



Note

CAMBRIDGE EAST – SITE CAPACITY CONSIDERATIONS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This note has been prepared on behalf of Marshall to help inform discussions with Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) in relation to site capacity considerations in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP) draft policy for Cambridge East.
- 1.2 By way of background, Marshall has engaged with GCSP about the site's potential capacity for a number of years and has previously submitted a suite of documents and technical evidence which tested a range of capacity scenarios (December 2020 and July 2021). During this process, GCSP identified the site in its Local Plan 'First Proposals' document for 7,000 homes and 9,000 jobs. Discussions continued thereafter and Marshall and its consultant team has maintained that the evidence and assessment work that has been undertaken demonstrates that the site is capable of accommodating a greater scale of development.
- 1.3 Whilst Marshall continues the process of appointing a Master Development Partner (MDP), they have largely opted not to proceed with any further testing of the site capacity until this MDP is on board and can bring their market knowledge and experience to the discussions. Notwithstanding that, local policy is now progressing and there have been recent changes in circumstances within Cambridge which could influence the extent and capacity of development at Cambridge East. Most notably these changes include the potential for a new station to be delivered at Cambridge East and the influence of the Cambridge Growth Company and the government's objectives for growth at Cambridge.
- 1.4 GCSP is proceeding in the preparation of the next draft version of the GCLP, with a draft expected to be published in Autumn / early Winter 2025. As part of the recent MOU discussions, Marshall has been asked to provide views on the potential site capacity in a "with station" and "without station" scenario. Marshall is happy to provide this note to help inform work being undertaken by GCSP and the County Council on transport modelling to inform the new plan, but it should not be used to settle and site capacity figures as planning policy.

2 Site Capacity Considerations

- 2.1 As has been discussed previously with GCSP, there is currently no masterplan for Cambridge East. Consequently, a full assessment of the site capacity is yet to be undertaken and any capacity figures in this note should be read with the caveat that these figures are subject to further testing through a design-led approach to ensure the capacity is suitable and optimised. Notwithstanding that, some technical evidence has been prepared to support a high-level understanding of the potential site capacity to inform transport modelling.

Baseline Scenario (safeguarded land without the station)

- 2.2 In terms of a baseline scenario (i.e. the safeguarded land without a station), Marshall's scenario capacity exercise in 2020 / 2021 and some subsequent sense-checking identified that approximately **9,300 homes and 9,000 jobs (2m sqft (NIA) office / labs floorspace + 700k sqft (NIA) of other commercial uses** (light commercial, hotel, retail, cultural, leisure))



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represented a well-balanced strategy for the safeguarded land. The associated transport strategy would make use of the capacity generated by committed investments being made in the east of the City through the Greater Cambridge Partnership, which would then be further supplemented through developer investments such as bus service improvements and walk / cycle connections.

- 2.3 Whilst the transport strategy is significant and would be hugely beneficial to the east side of the city, a localised solution would not result in transformational benefits across the city. Neither would the site's full potential scale or quality be achieved.
- 2.4 This baseline scenario has been the basis for discussions with GCSP through the design workshops in 2022 and in transport discussions to the present day.

Safeguarded Land 'with Station' Scenario

- 2.5 As per the ongoing discussions with East West Rail (EWR), it is understood that EWR are proceeding on the basis that a new station will be included within the scope of EWR's Development Consent Order (DCO) application for works along the Bedford to Cambridge section of the route. All parties, including Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge Growth Company, GCSP and Marshall have expressed, in writing and through meetings, clear support for the inclusion of a new station at Cambridge East and it is recognised that this represents a significant opportunity to create a sustainable, new urban quarter, served by high-quality public transport links to the east of the City.
- 2.6 The inclusion of a new station to the immediate south of the Airport will inevitably have an influence on any future masterplan for Cambridge East, particularly in relation to the safeguarded land. Whilst a masterplanning exercise has not been undertaken, the baseline scenario had always assumed that a high density centre is likely to be located somewhere centrally within the site to maximise accessibility.
- 2.7 However, with a station south of the site, there is logic in placemaking and sustainability terms to shift or extend any higher density centre so that it maximises the opportunities presented by a station, particularly for commercial uses. The station would also provide significant benefits for the development in transport terms and would enable a greater level of trips to the site to be supported. The ability to support greater levels of in / out commuting would suggest that a greater capacity of commercial floorspace could be accommodated at densities that reflect and optimise proximity to the station.
- 2.8 Having regard to the assumptions for the Baseline Scenario, it is considered that the inclusion of a new station is likely to result in an uplift in commercial (office / labs) floorspace to approximately **4.5m sqft (NIA) (plus the 700k sqft (NIA) of other commercial uses), equating to total of 20,000 jobs**. It is assumed that any additional density that could be created in the south of the site is most likely to be optimised by commercial floorspace and as such, it is expected that a "with station" scenario on the safeguarded land would be able to deliver a similar proportion of homes as the Baseline Scenario.
- 2.9 The exception to this is if the ratio of flats to houses is altered in response to the increased density. If a greater proportion of flats (delivered through a range of tenure types) was



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considered to be acceptable, the number of homes that could be delivered could increase to approximately 10,300 homes.

Expansion Land

- 2.10 In March 2025, Marshall submitted information through GCSP's latest Call for Sites exercise in relation to the Expansion Land (Land East of Airport Way and North of Newmarket Road). This submission followed on from Marshall's original submission to the Call for Sites, made in 2019, and the scenario testing work in 2020 and 2021 which demonstrates the full extent of the opportunity at Cambridge East.
- 2.11 Since then there has also been a change of Government and consequential changes to guidance / policy at the national level which have implications for growth at Cambridge.
- 2.12 There are a number of benefits for including the expansion land in a Cambridge East allocation, but it would most notably create a greater opportunity for transformative growth, connected green infrastructure and strategic, sustainable transport connections. If a new station is to be delivered at Cambridge East, expansion to the east of the city is the most logical and sustainable location to direct growth, whilst meeting the needs of the local community.
- 2.13 The Call for Sites submission by Marshall provides a high-level assessment of capacity on the Expansion Land. It acknowledges the potential for a new station, supplemented by an orbital connection to Cambridge North Station. The exercise essentially identified any constraints to development and then applied the same density assumptions used for the safeguarded land to any developable area within this Expansion Land. The exercise concluded that the Expansion Land could accommodate an additional **2,750 – 3,250 new homes and 0.4m sqft (NIA) of offices / labs / commercial space, which equates to a further 2,000 jobs**. These figures could be combined with the "with station" and "without station" scenarios on the safeguarded land to provide an estimate of capacity, but these figures do not take account of the full influence that a new station and a new orbital connection could bring, and further testing would be required.

3 Conclusions

- 3.1 As outlined above, there are a huge number of variables and assumptions that influence site capacity and the testing that has been carried out to date only provides an initial estimate based on some high-level technical assessment work and understanding of key placemaking principles. Therefore, the capacity numbers referenced are best estimates based on the information available.
- Baseline Scenario (safeguarded land without station) – 9,300 homes, 9,000 jobs (2m sqft (NIA) of offices / labs + 700k sqft (NIA) of other commercial uses)
 - Safeguarded Land with Station – 9,150 to 10,330 homes, 20,000 jobs (4.5m sqft (NIA) of offices / labs + 700k sqft (NIA) of other commercial uses)
 - Expansion Land – an additional 2,750 – 3,250 homes, 2,000 jobs (0.4m sqft (NIA) of commercial) – with further work required to understand how these key transport corridors could justify greater densities.



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- 3.2 Marshall recognises that there is more work that needs to be undertaken and it is anticipated that this work will be progressed upon the appointment of a MDP. However, the preparation of the emerging GCLP is progressing and it is important that the opportunity at Cambridge East is not underestimated. It is critical to the success of the development that emerging policy does not prevent or limit the site (which represents the largest brownfield and most sustainable option for growth) from being optimised. Whilst it is recognised that capacity figures need to be tested through the Local Plan process for the purposes of delivering infrastructure, it has always been the view of Marshall and its consultant team that policy itself does not need to reference capacity numbers and that the site's potential would ultimately be realised through a design-led masterplanning process.
- 3.3 If any capacity figure does need to be included in a draft policy, it is requested that language is used appropriately to highlight that these figures are approximates / indicative and that they could be liable to change if it can be demonstrated through masterplanning that an alternative solution yields a scheme that can deliver a greater number of benefits for the community.