Cambridge City Council

# DRAFT CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL'S URBAN FOREST STRATEGY 2026 - 2036

Draft version 4 for public consultation

*Figure 1*

*This is a draft document issued for consultation. Content, formatting and presentation may change prior to final publication. Images are indicative only and will be appropriately credited or replaced in the final approved version. Maps and spatial material will be provided in the final version.*

*'The tree in the front garden of my home is a word*
*The trees on my street are a sentence*
*The trees in my neighbourhood are a paragraph*
*And all the trees in the community are a story.*
*That story tells us about our relationship to nature, past and present.*
*The future of this story lies in the hands of all residents…..'*

Greg McPherson, USDA Forest Service1

DRAFT

[1] Pearlmutter et al (2017) The Urban Forest - Cultivating Green Infrastructure for People and the Environment, Springer. Chapter 11 Zurcher, N. Assessing the ecosystem services deliverable: The critical role of the urban tree inventory, pp101-110.

*Table 1 Version details*

| Version | Date | Purpose | Authorised by | Changes/ notes | Authorisation/ version date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 | Sept 25 | Draft for informal Cabinet | Alistair Wilson, Assistant Director, City Services (on behalf of James Elms, Director of City Services) | Not fully WCAG compliant<br>All pictures are indicative at this stage | 8/9/25 |
| 2 | Sept 25 | Cabinet final draft for consultation approval | Cabinet | Added version control table<br>Included status of the strategy section<br>Introduced new policy **M5**<br>Updated glossary<br>Renamed Topic Paper 2<br>Corrected minor spelling and grammar issues<br>Added policy alignment references in the Principles section<br>Added Topic Paper 12<br>Included history of the urban forestry<br>Population figure updates<br>Made minor revisions to aims<br>Reformatted document | 25/9/25 |
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Reformatted document | |
| 4 | Dec 25 | Public consultation draft | | | |
| 5 | Feb 25 | Cabinet final draft for approval | | | |
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## Document preparation

This Urban Forest Strategy has been prepared by Cambridge City Council, led by the Urban Forest Manager, with specialist technical input and support from Urban Forest Consultancy[2].

Responsibility for the content, policy direction and final decisions rests with Cambridge City Council.

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[2] www.ufctrees.co.uk

## Table of Contents



DRAFT

# FOREWORD

In 2019, a plaque[3] was placed on a barren mountainside in Iceland to mark the first glacier lost to climate change. It read: '*We know what is happening and what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it.*' This statement resonates deeply in cities across the world as we confront our own environmental tipping points, not on remote icecaps, but on our doorsteps: in rising temperatures, degraded air quality and increasingly unequal access to green space.

This Urban Forest Strategy is Cambridge City Council's (CCC) acknowledgement: we understand what is happening. And we are acting.

Trees in urban environments are not just landscape features. They are critical infrastructure. They help regulate our climate, support biodiversity and improve public health. They also provide a sense of place and belonging. In a warming, densifying world, they offer hope and resilience. But they must be nurtured, expanded and protected with the same urgency that the climate crisis demands.

This strategy sets out our commitment to grow and care for a resilient, diverse and equitable urban forest over the next decade. It recognises that trees are long-term investments, planted today for the benefit of future generations. They are living testaments to our intent: to mitigate climate impacts, adapt to new challenges and create a more just and liveable City.

Our approach is guided by five principles:

**Awareness and Action**: A clear-eyed recognition of the challenges we face, and a bold plan to address them.

**Climate Resilience**: Leveraging urban trees to cool neighbourhoods, capture carbon and reduce flood risk.

**Intergenerational Equity**: Planting today with tomorrow in mind, building a green legacy for the future.


*Figure 2*

**Public Engagement**: Encouraging community participation, education and shared stewardship of our urban forest.

[3] Image source: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/19/iceland-holds-funeral-for-first-glacier-lost-to-climate-change last accessed 5/1/26

**Environmental Justice**: Ensuring that every resident, especially those in the most heat vulnerable areas, has access to shade, clean air and nature.

Just as the Okjökull plaque mourned a loss and challenged the future, this strategy is a living promise: to restore, to protect and to grow. Let the trees we plant today stand as future witnesses, not to what we failed to do, but to what we achieved together.

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# VISION

*To protect, expand and manage Cambridge's tree canopy, guided by principles of equity, need and environmental value, ensuring that the benefits of urban trees are accessible across all communities and that the canopy we leave for future generations is healthier and more resilient than what we have inherited.*

*Figure 3*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy affirms Cambridge City Council's (CCC) promise to restore, protect and grow its urban forest in line with principles of equity, need and environmental value. Ensuring that the trees we plant and protect create a future urban forest that is healthier, more resilient and evidence of what we can achieve together.

Innovation and economic advances come with the need for urban expansion. With an increase in the concentration of people, buildings and activity comes an increased threat to the natural environment and our cultural heritage. A changing climate and the rising threat of pests and diseases also present significant challenges to the health, resilience and biodiversity of Cambridge's natural resources.

Protecting, enhancing and expanding natural areas and habitat for flora and fauna in cities is essential for strengthening our resilience to acute events and persistent stresses, many of which will be exacerbated by climate change and urbanisation. The Urban Forest Strategy is required to enable the protection and enhancement of Cambridge's urban forest to the benefit of its residents and visitors through approved, strategic, policy-based management.

Management also has its challenges and limitations. Understanding and accepting these reinforces the need for a coordinated and proactive approach to management and the need for continued investment. The strategy sets out CCCs vision and establishes the principles, aims, policies and actions necessary, across services, to deliver success.

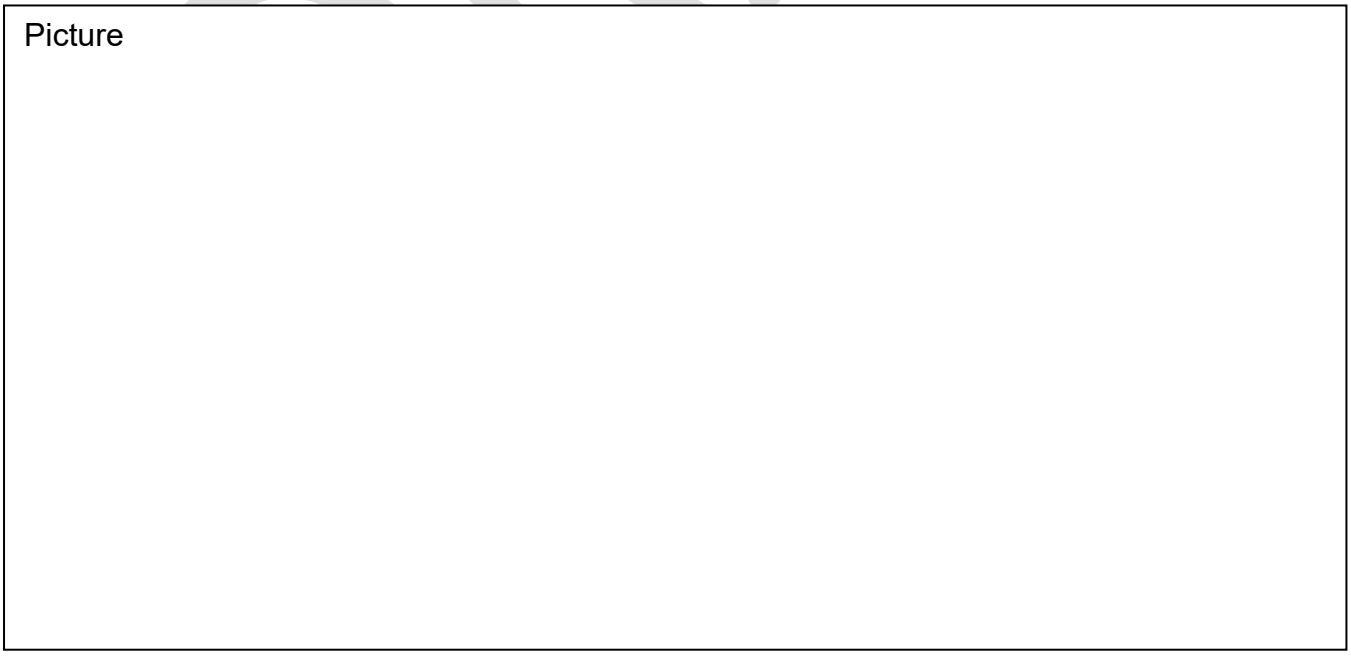


*Figure 4*

# INTRODUCTION

Occupying cultural significance throughout history and one of longest living organisms on earth, trees are central to mythology, folklore and religion. Symbolising life, growth and immortality they have served us in countless ways from the practical to the more profound. The significance of trees in the history and survival of humanity is beyond contestation and is represented in art, literature and spiritual practices, often reflecting deep philosophical concepts.

*Figure 5*

However, our relationship with trees has many dimensions and our reliance on them has altered through history but they nevertheless remain vital to the health of Cambridge and its occupants.

The necessary seizing of opportunities for innovation and economic advances comes with the need for urban expansion. With a population estimated to rise to approximately 160,500 in 2031, 163,500 in 2036 and 166,500 in 2041 comes an increased threat to the natural environment and our cultural heritage.

Alongside population growth and urban development, a changing climate and the rising threat of pests and diseases present significant challenges to the health, resilience and biodiversity of Cambridge's natural environment.

Building on past achievements, this Urban Forest Strategy has been developed to set out the long-term direction for the management of natural infrastructure to the benefit of our existing and future environment and communities and for the protection of our arboricultural heritage to 2036.

# WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY

Protecting and enhancing natural areas and habitat for flora and fauna in cities is essential for strengthening our resilience to acute events and persistent stresses, many of which will be exacerbated by climate change and urbanisation.

The urban forest plays a significant role in making Cambridge a place where we can all thrive. However, as with many cities, Cambridge's urban forest is under pressure. The projected denser urban form is increasingly crowding out opportunities for sustainable canopy cover, while a changing climate and higher urban temperatures put physical stress on the forest. Urban expansion beyond its current footprint threatens existing vegetation and natural values that will need protection and replacing.

Acute events like floods, heatwaves, droughts and extreme weather occurrences can all be mitigated by a resilient urban forest, along with the stresses associated with climate change, vulnerable communities, high rates of chronic illness, low rates of community interaction, increased pressure on healthcare, social inequality and pressure from development on ecosystem services.

**The Urban Forest Strategy replaces the 2016 to 2026 Tree Strategy and is required to continue and improve the protection and enhancement of Cambridge's urban forest to the benefit of its residents and visitors through approved, strategic, policy-based management.**

## How to use the Strategy

The Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) sets out a programme of interrelated principles, aims and actions, supported by topic papers, that will work together to bring Cambridge closer to its vision to protect, expand and manage its canopy, guided by principles of equity, need and environmental value, ensuring that the benefits of urban trees are accessible across all communities and that the canopy we leave for future generations is healthier and more resilient than what we have inherited. The core elements are set out as follows:

**Vision** - The long-term aspiration for Cambridge's urban forest.
**Principles** - Core values that underpin all decision-making.
**Benefits, Challenges and Limitations**- Providing context
**Aims** - Specific outcomes the strategy seeks to achieve.
**Approaches** - Thematic methods for delivery ('Manage more, Protect more, Plant more, Engage more').
**Policies** - Operational rules that embed the strategy into delivery.
**Actions** - Programmes, tools, datasets and delivery mechanisms.
**Topic Papers** - Technical supplements supporting implementation.

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Each action will result in specified benefits for Cambridge's ecosystem, the health and well-being of its community, the strength of its economy and a strong sense of social cohesion.

The UFS sets out a long-term vison supported by a series of principles, aims, policies and actions that guide how we all will protect, enhance and engage with the urban forest. These are delivered through a series of thematic approaches and practical actions each supported by robust evidence and detailed topic papers. Together, they provide a clear framework for delivering a healthier, fairer and more resilient urban forest.

The strategy has been developed alongside and with consideration of national and local planning policies and other key environmental strategies including:

- National Planning Policy Framework[4]
- Planning Practice Guidance[5]
- Cambridge Local Plan[6] and the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan[7]
- Biodiversity[8], Climate Change[9], Open Spaces[10], Community Wealth Building[11], County Trees and Woodland Strategies[12], Air Quality Action Plan[13] and The Council's Environment Statement[14].

## Who Should Use This Strategy

The UFS is designed to guide everyone with a role or interest in the care, protection and expansion of Cambridge's trees. It is intended for:

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2 last accessed 5/1/26
[5] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas last accessed 5/1/26
[6] https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/obhlati2/cambridge-local-plan-2018.pdf last accessed 5/1/26
[7] https://consultations.greatercambridgeplanning.org/draft-greater-cambridge-local-plan-consultation/document-library last accessed 5/1/26
[8] https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/biodiversity-strategy last accessed 5/1/26
[9] https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/climate-change-strategy last accessed 5/1/26
[10] https://files.cambridge.gov.uk/public/ldf/coredocs/RD-NE-050.pdf last accessed 5/1/26
[11] https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/community-wealth-building-strategy last accessed 5/1/26
[12] https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-and-environment/improving-the-natural-environment/biodiversity-and-greenspaces/cambridgeshire-tree-and-woodland-strategy last accessed 5/1/26
[13] https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/i3eh0kvd/greater-cambridge-air-quality-strategy-2024.pdf last accessed 5/1/26
[14] https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/6711/environment-policy-statement.pdf last accessed 5/1/26

**Council services** including Operations, Housing, Property Services, Biodiversity and Climate teams, to ensure consistent and coordinated delivery.
**Key land managers** including statutory agencies, developers, utility companies and the University of Cambridge and its Colleges, who hold significant areas of land and therefore play a major role in shaping the city's treescape.
**Partner organisations** such as the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership, where joint working is essential to align planning, transport, green, blue and grey infrastructure delivery.
**Community groups and residents** including schools, voluntary organisations and individuals, to help shape local projects and support shared stewardship of the urban forest.
**Contractors and professionals** including arboricultural consultants, landscape architects, planners, property developers and contractors, to align operational practice with The Council's standards and priorities.
**Councillors and decision-makers** to provide a clear framework for policy, resourcing and governance decisions.
**The Council's Tree Team,** part of City Services, leads the delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy while also managing the Council's tree asset on a day-to-day basis. This includes inspections, maintenance, planting and providing arboricultural advice to other services.

## Status of the Strategy

This Urban Forest Strategy forms the Council's adopted policy framework for the protection, management and expansion of Cambridge's trees. All elements of the strategy, its principles, aims, policies and actions, represent Council policy.

Together, these elements form a single, coherent policy statement. Where an aim or action does not yet have a corresponding detailed policy, it should still be understood as part of the adopted position, to be interpreted in line with the overarching vision and principles of the strategy.

## A short history of urban forestry

The idea of managing the whole urban forest (not just publicly owned trees) emerged in North America in the 1960s, grew through the 1990s-2000s with better inventories and research, and now focuses on canopy cover as a metric for climate resilience and canopy health and fairness.

Cambridge began using canopy mapping in 2013, using 2008 data as the baseline. The city set a canopy target in 2016 and expanded community programmes through the Cambridge Canopy Project.

Cities putting urban forestry into practice:

- Melbourne - Urban Forest Strategy
- Toronto - Strategic Forest Management Plan
- London - London Urban Forest Partnership

- Sydney - Greening Sydney Strategy
- Barcelona - Master Plan For Barcelona's Trees

**The core strategy concisely sets out the vision and overarching principles, provides an overview of key issues, challenges and objectives and establishes the, aims, policies and actions necessary to deliver success. Throughout the document links are provided to maps, research papers, data sets and topic papers that provide supporting evidence and allow the reader to delve deeper into areas of particular relevance or interest. It ensures that the value of Cambridge's urban forest is recognised, protected and enhanced through the decisions and actions of all who influence it. While designed to be read electronically, a downloadable version is available with many linked documents appended.**

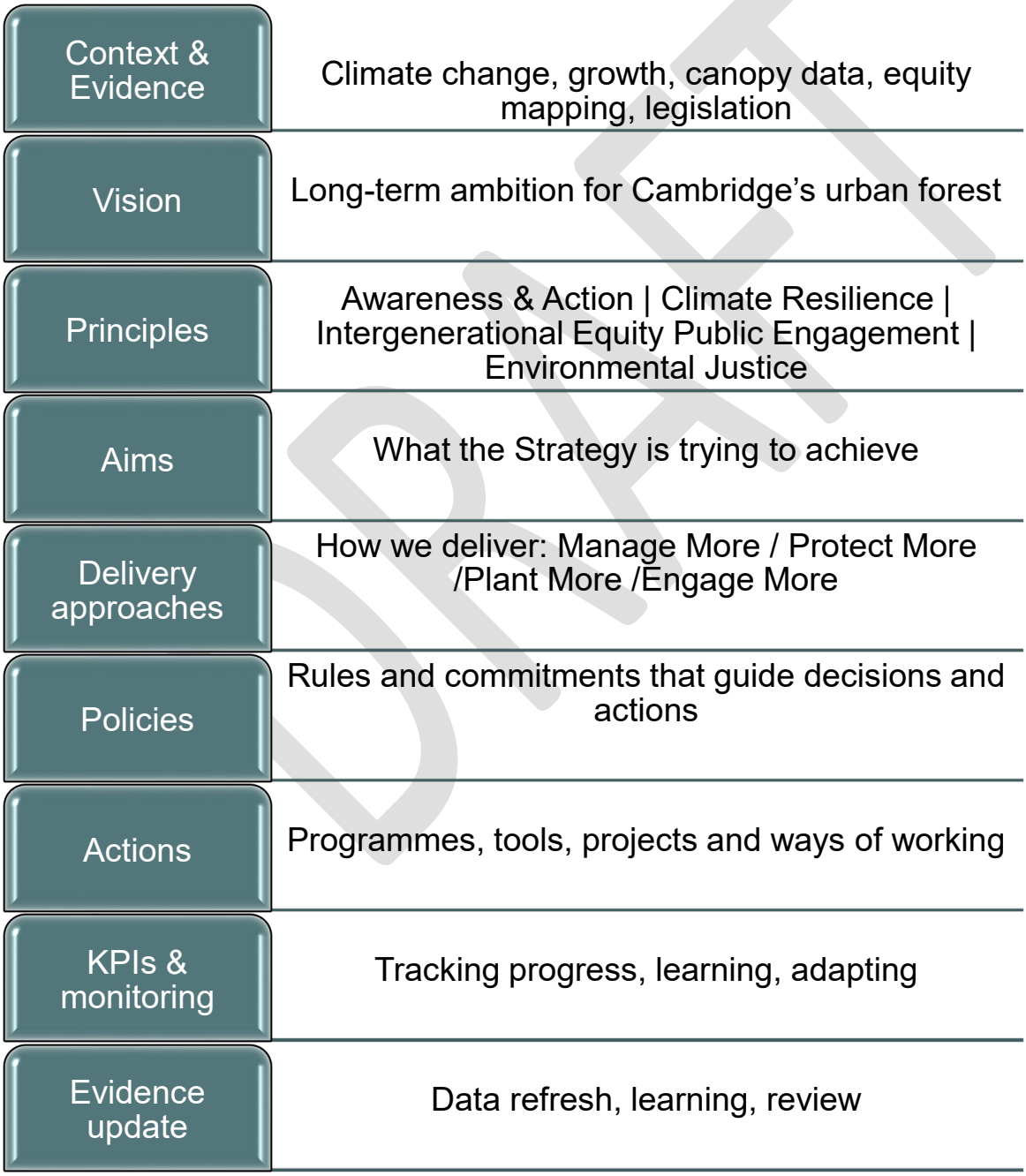


*Figure 6 Relationship between the key components of the Urban Forest Strategy*

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# PRINCIPLES

**Five principles serve as the foundation of the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS), guiding the approaches taken to deliver a healthier, fairer and more resilient urban forest.**

In setting out each principle, the strategy makes explicit the links between local ambition, national policy and best practice guidance. Each principle is therefore accompanied by:

- National law and policy references (for example the Environment Act 2021, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023), which provide the statutory and planning context; and
- Professional best practice guidance (for example TDAG and the Forestry Commission), which reflects current evidence and sector standards.

By doing so, the strategy demonstrates how Cambridge's local approach to managing and expanding its urban forest both fulfils legal and policy obligations and aligns with national and international good practice.

***Principle 1: Awareness and Action:*** A clear-eyed recognition of the challenges we face and a bold plan to address them. Understanding the problems of the past and those we still face, the resulting impact on ecosystem services and taking clear, innovative steps to redress the balance between the built and natural environments.

**National Policy (NPPF[15]) (below to be updated to 2025 when available)**

- *'an environmental objective … mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.' National Planning Policy Framework Dec 2024, para 8(c))*
- *'all plans should… improve the environment, mitigate climate change… and adapt to its effects.' National Planning Policy Framework Dec 2024, para 11(a)*
- *'Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change.' National Planning Policy Framework Dec 2024, para. 162*

**Best Practice**

- *'Baseline UTCC[16] data enables monitoring of changes over time.'* TDAG, First Steps in Urban Tree Canopy Cover[17], p.1

[15] NPPF_December_2024.pdf last accessed 9/9/25
[16] Urban Tree Canopy Cover
[17] tdag_firststepscanopycover.pdf last accessed 9/9/25

- *'UTCC metrics can give a proxy for ecosystem services and help enable clear messaging.'* TDAG, First Steps in Urban Tree Canopy Cover, p.1

***Principle 2: Climate Resilience:*** Leveraging urban trees to cool neighbourhoods, capture carbon and reduce flood risk. Protecting and enhancing canopy cover to minimise the occurrence and impact of extreme weather events to minimise damage to the environment, well-being and the economy.

**Law (Environment Act 2021[18])**

- Made Environmental Improvement Plans a legal requirement (s.8).
- 25 Year Environment Plan (2018) legally designated as the first Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) under the Environment Act 2021.
- Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) replaced the 25 Year Environmental Plan in January 2023.

**National Policy (Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP23))[19]**

*'Nature-based Solutions are crucial to helping to meet our climate ambitions.' EIP23, Goal 7, Delivery Plan, p193*

**National Policy (NPPF)**

*'The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts.' National Planning Policy Framework, para. 161*
*'New development should…: a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change… b) help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.' National Planning Policy Framework, para. 164*

***Best Practice (Forestry Commission)***
*'When planting or managing trees, it is important that procurement policy should consider both tree diversity and genetic variation as this can help the treescape to survive and adapt to future threats' Forestry Commission, Urban Tree Manual20, p21*

[18] Environment Act 2021 last accessed 9/9/25
[19] EIP23 environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf last accessed 9/9/25
[20] 7111_fc_urban_tree_manual_v15.pdf last accessed 9/9/25

***Principle 3: Intergenerational Equity***: Protecting and planting today with tomorrow in mind, building a green legacy for the future. Recognising the importance of trees, the time it takes for them to grow and the need for us to act now to benefits our future generations.

**National Policy (25 Year Environment Plan)**

*'Our ambition is to be the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than we found it.' HM Government, 25 Year Environment Plan, Foreword, 2018*

**National Policy (NPPF)**

*Strategic policies should make sufficient provision for planning measures to address the conservation and enhancement of green infrastructure, and climate change mitigation and adaptation - National Planning Policy Framework, para. 20(d)*

**Best Practice (TDAG)**

*'Therefore, strategic diversification of the urban tree population is critical for building resilience into the urban forest and associated green infrastructure.' TDAG, Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure[21], p.43*

***Principle 4: Public Engagement:*** Encouraging community participation, education and shared stewardship of our urban forest. Educating the wider community on the benefits of trees but also how and where they could make their own contribution so taking responsibility in self-protecting the urban forest at a neighbourhood level.

**National Policy (Environmental Improvement Plan 2023)**

*'…we will: Work with local authorities and relevant parties to ensure urban tree planting is well designed, delivers multiple benefits and avoids trade-offs, such as issues for air quality and human health.' EIP23, Goal 10, Delivery plan, p249*

**Best Practice (TDAG)**

*"Higher establishment success enhances the positive contribution trees make within any green infrastructure scheme. Potential disservices can also be minimised and future maintenance requirements reduced. These outcomes are all important for managers seeking to sustainably manage trees in green infrastructure and foster stewardship from the communities most directly impacted by their presence." TDAG, Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure, p17*

[21] tdag_speciesguidev1.4.03.pdf last accessed 9/9/25

***Principle 5: Environmental Justice*:** Ensuring that every resident, especially those in the most heat vulnerable areas, has access to shade, clean air and nature. With an uneven distribution of trees throughout Cambridge, the proactive preservation of existing trees and new planting needs to be prioritised in areas with lower canopy cover.

**National Policy (NPPF)**

*The planning system should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development: pursuing environmental, social and economic objectives in mutually supportive ways. - National Planning Policy Framework, para. 8*
*'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments...' National Planning Policy Framework, para 136.*

**Law (Environment Act 2021)**

*Public authorities must have regard to Local Nature Recovery Strategies designed to identify priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery - Environment Act 2021, Part 6, s.104-106*

**Best Practice (TDAG)**

*Mapping canopy against socio-economic and environmental indicators allows councils to target interventions where benefits are most needed - TDAG, First Steps in Urban Tree Canopy Cover*

DRAFT

# BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

**The urban forest is amongst the most valuable components of Cambridge's green infrastructure and delivers a range of ecosystem services that contribute to the health, mental well-being, social and economic vitality of the city and its communities. But management to maximise these benefits has its challenges and limitations.**

## Benefits

### Climate Regulation

Trees can contribute to climate change mitigation by sequestering carbon and reducing the urban heat island effect. Shade from tree canopies can cool buildings and pavements, which may reduce energy demand in hot weather. In Cambridge, shading from large trees in streets and parks can lower surface temperatures, easing heat stress in the city and mitigating the Urban Heat Island Effect.

### Air Quality and Pollution Mitigation

Trees can help filter airborne pollutants including nitrogen dioxide, ozone and fine particulate matter (PM2.5). These benefits are particularly important near busy roads, schools and hospitals.

## Stormwater Attenuation

Trees can play an important role in reducing surface water runoff and contribute to flood risk mitigation (see Topic Paper 7 Climate change and resilience). Their canopies intercept rainfall, slowing the rate at which it reaches the ground. Tree roots improve soil infiltration, reducing the volume and speed of water entering drainage systems. In doing so, urban trees help to reduce the likelihood and severity of localised flooding, improve water quality and reduce pressure on Cambridge's surface water infrastructure. As the city adapts to more intense rainfall due to climate change, trees are expected to become an increasingly valuable part of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

## Biodiversity and Habitat

The urban forest is a vital component of the city's ecological network. Trees support a wide range of wildlife by providing essential habitats for birds, bats, invertebrates, lichens and fungi. They offer opportunities for nesting, roosting, feeding and shelter across different stages of growth.
Veteran trees and urban woodlands are especially valuable, acting as long-established reservoirs of biodiversity and supporting species that depend on older or decaying wood. Even individual street trees contribute by linking fragmented habitats and creating stepping stones for wildlife across the urban landscape, contributing to the wider Cambridge Nature Network
Beyond direct habitat provision, trees support broader ecosystem health by helping to regulate temperature, improve air and water quality and buffer sensitive habitats from pollution and disturbance.

## Health and Wellbeing

Access to trees and green space is associated with benefits to mental and physical health. Numerous studies link higher levels of tree canopy with reduced stress, lower blood pressure, increased physical activity and improved recovery times. The presence of trees is also associated with reduced urban noise and greater perceptions of safety.

## Placemaking and Community Identity

Trees enhance the visual character of streets and open spaces and provide a pleasant place to stop. They play a key role in shaping neighbourhood identity, supporting cultural heritage and fostering pride in place.

## Economic Vitality

Healthy urban trees can boost retail and property values, reduce energy costs and support tourism and local businesses by improving the overall experience of place.

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## Equity and Inclusion

Urban canopy is not distributed equally. The UFS seeks to ensure that the benefits of trees are accessible to all communities, particularly those most vulnerable to climate impacts, through a more targeted and equitable approach to tree planting and protection.

# Challenges

**Like many other cities Cambridge is facing some key challenges including, growth and densification, climate change, increased pest and disease, fragmented governance and austerity**

## Environmental Challenges

### *Climate Change*

As trees remove climate-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere they help us mitigate the effects of climate change, but climate change itself creates challenges to effective tree management. Increased periods of drought and/or waterlogging results in increased difficulty to establish trees along with premature decline. Changes in climate also create opportunities for tree pests and diseases to thrive and for new pests and diseases to colonise. Prolonged periods of drought increase the instances of subsidence.

### *Pest and Disease*

Pests and diseases can cause significant damage to the urban forest, leading to damaged and failed stock and economic losses. Understanding the types of pests and diseases, their impact on trees, people, pets and ecosystems and how to manage them is crucial for successful urban forestry.

### *Loss of Suitable Growing Space*

Compacted soils, impermeable surfaces and below-ground constraints affect the viability of new planting.

## Governance and Resource Constraints

### *Governance*

The system by which an organisation is controlled and operates can impact on the way projects are communicated and managed. Isolated management can lead to overuse of resources, breaks in communication and conflicts of interest. The citywide approval of the UFS will provide necessary cohesion and strengthen the holistic, urban forest approach.

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### *Austerity*

The difficult economic conditions local governments are experiencing and the necessary reductions in public spending also influence the way our arboricultural projects are funded and managed.  With reduced financial and human resources, external funding and project management is essential to successful project delivery.

## Planning and development pressures

### *Densification*

The increase in the concentration of people, buildings, or activities within the city requires greater consideration of the potential impact on a resilient and geographically balanced urban canopy.

### *Conflicts with Utilities and Infrastructure*

Dropped kerbs, cables, CCTV, services and lighting, for example,  can limit planting opportunities or damage existing trees.

### *Transport Infrastructure and Road Redesign*

Efforts to improve transport infrastructure including road widening, junction redesign and the delivery of cycle and bus priority schemes can place significant pressure on existing trees. In some cases mature street trees are lost to accommodate new layouts, visibility splays, or underground utilities. While these schemes support important goals such as active travel and air quality, they can conflict with urban forest objectives if tree retention and canopy value are not fully integrated into design and decision-making. Without clear policies and early arboricultural input, road space reallocation can inadvertently erode canopy cover and reduce environmental resilience.

### *Social and cultural barriers*

Unequal canopy cover persists across Cambridge, leaving some communities more exposed to heat and pollution. Public perceptions and resistance to trees may limit support for necessary changes, such as tree planting in new locations or the introduction of less traditional species. Poor tree work at the private or neighbourhood scale can undermine overall canopy health and consistency.

**These challenges are not reasons to delay action. Rather, they highlight the importance of a coordinated, well-evidenced and adaptive approach to urban forest management, one that is resilient, inclusive and responsive to Cambridge's changing social, political and environmental context.**

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# Limitations

**While the UFS is rooted in the best available evidence and developed through extensive consultation, it is important to recognise its limitations. Some datasets are incomplete, certain ecosystem services remain difficult to quantify, and external factors such as funding, legislation and climate change may alter how or when actions can be delivered. The strategy therefore represents a framework for adaptive decision-making, one that will evolve as new knowledge, tools and opportunities emerge. The following limitations highlight the areas where caution, flexibility, or further development may be needed.**

## Legal

The legal responsibilities to maintain and replace trees imposed on private landowners by law or statute are necessarily limited. While they provide essential tools to aid preservation, in order to ensure maximum public benefits derived from private tree stocks, it is necessary to also engage with the public, raise awareness, educate and incentivise proactive management.

## Conflicting priorities

With finite land on which to seize opportunities for innovation and economic advancement, space for a resilient urban forest could easily be occupied by development. But in addition to protecting space for trees, other blue-green infrastructure must also be accommodated, putting additional pressure on land use. It is essential, therefore, to ensure necessary urban expansion provides for the protection and enhancement of the urban forest and other ecosystem services.

## Resources

With ever decreasing internal funding and human resources, CCC's capacity to manage the existing tree stock, deliver replacement tree planting and new planting projects is being stretched. It is essential therefore to streamline activities, make use of effective technology and take advantage of external opportunities.

## Fragmented responsibilities

With less than 25% of land in Cambridge under the ownership and/or management of CCC, we have limited space on which to positively influence canopy cover. In addition to directly maximising the benefits of our trees and those we manage by agreement, committing to an urban forest approach allows us to achieve our canopy cover goals in collaboration with all those who will benefit, equipping the community to self-protect the urban forest from a corporate to neighbourhood level.

## Evidence and Data

While the strategy is underpinned by datasets including canopy cover mapping, tree audits and asset valuations, some areas lack consistent or comprehensive data. Not all environmental and social benefits of trees can be fully or locally quantified. Estimates from tools such as i-Tree or CAVAT may not capture all site specific or community values. This evidence draws on snapshots in time (for example canopy cover in 2008 and 2018), but the urban environment is constantly changing. These changes can affect the relevance or accuracy of some baseline data.

## Policy Gaps

Not all tree related decisions are governed by clear policies.  For example, there is currently no Citywide canopy cover target adopted in local planning policy.  However, the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan policy aims to address this gap in Policy BG/TC. While Policy 71 of the extant local plan considers trees on development sites, there is currently no citywide policy regarding the management of protect trees.

**While the benefits of trees are well evidenced, their effects are influenced by species, scale, location and wider environmental conditions, and should be understood as contributory rather than determinative. Recognising the limitations is essential for transparent decision-making. Rather than diminishing the value of the strategy, this awareness reinforces the need for continued investment in data, monitoring and adaptive management.**

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# AIMS

**To achieve the strategy's vision of a healthy, resilient and inclusive urban forest, we have identified a set of overarching aims. These aims are grounded in the five core principles that guide our approach; *Awareness and Action; Climate Resilience; Intergenerational Equity; Public Engagement; Environmental Justice***

Each aim reflects one or more of these principles and provides a foundation for the delivery approaches and actions that follow:

### *Aim 1: Increase canopy cover*

To protect where appropriate and expand tree canopy across Cambridge, particularly in areas of low provision, enhancing climate resilience, reducing urban heat and contributing to long-term environmental improvement.
In line with best practice[22] , the strategy sets an aspirational target of achieving at least 20% by 2050 canopy cover across Cambridge, to be pursued through protection, public planting, private engagement and integrated policy.
*Supporting Climate Resilience, Intergenerational Equity and Environmental Justice principles.*

### *Aim 2: Improve the condition and longevity of existing trees*

To proactively protect, manage and care for trees throughout their lives, recognising the long-term benefits of a healthy, mature tree population.
*Supporting Awareness and Action, Intergenerational Equity principles.*

### *Aim 3: Ensure equitable access to the benefits of the urban forest*

To address disparities in canopy cover and environmental conditions by focusing efforts on communities that are underserved or most vulnerable to climate-related impacts.
*Supporting Environmental Justice, Public Engagement principles.*

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[22] Doick-et-al_Canopy-Cover-of-Englands-Towns-and-Cities_revised220317_combined.pdf last accessed 11/9/25; England's urban forests - using canopy cover data to secure the benefits of the urban forest last accessed 11/09/25; Mapping English tree cover: results, ranking and methodology. Policy and insight Friends of the Earth Policy, last accessed 11/09/25

### *Aim 4: Embed trees and canopy into policy and decision-making*

To ensure trees are considered at all levels of planning and design, from infrastructure and development to climate and public health policy.
*Supporting Awareness and Action, Climate Resilience principles*

### *Aim 5: Support biodiversity and habitat connectivity*

To increase species diversity and strengthen ecological networks, recognising trees' roles in supporting wider urban biodiversity.
*Supporting Climate Resilience, Intergenerational Equity principles.*

### *Aim 6: Promote shared stewardship and community participation*

To empower individuals, organisations and communities to take an active role in the care and expansion of the urban forest.
*Supporting Public Engagement, Intergenerational Equity principles*

### *Aim 7: Build and maintain a strong evidence base*

To use high-quality data and research to inform decisions, track progress and respond to emerging threats such as climate change and tree disease.
*Supporting Awareness and Action principle*

### *Aim 8: Strengthen the capacity and resourcing needed to deliver the strategy*

Build internal capacity, develop strategic partnerships and secure funding to ensure the urban forest strategy can be effectively implemented over the long term.
*Supporting Awareness and Action, Intergenerational Equity, Public Engagement principles*

**These aims shape the strategy's delivery framework and will be implemented through four interlinked delivery approaches: Manage More, Protect More, Plant More and Engage More.**

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# DELIVERY

## Delivery Approaches

**To achieve the aims set out in this strategy, CCC and its partner services will apply four interconnected delivery approaches, set out below. These approaches guide how we prioritise work, allocate resources and partner with others. They provide a flexible but structured framework for delivering a healthy, inclusive and resilient urban forest.**

***Manage more*** *- improving how we care for and monitor existing trees.*
***Protect more*** *- using policy and legal tools to prevent unnecessary loss.*
***Plant more*** *- increasing canopy cover where it's needed most.*
***Engage more*** *- building public awareness and fostering shared responsibility*

These approaches will be delivered across four interrelated areas: targeting canopy change, applying data and tools, working in partnership and monitoring over time. Together, they help prioritise investment and support the long-term resilience and sustainability of Cambridge's urban forest.

## Delivery Opportunities

**The practical opportunities available to help deliver the aims of the Urban Forest Strategy are structured around the four themes below. These support the evidence-based, collaborative and adaptive implementation of the *Manage more, Protect more, Plant more and Engage more delivery approaches cited above***

***1.Targeting and Prioritising Canopy Change*** explores how changes in canopy cover over time can be assessed and used to prioritise action. By understanding where canopy is declining or gaining and the equity of its distribution, we can direct planting, protection and maintenance where they are most needed.

***2.Tools and Data for Decision Making*** outlines the technical resources available to inform strategic and operational choices. These include canopy cover datasets, the i-Tree Eco® project, Proximitree™ analysis, veteran tree inventories and spatial information on land use, ownership and ecosystem service valuation.

***3.Delivering in Partnership*** highlights the importance of collaboration with planning authorities, local communities, developers and public landowners. Successful delivery depends on cross-sectoral effort and the capacity to embed urban forest goals across multiple programmes and organisations.

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***4.Monitoring and Adaptation*** reflects the importance of tracking progress, evaluating effectiveness and adjusting delivery methods in response to new challenges, including climate change, pest and disease pressures and community needs.

**These four themes are grounded in the strategic principles of this strategy. They reflect our commitment to evidence-led action, shared responsibility, whole-place thinking and equitable outcomes, ensuring that delivery is consistent with the values that underpin the Urban Forest Strategy.**

## Targeting and Prioritising Canopy Change

*Supporting Climate Resilience, Environmental Justice and Intergenerational Equity principles.*

Urban trees are not evenly distributed. Canopy cover varies by neighbourhood, land use and socio-economic context. We will use data to direct action where it is most needed and most effective.

### *Canopy Change Monitoring*

Using two, high resolution canopy datasets (ProximiTree™) from 2008 and 2018, we have assessed where canopy cover has increased or declined. This analysis supports proactive intervention to restore canopy where it has been lost and to protect gains where canopy is expanding and young tree populations are establishing.
tree-canopy-cover-in-cambridge-between-2008-and-2018.pdf

### *Tree Equity*

Equity mapping helps us identify communities with lower canopy cover and higher vulnerability to climate risks. Planting will be prioritised in these areas to ensure fair access to the benefits of trees, such as cooling, wellbeing and biodiversity.
tree-canopy-cover-in-cambridge-between-2008-and-2018.pdf
Tree Equity Score UK

### *Shadeways and Urban Cooling*

Although we do not currently have citywide Urban Heat Island (UHI)/ canopy mapping analysis, our Shadeways analysis has identified walking and cycling routes where new tree planting can provide much-needed shade. These routes will be a delivery priority for urban cooling, active travel and environmental equity.
https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/h54nmxh0/mapping-tree-shade-in-cambridge.pdf

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### *Flood Risk and SuDS Opportunities*

We do not yet have a detailed flood risk and canopy overlap assessment. However, we will seek to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), including tree pits in planting schemes to support wider surface water management and flood resilience objectives and particularly where aligned with Shadeways data.

### *Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)*

While urban BNG delivery is still emerging and current opportunities are limited, we will explore how future planting and design schemes can contribute to measurable habitat improvement, particularly in relation to the forthcoming Local Plan.

## Tools and Data for Decision-Making

*Supporting the Awareness and Action principle*
We rely on robust datasets to plan, prioritise and track our work. These tools allow us to understand the urban forest's current condition and its capacity to deliver ecosystem and social benefits.

### *EzyTreev®*

CCC's live inventory and management system for trees on public land, enabling proactive maintenance and risk monitoring.

### *i-Tree Eco® (2020-2021)*

A sample-based citywide survey assessing the urban forest's structure, condition ecosystem service value, including carbon storage, pollution removal and amenity. Provides a baseline for evaluating tree function and economic benefit.
i-Tree Eco project - Cambridge City Council

### *Canopy Cover Assessments (2008 & 2018)*

Full canopy datasets ten years apart allow us to assess canopy change and explore patterns in relation to land use, ownership and protection. This underpins strategic decisions about where to protect or grow canopy.
tree-canopy-cover-in-cambridge-between-2008-and-2018.pdf
analysis-and-interpretation-of-tree-audit-data.pdf
Ward by ward canopy reports available from Tree data - Cambridge City Council

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### *DiversiTree project*

A spatial dataset and report documenting veteran willow trees along a 10km stretch of the River Cam, alongside opportunities for succession planting and management. This supports heritage conservation, biodiversity, long-term planning and community engagement
https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/diversitree-project

### *ProximiTree™*

Licenced spatial datasets from Bluesky used in our canopy analysis.

### *Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)*

Our live TPO dataset helps us protect high-value trees through planning controls and assess where additional protection may be needed.
Map of protected trees

### *Land Use and Spatial Data*

Our analysis spans citywide, ward, LSOA, Output Area and 1-hectare plot levels. Land is categorised into natural, manmade, gardens, housing/residential, open space, town centre and industrial/employment zones, supporting area-based planning.
tree-canopy-cover-in-cambridge-between-2008-and-2018.pdf
analysis-and-interpretation-of-tree-audit-data.pdf
Tree data - Cambridge City Council

### *Asset Valuation*

We have estimated the contribution of trees to public amenity using tools such as Capital Asset Value of Amenity Trees (CAVAT), Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CLTA). These valuations support funding bids, investment planning and internal reporting.
i-Tree Eco project - Cambridge City Council

### *Pest and Disease Risk Assessment*

Our data includes known risks to species health and helps guide planting decisions and long-term diversification planning.
i-Tree Eco project - Cambridge City Council

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Canopy maps

*Figure 7*

## Delivering in Partnership

*Supporting Public Engagement and Intergenerational Equity principles*
Delivery of the strategy depends on strong partnerships across the city. While CCC leads on public tree management, external funding and resources aid delivery and many opportunities also lie on land we do not directly control. Collaboration is key.

### *Cross sector Collaboration*

We will work with stakeholders (for example landowners), partners (for example Trees for Streets, Cambridge Nature Network - Cambridge Nature Festival and Cambridgeshire County Highways), service providers (for example Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service), to align objectives and coordinate planting, management and funding opportunities.

### *Community Engagement and Participation*

Programmes such as Free Trees for Babies, public tree planting events and our Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign will engage residents in shaping and supporting the urban forest.

### *Planning and Development*

We will work with the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service to ensure the Local Planning Authority's statutory tree protection responsibilities are aligned with the vision, principles and aims of this strategy.

### *Communication and Learning*

We will continue to share data and develop accessible mapping tools where appropriate to raise awareness, support behaviour change and build climate literacy around the role of urban trees.

## Monitoring and Adaptation

*Supporting Intergenerational Equity and Awareness and Action principles.*
The urban forest and the resources to manage it are dynamic. Delivery must be transparent, evidence-led and responsive to long-term trends and emerging challenges.

### *Tree Planting and Removals Tracking*

We will continue to report annually on the number of trees planted and removed on CCC owned and managed lands.
Available from Tree data - Cambridge City Council

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### *Tree Protection*

We will continue to report annually on the number of trees protected by TPO and tree work applications assessed.
Available from Tree data - Cambridge City Council
We will seek opportunities to improve enforcement of replacement planting duties.

### *Repeat Canopy Assessments*

Future canopy surveys will allow us to track overall growth and identify where gains or losses are occurring, supporting evidence-led intervention.

### *Temperature and Climate Monitoring*

As climate data improves, we will integrate temperature and rainfall patterns to guide future tree species selection and resilience planning.

### *Biodiversity and Species Diversity*

We will monitor species mix, age structure and condition across the urban forest to maintain health and prepare for future threats.

### *Pest, Disease and Environmental Risk Monitoring*

Risk-based monitoring of pests, diseases and other climate-related threats will inform management plans and species diversification efforts.

### *Resourcing Our Vision*

Delivery is dependent on the availability of financial, technical and human resources. To maximise the impact of what we do, we will:

1. Ensure CCC's tree asset is sustained and enhanced where appropriate
2. Prioritise investment in high impact and high need areas
3. Seek external grants
4. Build internal capacity through staff development and innovation
5. Coordinate effort across Council departments and external partners

**By combining data, action and collaboration, the UFS seeks to ensure the urban forest grows in value now and for generations to come.**

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# POLICIES

**The following policies set out how the aims of the Urban Forest Strategy will be delivered in line with its four approaches: Manage more, Protect more, Plant more and Engage more. They provide a framework for decision-making, guiding day-to-day operations as well as longer-term planning.**

Each policy states either:

- **A current commitment -** where CCC and its partner services already have the capacity, systems and resources to deliver; or
- **An aspirational goal -** where CCC aims to develop the necessary capacity and partnerships over the lifetime of the strategy. Aspirational policies are worded as "*will work towards…*", "*will seek to…*", or *"aims to…".*

This distinction allows the strategy to be both realistic and ambitious, recognising what is deliverable now, while signalling the direction of travel and the areas where future investment, innovation, or partnership will be required.

In line with the strategy's structure, policies are organised under the four delivery approaches, however, a number of policies support more than one approach in practice.

Nothing in this strategy introduces new statutory duties, changes planning validation requirements, or creates new enforceable thresholds. Where policies are described as 'aspirational', delivery will be subject to available funding, land availability, partnership working and wider policy frameworks.

Policies are intended to guide decision-making and prioritisation and should be read alongside the supporting topic papers, which provide technical detail but do not create additional policy requirements.

## Manage More

CCC will continue to manage its tree assets sustainably and in accordance with best practice. It is recognised that, in some situations, trees can cause residents significant problems and that the wrong type of tree may be growing in the wrong place. In these situations, CCC will act reasonably and responsibly and work to seek an appropriate balance between the interests of the individual, the interests of the community and legal obligations.

**POLICY M1: The Council will prioritise its legal and health and safety obligations over all other aspects of the service.**

To do this, the CCC will:

- Manage its tree stock through a structured, risk-based inspection and maintenance framework, consistent with nationally recognised best practice.
- Undertake cyclical inspections and programmed maintenance using its tree maintenance database as the live asset inventory.
- Respond to emergencies promptly where a tree poses an immediate high risk to people or property.
- Respond to reactive maintenance needs in a timely and proportionate way, balancing risk management with tree retention wherever possible. Records of reactive works will be kept.
- Balance the duty of care with the long-term benefits of retaining healthy trees, ensuring that risk is managed proportionately and reasonably.

**POLICY M2: Government and best practice advice regarding the control of pests and diseases will be followed.**

This includes compliance with national biosecurity requirements and guidance issued by government bodies, regulators and professional organisations. Management responses will be proportionate, evidence-led and informed by risk to public safety, tree health, biodiversity and long-term resilience. Where appropriate, species diversification and adaptive management will be used to reduce future vulnerability to pests and diseases.

**POLICY M3: Trees, Damage and Subsidence. Tree-related damage mitigation requests and claims will be managed in line with nationally recognised guidance, ensuring decisions are based on robust evidence and a hierarchy of mitigation.**

Priority will be given to retaining trees of value wherever possible, with alternatives such as pruning, root barriers, or engineering solutions considered before removal. CCC will work with insurers, their engineers, arborists and residents to ensure fair outcomes that balance property, environmental, reputational and financial risks.

**POLICY M4: Capacity and Resourcing of the Council's Tree Asset.**

The capacity, skills and resources necessary to manage its tree stock as a long-term public asset will be maintained.

To achieve this, CCC will:

- Ensure adequate arboricultural staffing and training to meet statutory duties and deliver the Urban Forest Strategy.
- Sustain investment in digital systems such as EzyTreev® to support inspections, risk management and evidence-based decision-making.

- Allocate funding for cyclical maintenance, proactive inspections and replacement planting of trees under its management.
- Seek and secure external grants, partnerships and innovative delivery models to supplement core budgets.
- Review staffing levels, budgets and asset management systems regularly to ensure they remain proportionate to the scale and value of the tree stock.

**POLICY M5: Trees on Housing, Tenanted, Leased Land and other council owned land not directly managed by the Tree Team.**

CCC will manage trees on housing estates, communal land and tenanted or leased properties in a consistent and transparent way, ensuring safety, clarity of responsibility and long-term value.

- Communal Housing Land: Trees in shared estate spaces are part of the corporate tree asset and will be inspected and maintained on a regular cycle by the Tree Team.
- Individual Tenanted Gardens: Responsibility for trees in private gardens held under tenancy rests primarily with the tenant, unless otherwise specified in tenancy agreements. CCC will provide guidance and may intervene where statutory protections or significant safety concerns apply.
- Commercial Leases and Other Tenancies: For leased land or properties, tree management responsibilities will be set out in lease agreements. In most cases, the tenant or leaseholder is responsible for tree maintenance. CCC expects leaseholders to comply with legal obligations, including tree protection law and to seek consent for works where required.
- Council Oversight: CCC retains an interest in ensuring that trees across its housing land, leased land and estate are managed to appropriate standards, reflecting their role as community assets. All land managing services (for example Property Services, City Homes, Car Parking, Bereavement and Drainage) will liaise with the Tree Team where arboricultural expertise is required.

## Protect More

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and The Town and Country Planning (Trees Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012 make provision for the protection of trees with sufficient amenity value through the serving of Tree Preservation Orders, making local planning authority approval a prerequisite of any tree works. With the use of these regulatory powers GCSP will seek to protect and enhance trees of sufficient amenity value and preserve canopy cover, where expedient.

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With consideration of National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance, The Cambridge Local Plan and the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan, through the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) service, CCC will seek to ensure new development protects and enhances the urban forest.

**POLICY P1: GCSP will make efficient use of regulatory powers to protect trees of sufficient amenity value and secure replacement planting where appropriate.**
If council owned/managed trees are at risk from development, the CCC's Tree Team will be consulted at the earliest opportunity.

GCSP will consider visual amenity and impact, atmospheric benefits, historical, cultural or botanical value and its response to climate change and biodiversity crises as contributing factors when assessing amenity and the expedience of serving TPOs.

New structural tree planting forming part of landscape schemes implemented with development proposals will be made the subject of Tree Preservation Orders.

**POLICY P2: The Council will resist the removal of or excessive works to trees without robust and evidenced justification.**

TPO applications submitted without sufficient evidence will not be validated. Applications that do not reasonably justify works proposed will be refused.

The removal of or significant works to healthy trees in conservation areas will be resisted without the submission of reasonable justification for work proposed.

**POLICY P3: The Council will pursue enforcement action/prosecution where protected trees are damaged or destroyed without consent.**

Where private trees are removed without consent, penalties will be sought in accordance with current legislation and GCSP compliance policy.

**POLICY P4: In accordance with section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act , NPPF and Local Plan, planning permission will include appropriate provision for tree preservation and planting.**

This includes the use of planning conditions and Tree Preservation Orders, where appropriate, to secure tree protection during construction and the successful establishment of new planting. Requirements will be proportionate to the scale and nature of development and consistent with

adopted planning policy and guidance. This policy does not introduce new validation requirements or thresholds**.**

**POLICY P5 (Aspirational): CCC and GCSP will seek to review existing TPOs and how TPOs are used.**

Older and larger orders will be prioritised.
Area orders will be utilised to protect larger tree collections, and The Council will seek to update every 15 years. Any review of existing TPOs will be undertaken within existing legal powers and resource constraints.

**POLICY P6: Protecting Public Tree Assets. Enforcement action and appropriate compensation will be sought and pursued where trees in its care are damaged or destroyed without consent.**

Compensation will normally be based on nationally recognised valuation methods, such as CAVAT, to reflect both amenity and asset value. CCC will work with legal services and partner agencies to ensure deterrence and recovery of costs, reinforcing the principle that public trees are community assets.

## Plant More

**POLICY PL1: CCC and GCSP will encourage and continue to seek new opportunities for tree planting in appropriate locations.**

Funding will continue to be achieved internally and through external grants and partnerships.
The partner services will continue to seek opportunity for and encourage the planting of large canopy and long-lived trees species in sustainable locations throughout the city on public and private land.

The partner services will continue to ensure and encourage a diversity of tree species throughout the city on private and public land.

CCC will continue to target areas that currently lack tree cover to create equitable access to green infrastructure.

**POLICY PL2 (Aspirational): CCC will aim to ensure every new planting site is supported by a funded establishment period covering at least the first three years after planting. This will include watering, mulching and early formative pruning.**

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Establishment support will be sought where practicable and proportionate, recognising that long-term success depends on early care. Delivery will be subject to funding availability, land ownership and partnership arrangements. This approach is intended to improve survival rates and long-term canopy outcomes rather than to impose fixed requirements on all planting schemes.

**POLICY PL3: Replacement planting will be undertaken wherever a council-owned tree is lost, unless there is a clear justification not to replant in that location.**

Replacement planting will normally seek to maintain or enhance canopy value, taking account of site constraints, species suitability and future resilience. Where replanting is not feasible at the original location, alternative sites may be identified to achieve an overall net benefit. Decisions will be recorded transparently.

**POLICY PL4 (Aspirational): Services will explore opportunities to incorporate innovative planting techniques such as engineered tree pits, rain gardens and structural soils in new developments and highway schemes to support the establishment of trees in urban conditions.**

These techniques will be explored where they offer clear benefits for tree establishment and long-term performance in constrained urban environments. Their use will be opportunity-led and dependent on scheme design, feasibility, funding and maintenance responsibilities. This policy is intended to encourage innovation rather than mandate specific solutions.

## Engage More

**POLICY E1: Sustainable and proactive management of trees will be facilitated through public and partnership engagement.**

Engagement will support better understanding of the benefits and limitations of urban trees and encourage shared stewardship. This includes consultation on significant works, support for community planting and clear communication about management decisions. Engagement activity will be proportionate and targeted.

**POLICY E2 (Aspirational): CCC will seek to encourage joined up approaches to tree management through partnerships with other services, managers of private trees and by working with local communities and businesses to provide opportunities for donations and sponsorship.**

Partnership working will be used to extend capacity, share expertise and unlock additional resources where appropriate. This may include collaboration with other Council services,

landowners, businesses and community groups. Participation will be voluntary and subject to appropriate governance and safeguards.

**POLICY E3 (Aspirational): CCC will seek to quantify the benefits of Cambridge's urban forest, whilst creating real opportunities for community participation in the process of valuation.**

CCC will educate and encourage the community to participate in promoting and maintaining Cambridge's urban forest.

**POLICY E4: CCC will provide clear, accessible information about its tree management and planting through its website, public notices and consultation processes.**

Information will be provided in a clear and accessible way, proportionate to the nature of the activity and audience. This includes publishing guidance, consultation information and data where appropriate to support transparency and informed engagement.

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# ACTIONS

**To deliver the UFS's vision and achieve its aims, a programme of interrelated actions will be undertaken. These actions also reflect the four core delivery approaches and policies: Manage more, Protect more, Plant more and Engage more - and are designed to be flexible, evidence-led and scalable across the city.**

Each action supports one or more of the strategy's aims and is grounded in the 5 principles of: Awareness and Action; Climate Resilience; Intergenerational Equity; Public Engagement; Environmental Justice.

**Action 1: Increase canopy cover**
*Supporting Plant more, Protect more approaches*

1. Use updated canopy mapping to identify priority planting areas, focusing on locations with low or declining tree cover.
2. Deliver annual planting programmes across streets, parks, housing estates and open spaces.
3. Integrate canopy objectives into infrastructure, highways and urban development projects.
4. Support private landowners to plant and care for trees through guidance and incentives.
5. Protect existing trees of present and future value.

This is an aspirational, citywide outcome and does not create site-specific requirements, alter planning validation criteria, or override existing planning policy.

**Action 2: Improve the condition and longevity of existing trees.**
*Supporting Manage more, Protect more approaches*

1. Maintain proactive inspection and maintenance regimes of tree assets.
2. Prioritise the management of mature and veteran trees to maximise longevity and ecological value.
3. Implement robust watering strategies, especially for young and recently planted trees.
4. Improve design and planting practices to support healthy root systems and future growth.
5. Encourage species diversity including climate mitigating and climate-resilient tree selection.

**Action 3: Ensure equitable access to the benefits of the urban forest.**
*Supporting Plant more, Engage more approaches*

1. Use Tree Equity and Council tree canopy datasets to prioritise planting in underserved and vulnerable communities.
2. Target planting and engagement projects in areas of high need.
3. Align urban forest delivery with objectives for public health.

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4. Support community planting and tree sponsorship in priority areas.

**Action 4: Embed trees and canopy into policy and decision-making.**
*Supporting Manage more, Protect more approaches*

1. Inclusion of urban tree standards and canopy targets in local planning policy.
2. Integrate urban forest considerations into climate, biodiversity and other strategies.
3. Monitor the implementation of tree-related planning conditions and enforce where necessary and make effective use of regulatory powers.
4. Promote sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and green infrastructure that incorporate trees.

This strategy does not introduce new validation requirements or thresholds unless formally adopted through planning policy.

**Action 5: Support biodiversity and habitat connectivity.**
*Supporting Plant more, Manage more approaches*

1. Prioritise tree planting that supports habitat creation and ecological connectivity.
2. Manage river-edge willows, woodlands and veteran trees to preserve and enhance biodiversity.
3. Coordinate with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other landscape-scale initiatives.
4. Use species-rich and locally appropriate planting to support ecological resilience.

**Action 6: Promote shared stewardship and community participation.**
*Supporting Engage more, Manage more approaches*

1. Facilitate community-led planting, maintenance and aftercare schemes.
2. Deliver public engagement activities including guided walks, talks and education programmes.
3. Develop long-term partnerships with residents, businesses, landowners and third-sector organisations.
4. Promote the Veteran Willow Tree Charter[23] and encourage the community to care for the urban forest.

**Action 7: Build and maintain a strong evidence base.**
*Supporting Manage more, Protect more approaches*

[23] DiversiTree project - Cambridge City Council

1. Regularly update and analyse canopy cover, i-Tree Eco and tree audit datasets.
2. Monitor changes in canopy, tree numbers and condition to inform adaptive management.
3. Use GIS mapping to increase accessibility to Council tree canopy datasets.
4. Track threats from pests, disease and climate-related stress and update risk assessments.
5. Ensure data transparency by publishing relevant datasets and maps publicly where possible.

**Action 8: Strengthen the capacity and resourcing needed to deliver the Strategy.**
*Supporting All approaches*

1. Secure long-term funding for planting, maintenance and monitoring.
2. Invest in arboricultural staff capacity, training and digital infrastructure.
3. Pursue grants and external funding to support community and strategic delivery.
4. Explore co-production, partnerships and innovative delivery models with public, private and voluntary sectors.

# Monitoring, Evaluation and Key Performance Indicators

**To assess the success of the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) and support transparent, adaptive delivery, the Tree Team will track progress using a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These indicators are directly aligned with the strategy's aims and delivery approaches.**

KPIs fall into two categories:

1. Target based KPIs are linked to measurable, time-bound aims (for example a 20% canopy cover target).
2. Trend based KPIs are used to monitor change over time, where year on year variation is expected due to external factors such as funding, or climate impacts. These KPIs help track the direction of travel and support adaptive management.

Together, these KPIs provide a robust performance framework for monitoring delivery, identifying risks and informing future investment and policy.

**Increase Canopy Cover.**
*Target and Trend based*

- Measure the percentage of canopy cover citywide, using repeat mapping every 10 years - next due 2028
- Increase tree canopy cover to 20% by 2050

**Improve the Condition and Longevity of Existing Trees.**

*Trend based*

- Report on the number of council-managed trees inspected annually
- Record the number of trees removed by CCC each year
- Record the number and species of trees planted by CCC each year

**Ensure Equitable Access to Urban Forest Benefits.**
*Trend based*

- Track the number of new tree projects delivered in priority communities each year

**Embed Trees and Canopy into Policy and Decision-Making.**
*Trend based*

- Track the number of TPOs served each year
- Track the number of TWAs served each year

**Support Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity.**
*Trend based*

- Measure the percentage of new plantings made up of high biodiversity-value species
- Record the area (in hectares) of tree-linked habitat created or enhanced each year
- Monitor the number of veteran trees under positive long-term management

**Promote Shared Stewardship and Community Participation.**
*Trend based*

- Track the number of tree planting or other tree related events run each year
- Record the number of trees planted by community groups and volunteers
- Measure participation in Free Trees for Babies scheme

**Build and Maintain a Strong Evidence Base.**
*Target and trend based*

- Update major datasets regularly (for example canopy mapping, ecosystem service valuation, asset valuation, every 10 years, council-managed tree audits ongoing)
- Monitor the number of datasets made publicly available to support transparency

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**Strengthen Capacity and Resources.**
*Trend based*

- Track the annual budget allocated to UFS delivery
- Monitor arboricultural staffing levels - FTEs per 10,000 trees managed
- Record the total amount of external funding secured or leveraged each year

**Progress against KPIs will be reviewed annually, with key updates published for internal stakeholders and the public. This approach ensures the UFS remains evidence led, responsive to change and accountable to the people of Cambridge.**

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# AFTERWORD

## Cambridge’s living treescape - a story of growth, loss and renewal

Walk through Cambridge today and you’ll see a city shaped by trees: riverside willows leaning over the Cam, plane lined streets in Petersfield and Newnham and towering college trees casting long shadows over centuries of learning. But this treescape wasn’t inevitable, it is the result of generations of choices, accidents and acts of care.

Cambridge’s urban forest has grown from a patchwork of planning and chance. Some trees were planted to mark boundaries, adorn streets, or commemorate a special event. Others seeded themselves in untended spaces and simply endured. This layered evolution gives Cambridge’s treescape its richness and diversity, a mix of heritage, utility and wildness.

From the medieval landscapes of Sheep’s Green with their veteran willows and the Victorian parks of Parker’s and Christ’s Pieces, to the carefully managed arboreta of the colleges and the Botanic Garden, trees have long played a role in shaping the city’s identity. The 20th century has major pressures: increased development, the introduction of new diseases and changing trends in urban design. Yet it also saw the persistence of municipal and suburban planting, and the beginnings of community led greening.

Over the past decade, new data has deepened our understanding of Cambridge’s urban forest. Between 2008 and 2018, canopy cover increased modestly, from 17.1% to 17.6% largely due to the continued growth of existing trees and new planting. Encouragingly, some of the most significant gains were in parts of the city with greater deprivation, such as East Chesterton and Abbey. The city now supports over 300,000 trees, offering more than £1 billion in amenity value.

But this growth is uneven. Canopy losses have occurred in wards like Newnham and Castle, where the older Victorian and Edwardian plantings are reaching the end of their safe useful lives. Gardens, though shrinking, still contribute disproportionately to canopy cover. Protected open spaces, veteran trees and pockets of wildness support biodiversity and trees play an important role in supporting climate resilience and create better places to live and work in, but only if they are recognised, protected and maintained.

We now stand at a point of transition. For the first time, we have access to high-resolution data, long-term canopy mapping and tools like i-Tree® and GIS analysis that can guide more equitable and strategic decisions. But understanding is not enough, the future of Cambridge’s urban forest depends on coordinated action. What we choose to plant, retain, protect and invest in today will shape the City for decades to come.

This strategy builds on this story and aims to change its trajectory. In the strategy, we have set out our long-term vision, the principles that guide us and the actions we will take to protect, expand and steward the urban forest for current and future generations.

The urban forest is not static. It is living, growing, vulnerable and essential.

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# APPENDICES

## Topic papers

**1. Tree Asset Management and Risk**
This paper explains how Cambridge City Council manages its tree stock as living assets while meeting its duty of care. It covers inspection regimes, risk-benefit assessment processes, cyclical maintenance, consultation and the challenges of managing trees across different landholdings, including housing and its commercial estate land.

**2. Tree Planting, Work and Third-Party Guidance**
This paper sets out Cambridge City Council's approach to tree planting and tree work, and also provides wider guidance applicable to private landowners, developers, utilities and other third parties. It covers species selection, structural planting, and engineered tree pits, together with considerations for non-native and climate-adapted species. The paper also explains good practice in tree work, including pruning and removals, and sets out the processes for third-party interactions such as dropped kerb applications, pruning requests, and utility works.

**3. Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity**
Urban trees form vital habitats and ecological corridors. This paper describes how Cambridge City Council (CCC) manages trees to enhance biodiversity, including veteran tree care, species diversity, and contributions to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain. CCC will seek to maintain high standards of biosecurity to reduce the introduction and spread of pests and diseases, ensuring a resilient treescape for the future.

**4. Trees, Subsidence and Structural Damage**
Subsidence and other structural damage caused by trees can be complex and contentious. This paper sets out the evidential standards required, Cambridge City Council's (CCC) mitigation hierarchy and the legal and policy context guiding decisions. It explains how CCC works with insurers, engineers, and residents to resolve cases fairly.

**5. Public Engagement and Partnerships**
The urban forest belongs to everyone, and its future depends on shared stewardship. Less than 25% of land in Cambridge is directly owned or managed by Cambridge City Council (CCC), making collaboration with residents, businesses, schools, and partner organisations essential. Engagement is therefore not an optional extra but a core delivery mechanism of the Urban Forest Strategy.

**6. Governance and Resourcing**
Topic Paper 6 explains how Cambridge's urban forest is governed and resourced. It sets out the roles of different Council services in relation to trees, how resources are allocated, and how governance arrangements ensure transparent, coordinated delivery. It applies to both the Council's directly managed tree asset and the wider urban forest across Cambridge.

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### 7. Climate Change and Resilience

Trees are essential to Cambridge's response to climate change. This paper explores their role in cooling and shading, flood mitigation, and soil resilience, referencing strategies for diversifying species to withstand future climate and pest pressures. It links the urban forest directly to the Council's wider climate goals  and provides the evidence base for the policies listed above.

### 8. Achievements

Cambridge has a strong record of urban forest management and innovation. Over the past decade under the Citywide Tree Strategy 2016-2026, Cambridge City Council (CCC) has delivered major planting programmes, pioneered new approaches to tree asset management, and embedded trees within its climate and biodiversity strategies. The achievements, set out in Topic Paper 8, justify the need for an holistic approach to the management of green infrastructure and provide a solid foundation from which the Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036 has been developed.

### 9. Statutory Responsibilities and Planning Control

Trees in Cambridge benefit from a robust framework of legal protections administered by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP). This paper explains statutory responsibilities in relation to Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, and Tree Work Applications. It also sets out how GCSP responds to planning applications, tree work applications and enforces compliance to safeguard Cambridge's urban forest and its most valuable trees.

### 10. Cambridge's Urban Forest - Baseline and Change

Understanding today's urban forest is essential to planning for its future. This paper presents the current evidence on canopy cover, species composition, age structure and spatial distribution across the city. It also reviews recent trends and changes, providing the baseline against which future progress will be measured.

### 11. Tree Protection, Damage and Compensation

The urban forest is a public asset and protecting it from harm is a core responsibility of the Council and its partner services. This paper sets out how damage to trees is addressed, including unauthorised works, vandalism, and harm caused by third parties. It explains the legal framework for enforcement and prosecution, the use of valuation tools such as CAVAT to establish compensation, and how Cambridge City Council and partner services seek to deter damage while recovering costs where appropriate.

### 12.  Growing Cambridge's Tree Canopy

An explanatory paper that sets out why canopy cover is the right metric for Cambridge, justifies the 20% by 2050 aim against alternatives tracked via 10-year mapping cycles.

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# Glossary

**Amenity value** - The value of trees in terms of their contribution to public enjoyment, visual character, cultural significance and overall quality of life. Amenity value is often used in planning and legal contexts, including the assessment of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
**Arboriculture** - The selection, production, planting, maintenance and removal of all woody plants for amenity purposes.
**Asset valuation** - The process of assigning a financial value to trees as public assets, using recognised tools such as CAVAT (Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees) or i-Tree Eco®.
**Biodiversity**- A measure of biological variation, whether represented by gene, species, habitats or ecosystems.
**Biosecurity** - A set of precautions to reduce the risk of accidentally introducing or spreading alien invasive species, including potential pests and pathogens.
**Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** - An approach to development that ensures habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before development.
**Blue infrastructure** - Natural or artificial water-related features such as rivers, streams, canals, ponds and wetlands that form part of the wider green infrastructure network.
**Blue-green infrastructure** - An interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, greenways, parks, forests and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to health and quality of life. Includes parks, parkways, riparian buffers, residential landscaping, street trees, rain gardens, green roofs and window boxes.
**Cambridge** - The area of land represented by the District of Cambridge City
**Cambridge City Council (CCC)** - The local planning authority
**Cambridgeshire County Council** - The county council for non-metropolitan county of Cambridgeshire and the local highway authority
**Canopy Cover**- A 2-dimensional metric quantifying the area of ground covered by tree canopy when viewed from above, where tree canopy is the collective branches and foliage of the tree.
**Carbon sequestration** - Processes that remove carbon from the atmosphere.
**Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees (CAVAT)** - A method used to manage trees as public assets rather than liabilities
**Climate resilience** - The capacity of trees and the wider urban forest to withstand and adapt to the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather, drought, flooding and pests and diseases.
**Community stewardship** - Shared responsibility for the care and management of trees by local communities, residents and partner organisations.
**Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA)** - A professional body that publishes guidance and methods for appraising the monetary value of trees, often used internationally alongside or as a complement to CAVAT.
**DiversiTree project** - A spatial dataset and report documenting veteran willow trees along a 10 km stretch of the River Cam, highlighting opportunities for succession planting, biodiversity conservation and long-term heritage management.

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**Ecosystem Services** - The ways in which humanity relies on ecosystems for the continued provision of clean air, drinking water, an equitable climate, the productivity of agriculture, forestry and oceans, control of flooding, soil erosion, coastal erosion, carbon sequestration etc.
**Ecosystem** - A unit of ecology consisting of a discrete community of species, interacting with each other and their physical environment.
**Environment** - The prevailing conditions which reflect the combined influence of climate, soil, topography and biology (other plants and animals) present in an area.
**EzyTreev®** - Cambridge City Council's live inventory and management system for trees on public land, used to record inspections, manage risk and plan maintenance.
**Free Trees for Babies** - A Council-led community scheme providing free trees to celebrate the birth or adoption of children, supporting family involvement in the urban forest.
**GIS (Geographic information system)** - A collection of computer hardware, software and geographic data for capturing, storing, updating, manipulating, analysing and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information.
**Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP)** - Service responsible for delivering local planning functions across Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire
**Green infrastructure** - A strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural features such as parks, woodlands, hedgerows, street trees, private gardens and green roofs. Green infrastructure delivers multiple environmental, social and economic benefits, supporting biodiversity, health, climate resilience and quality of life.
**Green space** - Any vegetated land or water within an urban area that serves as recreation or open space. This includes neighbourhood and regional parks, gardens, cemeteries, playing fields, bike and walking paths and urban landscaping.
**Grey infrastructure** - The built environment's hard, engineered features such as roads, pavements, drainage network sand utilities. Grey infrastructure often competes with space for trees and green space, making integration with green and blue infrastructure critical to sustainable city planning.
**Habitat** - Food, water, shelter and space that supports plant or animal life.
**Local Planning Authority (LPA)** - The local government body that is empowered by law to exercise urban planning functions for a particular area.
**i-Tree Eco®** - A sample-based survey tool that quantifies urban forest structure, condition and ecosystem services such as carbon storage, pollution removal and amenity value.
**Intergenerational equity** - The principle of ensuring that decisions made today protect and enhance environmental resources so that future generations inherit equal or greater benefits.
**Neighbourhood Canopy Campaign** - A Cambridge initiative encouraging residents and community groups to increase canopy cover at neighbourhood scale.
**ProximiTree™** - High-resolution aerial data licensed from Bluesky International, used to analyse and monitor tree canopy cover over time.
**Section 211 Notice** - Notification to the LPA of proposed works to trees in a conservation area.
**Shadeways** - A Cambridge-specific mapping project identifying walking and cycling routes where tree planting could provide shade, cooling and environmental equity benefits.
**Subsidence** - In relation to soil or structures resting in or on soil, a sinking due to shrinkage when certain clay soils dry out, sometimes due to the extraction of moisture by tree roots.

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**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)** - An approach to managing rainfall that mimics natural processes, including tree pits, rain gardens and permeable surfaces, reducing flood risk and improving water quality.

**Tree inventory (or tree audit dataset)** - Gathering of accurate information on the urban forest, including tree species, location and health (see Ezytreev®).

**Tree Equity** - A framework for identifying and addressing unequal distribution of tree canopy in relation to social and environmental vulnerability.

**Tree Team** - Cambridge City Council's in-house arboricultural service, based in City Services. The Tree Team manages the Council's tree stock across streets, parks, housing estates and open space sand provides professional arboricultural advice to other Council services, including Housing and Property. It maintains the Council's tree inventory, delivers inspections and maintenance and supports statutory tree protection and strategic planning.

**Tree Work Application (TWA) -** A planning application relating specifically to works on protected trees, including those covered by TPOs or in Conservation Areas.

**Tree Preservation Order (TPO)** - A legally enforceable document served by the local planning authority to protect trees and woodland in the interests of public amenity. While trees in conservation areas are automatically protected, individual trees outside these areas may be protected with a Tree Preservation Order.

**Tree Work Application** - Planning application relating specifically to trees

**Urban Cooling** - The role of trees in lowering local temperatures, reducing the urban heat island effect and improving thermal comfort.

**Urban Forest** - Trees, woody shrubs, hedges, herbaceous plants, waterways, wildlife, grasses and other green infrastructure within the built environment, considered collectively over a defined area.

**Urban Forestry** - The holistic care and management of single trees and tree populations in urban settings for the purpose of improving the urban environment, irrespective of ownership.

**Urban heat island effect** - A phenomenon where air temperatures in urban areas are significantly hotter than those in surrounding rural areas due to the high concentrations of buildings and pavement in urban areas.

**Veteran tree** - A tree that has developed notable habitat, cultural, or heritage features due to its age, size, or condition, providing exceptional biodiversity value.

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