



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

Climate and Nature Strategy

2026-2030



scams.gov.uk



Contents

Vision	4	Governance	22
Key Principles	4	Our Areas of Focus	25
Our Approach	5	■ Adaptation & Resilience	26
Introduction	6	■ Transport	32
Local Context	7	■ Energy and Retrofit	36
Impacts of climate change	8	■ Nature and Water	42
Emissions in South Cambridgeshire	10	■ Sustainable Food	48
Progress over the past 5 years	12	■ Waste Minimisation	52
Achievements, Targets and Objectives	13	■ Community Support and Behaviour Change	56
Key Opportunities	14	■ Businesses, Supply Chain and Finance	60
Key Challenges	15	Appendix A – Local policy and frameworks	64
Framing our Strategy	17	Appendix B – Climate and Nature Acronyms	65
Our targets	18	Climate and Nature Glossary	66
- Carbon Emission Reduction	19		
- Protecting & Enhancing Nature	20		
- Adapting to Climate Change	21		

Foreword

The climate and ecological crises are real and present emergencies. Communities across the globe and close to home are facing the consequences of decades of inaction on climate change. In Cambridgeshire, once in a generation floods are happening more frequently, extreme heat is proving to be an acute public health concern and globally important water stressed habitats like chalk streams are under risk of being lost forever.

South Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing areas in the country and yet is one of the poorest in terms of biodiversity and has one of the smallest areas of land managed for nature, relative to its size. As our area becomes an internationally significant site for growth, the challenge to balance economic growth with measures to protect and enhance nature has never been more urgent.

We know that neither the climate crisis nor the ecological crisis can be tackled alone – they are part of the same problem and must be considered together which is why we have integrated our Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature Strategies into this ambitious Climate and Nature Strategy.

Under the previous strategies, we achieved so much, taking action on climate change and laying strong foundations for further progress. Since 2021, we have increased the energy performance of our main office building to an ‘A’ rating, began electrifying our fleet, and awarded over £650,000 in grants to our local communities. As we adopt this new strategy, our ambition is in no way abated – we aim to reduce our own emissions by 75% by 2030 and double nature in the district by 2050.

We will lead by example with our own estate, embedding knowledge and good practice, and working with others across local government, local businesses and community groups. At the heart of everything we do at South Cambridgeshire is being green to our core. This strategy serves to double down on that commitment.



**Cllr Bridget Smith,
Leader of the Council**



**Cllr Natalie Warren-Green,
Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment**

Vision and Principles

Vision

We envision a South Cambridgeshire that **leads boldly in climate action - championing climate initiatives, fostering environmental stewardship, protecting and enhancing nature, and building resilience** for the district and our residents as we face escalating climate impacts. Through this work we aim to nurture sustainable economic growth, innovation and development, social equity, and community wellbeing.

Key Principles – How we will deliver success

- **Lead by example with our own estate**, embedding knowledge and action on climate and nature throughout the organisation to drive progress in all areas of our work.
- **Collaborate effectively across all levels of governance**, with businesses, third sector organisations, local communities and parish councils to share knowledge and work together to tackle the shared challenges we face.
- **Prioritise actions that create co-benefits** for nature, reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change, whilst supporting a sustainable economy and improved health and wellbeing.
- **Maximise opportunities to accelerate delivery of our targets** where appropriate, based on availability of resources and funding.



Our Approach

Our strategy describes our successes to date and how we will continue to engage with our key stakeholders and communities to deliver further action.

We will use **our spheres of influence, skills and expertise** to address the eight key themes identified in our Strategy. Our approach will focus on **not only mitigating the impacts of climate change** but also **strengthening our position to adapt and be resilient** to any impacts.



**Adaptation
& Resilience**



Transport



**Energy &
Retrofit**



**Nature
& Water**



**Sustainable
Food**



**Waste
Minimisation**



**Business,
Supply Chain
& Finance**



**Community
Support &
Behaviour
Change**

Introduction

The climate and ecological crises are one of the biggest challenges facing South Cambridgeshire, now and in the years to come.

These challenges will impact everyone across the district, including its residents, community organisations, and businesses; 85% of survey respondents within Greater Cambridge stated they were either concerned or very concerned about the impact of climate change (2025).

Over the past five years, South Cambridgeshire District Council has **set the groundwork and made considerable progress** in the transition to net zero and protecting and enhancing the natural environment. As we move into the next phase of our work, there is an **opportunity to learn from our experience and refocus our ambitions** on where we can have the most impact. We want to ensure that the work delivered through this strategy **focusses on benefitting all residents across the district**, particularly those communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.





Local Context

Policy

We declared climate and ecological emergencies in 2019, **recognising the urgency with which we need to act**. We are taking active steps to **improve how our services are delivered** to benefit residents, businesses, and parish councils, as well as reducing our carbon footprint.

Alongside our own policies, work on a **new joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan** began in 2019 and is ongoing. This will be the first joint Local Plan for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire and is **designed to meet the need for increased homes and jobs within the area**. The two strategic priorities of climate change and biodiversity have **enabled ambitious policies** to demand significant carbon emissions reductions and deliver a high degree of climate resilience across all aspects of the plan.

Demography

The evolving demography within South Cambridgeshire presents both **opportunities and challenges** for climate mitigation and adaptation. The district faces an ageing population with a higher proportion of elderly residents compared to regional and national averages; older individuals are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme temperatures, underpinning the importance of **enhanced local climate resilience**.

Despite these challenges, there is a substantial opportunity to empower residents to reduce their energy demand and shift behaviours towards low-carbon lifestyles, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggests could contribute **40-70% of low-carbon transformation**. Supporting and enabling **residents, local communities, and businesses to lower emissions and increase resilience** is crucial, especially as younger families move into the area (Office for National Statistics, 2025), potentially altering current emission patterns.

Impacts of climate change and the ecological emergency in South Cambridgeshire

South Cambridgeshire, located in the east of England, is one of the driest areas of the UK, experiencing higher temperatures across the year compared to other areas and little rainfall.

Changes in the local climate are already being experienced, with warmer temperatures throughout the year and more infrequent but heavier rainfall.

Figure 1 (right) – Impacts of Climate Change, Met Office (2025) Climate Report for South Cambridgeshire, page 3
<https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/b8eb3cee8f764147a2cfcd69cf36238f/E07000012>



Heat

Increased energy demand for summer cooling



Health

Increased risk to health from heat stress



Transport

Increased disruption to transport due to heat e.g. rail buckling



Heavy Rainfall

Increased risk of river and surface water flooding



Energy

Infrastructure such as gas pipes are at high risk from flooding events



Sea Level Rise

Increased risk of coastal flooding



Drought

Risk to water supplies from drought



Environment

Increased risk to biodiversity (plants and animals)



Drainage

Increased disruption to urban drainage systems



Projected impacts of climate change in South Cambridgeshire

Compared to the UK average, Cambridgeshire is projected to experience higher average annual temperatures. This projection must inform the district's approach to adapting to climate change.

Adaptation measures will be needed to decrease the health impacts of increased summer temperatures, particularly on vulnerable groups. This figure shows the future climate change expected in Cambridgeshire under existing global policies (equivalent to global warming level of 2.0-3.7°C under the IPCC Representative Concentration Pathway 6.0) and shows the yearly averages for temperature for Cambridgeshire against the UK average.

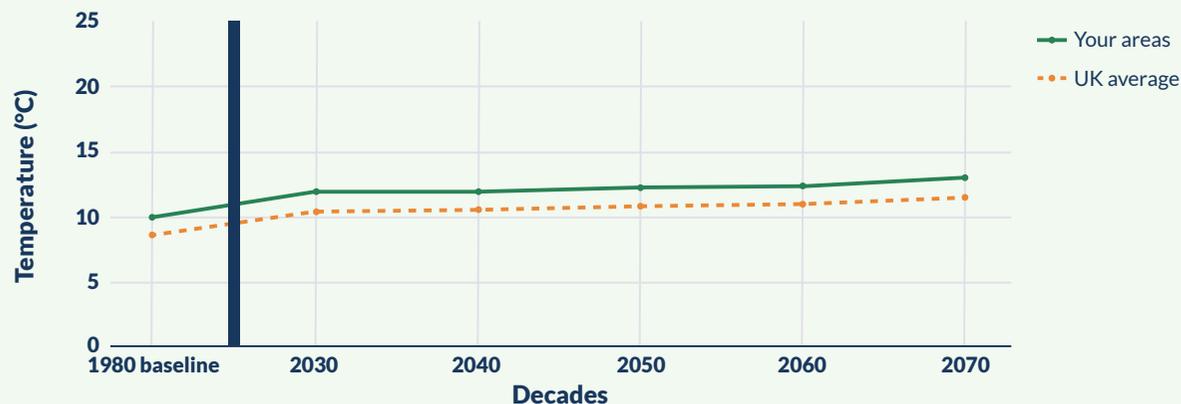


Figure 2 – Cambridgeshire vs UK average temperature increases, Local Climate Adaptation Tool (2024) <https://www.lcat.uk/>

Other pressures on our landscape and environment are likely to exacerbate the impacts of climate change. **Increased development** places stress on our existing **water scarcity** issues in the region, with further potential **impacts on air quality** if there is an increase in vehicle usage and combustion for heating. Increasing demand for agriculture, housing and supporting social infrastructure also raises the **risk of habitat loss and fragmentation**.

Our **climate risk register** captures the impacts of climate change which are likely to disrupt the delivery of our services and details how we plan to mitigate against these risks.

Figure 2 (above) Executive Summary:

This chart shows projected average temperature increases from a 1980 baseline for Cambridgeshire compared with the UK average from 2030 to 2070. Temperatures are expected to rise steadily in both cases over time. Cambridgeshire remains consistently warmer than the UK average across all decades shown. By 2070, local temperatures are projected to increase by roughly 3°C above the baseline, compared with approximately 2.5°C nationally, indicating slightly stronger warming locally than the UK as a whole.

Emissions in South Cambridgeshire

The transport sector is the largest contributor to South Cambridgeshire’s emissions, at over half of the district’s total emissions.

Emissions from **commercial and domestic electricity, gas and other fuel types** (termed ‘stationary energy’) are the **second largest source of emissions at almost 30%.**

According to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), South Cambridgeshire’s **emissions totalled 1,026,780 tonnes of CO₂** in 2023.



South Cambridgeshire District Council’s carbon emissions by sector.

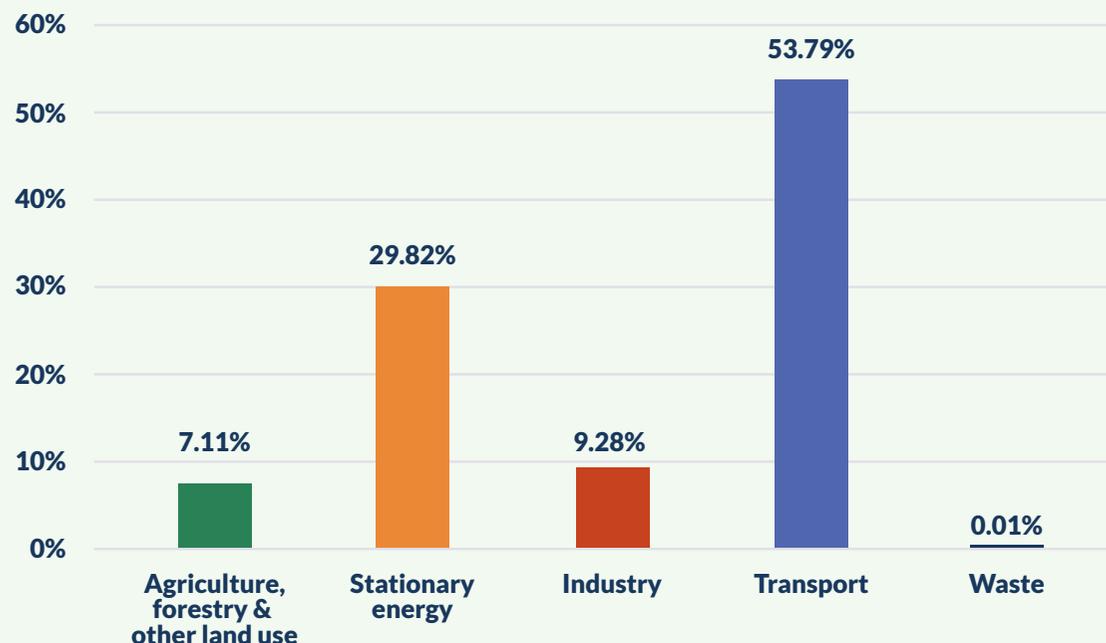


Figure 3 – South Cambridgeshire District Council Carbon Emissions by GHG Sector using **2023 DESNZ emissions data** for South Cambridgeshire District Council. Latest available emissions data from DESNEZ as of January 2026

Figure 3 (above) Executive Summary:

Transport is the largest source of carbon emissions in South Cambridgeshire, accounting for 53.79% of the total. Stationary energy is the second largest contributor at 29.82%. All other sectors—industry (9.28%), agriculture and land use (7.11%), and waste (0.01%)—make comparatively small contributions. Overall, emissions are heavily concentrated in transport and energy use.

The transport sector is the largest contributor to emissions, at over half of our total emissions.



Progress over the past 5 years

The aims of the previous Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature Strategies have been combined within this new joint Climate and Nature Strategy, recognising the inextricable links between our natural environment and our climate.

We can increase our impact by developing synergistic actions that simultaneously address both the climate and ecological crises.

This integrated strategy combines actions that may otherwise overlap or duplicate efforts, as well as including actions to adapt and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Considerable progress has been made under the previous two strategies against the key objectives:

- Since 2018, being **Green to our Core** has been a top Business Plan Priority, delivered through the Council's approach to reducing emissions through mitigation, adaptation, and natural solutions across all of its services. In 2025, this was once again adopted as **one of the Council's five key principles** in the new Corporate Plan.
- The Council has awarded **seven rounds of funding to communities through the Zero Carbon Communities Grant** to achieve wider community engagement and behaviour change around climate change as well as reducing carbon emissions through schemes such as building energy efficiency measures. Nearly £850,000 has been awarded to date through the grant scheme.
- Through the **installation of a ground source heat pump, as well as other energy efficiency measures**, the Council has increased the Energy Performance Rating (EPC) of its main office building, South Cambridgeshire Hall, to an 'A'.
- The Council has made good progress on the electrification of its fleet, **implementing four electric Refuse Collection Vehicles and several electric vans**, as well as paving the way for the electrification of a further 18 Refuse Collection Vehicles.

You can read about more of our achievements in our report on the 'Evaluation of the success of the Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature Strategies'

Achievements, Targets and Objectives

for South Cambridgeshire District Council



2015-2025

- Installed 2,213 Solar PV measures, LED lighting in 238 homes, 7,551 insulation measures and 205 double or triple glazing measures.



2025-26

- Increase amount of household waste going to recycling, composting or digestion based on 24/25 recycling rate of 50%

2019

- Declared an ecological and climate emergency
- First 'Zero Carbon Community' grant scheme
- First 'Six Free Trees' grant scheme

2025

- Cambridge and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) published
- Greater Cambridge Local Plan Consultation



2020

- Established 'Green to Our Core' Programme
- Council's first electric Refuse Collection Vehicle purchased.

2020

2021

- Adopted our Doubling Nature Strategy



2022

- Electric Vehicle Charging Policy adopted to support uptake of charge points



2023

- Street lighting upgrade completed

2025

2025

- Hackey Carriage & Private Hire Licensing Policy encourages reduction in emissions from taxis within the district
- Adopted new Corporate Plan

2024

- 123 publicly available EV charging devices
- 6.4% of households with solar PV
- Launch of Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy
- South Cambridgeshire Hall achieved 'EPC 'A'

Future targets

2027

- Complete the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network project to enable the increased electrification of the fleet
- Planned date for Greater Cambridge Local Plan Adoption

2028

- Delivery of Warm Homes: Local Grant and Social Grant by March
- Operate 18 electric Refuse Collection Vehicles'



2030

- Emissions reduction target of 75% for Council's estate and operations; 90% for vehicle fleet, and 75% for South Cambridgeshire Hall, based on 2018/19 baseline

2030

2030

- All licensed Hackney Carriage and private hire vehicles to transition to zero or ultra-low emissions by 2030
- All council homes up to a minimum 'EPC 'C' rating'
- Area wide emissions 50% reduction

2050

2050

- Increase area of land managed for nature from 7% to 14%
- Area wide emissions reach Net Zero



Figure 4 – South Cambridgeshire District Council timeline of achievements and targets 2015 – 2050

Key Opportunities

There are a number of key opportunities to explore and implement that will maximise climate and nature benefits for South Cambridgeshire.

1 Resident appetite for renewable technologies

Maximise the high resident appetite for home energy efficiency improvements in the area, as exemplified by the high uptake of the Solar Together scheme in South Cambridgeshire. In 2023, South Cambridgeshire had the highest percentage of homes with installations of any local authority area in England at 2.42% ([MCS, 2024](#)).

2 Strong legacy of upgrading community infrastructure

Build on the strong foundation of sustained support through the 'Zero Carbon Communities' grant scheme (having awarded £770,000 in funding to communities through seven rounds of funding) and the 'Net Zero Villages' scheme to continue decarbonising our local community facilities.

3 Prevalence of organisations with an innovative focus in the area

Harness connections with higher education institutions, including the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University, as well as the growing prevalence of scientific research organisations, to promote innovation in tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing nature.



4 Community engagement, education, and capacity building

Build on the success of community engagement on climate action to date, strengthen existing relationships and support new collaborations to deliver collective climate action. Capacity building will be key through knowledge sharing between our towns, parishes and communities.

5 Expanding and connecting green spaces

There is a need and opportunity to protect and enhance the natural environment, improving biodiversity, access to the countryside, and strategically connecting to the agricultural sector.

Key Challenges

There are a number of key challenges in addressing the climate and ecological emergencies.

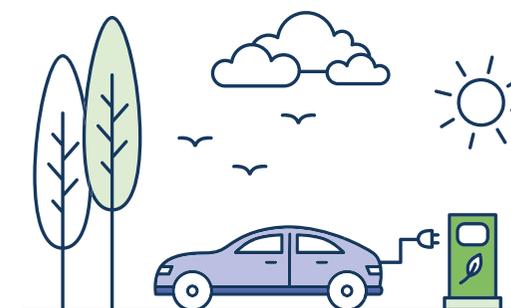
1 Changing policy landscape
We face an ever-changing national and local policy context. The need to remain adaptable and resilient is clear and reinforces the importance of the co-benefits of climate action being at the forefront of our service delivery.

2 Limitations of our areas of influence
As a district council, we have differing levels of responsibility in different sectors. For example, although transport is the largest sources of emissions in the district, we do not have any statutory responsibilities over it. Therefore, we must acknowledge our areas of direct control and influence to determine the actions that we should take.

3 Lack of land to improve for nature
Although we have strong ambitions to protect and enhance nature in the district, we own very little land on which we can create space for nature, meaning we must collaborate with others to seek opportunities for protecting and enhancing nature in the district.

4 Projected growth within the district
Greater Cambridge is expected to expand significantly in coming years which brings challenges with it, including increasing emissions due to growth and development. Care must be taken to ensure that this development is not at the expense of our climate and nature ambitions.

5 The use of AI technology
AI searches are significantly more energy-intensive than a regular search engine. As a business entity, the Council recognises the benefits of utilising AI technologies; we must focus our approach on ensuring that this does not negatively impact our net zero ambitions, through enabling the deployment of renewable energy generation.



Key Challenges

(continued)

6

Community engagement and addressing inequality

The success of climate action in the district is broadly dependent on collective community support. However, many people are limited by time, resources, financial constraints and capacity. There is also the additional challenge of tackling existing societal inequalities and the disproportionate impact felt from climate change by specific individuals or communities. Vulnerable groups, including those on low incomes, the elderly, and those in inadequate housing, often face the greatest impacts. It is, therefore, important that this strategy balances addressing the cost of living, economic growth and social cohesion.

We recognise that some of the challenges described here are short-term and have the potential to transition to opportunities on completion of **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**. LGR will present **significant opportunities for more direct control** over actions to reduce area-wide emissions and increase the protection of the local natural environment. We also acknowledge that LGR will present challenges for the area – to prepare for this we are ensuring alignment with other local authorities to ensure that the transition is as efficient as possible and to minimise the impact on progress towards climate mitigation and resilience. We will continue to work in partnership with other authorities as we navigate the next phase of LGR.

In recognition that our sphere of influence will evolve with LGR and other changes in the local and national landscape, we have set out an **ambitious programme of future actions** that we intend to implement to further increase climate mitigation and adaptation, as and when **our remit and institutional capacity** enable us to do so. This list of ambitious future actions has been compiled into a sister document to our action plan for this strategy, a **Prospective Action Register**. We will remain cognisant of and explore options within this list when resources and capacity allow.

Framing our Strategy

We have framed our strategy against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, an internationally recognised framework for addressing climate change, the decline in nature, and inequalities.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of **17 global aspirations set collaboratively by all United Nations member states**, with a target year of 2030. Whilst the goals are set by and for national governments primarily, the achievement of all goals is the responsibility of global society, including local government. The relevant SDGs for each key area are highlighted throughout this strategy.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



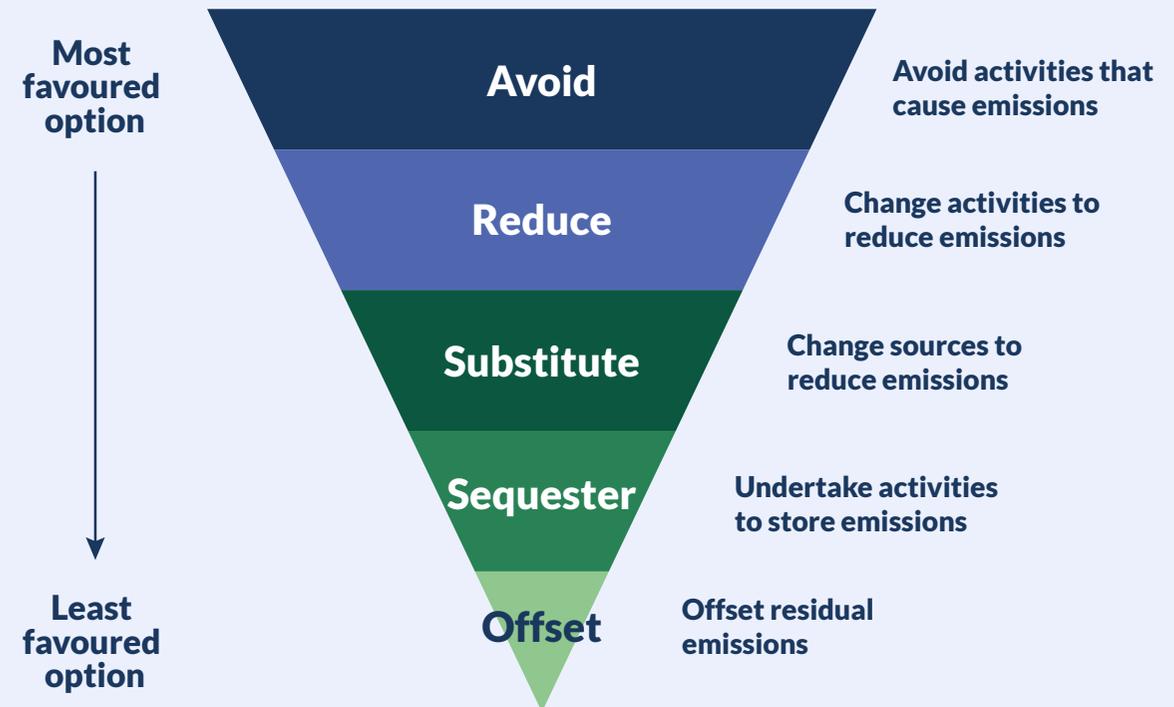
Figure 5 – The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Our targets

The targets included in this strategy will focus on three key areas: carbon emission reduction, climate adaptation and resilience, and protecting and enhancing nature, and will prioritise actions to achieve these through the Carbon Management Hierarchy.



Figure 6 – Greenhouse gas emissions
'Carbon Management Hierarchy'



Our targets

Carbon Emission Reduction

The Council has adopted targets for its **own estate and operations**, as well as ambitions for the **reduction of area-wide emissions**. Our own estate and operations targets cover our Scope 1 emissions (direct emissions which we can control) our Scope 2 emissions (indirect emissions from our purchase and use of energy) and our business mileage. Crucially, the Council and area-wide targets are also dependent on the UK government's commitment to fully decarbonising the electricity grid by 2035, and are contingent on their support of innovation, renewable energy generation and funding opportunities for accelerated decarbonisation. We will **retain the existing emissions reductions targets** previously committed to and will work to **develop a Net Zero target for our own estate and operations** based on what is practically and financially achievable.



We commit to a:

- **75% reduction by 2030 in Council estates and operations emissions, including a:**
 - **90% reduction by 2030 in Council fleet vehicle emissions**
 - **75% reduction by 2030 in emissions from South Cambridgeshire Hall**



We have also committed to:

- **50% reduction by 2030 and to reach Net Zero by 2050 for area-wide emissions**

Targets are measured against a 2018/19 baseline.

These targets are in line with the scale of reduction required to keep any global temperature increase below 2°C from pre-industrial temperatures based on the concept of a global carbon budget.

Achieving Net Zero means that although we will do all we can to reduce carbon emissions, we will not be able to reduce these emissions completely in some industries, such as agriculture. We recognise the need for an approach to the residual emissions from our estate and operations. Where these cannot be reduced to zero, we will adopt the following principles:

1. Prioritise **local, nature-based solutions** such as habitat or woodland creation.
2. Support the **development of renewable energy** projects and invest in community renewable energy projects.
3. **As a last resort, purchase carbon credits** where these represent investment in nature-based solutions – where possible on a local level.

Our targets

Protecting & Enhancing Nature

In 2021, the Council adopted the vision to 'double nature' in the district. As one of the most nature-depleted areas within the country, it is vital that we focus our efforts on creating quality, species-rich habitats, and in doing so increase residents' access to nature and green spaces.

Our target to 'double nature' refers to our wildlife, including plants and animals, as well as our soils and air, recognising the interconnectedness of nature and water in our landscapes. When we look at improving our nature and water, we are conscious of not only the quantity of this land or biodiversity, but also the change in quality, making sure that any changes are lasting and resilient.



Targets which will support our ambition to protect and enhance nature across the district:

 **Double the quantity and quality of land managed for nature from 7% to 14% by 2050**

 **Seek to introduce a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for major new developments through the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, above the national standard requirement of 10%**

We will also:

 **Ensure that increases in land areas managed for nature are resilient to future climate impacts**

 **Prioritise nature-based solutions when considering actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change**

 **Ensure increased access to green spaces is equitable, enhancing community health and wellbeing.**

In line with the Cambridge and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy our work to protect and enhance nature will be guided by the Lawton Principles:

 **Better:**
Improve the quality of habitats

 **Bigger:**
Expand existing areas protected for nature to provide larger habitats for biodiversity

 **More:**
Increase the number of areas where nature is protected and enhanced

 **Joined Up:**
Create networks connecting habitats to allow species to move between areas

Our targets

Adapting to Climate Change

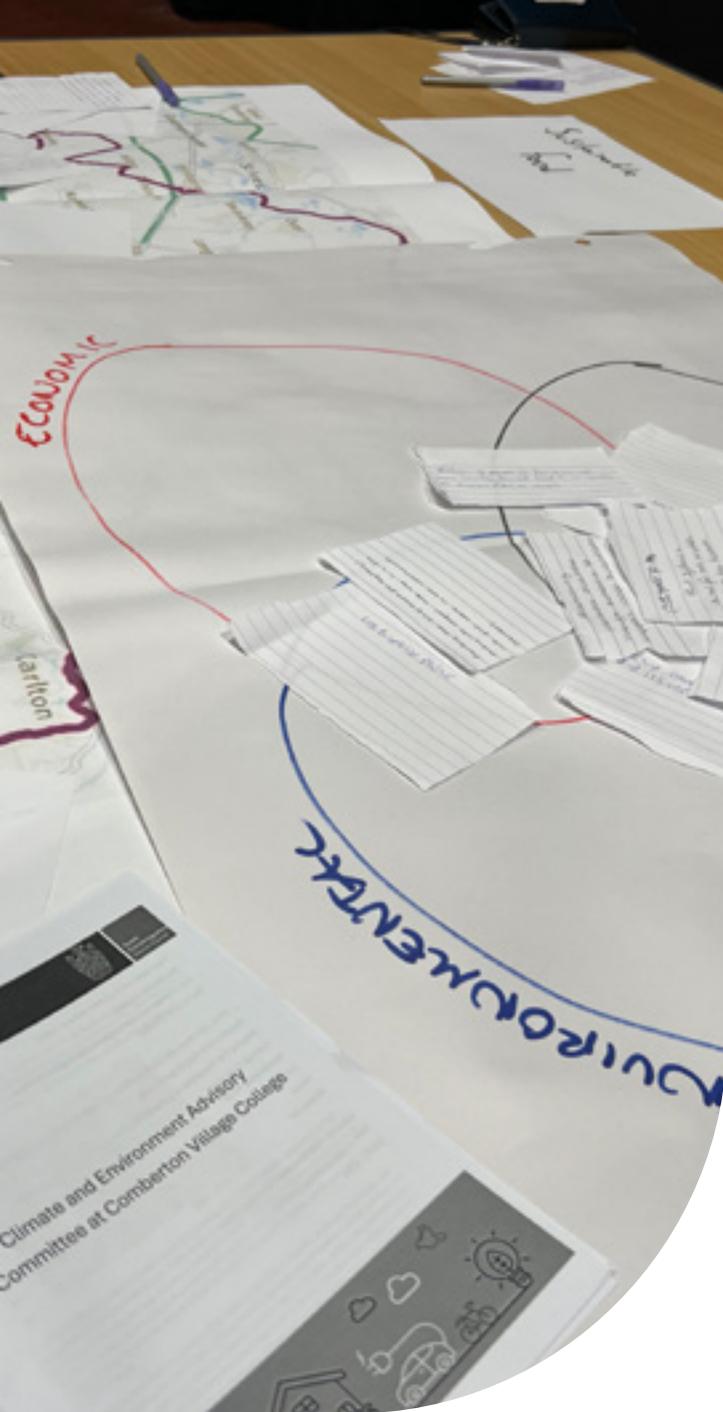
Our area is already seeing the impacts of climate change through more extreme weather, including warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers; 60% of survey respondents in Greater Cambridge stated they were already experiencing the impacts of climate change. This strategy aligns our approach to mitigating climate change and protecting and enhancing nature, whilst also adapting to any unavoidable impacts of climate change.

Adapting to changes that we cannot avoid is an imperative strand of our strategic activities and will include protecting the natural environment and making infrastructure more resilient to these changes. Through this strategy, **we propose actions which will help us to adapt to the impacts of climate change, supporting residents and businesses to become more resilient** to a changing climate whilst protecting and enhancing our nature and biodiversity.

We have committed to:

- **Ensure communities in South Cambridgeshire are resilient to a 2°C increase in global temperature (from pre-industrial levels).**





Governance

Monitoring and Reporting

Progress against our targets will be monitored through the 'Climate and Nature Action Plan'. This will set and review the actions taken to tackle climate change and protect and enhance nature, as well as adapt to the impacts of climate change. Progress on reducing emissions from our estate and operations, as well as across the district, will be monitored through annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting. We will continue to maintain transparency on progress by sharing information on actions which have been undertaken through our annual progress reports which are published on the Council's website.

Decision making and reporting

Consideration of nature and climate change is at the forefront of how South Cambridgeshire District Council delivers its services. Within the Cabinet, there is a Lead Portfolio Holder for Environment whose work relates to tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing nature. The Climate and Environment Advisory Committee advise Cabinet on policies,

action and resources required to deliver on the Council's ambitions for climate and nature. Annual reporting on greenhouse gas emissions and action plan progress reviews will be taken to the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee.

Officer responsibility for the Climate and Nature Strategy sits with the Head of Climate, Environment and Waste, with dedicated officers leading on driving delivery of the strategy. The Council's Corporate Plan has five priorities, of which being 'Green to our Core' is one. Projects delivered under the 'Green to our Core' priority are monitored through a dynamic and innovative officer-level forum which facilitates collective action throughout the Council to tackle climate change and protect and enhance nature, with representation from each service area.

Governance

Decision making interventions

We have four main points of intervention in the Council's processes to ensure that the impacts on climate and nature from actions and projects undertaken by the Council are considered.

➤ 1. Committee reporting

As part of our committee reporting procedures, all reports must consider any likely impacts on climate change. This must be reviewed by a member of the Climate and Environment team.

➤ 2. Procurement

Considerations for climate change and nature must be made through the procurement process. As part of tender and quotation processes, detail on what the organisation is doing and how the organisation will consider climate change and nature must be given. This is scored as part of the bid process.

➤ 3. Climate Impact Assessments

As part of our annual budgetary bid and savings process, each team putting forward a bid or saving must complete a climate impact assessment, which is reviewed by the Climate and Environment Team and presented as part of the consideration to the committee for decision-making on bids and savings.

➤ 4. Delivery of Carbon Literacy training for colleagues and Members

This ensures colleagues have a comprehensive level of knowledge around climate change and can apply this in everyday decision-making and project delivery.

Engagement and Collaboration

We recognise that tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing nature is not something which can be undertaken in silos. A vital part of understanding how to reach our targets for both climate and nature is to assess where our influence lies in relation to our emissions.

Our relationships with key stakeholders will be critical to unlocking action on climate and nature. For key areas impacting climate mitigation, resilience and nature recovery that fall outside of our immediate sphere of influence, we will still play an active role through advocating and enabling action where possible. We will do this through continuing to build partnerships and work with key stakeholders to achieve progress on important issues.





Governance



Figure 7 – South Cambridgeshire spheres of influence and delivery

Our Areas of Focus

The following part of our strategy details the ambition and actions for each focus area, to reduce our carbon impact, improve nature, increase resilience, and support our wider overarching climate and nature targets. The actions included in each section highlight our areas of influence and how we can affect positive change.



Adaptation & Resilience



Transport



Energy & Retrofit



Nature & Water



Sustainable Food



Waste Minimisation



Business, Supply Chain & Finance



Community Support & Behaviour Change



Our Areas of Focus

Adaptation & Resilience

Key Ambition

Support residents, communities and businesses to be resilient to the impacts of climate change, particularly those who are most vulnerable, to ensure that no-one is disproportionately affected.



Targets

- 🎯 Ensure communities in South Cambridgeshire are resilient to a 2°C rise in temperature (from pre-industrial levels).

Sustainable Development Goals





Background

Whilst it is essential that we work towards net zero emissions, we must acknowledge that impacts of the changing climate are being experienced now and will continue into the future.

It is important to ensure that South Cambridgeshire is resilient to climate change and that we support all of our residents, particularly those most vulnerable, to adapt to future impacts. Climate adaptation actions is threaded throughout the other seven key strategic themes of this strategy, recognising that actions to mitigate climate change can also increase resilience. This includes increased home insulation which increases energy efficiency and reduces emissions but also helps keep resident's cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Climate change and health and wellbeing, both physical and mental, are inextricably linked and the Council recognises that there is an urgent need to address the health and wellbeing impacts associated with rising global temperatures and reductions in biodiversity.

Our role

As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Council has a statutory responsibility to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergency situations, including those which are caused or intensified by climate change. This includes emergency events and incidents arising from severe heat, flooding, drought and other forms of extreme weather that affect communities, services and infrastructure.

The Council has created a Corporate Risk Register, which is regularly reviewed and updated, outlining the potential impacts to our services resulting from climate change, as well as how we will plan and adapt to ensure that we mitigate against any potential disruption to our services.

The Council's emergency planning and resilience work is delivered in close collaboration with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum; this partnership ensures a joined-up, multi-agency approach to climate-related risks.





Background *(continued)*

In the community

The Council will continue to support and implement several **practical measures to strengthen community resilience** and protect public health during periods of extreme weather including:

- **Warm Spaces (Winter):** The Council, in partnership with community and voluntary organisations, has designated a network of warm spaces across the district. These facilities offer a safe, heated environment during cold spells, supporting residents vulnerable to cold-related illness or energy insecurity.
- **Cool Spaces (Summer):** In preparation for increasing instances of extreme heat, designated cool spaces are identified for activation during heatwave alerts. These provide safe, temperature-controlled environments to protect vulnerable individuals during prolonged periods of high temperature.

- **Rest Centres and Places of Safety:** Emergency rest centres have been pre-identified and risk-assessed for use in incidents such as flooding, loss of utilities, or large-scale evacuations. These facilities provide short-term welfare support, first aid, refreshments, and information to affected residents.
- **Community Engagement:** The council supports parish and town councils and community groups to develop Community Emergency Plans, helping local residents identify local resources, volunteers, and facilities that can be used in an emergency. This bottom-up approach enhances local preparedness and supports a faster recovery following disruptive events.

Working with vulnerable communities

We recognise that the communities who are going to be most impacted by climate change are those who typically consume less energy, produce less waste and contribute fewer emissions. They may also lack access to green spaces and nature through issues such as isolation, lack of appropriate transport, and lack of inclusion, diversity and safety.

We will continue to work with local partners and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, and ensure that our actions are equitable and inclusive of vulnerable communities across the district. Recognising that it is essential that any actions which we undertake as a result of this strategy should not adversely affect the ability of those who are most vulnerable to adapt and remain resilient to the impacts of climate change, we have completed an Equality Impact Assessment for the strategy and accompanying action plan.



Key Policies

- The Council’s Health & Wellbeing Strategy Refresh 2024-2028 recognises that climate change and health are inextricably linked and that there is a need to respond and adapt to impacts on health arising from increased global temperatures, and is aligned with the Cambridge and Peterborough Integrated Care System (CPICS) Health & Care Strategy (2022)
- South Cambridgeshire District Council’s ‘Corporate Risk Register’ outlines the potential impacts to the Council’s services and how we will adapt to ensure that residents are not adversely affected by disruption to vital services.
- The Cambridge and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum’s ‘Community Risk Register’ identifies emerging and long-term risks associated with climate impacts. The Council contributes through the partnership to the Climate Change, Sustainability and Future Risks Working Group which reviews and updates the ‘Community Risk Register’.
- Work continues to align our planning with the National Resilience Standards, the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, and the Local Adaptation Reporting Power (LARP) framework, ensuring that emergency planning, public health, and environmental resilience functions remain cohesive, evidence-based, and responsive to emerging threats.





Actions

Area of Influence: Direct Control

Scope: Own estate

1.1 Ensure the resilience of the delivery of the Council's services to the impacts of climate change through regular review of the 'Corporate Risk Register'.

Area of Influence: Place shaping

Scope: Wider district

1.2 Explore opportunities to respond to climate risks through policies in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, such as water efficiency and the management of water resources; designing buildings that are simple to keep cool; and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) measures to help reduce flood risk, implementing changes through the Water Resources Group.

Area of Influence: Partnerships

Scope: Wider district

1.3 Work with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners in the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Partnership to manage climate-related flood risks and support communities to prepare for flood risk.

1.4 Support the implementation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's 'Transport and Connectivity Plan' and the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan to ensure resilience in public transport and active travel networks in the face of increasing extreme weather events, such as overheating and flooding.

Area of Influence: Involving, engaging and communicating

Scope: Wider district

1.5 Provide advice to residents on reducing health risks during extreme weather events.

1.6 Engage with partners including the 'Local Resilience Forum' and Environment Agency to ensure resilience to the impacts of climate change.

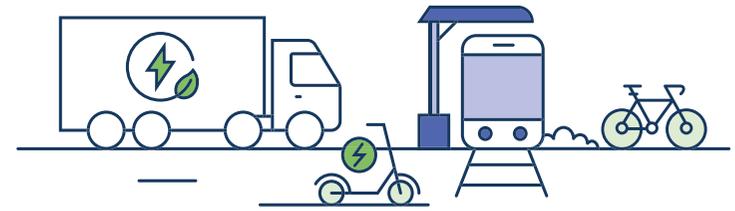
1.7 Explore how community transport scheme networks can provide support in response to extreme weather events.







Our Areas of Focus Transport



Key Ambition

Support the reduction of emissions from transport, seeking opportunities to protect and enhance nature in doing so. Maximise benefits from transport projects, including active travel to improve physical and mental health, improve air quality, increase the resilience of transport networks and enhance connections to key economic hubs.



Targets

- Complete the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network Project by 2027 to enable increased electrification of our fleets
- Transition all licensed Hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to zero or ultra-low emissions by 2030
- Operate 18 electric Refuse Collection Vehicles by 2030
- Support the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority’s vision of increasing electric vehicle charging infrastructure to provide 80% of residents with access to a public charger within a 5-minute walk.
- Work towards World Health Organisation Air Quality Guideline annual averages as longer-term targets (5 µg/m³ for PM_{2.5}, 15 µg/m³ for PM₁₀, and 10 µg/m³ for NO₂), with interim targets for delivery.

Sustainable Development Goals





Background

Wider district

The transport sector is the largest source of carbon emissions in the district, contributing to 54% of territorial emissions from the area in 2023 (DESNZ, 2023). Nearly 60% of these emissions come from road transport on A-roads, followed by motorways at 21%. The M11, A11 and A14 form a triangle of key freight routes falling in South Cambridgeshire, connecting the East of England to the rest of the UK (UK Logistics Network, 2024). This represents a high volume of Heavy Goods Vehicles and throughflow traffic and presents a key challenge in our ability to influence a reduction in these transport emissions. South Cambridgeshire is a predominantly rural district with high car dependency; 43.2% of our residents travel to work in a car or a van (Census, 2021). Residents also tend to commute further than the national average with 58% travelling 10km or more (Census, 2021). This car dependency presents both a significant challenge and an opportunity for emissions reduction.

Whilst reducing car dependency is key, there is a growing need for increased charging provision for electric vehicles (EV) across the UK, as households transition from petrol and diesel vehicles to EVs. Transitioning from car use where possible is essential and will be supported by increased active travel and reducing the need for car journeys, including for new developments. Greater Cambridge Partnership projects are providing infrastructure for existing populations to help them move away from car dependency also.

Our fleet

Our vehicle fleet makes up 67% of the Council's total emissions. Work over the last five years has paved the way for significant reductions in emissions from our fleet, which will be realised over this next strategy timeframe. A new refuse truck is required for every 3,000 properties, as well as additional vehicles required to meet increased demands across different services. As housing growth

continues at pace across the district - there have been 20,000 new homes built in Greater Cambridge since 2018 - there is an increased challenge to reduce fleet vehicle emissions. Mandatory food waste collections will come into effect across the district from March 2026 which will also challenge our commitment to reducing our fleet emissions. The Council continues to explore and deploy innovative methods to achieve its fleet decarbonisation goals such as through the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network project. The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service already has four electric Refuse Collection Vehicles, as well as several electric vans.

South Cambridgeshire District Council employs over 700 staff, with hybrid working policies and EV charging provided at main offices in place to reduce the impact of commuting. Many of our employees travel throughout the district as part of their roles and we will support them to do so more sustainably.



Air Quality

South Cambridgeshire, as part of Greater Cambridge, is a major growth area with large scale development, with a population increase of 37% expected by 2041 (Cambridgeshire County Council). Air quality in Greater Cambridge has been improving in recent years, there are currently no Air Quality Management Areas in the district, however it is important to act to continue to improve air quality especially in the context of continued development and population growth. Our approach to improving air quality is set out in the 'Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy 2024 – 2029'. We therefore have not included specific actions on air quality within this strategy to avoid duplication but do acknowledge that actions which impact air quality will also have an effect on emissions and climate change. We will continue to engage local communities and schools to deliver workshops on the importance of air quality and provide support on actionable next steps that can be taken to improve air quality and reduce air pollution.

A priority for the district is maximising co-benefits for nature and air quality through increasing nature-based solutions and green infrastructure including the introduction

of species-rich planting which supports biodiversity and improves air quality by absorbing pollutants, and trees to provide shading and reduce urban heat. Introducing more accessible green spaces to our district will also encourage active travel through walking and cycling, reducing the reliance on vehicles and associated emissions.

Key Policies

Several key policies and strategies frame our approach to reducing emissions from transport and improving air quality within the district. These include solutions which make it easier for residents to make sustainable transport choices.

- The Council's [Approach to Electric Vehicle Charging \(2022\)](#) sets out how we will support the installation and adoption of electric vehicle charging points in the district, including how we will work with partners to do so.
- Our [Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy](#) (2025) sets out how the Council will use its licensing function to encourage the reduction in emissions from taxis within the district.
- The [Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy \(2024\)](#) is a joint strategy between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council to improve air quality across Greater Cambridge and reduce the impact of future development on its air quality.
- Cambridgeshire County Council's [On Street Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Policy](#) (2023) frames the acceptable use of electric vehicle charging points on the public highway.
- Cambridgeshire County Council's [Active Travel Strategy](#) sets out how it aims to make active travel a safe, convenient and pleasant choice for local journeys.
- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's [Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#) aims to address major transport challenges to improve health, protect the environment whilst supporting sustainable economic growth.



Actions

Area of Influence: Direct Control

Scope: Own estate

- 2.1 Create a team dashboard to track changes in business mileage to support employees to reduce carbon emissions from business travel.
- 2.2 Explore car sharing options working with other organisations within Cambourne Business Park.
- 2.3 Carry out a colleague travel survey to identify opportunities for the reduction of emissions from colleague travel.

Area of Influence: Place shaping

Scope: Wider district

- 2.4 Promote sustainable modes of transport through the planning system by:
 - Applying policies in the current 'South Cambridgeshire Local Plan' and the 'Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document' to support housing and non-residential development which supports travel by walking, cycling and public transport
 - Developing new policies related to promoting sustainable transport and ensuring accessibility of new development sites to sustainable transport infrastructure is a key aspect in decision-making in preparing the 'Greater Cambridge Local Plan' and 'Northeast Cambridge Area Action Plan'
 - Improving accessibility to the countryside and access to nature through pedestrianised pathways
 - Encouraging the provision of electric vehicle charging points in future new housing and non-residential developments to support the electrification of transport

Area of Influence: Showcasing

Scope: Own estate

- 2.5 Deliver the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network project which will increase electricity provision at the Waterbeach Waste Depot, enabling the electrification of up to 18 further waste collection vehicles as they reach the end of their life.
- 2.6 Continue to expand the utilisation of alternative fuels, including hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) in our waste fleet to support emissions reduction in the interim before the implementation of the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network. Explore options for our Watercourses and Environmental Health fleet.

Area of Influence: Partnerships

Scope: Wider district

- 2.7 Review the taxi licensing policy and assess opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring local authorities and private sector partners to unlock opportunities for electric vehicle charging infrastructure for the taxi and private hire vehicle trade.
- 2.8 Support the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) to deliver a range of walking, cycling and bus improvements on key routes particularly across South Cambridgeshire including:
 - 12 Greenways, providing radial cycling and walking routes connecting South Cambridgeshire with Cambridge and the surrounding settlements and employment sites
 - Public transport corridor schemes to connect growing communities to employment hubs
- 2.9 Support the implementation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's 'Transport and Connectivity Plan', that aims to reduce private car use and congestion.
- 2.10 Work with councils within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to support the delivery of the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority's 'Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy' and delivery of Cambridgeshire County Council's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) project.

Area of Influence: Involving, engaging and communicating

Scope: Wider district

- 2.11 Deliver the 'Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy', including providing education around air pollution through communication campaigns and engaging with residents on behaviour change.
- 2.12 Support the reduction of business travel throughout the district through promoting car sharing schemes, active travel, and use of public transport.
- 2.13 Identify gaps in community transport schemes across the district, promote existing community transport schemes and explore opportunities for further expansion of community transport programmes in existing and new developments.
- 2.14 Promote active travel in communities through exploring opportunities for grant funding and supporting relevant schemes, including ensuring accessibility for all residents to encourage cycling and walking.



Our Areas of Focus

Energy and Retrofit

Key Ambition

Ensure that buildings in South Cambridgeshire are more affordable to run, healthier to live in, resilient to extreme weather and produce fewer carbon emissions.



Targets

- Reduce emissions from our main office, South Cambridgeshire Hall, by 75% by 2030 and 90% by 2050
- Bring all council homes up to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating of 'C' by 2030.

Sustainable Development Goals





Background

Housing

South Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest developing areas in the country; population estimates for 2022 were for just under 166,000 people, expected to rise to 193,695 by 2031 (UK Gov, 2022).

The adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan identified the need for 19,500 new homes in South Cambridgeshire. The area was earmarked for further development by the [UK Government](#) in their 2024 [‘The Case for Cambridge’](#) document, and housing development is expected to increase significantly within the next five years. This presents both challenges and opportunities for nature and mitigating against and adapting to climate change.

Existing housing in South Cambridgeshire has an average Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of ‘C’. Social housing in the district has a similar average EPC rating of ‘C’, with privately rented and owner-occupied properties averaging at a ‘D’ rating. Owing 5,549 council homes, including 1,378 sheltered homes (as of August 2025), we have a significant opportunity to improve home energy efficiency. We are also aiming

to deliver at least 75 new council homes per year to 2028.

In the past 10 years, we have installed 2,213 solar PV measures, LED lighting in 238 homes, 7,551 insulation measures and 205 double or triple glazing measures. We aim to bring all our homes up to an EPC ‘C’ by 2030. We also own and operate several smaller sites and communal rooms, which we are upgrading as opportunities arise. Energy efficiency measures such as improving insulation and window efficiency can reduce cold and damp which are often linked to respiratory problems and other health issues. More efficient homes are able to maintain a more consistent and comfortable temperature, improving overall wellbeing.

As well as our socially rented properties, our arms-length management company Ermine Street Housing rents out 571 homes. The EPC breakdown of Ermine Street Housing properties demonstrates that there is still a large proportion of housing stock at EPC rating ‘D’ at 17% (99 properties) and 57% rating EPC ‘C’ (327 properties).

EPC Breakdown for Ermine Street Housing (number of properties)

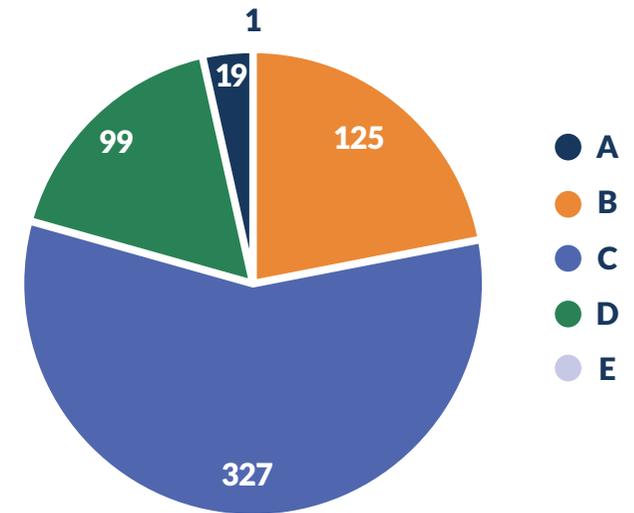


Figure 8 – EPC breakdown for Ermine Street Housing via number of properties

Figure 8 (above) Executive Summary: Most Ermine Street Housing properties are rated EPC C (327), followed by B (125) and D (99). Very few are rated A (19) or E (1). Overall, the majority of homes fall within the mid-range energy performance bands.



Energy and Retrofit

Background *(continued)*

Historic Buildings

There are a high number of historic buildings in the district, with 2,694 being Listed Buildings in 2023 (Annual Monitoring Report, 2023). As expected, older properties in South Cambridgeshire have a lower energy efficiency rating, with properties pre-1929 having an average EPC rating of 'D', and properties built post-2012 achieving on average a 'B'. ([ONS, 2024](#)). Historic buildings can be harder to retrofit due to the need to use sensitive materials.



Commercial Buildings

Over the last five years we have made considerable progress improving the energy efficiency of the Council's main office building, South Cambridgeshire Hall, conducting a comprehensive retrofit of the entire building including a solar carport, electric vehicle charging points, a ground source heat pump network, LED lighting, and an upgrade of the chiller system. This has upgraded the EPC rating of the building to an 'A'. Where possible, we will continue to seek opportunities to reduce further energy use from this building, as well as from our other buildings at the Cambridge Science Park, and the Waterbeach Depot.

We have also pursued further opportunities to improve our commercial properties through the South Cambridgeshire Investment Partnership (SCIP), the Council's investment vehicle. We will identify opportunities to explore future improvement at appropriate breaks in tenancies so that our tenants can benefit from reduced energy usage.

In our communities

The Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership (CERP) is a partnership between the local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, which supports home energy efficiency improvements in private sector housing under the collaborative 'Action on Energy'. The partnership helps low-income households take advantage of grant funding for retrofit and provides wider support for those who are more able to pay for energy efficiency measures. We will continue to support homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, providing clear information and guidance on retrofit, as well as seeking funding to support those on low incomes to improve the energy performance of their homes.

A priority for the district is to ensure tenants, particularly those most vulnerable, are empowered to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. We acknowledge the limited capacity of tenants to upgrade their homes, and we will work closely with landlords in the private rented sector to promote best practice and use the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) to identify rented properties with an EPC of 'F' or below.



We will work with organisations such as National Energy Action and the Local Energy Advice Partnership to support residents on low incomes to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and provide guidance on how to run homes efficiently.

We must also support homes to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, providing guidance on how homes can be adapted to support this. We recognise we cannot achieve this on our own and will continue collaborating with other organisations to maximise our impact.



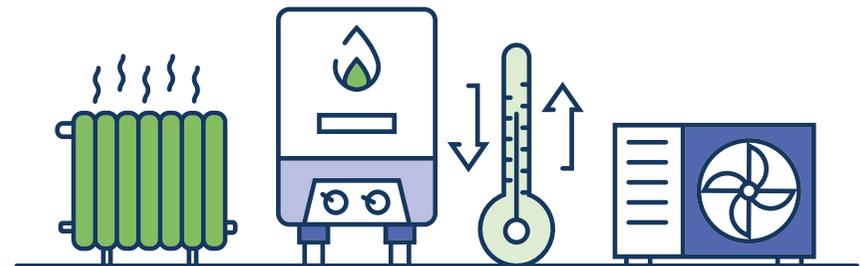
Key policies

A number of key policies shape the context of this work in South Cambridgeshire:

- South Cambridgeshire District Council's [Asset Management Strategy](#) (2021) sets out the Council's approach to maintaining, improving and developing the Council's housing assets which sit within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- The [Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy](#) (2024) is a joint strategy with Cambridge City Council which sets out our approach to improving housing in the area.
- Cambridgeshire County Council sets out how it can support communities with energy projects in its [Community Energy Action Plan](#).

Other policies in development include the emerging 'Greater Cambridge Local Plan', as well as the 'Local Area Energy Plan', which will support the future planning of renewable energy infrastructure. The joint Local Plan is developing policies to mandate acceptable levels of energy use in new developments, how renewable energy will be used to meet energy need, and how to account for whole-life carbon emissions (those associated with constructing buildings).

Following the adoption of the Local Plan, we will incorporate any resulting actions into our own plan.





Actions

Area of Influence: Direct Control

Scope: Wider district

- 3.1 Following stock condition survey of the Council-owned 'Ermine Street Housing' develop a plan for increasing the EPC ratings of the Ermine Street Housing Stock.
- 3.2 Improve the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock through the 'Asset Management Strategy' and 'Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy', including through the delivery of 'Warm Homes: Local Grant'.

Scope: Own estate

- 3.3 Reduce energy use from data storage on the Council's servers and websites.
- 3.4 Assess current and predicted future energy use from AI to develop plans to reduce the impact of increased energy demand from AI services.

Area of Influence: Place shaping

Scope: Wider district

- 3.5 Require all new developments to meet at least 10% of its energy needs from onsite renewable energy.
- 3.6 Progress planning policies requiring high standards on carbon emission reduction and environmental sustainability for new homes and non-residential developments as part of the new 'Greater Cambridge Local Plan', considering the outcomes of the 'Greater Cambridge Net Zero Evidence Base' study and other evidence informing the plan, as well as the 'National Planning Policy Framework' (NPPF).

Area of Influence: Showcasing

Scope: Wider district

- 3.7 Continue to investigate options for reducing the carbon impact of our housing stock renovation processes, including through reuse.
- 3.8 Continue to take next steps to progress South Cambridgeshire Investment Partnership development and deliver 256 new low-carbon homes in Cambourne as an exemplar to other developments.
- 3.9 Run the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project to identify 'Private Rental Sector' properties with an EPC of 'F' or below and relevant actions required (updates by exception, with end of year summary detailing progress during the year).

Area of Influence: Partnerships

Scope: Wider district

- 3.10 Contribute, in collaboration with partners, to the completion of the 'Local Area Energy Plan' for Cambridgeshire, setting out a blueprint to meet future energy demand.
- 3.11 Work with organisations such as National Energy Action and the Local Energy Advice Partnership to support residents on low incomes to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Area of Influence: Involving, engaging and communicating

Scope: Wider district

- 3.12 Deliver and promote grants for home energy efficiency improvements to households on low incomes through central government-funded projects.
- 3.13 Produce tenant guides to help our tenants ensure their homes operate in the most energy efficient way possible.
- 3.14 Support residents who are able to pay to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, working with the Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership.
- 3.15 Promote best practice and support on energy efficiency in privately rented properties to landlords through available means including the Landlord Forum.
- 3.16 Utilise the private sector housing survey to identify properties with low EPC rating to engage these landlords on energy efficiency and available support.
- 3.17 Provide energy efficiency support and advice through 3C Building Control.





Our Areas of Focus

Nature and Water



Key Ambition

Protect and enhance nature and water in South Cambridgeshire to create interconnected, resilient and productive natural ecosystems.

Targets

- Double the quantity and quality of land managed for nature, including increasing the area of land managed for nature from 7% to 14% by 2050 in the district.
- Seek to introduce a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for major new developments through the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, above the national standard requirement of 10%

Key Principles

- Ensure any land enhanced for nature is resilient to the impacts of climate change and increases sustainable long-term habitats for biodiversity.
- Prioritise nature-based solutions when considering actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change.



Sustainable Development Goals





Background

In 2019, South Cambridgeshire District Council declared an ecological emergency, recognising the declining ecological status of species and habitats, both globally and locally.

Nature and water represent just under 8% of land use in South Cambridgeshire (UK Gov, 2022), dwarfed by the amount of land used for agriculture and housing. We have some of the scarcest habitats and species, with just under 950 hectares of land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (CPERC, 2022-23), and approximately 37 hectares of land in local nature reserves. As a district, we also have very low tree cover (7.2%), placing us in the bottom third of rural areas for tree cover nationally.

A survey of Greater Cambridge highlighted protecting local wildlife and habitats as the highest motivation for residents and communities to improve nature and take climate action across the area. This is also a top priority for the district council, recognising the innumerable benefits that increased provision of nature can bring for the climate, health and wellbeing and air quality.

Chalk streams are one of the rarest habitats in the world and the UK accounts for approximately 85% of the global total number of chalk streams making the protection and restoration of our chalk streams of critical importance. These habitats are under sustained threat, facing key challenges such as barriers to fish passage, sedimentation, low water quality and

invasive species. Most of the district’s water bodies fail to achieve a ‘good’ ecological status under The Water Environment Regulations 2017, highlighting the need to focus on improving water quality across the area. South Cambridgeshire’s chalk streams are not only habitats for rare species but are also key to our flood management.



Figure 9 – Proportion of total land area by usage type in South Cambridgeshire - UK Government (2022)

Figure 9 (above) Executive Summary: Agriculture dominates land use in South Cambridgeshire (2022). Forest, open land and water are the next largest category, while all other uses each account for only small proportions of the total area.



Nature and Water

Background (continued)

Improving our nature and water can bring about wider benefits. Increased quality and quantity of green and blue space can help to support mental health, and during hot weather can provide cooler shading, allowing respite from the heat, as well as improving air quality. Improved connectivity of green spaces can also encourage physical activity providing further health benefits and opportunities for proximity to nature.

Increasing tree cover and creating infrastructure like rain gardens, as well as better management of our watercourses, can help to manage flooding, especially during increased severe rainfall events. We will continue to explore wider policy mechanisms as part of work on the emerging 'Greater Cambridge Local Plan' to ensure new development is resilient to our changing climate and considers nature interventions to bolster biodiversity holistically.

[A Green Infrastructure mapping report](#) was commissioned in support of the emerging Local Plan, which details opportunity areas for South Cambridgeshire. It will be important to consider all Green Infrastructure opportunities spatially for development site selection to maximise co-benefits and limit climate impacts.

Land we own

We own several small areas of green space, managed as part of our housing estate, as well as five closed churchyards, on which we have already taken measures to increase biodiversity. These areas have the potential to form higher quality land for wildlife and biodiversity, supporting species like bats, birds and insects, and improving access to quality climate-resilient green space for our residents and communities.

Land we manage

As well as the land we own, we also are responsible for managing 275km of awarded watercourses (streams and ditches). We will continue to maintain these and support the wildlife that inhabit this area. In the face of the more extreme weather resulting from climate change, these watercourses also represent crucial infrastructure which must be managed carefully to avoid flooding. We will seek further opportunities to work with partners to improve watercourses throughout the entire district.

Milton Country Park is a 38-hectare park, including woodland, water and grassy meadow habitats. Although owned by South Cambridgeshire District Council, it is managed by the Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust under a long-term lease. Where possible we will encourage the protection and enhancement of nature and water on this site.

Water supply is a significant challenge in Greater Cambridge; work with partners through the Cambridge Water Scarcity group is crucial to addressing this issue, whilst recognising the area's growth needs. The continued prioritisation of sustainable drainage systems in planning policy and new development will be key to reduce vulnerability to water shortages and infrastructure strain during heavy rainfall.

As a social landlord, we recognise the need to support residents so that they can be empowered to take action to help nature and biodiversity, and to adapt to the impacts of climate change. We will produce resources that support our residents to adopt water-efficient habits and measures, and to protect and enhance nature in their outdoor space.



The 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy' will help prioritise the important focus areas for nature recovery. We will look for opportunities to collaborate and support this recovery on the land identified within South Cambridgeshire.

In our communities

As the district council is not a large landowner, we acknowledge that we must work with partners to enact change that supports our nature, biodiversity and water resources. Although the area is nature-depleted, we will promote and encourage access and connection to nature for our communities. We will provide consistent communication and messaging on nature and water to encourage water efficiency and provide residents with guidance on what they can do to protect and enhance nature.

At the most local level of governance, parish councils have a unique and vital role in shaping the land they own and manage. The Environment Act (2021) includes parish councils as responsible public authorities under the Biodiversity Duty. There is also significant opportunity

to empower local councils to lead nature recovery efforts at a grassroots level.

There is significant opportunity within the agricultural sector to increase the adoption of nature-based solutions to increase biodiversity as well as regulate ecosystem services, improve soil health and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change. We will work with local farmers to support increased biodiversity on land managed for agriculture, which currently makes up 79.9% of land use in the district.





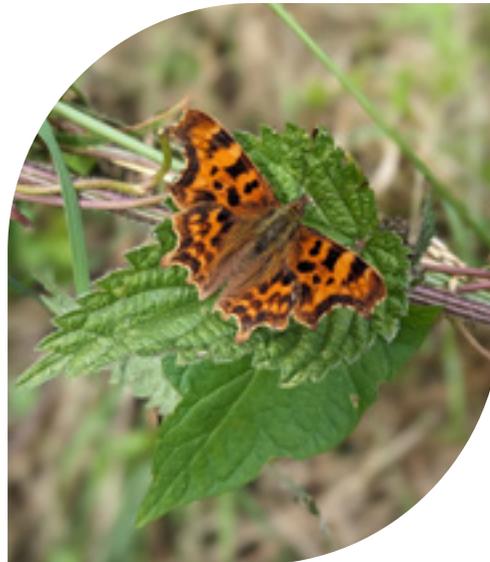
Key Policies

A number of key policies shape the context of this work in South Cambridgeshire:

- **The Environment Act (2021)** set out the responsibility of local authorities to deliver on their Biodiversity Duty which:
 - Requires us to consider what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity, agree policies and specific objectives, and act to deliver these.
- Under the Environment Act (2021), as a local planning authority we are required to mandate 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) as part of development. The Greater Cambridge Planning Service encourages a BNG of 20% and is exploring this as a policy requirement through the new '**Greater Cambridge Local Plan**'.



- The Environment Act (2021) also mandated the creation of a '**Local Nature Recovery Strategy**' for Cambridge and Peterborough. The strategy will identify priority areas for nature recovery, inform sustainable land use through the planning system and shape the delivery of nature-based solutions, as well as guiding how public funding for nature recovery is spent.





Actions

Area of Influence: Procurement and commissioning

Scope: Own estate

4.1 Pilot using alternative methods to control weed growth and avoid harmful environmental impacts in new contracts.

Area of Influence: Place shaping

Scope: Wider district

4.2 Progress planning policies which protect and enhance nature as part of wider work on green infrastructure in the emerging 'Greater Cambridge Local Plan'.

4.3 Work with the Community Health Initiative on the development of a contemporary open spaces policy for the 'Great Cambridge Local Plan' that places wellbeing as a central policy objective.

4.4 Seek to introduce a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for major new developments through the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, above the national standard requirement of 10%.

4.5 Require new housing to meet the water efficiency standards in the current 'South Cambridgeshire Local Plan' (maximum of 110 litres/person/day) and explore where higher standards could be adopted in the new 'Greater Cambridge Local Plan'.

Area of Influence: Showcasing

Scope: Own estate

4.6 Continue to identify and deliver opportunities for tree planting and biodiversity enhancements such as supporting rewilding and wildflower areas on land we own including as part of our housing estate and Milton County Park where funding is available.

4.7 Use opportunities from the development of the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network project to create high quality areas for nature.

Scope: Wider district

4.8 Continue to deliver the project to plant and maintain Miyawaki woodlands in Cambourne.

Area of Influence: Partnerships

Scope: Wider district

4.9 Work with the Cambridge Water Scarcity Group and other stakeholders to advocate for solutions to address short term water supply issues and longer-term strategies to identify solutions which protect the environment and enable growth needs to be met.

4.10 Contribute, in collaboration with partners, to the delivery of the 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy' for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which sets out plans for nature and habitat recovery, including within South Cambridgeshire.

4.11 Work with partners to support the delivery of the Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams project, identifying opportunities to work with landowners on the protection and enhancement of chalk streams.

4.12 Secure funding from developers for partners to protect and enhance nature.

4.13 Work with local farmers to promote best practice for sustainable agriculture, regenerative farming and solutions for nature on land managed for agriculture.

Scope: Own estate

4.14 Support the enhancement and protection of nature and our watercourses through working with partners on our awarded watercourses.

Area of Influence: Involving, engaging and communicating

Scope: Wider district

4.15 Engage parishes on the rewilding of parish-owned land including reduced mowing and wildflower planting and the implementation of a Parish Pollinator Pledge.

4.16 Produce and promote guides for residents on managing their gardens for nature.

4.17 Deliver a programme of engagement on nature and biodiversity (to include webinars, newsletter articles, and social media) with stakeholders, including communities and parish councils.

4.18 Provide grants to villages to plant trees and help biodiversity and nature recovery projects (e.g., rewilding), such as with the previous 'Community Chest' and the 'Six Free Trees' grants.

4.19 Work with partners to support communities to reduce their water consumption through promoting water-saving messaging.



Our Areas of Focus

Sustainable Food



Key Ambition

Support a resilient food system which provides healthy, affordable and locally available food for all.

Targets



-  To become a **Sustainable Food Place**, creating a network of local food organisations to break down silos and create a more connected food system.
-  Support the provision of space for allotments and community orchards in the district as required by **Policy SC/8 in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan**.



Sustainable Development Goals





Background

In South Cambridgeshire, there are unique opportunities and distinct local challenges to creating a fairer and more sustainable food system.

Agricultural land makes up around 80% of the district's land cover (DEFRA, 2022), yet some areas of our district have been categorised as 'food deserts' (CDRC, 2024). 'Food deserts' are areas where people have limited access to food which is nutritious, affordable and of a high-quality. We face a need to create a better connected, resilient food network, linking up food production and consumption in our district.

South Cambridgeshire's population is expected to grow substantially in the next 25 years, creating increasing obstacles to ensuring that all residents have access to healthy, affordable and sustainable food which is resilient to national and global shocks. The district is largely rural, with residents often needing to drive some distances to get their food, presenting further challenges around which foods might be accessible to different communities.

As an authority we do not procure food directly on a large scale meaning we have limited direct influence, however we do provide food at our main office site, South Cambridgeshire Hall. We ensure that we use local suppliers who prioritise locally sourced ingredients. As a waste-collecting authority, we do have an important role in influencing behaviour change and food waste minimisation as part of this service. Through collaboration, working in partnership and using our influence as a planning authority, we will be able to encourage a transition towards a sustainable food culture. Over the past seven years, we have supported community food growing initiatives, providing grants through our 'Zero Carbon Communities' grant scheme. We will continue to support food growing and food education initiatives through grant funding, including improving access to allotments to build on the publication of the allotment toolkit, and the support of local community orchards and food hubs.

At the same time, there is an appetite for locally produced food. Over the past few years, we have supported the set up and development of 16 local farmers' markets to promote local and sustainable food and support local rural businesses. South Cambridgeshire has nine community orchards, and the popularity of projects like the Babraham Forest Garden highlight local support for community food projects.

Given the district's predominantly agricultural landscape, an appropriate balance with nature and biodiversity must be struck. Agricultural intensification has historically caused significant nature loss in the UK. Environmentally sensitive farming is increasingly being encouraged by government schemes aimed at delivering positive outcomes for the climate, environment and our biodiversity, including creating and restoring wildlife-rich habitats. As these come to fruition, we are increasingly seeing positive examples of environmentally sensitive farming nationally.



Sustainable Food

Background *(continued)*

Within South Cambridgeshire, we are lucky to have a wealth of forward-thinking farmers, trialling innovative methods of farming with strong consideration towards the environment. It is vital that we help to share the experiences and learnings of these groups to promote further innovation in environmentally sensitive farming and food security.

One of the biggest drivers in the transition to a more sustainable food system will be the behaviours of residents, communities and businesses throughout the district. Supporting behaviour change through communications will be key to the success of our current and future food waste reduction programmes.

Key Policy

The following policy frames our approach to improving the accessibility of sustainable food in the district:

- [Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document 2020](#), encourages allotment provision for new developments





Actions

Area of Influence: Place shaping

Scope: Wider district

5.1 Use guidance in the 'Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document' (SPD) to encourage developers to incorporate provisions for food growing in new housing and non-residential development (e.g. providing fruit trees, roof top gardens and growing space as part of landscape design).

Area of Influence: Partnerships

Scope: Wider district

5.2 Explore opportunities for developing a Sustainable Food Network, including becoming a Sustainable Food Place

5.3 Work with local voluntary and community groups and other partners to promote sustainable food practices to local businesses.

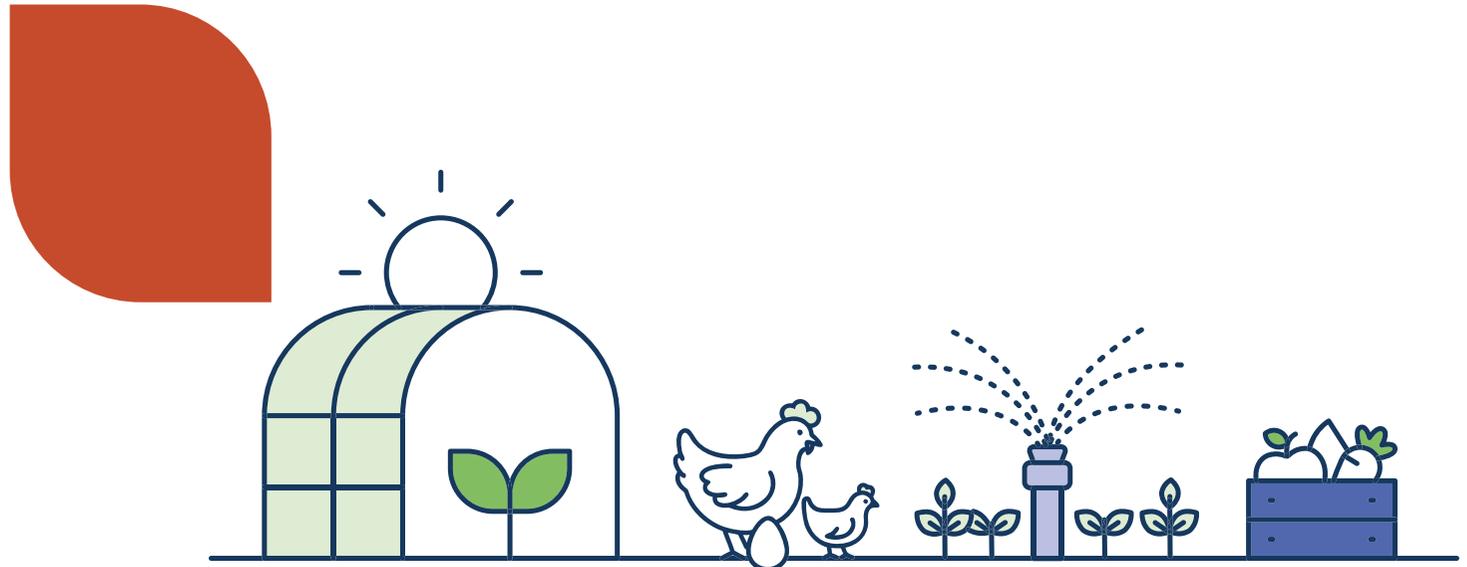
Area of Influence: Involving, engaging and communicating

Scope: Wider district

5.4 Support and engage farmers and agricultural businesses to become more economically and environmentally sustainable, including identifying opportunities to work together.

Scope: Own estate

5.5 Run annual communication campaigns to encourage carbon-friendly diets and food waste reduction, aligning with national schemes.





Our Areas of Focus

Waste Minimisation



Key Ambition

Deliver a waste service at the forefront of waste avoidance and reduction, with remaining waste being recycled, composted and disposed of safely and efficiently in terms of cost, climate change impact, and the natural environment.



Targets

- 🎯 Increase the amount of household waste sent for recycling, composting or anaerobic digestion to 55% by 2030, from a 24/25 recycling rate of 50%
- 🎯 Reduce the amount of general waste per household that cannot be recycled, composted or digested to 380kg per household per year by 2030



Sustainable Development Goals





Background

The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service (GCSWS) is a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, responsible for waste and recycling collection across both areas.

The waste service has a significant opportunity to have a positive impact on reducing emissions, converting waste into energy and preventing environmental damage and pollution. South Cambridgeshire District Council is also responsible for street cleansing, enforcement and awarded watercourse management in the district.

The GCSWS collects recycling and waste from approximately 131,000 households and 2,000 commercial customers (2024/25), numbers that increase by approximately 2,000 households each year. In total the GCSWS has approximately 170 employees and is the largest operational service in the Council. It empties 32,000 bins a day and collects over 50,000 tonnes of recycling each year (2024/25).

It is estimated that 45% of global emissions can be tackled by changing the way we make and consume goods and products. The actions of the GCSWS can contribute to championing the required behavioural change, supporting domestic and commercial customers to minimise the overall volumes of waste that people put in their bins for collection and maximise recycling rates.

There are key elements of waste collection which present particular challenges. In the UK, one third of the rubbish ending up in landfill is food waste (WRAP, 2025); our latest waste analysis shows the same picture locally with the contents of general waste bins being 34% food. Overall, one quarter of the food purchased nationally is disposed of as food waste (WRAP, 2025). The more this can be diverted or avoided in the first place, the better.

We can play a key role by delivering our waste collection policy, a document which is reviewed annually and sets out how we plan to encourage residents to change their waste-related behaviours. We set limits to the types and number of bins, collection

frequency and the allowance of additional bins to aid capture of resources where needed. We will continue to actively train our collection crews to ensure they are able to report back any problems with resident recycling, enabling a proactive and reactive education back to residents that keeps recycling collected at a high volume and quality.

Additionally, the GCSWS is part of the wider Cambridge and Peterborough Waste Partnership's Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP), which is setting an area-wide waste and resource strategy. The partnership enables the delivery of mutually beneficial projects to prevent waste and increase recycling. This partnership also provides the mechanism to respond to consultation and influence national policy.



Waste Minimisation

Background *(continued)*

Reducing non-recyclable waste requires residents to adopt new habits or behaviours. We will help encourage a shift to these behaviours by supporting initiatives that facilitate circularity and normalise the behaviours residents will need to adopt. We will continue to actively support and help deliver national campaigns with this purpose, as well as developing our own. We have also worked closely with Cambridge Carbon Footprint to grow and promote the Cambridgeshire Repair Cafe Network locally. These sociable, volunteer-led events bring people who love repairing things together with people who have items to be repaired over a cup of tea or coffee. The Greater Cambridge area now has one of the greatest concentrations of Repair Cafes in the country. Across the Greater Cambridge area in 2024, the Repair Cafe network helped avoid five tonnes of waste and 35 tonnes of CO₂e. We will continue to promote and support these circularity practices throughout the district.

Key Policies

Several key aspects of the Environment Act 2021 frame our approach to reducing emissions from the waste service in addition to our local service policy documentation:

- The [Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service Collection Policy](#) sets our approach to delivering the service, including what waste we collect and how.
- The Government's 2018 [Resources and Waste Strategy \(RAWS\)](#) aims to reduce waste, improve recycling, and support the development of a circular economy. As part of the strategy, collection and packaging reform will provide nationwide consistency in recycling collections and drive reduction and improved recyclability of packaging through Extended Producer Responsibility. It also includes plans for a nationwide Deposit Return Schemes for bottles and cans.
- The [Environment Act 2021](#) provides the legislative framework through which the strategic waste reforms will be enacted.

- **A Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP) Waste Strategy** is being written and will be adopted in 2026, which will help set out the future direction of local waste and recycling management and the increased sustainability of operations.
- **The 2023 Simpler Recycling policy** has nationwide requirements to improve recycling as per the Environment Act 2021.





Key Policies *(continued)*

As part of the Simpler Recycling policy, the Council will adhere to the following set of requirements:

- A core set of recyclables will be collected at kerbside by 31st March 2026: paper and card, glass bottles and jars, plastic tubs, post and trays, and bottles and Tetrapak cartons. The GCSWS will continue to provide this service.
- Kerbside collections of soft plastics will be required by 31st March 2027. The GCSWS will continue to collect this.
- The Council must introduce a weekly collection of food waste from domestic properties by 1st April 2026. The GCSWS has an implementation plan in place to ensure this requirement is fulfilled with maximum uptake from residents.
- For commercial premises the date of implementation was March 2025. The GCSWS already provides a commercial waste service that enables local businesses to meet their duty.

Actions

Area of Influence: Direct control

Scope: Wider district

6.1 Deliver separate weekly food waste collections from April 2026.

Scope: Own estate

6.2 Encourage waste minimisation and promote enable and promote a circular economy for colleagues i.e. swishes, freecycle section on Insite.

Area of Influence: Showcasing

Scope: Wider district

6.3 Provide support for and scale schemes (such as repair cafes, reuse, refill, kit hire and food waste redistribution schemes) that help the transition to a circular economy.

Area of Influence: Partnerships

Scope: Own estate

6.4 Work with Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP) partners on the new 'Joint Municipal Waste Strategy' setting out how authorities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will collect and dispose of waste over the next 10 years.

Scope: Wider district

6.5 Seek outlets for hard-to-recycle items including bulky collections and small electricals.

Area of Influence: Involving, engaging and communicating

Scope: Wider district

6.6 Provide information, communications and support to businesses to design out waste, adopt circular economy practices and increase recycling.

6.7 Review food waste collection through commercial waste service to identify opportunities to support food waste reduction.

6.8 Carry out communications campaigns focussed on increasing recycling rates and reducing non-recyclable waste from the 'Circular Resource Plan'.



Our Areas of Focus

Community Support and Behaviour Change

Key Ambition

Everyone in South Cambridgeshire to recognise what they can do to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies in whatever capacity they are able, and for residents to be supported in overcoming barriers to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Targets



- 
 Hold five external events per year to provide support engagement and education of residents and communities on the climate and ecological emergencies, including the annual Local Climate Action Conference
- 
 Publish four external 'Zero Carbon Communities' newsletters per year
- 
 Achieve Silver accreditation as a carbon literate organisation



Sustainable Development Goals





Background

One of the biggest drivers of change in addressing the climate and ecological emergencies will be people's everyday behaviours ([Climate Change Committee, 2025](#)).

As a local authority, we have many points of engagement with residents, community groups, colleagues and other important stakeholders. We have a significant opportunity to communicate and engage with these groups to educate, explain the need for change, explore how everyone can take action in their own lives, and understand how we can use our influence to provide support to transition to low carbon, resilient lifestyles. We acknowledge that this will require a diverse and multi-faceted approach and that everyone will be able to approach this with differing levels of capacity, ability to act, motivations for taking action and support required.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has an extensive history of engaging with residents and communities on nature and climate change. The district is fortunate to have numerous sustainability groups

working in their respective local areas to protect and enhance nature, communicate with others and reduce local carbon emissions. The 'Zero Carbon Communities' programme has supported these groups, bringing them together through events like the Green Connect webinars, sharing news and opportunities through the quarterly newsletter, and providing funding through a recurring grant scheme. These groups and projects have brought about benefits beyond those for climate and nature, such as reducing building running costs through energy efficiency upgrades or tackling social isolation by bringing communities together.

We are also a large employer, employing 738 staff as of 01 April 2025. Our influence through the different services which we deliver has the potential to have a significant impact on reducing emissions. In 2024, we became a Bronze certified carbon literate organisation, through developing our approach to ensure that all colleagues were able to understand how they could take action and communicate about climate change and nature in their own roles. We continue to support colleagues

to protect and enhance nature and tackle climate change and strive to achieve silver accreditation.

We play a key role in supporting planning at a local level. Processes such as the community-led planning process present an opportunity to encourage communities to consider how they might mitigate and adapt to the climate and ecological emergencies. The Council also distributes several grants such as the 'Community Chest Grant', the 'Service Support Grants' and the 'Tenant Community Grant', empowering our local communities to enact positive change.



Community Support and Behaviour Change

Key Policy

The following policy supports our approach to working with community groups, the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, and individuals to help tackle issues within their communities:

- [South Cambridgeshire District Council Corporate Plan 2025-2030](#) defines one of the Council's five key priorities as 'Healthy and Supported Communities', tackling environmental health issues, improving the health and wellbeing of residents and working with community groups, the voluntary and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, and individuals to help address issues within their communities.





Actions

Area of Influence: Direct control

Scope: Own estate

- 7.1 Maintain an Environmental Management System for the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service.
- 7.2 Include consideration of 'nature' as well as 'climate change' on impact reviews as part of internal committee reporting.

Area of Influence: Procurement and commissioning

Scope: Wider district

- 7.3 Review the grant processes to ensure that climate and nature are considered in the award of any grants.

Scope: Own estate

- 7.4 Conduct Climate Impact Assessments for all bids and savings.

Area of Influence: Place shaping

Scope: Wider district

- 7.5 Review our community-led planning documentation to assess mechanisms to implement climate change mitigation or adaptation as part of this process.
- 7.6 Monitor the impacts of new communities to assess the effectiveness of climate and nature-related planning measures.

Area of Influence: Showcasing

Scope: Own estate

- 7.7 Deliver carbon literacy training to colleagues and become a Silver Carbon Literate Organisation.

Area of Influence: Partnerships

Scope: Wider district

- 7.8 Seek opportunities to collaborate with Cambridge City Council on programmes of resident engagement.

Area of Influence: Involving, engaging and communicating

Scope: Wider district

- 7.9 Deliver communications campaigns around climate change and the protection and enhancement of nature through communication routes including tenants and leaseholders' newsletter and the parish clerks' newsletter.
- 7.10 Continue to support those engaged with climate action through the 'Zero Carbon Communities' programme, including the delivery of social media posts, newsletters and the annual Local Climate Action Conference.
- 7.11 Provide opportunities for in-person engagement on climate change to overcome the digital divide and working with volunteers/ community-led resources to offer community events to provide advice on environmental activities to reach a wider cross-section of the community.
- 7.12 Update the South Cambridgeshire District Council climate change webpages to provide clear guidance, tools and funding opportunities, and increase the visibility of local community groups and local environmental groups.
- 7.13 Continue to promote upcoming events, volunteer opportunities and local initiatives that residents can get involved with through the 'Zero Carbon Communities' newsletter and social media channels.
- 7.14 Work to ensure that Council magazines and communications include regular features on climate action, biodiversity and air quality, featuring success stories and examples of best practice.
- 7.15 Continue to collaborate with existing local climate and nature groups to advance climate action across the district, exploring opportunities for funding and joint communication campaigns, and facilitating connections between businesses, schools and community groups.

Scope: Own estate

- 7.16 Include reference to the importance of climate change and nature in job descriptions, as well as on the recruitment website.
- 7.17 Incorporate climate change into colleague objectives and awards.
- 7.18 Develop a 'team dashboard' to track progress on climate change and nature in each service area.
- 7.19 Incorporate sections on climate change into employee mandatory e-learning programme, as well as the corporate induction.



Our Areas of Focus

Businesses, Supply Chain and Finance

Key Ambition

Support and collaborate with businesses so that they are empowered to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies and are supported by a robust and resilient supply chain.

Targets



🎯 **Engage 2,000 businesses** through the inclusion of climate and nature related messaging in the business support newsletter and business socials, continuing our support for these organisations.



Sustainable Development Goals





Background

South Cambridgeshire is an area of significant economic development. Employment growth in South Cambridgeshire in 2024 was 4.4% ([Greater Cambridge Employment Update, 2024](#)); this is expected to rise with growth in sectors such as Life Sciences.

It is likely that this growth will bring about additional demands such as increased energy usage. Energy demand across Greater Cambridge is expected to triple between 2021 and 2050 (Cambridge Ahead), requiring consideration to the infrastructure which will be needed to support this growth.

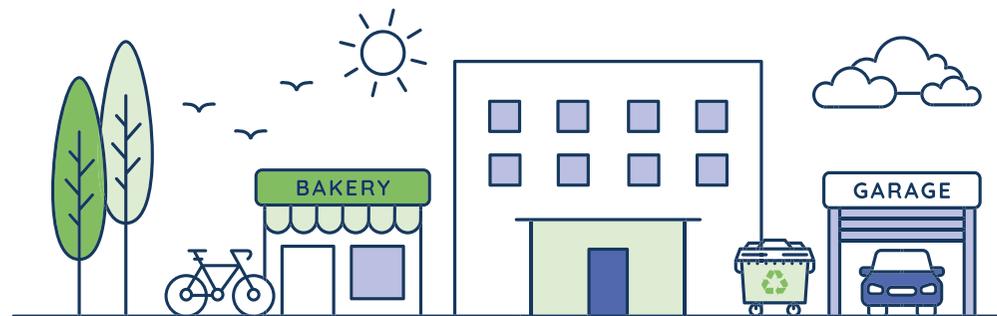
In 2024, 87.7% of businesses in South Cambridgeshire were micro businesses. These businesses are likely to need additional support to consider how they might respond to the climate and ecological emergencies, given constraints on resources or capacity. In 2024, the largest proportion of businesses were in the professional, scientific and technical services at 21.3%, followed by construction at 14%. The growth of resource intensive industries

in the area is expected to create demand for energy and water and increase the challenges of water scarcity, emissions from energy demand and the minimisation of waste throughout the district. Engaging local businesses will be key to transitioning towards a low carbon, circular economy.

As employers, businesses play a vital role in influencing their employees to make sustainable changes in their own lives to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies. It is essential that businesses understand how they can become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, particularly where front-line workers may be vulnerable. This may help to prevent future shocks to businesses in the face of increasingly adverse climate impacts. Through this, additional benefits such as reduced costs, greater business resilience,

and greater employee satisfaction may be realised. Furthermore, this will help to futureproof industry in South Cambridgeshire.

As an organisation, we procure goods and services to the value of around £40 million annually. This is significant in the scale of the local supply chain and highlights the need to assess the impacts of our procurement on carbon emissions, but also the wider environment. Our procurement processes already include a 15% weighting for social value and carbon reduction for all contracts, ensuring that we maximise social outcomes on all of our projects and protect the communities that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It is vital that we continue to leverage our procurement function to ensure that our suppliers consider their impact on climate and nature.





Businesses, Supply Chain and Finance

Background *(continued)*

We recognise the vital role that businesses must play in reducing the impact on the climate and protecting and enhancing nature. It is crucial that we support businesses to understand how they can focus their efforts as well as access support in this area, increasing commercial knowledge around climate and nature and the business benefits that it can bring. This includes helping businesses to understand how they can adapt to the impacts of climate change and become more resilient to future shocks. Our role in business and event licensing also gives us the opportunity to ensure that organisations consider how their actions can help to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies, particularly through the Event Safety Advisory Panel.

Key Policy

- The [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Skills Improvement Plan](#) sets out the region's plan for skills improvement based on its strategic priorities.





Actions

Area of Influence: Procurement and commissioning

Scope: Own estate

- 8.1 Provide training for officers in reducing supply chain emissions through sustainable procurement practices.
- 8.2 Reduce supply chain emissions through our largest contracts including requirements for green commitments from suppliers and contractors and auditing of sustainable impact.
- 8.3 Procure training providers who consider their climate impacts.
- 8.4 Ensure the benefits of social value weighting in procurement contracts are achieved.

Area of Influence: Partnerships

Scope: Wider district

- 8.5 Establish a 'green growth' business network to support the growth of the low-carbon sector in South Cambridgeshire, including a green business pledge.
- 8.6 Support the development of local 'green' skills, working with higher education institutions, skills hubs and the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Area of Influence: Involving, engaging and communicating

Scope: Wider district

- 8.7 Provide advice and resources to help businesses understand what they can do to reduce their emissions, waste and impact on nature, encouraging this through our licensing functions.
- 8.8 Set up a framework for the consideration of climate change through the Event Safety Advisory Group panel function using the green event guide from the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service.
- 8.9 Identify opportunities for funding and support to help businesses meet economic challenges around reducing emissions, increasing climate resilience and protecting and enhancing nature and adapting to the challenges of climate change.
- 8.10 Provide and promote resources and support to help businesses grow their commercial knowledge around climate change, such as offering thermal imaging cameras and webinars with internal and external sector experts.
- 8.11 Engage with businesses to identify knowledge gaps to feed into the provision and promotion of resources to support businesses.

Appendix A – Local policy and frameworks

- Greater Cambridge Shared Planning’s Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (2022)
<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2504/gcsp-biodiversity-spd-final-copy-march-2022-1.pdf>
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018)
<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/planning/local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/the-adopted-development-plan/south-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2018>
- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority’s Local Transport and Connectivity plan (2025)
<https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/CPCA-LTCP-Strategic-Document.pdf>
- Cambridgeshire County Council’s On Street Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Policy (2023)
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/On-Street-EV-Infrastructure-Policy-Cambridgeshire-County-Council.pdf>
- South Cambridgeshire District Council Corporate Plan 2025-2030
<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/rzphmfzt/scdc-corporate-plan-2025-2030.pdf>
- South Cambridgeshire District Council’s Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy (2025)
<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/vksj0oqh/hackney-carriage-and-private-hire-policy-2025-final.pdf>
- Homes for Our Future Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029 A Strategy for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils
https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/1hmntpbk/greater_cambridge_housing_strategy_final_accessibility_amendments_2025_04_15.pdf
- Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy 2021 – 2026 South Cambridgeshire District Council (2022)
<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/a2mpycch/scdc-asset-management-strategy-2021-2026.pdf>
- Cambridgeshire County Council’s Community Energy Action Plan (2024)
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/Community-Energy-Action-plan.pdf>

Appendix B - Climate and Nature Acronyms

Greater Cambridge Shared Waste team (GCSW) – a strategic partnership between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council collecting domestic and commercial recycling and waste from across both districts.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – a local housing authority that owns 200 or more social dwellings is required to account for them within an HRA. The HRA is intended to record expenditure and income on running a council's own housing stock.

Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) – a biofuel substitute for petrol and diesel

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – an intragovernmental body of the United Nations whose job is to provide the scientific basis for the development of climate policies.

Local Energy Advice Programme (LEAP) – a free energy and money saving advice service which South Cambridge District Council provides funding to

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – the process of restructuring the current local authority formation to realign governance and service delivery.

Refuse Collection Vehicle (RCV) & Electric Refuse Collection Vehicle (eRCV) – collect waste and transport it to the appropriate facility; eRCV's are powered by electricity.

South Cambridgeshire Investment Partnership (SCIP) –

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) – are designed to manage flooding and pollution risks resulting from urban runoff and mimic natural drainage processes to reduce the effect of run-off from developments and provide biodiversity benefits.

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) - refers to value-driven, non-governmental organisations which further social, environmental and cultural objectives.

Waterbeach Renewable Energy Project (WREN) – this project comes out of the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service commitments to decarbonise the fleet of refuse collection vehicles. WREN will provide the urgently required on-site renewable energy to facilitate this decarbonisation by enabling the charging of electric refuse collection vehicles.

Climate and Nature Glossary

Biodiversity – the variety of plant and animal life in a particular area or habitat.

Climate mitigation – the actions taken to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions, and those which enhance carbon sinks which absorb greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate resilience – the ability of individuals, communities or businesses to recover from or mitigate their vulnerability to climate-related impacts and shocks such as extreme weather events.

Co-benefits – the additional positive outcomes arising from action taken to address a primary goal. The co-benefits of action to address climate change include improved public health, enhanced biodiversity and economic growth.

Nature based solutions – actions to protect and restore natural systems to address challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and food and water security. The aim is to benefit society and the natural environment simultaneously.

Net Zero – negating the greenhouse gases produced by human activity, achieved either by reducing emissions completely and/or implementing offsetting methods to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This includes nature-based solutions.

Retrofit – the process of making improvements to the fabric of an existing building to make it more energy efficient. The process often involves improving insulation, upgrading windows, renewing services such as heating, water and lighting to improve the energy performance and comfort of the building and increases climate mitigation and resilience.



