

Profile of the Cambridge sub-region

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Chapter 6. Profile of the Cambridge sub-region

6.1 Area

The administrative area of Cambridgeshire is 1,176 square miles or 3,046 square km.

6.2 Population

Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing counties in England with total population expected to grow by some 86,000 to 665,100 by 2021. Most of this expected population growth is due to higher levels of in-migration. Currently there are 222,871 households within the County.

6.3 Settlement Pattern

The County's settlement pattern is strongly influenced by the city of Cambridge, which accounts for nearly 20% of the total population. Cambridge has an important regional role and is of national and international importance for its outstanding historic character, as a centre of learning and research, and because of its emergence as a centre of excellence for high technology industries.

The Cambridge planning sub-region encompasses Cambridge and the ring of five market towns within 15 miles or so that surround it. These are: St Neots, Huntingdon, St Ives, Chatteris, and Ely. Most other settlements are small and rural in character. The influence of the Cambridge sub-region extends beyond the boundary of Cambridgeshire to include parts of Essex (Saffron Walden), Hertfordshire (Royston), and Suffolk (Newmarket and Haverhill).

North Cambridgeshire is primarily influenced by Peterborough, which lies just outside the County boundary. The market towns of Wisbech and March are the main focus for economic and social life within North Cambridgeshire. Other market towns are Whittlesey and Ramsey. Again, most other settlements are small and rural in character.

The housing sub-region also includes St Edmundsbury which contains Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill; and Forest Heath which covers Mildenhall, Brandon, Lakenheath and Newmarket.

6.4 Transport

Generally, the development of key transport infrastructure networks across Cambridgeshire has lagged behind rapid population and economic growth. High growth in car use and movement of freight across the County by road has adversely affected Cambridgeshire's environment and quality of life, resulting in the declaration of a number of air quality management areas across the County. However, in recent years there has been considerable progress in implementing alternatives to car travel, especially in Cambridge and on the main radial routes.

6.5 Economy

Cambridgeshire has a buoyant economy, which is reflected in an unemployment claimant rate of 1.2%. But, there are important disparities across Cambridgeshire. The Cambridge Sub-region is a focus for high tech employment with existing clusters in the life sciences,

Information and Communication Technology and the environmental sectors. In 2006 a total of 43,134 jobs were recorded within the high tech sector in the County as a whole. The economy of North Cambridgeshire is less strong by comparison. Some areas have suffered from the decline of traditional industry and agriculture although regeneration projects are being brought forward to provide new opportunities. There are pockets of social disadvantage in both urban and rural locations. Accessibility to key services is another key concern. At the regional level a target has been set for the creation of a further 75,000 jobs within the County up to 2021.

6.6 Affordability of Housing

A key issue in Cambridgeshire is the high cost of housing and a shortage of affordable housing. The average price of houses in the County is some 6.4 times greater than average earnings.

6.7 Social deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies 4 Standard Output Areas (SOAs) within North Fenland as being within the most deprived 20% in the country. A further five SOAs are within the worst national quartile (25%). Two of these lie in Huntingdon North, one lies in Parson Drove & Wisbech St. Mary (near Wisbech), one in Hill (Wisbech) and one in Abbey (Cambridge). At the other end of the scale, 150 of Cambridgeshire's 365 SOAs (41%) lie within England's least deprived quintile, however affluence can mask small pockets of deprivation within each output area.

6.8 Ethnicity

The 2001 Census counted a total of 552,653 people as resident in Cambridgeshire. The overwhelming majority of the population (91.0%) described themselves as being "White British" across the County, compared to 78% in Cambridge City, including the BME student population. A further 5% of people across the County described themselves as "White Irish" or "White Other". However the Census fails to reflect the rapidly changing population of Cambridgeshire with the strong growth of a more diverse community driven by migrant workers, in part as a result of the shortage of skilled workers attracted to the sub-region.

6.9 Environmental Assets

Cambridgeshire contains a diverse range of habitats and landscapes with much that is vital to protect and enhance. The Ouse and Nene Washes are of international importance for wildfowl and migratory birds, whilst low-lying fenland areas provide unique landscapes. However, habitats in Cambridgeshire are fragmented and isolated, and the intense agricultural use of land means that opportunities to access the countryside are often limited. Cambridgeshire is also the least wooded County in England and the low-lying nature of much of Cambridgeshire means that flood risk is a key concern.

6.10 Green Infrastructure

The amount and type of accessible Green Infrastructure varies across the County. For example there is currently a substantial lack of accessible Green Infrastructure in Fenland and parts of East Cambridgeshire. There will also be increased pressure on existing Green Infrastructure as a result of development, in particular within the Cambridge Fringes.

6.11 Profile of Cambridgeshire: a summary

Cambridgeshire, as of one the fastest growing counties in the UK, expects the population to grow to 665,100 by 2021 because of higher levels of migration. Cambridge City itself accounts for nearly 20% of total population.

As part of the Cambridge Sub-region, the city has an important regional role, especially for high technology industries. Although surrounded by small market towns and rural areas, its influence extends beyond the county boundary.

Key transport infrastructure has lagged behind the rapid population and economic growth. Alternatives to car travel due to high levels of traffic are being developed, especially around Cambridge.

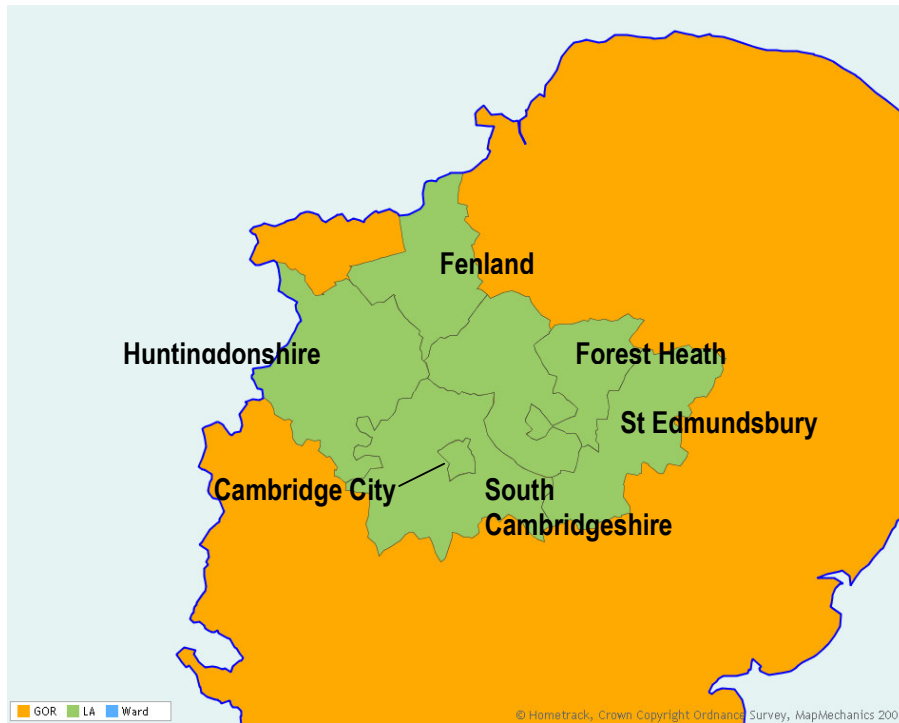
The county has a buoyant economy but there are important disparities. Certain industries such high technology have been the focus in the Sub-region. In contrast North Cambridgeshire has suffered decline through traditional industry and agriculture, though regeneration projects are providing new opportunities.

The key issues for affordable housing is a shortage and high cost with average house prices at least 6.4 times greater than average earnings.

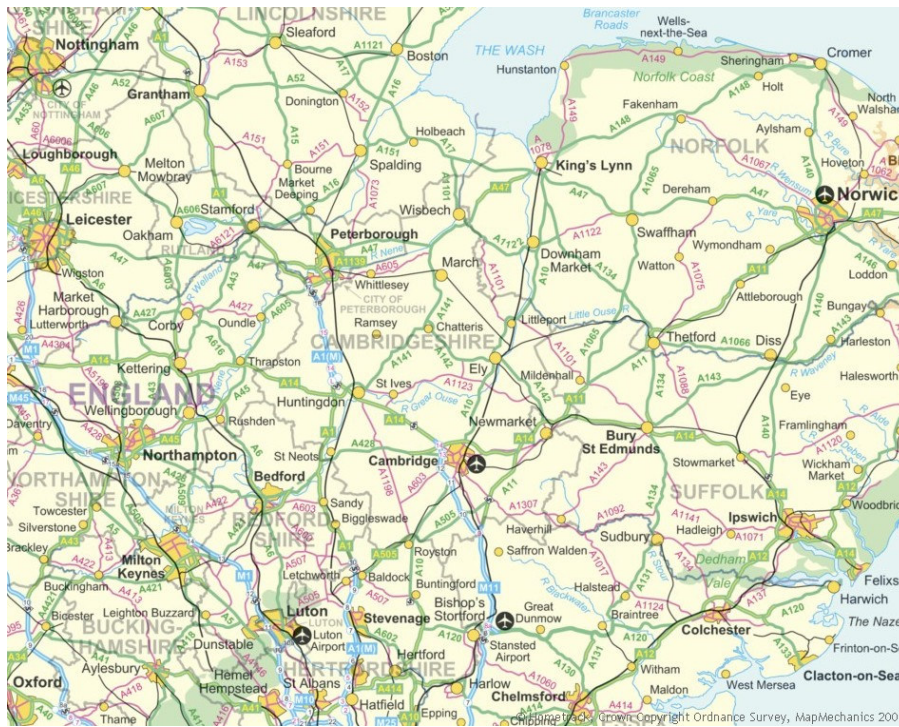
Although the 2001 Census indicated the majority of residents in Cambridgeshire considered themselves to be "White British", it failed to reflect the changing population with emphasis of the growth of more diverse communities driven by migrant workers.

6.12 Maps

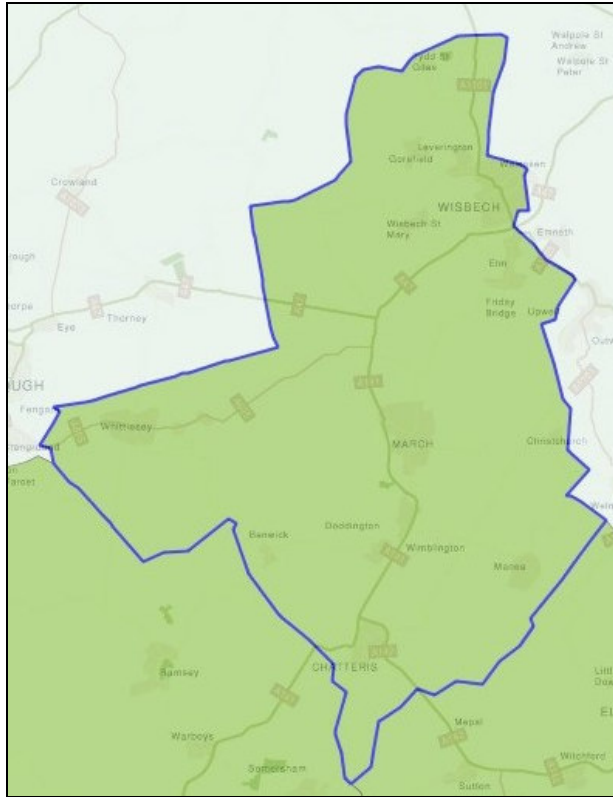
Districts making up the sub-region



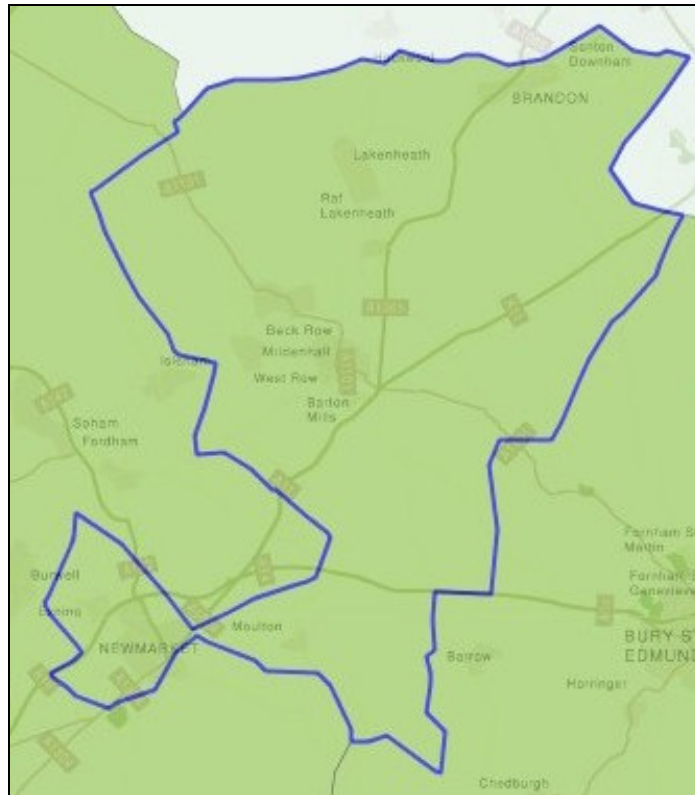
Main settlements and routes



Fenland, Cambridgeshire



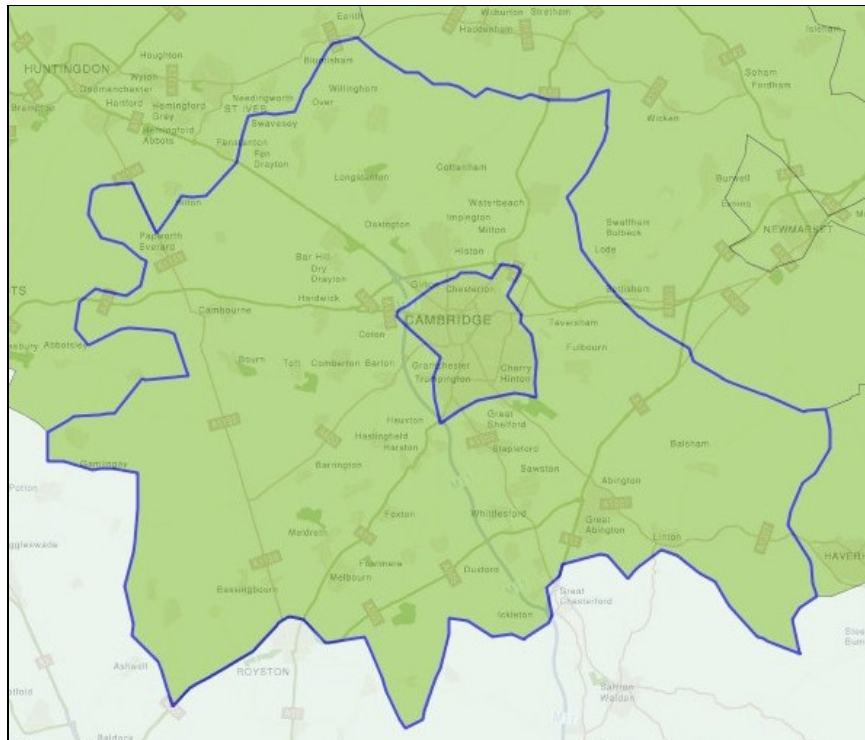
Forest Heath, Suffolk



Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire



South Cambridgeshire



St Edmundsbury, Suffolk

