



Cambridge City Council

**Services, Climate and Communities Overview
and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: Wednesday, 11 March 2026

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Market Square, Cambridge, CB2 3QJ [access the building via Peashill entrance]

Contact: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk, tel:01223 457000

Agenda

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Declarations of Interest
- 3 Minutes (Pages 3 - 10)
To approve the draft minutes from the meeting on 3 February 2026.
- 4 Public Questions
- 5 Biodiversity Strategy Mid-Term Review (Pages 11 - 198)
- 6 Urban Forest Strategy (Pages 199 - 496)
- 7 Work Programme (Pages 497 - 498)

Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Members: Young (Chair), Gardiner-Smith (Vice-Chair), Divkovic, Glasberg, Griffin, Hauk, Payne, Pounds and Swift

Information for the public

The public may record (e.g. film, audio, tweet, blog) meetings which are open to the public. For details go to:

www.cambridge.gov.uk/have-your-say-at-committee-meetings

For full information about committee meetings, committee reports, councillors and the democratic process:

- Website: <http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk>
- Email: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk
- Phone: 01223 457013

SERVICES, CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 February 2026

5.30 - 8.20 pm

Present: Councillors Young (Chair), Gardiner-Smith (Vice-Chair), Divkovic, Glasberg, Griffin, Hauk, Payne, Pounds and Swift

Officers:

Head of Economy, Energy and Climate: Jemma Little

Inclusive Economy and Climate Manager: David Wright

Assistant Director for Housing and Health: Samantha Shimmon

Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Justin Long

Deputy Democratic Services Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

Other councillors in attendance:

Councillor Rosy Moore, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Cabinet Member for Planning & Transport

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones, Cabinet Member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness

Councillor Tim Bick (Market Ward)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

26/1/SC&C Apologies

No apologies were received.

26/2/SC&C Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

26/3/SC&C Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

26/4/SC&C Public Questions

The Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment responded to the public question received on the recycling contract with Re-Gen in Northern Ireland.

It was confirmed that no recycling or waste collected by the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service was sent to the Warrenpoint refuse centre. Any contamination such as dirty nappies, food and clothes that is separated out and cannot be recycled, is stored at Re-Gen's Derryboy Road site and then sent to Sweden to an energy-from-waste facility.

The importance of the waste hierarchy (reduce, re-use, recycle) was emphasised along with the extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme.

26/5/SC&C Work Programme

The Work Programme was noted.

26/6/SC&C Update on the Climate Change Strategy (2026-2031)

The Inclusive Economy and Climate Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the development of the new Climate Change Strategy (2026-2031). This would replace the current strategy which ends in March 2026.

The following key points were noted:

- i. The Council's direct emissions made up approximately 0.7% of the total carbon emissions of the whole city.
- ii. The highest proportion of these (council) emissions came from leisure centres and swimming pools.
- iii. Emissions reduction had been achieved through the decarbonising of the national grid and initiatives including the use of electric and HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil) waste vehicles.
- iv. The Council continued to perform extremely strongly compared with other UK councils on carbon reduction and sustainability, and Cambridge was currently one of the highest-performing cities in the UK for sustainability.
- v. The emerging strategy aimed to continue progress and had been developed following widespread public engagement.

- vi. The proposed strategy was structured around three key sections with differing levels of authority, control and influence: Sustainable City Council (High Control), Sustainable City (Medium Control/ Influence), Working Together for a Sustainable Cambridge (Influence/ Facilitation).
- vii. The strategy plotted reduction over the next ten years and suggested that emissions could reduce by approximately 500 tCO₂e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) per annum.

Members raised a number of questions, and a summary of the key points were:

- i. Officers reported that details on carbon savings for the Civic Quarter project were being developed and would be dependent on whether the sites used on-site power generation or whether the City Centre Heat Network proceeded. In either scenario, the intention was that the Guildhall would be operationally net-zero.
- ii. The Council had several challenging buildings in its portfolio from a retrofit perspective (including the Guildhall) and it was noted that all council buildings would need to meet forthcoming (more stringent) minimum energy efficiency standards (EPC C rating by 2028) and therefore 'doing nothing' was not an option.
- iii. Members emphasised the growing energy demands of digital services (associated with AI, cloud computing and data centres) and noted that the strategy did not directly address this issue.
- iv. It was reported that the City Centre Heat Network project was progressing well and an update was due to be considered by the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- v. It was confirmed that the long-term aim was to get as many waste vehicles as possible electric (subject to the solar power capacity of the recharging stations) and the others would remain as HVO-run.
- vi. It was reported that many of the 'quick wins' on emissions had been secured and therefore the Council was undertaking more expensive and complex projects (such as City Centre Heat Network, Civic Quarter and the Solar Farm) and would face more difficult decisions as it moved towards net-zero.
- vii. Officers confirmed that EPC standards were the responsibility of landlords (in the private rented sector), and it was agreed that further information would be provided on enforcement work in this area.
- viii. It was reported that Abbey and Kings Hedges swimming pools would be outside the proposed new Heat Network, but work was ongoing to reduce energy use at these sites including as a part of the tender process for the operation of these facilities.

- ix. Officers confirmed that transport strategy and delivery sat with the Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- x. Officers outlined how moves to a unitary authority should give successor councils more scope to tackle climate change.
- xi. Commercial properties (shops and businesses) accounted for a significant proportion of emissions in Cambridge (23%); a much higher proportion than the UK average. It was reported that work was ongoing in this area to increase engagement and awareness as well as share best practice.
- xii. Officers reported that water scarcity had featured heavily in the consultation responses and work in this area was being led through the Local Plan and the Cambridge Growth Company.
- xiii. The link between the Strategy and the emerging Local Plan was discussed with officers working closely together. It was noted that the Local Plan was focused on new buildings and infrastructure (not existing).
- xiv. Members supported the focus on carbon reduction over offsetting wherever possible, noted that the consultation had clearly informed the strategy, and supported the international outlook being adopted.
- xv. It was agreed that more detail would be provided on progress in key areas such as on retrofit and adaptation initiatives.
- xvi. It was confirmed that the Council's proportion of emissions (0.7% of total emissions) had gone down – both as a proportion and in real terms.
- xvii. Members highlighted the importance of tree-planting and particularly tree preservation in addressing climate change and improving biodiversity. It was noted that a new Urban Forest Strategy was out for public consultation, and current planning policy stipulated all major planning applications were to provide a mandatory 10% uplift in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) with an aspiration for this to be 20% and a proposal in the emerging Local Plan for this to increase to 30%.

In summation, the Chair noted the following points on behalf of the Committee:

- i. Concern on the deliverability of the strategy if major projects such as the City Centre Heat Network and Civic Quarter did not progress as planned.
- ii. Support for the focus on innovation, efforts to tackle water scarcity and the principle of offsetting only as a last resort.
- iii. Recognition that there was a balance moving forward between a focus on the Council's direct emissions (only accounting for 0.7% of overall city emissions) and wider areas including business, commercial and private sector emissions.

26/7/SC&C /~Cambridge City Homelessness Review

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health introduced the item reporting that there had been several changes since the 2018 Homelessness Reduction Act, and therefore it was considered the right time to review the whole system in Cambridge. A review was procured last year from PPL, and it was planned that this would be followed by the development of a strategy and then its implementation.

Joe Kane-Smith, from the consultants PPL, then gave a presentation summarising the review and noting the following key points:

- i. There had been several recent national developments including publication of the 'National Plan to End Homelessness' in December 2025, recent consolidation of local authority funding into one 'Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant', and legislation under the Renters' Right Act (2025) and Social Housing (Regulation) Act (2023).
- ii. The lines of enquiry for the review were summarised. These included analysis of the existing strategy and landscape, current and future levels of homelessness, current provision and resources.
- iii. The review had mapped and explored in detail current pathways for different groups including young people, victims of domestic abuse, families, rough sleepers and those with no recourse to public funds.
- iv. The review found that Cambridge had strong foundations in place to respond to homelessness with partnership working well established; however, these strengths were under increasing strain with demand for homelessness services rising.
- v. PPL found that the system was good at responding to crisis but less consistent at preventing homelessness earlier or stopping it from reoccurring.
- vi. Key pressure points for Cambridge included discharge from institutions into homelessness, gaps in high needs supported housing, uneven access to health services and limited options for groups including women, people with no recourse to public funds and those experiencing hidden homelessness.
- vii. Recommendations were focused on strengthening prevention, improving flow through the system and targeting resources where they would have the greatest impact.
- viii. The strategy should be guided by a clear principle: 'start less and finish more', with a small number of priorities for the next two years and limited, targeted test-and-learn activity.

Members raised a number of questions, and a summary of the key points were:

- i. The report was commended by members for its level of detail, the system-wide approach, and the focus on strengthening prevention.
- ii. Key drivers of growing demand were discussed including victims of domestic abuse (these had doubled since the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act in 2021) and evictions from supported housing and the private rented sector.
- iii. It was noted that the review did not include specific public consultation, but it was anticipated that this wider work would be undertaken in the strategy development phase.
- iv. The importance of aiming to end homelessness rather than manage homelessness was emphasised. There was a recognised need to focus on moving people through pathways by reviewing incentives for each organisation in the 'eco-system' and making sure these all support the desired outcome.
- v. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 mandated that local authorities in England develop supported housing strategies based on a supported housing needs assessment by 2027.
- vi. Members discussed the importance of ensuring that there was no fragmentation in the system as well as the importance of getting the Housing First model right in Cambridge. This included considering PRS delivery in lower cost parts of the city together with visiting support.
- vii. Officers reported that the strategy development stage would focus on prioritisation and how the various recommendations would be delivered. This stage would also consider the implications of LGR, alignment with South Cambridgeshire District Council, and the need for wider-partner engagement.
- viii. Use of AI and data analytics was discussed including existing utilisation of the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT). This also included a way of establishing a good system wide method of assessing demand to ensure sufficient capacity e.g. for high needs space
- ix. Officers noted that housing was a key area of consideration as LGR proposals developed and getting proper alignment would be crucial.
- x. It was clarified that those homeless because of domestic abuse have a priority need and the Council had a duty to provide accommodation, and under the Council's lettings policy they would be placed in Band A.
- xi. Prevention, including the use of more predictive approaches, was considered a key priority as well as working more closely with social housing providers to support people to move on from homelessness.

- xii. Consideration of whether the Cambridge Charter should be taken under council control.

In summation, the Chair noted the following points on behalf of the Committee:

- i. Concern about the rise in those suffering domestic abuse and related homelessness.
- ii. Support for the focus on early intervention, identifying and preventing homelessness, and working with social housing providers to help people move on from homelessness.
- iii. The need to lead and consider the whole system, the incentives for each entity within it and how progress can be measured
- iv. The necessity to address the shortage of high needs accommodation and review all options to provide stable accommodation for those leaving homelessness e.g. an assisted PRS package.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank



**REPORT TITLE: Biodiversity Strategy Mid-Term Review (2022 – 2025) and
Action Plan (2026 – 2031): Pre-decision Scrutiny Update**

To: Services, Climate & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (11 March 2026)

Report by:

Guy Belcher, Biodiversity Manager

Tel: 01223 458532 Email: Guy.Belcher@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All

Director Approval: Director James Elms confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to scrutiny for consideration.

1.	Recommendations
1.1	It is recommended that the Services, Climate & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Key Decision 1. Notes the progress made in the midterm review of the Biodiversity Strategy (2026 – 2031), including the public consultation 2. Reviews and comments on the proposed update to the Biodiversity Strategy (and Action Plan) and recommends it to Cabinet for adoption Non-Key Decision 3. Reviews and comments on the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designations of Fulbourn Road and Church End in Cherry Hinton prior to 24 March 2026 Cabinet consideration of the recommendation to adopt.

2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	The report is presented for pre-decision scrutiny prior to 24 March 2026 Cabinet consideration of the decision to adopt the revised Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2026 – 2031). Scrutiny Committee feedback will be reported to Cabinet and used to inform the final version of the Strategy prior to adoption. Our current Biodiversity Strategy (2022 – 2030) pledged to undertake a 5-year review of actions and progress to ensure we continue to collaborate to protect, manage and enhance nature in the city. Following December 2025 Cabinet Approval a joint public consultation on the draft Biodiversity Strategy mid term review and a draft new Urban Forest Strategy was run on the City Council Go Vocal consultation portal from 7th January to 10th February, with a further one-week extension for emailed responses, as requested by specific groups. The revised Strategy reflects feedback and views from the consultation, retaining similar supported updated vision, themes and objectives, and additional actions and projects to align with our new statutory Biodiversity Reporting Duty, the new Urban Forest Strategy (UFS), and wider initiatives including the statutory Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), the BIG Chalk partnership and an ambition to collaborate with our communities to achieve future Nature City Accreditation. These more recent initiatives are described within the strategy. The strategy action plan includes the proposed designation of two new Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), both within Cherry Hinton. These have been supported through the consultation, and if approved we will seek formal declaration through the statutory Natural England process in 2026.

3.	Alternative options considered
3.1	1. To not review and allow the current strategy to continue without review through to 2030. This option is not recommended as it would fail to consider new initiatives and wider strategies and risk not aligning with future collaborations and associated funding priorities and opportunities. 2. To not designate the two new proposed LNRs in Cherry Hinton. This option is not recommended as it would fail to provide statutory protection, greater recognition and enhanced management of two important sites for nature in the ward
4.	Background and key issues
4.1	The current Biodiversity Strategy was adopted in 2022 and set out a clear vision and actions to address our declared Biodiversity Emergency. This vision has been retained following the 2026 consultation with only minor amendments to strengthen our commitment (shown in bold below): <i>‘Our Biodiversity Strategy vision is that over the next 5 years Cambridge will see a “measurable net gain” in biodiversity compared with the 2020 Biodiversity Audit baseline, both within every ward of the city and the surrounding countryside, including the extent and quality of priority habitats and populations of priority species. Wildlife habitats will be protected, enhanced and where possible expanded and linked.</i> <i>The very best wildlife habitats will form part of a much wider Cambridge Nature Network that will permeate the whole of the city and link to the wider Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Everyone who lives or works within Cambridge will have access to nature rich greenspaces within walking distance of their home or place or work, and there will be a greater awareness and understanding of biodiversity with opportunities to be involved and collaborate in local wildlife</i>

enhancement projects and monitoring.'

The 7 strategic objections to deliver the vision are retained, with only minor amendments (shown in **bold** below) in response to consultation and the addition of objective 2 referencing the recently adopted Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

1. To secure a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the city **by 2031, compared with the 2020 baseline, in** support of the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Vision by 2030.

2. To ensure designated sites and priority habitats are in good / favourable Condition, **wherever feasible, and that by 2031 no Council-managed LNR, Common or County Wildlife Site remains in poor condition without a management plan in place. Thus, enhancing habitat and species** resilience to a changing climate and contributing to the Cambridge Nature Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3. To **engage and** promote awareness of biodiversity and wellbeing, supporting coordinated action in our communities, businesses, and institutions **through embedding Natural England's Green Infrastructure strategies and principles, with particular focus on wards with high social disadvantage or poor access to natural green space**

4. To ensure that biodiversity **protection and enhancement** is considered by all council service functions and projects **in line with our statutory Biodiversity Duty**

5. To maximise the potential of our buildings, parks, open spaces, allotments and community gardens, watercourses and tree stock to support biodiversity, whilst balancing their multifunctional needs

6. To harness the wealth of local professional and amateur knowledge and experience in identifying and solving local issues.

7. To **work with partners to** establish long term, species and habitat monitoring to

	measure the impact of activities and identify new threats and opportunities across the city and publish an annual report on progress Since adoption of the current strategy, we have delivered many diverse projects and initiatives across services and in collaboration with partners and communities. These have been summarised in the accompanying Cabinet approved Biodiversity Duty Report 2022 – 2025) and associated case studies, the submission of which is a new statutory requirement for all local authorities established within the Environment Act, 2021. Since 2022 several new initiatives and partnership have arisen that require capturing in an updated plan: The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), adopted December 2025, is a new statutory strategic document that sets out the County wide sites, species and habitats priorities for action. These actions have been captured within the revised City Strategy and action plan to ensure we are coordinated with adjoining authorities within the remaining lifetime of the strategy, and that our plans are aligned for future Local Government Reorganisation. Our existing cross-boundary Cambridge Nature Network and Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project have been formally recognised by BIG Chalk, a major landscape scale alliance of over 150 organisations working to restore nature across 20% of England focuses on chalk and limestone landscapes. A key new ambition within the revised strategy is to seek Nature City Accreditation through a recognised process of increased collaboration for nature recovery with our communities, which has received significant support through our 2026 consultation.
5.	Corporate plan
5.1	The Biodiversity Strategy review seeks to address the following corporate priorities (2022 – 2027):

	• Responding to the climate and biodiversity emergencies and creating a net zero council by 2030 Through collaboration with communities and partners to deliver strategic nature recovery in the city and beyond. Nature based solutions including increase canopy cover, sustainable urban drainage and restoration of urban chalk streams will help mitigate the impacts of climate change on both communities and nature. • Tackling poverty and inequality and helping people in the greatest need Seeking to ensure everyone living or working in Cambridge has easy access to safe, high-quality, nature rich, natural green spaces, promoting wellbeing and social inclusion. • Building a new generation of council and affordable homes and reducing homelessness Ensuring new council homes meet our ambition of delivering 20% Biodiversity Net Gain • Modernising the council to lead a greener city that is fair for all Ensuring that we meet our Biodiversity duty through seeking opportunities to protect and enhance nature across all services and partnerships
6.	Consultation, engagement and communication The current Biodiversity Strategy was adopted in 2022 following a public consultation held in 2021. To inform the midterm review we promoted a public consultation on a draft revised strategy between 6th January and 10th February 2026 on our consultation portal. The public consultation undertaken jointly for the Biodiversity Strategy Mid-Term Review and the new Urban Forest Strategy generated a strong and constructive level of engagement. A total of 256 respondents participated, with 83% choosing to comment on both strategies together, supporting the intention to present these interrelated documents as a coordinated package. On request officers approved a one-week extension of the consultation for local groups to collate and submit emailed responses by the 17th February 2026. These responses do

not appear within the Consultation summary report but have been provided in full within the supporting papers.

Overall, feedback demonstrated very high levels of support for the strategic direction of the Biodiversity Strategy. Over 92% of respondents either strongly supported or supported the Strategy's vision, with fewer than 4% expressing opposition. Respondents consistently emphasised the importance of restoring priority habitats, enhancing ecological connectivity, and embedding biodiversity considerations across Council services.

A recurring theme throughout the consultation was the need to provide more space for nature, with 62% stating that current provision in parks is not sufficient and calling for increased wildflower meadows, wetlands, ponds, long grass, and deadwood habitats.

Respondents also highlighted the need for ongoing maintenance and monitoring, noting that newly planted trees and habitats require consistent aftercare to ensure their success.

Comments also strongly supported the Strategy's focus on designated site management, nature-based solutions, and the ambition to secure Nature City Accreditation, with over 76% of respondents in favour of Cambridge pursuing accreditation.

Respondents felt the Nature City accreditation framework could strengthen collaborative delivery, improve accountability, and help celebrate positive progress on biodiversity.

Several themes emerged consistently across long-form answers. These included:

- Reducing pesticide and herbicide use, with strong calls to reinstate or strengthen herbicide-free commitments.
- Integrating biodiversity into all new development, with requests for stronger enforcement of Biodiversity Net Gain and greater on-site delivery.
- Improved access to nature, particularly for communities with low canopy cover and limited green space; 59% of respondents supported prioritising resources for communities with the poorest access.

- A focus on wetlands, chalk streams, rivers, and water management, reflecting local concerns over siltation, pollution, and habitat fragmentation.
- Greater support for community involvement, volunteering, citizen science, and environmental education, particularly involving schools and families.

Feedback also aligned strongly with the Strategy's emphasis on addressing climate risks, with respondents expressing clear support for diversifying new tree species selection, enhancing tree canopy in heat-vulnerable neighbourhoods, and creating more shade, water features, and drought resilient planting.

Overall, respondents expressed a clear desire for ambitious, practical and measurable action, and asked that the Council continue to demonstrate transparency and strong communication around evidence, decisions, and trade-offs.

The revised Strategy has been updated to directly reflect this feedback.

Key amendments include:

- Integration of Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework, to support Nature City Accreditation ambition
- Commitment to core site habitat condition enhancements by 2031
- Commitment to publish an annual progress review
- Reinsertion of herbicide reduction promotion into the Action Plan
- Moving technical details into appendices to reduce overall length of the document

The consultation has therefore played a significant role in shaping the revised Strategy and ensuring it remains evidence-led, community-supported and aligned with emerging regional and national policy frameworks.

7.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
7.1	Adoption of the revised Biodiversity Strategy following the mid-term review is expected to deliver the following outcomes: 1. Improved plan quality: insights from stakeholders and communities will help ensure the Biodiversity Strategy is both deliverable and widely supported, with projects refined in response to feedback. 2. Increased participation and engagement: the consultation will raise awareness of the Biodiversity Strategy and encourage greater involvement of residents, community groups, developers, and landowners in its delivery. 3. Clearer accountability: the introduction of condition targets for core nature sites will allow progress to be monitored transparently over the remaining lifetime of the strategy. 4. Greater recognition: seeking Nature City Accreditation will ensure shared goals and new collaborations that can be celebrated. What does good look like? 1. A Biodiversity Strategy that is accessible, evidence-based, and widely supported. 2. Broad public awareness of and engagement with the Biodiversity Strategy and wider Cambridge Nature Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategy 3. A clear route to achieve Nature City Accreditation in recognition and celebration of our shared vision, collaboration and delivery partnerships.

8.	Implications
8.1	Relevant risks
	Risk 1: Risks if the decision is made (approve the mid-term Biodiversity Strategy review)): Approving the BS carries a low level of strategic risk, primarily relating to deliverability and expectations rather than policy intent, as progress towards long-term biodiversity outcomes will depend on sustained funding, cross-Council coordination, engagement on private land, and external factors such as climate impacts, development pressures and tree disease. There is a risk that targets are perceived as guaranteed outcomes rather than long-term ambitions, that delivery capacity varies year to year due to funding constraints and local government reorganisation, and that some decisions on site management may attract challenge from user groups; however, these risks are mitigated through realistic long-term targets, a proportionate, evidence-led approach, alignment with existing statutory duties and corporate strategies, and monitoring and reporting to enable adaptive management. Risk 2: Risks if the decision is not made: Not approving the BS carries a higher strategic risk, including loss of policy direction for managing and growing the city's core sites for nature, weaker alignment with the Climate Change and Urban Forest Strategy, reduced ability to influence development and partner activity, and increased exposure to ad hoc or inconsistent decision-making in high-risk areas such as, development pressure, tree protection and asset management. This would weaken the Council's ability to secure external funding and achieve the aspired Nature City Accreditation.
8.2	Legal Implications
	There are no direct legal implications arising from the proposed decision to adopt the revised strategy. The Council already has statutory duties to consider biodiversity in all its services and report to national government. The strategy will help ensure these duties are met within a clear framework.

	Equalities and socio-economic Implications Assessment found that the strategy and associated actions will have overall positive equality impacts across Cambridge's communities. The actions promote equitable access to nature, health and wellbeing benefits, and inclusive community engagement. No negative or disproportionate impacts were identified, and equality outcomes will be monitored through annual reporting.
8.3	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.4	The overall impact of the Biodiversity Strategy midterm review is assessed as being moderately positive in terms of reducing impacts of climate change and enhancing biodiversity. Healthy nature green spaces, wetlands, waterways and tree canopies form a vital part of climate mitigation and adaptation. The strategy sets out a proactive approach to protecting, maintaining, expanding and enhancing natural habitats, contributing to: • Carbon storage and sequestration, supporting the Council's net zero targets. • Urban cooling and shade, reducing the impacts of extreme heat. • Stormwater management, helping reduce local flood risk. • Biodiversity enhancement, contributing to Biodiversity Net Gain and habitat connectivity. The Strategy complements and aligns with the Council's draft Climate Change and Urban Forest Strategies.

	Procurement Implications
8.5	There are no procurement implications arising directly from this decision to approve the midterm Biodiversity Strategy review
	Community Safety Implications
8.6	There are no community safety implications arising directly from this decision to approve the midterm Biodiversity Strategy review The strategy supports public safety through developing natural solutions to mitigating the adverse impacts of climate on our communities. Following adoption of the revised strategy any specific site project design or management reviews will consider community safety audits to ensure that the sites continue to be safe, inviting and accessible to all.
	Financial
8.7	Revised Local Nature Reserve, Common and watercourse management will be delivered within existing budgets. Future delivery of the strategy may require external funding, building on the Council's track record of securing over £900K (excluding Cambridge Canopy Project) of external funding since 2022. A proposed 0.5 FTE post to support engagement delivery is included in the February 2026 Budget Setting Report and, if approved by Full Council, would help accelerate elements of the revised Biodiversity Strategy. Actions without identified funding are included in the strategy as aspirational and will only be taken forward if resources become available.

9.	Background documents Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
10.	Appendices
10.1	Appendix 1 - Biodiversity Strategy (2026 – 2031) Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2030 - Cambridge City Council (current) Appendix 2 - 2026 Biodiversity Strategy midterm Review - Consultation Report Appendix 3 – Cam Valley Forum Response Appendix 4 – Friends of St Matthews Piece Response Appendix 5 – Biodiversity Duty Report (2022 – 2025) Appendix 6 – Biodiversity Project Case Studies (2022 – 2025) Appendix 7 – Equalities Impact Assessment for Biodiversity Strategy midterm review Appendix 8 – Climate Change Rating Tool for Biodiversity Strategy midterm review
	To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Guy Belcher, Biodiversity Manager, tel: 01223 458532, email: Guy.belcher@cambridge.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Strategy (2026 – 2031) DRAFT



V2 1



Contents

1. Foreword 2

2. Vision..... 4

3. Executive Summery 5

4. Introduction 6

4.1 Why we need a strategy..... 6

4.2 Cambridge biodiversity in context..... 8

4.3 Legislation and policy 10

4.4 Local Initiatives 11

4.5 Cambridge City Council role 14

4.6 Biodiversity in Cambridge 17

4.7 Local threats and pressures 25

5. Biodiversity Audit 27

6. Biodiversity Strategy 28

7. Action plan (2026 – 2031) 32

8. References..... 38

9. Glossary of Terms..... 399

10. Appendices..... 40

Appendix 1 National Legislation

Appendix 2 Biodiversity Audit (2020 – 2025)

Appendix 3 Cambridge City Council, core biodiversity site habitat condition
audit 2025

Appendix 4 2026 Draft Biodiversity Stratgey Mid Term Review Consultation
Responses

1. Foreword



Councillor Martin Smart

Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Spaces & City Services

When we adopted our 2022 Biodiversity Strategy, we pledged to undertake a midterm review on progress, direction and delivery. This revised strategy update changes in national legislation and recognises new regional strategies, partnerships and local projects, setting clear, time bound actions and measures of success. It provides an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the many successful projects and partnerships working to protect and restore nature across the city and beyond. Whilst also recognising the urgency to address the continued threats

The 2021 Environment Act places a new statutory duty on all Local Authorities to publish a Biodiversity Duty Report to demonstrate our collective efforts in support of biodiversity. The accompanying report showcases our shared regional and local visions, strategies and initiatives and provides case studies on what has been achieved between 2022 and 2025. However, we are now halfway through the decade in which the UK has committed to halt and reverse nature loss; hence the need to review and strengthen our efforts between 2026 and 2031.

This summer I felt great pride in joining the Friends of Logan's Meadow Local Nature Reserve at their opening event of the newly created wetlands in East Chesterton. This ambitious project is a great example of the collaborative approach needed to restore urban habitats and wildlife. The original concept from the Friends, supported the vision of the Cambridge Nature Network, whose partners helped secure initial Lottery funding for design and consultation. Natural England provided additional Green Recovery Funding for a new woodland buffer, planted by the local community. The resulting momentum secured a Combined Authority grant and developer (S106) contributions to dig the new wetlands, which, following the planting of reeds by volunteers have already been visited by water voles, otters and kingfishers.

Such projects give us hope that the decline in nature can be reversed when communities and partners work together on shared challenges and goals. This is also the ambition of the recently adopted statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We worked with the Combined Authority to

produce this overarching vision for our region with shared priorities and goals that complement the existing objectives and projects of the Cambridge Nature Network, and we look forward to collaborating on delivery.

The repeating message of collaboration fundamentally supports our ambition for Cambridge to achieve Nature City Accreditation for our collective work to put nature at the heart of our communities. We pledge to take a lead on this and commit to publishing annual public reports on progress against this strategy.



2. Vision

Our corporate plan sets out a clear **‘One Cambridge, Fair for All’** vision which we are working towards cooperatively with our residents and partner organisations. Collectively we are seeking **‘Cambridge to be a net zero carbon city, where people and nature enjoy a clean river, clean air, and biodiverse green spaces’** and where **‘strong nature networks are coordinated between relevant bodies to combat the impacts of social and climate injustice’**

We will deliver this vision through our Corporate Plan (2022 – 2027) priorities. The first of which is **‘Leading Cambridge’s response to the climate change and biodiversity emergencies’**

‘Our Biodiversity Strategy vision is that over the next 5 years Cambridge will see a “measurable net gain” in biodiversity compared with the 2020 Biodiversity Audit baseline, both within every ward of the city and the surrounding countryside, including the extent and quality of priority habitats and populations of priority species. Wildlife habitats will be protected, enhanced and where possible expanded and linked. The very best wildlife habitats will form the Cambridge Nature Network that will permeate the whole of the city and link to the wider Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Everyone who lives or works within Cambridge will have access to nature rich greenspaces within walking distance of their home or place of work, and there will be a greater awareness and understanding of biodiversity with opportunities to be involved and collaborate in local wildlife enhancement projects and monitoring’.

Progress towards this vision will be monitored through annual reporting published on our website.

3. Executive Summary

The Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Strategy (2026–2031) sets out a renewed commitment to address the biodiversity emergency declared by the council in 2019. Building on the 2022 Biodiversity Strategy, this update aligns with the Environment Act 2021, regional Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and the Natural Cambridgeshire (Local Nature Partnership) ‘Doubling Nature’ ambition

Vision:

By 2031, Cambridge will achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity, ensuring priority habitats and species are protected, enhanced, and connected. This means more wildflower areas and nature rich grasslands in our parks and Commons; healthier chalk streams and riverbanks; more trees and shade on streets and in housing estates; and more places for birds, bats, insects and other wildlife to thrive. We also want every resident to have a good quality natural greenspace within a short walk of where they live, work or study, fostering engagement with nature and enhanced physical and mental wellbeing.

Strategic Objectives:

- Deliver measurable biodiversity net gain across the city, including a minimum 20% net gain on all Council-led developments and a net increase in biodiversity units across Council-managed natural green spaces by 2031.
- Improve condition and connectivity of designated sites and priority habitats, so that by 2031 all Local Nature Reserves and Commons have improved habitat condition, and no site remains in poor condition without a published management plan being implemented and monitored.
- Embed biodiversity considerations across all council services, policies, supply chains and developments.
- Educate and empower communities, businesses, and institutions to act to enhance local, with a particular focus on wards lacking high quality natural greenspace
- Maximise biodiversity potential of council properties, parks and urban spaces, whilst balancing their multi-functional uses
- Establish long-term monitoring and research partnerships.

Key Themes:

- **Biodiversity Mainstreaming:** Integrate biodiversity considerations into council procurement supply chains, planning, housing, and operations; help deliver the

Local Nature Recovery Strategy; achieve 20% biodiversity net gain for council-led developments.

- **The Core:** Enhance the habitat condition of all Local Nature Reserves and Commons; support Cambridge Nature Network; restore chalk streams; review and monitor grazing practices.
- **Nature in Your Neighbourhood:** Promote community-led projects, Nature City Accreditation, pollinator-friendly initiatives, and biodiversity education, targeting support for wards with lower tree canopy cover, fewer wildlife rich sites, or greater social disadvantage.

Action Plan (2026–2031):

The strategy outlines targeted actions under these themes, including policy adoption, habitat restoration, species recovery, and collaborative projects with partners. Progress will be monitored through site condition assessments, and community engagement metrics. Each action in the plan specifies a lead service, partners and timescales, and we will use these to publish an annual report on delivery and outcomes

Outcome:

This strategy aims to reverse biodiversity decline, strengthen ecological resilience, and embed nature at the heart of Cambridge's communities—delivering environmental, social, and health benefits for future generations.

4. Introduction

The term 'biodiversity' describes all forms of life, their interactions and the ecosystems that support them and us. It includes all species, both common and rare, which combine to provide us with the air we breathe, water we drink and the food we eat.

4.1 Why we need a strategy

In 2019, we declared a biodiversity emergency in recognition of the pressures facing our natural world, both locally and internationally. We adopted the Biodiversity Strategy in 2022 to guide our work to meet this challenge and pledged to undertake a

mid-term review to ensure we are meeting our objectives. This revised strategy for 2026-2031 is the result of this mid-term review.

As with the Council's climate change emergency declaration, the biodiversity emergency requires all our services to consider their net impact on biodiversity within their operations. This revised strategy embeds biodiversity principles and considerations across all Council service areas and the communities we serve.

For many years, we have worked with our Friends Groups, Local Nature Reserve volunteers and partners such as the Wildlife Trust, Cambridge Past Present and Future, community gardens and orchards to maintain and improve the rich diversity of habitats in and around Cambridge. We greatly value this shared expertise and passion, recognising that we cannot hope to reverse the decline and help our species adapt to a changing climate alone. For this reason, the strategy review seeks to further engage with other city property owners, businesses, community groups and visitors to respect, protect and enhance our city's wildlife and the multiple benefits it provides our communities.

Despite current efforts, our 2020–2025 core sites habitat audits show that many of our most visible Commons and recreation spaces remain in poor or only moderate ecological condition; furthermore, recreational pressure and urbanisation continue to erode wildlife value. This strategy therefore focuses on changing how we manage land and support more environmentally attuned behaviour in every neighbourhood.

We are partners in the Cambridge Nature Network (CNN), which incorporates our iconic riverside commons and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and we look forward to continue to work closely with other network stakeholders including the East Cambridge Farmland Cluster, Cambridge University colleges and the wider local community to conserve and enhance the network as a vital strategic piece of green infrastructure (network of natural and semi-natural features—such as parks, wetlands, green roofs, and street trees—that provides environmental, social, and economic benefits).for the city.

Due to the economic success of Cambridge and the local region, major housing and employment growth sites which were identified within the Cambridge City Council's former Nature Conservation Strategy (2006) have now been built, along with associated new country parks and habitats to complement the existing network of LNRs, woodlands and water courses. Trumpington Meadows Country Park and Hobson's Park are now vibrant new strategic green spaces, providing welcome respite for communities during the Covid pandemic and new homes for farmland and wetland species. These schemes demonstrate that with good design and planning policy, biodiversity net gain is achievable on multifunctional spaces, with Hobsons Park being designated a County Wildlife Site in 2025.

In addition, developments have included planning conditions securing Section 106 contributions, which have helped fund biodiversity projects on existing green spaces, such as 'The Rush' fish pass at Sheep's Green LNR and new wetlands at Logan's Meadow LNR.

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service between the City and South Cambridgeshire District Council allows us to help plan on a strategic Greater Cambridge geography for existing and new green infrastructure and measurable biodiversity net gain within our emerging shared local plan. Identifying land not just for new homes but for new habitats and green connections to meet our duty under the Environment Act 2021.

4.2 Cambridge biodiversity in context

The biodiversity emergency we are experiencing is not just local but also global. Current global species extinction rates are 100 to 1000 times higher than the expected baseline rate, and they are increasing. Some of the key driving forces which are causing the emergency are increasing demands for housing, food and energy production. These can result in habitat loss, habitat degradation, habitat fragmentation and environmental pollution. They also contribute to, and exacerbate, the effects of climate change.

The result is a decrease in species diversity, or changes in how different plant and animals interact. Ultimately these declines and changes undermine nature's productivity, resilience and adaptability placing it at risk of further damage or collapse.

All these pressures are damaging to the intrinsic value of biodiversity, and the ecosystem services that we rely on for our social, economic and environmental health and wellbeing - including clean air, urban cooling, flood alleviation and food to name but a few. A thriving biodiverse environment is critical for life with a growing evidence base to suggest that we lead healthier lives, both mentally and physically, if we have more opportunities to interact with nature.

The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world (ranked 189 out of 218). Almost 15% of all species in the UK are at risk from extinction. With 72% of the UK land area managed for agriculture it is no surprise that changes in this industrial sector, responding to Government policy and societal changes, have one of the greatest impacts on our nation's biodiversity. Other drivers for change include urbanisation, invasive species, hydrological change and climate change.

In comparison to other parts of the UK, Cambridgeshire has some of the lowest proportions of threatened Priority Habitats and land designated for nature conservation, and it has the second lowest proportion of woodland coverage. Within the region intensive agriculture has also been instrumental in land use changes and biodiversity losses. Grassland cover has decreased from around 30% in the 1930s to less than 10% in 2018, being replaced in large part by arable farmland. Cambridgeshire also contains relatively little accessible green infrastructure for people, while growing populations are placing greater recreational pressures on these existing greenspaces.

The same suite of threats impact on the biodiversity of Cambridge as they do throughout the rest of the world. Our city and its associated sub region are experiencing rapid urban growth, including housing, commercial and institutional development. Whilst this helps support a thriving local economy it places significant pressure on our natural environment¹ and the biodiversity it supports.

It is challenging in an urban environment to balance the needs of both wildlife and people. If we are to reverse the declines in biodiversity, we must value and make space for nature in the urban communities where we live and in the surrounding countryside. This will mean protecting and enhancing the precious biodiversity resources that we have left but also ensuring there is sufficient outdoor recreational space for residents to be able to access and enjoy.

The very fact that these pressures are occurring at a local level does mean that it is within our power to do something about them. Biodiversity is resilient, particularly in our towns and cities; and has the capacity to bounce back. There are many examples of positive interventions making a difference for biodiversity within the city and across the UK.

The suite of actions set out within this strategy is the response of Cambridge City Council to the biodiversity emergency we face locally, nationally, and internationally. We recognise the importance of a healthy and biodiverse environment that is sustainably planned and managed to ensure the current and future prosperity and health and wellbeing of all sections of our communities. Our aim is to go beyond simply halting the decline in biodiversity but to actively restore the quality of our natural environment and leave our city's wildlife in a better state than that in which we found it. We hope the following strategy will inspire you to join us and help to deliver the proposed actions and associated changes needed to achieve this.

4.3 Legislation and policy

This Biodiversity Strategy considers and is aligned with a range of national, regional and local policies and plans, as outlined below, Legislative documents, policy reports and reviews or policy drivers are described in further detail in Appendix 1.

National Legislation

- Environment Act 2021
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

Policy documents (national, regional and local)

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 (updated 2024)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) and Cambridge Local Plan (2018)
- Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan (publication timeline December 2026)
- South Cambridgeshire District Council Doubling Nature Strategy (2021)
- Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (2022)
- UK National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (NBSAP) 2025
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (December 2025)

Reviews, plans and policy drivers (national, regional, and local)

- Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping (2020/2021)
- Greater Cambridge chalk streams project report (2024)
- CCC/MKA Ecology Ltd Biodiversity Audit (2021)
- Natural England Nature Networks
- Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security (HM Gov 2026)
- Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network (The Lawton Report, 2010)
- Cambridge Nature Network Report

Our strategy recognises and adopts the principle of the following national initiatives that support our vision and objectives.

[The Big Chalk Partnership](#)

An ambitious, national-scale alliance of over 150 organisations—primarily National Landscapes, National Parks, conservation groups, farms, community groups, and government agencies—working across southern England’s chalk and limestone geologies, Big Chalk promotes collaborative conservation, data-driven project planning, and dynamic partnerships to ensure these vulnerable landscapes thrive in a changing climate.

Butterfly Conservation - Butterfly-Friendly Cities

Butterfly conservation focuses on protecting butterfly species and their habitats, which are vital indicators of a healthy ecosystem. Urban areas can play a key role through the concept of a “butterfly-friendly city,” where green spaces, parks, gardens, and roadside verges are managed to provide nectar-rich plants, native wildflowers, and shelter for butterflies. These cities reduce pesticide use, create pollinator corridors, and encourage community involvement in planting and monitoring..

Nature Town & Cities

Nature Towns and Cities is a coalition—led by Natural England, the National Trust, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and partners—aiming to transform urban living through nature. It seeks to give more people access to green and blue spaces within a 15-minute walk and enable more children to play in nature on their doorstep.

CABA (the Catchments Based Approach)

A community-led, collaborative framework for managing water environments at the river-catchment scale across England and Wales. It brings together a wide range of partners—including environmental NGOs, local authorities, government agencies, landowners, businesses, and community groups—to share evidence, develop joint catchment plans, and deliver integrated actions that improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, reduce flood risk, and support climate resilience.

4.4 Local initiatives

The continued decline in biodiversity has prompted several local and regional initiatives that seek to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity through both development and land management practices. Many of these seek landscape scale restoration of habitats to ensure that ecosystems are resilient. The City Council seeks to support these through both policies and projects to ensure that opportunities are

realised on our land holdings, and we deliver biodiversity improvements through our statutory functions, operational services and community influence.

Natural Cambridgeshire (Local Nature Partnership) Doubling Nature Vision

Natural Cambridgeshire is a partnership of leaders from businesses, local authorities, the health sector, farming, wildlife and environmental organisations that exists to champion, influence and enable the fulfilment of the Doubling nature vision

Cambridge Nature Network

The Cambridge Nature Network is a landscape scale biodiversity initiative led by the Local Wildlife Trust and Cambridge Past Present and Future with support from local Councils and other key landowning partners. The initiative is founded on an evidence based spatial plan for protecting and enhancing nature, focussed on the best of the remaining habitats within 10km of the city and key opportunities and locations for creating new habitats and associated linkages. Through collaboration with landowners and communities it represents an ambitious but achievable vision for local nature recovery.

Draft South Cambridgeshire Climate & Nature Strategy 2026–2030

South Cambridgeshire District Councils vision to empower the district to lead in climate action, enhance environmental stewardship, protect and restore nature, and build resilience for communities in the face of escalating climate impacts. Its key principles focus on embedding climate and nature objectives throughout the council's work, leveraging partnerships, and prioritising actions that deliver co-benefits—benefiting both nature and people—while enabling sustainable economic growth and improving wellbeing

Cambridge University Biodiversity Action Plan

Representing considerable land holdings across the city, this plan seeks to deliver a significant and measurable improvement in the biodiversity of the University of Cambridge estate, and the Greater Cambridge area more generally, in a manner that educates and inspires an appreciation of the natural environment, and that encourages interventions, research and innovation to enhance and protect biodiversity for future generations.

Wicken Fen Vision

The National Trust's Wicken Fen Vision is an ambitious, 100-year plan to create a diverse landscape for wildlife and people stretching from Wicken Fen to the edge of Cambridge. By restoring natural processes, careful management of water and grazing will allow the land to evolve a mosaic of habitats for a wide variety of abundant wildlife. People will be able to enjoy access and recreation opportunities across a beautiful, tranquil natural fenland landscape, with opportunities for volunteering, education, and interpretation.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The LNRS is a legally mandated framework under the Environment Act 2021, aimed at reversing nature decline in one of England's most nature depleted regions. Spearheaded by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (responsible authority) in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, Natural Cambridgeshire and local (supporting) authorities, the strategy sets biodiversity priorities, maps existing and potential habitats, and identifies key areas and species for ecological restoration.



Meadow and urban forest planting at Cherry Hinton Hall

4.5 Cambridge City Council role

We manage more than 80 parks and open spaces, such as play areas, allotments, community gardens and orchards, totalling over 742 hectares. Some of these sites are designated and managed predominantly as nature reserves, for their wildlife value and form part of the key Cambridge Nature Network, whilst others provide valuable predominantly recreational open space for residents and visitors to enjoy. Whatever the primary purpose and size of these spaces, combined they provide a huge potential for increasing the extent, quality and connectivity of habitats within the city and their contribution to the wider Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Therefore, we have an obligation and opportunity to ensure that all sites maximise their potential for biodiversity, provide good examples of habitat management and creation and hopefully influence other landowners to do the same.

Watercourses

We manage approximately 23 kilometres of awarded watercourses, including some of our precious chalk streams, by ensuring management is sensitive to biodiversity, whilst providing our statutory drainage functions, we can protect such iconic species as otter, water vole, kingfishers and brown trout in the city. We have developed the Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project to deliver and monitor evidence based restoration work to inform future investment. We also manage a significant stretch of the main riverbank through the city. Wherever possible we are seeking to 'naturalise' previously engineered banks such as at Stourbridge Common, creating new backwaters and wetland such as on Logan's Meadow LNR and providing passage for fish around artificial obstructions, such as at the weir at Byron's Pool LNR and 'The Rush' fish pass at Sheep's Green LNR.

Common land

We are custodians of our precious common land and oversee the historic grazing management practice that retains flood meadow landscapes and iconic cattle grazing in the heart of the city. These grasslands form a key part of the network of Cambridge spaces and offer potential for enhanced management to benefit biodiversity, urban drainage and capture carbon emissions.

Urban forest

Through implementation of our Urban Forest Strategy (2026 – 2036), we manage over 30,000 trees, contributing to the urban forest that provides both wildlife and communities with a range of ecosystem services, making our neighbourhoods cooler, cleaner and more attractive places to live. Streets trees provide vital shade for

communities as well as habitat and 'stepping stones' for species living in or moving through the built environment.

Property estate

Our property estate includes rental units, iconic buildings such as the Guildhall and council housing properties with gardens and communal open spaces. How we manage, renovate, and invest in these assets will impact upon existing species present and provide opportunities for restoring nature where people live and work.

Community action and volunteering

Through our Community Service, Community Engagement Team we offer support to local site Friends Groups, providing opportunities for volunteering in our parks and open spaces, and work closely with local community groups including On the Verge promoting new wildflower meadows and Action for Swifts, with swift box provision such as on Queen Ann Terrace car park and at Edgecombe Flats.

We provide local schools with natural green spaces for valuable environmental education opportunities enabling pupils to explore, experience and value nature close to home.

As a local authority we are often a key partner in many local initiatives and projects with links to community groups. By promoting biodiversity through raising awareness in communities we can ensure that opportunities for people to connect with, protect, enhance, and appreciate nature are realised.



Figure 1. Our role in local nature recovery

4.6 Biodiversity in Cambridge

The geological and landscape setting

There are three National Character Areas (NCA) around Cambridge, each with distinctive geological features which dictate the landscape character and biodiversity contained within them.

To the north and west is (NCA 88) Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Clay lands. A broad gently undulating lowland plateau with shallow rivers, and notably the Great Ouse and Nene, which broaden as they reach the Fens. The area is dominated by intensive arable farming. There is an underlying clay geology which is overlain by glacial deposits of chalky boulder clays which add great character to the ancient woodlands in the area.

To the south and east is (NCA 87) East Anglian Chalk. Characterised by smooth rolling chalkland hills with large irregular field enclosed by low-lying hedgerows. Much of the area is under cereal production but important semi-natural habitats include lowland calcareous grassland and the chalk streams which are under significant threat from modification, pollution and abstraction.

Further north and east of the city, and with a narrow corridor alongside the River Cam, is (NCA 46) The Fens. Characterised as an expansive low-lying wetland landscape. Woodland cover is sparse, and the open fields are bounded by drains and river systems which provide an important ecological network. An important area for biodiversity with several internationally recognised areas of nature conservation value.

Within the City of Cambridge, it is possible to see the influence of each of these regions on the habitats and species that are present. Directly to the south-east of the city are chalky grasslands with exposed chalk (such as East Pit in Cherry Hinton). To the north and east are areas which have characteristics of fenland with reedbeds and drains (such as Wilbraham Fen). To the west, and running right through the heart of the city, are riverside meadows and pastures which are characteristic of the semi-natural habitats of the clay lands (such as Grantchester Meadows and Midsummer Common).

The ecological setting

Statutory and non-statutory designated areas

Within Cambridge there are a range of areas designated for their nature conservation value. These include statutorily designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which are of national significance for the biodiversity and geological features they

support. The statutory sites also include LNRs which are of statutory local significance for both people and wildlife.

Non-statutory sites include County Wildlife Sites (CWS), which represent some of the most important habitats in Cambridgeshire. Within the city itself are a suite of City Wildlife Sites (CiWS) and Protected Road Verges (PRVs). These areas do not meet national or County criteria for statutory designation, but they do meet important criteria at a local level and contain many locally significant habitats and species.

The habitats and species at these locations are varied but typically reflect the wider landscape with woodlands, chalk grasslands and rivers and streams. Some are designated for the species they support, such as water vole. Some habitats and species within Cambridge are listed as Habitats of Principal Importance and Species of Principal Importance, or Priority Habitats and Species. These are listed on the NERC Act (2006) and represent some of the most valued habitats and species in the UK.

Other greenspaces

Cambridge is fortunate to have a host of other greenspaces which all make a significant contribution to our biodiversity. These include country parks, such as those at Milton (just outside the city boundary in South Cambridgeshire) and Trumpington Meadows (which straddles the border with South Cambridgeshire). There are also other accessible natural greenspaces including Grantchester Meadows, Hobson's Park, and new areas of open space at Eddington and Darwin Green in north-west Cambridge.

Cambridge is a 'green' city. Beyond the formal greenspaces such as designated areas and parks, there are also numerous informal greenspaces, including community gardens and orchards, private gardens as well as college grounds, street trees and increasingly, green roofs. Tree canopy covers approximately 17.6% of the city making a significant contribution to the biodiversity resource in Cambridge.

The Cambridge Nature Network

Two priority areas of the Cambridge Nature Network directly interact with the city and surrounding countryside. The Cambridge Nature Network Priority Areas have been identified by grouping core sites based on landscape features, topography, and hydrology. Within these areas, potential extension habitats (or 'steppingstones') are proposed with a view to creating coherent joined up nature networks, which are resilient to the modern-day pressures on our biodiversity. The Cambridge Nature Network target is to achieve a 30% coverage of wildlife rich habitats within each Priority Area.

The River Cam Corridor Priority Area passes right through the heart of Cambridge following the course of the Cam. This Priority Area also includes the tributaries of the Cam which flow from the south, such as Cherry Hinton Brook and Hobson's Brook. This is a critical Priority Area within the network as it provides the connection linking other Priority Areas to the north, south, east and west. Many of these sites and watercourses are managed by Cambridge City Council so we are uniquely placed to help deliver the network through the city.

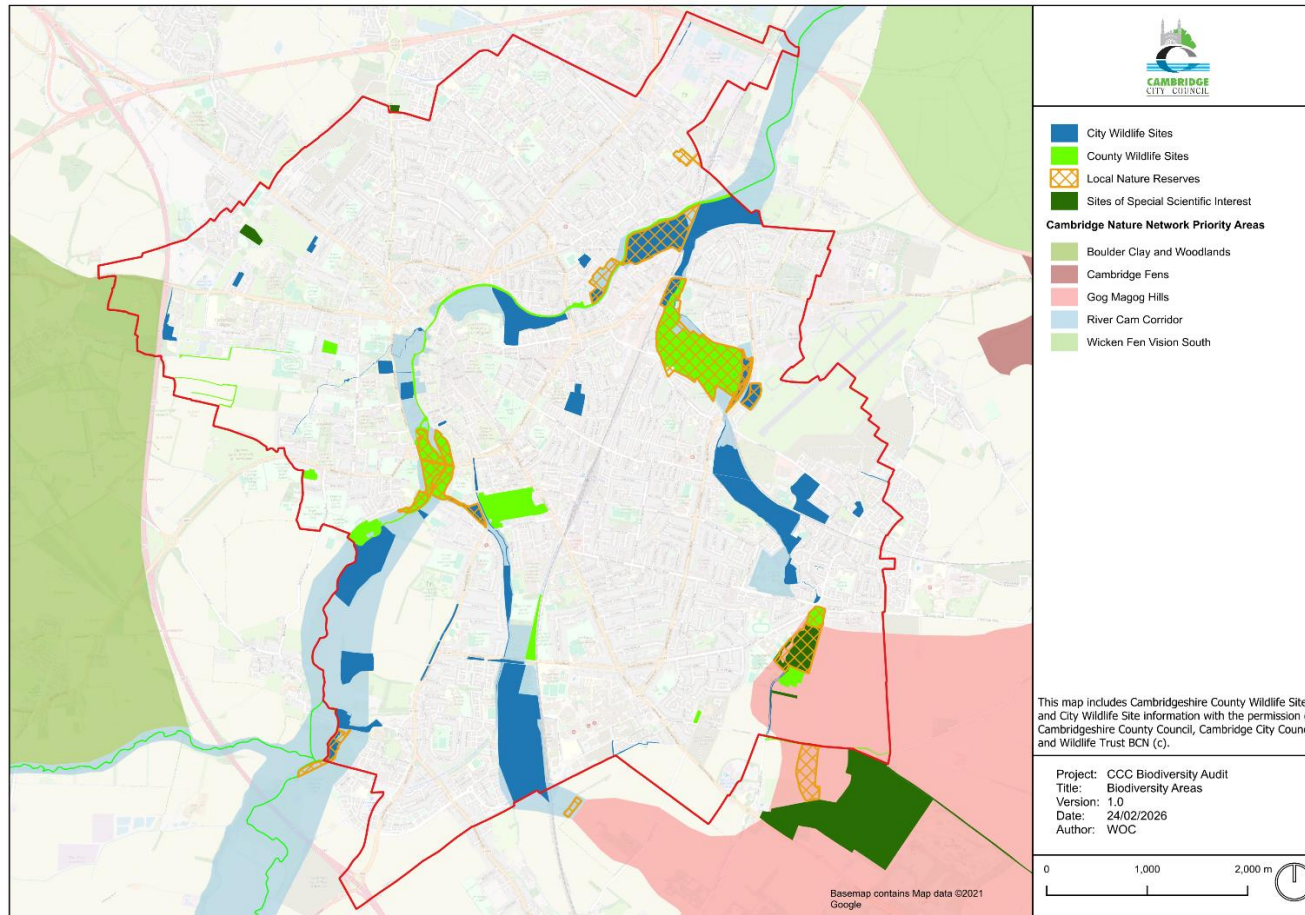
Just south of Cambridge, the Gog Magog Hills Priority Area reaches to the fringe of the city. This Priority Area is characterised by the underlying chalk with the key sites of nature conservation importance located at the Cherry Hinton chalk pit complex at this point on the edge of Cambridge. It stretches further south and east of the city with other important chalk habitats, such as the Roman Road Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

There are four other Cambridge Nature Network Priority/Opportunity Areas. Directly to the north and east are the Cambridge Fens Priority Areas and Wicken Fen Vision South Priority Area. To the west lies the Boulder Clay Woodlands Priority Area and further north is the Fen Edge Orchards and Drovers Opportunity Area.

The Cambridge Nature Network has been integrated into the statutory Cambridgeshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.



Map 1 showing designated biodiversity sites and CNN / LNRs priority areas in Cambridge



Cambridge key habitats

The various sites in the Cambridge Nature Network support several core habitats with distinct species, pressures and management requirements.

Grasslands

Cambridge grasslands range from small areas of rare species-rich lowland calcareous grassland to wide expanses of species poor amenity grasslands, which are widespread throughout the city. Significant grassland habitats are present along the Cam corridor and these run through the centre of Cambridge including Sheep's Green, Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common. These areas, with their grazing cattle, give Cambridge its unique rural character. Coldham's Common provides further large areas of grassland with a mix of amenity grassland through to more species diverse neutral and calcareous grasslands. There have been significant additions to the species-rich grassland resource in recent years with the creation of Trumpington Meadows Country Park and Hobson's Park to support local developments.

Priority grassland types within Cambridge include:

- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland meadows

Woodland

Woodlands are uncommon in Cambridgeshire with very few areas of ancient woodland remaining. Areas of naturally regenerated woodland are present throughout the city however and include Byron's Pool in Trumpington and the Bird Sanctuary, The Spinney and Limekiln Road LNR, all situated in Cherry Hinton. Several areas of wet woodland occur, primarily at Paradise and Logan's Meadow LNR.

Priority woodland types within Cambridge include:

- Lowland beech and yew woodland
- Wet woodland
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

Sheep's Green contains wood pasture habitat which comprises mature trees set within semi-natural grassland habitats. This combination of habitats, and particularly the veteran and ancient pollard willows, is important for numerous invertebrates including the scarce musk beetle. These woodlands and mature trees also provide roosting and

foraging habitats for a range of bat species, such as common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat

Hedgerows and scrub

Old and mature hedgerows are uncommon in the city with a few remaining examples at King's Hedges and Cherry Hinton. There are significant areas of scrub habitats, particularly around Coldham's Common and Barnwell within the designated sites at these locations.

Priority hedgerow and scrub habitats within Cambridge include:

- Hedgerows

These old hedgerows and scrub habitats provide important habitats through the city and particularly for bird species which use them for breeding during the spring and summer months and for foraging and cover in the autumn and winter months.

Wetlands and watercourses

The River Cam corridor contains a variety of wetland habitats, including wet grasslands, reedbeds, and the chalk streams which form tributaries to the Cam. The chalk streams around and within the city are very scarce habitats of international importance. Other wetland habitats occur away from the River Cam and these include ponds, lakes, and ditches.

Priority wetland habitats within Cambridge include:

- Reedbeds
- Ponds
- Rivers (including Chalk Streams)

The River Cam presents one of our most important wetland habitats, and, combined with its tributaries, forms a network of habitats through the city. To the northeast Teversham and Wilbraham Fen are biodiversity 'hotspots', which are home to a wealth of specialist birds, invertebrates and other species which reside in the reedbed and wetland habitats there.

Our wetland habitats are home to eels, kingfisher, grey wagtail, otter and water vole. Water voles have suffered significant national declines as a species but Cambridgeshire, and Cambridge in particular, remains a stronghold. They thrive in the slow-flowing, well-vegetated ditches found through the city.

Urban

Urban habitats dominate the city and often offer surprising opportunities for wildlife. There are pockets of habitats for species to thrive, including gardens, allotments, and street trees. Increasingly the built environment is purposefully designed to accommodate biodiversity with integrated bird and bat boxes and green roofs.

Priority urban habitats within Cambridge include:

- Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land

The David Attenborough Building on the New Museums Site is an example of how biodiversity can work with the built environment. Here green roofs provide habitats high above street level, and swifts nest in boxes that are built into the towers. Swifts are charismatic birds that form part of the backdrop to a Cambridge summer with squadrons of screaming birds swooping through the streets and nesting within the cracks and crevices of the buildings. Similarly, House Martins use buildings as nesting sites, for example at Addenbrookes Biomedical campus and in the gatehouse at King's College. The buildings of Cambridge also host breeding peregrine falcon, which can regularly be seen surveying the city from the spires of King's College Chapel.

Many species of bat roost in the buildings in the city, and some are specialists that will typically only roost in buildings. This includes serotine bat which can be seen hawking and swooping for prey over Nightingale Recreation Ground. As you move towards the edge of the city where the gardens tend to be bigger you are more likely to encounter other important species such as song thrush, or even part of the thriving urban badger population.

- Gardens

Collectively private gardens form the biggest land use within the city and are therefore vital in providing green space and tree canopy cover. Multiple ownership means that the individual biodiversity value of these spaces varies greatly but there is potential to greatly increase biodiversity value through relatively simple changes to management or initiative such as creating hedgehog highways to link gardens. Studies have shown that sensitively managed gardens can support a wide range of species that are often declining in the wider farmland landscape. The installation of garden ponds can benefit many species include amphibians, particularly when associated with other habitats such as long grass and wood piles that provide areas to forage and shelter.

The cultural setting

Cambridge is a place of naturalists and conservationists and has been for many years. We have perhaps one of the most studied natural histories of any city. It is possible to trace this history through just one plant in the city. The Butterbur patch which grows alongside the River Cam at Paradise LNR was first recorded in that location in the 1600s by the notable botanist John Ray. It has been recorded in that location ever since, its flowers appearing in early spring before the leaves.

Cambridge is home to many individuals, trusts, societies, groups, and institutes with nature conservation at the heart of what they do. Some groups have been well-established in the city for considerable periods of time, such as the Cambridge Natural History Society which has been studying the biodiversity of the area for over 164 years. Other more recently established organisations such as the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, a collaboration of the University and conservation organisations, have a world-wide reach far beyond the perimeter of the city. Whilst these groups are varied and diverse, they each have a shared goal to conserve and promote biodiversity. Collectively they present an enormous opportunity for successful collaboration to help Cambridge lead the way in the world as an example of how biodiversity and communities can co-exist and thrive together in a city geography.

4.7 Local threats and pressures

As with many other urban areas there are pressures and threats in Cambridge which degrade and deplete our biodiversity resource. To understand the opportunities and threats to biodiversity in Cambridge we commissioned the Biodiversity Audit and the Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project Report. These reports also identified several threats and pressures which are specific to our local area. The key pressures on biodiversity within Cambridge include:

- Habitat loss: Direct loss of biodiverse habitats and the species they support
- Habitat fragmentation: Removal of the links between areas resulting in smaller, less resilient habitats
- Habitat degradation: A deterioration in the condition of the habitat, such as reduction in species diversity

The key local causes of these are:

- Urbanisation: This can result in direct habitat loss and fragmentation. It could also lead to a degradation of habitats, for example from the effects of artificial light. Other indirect effects include poor air quality from increasing traffic. Nitrogen from exhaust fumes can over time increase nutrients in greenspaces and alter the composition of these habitats.
- Recreational pressure: As the population grows there is increasing demand on our greenspaces. Many habitats and species in the city are sensitive to disturbance. Impacts include trampling, or disturbance and nutrient deposition from the increasing popularity of dog walking in the city. Dog fouling deposits nutrients in sensitive habitats and this can change the vegetative composition of the area. Dogs off leads can have significant effects on ground nesting birds or disturbance of other animals such as mammals.
- Hydrological change: The Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project identified hydrological change as a major driver for negative impacts on our chalk streams and rivers. This includes channel modification and over-abstraction for domestic, agriculture and commercial use depleting aquifers leading to low flow and poor water quality. These result in habitat loss and degradation.
- Lack of appropriate habitat management: Many of our habitats require some form of human intervention to check 'succession' where they mature into less diverse habitats which support a smaller number of species. Examples include periodic coppicing (cutting to near ground level) of scrub and woodland to increase light to the ground or adjoining watercourses and promote new dense growth for bird nesting. Or grazing to prevent scrub encroaching onto rarer grassland habitats.

There are also wider causes, such as climate change which has the potential to alter habitats and species populations, thereby making them more scarce or isolated. These threats and pressures do not recognise the boundaries that we impose as humans. They pass through natural pathways, such as river catchments, and consequently their solutions will lie outside the city too. This requires us to work with stakeholders across a greater area across administrative boundaries



5. Biodiversity Audit

As part of the development of the 2022 Biodiversity Strategy, we established a baseline of habitat types and their condition for the key natural green spaces in our ownership so that we could plan and monitor management and enhancements to deliver a measurable gain in biodiversity. To quantify this we used the Biodiversity Metric tool developed by Natural England in partnership with DEFRA. It uses the size, type, and condition of habitats as a proxy for their importance and value for nature (Crosher *et al.*, 2019b).

The full 2020 baseline Biodiversity audit is available in Appendix 2

To inform the midterm review and revised site management plans we undertook a sample habitat condition audit on 14 of the original core sites including LNRs, Commons and Mill Rd Cemetery.

Table1 showing 2025 combined habitat condition and direction of travel

Site	Overall condition assessment
Coldham's Common	Moderate - stable
Stourbridge Common	Poor – stable
Sheep's Green, Coe Fen, Lower Vicar's Brook, New Bit and Coe Fen Straits	Moderate - stable
Barnwell East	Moderate - stable
Barnwell West	Moderate - declining
Paradise	Good - stable
Byron's Pool	Moderate – declining
Nine Wells	Moderate - stable
Midsummer Common	Poor - stable
Bramblefields	Moderate – declining
West Pit	Good - stable

Logan's Meadow	Moderate - improving
Mill Road Cemetery	Moderate - stable
Hobson's Park	Moderate – improving

Conditions sometimes varied across habitats on each site and a more detailed breakdown is available in Appendix 3.

6. Biodiversity Strategy

Cambridge City Council recognises the global biodiversity emergency and the local impact this will have, and is having, on the city and communities we serve. Therefore, in 2019 we pledged to provide leadership and to ensure that we work with all sections of the community, including schools, community groups, university colleges, businesses and residents to reverse the decline in biodiversity and deliver measurable net gain within Cambridge and the wider sub-region. Within this section we have defined our vision and objectives and set out our proposed actions to enable us to achieve this.

‘Our vision is that over the next 5 years Cambridge will see a “measurable net gain” in biodiversity compared with the 2020 Biodiversity Audit baseline, both within the city and the surrounding countryside, including the extent and quality of priority habitats and populations of priority species. Wildlife habitats will be protected, enhanced and where possible expanded and linked. The very best wildlife habitats will form the Cambridge Nature Network that will permeate the whole of the city and link to the wider Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Everyone who lives or works within Cambridge will have access to nature rich greenspaces within walking distance of their home or place or work, and there will be a greater awareness and understanding of biodiversity with opportunities to be involved and collaborate in local wildlife enhancement projects and monitoring’.

Our aim is to put biodiversity at the forefront of everything that we do. By maximising opportunities for collaboration, we are working in partnership with residents, businesses, and institutions, and building upon existing strategies for climate and trees, to achieve this goal.

We will promote the principles set out in the Lawton Report: bigger, better, more joined up. This will require improvements and enhancements to our core sites in the city to create a biodiverse blue and green thread through the heart of Cambridge. We will see a healthy river and tributaries flowing through their natural floodplain habitats. Areas of existing grasslands will be improved, former wetland features will be restored, and new ones created. This network will help to restore healthy populations of iconic species such as otter, eel, and water vole.

Beyond this core area we will strive to create a city that is more permeable for nature. We have made a commitment to enhance our own estate to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity. And we have also made a commitment to engage and enable others in the city to do the same. Building upon our core network this will help to join the dots and connect people to nature, creating a city where birdsong and buzzing invertebrates can be heard and experienced by everyone, everywhere who lives, works, visits and studies in Cambridge.

The biodiversity emergency is intricately linked with the climate emergency. Many of the proposed actions set out below will also serve to alleviate the climate emergency. The actions set out within our climate change strategy will contribute to resolving the biodiversity emergency. Therefore, our updated Climate Change, Urban Forest and Biodiversity strategies will work together to ensure we do maximise our effort to tackle these threats.

Our strategic objectives are:

- 1. To secure a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the city by 2031, compared with the 2020 baseline, in support of the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Vision by 2030**
- 2. To ensure designated sites and priority habitats are in good / favourable condition, wherever feasible, and that by 2031 no Council-managed LNR, Common or County Wildlife Site remains in poor condition without a management plan in place. Thus enhancing habitat and species resilience to a changing climate and contributing to the Cambridge Nature Network and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy**
- 3. To engage and promote awareness of biodiversity and wellbeing, supporting and empowering coordinated action in our communities, businesses, and institutions through embedding Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework strategies and principles, with particular focus on wards with high social disadvantage or poor access to natural green space**

4. To ensure that biodiversity protection and enhancement is considered by all council service functions and projects in line with our statutory Biodiversity Duty
5. To maximise the potential of our buildings, parks, open spaces, allotments and community gardens, watercourses and tree stock to support biodiversity, whilst balancing their multifunctional needs
6. To harness the wealth of local professional and amateur knowledge and experience in identifying and solving local issues.
7. To work with partners to establish long term, species and habitat monitoring to measure the impact of activities and identify new threats and opportunities across the city and publish an annual report on progress

To meet the objectives, the proposed actions have been grouped within three themes:

Biodiversity mainstreaming: This theme is about embedding biodiversity into everything that we do as a council, whether that is constructing new houses, buying materials, or undertaking our role as a planning authority. We will ensure that biodiversity considerations are integrated into business cases, procurement and asset management decisions and provide practical guidance and training to service managers to support this. Thus, ensuring our actions minimise negative impacts on biodiversity as well as seek opportunities to enhance it. We will aim to develop cross-cutting strategies and solutions between all services that promote biodiversity and focus on nature-based solutions.

Our ambition is to consider the intrinsic value of conserving and enhancing biodiversity, as part of everything that we do. We will take steps to ensure that we review the effects of our activities and decisions on biodiversity and that, wherever feasible, we can be working to promote and enhance the biodiversity of the city. We will take our objectives concerning biodiversity policy and consider them within all other areas of our work, for example our housing, transport, and economy.

We recognise that biodiversity not only has intrinsic value and beauty but also provides our life support system, whilst further contributing to all our lives in Cambridge by generating economic, community, health and well-being benefits.

The mainstreaming approach will also help us to explore sustainable nature-based solutions across the city. This means we can use nature to help us solve some of the

biggest issues that face us today including climate change, water and flood management or atmospheric pollutants from vehicles. This process will recognise and value nature as an asset that delivers multiple benefits to us.

The core: This theme is about developing our core of biodiversity sites in Cambridge. This includes reviewing and updating management plans for our most important nature conservation areas and working with partners to ensure a coherent and resilient nature network through Cambridge and beyond.

The Lawton Report encourages 'bigger, better and more joined up' habitats. The aim of this theme is to focus on our core sites, many of which are situated within the Cambridge Nature Recovery Network. Here we aim to focus on 'bigger and better' by improving biodiversity management of our core greenspaces, and wherever possible making more space for nature at these locations.

Many of these sites fall within the Cambridge Nature Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategy, our work here will help us make a meaningful contribution to these initiatives to deliver a joined up and resilient biodiversity network. The City Council will work to achieve enhanced habitat condition in these core locations to contribute to Natural Cambridgeshire's vision to double nature.

Nature in your neighbourhood: This theme is about encouraging nature to flourish across the city through empowerment and collaboration with communities, businesses and institutions. The aim is to ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations and that it can be enjoyed, understood, and experienced by all, regardless of where in the city people live, their income, or their housing type.

The biodiversity emergency is too big a problem to solve alone. In this theme we have developed actions which require a collaborative approach to the problem and to help encourage nature on your doorstep. Many of the actions relate to how people interact with nature in Cambridge, and we will provide the means and inspiration to help facilitate and encourage positive steps to be taken at a local level. We have developed actions to promote collaborative working in the city, drawing on the wealth of biodiversity expertise that we are fortunate to have in Cambridge. Other actions provide communities with the information or resources they need to help biodiversity in their neighbourhood. We will continue our commitment to existing initiatives, such as our hedgehog highways and neighbourhood canopy projects.

Our aim is to encourage engagement with nature to ensure that it is pervasive throughout the entire city. It is vitally important that we work hard to ensure that our key sites of nature conservation are protected and managed effectively. However, we

need to go beyond these islands of biodiversity and work to create greater connectivity for nature. Within this theme we are focussing on the Lawton's Report 'more joined up'.

We will work with communities to develop ward-based nature priorities, aligned with the LNRS and Cambridge Nature Network, and we will support residents to shape and monitor local projects.

7 Action plan (2026 – 2031)

Since adoption of the strategy in 2022 we have been collaborating on actions to achieve our objectives. Appendix 5 Biodiversity Duty Report summarises our key activities under our 3 themes and celebrates successes to date.

Moving forward to achieve our vision and objectives we will continue to collaborate with partners to deliver the following action plan (2026 – 2031) and monitor our collective outcomes. An annual review of this plan based on monitoring evidence and community feedback will identify actions that are delivered, delayed or require amendment and propose new projects or actions to meet our objectives.

Biodiversity Mainstreaming '*Consider and embed nature in everything we do*'

Actions	Lead & Partners	Outcomes	Timeline
Adopt, support delivery and monitoring of the LNRS. Continue representation on LNRS delivery steering group	City Services, Natural Cambridgeshire, CPCA, Cambridgeshire County Council	Strategic delivery of habitat and species actions within the city and beyond	Adopted December 2025 – Delivery and monitoring Plan 2026 Delivery – 2026 - 2031
Adoption and implementation of Shared Local Plan	GCSPS, SCDC	Robust, evidenced biodiversity policies, aligned with LNRS and BNG delivery to guide sustainable development	Proposed adoption by December 2026

Adoption and implementation of Urban Forest Strategy (2026 - 2036)	City Services, Community Services	Management, protection, planting of and engagement with the urban forest	Adoption March 2026 – Delivery 2026 – 2036
Ensure CIP and other City Council developments achieve a minimum 20% BNG target across all projects	CIP, GCSPS	New development secure high-quality habitats and species enhancement with published long-term management and monitoring in place.	2026 -2031
Implement Environmental Management System to secure ISO14001 accreditation for City operation hub and activities	City Services	Improved environmental performance across City Service	March 2026
Explore rainwater harvesting on Council owned properties	City Service, Property Services, Water Resources East (WRE)	Reduced abstraction from aquifer for tree watering and other operation functions	Explore Feasibility and performance metric in 2026, deliver 2027 - 2031
Continue to deliver Herbicide Reduction Plan	City Services, property Services	Continue herbicide free maintenance of our public realm advocate through Cambridge Matters and social media for residents, business and institutes to follow suit	2026 - 2031

Actions	Lead & Partners	Outcomes	Timeline
Continued support of Cambridge Nature Network	City Services, CPPF, BCN WT, Cambridge Ahead , National Trust, RSPB, East Cambridge Farming Cluster	Collaborate on funding bids and sharing resource to create 'Bigger, better, more joined up' habitats across the CNN	2026 - 2031
Local Nature Reserve and Commons management	City Service, Community Services, Volunteers and Corporate Groups	Complete ongoing habitat management of our 12 LNRs, including control of invasive species. Deliver at least one habitats condition improvement (as defined by DEFRA Condition Assessment) in each site by 2031	2026 - 2031
Continue our work with the Wildlife Trust to provide advice to private landowners and managers of Local Wildlife Sites to bring into positive management	City Services, BCN WT, private landowners	Increase number of designated Local Wildlife Sites in positive management, monitored annually by CPERC	2026 - 2031
Identification and designation of additional City Wildlife Sites and LNRs. Continue representation on County Wildlife Site Panel	City Services	Secure protection and enhanced management of qualifying sites	2026 - Cowley Road drain CiWS, Church End LNR and Fulbourn Rd LNR
Adopt and deliver new Management Plan	City Services	New management plans embedded to	13 sites reviewed in

Reviews for LNRs and Commons		ensure favourable habitat condition	2025 to be consulted, adopted and delivered in 2026 to 2031
Conservation Cattle Grazing Review	City Service, CNN, Licensed graziers	Review grazing timescales and number of animals to ensure we meet site management plan conditions and implement on all sites by 2031	Review in 2025 / 2026 Implement 2027 -2031
Trial the use of hardy sheep breeds within temporary fenced compartments on smaller sites.	City Services, CNN, East Cambridge Farmers Cluster	Enhanced grassland management of key sites to improve habitat condition	Consult in 2026, trial in 2027, if successful deliver from 2028 - 2031
Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project (GCCSP)	City Services, South Staffs Water, Cam Catchment Partnership , Anglian Water, Environment Agency, Hobson's Conduit Trust	Deliver and monitor 6 case study sites across City and Sith Cambs. Work with partners to deliver WINEP and other investment in Cambridge chalk streams	2026 - 2028
Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC)	City Service, GCSPS, CPERC	Continue support through Service Level Agreement and representation on the Steering Group	2026 - 2031

Nature in your neighbourhood ‘ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations and can be enjoyed, understood and experienced by all’

Actions	Lead & Partners	Outcomes	Timeline
Seek support and agree actions to embed Natural England Green Infrastructure principles to achieve Nature City Accreditation	City Services, Community Services, CNN, CCF Community Groups, Business	Strengthened partnership, shared leadership, community engagement, external recognition, increase funding opportunities	2026 Self-assessment. Build Partnership, seek Foundation Accreditation.
Parks Biodiversity Toolkit (publish 2021) promotion	City Services, Community services	Inspire communities to codesign and secure funding for local park biodiversity enhancement.	Seek to deliver at least 3 parks improvements per annum . 2026 - 2031
Nature Recovery 'From the Ground Up' LNRS delivery ward-based community action	City Services, Community Services, Cambridgeshire County Council, Community Groups	4-year Cambridge County Council Project targeting city wide, ward scale delivery of the LNRS.	2026 – 2030 programme to enable communities to develop and deliver LNRS actions locally
Butterfly Friendly Council (BFC)	City Services, Butterfly Conservation	Meet the 5 steps to become an official BFC including adopting ecological sensitive lighting principles on core sites	2026 - 2027

Cambridge Elm diversity Project – <i>celebrating the unique diversity of Cambridgeshire Elm</i>	City Services, Community Service, BCN WT	Establish a 'community nursery' of local Elm species for planting in partnership across the CNN	2026 - 2031
Native Black Poplar Project	City Services, Community Services,	Establish a 'community nursery' of local cultivars for planting in partnership across the CNN	2026 - 2031
River Cam CAN , DiversiTree legacy	City Services, Community Services	Seek further funding to secure management and replacement planting for willow pollards	2026 - 2031
Cambridge Nature Festival	City Services, Community Services, CNN	Month long programme of free and low-cost events to connect people with nature	Support events and promotion in 2026, seek funding 2026 - 2031
Environmental Education Spaces Continue to support existing spaces and explore additional site resource, explore partnership working to support the ' Go Green in 15 ' initiative.	City Service, primary school / nursery license holders	Continued use of 3 spaces, explore at least 1 additional site	2026 - 2031
Environment Improvement Programme (EIP) project selection criteria / prioritisation	City Services	Seek to allocate future budget to projects that meet strategic biodiversity and urban forest objectives.	2026 - 2027

'Wild about Art' projects – continue to support funding bids and provide locations for nature-based art across Cambridge	City Services, Community Services, artist and communities	Innovative education and / or habitat creation temporary and permanent installations exploring the wonders of nature	2026 - 2031
Urban Nature Conservation Evidence	City Services, Cambridge Conservation Initiative , Cambridge Conservation Forum	Facilitate research trials on our urban conservation actions to build a shared evidence base	2026 – Closed Churchyard grass cutting trials and monitoring invertebrate use of climate resilient non-native trees

8 References

[Draft Cambridge City Council Urban Forest Strategy](#)

[Draft Cambridge City Council Climate Change Strategy](#)

[Draft Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

[Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan](#)

[Draft South Cambridgeshire District Council Climate & Nature Strategy](#)

[Cambridgeshire County Council Biodiversity Strategy](#)

[Cambridge Nature Network](#)

[Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project Report](#)

9 Glossary of Terms

Amenity Grassland – Frequently mown, species-poor grassland.

Biodiversity – Variety of living organisms.

Biodiversity Duty – Statutory requirement to enhance biodiversity.

Biodiversity Emergency – Recognition of rapid decline.

Biodiversity Metric – DEFRA tool to calculate biodiversity units.

Biodiversity Net Gain – Measurable improvement in biodiversity.

Blue Infrastructure – Water-based ecological features.

Calcareous Grassland – Chalk/limestone grassland.

Chalk Streams – Rare freshwater habitats.

Climate Resilience – Ability to withstand climate impacts.

Connectivity – Joined habitats enabling species movement.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 – Protects key species and habitats.

CRoW Act – Right to roam and strengthened protections.

Dasgupta Review – Review on economics of biodiversity.

Deadwood – Standing or fallen decaying wood providing habitat.

Designation – Formal recognition of biodiversity importance.

Distinctiveness – Rarity/value score in biodiversity metric.

Ecological Succession – Natural habitat change over time.

Ecosystem Services – Benefits provided by nature.

Environment Act 2021 – Major UK environmental legislation.

Garden Biodiversity – Ecological value of private gardens.

Green Infrastructure – Network of natural/semi-natural areas.

Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Joint spatial plan for future growth.

Habitat Condition – Measure of ecological quality.

Habitat Creation – Establishing new habitats.

Habitat Enhancement – Improving existing habitats.

Habitat Fragmentation – Breaking up connected habitats.

Lawton Report – Recommends ‘bigger, better, more joined-up’ nature.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy – Statutory strategy for nature recovery.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) – Statutory designation for local biodiversity sites.

Measurable Net Gain – Quantified biodiversity improvement.

National Planning Policy Framework – National planning policies.

NERC Act 2006 – Defines Priority Habitats and Species.

Neutral Grassland – Grassland on neutral soils.

Pollard – Traditional tree management.

Priority Habitats & Species – National conservation priorities.

Protected Road Verge – Verge designated for conservation.

Recreational Pressure – Ecological impacts of high public use.

River Restoration – Reinstating natural river processes.

Semi-natural Habitat – Human-influenced yet biodiverse habitat.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest – National statutory designation.

Strategic Significance – Biodiversity Metric value booster.

Urban Forest – All trees in an urban area.

Veteran Tree / Veteranisation – Trees with biodiversity-rich features.

10 Appendices

Appendix 1	National Legislation
Appendix 2	Biodiversity Audit (2020 – 2025)
Appendix 3	Cambridge City Council, core biodiversity site habitat condition audit 2025
Appendix 4	2026 Draft Biodiversity Strategy Mid Term Review Consultation Responses
Appendix 5	Biodiversity Duty Report (2022 – 2025)

ENDS

Appendix 3

Cambridge City Council, core biodiversity site habitat condition audit 2025

The following provides a summary of the changes highlighted in the biodiversity audits between 2020 and 2025. A total of 14 sites were reassessed in 2025. Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans have been developed for these locations.

Overall themes

An attempt has been made to provide an overall condition for each site, and the direction of travel, taking a view across all the habitats and conditions at that location. These overall conditions are based on judgement and do not necessarily consider just extent of conditions across the site. Instead, additional weight has been placed on what are perceived to be the most important features of each site. For example, at Nine Wells the site is assessed overall as moderate – stable even though the most extensive habitat (woodland has moved from moderate to good). This is because the key habitat at this location, the chalk springs have remained stable in moderate condition. Another example is West Pit where the most extensive habitat, woodland, has declined in condition. However, this site has overall been assessed as good – stable because this is the condition of the calcareous grassland at this location, its most important feature.

The table below summarises the overall assessments for each site.

Site	Overall condition assessment
Coldham's Common	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Stourbridge Common	<i>Poor – stable</i>
Sheep's Green, Coe Fen, Lower Vicar's Brook, New Bit and Coe Fen Straits	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Barnwell East	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Barnwell West	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Paradise	<i>Good - stable</i>
Byron's Pool	<i>Moderate – declining</i>
Nine Wells	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Midsummer Common	<i>Poor - stable</i>
Bramblefields	<i>Moderate – declining</i>
West Pit	<i>Good - stable</i>
Logan's Meadow	<i>Moderate - improving</i>
Mill Road Cemetery	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Hobson's Park	<i>Moderate – improving</i>

Appendix 3

Of the fourteen sites that were reassessed in 2025 two are considered to be in good condition, ten are considered to be in moderate condition and two are considered to be in poor condition. The two sites in good condition are West Pit and Paradise, both with critical and rare habitats in the city (calcareous grassland and wet woodland). It is notable that the two sites in poor condition are significant and extensive locations: Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common. Whilst these sites are in poor condition their scale and prominence in the city does indicate great potential for improvement if grazing can be appropriately managed, together with recreational impacts.

Of the sites two are thought to be improving, whilst nine are stable and three are declining. The two improving sites are those which have undergone the most significant change in recent years (Logan's Meadow and Hobson's Park). The declining sites - Byron's Pool, Bramblefields and West Barnwell – have seen negative change for a variety of reasons possible maturing habitats with a lack of management, or recreational pressures in the case of Byron's Pool.

The following tables provide summaries for each key habitat type at the 14 locations across the city.

Grasslands

Site	Overall condition assessment
Coldham's Common	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Stourbridge Common	<i>Poor – stable</i>
Sheep's Green, Coe Fen	<i>Poor – stable</i>
New Bit	<i>Moderate - improving</i>
Barnwell East	<i>Poor – declining</i>
Paradise	<i>Poor – declining</i>
Byron's Pool	<i>Moderate – improving</i>
Midsummer Common	<i>Poor - stable</i>
Bramblefields	<i>Moderate – stable</i>
West Pit	<i>Good - stable</i>
Mill Road Cemetery	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Hobson's Park	<i>Moderate –stable</i>

This shows that the most significant areas of grassland are stable or improving. However, it also shows that sites which feature important areas of grasslands are in poor condition (Stourbridge Common, Sheep's Green, Coe Fen and Midsummer Common). These areas of poor condition are generally driven by a lack of species diversity and structure in the grasslands. This may be due to a combination of factors but improving grazing regimes and appropriate management of recreational pressures will likely improve condition.

Woodland

Appendix 3

Site	Overall condition assessment
Coldham's Common	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Stourbridge Common	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Sheep's Green, Coe Fen, Lower Vicar's Brook, New Bit and Coe Fen Straits	<i>Poor - declining</i>
Barnwell East	<i>Moderate – improving</i>
Barnwell West	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Paradise	<i>Good - stable</i>
Byron's Pool	<i>Moderate – declining</i>
Nine Wells	<i>Good – improving</i>
Bramblefields	<i>Moderate – stable</i>
West Pit	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Logan's Meadow	<i>Moderate - improving</i>

The key woodland sites of Paradise, Byron's Pool, Nine Wells and West Pit show mixed results. Both Byron's Pool and West Pit woodlands are declining, but potentially for different reasons, with recreational impacts at Byron's Pool and ash dieback and invasive species impacting West Pit. Paradise and Nine Wells are both now in good condition, with Nine Wells showing improvement in condition in this monitoring period.

Scrub

Site	Overall condition assessment
Coldham's Common	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Stourbridge Common	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Sheep's Green, Coe Fen, Lower Vicar's Brook, New Bit and Coe Fen Straits	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Barnwell East	<i>Good - stable</i>
Barnwell West	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Bramblefields	<i>Poor – declining</i>
West Pit	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Logan's Meadow	<i>Poor – declining</i>
Mill Road Cemetery	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Hobson's Park	<i>Moderate – improving</i>

Areas of well-established scrub at Barnwell West, Bramblefield, Logan's Meadow and Mill Road Cemetery are declining and this may be a result of lack of management resulting in maturing scrub with few clearings or glades and little regrowth and structure. However, some areas have remained in stable condition and the new areas of scrub at Hobson's Park are improving.

Appendix 3

Aquatic habitats

Site	Overall condition assessment
Coldham's Common	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Stourbridge Common	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Sheep's Green, Coe Fen, Lower Vicar's Brook, New Bit and Coe Fen Straits	<i>Moderate - declining</i>
Barnwell East	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Barnwell West	<i>Poor - stable</i>
Paradise	<i>Good - declining</i>
Byron's Pool	<i>Moderate – declining</i>
Nine Wells	<i>Moderate - stable</i>
Bramblefields	<i>Moderate – declining</i>
Logan's Meadow	<i>Moderate - improving</i>
Hobson's Park	<i>Moderate – stable</i>

Many of the aquatic habitats, which includes ditches and ponds, across the assessed sites are in moderate condition, however a significant number are declining in condition. This decline is for a number of reasons, for example overgrazing resulting in poaching at Coldham's Common and Coe Fen. The ponds at some sites, Byron's Pool and Bramblefields have declined in condition for varied reasons such as shading or invasive species but Logan's Meadow has seen improvements due to recent restoration works and slowly maturing habitats.

Appendix 3

*Site summaries***Coldham's Common *Moderate - stable***

Habitat types and extents have remained broadly similar between 2020 and 2025. The exceptions are the woodland has now been classified as w1f7 Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland rather than w1g7 Other broadleaved woodland types, and the g2a Lowland calcareous grassland is classified as g2c Other calcareous grassland. This change is not a result of changes in the habitat, instead it is the result of more rigorous grassland assessments in the newer UK Habitat Classification methodology.

The majority of the grasslands are in a stable condition, with the exception of the modified moderate and good condition, passing the majority of criteria with the exception of the playing fields which fails essential Criterion A. Some small areas of woodland south of the railway, have also declined in condition, however, this is likely as a result of updated methodologies in the Statutory Metric. The areas of scrub overall are in good or moderate condition. However, a small area is in poor condition, failing the majority of criteria. Coldham's Brook has declined in condition from good to moderate and it is likely this is a result of overgrazing and damage to the banks of the watercourse and the rigorous criteria for floristic diversity. All other habitat types are broadly in a similar condition to the 2020 audit and considered stable.

Stourbridge Common *Poor – stable*

Habitat types and extents have remained broadly similar between 2020 and 2025. The exception being is that the woodland has now been classified as w1f7 Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland rather than w1g7 Other broadleaved woodland types. Overall conditions for the majority of habitats have remained stable, with only some areas of woodland declining from moderate to poor. This change is likely due to a change in the condition assessment criteria. The site does experience overgrazing and high levels of recreational pressure. Changes in management would help to improve the condition of the grassland present.

Sheep's Green, Coe Fen, Lower Vicar's Brook, New Bit and Coe Fen Straits *Moderate - stable*

Habitat types and extents have remained broadly similar between 2020 and 2025. The exception being is that the woodland has now been classified as w1f7 Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland rather than w1g7 Other broadleaved woodland types. New Bit is also developing into wood-pasture and parkland.

Updated methodologies of UKHab and the Statutory Metric have led to changes in some habitat and condition across the site, in particular Sheep's Green. The grassland, scrub and freshwater habitats at Sheep's Green are in a moderate stable condition. However, the site does experience overgrazing and excessive trampling due to recreational pressure and should be managed appropriately to improve the conditions and grassland types present. Habitats at New Bit are overall in a stable condition, with only

Appendix 3

the grassland improving condition from poor to moderate. Grasslands at Coe Fen remain poor. The ditches at this location are now in poor condition, failing criteria relating to species richness, duckweed and damage due to cattle poaching.

Barnwell East *Moderate - stable*

Updated methodologies of UKHab and the Statutory Metric have led to changes in habitat and condition across the site. The calcareous grassland is at risk from vigorous invasive species including Canadian goldenrod. The scrub habitats are in good condition and improving, changes to the condition assessment methodology now mean that only mixed scrub requires a condition assessment. The woodland is also improving; it is now classified as a priority habitat and will continue to improve as it matures; invasive species management is necessary in this habitat also.

Barnwell West *Moderate - declining*

Habitat types and extents have remained broadly similar between 2020 and 2025. The exception being is that the woodland has now been classified as w1f7 Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland rather than w1g7 Other broadleaved woodland types. This is a positive change as w1f7 is a Habitat of Principal Importance.

There has been a reduction in condition of the habitats. The woodland has declined in condition due to a lack of understorey/vertical structure and deadwood. This may be a result of lack of management and impacts of browsing. Scrub has declined in condition in part due to a lack of structure and glades, with the northern parcel lacking good species diversity.

Paradise *Good - stable*

Habitat types and extents have remained broadly similar between 2020 and 2025. Small sections of the modified grassland have been subsumed into the wet woodland habitat. All other habitats have remained at the same extent, or slightly increased in the case of wet woodland.

The wet woodland, a Habitat of Principal Importance and key feature of the site is retained in good condition, albeit with continued pressures from recreation and anti-social behaviour. The grassland clearing in the north has decreased in condition from moderate to poor which may be a result of increasing dominance of ruderal species which is decreasing the overall species richness. However, the ruderal species continue to provide resource for various species, particularly nectar and foodplants for invertebrates, which in combination with the sheltered glade environment provides good habitat.

Byron's Pool *Moderate – declining*

Habitat types and extents have remained broadly similar between 2020 and 2025. The exceptions being that the woodland is now classified as w1f7 Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland rather than w1g7

Appendix 3

Other broadleaved woodland types. This is a positive change as w1f7 is a Habitat of Principal Importance. The area of cropland in the north of the site is now classified as other calcareous grassland.

There has been a reduction in condition of some of the habitats. The woodland has declined from good to moderate condition, likely as a result of increased recreational pressure, low diversity in age structure and lack of a recognisable ground flora. The ponds have also declined from overall from good to moderate, this change is likely due to a change in the condition assessment criteria with ponds failing one or more of the following: A – water quality; C – duckweed cover, D – connectivity and F – non-native invasives. An assessment of the fish pass was not undertaken during the 2025 survey, as this beyond the scope of the assessment. However, the fish pass appears to be in a stable condition.

Nine Wells *Moderate - stable*

Habitat types and extents have remained broadly similar between 2020 and 2025. The small area of grassland in the south-west has been reclassified as modified grassland from *Arrhenatherum* neutral grassland. This change is not a result of changes in the habitat, instead it is the result of more rigorous grassland assessments in the newer UK Habitat Classification methodology.

The woodland has improved in condition from moderate to good, now having better levels of deadwood and reduced impacts from grazing. A condition assessment of the chalk streams at Nine Wells was beyond the scope of the assessment however, they appear to be in a stable or slightly improved condition thanks to recent works to improve sinuosity and flow diversity. The small area of grassland has reduced from moderate condition to poor condition, largely in part due to the changing methodologies in the biodiversity metric. The hedgerows have remained stable or improved and are now all in good condition.

Midsummer Common *Poor - stable*

There has been little change at Midsummer Common with no significant changes in habitat type or extent. The only minor change that has occurred has resulted from the translocation of grassland turves from Hobson's Park. This has created a new area of other neutral grassland. In addition some areas of bramble scrub have been cut back.

The conditions at Midsummer Common have remained stable, albeit poor. The new area of other neutral grassland is in moderate condition.

Bramblefields *Moderate – declining*

The habitats and their extents at Bramblefields have remained similar. Two notable habitats at the site have declined in condition (ponds and scrub) but the other have remained stable (with minor changes likely a result of changing condition assessment methodologies in the different biodiversity metrics that have been applied). The ponds have declined from good to moderate and this is because of the

Appendix 3

presence of invasive species, shading and lack of open water. The scrub has declined in condition from good to poor because it has become dominated by a single species; they lack good edge habitat and some younger plants. Littering and human activity are also having impacts.

West Pit *Good - stable*

The extents of habitats at West Pit have largely remained stable. There has been a slight decrease in coverage of woodland although this is results of a mapping error in 2020. Continued scrub clearance has occurred around the edges of the calcareous grassland at the cliff top which has led minor changes in the coverage of these habitat types. The grassland that is present on the cliff face in the south of the site has been reclassified as modified grassland, rather than calcareous grassland. This is likely due to more rigorous grassland classifications in the new UKHab methodology. This grassland lacks both the species diversity and the calcareous indicators to be considered calcareous grassland.

The key habitat at this location is the calcareous grassland and this remains in good condition. The other major habitat at West Pit is the woodland. This has declined in condition from good to moderate. Whilst this change in condition may be partly a result of changing condition assessment methodologies is it clear that the woodland has also declined in condition. The lower condition value is a result of failing criteria concerning invasive species, disease (ash dieback) which is having a significant impact on the canopy, lack of proper NVC community, lack of veteran trees and significant nutrient enrichment. The extent of the ash dieback and the risk from falling rocks makes this area particularly unsafe and it is proposed that no public access is allowed. Due to the state of the woodland, and the likely continued decline it is proposed that this area is managed with a target habitat of calcareous scrub.

Logan's Meadow *Moderate - improving*

Logan's Meadow has undergone many changes in the past, with new habitats being created. The recent wetland creation will lead to higher condition and value habitats, currently they are lacking vegetation and structure, however this will change over time and the current assessment of condition (and habitat type to some extent) is likely not representative. The wet woodland is potentially improving in condition as are the woodland ponds that have now been established for 20 years.

Mill Road Cemetery *Moderate - stable*

The former calcareous grassland within one of the quadrants has now been reclassified as other neutral grassland which has a lower distinctiveness. This change is not a result of changes in the habitat, instead it is the result of more rigorous grassland assessments in the newer UK Habitat Classification methodology. Otherwise, the extent and types of habitats have remained largely stable.

The neutral grassland, the key habitat feature at Mill Road Cemetery, has remained in moderate condition. The scrub has reduced in condition and this is likely to be a result of maturation of this habitat with poor edges and a lack of glades and clearings.

Appendix 3

Hobson's Park Moderate – improving

The extent of the 2025 survey was significantly larger than the 2020 survey with several additional areas assessed. In addition to this, several habitats included within the scope of the 2020 survey had been removed and/or were inaccessible during the 2025 survey due to the development of Cambridge South station, mostly along the eastern boundary. An area previous classified as *g3c5 Arrhenatherum neutral grassland* is now classified as *g2c other calcareous grassland* due to the calcareous grassland indicator species present. The condition of this grassland has also changed from 'good' to 'moderate'. However, this is likely to reflect the change in condition assessment criteria rather than an actual decline in the condition of the grassland. The grassland appears to be significantly more species-rich than previously. Other grassland areas remain in the same condition or were excluded from either the 2020 or 2025 surveys.

An area assessed as woodland in the 2020 surveys has been assessed as scrub to reflect the true nature of the habitat currently present. The 2020 woodland condition was 'poor' and would remain 'poor' if the woodland condition assessment had been applied in 2025, with a score of 22 points. However, the current scrub habitat has been assessed as being in 'moderate' condition.

The hedgerow surrounding the allotments and the line of trees along the western boundary have improved in condition from 'poor' to 'moderate'. Hobson's brook has also increased in condition from 'moderate' in 2020 to 'good' in 2025.

Appendix 3

Table of condition changes at each site

Habitat	2020 Condition and direction of travel	2025 Condition and direction of travel	Reasons for change if any	Proposed actions in new management plans
Coldham's Common				
Other calcareous grassland (East)	Poor declining because of recreational management and scrub encroachment around the rifle butt	Poor - stable	Whilst the species composition and structure have largely remained the same the 2023 version of UKHab methodology has more rigorous selection criteria for grassland types, meaning this grassland now qualifies as g2c other calcareous grassland.	
Other calcareous grassland (The Triangle)	Moderate/good stable due to ongoing sympathetic management	Moderate - stable	Increased scrub encroachment.	Rotational clearance to reduce scrub encroachment in grassland areas.
Other neutral grassland	Moderate declining. Formerly more indicator species recorded in this area, potential overgrazing	Poor - stable	Stable condition however grassland has low floristic diversity and fails essential Criterion A.	Grazing strategy to be developed. Creation of scrapes in grassland areas.
Arrhenatherum neutral grassland	Moderate declining. Formerly more indicator species recorded in this area, potential overgrazing	Moderate - stable	N/A	Grazing strategy to be developed. Creation of scrapes in grassland areas.
Modified grassland	Poor stable. Pitches under regular management with close mowing, grassland dominated by tall fescue with heavy grazing	Moderate/ good condition improving	Change in condition likely driven by changing assessment methodologies in biodiversity metric.	On going management as appropriate for amenity areas. Grazing strategy to be developed. Creation of scrapes in grassland areas.
Line of trees	Good condition stable	Good condition stable	N/A	On going management as appropriate
Other broadleaved woodland	Moderate or good improving due to maturation of areas of planting	Moderate or poor declining.	Changes in the assessment methodology are likely the reason the woodland is no longer 'good' condition.	On going management as appropriate
Native hedgerow with bank or ditch	Moderate condition and stable with regular management	Moderate condition stable	N/A	On going management as appropriate
Native species-rich hedgerow with trees	Good condition and stable	Good condition stable	N/A	On going management as appropriate.
Mixed scrub	Good declining due to over maturation in parts	Moderate/ good condition declining	The areas of scrub overall are in good or moderate condition. However, a small area is in poor condition, failing the majority of criteria.	On going management of scrub as appropriate. Reduce scrub encroachment in grassland areas
Reedbed	Poor stable	Moderate condition and improving	Changes in the assessment methodology are likely the reason the reedbed has improved in condition. The reedbed passed the majority of the criteria, failing only	Keep reedbed open and reduce scrub encroachment.

Appendix 3

Habitat	2020 Condition and direction of travel	2025 Condition and direction of travel	Reasons for change if any	Proposed actions in new management plans
			presence of bare ground and a diverse structure.	
Ditch (Coldham's Brook)	Good condition and improving, formerly banks of nettles but now increasing in floristic diversity	Moderate condition and declining	The watercourse has declined in condition likely as a result of increased damage from cattle and its floristic diversity which failed exceed 10 sp / 20m.	Chalk stream project objective to improve light along the watercourse.
Ditch (East Main Drain)	Poor stable	Poor stable	N/A	Scrub clearance to improve light and floristic diversity along watercourse.
Stourbridge Common				
Grassland	Poor declining condition	Poor condition and likely stable	N/A	Grazing strategy to be developed. Creation of scrapes in grassland areas. Increase structural diversity of grassland.
Woodland	Good condition which is likely stable	Moderate condition and declining	Changes in the assessment methodology are likely the reason the woodland is no longer 'good' condition.	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Lines of trees	Good condition and stable	Good condition and stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Scrub	Moderate condition and likely stable	Moderate condition and stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Ditch	Poor declining condition	Poor and likely stable	N/A	Ditch is dry for long periods, aspiration to create more hollows or channels along water line
Coldham's Brook	Moderate condition and likely stable	Moderate condition and stable	N/A	Invasive management, scrub clearance to improve light and floristic diversity along watercourse.
Sheep's Green, Coe Fen, Lower Vicar's Brook, New Bit and Coe Fen Straits				
Grassland (Sheep's Green)	Poor and likely to be declining.	Moderate / poor and likely to be in a stable condition.	Change in condition likely driven by changing assessment methodologies in biodiversity metric.	Ongoing management as appropriate. Grazing strategy to be developed.
Woodland (Sheep's Green)	Moderate stable.	Poor declining.	Changes in the assessment methodology are likely the reason the woodland is no longer 'good' condition.	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Scrub (Sheep's Green)	Moderate stable.	Moderate stable.	The majority of the scrub patches are in a similar condition to the 2020 audit, as they lacked a well-developed edge.	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Freshwater habitats (Sheep's Green)	Moderate declining.	Moderate and likely in a stable condition.	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate. Consideration to incorporate new waterways across grassland. Enhance and new ditch works adjacent to Darwin College, bank reinforcements at Laundress Green, naturalisation of banks near Snob's brook.
Grassland (Coe Fen)	Poor- declining.	Poor –stable.	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate. Grazing strategy to be developed.

Appendix 3

Habitat	2020 Condition and direction of travel	2025 Condition and direction of travel	Reasons for change if any	Proposed actions in new management plans
Ditches (Coe Fen)	Moderate – improving.	Poor – declining.	These ditches fail on criteria relating to species richness, duckweed and damage due to cattle poaching.	Ongoing management as appropriate. Appropriate grazing strategy to be developed.
Grassland (New Bit)	Poor condition which is likely to be stable	Moderate condition and likely to be improving	Change in condition likely driven by changing assessment methodologies in biodiversity metric. However, grassland had improved floristic diversity. Grassland is developing into wood pasture and parkland.	Ongoing management as appropriate. Grazing strategy to be developed.
Scrub (New Bit)	Poor condition which is likely to be stable	Poor stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Ditch (New Bit)	Poor condition which is likely to be stable	Poor stable	N/A	
Vicar's Brook (New Bit)	Moderate condition which is likely to be stable	Moderate stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Barnwell East				
Grassland (calcareous)	Moderate – declining. More diverse swards are present as described in 2005, but invasive species remain present at similar levels, with early growth scrub also apparent.	Poor – declining. The calcareous grassland has been re-classified to an alternate habitat type due to differences in UKHab methodology. The condition remains poor, invasive species presence remains a problem throughout.	Invasive species presence, poor structure and lack of diversity.	Invasive species management.
Grassland (modified)	Poor – declining. Low species diversity.	Good – improving. The condition has increased since 2020, largely due to increased species diversity.	Change in condition likely driven by changing assessment methodologies in biodiversity metric, as well as higher recorded species diversity.	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Scrub	Good – stable. Areas of scrub within the centre of the site are as described in 2005, with several glades and varied structure	Good – stable. Changes in methodologies lead to only mixed scrub requiring a condition assessment, it remains in good condition. The areas of other scrub types remain in similar conditions to that of 2020.	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate. Consideration to removing areas of scrub.
Pond	Good – stable.	Moderate – stable. The only criterion failed relates to presence of invasive species.	Change in condition likely driven by changing assessment methodologies in biodiversity metric.	Ongoing management as appropriate. Potential for desilting.
Woodland	Moderate – improving. Characteristics of the understorey indicate the development of a woodland character.	Moderate – improving. The condition will continue to improve as the woodland matures and understory develops.	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Barnwell West				

Appendix 3

Habitat	2020 Condition and direction of travel	2025 Condition and direction of travel	Reasons for change if any	Proposed actions in new management plans
Woodland	2020: Good – improving. Whilst previously recorded as scrub, the overall condition compared with 2005 appears to be improving.	2025: Moderate – declining.	The woodland has declined in condition due to a lack of understorey/vertical structure and deadwood.	Potential for woodland management is resources available. Non-priority work across the city.
Freshwater Coldham's Brook	2020: Moderate – stable. Conditions in and along Coldham's Brook are largely as described in 2005.	2025: Poor – improving. Whilst the condition is now lower than recorded in 2020, the recent improvements to flow and habitat in Coldham's Brook will likely lead to an uplift in condition over time.	Poor due to a lack of aquatic plant species diversity and a lack of aquatic plant species structure. This is largely driven by high levels of shade.	Open canopy around the brook to allow for greater diversity of aquatic plant species.
Freshwater East Cambridge Main Drain	2020: Poor – stable. Conditions in and along Coldham's Brook and East Cambridge Main Drain are largely as described in 2005.	2025: Poor – stable. The condition of this drain is very similar to that recorded in 2020, and will likely remain so.	N/A	Retain as is for drainage purposes and for fern communities on banksides.
Scrub (south)	2020: Good – stable. Where present, conditions largely as described in 2005.	2025: Moderate – declining. The scrub will require management to improve condition, if left as is it will likely be subsumed into the adjacent woodland.	Poor structure.	Potential scrub management if resources available. Non-priority work across the city.
Scrub (north)	2020: Moderate – declining. Reduction in extent.	Poor – declining. Without management to encourage additional species diversity and diversity of age, this habitat will likely remain in poor condition.	Poor species diversity and structure.	Potential scrub management if resources available. Non-priority work across the city.
Paradise				
Grassland	2020: Poor/moderate condition which is likely to be stable.	2025: Poor condition, declining, potentially as a result of tall ruderal and herbs becoming dominant.	Increased prevalence of tall ruderal species in the grassland to the north likely to be contributing to a low species diversity.	Ongoing cutting regime.
Woodland	2020: Good condition which is likely to be stable.	2025: Good condition which is likely to be stable.	N/A	Ongoing woodland management programme.
Pond	2020: Good condition which is likely to be stable.	2025: Good condition which is likely to be stable.	N/A	Manage surrounding scrub and woodland to allow continued light to pond.
Aquatic marginal vegetation	2020: Good condition which is likely to be stable	2025: Moderate condition, declining, potentially as a result of drying and scrub encroachment.	Encroachment from scrub and low water levels resulting in lower condition.	Manage surrounding scrub and woodland to reduce encroachment.
Byron's Pool				
Grassland (other neutral)	Moderate stable	Moderate stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Grassland (other calcareous)	N/A	Moderate improving	Area of grassland was originally the cropland in the north of the site and had previously been seeded, it has developed well into calcareous grassland.	Ongoing management as appropriate. Use green hay in meadow

Appendix 3

Habitat	2020 Condition and direction of travel	2025 Condition and direction of travel	Reasons for change if any	Proposed actions in new management plans
Woodland	Good declining	Moderate – declining	Change is likely as a result of increased recreational pressure, low diversity in age structure and lack of a recognisable ground flora	Ongoing woodland management programme
Hedgerow	Good - improving	Good - stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate
Ponds	Good - declining	Moderate - declining	Change is likely due to a change in the condition assessment criteria	Non-native invasive and scrub management
Fish pass	Moderate - stable	Moderate - stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Nine Wells				
Woodland	2020: Conditions match the site description from the 2004 management plan (Friends of Nine Wells LNR, 2004).	2025: Good – improving. Better instances of deadwood and reduced impacts of browsing.	Improved deadwood and reduced browsing.	Ongoing woodland management programme.
Freshwater (chalk stream)	2020: Moderate – stable. Conditions match the site description from the 2004 management plan (Friends of Nine Wells LNR, 2004).	2025: Moderate – stable. Assumption based on habitat descriptions rather than condition assessments.	N/A	Ongoing management to improve flow diversity and conditions for aquatic plants. Thinning of canopy over streamheads to reduce leaf litter and sediment build up. Management of visitors and dogs to reduce negative impacts on banks and water quality.
Hedgerows	2020: Moderate and poor – stable.	2025: Good – improving. All hedgerows in good condition with few criteria missed.	Improvement over time.	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Grassland	2020: Moderate – stable.	2025: Poor - stable.	Change in condition likely driven by changing assessment methodologies in biodiversity metric.	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Midsummer Common				
Grassland (modified)	Poor – stable.	Poor – stable.	N/A	Update grazing regime to improve grassland structure and possibly diversity. Recreational management.
Grassland (other neutral)	N/A	Moderate – stable.	This is a new grassland type at Midsummer Common as a results of translocation from Hobson's Park.	Consider further translocation if opportunities arise.
Line of trees	Good/moderate – stable.	Good/moderate – stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Bramble scrub	Poor – improving.	N/A (no condition assessment in new metric) likely stable.	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Bramblefields				
Grassland	Moderate – stable – because of recreational management	Poor/moderate – stable. The modified grassland areas remain similar to 2020. One area of other neutral grassland is now present, with a good diversity of forbs, it is in moderate condition.	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.

Appendix 3

Habitat	2020 Condition and direction of travel	2025 Condition and direction of travel	Reasons for change if any	Proposed actions in new management plans
Woodland – w1f7	Good – stable	Moderate – stable. The woodland in the west of the site has good age and species diversity.	Changes in the assessment methodology are likely the reason the woodland is no longer 'good' condition.	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Woodland (central hawthorn dominated)	Moderate – declining	Moderate – stable. The central woodland has little succession and does have impacts from recreation.	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Ponds	Good – stable	Moderate – declining. The ponds are becoming dominated with vegetation, limiting open water. Crassula is present in both.	Presence of invasive species, shading and lack of open water.	Invasive species removal, management to increase open water
Scrub	Good – stable	Poor – declining. Areas of scrub have become dominated by a single species; they lack good edge habitat and some younger plants. Littering and human activity are also having impacts.	Dominance of single species, physical damage and human impacts.	Ongoing management as appropriate
West Pit				
Woodland	Good – stable	Moderate – declining.	Now failing criteria concerning invasive species, disease (ash dieback) which is having a significant impact on the canopy, lack of proper NVC community, lack of veteran trees and significant nutrient enrichment.	Managed decline of woodland as ash dieback removes most of canopy. Target calcareous scrub habitat. No public access due to safety concerns.
Calcareous grassland (cliff top)	Good – stable	Good - stable	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Calcareous grassland (cliff face)	Poor - improving	Poor – stable	Recently cleared in 2020 and with annual cuts to 2025. This grassland was reclassified as modified grassland due to a lack of species richness and calcareous indicators in the sward, it now being dominated by false oat-grass.	Continued management as habitat in the form of cleared glade/slope of ecological value although it is not classified as calcareous grassland.
Scrub	Good, moderate, poor	Moderate – stable	The scrub fail criteria relating to lack of age classes and also lack of glades. This scrub passes the criteria relating to invasive species because, although they are present (<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>), they do not reach the 5% threshold.	Ongoing management as appropriate, including continued cutting back to keep grassland habitats open.
Hedgerows	Good - stable	Poor – probably stable Good – probably stable	One hedgerow is now classified as being in poor condition due to the fact that it fails two functional groups (damaged/nutrient enriched ground flora and presence of archaophytes and damage).	Ongoing management as appropriate.
Logan's Meadow				

Appendix 3

Habitat	2020 Condition and direction of travel	2025 Condition and direction of travel	Reasons for change if any	Proposed actions in new management plans
Woodland	Moderate – stable. Conditions reported in 2005, particularly with regard to ground flora indicate a strong nutrient influence from the River Cam.	Moderate – stable/improving. The woodland is largely the same as recorded in 2020. The condition assessment is one point away from reaching good condition	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate
Pond (woodland)	Poor – stable. Ponds in 2005 were newly dug	Moderate – improving. The woodland ponds are improving in condition as they mature.	The ponds have good vegetation structure, and have improved in condition since they were dug.	Ongoing management as appropriate
Scrub	Good – stable. No formal survey of this area.	Poor – declining. The mixed scrub is in poor condition; it has a lack of a well-developed edge and no clearings as well as few younger plants.	Changes in assessment methodology likely have an impact on the change in condition.	Management to increase regrowth of saplings and young plants, and reduce the density of the scrub to introduce clearings.
Mill Road Cemetery				
Calcareous grassland	2020: Moderate declining due to scrub encroachment	2025: No calcareous grassland was recorded on site. Whilst, similar species were recorded to those identified in the 2020 surveys, the criteria to meet certain types of grassland i.e. calcareous has is more precise in the updated UK Hab v2.0 definitions. This area of grassland therefore does not meet the definitions for Lowland calcareous or other calcareous grassland and has been included in the other neutral grassland below.	Change in assessment methodology.	N/A
Neutral grassland	2020: Moderate condition and likely to be stable	2025: Moderate condition and no change. The condition of this grassland is very similar to that recorded in 2020, and will likely remain so.	N/A	Ongoing management as appropriate. Long-term aspiration for grazing to improve sward.
Scrub	2020: Good condition and improving	2025: Moderate condition and declining.	Change is likely considered due to the management and the scrub maturing and not passing condition assessment criteria for developed edge (D and E) within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.	Management of scrub to improve glades or rides and to reduce the density of the scrub.
Hobson's Park				
Neutral grassland	Good condition stable.	2025: Moderate condition and stable. Habitat type changed from neutral grassland to other calcareous grassland.	Change in condition likely to result from change in condition assessment criteria.	Continued appropriate management should allow grassland to return to 'good' condition.
Neutral grassland	Moderate condition and likely to be stable	2025: Moderate condition and no change. The condition of this grassland is similar to that recorded in	N/A	Continued appropriate management should allow grassland to also be classified as <i>g2c other calcareous grassland</i> .

Appendix 3

Habitat	2020 Condition and direction of travel	2025 Condition and direction of travel	Reasons for change if any	Proposed actions in new management plans
		2020, continued management should allow this grassland to also be classified as <i>g2c other calcareous grassland</i> .		
Calcareous grassland	Poor condition, stable.	N/A	N/A	Not assessed in 2025 survey effort.
Scrub	Poor condition woodland and likely to be stable	2025: assessed as scrub to reflect current habitat; in moderate condition likely to be stable/improving as the habitat matures.	Change in habitat type	Ongoing management will depend on whether woodland habitat or scrub habitat desired.
Pond	Moderate condition stable	2025: remains in moderate condition and likely to be stable. Area of open water has decreased since previous assessment.	N/A	Unlikely to be able to change condition due to being connected to Hobson's brook. Although may benefit from management to reduce cover of reedmace.
Hedgerows	Poor condition stable	2025: improved to moderate condition	Improved due to hedgerow becoming more mature and passing additional criteria.	
Line of trees	Poor condition stable	2025: Improved to moderate condition	Improved due to maturing trees but also may be due to change in condition assessment criteria.	
Ditch	Poor condition stable	2025: Poor condition stable	Dry ditch at time of survey, significant amount of scrub covering the ditch as well as areas of aquatic marginal vegetation	
Hobson's brook	Moderate condition stable	2025: Good condition	Passes all condition assessment criteria, may be due to location of condition assessment	

This page is intentionally left blank

Biodiversity and urban forest strategies

End of survey report

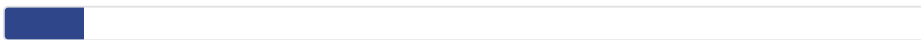
Which of our strategies would you like to feed back on?

256/256 - Multiple choice - choose one - required

Both 83.2% (213 choices)



Urban Forest Strategy 8.6% (22 choices)



Biodiversity Strategy 8.2% (21 choices)



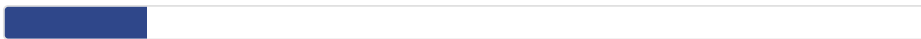
Do you support the Biodiversity Strategy vision?

233/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Strongly support 76.9% (180 choices)



Support 15.4% (36 choices)



Neutral 3.4% (8 choices)



Oppose 3% (7 choices)



Strongly oppose 0.9% (2 choices)



No answer 0.4% (1 choice)



Do you feel our parks currently provide enough space for nature in the city?

226/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Not enough 62.4% (146 choices)



About right 30.3% (71 choices)



No answer 3.4% (8 choices)



Too much 1.3% (3 choices)



Other 2.6% (6 choices)



What if any additional things should we be including for nature in our parks?

222/234 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional

Wildflowers 74.8% (175 choices)



Trees 69.7% (163 choices)



Ponds and wetlands 66.2% (155 choices)



Long grass 58.1% (136 choices)



Deadwood 51.3% (120 choices)



Shrubs 45.7% (107 choices)



Signage on habitats and species that can be found 40.2% (94 choices)



No answer 5.1% (12 choices)



Other 12.4% (29 choices)



Which of our proposed strategic objectives should be prioritised?

221/234 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional

Ensure designated sites and priority habitats are in good/favourable condition and connected, where possible, to increase resilience to a changing climate and contribute to the Cambridge Nature Network and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy

64.1%
(150
choices)

Maximise the potential of our buildings, parks, open spaces, allotments and community gardens, watercourses and tree stock to support biodiversity, whilst balancing their multifunctional needs

50.9%
(119
choices)

Secure a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the city by 2031 in support of the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Vision

46.2%
(108
choices)

Ensure that biodiversity protection and enhancement is considered by all council service functions and projects in line with our statutory Biodiversity Duty

40.2%
(94
choices)

Harness the wealth of local professional and amateur knowledge and experience in identifying and solving local issues

32.1%
(75
choices)

Engage and promote awareness of biodiversity and wellbeing, supporting and empowering coordinated action in our communities, businesses, and institutions

26.5%
(62
choices)

Work with partners to establish long term, species and habitat surveys and monitoring to measure the impact of activities and identify new threats and opportunities across the city

23.5%
(55
choices)

No answer

5.6% (13 choices)

What if any additional objectives would you like to see included in the strategy?

90/234 - Long answer - optional



English

Many respondents emphasised the need for ongoing maintenance and monitoring of green spaces and newly planted trees, with several noting that trees often die due to lack of follow-up care. There was strong support for integrating biodiversity and green spaces into all new developments, rather than relocating them elsewhere. Many called for stricter enforcement and measurable targets for biodiversity net gain, with some suggesting specific percentages or compulsory standards for developers.

A recurring theme was the importance of reducing pesticide and herbicide use, with several respondents urging the council to reinstate and strengthen its herbicide-free commitment and promote this approach city-wide. Linked to this, some highlighted the need to measure both positive and negative impacts of council activities to accurately demonstrate net biodiversity gain.

Engagement and accessibility were frequently mentioned, including calls for improved access to green spaces, better public transport, and inclusive engagement across all demographics and ages. Community involvement, citizen science, and support for local groups and community-led projects were also widely supported.

Many respondents wanted greater protection for existing mature habitats and wildlife, especially in the face of urban development, with some advocating for rewilding, wetland creation, and prioritising native species. Concerns about the impact of construction, light pollution, and loss of wildlife due to development were raised repeatedly.

Several respondents highlighted the need to link biodiversity objectives with wellbeing, health, and social prescribing, suggesting that green spaces should support both wildlife and human use. Education and awareness-raising, especially among young people, were also frequently mentioned.

Other notable suggestions included improving water management and creating rain gardens protecting building-dependent bird species and ensuring green spaces are safe and accessible after dark.

A minority of responses expressed concerns about increased pests or opposed certain environmental measures.

Overall, the strongest trends were calls for robust maintenance and monitoring, integration of biodiversity into all development, reduction of pesticide use, measurable targets, community engagement, and linking biodiversity with wellbeing and accessibility.

How important is it for every resident to have access to high-quality natural greenspace within 15 minutes walking distance?

227/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Essential 68.8% (161 choices)



Important 20.5% (48 choices)



Nice to have 6.4% (15 choices)



No answer 3% (7 choices)



Not important 1.3% (3 choices)



Should resources be directed first to communities who currently have the poorest access to nature and lowest tree canopy cover?

223/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Yes 55.6% (130 choices)



Maybe 30.3% (71 choices)



No 9.4% (22 choices)



No answer 4.7% (11 choices)



What local habitats or species should be the focus of future projects?

144/234 - Long answer - optional

Wildflower meadows, native trees, ponds, wetlands, and chalk streams are the most frequently mentioned habitats for future focus. Many respondents highlight the importance of supporting pollinators (especially bees and butterflies), birds (including swifts, house martins, sparrows, and songbirds), bats, hedgehogs, foxes, and other small mammals. Insects are repeatedly cited as a foundation for wider biodiversity.

There is strong support for prioritising endangered or declining species and habitats, and for connecting fragmented green spaces to create wildlife corridors. Many urge a shift away from manicured lawns and frequent mowing, advocating for more natural, less managed spaces, including urban meadows, scrubland, hedgerows, and deadwood habitats. Several mention the need to halt pesticide and herbicide use.

Water habitats, especially rivers (notably the Cam), ponds, and wetlands, are repeatedly highlighted for restoration and maintenance, including concerns about silt, pollution, and the need for clear water and healthy banks. Chalk streams are specifically mentioned as under threat and in need of protection.

Many respondents stress the need to protect and enhance existing commons, parks, and open spaces, with several naming Stourbridge Common, Midsummer Common, Coldham's Common, and Coton Orchard as priorities. Some call for more street trees and planting in residential areas, especially in less green-rich neighbourhoods.

There is also concern about the impact of new developments, with calls to protect habitats from building, integrate nature into new housing, and avoid further loss of green space. Several suggest focusing on areas where biodiversity is most degraded, and on habitats near residential housing.

Other recurring themes include the need for habitat connectivity, community involvement in local planting, and adapting to climate change with drought- and heat-resistant species. Some mention specific sites (Mill Road Cemetery, Paradise, Hodsons Park, Logan Meadows) and species (badgers, water voles, kingfishers, skylarks, swallows, amphibians, reptiles) as deserving attention.

Overall, the strongest trends are: prioritising native and endangered species, restoring and connecting diverse habitats (especially meadows, wetlands, rivers, and trees), reducing intensive management and chemical use, and ensuring nature is accessible and integrated throughout the city, including in new developments and less green-rich areas.

How should we balance recreational access and people's enjoyment of our parks with protecting sensitive habitats?

134/234 - Long answer - optional

Most respondents emphasised the need for clear zoning or separation between recreational areas and sensitive habitats, often suggesting fencing, signage, and designated paths to protect wildlife while allowing people to enjoy green spaces. Many called for some areas to be permanently or periodically off-limits to the public, especially for the most sensitive habitats.

Education and awareness were frequently mentioned as crucial, including information boards, campaigns, workshops, and school programmes to help people understand the importance of biodiversity and how their actions affect habitats.

Several respondents highlighted the importance of thoughtful design, such as providing benches, bins, and well-maintained paths to guide movement and reduce disturbance, as well as landscaping features like hedges and buffer zones.

Dog management was a recurring theme, with many suggesting dog-free zones, dogs on leads, or restrictions during sensitive periods (e.g. bird nesting season).

Some respondents prioritised wildlife and biodiversity over recreation, arguing that urban parks should provide undisturbed habitats and that people's wellbeing benefits from nature. Others felt recreation should take precedence, especially in dense urban areas, and cautioned against restricting access too much.

There was broad support for a balanced approach, with many suggesting a mix of accessible and protected areas, and some advocating for seasonal restrictions or adaptive management depending on wildlife needs.

Other points raised included the impact of major events, fireworks, and urban development on habitats the need for more and larger green spaces and the value of community involvement and engagement.

In summary, the strongest trends were support for zoning and separation, education and awareness, thoughtful design, dog management, and a balanced approach between recreation and habitat protection. There was some disagreement about whether wildlife or recreation should be prioritised, but most respondents favoured solutions that allow for both, with careful management and communication.

If there are children or young people in your household, what do they want from existing and future green spaces?

82/234 - Long answer - optional

Respondents most frequently highlighted the importance of natural, biodiverse, and varied green spaces where children and young people can freely explore, play, and connect with nature. Many want spaces with trees to climb, wild areas, water features, and opportunities to observe and interact with wildlife such as birds, insects, and small mammals. Climbable trees and places to build dens or hide were specifically mentioned by several respondents.

A strong theme was the desire for green spaces to be safe, clean, and free from litter, needles, and antisocial behaviour. Safety and the ability to explore without fear were repeatedly emphasised, both for younger children and for teenagers seeking places to socialise.

Learning about nature and opportunities for environmental education were also common requests, including information boards, signage, and school visits to wildlife sites. Some suggested that green spaces should be accessible for school activities and that events like bioblitzes are valuable.

Respondents want a mix of open spaces for running and sports, as well as wilder, less manicured areas for adventure and discovery. Some noted that playgrounds are less appealing than natural areas with shrubs, woods, and features like stumperies. There were also calls for more wildflowers, ponds, and spaces for ethical angling.

Facilities such as toilets, drinking water, picnic benches, bins, and shelter from rain or sun were mentioned as desirable. Some respondents highlighted the need for spaces that exclude dogs for safer play, and for areas suitable for a range of ages.

Concerns were raised about the impact of urban development on green spaces, with some expressing frustration at loss of biodiversity and inadequate protection from authorities. A few also mentioned the importance of making green spaces accessible by different modes of transport.

Finally, several responses noted the importance of balancing spaces for play, sports, relaxation, and quiet enjoyment, and ensuring that green spaces are inclusive and welcoming for all ages and genders.

Do you support Fulbourn Road Local Nature Reserve designation?

201/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



Do you support Church End Local Nature Reserve designation?

188/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Yes 76.5% (179 choices)



No answer 19.7% (46 choices)



No 3.8% (9 choices)



Do you support Cambridge seeking Nature City Accreditation?

221/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Yes 76.1% (178 choices)



Unsure 9.8% (23 choices)



No 8.5% (20 choices)

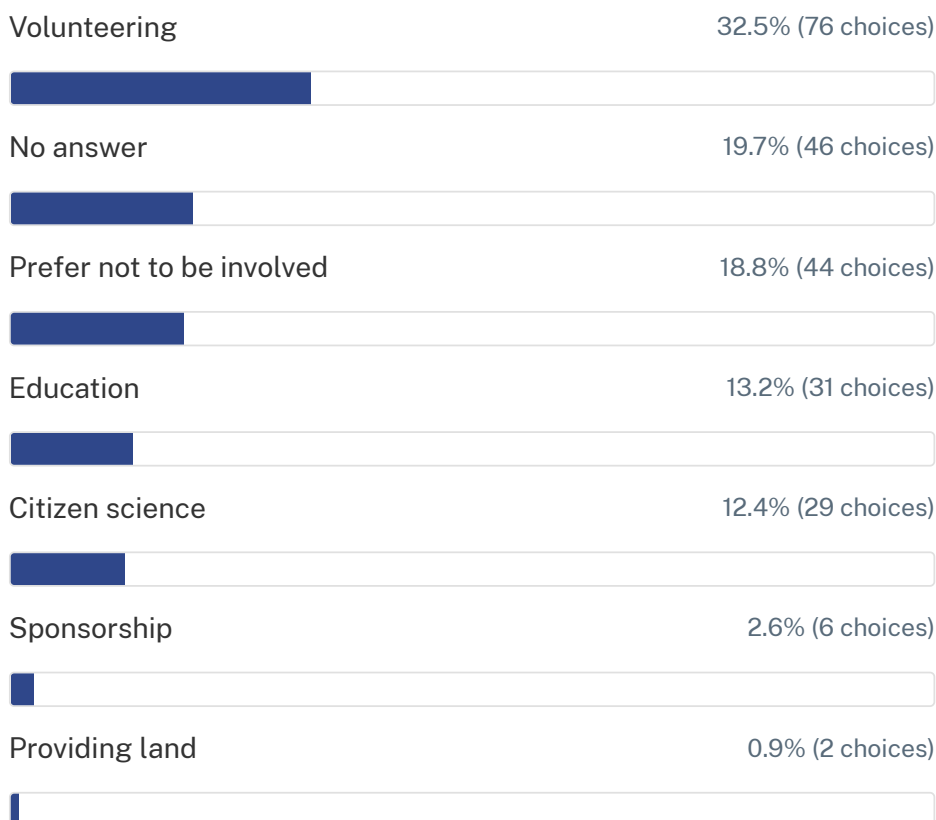


No answer 5.6% (13 choices)



How would you or your organisation like to collaborate on biodiversity projects and engage with Nature City accreditation?

188/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



What barriers might prevent you from participating in nature activities such as exploring a Local Nature Reserve or volunteering to help with a nature project in your local park?

113/234 - Long answer - optional

The most common barrier mentioned by respondents is lack of time, often due to work, family, or other commitments etc.]. Many people also cite physical barriers such as disability, poor health, age, or limited mobility etc.].

Accessibility and transport are also recurring issues, including distance from sites, lack of public transport, poor cycle routes, and parking difficulties etc.]. Several respondents highlight the need for activities to be local and accessible by foot or bike.

A lack of information or communication about opportunities, events, and how to get involved is another common theme. Some also mention a lack of family-friendly or child-inclusive activities.

Other barriers mentioned include safety concerns (especially in secluded areas or due to anti-social behaviour) poor facilities (such as toilets), and the physical quality of sites. A few respondents express distrust in council motives or frustration with bureaucracy and the political nature of such projects.

A minority of respondents say they face no barriers or are already actively involved.

In summary, the main barriers are lack of time, physical and health limitations, accessibility and transport issues, insufficient information, and the need for more family-friendly and flexible Safety, facilities, and trust in organisers are also concerns for some.



How would you like us to share progress and decisions on biodiversity actions?

212/234 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional

Online updates 76.5% (179 choices)



Interactive maps 40.2% (94 choices)



Social media 35.5% (83 choices)



Community meetings 28.2% (66 choices)



No answer 9.4% (22 choices)



Other 5.6% (13 choices)



Do you have any innovative ideas that could help make Cambridge a leader in urban biodiversity and meet our Nature City accreditation aspiration?

100/234 - Long answer - optional

The most common themes across responses are the need for greater community engagement and education, including involving schools, colleges, and local residents in biodiversity projects. Many suggest expanding volunteering networks, citizen science, and making biodiversity culturally visible through signage, art, and public campaigns.

A strong emphasis is placed on rewilding, reducing mowing and chemical use, and allowing verges and green spaces to become more natural, with wildflowers, scrubland, and less intensive maintenance. Several respondents highlight the importance of protecting existing green spaces from development and prioritising biodiversity over city growth.

Many mention the need for more trees, shrubs, and wildflower planting in parks, streets, and neglected spaces, including replacing failed plantings and increasing tree cover in areas like Parker's Piece and Mill Road. Suggestions include vertical planting, green roofs, and water gardens for climate resilience.

There is repeated concern about pesticide and herbicide use, with calls to maintain and promote the city's herbicide-free commitment and educate residents and businesses about alternatives.

Water and river habitats are frequently mentioned as priorities, including protecting chalk streams, the River Cam, and creating more ponds and wetlands.

Other recurring ideas include creating wildlife corridors, hedgehog highways, and pollinator patches to connect habitats incentivising garden ponds and rainwater collection and using technology for monitoring biodiversity.

Several respondents urge the council to listen to local experts, Friends groups, and environmental organisations, and to mainstream nature-based solutions in all planning decisions.

There are also calls for more funding, personnel, and incentives for biodiversity projects and for improved communication and visibility of biodiversity efforts.

Less frequently, respondents mention limiting cars, improving public transport, and managing tourist impact as well as unique ideas like supertrees, urban food forests, and orchard parks.

Overall, the strongest trends are: prioritising community involvement and education, rewilding and naturalising green spaces, protecting existing habitats from development, increasing tree and wildflower planting, maintaining a pesticide-free approach, and enhancing water and river habitats. Respondents want biodiversity to be embedded in everyday life and city planning, with visible, accessible, and well-communicated actions.

Are there any other comments or suggestions you'd like to make regarding the Biodiversity Strategy or Nature City accreditation?

62/234 - Long answer - optional

Many respondents emphasised the need for **urgent, ambitious, and practical action** rather than focusing solely on accreditation or strategy documents. There is a strong call for **measurable targets, robust monitoring, and enforcement** to ensure real outcomes for biodiversity.

Development pressure and loss of habitat are major concerns, with several respondents urging limits on new building until infrastructure and biodiversity protections are in place. Many want **nature and biodiversity to be prioritised above profit and unchecked growth**.

Pesticide and herbicide use is a divisive issue. Several respondents demand a pesticide-free city and criticise the omission of this commitment in the latest strategy while one suggests limited herbicide use for safety and drainage reasons.

Community engagement, education, and inclusivity are widely supported. Respondents want clear communication, opportunities for volunteering, and education to be central to the strategy. There is also a call for **better public awareness campaigns** and more accessible information.

Protection and enhancement of existing habitats is a recurring theme, with many stressing the importance of preserving what remains, improving green corridors, and ensuring developments deliver on-site biodiversity gains. There are also calls for **better management of mowing, invasive species, and pollution**.

Trees and urban greening are highlighted as vital for climate resilience and urban wellbeing. Respondents want more tree planting, green corridors, and adaptation to changing climate conditions.

Collaboration with local experts, universities, and community groups is encouraged to leverage existing knowledge and resources.

Other points raised include the need to address **light pollution** improve **litter management** ensure **inclusive design** and avoid over-bureaucratisation. Some respondents also highlighted the **mental health benefits** of green spaces.

A minority expressed scepticism about the strategy's effectiveness or the value of accreditation.

Overall, the responses show strong support for urgent, ambitious, and practical biodiversity action, with a focus on measurable outcomes, community involvement, and the protection and enhancement of existing nature in the face of development pressures.

What would you like to do next?

234/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - required

Go to the Urban Forest Strategy questions 56% (131 choices)



Go to the end of the survey 27.4% (64 choices)



Go to the cross-cutting questions 16.7% (39 choices)



Does the strategy clearly explain the concept of Urban Forestry?

136/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Clearly explains 50.3% (77 choices)



Somewhat explains 34.6% (53 choices)



No answer 11.1% (17 choices)



Does not explain 3.9% (6 choices)



Do you support the overall vision, principles and aims of the Urban Forest Strategy and the direction of travel for the next decade?

142/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Strongly support 60.8% (93 choices)



Support 22.2% (34 choices)



Neutral 8.5% (13 choices)



No answer 7.2% (11 choices)



Strongly oppose 1.3% (2 choices)



Oppose 0% (0 choices)



What level of ambition should Cambridge adopt for future canopy cover and overall tree legacy?

148/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Adopt an ambitious long-term target above current levels (~25%), supported by major investment 60.1% (92 choices)



Aim for modest canopy growth, prioritising areas with the lowest canopy cover 22.9% (35 choices)



Aim for modest canopy growth (~20%) over the next 10-15 years 11.1% (17 choices)



No answer 3.3% (5 choices)



Maintain the current canopy cover (no major change at ~17%) 2.6% (4 choices)



What approach should the council take to selecting tree species in a changing climate?

143/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Prioritise climate-resilient species (including non-native) where evidence supports it 28.8% (44 choices)



Actively diversify the species mix for long-term resilience, even if this means major shifts from historic species 24.2% (37 choices)



Use a mix of native and non-native species, with careful site-based selection 20.9% (32 choices)



Prioritise traditional native species wherever possible 19.6% (30 choices)



No answer 6.5% (10 choices)



How should the council balance mature tree retention with public safety?

149/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Retain mature trees wherever reasonable, accepting some residual risk, to preserve public benefits 43.1% (66 choices)



Retain mature trees where risks are tolerable and can be managed proportionately 33.3% (51 choices)



Balance safety with retention, using pruning before removal 15.7% (24 choices)



Prioritise safety above all; remove trees where risk is identified 5.2% (8 choices)



No answer 2.6% (4 choices)



What level of responsibility should developers have for new and existing trees?

148/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Provide full funding for establishment/aftercare (for example, at least three years), long-term protection and enhanced canopy delivery 60.8% (93 choices)



Deliver high-quality tree retention, planting and aftercare as a standard requirement 29.4% (45 choices)



Meet minimum national requirements 3.3% (5 choices)



Protect existing trees of value and plant replacements where feasible 3.3% (5 choices)



No answer 3.3% (5 choices)



How should the council prioritise where new trees are planted?

147/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Where canopy cover is lowest or heat risk is highest 54.2% (83 choices)



Strongly prioritise areas with the greatest environmental inequalities, even if this means fewer new trees elsewhere 22.9% (35 choices)



Evenly across the city 11.8% (18 choices)



Where new development is happening 7.2% (11 choices)



No answer 3.9% (6 choices)



What approach should the council take to replacing and establishing new trees?

145/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Increase replacement ratios and invest in high-quality watering and formative care 66% (101 choices)



Treat young-tree establishment as a high-priority investment, even if it means planting fewer trees 17.6% (27 choices)



Replace trees 1:1 and provide basic establishment 8.5% (13 choices)



No answer 5.2% (8 choices)

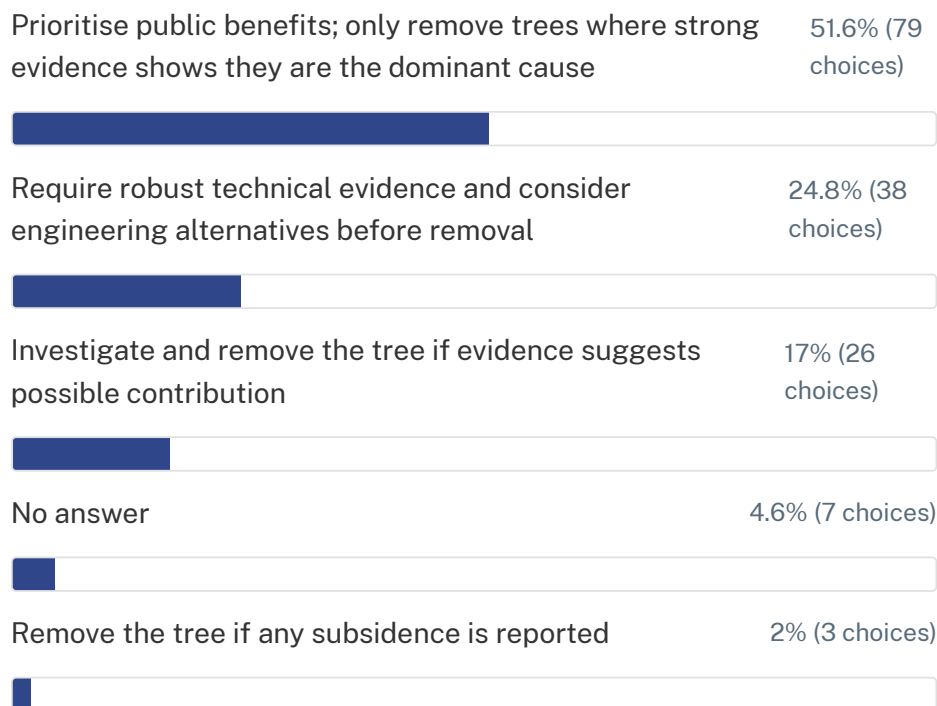


Replace removed trees 1:1 where possible 2.6% (4 choices)



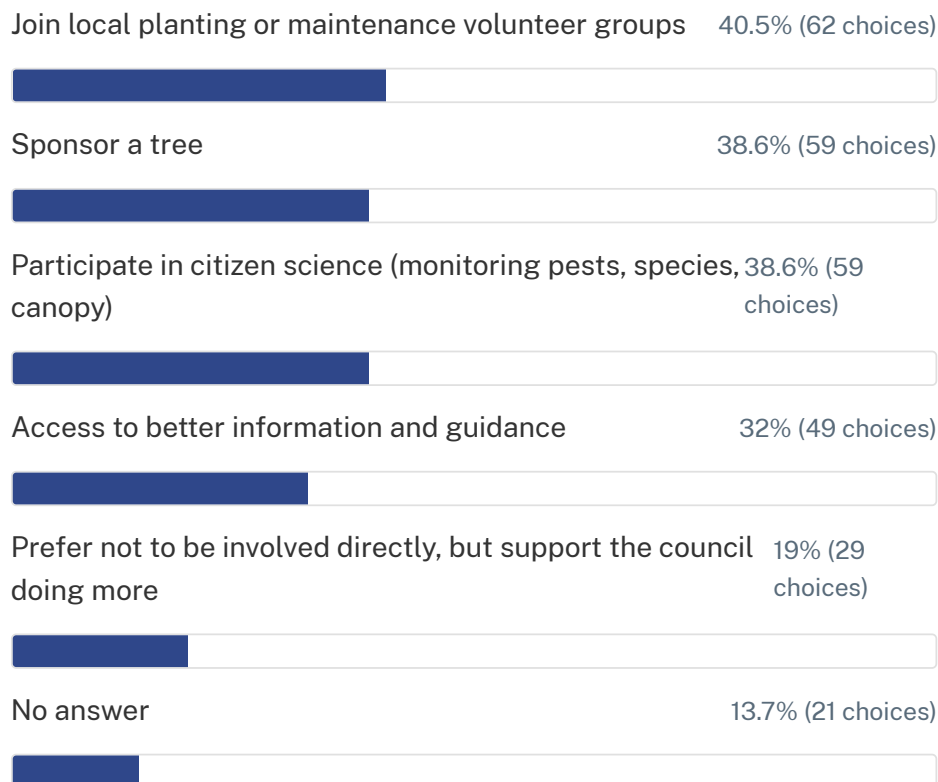
What approach should be taken when subsidence is alleged to be caused by a public tree?

146/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



How would residents like to be involved in supporting Cambridge's urban forest?

132/153 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional



If resources are limited, what should the Council prioritise?

146/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Maximising long-term benefits (biodiversity, shade, climate) even if it means difficult trade-offs (like what) 35.9% (55 choices)



Maintenance and aftercare of existing trees 24.2% (37 choices)



Planting fewer trees but with proper establishment 18.3% (28 choices)



Engagement, education and partnerships to expand capacity 11.8% (18 choices)



Tree safety work 5.2% (8 choices)



No answer 4.6% (7 choices)



What would you like to do next?

148/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Go to cross-cutting questions 80.4% (123 choices)



Go to end 16.3% (25 choices)

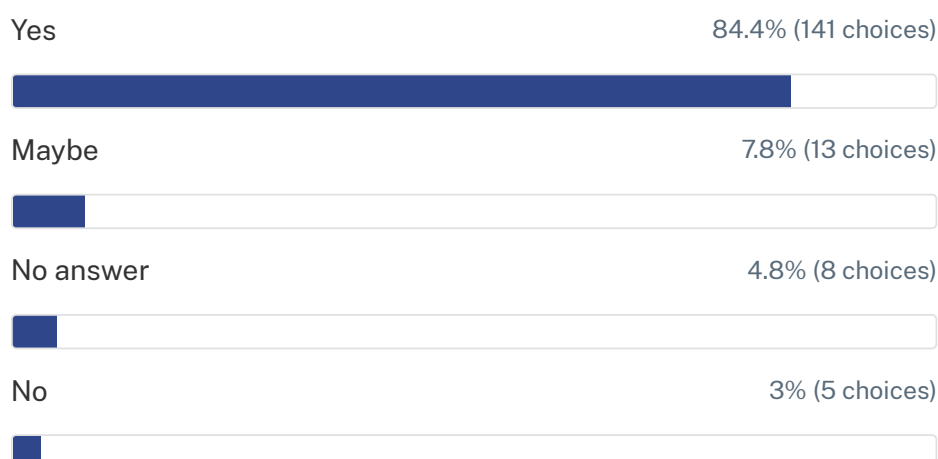


No answer 3.3% (5 choices)



Do residents support a more integrated approach to canopy cover, habitat connectivity and species recovery?

159/167 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



How should the city adapt habitats and planting practices to hotter, drier summers and increased climate risks?

93/167 - Long answer - optional

Respondents most frequently emphasised the need to plant more trees, especially those that are resilient to hotter, drier conditions and future climate scenarios. Many called for prioritising the protection and maintenance of existing mature trees, which are seen as more resilient and valuable for shade and biodiversity.

A strong trend was the recommendation to diversify planting, using a mix of native and climate-resilient species, to hedge against uncertainty in future weather patterns and pests. Some stressed the importance of focusing on native species for biodiversity, while others argued for including non-natives if they are better adapted to future conditions.

Water management was another key theme: respondents suggested rainwater collection, rain gardens, ponds, and mulching to support plant survival and reduce reliance on mains water. Several also highlighted the need for improved soil health as a foundation for resilient planting.

Community involvement in watering and caring for new plantings was widely supported, with suggestions for volunteer schemes, public awareness campaigns, and involving schools.

Many respondents advocated for increasing shade through tree avenues, green walls, and roofs, and reducing hard surfaces to mitigate urban heat. There was also support for creating and maintaining wetlands, wildflower meadows, and less intensively managed green spaces.

A number of responses stressed the importance of evidence-based, expert-led approaches, learning from other cities, and adapting strategies as more is learned.

Some respondents raised concerns about the unpredictability of future climate (including wetter winters), and the need to avoid over-reliance on any one approach. A few questioned the premise of climate adaptation or the urgency of intervention.

Overall, the main trends were: prioritising tree planting and protection (especially shade and resilient species), diversifying plantings, improving water and soil management, involving the community, and taking an evidence-based, holistic approach.



Should reasonable resources be directed first to communities with the lowest canopy cover and poorest access to wildlife?

159/167 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Yes 59.3% (99 choices)



Maybe 31.1% (52 choices)



No 4.8% (8 choices)



No answer 4.8% (8 choices)



What role could communities play in both tree and biodiversity?

82/167 - Long answer - optional

Most respondents emphasised the importance of community involvement in both tree planting and ongoing care, particularly watering and maintenance of young trees. Many suggested schemes such as 'adopt a tree' or 'guardian' roles for residents, schools, or local groups.

Education and awareness were frequently mentioned, especially through schools and community events. Several respondents highlighted the benefits of involving children and families, both for biodiversity and for fostering stewardship.

Volunteering opportunities, monitoring, and reporting issues were also common themes. Respondents noted the need for accessible and well-publicised volunteering, with some suggesting family-friendly sessions and community events.

Many stressed the value of local knowledge and input, including species selection, site suggestions, and everyday stewardship. Some respondents called for more support, training, and genuine decision-making roles for communities.

Private gardens were identified as a major issue, with suggestions to encourage retention and replacement planting, and to promote biodiversity-friendly gardening. Hedgerows, leaf litter, and wildlife corridors were also mentioned as ways to boost biodiversity.

Some respondents noted barriers such as lack of time, unclear information, or insufficient council support, and called for easier access to resources, clearer communication, and practical help (e.g. watering equipment, rainwater collection hubs).

Overall, the strongest trends were calls for community-led planting, care, and monitoring; education and engagement through schools and families; accessible volunteering; and support for biodiversity in private gardens.

How can we best present evidence, decisions and trade-offs to build public confidence across both strategies?

65/167 - Long answer - optional

Transparency, honesty, and clear communication were the most frequently emphasised themes. Respondents repeatedly called for open explanations of decisions, evidence, and trade-offs, using plain language and avoiding spin. Regular updates and feedback loops, such as email newsletters, were suggested to keep the public informed about progress and outcomes.

Many respondents stressed the importance of using a wide range of communication channels, including social media, local press, leaflets, noticeboards, public events, and community meetings, to reach diverse audiences. Visuals such as maps, diagrams, artist impressions, and short videos were recommended to make information more accessible and engaging.

Demonstrating real-world results and successful case studies, both locally and from other cities, was seen as important for building trust and showing the impact of strategies. Several responses highlighted the need for baseline data, measurable targets, and transparent reporting on progress, costs, and benefits.

Active public engagement and collaboration were also recurring themes. Respondents wanted opportunities for feedback, influence, and involvement, with some suggesting support for local champions, schools, and community groups. Listening to public opinion and showing how it shapes outcomes was seen as key to building confidence.

A minority of responses expressed scepticism or opposition to the strategies or questioned the council's priorities

Demographic of respondents

Respondents are invited to share some details about themselves as part of the registration process on our online engagement platform. This helps us better understand how representative the responses are of the people who live and work in Cambridge.

To ensure that the survey is accessible to as many people as possible, we do not make it compulsory to provide this data. The online engagement platform is continually working to improve how it presents this data.

Year of birth

0 - 9



10 - 19



20 - 29

5%



30 - 39

8%



40 - 49

12%



50 - 59

13%



60 - 69

12%



70 - 79

11%



80 - 89

5%



90 +



Unknown

34%



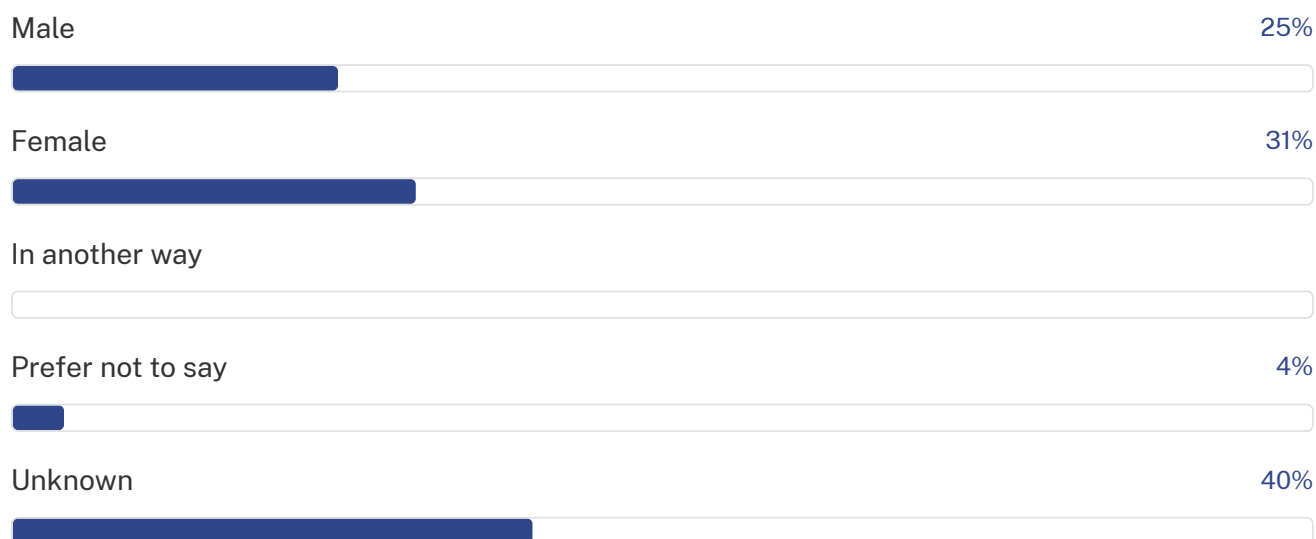
Place of residence

Abbey	1%
Arbury	5%
Castle	2%
Cherry Hinton	1%
Coleridge	1%
East Cambridgeshire	1%
East Chesterton	2%
Fenland	
Huntingdonshire	
King's Hedges	2%
Market	1%
Newnham	1%
Petersfield	2%
Queen Edith's	1%
Romsey	2%
South Cambridgeshire	5%
Trumpington	1%
West Chesterton	3%





Which of the following describes how you think of yourself? (please select one response from the following)



This page is intentionally left blank

Cam Valley Forum - 17 February 2026

Response to consultation on

Cambridge City Council Draft Biodiversity Strategy 2026-2031

Overall, we think the draft Biodiversity Strategy is good. Our comments are as follows.

1. Need for greater emphasis on protection of *in-situ* biodiversity

The draft Biodiversity Strategy correctly calls for protection and enhancement of wildlife and biodiversity, but there is little specific mention of the need for protection of the remaining *in-situ* biodiversity. The BNG legislation allows for biodiversity in a location to be “lost to development, if the latter is considered sufficiently important, on the basis that it can be re-created elsewhere”. We feel that this opens up a considerable risk of loss of key biodiversity, and would like to see stronger emphasis on protecting current remaining in-situ biodiversity.

2. Strategic objectives

Reflecting the above general point, we would like to see the first two of the strategic objectives (summarised on page 5 and worded in full on page 43) re-ordered and the text adjusted as follows:

1. **Strengthen protection of, and** improve condition and connectivity of designated sites and priority habitats **in-situ**.
2. Secure a measurable biodiversity net gain across the city.

The strategic objective on BNG should perhaps also mention the targets (the statutory target which is 10%, and the City Council’s laudable desire to reach 20%)

The summary objectives on p 5 need editing to reflect more closely the fully worded strategic objectives on p.43.

3. Section 4

4.3. Special mention is made of The Big Chalk Partnership, Butterfly Conservation, and Nature Town and Cities. We would like to see mention of the following national initiative as this is specifically relevant to Cambridge’s biodiversity and key habitats:

CABA (the Catchments Based Approach - <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/>) which has a strategy specifically for chalk streams, the key recommendation of which is to develop ‘*an overarching level of protection and priority status for chalk streams and their catchments*’, and its closely associated partner, the Rivers Trust <https://theriverstrust.org/our-work>

4.4. We are pleased to see mention of the “*Draft South Cambridgeshire Climate & Nature Strategy 2026–2030*” but we understand this is to be a joint strategy with Cambridge City Council. This may need correcting or clarifying.

4.5. Bottom of page 16/top of page 17: the paragraph on actions underway on chalk streams does not mention the GCCSP. This project should be mentioned, along with future work on the city’s chalk streams that is expected to build on the results of the case study work currently underway through the GCCSP.

4.6. The importance of designated City Wildlife Sites is acknowledged but there appears to be little in the draft to indicate how their biodiversity will be safeguarded. Some are already under significant threat from development. The very small area covered by designated LNRs is clearly illustrated in

Map 1. The overlay, on Map 5, of designated sites with the Cambridge Nature Network priority areas looks very good and positive until one realises that the majority of the area of designated sites is non-statutory protection.

Section on “Wetlands” (p.29): it would be useful if this could be termed ‘Wetlands **and Watercourses**’ to make it clear that river and streams are included here, not just fenland and marshes, which some might initially think of as wetlands. We appreciate the attention given to chalk streams.

4.7. (p. 32). – Local threats and pressures. This section needs specific mention of ‘over-abstraction’ of water for both household and non-household use. Over-abstraction is a major contributor to both ‘urbanisation’ and ‘hydrological change’. There is a mention of ‘depleted aquifers’ but not of what is causing these.

4. Section 5. Biodiversity Audit

The biodiversity audit, on which the strategy is based, was undertaken in 2020, over 5 years ago. At that time, as noted *“Overall, 123 ha (63%) of the total area of the audit is in poor condition”*. We wonder if there might already be some significant changes to the baseline? We note the more recent figures for particular sites in 2025 (Table 3, p.40) but it is difficult to get an overall picture.

We think that the biodiversity audit should include at least some measure of the health of the City’s river and chalk streams, given the efforts that have been put into gathering data on water quality and quantity, and other metrics relevant to this key habitat type. We are aware the BNG metrics do not specifically address this, but think it is essential that the local biodiversity strategy should do so. As far as we are aware there is no requirement for a local authority biodiversity strategy to focus specifically on the BNG approach.

Somewhere there needs to be a specific commitment or action on improving communication with local residents about the City Council’s management of biodiversity and why certain apparently ‘damaging’ actions (e.g tree felling, in-channel stream work etc) are necessary. Public awareness of the natural environment and the need to protect biodiversity is fortunately high in Cambridge but the complexity of its management in the face of development pressures is not always well understood.

General comment

The draft text needs some good editing as some of the sentences are ambiguous and not always easy to interpret.

Overview

The revised Biodiversity Strategy keeps the overall direction of the current Strategy – while constructively tightening the focus, updating to address new law and policy, and reshaping both the action plan and monitoring framework. The earlier Strategy set a vision of achieving measurable net biodiversity gain across Cambridge, structured around seven Objectives under three Themes. The revised Strategy explicitly retains the overall vision and high-level Themes, while refining and sometimes replacing individual Actions and indicators, in light of what has (and has *not*) worked since 2022.

The revised Strategy constructively places much more emphasis on measurable progress with updated baselines, clearer indicators, and reporting arrangements that track delivery of actions and outcomes. It is well integrated, clarifying how e.g., the Cambridge Nature Network priority areas, Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and the Council's emerging Urban Forest Strategy will feed into site selection, planning decisions and investment.

➡ This is all positive 👍

However, a number of weaknesses should be addressed, to strengthen this draft Strategy.

- Less clear sense of urgency and milestones By stretching delivery into a second phase, treating 2022–25 more as a 'ramp-up', sometimes **blurs near-term urgency** by reducing pressure for early, transformational change.
- More complex governance is not always clearer Delivery in the draft Strategy accommodates new layers [e.g., LNRS, statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the Urban Forest Strategy, Greater Cambridge Planning]. This complexity requires consistent and clear explanation of *who* is responsible for *what*, by *when*, and, above all, **how** they can be **held to account**.
- Over-reliance on statutory BNG and spatial frameworks? The current Strategy relies on BNG, Cambridge Nature Network and 'Doubling Nature', but also features proactive projects that go *beyond* minimum planning requirements. The draft Strategy aligns more closely with national BNG and the LNRS – risking **choking off** locally driven, discretionary projects (in e.g., smaller sites, where statutory tools are less pertinent).
- Weaker focus on concrete neighbourhood-level benefits The current Strategy emphasises 'Nature in your Neighbourhood', access to local green spaces, and working with 'Friends groups' and volunteers. This enables residents to see easily how the Strategy impacts them. The draft Strategy is expressed in more technical terms ('targets', 'networks', 'indicators', 'compliance'). This risks **local, site-specific and equality-focused benefits** being less visible, relevant and accessible to residents and – further – makes such benefits plainly secondary to more abstract regulatory alignments.
- Monitoring needs better focus on measurable ecological outcomes Under the current Strategy, the Council delivered on many actions **without** achieving the hoped-for scale of nature recovery. There is a clear need to monitor progress *better* against a biodiversity baseline. While this draft Strategy improves the indicator framework, it leans too much toward counting actions and outputs (projects delivered, hectares in management, trees planted) **rather than ecological outcomes** (habitat condition, species trends, connectivity). It is essential for residents, partners, Councillors and Officers all to be able to assess whether Cambridge **is or is not** genuinely on track for 'measurable net gain'.
- Dilution of community voice The 2021 public consultation on *that* draft Biodiversity Strategy enabled significant partnership with residents, local groups and conservation organisations. However, this draft Strategy's consultation has been *deliberately* bundled with the 'parallel' Urban Forest Strategy (while *entirely* overlapping with other major and challenging public consultations), despite the two documents lacking parallel or inter-linked structures. Meanwhile the ostensibly equally 'parallel' Climate change consultation had come and gone before these two had even begun. Together, this has

dramatically reduced residents' **capacity** to provide meaningful input. The consequent built-up frustration of local residents is obvious in e.g., this **29/1/26** comment found on a local discussion board, (posted by a person I have never previously come across):

"I suppose it's possible this "consultation" will be different, but all the council consultations I've responded to in the past have been a sham, constructed to get a particular answer, although perhaps, if enough people band together, something could be done. (Methods of manipulation regularly used: 1. consulting on a very limited predetermined choice, major decisions already made; 2. listing benefits no one would say no to, eg more youth services, which never get delivered/will be delivered anyway even if scheme the council wants to "sell" doesn't go ahead/without warning of the sometimes extremely high costs (eg demolitions) the benefit depends on, potentially making the "benefit" a bad choice; 3. questions so vague they're pretty meaningless and the council can draw whatever conclusions they want 4. compelling the respondent to agree to at least one option whether they agree with any of them or not; 5. not accurately transferring responses from surveys into the following report, eg one report cast doubt on whether anyone in my situation existed, although I reported it clearly in the survey.)"

- Therefore the finalised Strategies must demonstrate clearly how meaningful, relevant and thoughtful public input **does** alter the drafts' focuses, approaches and priorities – so community influence is not seen to be manifestly weaker than previously.

With all of these concerns in mind, and aiming to maintain and retain the strengths of this draft Biodiversity Strategy, the following pages offer commentary as well as detailed suggested **amendments** to the draft text.

These are intended throughout to:

- tighten accountability and align with emerging standards;
- boost visible and *essential* urgency; and
- optimise neighbourhood-level desirable outcomes.

For clarity, proposed new wording is preceded by a → symbol and designated with green text.

1. Foreword

Issue: The tone is celebratory and process-heavy; urgency and accountability for delivery 2026–31 are understated.

Re: "When we adopted our 2022 Biodiversity Strategy, we pledged to undertake a midterm review on progress and direction. This draft revised strategy for consultation seeks to update changes in national legislation and recognise new regional strategies, partnerships and local projects." **Replace with:**

→ When we adopted our 2022 Biodiversity Strategy, we pledged to undertake a midterm review on progress, direction **and delivery**. This draft revised strategy for consultation seeks **not only** to update changes in national legislation and recognise new regional strategies, partnerships and local projects, **but also to set out clear, time-bound actions and measures of success for the period 2026–2031.**

Re: "It provides an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the many successful projects and partnerships working to protect and restore nature across the city and beyond." **Replace with:**

→ It provides an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate successful projects and partnerships, **and to be honest about where progress has been too slow or uneven so that we can correct course quickly.**

Add at end of the second paragraph:

→ We are now halfway through the decade in which the UK has committed to halt and reverse nature loss; failure to act decisively between 2026 and 2031 would lock in further decline in Cambridge's habitats and species.

In the final paragraph, strengthen accountability and demonstrate that aims will be consistently translated into results, **replace** “We propose to take a lead on this and I hope you will feel inspired to respond to the consultation and join us in whatever way you are able.” **with**:

→ We propose to take a lead on this, and commit to publishing annual public reports on progress against this strategy – so that residents, partners and communities can hold us to account.

2. Vision

Issue: Strong long-term vision, but lacks sufficiently explicit reference to: 2030/2031 milestones; equity between neighbourhoods; and accountability. The draft Strategy focuses mainly on land management and planning within the city boundary; could more weight be given to value-chain management, financial actors and the redirection of harmful subsidies and investments?

At the start of the section, **add** a short framing sentence:

→ This strategy translates our long term corporate vision into specific outcomes that must be achieved in every neighbourhood by 2031.

At the draft’s 1st paragraph, **add**:

→ The Council will aim for local and global supply chains linked to the city (e.g., in construction materials, food, research inputs) to reduce their negative biodiversity impacts.

<Aligns draft Strategy with IPBES’ messages on value chains and trade (A6, B10); cf the Report cited at end of list on p. 6 of this feedback >

In the quoted biodiversity vision, to **add** explicit timing and equity:

‘Our Biodiversity Strategy vision is that over the next 5 years Cambridge will see a “measurable net gain” in biodiversity, both within the city and the surrounding countryside, including the extent and quality of priority habitats and populations of priority species. **Replace by:**

→ ‘Our Biodiversity Strategy vision is that over the next 5 years Cambridge will see a “measurable net gain” in biodiversity that will be demonstrable – both within the city and in the surrounding countryside (including the extent and quality of priority habitats and populations of priority species) **with no ward left behind in access to nature and in improvements to local habitats.**

Add a final sentence to the paragraph:

→ Progress towards this vision will be tracked through publicly reported indicators, including: ‘biodiversity units’ on Council-managed land; on the condition of key sites; and on meaningful public access to natural green space within an average 10–15 minute walk from residents’ homes.

3. Executive Summary

Issue: Good structure, but lacks explicit neighbourhood-level framing, baselines and targets.

The ‘Vision’ paragraph

By 2031, Cambridge will achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity, ensuring priority habitats and species are protected, enhanced, and connected. **Replace by:**

→ By 2031, Cambridge will achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity **compared with the 2020 baseline set out in our Biodiversity Audit**, ensuring priority habitats and species are protected, enhanced, and connected. We will also have piloted business-relevant metrics (e.g. biodiversity units, habitat condition, species trends) for local businesses to use.

<The latter aligns the draft Strategy with IPBES’ calls for standardized, decision-relevant indicators and scenarios (C5–C6, Table SPM.7); cf IPBES, cited on p.6 of this feedback. >

And also **add**:

→ We will publish updated biodiversity unit scores for our core sites in 2028 and 2031, and aim to use these to demonstrate at least a 20% increase in units across Council-managed natural green spaces by 2031 – subject to available resources.

The 'Strategic Objectives' list

Make objectives clearly **testable** by **adding** text to three of the six bulleted items:

- Deliver measurable biodiversity net gain across the city. **Replace by:**
 → • Deliver measurable biodiversity net gain across the city, including a minimum 20% net gain on all Council-led developments and a net increase in biodiversity units across Council-managed natural green spaces by 2031.
- Improve condition and connectivity of designated sites and priority habitats. **Replace by:**
 → • Improve condition and connectivity of designated sites and priority habitats, so that by 2031 at least 75% of Local Nature Reserves and Commons are in moderate or good condition and no site remains in poor condition without a published recovery plan.
- Embed biodiversity considerations across all Council services and developments. **Replace by:**
 → • Embed biodiversity considerations across all Council services and developments and local economic policy and business-support programmes. Furthermore: support local businesses to adopt biodiversity accounting and reporting and encourage firms to set science-based nature targets aligned with the LNRS and global goals.
<Align draft Strategy with IPBES' whole-of-government approaches (KM3, B1; setting nature targets aligns with IPBES B8–B9; cf the Report cited at end of list on p.6 of this feedback >
Consider also citing Logan's Meadow and Hobson's Park schemes (mentioned at p.2–3 & p.8 of the Draft Strategy) as examples of how planning, S106, and public–private co-funding offer a prototype enabling-environment, for net-gain-positive, business-led development.
- Empower communities, businesses, and institutions to act. **Replace by:**
 → • Empower communities, businesses, and institutions to act, with a particular focus on neighbourhoods currently lacking high quality natural greenspace, and support at least one LNRS-aligned community nature project in every ward by 2030.

The 'Key Themes' bullets

Under 'Biodiversity Mainstreaming':

Signal the city's role in shifting financial flows at local scale (in line with IPBES B3), with:

- Develop and pilot biodiversity-weighted procurement criteria for major public realm and housing projects by 2028.

Under 'Nature in Your Neighbourhood':

Promote community-led projects, Nature City Accreditation, pollinator-friendly initiatives, and biodiversity education. **Replace by:**

- Promote community-led projects, Nature City Accreditation, pollinator-friendly initiatives, and biodiversity education, **with targeted support for wards with lower canopy cover, fewer wildlife-rich sites, or greater social disadvantage.**

The 'Action Plan' paragraph

Add to the end:

- Each action in the plan specifies a lead service, partners, intended outcomes and timescales, and we will use these to report transparently on delivery each year through our Biodiversity Duty Report.

Consider **adding** a *Resident-focused Executive Summary (plain-language version)*

Provide a boxed 'Summary for residents and neighbourhood forums', alongside or immediately after the formal Executive Summary, with text along the following lines:

→ **Summary for neighbourhoods and residents**

Nature in Cambridge is under real pressure. Many of our commons, parks and rivers are still in poor or only moderate condition for wildlife, despite volunteers and community groups having worked hard to improve them. This updated Biodiversity Strategy sets out what the Council and its partners will do between 2026 and 2031 to turn that around – street by street, and neighbourhood by neighbourhood.

By 2031, we want to see clear improvements that residents can experience close to home. That means: more wildflower areas and richer grasslands in our parks and Commons; healthier chalk streams and riverbanks; more trees and shade on streets and in housing estates; and more places for birds, bats, insects and other wildlife to thrive. We also want every resident to have a good quality natural greenspace within a short walk of where they live, work or study.

To achieve this, the Strategy focuses on three main areas:

- **Embedding nature in everything we do** – making sure Council services, new developments and day-to-day decisions all evaluate the short- and long-term impacts on nature, and securing at least 20% biodiversity net gain in Council-led developments.
- **Looking after our core nature sites** – improving how we manage Commons, Local Nature Reserves and rivers so that our most important habitats move from poor or moderate condition towards good, while also creating better links for wildlife across and beyond the city.
- **Nature in your neighbourhood** – supporting community-led projects in parks, streets, schools and housing areas, prioritising places that currently have less-than-average access to nature, and helping residents shape and monitor unfolding local action.

We will publish clear information each year on what has been done, where, with its results. A mid-term review in 2028 will check whether we are on track and also evaluate where and what needs to change.

This is not a strategy the Council can deliver alone: it depends on local groups, businesses, schools, colleges and residents becoming involved. Neighbourhood forums and community organisations will be key partners in identifying local priorities, co-designing projects, and holding the Council to account in the delivering of changes that nature – and our communities – need.

4.1 Why we need a strategy

Issue: Good narrative, but the declared biodiversity emergency needs to be translated more clearly into “what must change by when”; furthermore, neighbourhood equity is implicit rather than explicit. For ‘emerging standards’ of the Tables in the IPBES Report (its pp 7& 8) cited on my p. 6.

First paragraph – **add urgency:**

“In 2019, we declared a biodiversity emergency in recognition of the pressures facing our natural world, both locally and internationally”; **Replace by:**

→ In 2019, we declared a biodiversity emergency in recognition of the accelerating pressures facing our natural world, both locally and internationally, **and acknowledged that ‘business as usual’ in the way we plan, manage and use land in Cambridge is not compatible with nature recovery.** It is clear that local firms, institutions and supply chains (e.g., construction, life sciences, tourism, higher education, finance) *both* depend on functioning ecosystems (water quality, flood regulation, liveability for skilled workers) *and* contribute to biodiversity decline through land-take, resource use and pollution. These impacts create systemic risks for economies and societies, not just local environmental issues.

Add a short commitment paragraph after the first paragraph:

→ From 2026, we will treat the 742 hectares that the Council manages as a single, connected nature network for which we are collectively responsible. We will set site-level objectives for habitat condition and for biodiversity units, prioritising improvements on larger Commons and parks that serve multiple neighbourhoods and that currently perform only poorly for nature.

After the 3rd paragraph on p. 7, about working with Friends Groups etc., **add:**

→ Despite these efforts, our 2020–2025 audits show that many of our most visible Commons and recreation spaces remain in poor or only moderate ecological condition; furthermore, recreational pressure and urbanisation continue to erode wildlife value. This strategy therefore focuses on changing how we manage land and support more environmentally attuned behaviour in every neighbourhood. The Council will encourage and (where possible through planning conditions or

procurement) encourage businesses and institutions to measure and publicly disclose their biodiversity impacts and dependencies in line with emerging standards. <cf IPBES, below>

After the final paragraph on p. 8, about the use of S106 contributions etc., add:

→ We will continue to seek S106 contributions, targeting their deployment also in areas with relatively poor access to nature – even if this means small-scale initiatives due to the lack of obvious large-scale opportunities.

4.3 Legislation and policy

Issue: Current policy, legal, financial and cultural conditions tend to make harmful business practice profitable, and beneficial practice unprofitable; changing this ‘enabling environment’ is essential. The draft Strategy is strong on habitat projects but much weaker on these systemic levers. Section 4.3 outlines many key Policies and national initiatives on page 11. After these lists it should **note:**

→ These Policies and National initiatives build a local enabling environment for businesses. Under this Strategy, the Council will use its levers (planning conditions, procurement, fiscal tools where available) to align profitability with positive biodiversity outcomes. This aligns with IPBES KM2, KM3 and B2–B3. <cf the Report from IPBES, in the list, below >

I recommend that the following (especially the 7th of these) should be included in the bullet-point lists on pp 11–12; where agreed, these should also be added to Appendix 1 (pp 53–59).

→ • **Environmental Improvement Plan 2025 (EIP 2025)** – the latest legal, regularly updated delivery plan for the 25 Year Environment Plan, which raises the interim target for wildlife-rich habitat restoration, and places a stronger emphasis on delivery for LNRS ‘responsible authorities’;

→ • **Local Nature Recovery Strategies** statutory guidance and regulations – Defra guidance and the 2023 Procedure Regulations, which set out how LNRSs must be prepared, consulted on and used (see [this](#) and [this](#));

→ • **Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework (2023)** see [here](#) and its 2024–2025 supporting blogs, case studies, and mapping-tool updates (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). These provide nationally recognised benchmarks for e.g., 15-minute access, trees and greening levels, which should serve as a reference in the Local Plan, the Biodiversity Strategies and design guides;

→ • The developing **Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs)** as a major driver for land-use change around Cambridge (picked up via LNRS/EIP but not named) see [this](#) or [this](#);

→ • **The Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022)**, the UN’s current global ‘deal’ to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, that is intended to guide national and local strategies – including Biodiversity and Nature-recovery plans – to encourage local actions collectively to add up to global recovery as adopted in the COP15 decision (the full text is [here](#));

→ • **Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security (published 20.1.26)** via [HM Government](#), examining global ecosystem degradation and collapse and their threat to both UK national security and prosperity – highlighting that those countries best placed to adapt are those that invest in ecosystem protection and restoration.

→ • **IPBES Business and Biodiversity Assessment: Summary for Policymakers (published 08.02.26)** from the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), a global independent research body comprising 150+ member states governments. This concludes that the business-as-usual model this is heavily focused on *growth at the expense of nature* is not only unsustainable, it threatens our extinction, unless reversed. It reframes the often-destructive relationship between nature and commerce, showing not only how business impacts and **depends** on biodiversity, but also how nature contributes to people's and society's wellbeing.

4.4 Local Initiatives

Issue: Section 4.4 captures several of the big landscape-scale and institutional initiatives shaping nature recovery around Cambridge, but should address **local** initiatives. It leans too heavily towards broader strategic plans, but should demonstrate how – together – local initiatives can also relate to the spatial, policy and community framework for this Biodiversity strategy. Local and wider-scale initiatives should be clearly aligned, without duplicating precious effort and resources.

On page 14, before introducing Natural Cambridgeshire, Cambridge Nature Network, LNRS etc., **add** to the initial paragraph:

→ The following are not only conservation initiatives but also the spatial and policy framework within which businesses and financial institutions can invest, disclose and manage impacts on biodiversity.

Add a clear subheading for '**community-focused initiatives**' that includes the following important local programmes. For each element, include at least one sentence on what it contributes (e.g., “provides the evidence base for landscape-scale targeting”, or “offers a long-term vision for fenland expansion and access” or “creates a framework for ward-based community projects aligned with LNRS”):

→ • **River Cam CAN** (Climate Action through Nature) – a grant-funded project led by Cambridge Past, Present & Future, working with communities along the Cam on nature and climate actions that directly links biodiversity, climate resilience and social equity in river-adjacent neighbourhoods.

→ • **State of Nature in Cambridgeshire** reports – Natural Cambridgeshire’s county-level “State of Nature” assessments provides evidence, priorities and case studies that underpin local action.

→ • **Cambridgeshire County Council Biodiversity Strategy** is already implicit via LNRS, but this could be named to show alignment with the County’s wider policy framework.

→ • **The Green Infrastructure** work, associated with the Cambridge Nature Network and Doubling Nature (GI opportunity mapping, Cambridge Nature Festival), emphasises access to greenspace and health.

Furthermore, the Strategy should **add a subheading** to highlight **the desirable principles** underlying small-scale, hyper-local biodiversity projects such as:

→ • Planting street trees, hedges, planters and rain gardens with a variety of resilient or wildlife-friendly species.

→ • Creating continuous or “stepping-stone” habitat along streets or arteries (trees, shrubs, climbers, pollinator planting), instead of isolated ornamental tubs.

→ • Designing features such as rain gardens or pocket planting that manage runoff and improve water quality as well as providing nectar, cover and nesting opportunities.

To make 'Nature in your neighbourhood' a meaningful reality, **add another subheading** and include text to focus on **examples** of hyper-local biodiversity projects that should be nurtured under the new Biodiversity Strategy (a few suggestions follow):

→ • Ideas from ‘Mill Road For People’ to '**green**' **Mill Road**, in Cambridge – a nature-poor but population-dense area, where relatively small interventions could deliver disproportionate benefits for both people and wildlife, (echoing current initiatives in Brussels, London, Walton-on-Thames, Arnhem, Lorquí, Potenza, Dunaújváros, Vienna and Amsterdam) - see e.g. <https://www.dw.com/en/how-one-city-won-over-its-residents-to-turn-parking-into-green-space/a-75017286>

→ • Creation of **micro-corridors linking green spaces** (e.g., along Petersfield side streets, in Mill Road Cemetery, along the Chisholm Trail)

→ • any project that supports **climate resilience** (by enhancing shade or cooling, and by improving air-quality) and boosts residents' daily contact with nature — all tying in with the draft Biodiversity Strategy's 'Nature in your neighbourhood' theme

→ • the Biodiversity enhancements (initially EIP-funded), in and around **St Matthew's Piece**, in Petersfield Cambridge that included the establishment of a small volunteer-supported new urban community orchard with a substantial rain garden, designed to boost foraging opportunities for insects, birds and mammals.

A **further, cautionary, subheading** should address **predictable hurdles for such initiatives** that need to be addressed structurally and strategically. Some pilots for hyper-local biodiversity projects struggle to be maintained or grow, even when well designed. The most successful initiatives treat 'greening' initiatives as a both *permanent and mainstream*. Preventing these obvious problems should be explicitly built into the new Biodiversity Strategy, seeking to **avoid**:

→ • Lack of long-term funding or ownership – where temporary greening is wastefully installed for a 'project', and then removed or left poorly maintained once the grant period ends;

→ • Weak community buy-in – due to residents experiencing changes being imposed 'from above', thereby *unnecessarily* creating polarisation and opposition (to e.g., loss of car-parking space) that can distract and dominate, resulting in constructive pilots not being repeated or extended;

→ • Failure to integrate a project into wider strategic plans, so they remain isolated rather than becoming the normal or expected approach in e.g., street or development-project design.

4.5 Cambridge City Council role

Issue: Strong *description* of assets, but lacks: explicit commitments, measurable expectations, and neighbourhood focus.

Add a short commitment paragraph after the first paragraph:

→ From 2026 we will treat these 742 hectares as a single, connected nature network for which we are collectively responsible. We will set site level objectives for habitat condition and biodiversity units, prioritising improvements on larger commons and parks that serve multiple neighbourhoods and currently perform poorly for nature. The Council will treat biodiversity loss as a systemic business and economic risk locally (to investment, insurance, and health), aligned with IPBES' framing of biodiversity loss as a systemic risk to financial stability.

<cf the Report listed on my p.6, from IPBES >

Also add several passages with specific and clear *commitments* after the paragraph that runs from page 15 to 16 (on local watercourses); here are seven suggestions:

→ To advocate, through the Cam & Ely Ouse catchment partnership and regulators, for restoring environmental flows on all Council-managed chalk streams to a level consistent with achieving at least "Good Ecological Status" under the Water Framework Directive by 2030.

→ Pledge to oppose major growth or infrastructure proposals that would increase net abstraction from the Cam chalk aquifer unless these demonstrate credibly no deterioration in river flows, with these tests to be explicitly built into both the Council's planning responses and relevant emerging Local Plan policies.

→ Commit to achieve, by 2030, phosphate and nitrate concentrations in Council-managed watercourses that meet "Good" status thresholds, with at least quarterly sampling at fixed points – and results included in the Council's Environmental Improvement Plan monitoring.

→ Commit to support (through planning obligations, partnership projects and land agreements) delivery of nature-based solutions such as wetlands, surface-water separation and attenuation schemes that directly reduce inflows to combined and foul sewers, prioritising catchments feeding the most frequently spilling overflows identified in the 2023–2025 Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) data.

→ Commit to create at least 10 new in-channel or marginal habitat features (backwaters, side channels, woody-debris complexes, or offline ponds) by 2030, in line with national chalk-stream restoration guidance, and to maintain these under a published management schedule.

→ Commit to bringing all Council-managed riparian land along the Cam and chalk streams into a positive management regime for nature (e.g. wild margins, reduced mowing, buffer strips) by 2028, aligned with Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities and national chalk-stream strategy recommendations.

→ Commit to publish prominently and annually a succinct, balanced and clear *State of the Cam and Chalk Streams in Cambridge* report – summarising flows, water-quality metrics, habitat works and key species trends, co-designing the indicators with key local groups (such as the Cam Catchment Partnership and Friends of the Cam). Meaningful contributions to this report from all relevant local water authorities will be sought for inclusion in this report.

To the paragraph on trees (middle of p. 17): “Through implementation of our Tree Strategy (2016 – 2026), we manage over 30,000 trees...” **Add**:

→ The updated Urban Forest Strategy (2026–2036) will include ward-level canopy targets and a clear programme of planting and diversification, prioritising streets and estates with low canopy cover and high vulnerability to either the Urban Heat Island Effect and/or to air pollution.

In the paragraph (p. 17) on Council property and communal Open Spaces, **add** these concrete pledges:

→ For new Council-led housing schemes we will require integrated and sustainable biodiversity enhancements (e.g., swift bricks, bat boxes, rain gardens and wildlife-friendly planting); for existing estates we will work with tenants to identify at least one biodiversity improvement project in each estate by 2031, and continue to enhance these over following years. Further, we will aim to use the Council’s procurement and investment policies to favour suppliers and contractors with credible biodiversity performance and disclosure.

<The latter pledge aligns with IPBES B3 & C2; cf the Report on the list of my p.6>

At the end of the section, **add** an accountability sentence:

→ We will bring together these responsibilities in an internal “nature at home and work” programme, with annual public reporting on changes to habitat quality, canopy cover and community participation across the Council-managed estate.

4.6 Biodiversity in Cambridge

Issue: Provides a strong descriptive baseline but could be strengthened with regard to credibility, usability and ‘strategy’.

Although Section 4.6 describes habitats, sites and designations well, it does not distil which elements of the city’s biodiversity resource are the top priorities for protection, restoration or investment over 2026–2031 – discussion of which is reserved for later in the Strategy.

How meaningful is it to account for biodiversity **gains** without simultaneously monitoring and accounting biodiversity **losses** due to any cause with Cambridge, particularly any that are directly attributable to Council-led initiatives? For example, consider the ‘blackberry hedge incident’, raised in #4 on page 11 of this feedback. To make commitments on improved and more equitable access to nature *more reliable, usable and credible*, **add** to this section e.g.,:

- a clear **list** of critical habitat types and locations, linking these to the Strategy’s objectives and action plan;

- quantitative **baselines** (e.g. total hectares of each priority habitat within the city, or current condition status), to facilitate determining 'measurable net gain' over time;
- **key data** from the separate Biodiversity Audit and Chalk Stream reports should be summarised to support both non-specialist readers and decision-makers;
- clarity on how **unevenly** access to better-quality biodiversity is distributed across Cambridge (highlighting which wards are most nature-deprived or where residents are farthest from high-quality green spaces) ... enhancements to biodiversity and social-equity should overlap.

4.7 Local threats and pressures

Issue: Apart from the addition of the pretty photo on p. 33 – this seems to be verbatim the same as the previous Strategy document. Has **nothing** improved? changed? deteriorated?

5. Biodiversity Audit (2020–2025)

Issue: Although the evidence presented is strong, the implications for action – especially at site and neighbourhood level – are not sufficiently articulated. Issues relating to Paradise LNR should be addressed explicitly.

To promote transparency and enable businesses, residents, Councillors and Officers to evaluate how neighbourhoods are being monitored and served locally, after the 2nd paragraph on p. 35 **add an accessible reference** to the baseline habitat audits done across the 32 sites in 2020.

Ongoing monitoring should be designed to support both statutory reporting and local business and community needs (e.g., making city data available through open platforms to allow assessment of location-specific risks and opportunities). Consider **pledging** after the 1st paragraph on p 34:

→ We will by 2027 publish an open biodiversity data portal for Cambridge, aligned with LNRS mapping, to enable communities, businesses and institutions to assess site- and neighbourhood-level impacts and dependencies.

<Aligns with IPBES' call for robust, accessible biodiversity information systems (A.4.4–A.4.6 in Table SPM.1); cf Report cited in the list on p. 6 of my feedback.>

Before the final sentence of the 3rd paragraph p. 36 (where the text states that 63% of the audited area is in poor condition), **add**:

→ These findings underline the scale of change required: most of the greenspace that residents see and use daily is still managed in ways that limit its value for wildlife and its resilience to climate change. This Strategy therefore commits to shifting management practices across our largest commons and recreation grounds and to making those changes visible, meaningful and more clearly valuable to local communities.

Add a short paragraph linking to neighbourhood outcomes, before the final paragraph on p. 37:

→ We will communicate management changes through on-site interpretation and ward-level engagement, so that residents understand why some areas may look 'messier' and how this *contributes* to healthier and more resilient green spaces.

In the bullet list on page 39 of common recommendations, **make them more directive**:

Add to • Relaxation of grazing pressure or reduced mowing frequency on grasslands...

→ From 2026 we will progressively relax grazing pressure or reduce mowing frequency on priority grasslands identified in the audit, starting with Coldham's Common, Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common, and will agree clear grazing and mowing regimes for each site with stakeholders while preserving and protecting ancient grazing rights.

Add to • Restricting or limiting impacts of recreation...

→ We will introduce targeted measures to manage recreational pressure (including dog walking) on sensitive grasslands, woodlands and watercourses, e.g., path rationalisation, seasonal signage,

dog-free zones and improved provision of bins, all co-designed openly with local users and while maintaining or improving public-access rights generally to green open spaces.

There is a glaring absence of content in this Strategy (cf. paragraph 1 on page 41) regarding the obvious **threats** to the condition of Paradise LNR, following the recent commencement of substantial development by Queens' College (not due for completion until mid-2027) along the boundary with Paradise LNR. This approved project includes the felling of 8 mature poplar trees – with expected significant impacts on bats, nesting birds, canopy cover and invertebrate habitat along what will remain of the woodland corridor. Text should be **added** to the Strategy to make explicit and transparent to residents what monitoring, protective and remedial measures can be expected to be taken to look after this key site – particularly in view of these biodiversity threats being to *one of only two* sites in Table 3 (p. 40) in both “**good**” and “**stable**” condition.

6. Biodiversity strategy (vision, objectives and themes)

Issue: Strong narrative but some objectives and themes are still high level; sharpen them and insert explicit accountability and neighbourhood level expectations.

The introductory wording (pp. 41–43) seems to be essentially identical to the previous Strategy document. Has **nothing** improved? changed? deteriorated?

Strategic objectives

On page 43, **edit** four of the bulleted objectives (#1–3 and #5) to be less ‘fluffy’, more measurable & more neighbourhood focused:

1. To secure a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the city by 2031 in support of the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Vision by 2030. **Replace by:**

→ To secure a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the city by 2031, **compared with the 2020 baseline**, in support of the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Vision by 2030.

2. To ensure designated sites and priority habitats are in good / favourable condition...

Replace by:

→ To ensure designated sites and priority habitats are in good / favourable condition **wherever feasible and that, by 2031, no Council-managed LNR, Common or County Wildlife Site remains in poor condition without a funded and time-bound improvement plan.**

3. To engage and promote awareness... **Replace by:**

→ To engage and promote awareness of biodiversity and wellbeing, supporting and empowering coordinated action in our communities, businesses, and institutions, **with particular focus on neighbourhoods with high social disadvantage or poor access to natural greenspace.**

4. To maximise the potential of our buildings, parks... **Replace by:**

→ To maximise the potential of our buildings, parks, open spaces, allotments and community gardens, watercourses and tree stock to support biodiversity, whilst balancing their multifunctional needs, **and to demonstrate visible improvements in at least one priority site in every ward by 2031.** Biodiversity *destruction* due to the Council-led elimination of the well-established protective blackberry hedge – which had long run along the south side of the New St allotments in Abbey Ward), over-riding vocal and well-reasoned local-community objections – will not recur.

Add an explicit monitoring objective after the 7th (on p. 43):

→ 8. To publish an annual Biodiversity Duty Report and mid-term progress update (2028) that set out progress against each objective, highlight gaps, and propose corrective action where delivery is off track.

Theme descriptions (on pp 44–46)

These are laudably strengthened versus the previous version, but need more.

Under ‘**Biodiversity mainstreaming**’ **add** the following:

→ From 2026 we will require all major service projects and programmes (e.g., those rated ‘high’ or above on the corporate-risk matrix for at least one of finance, legal/compliance, health and

safety, environmental impact, or reputation, and therefore tracked through the corporate- risk register rather than only a service-level register), to demonstrate how they will contribute **positively** to biodiversity objectives.

This positive biodiversity requirement should also apply to any project that:

- delivers a key corporate priority (e.g., climate and biodiversity, housing, major regeneration, transport or digital transformation), or is needed to meet statutory duties or government targets where failure would have serious consequences; or that
- involves multiple external partners, long timescales (multi-year) and inter-dependencies with other major infrastructure or transformation programmes (e.g., the Market Square/Civic Quarter proposals, and major ICT or depot relocations).

We will integrate biodiversity considerations into business cases, procurement and asset management decisions, and provide practical guidance and training to service managers to support this shift.

Under ‘**The core**’ **add** explicit site-level ambitions:

→ By 2031 we aim to have moved all City-managed core sites currently in poor condition to **at least** moderate condition, and to have demonstrably improved connectivity along the River Cam corridor and between the city and the Gog Magog Hills priority area – as measured through habitat mapping and biodiversity units.

Under ‘**Nature in your neighbourhood**’ **strengthen** neighbourhood outcomes:

In the first paragraph on p. 45, “The aim is to ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations and that it can be enjoyed, understood, and experienced by all.” Should be **replaced by**:

→ The aim is to ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations but that it can be enjoyed, understood, and experienced by all – regardless of where in the city people live, their income, or their housing type.

And also **add**:

→ We will work with communities to develop ward-based nature priorities, aligned with the LNRS and Cambridge Nature Network, and we will support residents to shape and monitor local projects.

→ **Note** also the **Appendix** to these comments (on the wards selected for LNRS projects).

7. Action plan (2026–2031)

Issue: Actions are mostly clear but lack success metrics and community-visible outcomes; timelines are too-often open ended (“ongoing”); the current Strategy’s Action plan was much more detailed (24 pages vs only 5 here) on planned outcomes and especially on **who** would do **what**. The draft Strategy also depends heavily on community and volunteer effort in action plans (especially for managing Local Nature Reserves and other sites, delivering habitat creation and enhancement, and contributing to the Cambridge Nature Network and Doubling Nature ambitions). This reliance is **problematic**. Using volunteers and local groups to enhance and extend professional work may be sensible considering financial constraints, but using them as a *de facto* substitute for baseline Council capacity risks under-delivery if those external inputs weaken (due to predictable risks e.g., funding cuts, volunteer fatigue, or loss of key organisers).

The 1st paragraph on page 47, seems important but is confusing; it reads:

“Since adoption of the strategy in 2022 we have been collaborating on actions to achieve our objectives. **Appendix 2** Biodiversity Duty Report summarises our key activities under our 3 themes and celebrates successes to date.”

But Appendix 1 runs pp 53–59; this Strategy document **has no Appendix 2**. Please **address**.

General edits: **add** a short paragraph before the tables and then also **implement** associated additions to make 'outcomes' more meaningful and useful:

→ For each action we will define a small number of success measures (for example, hectares of habitat restored, number of wards engaged, or condition of specific sites) and report progress annually. Where actions are marked 'ongoing', we will review delivery at least every 2 years to confirm that these actions remain effective and adequately resourced.

Examples of additions to make 'outcomes' more meaningful and useful using specific suggestions (look for where else to **mirror this pattern across all three tables):**

For 'Biodiversity Mainstreaming' table (pp. 47–48):

• Under 'Consider and embed nature in everything we do' (p. 47) **reiterate and embed** the Council's commitment to being herbicide-free. Currently, the draft Strategy lacks any reference to being and remaining herbicide-free – although having gone herbicide-free represents a major step towards biodiversity recovery and improving ecological public health. Commitment to being herbicide-free features heavily in the Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2030 (written prior to the Council having gone fully herbicide-free. For this Biodiversity Strategy to be taken seriously it **must** address pesticide use (including herbicides), as these are a major driver of catastrophic biodiversity loss. So **add**:

→ The Biodiversity Strategy 2026-2031 will:

- End the use of pesticides in the routine maintenance of the City and County Council's public realm estate in Cambridge
- Bring in other key stakeholders to follow suit in ending the use of pesticides on land under their control.
- Encourage the public to stop the use of pesticides in gardens, allotments and other areas.
- Lead and support in making Cambridge a 'Pesticide-Free City'.

• Also **add** also the following specific actions to:

→ • develop **Cambridge guidance or a toolkit** to help SMEs assess their biodiversity impacts/dependencies *<aligns with IPBES C5–C6, C8>*

→ • pilot **voluntary biodiversity-impact disclosure** mechanisms with anchor institutions (University, hospitals, large employers) and linking these to citywide monitoring;

→ • engage with local financial institutions (e.g. university endowment, pension funds, local banks) to **explore nature-positive investment** aligned with the LNRS *<aligns with IPBES B2, B3, B12>*

→ • develop guidance on **nature-positive procurement** for major city projects *<aligns with IPBES Table SPM.1 Actions A.1.3, on integrating biodiversity into procurement>*

• Ensure CIP and other City Council developments achieve a minimum 20% BNG target across all projects – **add a measure**:

→ Outcomes: New developments secure high-quality habitats and species enhancement – with long-term management and monitoring in place; **BNG calculations and monitoring reports are published for all Council-led schemes.**

• Implement Environmental Management System... – **add**:

→ Outcomes: Improved environmental performance across City Service, **including meeting published targets for pesticide reduction, improvements to soil health, and protection of priority species on operational sites.**

• Explore rainwater harvesting

Correct the text from "Reduced abstraction **for** aquifer for tree watering and other operation functions" to "Reduced abstraction **from** aquifer for tree watering and other operation functions" and **expand** the text to indicate a metric by which performance of this desirable outcome can be measured.

For 'The Core' table (pp. 48–49)

- Local Nature Reserve and Commons management – **specify outputs** by adding: **invasive species, and deliver at least one habitat condition improvement (as defined in the DEFRA metric) in each site by 2030.**
- Conservation Cattle Grazing Review – **add:**
 → Outcomes: Review grazing timescales and number of animals to ensure we meet site-management plan conditions, **and implement revised regimes on at least three priority commons (including Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common) by 2028.**
- Trial use of.... – Under 'Outcomes', **clarify** how management would/could/might be enhanced – to make this outcome measurable.

For 'Nature in your neighbourhood' table (pp. 49–51)

The Strategy should **add** text to explicitly address how to tackle the entirely predictable risks of funding cuts, volunteer fatigue, or loss of key community organisers – particularly insofar as these could negatively impact key objectives such as:

- **Equitable access to nature:** Neighbourhoods with poor green space often also have weaker volunteer capacity, so relying on community projects can widen the gap in access to high-quality natural spaces.
- **Long term condition of key sites:** Maintaining Local Nature Reserves and priority habitats in favourable condition requires consistent management; if volunteer days or NGO capacity fall away, core tasks (e.g., scrub control, invasive-species management) may lapse.
- **Strategic metrics (net gain, Nature Network targets):** Citywide net gain and Nature Network outcomes require reliable, sustained delivery across the whole area. Over-reliance on community and partner capacity – without corresponding professional staffing and funding – makes these goals vulnerable to factors the Council does not control.

In addition, the following suggested changes...

- Nature Recovery 'From the Ground Up' LNRS delivery ward-based community action – **make outcomes ward-specific:**
 → Outcomes: 4 year Cambridge County Council Project targeting parish-scale delivery of the LNRS. Initially selected wards: Cherry Hinton, Abbey, East Chesterton, Market & Trumpington, **with at least one co-designed project per ward and monitoring of ecological and social outcomes.**

→ **Note** here the **Appendix** to these comments (on the wards selected for LNRS projects).

- Parks Biodiversity Toolkit promotion – **add a success metric:**
 → Outcomes: Inspire communities to co-design and secure funding for local park biodiversity enhancement, **with at least ten parks or recreation grounds incorporating Toolkit-inspired changes by 2030, and revise the 2021 Toolkit (drawing on this experience) by 2031.**
- Environmental Education Spaces – **add:**
 → Outcomes: Continued use of 3 spaces, explore at least 1 additional site, **and engage at least 500 pupils per year (from different schools each year) in hands-on nature learning across the sites.**

At the very end of the Action Plan, on page 51 after the Tables, **add** a clear accountability sentence:

- We will review and, if necessary, update this action plan in 2028, based on monitoring evidence and community feedback. Furthermore, we will clearly flag any actions that are delayed, re-scoped or not delivered, together with stating clear reasons for this – specifying appropriate remedial steps.

Then add a 'Delivery and Monitoring' sub-section to the Action Plan (i.e, to Section 7) that pulls together and summarises accountability points:

→ **Delivery and Monitoring**

Delivering this strategy requires clear responsibilities, transparent reporting, and the ability to change course when actions are not working. We will therefore put in place a simple but robust delivery and monitoring framework for 2026–2031.

- **Clear ownership:** Each action in the plan will have a named lead service and senior officer sponsor, with roles agreed annually through service plans.
- **Measurable outcomes:** For each strategic objective we will track a small number of indicators, including biodiversity units on Council-managed land, condition of key sites, ward-level access to natural greenspace, and community participation in local nature projects.
- **Annual public reporting:** Progress will be reported each year through our Biodiversity Duty Report and on the Council website, highlighting achievements, delays, and any actions that are no longer fit for purpose.
- **Mid-term review:** In 2028 we will carry out a mid-term review of this strategy and action plan, using monitoring data and community feedback to confirm priorities, identify gaps, and agree any necessary changes.
- **Neighbourhood focus:** We will monitor how benefits are distributed across the city, including between wards, and will target additional support where communities currently have poorer access to nature or lower-quality greenspaces.
- **Community voice:** Residents, community groups and partners will be invited to comment on annual progress and to propose new or improved actions, particularly where local experience suggests our approach needs to change.

Finally, add a **Glossary of Key Terms** – including **all acronyms** used throughout the Biodiversity Strategy – to enhance clarity, usability and transparency for residents, partners and Councillors.

Appendix: ‘Nature in your neighbourhood’

Summary: The "Nature Recovery 'From the Ground Up'" project names four wards (Cherry Hinton, Abbey, East Chesterton, Market & Trumpington) but gives no selection criteria or scope to add others – such as Petersfield. Therefore: Petersfield is proposed here because of (a) its dense housing; (b) low POS provision, and its location near both the Cam and City Centre that supports connectivity. Please provide: (1) published selection criteria for wards; (2) flexibility to add or opt in additional wards; and (3) for Petersfield to be either an immediate fifth focus ward (if funded) or the first reserve/expansion ward when opportunities arise.

The **Nature Recovery ‘From the Ground Up’** project will work in the four named wards, but there is no clarification for why those specific wards were selected or whether others (e.g., Petersfield) could also be added.

This Cambridgeshire County Council–led, four-year project targets “parish scale delivery of the LNRS”, for which the city component is: Cherry Hinton, Abbey, East Chesterton, Market & Trumpington. The strategy does not state the criteria used, nor does it specify whether this list is fixed for the full 4 years.

This Appendix seeks clarification and expansion of the list – to include Petersfield. Note that Petersfield has characteristics that offer a strong case for inclusion, for example:

1. High-density housing and extremely poor availability of Public Open Space;
2. Small-scale, street, courtyard and school-based nature projects could have a significant impact on the daily environment of residents of all ages;
3. Proximity to both the Cam corridor and to the City Centre offers clear opportunities to improve ecological connectivity as well as enhanced access to Nature.

Therefore:

- The criteria used to choose the four wards initially selected should be published in the final Biodiversity Strategy (or supporting papers).
- Petersfield should be considered now as a fifth focus ward, if funding allows; or as the first reserve / expansion ward if the project is extended; or if there is underspend; or as soon as extra grant funding becomes available.
- The project design should explicitly *either* include additional pilot wards (e.g. Petersfield) from an early stage, *or* specify a mechanism for additional wards to be added to the project – especially where there is both demonstrable community capacity and need.

Cambridge City Council

November 2025

Biodiversity Duty Report (2022 – 2025) and Action Plan (2026 – 2031)

Contents

Introduction

What is a Biodiversity Duty Report?

Our role in nature recovery

Section 1: Our policies, objectives and actions for biodiversity

1.1 Our strategies and policies for biodiversity

1.2 Our visions and objectives for biodiversity

1.3 Our partnerships for biodiversity

1.4 Our delivered actions for biodiversity (2022 – 2025)

1.5 Management of Local Wildlife Sites

Section 2

2.1 Our future actions for biodiversity (2026 – 2031)

Section 3

3.1 Our Biodiversity net gain (BNG) progress

Introduction

What is Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth, including all living organisms, the genetic differences within species, and the ecosystems they form. It covers:

Species diversity – the range of different species.

Genetic diversity – variation within species.

Ecosystem diversity – different habitats and ecological processes.

What is a Biodiversity Duty Report?

The statutory [Biodiversity Duty](#) was first introduced by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act in 2006 which required that:

‘Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of these functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’.

In 2021, the Environment Act (Section 102 and 103) strengthened this duty by amending Section 40 of the NERC Act and by requiring all public authorities in England to take steps to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.

As a public authority and local planning authority, the government guidance requires Cambridge City Council (CCC) to:

- Consider what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on our consideration.
- Act to deliver our policies and achieve our objectives.

To evidence the above we are required to publish a [Biodiversity Report](#) to communicate what we are doing to improve the environment and to show the positive changes that have been made. The first reporting period must end by 1st January 2026, and the report must be published within 12 weeks (by the end of March 2026).

This report follows the [government guidelines](#) and covers actions undertaken in the period from adoption of our [Biodiversity Strategy](#) in 2022 through to November 2025.

Our role in nature recovery

Management of streets and open spaces

Cambridge City Council manages more than 80 parks and open spaces, such as play areas, allotments, community gardens and orchards, totalling over 742 hectares. Some of these sites, such as our 12 [Local Nature Reserves](#), are designated and managed primarily for nature and form part of the core [Cambridge Nature Network](#), whilst others provide valuable predominantly recreational open space for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Whatever the primary purpose and size of these spaces, combined they provide a huge potential for increasing the extent, quality, and connectivity of habitats within the city. Therefore, we have an obligation and opportunity to ensure that all sites maximise their potential for biodiversity, provide good examples of habitat management and creation and hopefully encourage other landowners to do the same.

We manage approximately 23 kilometres of awarded watercourses, including some of our precious chalk streams, by ensuring management is sensitive to biodiversity, whilst providing our statutory drainage functions, we can protect such iconic species as water vole, kingfishers and brown trout in the city. We are also riparian owners of a significant stretch of the main riverbank through the city.

Wherever possible we are seeking to 'naturalise' previously engineered banks such as at Stourbridge Common, creating new backwaters and wetland such as on Logan's Meadow Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and providing passage for fish around artificial obstructions, such as the weir at Byron's Pool LNR and 'The Rush' fish pass at Sheep's Green LNR.

We are custodians of our precious common land and oversee the historic grazing management practice that retains flood meadow landscapes and iconic cattle grazing in the heart of the city. These grasslands form a key part of the network of Cambridge spaces and offer potential for enhanced management to benefit biodiversity and capture carbon emissions.

Through implementation of our tree strategy, we manage over 30,000 trees, contributing to the urban forest that provide both wildlife and communities with a range of ecosystem services, making our neighbourhoods cooler, cleaner and more attractive places to live. Street trees provide habitat and 'stepping stones' for species living in or moving through the built environment.

Management of our estate

Our property estate includes rental units, iconic buildings such as the Guildhall, and council housing properties with gardens and communal open spaces. Decisions on how we manage, renovate, and invest in these assets will impact upon existing species present and provide huge opportunities for restoring nature where people live and work. Energy efficiency Investment towards net zero will contribute to reducing the impact of climate change on the natural world, whilst increased water efficiency measures and rainwater capture will reduce abstraction pressure on the chalk stream aquifer.

Community Empowerment

Through our Community Services Engagement Team, we offer support to local Friends Groups, providing opportunities for volunteering in our parks and open spaces, and work closely with local community action groups including [On the Verge Cambridge](#), promoting new wildflower meadows and [Action for Swifts](#), with swift box provision on our estate such as on Queen Ann Terrace car park and at Edgecombe Flats.

As a local authority we are often a key partner in many local initiatives and projects with links to community groups. By promoting biodiversity through raising awareness in communities we can ensure that opportunities for people to connect with, protect, enhance, and appreciate nature are realised.

Planning and Growth

Through our [Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service](#) we shape and implement policies that guide sustainable development seeking to protect, restore and enhance nature across administrative boundaries.

Section 1: Our policies, objectives and actions for biodiversity

In 2019 we declared a [Biodiversity Emergency](#) in recognition of the global loss of biodiversity and the local impacts this could have on the communities and business we serve.

To address this, we have recognised and incorporated the importance of conserving and enhancing local biodiversity across numerous strategies, policies, partnerships and actions.

1.1 Our corporate and partnership strategies and policies for biodiversity

Relevant strategies are summarised below, followed by further information on 4 key strategies:

Strategy or policy document	Summary of relevance to biodiversity
Internal strategies	
Cambridge City Corporate Plan (2022 – 2027)	Sets out our 4 key priorities including: Priority 1: Leading Cambridge's response to the climate change and biodiversity emergencies
Biodiversity Strategy (2022 – 2030)	Our key biodiversity document that includes our vision, objectives and actions to meet the biodiversity emergency declaration and Biodiversity Duty.
Tree Strategy (2016 – 2026)	Sets out policies and actions to manage the City tree stock, plus increase and diversify tree canopy for the benefit of people and nature.
Climate Change Strategy (2021 – 2026)	Includes actions to reduce and mitigate the impacts of climate change on biodiversity.

Cambridge Local Plan (2018)	Includes hierarchical policies to ensure development protects and enhances biodiversity.
Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD	Provides technical guidance on how to comply with Local Plan policies to protect and enhance biodiversity.
Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan (a 20 year plan for Greater Cambridge Area)	Includes a key theme of 'Biodiversity and Green Spaces' and proposes policies to protect and enhance biodiversity and improve the network of green spaces in Greater Cambridge.
External / partnership strategies	
Draft Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recover Strategy (LNRS)	A proposed regional statutory plan that identifies local biodiversity priorities and maps areas for habitat restoration.
Natural Cambridgeshire's 'Doubling Nature' Vision for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	Our Local Nature Partnership vision for doubling the current area of wildlife rich habitats by 2050.
Cambridge Nature Network vision	Sets out a shared vision for nature recovery in and around the city for collective delivery by partners.
BIG Chalk	A shared vision for supporting nature recovery projects across the chalk and limestone landscapes of southern England.
Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) - BNG Strategy	Commits to a minimum 20% BNG across the transport programme covering on and offsite delivery.

1.2 Our visions and objectives for biodiversity

Biodiversity Strategy (2022 – 2030)

‘Our vision is that over the next 9 years Cambridge will see a “measurable net gain” in biodiversity, both within the city and the surrounding countryside, including the extent and quality of priority habitats and populations of priority species. Wildlife habitats will be protected, enhanced and where possible expanded and linked. The very best wildlife habitats will form part of a much wider Cambridge Nature Network that will permeate the whole of the city and

beyond. Everyone who lives or works within Cambridge will have access to high quality natural greenspaces close to their home or place of work, and there will be a greater awareness and understanding of biodiversity with opportunities to be involved and collaborate in local wildlife enhancement projects and monitoring.'

To deliver this vision we have been delivering on 7 strategic objectives:

1. To secure a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the city by 2025 and support the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Vision by 2050
2. To ensure designated sites and priority habitats are in good / favourable condition and connected, where possible, to increase resilience to a changing climate and contribute to the Cambridge Nature Network
3. To promote awareness of biodiversity and wellbeing, supporting coordinated action in our communities, businesses, and institutions
4. To ensure that biodiversity is considered by all council service functions and projects
5. To maximise the potential of our buildings, parks, open spaces, allotments and community gardens, watercourses and tree stock to support biodiversity, whilst balancing their multifunctional needs
6. To harness the wealth of local professional and amateur knowledge and experience in identifying and solving local issues.
7. To establish long term, species and habitat surveys and monitoring to measure the impact of activities and identify new threats and opportunities across the city

To meet the objectives, the proposed actions have been grouped within the three main themes:

1. **Biodiversity mainstreaming:** This theme is about embedding biodiversity into everything that we do, whether that is constructing new houses, buying materials, or undertaking our role as a planning authority. We will ensure that our actions minimise impacts on biodiversity as well as seek opportunities to enhance it. We will aim to develop cross-cutting strategies and solutions between all services that promote biodiversity and focus on nature-based solutions.
2. **The core:** This theme is about developing our core of biodiversity sites in the city. This includes reviewing and updating management plans for our most important nature conservation areas and working with partners to ensure a coherent and resilient nature network through Cambridge and beyond.
3. **Nature in your neighbourhood:** This theme is about encouraging nature to flourish across the city through collaboration with communities, businesses

and institutions. The aim is to ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations and that it can be enjoyed, understood, and experienced by all.

Natural Cambridgeshire ‘Doubling Nature’ Vision

‘Natural Cambridgeshire’ is the Local Nature Partnership for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. A partnership of leaders from businesses, local authorities, the health sector, farming, wildlife and environmental organisations that exists to champion, influence and enable the fulfilment of the ‘Doubling Nature’ vision:

‘Our Vision is that by doubling the area of rich wildlife habitats and natural green-space, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will become a world-class environment where nature and people thrive, and businesses prosper’

The key objective is to double the area of rich wildlife habitats and green space from 8.5% to 17% by 2050.

Cambridge Nature Network

The Cambridge Nature Network is a landscape scale biodiversity initiative led by the Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire [Local Wildlife Trust](#) (BCN WT) and [Cambridge Past Present and Future](#) with support from the City Council and other key landowning partners.

‘Our vision is for Cambridge to have significant areas of downland, fens, meadows, waterways and woodlands around it, where nature can recover and thrive and where people can experience a wilder countryside and nature on their doorstep.’

The initiative is founded on an evidence based spatial plan for protecting and enhancing nature, focused on the best of the remaining habitats within 10km of the city and key opportunities and locations for creating new habitats and associated linkages.

Through collaboration with landowners and communities it represents an ambitious but achievable vision for local nature recovery. The Cambridge Nature Network has steered our actions over the past 5 years and forms a critical part of the emerging statutory LNRS.

Draft Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The LNRS is a spatial strategy mandated by the Environment Act 2021. It identifies locations to improve nature and provide other environmental benefits including

carbon sequestration, flood risk mitigation, accessibility to green space to promote social well-being.

The LNRS covering Cambridge City is being developed by Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), who are the government appointed 'Responsible Body' working with our Local Nature Partnership (Natural Cambridgeshire) and Cambridgeshire County Council.

As a supporting authority, we have contributed to the development of the LNRS through representation on the Steering Group and at technical workshops and approving the draft document for consultation. We have advocated for inclusion of the existing Cambridge Nature Network (CNN) vision within the LNRS to ensure existing plans and projects are recognised, celebrated and link to the wider ambitions.

Key objectives identified for Cambridge City within the draft LNRS include:

Theme	Objective	Action
Ecological Connectivity	Enhance and expand chalk downland, fens, meadows, and woodlands within the CNN	Prioritise habitat creation and enhancement across CNN corridors
Chalk Stream Restoration	Restore stream flow, water quality, and habitat	Implement restoration works on urban chalk streams
Urban Forest	Increase and diversify tree canopy building on the successful Cambridge Canopy Project	Coordinate protection and planting across public and private land

A Public consultation on the draft LNRS ran from July to September 2025 and the subsequent revised documents are awaiting final Supporting Authority approval before submission to the Secretary of State, planned for late December 2025.

1.3 Our partnerships for biodiversity

We recognise that nature recovery cannot be delivered without working in collaboration with others. The table below summarises some of our key partnerships for nature.

Key partnerships and groups	Relevance to our biodiversity work
Natural Cambridgeshire	Helping steer sustainable development, nature recovery and community engagement with nature and coordinating an annual Actions for Nature Report
Cambridge Nature Network	Through the Steering Group we help guide strategic decisions, joint funding bids and project delivery, including the annual Cambridge Nature Festival
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC)	Through the steering group and a service level agreement we support the work of the centre to collate, validate and supply habitat and species data across the County.
Cambridge Conservation Forum	Strengthen links and developing collaborations across the diverse community of conservation practitioners and researchers based in Cambridge
Cambridge Conservation Initiative – Urban Nature	A collaborative partnership which brings together the biggest names in international biodiversity conservation with the University of Cambridge and local conservation practitioners.
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Wildlife Site Partnership	We guide selection and monitoring of public and private Local Wildlife Sites to protect and enhance these critical habitats and the species they support
BIG Chalk	Both the Cambridge Nature Network and Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Projects are recognised project partners sharing knowledge and expertise with the wider partnership
Local Friends and community groups	We consult and offer support and guidance to numerous, passionate,

	diverse groups across the city to protect, enhance and celebrate our chalk streams, commons, parks, community orchards and gardens.

1.4 Our actions for biodiversity (2022 – 2025)

Through implementation of the above strategies with our partners, we have collectively delivered many actions for nature over the reporting period. These are summarised in the table below under our 3 Biodiversity Strategy Themes.

Biodiversity Mainstreaming ‘Consider and embed nature in everything we do’

Action	Services & Partners	Outcome
Updated project ‘Climate Change Rating Tool’ to include a Biodiversity Assessment	All services	All corporate projects and programmes are assessed as to how they may impact or could enhance biodiversity prior to approval
Herbicide Reduction Plan for phased transition to cease herbicide use on our estate	City Service, Pesticide Free Cambridge ,	Ceased use of herbicide across all council owned sites, including parks, car parks and housing areas in March 2024
Ceased the use of Peat in all landscape schemes	City Services, City Homes	Reduced demand for unsustainable harvesting of rare peat habits and associated carbon emissions.
City Services Operatives Biodiversity Training	City Services, BCN Wildlife Trust, Cambridge University / colleges	Delivered 3 bespoke training events alongside university college gardening teams to increase understanding and skills around Biodiversity, grassland and watercourse management
Great Crested Newt Pond Restoration at Bar Hill Crematorium	City Services, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Amphibian & Reptile Group	2 Great Crested Newt breeding ponds restored under Natural England license

Delivering 20% BNG on all our developments	City Investment Partnership	16 sites have delivered or secured minimum 20% BNG
Development of Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan	GCSPS	'First Conversation' consultation in 2020, 'First Proposals' consultation in 2021, January 2025 update of the Local Plan timetable to submit Local Plan by December 2026.
Adopted Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD	GCSPS, SCDC, City Services	Adopted in 2022 to ensure planning applications meet best practice and comply with Local Plan policies

The Core '*working with partners to ensure a coherent resilient nature network*'

Action	Partners	Outcome
Local Nature Reserve and Commons management	City Service, Community Services, Volunteers and Corporate Groups	Completed ongoing habitat management of our 12 LNRs, including control of invasive species
Open Mosaic Habitat (Brownfield) Creation trials at Bramblefield's LNR	City Services, Cambridge University	Ongoing project continued with 3 new substrate mounds installed and studied.
Invertebrate banks and stumpy habitat trials	City Services, Anglia Ruskin University, Friend's of St. Thomas Park	Ongoing project being studied, with 8 new habitats installed.
'No Fence' Collar Trials	City Services, Licensed graziers	Positive demonstration of new technology that supports adopting conservation grazing on key sites
Logan's Meadow Wetland	City Services, CPCA, Friends of Logan's Meadow	Over 1 hectare of new urban wetland habitat created
Cambridge Nature Network - Green Recovery Fund delivery	City Services, CNN, Natural England	Over 20 partnership projects delivered. 7 City Services projects included: Sheep's Green LNR Veteran Willow Restoration and

		community engagement, Logan's Meadow LNR community tree planting, 'Artscaping' in Bramblefield's LNR, Stourbridge Common LNR habitat improvement, Commons grassland restoration trials
Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project	City Services, CPCA, City Services, Hobson's Conduit Trust , Anglia Ruskin University, Keele University, SCDC, Anglian Water, South Staffs Water, Environment Agency	Secured funding to deliver 6 evidence driven, case study restoration and demonstration sites. Engaged over 50 Citizen Scientist in baseline and ongoing monitoring
Coldham's Brook enhancements, Abbey Ward	City Services, Abbey People South Staffs Water	500m of in-channel habitat restoration with volunteers, 2 interpretation panels installed
Dog Control Orders to reduce disturbance to breeding birds	City Services	Seasonal Dogs on Lead Orders in place for 6 Local Nature Reserve (2023)
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy	CPCA, City Services, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, Natural Cambridgeshire, Natural England, all neighbouring Local Authorities	Draft plan approved at CPCA Board, due for submission by December 2025, subject to 'Supporting Authority' Approval
Woodland Management Plans for Byron's Pool and Nine Wells LNRs	City Services, Forestry Commission (FC)	Plans consulted and approved by FC for phased delivery between 2025 and 2027
Hobson's Park County Wildlife Site designation	City Service, County Wildlife Site Panel, BCN WT	35.7 hectare of recently created grassland and wetlands designated for their value to breeding birds
Introduced conservation grazing at Netherhall School chalk slope	City Services, OTV, Netherhall School , Local grazier	1.5 hectare of chalk grassland under favourable management

Byron's Pool Fish Pass enhancement	City Services, Wild Trout Trust , Environment Agency	Fish pass redesigned to better guide fish around the weir

Nature in your neighbourhood 'ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations and can be enjoyed, understood and experienced by all'

Action	Partners	Outcome
Supported the Cambridge Citizen UK Young Person's Assembly	Community Services, City Services, Kings College, Cambridge Citizens - UK , local schools	Decision makers heard from young people about their concerns for local biodiversity and pledged to act
Cambridge Canopy Project	City Services, Community Services, Nature Smart Cities	Developed a business model for the incorporation of more green infrastructure solutions in towns and cities. Launched the i-Tree Eco project and the Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign .
Happy Bee Streets	City Services, Community Services	Active groups on 14 streets across 8 wards
Declaration of Butterfly Emergency in 2024, Cambridge Butterfly Trail	City Services, Butterfly Conservation (BC)	Creation of Cambridge Butterfly Trail covering 30 green spaces across the city and surrounds.
Hedges for Kings Hedges	City Services, Community Services, Trees are Good , Tree for Cities	Volunteers planted 100 m of new mixed native hedge and fruit tree planted in the ward parks. Included a fruit tree grafting workshop.
Free Trees for babies' scheme	City Services	878 trees donated over the reporting period to increase canopy cover. This has been running for over 30 years to incentivise tree planting in the city.
Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign	City Services, Community Services	Residents claimed 309 trees and shrubs over the reporting period to reduce inequality in canopy cover across wards.

<u>Cambridge Nature Festival</u>	City Services, CNN	City-wide month-long festival running for 3 consecutive years. Multiple organisations delivering a month of over 100 free events for all ages. Voted as one of the best free festivals in 2023 by the i-news.
<u>River Cam CAN, DiversiTree</u>	City Services, Community Services, <u>Community Fund for Lottery</u>	23 artist-led workshops in 20 different spaces in the City. 8 public events attended by an estimated 6,000 people. x5 public walks and talks on the cultural and biodiversity significance of veteran trees in Cambridge City. x4 workshops for landowners and members of the public on how to manage veteran trees sustainably. Charter for sustainable veteran tree management being created.
<u>Environmental Improvement Program</u>	City Services	28 biodiversity focused projects delivered on parks and public realm across the city including new meadows, stumperies, bird and bat boxes
<u>Parks Biodiversity Toolkit</u>	City Services	Promotion of our toolkit inspired a local community to design, consult and deliver enhancement to St Thomas Park, Queen Edith's ward
<u>S106</u> funded park enhancement schemes	City Services	Five Trees Park meadow and tree planting, Jesus Green stumpery, 700m ² 'pictorial meadow' at Parkside Pool to provide pollinator 'steeping stone' through the urban environment
Environmental Education Spaces	City Service, primary school / nursery license holders	Licenses in place for 2 City owned spaces delivering access to nature for local pupils
Community Engagement Team <u>Biodiversity Assembly / School visits</u>	Community Services	Approximately 35 school session held over the reporting period

Investment in new Cut and Collect machine	City Services	Enhanced management of long grass and meadow areas across our parks and road verges
Hobsons Conduit Bioblitz	City Services, Hobsons Conduit Trust	3 x Annual community event recording wildlife along the brook over 24hrs

1.5 Condition of Cambridge Local Wildlife Sites

Local Wildlife Sites (including 3 designations: County Wildlife Site, City Wildlife Sites & Protected Road Verges) are non-statutory designations for areas identified locally as having high biodiversity value, supporting important species or habitats at a city or County scale.

These sites can be on both private and public land. Through our annual monitoring to central government, we report on how many are in favourable management to support the habitats and species for which they are recognised.

Cambridge City Local Wildlife Sites in positive management (public and private)

Results for the 2024/25 reporting year

Total number of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented within the last five years

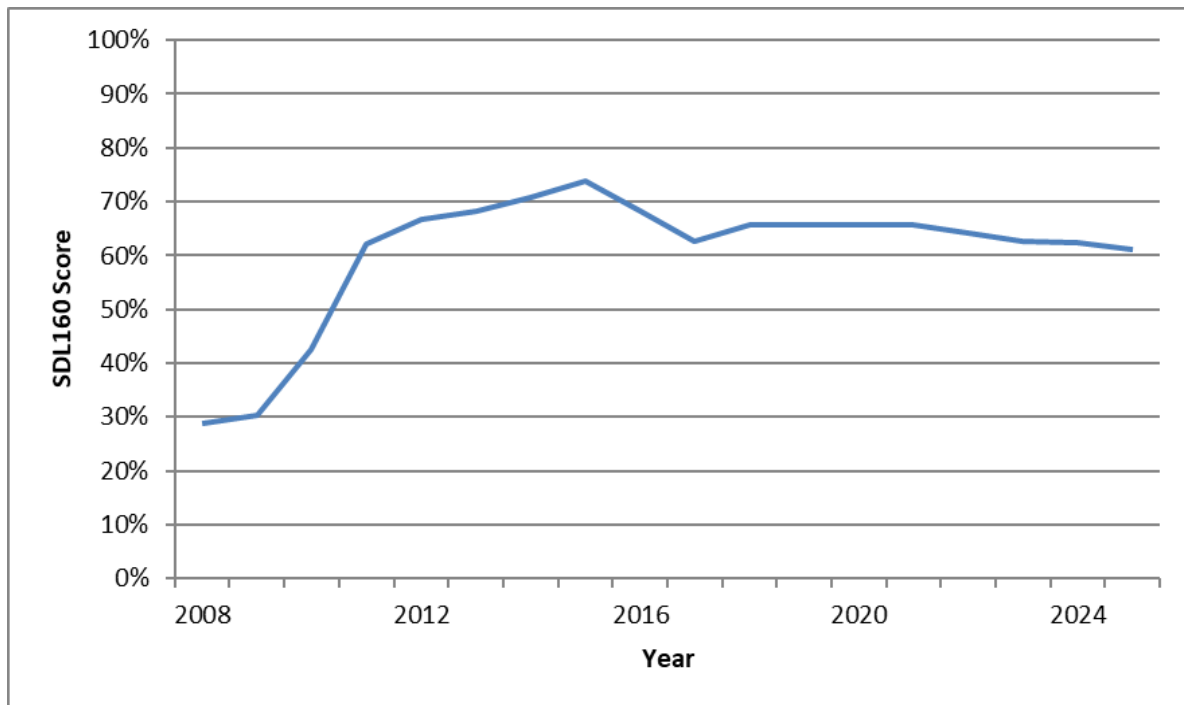
44

Total number of Local Sites

72

% of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented within the last five years

61.1%



Results over time, SDL160 scores 2008 – 2025

Cambridge City Council (CCC) owned and/or managed sites only
Results for the 2024/25 reporting year

Total number of Local Sites (CCC owned and/or managed) where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented within the last five years	29
Total number of Local Sites (CCC owned and/or managed)	32
% of Local Sites (CCC owned and/or managed) where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented within the last five years	90.6%

Section 2: Our future actions for biodiversity (2026 – 2031)

In 2026 we will review and consult on our Biodiversity Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and Tree Strategy.

Proposed updated actions have been included in the table below, grouped by theme. Please note these may be subject to change following consultation, prior to formal adoption.

‘Our vision is that over the next 5 years Cambridge will see a “measurable net gain” in biodiversity, both within the city and the surrounding countryside, including the extent and quality of priority habitats and populations of priority species. Wildlife habitats will be protected, enhanced and where possible expanded and linked. The very best wildlife habitats will form the Cambridge Nature Network that will permeate the whole of the city and link to the wider Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Everyone who lives or works within Cambridge will have access to high quality natural greenspaces within walking distance of their home or place or work, and there will be a greater awareness and understanding of biodiversity with opportunities to be involved and collaborate in local wildlife enhancement projects and monitoring’.

Biodiversity Mainstreaming ‘Consider and embed nature in everything we do’

Actions	Partners	Outcomes	Timeline
Adopt, support delivery and monitoring of the LNRS	NC, CPCA, Cambridgeshire County Council	Strategic delivery of habitat and species actions	Adoption: December 2025 – Delivery ongoing
Adoption and implementation of Shared Local Plan	GCSPS, SCDC	Robust biodiversity policies, aligned with LNRS and	Proposed adoption by December 2026

		BNG delivery to guide sustainable	
Adoption and implementation of Urban Forest Strategy (2026 - 2036)	City Services, Community Services	Management, protection, planting of and engagement with the urban forest	Adoption March 2026 – Delivery 2026 – 2036
Ensure CIP and other City development achieve a minimum 20% BNG target across all projects	CIP, GCSPS	New development secure high-quality habitats and species enhancement with long term management and monitoring in place.	Ongoing
Implement Environmental Management System to secure ISO14001 accreditation for City operation hub and activities	City Services	Improved environmental performance across City Service	March 2026 - ongoing
Explore rainwater harvesting on Council owned properties	City Service, Property Services, Water Resources East (WRE)	Reduced abstraction for aquifer for tree watering and other operation functions	Feasibility 2026, deliver 2027

The Core ‘*working with partners to ensure a coherent resilient nature network*’

Actions	Partners	Outcomes	Timeline
Continued support of CNN	City Services, CPPF, BCN WT, Cambridge Ahead , National Trust, RSPB, East Cambridge Farming Cluster , CU Botanic Garden, South Cambs DC, Magog	Collaborate on funding bids and sharing resource to create ‘Bigger, better, more joined up’ habitats across the CNN	Ongoing

	Down, Natural Cambs, Cambridge Sports Lake Trust		
Local Nature Reserve and Commons management	City Service, Community Services, Volunteers and Corporate Groups	Complete ongoing habitat management of our 12 LNRs, including control of invasive species	Ongoing
Continue our work with the Wildlife Trust to provide advice to private landowners and managers to bring sites into positive management	City Services, BCN WT, private landowners	Increase number of designated Local Wildlife Sites in positive management	Ongoing
Identification and designation of additional City Wildlife Sites and LNRs	City Services	Secure protection and enhanced management of qualifying sites	2026 -Cowley Road drain CiWS, Church End LNR and Fulbourn Rd LNR
Adopt and deliver new Management Plan Reviews for LNRs and Commons	City Services	New management plans embedded to ensure favourable habitat condition	13 sites reviewed in 2025 to be adopted and delivered in 2026 to 2030
Conservation Cattle Grazing Review	City Service, CNN, Licensed graziers	Review grazing timescales and number of animals to ensure we meet site management plan conditions	Review in 2025 / 2026
Trial the use of hardy sheep breeds within temporary fenced compartments on smaller sites.	City Services, CNN, East Cambridge Farmers Cluster	Enhanced management of key sites	Trial in 2026, if successful deliver from 2027 onwards
Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project (GCCSP)	City Services, South Staffs Water, Cam Catchment Partnership , Anglian Water, Environment	Deliver and monitor 6 case study sites. Work with partners to deliver WINEP and other investment in	2026 - 2028

	Agency, Hobson's Conduit Trust	Cambridge chalk streams	
Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC)	City Service, GCSPS, CPERC	Continue support through Service Level Agreement and representation on the Steering Group	Ongoing

Nature in your neighbourhood ‘ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations and can be enjoyed, understood and experienced by all’

Actions	Partners	Outcomes	Timeline
Seek support and agree actions to achieve Nature City Accreditation	City Services, Community Services, CNN, CCF Community Groups, Business	Strengthened partnership, shared leadership, community engagement, external recognition, increase funding opportunities	2026 Self-assessment. Build Partnership, seek Foundation Accreditation
Parks Biodiversity Toolkit (publish 2021) promotion	City Services, Community services	Inspire communities to codesign and secure funding for local park biodiversity enhancement	Ongoing
Nature Recovery 'From the Ground Up' LNRS delivery ward-based community action	City Services, Community Services, Cambridgeshire County Council, Community Groups	4-year Cambridge County Council Project targeting Parish scale delivery of the LNRS. Selected wards: Cherry Hinton, Abbey, East Chesterton, Market & Trumpington	2026 – 2030 programme to enable communities to develop and deliver LNRS actions.

Butterfly Friendly Council (BFC)	City Services, Butterfly Conservation	Meet the 5 steps to become an official BFC	2026
Cambridge Elm diversity Project – <i>celebrating the unique diversity of Cambridgeshire Elm</i>	City Services, Community Service, BCN WT	Establish a 'community nursery' of local Elm species for planting in partnership across the CNN	2026 - 2030
Native Black Poplar Project	City Services, Community Services, Forest Research, Tree Council,	Establish a 'community nursery' of cultivars of known provenance for planting in partnership across the CNN	2026 - 2030
River Cam CAN , DiversiTree legacy	City Services, Community Services	Seek further funding to secure sustainable management and replacement planting for willow pollards, continue with engagement	2026 - 2030
Cambridge Nature Festival	City Services, Community Services, CNN	Month long programme of free and low-cost events to connect people with nature	Support events and promotion in 2026, seek funding 2026 onwards
Environmental Education Spaces Continue to support existing spaces and explore additional site resource	City Service, primary school / nursery license holders	Continued use of 3 spaces, explore at least 1 additional site	2026 - 2031
Environment Improvement Programme (EIP) project selection criteria / prioritisation	City Services	Seek to allocate future budget to meet strategic biodiversity and urban forest objectives.	2026 - 2027
'Wild about Art' projects – continue to	City Services, Community	Innovative education and / or	2026 - 2030

support funding bids and provide locations for nature-based art across Cambridge	Services, artist and communities	habitat creation temporary and permanent installations exploring the wonders of nature	
Urban Nature, Conservation Evidence	City Services, Cambridge Conservation Initiative , Cambridge Conservation Forum	Facilitate research trials on our urban conservation actions to build a shared evidence base	2026 – Closed Churchyard grass cutting trials and monitoring invertebrate use of climate resilient non-native trees – Ongoing

Section 3: Biodiversity net gain information

We deliver our local planning authority function through the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS) in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC).

3.1 Actions we have carried out to meet BNG obligations

From 12 February 2024, we have been applying a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain Pre-Commencement Condition to all relevant (except exempted) planning applications coming forward. This data has been captured and entered the corporate BNG tracking software (Verna's Mycelia), as well as being tracked through the corporate planning software (Uniform).

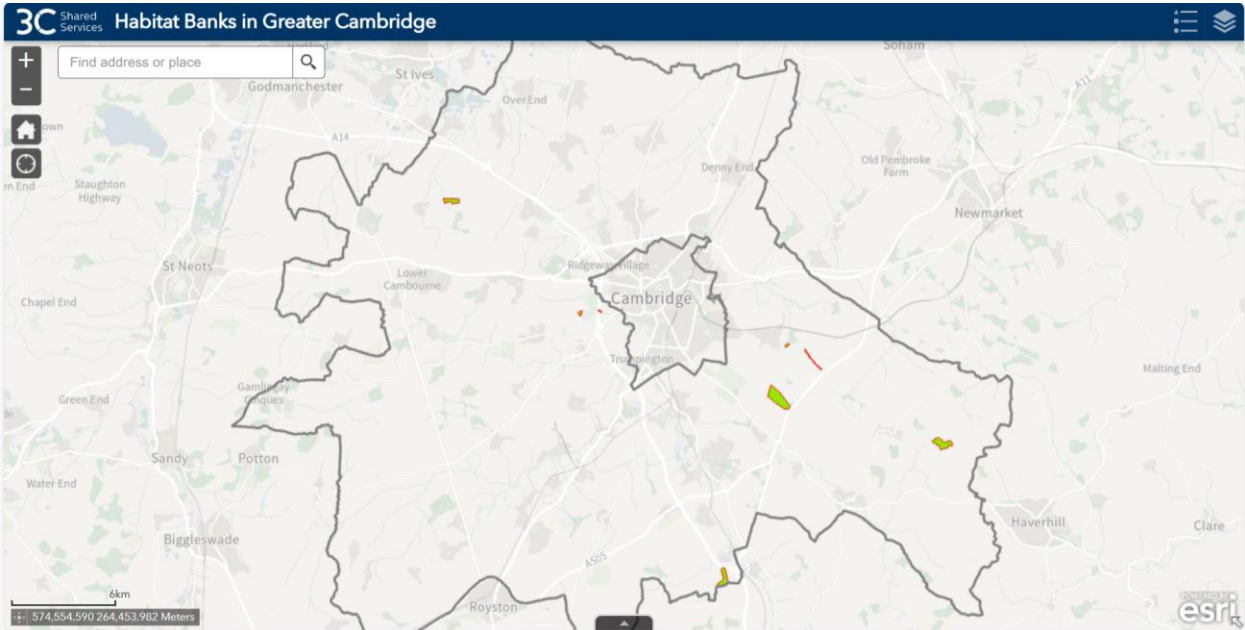
In Greater Cambridge, we have also facilitated the creation of **8** [offsite advance habitat creation offset](#) sites which cover a total land area of approximately **200** hectares. These sites are either already listed on DEFRA's [Biodiversity Register](#), or are in the process of finalising the Section 106 Agreements and registering.

These BNG Offset sites are where developers can purchase BNG credits to mitigate habitat loss from developments taking place in Greater Cambridge. For our work facilitating the creation of these sites, we won the Planning for the Natural Environment category at the June 2025 [Planning Awards](#).

Through the negotiation and creation of Section 106 Agreements, we have put in place a chargeable monitoring regime for the offsite BNG Providers to cover the costs of LPA monitoring of BNG on their recovery sites by our ecology team.

GCSP have also agreed **twelve** Section 106 Agreements for onsite delivery of BNG and as of October 2025 approximately **125** planning applications for which the mandatory BNG Condition has been applied for onsite BNG.

BNG offset provider sites in Greater Cambridge



3.2 BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans you’ve approved

The BNG resulting or expected to result from these collected activities both on and offsite is difficult to quantify at present as we have just begun to receive offsite reports and the process for collating and tracking onsite BNG is still emerging, but we can report that as of September 2025 the offset providers in Greater Cambridge have provided 177 BNG Units to developers in order to offset damage to the natural environment as a result of development.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has through the set-up of these offset sites enabled the creation of new habitats and thus new opportunities for biodiversity to thrive here.

BNG unit sales from offset sites created in Greater Cambridge

BNG Provider/Agent	Site	BNG unit sales as at 09/10/2025
Cambs County Council	Lower Valley Farm	64.46
Wildlife Trust BCN	Flack Field, Fulbourn	19.62

Groundworks	Devana Centre	7.4
The BNG Partnership	Boxworth	85.99
Cheffins	Coploe Hill,	0 (S106 being finalised)
Cambridge Past Present & Future	Coton Reserve	0 (S106 being finalised)
Total Units	-	177.47

We are in concept stage of developing a watercourse offsite BNG credit option at pour Sheep's Green Local Nature Reserve in Newnham to ensure that any offsite watercourse habitat requirements resulting from development can be delivered to the benefit of local habitats and communities.

Section 106 Agreements which include BNG Provision in Greater Cambridge

App No	Site Address	Decision	Ward	District	Type	Deed Date
21/00660/FUL	Land Adj 129 - 131 Ditton Fields Cambridge Cambridgeshire	Granted	Abbey	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	05/11/2021
22/01384/FUL	Beech Farm Church Street Harston Cambridgeshire CB22 7NR	Granted	Harston & Comberton	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	23/02/2023
22/02088/FUL	Bourn Golf Club, Health and Fitness Club Toft Road Bourn Cambridgeshire CB23 2TT	Granted	Caldecote	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	18/11/2022
22/05549/OUT	TWI Granta Park Great Abington Cambridgeshire CB21 6AL	Granted	Linton	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	18/01/2024
23/01335/OUT	Land East Of Ermine Street Caxton Cambridgeshire	Granted	Caxton & Papworth	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	26/07/2024
23/04233/FUL	Fitzwilliam College Storeys Way Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB3 0DG	Granted	Castle	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	09/08/2024
23/04590/OUT	Land South Of Coldhams Lane Cambridge Cambridgeshire	Granted	Cherry Hinton	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	31/01/2025
23/04687/FUL	Barnwell Local Centre Barnwell Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB5 8RG	Granted	Abbey	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	26/11/2024
23/04952/FUL	19 - 35 Regent Street Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB2 3AS	Granted	Market	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	18/12/2024
24/01080/OUT	Land At Green End/Heath Road Gamlingay Sandy SG19 3JZ	Granted	Gamlingay	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	10/04/2025
24/01354/FUL	137 And 143 Histon Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB4 3HZ	Granted	Arbury	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	06/03/2025
24/03285/OUT	Land Southwest Of Lanacre 86 Chrishall Road Fowlmere Cambridgeshire SG8 7RY	Granted	Foxton	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	31/07/2025

3.3 How we plan to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period

We will continue to support applicants and habitat bank providers through the planning system with the provision of expert advice from our team of three full-time

in-house ecologists and the systems and process that we have put in place to record and report on BNG.

To track, monitor and report on our BNG data, we have purchased a specialist software package (Verna's Mycelia), which will be used to collate data from other corporate systems (Uniform, Exacom) to provide greater detail of BNG delivery in future Biodiversity Duty reports.

Our draft shared Local Plan proposes that all Major development in Greater Cambridge must provide a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain (BNG), unless exempt under the Environment Act 2021, to be provided onsite where this is feasible and effective. If adopted, we will implement this policy to ensure that our large developments deliver above mandatory 10% net gain. Where this requires offsite delivery, we will ensure that sites support the emerging LNRS.

ENDS

This page is intentionally left blank

BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT

Biodiversity and Tree Projects Progress Report

2022-November 2025

Authors:

Natalie Lambert – Biodiversity Projects Officer

Guy Belcher – Biodiversity Manager

Victoria Smith – Local Nature Reserve Ranger

Rober Martyr – Project Lead, Great Cambridge Chalk Steam Project

Fulbourn Road Green Space: Scrapes and Bee Bank

Location (What3Words): each.actual.remark

Project Summary

This project focuses on transforming council-owned amenity grassland into a more species-rich chalk grassland habitat. Early trial scrapes in 2021 demonstrated the potential of the underlying chalk substrate, which informed a larger-scale intervention in February 2022. Topsoil was removed to expose nutrient-poor chalk, followed by rotavation and sowing with a chalk grassland seed mix. A substantial bee bank was created in April 2022 using arisings from the scrapes, providing habitat for ground-nesting solitary bees. The site lies close to three nature reserves, including a chalk grassland SSSI, improving ecological connectivity. Ongoing monitoring and further planned scrapes indicate long-term biodiversity gains.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	c. 200 m ² improved chalk grassland including bee bank
 Volunteer input	10 volunteers, 3 sessions per year, 4 hours each
 Monitoring	Annual Rapid Condition grassland monitoring by ranger
 Engagement / Legacy	Further scrapes planned for January 2026
 Project Dates	January 2022 – ongoing

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council Housing Department



Coldhams Common Pond

Location (What3Words): lobby.fumes.clear

Project Summary

A small experimental pond measuring 3m by 2m was installed by volunteers on Coldhams Common in an area that already displayed wetland potential through its vegetation. The purpose was to test whether a pond could be sustained naturally in this location. If successful, the intention is to develop a sequence of ponds across the area, each at different successional stages, to create a richer wetland system. Such a network would provide new opportunities for local residents, schools, clubs and academic groups to study freshwater ecology in an accessible setting, whilst also contributing as a stepping stone in the Cambridge Nature Network. The pilot pond also acts as a catalyst for wider habitat enhancement and community engagement with wetland biodiversity.

Quick Facts

🌿 Habitat work	6 m ² experimental pond created
👤 Volunteer input	5 volunteers, 1 session, 4 hours
📋 Additional features	Log pile hibernacula installed
🔍 Monitoring	Ongoing assessment of pond sustainability (experimental site)
📅 Project Dates	February 2025 – ongoing



Barnwell West LNR:

Ponds, Bee Bank, Wildflower Meadow and Willow Planting

Location (What3Words): verse.dream.trucks

Project Summary

To increase habitat diversity within Barnwell West Local Nature Reserve, a new glade was created through the removal of scrub and topsoil across an area of approximately 60 m². Two ponds were installed, and a substantial bee bank was constructed along the entire south-facing edge of the glade. The remaining ground was seeded with a wildflower mix suitable for the site's conditions. Four mature Osier Willow trees were planted to strengthen structural diversity and provide future habitat benefits. A log-round seating area was added to create an outdoor meeting and learning space for local schools and community groups, supporting the wider aim of encouraging educational use and community engagement.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	60 m ² glade creation, wildflower seeding, 2 ponds, bee bank, 4 Osier Willows
 Volunteer input	10–15 volunteers, 4 sessions per year since 2022
 Monitoring	Ongoing site condition checks (informal)
 Engagement / Legacy	Dedicated outdoor learning space established
 Project Dates	March 2022



Bee Kind Log Bee Hives

Location (What3Words):

Byron's Pool LNR (front.rice.after) & Nine Wells LNR (turkey.redouble.voices)

Project Summary

This project represents the first step in introducing more veteran tree features into two council-managed woodlands. Many of the city's wooded areas suffer from a lack of staggered age structure, which limits the availability of habitat niches for invertebrates and other wildlife. To help address this gap, hollowed log 'Bee Kind' hives were installed at the woodland edges at Byron's Pool and Nine Wells Local Nature Reserves.

These natural log hives provide suitable refuge for wild honeybees, offering an alternative to conventional managed hives. By giving colonies a place to live with minimal human interference, the project aims to support more resilient wild populations. Honeybees face a range of pressures including pesticide exposure, reduced forage availability, emerging diseases and stress from intensive honey production. The log hives offer an opportunity for wild colonies to exist simply as pollinators within a more natural ecological setting, contributing to woodland biodiversity and long-term habitat health.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Installation of hollow log bee hives to mimic veteran tree features
 Volunteer input	3 volunteers, twice
 Monitoring	Volunteers monitor hive condition and bee activity throughout the year
 Engagement / Legacy	Supports long-term habitat diversification in council woodlands
 Project Dates	April 2022



Coldhams Brook Enhancement Project

Location (What3Words): chemistry.limbs.paid

Project Summary

Coldhams Brook, a chalk stream on the east side of Cambridge, had been canalised in the 1950s and received little maintenance beyond an annual weed cut. As a result, the stream developed slow flow, reduced habitat diversity and significant sediment build-up. Despite this, water voles, kingfishers and little egrets continued to use the area, motivating a collaborative enhancement project between Cambridge City Council and Abbey People Community Charity. The project aims to improve a 600 m stretch of the brook through introducing flow deflectors, berm creation with planted macrophytes, secondary channels, backwaters and selective shade reduction. Most of the work has been delivered by volunteers, with occasional contractor support. This ambitious project remains ongoing with continued ecological monitoring.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Flow deflectors, berms with marginal planting, secondary channels, backwaters, shade reduction
 Volunteer input	10–20 per session, ~10 sessions per year since 2022
 Monitoring	Quarterly Riverfly monitoring
 Area improved	Approx. 600 m stretch
 Project Dates	February 2022 – ongoing

Partners

Abbey People Community Charity



Substrate Experimental Mounds and Pond at Bramblefields LNR

Location (What3Words): long.poker.manage

Project Summary

Bramblefields LNR was selected for experimental habitat creation following the loss of nearby brownfield habitat to development. Initially, a large mound surfaced with recycled ceramics was constructed in 2018. Monitored by Cambridge University Zoology students, academics and volunteers, the trial proved successful for both flora and invertebrates. Building on these results, three additional 'S'-shaped mounds were created, each using a different recycled aggregate: sand, recycled concrete and recycled brick. All were seeded with a chalk grassland mix, and a pond was also excavated, with its spoil forming part of the mound bases. The project has provided diverse learning and engagement opportunities for students, schools, nursery groups, botany groups and local residents, and has been featured in Conservation Land Management and will join the Conservation Evidence library. Annual monitoring continues as part of the second-year Zoology module.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	3 'S'-shaped mounds (sand, recycled concrete, bricks), chalk grassland seeding, pond creation
 Volunteer input	10–20 volunteers, 5 sessions per year since 2018
 Area improved	Approx. 108 m ²
 Engagement	University students, academics, local schools, public guided walks
 Monitoring	Annual plant and invertebrate surveys by Zoology module
 Project Dates	February 2023



Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project (GCCSP): Evidence-Led Restoration, Monitoring and Community Engagement

Locations (What3Words): Multiple sites including spring.waters.clearly, meander.silver.riffles, brook.pathways.urban, historic.chalk.source, commons.clear.brook, industrial.runoff.channel, chalk.spring.origin, ancient.spring.head, meadow.river.habitat, farm.recharge.soils

Project Summary

The Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project is an evidence-led programme delivering ecological monitoring, restoration design and community engagement across nine chalk-stream and springhead sites in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. The project addresses long-standing gaps in hydrological and ecological data, building a robust scientific baseline for long-term chalk-stream recovery. Weekly water-quality monitoring, macroinvertebrate and macrophyte surveys, geomorphological assessments, sediment studies and citizen-science training have created one of the most comprehensive chalk-stream datasets in the region.

Urban streams such as Cherry Hinton Brook, Hobson's Brook and Coldham's Brook show nutrient enrichment, storm-driven pollution pulses and sedimentation, while rural reaches such as Linton, Abington and the springheads at Nine Wells and Giant's Grave demonstrate groundwater influences and seasonal dissolved-oxygen variability. Restoration plans for each site are now process-led and tailored to local hydrological and ecological conditions. Over sixty volunteers have been trained, new partnerships have been strengthened, and the programme has established a model for long-term chalk-stream recovery in Greater Cambridge.

Quick Facts

 Sites involved	Nine chalk streams, springheads and a regenerative farming demonstration site
 Volunteer input	60+ volunteers trained for weekly sampling, sediment monitoring and survey work
 Monitoring	Weekly water-quality sampling; sediment traps; erosion pins; biological surveys; hydro-surveys
 Key findings	Storm driven urban nutrient pulses; seasonal dissolved oxygen variation; sediment mobility patterns; groundwater influence
 Evidence use	All data now underpins site-specific, process-led restoration design
 Project Dates	January 2024 – November 2025

Quote

“Chalk streams cannot be restored through assumptions or wishful thinking. The Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project is the first initiative in this area to build the level of evidence we actually need... It has been refreshing to see a project led by science, not by fashion.” — Dr Steve Boreham, Geologist & Ecologist, Hobson’s Conduit Trust

Partners and Funders

Principal funder: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)

Supporting staffing, monitoring, restoration design, citizen science, regenerative farming, and technology trials across all GCCSP sites.

Major co-funders: Anglian Water (Get River Positive), Cambridge Water / South Staffordshire Water

Supporting long-term water-quality monitoring, habitat enhancement and urban pollution mitigation. Match funding for sites including Linton, Abington, Cherry Hinton Brook, Coldham’s Brook and Giant’s Grave, plus springhead research and WINEP support.

Local authority partners: Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council
CCiC - Funding for Cherry Hinton Brook and Coldham’s Brook, drainage improvements, sediment mitigation, and project coordination.

SC - core delivery partner for Linton, Abington and rural Granta sites.

Project-Specific Contributors:

- Hobson’s Conduit Trust (HCT) – targeted contributions to Hobson’s Brook, Vicar’s Brook and Nine Wells; springhead protection, monitoring and research.
- Big Chalk Fund – capital funding for city habitat creation and in-channel works.
- Patchwork Education Village, Abington Woods – education, community access and habitat works.
- Private landowners at Neville & Enzo’s Meadow, Giant’s Grave and Nine Wells.

Delivery and Technical Partners

- Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) – water-quality programme, WHPT and MTR surveys, wellbeing surveys and citizen-science training.
- Keele University – geomorphology, sediment advice, in-channel process design.
- Aquamaintain Ltd – in-channel and bankside restoration delivery.
- Wildlife Trust BCN – riparian design and community engagement.
- Cam Valley Forum & local experts – long-term monitoring, historical context and citizen-science data.
- JRH Ltd – rainwater harvesting infrastructure and aquifer recharge engineering at New Shardelowes Farm.

Community and Volunteer Partners

- Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook
- Friends of Hobson’s Brook
- Abington Naturewatch

- Linton community groups
- East Cambridgeshire Farm Cluster
- Over sixty trained citizen-science volunteers supporting weekly monitoring, sediment surveys, fixed-point photography and engagement events.



Logan's Meadow LNR Wetland Creation

Location (What3Words): hits.bolt.token

Lead organisation: Cambridge City Council, in partnership with Friends of Logan's Meadow

Project Summary

Logan's Meadow Local Nature Reserve sits on the River Cam in East Chesterton and is one of the council's core nature sites within the Cambridge Nature Network. The wetland creation project has significantly extended the reserve, transforming former rough grassland into a complex of open water, reedbed, ditches and wet woodland. The design was informed by a community-led process, including a public consultation in 2020 that showed strong support for enlarging the LNR, planting more trees and adding additional wetland features.

Cambridge City Council, river restoration specialists and Friends of Logan's Meadow worked together to create backwaters, scrapes and marginal habitats that support species such as water vole, otter, reed warbler, grass snake, dragonflies and breeding fish.

The new wetlands were officially opened in June 2025 at a community event that drew several hundred visitors for guided walks, children's activities and stalls from local groups. The extension more than doubles the wetland area on site, strengthens the ecological corridor along the Cam, and showcases how urban riverside land can be repurposed for nature recovery, climate resilience and community access to blue-green space.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Approx. 1 ha of new wetland including open water, reedbeds, scrapes and wet woodland
 Community involvement	Community-led consultation and ongoing volunteering
 Volunteer input	Around 1,000 volunteer hours across planting, management and events
 Engagement	Hundreds attended the 2025 opening event, the project has been video documented and a film is planned.
 Monitoring	Ongoing ecological monitoring by partners and volunteers
 Project dates	2022-2025

Partners

Cambridge City Council; Friends of Logan's Meadow; Cambridge Nature Network; Anglia Ruskin University.

Funders

Heritage Lottery, Green Recovery Fund, Natural England, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, S106 Contributions.



Herbicide Reduction Plan

Location: City-wide

Project Summary

Following a motion in July 2021, Cambridge City Council committed to a Herbicide Reduction Plan and herbicide-free trials, initially in two wards, with the aim of phasing out routine glyphosate use across the city. The plan tested non-chemical weed management methods in residential streets and public spaces, while monitoring costs, public perception and biodiversity outcomes.

By March 2024, the council had closed the original Herbicide Free Plan and trials, and approved a new city-wide weed control methodology that significantly reduces herbicide use and restricts it to exceptional circumstances where alternatives are not viable. In March 2025 a new herbicide-free weed management work programme was approved, following the decision to discontinue herbicide use (restricted to exceptional circumstances) across all council-owned sites, including parks, car parks and housing areas.

Alongside operational changes, the council has developed communication and engagement initiatives to help residents understand why verges and pavements may look less “tidy” and to promote manual and mechanical weed control. This includes the “Happy Bee and Butterfly Streets” community weeding scheme, which supports local groups to manage verges in ways that benefit pollinators and public health. The Herbicide Reduction Plan is now a cornerstone of the council’s approach to reducing harm to pollinators, improving air and water quality and delivering the Biodiversity Strategy.

Quick Facts

 Scope	City-wide shift away from routine herbicide use
 Implementation	Trials from 2022; revised method adopted 2024; discontinuation confirmed 2025
 Community engagement	Collaboration with Pesticide-Free Cambridge and volunteers
 Happy Bee Streets scheme	Supports community weeding for pollinator benefit
 Dates	2021–2025

Partners

Cambridge City Council; Pesticide-Free Cambridge; local residents; volunteer groups.

City Services Operatives Biodiversity Training

Locations: Multiple council-managed sites

Project Summary

City Services operatives manage a large proportion of Cambridge's public realm, including parks, verges, housing land, watercourses and local nature reserves. To embed biodiversity into day-to-day operations, the council has worked with BCN Wildlife Trust and the University of Cambridge to develop bespoke biodiversity training for operational grounds and streets staff.

Three bespoke training events were delivered, alongside university college gardening teams, to increase understanding and practical skills in biodiversity, grassland and watercourse management. The University's operational grounds team joined Cambridge City Council and BCN Wildlife Trust for biodiversity training as part of a wider commitment to enhance biodiversity across the estate.

Training has covered topics such as recognising priority habitats and species on sites, tailoring mowing regimes, managing banks and ditches for wildlife, and communicating changes (for example, relaxed mowing) to residents and park users. This programme supports the council's Biodiversity Strategy actions to build staff capacity, reduce unintentional harm to habitats and ensure that operational decisions contribute positively to nature recovery.

Quick Facts

 Training delivered	Three bespoke biodiversity training events
 Focus areas	Grassland, verge and watercourse management; habitat recognition
 Collaboration	Joint delivery with BCN Wildlife Trust and University of Cambridge teams
 Strategic context	Supports delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Duty commitments to equip staff with the skills needed to manage LNRs, commons and green spaces for nature.
 Dates	2023–2024, further sessions proposed for 2026-2031 as part of the Biodiversity Strategy action plan.

Partners

Cambridge City Council; BCN Wildlife Trust; University of Cambridge; partner colleges.

Great Crested Newt Pond Restoration at Bar Hill Crematorium

Location: Cambridge City Crematorium near Bar Hill

Project Summary

Cambridge City Crematorium supports an important population of protected great crested newts within a network of breeding ponds. Restoration work under Natural England license has focused on desilting, re-profiling pond margins, fish removal and improving aquatic vegetation to enhance breeding habitat quality.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Desilting, re-profiling, vegetation improvements, fish removal
 Monitoring	Ongoing population monitoring by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Amphibian and Reptile Group (CPARG)
 Strategic role	Part of District Level Licensing and amphibian conservation work
 Dates	2013–ongoing

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; CPARG; Natural England.

Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Planning area: Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

Project Summary

The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD provides detailed guidance to support the biodiversity policies of the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans. It sets out how new development in Greater Cambridge should protect, enhance and restore biodiversity, and how planners and applicants should interpret requirements around habitat creation, ecological networks, mitigation hierarchies and biodiversity net gain. The SPD underwent public consultation in 2021 and was formally adopted by Cambridge City Council in January 2022 and South Cambridgeshire District Council in February 2022. It is now a key material consideration in planning decisions, helping to secure better designed green infrastructure, more joined-up habitats and improved access to nature within and around new developments.

Quick Facts

 Adoption	Adopted by Cambridge City Council (Jan 2022) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (Feb 2022)
 Scope	Applies to all new development across Greater Cambridge, supporting Local Plan biodiversity policies
 Purpose	Provides practical guidance on delivering biodiversity net gain, habitat creation and ecological connectivity
 Role in decisions	Used as a material consideration in planning decisions and to guide pre-application discussions
 Consultation	Subject to public consultation in 2021, with broad support for stronger biodiversity requirements

Partners

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning; Natural Cambridgeshire; biodiversity stakeholders who contributed through consultation.

Nofence Collar Trials on Cambridge Commons

Location: Coldham's Common and other grazed commons

Project Summary

Conservation grazing on Cambridge's commons is vital for maintaining species-rich grassland, but conventional fencing can fragment access and constrain where livestock can graze. The Council has therefore trialled Nofence virtual fencing technology on a section of Coldham's Common and other grazed areas. Solar-powered collars on cattle create GPS-defined grazing cells without the need for physical fencing, allowing more flexible targeting of areas with grassland and scrub encroachment while maintaining open access for people and dogs. The trials are being used to evaluate animal behaviour, public perception, grassland response and operational feasibility. Early findings suggest that Nofence collars can help improve sward condition and reduce manual cutting in difficult-to-access areas, while supporting the Council's wider climate and biodiversity goals.

Quick Facts

 Habitat focus	Improving condition of grazed common grasslands such as Coldham's Common
 Trial area	Coldham's Common and selected compartments on city commons
 Approach	Use of GPS-based Nofence collars to create virtual grazing cells without physical fencing
 Aim	Target grazing where it delivers greatest biodiversity benefit while retaining public access
 Timeline	From 2023 onwards

Partners

Cambridge City Council City Services; local graziers; Natural Cambridgeshire partners; technology provider Nofence.



Woodland Management Plans for Byron's Pool and Nine Wells Local Nature Reserves

Location: Byron's Pool LNR and Nine Wells LNR

Project Summary

Byron's Pool and Nine Wells Local Nature Reserves contain important riparian and spring-fed woodland habitats that have developed dense, even-aged canopies in places. To secure their long-term ecological value, the Council has prepared woodland management plans for both sites, funded in part through Section 106 ecological mitigation.

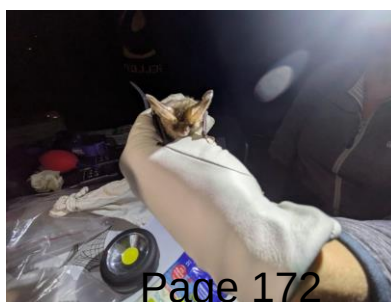
The plans set out a phased programme of selective thinning, regeneration felling and coppicing to diversify age structure, create open glades and promote natural regeneration. At Byron's Pool this includes several hectares of light thinning and small areas of coppice and regeneration felling, while at Nine Wells the focus is on heavier thinning and coppice to restore structural diversity around the rare chalk springs. Arisings are retained as habitat piles wherever practical, supporting deadwood invertebrates, fungi, bats and woodland birds, and improving resilience to climate change and recreational pressure.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Phased thinning, regeneration felling and coppicing across woodland blocks at both LNRs
 Scale	Several hectares of light thinning and smaller areas of coppice and regeneration felling
 Deadwood	Arisings stacked as habitat piles where possible to increase deadwood resource
 Objectives	Improve structural diversity, light levels, natural regeneration and habitat quality around springs and river
 Status	Woodland management plans approved, with implementation procured and phased from 2024 onwards

Partners

Cambridge City Council; Wild Trout Trust (linked works at Byron's Pool); local volunteer groups; contractors delivering woodland works.



Hobson's Park County Wildlife Site Designation

Location: Hobson's Park, south Cambridge (near Trumpington)

Project Summary

Hobson's Park is a large, recently created greenspace in south Cambridge, designed alongside new development to provide multifunctional public open space and high-quality habitats for wildlife. The park includes extensive grassland, balancing ponds, reedbeds and ditches, and forms part of a wider green corridor linking the city to the surrounding countryside. In recognition of the site's ecological importance, particularly for breeding birds, approximately 35.7 hectares of grassland and wetlands at Hobson's Park have been designated as a County Wildlife Site, and are also recognised by the City Council as a City Wildlife Site. Management focuses on maintaining a rich mosaic of sward heights, wet features and scrub while balancing recreation. The designation secures stronger planning protection and underscores the success of biodiversity-led design in new urban extensions.

Quick Facts

 Area	Around 35.7 ha of grassland and wetland designated for biodiversity value
 Habitats	Species-rich grassland, balancing ponds, reedbeds, ditches and scrub
 Key interest	Notable assemblage of breeding and wintering birds associated with open farmland and wetland
 Status	Designated as a County Wildlife Site and recognised as a City Wildlife Site within the Green Belt
 Timeline	Habitat creation delivered with new development; CWS status confirmed in early 2020s

Partners

Cambridge City Council; BCN Wildlife Trust; County Wildlife Site Panel; local bird and natural history groups.

Funders

Countryside Properties and partners involved in park creation.



Conservation Grazing at Netherhall School Chalk Slope

Location: Chalk slope adjacent to Netherhall School, south-east Cambridge

Project Summary

A steep chalk slope on land associated with Netherhall School provides one of the few remaining examples of chalk grassland in this part of Cambridge. To secure its long-term condition, the Council has worked with Netherhall School, a local grazier and partners to introduce conservation grazing as the primary management tool. The aim is to maintain a short, herb-rich sward and prevent scrub encroachment, supporting characteristic chalk grassland flora and associated invertebrates. The site also functions as an outdoor learning resource for pupils, illustrating the links between land management, biodiversity and climate resilience. Conservation grazing here complements other chalk grassland projects in the Cambridge Nature Network and demonstrates how school land can contribute to city-wide nature recovery.

Quick Facts

 Area	Approximately 1.5 ha of chalk grassland under favourable management
 Grazing	Conservation grazing introduced with a local grazier to manage sward height and scrub
 Education	Used as an outdoor classroom by Netherhall School to support curriculum and nature connection
 Strategic role	Adds to the limited chalk grassland resource on the south-eastern edge of the city
 Timeline	Conservation grazing in place during the 2020s, with ongoing monitoring of grassland condition

Partners

Cambridge City Council City Services; Netherhall School; local grazier; partners in the Cambridge Nature Network.

Byron's Pool Fish Pass Enhancement

Location: Byron's Pool Local Nature Reserve, River Cam, Trumpington

Lead organisation: Cambridge City Council, working with the Wild Trout Trust and specialist contractors

Project Summary

Byron's Pool weir on the River Cam historically posed a barrier to fish migration and altered natural river processes. To address this, the Council has worked with the Wild Trout Trust and river engineering specialists to enhance the existing nature-like fish pass, which takes the form of a bypass channel around the weir. Detailed designs have improved the channel's gradient, flow patterns and in-channel features so that it functions both as an effective route for fish movement and as additional habitat for juvenile fish and other wildlife. The project has been funded through Section 106 developer contributions, with input from local volunteers and river groups. It sits within a wider programme of ecological mitigation at Byron's Pool, including amphibian pond improvements and access upgrades, and supports the health of the wider Cam catchment.

Quick Facts

 Intervention	Enhancement of a nature-like bypass channel functioning as a fish pass around Byron's Pool weir
 Objectives	Improve upstream and downstream fish passage and create habitat for juvenile fish
 Additional works	Works linked to amphibian pond improvements and ecological mitigation on the reserve
 Funding	Supported by Section 106 contributions with technical input from river specialists
 Timeline	Fish pass concept developed in 2010s; enhancement works delivered in the early 2020s

Partners

Cambridge City Council; Wild Trout Trust; 5Rivers Environmental and other technical consultants; Cam Valley Forum; local volunteers.

Parks Biodiversity Toolkit: St Thomas Park Enhancement

Location: St Thomas Play Park, Queen Edith's ward, Cambridge

Project Summary

The Parks Biodiversity Toolkit was developed by Cambridge City Council to help local groups plan and deliver small-scale biodiversity interventions in parks and open spaces. St Thomas Play Park in Queen Edith's ward is a leading example of the toolkit in action. Inspired by the guidance in the Toolkit, local residents worked with the Council's Biodiversity and Tree Teams to design and consult on a set of enhancements that would improve habitat for pollinators and other wildlife while keeping the site welcoming for play. Changes have included installing bird and bat boxes, creating a bee bank and drilled logs for solitary bees and other invertebrates, reducing but not removing ivy on taller trees to stop encroachment but allowing habitat for bats, adjusting mowing regimes to allow areas of longer grass and flowers, and developing a new wildflower border. The project is now referenced in the Council's Biodiversity Duty reporting as an example of community-led park enhancement.

Quick Facts

 Toolkit	Local application of the city-wide Parks Biodiversity Toolkit
 Habitat changes	Sand bank and bee features, selective ivy removal, relaxed mowing, new wildflower border, installation of bat and bird boxes
 Community role	Design and consultation led by residents working with City Services
 Timeline	Toolkit launched in early 2020s; St Thomas Park enhancements developed and delivered 2025

Partners

Cambridge City Council City Services; Birdwood Area Residents Association; Butterfly Conservation's Wild Spaces initiative (mapping and inspiration).



Hobson's Brook and Hobson's Conduit Bioblitz

Location: Hobson's Brook, Hobson's Conduit and associated greenspaces (including Hobson's Park and Brookside)

Project Summary

The Hobson's Brook and Conduit Bioblitz is a long-running citizen science initiative designed to build a detailed record of the wildlife associated with Hobson's Brook, Hobson's Conduit and their green corridor through Cambridge. Launched in 2017 as a ten-year programme, the Bioblitz brings together local experts, community groups and families for intensive survey sessions along different sections of the watercourse, including Hobson's Park and the Brookside gardens. Events typically run over a weekend, covering birds, mammals, bats, fish, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, plants and fungi. The resulting species lists contribute to understanding of the ecological value of the Conduit corridor and inform management discussions between the Trust, the City Council and other partners. The Bioblitz has also become an important engagement event, and as part of the annual Cambridge Nature Festival introducing residents to the history and biodiversity of this historic water supply system.

Quick Facts

 Programme	Ten-year Bioblitz programme initiated in 2017
 Surveys	Multi-taxon surveys including birds, mammals, bats, fish, invertebrates, plants and fungi
 Coverage	Different sections of Hobson's Brook and Conduit surveyed in successive years, including Hobson's Park and Brookside
 Participation	Events open to families and local residents, supported by expert naturalists and volunteers
 Use of data	Species records feed into ecological understanding and management of the Hobson's Conduit corridor

Partners

Hobson's Conduit Trust; Cambridge City Council; local natural history societies; schools and community groups; Cambridge Nature Network partners.

DiversiTree Project

Location: Cambridge (10km stretch and 100m wide of the river Cam from Baits Bites to Grantchester Meadows)

Project Summary

DiversiTree is a Cambridge City Council initiative launched in September 2023 to promote the importance of diversity within the city's urban forest. A particular focus is on identifying, understanding and improving the management of veteran trees along the River Cam by creating a Charter for veteran tree managers to sign up to. The project forms part of the River Cam Climate Action through Nature programme delivered by the Cambridge Nature Network partnership and is funded through the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund.

As well as the Charter, another core element of DiversiTree is community engagement. The project works with Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination to involve children, families and under-represented groups in creative and educational activities that connect people with veteran trees and their wildlife. Professional storyteller Studio Places has led participatory storytelling sessions, including 'Weaving Words with Willows', helping communities explore the cultural and ecological significance of veteran riverbank trees through storytelling and creative workshops.

Quick Facts

 Project focus	Urban forest diversity, focusing on veteran riverbank trees (including veteran willows), community engagement
 Programme dates	September 2023 – spring 2026 (legacy actions expected to continue)
 Key actions	Identifying veteran trees, improving long-term management approaches, raising awareness of veteran-tree biodiversity
 Community engagement	Targeted engagement to involve under-represented local people and communities, as well as stakeholders that manage veteran willows
 Funding	National Lottery Community Fund – Climate Action Fund

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; Cambridge Nature Network; National Lottery Community Fund; Local stakeholders involved in riverbank stewardship; Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination; Studio Places.



Cambridge Butterfly Trail

Location: Cambridge City (30 parks and open spaces across every ward)

Project Summary

The Cambridge Butterfly Trail is a self-guided nature trail launched by Cambridge City Council in August 2025. It uses eye-catching marker posts placed across 30 parks and open spaces, spanning every ward of the city, to help residents and visitors explore Cambridge's green spaces and learn about butterflies and moths found locally.

Each marker post features a species-specific plaque with a QR code linking to information about the featured butterfly or moth, alongside an outline designed for 'rubbings' using a pencil or crayon. Participants can start anywhere, use a downloadable collection sheet (also available from community centres), and submit a photo once completed. The first 20 people to complete the full set of 30 rubbings can win a pair of entry tickets to the University of Cambridge Botanic Garden.

The trail supports the council's commitment to become a more 'butterfly-friendly' city, reflecting the wider concern about declines in butterflies and moths highlighted by Butterfly Conservation's declaration of a national 'Butterfly Emergency'. It also links with actions in the council's Biodiversity Strategy, including improving habitat quality in parks and encouraging residents to create 'wild spaces' for pollinators at home.

Quick Facts

 Trail scale	30 marker posts in 30 parks and open spaces, across every ward of Cambridge
 Species featured	30 butterflies and moths found in Cambridge and surrounding areas
 Interpretation	QR codes on plaques link to species information and trail locations
 Interactive element	Rubbing plaques and a downloadable collection sheet (also available at community centres)
 Incentive	First 20 completions receive a pair of tickets to Cambridge University Botanic Garden
 Accessibility	Posts located on accessible paths suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs
 Launch date	August 2025

Quote

"The new Cambridge Butterfly Trail is a wonderful way for people to get out and explore some of our parks and open spaces, and to learn more about the many different species of butterfly and moth which live in and around our city." – Cllr Martin Smart (Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services)

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; Butterfly Conservation (context and 'Wild Spaces' programme); University of Cambridge Botanic Garden (trail completion prize partner); Cambridge community centres (collection sheets).



Cambridge Microwoods (Nuns Way and Five Trees)

Locations: Nuns Way Rec and Five Trees, Cambridge

Project Summary

Cambridge City Council has established a series of microwoods across the city to increase urban tree cover, improve biodiversity and strengthen climate resilience. Microwoods are small, densely planted areas of trees and shrubs designed to grow rapidly into woodland habitat, delivering ecological and environmental benefits even in constrained urban spaces.

The Nuns Way microwood was planted in 2025 by Cambridge City Council and local residents, supported by the Coronation Living Heritage Fund. It provides shelter, food and nesting opportunities for wildlife, improves air quality, absorbs rainwater and helps cool the urban environment.

The Five Trees microwood, established as part of the Tiny Forest programme on 26 March 2022, covers approximately 201 m² and was planted with a diverse mix of native species including oak, birch, hazel, hawthorn and guelder rose. Delivered in partnership with Earthwatch Europe and funded by the Forestry Commission's Local Authority Treescape Fund, the site was created with community volunteers and supports citizen science monitoring. Together, these microwoods form stepping-stone habitats that contribute to the Cambridge Nature Network, helping wildlife move through the city while engaging communities in nature recovery.

Quick Facts

 Habitat creation	Dense planting of native trees and shrubs to create mini woodland habitat
 Key sites	Nuns Way microwood (planted 2025) and Five Trees Tiny Forest (planted March 2022)
 Biodiversity benefits	Provides habitat, nesting sites and food for birds, insects and other wildlife
 Climate benefits	Improves air quality, stores carbon, reduces urban heat and absorbs rainwater
 Community involvement	Community planting, volunteering and citizen science monitoring
 Strategic role	Supports Cambridge Nature Network and city-wide urban nature recovery
 Funding	Coronation Living Heritage Fund and Forestry Commission Local Authority Treescape Fund

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; Cambridge Nature Network; Earthwatch Europe; Forestry Commission (Local Authority Treescape Fund); Coronation Living Heritage Fund; local community volunteers.



Free Trees for Babies Scheme

Location: Cambridge (city-wide residential planting scheme)

Project Summary

The Free Trees for Babies Scheme is a long-running Cambridge City Council initiative that provides a free tree to residents to plant in their garden to celebrate the birth or adoption of a child. The scheme helps grow the city's urban forest, supports biodiversity and strengthens connections between families and nature. By encouraging tree planting on private land, the scheme contributes to wider efforts to increase tree canopy cover and climate resilience across Cambridge.

Eligible Cambridge residents with a child or grandchild aged four or younger can apply to receive a tree. Applications typically open in early November and close the following August, with trees distributed during the winter planting season. Participants are provided with guidance and materials to support successful planting and establishment. Trees may also be planted in other suitable locations within Cambridge, such as schools or community spaces, where residents do not have access to a garden.

The scheme supports the Cambridge Canopy Project and Biodiversity and Trees Strategies by increasing habitat availability, helping store carbon, improving air quality and contributing to long-term environmental resilience.

Quick Facts

 Purpose	Celebrate births and grow Cambridge's urban forest
 Eligibility	Cambridge residents with a child or grandchild aged four or younger
 Biodiversity benefit	Creates habitat and food sources for wildlife in residential areas
 Timeline	Annual scheme with applications typically open November–August
 Support provided	Free tree, planting guidance and establishment materials
 Strategic role	Supports Cambridge Canopy Project and Biodiversity Strategy
 Community impact	Encourages residents to actively participate in nature recovery

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; partner tree nurseries; local residents participating in the scheme.



Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

This tool helps the Council ensure that we fulfil legal obligations of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Guidance on how to complete this tool can be found on the Cambridge City Council intranet. For specific questions on the tool please contact the Community Equity Team at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk.

Also, once you have drafted the EqIA please send this to equalities@cambridge.gov.uk for checking.

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service

Biodiversity Strategy (2022–2030), Biodiversity Duty Report (2022–2025), and Biodiversity Action Plan (2026–2031)

2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)

To be updated when published **Date?**. Existing Strategy link:

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/11066/biodiversity-strategy.pdf>

3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

The combined programme sets out how Cambridge City Council will conserve and enhance biodiversity across the city, in line with statutory requirements in the Environment Act 2021 and amended NERC Act Section 40. It embeds biodiversity into council decision making, land management, planning policy and community engagement. A mid-term review of the Biodiversity Strategy is planned to celebrate achievements and align future actions with new legislation and initiatives. The Biodiversity Duty Report documents how Cambridge City Council has taken and will continue to take steps to conserve and enhance biodiversity in exercising its functions. The accompanying Action Plan (2026–2031) sets out future commitments to embed biodiversity across council operations, estate management, planning policy, and community engagement.

4. Responsible Team and Group

City Services: Biodiversity Team

5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

(Please tick all that apply)

- ☒ Residents
- ☒ Visitors
- ☒ Staff

- Council tenants and residents across all wards
- Community volunteers, Friends groups, and local schools engaged in biodiversity actions
- Developers and land managers participating in biodiversity net gain initiatives
- Staff across service areas involved in delivering biodiversity actions
- People who work in the city but do not live here
- Tourists

6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this?

- ☒ New
- ☐ Major change
- ☐ Minor change

7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Community Services, Cambridge Investment Partnership, Combined Authority, Natural Cambridgeshire, Cambridge Nature Network, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, community groups and Friends groups.

8. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

This EQIA draws on national guidance and a growing peer reviewed evidence base on the links between access to green space, biodiversity and health, with a focus on how these benefits and risks are patterned by age, disability, income, ethnicity and other characteristics.

Key sources include:

- **UK guidance and reviews**
 - Public Health England, *Improving access to greenspace: 2020 review* which summarises evidence that greener communities show lower levels of depression

and anxiety, reduced exposure to heat and flooding, and that disadvantaged groups often gain greater health benefit when green space is improved. [GOV.UK](#)

- Public Health England and wider UK reviews summarised in *Making the most of green space for people's health* and the EKLIPSE report on types and characteristics of green space that affect mental health. [Eklipse](#)
- Health Foundation and Friends of the Earth analyses of inequalities in access to green space and environmental hazards by deprivation and ethnicity. [health.org.uk](#)

- **Mental health and wellbeing**

- Systematic reviews and meta-analyses showing that exposure to nature and urban green space is consistently associated with improvements in mental health outcomes across age groups, including reduced depression and anxiety and improved quality of life. [Journal of Global Health](#)
- Evidence that urban green exercise and even short periods of nature exposure can improve mood and reduce stress, including for adults with existing mental illness. [Urban Green Exercise](#)

- **Children, young people and older adults**

- Systematic reviews showing that access to green space supports children's mental wellbeing, behaviour and cognitive development, and that outdoor learning in green environments benefits attention and academic performance. [Impact of Green Space](#)
- Reviews and longitudinal studies showing that green space can improve physical and mental health for middle-aged and older adults and reduce heat-related morbidity and mortality. [Health impacts of urban green spaces](#)

- **Disability and long-term conditions**

- Meta-analyses and scoping reviews indicating that nature exposure produces short term improvements in mood, stress and quality of life for adults with mental illness, and broader mental health benefits across diagnostic groups. [Nature Exposure Benefits](#)

- **Pregnancy and maternity**

- Systematic reviews and meta-analyses showing there is some evidence that residential greenness is associated with healthier pregnancy outcomes such as higher birthweight and lower risk of preterm birth and small for gestational age. [Greenspace and birth outcomes](#)

- **Race, income, climate vulnerability and intersectionality**

- UK analyses showing that people in more deprived areas and many ethnic minority communities have less access to high quality green space and are more exposed to

extreme heat and environmental risks, which increases health inequalities.

[Inequalities in access to green space](#)

- Evidence that neighbourhood green space can have particularly strong protective mental health effects for disadvantaged groups. [Greenspace and mental health in disadvantaged groups](#)

- **Safety, gender and quality of green space**

- Systematic reviews and studies on green space quality, which highlight perceived safety as a key dimension of quality affecting mental health outcomes and park use. [Greenspace and safety](#)
- Research showing that women and girls are more likely to feel unsafe in parks and other public green spaces, and that design features such as lighting, visibility and signs of disorder influence their use of these spaces. [Perceptions of safety in urban parks](#)

The evidence above has been used to identify where the combined Biodiversity Strategy, Duty Report and Action Plan can have positive impacts for different groups, where there are risks or barriers (for example linked to safety or unequal access), and where mitigation and inclusive design are needed. More detailed evidence is referenced under each protected characteristic in Section 9.

9. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

(a) Age - Please also consider any safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk

Positive impacts

- Children and young people: Systematic reviews show that access to green space is associated with improved mental wellbeing, reduced stress, better behaviour and enhanced cognitive development and academic performance in children. School-based studies link greener school environments to gains in working memory and attention. [Greenspace and mental well-being of children](#)
- The Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan support outdoor learning, nature-based play and activities in parks and open spaces, including forest schools, which should therefore have positive impacts on children's learning and wellbeing.

- Older adults: Reviews and longitudinal studies indicate that green space and street trees can promote physical activity, social contact and better self-rated health for middle-aged and older adults, and can reduce heat-related morbidity and mortality in hotter periods. [Health impacts of urban greenspaces](#)
- Increasing canopy cover and nature-based cooling in neighbourhoods where older people live responds to evidence that they are particularly vulnerable to climate-related risks such as heatwaves. [Heat related morbidity and mortality](#)

Safeguarding

- No specific safeguarding risks have been identified at strategy level, but individual projects should follow safeguarding procedures for activities involving children, young people and adults at risk.

(b) Disability

Positive impacts

- High quality green space, especially where it is accessible and well maintained, is consistently associated with improved mental health outcomes. Scoping reviews of nature-based interventions report improvements in mood, stress, anxiety and depression across diagnostic groups, including people with existing mental illness. [Impacts of nature on health](#)
- A recent meta-analysis focusing on adults with mental illness found that even brief (around 10 minutes) exposure to nature can yield short term improvements in depressive symptoms, stress and quality of life. [Nature exposure and the benefits for adults with mental illness](#)
- By increasing the quantity and quality of green space in the city, the programme has the potential to support mental health for disabled residents, including those with long term mental health conditions.

Mitigation and design

- Accessibility audits and engagement with disabled residents and representative groups are needed to ensure that paths, entrances, seating, signage and facilities are inclusive, and that sensory planting and quiet areas are designed with neurodivergent users in mind. For example, the city's new Butterfly Trail ensures the height of the trail signage is in line with recommendations from the government's [inclusive mobility](#).
- This is consistent with evidence that green space quality, including safety, accessibility and amenities, is crucial in determining who actually experiences health benefits. [Greenspace quality and health](#)

(c) Gender reassignment

There is very limited peer reviewed evidence specifically on trans and non-binary people's use of green space. Existing research on public space suggests that trans and non-binary people may face harassment or exclusion in public settings, but this is not yet well studied for parks and nature spaces.

(d) Marriage and civil partnership

No impacts have been identified specific to this equality group.

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

Positive impacts

- Multiple systematic reviews and meta-analyses show that there is some evidence that residential greenness is associated with healthier pregnancy outcomes, including higher average birthweight and lower risk of preterm birth and small for gestational age births. [Greenspace and birth outcomes](#)
- The programme's focus on local, walkable green spaces, shade, benches and traffic-free routes is therefore likely to benefit pregnant women and new parents by supporting safe physical activity, stress reduction and social contact.

Risks

- A small number of recent studies highlight possible associations between certain types of greenness and childhood asthma, which may be related to specific pollen or air quality profiles, so this evidence remains mixed and developing. [Residential Greenspace and Asthma](#)
- These uncertainties underline the importance of integrating biodiversity, air quality and species selection considerations into planting schemes, rather than simply maximising greenness.

(f) Race – Note that the protected characteristic ‘race’ refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Local context

- Cambridge is relatively diverse compared with England and Wales overall. Census 2021 data for Cambridge City show:
 - Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: 14.8% of residents
 - Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: 2.4%
 - Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: 5.1%
 - White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British: 53.0%
 - White: Other ethnic group: 21.5%
 - Other ethnic group: 3.1% [Cambridge City Council](#)
- This means that only just over half of residents identify as White British, compared with 74.4% for England and Wales overall, so Cambridge’s population is substantially more diverse than the national picture. [Office for National Statistics](#)

National evidence on race, deprivation and green space

- England wide analyses by Friends of the Earth show a strong correlation between green space deprivation, ethnicity and income. Their “England’s green space gap” report finds that Black, Asian and minority ethnic people are around 2.7 times as likely as White people to live in areas with the least green space, and that these neighbourhoods also tend to be more deprived. [Friends of the Earth](#)
- The Health Foundation’s evidence hub on green space similarly reports that people in more deprived areas, and those from minority ethnic groups, are more likely to live in neighbourhoods with limited access to green space, even though they may gain greater health benefits when high quality green space is available locally. [health.org.uk](#)
- Public Health England’s review of access to greenspace concludes that improving green spaces in disadvantaged areas can reduce health inequalities and provide the largest marginal benefits for groups who currently have least access. [GOV.UK](#)

Positive impacts

- Given Cambridge’s relatively high ethnic diversity, and the presence of pockets of deprivation in urban neighbourhoods, actions that increase the quantity, quality and accessibility of local green space have strong potential to reduce environmental and health inequalities for residents from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- UK analyses show that people from ethnic minority communities are more likely to live in neighbourhoods with lower access to high quality green space and are more exposed to environmental hazards such as extreme heat. [Ethnic minorities and access to greenspace](#)

- There is emerging evidence that improvements in residential greenness may contribute to better perinatal outcomes in under-resourced neighbourhoods, including for Black mothers. [Residential greenspace and maternal race](#)
- By targeting improvements to neighbourhood green space and canopy in areas of greatest need, the Strategy and Action Plan have potential to reduce environmental and health inequalities that currently fall disproportionately on some ethnic minority residents.

Risks and mitigation

- National research highlights that ethnic minority communities can be less likely to use existing green space where it feels unsafe, poorly maintained or not designed with their needs in mind. [Urban greenspace use among ethnic communities](#)
- **To avoid reinforcing inequalities, individual projects should:**
 - use Cambridge’s IMD and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) mapping to identify and prioritise improvements in neighbourhoods with both higher deprivation and lower access to quality green space
 - involve ethnically diverse communities and organisations in co-design and stewardship of local green spaces
 - consider cultural preferences, language, and perceptions of safety in engagement and design
- No direct negative impacts on any ethnic group are anticipated if this targeting and engagement approach is followed. There is an opportunity to narrow existing environmental and health inequalities that currently fall disproportionately on some minority ethnic communities.

Mitigation and engagement

- Research on “green space gaps” highlights that provision, quality and cultural relevance of green space can all be barriers. [Greenspace gaps](#)
- Engagement work with community groups should therefore include ethnically diverse communities, co-design of spaces, and attention to cultural and language barriers.

(g) Religion or belief

No negative impacts for this protected characteristic have been identified at strategy level.

(h) Sex

Positive impacts

- Women and men can both benefit from the physical and mental health advantages associated with access to good quality green space described above. Systematic reviews suggest that green space is associated with better mental health, lower mortality and increased physical activity in adults of all genders. [Health impacts of urban green space](#)

Safety and barriers

- A consistent finding in the literature is that women are more likely than men to feel unsafe in parks and other public spaces, especially after dark, and that these perceptions reduce their use of green space. [Perceptions of safety in urban parks](#)
- UK and international studies highlight that women and girls cite poor lighting, low visibility, presence of groups of men, and signs of neglect or disorder as key reasons for feeling unsafe in parks. [Women and girl's safety in parks](#)

Mitigation

- In response, individual projects under the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan should:
 - incorporate women's and girls' views in design and management of sites
 - review lighting, sightlines, vegetation management and routes with a gender-sensitive lens
 - work with community safety colleagues to ensure design and management reflects best practice.

(i) Sexual orientation

There is limited direct research on how access to green space varies by sexual orientation. Some broader studies on public space and harassment indicate that LGBTQ+ people can experience discrimination or abuse in public settings, which may also apply in parks, but empirical evidence is sparse.

The Strategy and Action Plan are inclusive in intent and do not treat people differently by sexual orientation. Activities and volunteering are open to all and must comply with Council equalities and anti-harassment policies.

Engagement and consultation activity should ensure LGBTQ+ organisations are included so that any specific safety or inclusion concerns about particular sites can be identified and mitigated.

(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular, please consider the impact of any changes on:

- **Low-income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty.**
- **People of any age with care experience – this refers to individuals who spent part of their childhood in the care system due to situations beyond their control, primarily arising from abuse and neglect within their families. The term “Care experience” is a description of a definition in law, it includes anyone that had the state as its corporate parent by virtue of a care order in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and amendments.**
- **Groups who have more than one protected characteristic that taken together create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Here you are being asked to consider intersectionality, and for more information see: https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_159kt25q).**

Deprivation patterns and potential inequalities – Local context

- Cambridge City as a whole is relatively less deprived than the national average, with average IMD domain scores around decile 7. However, there are clear pockets of deprivation:
 - Nine Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in the three most deprived deciles nationally on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.
 - Deprivation is concentrated in the northeast of the city, particularly parts of Abbey and King’s Hedges. [Cambridgeshire Insight](#)
 - On the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), 20 out of 68 LSOAs are in the three most deprived deciles nationally. [Cambridgeshire Insight](#)
- The Council’s own “Mapping poverty” and IMD analysis highlight that these more deprived areas are also among the most built up and therefore more at risk of environmental inequalities such as poorer housing conditions, air quality and limited access to high quality green space. [Cambridge City Council](#)

Low-income groups and deprived areas

- National and local analyses show that people living in more deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to lack access to high quality green space and are disproportionately exposed to environmental risks such as air pollution and extreme heat. [Inequalities in access to green space](#)
- Reviews by Public Health England conclude that disadvantaged groups often gain greater health benefit when green space is improved, and that greener areas can reduce socio-economic inequalities in health. [Improving access to green space](#)

- The Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan therefore prioritise improvements that increase equitable access to nearby, good quality green space and canopy cover in areas of greatest need, which is likely to be particularly beneficial for low-income households.

Intersectionality

- Studies of environmental and health inequalities show that disadvantage often overlaps, for example where low income, ethnic minority status, gender and disability coincide, and that these groups can experience the highest exposure to environmental risks and the lowest access to green space. [Climate and nature impact on ethnic minorities](#)
- Evidence also shows that neighbourhood green space can provide strong protective mental health effects for disadvantaged groups when it is safe, high quality and culturally relevant. [The effects of neighbourhood green spaces on mental health of disadvantaged groups](#)
- By embedding equity into site prioritisation, design and engagement, the programme aims to ensure that those facing multiple disadvantages are not further excluded and can share in the benefits.

10. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqlA accordingly.)

- Monitoring: Equality impacts will be undertaken for specific projects within the action plan
- Engagement: Strengthen partnerships with schools, community groups, and accessibility networks
- Mitigation: Embed accessibility and inclusion in project design
- Next EqlA review: December 2026

11. Do you have any additional comments?

12. Sign off

Lead officer: Natalie Lambert, Biodiversity Projects Officer. Others consulted: Guy Belcher, Biodiversity Manager; Lily Simmonite, Community Equity Officer.

All EqlAs need to be sent to the Community Equity Team at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk

1. IMPACT ON CARBON EMISSIONS (MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE)			CLIMATE CHANGE RATING: <i>Use drop down list</i>	WILL THE PROJECT MOVE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL CLOSER TO THE OBJECTIVE OF BEING NET ZERO CARBON BY 2030? <i>Use drop down list</i>	WILL THE PROJECT MOVE THE CITY CLOSER TO THE OBJECTIVE OF A NET ZERO CARBON CAMBRIDGE BY 2030? <i>Use drop down list</i>	PLEASE DETAIL HERE THE ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN TO AVOID, MITIGATE OR COMPENSATE FOR THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND MAXIMISE POSITIVE IMPACTS?	HAS A NET ZERO CARBON OPTION BEEN CONSIDERED? PLEASE PROVIDE DETAILS.
1	ENERGY USE	Positive Impact: Energy use will be reduced or renewable energy will be used	Medium Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: - Reducing demand for energy - Specifying energy efficiency measures (e.g. insulation, low energy lighting) - Generating renewable energy (e.g. heat pumps, solar photovoltaic panels)	Semi natural habitats, tree canopy and water courses cool the city and reduces energy demand in heatwaves.
		Nil Impact: No extra energy use is involved					
		Negative Impact: More energy (gas and/ or electricity) will be consumed (by CCC or others)					
2	WASTE GENERATION	Positive Impact: Less waste will be generated OR amount of waste that is reused/ recycled will be increased	Nil	No	No	Consider: - Will resources be reduced or reused? - Will you use recycled goods? - Will recycling facilities be increased?	Review of park leaf clearance will reduce operational carbon use and enhance soil carbon capture. However, additional meadow creation will require cut and collect management with transport of green waste within the City. Options for onsite composting will be explored for suitable sites.
		Nil Impact: No waste will be generated					
		Negative Impact: More waste will be generated (by CCC or others)					
3	USE OF TRANSPORT	Positive Impact: The use of transport and/or of fossil fuel-based transport will be reduced	Nil	No	No	Consider: - Will you purchase an electric vehicle? - Will you specify the use of public transport? - How will you reduce the need to travel or transport goods?	Additional Hay cuts may require increase use of vehicle to move green waste. Options for onsite composting will be explored for suitable sites.
		Nil Impact: No extra transport will be necessary					
		Negative Impact: CCC or others will need to travel more OR transport goods more often/ further					
4	SUSTAINABLE FOOD	Positive Impact: Food will be locally grown and/ or meat-free	Low Positive	No	No	Consider: - Use of locally grown/ produced food - Reducing use of imported food - Reducing use of meat	Produce available from community orchards and gardens. Foraging for blackberries, Sloes etc on Local Nature Reserves
		Nil Impact: No change in supply of food					
		Negative Impact: Food will travel long distances and include meat					
2. IMPACT ON RESILIENCE (ADAPTATION) TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE							
HOW WILL THIS PROJECT/PROPOSAL AFFECT THE FOLLOWING KEY AREAS:			CLIMATE CHANGE RATING: <i>Use drop down list</i>	WILL THE PROJECT HELP CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL TO BE MORE RESILIENT TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE? <i>Use drop down list</i>	WILL THE PROJECT HELP CAMBRIDGE TO BE MORE RESILIENT TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE? <i>Use drop down list</i>	PLEASE DETAIL HERE THE ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN TO AVOID, MITIGATE OR COMPENSATE FOR THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND MAXIMISE POSITIVE IMPACTS?	HAS A NET ZERO CARBON OPTION BEEN CONSIDERED? PLEASE PROVIDE DETAILS.
5	HEATWAVES	Positive Impact: Increased/ improved shade & natural ventilation	High Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: Building orientation and installing measures such as Brise Soleil to reduce heat gain and plant hydration methods.	Significant contribution to reducing urban heat island effect, through shading and cooling effect of semi natural habitats
		Nil Impact: No impact on existing levels of shade & ventilation					
		Negative Impact: Lack of or reduced shade (e.g. from trees or buildings) & natural ventilation					
6	WATER AVAILABILITY	Positive Impact: Provision made for an enhancement of water efficiency measures to minimise the impact on water resource availability	Medium Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: Managing water use efficiently, installing measures to use less water such as low water use taps, planting drought resistant plants and using rainwater for irrigation.	Watercourse enhancements and reconnecting sites to their floodplain. Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project focuses on water use and quality. Rainwater harvesting project will reduce our reliance on aquifer abstraction for operations such as tree watering
		Nil Impact: Levels of water use will not be changed					
		Negative Impact: Water use will increase and/or no provision made for water management = Negative Impact					
7	FLOODING	Positive Impact: Sustainable drainage measures incorporated, positive steps to reduce & manage flood risk	Medium Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: The installation of measures to reduce the speed and increase the absorption of rainwater e.g. green roofs, SuDS, permeable paving etc. and alternative arrangements (business continuity)	Reconnecting the river to its floodplain through habitat creation schemes, tree canopy and sustainable urban drainage schemes will help 'slow the flow'
		Nil Impact: Levels of surface water run-off & flood risk are not affected					
		Negative Impact: Levels of surface water run-off will increase, no management of flood risk					
8	HIGH WINDS / STORMS	Positive Impact: Exposure to higher wind speeds is being actively managed & reduced	Low Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: the need to install stabilisation measures and ensure robust structures resilient to high winds	A healthy urban forest provides shelter for streets and parks
		Nil Impact: No change to existing level of exposure to higher wind speeds					
		Negative Impact: Exposure to higher wind speeds is increased or is not managed = Negative Impact					
9	FOOD SECURITY	Positive Impact: Opportunities & resources for local food production are increased/ enhanced	Medium Positive	Yes	Yes	Source food locally, and provide meat-free catering to reduce vulnerability to food shortages and reduce emissions from transport and farming of food	Urban Forest and LNR habitats nurture a healthy pollinator population for pollination of food crops.
		Nil Impact: No change to opportunities & resources for local food production					
		Negative Impact: Opportunities & resources for local food production are reduced					
10	BIODIVERSITY	Positive Impact: Biodiversity will be protected/ enhanced	High Positive	Yes	Yes	Provide net gain mitigation if required and seek enhancement in projects of all types and scale	Main outcomes are to protect and enhance biodiversity at a city and landscape scale.
		Nil Impact: Level of biodiversity will not change					
		Negative Impact: Biodiversity will decrease					
Weighing up the negative and positive impacts of your project, what is the overall rating you are assigning to your project?:			Medium Positive	This overall rating is what you need to include in your report/ budget proposal, together with your explanation to be included in the red box below			

Guidance on Assessing the Degree of Negative and Positive Impacts:

Note: Not all of the considerations/ criteria listed below will necessarily be relevant to your project

Low Impact (L)	* No publicity * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Low or none * No impact on service or corporate performance
Medium Impact (M)	* No capital assets, or capital assets with lifetime of less than 3 years * Local publicity (good or bad) * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Medium * Affects delivery of corporate commitments * Affects service performance (e.g.: energy use; amount of waste; distance travelled) by more than 10%
High Impact (H)	* Capital assets with a lifetime of more than 3 years * National publicity (good or bad) * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Significant or High * Affects delivery of regulatory commitments * Affects corporate performance by more than 10% * Capital assets with a lifetime of more than 6 years

In the box below please summarise the projects impacts (the reasons for the ratings given in column E above) to explain how the overall rating for the project/ proposal has been derived (Cell E37). Please also highlight any negative impacts your project may have and how you plan to avoid, mitigate or compensate for these (as you will have detailed in column I above).

The overall impact of the Biodiversity Strategy mid term review is assessed as being moderately positive in terms of reducing impacts of climate change and enhancing biodiversity.

This page is intentionally left blank



REPORT TITLE: Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036: Pre-decision Scrutiny Update

To: Services, Climate & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (11 March 2026) Report by:

Matthew Magrath, Urban Forest Manager

Tel: 01223458526. Email: matthew.magrath@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

Director Approval: Director James Elms confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to scrutiny for consideration.

1.	Recommendations
1.1	It is recommended that the Services, Climate & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: a) Notes the progress made in developing the Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036, including the evidence base and consultation undertaken to date (see version control summary at Appendix 6). b) Reviews and comments on the proposed Urban Forest Strategy and supporting Topic Papers (v4.2), with feedback reported to Cabinet ahead of its consideration of adoption on 24 March 2026, including the Strategy's delivery framework, actions, policies and Key Performance Indicators (Section 7 & Appendix 10). c) Recommends the Urban Forest Strategy (Appendix 7) to the Cabinet for adoption.
2.	Purpose and reason for the report

2.1	This report is presented in response to the Committee's request for a clear summary of the strategic rationale underpinning the proposed Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) 2026-2036, ahead of Cabinet consideration of adoption on 24 March 2026. The report is structured around three key questions: • Where have we been? • Where are we now? • Where are we going? It also explains the evidence base and rationale for the proposed long-term ambition to achieve at least 20% canopy cover across Cambridge by 2050, including why this level is considered ambitious yet appropriate for the city. The report summarises consultation undertaken to date, highlights how feedback has informed changes to the Strategy, and sets out the continuity and evolution from the 2016 Tree Strategy to the proposed Urban Forest Strategy. Feedback from the Scrutiny Committee will be reported to Cabinet and used to inform the final version of the Strategy (v5) prior to adoption.
3.	Alternative options considered
3.1	Option 1: Retain the Citywide Tree Strategy 2016-2026 This option is not recommended. The 2016 Tree Strategy is time-expired and does not reflect current evidence, statutory duties, climate and biodiversity priorities, or the need for a whole-city approach to managing and expanding canopy cover. Option 2: Update and adopt the Urban Forest Strategy (preferred option) This option provides a clear, evidence-led framework to guide protection, management and expansion of Cambridge's urban forest over the next decade, aligning tree policy with climate adaptation, biodiversity recovery, health and equity objectives. Option 3: Delay adoption of the Urban Forest Strategy

	This option is not recommended. Delay would create a policy gap, weaken coordination across Council services, reduce clarity and defensibility in planning and subsidence-related decisions, and risk loss of momentum following consultation.
4.	Background and key issues
4.1	Strategy history and rationale This section summarises the strategic journey of Cambridge's urban forest and the rationale for updating the 2016 Tree Strategy to a broader Urban Forest Strategy (UFS). It draws on the evidence set out in Topic Papers 8 (Achievements), 10 (Baseline and Change) and 12 (Growing the Canopy), included at Appendix 8. Where have we been? Over the last decade, Cambridge City Council has established a strong foundation in urban forestry through delivery of the 2016 Tree Strategy, including proactive management of over 30,000 Council-managed trees through systematic inspection regimes, delivery of significant planting and canopy expansion programmes across streets, parks and neighbourhoods, securing significant external funding to support urban forestry delivery, embedding trees within the Council's Climate Change Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, and Air Quality Strategy, developing a robust evidence base on canopy cover and ecosystem services, and building public and community engagement through initiatives such as the Cambridge Canopy Project¹, Trees for Streets², Free Trees for Babies³ and other planting programmes. These achievements demonstrate that Cambridge has made tangible progress in managing and expanding its tree stock, while also highlighting the limitations of a strategy focused primarily on Council-managed land and the need for a whole-city approach to deliver long-term canopy outcomes. Where are we now? The current evidence base shows that canopy cover increased modestly from 17.1% in 2008 to 17.6% in 2018, that canopy cover is unevenly distributed across the city with lower canopy in some eastern wards, that approximately three quarters of existing

¹ [Nature Smart Cities across the 2 Seas programme - Cambridge City Council](#)

² [Sponsoring new trees - Cambridge City Council](#)

³ [Trees for Babies scheme - Cambridge City Council](#)

	canopy is located on private or institutional land rather than Council-managed land, that historic species composition presents resilience risks, and that there are relatively few large trees within the urban forest, reinforcing the importance of protecting existing mature canopy and enabling current trees to grow to full size. This baseline demonstrates that, while progress has been made, overall canopy remains below long-term ambitions and is unevenly distributed, thereby justifying a more strategic, citywide approach that focuses on both protection and growth. Where are we going? The UFS sets out a long-term direction of travel to grow and sustain Cambridge's tree canopy to 2050 and beyond, recognising that canopy cover, rather than planting numbers alone, is the most meaningful indicator of urban forest outcomes and associated climate, biodiversity and health benefits. The evidence indicates that protecting large and mature trees and enabling existing trees to increase their canopy delivers faster and more reliable canopy gains than planting alone, that mobilising private and institutional land is essential to achieving citywide outcomes given the distribution of existing canopy. This direction of travel is intended to embed trees and canopy into planning as routine city infrastructure, rather than as an add-on. Justification for the 20% canopy cover target The proposed long-term ambition of achieving at least 20% canopy cover by 2050 is evidence-led and grounded in Cambridge's baseline canopy data and growth modelling, is ambitious in the context of the city's current canopy levels and urban form, is deliverable over appropriate timescales given the long growth periods required for trees to deliver meaningful canopy, focuses on canopy outcomes and associated ecosystem services rather than simply on planting numbers, is paired with a commitment to prioritise lower-canopy and more heat-vulnerable neighbourhoods in order to address environmental inequality, and is framed as a minimum ambition rather than a ceiling, with scope to exceed this level where opportunities arise through development, partnership working and investment.
4.2	Continuity of purpose: 2016 Tree Strategy ⁴ and UFS

⁴ [Tree strategy - Cambridge City Council](#)

	The UFS represents an evolution of the 2016 Tree Strategy rather than a departure from its core purpose. It retains a focus on tree protection, risk-based management, duty of care, replacement planting, public engagement and evidence-led decision-making, while extending the scope to a whole-city approach that recognises the role of private and institutional land, introduces a citywide canopy ambition, strengthens the framing of trees as essential infrastructure, and places greater emphasis on cross-service and partnership delivery.
5.	Corporate plan
5.1	The UFS supports delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities by responding to the climate and biodiversity emergencies, tackling inequality and improving health and wellbeing, supporting sustainable neighbourhoods, and modernising the Council through evidence-led, cross-service working. Cambridge's urban forest is a major city asset delivering climate adaptation, cooling, air quality, biodiversity and wellbeing benefits, and the Strategy strengthens how this asset is protected, expanded and embedded across planning, housing, public realm and community services. The UFS aligns with and complements the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy, providing an integrated framework for nature-based solutions across the city.
6.	Consultation, engagement and communication
6.1	Consultation was undertaken in two phases: internal consultation (November-December 2025) to test deliverability and cross-service alignment, followed by public consultation (January-February 2026) delivered alongside the Biodiversity Strategy mid-period review. Internal consultation demonstrated strong support for the overall direction and deliverability of the UFS, with feedback focused primarily on clarity, structure and accessibility. Comments were used to refine the UFS and Topic Papers, with no material barriers identified. Leadership Team feedback requested a shorter and more accessible main document, stronger alignment with related strategies, reduced technical language, clearer explanation of the canopy ambition and greater use of visuals. These changes have been

	incorporated into v4.2. Public consultation responses showed strong support for the urban forest concept, retention of mature trees, increased canopy ambition, equitable distribution of benefits, climate-resilient species selection and community involvement. Feedback has been used to improve clarity, reduce misinterpretation and strengthen narrative coherence. A detailed analysis of the consultations can be found in Appendices 2,3,4, & 5.
6.2	Internal consultation summary (Appendix 2 - full report) Internal consultation on the draft UFS showed strong support across services for the overall direction, aims and delivery approach, with respondents broadly confident the strategy is achievable. Feedback focused on improving clarity, navigation, terminology and signposting to evidence, rather than raising concerns about deliverability, resourcing, governance or legal risk. The comments have been used to refine the document and Topic Papers, address points of misunderstanding, and strengthen links to evidence and policy, with no material issues identified that would prevent progression to public consultation.
6.3	Leadership Team feedback summary (Appendix - 3 detailed timeline) The Leadership Team asked for the UFS to be shorter and more accessible, better aligned in structure and tone with the Climate Change and Biodiversity strategies, clearer in presenting a unified 'One Council' position, less reliant on technical jargon, and supported by stronger use of visuals and headline data, with a clearer explanation of the 20% canopy ambition and its timescales. In response, the UFS has been restructured and shortened, with detailed actions and KPIs moved to appendices and Topic Papers, the main document aligned more closely with the Climate Change and Biodiversity strategies, the corporate 'One Council' framing strengthened, technical language reduced, visuals and signposting to evidence improved, and the rationale, baseline and timescales for the canopy target clarified, with only minor presentational refinements remaining following Leadership Team's subsequent review. These refinements will be undertaken in conjunction with the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategies subject

	to Cabinet approval in March.
6.4	Subsidence Topic paper feedback (Appendix - 5 detailed timeline) The Subsidence Topic Paper was refined following independent legal and technical review to improve clarity, proportionality and legal defensibility, without changing the overall policy direction. Changes included clearer distinction between mitigation and legal claims, removal of unworkable cost-splitting between trees, climate and foundations, correction of how shallow foundations are treated, explicit inclusion of consultation duties at mitigation stage, and stronger requirements for sequenced technical evidence that considers climate change and heave risk, while retaining the principle that tree removal is a last resort and evidential standards rise with amenity value.
6.5	GoVocal consultation and email responses summary (Appendix 4) Go Vocal responses indicate that the UFS has been well received, with the majority of feedback in support of the urban forest concept and the strategy vision, aims and delivery approaches. Comments on canopy equity indicate general support for focussing increasing canopy cover in less well represented areas. The majority of respondents would like increased investment in new tree establishment and there was also strong support for community involvement in this area. The majority of comments support a more ambitious target for canopy cover increase than is proposed and support prioritising the planting of climate resilient species, actively diversifying species mixes and integrating canopy cover with habitat connectivity. Feedback supports the retention and protection of mature trees, unless there is significant justification for removal. While some respondents requested easier access to resources, clearer communication, and practical help, many respondents focused on improving community-led planting, care, and monitoring; education and engagement through schools and families; accessible volunteering; and support for biodiversity in private gardens, supporting the urban forestry approach. Suggestions and recommendations have been made through Go Vocal but predominantly through emailed feedback. These suggestions were aimed at strengthening policy, embedding UFS policy in Draft Local Plan and addressing perceived gaps. In addition, we have received comments that indicate a misunderstanding of the text or how the strategy works. There is a

	common request to increase the number of policies or add operational and/or technical commitments to existing policies. However, the UFS has been designed to be achievable, workable and to minimise the core document length, to improve accessibility, providing the operational and technical information, research, guidance and background in a series of Topic Papers. Suggested alterations/additions that improve the strategy narrative have been actuated. Where comments indicate a misunderstanding of the text, the strategy wording has been edited to reduce the potential for misinterpretation.
7.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
7.1	Delivery Opportunities, Actions, Key Performance Indicators KPIs and Policies Subject to Cabinet approval, the UFS will provide a clear, evidence-led framework for protecting, managing and expanding Cambridge's urban forest over the next decade. It will improve alignment across Council services, strengthen accountability through measurable KPIs, and support more equitable access to the benefits of tree canopy. Delivery is structured around four approaches: Manage More, Protect More, Plant More and Engage More. These are supported by a delivery framework, action plan and monitoring arrangements set out in the UFS and summarised at Appendix 10. The UFS is expected to increase participation and shared stewardship by promoting the urban forest as shared city infrastructure, improve transparency through monitoring and reporting, and target interventions to areas of greatest need in order to support more equitable access to the benefits of canopy cover such as cooling, air quality and wellbeing. These anticipated outcomes are set out in the UFS's Vision, Principles and Aims, and are operationalised through the four Delivery Approaches (Manage More, Protect More, Plant More, Engage More). The proposed delivery framework (see Appendix 10 for a summary) for implementing the UFS in practice is set out in the Delivery section of the UFS and the accompanying Topic Papers. The proposed actions for delivery are set out in the Action plan in the appendix to the UFS, which identifies priority actions, lead services and indicative

	timescales. The proposed monitoring and KPI framework is set out in the Monitoring, Evaluation and KPIs section, also in the appendices to the UFS, which describes how progress will be tracked over time and reported. Together, these elements provide the basis on which Cabinet will be asked to consider the UFS, delivery opportunities, actions, KPIs and associated policies as a single, coherent package.
8.	Implications
8.1	Relevant risks
	<i>Risks if the decision is made (approve the Urban Forest Strategy):</i> Approving the UFS carries a low level of strategic risk, primarily relating to deliverability and expectations rather than policy intent, as progress towards long-term canopy and biodiversity outcomes will depend on sustained funding, cross-Council coordination, engagement on private land, and external factors such as climate impacts, development pressures and tree disease. There is a risk that targets are perceived as guaranteed outcomes rather than long-term ambitions, that delivery capacity varies year to year due to funding constraints and local government reorganisation, and that some individual decisions (for example on biosecurity, subsidence or development-related tree loss) may attract challenge; however, these risks are mitigated through realistic long-term targets, a proportionate, evidence-led approach, alignment with existing statutory duties and corporate strategies, and monitoring and reporting to enable adaptive management. <i>Risks if the decision is not made:</i> Not approving the UFS carries a higher strategic risk, including loss of policy direction for managing and growing the city's tree canopy, weaker alignment with the Climate Change and Biodiversity strategies, reduced ability to influence development and partner activity, and increased exposure to ad hoc or inconsistent decision-making in high-risk areas such as biosecurity, subsidence, development pressure, tree protection and tree asset management. This would weaken the Council's ability to secure external funding, undermine transparency and defensibility of tree-related decisions, and increase the likelihood of canopy loss and inequitable

	outcomes, particularly in low-canopy and high-heat vulnerability areas, financial, environmental and reputational risk.
	Financial Implications
8.2	There are no direct financial implications arising from this decision, as approval is sought to adopt the UFS rather than to commit new funding. The UFS has been developed so that delivery can be achieved within existing budgets, with aspirational elements clearly identified to support future internal funding bids or external grant applications should opportunities arise. A proposed 0.5 FTE post to support engagement delivery, included in the recent BSR has been approved by Full Council, will help accelerate elements of UFS delivery. This report has not been checked with Financial Services; however, Finance was consulted on earlier drafts of the UFS (v2 and v3) and raised no objections. Any future funding proposals arising from delivery of the UFS would be subject to the Council's normal budget approval and governance processes.
	Legal Implications
8.3	There are no direct legal implications arising from this decision, as the Council already has statutory duties to manage and protect trees, and to consult on certain decisions, under legislation including the Town and Country Planning Act. The UFS provides a clear, consistent framework to support lawful and defensible decision-making. This report has not yet been checked with Legal Services; however, Legal Services were consulted on earlier drafts of the UFS (v2 and v3) and raised no objections. In addition, Topic Paper 4 (Subsidence and Structural Damage) has been independently reviewed and refined following specialist legal scrutiny by a barrister with expertise in tree law and subsidence, strengthening the legal robustness of the Council's approach should decisions be challenged.
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
8.4	An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared for v2 of the UFS and attached as an appendix to this report (Appendix 1). The EqIA prepared for v2 has been reviewed for ongoing relevance and remains

	applicable to v4.2, as the strategic aims and equity principles have not changed. The UFS explicitly addresses issues of equitable access to tree canopy cover across the city. Analysis has highlighted inequalities in canopy distribution that correlate with social and economic deprivation. The UFS responds to this evidence by embedding equity considerations into future planting and management priorities.
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.5	Trees and woodlands are a vital part of climate mitigation and adaptation. The UFS sets out a proactive approach to maintaining and expanding canopy cover, contributing to: • Carbon storage and sequestration, supporting the Council's net zero targets. • Urban cooling and shade, reducing the impacts of extreme heat. • Stormwater management, helping reduce local flood risk. • Biodiversity enhancement and habitat connectivity. The UFS complements and aligns with the Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategies. A climate change rating has been completed for v2 of the UFS and it attached at Appendix 9. The Climate Change Rating completed for v2 remains applicable to v4.2, as the Strategy's direction and climate outcomes are unchanged.
	Procurement Implications
8.6	There are no direct procurement implications arising from this decision. Any future procurement for planting, maintenance, projects or surveys arising from delivery of the UFS will follow existing Council frameworks and procurement processes.
	Community Safety Implications
8.7	There are no direct community safety implications arising from this decision. The Urban Forest Strategy supports public safety in relation to the Council's tree asset through continued proactive inspection, risk-based management and maintenance, and provides

	a consistent framework to guide tree-related decision-making across multiple Council services.
8.8	Checklist - Impact of the decision: <u>Financial:</u> Future delivery of the UFS may require external funding, building on the Council's track record of securing over £1 million since 2019. The 0.5 FTE post to support engagement delivery is included in the recent BSR and approved by Full Council will help strengthen delivery capacity and accelerate engagement elements of the UFS. Actions without identified funding are included in the UFS as aspirational and will only be taken forward if resources become available. <u>Legal:</u> No new legal duties are created. The UFS supports compliance with existing duties such as safety, tree preservation and planning requirements. <u>Corporate Priorities:</u> The UFS contributes to all four Corporate Plan priorities: responding to the climate and biodiversity emergencies, tackling poverty and inequality, supporting sustainable housing and neighbourhoods, and modernising council services. <u>Climate Change, Biodiversity & Sustainability:</u> The UFS has a positive impact. It will help increase canopy cover, capture carbon, provide shade and cooling, deliver biodiversity net gain, and reduce stormwater flooding. <u>Crime and Disorder / Community Safety:</u> The UFS indirectly supports safety through proactive tree inspection and maintenance. <u>Discrimination and Equality:</u> The UFS explicitly addresses equity and will identify areas with low canopy cover and higher social need, ensuring fairer distribution of the benefits of trees. <u>Human Resources:</u> The UFS does not create new posts, though it reinforces the Urban Forest Manager role and may guide future staff and team development. <u>ICT:</u> Existing systems such as GIS and online mapping will support delivery and

	monitoring. <u>Property</u>: Trees on council land are an asset class but there are no new property implications. <u>Procurement</u>: Future procurement for services, planting or maintenance will follow standard council processes or our Framework Agreement⁵. <u>Customer Services</u>: The UFS will provide a clearer framework for responding to public enquiries, complaints and FOIs. <u>Communications, Consultation & Engagement</u>: A two-stage consultation process has been undertaken, comprising internal consultation followed by public consultation alongside the Biodiversity Strategy review. Both stages indicated overall support for the direction and aims of the UFS, with feedback used to refine clarity and presentation. <u>Council's values and Target Operating Model</u>: The UFS supports cross-service working, measurable performance through KPIs, fairness through tree equity, sustainability through canopy expansion, protection and resilience, and improved customer focus.
9.	Background documents Documents used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, are listed in the appendices.
10.	Appendices Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Urban Forest Strategy (v2) Appendix 2 Internal Consultation Summary Report (Nov-Dec 2025) Appendix 3 Leadership Team Feedback: Timeline and Summary of Changes Appendix 4 Public Consultation (Go Vocal) and email responses - Summary Report Appendix 5 Subsidence Topic Paper: External Review Timeline and Summary of Changes

⁵ [Our tree-work partners - Cambridge City Council](#) (last accessed 26/08/25)

	Appendix 6 UFS Version control details Appendix 7 UFS v4.2 Appendix 8 Topic Papers 1-12 v4.2 Appendix 9 Climate Change Rating Tool for UFS (v2) Appendix 10 Summary of UFS Delivery Framework
11.	To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Matthew Magrath, Urban Forest Manager, matthew.magrath@cambridge.gov.uk , 01223458576

Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

This tool helps the Council ensure that we fulfil legal obligations of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Guidance on how to complete this tool can be found on the Cambridge City Council intranet. For specific questions on the tool please contact the Community Equity Team at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk.

Also, once you have drafted the EqIA please send this to equalities@cambridge.gov.uk for checking.

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service

Urban Forest Strategy 2026–2036 v1 - draft

2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)

To be added to the Council's website once final approval has been given March 2026

3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

The Strategy sets out Cambridge City Council's long-term approach to protecting, expanding and managing the City's tree canopy. Its aim is to secure the health, resilience and equitable distribution of the urban forest so that all communities benefit from cleaner air, reduced heat stress, enhanced biodiversity, climate resilience and improved wellbeing. It provides a clear framework of principles, aims, policies and actions, ensuring that trees are embedded in planning, infrastructure, climate and health decision-making. It is an extension, revision and continuation of the Citywide Tree Strategy that expires in 2026

UFS vision

To protect, expand and manage Cambridge's tree canopy, guided by principles of equity, need and environmental value, ensuring that the benefits of urban trees are accessible

across all communities and that the canopy we leave for future generations is healthier and more resilient than what we have inherited.

UFS principles

Five principles serve as the foundation of the Strategy, guiding the approaches taken to a deliver healthier, fairer and more resilient urban forest.

1. Awareness and Action:

A clear-eyed recognition of the challenges we face and a bold plan to address them. Understanding the problems of the past and those we still face, the resulting impact on ecosystem services and taking clear, innovative steps to redress the balance between the built and natural environments.

2. Climate Resilience:

Leveraging urban trees to cool neighbourhoods, capture carbon and reduce flood risk. Protecting and enhancing canopy cover to minimise the occurrence and impact of extreme weather events to minimise damage to the environment, well-being and the economy.

3. Intergenerational Equity:

Protecting and planting today with tomorrow in mind, building a green legacy for the future. Recognising the importance of trees, the time it takes for them to grow and the need for us to act now to benefits our future generations.

4. Public Engagement:

Encouraging community participation, education and shared stewardship of our urban forest. Educating the wider community on the benefits of trees but also how and where they could make their own contribution so taking responsibility in self-protecting the urban forest at a neighbourhood level.

5. Environmental Justice:

Ensuring that every resident, especially those in the most heat vulnerable areas, has access to shade, clean air and nature. With an uneven distribution of trees throughout Cambridge the proactive preservation of existing trees and new planting needs to be prioritised in areas with lower canopy cover.

UFS Aims

1. Increase canopy cover

To protect where appropriate and expand tree canopy across Cambridge, particularly in areas of low provision, enhancing climate resilience, reducing urban heat and contributing to long-term environmental improvement.

In line with the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, the Strategy sets an aspirational target of achieving at least 20% by 2050 canopy cover across Cambridge, to be pursued through protection, public planting, private engagement and integrated policy.

Supporting Climate Resilience, Intergenerational Equity and Environmental Justice principles.

2. Improve the condition and longevity of existing trees

To proactively protect, manage and care for trees throughout their lives, recognising the long-term benefits of a healthy, mature tree population.

Supporting Awareness and Action, Intergenerational Equity principles.

3. Ensure equitable access to the benefits of the urban forest

To address disparities in canopy cover and environmental conditions by focusing efforts on communities that are underserved or most vulnerable to climate-related impacts.

Supporting Environmental Justice, Public Engagement principles.

4. Embed trees and canopy into policy and decision-making

To ensure trees are considered at all levels of planning and design, from infrastructure and development to climate and public health policy.

Supporting Awareness and Action, Climate Resilience principles

5. Support biodiversity and habitat connectivity

To increase species diversity and strengthen ecological networks, recognising trees' roles in supporting wider urban biodiversity.

Supporting Climate Resilience, Intergenerational Equity principles.

6. Promote shared stewardship and community participation

To empower individuals, organisations and communities to take an active role in the care and expansion of the urban forest.

Supporting Public Engagement, Intergenerational Equity principles

7. Build and maintain a strong evidence base

To use high-quality data and research to inform decisions, track progress and respond to emerging threats such as climate change and tree disease.

Supporting Awareness and Action principle

Strengthen the capacity and resourcing needed to deliver the Strategy

8. Build internal capacity, develop strategic partnerships and secure funding to deliver the Strategy

Build internal capacity, develop strategic partnerships and secure funding to ensure the urban forest Strategy can be effectively implemented over the long term.

Supporting Awareness and Action, Intergenerational Equity, Public Engagement principles

4. Responsible Team and Group

Tree Team (City Services, Public Realm).

5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

(Please tick all that apply)

- ☒ Residents
- ☒ Visitors
- ☒ Staff

Please state any specific client group or groups (e.g. City Council tenants, tourists, people who work in the city but do not live here):

All people who live in, work in and visit the city, including:

City Council tenants (housing estates and communal areas)

Community groups involved in planting/ urban forestry projects

Developers and landowners affected by new policy guidance

Vulnerable residents in areas of low canopy cover and high climate risk (heat, air quality, flooding).

6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this?

- ☒ New
- ☐ Major change
- ☐ Minor change

7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

If 'Yes' please provide details below:

Subject to approval to go to consultation at Cabinet in September the strategy will proceed to internal consultation to ensure feasibility. Consultees will include:

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service

Cambridgeshire County Council (Highways)

Greater Cambridge Partnership

It will then proceed to public consultation in December/January.

8. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

- Canopy cover datasets (2008 & 2018) and ward-level analysis
- i-Tree Eco survey (2020–21) of ecosystem services
- Tree Equity mapping
- Tree audit data from Ezytreev (Council-managed trees)
- DiversiTree veteran willow survey (2025)
- Shadeways analysis (2023)
- Free Trees for Babies participation data
- National and local demographic data identifying vulnerable groups most at risk from climate impacts.
 - Tree Equity Score UK [Tree Equity Score UK](#)
 - Local studies analysing tree canopy with IMD
 - [tree-canopy-cover-in-cambridge-between-2008-and-2018.pdf](#)
 - Govt IMD [English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK](#)

9. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

(a) Age - Please also consider any safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

Children benefit from improved air quality, shaded walking routes to schools, and opportunities to engage in planting/education. Older residents gain health and wellbeing

benefits from access to shaded spaces, reduced heat stress, and opportunities for social connection.

[Health matters: air pollution - GOV.UK](#) - children and older people are especially likely to be impacted by poor air quality so improvements are especially beneficial to them

Safeguarding: Planting projects involving schools/community groups will include safeguarding measures in accordance with Council policy.

Negative impacts: We do not advise seating directly beneath trees. While trees provide important general cooling benefits and shade, seating can create maintenance issues such as clearing honeydew, bird droppings, and fruit fall, as well as potential safety risks. For this reason, we recommend that cooling and shading benefits are enjoyed more generally within treed spaces rather than focused on seating provision beneath individual trees

(b) Disability

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

Accessible green spaces with shade and improved air quality benefit people with physical and mental health conditions. Increasing urban tree canopy helps prevent heat-related illnesses, respiratory and heart diseases, obesity, and mental health disorders by cooling cities, cleaning air, and reducing stress. Planting programmes consider accessible design (e.g. avoiding obstructions to pavements/paths).

Creating shaded places help foster inclusive, age-friendly spaces where people can pause and recover. Shade not only protects humans from heat it also keeps pavement cooler for assistance dogs, making urban areas more accessible and comfortable for everyone.

Air quality and physical health

Trees and vegetation help capture and hold onto airborne particles, which improves local air quality and delivers measurable health benefits for nearby communities.

[Forest Research – Improving Physical Health](#)

Mental wellbeing and stress reduction

Access to woods and trees supports health and wellbeing by reducing stress, lifting mood, and strengthening the immune system.

[Woodland Trust – Health and Wellbeing](#)

Cooling, air quality, and overall wellbeing

Urban trees provide wide-ranging health benefits: they clean the air, lower asthma levels, reduce stress, and offer shade that helps protect people from heat and sun exposure.

[GOV.UK – The Case for Trees](#)

Potential barriers: None identified.

(c) Gender reassignment

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

(d) Marriage and civil partnership

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

No negative impacts identified specific to this group.

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

Improved air quality, shade and reduced heat stress benefit pregnant people and those with infants. The “Free Trees for Babies” scheme provides positive symbolic and environmental benefits for new families.

No negative impacts identified.

(f) Race – Note that the protected characteristic ‘race’ refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

No negative impacts identified.

(g) Religion or belief

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

Many faith groups and beliefs value nature for spiritual reasons.

No negative impacts identified.

(h) Sex

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

Urban forest benefits are universal. Women are more likely to experience caring responsibilities and can benefit from safer, shaded routes for walking with children.

'In 2022, females on average made 18% more walking trips than males' [Walking and cycling statistics, England: Demographic differences in walking and cycling - GOV.UK](#)

No negative impacts identified.

(i) Sexual orientation

Positive: Engagement activities are citywide and inclusive and do not discriminate

Community planting and stewardship events provide inclusive opportunities, fostering social cohesion across diverse groups.

No negative impacts identified.

(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular, please consider the impact of any changes on:

- **Low-income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty.**
- **People of any age with care experience – this refers to individuals who spent part of their childhood in the care system due to situations beyond their control, primarily arising from abuse and neglect within their families. The term “Care experience” is a description of a definition in law, it includes anyone that had the state as its corporate parent by virtue of a care order in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and amendments.**
- **Groups who have more than one protected characteristic that taken together create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Here you are being asked to consider intersectionality, and for more information see: https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_l59kt25q).**

Low-income groups: Targeting of planting and protection in deprived wards improves environmental quality, access to green space, and resilience to heat and flood risks. Free schemes (e.g. Free Trees for Babies) ensure benefits are not income dependent.

Care-experienced individuals: The Strategy does not directly disadvantage this group. Community engagement programmes will be inclusive, offering opportunities for involvement regardless of background.

Intersectionality: Strategy recognises that residents in lower-income, ethnically diverse communities may face compounded disadvantages; canopy prioritisation explicitly addresses this. The Strategy targets canopy cover interventions toward areas where multiple disadvantages overlap (low income, ethnically diverse, health vulnerabilities), and by embedding inclusivity into planting, engagement, and policy frameworks.

10. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqIA accordingly.)

1. Equality impacts will be monitored through delivery of actions and KPI reporting (tree planting by ward, canopy change, engagement participation). We will specifically report on Free Tree for Babies given away and canopy cover correlations with the Index of Multiple Deprivation every 10 years.
2. Consultation feedback will be analysed for equality impacts, with adjustments made where barriers are identified.
3. Engagement materials will be reviewed for accessibility (plain English, translations where needed, digital and non-digital formats).

4. Draft strategy to Sept Cabinet for approval to go to consultation
5. Internal consultation October to December 2025
6. Public consultation (with the Biodiversity mid-period review) December to January 2026
7. March 2026 Cabinet for final approval
8. EqlA will be reviewed post public consultation (2026) and before final approval in March 2026.

11. Do you have any additional comments?

The Strategy actively supports environmental justice, ensuring equitable access to shade, clean air and green infrastructure across Cambridge. It seeks to reduce health inequalities linked to climate impacts and promote inclusive participation in stewardship of the City's trees.

12. Sign off

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment: Matthew Magrath, Urban Forest Manager

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted: Cllr Smart – Executive Councillor; James Elms – Director; Alistair Wilson – Project sponsor; Kenny McGregor, Jake Camilleri, Natalie Lambert - delivery; Helen Crowther – Equity & Community Power Manager & Graham Lewis Community Equity Officer

Date of EqlA sign off: 10/09/25

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: March 2026

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: [Click here to enter text.](#)

All EqlAs need to be sent to the Community Equity Team at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk

Drafted by Matthew Magrath 04/09/25 v1

Modified following Equalities review and feedback 09/09/25 v1.1

Equalities review 09/09/25 v1.2; Equalities final review 09/09/25 v1.3

Sign off v2

URBAN FOREST STRATEGY

INTERNAL CONSULTATION REVIEW

SUMMARY

In September 2025, Cambridge City Council Cabinet approved the emerging 2026 to 2036 Urban Forest Strategy, to replace the expiring 2016 to 2026 Tree Strategy, subject to internal and external consultation.

The internal consultation, which commenced on 27 October 2025 and ran until 9 December 2025 is now closed and the comments received analysed.

Responses indicate that the Urban Forest Strategy, its vision, principles, aims, policies, actions and Topic Papers are generally supported. Comments reveal that minor amendments will aid clarity, document navigation and comprehension but that there are no risks to deliverability, resourcing, finance and governance.

Authorisation is therefore requested to amend the UFS and referenced topic papers, as detailed below, and proceed to public consultation in January alongside the Biodiversity Mid-Strategy review.

CONSULTATION

The current 2016 to 2026 Cambridge City Council Tree Strategy is approaching expiry. In September 2025 Cambridge City Council Cabinet approved the replacement 2026 to 2036 Urban Forest Strategy subject to internal and external consultation and final Cabinet review in March 2026. The internal consultation has been completed and its review is set out in this report.

The consultation was carried out in accordance with current council protocol. On 22 October 2025, introductions to the consultation were made via email to:

- Selected internal Services
- Members (City and County Ward Councillors)
- Partners (GCSP, County Highways, GCP)
- CCC Directors

Emails informed that, from Monday 27 October to Friday 21 November, Cambridge City Council would be running an internal consultation on the *Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036* and its supporting *Topic Papers*. Emails provided a link to the internal consultation, requested teams were alerted to the consultation, encouraged to review the documentation and respond via the MS Form (link included). A reminder email was sent out to all the groups listed above on the 24 November 2025.

The consultation was posted on the intranet on 27 October with a news article requesting staff to view and comment.

Four, online webinars were advertised and held over 10 and 11 November.

The consultation was re-posted on the intranet 12 November to introduce a recording of the 'General Overview' Webinar and ensure the consultation was again highlighted as a news item.

Early drafts of the UFS, Cabinet paper and consultation plan were shared with the BNE Team on 11 September 2025 and draft Topic Paper 4 and 9 shared 2 October 2025

Later drafts of the UFS and all topic papers were shared with the BNE Team on the 7 October 2025.

At the request of Development Services, the consultation was extended to 5pm on 28 November.

The consultation was further extended to 5pm on 5 December and again to 5pm on 9 December to accommodate a response from GCSP.

RESPONSES

Responses to the consultation are summarised below.

Written responses were received via:

- MS Forms: 12 webforms were completed and submitted.
- Email: 3 responses including a combined response from the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service, received 9 December 2025.

In addition to the above we have confirmation of the following intranet hits:

Web Page views: 98

News Article views: 216

Webinar Article views: 199

Webinar views: 48

REVIEW

Responses to the consultation have been received in a two formats, as indicated above. These have been collated and are detailed below along with comments where pertinent.

Overall, responses indicate that the Urban Forest Strategy has been well received with majority of consultees supporting the approach. Some very helpful suggestions and recommendations have been made to improve clarity, standardise terminology and correct typographical errors. In addition we have received a few comments that indicate a

misunderstanding of the text. These are addressed in detail in the tables and list at the end of this review.

The below list summarises comments made.

- Improve clarity of some statements
- Improve navigation through documents
- Additional links are required to referenced documents
- Additional references to source documents are required
- Preferred terminology, e.g. Development Management not Control
- Potential Resourcing implications
- Canopy cover assessment background data
- Add more research data

Most of the requested amendments have been actuated and are continuing to be processed. Where comments indicate a misunderstanding of the text, the strategy wording has been edited to reduce the potential for misinterpretation.

Links to external references have been added as requested but links to internal documents cannot be addressed until documents are finalised and the required pathways are fixed. All links and referenced will be checked prior to final publication.

The Tree Team at this stage would like to thank all individuals, teams and services who took the time to respond to the consultation; the constructive feedback received has been invaluable in refining the Urban Forest Strategy and improving its clarity, robustness and accessibility.

RISK

The Urban Forest Strategy has been prepared to aid the protection and expansion of Cambridge's tree canopy and to ensure that the benefits are accessible across all communities and future generations. To accomplish this, the strategy needs to be achievable, clear and accessible. It has been prepared to give direction, guidance and support and provide evidence to justify decision making.

The primary objective of the internal consultation was to test deliverability, resourcing implications, legal/governance risks and to ensure alignment with other policies. Responses to the consultation indicate that no risks to these criteria are associated with the current document, but that minor amendments will improve clarity and usability of both the strategy and the associated topic papers.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION APPROVAL

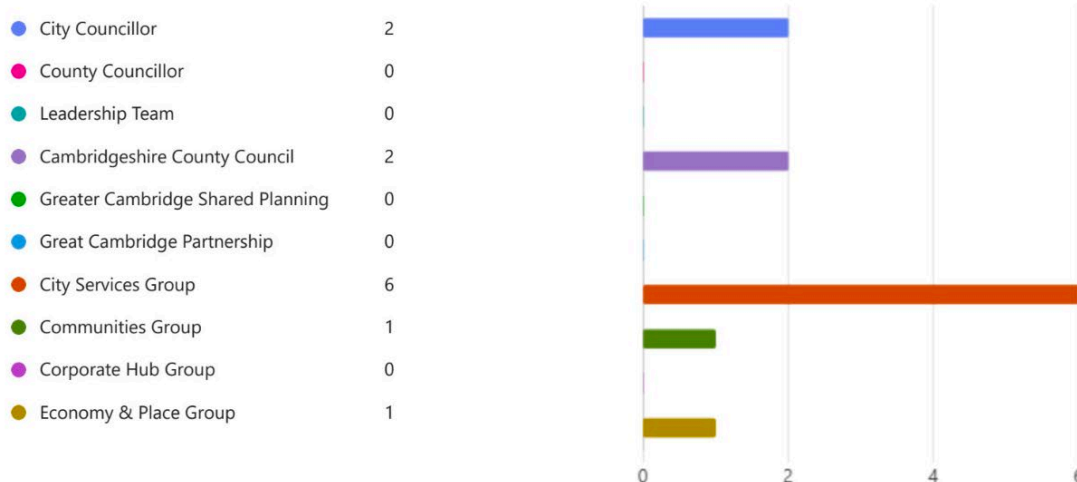
Authority to proceed to public consultation was delegated to the City Services Director by Cabinet in September 2025. The next step in the process is to commence public consultation. In this regard, we request authorisation to amend the UFS and referenced topic papers as

detailed below, and proceed to public consultation in January alongside the Biodiversity Mid-Strategy review.

WEB FORM RESPONSES

The MS Forms comprised of a series of multiple choice questions set round relevance to service, document structure and pathfinding, clarity of the strategy and its topic papers and the deliverability of the vision. The overall response was very positive.

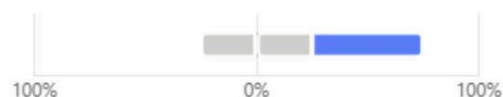
THE BELOW CHART SHOWS WHICH GROUPS RESPONDED.



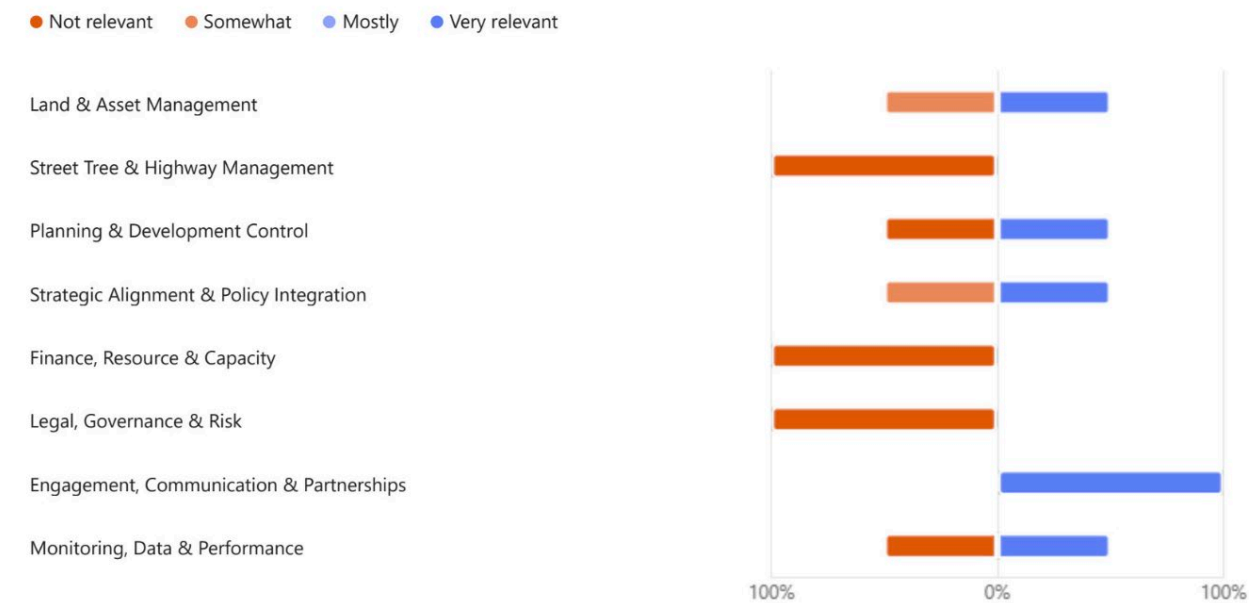
THE FOLLOWING CHARTS DETAIL THE PERTINENT MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS AND SUMMARISES THE RESPONSES.

8. How familiar were you with the old Tree Strategy 2016-2026 before this consultation?

Not at all Slightly Somewhat Mostly Very familiar



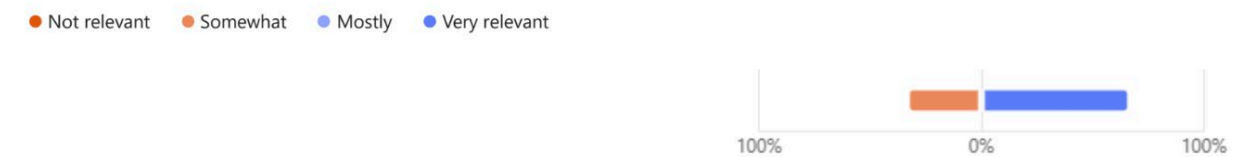
9. How relevant are the following themes you selected to your service?



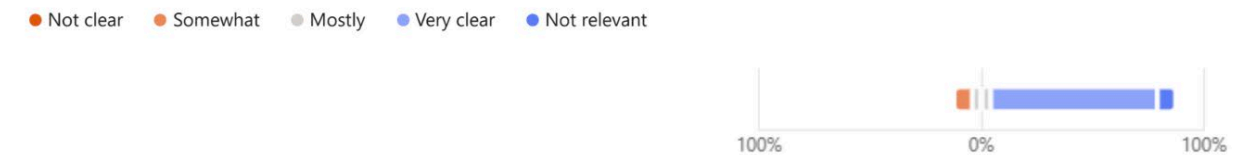
11. Did the consultation themes make it easier to locate and review the sections of the UFS and Topic Papers relevant to your work?



12. How relevant are the UFS and Topic Papers to **your area of work**?



13. How clear are the UFS and Topic Papers in helping you understand the relevance of the urban forest to **your area of work**?



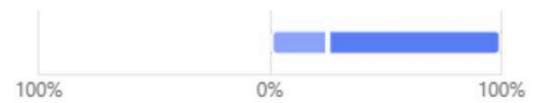
14. How confident are you that **your service** can contribute to delivery of the UFS's aims?

● Slightly ● Not confident ● Somewhat ● Mostly ● Very confident ● Not relevant



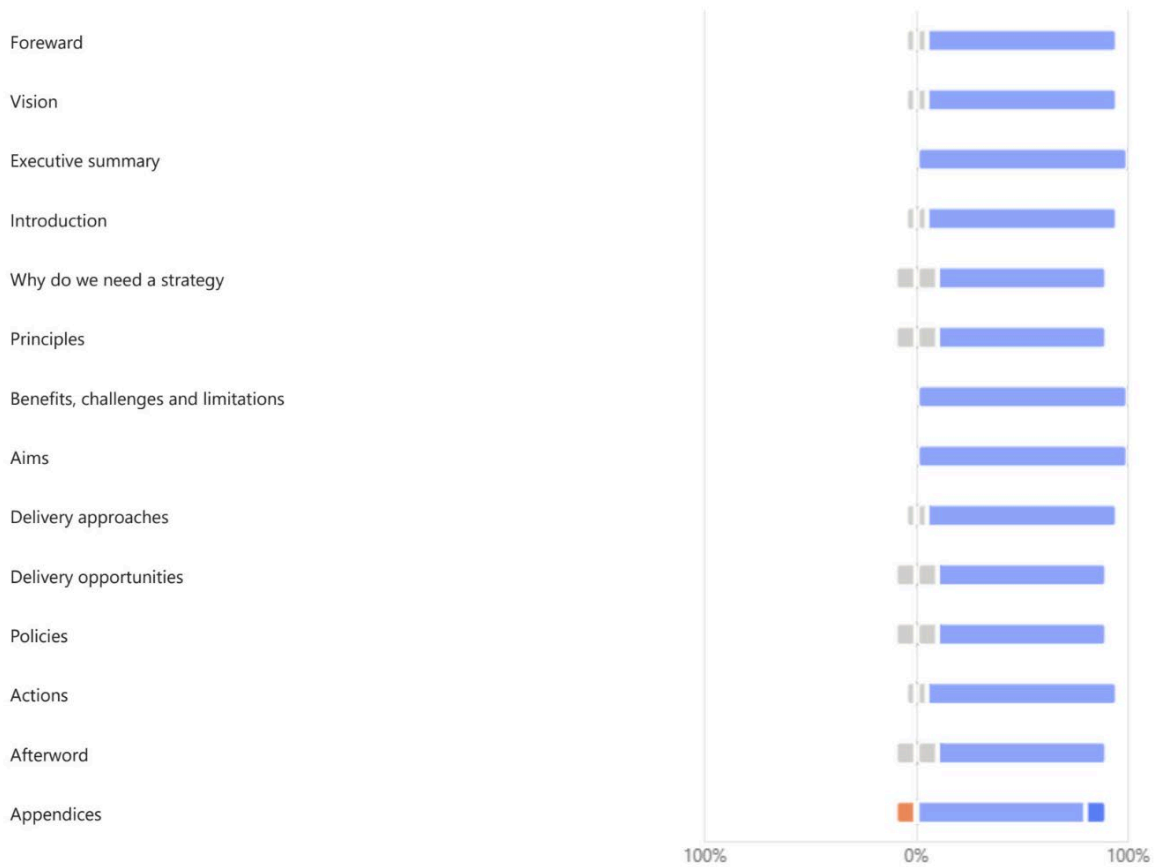
15. **Regardless of your area of work** how clear did you find the aims and purpose of the UFS and Topic Papers

● Not clear ● Somewhat ● Mostly ● Very clear



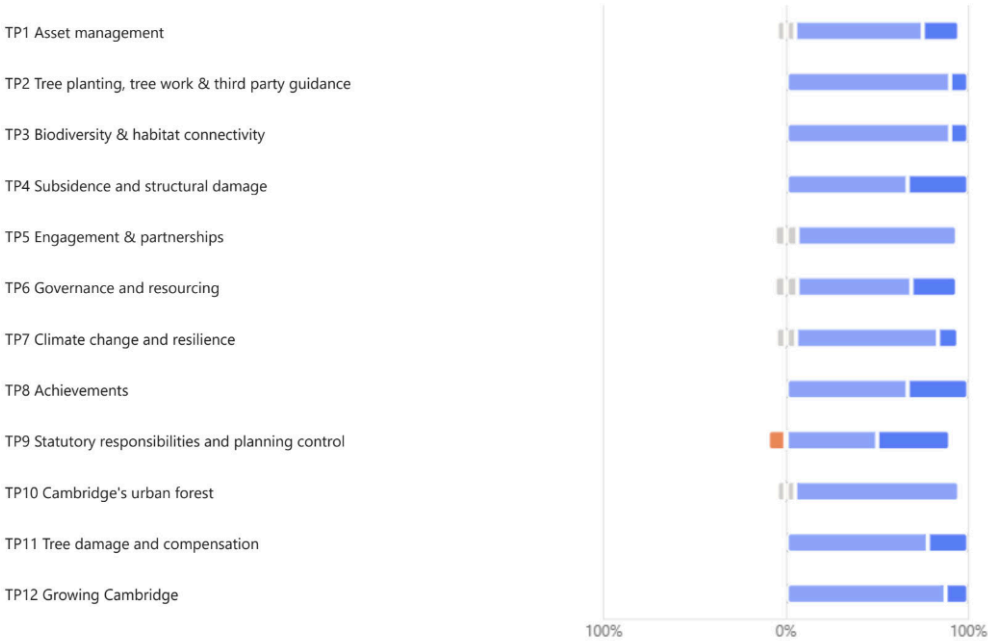
17. Use this section to highlight where the UFS are strong or need clarification. Ratings help us identify which parts of the UFS may need revision before public consultation.

● Not clear ● Somewhat ● Mostly ● Very clear ● Not relevant



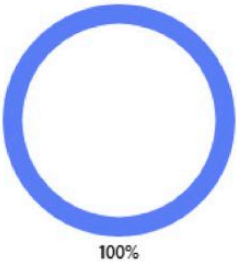
19. Use this section to highlight where Topic Papers strong or needs clarification. Ratings help us identify which Topic Papers may need revision before public consultation.

● Not clear ● Somewhat ● Mostly ● Very clear ● Not relevant



21. Do you support the overall direction and priorities of the UFS?

● Yes 12
● No 0
● Partially 0



In addition to the multiple choice questions above, four themed opportunities were provided for additional comment. The below tables cite the questions and comments and set out the team's response.

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THE CLARITY, RELEVANCE AND ACHIEVABILITY OF THE UFS AND SUPPORTING TOPIC PAPERS

COMMENT	RESPONSE
I found the UFS and topic papers clear yet powerfully written. They are both thorough yet succinct, this will make their interpretation and application far easier for those who it is relevant. Regarding achievability, I believe it is a very pragmatic body of text, stating what is achievable given our current level of resources and how we will use those resources to achieve all our aims.	This is a positive response to the UFS that does not require change
It might be helpful to have a form of flow diagram or similar at the top of relevant pages to show how each sections connects to each other. E.g. Vision - principles. Policies - Actions.	A flow-chart will be added to 'How the Strategy Work' section
This sets out a vision and guidance as well as an approach to my day to day working. It is an essential policy for the tree team. This is a natural progression from the last tree strategy. I think the new UFS is very achievable as it simply advances our stride to managing the Cities trees wholistically by working with the public and landowners as well as our own tree stock.	This is a positive response to the UFS that does not require change
Cambridgeshire County Council Public Health are pleased to see reference that trees are critical infrastructure help to improve public health in the foreword. In the Why section, public health are pleased to see the acknowledgement that a lack of trees and canopy cover leads to climate change issues, high rates of chronic illness and increased pressure on healthcare, and low rates of community interaction. We are also pleased to see that acknowledgement has been made to the inequality in the distribution of canopy cover. In TP7 public health were pleased to see the reference that inaction (e.g., not increasing canopy cover) could lead to threats to human health, food and water insecurity and poverty and displacement. In TP12 public health are pleased to see that the quality of the canopy cover is more important than quantity as larger trees have the capacity to cool and shelter an area more than many small trees. Maintaining and increasing good quality tree coverage is important for wellbeing and human health in terms of improving the visual amenity of an area, improving air quality, cooling and shading.	This is a positive response to the UFS that does not require change

I understand why, but the main UFS is very long and there is a lot of repetition of the aims and goals. There was not always a clear link between aims and delivery opportunities and some sections could maybe have been reorganised or numbered in line with the aims. No issues with relevance or achievability	In line with additional comments received on this topic, amendment have been made to improve the narrative and pathfinding.

DO YOU HAVE SPECIFIC COMMENTS, OMISSIONS, OR OVERLAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO FLAG REGARDING ANY UFS SECTIONS

COMMENT	RESPONSE
I felt we could add more statistics from the iTree Eco study earlier in the UFS (I believe there was only the £1 billion pound statistic in the afterword). Though I do acknowledge the stats are within the topic papers such as the runoff mitigation statistic within topic paper 7. I feel this way as I believe the UFS will be the most widely published and read, I feel these stats really advocate for trees and put a high value what they do and how they benefit the city. I could not find anywhere which states how often the UFS will be reviewed or how long it will stand for exactly.	It is agreed that additional data will aid justification of the approach especially with regard to Proximitree™ and breaking down the ADAS report further. The UFS will be reviewed at 10 years. While progress will be monitored annually through KPIs, some of the most important canopy metrics particularly changes in canopy cover—can only be reliably assessed over longer timeframes. Tree growth, establishment and loss occur gradually, and shorter assessment periods risk producing misleading results. A 10-year review therefore provides a robust and proportionate timeframe to assess meaningful change, supported by the most up-to-date canopy mapping and evidence, while annual monitoring ensures delivery remains on track in the interim
It is very important that the UFS is confirmed in time to be added to policy BG/TC of the proposed local plan so that it can be taken into consideration as part of this policy in the future. (eg para 5.42, p459 of Appendix A).	Agreed
It might be helpful to number the four themes under delivery opportunities to keep it clear that those are the four points you are	Agreed and this has been done

referring to, as there are many subtitles. Also, "These four themes above..." might make it more clear. On page 13, under Biodiversity and Habitat, the addition of the CNN could be beneficial "Even individual street trees contribute by linking fragmented habitats and creating stepping stones for wildlife across the urban landscape - contributing to the wider Cambridge Nature Network and following the Lawton Principles." On page 22 and 38, where the DiversiTree project is mentioned, I think it is beneficial to include that a large part of this project is also delivering substantial community engagement opportunities. Principle 3 - be bolder - replacement of trees where works and removals are needed - NOT with saplings or whips... myself and many others including residents are frustrated by the replacement of trees with saplings within new housing developments. We should be asking for trees that are stronger and 3-5 yrs old, so they survive . We should also be firmer in holding developers to account when saplings fail due to poor watering and care. Principle 4: What is the ask for additional resource to have a greater focus on this - whilst its ambitious plan, i can't see how you can deliver this on existing resource. The language used between policies and the principles is very close - and its difficult to see how they are distinct. Never seen an afterword before (I guess it is basically a conclusion?). Interesting info in it. If other UFS's have it, then fine. In appendices, the Spacing feels a bit dense. Not kind to the eyes.	Agreed and this has been done Community engagement add at pg 22. The UFS has limited power in the this regard, it is a non-statutory document, so it cannot create enforceable obligations or financial requirements for developers beyond the local plan which provides for conditions that give greater control. Public engagement is not new. We have numerous successful public engagement projects as set out in Topic Paper 5 The principles and linked through aims and approaches so, yes the language is similar. The Foreword and Afterword are intended to frame the UFS, setting the context and reflecting on the wider story of Cambridge's urban forest. They use a more accessible and narrative tone to complement the technical content that follows, helping the document speak to a wide audience. Together, they bookend the Strategy, providing an entry point and a point of reflection, while the core sections set out the evidence, policies and actions that guide delivery
Very well considered and put together strategy.	This is a positive response to the UFS that does not require change

Just to state that Cambridgeshire County Council are looking to map canopy cover and hedge cover (less relevant) for the entire county in early 2026 - so there would be potential to use maps and data from this exercise if needed. We will send round the request to tender so if there are any additional needs these may be included. Support may be possible for tree planting and public engagement on tree cover from the county council if needed from the new woodland creation project. Looking at a call for sites and identifying appropriate areas for planting with fits together with the UFS aims. Also investigating the feasibility of a community tree nursery which could also help support UFS aims.	A joint project between County, SCDC and CCC would be very worthwhile, so yes please keep us in the loop.

DO YOU HAVE SPECIFIC COMMENTS, OMISSIONS, OR OVERLAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO FLAG REGARDING ANY TOPIC PAPERS

COMMENT	RESPONSE
Very well written with great rationale behind each topic paper. One adjustment I would like to see is to change the title of the PDF so the topic is clearer before being downloaded/opened, for example instead of: urban-forest-strategy-topic-paper 1. It should instead be - urban-forest-strategy-topic-paper 1 Asset Management	This is positive response to the UFS that does not require change Agreed, this will help will pathfinding
I think that the UFS needs to recognise the importance of smaller /lower value trees but which are sited in denser urban areas and therefore may be the only greenery in between many houses, often without front gardens (eg Market or Petersfield wards). Whilst these may not be Cat A trees, they provide vital breaks in urban density and provide amenity to sometimes hundreds of small terraced houses in the area. I would also like to see a clear request for proper information for any request to undertake tree works in the Conservation area or on TPO'ed trees. Whilst I appreciate that it is not a statutory requirement, guidance asking for photos, indication of the problem - eg where the damage is, what caused it and whether a replacement is proposed (even if not required) and what this would be would be very helpful. It is evident that many applications, including those to fell, are put in by companies who do not always understand that residents/neighbours and the LPA need decent information to understand the situation and to assess it properly and that felling a tree in the urban streetscape has greater impacts that	Agreed, text has been added to highlight the importance of considering amenity in context The UFS has limited power in this regard, it is a non-statutory document, so it cannot create enforceable obligations.

falling one of many in a less urban environment. Providing more information would also help reduce neighbour objections if it is clear about reasoning and any replacement and therefore make decision making faster. I would also suggest that we add a link in from the GCSPS application forms for tree works, linking to the UFS policy about this. I would also like the UFS or City website to include an example of good practice for an application (eg with clear photos, site plan, indication of reasons and details of planned replacement).	Recommendations are set out in TP9 There is a link to the application form. The hyperlink pathways will need to be updated. This is supported by CCC but would need to be hosted by GCSP We will pass these comments on to GCSP for consideration
I'm not sure if all of the Topic papers are intended on being kept when consulting externally and adopting the UFS? There is a lot of information here - realistically, I'm not sure how much the 'average person' will read, but I can see this being helpful for individuals and groups/orgs who are already vested in this agenda. Might be worth thinking about a summary document for the average person with links to the details if they want to know more. There was a number of things in the achievements and current projects info that i wasn't aware of - so on reflection this feels as though there is more to do on internal comms and joint, cross departmental working - particularly in reference to community engagement	Yes The strategy has been separated into a core document supported by topic papers in an attempt to streamline the core document. The topic papers allow the reader to delve deeper into areas of greatest interest. Yes, good internal and external communication is essential to successful delivery.
My main comments relate to somehow feeling that topic 7 was a little generic in content and didn't really offer much extra value in terms of being able to quantify the actual local impacts and improvements in relation to the UFS and its delivery, should Cambridge be aiming for targets within this? Maybe this isn't the place to put it because then it defines the opportunity too greatly but just a thought on what this topic paper clarifies in relation to Cambridge specifically beyond just the existing position.	TP 7 is intended to provide context and justification, rather than to introduce additional targets or metrics. Its role is to explain, using Cambridge-specific evidence notably i-Tree Eco data, how the urban forest contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and why this underpins the UFS. Topic Paper 12 considers the future position in more detail

ANY OTHER COMMENTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE?

COMMENT	RESPONSE
There was a number of things in the achievements and current projects info that I wasn't aware of - so on reflection this feels as though there is more to do on internal comms and joint, cross departmental working - particularly in reference to community engagement	This is a positive response to the UFS that does not require change
Tackling the private sector engagement issue, a suggestion to introduce a council tax relief bracket (something minimal of a few percent) applying to properties where there are a minimum number of healthy, maintained, tall trees (having a height threshold prevents this from becoming a surge to plant and not care for the trees only to benefit from tax relief), aiming to incentivise the private sector into going greener. As a large portion of the properties in Cambridge are rentals, this would likely be well received by landlords as they will be able to advertise accordingly, having an edge in the market due to reduced council tax on tenants. With the owners having to fulfil a certain requirement to qualify for reducing an expense, the engagement is likely to skyrocket so as to not miss out, at the same time minimising the labour and expenses on the council's behalf.	While this is an interesting proposal, it is beyond the influence of UFS
In the latest 2025 transformation the replanting budgets for our estates has been cut in its entirety. We will therefore not be renewing any of the shrub beds which will impact biodiversity. Areas will be returned to grass. No biodiversity connecting corridors to link habitats with hedgerows and trees. Another significant impact is the new builds. The mature trees from the open spaces are removed and replaced with larger developments. A green roof doesn't support as much biodiversity as a mature tree so there is always a significant loss. Large numbers of the trees that get planted on estates never make it to maturity as the developers don't water them in the first year or they are very small and are vandalised. So again as the trees never reach maturity it is a continual erosion of the forest canopy in the city. Naturally we build on the estates that have the largest open spaces so we can squeeze as many properties in as possible. The two are naturally at odds with one another.	Strategic planting is essential to a healthy urban forest. Providing appropriate, protectable, space allows fewer large copy trees to be planted and retained through future development, ensuring that trees can mature to provide the their maximum benefits.

EMAIL RESPONSES

In addition to the MS Form responses, comments have been received via email. The comments, context and responses are set out in the tables and lists below.

UFS PAGE	RELEVANT TEXT	COMMENT	RESPONSE
6	The strategy has been developed alongside and with consideration of national and local planning policies and other key environmental strategies including...	No references or publication dates for any policy/docs. Suggest including so it is clear which policy/docs have informed strategy (noting they some referenced later in document but would be clearer if referenced as list/where first they are referred to).	Changed cited documents format to a list. References to be added
7	History of Urban Forestry- “ Throughout the document links are provided to maps, research papers, data sets and topic papers to allow the reader to delve deeper into areas of particular relevance or interest”	Topic papers are not just for relevance/interest but should/provide supporting evidence the policies. Consider re-wording this sentence and clearer signposting within policy to supporting TP.	Strategy edited to include this point. Signposting will be addressed with links when pathways to internal documents can be fixed.
Page 236	National Policy (NPPF) ‘The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts.’ National Planning Policy Framework, para. 161 ‘New development should...: a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change... b) help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.’ National Planning Policy Framework, para. 164	None. But to note new NPPF due out before Christmas 2025, so will need to cross reference to this when published.	Reference will be updated when 2025 NPPF published.
11	With an uneven distribution of trees throughout Cambridge the proactive preservation of existing trees and new planting needs to be prioritised in areas with lower canopy cover	In practice not possible i.e. where a site has significant ecological, historical, landscape or operational reasons to justify alternative to tree planting (see- Draft GC LP policy-if scheme demonstrates above reasons to justify a canopy requirement of less than 30% on site then policy allows for an alternative percentage of canopy provision to be agreed with the LPA.)	5 Principles found the UFS and guide the approach. The comment relates to Principle 5, which is aimed at environmental justice. The principle does not convey a commitment to plant irrespective of other planning considerations but to prioritise protection and new planting in low canopy areas and in line with the Draft Greater Cambridge LP policy.

13 (and 22)		Flood Risk and SuDS Opportunities- “ <i>We do not yet have a detailed flood risk and canopy overlap assessment.</i>” Q: Will CCC be undertaking this assessment? Flood risk assessments and tree canopy overlap assessments are important to understanding the impact of tree cover on flood risk management but perhaps need to be clearer as to how/ when assessment would be done and used for implementation. ‘Stormwater attenuation’ section (pg.13)- consider clearer link to topic paper flood risk/SUDs > perhaps link to National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) - GOV.UK	Link to Topic Paper 7 to be included in UFS when pathways are fixed. Link to National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) - GOV.UK added to TP7 A more detailed dataset linking tree canopy, flood risk and SuDS is aspirational and could be developed subject to resources, potentially with partner organisations. Over time, this would help target tree planting, retention and protection where it can most effectively support flood risk management.
17	Policy Gaps Not all tree related decisions are governed by clear policies. For example, there is currently no Citywide canopy cover target adopted in planning policy. While policy 71 of the local plan considers trees on development sites, there is currently no citywide policy regarding the management of protect trees.	make clearer in subheading/ paragraph so it is obvious that referencing planning policy. What does ‘no citywide policy regarding the management of protect trees’ mean? Is this referring to trees of amenity value>TPOs? Can the strategy reference the draft LP emerging preferred approach?- which is to apply a tree canopy cover target for a site, in order to support the delivery of the area-wide ambition of 20% tree canopy cover (ahead of the Proposed Submission stage, the Councils may also explore the implications of applying an alternative policy approach of requiring a canopy cover percentage increase)? 20% for Greater Cambridge seems reasonable figure but for Cambridge City a technical report ‘Valuing the Urban Forest of Cambridge’ (2020-2021) was produced (as part of the Interred Nature Smart Cities 2 Seas project) in order to help plan and manage the city’s urban forest. The report found	Done Protected trees are those with TPO, in conservation area or subject to planning condition. There is currently no policy governing how these are managed. Highlighting these limitations is aimed at reinforcing the need to allocate resources when available and to seek investment. Yes, UFS has been updated to reflect the draft GCLP ambition. Different canopy figures reflect different methods and purposes. The evidence base and rationale for using ProximiTree aerial mapping consistently to set and track targets, alongside i-Tree Eco to value ecosystem benefits, are set out in Topic Paper 12 How we measure canopy. Topic Paper 10 provides the baseline context.

		that Cambridge tree canopy covers about 20.1% of the city (13.3% trees and 6.8% shrubs). = Cambridge's latest mapping point is 20.1 % canopy (2021) by this evidence. What is reason for not referencing this document? and in this context, the proposed uplift target of 20% by 2050 for the Greater Cambridge area as a whole is considered to be appropriate but for Cambridge is less than 2021- perhaps strategy should look at narrative of this in terms of overall GC area(?) Note: the Strategy sets citywide canopy cover 20%> the Draft GCLP emerging preferred approach is to apply a tree canopy cover target for a site, in order to support the delivery of the area-wide ambition of 20% tree canopy cover (LP GI Strategy proposes Urban Tree Canopy Cover across the Greater Cambridge area increased to a target of 20% by 2050 from current baseline) = is in alignment with draft LP.	Internal improvement note (TP10) Topic Paper 10 should be updated to include a short qualification in the Canopy Cover section clarifying that i-Tree Eco canopy estimates are not used as the headline baseline for target-setting, due to methodological differences, but are used to quantify ecosystem services. The ambition is the same across both the UFS and draft GCLP so the documents are in alignment, it is not clear how the site by site % will be worked out in the GCLP. But the UFS is not that specific. The principle is plant more and protect more and the canopy will automatically increase as a result
19	Aim 4: Embed trees and canopy into policy and decision-making. To ensure trees are considered at all levels of planning and design, from infrastructure and development to climate and public health policy. Supporting Awareness and Action, Climate Resilience principles	What does this mean? 'Trees' are already embedded into policy and decision making (statutory responsibilities/duties) Decision making= DM. TP 9,pg.10(?)-"An applicant should ensure that tree constraints information is established at an early stage of proposed development to ensure trees of value inform design layouts"- need to discuss the process as not current approach.	Much of the policy covers systems that are already in place. This is the commitment to do so and continue doing so. This is advice to an applicant and is current best practice (BS5837 2012). It is aimed at ensuring trees of value are a design considerations and their assessment is not just a tick-box exercise. Tree Constraints information is generally circulated to the design team and not submitted to the LPA as part of any detailed application. It is however valuable

		‘Canopy’ – What? ‘preserve and enhance canopy cover? – somewhat duplicates/repeats Aim 1: Increase canopy cover?	information to aid the LPA in preparing pre-app advice. Canopy cover. Aim 4 is to aid Aim 1 by ensuring policy supports it.
22	Strategic decisions about where to protect or grow canopy	What are these strategic decisions? Will such decisions be informed by canopy cover assessments so ‘strategic approach’ =”evidence-led action, shared responsibility, whole-place thinking and equitable outcomes “ not specifically defined	(Page 25) Where to plant and protect trees. Datasets tell us where canopy is lacking allowing strategies to focus canopy cover delivery in those places. This statement comes under Delivery Opportunities and specifically the tools and data used to plan, prioritise and track work. Our canopy cover assessments allow us to track patterns and prioritise action where it is needed and where resources allow.
	Planning and Development Partnerships- We will work with the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service to ensure the Local Planning Authority’s statutory tree protection responsibilities are aligned with the vision, principles and aims of this strategy	GCSP is joint service for LPA (SCDC and CCC)= is this para needed? Suggest remove. The LPAs are working as the GCSP to ensure LPAs statutory tree protection responsibilities are carried out (TPOs, CA, public consultations, legal liability-compliance with legal restrictions)	CCC is the LPA and therefore ultimately responsible. GCSP provides the service in accordance with CCC statutory responsibilities. The statement is a commitment to work together in accordance with the holistic, urban forestry approach.
25	Planning and Development Partnerships- We will work with the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service to ensure the Local Planning Authority’s statutory tree protection responsibilities are aligned with the vision, principles and aims of this strategy	Is this para needed? GCSPS is the joint service for the Council - we are not a partner!	CCC is the LPA and therefore ultimately responsible. GCSP provides the service in accordance with CCC statutory responsibilities. The statement is a commitment to work together in accordance with the holistic, urban forestry approach but

			the word Partnership is not essential to the statement and can therefore be removed.
25	share data and develop accessible mapping tools	Can this approach be utilised to provide data for baseline tree canopy cover for South Cambs? (currently not available) >this would provide supporting evidence for draft LP policy overall canopy cover target.	The commitment to share data and develop accessible mapping tools relates to datasets and tools held by Cambridge City Council and therefore applies to the Cambridge City administrative area only. The approach could, however, be used as a model to develop similar mapping and reporting tools for South Cambridgeshire. To do so would require the procurement of appropriate underlying datasets for South Cambridgeshire (for example, aerial canopy mapping), which are not currently held by Cambridge City Council.
	Tree Protection We will continue to report annually on the number of trees protected by TPO and tree work applications assessed. Available from Tree data - Cambridge City Council We will seek opportunities to improve enforcement of replacement planting <u>duties</u>	Would like to discuss how we can improve enforcement of replacement planting. Additional resources are likely needed.	CCC is committed to aiding all services to deliver the strategy. This statement is aspirational and not a commitment to use existing resources but to look for opportunities to improve these essential functions.
28	POLICY M3 Trees, Damage and Subsidence: Tree-related damage mitigation requests and claims will be managed in line with nationally recognised guidance, ensuring decisions are based on robust evidence and a hierarchy of mitigation. Priority will be given to retaining trees wherever possible, with alternatives such as pruning, root barriers, or engineering solutions considered before removal. CCC will work with insurers, their engineers, arborists and residents to ensure fair outcomes that balance property, environmental, reputational and financial risks.	Legal will need to be consulted on liability/compensation	This a manage more policy related to the management of council assets that legal (internal and external) have been consulted on

29-30	Protect More: The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and The Town and Country Planning (Trees Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012 make provision for the protection of trees of value through the serving of Tree Preservation Orders, making local planning authority approval a prerequisite of any tree works. With the use of these regulatory powers The Council and partner services will seek to preserve and enhance trees of value and canopy cover, primarily on private land. With consideration of National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance and The Cambridge Local Plan, through development control, through the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) services, CCC will seek to ensure new development protects and enhances the urban forest.	Our main focus, remains with PA, not trees of value (too vague) Which partner services are being referred to? NB Throughout the UFS please replace all reference to ‘Development Control’ with Development management’ (development control is a very dated term that is not used by Councils these days)	Changed to trees with sufficient amenity value Changed to GCSP Deleted or changed to Development Management
29-30		“... trees of value and canopy cover, primarily on private land.” Q) Is this referencing preserving/enhancing canopy cover for large species trees- if so then it is one part of assessment of amenity value- so why distinct reference to this aspect? Suggestion: remove ‘primarily on private land’ and consider ‘on both council owned/public land and private property’ - the preservation /enhancement of whole urban forest is golden thread and TPOs applicable to both public/private land...	No. preserve trees of value and preserve canopy cover While urban forestry is the golden thread, the suggested alteration is open to interpretation and creates an unnecessary expectation regarding TPO protection for council trees. While there are circumstances where TPOs are necessary for council trees, (typically where common law rights would allow work not authorised by the council) local authorities are regarded as responsible tree managers so TPO are not required.

		Phrasing: (CCC is LPA and SCDC is LPA= the GCSP is the joint service for both councils). Look at this paragraph wording to reflect in practice application of policy: DM is part of GCSP not isolated from it. This needs re-wording.	The statement now reads “...to protect and enhance trees of sufficient amenity value and preserve canopy cover, where expedient. Removed specific reference to development control (management)
Page 242	POLICY P1: GCSP will make efficient use of regulatory powers to protect trees of value and secure replacement planting where appropriate. If council owned/managed trees are at risk from development, the CCC’s Tree Team will be consulted at the earliest opportunity. GCSP will consider a response to climate change and biodiversity crises as contributing factors when assessing amenity and the expedience of serving TPOs. New structural tree planting forming part of landscape schemes implemented with development proposals will be made the subject of Tree Preservation Orders.	We need to discuss how to ensure this happens will the planners know which trees are council owned/ managed?	Internal consultation with asset management tree officers is an historic function that was carried out within City Services. The Tree Team is happy to discuss the best system to maintain this consultation.
	POLICY P1: GCSP will make efficient use of regulatory powers to protect trees of value and secure replacement planting where appropriate. If council owned/managed trees are at risk from development, the CCC’s Tree Team will be consulted at the earliest opportunity. GCSP will consider a response to climate change and biodiversity crises as contributing factors when assessing amenity and the expedience of serving TPOs. New structural tree planting forming part of landscape schemes implemented with	AMENITY ASSESSMENT: The Urban Forest Strategy does include method for assessing amenity value (in TP9) but P1 highlights 2 factors in particular “ <i>will consider a response to climate change and biodiversity crises as contributing factors when assessing amenity</i>”> These are 2 factors of previous amenity criteria (which is carried fwd in the new strategy) but should strategy not cross refer to Topic Paper 9 method of assessment which sets out all the criteria to be considered?	Agreed. P1 has been updated to reflect. The GC draft LP- policy BG/TC “ <i>Trees, groups of trees and woodland will be assessed by the Councils in accordance with the amenity assessment (Policy P2) Cambridge City Councils tree strategy (2016-2026) or successor document.</i>”

	POLICY P2: The Council will resist the removal of or excessive works to trees without robust and evidenced justification. TPO applications submitted without sufficient evidence to justify work specified will not be validated. The removal of or significant works to healthy trees in conservation areas will be resisted without the submission of justification for work proposed	We will be guided by the advice provided in the new blue book.	Blue book was replaced by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in 2014. Policy P2 is in accordance with the PPG.
Page 243	POLICY P2: The Council will resist the removal of or excessive works to trees without robust and evidenced justification. TPO applications submitted without sufficient evidence to justify work specified will not be validated. The removal of or significant works to healthy trees in conservation areas will be resisted without the submission of justification for work proposed	Query- 'to trees' =trees of amenity value (TPOs)? CCC LP policy = "Development will not be permitted which involves felling, significant surgery (either now or in the foreseeable future) and potential root damage to trees of amenity or other value, unless there are demonstrable public benefits accruing from the proposal which clearly outweigh the current and future amenity value of the trees." OK= as LP policies take priority where they apply.	This policy relates predominantly to trees protected by TPO or conservation area location. A TPO application is separate from a planning application. The LP policy is only obliquely pertinent. But even so there is not conflict. Policy P4 is more pertinent to Development Management.
	POLICY P3: The Council will pursue enforcement action/prosecution where protected trees are damaged or destroyed without consent. Where private trees are removed without consent, penalties will be sought in accordance with current legislation.	This is a very categoric statement and does not reflect the Council's compliance policy which addresses breaches: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning compliance policy Need to discuss wording further.	Added reference to compliance policy under P3
	Policy P4: In accordance with section 197 of the Town and Country Act Planning , NPPF and Local Plan planning permission will include appropriate provision for tree preservation and planting. (Page 30)	Is this needed? Does this add anything additional to national/ local planning policy? > TCPA places a general duty on local planning authorities (LPA) to make adequate provision for the preservation and planting of trees in the granting of planning permission.	Much of the UFS is confirming our commitment to work in accordance with various Acts, Policies and best practice. P4 is confirming this commitment with regard to Development Management.

	POLICY P5 (Aspirational): CCC and GCSP will seek to review existing TPOs and how TPOs are used. Older and larger orders will be prioritised Area orders will be utilised to protect larger tree collections, and The Council will seek to update every 15 years.	This has implications for resource, and is not feasible within existing staffing levels.	This is an aspirational policy that confirms a commitment, when resources are available. The policy helps to justify seeking additional resources (internal or external) to make service improvement.
Page 244	Policy PL1 (Aspirational): CCC and GCSP will encourage and continue to seek new opportunities for tree planting in appropriate locations	Species diversity MUST be supported not aspirational. Cannot both 'ensure and encourage'> should ensure this (Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance supports this). Consider amendment to POLICY PL1 wording.	Agreed and has been amended. Emerging draft LP- Species mix for NEW tree planting. BG/TC point 4) : <i>'4. Where new trees are provided, planting must:</i> <i>a) be of species which are appropriate for the conditions of the site including consideration for climate change, and</i> <i>b) support species diversity and incorporation of long lived trees within the treescape design</i>
	POLICY PL2 (Aspirational): CCC will aim to ensure every new planting site is supported by a funded establishment period covering at least the first three years after planting. This will include watering, mulching and early formative pruning.	What is the evidence for a three-year establishment period of aftercare which is recommended as a minimum? Would need to be secured through planning conditions and/or obligations as appropriate, gap in current LP policy to make this implementable.	The minimum three-year establishment period reflects recognised arboricultural best practice and national funding requirements. Forestry Commission grant programmes, including the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and Local Authority Treescapes Fund, require funded aftercare during the establishment period, recognising that newly planted trees are most vulnerable in their early years. The Arboricultural Association advises that newly planted urban trees typically require around 50 litres of water per week during the summer months for at least the first

			three years after planting to ensure successful establishment, particularly as hotter and drier conditions become more common. Tree-Watering-Press-Release-2023-v2.docx. [Withdrawn] Urban Tree Challenge Fund (currently closed) - GOV.UK. [Withdrawn] Local Authority Treescapes Fund (currently closed) - GOV.UK It is currently secured through landscape conditions that require management to establishment. This can continue.
Page 245	POLICY PL4 (Aspirational): The partner services will explore opportunities to incorporate innovative planting techniques such as engineered tree pits, rain gardens and structural soils in new developments and highway schemes to support the establishment of trees in urban conditions.	Which partner services are being referred to?	Any service that has authority connected to tree planting or conditions relating to tree planting.
	POLICY PL4 (Aspirational): The partner services will explore opportunities to incorporate innovative planting techniques such as engineered tree pits, rain gardens and structural soils in new developments and highway schemes to support the establishment of trees in urban conditions.	How can GCSPs encourage the incorporation of innovative planting techniques? It is aspirational policy but not clear as to what opportunities support this. Can strategy be clearer as to what these may be?	Policy PL4 is aspirational and is intended to encourage innovation where opportunities arise. These may include, but are not limited to development management (through pre-application advice and planning conditions), City-funded environmental improvement schemes, externally funded projects, and major or minor highway infrastructure schemes. In relation to highways, CCC does not currently have an up-to-date Reverse Agency Agreement

		Also, does CCC have a Reverse Agency Agreement with County Highways for street tree management, maintenance and planting? (link to opportunities for highways schemes).	with Cambridgeshire County Council. The previous RAA expired in 2014, and street tree management has since operated through custom and practice, broadly aligned with the former agreement. Options for a new agreement are currently being explored.
33	Action 4, 1. <i>“Advocate for the inclusion of urban tree standards and canopy targets in local planning policy.”</i>	The GC draft LP standards are based on Natural England’s recommended national “Headline GI Standards” for Urban Tree Canopy Cover. GI emerging strategy, GI standards include Urban Tree Canopy Cover Quantity Standard and Urban Tree Canopy Cover Quality Standard <i>’ Urban Tree Canopy Cover across the Greater Cambridge area increased to a target of 20% by 2050 from current baseline. Development achieves a minimum future tree canopy cover of 30% of the site area through retention of existing trees and planting of new trees.” And “ Proposals for increasing and maintaining Urban Tree Canopy Cover reflect good practice tree planting and management GI guidance.”</i> <i>Already included so Action will be updated to reflect</i>	As this is already proposed in the draft GCLP, Action 4.1 has been updated to reflect.
33	Action 4, 3 <i>“ Monitor the implementation of tree-related planning conditions and enforce where necessary and make effective use of regulatory powers”</i>	KPIs do not reference how monitoring/enforcement of planning conditions will be achieved? Resourcing issues with: ➤ reviewing all of Cambridge’s TPOs, ➤ proactively monitoring landscaping conditions and, serving pre-emptive TPOs on Strategic Landscaping on new developments	Need to set up a system for monitoring compliance with replacement planting conditions, resources allowing.
34	2050s	Should be ‘2050’	Edited

General		<i>forthcoming Local Plan</i> = should be 'Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan'	Edited
General	ALL Documents - 'Development control'	'Development control' should 'Development management'	UFS Edited check all TPs
General	Partner (services)	Need to look at clarity of explanation of GCSPS as joint service throughout. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service (GCSP) delivers statutory planning functions on behalf of CCC who retains legal responsibility, as the local planning authority> policy which references CCC suggest update to 'the council' or 'GCSP' (when directly related to decision/functions of local planning authority) as appropriate. Not: Topic Paper 6. does do this= pg.5 " <i>The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service (GCSP) delivers statutory planning functions on behalf of CCC who retains legal responsibility, as the local planning authority.</i>" <i>Pg.20 " To achieve the aims set out in this strategy, CCC and its partner services will apply four interconnected delivery approaches"</i>= Partner services are not defined but assume this is referring to GCSP (see issue above). N.b 'Partner organisations are listed pg.6 including GCSP should be removed from this list.	For the purposes of this Strategy, "partner services" refers to Cambridge City Council services and teams, and to external organisations, that have related roles, interests or objectives in relation to trees, green infrastructure and place-making. Cambridge City Council services will have regard to the Urban Forest Strategy where relevant to their functions. References to partner services reflect alignment of aims and collaborative working, rather than the creation of any new legal, governance or delivery responsibilities beyond existing remits.
31	POLICY PL2 (Aspirational): CCC will aim to ensure every new planting site is supported by a funded establishment period covering at least the first three years after planting. This will include watering, mulching and early formative pruning.	Assume this is proposed to be captured by developer contributions increased to cover longer term maintenance?	P2 is an aspirational policy that does not introduce new mandatory burdens on developers beyond what is already required through existing planning policy and standard development management practice. The Urban Forest Strategy is a non-statutory document, so it cannot create enforceable obligations or

			financial requirements for developers beyond the local plan. Where planting arises through development, establishment funding will continue to be secured through conditions or S106 where justified, exactly as happens now.

TOPIC PAPER 1: ASSET MANAGEMENT

TP page#	Text	Comment	Response
5 Page 248	Drainage Land	Change to 'riparian land'. Use as consistent reference throughout the UFS where it is applicable.	Done
18	Consultation	For flood risk we often cannot mimic a typical consultation period if it is deemed urgent/necessary	This is in accordance with urgent tree works, where works can be carried out under delegated powers. Topic Paper 1 has been amended to increase detail regarding tree works required for flood defence.

TOPIC PAPER 4: SUBSIDENCE

TP page#	Text	Comment	Response

6	Protected Trees - Statutory Requirements - Government guidance is clear that, where subsidence or structural damage is alleged in support of works to protected trees, applications must be accompanied by detailed technical evidence. For Tree Preservation Order (TPO) applications, this evidence is mandatory: applications without it are invalid and will be returned. For Conservation Area notifications, while the same evidence is not a statutory requirement, CCC will normally resist removal of or significant works to healthy trees unless robust evidence of this type is provided. Protected trees may be in either public or private ownership	Accept sentiment proposed but will only be able to resist removal of or significant works to healthy trees if tree is worthy of a TPO. Like to discuss approach to TPO in public ownership.	Agreed While this is not directly related to the UFS discussion on this topic between CCC and GCSP is welcomed.

TOPIC PAPER 6: GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCING

Page#	Text	Comment	Response
249	It establishes the council's vision, aims and policy framework for the urban forest and provides the evidence base (e.g. canopy mapping, amenity valuation, biodiversity priorities) for decision-making."	Suggest amend to: " It establishes the council's vision, aims and policy framework for the urban forest and provides the an evidence base (e.g. canopy mapping, amenity valuation, biodiversity priorities) for supporting decision- making."	Done
4	Trees on drainage land	Change to Trees on riparian land	Done
5/6		➤ Why is summary of TCPA section 197 set out whereas other policy not? Does it need to be set out in full? ➤ Suggest that 'GCSP decisions' is amended to 'the decision of the Local	This summary has been amended to include reference to NPPF and current and draft LPs

		Planning Authority on planning applications...”. ➤ Remove sentence “ <i>But the local plan policies take priority where they apply.</i> ” as preceding sentence makes this clear (as well as the primacy of national policy/legislation). Remove sentence ‘<i>GCSP delivers the statutory planning functions, aligning its procedures with the aims of the UFS, while giving precedence to the local plan in development control.</i>’ UFS is a material consideration. What is meant by “<i>aligning its procedures with the aims of the UFS</i>”- requirement set in law that planning decisions must be taken in line with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.	Done Done The purpose of this paragraph is to set out responsibilities. The strategy has been amended to achieve this with consideration of the comments. The point now reads “While CCC has strategic oversight of the urban forest, sets corporate policy through the UFS, and manages its own public tree asset, GCSP delivers the statutory planning functions.

TOPIC PAPER 9: STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES AND PLANNING CONTROL

TP page#	Text	Comment	Response
3	However, GCSP endeavors to encourage good tree management, particularly through engagement when assessing applications for consent under a Tree Preservation Order	typo.	Corrected

3	works to fruit trees;	Some/certain works to fruit trees	Agree, description was open to interpretation and has been amended.
3	works by or for statutory undertakers works for highway operations works by the Environment Agency and drainage bodies;	Again some works not any works	As above
5-6	Assessment of Tree Work Applications/ notifications (heading)	Nothing under this heading has to do with TWA it refers to making TPOs and goes way beyond any guidance within the blue book. To Note GCSPS has adopted TEMPO system.	‘Assessment of Tree Work Applications/ notifications’ Changed to ‘Amenity Assessment’ CCC never adopted the TEMPO method when undertaking its planning functions. While TEMPO provides a structured scoring framework, its reliance on fixed numerical thresholds and a narrow interpretation of amenity was considered insufficient to reflect local circumstances and the full range of factors relevant in Cambridge. Government guidance advises that local planning authorities should determine what “amenity” means in their local context. In Cambridge, amenity was therefore defined through the 2016 Tree Strategy, and this definition is carried forward in the Urban Forest Strategy. Assessment was consistently undertaken by CCC using a professional judgement-led approach, allowing visual, environmental, cultural, biodiversity, climate and strategic urban forest considerations to be weighed proportionately on a case-by-case basis, rather than through a prescriptive and resource hungry, scoring system.

6	In addition to responding to individual applications and notifications, the LPA may also serve TPOs proactively and strategically where this is justified to protect canopy cover and secure long-term urban forest resilience. Examples include safeguarding important groups threatened by cumulative or incremental development, protecting trees identified through canopy mapping as high-value, and pre-emptively securing new planting where it contributes to canopy targets	Need to discuss as Blue book guidance is quite clear TPOs may be made .. ‘expedient in the interest of amenity’ and mentions nothing about canopy cover etc.	The Blue Book was replaced by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in 2014. The PPG encourages LPAs to define amenity, which has been done in Topic Paper 9P ‘Amenity’ is not defined in law, so authorities need to exercise judgment when deciding whether it is within their powers to make an Order. Orders should be used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have a significant negative impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public. Before authorities make or confirm an Order they should be able to show that protection would bring a reasonable degree of public benefit in the present or future. PPG Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 36-007-20140306 Revision date: 06 03 2014
6	In addition to responding to individual applications and notifications, the LPA may also serve TPOs proactively and strategically where this is justified to protect canopy cover and secure long-term urban forest resilience. Examples include safeguarding important groups threatened by cumulative or incremental development, protecting trees identified through	No extant policy to support canopy cover retention/increase= no justification to protect canopy cover through TPO’s. Note: Draft GCLP policy for Major Development only: “Only canopy that is delivered (retained or	Canopy cover is linked to amenity value. Public benefits are associated with increased canopy cover as set out in the Amenity Assessment section. The UFS refers to the proactive and strategic use of TPOs, including Category C TPOs, to protect canopy cover and secure long-term urban forest

	canopy mapping as high-value, and pre-emptively securing new planting where it contributes to canopy targets	established) within the application site boundary will be considered canopy provision for the purposes of this policy.” = goes ahead of LP policy for pre-emptively securing new planting contributing to canopy targets.	resilience across the city, not solely on development sites to protect trees beyond the lifetime of a planning condition. This may include safeguarding important groups threatened by cumulative loss, protecting trees identified through canopy mapping as high-value, and securing the long-term protection of newly planted or protected trees under planning conditions. The draft GCLP policy for major development operates at the development management stage, requiring canopy to be delivered within the application site boundary to mitigate the impacts of that development. This should not prevent the wider use of TPOs elsewhere, where justified, to protect canopy beyond individual sites or schemes. The two approaches are therefore complementary: the LP focuses on on-site canopy delivery, while the UFS addresses city-wide, long-term protection and resilience of the urban forest.
	Future trees to be planted Tree Preservation (England) Regulations 2012, allows TPOs to be applied to trees that are yet to be planted under a planning condition (s197 TCPA 1990). Such trees are identified in the TPO schedule with the letter “C”, and protection takes effect once the tree is planted. This ensures landscaping secured through planning is afforded long term protection beyond the lifetime of the condition itself	197 (TCPA) -Planning permission to include appropriate provision for preservation and planting of trees. It shall be the duty of the local planning authority— (a)to ensure, whenever it is appropriate, that in granting planning permission for any development adequate provision is made, by the imposition of conditions, for the preservation or planting of trees; and	This section is mirrored in the Emerging GCLP policy direction “ <i>The councils will protect trees of current and future amenity value through the imposition of TPOs (including the serving of category C TPOs) and/or, through planning conditions to ensure protection and prevent damage during the development process</i> ”

		(b)to make such orders under section 198 as appear to the authority to be necessary in connection with the grant of such permission, whether for giving effect to such conditions or otherwise. Can we discuss this. Has this been done to date? Under what circumstances? Need to ensure we are managing expectations too.	This has been used previously. Certain trees to be planted on private land as part of landscape conditions can be protected before they are planted. Information on approved planting plans are used to inform the TPOs.
7 Page 254	TPO review programme CCC and GCSP will operate a rolling programme to review existing TPOs to ensure they remain accurate, enforceable and proportionate. The review will prioritise older and larger Orders, replace “area” Orders with more precise individual, group or woodland designations where appropriate, and work to a 15-year refresh cycle.	To deliver this additional resources would be required (an additional Tree Officer and a Technical Support officer) funded by Cambridge City Council.	This is aspirational and will only happen when resources allow. Including it in strategy provides the leverage to seek resources either internal or external (sponsorship) etc.
7	guidance is also provided. Tree work applications must be submitted on the form published by the Secretary of State and include the information requested on the form, a plan identifying the subject tree(s) and location, information necessary to specify the proposed work, reasons for the proposed work and evidence to support structural damage, tree health or safety concerns, as applicable.	Only TPO applications need to be made on the 1App form, and only TPO applications need to provide reasons and supporting evidence. S211 notices don't. The difference between TPO & S211 needs to be made distinct TWA suggests both TPO & S211.	Correct. In this context ‘application’ refers to TPO application and not to notifications which would refer to s.211 Notices. TP9 has been reworded to make it clear this only applies to TPOd trees.
8	Repeat and phased applications Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph 071 of the Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas section) advises that, where appropriate, authorities may encourage single applications covering regularly repeated operations or phased works. CCC considers the	Need to discuss this further please to ensure we have an agreed an consistent approach across Greater Cambridge.	Permission allowing repeat works are standard practice and reduce the number of applications that need to be processed, freeing up resources.

	following particularly suited: • Crown reductions to a defined retained size (e.g. canopy dimension of 12m width and 16m height). • Crown lifting to maintain a defined clearance (e.g. 3m above ground, or 1.5m clearance to adjacent buildings). Repeat consents will normally be issued for a maximum period of 10 years. Applications must clearly specify the operations, retained dimensions, timing/frequency, and an end date. This reduces administrative burden for owners, contractors and the LPA, while giving certainty for long-term management	Mixed views to some of these suggestions.	The suggestions are reasonable examples of when repeat permissions might be appropriate, subject to justification. They do not represent a commitment to allow such works.
8	Link to online form has been removed		Links will be checked and updated when pathways are fixed.
8	Considerations	Again there is confusion over the difference between TPO applications and S211 notifications and level of detail required	This section is not stating a requirement but a principle. If you don't successfully justify the work and work will be detrimental to amenity the application will be refused or a TPO served if warranted. The section makes a clear distinction between applications and notifications
8	Trees are living and therefore everchanging and dying organisms. In addition to natural circumstances that result in tree loss, problems can arise that require tree removal or pruning. The arboricultural landscape is therefore ever changing, albeit slowly, and not protectable in the same way as a listed building for example. Notwithstanding this, and depending on their location, size, age and condition, the value of some trees to amenity is sufficient that the benefits they offer outweigh the desires of landowners. When considering the merits of a tree work application or section 211 notice, GCSP will balance the amenity value of a tree, the impact the proposed work will have on its amenity value and the justification submitted. Generally, t detrimental works to trees of value will be resisted, without	Suggest that this reads : 'Trees are living, dynamic organisms' Need to discuss this further.	Amendment has been made that incorporates the suggest but retains the key point. The section set out the principles relating to balancing amenity value against justification. There are no associated risks to reputation or resources. See comments above regarding TEMPO

	sufficient justification. Typically, the lower the amenity value, the lower the justification for works needs to be. The below categories provide useful definitions of amenity value levels. • Trees of limited amenity value (for example, young trees, those with structural defects, or those nearing the end of their safe useful life) will require less detailed evidence to justify intervention. • Trees of some amenity value (for example, healthy street or garden trees making a positive but not distinctive contribution to the local environment) will require a reasonable level of evidence, including monitoring and engineering reports, before removal or significant works will be considered. • Trees of special amenity value will require robust evidence that clearly demonstrates the causal link between the tree and the alleged damage, alongside an assessment of alternatives. • Trees of outstanding amenity value will require the most rigorous and comprehensive evidence before removal or significant works will be considered. Using this approach ensures consistent decision-making. GCSP will consider these criteria when assessing both the suitability of protection and /or the prohibition of works in order to balance detriment to the public against the needs or desires of a landowner	When GCSPS assess a S211 notice they will consider the desirability of the works and the tree's suitability for inclusion in a TPO, according to TEMPO. When assessing TPO application GCSPS will follow the guidance within Planning Practice Guidance: TPOs & trees in CA, in particular section 8.	PPG does not conflict with the advice set out in 'Considerations'
9	Appeals against decision to refuse consent or impose conditions can be made to the Secretary of State and details in how to do this are provided in decision notices.	Typo	Edited
10	While a section 211 notice does not have to take any particular form, it is recommended that they are made in the same way as a TPO application. A section 211 notice must identify and locate the subject trees, describe, accurately, the work proposed and include the date it is submitted. A plan is not mandatory but is helpful. Evidence is not required to support structural damage,	Although correct it contradicts the information provided previously in the strategy. A reason for works and evidence in support of the notification is not mandatory but is helpful	Information provided previously has been amended to remove risk of misunderstanding.

	health or safety but without the submission of evidence, the removal of valuable trees will be resisted		
10	Many of the benefits associated with tree canopy are provided local to the trees themselves, mitigating tree losses or making provision for new tree planting therefore is not appropriate off site	BNG allows for this though	While elements of BNG are connected to replacement trees, this provision is separate and is supported by the draft GCLP <i>'Urban Tree Canopy Cover across the Greater Cambridge area increased to a target of 20% by 2050 from current baseline. Development achieves a minimum future tree canopy cover of 30% of the site area through retention of existing trees and planting of new trees.' And "Proposals for increasing and maintaining Urban Tree Canopy Cover reflect good practice tree planting and management GI guidance."</i>
Page 257	As part of the process the Built and Natural Environment team is consulted on applications with arboricultural interests.	Working on this!	Planning application consultation is essential to the protection and replacement of trees on development sites. Both of which are essential to canopy cover aims. Any lack of consultation could lead to the loss of trees of value and/or a lack of replacement planting; risking UFS goals and CCC and GCSP service reputation.

FORMATTING POINTS/GENERAL COMMENTS (RESPONSES IN BLUE ITALICS)

- Policy 'Protect More' is written as 'P.6' whereas should be 'Policy P6' - to be consistent. - *Amended*
- Pg.17, 4th sentence "The s evidence" remove 's'. *Amended to - 'This evidence'*
- Pg. 9- Topic paper 9, 3rd sentence "Generally, t detrimental" remove 't' - *Amended*
- Bullet lists (some have additional bullet with not text)- *Surplus bullet to be removed*
- Strategy is replacing the CCC 2016 Tree Strategy (which runs out in 2026)> Perhaps helpful to state what previous documents this strategy is replacing/building on perhaps in section 'why do we need a strategy']. – *Text added referencing 2016 Tree Strategy*. New strategy has higher level policy whereas 2016 sets out policies which have greater detail about process/decision making and implementation: i.e. " POLICY GM3: All planned tree works will be published on the Council website and through site notices for the community to access at least 20 working days before implementation. The Council sees this as an important tool for communicating to the local community about tree work planned for their area and the reasons why the works are necessary" has this been done on purpose? If strategy does not set out details where will they be set out? *The details are set out in the Topic Papers. This creates a more concise and therefore accessible core document. This is a conscious modernisation choice. Consultation detailed in GM3 is presented in Topic Paper 1. Details form the Tree Strategy 2016 have not been lost but relocated to the UFS.*
- Strategy Page 5: difficult to understand immediately how each section of the strategy is divided and combines to deliver the vision and aims. The structure of the content is ordered differently to how it is set out in 'How to use the Strategy'. *The structures is ordered the same way in both content and How to use the strategy. The content page however includes additional sections linking the core items*. Suggest considering looking at presentational order of the strategy to aid reader understanding/the narrative. *Amendments have been made to 'How to use the strategy' introduction to aid comprehension of the narrative*. The description of TP content is sitting after the glossary, suggest it would be helpful to narrative and understanding to move this to section 'How to use the strategy'. *Topic Papers will be linked throughout the core document once the necessary pathways are fixed. This will aid the narrative.*
- Strategy- Pg20 onwards- The layout on page 20 is not clear that starts with a summary of each of the sections which follow- could the headings/layout be looked at to make it more reader friendly? – *Amendments have been made to improve comprehension.*
- Is there a reason that context/supporting text is not for all policies within policies section? Although Topic Papers provide supporting text/technical guidance it is not obvious when reading strategy document which Topic paper supports which aims, policies and actions. Would be helpful if supporting text was included for all policies as unclear why policy needed/to be implemented without this. *Some policies are more focused than others and therefore don't need to be put into context, however supporting text will be added for consistency. Please note all policies are supported either directly by text or via the TPs.*
- Would have preferred to have seen a joint strategy with South Cambridgeshire to cover all of Greater Cambridge and we hope that this can be explored at a future date. *The option of producing a single joint UFS for Greater Cambridge was considered and risk-assessed, but was*

ultimately not taken forward at the Cabinet approval stage. There were several practical reasons for this decision. SC does not currently have an up-to-date tree strategy, and there are significant differences in context and approach between urban forest management in Cambridge City and the predominantly rural tree management challenges in SC. In addition, the CCC's 2016 Tree Strategy was nearing expiry, while CCC's Climate Change Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy were being renewed/ reviewed, creating a clear and time-limited opportunity to align consultation and policy objectives. CCC also has a well-developed evidence base to support an urban forest approach, which SC does not currently hold to the same extent. Progressing a joint strategy at this stage would therefore have required either delaying the City's strategy or diluting its evidence-led focus, risking loss of momentum. That said, the Council recognises the value of a more joined-up approach across Greater Cambridge. Provided the challenges around data availability, land-use differences and policy alignment can be addressed, there is no reason why closer alignment or a future joint approach could not be explored at a later date.

- The UFS confirms that GCSPS Tree Team will administer all statutory tree controls for the LPA, as agreed through the City Transition in 2025, but goes further and sets out aspirational work for which significant new resource would be required to deliver, but the source of which is not identified in the document. This requires further discussion before formal consultation takes place. GCSPS will be happy/ able to do this work if Cambridge City Council wishes to fund the additional posts. *Aspirational work is set out in the strategy to highlight where improvements to the deliverability of the vision can be made and to aid leverage of additional resources. They do not convey a commitment without such additional resources. They also do not alter any statutory duties or responsibilities.*
- We have compared the proposed UFS with the draft Local Plan policies, which is currently out for consultation (1st December 2025- 30th January 2026) and have set out some suggestions to ensure these align (see table below). It would be helpful to discuss these further with you, bringing tree and policy officers together. *The UFS has been reviewed to align with the draft GCLP, amendments have been made to the UFS where potential conflicts have been highlighted. Responses have been provided in the table above where there appears to have been a misunderstanding of the text. Our approach has been to ensure that the UFS complements, rather than duplicates or conflicts with, the existing and draft LPs.*
- Topic Paper 9 ("Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control") expands and codifies how the Council will manage Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), Conservation Area notifications, tree work applications, and planning enforcement. This confirms that GCSPS will administer all statutory tree controls for the LPA and appears to require arboricultural input for every planning application affecting trees, with explicit reference to BS 5837: 2012 compliance, Arboricultural Impact Assessments, and Method Statements. It suggests that off-site planting will rarely be acceptable mitigation, requiring planners to secure on-site canopy provision and space for tree maturity. *TP9 clarifies how existing statutory responsibilities and good practice are applied in Cambridge; it does not introduce new requirements, thresholds or automatic triggers for arboricultural input. Consultation with BNE Tree Team is already required for planning applications affecting trees to allow officers with the appropriate experience to assess impacts and arboricultural input will be limited where impacts are considered acceptable. As many of the benefits associated with trees are local to those trees, off site canopy provision does not benefit the community local to the development.*

- The UFS also introduces the expectation of strategic, proactive TPO making, not only reactive designations, which is a change from the existing operating procedures which would require much more time (and therefore staff) to deliver. *This expectation is not newly introduced. CCC was working on strategic protection before the restructure. Notwithstanding this, any proactive tree protection or TPO review will only be pursued when resources allow and is aimed to be a collaborative project with CCC.*
- The strategy also reiterates that development must provide space for existing and future large-canopy trees. Development management teams would need to embed tree constraints mapping at pre-app stage, which might lead to an increased need for design review and condition drafting expertise. This may also influence validation requirements (e.g., mandatory AIA/AMS submission thresholds) and need further consideration and discussion. *The provision for the planting of long-lived, large canopy trees is an essential element of canopy cover improvement (see Topic Paper 12). This principle is supported in the draft GCLP at BG/TC. Tree constraints mapping is an essential tool at pre-app stage. Without tree constraints information the potential impact of a proposed development cannot be assessed properly and arboricultural advice to the applicant will be limited. Potentially resulting in the loss of trees of value, lack of provision for tree planting required in accordance with canopy cover targets set out in the draft GCLP, and reputational risk.*
- The UFS references breaches and enforcement. The Council has an agreed Compliance (enforcement) policy: [Greater Cambridge Shared Planning compliance policy](#) which should be referenced. *It has now been referenced.*
- Does this UFS replace or supersede existing 2016 Tree Strategy as some things that are covered in the that are not covered in this Strategy? *UFS replaces the CCC Tree Strategy. Elements not covered in the core strategy are covered in the Topic Papers.*

The Nature of the additional proposed workload for GCSPS

The strategy effectively increases the Planning Tree Team's scope from a casework-response unit to a strategic and enforcement-enabled service underpinning multiple policy agendas. To deliver this sustainably, the team will need additional full-time equivalent staff, (likely 1 – 2 FTE) spread across development management, enforcement, and data monitoring, plus investment in training, system integration and engagement /outreach activities. The strategy would change the Planning Tree Team beyond its traditional "reactive" role (TPOs, applications, appeals) into a much broader proactive and data-led remit, including:

- Greater volume and complexity of casework, particularly at pre-application stage.
- Increased enforcement activity (breaches, CAVAT valuations, restitution planting).
- Contribution to strategic policy and monitoring frameworks (canopy cover, BNG, LNRS alignment).
- Requirement for public transparency, consultation, and cross-department liaison.
- This combination means both more cases and more technically demanding cases, with heavier evidence and data requirements.

The UFS does not introduce responsibilities additional to those undertaken prior to the restructure, existing service expectations are unchanged. Aspirational tasks would only be undertaken where resources allow and in collaboration with CCC Tree Team, again when resources allow. Including

these aspirational elements in the strategy provides the leverage needed to seek additional resources. There is no implicit expansion of GCSP's remit as a result of adoption of this UFS

Final note: Where the UFS identifies aspirational elements for enhanced delivery, these are intended to illustrate the direction of travel and areas where outcomes could be strengthened if resources allow. They do not create new statutory duties or service commitments, nor do they alter existing roles or processes. Delivery of aspirational elements will be subject to available funding, capacity and will be progressed collaboratively where appropriate.

END

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 3 Leadership Team Feedback: Timeline and Summary of Changes

UFS Leadership Team comments and response

7 January 2026

Leadership Team first raised comments requesting that the Urban Forest Strategy follow the Council's corporate design approach and be aligned with the wider programme of strategy reviews, with designed versions to be produced post-Cabinet approval.

23 January 2026,

Leadership Team provided detailed feedback asking for a shorter and more accessible main document, improved alignment with the Climate Change and Biodiversity strategies, a stronger 'One Council' voice, greater use of visuals and headline data, clearer framing of the 20% canopy ambition and timescales, and reduced technical jargon.

26 January 2026

Officers confirmed these points would be addressed through restructuring and shortening the main strategy, moving detailed content into Topic Papers and appendices, improving visuals and alignment, clarifying the canopy target rationale and timescales, and strengthening corporate framing.

11 February 2026

Officers provided Leadership Team with a revised and shortened version (v4.1) showing how these comments had been addressed.

13 February 2026

Leadership Team confirmed the revised draft was tighter and clearer, with only minor presentational suggestions remaining.

This page is intentionally left blank

SUMMARY

In September 2025, Cambridge City Council Cabinet approved the emerging 2026 to 2036 Urban Forest Strategy, to replace the expiring 2016 to 2026 Tree Strategy, subject to internal and external consultation.

The internal consultation, commenced on 27 October 2025 and ran until 9 December 2025.

Responses indicated that the Urban Forest Strategy, its vision, principles, aims, policies, actions and Topic Papers were generally supported. Comments revealed that minor amendments would aid clarity, document navigation and comprehension but that there were no risks to deliverability, resourcing, finance and governance.

Authority to proceed to public consultation was delegated to the City Services Director by Cabinet in September 2025. Authorisation was requested and gained to amend the UFS and referenced topic papers, as detailed in the review and proceed to public consultation alongside the Biodiversity Strategy Mid Period Review.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Following authority to amend the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) with consideration of the internal consultation, the public consultation was carried out in accordance with current council protocol and alongside the Biodiversity Strategy Mid Period Review. The Purpose of the UFS public consultation was to test support for its vision, aims and delivery approaches; gather views on canopy equity, protection and planting; raise awareness of the urban forest concept; and encourage shared stewardship.

On 6 January 2026 online public consultation commenced via Go Vocal, the Council's consultation portal. Email submission were permitted as part of this process. The Go Vocal consultation closed 10 February 2026. The deadline for email submissions was extended on request to 12:00 noon 17 February 2026.

A webinar was recorded providing an overview of the Urban Forest Strategy. This was made available to the public via Go Vocal.

RESPONSES

Responses to the consultation are summarised below.

Written responses were received via:

- Go Vocal
 - 256 responses to the combined Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) and Biodiversity Strategy mid-review (BSR) consultation.
 - 83.2% responded to both UFS and BSR
 - 8.6% to responded to mainly UFS
 - 8.2% to responded to mainly BSR
- Email: 8 responses, including an additional internal response.

REVIEW

Responses to the consultation have been received in a two formats, as indicated above. These have been collated and are detailed in the appendices along with comments.

Overall, the Go Vocal responses indicate that the Urban Forest Strategy has been well received, with the majority of feedback in support of the urban forest concept and the strategy vision, aims and delivery approaches. Comments on canopy equity indicate general support for focussing increasing canopy cover in less well represented areas. 66% of respondents would like increased investment in new tree establishment and there was also strong support for community involvement in this area. The majority of comments support a more ambitious target for canopy cover increase than is proposed and support prioritising the planting of climate resilient species, actively diversifying species mixes and integrating canopy cover with habitat connectivity. Feedback supports the retention and protection of mature trees, without significant justification for removal.

With reference to community activity, while some respondents requested easier access to resources, clearer communication, and practical help many respondents focused on improving community-led planting, care, and monitoring; education and engagement through schools and families; accessible volunteering; and support for biodiversity in private gardens, supporting the urban forestry approach.

Some helpful suggestions and recommendations have also been made through Go Vocal but predominantly through emailed feedback. These suggestions are aimed at strengthening policy, embedding UFS policy in the emerging Local Plan and addressing perceived gaps. In addition we have received a few comments that indicate a misunderstanding of the text or how the strategy works. There is a common request to increase the number of policies or add operational and/or technical commitments to existing policies. However, the UFS has been designed to be achievable, workable, and to minimise the core document length, which improves accessibility and provides the operational and technical information, research, guidance and background in a series of Topic Papers.

Suggested alterations/additions that improve the strategy have been acted on or are continuing to be processed. Where comments indicate a misunderstanding of the text, the strategy wording has been edited to reduce the potential for misinterpretation.

All links and references will be confirmed prior to final publication.

The Tree Team at this stage would like to thank all individuals who took the time to respond to the consultation. The constructive feedback received has been invaluable in refining the Urban Forest Strategy and improving its clarity, robustness and accessibility.

RISK

The Urban Forest Strategy has been prepared to aid the protection and expansion of Cambridge's tree canopy and to ensure that the benefits are accessible across all communities and future generations. To accomplish this, the strategy needs to be achievable, clear and accessible. It has been prepared to give direction, guidance and support and provide evidence to justify decision making.

The primary objective of the public consultations was to test support for its vision, aims and delivery approaches; gather views on canopy equity, protection and planting; raise awareness of the urban forest concept; and encourage shared stewardship. Overwhelmingly, responses to the public consultation indicate support of the UFS.

GO VOCAL UFS RESPONSES

Biodiversity and urban forest strategies

End of survey report

Which of our strategies would you like to feed back on?

256/256 - Multiple choice - choose one - required



Does the strategy clearly explain the concept of Urban Forestry?

136/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Clearly explains 50.3% (77 choices)



Somewhat explains 34.6% (53 choices)



No answer 11.1% (17 choices)



Does not explain 3.9% (6 choices)



Do you support the overall vision, principles and aims of the Urban Forest Strategy and the direction of travel for the next decade?

142/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Strongly support 60.8% (93 choices)



Support 22.2% (34 choices)



Neutral 8.5% (13 choices)



No answer 7.2% (11 choices)



Strongly oppose 1.3% (2 choices)

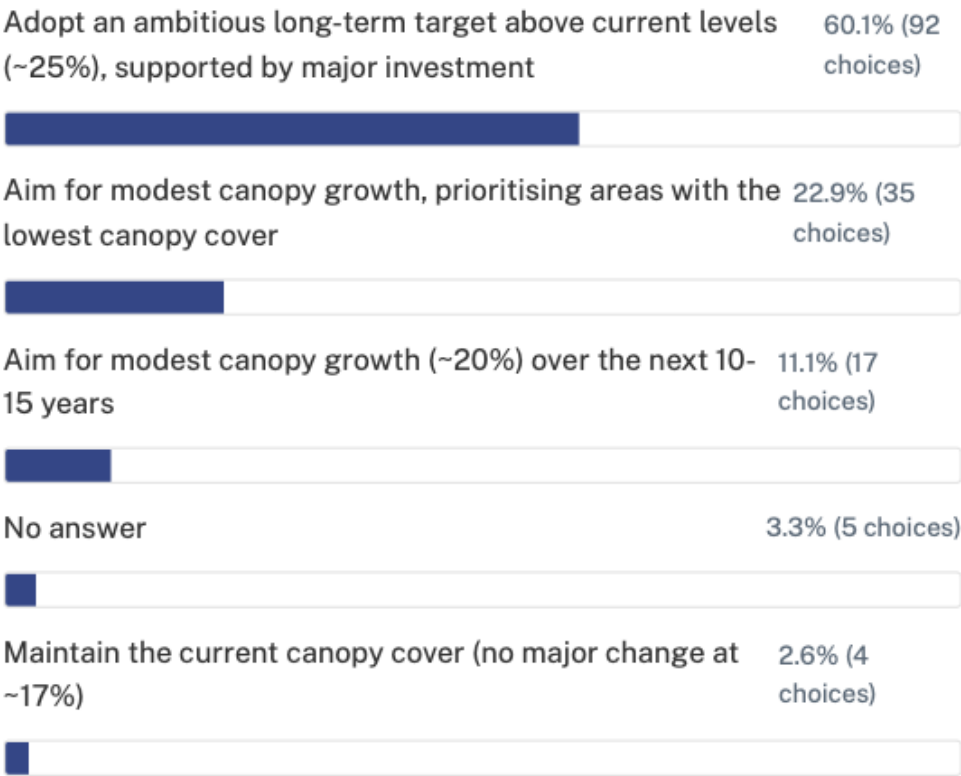


Oppose 0% (0 choices)



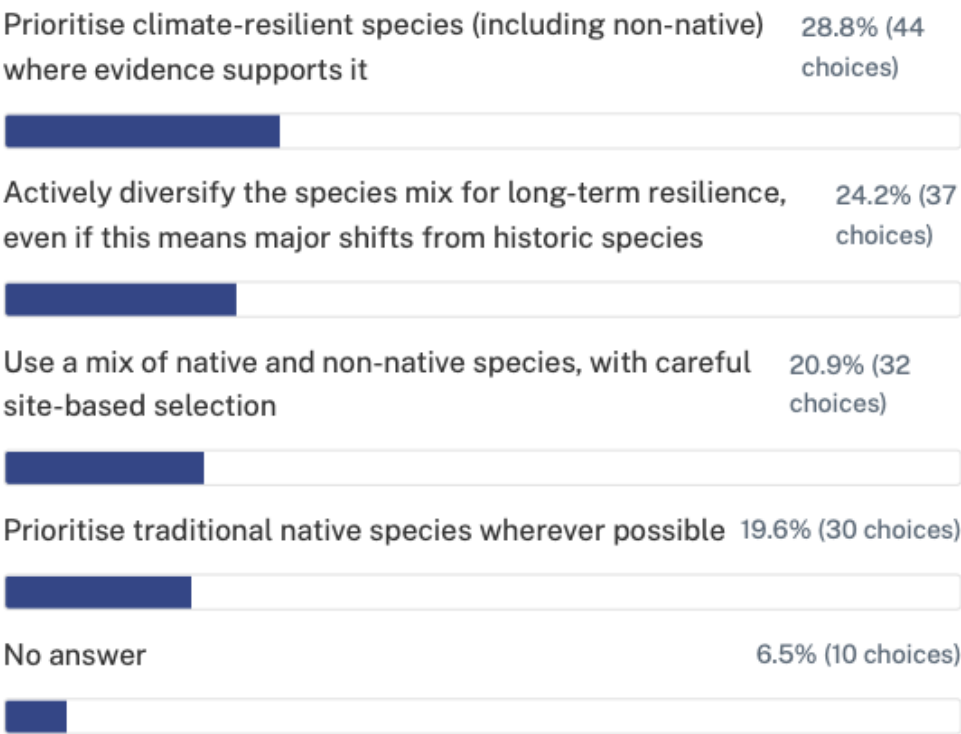
What level of ambition should Cambridge adopt for future canopy cover and overall tree legacy?

148/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



What approach should the council take to selecting tree species in a changing climate?

143/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



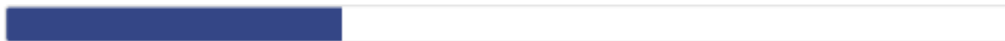
How should the council balance mature tree retention with public safety?

149/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Retain mature trees wherever reasonable, accepting some residual risk, to preserve public benefits 43.1% (66 choices)



Retain mature trees where risks are tolerable and can be managed proportionately 33.3% (51 choices)



Balance safety with retention, using pruning before removal 15.7% (24 choices)



Prioritise safety above all; remove trees where risk is identified 5.2% (8 choices)



No answer 2.6% (4 choices)



What level of responsibility should developers have for new and existing trees?

148/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Provide full funding for establishment/aftercare (for example, at least three years), long-term protection and enhanced canopy delivery 60.8% (93 choices)



Deliver high-quality tree retention, planting and aftercare as a standard requirement 29.4% (45 choices)



Meet minimum national requirements 3.3% (5 choices)



Protect existing trees of value and plant replacements where feasible 3.3% (5 choices)



No answer 3.3% (5 choices)



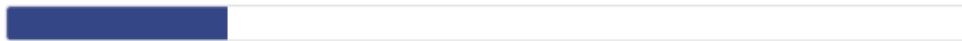
How should the council prioritise where new trees are planted?

147/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Where canopy cover is lowest or heat risk is highest 54.2% (83 choices)



Strongly prioritise areas with the greatest environmental inequalities, even if this means fewer new trees elsewhere 22.9% (35 choices)



Evenly across the city 11.8% (18 choices)



Where new development is happening 7.2% (11 choices)



No answer 3.9% (6 choices)



What approach should the council take to replacing and establishing new trees?

145/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Increase replacement ratios and invest in high-quality watering and formative care 66% (101 choices)



Treat young-tree establishment as a high-priority investment, even if it means planting fewer trees 17.6% (27 choices)



Replace trees 1:1 and provide basic establishment 8.5% (13 choices)



No answer 5.2% (8 choices)

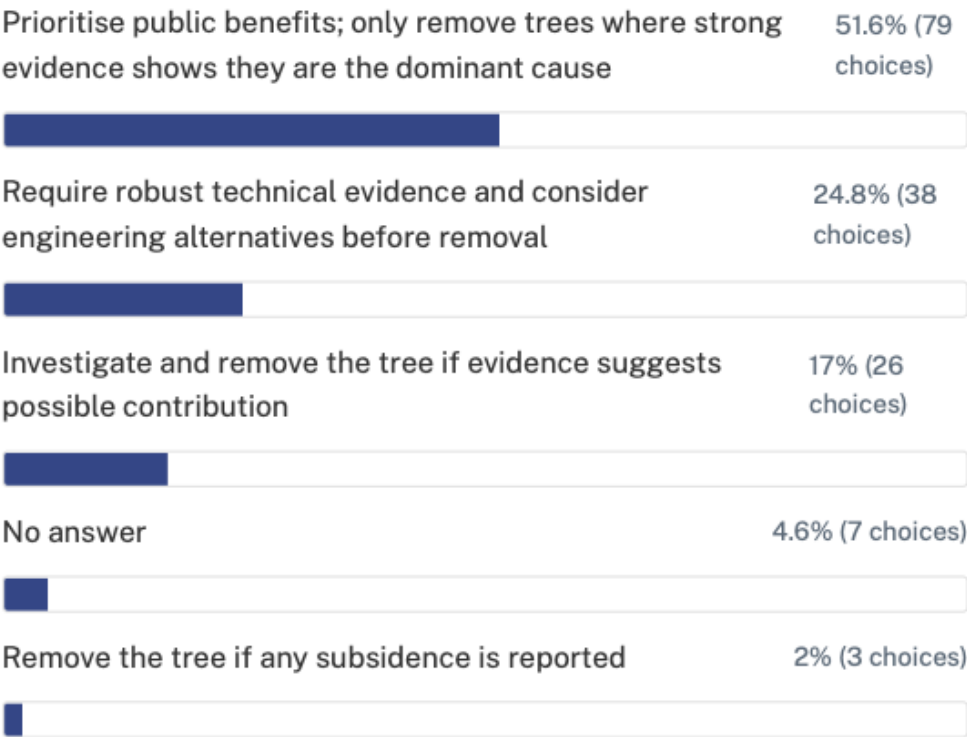


Replace removed trees 1:1 where possible 2.6% (4 choices)



What approach should be taken when subsidence is alleged to be caused by a public tree?

146/153 - Multiple choice -choose one -optional



How would residents like to be involved in supporting Cambridge's urban forest?

132/153 - Multiple choice -choose many -optional



If resources are limited, what should the Council prioritise?

146/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Maximising long-term benefits (biodiversity, shade, climate) even if it means difficult trade-offs (like what) 35.9% (55 choices)



Maintenance and aftercare of existing trees 24.2% (37 choices)



Planting fewer trees but with proper establishment 18.3% (28 choices)



Engagement, education and partnerships to expand capacity 11.8% (18 choices)



Tree safety work 5.2% (8 choices)



No answer 4.6% (7 choices)



What would you like to do next?

148/153 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Go to cross-cutting questions 80.4% (123 choices)



Go to end 16.3% (25 choices)

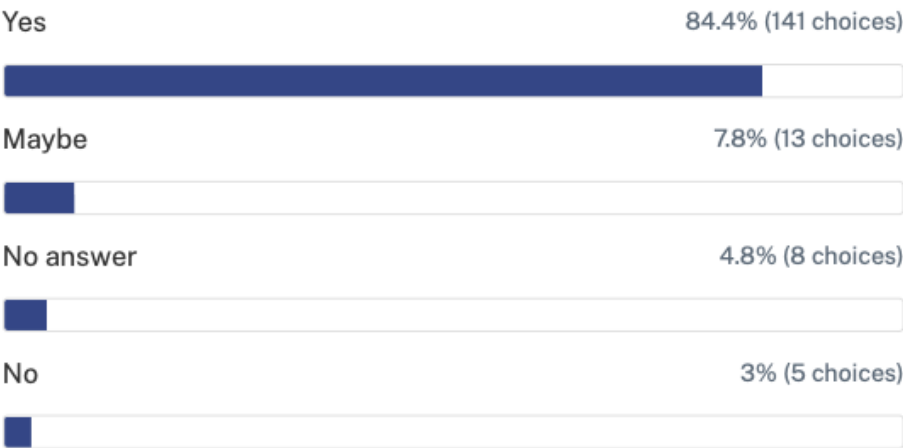


No answer 3.3% (5 choices)



Do residents support a more integrated approach to canopy cover, habitat connectivity and species recovery?

159/167 - Multiple choice -choose one -optional



How should the city adapt habitats and planting practices to hotter, drier summers and increased climate risks?

93/167 - Long answer -optional

Respondents most frequently emphasised the need to plant more trees, especially those that are resilient to hotter, drier conditions and future climate scenarios. Many called for prioritising the protection and maintenance of existing mature trees, which are seen as more resilient and valuable for shade and biodiversity.

A strong trend was the recommendation to diversify planting, using a mix of native and climate-resilient species, to hedge against uncertainty in future weather patterns and pests. Some stressed the importance of focusing on native species for biodiversity, while others argued for including non-natives if they are better adapted to future conditions.

Water management was another key theme: respondents suggested rainwater collection, rain gardens, ponds, and mulching to support plant survival and reduce reliance on mains water. Several also highlighted the need for improved soil health as a foundation for resilient planting.

Community involvement in watering and caring for new plantings was widely supported, with suggestions for volunteer schemes, public awareness campaigns, and involving schools.

Many respondents advocated for increasing shade through tree avenues, green walls, and roofs, and reducing hard surfaces to mitigate urban heat. There was also support for creating and maintaining wetlands, wildflower meadows, and less intensively managed green spaces.

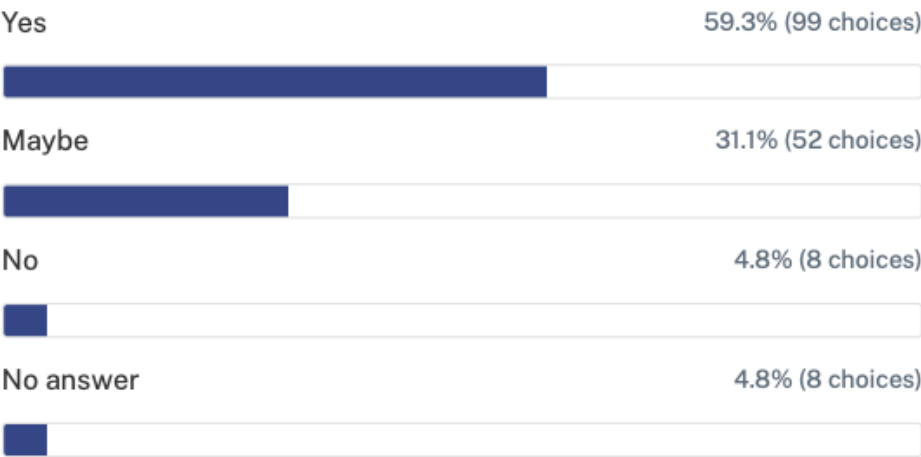
A number of responses stressed the importance of evidence-based, expert-led approaches, learning from other cities, and adapting strategies as more is learned.

Some respondents raised concerns about the unpredictability of future climate (including wetter winters), and the need to avoid over-reliance on any one approach. A few questioned the premise of climate adaptation or the urgency of intervention.

Overall, the main trends were: prioritising tree planting and protection (especially shade and resilient species), diversifying plantings, improving water and soil management, involving the community, and taking an evidence-based, flexible approach.

Should reasonable resources be directed first to communities with the lowest canopy cover and poorest access to wildlife?

159/167 - Multiple choice -choose one -optional



What role could communities play in both tree and biodiversity?

82/167 - Long answer -optional

Most respondents emphasised the importance of community involvement in both tree planting and ongoing care, particularly watering and maintenance of young trees. Many suggested schemes such as ‘adopt a tree’ or ‘guardian’ roles for residents, schools, or local groups.

Education and awareness were frequently mentioned, especially through schools and community events. Several respondents highlighted the benefits of involving children and families, both for biodiversity and for fostering stewardship.

Volunteering opportunities, monitoring, and reporting issues were also common themes. Respondents noted the need for accessible and well-publicised volunteering, with some suggesting family-friendly sessions and community events.

Many stressed the value of local knowledge and input, including species selection, site suggestions, and everyday stewardship. Some respondents called for more support, training, and genuine decision-making roles for communities.

Private gardens were identified as a major issue, with suggestions to encourage retention and replacement planting, and to promote biodiversity-friendly gardening. Hedgerows, leaf litter, and wildlife corridors were also mentioned as ways to boost biodiversity.

Some respondents noted barriers such as lack of time, unclear information, or insufficient council support, and called for easier access to resources, clearer communication, and practical help (e.g. watering equipment, rainwater collection hubs).

Overall, the strongest trends were calls for community-led planting, care, and monitoring; education and engagement through schools and families; accessible volunteering; and support for biodiversity in private gardens.

How can we best present evidence, decisions and trade-offs to build public confidence across both strategies?

65/167 - Long answer - optional

Transparency, honesty, and clear communication were the most frequently emphasised themes. Respondents repeatedly called for open explanations of decisions, evidence, and trade-offs, using plain language and avoiding spin. Regular updates and feedback loops, such as email newsletters, were suggested to keep the public informed about progress and outcomes.

Many respondents stressed the importance of using a wide range of communication channels, including social media, local press, leaflets, noticeboards, public events, and community meetings, to reach diverse audiences. Visuals such as maps, diagrams, artist impressions, and short videos were recommended to make information more accessible and engaging.

Demonstrating real-world results and successful case studies, both locally and from other cities, was seen as important for building trust and showing the impact of strategies. Several responses highlighted the need for baseline data, measurable targets, and transparent reporting on progress, costs, and benefits.

Active public engagement and collaboration were also recurring themes. Respondents wanted opportunities for feedback, influence, and involvement, with some suggesting support for local champions, schools, and community groups. Listening to public opinion and showing how it shapes outcomes was seen as key to building confidence.

A minority of responses expressed scepticism or opposition to the strategies or questioned the council's priorities

EMAIL RESPONSES

Email Feedback from the UFS Public Consultation. Feedback is provided in full with *Officer Comments, actions underlined and in italics* where suitable.

Email 1.

I've been reading Cambridge's Draft Urban Forest Strategy and was struck by how clearly it sets out a practical, data-led programme to **manage more, protect more, plant more and engage more**, underpinned by evidence, tracking and cross-service coordination.

Officer Comment: Positive feedback with no action required.

Email 2.

When you plant trees please make sure they are trees and not tiny twigs and protect them well. AND in Summer WATER THEM!!! If not it's just a waste of (our) money!!!

Officer Comment: Not strictly related to the strategy. Passed to Urban Forest Manager for consideration.

Email 3.

Climate change, and taking some action to minimise its impact is important.

Officer Comment: Positive feedback that does not require a response.

Not everywhere needs trees, so the positioning of them and what needs careful consideration, perhaps more so than in the past. For instance, Jesus Green has plenty of trees already, especially with the recent planting, but perhaps Coldham's Common does not have the same variety. Not everyone wants to sit in the shade, but they need access to it. Enormous trees which shed leaves create other problems, particularly for walkers and cyclists when surfaces become too slippery and dangerous. Careful thought needs to be made about the types and locations of trees, and what impact they might have without thinking this through.

Officer Comment: Not strictly related to the strategy. Passed to Urban Forest Manager for consideration.

Increasing biodiversity with planting is excellent, especially for insects and bees. Again, thought about where the planting takes place to have benefit without harm to humans, and I believe that most people enjoy seeing flowers and wild planting across the city.

Officer Comment: Positive feedback that does not require a response.

I personally do not enjoy walking in long grass, particularly when it is damp, and non-mowing or reduced mowing is frankly a nuisance.

Finally, though not mentioned, the lack of weeding the street pavements and paths is a disgrace, under the guise of helping the environment. It makes everywhere look untidy and unloved. If you go to Switzerland, you see properly kempt roadways and paths, and they still protect the environment.

Officer Comment: Above two comments not strictly related to the strategy.

It would be helpful for the whole Council to have joined up thinking on its different strategies so that one does not wipe out the other.

Officer Comment: Internal and external consultation on three interconnecting strategies has been carried out. While the strategies are separate they are mutually reinforcing.

Email 4.

Too long and repetitious and I agree with the principles and direction.

Officer Comment: The length has been reduced, primarily through referencing, not repeating, information contained in Topic Papers.

Email 5.

Thank you xxxxxxxx for allowing residents an extended 17 Feb deadline for commenting on the council's Biodiversity and urban forestry consultations.

We should like to thank you and your team for all the hard work that has gone into preparing the urban forestry strategy and also the biodiversity strategy

The xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx supports and endorse the two submissions on the strategies submitted by xxxxxxxxxxxx. Many residents share xxxxxxxxx concerns about the lack of urgency about the nature crisis. They feel that these strategies need ramping up. It is not at all clear who is responsible for delivery. Who is responsible for what, by when and how will they be held to account. Who do residents go to for example about lack of enforcement ? Or the damage done in their areas by utilities and contractors ? These are big issues for many Cambridge residents who feel that there is no tangible sense of local neighbourhood benefits or ownership in these strategies. Yet, they highlight that if the council is serious about addressing climate change, a strong sense of local ownership and local neighbourhood across Greater Cambridge will be essential to achieve this.

Officer Comment: City Services Tree Team is responsible for delivering the overall UFS but its purpose is to empower everyone to take part. More specific responsibilities are included in Topic Paper 1, which sets out management and ownership of Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council trees. Topic Paper 6 sets out governance and how services work together. Topic Paper 9 sets out the responsibilities associated with legislation and trees in private ownership. Enforcement is set out in Topic 11 and deals with City's responsibilities regarding damage to council trees and how the GCSP service deals with planning enforcement (unauthorised works to private trees). Topic Papers form part of the strategy and guide day to day operations responsibilities, duties and policy.

With 75% of trees in private ownership, the council cannot deliver canopy cover aspirations through asset management alone. Trees on private land are vital to a healthy urban forest but legislation limits a council's authority to enforce action on private land. It is essential therefore that the community accepts some responsibility for greening the city but the strategy reinforces the Council's commitment to provide the necessary help, guidance and incentive.

Many residents have shared concerns with us that the focus in the strategies is on targets rather than on engaging residents – they ask where are the plans for hedgehog corridors- where are the incentives

for replacing hard landscaping and/fences. Encouragement for not using pesticides? Plastic lawns. They ask “ is there enough water for gardens and wildlife? “

Officer Comment: The point is not directly related to the UFS

Residents say what about including a protection for "groups of trees" and for street trees as habitat corridors and engaging residents and schools and the universities in doing this?

Officer Comment: Subject to resources, the UFS commits to improving protection for trees in its Protect More policies.

As a specific example there is no listing for Homerton College’s beautiful avenue of mature trees with its cow parsley. Yet this attractive group of mature trees is a major feature on Hills Road, one of the main city approach roads.

Officer Comment: Homerton College trees are protected by TPO 24/2018.

How are residents to assess outcomes? What will success look like in their area? Is there enough water for wildlife and gardens? How many hedges not new fences? How many concrete front gardens?

Officer Comment: UFS outcomes will be recorded and information made available to the public. This is set out in Appendix 2.

How are you planning to engage residents

We are hearing concerns that the community's voice has been diluted in these strategies.

Officer Comment: Consultation commitments remain the same, details are now located in Topic Paper 1. Consultation on Tree Work Application consultations follow the structure set out by GCSP.

Additional comments relating to grazing have not been included in the UFS review.

Email 6.

I found the draft strategy a very good starting point. I like the idea of using the ‘urban forest’ concept instead of the previous approach focussed on trees alone but I think this needs a clearer and simpler explanation at the beginning. The term ‘urban forest’ has been around for several years, but is being used in a variety of ways and can come across as jargon if not used carefully. When it comes to the policies and actions sections of the strategy, much of the focus is in fact on trees. Hopefully the revised version will explain a little more succinctly the reason for moving from a trees-only approach to the urban forest approach, and also ensure that the concept is followed through to policies and actions.

Officer Comment: An improved explanation of urban forestry has been included in revisions and placed earlier in the strategy. The focus of the UFS remains on trees but the policy has been aligned with the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategies to ensure a more co-ordinated approach.

Could POLICY M1 be worded as follows: “The Council will prioritise its legal and health, safety and **environmental** obligations over all other aspects of the service.” The addition of the word ‘environmental’ seems important given the good earlier explanation and context that is provided for the need to ensure that trees are managed within the context of the broader natural environment and the obligations that now exist to protect and manage this.

Officer Comment: The purpose of M1 is to confirm that health and safety and legal obligations must be prioritised. This approach does not, however, result in a zero tolerance culture. Amenities, ecology and environment remain key considerations of any tree removal/tree work decision.

Following a recent issue involving public complaints about tree and scrub management work along Coldham's brook (note that I consider the planned work to be well justified), which clearly was not understood by some members of the public and local journalists, I think POLICY E4 needs to be worded more strongly: "CCC will provide clear, accessible information about its tree management and planting through its website, public notices and consultation processes. Information will be provided in a clear and accessible way, proportionate to the nature of the activity and audience. This includes publishing guidance, consultation information and data where appropriate to support transparency and informed engagement." The Council website, public notices and the current consultation processes (all of which were, I believe, used in the Coldhams issue) seemed to be insufficient to prevent argument. Information needs to be provided in a "timely" manner, so perhaps this word could be added before the word 'clear', although this also needs to be understood as being 'well in advance' of the actual initiation of any work. Perhaps further thought could also be given to other mechanisms for getting information out to the public? Given the existence of the large volunteer conservation network in the city, could more use of this be made?

Officer Comment: Public consultation on works carried out or authorised directly by the Tree Team will follow the consultation process set out Topic Paper 1. The reach of the policy has its limits however and cannot be used to enforce other services to follow similar consultations.

This might also need to be reflected in Action 6, point 2 "Deliver public engagement activities including guided walks, talks and education programmes.", with more thought given as to how information can be got across to Cambridge residents, developers, and others on different sides of the debate (pro-conservation vs development). Some do not necessarily fully understand the complex ecosystem of an 'urban forest' and how this needs to be managed so that trees and associated vegetation can be maintained. It is understandably not easy, but is becoming increasingly important as tensions grow between those who want to maintain nature and those for whom economic drivers may be more important.

Officer Comment: Agreed. The service has a successful record of engagement, set out in Topic Paper 8, but will seek new avenues to resource projects, including community participation.

I regret not having had time to look in more detail at the strategy as I think it is so important for the City. I am not sure if there is any more that could be done to prevent the loss of trees from private land and gardens – the area around my house has changed markedly in this regard over the last 15 years or so, with the loss of many trees from gardens.

Officer Comment: This anecdotal evidence further supports the need for proactivity.

Email 7.

Officer comment: This feedback demonstrates substantial support for the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS / Strategy). It makes suggestions where areas are considered to be weak or missing detail.

Corporate guidance requires strategies to be concise. Internal consultation required the strategy to be significantly reduced in length. Consequently, repetition has been avoided and the strategy has been structured to simplify access to more detailed information on individual subjects. Some of the

suggestions made in the below feedback would result in unnecessary repetition that would increase the core document length, others, made to improve clarity have been incorporated succinctly, where appropriate. Comments are made in italics and underlined where alterations are proposed or not proposed as a result of the feedback, with reasons provided.

2. Overview

The draft Urban Forest Strategy contains much to commend. Among its best features are its clear long-term vision, explicit canopy-cover ambition, and its emphasis on equity, climate resilience, and partnership working. Its most valuable attributes are listed below.

- Linking high-level goals to delivery.
- Considering the urban forest as critical green infrastructure for a “healthier, fairer and more resilient city” over 2026–2036, rather than a collection of amenity trees.
- Adopting an explicit citywide canopy-cover target of “at least 20% by 2050”, linking this to climate resilience, intergenerational equity and environmental justice.
- Building on existing data and tools, noting where the tree canopy is low and where planting offers the greatest climate- and flood-risk benefits.
- Recognition that the tree canopy in Cambridge is very unevenly distributed, so targeting planting and protection to hotter, more vulnerable, and relatively tree-poor neighbourhoods.
- Stressing that trees are vital to addressing heatwaves, flooding, poor air quality and to boosting carbon capture – so also addressing wider climate-change and health agendas.
- Organising delivery around four intuitive approaches: “manage more, protect more, plant more, engage more”, which should be easy to communicate with residents.
- Tying these thematic approaches to policies and actions, aiming to strengthen a practical framework for maintenance and protection of the existing canopy, together with the delivery of new planting – all with appropriate public involvement.
- Alignment with the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan (e.g., Policy BG/TC) and other key Strategies, so trees can be front and centre in planning and investment decisions.
- Commitment to introducing measurable Key Performance Indicators, so progress can be monitored more transparently.

Officer comment: The above is positive feedback that requires no Officer response or action to change the Strategy.

There are also important weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Addressing these would make this Urban Forest Strategy clearer, more concrete, and more robust. Suggestions for improvements to strengthen the draft are provided in the main body of my feedback. Two Appendices also compare the 2016 versus the new draft Strategy, aiming to maximise the strength of the latter by retaining and optimising key elements from the former. As in my parallel feedback on the draft Biodiversity Strategy – for clarity – specific proposed or new wording are preceded by a → symbol and highlighted in green text.

Officer comment: Noted. This introductory commentary sets the context for the detailed feedback below and does not require a specific change to the Strategy.

3. Keep it local to Cambridge

changes The quote on draft page (i) is charming, but unfortunately from a US source.

Replace the draft Strategy’s opening quote by:

→ *Single trees are extraordinary; trees in number more extraordinary still. To walk in a wood is to find fault with Socrates’s declaration that ‘Trees and open country cannot teach me anything, whereas men in town do.’ Time is kept and curated in different ways by trees, and so it is experienced in different ways when one is among them... It is valuable and disturbing to know that grand oak trees can take three hundred years to grow, three hundred years to live and three hundred years to die.*

Such knowledge, seriously considered, changes the grain of the mind... When woods and trees are destroyed... imagination and memory go with them. W.H. Auden knew this. 'A culture,' he wrote warningly in 1953, 'is no better than its woods.' - Extracted from *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* (2019) by Robert Macfarlane, Professor of Literature and the Environmental Humanities in the Faculty of English; Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

Officer comment: Advances in arboriculture and urban forestry are not limited to Cambridge and many of the important developments have come from the U.S. The opening quote by Greg McPherson was selected for its narrative and community themes, which align closely with the Strategy's emphasis on shared stewardship and the urban forest as a collective story. The use of a non-UK source is not considered detrimental to the Strategy, and no change is proposed..

4. Clarify 'how the Strategy works' and roles

In the 2016 Strategy, Part 2 opens with a concise explanation of: how the Strategy works; its 3- part structure; and who does what. It then sets out in practical terms how trees are currently managed (outlining team structure, workloads, locations, and responsibilities). While this draft Urban Forest Strategy describes its elements (Vision, Principles, Aims, Approaches, Policies, Actions, Topic papers), it does not give the same simple operational overview of delivery structures, roles and responsibilities.

Officer comment: The change in structure from a two-part, all encompassing, document to a more concise core document with Topic Papers for the detail was a conscious decision that has been widely supported though internal consultation and Leadership Team feedback. The core Strategy therefore focuses on vision, direction and policy, with roles, responsibilities and delivery structures set out in the relevant Topic Papers. No change is proposed.

Why this matters

- It is harder for non-specialist readers (e.g. councillors, residents and partners) to understand how day-to-day decisions, inspections, enforcement and 'customer interactions' will work under this draft Strategy.

Officer comment: This point was considered. The Strategy has been deliberately structured to keep the core document concise, with operational detail on inspections, enforcement and customer interactions set out in the relevant Topic Papers. This approach was supported through internal consultation and Leadership Team feedback. No change is proposed..

- The move from "To protect / To enhance / To manage" to "Manage more / Protect more / Plant more / Engage more" is *conceptually* strong but less fully clear in operational terms that was provided by the 3-part structure in the 2016 Strategy.

How to fix this: 1

Add a new short section "How this Strategy Works in Practice" immediately after "How to use the Strategy" (around p. 6–7):

→ How this Strategy Works in Practice

The Urban Forest Strategy takes four complementary approaches to delivering the Council's vision and aims: 'Manage more', 'Protect more', 'Plant more' and 'Engage more'. These build on the previous Strategy's focus on protection, enhancement and management, but extend it to the entire urban forest – including trees in public, private and institutional ownership.

Day-to-day, the Council's Tree Team within City Services will continue to:

- Inspect and maintain trees in parks, open spaces, communal housing land and other Council sites.

- Deliver and commission both tree planting and establishment.
 - Provide arboricultural advice to planning, housing, property and other services.
 - Administer Tree Preservation Orders and notifications for trees in conservation areas.
 - Coordinate engagement, guidance and support for residents, community groups and partners.
- These operational functions are guided by the policies set out under 'Manage more', 'Protect more', 'Plant more' and 'Engage more', and supported by detailed Topic Papers and service-level procedures.

Officer comment: The Strategy follows a logical sequence from its principles through to its policies. The “More” delivery approaches set out how the Council will deliver the Strategy’s principles and aims and are therefore intentionally positioned in the document. Amendments have already been made to the “How to use this Strategy” section to clarify that the Topic Papers are the primary source of operational detail. No change proposed.

How to fix this: 2

Add the following text at the start of the 'Policies' section (p. 29), that clearly links back to the content in “How this Strategy Works in Practice” on operational delivery:

→ The following policies translate the Strategy’s principles and aims into clear rules and expectations for day-to-day decisions and actions. They will be embedded in service procedures, contracts and guidance used by the Tree Team and other Council services, and will inform how we work with partners, residents and developers across the city.

Officer comment: Since public consultation, the “How to use the Strategy” section has been updated to include a new “Using Topic Papers in practice” and “Status of the Topic Papers” subsections, which clarify how policies translate into day-to-day delivery and that Topic Papers are the primary source of operational detail and technical guidance. The introduction to the Policies section has also been amended to align with this clarification.

5. Strengthen the risk-management framework

The 2016 Strategy sets out a detailed tree risk-management framework: legal duty of care, explicit adoption of National Tree Safety Group principles, inspection levels (walk by, basic, detailed, advanced), inspection cycles, and clear policies WP1–WP7 on priorities, inspection, reactive works and emergencies. This draft Urban Forest Strategy refers to ‘Manage more’ and challenges/limitations but does not yet set out a similarly explicit risk-management policy framework.

Why this matters

- Without stronger and explicit risk-management, the draft Strategy risks losing clarity on how public safety, duty of care, and proportionate risk management will be maintained and evidenced.

How to fix this: 1

Under “Manage more” policies (pp. 29–30), **add** an explicit risk-management policy, drawing from WP2:

→ **POLICY Mx: Proportionate Tree Risk Management**

The Council will manage tree-related risks to people and property in line with nationally recognised good practice, including the National Tree Safety Group guidance *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees*. This will:

- Operate a system of proactive and reactive tree inspections, with frequencies proportionate to site use and risk.
- Maintain records of inspections and works carried out.
- Ensure individuals carrying out inspections are suitably trained and competent.

- Prioritise works that address significant risks to health and safety, while recognising the very low level of overall tree risk and the wider public benefits of trees.

How to fix this: 2

Insert explanatory text (pp. 29–30) to clarify inspection and maintenance cycles:

→ The Council will continue to manage trees on parks, open spaces and communal housing land through proactive inspection and maintenance cycles, supplemented by reactive inspections where concerns are raised or events occur. This cyclical approach provides a defensible framework for balancing public safety with the long-term health and value of the urban forest. Detailed service-level procedures and inspection frequencies will be set out in supporting Topic Papers and operational guidance, informed by National Tree Safety Group principles and sector best practice.

Officer comment: The Topic Papers and therefore the commitments they make form part of the strategy. The principle of removing detail from the core document and including it in the Topic Papers has been supported. The commitments cited above are retained within the Topic Papers, including explicit risk-management standards aligned with nationally recognised good practice. The core document introduces the strategy and sets out the justification, approach and policies while providing links to background information, research, operations and responsibilities allowing individuals to delve deeper into a subject when needed, while keeping the core document at a more accessible size. No change proposed.

6. Clarify inspection and asset-management cycles

The 2016 Strategy explicitly describes a three-year inspection and maintenance cycle, the geographic rotation, and the move of parks trees into the same system; it quantifies tree numbers by category and explains recording systems such as Ezytreev. The draft Urban Forest Strategy **refers to** data, tools and monitoring **in general terms** but lacks the same concrete description of inspection cycles and asset-management systems.

Why this matters

- Stakeholders cannot easily see whether the existing three-year cyclical approach and asset-recording discipline will continue or how it might be altered.
- This weakens transparency for residents and for Councillors about service standards and expectations for inspections and routine maintenance.

How to fix this: 1

In the 'DELIVERY' section following the paragraph that follows the four listed 'approaches', and includes the text "targeting canopy change, applying data and tools" (on p 22), **add** a short paragraph on inspection cycles and data systems:

→ The Council will continue to use structured inspection and maintenance cycles for trees in parks, open spaces, communal housing land and other key sites, typically on a multi-year basis appropriate to risk and use. Inspection, condition and works data will be recorded in a corporate tree-management system, ensuring that decisions are evidence-based, auditable and consistent across the city.

How to fix this: 2

In the 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Key Performance Indicators' section (pp. 38-40), **add** a Key Performance Indicator for inspection coverage:

→ Percentage of Council managed trees covered by a recorded inspection within the target cyclical period for their site type (e.g., parks, communal housing, street trees managed by agreement).

Officer comment: The Topic Papers and therefore the commitments they make form part of strategy. The principle of removing detail from the core document and including it the Topic Papers has been welcomed. The commitments cited above remain in the core Strategy and Topic Papers. No change proposed.

7. Boost transparency re public-engagement in tree works

The 2016 Strategy has a clear, three-tier engagement framework (notification, public scrutiny, open consultation) with policies GM3–GM8 setting out which works fall into which category, timescales, and escalation to Executive Councillors.

While the draft Urban Forest Strategy highlights its 'Engage more' approach to emphasise both public engagement and environmental justice, the core document does not restate clear minimum standards on how residents are informed and engaged on specific tree works, nor does it elucidate the thresholds for scrutiny and decision making.

Other Councils have looked hard at these matters. After significant conflict between community, NGOs, contractors and the Council, Sheffield has now developed a 'partnership Street Tree Strategy' that follows best practice in decisions and communication about works affecting street trees. This uses web-based maps, public consultations on significant felling, and ongoing co-design of management approaches, coupled with annual review of measures and reporting to partners and the public.

Northampton publishes clear online guidance on how it meets the statutory 'duty to consult' when felling street trees, including on-tree notices, web notices, minimum consultation periods, and accessible digital and non-digital response routes. This sets out expectations for explaining reasons, replanting proposals, and providing both email and postal channels (so people without internet access can also participate) – aligning closely with proportional and accessible engagement principles.

Cambridge deserves *best practice standards* in this sensitive and important area.

Why this matters

- There could be a perceived *reduction* in transparency on felling, major pruning and replacement planting – compared to previous public experience of explicit triggers and timelines for scrutiny and consultation.
- Without explicit standards, there is a risk of inconsistency between services and projects in how engagement is carried out for significant tree works and management plans.
- Communication with ward Councillors, residents and stakeholders should be improved as (even under the existing Strategy), this has been uneven and inconsistent.

How to start to fix this: 1

Under “Engage more” policies (pp. 34–35), **insert** additional policies, building on GM3–GM7:

→POLICY Ex: Transparency on Tree Works

In order to inform local communities about upcoming routine, planned operations works in their area and why they are considered necessary, the Council will publish planned tree works on its website and, where appropriate (e.g., within a Conservation Area, or when a tree has a TPO, or is otherwise of significance to its locality), on Site Notices at least 20 working days before implementation. This will not apply where urgent safety works are required, but explanations for such reactive works will be provided by arboricultural Officers on request.

Officer comment: This information is provided in Topic Paper 1, which sets out consultation, notification and engagement standards for different categories of tree works, including statutory duties to consult on street trees and protected trees. The approach of locating detailed engagement thresholds and procedures in Topic Papers, rather than in the core Strategy, was supported through internal consultation. No change is proposed.

POLICY Ey: Public Scrutiny of Significant Tree Works

Allowing at least 20 working days for response before a decision is reached, the Council will invite comments from residents, ward Councillors and stakeholders on any significant tree works (affecting e.g., a tree over 75mm in diameter at 1.5m in height, or within a Conservation Area, or when a tree has a TPO) that may materially change the character of an area, and always when:

- Removing any healthy mature trees; and
- Conducting major crown reductions or other operations likely to noticeably alter local landscape character.

Where objections cannot be resolved at Officer level, decisions will be referred to the relevant Executive Councillor. In making a determination, the Councillor must consider both the amenity value and likely impact of the proposed works, and whether these are justified in light of the reasons for and against.

Officer comment: The above is a potential step backwards from the 2016 Tree Strategy and significant change from existing practice. With reference to Part 1 section 8 (Consultation), it was clearly shown that unsolicited consultation is resource hungry and not proportionate to responses received. Regarding consultation response times, these must necessarily be limited. The conservation area notification is a six-week process and the TPO application an eight-week process. Within those times applications/notifications must first be acknowledged, registered or returned (following assessment of submitted information). The consultation must include time to consider and respond or escalate. As committee meets once a month, even with the two-week consultation it is commonly not possible to take an application before committee within the eight-week time frame. No change is proposed.

POLICY Ez: Open Consultation on Planting and Management Plans

After having first consulted Ward Councillors, the Council will then follow an 'open consultation' process to alert residents and stakeholders (including Housing, Highways and Parks Managers) on:

- proposed new tree-planting schemes,
- replacement planting that would alter the character of an area,
- tree-management plans for key open spaces, or
- for any tree works within a Conservation Area.

The Council will use proportional and accessible engagement methods, including: highlighting any proposals as 'consultations' on the Council website; and allowing at least 20 working days for response before a decision is reached.

Where objections cannot be resolved at Officer level, decisions will be referred to the relevant Executive Councillor. In making a determination, the Councillor must consider both the amenity value and likely impact of the proposed works, and whether these are justified in light of the reasons for and against.

How to start to fix this: 2

Start the text for E1 in 'Engage more' by adding a sentence linking to the minimum standards in the previous Strategy:

→ Minimum standards for publishing works, inviting public scrutiny and consulting on major changes to the urban forest will be set out in policies under Engage more, building on the three-tier framework (Notifications, Public scrutiny, and Open consultation) that had established in the 2016–2026 Tree Strategy.

Officer comment: Standards for consultation on new planting, replacement planting that may alter local character, and management plans for key open spaces are set out in the supporting Topic Papers and planting guidance. These require consideration of amenity, local character and equity, and proportionate engagement where proposals would materially affect communities. These

commitments have not been removed since the 2016 Strategy but are in Topic Papers to keep the core Strategy concise. No change is proposed.

8. Clarify the scope and limitations of Council control

The 2016 Strategy is clear that not all urban trees are under direct City management, differentiating where the Tree Team manages trees on behalf of others (e.g. County street trees, housing land, car parks) and where it simply advises. Although this draft Urban Forest Strategy notes that < 25% of Cambridge land is Council-owned and/or -managed and emphasises fragmented responsibilities, it does not clearly restate the specific **categories** of land. Nor does it address the balance between direct control, management by agreement and influence through policy and engagement.

Officer comment: The specific categories of land are set out in Topic Paper 1. The balance between direct control, management by agreement and influence is addressed throughout the Strategy and supporting Topic Papers. No change is proposed.

Why this matters

- These omissions muddy the limits of Council powers, especially where influence relies on partnership or regulation, and what the 'urban forest' really is, outside the Council estate.

Officer comment: What the 'urban forest' and 'urban forestry' are now defined in the Strategy. . In addition, the respective roles of direct control, management by agreement and influence through policy, regulation and engagement are set out across the Strategy and supporting Topic Papers. No additional changes are proposed.

- This risks obscuring both resource constraints and reasonable expectations about the Council's capacity to improve canopy cover on land it does not own.

How to fix this: 1

In the subsection under 'Limitations' called 'Fragmented responsibilities' (p. 18), **extend** the paragraph as follows:

→ Due to less than 25% of land in Cambridge being under Council ownership and/or management, our direct control over the urban forest is limited. The Tree Team directly manages trees in parks and open spaces, communal housing land and other Council-owned sites, and currently manages certain street trees on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council (through agreement). On other land, including private gardens, institutional estates and some highway and utility land, the Council's role is primarily to influence through:

- policy;
- partnership;
- guidance and regulation (e.g., Tree Preservation Orders and planning conditions).

Officer comment 1 of 2: Some clarity of 'Fragmented responsibilities' has been lost in edits. As the Strategy is a policy document, we can't use policy to directly influence outcomes but we can make policy as to how the Council will seek to influence outcomes.

How to fix this: 2

Under the heading 'Who should use this Strategy', immediately following the list on p. 8 **add** this sentence:

→ Together, these diverse audiences reflect the crucial reality that Cambridge's urban forest extends well beyond the trees the Council owns or directly manages. Achieving the aims of this Strategy depends on coordinated action across all of these sectors.

Officer comment 2 of 2: As above this point is also well made. To limit additional wording in the main Strategy, a minor amendment will be made to the ‘Fragmented responsibilities’ section to explicitly reference private landowners, rather than duplicating this point elsewhere.

9. Bridge the gap between 2016 and draft Strategy policies

The 2016 Strategy numbers and defines a full list of policies that have been used for many years. The draft Urban Forest Strategy introduces new policy groupings without explicitly stating which existing policies are being superseded, preserved, or translated. The draft Urban Forest Strategy does not cross reference existing commitments (e.g., emergency-response times or public-engagement thresholds).

Why this matters

- It may create uncertainty for residents, partners and even Officers about whether familiar relied-on commitments (e.g., GM3–GM7, WP7) will continue to apply, or have been altered, or are intended to be replaced by new wording.
- Some important policy elements may have been lost (‘orphaned’).
- This could complicate interpretation during any transition period.

How to fix this: 1

In the ‘Status of the Strategy’ section (p. 8), **add**:

→ This Urban Forest Strategy replaces the Citywide Tree Strategy 2016–2026 as the Council’s overarching policy framework for trees. Key service standards and procedures from the previous Strategy (e.g., emergency-response times, inspection practices and public-engagement mechanisms) have been reviewed and – where appropriate – updated and incorporated into the policies and Topic Papers that support this Strategy. During implementation, the Council will maintain clear cross references so that staff, partners and residents can see how previous commitments have been carried forward or updated.

Officer comment: Building on the 2016 Tree Strategy the UFS has been developed to improve the protection and enhancement of Cambridge’s urban forest. The UFS replaces the Tree Strategy and therefore should be read as the current operative strategy. Extensive consultation has been carried out, in part, to ensure that none of the still pertinent commitments presented in the Tree Strategy have not been left out. No change proposed.

How to fix this: 2

At the start of the draft Strategy’s appendices (p. 43), after the ‘Topic papers’ heading, **insert** a brief note referring to inherited standards:

→ Several Topic Papers incorporate and update operational practices from the 2016– 2026 Citywide Tree Strategy, including risk management, inspection cycles, emergency response and public engagement. This ensures continuity of good practice while aligning with the broader urban forest approach set out in this Strategy.

Officer comment: This recommendation has been incorporated under “Why Do we Need A Strategy” where an explanation of the use of Topic Papers has been added.

How to fix this: 3

Ensure that clear cross references are easily publicly accessible, so that residents, partners and staff can see how previous commitments have been carried forward or updated (including where these have been superseded). My Appendix 1 to this feedback seeks to map the 2016 policies onto the current draft Urban Forest Strategy policies – this may provide a decent *start*.

Officer comment: Officer comments to these points are made later in this response document, where appropriate.

How to fix this: 4

my Appendix 2 to this feedback, which highlights where some possibly significant 2026 Tree Strategy elements seem to have been ‘lost’, and also suggests how to ‘retrieve’ them.

Officer comment: Officer comments to these points are made later in this response document, where appropriate.

10. Link canopy targets better to planning control

Review The draft Urban Forest Strategy cites a canopy target (minimum 20% by 2050 – but **is that really enough, in the context of the Treeconomics 3-30-300 Rule?**) and notes the lack of a citywide canopy target in currently adopted planning policy.

Officer comment: The rationale for the 20% canopy ambition by 2050 is set out in Topic Paper 12. The Strategy seeks to strengthen alignment with emerging Local Plan policy where possible. No change is proposed..

However, the 2016 Strategy is better tied to development control policies and practical management of trees on development sites. This draft Strategy should more clearly state how its canopy ambitions will be embedded in development management decisions, pending full adoption in the Greater Cambridge Local Plan... the draft for which has also so very recently been under public consultation.

Officer comment: The UFS cannot embed commitment to trees in the emerging Local Plan which is led by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service and subject to statutory processes. For the commitments made in the UFS to be embedded in local plan policy, the Local Plan needs to reference the UFS. No change proposed.

Why this matters

- Without clear interim expectations for development, there is a risk that the canopy and equity ambitions remain aspirational rather than materially influencing development outcomes.
- This misses an opportunity to bridge current Local Plan policies (e.g., Policy 71) and the forthcoming policies (e.g., BG/TC) in the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

How to fix this: 1

In the text following the heading 'Aim 1: Increase canopy cover' (p.20) and also under the heading 'Protect more' (pp. 31–33) **add** the following explicit development-management text:

→ Until a citywide canopy target is formally adopted via the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, the Council will use the principles and aims of this Strategy to guide development-management decisions, seeking to:

- Protect existing high-value canopy, particularly in areas of low provision or high vulnerability to the Urban Heat Island Effect;
- Secure high-quality replacement planting where tree loss is unavoidable, with adequate space and arrangements for both tree establishment and long-term care;
- Require new developments to contribute to overall canopy enhancement in line with both this Strategy’s 20% canopy ambition by 2050 and the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan policies.

Officer comment: Topic Paper 9 sets out how canopy ambitions can be achieved through development management. Tree planting alone cannot achieve canopy cover targets without preserving existing trees and their canopy also. The UFS along with its Topic Papers aids Draft Local Plan canopy targets by providing the guidance on how to do so. No change proposed.

How to fix this: 2

Under “Policy Gaps” in Limitations (p. 19), strengthen the commitment by **adding**:

→ While the benefits of trees are well evidenced, not all tree-related decisions are governed by clear local planning policies. There is currently no adopted citywide canopy-cover target, although the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan would address this, through Policy BG/TC. Until that policy has been adopted, the Urban Forest Strategy will provide the primary planning and design framework for protecting and enhancing canopy cover across the city.

Officer comment: UFS has been updated to include reference to canopy targets in emerging strategies.

11. Make canopy targets meaningful at the local level

Thinking of the neighbourhood with which I am most familiar (the northern half of Petersfield), the draft Urban Forest Strategy could be strengthened by addressing ward- and neighbourhood-level issues much more explicitly.

Officer comment: This information is detailed in Topic Paper 10. It was always intended to be presented in the UFS in the form of maps in the final versions.

Why this matters

- Failing to address these concerns about how ‘Protect more’ and ‘Plant more’ could be **implemented** in practice in highly built-up inner city neighbourhoods like north Petersfield risks making too much of this draft Strategy seem aspirational, meaningful only in *other* areas.
- This would only **increase** local “pressure on healthcare, social inequality and pressure from development on ecosystem services.” (draft Urban Forest Strategy, p. 6)
- These suggested changes keep the citywide strategy intact while making Cambridge's inner urban realities and opportunities **evident** in the text, and also providing a clearer ‘hook’ for local projects in neighbourhoods like north Petersfield.

How to fix this: 1

Under Challenges (p.16) in ‘Benefits, Challenges and Limitations’ add:

→ “In inner-city urban wards, canopy cover varies greatly between adjacent areas – even where there may be a relatively high *mean* canopy height. Narrow streets, small gardens and limited public open space restrict easy opportunities for traditional street trees, placing even greater emphasis on the value of boundary trees, communal courtyards and institutional land (for example in schools and housing estates) to deliver vital shade, essential cooling and crucial public amenity.”

Officer comment: This principle is covered in Plant More policies and supporting Topic Papers. No change is proposed.

How to fix this: 2

In the 1st numbered section under Delivery Opportunities (p. 22), after the text pertaining to spatial targeting, add:

→ “Priority will be given to micro areas within low- or average-canopy wards (i.e., where canopy cover and/or canopy height are low). Here, the Strategy will focus on small-scale, high-impact interventions: planting in school grounds, in pocket parks and in housing courtyards, while also actively seeking to secure new street trees.”

Officer comment: As above this principle is already reflected within the ‘Plant More’ delivery approach and supporting Topic Papers. No change is proposed.

How to fix this: 3

To the text on p. 28, pertaining to Tree protection, add:

→ “We will use ward-level data to review whether existing protection in dense inner wards adequately covers trees that provide significant cooling and shelter in streets with limited public open space. We will work with residents and landowners to identify boundary and courtyard trees of high local value and consider appropriate long-term protection where this aligns with wider planning policy.”

Officer comment: This concept is covered in Policy P1 and Action 3, which focus on targeted protection informed by local data and engagement with residents and landowners in areas of greatest need. No change is proposed.

How to fix this: 4

To the text under POLICY PL1 (p. 33) add:

→ “Along inner-city terraces – focus on: infill planting in existing small open spaces; planting and retaining trees in school and church grounds; encouraging tree planting in front and rear gardens where space allows; and securing street or courtyard trees as part of redevelopment.”

Officer comment: As above

How to fix this: 5

To the text on POLICY E1 (p. 34) add:

→ “Neighbourhood pilots will be used to test different delivery models in contrasting contexts, including a pilot in an inner-city ward to explore how residents, schools and housing providers can collectively increase canopy in a densely built-up terraced areas, with limited public land.”

Officer comment: The UFS cannot make commitments to specific projects that require additional resources or funding not yet secured. This principle is however covered in Policy E1, Actions 3, Action 6 and Action 8 which support partnership working in different neighbourhood contexts. No change is proposed.

12. Understaffing and over-reliance on volunteers is risky

On understaffing: commitments embedded in this draft Strategy largely would create significant additional pressure on a small, already-stretched staff. Formal service standards for inspections, response times and enquiry handling would demand tighter logging and monitoring, perhaps forcing reductions in ‘discretionary’ work – unless capacity were to increase. Strengthened notification and consultation procedures would add administrative workload, also likely requiring either extra support or reprioritisation. A tiered inspection regime with KPIs would increase tracking and reporting workloads, although appropriate use of AIs could reduce this admin work.

Why this matters

- Key objectives of the draft Urban Forest Strategy may be at risk.
- Scaling back activities risks missing standards, consultation delays and increased stress on the arboricultural team.

How to fix this: 1

Reliable delivery of all objectives may require additional arboricultural and administrative staff.

Officer comment: Agreed, but this is over and above that presented in Action 8, the strategy cannot commit to additional resources. The UFS cannot commit to additional staffing or resources beyond those currently approved; however, it is intended to provide an evidence base to support future business cases and external funding bids where opportunities arise. No change is proposed.

How to fix this: 2

Building a comprehensive, publicly accessible urban-forest inventory and valuation may exceed staff capacity, but project funding or external partners could make a significant difference.

Officer comment: Agreed, this concept is embedded into the UFS and supporting Topic Papers. No change is proposed.

On over-heavy reliance on volunteers: The draft Urban Forest Strategy leans most on community and volunteer effort under ‘Engage more’ and also in some policy delivery and partnership sections. While using volunteers and community partners to enhance delivery is reasonable, this draft Strategy implicitly leans on us (i.e., community volunteers) to underpin core planting, equity and aftercare outcomes. This is risky given acknowledged funding and staffing constraints and the unequal capacity of different communities to contribute.

In a bit more detail:

Officer comment: Engagement is not only concerned with managing or relying on volunteers but is also concerned with collaboration and giving the public the information, guidance and support required to promote and actuate self-help. If every garden owner with room to plant a tree did, canopy cover targets could easily be met (surpassed). The UFS does not rely on volunteers to deliver aims; community action is intended to complement Council activity and help extend reach where communities are able and willing to participate.

(a) Throughout the draft Strategy, every instance of the word ‘stewardship’ is associated with shared / partnership / community... while this is reasonable in proportion, the draft Strategy lacks clear specification of Council-led mechanisms for managing long-term stewardship to ensure e.g., new trees are surviving. A long-term, legacy view, perhaps associated with planning conditions for funding to resource the local authority to ensure long-term compliance, ideally via a holistic management scheme for public and private spaces.

(b) "Delivering in Partnership" (pp. 27–28) emphasises cross-sector collaboration, as best practice supports shared stewardship and partnership working.

(c) Policies PL1, PL2, E1 and E2 refer to “partnership engagement”, “joined up approaches”, “donations and sponsorship”, stressing working with communities and businesses to extend capacity by drawing on donations and/or sponsorship and community energy.

(d) Action 3 (equity), Action 6 (shared stewardship) and Action 8 (capacity and resourcing) all assume community planting, sponsorship, volunteer aftercare and third-sector partnerships as core delivery tools. This has worked in initiatives such as ‘Free Trees for Babies’ and ‘Neighbourhood Canopy campaigns’ that add trees and build support while engaging residents who have the time, space and energy to participate.

(e) This draft Strategy notes (p. 19) decreasing internal funding and human resources, and presents both external funding and project management as “essential to successful project delivery”.

Why this matters

- Risks arise wherever reliance on volunteers substitutes for core capacity.
- If partners are assumed rather than secured, key programmes (for example large-scale planting in low-canopy neighbourhoods) may be under-delivered.
- If “extending capacity” via partners is needed to meet core planting and engagement outcomes, delivery of equity-focused objectives are vulnerable to volunteer availability and charitable funding patterns – can this be acceptable?

- Priority areas may well coincide with communities with fewer resources, less spare time and less capacity to volunteer; most seriously: relying on all communities to ‘self-deliver’ planting and aftercare jeopardises the 20% canopy target and could reinforce existing inequities.
- As the Friends of St Matthew’s Piece learned swiftly over the very dry spring and summer of 2025 while tending its newly planted EIP-funded community orchard on York Street, young trees have demanding needs for both adequate and consistent watering (as well as routine maintenance). If, through this emerging Strategy, responsibility for this is pushed *too far* onto volunteers with inadequate Council-based support, tree- establishment failure would undermine crucial climate and biodiversity objectives.
- If external funding and project management truly are “essential to successful project delivery”, that reflects a structural reliance in this draft Strategy on external/volunteer capacity for core delivery... not just as ‘nice to have extras’; this must be unreasonable at least insofar as obligations like risk management, equity in canopy cover, and delivery of long-term climate resilience. And yet...
- **Aim 1: to increase canopy cover (20% by 2050):** If community-led planting and sponsorship lag (e.g., where constrained by cost-of-living pressures or volunteer fatigue), the citywide canopy target (particularly gains in low-canopy wards) is at risk.
- **Aim 3: Ensure equitable access to benefits:** Areas most in need of shade and cleaner air may have least capacity to mobilise volunteers; over-reliance on community resource is plainly structurally misaligned with the principle of environmental justice.
- **Aim 6: Shared stewardship and participation:** If the Tree Team lacks staff time for facilitation, support and communications, community and volunteer schemes are likely to be sporadic, short lived or concentrated in affluent areas – thus *undermining* the stated ambition of ‘shared stewardship’.

How to fix this:

Realistic resources must be proportionate to and aligned with responsibilities and commitments.

Officer comment: If the strategy vision was overly influenced by what internal resources are currently available, it would necessarily be far less ambitious and its focus would be health and safety, legal and financial risk and, trying to maintain existing canopy cover. But, as the strategy explains, this is not enough. We must therefore acknowledge that funding and capacity has its limits and supplement resources externally if we are to enhance canopy cover meaningfully. Using volunteers is only one of the external resources used and the majority of external aid has come in the form of grant funded projects, that have successfully contributed to canopy cover targets. Increased funding and staffing would absolutely reduce reliance on external resources but with 75% of land being in private ownership, canopy cover targets would still rely heavily on resident participation.

Appendix 1: Policy number mapping & suggested associated wording tightening

Manage More (M1–M5)

Draft UFS policy

M1: Prioritise legal and H&S obligations, structured risk-based inspection and maintenance, emergency response, proportionality.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

WP1 (prioritise legal obligations); WP2 (risk management and inspection system); WP5–WP7 (cyclical maintenance, reactive works, emergency response).

Key tightening / missing clauses to import for ‘Manage More’ policies

1) Import explicit reference to the **3-year inspection / maintenance cycle** for parks and communal housing trees, or state minimum inspection frequencies, as in WP5, so ‘structured, risk-based inspection’ is not purely generic.

- 2) Reinstate the 90-minute emergency response standard from WP7 (even as 'aim to') to avoid weakening expectations.
- 3) Carry across the four inspection levels (walk-by, basic, detailed, advanced) and the 'competent person' definition from WP2, either in the policy or by cross-reference to Topic Paper 1, to anchor what 'risk-based' means in practice.
- 4) Preserve the statement that legal/statutory duties and tree safety take precedence over all other aspects of the service (WP1) by adding a short bullet to M1, so this is not softened by the more general 'balancing' language.

Officer comment: Operational and technical obligations are now located in the Topic Papers to maintain a more concise core document. Topic Papers nevertheless form part of the strategy and set out the necessary service standards and commitments, including inspection cycles, competence requirements and emergency response arrangements. No change is proposed.

Draft UFS policy

M2: Pests and diseases, follow government/best-practice advice, biosecurity, proportional and evidence-led responses, diversification.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

Parts of WP2 (risk; plant health), plus background text on plant health in Part 2.

Key tightening / missing clauses to import for 'Manage More' policies

- 1) Add an explicit commitment to '**maintain high standards of biosecurity**' and to avoid high-risk planting or sourcing routes, echoing Topic Paper 3 and the 2016 Strategy's discussion of pests and disease.
- 2) Add that Tree procurement should be thru **plant-healthy UK** nurseries (where necessary, any imports should be quarantined by the vending nursery before planting out here), and there should be a 'Maintenance & Defects Period' of 3-5 years for new plantings.
- 3) To minimise risk, specify that new avenues of trees should **not** be of a single species, but of a number of different species that grow to a similar habit – with the appearance a single avenue – allowing the boulevard to remain in place, if disease were to strike.
- 4) Requiring structured pest/disease **monitoring and recording** (e.g., in EzyTreev) so this is not just reactive.

Officer comment: As Topic Papers form part of the strategy and make the necessary operational commitments amendments it is not necessary to repeat text in the core document, Topic Paper 3 sets out our protocols around biosecurity And reference the Plant healthy Scheme. No change is proposed to the core policy wording.

Draft UFS policy

M3: Trees, Damage and Subsidence – manage mitigation requests/claims with hierarchy, robust evidence, work with insurers and residents.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 section 3.3 'Trees and Subsidence' and related policies (likely in GM/other WP sections – continues beyond extracted text).

Key tightening / missing clauses to import for 'Manage More' policies

- 1) Import the **explicit evidential standards**: requirement for appropriate investigations, monitoring and engineering options before felling, as in the 2016 Strategy's subsidence section, to avoid claims being handled on *ad hoc* 'robust evidence' alone.

- 2) Reinstate that alternatives (e.g., pruning or engineering) **must** be fully explored before consideration of tree removal proposals – not just ‘considered’ – to avoid introduction of a softer hierarchy than in the 2016 Strategy.
- 3) Add to M3 a clear and firm statement about the Council not accepting speculative or weak insurance claims – to deter opportunistic applications that risk the loss of high-value trees (as has been seen in 25/0432/TTPO, 24/0413/TTPO, 23/0119/TTPO, and 22/0271/TTPO – all in relation to the **same** three TPO’d trees).
- 4) Add a short **hierarchy**: surveillance → containment → phased replacement, to mirror the clear mitigation hierarchy used for subsidence in WP/GM, when an insurance claim or concern is raised about subsidence allegedly caused by a Council-owned tree.

Officer comment: As the Topic Papers form part of the strategy and set out the necessary operational commitments, it is not necessary to repeat detailed protocols within the core Strategy. The evidential standards and mitigation hierarchy for subsidence are set out in Topic Paper 4, which has been independently reviewed by a specialist barrister. No change is proposed to the core policy wording..

Draft UFS policy

M4: Capacity and Resourcing – maintain skills, systems, budgets, seek external grants, review capacity regularly.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 sections 2.2–2.7 (Tree Team structure, EzyTreev, framework contracts) plus implicit resourcing in WP1–WP7.

Key tightening / missing clauses to import for ‘Manage More’ policies

- 1) Consider importing the **minimum arboricultural staffing expectation** from the 2016 Strategy's descriptive text (three FTE arboriculturists covering both regulatory and management functions) as a benchmark, even if phrased as ‘will ensure staffing levels remain at least commensurate with...’

Officer comment: The Strategy cannot be used to make a specific commitment to staffing levels as these are subject to annual budget-setting and corporate workforce processes. However, the UFS is intended to provide the strategic case for maintaining appropriate capacity and for seeking external funding where opportunities arise. No change is proposed.

- 2) Add an explicit clause that the Council will maintain a **single live corporate tree inventory** (EzyTreev) for all council-managed trees as a condition for safe management, mirroring the 2016 Strategy.
- 3) Include the requirement that contractors are appointed via a **quality-assured framework** and that arboricultural work is undertaken only by suitably qualified, insured contractors.

Officer comment: As Topic Papers form part of the strategy and make the necessary commitments it is not necessary to repeat the protocols set out in Topic Paper 1 and Topic paper 6. No change is proposed.

Draft UFS policy

M5: Trees on Housing, Tenanted, Leased Land and other council land – responsibilities for communal housing land, tenanted gardens, leases; oversight by Tree Team.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

WP3 (review management of trees not directly managed by Tree Team); 2016 text in 2.2 and later sections on tenanted land and Property Services.

Key tightening / missing clauses to import for 'Manage More' policies

- 1) Tighten the wording around **tenanted gardens**: import the 2016 Strategy's expectation that tenants must maintain trees safely and comply with legal protections, and that the Council may take enforcement action where risk or statutory breach arises.
- 2) Strengthen 'will liaise with the Tree Team where arboricultural expertise is required' to '**must** seek Tree Team advice before commissioning or approving significant tree works or alterations', to avoid fragmentation.
- 3) Consider a clear commitment, as in WP3, that the Council **will review and bring into a consistent regime** all trees on land it owns or manages (including property and car parks) within a defined timescale.

Officer comment: Tenants obligations are set out in tenancy agreements. The strategy cannot enforce tree maintenance as suggested above or demand cross service consultation. The UFS provides strategic direction and guidance, with operational responsibilities and protocols set out in the relevant Topic Papers and service procedures. No change is proposed..

General: wording tweaks for Manage More

- Replace some 'will work to seek an appropriate balance' style phrases with '**will** balance' or '**must** demonstrate how it has balanced...', so the duty to weigh risks versus amenity is operationalised, as in WP2.
- Where retaining 'will aim to' (e.g., emergency response times), justify it in Topic Paper 1 but keep **at least one explicit standard**, so no regression from 2016 practice.

Officer comment: The point about avoiding regression from the 2016 Strategy is noted. Operational standards and service-level commitments are set out in the supporting Topic Papers, particularly Topic Paper 1, to keep the core Strategy concise while retaining necessary detail. The "Manage More" section and Policy M1 strengthen the 2016 position by explicitly prioritising legal and health and safety duties and requiring proportionate risk management alongside retention of healthy trees. While some wording retains professional judgement, the requirement to demonstrably balance duty of care with amenity and long-term canopy benefits is embedded in Policy M1 and Topic Paper 1. Emergency response standards, inspection frequencies and competence requirements continue to apply and are not weakened by the UFS; they are carried forward in Topic Paper 1 rather than restated in the core Strategy. No change is proposed.

Protect More (P1–P6)

Draft UFS policy

P1: GCSP's regulatory powers efficiently protect amenity trees and secure replacement planting; consult Council Tree Team when council trees at risk; structural planting to be TPO'd.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

Part 1 of 2016 Strategy, especially policies on TPOs, conservation areas, and use of planning powers (WP equivalents in Part 1).

Tightening / import suggestions for 'Protect More' policies

- 1) Import the **criteria for TPO expediency and amenity** from the 2016 Strategy's Part 1 policies, so 'efficient use' is not too discretionary.

Officer comment: As Topic Papers form part of the Strategy and set out the necessary operational guidance, it is not necessary to repeat detailed TPO criteria in the core Strategy. The criteria for expediency and amenity are set out in Topic Paper 8. No change is proposed..

2) Tighten 'where appropriate' around replacement planting: specify that replacement is normally required **at least on a 1:1 basis or better** – unless clear justification is documented, echoing 2016 practice.

Officer comment: The UFC cannot make requirements over and above the Local Plan but it can and does offer the guidance required to inform proportionate and considered decisions and conditions in line with the merging Local Plan. No change is proposed.

3) Add a clause that new TPOs will normally be considered **proactively** in response to canopy loss analysis, not only reactive to threats, to carry forward the more strategic tone of the 2016 Strategy's.

Officer comment: The UFS cannot commit to action without the necessary resources. This principle is reflected in Topic Paper 9, which sets out the approach to proactive TPO consideration informed by canopy loss evidence. The intent to review protection in response to canopy change is captured within Policy P1. No change is proposed to the core policy wording.

Draft UFS policy

P2: Resist removal / excessive works to trees without robust justification; TPO apps lacking evidence not validated; CA works resisted without justification.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 Part 1 policies on TPO decision-making and conservation area notifications (including thresholds and justifications).

Tightening / import suggestions for 'Protect More' policies

1) Import any **explicit refusal tests** from the 2016 Strategy's policy (e.g., 'will normally refuse applications that...'), and mirror that language here to avoid a weaker, purely procedural 'will not be validated' focus.

Officer comment: This point is addressed through the combined use of Topic Papers 9 and 2. Topic Paper 9 sets out the statutory and planning control framework for assessing tree work proposals, while Topic Paper 2 provides practical guidance on the types of reasons for tree works that are likely to be supported or resisted in principle. To strengthen clarity and usability for applicants and decision-makers, a cross-reference will be added in Topic Paper 9 to the "Reasons for Tree Works" section in Topic Paper 2. This improves transparency without duplicating guidance or adding new policy requirements.

2) Add a requirement that arboricultural evidence must comply with recognized standards (e.g., BS5837, appropriate professional qualifications), as implicit in the 2016 Strategy's text.

Officer comments: The appropriate professional standards are included in Topic Paper 1, BS 3998 and Topic Paper 9 BS 5837. The core policy cannot require information over and above that required by the Tree Work Application Form requirements, but the topic papers can provide guidance on the quality and standards of evidence to support decision-making. No change is proposed.

Draft UFS policy

P3: The Council will pursue enforcement / prosecution where protected trees are damaged or destroyed; using tools e.g., CAVAT.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 Tree Protection, Damage and Compensation policies (later in Part 2 / appendices).

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Protect More’ policies

- 1) Import the **stepwise enforcement process** from the 2016 Strategy: investigation → formal warning → prosecution / direct action → recovery of costs, so P3 reads as an operational commitment, not just an *intent*.
- 2) Reinstate any 2016 Strategy statement that the Council will also seek **replacement planting notices** (where powers exist), so enforcement is tied to restoration of canopy.

Officer comments: The UFS cannot impose greater enforcement than that detailed in GCSP’s Enforcement Policy. Planning Compliance powers are set out in Topic Paper 9 and including powers of enforcement and the serving of Tree Replacement Notices.

Draft UFS policy

P4: Planning permissions will include appropriate tree preservation and planting provisions via conditions/TPOs, in proportion to development.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 Part 1 policies on development control and ‘right tree, right place’ plus canopy targets.

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Protect More’ policies

- 1) Add explicit cross-reference to **BS5837** and to the 2016 Strategy’s requirements for tree protection plans and arboricultural method statements, so ‘appropriate provision’ has a clear standard.
- 2) Consider importing the 2016 Strategy’s expectation that **viability arguments** do not normally justify avoidable tree loss where standards can be met.

Officer comments: Both these points are included in Topic Paper 9. As Topic Papers form part of the Strategy and contain these commitments it does not need to be repeated in the core policy wording.

Draft UFS policy

P5: Aspirational review of existing TPOs, use area orders, periodic updating.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 statements about TPO coverage and need for review (if present) plus appendices on existing coverage.

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Protect More’ policies

- 1) Tighten ‘will seek to review’ by adding at least a **priority list** (e.g., ‘starting with area orders older than X years’ or ‘wards with highest canopy loss’), drawing from the 2016 Strategy’s emphasis on canopy mapping.
- 2) Consider adding that reviews will be informed by **canopy-loss hot-spots** and Tree Equity mapping, to embed a new evidence-led approach.

Officer comment: Policy P5 includes a priority list that will be applied with reference to canopy change and loss. Point 2 is included in Topic Paper 9. As Topic Papers form part of the Strategy and contain this evidence lead-approach it does not need to be repeated in the core policy wording.

Draft UFS policy

P6: Protecting public tree assets; enforcement and compensation where council trees damaged.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 Appendix / policy on damage to public trees and recovery of CAVAT/CTLA value.

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Protect More’ policies

- 1) Import the 2016 Strategy's statement that **unauthorised works to council trees** may result in removal of permissions/licences or recovery of full reinstatement costs – to strengthen deterrence.
- 2) Add that the Council will normally require **like-for-like or better replacement** *in addition to* financial compensation as determined by full and correctly performed CAVAT assessments (cf the two 03/02/26 uploads to the Planning Portal for 25/0432/TTPO regarding CAVAT valuations pertaining to that application).

Officer comment: The approach to unauthorised works to Council-owned trees, enforcement, compensation and restoration is set out in Topic Paper 11, which forms part of the Urban Forest Strategy. Topic Paper 11 establishes that unauthorised damage to Council trees may be pursued where legally available. That amenity value (normally assessed using CAVAT) and direct replacement or remedial costs may be recovered in line with the polluter pays principle, and that restoration planting may be sought where appropriate to reinstate canopy and amenity value. As these operational commitments are set out in Topic Paper 11, it is not necessary to restate this level of detail in the core policy wording.

- 3) These protections and enforcement standards must apply to **any** TPO'd tree, not only Council-owned trees

Officer comment: The legal procedures for enforcement and prosecution differ when considering breaches involving TPOs, conservation areas and planning control or criminal or civil damage to Council-managed trees and therefore cannot be the same.

General: wording tweaks for Protect More

- Where the 2016 Strategy uses stronger verbs ('will refuse', 'will expect'), mirror that where the legal basis is clear; keep 'will seek to' only for truly aspirational elements (e.g., TPO review frequency).
- Avoid repeated 'where appropriate' around enforcement and replacement: in the 2016 Strategy, these powers are framed as the **default** response unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Officer comment: We've retained strong directive language where the Council has control, and only used aspirational wording where delivery depends on funding, land ownership or partners. Replacement and enforcement remain the default response unless justified otherwise. No proposed change.

Plant More (PL1–PL4)

Draft UFS policy

PL1: Encourage and seek new planting on public and private land; target large, long-lived species and diversity; prioritise low-canopy areas.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 Part 1 policies on enhancement, 'right tree in right place', and consultation on new planting (GM7).

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Plant More’ policies

- 1) Import explicit recognition of the **'right tree in the right place'** principle and reference to constraints (utilities, species suitability), which has strong public support in the 2016 Strategy and helps defend choices.

Officer comment: Topic Paper 2 gives clear guidance on planting and tree selection, following similar principles as ‘right tree in the right place’ however this guidance focuses on fitting the best tree to existing constraints, whereas the UFS guidance goes further, to ensure that the right space is created to allow more beneficial trees to be planted. No change is proposed.

2) Add a clause that **new planting schemes will have defined canopy gain objectives** (e.g., contribution towards the 20% by 2050 aim, or local canopy targets), linking back to the canopy-metric logic in Topic Paper 12.

Officer comment: The link between new planting and the long-term canopy ambitions is embedded throughout the strategy and topic papers. No change is proposed.

3) Include the 2016 Strategy's focus on drought/pollution-tolerant species for streets to keep that applied emphasis.

Officer comment: This is highlighted in Topic Paper 2 and does not therefore need to be repeated in core policy wording. No change is proposed.

Draft UFS policy

PL2: Aspirational funded establishment period of at least 3 years (watering, mulching, formative pruning).

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 text on establishment and aftercare (Part 2 and planting guidance).

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Plant More’ policies

1) Tighten ‘will aim to ensure’ by stating that the Council **will not normally undertake new planting without an identified establishment budget and arrangements**, echoing the implied discipline in the 2016 Strategy.

2) Import quantitative watering guidance from the Council’s ‘Watering new trees’ webpage into Topic Paper 2, and cross-reference from PL2 so the commitment is measurable.

Officer comment: Policy PL2 already sets a clear aspirational expectation that new planting sites should be supported by a funded establishment period of at least three years, while explicitly recognising that delivery is subject to funding availability, land ownership and partnership arrangements. The Strategy cannot impose an absolute precondition on all planting activity without risking unintended constraints on delivery. No change is proposed.

Draft UFS policy

PL3: Replacement planting for any lost council-owned tree unless clear justification not to replant; allow off-site alternatives.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

GM2 (reluctant felling, replacement as close as practicable); GM7 (consultation on replacement schemes).

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Plant More’ policies

1) Import GM2’s strong statement that the Council will not remove trees ‘**without good reason**’ allied by specifications for how these reasons should be documented, and explicitly tie this to PL3 so removal and replacement sit together.

Officer comment: Policy P2 will be amended to make it clear this policy refers to council trees also. No change is proposed to Policy PL3.

2) Add a preference for **on-site replacement** first, then ‘nearby’ within the same neighbourhood, and only *then* off-site substitution, mirroring GM2’s ‘as close as practicable’

Officer comment: On-site replacement planting relating to Development Management is captured in Topic Paper 9. For Council-owned tree stock outside development contexts, it is not proportionate or practical to require neighbourhood-level prioritisation in every case, given capacity and resource constraints. The Council manages its tree asset strategically at a citywide scale to maximise overall canopy and equity benefits. Accordingly, while the original site will normally be considered first for replacement, where this is not feasible replacement will be prioritised elsewhere in the city where it can deliver the greatest net benefit, rather than being limited to the immediate neighbourhood.

Draft UFS policy

PL4: Aspirational: explore engineered pits, rain gardens, structural soils in developments and highways.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 guidance on engineered pits and structural planting (in Part2 / appendices).

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Plant More’ policies

1) Import from the 2016 Strategy the more technical requirements (e.g., minimum soil volumes, avoidance of tree ‘planting pits’ that compromise longevity) into Topic Paper 2 and reference them here so PL4 has teeth.

2) Replace ‘will explore opportunities’ with ‘**will expect schemes of a certain scale/typology** to consider these options and justify alternatives’ – thereby retaining aspiration while adding a clear planning ‘hook’.

Officer comment: Not all sites are the same, and tree pits should be site specific. The UFS is not setting a standard to be met but provides guidance on the key elements of tree pit design. Topic Paper 2 includes technical requirements, maximising establish and longevity. Policy PL4 is therefore intentionally aspirational to encourage innovation where it is appropriate and feasible, without creating rigid expectations.

Engage More (E1–E4)

Draft UFS policy

E1: Facilitate sustainable and proactive management through public and partnership engagement; proportionate consultation.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

GM3–GM8 (notifications, public scrutiny, open consultation, escalation to Executive Councillor).

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Engage More’ policies

1) Import the **three-tier engagement architecture** (notification, public scrutiny, consultation) from GM3– GM8, ideally as a short sub-policy or in Topic Paper 5 with an explicit cross-reference in E1, so that ‘engagement’ is structured – not *ad hoc*.

2) Retain the clear trigger from the 2016 Strategy that unresolved objections go to the **relevant Executive Councillor** (GM6, GM8), so decision-making appears (and is) less discretionary.

Officer comment: The consultation and escalation framework for Council-owned tree works previously set out in GM3–GM8 of the 2016 Tree Strategy is retained and updated in Topic Paper 1. No changes proposed.

Draft UFS policy

E2: Aspirational joined-up approaches via partnerships, sponsorship, donations.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 consultation text (support for partnerships with voluntary bodies and community groups) and parts of GM7 (community involvement in planting plans).

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Engage More’ policies

1) Add an explicit clause that partnership schemes must comply with the Council’s **technical standards and Tree Team sign-off**, to avoid variable-quality community planting that would undermine canopy health (a risk noted in the draft’s ‘Challenges’ section).

2) Consider referencing existing programmes (Free Trees for Babies, Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign) as the **default channels** for sponsorship rather than entirely new *ad hoc* schemes.

Officer comment: The importance of maintaining consistent technical standards and governance across partnership and community-led initiatives is recognised. To address this, the wording under Policy E2 will be clarified to make explicit that partnership activity involving planting or works to trees on Council land will align with the Council’s technical guidance and governance arrangements. This will strengthen quality assurance while retaining flexibility for diverse partnership models over the lifetime of the Strategy.

Draft UFS policy

E3: Aspirational – quantify benefits of the urban forest and create opportunities for community participation in valuation.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

2016 references to i-Tree and valuation methods (CAVAT/CTLA) in Part 1 and 2.

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Engage More’ policies

1) Import the 2016 Strategy’s commitment to **using recognised tools** (i-Tree, CAVAT/CTLA) so the valuation framework is consistent over time and comparable (noting, per the two 03/02/26 uploads to the Planning Portal for 25/0432/TTPO on CAVAT valuations, the importance of such valuation tools being used correctly – to maintain credibility).

2) Tighten the link between **valuation** and **decision-making**: state that results will inform prioritisation, enforcement and communications, echoing the way the 2016 Strategy uses valuation to justify investment.

Officer comment: Policy E3 is intended to use established tools in proportionate, accessible ways to support engagement and citizen science, helping people and decision-makers better understand the many benefits of Cambridge’s urban forest and encouraging wider investment of time, skills and resources. E3 is not intended to focus on enforcement or regulatory decision-making. No changes proposed..

Draft UFS policy

E4: Provide clear, accessible information about tree management and planting via website, notices, consultation.

Closest 2016 policy/ies

GM3–GM4 (publishing planned works, explaining reactive works on request).

Tightening / import suggestions for ‘Engage More’ policies

1) Import the 2016 Strategy’s **20-working-day notice** expectation for planned works (GM3) and the 7-day response target for enquiries (GM1), or explain if and how these have been superseded.

Officer comment: The notice periods for planned works are now located in Topic Paper 1. These commitments have not been removed or weakened; they have been relocated to the Topic Papers to keep the core Strategy concise while maintaining continuity of service standards.

2) Add a commitment to maintain an **up-to-date online map/list of planned works and planting** (mirroring that given in GM3 via 2016 Strategy’s plan to deliver a ‘Planned tree works’ webpage), also upgrading from the 2016 Strategy by making the public-facing commitment line up with the Urban Forest Strategy’s emphasis on using live datasets, mapping tools and KPIs to plan and explain work on the urban forest.

Officer comment: These commitments have not been removed or weakened; they have been relocated to Topic Paper 1 to keep the core Strategy concise while maintaining continuity of service standards.

Appendix 2: Content not in draft UFS, but in 2016 Strategy policies

Appendix 2 is arranged according to the 2016 Tree Strategy policies, highlighting ‘orphaned’ content that has *not* been clearly carried through to the draft Urban Forest Strategy. It also suggests **how** such content could be brought forward into the draft Urban Forest Strategy by modest wording changes.

Summary of ‘orphaned’ 2016 elements

The key areas from WP/GM that are **not clearly embedded** in the draft Urban Forest Strategy to evaluate for re-insertion (either in Policies or in Topic Papers – with explicit cross-references):

1. The explicit **inspection architecture**: four inspection levels, competence requirements, and minimum recording standards (WP2).
2. The **three-year cyclical inspection/maintenance** commitment for parks and communal housing trees (WP5).

Officer comment: These commitments have not been removed or weakened; they have been relocated to Topic Paper 1 to keep the core Strategy concise while maintaining continuity of service standards

3. Timebound **operational standards**:

- a. 90-minute emergency make-safe target (WP7).
- b. 7-day enquiry response benchmark (GM1).

Officer comment: These commitments have not been removed or weakened; they have been relocated to Topic Paper 1 and embedded in operational arrangements. The 90-minute emergency make-safe target is secured through the Arboricultural Framework 2025-2029, and enquiry response times align with the Council’s corporate service standards as set out on the Council’s webpages.

- c. 20-working-day pre-notification of planned works (GM3).

Officer comment: These commitments have not been removed or weakened; they have been relocated to Topic Paper 1 to keep the core Strategy concise while maintaining continuity of service standards

4. Clear **governance / intervention rules:**

- a. Reverse Agency Agreement and responsibilities for highway trees (WP4).

Officer comment: These commitments have not been removed or weakened; they have been relocated to the Topic Papers to keep the core Strategy concise while maintaining continuity of service standards

- b. Use of LGMPA 1976 s.23 and Highways Act for dangerous private trees (WP8).

Officer comment: These commitments have not been removed or weakened; they have been relocated to Topic Paper 2 to keep the core Strategy concise while maintaining continuity of service standards

- c. Commercial event organisers' responsibilities and charge-back of facilitation works (WP9).

Officer comment: The WP9 principles have been retained in substance: Topic Paper 1 requires Tree Team advice for third-party projects affecting Council trees, consultation via the relevant service's protocols. Compensation for damage may apply via Topic Paper 11.

5. The **structured engagement model** and democratic check:

- a. b. Public scrutiny and consultation triggers (GM5, GM7). Escalation of unresolved objections/consultations to the relevant Executive Councillor (GM6, GM8).

Officer comment: The three-tier engagement model from the 2016 Strategy has not been removed. These principles are now set out in Topic Paper 1 for Council-owned and managed trees, including publication of planned works, ward councillor notification, proportionate consultation, and referral of unresolved objections to the Executive Councillor. The core Strategy therefore avoids repeating operational detail, while the Topic Paper provides the clear procedural framework.

WP policies (risk, plant health, inspections)

WP1 – Prioritise legal obligations over all other aspects of the service

Mapped to: **M1** (legal and H&S obligations, risk-based inspection and maintenance

Status: **Substantively carried forward**, but softer.

• Tighten by:

- o Re-stating that the Council “**will prioritise its legal obligations first over all other aspects of the service**”, not just “will prioritise legal and health and safety obligations”.
- o Keeping this as a distinct first bullet under M1 so it is as prominent as in WP1.

M1 states “THE COUNCIL will prioritise its legal and health and safety obligations over all other aspects of the service”

Officer comment: Policy M1 already mirrors and strengthens the intent of WP1. Health and safety duties are a core part of the Council's legal obligations, and their explicit inclusion strengthens rather than softens the policy by making the duty of care and public safety dimension unambiguous. No change is proposed to the wording of M1.

WP2 – Risk management and inspections (NTSG principles, four inspection levels, recording, competence)

- Mapped to: **M1** and Topic Paper 1 (Tree Asset Management and Risk).
- Status: **Partly carried**, key details risk being diluted.
- At risk of orphaning:
 - o The **four defined inspection levels** (walkabout/drive-by, basic, detailed, advanced).
 - o Explicit data-recording requirements and use of **EzyTreev**.
 - o Clear requirement that inspection staff must be **competent and suitably qualified**.
- Suggested fix:
 - o Summarise the four levels and competence requirement in M1 itself, with a cross-reference to Topic Paper 1, so they remain policy not just background.

Officer comment: The inspection framework, competence requirements and recording standards are set out in Topic Paper 1, which forms part of the Strategy. To address concerns about the status of the topic papers, a new “Status of Topic Papers” section has been included in the core Strategy.

WP3 – Review management of trees not directly managed by the Tree Team

- Mapped to: **M5** (Trees on Housing, Tenanted, Leased Land and other council land).
- Status: **Mostly carried**, but the review commitment is weaker.
- Orphan risk:
 - o The explicit promise to **review and bring into a consistent regime** all Council trees outside the Tree Team’s direct control.
- Suggested fix:
 - o Add a clause to M5: “**The Council will review and, where necessary, bring into a consistent inspection and maintenance regime** all trees on land it owns or manages, including housing tenanted land, car parks and property holdings, within [X] years.”

Officer comment: The UFS does not commit to a timebound wholesale integration of all Council-owned trees into a single regime, as this would require additional resources and potential cross-service governance changes. However, the principle of consistent standards and Tree Team oversight is retained.

WP4 – Reverse Agency Agreement and funding for street trees

- Mapped to: delivery text on **Delivering in Partnership** and Targeting Canopy Change, but no explicit policy.
- Status: **Largely orphaned as a clear commitment**.
- Importance: Clarifies **governance, funding and liability** for a major share of the canopy (County highways trees).
- Suggested fix:
 - o Either: add a new **Manage More policy** (e.g. “M6: Street Tree Partnership”) restating the intent to secure a formal agreement with County Highways, or
 - o Fold the core commitment into M4 (Capacity and Resourcing): “The Council will work with Cambridgeshire County Council to secure a formal agreement for the management, funding and liability of street trees.”

Officer comment: The Strategy recognises the importance of street trees and the role of partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council as Highway Authority. However, the Council cannot commit unilaterally to securing a formal reverse agency agreement, as this depends on the agreement of another authority and on funding and governance arrangements outside the City Council’s control

WP5 – Three-year maintenance cycle for parks and communal housing trees

- Mapped to: **M1** and the “Planned maintenance cycles” narrative in Delivery.
- Status: **Principle carried but detail at risk.**
- Orphan risk:
 - o The explicit **three-year cycle** and its linkage to the legal duty of care.
- Suggested fix:
 - o Add a bullet under M1: “**The Council will maintain parks and communal housing trees on a three-year inspection and maintenance cycle**, or an alternative evidence-based frequency agreed through Topic Paper 1.”

Officer comment: The three-year cyclical inspection and maintenance regime for parks and communal housing trees, and its link to the Council’s duty of care, has not been removed. This is set out in Topic Paper 1, which forms part of the Strategy and provides the operational standards for inspection frequencies based on risk and site use. The detail has been intentionally located in the Topic Papers to retain operational clarity while keeping the core Strategy concise and flexible.

WP6 – Reactive maintenance in safety priority order

- Mapped to: **M1** (reactive maintenance) and emergency / monitoring text.
- Status: **Substantively carried** in general language.
- Minor tweak:
 - o Make clear that reactive works **safety-priority order**”, matching WP6 wording, to avoid a weaker “timely and “**will normally be prioritised in proportionate**” formulation.

WP7 – Emergencies (90-minute make-safe target, procedures, duties for private trees)

- Mapped to: **M1** (emergency response) and Delivery text under Monitoring & Adaptation.
- Status: **Partly carried; performance standard orphaned.**
- Orphan risk:
 - o The specific **90-minute make-safe target** for high-risk emergencies.
 - o Clear differentiation between **immediate vs non-immediate danger**, and respective timescales.
- Suggested fix:
 - o In M1, retain at least an indicative standard: “Where a tree poses an immediate very high risk, the Council **will instruct make-safe works as quickly as practicable and will aim to do so within 90 minutes.**”

WP8 – Council intervention on dangerous private trees

- Mapped to: partly implied in **M3** and Delivery’s discussion of limitations and legal powers, but no explicit policy.
- Status: **Materially orphaned.**
- Importance: Sets clear expectations on when the Council will intervene on private land and refers to statutory basis.
- Suggested fix:
 - o Keep a short, explicit clause under M3: “The Council will only intervene directly on dangerous trees in private ownership where the danger is imminent, acting under s.23 LGMPA 1976, or will refer highway dangers to the County Council Highways authority.”

Officer comment: These matters have not been removed or weakened; they are now set out in Topic Paper 1, which forms part of the Strategy. Topic Paper 1 explicitly covers safety-prioritised reactive works, differentiation between immediate and non-immediate risks, emergency response, and the Council’s approach to dangerous trees on private land. The operational detail has been relocated to Topic Paper 1 to keep the core Strategy concise while retaining clear service standards and legal duties.

WP9 – Event tree risk (organisers’ responsibilities, charging for facilitation works)

- Mapped to: Delivery text on **Tree Planting and Removals Tracking** and partnerships, but not clearly.
- Status: **Largely orphaned.**
- Importance: Clarifies **commercial liability** and prevents unfunded event-driven works.
- Suggested fix:
 - o Add a short paragraph under **Engage More** or Topic Paper 1: “Commercial event organisers remain responsible for event-specific tree risk assessments and costs of non-routine facilitation works, in line with the Council’s existing practice.”

Officer comment: The WP9 principles have been retained in substance: Topic Paper 1 requires Tree Team advice for third-party projects affecting Council trees, consultation via the relevant service’s protocols. Compensation for damage may apply via Topic Paper 11.

GM policies (enquiries, consultation, public engagement)

GM1 – Enquiries (7-day response / inspection target, escalation path)

- Mapped to: **E4** (clear information about tree management) plus generic text on engagement.
- Status: **Response-time standard orphaned.**
- Importance: Sets a clear **customer service benchmark**. “For non-emergency tree-related enquiries, the Council **will aim**
- Suggested fix:
 - o Include in E4: **to contact the enquirer with an initial response or inspection outcome within 7 working days**; more complex cases will receive a holding response explaining extended timescales.”

GM2 – Tree removal: “no removal without good reason”, documented reasons, replacement as close as practicable

- Mapped to: **PL3** (replacement planting where council tree lost) and M1 narrative on balancing interests.
- Status: **Partly carried, but the strong presumption against removal risks dilution.**
- Orphan risk:
 - o The unambiguous statement that the Council “**will not remove trees without good reason**” and that reasons will be recorded.
- “**The Council will not remove trees without good reason and**
- Suggested fix:
 - o Add to PL3: **will document and record the reasons for all non-emergency removals,**” retaining GM2’s clarity.

GM3 – Notifications: all planned tree works published at least 20 working days before implementation; site notices

- Mapped to: **E4** (website, notices) and E1 (engagement), but **the 20-day minimum is not repeated.**
- Status: **Key time standard orphaned.**
- Suggested fix:
 - o In E4, include: “Planned tree works on Council land **will normally be published online and via site notices at least 20 working days before implementation**, except where works are strictly emergency or reactive.”

GM4 – Reactive works not published, but explanations on request

- Mapped to: E4/E1 in general terms.
- Status: **Principle carried implicitly**, but worth making explicit.

- Suggested fix:

o Add one sentence under E4: “Reactive safety works that cannot wait for the planned cycle **will not be subject to prior notification but the Council will provide explanations on request.**” *Cf also my prev comments in main text.*

GM5 – Public scrutiny triggers (healthy trees >75mm diameter at 1.5m h; significant character impact; process and timescales)

- Mapped to: **E1** (engagement) and general consultation language.
- Status: **Substantive architecture at risk of being orphaned.**
- Importance: Provides **clear thresholds** for when residents can expect to comment.
- Suggested fix:
 - o Either preserve GM5 almost verbatim in Topic Paper 5, with E1 cross-referencing it, or add a sub clause in E1: “The Council will invite public comment where proposed works remove healthy trees above [75mm] diameter or where works will significantly alter the character of an area, as defined in Topic Paper 5.” *Cf also my prev comments in main text.*

*Officer Comment: See comments at **POLICY Ey: Public Scrutiny of Significant Tree Works***

GM6 – Unresolved objections under public scrutiny decided by relevant Executive Councillor

- Mapped to: E1/E4 in spirit, but **decision route not explicit.**
- Status: **Decision-making safeguard orphaned.**
- Suggested fix:
 - o Add: “Where objections to significant tree works cannot be resolved by officers, decisions **will be referred to the relevant Executive Councillor** for determination,” keeping the democratic check from GM6.

GM7 – Open consultation (tree management plans, new planting, character-changing replacements; ward member first; Exec Cllr if unresolved)

- Mapped to: **E1–E2** and Plant More narrative.
- Status: **Structure partly carried; triggers and escalation at risk.**
- Orphan risk:
 - o Specific **consultation triggers** & link to Executive Councillor determination (GM8).
- Suggested fix:
 - o Make Topic Paper 5 carry the GM7–GM8 architecture, and in E1 state that the Council will follow those procedures for tree management plans and significant planting schemes. *Cf also my prev comments in main text.*

GM8 – All unresolved consultations determined by relevant Executive Councillor

- Mapped to: not explicitly referenced in UFS policies.
- Status: **Orphaned.**
- Importance: Mirrors GM6, giving a clear line of accountability on contentious schemes.
- Suggested fix:
 - o Combine with GM6 into a single clause in E1: “Unresolved objections arising from public scrutiny or consultation processes **will be determined by the relevant Executive Councillor.**” *Cf also my prev comments in main text.*

Officer comment: The consultation from the 2016 Strategy has not been removed. These principles are now set out in Topic Paper 1 for Council-owned and managed trees, including publication of planned works, ward councillor notification, proportionate consultation, and referral of unresolved objections to the Executive Councillor. The core Strategy therefore avoids repeating operational detail, while the Topic Paper provides the clear procedural framework

Appendix 3: General Editorial suggestion

For clarity and transparency, all figures should have a succinct legend or caption.
(For example... what/where is that tree in Figure 5 on page 5?)

All imagery is currently indicative and subject to layout, design and formatting

Officer comment: this will be addressed in the final document design, post Cabinet approval

Email 8.

The below internal comments were received in the form of a summary email with specific comments made directly on the draft UFS.

Having read through the draft Urban Forest Strategy, I think overall that it's a comprehensive and well written strategy. I've added some more specific comments in the draft strategy document, but I had some broader observations that I wanted to share with you that I think need addressing in the final draft:

- Length – xxxxxxxxxxxx like to see shorter strategy documents. Overall, the strategy is quite long (53 pages currently) and I'm not sure many people will read a document of this length fully. As an example, the Community Wealth Building Strategy is 25 pages long – it might not be possible to cut the UFS strategy to this length, but I'd encourage some robust editing to reduce its length. I've made some suggestions in my comments in the document, including:
 - Removing similar paragraphs (I've highlighted a couple of examples in my comments)
 - Combining the foreword, vision and introduction into a single shorter section
 - Combining the Delivery, Policy and Actions sections (currently 30 pages) into a single, more succinct section setting out what the Council will do to implement the aims/objectives of the strategy over the next five years.

Officer Comment: Largely by removing data that is repeated from Topic Paper and combining similar sections this has been achieved and the core document has been reduced to approximately 30 pages. The document is expected to be further reduced in length (but not content) during the design stage.

- Consistency – I've been reading and commenting on the draft Climate Change Strategy and UFS side-by-side and plan to look at the Biodiversity Strategy next week. As our key environmental strategies, these need to be a consistent suite of documents. At the moment, the 3 documents have very different structures, which is quite confusing, so it would be worth discussing with Guy Belcher and David Wright how the structure can be aligned more. For example:
 - UFS has a vision, 5 principles, 8 aims, 4 delivery approaches with 19 related-policies, and 8 actions (with a number of sub actions under each)
 - CCS has 7 goals, objectives under each goal, priority projects, and an action plan
 - BS has a vision, 7 strategic objectives and an action plan.

Officer Comment: While related and aligned, the three strategies are sufficiently different to make drafting consistency problematic.

- Data and visuals – the strategy currently has a lot of narrative text. It would be helpful to use maps, infographics and key data to illustrate the points that you make in the strategy and break up the text/narrative. Rather than listing the data sources and

reports that have been produced at pages 23-25, I would recommend pulling out the key points from these reports (in a visual form if possible) to illustrate the points made in the narrative.

Officer Comment: Some visuals have been included to indicate intention in this regard but the drafts have focused on the text. Visuals, maps and infographics will be added at design stage.

- Target – the strategy proposes an aspirational target of 20% increase in tree canopy by 2050. If the strategy is going to set a target, I'd recommend including this up front in the introduction or early in the document. It would be helpful to:
 - use the data available to indicate what the baseline is and what a 20% increase in coverage or number of trees would be.
 - Explain how we have arrived at a 20% target. Is this realistic, achievable or ambitious/stretching?
 - Reconsider the timeframe as 2050 is a long way away – the strategy runs to 2031 but the Council will cease to exist in 2028, so would we be better setting an aspirational target for 2031, with an interim target for 2028 (this is the approach adopted in the new CCS, so would be consistent)?

Officer Comment: While explained in Topic Papers 10 and 12 this has now been better explained in the core document

- One Council – in places, the strategy reads as a document written from the perspective of the tree/urban forest team seeking to influence the policies of the Shared Planning Service and GCP. The strategy needs to represent the unified view and actions of the council as a whole to improve the urban forest.

Officer Comment: As the location of arboricultural expertise in CCC, City Services is best placed to lead on Urban Forestry. Not all trees are the responsibility of CCC therefore it is necessary, for vision achievement, to work with our partner council services. Consultation with GCSP has been carried out to ensure that the UFS does not contradict GCSP policies and the UFS does not create any new service demands. However as the Local Planning Authority, it is the responsibility of Cambridge City Council to ensure that statutory responsibilities are carried out in accordance with the law and government guidance, that decision are proportionate and to minimise any financial or reputational risks.

- Jargon/technical terms – overall the document is clear and well-written, but in places it uses jargon or technical terms (e.g. blue and green infrastructure, arboricultural, sequestering, urban heat island effect) when plainer English or adding definitions could help make it more accessible to a wider audience. I've suggested alternatives in my comments, but xxxxxxxx may be able to review and advise.

Officer Comment: A glossary is provided with improved links

The following section sets out specific comments and, *in italics*, actions taken or explanations provided.

It would be helpful to explain in the Exec Summary (and potentially the introduction) that the Urban Forest Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, and Climate Change Strategy have been deliberately developed, reviewed and consulted on in parallel and are “closely interrelated, share common evidence bases, and are intended to operate as a coherent policy framework rather than as standalone documents”

Officer Comment: Agreed, Executive Summary has been amended to incorporate this point.

Is this paragraph necessary? Would residents and stakeholders reading the strategy recognise this description of the roles of trees and see it as a point of contestation”? I would suggest deleting this

paragraph and replacing it with a bulleted list of the wide range of benefits that trees bring (as set out on pages 14-15)

Officer Comment: The paragraph has been reduced, with reference to the above, but has been retained as an introduction.

We have included different population growth figures in our LGR proposal for Cambridge- 154, 500 in 2026, 161,000 2031, 165,500 in 2035, and 171,500 in 2041. Greater Cambridge would reach 405,500 by 2041. These figures were calculated for us by the Planning Policy team, based on development included in the 2018 Local Plan and the proposed Local Plan. Could you use these figures instead for consistency please?

Officer Comment: Figures have been updated in line with the above.

Jargon - is there a plain English alternative to arboricultural?

Officer Comment: Arboriculture is the accepted term for the study, management and cultivation of trees. A link will be provided to glossary.

I suggest this section [A Short History] could be moved up to the top of the “why do we need a strategy” on page 6, just before the bold paragraph that starts “The Urban Forest Strategy sets out....”

Officer Comment: This has been actioned.

It would be helpful to include a chart or an infographic to show how the number of trees or the tree canopy as a whole has increased in Cambridge since the 2008 baseline. It would also be helpful to include a map to show the geographical spread of the tree canopy (i.e. the LSOAs or wards that have denser or sparser tree canopy cover)

Officer Comment: Maps had not been added at the time of consultation but have now been included.

It would be helpful to have a sentence at the beginning of this paragraph (or earlier in the strategy) to explain what we mean by “urban forest” and why we are using this term rather than trees, as we have in previous strategies.

Officer Comment: This has been actioned.

Does this [approved] mean that the approach is approved by the Council or another body? If it's the Council, I suggest deleting this, as the strategy is a statement of the council's approach, so it would be slightly odd to say that we need approval from ourselves

Officer Comment: The point was to highlight that the strategy is approved but it is agreed it is not necessary.

This paragraph [1st in How to use the Strategy]. is similar to the first paragraph on page 9 (which begins “the core strategy concisely sets....” The two paragraphs could be combined here.

Officer Comment: The paragraph on page 9 is a conclusion so the wording been merged with the 1st paragraph in the section.

I've highlighted in yellow the policy references that seem most relevant/pertinent to the UFS (to a non-expert reader). If necessary, you could add these policy references to the policy list on page 7. The

other references in this section are more generic references to climate change that aren't specifically related to the urban forest, so I would suggest deleting these.

As currently drafted, this section is quite hard to follow, as there are lots of quotes from national planning policy and legislation, but there is no narrative to explain how the quotes and bullets relate to each of principles. You have already stated on page 7 that the strategy is consistent with local and national policies and listed the key policies, so I don't think you need to include all the detailed quotes and references here. I would suggest amending this page so that it simply lists the 5 principles, without all the policy and best practice bullets.

I've highlighted in yellow the policy references that seem most relevant/pertinent to the UFS (to a non-expert reader). If necessary, you could add these policy references to the policy list on page 7. The other references in this section are more generic references to climate change that aren't specifically related to the urban forest, so I would suggest deleting these.

Officer Comment: With reference to the above three points, the whole strategy has been amended to improve the narrative. Non-essential, references have been moved to end-noted, appendices and topic papers as appropriate. This has significantly reduced the length of the core document.

Would be helpful to add a sentence or two here [Health and Wellbeing] to explain how and why trees can have these benefits, based on the research.

Officer Comment: A link will be created to research.

As suggested on page 8, it would be helpful to include a map to illustrate the uneven distribution of tree canopy in Cambridge. If it appears on page 8, you could refer to it again here. Or you may want to include the map on this page instead.

Officer Comment: Map and other illustrations will be added as design stage.

Austerity is a term more associated with the policies of the previous government. Suggest using 'constrained public finances' instead.

Officer Comment: This has been actioned.

I'm not sure what this paragraph [Governance] is trying to say? It currently reads as/implies a criticism of the council's governance arrangements. Its also not clear what you mean by "citywide approval", as the strategy will be a statement of the Council's agreed approach to the urban forest, but won't necessarily be adopted by other landowners in the city. I would suggest redrafting this paragraph as a more positive statement that the strategy is intended to set out a cohesive, holistic citywide approach to the urban forest in Cambridge and it aims to mitigate the risks of isolated, fragmented management of the urban forest.

Officer Comment: No criticism was intended. Paragraph has been amended in line with the above.

I think its OK to highlight that urban development and densification can impact on the urban forest, but this sentence [Densification] reads as a criticism of planning policy and decisions, which are within the Council's gift. It would helpful to add a sentence here to explain the Council's planning policy? Local Plan policies on trees and the urban forest.

Officer Comment: No criticism was intended. Paragraph has been amended.

This [Transport Infrastructure and Road Redesign] could read as a criticism of GCP (which the Council is a partner in) or County Council decisions. Could this sentence be replaced with a positive

statement that the Council works with partners and stakeholders to highlight and mitigate these challenges and risks.

Officer Comment: No criticism was intended. Last sentence has been deleted.

Reframe [Conflicting Priorities] around competing land use for housing, business, leisure etc constraining space available for a resilient urban forest.

Officer Comment: Paragraph has been reworded as suggested. Also suggestions made to Resources, Fragmented responsibilities, Evidence and Data, Policy support have been accepted.

[Aim 1] Can you use the data available to indicate what the baseline is and what a 20% increase in coverage or number of trees would be? It would also be helpful to explain how we have arrived at 20% target? Is this realistic, achievable or ambitious/stretching? 2050 is a long way away – should we set an earlier target? The strategy runs to 2031 but the Council will cease to exist in 2028, so should we set an aspirational target for 2031, with an interim target for 2028?

Officer Comment: Information from Topic Papers 10 and 12 have been added to core document.

[Aim 8] It would be helpful to explain what you mean by “build internal capacity” here. Unless there are budget bids submitted for additional staff, it’s unlikely that the Council will have additional staff to help implement the strategy.

Officer Comment: This section has been reworded in line with the above.

The sections on Delivery, Policy and Actions all essentially set out what the Council will do to implement the aims/objectives of the strategy over the next five years. Together they cover 30 pages and there is quite a bit of repetition in the issues that they cover. I would suggest combining these sections and heavily editing the content into a more succinct statement of the actions that we are planning to take to improve and expand the urban forest.

Officer Comment: This has been achieved, as indicated previously, by removing information already set out in topic papers, and using graphics.

Can this be reframed? GCSP is the Council’s planning service, so to an external audience this statement reads like we are working with ourselves.

Officer Comment: As part of the previous comment this section has been removed.

END

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 5 Subsidence Topic Paper: External Review Timeline and Summary of Changes

UFS Topic Paper 4 Subsidence external legal review detail

October 2025

The Council initiated external review of the Subsidence Topic Paper in October 2025 by seeking independent subsidence expertise input via TDAG to test evidential standards and proportionality, including foundation adequacy, climate change and heave considerations.

November 2025

Specialist legal input was sought from Sarah Dodds, CEO at Tree Law, to review the interface between arboriculture, engineering, liability and insurance practice.

January 2026

Tree Law provided detailed amendments to clarify the distinction between mitigation and legal claims, remove unworkable cost apportionment between trees, climate and foundations, strengthen consultation duties at mitigation stage, and correct the treatment of shallow foundations; these changes were incorporated into v4 of the Topic Paper, with v4.1 issued as the post-review version for consultation and reporting.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 6 UFS Version control details

UFS version control details

v2 (September 2025)

Cabinet draft approved to proceed to consultation, including approval of the consultation plan and selected Topic Papers.

v3 (November-December 2025)

Internal consultation draft, issued with the full suite of Topic Papers, and used to test deliverability and cross-service alignment.

v4 (January -February 2026)

Public consultation draft, issued as the full suite including all Topic Papers.

v4.1 (January 2026)

Revised and shortened main Strategy following Leadership Team feedback, with Topic Paper 4 (Subsidence) revised following independent legal guidance and retained as operational guidance.

v4.2 (March 2026)

Version presented to Scrutiny Committee reflecting public consultation feedback.

v5 (March 2026)

Final version to be taken to Cabinet for adoption following Scrutiny Committee feedback.

This page is intentionally left blank

DRAFT CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL'S URBAN FOREST STRATEGY 2026 - 2036

Draft version 4.2 for Scrutiny Committee 11 March 2024



Figure 1

This is a draft document issued for Scrutiny Committee. Content, formatting and presentation may change prior to final publication. Images are indicative only and will be appropriately credited or replaced in the final approved version.

*'The tree in the front garden of my home is a word
The trees on my street are a sentence
The trees in my neighbourhood are a paragraph
And all the trees in the community are a story.
That story tells us about our relationship to nature, past and present.
The future of this story lies in the hands of all residents....'*

Greg McPherson, USDA Forest Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy affirms Cambridge City Council's (THE COUNCIL) promise to restore, protect and grow its urban forest in line with principles of equity, need and environmental value. Ensuring that the trees we plant and protect create a future urban forest that is healthier, more resilient and evidence of what we can achieve together. As the Urban Forest Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, and Climate Change Strategy share common evidence bases and goals, they have been developed in parallel to create a coherent policy framework.¹

Innovation and economic advances come with the need for urban expansion. With an increase in the concentration of people, buildings and activity comes an increased threat to the natural environment and our cultural heritage. A changing climate and the rising threat of pests and diseases also present significant challenges to the health, resilience and biodiversity of Cambridge's natural resources.

Protecting, enhancing and expanding natural areas and habitat for flora and fauna in cities is essential for strengthening our resilience to acute events and persistent stresses, many of which will be exacerbated by climate change and urbanisation. The Urban Forest Strategy is required to enable the protection and enhancement of Cambridge's urban forest to the benefit of its residents and visitors through approved, strategic, policy-based management.

Management also has its challenges and limitations. Understanding and accepting these challenges and limitations reinforces the need for a coordinated and proactive approach to management and the need for continued investment. The strategy sets out THE COUNCIL's vision and establishes the principles, aims, policies and actions necessary, across services, to deliver success.

¹ The evidence base for the canopy cover metric and the 20% by 2050 ambition is set out in **Topic Paper 12 - Growing Cambridge's Tree Canopy**.

VERSION CONTROL

Table 1 Version details

Version	Date	Purpose	Authorised by	Changes/ notes	Authorisation
1.1	Sept 25	Draft for informal Cabinet	Alistair Wilson, Assistant Director, City Services (on behalf of James Elms, Director of City Services)	Not fully WCAG compliant All pictures are indicative at this stage	8/9/25
2	Sept 25	Cabinet final draft for consultation approval	Cabinet	Added version control table. Included status of the strategy section. Introduced new policy M5 Updated glossary. Renamed Topic Paper 2 Corrected minor spelling and grammar issues. Added policy alignment references in the Principles section. Added Topic Paper 12. Included history of the urban forestry. Population figure updates. Made minor revisions to aims. Reformatted document	25/9/25
3	Oct 25	Internal consultation draft	James Elms, Director of City Services	Made minor revisions to Topic Paper descriptions, spelling, and grammar. Reformatted document	December 2025
4	Dec 25	Public consultation draft			
4.1	Feb 26	Following Corporate comments		LT feedback logged: shorten UFS; align structure with CCS/BS; strengthen visuals; clarify canopy target/timescales; reinforce One Council framing; reduce jargon. Topic paper 4 reviewed and revised by external barrister	
4.2	Feb 26	Scrutiny Committee		Public consultation feedback informed minor clarifications and signposting changes, with no material change to policy direction.	
5	Feb 25	Cabinet final draft for approval			
6	Mar 25	Final approved draft			

Document preparation

This Urban Forest Strategy has been prepared by THE COUNCIL, led by the Urban Forest Manager, with specialist technical input and support from Urban Forest Consultancyⁱⁱ.

Responsibility for the content, policy direction and final decisions rests with THE COUNCIL.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Draft Cambridge City Council's Urban Forest Strategy 2026 - 2036	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
VERSION CONTROL	ii
Table of contents	iv
FOREWORD	1
VISION	2
INTRODUCTION	3
WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY	4
PRINCIPLES	9
BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS	10
CANOPY MAPS	16
AIMS	17
DELIVERY	20
POLICIES	23
DELIVERY, ACTIONS & MONITORING SUMMARY	30
AFTERWORD	31
Appendix 1 - Topic papers	v
Appendix 2 - Actions	vii
Appendix 3 - Monitoring, Evaluation and Key Performance Indicators	ix
Appendix 4 - Glossary	xii
Appendix 5 – End notes	xv

FOREWORD

In 2019, a plaqueⁱⁱⁱ was placed on a barren mountainside in Iceland to mark the first glacier lost to climate change. It read: *'We know what is happening and what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it.'* This statement resonates deeply in cities across the world as we confront our own environmental tipping points, not on remote icecaps, but on our doorsteps: in rising temperatures, degraded air quality and increasingly unequal access to green space.

This Urban Forest Strategy is THE COUNCIL's acknowledgement: we understand what is happening. And we are acting.

Trees in urban environments are not just landscape features. They are critical infrastructure. They help regulate our climate, support biodiversity, improve public health. They also provide a sense of place and belonging. In a warming, densifying world, they offer hope and resilience. But they must be nurtured, expanded and protected with the same urgency that the climate crisis demands.

This strategy sets out our commitment to grow and care for a resilient, diverse and equitable urban forest over the next decade. It recognises that trees are long-term investments, planted today for the benefit of future generations. They are living testaments to our intent: to mitigate climate impacts, adapt to new challenges and create a more just, liveable City.

Our approach is guided by five principles:

1. **Awareness and Action**
2. **Climate Resilience**
3. **Intergenerational Equity**
4. **Public Engagement**
5. **Environmental Justice**



Figure 2

Just as the Okjökull plaque mourned a loss and challenged the future, this

strategy is a living promise: to restore, to protect and to grow. Let the trees we plant today stand as future witnesses, not to what we failed to do, but to what we achieved together.

VISION

To protect, expand and manage Cambridge's tree canopy, guided by principles of equity, need and environmental value, ensuring that the benefits of urban trees are accessible across all communities and that the canopy we leave for future generations is healthier and more resilient than what we have inherited.



Figure 3 – picture source?

INTRODUCTION

Occupying cultural significance throughout history and one of longest living organisms on Earth, trees are central to mythology, folklore and religion. Symbolising life, growth and continuity they have served societies in many ways from the practical to the more profound. The significance of trees in the history and survival of humanity is represented in art, literature and spiritual practices, often reflecting deep philosophical concepts.

While our relationship with trees has many dimensions and has altered through history, they also deliver well-evidenced environmental, health and social benefits. They remain vital to the health, character and liveability of Cambridge and its communities. .

The necessary seizing of opportunities for innovation and economic advances comes with the need for urban expansion. With a population estimated to rise to approximately 154, 500 in 2026, 161,000 in 2031, 165,500 in 2035, and 171,500 in 2041 comes an increased threat to the natural environment and our cultural heritage.

Alongside population growth and urban development, a changing climate and the rising threat of pests and diseases present significant challenges to the health, resilience and biodiversity of Cambridge's natural environment.

Building on past achievements², this Urban Forest Strategy has been developed to set out the long-term direction for the management of Cambridge's green infrastructure to the benefit of our existing and future environment and communities and for the protection of our arboricultural heritage to 2036.



Figure 4 – picture source?

² Recent achievements and learning from the 2016–2026 Tree Strategy are summarised in **Topic Paper 8 - Achievements**.

WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY

What is the urban forest?

The urban forest is comprised of all the trees, woody shrubs, hedges, herbaceous plants, waterways, wildlife, grasses and other green infrastructure within the built environment.

Urban forestry differs from arboriculture. Arboriculture focuses on the management of individual trees, whereas urban forestry considers the cumulative benefits, risks and resilience of the entire tree and green infrastructure system across a town or city, regardless of ownership.

A short history of urban forestry

The idea of managing the whole urban forest (not just publicly owned trees) emerged in North America in the 1960s, grew through the 1990s-2000s with better inventories and research, and now focuses on canopy cover as a metric, climate, health and fairness.

Cambridge began using canopy mapping in 2013, using 2008 data as the baseline. The city set a canopy target in 2016 and expanded community programmes through the Cambridge Canopy Project.

Cities putting urban forestry into practice:

- Melbourne - [Urban Forest Strategy](#)
- Toronto - [Strategic Forest Management Plan](#)
- London - [London Urban Forest Partnership](#)
- Sydney - [Greening Sydney Strategy](#)
- Barcelona - [Master Plan For Barcelona's Trees](#)

Protecting and enhancing natural areas and habitat for flora and fauna in cities is essential for strengthening our resilience to acute events and persistent stresses, many of which will be exacerbated by climate change and urbanisation.

The urban forest plays a significant role in making Cambridge a place where we can all thrive. However, as with many cities, Cambridge's urban forest is under pressure. The projected denser urban form is increasingly crowding out opportunities for sustainable canopy cover, while a changing climate and higher urban temperatures put physical stress on the forest. Urban expansion beyond its current footprint threatens existing vegetation and natural values that will need protection and replacing.

Acute events like floods, heatwaves, droughts and extreme weather occurrences can all be mitigated by a resilient urban forest, along with the stresses associated with climate change, vulnerable communities, high rates of chronic illness, low rates of community interaction,

increased pressure on healthcare, social inequality and pressure from development on ecosystem services.

The Urban Forest Strategy replaces the 2016 - 2026 Tree Strategy and provides an policy framework for the protection and enhancement of Cambridge's urban forest to the benefit of its residents and visitors through strategic, evidence-led and policy-based management.

How to use the Strategy

The Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) sets out a programme of interrelated principles, aims and actions, supported by topic papers, that will work together to bring Cambridge closer to its Vision. The vision is supported by a clear framework of Principles, Aims, Policies and Actions that guide how THE COUNCIL and its partners can protect, enhance and engage with the urban forest.

These are delivered through a series of thematic approaches and practical actions each supported by robust evidence and detailed topic papers. Together, they provide a clear framework for delivering a healthier, fairer and more resilient urban forest.

The core elements of the Strategy and their relationship to one another are illustrated in Figure 5.

Using Topic Papers in practice

Topic Papers should be used as the primary source of operational detail and technical guidance for implementing the Strategy's Policies and Actions. They support consistent, evidence-led decision-making across THE COUNCIL's services and with partners. Topic Papers do not create additional statutory or planning policy requirements and should be applied in a way that is consistent with the adopted Vision, Principles, Aims, Policies and Actions.

Context & Evidence Base	Climate change, growth, canopy data, equity mapping, legislation
Vision	Long-term ambition for Cambridge's urban forest
Principles	Awareness & Action Climate Resilience Intergenerational Equity Public Engagement Environmental Justice
Aims	What the Strategy is trying to achieve
Delivery approaches	How we deliver: Manage More / Protect More /Plant More /Engage More
Policies	Rules and commitments that guide decisions and actions
Actions	Programmes, tools, projects and ways of working
KPIs & monitoring	Tracking progress, evidence and learning, adapting
Evidence and Learning (Topic Papers)	Data refresh, learning, review

Figure 5 Relationship between the key components of the Urban Forest Strategy

Policy and legal context³

The strategy has been developed alongside and with consideration of local ambition, national and local planning policies, best practice and other key environmental strategies including:

- [National Planning Policy Framework](#)^{iv}
- [Planning Practice Guidance](#)^v
- [Cambridge Local Plan](#)^{vi} and the [Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan](#)^{vii}
- [Biodiversity](#)^{viii}, [Climate Change](#)^{ix}, [Open Spaces](#)^x, [Community Wealth Building](#)^{xi}, [County Trees and Woodland Strategies](#)^{xii}, [Air Quality Action Plan](#)^{xiii} and [The Council's Environment Statement](#)^{xiv}.
- 'Baseline UTCC^{xv} data enables monitoring of changes over time.' TDAG, First Steps in Urban Tree Canopy Cover^{xvi}

The Strategy also reflects statutory duties introduced by the **Environment Act 2021**^{xvii}, including the requirement to have regard to Environmental Improvement Plans and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

³ The statutory framework for tree protection, planning control and enforcement is set out in **Topic Paper 9 - Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control**.

Who Should Use This Strategy

The UFS is designed to guide everyone with a role or interest in the care, protection and expansion of Cambridge's trees. It is intended for:

THE COUNCIL's services including Operations, Housing, Property Services, Biodiversity and Climate teams, to ensure consistent and coordinated delivery.

Key land managers including statutory agencies, developers, utility companies and the University of Cambridge and its Colleges, who hold significant areas of land and therefore play a major role in shaping the city's treescape.

Partner organisations and services such as the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership, where joint working is essential to align planning, transport, green, blue and grey infrastructure delivery.

Community groups and residents including schools, voluntary organisations and individuals, to help shape local projects and support shared stewardship of the urban forest.

Contractors and professionals including arboricultural consultants, landscape architects, planners, property developers and contractors, to align operational practice with THE COUNCIL's standards and priorities.

Councillors and decision-makers to provide a clear framework for policy, resourcing and governance decisions.

Delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy is led by THE COUNCIL through coordinated action across services, with specialist arboricultural input provided by the Tree Team within City Services.

Status of the Strategy⁴

This Urban Forest Strategy forms THE COUNCIL's adopted policy framework for the protection, management and expansion of Cambridge's trees. The Vision, Principles, Aims, Policies and Actions set out in this Strategy together form THE COUNCIL's adopted policy position on the urban forest.

Together, these elements form a single, coherent policy statement. Where an aim or action does not yet have a corresponding detailed policy, it should still be understood as part of the adopted position, to be interpreted in line with the overarching vision and principles of the strategy.

Status of Topic Papers

Topic Papers provide supporting evidence and technical guidance and set out THE COUNCIL's operational approach to delivery. They do not introduce new statutory or planning policy

⁴ The statutory framework for tree protection, planning control and enforcement is set out in **Topic Paper 9 - Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control**.

requirements and may be updated over time, provided they remain consistent with the adopted Vision, Principles, Aims and Policies.

The core strategy concisely sets out the vision and overarching principles, provides an overview of key issues, challenges and objectives and establishes the, aims, policies and actions necessary to deliver success. Throughout the document links are provided to maps, research papers, data sets and topic papers that provide supporting evidence and allow the reader to delve deeper into areas of particular relevance or interest. It ensures that the value of Cambridge's urban forest is recognised, protected and enhanced through the decisions and actions of all who influence it. While designed to be read electronically, a downloadable version is available with many linked documents appended.

DRAFT

PRINCIPLES

Five principles serve as the foundation of the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS), guiding the approaches taken to a deliver healthier, fairer and more resilient urban forest.

Each principle is driven by local ambition, national policy and best practice guidance cited in the previous section. demonstrating how Cambridge's local approach to managing and expanding its urban forest both fulfils legal and policy obligations and aligns with national and international good practice.



Awareness and Action: A clear-eyed recognition of the challenges we face and a bold plan to address them. Understanding the problems of the past and those we still face, the resulting impact on ecosystem services and taking clear, innovative steps to redress the balance between the built and natural environments.

Climate Resilience: Leveraging urban trees to cool neighbourhoods, capture carbon and reduce flood risk. Protecting and enhancing canopy cover to minimise the occurrence and impact of extreme weather events to minimise damage to the environment, well-being and the economy.



Intergenerational Equity: Protecting and planting today with tomorrow in mind, building a green legacy for the future. Recognising the importance of trees, the time it takes for them to grow and the need for us to act now to benefits our future generations

Public Engagement Encouraging community participation, education and shared stewardship of our urban forest. Educating the wider community on the benefits of trees but also how and where they could make their own contribution so taking responsibility in self-protecting the urban forest at a neighbourhood level.



Environmental Justice: Ensuring that every resident, especially those in the most heat vulnerable areas, has access to shade, clean air and nature. With an uneven distribution of trees throughout Cambridge the proactive preservation of existing trees and new planting needs to be prioritised in areas with lower canopy cover.

Figure 6 Urban Forest Strategy's 5 Principles

BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The urban forest is amongst the most valuable components of Cambridge's green infrastructure and delivers a range of ecosystem services that contribute to the health, mental well-being, social and economic vitality of the city and its communities. But management to maximise these benefits has its challenges and limitations.

Benefits

Climate Regulation⁵

Trees can contribute to climate change mitigation by storing carbon and reducing the urban heat island effect. Shade from tree canopies can cool buildings and pavements, which may reduce energy demand in hot weather. In Cambridge, shading from large trees in streets and parks can lower surface temperatures, easing heat stress in the city and mitigating the Urban Heat Island Effect.

Air Quality and Pollution Mitigation

Trees can help improve air quality by filtering airborne pollutants including nitrogen dioxide, ozone and fine particulate matter (PM2.5). These benefits are particularly important near busy roads, schools and hospitals.

Stormwater Attenuation

Trees can play an important role in reducing surface water runoff and contribute to flood risk mitigation. Their canopies intercept rainfall, slowing the rate at which it reaches the ground. Tree roots improve soil infiltration, reducing the volume and speed of water entering drainage systems. In doing so, urban trees help to reduce the likelihood and severity of localised flooding, improve water quality and reduce pressure on Cambridge's surface water infrastructure. As the city adapts to more intense rainfall due to climate change, trees are expected to become an increasingly valuable part of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

⁵The role of the urban forest in climate mitigation and adaptation is explored in **Topic Paper 7 - Climate Change and Resilience**.

Biodiversity and Habitat⁶

The urban forest is a vital component of the city's ecological network. Trees support a wide range of wildlife by providing essential habitats for birds, bats, invertebrates, lichens and fungi. They offer opportunities for nesting, roosting, feeding and shelter across different stages of growth.

Veteran trees and urban woodlands are especially valuable, acting as long-established reservoirs of biodiversity and supporting species that depend on older or decaying wood. Even individual street trees contribute by linking fragmented habitats and creating stepping stones for wildlife across the urban landscape, contributing to the wider [Cambridge Nature Network](#)

Beyond direct habitat provision, trees support broader ecosystem health by helping to regulate temperature, improve air and water quality and buffer sensitive habitats from pollution and disturbance.

Health and Wellbeing

Access to trees and green space is associated with benefits to mental and physical health. Numerous studies link higher levels of tree canopy with reduced stress, lower blood pressure, increased physical activity and improved recovery times. The presence of trees is also associated with reduced urban noise and greater perceptions of safety.

These benefits arise through a combination of mechanisms, including microclimate regulation (shade and cooling), stress reduction linked to exposure to natural environments, and the way greener streets and parks encourage walking, social interaction and use of outdoor space.

Placemaking and Community Identity

Trees enhance the visual character of streets and open spaces and provide a pleasant place to stop. They play a key role in shaping neighbourhood identity, supporting cultural heritage and fostering pride in place.

Economic Vitality

Healthy urban trees can boost retail and property values, reduce energy costs and support tourism and local businesses by improving the overall experience of place.

Equity and Inclusion

Urban canopy is not distributed equally. The UFS seeks to ensure that the benefits of trees are accessible to all communities, particularly those most vulnerable to climate impacts, through a more targeted and equitable approach to tree planting and protection.

⁶ The role of trees in supporting biodiversity and habitat connectivity is explored in **Topic Paper 3 - Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity**.

Challenges

Like many other cities Cambridge is facing some key challenges including, growth and densification, climate change, increased pest and disease, fragmented governance and constrained public finances.

Environmental Challenges⁷

Climate Change

As trees remove climate-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere they help us mitigate the effects of climate change, but climate change itself creates challenges to effective tree management. Increased periods of drought and/or waterlogging results in increased difficulty to establish trees along with premature decline. Changes in climate also create opportunities for tree pests and diseases to thrive and for new pests and diseases to colonise. Prolonged periods of drought increase the instances of subsidence⁸.

Pest and Disease

Pests and diseases can cause significant damage to the urban forest, leading to damaged and failed stock and economic losses. Understanding the types of pests and diseases, their impact on trees, people, pets and ecosystems and how to manage them is crucial for successful urban forestry.

Loss of Suitable Growing Space

Compacted soils, impermeable surfaces and below-ground constraints affect the viability of new planting.

⁷ The role of the urban forest in climate mitigation and adaptation is explored in **Topic Paper 7 - Climate Change and Resilience**.

⁸ The Council's evidential standards and mitigation hierarchy for tree-related subsidence and structural damage are set out in **Topic Paper 4 - Subsidence and Structural Damage**.

Governance and Resource Constraints^{9 10}

Governance

The system by which any organisation is controlled and operates can impact on the way projects are communicated and managed. The UFS is intended to provide cohesion and strengthen the holistic, urban forest approach to mitigate potential risks of isolated, fragmented management

Public finances

The difficult economic conditions local governments are experiencing and the necessary reductions in public spending also influence the way our arboricultural projects are funded and managed. With reduced financial and human resources, external funding and project management is essential to successful project delivery.

Planning and development pressures

Densification

The increase in the concentration of people, buildings, or activities within the city can impact on a resilient and geographically balanced urban canopy.

Conflicts with Utilities and Infrastructure

For example, dropped kerbs, cables, CCTV, services and lighting can limit planting opportunities or damage existing trees.

Transport Infrastructure and Road Redesign

Efforts to improve transport infrastructure including road widening, junction redesign and the delivery of cycle and bus priority schemes can place significant pressure on existing trees. In some cases mature street trees are lost to accommodate new layouts, visibility splays, or underground utilities. While these schemes support important goals such as active travel and air quality, they can conflict with urban forest objectives if tree retention and canopy value are not fully integrated into design and decision-making.

⁹ For detail on tree asset management, inspection regimes and risk-based decision-making, see **Topic Paper 1 - Tree Asset Management and Risk**.

¹⁰ Governance arrangements and resourcing models for delivering the Urban Forest Strategy are detailed in **Topic Paper 6 - Governance and Resourcing**.

Social and cultural barriers

Unequal canopy cover persists across Cambridge, leaving some communities more exposed to heat and pollution. Public perceptions and resistance to trees may limit support for necessary changes, such as tree planting in new locations or the introduction of less traditional species. Poor tree work at the private or neighbourhood scale can undermine overall canopy health and consistency.

These challenges are not reasons to delay action. Rather, they highlight the importance of a coordinated, well-evidenced and adaptive approach to urban forest management, one that is resilient, inclusive and responsive to Cambridge's changing social, political and environmental context.

Limitations¹¹

While the UFS is rooted in the best available evidence and developed through extensive consultation, it is important to recognise its limitations. Some datasets are incomplete, certain ecosystem services remain difficult to quantify and external factors such as funding, legislation and climate change may alter how or when actions can be delivered. The strategy therefore represents a framework for adaptive decision-making, one that will evolve as new knowledge, tools and opportunities emerge. The following limitations highlight the areas where caution, flexibility, or further development may be needed.

Legal

The legal responsibilities to maintain and replace trees imposed on private landowners by law or statute are necessarily limited. While they provide essential tools to aid preservation, in order to ensure maximum public benefits derived from private tree stocks, it is necessary to also engage with the public, raise awareness, educate and incentivise proactive management.

Conflicting priorities

Use of land in Cambridge for housing, business and employment, leisure and recreation purpose can constrain the space available for a resilient urban forest. In addition to protecting space for trees, other blue-green infrastructure must also be accommodated as part of new developments, putting additional pressure on land use. It is essential, therefore, to ensure necessary urban expansion provides for the protection and enhancement of the urban forest and other ecosystem services.

¹¹ The Council's approach to tree damage, enforcement and compensation is set out in **Topic Paper 11 - Tree Damage and Compensation**.

Resources

With reducing local government funding and increasing demand for other services, THE COUNCIL's capacity to manage the existing tree stock, deliver replacement tree planting and new planting projects is being stretched. It is essential therefore to streamline activities, make use of effective technology and take advantage of external opportunities.

Fragmented responsibilities

With less than 25% of land in Cambridge under the ownership and/or management of THE COUNCIL, we have limited space on which to directly influence canopy cover. This means that partner organisations and private landowners also need to commit to managing and increasing Cambridge's urban forest. In these contexts, the Council's role is primarily to influence through example, statutory regulation, guidance and partnership. In addition to directly maximising the benefits of our trees and those we manage by agreement, committing to an urban forest approach allows us to achieve our canopy cover goals in collaboration with all those who will benefit, equipping the community to self-protect the urban forest from a corporate to neighbourhood level.

Evidence and Data

While the strategy is underpinned by datasets including canopy cover mapping, tree audits and asset valuations, some areas lack consistent or comprehensive data. Not all environmental and social benefits of trees can be fully or locally quantified. Estimates from tree mapping and asset valuation tools such as i-Tree or CAVAT may not capture all site specific or community values. This evidence draws on snapshots in time (for example canopy cover in 2008 and 2018), but the urban environment is constantly changing. These changes can affect the relevance or accuracy of some baseline data.

Policy support

Not all tree related decisions are currently governed by clear policies. For example, the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service is proposing to introduce a citywide canopy cover target in local planning policy as part of the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

While the benefits of trees are well evidenced, their effects vary by species, scale, location and wider environmental conditions. Trees should therefore be understood as contributing to wider outcomes, rather than being the sole cause of them. Recognising the limitations is essential for transparent decision-making. Rather than diminishing the value of the strategy, this awareness reinforces the need for continued investment in data, monitoring and adaptive management

CANOPY MAPS^{12 13}

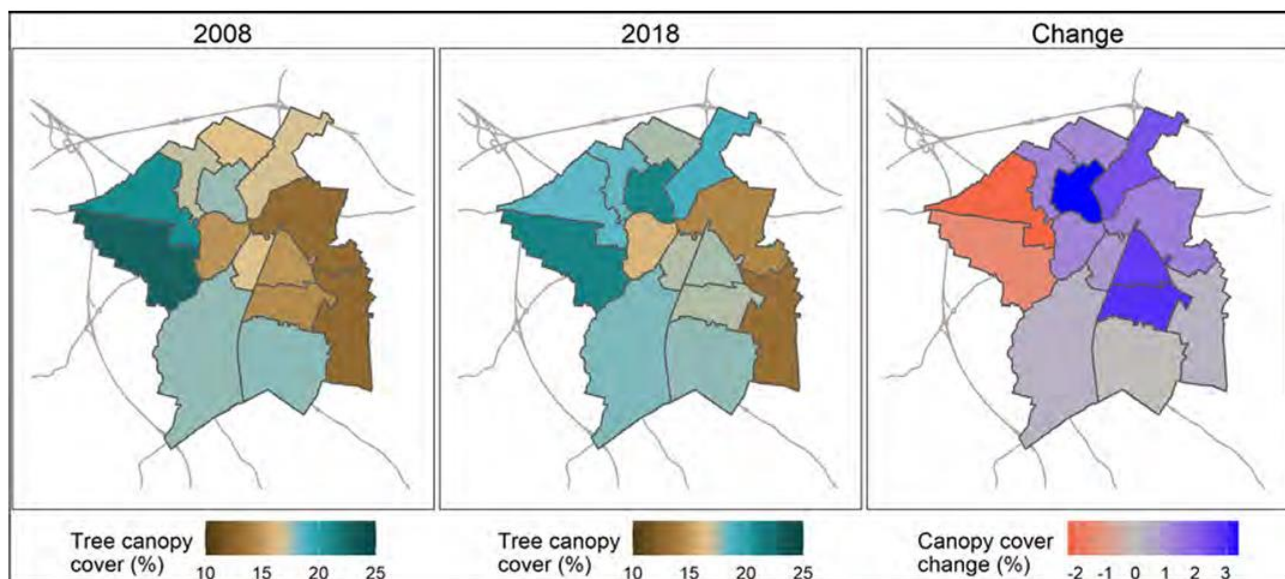


Figure 6 Maps of tree canopy cover (%) at ward level

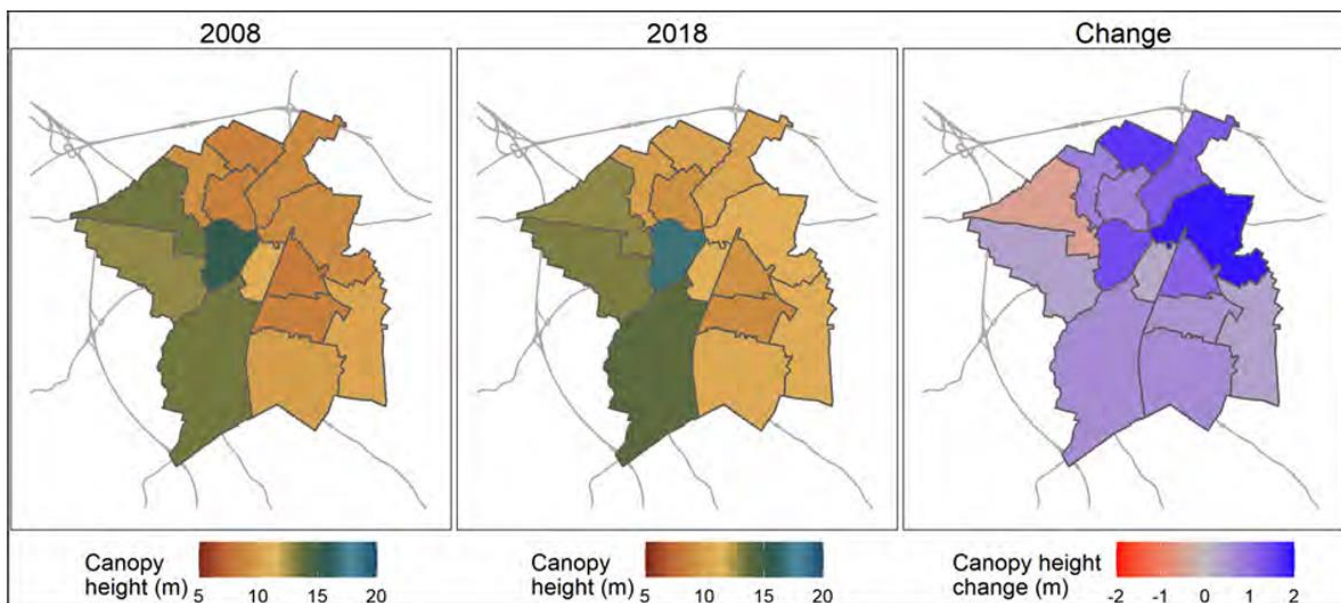


Figure 8 Maps of mean canopy height (m) at ward level

¹² Baseline canopy data and recent trends in canopy change across Cambridge are set out in **Topic Paper 10 - Cambridge's Urban Forest: Baseline and Change**.

¹³ The evidence base for the canopy cover metric and the 20% by 2050 ambition is set out in **Topic Paper 12 - Growing Cambridge's Tree Canopy**.

AIMS

To achieve the strategy's vision of a healthy, resilient and inclusive urban forest, we have identified a set of overarching aims. These aims are grounded in the five core principles that guide our approach; *Awareness and Action; Climate Resilience; Intergenerational Equity; Public Engagement; Environmental Justice*

Each aim reflects one or more of these principles and provides a foundation for the delivery approaches and actions that follow:

Aim 1: Increase canopy cover¹⁴

To protect where appropriate and expand tree canopy across Cambridge, particularly in areas of low provision, enhancing climate resilience, reducing urban heat and contributing to long-term environmental improvement¹⁵.

The strategy sets an aspirational target of achieving at least 20% by 2050 canopy cover across Cambridge, to be pursued through protection, public planting, private engagement and integrated policy. This target is in line with best practice^{xviii}. Cambridge tree canopy increased by 0.5% (20 hectares in total, 2 hectares per year) in the ten years from 2008-2018. We are setting a realistic but stretching aspirational target of increasing the canopy cover by 2.4% by 2050 (98 hectares in total, 4 hectares per year).¹⁶

Supporting principles



Aim 2: Improve the condition and longevity of existing trees

To proactively protect, manage and care for trees throughout their lives, recognising the long-term benefits of a healthy, mature tree population.

Supporting principles



¹⁴ Baseline canopy data and recent trends in canopy change across Cambridge are set out in **Topic Paper 10 - Cambridge's Urban Forest: Baseline and Change**.

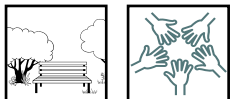
¹⁵ The role of the urban forest in climate mitigation and adaptation is explored in **Topic Paper 7 - Climate Change and Resilience**.

¹⁶ The evidence base for the canopy cover metric and the 20% by 2050 ambition is set out in **Topic Paper 12 - Growing Cambridge's Tree Canopy**.

Aim 3: Ensure equitable access to the benefits of the urban forest

To address disparities in canopy cover and environmental conditions by focusing efforts on communities that are underserved or most vulnerable to climate-related impacts.

Supporting principles



Aim 4: Embed trees and canopy into policy and decision-making

To ensure trees are considered at all levels of planning and design, from infrastructure and development to climate and public health policy.

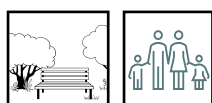
Supporting principles



Aim 5: Support biodiversity and habitat connectivity¹⁷

To increase species diversity and strengthen ecological networks, recognising trees' roles in supporting wider urban biodiversity.

Supporting principles



Aim 6: Promote shared stewardship and community participation¹⁸

To empower individuals, organisations and communities to take an active role in the care and expansion of the urban forest.

Supporting principles



Aim 7: Build and maintain a strong evidence base

To use high-quality data and research to inform decisions, track progress and respond to emerging threats such as climate change and tree disease.

¹⁷ The role of trees in supporting biodiversity and habitat connectivity is explored in **Topic Paper 3 - Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity**.

¹⁸ The Council's approach to public engagement and partnership working is set out in **Topic Paper 5 - Public Engagement and Partnerships**.

Supporting principle



Aim 8: Strengthen the capacity and resourcing needed to deliver the strategy¹⁹

Build internal capacity through improved efficiency , skills development, ways of working alongside the development of strategic partnerships and securing funding to ensure the urban forest strategy can be effectively implemented over the long term. This approach does not assume additional core staffing but focuses on maximising the impact of existing resources and leveraging in partner and grant-funded capacity where possible.

Supporting principles



These aims to shape the strategy's delivery framework and will be implemented through four interlinked delivery approaches: **Manage More, Protect More, Plant More and Engage More.**

¹⁹ Governance arrangements and resourcing models for delivering the Urban Forest Strategy are detailed in **Topic Paper 6 - Governance and Resourcing.**

DELIVERY

Delivery Approaches

To achieve the aims set out in this strategy, THE COUNCIL and its partner services will apply four interconnected delivery approaches, set out below. These approaches guide how we prioritise work, allocate resources and partner with others. They provide a flexible but structured framework for delivering a healthy, inclusive and resilient urban forest.



Figure 7 Our delivery approaches

Delivery Opportunities

The above approaches support the practical opportunities available to help deliver the aims of the Urban Forest Strategy. These are structured around the below four themes.

1.Targeting and Prioritising Canopy Change. By understanding where canopy is declining or gaining and the equity of its distribution, we can direct planting, protection and maintenance where they are most needed.²⁰²¹

Supporting principles



2.Tools and Data for Decision Making²² We rely on robust datasets to plan, prioritise and track our work. These tools, including the inventory and management system, canopy cover datasets, the i-Tree Eco® project, Proximitree™ analysis, veteran tree inventories, spatial information on land use, statutory provisions, ownership and ecosystem service and asset valuation, allow us to understand the urban forest's current condition and its capacity to deliver the required benefits.

Supporting principle



3.Delivering in Partnership²³ Successful delivery depends on strong partnerships across the city, cross-sectoral effort, public engagement and the capacity to embed urban forest goals across multiple programmes and organisations. While CCC leads on public tree management, external funding and resources aid delivery, many opportunities also lie on land we do not directly control. Collaboration is key.

Supporting principles



²⁰ Baseline canopy data and recent trends in canopy change across Cambridge are set out in **Topic Paper 10 - Cambridge's Urban Forest: Baseline and Change**.

²¹ Baseline canopy data and recent trends in canopy change across Cambridge are set out in **Topic Paper 10 - Cambridge's Urban Forest: Baseline and Change**.

²² Detailed guidance on tree planting, tree works and third-party interactions is set out in **Topic Paper 2 - Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance**.

²³ The Council's approach to public engagement and partnership working is set out in **Topic Paper 5 - Public Engagement and Partnerships**.

4. Monitoring and Adaptation . The urban forest and the resources to manage it are dynamic. Delivery must be transparent, evidence-led and responsive to long-term trends and emerging challenges. It is therefore essential to track progress, evaluate effectiveness and adjust delivery methods in response to new challenges, including climate change, pest and disease pressures and community needs.

Supporting principles



These four themes are grounded in the strategic principles of this strategy. They reflect our commitment to evidence-led action, shared responsibility, whole-place thinking and equitable outcomes, ensuring that delivery is consistent with the values that underpin the Urban Forest Strategy.

POLICIES

The following policies set out how the aims of the Urban Forest Strategy should be delivered in line with its four approaches. They provide a framework for decision-making, guiding day-to-day operations as well as longer-term planning.

Each policy states either:

- **A current commitment** - where THE COUNCIL and its partner services already have the capacity, systems and resources to deliver; or
- **An aspirational goal** - where THE COUNCIL aims to develop the necessary capacity and partnerships over the lifetime of the strategy. Aspirational policies are worded as “*will work towards...*”, “*will seek to...*”, or “*aims to...*”.

This distinction allows the strategy to be both realistic and ambitious, recognising what is deliverable now, while signalling the direction of travel and the areas where future investment, innovation, or partnership will be required.

In line with the strategy’s structure, policies are organised under the four delivery approaches, however, a number of policies support more than one approach in practice.

Nothing in this strategy introduces new statutory duties, changes planning validation requirements, or creates new enforceable thresholds. Where policies are described as ‘aspirational’, delivery will be subject to available funding, land availability, partnership working and wider policy frameworks.

Policies are intended to guide decision-making and prioritisation and should be read alongside the supporting Topic Papers, which provide the primary source of operational detail and technical guidance for implementing the Strategy’s policies and actions, but do not create additional statutory or policy requirements.

Manage More



THE COUNCIL will continue to manage its tree assets sustainably and in accordance with best practice. It is recognised that, in some situations, trees can cause residents significant problems and that the wrong type of tree may be growing in the wrong place. In these situations, THE COUNCIL will act reasonably and responsibly and work to seek an appropriate balance between the interests of the individual, the interests of the community and legal obligations.

POLICY M1: THE COUNCIL will prioritise its legal and health and safety obligations over all other aspects of the service.²⁴

²⁴ For detail on tree asset management, inspection regimes and risk-based decision-making, see **Topic Paper 1 - Tree Asset Management and Risk.**

To do this, THE COUNCIL will:

- Manage its tree stock through a structured, risk-based inspection and maintenance framework, consistent with nationally recognised best practice.
- Undertake cyclical inspections and programmed maintenance using its tree maintenance database as the live asset inventory.
- Respond to emergencies promptly where a tree poses an immediate high risk to people or property.
- Respond to reactive maintenance needs in a timely and proportionate way, balancing risk management with tree retention wherever possible. Records of reactive works will be kept.
- Balance the duty of care with the long-term benefits of retaining healthy trees, ensuring that risk is managed proportionately and reasonably.

POLICY M2: Government and best practice advice regarding the control of pests and diseases will be followed.

This includes compliance with national biosecurity requirements and guidance issued by government bodies, regulators and professional organisations. Management responses will be proportionate, evidence-led and informed by risk to public safety, tree health, biodiversity and long-term resilience. Where appropriate, species diversification and adaptive management will be used to reduce future vulnerability to pests and diseases.

POLICY M3 Trees, Damage and Subsidence: Tree-related damage mitigation requests and claims will be managed in line with nationally recognised guidance, ensuring decisions are based on robust evidence and a hierarchy of mitigation. ²⁵

Priority will be given to retaining trees wherever possible, with alternatives such as pruning, root barriers, or engineering solutions considered before removal. THE COUNCIL will work with insurers, their engineers, arborists and residents to ensure fair outcomes that balance property, environmental, reputational and financial risks.

POLICY M4: Capacity and Resourcing of THE COUNCIL's Tree Asset²⁶

²⁵ The Council's evidential standards and mitigation hierarchy for tree-related subsidence and structural damage are set out in **Topic Paper 4 - Subsidence and Structural Damage**.

²⁶ Governance arrangements and resourcing models for delivering the Urban Forest Strategy are detailed in **Topic Paper 6 - Governance and Resourcing**.

The capacity, skills and resources necessary to manage its tree stock as a long-term public asset will be maintained.

To achieve this, THE COUNCIL will:

- Ensure adequate arboricultural staffing and training to meet statutory duties and deliver the Urban Forest Strategy.
- Sustain investment in digital systems such as EzyTreev® to support inspections, risk management and evidence-based decision-making.
- Allocate funding for cyclical maintenance, proactive inspections and replacement planting of trees under its management.
- Seek and secure external grants, partnerships and innovative delivery models to supplement core budgets.
- Review staffing levels, budgets and asset management systems regularly to ensure they remain proportionate to the scale and value of the tree stock.

POLICY M5: Trees on Housing, Tenanted, Leased Land and other council owned land not directly managed by the Tree Team

THE COUNCIL will manage trees on housing estates, communal land and tenanted or leased properties in a consistent and transparent way, ensuring safety, clarity of responsibility and long-term value.

- Communal Housing Land: Trees in shared estate spaces are part of the corporate tree asset and will be inspected and maintained on a regular cycle by the Tree Team.
- Individual Tenanted Gardens: Responsibility for trees in private gardens held under tenancy rests primarily with the tenant, unless otherwise specified in tenancy agreements. THE COUNCIL will provide guidance and may intervene where statutory protections or significant safety concerns apply.
- Commercial Leases and Other Tenancies: For leased land or properties, tree management responsibilities will be set out in lease agreements. In most cases, the tenant or leaseholder is responsible for tree maintenance. THE COUNCIL expects leaseholders to comply with legal obligations, including tree protection law and to seek consent for works where required.
- Council Oversight: THE COUNCIL retains an interest in ensuring that trees across its housing land, leased land and estate are managed to appropriate standards, reflecting their role as community assets. All land managing services (for example Property Services, City Homes, Car Parking, Bereavement and Drainage) will liaise with the Tree Team where arboricultural expertise is required.



The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and The Town and Country Planning (Trees Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012 make provision for the protection of trees with sufficient amenity value through the serving of Tree Preservation Orders, making local planning authority approval a prerequisite of any tree works. With the use of these regulatory powers GCSP will seek to protect and enhance trees of sufficient amenity value and preserve canopy cover, where expedient.

With consideration of National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance, The Cambridge Local Plan and the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan, through the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) service, THE COUNCIL will seek to ensure new development protects and enhances the urban forest.

POLICY P1: GCSP will make efficient use of regulatory powers to protect trees of sufficient amenity value and secure replacement planting where appropriate.

If council owned/managed trees are at risk from development, THE COUNCIL's Tree Team will be consulted at the earliest opportunity.

GCSP will consider visual amenity and impact, atmospheric benefits, historical, cultural or botanical value and its response to climate change and biodiversity crises as contributing factors when assessing amenity and the expedience of serving TPOs.

New structural tree planting forming part of landscape schemes implemented with development proposals will be made the subject of Tree Preservation Orders.

POLICY P2: THE COUNCIL will resist the removal of or excessive works to trees, including those in Council ownership or management without robust and evidenced justification.

TPO applications submitted without sufficient evidence to justify work specified will not be validated.

The removal of or significant works to healthy trees in conservation areas will be resisted without the submission of justification for work proposed.

POLICY P3: THE COUNCIL will pursue enforcement action/prosecution where protected trees are damaged or destroyed without consent.

²⁷ The statutory framework for tree protection, planning control and enforcement is set out in **Topic Paper 9 - Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control.**

Where private trees are removed without consent, penalties will be sought in accordance with current legislation and GCSP compliance policy.

POLICY P4: In accordance with section 197 of the Town and Country Act Planning , NPPF and Local Plan, planning permission will include appropriate provision for tree preservation and planting.

This includes the use of planning conditions and Tree Preservation Orders, where appropriate, to secure tree protection during construction and the successful establishment of new planting. Requirements will be proportionate to the scale and nature of development and consistent with adopted planning policy and guidance. This policy does not introduce new validation requirements or thresholds.

POLICY P5 (Aspirational): THE COUNCIL and GCSP will seek to review existing TPOs and how TPOs are used.

Older and larger orders will be prioritised
Area orders will be utilised to protect larger tree collections, and THE COUNCIL will seek to update every 15 years. Any review of existing TPOs will be undertaken within existing legal powers and resource constraints

POLICY P6. Protecting Public Tree Assets: Enforcement action and appropriate compensation will be sought and pursued where trees in its care are damaged or destroyed without consent. ²⁸

Compensation will normally be based on nationally recognised valuation methods, such as CAVAT, to reflect both amenity and asset value. THE COUNCIL will work with legal services and partner agencies to ensure deterrence and recovery of costs, reinforcing the principle that public trees are community assets.

Plant More ²⁹



POLICY PL1 THE COUNCIL and GCSP will encourage and continue to seek new opportunities for tree planting in appropriate locations.

²⁸ The Council's approach to tree damage, enforcement and compensation is set out in **Topic Paper 11 - Tree Damage and Compensation**.

²⁹ Detailed guidance on tree planting, tree works and third-party interactions is set out in **Topic Paper 2 - Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance**.

Funding will continue to be achieved internally and through external grants and partnerships. The partner services will continue to seek opportunity for and encourage the planting of large canopy and long-lived trees species in sustainable locations throughout the city on public and private land.

The partner services will continue to ensure and encourage a diversity of tree species throughout the city on private and public land.

THE COUNCIL will continue to target areas that currently lack tree cover to create equitable access to green infrastructure.

POLICY PL2 (Aspirational): THE COUNCIL will aim to ensure every new planting site is supported by a funded establishment period covering at least the first three years after planting. This will include watering, mulching and early formative pruning.

Establishment support will be sought where practicable and proportionate, recognising that long-term success depends on early care. Delivery will be subject to funding availability, land ownership and partnership arrangements. This approach is intended to improve survival rates and long-term canopy outcomes rather than to impose fixed requirements on all planting schemes.

POLICY PL3: Replacement planting will be undertaken wherever a council-owned tree is lost, unless there is a clear justification not to replant in that location.

Replacement planting will normally seek to maintain or enhance canopy value, taking account of site constraints, species suitability and future resilience. Where replanting is not feasible at the original location, alternative sites may be identified to achieve an overall net benefit. Decisions will be recorded transparently.

POLICY PL4 (Aspirational): Services will explore opportunities to incorporate innovative planting techniques such as engineered tree pits, rain gardens and structural soils in new developments and highway schemes to support the establishment of trees in urban conditions.

These techniques will be explored where they offer clear benefits for tree establishment and long-term performance in constrained urban environments. Their use will be opportunity-led and dependent on scheme design, feasibility, funding and maintenance responsibilities. This policy is intended to encourage innovation rather than mandate specific solutions.



POLICY E1: Sustainable and proactive management of trees will be facilitated through public and partnership engagement.

Engagement will support better understanding of the benefits and limitations of urban trees and encourage shared stewardship. This includes consultation on significant works, support for community planting and clear communication about management decisions. Engagement activity will be proportionate and targeted.

POLICY E2 (Aspirational): THE COUNCIL will seek to encourage joined up approaches to tree management through partnerships with other services, managers of private trees and by working with local communities and businesses to provide opportunities for donations and sponsorship.

Partnership working will be used to extend capacity, share expertise and unlock additional resources where appropriate. This may include collaboration with other Council services, landowners, businesses and community groups. Participation will be voluntary and subject to appropriate governance and safeguards, including alignment with the Council's technical guidance where planting or works affect the Council's tree asset

POLICY E3 (Aspirational): THE COUNCIL will seek to quantify the benefits of Cambridge's urban forest, whilst creating real opportunities for community participation in the process of valuation.

THE COUNCIL will educate and encourage the community to participate in promoting and maintaining Cambridge's urban forest.

POLICY E4: THE COUNCIL will provide clear, accessible information about its tree management and planting through its website, public notices and consultation processes

Information will be provided in a clear and accessible way, proportionate to the nature of the activity and audience. This includes publishing guidance, consultation information and data where appropriate to support transparency and informed engagement.

³⁰ The Council's approach to public engagement and partnership working is set out in **Topic Paper 5 - Public Engagement and Partnerships**.

DELIVERY, ACTIONS & MONITORING SUMMARY

To deliver the UFS's vision and achieve its aims, a programme of interrelated actions will be undertaken. These actions also reflect the four core delivery approaches and policies and are designed to be flexible, evidence-led and scalable across the city.

The actions provide a practical delivery framework, translating the Strategy's aims and policies into operational activity across Council services and in partnership with landowners, communities and other stakeholders.

To keep the core Strategy concise and accessible, the detailed action plan (including indicative actions, supporting delivery approaches, and links to Topic Papers) is set out in **Appendix 2 - Actions**.

Delivery will be monitored through a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned to the Strategy's aims and delivery approaches. The detailed monitoring and evaluation framework is set out in **Appendix 3 - Monitoring, Evaluation and Key Performance Indicators**.

This approach ensures transparency and accountability while allowing the Strategy to remain focused on its strategic direction and policy framework.

AFTERWORD

Cambridge's living treescape - a story of growth, loss and renewal

Walk through Cambridge today and you'll see a city shaped by trees: riverside willows leaning over the Cam, plane lined streets in Petersfield and Newnham and towering college trees casting long shadows over centuries of learning. But this treescape wasn't inevitable, it is the result of generations of choices, accidents and acts of care. Cambridge's urban forest has grown from a patchwork of planning and chance. Some trees were planted to mark boundaries, adorn streets, or commemorate a special event. Others seeded themselves in untended spaces and simply endured. This layered evolution gives Cambridge's treescape its richness and diversity, a mix of heritage, utility and wildness. From the medieval landscapes of Sheep's Green with their veteran willows and the Victorian parks of Parker's and Christ's Pieces, to the carefully managed arboreta of the colleges and the Botanic Garden, trees have long played a role in shaping the city's identity. The 20th century has major pressures: increased development, the introduction of new diseases and changing trends in urban design. Yet it also saw the persistence of municipal and suburban planting, and the beginnings of community led greening.

Over the past decade, new data has deepened our understanding of Cambridge's urban forest. Between 2008 and 2018, canopy cover increased modestly, from 17.1% to 17.6% largely due to the continued growth of existing trees and new planting. Encouragingly, some of the most significant gains were in parts of the city with greater deprivation, such as East Chesterton and Abbey. The city now supports over 300,000 trees, offering more than £1 billion in amenity value.

But this growth is uneven. Canopy losses have occurred in wards like Newnham and Castle, where the older Victorian and Edwardian plantings are reaching the end of their safe useful lives. Gardens, though shrinking, still contribute disproportionately to canopy cover. Protected open spaces, veteran trees and pockets of wildness support biodiversity and trees play an important role in supporting climate resilience and create better places to live and work in, but only if they are recognised, protected and maintained.

We now stand at a point of transition. For the first time, we have access to high-resolution data, long-term canopy mapping and tools like i-Tree® and GIS analysis that can guide more equitable and strategic decisions. But understanding is not enough, the future of Cambridge's urban forest depends on coordinated action. What we choose to plant, retain, protect and invest in today will shape the City for decades to come. This strategy builds on this story and aims to change its trajectory. In the strategy, we have set out our long-term vision, the principles that guide us and the actions we will take to protect, expand and steward the urban forest for current and future generations.

The urban forest is not static. It is living, growing, vulnerable and essential.

APPENDIX 1 - TOPIC PAPERS

1. Tree Asset Management and Risk

This paper explains how Cambridge City Council manages its tree stock as living assets while meeting its duty of care. It covers inspection regimes, risk-benefit assessment processes, cyclical maintenance, consultation and the challenges of managing trees across different landholdings, including housing and its commercial estate land.

2. Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance

This paper sets out Cambridge City Council's approach to tree planting and tree work, and also provides wider guidance applicable to private landowners, developers, utilities and other third parties. It covers species selection, structural planting, and engineered tree pits, together with considerations for non-native and climate-adapted species. The paper also explains good practice in tree work, including pruning and removals, and sets out the processes for third-party interactions such as dropped kerb applications, pruning requests, and utility works

3. Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity

Urban trees form vital habitats and ecological corridors. This paper describes how THE COUNCIL manages trees to enhance biodiversity, including veteran tree care, species diversity, and contributions to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain. THE COUNCIL will seek to maintain high standards of biosecurity to reduce the introduction and spread of pests and diseases, ensuring a resilient treescape for the future

4. Trees, Subsidence and Structural Damage

Subsidence and other structural damage caused by trees can be complex and contentious. This paper sets out the evidential standards required, THE COUNCIL's mitigation hierarchy and the legal and policy context guiding decisions. It explains how THE COUNCIL works with insurers, engineers, and residents to resolve cases fairly.

5. Public Engagement and Partnerships

The urban forest belongs to everyone, and its future depends on shared stewardship. Less than 25% of land in Cambridge is directly owned or managed by THE COUNCIL, making collaboration with residents, businesses, schools, and partner organisations essential. Engagement is therefore not an optional extra but a core delivery mechanism of the Urban Forest Strategy.

6. Governance and Resourcing

Topic Paper 6 explains how Cambridge's urban forest is governed and resourced. It sets out the roles of different Council services in relation to trees, how resources are allocated, and how governance arrangements ensure transparent, coordinated delivery. It applies to both THE COUNCIL's directly managed tree asset and the wider urban forest across Cambridge.

7. Climate Change and Resilience

Trees are essential to Cambridge's response to climate change. This paper explores their role in cooling and shading, flood mitigation, and soil resilience, referencing strategies for diversifying species to withstand future climate and pest pressures. It links the urban forest directly to The Council's wider climate goals and provides the evidence base for the policies listed above.

8. Achievements

Cambridge has a strong record of urban forest management and innovation. Over the past decade under the Citywide Tree Strategy 2016-2026, THE COUNCIL has delivered major planting programmes, pioneered new approaches to tree asset management, and embedded trees within its climate and biodiversity strategies. The achievements, set out below, justify the need for an holistic approach to the management of green infrastructure and provide a solid foundation from which the Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036 has been developed.

9. Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control

Trees in Cambridge benefit from a robust framework of legal protections administered by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP). This paper explains statutory responsibilities in relation to Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, and Tree Work Applications. It also sets out how GCSP responds to planning applications, tree work applications and enforces compliance to safeguard Cambridge's urban forest and its most valuable trees.

10. Cambridge's Urban Forest - Baseline and Change

Understanding today's urban forest is essential to planning for its future. This paper presents the current evidence on canopy cover, species composition, age structure and spatial distribution across the city. It also reviews recent trends and changes, providing the baseline against which future progress will be measured.

11. Tree Protection, Damage and Compensation

The urban forest is a public asset and protecting it from harm is a core responsibility of the Council and its partner services. This paper sets out how damage to trees is addressed, including unauthorised works, vandalism, and harm caused by third parties. It explains the legal framework for enforcement and prosecution, the use of valuation tools such as CAVAT to establish compensation, and how Cambridge City Council and partner services seek to deter damage while recovering costs where appropriate.

12. Growing Cambridge's Tree Canopy

An explanatory paper that sets out why canopy cover is the right metric for Cambridge, justifies the 20% by 2050 aim against alternatives tracked via 10-year mapping cycles.

APPENDIX 2 - ACTIONS

To deliver the UFS's vision and achieve its aims, a programme of interrelated actions will be undertaken. These actions also reflect the four core delivery approaches and policies and are designed to be flexible, evidence-led and scalable across the city.

Each action supports one or more of the strategy's aims and is grounded in the 5 principles of: Awareness and Action; Climate Resilience; Intergenerational Equity; Public Engagement; Environmental Justice.

Action 1: Increase canopy cover

Supporting Plant more, Protect more approaches

1. Use updated canopy mapping to identify priority planting areas, focusing on locations with low or declining tree cover.
2. Deliver annual planting programmes across streets, parks, housing estates and open spaces.
3. Integrate canopy objectives into infrastructure, highways and urban development projects.
4. Support private landowners to plant and care for trees through guidance and incentives.
1. Protect existing trees of present and future value

This is an aspirational, citywide outcome and does not create site-specific requirements, alter planning validation criteria, or override existing planning policy

Action 2: Improve the condition and longevity of existing trees

Supporting Manage more, Protect more approaches

1. Maintain proactive inspection and maintenance regimes of tree assets.
2. Prioritise the management of mature and veteran trees to maximise longevity and ecological value.
3. Implement robust watering strategies, especially for young and recently planted trees.
4. Improve design and planting practices to support healthy root systems and future growth.
5. Encourage species diversity including climate mitigating and climate-resilient tree selection.

Action 3: Ensure equitable access to the benefits of the urban forest

Supporting Plant more, Engage more approaches

1. Use Tree Equity and Council tree canopy datasets to prioritise planting in underserved and vulnerable communities.
2. Target planting and engagement projects in areas of high need.
3. Align urban forest delivery with objectives for public health.
4. Support community planting and tree sponsorship in priority areas.

Action 4: Embed trees and canopy into policy and decision-making

Supporting Manage more, Protect more approaches

1. Inclusion of urban tree standards and canopy targets in local planning policy.
2. Integrate urban forest considerations into climate, biodiversity and other strategies.
3. Monitor the implementation of tree-related planning conditions and enforce where necessary and make effective use of regulatory powers.
4. Promote sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and green infrastructure that incorporate trees

This strategy does not introduce new validation requirements or thresholds unless formally adopted through planning policy.

Action 5: Support biodiversity and habitat connectivity

Supporting Plant more, Manage more approaches

1. Prioritise tree planting that supports habitat creation and ecological connectivity.
2. Manage river-edge willows, woodlands and veteran trees to preserve and enhance biodiversity.
3. Coordinate with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other landscape-scale initiatives.
4. Use species-rich and locally appropriate planting to support ecological resilience.

Action 6: Promote shared stewardship and community participation

Supporting Engage more, Manage more approaches

1. Facilitate community-led planting, maintenance and aftercare schemes.
2. Deliver public engagement activities including guided walks, talks and education programmes.
3. Develop long-term partnerships with residents, businesses, landowners and third-sector organisations.
4. Promote the Veteran Willow Tree Charter^{xix} and encourage community to care for the urban forest.

Action 7: Build and maintain a strong evidence base

Supporting Manage more, Protect more approaches

1. Regularly update and analyse canopy cover, i-Tree Eco and tree audit datasets.
2. Monitor changes in canopy, tree numbers and condition to inform adaptive management.
3. Use GIS mapping to increase accessibility to Council tree canopy datasets.
4. Track threats from pests, disease and climate-related stress and update risk assessments.

5. Ensure data transparency by publishing relevant datasets and maps publicly where possible.

Action 8: Strengthen the capacity and resourcing needed to deliver the Strategy

Supporting All approaches

6. Secure long-term funding for planting, maintenance and monitoring.
7. Invest in arboricultural staff capacity, training and digital infrastructure.
8. Pursue grants and external funding to support community and strategic delivery.
9. Explore co-production, partnerships and innovative delivery models with public, private and voluntary sectors.

APPENDIX 3 - MONITORING, EVALUATION AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

To assess the success of the Urban Forest Strategy and support transparent, adaptive delivery, we will track progress using a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These indicators are directly aligned with the strategy's aims and delivery approaches.

KPIs fall into two categories:

- Target based KPIs are linked to measurable, time-bound outcomes that the Council aims to achieve (e.g. a 20% canopy cover target).
- Trend based KPIs are used to monitor change over time, where year on year variation is expected due to external factors such as funding, or climate impacts. These KPIs help track the direction of travel and support adaptive management.

Together, these KPIs provide a robust performance framework for monitoring delivery, identifying risks, and informing future investment and policy.

Increase Overall Canopy Cover

(Target based and trend based)

- Measure the percentage of canopy cover citywide, using repeat mapping every 10 years – next due 2028
- Increase tree canopy cover to at least 20% by 2050s

Improve the Condition and Longevity of Existing Trees

(Trend based)

- Report on the number of council-managed trees inspected annually
- Record the number of trees removed by the Council each year
- Record the number of trees planted by the Council each year

Ensure Equitable Access to Urban Forest Benefits

(Trend based)

- Track the number of new tree projects delivered in priority communities each year

Embed Trees and Canopy into Policy and Decision-Making

(Trend based)

- Track the number of TPOs served each year
- Track the number of TWAs processed each year

Support Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity

(Trend based)

- Measure the percentage of new plantings made up of high biodiversity-value species
- Monitor the number of veteran trees under positive long-term management

Promote Shared Stewardship and Community Participation

(Trend based)

- Track the number of tree planting or other tree related events supported by the Council each year
- Record the number of trees planted by community groups and volunteers
- Measure participation in Free Trees for Babies scheme

Build and Maintain a Strong Evidence Base

(Target based and trend based)

- Update major datasets regularly (e.g. canopy mapping, ecosystem service valuation, asset valuation, every 10 years; Council managed tree audits ongoing)
- Monitor the number of datasets made publicly available to support transparency

Strengthen Capacity and Resources

(Trend based)

- Track the annual budget allocated to urban forest strategy delivery
- Monitor arboricultural staffing levels - FTEs per 10,000 trees managed
- Record the total amount of external funding secured or leveraged each year

Review and Reporting

Progress against KPIs will be reviewed annually, with key updates published for internal stakeholders and the public. This approach ensures the strategy remains evidence led, responsive to change, and accountable to the people of Cambridge.

KPIs will be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain proportionate, measurable and aligned with available data, with any proposed changes reported transparently to Members.

APPENDIX 4 - GLOSSARY

Amenity value - The value of trees in terms of their contribution to public enjoyment, visual character, cultural significance and overall quality of life. Amenity value is often used in planning and legal contexts, including the assessment of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

Arboriculture - The selection, production, planting, maintenance and removal of all woody plants for amenity purposes.

Asset valuation - The process of assigning a financial value to trees as public assets, using recognised tools such as CAVAT (Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees) or i-Tree Eco®.

Biodiversity - A measure of biological variation, whether represented by gene, species, habitats or ecosystems.

Biosecurity - A set of precautions to reduce the risk of accidentally introducing or spreading alien invasive species, including potential pests and pathogens.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) - An approach to development that ensures habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before development.

Blue infrastructure - Natural or artificial water-related features such as rivers, streams, canals, ponds and wetlands that form part of the wider green infrastructure network.

Blue-green infrastructure - An interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, greenways, parks, forests and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to health and quality of life. Includes parks, parkways, riparian buffers, residential landscaping, street trees, rain gardens, green roofs and window boxes.

Cambridge - The area of land represented by the District of Cambridge City

Cambridge City Council (THE COUNCIL) - The local planning authority

Cambridgeshire County Council - The county council for non-metropolitan county of Cambridgeshire and the local highway authority

Canopy Cover - A 2-dimensional metric quantifying the area of ground covered by tree canopy when viewed from above, where tree canopy is the collective branches and foliage of the tree.

Carbon sequestration - Processes that remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) - A method used to manage trees as public assets rather than liabilities

Climate resilience - The capacity of trees and the wider urban forest to withstand and adapt to the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather, drought, flooding and pests and diseases.

Community stewardship - Shared responsibility for the care and management of trees by local communities, residents and partner organisations.

Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA) - A professional body that publishes guidance and methods for appraising the monetary value of trees, often used internationally alongside or as a complement to CAVAT.

DiversiTree project - A spatial dataset and report documenting veteran willow trees along a 10 km stretch of the River Cam, highlighting opportunities for succession planting, biodiversity conservation and long-term heritage management.

Ecosystem Services - The ways in which humanity relies on ecosystems for the continued provision of clean air, drinking water, an equitable climate, the productivity of agriculture, forestry and oceans, control of flooding, soil erosion, coastal erosion, carbon sequestration etc.

Ecosystem - A unit of ecology consisting of a discrete community of species, interacting with each other and their physical environment.

Environment - The prevailing conditions which reflect the combined influence of climate, soil, topography and biology (other plants and animals) present in an area.

EzyTreev® - Cambridge City Council's live inventory and management system for trees on public land, used to record inspections, manage risk and plan maintenance.

Free Trees for Babies - A Council-led community scheme providing free trees to celebrate the birth or adoption of children, supporting family involvement in the urban forest.

GIS (Geographic information system) - A collection of computer hardware, software and geographic data for capturing, storing, updating, manipulating, analysing and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) - Service responsible for delivering local planning functions across Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

Green infrastructure - A strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural features such as parks, woodlands, hedgerows, street trees, private gardens and green roofs. Green infrastructure delivers multiple environmental, social and economic benefits, supporting biodiversity, health, climate resilience and quality of life.

Green space - Any vegetated land or water within an urban area that serves as recreation or open space. This includes neighbourhood and regional parks, gardens, cemeteries, playing fields, bike and walking paths and urban landscaping.

Grey infrastructure - The built environment's hard, engineered features such as roads, pavements, drainage network and utilities. Grey infrastructure often competes with space for trees and green space, making integration with green and blue infrastructure critical to sustainable city planning.

Habitat - Food, water, shelter and space that supports plant or animal life.

High biodiversity-value species - Defined in the Council's Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting Work & Guidance as species selected for strong biodiversity benefits and suitability to site conditions and future climate.

Local Planning Authority (LPA) - The local government body that is empowered by law to exercise urban planning functions for a particular area.

i-Tree Eco® - A sample-based survey tool that quantifies urban forest structure, condition and ecosystem services such as carbon storage, pollution removal and amenity value.

Intergenerational equity - The principle of ensuring that decisions made today protect and enhance environmental resources so that future generations inherit equal or greater benefits.

Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign - A Cambridge initiative encouraging residents and community groups to increase canopy cover at neighbourhood scale.

Partner organisations and services - For the purposes of this Strategy, "partner organisations and services" refers to Cambridge City Council services and teams, and to external organisations, that have related roles, interests or objectives in relation to trees, green infrastructure and place-making. Cambridge City Council services will have regard to the Urban Forest Strategy where relevant to their functions. References to partner services reflect alignment of aims and

collaborative working, rather than the creation of any new legal, governance or delivery responsibilities beyond existing remits.

ProximiTree™ - High-resolution aerial data licensed from Bluesky International, used to analyse and monitor tree canopy cover over time.

Section 211 Notice - Notification to the LPA of proposed works to trees in a conservation area.

Shadeways - A Cambridge-specific mapping project identifying walking and cycling routes where tree planting could provide shade, cooling and environmental equity benefits.

Subsidence - In relation to soil or structures resting in or on soil, a sinking due to shrinkage when certain clay soils dry out, sometimes due to the extraction of moisture by tree roots.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) - An approach to managing rainfall that mimics natural processes, including tree pits, rain gardens and permeable surfaces, reducing flood risk and improving water quality.

Tree inventory (or tree audit dataset) - Gathering of accurate information on the urban forest, including tree species, location and health (see Ezytreev®).

Tree Equity - A framework for identifying and addressing unequal distribution of tree canopy in relation to social and environmental vulnerability.

Tree Team - Cambridge City Council's in-house arboricultural service, based in City Services. The Tree Team manages the Council's tree stock across streets, parks, housing estates and open space and provides professional arboricultural advice to other Council services, including Housing and Property. It maintains the Council's tree inventory, delivers inspections and maintenance and supports statutory tree protection and strategic planning.

Tree Work Application (TWA) - A planning application relating specifically to works on protected trees, including those covered by TPOs or in Conservation Areas.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) - A legally enforceable document served by the local planning authority to protect trees and woodland in the interests of public amenity. While trees in conservation areas are automatically protected, individual trees outside these areas may be protected with a Tree Preservation Order.

Tree Work Application - Planning application relating specifically to trees

Urban Cooling - The role of trees in lowering local temperatures, reducing the urban heat island effect and improving thermal comfort.

Urban Forest - Trees, woody shrubs, hedges, herbaceous plants, waterways, wildlife, grasses and other green infrastructure within the built environment, considered collectively over a defined area.

Urban Forestry - The holistic care and management of single trees and tree populations in urban settings for the purpose of improving the urban environment, irrespective of ownership.

Urban heat island effect - A phenomenon where air temperatures in urban areas are significantly hotter than those in surrounding rural areas due to the high concentrations of buildings and pavement in urban areas.

Veteran tree - A tree that has developed notable habitat, cultural, or heritage features due to its age, size, or condition, providing exceptional biodiversity value.

APPENDIX 5 – END NOTES

- ⁱ Pearlmutter et al (2017) The Urban Forest - Cultivating Green Infrastructure for People and the Environment, Springer. Chapter 11 Zurcher, N. Assessing the ecosystem services deliverable: The critical role of the urban tree inventory, pp101-110.
- ⁱⁱ www.ufctrees.co.uk last accessed 10/2/26
- ⁱⁱⁱ Image source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/19/iceland-holds-funeral-for-first-glacier-lost-to-climate-change> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^v <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{vi} <https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/obhlati2/cambridge-local-plan-2018.pdf> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{vii} <https://consultations.greatercambridgeplanning.org/draft-greater-cambridge-local-plan-consultation/document-library> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{viii} <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/biodiversity-strategy> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{ix} <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/climate-change-strategy> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^x <https://files.cambridge.gov.uk/public/ldf/coredocs/RD-NE-050.pdf> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{xi} <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/community-wealth-building-strategy> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{xii} <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-and-environment/improving-the-natural-environment/biodiversity-and-greenspaces/cambridgeshire-tree-and-woodland-strategy> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{xiii} <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/i3eh0kvd/greater-cambridge-air-quality-strategy-2024.pdf> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{xiv} <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/6711/environment-policy-statement.pdf> last accessed 5/1/26
- ^{xv} Urban Tree Canopy Cover
- ^{xvi} [tdag_firststepscanopycover.pdf](#) last accessed 9/9/25
- ^{xvii} [Environment Act 2021](#) last accessed 9/9/25
- ^{xviii} [Doick-et-al_Canopy-Cover-of-Englands-Towns-and-Cities_revised220317_combined.pdf](#) last accessed 11/9/25; [England's urban forests - using canopy cover data to secure the benefits of the urban forest](#) last accessed 11/09/25; [Mapping English tree cover: results, ranking and methodology. Policy and insight](#) Friends of the Earth Policy, last accessed 11/09/25
- ^{xix} [DiversiTree project - Cambridge City Council](#) last accessed 10/2/26

This page is intentionally left blank

TP 1 ASSET MANAGEMENT AND RISK

TP2 TREE PLANTING, WORK AND THIRD PARTY GUIDANCE

TP3 BIODIVERSITY AND HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

TP4 SUBSIDENCE AND STRUCTURAL DAMAGE

TP5 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

TP6 GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCING

TP7 CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

TP8 ACHIEVEMENTS

TP9 STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES AND PLANNING CONTROL

TP10 CAMBRIDGE'S URBAN FOREST - BASELINE AND CHANGE

TP11 TREE DAMAGE AND COMPENSATION

TP12 GROWING CAMBRIDGE'S TREE CANOPY

TOPIC PAPER 1 ASSET MANAGEMENT AND RISK

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

Contents

Purpose.....	2
Policy alignment.....	2
Associated Topic Papers.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Public Tree Assets.....	3
Direct management by the Tree Team.....	5
Inspection and risk management.....	5
Proactive inspections and maintenance.....	6
Zoning and Inspection Framework.....	9
Ivy and Shrub Obstructions.....	10
Geographic Management Areas.....	11
Subsidence risk abatement.....	12
Annual Epicormic Removal Programme.....	12
Reactive Management.....	12
Emergencies.....	13
Managing Trees on Housing and Estate Land.....	14
Priorities for Advice and Works.....	15
Works to trees on ex-Council tenanted properties.....	15
Individual Trees and Woodlands.....	15
Community Orchards.....	16
Areas of High Biodiversity Value.....	17
The management of shrubs and self-sets.....	18
Commercial and Property Services trees.....	18
Riparian Land.....	19
Consultation.....	19
How We Manage Protected Council Trees.....	20
Damage and Compensation.....	21
Adopted land and newly transferred trees.....	21

Purpose

This paper explains how Cambridge City Council manages its tree stock as living assets while meeting its duty of care.

It covers inspection regimes, risk-benefit assessment processes, cyclical maintenance, consultation, and the challenges of managing trees across different landholdings, including housing and its commercial estate land. The approach follows the principles of the [National Tree Safety Group \(2024\)](#)¹ and the Council's Urban Forest Strategy, ensuring that trees are managed as valuable assets that provide multiple benefits, while risks to public safety are kept as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP).

Policy alignment

The paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy under the following policies.

- M1-M5: Policies relating to the management, resourcing and governance of the Council's tree asset, including risk management, pests and diseases, subsidence, and landholdings.
- P2: The Council will resist the removal of/or excessive works to trees without robust and evidenced justification.
- PL1 (Aspirational): The Council will encourage and continue to seek new opportunities for tree planting in appropriate locations. This will include ensuring and encouraging a diversity of tree species, targeting areas that currently lack tree cover, and prioritising the planting of large-canopy and long-lived trees.
- E1: Through public and partnership engagement the Council will facilitate sustainable and proactive management of trees.
- E2 (Aspirational): The Council will seek to encourage joined-up approaches to tree management through partnerships with other Council services, managers of private trees, and by working with local communities and businesses.

Associated Topic Papers

Topic Paper 1 is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance

¹ <https://ntsgroup.org.uk/> (last accessed 18/09/25)

- Topic Paper 3 Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity
- Topic Paper 4 Trees, Subsidence and Structural Damage
- Topic Paper 11 Tree Protection, Damage and Compensation which together provide a comprehensive framework for tree asset management.

Together these papers provide a comprehensive framework for tree asset management.

Introduction

Cambridge City Council's (CCC) legal obligations include a duty of care to maintain its trees in a safe condition. The demand on any service area can vary from year to year in response to environmental changes, storm damage, altered growing conditions and rises in pests and diseases, resulting in localised rises in tree work. Increases in demand in one area of the service can affect the ability to deliver in other areas.

CCC will prioritise its legal obligations first, ensuring that risks to people and property are managed proportionately in line with National Tree Safety Group guidance. This means balancing public safety with the wide range of benefits that trees provide, including amenity, biodiversity, climate regulation, community well-being, and avoiding unnecessary loss of healthy trees. Its second priority will be to sustain its asset through non-safety related tree care practices and planting. Lastly, it will prioritise its engagement aspirations.

Public Tree Assets

CCC has a team of three full-time qualified arboriculturists to administer and advise on matters related to trees in the public domain, which can be divided into five categories:

1. Parks and Open Spaces

Trees located in Cambridge's:

- Parks
- Recreation grounds
- Commons
- Closed churchyards
- Play areas

- Nature reserves and other areas of high biodiversity value
- Other open spaces, including cross-boundary sites such as Byron's Pool, Nine Wells and St Albans Recreation Ground

2. Highways

Street trees growing in pavements and verges are the assets of Cambridgeshire County Council. CCC has managed these trees on the County's behalf since before 1994. Although the formal service agreement expired in 2014, the arrangement has continued by custom and practice.

Under this arrangement, CCC maintains and plants highway trees, with costs recouped annually from the County. Overall liability for the tree stock remains with Cambridgeshire County Council, and objections raised through consultation are resolved by County officers. In line with the 2016 Tree Strategy, responsibility for funding and long-term strategic management rests with the County. CCC will continue to seek clarity on future arrangements to ensure the sustainability of the service.

In fulfilling this role, CCC also discharges the statutory duty introduced by the Environment Act 2021 (now contained in the Highways Act 1980) to consult on the felling of street trees, ensuring transparency and public involvement in decision-making.

3. Housing

The responsibility of City Homes, trees on communal housing land are those found in the publicly accessible open space areas in and around housing estates. The Tree Team inspects and advises on these trees, to ensure a consistent balance between safety, amenity and resident engagement.

4. Residual sites

These are special areas sometimes with limited public access:

- Highfield Avenue tree belt
- Walpole Road woods
- West Pit woods
- Histon Road Cemetery

5. Other managed land

In addition to direct responsibility, the Tree Team also advises on the management of trees on all other Council-owned land, including:

- Council car parks
- Tenanted housing land
- Newmarket Road Cemetery and the Crematorium (S. Cambs)
- Property services lands (including commercial leases)
- Riparian land
- Other leased or service-managed land where tree safety responsibilities remain with the Council.

The Tree Team directly manages 1-4.

Direct management by the Tree Team

Set out below is CCC's general maintenance regime. Most Highway, Housing Estate and Park and Open spaces trees are managed by the Tree Team inspected and maintained under a 3-year cycle.

The cycle is based on the city being split into three geographic ward-based areas. Each area is given a three-year priority in turn, and trees in the priority area are proactively inspected and managed. Only emergency, zone 2 or special zone works are completed outside the priority area.

This division of the city makes best use of resources while adhering to government guidance and the National Tree Safety Group principle of proportionate risk management ensuring that risk is controlled to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP).

Trees in closed churchyards are also managed by the Tree Team using the same inspection principles, but recommended works remain subject to Diocesan approval. All other council-owned trees (e.g. cemeteries, car parks, and tenanted land) are inspected and maintained either through cyclical programmes or on request from the appropriate managing service, in line with the council's duty of care.

Inspection and risk management

As trees are essential assets to the urban environment, but conflicts can occur with their surroundings, CCC follows the National Tree Safety Group's *Common sense risk management of trees* as the basis for its approach. This guidance stresses that risks should be kept *as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP)*, while recognising the wide benefits that trees provide. The five key principles are:

1. Trees provide a wide variety of benefits to society.
2. Trees are living organisms and they naturally lose branches or fall.
3. The overall risk to public safety is extremely low.
4. Tree owners have a legal duty of care; and
5. Tree owners should take a balanced and proportionate approach to tree risk management.

Tree inspections are undertaken by suitably qualified staff or contractors who hold relevant training and experience. Inspectors are expected not only to observe potential hazards, but also to apply professional judgement in balancing risks with benefits.

While whole-tree or partial failures can have serious consequences, other issues such as low branching obstructing access or sightlines to traffic signals can also present significant risks. To manage this effectively across a large and varied estate, the Council uses a ward-based three-year inspection cycle as the baseline. This provides an efficient and transparent system that allows resources to be distributed evenly and residents to be informed and consulted in a consistent way.

Where circumstances present a higher level of risk, for example trees in high use areas, inspections are carried out more frequently (see Special zones). Practical examples include the annual epicormic growth removal programme for busy lime lined streets, the London planes on Jesus Green and heritage limes on Parkers and Christ's Pieces. This blended approach ensures proportionate risk management in line with National Tree Safety Group guidance and demonstrates that the council manages tree safety risks to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP), while retaining the wide benefits of the urban forest.

It should be noted that risks relating to building damage (e.g. subsidence or root-related structural issues) fall outside the scope of the National Tree Safety Group safety framework. These are addressed separately under Topic Paper 4 (Trees, Subsidence and Structural Damage), which sets out CCC's approach to balancing property risks with the wider benefits of the urban forest.

Proactive inspections and maintenance

Depending on the circumstances one of four levels of inspection will be employed:

1. Walkabout/drive-by - A rapid visual assessment of a site looking for significant visually prominent tree related hazards.

2. Basic - A visual assessment of individual trees which shall evaluate tree related hazards including the structural integrity of a tree, relying primarily on observations from ground level (possibly using binoculars, mallet and probe).
3. Detailed - A systematic and diagnostic process of visual inspection to gain sufficient understanding of a tree's structural condition, to inform, where appropriate, re-inspection interval and management recommendations; and
4. Advanced - A specialised examination identified as being necessary during a basic or detailed inspection involving the use of specialised (e.g. decay mapping) equipment.

Inspection data is recorded on the council's proprietary tree management software (Ezytreev®). Advanced inspections will be recorded with a full report saved on the shared network in an appropriate format, such as Word, PDF or Excel. The detail recorded will vary with the level of inspection. Any observations giving rise to concern over tree safety will be recorded. Basic inspections will be the default level of inspection.

Occasionally there are trees, particularly veteran or ancient specimens of exceptional amenity, biodiversity or cultural value that display significant defects. In such cases, in line with National Tree Safety Group guidance, the Council may choose to retain the tree where risks can be reasonably managed, for example by restricting access, selective works, or increased monitoring. This reflects the principle that higher levels of risk may be tolerated when justified by higher levels of benefit.

Where a significant defect is suspected and failure could result in serious harm or damage, inspections will be undertaken to fully assess the extent of the defect and level of any associated risk. This will inform site-specific management recommendations.

For basic inspections the minimum data recorded will be:

- date of inspection.
- name of person undertaking the inspection.
- trees inspected/site inspected.
- any significant defects observed.
- any limitations preventing inspection to the required level e.g. ivy, shrubs
- tree species; and
- action recommended (where relevant).

Trees not found to have significant defects, and/or not directly threatening an identified target, need not be individually recorded during a site inspection, providing that the date of inspection and the site inspected are recorded. It will be assumed, for the purposes of record-keeping, that all trees present within the site have been inspected to the extent reasonably practicable. This method of recording may be employed during proactive inspections where large numbers of trees are involved and the practicalities of recording each tree inspection each tree are unrealistic.

For detailed and advanced inspections, the minimum data recorded should be:

- date of inspection
- name of person undertaking the inspection
- tree inspected
- species name
- age class
- specific defects present assessed as being a potentially significant risk
- any limitations preventing systematic inspection
- action recommended (where relevant).
- risk assessment e.g. [Quantified Tree Risk Assessment](#)²
- condition assessment

Walkabout/drive-by inspections will only be undertaken in special circumstances, e.g. after a storm event, where there are resource issues or prior to some events. For walkabout/drive-by inspections, the minimum data recorded should be:

- date of inspection
- name of person(s) undertaking the inspection
- site inspected
- defects present assessed as being a potentially significant risk
- action recommended (where relevant).

Basic tree inspections should be employed both reactively and proactively. Detailed and advanced inspections will be employed in response to basic inspection findings.

In applying this inspection system, CCC will ensure that decisions are transparent, proportionate, and where appropriate involve consultation with stakeholders. This

² <https://qtra.co.uk/> (last accessed 18/09/25)

reflects the National Tree Safety Group emphasis on maintaining public trust and confidence, while managing tree risks in a way that retains the broadest possible range of benefits.

Maintenance follows from inspections or from the application of pre-defined standards, such as the Cambridge City Council Combined Proactive Specification³. Trees on the city's streets and in communal housing areas are managed as a single unit, reflecting their shared role in the streetscape, typically lining either side of a footpath. On their scheduled three-year cycle, these trees are brought up to the Combined Proactive Specification baseline, after which inspections identify any additional tree care needs. Trees on other landholdings, such as parks and open spaces, are inspected first and works are then recommended in line with the specific use and character of each site. The inspecting officer is responsible for procuring, consulting on, and overseeing the works they have recommended, ensuring these are delivered in a timely manner. With few exceptions, all works are carried out by the Council's approved framework contractors.

Zoning and Inspection Framework

In line with HSE guidance ([SIM 01/2007/05](https://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/sims/ag_food/010705.htm))⁴, the Council applies a simple two-zone framework for managing tree safety risks:

- **Zone 1** - Trees directly managed by the Tree Team, including those on streets, communal housing land, parks, and open spaces. These trees are subject to the baseline three-year inspection cycle.
- **Zone 2** - Trees where the Tree Team does not have sole responsibility, including those on tenanted housing land (where tenants share responsibilities under tenancy agreements) and service-managed landholdings. In these cases, the Tree Team provides advice to landowners and service managers, who are expected to integrate tree safety into their wider responsibilities.
- **Special zones** - Certain high-profile or distinctive sites require tailored management regimes outside the standard three-year cycle. These zones are defined by the nature of the trees, the risks involved, or specific management objectives. Current examples include:

³ The Combined Proactive Specification is the standard set of arboricultural operations applied to the city's tree stock during each management cycle. Its purpose is to bring trees up to a consistent baseline condition that ensures safety, accessibility, and functionality across the urban forest before additional needs are identified through inspection

⁴ https://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/sims/ag_food/010705.htm last accessed 17/09/25

- Annual epicormic removal - Predominantly highway limes, where programmed clearance is required each year to maintain sightlines and safe access.
- Trees with particular characteristics - Examples include Christ's Pieces, Jesus Green, Midsummer Common, and Long Road, where the species, form, and condition of the trees warrant more frequent inspection than the baseline cycle.
- Ash-dominated woodlands - Areas such as Walpole Road Woods and West Pit, where ash dieback significantly affects stand condition and requires periodic site-level monitoring and management.
- Subsidence risk abatement areas - Locations such as Alexandra Gardens, Maids Causeway, and Newmarket Road, where management is shaped by engineered root management and regular interventions to reduce the risk of property damage.

These tailored regimes may result in inspection intervals that are generally shorter than the baseline three-year cycle. This approach ensures that risks remain ALARP while sustaining the amenity, biodiversity, and heritage value of Cambridge's most prominent and sensitive tree populations.

In addition to programmed inspections, operational staff working in parks, streets, and open spaces are encouraged to report obvious tree defects. This supports the formal inspection system and ensures that reactive checks supplement proactive cycles.

Ivy and Shrub Obstructions

The presence of ivy or dense shrub growth can sometimes restrict the ability to carry out a full basic inspection of a tree. Where this occurs, inspectors will record the limitation and note whether additional action is required.

In line with National Tree Safety Group guidance on proportionate risk management:

- If the tree shows no other signs of immediate concern, inspection will be recorded as limited but no intervention will be made.
- If defects are suspected but obscured, inspectors may recommend selective clearance of ivy or shrubs to allow a closer inspection.
- Where ivy or shrubs provide biodiversity or amenity value, clearance will be kept to the minimum necessary to confirm tree safety.

This approach ensures that risks are identified and managed while avoiding unnecessary loss of habitat or cover.

Geographic Management Areas

The Council divides the city into three broad management areas, based on ward boundaries. This enables a systematic three-year inspection and maintenance cycle, ensuring resources are applied consistently to all areas.

Inspection and Maintenance Cycle

Management Area	Inspection and Maintenance Years
A (including Byron's Pool, Nine Wells)	2025/26 · 2028/29 · 2031/32 · 2034/35
B	2026/27 · 2029/30 · 2032/33 · 2035/36
C (including St Albans Recreation Ground)	2027/28 · 2030/31 · 2033/34 · 2036/37

Table 1 Inspection and maintenance cycles

Note: Years are shown as the starting year of the cycle. Each cycle includes inspection, maintenance and recording within that financial year.

Tree Planting and Establishment Cycle

Tree planting and establishment follows a similar cycle to maintenance but begins in the year following maintenance.

Management Area	Planting and Establishment Years
A (including Byron's Pool, Nine Wells)	2026/27 · 2029/30 · 2032/33 · 2035/36
B	2027/28 · 2030/31 · 2033/34 · 2036/37
C (including St Albans Recreation Ground)	2028/29 · 2031/32 · 2034/35 · 2037/38

Table 2 Tree planting and establishment cycle

Ward by management area

Ward	Streets and communal Housing	Parks, open and enclosed spaces
Abbey	C	B
Arbury	A	C

Castle	B	C
Cherry Hinton	C	B
Coleridge	B	A
East Chesterton	A	C
Kings Hedges	A	C
Market	B	A
Newnham	B	C
Petersfield	B	C
Queen Ediths	C	A
Romsey	B	B
Trumpington	B	A
West Chesterton	C	C

Table 3 Management areas by ward

Inspection and maintenance cycles may be adjusted where site-specific risks, events or operational constraints require a more frequent or responsive approach.

Subsidence risk abatement

Where the Tree Team has established that a tree poses a higher risk of subsidence damage, it may be placed on an annual or biannual cycle. Examples include the London planes on Newmarket Road, Maids Causeway and Alexandra Gardens

Annual Epicormic Removal Programme

Epicormic growth at the base of mature lime trees can obstruct access and visibility. Growth is currently removed on an annual basis in the following example streets:

- Bentley Road; Belvoir Road; Blinco Grove; Chesterton Road; Hamilton Road; Humberstone Road; Kendal Way; Magrath Avenue; Mill Road; Mortimer Road; Mowbray Road; Queen's Road; St Andrew's Road; St Paul's Road.

Reactive Management

Reactive inspections are not systematic but are carried out in response to an event or enquiry. Typical triggers include storm damage, visible defects, or public reports of

safety concerns. Requests are prioritised according to risk and inspected by a qualified officer.

Where immediate response is required and recording cannot be completed at the time, inspections may not always be entered into Ezytreev® immediately. The Tree Team will seek to update records where practicable, recognising that in urgent cases the priority is to address the risk.

Where there is an immediate risk of harm or damage, works are instructed straight away to reduce the risk to an acceptable level so that the tree can continue to be maintained safely within the baseline system.

Where safety concerns do not require immediate action but cannot wait until the next programmed inspection, they are collated and issued to contractors monthly.

Emergencies

If a tree on council-owned land poses an immediate danger, phone the Council's Customer Service Centre and provide details.

We will need to know:

- the location - a house number, road name or number, and a description. [What3Words](https://what3words.com/)⁵ is a useful tool for identifying exact locations
- the extent of problem, when it happened and the current situation
- your name and telephone number so we can contact you if we need more information

If you can provide any photographs of the tree, it can help us deal with the problem more quickly.

Out of hours calls go through to an Emergency Duty Officer and will be passed directly to the Council's emergency contractor and Arboricultural Officers if necessary.

In line with National Tree Safety Group guidance, emergency response prioritises the protection of people and property. Where possible, proportionate measures will be used to mitigate risk (for example, restricting access, temporarily closing paths or parks during severe weather) before resorting to tree removal.

⁵ <https://what3words.com/> last accessed 5/1/26

Managing Trees on Housing and Estate Land

CCC's responsibilities for trees on housing estate land are shared with City Homes (CH) and the Repairs & Compliance Team (RCT). The Tree Team provides professional arboricultural advice, while CH and RCT hold responsibility for instructing and funding most works. Responsibilities differ depending on whether the trees are in communal housing open space, communal gardens, or tenanted gardens.

Communal Housing Open Space

These are publicly accessible open spaces within or surrounding housing estates. Trees in these areas are treated as part of CCC's wider public tree stock. They are inspected and maintained by the Tree Team on the programmed cycle, with works delivered by approved contractors under the arboricultural framework. Significant works are subject to public consultation protocols, with CH consulted as part of the process. The Tree Team will proactively identify and deliver planting schemes in these areas, including opportunities for community-led planting.

Communal Gardens

These are enclosed gardens in CCC ownership for the exclusive use of specific residents (e.g. blocks of flats). Trees in communal gardens are primarily managed by CH or RCT. The Tree Team supports CH/RCT with advice and inspection on request and must be consulted before works that would adversely affect visual amenity. Works delivery and costs are the responsibility of CH/RCT. Consultation with residents is recommended, but these works are not part of the public consultation protocols due to their private, enclosed nature. The Tree Team may advise on and facilitate planting, in collaboration with CH or RCT, subject to resident consultation.

Tenanted Gardens

Privately demised gardens forming part of individual tenancies. Primary responsibility for tree management lies with the tenant. Tenants raise concerns with their Housing Officer, who seeks advice from the Tree Team. Recommendations are passed back via the Housing Officer. CH may, in some cases, assist tenants with works. Tree removals always require CH consent. Tree works in tenanted gardens are not subject to the Council's public consultation protocols. CCC is committed to

enhancing tree cover in tenanted gardens through refurbishment programmes, and to ensuring long-term protection of significant trees via Tree Preservation Orders (where justified) or covenants

Priorities for Advice and Works

When advising CH and RCT, the Tree Team will prioritise issues as follows:

1. Health and safety - must be acted on within the recommended timescale
2. Social reasons - discretionary, to be considered by Housing Officers
3. Arboricultural reasons - long-term issues not yet posing a risk; discretionary

Works to trees on ex-Council tenanted properties

Trees on tenanted properties that have been sold may be protected by a covenant on the deeds. Owners may be required to seek approval before removing such trees. The process for approval is the owner will request approval from City Homes, who will seek advice from the Tree Team and the Legal Team before making a final decision.

Individual Trees and Woodlands

CCC's tree stock includes both individual trees and groups or blocks of woodland. While all are part of the city's urban forest, the way they are managed and inspected reflects their different characteristics and risks.

Individual trees

Individual trees are those growing in isolation or as part of small groups within parks, streets, gardens, and open spaces. They are recorded as discrete assets in the Council's Ezytreev® inventory. These trees are inspected individually on a three-year cycle under the Zone 1 framework, with additional visits where higher levels of risk are present (Special zones). Individual trees in Zone 2 landholdings (such as tenanted housing land) are not inspected routinely but may receive advice or inspections where requested. Reactive inspections supplement the cycle where faults are reported or events such as storms occur.

Woodlands

Woodlands are areas dominated by tree cover, often self-seeded or semi-natural, managed as a collective habitat rather than a set of individual assets. Examples include West Pit and Walpole Road Woods. These areas are not recorded tree-by-tree in Ezytreev® but are instead managed through site-level woodland plans and habitat management regimes, where they are available. Tree inspections focus on public safety along paths, entrances, and high-use edges (Zone 1). Woodland visits are often linked to wider biodiversity or site management visits.

Approach

- All individual trees under direct Tree Team management are inspected on a three-year cycle, with higher-frequency visits where justified.
- Woodlands are inspected on a site basis, prioritising high-use areas and boundary trees where risks are most likely to affect the public.
- Reactive inspections and public reports provide an additional safeguard for both categories.

This approach ensures proportionate risk management in line with National Tree Safety Group and HSE guidance, balancing public safety with the wider amenity, biodiversity, and heritage value of Cambridge's urban forest.

Community Orchards

CCC supports several community orchards, which are managed in conjunction with local community groups and volunteers. These orchards provide valuable opportunities for food growing, education, biodiversity, and social activity, while also contributing to the wider urban forest.

Inspection

As public tree assets, many community orchards fall under Zone 1 inspection framework. Trees are inspected by the Tree Team on a three-year cycle, with additional checks where higher levels of risk are present.

Maintenance

Day-to-day maintenance activities, such as fruit collection, light pruning for fruiting purposes, and general ground care, are the responsibility of the local community group managing the orchard. CCC retains responsibility for tree safety and major arboricultural interventions identified through inspection.

New community orchards

Any new community orchards established on council land will be subject to a formal agreement between CCC and the managing group. This agreement will set out roles and responsibilities, covering inspections, maintenance, insurance, and public use, to ensure the orchard is managed safely and sustainably.

Areas of High Biodiversity Value

Some parts of the city's tree estate, including Local Nature Reserves, CCC and County Wildlife sites, Protected Road Verge, Local Geographical Sites, watercourses and veteran or ancient trees, are managed first and foremost for their biodiversity and habitat value. These sites contribute disproportionately to the ecological network of the city and are therefore subject to more tailored approaches of inspection and maintenance.

Veteran and ancient trees

Veteran trees are recognised as irreplaceable habitats and form a key part of Cambridge's natural heritage. While they may present structural weaknesses, they are managed in line with national good practice which seeks to retain them for as long as safely possible. Inspections focus on proportional risk control for example, restricting access, halo thinning, or sensitive pruning rather than removal, unless no practical alternative is available.

Local Nature Reserves and designated wildlife and other sites

Trees within nature reserves and other high-value habitats are managed at site level to balance public safety with conservation objectives. Routine safety inspections in accordance with the zoning protocols prioritise paths, entrances, and high-use edges. The Biodiversity Team are responsible for assessing habitat condition and management is based on management plans where available. Tree safety

interventions are minimised and designed to preserve standing deadwood and natural features wherever possible.

Approach

- Safety of people remains the priority, but risk management in biodiversity areas will emphasise proportionate and non-intrusive interventions.
- Where risk can be managed through access controls or habitat management, these will be preferred to heavy pruning or felling.
- Detailed biodiversity considerations, including the role of the urban forest in ecological connectivity, are set out in Topic Paper 3 (Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity), which this section should be read alongside.

This ensures CCC fulfils its duty of care while sustaining the ecological integrity of Cambridge's most sensitive and valuable tree habitats.

The management of shrubs and self-sets⁶

Woody shrubs and self-set trees under 10cm in diameter do not usually require specialist arboricultural expertise to manage. Outside of local nature reserves and woodlands all shrubs and self-set trees are for City Services Operations Team to manage in the first instance.

Where management may affect trees protected by a TPO or Conservation Area designation or are growing in areas of high nature conservation value the Tree Team and the Biodiversity Team will provide advice and oversight.

Commercial and Property Services trees

CCC's responsibilities for trees on Property Services land are the responsibility of Property Services. The Tree Team provides professional arboricultural advice, while Property Services holds responsibility for instructing and funding most works.

⁶ Shrubs and self-sets are woody plants that do not usually fall under the Tree Team's management unless they mature into tree form (or are protected by legislation). Shrubs are typically planted as part of landscaping schemes and remain smaller, multi-stemmed plants, while self-sets are naturally seeded trees that establish without deliberate planting. In early stages they are treated as ground or shrub vegetation and managed by City Services Operations, but once they reach a stem diameter of around 10 cm at 1.5 m above ground level they are considered trees and may then come under the Tree Team's inspection and management responsibilities.

Riparian Land

Tree management may be needed to ensure watercourses are kept free flowing. Works will be carried out in accordance with the Watercourse Maintenance Contract. The Tree Team provides professional arboricultural advice regarding trees with a stem diameter greater than 75mm on request from Drainage Services. Where there is an immediate risk of harm or damage, works are instructed straight away to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Consultation

Tree works associated with projects not run by the Tree Team, or with trees growing on land not directly administered by the Tree Team, will follow the consultation protocols of the relevant service. This ensures that the justification for works is clearly set out within the context of the project or landholding concerned.

All tree works instructed by the Tree Team will be published on the [Planned tree works](#)⁷ web page for a minimum of 20 days. Ward councillors and relevant service leads will be notified at the same time.

Health and safety works: Decisions are delegated to the Tree Officer, to ensure that necessary control measures can be implemented without delay.

Other works: Where objections are received that cannot be resolved by the Tree Officer, the matter will be referred to the Executive Councillor for determination. In reaching a final decision, the Executive Councillor will apply the established criteria:

1. The amenity value of the tree(s) and the likely impact of the proposed works on the character of the area; and
2. Whether the proposal is justified, having regard to the reasons put forward both in support of and against it

Street trees: In addition, CCC fulfils the statutory duty introduced by the Environment Act 2021 (now contained within the Highways Act 1980) to consult on the felling of street trees. This requires the publication of proposed works and consideration of

⁷ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/comment-on-our-planned-tree-works> Last accessed 12/09/25

representations before removal, except where works are urgently required for health and safety.

This streamlined process ensures consultation remains transparent and accountable while being proportionate in line with National Tree Safety Group guidance: urgent health and safety risks are addressed promptly, while works with wider amenity implications, including those covered by the new statutory street tree duty, are subject to public scrutiny and democratic decision-making.

How We Manage Protected Council Trees

Some trees managed by CCC are legally protected because they are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or are growing in a conservation area.

Council Trees with a TPO

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act and Regulation 13 of Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012, when work is needed on a council-owned tree that has a TPO, we follow the same process as required of others:

- A formal application is made, with details of the proposed work and reasons.
- The application is placed on the public register by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, who also manage consultation and make the decision.

This means decisions about Council TPO trees are open to public comment and scrutiny.

In urgent cases such as if a tree is dead or poses an immediate risk of serious harm, Regulation 14 allows us to act quickly, with short written notice instead of a full application.

Council Trees in Conservation Areas

With reference to Regulation 15, if a Council-owned tree is in a conservation area but not protected by a TPO, the Council is not required to notify the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service before works commence. However, the standard consultation process will be followed.

Damage and Compensation

Tree-related damage and compensation issues are addressed through two complementary strands of policy and practice.

Damage caused by trees

Cases of alleged subsidence or structural damage are managed in accordance with Policy M3 (Trees, Damage and Subsidence) and the approach set out in Topic Paper 4 (Trees, Subsidence and Structural Damage). CCC follows a clear mitigation hierarchy, giving priority to retaining trees wherever possible. Alternatives such as pruning, root barriers or engineering solutions are considered before removal. Claims are assessed using robust evidence and in collaboration with insurers, engineers, arborists and residents, ensuring outcomes balance property, environmental, reputational and financial risks.

Damage to trees

Where council-owned trees are damaged, whether through unauthorised works, vandalism or third-party actions, CCC applies Policy P6 (Protecting Public Tree Assets) and the framework described in Topic Paper 11 (Tree Protection, Damage and Compensation). Enforcement action will be pursued where appropriate, and compensation sought to reflect both amenity and asset value. Valuation tools such as [Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees](#) (CAVAT)⁸ will normally be used to establish fair and transparent compensation. The Council will work with legal services and partner agencies to ensure deterrence and recovery of costs, reinforcing the principle that public trees are community assets.

Adopted land and newly transferred trees

CCC periodically adopts land that includes trees, most commonly as part of major development sites, regeneration projects, or infrastructure schemes delivered by partners such as the Greater Cambridge Partnership. In some cases, CCC itself may create new landscapes which later fall into the Tree Team's management. Where trees are to be transferred into CCC's direct management and incorporated into the baseline inspection and maintenance cycle, it is the responsibility of the

⁸ <https://ltoa.org.uk/resources/cavat> last accessed 18/09/25

relevant project officer or service lead to ensure that the Urban Forest Manager is provided with:

- Accurate information on tree species and locations;
- Planting specifications and establishment requirements; and
- Details of any associated maintenance funding or commuted sums to support long-term management.

All newly adopted or transferred trees must be added to the Ezytreev® inventory before they can be managed as part of the three-year inspection cycle. This ensures that records are complete and accurate, enabling the Tree Team to maintain consistent inspection, risk management, and accountability across the city's public tree stock.

Standards for planting and establishment on adopted land should follow the guidance set out in Topic Paper 2 (Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance), ensuring new trees are integrated to CCC specifications.

This Topic Paper is intended to explain how the Council manages its tree asset in practice. It should be read alongside the Urban Forest Strategy and other topic papers, which together set the strategic direction, technical standards and governance framework for urban forest management in Cambridge.

END

TOPIC PAPER 2 TREE PLANTING, WORK AND THIRD-PARTY GUIDANCE

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Purpose.....	2
Policy Alignment.....	2
Associated Topic Papers	2
Introduction	3
Tree planting	3
Species Selection.....	3
Structural Planting	4
Non-Native and Climate Adaptive Species	4
Tree Pits	4
The Council's Tree Planting Programme	5
Establishment	6
Tree Work.....	6
Reasons for Tree Works	7
Special Circumstances and Exceptional Response	7
Common Pruning Practices	9
Highway Trees and Dropped Kerb Applications	9
Third Party Pruning Requests and Permit to Work.....	10
Utility Companies and NJUG Guidelines.....	10
Rights, Protections and Legal Powers.....	11
Abatement	11
Rights and Responsibilities for Private Landowners	11
Legal Protection	12
Miscellaneous Provisions	13

PURPOSE

Setting trees up to thrive for generations requires careful planning and sound practice. This paper sets out Cambridge City Council's (CCC) approach to tree planting and tree work, and also provides wider guidance applicable to private landowners, developers, utility companies and other third parties. It covers species selection, structural planting, and engineered tree pits, together with considerations for non-native and climate-adapted species. The paper also explains good practice in tree work, including pruning and removals, and sets out the processes for third-party interactions such as dropped kerb applications, pruning requests, and utility works. In this way both the council and external partners can help maximise tree survival, minimise conflict, and support a resilient urban forest.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy under the following policies.

- PL1-PL4: Advancing Plant More policies through guidance on species selection, structural planting, climate-adapted trees and tree pits, as well as principles for establishment and replacement planting.
- M1-M5: Contributing to Manage More policies by setting out good practice in pruning, explaining reasons for works, and clarifying processes such as third-party permits and dropped kerb applications.
- P1-P6: Underpinning Protect More policies through its guidance on resisting unnecessary removals, setting expectations for utilities, and highlighting statutory protections and council powers.
- E1-E4: Reinforcing Engage more policies by extending guidance to private landowners, encouraging responsible management, and providing clear pathways for community participation in tree care and planting.

ASSOCIATED TOPIC PAPERS

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 1 Tree Asset Management and Risk
- Topic Paper 3 Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity,
- Topic Paper 4 Trees, Subsidence and Structural Damage
- Topic Paper 11 Tree Protection, Damage and Compensation

Together these papers provide a comprehensive framework for tree asset management.

INTRODUCTION

For the most part trees develop in balance with their surroundings, both above and below ground. However, conflicts with people and property can result from natural processes, the effects of human activity, or poor species choice. These conflicts are more likely in urban areas where densification results in closer proximity and harsher rooting environments. Severe conflicts can have serious implications for the health and welfare of trees and/or the safety of people and property, necessitating tree work or removal. As trees are vital to the health and resilience of our urban areas, it is essential to adopt practices that maximise tree survival while minimising conflict.

TREE PLANTING

Species Selection

Choosing the right tree for a location is essential to successful planting schemes, whether undertaken by CCC or by private landowners. The above- and below-ground constraints of any site should inform the species choice, and suitable space should be provided for species that will make a meaningful contribution to the wider urban forest.

Rather than providing a fixed list of species (which can be limiting in terms of biodiversity), site-specific assessments of potential planting locations are recommended, along with expert advice on species choice.

Site constraint assessments need to consider:

- Tree health -soil type, light levels, ground cover
- Conflict -available rooting volume, access requirements, proximity to hard standing and structures
- Potential nuisance/inconvenience -leaf litter, fruit/nut fall, excessive shading, bird roosting
- Maintenance needs -watering, access for pruning, weeding, mulching

Structural Planting

Trees should be designed into developments and landscapes from the outset to maximise planting opportunities and optimise establishment and vigorous growth. On new developments this means that, in addition to ornamental planting, space should be provided for sustainable, structural planting. For private landowners, this means allowing adequate space on their property for trees to mature safely. Large and long-lived trees provide the greatest ecosystem services and are enormously beneficial to the urban forest. However, without forward planning, increased densification reduces the space available for these essential assets. Furthermore, the life of many new developments is relatively short compared with the life expectancy of a large tree. If trees are not located in sustainable positions they will inevitably be removed before their potential is realised, whether by redevelopment pressures or avoidable conflicts.

This guidance does not introduce new planning requirements, but explains good practice where opportunities arise through design and layout.

Non-Native and Climate Adaptive Species

Native trees provide essential ecological benefits by supporting native wildlife through the provision of food and shelter. Adapted to local conditions, they often require less maintenance to establish and may have a greater potential for survival. However, diversity is a key element of a resilient urban forest. Pests and diseases can devastate single-species populations, and climate changes are occurring too rapidly for some species to adapt. Both CCC and private landowners can broaden planting palettes to include species that are beneficial to local wildlife and more tolerant of extreme drought or waterlogging. This approach increases overall success rates and helps secure resilience against future risks.

Tree Pits

Tree pits provide the necessary soil and root growth conditions to allow new trees to establish. They can be simple or engineered depending on required additional functions such as root management, stormwater management, urban cooling, and carbon sequestration. They can be soft or hard surfaced and decorative, but they must always allow for water, nutrient and air access, and root growth without conflict with surroundings. Effective tree pits are site specific and should be designed to maximise establishment and aid long-term tree health by ensuring a sufficient volume of uncompacted material to support a strong root system. This applies to

both new plantings in the public realm and to private landowners creating new planting spaces on their own land.

Design considerations

Tree pits should:

- Be of sufficient size to allow healthy establishment. If designed to prevent breakout, the pit should allow sufficient rooting volume for the species chosen.
- Be designed to capture surface water. If designed to avoid breakout, the pit must allow for overflow/discharge to underdrain.
- Contain rooting material sufficient to aid healthy growth and provide ground structure if required.
- Consider future root growth and methods to direct or contain it.
- Provide removable grates or similar, if used.

The Council's Tree Planting Programme

CCC's tree planting and establishment programme includes planting, watering and young tree maintenance. It follows programmed works and begins in a geographical management area in the year following the tree maintenance and inspection cycle. Private landowners may also find these principles helpful when planning their own tree planting projects, particularly in terms of timing, replacement priorities and establishment care.

For council planting, consideration of locations for planting in any single year will be prioritised in the following order:

1. Replacement planting -within the current planting management area.
2. Public and member replacement planting requests.
3. New planting locations -within the current planting management area.
4. Replacement planting -in other management areas.

When the decision is taken to remove a council-owned tree, CCC prioritises replacement planting, considering whether it is appropriate to replant. Wherever possible, the site will be considered as a whole, reflecting its history, character, available space, use and local interests. In some situations, planting opportunities after a tree has been removed are significantly more expensive and difficult, as a new tree pit may have to be engineered and contend with underground services,

aerial competition from streetlamps, traffic signs and vehicle sightlines. Replacement plantings in these types of situations may take longer and be the subject of specific funding bids.

Establishment

Newly planted trees require monitoring and regular maintenance input to ensure that they successfully establish. For both CCC plantings and privately planted trees, this may include weeding (either by herbicide or mulching), watering, and adjustment or removal of tree ties or guards. In most cases, a three-year establishment period of aftercare is recommended as a minimum, subject to funding, ownership and maintenance responsibilities.

Community support can help with [Watering new trees - Cambridge City Council](#) ¹.

TREE WORK

To minimise negative impacts of pruning it is essential to consider the tools and techniques used, the situation in which the tree grows, the desired outcome, and how best to achieve it. A common assumption is that reducing the overall size of a tree will solve many conflicts; however, often the converse is true.

Unlike grasses, trees and shrubs are apically dominant, meaning that they grow from the tip. Removing the tip results in chemical reactions aimed at recovering lost leaf area as efficiently as possible. The tree therefore focuses on new shoot and leaf growth, with shoots often more prolific than those removed and leaves often larger. This can result in a denser, unnatural form and a canopy that conflicts with its surroundings. An alternative solution may be to remove lower branches (crown lift). This allows the tree canopy to occupy previously unusable space and increases light under the canopy while maintaining a natural, aesthetically pleasing form.

All tree work should be carried out in accordance with [British Standard 3998:2010](#)² and by a suitably qualified operative. This applies equally to council trees and privately owned trees.

¹ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/watering-new-trees> last accessed 5/1/26

² <https://landingpage.bsigroup.com/LandingPage/Standard?UPI=000000000030089960> last accessed 5/1/26

Reasons for Tree Works

CCC recognises that, in some situations, trees can cause residents significant problems and that the wrong type of tree may be growing in the wrong place. In these situations, the tree team will act reasonably and responsibly and work to ensure an appropriate balance is reached between the interests of the individual, the community and its legal obligations. Private landowners are also encouraged to weigh these same factors when considering tree works.

Works likely to be opposed (without robust, evidenced justification):

1. Interference with satellite TV reception or telephone wires
2. Improving light to solar panels
3. Perception that the tree is too large
4. Obstruction of view or natural light
5. Seasonal nuisance (leaf fall, fruit/berries/nuts, insects, birds, or honeydew)
6. Medical/allergy concerns
7. Perception that the tree will cause damage in the future
8. To replace a healthy mature tree to create space for new planting
9. Remedy issues with drains
10. Removal of overhang for convenience
11. Dropped kerbs (see also "Highway Trees and Dropped Kerb Applications" below)

Works likely to be supported:

1. Tree, or part of it, found by a qualified arborist to be in unreasonable condition in its context
2. Tree missed from a cyclical maintenance programme
3. Work to create or maintain reasonable access
4. Work to create or maintain reasonable clearance
5. Maintain sightlines
6. Remove obstruction

Special Circumstances and Exceptional Response

While CCC applies consistent criteria to tree maintenance and pruning to ensure fair and transparent management across the city, it recognises that in rare and

exceptional cases, the standard approach may not adequately address the impacts experienced by individuals or households.

An exceptional response may be considered where:

- The impact on residential use or enjoyment significantly exceeds what is typical for an urban setting
- The tree's proximity or species characteristics create disproportionate effects on health or wellbeing
- A clear and credible link is established between the tree and a health-related impact, supported by appropriate evidence
- The structural condition of the tree increases the likelihood of future failure, even if it does not present an immediate safety risk
- The cumulative effect of several factors materially compromises the safe or reasonable use of private space

Where such circumstances apply, the Council may consider a departure from standard practice, which could include:

- A heavier crown reduction than normally permitted
- Management as a high pollard
- Tree removal with compensatory planting
- Where appropriate, additional planting elsewhere may be considered to offset the impact

All decisions will be based on arboricultural assessment, consideration of the tree's wider public value, and consultation with the public and ward councillors where necessary. Methods such as the [Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees](https://www.ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/capital-asset-value-for-amenity-trees-cavat)³ (CAVAT) may be used to support decision-making.

Exceptional responses will be recorded and justified in writing. They will not set precedent, but serve as proportionate, site-specific responses that reflect the Council's duty to balance individual impact with the wider benefits of its urban forest.

³ <https://www.ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/capital-asset-value-for-amenity-trees-cavat>
last accessed 5/1/26

Common Pruning Practices

Provided below are descriptions of some of the more common and useful pruning practices. These apply equally to council-managed trees and to those on private land.

- Crown lift -removal of lower branches to raise the height of the crown's base.
- Crown reduce -pruning the outer parts of the canopy to lessen overall size; excessive reduction should be avoided.
- Crown thin - removal of a percentage of smaller branches, usually in the outer crown, to produce a lighter, more uniform canopy.
- Pollard -pruning method where branches are regularly cut back to a framework of specified height/width.

All works should be carried out in accordance with BS 3998:2010 and by a suitably qualified person with appropriate insurance.

HIGHWAY TREES AND DROPPED KERB APPLICATIONS

Dropped kerb applications are administered by Cambridgeshire County Council⁴ as the highway authority. CCC provides arboricultural advice to inform decisions where existing street trees may be affected.

CCC, through the highway authority decision-making process, will normally resist the removal of highway trees where they are well established and in good condition. Trees are an integral part of the street scene and their benefits, including shade, amenity, and contributions to biodiversity, are considered to outweigh the convenience of additional vehicle access in most cases.

Where removal is accepted as unavoidable, the applicant is required to meet the cost of replacement planting and establishment. The current (2025) estimated cost is £500 per tree, which covers planting, aftercare, and establishment. Replacement planting will be sought as close as practicable to the original location to maintain canopy cover and continuity of the street's character.

⁴ <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/dropped-kerbs-and-access-protection-markings> last accessed 5/1/26

THIRD PARTY PRUNING REQUESTS AND PERMIT TO WORK

In some situations, third parties, including residents, developers or other organisations may request pruning of council-owned trees where the CCC itself would not normally undertake the work. This may arise where the request is not related to safety, or where the applicant wishes for works to be completed within timescales quicker than the service can achieve through its programmed operations.

In such cases the CCC operates a permit to work system. This allows third parties to apply for permission to prune council-owned trees at their own expense, subject to conditions. Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure that any proposed works are reasonable, proportionate, and will not harm the long-term health or structure of the tree. Permissions are granted at the CCC's discretion and do not create a precedent for future requests.

Further information, including application details, can be found on the CCC website [Apply for a permit to prune Council trees](#)⁵.

UTILITY COMPANIES AND NJUG GUIDELINES

Utility companies working adjacent to or within the root or canopy zones of trees are expected to follow nationally recognised guidance, including the [*NJUG Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees \(Volume 4\)*](#)⁶, and other applicable arboricultural and highway standards.

Expectations:

- Early Planning & Consultation -Utilities should undertake site surveys at the design stage to identify trees, root protection areas and canopy spread, and consult with the local authority tree officer to avoid conflicts.

⁵ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/apply-for-a-permit-to-prune-council-trees> last accessed 5/1/26

⁶ <https://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/V4-Trees-Issue-2-16-11-2007.pdf> last accessed 5/1/26

- Respecting Tree Protection Zones -Prohibited, Precautionary and Permitted Zones (as defined in NJUG4) must be followed to minimise excavation and disturbance near trees.
- Methods to Avoid Damage -Works near trees should use appropriate techniques to reduce root loss, prevent soil compaction, and protect exposed roots.
- Above-Ground Clearances -Where overhead lines or other above-ground apparatus are installed, clearance distances must be maintained, and any necessary pruning must be in line with BS 3998:2010
- Protection of Legally Protected Trees -Trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Area controls, or planning conditions require full compliance with relevant legal procedures.
- Repair and Reinstatement -Where utility operations cause damage to trees, utilities are expected to provide suitable reinstatement, including replacement planting or remedial works, in consultation with the local authority.

RIGHTS, PROTECTIONS AND LEGAL POWERS

In addition to tree planting and tree work guidance, it is important to set out the rights and responsibilities of private landowners, and the legal powers available to councils. The following sections summarise how common law rights, statutory protections, and specific legislation apply to trees in Cambridge, whether they are in public or private ownership.

Abatement

It is long established that branches of trees overhanging another's land may be cut back to the boundary by the landowner or their tenant without the permission of the tree owner. Notice should be provided to the tree owner if access to the tree or the land from which it grows is required, and any arising material (including fruit/nuts) should be offered back.

CCC recommends caution when exercising this right. Consultation with the tree owner is recommended before works are carried out and only the minimum work necessary to resolve the nuisance should be completed.

Rights and Responsibilities for Private Landowners

Private landowners play a vital role in the health and resilience of the city's urban forest. The majority of trees in Cambridge are in private ownership, and the way they

are managed has a direct impact on community well-being, biodiversity and climate resilience.

Rights:

- Ownership rights -Landowners own the trees growing on their land and have the right to enjoy their benefits.
- Abatement -As outlined above, landowners may prune branches that overhang their property back to the boundary, provided this does not breach legal protections.
- Reasonable enjoyment -Landowners can carry out tree works on their own land, subject to planning and conservation legislation.

Responsibilities:

- Duty of care -Landowners have a legal duty of care to ensure their trees do not pose an unacceptable risk to people or property.
- Compliance with protections -Works must not be carried out on trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order, Conservation Area controls, or planning conditions without formal consent.
- Good practice -Tree works should follow British Standard 3998:2010 and be undertaken by a suitably qualified and insured arborist.
- Sustainability -When removing trees, landowners are encouraged to replant where space allows, to sustain the contribution to the wider urban forest.
- Neighbour relations -Before undertaking works that might affect neighbours, consultation is encouraged to maintain good relations and avoid disputes.

By recognising both their rights and their responsibilities, private landowners can ensure that their trees create minimal inconvenience, remain safe, healthy, and valuable, while contributing positively to Cambridge's shared urban forest.

Legal Protection

Notwithstanding the above, no works to any trees should be carried out before ascertaining any legal restrictions. Trees may be protected by a [Tree Preservation](#)

[Order, Conservation Area designation](#)⁷, Planning Condition or Covenant. This applies equally to council-owned and privately owned trees. Carrying out unauthorised works can result in enforcement action and significant penalties.

Miscellaneous Provisions

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976⁸ empowers councils to make a tree safe where it poses an imminent danger. While disputes about trees between private parties are normally for those parties to resolve, a council may intervene where:

- a dangerous tree presents a risk to the public, and
- the owner is uncontactable, refuses, or ignores requests to make the tree safe.

In such cases the council may take appropriate steps under the Act to remove the danger and may seek to recover reasonable costs.

This Topic Paper provides practical guidance to support good outcomes for trees across Cambridge. It should be read alongside the Urban Forest Strategy and other topic papers, which together set the strategic direction, technical context and governance framework for urban forest management.

END

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas> last accessed 5/1/26

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57> last accessed 16/10/25

TOPIC PAPER 3 BIODIVERSITY AND HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Topic Paper 3 Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity.....	1
Policy alignment.....	1
Associated Topic Papers.....	2
Purpose	2
Introduction	2
Species Diversity	3
Habitat Connectivity	4
Veteran Tree Care	4
Biosecurity	6
Risk from Pests and Diseases	6
Collaboration.....	8

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This Topic Paper supports delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy through the following policies

- M2: The Council will follow Government and best practice advice regarding the control of pests and diseases.
- P2: The Council will resist the removal of/or excessive works to trees without robust and evidenced justification.
- PL1 (Aspirational): The Council will encourage and continue to seek new opportunities for tree planting in appropriate locations. This will include ensuring and encouraging a diversity of tree species, targeting areas that currently lack tree cover, and prioritising the planting of large-canopy and long-lived trees.
- E1: Through public and partnership engagement the Council will facilitate sustainable and proactive management of trees.
- E2 (Aspirational): The Council will seek to encourage joined-up approaches to tree management through partnerships with other Council services, managers of private trees, and by working with local communities and businesses.

ASSOCIATED TOPIC PAPERS

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 1 Asset Management
- Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance
- Topic Paper 7 Climate Change and Resilience

Together these papers set out how the Urban Forest Strategy is contributing to biodiversity and climate change crises mitigation and adaptation.

PURPOSE

Urban trees form vital habitats and ecological corridors. This paper describes how Cambridge City Council (CCC) manages trees to support and enhance biodiversity, including veteran tree care, species diversity, and contributions to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain. CCC will seek to maintain high standards of biosecurity to reduce the introduction and spread of pests and diseases, ensuring a resilient treescape for the future.

INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity is the variety of all life, encompassing different species, genetic variations, and the diverse ecosystems they inhabit. This complex web of life provides essential ecosystem services, such as clean air and water, food, medicine, and climate regulation, that are essential to the health and well-being of Cambridge.

Trees and woodlands are crucial for biodiversity, providing complex habitats for species ranging from fungi and lichens to birds and mammals, as well as supporting ecosystems through soil protection, climate regulation, and nutrient cycling. A single oak tree can support hundreds of associated species, with some estimates suggesting over 2,000 species across its lifetime, and the diversity of tree species in an area directly contributes to overall biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. Protecting and planting trees that provide benefits to native flora and fauna is therefore a key strategy for addressing the biodiversity crisis.

SPECIES DIVERSITY

The UK is ranked 189 out of 218 for countries in terms of nature depletion ¹ with almost 15% of all species at risk of extinction. The primary causes include agriculture, urbanisation, inappropriate woodland management, invasive species, hydrological change and climate change. Climate change is thought to be responsible for the significant decline of some species and the rapid population growth of others, creating imbalances in ecosystems.

In Cambridge there are some of the lowest proportions of Priority Habitats and land designated for nature conservation. With approximately 13% forest cover in 2015, the UK is one of the least densely forested countries in Europe. This compares with 38% for the EU as a whole and 31% worldwide.²

The necessary drive for innovation and economic growth has resulted in urban expansion. In a denser larger city, balancing the needs of both wildlife and people is challenging but, as it is essential for strengthening the city's resilience, we must work together to make space for nature in urban communities and the surrounding countryside.

Species diversity is key to the stability and resilience of an ecosystem. More diverse ecosystems are better able to withstand stresses such as drought or invading species.

Changes in climate from steady rises in temperature to acute weather events can significantly impact tree health. This creates the need to diversify planting palettes, introducing more species tolerant of drought, waterlogging, extremes of temperature and pests and diseases. However, as sudden changes in habitat can have devastating impacts on the flora and fauna reliant on them, it is essential to consider the benefit of non-native tree species to native wildlife.

CCC continues to diversify its planting palette through trial and research while ensuring the use of native and, where possible, locally sourced tree stock.

¹ [Biodiversity Strategy - Cambridge City Council](#) last accessed 16/10/25

² <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/publications/forestry-statistics/forestry-statistics-2017/international-forestry-6/forest-cover-international-comparisons-3/> last accessed 16/10/25

We use national guidance and tools, such as TDAG's *Tree Species Selection* guide³ and the *Right Trees for a Changing Climate* tool⁴, to help choose species that will thrive in Cambridge's future climate.

The management of tree populations and natural regeneration is also essential for enhancing species diversity. This includes the removal of trees to benefit grassland and riparian habitat as well as maximizing habitat types within woodland areas.

HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

Healthy ecosystems depend not only on the diversity of species but also on the connections between habitats. Isolated green spaces can limit the movement and survival of wildlife, while connected networks of trees, hedgerows, riversides, and woodlands allow species to move, feed, and adapt to changing conditions.

In Cambridge, the background matrix of trees created by the distribution of the urban forest plays a vital supporting role. It underpins areas of higher biodiversity value by creating ecological corridors, providing habitat for more common species, and buffering sensitive habitats. At the same time, it delivers wider ecosystem services, including air pollution amelioration, urban cooling, and the interception of stormwater run-off that protect these more sensitive areas.

Through careful tree protection, planting, management and engagement, the council seeks to strengthen these ecological connections across the city, linking parks, gardens, watercourses, and the wider countryside. This approach supports the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy, ensuring that the urban forest functions as part of a joined-up, resilient network of habitats.

VETERAN TREE CARE

Veteran trees are some of the most valuable trees in the landscape. In addition to providing a sense of history and contributing to aesthetic appeal they are a significant resource providing unique habitats, for a wide range of fungal, plant and animal life.

³ <https://www.tdag.org.uk/tree-species-selection-for-green-infrastructure.html> last accessed 12/09/25

⁴ <http://www.righttrees4cc.org.uk/> last accessed 12/09/25

The importance of veteran trees is not widely understood and a desire for uniformity and overconcern for risk has resulted in the premature loss of these living ecosystems and the significant biodiversity benefits they provide. While veteran trees may exhibit structural weaknesses due to their age and natural decay processes, these features are not automatically considered defects. Instead, they are assessed with an informed understanding of the tree's adaptive capacity and ecological value. Management is guided by best practice, including the principles outlined in *Veteran Trees: A Guide to Good Management*, with a focus on retention over removal, wherever it is safe and feasible to do so. The removal of ancient and veteran trees would represent not just an aesthetic loss but the disappearance of entire ecosystems centuries in the making. Removal is, therefore, considered only as a last resort, where no reasonable alternative exists.

In 2004 a survey was commissioned by CCC to establish the presence, location and species of veteran trees in Cambridge⁵.

In 2018 a further survey was commissioned to assess the number, location and value of ancient and veteran trees on Sheep's Green and Coe Fen.⁶ The survey established that of the 390 trees on Sheep's Green and Coe Fen 50 are ancient and/or veteran and 17 are advanced candidate veteran trees. A further 53 premature candidate veteran trees were identified for proactive management, helping ensure a continuing population of these biodiversity assets⁷.

Risk from ancient and veteran trees is managed proportionally using methods that favour the tree's longevity and habitat function, like restricting public access to reduce risk of harm, halo thinning to reduce competition and sympathetic, staged pruning to mimic natural aging while improving structural stability.

Through this approach, Cambridge seeks to honour and protect its veteran trees, not simply as biological specimens, but as living witnesses to the city's past and guardians of its ecological future.

⁵ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/7447/veteran-trees-in-cambridge-booklet-2004-red.pdf> last accessed 12/09/25

⁶ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/7446/180831-12-sg-veteran-tree-report-reduced.pdf> last accessed 12/09/25

⁷ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/veteran-tree-management-on-sheeps-green-and-coe-fen> last accessed 12/09/25

BIOSECURITY

Tree pests and diseases pose a significant impact on tree populations and the habitats they provide. Following a significant increase in non-native tree pests and diseases introduced into the United Kingdom since the early 2000s, it is essential that we reduce the risk of introducing and spreading tree pests and diseases by applying simple biosecurity measures.

Everyone can help by:

- Avoiding driving or parking on natural surfaces when visiting park, gardens and woodlands.
- Cleaning footwear, pets, bikes and prams.
- Not bringing plant material from abroad

In addition to the above, CCC encourages its staff and contractors to regularly clean all kit, vehicles and machinery.

CCC will continue to source planting stock responsibly, prioritising pest-and disease-free areas and nurseries that follow recognised national standards or robust biosecurity policies. Wherever possible, stock will be obtained from suppliers accredited under the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme⁸, which provides independent assurance of high standards in plant health and biosecurity management.

RISK FROM PESTS AND DISEASES

Tree pests and diseases represent one of the most significant and growing risks to biodiversity, canopy cover and habitat connectivity within Cambridge's urban forest. Increased global trade, the movement of plants and wood products, and a warming climate have created new pathways for harmful organisms to establish and spread. The effects extend far beyond the loss of individual trees, impacting the species that depend on them and reducing the ecological resilience of the city's treescape.

Several pests and pathogens already affect Cambridge's trees, while others pose emerging threats.

Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is now widespread across Cambridgeshire, and substantial loss of common ash is expected over the coming decade. CCC has monitored a representative sample of ash trees under its control

⁸ [Certification - Plant Healthy](#) last accessed 12/09/25

since 2017 to record and understand the progression and impact of the disease on the city's canopy.⁹

Horse chestnut leaf miner (*Cameraria ohridella*) is endemic, causing annual premature leaf browning and visual decline, though rarely resulting in tree death.

Plane anthracnose (*Marssonina platani*) causes leaf blotching, shoot dieback and premature defoliation in London planes but not considered fatal. Severe or repeated infection can weaken young wood, occasionally leading to branch drop and loss of crown structure. The disease is widespread across southern and eastern England, including Cambridge.

Other pests are approaching from neighbouring regions.

Oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*), which defoliates oaks and poses a public health risk through its urticating hairs, has expanded northwards from London and is now approximately 40–50 kilometres from Cambridge.

Acute oak decline, a complex bacterial disorder, has been recorded in parts of eastern England and could impact the city's native oak population if established.

Plane lace bug (*Corythucha ciliata*), which causes leaf stippling and bronzing, has recently been detected in south-east England and is expected to reach Cambridge within the next few years, potentially affecting the city's prominent London plane avenues.

Elm zigzag sawfly (*Aproceros leucopoda*), recently recorded across southern England, while not currently considered to cause widespread mortality it does present a moderate risk to the city's recovering elm population, with repeated defoliation that may weaken trees over time.

A number of serious exotic threats are also of increasing concern.

Plane wilt (*Ceratocystis platani*), **bronze birch borer** (*Agrilus anxius*), and **beech leaf disease** have not yet reached the United Kingdom but are spreading across continental Europe and would have severe impacts on key species if introduced.

Sweet chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*) is already present in southern England and could spread further north but will have little impact on Cambridge with its low numbers of this species, while **oak lace bug** (*Corythucha arcuata*) poses a potential additional stress to native oak populations.

⁹ See <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/tree-data> for survey results. Last accessed 16/10/25

Climate change is expected to exacerbate many of these risks by extending the suitable range and survival of pest species, while drought and heat stress reduce trees' natural defences. To build resilience, CCC will continue to monitor emerging threats, follow Forest Research's advice and national surveillance schemes such as Observatree, and promote early detection and reporting. Species diversification remains central to this approach, ensuring no single genus dominates and that future canopy composition can better withstand pest and disease pressures.

Through vigilant monitoring, responsible sourcing, and adaptive management, CCC aims to protect the biodiversity value of the city's trees and sustain a healthy, resilient canopy for future generations.

COLLABORATION

The Urban Forest Strategy supports and aligns with the Biodiversity Strategy but is subordinate to it. Where objectives overlap, biodiversity policy direction takes precedence, subject to statutory safety duties. In practice, this means that in areas of high biodiversity value, tree management decisions will be taken with safety as the first priority, and biodiversity value considered second, in close collaboration with the Biodiversity Team. This ensures that statutory duties are met while protecting and enhancing ecological value wherever possible.

The Urban Forest Strategy has been developed alongside the Biodiversity Strategy mid-period review and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

CCC collaborates with partners including Cambridgeshire County Council, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, Natural England, the Wildlife Trust (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire), local universities, and community groups. These partnerships integrate urban forestry with wider conservation efforts, improve ecological connectivity, and provide opportunities for community involvement. Through this collaborative approach, CCC will ensure that its urban forest contributes fully to statutory biodiversity duties and regional nature recovery.

This Topic Paper should be read alongside the Urban Forest Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy, which together set the strategic framework for protecting and enhancing Cambridge's natural environment

END

TOPIC PAPER 4 SUBSIDENCE AND STRUCTURAL DAMAGE

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

Contents

Policy alignment	2
Purpose	2
Introduction	3
Direct Damage	3
Evidence of Direct Damage	3
Drain Damage	4
Cost Assessment	4
Avoidance of Direct Damage	5
Indirect Damage (Subsidence)	5
Current Council Practice	5
Evidence	6
Protected Trees - Statutory Requirements	6
Council-Owned Trees - Alignment with Protected Tree Standards	6
Clarification on Evidence Standards	7
Amenity Value Categories	7
Subsidence reports	8
Other Structural Damage - Required Reports	9
Heave Risk	9
Shallow Foundations	10
Climate Change Considerations	10
Avoidance of Subsidence Damage	11
Mitigation Hierarchy	11
Legal Context on Liability and Compensation	12
Common Law Duties	12
Compensation under TPO Law	12
Implications for Evidence and Decision-Making	12

Policy alignment

This paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy under the following policies.

- M1, M3 and M4: Supporting the **Manage More** policies relating to legal obligations, damage control and mitigation and capacity and resourcing
- P2: Underpinning the **Protect More** policy regarding planning controls
- PL1-PL4: Advancing the **Plant More** policies relating to planting, establishment, innovation and diversity
- E1-E4: Reinforcing **Engage more** policies by extending guidance to private landowners, encouraging responsible management, and providing clear pathways for community participation in tree care and planting.

Associated Topic Papers

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 1 Tree Asset Management and Risk
- Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance
- Topic Paper 6 Governance and Resourcing
- Topic Paper 9 Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control
- Topic Paper 11 Tree Protection, Damage and Compensation

Purpose

Subsidence and other structural damage caused by trees can be complex and contentious. This paper sets out the evidential standards required, Cambridge City Council's (CCC) mitigation hierarchy and the legal and policy context guiding decisions. It explains how the CCC works with insurers, engineers, and residents to resolve cases fairly.

This approach protects Cambridge's urban forest, safeguards public amenity, and ensures that limited resources are spent effectively while meeting legal duties of care and liability.

Introduction

This paper is based on the understanding that trees provide numerous benefits to the health and liveability of Cambridge, while recognising that damage caused to property by trees can have financial implications and affect a householder's quality of life. It is essential therefore to balance the many benefits that trees provide against the physical and financial impact of trees causing damage to buildings.

Structural damage to properties by trees can be caused both directly and indirectly. Direct damage results from annual growth and/or root activity, or indirect damage, such as subsidence, can result from the extraction of moisture from shrinkable soil by fibrous tree roots or the washing away of fines from soil under foundations from leaking drains.

Most trees co-exist with buildings with minimal conflict, and when damage does occur it is not necessarily a result of tree root activity, even if there are trees present and in proximity. Indeed, even in the most high risk area for subsidence damage no tree has a greater than 5% chance of causing damage to a property. Furthermore, if trees are implicated in damage, alternatives to pruning or felling may solve the issue. The value of trees to the public varies, from limited amenity value, through some amenity value, to special or outstanding amenity value. Accordingly, the greater the amenity value of a tree, the more compelling and comprehensive the evidence must be before works to mitigate alleged damage will be supported. Conversely, trees with limited amenity value, for example because they have a short safe useful life, will require less evidence. This principle helps facilitate timely decision-making and avoid unnecessary delays.

Direct Damage

The physical expansion of woody roots as trees increase in size can affect light structures (e.g. boundary walls, porches, driveways and pavements). Direct damage can also be caused by the stem or branches through direct pressure resulting from annual growth or movement in the wind.

Evidence of Direct Damage

Where direct damage is alleged, the claimant or their agent must provide evidence sufficient to demonstrate, on the balance of probabilities, that the tree is the effective cause of that damage. Evidence should include:

- A clear description of the damage, including its nature, extent and location.
- Photographs showing both the damage and the tree alleged to be responsible.

- A plan or sketch identifying the position of the tree(s) relative to the affected structure.
- Where drains or services are implicated, a CCTV drain survey or other relevant investigation showing root ingress or obstruction.
- An engineer's or surveyor's report setting out causation, with consideration of alternative causes (e.g. defective construction, ground movement, wear and tear).

Drain Damage

It is important to distinguish between tree roots causing direct damage to drains, and tree roots exploiting existing defects. In many cases roots are opportunistic, they are attracted to moisture and enter drains through pre-existing cracks or faulty joints. In such cases, the tree is not the primary cause of the damage to the drain, and the appropriate remedy is to repair or replace the defective drain. Only where robust evidence demonstrates that root pressure has directly fractured or displaced an otherwise sound drain will tree works be considered. In practice, it can be very difficult to determine whether the tree roots were attracted by already leaking water from a fractured drain or whether the roots themselves have caused the fracture.

Cost Assessment

For transparency, mitigation requests and claims relating to direct damage should also include a breakdown of estimated costs under different scenarios. This should set out:

- the estimated costs of repairing or rebuilding the affected structure while retaining the tree;
- the estimated costs of tree removal, including replacement planting, ongoing monitoring, and any associated engineering works; and
- the comparative financial, amenity and environmental implications of each option.

Reports should distinguish between works that are directly related to tree management and those that arise from building condition, foundation design, drainage defects, soil characteristics or wider climatic influences. The Council does not expect a numerical apportionment of overall costs between contributory causes where this cannot be robustly demonstrated. However, costs must not be attributed to tree influence without clear technical justification, and the presence of other material factors must be expressly acknowledged. These costs should be presented in a transparent, itemised format so that decision makers can fully weigh the options and ensure that any decision to remove or retain a tree is evidence-based, proportionate, and defensible.

Avoidance of Direct Damage

Most direct damage in relation to future properties can be avoided if best practice is followed at the design and construction stage. Compliance with *BS 5837:2012 - Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction* is essential. This standard sets out the requirements for surveying existing trees, establishing root protection areas, and designing foundations, surfacing, and underground services to avoid future conflict. The Council expects developers, contractors and landowners to follow BS 5837 guidance wherever construction or excavation is proposed in the vicinity of trees. Failure to do so may increase the likelihood of avoidable damage and limit options for later resolution.

Indirect Damage (Subsidence)

Trees cause subsidence when they remove moisture from a dynamic soil beneath foundation depth. Concern about the risk of subsidence and proximity of trees to buildings can lead to their unnecessary felling or pruning.

If tree root activity is evidenced to be the cause of or a contributing factor to subsidence it is not always necessary to fell the tree as alternative solutions might be appropriate to stabilise a property and stop ongoing subsidence movement. Typically, however, alternative solutions are significantly more costly; therefore it may be necessary to balance the amenity value of the tree(s) and the availability of funding against the cost of alternative solutions.

Current Council Practice

In areas of known high risk, CCC already undertakes preventative management to mitigate the potential for tree-related subsidence. This includes biennial or triennial crown reductions of certain tree populations to maintain them at a smaller size than they would reach at full maturity. Examples include the London plane at Alexandra Gardens, Maids Causeway and Newmarket Road. This cyclical management helps reduce water demand from trees in shrinkable soils while retaining their public amenity and environmental value.

CCC does not, however, proactively assess individual trees for subsidence risk. Each case is dealt with as it arises, based on the evidence provided. This is because there are too many unknowns to allow for meaningful proactive assessment without detailed site specific investigations, which cannot be undertaken at scale for reasons of cost, resourcing, and lack of access to private property. Factors such as whether

roots extend beneath foundations, the type and depth of foundations, and the nature of soils beneath individual buildings can only be established through intrusive investigations carried out by claimants or their agents.

Proactively removing trees without clear evidence of risk is disproportionate and would also be unsustainable and counterproductive. It would result in unnecessary loss of canopy cover, reduce resilience to climate change, diminish biodiversity and contribute to local “urban desertification” through loss of shading and evaporative cooling. For these reasons, CCC requires robust, case-by-case evidence before supporting tree removal on subsidence grounds.

Evidence

Protected Trees - Statutory Requirements

Government guidance is clear that, where structural damage from subsidence is alleged to have been caused by protected trees, applications for tree work must be accompanied by detailed technical evidence. For Tree Preservation Order(TPO) applications, this evidence is mandatory: applications without it are invalid and will be returned. For Conservation Area notifications, while the same evidence is not a statutory requirement, CCC will normally resist removal of or significant works to healthy trees unless robust evidence of this type is provided. Protected trees may be in either public or private ownership.

Council-Owned Trees - Alignment with Protected Tree Standards

Council-owned trees are public assets. They are not generally protected by TPOs, since their management is already controlled by the council as landowner. However, because they are typically located in public places, they usually provide a higher baseline of amenity value than privately owned trees.

For this reason, CCC requires that the same evidential standards are applied when assessing mitigation requests relating to its own trees as would apply to protected trees. This approach ensures that community assets are only removed or reduced where robust and transparent evidence demonstrates it is necessary, and that decisions are proportionate, defensible, and consistent with the statutory framework.

In exercising its functions in relation to tree management, subsidence mitigation and structural damage, Cambridge City Council acts as a public authority for the purposes of the Environment Act 2021. The Council is therefore required to have due regard to the environmental principles set out in the Government’s Environmental Principles Policy Statement, including the prevention of environmental harm, proportionality, and integration of environmental protection into decision-making.

Where decisions relating to tree management may have a material effect on the natural environment or public amenity, the Council will also ensure that appropriate consultation and engagement is undertaken, in line with its statutory duties, adopted strategies and engagement policies. This includes providing clear information to affected parties, considering representations received, and demonstrating how environmental considerations have been taken into account alongside engineering, legal and financial factors.

This approach supports transparent, lawful and proportionate decision-making, and reinforces the Council's commitment to managing conflict between trees and buildings in a way that protects the urban forest while addressing legitimate concerns about property damage.

Clarification on Evidence Standards

The requirement to provide technical evidence is mandatory where works are sought to TPO protected trees because of alleged subsidence or direct structural damage. Government guidance prescribes the categories of evidence that must be supplied with a TPO application linked to subsidence damage (for example monitoring data, foundation depth, soil analysis, root identification, costings). However, the level of detail within each category is not defined in statute. CCC therefore interprets these requirements to ensure that evidence is complete, transparent, and robust. Where evidence submissions fall short of the categories, they will be refused or returned as invalid. Where submissions provide the required categories but lack sufficient clarity or detail, further information will be requested before reaching a decision.

The requirement to provide technical evidence where works are sought to trees in CCC's ownership does not have to align to statutory standards. Where the CCC is the tree owner the Claimant's duty is to provide a reasonable level of evidence to show, on the balance of probabilities that the tree is the cause of the nuisance and subsidence damage is occurring.

Amenity Value Categories

Although Article 5 certificates were removed from legislation, the DETR Guide (2000, paras 6.69-6.70) provided useful definitions of the terms *special* and *outstanding amenity value*. While no longer part of current statutory guidance, these definitions

remain relevant as a practical way of distinguishing levels of amenity. Trees of outstanding amenity value were described as typically dominant features in the landscape, while trees of special amenity value were defined as those performing a particular function in their setting, such as screening development. CCC continues to apply these distinctions as part of its assessment of mitigation requests or claims, using them to calibrate the evidential standard required in proportion to the level of amenity value at stake. Accordingly, the framework applied is:

- **Trees of limited amenity value** (for example, young trees, those with structural defects, or those nearing the end of their safe useful life) will require less detailed evidence to justify intervention.
- **Trees of some amenity value** (for example, healthy street or garden trees making a positive but not distinctive contribution to the local environment) will require a reasonable level of evidence, including monitoring and engineering reports, before removal or significant works will be considered.
- **Trees of special amenity value** will require robust evidence that clearly demonstrates the causal link between the tree and the alleged damage, alongside an assessment of alternatives.
- **Trees of outstanding amenity value** will require the most rigorous and comprehensive evidence before removal or significant works will be considered.

This tiered approach facilitates decision-making, ensures proportionality, and avoids delays by making expectations clear from the outset.

Subsidence reports

Reports should be provided by a structural engineer or a chartered surveyor and be supported by technical analysis from other experts (for example for root and soil analysis). The sequence of investigation is important:

- Site investigations and level/crack monitoring should first be completed to establish the pattern and likely causes of movement.
- An engineer's report should then assess this data to determine whether there is a probable causal link between soil behaviour, building movement and nearby trees.
- Only once such a causal link is established should an arboricultural report be commissioned to consider whether tree management or removal is an appropriate response.

These reports must include the following information:

- A description of the property, including a description of the damage and the crack pattern, the date that the damage first occurred/was noted, details of any previous underpinning or building work, the geological strata for the site identified from the geological map.

- Details of vegetation in the vicinity and its management since discovery of the damage. Include a plan showing the vegetation and affected building.
- Measurement of the extent and distribution of vertical movement using level monitoring. Where level monitoring is not possible, state why and provide crack-monitoring data. Data provided must be sufficient to show a pattern of movement consistent with the presence of the implicated tree(s).
- A profile of a trial/bore hole dug to identify foundation type and depth and soil characteristics, with explicit confirmation where shallow foundations are present, as these are particularly vulnerable to soil shrinkage and tree root influence.
- The sub-soil characteristics including soil type (particularly that on which the foundations rest), liquid limit, plastic limit and plasticity index.
- The location and identification of roots found. Where identification is inconclusive, DNA testing should be carried out.

Proposals and estimated costs of options to repair the damage, presented in a transparent, itemised format. Claimants must demonstrate what proportion of the estimated costs is directly attributable to the tree, and what proportion arises from other factors. Reports should distinguish between works that are directly related to tree management and those that arise from building condition, foundation design, drainage defects, soil characteristics or wider climatic influences. The Council does not expect a numerical apportionment of overall costs between contributory causes where this cannot be robustly demonstrated. However, costs must not be attributed to tree influence without clear technical justification, and the presence of other material factors must be expressly acknowledged.

In addition, a report from an arboriculturist must be included to support the tree work proposals, setting out arboricultural options for avoidance or remediation of indirect tree-related damage. Where tree removal is recommended, the report must provide clear reasons why lesser works (such as pruning, cyclical management, or installation of barriers) are not considered appropriate or sufficient.

Other Structural Damage - Required Reports

Technical evidence in respect of other structural damage (e.g. garden walls, drains, paving, drive surfaces) should be provided by a relevant engineer, building/drainage surveyor or other appropriate expert.

Heave Risk

When trees are removed from shrinkable clay soils, there is a risk of ground heave, upward movement caused by the rehydration and swelling of soils that have previously been desiccated by tree roots.

For this reason, technical reports must explicitly consider the potential for heave as

part of any remediation assessment. CCC will require evidence that the risk of heave has been assessed and factored into proposals. Where a significant risk is identified, tree removal may not be supported unless appropriate engineering or alternative solutions are demonstrated.

Shallow Foundations

Shallow or otherwise vulnerable foundations are a recognised risk factor for building movement on shrinkable clay soils and may increase a property's sensitivity to seasonal soil moisture changes.

The presence of shallow foundations does not, of itself, preclude a finding that tree root activity is a material or effective cause of damage, nor does it absolve CCC (as tree owner) of responsibility where such causation is established. At the mitigation stage, the Council therefore requires foundation depth and adequacy to be identified and taken into account when considering the appropriateness and proportionality of proposed mitigation measures. This ensures that tree removal is not relied upon as a default response to underlying structural vulnerability, while recognising that, where tree influence is shown to be a material cause of damage, reasonable steps to abate that influence may still be required.

The relevance of foundation vulnerability will be considered alongside other factors, including soil conditions, climate effects and engineering evidence, and does not determine liability in isolation should a matter proceed to a claim.

Climate Change Considerations

Climate change is projected to increase the frequency and intensity of summer droughts, leading to deeper and more prolonged soil moisture deficits in shrinkable clay soils. These conditions increase the likelihood of seasonal ground movement, particularly where foundations are shallow or otherwise vulnerable. As a result, buildings that may historically have remained stable may become more sensitive to environmental stress over time.

In this context, tree root activity may interact with wider climatic and ground conditions rather than operate in isolation. CCC therefore requires structural and engineering reports to address explicitly the potential influence of climate change on soil behaviour and foundation performance, and to explain how these factors have been taken into account when assessing the nature of the movement observed and the suitability of proposed mitigation measures.

By requiring climate-related factors to be considered as part of a holistic assessment, the Council seeks to ensure that decisions on tree management or removal are evidence-based, proportionate and resilient to future environmental conditions. This approach avoids treating tree removal as a default response to building movement where wider environmental or structural vulnerabilities may be contributing factors,

while recognising that vegetation influence may still require abatement where supported by robust evidence.

Avoidance of Subsidence Damage

Most tree-related subsidence can be avoided through appropriate planning, design and management of both trees and buildings. CCC therefore promotes the following preventative measures:

- **Foundation design** - ensure foundations are constructed to a depth and specification appropriate to local soil type and the anticipated mature size of nearby trees.
- **Avoid shallow foundations** - where new buildings or extensions are proposed on shrinkable clay soils, shallow foundations should be avoided as they are particularly prone to seasonal movement and tree-related subsidence.
- **Species selection and planting distance** - avoid planting high water-demand species too close to buildings or structures, particularly on shrinkable clay soils. Tree planting plans should consider the ultimate size and rooting potential of the species.
- **Diversity and resilience** - planting a diverse range of tree species helps to avoid over-reliance on species that may pose higher subsidence risks on sensitive soils.
- **Water management** - sustainable drainage systems, rain gardens and permeable surfacing can help stabilise soil moisture levels and reduce differential drying beneath foundations.
- **Design compliance** - developers, contractors and designers should follow the principles set out in *NHBC Standards Chapter 4.2 - Building near trees* and relevant British Standards.
- **Ongoing monitoring** - residents and property owners are encouraged to maintain buildings, drains and gutters in good condition, reducing opportunities for water ingress or ground instability that may be wrongly attributed to trees.

By promoting preventative measures, the council seeks to reduce the likelihood of conflict between trees and buildings, protect public tree assets, and minimise the financial burden of subsidence claims on both residents and the public purse.

Mitigation Hierarchy

When trees are implicated in subsidence or structural damage, a clear mitigation hierarchy will be applied to ensure that tree removal is considered only as a last resort:

1. **Do nothing** - monitor to establish whether movement is progressive or seasonal and self-limiting.

2. **Engineering solutions** - underpinning, drain repair, or other building-focused interventions to resolve damage without tree works.
3. **Tree management** - cyclical crown reduction or root pruning, carried out with arboricultural advice, to reduce water demand or alleviate direct pressure.
4. **Tree removal and replacement** - considered only if all other reasonable options are unviable or disproportionate, and where the balance of evidence shows that removal is necessary to prevent further damage.

In all cases the council will explore the available options, but the final decision must weigh the public amenity value of the tree against both (a) the direct financial cost of mitigation and (b) the wider impact on council budgets and services.

Legal Context on Liability and Compensation

Decisions on tree-related damage must reflect not only arboricultural and amenity considerations but also the legal framework governing liability and compensation.

Common Law Duties

At common law, tree owners may be liable in nuisance where their trees cause actual damage to neighbouring land or structures. Liability can arise if, on the balance of probabilities, the tree is the effective cause of the damage and the type of damage that was caused to the property was reasonably foreseeable by the tree owner prior to the damage occurring. Once notified of a problem and provided with evidence in support of the legal nuisance, the tree owner has a duty to take reasonable steps to abate that nuisance.

Compensation under TPO Law

Under section 202E of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, if the council refuses consent for works to a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order (or grants consent subject to conditions) and as a result of that refusal the Claimant has to carry out alternative stabilisation work to the property the council may be liable to pay compensation for the cost of those additional works. Such liability is limited to losses that were reasonably foreseeable at the time of the refusal and providing the claim is notified to the Council within 12 months of the refusal notice being issued.

Implications for Evidence and Decision-Making

This legal framework underlines the importance of requiring robust and transparent evidence before making decisions on mitigation requests or protected tree applications. CCC's amenity-based tiers of evidence ensure proportionality in decision-making. However, once robust causation is established, the council cannot disregard the duty to abate nuisance, even for trees of high amenity value. In such

cases, the balance of options will consider whether less destructive, reasonable alternatives (such as engineering solutions) are available before tree removal is contemplated.

Note that whilst causation is the primary consideration at mitigation stage, if a claim goes on to become a legal claim for the recovery of damages, the Claimant has to succeed in satisfying other parts of the law of nuisance test before damages become payable. The stages of the legal test in nuisance are:

- 1 The tree owner owed the Claimant a duty of care
- 2 The duty of care was breached and foreseeable damage was caused
- 3 The evidence links the tree to the damage as the primary cause
- 4 The repair works carried out were reasonable in scope and cost.

TOPIC PAPER 5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Purpose.....	1
Policy Alignment.....	2
Associated Topic Papers	2
Background	2
Community Programmes and Initiatives.....	3
Free Trees for Babies.....	3
Trees for Streets Sponsorship.....	3
Watering New Trees.....	3
Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign.....	3
Volunteer Planting in Parks	3
Tree Trails and Mapping.....	3
Tree Data Portal.....	4
Comment on Planned Tree Works	4
Track Record of Partnerships.....	4
Delivery of the Strategy depends on strong collaboration:.....	5
Conclusion	6

PURPOSE

The urban forest belongs to everyone, and its future depends on shared stewardship. Less than 25% of land in Cambridge is directly owned or managed by Cambridge City Council (CCC), making collaboration with residents, businesses, schools, and partner organisations essential. Engagement is therefore not an optional extra but a core delivery mechanism of the Urban Forest Strategy.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy under the following policies.

- Policy E1: Through public and partnership engagement the Council will facilitate sustainable and proactive management of trees.
- Policy E2: Encourage joined-up approaches across services, communities, and businesses through donations and sponsorship.
- Policy E3: Quantify the benefits of Cambridge's urban forest with opportunities for community participation.
- Policy E4: Provide clear, accessible information about tree management and planting through web platforms and consultation processes.

These policies also contribute to corporate priorities: tackling climate and biodiversity emergencies, addressing inequality by focusing on underserved wards, and modernising the Council through evidence-led engagement.

ASSOCIATED TOPIC PAPERS

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 6 Governance and resourcing
- Topic Paper 8 Achievements

Together these papers set out how strong leadership and shared stewardship help to maintain a healthy and resilient urban forest.

BACKGROUND

CCC has built a strong track record of community engagement through flagship projects such as the Cambridge Canopy Project (2019-2023) and the ongoing work of the Biodiversity Project Officer, supported by legacy funding. These programmes, detailed below, have combined planting, education, citizen science, and cultural activities to increase awareness of the value of trees and involve the community in their care

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

Free Trees for Babies

A legacy scheme offering a commemorative tree to mark the birth of a child, planting the urban forest into residents' gardens. Between 2016/17 and 2023/24, a total of 1,843 trees were distributed.

[Trees for Babies scheme - Cambridge City Council](#)

Trees for Streets Sponsorship

Cambridge was the first council to partner with this national charity in 2019. Residents and businesses can sponsor new street trees, covering planting and establishment costs, and directly contributing to canopy growth.

[Sponsoring new trees - Cambridge City Council](#)

Watering New Trees

Community involvement is vital to establishment. CCC encourages residents to help water newly planted street and park trees during dry periods.

[Watering new trees - Cambridge City Council](#)

Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign

Targeted planting in areas of need, supported by residents and community groups, often themed to local priorities such as pollinators or climate resilience.

[Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign - Cambridge City Council](#)

Volunteer Planting in Parks

Planting events in parks and open spaces, delivered in partnership with the Community Engagement Team, allow residents and volunteers to actively contribute to canopy expansion while learning about species diversity, aftercare, and the wider benefits of trees. These events strengthen local ownership and create lasting links between communities and their green spaces.

Tree Trails and Mapping

Interactive online resources and downloadable trails connect residents with heritage and landmark trees, fostering place-based pride and environmental education

[Tree trails - Cambridge City Council](#)

Tree Data Portal

Open access to tree data (location, species, management status) promotes transparency, supports citizen science, and underpins engagement with schools, universities, and community researchers.

[Tree data - Cambridge City Council](#)

Comment on Planned Tree Works

CCC encourages residents to take an active role in scrutinising and shaping how trees are managed. Through the planned tree works consultation webpage, residents can review forthcoming maintenance proposals and submit comments or objections before works proceed. This open process enhances transparency, builds trust, and ensures that community views are considered in balancing safety, biodiversity, and amenity when making arboricultural decisions.

[Comment on our planned tree works - Cambridge City Council](#)

TRACK RECORD OF PARTNERSHIPS

Cambridge has established a strong record of working with external partners to deliver innovative and impactful urban forestry projects. These collaborations demonstrate the council's ability to leverage external expertise and funding, while engaging communities in shared stewardship of the urban forest:

- **Nature Smart Cities (Interreg 2 Seas) & Cambridge Canopy Project (2019-2023)¹**
Delivered as part of a European climate adaptation programme, the Canopy Project combined canopy cover analysis, priority planting, and community engagement. It secured significant EU funding and showcased the benefits of cross-border collaboration.
- **i-Tree Eco Project (2021)²**
Undertaken in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University, the project trained students as surveyors and quantified Cambridge's canopy in terms of carbon

¹ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/nature-smart-cities-across-the-2-seas-programme>

² <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/i-tree-eco-project>

storage, pollution removal, stormwater regulation, and asset value. This established a shared evidence base for policy and public engagement.

- **DiversiTree Project (2023-2026)³**
Part of the River Cam CAN partnership and funded by the National Lottery, this project focuses on veteran and heritage willows along the River Cam. It combines cultural heritage with biodiversity management and community storytelling.
- **Trees for Streets Sponsorship⁴**
A long-term partnership with the national charity Trees for Streets, enabling residents and businesses to sponsor new street trees. Cambridge was the first council in the UK to sign up (2019), helping to establish the model nationally.
- **Earthwatch UK⁵ - Tiny Forest⁶**
In 2023, Cambridge worked with Earthwatch UK to deliver a “Tiny Forest” at Five Trees, Chesterton, involving schools, volunteers, and residents in planting 600 whips. This living classroom demonstrates climate resilience and biodiversity benefits at a community scale.

Delivery of the Strategy depends on strong collaboration:

- **Public sector partners:** Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (statutory tree protection), Cambridgeshire County Council (schools, highways), Greater Cambridge Partnership (infrastructure projects).
- **Charities and networks:** Trees for Streets, Cambridge Nature Network, local wildlife trusts, and community festivals such as the Cambridge Nature Festival.
- **Academia:** Anglia Ruskin University and University of Cambridge contribute through research, monitoring, and student engagement (e.g. i-Tree Eco survey).

³ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/diversitree-project>
webpages last accessed 16/10/25

⁴ <https://www.treesforstreets.org>

⁵ <https://earthwatch.org.uk/>

⁶ <https://earthwatch.org.uk/program/tiny-forest/>

Web pages last access 16/10/25

- **Businesses and residents:** Sponsorship, volunteering, and responsible tree management on private land.

CONCLUSION

Public engagement and partnerships are not peripheral to urban forestry; they are central to delivery. Cambridge's community planting events, sponsorship schemes, education resources, and collaborative projects demonstrate both innovation and capacity to mobilise shared stewardship. Strengthening these initiatives through the Urban Forest Strategy will ensure that every resident, from a new parent receiving a free tree to a local business sponsoring a street tree, could shape and sustain Cambridge's urban forest.

Engagement activity will continue to be targeted, proportionate and responsive to available resources.

END

TOPIC PAPER 6: GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCING

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Purpose.....	1
Policy Alignment.....	2
Associated Topic Papers	2
Introduction	2
Governance within the Council.....	3
The Council's Leadership Role in Urban Forestry	3
Functional Responsibilities	4
1. Tree Asset Managers	4
2. Landowners / Service Managers.....	4
3. Support Services.....	5
4. Strategic Alignment and Oversight.....	6
Resourcing the Strategy.....	8
Core Council Resources.....	8
External and Supplementary Resources	9
Human Resources and Skills.....	9
Transparency and Accountability	9
Wider Governance of the Urban Forest.....	10

PURPOSE

Topic Paper 6 explains how Cambridge's urban forest is governed and resourced. It sets out the roles of different Council services in relation to trees, how resources are allocated, and how governance arrangements ensure transparent, coordinated delivery. It applies to both the Council's directly managed tree asset and the wider urban forest across Cambridge.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) under the following policies.

- M4: Underpinning the Manage More policy strengthening the capacity and resourcing needed to deliver the Strategy
- E1-E3: Promoting the Engage More policies recognising that the majority of Cambridge's canopy lies outside Council ownership and must be delivered through shared stewardship.

ASSOCIATED TOPIC PAPERS

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the UFS and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 1 Tree Asset Management and Risk
- Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance
- Topic Paper 4 Trees, Subsidence and Structural Damage
- Topic Paper 5 Public Engagement and Partnership
- Topic Paper 9 Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control
- Topic Paper 11 Tree Protection, Damage and compensation

Together these papers illustrate the framework for governance, partnership and resourcing needed to build and manage a healthy and resilient urban forest.

INTRODUCTION

The Urban Forest Strategy is a corporate strategy, binding all Council services that involve trees. It establishes the council's vision, aims and policy framework for the urban forest and provides an evidence base (e.g. canopy mapping, amenity valuation, biodiversity priorities) supporting decision-making. While the UFS sets expectations for alignment across all council and partner services it does not override the statutory planning framework or Highway Authority ownership. Its adoption establishes a consistent policy base for decision-making and investment, reducing fragmentation and aligning local action with national policy and best practice.

Less than 25% of land in Cambridge is owned or managed by Cambridge City Council (CCC), meaning most tree canopy lies on private or institutional land. Delivering the Strategy therefore requires not only strong internal governance and resourcing but also wider partnerships across sectors and with residents.

GOVERNANCE WITHIN THE COUNCIL

The Council's Leadership Role in Urban Forestry

Cambridge City Council is not only a manager of its own tree stock but also the body best placed to lead on the governance of the city's wider urban forest. Local authorities are the primary delivery agents of urban forests¹, as they:

- Hold statutory powers to protect trees ([Tree Preservation Orders](#), [Conservation Area designations](#)², and planning policy).
- Manage large areas of public tree canopy, including parks, commons, cemeteries and housing land.
- Integrate tree management into wider agendas such as climate adaptation, biodiversity recovery, flood resilience, public health, and place-making.
- Directly administer statutory consultation duties, including the Environment Act's street tree provisions.
- Are well placed to influence decisions beyond their own estate, ensuring that private, institutional and developer-owned trees contribute to citywide canopy targets.

The Tree Team directly manages around 30,000 trees, of which 10,000 are highway trees maintained on behalf of the County Council, and provides advice across other service areas. Through public-facing programmes and statutory frameworks, CCC acts as both steward of its own asset and strategic coordinator of the wider urban forest, ensuring that all stakeholders contribute to sustaining and expanding Cambridge's canopy.

¹ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/what-is-the-urban-forest/> last accessed 5/1/26

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas> last accessed 6/1/26

Functional Responsibilities

Council responsibilities for trees can be grouped into four functional categories:

1. Tree Asset Managers

Teams with day-to-day responsibility for inspection, maintenance, planting and record-keeping.

Tree Team (City Services - Public Realm):

- Leads delivery of the Strategy.
- Directly manages the corporate tree asset (parks, commons, recreation grounds, nature reserves, closed churchyards, communal housing land).
- Manages highway trees on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council, with costs recouped annually.
- Oversees cyclical inspections, reactive works, planting, consultation and risk management.
- Maintains live asset data on Ezytreev®.

2. Landowners / Service Managers

Services that hold land on which trees grow, responsible for funding or instructing works, with advice from the Tree Team.

Housing (City Homes & Repairs and Compliance Team):

- Trees in communal open space are inspected by the Tree Team.
- Communal gardens and tenanted gardens are managed by Housing, with arboricultural advice provided.

Property Services: Trees on commercial estate and corporate buildings.

Car Parks Team: Trees on Council managed car park land

Bereavement Services: Trees in Newmarket Road Cemetery and the crematorium grounds

Drainage Services: Trees on riparian land.

Operations (Open Spaces): Manage shrubs, self-sets and wider vegetation alongside trees.

3. Support Services

Specialist teams providing enabling expertise to ensure the Strategy is delivered consistently and transparently.

Biodiversity Team: Balance safety with ecological value, integrates trees into the Biodiversity Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Climate Team: Ensures urban forest delivery aligns with the Climate Change Strategy and supports carbon reduction, cooling and resilience.

Project Delivery Team: Provides programme and project management skills to deliver environmental improvements, including the design and installation of engineered tree pits, sustainable drainage systems, and other infrastructure requiring technical coordination.

Communications Team: Deliver clear and consistent public communication, press releases, digital news, ensuring residents and stakeholders are informed and engaged in urban forest initiatives. They provide web support and administer the Council's tree webpages.

ICT Teams: Provides digital mapping, interactive canopy maps.

Legal & Finance: Provide advice on statutory duties, liabilities, compensation, procurement and funding bids.

Community Engagement Services: Support public-facing programmes such as [Free Trees for Babies](https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/trees-for-babies-scheme)³, Planting in Parks and Neighbourhood Canopy Campaigns⁴.

Customer Services Team: Triage public enquiries, answering straightforward or less technical questions quickly and efficiently, and directing more complex matters to the Tree Team.

³ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/trees-for-babies-scheme> last accessed 6/1/26

⁴ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/neighbourhood-canopy-campaign> last accessed 6/1/26

4. Strategic Alignment and Oversight

Functions that ensure the fulfilment of statutory duties and that trees are embedded into corporate priorities, statutory planning and external partnerships.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service: Administers TPOs, policies.

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service (GCSP) delivers statutory planning functions on behalf of CCC who retains legal responsibility, as the local planning authority. This includes administration and enforcement of tree preservation orders TPOs, conservation area notifications, planning compliance and the application of local plan policies to development proposals.

In matters of development control, the Town and Country Planning Act, National Planning Policy and the Local Plan has primacy. Under the [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(Section 197\)](#)⁵ local planning authorities must make adequate provision for the preservation and planting of trees when granting planning permission. This duty underlines national and local plan policies set out in the NPPF Cambridge Local plan and Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan. Decisions of the Local Planning Authority on planning applications must be taken in accordance with the adopted local plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The urban forest strategy therefore may act as a material consideration, ensuring that planning decisions reflect the city's corporate commitments to canopy growth, climate resilience and environmental justice.

In relation to tree protection, GCSP operates under national legislation Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and tree preservation regulations 2012. It does not have separate planning policies for TPO's but applies its own organisational procedures for administering applications and enforcement. Here, the UFS provides a clear local policy framework to support consistent decision-making, for example, on proactive and strategic TPOs, use of category C TPOs, and acceptance of repeat or phased applications, which strengthens the consistency and defensibility of decisions. The relationship between CCC and GCSP is therefore complementary.

While CCC has strategic oversight of the urban forest, sets corporate policy through the UFS, and manages its own public tree asset, GCSP delivers the statutory planning functions.

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/section/197> last accessed 6/1/26

By working jointly, and through shared arboricultural expertise, the two services can deliver statutory protection and strategic ambitions together. This includes coordinated TPO reviews, identifying proactive designations, and integrating tree and canopy objectives into development management practice.

Executive Councillors and Senior Management: Provide political and corporate oversight, approving strategies and budgets.

Cambridgeshire County Council : -

Cambridgeshire County Council (Highways) is the local highway authority and retains ownership, legal liability, and statutory responsibilities for all highway trees within the public highway across Cambridge. Under [Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980](#)⁶, the County Council has a duty to maintain the highway, including ensuring that vegetation does not endanger users or obstruct visibility, signage, lighting, or access.

CCC undertakes day-to-day arboricultural management of highway trees as part of a long-standing working partnership with the County Council. Through this partnership, the Tree Team provides professional advice, inspection, maintenance, and planting services to support the County in discharging its statutory duties and to deliver the shared objectives of the UFS. The UFS recognises this shared responsibility and provides an integrated framework for managing highway trees that aligns safety, amenity, and climate resilience. Although the County Council remains the legal owner, CCC's operational role means both authorities must work collaboratively to deliver the UFS principles of Climate Resilience, Intergenerational Equity, and Environmental Justice.

This working partnership distinguishes ownership and liability from operational delivery.

- Cambridgeshire County Council (Highways)
 - Retains ownership and full legal liability for all highway trees, including any injury or damage arising from their condition or management.
 - Acts as the statutory decision-maker for vehicle crossings, highway alterations, and any works carried out under the [Highways Act 1980](#)⁷.
 - Holds the [statutory duty to consult](#)⁸ the public before felling street trees under the Environment Act 2021, working collaboratively with CCC to meet this obligation.
- Cambridge City Council (Public Realm, Tree team)

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/41> last accessed 6/1/26

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/contents> last accessed 6/1/26

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/96A?view=plain> last accessed 6/1/26

- Provides professional arboricultural advice, inspection, maintenance, and planting of highway trees on behalf of the County Council.
- Undertakes public consultation on proposed highway tree works and collates responses for consideration.
- Advises on the implications of development proposals and Highways Act applications (including dropped kerbs) for the existing street tree stock.

Where objections are received to proposed highway tree works following consultation, the final decision will be made by a Senior Officer of CCC and in consultation with Cambridgeshire County Council. This ensures that the County's legal liability is recognised, decisions are made in a timely and transparent manner, and the City's professional advice is fully considered.

This collaborative approach provides clear accountability, efficient decision-making, and consistent delivery of both authorities' responsibilities. It also ensures that highway tree management supports the aims of the UFS, maintaining a safe, resilient, and expanding street tree network that contributes to Cambridge's environmental quality, public amenity, and climate resilience.

Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP): Designs and funds major transport schemes, with significant tree impacts requiring early arboricultural input.

RESOURCING THE STRATEGY

Delivery of the UFS will be prioritised within available resources, recognising that funding and capacity may fluctuate over the lifetime of the UFS.

Core Council Resources

Tree Team capacity: A small team of qualified arboriculturists, supported by approved framework contractors.

Technology and systems: [Ezytreev®](#)⁹, GIS, canopy mapping, [i-Tree Eco](#)¹⁰.

Base budgets: Fund cyclical inspections, consultation, engagement and routine maintenance.

⁹ <https://ra-is.co.uk/ezytreev/> last accessed 6/1/26

¹⁰ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/i-tree-eco-project> last accessed 6/1/26

Innovation and efficiency: Ward-based inspection cycles, digital platforms and data-led prioritisation to maximise the value of limited resources.

External and Supplementary Resources

Grant funding: e.g. Forestry Commission schemes - [Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#)¹¹, [Local Authority Treescapes Fund](#)¹²; National Lottery.

Sponsorship and donations: e.g. [Trees for Streets](#)¹³.

Partnership delivery: e.g. [Cambridge Canopy Project](#)¹⁴; [DiversiTree](#)¹⁵.

Human Resources and Skills

- Maintaining arboricultural and biodiversity expertise within the Council.
- Training, upskilling and succession planning to retain long-term capacity.
- Partnerships with universities, volunteers and contractors to extend delivery capacity.

Transparency and Accountability

- All works are subject to proportionate consultation and recording.
- Annual reporting of tree planting, removals, and statutory protection ensures accountability.
- KPIs (e.g. canopy cover change, ecosystem service benefits, statutory protection outcomes) track delivery.
- Topic Papers provide procedural clarity, supporting consistent and transparent governance and together form part of the governance framework that ensures decisions are accountable and defensible.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/urban-tree-challenge-fund> last accessed 6/1/26

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-authority-treescapes-fund> last accessed 6/1/26

¹³ <https://www.treesforstreets.org/> last accessed 6/1/26

¹⁴ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/nature-smart-cities-across-the-2-seas-programme> last accessed 6/1/26

¹⁵ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/diversitree-project> last accessed 6/1/26

- The Communications and ICT teams play a key role in this by publishing information online, hosting interactive maps, and supporting consultation platforms

WIDER GOVERNANCE OF THE URBAN FOREST

Beyond the Council, the majority of Cambridge's canopy lies on private land, university and college estates, and other institutional grounds. Effective governance therefore depends on:

University of Cambridge and Colleges: Major landowners and custodians of heritage tree populations.

Cambridgeshire County Council: Owner of highway trees and responsible for trees on land associated with local authority-maintained schools and other County-managed institutions, making them a key partner in sustaining citywide canopy.

Developers and Landowners: Required to integrate trees into design and contribute to canopy growth through planning.

Utility Companies: Expected to follow [NJUG 4](#)¹⁶ and best practice when working near trees.

Voluntary and Community Groups: Friends groups deliver projects and advocacy.

Residents: Manage most of the City's tree canopy in private gardens, representing the largest single opportunity for canopy growth.

This Topic Paper provides clarity on how CCC governs and resources the urban forest, recognising both statutory responsibilities and the need for partnership working. It supports transparent, proportionate and accountable decision-making over the lifetime of the UFS.

END

¹⁶ <https://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/V4-Trees-Issue-2-16-11-2007.pdf>
last accessed 6/1/26

TOPIC PAPER 7 CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Purpose	1
Policy Alignment	1
Associated Topic Papers	2
Introduction	2
Mitigation, adaptation and risks	3
Mitigation benefits	3
Adaptation benefits	3
Canopy cover	3
Flood mitigation	4
Soil resilience	4
Risks and vulnerabilities	5
Strategies and guidance	5

PURPOSE

Trees are essential to Cambridge's response to climate change. This paper explores their role in cooling and shading, flood mitigation, and soil resilience, referencing strategies for diversifying species to withstand future climate and pest pressures. It links the urban forest directly to The Council's wider climate goals and provides the evidence base for the policies listed above.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) under the following policies.

- M1, M2, M3: Underpinning Manage More policies regarding legal obligations, pest and diseases and capacity and resources and their importance to a healthy urban forest that is resilient to climate change
- P1-P4: Supporting planning control policies to improve best practice
- PL1-PL4: Advancing the Plant More policies essential to increasing the urban forest
- E1-E4: Reinforcing Engage More policies by extending guidance to private landowners, encouraging responsible management and community participation in tree planting.

ASSOCIATED TOPIC PAPERS

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the UFS and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 1 Tree Asset Management and Risk
- Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance
- Topic Paper 3 Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity
- Topic Paper 9 Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control

Together these papers provide a comprehensive framework for climate change resilience.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is the long-term shift in the planet's average temperatures and weather patterns, primarily driven by human activities, like burning fossil fuels, deforestation, intensive agriculture and the manufacturing of certain goods, since the 1800s. The primary cause is the burning of fossil fuels, which releases greenhouse gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and has resulted in rising global temperatures, warming oceans, melting ice, rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events.

The impact of climate change presents significant risks through ecosystem and biodiversity loss, threats to human health, food and water insecurity and poverty and displacement.

Addressing climate change requires systemic transformation including the move to renewable energy, protection and restoration of nature, introducing sustainable agriculture and investing in clean innovation. Individual choices regarding energy use, consumption and diet can contribute to emissions reduction, while governments

must implement strong climate, sustainability and nature policies to actuate necessary change.

MITIGATION, ADAPTATION AND RISKS

Trees in Cambridge play multiple climate-roles: mitigation (reducing the causes of climate change), adaptation (helping people and ecosystems cope with the effects), and they are themselves subject to risks from climate change. Quantifying these helps plan better, and the i-Tree Eco study provides essential local data¹.

MITIGATION BENEFITS

Cambridge's trees store about 88,000 tonnes of carbon (valued at ~£22,500) in their biomass. They also sequester about 2,040 tonnes of carbon per year, worth ~£524,000 annually. These functions help reduce greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, contributing directly to mitigation goals and supporting CCC's wider Climate Change Strategy.

ADAPTATION BENEFITS

Trees are estimated to remove roughly 22.2 tonnes of air pollution each year (valued at ~£990,000) by filtering pollutants, improving human health. They help manage excess rainfall: an estimated 97,600 m³ of stormwater runoff is prevented annually, equivalent to ~£153,000 in avoided drainage costs. Overall tree and shrub cover is about 20.1% of Cambridge, providing cooling, shade, and local microclimate regulation. The following sections outline in more detail the key adaptation functions of the urban forest.

Canopy cover

Increasing urban canopy cover can help mitigate the urban heat island effect by providing shade and evaporative cooling. Shade is important for health because it can help block harmful UV radiation and can help prevent heatstroke. Shaded areas encourage greater use of public spaces and therefore contribute to wellbeing.

¹ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/i-tree-eco-project> last accessed 16/10/25

Shaded infrastructure is protected by lower material temperatures and the prevention of premature degradation from UV rays. Shade prolongs the lifespan of building components, outdoor equipment and finishes and improves energy efficiency in buildings by decreasing the need for air conditioning. Additionally, shade helps maintain the aesthetic quality and structural integrity of materials by minimising fading, warping and cracking caused by sun exposure, adding a financial benefit to increasing canopy cover.

Flood mitigation

Following UK-wide flooding in the summer of 2007, a report from Sir Michael Pitt identified that paving over front and rear gardens was a major factor in surface water movement in towns and cities. Around two thirds of all the flooding in 2007 was a result of surface water run-off.²

While changes in policy and surface design, increasing areas of soft landscaping where possible and using porous hard surfaces aid soil infiltration, trees and their roots can help slow the flow of rainwater, which is also beneficial for reducing flood risk. The canopy intercepts rainfall, slowing the flow of water to the ground and allowing water to infiltrate the soil, therefore, reducing surface runoff. The interception of rainfall also allows a percentage of water to evaporate back into the atmosphere before it hits the ground. Root systems help water penetrate deeper into the soil at a faster rate under and around trees, which results in less surface run-off and more storage in the soil. [National standards for sustainable drainage systems \(SuDS\) - GOV.UK](#)

Trees form one component of a wider surface water management approach and should be considered alongside land use planning, drainage design and sustainable drainage systems.

Soil resilience

Healthy soils with high organic matter can act as carbon sinks, helping to mitigate climate change. Tree roots bind the soil together, holding it in place and preventing it and nutrients from being washed away by flowing water. Fallen leaves also provide a protective layer on the ground and, as decaying matter, improve soil structure and nutrition.

² [Pitt-Review-UK-Floods.pdf](#) last accessed 16/10/25

RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES

The urban forest itself is vulnerable to climate change. Some tree species will struggle with prolonged drought and/or waterlogging, while others may not be able to adapt to increasingly extreme temperatures. Climate change enables some pests and pathogens to expand their range into new areas, while milder winters increase the survival rates of existing pests and diseases, accelerating reproductive cycles and allowing more generations per year. At the same time, acute weather events, such as heatwaves, storms, droughts and flooding, stress trees and make them more vulnerable to infestation and decline. Recognising and planning for these vulnerabilities is central to the Strategy's delivery approaches.

STRATEGIES AND GUIDANCE

Strategic tree selection and succession planning is required for long-term conservation and adaptation. With consideration of biodiversity and biosecurity, CCC is committed to increasing canopy cover through its own asset management, planning partnership and public engagement and identifying and planting future-proofed trees to replace those vulnerable to climate change, ensuring the long-term health of the urban forest³.

Equally important is the protection of established trees. Avoiding unnecessary stress from root damage, soil compaction, inappropriate pruning or poorly designed development is critical to maintaining canopy cover and resilience. These issues are addressed through the "Protect More" policies and development control processes. In addition to formal planning controls, many activities that affect trees take place outside the planning system, such as permitted development, statutory utility works or routine maintenance by contractors. Following recognised best practice guidance is strongly advised whenever works are undertaken near trees. This includes avoiding soil compaction, preventing root severance, using appropriate pruning methods and taking professional arboricultural advice where necessary. Utilities, contractors, developers and residents all have a role in ensuring that established trees are not placed under avoidable stress. While there are technical methods to calculate Root Protection Areas (RPAs)⁴ a simple rule of thumb can be applied:

³ See <http://www.righttrees4cc.org.uk/> last accessed 6/1/26

⁴ The minimum area around a tree that must be protected from disturbance if the tree is to be retained successfully, normally calculated as a radius based on the tree's

avoid excavating, storing materials or running heavy vehicles under the canopy of a tree, plus 1 metre, or a radius equal to half the tree's height for tall, narrow trees - whichever is greater. This rule of thumb is indicative only and does not replace site-specific arboricultural assessment where required. Where works are unavoidable, professional arboricultural advice should always be sought to mitigate negative impacts.

This Topic Paper demonstrates how the urban forest contributes to climate mitigation and adaptation while recognising its own vulnerability to climate change. It supports evidence-led, proportionate action that complements wider climate policies and infrastructure-based solutions.

END

stem diameter, in accordance with British Standard BS 5837:2012 "Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations".

TOPIC PAPER: 8 ACHIEVEMENTS

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Purpose.....	2
The Tree Team	2
Team composition and evolution	2
Achievements to Date	3
Strategic and Policy Framework	3
Alignment with Wider Council Strategies and Priorities	4
Cambridge Local Plan 2018	4
Air Quality Action Plan 2018-2023 and Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy 2024	4
Biodiversity Strategy 2020-2030	5
Climate Change Strategy	5
Corporate Priorities (2022-2027).....	5
Target Operating Model (TOM)	5
Cambridge Canopy Project (2019-2023)	6
Planting and Canopy Expansion.....	6
Tree Planting and Felling Trends	7
Tree Asset Management.....	7
Protection	8
Biodiversity and Veteran Trees	8
Engagement, Communications and Web Resources	8
Cambridge Canopy Project.....	8
Biodiversity Project Officer (started 2023).....	8
Tree for Streets	9
Free Trees for Babies.....	9
Digital Accessibility	9
External funding and Investment (2019-2025).....	9
2008-2018 Canopy Change Study.....	10
Canopy Cover and Ecosystem Services.....	10

Evidence and Data Innovation.....	10
Ash Dieback Monitoring (2017-2024).....	10
Conclusion.....	11

PURPOSE

Cambridge has a strong record of urban forest management and innovation. Over the past decade under the [Citywide Tree Strategy 2016-2026](#)¹, Cambridge City Council (CCC) has delivered major planting programmes, pioneered new approaches to tree asset management, and embedded trees within its climate and biodiversity strategies. The achievements, set out below, justify the need for an holistic approach to the management of green infrastructure and provide a solid foundation from which the Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036 has been developed. The paper highlights what can be achieved and emphasises the need to increase momentum through robust policy based strategy to further improve Cambridge's Urban Forest and its enjoyment by all.

THE TREE TEAM

CCC's Tree Team, based within City Services, has been central to the delivery of Cambridge's urban forestry achievements. The team manages over 30,000 trees on council land, leading on inspections, maintenance, planting, and statutory tree protection. It also provides arboricultural advice across the organisation, including to planning, and housing services.

Team composition and evolution

- Until 2024, the team comprised:
 - Senior Arboricultural Officer (manager)
 - Arboricultural Planning Lead (statutory and planning casework)

¹ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/tree-strategy> last accessed 6/1/26

- 2x Arboricultural Officers (enquiries, operational inspections and maintenance)
- Supported by project roles such as the Cambridge Canopy Project Officer (2019-2023) and the Biodiversity Project Officer (2023 - to date).
- In the 2024/25 restructure, the manager's role was retitled Urban Forest Manager, formally recognising the Council's adoption of an urban forestry approach. The Arboricultural Planning Lead post was deleted, with statutory planning functions transferred to the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service (GCSP) as of 1 May 2025.

The Tree Team remains CCC's centre of expertise on trees, shaping policy, delivering day-to-day management, and securing external investment while working in partnership with contractors, communities, and other services.

Two posts have been particularly important in driving forward its urban forestry engagement functions:

- The Cambridge Canopy Project Officer (2019-2023), created through EU funding, which delivered community engagement, planting events, and communications.
- The Biodiversity Project Officer (2023 to date), funded as a legacy role, delivering 50% biodiversity projects and 50% urban forest engagement projects to continue and expand on the Canopy Project's work.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

Strategic and Policy Framework

Adoption of the 2016 Tree Strategy, establishing the holistic urban forestry approach.

Integration of tree policy into the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategies, aligning arboriculture with wider environmental priorities.

2024-25 restructure: CCC formally recognised the discipline of Urban Forestry by changing the manager's title from Senior Arboricultural Officer to Urban Forest Manager.

Recognition of Cambridge's leadership in urban forestry includes:

- Cambridge City Council's Excellence in Environmental Responsibility Award (2022)
- Cambridge City Council's Net Zero Award (2024)
- Nomination for APSE's Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation Initiative (2025) for pioneering use of i-Tree Eco to quantify the climate and ecosystem value of the urban forest.
- Runner up for Cambridge City Council's Net Zero Award (2025)

Alignment with Wider Council Strategies and Priorities

Cambridge's urban forestry achievements also contribute directly to wider Council strategies and corporate objectives:

Cambridge Local Plan 2018

- *Strategic Objective 6*: commits to protecting and enhancing the city's landscape setting, including the Green Belt, green corridors, multifunctional green spaces, and tree canopy cover.
- *Policy 71 (Trees)*: requires development to preserve, protect and enhance existing trees, ensure replacement planting, provide space for trees to mature, and safeguard veteran and ancient trees.

Achievements such as expanded TPO coverage and measurable canopy growth since 2008 directly deliver on these requirements.

Air Quality Action Plan 2018-2023 and Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy 2024

- Identify tree planting and green infrastructure as tools to offset emissions and reduce exposure to air pollution.

Cambridge's planting programmes and canopy expansion, combined with i-Tree Eco findings (~22 tonnes pollutants removed annually, worth ~£990,000), provide measurable estimates to these objectives.

Biodiversity Strategy 2020-2030

- Highlights the role of urban trees as habitats, corridors, and contributors to biodiversity.

Achievements such as the [DiversiTree project](#)², reinstated willow pollards, orchards, stumperies, pollinator habitats, and biosecurity measures directly support Strategy objectives.

Climate Change Strategy

- Trees are recognised as key infrastructure for delivering net zero and adapting to a changing climate.

Achievements in planting, canopy expansion, and monitoring ecosystem services (carbon storage, cooling, stormwater) demonstrate this contribution.

Corporate Priorities (2022-2027)

Achievements contribute to all four Council priorities:

1. *Responding to the climate and biodiversity emergencies* - via tree canopy growth, carbon capture, biodiversity projects.
2. *Tackling poverty and inequality* - via equitable canopy gains in deprived wards, community engagement, free tree schemes.
3. *Building new council and affordable homes* - via integrating green infrastructure and tree planting into new developments.
4. *Modernising the council* - via embedding evidence-led, cross-service working and innovation in public service delivery.

Target Operating Model (TOM)

Achievements also align with TOM principles by:

- Enabling cross-service working (e.g. planning advice, housing advice, biodiversity alignment, communications).

² <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/diversitree-project> last accessed 3/9/25

- Establishing baseline measurements through canopy data and i-Tree Eco valuations.
- Embedding fairness by addressing tree equity across wards.
- Ensuring sustainability and resilience through canopy expansion and long-term strategic frameworks.
- Enhancing customer focus with clearer web resources, accessible data, and support for residents in engaging with trees.

Cambridge Canopy Project (2019-2023)³

- Delivered: 2,384 standard trees, 250 half-standards, and 600 whips.
- 953 “Free Trees for Babies” distributed.
- 193 trees planted through the [Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign](#)⁴.
- Delivered Cambridge’s first Tiny Forest in Chesterton (600 whips).

Planting and Canopy Expansion

- Since 2016, over 5,000 new trees have been planted across streets, parks, estates, and open spaces.
- Landmark planting events included: 33 trees on Parker’s Piece, species diversity themed planting in all 14 wards, ceremonial maples on Jesus Green, and COP26-themed plantings in neighbourhoods.

³ An EU funded project under the parent umbrella climate resilience programme Nature Smart Cities across the 2 Seas <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/nature-smart-cities-across-the-2-seas-programme> (last accessed 3/9/25)

⁴ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/neighbourhood-canopy-campaign> (last accessed 3/9/25)

Tree Planting and Felling Trends

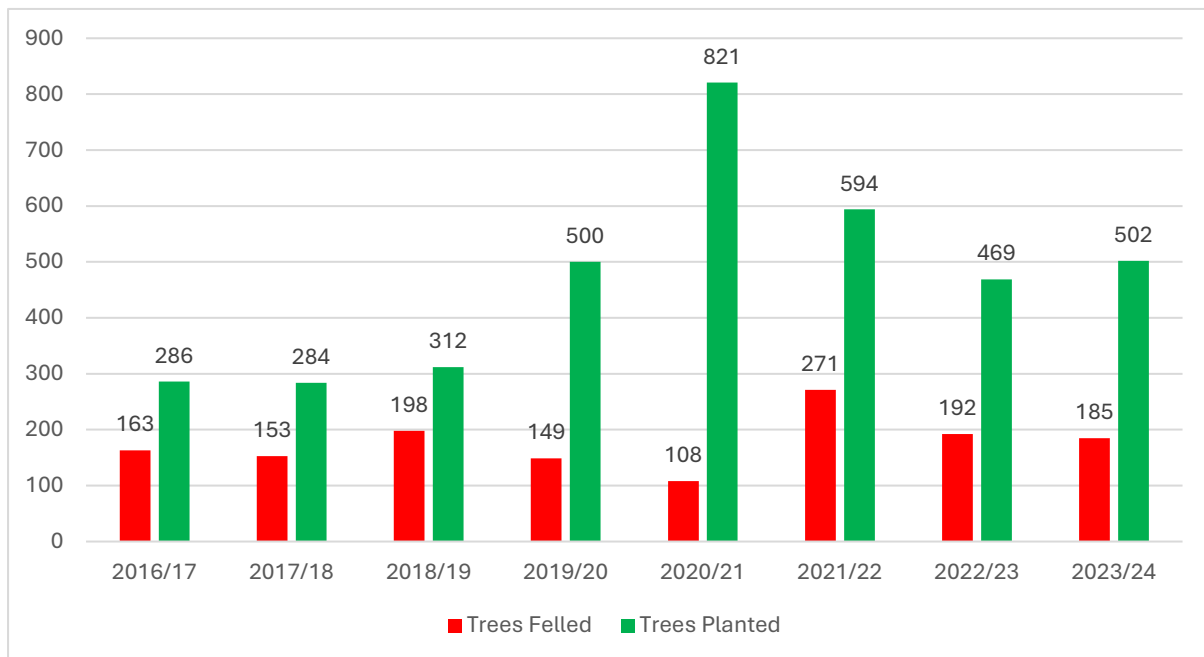


Figure 1 Chart showing the number of Council trees recorded as felled and standards planted

1,419 trees were recorded as felled with 3,768 standard⁵ sized trees planted. A net gain of 2,349 trees between 2016 and 2024, showing planting consistently outpaced felling. These figures reflect recorded Council-managed trees and do not represent total citywide canopy change.

Tree Asset Management

- Maintained an EzyTreev® inventory 30,000+ trees for management.
- Introduced systematic and proactive three-year inspection cycles to parks trees in 2016 to align with streets and communal housing lands.
- Officers inspected over 27,000 during one 3-year cycle (cycle 9: 1/4/21-31/3/24) and contractors visited over 20,000 trees in the same period.
- Delivered successive Arboricultural Frameworks:
 - 2017-2021 Framework
 - 2021-2025 Framework: Introduced a new Planting and Establishment Specification to standardise our tree planting and aftercare works.
 - 2025-2029 Framework (securing capacity through the decade).

⁵ A standard tree is defined as a tree with a single upright trunk that is clear of lower branches for a certain height, typically at least 1.8 meters

Protection

- Pre-2016: TPOs increased from 310 (1995) to ~430 (2016).
- 2016-2024: TPOs rose to 742 (73% growth since 2016).
- Tree Work Applications (TWAs): 186 in 1995 to 657 in 2023.
- 2009-2022: 388 new TPOs served, alongside multiple conservation area extensions¹.
- 2024-25 restructure: Arboricultural Planning Lead post deleted; statutory tree functions now delivered by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP), with Tree Team retaining strategic interest.

Biodiversity and Veteran Trees

- [2018 Veteran willow survey and management plan commissioned to inform the sustainable management these valuable trees.](#)⁶
- 2021 - Reinstated pollarding of riverside willows, supporting habitat and heritage landscapes, funded by the Green Recovery Fund
- DiversiTree project (2023-2026), funded by the National Lottery, celebrating and managing veteran and heritage trees.
- Expanded pollinator habitats, orchards, bee banks, and stumperies.

Engagement, Communications and Web Resources

Cambridge Canopy Project

- Established a strong urban forestry brand, through projects and planting events.

Biodiversity Project Officer (started 2023)

- Delivered resilient species planting, mulch initiatives, watering support, pollinator and cultural projects, and citizen science programmes.
- Founded the Cambridge Nature Festival, produced interpretation boards, and engaged in multiple city festivals.

⁶ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/veteran-tree-management-on-sheeps-green-and-coe-fen> (last accessed 3/9/25)

Tree for Streets

- 2019 Cambridge City Council became the first Council to sign up to the national charity [Trees for Streets](#)⁷ to engage communities to help manage tree sponsorships.

Free Trees for Babies

- The [Free Trees for Babies](#)⁸ scheme is a long-running legacy initiative, offering a free tree to commemorate the birth of a child and securing planting in residents' gardens. Between 2016/17 and 2023/24, a total of 1,843 trees were distributed, ensuring that every new child could be celebrated with a lasting contribution to Cambridge's canopy.

Digital Accessibility

- 2017 - Created dedicated and [accessible tree webpages](#)⁹, covering protected treesⁱⁱ, works consultation, tree data, and tree projects.

External funding and Investment (2019-2025)

Cambridge secured over £1.28 million in external funding.

- LATF (Local Authority Treescapes Fund) - £237,499
- UTCF (Urban Tree Challenge Fund) - £230,061
- Green Recovery Fund - ~£14,500
- National Lottery (DiversiTree) - £84,180
- CLHF (Nuns Way Microwood) - £13,875 (1,000+ whips planted)
- NSCiti2S (EU Interreg) - ~£635,000 (Cambridge Canopy Project)
- Trees for Streets - ~£68,400+

⁷ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sponsoring-new-trees> last accessed 6/1/26

⁸ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/trees-for-babies-scheme> last accessed 6/1/26

⁹ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/trees> last accessed 6/1/26

2008-2018 Canopy Change Study¹⁰

- Citywide canopy rose from 17.1% to 17.6% (+20 ha).
- 11 of 14 wards saw increases; Castle and Newnham declined.
- Deprived wards (Abbey, King's Hedges, East Chesterton) recorded the strongest gains, narrowing equity gaps.
- Gardens and protected open spaces contributed disproportionately to canopy.
- Provided Cambridge with its first robust citywide canopy changes baseline.

Canopy Cover and Ecosystem Services¹¹

- 2021 i-Tree Eco estimated canopy at 20.1% (including shrubs). This figure is not directly comparable with Proximitree canopy change studies, as it uses a different methodology
- Estimated annual benefits (i-Tree Eco):
 - 2,040 t carbon captured (£524k)
 - 88,000 t carbon stored (£22.5k)
 - 22.2 t pollutants removed (£990k)
 - 97,600 m³ stormwater runoff attenuated (£153k)
- Estimated asset valuation: ~£1.03 billion amenity value; ~£172m replacement cost.

Evidence and Data Innovation

- Live EzyTreev® inventory of 30,000+ trees.
- Proximitree datasets (2008 - 2018), enabling ward-level analysis.
- i-Tree Eco studies (2021) valuing carbon, pollution, and stormwater services.
- Ward-level canopy and land-use overlays for equity-based planting.
- DiversiTree veteran willow database along a 10km stretch of the River Cam.

Ash Dieback Monitoring (2017-2024)

- Annual monitoring survey (99 trees), started 2017.
- Recorded increasing defoliation and deadwood; two trees removed as dead.
- 2024 inventory recorded ~1,500 ash trees under management.

¹⁰ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/4uvksm30/tree-canopy-cover-in-cambridge-between-2008-and-2018.pdf> last accessed 6/1/26

¹¹ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/i-tree-eco-project> last accessed 6/1/26

Conclusion

From 2016 to 2026, Cambridge has:

- Delivered net canopy gains with planting far exceeding felling.
- Expanded protections, with TPO growth accelerating after 2016.
- Modernised management with successive frameworks and EzyTreev®.
- Protected biodiversity and veterans.
- Engaged communities through high-profile programmes and digital resources.
- Secured £1.28m+ external funding, including the planting of 1,000+ whips at Nuns Way Microwood.
- Monitored long-term threats such as ash dieback.
- Built a robust evidence base showing measurable progress.
- Aligned achievements with the Local Plan, AQAP, Biodiversity Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, Corporate Priorities, and TOM.

END

TOPIC PAPER 9 STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES AND PLANNING CONTROL

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Purpose	2
Policy Alignment	2
Associated Topic Papers.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Tree Preservation Orders	3
Exceptions.....	4
Works to Dead or Dangerous Protected Trees: Notification Requirements.....	5
Exempt Works to Highway Trees: Notification and Good Practice	5
Amenity Assessment.....	6
Proactive and strategic TPOs.....	7
Future trees to be planted	8
TPO review programme	8
Conservation Areas	8
Tree Work Applications	9
Demonstrating Good Practice in Tree Work Applications	9
Repeat and phased applications	10
Exceptions.....	10
Considerations	11
Decision Making.....	11
Development Control	12
Planning Compliance.....	14

PURPOSE

Trees in Cambridge benefit from a robust framework of legal protections administered by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP). This paper explains statutory responsibilities in relation to Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, and Tree Work Applications. It also sets out how GCSP responds to planning applications, tree work applications and enforces compliance to safeguard Cambridge's urban forest and its most valuable trees.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) under the following policies.

- P1-P4: Supporting Protect More policies through planning control to improve best practice
- PL1-PL4: Advancing the Plant More policies essential to increasing the urban forest
- E1-E4: Reinforcing Engage More policies by extending guidance to private landowners, encouraging responsible management and community participation

ASSOCIATED TOPIC PAPERS

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the UFS and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 1 Tree Asset Management and Risk
- Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance
- Topic Paper 4 Trees, Subsidence and Structural Damage
- Topic Paper 6 Governance and Resourcing
- Topic Paper 11 Tree Protection, Damage and Compensation

Together these papers highlight the importance of clear and robust planning control to a resilient urban forest.

INTRODUCTION

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (The Act) places a general duty on local planning authorities (LPA) to make adequate provision for the preservation and planting of trees in the granting of planning permission. The Act further empowers a LPA to make provision for the preservation of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity. This protection is provided in the form of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). The Act also provides a degree of protection for trees located in conservation areas.

This legislation is underlined by [The Town and Country Planning \(Tree Preservation\)\(England\) Regulations 2012](#)¹(The regulations), [National Planning Policy Framework](#)², the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, which updated the [HM Government's 25 year environment plan](#)³ under the Environment Act 2021) , [Planning Practice Guidance](#)⁴ and [The Cambridge Local Plan 2018](#)⁵.

The [Environment Act 2021](#)⁶ also introduced statutory duties on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (sections 104-106), which provide important context for the Council's responsibilities to protect and enhance trees and habitats through planning decisions. The Council's statutory responsibilities regarding the protection of trees can be separated under five headings.

TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

Tree Preservation Orders are made by a local planning authority and served to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity. A TPO prohibits the;

- cutting down
- topping
- lopping

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/605/contents> last accessed 6/1/26

²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_Deember_2024.pdf last accessed 6/1/26

³ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ab3a67840f0b65bb584297e/25-year-environment-plan.pdf> last accessed 6/1/26

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> last accessed 6/1/26

⁵ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/local-plan-2018> last accessed 6/1/26

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents> last accessed 6/1/26

- uprooting
- wilful damage or
- wilful destruction

of trees and their roots without the local planning authority's written consent. If consent is given, it can be subject to conditions which have to be followed.

A TPO does not alter maintenance responsibilities, which remain with the owners. A TPO does not authorise the LPA to require maintenance work to be carried out. However, GCSP endeavors to encourage good tree management, particularly through engagement when assessing applications for consent under a Tree Preservation Order.

Exceptions

There are exceptions to this prohibition, detailed at [Regulation 14](#)⁷ of The Regulations that include;

- dead trees and branches;
- dangerous trees and branches;
- works to comply with an Act of Parliament;
- works to prevent or abate a nuisance;
- works to necessary to implement a planning permission;
- works to fruit trees;
- works by or for statutory undertakers;
- works for highway operations;
- works by the Environment Agency and drainage bodies; and
- works for national security purposes.

TPOs may be served at anytime, following a section 211 notice, in response to a planning application, including the protection of trees agreed to be planted as part of approved landscaping, following a request from a member of the public or in response to general development pressure, for example.

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/605/regulation/14> last accessed 6/1/24

Works to Dead or Dangerous Protected Trees: Notification Requirements

Under the *Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012*, works to protected trees may be carried out without prior consent if the tree is dead or poses an immediate risk of serious harm. However, tree owners or their agents are required provide at least five working days' written notice before undertaking such works, except in cases of genuine emergency.

The purpose of this notice is to allow the LPA to:

- Confirm the tree's condition.
- Agree the scope of necessary works.
- Specify any replanting requirements, where appropriate.

In emergency situations where immediate action is unavoidable, the LPA must be notified as soon as practicable after the works, with photographic evidence or arboricultural assessment provided to justify the action taken.

It remains the responsibility of the tree owner to demonstrate that the works were strictly necessary due to the tree being dead or dangerous. Failure to give proper notice or provide sufficient evidence may result in enforcement action.

Exempt Works to Highway Trees: Notification and Good Practice

Under the *Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012*, certain works to protected highway trees may be carried out without formal consent, including:

- *Routine nuisance works*: Where branches obstruct the highway, works may proceed to the minimum extent necessary to *abate the nuisance*. This includes maintaining statutory clearances typically 5.2m above carriageways and 2.4m above footways or cycleways.
- *Dead or dangerous trees*: Where a highway tree is dead or poses an immediate risk of serious harm, works are exempt from consent. However, the Council expects at least five working days' written notice, unless the situation is an absolute emergency.

In emergencies, the LPA must be notified as soon as practicable after the works, with supporting evidence of the tree's condition.

The more serious and imminent the risk, the stronger the expectation for timely notification, ensuring urgent safety issues are addressed while maintaining oversight of significant interventions.

Good practice: Notification is encouraged in all cases where exempt works to highway trees are proposed, even when only nuisance is involved. This provides transparency, helps maintain management records and avoids disputes about the justification for works. For predictable maintenance, such as cyclical clearance pruning to maintain highway safety standards, repeat applications may be accepted for a defined period. Applications should specify the retained dimensions or clearances to be maintained. This approach reduces administrative burden for landowners, contractors and local authorities, while ensuring consistent oversight of long-term management of highway trees.

Amenity Assessment.

When assessing the suitability of serving a TPO. The LPA also considers amenity. Amenity value is not defined in The Act and the government has advised authorities to develop their own methods for assessing amenity value taking into consideration visibility, individual, collective and wider impact. Being able to assess trees in relation to the abundance of benefits they offer, not just focusing on the visual benefits, allows for more appropriate value to be attributed to trees so securing the suitable level of protection.

In accordance with Planning Practice Guidance, CCC has developed a method for assessing amenity value and public benefit and the criteria are set out below.

1. Visual

- Trees visible from a public place.
- Trees which provide significant screening between land uses.
- Trees on private land which may not be visible to the general public but significantly enhance the appearance and character internal to a site.
- Trees which are significant to the defined landscape character of an area or are of defined value to the community.

2. Individual, collective and wider impact

- The trees' size and form and suitability to its immediate location.
- The trees' future potential as an amenity.
- The trees' contribution to and relationship with the landscape.

3. Atmospheric

- Trees which are in the immediate vicinity of congested roads, abutting railways or industrial premises with gaseous emissions.
- Trees in high density residential areas where opportunities to grow trees are very limited.

4. Climate change

- Large trees or those with the potential to grow into large trees which make a greater contribution to canopy cover and have a greater impact with regard to climate change adaptation.
- Trees with canopy that cast a level of shade that can be reasonably managed in relation to the use of the site.

5. Biodiversity

- Trees which are a known habitat of a protected species.
- Trees which could be managed as veterans.
- Trees which extend or are an integral part of a city or county wildlife site.
- Trees or areas of trees which it would be appropriate to manage specifically to encourage colonisation by wildlife.

6. Historic or cultural

- Trees which commemorate an event or notable person.
- Trees which are historically part of the setting of a listed building.

7. Botanical

- Trees which are in themselves botanically rare or part of a locally significant botanical collection.

Amenity value needs to be considered in context. A medium-large tree visible to the public, in a well treed area within large gardens might contribute relatively little. However, a small tree in built-up area where canopy is limited will contribute significantly to amenity.

Proactive and strategic TPOs

In addition to responding to individual applications and notifications, the LPA may also serve TPOs proactively and strategically where this is justified to protect canopy cover

and secure long-term urban forest resilience. Examples include safeguarding important groups threatened by cumulative or incremental development, protecting trees identified through canopy mapping as high-value, and pre-emptively securing new planting where it contributes to canopy targets. The use of proactive and strategic TPOs will remain subject to statutory tests of amenity and expediency and available resources.

Future trees to be planted

Tree Preservation (England) Regulations 2012, allows TPOs to be applied to trees that are yet to be planted under a planning condition (s197 TCPA 1990). Such trees are identified in the TPO schedule with the letter “C”, and protection takes effect once the tree is planted. This ensures landscaping secured through planning is afforded long-term protection beyond the lifetime of the condition itself.

TPO review programme

CCC and GCSP will operate a rolling programme to review existing TPOs to ensure they remain accurate, enforceable and proportionate. The review will prioritise older and larger Orders, replace “area” Orders with more precise individual, group or woodland designations where appropriate, and work towards a 15-year refresh cycle, subject to resources and priorities.

CONSERVATION AREAS

Trees in a conservation area that are not protected by a TPO are protected by the provisions in section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These provisions require people to notify the LPA, using a ‘[section 211 notice](#)⁸’, 6 weeks before the proposed works is due to be carried out. The notice and the associated 6-week period gives the LPA an opportunity to consider whether the trees, with consideration of works proposed to them, are suitable for TPO.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas#Section-211-notices> last accessed 6/1/26

There are exceptions to this prohibition, detailed at [Regulation 15](#)⁹ of The Regulations.

TREE WORK APPLICATIONS

Permission to carry out work to or fell trees protected by a Cambridge TPO or located in a Cambridge conservation area is required to be submitted to [Greater Cambridge Shared Planning \(GCSP\)](#)¹⁰. This should be done via the [Planning Portal](#)¹¹ where guidance is also provided.

Application for permission to carry out works to trees protected by TPO must be submitted on the form published by the Secretary of State and include the information requested on the form, a plan identifying the subject tree(s) and location, information necessary to specify the proposed work, reasons for the proposed work and evidence to support structural damage, tree health or safety concerns, as applicable.

Demonstrating Good Practice in Tree Work Applications

Applications should demonstrate that proposed works follow recognised industry standards, notably BS 3998:2010 Tree Work - Recommendations. Submissions that align with these standards provide assurance of good practice and will normally be expected. Where deviation is proposed, clear and robust justification should be provided.

To support assessment and ensure clarity, applications should:

- Clearly specify the type of work, extent, and retained dimensions (e.g. post-pruning height and spread).
- Include timing and frequency if the work is part of a repeat or phased operation.
- Where possible, provide annotated photographs or diagrams to illustrate the proposed works and their context. This is particularly helpful for complex sites or where visual impact is a consideration.

For guidance on the types of reasons for tree works that are likely to be supported or opposed in principle (and the circumstances in which exceptions may apply),

⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/605/regulation/15> last accessed 6/1/26

¹⁰ <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/> last accessed 6/1/26

¹¹ <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/> last accessed 6/1/26

see Topic Paper 2: Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance (section “Reasons for Tree Works”).

Repeat and phased applications

Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph 071 of the Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas section) advises that, where appropriate, authorities may encourage single applications covering regularly repeated operations or phased works. CCC considers the following particularly suited:

- Crown reductions to a defined retained size (e.g. canopy dimension of 12m width and 16m height).
- Crown lifting to maintain a defined clearance (e.g. 3m above ground, or 1.5m clearance to adjacent buildings).

Repeat consents will normally be issued for a maximum period of 10 years. Applications must clearly specify the operations, retained dimensions, timing/frequency, and an end date. This reduces administrative burden for owners, contractors and the LPA, while giving certainty for long-term management.

Exceptions

There are circumstances where tree work applications are not required and these are listed above in section 1. With reference to dead and dangerous trees, while a full application is not required, a tree owner or their agent must notify the LPA if they are removing or pruning a tree that is dead or dangerous. The onus is on the tree owner to provide the necessary evidence to support tree work or removal under this exception. In the case of work urgently necessary to remove an immediate risk of serious harm, a notice should be submitted as soon as practicable after the works become necessary and in any other case at least five working days prior to the date on which the works are to be commenced. Notices can be served via the [online form](#)¹².

¹²<https://forms.cambridge.gov.uk/APPLYFOREXEMPTIONONPROTECTEDTREE/launch> last accessed 6/1/26

Considerations

Trees are living and therefore dynamic organisms that cannot be retained indefinitely. In addition to natural circumstances that result in tree loss, problems can arise that require tree removal or pruning. The arboricultural landscape is therefore ever changing, albeit slowly, and not protectable in the same way as a listed building for example. Notwithstanding this, and depending on their location, size, age and condition, the value of some trees to amenity is sufficient that the benefits they offer outweigh the desires of landowners.

When considering the merits of a tree work application or section 211 notice, GCSP will balance the amenity value of a tree, the impact the proposed work will have on its amenity value and the justification submitted. Generally, detrimental works to trees of value will be resisted, without sufficient justification. Typically, the lower the amenity value, the lower the justification for works needs to be. The below categories provide useful definitions of amenity value levels.

- **Trees of limited amenity value** (for example, young trees, those with structural defects, or those nearing the end of their safe useful life) will require less detailed evidence to justify intervention.
- **Trees of some amenity value** (for example, healthy street or garden trees making a positive but not distinctive contribution to the local environment) will require a reasonable level of evidence, including monitoring and engineering reports, before removal or significant works will be considered.
- **Trees of special amenity value** will require robust evidence that clearly demonstrates the causal link between the tree and the alleged damage, alongside an assessment of alternatives.
- **Trees of outstanding amenity value** will require the most rigorous and comprehensive evidence before removal or significant works will be considered.

Using this approach ensures consistent decision-making.

GCSP will consider these criteria when assessing both the suitability of protection and /or the prohibition of works in order to balance detriment to the public against the needs or desires of a landowner.

Decision Making

When considering a TPO application, GCSP will assess the impact of the proposal on public amenity and the justification submitted.

An application can be refused, permitted or permitted subject to conditions. Appeals against decisions to refuse consent or impose conditions can be made to the Secretary of State and details on how to do this are provided in decision notices.

Decisions permitting works are valid for 2 years from the date of the decision unless it is agreed that works may be repeated cyclically, in which case the decision will include a description of the repeatable works, the frequency of cycle and an end date

In certain circumstances, [compensation may be payable by the LPA](#)¹³ for loss or damage which results from the authority refusing consent or granting consent with conditions. However, there are strict criteria and limitations on what compensation may be payable.

When considering a section 211 notice, GCSP will again assess the impact of the proposal on public amenity and the justification submitted. However, a council cannot permit or refuse works detailed a section 211 notice. If the works proposed will have detrimental impact on amenity, the suitability of a TPO will be considered. Unless a TPO is warranted and therefore served, works detailed in a section 211 notice may be actioned after 6 weeks or on receipt of a decision providing consent. Work permitted cannot be conditioned but can include informatives to help maintain and enhance the amenity provided by trees.

While a section 211 notice does not have to take any particular form, it is recommended that they are made in the same way as a TPO application.

A section 211 notice must identify and locate the subject trees, describe, accurately, the work proposed and include the date it is submitted. A plan is not mandatory but is helpful. Evidence is not required to support structural damage, health or safety but without the submission of evidence, the removal of valuable trees will be resisted.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

CCC's planning service is managed by GCSP. In addition to managing TPOs, trees in conservation areas and tree work applications/notifications, GCSP are responsible for processing and determining planning applications for CCC. As part of the process the Built and Natural Environment team is consulted on applications with arboricultural interests.

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas#Compensating-for-loss-or-damage> last accessed 6/1/26

Any development or redevelopment of a site must consider the value of any trees potentially influenced and, where appropriate, make provision for the sustainable retention of trees of value and space for replacement/new planting on site. Many of the benefits associated with tree canopy are provided local to the trees themselves, mitigating tree losses or making provision for new tree planting therefore is not normally appropriate off site.

An applicant should ensure that tree constraints information is established at an early stage of proposed development to ensure trees of value inform design layouts. Relative to development, trees are very long-lived organisms and if they are to make a meaningful contribution to amenity, they need time to reach maturity. Development that does not respect existing trees of value or prevents replacement trees the time and space needed to reach their potential is not arboriculturally sustainable. For replacement trees to be allowed to reach their potential it is essential that provision is made for strategic planting of large trees in locations that can be protected into the future during future redevelopment of a site.

Arboricultural assessment and submissions should be made in accordance with the recommendations set out BS 5837 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction- Recommendations.

Planning applications should be supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment that evaluates the direct and indirect effects of the proposed development and, where necessary, recommends mitigation. The assessment should indicate any tree loss required and any potential for retained trees to be damaged or restricted in the future. Consideration should also be given to buildability and the impact of new access arrangements, utilities, movement around the site, adequate working space and provision for the storage of materials.

Submitted either as part of a planning application or an application to discharge condition, an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) is a site-specific tree protection methodology for the implementation of any aspect of a development that has the potential to result in the loss of or damage to a tree to be retained. It is comprised of a set of definitive statements, not recommendations, that are not open to interpretation, clearly explaining precisely how trees will be protected and how demolition, deliveries, storage and construction activities will be managed to avoid material damage to trees. It should not allow works/activity not specifically approved. The AMS should be phased in line with the construction timetable and specify the extent of work that is covered. The retained arboriculturalist needs to be provided with all necessary details to allow the completion of an AMS that is fit for purpose and enforceable. Seeking the approval of an AMS or discharge of tree protection conditions should not be pursued without all pertinent construction details and therefore might not be possible without the involvement of main contractors.

PLANNING COMPLIANCE

The removal of, or works to trees protected by TPO, conservation area or planning condition, without the required permission, is a breach of planning control. Any breach of planning control should be reported to the planning compliance team to investigate via the [online form](#)¹⁴.

GCSP will initially aim to resolve breaches, through negotiation, and discussion. However, where unauthorised works have caused significant harm, or where there is evidence of deliberate or repeat offences, formal enforcement action will be pursued. This may include:

- Serving a Tree Replacement Notice (TRN);
- Issuing a Breach of Condition Notice;
- Prosecution through the courts (fines up to £20,000 in Magistrates' Court or unlimited in Crown Court).

Decisions will follow the GCSP's Enforcement Policy, weighing proportionality, harm and public interest.

This Topic Paper explains how statutory tree protections and planning controls are applied in Cambridge to safeguard trees of public value. It supports transparent, proportionate and consistent decision-making, balancing private interests with the long-term public benefits provided by the urban forest.

END

¹⁴ <https://forms.scams.gov.uk/REPORTABREACHOFPLANNINGCONTROL/launch>
last accessed 6/1/26

TOPIC PAPER 10 CAMBRIDGE'S URBAN FOREST - BASELINE AND CHANGE

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Purpose.....	1
Policy Alignment.....	2
Associated Topic Papers	2
Introduction	2
Canopy Cover	3
Species Composition.....	3
Age and Size Structure	3
Spatial Distribution [Dr T Jackson]	4
Ecosystem Services (i-Tree Eco® 2020-21)	4
Distribution of Canopy by Land Use.....	4
Residential and Gardens [Dr T Jackson]	4
Institutional / College Land	4
Council-Managed Land (Parks, Housing, Highways) [Dr T Jackson].....	5
Industrial and Commercial Land	5
Agricultural / Urban Fringe.....	5
Trends and Change.....	5
Implications	6
References.....	6

PURPOSE

Understanding Cambridge's urban forest today is essential to planning for its future. This paper sets out the current evidence on canopy cover, species composition, age structure, and spatial distribution across the city. It also reviews recent trends and changes, providing the baseline against which future progress will be measured.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) under the following policies.

- PL1-PL4: Advancing the Plant More policies essential to increasing canopy and species and structural diversity, distributed fairly across the city
- E1-E4: Reinforcing Engage More policies, encouraging private landowner to bolster their contribution to the urban forest

ASSOCIATED TOPIC PAPERS

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the UFS and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance
- Topic Paper 5 Public Engagement and Partnerships
- Topic Paper 6 Governance and Resourcing
- Topic Paper 7 Climate Change and Resilience

Together these papers highlight the importance of planning for a future, larger and more resilient urban forest.

INTRODUCTION

Cambridge's urban forest, the trees and shrubs that grow across public and private land, is a vital part of the city's character and environmental resilience. It provides shade, and contributes to improved air quality, stored carbon, flood risk mitigation, and enhanced biodiversity.

To manage this resource effectively, a clear evidence base is needed. Over the past 15 years, a series of studies have been undertaken, including the ADAS Tree Audit (2013), the Dr T Jackson's 2008-2018 canopy cover analysis and the i-Tree Eco® survey (2020-21). Together with the Council's own analysis of its tree maintenance database (Ezytreev®), these provide a comprehensive baseline of structure, composition, and change.

CANOPY COVER

- 2008: 17.1% baseline [ADAS].
- 2018: 17.6% (slight increase, equivalent to ~20 hectares) [Dr T Jackson].
- 2019 [i-Tree Eco® sample]: 20.1% (trees and shrubs combined). This i-Tree Eco® figure is not directly comparable with the 2008 & 2018 canopy change studies, as it uses a different methodology and includes both trees and shrubs

Ward-level data shows the highest canopy in Newnham (21.2%) and West Chesterton (21.1%), and lowest in Cherry Hinton (13.1%) and Abbey (14.3%) [Dr T Jackson].

For consistency, the UFS uses canopy change studies as the primary measure of progress over time

SPECIES COMPOSITION

- ADAS 2013: *Fraxinus* (Ash) over 20% of population; *Rosaceae* (*Prunus*) 28%.
- Ash dieback presents a high risk of mortality, with national projections indicating potential losses of up to 95%¹
- i-Tree Eco® (2020–21): 105 species, 49 genera. Most common: *Crataegus* (thorn) (12.5%), *Prunus* (cherry, apple, *sorbus*) (11.1%), *Acer* (maple) (10.6%); most common species: hawthorn (11%)
- Council-managed stock differs: *Prunus* (14%), *Acer* (12%), *Tilia*, *Betula*, *Sorbus* (8% each).

AGE AND SIZE STRUCTURE

- ADAS 2013: 75% of trees 2.5-10m tall; <2% over 20m.
- 2018 study: gains from medium trees maturing; losses in Castle due to development.
- i-Tree Eco®: 49.5% of trees 15-45 cm DBH; only 4.2% over 75 cm

¹ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/ash-dieback-impact/> last accessed 16/10/25

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION [DR T JACKSON]

- Higher canopy in the west (Newnham, Castle, West Chesterton).
- Lower canopy in the east (Abbey, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge).
- Canopy ownership: 74.1% private/other, 16.3% Council, 9.6% highways

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (I-TREE ECO® 2020-21)

- Estimated carbon storage: 88,000 tonnes (£22.5m).
- Estimated carbon sequestration (annual): 2,040 tonnes (£524k).
- Estimated air pollution removal: 22.2 tonnes annually (£990k).
- Estimated avoided runoff: 97,600 m³ annually (£153k).
- Indicative amenity value (CAVAT): £1.03 billion.
- Estimated replacement cost: £172 million.

DISTRIBUTION OF CANOPY BY LAND USE

Residential and Gardens [Dr T Jackson]

- Gardens contribute disproportionately high canopy cover relative to their area.
- Between 2008-2018, even as garden space shrank due to densification, canopy in gardens increased in many wards (notably Romsey).
- This shows private gardens are a key part of the urban forest, especially in wards with low Council land. This reinforces the importance of engagement with private landowners in maintaining and expanding canopy cover.

Institutional / College Land

- ADAS (2013) found the largest trees and highest canopy density concentrated on college and institutional land (often in western Cambridge) .
- i-Tree Eco® confirms that Newnham and Castle, which have substantial college land, still hold the highest canopy cover (~21%).

Council-Managed Land (Parks, Housing, Highways)

[Dr T Jackson]

- Council land makes up only 13.5% of land area but supports 16.3% of canopy cover.
- Parks and protected open spaces contain a significant share of large trees, particularly in lower canopy wards, helping balance inequity.
- Highways support 9.6% of canopy which are crucial for shade and amenity but limited in number compared to private gardens.

Industrial and Commercial Land

- ADAS (2013) highlighted that industrial areas had low tree numbers and canopy, identifying them as priority planting opportunities.
- More recent studies continue to show lower canopy in eastern industrial wards (e.g. Abbey, Cherry Hinton). [Dr T Jackson]

Agricultural / Urban Fringe

- The i-Tree Eco® report recorded 16.3% of the city's land as agricultural, but these areas tend to have low canopy density compared to residential or institutional land
- Hedgerows and shelterbelts contribute, but they are not equivalent to dense canopy. [i-Tree Eco®]
- Large areas of remnant agricultural land have been urbanised.

TRENDS AND CHANGE

- Net increase in canopy since 2008 (17.1% to 17.6%).
- Ward-level variations - Romsey gained canopy; Castle and Newnham lost canopy.
- Equity - canopy increased in deprived areas between 2008 & 2018, reducing disparities.
- Risks - Ash dieback (ash has been estimated at 22% of Cambridge's tree population)[ADAS 2013]; recent temperature extremes highlight climate pressures (In 2019 UK's hottest temperature, 38.7°C, was recorded in

Cambridge but in 2022 that record was broken with 39.9°C recorded at Cambridge University Botanic Gardens².)

IMPLICATIONS

- Based on canopy change studies, canopy cover remains below the 20% target and is unevenly distributed across the city..
- Private land dominates, making engagement essential.
- Species diversity is relatively high, but over reliance on Rosaceae and ash is a risk.
- Few large trees - need to protect and establish future cohorts.
- Ecosystem service valuation underlines the economic and social case for investment.
- Council and protected open space play a disproportionately important role in lower-canopy wards, helping offset the loss of large gardens and equity issues.

This baseline highlights both progress made and structural constraints, reinforcing the need for long-term, partnership-based approaches to growing Cambridge's urban forest

REFERENCES

Trees - Cambridge City Council <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/trees> last accessed 6/1/26

Tree data - Cambridge City Council <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/tree-data> last accessed 6/1/26

Dr T Jackson <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/4uvksm30/tree-canopy-cover-in-cambridge-between-2008-and-2018.pdf> last accessed 6/1/26

ADAS 2013 <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/3257/analysis-and-interpretation-of-tree-audit-data.pdf> last accessed 6/1/26

² <https://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/how-the-weather-is-recorded-at-cubg/> last accessed 16/10/25

i-Tree Eco <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/to0h50xn/i-tree-eco-project-report.pdf> last accessed 6/1/26

END

DRAFT

TOPIC PAPER 11 TREE DAMAGE AND COMPENSATION

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Purpose.....	1
Policy alignment.....	2
Associated Topic Papers	2
Private Trees	2
Public Trees	3
Damage.....	3
Considerations	4
Enforcement and Prosecution.....	5
Reporting Damage	6
Valuation and Cost Recovery	6
The Polluter Pays Principle	7

PURPOSE

The urban forest is a public asset and protecting it from harm is a core responsibility of the Council and its partner services. This paper sets out how damage to trees is addressed, including unauthorised works, vandalism, and harm caused by third parties. It explains the legal framework for enforcement and prosecution, the use of valuation tools such as [CAVAT](https://ltoa.org.uk/resources/cavat)¹ to establish compensation, and how Cambridge City Council (CCC) and partner services seek to deter damage while recovering costs where appropriate.

The paper deals with damage to trees. Issues relating to damage from trees (such as subsidence and structural impacts) are addressed separately in Topic Paper 4.

¹ <https://ltoa.org.uk/resources/cavat> last accessed 6/1/26

POLICY ALIGNMENT

This paper supports implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) under the following policies.

- P1, P3, P6: Supporting Protect More policies through planning control to improve best practice
- E1: Utilising the Engage More policy partnering with other services to achieve reasonable and proportionate outcomes.

ASSOCIATED TOPIC PAPERS

The paper is part of a series, underpinning the delivery of the UFS and can be read in conjunction with the following papers.

- Topic Paper 1 Tree Asset Management and Risk
- Topic Paper 2 Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance
- Topic Paper 4 Subsidence and Structural Damage
- Topic Paper 9 Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control

Together these papers provide guidance on good practice, how damage severity is assessed and the options available when breaches occur.

PRIVATE TREES

Trees on private land can be protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), Conservation Area designation, and/or planning permission condition, all of which are managed by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Cambridge City Council (CCC) is the LPA, but statutory planning duties are exercised by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) service.

A TPO prohibits works to protected trees without written consent from the LPA. In a Conservation Area it is an offence to carry out work to a tree without first notifying the LPA. Planning conditions can also prohibit specific tree works or construction works within the vicinity of trees (see Topic Paper 9).

In order to obtain permission to work on a protected tree, a tree work application must be submitted to GCSP, or details of works must be included within a planning application submission. The removal of, or works to, trees protected by a TPO,

Conservation Area, or planning condition without the required permission constitutes a breach of planning control, and the LPA has the power to enforce against such actions.

Damage to trees protected by a planning condition (for example through excavation, compaction, or unauthorised pruning during development) is also considered a breach of planning control. In such cases the LPA may require remedial action or replacement and/or pursue enforcement action including formal notices and fines. Acts of vandalism to private trees not protected by a TPO, Conservation Area, or planning conditions are a civil matter; the LPA has no authority to act.

PUBLIC TREES

Trees on public land are the responsibility of CCC or Cambridgeshire County Council. This includes trees on land that is tenanted or leased out (for example tenanted housing gardens, allotments, or commercial leased sites). Although the land may be occupied by others, CCC retains ownership of the trees and remains responsible for their long-term management and legal protection.

Tenants and leaseholders are not normally permitted to carry out tree works without consent. Any unauthorised works may be treated as a breach of tenancy or lease conditions in addition to potential enforcement under planning or tree protection legislation.

Unauthorised works to and removal of council-owned trees constitute vandalism and may be treated as criminal damage.

Incidences of vandalism to council-owned trees in Cambridge are rare, but young trees can be vulnerable to anti-social behaviour. Allowing dogs to cause damage to trees may also constitute an act of vandalism. CCC aims to deter vandalism, but where it occurs damage will be corrected as soon as practical and, where appropriate, compensation will be sought either through negotiation or prosecution.

DAMAGE

Damage to trees is the act of physical harm that impairs the tree's value. Value can be considered aesthetic, functional, or ecological.

Trees can be damaged intentionally, accidentally, or through insufficient consideration. Any incident that exposes woody tissue above or below ground is a

form of damage that can be detrimental to a tree in the short or long term. Damage may also allow entry of pathogens or activate latent pathogens or organisms.

While trees can compartmentalise decay, severe or repeated pruning impairs function and structural integrity. Roots are particularly critical; below-ground damage is often more serious than canopy damage because it compromises stability and long-term health.

Indirect damage can also occur through soil compaction, toxic materials, or altered water availability. Avoiding material damage is therefore essential to sustaining tree health and a resilient urban forest.

Pruning damage is minimised by adherence to best practice. Where trees are protected, applications allow the LPA to balance need against impact. Pruning work should always be the minimum required to achieve the necessary outcome and carried out in accordance with [BS3998:2010](#)² (as amended) by suitably qualified operatives.

On development sites, consideration is given to the potential for damage through construction activity. Guidance is set out in [BS5837:2012](#)³ (as amended), and where risks are identified an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) must be submitted and approved, with adherence secured through planning conditions.

Highway trees and private trees close to highways can be damaged by large vehicles, verge compaction from unauthorised parking, service excavations, crossovers, and new road layouts. Young trees are more susceptible to vandalism. CCC seeks to reduce risks through cyclical management, planting larger and more resilient stock, installing guards where appropriate, regulating applications to work on Council trees, and engagement with the public, partners, and utility companies.

CONSIDERATIONS

When assessing unauthorised works or vandalism, CCC and GCSP will consider:

2

<https://landingpage.bsigroup.com/LandingPage/Standard?UPI=00000000003008996>
0 last accessed 6/1/26

3

<https://landingpage.bsigroup.com/LandingPage/Standard?UPI=00000000003021364>
2 last accessed 6/1/26

- **Visibility:** A prominent tree in a front garden or street offers higher amenity than one in a secluded location. Larger trees, or those with potential to grow large, are more significant.
- **Health:** Tree health affects longevity, amenity, and ecosystem service delivery.
- **Life Expectancy:** Trees with longer expected life spans offer greater cumulative benefit.
- **Impact:** The Council must show that its response is proportionate. Minor works in secluded locations may have little public impact, whereas excavation severing major roots of a prominent street tree may represent a significant loss of amenity.
-

ENFORCEMENT AND PROSECUTION

The removal of, or unauthorised works to, protected trees is a breach of planning control. Unauthorised works to council trees are acts of vandalism and may amount to criminal damage:

- Under section 206 of the [Town and Country Planning Act 1990](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents)⁴, landowners have a duty to replace protected trees that are removed or destroyed without consent.
- Sections 207-209 empower the LPA to serve a replacement notice and recover costs if not complied with.
- Section 210 makes contravention of a TPO an offence. Fines are up to £20,000 in magistrates' court, or unlimited in Crown Court.
- Breaches of planning conditions (e.g. tree protection measures) may trigger enforcement notices, stop notices, or breach of condition notices, with unlimited fines on conviction.

Wilful or negligent damage to council trees is criminal damage and may be treated as anti-social behaviour.

Formal enforcement action is discretionary. Consideration will be given to legislation, applications/notifications, planning conditions, development plan policies, and public interest before proceeding. Each case is assessed on its merits. Persistent or severe vandalism may also be addressed under Anti-Social Behaviour legislation in partnership with enforcement colleagues.

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents> last accessed 5/1/26

REPORTING DAMAGE

The effectiveness of enforcement depends on timely and accurate reporting of incidents. Anyone who witnesses or discovers tree damage should report it promptly through the following pathways:

- For protected private trees (Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, or planning conditions): report to the GCSP Compliance Team, who are responsible for investigating breaches of planning control. Reports can be submitted through the planning enforcement portal.
- For publicly owned trees (in the care of CCC or Cambridgeshire County Council): report via the Cambridge City Council Customer Service Centre (phone, email, or online reporting forms), who will forward details to the Tree Team.
- For cases of criminal damage (wilful vandalism or felling without consent): report to the police as well as the council, as such acts may constitute criminal damage or anti-social behaviour.

Reports should include as much detail as possible. The exact location, a description of the tree, the type of damage, date and time observed, and where available, any identifying information about those responsible. Photographs are particularly valuable to support enforcement and compensation claims.

VALUATION AND COST RECOVERY

When unauthorised works or damage occur, the recovery of costs will be sought through a combination of:

Amenity valuation using CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees). This nationally recognised system calculates a tree's asset value in monetary terms. It has two approaches: the Full Method, which provides a detailed valuation for individual high-value specimens, and the Quick Method, which enables consistent valuation of groups of trees. CAVAT is the Council's preferred method of establishing amenity value for the purposes of compensation, but this does not preclude the use of alternative recognised approaches where appropriate.

Recovery may include direct replacement or remedial costs, including the cost of planting a replacement tree of suitable size and species, carrying out remedial works, and the officer time required to investigate, administer, and supervise those works.

The rationale for seeking both amenity value (via CAVAT or other recognised systems) and direct costs is that CAVAT reflects the public amenity lost, while replacement and remedial costs ensure the asset can be practically restored and that resources expended are recovered. Together, they provide a fair and proportionate basis for compensation that recognises both community benefit and actual expenditure.

Compensation recovered will be reinvested directly into the urban forest, recharging the costs of remedial work and officer time, planting replacements, and offsetting the lost amenity value of the damaged tree(s). This ensures the community continues to benefit from a healthy, resilient tree stock and that the principle of the polluter pays is applied.

THE POLLUTER PAYS PRINCIPLE

The polluter pays principle is an established principle of environmental law and policy. It is embedded in UK environmental legislation, including the [Environment Act 2021](#)⁵.

In the context of trees, this means that anyone who causes damage to Council-owned or protected trees may be required to:

- Pay compensation reflecting the loss of amenity value (normally assessed using CAVAT or other recognised valuation systems);
- Cover the direct costs of replacement planting or remedial works; and
- Meet the administrative and officer costs involved in enforcement and restoration.

This ensures that the community is not left to bear the cost of tree damage, and that public assets are protected in line with the principle of the polluter pays.

The application of this principle will always be proportionate to the scale and impact of the damage caused.

This Topic Paper sets out a clear, proportionate and transparent approach to addressing damage to trees. It supports deterrence, recovery of costs and

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents> last accessed 6/1/25

reinvestment in the urban forest, while ensuring that enforcement action remains fair, evidence-based and in the public interest.

END

DRAFT

TOPIC PAPER 12 GROWING CAMBRIDGE'S TREE CANOPY

V4.2 SCRUTINY DRAFT

CONTENTS

Summary	1
What is canopy cover and why use it?	2
Where we are now	2
How we measure canopy	2
What the 20% by 2050 target means	2
Why not 25% by 2050 or 20% by 2030?	3
The most effective actions.....	3
Planting vs. keeping what we've got.....	3
How we will track progress.....	4
What residents and partners can do	4

SUMMARY

- **Why canopy, not tree counts?** What matters is the leafy cover over our streets and spaces. A few big trees can cool and shelter an area more than many small ones.
- **Where we are:** Cambridge's latest mapping point is 17.6% canopy (2018). From 2008 to 2018 we gained 0.5 percentage points¹ (pp) about 20 hectares of extra canopy.
- **Our target:** 20% by 2050 means adding ~+2.4 pp - roughly 98 hectares of new canopy in total (around 140 football pitches²), or about 4 hectares per year.

¹ Percentage points (pp) show the absolute change between two percentages. For example 10% - 12% = +2 pp), while percent (%) shows the relative change (the same change is a +20% increase).

² A standard football pitch is about 0.7 ha

WHAT IS CANOPY COVER AND WHY USE IT?

Canopy cover is the share of land that sits under the spread of tree crowns. It tells us where shade, cooling, rain capture and habitat are happening. Counting trees alone can mislead: one large tree can do the work of many saplings.

Rule of thumb for Cambridge: City area ~ 4,070 ha - 1 percentage point (pp) of canopy ~ 40.7 ha.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

- **2018:** 17.6% canopy (latest consistent mapping point).
- **Change since 2008:** +0.5 pp over ~10 years ~ 20 ha total (about 29 football pitches).

This tells us we can grow canopy, but to meet future goals we need to do a little more, a little faster.

HOW WE MEASURE CANOPY

- **ProximiTree™:** aerial canopy mapping (our headline series) uses high-resolution aerial imagery to map tree cover across the whole city. It gives % canopy by ward and land-use. Latest consistent point, 2018 = 17.6%. We use this to track the target so each update compares like-with-like.
- **i-Tree Eco (2021 field survey):** On the ground sample plots used to estimate the benefits trees provide (cooling, carbon, pollution removal). It produced a higher canopy percentage (~20.1%) because it uses a different, sample-based method. We cite Eco for benefits and not to reset the headline trend.
- **ADAS (2013 analysis and scenarios):** Earlier modelling that used the 2008 baseline to explore how much planting might lift canopy by about 2% (~ 80 ha) over time. It assumed typical planting losses (around a quarter over the long term) and tested where planting would work best (by ward and land-use). Useful for scale of effort, but today we put more weight on protecting big trees and growing existing crowns, not just tree counts.

In short, we track progress with one consistent mapping series; use i-Tree to explain benefits; use ADAS style numbers only as illustrative context or supporting evidence.

WHAT THE 20% BY 2050 TARGET MEANS

From 17.6% - 20% is +2.4 pp. That equals ~97.7 ha of extra canopy citywide. Spread over 25 years, that's ~3.9 ha each year or about 5-6 football pitches of new canopy every year.

WHY NOT 25% BY 2050 OR 20% BY 2030?

- 25% by 2050 would need about 12 ha per year (roughly 18 pitches/year) - a very big step up, and unlikely without major land use changes and large-scale private action.
- 20% by 2030 would need about 19-20 ha per year (around 28 pitches/year) - far beyond what tree growth and delivery capacity can realistically achieve in time.

So, 20% by 2050 is challenging but **achievable**, if we focus on the most effective actions.

THE MOST EFFECTIVE ACTIONS

1. **Protect big trees:** Avoid losing mature trees. One removal can wipe out hundreds of m² of canopy that would take decades to replace.
2. **Help existing trees grow:** Good plant health care and prune with canopy in mind. Small growth on a big crown adds a lot of extra shade.
3. **Mobilise private land:** Around three quarters of the city's canopy is not on Council land. Support homeowners, colleges, schools and businesses to keep trees, let them mature, and plant where space allows.
4. **Plant for canopy, not just numbers:** Fewer, better designed sites beat many poor ones. Where we plant provide enough soil, choose species that can form a large crown, and fund aftercare.
5. **Allow natural regeneration:** In nature reserves, woodlands, isolated areas in our parks, open spaces and river margins, protect promising self-sets so they grow into future trees at low cost.

PLANTING VS. KEEPING WHAT WE'VE GOT

- **Keeping a big tree:** keeps a large, working 'umbrella' over people and places right now.
- **Planting a new tree:** is essential for the future, but it can take 20-40 years before it provides similar shade. That's why we do both, keep the canopy we have, and plant smartly for tomorrow.
 - For example a mature street or park tree with a crown radius ~8 m, has a crown diameter ~16 m and a height of around 15-22 m and a trunk diameter of ~60-80 cm, shades about 200 m².
 - Compared with a young established tree with a crown radius ~1-2 m, with a crown diameter 2-4 m, height of ~4-6 m and trunk diameter ~10-20 cm, shades ~3-12 m². Ten such trees together provide ~30-120 m² and only after several growing seasons.

Numbers vary by species and pruning, but the relative difference holds: one large crown usually outperforms many small ones for decades. Protecting the big one usually gives more benefit, more quickly.

HOW WE WILL TRACK PROGRESS

We will use a consistent mapping method over time, so progress is comparable. Other surveys (like i-Tree Eco) help describe benefits, but the headline trend will stick to one method (ProximiTree™) for clarity.

We check canopy change every 10 years. This rhythm is practical and affordable for us to deliver, and it smooths out small year to year differences. Longer cycles years can slow course correction and would fall outside of the strategies lifetime. 10 years is clear enough to guide decisions and deliverable with our resources.

WHAT RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS CAN DO

- Keep the trees you have where safe to do so; ask for advice before removing.
- Plant a tree, give it space and care (especially the first three summers).
- Reduce hard surfacing around trees; use mulch where you can.

This page is intentionally left blank

Project: Urban Forest Strategy Draft

Date: 04-Sep-25

Your Name: Matthew Magrath

1. IMPACT ON CARBON EMISSIONS (MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE)			CLIMATE CHANGE RATING: <i>Use drop down list</i>	WILL THE PROJECT MOVE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL CLOSER TO THE OBJECTIVE OF BEING NET ZERO CARBON BY 2030? <i>Use drop down list</i>	WILL THE PROJECT MOVE THE CITY CLOSER TO THE OBJECTIVE OF A NET ZERO CARBON CAMBRIDGE BY 2030? <i>Use drop down list</i>	PLEASE DETAIL HERE THE ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN TO AVOID, MITIGATE OR COMPENSATE FOR THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND MAXIMISE POSITIVE IMPACTS?	HAS A NET ZERO CARBON OPTION BEEN CONSIDERED? PLEASE PROVIDE DETAILS.
1	ENERGY USE	Positive Impact: Energy use will be reduced or renewable energy will be used	Medium Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: - Reducing demand for energy - Specifying energy efficiency measures (e.g. insulation, low energy lighting) - Generating renewable energy (e.g. heat pumps, solar photovoltaic panels)	Trees provide shading, reduce energy demand, and sequester and store carbon.
		Nil Impact: No extra energy use is involved					
		Negative Impact: More energy (gas and/or electricity) will be consumed (by CCC or others)					
2	WASTE GENERATION	Positive Impact: Less waste will be generated OR amount of waste that is reused/ recycled will be increased	Nil	No	No	Consider: - Will resources be reduced or reused? - Will you use recycled goods? - Will recycling facilities be increased?	There is no direct, other than wood waste which is recycled by our contractors. Indirectly, pollution will be ameliorated through improved air quality, as trees intercept particulates and absorb pollutants. Non-potable stormwater will be captured and stored by trees and their root systems, reducing the volume entering the drainage network for treatment and lowering associated carbon and energy costs.
		Nil Impact: No waste will be generated					
		Negative Impact: More waste will be generated (by CCC or others)					
3	USE OF TRANSPORT	Positive Impact: The use of transport and/or of fossil fuel-based transport will be reduced	Medium Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: - Will you purchase an electric vehicle? - Will you specify the use of public transport? - How will you reduce the need to travel or transport goods?	Reduced reliance on vehicles through shading and increased active travel
		Nil Impact: No extra transport will be necessary					
		Negative Impact: CCC or others will need to travel more OR transport goods more often/ further					
4	SUSTAINABLE FOOD	Positive Impact: Food will be locally grown and/ or meat-free	Nil	No	No	Consider: - Use of locally grown/ produced food - Reducing use of imported food - Reducing use of meat	Not directly relevant to food, but indirect benefit through community orchards.
		Nil Impact: No change in supply of food					
		Negative Impact: Food will travel long distances and include meat.					
2. IMPACT ON RESILIENCE (ADAPTATION) TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE							
HOW WILL THIS PROJECT/PROPOSAL AFFECT THE FOLLOWING KEY AREAS :			CLIMATE CHANGE RATING: <i>Use drop down list</i>	WILL THE PROJECT HELP CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL TO BE MORE RESILIENT TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE? <i>Use drop down list</i>	WILL THE PROJECT HELP CAMBRIDGE TO BE MORE RESILIENT TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE? <i>Use drop down list</i>	PLEASE DETAIL HERE THE ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN TO AVOID, MITIGATE OR COMPENSATE FOR THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND MAXIMISE POSITIVE IMPACTS?	HAS A NET ZERO CARBON OPTION BEEN CONSIDERED? PLEASE PROVIDE DETAILS.
5	HEATWAVES	Positive Impact: Increased/ improved shade & natural ventilation	High Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: Building orientation and installing measures such as Brise Soleil to reduce heat gain and plant hydration methods.	Significant contribution to shading, reducing overheating impacts.
		Nil Impact: No impact on existing levels of shade & ventilation					
		Negative Impact: Lack of or reduced shade (e.g. from trees or buildings) & natural ventilation					
6	WATER AVAILABILITY	Positive Impact: Provision made for an enhancement of water efficiency measures to minimise the impact on water resource availability	Nil	No	No	Consider: Managing water use efficiently, installing measures to use less water such as low water use taps, planting drought resistant plants and using rainwater for irrigation.	No direct benefits. Indirectly, urban cooling from trees reduces local heat stress and evaporation, helping conserve water resources while providing shade and comfort.
		Nil Impact: Levels of water use will not be changed					
		Negative Impact: Water use will increase and/or no provision made for water management = Negative Impact					
7	FLOODING	Positive Impact: Sustainable drainage measures incorporated, positive steps to reduce & manage flood risk	Low Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: The installation of measures to reduce the speed and increase the absorption of rainwater e.g. green roofs, SuDS, permeable paving etc. and alternative arrangements (business continuity)	Trees reduce runoff, improve infiltration, and contribute to SuDS.
		Nil Impact: Levels of surface water run-off & flood risk are not affected					
		Negative Impact: Levels of surface water run-off will increase, no management of flood risk					
8	HIGH WINDS / STORMS	Positive Impact: Exposure to higher wind speeds is being actively managed & reduced	Low Positive	Yes	Yes	Consider: the need to install stabilisation measures and ensure robust structures resilient to high winds	Urban trees reduce wind tunnelling and exposure, but minor overall effect.
		Nil Impact: No change to existing level of exposure to higher wind speeds					
		Negative Impact: Exposure to higher wind speeds is increased or is not managed = Negative Impact					
9	FOOD SECURITY	Positive Impact: Opportunities & resources for local food production are increased/ enhanced	Nil	No	No	Source food locally, and provide meat-free catering to reduce vulnerability to food shortages and reduce emissions from transport and farming of food	Not directly relevant to food, but indirect benefit through community orchards.
		Nil Impact: No change to opportunities & resources for local food production					
		Negative Impact: Opportunities & resources for local food production are reduced					
10	BIODIVERSITY	Positive Impact: Biodiversity will be protected/ enhanced	High Positive	Yes	Yes	Provide net gain mitigation if required and seek enhancement in projects of all types and scale	Trees enhance habitat connectivity and biodiversity, strengthening the city's resilience to climate change.
		Nil Impact: Level of biodiversity will not change					
		Negative Impact: Biodiversity will decrease					
Weighing up the negative and positive impacts of your project, what is the overall rating you are assigning to your project?:			Medium Positive	This overall rating is what you need to include in your report/ budget proposal, together with your explanation to be included in the red box below			

Guidance on Assessing the Degree of Negative and Positive Impacts:

Note: Not all of the considerations/ criteria listed below will necessarily be relevant to your project

Low Impact (L)	* No publicity * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Low or none * No impact on service or corporate performance * No capital assets; or capital assets with lifetime of less than 3 years
Medium Impact (M)	* Local publicity (good or bad) * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Medium * Affects delivery of corporate commitments * Affects service performance (e.g.: energy use; amount of waste; distance travelled) by more than 10% * Capital assets with a lifetime of more than 3 years
High Impact (H)	* National publicity (good or bad) * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Significant or High * Affects delivery of regulatory commitments * Affects corporate performance by more than 10% * Capital assets with a lifetime of more than 6 years

In the box below please summarise the projects impacts (the reasons for the ratings given in column E above) to explain how the overall rating for the project/ proposal has been derived (Cell E37). Please also highlight any negative impacts your project may have and how you plan to avoid, mitigate or compensate for these (as you will have detailed in column I above).

The overall impact of the Urban Forest Strategy is assessed as moderately positive, with benefits across rating areas of energy use and heatwaves, transport, and biodiversity. In terms of mitigation, the Strategy supports carbon sequestration through the protection and planting of long-lived, large-canopy species, reduces energy demand from buildings by providing shade that lowers summer cooling requirements, flooding, storms and biodiversity. In terms of mitigation, the Strategy supports carbon sequestration through the protection and planting of long-lived, large-canopy species, reduces energy demand from buildings by providing shade that lowers summer cooling requirements, and improves local air quality by intercepting pollutants and particulates. For adaptation, the Strategy delivers urban cooling to reduce heat stress, reduces surface water runoff, and promotes species diversification and drought-tolerant planting to increase resilience under changing climate conditions. In relation to biodiversity and the wider environment, the Strategy enhances habitat connectivity, secures biodiversity sustainability and enhancement through new planting and sensitive management of veteran and high-value trees, and improves stormwater quality by capturing and filtering non-potable water before it enters the treatment system. While the overall benefits are medium rather than high because the Strategy's indirect contributions to carbon reduction are less significant than direct emissions savings, no significant negative impacts have been identified.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 10 Summary of UFS Delivery Framework

Summary of UFS Delivery Framework

Strategic Aims (what the Strategy seeks to achieve):

1. Increase canopy cover
2. Improve the condition and longevity of existing trees
3. Ensure equitable access to the benefits of the urban forest
4. Embed trees and canopy into policy and decision-making
5. Support biodiversity and habitat connectivity
6. Promote shared stewardship and community participation
7. Build and maintain a strong evidence base

Delivery Approaches (how the Strategy will be delivered):

1. Manage More
2. Protect More
3. Plant More
4. Engage More

Delivery opportunities (how activity will be prioritised and shaped)

1. Targeting areas of high need and prioritising canopy change.
2. Utilise and enhance tools and data for decision making
3. Deliver in partnership
4. Monitoring, adapt and respond

Policies (what will guide decisions):

Manage More

M1 - Health, safety and legal duties prioritised

M2 - Pest and disease management

M3 - Trees, damage and subsidence

M4 - Capacity and resourcing

M5 - Trees on housing and other Council land

Protect More

P1 - Regulatory protection (TPOs and planning)

P2 - Resisting unjustified tree loss

P3 - Enforcement for unauthorised works

P4 - Planning conditions and development management

P5 - Review and modernisation of TPO coverage (aspirational)

P6 - Protection of public tree assets and compensation

Plant More

PL1 - Targeted new planting

PL2 - Funded establishment period (aspirational)

PL3 - Replacement planting

PL4 - Innovative planting in constrained locations (aspirational)

Engage More

E1 - Public and partnership engagement

E2 - Joined-up management of the urban forest (aspirational)

E3 - Community participation and valuation (aspirational)

E4 - Clear information and guidance

Actions (what will be delivered)

1. Increase canopy cover
2. Improve the condition and longevity of existing trees
3. Ensure equitable access to the benefits of the urban forest
4. Embed trees and canopy into policy and decision-making
5. Support biodiversity and habitat connectivity
6. Promote shared stewardship and community participation
7. Build and maintain a strong evidence base
8. Strengthen the capacity and resourcing needed to deliver the Strategy

Key Performance Indicators (how progress will be monitored):

1. Citywide canopy cover change
2. Condition and management of Council trees
3. Planting and removal trends
4. Equity of canopy distribution
5. TPO and planning outcomes
6. Veteran trees and biodiversity indicators
7. Community engagement metrics
8. External funding secured

9. Delivery capacity and budget

Work Programme: Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Items and dates are provisional and will be confirmed on the agenda for each meeting.

Business previously considered by the Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be found on the council's website:

[Committee details - Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Cambridge Council](#)

Name of Item	Description of Item	Suggested Meeting Date	Service Area	Lead Officer
Bio-diversity Strategy	To consider the bio-diversity strategy as it moves through consultation	11 March 2026	City Services	Guy Belcher
Urban Forest Strategy	To review the Urban Forest Strategy before decision on updating	11 March 2026	City Services	Matthew Magrath
Impact of internal reorganisation on Public Realm/City Services, including service delivery implications and the introduction of revised fees and charges.	Post-scrutiny on the impact of changes to fees and charges on use of council services.	TBC – deferred from March	City Group	TBC
Equalities Strategy	To scrutinise the current strategy and reasons for proposed redrafting.	TBC	Communities	Keryn Jalli, Strategic Resettlement and Community Equity Lead
Culture Strategy	TBC	TBC: Post-Festival 2026	TBC	TBC

Name of Item	Description of Item	Suggested Meeting Date	Service Area	Lead Officer
Folk Festival	Review of 2026 edition and changes agreed 2025.	TBC: Post-Festival 2026,	Communities	Frances Alderton, Sam Scharf
Cambridge City Council Fleet de-carbonisation and replacement project	Cambridge City Council's programme on the decarbonisation of Council wider, organic fleet.	TBC:	City Group	Peter Finch, Sean Cleary
Bin collection routes	TBC	TBC:	TBC	TBC

Watching brief/potential items:

- Bereavement Services

The following items are within the remit of the Performance OSC, so would only feature on a Services OSC agenda as it related to Services remit specifically

- Local Growth Plan
- Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Corporate Plan