

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

**To:** Cabinet 16 December 2025

Cabinet Member: Cllr Martin Smart, Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services

**Report by:**

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**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 the Cabinet/Cabinet Member for decision.

<b>1.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
1.1	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approves the progression to public consultation to inform a midterm review of the Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Strategy (2022 – 2031)</li> <li>2. Notes that the public consultation will run alongside the approved Urban Forest Strategy public consultation</li> <li>3. Delegate finalisation of consultation documents and proposals to the Director of City Services</li> <li>4. Note that following the proposed consultation the amended Biodiversity Strategy is on the Forward Plan to return to Cabinet for approval in March 2026, along with the Urban Forest Strategy and Climate Change Strategy.</li> </ol>

<b>2.</b>	<b>Purpose and reason for the report</b>
2.1	<p>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.</p> <p>The draft revised Strategy proposes to retain the same vision and themes and support for the existing Cambridge Nature Network, however, suggests alternative actions and projects to align with our new statutory Biodiversity Reporting Duty, the draft Urban Forest Strategy (UFS), and wider initiatives including the statutory Cambridgeshire &amp; Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS, proposed for submission to the Secretary of State in December 2025), the BIG Chalk partnership and an ambition to collaborate to achieve future Nature City Accreditation. These more recent initiatives are described within the draft strategy.</p> <p>The report seeks approval to proceed to public consultation alongside the UFS consultation to seek views from residents, community groups, and other stakeholders.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Alternative options considered</b>
3.1	<p><b>1. To not review and allow the current strategy to continue without review through to 2030.</b></p> <p>This option was rejected as it would fail to consider new initiatives and wider strategies and risk not aligning with future collaborations and associated funding priorities and opportunities.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Background and key issues</b>
4.1	The current Biodiversity Strategy (Appendix A) was adopted in 2022 and set out a clear vision and actions to address our declared Biodiversity Emergency.

***‘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 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.’***

The draft document retains this vision through to 2031, with the addition of referencing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The consultation will seek continued support for this vision or alternative suggestions.

The 7 strategic objections to deliver the vision are proposed to be retained, with the addition of objective 2 referencing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. As with the vision the consultation will seek continued support for these or alternative suggestions:

1. To secure a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the and support the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Vision by 2030.
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 and Local Nature Recovery Strategy
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

Since adoption we have delivered many diverse projects and initiatives across services and in collaboration with partners and communities. These have been summarised in the accompanying Biodiversity Duty Report, 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), proposed for submission to the Secretary of State in December 2025, will be a 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.

	<p>A key new ambition is to seek Nature City Accreditation through a recognised process of increased collaboration for nature recovery with our communities. The consultation will seek support for the initiative and identify new collaborations with diverse groups to ensure that everyone can help restore, appreciate and engage with local nature.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Corporate plan</b>
5.1	<p>The Biodiversity Strategy review seeks to address the following corporate priorities (2022 – 2027):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Responding to the climate and biodiversity emergencies and creating a net zero council by 2030</b></p> <p>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.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Tackling poverty and inequality and helping people in the greatest need</b></p> <p>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.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Building a new generation of council and affordable homes and reducing homelessness</b></p> <p>Ensuring new council homes meet our ambition of delivering 20% Biodiversity Net Gain</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Modernising the council to lead a greener city that is fair for all</b></p> <p>Ensuring that we meet our Biodiversity duty through seeking opportunities to protect and enhance nature across all services and partnerships</p> </li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Consultation, engagement and communication</b></p> <p>The current Biodiversity Strategy was adopted in 2022 following a public consultation held in 2021.</p> <p>A co-ordinated public consultation will be held alongside the approved UFS consultation,</p>

	<p>using an umbrella approach. This integrated engagement will enable stakeholders and residents to provide feedback across the two inter-related strategies, while ensuring efficient use of resources and maximising participation.</p> <p>The final Biodiversity Strategy is planned to be presented to Cabinet in March 2026 for adoption, alongside the Urban Forest Strategy and Climate Change Strategy. Presenting the three strategies together will demonstrate their interconnections and provide a joined-up framework for managing climate, nature, and the urban forest.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact</b>
7.1	<p>Approval to consult will let us review and improve our Biodiversity Strategy, continuing and strengthening our long-term approach to working in collaboration for nature recovery.</p> <p>The review is expected to deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved plan quality: insights from stakeholders and communities will help ensure the Biodiversity Strategy is both deliverable and widely supported, with projects and KPIs refined in response to feedback.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. Clearer accountability: the introduction of measurable KPIs will allow progress to be monitored transparently over the remaining lifetime of the strategy.</li> <li>4. Greater recognition: seeking Nature City Accreditation will ensure shared goals and new collaborations that can be celebrated.</li> </ol> <p><b>What does good look like?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A Biodiversity Strategy that is accessible, evidence-based, and widely supported.</li> </ol>

	<p>2. Broad public awareness of and engagement with the Biodiversity Strategy and wider Cambridge Nature Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategy</p> <p>3. A clear route to achieve Nature City Accreditation in recognition and celebration of our shared vision, collaboration and delivery partnerships.</p>
8.	<b>Implications</b>
8.1	<b>Relevant risks</b>
	<p><b>Risk 1: Limited engagement or low participation in the consultation could reduce the quality of feedback.</b></p> <p><b>Mitigation:</b> Strong communications, by aligning with UFS consultations to maximise visibility.</p> <p><b>Risk 2: Loss of key personnel.</b> The Biodiversity Project Officer post is currently fixed term until 2026, with 50% of the role dedicated to delivering Biodiversity Strategy projects and engagement (the remaining 50% to delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy). If this post is not retained, delivery of the strategy will be limited by staff resource.</p> <p><b>Mitigation:</b> Options for extending this role will be explored ahead of 2026 deadline to secure continuity of delivery.</p>
	<b>Financial Implications</b>
8.2	<p>There are no direct financial implications arising from this decision, as approval is only sought to consult on a mid-term review of the strategy and action plan.</p> <p>Consultation and engagement will be delivered within existing City service budgets.</p>
	<b>Legal Implications</b>

8.3	<p>There are no direct legal implications arising from this decision to consult on the reviewed strategy.</p> <p>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.</p>
	<p><b>Equalities and socio-economic Implications</b></p> <p>Assessment found that the strategy and associated actions will have overall positive equality impacts across Cambridge's communities.</p> <p>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.</p>
8.4	<b>Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications</b>
8.5	<p>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.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon storage and sequestration, supporting the Council's net zero targets.</li> <li>• Urban cooling and shade, reducing the impacts of extreme heat.</li> <li>• Stormwater management, helping reduce local flood risk.</li> <li>• Biodiversity enhancement, contributing to Biodiversity Net Gain and habitat connectivity.</li> </ul> <p>The Strategy complements and aligns with the Council's draft Climate Change and Urban Forest Strategies.</p>



	<b>Procurement Implications</b>
8.6	There are no procurement implications arising directly from this decision as approval is only sought to consult on a reviewed strategy.
	<b>Community Safety Implications</b>
8.7	<p>There are no community safety implications arising directly from this decision to consult on the reviewed strategy.</p> <p>The strategy supports public safety through developing natural solutions to mitigating the adverse impacts of climate on our communities.</p> <p>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.</p>
	<b>Financial</b>
8.8	<p>No new funding is required for the consultation, which will be delivered within existing budgets.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Actions without identified funding are included in the strategy as aspirational and will only be taken forward if resources become available.</p>
9.	<b>Background documents</b> Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

<b>10.</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
10.1	<p>Appendix A – Current Biodiversity Strategy (2022 – 2030)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2030 - Cambridge City Council</u></a></p> <p><i>Appendix B – Draft Biodiversity Strategy (2026 – 2031) (for consultation)</i></p> <p><i>Appendix C – Draft Biodiversity Duty Report (2022 – 2025)</i></p>
	<p>To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact  Guy Belcher, Biodiversity Manager, tel: 01223 458532, email:  <a href="mailto:Guy.belcher@cambridge.gov.uk">Guy.belcher@cambridge.gov.uk</a></p>