

South West Cambridge Action Group

Parish Council Information Meeting

March 2nd 2021, 6-7 pm

With updates added March 7th

District & County Councillors

*Representing villages within the Thakeham proposal area,
& promoting SWCAG objectives - 'Prevent the proposed Thakeham
development'*

- ▶ Jose Hales - *District Councillor for Melbourn, Meldreth, Whaddon, Shepreth*
- ▶ Sebastian Kindersley - *County Councillor for Barrington, Orwell, Wimpole & the Gamlingay Division villages*
- ▶ Peter McDonald - *County Councillor for Shepreth, Foxton & the Duxford Division villages*
- ▶ Susan van de Ven - *County Councillor for Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth, Whaddon, Meldreth, Melbourn*
- ▶ Aidan Van De Weyer - *District Councillor for Barrington, Orwell, Wimpole*
- ▶ *(District Cllrs Nigel Cathcart and Deborah Roberts - Observers only, protecting their right to vote on the Local Plan)*



Agenda

- ▶ Introduction: *Susan van de Ven*
- ▶ Round-up of recent developments: *Sebastian Kindersley*
- ▶ Freedom of Information status: *Aidan Van de Weyer*
- ▶ OxCam Arc: *Peter McDonald*
- ▶ MHCLG Bid and its significance: *Peter McDonald*
- ▶ Next Steps: *Aidan Van de Weyer*
- ▶ Questions: *Susan van de Ven*

Recent Developments

1. Freedom of Information responses from East West Rail (EWR), Cabinet, Treasury.
2. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published a bid for £50k for engagement with stakeholders along EWR route.
3. Government published Ox Cam Arc Information
4. SWCAG published a new map and leaflet, highlighting potential impact of Thakeham proposal
5. *Cambridge Independent* published our new map and recent concerns.
6. Anthony Browne MP met Thakeham CEO Feb 26th

Freedom of Information response, East West Rail (EWR)

- ▶ Gallagher, Strategy Director at EWR, had at least two meetings with Thakeham over a six-month period in 2019, though we have been provided no information about the content of the meetings.
- ▶ The initial email of introduction from Thakeham to EWR includes an assertion about their relationship with Homes England. Homes England is a government agency tasked with accelerating housing delivery, and sits within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which is led by Robert Jenrick MP.
- ▶ On 8 February 2019, Thakeham wrote the following to EWR:
- ▶ “I write as we are assembling a sizeable potential development on the Oxford/Cambridge Arc. We are moving through legals with land that can yield 10,000-15,000 properties currently and negotiating on further land attached that could see us at 25,000-30,000 units in total. We are in advanced discussions with Homes England to join us as our promotion and delivery partner.”
- ▶ The last sentence is somewhat at odds with what Thakeham indicated to us on 4 January 2021, when they confined their comments relating to Homes England to simply, "Homes England know of the scheme's existence".

Freedom of Information responses, Treasury: ‘release of information would have a detrimental impact’

Requests:

“Please disclose details that you hold of all meetings between a) the property development company known as Thakeham (including limited companies Thakeham Homes Limited, Thakeham Client Limited, Thakeham Homes (Southern) Limited) and/or any of its subsidiary companies and/or any of its representatives, and b) Rishi Sunak MP, Stephen Barclay MP, Robert Jenrick MP, Simon Clarke MP and Kemi Badenoch MP from 24/07/2019 to date.”

“Please disclose all documents that you hold (including, but not limited to, notes, memos, papers, emails, letters and presentations) relating to the ‘New Town in Cambridge’ referred to in the 2020 Budget from 24/07/2019 to date.”

Response to both: “...a qualified exemption...protecting the Government’s ability to discuss and develop policies and to reach well-formed conclusions. The Information Commissioner has recognised that policy development needs some degree of freedom to enable the process to work effectively and we consider that there is a strong public interest in protecting information where release would be likely to have a detrimental impact on the ongoing development of policy.”

Full documents: <http://www.swcag.org.uk/news-and-events>

Freedom of Information Response, Cabinet

- ▶ Request:
 - ▶ - all correspondence relating to land in South Cambridgeshire between Thakeham and/or any of its subsidiary companies and/or any of its representatives, and Jack Airey, special advisor planning and housing from 01/01/2020 to date;
 - ▶ and,
 - ▶ - details of all meetings between Thakeham and/or any of its subsidiary companies and/or any of its representatives, and Jack Airey, special advisor planning and housing from 01/01/2020 to date.
- ▶ Response:
 - ▶ “Mr Airey held a virtual meeting with Mr Rob Broughton, in his capacity as a member of the Home Builders Federations Future Homes Taskforce, on 3 December 2020. This was a general discussion about how the housebuilding industry can deliver zero carbon homes.”
 - ▶ Full document: <http://www.swcag.org.uk/news-and-events>

OxCam Spatial Framework

and

**Ministry of Housing,
Communities and Local
Government Tender Bid**

*What are these about and why are they
important?*

Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc

An introduction to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework

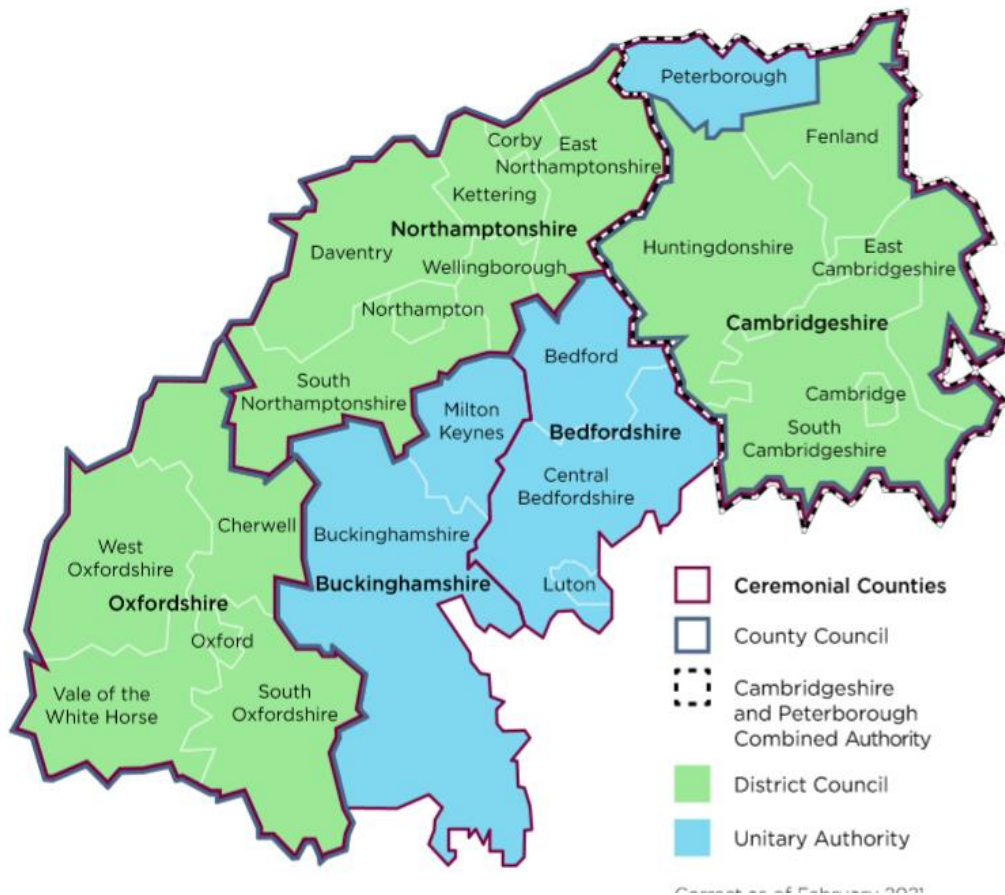
Oxford-Cambridge Arc

This is a Government sponsored infrastructure plan for housing, environment & jobs, for the six counties that sit within the geography known as the ‘OxCam Arc’.

Introductory paper now published marking start of the first stage of the public engagement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework>

OxCam Arc: where is it & why is it important?



‘National Economic Priority’: key geography for national economic growth, as identified by Government

- ▶ Currently 7% of UK GDP
- ▶ With the right interventions and investment, economic forecasts suggest that by 2050 we would see economic output growing by between £80.4 billion and £163 billion per annum, with between 476,500 and 1.1 million additional jobs.
- ▶ **‘Government-led approach to strategic planning**
- ▶ In order to achieve the Arc’s potential across multiple local authorities, Government takes charge of the strategic planning vision and process.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Tender Bid

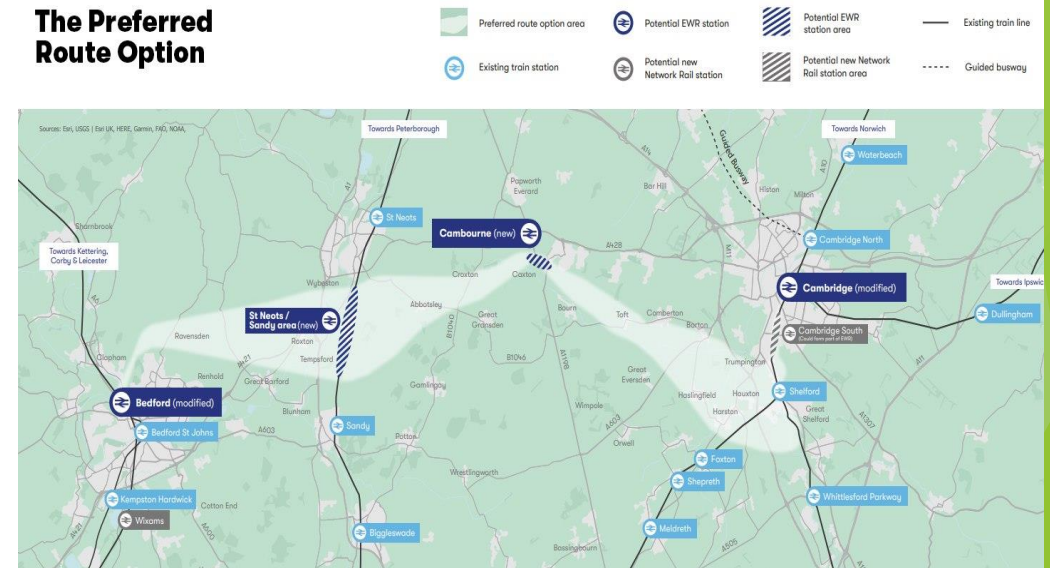
Meanwhile, the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) have now published a bid for £50k for "engagement of stakeholders" **for up to four new or expanded settlements along the East West Rail route.**

"MHCLG is seeking to procure a planning/engagement specialist to support the Government in developing an approach to engaging local audiences (both stakeholder groups and the public) throughout the process of developing up to four new or expanded settlements in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (OxCam Arc) aligned with new stations along the East West Rail (EWR) Central Section".

Read the document here:
<https://www.bidstats.uk/tenders/2021/W05/744358353>

'East West Rail Central Section' preferred option:

The Preferred Route Option



New map and leaflet published by SWCAG, highlighting impacted villages and wider context

Leaflet and map downloadable at <http://www.swcag.org.uk/news-and-events>



Map shows size of new town

By Alex Spencer
alex.spencer@iliffmedia.co.uk

A campaign group has published a map showing the potential extent of a proposed town for a rural area of South Cambridgeshire.

The South West Cambridgeshire Action Group has drawn up the map to allow residents to envisage the impact it would have on neighbouring villages.

West Sussex-based property developer Thakeham unveiled its vision in December for the enormous 25,000-home community in South West Cambridgeshire.

Thakeham says it hopes to create the UK's first zero-carbon development by creating a new town and a series of connecting villages.

It says it would deliver up to 10,000 affordable homes, ensure a biodiversity net gain of at least 20 per cent and deliver new sporting, healthcare, schools and education facilities – and would be sited between Barrington, Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth, Foxton, Meldreth, Orwell, Shepreth, Whaddon and Wimpole.

Cllr Susan van de Ven, county councillor for Melbourn, Meldreth, Whaddon and Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth, said: "It is very hard to

fathom the real scale of the sprawling South West Cambridgeshire new town. The proposal is for 25,000 houses, which is over half as many as make up Cambridge. But these would potentially be spread over an area larger than Cambridge.

"The action group has commissioned a new map which really brings home quite how enormous this could be, especially when seen in relation to Cambridge. I hope that people realise now that this development would wipe out most of the villages and countryside in this river valley setting, as well as the impact on Cambridge itself."

Sebastian Kindersley, county councillor for Barrington, Orwell and Wimpole, said: "The map captures the scale of the proposed urban development. We can see that the impact on the historic city of Cambridge, on the natural environment and on the local communities, would be enormous if this were allowed to go ahead."

Rob Boughton, Thakeham CEO, said: "Thakeham are committed to working in partnership with the local community."

No formal plans have yet been submitted. The government has said South Cambridgeshire District Council will determine the proposals as the planning authority.



An indication of the potential scale of Thakeham's proposed development by the campaign group. Thakeham has not divulged the precise boundaries

Next Steps

- ▶ Re-engage with: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), National Trust, Wildlife Trust, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), Cambridge Carbon Footprint - initial contact established.
- ▶ Possible crowdfunding for specific advice/expertise.
- ▶ Begin anticipating the case against the proposal within a Local Plan context.
- ▶ SWCAG public meeting number three: 7th April 6-7PM.

Actions agreed by Parishes meeting March 2nd

- New leaflet with map: distribute via parish councils and parish newsletters.
- OxCam Arc: develop sustainability arguments, including water issues.
- Grade 2 agricultural land: develop food security arguments.
- Environmental protection and heritage public interest groups: Re-engagement once Thakeham submission to Call for Sites is made, with defined proposal for scrutiny.
- Seek meeting with SCDC Leader and Head of Planning.
- Engage with Transport and Housing, Communities and Local Govt Select Committees. Approach MP, suggesting collaborative action.
- Seek meeting with MP to learn outcome of his meeting with Thakeham on 26 February.

Any questions?

Please write to: info@swcag.org.uk

Further information:

Website www.swcag.org.uk

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/southwestcambridgeactiongroup>

Thank you and stay safe

