Cambridge City Council

Biodiversity Strategy

(2026 – 2031)

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Sheep's Green Local Nature Reserve, Newnham

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1. Foreword

Councillor Martin Smart

Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Spaces & City Services

When we adopted our 2022 Biodiversity Strategy, we pledged to undertake a midterm review on progress, direction and delivery. This revised strategy update changes in national legislation and recognises new regional strategies, partnerships and local projects, setting clear, time bound actions and measures of success. It provides an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the many successful projects and partnerships working to protect and restore nature across the city and beyond. Whilst also recognising the urgency to address the continued threats

The 2021 Environment Act places a new statutory duty on all Local Authorities to publish a Biodiversity Duty Report to demonstrate our collective efforts in support of biodiversity. The accompanying report showcases our shared regional and local visions, strategies and initiatives and provides case studies on what has been achieved between 2022 and 2025. However, we are now halfway through the decade in which the UK has committed to halt and reverse nature loss; hence the need to review and strengthen our efforts between 2026 and 2031.

This summer I felt great pride in joining the Friends of Logan's Meadow Local Nature Reserve at their opening event of the newly created wetlands in East Chesterton. This ambitious project is a great example of the collaborative approach needed to restore urban habitats and wildlife. The original concept from the Friends, supported the vision of the Cambridge Nature Network, whose partners helped secure initial Lottery funding for design and consultation. Natural England provided additional Green Recovery Funding for a new woodland buffer, planted by the local community. The resulting momentum secured a Combined Authority grant and developer (S106) contributions to dig the new wetlands, which, following the planting of reeds by volunteers have already been visited by water voles, otters and kingfishers.

Such projects give us hope that the decline in nature can be reversed when communities and partners work together on shared challenges and goals. This is also the ambition of the recently adopted statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We worked with the Combined Authority to

produce this overarching vision for our region with shared priorities and goals that complement the existing objectives and projects of the Cambridge Nature Network, and we look forward to collaborating on delivery.

The repeating message of collaboration fundamentally supports our ambition for Cambridge to achieve Nature City Accreditation for our collective work to put nature at the heart of our communities. We pledge to take a lead on this and commit to publishing annual public reports on progress against this strategy.

Swift Tower and new wetland at Logan's Meadow Local Nature Reserve, East Chesterton

2. Vision

Our corporate plan sets out a clear '**One Cambridge, Fair for All'** vision which we are working towards cooperatively with our residents and partner organisations. Collectively we are seeking **'Cambridge to be a net zero carbon city, where people and nature enjoy a clean river, clean air, and biodiverse green spaces'** and where **'strong nature networks are coordinated between relevant bodies to combat the impacts of social and climate injustice'**

We will deliver this vision through our Corporate Plan (2022 – 2027) priorities. The first of which is **'Leading Cambridge's response to the climate change and biodiversity emergencies'**

'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 the 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 of 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'.

Progress towards this vision will be monitored through annual reporting published on our website.

3. Executive Summary

The Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Strategy (2026–2031) sets out a renewed commitment to address the biodiversity emergency declared by the council in 2019. Building on the 2022 Biodiversity Strategy, this update aligns with the Environment Act 2021, regional Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and the Natural Cambridgeshire (Local Nature Partnership) 'Doubling Nature' ambition

Vision:

By 2031, Cambridge will achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity, ensuring priority habitats and species are protected, enhanced, and connected. This means more wildflower areas and nature rich grasslands in our parks and Commons; healthier chalk streams and riverbanks; more trees and shade on streets and in housing estates; and more places for birds, bats, insects and other wildlife to thrive. We also want every resident to have a good quality natural greenspace within a short walk of where they live, work or study, fostering engagement with nature and enhanced physical and mental wellbeing.

Strategic Objectives:

- Deliver measurable biodiversity net gain across the city, including a minimum 20% net gain on all Council-led developments and a net increase in biodiversity units across Council-managed natural green spaces by 2031.
- Improve condition and connectivity of designated sites and priority habitats, so that by 2031 all Local Nature Reserves and Commons have improved habitat condition, and no site remains in poor condition without a published management plan being implemented and monitored.
- Embed biodiversity considerations across all council services, policies, supply chains and developments.
- Educate and empower communities, businesses, and institutions to act to enhance local, with a particular focus on wards lacking high quality natural greenspace
- Maximise biodiversity potential of council properties, parks and urban spaces, whilst balancing their multi-functional uses
- Establish long-term monitoring and research partnerships.

Key Themes:

- **Biodiversity Mainstreaming:** Integrate biodiversity considerations into council procurement supply chains, planning, housing, and operations; help deliver the

Local Nature Recovery Strategy; achieve 20% biodiversity net gain for council-led developments.

- **The Core:** Enhance the habitat condition of all Local Nature Reserves and Commons; support Cambridge Nature Network; restore chalk streams; review and monitor grazing practices.

- **Nature in Your Neighbourhood:** Promote community-led projects, Nature City Accreditation, pollinator-friendly initiatives, and biodiversity education, targeting support for wards with lower tree canopy cover, fewer wildlife rich sites, or greater social disadvantage.

Action Plan (2026–2031):

The strategy outlines targeted actions under these themes, including policy adoption, habitat restoration, species recovery, and collaborative projects with partners. Progress will be monitored through site condition assessments, and community engagement metrics. Each action in the plan specifies a lead service, partners and timescales, and we will use these to publish an annual report on delivery and outcomes

Outcome:

This strategy aims to reverse biodiversity decline, strengthen ecological resilience, and embed nature at the heart of Cambridge's communities—delivering environmental, social, and health benefits for future generations.

4. Introduction

The term 'biodiversity' describes all forms of life, their interactions and the ecosystems that support them and us. It includes all species, both common and rare, which combine to provide us with the air we breathe, water we drink and the food we eat.

4.1 Why we need a strategy

In 2019, we declared a biodiversity emergency in recognition of the pressures facing our natural world, both locally and internationally. We adopted the Biodiversity Strategy in 2022 to guide our work to meet this challenge and pledged to undertake a

mid-term review to ensure we are meeting our objectives. This revised strategy for 2026-2031 is the result of this mid-term review.

As with the Council's climate change emergency declaration, the biodiversity emergency requires all our services to consider their net impact on biodiversity within their operations. This revised strategy embeds biodiversity principles and considerations across all Council service areas and the communities we serve.

For many years, we have worked with our Friends Groups, Local Nature Reserve volunteers and partners such as the Wildlife Trust, Cambridge Past Present and Future, community gardens and orchards to maintain and improve the rich diversity of habitats in and around Cambridge. We greatly value this shared expertise and passion, recognising that we cannot hope to reverse the decline and help our species adapt to a changing climate alone. For this reason, the strategy review seeks to further engage with other city property owners, businesses, community groups and visitors to respect, protect and enhance our city's wildlife and the multiple benefits it provides our communities.

Despite current efforts, our 2020–2025 core sites habitat audits show that many of our most visible Commons and recreation spaces remain in poor or only moderate ecological condition; furthermore, recreational pressure and urbanisation continue to erode wildlife value. This strategy therefore focuses on changing how we manage land and support more environmentally attuned behaviour in every neighbourhood.

We are partners in the Cambridge Nature Network (CNN), which incorporates our iconic riverside commons and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and we look forward to continue to work closely with other network stakeholders including the East Cambridge Farmland Cluster, Cambridge University colleges and the wider local community to conserve and enhance the network as a vital strategic piece of green infrastructure (network of natural and semi-natural features—such as parks, wetlands, green roofs, and street trees—that provides environmental, social, and economic benefits).for the city.

Due to the economic success of Cambridge and the local region, major housing and employment growth sites which were identified within the Cambridge City Council's former Nature Conservation Strategy (2006) have now been built, along with associated new country parks and habitats to complement the existing network of LNRs, woodlands and water courses. Trumpington Meadows Country Park and Hobson's Park are now vibrant new strategic green spaces, providing welcome respite for communities during the Covid pandemic and new homes for farmland and wetland species. These schemes demonstrate that with good design and planning policy, biodiversity net gain is achievable on multifunctional spaces, with Hobsons Park being designated a County Wildlife Site in 2025.

In addition, developments have included planning conditions securing Section 106 contributions, which have helped fund biodiversity projects on existing green spaces, such as 'The Rush' fish pass at Sheep's Green LNR and new wetlands at Logan's Meadow LNR.

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service between the City and South Cambridgeshire District Council allows us to help plan on a strategic Greater Cambridge geography for existing and new green infrastructure and measurable biodiversity net gain within our emerging shared local plan. Identifying land not just for new homes but for new habitats and green connections to meet our duty under the Environment Act 2021.

4.2 Cambridge biodiversity in context

The biodiversity emergency we are experiencing is not just local but also global. Current global species extinction rates are 100 to 1000 times higher than the expected baseline rate, and they are increasing. Some of the key driving forces which are causing the emergency are increasing demands for housing, food and energy production. These can result in habitat loss, habitat degradation, habitat fragmentation and environmental pollution. They also contribute to, and exacerbate, the effects of climate change.

The result is a decrease in species diversity, or changes in how different plant and animals interact. Ultimately these declines and changes undermine nature's productivity, resilience and adaptability placing it at risk of further damage or collapse.

All these pressures are damaging to the intrinsic value of biodiversity, and the ecosystem services that we rely on for our social, economic and environmental health and wellbeing - including clean air, urban cooling, flood alleviation and food to name but a few. A thriving biodiverse environment is critical for life with a growing evidence base to suggest that we lead healthier lives, both mentally and physically, if we have more opportunities to interact with nature.

The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world (ranked 189 out of 218). Almost 15% of all species in the UK are at risk from extinction. With 72% of the UK land area managed for agriculture it is no surprise that changes in this industrial sector, responding to Government policy and societal changes, have one of the greatest impacts on our nation's biodiversity. Other drivers for change include urbanisation, invasive species, hydrological change and climate change.

In comparison to other parts of the UK, Cambridgeshire has some of the lowest proportions of threatened Priority Habitats and land designated for nature conservation, and it has the second lowest proportion of woodland coverage. Within the region intensive agricultural has also been instrumental in land use changes and biodiversity losses. Grassland cover has decreased from around 30% in the 1930s to less than 10% in 2018, being replaced in large part by arable farmland. Cambridgeshire also contains relatively little accessible green infrastructure for people, while growing populations are placing greater recreational pressures on these existing greenspaces.

The same suite of threats impact on the biodiversity of Cambridge as they do throughout the rest of the world. Our city and its associated sub region are experiencing rapid urban growth, including housing, commercial and institutional development. Whilst this helps support a thriving local economy it places significant pressure on our natural environment[1] and the biodiversity it supports.

It is challenging in an urban environment to balance the needs of both wildlife and people. If we are to reverse the declines in biodiversity, we must value and make space for nature in the urban communities where we live and in the surrounding countryside. This will mean protecting and enhancing the precious biodiversity resources that we have left but also ensuring there is sufficient outdoor recreational space for residents to be able to access and enjoy.

The very fact that these pressures are occurring at a local level does mean that it is within our power to do something about them. Biodiversity is resilient, particularly in our towns and cities; and has the capacity to bounce back. There are many examples of positive interventions making a difference for biodiversity within the city and across the UK.

The suite of actions set out within this strategy is the response of Cambridge City Council to the biodiversity emergency we face locally, nationally, and internationally. We recognise the importance of a healthy and biodiverse environment that is sustainably planned and managed to ensure the current and future prosperity and health and wellbeing of all sections of our communities. Our aim is to go beyond simply halting the decline in biodiversity but to actively restore the quality of our natural environment and leave our city's wildlife in a better state than that in which we found it. We hope the following strategy will inspire you to join us and help to deliver the proposed actions and associated changes needed to achieve this.

4.3 Legislation and policy

This Biodiversity Strategy considers and is aligned with a range of national, regional and local policies and plans, as outlined below, Legislative documents, policy reports and reviews or policy drivers are described in further detail in Appendix 1.

National Legislation

- Environment Act 2021
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000

Policy documents (national, regional and local)

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 (updated 2024)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) and Cambridge Local Plan (2018)
- Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan (publication timeline December 2026)
- South Cambridgeshire District Council Doubling Nature Strategy (2021)
- Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (2022)
- UK National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (NBSAP) 2025
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (December 2025)

Reviews, plans and policy drivers (national, regional, and local)

- Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping (2020/2021)
- Greater Cambridge chalk streams project report (2024)
- CCC/MKA Ecology Ltd Biodiversity Audit (2021)
- Natural England Nature Networks
- Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security (HM Gov 2026)
- Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network (The Lawton Report, 2010)
- Cambridge Nature Network Report

Our strategy recognises and adopts the principle of the following national initiatives that support our vision and objectives.

The Big Chalk Partnership

An ambitious, national-scale alliance of over 150 organisations—primarily National Landscapes, National Parks, conservation groups, farms, community groups, and government agencies—working across southern England's chalk and limestone geologies, Big Chalk promotes collaborative conservation, data-driven project planning, and dynamic partnerships to ensure these vulnerable landscapes thrive in a changing climate.

Butterfly Conservation **-** ***Butterfly-Friendly Cities***

Butterfly conservation focuses on protecting butterfly species and their habitats, which are vital indicators of a healthy ecosystem. Urban areas can play a key role through the concept of a "butterfly-friendly city," where green spaces, parks, gardens, and roadside verges are managed to provide nectar-rich plants, native wildflowers, and shelter for butterflies. These cities reduce pesticide use, create pollinator corridors, and encourage community involvement in planting and monitoring..

Nature Town & Cities

Nature Towns and Cities is a coalition—led by Natural England, the National Trust, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and partners—aiming to transform urban living through nature. It seeks to give more people access to green and blue spaces within a 15-minute walk and enable more children to play in nature on their doorstep.

CABA (the Catchments Based Approach)

A community-led, collaborative framework for managing water environments at the river-catchment scale across England and Wales. It brings together a wide range of partners—including environmental NGOs, local authorities, government agencies, landowners, businesses, and community groups—to share evidence, develop joint catchment plans, and deliver integrated actions that improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, reduce flood risk, and support climate resilience.

4.4 Local initiatives

The continued decline in biodiversity has prompted several local and regional initiatives that seek to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity through both development and land management practices. Many of these seek landscape scale restoration of habitats to ensure that ecosystems are resilient. The City Council seeks

to support these through both policies and projects to ensure that opportunities are realised on our land holdings, and we deliver biodiversity improvements through our statutory functions, operational services and community influence.

Natural Cambridgeshire (Local Nature Partnership) Doubling Nature Vision

Natural Cambridgeshire is a partnership of leaders from businesses, local authorities, the health sector, farming, wildlife and environmental organisations that exists to champion, influence and enable the fulfilment of the Doubling nature vision

Cambridge Nature Network

The Cambridge Nature Network is a landscape scale biodiversity initiative led by the Local Wildlife Trust and Cambridge Past Present and Future with support from local Councils and other key landowning partners. The initiative is founded on an evidence based spatial plan for protecting and enhancing nature, focussed on the best of the remaining habitats within 10km of the city and key opportunities and locations for creating new habitats and associated linkages. Through collaboration with landowners and communities it represents an ambitious but achievable vision for local nature recovery.

Draft South Cambridgeshire Climate & Nature Strategy 2026–2030

South Cambridgeshire District Councils vision to empower the district to lead in climate action, enhance environmental stewardship, protect and restore nature, and build resilience for communities in the face of escalating climate impacts. Its key principles focus on embedding climate and nature objectives throughout the council's work, leveraging partnerships, and prioritising actions that deliver co-benefits—benefiting both nature and people—while enabling sustainable economic growth and improving wellbeing

Cambridge University Biodiversity Action Plan

Representing considerable land holdings across the city, this plan seeks to deliver a significant and measurable improvement in the biodiversity of the University of Cambridge estate, and the Greater Cambridge area more generally, in a manner that educates and inspires an appreciation of the natural environment, and that encourages interventions, research and innovation to enhance and protect biodiversity for future generations.

Wicken Fen Vision

The National Trust's Wicken Fen Vision is an ambitious, 100-year plan to create a diverse landscape for wildlife and people stretching from Wicken Fen to the edge of Cambridge. By restoring natural processes, careful management of water and grazing will allow the land to evolve a mosaic of habitats for a wide variety of abundant wildlife. People will be able to enjoy access and recreation opportunities across a beautiful, tranquil natural fenland landscape, with opportunities for volunteering, education, and interpretation.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The LNRS is a legally mandated framework under the Environment Act 2021, aimed at reversing nature decline in one of England's most nature depleted regions. Spearheaded by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (responsible authority) in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, Natural Cambridgeshire and local (supporting) authorities, the strategy sets biodiversity priorities, maps existing and potential habitats, and identifies key areas and species for ecological restoration.

Meadow and urban forest planting at Cherry Hinton Hall

4.5 Cambridge City Council role

We manage more than 80 parks and open spaces, such as play areas, allotments, community gardens and orchards, totalling over 742 hectares. Some of these sites are designated and managed predominantly as nature reserves, for their wildlife value and form part of the key Cambridge Nature Network, whilst others provide valuable predominantly recreational open space for residents and visitors to enjoy. Whatever the primary purpose and size of these spaces, combined they provide a huge potential for increasing the extent, quality and connectivity of habitats within the city and their contribution to the wider Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Therefore, we have an obligation and opportunity to ensure that all sites maximise their potential for biodiversity, provide good examples of habitat management and creation and hopefully influence other landowners to do the same.

Watercourses

We manage approximately 23 kilometres of awarded watercourses, including some of our precious chalk streams, by ensuring management is sensitive to biodiversity, whilst providing our statutory drainage functions, we can protect such iconic species as otter, water vole, kingfishers and brown trout in the city. We have developed the Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project to deliver and monitor evidence-based restoration work to inform future investment. We also manage a significant stretch of the main riverbank through the city. Wherever possible we are seeking to ‘naturalise’ previously engineered banks such as at Stourbridge Common, creating new backwaters and wetland such as on Logan's Meadow LNR and providing passage for fish around artificial obstructions, such as at the weir at Byron’s Pool LNR and ‘The Rush’ fish pass at Sheep’s Green LNR.

Common land

We are custodians of our precious common land and oversee the historic grazing management practice that retains flood meadow landscapes and iconic cattle grazing in the heart of the city. These grasslands form a key part of the network of Cambridge spaces and offer potential for enhanced management to benefit biodiversity, urban drainage and capture carbon emissions.

Urban forest

Through implementation of our Urban Forest Strategy (2026 – 2036), we manage over 30,000 trees, contributing to the urban forest that provides both wildlife and communities with a range of ecosystem services, making our neighbourhoods cooler, cleaner and more attractive places to live. Streets trees provide vital shade for

communities as well as habitat and ‘stepping stones’ for species living in or moving through the built environment.

Property estate

Our property estate includes rental units, iconic buildings such as the Guildhall and council housing properties with gardens and communal open spaces. How we manage, renovate, and invest in these assets will impact upon existing species present and provide opportunities for restoring nature where people live and work.

Community action and volunteering

Through our Community Service, Community Engagement Team we offer support to local site Friends Groups, providing opportunities for volunteering in our parks and open spaces, and work closely with local community groups including On the Verge promoting new wildflower meadows and Action for Swifts, with swift box provision such as on Queen Ann Terrace car park and at Edgecombe Flats.

We provide local schools with natural green spaces for valuable environmental education opportunities enabling pupils to explore, experience and value nature close to home.

As a local authority we are often a key partner in many local initiatives and projects with links to community groups. By promoting biodiversity through raising awareness in communities, we can ensure that opportunities for people to connect with, protect, enhance, and appreciate nature are realised.

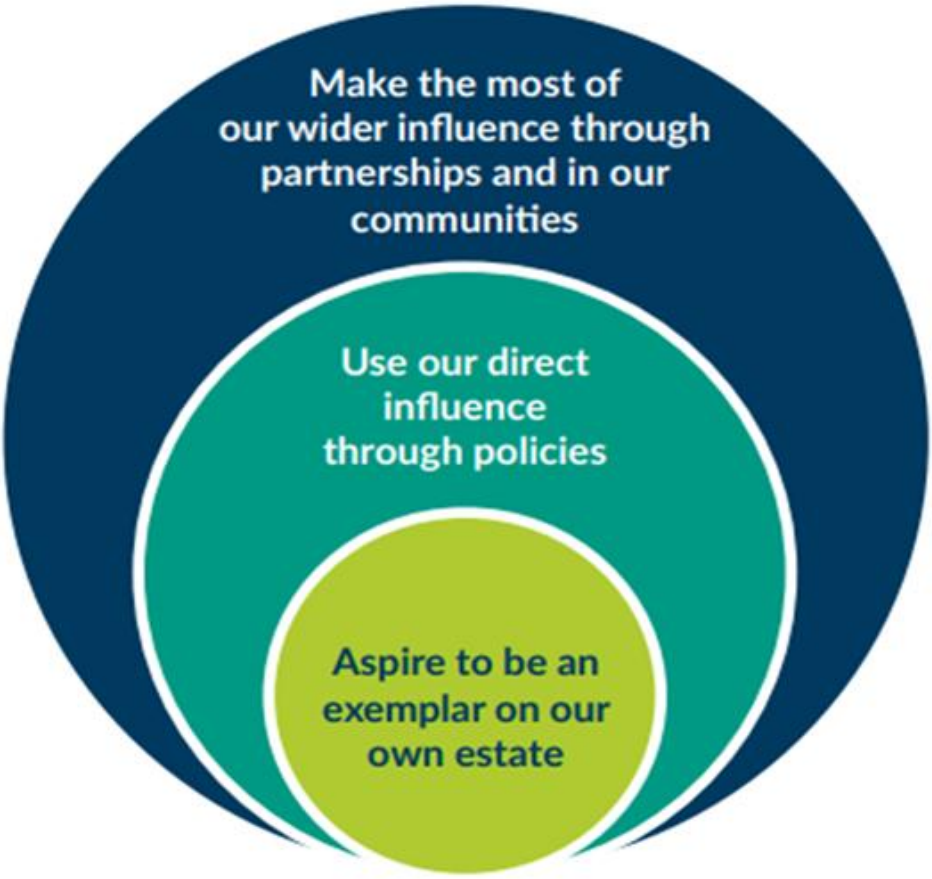


Figure 1. Our role in local nature recovery

4.6 Biodiversity in Cambridge

The geological and landscape setting

There are three National Character Areas (NCA) around Cambridge, each with distinctive geological features which dictate the landscape character and biodiversity contained within them.

To the north and west is (NCA 88) Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Clay lands. A broad gently undulating lowland plateau with shallow rivers, and notably the Great Ouse and Nene, which broaden as they reach the Fens. The area is dominated by intensive arable farming. There is an underlying clay geology which is overlain by glacial deposits of chalky boulder clays which add great character to the ancient woodlands in the area.

To the south and east is (NCA 87) East Anglian Chalk. Characterised by smooth rolling chalkland hills with large irregular field enclosed by low-lying hedgerows. Much of the area is under cereal production but important semi-natural habitats include lowland calcareous grassland and the chalk streams which are under significant threat from modification, pollution and abstraction.

Further north and east of the city, and with a narrow corridor alongside the River Cam, is (NCA 46) The Fens. Characterised as an expansive low-lying wetland landscape. Woodland cover is sparse, and the open fields are bounded by drains and river systems which provide an important ecological network. An important area for biodiversity with several internationally recognised areas of nature conservation value.

Within the City of Cambridge, it is possible to see the influence of each of these regions on the habitats and species that are present. Directly to the south-east of the city are chalky grasslands with exposed chalk (such as East Pit in Cherry Hinton). To the north and east are areas which have characteristics of fenland with reedbeds and drains (such as Wilbraham Fen). To the west, and running right through the heart of the city, are riverside meadows and pastures which are characteristic of the semi-natural habitats of the clay lands (such as Grantchester Meadows and Midsummer Common).

The ecological setting

Statutory and non-statutory designated areas

Within Cambridge there are a range of areas designated for their nature conservation value. These include statutorily designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which are of national significance for the biodiversity and geological features they

support. The statutory sites also include LNRs which are of statutory local significance for both people and wildlife.

Non-statutory sites include County Wildlife Sites (CWS), which represent some of the most important habitats in Cambridgeshire. Within the city itself are a suite of City Wildlife Sites (CiWS) and Protected Road Verges (PRVs). These areas do not meet national or County criteria for statutory designation, but they do meet important criteria at a local level and contain many locally significant habitats and species.

The habitats and species at these locations are varied but typically reflect the wider landscape with woodlands, chalk grasslands and rivers and streams. Some are designated for the species they support, such as water vole. Some habitats and species within Cambridge are listed as Habitats of Principal Importance and Species of Principal Importance, or Priority Habitats and Species. These are listed on the NERC Act (2006) and represent some of the most valued habitats and species in the UK.

Other greenspaces

Cambridge is fortunate to have a host of other greenspaces which all make a significant contribution to our biodiversity. These include country parks, such as those at Milton (just outside the city boundary in South Cambridgeshire) and Trumpington Meadows (which straddles the border with South Cambridgeshire). There are also other accessible natural greenspaces including Grantchester Meadows, Hobson's Park, and new areas of open space at Eddington and Darwin Green in north-west Cambridge.

Cambridge is a 'green' city. Beyond the formal greenspaces such as designated areas and parks, there are also numerous informal greenspaces, including community gardens and orchards, private gardens as well as college grounds, street trees and increasingly, green roofs. Tree canopy covers approximately 17.6% of the city making a significant contribution to the biodiversity resource in Cambridge.

The Cambridge Nature Network

Two priority areas of the Cambridge Nature Network directly interact with the city and surrounding countryside. The Cambridge Nature Network Priority Areas have been identified by grouping core sites based on landscape features, topography, and hydrology. Within these areas, potential extension habitats (or 'steppingstones') are proposed with a view to creating coherent joined up nature networks, which are resilient to the modern-day pressures on our biodiversity. The Cambridge Nature Network target is to achieve a 30% coverage of wildlife rich habitats within each Priority Area.

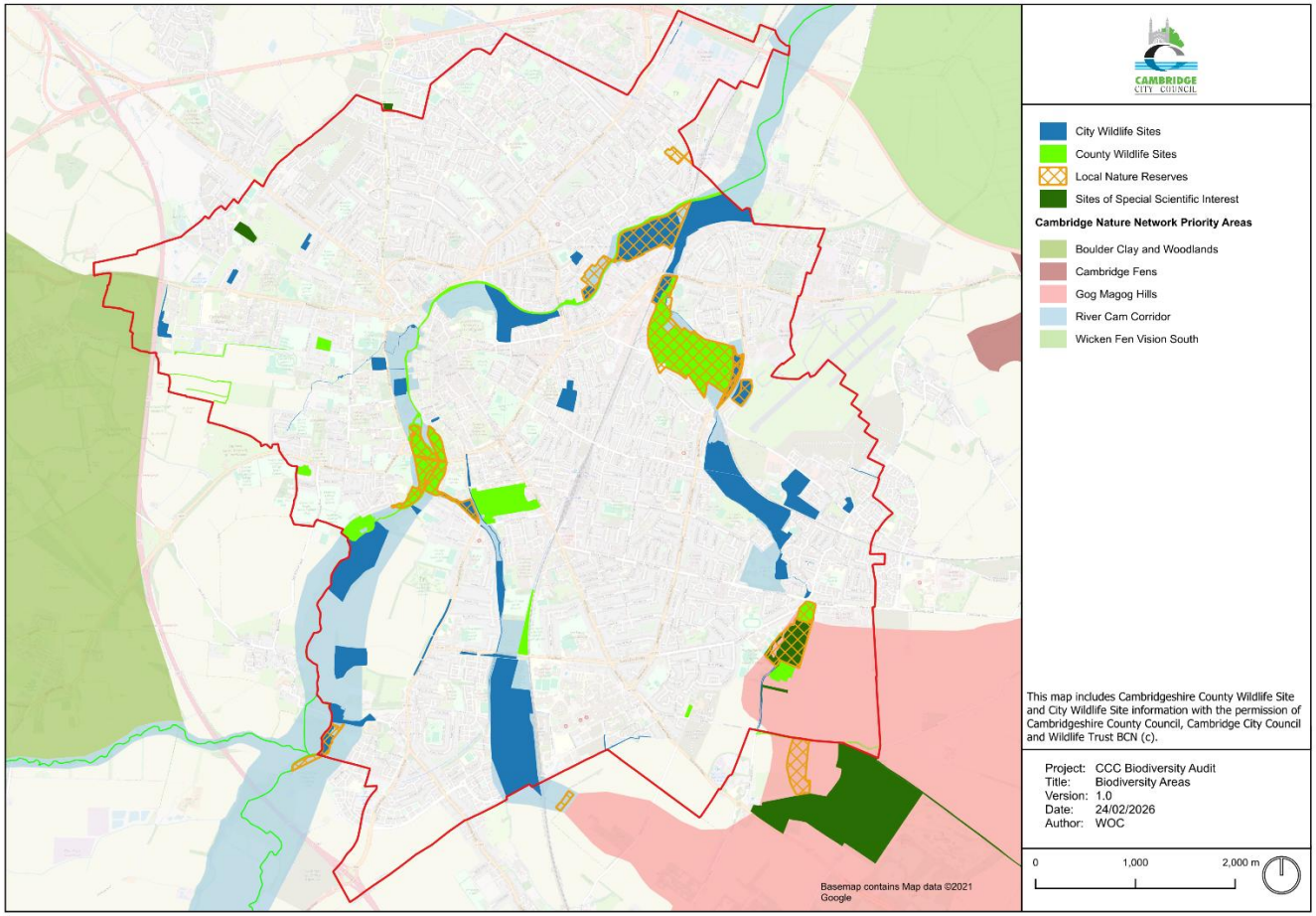
The River Cam Corridor Priority Area passes right through the heart of Cambridge following the course of the Cam. This Priority Area also includes the tributaries of the Cam which flow from the south, such as Cherry Hinton Brook and Hobson's Brook. This is a critical Priority Area within the network as it provides the connection linking other Priority Areas to the north, south, east and west. Many of these sites and watercourses are managed by Cambridge City Council so we are uniquely placed to help deliver the network through the city.

Just south of Cambridge, the Gog Magog Hills Priority Area reaches to the fringe of the city. This Priority Area is characterised by the underlying chalk with the key sites of nature conservation importance located at the Cherry Hinton chalk pit complex at this point on the edge of Cambridge. It stretches further south and east of the city with other important chalk habitats, such as the Roman Road Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

There are four other Cambridge Nature Network Priority/Opportunity Areas. Directly to the north and east are the Cambridge Fens Priority Areas and Wicken Fen Vision South Priority Area. To the west lies the Boulder Clay Woodlands Priority Area and further north is the Fen Edge Orchards and Droves Opportunity Area.

The Cambridge Nature Network has been integrated into the statutory Cambridgeshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Map 1 showing designated biodiversity sites and CNN / LNRS priority areas in Cambridge



Cambridge key habitats

The various sites in the Cambridge Nature Network support several core habitats with distinct species, pressures and management requirements.

Grasslands

Cambridge grasslands range from small areas of rare species-rich lowland calcareous grassland to wide expanses of species poor amenity grasslands, which are widespread throughout the city. Significant grassland habitats are present along the Cam corridor and these run through the centre of Cambridge including Sheep's Green, Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common. These areas, with their grazing cattle, give Cambridge its unique rural character. Coldham's Common provides further large areas of grassland with a mix of amenity grassland through to more species diverse neutral and calcareous grasslands. There have been significant additions to the species-rich grassland resource in recent years with the creation of Trumpington Meadows Country Park and Hobson's Park to support local developments.

Priority grassland types within Cambridge include:

- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland meadows

Woodland

Woodlands are uncommon in Cambridgeshire with very few areas of ancient woodland remaining. Areas of naturally regenerated woodland are present throughout the city however and include Byron's Pool in Trumpington and the Bird Sanctuary, The Spinney and Limekiln Road LNR, all situated in Cherry Hinton. Several areas of wet woodland occur, primarily at Paradise and Logan's Meadow LNR.

Priority woodland types within Cambridge include:

- Lowland beech and yew woodland
- Wet woodland
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

Sheep's Green contains wood pasture habitat which comprises mature trees set within semi-natural grassland habitats. This combination of habitats, and particularly the veteran and ancient pollard willows, is important for numerous invertebrates including the scarce musk beetle. These woodlands and mature trees also provide roosting and

foraging habitats for a range of bat species, such as common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat

Hedgerows and scrub

Old and mature hedgerows are uncommon in the city with a few remaining examples at King's Hedges and Cherry Hinton. There are significant areas of scrub habitats, particularly around Coldham's Common and Barnwell within the designated sites at these locations.

Priority hedgerow and scrub habitats within Cambridge include:

- Hedgerows

These old hedgerows and scrub habitats provide important habitats through the city and particularly for bird species which use them for breeding during the spring and summer months and for foraging and cover in the autumn and winter months.

Wetlands and watercourses

The River Cam corridor contains a variety of wetland habitats, including wet grasslands, reedbeds, and the chalk streams which form tributaries to the Cam. The chalk streams around and within the city are very scarce habitats of international importance. Other wetland habitats occur away from the River Cam and these include ponds, lakes, and ditches.

Priority wetland habitats within Cambridge include:

- Reedbeds
- Ponds
- Rivers (including Chalk Streams)

The River Cam presents one of our most important wetland habitats, and, combined with its tributaries, forms a network of habitats through the city. To the northeast Teversham and Wilbraham Fen are biodiversity 'hotspots', which are home to a wealth of specialist birds, invertebrates and other species which reside in the reedbed and wetland habitats there.

Our wetland habitats are home to eels, kingfisher, grey wagtail, otter and water vole. Water voles have suffered significant national declines as a species but Cambridgeshire, and Cambridge in particular, remains a stronghold. They thrive in the slow-flowing, well-vegetated ditches found through the city.

Urban

Urban habitats dominate the city and often offer surprising opportunities for wildlife. There are pockets of habitats for species to thrive, including gardens, allotments, and street trees. Increasingly the built environment is purposefully designed to accommodate biodiversity with integrated bird and bat boxes and green roofs.

Priority urban habitats within Cambridge include:

- Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land

The David Attenborough Building on the New Museums Site is an example of how biodiversity can work with the built environment. Here green roofs provide habitats high above street level, and swifts nest in boxes that are built into the towers. Swifts are charismatic birds that form part of the backdrop to a Cambridge summer with squadrons of screaming birds swooping through the streets and nesting within the cracks and crevices of the buildings. Similarly, House Martins use buildings as nesting sites, for example at Addenbrookes Biomedical campus and in the gatehouse at King's College. The buildings of Cambridge also host breeding peregrine falcon, which can regularly be seen surveying the city from the spires of King's College Chapel.

Many species of bat roost in the buildings in the city, and some are specialists that will typically only roost in buildings. This includes serotine bat which can be seen hawking and swooping for prey over Nightingale Recreation Ground. As you move towards the edge of the city where the gardens tend to be bigger you are more likely to encounter other important species such as song thrush, or even part of the thriving urban badger population.

- Gardens

Collectively private gardens form the biggest land use within the city and are therefore vital in providing green space and tree canopy cover. Multiple ownership means that the individual biodiversity value of these spaces varies greatly but there is potential to greatly increase biodiversity value through relatively simple changes to management or initiative such as creating hedgehog highways to link gardens. Studies have shown that sensitively managed gardens can support a wide range of species that are often declining in the wider farmland landscape. The installation of garden ponds can benefit many species include amphibians, particularly when associated with other habitats such as long grass and wood piles that provide areas to forage and shelter.

The cultural setting

Cambridge is a place of naturalists and conservationists and has been for many years. We have perhaps one of the most studied natural histories of any city. It is possible to trace this history through just one plant in the city. The Butterbur patch which grows alongside the River Cam at Paradise LNR was first recorded in that location in the 1600s by the notable botanist John Ray. It has been recorded in that location ever since, its flowers appearing in early spring before the leaves.

Cambridge is home to many individuals, trusts, societies, groups, and institutes with nature conservation at the heart of what they do. Some groups have been well-established in the city for considerable periods of time, such as the Cambridge Natural History Society which has been studying the biodiversity of the area for over 164 years. Other more recently established organisations such as the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, a collaboration of the University and conservation organisations, have a world-wide reach far beyond the perimeter of the city. Whilst these groups are varied and diverse, they each have a shared goal to conserve and promote biodiversity. Collectively they present an enormous opportunity for successful collaboration to help Cambridge lead the way in the world as an example of how biodiversity and communities can co-exist and thrive together in a city geography.

4.7 Local threats and pressures

As with many other urban areas there are pressures and threats in Cambridge which degrade and deplete our biodiversity resource. To understand the opportunities and threats to biodiversity in Cambridge we commissioned the Biodiversity Audit and the Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project Report. These reports also identified several threats and pressures which are specific to our local area. The key pressures on biodiversity within Cambridge include:

- Habitat loss: Direct loss of biodiverse habitats and the species they support
- Habitat fragmentation: Removal of the links between areas resulting in smaller, less resilient habitats
- Habitat degradation: A deterioration in the condition of the habitat, such as reduction in species diversity

The key local causes of these are:

- Urbanisation: This can result in direct habitat loss and fragmentation. It could also lead to a degradation of habitats, for example from the effects of artificial light. Other indirect effects include poor air quality from increasing traffic. Nitrogen from exhaust fumes can over time increase nutrients in greenspaces and alter the composition of these habitats.
- Recreational pressure: As the population grows there is increasing demand on our greenspaces. Many habitats and species in the city are sensitive to disturbance. Impacts include trampling, or disturbance and nutrient deposition from the increasing popularity of dog walking in the city. Dog fouling deposits nutrients in sensitive habitats and this can change the vegetative composition of the area. Dogs off leads can have significant effects on ground nesting birds or disturbance of other animals such as mammals.
- Hydrological change: The Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project identified hydrological change as a major driver for negative impacts on our chalk streams and rivers. This includes channel modification and over-abstraction for domestic, agriculture and commercial use depleting aquifers leading to low flow and poor water quality. These result in habitat loss and degradation.
- Lack of appropriate habitat management: Many of our habitats require some form of human intervention to check ‘succession’ where they mature into less diverse habitats which support a smaller number of species. Examples include periodic coppicing (cutting to near ground level) of scrub and woodland to increase light to the ground or adjoining watercourses and promote new dense growth for bird nesting. Or grazing to prevent scrub encroaching onto rarer grassland habitats.

There are also wider causes, such as climate change which has the potential to alter habitats and species populations, thereby making them more scarce or isolated. These threats and pressures do not recognise the boundaries that we impose as humans. They pass through natural pathways, such as river catchments, and consequently their solutions will lie outside the city too. This requires us to work with stakeholders across a greater area across administrative boundaries

5. Biodiversity Audit

As part of the development of the 2022 Biodiversity Strategy, we established a baseline of habitat types and their condition for the key natural green spaces in our ownership so that we could plan and monitor management and enhancements to deliver a measurable gain in biodiversity. To quantity this we used the Biodiversity Metric tool developed by Natural England in partnership with DEFRA, It uses the size, type, and condition of habitats as a proxy for their importance and value for nature (Crosher *et al.,* 2019b).

The full 2020 baseline Biodiversity audit is available here: https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/9597/biodiversity-audit.pdf

To inform the midterm review and revised site management plans we undertook a sample habitat condition audit on 14 of the original core sites including LNRs, Commons and Mill Rd Cemetery.

Table1 showing 2025 combined habitat condition and direction of travel

Site	Overall condition assessment
Coldham's Common	Moderate - stable
Stourbridge Common	Poor – stable
Sheep's Green, Coe Fen, Lower Vicar's Brook, New Bit and Coe Fen Straits	Moderate - stable
Barnwell East	Moderate - stable
Barnwell West	Moderate - declining
Paradise	Good - stable
Byron's Pool	Moderate – declining
Nine Wells	Moderate - stable
Midsummer Common	Poor - stable
Bramblefields	Moderate – declining

West Pit	Good - stable
Logan's Meadow	Moderate - improving
Mill Road Cemetery	Moderate - stable
Hobson's Park	Moderate – improving

Conditions sometimes varied across habitats on each site and a more detailed breakdown is available in Appendix 2.

To support clearer and more consistent reporting, we will develop a simplified framework for defining "measurable net gain" across all Council managed core biodiversity sites, in line with neighbouring authorities, to ensure comparable reporting. This will include a streamlined methodology for assessing habitat extent, condition and connectivity, aligned with the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric but expressed in a way that is easy for practitioners, partners and the public to understand. This framework will set out how results are calculated, how often assessments are completed, and how progress will be communicated through our annual public reporting.

6. Biodiversity Strategy

Cambridge City Council recognises the global biodiversity emergency and the local impact this will have, and is having, on the city and communities we serve. Therefore, in 2019 we pledged to provide leadership and to ensure that we work with all sections of the community, including schools, community groups, university colleges, businesses and residents to reverse the decline in biodiversity and deliver measurable net gain within Cambridge and the wider sub-region. Within this section we have defined our vision and objectives and set out our proposed actions to enable us to achieve this.

'Our 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 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 the 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'.

Our aim is to put biodiversity at the forefront of everything that we do. By maximising opportunities for collaboration, we are working in partnership with residents, businesses, and institutions, and building upon existing strategies for climate and trees, to achieve this goal.

We will promote the principles set out in the Lawton Report: bigger, better, more joined up. This will require improvements and enhancements to our core sites in the city to create a biodiverse blue and green thread through the heart of Cambridge. We will see a healthy river and tributaries flowing through their natural floodplain habitats. Areas of existing grasslands will be improved, former wetland features will be restored, and new ones created. This network will help to restore healthy populations of iconic species such as otter, eel, and water vole.

Beyond this core area we will strive to create a city that is more permeable for nature. We have made a commitment to enhance our own estate to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity. And we have also made a commitment to engage and enable others in the city to do the same. Building upon our core network this will help to join the dots and connect people to nature, creating a city where birdsong and buzzing invertebrates can be heard and experienced by everyone, everywhere who lives, works, visits and studies in Cambridge.

The biodiversity emergency is intricately linked with the climate emergency. Many of the proposed actions set out below will also serve to alleviate the climate emergency. The actions set out within our climate change strategy will contribute to resolving the biodiversity emergency. Therefore, our updated Climate Change, Urban Forest and Biodiversity strategies will work together to ensure we do maximise our effort to tackle these threats.

Our strategic objectives are:

1. **To secure a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the city by 2031, compared with the 2020 baseline, in support of the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Vision by 2030**

2. **To ensure designated sites and priority habitats are in good / favourable condition, wherever feasible, and that by 2031 no Council-managed LNR, Common or County Wildlife Site remains in poor condition without a management plan in place. Thus enhancing habitat and species resilience**

to a changing climate and contributing to the Cambridge Nature Network and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3. **To engage and promote awareness of biodiversity and wellbeing, supporting and empowering coordinated action in our communities, businesses, and institutions through embedding Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework strategies and principles, with particular focus on wards with high social disadvantage or poor access to natural green space**

4. **To ensure that biodiversity protection and enhancement is considered by all council service functions and projects in line with our statutory Biodiversity Duty**

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 work with partners to establish long term, species and habitat monitoring to measure the impact of activities and identify new threats and opportunities across the city and publish an annual report on progress**

To meet the objectives, the proposed actions have been grouped within three themes:

Biodiversity mainstreaming: This theme is about embedding biodiversity into everything that we do as a council, whether that is constructing new houses, buying materials, or undertaking our role as a planning authority. We will ensure that biodiversity considerations are integrated into business cases, procurement and asset management decisions and provide practical guidance and training to service managers to support this. Thus, ensuring our actions minimise negative impacts on biodiversity as well as seek opportunities to enhance it. We will aim to develop cross-cutting strategies and solutions between all services that promote biodiversity and focus on nature-based solutions.

Our ambition is to consider the intrinsic value of conserving and enhancing biodiversity, as part of everything that we do. We will take steps to ensure that we review the effects of our activities and decisions on biodiversity and that, wherever

feasible, we can be working to promote and enhance the biodiversity of the city. We will take our objectives concerning biodiversity policy and consider them within all other areas of our work, for example our housing, transport, and economy. We will strengthen internal communication through regular cross service meetings, shared guidance, and clearer governance arrangements to ensure that biodiversity considerations are embedded consistently and that teams are aligned in their approach to site management and project delivery.

We recognise that biodiversity not only has intrinsic value and beauty but also provides our life support system, whilst further contributing to all our lives in Cambridge by generating economic, community, health and well-being benefits.

The mainstreaming approach will also help us to explore sustainable nature-based solutions across the city. This means we can use nature to help us solve some of the biggest issues that face us today including climate change, water and flood management or atmospheric pollutants from vehicles. This process will recognise and value nature as an asset that delivers multiple benefits to us.

The core: This theme is about developing our core of biodiversity sites in Cambridge. This includes reviewing and updating management plans for our most important nature conservation areas and working with partners to ensure a coherent and resilient nature network through Cambridge and beyond.

The Lawton Report encourages ‘bigger, better and more joined up’ habitats. The aim of this theme is to focus on our core sites, many of which are situated within the Cambridge Nature Recovery Network. Here we aim to focus on ‘bigger and better’ by improving biodiversity management of our core greenspaces, and wherever possible making more space for nature at these locations.

Many of these sites fall within the Cambridge Nature Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategy, our work here will help us make a meaningful contribution to these initiatives to deliver a joined up and resilient biodiversity network. The City Council will work to achieve enhanced habitat condition in these core locations to contribute to Natural Cambridgeshire’s vision to double nature.

We will endeavour to ensure that communities are informed in advance of any significant habitat works on our Local Nature Reserves, Commons and other core sites. Clear communication — including on site signage, online updates, and engagement with Friends Groups — will explain the purpose, timing and benefits of the works to help site users understand why temporary changes are necessary and how they will contribute to long term ecological improvement.

Nature in your neighbourhood: This theme is about encouraging nature to flourish across the city through empowerment and collaboration with communities, businesses and institutions. The aim is to ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations and that it can be enjoyed, understood, and experienced by all, regardless of where in the city people live, their income, or their housing type.

The biodiversity emergency is too big a problem to solve alone. In this theme we have developed actions which require a collaborative approach to the problem and to help encourage nature on your doorstep. Many of the actions relate to how people interact with nature in Cambridge, and we will provide the means and inspiration to help facilitate and encourage positive steps to be taken at a local level. We have developed actions to promote collaborative working in the city, drawing on the wealth of biodiversity expertise that we are fortunate to have in Cambridge. Other actions provide communities with the information or resources they need to help biodiversity in their neighbourhood. We will continue our commitment to existing initiatives, such as our hedgehog highways and neighbourhood canopy projects.

Our aim is to encourage engagement with nature to ensure that it is pervasive throughout the entire city. It is vitally important that we work hard to ensure that our key sites of nature conservation are protected and managed effectively. However, we need to go beyond these islands of biodiversity and work to create greater connectivity for nature. Within this theme we are focussing on the Lawton's Report 'more joined up'.

We will work with communities to develop ward-based nature priorities, aligned with the LNRS and Cambridge Nature Network, and we will support residents to shape and monitor local projects.

7 Action plan (2026 – 2031)

Since adoption of the strategy in 2022 we have been collaborating on actions to achieve our objectives. Appendix Biodiversity Duty Report summarises our key activities under our 3 themes and celebrates successes to date.

Moving forward to achieve our vision and objectives we will continue to collaborate with partners to deliver the following action plan (2026 – 2031) and monitor our collective outcomes. An annual review of this plan based on monitoring evidence and community feedback will identify actions that are delivered, delayed or require amendment and propose new projects or actions to meet our objectives.

Biodiversity Mainstreaming *'Consider and embed nature in everything we do'*

Actions	Lead & Partners	Outcomes	Timeline
Adopt, support delivery and monitoring of the LNRS. Continue representation on LNRS delivery steering group	City Services, Natural Cambridgeshire, CPCA, Cambridgeshire County Council	Strategic delivery of habitat and species actions within the city and beyond	Adopted December 2025 – Delivery and monitoring Plan 2026 Delivery – 2026 - 2031
Adoption and implementation of Shared Local Plan	GCSPS, SCDC	Robust, evidenced biodiversity policies, aligned with LNRS and BNG delivery to guide sustainable development	Proposed adoption by December 2026
Adoption and implementation of Urban Forest Strategy (2026 - 2036)	City Services, Community Services	Management, protection, planting of and engagement with the urban forest	Adoption March 2026 – Delivery 2026 – 2036
Ensure CIP and other City Council developments achieve a minimum 20% BNG target across all projects	CIP, GCSPS	New development secure high-quality habitats and species enhancement with published long-term management and monitoring in place.	2026 -2031
Implement Environmental Management System to secure ISO14001 accreditation for City	City Services	Improved environmental performance across City Service	March 2026

operation hub and activities			
Explore rainwater harvesting on Council owned properties	City Service, Property Services, Water Resources East (WRE)	Reduced abstraction from aquifer for tree watering and other operation functions	Explore Feasibility and performance metric in 2026, deliver 2027 - 2031
Continue to deliver Herbicide Reduction Plan	City Services, property Services	Continue herbicide free maintenance of our public realm advocate through Cambridge Matters and social media for residents, business and institutes to follow suit	2026 - 2031
Continue biodiversity representation on the existing Environment Policy & Project Group to improve cross service communication,	City Services, Community Services, GCSPS, Housing, Property Services	Integration of biodiversity objectives across all council functions; improved delivery efficiency; stronger alignment between services.	2026 – 2031

The Core '*working with partners to ensure a coherent resilient nature network*'

Actions	**Lead & Partners**	**Outcomes**	**Timeline**
Continued support of Cambridge Nature Network	City Services, CPPF, BCN WT, Cambridge Ahead, National Trust, RSPB, East	Collaborate on funding bids and sharing resource to create 'Bigger, better, more joined	2026 - 2031

	Cambridge Farming Cluster	up' habitats across the CNN	
Local Nature Reserve and Commons management	City Service, Community Services, Volunteers and Corporate Groups	Complete ongoing habitat management of our 12 LNRs, including control of invasive species. Deliver at least one habitats condition improvement (as defined by DEFRA Condition Assessment) in each site by 2031	2026 - 2031
Develop a simplified measurable net gain assessment framework for all Council managed core biodiversity sites	City Services. CPCA, Natural Cambridgeshire, CNN	Clearer reporting of biodiversity improvements; consistent measurement across sites; improved public and partner understanding	Develop 2026; implement 2027 - 2031
Continue our work with the Wildlife Trust to provide advice to private landowners and managers of Local Wildlife Sites to bring into positive management	City Services, BCN WT, private landowners	Increase number of designated Local Wildlife Sites in positive management, monitored annually by CPERC	2026 - 2031
Identification and designation of additional City Wildlife Sites and LNRs. Continue representation on County Wildlife Site Panel	City Services	Secure protection and enhanced management of qualifying sites	2026 -Cowley Road drain CiWS, Church End LNR and Fulbourn Rd LNR

Adopt and deliver new Management Plan Reviews for LNRs and Commons	City Services	New management plans embedded to ensure favourable habitat condition	13 sites reviewed in 2025 to be consulted, adopted and delivered in 2026 to 2031
Conservation Cattle Grazing Review	City Service, CNN, Licensed graziers	Review grazing timescales and number of animals to ensure we meet site management plan conditions and implement on all sites by 2031	Review in 2025 / 2026 Implement 2027 -2031
Trial the use of hardy sheep breeds within temporary fenced compartments on smaller sites.	City Services, CNN, East Cambridge Farmers Cluster	Enhanced grassland management of key sites to improve habitat condition	Consult in 2026, trial in 2027, if successful deliver from 2028 - 2031
Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project (GCCSP)	City Services, South Staffs Water, Cam Catchment Partnership, Anglian Water, Environment Agency, Hobson's Conduit Trust	Deliver and monitor 6 case study sites across City and Sith Cambs. Work with partners to deliver WINEP and other investment in Cambridge chalk streams	2026 - 2028
Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC)	City Service, GCSPS, CPERC	Continue support through Service Level Agreement and representation on the Steering Group	2026 - 2031
Develop and deliver a communications protocol to inform	City Services, Community Services,	Improved public understanding and support for habitat	Protocol developed 2026;

communities of habitat management works	Communications Team	interventions; reduced confusion or concern; strengthened relationships with site users.	implemented 2026–2031

Nature in your neighbourhood ***'ensure nature is not restricted to a few precious locations and can be enjoyed, understood and experienced by all'***

Actions	Lead & Partners	Outcomes	Timeline
Seek support and agree actions to embed Natural England Green Infrastructure principles to achieve Nature City Accreditation	City Services, Community Services, CNN, CCF Community Groups, Business	Strengthened partnership, shared leadership, community engagement, external recognition, increase funding opportunities	2026 Self-assessment. Build Partnership, seek Foundation Accreditation.
Parks Biodiversity Toolkit (publish 2021) promotion	City Services, Community services	Inspire communities to codesign and secure funding for local park biodiversity enhancement.	Seek to deliver at least 3 parks improvements per annum . 2026 - 2031
Nature Recovery 'From the Ground Up' LNRS delivery ward-based community action	City Services, Community Services, Cambridgeshire County Council, Community Groups	4-year Cambridge County Council Project targeting city wide, ward scale delivery of the LNRS.	2026 – 2030 programme to enable communities to develop and deliver LNRS actions locally
Butterfly Friendly Council (BFC)	City Services, Butterfly Conservation	Meet the 5 steps to become an official BFC including adopting ecological	2026 - 2027

		sensitive lighting principles on core sites	
Cambridge Elm diversity Project – *celebrating the unique diversity of Cambridgeshire Elm*	City Services, Community Service, BCN WT	Establish a 'community nursery' of local Elm species for planting in partnership across the CNN	2026 - 2031
Native Black Poplar Project	City Services, Community Services,	Establish a 'community nursery' of local cultivars for planting in partnership across the CNN	2026 - 2031
River Cam CAN, DiversiTree legacy	City Services, Community Services	Seek further funding to secure management and replacement planting for willow pollards	2026 - 2031
Cambridge Nature Festival	City Services, Community Services, CNN	Month long programme of free and low-cost events to connect people with nature	Support events and promotion in 2026, seek funding 2026 - 2031
Environmental Education Spaces Continue to support existing spaces and explore additional site resource, explore partnership working to support the 'Go Green in 15' initiative.	City Service, primary school / nursery license holders	Continued use of 3 spaces, explore at least 1 additional site	2026 - 2031
Environment Improvement Programme (EIP)	City Services	Seek to allocate future budget to projects that meet	2026 - 2027

project selection criteria / prioritisation		strategic biodiversity and urban forest objectives.	
'Wild about Art' projects – continue to support funding bids and provide locations for nature-based art across Cambridge	City Services, Community Services, artist and communities	Innovative education and / or habitat creation temporary and permanent installations exploring the wonders of nature	2026 - 2031
Urban Nature Conservation Evidence	City Services, Cambridge Conservation Initiative, Cambridge Conservation Forum	Facilitate research trials on our urban conservation actions to build a shared evidence base	2026 – Closed Churchyard grass cutting trials and monitoring invertebrate use of climate resilient non-native trees

8 References

Draft Cambridge City Council Urban Forest Strategy

Draft Cambridge City Council Climate Change Strategy

Draft Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan

Draft South Cambridgeshire District Council Climate & Nature Strategy

Cambridgeshire County Council Biodiversity Strategy

Cambridge Nature Network

Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project Report

9 Glossary of Terms

Amenity Grassland – Frequently mown, species-poor grassland.

Biodiversity – Variety of living organisms.

Biodiversity Duty – Statutory requirement to enhance biodiversity.

Biodiversity Emergency – Recognition of rapid decline.

Biodiversity Metric – DEFRA tool to calculate biodiversity units.

Biodiversity Net Gain – Measurable improvement in biodiversity.

Blue Infrastructure – Water-based ecological features.

Calcareous Grassland – Chalk/limestone grassland.

Chalk Streams – Rare freshwater habitats.

Climate Resilience – Ability to withstand climate impacts.

Connectivity – Joined habitats enabling species movement.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 – Protects key species and habitats.

CRoW Act – Right to roam and strengthened protections.

Dasgupta Review – Review on economics of biodiversity.

Deadwood – Standing or fallen decaying wood providing habitat.

Designation – Formal recognition of biodiversity importance.

Distinctiveness – Rarity/value score in biodiversity metric.

Ecological Succession – Natural habitat change over time.

Ecosystem Services – Benefits provided by nature.

Environment Act 2021 – Major UK environmental legislation.

Garden Biodiversity – Ecological value of private gardens.

Green Infrastructure – Network of natural/semi-natural areas.

Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Joint spatial plan for future growth.

Habitat Condition – Measure of ecological quality.

Habitat Creation – Establishing new habitats.

Habitat Enhancement – Improving existing habitats.

Habitat Fragmentation – Breaking up connected habitats.

Lawton Report – Recommends ‘bigger, better, more joined-up’ nature.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy – Statutory strategy for nature recovery.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) – Statutory designation for local biodiversity sites.

Measurable Net Gain – Quantified biodiversity improvement.

National Planning Policy Framework – National planning policies.

NERC Act 2006 – Defines Priority Habitats and Species.

Neutral Grassland – Grassland on neutral soils.

Pollard – Traditional tree management.

Priority Habitats & Species – National conservation priorities.

Protected Road Verge – Verge designated for conservation.

Recreational Pressure – Ecological impacts of high public use.

River Restoration – Reinstating natural river processes.

Semi-natural Habitat – Human-influenced yet biodiverse habitat.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest – National statutory designation.

Strategic Significance – Biodiversity Metric value booster.

Urban Forest – All trees in an urban area.

Veteran Tree / Veteranisation – Trees with biodiversity-rich features.

10 Appendices

Appendix 1	National Legislation
Appendix 2	Cambridge City Council, core biodiversity site habitat condition audit 2025
Appendix 3	Biodiversity Duty Report (2022 – 2025)

ENDS