

# Help shape our climate and nature work

## Share your views

Understanding how you are thinking about climate and nature is more important than ever. Cambridge City Council would like you to help shape our climate change strategy for the coming years.








We have a target to achieve net zero carbon emissions for our buildings and fleet by 2030 and a net zero vision for the city. Our existing strategy focused on actions up to 2026 and we are now developing our strategy for 2026 onwards.

### We stand firmly by our climate goals for Cambridge

Together, we're making progress. Every action makes a difference for the future and changes lives for the better today. Our vision is for a city where people and nature enjoy a clean river and clean air in species-rich and connected green spaces. We also want to play our part in reducing climate change and supporting our communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

## Our climate change strategy for 2026 and beyond

There are five areas of focus for our new strategy:

-  Working to reduce the council's own emissions and increase climate resilience
-  Supporting the city in reducing emissions and increasing climate resilience
-  Protecting and increasing our nature and biodiversity including increasing tree canopy cover from 17% to 20%
-  Improving people's daily lives - lower bills, cleaner air, more comfortable homes, greener neighbourhoods, new green jobs and stronger local economies
-  Ensuring climate action is fair and inclusive, so that those most affected by climate change are not left behind and the benefits of addressing climate change are felt by all

## Climate action = changing lives for the better

-  **Reducing emissions** = lower bills for households and businesses
-  **Tree planting** = shade on hot days, reducing flood risk, carbon storage
-  **Biodiversity and nature based solutions** = green spaces for people and animals, and climate resilience
-  **Supporting new technologies** = creates jobs and supports the local economy



Help shape our climate and nature work – share your views now!

✉ [sustainablecity@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:sustainablecity@cambridge.gov.uk)

👉 [cambridge.gov.uk/climate-change-strategy](https://cambridge.gov.uk/climate-change-strategy)

## Past progress and achievements

The council has been actively tackling climate change since 2007, declaring a climate emergency in 2019 to align with the 1.5°C global warming limit. Significant progress has been made, with the council's emissions more than halving (51.9% lower than the 2014/15 baseline). Cambridge was recognised as an 'A' list city in the Carbon Disclosure Project's global rankings in 2023 and 2024 and a top-performing council in Climate Emergency UK's scorecards. Some of the things we've done so far to reduce the council's emissions and support residents and organisations to reduce theirs are shown below:

### 2007

- Council launched original **Cambridge Climate Change Charter**

### 2008

- Council approved its first **Climate Change Strategy**
- **Climate Change Fund launched**, to finance carbon reduction projects within the council

### 2009

- Trial of first two **electric council vehicles**
- Cambridge Carbon Footprint ran its first **Open Eco Homes event**

### 2010

- **Electric car charging points** installed in two city centre car parks

### 2011

- **£94,000 LED lighting installed** at Grand Arcade Annex car park
- **Solar thermal panels** installed to heat water at Abbey swimming pool
- **Energy efficiency measures installed** in council homes through the Decent Homes programme

### 2012

- **Energy efficiency improvements** implemented at Abbey, Parkside, Jesus Green and King's Hedges swimming pools
- Supported **insulation measures in over 500 homes city wide** through The Cambridge Home Insulation grant
- **Waste service increased** the range of materials that households can recycle, adding plastic pots, tubs and trays

### 2013

- **LED lighting and controls** installed at Grafton West car park
  - £500,000 programme delivered in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, **improving highways for cyclists**
- ### 2014
- **Heat pumps** installed at King's Hedges swimming pool
  - **Solar panels** installed at Cherry Hinton Village Leisure Centre
  - **Greening Your Home Guide** published
  - New cycle racks installed in the city centre in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council creating **600 more bike parking spaces**
- ### 2015
- **Solar panels** installed at Buchan Street Neighbourhood Centre
  - 20 council vehicles replaced with **alternative stop-start technology**
  - **LED lighting** installed at the Crematorium
- ### 2016
- Began purchasing electricity from **100% renewable sources** for council buildings
  - Seven council diesel vehicles replaced with **electric vans**
  - **£320,000 LED lighting** installed at Grand Arcade car park and Grafton East car park, reducing electricity usage by 50%
  - Action on Energy partnership retrofitted over 400 homes in Cambridge with **insulation measures** through the Green Deal for Communities funding
  - **Bronze Sustainable Food City status achieved** by Cambridge Sustainable Food Partnership

### 2017

- **Solar thermal system** upgraded at Abbey swimming pool
- **City Leaders Climate Change Group established** to bring together business, universities and the public sector to explore how emissions in the city can be reduced
- Sustainable City Grant helped to fund the **World's Biggest Repair Café** organised by Cambridge Carbon Footprint

### 2018

- Local Plan adopted including requirement for new developments to achieve a **19% reduction in carbon emissions**
- Council adopted a new **Sustainable Food Policy**
- Became the first council to require all new licensed taxis to be **low emission vehicles**
- Supported over 200 low-income residents to install **energy or water saving measures** in their homes

### 2019

- **Council declared a Climate Emergency and a Biodiversity Emergency**
- £285,000 project to **install solar panels** across eight council sites, including the Guildhall, Mandela House and Abbey and Parkside pools
- £350,000 project to **install measures to reduce carbon emissions** at the Guildhall
- Cambridge Canopy Project launched to **increase the tree canopy** in Cambridge
- **Planted 500 trees**

## 2022

- £1.7 million major **carbon reduction scheme** completed at Parkside and Abbey swimming pools, including air-source heat pumps
- Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service's **second electric refuse collection vehicle** in operation
- 18 charging points installed for electric taxis and 38 **on-street residential charging points** piloted for electric vehicles
- **Cambridge Retrofit Guide** published
- **Cambridge Climate Map** created by Cambridge Carbon Footprint
- Cambridge Carbon Footprint launches **climate change training course for residents**, funded by the Council
- Adopted a **plant-based food** motion, to transition to 100% plant-based food at civic events by 2026
- Supported Cambridge schools working to meet the accredited **Eco-School Green Flag Award**.

## 2021

- Separate **food waste collection** trial conducted
- **Sustainable Food Places Silver Award** received by Cambridge Sustainable Food Partnership
- Preferred Options report of new Local Plan published, including vision for development that **minimises carbon emissions**
- External **insulation and solar panels** installed in private homes and 150 council homes
- **Green Business Grants** launched, awarding £150,000 grants to help Cambridge organisations reduce carbon emissions

## 2020

- Committed to replacing existing council vehicles with **Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles** when they are due for replacement
- Cambridgeshire's first **electric refuse collection vehicle** commissioned by Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service
- **New Climate Change Charter** developed and launched with Cambridge Carbon Footprint

## 2023

- Partnered with local authorities to launch the Green Business Programme, **helping businesses reduce their carbon footprint** by developing net zero roadmaps and offering grants of up to £5k.
- Funding awarded from the Heat Network Delivery Unit to progress a **District Heating Scheme** to the next phase.
- Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service's **third electric refuse collection vehicle** in operation
- Funding secured for the development of a £6.1m **Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network** solar project, led by Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service
- Switched to **reusable cups** at Corn Exchange and Guildhall events
- First 15 **electric charging points installed**, at Adam and Eve car park, in partnership with Connected Kerb
- DiversiTREE project launches taking a **community-based approach to managing veteran trees along the riverbank**
- **Conservation grazing reintroduced** at East Barnwell Nature Reserve to improve biodiversity

## 2024

- Continuing to **retrofit council housing stock** while working collaboratively as part of Action on Energy Cambridgeshire, to retrofit privately owned properties
- Continued building new homes to **Passivhaus standards**
- **Sustainable Food Places Gold Award** received by Cambridge Sustainable Food Partnership, recognising Cambridge as leading the way in transforming local food systems
- **Fourth electric refuse collection vehicle** commissioned by Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service
- **Cambridge Folk Festival achieves the Greener Festival 'Outstanding' Certification** again, recognising the significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, transport links and food and waste management
- **New Air Quality Strategy** adopted to improve air quality in Greater Cambridge
- New **herbicide free** approach
- £150,000 secured to support **Biodiversity Net Gain** in planning applications

### Key

- Reducing Cambridge City Council's carbon emissions
- Helping Cambridge reduce carbon emissions



# The need for action to tackle climate change and increase climate resilience

Scientific evidence unequivocally demonstrates that our climate is changing, with global average temperatures already reaching approximately 1°C above pre-industrial levels. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and global agreements like the UN Paris Climate Agreement have established a critical threshold: limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is essential to avert the most severe and catastrophic impacts of climate change. The UK government committed to reaching net zero by 2050 and a 68% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (from 1990 levels).

## Cambridge is feeling the effects of climate change

### Overheating

Cambridge recorded 38.7°C in 2019 and the UK recorded over 40°C for the first time in 2022. The summer of 2025, the UK's hottest, saw an unusually high number of heatwaves declared. Urban areas such as Cambridge are particularly vulnerable to changes in heat. An additional factor facing city residents is the urban heat island effect. Buildings absorb rather than reflect the sun's heat, and waste heat from air conditioners and vehicles can add warmth to the surroundings, increasing temperatures.

### Water scarcity and flooding

Cambridge is already seeing warmer, wetter winters which increase flood risk. It's projected winters will be 1.3°C warmer and 7% wetter by 2050. Summers are also becoming hotter and drier raising the risk of drought, despite increased intensity of rainfall when it occurs. Summers are projected to be 2.2°C warmer and 3% drier by 2050.

## But together we are making progress

Since 2014/15, the council's emissions have reduced by

↓ 51.9%

Since 2005, the city's emissions have reduced by

↓ 47.3%

## Strategy and objectives from 2026

The new draft strategy for 2026 and beyond focuses on the council's direct actions while driving city-wide change through partnerships. It builds on the previous strategy (2021-2026) integrating climate adaptation actions throughout and introduces some new objectives.

It sets our continued direction of travel towards net zero, while allowing for flexibility guided by emerging opportunities, evolving priorities and the resources that enable their success.

## Objectives

### Transport

Reduce fossil fuel-powered travel, encourage low/zero carbon transport.

### Energy and retrofit

Improve energy efficiency and climate resilience of homes and buildings, support low-carbon heating.

## Nature and water

Enhance nature, increase tree canopy cover, safeguard water and adapt to climate impacts.

## Sustainable food

Increase access to local, low-impact, seasonal food, reduce food waste.

## Waste minimisation

Reduce waste, support a circular economy.

## Supply chain and finance

Reduce emissions and maximise social/environmental value of procurement and partnerships.

## Community support and behaviour change

Provide accessible/inclusive support to empower low-carbon behaviour change, ensuring benefits are shared widely.



## New areas of focus from 2026

### A collaboratively created city-wide climate plan

We're calling for input from organisations to help shape a collaborative, city-wide climate plan for Cambridge that builds a picture of what is happening across the city including how others are decarbonising their operations. Building on our partnership with Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, Anglia Ruskin University's Global Sustainability Institute, and the Cambridge City Leaders Climate Change Group, we aim to co-develop a shared plan with businesses, public sector bodies, anchor institutions and community organisations that reflects the breadth of climate action across the city, highlights the shared responsibility for addressing climate change and paves the way for more collaborative action, accelerating decarbonisation and adaptation – locally and collectively.

### Residual emissions

Exploring how councils might compensate for unavoidable residual emissions to meet net zero targets. This is often referred to as 'offsetting'.

### Measuring council scope three emissions

Working with our suppliers to encourage and support them to reduce their emissions.

### Supporting community-led renewable energy projects

Exploring opportunities for community-led renewable energy generation and shared ownership models, providing advice and support to unlock funding.

### Reducing emissions from commercial properties

Reviewing the Asset Management and Decarbonisation Plan to identify priority sites and funding for improvements to meet net zero targets and energy efficiency standards.

# Areas of action

The strategy will have a detailed action plan alongside it. This is currently being developed, and your feedback will help inform this. However, there are some existing strategic projects that are already in development and are being considered as part of the plan to address emissions, subject to funding being secured.

## Reducing the council's direct emissions and increasing the council's climate resilience

### Key projects

#### Transport

**Fleet decarbonisation:** Purchasing Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) when replacing vans and trucks.

**Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network:**

The network will charge and power up to 18 electric refuse collection vehicles using renewable energy generated by solar panels at the depot (targeting 2026/27 for completion).

#### Energy and retrofit

**Civic Quarter redevelopment:** Retrofitting the Guildhall to ENERPHIT (a certification standard designed for energy-efficient renovations of existing buildings) and emerging net zero carbon standards by 2029 and the Corn Exchange targeting a 65% reduction in carbon emissions.

**Cambridge City Centre District Heat Network:** Supplying low carbon, renewable heat to buildings in the city centre. If viable, targeting 2030 for first buildings to connect to it, aiming to phase out gas boilers.

**Strategic asset management plan:** To identify pathways to reduce emissions from council buildings to net zero and identify funding opportunities.

#### Nature and water

Delivering biodiversity net gain on the council's estate, climate-resilient management of parks (drought-tolerant planting, no-mow zones, herbicide-free), exploring rainwater harvesting.

## Waste minimisation

Eliminating single-use plastics at council events and banning them at events held on council open spaces.

## Community support and behaviour change (just transition)

Continuing to provide carbon literacy training to staff, councillors and residents.

## Reducing Cambridge's emissions and increasing the city's climate resilience

### Key projects

#### Transport

Installing EV charging infrastructure across the city (600 charging points with Connected Kerb, 264 installed to date), and in new council homes whilst also encouraging all new developments to install EV chargers too. Promoting walking, cycling and public transport through planning policies and as part of the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

#### Energy & retrofit

Through the new Local Plan new development must be designed to take into account a changing climate (e.g. overheating), and embed the principles of climate change mitigation and adaptation, achieve net zero operational emissions, be energy and water efficient and use renewable energy to meet their remaining energy needs.

#### City-wide emissions (homes - 25% of city emissions)

**Council homes:** Developing a delivery and funding plan which will take a strategic approach to decarbonisation of existing council homes and will include creating an overheating mitigation strategy and a policy for heat pump installation. We have already retrofitted 225 council homes to EPC C, retrofitted a further 48 homes on Ross Street to net zero carbon and have secured funding for 370 more.

**Private homes:** Providing grant funding for energy upgrades and low-carbon heating to low-income households by working in partnership with Cambridge Energy and Retrofit Partnership (CERP).



**Partnerships:** Creating a cohesive retrofit strategy for all housing tenures to scale up retrofit through measures such as area-based plans, continuing to provide energy efficiency advice for residents and communities to support residents to retrofit through Action on Energy partnership, progressing the Cambridgeshire Local Area Energy Plan (sets out what energy infrastructure Cambridgeshire needs to reach net zero and support sustainable growth), and leading the City Centre District Heat Network (reducing carbon emissions by 98% if viable).

## Nature and water

**Water safeguarding:** Planning water retrofit measures in existing council homes, exploring rain gardens in housing estates. Participating in Water Scarcity Funding to retrofit households for water savings and establish a Water Credits Scheme. Implementing pool water recovery systems at three swimming pools.

**Planning system:** Using the new Local Plan to protect from flooding and not increase flood risk, managing water in as natural way as possible by using Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and to be highly water efficient. New homes to meet water efficiency standards (110 litres/person/day). which goes beyond the national standard - reflecting the water issues facing the Cambridge area.

**Enhancing nature:** Increasing Cambridge's tree canopy cover from 17% to 20% by 2050 through the Urban Forest Strategy. Ceasing herbicides on grass verges, trialling new grass-cutting methods for wildflowers. Improving rare chalk stream habitats (Cherry

Hinton Brook, Vicars Brook, Coldham's Brook). Using the new Local Plan to protect peat soils and promote the protection of soils in construction, encouraging green infrastructure to support natural carbon storage rather than greenhouse gas release.

## Sustainable food

**Promoting sustainable food in the city:** Requiring allotment space in new developments, making council allotment plots more accessible, supporting community orchards and wildlife gardens, encouraging food-growing opportunities in developments.

**Partnerships:** Member of Cambridge Sustainable Food Network (supporting Gold Award status), providing grants for projects that promote sustainable food (e.g. foraging), partnering with Cambridge Sustainable Food to run a predominantly plant-based café at Meadows Community Centre.

## Waste minimisation

**City-wide waste:** Rolling out food waste collections from 2026 (phased approach), aiming to send food waste to anaerobic digestion facilities. Working with RECAP on a new Joint Municipal Waste Strategy. Using the new Local Plan to promote reuse of materials and recycling in building projects and when buildings are in use.

**Partnerships:** Communications campaigns to raise awareness and encourage recycling/waste reduction, supporting businesses to adopt circular economy practices, providing grant funding to community organisations to support residents to reuse and recycle, for example running repair cafes.

## Supply chain and finance

**Partnerships:** Convening the City Leaders Climate Change Group (with Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership (CISL) and Cambridge Zero) to drive cross-sector initiatives. Co-developing the city-wide climate plan with this group. Supporting the growth of a “climate cluster” in Greater Cambridge (Innovate Cambridge, Cambridge Clean Tech, Cambridge Zero, CISL) and partnering with CISL to share learning and find testbed opportunities for climate solutions.

## Community support and behaviour change (just transition)

Co-developing Ward Climate Action Plans reflecting local priorities. Designing a creative behavioural change campaign for Council venues. Providing retrofit apprenticeship opportunities and supporting green job access through the Region of Learning programme.

**Partnerships:** Supporting community groups with Sustainable City Grant funding to deliver activities which help achieve the Climate Change Strategy objectives (e.g., for energy reduction, repair cafes, sustainable food). Convening the Local Climate Change Forum to facilitate collaboration, public engagement and best practice sharing with community groups including Cambridge Carbon Footprint. Exploring and supporting community energy projects.

## Offsetting residual emissions

We have prioritised, and will continue to prioritise, reducing emissions as far as is reasonably possible.

We are now starting to explore how councils might compensate for unavoidable residual emissions to meet net zero targets, often referred to as “offsetting”.

We would like to understand what you think.

### General principles for offsetting:

- Local – offsets should be generated locally within the UK (not overseas).
- Additional – contribute to projects that wouldn’t happen otherwise.
- Credible, permanent and verified to comply with independent, recognised standards and avoid double counting.
- Prioritise carbon removal over avoidance offsets.

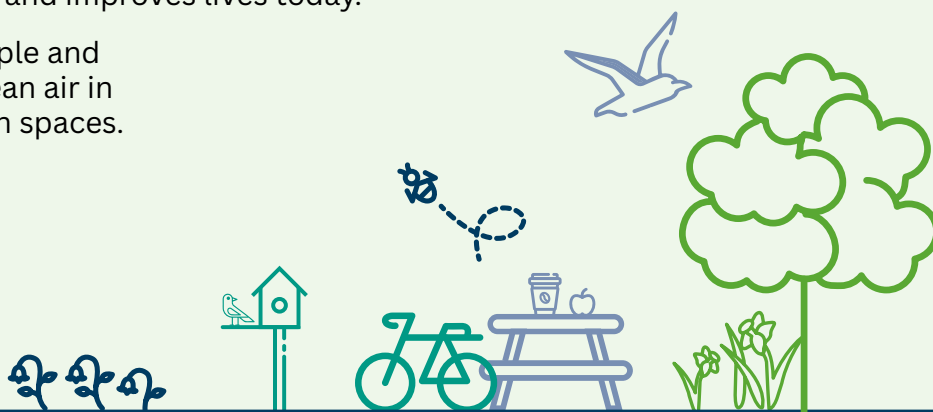
Beyond this we anticipate the development of national guidance, and will prepare the necessary evidence and data to inform future decisions that may be needed by the council or a newly formed unitary council.

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