Cambridge Futures 1 Survey Report

Stephen Platt

Reference:

As part of the Cambridge Futures exercise, the views of the public have been sought and analysed. They were asked what they thought of the seven Cambridge Futures planning options, and whether they agreed or disagreed with eight statements about the planning of the region. Some strong messages emerged – they are described below and overleaf.

Little support for the status quo
The planning options which won least support were those closest to present planning policies, that is, ‘Minimum growth’ for the city of Cambridge, and ‘Necklace’ development around Cambridge. The social consequences of minimising growth in Cambridge were unpopular, with strong support for the statement “It would be a bad thing if only wealthy people could afford to live in Cambridge”.

Shared values
There is a high degree of consensus about the planning of the region. The survey results were broken down by age of the participants, their place of residence, how long they had lived in the region and how long they planned to stay, and there was no evidence of opposing camps. The variations that did exist were differences of emphasis within a shared pattern of opinion.

Backing for public transport
The dominant message is that public transport must take a leading role in the future of the region. The planning option ‘Transport links’ won far more support than any of the other options, and the statement “More money should be invested in railways and other public transport than in roads” was the most popular of the statements by a clear margin.

Top priority for minimising congestion
The biggest problem in the region is seen to be traffic congestion. The planning options which reduce congestion were preferred over those that have less impact on congestion. There was moderate support for two statements describing alternative ways to tackle congestion, “The A14 should be widened to 3 lanes in each direction”, and “Commuters should pay to drive their cars into Cambridge”.

Quality of life
People prefer growth away from where they live, indicating that quality of life is highly valued. Thus city residents give more support to some development of the green belt, whereas people outside the city are keener on densification in Cambridge. The new town option was significantly less popular in the north-west of the region, where the new town would be located.

Support for competitiveness and economic growth
People are keen that prosperity and economic growth should be encouraged. It was not as high a priority as tackling congestion, but planning options which harm competitiveness were not supported. There was strong backing for the statement “The region’s high tech businesses must be allowed to grow”.

The popular view
People want a balance of development in Cambridge and in the region. The survey suggested that a planning strategy which aimed for some growth in Cambridge through densification and expansion, together with growth outside Cambridge based on public transport links, would be most likely to meet the aspirations of the people who live and work in the region.
### THE OPTIONS

**Option 5**
**Transport Links**

This is the clearly preferred option liked by 78% of all respondents. This option would reduce car use the most, minimising increased traffic congestion and pollution, and better protect the quality of life in the city and surrounding area.

**Inference**
Two issues dominate people’s choices: traffic congestion and quality of life.

**Option 6**
**Virtual Highway**

Like by marginally more people than disliked but with a high proportion of people undecided in the middle.

**Inference**
People may not fully understand this option. Since it might reduce traffic congestion it gets moderate support.

**Option 4**
**Green Swap**

Marginally more people favour allowing development in selected areas of the green belt of less scenic value than dislike it. Interestingly these differences seem independent of where people live.

**Inference**
Despite increased traffic congestion in the city, 42% of people favour this option because it produces the lowest increase in the cost of living.

**Option 2**
**Densification**

Like green swap, densification stabilises the cost of living promotes regional prosperity. Like green swap, opinions are divided on its merits.

**Inference**
Rising house prices are a concern and people consider the merit of allowing development where demand is high. People are also concerned about the quality of life in the city.

### MOST LIKED

#### THE STATEMENTS

**Public Transport**

86% of people agree that:

"More money should be invested in public transport than in roads."

**Inference**
Traffic congestion is people’s biggest concern. Most people are in favour of more investment in public transport.

**Social Balance**

81% of people agree that:

"It would be a bad thing if only wealthy people could afford to live in Cambridge."

**Inference**
People are concerned about rising house prices and the implications for social equity and the balance of the community.

**High Tech Growth**

78% of people agree that:

"The region’s high tech businesses must be allowed to grow."

**Inference**
The large majority of people are concerned about economic prosperity and want to maintain the region’s growth.

**Road Tolls into City**

59% of people agree that:

"Commuters should pay to drive their cars into Cambridge."

**Inference**
There is substantial support for road tolls but these would have to coincide with the provision of good public transport alternatives if they were to have impact on traffic congestion in the city.
Cambridge Kept Same

Cambridge Full

Option 1
Minimum Growth

Option 3
Necklace

Option 7
New Town

Widen A14

Cambridge Full

Green Belt Released

Cambridge Kept Same

Inference

Surprisingly, and most encouragingly in terms of this whole exercise, most people appreciate that minimum growth will not keep things the same.

Inference

People agree that things cannot continue as they are and that we need new policies to reduce traffic congestion whilst maintaining regional prosperity.

41% of people agree that:
"Some of the Green Belt should be released for development."

Inference

This is a contentious issue on which opinions are fairly evenly divided with a similar proportion of people agreeing as are in favour of Option 4 Green Swap.

18% of people agree that:
"Cambridge and its surroundings should be kept just as they are."

Inference

Most people accept that it is not possible to keep things as they are.

52% of people agree that:
"The A14 should be widened to 3 lanes in each direction."

Inference

Traffic congestion is the key issue and some people think that road building will reduce the problem.

47% of people agree that:
"Cambridge is full."

Inference

Over half the people are either undecided or think that Cambridge could take more people by densification or expansion.

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The survey formed part of an exhibition, which was launched at the Senate House in the University before going to the Grafton Centre and other venues in the region. Using panels, a video and a brochure sheet, the exhibition explained the purpose of Cambridge Futures and described the seven development options in detail. People were offered the opportunity to comment on the proposals by filling in a tear-off slip on the brochure or by using a computer-based interactive questionnaire devised by Cambridge Architectural Research.

Cambridge Futures also created a web site and, as part of the site, Cambridge Media Lab devised a web-based survey. A total of 650 people answered the survey. Half (50%) of the responses were from the computer version of the survey; just over a third (41%) from the paper version and 9% from the web.

About 457 people voted on the Options section and 419 answered the Statements. Over 500 gave their age and told us where they lived. Although people self-selected themselves to answer the survey, the indications are that they reflect the average shopper in the Grafton Centre rather than any sectional interest or pressure group.

We conclude therefore that this is a sufficiently good sample to have confidence that it accurately reflects general public opinion of the region in and around the city.

**Method of Response**

- Web: 9%
- Paper: 41%
- Computer: 50%

**Age**

- Under 20: 17%
- 20-65: 77%
- Over 65: 10%

**Employment**

- Employed: 68%
- Student: 9%
- Retired: 18%
- Other: 5%

**Home District**

- Cambridge City: 50%
- South Cambs: 37%
- Huntingdonshire: 3%
- East Cambs: 10%

**Residence**

- Entire life: 15%
- Over 10 years: 33%
- Less than 3 years: 22%
- No plans to move: 52%
- 3-10 years: 25%

**Plans to move**

- Over 10 years: 15%
- Within 3 years: 9%

**Effects of Residence**

There is a small effect of people voting in terms of self-interest, but less than one might have expected.

**Options**

Fewer people living on the south and west sides of the city, the areas that would be most affected by increased density, favour Option 2 Densification. Fewer people NW of the region, the areas most affected, favour Option 6 Virtual Highway and Option 7 New Town. In contrast, relatively more people in the NE like Option 7 New Town, perhaps because they are unaffected by this option.

**Statements**

More people living outside Cambridge think Cambridge is full than people living in the city. More people living in the NW of the region agree that some of the green belt should be released for development. Fewer people living on the east side of the city think commuters should pay to drive their cars into Cambridge.

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**Cambridge Futures**

Cambridge Futures is a group of local business leaders, politicians, government officers, professionals and academics who have been looking at options for growth in and around Cambridge. The intention has been to demonstrate the possibilities open to society— and in so doing, to generate informed debate. Established in 1996, it is coming to the end of its first phase of activity and is now reporting on the views of people living in the region.

**Cambridge Architectural Research**

CAR is an independent consultancy which provides specialist advice for the construction industry and design professions and undertakes a broad range of research for policy-making institutions. Founded in 1987 by architects, engineers, software developers and researchers, CAR has established an international reputation for consultancy in Energy and Environment, Building Design and Use, New Media Applications and Risk Management.

**Cambridge Media Lab**

CML is a digital media production company that specialises in database driven web sites and kiosk based surveys. Specifically, the company has a proven track record working with educational and scientific/technical groups. CML is well used to generating ideas and initiating projects. Client organisations include BBC Education, Cambridge University Press and Reuters.