

Cambridge District
South Cambridgeshire District

Building Heights
2-7m (1 Storey)
7-10m (2 Storeys)
10-13m (3 Storeys)
13-16m (4 Storeys)
16-22m (5-6 Storeys)
22-28m (7-8 Storeys)
28-34m (9-10 Storeys)
34-43m (11-13 Storeys)
43m+ (14+ Storeys)

**Figure 11: Existing
building heights mapping
- Cambridge City scale**

2.10 Existing building heights

2.10.1 This study produced a detailed building height map of the Greater Cambridge Area, using available OS mapping of the area, DTM¹ and DSM² data sets (Figure 11).

2.10.2 While Cambridge is a modestly scaled city, there is a concentration of height in the historic city centre with many of the buildings ranging between 4-8 storeys (13-28m). The majority of these buildings are historic institutional buildings of Cambridge University, the 1970s/80s Grafton shopping centre and the buildings of Anglia Ruskin University.

2.10.3 Outside of the city centre, the majority of the city is composed of 1-2 storey suburban residential development.

1 A Digital Terrain Model (DTM) is a digital representation of a terrain's surface, typically including elevation data for a regularly spaced grid of points.

2 A Digital Surface Model (DSM) is a geospatial dataset that represents the elevation of the earth's surface, including all objects on it, such as buildings, trees, and other structures.



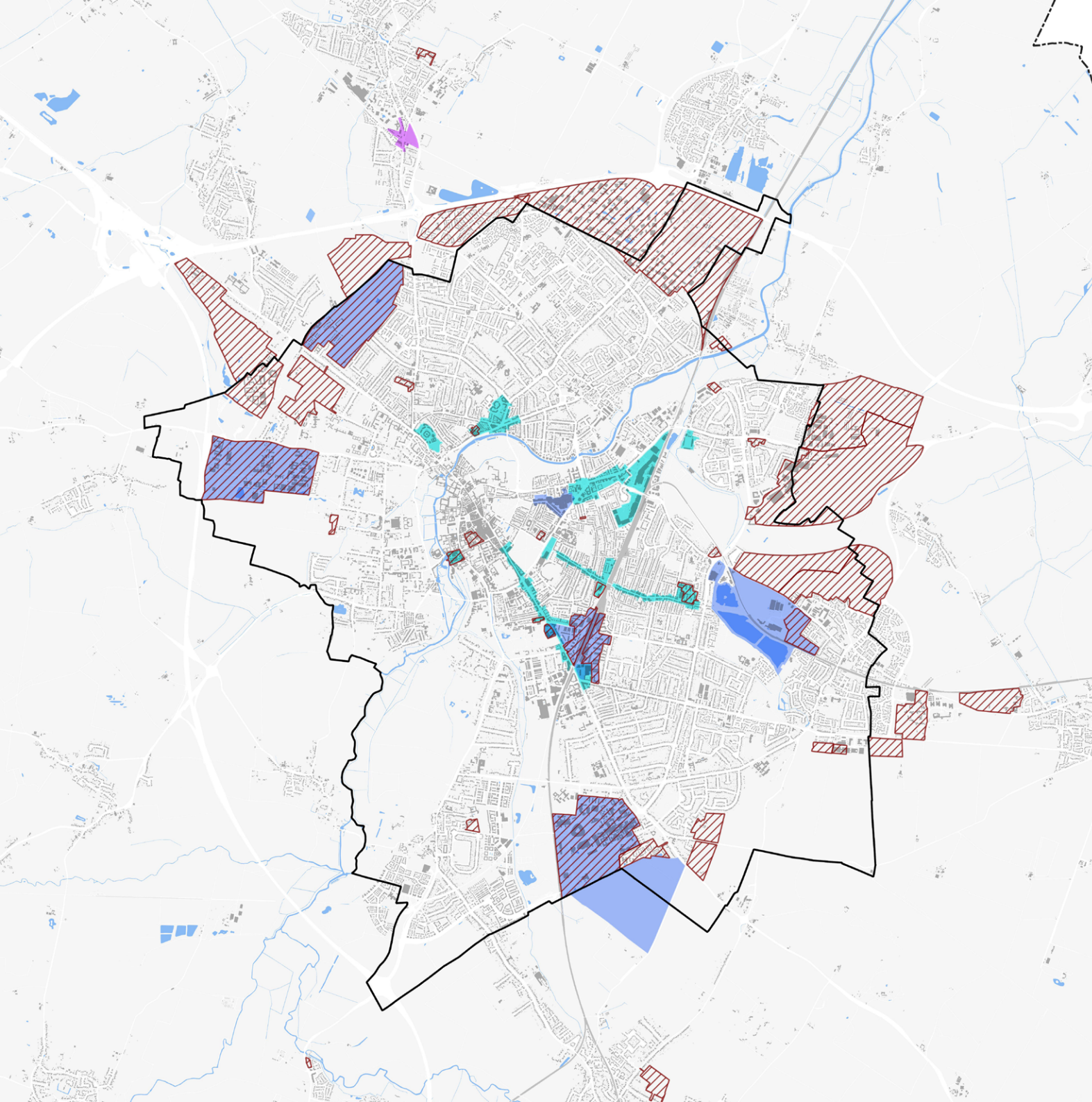
Image 30: CB1 Development © John Sutton

However, there are some concentrated areas where building height is increased such as around North East Cambridge, West Cambridge, Cambridge City Airport, Station Road West, Clifton Road, Homerton College, and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus site. Similarly, there has been recent growth along key corridors such as Newmarket Road and East Road which has resulted in an uplift in scale and introduced a horizontal form which is juxtaposed with the existing, established low-rise residential form in these areas.



Image 31: Springfield Road, Cambridge © Hugh Venables

2.10.4 More detail on the height characteristics of Cambridge and the location of existing tall buildings can be found in Chapter 5 Defining Tall Buildings in Greater Cambridge.









-  Cambridge District
-  South Cambridgeshire District
-  Area of major change
(GCLP First Proposals 2021)
-  Opportunity areas
(GCLP First Proposals 2021)
-  Policy areas
(GCLP First Proposals 2021)
-  Updated GCLP Proposed
Site Allocations (2024)

Figure 12: Site Allocations and Policy areas from Greater Cambridge Local Plan First Proposal 2021- Cambridge City scale

2.11 Regeneration

2.11.1 The area of Greater Cambridge is located in a strategic position due to proximity to Cambridge itself, London, and the surrounding market towns, and access to good transport connections. The district and city are in a period of growth with the population of South Cambridgeshire growing 8.9% and Cambridge growing 17.6% between 2011 and 2021 (Census 2021).

2.11.2 To meet this growing demand significant development areas have been identified in large growth areas at the inner and outer periphery of the city, including (Figure 12):

- Significant expansion with new neighbourhoods on the Southern Fringe, in the North West Quadrant, around Cambridge Station under way;
- Growth pressure on West Cambridge to accommodate the decant of university departments.
- Further plans for housing and mixed-use developments at North East Cambridge and Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

2.11.3 Significant new development is expected to take place in these areas, which are likely to bring forward proposals of increased height and potentially taller buildings. Whilst comprehensive masterplan led development offers an opportunity to shape new places with a distinct character and approach to height of their own, the impact of greater height and taller buildings on the wider urban and landscape context, the image of Cambridge, heritage assets and views will need be thoroughly tested to ensure the development positively contributes to the city.

2.11.4 Besides these well known large growth areas development is also expected to be promoted on smaller sites throughout the urban area in response to local opportunities. Not all of these sites are known to the local authority and they may just emerge as windfall sites through the development management process. Smaller sites may be located right in the historic core, in mixed use or industrial areas, at commercial or institutional sites or making use of left over, brown or

greenfield sites throughout the suburbs. Due to their limited size smaller sites often seek to maximise output through increased building heights. Whilst a taller building on a small site can in some occasions provide a positive and meaningful addition to the townscape, enhancing the local character, legibility and image of a city, it also can undermine the coherence of an area or affect local heritage, townscape or visual sensitivities. Therefore proposals for buildings that are larger than the prevailing context height in an area, both in terms of scale and bulk, will need to be carefully scrutinised to ensure they have a positive impact on Cambridge's sensitivities.



Aerial view of Cambridge University along the River Cam © 4kclips - shutterstock

2.12 Summary of key characteristics and considerations

2.12.1 Based on the above analysis the following key characteristics and considerations have been identified in terms of the approach to managing Cambridge's Skyline and potential future tall buildings:

- strong city image as a compact collegiate city in a rural setting, particularly the rurality of the southwest meadows and their immediate relationship to the historic core
 - critically important and valuable Historic Core with a strong internal character and a clear role in the Skyline
 - historic city with distinctive mix of large scale collegiate institutional buildings and domestic scale market town buildings
 - River Cam and meadows important structural feature and opens up distinctive views to the city
 - clear visual separation between the tall historic buildings in the core and other elements of more modern development
 - trees are important features in Cambridge's city image, in many views
- creating a soft skyline with occasional tall buildings rising above
 - general flat topography with only a few high points that provide views across the city's skyline
 - city-wide significant ongoing development pressures through both planned development and piecemeal change which can potentially lead to an uncoordinated city wide approach to tall buildings
 - need for approach on skyline management including an approach to safeguarding key characteristics and an approach to height and tall buildings that provides clarity on what constitutes a tall building and how to establish its appropriateness.



Former Mill at Grantchester, Cambridgeshire

3 Other villages and settlements

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The section is structured to:

- Provide an overview of the character and form of South Cambridgeshire
- Describe land use and townscape character
- Describe landscape character
- Define heritage assets
- Evaluate existing building heights
- Set out current large scale regeneration ambitions

3.2 General characteristics

3.2.1 South Cambridgeshire is a largely rural district which surrounds the city of Cambridge. There are over 100 small villages throughout the district, many of which are historic and have a distinct rural village character. The district is surrounded by a ring of market towns outside its borders which serve the local population; 'together, Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and the Market Towns form the Cambridge Sub-Region'.

3.2.2 The district is growing in population due to its desirability, proximity to Cambridge, London, and the market towns, and its strategic position as an epicentre for clusters of high technology research and development. According to the latest census (2021) the population of South Cambridgeshire is 162,000 which is a growth of 8.9% over the 2011 population of 148,755.