

## Where and How to Build in East Cambridgeshire

Over the past three decades, the UK has seen housing affordability plummet. A shortage of housing supply—and critically, the misallocation of where homes are built—lie at the heart of this issue. In response, the UK government has pledged to build 1.5 million homes over five years.

Using data on over 20 billion housing searches from Rightmove—the UK’s most popular housing platform—together with the full history of rental and sales listings from 2019–2024, [Dr Nikhil Datta](#) and [Dr Amrita Kulka](#) at the University of Warwick have produced a research report and mapping tool on **where and how to build 1.5 million homes in Great Britain** to meet actual demand.

We construct a new measure of excess housing demand: the **housing gap**. The housing gap is the difference between the number of people searching for a home and the number of available properties in an area. It reflects how many home-seekers are affected by a shortage. We calculate the housing gap at a hyper-local level: Output areas (OAs).

You can view the [main report](#), examine the underlying calculations, and view our mapping tool at: [wheretobuild.warwick.ac.uk](https://wheretobuild.warwick.ac.uk)

This sub-report provides detailed information on where and how to build in East Cambridgeshire and should be read along with the main report as it is not fully self-contained.

The current government Local Authority (LA) housing target is 686 homes per year, out of a total 401,918 nationally. East Cambridgeshire contains 269 Output Areas, out of 235,243 in total in Great Britain. Our main report finds that 96% of the variation in the housing gap arises within local authorities, not between them. This highlights the crucial role of local authority decision-making in determining where housing is delivered.

The following figure documents where in East Cambridgeshire the housing gap, the difference between demand and supply, is the largest, by Output Area.

Figure 1: Housing gap per Km<sup>2</sup>



Specifically, below are the output areas ranked highest and lowest within East Cambridgeshire LA in terms of their housing gap.

**Table 1: Highest and lowest housing gaps per Km<sup>2</sup> within Local Authority**

OA Code	Rank within LA	National Rank	In Post District	Example Postcodes
<b><u>Highest Gap per Km<sup>2</sup></u></b>				
E00090937	1	50,453	CB7	CB7 4FD, CB7 4FE
E00090953	2	50,579	CB6	CB6 3DR, CB6 3DW
E00090954	3	50,612	CB6	CB6 3DX, CB6 3DL
E00090962	4	50,626	CB6	CB6 1AX, CB6 1AY
E00173725	5	50,629	CB7	CB7 4YF, CB7 4QW
<b><u>Lowest Gap per Km<sup>2</sup></u></b>				
E00090859	265	231,719	CB8	CB8 0SH, CB8 9RA
E00091094	266	231,844	CB25	CB25 0NA, CB8 0SD
E00090860	267	231,899	CB8	CB8 9NJ, CB8 9NE
E00090895	268	231,960	CB8	CB8 9PJ, CB8 9PE
E00090865	269	232,333	CB8	CB8 0TZ, CB8 0RD

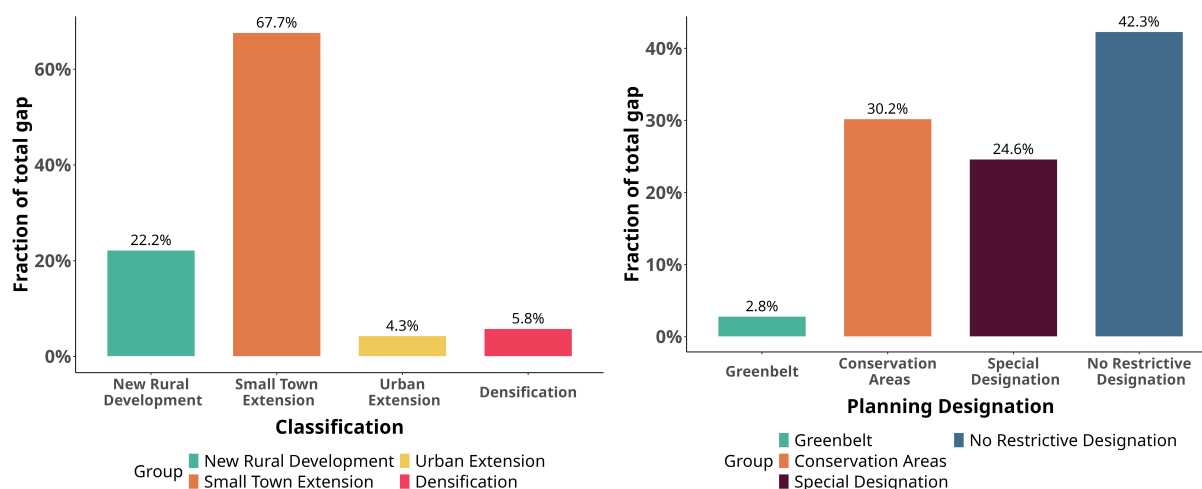
We also decompose the housing gap in several ways to shed light on the locations that would reduce the excess demand for housing in East Cambridgeshire LA if they received new housing.

We classify building patterns into 4 groups following the debates on housing delivery<sup>1</sup>:

- New rural developments which incorporate new towns and villages, and developments to small villages.
- Small town extensions which incorporate developments within and immediately surrounding large villages and small towns.
- Urban extensions which are developments extending large towns and cities.
- Densification which involves the inner development of large towns and cities.

In East Cambridgeshire, we calculate the fraction of the housing gap corresponding to each of our four building patterns and analyse the proportion of the housing gap that lies within restrictive planning designations:

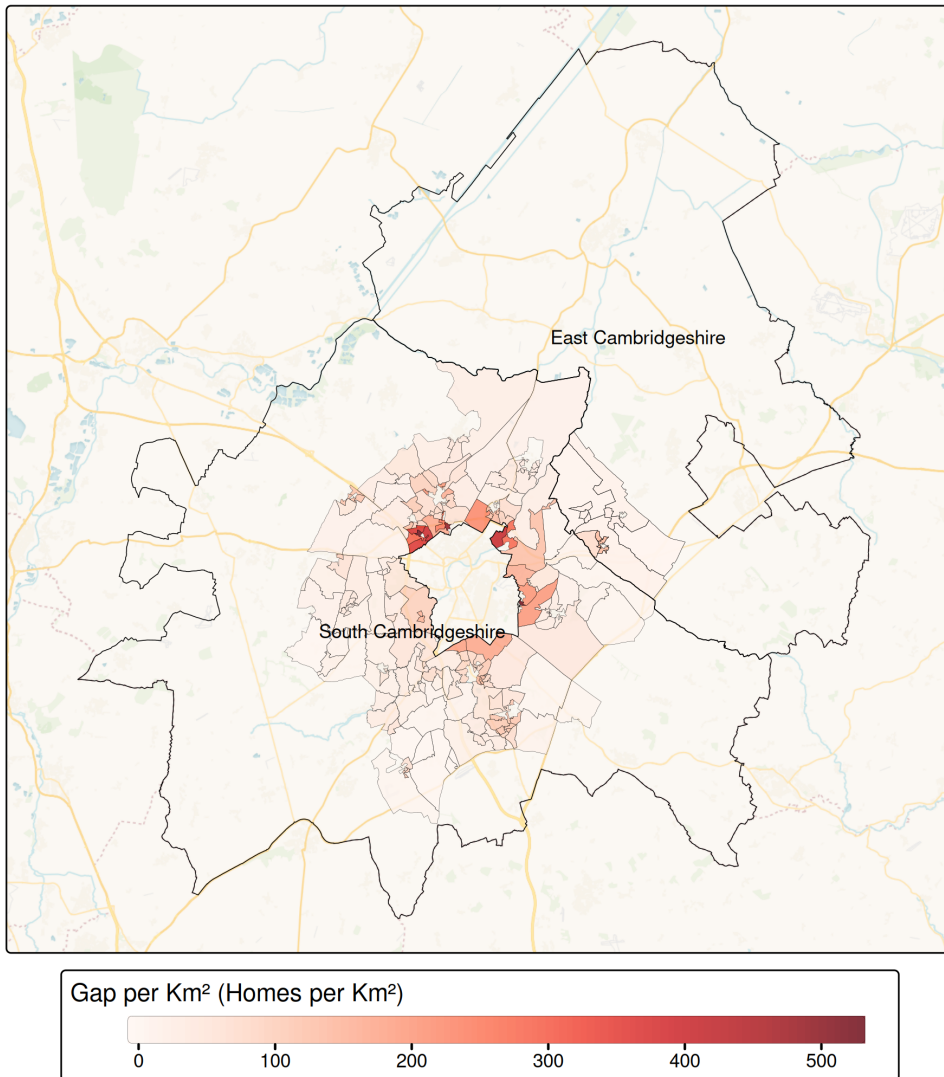
**Figure 2: Proportion of housing gap by build classification and planning designation**



<sup>1</sup>Note that towns and cities are defined by ONS BUASDs/BUAs or NRS Localities/Settlements and can intersect more than one LA. Therefore, the densification and urban extension areas for the same city may lie in different LAs. This is particularly pronounced for the LAs around the 5 major cities. For example, an outer-lying London borough building may be classified almost entirely as urban extension, as it does not lie within the inner 50% of London.

The below map plots shading of the housing gap per km<sup>2</sup> for Output Areas which intersect with a greenbelt either within East Cambridgeshire LA or its neighbouring LAs which contain any greenbelt land:

**Figure 3: Housing gap per km<sup>2</sup> on greenbelt land**



We also calculate a secondary measure: **housing tightness**. This is the ratio of searchers to homes, reflecting competition for a single property and linking directly to how hard or quick it may be to secure one. The higher the tightness the more competition for a single property. While the housing gap reflects how many people are affected by excess demand, housing tightness captures the intensity of that shortage for an individual person—e.g. how difficult it is for someone to find a property.

The following figure presents the tightness measure for all output areas in East Cambridgeshire.

**Figure 4: Housing tightness**



**Policy Recommendations** In our main [report](#) we document that the placement of new housing within local authorities is even more important than the targets set across local authorities. We show that in areas with a low housing gap, developers are slow to build out new units due to the lack of demand. Therefore, housing development should be diverted towards places with a high housing gap. This report highlights key locations in East Cambridgeshire LA where local policy makers should consider prioritising adding new housing to satisfy the current gap between housing demand and availability.