



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# Climate and Nature Strategy

2026-2030

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# Foreword

To be added when strategy is finalised



# 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 seven 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.



**Transport**



**Energy & retrofit**



**Nature & water**



**Sustainable food**



**Waste minimisation**



**Business, supply chain & finance**



**Community support & behaviour**

# 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.

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 an ecological emergency in July 2019 and a climate emergency in November 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, with public consultations taking place in 2020, and late 2021. 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

Understanding the evolving demographics within South Cambridgeshire presents both opportunities and challenges for climate resilience and emissions reductions. The district faces an ageing population with a higher proportion of elderly residents compared to regional and national averages. This demographic trend poses a challenge, as older individuals are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme temperatures, underpinning the importance of enhanced local climate resilience strategies.

Despite these challenges, there is a substantial opportunity to leverage the district's capacity to reduce energy demand and change behaviours, 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, potentially altering current emission patterns.

# Impacts of climate change and the ecological emergency in South Cambridgeshire

South Cambridgeshire is located in the east of England and 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 heavier rainfall. The negative impacts of climate change may include the impacts shown in Figure 2 (right).

Figure 2 – Impacts of Climate Change, Met Office (2025)  
Climate Report for South Cambridgeshire, page 3  
<https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/b8eb3cee8f764147a2cfd69cf36238f/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





# Impacts of climate change and the ecological emergency 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 mitigating, as well as adapting to, climate change.

Adaptation measures will be needed to decrease the health impacts of increased summer temperatures, particularly on vulnerable groups. Figure 3, shows the future climate change expected in Cambridgeshire under existing global policies (equivalent to global warming level of 2.0-3.7C under the Intergovernmental

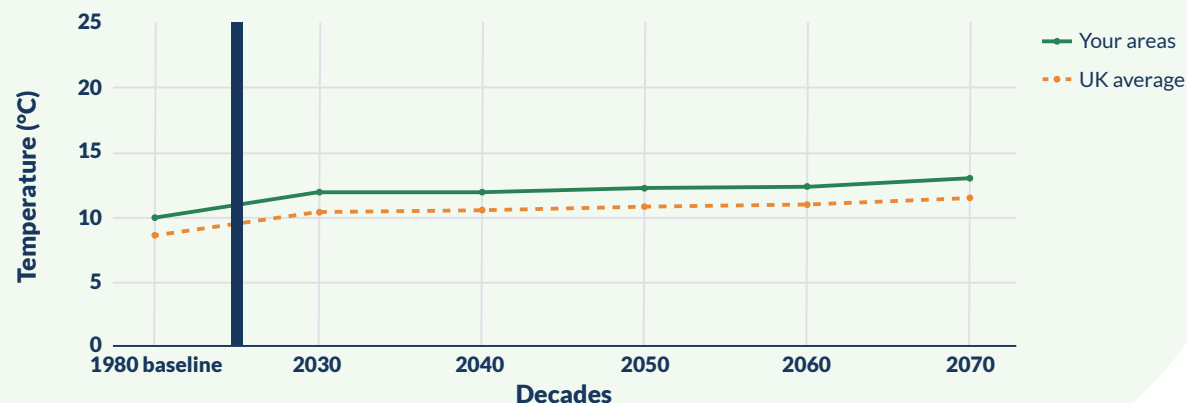


Figure 3 – Cambridgeshire vs UK average temperature increases, Local Climate Adaptation Tool (2024)  
<https://www.lcat.uk/>

Panel for Climate Change Representative Concentration Pathway 6.0), and shows the yearly averages for temperature for Cambridgeshire against the UK average.

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.

## Other human induced pressures in South Cambridgeshire:

- Pressures from increased development
- Habitat loss and fragmentation from agricultural and housing
- Air pollution

Our climate risk register (Appendix B) 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.

# Emissions in South Cambridgeshire

The transport sector is the largest contributor to South Cambridgeshire's emissions, at over half of our total, see (Figure 4.)

Emissions from commercial and domestic electricity and gas, as well as other fuel types, are the second largest source of emissions at almost 30%.

According to DESNZ, our emissions totalled 1,026,780 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> for the year 2023.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's carbon emissions by sector.

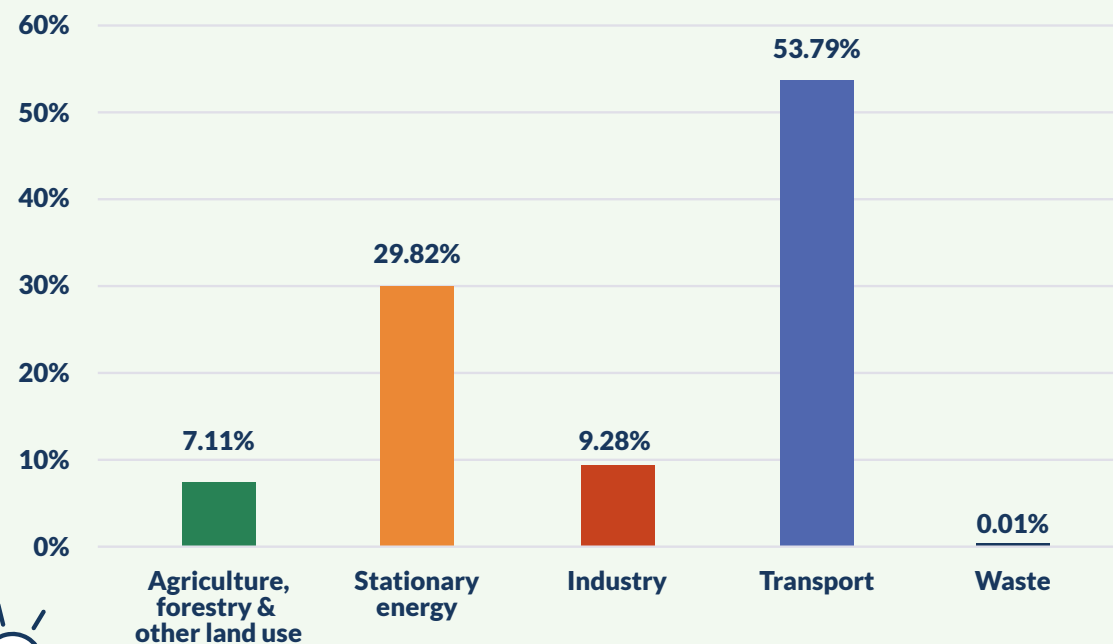


Figure 4 – South Cambridgeshire District Council Carbon Emissions by GHG Sector using 2023 DESNZ emissions data for South Cambridgeshire District Council





**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 policies that simultaneously address both the climate and ecological crises.

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

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

Some key achievements to date are demonstrated in the following timeline.

You can read about 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

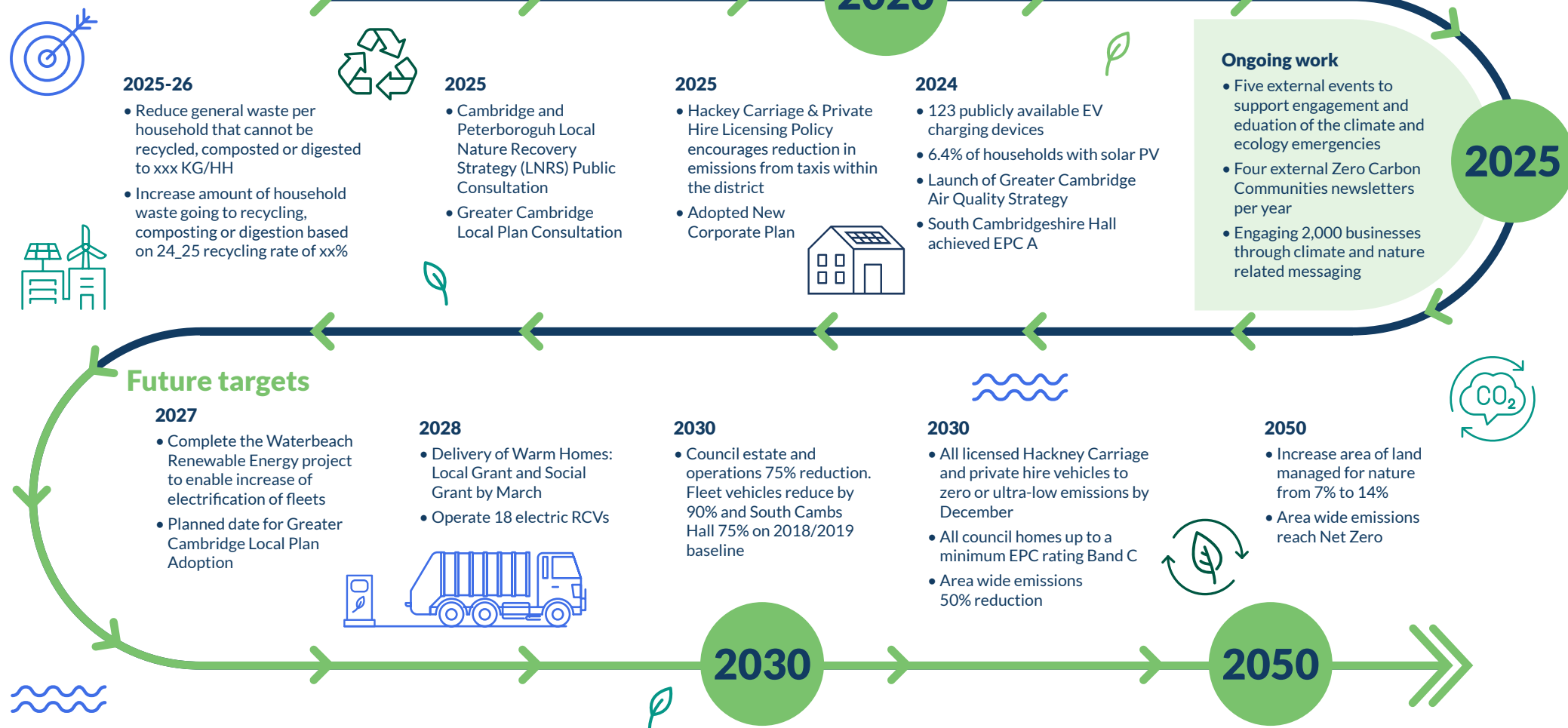


Figure 5 – South Cambridgeshire District Council timeline of achievements and targets 2015 – 2050



# 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, at 2.42%, of any local authority area in England ([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 ~£650,000 in funding to communities) 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.





# 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.

**The use of AI technology**  
AI searches are significantly more energy-intensive than a regular search engine. As a business entity, the Council cannot afford to forego the use of AI. 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)*

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.

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 enables us to do so. This list of potential, ambitious future actions has been compiled in a sister document to our Action Plan for this Strategy, a **Prospective Action Register**. We will remain cognisant of and return to this list when resources and capacity allow.

We will continue to work in partnership with other local authorities to ensure that our ambitions align as we navigate the next phase of LGR.





# Framing our Strategy

We have framed our strategy against the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as this is 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 to each focus area are highlighted throughout this strategy.



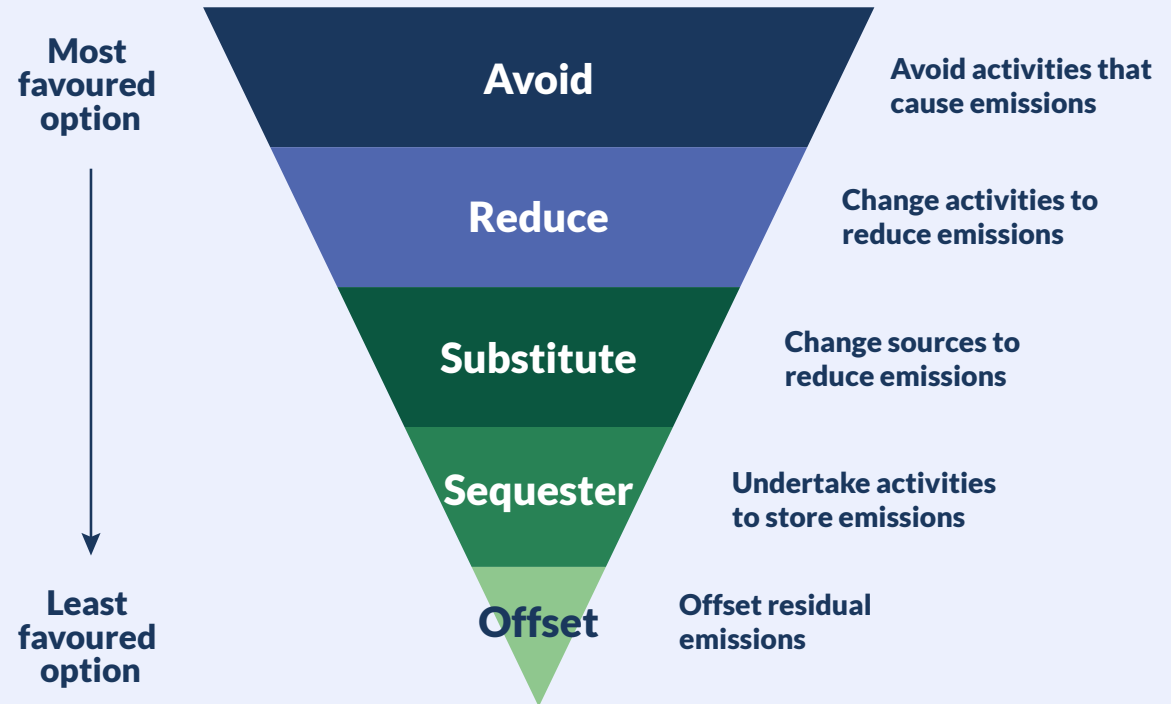
Figure 5 – The relevant Sustainable Development Goals to SCDC's Climate and Nature strategy



# Our targets

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

Figure 6 – Greenhouse gas emissions carbon management plan 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 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. These targets are also crucially 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 and will develop a Net Zero target for our own estate and operations which is practically and financially achievable.



### **Council estate and operations: 75% reduction by 2030.**

- Fleet vehicles: 90% reduction by 2030
- South Cambridgeshire Hall: 75% reduction by 2030



### **Area-wide emissions: 50% reduction by 2030 and to reach Net Zero by 2050.**



### **Ensure communities in South Cambridgeshire are resilient to 2°C global warming**

Targets are to be measured on a 2018/19 baseline.



These targets are in line with the scale of reduction required to keep any global temperature increase below 2°C above 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

# Doubling Nature

In 2021, the Council adopted the vision to 'Double Nature' within 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 wildlife, but also the change in quality, making sure that any changes are lasting and resilient.

There are several ambitions which represent our target to Double Nature in the district:



**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.**



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



**Achieve the vision of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain above pre-development Baseline Conditions**



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



**Increase equitable access for our residents to green and natural spaces, enhancing communities' health and wellbeing.**

## Our targets

# Adapting to Climate Change

We are already seeing the impacts of climate change through more extreme weather, including warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. This strategy aligns our approach to mitigating climate change, protecting and enhancing nature, with adapting to the 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.

# Governance

## Monitoring and Reporting

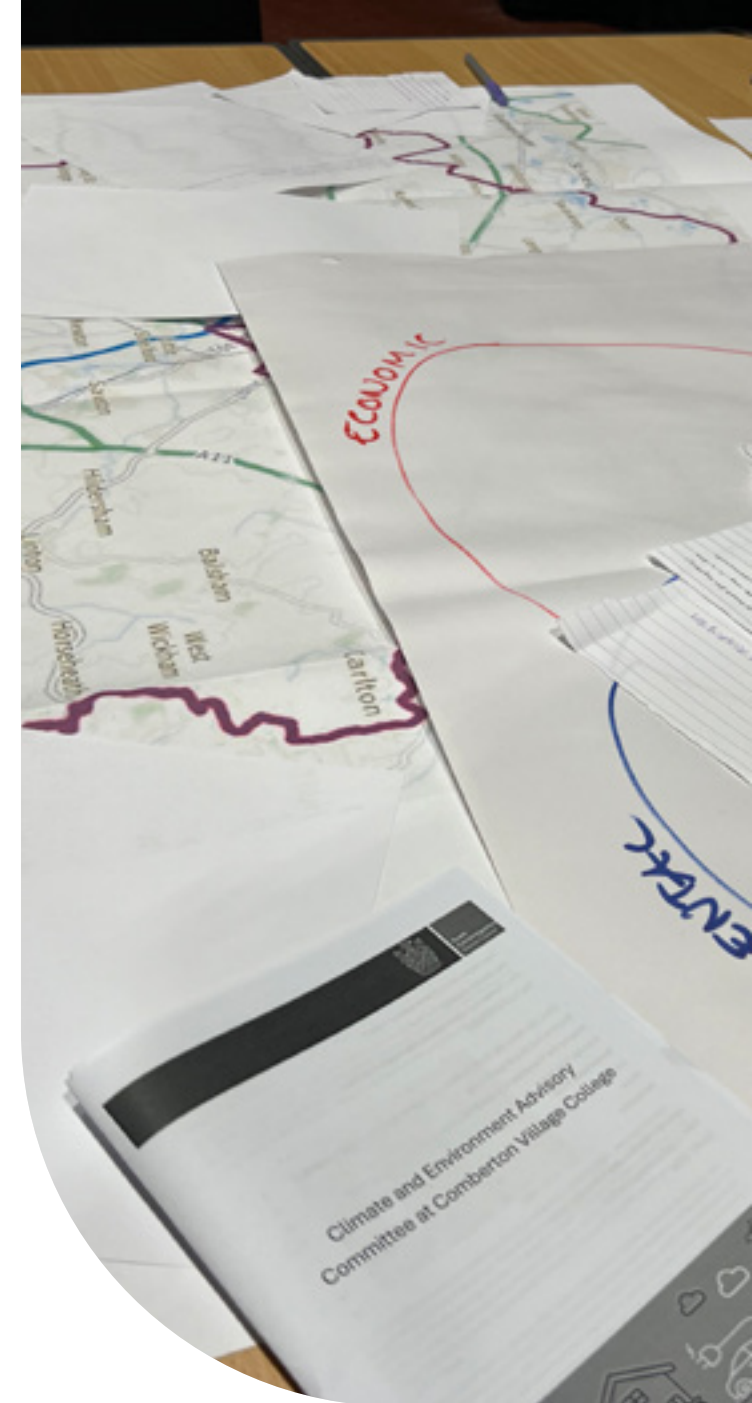
Progress against our Net Zero and Doubling Nature targets will be monitored through the Climate and Nature Action Plan. This will set and review the actions taken to tackle climate change and protect and enhance nature, as well as adapt to the impacts of climate change. Progress on reducing emissions from our estate and operations and area-wide emissions reductions will be monitored through annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting.

## 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 advises 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. The 'Green to our Core' cluster board is 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 carbon literacy 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. Figure 7 illustrates our areas of influence and the levels of impact we can have in affecting change.

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

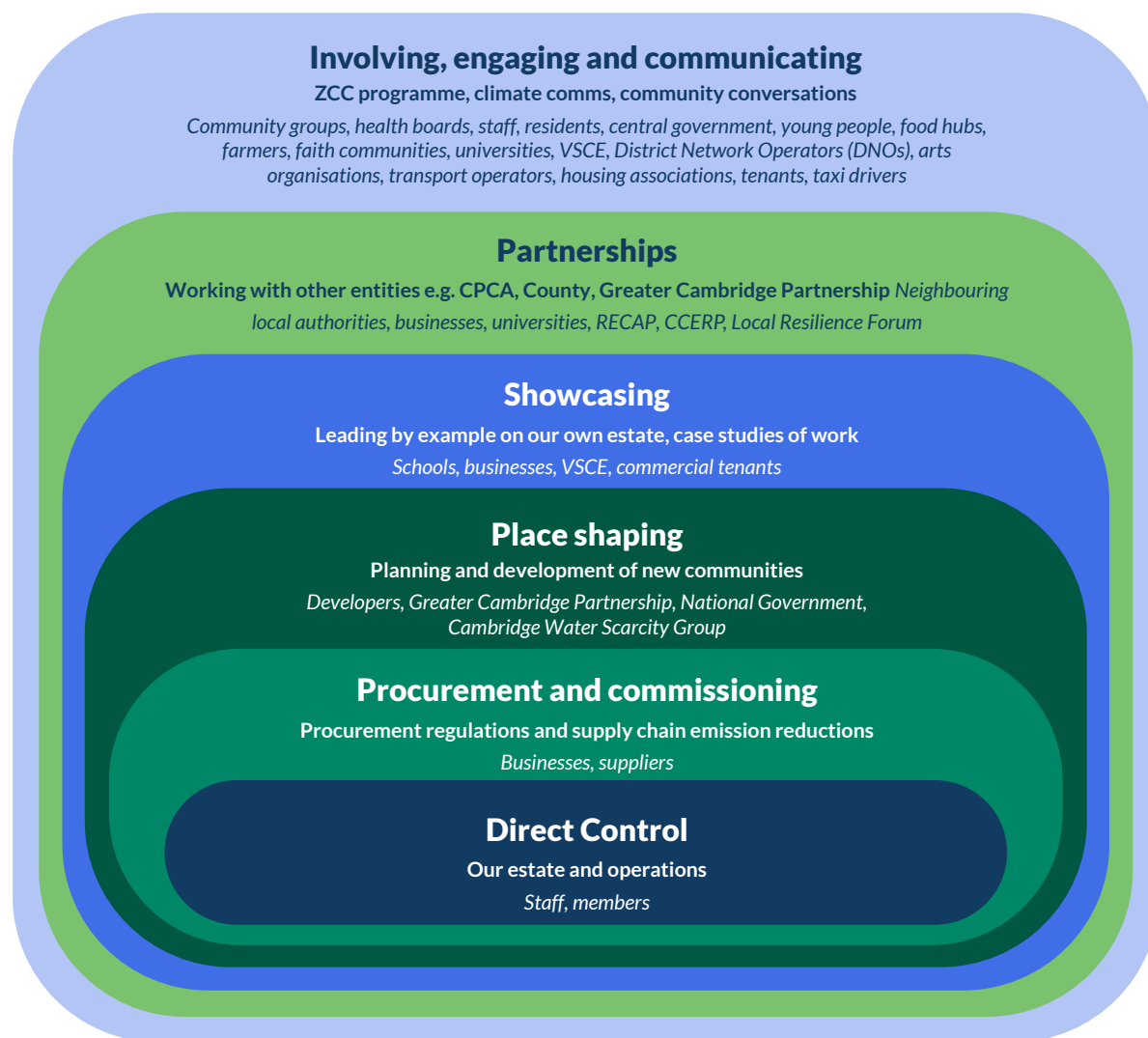


Figure 7 – South Cambridgeshire spheres of influence and delivery

## 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 with isolation, transport, and inclusion, diversity and safety.

Vulnerable communities refer to those that may have limited access to essential resources, services and opportunities, increasing vulnerability and inequalities. These can include rural/ isolated groups, elderly populations, deprived areas, homeless populations, disabled and neurodivergent groups, and young people.

We will work with local partners and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to ensure that our actions are inclusive of underserved communities across the district.

We will complete an Equality Impact Assessment, recognising the importance that any actions which we undertake should not adversely affect those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

# 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, and support our wider overarching climate and nature targets. The action plan highlights our areas of influence and how we can affect positive change.



## Transport



## Energy and Retrofit



## Nature and Water



## Sustainable Food



## Waste Minimisation



## Business, Supply Chain and Finance



## Community Support and Behaviour







## Our Areas of Focus

# Transport



### Key Ambition

Support the reduction of emissions from transport, seeking opportunities to protect and enhance nature by 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 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 2028
- Support the CPCA's vision of increasing EV charging infrastructure to provide 80% of residents with access to a public charger within a 5-minute walk.
- Work towards World Health Organization Air Quality Guideline annual averages as longer-term targets (5 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for PM<sub>2.5</sub>, 15 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for PM<sub>10</sub>, and 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for NO<sub>2</sub>), with interim targets for delivery.

Sustainable  
Development  
Goals







## Background

**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).**

Of this 54%, nearly 60% of these emissions come from road transport on A-roads, followed by Motorways at 21%. The M11, the A11 and the A14 in the district 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. In the 2021 national census, 43.2% of our residents stated that they travel to work in a car or a van. Residents tend to commute further than the national average with 58% travelling 10km or more in 2021 (Census, 2021). This car dependency highlights a significant challenge, but also

an opportunity in our efforts to reduce emissions and protect and enhance nature. There is a growing need for increased charging provision for electric vehicles (EV) across the UK. A priority for the district is to ensure equitability of EV charging provision and charging rates in line with the increasing prevalence of EVs.

Our vehicle fleet makes up 67% of the Council's total emissions. Our 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. The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service already has four electric Refuse Collection Vehicles, as well as several electric vans.

We employ over 700 members of 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.

We advocate for maximising opportunities to protect and enhance biodiversity and nature where major transport infrastructure

projects are being delivered within the district. We will continue to work closely with partners to ensure that the benefits of these projects are fully realised.

Air quality in the Greater Cambridge area has been improving in recent years, however there is no safe level of air pollution in the area.





### Background *(continued)*

South Cambridgeshire as part of Greater Cambridge, is a major growth area with large scale development and the population is expected to increase in the next 10-20 years. The Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy 2024 – 2029 is intrinsic to South Cambridgeshire's approach to improving air quality.

A priority for the district is maximising co-benefits for nature and air quality through increasing nature-based solutions and green infrastructure. This should look to include 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 walking and cycling, reducing the reliance on vehicles and reducing their associated emissions.

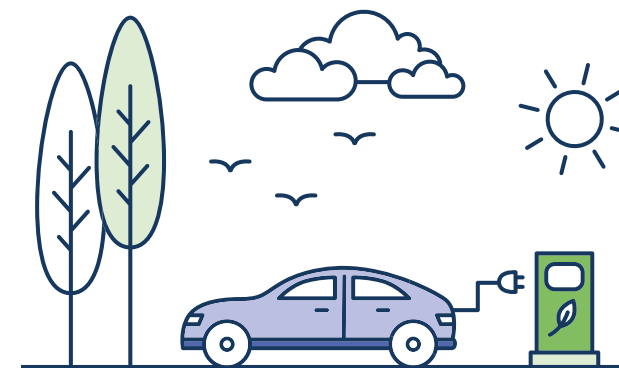
We have been engaging with our local communities and schools to deliver workshops on the importance of air quality and providing support on actionable next steps that can be taken to improve air quality and reduce air pollution. Our engagement has also covered local youth groups in our district.

### 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 Electric Vehicle Charging Policy** (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

Ref	Action	Scope	Area of influence
1.1	Review 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 trade.	Wider district	Partnerships
1.2	Support the reduction of business travel throughout the district through promoting car sharing schemes, active travel, etc.	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
1.3	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. Explore how these networks can provide support in response to extreme weather events.	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
1.4	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 surrounding settlements and employment sites. Public transport corridor schemes to connect growing communities to employment hubs	Wider district	Partnerships
1.5	Promote sustainable modes of transport through the planning system by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying policies in the current Local Plan and Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document to support housing and non-residential development which supports travel by walking, cycling and public transport.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Encouraging the provision of electric vehicle charging points in future new housing and non-residential developments to support the electrification of transport.</li> </ul>	Wider district	Place shaping
1.6	Promote active travel in communities through exploring opportunities for grant funding, including ensuring accessibility for all (such as supporting schemes to help different communities get into cycling)	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
1.7	Support the implementation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Transport and Connectivity Plan (2023), that aims to reduce private car use and congestion, and accompanies the adopted Local Plan ensuring resilience in public transport and active travel networks in the face of increasing extreme weather events, such as overheating and flooding	Wider district	Partnerships
1.8	Work with councils within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to support the delivery of the CPCA electric vehicle charging strategy and delivery of Cambridgeshire County Council's LEVI grant	Wider district	Partnerships
1.9	Create a team dashboard to track changes in business mileage to support employees to reduce carbon emissions from business travel	Own estate	Direct control
1.10	Explore car sharing options working with other organisations within Cambourne Business Park	Own estate	Direct control
1.11	Deliver the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network project – this 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	Own estate	Showcasing
1.12	Continue to expand utilisation of alternative fuels, including HVO in waste fleet to support emission reduction in the interim before the implementation of WREN. Explore options for our Watercourses and Environmental Health fleet	Own estate	Showcasing
1.13	Carry out staff travel survey to identify opportunities for the reduction of emissions from staff travel	Own estate	Direct control
1.14	Deliver the air quality strategy including providing education around air pollution through communication campaigns and engaging with residents on behaviour change	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating





## Our Areas of Focus



# Energy and Retrofit

### Key Ambition

Ensure that buildings 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 Band 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; 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.

Owning over 5,547 homes, including 1,378 sheltered homes (SCDC Asset Management Strategy, 2021), 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.

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) - see Figure 8.

**EPC Breakdown for Ermine Street Housing (number of properties)**

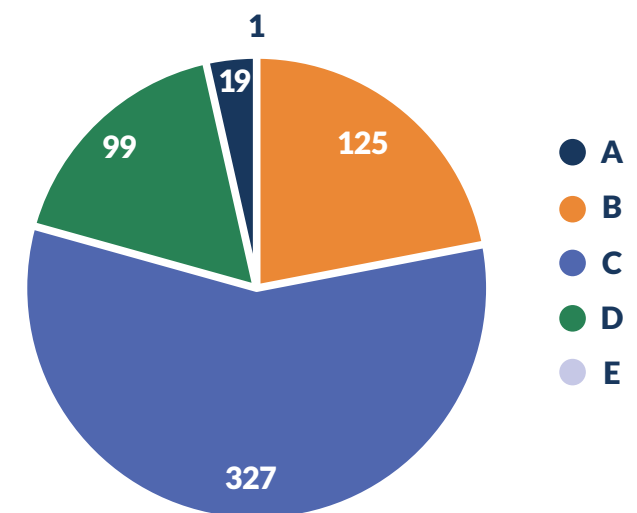


Figure 8 – EPC breakdown for Ermine Street Housing via number of properties



## 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 from 2012 achieving on average a B. (ONS, 2024). Historic buildings are typically 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, (EPC rating B) 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 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's local authorities, 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 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 vulnerable tenants are empowered and able to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

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.





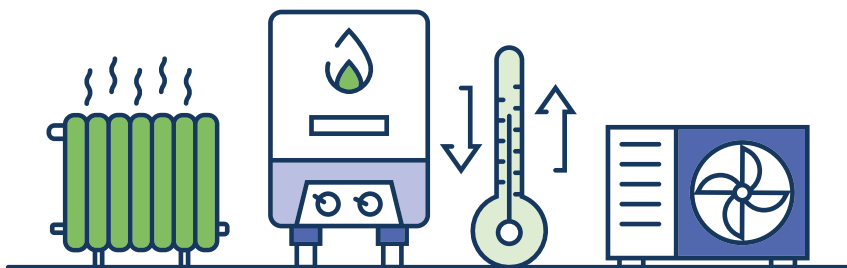
### Key policies

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).

We will support the development of these documents and, following their adoption, incorporate any resulting actions into our own plan.





## Energy and Retrofit Actions

Ref	Action	Scope	Area of influence
2.1	Following stock condition survey of the Council-owned 'Ermine Street Housing' develop a plan for increasing the EPCs of the Ermine Street Housing Stock	Wider district	Direct Control
2.2	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: Social Grant	Wider district	Direct Control
2.3	Continue to investigate options for reducing the carbon impact of our Housing stock renovation processes, including through reuse	Wider district	Showcasing
2.4	Deliver and promote grants for home energy efficiency improvements to households on low incomes through central government-funded projects, ensuring that retrofit programmes respond to the future needs of homes which arise with a changing climate	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
2.5	Producing tenant guides to help our tenants ensure their homes operate in the most energy efficient way possible	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
2.6	Use all available means to encourage developers to go beyond current requirements for energy efficiency in new developments	Wider district	Place shaping
2.7	Contribute (with partners) to the completion of the Local Area Energy Plan for Cambridgeshire, setting out a blueprint to meet future energy demand	Wider district	Partnerships
2.8	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 net zero evidence base study and other evidence informing the plan, as well as the national planning policy framework	Wider district	Place shaping
2.9	Work with organisations such as NEA and LEAP to support residents on low incomes to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.	Wider district	Partnerships
2.10	Continue to take next steps to progress SCIP development, to deliver 256 low-carbon homes in Cambourne to be an exemplar to other developments	Wider district	Showcasing
2.11	Support residents who are able to pay to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, working with the Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
2.12	Run Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project to identify Private Rental Sector properties with an EPC of F or below and actions required, contacting landlords (updates by exception, with end of year summary detailing progress during the year)	Wider district	Showcasing
2.13	Promote best practice and support on energy efficiency in privately rented properties to Landlords through means available (such as the Landlord Forum)	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
2.14	Utilise the private sector housing survey to identify properties with low EPC rating	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
2.15	Provide energy efficiency support and advice through 3C Building Control	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
2.16	Reduce energy use from data storage on the Council's servers and websites	Own estate	Direct control
2.17	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	Adaptation	Place shaping









## 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.
- Ensure any land enhanced for nature is resilient to the impacts of climate change and increases sustainable long-term habitats for biodiversity.
- Achieve the vision of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain above pre-development baseline conditions.
- 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 our species and habitats 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, see Figure 9. At the same time, 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 nearly 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.

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

Cambridgeshire's chalk streams are not only habitats for rare species but are also key to our flood management. Most of our water bodies only have a 'moderate ecological status', highlighting the need to focus on improving water quality in our district.

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 ([Wood et al., 2017](#)), and during hot weather can provide cooler shading, allowing respite from the heat, as well as improving air quality. 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.

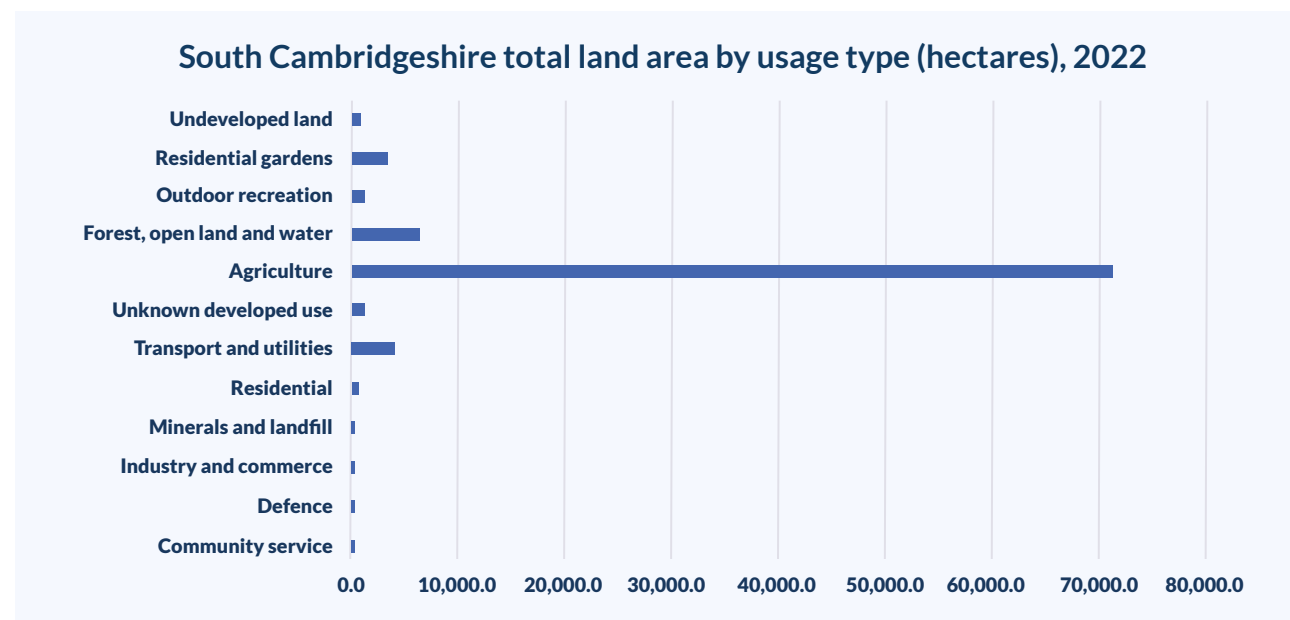


Figure 9 – South Cambridgeshire total land area by usage type in hectares, UK Government (2022)



### Background *(continued)*

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 do their bit to help nature and biodiversity, and to adapt to climate change. We will produce resources that support our residents to adopt water-efficient habits, 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.

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

With increasingly adverse weather resulting from climate change, the need for preparation and adaptation will become more pronounced. Although SCDC is not the main Flood Risk Authority (this is Cambridgeshire County Council), we still play a role in supporting and responding to emergencies caused by increasingly adverse weather by communicating extreme weather warnings and informing communities of the need to prepare.

We will engage with communities to support them in preparing for risks associated with climate-related extreme weather events through the Cambridge Flood Risk Management Partnership.

Given our lack of council-owned land, our ability to make direct, supportive interventions for nature and biodiversity is limited. Therefore, it is vital we work with and support our communities in this work. 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.





### 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 are 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. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Strategy will identify priority areas for nature recovery in South Cambridgeshire, 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

Ref	Action	Scope	Area of influence
3.1	Continue to identify and deliver opportunities for tree planting and biodiversity enhancements (e.g. wildflower areas, habitat piles) on land we own as part of our housing estate and Milton County Park where funding is available.	Own estate	Showcasing
3.2	Produce guides for residents on managing their gardens for nature	Own estate	Involving, engaging and communicating
3.3	Pilot using alternative methods to control weed growth and avoid harmful environmental impacts in new contracts	Own estate	Procurement and commissioning
3.4	Support the enhancement and protection of nature and our watercourses through working with partners on our Awarded Watercourses	Own estate	Partnerships
3.5	Explore opportunities improving nature through the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network project	Own estate	Showcasing
3.6	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.	Wider district	Partnerships
3.7	Progress planning policies which protect and enhance nature as part of wider work on green infrastructure on the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan	Wider district	Place shaping
3.8	Work with the health community initiative on the development of a contemporary open spaces policy for the Joint Local Plan that places wellbeing as a central policy objective	Wider district	Place shaping
3.9	Contribute (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	Wider district	Partnerships
3.10	Continue to develop our processes, resources and guidance to ensure delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain in new developments	Wider district	Place shaping
3.11	Deliver a programme of engagement on nature and biodiversity (to include webinars, newsletter articles, and social media) with stakeholders, including communities, and parish councils.	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
3.12	Provide grants to villages to plant trees and help biodiversity and nature recovery projects (e.g. rewilding) to deliver 'doubling nature' at the parish level. Previously this has been through the Community Chest Grant and the Six Free Trees grant	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
3.13	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.	Wider district	Partnerships
3.14	Secure funding from developers for partners to protect and enhance nature.	Wider district	Partnerships
3.15	Work with partners to support communities to reduce their water consumption through promoting water-saving messaging	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
3.16	Require new housing to meet the water efficiency standards in the current Local Plan (maximum of 110 litres/person/day) and explore where higher standards may be needed in the new Local Plan.	Wider district	Place shaping





## Actions

Ref	Action	Scope	Area of influence
3.18	Explore opportunities to manage climate risks through policies in the new Local Plan, subject to the outcomes of the current national consultation on planning reforms. This could include water efficiency policies to help reduce water consumption and manage water resources; designing buildings that are simple to keep cool; and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) measures to reduce flood risk.	Wider district	Place shaping
3.19	Work with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners in the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Partnership to manage climate change-related flood risks and support communities to prepare for flood risk.	Wider district	Partnerships
3.20	Continue to deliver project to plant and maintain Miyawaki woodlands throughout Cambourne	Wider district	Showcasing
3.21	Engage parishes on rewilding of parish council-owned land including reduced mowing and wildflower planting (e.g. implementing a Parish Pollinator Pledge)	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating











## 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.
-  Policy SC/8 in South Cambridgeshire's Local Plan requires the provision of space for allotments and community orchards in the district.



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 (2022), yet some areas of our district have been categorised as food deserts (CDRC, 2024); these 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 more 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 pressures on 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 in what food might be accessible.

As an authority we do not procure food directly on a large scale and we do not have any substantial provision of food on our site, meaning we have limited direct influence. It is, therefore, in collaborating, working in partnership and using our influence as a planning authority that we will be able to encourage a transition towards sustainable food. 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.

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 rural businesses. South Cambridgeshire has 9 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 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 access to sustainable food in the district:

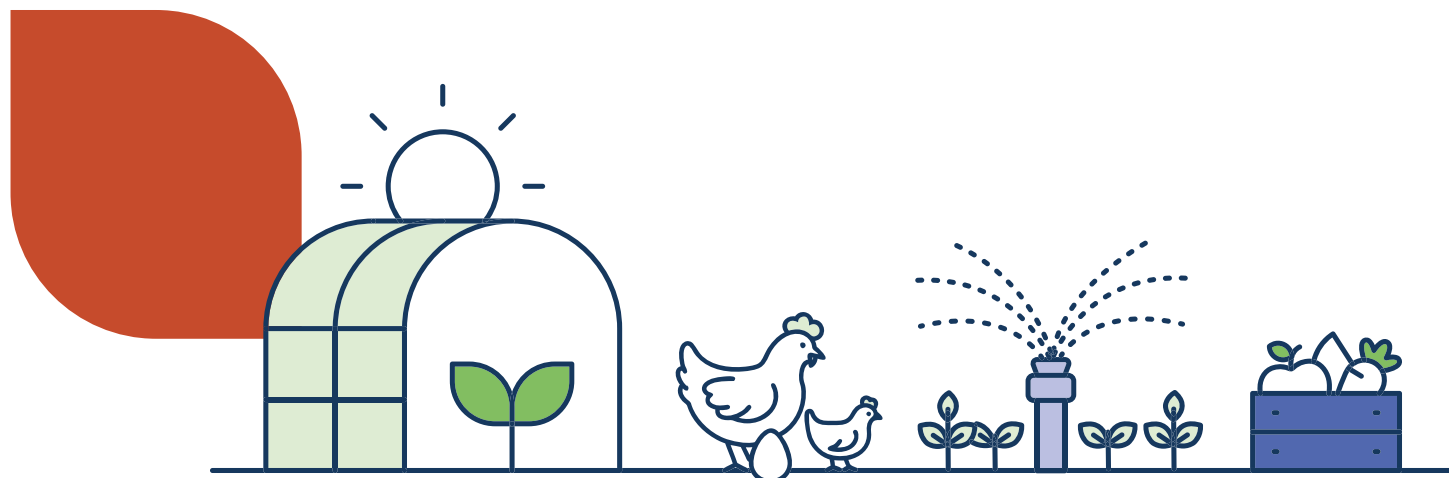
- **Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document** January 2020, encourages allotment provision for new developments





## Actions

Ref	Action	Scope	Area of influence
4.1	Deliver separate weekly food waste collections from April 2026	Own estate	Direct Control
4.2	Run annual communication campaigns to encourage carbon-friendly diets and food waste reduction aligning with national schemes	Own estate	Involving, engaging and communicating
4.3	Explore opportunities for developing a Sustainable Food network, including becoming a Sustainable Food Place.	Wider district	Partnerships
4.4	Build on the publication of the allotment toolkit to support parish and town councils, groups, and societies to increase the number of people who can easily use them	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
4.5	Take up opportunities for the expansion of food growing initiatives through grant funding support of promotion of schemes and initiatives	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
4.6	Using guidance in the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to encourage developers to incorporate 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)	Wider district	Place Shaping
4.7	Working with local voluntary and community groups and other partners to promote sustainable food practices to local businesses	Wider district	Partnerships
4.8	Support and engage farmers and agricultural businesses to become more economically and environmentally sustainable, including identifying opportunities to work together.	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating







## Our Areas of Focus

# Waste Minimisation



## Key Ambition

Deliver a waste service at the forefront of waste avoidance and reduction, with 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 digestion by x% based on a 24/25 recycling rate of x%
- 🎯 Reduce the amount of general waste per household that cannot be recycled, composted or digested to xxxKG/HH (25\_26 figures)



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 resources and preventing environmental damage. South Cambridgeshire District Council is also responsible for street cleansing, enforcement and awarded watercourse management.

The Service 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 shared waste service 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).

45% of global emissions can be tackled by changing the way we make and consume products and goods. The GCSWS actions 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 and maximise recycling rates.

There are some 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); our latest waste analysis shows the same picture locally with the contents of general waste bins being 34% food. 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 can 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 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership, RECAP – Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 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.

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 people need to adopt.



# Waste Minimisation

## Background *(continued)*

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 develop a network of local Repair Cafes. 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 Café network helped avoid 5 tonnes of waste and 35 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e.

## 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

- **GCSWS Household Waste Collection Policy** sets our approach to deliver 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 driving reduction and improved recyclability of packaging through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). It also includes plans for a nationwide Deposit Return schemes (DRS) for bottles and cans.
- The **Environment Act 2021** provides the legislative framework through which the strategic waste reforms will be enacted.

- A RECAP (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) Waste Strategy is being written and will be adopted in 2025\_26, 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 following set of requirements must be adhered to:

- 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. GCSWS will continue to provide this service.
- Paper and card should be collected separately by March 2026, unless it is not technically, economically and environmentally practicable for a council to do so.
- Kerbside collections of soft plastics will be required by 31st March 2027. GCSWS will continue to collect this.
- The Council must introduce a weekly collection of food waste from domestic properties by 1st April 2026. GCSWS has an implementation plan in place to ensure this requirement is fulfilled.
- For commercial premises the date of implementation was March 2025. GCSWS already provides a commercial waste service that enables local businesses to meet their duty.

## Actions

Ref	Action	Scope	Area of influence
5.1	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	Wider district	Showcasing
5.2	Carry out communications campaigns focussed on increasing recycling rates and reducing non-recyclable waste from Circular Resource Plan. Provide information, communications and support to businesses to design-out waste, adopt circular economy practices and increase recycling (ongoing)	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
5.3	Seek outlets for hard-to-recycle items collected including bulky collections and small electricals.	Wider district	Partnerships
5.4	Provide information, communications and support to businesses to design-out waste, adopt circular economy practices and increase recycling (ongoing)	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
5.5	Review food waste collection through commercial waste service to identify opportunities for support for food waste reduction	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
5.6	Encourage waste minimisation and promote enabling a circular economy for colleagues i.e. swishes, freecycle section on Insite	Own estate	Direct control
5.7	Work with RECAP partners on new Joint Municipal Waste Strategy setting out how authorities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will collect and dispose of waste over the next 10 years	Own estate	Partnerships



## Our Areas of Focus

# Community Support and Behaviour Change

## Key Ambition

For everyone in South Cambridgeshire to recognise what they can do to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies in whatever capacity they are in, and support residents to overcome 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 Climate 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.

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 local areas to protect and enhance nature, communicate with others and reduce 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 bringing communities together through repair cafes to tackle social isolation.

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, the Service Support Grants and the Tenant Community Grant, empowering our local communities to enact positive change.

We play a key role in sharing adverse weather warnings and supporting communities to respond to extreme weather events, helping our residents meet the challenges of our changing climate. The need for this clear and urgent messaging will become more pronounced as the severity of these instances is expected to grow, particularly for instances such as overheating and flooding.





## 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 the Council's priorities as 'healthy and supported communities', tackling environmental health issues, improving the health and wellbeing of residents, and working with community groups, the voluntary sector and individuals to help address issues within their communities.





## Actions

Ref	Action	Scope	Area of influence
6.1	Review our community-led planning documentation to assess mechanisms to implement climate change mitigation or adaptation as part of this process	Wider district	Place shaping
6.2	Monitor the impacts of new communities to assess the effectiveness of climate and nature-related planning measures.	Wider district	Place shaping
6.3	Review the grant processes to ensure that climate and nature is considered in the award of any grants i.e. service support grants, tenant community grants.	Wider district	Procurement and commissioning
6.4	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.	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.5	Continue to support those engaged with climate action through the Zero Carbon Communities programme, including the delivery of social media posts, newsletters and the local climate action conference	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.6	Provide opportunities for in-person engagement on climate change to overcome the digital divide (such as through community hub volunteers)	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.7	Provide advice to residents on reducing health risks during extreme weather events	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.8	Engage with partners including the local resilience forum and Environment Agency to ensure resilience to the impacts of climate change	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.9	Seek opportunities to collaborate with Cambridge City Council on programmes of resident engagement	Wider district	Partnerships
6.10	Include reference to the importance of climate change and nature in job descriptions, as well as on the recruitment website	Own estate	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.11	Deliver carbon literacy training to colleagues and become a Silver Carbon Literate Organization.	Own estate	Showcasing
6.12	Incorporate climate change into colleague objectives and awards	Own estate	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.13	Develop a team dashboard to track progress on climate change and nature in each service area	Own estate	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.14	Incorporate sections on climate change into employee mandatory e-learning programme, as well as the corporate induction	Own estate	Involving, engaging and communicating
6.15	Conduct Climate Impact Assessments for all bids and savings	Own estate	Procurement and commissioning
6.16	Maintain an Environmental Management System for the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service	Own estate	Direct control
6.17	Include consideration of 'nature' as well as 'climate change' on impact reviews as part of committee reporting	Own estate	Direct control



## Our Areas of Focus

# Businesses, Supply Chain and Finance

### Key Ambition

Support and collaborate with businesses so that they are confident in responding 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

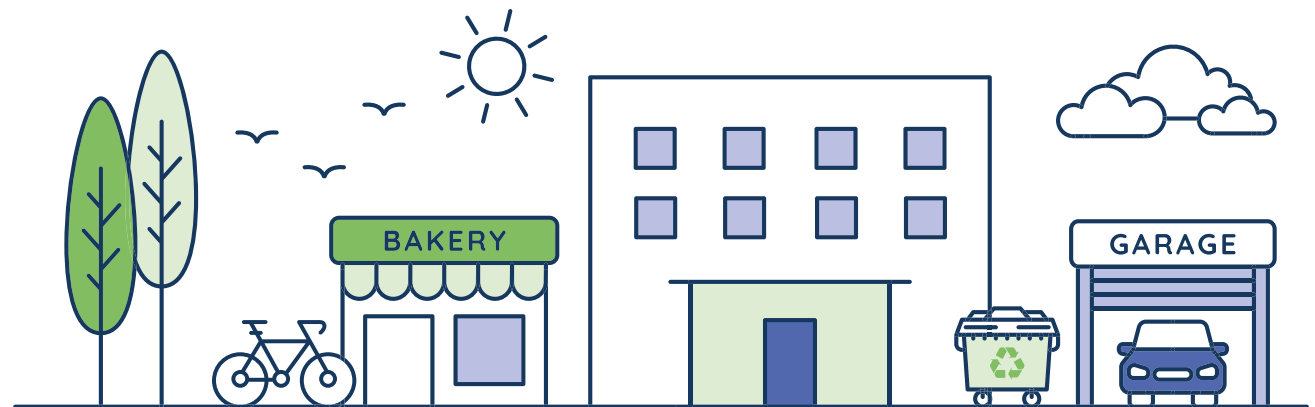
**South Cambridgeshire is an area of significant economic development. Employment growth in South Cambridgeshire in 2024 was 4.4% (Greater Cambridge Employment Update, 2024).**

This is expected to rise with growth in sectors such as Life Sciences. It is likely that these will bring about additional demands such as increased energy usage. Energy demand across Greater Cambridge is expected to triple by 2050 from a 2021 baseline (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%.

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 per year. This is significant in the scale of the local supply chain and highlights the need to assess 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

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### Background *(continued)*

We recognise the vital role that businesses must play in reducing our 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

Ref	Action	Scope	Area of influence
7.1	Provide advice and resources to help businesses understand what they can do to become greener, encouraging this through our licensing functions	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
7.2	Set up framework for consideration of climate change through the event safety advisory group panel function using the green event guide from the shared waste service	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
7.3	Identify opportunities for funding and support to help businesses meet economic challenges around being greener and adapting to the challenges of climate change	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
7.4	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.	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
7.5	Support the development of local 'green' skills working with higher education institutions, skills hubs and the CPCA	Wider district	Partnerships
7.6	Engage with businesses to identify knowledge gaps to feed into the provision and promotion of resources to support businesses	Wider district	Involving, engaging and communicating
7.7	Establish a 'green growth' business network to support the growth of the low-carbon sector in South Cambs including a green business pledge	Wider district	Partnerships
7.8	Provide training for officers in reducing supply chain emissions through sustainable procurement practices	Own estate	Procurement and commissioning
7.9	Reduce supply chain emissions through our largest contracts	Own estate	Procurement and commissioning
7.10	Procure training providers who consider their climate impacts	Own estate	Procurement and commissioning
7.11	Ensure benefits of social value weighting in procurement contracts achieved	Own estate	Procurement and commissioning



## 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](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>





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