

A Litter Strategy for Cambridge

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Forward by

To be completed after Environment and Community Service Scrutiny Committee and Executive Councillor decision.

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Executive Councillor for Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

A Litter Strategy for Cambridge

Introduction

The Council's corporate [vision](#) is *to lead a united city, 'One Cambridge - Fair for All', in which economic dynamism and prosperity are combined with social equality and environmental justice. An international, entrepreneurial, diverse, and welcoming city, which is a great place to live, work and learn and which protects its most vulnerable.*

The following [corporate priorities](#)¹ are directly relevant to our Litter Strategy for the city: -

- *“Leading Cambridge's response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies and creating a net zero council by 2030*
- *Modernising the council to lead a greener city that is fair for all”*

Our Strategy is informed by and accords with the Government's [Litter Strategy for England, published in 2017 and associated](#) guidance issued by the UK charity, [WRAP \(Waste Resources Action Programme\)](#) - [“Binrastructure – The right bin in the right place”](#)².

In implementing our Strategy, we intend to apply best practice in litter³ management education, enforcement, and infrastructure to deliver a substantial reduction in litter and littering behaviour.

Industry research shows that good infrastructure (bins and containers) and clear expectations, supported by proportionate enforcement, helps reinforce social pressure to do the right thing.

The cost of managing litter, including fly tipping places a significant burden on the Council, at a time of unprecedented budget pressures and associated service demands.

Litter is also a cost to public health, with published [research](#)⁴ evidencing that living in a littered environment makes people feel less safe in their communities, and less likely to venture out, which, in turn can impact their mental and physical health. It also makes an area look untidy and uncared for, which in turn, contributes to a cycle of decline

¹ Corporate plan 2022-27: our priorities for Cambridge

² <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/guide/binrastructure-right-bin-right-place>

³ There is no official statutory definition of litter, but it is most commonly assumed to include materials that are improperly discarded; for Cambridge this includes dog waste and fly tipping

⁴ Journal of Litter and Environmental Quality June 2017

deterioration in social, economic, and environmental community outcomes, e.g., 'the broken window' concept.

An environment that looks cared for encourages a sense of civic pride and encourages local investment.

Our Strategy is formed of four parts as follows:

- Part One sets out the background to the strategy, in terms of the Council's powers, duties and current service
- Part Two sets out the strategic vision and aims
- Part Three sets out the supporting policies
- Part Four is an action plan which sets out actions, timescales, and responsibilities to implementing the Strategy.

Part 1 - Background

Cambridge City Council has a statutory duty to keep land and highways clear of litter and refuse as far as is practicable (ref. Section 39 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990).

Under section 5 of the Litter Act 1983, the Council also has powers to provide and maintain in any street, or public place, receptacles for refuse or litter. The Highways Act 1980 also provides a similar power to install refuse or litter bins in streets. Once a bin has been installed, the Council has a legal duty to plan for the regular emptying and cleansing of that bin.

There are some additional Regulations which relate to the management of recycling-on-the-go bins⁵. There is also anticipated Regulations with regards to the introduction of deposit return schemes to be introduced by October 2025.

The Council also has powers to prosecute those who drop litter, or to issue fixed penalties, in lieu of prosecution, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Council's Street cleansing service is responsible for servicing 1300 street and 540 open space litter bins and associated litter picking; highway sweeping; 'rapid response' ⁶'deep clean' and graffiti/ fly tip removal. The service also provides a public realm engagement and enforcement service, which covers dog control offences, fly tipping, littering, unauthorised camping, abandoned vehicles, waste management offences and education campaigns.

Street cleansing, including associated street and open space bin emptying and litter management, currently costs the Council ~£2.7m per annum; and is delivered by a workforce of 55 operatives, who provide a 7 day a week service, which equates to ~88000 hours per annum.

The Council's existing bin stock encompasses 1300 street and 540 open space bins and over 10 different bin design types; and has evolved over time and not been strategically reviewed until now. This Strategy provides a valuable opportunity to review the current bin stock against the recommended national guidance produced by WRAP, with regard to the design, number and location of public litter bins and other

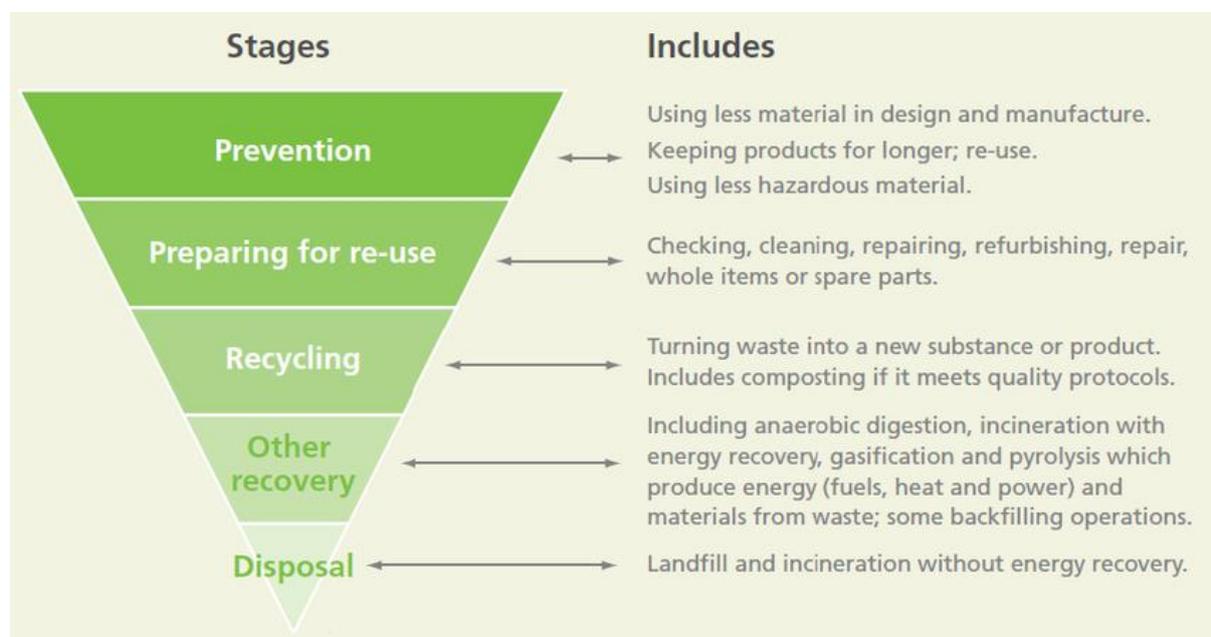
⁵ Councils which provide recycling bins for materials are required to manage them by way of separate collection to ensure that waste undergoes recovery or to facilitate or improve recovery, and where it is technically, environmentally, and economically practicable.

⁶ A service that can clean and remove items once they have been reported. They are City Centre based in the mornings and cover the remainder of the city for the remainder of the day.

items of street furniture designed to capture litter, and the associated supporting principle of 'Right Bin, Right Location and Right Reason'.

Effective local litter disposal infrastructure is not just about having the right number and type of bins, but also siting them in appropriate locations and using visual cues to maximise their appropriate use.

Research conducted to inform the Strategy has highlighted that littering is fundamentally a behavioural problem and that effective infrastructure and clear expectations, supported by proportionate enforcement, helps reinforce social pressure for people to do the right thing. The Strategy is underpinned by the universally adopted waste management hierarchy⁷, as follows:



To achieve our vision, we want to create a culture where it is unacceptable to drop litter, fly tip or not pick up after your dog. This means generating strong and lasting civic pride and social pressures, making such acts socially unacceptable.

In developing the Strategy, it is evident that people need to both understand what they ought to be doing and be motivated to do the right thing. It also suggests that they must have the opportunity to do so, and that is where the provision of effective litter disposal infrastructure comes in.

⁷ [Guidance on applying the waste hierarchy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Research suggests that infrastructure alone is not enough to solve the problem; information is required to build capability to properly use different types of bins, and positive campaigns to create the necessary motivation for people to use them.

Our [Climate Change Strategy \(2021-2026\)](#) shares a vision for Cambridge to be net zero carbon by 2030, subject to Government, industry and regulators implementing the necessary changes to enable the city and the rest of the UK to achieve this. The Climate Change Strategy sets out a number of strategic objectives, of which the following are directly relevant to our Litter Strategy:

- *“Reducing carbon emissions from city council buildings, land, vehicles, and services*
- *Reducing consumption of resources, reducing waste, and increasing recycling in Cambridge”*

Part 2 - Strategic vision and aims

Our Litter Strategy's vision is:

For Cambridge to be a city which is free of litter, fly-tipping, and dog waste.

Through the Strategy, we aim to:

- Maximise the number of people who dispose of their litter responsibly by providing appropriate facilities in the right places and collecting litter in a timely fashion.
- Minimise the proportion of people who feel it is acceptable to litter, fly tip and not pick up after their dog
- Minimise the environmental impact and maximise the productivity of the Council's streets and open spaces waste management service.
- Minimise the volume of streets and open spaces derived waste going to landfill.
- Apply an evidence based, data led approach to monitoring and reviewing the Strategy's effectiveness; and informing any required changes to it.

Part 3 - Policies

Policy LS1

To continue to manage our services to ensure that litter problems do not build up and develop a city-wide culture where it is unacceptable to drop or leave litter lying in the environment.

We will:

- Periodically review and allocate our work-based area teams to monitor and manage known or new litter hotspots.
- Create and continue to provide an easy system for the public to report instances of littering.
- Use targeted awareness campaigns to address known littering problems, including litter item types and hot spots.
- Include dog-fouling in our definition of litter and promote ways of dealing with it.

⁸

Policy LS2

To continue to build a knowledge base and understanding around litter and sources of litter to inform, direct, and drive all service activity and maximise our effectiveness.

We will:

- Continue our work with Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service to examine the causes of littering, including fly tipping, and so help us find solutions to deal with problems at source.
- Create campaigns and encourage businesses to design their products and packaging in ways which will reduce public waste, including recyclable by default and stating clear methods of disposal.
- Ensure and support more recycling with media campaigns.
- Work with partners in the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service to design bin infrastructure on new development sites.

⁸ Dog waste can be bagged and deposited in dog bins or in litter bins

Policy LS3

To continue and establish partnership working with organisations, communities, schools, and businesses, to extend the capacity for action to address the problems of litter, fly tipping and dog waste

We will:

- With partners run anti-litter campaigns and take part in national campaigns (i.e. Great British Spring Clean)
- With our Streets and Open Spaces Volunteer scheme help people to clear up litter in their local areas
- Work with litter-picking volunteers and help them with equipment.
 - Initiatives include setting up community litter groups with their own social media and communication groups to keep an eye on their local patch
- Visit and make sure that we support schools and other organisations and groups in teaching about litter through use of the Eco-Schools program.
- Assist and encourage businesses to work with others to deal with local litter problems
 - It is in the interests of businesses to keep places free of litter; this applies especially with takeaway outlets. We will consider what powers we can use to ensure that businesses take responsibility for resulting litter and will campaign for greater powers if needed
- Making it easy to dispose of litter, with appropriate bins, in the right locations for the right reasons.

Policy LS4

To establish a system of ongoing audit and review to ensure our streets and open spaces waste management service, including its associated bin infrastructure, cleaning systems and community engagement and enforcement activity is continuously improving, in terms of its efficiency and effectiveness.

Around a third of people will be deterred from using a litter bin if it is dirty or damaged. Moreover, if a bin is overfull, people cannot use it, and litter from the bin can start to fall and litter the streets. People may also be tempted to place their litter besides, rather than into, a bin which is full, dirty, or damaged.

Waste management can have a significant impact on litter and fly-tipping. If waste is left out for collection for long periods of time, especially in plastic sacks rather than bins, it can inadvertently lead to an increase in litter, e.g., sacks may be broken into

by animals; people may start to leave their litter amongst the waste awaiting collection; a perception that the street is already affected by litter and waste may lead to an increase in littering behaviour.

We will:

- Keep updated our baseline assessment of our infrastructure, including bins, litter types/ locations, disposal behaviour and public perception.
- Apply WRAP's 'Right Bin: Right Location: Right Reason' principle and associated national guidance in continuously reviewing the city's litter disposal infrastructure and determining required changes to the design, location and number of public litter bins
- Maximise the use of mechanical litter and waste management handling/ collection
- Monitor the placement effectiveness and condition of bins.
- Repair/ refurbish bins in a timely manner.
- Review schedules for emptying bins and ensure means of adapting where extra or fewer collections are needed
- The emptying of litter and recycling bins must be sufficiently frequent to ensure that no litter bin or its contents becomes a nuisance or gives reasonable grounds for complaint
 - create a public realm which looks cared for, with well-maintained street furniture, clear informative anti-litter signage, landscaping features in good condition, and bins where they are needed, properly oriented, clean, and easily accessible to all users
- Make it as easy as possible for people to dispose of their rubbish properly
- Undertake performance benchmarking against comparator authorities

Policy LS5

To expand the concept of recycling beyond the domestic collection with greater provision for recycling 'on the go' and preparing for future deposit return schemes

We will:

- Review recycling receptacles in public spaces - we want to support people being able to recycle more and to encourage people to recycle 'on the go'. Standard litter bins often do not provide people with the opportunity to separate different types of waste materials for recycling, nor to easily understand what waste goes in what bin, something which is already done as part of the kerbside recycling service.

There are many things to consider when designing the options for a Recycle on the Go (RotG) solution, e.g., locating units in areas of highest footfall, where most waste is likely to occur.

- The types of litter commonly dropped will vary depending on the area involved and so receptacles may have to be tailored to the needs of the location.
- Encourage business support for recycling; this could include promotion, or sponsorship of bins.

Policy LS6

To practically engage with local businesses, organisations, and residents to empower and support them in positive partnership action to address litter, fly tipping and dog waste problems.

We will:

- work with businesses and organisations to ensure they have the right facilities to get rid of waste on their premises
 - Businesses have a key role to play in helping to tackle the problem and we want to work with them to do so. We would encourage businesses to recognise the benefits to their own business, and to the economic health of the area, of helping to ensure that the streets remain clean and attractive to customers, and the potential negative impact on their business of litter outside their premises.
 - Studies have found that about half of smokers would not walk more than 10 paces to use a bin, but also that many smokers did not notice bins that had been placed in convenient locations for their use.
- We will consider all relevant guidance when taking decisions on the type and position of litter bins.

Bin technology now makes it possible to install bins that have sensors which inform the cleansing service when they are full/ nearly full. Trials conducted by Cambridge City Council and other evidence of their use indicates that they can lead to a 50% reduction in collections, and sometimes more, because the sensor removes the need to check on a bin to see whether it needs emptying.

Policy LS7

To build a strong sense of civic pride where people care about the environment of where they live and the outdoor locations, including streets and open spaces, they visit.

We will:

- support and encourage people sharing their experience of what works to reduce littering
 - We understand from our public consultation that community priorities and expectations vary, and that different communities face different challenges in developing their own solutions to local litter problems. A range of different tools and approaches will be needed to tap into their enthusiasm and energy, and help willing volunteers access opportunities to get involved
- Focus on what works
 - We spend thousands of pounds per year on tackling litter and fly tipping, and we need to choose the most cost-effective combination of approaches to tackle the litter problems facing our communities. That means that we need to make continuous improvements in our understanding of 'what works'. We need to try out and evaluate new ways of doing things, and we also need to test and refine existing approaches. Even where we do know for sure that certain approaches do work in a particular context, we still need to consider whether they are cost-effective, or practical, for widespread or long-term implementation.
- create roles that can be undertaken by community organisations and individuals

Policy LS8

To continue our zero-tolerance approach to littering, fly tipping and dog fouling, using our enforcement capability to issue on the spot fixed penalty notice (FPN) fines⁹ and to undertake targeted investigations and enforcement action, including prosecution, in accordance with our corporate Enforcement Policy.

We will:

- take appropriate enforcement action¹⁰ when we have evidence to suggest an offence has been committed this may lead to the issuing of a fine or prosecution (not in all circumstances)
- issue fixed penalties for littering and small-scale fly-tipping offences
 - There may be a fine line between littering and small-scale fly-tipping, although fly-tipping is often associated with a desire to avoid the legitimate costs of waste-disposal. The deposit of a single black plastic sack of rubbish should usually be considered a littering offence, rather than fly tipping.
 - A fixed penalty notice will not be an appropriate sanction for operators in the waste management industry, repeat offenders or those responsible for large scale fly-tipping or the fly-tipping of hazardous waste. We will continue to use existing prosecution powers, which may lead to unlimited fines or imprisonment
- promote transparency and accurate reporting of enforcement action against littering, so that offenders know they will be punished if they are caught
 - Research has found that “people who have seen or heard about fixed penalty notices being issued via local media are significantly more likely to think they are effective” and that “attitudes to enforcement are greatly shaped by the degree to which an individual sees them as a threat – and many do not think it is likely they will be fined for environmental offences”
- public awareness of responsible enforcement activity and the seriousness with which these offences are viewed may also help to reinforce the social norm against littering and other environmental ‘incivilities’
- acknowledge people who are doing the right thing
continue working with stakeholders to tackle fly-tipping and litter hotspots, including through use of re-deployable CCTV cameras to capture evidence and serve as a deterrent.

⁹ Fixed penalties for flytipping are only applicable to ‘small-scale’ incidents

¹⁰ Corporate Enforcement Policy – October 2022

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/3837/corporate-enforcement-policy.pdf>

Policy LS9

To continue our work to ensure the Litter Strategy contributes to achieving the Council's target of achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030

We will

- Achieve accreditation of ISO14001 ¹¹to ensure we assess the performance standards to achieve net zero carbon for any service configuration.
- Review our bin designs and associated emptying schedules and routes to minimise vehicle movements and miles travelled.
- Review our fleet requirements to find a 'best fit' to achieve the Strategy vision, including use of ultra-low emission/ electric vehicles and bikes/ cargo bikes, where operationally viable

¹¹ Part of the ISO 14000 family of international standards which provide guidelines for organisations looking to manage their environmental impact, ISO 14001 is the accreditation that helps you design and implement an EMS. The framework is designed to measure and improve the way organisations use and dispose of natural resources as well as reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Part 4:

Action Plan

The following action plan captures all the stakeholder concerns and issues identified during the development phase of the Strategy. The action plan further shows how the research recommendations have influenced the Strategy policies and finally what key actions are required to achieve the Strategy¹².

Refer to Appendix B of the Scrutiny Report

¹² It is expected that the Action will be continually updated and is a 'working document'. It is our intention to seek input from lead organisations such as Keep Britain Tidy to aide and assist with identifying and designing appropriate actions and advising on best practice.