

## **Appendix A: Engagement Supporting Document (content before design and layout)**

# **Help shape our climate and nature work**

## **Share your views**

Understanding how you are thinking about climate and nature is more important than ever and we'd like you to help shape our climate change strategy for the coming years.

The council has a target to achieve net zero carbon emissions for our own operations by 2030 and a net zero vision for the city. Our existing strategy focused on actions up to 2026 and we are now developing our strategy for 2026 onwards.

## **We stand firmly by our climate goals for Cambridge**

Together, we're making progress.

Every action makes a difference for the future AND changes lives for the better today.

Our vision is for a city where people and nature enjoy a clean river and clean air in species-rich and connected green spaces.

We also want to play our part in slowing climate change and supporting our communities to adapt to the changing climate.

Decarbonisation and sustainability activities reduce the use of energy and resources. They also reduce the financial cost to residents, businesses and public services of responding to disruptions from extreme weather, caused by the changing climate. Investing in efficient and low-carbon technologies also creates jobs and economic growth, making the overall economy more robust and adaptable to future changes.

## **Our climate change strategy for 2026 and beyond**

Building on past achievements, our new strategy will renew our commitment to working towards net zero for our own operations and the city as a whole, and considering what more we can do.

There are five areas of focus:

- Working to reduce the council's own emissions and increase climate resilience
- Supporting the city in reducing emissions and increasing climate resilience
- Protecting and increasing our nature and biodiversity
- Achieving better outcomes for people's daily lives - with lower bills, cleaner air, more comfortable homes, greener neighbourhoods, with new job opportunities and stronger local economies
- Ensuring that our climate change strategy is fair and inclusive, to deliver a just transition, so that those most affected by climate change are not left behind and the benefits of addressing climate change are shared widely and felt by all

From energy-efficient homes to thriving green spaces, climate action creates jobs, protects communities and builds a fairer, healthier, more resilient city for everyone. Supporting biodiversity and investing in nature-based solutions, enables us to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Planting trees provides shade on hot days, soaks up surface water reducing flood risk and helps to support natural carbon storage rather than greenhouse gas release., which ultimately helps to reduce the risk of climate change and ensures the city is more climate resilient.

### **Pages 2 and 3**

#### **The need for action to tackle climate change and increase climate resilience**

Scientific evidence unequivocally demonstrates that our climate is changing as a direct result of human activity, with global average temperatures already reaching approximately 1°C above pre-industrial levels.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and global agreements like the UN Paris Climate Agreement have established a critical threshold: limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is essential to avert the most severe and catastrophic impacts of climate change. The UK government committed to reaching net zero by 2050 and a 68% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 (from 1990 levels).

#### **Past progress and achievements**

The council has been actively tackling climate change since 2007, declaring a climate emergency in 2019 to align with the 1.5°C global warming limit. Significant progress has been made, with the council nearly halving its own emissions (47.6% lower than the 2014/15 baseline). Cambridge was recognised as an 'A' list city in the Carbon Disclosure Project's global

rankings in 2023 and 2024 and a top-performing council in Climate Emergency UK's scorecards. Some of the things we've done so far to reduce the council's emissions and support residents and organisations to reduce theirs are shown below:

Cambridge is already experiencing the effects of climate change

**Overheating:** Cambridge recorded 38.7°C in 2019 and the UK recorded over 40°C for the first time in 2022. The summer of 2025, the UK's hottest, saw an unusually high number of heatwaves declared. On 30 June, the temperature in Cambridge reached 32.2°C, which was the highest June temperature on record, matching a previous record from June 2022. Urban areas such as Cambridge are particularly vulnerable to changes in heat. In addition to background warming an additional factor facing city residents is the urban heat island effect. Buildings absorb rather than reflect the sun's heat, and waste heat from air conditioners and vehicles can add warmth to the surroundings, increasing temperatures. The Met Office has cautioned that the UK's climate is changing, with a 50/50 chance of seeing temperatures reach 40°C again within the next 12 years.

**Water scarcity and flooding:** Warmer, wetter winters (projected 1.3°C warmer and 7% wetter by 2050) increase flood risk. Drier, hotter summers (projected 2.2°C warmer and 3% drier by 2050) raise drought risks, despite increased intensity of rainfall when it occurs.



Emissions profile

Cambridge City Council's organisational carbon footprint

Total gross greenhouse gas emissions (2024/25) 3,871 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO2e). 8.1% lower than 2023/24. 51.9% lower than the 2014/15 baseline. Council's direct responsibility: 0.7% of total city emissions in 2023 [Source: Cambridge City Council, 2025]

The carbon footprint for the Cambridge area

Cambridge's greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 47.3% since 2005 (from 985.1 kt CO2e to 519.3 kt CO2e in 2023). Per capita emissions reduced from 8.4 tCO2e in 2005 to 3.5 tCO2e in 2023. [Source: UK Government, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2025]

Strategy and objectives from 2026

The new draft strategy for 2026 and beyond focuses on the council's direct actions while driving city-wide change through partnerships. It builds on the previous strategy (2021-2026) integrating climate adaptation actions throughout and introduces some new objectives.

It sets our continued direction of travel towards net zero, while allowing for flexibility guided by emerging opportunities, evolving priorities and the resources that enable their success.

Existing objectives

**Transport:** Reduce fossil fuel-powered travel, encourage low/zero carbon transport.

**Energy and retrofit:** Improve energy efficiency and climate resilience of homes/buildings, support low-carbon heating.  
**Nature and water:** Enhance nature, increase tree canopy cover, safeguard water and adapt to climate impacts.  
**Sustainable food:** Increase access to local, low-impact, seasonal food, reduce food waste.  
**Waste minimisation:** Reduce waste, support a circular economy.  
**Supply chain and finance:** Reduce emissions and maximise social/environmental value of procurement and partnerships.  
**Community support and behaviour change:** Provide accessible/inclusive support to empower low-carbon behaviour change, ensuring benefits are shared widely.

## **New areas of focus from 2026**

**A collaboratively created city-wide climate plan:** We're calling for evidence and input from organisations to help shape a collaborative, city-wide climate plan for Cambridge that builds a picture of what is happening across the city including how others are decarbonising their operations. Building on our partnership with Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership and working through the Cambridge City Leaders Climate Change Group, we aim to co-develop a shared plan with key partners: businesses, public sector bodies, anchor institutions and community organisations that reflects the breadth of climate action across the city, highlights the shared responsibility for addressing climate change and paves the way for more collaborative action, accelerating decarbonisation and adaptation — locally and collectively.

**Residual emissions:** Exploring how councils might compensate for unavoidable residual emissions to meet net zero targets. This is often referred to as 'offsetting'.

**Measuring council scope three emissions:** Working with our suppliers to expand the measurement and reporting of indirect emissions such as those from suppliers (currently including business travel, outsourced activities, transmission/distribution losses) to better understand and reduce the Council's carbon footprint further.

**Supporting community-led renewable energy projects:** Exploring opportunities for community-led renewable energy generation and shared ownership models, providing advice and support to unlock funding.

**Reducing emissions from commercial properties:** Reviewing the Asset Management and Decarbonisation Plan to identify priority sites and funding for improvements to meet net zero targets and energy efficiency standards.

Pages 5 and 6

## **Areas of action**

### **Reducing the council's direct emissions and increasing the council's climate resilience**

The strategy will have a detailed action plan alongside it. This is currently being developed, and your feedback will help inform this. However, there are some existing strategic projects that are already in development and are being considered as part of the plan to address the council's emissions, subject to funding being secured.

#### **Key projects**

##### **Transport:**

**Fleet decarbonisation:** Purchasing Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) when replacing vans and trucks.

**Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network (WREN):** Delivery by 2026/27 to charge and power up to 18 electric refuse collection vehicles using renewable energy generated by solar panels at the depot.

##### **Energy and retrofit:**

**Civic Quarter redevelopment:** Retrofitting the Guildhall to ENERPHIT (a certification standard designed for energy-efficient renovations of existing buildings) and emerging net zero carbon standards by 2029 and the Corn Exchange targeting a 65% reduction in carbon emissions.

**Cambridge City Centre District Heat Network:** Supplying low carbon, renewable heat to buildings in the city centre. If viable, targeting 2030 for first buildings to connect to it, aiming to phase out gas boilers.

**Strategic asset management plan:** To identify pathways to reduce emissions from council buildings to net zero for and funding opportunities.

**Nature and water:** Delivering biodiversity net gain on the council's estate, climate-resilient management of parks (drought-tolerant planting, no-mow zones, herbicide-free), exploring rainwater harvesting.

**Waste minimisation:** Eliminating single-use plastics at council events and banning them at events held on council open spaces.

**Supply chain and finance:** Council procurement: Tackling Scope 3 emissions by working with suppliers to measure, manage and reduce their climate impact

**Community support and behaviour change (just transition):** Continuing to provide carbon literacy training to staff, councillors and residents

## Residual emissions

The council has always prioritised and will continue to prioritise reducing emissions as far as possible. We are starting to explore how councils might compensate for unavoidable residual emissions to meet net zero targets. This is often referred to as 'offsetting'. We want to understand what you think about this.

### **In general, principles are:**

- Local – offsets should be generated locally within the UK (not overseas).
- Additional – contribute to projects that wouldn't happen otherwise.
- Credible, permanent and verified to comply with standards and avoid double counting.
- Prioritise carbon removal over avoidance offsets.

**Future approach:** We anticipate the development of national guidance or regional/national offsetting schemes which we would look to explore.

## Reducing Cambridge's emissions and increasing the city's climate resilience

The strategy will have a detailed action plan alongside it. This is currently being developed, and your feedback will help inform this. However, there are some existing strategic projects that are already in development and are being considered as part of the plan to help address city-wide emissions, subject to funding being secured.

### **Key projects**

**Transport:** Installing EV charging infrastructure across the city (600 charging points with Connected Kerb, 264 installed), and in new council homes whilst also encouraging all new developments to install EV chargers too. Promoting walking, cycling and public transport through planning policies and in partnership with the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

**Energy & retrofit:** Through the new Local Plan new development must be designed to take into account a changing climate (e.g. overheating), and embed the principles of climate change mitigation and adaptation, achieve net zero operational emissions, be energy and water efficient and use renewable energy to meet their remaining energy needs

### **City-wide emissions (homes - 25% of city emissions):**

**Council homes::** Developing a delivery and funding plan which will take a strategic approach to decarbonisation of existing council homes and will include creating an overheating mitigation strategy and a policy for heat pump installation, we have retrofitted 225 council homes to EPC C to date, funding secured for 370 more, net-zero home pilot to retrofit 48 homes on Ross Street to net zero carbon.

**Private homes:** Providing grant funding for energy upgrades and low-carbon heating to low-income households by working in partnership with Cambridge Energy and Retrofit Partnership (CERP).

**Partnerships:** Creating a cohesive retrofit strategy for all housing tenures to scale up retrofit through measures such as area-based plans, through Action on Energy partnership continue to provide energy efficiency advice for residents and communities to support residents to retrofit, progressing the Cambridgeshire Local Area Energy Plan (sets out what energy infrastructure Cambridgeshire needs to reach net zero and support sustainable growth), and leading the City Centre District Heat Network (reducing carbon emissions by 98% if viable).

### **Nature and water:**

**Water safeguarding:** Planning water retrofit measures in existing council homes, exploring rain gardens in housing estates. Participating in Water Scarcity Funding to retrofit households for water savings and establish a Water Credits Scheme. Implementing pool water recovery systems at three swimming pools.

**Planning system:** Using the new Local Plan to protect from flooding and not increase flood risk, managing water in as natural way as possible by using Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and to be highly water efficient. New homes to meet water efficiency standards (110 litres/person/day). which goes beyond the national standard - reflecting the water issues facing the Cambridge area.

**Enhancing nature:** Increasing Cambridge's tree canopy cover from 17% to 19% by 2050 through the Urban Forest Strategy. Ceasing herbicides on grass verges, trialling new grass-cutting methods for wildflowers. Improving rare chalk stream habitats (Cherry Hinton Brook, Vicars Brook, Coldham's Brook). Using the new Local Plan to protect peat soils and promote the protection of soils in construction, encouraging green infrastructure to support natural carbon storage rather than greenhouse gas release.

### **Sustainable food:**

**Promoting sustainable food in the city:** Requiring allotment space in new developments, making council allotment plots more accessible, supporting community orchards and wildlife gardens, encouraging food-growing opportunities in developments.

**Partnerships:** Active member of Cambridge Sustainable Food Network (supporting Gold Award status), providing grants for projects that promote sustainable food (e.g. foraging), partnering with Cambridge Sustainable Food to run a

predominantly plant-based café at Meadows Community Centre.

#### Waste minimisation:

**City-wide waste:** Rolling out food waste collections from 2026 (phased approach), aiming to send food waste to anaerobic digestion facilities. Working with RECAP on a new Joint Municipal Waste Strategy. Using the new Local Plan to promote reuse of materials and recycling in building projects and when buildings are in use.

**Partnerships:** Communications campaigns to raise awareness and encourage recycling/waste reduction, supporting businesses to adopt circular economy practices, providing grant funding to community organisations to support residents to reuse and recycle, for example running repair cafes.

#### Supply chain and finance:

**Partnerships:** Convening the City Leaders Climate Change Group (with Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership (CISL) and Cambridge Zero) to drive cross-sector initiatives. Co-developing the city-wide climate plan with this group. Supporting the growth of a "climate cluster" in Greater Cambridge (Innovate Cambridge, Cambridge Clean Tech, Cambridge Zero, CISL) and partnering with CISL to share learning and find testbed opportunities for climate solutions.

#### Community support and behaviour change (just transition):

Co-developing Ward Climate Action Plans reflecting local priorities. Designing a creative behavioural change campaign for Council venues. Providing retrofit apprenticeship opportunities and supporting green job access through the Region of Learning programme.

**Partnerships:** Supporting community groups with Sustainable City Grant funding to deliver activities which help achieve the Climate Change Strategy Objectives (e.g., for energy reduction, repair cafes, sustainable food). Convening the Local Climate Change Forum to facilitate collaboration, public engagement and best practice sharing with community groups including Cambridge Carbon Footprint. Exploring and supporting community energy projects.

We stand firmly by our climate goals for Cambridge.

Together, we're making progress and we can't stop now. Every action makes a difference for the future and changes lives for the better today.

Our vision is for a city where people and nature enjoy a clean river and clean air in species-rich and connected green spaces.

We also want to play our part in slowing climate change - supporting our communities to adapt to the changing climate.

***Help shape our climate and nature work – share your views now!***

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/climate-change-strategy>