Appendix 7

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** o 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_l59kt25q).**

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 EqIA 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 EqIA 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 EqIAs need to be sent to the Community Equity Team at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk