

# Big Issues for the Cambridge Area

What kind of place do we wish the Cambridge area to be in 2050?

What should the local authorities and other bodies be doing now to achieve that?

A report of discussions extending over 9 hours during the autumn of 2017 by members of

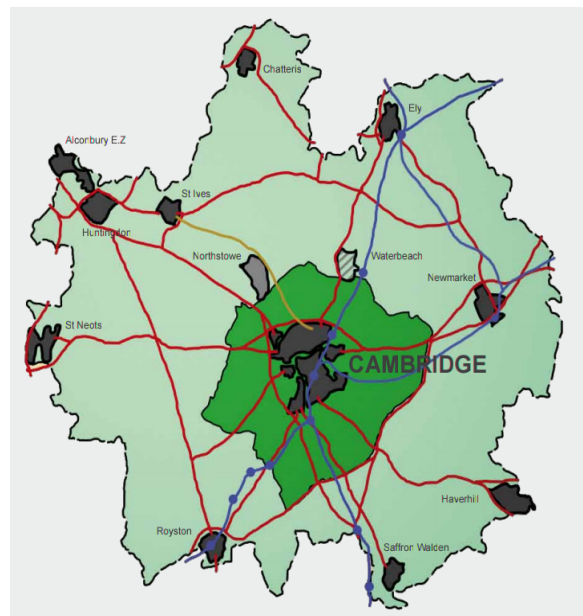


Each session began with a 15-minute slide presentation, followed by 45 minutes of discussion.

The slides, and fuller accounts of the discussions, are on <http://www.damtp.cam.ac.uk/user/pvl/2050/>

Not all the participants necessarily agree with the views expressed.

*The dark green area on the accompanying map signifies the extent of the Green Belt*



## Contents:

Our economy  
Transport  
Social cohesion  
The NHS  
Education and skills

Agriculture and green spaces  
Design of buildings and localities  
Energy and waste  
Quality of life

## Our economy

- Cambridge is dogged with too many layers of government; we must achieve unitary status
- Cambridge is a net contributor to the Treasury and its economy is growing very rapidly; Government needs to turn its recent promises of new infrastructure into wider benefits for the region
- A structured policy is needed to develop surrounding towns and villages and improve their transport links
- The University of Cambridge is a key driver of the current economic success of the city, but there is concern about the potential effects of Brexit on budgets and on its attractiveness to foreign institutions, investors, students and visitors
- The Cambridge environment must be nurtured to attract and retain the much-needed skills which drive the success of the cluster
- The needs of the significant part of the population earning £20,000 per year or less should be addressed
- Over-development could harm the medieval heart of the city and so the development process has to be managed carefully
- Longer stays and greater expenditure by tourists will require an improvement in the accommodation and basic amenities the city has to offer (including a coach station and more accessible tourist information)

## Transport

- There must be rapid modernisation and widespread improvement of the transport network over the wider Cambridge area
- Commuter behaviour needs to change, encouraged by cheap and efficient public transport
- Restrictions on vehicle access to the central area should be further extended, with potential for introducing a congestion charge on some vehicles
- Existing and new Park & Ride sites could serve as transport hubs for an integrated public transport system throughout the city and its suburbs, with incentives to increase the use of bicycles
- Provision of user-friendly cycleways with good lighting and general maintenance

- Provision of school bus services and help for young people to meet transport costs
- Close engagement with community resident associations over the details of all innovations

## Social cohesion

- Cambridge faces problems such as: areas of deprivation; an increasing elderly population; social isolation; shortage of affordable housing; lack of appropriate education facilities at some levels
- The sub-region is one of the wealthiest parts of the country, but it is the worst in the country for inequality
- It is important to pepper-pot social housing within areas of private housing so as to achieve better integration
- The correlation of social isolation with depression is well established; the benefits of voluntary work to both the volunteer and the recipient are acknowledged and should be acted upon
- More vocational training would give young people a sense of purpose
- 5% of people in Cambridge are illiterate, another isolating factor; voluntary input could help.
- Attitudes towards the underprivileged have to change

## The NHS

- The Cambridge area could be a powerful exemplar for improved practice within primary, secondary and tertiary health as well as social care services
- Hospital is the most expensive place for people recovering from illnesses and clinical interventions; a new 'half way house' could provide a lower cost and more effective option
- Addenbrooke's might concentrate on emergencies and acute care, with a second building devoted to routine procedures,
- The elected mayor for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough could take a lead in integration of health care with social care
- Mental health remains a major issue; this might be remedied by better integration of physical and mental health care services
- The area could be used to pilot service developments such as student mental health, injuries from bicycle accidents or how best to care for older patients with multiple morbidities

- There might be a pilot study to encourage medical staff to take courses at the Judge Institute to help improve NHS management practice
- Cambridge could become a leader in considering the wishes of older people regarding the treatment and care they want in later life

## Education and skills

- Areas of concern include: under-performance of some local schools; the importance of non-academic qualifications; links between business and schools; the supply and retention of teachers; skills shortages
- The shortage of teachers is exacerbated by requiring excessive bureaucracy in their work and insufficient housing at affordable prices to match their salaries
- More people are needed in science, technology, engineering and mathematics without jeopardising the creative industries
- Too large a proportion of school students are expected to go to university which depletes the numbers taking vocational skills
- People will need to retrain several times during their career
- The centrally-created curriculum has reduced time available for extra-curricular activities, such as performing arts which help to develop confidence
- Fewer parents are volunteering to help with extra-curricular activities such as after-school clubs due to the levels of DBS checking required
- Cambridge should adopt best practice of other countries by providing free transport for all children attending school up to age 18

## Agriculture and green spaces

- Cambridge should be more widely promoted as the leading centre of agricultural science and technology in the UK
- With more land given over to wind farms and solar panels there is a reduction in conventional crops and livestock
- Fenland is increasingly vulnerable to the threat of sea-level rises and deterioration in soil quality
- Security of food supplies is critical so it is vital to reduce waste
- There is a need to increase the ratio of open space in each newly built area
- The north-east side of the city is currently poorly served with green spaces

- The Cam Valley Forum and other voluntary environmental groups have stimulated an encouraging level of local commitment to conservation in different communities around the city

## Design of buildings and localities

- Computer models could allow all those involved better understanding of designs, and the way they fit into their context
- Eddington shows the use of centralised power and heating plant, recycling of water and better waste disposal without wheelie bins
- Tall buildings may be acceptable in the right places but high density can be achieved without having to build towers
- Cambridge has some excellent and some poor quality new buildings; can planners ensure quality in all new buildings?
- Development along improved routes fanning out from Cambridge would help those travelling into the city and would allow green spaces to remain between
- Clusters of workspaces can provide sharing facilities and social contacts missing from working at home
- More seating and more public toilets are urgently required to serve areas most frequented by visitors

## Energy and waste

- Retrofitting for energy efficiency is essential and more beneficial than raising existing standards for new housing
- Technology development such as insulating plaster will lead to cost savings and greater efficiency
- Behaviour with regard to energy use must change, such as reducing room temperatures and wearing warmer clothing.
- Small modular nuclear reactors and the development of nuclear fusion can be expected to compensate for the decline in the use of fossil fuels
- There should be greater emphasis on reducing waste, in particular plastic packaging
- The potential to generate energy and useful materials from waste has now been fully recognised but the UK is well behind initiatives in Europe and other developed countries

## Quality of life

- 16-24 year-olds complain of not enough to do, and that the events and facilities available to them, such as the Junction, cost too much
- Various groups have sports sessions for those who are older but sports facilities for younger age groups are lacking
- Schools and Colleges cannot open their facilities to the public after hours for lack of staff, and volunteers from outside would have to be DBS checked
- A small increase in council tax could support volunteers in providing a wider range of activities
- The University should provide better information to encourage wider access to events and lectures that are open to all
- People who live in surrounding towns and villages need better public transport especially in the evenings, to encourage access to events and entertainment in the city

\*\*\*

### Discussions led by

Ian Gaseltine  
Harry Gelsthorpe  
Rob Howard  
Bruce Knight  
Barry Pearce  
Mal Schofield  
Christine Townrow  
Martin Tyson

### Notes taken by

Howard Biddle  
Alan Coulson  
Max Field  
Ian Gaseltine  
Kate Kirk  
Ken McKay  
Jane Phillips  
Richard Synge

Introductory slides by Peter Landshoff

pvl (at) damtp.cam.ac.uk