

Councillor Peter McDonald Duxford Division & Ward:  
District Councillor for Parishes of Duxford, Hinxton, Ickleton, Babraham, Pampisford.  
County Councillor also for Foxton, Fowlmere, Shepreth, Thriplow, Heydon, Chishills, Whittlesford

## **Parish Council County Report December 2025**

### **South Cambs Council**

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has been crowned Planning Authority of the Year at last night's prestigious Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence.

This nationwide recognition celebrates the service's outstanding commitment to delivering high-quality planning for local communities, supporting sustainable growth, and shaping places where people can thrive. The award follows a year of significant achievements for Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) – which is a partnership between Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils. It comes after GCSP was crowned Planning Authority of the Year - East of England at the local RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence earlier this year.

### **Highlights from the last year**

Some of the past year's highlights from GCSP's award-winning work are:

- Advancing several digital planning initiatives. This includes creating an artificial intelligence tool to speed up the assessment of local views on policy documents, improving online information through a brand new GCSP website and developing analysis tools using a digital 3D model of Cambridge to enable faster, better-informed decisions. On Monday, consultation begins on the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which also adopts an improved user-friendly approach using interactive maps.
- Biodiversity Net Gain leadership, with the service proactively securing more than 200 hectares of habitat for biodiversity offsetting, ahead of national policy requirements. This project won the 'Planning for the Natural Environment Award' at the Planning Magazine Awards 2025.
- Its multi-award-winning Youth Engagement Service, which is an internationally recognised programme giving young people a voice in town planning and design, having won the Social Value Award in 2025's Thornton Education Trust Inspire Future Generations competition.
- Inclusive planning: Through initiatives like the Cambridge Neighbourhoods Design Code project, GCSP is tackling inequality and improving access to green spaces in some of the region's most deprived areas.
- Apprenticeship and talent development: A structured programme supporting future planners through hands-on experience and academic study, ensuring a strong pipeline of planning professionals.

### **Local Government Re-Organisation**

Three Cambridgeshire councils have now backed the creation of a new unitary Council for Greater Cambridge and another for North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – with local leaders saying they offer financial security, deliver up to £43 million savings a year and respect local identities.

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Option B would replace the seven existing councils with two new unitary councils:

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – serving around 612,000 people in East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough.

Greater Cambridge – serving around 322,000 people in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/0vwntiak/option-b-ccc-scdc-ecdc-final-1-compressed.pdf>

### **Why Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire District and South Cambridgeshire District councils believe option B is best**

Financial security: Independent analysis shows option B is the most financially sustainable option of the proposals developed by local councils this year. It would save up to £43 million a year, more than three times the saving of other options developed locally, paying back the cost of change in just four years. Future savings will be reinvested in frontline services, as residents have called for.

### **Next steps**

Four proposals are being submitted to Government by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils. There will be a consultation run by the Government in 2026, before they ultimately make a final decision next summer. New unitary councils are then due to begin operating in a shadow capacity from May 2027, with full implementation expected in April 2028.

### **Ukrainian Residents**

South Cambridgeshire has welcomed almost 1,000 Ukrainians fleeing the war, thanks to the generosity of local communities and support provided by the District Council.

The Government launched the Homes for Ukraine scheme in 2022 to enable UK residents to offer accommodation to people escaping the conflict in Ukraine. The District Council responded rapidly to ensure that residents who were keen to support those fleeing the war in Ukraine could offer a place to stay as promptly as possible. This initial work included hundreds of DBS checks, in-person visits to check accommodation was suitable, ensuring payments were made to both guests and hosts, and much more.

Recognising that guests want to live more independently where they could – the Council established dedicated support for those who wanted to find their own accommodation early in the scheme. This included involvement from Homes for Ukraine guests who have in-turn helped other guests.

Councillors have said that South Cambridgeshire residents responded with extraordinary kindness, making the district one of the leading areas nationally for participation.

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## Key achievements in South Cambridgeshire

Since the scheme began:

- 993 Ukrainians have arrived in South Cambridgeshire, thanks to local hosts opening their homes - one of the highest figures for a lower-tier authority in the country.
- 416 families have since moved on into their own independent accommodation, supported by the Council's housing and tenancy services.
- A Ukrainian-speaking Tenancy Support Officer at the District Council has assisted over 100 families with setting up homes, managing bills, and registering with local services.
- The Council has run multiple tenancy workshops, provided English lessons, and worked with partners such as Beam to deliver employment support, including CV writing, interview coaching, and job searches.
- Community integration has been strengthened through collaboration with local groups like Open Arms in Shelford and Stapleford, Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign, and Cottenham4Ukraine, alongside many others.
- Practical help has included providing guests with recycled laptops and electronics, second-hand bikes, and funding for visa advice, mental health support, and wellbeing activities for children.
- The Council has also supported the Cambridge Ukrainian School, enabling cultural education and excursions for young people.
- Supporting wellbeing and integration
- Beyond housing and employment, the Council has worked with partners to provide:
- Mental health services through Refugee Host Support, including group sessions and one-to-one therapy.
- Summer camps and sports activities for children to help them integrate and build confidence.
- Funding for visa queries and applications through Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum, ensuring families can transition to the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme.

The Government's Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme allows guests from Ukraine to apply for an 18-month visa extension when they are within 28 days of their existing visa ending. The Council continues to support guests as part of this process – along with those looking to move on elsewhere. Find out more about the Homes for Ukraine scheme at [www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine](https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine)

## **Cambs County Council**

### **Local Government Re-Organisation**

Cambridgeshire County Council has published its final proposal for 'Two Councils. One fairer future.' also known as Option A for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

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The County Council's proposal will be submitted directly to Government by the deadline of Friday, 28 November, following the decision of the Full Council in October.

Option A sets out the proposed creation of two new unitary councils across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area, replacing the seven existing councils. This consists of a Northwest unitary council covering the current footprint of Fenland, Huntingdonshire, and Peterborough, and a Southeast unitary council, covering Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire

Option A sets out proposals for Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs). These will give residents a stronger, more empowered, and more local voice. They will complement the role of democratically elected councillors, who will become responsible for the political leadership of the full range of local government services. Builds on a robust, evidence-based options appraisal demonstrating that Option A most effectively meets the Government criteria for LGR.

Between September and October, the council undertook a second phase of engagement across the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that received 1,912 responses from residents, businesses, public bodies, and community and voluntary sector groups. The results showed strong support in favour of Option A:

East Cambridgeshire: 67%  
Cambridge City: 62%  
South Cambridgeshire: 61%  
Peterborough: 55%

Strong support was evident for Option A, with 65% of organisations and 58% of elected representatives responding to the engagement survey also being in favour to the consultation. Lower support for Option A was recorded in Fenland (26%) and Huntingdonshire (20%) – this was largely due to concerns about local identity in the proposed council structure.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/lgr/proposal/LGR-Option-A-Proposal-28-Nov-25.pdf>

## **Highways Workers Safety**

Cambridgeshire County Council is supporting a national campaign to stop abuse of roadworkers. The council is appealing to the public to show respect for our highway officers after incidents of physical and verbal abuse.

In Cambridgeshire, there have been 29 threatening behaviour reports and four assaults in the past year (since November 2024). These included incidents where highways workers have been intimidated, sworn at, had a bottle thrown at them, spat at and one officer was assaulted whilst trying to help the public with a diversion route. There have also been 30 intentional incursions onto our worksites since February 2025, all of which could have resulted in a more serious outcome than they did.

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While trying to carry out their work on the highway, officers continue to face daily verbal abuse as well as more serious cases.

In one incident, in South Cambridgeshire, a woman drove at the highway officer, rammed her vehicle into barriers, became extremely aggressive, got out of her car, shouted personal abuse at him, threatened him, and then called the police.

The Stamp It Out campaign hopes to raise awareness of the issue amongst the public and help remove abuse that roadworkers receive every day. Research by the group found that 50% of those in public-facing roles face weekly abuse, while 80% do not report it, as they feel nothing will be done.

To tackle this behaviour, highway workers have begun to wear bodycams and vehicles are fitted with dashcams to record any incidents. We're also working with the police to report these incidents and pass on the recordings for further investigation and prosecution.

More details about the national Stamp It Out campaign can be found on their website.  
<https://www.stampitout.uk/>



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A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of You

Peter McDonald Dec 5th 2025

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