

REPORT TITLE: Local Nature Reserve Designations

To: Cabinet 24th March 2026

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

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Cherry Hinton

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.

1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

Non-Key Decision

1. Approve the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designations of Fulbourn Road Open Space, Cherry Hinton
2. Approve the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation of Church End, Cherry Hinton

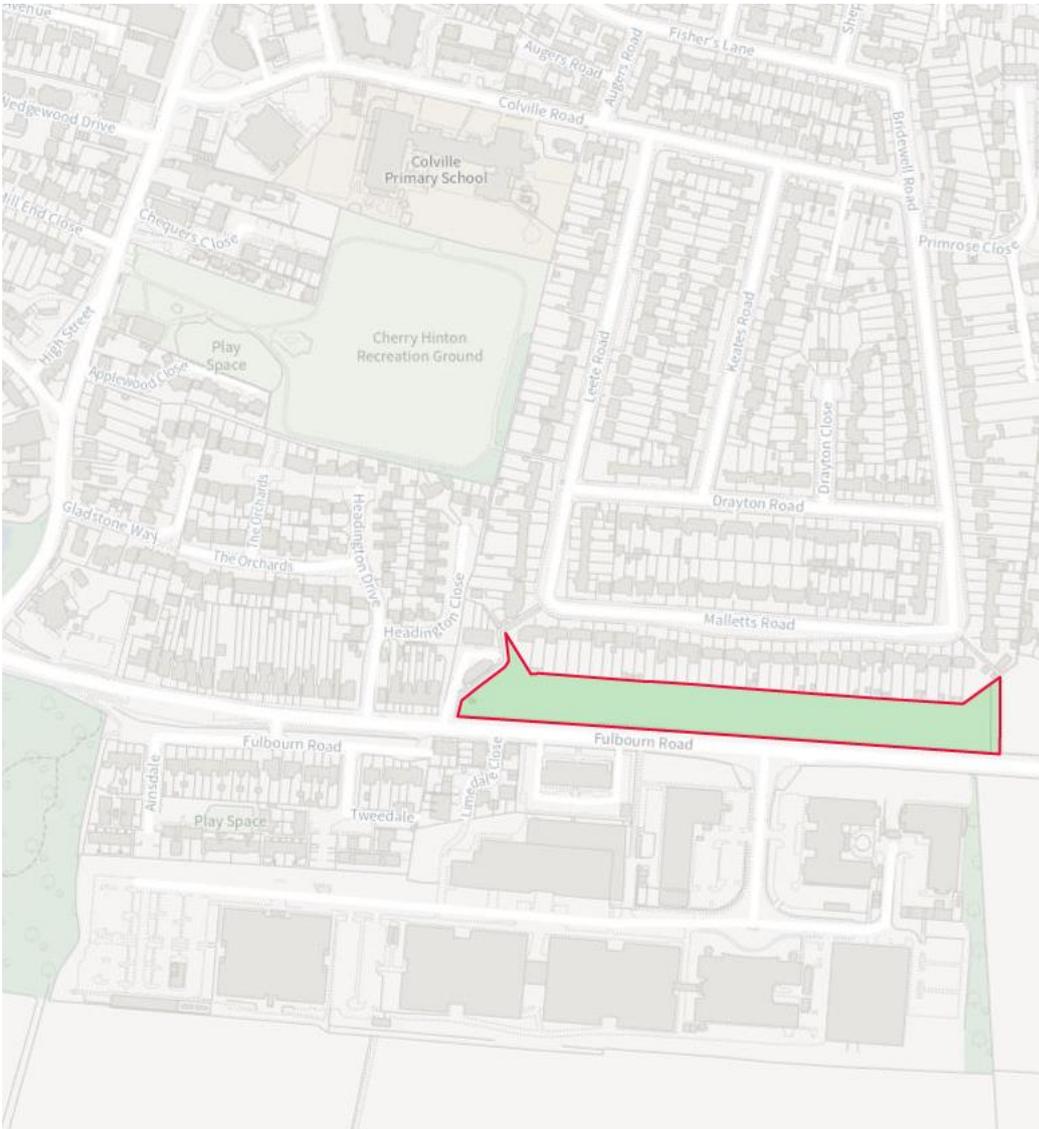
2. Purpose and reason for the report

2.1 Following December 2025 Cabinet Approval a joint public consultation on the draft Biodiversity Strategy midterm review and a draft new Urban Forest Strategy was run on

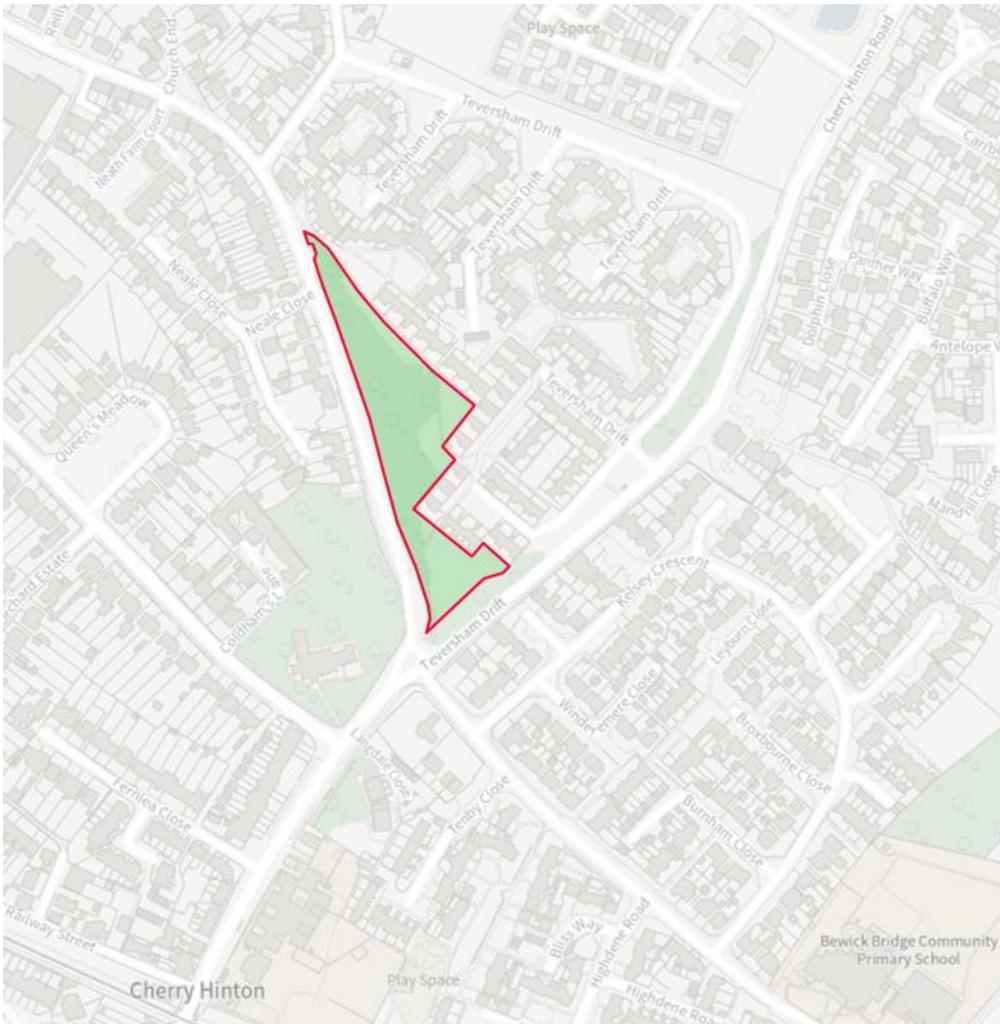
the City Council Go Vocal consultation portal from 7th January to 10th February, with a further one-week extension for emailed responses, as requested by specific groups.

The 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 during 2026.

The proposed LNR sites are:



Fulbourn Road Open Space, Cherry Hinton



Church End, Cherry Hinton

3. Alternative options considered

3.1 1. 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 public open spaces for nature in the ward.

4. Background and key issues

4.1

*‘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 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 enhancement projects and monitoring.’*

The proposed designations will contribute to this vision by providing statutory protection to these two small sites, in recognition of their existing wildlife value and potential for enhancement of habitat and public access through adoption of a new management plan.

5. Corporate plan

5.1 The Local Nature Reserve designations seek to address the following corporate priorities (2022 – 2027):

- **Responding to the climate and biodiversity emergencies and creating a net zero council by 2030**

Through protecting priority woodland and grassland habitats and enhancing their management to mitigate 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.

- **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 our estate and services.

6. Consultation, engagement and communication

To inform the midterm review of the Biodiversity Strategy we promoted a public consultation on a draft revised Biodiversity strategy between 6th January and 10th February 2026 on our consultation portal. A total of 256 respondents provided a strong and constructive level of engagement.

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.

Specific questions on the proposed LNR designation were included within the consultation, with site notices and flyers posted through neighbouring properties doors to ensure residents and site users had the opportunity to comment.

Responses to the LNR designations question demonstrated strong support for both sites.

Do you support Church End Local Nature Reserve designation?

188/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



Do you support Fulbourn Road Local Nature Reserve designation?

201/234 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



7. Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact

7.1 Designation of the two new LNRs is expected to deliver the following outcomes:

Statutory protection for the existing biodiversity value of these City owned public spaces.

Greater recognition of their biodiversity significant within local communities.

Enhanced management and monitoring to maximise the sites potential for both wildlife and public access to natural green space.

8. Implications

8.1 Relevant risks

Risk 1: If the decision is made to approve the designation of two additional Local Nature Reserves in Cherry Hinton:

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) place statutory responsibilities on the local authority to protect and manage the sites' ecological value, maintain safe public access, and comply with relevant environmental legislation. Key risks include habitat degradation, protected species impacts, and failure to meet legal or policy requirements, all of which can expose the authority to regulatory scrutiny, challenge from stakeholders, and reputational harm. Public safety responsibilities—such as managing trees, fire risk, and visitor pressure—also create operational and liability risks on council-owned land.

Financial and resource pressures can affect the council's ability to maintain LNRs to required standards, leading to deterioration of ecological condition and increased long-term costs. Misalignment between partners, contractors, volunteers, or grazing agreements can introduce governance risks, while climate-related impacts such as flooding, drought, and disease increase the need for resilience measures. Collectively, these factors present ongoing legal, environmental, financial, and reputational risks that require active and sustained management

Risk 2. If these important natural green spaces are not designated as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs): the local authority loses a key statutory mechanism for safeguarding their long-term ecological value. Without designation, these sites are more vulnerable to habitat degradation, incremental development pressure, reduced protection for priority species, and land-use changes that can undermine their environmental function. The absence of LNR status also weakens the authority's ability to apply robust management

frameworks or defend sites against external threats such as recreational overuse, pollution, or adjacent development impacts.

There are also strategic and reputational risks. Undesignated sites may be perceived as lower priority, leading to reduced investment, fewer opportunities for community involvement, and weaker alignment with local and national biodiversity duties. Failing to designate important green spaces can be challenged by stakeholders, undermining trust and the authority's credibility in delivering nature recovery commitments. Collectively, this can result in loss of biodiversity, reduced public access to quality nature areas, and missed opportunities for funding, partnerships, and statutory recognition of the council's environmental leadership.

8.2 **Legal Implications**

Designation of the two sites as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) is a statutory act under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, requiring the Council to hold a legal interest in the land, which is satisfied through existing ownership by the Housing Service. Upon designation, the Council assumes a formal duty to manage and protect the land for nature conservation purposes and must consult Natural England as the statutory consultee during the declaration process. The designation also commits the Council to ensuring that any future use of the sites is compatible with their protected status, including the potential application of byelaws to safeguard habitats and restrict inappropriate activities. These obligations reinforce the Council's statutory biodiversity duties under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and require that any future changes to land use or management follow the formal procedures for amending or revoking an LNR designation.

Equalities and socio-economic Implications

An assessment of the Biodiversity Strategy midterm review included the proposed LNR designations and 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.

The proposed LNR designations contribute by providing healthy local nature green spaces and tree canopies to aid climate mitigation and adaptation. 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 species protection and habitat connectivity.

Procurement Implications

8.5 There are no procurement implications arising directly from this decision to approve the designation of the two Local Nature Reserves

Community Safety Implications

8.6 There are no community safety implications arising directly from this decision to approve the designation of the two Local Nature Reserves

Following designation 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 The LNRs will be managed by the existing City Services staff, operational, tree and LNR revenue budgets. Specific habitat enhancement project identified will seek external funding

9. Background documents

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A

10. Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix A [Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2030 - Cambridge City Council](#) (current)

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