



Historic Ely

Ely means 'the island of the eels'. In the 17th century before the Fens were drained the site of Ely was an island surrounded by water and marshes, where eels were found in abundance.

The world famous Cathedral with its medieval surroundings was built on the site of a monastery founded in 673AD by Saint Etheldreda. Traces of Saxon settlement are known in the vicinity of the Cathedral and the Cathedral Green, as well as downhill to the east between Broad Street and the river.

Ely is the second smallest city in England, and attracts 1.25 million tourists a year. Tourism is estimated to be worth £91million to the local economy (2002 figures).

The Ely Conservation Area boundary was extended significantly in 2009 and takes in the central and historic core with over 190 statutorily listed buildings, as well as buildings and open spaces of local importance.

Green Ely

The Park to the south of Ely Cathedral was laid out in the 18th century and forms an important historic green space. Cherry Hill within the park accommodates the remnants of the motte and bailey of the Norman castle.

Palace Green is situated right in the centre of the City. It is popular for picnics and sitting out on fine sunny days, and hosts a number of community events over the year.

Paradise playing fields situated close to the city centre and adjacent to the leisure centre provide a valuable open space where local teams can play cricket and football.

The Ouse riverside area, green spaces, Jubilee Gardens, Chettisham Meadows, Roswell Pits, Ely Pits and Meadows Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) already make a significant contribution to the current setting and attractiveness of Ely.



“It is not just the Cathedral that is stunning, it's the heritage and architecture of the City.”

Ely Youth Film

Ely on the Move

Most of the population is within easy walking or cycling distance of key services in Ely. The cycleway network however, is currently fragmented, making it difficult to access key destinations without using the roads.

Ely is served by two major A roads that link the City to the wider road network. The A10 bypasses Ely to the west, while the A142 runs east/west along Angel Drove on the southern outskirts.

Ely is well connected to the national railway network. A 30% growth in passenger levels over the last ten years has resulted in 1.5 million passengers per year now using Ely station (2007/8) and a consequent pressure on car parking provision in this area.

The proposed development of a new station at Chesterton sidings in Cambridge, serving the Cambridge Science Park, would strengthen the links between the employment areas of Ely and Cambridge as well as providing alternative rail transport options for existing commuters currently using the A10.

Ely railway crossing for HCV's using the A142 is closed for 25mins in every hour. By the mid 2020's, with proposed increases in freight and passenger traffic, the crossing might be closed for 55 minutes every hour. Delays to traffic, including HCV's, are of regional significance given the importance of the A142 as a primary route.

A Southern Link Road has been proposed previously to relieve congestion on the A142. Although a bid to Government for funding for this scheme in 2004 met Government requirements, the scheme was not successful in obtaining a funding allocation because of the high level of competition for this funding. The District Council is currently working with Cambridgeshire County Council to explore options to resolve the current problems caused by the railway crossing.

Many of the public car parks are used to capacity during the day, in part a reflection of the extremely limited bus services available within and around Ely.



Ely at Home

Ely has grown rapidly in recent years with significant expansion to the west and north.

Sites for new housing in Ely are severely restricted by physical constraints. Studies indicate that there is capacity to accommodate only a further 1,100-1,300 dwellings on brownfield sites within the current development boundaries of Ely (ECDC Housing Land Availability Assessment 2007). For this reason the District Council's Core Strategy plans for development of new housing on a green field area in the north of Ely to the eastern side of the Hospital.

Ely at Work



The local economy has been performing strongly in recent years, although the current global downturn may impact on this. Today there are just over 9,000 people employed in Ely.

More than half of those living and working in Ely walk to work. However, out commuting levels for Ely are 49% and this figure rises to 72% for some of the more recent housing developments in the City.

Employment studies suggest that the current allocation of major new employment sites at Lancaster Way and Angel Drove will be sufficient for the period up until 2021, provided that they are fully developed.

The projected employment growth within the County is seen to be within the financial, business and other services sector, which includes public sector, health, distribution, hotels and catering.

Tesco and the King's School are two of the largest employers in Ely. Education provision also includes the City of Ely Community College and Sixth Form Centre.





Ely at Leisure

Ely hosts three different markets with its award winning Farmers Market on the second and fourth Saturday of every month, its regular Thursday General Market and Saturday Craft and Collectables Market.

There is almost 45,000 sq m gross floorspace in the central shopping area of Ely. Just over 35,000 sq m of the total gross floorspace is taken up with retail uses, which represents over 80% of the total floorspace. The total retail floorspace includes the Tesco store (4,824 sq m gross) at Angel Drove, which represents a significant proportion of the convenience retail offer in Ely, and is a major attractor for Ely as a retail centre. Non-retail uses take up just under 5,500 sq m (12.2%) gross of the total floorspace. Just over 1,700 sq m gross (4%) of the total floorspace is vacant (East Cambridgeshire District Council Retail Study 2005).

Retail studies have identified that there is a relatively high leakage of spending out of the area, with only 23% of the locally available spend on comparison goods (clothes, consumer goods, home improvement products) being spent within the district. They indicate that there is potential to increase the percentage of this market share (East Cambridgeshire District Council Retail Study 2005, Partial Review April 2008, Roger Tym & Partners).

There is very limited vacant floorspace within the existing city centre to accommodate new shopping provision.



There are current proposals to relocate the existing sports facilities at Paradise to a site at the Downham Road/A10 junction. The proposal is to develop this as a leisure village providing new facilities not just for Ely, but as a District level facility for East Cambridgeshire as a whole. The proposed centre will be incorporated with the existing outdoor sports facilities and include a new eight-lane swimming pool, a health suite and a six court sports hall.

A bowling facility is operated commercially off Angel Drove, and there is a private health club facility. However Ely has no cinema, arts centre or theatre provision, apart from the facilities which can be offered at the Maltings Banqueting and Conference Centre by the river.

The riverside moorings offer an important tourist and leisure amenity, which adds to the City's attractiveness.