

2021 Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory: briefing note

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service has now published its updated housing trajectory and five year housing land supply position statement.

A housing trajectory is used by Councils to calculate their five-year housing land supply and also to demonstrate that anticipated housing delivery will meet or exceed their housing requirement. Our updated Greater Cambridge housing trajectory (April 2021) concludes that Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire jointly have 6.1 years of housing land supply for the 2021-2026 five-year period. This conclusion is based on our five-year housing land supply being calculated jointly, using the Liverpool methodology, and applying a 5% buffer.

What is a housing trajectory?

Housing trajectories are used by Councils to demonstrate that anticipated housing delivery will meet or exceed the housing requirement set out in their Local Plan.

The Greater Cambridge housing trajectory records how many additional homes have been completed in the area since 2011, and forecasts how many additional homes will be completed in the area by 2031 (and beyond) on a site by site basis. It sets out anticipated housing completions from all the sites allocated in the adopted Local Plans 2018; from all sites with planning permission; and from sites of 10 or more dwellings with a resolution to grant planning permission by our planning committees.

The housing trajectory also includes anticipated completions from developments that are not yet known about that will come forward on land that is not allocated – referred to in the housing trajectory as the windfall allowance. The Councils have used evidence of past completions to develop assumptions on the number of dwellings anticipated to be completed each year through the windfall allowance.

The housing trajectory itself is a series of tables of sites with their anticipated housing completions by year. It is accompanied by commentary on each of the sites.

The housing trajectory covers the whole of the adopted plan period (2011-2031), and beyond. From this, the Councils can calculate their five year supply, by just looking at actual completions and the number of dwellings anticipated to be completed within the next five years. Not all sites in the housing trajectory will deliver dwellings within the next five years.

How have we prepared the housing trajectory?

We have prepared the housing trajectory and five year housing land calculations based on the guidance set out in national planning policy and guidance. This means that we have assessed the deliverability and/or developability of all sites, based on the definitions set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (published in February 2019). We have made this assessment based on a range of information, such as the planning status of the site (allocated, with outline planning permission, or with full planning permission), but also using information gathered from housebuilders, developers, agents and landowners.

Why do we have a joint housing trajectory and joint five year supply calculations for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire?

We have prepared a joint housing trajectory for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire as the adopted 2018 Local Plans (Policy 3 and Policy S/12) state that “the housing trajectories for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire ... will be considered together for the purposes of phasing of housing delivery, including for calculating 5-year housing land supply in development management decisions that concern housing development”.

The Inspectors that examined the Local Plans concluded that a joint approach should be taken to reflect the joint development strategy across the two Local Plans. The Inspectors' Reports recognised that given the nature of the development

strategy for Greater Cambridge as a whole, housing delivery would be higher in Cambridge in the early years of the plan period and higher in South Cambridgeshire later in the plan period, and therefore that housing land supply and delivery should be considered jointly.

What is five year housing land supply?

The five year housing land supply is a calculation that compares the number of homes anticipated to be delivered in the area within the next five years against five years' worth of their annual housing requirement plus the appropriate buffer.

There are two methodologies for calculating the five year supply – the Liverpool methodology and the Sedgefield methodology. The Liverpool method of calculating five year housing land supply spreads any shortfall in housing supply (at the point of calculation) over the remainder of the plan period, whereas the Sedgefield method includes any shortfall in housing supply (at the point of calculation) within the five year assessment period. The Inspectors examining the 2018 Local Plans concluded that the Liverpool methodology was justified for Greater Cambridge due to the joint development strategy and the reliance on delivery of new settlements which take longer to start delivering homes. Policy 3 of the Cambridge Local Plan and Policy S/12 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan therefore state that the Liverpool method will be used. Policy 3 and Policy S/12 also state that a 20% buffer will be applied to the calculation, as the Inspectors examining the Local Plans concluded that at that time the Councils had consistently under-delivered against their housing requirements.

National planning policy has subsequently changed the approach to the assessment of previous under-delivery, and now that assessment is based on the results of the Housing Delivery Test. This states that a 20% buffer should be applied where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that delivery was below 85% of the housing requirement. The latest Housing Delivery Test results show that neither Council has delivered below 85% of their housing requirement, and therefore national policy now indicates that it is no longer necessary for a buffer of 20% to be applied to the

Councils' five year supply calculations. Instead, a 5% buffer should be applied to their five year housing land supply calculations.

The Councils jointly have 6.1 years of housing land supply for the 2021-2026 five year period, using the Liverpool methodology and applying a 5% buffer. However, even if a different view was taken and it was concluded that a 20% buffer should still be applied, the Councils can still jointly demonstrate 5.3 years supply.

Why is this important?

Councils are required by national planning policy and guidance to update their housing trajectory and five year supply calculations annually. Whether or not the Councils can demonstrate a five year housing land supply has implications when making planning decisions.

What does this mean for planning decisions in Greater Cambridge?

As we can demonstrate a five year housing land supply for Greater Cambridge, our planning policies in the adopted Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans will be given full weight in decision making, unless there are other material considerations to take into account.

For more information please visit our [Monitoring delivery webpage](#).