
St Ives:

A Prospectus for Growth

DRAFT VERSION 1. NOT TO BE MORE WIDELY SHARED.

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About this document

This document has been commissioned by Huntingdonshire District Council, funded by the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, and developed in co-ordination with a local team of councillors, business, and other stakeholders. It delivers a 'prospectus for growth' - identifying St Ives' strengths and opportunities through highlighting interventions and areas where more detailed planning is required. The document will be instrumental in securing funding to deliver these short-term, medium-term and long-term initiatives which is seen as crucial to the growth and prosperity of St Ives, as well its wider economy.

This prospectus builds upon the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER), which was commissioned to give a thorough review and set of priorities for the Combined Authority. It recognises three broad economies existing in the Combined Authority region:

- 1) Greater Cambridge
- 2) Greater Peterborough
- 3) The Fens

St Ives contributes to and benefits from the Greater Cambridge economy, but is an attractive place to live and work in its own right. Proximity to the Cambridge Ecosystem and good connectivity to the City via the guided busway are factors for out-commuting, yet the market town of St Ives provides a unique offer for workers, residents and visitors alike.

This 'prospectus for growth' report endorses mayor James Palmer's target for the region, to **double its Gross value added (GVA) over the next twenty years.** For this to be achieved, all areas will be required to 'do their bit' to improve the three economies. St Ives' output (GVA) was £399m in 2017 - doubling will take us well on the way to having a £1 billion economy. The interventions hereby enshrine the importance of inclusive growth, in line with the CPIER recommendations.

Lastly, the devolution deal which created the Combined Authority recognises the **important role of market town economies** in growing the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy. A masterplan or 'prospectus for growth' document for each of the eleven market towns across the region provides the opportunity to look at the unique features of each town, and offers deliverables which will benefit the immediate and wider economy.



Introduction

What sets apart the town of St Ives? What do we want it to look like in ten, twenty, even fifty years' time? What are the big things which need to happen to secure a prosperous future for our residents?

This document sets out our answers to these questions. We begin with an overview of what the town of St Ives is like, drawing upon a broad analysis of all the available data. Then we set out a vision for the future of our town, which has been developed in co-ordination with local partners. This leads to a list of key priorities which, if acted upon, will be transformational for our town.

We have called this document a “prospectus for growth”. The choice of words is deliberate. Similar to an investment prospectus, we don't expect everything in this document to be funded immediately. There are some quick wins where an injection of funding can get things moving. For other projects, we will need to spend time developing detailed plans and compelling investment cases before we can begin to leverage in funding. While the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has funded this report, and is keen to invest in our town, we know we will need to build a coalition of supporters, including central government, to get some of the schemes detailed here delivered.

But we will not let the complexity or time requirement dim our ambitions for our town. Now is a pivotal moment. As plans develop to provide new rapid transit into Cambridge through the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM), we need to ready ourselves to capitalise. At the same time, we are grappling with the questions faced by towns up and down the country – how to support our high street during the transition to greater online retail, how to encourage people into more sustainable and healthy ways of living and moving, and how to attract new labour and business in what has been dubbed “the age of the city”. The towns which will prosper are those which don't shy from taking bold steps to address these issues.

We welcome the involvement of the public and businesses as we develop these plans. [details of how people can have their say to be added].

Why does St Ives need a “prospectus for growth”?

What is the prize on offer? The Combined Authority's target is to double output (as measured by Gross Value Added, or GVA) from 2017 levels by 2040. We estimate that in St Ives, our output (GVA) was £399m in 2017. Doubling will take us well on the way to having a £1 billion

economy. But the prize is not just economic. By focusing on the interventions which change the look and feel of our town, we will build an inclusive and enjoyable place to live.

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A vision for St Ives



St Ives has a unique offer. It combines a distinctive and attractive environment with close proximity to Cambridge, one of the UK's tech hotspots. The River Great Ouse provides leisure opportunities and creates the iconic view of the town. St Ives' high street has few vacancies, and offers a mix of arty independent shops and recognised high street brands.

But, while St Ives already has a lot to offer, to its residents and as a service centre for outlying villages, we know that our town is not yet fulfilling its potential.

Our vision is that St Ives will maximise its position to bring in innovative businesses. This will create highly skilled jobs with good wages, and help grow the economy of the town. **Over time, St Ives will become a vital component of the wider Cambridge economy.**

To deliver this, we will continue to develop as **a hub for innovative businesses**. This means creating the space these businesses need – building on the growth of co-working space in St Ives to repurpose an area of land in the town centre as an innovation quarter. This will combine workspace with high-end retail, and accommodation designed to suit younger workers – with lower cost options and an approach designed to encourage active travel choices (rather than generating additional traffic on our already congested roads). It also means exploring using Wyton Airfield as a base for larger employers in the tech and allied sectors, and building on the network of companies which already exist there. Finally, we know that the key to a successful innovation hub is effective networking between businesses, where knowledge is exchanged and collaborations formed. While we already have many business groupings, we will look to tie more closely into networks which exist in Cambridge, identifying innovation champions who can serve as “nodes” in the business network.

St Ives will also be a **connected town with strong East-West links**. The economic potential of our town can be released by relieving transport constraints in multiple directions. Firstly, we need to improve upon the guided busway infrastructure in both directions – offering fast services to Cambridge and Huntingdon. A segregated guided bus route West to Huntingdon could be a precursor to the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) development. Improved connectivity across the River Great Ouse and a review of the Harrison Way roundabout will make travel around our town easier, helping businesses and commuters. We will also make active travel the easiest choice in St Ives, with improved cycle infrastructure linking into public transport hubs.

Finally, we will build on one of our strengths by having a **public realm of the highest quality**. We will prioritise pedestrians in our town, creating a walkable town centre with effective infrastructure to reduce the cluttering of parked cars. We will also explore options to make more effective use of mews in the town centre, improving the town's creative offer.

All of this will be presented in line with the Combined Authority's vision to reach zero carbon.

The Plan on a Page



An overview of St Ives



A town defined by its river

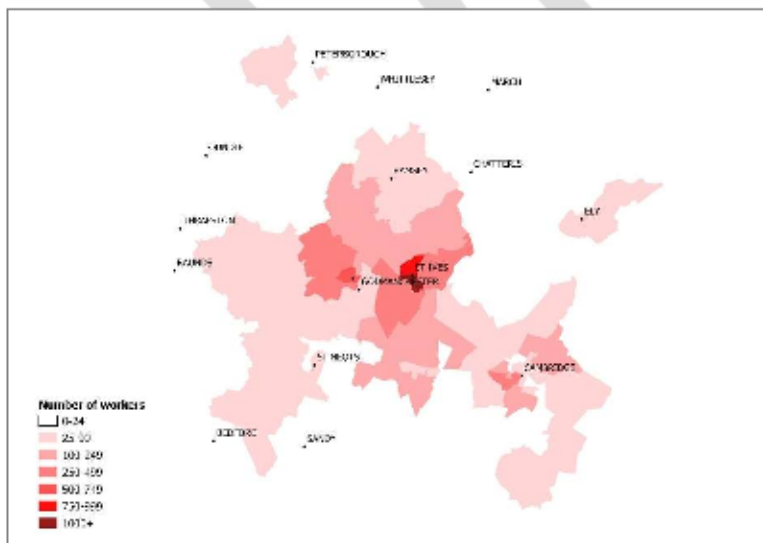
The iconic view of St Ives is from the river. The Bridge is a defining architectural feature of St Ives, and is one of only three in the UK to have a chapel on it. From the viewpoint of the bridge there are wide vistas up and down the Great Ouse. This attracts international tourists to the town, often as a next stop from a visit to Cambridge. The river supports the night-time economy in St Ives, as restaurants and bars cluster along the quayside. As well as visual amenity, the river provides leisure opportunities, from canoeing to angling.



The river is also, of course, a geographical constraint, which has shaped how the town has developed. St Ives is unusual in that its town centre is right at the south of the town, with development south of the river severely hindered due to flooding constraints. And because St Ives is on the other side of the river to the place where many of its residents commute to (Cambridge), traffic congestion builds up on the main link across the river – the A1096.

Opportunities to benefit from the “Cambridge effect”

Out-commuting from St Ives in 2011



Source: Analysis of Census 2011 data

St Ives is a generally affluent town, with little deprivation. This seems to be a combination of two factors: firstly, its history as a prosperous market town, and secondly, being within the orbit of one of the UK's major economic hotspots: Cambridge. While St Ives commuters go in all directions to get to work, there is a notable clustering around Cambridge. The map, left, shows the position at the time of the last census (2011) – since then, the opening of the Guided Busway has stimulated further out-commuting in this

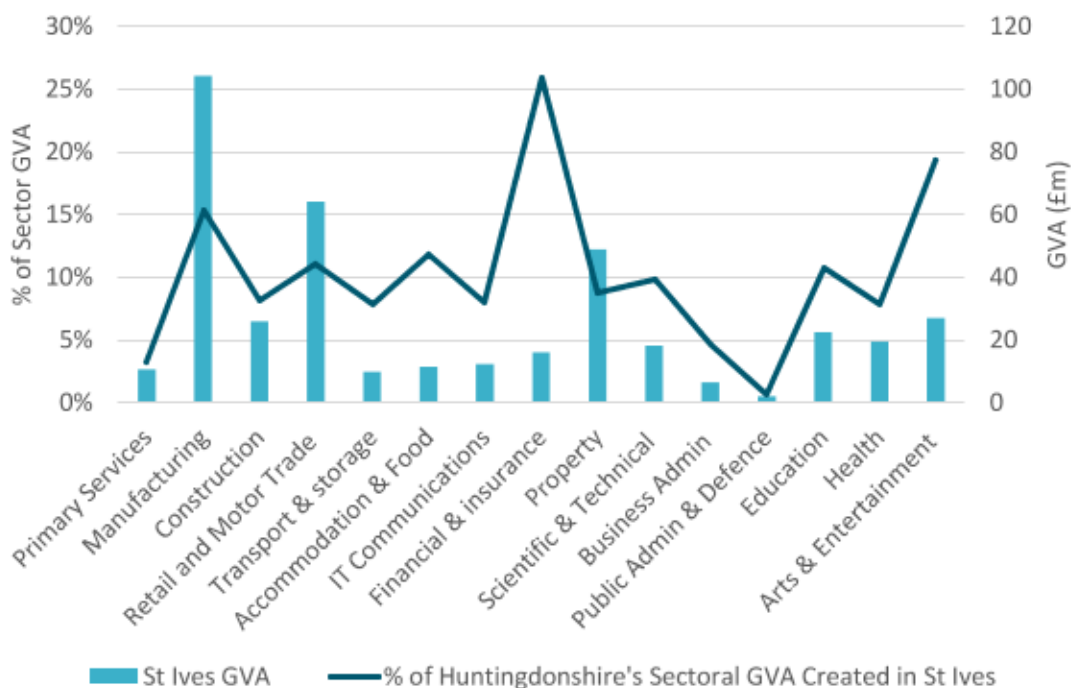
direction. It is not uncommon for the guided busway to be completely packed at the point at which it leaves St Ives on a weekday morning.

Having said that, while we see some of the more technological businesses which characterise the Cambridge economy moving to St Ives, in general the benefits to our town are felt **indirectly** – through out-commuters bringing their wages to spend in the town. There is a digital cluster, with companies such as 42 Technology and Profile Digital Agency basing themselves here, but we are not yet a fully integrated part of the Cambridge tech economy.

An economy focused on manufacturing, retail, and property

The value of economic output in St Ives is estimated at £399m¹ in Gross Value Added (GVA) terms. This is a little under a tenth of Huntingdonshire district's output. The largest contributor to this is the manufacturing sector, where over a quarter of this (£104m) originates. The next two largest sectors are the retail and motor trade (£64m) and the property sector (£49m).

St Ives GVA and Contribution to Sectoral GVA in Huntingdonshire



¹ In 2017. Based upon analysis of ONS regional GVA figures at a district level then using employment figures for the wards of St Ives East, St Ives South, and St Ives West to estimate the proportion of district-level GVA produced in the town.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of ONS Regional GVA figures and ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)

Interestingly, while the financial and insurance sector is relatively small within St Ives (£16m), it is a relative specialism within Huntingdonshire, contributing over a quarter of the district's GVA from this sector. Arts and Entertainment is another sector where St Ives performs well – reflecting the cultural strengths of the town.

An attractive town centre – with room for improvement

Change in footfall across St Ives 2006-2015



Source: Analysis of HDC footfall data. Please note this compares two specific days – so figures may be subject to variation

The town centre in St Ives is very characterful, with buildings like the Corn Exchange, All Saints Church, and of course the Bridge adding to the unique design. Holt Island Reserve is among the town centre's offer of green space, whilst the Great Ouse is a key focal point, providing substantial blue space. The retail position of the high street is also relatively healthy – comparing data from 2006 and 2015, footfall has generally grown across most of the town centre (see map). There are few vacant units, and St Ives has more artistic, independent shops than many other towns in Cambridgeshire.

But there is room for improvement in our town centre. In an online discussion about what could make St Ives better, one resident commented that St Ives “lacks a proper civic central space”. Another noted that “the high street seems to be missing something”. The town centre also suffers from being overly cluttered with cars that are parked – in many cases illegally. This decreases the enjoyability of spending time in St Ives.



An active community

Perhaps most notably of all, St Ives has a very proactive community, with many different groups leading on events. This includes the St Ives Town Initiative (SITI), St Ives Town Team,

Festival Events St Ives, the St Ives Retail Group, Friends of the Norris Museum, , and of course, the Town Council. There are also numerous interest groups and business groupings.

The presence of all these groups reflects a healthy civic culture within St Ives – which can also be seen on market days (where the market is much healthier than in some other Cambridgeshire towns), in the low crime rate, and voting figures which are generally above regional and national averages.

Some concerns have been expressed that groups could work more effectively together, with need of a common focus and that much of the activity focuses on the town centre – which can feel remote to those living in the North of the town. Nonetheless, this active community should be recognised as a strength of St Ives.

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1. A hub for innovative business



St Ives will attract innovative businesses to base themselves in and around the town. This will create high-value jobs, boosting growth, and bringing more disposable income to our town centre. Our three priorities to deliver this are:

- An Innovation Quarter at the heart of St Ives
- Wyton Airfield as a base for larger hi-tech companies
- Integrating into the Cambridge innovation ecosystem through network development

An Innovation Quarter at the heart of St Ives

One of the most exciting opportunities for St Ives at the moment is the Cattle Market Car Park – a large area of brownfield land on the western edge of the town centre. This presents a major opportunity to create a new quarter in St Ives as a natural extension of the town centre.

Given our ambition for St Ives, this quarter must reflect our innovative potential. It should therefore include:

1) A business space offer to attract high end companies

To become a hub for innovative businesses, we need to offer quality space for them to work from.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that St Ives already has plenty of office space, with one report from 2014 for the District noting that “there is an oversupply of office floorspace in Huntingdonshire, notably within St Ives.”² This is particularly apparent within Parsons Green and Compass Point Business Parks. Therefore any approach to developing new business space for companies must focus on offering something new – or else there is a risk of further diluting the market.



² https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/1223/employment_land_study_2014.pdf p4

The Desk Club, a recently opened office space in St Ives, shows how this might be done. This is a co-working space, located in the heart of the town on Bridge Street, which offers flexible tenancies, hotdesking, and access to meeting room and kitchen facilities for its occupants. The style is deliberately distinctive, designed to attract entrepreneurs, and those who don't wish to be based in a corporate office environment, yet want access to opportunities to socialise and collaborate with workers in other sectors.

The Desk Club



An Innovation Quarter for St Ives should include co-working space to attract more of these businesses and entrepreneurs to the town – combining a city centre type office offer with the ambience of a market town. As a minimum, it should offer high speed, high capacity broadband and a range of options from hired out office space to more flexible hot-desking. It makes sense to start small here – but to look, over time, to grow the space as the reputation spreads. It will be useful to test the market for appetite for more technical space e.g. labs, if so – this should complement town centre co-working space.

2) Residential accommodation to suit young professional workers

St Ives is already a desirable place to live – but we need to be aware that what people look for in accommodation is changing - particularly the young professional class who are needed to grow our innovative sectors. Many now place less of a premium on having a detached or semi-detached property and instead look for:

- An apartment offer, with flexible renting options
- Shared communal spaces
- Cycle storage (with less of a focus on car parking availability)

To flourish as a hub of innovation we need to provide the types of housing which will accommodate the labour force of the future. The Innovation Quarter should include attractive flats at different price points to meet the needs of both those entering the labour market for the first time, and those more progressed in their career. The design should minimise the amount of residential parking provided, making a virtue of being cyclist and pedestrian friendly. This means that some landscaping will also be required to connect the Quarter to the rest of the town centre in a way which gives pedestrians and cyclists priority.

3) A mix of retail uses

Finally, this development has the opportunity to increase the retail offering in St Ives – shops, restaurants and cafés. However we need to avoid the trap of creating vacant units, or simply pulling retail activity from the centre of town. This means we need to:

- Ensure continuous flow between Waitrose and the town centre, through the Quarter. This means an architectural design that draws people from one end to the other, along with signage to encourage people to explore what's on offer. This means Waitrose can become more of an anchor store for the town centre – rather than being separate from it, as it is at the moment.
- Make a high priority of bringing in independent units which add interest and provide something not yet found in the town. As part of this, at least one unit should be for pop-up uses, meaning a continual variety of what is on offer in the unit. This would allow new entrepreneurs from St Ives to try out new products.
- There should be some tailored support to help companies promote their offering digitally, and where appropriate to integrate the digital and the physical, e.g. through click and collect type platforms.

Of these three uses, residential accommodation should be the most highly prioritised. It is here that there is a most clearly evidenced lack of supply in the town. As a masterplan for this development comes forward, it will need to be sufficiently flexible to respond to the changing demands for town centre space.

Wyton Airfield as a strategic site

St Ives is the nearest market town to RAF Wyton. The site is home to the Joint Force Intelligence Unit and the National Centre for Geospatial Intelligence. The airfield on the site is currently unused, which is a large site also within easy reach of Huntingdon.

We are currently exploring with Marshalls Aerospace whether there is an opportunity for them, as they move away from Cambridge Airport, to make the Wyton Airfield a new base for the company. This would be an ideal opportunity to turn this space back into a useable airfield, bringing high quality employment opportunities for people across Huntingdonshire. Wage data shows that, at the moment, Huntingdonshire residents can earn more by working outside of the district than within it³ – to tackle this we need to bring in employers like Marshalls. This will also help drive up productivity in our area.

To support Marshalls in moving to Wyton Airfield, we will work to ease the transition as much as possible. Some of the other initiatives proposed elsewhere will make it easier for employees who are currently based in Cambridge to work here, including creating more rapid guided busway services and providing better connectivity over the Great Ouse.

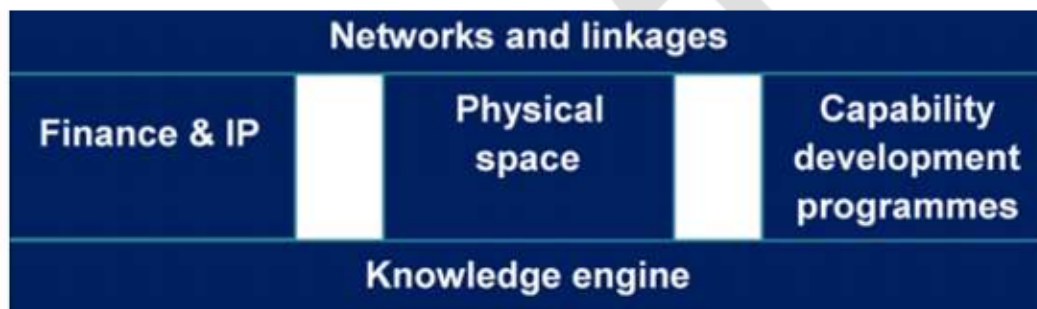
³ £13.54 per hour vs £14.95. Office for National Statistics Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2018 data

In the event that we are unsuccessful in bringing Marshalls to Wyton Airfield, we will need to think further about the strategic potential for the site.

There are currently plans to develop housing at Wyton, as part of a mixed-use development for the site. For Wyton Airfield to provide future housing for the wider St Ives area, it is recognised that transport and infrastructure barriers will need to be addressed as part of the strategy. Any development needs to happen at scale, and not on a piecemeal basis, to deliver a genuinely transformational place.

Integrating into the Cambridge innovation ecosystem through network development

There are many reasons for the success of the Cambridge economy. As set out in the Local Industrial Strategy, innovation ecosystems require five key aspects:



Source: The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Industrial Strategy, p39

Within Cambridge, the University is the knowledge engine at the base of the ecosystem. The city has created its own investor networks, and increasingly attracts investment from abroad. It has a legal community to support the creation of intellectual property (IP), and is adding to its stock of physical space through new science parks. But perhaps the defining strength of Cambridge's economy is its networks and linkages. Within Cambridge, "everybody knows everybody", meaning that for young entrepreneurs (many of whom come up through the University) it is straightforward to access support across a wide variety of disciplines, often free of charge. Successful businesspeople within the city recognise the benefit of supporting new talent to continue to promote the international brand of the city and create further opportunities for collaboration.

Within St Ives, it is not possible to recreate all the conditions of Cambridge – nor would it be wise to attempt to do so. For a start, there is no equivalent of the University within our town. But, by focusing on networks and linkages, we can increasingly integrate ourselves within the Cambridge ecosystem. By doing so, our business community will have greater access to the knowledge engine, finance and intellectual property of Cambridge.

In practise, this network development would require:

- 1) Identifying innovation champions**, who will proactively engage with businesses in Cambridge on behalf of businesses in St Ives. These should be people who are already

well known in the local business community and have some connections to Cambridge business. They will work to identify the strengths of local businesses, and be ready to discuss their offer with potential partners and investors.

- 2) **The development of promotional material**, to showcase what is on offer at St Ives. Companies should be given a free opportunity to contribute to a prospectus-type document, showcasing their goods and services. This would include the provision of graphic design and photography services, and a web-based platform to showcase as well.
- 3) **Attendance at Cambridge business events**. One of the roles of innovation champions would be to access information about when networking events are happening in Cambridge, and feed that back to relevant businesses in St Ives. This will help them to make links into these other networks. We will also work closely with key Cambridge business networks like Cambridge Ahead to match businesses to events.

As part of this, we want to focus on growing the concept of “Cambridge” to include market towns within close reach of the city, including St Ives, Ely, and Newmarket. In this way we can become a vital component in Cambridge’s innovation ecosystem.

Case Study: The Best of Shrewsbury

The Best of Shrewsbury website is an attractive and easy to use website where users can search businesses by letter and by sector. These sectors are then subdivided to refine the search – for example “IT and computing” is then broken down into categories like computer maintenance and repairs, web design, IT training, and internet advertising.



There are also options to recommend businesses, with those businesses which are better recommended featuring more prominently.

Digital infrastructure to support businesses

For St Ives’ inclusion in Cambridge’s innovation ecosystem to be supported, the market town needs to match Cambridge in terms of digital infrastructure. As national providers increase the availability of 5G to more local areas, St Ives’ business network will make a strong case for its rollout.

At present, St Ives Town centre is included in the Combined Authorities’ ‘Top 20’ priority areas for mobile coverage improvements and broadband signals are not adequate for local business needs.



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2. A connected town with strong East-West links



St Ives can become a much better-connected town, helping to facilitate closer economic linkages with Cambridge, other market towns in the area and villages along the busway. At the same time, tackling the congestion in our town will increase quality of life.

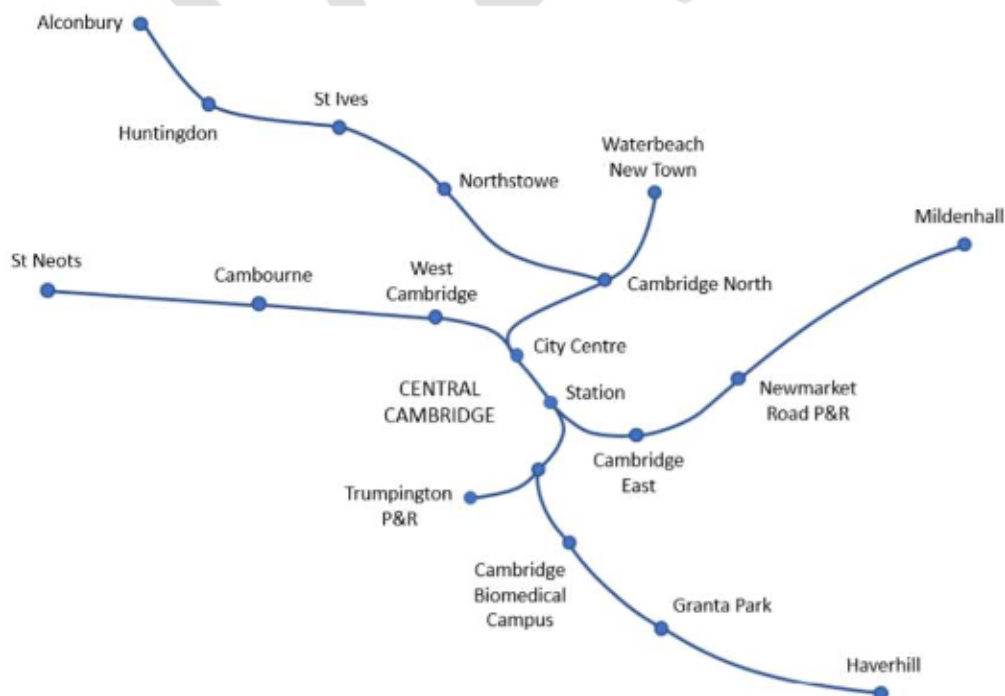
Future plans are set to improve connectivity - St Ives will benefit from transport opportunities around the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM), East-West rail links with a new proposed stop at Cambourne, and the new A14 leaving the old route available with its redundant busway (A1307).

A **future mobility strategy** will consider the coming times of mobility. As innovators of the first guided busway, St Ives is well-positioned to be at the cutting edge of transport innovation again.

As things stand now, we see three key priorities which should be outlined in a transport strategy:

A seamless guided bus connection as a pre-cursor to the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM)

The long-term plan for connectivity in the area is the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) which will link from central Cambridge to Alconbury, via Northstowe, St Ives, and Huntingdon (see map).



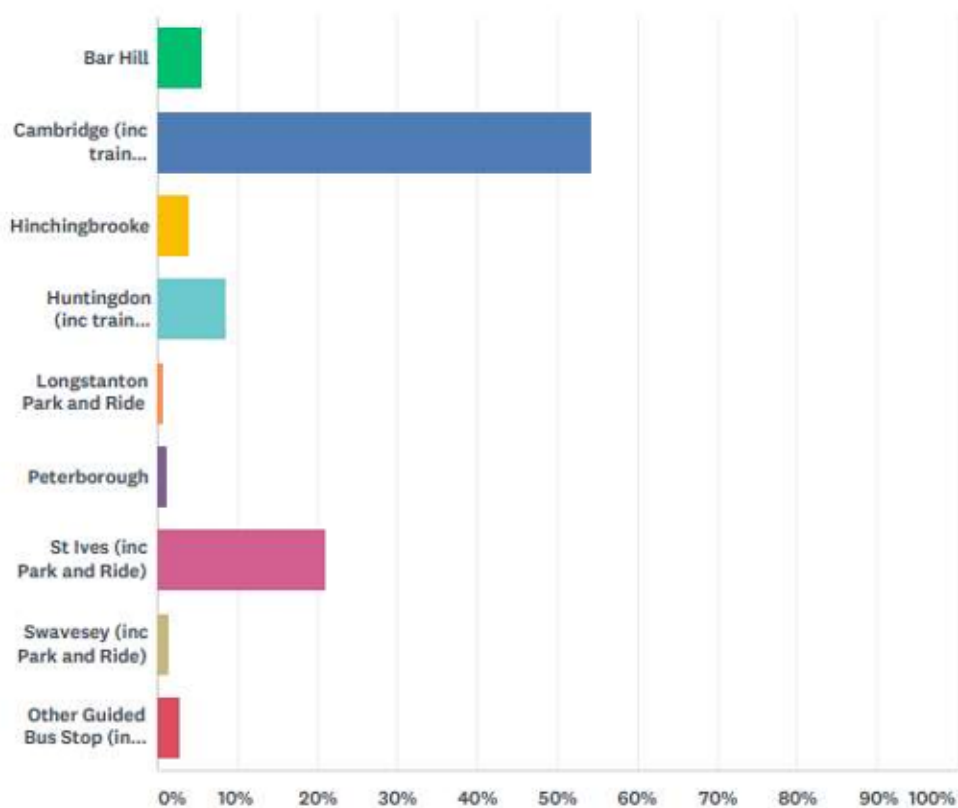
Source: Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro Strategic Outline Business Case

We want to work towards this vision, by upgrading the existing infrastructure of the Guided Busway. The Strategic Bus Reform Group is considering these issues, here we put forward our ideas for more effective bus connectivity in St Ives.

St Ives – Cambridge: Express services

The link to Cambridge is beneficial to St Ives, but it still takes too long to get there. Every bus to the city stops at Swavesey, Longstanton, Oakington, and Histon & Impington, meaning that even the fastest service takes 35 minutes to get from St Ives Park and Ride to Central Cambridge. While the guided bus is vital to these places, the fact that every service is a stopping service adds a lot to the time for the connection. As is common practise in transport planning, a combination of an express service calling at major hubs only, and a stopping service calling at all locations, would be a better approach. Data from the recent local bus user survey shows that Cambridge and St Ives are much more in demand destinations along the guided busway:

Response to Question 10: Where would be your most frequent destinations?



Source: Local Bus survey, covering the parishes of Colne, Earith, Houghton & Wyton, Bluntisham, Fenstanton, Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey, Hilton, Holywell-cum-Needingworth, Pidley-cum-Fenton Parish Council, Swavesey, Somersham, Woodhurst, Wyton on the Hill and Warboys

This echoes the identification of key hubs at Northstowe, St Ives, Huntingdon, and Alconbury in the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the CAM.

To realise this between Cambridge and St Ives should only require minor amendments to the existing busway, to build passing places for express services to go past stopping services. It will also require negotiation with Stagecoach to re-timetable services.

In addition, we are also keen **to explore the option of asymmetric pricing with Stagecoach** depending on direction of travel. Those who work in Huntingdonshire are in general paid less than those who work in Cambridge, so there is a strong case to make peak-time journeys from Cambridge to St Ives cheaper than those going in the other direction. This will help us attract Cambridge-based workers to companies in St Ives (and elsewhere in Huntingdonshire).

Alconbury – St Ives

The remaining section of the Guided Busway which is relevant for the CAM is that which goes on from St Ives to Alconbury. The current model is for these buses to join the road network at St Ives. This causes at least two significant problems:

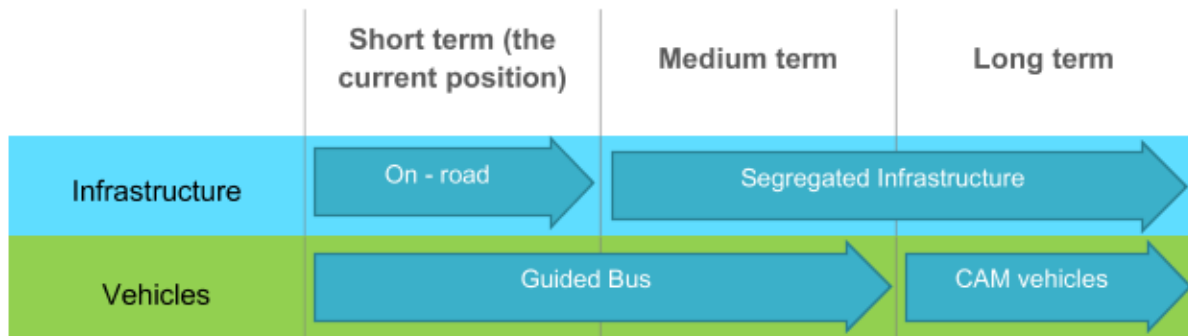
- 1) It reduces the efficiency of the guided busway as a means of public transport, as it is no longer segregated from other traffic and therefore is slowed down.
- 2) The buses themselves add to the weight of traffic, causing congestion problems on the Harrison Way.

In addition, the route west of St Ives also suffers from stopping at multiple places, this contributes to local congestion – with all buses to Huntingdon stopping at Hartford, Oxmoor, and the Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

In order to deliver the CAM, we need to create a fully segregated network. As the SOBC notes, “CAM has been developed to maximise segregation, which in addition to creating a faster, more reliable network, will increase the ease at which autonomous operation can be introduced.”⁴ But we also know that with the current guided bus vehicles, segregated connectivity can also improve the efficiency of the service (as seen to the east of St Ives). Therefore, by working now to provide segregated connectivity onwards to Huntingdon and Alconbury, we can both make the Guided Busway more effective in the medium term, and prepare the ground for the CAM in the long-term. The SOBC for the CAM already acknowledges that the only part of the guided busway which would need conversion for the CAM is the section between Cambridge Regional College and Cambridge North, and south of Cambridge station – therefore envisaging that the guided bus infrastructure from St Ives to Cambridge Regional College could remain as it is. Therefore, we can continue this style of infrastructure, without incurring additional costs for conversion at a later date.

Phasing of infrastructure and vehicle types for public transport connectivity between Alconbury and St Ives

⁴ <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/assets/Uploads/CAM-SOBC-v2.1.pdf>, p.v



To develop the segregated infrastructure to allow the Guided Bus to continue quickly on to Huntingdon we will explore whether, once the new A14 has opened, if the old A14 infrastructure can host the guided bus connection. This would also naturally create a transport interchange at Huntingdon train station. Or, there may be options to split at St Ives, with some guided buses going to Huntingdon, and others going north to Alconbury and on to Peterborough.

Improved connectivity across the River Great Ouse

As noted in the overview, the River Great Ouse has shaped the development of the town. It is a huge asset for St Ives.

However, the river also acts as a very direct transport barrier, limiting our ability to develop as a town. Creative proposals need to be developed to improve flows of traffic across the river, while maintaining the distinctive sense of place which defines St Ives. Various options are currently being explored around creating a third river crossing, with an initial feasibility report expected in March 2020. This study is looking at the broadest package of measures to manage congestion issues to the north of the Great Ouse. This river crossing would allow for long-term higher rates of economic growth and the provision of additional housing, as well as taking pressure off existing crossing points. **The Combined Authority needs to continue to prioritise this as a key action, not just for St Ives, but for all of Huntingdonshire and the wider area.**

More immediately, we can reduce the stress on transport flowing through the A1096 by improving flows on the roundabout where the A1096 meets the A1123. Increasing the ease of flow here will reduce wait times, improving conditions for local businesses.

Become the Cycling Capital of Cambridgeshire

Cycling is already popular in St Ives, with two bike shops in the town⁵, and a cycle club which was originally launched in 1877⁶. Rates of cycling to work are double the English average, at 6% of workers.⁷ We want to turn this natural preference into a real strength for the town, **becoming the cycling capital of Cambridgeshire**. This vision ties in with environmental benefits, taking cars off the road by encouraging switching the mode of transport where feasible, with the provision of good quality cycle infrastructure. To realise this ambition, we need to:

- Increase cycling infrastructure in and around the town, to encourage cycling not just among the naturally sporty, but also those who might be put off by safety concerns. Creating slow, safe routes around the town will make it easier for underrepresented groups to get into cycling.
- Develop collateral to support cycling, including local route maps.
- Create order of cyclist/pedestrian/car priorities in the historic town centre
- Work with local bike shops to promote cycle hire schemes.

A focus on improving the ease of cycle commuting, including secure cycle locking facilities in town and at public transport hubs – particularly the Guided Busway station. These elements are important contributors to reducing the conflict of space. As well as introducing new cycling infrastructure to a high standard, it is integral that we upgrade and improve the current provisions in such a way that they cycle routes are the preferred choice of cyclists and are factors in designing the car out.

⁵ Richardsons Cycles and Broadway Cycles

⁶ See <https://stives100yearsago.blogspot.com/1988/08/st-ives-3-may-1889.html>

⁷ Analysis of Census 2011 data

3. Public realm of the highest quality



“Public realm”, according to English Heritage, “relates to all parts of the built environment where the public has free access. It encompasses: all streets, squares, and other rights of way, whether predominantly in residential, commercial or civic uses”.⁹ It can also be thought of as the “space between” buildings. The difference between towns where it is pleasant to dwell and visit, and those you would rather avoid, is the quality of the public realm. Poor public realm is often characterised by a lack of a distinctive sense of place, an overabundance of cars (both moving and parked), and absence of green space.

As a historic market town, St Ives has preserved much of its heritage buildings, and the river frontage creates a pleasing view of the town. But there is much more we can do to make the most of our public realm and maximise access to the natural environment

Ensuring pedestrian priority in St Ives

Pedestrianisation of spaces in towns and cities have multiple proven benefits. These include:

- An improved aesthetic, lifting the feel of a place
- Increased footfall as it is easier for people to linger, supporting local businesses
- Greater probability of encountering friends, building community
- Improved air quality from a lack of motor vehicles
- Reduced conflict between pedestrians and motorists
- Greater accessibility for disabled persons, as there is no longer a need to maintain “hard borders” between pedestrian and motorist space

While pedestrianisation inevitably leads to a removal of some car parking space, this should not affect small businesses, as the added appeal of a car free centre draws people in to spend more time and money there.

Case Study: Pedestrianisation in Stoke on Trent

In 2017, Stoke on Trent City Council invested £2.5 million on improving pedestrianisation around Hanley’s shopping areas. The investment included widening footpaths, replacing existing footpaths with modern paving and installing trees and

⁹ https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Public_realm

benches to promote a more pedestrian friendly landscape for shoppers. The Council stated that the programme led to a 30% increase in footfall on Piccadilly street, Hanley.

This intervention is part of a wider scheme of the Councils, with a total investment of £10 million to make Stoke on Trent more Pedestrian friendly. Other areas that the programme is targeting includes Tontine square, upper market square and Parliament row. The programme shows that, in areas which are already in high demand, such as high streets, pedestrianisation can support retailers by increasing dwell time.

Within St Ives, there is a small pedestrianised area (Bridge Street). The street, however, is still cluttered with parked cars. We also partially pedestrianise Market Hill and the Pavement for market days (when footfall in the town is highest). But there is scope to do much more.

Our proposal for pedestrianisation in St Ives includes:

- Working towards full pedestrianisation of the area of Market Hill, the Pavement, the Quay, Wellington Street, Birt Lane, and Market Lane. This will create a continuous area with Bridge Street, and importantly open up the Quay. This is likely to be a gradual process, and may require testing out different interventions (for example, on a weekly basis) to ensure it works smoothly and is well received by local people.
- Using the extra space created for street furniture such as sympathetically designed benches to increase dwell time. There may be scope to bring more greenery in to the town centre (such as trees) as well.
- Some “hard infrastructure” to ensure that people do not flout the restrictions (as currently happens on Bridge Street). This would most likely look like rising bollards – allowing business suppliers to drop goods off in the morning before keeping the streets clear for the rest of the day

We propose **full pedestrianisation from Market Street to The Waits.**

Creating a unique offer around the mews

The mews around St Ives are an unusual feature, not present in many of Cambridgeshire’s market towns. They present opportunities to create interesting new spaces with business and accommodation built in. This already happens to an extent– but by engaging our local creative community we can identify a site to do something “out of the box”. It gives us an opportunity to build upon the evening economy which is already a strength of St Ives.

The example of Cobden Chambers in Nottingham (see case study) is instructive. A real focus on getting independent, artisan businesses in will create a “quarter” with an unusual cultural and arts offer. The courtyard area can become an “arts quarter” with benches and ambient lighting. There may also be an opportunity to develop a “gallery space” by working with local

artists – even more ambitiously, we have had early conversations with “the other St Ives” (on the Cornish Coast, which hosts the Tate St Ives Gallery) about whether there may be opportunities for artistic collaborations between the two towns. This is the sort of project which could majorly raise the profile of our town as an artistic and cultural destination.

Case Study: Cobden Chambers, Nottingham

Nottingham has transformed a courtyard off one of its main streets into a characterful centre of independent retail. The Chambers contain a design hub, record store, independent book shop, café and jewellery store, centred around an outdoor seating area. The charm of the original courtyard has been maintained, combined with quirky art and design features. The area has the feel of a hidden gem, tapping into consumer demands for unusual, one-off experiences.



This vision was realised with funding provided by through a vacant shop grant to install electricity and make the previously empty units fit for purpose. The City Council worked with the owner of the properties to secure funding and assist with access to the courtyard. The Council also produced an online Nottingham Independent Tour¹⁰ which shows people the key independent areas around the city. This established Cobden Chambers as a key part of Nottingham’s independent scene.

On-street WiFi to digitally enable the urban realm

The development of digital technologies has had an inescapable impact on our high streets. However, prophecies of the total demise of the high street overlook the fact that humans are, and always will be, physical creatures, benefiting from face to face interaction. People will also often want to look at and assess goods before buying them. The fact that Amazon, one of the dominant forces in e-commerce, is now trialling pop-up shops on the UK High Street testifies to the continued importance of the physical high street, and the opportunity which exists to combine the digital and the physical.

The next step to future proof the high street will be the installation of free on-street Wi-Fi – this is one of the basics in providing an integrated digital/physical experience for the future, and may well become a criteria for national chains when deciding where to set up. Bill

¹⁰ See <https://www.guidigo.com/Tour/United-Kingdom/Nottingham/HIDDEN-Nottingham-Independent-Shopping/UF2eCOx472M?lg=en>

Grimsey, Former Chief Executive of Iceland and one of Wickes' subsidiary businesses, set out as a key recommendation in his second review of the High Street to "provide free public Wi-Fi and well-connected workplaces that support flexible working patterns and attract freelancers to high streets and town centres."¹¹

Our proposal for the Wi-Fi is deliberately constrained to the town centre to encourage people into it. It can also be used to gather helpful data to improve the town – for example St Neots have recently launched an interactive map¹² where people can anonymously post about any problems they encounter within the town centre. As St Ives looks to become more walking and cycling friendly, it can also draw on the example of the Sheffield City Region, which has recently launched an active travel map¹³, where people can post about areas it doesn't feel safe to walk or cycle.

An improved quayside

Finally, as well as pedestrianisation, we can bring the Quay further to life by attracting more boater traffic. This requires the fairly simple addition of pontoons at the Quay to provide additional mooring points next to the Quay.

The design of the floating pontoon will provide step access, and therefore cater for a range of smaller-sized river craft than at present, as currently moorings are too low to the wall. Boater traffic at the Quay should be monitored to ensure that boats using the moorings are staying for a maximum of 24 hours (to avoid boats being abandoned).

Monitoring the success of upgrades to the public realm

To understand the success of these interventions, we need to begin monitoring footfall in St Ives in real time. This will monitor the health of the evening economy, and measure how successful different urban realm interventions have been in growing the use of the town centre.

¹¹ <http://www.vanishinghighstreet.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/GrimseyReview2.pdf> p9

¹² <https://consultcambis.uk/engagementhq.com/smart-places-initiative-st-neots/maps/st-neots-interactive-map#marker-2477>

¹³ <https://cyclewalkscrmapp.sheffieldcityregion.org.uk/>

Conclusion and Next Steps

[To be finalised once actions are agreed]



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