



The countryside charity
Cambridgeshire
and Peterborough

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For immediate release

CAMBRIDGE: ALREADY ON THE LEVEL

The coming General Election gives local people the chance to call a halt to Government plans to build tens of thousands of new homes in and around Cambridge. Countryside campaigners say now is the moment to persuade a future government to announce a levelling up agenda which actually delivers on its promises.

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, requires a government minister to *“prepare, and lay before each House of Parliament, a statement of levelling-up missions”*. The preceding Levelling Up White Paper stated clearly a core objective is to *“boost productivity, pay, jobs, and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging.”*

“This makes nonsense of plans to build up to 150,000 homes in and around Cambridge,” said Dr Alan James, Chairman of Cambridgeshire Countryside charity, CPRE. “Lagging behind ... Cambridge is not! The inference from Government is that Cambridge is the only UK university delivering life sciences. We’ve done our research and many university cities across the UK are breaking boundaries in life sciences. Surely, the Government should be investing in places like Teeside, Tyneside, Sheffield and Leeds, regenerating brownfield sites rather than doubling the size of Cambridge by destroying one of the country’s most important Green Belts with its surrounding areas of prime agricultural land?”

CPRE say politicians shouldn’t be trying to create a Cambridge cluster. Instead, they should seek to build a UK-wide cluster. “The biggest life sciences cluster in the United States is North Carolina’s Research Triangle,” said Dr James. “The Research Triangle region is comparable in size to central and northern England. Distance is no longer an issue in research, communication and collaboration.

“Back in the day of Route 101, Silicon Valley and the Cambridge Phenomenon, we didn’t even have telephone conferencing – people had to get on planes in order to meet. These days we have something called the Internet. People in Cambridge can talk to Manchester or Malaysia at the click of a mouse. The new government needs to look at the regions and cities which need the growth – and have regeneration space for it. The Levelling Up Act clearly states its primary objective is to close the disparities in productivity, wages and employment across all regional and nations of the UK. Cambridge and the areas surrounding it are not struggling.”

Dr James contends the recent local elections indicate that people in Cambridge don’t want major growth. “Of course, there are many, many people who need homes but the majority of these are in the areas of the country that need regeneration. In many of those areas there are thousands of empty properties, just in need of refurbishment and modernisation. It would be quick and have minimum climate impact. Those are the places that merit levelling up investment – Cambridge is already on the level.”

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