

100
YEARS



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Acting Chairman's Report

Alan James

It has been another challenging year for us at CPRE Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

My term as Chairman came to an end but we were unable to find a replacement, so with the support of our trustees, I have continued in an acting capacity. We are in need of new trustees, and volunteers, as our workload (all done voluntarily) is stretching our small team too far. We apologise if we have not managed to address all the development matters that have arisen this past year.

Housing

Pressures arising from development in the county continue to increase at an unprecedented level. Government has completely by-passed the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and its Missions, and established an obsessive focus on Cambridge as leading national 'growth'. We do not feel that there is sufficient Life Sciences activity in the UK to justify the development of the many laboratory-based sites that are under construction or awaiting approval. This year, the pharmaceutical companies AstraZeneca and Merck (MSD) have paused or abandoned significant investments in Cambridge, including AstraZeneca's planned £200 million expansion and Merck's £1 billion research centre.

There is an undisputed housing crisis in this country. Analysis by the Centre for Policy Studies reveals that in 2025 the UK has a shortage of 6.5 million homes when compared to similar European countries. Britain has just 446 homes per 1,000 people, the second worst rate in Europe where the average is 542 homes per 1,000 people. Particularly damaging is the chronic shortage of social and affordable housing. On recent trends, the UK will

not match the current European average until 2115, condemning future generations to increasingly unaffordable housing and reduced living standards.

The most rapid and environmentally-friendly approach to help solve the crisis is to bring the near 1 million empty homes back into use and to build on the c. 1.3 million registered brownfield sites. This approach would provide an added bonus of regenerating areas of the country that are crying out for economic assistance and reduce the break-up of communities as young people head for the cities to find work and an over-priced home. Instead, in our region, councils continue to approve developments that cover some of the best Grade 2 and Grade 3 farmland in the country with imported bricks and concrete, creating vast estates poorly connected to other settlements and without adequate infrastructure to support a community. This approach entirely ignores the 2019 Environmental Audit Committee's advice to Parliament that the UK must grow a greater proportion of its own food because imports will become increasingly expensive or unavailable due to climate change.


Transport

The new Mayor of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CAPCA), has continued with funding new and improved bus routes and has extended the Under-25s £1 bus fare cap until March 2027. He has also made it clear that he is strongly opposed to new busways such as the Cambourne to Cambridge, C2C, busway.

East-West Rail meanwhile have continued to press ahead with their costly rail disaster across South Cambs. farmland. Yet funds are still not available for the Ely junction improvements which would allow multiple daily freight services between the East Coast ports and the national freight distribution hub at Nuneaton, taking thousands of HGV journeys off the roads every day. This is the tragedy of fragmented transport planning.

Climate

Climate change and 'growth' are leading to a lack of potable water in Cambridgeshire due to hotter, drier summers and over-population. Increased flood risk due to prolonged and heavier winter rainfall and an increasing rate of sea level rise is also becoming more apparent. We do not see the plan to pump brackish water to a new Fens reservoir north east of Chatteris and then to pump it back again to Cambridge as a sensible solution. Far better to

 Front cover and text below, "Folly at Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire, UK" by ukgardenphotos, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Here is a good example of a completely 'artificial' landscape. The folly in this picture is actually a full size 'garden ornament' - several hundred feet long to give a 'nice view' through the landscape from the main house. It was built in the 1770's to resemble a gothic, medieval ruined castle. The ruin, together with the man-made lake, provides a harmonious and pleasing pastoral English landscape. The view is often enhanced by the presence of rare breed sheep and cattle. Famous landscape designers such as Capability Brown, Humphry Repton and Charles Bridgeman have all left their mark on Wimpole.

move the people to where the water is via a considered industrial regeneration strategy.

We believe that Environment Agency's right of veto of developments on flood plains should be restored; this could save huge costs arising from property damage and could well save lives in the future.

The Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan was issued for consultation during December and January and we hope that as many of you as possible submitted your comments.

We have continued our support for Friends of the Cam <https://www.friendsofthecam.org/>, and work closely with them on many issues.

We have maintained our interest in the Great Ouse Valley Trust <https://www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk/>; they do a great job protecting and improving the valley while increasing access to green space.

In September Tracey Hipson, who served the branch and the region as Administrator for many years, retired. We miss her greatly and wish her all the best for the future.

Jo McGowan continues to provide an excellent service as Branch Administrator.

Sue Duma has continued as our Treasurer.

If you think you can assist, either as volunteer or as a trustee please contact us.

A Local Countryside Legacy

We have recently received a legacy from one of our local supporters, for which we are immensely grateful. By including a gift in her will to support our campaigning, this lady is helping to protect the beauty, setting, and biodiversity of our landscapes, and contributing to the well-being of future generations.

Thankfully, the lady concerned left her gift directly to our local branch. If she had left it to CPRE national office, we would not have received it at all.

If you are considering leaving a gift in your will to CPRE, and would like to ensure it goes to protect local landscapes that are meaningful to you, please provide your solicitor with the following essential information:

- Name: CPRE Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
- Address: The Town Hall, Market Hill, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 5AL
- Charity Number: 242809

Legacy gifts to a charity like us are free of inheritance tax. We can promise you that any amount will be greatly appreciated and used solely to help protect the local countryside we all hold dear.

Greater Cambridgeshire

Jane Williams

There has never been a greater time of change and challenge facing the Greater Cambridge Area, which is made up of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). South Cambridgeshire wraps around Cambridge. Cambridge City is surrounded by Green Belt land to protect the identity of Cambridge, to prevent urban sprawl, and to protect the identity of the necklace of villages in the surrounding area. There have been areas of the Green Belt taken for development in the current 2018 adopted City and SCDC Local Plans

Cambridge City Council and SCDC, under the umbrella of Greater Cambridge Planning, recently held a consultation for the first draft of their joint Local Plan. Further consultations will follow. In the emerging Plan, it is proposed that 50,000 new homes will be required between 2024 to 2045 to meet the forecast increase in jobs. 37,000 of these new homes are already provided for within the planning permissions and sites identified in the adopted 2018 Local Plans.

Cambridge has been identified by the previous and current government as a cash cow to generate wealth. In April 2025 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government commissioned Oxford Economics to explore the growth potential of the Greater Cambridge economics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greater-cambridge-growth-scenarios/greater-cambridge-growth-scenarios>

Climate change severely threatens the Cambridgeshire Fens with sea-level rise, increased flooding, droughts and water scarcity. These will potentially render parts uninhabitable by 2100, impacting agriculture, infrastructure, and biodiversity. Urgent landscape-scale interventions and adaptations are required, such as rewetting peatlands to store carbon, and managing water resources more holistically.

We urgently need concerned residents of our region to join us, to bring the voice of reason to decisions that will affect us all for generations to come.

Huntingdonshire

Huntingdonshire's rural communities and towns are feeling the strain of over-development and lack of infrastructure funding. Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) 2024 housing trajectory predicted completions of 819 dwellings in 2024/25.

The actual number of completions was 858 (net). The majority of these were in St Neots (255), The Stukeleys (173), Sawtry (100) and Ramsey (75). As at 31 March 2025, 1,047 dwellings were under construction. Completions in 2025/26 are anticipated to be 754 dwellings.

HDC has proposed plans for significant housing development, aiming to build over 15,000 new homes by 2046. Two key sites are Lodge Farm, Huntingdon (4,900 homes) and The Lattenburys, Hemingford Abbots (3,800). Between 2025 and 2036, it is expected that 2,775 homes - plus commercial construction and infrastructure - will be built on brownfield land (former RAF) at Alconbury Weald in North Huntingdon. Overall capacity at the site is anticipated to be 6,500 homes.

We do not have space to itemise other existing or proposed substantial housing sites; but please see HDC's Annual Monitoring Report 2025 Part 1 (Housing Supply) for further details:

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/p2lhfkoi/annual-monitoring-report-part-1-housing-supply-2024-25.pdf>

Transport

In recognition of the impacts of this huge additional supply of housing and other developments, the A141 and St Ives Improvements Scheme is currently looking at a long-term, sustainable solution to

Huntingdonshire's transport network issues. This includes improvements to active travel, public transport and road elements that will ultimately be delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and supported by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) as project sponsor:

<https://yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/place-and-sustainability/a141-consultation/supporting-documents/a141-and-st-ives-faq-website-2025-v22pdf>

Our concern is that the A141 upgrade would realign the road away from existing communities and in so doing release land for further developments.

Environment

The whole of Eastern England is 'seriously water stressed', and Huntingdonshire faces significant water-related challenges. Anglian Water has raised concerns about insufficient infrastructure to handle sewage from proposed housing developments, which could lead to environmental risks and exacerbate flooding issues. Substantial improvements to drainage systems will be necessary.

In March 2024, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), there were 12,110 unoccupied dwellings across Cambridgeshire. Cambridge had by far the most (3,375), and Huntingdonshire had the second highest (3,015). Although there are substantial challenges in bringing these privately-owned dwellings back into use, strategies to achieve this should be implemented as re-use is significantly less carbon-intensive than new builds.

Website and Social Media

We continue to maintain our website, <https://www.cprecams.org.uk/>. From a purely technical and visual point of view, the site performs well but we are hampered by lack of volunteers to generate content to be added on a regular basis.

We continue to use X (formerly Twitter) as our main social media activity because it remains useful and relevant. We post local, national and international news where it is appropriate to our aims.

Sadly, Elon Musk made X analytics unavailable for free accounts, so we can no longer track performance measures. However, we are attracting many new followers (local, national and international) as a result of our tweet activity (both original tweets

and re-tweets). Plus, we are seeing regular likes and re-tweets of our content. We have not attracted any adverse comments about our posts, which is pleasing; although we welcome healthy debate we do not need unpleasantness which can be distressing for our volunteers who post material.

2025 has been a challenging year for volunteers' time, and we hope to track and post more locally relevant news items in 2026.

Facebook posts have been more limited than X posts this year, due to volunteer availability, and we hope to improve this in 2026. We must thank Tracey Hipson who, prior to her retirement, ensured that we maintained a strong Facebook presence

East Cambridgeshire

Alan James

We continue to monitor and respond to planning applications in the District and provide advice to residents and members.

Climate change, excessive development and the deteriorating road network are some of the serious issues facing East Cambridgeshire. Local government re-organisation will soon see the local district council abolished.

The continued high rates of building in East Cambs. are not sustainable because commensurate local employment is not available and so the majority of this housing will be taken up by commuters. The developments themselves are demonstrably not climate-friendly, with few mandating solar panels on roofs, or local wind power generation, and with far too much hard landscaping.

Major developments approved during 2025 include:

- Burwell – 61 homes in a development by This Land Ltd, the County Council owned development company. These will abut the Millstone Park development off Newmarket Road and all will be 'affordable'.
- North Ely – 300 homes in the next phase of the Orchards Green development. There is a complete lack of amenities in this development although a convenience store and a toddler play area may be provided in a later phase. 120 of these homes will be 'affordable'.
- Littleport – 286 homes as part of the wider Grange Lane development.

- Soham – 99 homes off Mereside. This is a part of the local flood plain, hence the area's name, and local residents are very concerned that this development will increase the existing high flood risk.

(Note: above figures are from an article in the Ely Standard newspaper.)

This is a total of 746 and takes no account of significant smaller developments. Most will be built on the locally called "high land" which is good farmland on the Isle of Ely and at Littleport. There seems to have been little consideration of the long-term effects of increasing flood risk to the surrounding drained fen land. As everywhere in Cambridgeshire, developments have a long way to go in seriously addressing the challenges of climate change in the driest part of the UK – as water shortages are a reality alongside the risk of flooding.

Once again, no funding has been provided for Network Rail to carry out the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) as submitted to the Department for Transport in March 2022.

Last year, we reported that despite refusal by the Planning Inspectorate, the then new Secretary of State had approved the Sunnica solar farm development within days of his appointment. We remain very concerned about this development and its effect on local airfields, not least from the proposed battery storage. A new risk that has been identified recently is the increased damage to any crashing aircraft by the steel poles and solar panel frames.

Media

Ally Sargent, Press Officer

Media activity has been largely focused on the dominant issues of the Ox-Cam Arc and the environmental threat posed by concreting what's left of our countryside.

Our contention that clustering major centres of excellence were rooted in a bygone age provoked some media debate. Our argument was the so-called Cambridge Phenomenon belonged to the days before the internet and conference calls.

We also made the point that Oxbridge colleges are not the only centres of excellence for life sciences in this country. Top scientists can now work together wherever they are based and Oxbridge is not the only habitat for clever people who want to work in collaboration rather than competition.

Another release expressed our concern that East West Rail (EWR) will only fuel yet more unnecessary development.

We also highlighted the problem that the huge numbers of houses planned for Cambridgeshire, coupled with climate change, are putting vast areas of the county at risk of serious flooding. Paradoxically, there is also the risk of water scarcity. We pointed out that without urgent action, the East of England faces a projected water shortage of 800 million litres a day by 2050. Our press release argued there were plenty of genuine brownfield sites available which would minimise the impact of all this development. However, once vast tracts of the countryside vanish under concrete, there could be no turning back.

Receipts and Payments Accounts for The Year Ending 31st March 2025

Sue Duma

The charity does not have any funds which are of a Restricted nature.

During the year to 31st March 2025 the charity received a steady flow of income from Members' subscriptions of £9,086 (2024 £11,333), donations of £6,507 (2024 £186). In addition a very generous legacy of £5,000 was received from the estate of PA Farman A Harding.

All expenditure was for normal costs and the total was £24,126 (2024 £16,399). The notable increase was for additional payroll costs, which are a result of the removal of funding from National Office regarding the regional work that was transferred back to National Office.

The net result for the year was a deficit of £2,496 (2024 surplus £3,862) which decreased the cash reserves as at 31st March 2025 to £28,599 compared to £31,095 as at 31st March 2024.

	For the year ending 31st March 2025 £	For the year ending 31st March 2024 £
Receipts		
CPRE subscriptions received	9,086	11,333
Donations received	6,507	186
Share of Eastern Region Funds Redistribution	-	6,770
Interest received	965	865
Lottery receipts	81	107
Grants received	-	-
Legacy received	5,000	1,000
Total receipts for year	21,630	20,261
Payments		
Charitable activities	23,792	16,056
Governance	334	344
Total payments for the year	24,126	16,400
Excess of expenditure over receipts	2,496	3,862
Balance of Cash Reserves at the beginning of the year	31,095	27,233
Balance of Cash Reserves at the end of the year	28,599	31,095

Peterborough

Sally Jackson

Peterborough City Council are preparing a new Local Plan to replace the 2019 Adopted Plan. The new Plan has generated much unfavourable comment from local statutory consultees, such as Historic England, Protect Rural Peterborough, Natural England, the Home Builders Federation, CPRE, and Parish Councils, mostly due to its longer duration (19 years instead of 15, and an increased buffer from 5% to 10%). We are unsure why this has been proposed, as this means that more sites for new houses will be needed.

80% of new housing allocations are located within 4 Medium villages. This is despite the current Brownfield Land Register containing current and consistent information on previously developed sites which are considered appropriate for residential development. The new Plan contains no provision for extra school places, doctors' surgeries or road improvements within these 4 rural settlements.

Permissioned Brownfield Housing Capacity v Local Housing Needs Target for Peterborough 2024 (9th highest in the country 2024)

Annual Local Housing Need (ALHN) under the new standard method is: **1,005.98**

5-year target (ALHNx5): **5,029.92**

Dwellings on brownfield with Planning Permission: **6,963**

Percentage of 5-year target situated on brownfield with Planning Permission: **138.43%**

So, where is the need for urban style development, out of keeping with the character of the countryside, which will have a major negative impact on historic villages, such as Castor, Ailsworth, Glington, Peakirk, Helpston, Barnack and Deeping Gate, changing the rural landscape forever? The convergence of villages, lack of school places, scarcity of Doctors' surgeries and even heavier congestion on the road network, will all degrade countryside for future generations.

New CPRE analysis shows that the government's 'grey belt' policy is leading to significant loss of unspoilt countryside, contrary to ministerial assurances. This research finds that **"88% of the 1,250 homes approved on 'grey-belt' sites since December 2024 will be built on previously undeveloped Green belt land"**.

This directly contradicts earlier promises that so-called 'grey belt' development would focus on disused or poor-quality, previously developed sites.

Fenland

Sally Jackson

Fenland District Council are preparing a new Local Plan, which they aim to be adopted by March 2028. It is based on existing proposals and planning policies for the growth and regeneration of the district with a proposed new total of 14,346 houses to be built in Fenland by March 2040.

The population of Fenland was approximately 101,5001 at the time of the 2021 Census. The district covers approximately 200 square miles, with approximately 70% of the population living within one of the four market towns.

The results of adding to existing proposals are as follows:

Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech, existing proposals 6,425 houses, plus 231; 6,656.

14 Medium sized settlements e.g. Elm and Manea existing proposals 6,969, plus 324; 7,293.

30 smaller settlements e.g. Benwick and Gorefield, existing proposals 121, plus 28; 149

Open Countryside e.g. outskirts of March and Elm. Already committed 154 houses. No addition.

Fenland is one of the areas of the country most vulnerable to the effects of climate change on water.

Both the increasing rate of sea level rise and the increased rate of water run-off caused by upstream developments pose increased risks to Fenland and its nationally important agricultural production without significant new investment in water management.

About CPRE

We campaign for a beautiful and living countryside. We work to influence how we plan our towns and cities to make them better places to live and work, to ensure the countryside is protected for all to enjoy for now and future generations.

Our President is Mary Ann Ochota.

Nationally, we have around 60,000 members and a branch in every county. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning. CPRE is a Registered Charity (No. 1089685).

Please note the opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of individual contributors, or the editor, and do not necessarily represent the views of the branch or the national charity.

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Huntingdonshire

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Branch office

Website and Social Media

David Slater

Keeping in Touch

CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are happy to help you. As well as this report and our printed newsletter, there are lots of ways to keep in touch with us.

If you have an email address, sign up for our quarterly newsletter: office@cprecambs.org.uk

Our website is frequently updated with both local and national news and issues. Have a look and tell us what you think: <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk>.

Write:

CPRE, The Town Hall, Market Hill, St Ives, Cambs PE27 5AL. Follow us on:

 X (formerly Twitter): [@CPRECambs](https://twitter.com/CPRECambs).

 Facebook: CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Gifts and Donations

We are always grateful for your donations – they are vital in enabling us to carry out our work. To ensure your gift reaches us, please consider donating in the following ways:

Website: By donating via CAF Donate on our website

<https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/donate-to-cpre.html>

Online: By bank transfer to our CAF account, Campaign to Protect Rural England Cambridgeshire (account details on request) Please let us know so that we can thank you.

Cheque: Made payable to “CPRE Cambridgeshire” and sent to: CPRE, The Town Hall, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 5AL.

For further information about how to help us, including by leaving a legacy, please visit