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Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

Cambourne Growth Strategy Programme

Economic Study

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Executive summary

Key baseline messages are:

- Cambourne currently has lower house prices than Cambridge, generally a young population and a skilled workforce.
- Cambourne's image and offer is under developed and expansion provides an opportunity to renew this.
- Historically the connectivity to Cambridge has been road / car focussed. This will change with the introduction of the dedicated Cambourne to Cambridge bus route and later through East West Rail (EWR).
- The wider Greater Cambridge economy has performed strongly in recent years, particularly in life sciences and tech, aided by a wealth of institutions and research centres. There are also a wider range of growth sectors across the Oxford to Cambridge sub region particularly across science and technology. Cambourne has not notably benefitted from this in development but there are opportunities for change.
- The lab market in Greater Cambridge has performed very strongly in recent years, responding to demand through COVID-19 and related to availability of venture capital. In response, the planning pipeline has substantially increased with a good supply of space for more than a decade in the planning pipeline as well as future draft Local Plan allocations. Lab clusters are attracted to critical mass and amenity.
- The office market has suffered globally and nationally as a result of the pandemic, but Cambridge has been one of the few locations to continue to see good demand driven by its successful sectors. Offices tend to be concentrated in high amenity and connectivity locations, as well as in more urban denser environments.
- Industrial has also performed strongly in recent years, including in Greater Cambridge, buoyed by distribution and a range of manufacturing / mid tech crossover demands. There remains an undersupply of space in this market area.

Ways forward.

- Whilst Cambourne could be just another commuter town, it has major opportunities to capture across the industrial-tech and R&D sectors. To achieve these will require long term vision, planning and commitment, going against the current commercial trend in that location.
- Cambourne could in the long term grow by anything from 4,000 to 18,000 jobs, with a potential labour force of over 13,000 based on 10,000 extra homes.
- As a minimum, a dormitory settlement should create 4,000 jobs supporting the expanded population.
- There is potential for a mixed mid tech industrial scheme, focused on more industrial style premises, as well including some labs and offices, reflecting the success of the Bourn Quarter (and to a lesser degree Alconbury Enterprise

Campus). This would appeal to a range of occupiers including industrial type premises, improving viability and reflecting an undersupply in the market area. This could scale from 30 ha up towards 80 ha the latter would be more of an equivalent to Milton Park in Oxfordshire.

- A lab emphasis / office mix campus development is a possible route for Cambourne, with EWR making it a stop from Cambridge Biomedical Campus. An anchor tenant or institution would be a catalytic effect on making this happen and a notable critical mass, with amenity, would normally be needed to create a sustainable offering. This could look to support over 100,000 sqm of floorspace and in itself 8,000 to 10,000 jobs. Looking to the longer term, there are competing locations for such development.
- The highest levels of growth would focus both on a campus R&D park and a separate industrial business park. This combination if achieved would head towards 18,000 jobs in the very long term.

Wider issues are:

- Whether a major employer or institutional investor can be attracted, which would underpin employment and supply chain. This could include University of Cambridge, one of the other research institutes or other major employer.
- How land ownership and stewardship structures contribute to the long term success of the place, which influences viability. Place making is an essential ingredient in the competitiveness of locations attracting investment and talent.
- How the growth trajectory of housing / employment space inter relate and how this phasing compares with other competing locations.

1. Introduction

This Economic Study has been produced as part of the Cambourne Growth Strategy Programme (CGSP) which seeks to optimise the growth opportunity and associated infrastructure delivery around the future proposed East West Rail (EWR) alignment and station at Cambourne. The programme aims to:

- Inform and provide supporting evidence to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP) Cambourne expansion allocation preparation;
- Inform and provide supporting evidence aligned with the GCLP Cambourne expansion allocation to inform the Cambourne Local Opportunity Plan (LOP) to be prepared by EWR Co; and
- Inform the GCSP response to the East West Rail Company (EWR Co.) Development Consent Order (DCO) process for the new railway.

The first stage of the programme covers preparation of a technical evidence base, identification and assessment of spatial options, development of a spatial framework strategy for the preferred option and provision of policy and related inputs to the local plan making process. The ITT specification sets out further detail of the technical and administrative requirements for the preparation of the work packages for the CGSP.

This Economic Study:

- Sets out a review of the local economy in Cambourne and the wider context across Greater Cambridge (comprising Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire districts) and beyond. This provides statistical information on a range of matters such as employment and skills, and also reports on the wider economic institutional infrastructure that forms part of the Greater Cambridge context.
- Considers the property market context in terms of different types of commercial space such as offices, labs and industrial / warehousing. It also looks at the planning policy evidence base on forecast demand for different land uses and known supply – demand dynamics.
- Identifies benchmark developments that are considered relevant to future options for Cambourne, looking across England.
- Considers options for the focus of future economic growth, taking into account enhanced infrastructure connectivity and harnessing the broader context.
- Will inform the development of spatial options for Cambourne.

2. Baseline

A summary of the baseline messages:

- The Greater Cambridge economy is globally recognised for its unique concentration of high-tech and life science industries and has performed strongly in recent years. Central to its success are the presence of high-profile institutions including the University of Cambridge, numerous research centres, and hospitals.
- Located within Greater Cambridge, Cambourne is a town with a population of 12,350, located along the A428 between Cambridge and St Neots. Typical of new settlements, Cambourne's demographic profile is characterised by higher-than-average proportions of younger children and adults aged 30-49 years, and lower proportions of people ages over 50. Cambourne has a relatively high proportion of its workforce in more highly skilled jobs and has a well-qualified workforce
- Cambourne's main employment hub is Cambourne Park. 6.25 ha of employment land has been approved in West Cambourne, with three designated employment zones in the draft masterplan. To the east, Bourn Quarter at Bourn Airfield is a new commercial site. The wider Bourn Airfield site is approved for a new mixed-use village, including around 350 homes and various facilities.
- Cambourne's retail and leisure offer is limited and resembles an 'out-of-town' retail park, centred around Morrisons, with a weaker overall amenity and commercial offer.
- Connectivity to Cambridge is currently road / car focussed. This will change with the introduction of the dedicated bus route to Cambridge and later through EWR. The A428 upgrade will also improve connectivity.
- In terms of employment, Cambourne's sectoral strengths lie within the wholesale and retail trade, professional, scientific and tech, public admin and defence, education and accommodation and food services sectors.
- According to ONS data, Cambourne's GVA has doubled between 2012 and 2022. The strong growth in GVA correlates with the expansion of Cambourne through the addition of Upper Cambourne.
- Key out-commuting destinations from Cambourne include several areas of Cambridge, notably the city centre, the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and the Cambridge Science Park. To the south of Cambridge, employment hubs such as Granta Park and Babraham Research Campus also attract a significant number of Cambourne residents. Additionally, there is a notable level of commuting from Cambourne to Huntingdon. In-commuting is more localised in comparison to out-commuting.
- Housing is significantly more affordable in Cambourne than housing in nearby Cambridge city and Cambourne is generally on the lower end of the deprivation scale.
- There are also a wider range of growth sectors across the Oxford to Cambridge sub region particularly across science and technology. Cambourne has not notably

benefitted from this in development terms albeit the occupancy of existing commercial space is currently relatively high and has seen some refurbishment of space towards life science labs.

- The lab market in Greater Cambridge has performed very strongly in recent years, responding to demand through COVID-19 and related to availability of venture capital. In response, the planning pipeline has substantially increased with a number of years supply in place as well as future draft Local Plan allocations. Lab clusters are attracted to critical mass and amenity.
- The office market has suffered globally and nationally as a result of the pandemic, but Cambridge has been one of the few locations to continue to see good demand driven by its successful sectors. Offices tend to be concentrated in high amenity and connectivity locations, as well as in more urban dense environments.
- Industrial space demand has performed strongly in recent years, including in Greater Cambridge, buoyed by distribution and a range of manufacturing / mid tech crossover demands. There remains an undersupply of space in the market area.
- There may therefore be demand for creative workspaces in Cambourne, which could perhaps be delivered as part of a wider mid-tech development or alternatively purpose-built creative workspace could be provided as part of a new town centre offer.

2.1 Spatial and Economic Dynamics of Greater Cambridge

The uniqueness of the Greater Cambridge economy overall is well known and documented, the 'Cambridge Phenomenon' being driven by a concentration of high tech and life science research companies in and around Cambridge emerging from the 1960s onwards.

At the core of Greater Cambridge's success lie the University of Cambridge and a great number of research institutes including the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute and National Institute of Health Research on the Biomedical Campus, Addenbrooke's Hospital, the Babraham Institute and Wellcome Sanger Institute as well as Anglia Ruskin University.

At 2023, employment in Greater Cambridge remains dominated by the professional, scientific and technical services sector (22%) which includes scientific research and development, followed by education (16%), health (13%) and wholesale and retail trade (9%)¹.

Beauhurst report that Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire are the local authorities with the highest density of high-growth companies across all sectors in the UK with 2.18 and 1.6 per 1,000 people respectively². Cambridge is ranked the 3rd top Science hub in the

¹ BRES, 2023

² Iceni Projects. Greater Cambridge Growth Sectors Study: Life science and ICT locational, land and accommodation needs. September 2024.

world by Savills³, behind Bay Area, San Francisco and Boston, scoring highly on University talent.

Greater Cambridge has particular attributes that enable the sector clusters to succeed including:

- Access to a highly skilled labour pool and source of entrepreneurs related to the universities;
- Knowledge spillovers and informal learning facilitated by the scale of the sector clustering and interaction between academics, institutions and business; and
- Depth of the supporting supplier base across the range of professional services such as financial and legal.

The business ecosystem thrives from interrelationships including between larger and smaller firms. The larger firms are able to attract talent and supply chain partners inevitably locate locally.

Greater Cambridge sits within a number of innovation corridors including:

- The London-Cambridge corridor known as the 'Innovation Corridor', home to advanced technology and bioscience clusters, where world-class business, universities and Research and Development (R&D) centres converge, providing a unique ecosystem of talent and businesses;
- The (formerly known as) Oxford-Cambridge Arc or Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor formed of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire is recognised by the Government as having the potential to become a world-leading and globally renowned centre for business, innovation and investment in a variety of industries including AI (Artificial Intelligence), advanced manufacturing and life sciences;
- Cambridge also falls within the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor which contains world-leading universities, research institutes and science parks, complemented by an ecosystem of businesses and networks, offering a 100km opportunity across Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk for start-ups, growing businesses and investors.

In January 2025, the Government announced new plans to deliver the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, with planned investments which are estimated to boost the UK economy by up to £78 billion by 2035. This includes upgrades to the A428 and confirmed funding for EWR.

2.2 Opportunities in Emerging Sectors

The Oxford to Cambridge: Science, Innovation, and Technology (SIT) Business Premises Study for the Oxford to Cambridge pan Regional Partnership⁴ provides a helpful steer on emerging sectors (under the broad SIT category) that are relevant to consider looking ahead as the national economy continues to evolve and the position of the Oxford to Cambridge sub region in relation to these.

In particular the sectors of interest are:

- Digital tech

³ Savills Global Index: World's Top 20 Life Science Hubs

⁴ Sci Tech Premises Report at <https://www.oxford-cambridge-partnership.info/>

- Future energy
- Engineering
- Automotive
- Space
- Future mobility
- Robotics
- Quantum Computing
- AI and machine learning
- Life science
- Agri-tech

Greater Cambridge and the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is well placed in sectors of digital tech; engineering; space; robotics; quantum Computing; AI and machine learning; life science and agri-tech.

These sectors cross over well with the Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy 2024 which covers:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Clean energy industries
- Creative industries
- Defence
- Digital and technologies
- Financial services
- Life sciences
- Professional and business services

The creative industries sector is a notable additional sector sitting outside of the SIT grouping that may be of relevance in the overall Oxford to Cambridge area but also at the Cambourne level.

The SIT study details a range of case studies relating to the key SIT sectors, as well as considering both the types of premises and their broad demand and supply across the sub region.

The key workspace typologies of relevance are offices, labs (wet and dry) and then mixed industrial type premises. The potential for delivering these typologies is explored later in this report.

2.3 Economic Baseline

Cambourne is located in the district of South Cambridgeshire which has a population of 12,350 (Census 2021). It lies on the A428 between Cambridge (approx. 10 miles to the east) and St Neots and Bedford to the west (approx. 10 miles and 20 miles respectively).

The town is comprised of three areas: Lower Cambourne to the west, Great Cambourne in the centre and Upper Cambourne to the east. The town centre is located in Great Cambourne.

Cambourne Park is the main commercial employment centre, located to the north of Lower Cambourne. This is not fully built out, with Plot 4010 adjacent to the South Cambridgeshire District Council offices undeveloped.. Buildings 1010, 1020 and 1030 were built in 1999 and range from approx. 31,588 sqft – 43,311 sqft. Buildings 2010, 2020 and 2030 were built slightly later between 2001/2002 and range from approx. 31,224 sqft – 52,936 sqft.

Other existing employment locations in Cambourne include The Manor House (occupied by The Wildlife Trust), offices at 1-3 De La Warr Way to the north of Morrisons and Caxton House to the south west of Morrisons.

Further to this, 6.25 ha of employment land has been approved as part of the West Cambourne development. Within the draft masterplan provided within the outline planning application, there is provision for approximately three areas of employment land.

The town centre itself has a retail / leisure offer which feels part 'out of town' retail park due to the large car park adjacent to Morrisons. There are units facing onto the High St rather than what could be the town square (south of Morrisons). The town's amenity offer is relatively weak, as is the offer at Cambourne Park.

The A428 connects Cambourne to Cambridge towards the east and St Neots to the west.. In terms of existing public transport provision, Cambourne is served by a number of bus routes (4, 18, X2, X3) which provide connections to Cambridge, Huntingdon and St Neots.

A number of proposed transport infrastructure projects will improve accessibility from Cambourne. The A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme which is currently underway will improve capacity, reliability and safety by developing a new dual carriageway between the Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet roundabout. This will improve connectivity between Cambourne and areas to the west including Milton Keynes and Bedford. The East West Rail proposals include a new rail station at Cambourne which could significantly reduce journey times to Cambridge versus car travel, as well as improving public transport connections westwards towards Oxford. In addition to this, the Cambourne to Cambridge (C2C) project proposes a new dedicated busway connecting Cambourne to Cambridge.

To the east of Cambourne, Bourn Quarter is a new commercial development at Bourn Airfield. The remainder of Bourn Airfield has been granted planning permission for a new mixed-use village comprising residential development of approx. 350 dwellings, plus employment, retail, hotel, leisure, education, community facilities and open space.

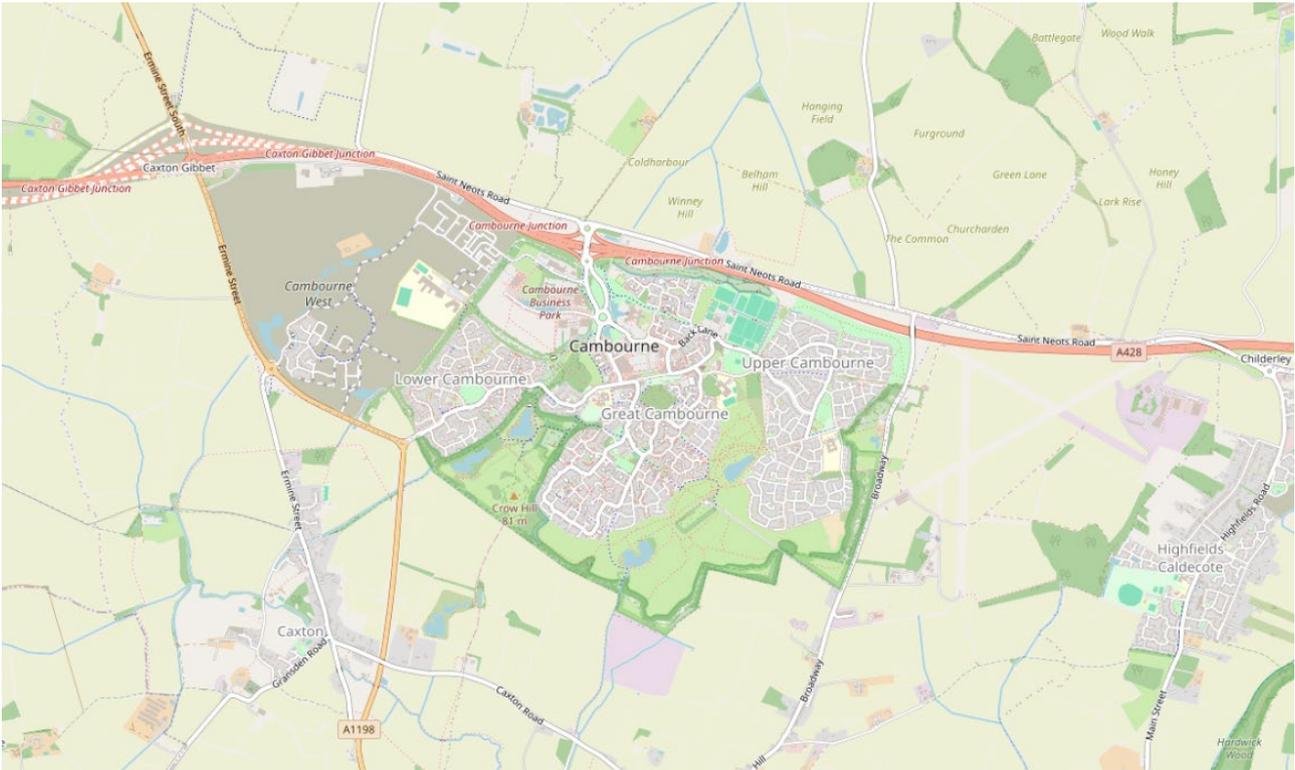


Figure 1: Map Of Cambourne

Source: OpenStreetMap

In 2022, Cambourne’s Gross Value Added (GVA) was estimated at £367.6 million by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)⁵. According to these estimates, Cambourne’s GVA more than doubled between 2012 and 2022, from £117.9m in 2012.

Figure 2 below compares Cambourne’s growth in GVA with South Cambridgeshire, the wider region and England. It would appear that Cambourne has seen significantly more rapid growth in GVA than the comparator areas since 2012. This correlates with the expansion of Cambourne through the addition of Upper Cambourne. However, the ONS advise that caution is taken when comparing data at the most granular level (such as that of Cambourne) with less granular data (e.g. local authority/regional level) as small area data is volatile.

⁵ ONS. UK small area gross value added (GVA) estimates. Cambourne defined as the sum of LSOAs South Cambridgeshire 020A, 020B, 020C, 020D, 020E. This includes Bourn Airfield and the Bourn Quarter development.

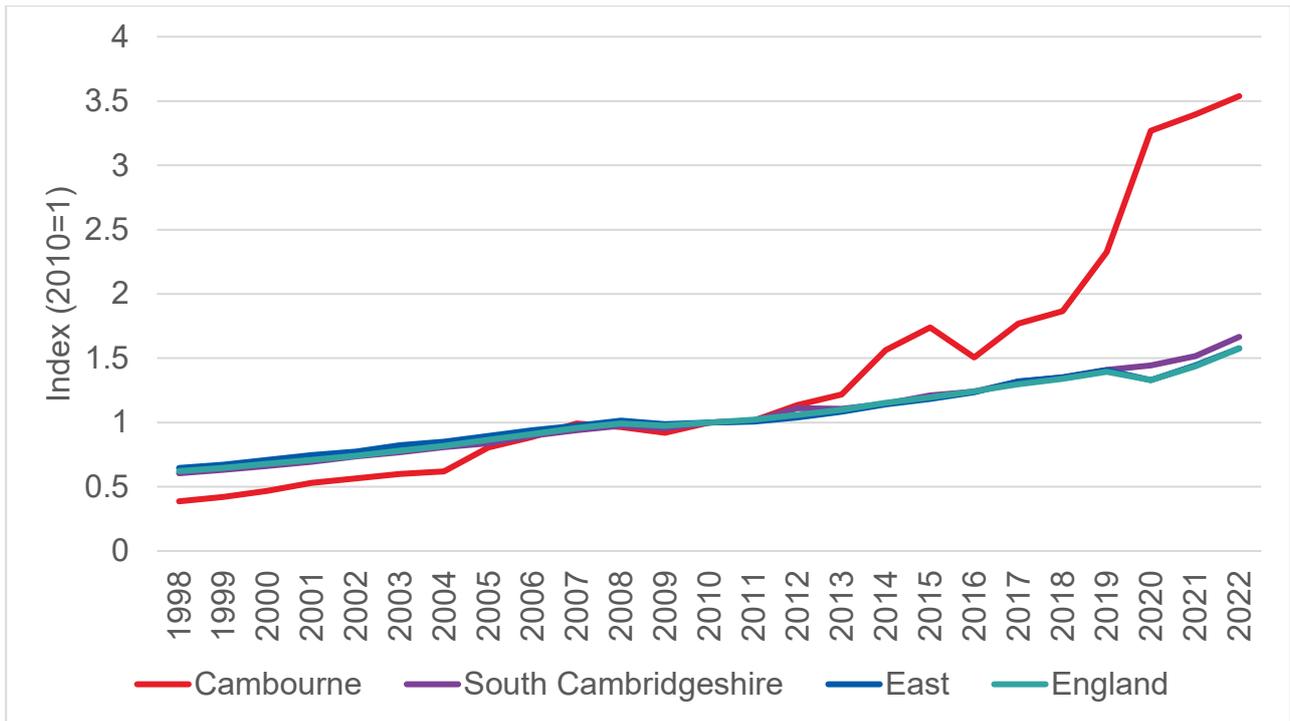


Figure 2: Indexed GVA (2010=1)

Source: ONS, Regional economic activity by gross domestic product, UK: 1998 to 2022

Table 1 shows the ONS split of employees by sector in Cambourne compared to Greater Cambridge, the East region and England. For the purposes of this analysis, Cambourne has been defined using the Mid Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) E02006873 : South Cambridgeshire 020, which includes Bourn Airfield and the Bourn Quarter development, as shown on the map below:

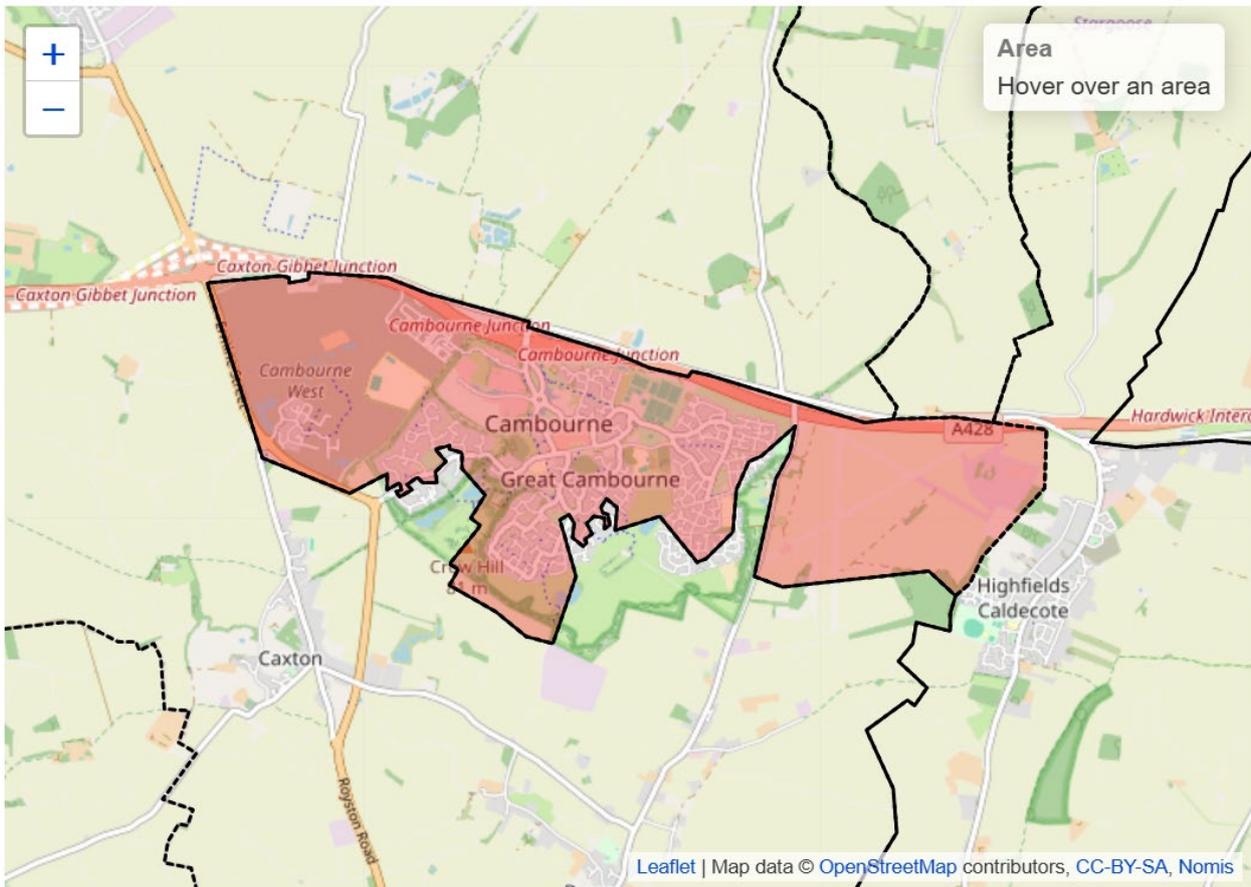


Figure 3: Map showing extent of Mid Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) E02006873 : South Cambridgeshire 020

Source: ONS, NOMIS

The largest sectors of employment in Cambourne are:

- **Wholesale and retail trade** – Reflecting the presence of Morrisons supermarket and other retailing
- **Professional, scientific and tech** – Reflecting activities at Bourn Quarter and Cambourne Park and the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire Head Office at the Manor House.
- **Public admin and defence** – Reflecting South Cambridgeshire District Council's offices at Cambourne Park
- **Education** – There are several schools and nurseries including primary schools and a secondary school (Cambourne Village College)
- **Accommodation and food services** – There are two hotels located in Cambourne - the Holiday Inn Express and Cambridge Belfry Hotel & Spa

Table 1: Employment jobs by sector – Cambourne / Greater Cambridge / East / England, 2023

Industry	Employment Jobs - Cambourne	Cambourne (%)	Greater Cambridge (%)	East (%)	England (%)
Wholesale and retail trade	900	18.0	9.0	15.0	13.7
Professional, Scientific and Tech	700	14.0	21.8	8.6	9.7
Public admin and defence	700	14.0	2.0	3.4	4.2
Education	600	12.0	15.6	8.6	8.3
Accommodation and food services	500	10.0	6.4	7.2	7.8
Info and communication	450	9.0	8.1	3.3	4.7
Admin and support services	350	7.0	4.5	11.0	8.8
Manufacturing	225	4.5	5.3	7.2	7.3
Human health and social work	175	3.5	13.3	12.3	13.3
Construction	125	2.5	3.4	6.2	4.8
Real estate activities	125	2.5	1.9	2.3	2.1
Financial and insurance	100	1.7	0.9	2.0	3.4
Arts, entertainment & rec.	100	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.6
Other services	50	1.0	2.4	2.1	2
Transportation and storage	25	0.5	2.1	6.0	5.1
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0.7	1.4	1.2
Mining and quarrying	0	0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Electricity, gas, steam etc.	0	0	0.1	0.2	0.3
Water supply etc.	0	0	0.4	0.7	0.7
Total	5,125	100	100	100	100

Source: BRES, 2023

To demonstrate an accurate sector size comparison, Cambourne has also been compared to Greater Cambridge and the East of England through the use of a location quotient (LQ) (% employees in Cambourne divided by % employees across Greater Cambridge/East). An LQ greater than 1 indicates that Cambourne has a greater proportion of employment

within the sector compared to the comparator area. Conversely, an LQ less than 1 indicates that Cambourne has a smaller proportion of employment within this sector compared to the comparator area.

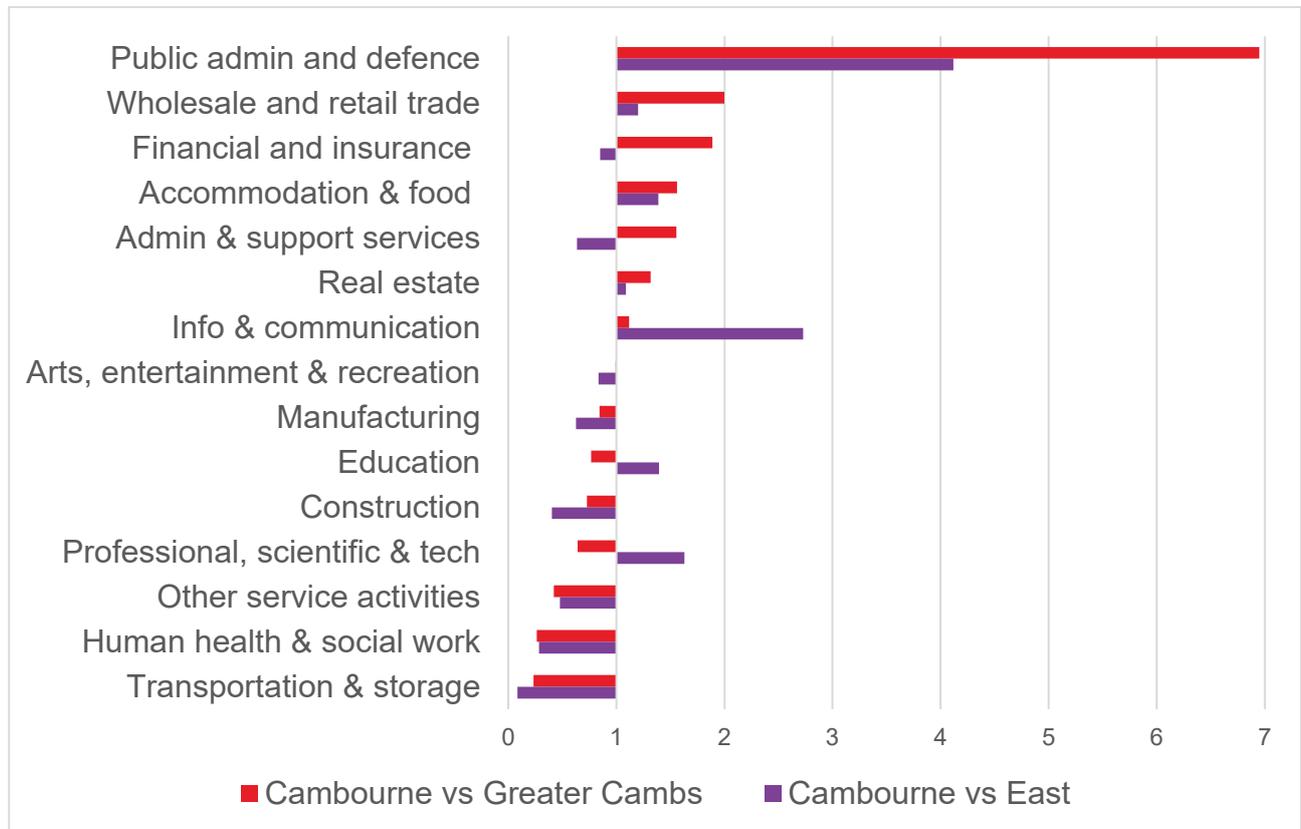


Figure 4: Location Quotient analysis – Cambourne vs Greater Cambridge / East region

Source: BRES, 2023

NB: Sectors with no employment in Cambourne have been removed.

Figure 4 shows differences in Location Quotient by sector for Cambourne in comparison with Greater Cambridge and with the East region. Public admin and defence has the highest LQ, with approximately seven times the proportion of employment within this sector compared to Greater Cambridge and over four times the concentration seen across the East of England. This reflects that the South Cambridgeshire District Council offices are located within Cambourne, with 750 of the 830 jobs within this sector being within ‘general public administration activities’ at the more granular 4-digit SIC code level, and no jobs being within defence activities.

Wholesale and retail trade, financial and insurance and accommodation and food also have high LQs compared to the wider Greater Cambridge area.

Whilst the professional, scientific and technology sector is the second largest in terms of employment for Cambourne, it has an LQ of 0.6 when compared with Greater Cambridge meaning it has a lower concentration of employment within this sector in comparison to Greater Cambridge. This makes sense given the strength of life science and tech clusters across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. Compared to the East of England, Cambourne still has a higher concentration of employment within this sector, with an LQ of 1.6 meaning the concentration of employment within this sector is 1.6x greater than the regional level.

Info & communication has a high LQ in relation to the East, with 2.7x the concentration of jobs within this sector in Cambourne compared to the East. At the 3-digit SIC code level, it is apparent that the majority of jobs within this sector relate to computer programming, consultancy and related activities and are located at Cambourne Park. Therefore these jobs may be related to occupiers such as Rakon (whose activities include developing products for 5G networks) and u-blox (who develop chips and modules that support global navigation satellite systems).

The map below illustrates levels of out-commuting from Cambourne at the Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) level, based on data from the 2021 Census. The greatest commuting flow is internal, with 2,863 residents both living and working in Cambourne, resulting in a self-containment rate of 55%. It is important to note that this figure includes individuals working from home - likely elevated at the time due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although somewhat outdated, the Cambourne Retail and Employment Study (October 2013), reported that approximately 10% of the 1,250 employees that worked at Cambourne Business Park (now Cambourne Park) also lived in Cambourne. The average distance travelled to work at the Cambourne Business Park was 20.5km (12.7 miles).

Beyond Cambourne, key commuting destinations include several areas of Cambridge, notably the city centre, the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and the Cambridge Science Park. To the south of Cambridge, employment hubs such as Granta Park and Babraham Research Campus also attract a significant number of Cambourne residents. Additionally, there is a notable level of commuting from Cambourne to Huntingdon.

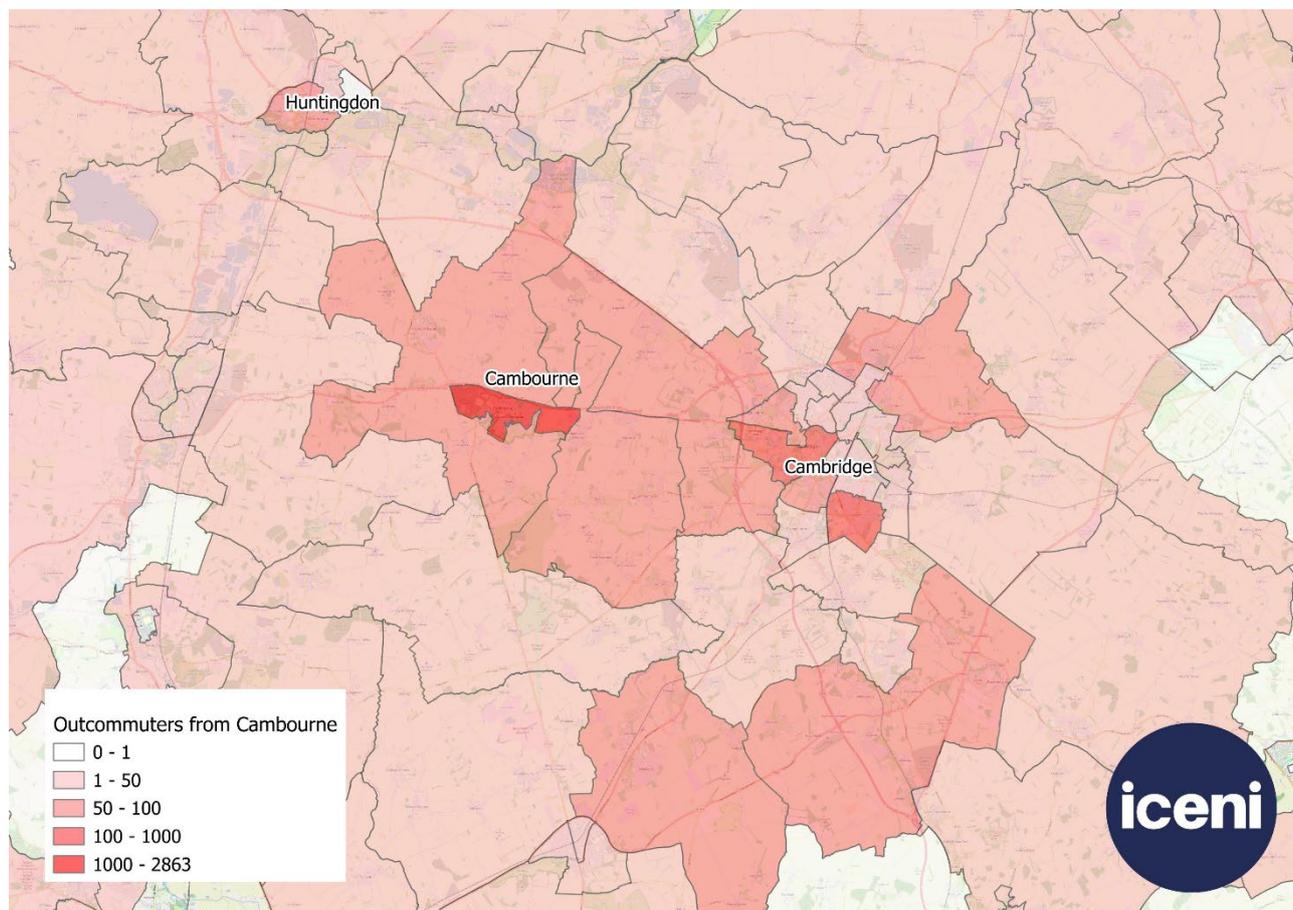


Figure 5: Out-commuting from Cambourne

Source: IcenI analysis of Census, 2021

Conversely, the map below illustrates levels of in-commuting to Cambourne. Again, the greatest commuting flow is internal with 2,863 residents both living and working in Cambourne. In-commuting is more localised in comparison to out-commuting, with the majority of commuters travelling from neighbouring MSOAs.

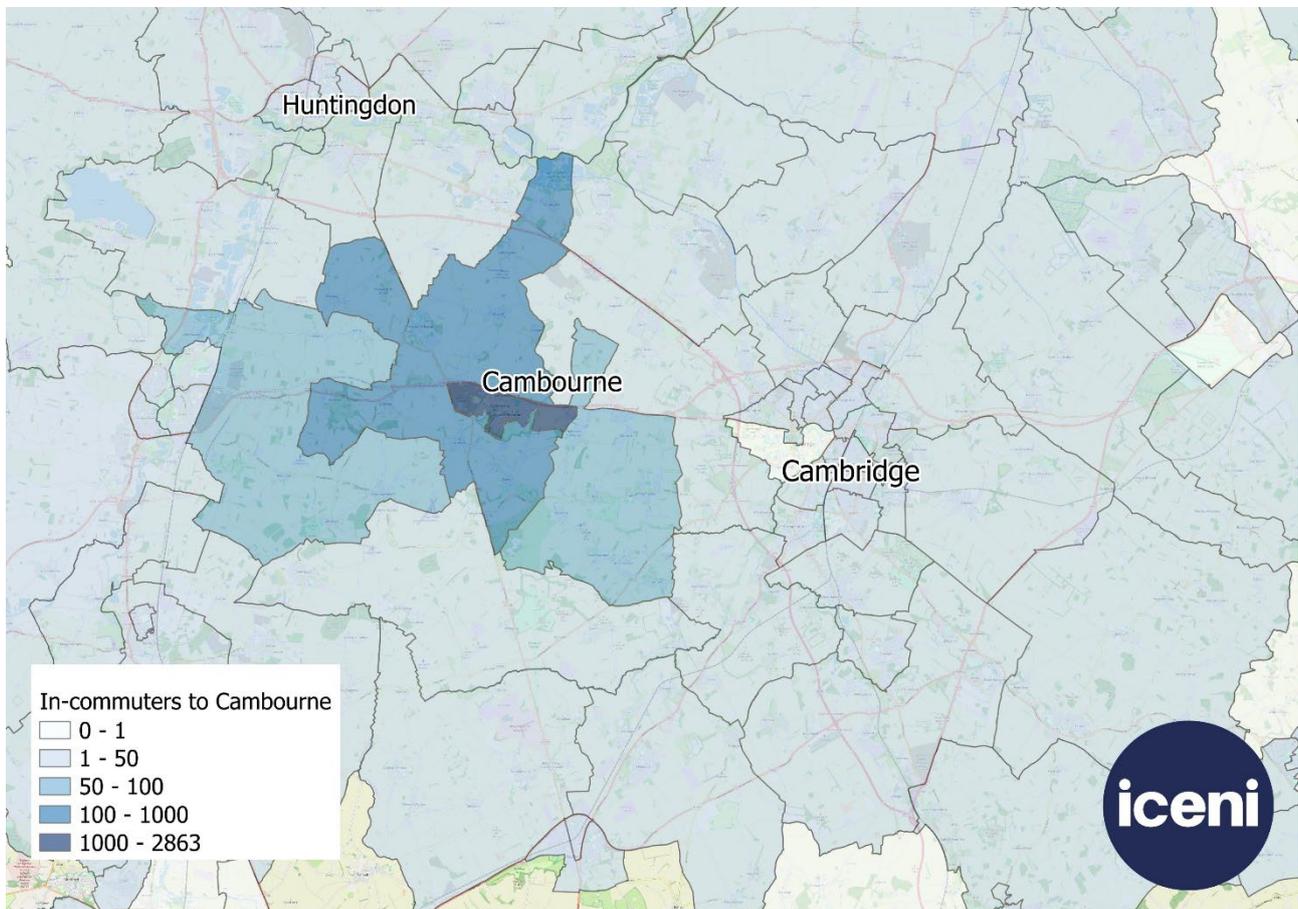


Figure 6: In-commuting to Cambourne

Source: IcenI analysis of Census, 2021

2.4 Socio-economic Baseline

This section provides an overview of the demographic and economic context of Cambourne.

Based on the 2021 Census data, the total population of Cambourne was 12,351 residents. This is equivalent to 7.6% of the entire South Cambridgeshire population (162,119 residents).

As shown in Figure 7, Cambourne has a greater representation of children aged under 19 and residents aged 30-49 compared to South Cambridgeshire, East of England and England indicating that the population is dominated by young families. Conversely, it has a smaller proportion of people aged 20-29 and 50+. This demographic profile is common in new settlements which tend to attract younger migrants seeking career opportunities and more affordable housing.

A greater proportion of Cambourne's population are of working age (16-64), at 67.2% compared to 61.9% in South Cambridgeshire, 62.7% in the East and 64.1% in England.⁶

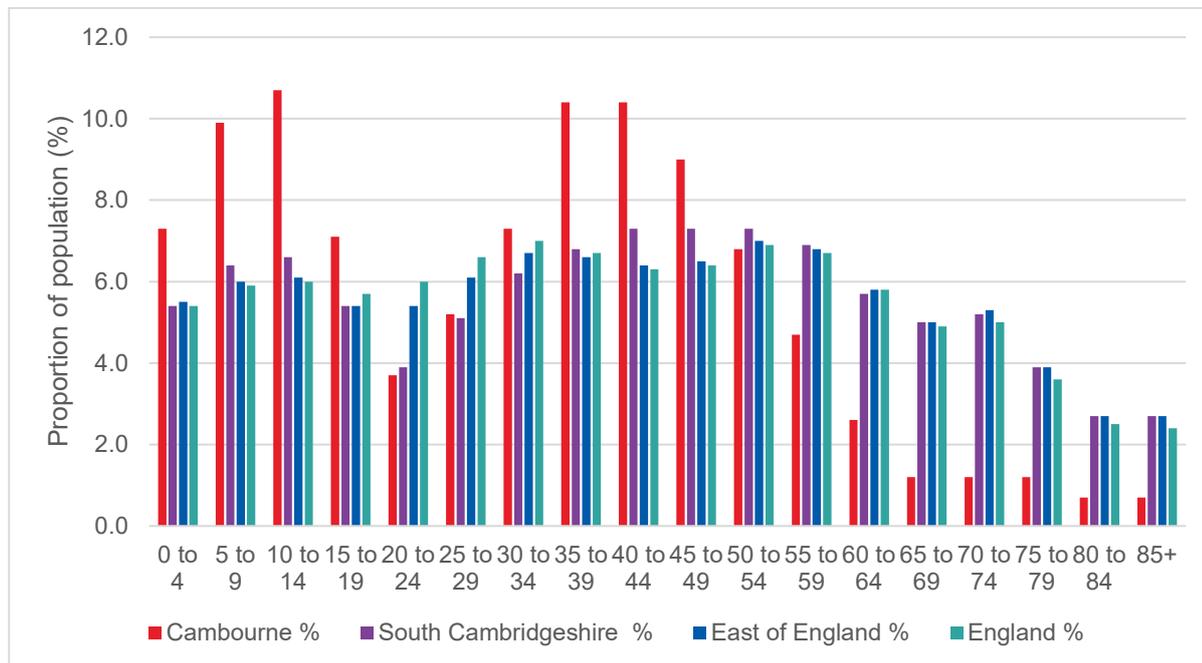


Figure 7: Age Profile of Residential Population in Cambourne, South Cambridgeshire, East of England and England

Source: Census 2021

Levels of deprivation can be analysed using the English Indices of Deprivation, 2019, which provide a relative measure of deprivation across small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England⁷. The indices analyse the relative level of deprivation for small areas across seven domains: income, employment, education, skills and training, health deprivation and disability, crime, barriers to housing and services, and living environment. Combining information from the seven domains produces an overall relative measure of deprivation – the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

The IMD then ranks every small area in England from most deprived (ranked 1) to least deprived (ranked 32,844).

It is clear from the map below that Cambourne is generally on the lower end of the deprivation scale, with much of the town ranking within the 8th to 10th deciles of deprivation (i.e. better than average, with much of lower Cambourne and Great Cambourne within the least deprived decile).

⁶ ONS (2021) Census. Dataset: TS007A - Age by five-year age bands

⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2020) [English indices of deprivation](#)

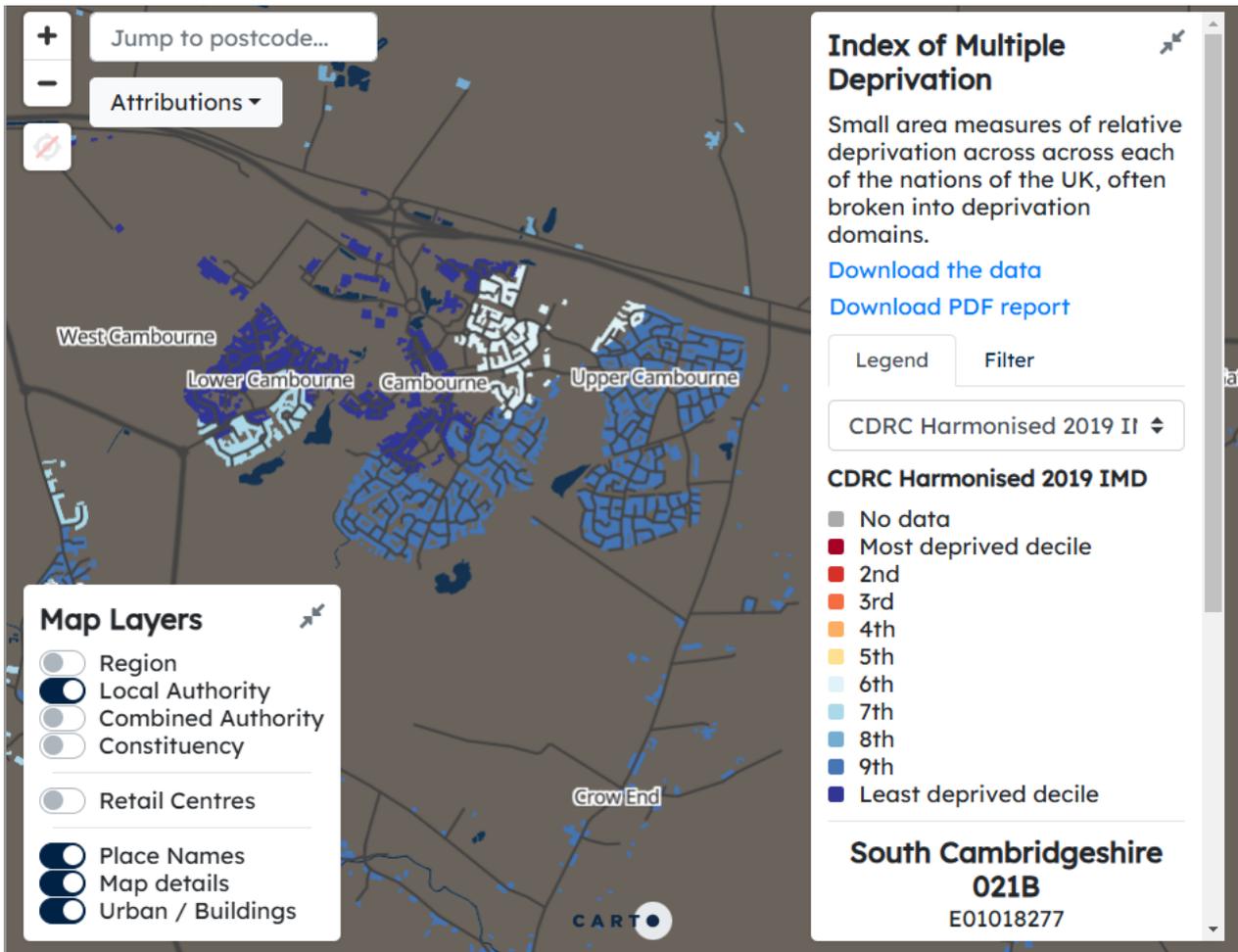


Figure 8: Map of 2019 IMD Data - Cambourne

Source: Source: Consumer Data Research Centre, [Index of Multiple Deprivation](#)

The 'barriers to housing' domain takes into consideration housing affordability. Housing remains significantly more affordable than housing in nearby Cambridge City, as shown by Figure 8 below. Median house prices across Cambourne tend not to exceed £400,000, whereas the median house price across much of Cambridge is in excess of £400,000 and in some areas of the city is above £650,000.

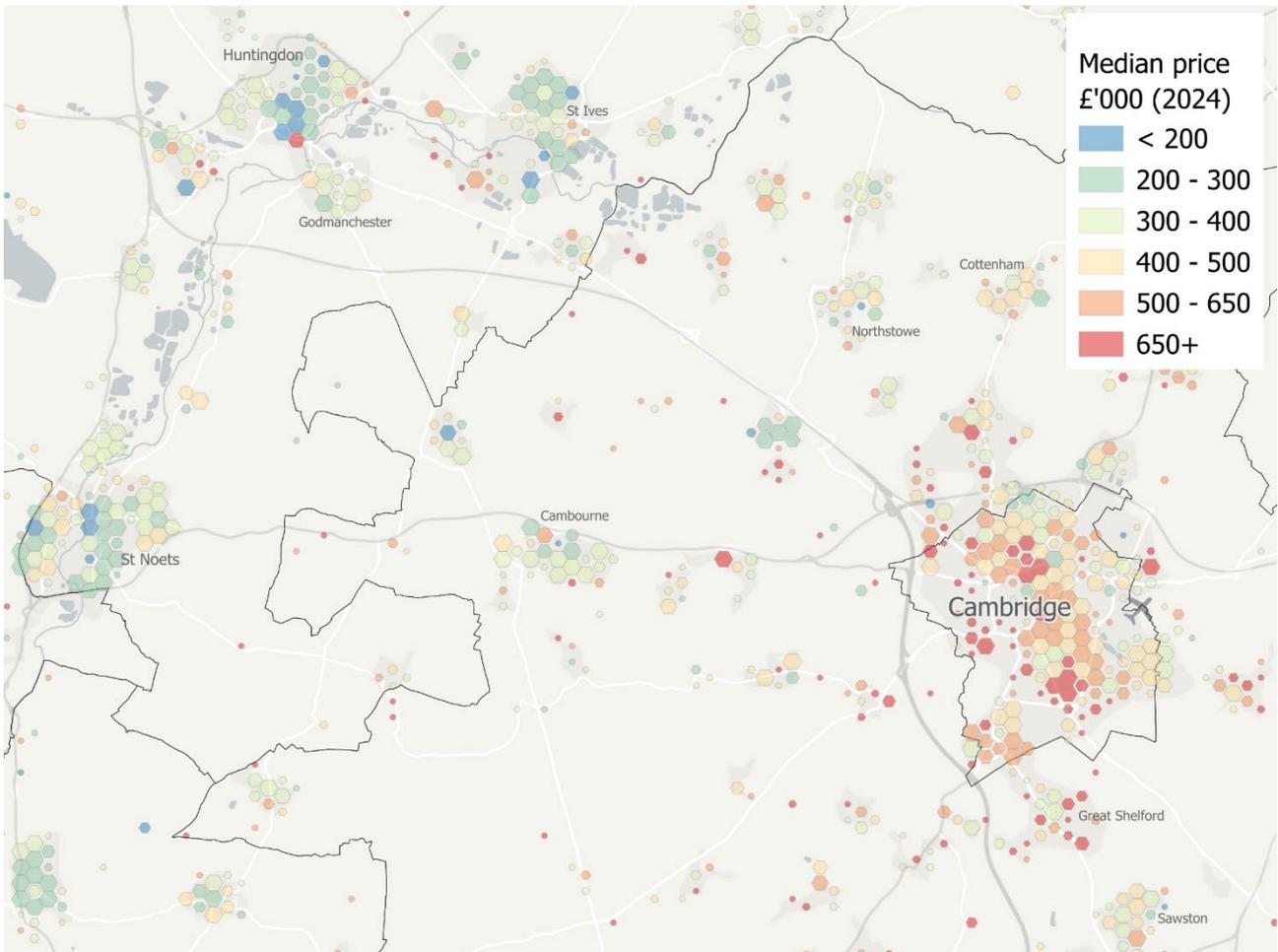


Figure 9: Map of Median House Prices (2024, £'000)

Source: Icen analysis using HM Land Registry, Price Paid Data, 2024

Table 2 presents a range of key socio-economic indicators for South Cambridgeshire, providing comparison to the East of England and England.

The proportion of the population who are of working age is slightly lower than the comparator areas, most likely due to the high proportion of the population who are aged under 14 years. However, the economic activity rate is greater than that of the region or England, at 87.4%, indicating that a greater proportion of the working-age population are either employed or actively seeking employment.

The claimant count (number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance plus those out of work claiming Universal Credit as a proportion of economically active) is significantly lower than both the regional and national figures, as expected given the higher economic activity rate.

South Cambridgeshire has a higher proportion of the workforce in more highly skilled Tier 1-3 jobs (managerial/professional/technical) and has a well-qualified workforce, with a higher proportion of residents holding RFQ4+ (degree level) qualifications than the regional and national averages.

Average weekly earnings, both by place of residence and by place of work, are greater than the East of England and England averages, aligning with the fact that a greater proportion of the workforce are in Tier 1-3 jobs which are generally associated with higher salaries.

Table 2: Key Socio-economic Indicators

Indicator	South Cambridgeshire	East of England	England
Working-age population (16-64 years) % of the Total Population (2021)	60.8%	61.6%	63.0%
Economic Activity Rate (Oct 2023 – Sep 2024)	87.4%	79.3%	78.8%
Claimant count- (December 2024)	1.9%	3.3%	4.3%
Tier 1-3 Occupations (managers, professionals, technical) (April 2022 – March 2023)	63.3%	53.1%	54.0%
RQF4+ Qualifications (Jan 2023-December 2023)	53.4%	42.8%	46.7%
Earning by place of residence (2024), Gross	£885.30	£763.50	£732.00
Earning by place of work (2024), Gross weekly pay	£850.10	£724.60	£732.10

Source: ONS, Labour Market Profile – South Cambridgeshire

According to 2021 census data⁸, 52.4% of Cambourne residents have Level 4+ qualifications⁹, higher than 47.7% South Cambridgeshire (47.7%), 31.6% the East (31.6%) and England (33.9%). The proportion of Cambourne’s population with no qualifications (6.8%) is significantly lower than South Cambridgeshire (11.8%), the East (18.1%) and England (18.1%). This indicates that Cambourne has a relatively highly skilled population.

Also based on 2021 census data, Cambourne has a higher proportion of residents aged 16 years and over within L1, L2 and L3 (Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations) than the regional and national averages at 24.6% compared to 13.7% and 13.2% for the East and England respectively.

2.5 Commercial market dynamics

2.5.1 Office Market

UK Office Market

The UK office market has fundamentally changed since the COVID-19 pandemic, through a shift in ways of working. Since the pandemic, many office workers are spending at least

⁸ Dataset: TS067 Highest Level of Qualification.

⁹ Level 4 qualifications (or above) are defined as: degree (BA, BSc), higher degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ level 4 to 5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, professional qualifications (for example, teaching, nursing, accountancy)

part of the week at home and perhaps 2-3 days in the office rather than five. Technological innovation has changed how people work. Whilst this may be partially offset by some changes to office configuration (such as through providing enhanced space for collaborative activities) it is resulting in a reduced requirement for office floorspace overall.

This trend is evident within CoStar data on the UK office market. CoStar report that the national office vacancy rate continues to increase, with net negative absorption (more floorspace being vacated than being taken up) as ongoing structural change in the sector combines with weak economic conditions to depress demand.

Despite this, some market segments are performing better than others, with modern, Grade A buildings remaining attractive to tenants who are looking for sustainable spaces with good amenities. Prime space in central locations is being favoured over older stock in peripheral locations.

CoStar's national office report also notes spatial differences in demand, stating that life science demand means that places like Oxford and Cambridge are outperforming.

Cambridge Office Market

The Cambridge office market¹⁰ remains one of the UK's stronger office markets, despite the difficulties experienced by the sector as a whole in recent years. This is owing to the success of the 'Cambridge Cluster', which has evolved into a renowned science and technology hub with close ties to the University of Cambridge. The local labour market is attractive to high-tech companies in biopharma, electronics and software development industries, with Apple, Microsoft, Gilead Sciences and Amgen among the numerous high-profile global firms that have expanded in Cambridge recently.

CoStar report that Cambridge has an office vacancy rate of 5.3% at spring 2025, which remains considerably below the national average of 8.5%. Expansions by life sciences firms and tech giants Apple and Roku have kept absorption positive over recent years. Structural change in the office sector has been less pronounced here than in other cities, with many of Cambridge's high-tech office jobs not suited to remote working.

Cambridge remains among the nation's top-performing office markets over the long term. Cambridge has one of the highest average rents of any non-London market at £32.00 per square foot. Prime rents are estimated to be around £60 per square foot.

According to CoStar, the market for larger spaces remains particularly tight, however looking forward, the Greater Cambridge Growth Sectors Study¹¹ found that the future supply of office space appears healthy. Cambridge's business and science parks remain hotbeds of activity, with new and refurbished space in demand.

Figure 10 below, extracted from CoStar, shows the locations of office (and lab/office mix) stock across Greater Cambridge. The blue diamonds indicate stock with vacancy, whilst the grey diamonds indicate that the property is fully occupied. Whilst the majority of stock is located within close proximity to Cambridge city centre, there are also considerable

¹⁰ Defined by CoStar as Greater Cambridge plus East Cambridgeshire

¹¹ Icen Projects. Greater Cambridge Growth Sectors Study: Life Science and ICT locational, land and accommodation needs. July 2024.

numbers of offices located more rurally, including stock co-located with lab space at science parks such as Babraham Research Campus and Granta Park.

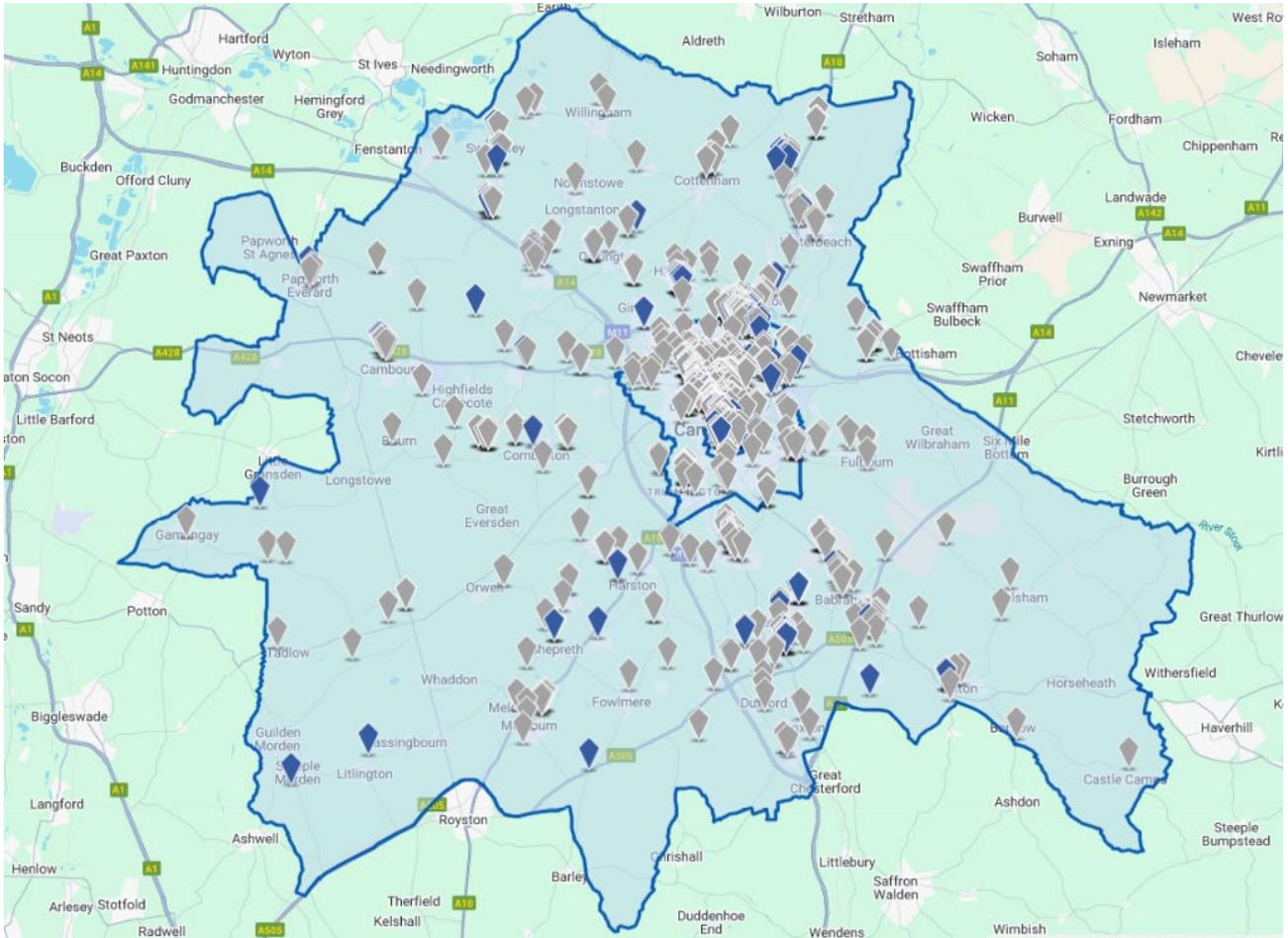


Figure 10: Map of Office Stock (March 2025)

Source: CoStar, 2025

Cambourne’s Office Market

According to CoStar, Cambourne has 24,659 sqm of office stock, equating to approx. 2% of Greater Cambridge’s office stock.

The majority of Cambourne’s office stock is located at Cambourne Park Science & Technology Campus (recently rebranded from Cambourne Business Park)), a 50 acre site with office space home to 60 companies. Originally opened in 1999, the Campus has recently been acquired by Life Sciences REIT with some conversion of office space to lab space – this is discussed further in the Lab Market section later in this report.

Whilst there are two hotels, a café, a supermarket, a gym and a pub within a 10 minute walk of the Campus (effectively in the town centre), the amenity offer does not rival that of a city centre such as Cambridge. It also does not have ‘image’ that other science parks do.

The Park has taken time to build up occupancy due to a range of reasons including lack of range of localised amenities and limited public transport connectivity¹². Its more limited public transport connectivity will be improved through the Cambourne to Cambridge guided bus scheme and EWR connecting Oxford to Cambridge.

According to CoStar, the vacancy rate at Cambourne Park is currently 8.4%, however due to the small sample size this fluctuates significantly year-on-year as a single occupier moving in or out can have a significant effect on the vacancy rate.

Current occupiers include businesses within technology, medical technology, business services, agri-tech and construction sectors, including Zeiss, Regus, Handelsbanken and Bellway Homes.

The Park is not fully built out and land to the south of the site has been reallocated for residential uses, impacting the ability for the commercial offer to grow or intensify. The last remaining development plot on the site is within the Cambridge Compass Enterprise Zone which focusses on innovation and manufacturing, bio-tech, high tech, life sciences, clean-tech, creative and digital sectors. Within the EZ, businesses can benefit from a range of incentives including fast-tracked planning and access to growth funding.

Buildings range from 31,000 sqft – 53,000 sqft. Although the office buildings are relatively large, floors are subdivided to a certain extent, allowing accommodation for multiple businesses. In recent years, there has been a clear shift away from traditional, large-scale headquarter type offices as occupiers adapt to evolving work patterns. As organisations reassess their space requirements, there is growing demand for more flexible, smaller-scale office spaces, that better align with modern working practices. Regus currently offer flexible office space and coworking space in Building 1010 at Cambourne Park.

Beyond Cambourne Park, there is a limited amount of office stock which tends to be smaller in terms of floorspace. This includes The Manor House (occupied by The Wildlife Trust), offices at 1-3 De La Warr Way to the north of Morrisons and Caxton House to the south west of Morrisons.

Figure 11 below provides CoStar data on rents, showing that average office rents in Cambourne have consistently been lower than those across Greater Cambridge as a whole and national levels, indicating weaker demand for space. In 2024, office space in Cambourne achieved on average £28.26 per sq ft.

¹²GL Hearn. Greater Cambridge Employment Land and Economic Development Evidence Study. November 2020 and Icen Projects, Greater Cambridge Warehouse and Industrial Space Needs, March 2025.

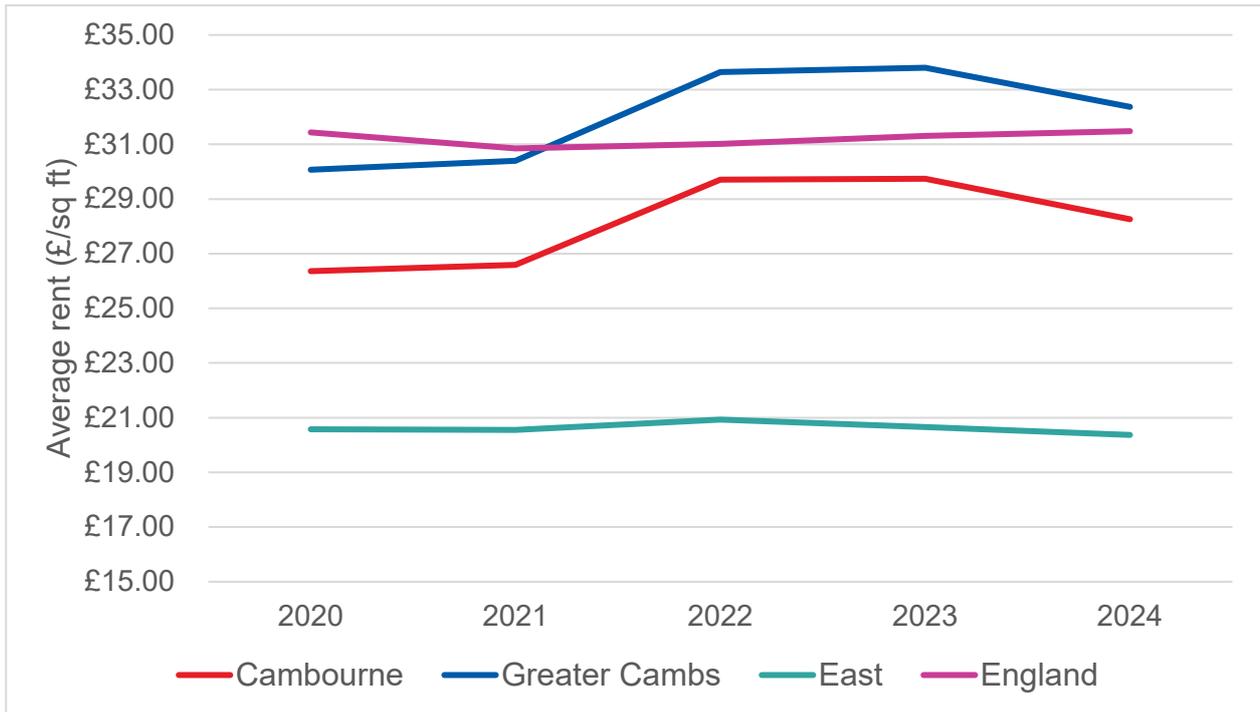


Figure 11: Office Rents (£ per sq ft)

Source: Icen analysis of CoStar (2025)

Office requirements – does Cambourne have potential as an office location?

As highlighted in the market overview above, occupiers are looking for:

- High quality, Grade A space – Cambourne currently offers a small amount of Grade A office space at Cambourne Park, delivered through recent refurbishment. With average rents lower than those of Greater Cambridge, there is a question regarding the viability of new build Grade A office stock. Future improvements in connectivity – notably the introduction of East West Rail – could improve viability by raising the level of office rents that could be achieved.
- Central locations favoured over older stock in peripheral locations – Cambourne would be regarded a peripheral location to Cambridge, however the delivery of public transport schemes including EWR could change this perception by reducing journey times between Cambourne and Cambridge.
- Amenity provision – a good range of amenity to attract and retain talent. Cambourne’s amenity offer is currently relatively weak, however an amenity hub could be included as part of a development proposal if it were of sufficient scale. Furthermore, the growth of Cambourne is likely to improve amenity provision. Nonetheless, this is unlikely to rival the amenity offered by a city such as Cambridge.
- Connectivity (including public transport) – Cambourne’s current public transport accessibility is relatively limited, with no rail connections. EWR and the Cambourne to Cambridge Busway would improve this.

With a growing population, Cambourne will also require a certain level of office provision to serve local needs. Smaller, more flexible office space may be more

suitable for local needs. In addition, spaces of this type may be more attractive to the wider market, given the shift away from large HQ offices in recent years as firms 'right-size'.

2.5.2 Laboratory Market

UK Lab Market

The UK's lab market is focussed predominantly within 'the Golden Triangle' which encompasses Oxford, Cambridge and London. The Golden Triangle is a highly concentrated hub of world-class research and education institutions, healthcare providers and leading science, innovation and technology businesses.

Cushman & Wakefield's Golden Triangle Life Sciences Q1 2025 MarketBeat report states that:

- Take-up of lab space in Q1 2025 totalled 97,500 sq ft, which presents a 32% decline compared to Q4 2024. This is also 37% below the five-year quarterly average.
- Prime quoting rents saw growth in Oxford and London compared to the previous quarter, and now sit at £70 psf in Oxford and £140 psf in London. Rents have remained stable in Cambridge at £77 psf.
- Seven schemes were completed across the Golden triangle in Q1 2015, with a further 4.0 million sqft under construction and due to be delivered before the end of 2027.
- UK life science companies secured an additional £1,251 in venture capital funding in Q1 which represents the highest quarterly total on record, however the lowest number of raises since Q4 2020.

Greater Cambridge – Lab Market

It is important to note that CoStar's lab feature is relatively new for 2025 and should be treated with caution, being here cross referenced with other Icen knowledge and research.

Greater Cambridge is a world leader in the life science and healthcare sector. The cluster is underpinned by the presence of world-leading R&D taking place at the University of Cambridge and specialist research institutes, hospital and businesses established in and beyond Cambridge city.

Cambridge Ahead report that in 2023/24 there were 421 life sciences companies in Greater Cambridge, supporting 20,950 jobs¹³. The majority of businesses are within the Biotechnology R&D sub-sector (231) many of which will require wet lab premises for research.

Wet labs involve biological matter – these are controlled environments where drugs, chemicals and biological matter can be analysed and tested. Life science research often requires wet lab space alongside office space, usually at a ratio of around 60:40.

¹³ Cambridge Cluster Insights, Cambridge Ahead, CBR data which may differ from ONS data. It should be noted that Cambridge Ahead data does not include sole traders and therefore underestimates total business / jobs count.

Dry labs focus on applied or computational mathematical analyses via the creation of computer-generated models or simulations in computing, engineering and physics. Dry labs are different from offices as they are still about experimental activity and often still require “clean rooms” that may involve testing dry equipment or materials. They may be used for genomic research and sequencing and advanced tech R&D.

Table 3 below sets out the Top 10 Life Science employers in Greater Cambridge. The 10 largest life science employers in Greater Cambridge employ 63.2% of employees within the life sciences sector with AstraZeneca being the single largest employer.

Table 3: Greater Cambridge Top 10 Life science employers, 2023-24

Company	Employees	Sub-sector
AstraZeneca Plc	4,348	Biotechnology R&D
PPD Global Ltd	2,228	Biotechnology R&D
Genome Research Ltd	1,209	Biotechnology R&D
Illumina Cambridge Ltd	823	Biotechnology R&D
CMR Surgical Ltd	821	Medical Instruments
Abcam Plc	741	High-tech Manufacturing – Life Sciences
Amgen Ltd	592	Biotechnology R&D
SDI Group PLC	489	Medical Instruments
Napp Pharmaceutical Holdings Ltd	400	High-tech Manufacturing – Life Sciences
Costello Medical Consulting Limited	386	Other Life Sciences

Source: Cambridge Cluster Insights, Cambridge Ahead

Based on CoStar data, there was 548,118 sqm of lab space in Greater Cambridge in 2024. Figure 12 below, extracted from CoStar, shows the location of lab stock across Greater Cambridge. The blue diamonds indicate stock with vacancy, whilst the grey diamonds indicate that the property is fully occupied. Higher demands for land associated with lab space and the large clustering at parks logically tends to locate them at edge of city / out of town locations.

In line with this, lab space across Greater Cambridge tends to be clustered at parks located at the edge of city or out of town, with the largest clusters located at Cambridge Science Park and south of the city at Granta Park and Babraham.

However, it should be noted that recent proposals for life science developments have seen new patterns emerging, with some central urban and more rural locations. This notably includes the Grafton Centre redevelopment in urban Cambridge, Cambridge North and the development / expansion of locations to the south such as Melbourn Science Park.

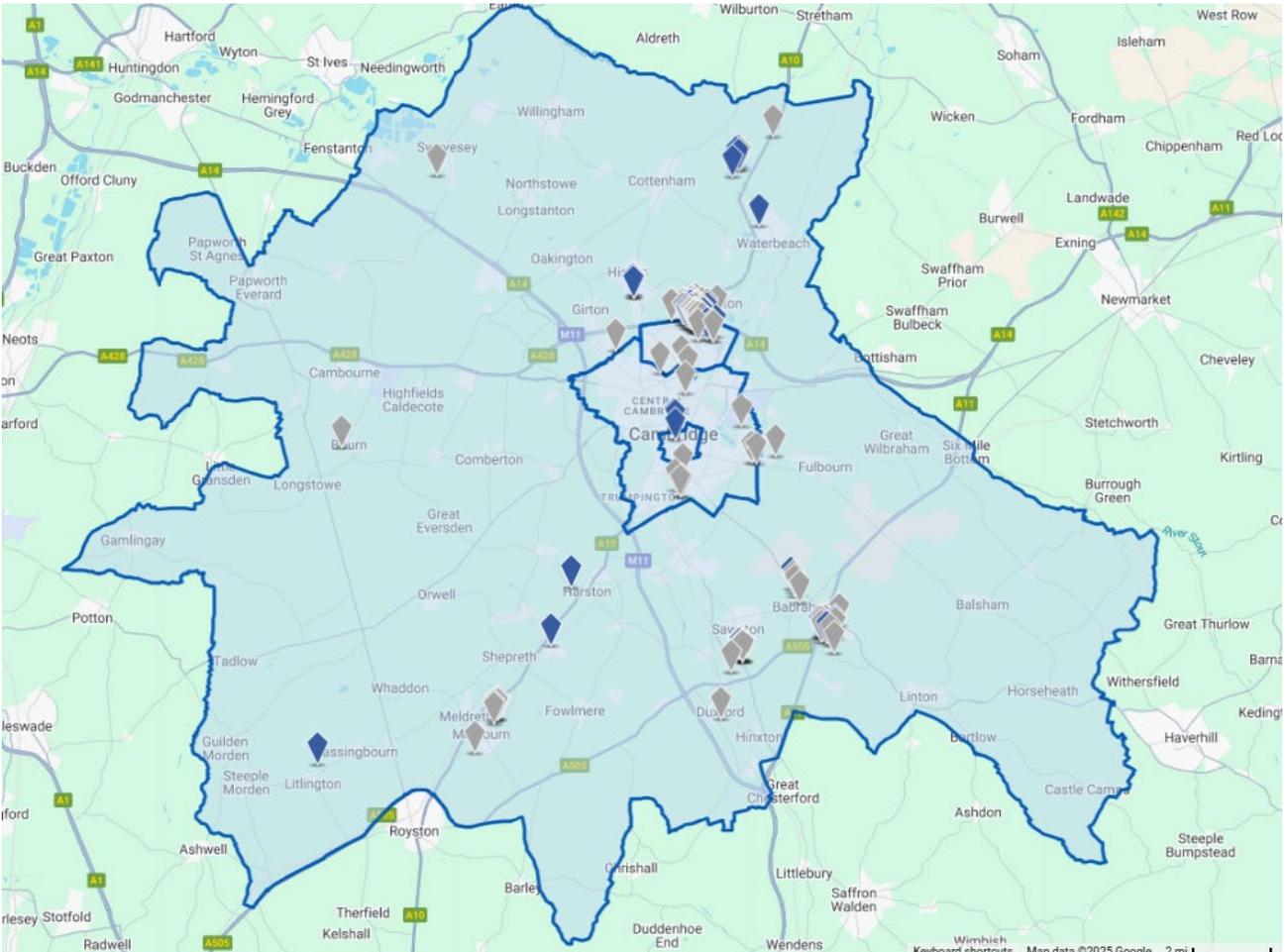


Figure 12: Map of Lab Stock, 2025

Source: CoStar (2025).

Lab space - Cambourne

Cambourne Park has traditionally been focussed on office uses, however it has recently been acquired by ‘Life Science REIT’ who have rebranded the Park as ‘Cambourne Park Science and Technology Campus’. Life Science REIT have developed a vision for the Campus to be a leading location for science and technology, and so far have converted 10,000 sqft (approx. 930 sqm) of office space to lab enabled space¹⁴. This laboratory and refurbished Grade A office space at Building 2020 remains unoccupied as of March 2025.

¹⁴ Cambourne Park <https://www.cambournepark.com/vision/>



Figure 13: Cambourne Park, Building 2020

Source: [Cambourne Park](#)

Lab Market Dynamics – Greater Cambridge Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic saw heightened demand for wet lab premises as a result of increased demand and funding for scientific research and development. This aligned to a time of slower pipeline and availability in the relevant sectors leading to very low vacancy. Supply/demand issues began to ease into 2024 – in part due to reduced demand as a result of a slow down in funding and in part due to an increase in permissions and developments coming forward.

Despite this easing in the market, which is particularly relevant to the wet lab life science sector, there broadly remains a perceived imbalance in supply and demand with a continued undersupply of good quality premises in preferable locations with amenity provision, coupled with continued high levels of demand. This is partly due to the need to build out space that is being permitted in planning.

Supply of space catering for early stage/scaling life sciences businesses is reported to be particularly tight with very little choice for occupiers in the market. However, there are examples of good provision for early-stage companies for example at the Cambridge Bio-Innovation Centre at Cambridge Science Park and Babraham Research Campus.

Supply constraints may have eased in comparison to recent years, although demand is highly contingent on venture capital funding which causes cycles of higher and lower demand. A solid pipeline of future development is key to supporting anticipated increases in funding in the future.

Looking forward there is a good variety of lab space coming through the pipeline due to a market response in relation to increased interest, with a good supply of space for more than a decade in the planning pipeline. However, not a huge amount of lab space is

currently under construction - partly as a result of a challenging viability of construction costs.

Lab Market Dynamics - Market Indicators

This section looks at the Greater Cambridge lab market using market indicators sourced from CoStar data.

Figure 14 below reports on lab floorspace net absorption (the total space occupied after adjusting for space vacated), delivery and vacancy rates per year. It can be seen that the vacancy rate has been somewhat volatile over the last 10 years with a low of 1.6% in 2015 and a high of 6.0% in 2019. A vacancy rate of between 5-10% is expected in a well-functioning market. In greater Cambridge, the vacancy rate has often been lower than this in the last decade, indicating a level of supply constraint. It can be seen that the vacancy rate increased significantly in 2024, from 2.2% to 5.8%.

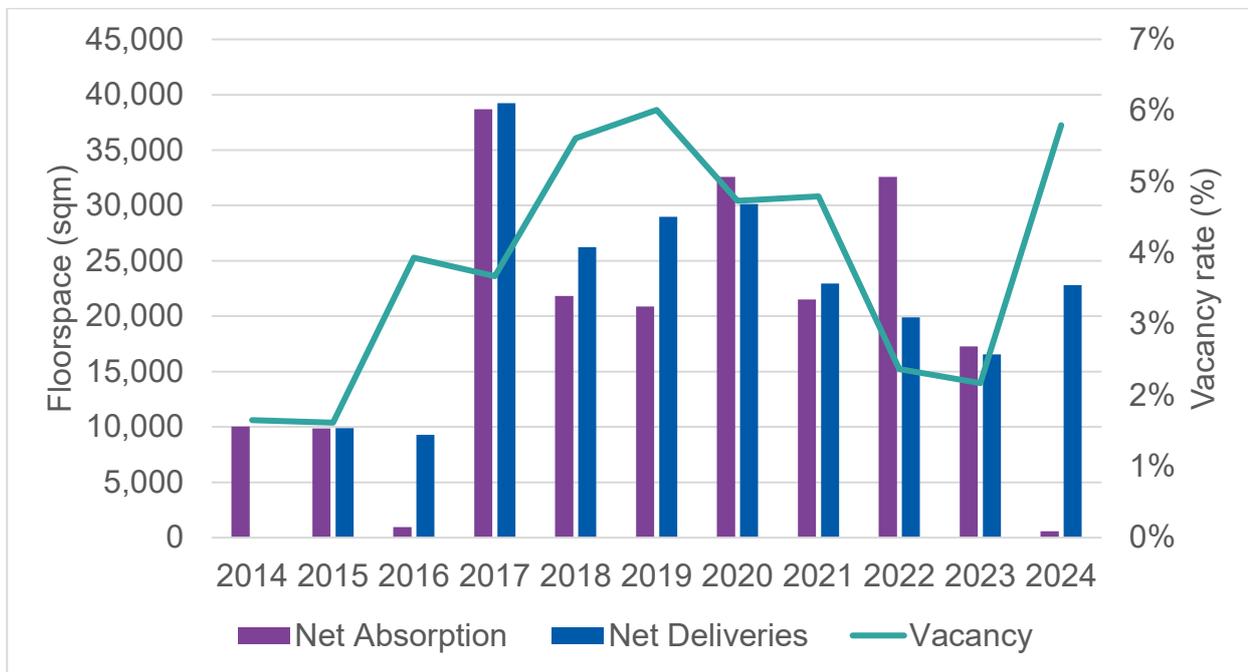


Figure 14: Net absorption, Net Deliveries and Vacancy, Greater Cambridge Lab Space

Source: Costar

Locational requirements - does Cambourne have potential as a lab location?

Iceni have undertaken several studies which have included research into locational needs for science premises (including lab space) in the Oxford to Cambridge region and specifically within Greater Cambridgeshire. The following locational needs are associated with life sciences occupiers (who generally require some lab space):

- Trend towards integrated ‘place’ based locations that encompass quality premises with amenity offer and connectivity including commuting via public transport. Cambourne’s current amenity offer is relatively poor, as is its public transport connectivity. However, EWR provides an opportunity to increase the town’s connectivity substantially and the expansion of Cambourne is likely to provide opportunity to improve the town’s amenity offer.

- Life science centres require sufficient ‘space and scale’ recognising that facilities tend to be lower density and therefore space hungry as well as potentially having some bad neighbour characteristics such as deliveries, waste disposal and extraction. Whilst there is not a large quantum of land available to expand at Cambourne Park, there is a large amount of rural land surrounding Cambourne – development as part of a further urban extension could include an element of lab space.
- Locationally, larger R&D life science organisations tend to gravitate towards edge-of-centre campuses and out-of-town science parks, taking advantage of space / land availability, but there is a sense that urbanised life science hubs are increasingly popular, due to their proximity to labour and city centre amenities. Cambourne has better land availability than the city of Cambridge and future transport improvements (notably EWR and the Cambourne to Cambridge Busway) will improve accessibility to labour and amenities in Cambridge city centre.
- A significant critical mass of similar businesses to create a community that can attract and retain a concentrated labour pool on site, creating a network and community of workforce, as well as a viable offer of facilities, both technical and amenity focused. Cambourne currently has very little lab space – the space that exists has recently been developed and is not yet occupied. A key occupier or institution would likely be required to attract further businesses to Cambourne and start to develop a community/cluster.
- For smaller businesses and start-ups, the need to be located with institutions or research centres that can provide appropriate space at affordable cost, which is typically not viable in fully commercialised centres or as a standalone proposition. Land values typically lower than elsewhere which may aid viability for small business and start-up units / facilities. Cambridge Design Partnership are located nearby at Bourn Quarter, who are an end-to-end innovation partner who help start-ups to succeed.
- Some businesses need to be in close proximity to clinical research centres such as Cambridge Biomedical Campus, but others require a location with academic research or in a broader commercial non-clinical campus, depending on sector specific focus. Cambourne lacks an academic/clinical centre which puts it in a less attractive position in comparison to locations such as Cambridge Biomedical Campus, however EWR will effectively bring Cambourne closer to these institutions in the future.
- Amenity offer as a part of a place making strategy including cafes / restaurants, green spaces, gyms, sustainable / functional transportation and market housing that is affordable. Cambourne’s housing market is significantly more affordable than the offer in the city of Cambridge, however its amenity offer currently lets it down. As Cambourne expands, there will be additional amenity provision which may improve commercial attractiveness.
- Sustainable, affordable and reliable transport connections are highly desirable across the occupier spectrum however many of the science parks in reality are accessed and accessible by car which requires parking space and enables in-commuting from a range of locations. Some existing periphery locations have struggled to be successful even in high demand periods as they lack the connectivity and integrated offer that the sector seeks. Whilst Cambourne’s public

transport offer is currently relatively limited, the development of EWR, A428 upgrade and Cambourne to Cambridge busway scheme may fundamentally change this and improve the desirability of the town for lab development.

2.5.3 Industrial Market

Industrial and Warehousing Market

The needs and premises types of the industrial and warehouse sector are diverse; depending often on the type of operation, supply chain, customer base and company maturity. Industrial and warehouse occupier sectors include:

- **Manufacturing / advanced manufacturing**, typically in Use Class B2, factory space for machines and industrial activity, can include ancillary lab and office space;
- **General industrial**, typically in Use Class B2, for example car repair workshops, but could include (Use Class B8 / Sui Generis) trade counter sales or wholesalers;
- **Distribution**, typically in Use Class B8, which is both parcel delivery (third party such as Amazon / DPD) but may include retailer specific parcel (food or goods retailers); and
- **Mid-tech**, potentially in Class E(g) but also may need to include B2 and B8, for product development, testing and storage.

UK Industrial Market

CoStar report that although most industrial landlords believe the sector remains relatively strong, the past year has seen negative net absorption (more space vacated than taken up) as a result of consolidation by retailers and distribution occupiers. At the national level, the vacancy rate is at its highest level in more than a decade, however at 5% this is at a level that indicates a well-functioning market and does not suggest over-supply.

The industrial and warehousing market saw strong demand during the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of increased online retailing. CoStar report that leasing activity has now slowed and is around 40% lower than at the mid-pandemic peak.

Greater Cambridge Industrial Market

Greater Cambridge has a considerable number of industrial estates and parks of varying type and location, as mapped below. In most instances these provide highly sought after locations, and a number of these have seen expansion and new development in recent years in response to occupier demand.

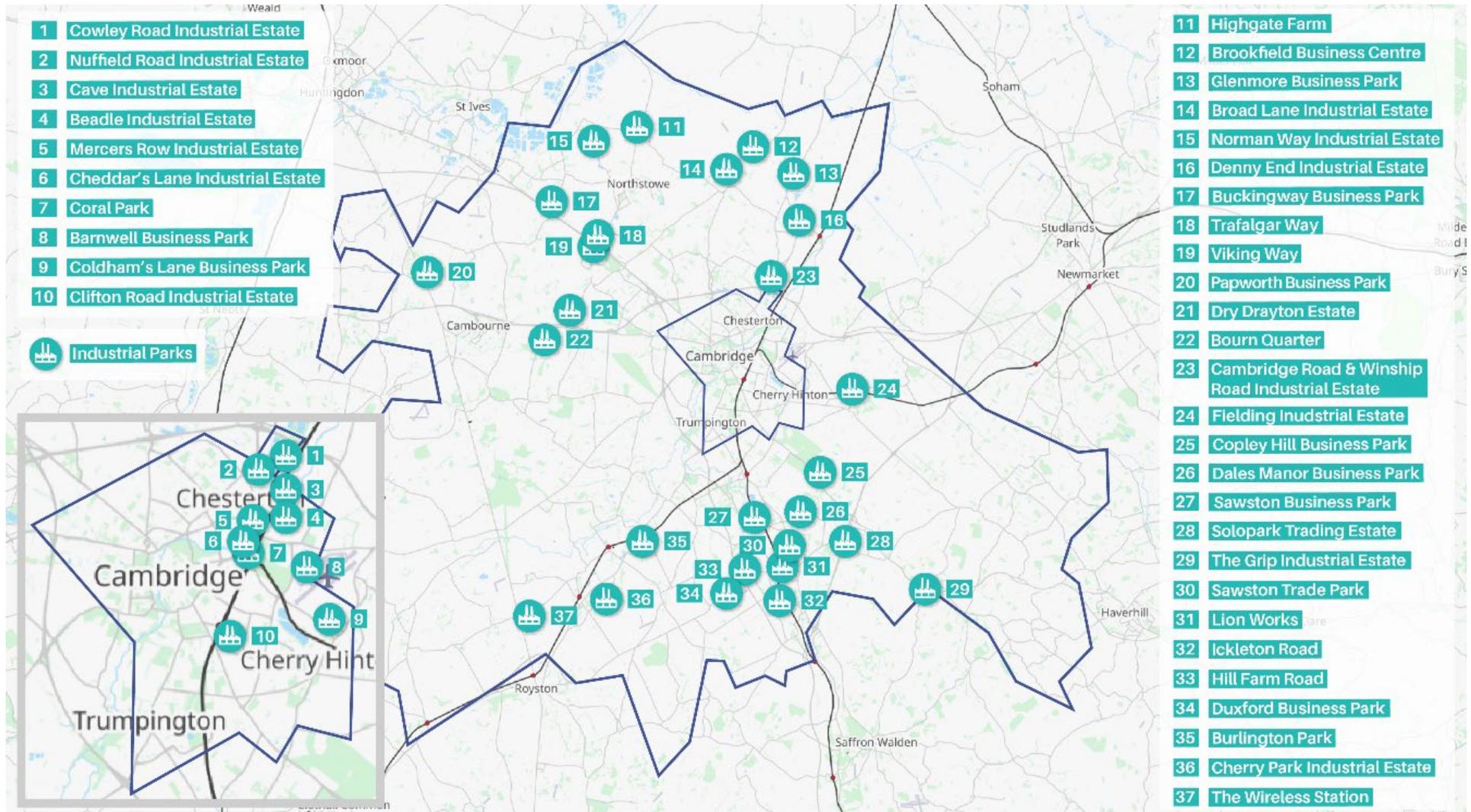


Figure 15: Map of Industrial Parks, Greater Cambridge

Source: Greater Cambridge Warehouse and Industrial Space Needs study (Iceni Projects, March 2025)

Business occupiers of Greater Cambridge’s industrial premises cover a wider range of economic sectors across manufacturing, distribution and services. This includes traditional general industrial occupiers such as car servicing, trade counter and wholesale, distributors and manufacturing ranging from more traditional to high tech advanced manufacturing and engineering. Pharmaceuticals multinational AstraZeneca, composite manufacturer Hexcel Corporation and food company Hain Daniels are among the firms with a significant local industrial footprint.

High value manufacturers in industries such as pharmaceuticals, robotics and electronics are able to draw on an established research and education infrastructure, which includes the University of Cambridge (including the Institute for Manufacturing), the College of West Anglia Cambridge campus, Cambridge Regional College and TWI (The Welding Institute).

As noted at the national level, the rise in e-commerce has had a significant effect on the way the industrial and logistics sector works and this also has local impacts. There is a need in particular for final mile premises that deliver directly to households and businesses, with close proximity to urban destinations reducing journey times.

Figure 16 below reports on industrial floorspace net absorption (the total space occupied after adjusting for space vacated), delivery and vacancy rates per year. It can be seen that Greater Cambridge’s vacancy rate has generally been decreasing since its peak in 2019. The vacancy rate currently stands at 2.4% which is considerably lower than the level expected in a well-functioning market, indicating that supply is constrained across Greater Cambridge.

Net absorption has been positive in all but one year over the past decade, showing strong demand for industrial and warehousing space. In 2024, strong take-up against a backdrop of low deliveries drove the vacancy rate down.

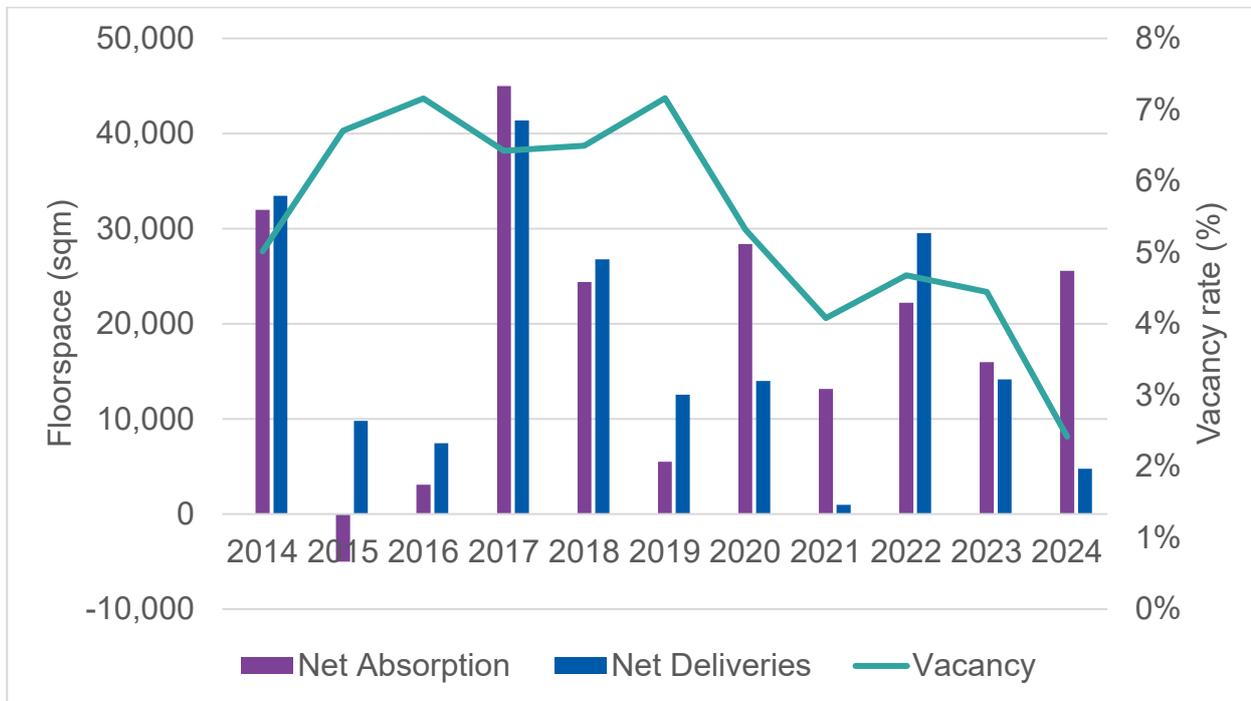


Figure 16: Net Absorption, Net Deliveries and Vacancy, Greater Cambridge Industrial Stock

Source: Icen analysis of CoStar, 2025

Figure 17 below shows that historically Greater Cambridge has seen higher rental levels than both the East of England and England, however industrial rents across the East have grown rapidly since 2020 and now match Greater Cambridge at approx. £10.50 per sq ft.

Multiple years of positive net absorption and relatively low vacancy have led to steady rental growth across Greater Cambridge.

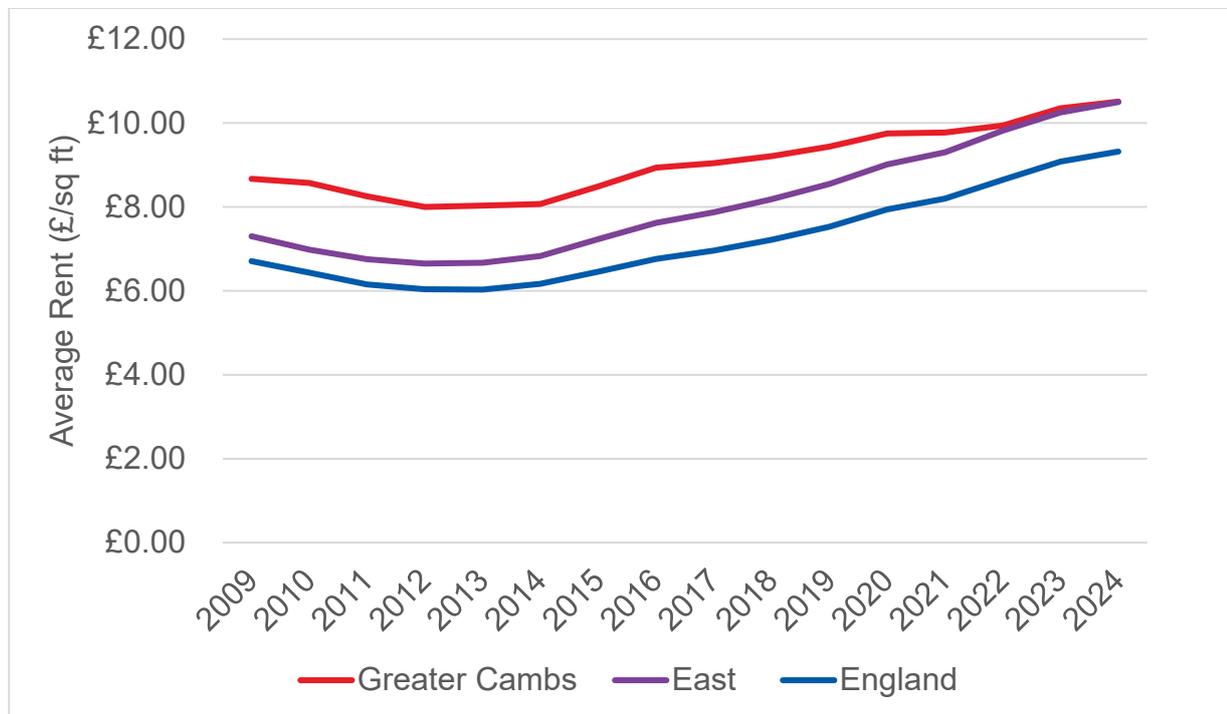


Figure 17: Average rents, Greater Cambridge Industrial Stock (£ per sq ft)

Source: IcenI analysis of CoStar, 2025

IcenI’s Greater Cambridge Warehouse and Industrial Space Needs study (March 2025) undertook stakeholder engagement with a range of agents, occupiers and site owners. The following provides a summary of stakeholder views regarding demand by industrial sub-sector:

Distribution - Stakeholders were unanimous in the view that storage and distribution (use class B8) space was lacking within Greater Cambridge and some commentators indicated this stretched to the wider Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)¹⁵ and beyond. Given trends of rising demand in the distribution market and other market indicators this is likely to be the case.

General Industrial – demand is reported for small and mid-size general industrial properties from 5,000 sq.ft to 20,000 sq.ft (500 – 1,900 sq.m) including trade counter, wholesale, motor repair, construction yards and other local population serving industries who find it difficult to find space in Cambridge and serve their market. There were also concerns raised about displacement of general industrial tenants due to current industrial land being allocated for residential.

¹⁵ Defined as Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough City in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Authorities’ Statutory Governance Review 2016

Mid-tech requirements typically arise from the demand for R&D testing and production space associated with some tech / physical science businesses spinning out of university and science parks. The science parks cater largely for life science wet labs and offices for software tech. Physical engineering sciences need more industrial space and once out of start-up concept often need to lease more industrial type commercial space, but still often associate with the science park / university in commute / proximity terms.

Quantifying the volume of space needed in Greater Cambridge for this mid-tech sector as differentiated from other types is difficult due to similar physical unit requirements (say as with general industrial of good specification) combined with views on need diverging. Some stakeholders see a rapidly expanding demand but others identify much more muted requirements. In reality the volume of take up and enquiries in this sector has been relatively limited to date, across a handful of deals, but comparably in Oxfordshire this type of space is more commonly sought and better provided for, with Oxfordshire having a greater emphasis on the engineering sectors and sciences compared with Greater Cambridge's life science / tech emphasis.

Manufacturing - Manufacturers spatial distribution sees a pattern of locating in the Greater Cambridge villages within rural estates, on the A14, or into wider Cambridgeshire. This reflects a combination of historic locations of land ownership and more traditional manufacturers who have found occasional space and have stayed in situ.

There is cross over between mid-tech and manufacturing (particularly for advanced manufacture) the latter essentially being the next stage of mid-tech moving into production phase. Stakeholders report good demand for this production space for both general and higher tech occupier needs, which with a lack of supply invariably sees operators move out to locations such as Huntingdonshire or Ely.

Cambourne Industrial Market

According to CoStar, Cambourne has no industrial stock at present. However, the recent Bourn Quarter development (see later Case Study for more detail) is located to the east of Cambourne (approx. 4 miles), offering space for R&D, light manufacturing, office and warehouse facilities housed in mid-tech industrial units.

Locational Priorities - does Cambourne have potential as an industrial location?

Iceni's Greater Cambridge Warehouse and Industrial Space Needs study (March 2025) also explored locational priorities by sub-sector as part of the stakeholder engagement. These are summarised below:

Manufacturing: B2 manufacturer locations reflect either historic positions around Cambridge or represent production level manufacturers who have found space. Existing firms often depend on their workforce location (Cambridge based labour) and therefore business relocations to larger premises in Huntingdonshire or beyond can be problematic. There are requirements for a range of existing Cambridge businesses to expand within commutable distance of the city – road network locations are considered suitable as are those with good public transport accessibility.

Being commutable from Cambridge, Cambourne could provide manufacturing premises to cater for business expansion, but development would need to be of sufficient scale to achieve critical mass. Additional space would preferably be upwards of 40,000 sq.m (c 10 ha) to ensure a comprehensive development that is viable but could be larger if part of a new development / allocation for mixed B development, to ensure viability. EWR would improve Cambourne's public transport accessibility, making it more attractive as a potential manufacturing location.

General industrial: For general industrial including MOT car repair, trade park, and wholesale there is a reported need to be in or close to Cambridge due to the customer base. This is therefore an urban or edge of urban requirement. Some provision in other locations to serve local populations or on the strategic network is considered by stakeholders as reasonable but the city is considered to be the main market. Views are mixed on the implications of industrial units being displaced out of Cambridge, balancing distance from market with reduced congestion in the City.

Whilst there may be some need for general industrial provision to serve local need both at present and as Cambourne's population increases, Cambourne is unlikely to be a suitable location to serve Cambridge's need, being located beyond the urban fringe. This latter point should be qualified by that noted below, in terms of the improvements to the A428, its connection to the A1M and the success of the Bourn Quarter, as below.

Strategic distribution: Including third party logistics and retail distributors. Larger operators require strategic road network access of the M11 / A14 and close proximity to junctions. They also seek reasonable access, sub 30 minutes drive, to a labour force. Sites usually require large areas of flat land and good power supply.

Cambourne would be less desirable as a location for strategic distribution as it is not located on the A14/M11, although Cambourne does have access onto the A428 which is undergoing upgrades at present.

Final mile distribution: Delivery operators, mostly third party, are seeking locations close to the A14 (such as Buckingway Business Park or Bar Hill), where there is also an available local workforce, and the A428 is also viewed as increasingly attractive given upgrades and A1 connectivity. For parcel carriers, a 20-30 acre (8-12 ha) site close to Cambridge would be ideal, with potentially three-four prospective occupiers for this land. These need to be close enough for sustainable trips to the urban population including for electric large goods vehicles (LGVs) with a 50-150 mile range.

The A428 is noted as being increasingly attractive to occupiers given the upgrades that are currently underway – this could present an opportunity for Cambourne to cater for business to business and business to consumer deliveries supporting the Cambridge population and supply chain.

Mid-tech: Mid-tech occupiers tend to arise from university or science park settings. Some maintain that connection as they spin out and others do not. There is a benefit in being in a close proximity to the science parks to support the connection. Even for those with a weaker connection, the workforce tends to be Cambridge based graduate / tech staff having to travel to site. Rural locations are sub optimal where car free travel is less readily available. Connectivity, such as guided bus, should improve the attractiveness for investment. Edge of urban locations provide an optimal location for mid-tech start-up and scale up space. The occupation of units at Bourn and Sawston is a demonstration of development where values and rents are more achievable away from the city itself, but where the distance presents connectivity challenges for occupiers.

Mid-tech is likely to be a sub-sector which could develop successfully in Cambourne, as demonstrated by Bourn Quarter which is located just to the east of Cambourne. The lower land values in comparison to the city of Cambridge would make development more viable. Whilst the distance from the city may be a challenge, journey time improvements delivered by EWR and the Cambourne to Cambridge busway will only increase the appeal of Cambourne as a mid-tech location. Amenity will be an important consideration for any new development given the relatively weak offer Cambourne currently has.

2.6 Creative Space

Creative Space

The 'Greater Cambridge Creative Business and Cultural Production Workspace: Specifications and Practical Requirements Study' (June 2021), provides an analysis of supply, demand and needs of creative businesses in Greater Cambridge.

Creative workspace cuts across many building typologies, as set out in the report, including:

- Artist Studios
- Digital Media Space
- Makespace¹⁶
- Offices
- Performance and Exhibition Space

These typologies cut across many different planning use classes, including E(g)(i) office space, E(g)(ii) R&D space and E(g)iii Industrial processes that can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to the amenity of the area.

The study finds that there is a general shortfall of dedicated, affordable workspace for creative industries in central Cambridge as well as within the wider Greater Cambridge area. Many businesses are willing to consider locations outside of central Cambridge (although this does remain a preferred location), subject to delivery of suitable spaces in a high quality setting with good transport connectivity, services, open spaces and proximity to other creatives. This is highlighted as an important finding given the low land availability and high land and property values in central Cambridge, likely to limit the delivery of new dedicated workspace.

The study concludes that areas outside central Cambridge, including the new growth locations such as Waterbeach, Bourn, Northstowe and North East Cambridge (NEC), are likely to offer the greatest opportunities for new provision for the foreseeable future.

There may therefore be demand for creative workspaces in Cambourne, which could perhaps be delivered as part of a wider mid-tech development or alternatively purpose-built creative workspace could be provided as part of a new town centre offer.

Of note, there is already creative space in Cambourne. In 2023, the Coates Theatre opened¹⁷ which provides opportunities for students at Cambourne Village College, as well as the wider Cambourne community, to take part in arts, music and cultural activities. Wysing Arts Centre is also located at Bourn, south of Cambourne. This arts campus was

¹⁶ Makespace is defined as spaces that are “often larger than artist studios and provide workshop space for businesses and organisations that design, make and manufacture a diverse range of products that require use of larger spaces and specialist industrial equipment” (e.g. 3D printers / laser cutters etc) – Source: Greater Cambridge Creative Business and cultural Production Workspace: Specifications and Practical Requirements Study, June 2021

¹⁷ <https://www.cambournevc.org/about-us/charitable-trust>

established in 1989 and is set across 11 acres. The campus has been expanded over the years, with the main purpose-built studio building opened in 2008.

3. Case Studies and benchmarks

With growth there is potential for Cambourne to develop greater focus around its economic identity. This section looks at case studies firstly at the broader town level, and then at specific business / employment parks.

3.1 Economic identity

Some settlements benefit from centuries of history, whereas new towns notably built since WWII have had to develop their economic offer to attract investment and growth. Consideration has been made here of 'new towns' and settlements that have seen major housing growth accompanied by employment development.

Milton Keynes through the 1970s and 1980s benefited from the Milton Keynes Development Corporation and has become the largest new town project with over 300,000 residents. Its grid based central layout has facilitated space for commercial investment, aided by national rail connectivity and the M1 corridor. It now has a strong technology, professional services and innovation sector, supporting its office market, which has attracted many HQ occupiers such as National Rail and Santander orientated around the core and station. It also has a strong logistics and distribution sector at various parks due to its proximity to the M1 and is home to Amazon, John Lewis and DHL.

Harlow was one of the original post-war new towns which historically had a strong manufacturing base, later attracting advanced manufacturing, R&D and health. GlaxoSmithKline was a major occupier, taking over from Beecham Research Laboratories who opened a 2 ha site in 1969. GSK's major site New Frontiers Science Park later acquired by Public Health England (now the UK Health Security Agency) in 2017, GSK retaining a presence. Other major occupiers include Raytheon, Charles River, Kao Data, Arrow and Pearson. Logistics are a significant feature on the M11 corridor.

Stevenage, expanded as a new town in the 1950s, has evolved into a biopharmaceutical and aerospace hub. It is anchored by GSK's R&D centre campus, one their two largest global hubs whilst the UK HQ is in central London. Other key employers include Airbus Defence & Space and MBDA (formerly British Aerospace). The town has strong links to London and Cambridge.

Notably features of the above include:

- Commercial centres around the main station, office / tech focus
- Campus developments for expanding occupiers in the R&D / advanced manufacturing sectors
- Industrial / warehousing on the road network
- Attracting major occupiers (private / public) as an anchor tenant underpinning employment and cluster development

3.2 Business parks

The following case studies provide examples of business parks and science parks that may be considered reasonable benchmarks for Cambourne in the long term.

Bourn Quarter



Figure 18: Photograph of Bourn Quarter

Image source: [Bourn Quarter](#)

Located off the A428, to the east of Bourn Airfield, Bourn Quarter is a new mid-tech business park development, housing R&D, science and warehousing activities. Phase 1 of the scheme was completed in March 2022 and has been successful in securing occupiers including:

- CRFS – spectrum monitoring and geolocation
- Xampla – biodegradable material manufacturer
- 4T Medical – suppliers of cosmeceutical and medical aesthetic products
- Cambridge Design partnership – end-to-end innovation partners
- Tsunami axis – workplace design
- Pentair HYPRO – design and manufacture of fluid handling technology
- GrowUp – Agri-tech. Leaf Lab innovation hub located at Bourn Quarter, research and science.

Phase 2 was due to complete in February 2025, with 9 available units.

Alconbury Weald Enterprise Campus



Figure 19: Photograph of Alconbury Weald Enterprise Campus

Image source: <https://www.alconbury-weald.co.uk/whos-here>

Alconbury Weald Enterprise Campus is a community of connected businesses occupying over 1.5 million sq ft of employment space. With easy access to walking and cycling routes, shops and cafés, and a programme of activities and events taking place at the heart of Alconbury Weald. It includes incubator space, flexible start up and grow on space for office, creative and R&D businesses. Alconbury Weald is a new settlement in Huntingdonshire, previously part of RAF Alconbury. Cambridgeshire County Council moved its headquarters from Cambridge to Alconbury Weald in 2021.

There have been challenges in attracting commercial occupiers to Alconbury. More recent phases have refocused on advanced manufacturing / engineering, general manufacturer and distribution, including large scale distribution businesses.



Figure 20: Render of Oxford North

Image source: [Oxford North](https://www.oxfordnorth.com)

Oxford North is a new innovation district in Oxford set to open in 2025. It provides an example of a scheme which includes an element of residential development alongside new laboratories, workspaces and amenities to form a new community where people can live and work.

Oxford North is located between the A34, A40 and A44 on the northern edge of Oxford, and will be connected to the city and the wider innovation clusters via extra cycle paths, a new shuttle bus and parking spaces for car users.

The scheme has been designed to offer flexibility in labs and workspaces, with bespoke options and spaces suitable for early stage ventures right through to later stage companies with significantly larger requirements.

The importance of amenity is reflected in the masterplan. The Red Hall is designed to act as “the heart of Oxford North” and will provide a café-bar, retail units, community space and co-working spaces on the ground floor. Further amenity space is provisioned by Fallaize Square (pop-up markets, food vendors, sports and cultural events) and Fallaize Park (green space hosting wellbeing events).

¹⁸ <https://www.oxfordnorth.com/about>

Milton Park, Oxfordshire¹⁹



Figure 21: Photograph of Milton Park

Image Source: Milton Park / MEPC

Milton Park is a science, technology and business park, located south of Oxford near Abingdon and Didcot. The park describes itself as a ‘hub of innovation’, supporting collaboration and networking to support business connections and discoveries.

There are currently 86 buildings on the Site, with a range of building types including industrial, office, laboratories (over 800,000 sq ft / 74,300 sqm), R&D and warehousing units. Milton Park is well-occupied with a healthy level of vacancy whereby there is sufficient availability to accommodate new occupiers or occupier expansions/moves within the site.

The Park is home to over 250 companies ranging in size from start-ups to large corporates. Approximately 50% of occupiers are life sciences focussed, however there are also companies from a variety of sectors such as green energy (including fusion energy and battery technology), Healthtech, advanced engineering, technology, AI, Agritech, quantum computing, retail, publishing, distribution and professional services.

The Park is easily accessible via public transport. There are frequent bus services (every 8-10mins) to and from Didcot Parkway railway station to Milton Park.

There are currently a range of amenities on-site including multiple cafes, a gym, nursery, hotel and a post office. In addition to this, Milton Park are investing £14m into a new amenity hub – Signal Yard - which will offer a mix of food, drinks, retail services and outdoor events space.

¹⁹ Extract taken from Oxford to Cambridge: Science, Innovation, and Technology Business Premises Study, Icenic Projects, February 2025. For full case study, see: [Oxford to Cambridge Partnership | Innovation & Economy](#)

3.3 Benchmarks (employment floorspace)

In considering employment growth, it is helpful to consider ratios of commercial floorspace to dwellings in other places.

Settlements surrounding Cambridge that will have a similar spatial dynamic to Cambridge as Cambourne include St Neots, St Ives, Ely, Huntingdon and Haverhill. Employment floorspace density ranges from 10 to 27 sq.m per household.

Huntingdon and Haverhill at the upper end of the range have a larger presence of industrial floorspace. Huntingdon in particular is largely driven by its strategic road network connection to the A14 and A1(M) which makes it suitable for serving Cambridge and more widely a sub-regional market.

In addition, some of the larger 'new towns' noted previously have been included. These tend to support higher floorspace to household ratios, as critical mass creates a platform for greater investment.

Table 3: Household / commercial floorspace ratios

Settlement	Households	Population	Office Floorspace	Industrial Floorspace	Total Floorspace	Floorspace to Household Ratio (sq.m per dwelling)
St Neots	16,289	34,773	15,000	189,000	204,000	12.5
St Ives	8,167	18,600	14,000	116,000	130,000	15.9
Ely	9,608	22,352	23,000	71,000	94,000	9.8
Huntingdon	11,192	27,420	20,000	250,000	270,000	24.1
Haverhill	10,879	26,431	10,000	281,000	291,000	26.7
Milton Keynes	96,158	246,968	503,000	1,635,000	2,138,000	22.2
Harlow	37,857	93,329	89,000	789,000	878,000	23.2
Stevenage	36,511	89,495	124,000	478,000	602,000	16.5

Source: Icen analysis of Census 2021 and VOA

Overall, the range of the ratio is c. 10 to 25 sq.m of employment floorspace per dwelling. The ratio of office to industrial floorspace ranges between 1:3 to 1:12.

Assuming Cambourne grew to 20,000 homes in the long term, it could be expected to support around 200,000 to 500,000 sq.m of employment floorspace, ranging between 75% to 90% split for industrial to office.

It is useful to note that in recent years construction inflation has made the delivery of new commercial floorspace outside of prime locations more challenging, particularly for office and labs but also industrial. Settlements in the table above would have benefitted from cheaper costs and cost/rent ratios, which may mean that achieving delivery of the scale of commercial floorspace above will be challenging in the short to medium term.

4. Summary SWOT

This section summarises the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats at Cambourne as described earlier in this report.

4.1 Strengths

- Relatively close proximity to Cambridge (approx. 10 miles) – offering a labour supply pool, variety of amenity and a market for goods/services.
- Located within the Oxford-Cambridge corridor. Greater Cambridge has strengths in technology and life sciences, with a high density of high-growth companies and institutions including the University of Cambridge and numerous research institutes.
- Strong employment within the public admin (home to South Camb District Council offices), professional, scientific and technology, wholesale retail, and financial / insurance sectors.
- Relatively affordable housing in comparison to Cambridge
- Younger population profile – population age structure dominated by young families.
- Low levels of deprivation in the town.
- Well-qualified labour force across South Cambridgeshire.
- Some refurbished Grade A office stock at Cambourne Park with occupiers representing sectors including tech, medical tech, and agri-tech as well as professional services.
- Lower office rents achieved compared to Greater Cambridge.
- Bourn Quarter – mixed commercial mid tech offer - located to the east of Cambourne has been successful in achieving occupancy as it has been delivered. Houses Cambridge Design Partnership.
- Direct access to the Strategic Road Network (A428)

4.2 Weaknesses

- Amenity offer – town centre provision is relatively weak in form and function, as is the offer on the established Cambourne Park business park. This is required to attract talent in a competitive market.
- Lacks an academic/research institution centre tenant which puts in a less attractive position in comparison to Cambridge city and other business parks and science campuses such as Cambridge Biomedical Campus.
- Public transport accessibility currently limited, with no rail access.
- Cambourne Park has taken time to build up occupancy as a secondary location.
- Limited lab space at present – not sufficient to achieve a critical mass / community of life science occupiers.

4.3 Opportunities

- Population growth as Cambourne expands – increasing labour supply and critical mass, driving local demand for goods/services
- Significantly improved public transport accessibility to be delivered by EWR and the Cambourne to Cambridge Busway including improved connectivity to Cambridge.
- A428 upgrade in progress (Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme) which will improve road journeys between Cambourne, Milton Keynes and Bedford.
- Lower land values may incentivise investment outside of Cambridge City, as people are priced out of Cambridge.
- Land availability – potentially greater land availability in comparison to Cambridge City centre – potential to be sufficient to enable sites large enough to support infrastructure improvements.
- Improved amenity offer as part of a wider Cambourne expansion
- Expectation of achieving good critical mass of commercial development in the long term, which could be 200,000 sqm to 500,000 sqm, ultimately including amenity provision within design.
- Industrial supply constraint across Greater Cambridge – low vacancy levels, rental growth and positive net absorption.
- Government agenda for Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor – backing economic growth across the corridor, aiming to catalyse private sector investment by investing in infrastructure across the region.
- Locations along the A428 increasingly attractive to final mile distribution occupiers.
- Significant levels of R&D/ labs demand in recent years, creating potential for development / occupancy outside of traditional locations across Greater Cambridge.
- Being commutable from Cambridge, Cambourne could provide manufacturing premises to cater for business expansion
- Mid-tech is likely to be a sub-sector which could develop successfully in Cambourne
- Enhanced opportunities for placemaking

4.4 Threats

- Uncertainty regarding location of the EWR station in relation to the location of potential employment sites.
- Changing market dynamics – unexpected events can fundamentally change market dynamics, as has been seen with the office market since the COVID-19 pandemic. Flexibility in building design/planning permissions may reduce risk.
- Viability challenges due to inflation and construction costs across most markets – may be particularly challenging outside of Cambridge city centre.
- Development likely to be contingent on delivery and timings of EWR.
- A key occupier or institution would likely be required to attract further businesses to Cambourne and start to develop a community/cluster– Cambourne has not secured this to date.

- Strong lab supply pipeline across Greater Cambridge – may satisfy demand without need for further space in Cambourne.
- Tech and office development likely to need a high density form which may not reconcile with a wider vision for Cambourne in its setting.
- Local Government Reorganisation which may impact the strength of the public administration sector within Cambourne if Councils merge.

5. Issues and Options

The potential for a significant settlement expansion at Cambourne, including housebuilding and infrastructure investment notably in the form of EWR, creates a platform for economic development that can capture opportunities associated with Greater Cambridge and wider Oxford to Cambridge sub region.

This section essentially considers what growth directions could look like and what scale of growth might be considered.

5.1 Exploring opportunities

5.1.1 Benefits of an expanded population

More residents generate additional spending power in the retail and leisure sectors as well as public sector demand for education and health. As settlements grow they also tend to create a critical mass that claws back leakage of spend from that goes to other larger locations.

The Greater Cambridge Employment Land and Economic Development Evidence Study 2020 drew together wider research on how population growth in itself supports employment, noting (p176) that around 175 jobs are created for every 1,000 persons.

Illustratively, for 10,000 new homes or roughly 24,000 persons (UK average), this would generate demand for 4,200 jobs across a range of population serving sectors including health, education, retail and leisure.

The workforce will also grow substantially with the population. With an economic activity rate of over 87% in the district, assuming around 65% of residents being of working age, there could be over 13,000 workers in the settlement in the long term. A highly sustainable solution would be seek self containment and delivering more than 10,000 employment opportunities at Cambourne, whilst recognising its desirability as a destination to access employment in Cambridge particularly in the initial years of expansion.

5.1.2 Directions for growth: discussion of ways forward

Employment or residential focus – given the wider economic success of Greater Cambridge, Cambourne has seen relatively slow development and investment over the last two decades. A combination of issues around connectivity, location, amenity offer and configuration has seen a failure to compete with the City and other established locations such as Granta Park or Babraham. Lacking an institutional presence has been a significant challenge.

As Cambourne sees major growth, it can revive the town centre destination and create new centres - with a mix of retail, leisure and commercial mixed use. A strong sense of place making and design quality in the heart of the Cambourne is an important part of the overall opportunity in raising Cambourne's profile and attractiveness.

The station connectivity will mean Cambourne being very well connected across Oxford to Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Bedford. However it also becomes 'one stop' of many and does not directly translate to an attractive investment location, competing for example with Cambridge Biomedical Campus at Cambridge South station and to a lesser extent Cambridge North.

To avoid Cambourne as a commuter destination, the main issues are likely to include a well planned employment land offer, whether an anchor tenant can be attracted, and/or whether a critical mass of suitable uses can be established, underpinned by place making and stewardship.

Labs for life science and related at Cambourne Park – in recent years there has been a very great demand for lab space in Greater Cambridge, with venture capital surging during the pandemic and creating demand for occupier spaces from start up labs to large scale premises. The Cambridge Growth Sectors Study reflects on this demand but also reports that there has been a very significant supply side response with planning permissions likely to outweigh the need for space in the medium term, albeit these need to be converted to deliveries. With an expanded supply pipeline across Greater Cambridge it would be challenging for Cambourne to compete in this market in the short to medium term, particularly without an existing cluster or anchor tenant. New lab (and office) development may also be challenging in viability terms if the rental premiums achieved in the City centre and existing clusters cannot be secured in Cambourne.

In the longer term Cambourne does offer the prospect of a new location for life science investment, particularly for an anchor tenant seeking a campus style arrangement. There would be significant costs associated with development and a public private investment may be the best arrangement in achieving growth.

Offices and tech / professional services – the tech community in general is sensitive to the quality of amenity offer and the attraction of central Cambridge (and other major centres), although Cambourne has seen some success in getting occupation of its existing stock as a secondary location. Viability of future offices alone is likely to be challenging in Cambourne in the short to medium term.

Taking as a contrast the CB1 development in the City, this has focused on a high density intensification, integrating office professional services, notably tech occupiers, with the amenity and residential development. The densities achieved are high and this would need for Cambourne to be a bold vision.

Mixed manufacturing / industrial – the success of Bourn Quarter points to a broader unmet demand for high quality industrial space in Greater Cambridge, which is reinforced in the Greater Cambridge Warehouse and Industrial Space Needs 2025. The A428 and A14 routes out of Cambridge have supported the steady growth of mixed industrial business parks such as Bourn Quarter, Bar Hill and Buckingham – although these rely on the road rather than any rail based connection. The Bourn Quarter's success is also a challenge for Cambourne in the sense that it is a competing location for a potential market offer at Cambourne.

A higher spec mixed industrial park (or mid-tech) development appears a promising opportunity for Cambourne. Bourn Quarter Phase 2 is under development at 2025 and this will be a substantial addition to Phase 1. Looking ahead at a multi decade programme, Cambourne could well focus on an industrial tech market, building on the Bourn Quarter and potentially connections to Cambridge University and its School of Physical Sciences located West Cambridge – albeit there is substantial pipeline for development there at present.

The Idea would be to have a mixed employment environment. For example, with Bourn Quarter hosting Cambridge Design Partnership and Buckingham Business Park advanced manufacturing such as Industrial Inkjet Ltd. Whilst the A14 is generally seen as a better connected trunk road, the station could give an 'edge' to a mixed industrial park in Cambourne. Milton Park would be the ambitious blueprint from the Oxfordshire context.

A disadvantage of industrial leaning development would be a greater level of potential negative environmental effects particularly associated with traffic movements which would include some HGVs and LGVs.

General industrial and warehousing – The A428 is not a main trunk corridor, however it benefits from the upgrade programme, and warehousing and distribution could be attracted to Camborne as part of a general industrial offer. This would include population type services such as vehicle repair and trade park.

5.1.3 Directions for growth: scenarios

The below seeks to bring together a number of potential scenarios on employment, including quantum, key issues, benchmarks and interventions. These are anchored in the perspective of the benchmarks (section 3) assuming Camborne grew to 20,000 homes in the long term, it could be expected to support around 200,000 to 500,000 sq.m of employment floorspace, ranging between 75% to 90% split for industrial to office. The options identified are:

- 1: Commuter base – limited / modest growth - 4,000 jobs
- 2: Mid / mixed tech / industrial focus – modest growth - 7,000 jobs overall
- 3: Mid / mixed tech / industrial focus – higher growth - 10,000 jobs overall
- 4: ICT / life science focus – high growth - 12,000 jobs overall for the settlement
- 5: Mid / mixed tech / industrial plus ICT / life science focus – very high growth - 18,000 jobs overall

Calculations below assume around 50 sqm per job for industrial and 10-12 sqm for office/R&D.

5.1.4 1: Commuter base – limited / modest growth

Direction

Concentrating modest commercial development at the station and local centres supporting 4,000 jobs across population led employment. Limited employment, some general industrial of 10ha land. Assume 10,000 sqm commercial total.

Strengths / opportunity

- Readily deliverable under current market conditions
- Manageable under masterdeveloper / housebuilder

Weaknesses / challenges

- Camborne functions as a commuter location, adding value limited value in economic terms

Case Studies

- Typical commuter town, with range of town centre functions

Key conditions

- Not Applicable - population growth drives local demand

5.1.5 2: Mid / mixed tech / industrial focus – modest growth

Direction

Concentrating commercial development at the station and local centres, some general industrial of 10ha land, as well as a defined industrial tech park (30ha with 120,000 sqm floorspace) supporting c3,000 and 7,000 jobs overall

Strengths / opportunity

- Captures under served industrial market for Greater Cambridge
- Builds on economic strengths without competing with notable committed supply, more of a unique market opportunity
- Diversification in employment typologies
- Cost / value of build more competitive than office/R&D premises
- Utilises rail and road connectivity

Weaknesses / challenges

- Competing with Bourn Quarter phase 2, albeit that will be completed before Cambourne is on stream
- Sub optimal location for B8 distribution functions which prefers A14/A1M connectivity
- Not on the fringe of the main Cambridge urban area or adjacent to any research centres – although Bourn has seen good occupancy without this.

Case Studies

- Bourn Quarter (phases one and two) is around 10 hectares (as is Buckingham Business Park) so three times this scale.
- Tritax Symmetry developing 20 ha site for Siemens in Cherwell, with large scale individual units.

Key conditions

- Employment area developable in phases, connected to SRN
- Would benefit from anchor tenant but may not be necessary.
- Commercial development partner required

5.1.6 3: Mid / mixed tech / industrial focus – higher growth

Direction

Concentrating commercial development at the station and local centres, some general industrial of 10ha land, as well as defined industrial / mixed tech park (80ha with 300,000 sqm floorspace) supporting c6,000 jobs and 10,000 jobs overall

Strengths / opportunity

- Captures under served industrial market for Greater Cambridge
- Builds on economic strengths without competing with notable committed supply, more of a unique market opportunity
- Diversification in employment typologies
- Cost / value of build more competitive than office/R&D premises

- Utilises rail and road connectivity

Weaknesses / challenges

- Competing with Bourn Quarter phase 2, albeit that will be completed before Cambourne is on stream
- Sub optimal location for B8 distribution functions which prefers A14/A1M connectivity
- Not on the fringe of the main Cambridge urban area or adjacent to any research centres – although Bourn has seen good occupancy without this.
- Scale of demand and location is unproven and without a committed anchor tenant / institution will be very difficult to achieve

Case Studies

- Milton Park, Oxfordshire is c80ha built form / 290,000 sqm, although this excludes the distribution centre elements to east. Twenty years to reach current state.
- Culham Campus – with UK Atomic Energy Authority / Culham Centre for Fusion Energy is 80 ha (low density) 21,700 sqm across offices / R&D / plant

Key conditions

- Would need to get anchor tenant occupier / or institutional catalyst buy in as a driver of success – local / national facilitation
- Establishes a long term plan for growth given scale of commitment land
- Milton Park has an Local Development Order (Vale oWH) in place to enable development
- Commercial development partner required

5.1.7 4: ICT / life science focus – high growth

Direction

Concentrating commercial development at the station and local centres, some general industrial of 10ha land, plus targeting an office / labs component campus form of c100,000 sqm supporting c8,000 jobs and 12,000 jobs overall for the settlement

Strengths / opportunity

- Greater Cambridge almost uniquely able as a cluster to support growth in these specialist industries
- Long term platform for growth away from land constrained urban Cambridge
- Connected to CBC as well as CB1 and Bedford, MK and Oxf
- High value investment / GVA growth opportunity
- Potential location for unique occupiers seeking large land / premises requirements
- Anchor tenant / institution likely to be critical to success.

Weaknesses / challenges

- Market not developed in this fringe location
- Many competing locations for investment in the Greater Cambridge area, strong pipeline inc Cambridge East, NEC, Grafton Centre, CSP
- Viability highly challenging for new build in non core locations for Grade A office / labs
- Without an anchor tenant / institution, very challenging to achieve critical mass
- More than one commercial centre / zone (ie station area plus another) further challenging

Case Studies

- Cambridge Science Park is 160,000 sqm total floorspace on around 60 ha campus.
- Oxford North currently under construction is c100,000 sqm of labs and office, no anchor tenant, brought forward with c500 dwellings
- Wellcome Genome Campus expansion application for 150,000 sqm mixed employment and residential uses

Key conditions

- Critical role of tech / life science major investor including capital commitment – akin to AstraZeneca / Wellcome or Cambridge University campus / facility, local / national facilitation
- Establishes a long term plan for growth given scale of commitment land
- Market anticipated to prefer campus development over station innovation district

5.1.8 5: Mid / mixed tech / industrial plus ICT / life science focus – very high growth

Direction

Concentrating commercial development at the station and local centres, some general industrial of 10ha land; plus targeting an office / labs component campus form of c100,000 sqm supporting c8,000 jobs; as well as defined industrial / mixed tech park (80ha with 300,000 sqm floorspace) supporting c6,000 jobs; and 18,000 jobs overall.

Strengths / opportunity

- Bringing together multiple strands of economic opportunity as a concentration for growth
- Taking advantage of existing and future market opportunities
- Others as options 3 and 4

Weaknesses / challenges

- Major levels of investment to generate the infrastructure and buildings, viability not proven / not workable in present market conditions, untested market, major anchor tenants required
- Others as options 3 and 4

5.2 Interventions and actions

As noted in the table above, achieving higher levels of growth will require a range of actions, including by public sector partners. Key elements of this are:

5.2.1 A sense of place

The Local Plan evidence reports on the importance of place making, with the 2024 Greater Cambridge Growth Sectors Study on Life science and ICT emphasising the role of attractive and integrated places to ensure the best environment to attract higher value occupiers and workers.

Going forwards, enhancing economic growth at Cambourne needs to integrate commercial space with amenity to create an attractive environment at the right density in a well connected way for private vehicle and sustainable movement modes.

In spatial planning terms, Cambourne could be looking at 3-4 employment areas: the station commercial core; a campus for R&D / life science; an employment park for mixed tech and industrial; and a general employment area for industrial and trade counter. The latter two could be phased and integrated, the way that is seen in Sawston at South Cambridge Business Park or Unity Campus.

5.2.2 Capturing an anchor

Attracting a major employer or institutional investor would underpin employment and supply chain. This could include University of Cambridge, one of the other research institutes or other major employer. GCSP as well as other bodies such as CPCA would need to engage with potential partners to encourage investment in this location, particularly given the alternative pipeline developments in place.

5.2.3 Stewardship

Land ownership and stewardship structures contribute to the long term success of the place, which influences viability. Place making is an essential ingredient in the competitiveness of locations attracting investment and talent and there needs to be a commitment to commercial (employment space) success as a part of this. This is likely to involve bringing on a major partner who is able to show experience and understanding of the commercial sector.

5.2.4 Phasing

The growth trajectory of housing / employment space interrelationships and the phasing in the broader market need to be considered. Given other developments on stream, including Bourn Quarter Phase 2, and beyond that Cambridge East and other, employment at Cambourne would be most appropriately phased later i.e. post 2030/35.

6. Overall summary, conclusions and recommendations

Key baseline messages are:

- Cambourne currently sees lower house prices than Cambridge, generally a young population and a skilled workforce.
- Historically the connectivity to Cambridge has been road / car focussed. This will change with the introduction of the dedicated bus route to Cambridge and later through EWR.
- The wider Greater Cambridge economy has performed strongly in recent years, particularly in life sciences and tech, aided by a wealth of institutions and research centres. There are also a wider range of growth sectors across the Oxford to Cambridge sub region particularly across science and technology.
- The lab market in Greater Cambridge has performed very strongly in recent years, responding to demand through COVID-19 and related to availability of venture capital. In response, the planning pipeline has substantially increased with a number of years supply in place as well as future draft Local Plan allocations. Lab clusters are attracted to critical mass and amenity.
- The office market has suffered globally and nationally as a result of the pandemic, but Cambridge has been one of the few locations to continue to see good demand driven by its successful sectors. Offices tend to be concentrated high amenity and connectivity locations, as well as in more urban denser environments.
- Industrial has also performed strongly in recent years, including in Greater Cambridge, buoyed by distribution and a range of manufacturing / mid tech crossover demands. There remains an undersupply of space in the market area.

Ways forward.

- Whilst Cambourne could be just another commuter town, it has major opportunities to capture across the industrial-tech and R&D sectors. To achieve these will require long term vision, planning and commitment, going against the current commercial trend in that location.
- Cambourne could in the long term grow by anything from 4,000 to 18,000 jobs, with a potential labour force of over 13,000 based on 10,000 extra homes.
- As a minimum, a dormitory settlement should create 4,000 jobs supporting the expanded population.
- There is potential for a mixed mid tech industrial scheme, focused on more industrial style premises, as well including some labs and offices, reflecting the success of the Bourn Quarter (and to a lesser degree Alconbury Enterprise Campus). This would appeal to a range of occupiers including industrial type premises, improving viability and reflecting an undersupply in the market area. This could scale from 30 ha up towards 80 ha the latter would be more of an equivalent to Milton Park in Oxfordshire.
- A lab emphasis / office mix campus development is a possible route for Cambourne, with EWR making it a stop from Cambridge Biomedical Campus. An

anchor tenant or institution would be a catalytic effect on making this happen and a notable critical mass, with amenity, would normally be needed to create a sustainable offering. This could look to support over 100,000 sqm of floorspace and in itself 8,000 to 10,000 jobs. Looking to the longer term, there are competing locations for such development.

- The highest levels of growth would focus both on a campus R&D park and a separate industrial business park. This combination if achieved would head towards 18,000 jobs in the very long term.

Wider issues are:

- Whether a major employer or institutional investor can be attracted, which would underpin employment and supply chain. This could include University of Cambridge, one of the other research institutes or other major employer.
- How land ownership and stewardship structures contribute to the long term success of the place, which influences viability. Place making is an essential ingredient in the competitiveness of locations attracting investment and talent.
- How the growth trajectory of housing / employment space inter relate and how this phasing compares with other competing locations.