

12 Employment and transport

As yet there are too few jobs in Cambourne and most people work away. But the business park and shopping centre are less than half finished and local employment opportunities will increase. There is a regular bus service to Cambridge and a train service from St Neots for people commuting to London. Car ownership and car use is high and secondary school children have to travel to Comberton or Cambridge. However, walking and cycling is pleasant within Cambourne and most primary school children walk or cycle to school.



Employment

People identify the lack of local employment opportunities and the need to travel to work by car as the key issues in Cambourne's failure to be 'sustainable'.

The key issue is the lack of local employment opportunities. The idea was that people wouldn't need their car to get to work. We are far from this. David Morgan, Councillor

But it is important to remember that the business park and high street are only half finished and that they will provide much more employment in the future.

The majority of employed Cambourne residents (71%) work in managerial, professional or technical occupations. Most people (71%) travel less than 12 miles to work and only 8% travel more than 24 miles. This pattern is similar to that in the rest of S.Camb and like many other villages in the region, Cambourne might be considered a dormitory suburb of Cambridge. Nowadays the work force throughout the country is highly mobile and most people live further from their place of employment than is possible to walk.

There are a number of live-work units on Broad Street. These are attractive, but suffer two defects – they are expensive for small start up businesses and lack potential for adaptation and expansion. They are small, have no land to extend onto and the planners are reluctant to grant change of use from residential to business for the living part of the units. Is it any wonder that people live in Cambourne, with its new homes and good schools, and work elsewhere?

Potentially Cambourne could be much more sustainable. There is a strong aspiration amongst residents to work on site. We have a business centre and local employment opportunities are growing.

Peter Bailey, GP, Monkfield Medical Practice

The business park is too isolated. It doesn't do much for the settlement. It could have been integrated into the village centre in the form of smaller business units. We need to look for greater density and a more closed community in new developments like Cambourne. A tighter development with a mix of uses and no separate business park would be much better. This would generate local employment and business opportunities integrated with the housing. Brian Human, Head of Policy and Projects, Cambridge CC



We can learn lessons here for the development of other new settlements like Northstowe. As has been suggested, it makes sense to integrate jobs and homes in mixed use development. But starter businesses need low rents and unless there are financial incentives in the new developments it may be difficult to attract employers if it is possible to find much cheaper accommodation in neighbouring villages.

Yet is it realistic in today's mobile labour market to expect people to live and work in the same place? At first sight it would seem sensible to locate all new settlements near main-line railway stations, but only a small proportion of working residents travel to work in London. Will Northstowe, with its proposed guided bus link to Cambridge, perform any better with respect to car use?

In summary, as yet there are too few jobs in Cambourne and most people work outside the village in Cambridge or elsewhere in S.Cambs. But the business park and shopping centre are less than half finished and local employment opportunities will increase with time as the settlement grows.

Motor vehicle use

Stakeholders lament Cambourne's car dependency.

Compared with Cambridge there is obviously much less choice. In Cambridge there is so much within cycling or walking distance. Despite our good intentions, Cambourne is very car dependent. There are also detailed design faults that encourage more car use than might have been necessary. Gary Young, Urban Design Consultant, Terry Farrell & Partners

One of the main issues is the lack of accessibility. In Cambridge you can walk to most facilities, in Cambourne people use their car. Lynne Anderson, Head, Monkfield Park School.

It was built for cars, like Milton Keynes, and you have to travel everywhere. Diana Cook, Community Learning, Comberton Village College

The majority of people living here work outside Cambourne. Many get the 7:30 train to London from St Neots. From early morning the traffic streams out and during the week the village is empty. But at the weekend it's a job to get around. Today many teenagers want a car of their own. Ted Pateman, Councillor, South Cambridgeshire DC

It is true that people use their cars. But is not necessarily because of a lack of accessibility or poor pedestrian access. They just choose to drive. David Chare, Project Director, Chare Associates

Public transport

The new bus route has helped. But you can't just pop down the road like you can in Cambridge. People mention that you have to add a lot more time to the journey. The bus goes through all the villages. It would be nice if there was an express service to Cambridge and St Neots. But a lot of families have cars. Kevan Crane, Community Worker, Housing Associations Consortium

We have a regular bus service, but once the developer moves on in five years it's down to market forces. Sustainability is hopeless. They are only now widening the road to Cambridge. Roger Hume, Councillor, Cambourne Parish Council



The Cambridge bus is fairly well used. It used to take 20 minutes, but they have added an extra loop so it now takes twice as long. The place needs more life and less commuting. People go to Cambridge for culture. Cambourne needs to be settled enough not to have to jump in the car for everything. Pam Thornton, Planner, South Cambridgeshire DC

The bus is getting better used. But it doesn't coincide well with London trains from St Neots and it doesn't stop at the station. We are in the hands of the bus companies. They have a big financial outlay on new buses for the new guided bus way or they lose grants. John Vickery, Clerk, Cambourne Parish Council

It needs better public transport links, especially to St Neots. Some people from Bourn and Caxton use the village. Jenny Mackay, Wildlife Trust

In the early days it was frustrating working on the green travel plan when there was no real alternative to using the car. Initially the bus services were unreliable and once people have been let down a couple of times by public transport they go and buy a second car. Some of the combined cycle/footpaths can cause problems. They missed the opportunity, working with a clean sheet in Cambourne, to get this right by making separate footpaths and cycleways. The A428 widening will ultimately make things better for cyclists travelling to Cambridge as the old road will be retained for cycling. Northstowe will have the advantage of being on the guided bus route. In Cambourne it would help if the local bus connected to the train station at St Neots. Lesley Scobell, Cambourne Business Park

The bus service improved recently as the population increased. We now have a 20 minute service at peak times with the possibility of a 15 minutes service in due course. David Chare, Project Director, Chare Associates

Walking and Cycling

Within Cambourne walking and cycling are easy and pleasant. The roads seem safe, there are wide footpaths and there are footpaths through the green spaces and around the periphery. But beyond Cambourne insufficient attempt has been made to link Cambourne to longer distance footpaths or to create cycleways. This may improve with time as signage gets better and the old A428 is freed of traffic.

There is no cycle route to Comberton. But would young people cycle that distance anyway? Young ladies wouldn't want to arrive with their hair soaking wet. And all the stuff they have to carry nowadays. Some people enjoy cycling to work in Cambridge. Hopefully once the dual carriageway is finished the old road will be a quiet cycle way. Ted Pateman, Councillor, South Cambridgeshire DC



Parking

The houses were designed for 1.5 cars per household. We should have specified one car per bedroom. Most people don't put the car in the garage. They couldn't get it in as it's used as a store. So people park on the road. Ted Pateman, Councillor, South Cambridgeshire DC

Road adoption needs to be quicker. There are all sorts of problems of speeding and bad parking. The level of off street parking provision is 1.5 per house. But there are a lot of professional people and many have more than 2 cars per family. So parking provision isn't up to what it could be. Roads are narrow and bendy and people have to park on the road. John Vickery, Clerk, Cambourne Parish Council

The roads can be too busy and we can't enforce the speed limits yet because the roads are unadopted.
Lynne Anderson, Head, Monkfield Park School

Lessons

- 12.1 People identify the need the lack of local employment opportunities and the need to travel to work by car as the key issues in Cambourne's failure to be 'sustainable'. But the business park and shopping centre are less than half finished and local employment opportunities will increase with time as the settlement grows.
- 12.2 At first sight it would seem sensible to locate all new settlements near main-line railway stations. But only a small proportion of working residents travel to work in London and most people may prefer to travel by car.
- 12.3 In today's highly mobile labour market, it may be unrealistic to plan for most people to work where they live even if there are local jobs available.
- 12.4 Live-work and business starter units may need subsidising to woo new businesses from cheaper accommodation in neighbouring villages. The units in Cambourne also lack scope for adaptation and expansion and planners may need to be more flexible in granting change of use in Northstowe and elsewhere.
- 12.5 A regular bus service to Cambridge has been established but it is not that convenient and many people prefer to use their cars and park at the Park and Ride.
- 12.6 Cycle routes and footpaths out of Cambourne are not well provided. However, once work on the new A428 is finished the old road may provide a safe cycle way and fast bus lane to Cambridge.
- 12.7 Insufficient attention has been paid to disabled access and there are problems of accessibility for disabled people and parents with buggies getting around the pavements, using the allotments and accessing the sitting places near the Cambourne lakes.
- 12.8 Parking provision underestimated the level of car ownership and this is creating parking problems. But these are nowhere as severe of course as those suffered in Cambridge.