2. Introduction

2.1 Project Background

City Science was commissioned by the Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to develop a State of the Region and interactive dashboard. The State of the Region will inform the CPCA Strategic Planning process, and strategy and policy development across the whole C&P region. Whilst CPCA has commissioned this work, constituent councils and partners have been actively involved in the Review. Key partners are:

- Cambridge Ahead
- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System
- Centre for Business Research (CBR)
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Cambridgeshire Acre
- Voluntary Community Action East Cambridgeshire

- Fenland District Council
- Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
- Greater Cambridge Partnership
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Peterborough City Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- University of Cambridge
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust

This State of the Region builds on previous work, including the C&P Independent Economic Review (CPIER, 2018). The purpose of CPIER was to create a single strategic position to help the C&P region consider the case for greater fiscal devolution and powers to unlock the delivery of major infrastructure, including showing how the area delivers benefits to the rest of UK. The original CPIER was well received nationally and locally; however, key elements of the evidence base used to inform the CPIER are now out of date. For instance, several significant macro-economic factors include the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and an increased focus on delivering net zero ambitions. Other significant pieces of work built upon include the State of the City Report for Cambridge (Cambridge City Council, 2023).

2.2 Report Purpose

This State of the Region aims to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of C&P's current economic, social, and environmental landscape. This report sets out the key findings from the State of the Region, covering 140 datasets which link to the datasets presented in the accompanying online dashboard. The report also undertakes relevant analyses and comparisons with other regions to capture key trends and understand the relative performance of the C&P against other areas. By analysing the most up-to-date data and insights from across the region, this report serves as a resource and evidence base for stakeholders, policymakers, and community leaders to understand the area's opportunities, priorities, and pathways for sustainable growth and prosperity. Across the data used in this report, there is a variation in the time the data becomes available (varying from months to years) and the time period it covers (e.g. releases relating to calendar years, financial years). Consequently, the time period covered by the most up-to-date data varies between sections of this report.

2.3 The Dashboard

This 2024 State of the Region is complemented by a live, online, interactive dashboard that enables users to find and explore the data summarised in this report, alongside providing access to the raw data.

2.4 Project Objectives

The objectives of this State of the Region and dashboard are to:

- Create a relevant, reliable and accessible evidence base on the current state of the C&P region.
- Assess the impact of recent macro-economic factors on how residents live, and businesses operate.

- Inform conversations about the contribution the region is making regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Ensure the evidence base adds value to what is already being done locally and is aligned with locally established methodologies and reporting measures.
- Ensure that the evidence base meets the needs of stakeholders from diverse sectors including local government, voluntary and community and business.
- Gain visibility and buy-in for the evidence base through communications and engagement.
- Achieve best value use of public funding by building on existing work and drawing on local, national and international best practice.
- Build local data analysis, interpretation skills and capacity.
- Future proof the evidence base with an annual refresh and automation interacting with external datasets, dependent on availability of future funding.

2.5   Strategy Area

The CPCA was established in 2017, and covers a significant extent of the East of England, which includes the local authorities of (as shown in Figure 2-1):

- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Fenland District Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Peterborough City Council
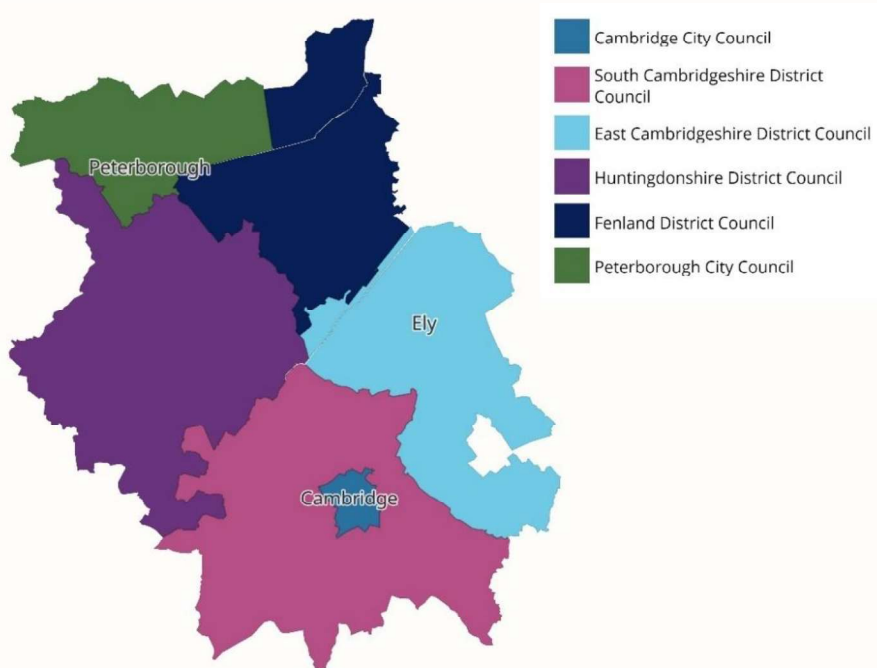- South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Figure 2-1: CPCA Extent (Greater Cambridge Shared Planning)

2.6   Introduction to the Themes

2.6.1   Theme Development

The themes that underpin the evidence for this State of the Region were developed through a comprehensive process of analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement (see Section 2.7). The following activities ensured the themes and indicators aligned with partner priorities and leveraged local data sources:

- **Stakeholder Interviews:** In-depth interviews with key stakeholders to explore current and future strategic priorities, planned uses of the report data and dashboard, and availability of local datasets. These hour-long interviews covered a range of topics agreed upon with the project team.

- **Technical Working Group Consultation:** Regular consultation with the Technical Working Group for the State of the Region which brought together key representatives from the local partners (see Section 2.1), seeking their input, feedback and validation of themes and datasets at key stages of the development process. This included, reviewing the evidence from the best-practice and policy reviews, development of the core themes and sub-themes, and long-listing and appraisal of the key datasets for analysis within each theme. This collaborative process with working group experts ensured the themes and indicators developed reflected regional priorities.
- **Policy & Strategy Review:** Comprehensive review of current and forthcoming policies/strategies from CPCA and stakeholders, to understand key themes and ensure alignment with strategic needs.
- **Literature & Best Practice Review:** Production of a literature review examining existing frameworks, themes, and indicators used in sustainable growth frameworks and similar studies. This identified common themes like health/wellbeing, equality, prosperity, and sustainability for consideration.

The final five themes were selected to align with the priorities identified through the policy/strategy review and stakeholder engagement process. Three cross-cutting themes were also developed to capture indicators spanning multiple topics. The full list of themes and indicators is shown in Appendix B – List of Indicators.

2.6.2   State of the Region Themes

Figure 2 sets out the themes covered by this State of the Region. These themes cover economic, social and environmental considerations and are split into 5 core themes and 3 cross-cutting themes. Each core and cross-cutting theme is dedicated a separate chapter within this report.

Core themes are:

- Business & Enterprise (see Section 4)
- Workforce, Jobs & Skills (see Section 5)
- Health & Wellbeing (see Section 6)
- Wildlife & Nature (see Section 7)
- Net Zero & Climate Resilience (see Section 8)

Cross-cutting themes are:

- Place (see Section 3)
- Tackling Inequality (see Section 9)
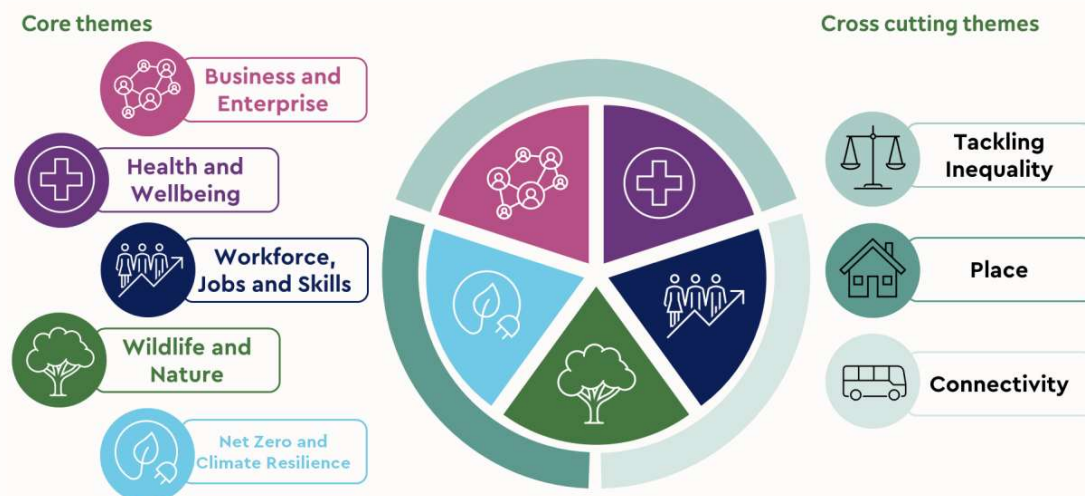- Connectivity (see Section 10)

Figure 2-2-2: State of the Region Themes

2.7 Stakeholder Engagement

An extensive stakeholder engagement process has been fundamental to the development of this 2024 State of the Region and dashboard. This has included project meetings with the core CPCA project team, alongside Technical Working Group and Shared Ambition Meetings with key stakeholders, including local authority representatives, the Integrated Care System and the CBR. Regular project meetings have been complimented by engagement with additional stakeholders including members, voluntary and business sector representatives, and academics. Engagement has been held at key project stages to inform the work (e.g. to support strategic alignment and to obtain feedback on the emerging findings, as well as ensuring alignment with the local plan). Table 2-1 lists the key stakeholder engagement the process has included.

Audience	Meeting	Frequency
Project Meetings	**Project Meetings:** With the core CPCA project team	Weekly
	State of the Region Technical Working Group: With key stakeholders, including data specialists	Monthly
	Shared Ambition Meetings: To support alignment with the development of a shared ambition for C&P	Monthly
Broader Engagement	**Insight Interviews:** To gain insights on existing data sources, platforms and strategy and policy priorities	16 Meetings
	Interim Report Consultation Sessions: To cascade the emerging findings and obtain feedback	4 Meetings
	Dashboard Testing: To obtain feedback to inform development of the dashboard	5 Meetings
	Draft Final Report Consultation Sessions: To cascade the findings and obtain feedback prior to finalisation of the report	4 Meetings
	Narrative Workshops: To engage and discuss the emerging findings	3 Meetings

Table 2-1: Stakeholder Engagement

2.8 Note on Data Sources

Development of the State of the Region has revealed particular indicators where a number of potential datasets or methods exists which could be used. Navigating these differences can be challenging and complicates the provision of a "single version of the truth", which is a key aspiration of this work. Throughout this report we have selected a headline, primary data source to provide a single version of the truth. Appendix C – Selection of Data Sources sets out the rationale for the selection of the primary data sources used, but also notes some of the key areas of difference with other sources or methods that stakeholders may encounter.