

Government plan to transform Oxford-Cambridge Arc into UK's fastest growing economic region

- Generational plan will unlock the long-term potential of the region, transforming the Arc into a world-class place to live and work sustainably.
- An intention to establish a new single voice for the area – an Arc Growth Body – to drive and support economic growth

An ambitious plan to unleash the economic and cultural potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, to transform it into one of the world's premier growth corridors and a world-leader in sustainability, has been announced today (Thursday 18 February) by Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher.

The spatial framework plan will help to create thousands of jobs, drive investment, protect and enhance the environment, and provide the infrastructure and beautiful new places needed to make the area – which spans the five counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire – an even greater place to live and work.

The results, due to be published in 2022, will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help to ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.

The intention to establish an Arc Growth Body will also help unleash the area's potential as a global innovation powerhouse by promoting the Arc internationally.

With the right interventions and investment, local analysis suggests that by 2050 economic output could double to over £200 billion.

To realise the full potential of local economies and the Arc as a whole, the government is also considering how further investment could create jobs, support the delivery of more homes, and support local economic growth.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is already home to world-leading economic, cultural and scientific assets.

We know for instance Cambridge's rate of patent applications – a key indicator of innovation – is the highest in the United Kingdom, while nearby Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the country.

We want to take this region to the next phase of its renaissance by unlocking its full potential and our plans will drive investment where it is needed and ensure, as growth happens, we create well-designed, inclusive and vibrant places and communities.

The OxCam spatial framework will allow us to plan positively for growth and we look forward to working with our local partners over the coming months to strengthen our vision and approach to the Arc.

Councillor Barry Wood, Chair of The Arc Leaders Group and Leader Cherwell District Council said:

We welcome the continuing commitment from Government to the Oxford to Cambridge Arc through today's announcements.

We look forward to working together with local people and our local partners to deliver an economy that works for all, underpinned by a high-quality natural environment. This will include planning for and enabling development that is truly inclusive and sustainable which delivers real benefits for our communities and environment now and in the future.

The Arc already is home to over 2 million jobs and provides a place to live for over 3.7 million residents.

The Arc's success is key to the United Kingdom's national prosperity, international competitiveness, and ability to meet the challenges and opportunities the country will face over the next century, including climate change and supporting nature recovery technological change fighting COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.

This regional success will build on the work of the government that has helped millions of people continue to provide for their families as part of its [Plan for Jobs](#) to protect, support and create employment.

The [Oxford to Cambridge \(OxCam\) Arc](#) the name given to a cross-government initiative that supports planning for the future made up of the five counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. It includes:

- 3 county councils: Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.
- 17 district councils: City of Oxford, South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse, West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, Northampton, South Northamptonshire, Daventry, Wellingborough, Kettering, Corby, East Northamptonshire, City of Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire;

- 6 unitary authorities: Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Luton, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and City of Peterborough;
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a unique place, home to cutting-edge research, globally renowned science, and technology clusters, and some of the most productive towns and cities in the country.

Oxford and Cambridge are world-leading centres of research and innovation. There are ten significant higher education institutions, including Cranfield University, with its world-leading specialisms in automotive and aerospace engineering, the Open University, and the world-leading centres of learning at the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge.

The Arc contains a vibrant natural environment and a rich cultural heritage, and it is home to some of the country's fastest growing and most innovative places.

Cambridge's rate of patent applications – a key indicator of innovation – is the highest in the UK, at over 12 times the national average. Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the country. Work on the COVID-19 vaccine, testing and treatment is the latest example of the Arc's unique innovation and business environment leading efforts to tackle a global challenge.

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With the right interventions and investment, local economic forecasts suggest that by 2050 we would see economic output doubling to over £200 billion. The Arc's success is key to the UK's national prosperity, international competitiveness, and ability to meet the challenges and opportunities we will face as a country over the next century, including climate change and supporting nature recovery, technological change, fighting COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.

"The Arc" offers a significant opportunity for the government and partners to work together to support the harmonious delivery of improved connectivity, productivity and place-making, whilst ensuring pioneering environmental standards and enhancements are delivered and the government's 25 Year Environment Plan is put into action.

The desirability of the Arc as a place to live, visit, work and invest is in part due to the quality of the local environment, the rich and diverse character of its landscapes, and the resultant high value of the area's natural capital.

Spatial framework

The spatial framework will set a plan and policies with the status of national planning policy. Based on a long-term, strategic approach to planning for growth across the area, it will help to unlock the long-term potential of the area in a sustainable way, improving the Arc as a place to

live and work. It will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help to ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.

We are today publishing a [policy paper](#), which sets out the approach we intend to take, including:

- a timeline for developing the framework,
- how we will engage communities and work with local partners, and
- the high-level scope of the framework, including the approach it will take to planning for the environment, infrastructure, economic growth, and new homes and place-making.

Growth body

- Capitalising on the globally renowned assets of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc can help to lead the UK's economic recovery. That is why government has today (18 February) announced its intent to establish a Growth Body in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.
- This will give a clear economic leadership voice to the Arc. This announcement builds on government's support for the region including connecting communities through East West Rail and supporting a long-term plan for sustainable growth with the spatial framework.
- Government will work with local partners to ensure that the Growth Body is tailored to the region's unique opportunities.