

Great Places

Topic Paper



Greater Cambridge Local Plan

Topic Paper published as part of the Proposed Submission
Local Plan - Regulation 19 consultation (August 2026 -
September 2026)

Topic Paper: Great Places

1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 This is one of nine topic papers produced to accompany the Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) consultation on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The topic papers are:

- Development strategy (with appendices)
- Site allocations
- Climate change
- Biodiversity and green spaces
- Wellbeing and social inclusion
- Great places
- Jobs
- Homes
- Infrastructure

1.2 All of the papers can be found on the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website as part of the document library for this stage. The topic papers set out how each policy under the relevant Local Plan ‘theme’ has been updated following on from the Draft Local Plan stage. As such, the topic papers support and complement the Proposed Submission consultation document as they provide a detailed explanation of the basis for each policy.

1.3 The topic paper has a section for each policy which sets out:

- Policy context update – Any national or local policy changes, or other context changes which impact on the policy approach.
- New or updated evidence – Highlighting where new evidence has been prepared since the draft plan stage.

- Additional alternative approaches considered – If any additional reasonable alternative approaches were identified to the policy.
- Proposed approach – changes that have been made to the approach in the Draft Local Plan, and why they have been made.

1.4 Representations received at previous stages, including to the Draft Local Plan consultation, are summarised in the Statement of Consultation. This also includes responses to the issues raised.

1.5 The topic papers at previous consultation stages including those which accompanied the Draft Local Plan as are still available to view in our document library.

1.6 The Local Plan is supported by a wide range of evidence which can be found in our document library. Key supporting documents to the plan include:

- Statement of Consultation
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)

1.7 A draft NPPF was published for consultation on 16 December 2025 with comments required by 10 March 2026. The two Councils have submitted their response to this consultation. A final version of the NPPF has not yet been published at time of preparation of the Proposed Submission Local Plan. As a legacy plan, being prepared under the previous plan making system, transitional arrangements mean that the soundness of the Local Plan will be considered against the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024.

2. Great Places Policies

2.1 The following proposed policies areas are addressed in this topic paper:

- Policy GP/PP: People and place responsive design
- Policy GP/QD: Achieving high quality development
- Policy GP/HD: Housing density
- Policy GP/ST: Skyline and tall buildings
- Policy GP/QP: Establishing high quality landscape and public realm
- Policy GP/LC: Protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape character
- Policy GP/HE: Historic Environment
- Policy GP/HA: Designated Heritage Assets
- Policy GP/ND: Non-designated heritage assets
- Policy GP/CC: Adapting heritage assets to climate change
- Policy GP/AR: Archaeology
- Policy GP/SF: Shopfronts

3. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to Policy GP/PP: People and place responsive design

Policy context update

3.1 None.

New or updated evidence

3.2 [Children and young people in Local Plans in England](#) was published in March 2026 as a series of resources for embedding the rights, needs and voices of children and young people in planning policy, noting in particular [Child-friendly planning principles and prompts](#) 2026. These have informed the approach to relevant policies in this chapter.

Additional alternative approaches considered

3.3 None.

Proposed approach

3.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- Amendments to point 1a: responding to Greater Cambridge's communities:
 - Point 1aii amended to add reference to those with caring responsibilities.
 - Point 1aiii expanded to refer to designing streets, places and public realm.
 - Point 1aiv made more specific to be clear that community engagement should take place early in the planning process, and to make specific reference to participation in delivering public art.
 - Point 1av added to explicitly reference encouraging local groups to prepare Neighbourhood Plans to set out design principles responding to local context and character.
- Amendments to point 1b: improve Greater Cambridge's connectivity:
 - Minor amendments to make consistent elements that are connected to requirements set out in the Infrastructure chapter.
- Amendments to point 1c: support the climate emergency response:

- Minor amendments referencing high quality development and its operation.
- Consequential amendments to the supporting text to reflect the policy amendments referred to previously.
- Reference added to the Youth Engagement Service as a way of supporting the policy's requirements for responding to Greater Cambridge's communities.

4. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to Policy GP/QD: Achieving high quality development

Policy context update

4.1 None.

New or updated evidence

4.2 National Protective Security Agency Public Realm Guide for Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) - Third Edition 2022 provides guidance on how to include hostile vehicle mitigation principles into the design of public realm, which has informed Policy GP/QD: Achieving high quality development and also Policy GP/QP: Establishing high quality landscape and public realm.

4.3 The following research articles relating to neuro-Architecture & design quality were reviewed to inform amendments to this policy: Visual Stress in Architectural Façades Across Historic Periods (Seoul Study); Research Article 2: Impact of Architectural Façade Design on Neurophysiological Stress Using fNIRS (Valentine et al.).

Additional alternative approaches considered

4.4 None

Proposed approach

4.5 The following additional requirements have been added to the Draft Plan policy, alongside other minor wording amendments:

- Point 2d/e. designing out crime, and proportionate counter-terrorism protective security measures
- Point 2f. design measures to consider impact on neurodiversity
- Point 2g. positioning of building names and numbers to be clearly displayed to enable legibility
- Point 2i. design measures that support priority and threatened species
- Point 2k. cycle storage design requirements
- Consequential revisions have been made to supporting text to explain the approach in the Proposed Submission policy, including in particular

explanation regarding the approach to natural surveillance and referencing the Public Realm Guide for Hostile Vehicle Mitigation.

5. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to policy GP/HD: Housing Density

Policy context update

5.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

5.2 In the Great Places Topic Paper 2025, the document referenced an intention to prepare additional evidence to identify suitable locations for higher density residential development. Consideration was given to setting specific minimum densities within Cambridge for areas with excellent accessibility by walking and cycling of existing and proposed transport nodes and local centres. However these areas were also in close proximity to heritage assets including the historic core, where bespoke site design is needed to optimise sites which respond to local context and potentially the identified strategic view points. Setting a minimum density would therefore not be appropriate, or as a precautionary measure in order to respond to all sites it would need to be set so low as to undermine its effectiveness. In addition, considering NPPF (2024) paragraph 130, the requirements where plans have not identified land to meet identified development needs do not apply in Greater Cambridge.

Additional alternative approaches considered

5.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

5.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- Point 1 amended to clarify the role of density in optimising site potential whilst being responsive to surrounding local character and contexts. A design-led approach will be required to ensure that proposals resolve the challenges of higher density approaches in a well resolved way. This responds to representations and also better reflects NPPF paragraph 130.

- Point 1b adds reference to consideration of sensitivities of the area.
- Additional policy requirement added to point 1 to address proposals within or adjacent to the open countryside, ensuring they provide an appropriate transition between the character and openness of the wider landscape and the proposed built form including boundary treatments.
- Additional requirements added in relation to higher density developments in sustainable locations, to encourage low levels of car parking but ensure external impacts are considered, along with provision of higher levels of cycle parking.

6. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to Policy GP/ST: Skyline and tall buildings

Policy context update

6.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

6.2 Revisions to the Skyline and Tall Buildings Strategy which include:

- Recognition of the views to and from Ely Cathedral have been included in
- An Executive Summary

Additional alternative approaches considered

6.3 No additional or alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

6.4 Changes have been made to section e) of the policy as detailed below:

- Point 1d has been amended to clarify design quality requirements, including the treatment of plant, and external treatment and finishes.
- Point 1e has been amended to include reference to 'overheating', to recognise the impact that tall building can have in terms of microclimatic change at a local level and in terms of the quality of accommodation provided with regard to climate change.
- A new policy sub section has been added on mix of uses and active ground floor frontages, and ensuring uses are suitable for the intended occupancy.
- Further information has been added to the supporting text relating to design and the choice of materials, to provide important clarification on considerations when designing tall buildings.

7. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to Policy GP/QP: Establishing high quality landscape and public realm

Policy context update

7.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

- 7.2 Homes England [Parking What Works Where Second Edition](#) 2026 guidance focuses on making parking efficient, attractive, safe and multi-functional, rather than specifying how much should be provided. It has been incorporated into the public realm policy to reflect need for landscaping/appropriate cycle parking design in public realm.
- 7.3 [National Protective Security Agency Public Realm Guide for Hostile Vehicle Mitigation \(HVM\) - Third Edition](#) 2022 provides guidance on how to include hostile vehicle mitigation principles into the design of public realm, which has informed Policy GP/QP: Establishing high quality landscape and public realm and also Policy GP/QD: Achieving high quality development.

Additional alternative approaches considered

7.4 No additional or alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

- 7.5 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:
- 1a: enabling local communities: additional requirements for play, designing to meet the needs of neuro-diverse individuals; engagement with children and young people.
 - 1b: enhancing connectivity: additional requirements relating to the street scene and parking.
 - 1c: responding to climate change: additional requirements relating to permeable materials, and the urban heat island effect.

- 1d: integrating with local character: additional requirements relating to paving in front gardens, and clarifications to the approach to public art.
- 1d: being accessible to all: additional requirements relating to removing hostile architecture.
- 1e: promoting health and wellbeing: addition of considerations relating to counter-terrorism protective security, and skateboarding, public bridleways for equestrians
- Consequential revisions have been made to supporting text to explain the approach in the Proposed Submission policy, including in particular adding detail regarding hostile vehicle mitigation principles.

8. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to GP/LC: Protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape character

Policy context update

8.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

8.2 Appendix E of the Protected Open Space Review (2026) considers comments made to the Draft Plan consultation in relation to Important Countryside Frontages (ICFs). Comments were either asking for new areas to be considered as ICFs or that areas already identified didn't meet the criteria and should be removed, also that an ICF in a Neighbourhood Plan should be included. Responses are provided and these concluded that no changes should be made to the ICFs and that the ICF in the made Neighbourhood Plan already forms part of the development plan and will be shown on the policies map.

Additional alternative approaches considered

8.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

- 8.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:
- The title of the policy has been amended to include 'conservation' to match the requirements of part a) of the policy.
 - To be clear that the third section of the policy is referring to Important Countryside Frontages (ICFs), a reference to ICFs has been made.
 - A reference has been made in the supporting text that applicants, particularly of major developments, are encouraged to enter into pre-application discussions to ensure that landscape character is considered in an early stage in the design process. This was in response to a representation.

9. Proposed Submission Local Plan update Policy GP/HE: Historic Environment

Policy context update

9.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

9.2 No updated evidence.

Additional alternative approaches considered

9.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

9.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- The requirement for supporting documentation has been amended from a “Heritage Impact Assessment” to a “Heritage Statement”, with minor associated drafting changes to clarify terminology while retaining the requirement for proportionate assessment of impacts on heritage assets and their settings.
- The policy has been strengthened to more explicitly recognise the wider benefits of conserving and enhancing the historic environment, including cultural identity, place-making, wellbeing and sustainability, alongside its economic role.
- The wording has been refined to improve clarity around the balancing approach, confirming that the Councils will weigh the need for development against the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the historic environment through a positive strategy.
- A new policy requirement has been added to support proposals that enhance existing provision and improve access to a wider range of heritage assets,

strengthening the role of the historic environment in public enjoyment and engagement.

10. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to Policy GP/HA: Designated Heritage Assets

Policy context update

10.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

10.2 No updated evidence.

Additional alternative approaches considered

10.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

10.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- The policy has been revised to clarify that harm to designated heritage assets must be justified in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and that such harm will be weighed against public benefits, explicitly setting out the statutory planning balance.
- The policy has been amended to include requirements in relation to heritage assets at risk, including those on the Heritage at Risk Register, setting out expectations for conservation, enhancement, and adaptive reuse, and confirming that development will be supported where it secures the future of the asset.
- Additional wording has been added to strengthen delivery mechanisms, including the requirement for appropriate agreements to secure the repair or enhancement of heritage assets at risk before completion or occupation of development.
- The previously separate section on enabling development has been removed from the policy, with its principles integrated into the supporting text.

11. Proposed Submission Local Plan update Policy GP/ND: Non-designated heritage assets

Policy context update

11.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

11.2 No updated evidence.

Additional alternative approaches considered

11.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

11.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- The opening criterion has been amended to replace the requirement to seek the “retention and enhancement” of non-designated heritage assets with a requirement to seek their “protection and enhancement”.
- This change has been made to better reflect the proportionate and balanced approach set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), recognising that non-designated heritage assets should be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to their significance and the scale of any harm or loss, providing greater flexibility in decision-making while continuing to support the conservation and enhancement of non-designated heritage assets.
- No other substantive changes have been made to the policy requirements
- Minor additions to the supporting text regarding the inclusion criteria on the Cambridge Historic Environment Record, and around the identification of non-designated heritage assets.

12. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to Policy GP/CC: Adapting heritage assets to climate change

Policy context update

12.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

12.2 No updated evidence.

Additional alternative approaches considered

12.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

12.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- Point 2 has been added in response to representations from Historic England about taking a whole buildings approach.
- Point 3 has been revised to also include reference BS EN16883 in response to representations from Cambridge Past, Present and Future.
- Point 5 has been amended to for clarity of expression.
- The supporting text has been revised to include suggested guidance from Historic England and to include the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance.

13. Proposed Submission Local Plan update Policy GP/AR: Archaeology

Policy context update

13.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

13.2 No updated evidence.

Additional alternative approaches considered

13.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

13.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- The policy has been amended to clarify that Archaeological Assessments should inform planning proposals, including at the masterplanning stage, ensuring archaeology is considered early in the design and planning process.
- The wording has been strengthened to reinforce the importance of early identification, assessment and integration of archaeological considerations into development proposals affecting known or potential archaeological remains.
- The requirement for appropriate archaeological assessment, investigation, recording and preservation by record remains in place and is unchanged in its overall approach

14. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to Policy GP/SF: Shopfronts

Policy context update

14.1 No additional policy context update.

New or updated evidence

14.2 No updated evidence.

Additional alternative approaches considered

14.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

Proposed approach

14.4 The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- The wording has been revised to clarify that the replacement of traditional shopfronts within Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas will only be supported where the existing shopfront is inappropriate and where the replacement is of high quality and demonstrably enhances the character of the building or area.
- The policy has been strengthened to provide clearer and stronger protection for traditional and historic shopfronts, introducing a more explicit policy requirements surrounding their removal where they are appropriate to the building or of architectural or historic significance.