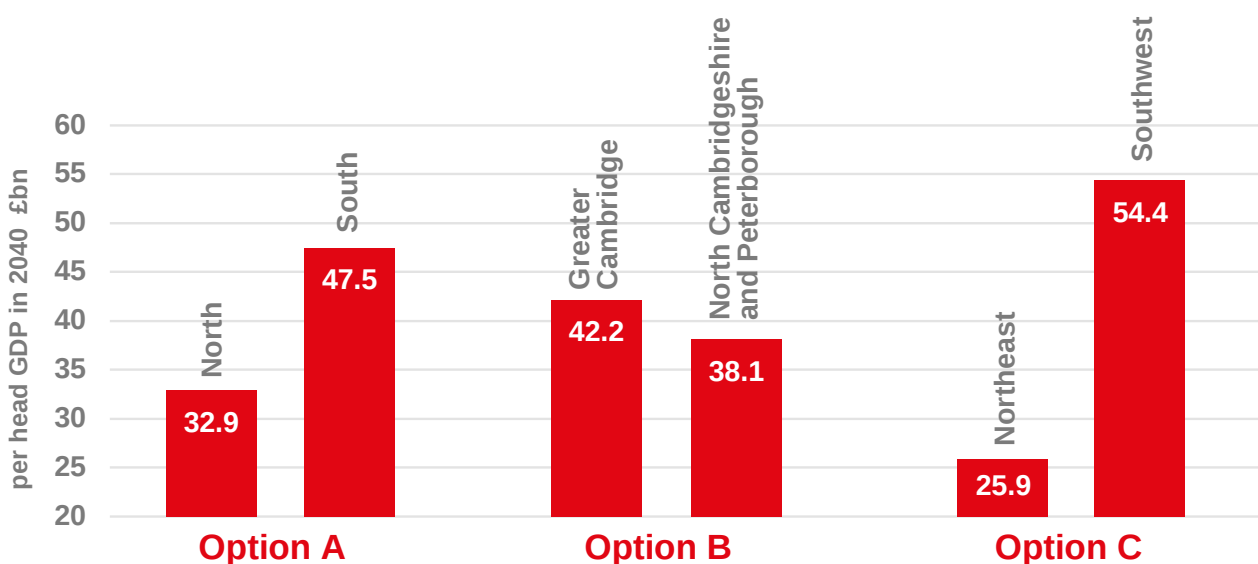


Councils with national economic significance

If North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were around today it would have the equivalent size economy as Liverpool. Outside London, the 10th largest local authority economy ranked by GDP in the UK.

Greater Cambridge's GDP would be larger than Cardiff's, making it the 17th largest outside London.

2040 estimated GDP based on historic trends



Option A (and C) will lead to distinctly imbalanced and inequitable economies across the region.

Option A will lead to the southern council with an economy 40-50% larger than the northern council in 2040, and Option C more than double the size of the northern council.

Both these options struggle to meet government criteria as one council will have an undue economic and fiscal advantage over the other.

Option B achieves the best economic balance for the region. Increasing the size of a southern unitary will increase economic and fiscal disadvantage for the northern council.



The AstraZeneca building at Cambridge Biomedical Campus

Functional economic areas

Each council area represents a functional economic area with a high level of alignment with local labour markets and consumer patterns³³.

Our proposal creates new councils that align with the economic realities or the way people live and work:

- **Coherent geographies** for existing business clusters, supply chains and CPCA economic policy
- Each area will facilitate **specialist sectors**, skills and further education strategies that align with the Local Growth Plan³³
- **across the region nearly 88% of working residents** will live and work within their council area³⁴.

Distinct economies

Greater Cambridge has a high value knowledge intensive economy which accounts for two thirds of the region's total annual business turnover. Average ratable values are 2.5 times higher due to the concentration of premium office and lab space.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by comparison is an industrial giant with nearly five times the amount of industrial floorspace. It has competitive land values, an advanced manufacturing heartland combined with high value agricultural sectors.

Employment self-containment for proposed authorities³⁵

Working patterns	Self-containment % (incl. WFH/ No-fixed)	Self-containment % (commuters only)
Greater Cambridge	91	81
North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	86	75

There are several positive benefits that flow from the high level of labour market self-containment in each council area:

- **Productivity** through alignment of residents' skills and local employers' needs³⁶
- **Fiscal stability** - a larger share of income tax and business-rates receipts are retained locally, improving fiscal resilience and making infrastructure investment more efficient
- **Economic coherence** across housing and jobs markets, and transport systems
- **Greater wellbeing and social inclusion outcomes**³⁷ – higher life satisfaction and enhanced social mobility.

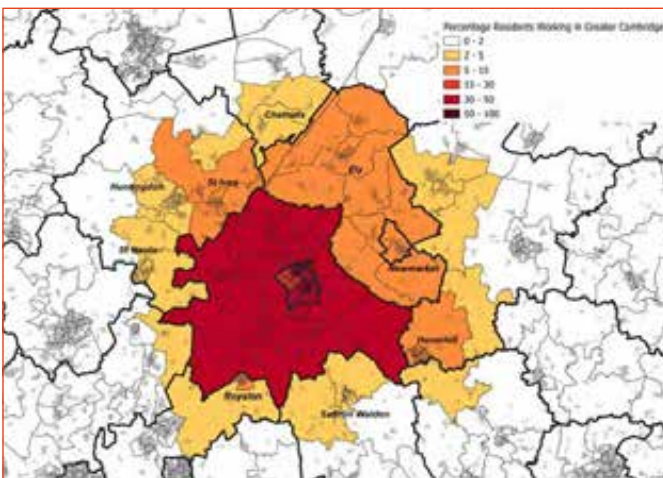
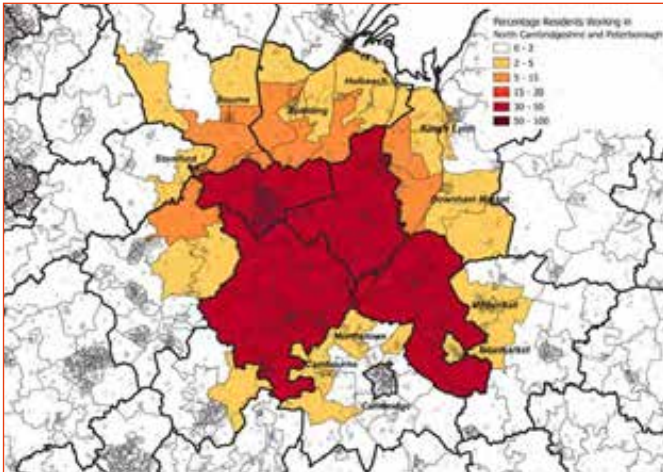


The River Great Ouse

Functional economic areas and unitary local government

Where self-containment exceeds 75–80%, government guidance suggests an area likely constitutes a complete functional economic market area, which could serve as the logical geography for a unitary authority³⁸.

Commuting heatmaps for proposed authorities³⁹



The commuter heat-map diagrams clearly demonstrate the distinct Travel To Work Areas for the proposed Greater Cambridge, and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, unitary councils. Darker areas indicate a greater intensity of commuter flows per overall population.

Further details, including about the commuting patterns of East Cambridgeshire residents to

Cambridge, Newmarket and Mildenhall in Suffolk, and southern Fenland can be found in Appendix 14 - Transport to Work Areas.

Key takeaways

Options A and C create economic imbalance for the region which would:

- give the southern unitary significant advantage over the northern unitary that would widen over time
- lead to policy tensions and the risk of neither council being able to maximise its own or the region's potential to maximise the benefits of devolution
- cut across existing functional economic areas and sectors.

Option B ensures economic balance built on functional economic areas, achieved by:

- both councils having sufficient scale to attract investment and speak powerfully to Government
- the conditions for an equitable partnership that supports regional economic coordination and the devolution agenda
- neither unitary dominating the regional economic policy agenda coordinated through the CPCA
- greater opportunities to lift-up communities and share prosperity for all in the region.

Our proposal achieves critical economic balance and ensures both councils are nationally significant. The functional economic areas reflect the realities of established labour markets and consumer spending patterns and provide confidence for investors.

Our proposal achieves critical economic balance and ensures both councils are nationally significant. The functional economic areas reflect the realities of established labour markets and consumer spending patterns and provide confidence for investors.

	Option A		Option B		Option C	
	North Unitary	South Unitary	North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Greater Cambridge	Northeast unitary	Southwest unitary
GDP total (ONS 2023)	£17.6 (47%)	£19.8bn (53%)	£20.3bn (54%)	£17.2bn (46%)	£14bn (37%)	£23.4bn (63%)
Annual Business turnover (2023) ⁴⁰	£33.7bn (28%)	£86.3bn (72%)	£40.1bn (33%)	£80.3bn (66%)	£20.9bn (17%)	£99.5bn (83%)
Implied non-domestic Rateable Value (2023) ⁴¹	£360m (44.5%)	£448m (55.5%)	£402m (49.8%)	£406m (50.2%)	£283m (35%)	£524m (65%)

Option B delivers greater economic equity and balance for the whole region now and over the long term.



Benefit 2: Distinct and complementary economies

Each council can focus on and develop its core economic advantages. This will enable clearer focus on key sectors that are prioritised in the National Industrial Strategy and the CPCA's Local Growth Plan.

Greater Cambridge's geographic footprint is critical to national economic growth and builds on an established global brand. Cambridge-based companies have now raised £7.9bn in investment since 2015⁴². The government has established the Cambridge Growth Company to accelerate economic development across the area.

- Focus on attracting high-value R&D, life sciences and biotech, digital technology and AI, and knowledge-intensive companies and developing a deep skills pool.
- Nurture partnerships with the globally recognised innovation and technology clusters.
- Maintain investor confidence in internationally competitive sectors.
- Absorb the Greater Cambridge Partnership, reducing governance complexity and enhancing growth opportunities.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough specialises in growing, making and moving. It can become a manufacturing and logistics powerhouse that can:

- Promote nationally significant advanced

manufacturing, industrial and agri-food sectors, including the UK's 'bread-basket'

- Build upon the areas with the highest proportion of exporting businesses in the region
- Develop defence sector opportunities linking southern R&D with northern manufacturing
- Focus on supply chains, services, and jobs that support regional growth to increase workforce participation and reduce statutory service demand.

Each council has different economic strengths and specialisms, supported by distinctive place offers. This allows the councils and the CPCA to focus investment and support on the key sectors in their area.

Innovation to production pathway

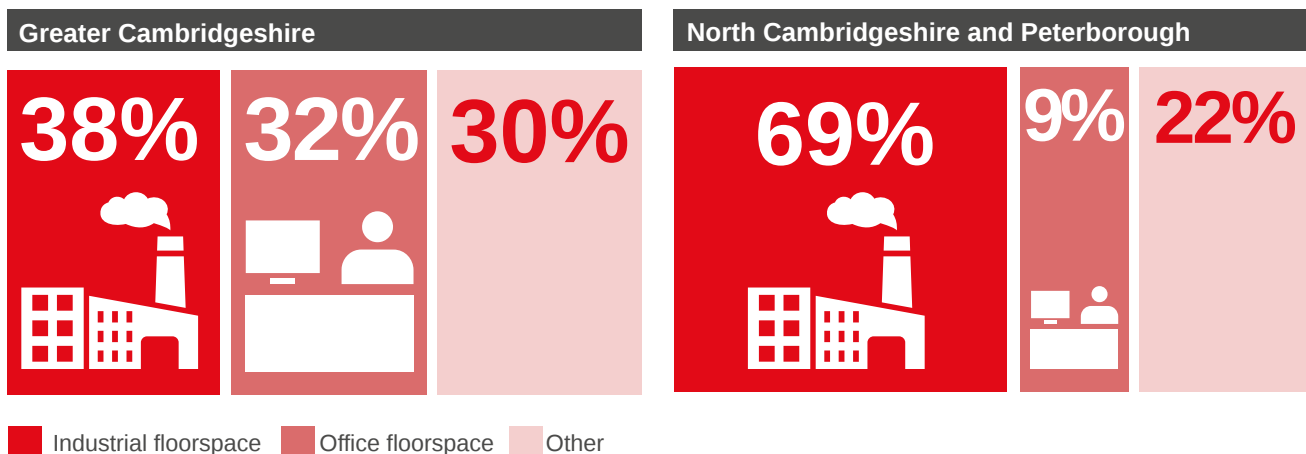
R&D and HQ functions cluster in Greater Cambridge alongside global brands, and a deep graduate and skills pool.

Scale up, assembly, and distribution gravitate to North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough where space, manufacturing expertise and transport connectivity adds greater value.

Other proposals for the area would create councils with more mixed or fragmented economies, with the risk that investment flows to particular dominant sectors at the expense of others.

The comparative advantage and specialism of each council area is currently reflected in their make-up of commercial floorspace.

Commercial floorspace⁴³





St Ives, Bridge Street from London Road

Each economy is interconnected. Each provides spillover benefits to each other as well as beyond Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. These complementary strengths – through option B - can facilitate mutual interdependence rather than competition.

Peterborough's national connectivity, supply chains and logistics, and competitive land prices provide significant benefits for the whole region.

ARU Peterborough delivers skills to support technical roles in bio-medical research and technology companies in the south. Agritech research in Cambridge is applied to agricultural settings in the Fens, which stretch across North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

University of Cambridge spin-outs, such as a CMR

Surgical (robotic surgery) and Paragraf (graphene based electronic devices), have established significant headquarters and new employment in East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.

Option B pairs North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - a nationally significant industrial powerhouse that has expansive agriculture and production facilities, with Europe's leading knowledge intensive innovation cluster in Greater Cambridge.

Two councils representing distinct economic areas with the scale to attract national and international investment. Each area contributes in different ways to regional and national economic competitiveness. Each area can focus on and develop its core economic advantages and potential.

Benefit 3: Alignment of housing and infrastructure investment

Our proposal aligns new councils with housing markets, planned housing growth and infrastructure investment patterns. This will ensure sustainable development that supports economic objectives while meeting environmental targets.

This is ideal to support ambitious Local Plans for each council that focus on the differing economic strengths and housing needs of their functional economic area.

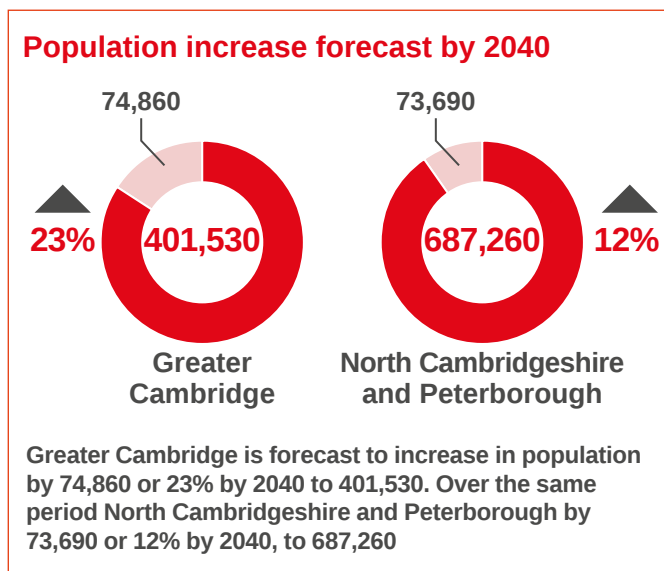
Complex cross-boundary coordination in the north will end⁴⁴. This will strengthen regional housing and infrastructure delivery via the CPCA's anticipated spatial strategy.

Housing strategies can be tailored for different local needs and markets.

	Average house price	£456,000	£265,000
		Greater Cambridge	North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
	Average monthly rent	£1,555	£956

The populations of North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Greater Cambridge are each forecast to increase by around 74,000 people by 2040.

However, as Greater Cambridge has a smaller total population than North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the rate of population growth in the southern unitary (23% by 2040) will be more than double the rate in the northern unitary (12%).



Greater Cambridge: major planned growth is strategically positioned to capitalise on infrastructure investment by Greater Cambridge Partnership. East-West Rail will enable connections between new settlements and employment centres. Planning permission is already in place for over 35,000 homes and 1.2m sqm of commercial floorspace. The Cambridge Growth Company, a subsidiary of Homes England, has been established to further facilitate development, this could increase the forecast rate of growth.



Greater Cambridge will be well placed to deliver affordable housing, as the existing councils both own and manage significant council housing stock and already have housing development programmes and capacity. Over one in 10 homes will be council-owned.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough:

Planned and emerging growth proposals are informed by existing infrastructure connections and planned enhancement. This includes heavy rail and the strategic road network, including the strategic A1 corridor. Peterborough and connected market towns in Huntingdonshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire provide complementary employment and housing opportunities to underpin the city-regions continued economic growth.

The existing councils in the proposed North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unitary area have all transferred their housing stock to different housing associations, which would focus attention on the significant opportunities for shaping the market for affordable housing.

"The Link" Wellbeing Community Hub — Stretham

The Link is a transformative infrastructure project, aiming to harness the power of community-led development through a Community Land Trust.

It will deliver affordable housing at the edge of Stretham, and provide a lasting foundation for health, connection and wellbeing.



Funded in part by £1.2m from East Cambridgeshire District Council, the Link brings together a GP surgery, café, meeting/work units, and complementary holistic health service spaces. The Link looks to provide a lifeline of community gathering, support, and economic opportunity.

23 high quality homes have already been built, including shared ownership tenures. An additional 6 homes will be owned by Hundred Houses.

Planning for sustainable growth

To keep pace with demand for affordable homes, business growth and 73,000 forecast jobs the proposed Greater Cambridge Local Plan increases new homes that can be built up to 2045 to 77,000, including up to 2.5 sqm of commercial and lab space – equivalent to 350 football pitches.

These spatial plans are based on a longstanding strategy that:

- Maximises the value of major transport infrastructure investments
- Ensures new housing supports rather than constrains economic growth
- Creates sustainable travel patterns that reduce carbon emissions.

Neighbouring districts, East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire do not have the same affordability

and growth challenges. Neither do they require the transformative scale of development the government has identified as necessary to support the Greater Cambridge economy.

Strategic development sites



In 2024, the Homes England-CPCA strategic partnership identified that of 68,000 homes being built or planned at strategic sites **over three quarters are in Greater Cambridge.**



LGR proposals that interfere with the Greater Cambridge spatial framework risk fragmenting and slowing down these ambitious plans.

For **North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough** outside the A1 corridor and other key growth sites, large scale homebuilding opportunities face different infrastructure constraints.

A different approach is required. Large scale development in these areas will:

- present significant infrastructure funding challenges reflecting development, land values and viability challenges
- strain existing transport networks beyond capacity undermining productivity
- perpetuate car dependency and increase carbon emissions
- result in the loss of valuable agricultural land which is key to national food production and food security and key habitats such as the nationally significant peatland, which is key to carbon storage and biodiversity.

As a large geographic council, North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will facilitate a more strategic approach to housing and infrastructure delivery to optimise financial efficiency and economic impact. This could enable a focus on development in areas where it is most needed to support economic growth, while preserving areas of high-value food production or environmental importance.

Our proposal ensures each council can develop focused housing strategies that align with their distinct infrastructure capacities and investment programmes, maximising delivery while maintaining sustainability.

Growth, financial resilience and funding public services

Local economic growth and funding for local services are mutually reinforcing (NAO 2025; IFS 2018). Growth increases locally retained revenues and homebuilding broadens the Council Tax base. This is particularly important to fund statutory services and address deprivation in parts of Peterborough and the Fens.

Councils designed for growth will have more funding to meet statutory needs or **invest in the core drivers of productivity:** housebuilding, transport, skills, business support and place-making. Well targeted investments that support prevention or productivity broaden the local tax base and reduce spend on crisis services, strengthening fiscal resilience (Institute for Government 2025).

National economic significance

This government's decision about where to draw local authority boundaries has national significance.

LGR has the potential to assert the national and international significance of our region, or the potential to disrupt sectors, supply chains, development and investment plans so crucial to the national economy.

Our proposal plays to each area's strengths, to enhance business confidence and accelerate growth sustainably.

With two councils of national scale and importance option B will enhance what makes Cambridgeshire and Peterborough an economic powerhouse.

Our proposal delivers sensible and equitable economic areas that have distinct but complementary strengths; exceptional growth prospects that support strong tax bases and financial resilience; and streamlined governance that will accelerate housing delivery across the region.

Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge

The government intends to establish a Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge. The Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, announced £400 million of initial government funding for the Development Corporation to kickstart the

development of affordable homes, infrastructure and business expansion.

Science Minister and Oxford-Cambridge Innovation Champion, Lord Vallance: "Cambridge is one of the world's most fertile grounds for innovation to take root, and blossom into opportunities for investment, job creation, and progress in fields ranging from life sciences to deep tech."



Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability

Summary

Financial sustainability is key to successful Local Government Reorganisation.

It is arguably the most important of the government's criteria. Residents, businesses and other local stakeholders also placed it in their top three priorities.

No council can hope to improve its delivery of public services, grow its economy, or deliver more housing if it is always struggling to balance the budget.

Financial sustainability underpins our support for option B – it's not just desirable, it is essential. This option delivers the strongest financial foundation for the whole area, creating two robust councils with the capacity and resources to not only deliver excellent services effectively but also invest in the improvements our communities need and deserve.

Our financial benefits

Option B delivers two significant financial benefits:

1. Substantial savings will be delivered - £42.8m in the base case and £57.3m in the stretch case - with a payback period by Year 4.
2. Balanced and equitable finances across both new councils taking a range of factors into account, reducing the risk that local services cannot be funded in the future.

Why discount three unitary options?

A number of other three unitary options were also considered early on and discounted by council leaders for the following reasons:

- Setting up three councils will be more costly and result in a longer pay-back period
- Operating three councils will be more expensive than operating two councils⁴⁵
- Three-unitary options struggle to achieve sufficient population and financial scale⁴⁶.

Options D and E propose three unitary councils for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which would not be financially sustainable for the region.

Financial sustainability assessment: Two unitary options

Independent financial analysis by Pixel confirms that all 'two unitary' options for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are viable. However, viability is not enough – **the differences between options A, B and C are significant and will determine whether our new councils simply survive or thrive.**

The financial analysis, detailed in Appendix 2 - Financial analysis and modelling, goes beyond theoretical viability. It compares the actual funding position of each council: budget, the starting reserves, and the debt implications of each proposal using **real budget data provided by the Chief Financial Officers** across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

This rigorous, evidence-based approach reveals critical distinctions between the options. The high-level findings are summarised in the table.

Ratings of options A, B and C on key financial themes

	Funding: budget ratio	Reserves	Debt
Option A	Green	Gold	Gold
Option B	Green	Green	Green
Option C	Red	Gold	Gold

The ratings are defined as follows:

- **Red** – Significant concern which brings into question the financial sustainability of one (or both) of the new unitary councils in the option
- **Gold** – Moderate concern warranting consideration
- **Green** – No material concern.

Option B is the clear choice for financial sustainability. Using a balanced scorecard approach, it delivers the most equitable and resilient solution for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a whole. Option B provides balanced strength. It gives both new councils the financial resilience needed for long-term stability, reducing the risk that essential local services cannot be funded.



With projected savings of £42.8m and payback achieved by 2030/31, option B delivers both immediate sustainability and long-term value.

Option A creates significant imbalances.

While the funding-to-budget ratio appears healthy, it leaves the northern council with a more challenging debt position and severely inadequate reserves – inheriting only 57% of the value of the southern council's reserves. For a council serving communities with higher care needs and more volatile spending pressures, this reserves deficit represents a concern from day one.

Option C is financially unsustainable. The northeast council would face an immediate budget gap in Year 1, carry the highest debt gearing of any two-unitary option, and hold the lowest reserves of all scenarios. This is not a viable foundation for effective local government.

What will Option B save – and what will it cost to set up?

Efficiencies, savings and transition costs

This section outlines how our proposal for two new unitary authorities for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will deliver financial resilience and reduce costs.

We will achieve this through reducing duplication, achieving economies of scale, and delivering more cost-effective services through transformation and improvement.

While each council faces unique financial challenges, a number of themes are common to all:

- Growth in demand for services, particularly social care, SEND and homelessness
- Inflationary pressures in nearly all areas of spend
- The impact of the Fair Funding reform and uncertainty around future grant funding streams.

The transition to two new unitary councils will inevitably bring further uncertainty. However, because there are already two upper tier authorities within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the current proposal will not create additional ongoing costs.

Independent modelling by Newton suggests that any of the proposed two-unitary options will be marginally cheaper than the status quo⁴⁷.

Savings and transitional costs for option B are shown below. A detailed explanation of the approach and assumptions is set out in Appendix 2.

Projected savings

We have set out two scenarios – a base case and a stretch case.

The 'base-case' refers to highly achievable benefits that are built into the proposal, the majority of which will be delivered within four years from vesting day.

A 'stretch-case' is more ambitious and will require careful, planned implementation but could achieve further benefits through deeper transformation.

Using the base case, our financial analysis demonstrates that option B will generate annual savings by 2032/33 of £42.8m.

While the specific savings achieved will be subject to the ambition and decisions of the new unitary councils, our modelling indicates that substantial savings can be achieved through moving to a two unitary model and specifically option B.

The financial benefits of our **'base-case'** two-unitary model include:

- Reducing duplicated costs arising from seven councils
- Using digital technology to improve customer/resident experience and accessibility as well as automating simple services and increasing data integrity
- Making better use of social care, public health and benefits data to focus on preventative measures, such as targeted promotion of leisure and wellbeing services.

The financial benefits of our **'stretch case'** two-unitary model include in addition:

- A more radical approach to service transformation
- Closer integration of social care and housing to create holistic support systems that don't just serve residents better, they cost less to deliver over the longer term.
- Development of workforce capabilities and new technology to drive productivity gains across every part of our services.

Financial efficiencies

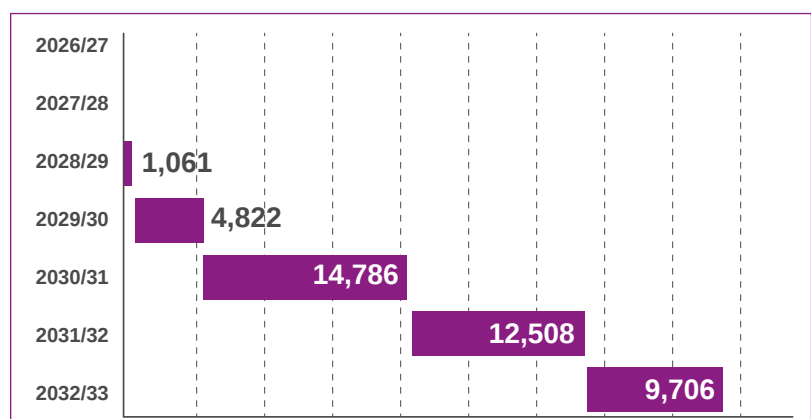
(savings across both new councils; £m per annum)

Forecast savings are set out below, and detailed explanation of all assumptions made for each saving are set out in Appendix 2.

	Total spend 7 councils 24/25 £m	Base Savings £m	Stretch Savings £m	Base Saving % of Existing Cost Base
Senior Management	15.4	6.3	6.3	41%
All Remaining Workforce excluding Education, Social Care, ICT	224.1	17.9	26.9	8%
ICT Systems and Workforce	34.6	9.6	11.0	28%
Office Accommodation	10.9	2.7	5.5	25%
Democratic Arrangements (1) Councillor Costs	4.2	0.9	0.9	23%
Democratic Arrangements (2) Election Costs	3.5	1.5	1.5	44%
Supplies and Services (non-ICT, non- Office Accommodation)	50.9	3.8	5.1	7.5%
Total savings across both new councils		42.8	57.3	10%

Annual savings build up £m

These savings build up over five years, with the entire £42.8m being delivered by 2032/33.



Projected transition and ongoing costs

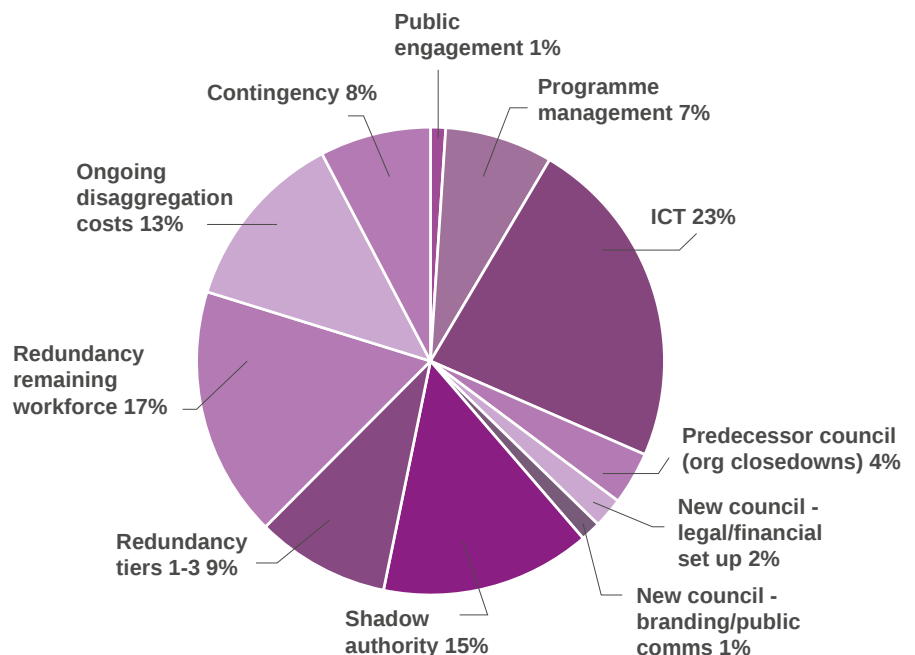
Set against the savings are the one-off and ongoing costs of reorganisation, which are outlined below, and explained in more detail in Appendix 2.

One off and ongoing additional costs (across both new councils)

	Pre-Vesting Day		Post-Vesting Day				Line item total
	26-27 £m	27-28 £m	28-29 £m	29-30 £m	30-31 £m	31-32 £m	
Public Engagement		0.3	0.3				0.6
Programme Management	1.4	1.4	1.4				4.3
ICT		4.2	6.5	2.1	0.4		13.2
Predecessor Council (organisation closedowns)			2.1				2.1
New councils legal/financial set up		1.2					1.2
New Councils Public Comms/Branding		0.4	0.4				0.8
Shadow Authority Costs		8.3					8.3
Redundancy Tier 1-3			5.3				5.3
Redundancy Remaining Workforce				4.9	4.9		9.9
Ongoing Disaggregation Costs			1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	7.2
Contingency	0.1	1.6	1.8	0.9			4.4
Total	1.5	17.5	19.7	9.7	7.1	1.8	57.4

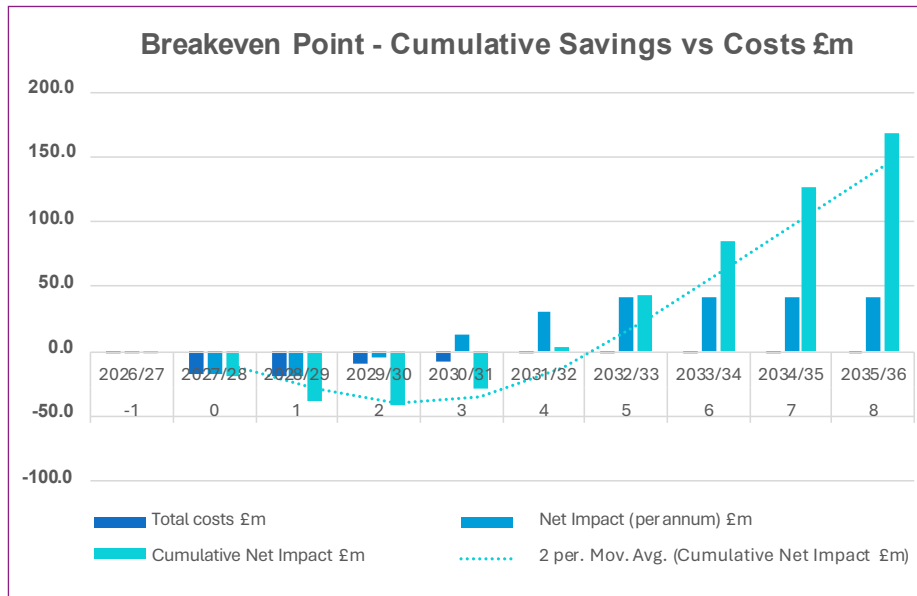
The implementation costs by category and % of overall spend are shown opposite (using the data from the above table):

Implementation costs by category £m



Payback period

Option B pays back by Year 4 of the new authorities, meaning the savings will outweigh the upfront costs in only four years, freeing up recurring savings to support the cost of delivering frontline services and deeper transformation – creating a virtuous cycle.



Cuckoos Hollow public footbridges in Peterborough

Payback period, using the base case savings scenario

Year	Financial Year	One off costs £m	Recurring costs £m	Total costs £m	Recurring Savings £m	Net Impact (per annum) £m	Cumulative Net Impact £m
-1	2026/27	-1.6	0.0	-1.6	0.0	-1.6	-1.6
0	2027/28	-17.5	0.0	-17.5	-0.2	-17.7	-19.3
1	2028/29	-17.9	-1.8	-19.7	1.1	-18.6	-37.9
2	2029/30	-7.9	-1.8	-9.7	5.9	-3.8	-41.8
3	2030/31	-5.3	-1.8	-7.1	20.7	13.5	-28.2
4	2031/32	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	33.2	31.4	3.1
5	2032/33	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	42.9	41.1	44.2
6	2033/34	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	42.9	41.1	85.3
7	2034/35	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	42.9	41.1	126.4
8	2035/36	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	42.9	41.1	167.5

Comparison of savings and costs for all LGR options⁴⁸

	Maximum Annual Savings	Total Implementation Costs	Payback year
Option A	£12.1m	£34m	6
Option B	£42.8m	£57.4m	4
Option C	£6.2m	£14m	2
Option D	£1.4m	£41m	50+
Option E	£2.3m	£17m	8

Council Tax harmonisation

New unitary authorities are required to harmonise their Band D Council Tax within seven years (Council Taxes must be fully harmonised by year 8). In practice, though, most new unitary authorities harmonise within one or two years.

A detailed explanation of the impact on each existing authority's council tax levels is set out in Appendix 2.

Conclusion: financial sustainability

Option B creates two genuinely sustainable councils with the financial strength to deliver for residents over the long term.

The £57.4m implementation investment delivers clear value: full payback by 2031/32 (year 4 after Vesting Day) and cumulative net savings of £167.4m by 2035/36. This is not simply reorganisation – it's a strategic investment that pays for itself and generates substantial ongoing savings.

Critically, Option B is the only proposal that genuinely addresses the levelling-up agenda for Peterborough and northern Cambridgeshire. It ensures the northern unitary has the scale, financial resilience and capacity to tackle entrenched deprivation and inequality.

Option B also aligns economic geography with governance. By matching council boundaries to areas designed for growth, it creates the conditions for economic expansion to generate the tax base needed to fund improving public services – a virtuous cycle that benefits all our communities.

A glorious day at Peterborough's Central Park

Better public services

Better public services

“prioritising the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services to citizens” with “consideration given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children’s services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety”.

Transformation and public service reform

Reorganising councils presents an opportunity to be innovative, address current challenges and to make sure they are fit for the future. It can act as a catalyst to improve outcomes for all our residents, alongside wider reforms including:

- The NHS 10-year plan (analogue to digital; treatment to prevention; and hospitals to community)
- Planned reforms to adult social care, children’s services, SEND and public health (Casey Commission and the development of a national adult social care reform plan).

We should take an ambitious and localised approach to transformation so that services are organised for our local communities to thrive as they have requested.



People, Powered, Places is a preventative-led approach, with strong roots in local communities, building on evidenced-based practice to reduce demand for statutory care, increase responsiveness and provide greater value for money for the taxpayer.

Well targeted investments that support prevention reduce spend on crisis services, strengthen councils’ fiscal resilience and improve labour market outcomes⁴⁹.

The People, Powered, Places approach is informed by expert analysis and recommendations by Red Quadrant (see Appendix 10 - Future of Social Care and Public Health). Their report sets out a practical blueprint to inform the delivery of safe, legal and sustainable people services (adult social care, children’s services, SEND and public health) in the new unitary councils. It also draws on analysis by PPL of opportunities to improve homelessness services in the new unitary councils (see Appendix 11 - Advice note on Housing and Homelessness).

The blueprint builds on a collaborative workshop in August 2025 involving chief executives and social care leaders from Peterborough City Council and the five district councils (Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire). This concluded that effective public service delivery during the transition period and following reorganisation would require a collective vision and a shared approach to reducing demand and meeting need early through prevention.

Four key public service benefits of option B:

- **Better financial resilience to future-proof services**
- **Greater fairness and better outcomes**
- **Localised approach to service delivery**
- **Councils committed to putting residents first when transforming services**

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Greater Cambridge councils will provide measurably better outcomes than the status quo and achieve better value public services for the taxpayer.

Each council will have distinct qualities and strengths and the best prospects to address their

particular local challenges compared to alternative options.

Greater Cambridge faces significant housing affordability challenges and rising SEND pressures, while North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has greater deprivation, higher working age care needs and an ageing population.

The new councils will seek to join the national 'Test, Learn, Grow' programme to redesign services through a place-based approach.

This will build on preventative services already provided, use existing community centres and establish Best Start Family Hubs as the backbone of this approach.

Adoption of neighbourhood-based models of service delivery will enable both councils to begin the journey to genuinely integrate social care, education and health services, with housing, community safety and the wide range of preventative services currently provided.

Both councils will be designed to deliver more effective and more responsive services that residents have called for in response to surveys about their reorganisation priorities.

Other reorganisation proposals do not provide these benefits. They would:

- create a greater imbalance in social needs between each council area, which could risk perpetuating inequalities in health and employment outcomes
- place additional strain on council budgets
- create the risk of a postcode lottery for residents with housing needs by mixing up areas with council-owned homes and areas with no council-owned homes
- not support growth prospects for the whole of the area, which will affect future funding for local services.

Over time these disadvantages could create greater unfairness between the quality and funding for public services that residents living in each council area receive.



People, Powered, Places recognises the diverse needs of our neighbourhoods

Enabling us to

Work with local providers to provide local services which meet the needs of local people – utilising best practice and advances in technology

Help people to help themselves and live healthier, more independent lives



Target resources where they are most needed – combining the large 'buying power' of the northern unitary with the technological advances in the southern

Provide services closer to home that are tailored to people's individual needs

Reduce demand and costs

Deliver on public and government expectations

Simply 'lifting and shifting' existing services into the new councils will not resolve these demand and cost pressures. That approach is likely to result in cost and demand trajectories continuing to rise unsustainably.

People, Powered, Places is a new approach for the area which redesigns the way services are delivered to help reduce demand for statutory care services, and support greater independence and community resilience.

Each council has the right scale to fund services that can enable communities to thrive but is local enough to care.

Summary

Option B offers the best opportunity to deliver better outcomes for the whole region's residents.

- Scale and funding where it is needed most

because this achieves greater fairness, in particular to improve outcomes for our more vulnerable residents

- Designing into the new councils the priorities that residents have told us they want: better health infrastructure, better community facilities, and respect for community identity
- A focus on community powered health that puts residents front and centre; going to where residents need us most – to their neighbourhoods and homes
- More responsive authorities that are better at listening to communities to understand and respond to feedback in a timely manner that delivers results.

Public services in North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

At a glance...

Population 612,000
(fourth largest unitary by population)

Budget per head £1,055

GDP per head £31,120
(England median)

8/10 residents live and work in council area

Settlement mix: 57% rural and 43% urban



Needs profile	- Below English average population needs, but unevenly spread. Deprivation hotspots in Peterborough and Fens market towns - Ageing rural communities; higher working-age social care in urban areas; rising adolescent Learning Disability (LD) and autism
Value for money and governance	- Buying power where it is most needed to deliver better value-for-money people services - Localised governance to enable district level accountability: 'buy big – deliver locally'
Adult social care	- Scale to reshape care markets by developing local providers - Joined up prevention, social care and NHS neighbourhoods to keep people independent - home adaptations, reablement, community support, hospital discharge
Children's services	- Single children's service for c. +60,000 additional young people (beyond Peterborough), covering child protection, SEND and school admissions. Focus on early help and attainment - Reduced costs by sharing best practice (Peterborough currently 2x County spend per child) - Scale comparable to Leeds and North Yorkshire, which have 'outstanding' Ofsted ratings
Housing and homelessness	- One housing authority to set strategy, align with Housing Associations to increase homes and standardise tenancy support (all council homes already transferred to HAS) - Integrate homelessness prevention with social care; expand Housing First and targeted support for care leavers and older people
Planning and transport	- Residents have one body to hold to account for potholes, traffic calming and major schemes. One Local Plan supporting key growth sites. One voice to influence CPCA on bus networks and stations - Build on Peterborough's strengths in skills, highways, and planning for market-town renewal
Waste and street cleansing	- Standardise recycling/collections across the area; larger fleet can lower unit costs - Smaller back-office allows more frontline work; rural areas benefit from shared kit/crews; crews directed to fly-tipping and litter hotspots regardless of old boundaries
Overall outcomes	Increased resident satisfaction, lower cost through scale, smoother transition (building on Peterborough's unitary footing), and neighbourhood-level delivery tailored to different communities

Public services in Greater Cambridge

At a glance...

Population
322,000 (ONS 2024)
40th largest unitary

Budget
per head
£916

Age profile
Under 18s
19.2%
and 65+
16.0%

9/10 residents
live and work in
council area

GDP per head
£49,260

Settlement mix:
64% rural and 36% urban



Needs profile	- Below England average population need; low children's social care but rising SEND needs with population growth - Housing affordability and above-average rough sleeping; pockets of deprivation (north/east Cambridge) and isolated rural poverty; ageing population in rural villages
Value for money and governance	- Strong emphasis on prevention and community resilience to manage demand as the council receives lower care grant - One council to simplify complex governance and accountability building on existing shared services
Adult social care	- Care joined up with housing and community health to reduce inequalities and keep people independent - home care, adaptations, reablement and care-tech pilots - Streamlined hospital discharge with Addenbrooke's Hospital and GPs; single accountable pathway, with fewer hand-offs
Children's services	- Integrated approach to safeguarding and school place planning; family hubs and early help aligned to district community assets and housing services - One council coordinating education, transport and inclusion leading to better SEND provision and planning - Social investment in local care homes supporting the most vulnerable children
Housing and homelessness	- Back-office consolidation to reinvest savings in new supply and support. One landlord authority (c. one in 10 homes council-owned) with significant opportunity for integration with Adult Social Care to support prevention agenda - Integrate homelessness prevention with adult social care or children's services; scale Housing First and key-worker housing offers
Planning and transport	- Greater Cambridge already has a shared draft Local Plan and shared planning service. Integrate the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) for a single growth plan for labs, homes and infrastructure - Local control of roads/traffic management for faster schemes and better bus/active-travel integration
Waste and street cleansing	- Extend existing Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service (which provides waste and recycling collections for residents and businesses) to waste disposal for higher recycling rates, and stronger commercial income - Integrated street cleansing and highways so city and villages get consistent standards; less back-office duplication and more frontline time
Overall outcomes	- Prevention-led, integrated services to address complex area profile (rising SEND, housing/rough sleeping pressures, and complex transport challenges). Workforce plan for mental health practitioners, occupation therapists, educational psychologists - Clearer accountability, quicker delivery, and better value for Greater Cambridge residents

Benefit 6 - Better financial resilience to future proof services for residents

The largest pressure on councils' budgets comes from 'people services' – children's services, adult social care, education, housing, homelessness, community safety, public health, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

These statutory, demand-led services must be provided whenever residents meet eligibility criteria,

and therefore account for most council spending.

These services are also the most complex and high-risk areas of council delivery.

Both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council spend a higher proportion on these services than the national average.

On different measures of financial resilience, both existing upper tier councils have a higher exposure to financial risk than councils nationally.

	CIPFA Financial Resilience	LGA Financial Stress	% High Demand Services	Main drivers
Cambridgeshire	3rd quartile – above average exposure	4.3 medium	61%	Rising SEND deficit, adult social care inflation, but healthy tax-base and capital financing ratio
Peterborough	4th quartile – highest exposure	7.6 high	67%	Minimal reserves, history of in-year overspends, high debt charges, SEND deficit and homelessness pressures

Why costs are rising

Adult social care, children's services and SEND will keep driving cost growth due to:

1. **rising population:** our region's population is growing well above the UK average – we need to plan for increased demand in a coherent and effective way
2. **rising complexity of need** due to a variety of social and economic factors and better diagnosis
3. **ageing populations**, which drive demand for adult social care, and place additional costs on councils when fewer people will be responsible for the costs of their own care
4. **increasing working age population**, which will lead to more adults of working age with care and support needs, including younger adults with disabilities
5. **increasing SEND demand**, partly resulting from rising children's mental health and neurodevelopmental referrals
6. **higher than average inflation** due to workforce challenges and a lack of in-area supply resulting in costly out-of-area placements, for example for children's care and SEND placements.



Financial sustainability

It is essential to consider the distribution of statutory needs across the region when designing new unitary councils, as discussed in the rest of this section.

It is also essential to protect early help and preventative support. Earlier intervention can prevent needs and costs unnecessarily escalating.

Our proposal will give each new council greater resilience because financial risks are pooled and/or diversified more effectively across the whole region than in other options.

Services will be configured to support affordable housing and economic growth, and joint commissioning arrangements will be fully exploited.

This creates more sustainable council finances and is ultimately better for our residents and provides better value public services for the taxpayer.

Both councils are the right size to work effectively for their needs profile.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

- Population of over 600,000 exceeding the government's guidance for resilience; and a larger share of the total adult social care, children's services and public health budget and resource, increasing its ability to benefit from economies of scale.
- Additional £50m per annum due to anticipated reforms to local government finance to reflect population size and needs profile.
- Total reserves at £203.3m are higher per capita than any other northern unitary option – greater resilience against more volatile costs of demand led statutory services.
- Commissioning scale where demand pressures are greatest. Buying power is concentrated exactly where it's needed most with Peterborough and Fenland part of a larger unitary. This offers better value for money and better-quality specialist services. It could include promoting the expansion of local micro providers and micro enterprises to meet the needs of rural communities.
- Independent modelling by Newton suggests that

its characteristics (population, need, funding) give it the best chance of achieving Ofsted 'Good' for children's services compared to other northern unitary options⁵⁰.

- Comparable budget per head (£1,055) to the northern unitary in option A (£1,057).

Greater Cambridge

- Population of over 322,000⁵¹ exceeding the government's minimum for resilience. It will be the 20th largest of the 64 existing unitary councils in England; and is forecast to grow to over 400,000 by 2040 based on existing plans.
- It will have higher than England average homelessness pressures and rising demand for SEND. Smaller commissioning scale could add a premium for specialist care provision. However, the population is above median size for authorities that achieve 'Outstanding' children's services.
- Independent modelling by Newton suggests its characteristics give it the same chance of achieving Ofsted 'Good' for children's services as other southern unitary options⁵⁰.
- It will have sufficient per head budget at £916 to meet lower social needs; and following Council Tax harmonisation it will have the same Council Tax rate but lower statutory needs than other southern unitary options.
- Total reserves at £206.8m are higher per head than other southern unitary options, which provides greater mitigation against financial volatility for demand-led statutory services.
- Anticipated reforms to local government finance will reduce annual funding by £5m because it has lower social care needs.
- Opportunities to collaborate with the world-leading research and innovation economy on care-tech and workforce development programme, including integrated-care models, and digital innovation pilots for early intervention.
- Over one in 10 homes will be council-owned. This will facilitate significant opportunities to integrate social care, social housing and health services to enable a stronger preventative approach and improve vulnerable resident outcomes.

Commissioning at the right scale

Where cross-boundary collaboration offers better outcomes and value for money, and supports national reforms to the NHS, social care and SEND, the new councils could maintain existing or establish joint commissioning and other arrangements.

Joint-commissioning opportunities are summarised in the table below and more detail is provided in the Red Quadrant blueprint for delivery of people services at Appendix 10 - A Future Blueprint for Social Care and Public Health; and the PPL homelessness advice at Appendix 11.

Services	Collaboration	Rationale
Community equipment and assistive technology	Joint commissioning with NHS across Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Economies of scale; consistent specification
Hospital transfer of Care Hubs	Shared cross-boundary hubs at acute hospitals	Supports timely discharge, avoids duplication
Learning disability respite and day services	Reciprocal access agreements across Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Protects continuity where current services cater for specific cohorts
High cost children's services and specialist mental health and learning disabilities services	Joint commissioning arrangements/unit across Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Economies of scale; consistent specification
Safeguarding Adults Boards and Community Safety Partnerships	Shared/adapted arrangements across Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Maintains strong partnerships and critical expertise
Homelessness and rough sleeping services	Shared best practice approaches across Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; potential for joint, integrated commissioning of housing, health and social care provision	Integration across housing, social care and public health to reduce risk of rough sleeping, including Housing First and supported housing schemes for people with support needs



Financial modelling by Newton for the County Council's Network

Newton's analysis suggests that option B achieves £1.6m lower overall costs from year one for 'people services' (children's services, adult social care, SEND, and homelessness) than current arrangements.

Newton also suggests Option A will lead to higher forecast costs for people services than are currently provided. Over the longer term to 2040, option B will be £13m better value than option A, the County Council's preferred option.

Newton forecasts that Greater Cambridge, and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, will not have the extremes of per-resident costs and demand-led growth that other options would have. This means that high demand exposure is more sensibly spread across the region.

Further analysis that extends the Newton work using ONS subnational population projections and DfE/DHSC average unit costs by local authority population size confirms that option A embeds greater structural pressures on demand-led people service in the northern unitary. More detail can be found in Appendix 13 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Government Reorganisation - comparative implications for people services to 2040.

It also confirms that by pairing a larger and a smaller authority, rather than creating two medium sized councils, option B has the potential to make cumulative saving up to £97.5m in the short-term relative to option A. The approximate annual people services budget in 2024 prices is around £600m for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This would equate to a saving of around 3% over a conventional five-year financial planning cycle from 2025-2030.

Is Greater Cambridge large enough for Outstanding children's services?

The role of children's services is to ensure that all children, particularly the most vulnerable, are safe, supported, and can achieve good outcomes in every aspect of their lives.

Peterborough City Council is currently rated 'Inadequate' and Cambridgeshire County Council 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted. Reorganising local government is an opportunity to deliver excellent children's services with the ambition to be outstanding.

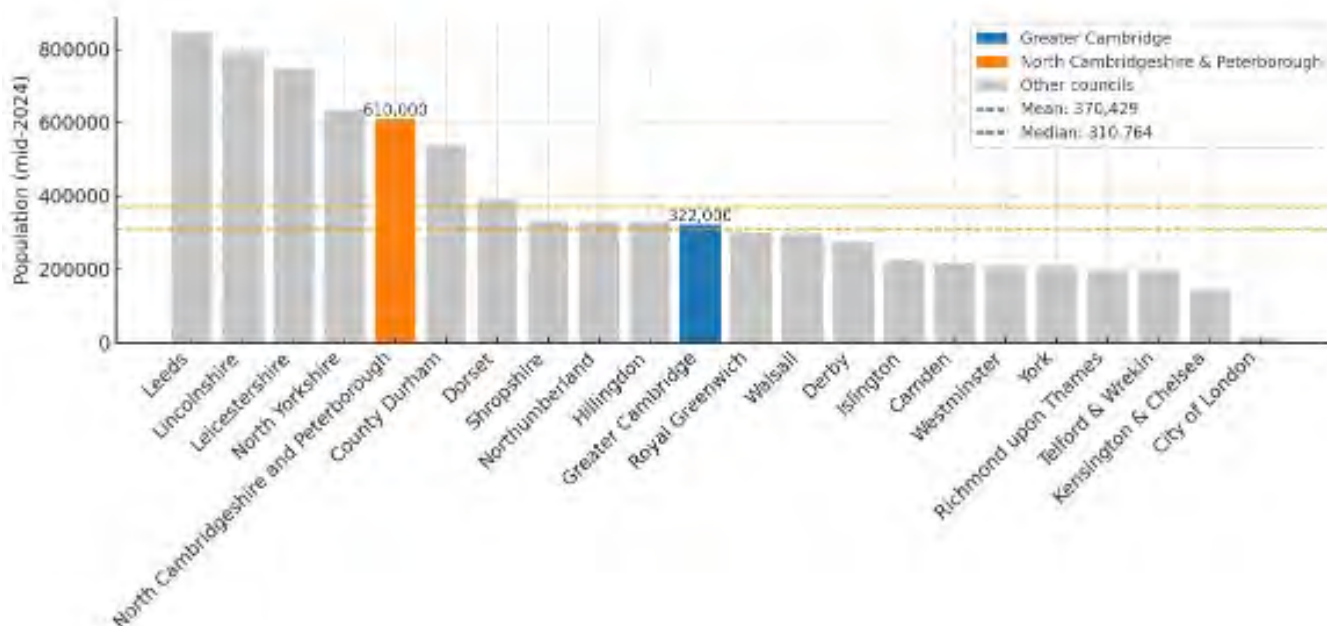
It has been suggested that a Greater Cambridge authority would be too small to have effective children's services. In practice, it would receive a higher level of grant per under 18 than several authorities with 'Outstanding' children's services. Each of these authorities have the same and higher rates of children in care (CiC; national average 7 per 1,000 under 18s) and populations that are smaller, similar size and larger.

- **Greater Cambridge: £992 per U18; 2.8/1,000 CiC; pop 318,500**
- Richmond upon Thames: £689 per U18; 2.9/1000 CiC; pop. 195,500
- York: £952 per U18; 8/1000 CiC; pop 207,000
- Shropshire: £982 per U18; 10.4/1000 CiC; pop. 329,000
- North Yorkshire: £936 per U18; 3.8/1000 CiC; pop. 627,500

**2022 ONS mid-year population estimate and DfE CIC used to be consistent with Pixel financial model inputs used to calculate Greater Cambridge Children's Social Care Relative Needs Formula.*



Comparison of population size with 'Outstanding' Ofsted rated children's services



Benefit 7 - Greater fairness and better outcomes for all residents

Our proposal creates the most balanced and equitable distribution of needs and demand for key people services. These services account for the majority of council spending.

This is fairer and better for everyone in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough than any of the alternative options (see options appraisal in Appendix 3 - Detailed options appraisal).

It will allow each council to develop distinct people services and strategies to meet the different demands upon statutory services from their unique local communities. Designing councils to reflect the region's variation in local needs profiles supports better outcomes.

Better outcomes: each council can develop specialist people services and strategies tailored for the different statutory needs of their communities

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Older profile and greater deprivation, with children's and adult social care demands concentrated in Peterborough and the Fens. Its scale offers the advantage to address higher cost services by buying better and building local alternatives to costly out of area placements.

It will need to focus on growing provision and workforce capacity to address family homelessness, adolescent edge of care, SEND sufficiency and travel; and shaping the market in supported living and rural home care across Huntingdonshire, Fenland, and East Cambridgeshire.

Greater Cambridge

Lower statutory needs, a younger and healthier population but fast-growing with pressures on housing affordability and SEND provision. With lower budget per capita and less buying power the council will need to focus its plans and strategies on a prevention-first approach.

In particular, building schools and SEND inclusion in fast growing new communities, building affordable housing, improving rough sleeping pathways, and developing a tech enabled care offer.



Our proposal will encourage ongoing collaboration and partnership between the two councils. They will be stronger by working together; sharing best practice and local insights,

co-commissioning and looking ahead at how public services will continue to change in future, including due to anticipated government reforms.

The average level of need for children's services, adult social care and homelessness is lower for our proposed councils than the national average across all key metrics, and lower than the alternative options (options A, C, D and E). The exception is rough sleeping due to the higher concentration in Cambridge.

Options A, C, D and E concentrate levels of need, neglect and deprivation in the northern unitary.

When combined with the significant financial challenges in Peterborough and higher adult social care needs in Fenland, these options risk creating greater inequality of outcomes across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

All other options risk deepening social inequalities and placing disproportionate pressure on a single authority, which lacks the scale or financial resilience to respond effectively.

Two councils, each built around what their communities need

Greater Cambridge focuses on prevention and inclusion (lower statutory demand, fast growth).

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough focuses on stronger protection and support (higher need today, more complex cases).

One size doesn't fit all. Option B creates scale where it is needed most. It lets both councils specialise in what works best for their places and encourages ongoing cross-council collaboration for service delivery.

Population-weighted metrics: People services

	Children in care (CiC) per 1,000 (0-17)	Children in need (CiN) per 1,000 (0-17)	EHCP (%)	Adult social care per 1,000 adults	Temporary accommodation households per 1,000 dwellings	Rough sleepers per 100,000
Option B: Greater Cambridge	2.8	11.3	4.7	11.9	5	9.3
Option B: North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	5.6	21.7	4.8	15.3	4.7	7.6
Option A: Southern	3	12.1	4.8	11.7	4.3	7.5
Option A: Northern	6	22.8	4.7	16	5.2	8.8
Option C: Southwest	3.3	13.7	4.6	12.5	3.9	6.8
Option C: Northeast	6.3	23.5	4.9	16	5.9	9.9
England (average)	7	33.3	5.3	19.7	5.1	8.1

To enable more meaningful comparison of social needs across key people services for each option individual metrics can be integrated and presented as an index.

Social needs index

The table below illustrates a composite of indicators in the table on page 85. It also illustrates forecast changes in demand to 2040 based on Newton assumptions and ONS Subnational Population Projections which enable disaggregation by age group⁵².

Option B has the most balanced and equitable social needs distribution between the two councils of all the options. This means that Greater Cambridge, and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, will both have lower needs initially and over the long term than option A (and C).

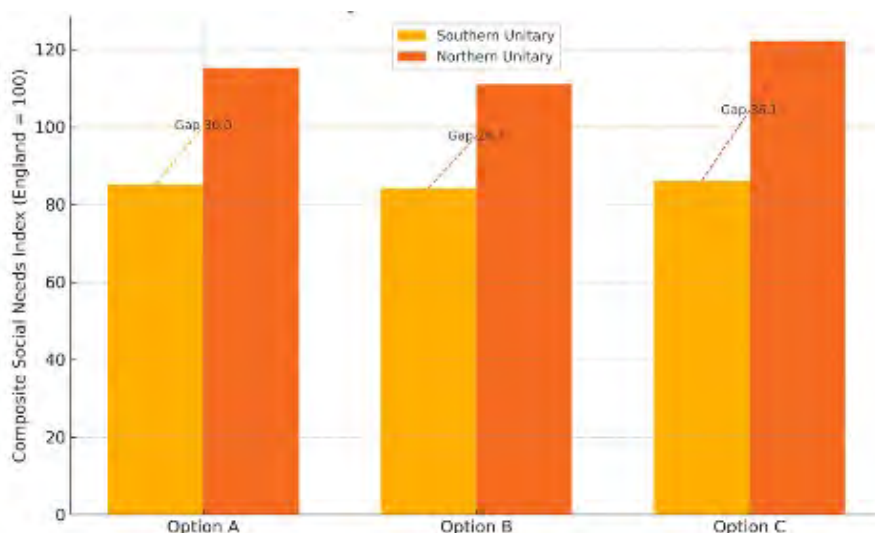
Under our proposal the difference in the social needs between each council's population is also narrower than alternative options (options A, C, D and E).

	Social needs index (2024)	Social needs index (2040)	Key characteristics
Option A	South 61 North 83	South 85 North 115	Moderate balance; mixes higher and lower need areas, less coherent than B
Option B	Greater Cambridge 61 North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 79	Greater Cambridge 84 North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 111	Lower social needs in each authority now and over the long term, and greater balance between each authority
Option C	Southwest 63 Northeast 85	Southwest 86 Northeast 122	Creates highest need northern unitary; least balanced

(England average = 100; 2024)



Comparison of social needs index in 2040



Option B separates higher-growth, lower-need Greater Cambridge from higher-need, predominantly rural North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Each authority has a clearer differentiation of needs that are more fairly distributed than the alternatives.

This will enable greater specialisation in each

council area which means a better local offer, tailored to the needs of residents.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will have the commissioning scale and buying power where demand and costs for specialist services are greatest, whilst enabling governance models that support localised delivery.



Differentiated service strategies across distinct but complementary geographies will also allow sharper commissioning, workforce planning and risk management than option A (or C). This could include greater use of local exemplar providers⁵³.

Family Psychology Mutual: Helping families stay together

Huntingdon based social enterprise that empowers families using evidence-based practice.

Since being established 10 years ago, by former Cambridgeshire County Council staff, FPM have provided family therapeutic interventions to families whose children were on a trajectory to care. This work has avoided over half a million care days, improving outcomes for young people and saving over £250m for councils.

Though Cambridgeshire based they are not currently operating here. That is a missed opportunity to grow local provision and adopted best practice that has been proven to work.

Over time these comparative advantages could also improve the productivity and efficiency of the region's public services, though this has not been considered in the modelling.

Because our proposal provides a fairer and a lower distribution of social needs across the two new councils it is structurally set up to support better outcomes for local people. Each council is the right scale to work for the statutory social challenges they face and are set up to succeed.

Ferry Project, Wisbech, Fenland

The Ferry Project provides wrap-around person centred support to help homeless people and prevent homelessness where possible.

As well as providing hostel and independent living accommodation for individuals with complex needs it also teaches the skills they need to live independently and access services.

By bringing council and health services 'into their home environment', trust is built up between homeless people and care and health professionals.

The local GP practice also runs a drop-in service at the project with nurses and health and wellbeing coaches.

This has significantly improved health outcomes and reduced missed appointments achieving savings for stretched NHS budgets.



Benefit 8 - Localised approach to service delivery with partners and communities that prioritises prevention and early intervention

Neighbourhood and 'patch-based' working

In option B, both new unitary councils will adopt neighbourhood and 'patch-based' service delivery models, in both urban settings and more dispersed rural areas.

By adopting a localised approach, services will be better aligned to how people live and work and shaped around the specific needs and characteristics of communities.



Understanding local needs and addressing them through hyper-local service delivery – particularly in the larger North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unitary, with its broad diversity of market towns, villages, and rural communities – will lead to better outcomes for residents.

This more tailored approach will also increase trust in services within communities, reduce demand failure and unleash greater levels of volunteering.

A localised approach provides opportunities to work more closely with other public and voluntary sector organisations that are also delivering services on an area or neighbourhood basis, including the police and NHS partners.

Community Powered: Health at the Hub

In Melbourn in South Cambridgeshire residents can access a range of health and wellbeing services provided by Meridian Primary Care Network's Personalised Care Team at Cambridgeshire ACRE Melbourn Hub.

Services include help with anxiety, the pressure of being a carer, giving up smoking, cervical screening, healthier eating, and menopause, amongst many other aspects of general wellbeing.

The initiative has brought services out of GP surgeries and into a community setting, to provide easier access for patients. Members of the team include social prescribers, health coaches and care co-ordinators.

For example, the two councils will build on work by **integrated neighbourhood teams**, which are already operating with NHS partners, local government representatives and members of the voluntary and community sector.

A localised approach also unlocks the ability to work with smaller, grassroots organisations that are deeply embedded within their communities and have trusted relationships with residents. These groups are often best placed to identify emerging needs early and deliver culturally relevant, accessible, and preventative services that reduce demand on more expensive statutory provision.

Our localised approach will build on existing local and national good practice, such as:

- Support for children, family and community centres, including the introduction of Best Start Family Hubs
- Community hubs – taking key services such as housing and financial advice into local areas and closer to vulnerable residents
- Health, fitness and rehabilitation – provided through a network of leisure centres, health centres and open spaces to support health, fitness and rehabilitation.

Overall, this locally-led approach will strengthen community partnerships, improve service responsiveness, and reduce demand failure – creating a more sustainable and equitable model for delivering public services.

Shaping Abbey, Cambridge

The Shaping Abbey programme is a collaborative, resident-centric approach to shaping services and investment priorities in Abbey and Barnwell neighbourhoods.

Community engagement is focused on regeneration and future growth, addressing antisocial behaviour, and co-designing youth services.

This approach has been recognised in the UK Government's Civil Society Covenant as a national example of empowering local people to positively influence their neighbourhoods, or community wealth building. www.abbeypeople.org.uk/shaping-abbey/



Prioritising prevention and early intervention

Option B will provide a platform for preventative approaches and early intervention, which will help address the significant demand pressures for people services and reduce long-term spending on costly crisis interventions.

Neighbourhood and patch-based delivery facilitates greater focus on prevention and early intervention. It enables each unitary council to determine spending priorities and strategies around prevention and early intervention, ensuring that public services are better aligned with how people live and work.

It will enable the two unitary councils to begin the journey to genuinely integrate social care, education and health services, with the wide range of district council-led, locally-based preventative services, such as social housing, homelessness prevention, financial and debt advice, community safety, leisure services, and open space provision.

Neighbourhood-level service integration will bring valuable community insights into provision of social care, education and health services and help ensure

that vulnerable households are identified earlier and supported more holistically.

Furthermore, commissioning through local models enables greater flexibility to engage community groups, voluntary, community and social enterprise partners, and parish councils as delivery partners for prevention, wellbeing, and low-level support services.

Accessing early support can improve independence and resilience for residents and prevent escalation and demand for statutory services.

The two unitary councils will build upon and strengthen existing preventative services that are working well and use them as the backbone of our approach.

For example, there are a number of existing hubs that can act as nodes for a neighbourhood service delivery network:

- **Early Help** - large numbers of families in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are supported by Early Help, with assessment rates that are above the English average

- **Family Hubs** - supporting parents and young children, with examples in place already in Peterborough (e.g. Honey Hill and Orton Family Hubs)
- **Community Hubs and Centres** - providing a wide range of resources for communities
- **Breakfast clubs** - currently being piloted in 12

Cambridgeshire schools as part of the national programme

Our proposal can enable a range of joined-up, preventative services at a neighbourhood level to help individuals and families to access the services they need, when they need them – building their own personalised support system.

Best Start Family Hubs

Better support during early years can improve education outcomes and reduce inequality. The government is investing £1.5bn to improve support for babies, children and families.

Best Start Family Hubs serve as a one-stop-shop, where families can access joined-up services:

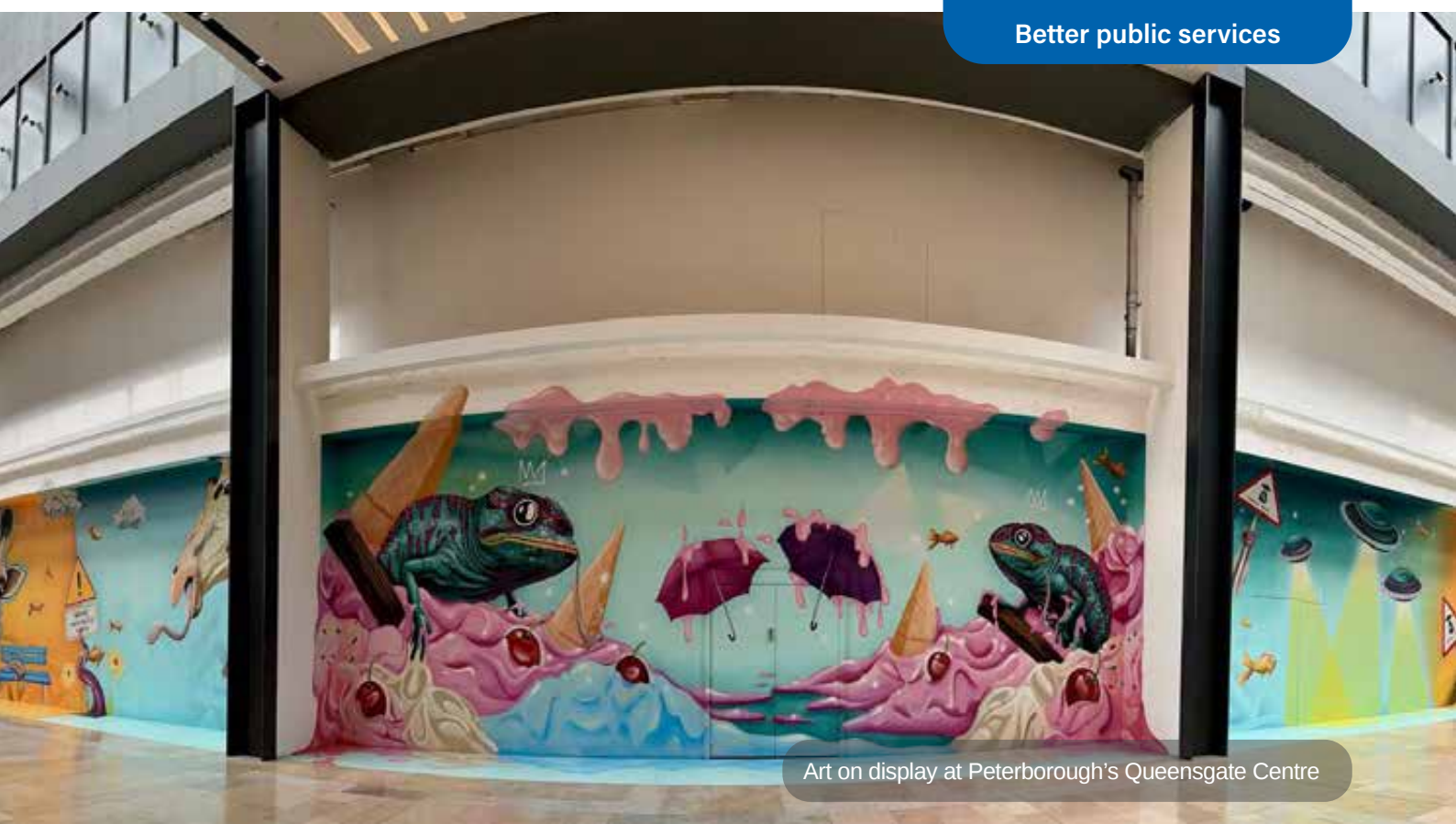
- **community services and support networks**
- **parenting classes and health services**
- **financial and housing advice**
- **early education resources, including for children with additional needs.**

Lauren, 22, a first-time mum in Peterborough attends two perinatal mental health groups, which she says has transformed her mental health and helped her son's development.

"I turned up for Babbling Babies. All my friends are [now] from the groups. It's made a real difference."

Sheffield City Council has a network of Family Hubs in accessible locations to provide integrated support for families with children aged 0–19 (up to 25 for those with SEND). The model is cited nationally as an example of how to address inequalities and improve long-term outcomes.





Art on display at Peterborough's Queensgate Centre

Benefit 9 - Putting residents first when transforming services

Local government presents an opportunity to be innovative, address current challenges and ensure that we have council services that are fit for the future.

Moving towards a model of integrated, neighbourhood-based, preventative services will involve significant transformation for both of the new unitary councils.

Our proposal will put residents first as part of this transformation through:

- co-designed and community-led services
- whole system approaches
- digital transformation to improve the experience of people using council services
- ensuring that statutory people services are safe and legal on day one.

This approach is informed by the detailed blueprint for the delivery of safe, legal and sustainable people services (adult social care, children's services, SEND and public health) in the two unitary councils, during the transition period and following reorganisation (Appendix 10).

This blueprint was developed by experts at Red Quadrant with senior leadership experience in local government social care services, with input from the partner councils. If government decides that option B should be implemented, the blueprint will be refined further, in collaboration with partners across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough system.

Co-designed services

Residents have consistently told us through consultations and feedback that they want councils to put users first when designing services.

The two unitary councils will co-design services with users wherever possible, as this will enable the councils to improve services and better meet people's needs.

As part of the service redesign process for people services, the councils will engage and collaborate with people with lived experience, including children in care and care-leavers, supported older people, disabled people, people with mental health needs, families and carers.

Once new services are established, the two councils will also work closely with residents (through the community engagement approaches outlined earlier) to shape service priorities around the needs of users.



Test, Learn, and Grow

An iterative place-based approach to redesigning services at the local level with communities – rewiring the state from the bottom up, and changing Whitehall too.

The initiative includes increasing the uptake of Best Start Family Hubs to support parents and young children, establishing neighbourhood health services, better support for children with special needs, getting more people into work, rolling out breakfast clubs, and tackling violence against women and girls.

We want to be part of the national programme to embed a 'Test, Learn, and Grow' approach as we establish new councils by becoming an accelerator area.

Community Powered Health: making prevention a reality

A central London primary care network employs local people as community health workers. The results have been promising, from reducing hospital admissions by 10%, and GP appointments by 7%, to tackling loneliness and detecting and preventing illness early. .

This example and other initiatives are changing the way communities engage with healthcare, particularly for those most in need, and helping to join-up disconnected local and NHS services.

'Healthier Fleetwood' in Lancashire has had similar results by working with local communities to bridge the gap between services and residents to help people improve their own health and wellbeing. Within a year, A&E attendance had dropped by 17%.

In Sheffield, a group of GPs have transferred 25% of their additional roles budget to a local community anchor organisation – the Heeley Trust. Their health coaches report significant improvements in people's weight, blood pressure and measures of confidence.

People, Powered, Prevention works

[A Community-Powered NHS - New Local](#)

[Communities And Health | The King's Fund](#)

Whole system approaches

When designing new services, the two new councils will put users' needs first, and design services around them, rather than starting with operational requirements or the structure of services.

As well as integrating upper tier and district council services, the two new councils will develop strong partnerships with public, voluntary and community organisations to develop whole-system solutions around the needs of residents and service users.

Changing Futures in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

We can build on the platform provided by our existing whole-system partnership for individuals with multiple and complex needs.

Changing Futures is a cross-government initiative supporting people facing multiple disadvantage, such as homelessness, mental ill-health, substance misuse and domestic abuse.

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the programme focuses on trauma-informed approaches, relational practice, peer support, and better coordination across services that too often operate in silos.

Early evaluations highlight improved engagement, stronger partnerships, and opportunities to reshape services around prevention and recovery.

Hospital discharge and community support

The NHS and councils work together to support patients discharged from hospital that are eligible to get the right social care support at home.

In Cambridgeshire, 79% of people remain at home 91 days after being discharged and receiving reablement. The figure for Peterborough is 71%. [Microsoft Power BI (ASCOF)]

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough perform poorly on this measure, ranked 112th and 141st respectively, out of 153 nationally. The average is 84%.

Areas that send patients for treatment to our hospitals have higher reablement outcomes. Norfolk 82.7%; Suffolk 85.7%; Hertfordshire 83.4%; Essex 87%; and Lincolnshire 91.7%.

This suggests that being treated at hospital in your local authority has less bearing on the outcome than the quality of local social care provided.

LGR offers significant scope for improvement in reablement outcomes by adopting a community powered approach.

Digital transformation

The transition to the new councils and the transformation of services will be underpinned by digital transformation and innovation.



We will build on best practice to design digital systems and services around the needs of service users, so that they help improve outcomes for residents and communities. This will include digital and customer access integration, for example through a single online portal for each unitary council for payments by residents and businesses.

The two councils will implement efficient and effective data sharing and integration, underpinned by effective digital infrastructure, both across council services and with other public sector organisations. This will help ensure that residents benefit from more seamless and joined-up services and it will help enable evidence-led prevention and early intervention activities.

Case management systems will be configured for the new council footprints, with interoperability built in to ensure information sharing with NHS, housing, and education partners.

The councils will also use predictive analytics to identify where early support could be offered and intervention activity targeted to prevent needs escalating. For example, sharing with adult services data about people who have requested assisted

bin collections and may be at greater risk of falls or isolation, or data about cases of self-neglect and hoarding.

The two unitaries will work with the globally significant technology and life sciences sectors in Greater Cambridge to develop digital innovation pilots for early intervention and integrated care.

There are opportunities to leverage the expertise that exists in world leading tech companies located in Greater Cambridge, together with the research and clinical skills present in the NHS (including Cambridge University Hospitals, Papworth Hospital, Cambridge Children's Hospital, and the proposed new Cancer Hospital).

Low Income Family Tracker – LIFT

LIFT is an innovative data analytics tool used to identify vulnerable families. It integrates multiple datasets to provide insights at the household level.

South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge and Peterborough councils are using LIFT to:

- prevent homelessness
- increase benefit uptake – in South Cambridgeshire supporting over £3.5m of pension credit claims and 65 families to access Healthy Start
- provide targeted debt advice support.

There are plans to use LIFT to increase uptake of free school meals; support residents at risk of loneliness and isolation; and take advantage of reduced water tariffs to help reduce the cost of living and the impact of water use on the environment.

Hey Geraldine

Geraldine Jinks, a well-respected care expert at Peterborough City Council, worked with a leading AI company to transform herself into a ChatBot.

The 'Hey Geraldine' ChatBot gives advice to social workers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and saves, on average, 15 minutes per conversation.

It means staff have instant access to advice on the technology-enabled care equipment they need to help residents stay in their own homes for longer.



Safe and legal statutory services from day one

Adult social care, children's services, SEND, education, public health, housing, homelessness and community safety are vital statutory services. They are also the most complex and high-risk of our service areas.

While our proposal will take forward longer-term service transformation to improve outcomes for residents in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, it recognises that individuals and families must be safeguarded by robust transition and strong partnership arrangements. This will be vital to ensure that vulnerable people do not fall through the gaps during the transition period to the new unitary councils.

Our proposal will create two new unitary councils with statutory people services that are 'safe and legal' from day one (as set out in more detail in the Implementation and Transition Plan from page 112).



To achieve this we will initially disaggregate (or aggregate) most existing statutory services into the two new councils.

As noted previously, where cross-boundary collaboration offers better outcomes and value for money, the new councils would maintain existing,

or establish new, joint commissioning and other arrangements.

More detailed proposals for delivery of adult social care, children's services, education, SEND, public health and homelessness are set out in the public services blueprints at Appendix 10.

Service area	Day one	Future transformation options
Adult early help and reablement	Existing locality teams transferred to new councils	Embedded into neighbourhood models; potential use of digital triage and reablement services
Care and support planning (older people, learning disabilities and mental health)	Teams lifted and shifted; existing Section 75 agreements continued	Renegotiate Section 75 to support local integration; embed Learning Disabilities and Autism into neighbourhood teams
Children's services	Locality-based teams, early help, SEND and safeguarding transferred	Strengthened locality integration; expansion of in-borough fostering and residential provision
Education and SEND	Admissions, school improvement, SEND casework transferred	Co-commissioning with schools; expand in-area SEND provision to reduce out-of-county placements
Public health	Statutory services (sexual health, substance misuse, health checks) transferred	Closer integration with ICS and neighbourhood health networks; stronger prevention-led focus
Housing and homelessness	Housing and homelessness prevention teams transferred from districts into new councils	Integration of housing, health, and social care responses; early intervention to prevent homelessness
Specialist legal functions (e.g. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding)	Shared service across Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to maintain critical mass	Long-term review of Liberty Protection Safeguards and shared resilience models

**Democratic representation, community
engagement, local identity**

Democratic representation, community engagement, local identity

Healthy democracy requires meaningful local connection and good governance. Our proposal delivers this balance through two key benefits:

- Delivering strong democratic accountability that respects our distinct historic identities
- Enhanced community voice through inclusive and flexible, place-based arrangements, including Resident Engagement Pathways.

Local government: a brief history and ‘why is it so complicated?’

Local government emerged from our urban centres in Peterborough, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Ely a thousand years ago.

Between the 13th and 19th centuries, these towns were self-governing.

In 1888, these became elected county councils:

- the County of the Isle of Ely
- the County of Huntingdon
- the County of Cambridge
- the Soke of Peterborough - a self-governing area within the County of Northamptonshire

The Borough of Cambridge was not affected, however, it tried to become a ‘County borough’ or a unitary in 1912, 1946 and 1960.

These arrangements with five principal local authorities lasted until 1965.

Local origins

‘The Liberty (or Soke) of Peterborough’ was administered by the church from 972 until 1790, under powers bestowed by King Edgar. It was granted city status in 1541 by King Henry VIII.

Cambridge was noted as a key English borough with 10 wards in the Domesday Book in 1086. It received powers of self-government from King Henry I as early as 1120 and became a city in 1951.

‘The Liberty of the Isle of Ely’ was run by the Bishops of Ely from 1109 until 1836 - which included present day Fenland. Regarded as a city since the 12th century, Ely was granted city status in 1974.

Huntingdon became a self-governing borough in 1205 under power granted by King John I. Since 1630 it has continued to appoint a Mayor.



From 1965 to 1974, the four county councils merged into two to create Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely County Council, and Huntingdon and Peterborough County Council.

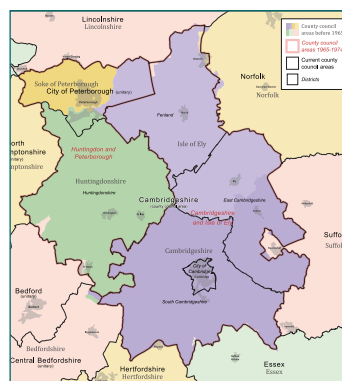
The last major local government reorganisation in 1974 created an enlarged Cambridgeshire County Council. The county council took on powers previously held by the two cities, and former county councils became districts.

There have been more changes since then:

- **Peterborough City Council** became a unitary authority in 1998. The ceremonial County of Cambridgeshire, known as the Lieutenancy, was then changed to 'Cambridgeshire and Peterborough'
- In 2014, the Greater Cambridge City Deal led to the creation of the **Greater Cambridge Partnership** – a joint committee of Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council
- In 2017, the **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority**, with a directly elected Mayor, was established.



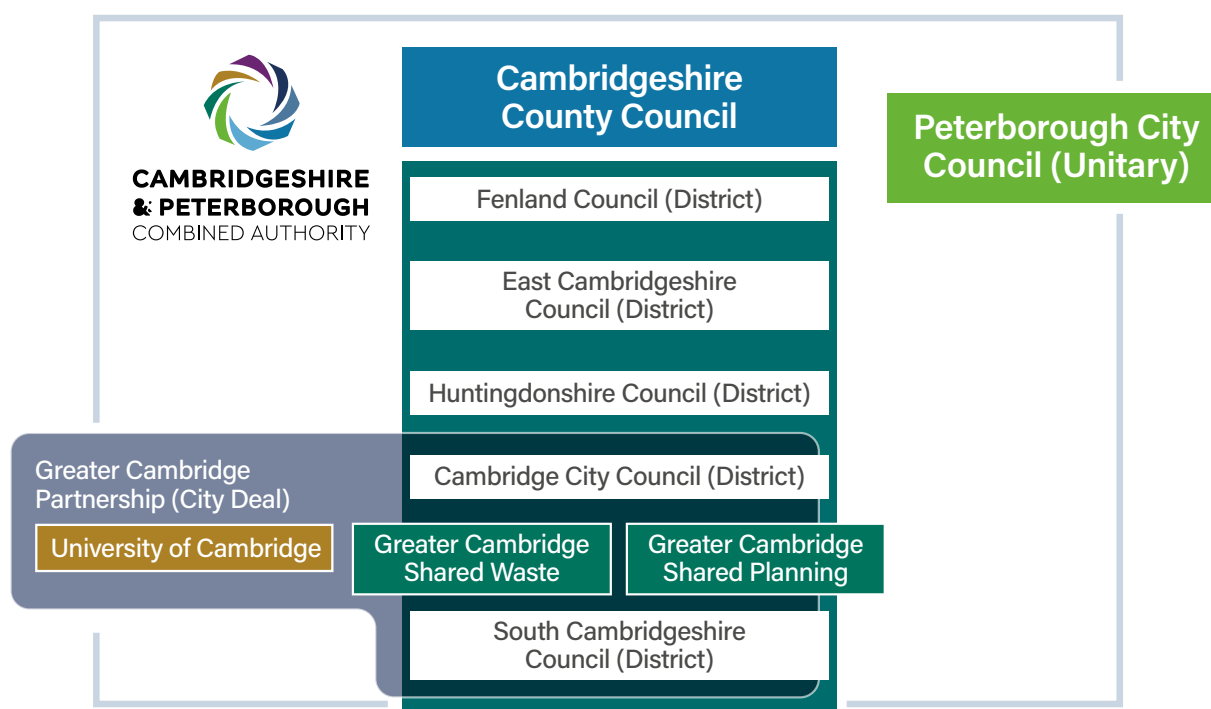
Evolution of local administration reflects complex identities and history



Contains Ordnance Survey data
© Crown copyright and database



Current local government governance arrangements across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough





The village green in Barrington

Local government: what next?

Local government has always changed as the area has changed. Today is no different.

Local Government Reorganisation is a once in a generation opportunity to simplify uniquely complex arrangements across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Our proposal builds on the longstanding sub-regional identities and local governance that have developed over a millennia.

- North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Council encompasses the ancient administrative geographies of Peterborough, Huntingdonshire, the Isle of Ely and Fenland
- Greater Cambridge Council encompasses the districts of South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City, reflecting the historically smaller County of Cambridge



Benefit 10: Delivering strong democratic accountability that respects our distinct historic identities

The ideal number of councillors a local authority requires should take account of the capacity required to provide⁵⁴:

- Strategic leadership
- Accountability (scrutiny, regulatory and partnerships)
- Community leadership



There are currently 331 elected councillors serving Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Both councils will operate with a Leader and Cabinet model of governance in accordance with the government's clear position. This will ensure clear, visible and accountable leadership, and the cabinet will be able to make decisions faster and with a strong strategic focus.

Leaders and cabinets will be held to account by independently minded scrutiny committees. These committees will act as critical friends and offer constructive challenge to improve decision making on behalf of our communities.

The decision-making structures of the councils will be reinforced with effective regulatory committees for planning and licensing, and a further range of committees to meet the governance needs of each authority.

Councillors

Our proposal has carefully considered how many councillors each unitary council requires to achieve a strong level of democratic representation and maintain a deep connection to communities during the transition period.

The number of councillors must ensure democratic accountability and representation are sufficient to support good governance taking account of the geographic scale, mix of urban and rural areas, and levels of deprivation.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Currently 217 councillors represent an electorate of 432,904. This consists of:

- 183 district and unitary councillors, over 80 wards (Peterborough, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire councils)
- 34 county councillors over 33 divisions (Huntingdonshire, Fenland, East Cambridgeshire areas)
- The elector-to-councillor ratio is as follows:
- District councillors serve an average ratio of 1:2,366
- County councillors serve an average ratio of 1:8,404

The proposal is that 125 councillors will be elected to the new council. This will result in an elector-to-councillor ratio of 1:3,463.

This results in a 42% reduction in the number of councillors.

Greater Cambridge

Currently 114 councillors represent an electorate of 214,830. This consists of:

- 87 district and city councillors, over 40 wards (South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge)

- 27 county councillors over 26 divisions (South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge)
- The elector-to-councillor ratio is as follows:
- District councillors serve an average ratio of 1:2,469
- County councillors serve an average ratio of 1:7,957

The proposal is that 65 councillors will be elected to the new council. This will result in an elector-to-councillor ratio of 1:3,305.

This results in a 43% reduction in the number of councillors.

Implementation and transition period

Following the government's decision in 2026 on which LGR proposal to implement in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, we propose that Joint Implementation Committees are established for each new unitary council, with member representation from the existing councils.

We would request that the Joint Implementation Committee for Greater Cambridge is made up of an equal number of councillor representatives from Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire County councils, and that all members represent Greater Cambridge wards/divisions; with similar arrangements for the northern unitary. There is a successful track record of such arrangements, including at the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Following the local elections in May 2027 and during the subsequent transition period, the Shadow Authorities must also maintain the confidence of the citizens they represent so that local needs, issues and identities are fully reflected in the formation of the new unitary authorities.

Mayoralty and city status

In 1207, King John issued a Royal Charter granting the town of Cambridge the right to elect a mayor. Cambridge became a city in 1951 through Letters Patent issued by King George VI.

Our proposal is that the mayoralty and city status is transferred to the Greater Cambridge council. The mayoralty, insignia and civic regalia would be



transferred through specific clauses in the Structural Change Order (SCO) creating the new council. The Monarch under the Royal Prerogative with the advice of ministers can confer city status on the new unitary authority through the issuance of fresh Letters Patent⁵⁵.

Peterborough was granted city status in 1541, by King Henry VIII, and has had a mayor since 1874. The current district of Peterborough became a city in 1974 following local government reorganisation.

It will be important to retain the mayoralty and city status for Peterborough within the North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unitary council. The mayor could be retained by establishing Charter Trustees under the Charter Trustees Regulations 2009. Further consideration is needed with relevant local authorities in relation to arrangements regarding the transfer of city status.

Benefit 11: Enhanced community voice through inclusive and flexible, place-based arrangements, including Resident Engagement Pathways

Our proposal will create two new unitary councils that are committed to increasing community input into decision-making, which must be shaped with residents, not imposed on them.

If our proposal is successful, we will embark on detailed rounds of engagement with local communities, businesses and other key partners to design councils that are fit for the future.

A flexible model of neighbourhood engagement

Community engagement can be delivered through a range of models, each offering different strengths depending on local needs and context.

Our vision will ensure that engagement is meaningful, inclusive, and responsive by building on the strong foundations across our existing councils and drawing on best practice from both rural and urban areas.

Neighbourhood Area Committees or Locality Boards (used in Buckinghamshire Council) provide a formal, geographically defined structure with delegated powers and small budgets, enabling residents to influence decisions through regular public meetings.

Area Constituent Committees, used in some larger rural authorities such as in North Yorkshire, offer a flexible governance model that brings together elected members across broader sub-areas to oversee local priorities and coordinate services.

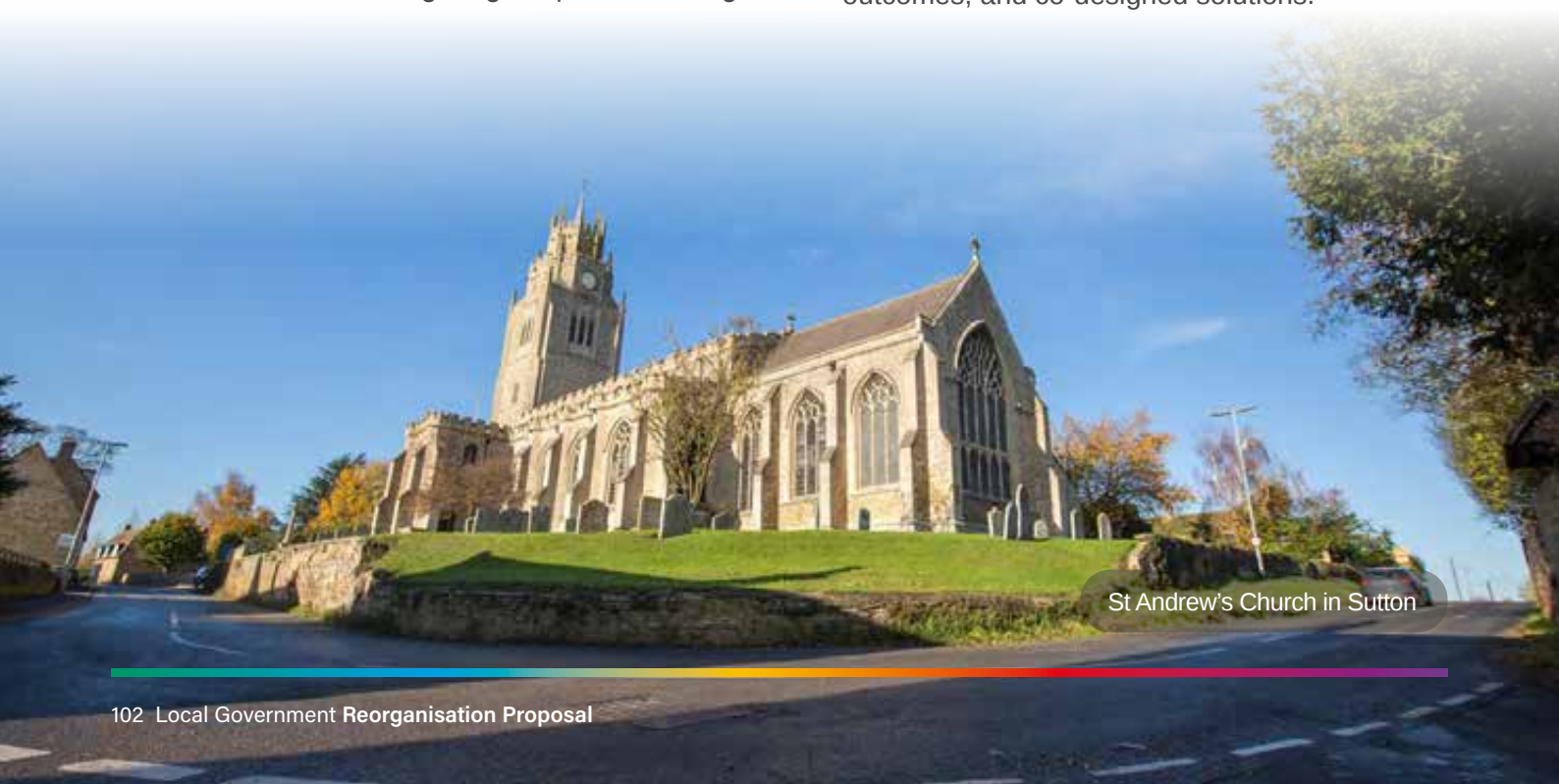
In our experience area committees can become unwieldy, overly bureaucratic, and insufficiently representative of the wider community, which can become a barrier to effective and inclusive engagement.

Alongside these more structured approaches, Resident Engagement Pathways (REPs) provide an adaptable, issue and place-based approach to enable residents to shape priorities through multiple routes.

The new councils will need to reflect on best practice to establish localised forms of governance that are right for their communities and traditions. A blended approach that enables both formal and informal engagement will strengthen our communities' voices.

We are confident a blended approach will:

- enhance community voice through neighbourhood and area-based engagement
- improve engagement with places (towns, villages, neighbourhoods) and communities of interest (such as young people, minority groups, or service-user communities) across our diverse and dispersed communities
- develop better democratic governance and increase civic trust by focusing on issues, outcomes, and co-designed solutions.



St Andrew's Church in Sutton

A co-designed approach, rooted in partnerships

A commitment to a blended, non-prescriptive model is the right approach to better reflect the views of our communities, as set out previously. It will ensure:

- the differing needs of rural and urban communities and areas are not overlooked
- all communities are well represented by knowledgeable councillors who understand their locality
- that partners including parish and town councils as well as the voluntary sector continue to play their key role and are supported by the new councils in doing so.
- Integrated Neighbourhoods for health and social care
- Parish and town council partnership forums
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) local investment decision-making
- Youth and citizen assemblies⁵⁶
- Community-led housing and planning collaboration
- Multi-agency Community Safety Partnerships
- Bespoke forums for new communities in areas of growth.

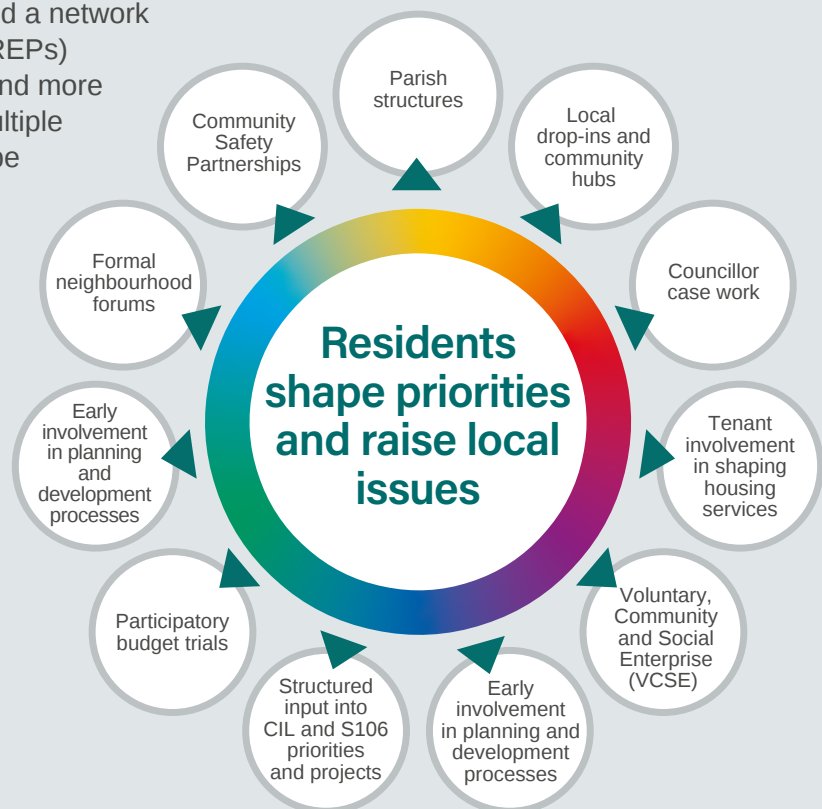
Resident Engagement Pathways

The new councils will support and build a network of Resident Engagement Pathways (REPs) through both structured approaches and more dynamic, informal settings to allow multiple routes through which people can shape priorities, challenge issues, and co-design solutions with public services.

At the centre of this model is a simple but powerful principle:

Residents shape priorities and raise local issues through a range of pathways that reflect the diversity of our places, people, and communities of interest.

By using REPs we will address the potential imbalance that our engagement exercise identified, by ensuring the scale of the new councils does not result in loss of local voice and that we maintain and protect a deep understanding of our local places.



Rural and urban realities

Our proposal has also been developed with input from Cambridgeshire ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) to ensure that option B is grounded in the principles of 'rural proofing', and the new councils' approach to community engagement and future service-delivery models will be responsive to rural needs.

Rural and market town areas require hyper-local patch-based working to ensure that dispersed communities are heard and can influence local priorities.

In contrast, dense urban areas, such as Cambridge or Peterborough, often benefit from theme-based engagement because communities are diverse and not always geographically defined.



Resident Engagement Pathways in practice

Working with existing local democratic structures

Parish structures, councillor casework, and local drop-ins remain cornerstones of local democracy. In the new unitary councils, councillors will act as community convenors, ensuring resident insights feed directly into service design and strategic decision-making.

Formal and informal neighbourhood forums

Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, successful practices already exist ranging from formally constituted multi-agency groups such as Community Safety Partnerships to informal community hubs or community-led gatherings. The new councils will support these forums where they are valued and enable new ones where communities want them by actively working with the voluntary and community sector.

Patch-based working with Integrated Neighbourhood Teams

In rural, dispersed, or mixed communities, particularly in North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, hyper-local 'patch' models are

essential. Through Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, residents engage on health, social care, wellbeing and early intervention, supported by multi-agency teams who understand the local area. These locally rooted conversations are often held in community venues or through outreach. This broadened approach ensures isolated communities or villages have equal voice and influence.

Engagement through planning, development and regeneration

Early involvement in planning and development processes ensures residents help shape the future of their places before decisions are made. This can be achieved formally through innovative Community Land Trusts or using existing neighbourhood forums to enable early dialogue on infrastructure, green space, transport and community facilities, and facilitating transparent discussions on trade-offs and local priorities as the new communities grow.

Haddenham CLT Scheme, East Cambridgeshire

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are organisations run by local people for local benefit. East Cambridgeshire Trading Company and Haddenham CLT worked in partnership to deliver the West End Gardens housing development, providing a mixture of private homes and affordable housing for residents with village ties.

Local residents were involved in decisions around the land, house types, layout and design. The project was also designed to foster vibrant, cohesive communities, through balanced tenures and shared green areas and play spaces to encourage social interaction.

Participatory budgeting and local investment decisions

Building on examples of good practice in the region, working closely with our parishes or established neighbourhood forums, the new councils will pilot participatory budget trials and structured input into CIL and Section 106 planning obligations, so that residents will be able to prioritise local projects and identify community investments. These mechanisms strengthen accountability, transparency and civic trust.

Using CIL to strengthen local democracy, Huntingdonshire

In Huntingdonshire, local communities shape development-led investment through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. Each year, parish and town councils receive a share of £6m CIL funding to reinvest locally. Residents and elected members influence how growth funds are invested, balancing immediate priorities with longer-term projects.

A wide range of projects have been funded including community buildings, sports, play, green space, public realm and traffic management schemes.



Engagement shaped around specific services or communities of interest

Some issues require specialist insight from those most affected. REPs such as:

- tenant involvement in shaping housing services
- voluntary and community sector-led engagement
- targeted engagement with youth groups, faith groups, minority communities, or residents experiencing vulnerability.

This will ensure the new councils hear from voices that are less likely to attend a neighbourhood forum but often have the strongest stake in service improvement.

Our approach will complement place-based engagement by recognising that people belong to multiple communities, not just geographic ones.

For example, young people told us in our engagement exercise they do not feel well connected to their geographic communities. The two new unitary councils will carry out targeted engagement with communities that are often underrepresented by traditional approaches.

Youth Assembly, Cambridge

Throughout 2024 Citizen UK and partners including the police, city and county councils, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, housing providers and youth charities commissioned the development of a Youth Assembly to work with young people over a number of months to hear directly from them about their hopes and needs of public services.

This culminated in an Assembly, where the public sector got to hear directly from young people regarding their priorities for Cambridge.





Soham High Street

Better democratic governance and increased civic trust and safety

Our residents and stakeholders' survey identified a real appetite to create new opportunities to maximise the role of parish and town councils, community groups, and voluntary sector partners in shaping local priorities and monitoring service delivery.

The Resident Engagement Pathways create a rich, interconnected network of opportunities for residents and stakeholders to shape priorities and influence decisions.

The new unitary councils will use these pathways to:

- strengthen local democratic voice
- ensure rural and urban areas are equally heard
- engage communities of interest as well as communities of place
- support co-design on major themes and services

- reinforce civic trust and transparency
- deliver meaningful, resident-led policy and service design.

This engagement approach will recognise the important role of:

- councillors supporting these conversations in line with portfolio or service or ward responsibilities, using insights from community groups to scrutinise and to influence council policy and delivery
- community leaders convening conversations and engagement. Building on experience from existing councils, the two new councils will enable engagement and community-building through partnership working, enhancing their relationships with communities of interest and faith groups
- when working with communities, embedding a process of continuous learning, empathy and dialogue is important as councils will need to adapt as communities and places change, and new priorities emerge.

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) – a local approach to build into unitary governance

All six CSPs bring together councils, police, fire, NHS, probation and other local partners to set annual priorities informed by local strategic assessments.

CSPs in urban areas – Cambridge and Peterborough – tend to focus on the night-time economy, city-centre violence and antisocial behaviour (ASB). There is more emphasis on visible patrols, guardianship and late-night hotspot policing around transport hubs and retail cores.

In rural areas – South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire – CSPs focus on place-based problem solving, often coupling ASB prevention with community capacity building and small-grant interventions. They give more attention to vulnerability and rural isolation, fraud/scams/cyber-crime, and practical deterrence.

Localised multi-agency partnerships put safety and wellbeing at the heart of community life. This type of approach could act as a model for local engagement and delivery in unitary councils.



Conclusion

Our proposal for two unitary councils recognises that effective local government must balance strategic scale with meaningful local connection and will ensure:

- clarity of responsibility, so residents understand how to hold democratic representatives to account

- all residents, no matter what their location, have good local representation and a variety of opportunities to engage and influence decision-makers
- historic identities are respected, fostering and promoting pride-in-place.

The historic complexity of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's administrative arrangements reflects a millennium of distinct identities – from the ancient boroughs and counties to modern partnerships like the Combined Authority and Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all solution, our proposal respects these deep-rooted identities while creating the conditions for more effective democratic representation and community engagement.

By reducing councillor numbers by around 43% whilst maintaining elector-to-councillor ratios of around 1:3,400, we will create more strategic, accountable leadership without losing local voice.

The commitment to flexible, neighbourhood-based engagement through Resident Engagement Pathways – from hyper-local patch working in rural North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to collaborative approaches in Greater Cambridge – demonstrates how the new unitary councils will maintain and strengthen community connections.

Building on proven approaches such as local forums and assemblies, integrated neighbourhoods, and targeted engagement with diverse communities, the two councils will be well-positioned to enhance civic trust and ensure all residents can influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Reorganisation is not simply an administrative exercise – it is an opportunity to create local authorities that are both more efficient and more responsive to the communities they serve, whilst preserving the distinct character and identity of the places that make up Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Our Resident Engagement Pathways approach offers the inclusivity and responsiveness that residents and stakeholders have asked for, without overly relying on formalised neighbourhood committees. It ensures different communities with distinct needs and interests will have a clear route to influence decisions that shape their lives. If delivered effectively this approach would support better democratic governance, increased civic trust and community engagement.

Devolution

Devolution

Benefit 12: Unlocking the full potential of devolution through balanced strategic governance

Option B positions Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to unlock the benefits of devolution by creating two economically balanced constituent councils that can engage effectively with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and national government. This structure ensures strategic decisions on growth, transport, and investment reflect the distinct strengths and needs of both the Cambridge city-region and the North Cambridgeshire economy.

Governance arrangements

The CPCA was established as a Mayoral Combined Authority in 2017.

Following the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, all Mayoral Combined Authorities (including the CPCA) will automatically become Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs). The Bill proposes further devolution to MSAs such as the CPCA, including additional powers for transport, housing, strategic planning, economic development, skills, regeneration, health and public safety.

In future the powers and responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner may also be

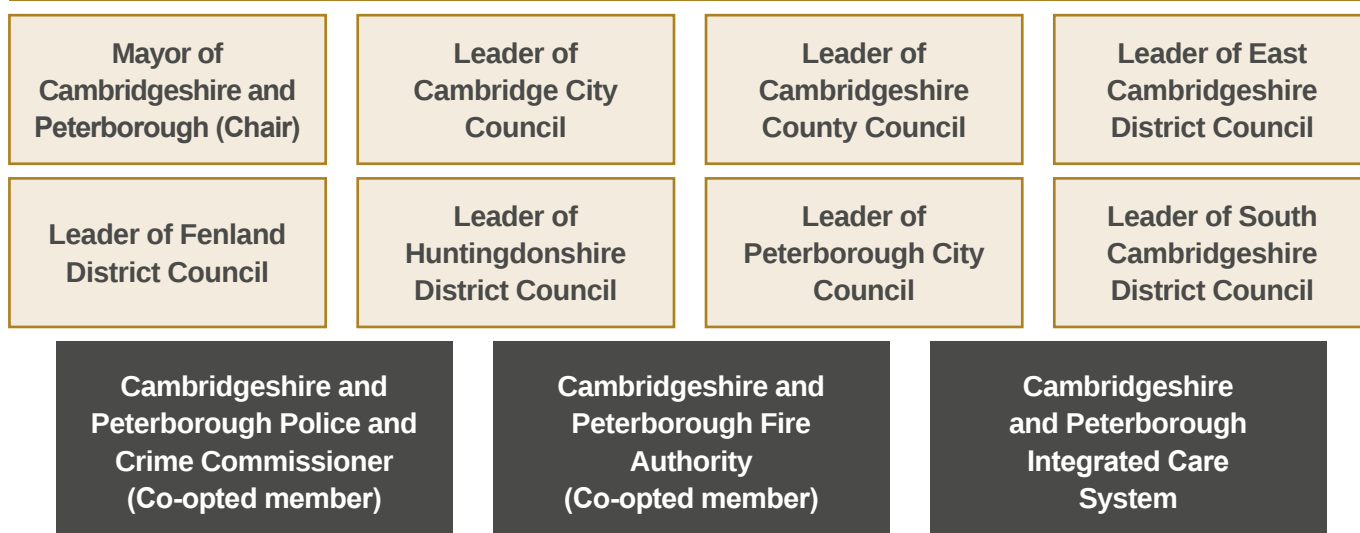
taken on by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Our ambition is for greater devolution for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, bringing more powers, decision-making and funding closer to our local communities. If our proposal is chosen by government, we will work with the Mayor and MHCLG to ensure the right governance arrangements are in place to support further devolution.

There will need to be changes to the current governance arrangements of the CPCA, including its Executive Board, to reflect a reduction from seven constituent councils to two. It will be essential to ensure that new governance arrangements support the integrity and fairness of decision making, whilst ensuring that strategic decision making enables economic growth and addresses the needs of the area as a whole.

We propose changes to CPCA governance arrangements to achieve this.

Current CPCA governance arrangements



Proposed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board

**Mayor of
Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough (Chair)**
[including covering Fire
Authority and Police and
Crime Commissioner]

**Greater Cambridge
Council (Member)**
2 representatives

**North Cambridgeshire
and Peterborough Council
(Member)**
2 representatives

Central East Integrated Care Board

Each of the constituent councils will appoint two representatives to the Executive Board, following the approach adopted by the recently established North Yorkshire Combined Authority, which also has two constituent member councils.

This could improve decision-making by ensuring a greater plurality of views and perspectives, in particular where constituent member councils may have 'no overall control'.

Balanced decision making

Our proposal will create more balanced representation around the Combined Authority table than other options, leading to more effective strategic decision-making.

Although option B leads to different population sizes between North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and Greater Cambridge, it more importantly creates two constituent member councils with the same sized economies.

The two constituent members will represent two distinctly different and functional economic areas. Option B will support good governance and enable growth, jobs and housing across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by:

- allowing CPCA plans, strategies and investments to focus on each area's unique strengths and challenges. For example, it will allow the CPCA to develop strategic transport and infrastructure planning and delivery around functional economies, rather than administrative boundaries
- creating opportunities to harness the complementary strengths of each area

and address unique challenges with shared solutions, ultimately delivering balanced and inclusive growth across the whole region

- minimising the risk of policy, investment or delivery bias towards either member council, due to the equal economic balance between the two constituent councils.

Unlocking further growth and devolution

Option B will support the delivery of key national and regional priorities, act as a system enabler and help unlock future devolution opportunities.



More new homes under construction at the new town of Waterbeach

It will support the government's continued focus on the Greater Cambridge economy as a driver of UK economic growth, including the recent announcement of £400m additional funding for affordable homes, infrastructure and business expansion.

For example, the geographic alignment between the Greater Cambridge unitary and the Cambridge Growth Company will enable more coherent governance of economic growth, infrastructure and housing issues.

The priority sectors identified in the CPCA's Local Growth Plan⁵⁷ will be concentrated in either Greater Cambridge (Life Sciences, Digital and Technology) or North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Advanced Manufacturing and Materials, Agri-Food and Tech and Energy and Clean-Tech) rather than dispersed across two or more different administrative footprints.

The NHS is going through a period of significant structural reform. From April 2026, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) will be abolished and merged with Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB and Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB. It is expected the Chair of the new Central East ICS will be a co-opted member of the CPCA Executive Board.

The boundaries of the proposed two unitary councils will largely align with the current geography of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough North and South Care Partnerships. These 'Place' partnership are not statutory arrangements. The NHS has indicated that the new ICSs will realign 'place' footprints to match the new unitary councils that emerge through LGR⁵⁸.

Conclusion

Option B will complement the CPCA's increased spatial planning, transport and infrastructure, skills and housing powers with two councils representing coherent functional economic areas. The Mayor and constituent council leaders will be in a better position to influence and deliver government policy as both councils are of national significance, ranked in the top 20 by GDP outside London.

Our proposal enables a more equitable partnership that supports regional economic coordination and maximises the benefits of devolution. Neither unitary will dominate the region's economic policy agenda, which will benefit the whole area, including delivery of the CPCA's strategic growth plans.



Implementation and transition plan





Gunwade lake at Nene Park, Peterborough

Implementation and transition plan

Overview

This section sets out the high-level roadmap, milestones and governance for a safe, legal and well sequenced transition to new unitary arrangements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

It also outlines our communications and engagement approach and the risk management framework across the transition period.

Our commitment

We are committed to delivering purposeful reform to create two stable unitary councils that will help us achieve our proposed benefits.

We will do this by:

Residents first:
Safe and legal from day one pledge

Data-driven decision making with strong financial stewardship

Consistent area-wide design, localised adaptation as needed

Meaningful workforce engagement in partnership with trade unions and stakeholders

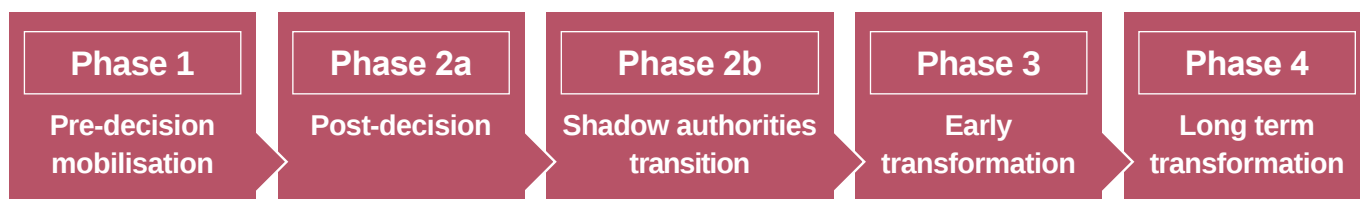
Rigorous programme controls and assurance

Openness and transparency with the public

High level roadmap

The move towards establishing two new unitary councils necessitates a carefully structured and phased implementation programme. This approach is designed to ensure continuity of statutory services, minimise disruption for residents, and accelerate the realisation of reorganisation benefits.

The transition will be delivered in **five staged phases** with clear entry/exit criteria and an overarching objective that services are safe and legal on vesting day and residents experience continuity of service. The proposed approach and key steps are outlined in the following sections:



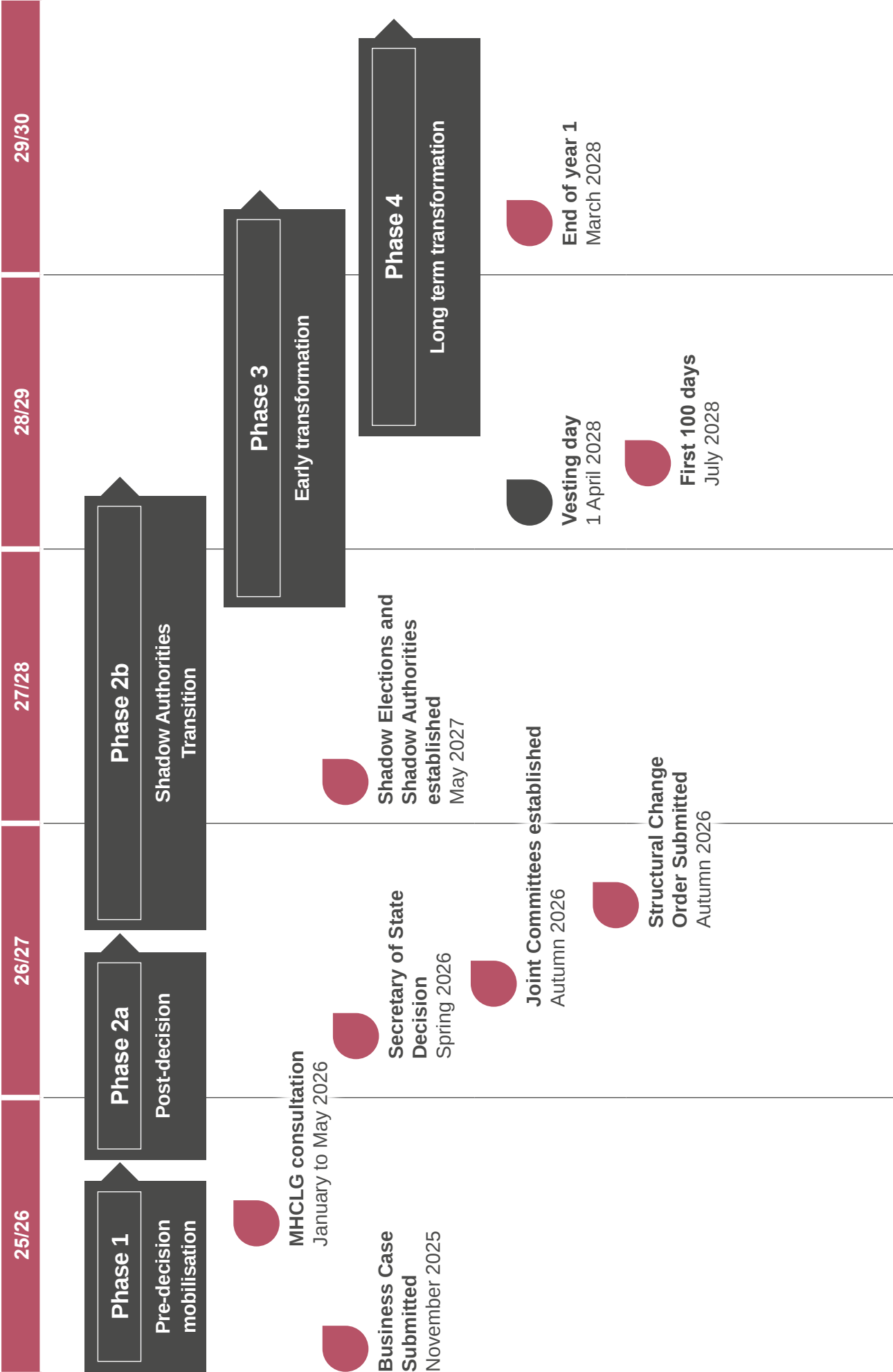
Phases at a glance

1. **Pre-decision mobilisation (now → Ministerial decision/statutory consultation):** Risk mitigation, stakeholder engagement, programme mobilisation including data and contract gathering, and establishing governance framework and boards.
- 2a. **Post-decision → shadow elections:** Formal cross council design and readiness, mobilisation of Joint Implementation Committees to oversee the transition process. Standup of the Transformation Programme Office (TPO); creation of service blueprints and baseline assessments of services, finances, assets, and workforce; initial legal scoping for the Structural Change Order will begin, including decisions around Section 24, laying the groundwork for the subsequent implementation phases.
- 2b. **Shadow authorities (shadow elections → vesting day):** Shadow authorities will be established to prepare for vesting day with relevant elections. Priorities include service continuity, senior appointments, budget setting, Council Tax alignment, system integration, HR policy finalisation, asset rationalisation, and regular communication. Joint committees will oversee these tasks in accordance with legal and statutory requirements.
3. **Early transformation (vesting day → Year 1):** Focus on stabilising, harmonising, and beginning transformation. This phase includes benefits tracking and post-implementation review, with an emphasis on innovating service delivery, integrating teams and systems, and driving digital transformation. Collaboration with staff and partners will be central to achieving efficiencies and improved outcomes, as well as realising the full benefits set out in the business case. The overall aim is to establish a modern, efficient, and responsive organisation.
4. **Long term transformation (Day 365 onwards):** Delivering our longer-term ambitions in line with public sector reform. Work will be prioritised by each of the two unitary councils in conjunction with the CPCA staff, building partnerships, and tracking long-term goals.

We acknowledge the complexity of this undertaking and recognise that its success will depend on strong cooperation, comprehensive planning, and consensus among all partners and elected representatives. Our proactive and collaborative approach includes advanced detailed planning in anticipation of the proposal's approval, ensuring readiness for both transition and transformation.

This reorganisation represents a pivotal opportunity to drive public sector reform and deliver enhanced value for our communities.

Timeline for successful delivery



Workstream and deliverables

We will organise delivery through seven workstreams, each with clearly defined ownership and deliverables

1. **Governance, Democracy and Legal** – constitutions, standing orders, regulatory committees, election logistics, shadow structures, equalities reviews, Boundary Commission interface, member development; day one legal and policy framework.
2. **Finance, Commercial and Assets** – Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reserves strategy, Council Tax equalisation trajectory, fees and charges policy approach, single balance sheet, asset register, contracts novation strategy, procurement pipeline.
3. **People and Culture** – Target Operating Model, staffing models, pay, T&Cs, and grading roadmap, organisational development, culture plan, change management and communications to staff, leadership development, equality impacts.
4. **Customer, Digital and Data** – contact model (telephony, web, face-to-face), CRM and case management approach, identity and access management, data and system migration, integration and retention schedules, new websites and branding, cyber security.
5. **Service Alignment, Continuity and Delivery** – day one readiness; phased integration plans for adult social care, children's services, education, SEND, housing and homelessness, public protection, waste, planning and growth, highways and transport, libraries and culture, revenues and benefits, environmental health, regulatory services, equality impact assessments.
6. **Partnerships, Locality and Communications** – parish/town council agreements, community boards, partner governance interfaces (ICB, Police/Fire, CPCA), public and stakeholder communications.
7. **Programme Management** – planning and coordination, RAID, dependency management, benefits management, reporting, configuration and document control; independent assurance.



Air quality lesson with Cambridgeshire primary school pupils

Roadmap

The roadmap overleaf provides indicative key activities at each phase.

This will be developed into a full implementation programme plan. The activities within stages three and four are dependent on the ambitions determined by the new councils.

Roadmap

Governance, Democracy and Legal	Finance, Commercial and Assets	People and Culture	Customer, Digital and Data	Service Alignment, Continuity and Delivery	Partnerships, Locality and Communications	Programme Management
Governance arrangements established	- Budget baseline defined - Shared assets database established - Shared contracts database	- HR transition plan - HR shared data established	- Digital maturity assessment - Data maturity assessment - Shared database developed	- Additional 'as is' service analysis for both front line and back office - Enabling functions identified	- Internal readiness workshops - Communication and engagement plan	Programme Team recruited and trained
- Constitution developed - Elections logistics - Shadow structures - Standing Orders - Structural change order, including Section 24 triggers	- Contract innovation strategy - Procurement pipeline	- Staffing models - Roles T&Cs defined - Job evaluation - People and workplace culture model	- Customer interaction model - Digital design	- Day one readiness - Integration plan for both front line and back-office services	- Internal and external workshops - Design of Resident Engagement Pathways	- Implementation plan finalised - Ongoing programme monitoring and reporting
- Day one legal and policy framework - Council structures and boards in place	- MFTP and reserves strategy - Disaggregation of county council balance sheet	- Job matching, selection, and recruitment into new structure - Recruitment of interim statutory roles (S151, Monitoring Officer, etc)	- CRM and case management transition - Data migration	Agreement on future service offer	New branding agreed	- Benefit realisation - Programme closure
HQ and civic buildings transition	Asset strategy developed	- Culture change implemented - New ways of working established	Day one readiness and testing	- Services reorganised - SLAs developed - Service improvement initiated	Organisation rebranding	Three-five year transformation plan finalised

Phase 1:
Pre decision
mobilisation

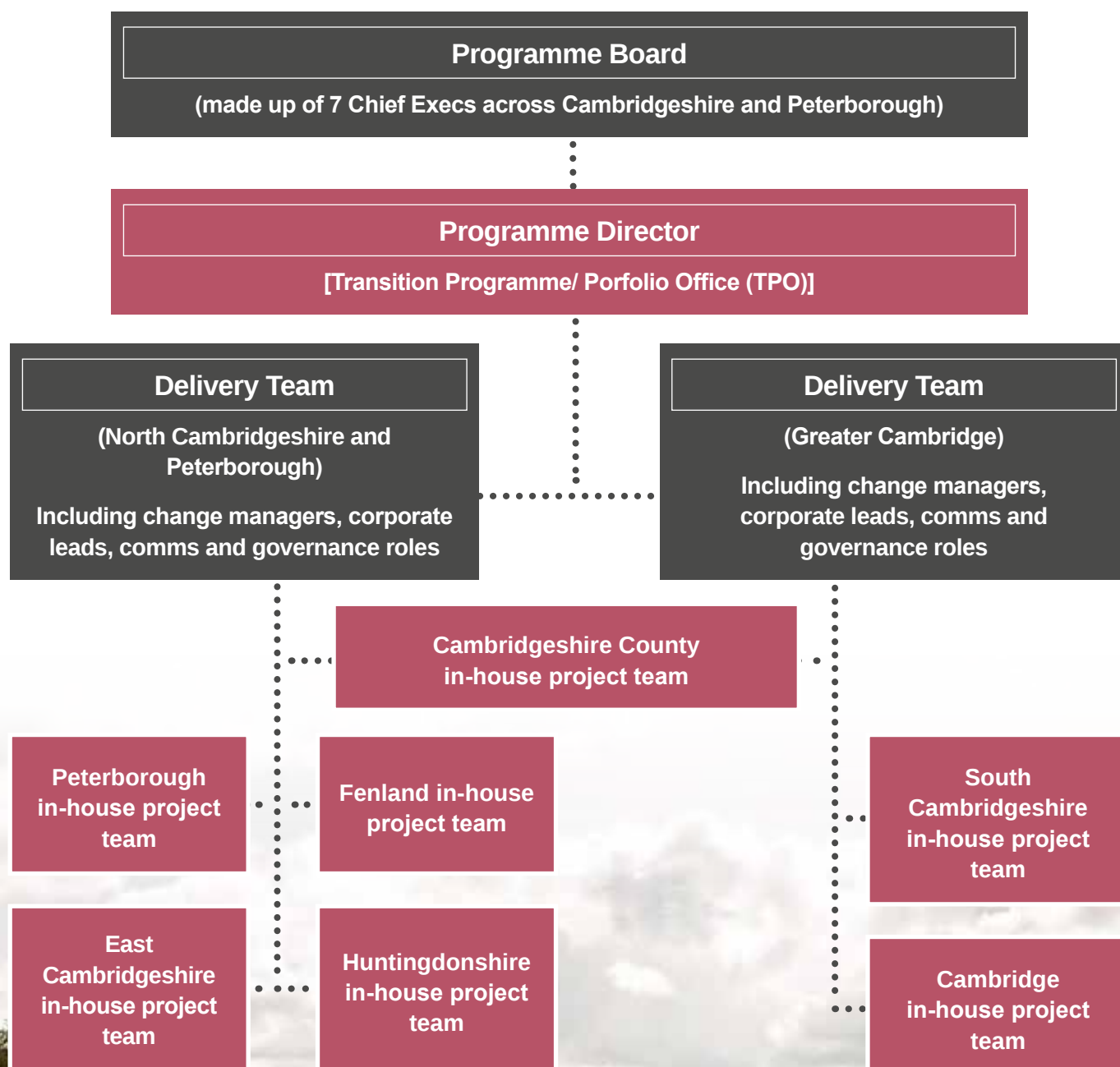
Phase 2a:
Post-decision

Phase 2b:
Shadow
Authorities
transition

Phase 3:
Early
transformation

Transition governance arrangements

Below is a governance overview of how the Transition Programme/Portfolio office will interact with the Programme Board and the delivery teams, with one delivery team established for each future unitary, and the potential for there to be the recruitment of additional programme directors for each delivery team:



An afternoon cycle through Wicken Fen

Implementation risk management and benefits tracking

The table below outlines the key risks to successful LGR delivery, along with proposed mitigation strategies. Effective management of these risks is essential to ensure the programme is delivered successfully – see Appendix 15 - Implementation risk log.

High-Level LGR implementation risks and mitigations

Risk description	Mitigating actions
Service disruption - Disruption to statutory and critical services (e.g. adult social care, children's services, SEND, safeguarding, revenues and benefits) during transition, risking continuity of care and essential payments.	• Day one readiness assessments for all critical services • Dual running of systems where required • Dedicated incident room during cutover • Scenario-based rehearsals and continuity plans • Early appointments to critical roles • Retention incentives for scarce skills • Visible leadership and change champion network • Wellbeing support and clear TUPE processes • 'Minimise change for day one' principle • Rigorous migration rehearsals and validation • Robust identity and access management and cyber controls • Independent technical assurance • Ring-fenced transition budget with benefits tracking • Monthly review of prudential indicators • Pre-vesting reserves strategy • Transparent Council Tax harmonisation plan • Single, coherent narrative and consolidated FAQs • Structured engagement plan for MPs, partners, and communities • Early and ongoing engagement • Transparent communications strategy • Realistic critical path and clear scope control • Time-boxed discovery for unknowns • Early legal drafting for Orders • Structured escalation and decision protocols • Design governance structures to protect local representation • Empower town/parish councils • Thematic and neighbourhood engagement models • Monitor and respond to emerging tensions • Clear benefits realisation approach • Establishment of appropriate monitoring arrangements • Regular reporting and corrective action plans • Invest in long-term programme management capability
Workforce capacity and retention - Loss of key staff, low morale, or insufficient capacity to deliver both transition and ongoing services.	
ICT and data migration - Data loss, cyber risk, or system failure during migration, risking service continuity and data integrity.	
Financial risks - Uncertainty over transition costs, Council Tax harmonisation, legacy debts, and ongoing financial resilience.	
Stakeholder engagement and public confidence - Lack of buy-in or clarity among residents, staff, partners, MPs and other stakeholders, risking resistance and loss of confidence.	
Programme complexity and pace - Overambitious timelines, unclear scope, or failure to control programme complexity, risking delivery failure.	
Loss of local representation and community cohesion - Perceived or actual reduction in local democratic voice and accountability; risk of community tensions or loss of local identity.	
Failure to deliver transformation benefits - Estimated savings and service improvements not realised, undermining the business case and future delivery.	

Success measures and benefits tracking

Success and the realised benefits of the programme will be monitored as follows:

- **Day one success tests:** All statutory services operational; no missed payments (payroll, suppliers, benefits); customer access channels live; legal frameworks in force
- **12 month success tests:** Harmonised core corporate policies; measurable improvements in customer contact performance; planned integrations completed; delivery of Year 1 efficiency targets; independently validated lessons learned review
- **Benefits management:** Baseline and track savings (recurring and non-recurring) and quality outcomes through a central benefits register; align to Medium Term Financial Plan and transformation roadmap; publish quarterly progress updates.

Commitments

- **Residents first/Safe and legal day one pledge:** All statutory services operating;



executive/financial delegations in force;
customer access live; payroll/suppliers/benefits
payments uninterrupted on vesting day.

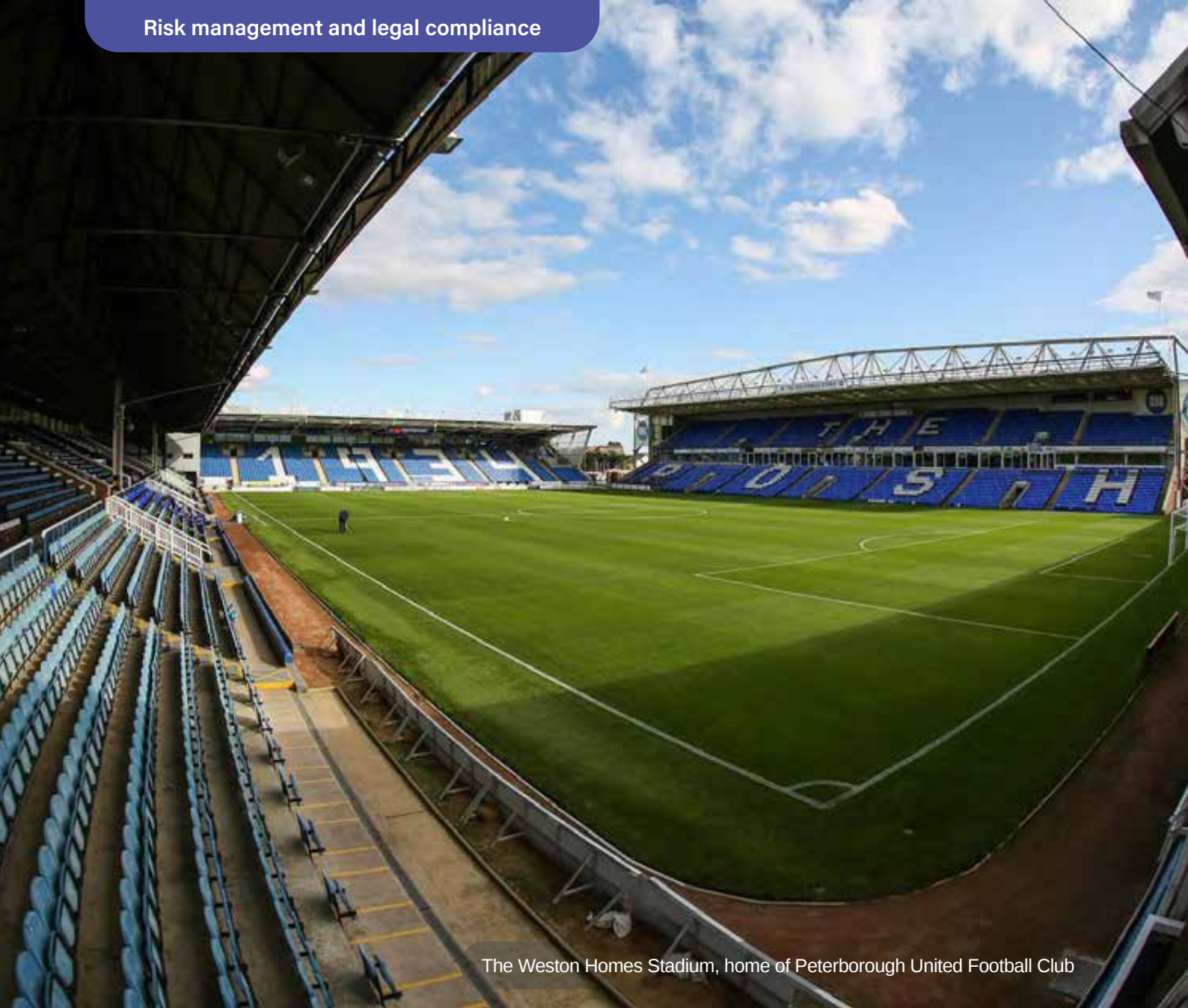
- **Public transparency commitment:** Launch and maintain a public LGR microsite (timeline, board summaries, FAQs, myth busters, document library including Shadow Authority Meetings) with monthly updates through to vesting day and quarterly thereafter in Year 1.
- **'Once for the area' dual track readiness:** Maintain option flexible artefacts (Target Operating Model options, ICT cutover variants, Council Tax trajectories) up to the Ministerial decision. Beyond Ministerial decision continue both unitary cooperation and data sharing between the Shadow Authorities and the existing councils.
- **Workforce engagement:** Early appointment of statutory officers; retention and wellbeing measures; regular staff briefings and a change champion network.
- **Data and financial discipline:** Ring fenced transition budget; published benefits register; monthly delivery confidence assessments; Council Tax harmonisation plan agreed pre vesting; single, shared evidence base.
- **Programme assurance:** Independent gateway reviews at each phase gate with audit report line back to joint implementation committees (decision to consult → Order drafting → shadow go live → vesting → 100 day review).

Additional measures for sustainability

- Establish a three-to-five-year transformation focus beyond vesting day (digital, demand management, commercial pipeline) with non-recurring vs recurring benefits identified.
- Embed locality boards/community panels with devolved micro budgets and service standards to protect place responsiveness within larger units.
- Introduce a supplier and contract consolidation plan (12-18 months) to rationalise legacy contracts and unlock procurement savings while safeguarding continuity.

**Risk management
and legal compliance**

Platform 1 16:39
Ipswich
Bury St Edmunds
16:40
Stamford (17:00)
Ipswich (17:28)



The Weston Homes Stadium, home of Peterborough United Football Club

Risk management and legal compliance

Risk management strategy

We have outlined in our proposal for public services our approach to service delivery which includes ensuring legal compliance with statutory legislation and duties whilst also making sure that services are not disrupted on vesting day.

This section outlines in more detail how we wish to address some of the wider key risks associated with LGR including legal, governance, and reputational risks. It is vital that all proposals submitted address the below risks to protect residents and ensure services are operational on day one.

In the implementation plan section, we outlined some of the key programme-level risks that will be addressed by a centralised risk register managed by the TPO during the implementation phase. Our TPO will also implement wrap-around assurance with regular risk horizon scans to ensure that we are on top of any emerging risks.

The above outlines our approach going forward, but our approach so far has also been collaborative. As part of the proposal phase, we set up a democracy, governance and risk workstream attended by the monitoring officers in the region to ensure shared understanding of key risks and statutory duties.

The following table highlights some of the top-level risks with mitigations that are or will be implemented to manage safe and legal implementation.

Risk	Mitigation
Effective leadership – ensuring clarity of leadership and decision-making processes to keep implementation activities on track with effective oversight.	We will move swiftly to implement our transition programme office and sponsor board. A single responsible officer for each unitary will be appointed, allowing for a central leader to guide decision-making.
Service continuity – balancing LGR with business as usual (BAU) service delivery to avoid disruptions to services for residents, potentially harming public confidence and trust.	Our approach to service delivery in this proposal is one that recognises the statutory requirements of the new unitaries. We recognise that transformation is a later task with safe transition taking priority. Within our TPO, we will work to effectively prioritise accordingly whilst ensuring that roles are back-filled to continue services in the existing authorities.
Stakeholder engagement – providing clarity to stakeholders on the LGR transition process and ensuring different priorities are accounted for. Lack of clear communication could result in reputational damage and lack of trust.	Within our TPO, we will have dedicated communications capacity to ensure that communication is timely and effective. A communications strategy will be developed to ensure that communication is targeted and consistent.
Complexity and pace of change – there is a compressed timetable between decisions on the proposal and the go-live date in April 2028. If programme management is not effective, there may be additional increases in time and costs.	The implementation plan section of this proposal establishes a clear plan for accelerating into the transition phase of LGR. It places capacity to deliver as a priority with robust programme management arrangements to manage risk and embed oversight.
Workforce capacity and morale – LGR will lead to significant changes for staff potentially resulting in a drop in morale and capacity. It is important that we manage change effectively and maintain strong engagement to make sure our workforce is on board.	Our communications strategy will work to embed staff feedback and co-design within our processes, making sure that the workforce has an opportunity to build our identities for the new organisations. Our dedicated Human Resources and Organisational Development workstream will also be responsible for managing that change, allowing dedicated time and capacity to ensure a smooth workforce transition.



A multi-use sports pavilion and pitches, delivered at the new town of Northstowe

Assessment of legal compliance

The below table highlights our 'safe and legal' checklist for vesting day.

This list is not exhaustive and there will be other areas that need to be incorporated however it provides an initial assessment of how we will ensure compliance.

Compliance area	How will we ensure this is met?
Data-sharing and GDPR	Data-sharing agreements have already been established between regional local authorities. We will always ensure that sensitive data is collected in compliance with GDPR and our information governance officers are in conversation to ensure this is met.
TUPE/HR considerations	Transfer of staff will be in line with TUPE regulations – all T&Cs will be maintained and continuity protected. We will ensure that payroll systems are high priority and will be aligned by vesting day to ensure consistency and continuity.
Structural Change Order	The Structural Change Order (SCO) will outline the statutory requirements for implementation and electoral arrangements. We have continuously kept in conversation with MHCLG and will continue to do so to shape the SCO. The region has already begun forming implementation plans and we are aware that our implementation team should be in line with the government's provisions.
Major financial decisions	Once the SCO comes into effect, the relevant authorities will be responsible for not binding the future unitary through major financial decisions. The SCO will put the process for managing this in place; however we have begun to set up procurement working groups to ensure effective oversight of major contracts that directly feeds up to our monitoring officers.
Budget setting	Once the decision is made by government, the shadow authority will be responsible for budget setting, ensuring financial management (including systems) and financial reporting is in place for vesting day. We will ensure this is completed in line with the shadow authorities' remits.
Democratic arrangements	The SCO will also outline electoral arrangements for the new authorities. We have outlined our recommendation for arrangements in this proposal however our Monitoring Officer working group will ensure compliance with the arrangements outlined, including the remit of the shadow authorities' decisions on schemes of delegation, constitutions and committees.

Compliance area	How will we ensure this is met?
Customer services and website	It is key that residents have a way to access the council. We will ensure that there is one phone number, website and front door to avoid confusion for residents.
Liabilities/ asset transfers/ intellectual property/ legal company agreements	We are undertaking the work now to ensure that all asset registers are up to date. Our IT staff are also creating a centralised repository to manage IT contracts. A procurement sub-group has also been set up to manage our existing procurement regulations to ensure that contracts have clear exit strategies. Once the decision has been made by government, we will work with our partner councils to ensure that transfers can be managed legally and as smooth as possible.
Bank accounts/ collection of Council Tax/ payment of benefits	We will ensure that the new authorities' bank accounts are set up for day one to avoid any disruptions in the collection of Council Tax and the payment of benefits. We will work to harmonise Council Tax within the seven year limit, as legislated, using member working groups with the new administrations.
Statutory roles recruited	As soon as elections take place, we will advertise for our statutory roles, starting with the Chief Executive. We will begin work on this prior to elections to ensure that the national recruitment happens swiftly with sufficient time for the new corporate leaderships to play a key role in implementation.
Statutory policies	We will ensure that all statutory policies are a priority for the new shadow authorities, such as the housing allocation scheme, licensing policies, equalities impact assessments, and a homelessness strategy. We will start work swiftly to ensure that a new Local Plan is implemented within the five year limit.



Taking a walk along the riverside in Ely

Conclusion



Conclusion

Today, tomorrow, together

Local Government Reorganisation offers a once in a generation opportunity to protect what works, fix what needs to improve and create the conditions for a brighter future.

Our proposal is based on a shared commitment to work in partnership for a prosperous regional economy and better public services for every person and every community.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and Greater Cambridge, are the right size to thrive and local enough to care.

Each council has unique strengths that will provide a strong platform for:

- **inclusive and sustainable growth:** two equal economies ranked in the UK top 20 by GDP (outside London) – reflecting functional economic areas where 88% of working people live and work
- **resilient council finances:** a fairer division of resources to meet local needs – delivering three times the savings of any other option (£167m net savings by 2035), to provide headroom to invest in the improvements our residents have called for
- **better public services:** a focus on preventative care, healthier lifestyles, and continuous improvement – supporting lower average social needs in both councils and local government structures more capable of serving the whole region
- **community engagement and civic pride:** a commitment to co-design local governance and integrated local services with local communities to reflect their diverse needs and interests across our region.

B is better

Option B is based on thorough and robust data and insights to evidence the best outcomes for the whole region. We've listened to our residents, cities, districts and villages.

Looking at a map, it may seem sensible to carve

up the region into equal landmass, with similar populations as proposed in option A. But this approach concentrates social needs in one council and leads to greater economic inequality over time, with the south dominating the region.

The three unitary council options understandably seek to preserve historic local government identities. But they are not financially viable. Holding on to the past would be at the expense of providing decent public services to our residents in the future.

That is not a fair outcome for the whole region either.



The evidence we have presented demonstrates that option B makes a virtue of different sized councils. It meets the government's tests for financial sustainability, economic coherence and democratic accountability. It establishes two complementary councils, each capable of standing on solid foundations and sound finances.

Above all, local government exists to help residents live fulfilling, healthier lives. Option B recognises our regional disparities and is designed to address them. It is the fairest option for everyone who calls this place home.

Sustainable growth, better services and shared prosperity

Living standards will only improve if we prioritise sustainable economic growth. Growth expands councils' tax bases and strengthens budgets.

Healthier budgets mean our new councils can invest in better services that deliver for our residents, businesses, and communities.

A Greater Cambridge council can also complement a Greater Oxford council to bookend the growth corridor, which successive governments have championed as vital to the nation's economic success. Its innovation economy and robust tax base would support quality services for a rapidly growing population, though it would need to address rising housing pressures and demand for SEND provision.

The council would have a higher children's social care grant per child than many Ofsted-rated 'outstanding' authorities, which is where we will aim. We will be ambitious about the future of our next generation and strive for excellence particularly for the most vulnerable.

The larger **North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough** council would rank 15th by GDP in the UK – bigger than Liverpool, Belfast and Sheffield. It would have a voice on the national stage and strengths in key sectors integral to the nation's industrial strategy and food supply.

It would have scale where it is needed most; to deliver better adult social care and children's services than residents currently receive, particularly where needs are greatest in parts of Fenland and Peterborough. It would have the size and financial stability to manage budget risks inherited from previous councils and the buying power to reshape care markets, close inequality gaps and build long-term prosperity.

Delivering together for everyone

We appreciate that residents in rural areas fear their voice may be lost – either drowned out by Cambridge or diminished in a larger authority.

Option B has heard and listened to those concerns.

We believe that imposing Neighbourhood Area Committee covering 30,000 people, as proposed by option A, will not satisfy the diversity of community interests and places that make up our great region.

Instead, we have put forward a variety of different ways for residents to engage and influence the decisions that affect their lives, in their communities, including how services should be arranged to meet local needs.

More importantly option B is the only proposal that has committed to co-design these local governance and delivery arrangements with local communities too.

Creating a culture that puts residents first

Finally, we recognise that a proposal is just that; a statement of intent backed by evidence and a commitment that residents must come first in everything the new councils do.

To deliver on the 12 benefits of B, it's critical to establish the right conditions for success.

That will require a fresh start that retires former councils but respects their legacy. It also means creating a collaborative, resident-first culture with partners that may have preferred a different approach to reorganisation.

Every colleague, wherever they worked before, must feel welcomed, empowered and have a stake in the future of their council from the moment government makes its decision.

We have developed this proposal in that spirit by reaching out to every authority in the region to seek their input and insights.

We should not sweep away 50 years of local knowledge but build on what works: committed leadership that understands and works for local communities, with a willingness to embrace new technologies and new ways of working to respond to today's challenges while preparing for tomorrow's opportunities.



Appendices and supporting evidence

Appendices and supporting evidence

Executive summary

1a – NHS England (2025) [Strategic Commissioning Framework](#)

1b – NHS England (2025) [Planning Framework for the NHS in England](#)

Introduction to Local Government Reform

2 – LGiU: Local Government Information Unit (2025) [State of the Locals 2025](#)

An Overview of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

3 – ONS (2023) [Regional Economic Activity by Gross Domestic Product, UK: 1998 to 2023](#)

4 – ONS (2023) [Regional Economic Activity by Gross Domestic Product, UK: 1998 to 2023](#)

5 – PWC (2023) [Good Growth for Cities](#)

6 – National Farmers Union (2019) [Delivering for Britain: Food and Farming in the Fens](#)

7 – University of Cambridge (2025) [Cambridge Innovation in Numbers](#)

8a – Department for Transport (2024) [Road Condition Statistics: Data Tables](#)

8b – Data used is from RDC0120, detailing the percentage of networks where roads should be considered for maintenance. This includes A, B, C, and unclassified roads. It provides a relative rank compared to highways authorities.

9 – Centre for Cities (2025) [High Streets Catchment Data Tool](#)

10 – See Appendix 4 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough countywide survey results

11 – ONS (2025) [Private Rent and House Prices, UK: April 2025](#)

12a – ONS (2025) [UK House Price Index](#)

12b – Data used is the HPI for 17 September 2025. Average price for all property types was taken, and ONS monthly average private rent from price Index of Private Rents was used to supplement.

13 – Centre for Cities (2025) [Data Dashboard](#)

14 – Cambridge City Council (2023) [State of the City Report 2023](#). p.44.

15 – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) [Live Tables on Housing Supply: Net Additional Dwellings](#)

16 – CPCA (2025) [Local Growth Plan 2025](#)

17 – Holmes, H., Burgess, G (2025) [Experiences of digital exclusion among temporary accommodation and social housing tenants: Learning for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan](#). Cambridge: University of Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research

18 – Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce (2025) [Local Skills Improvement Plan Annual Report 2025](#)

19 – ONS (2019) [UK Natural Capital: peatlands](#)

20 – Natural England (2025) [England Peat Map Portal](#)

21 – ONS (2024) [Mid-year local authority population estimates](#)

22 – ONS (2021) [Rural Urban Classification](#)

23a – East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough figures are drawn from Cambridgeshire County Council's published 2023-based population forecasts. Greater Cambridge is a scenario informed by the 2024 housing trajectory, plus emerging Local Plan allocation sites from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

23b – Cambridgeshire County Council (2025) [Local Population and Dwelling Stock Estimates and Forecasts](#)

23c – Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (2024) [Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Housing Land Supply Report](#)

23d – Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (2025) [Draft Local Plan](#)

24a – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insight (2023) [State of the Region Dashboard: Child Poverty Map](#)

24b – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insight (2024) [State of the Region Dashboard: Healthy Life Expectancy](#)

25 – The Sutton Trust (2025) [Opportunity Index Interactive Map](#)

26 – ONS (2021) [Census 2021 Data Explorer](#)

27 – CPCA (2025) [Health and Wellbeing State of the Region](#)

Options Appraisal

28 – Appendix 9: Newton (2025) *Local Government Reorganisation: Impact on people services*. p.48

Our Proposal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

29 – Based on 2023 chained volume GDP, compared to existing authorities. ONS (2023) [Regional Economic Activity by Gross Domestic Product, UK: 1998 to 2023](#)

30 - [Global Innovation Index 2025 - Cluster ranking](#)

31 – ONS (2023) [Regional Economic Activity by Gross Domestic Product, UK: 1998 to 2023](#)

32 – Projections based on 2014-2023 per head GDP cumulative annual growth rate for local authorities trend, projected continuing until 2040. For example, Greater Cambridge's GDP per head growth is here 4.25%, and North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough's is 3.1%.

33 – CPCA (2025) [Local Growth Plan 2025](#)

34 – Includes working from home and no fixed place of work. Census 2021 was conducted during the COVID pandemic, and patterns may since have changed.

35 – ONS (2021) [Census 2021 Data Explorer](#)

36 – Centre for Cities (2022) [Cities Outlook 2022](#)

36a – Clark, B., Chatterjee, K., Martin, A., Davis, A. (2020) 'How commuting affects subjective wellbeing' *Transportation*, 47(1), pp.2777-2805

37 – Public Health England (2021) [PHE Healthy Places](#)

38 – MHCLG [Function economic market areas](#)

39 – ONS (2021) [Census 2021 Data Explorer](#)

39a – Analysis of 2021 census data, mapped to MSOAs to provide additional geographic detail regarding commuting patterns. For further detail see Appendix 14.

40 – Beauhurst (2024) [UK Council Ranking: The Local Growth Index](#)

41 – Valuation Office Agency (2023) [Non-domestic rating stock of properties including business floorspace. 2023](#)

42a – Cambridge start-ups raised £0.8bn of private equity investment during 150 funding rounds in 2023, according to Beauhurst. In 2024, this figure was £1.7bn

42b – Beauhurst (2024) [UK Council Ranking: The Local Growth Index](#)

42c – Cambridge Network (2025) [Cambridge tops UK for science investment as US capital surges into tech and life sciences](#)

43 – Valuation Office Agency (2023) [Non-domestic rating stock of properties including business floorspace. 2023](#)

44 – Greater Cambridge already has a shared planning service, and is consulting on a joint Local Plan

45 – Appendix 9: Newton (2025) *Local Government Reorganisation: Impact on people services*. p.13

46 – Appendix 8: Pixel (2025) *Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – Cambridgeshire*.

- 47** – Appendix 9: Newton (2025) *Local Government Reorganisation: Impact on people services*. p.17
- 48** – Based on published proposals at 14 November 2025
- 49** – Institute for Government (2024) [*The 2025-26 English Local Government Finance Settlement*](#)
- 51** – Of the 63 existing Unitary Authorities in England, the mean population is 269,397 with the median at 230,185
- 50** – Appendix 9: Newton (2025) *Local Government Reorganisation: Impact on people services*. p.48
- 52** – See Appendix 12 for more detailed analysis. The composite Social Needs Index (SNI) uses the following weighted domains: Adult Social Care (45%), Children’s Social Care (30%), SEND (20%), Homelessness (5%).
- 53** – Social Finance (2022) [*Changing Lives. Changing Systems: Helping Families Stay Together*](#)
- 54** – Local Government Boundary Commission for England (2023) [*Council Size Submission: Guidance: A guide to making a good submission*](#)
- 55** – For example, the Structural Changes Order (SCO) under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 §7 declares a new authority “*is to have the style of a city, subject to the grant of Letters Patent*” and “*all charters, civic insignia, plate and other ceremonial property help by the former Cambridge City Council shall vest in the new authority*”. Grants or regrants exercised under the Royal Prerogative via the Local Government Act 1972 §245.4 might indicate “*The grant of city status contained in the Schedule to these Letters Patent shall take effect immediately before [article x] of the Structural Change Order*” so that both instruments dovetail and also re-grants the arms, crest, supporters and motto to the new authority — *mutatis mutandis* — allowing continued use on regalia, stationary and signage
- 56** – Institute for Government (2024) [*Citizens’ Assemblies*](#)
- 57** – CPCA (2025) [*Local Growth Plan 2025*](#)
- 58a** – NHS England (2025) [*Strategic Commissioning Framework*](#)
- 58b** – NHS England (2025) [*Planning Framework for the NHS in England*](#)

Additional Appendices to this document:

Appendix 1 – Glossary

Appendix 2 – Financial analysis and modelling

Appendix 3 – Detailed options appraisal

Appendix 4 – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough countywide survey results

Appendix 5 – East Cambridgeshire survey results

Appendix 6 – The future of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire joint survey results

Appendix 7 – Inner Circle Consulting – Case for cities report

Appendix 8 – Pixel – Financial modelling and reporting

Appendix 9 – Newton – People services report

Appendix 10 – RedQuadrant – Future of social care and public health report

Appendix 11 – PPL – Advice note on housing and homelessness

Appendix 12 – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – People services overview

Appendix 13 – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Government Reorganisation – comparative implications for people services to 2040

Appendix 14 – Transport To Work Areas (TTWAs) – further analysis

Appendix 15 – Implementation risk log

Appendix 16 – Equalities Impact Assessment

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CAMBRIDGE
CITY COUNCIL



East Cambridgeshire
District Council



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council