Cambourne Growth Strategy Programme

Annex 2:
Cambourne's Green & Blue Infrastructure Framework

Published as part of the Draft Local Plan - Regulation 18 consultation (December 2025 - January 2026)

September 2025

Contents

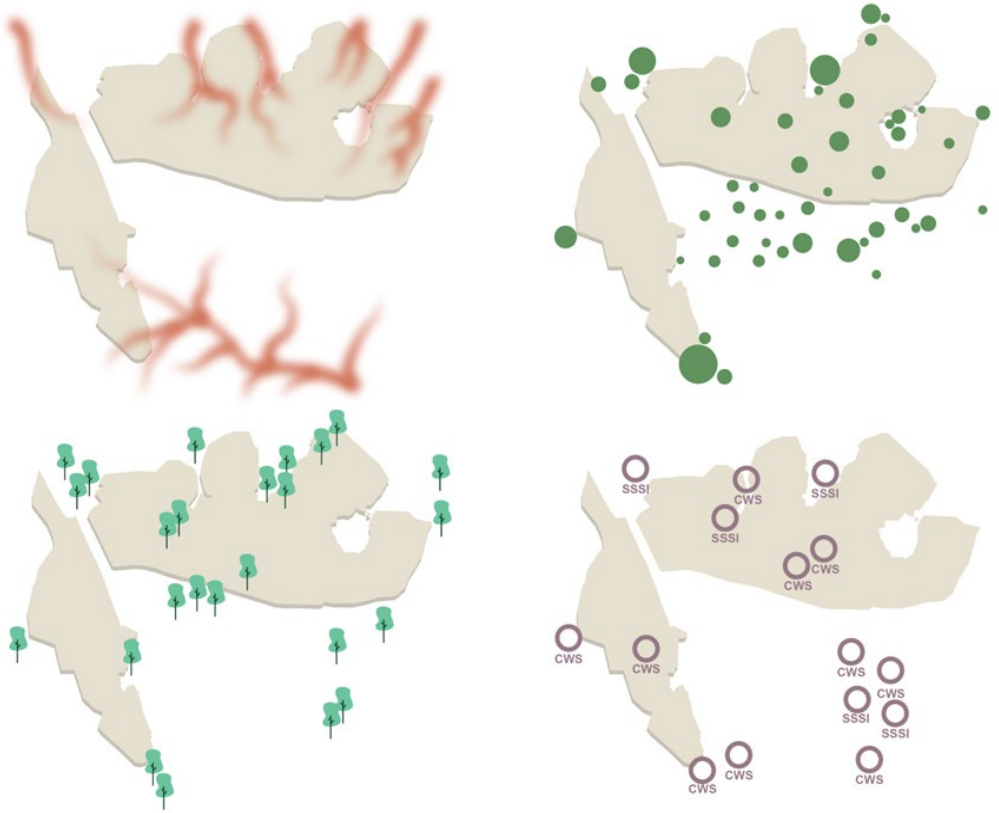
Cambourne Growth Strategy Programme

Development of the GBI Framework

How the existing context has informed the development of the GBI network

The baseline context was analysed to inform the GBI approach – see summary below:

- **Topography** - The landform reflects the underlying geology of rolling Gault Clay ridges. Long views are afforded where the highest part of the undulating plateau (north of Cambourne) slopes gently northwards the Fens.
- **Existing GBI assets** – Woodland, hedgerows, public rights of way (PRoW), and river networks follow an intricate pattern across the wider landscape.
- **Tree cover** – Tracts of woodland provide a well-defined GBI structure that frame settlements and contribute to the distinct landscape character of the area, as well as its strong sense of place.
- **Nature conservation designations** – Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (6.4km south at the closest point) is designated for the maternity roost of barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus)*, one of the UK's rarest mammals. The area to the north contains three sites of special scientific interest (SSSI), and a county wildlife site (CWS) designated for the ancient semi-natural woodland habitat and associated vascular plants they support. All the SSSIs are in unfavourable condition, two of them declining. Brockley End Meadow to the north, as well as Caxton Moats and Manor Farm Meadows to the south and east are all CWS designated for their wet grassland communities.

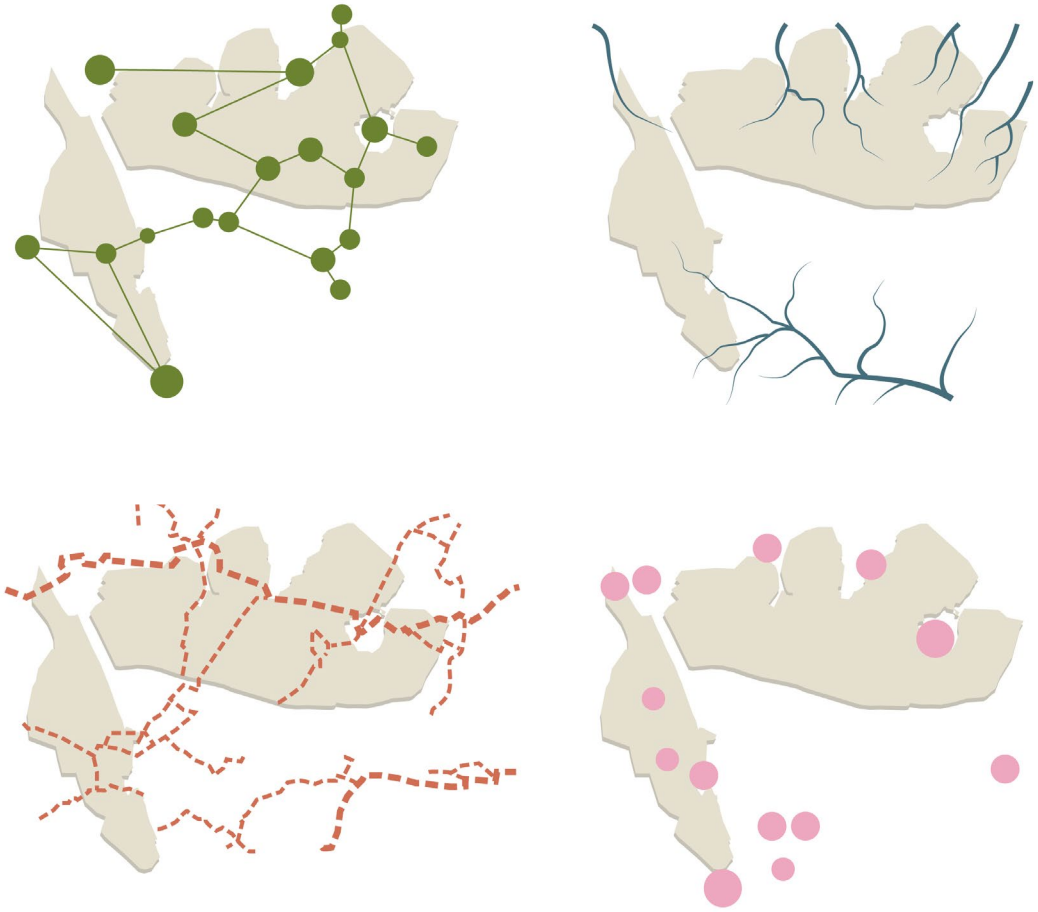


Development of the GBI Framework

How the existing context has informed the development of the GBI network

- **Habitat networks** - The landscape to the north is dominated by arable farming with pockets of priority habitats and a locally important network of habitats providing connectivity across the intensively managed landscape. Tracts of ancient woodland are considered irreplaceable. RSPB's Hope Farm lies adjacent to the north east boundary and is managed positively to support farmland birds.
- **Blue infrastructure** - Flood risk, water quality and groundwater recharge issues exist within the clay catchment. Linear open ditches along field boundaries form drainage features and are of biodiversity value, providing important habitat and connectivity for protected and priority species.
- **Access networks** – A network of PRoW and long-distance footpaths cross the landscape, broadly following the boundaries of field boundaries or minor tracks.
- **Heritage assets** – The landscape exhibits evidence of time depth due to the moated site at Knapwell (scheduled monument) and Childerley Hall Registered Park and Garden. Several of the villages surrounding Cambourne are also designated as conservation areas with concentrations of listed buildings.

Refer to Phase 1 – Evidence (GBI and Biodiversity) and Appendix C for further details relating to the baseline analysis.



Development of the GBI Framework

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Integration of Strategic Initiatives within the Greater Cambridge GI Opportunity Mapping

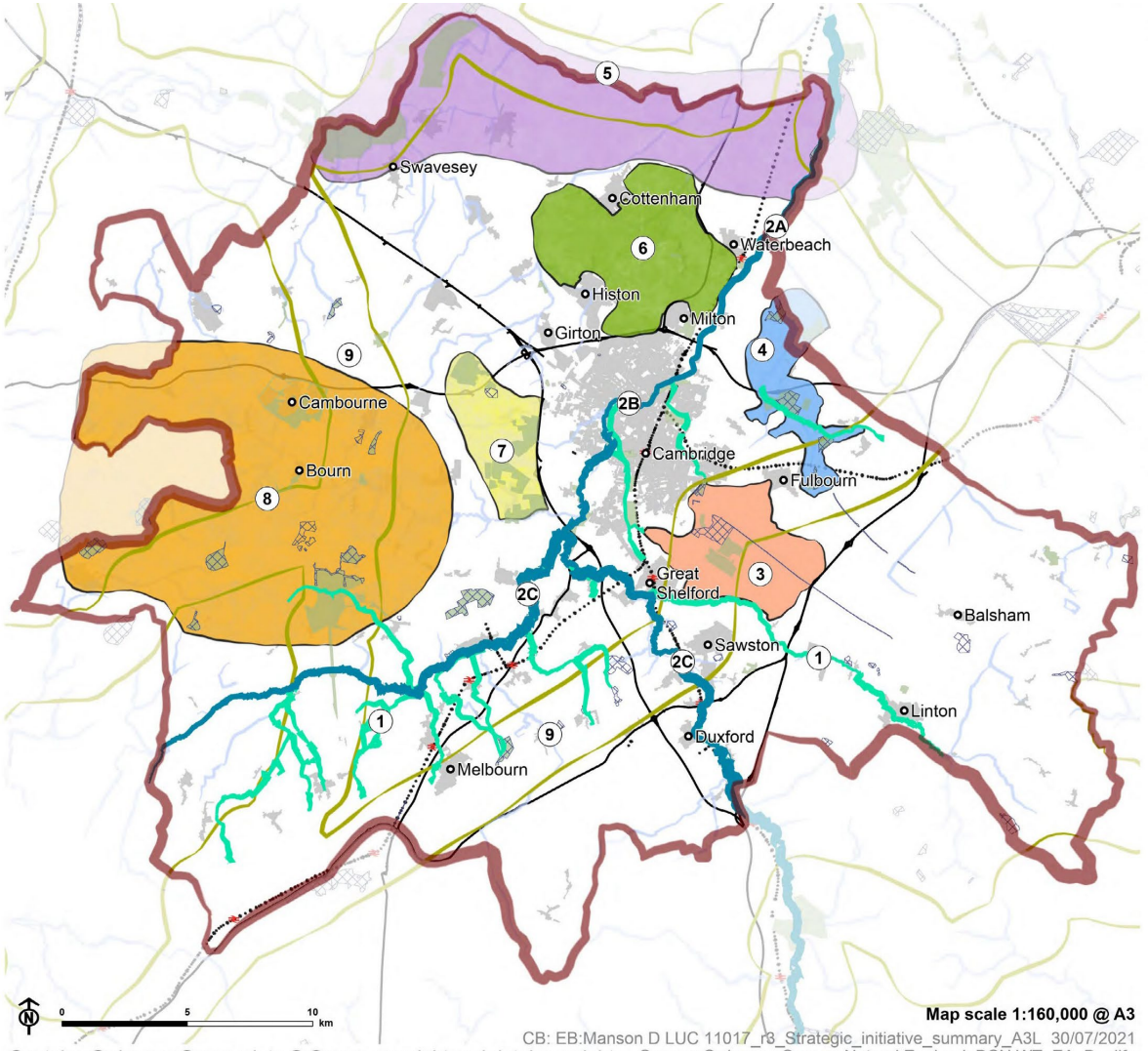
As defined within the *Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping* (2021), the two Strategic Initiatives of relevance to the proposed GBI framework are *Western Gateway Multi-functional GI Corridors* and the *Pollinator Corridor* running north-south to the east of Cambourne.

Refer to Phase 1 – Evidence (GBI and Biodiversity) for further details.

- Greater Cambridge
- Large natural greenspace (all access types)
- SSSI

Spatially-specific Strategic GI Initiatives

1. Revitalising the chalk stream network
2. River Cam Corridor
3. Gog Magog Hills and chalkland fringe
4. Enhancement of the eastern fens
5. The Great Ouse fenland arc
6. North Cambridge green space
7. West Cambridge GI buffer - Coton Corridor
8. Western gateway multifunctional GI corridors
9. Pollinator corridors



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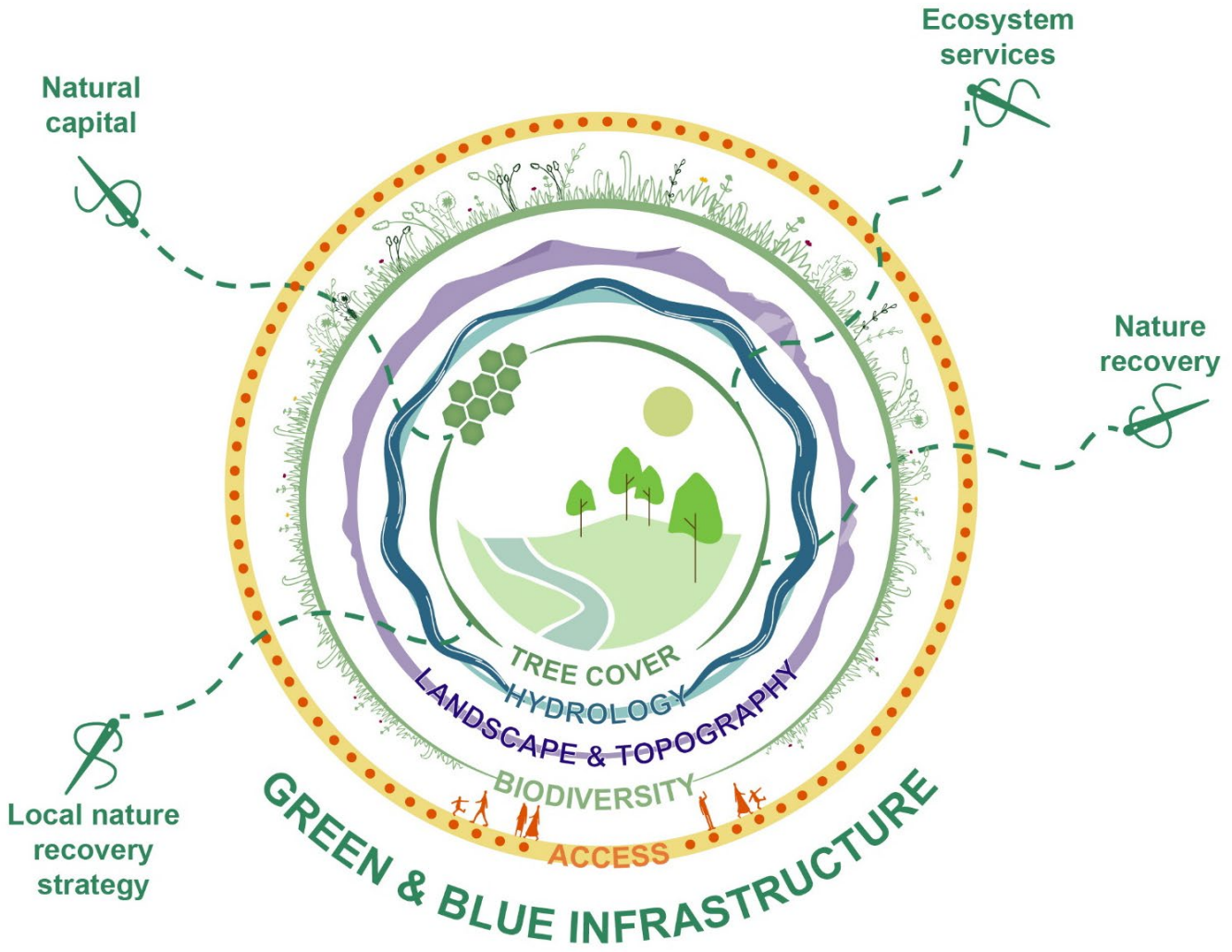
Source: Ordnance Survey, Natural England, BCN WT, EA, Buglife

Development of the GBI Framework

The vision for the GBI network

A bold vision for GBI provides the opportunity to inform future place-making, defining how development will be integrated within a wider GBI network as part of a 'landscape-led' approach. Key principles for the siting and integration of GBI, including opportunities for the enhancement of blue infrastructure and sustainable transport, should enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness.

The proposed GBI network will build upon the existing landscape and visual framework; comprised of landscape features, landscape character and key views. The key opportunities and priority areas of enhancement identified as part of the *Greater Cambridge GI Opportunity Mapping* completed by LUC in 2020 have been used to inform the approach and siting of the GBI network.



Development of the GBI Framework

Application of the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework to guide the 'landscape-led' approach

The Natural England GI Framework sets out the key attributes describing what good quality GBI should look like. These characteristics have been used as the guiding principles informing the development of the GBI framework.

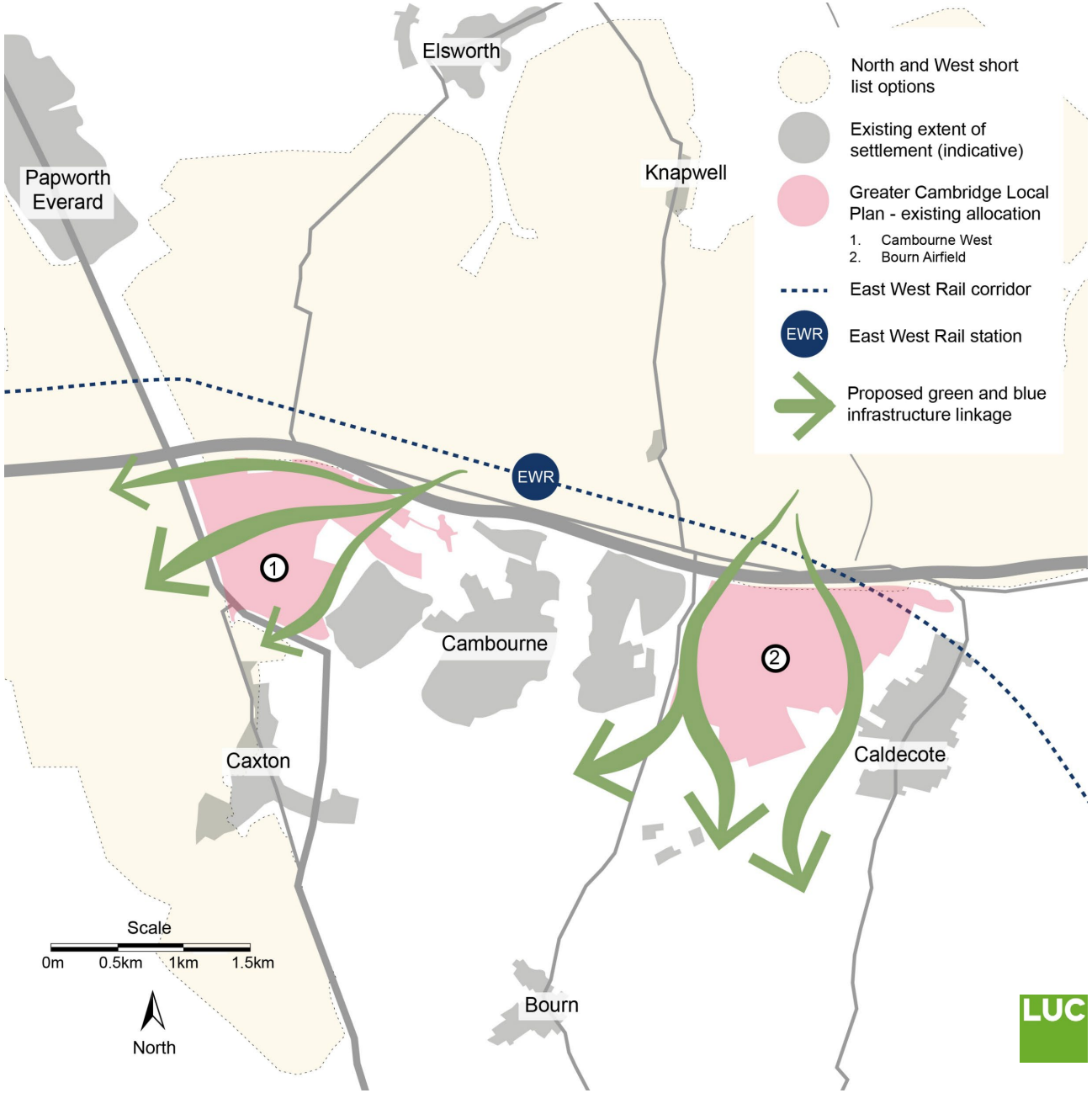
- **Connected** – GI / GBI should function and connect as a living network for both people and nature. Noting the necessity for a hierarchy which allows for differing levels of public access, the GBI Framework will include sanctuary areas with limited or no public access.
- **Multi-functional** – GI / GBI should deliver a range of functions and benefits;
- **Accessible** – GI / GBI should promote access to greenspaces which are inclusive, safe, well-managed and accessible for all;.
- **Varied** – GI / GBI should comprise a variety of types and sizes of green and blue spaces; and
- **Respects local character** – GI / GBI should contribute to the conservation, enhancement and protection of landscapes.

Development of the GBI Framework

Integration of GBI proposals at adjacent allocation sites

Development of the GBI framework complements the landscape proposals / frameworks / design codes of planning applications for allocated sites at Bourn Airfield and West Cambourne. Landscape mitigation proposals associated with the National Highways A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme have also been considered. This approach aims to ensure a holistic and resilient approach to the integration of GBI, promoting connected landscape networks which reduce the potential for landscape severance.

Alignment with existing proposals ensures the continuity of networks of GBI and ecological corridors to provide a connected, landscape led framework for people and nature. Site-specific ecological surveys will be necessary to inform assessment, develop design detail and, where appropriate, mitigation. The detailed design of crossing points across the EWR / A428 infrastructure corridor will be required to respond to the GBI Framework. The potential for integrating green infrastructure and supporting habitat connectivity should be investigated.

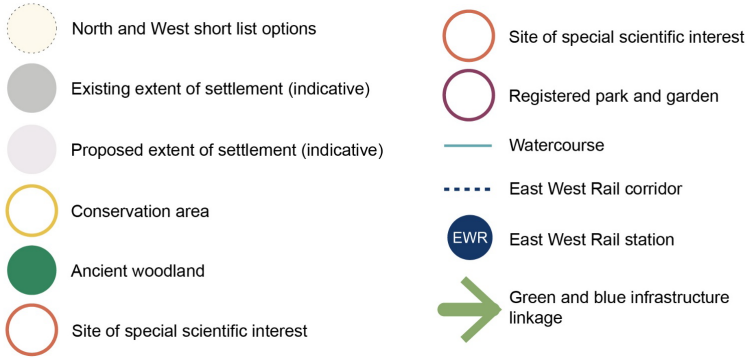


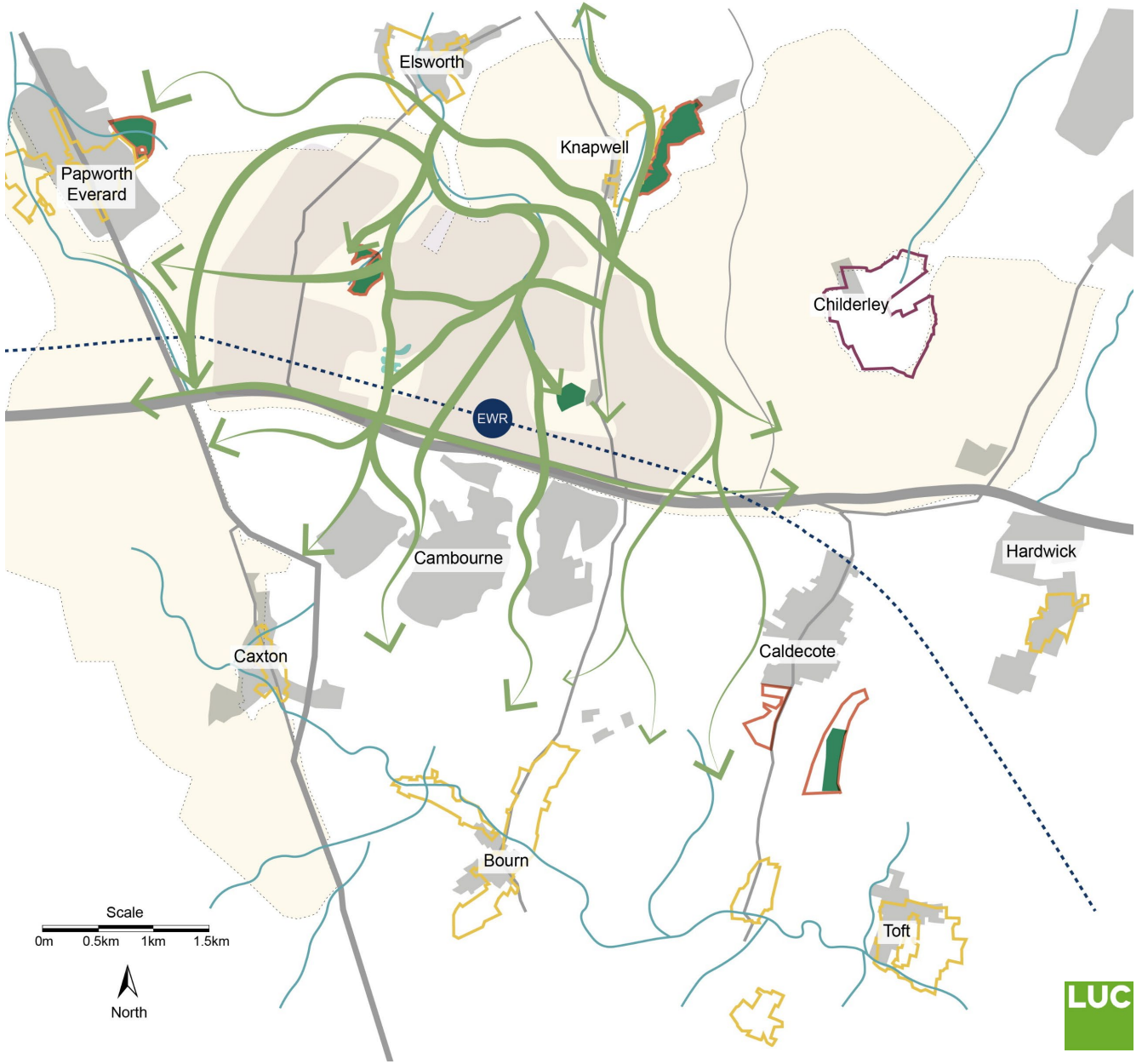
Development of the GBI Framework

Integration of landscape linkages

A network of proposed landscape linkages have been defined across the wider landscape. A framework of green corridors and green spaces will provide a multi-functional and interconnected network of GBI (throughout the development and into the rural landscape). This will promote the protection, enhancement and integration of existing habitats of wildlife value, including ancient woodland.

The emphasis on multi-functionality of GBI features, including the delivery of societal, environmental and economic benefits, will play an important role in the delivery of sustainable growth. The GBI network should function and connect as a living network for both people and nature, informed by site-specific ecological survey.





Development of the GBI Framework

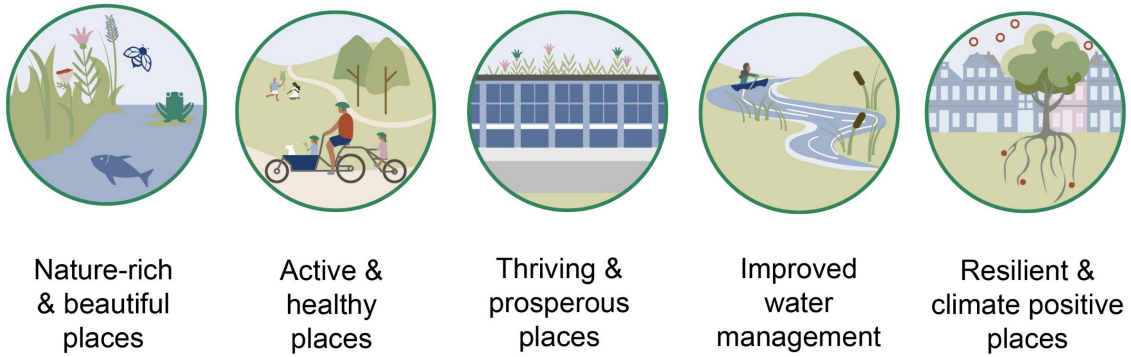
Cambourne Growth Strategy Programme

Application of the Natural England 'Benefit Principles' to the landscape linkages

GBI is defined by its multifunctionality, with a single asset having the ability to provide a number of benefits to people, wildlife and wider environmental functions. The 'Benefit Principles' which underpin the Natural England GI Framework (see opposite) set out the key benefits provided by GBI and can be applied to the framework of landscape linkages.

GBI provides a number of functions, of varying weight and importance. This is particularly relevant where differing purposes conflict with each other. For example, the delivery of biodiversity enhancements (favourable status of statutorily designated sites or species) at select locations should be balanced with the need for active transport or recreation. Some assets, such as ancient semi-natural woodland, will be specifically free from public access to conserve their sensitive ground flora and minimise disturbance. Alternative access provision within the wider GBI Framework will be encouraged.

New tree and woodland planting will promote carbon sequestration across the development. However, the value of enhanced carbon sequestration must be balanced with measures to reduce and prevent carbon emissions at source (including promoting active and sustainable travel) to achieve net zero ambitions.



Application of Natural England's Benefit Principles to each landscape linkage to promote GBI multi-functionality

Development of the GBI Framework

The spatial layout of the landscape linkages

The siting of landscape linkages was informed initially by the network of existing GBI assets. The type of landscape linkage in terms of GBI approach and primary functionality was also defined, based on the principles set out below:

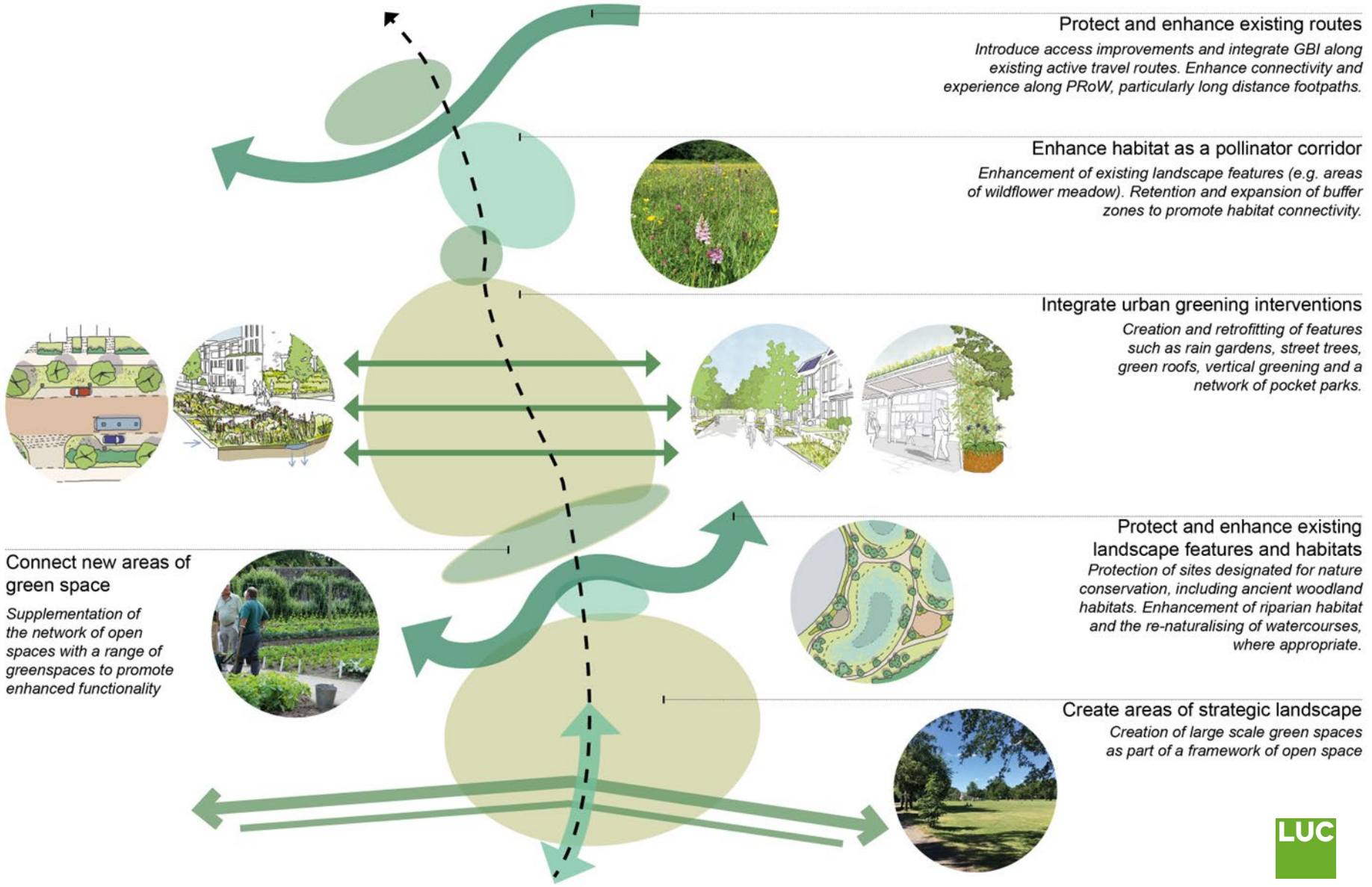
- **Create** – Deliver new areas of GBI to address deficiencies in the GBI network or respond to local needs;
- **Enhance** – Improve the existing GBI network to ensure existing assets are functioning to their potential;
- **Protect** – Safeguard areas of existing GBI e.g. areas of high conservation value; and
- **Connect** – Address areas of severance within the wider landscape through the GBI network.

The four approaches to GBI outlined above are cross-cutting, with one or more potentially relevant to each landscape linkage. The spatial layout been classified further into a GBI hierarchy of primary, secondaryand tertiary linkages – see slide 18. The detailed design of crossing points across the EWR / A428 infrastructure corridor will be required to respond to the GBI Framework. The potential for integrating GBI and supporting habitat connectivity should be investigated.

Development of the GBI Framework

The conceptual approach to the landscape linkages

The landscape linkages vary in size and scale, depending on the GBI interventions included to promote multi-functionality. For instance, the scale of landscape linkages may range from a new large strategic greenspace to a connected network of urban greening interventions through the urban fabric.



Development of the GBI Framework

Buffers required around existing ecological constraints within landscape linkages

Woodlands

All woodlands should be retained and provided with buffers of a minimum of 15 metres, though ideally 50 metres (from canopy edge) from housing or associated infrastructure and 100 metres from major roads, where possible. All ancient woodland, including SSSI and CWS, should be protected from public access and alternative areas provided to avoid recreational pressure on these assets. The buffers around such woodlands can, in part, contribute to alternative areas but principally access would be encouraged elsewhere through informal SANG provision.

The buffers around all woodland assets should incorporate at least some dark (unlit and away from ambient artificial light spill) buffer (suggested minimum 20m) to ensure nocturnal and crepuscular species can forage with a minimum of disturbance. The width of these buffers is to be informed by site-specific ecological survey at later design stages.

Buffers should include appropriate positive management. Depending on the needs of a given site, structural and species diversity should be encouraged within buffers. This could include the planting of species that are traditionally managed through coppice, scrub species, natural regeneration (where appropriate), and the sowing of understorey species.

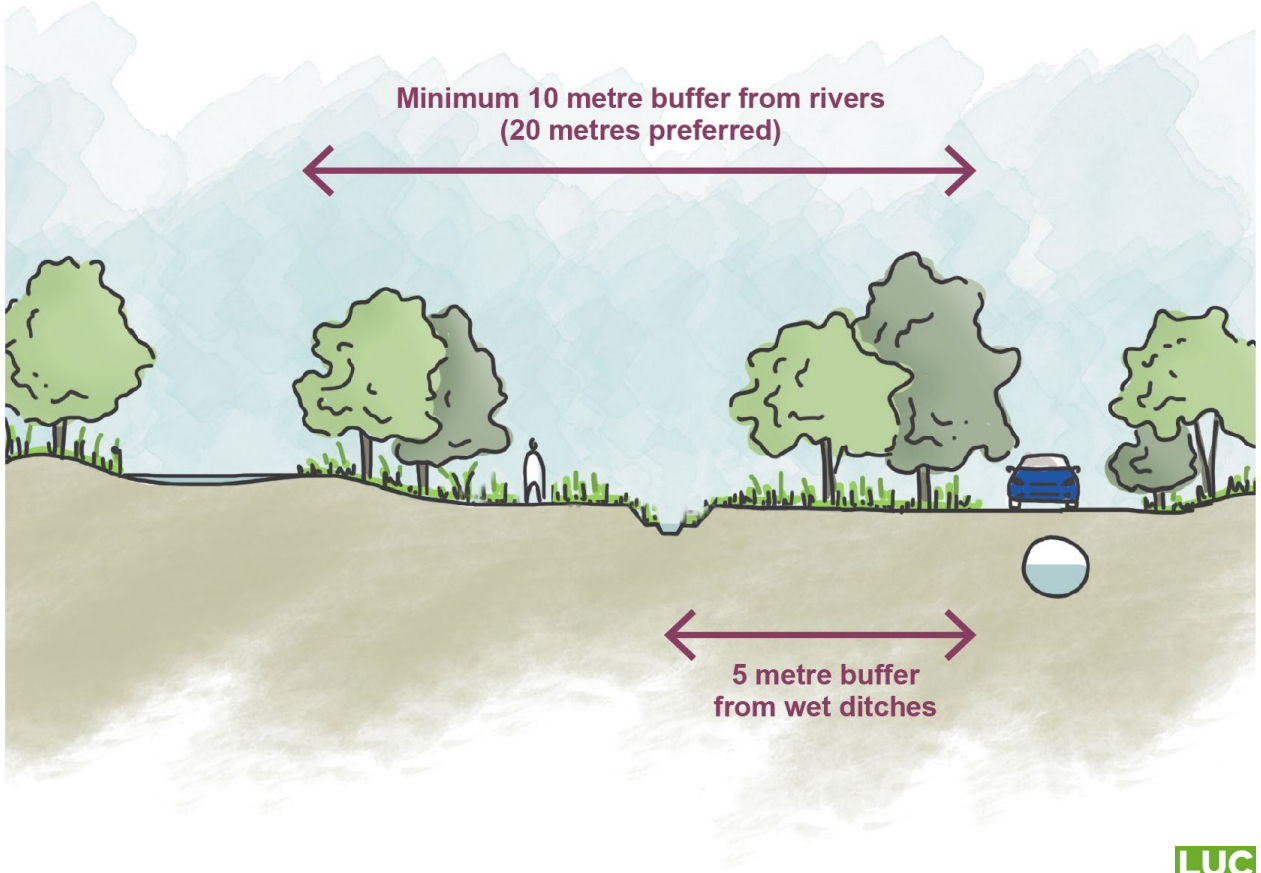
Development of the GBI Framework

Buffers required around existing ecological constraints within landscape linkages

Rivers and watercourses

To maintain a healthy riparian zone and enhance water quality, a minimum 10 metre buffer should be provided for all rivers and streams. However, 20 metres is preferable where possible and appropriate to do so. Wet ditches should be afforded 5 metre buffers. Additionally, some ponds in this area support great crested newt and should therefore be given a 50 metre buffer. All ponds should be connected to the wider semi-natural green infrastructure without any barriers to access for Great Crested Newts.

Positive management of these buffers should include minimal interventions and light-touch management to create a mosaic of habitats where ideally no agri-chemicals are applied and public access is limited. These areas should be maintained free of artificial lighting. Interventions such as directional lighting, screen planting and darkness buffer zones to minimise ambient light-spill. The effectiveness of a dark buffer or corridor is expected to be greater where this is not influenced by ambient light spill from one, rather than two, aspects. The width of buffer zones will be informed through further survey and at later design stages.

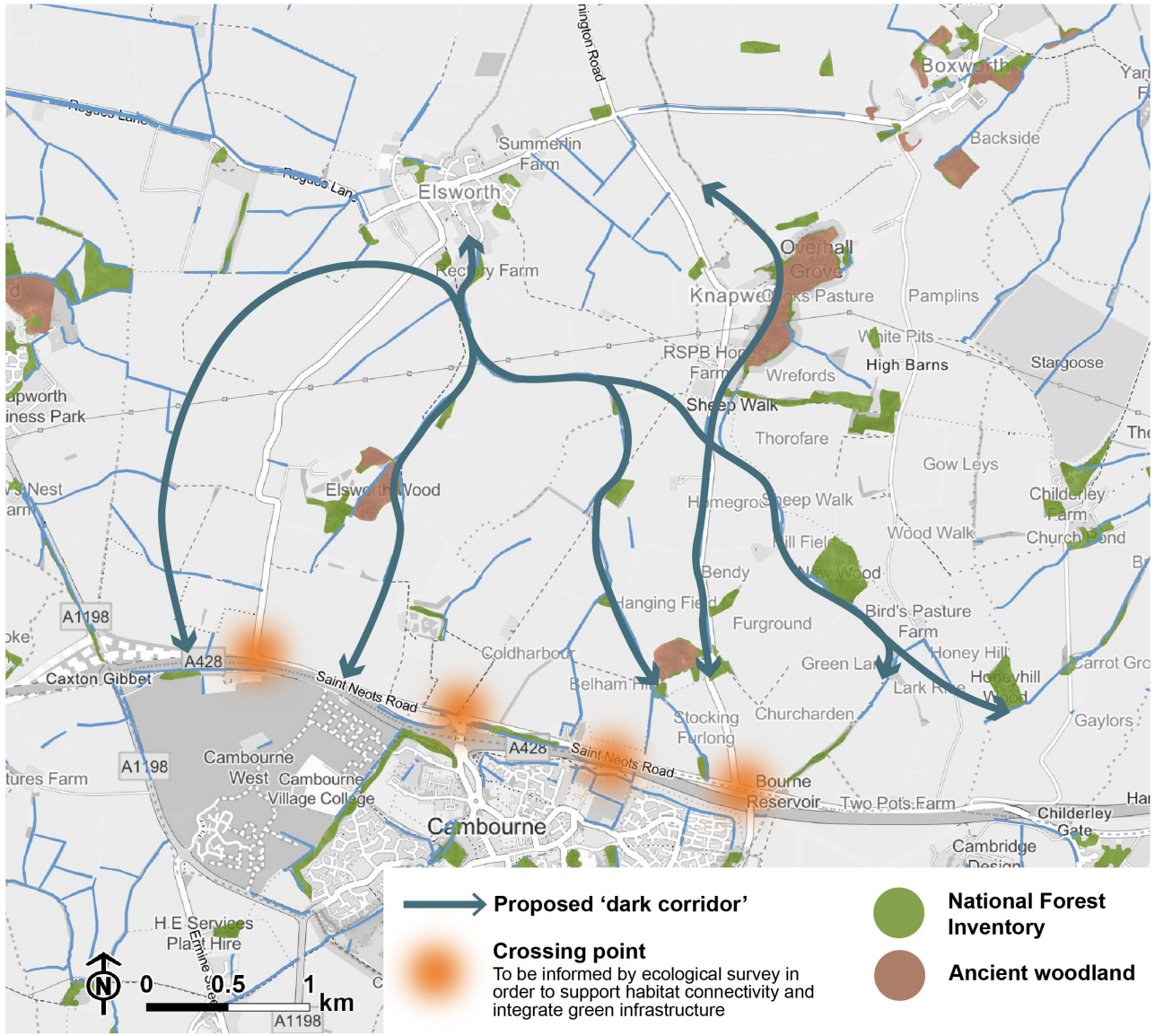


Development of the GBI Framework

Definition of the proposed ‘dark corridors’

Barbastella barbastellus (for which Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC is designated) forage over a large area of up to 20 km of connected, suitable habitats. Habitats of highest value to *Barbastella barbastellus* include unlit broadleaved woodland, wet meadows and pasture, hedgerows, watercourses and waterbodies for foraging (a variety of moth prey species) and dispersal. Within 6km (the core sustenance zone for the species) these habitat types – and any changes to them – are of particular significance. Potential loss, damage or disturbance to such functionally linked land should be considered through Habitat Regulations Appropriate Assessment.

Site-specific ecological surveys are necessary to inform assessment, develop design detail and, where appropriate, mitigation. This includes the width of dark corridors and the lighting plans for surrounding development.

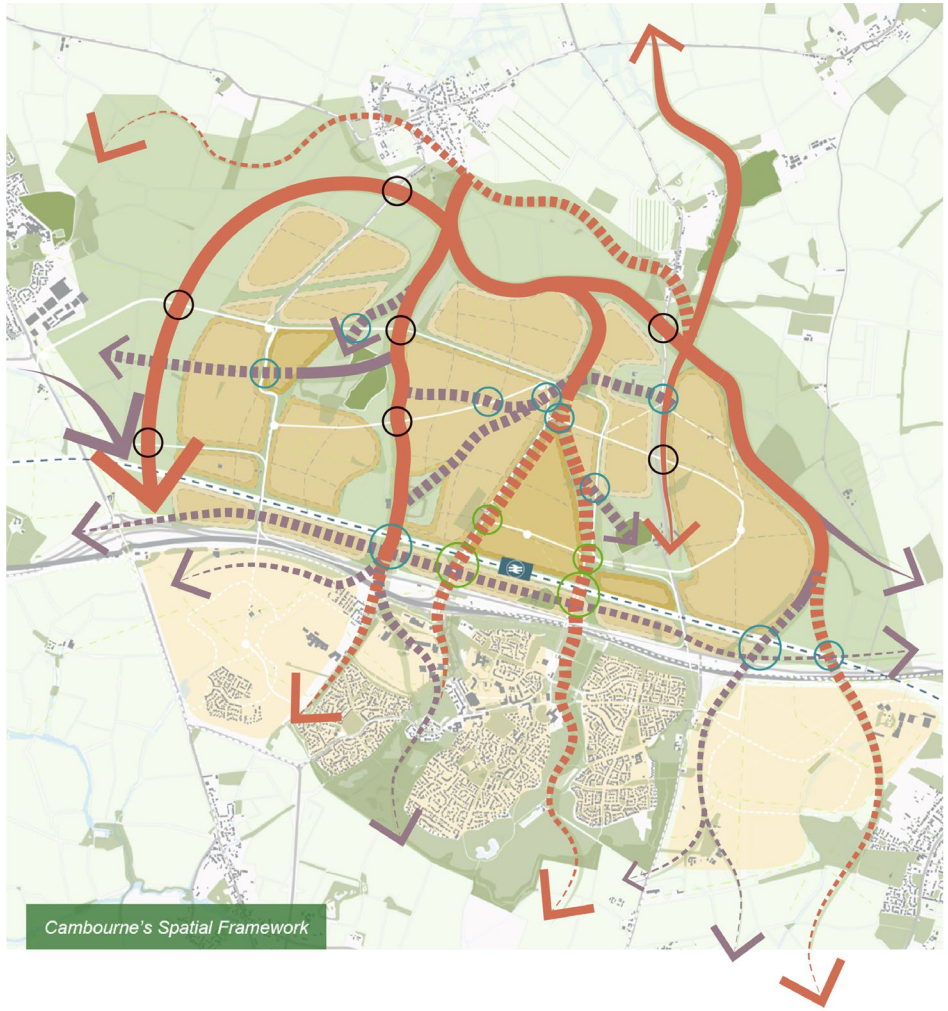


Development of the GBI Framework

Integration of the dark corridors with the transport network

Improving naturalness, connectedness and condition of the favourable habitat network is therefore considered as a priority opportunity and a necessary aspect of anticipated mitigation. A significant area of new unlit and well-connected woodland arc is, for example, proposed around and connecting through the three principal development areas (termed 'unlit primary landscape linkages' – see Slide 16). Where dark corridors cross the transport network and lighting is a priority for health and safety, sensitive design will be required. It is recognised that within the principal development areas, truly dark corridors may be narrowed or unrealistic to achieve due to surrounding ambient lighting. Design of landscape linkages will take a hierarchical approach:

- 1.Unlit and free from ambient lighting e.g. similar to an unlit towpath at night.
- 2.Occasional use of minimal, directional and movement sensitive lighting e.g. similar to the Cambridge Cycleway at night.
- 3.Rationalised lighting where routes require more, or more frequent, lighting; schemes will employ best practice according to current BCT and ILE guidance.



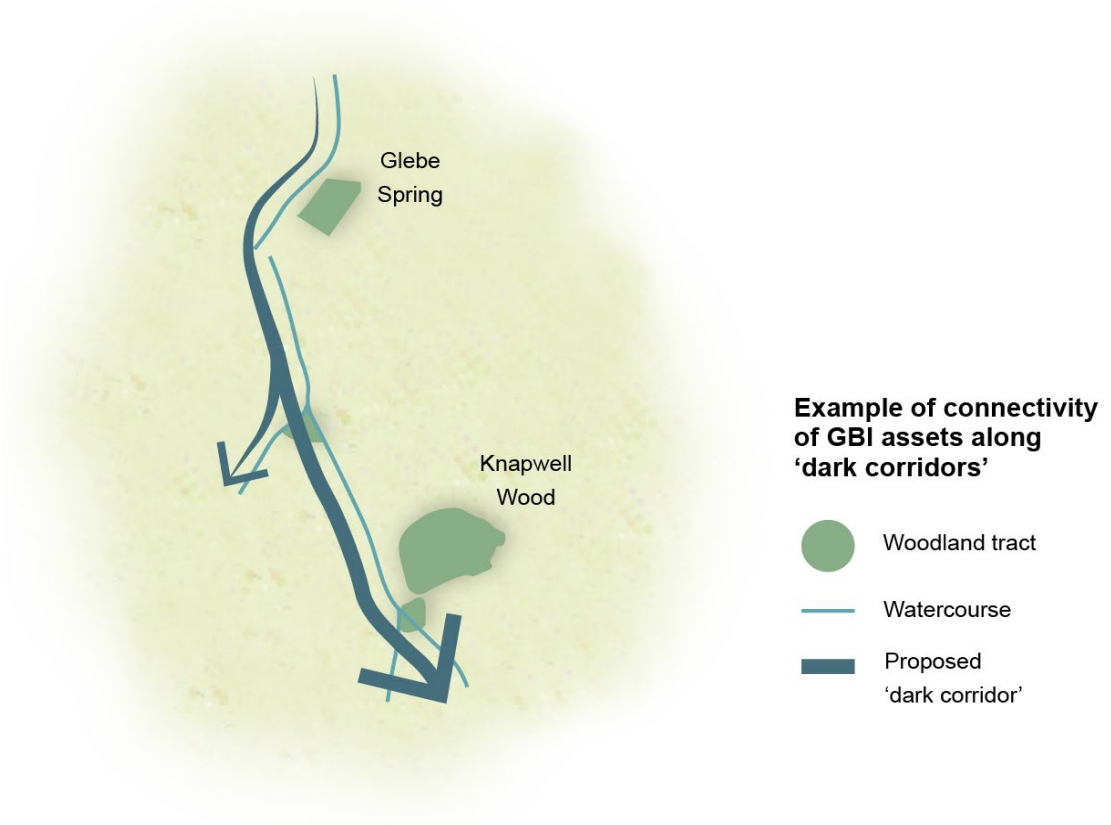
Development of the GBI Framework

Identification of proposed ‘dark corridors’

Light spillage should be minimised **as a priority** through the use of directional lighting and ensuring dark canopy connectivity in all dark corridor buffer zones, woodlands and wetlands, to enable nocturnal and crepuscular species such as *Barbastella barbastellus* to forage.

‘Dark corridors’ are recommended along pre-existing natural and semi-natural corridors such as streams and hedgerows, as well as woodland assets with mature growth as these have the potential to support roosting *Barbastella barbastellus*. These corridors will provide connectivity with GBI assets across the landscape and into adjoining off-site habitats.

Networks identified as dark corridors should be retained as unlit, semi-natural corridors with suitable foraging opportunities. Wetlands should have limited public access whilst ancient woodland sites should be entirely free from public access. Otherwise, public access should not be restricted along dark corridors during daylight hours. Where essential, lighting should be set on motion sensors to maintain darkness as far as practicable. A lighting strategy should be prepared to support the future masterplan to ensure the successful integration of dark corridors. The approach should include incorporate good practice lighting design principles which consider public health and safety need.



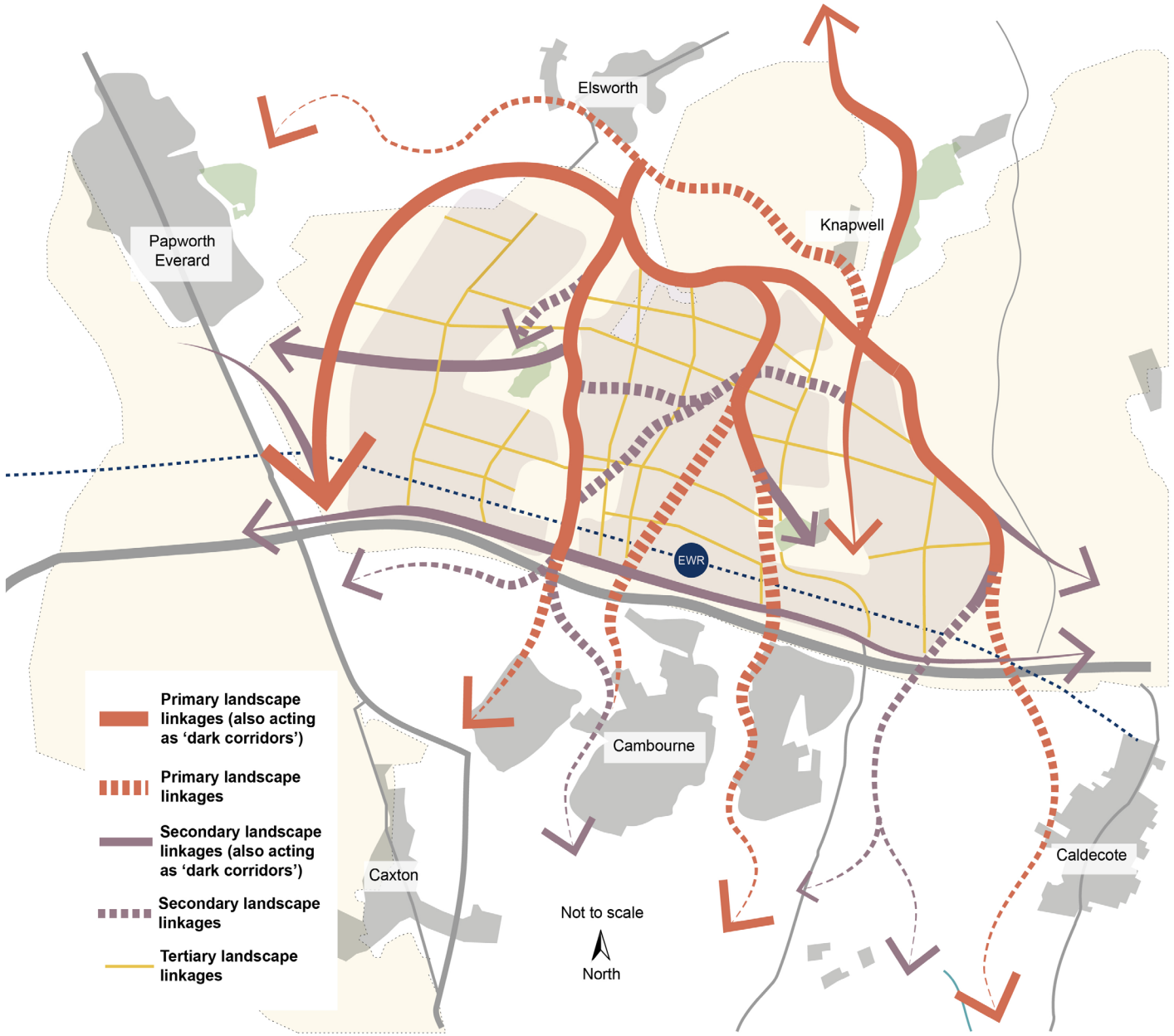
Development of the GBI Framework

Building the granularity of the GBI network

The landscape linkages have been classified to form a GBI hierarchy, as outlined below:

- **Primary landscape linkage** – Strategic landscape scale corridors that form the basis for the GBI framework.
- **Secondary landscape linkage** – GBI networks at a residential area scale, providing connections with the primary network.
- **Tertiary landscape linkage** – GBI linkages which are integrated within the urban fabric of a development, often at the street scale. Tertiary landscape linkages provide connections to the primary and secondary networks.

Consideration of the landscape linkages as part of a wider GBI framework aim to deliver connectivity across the landscape. Primary and secondary landscape linkages may also perform as dark corridors.

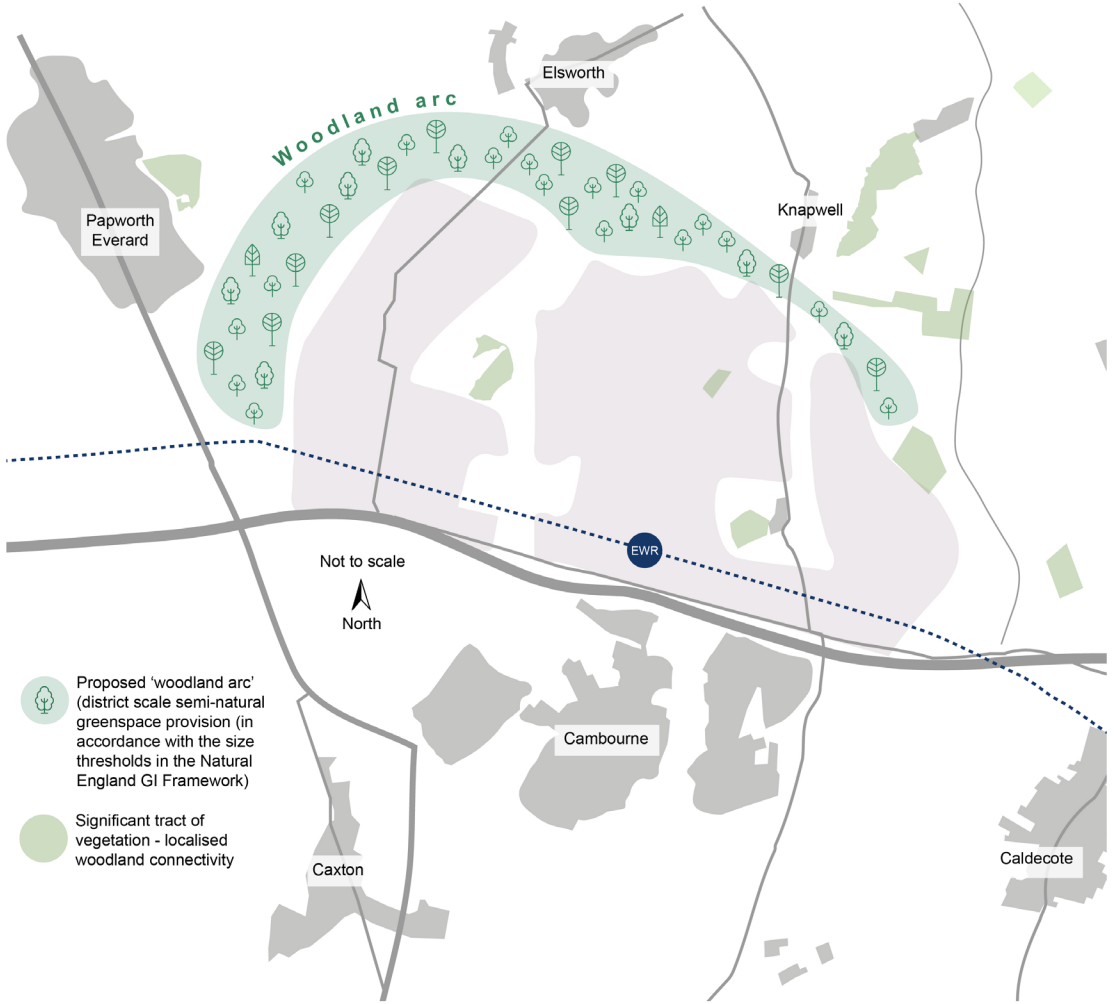


Development of the GBI Framework

Definition of the primary landscape linkages – the regional scale woodland arc

The integration of a primary landscape linkage to the west, forming a woodland arc, offers the opportunity to provide the following multi-functional benefits:

- Provide an accessible natural greenspace (the 'woodland arc') to contribute to the open space network and promote access to greenspace close to home. Note: Based on the size thresholds in the Natural England GI Framework, the woodland arc equates to a 'district' scale greenspace.
- Maintain the undeveloped rural landscape between villages to the north, reducing the potential for settlement coalescence.
- Contribute to the expansion of Greater Cambridge's 'urban forest' by protecting and increasing tree canopy cover using climate resilient species. This includes enhanced linkages with the West Cambridge Hundreds – a landscape-scale scheme aimed at improving the connectivity of the ecological network.



Development of the GBI Framework

Definition of the primary landscape linkages – pollinator corridor to the east

The Strategic Initiatives defined within the Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping (2021) identify land stretching north to south to the west of Cambridge as a 'pollinator corridor'. The proposed GBI framework identifies this area as a primary landscape linkage with the aim of enhancing its functionality as a pollinator corridor.

The primary landscape linkage offers the opportunity to enhance the north-south GBI corridor, whilst also ensuring alignment with the landscape proposals at Bourn Airfield allocation site.

The pollinator corridor will promote the establishment of locally-appropriate species-rich wildflower meadows in accordance with the National Pollinator Strategy. This Strategic Initiative will focus on the integration of wildflower meadows on road verges and within green corridors accommodating walking and cycling infrastructure.

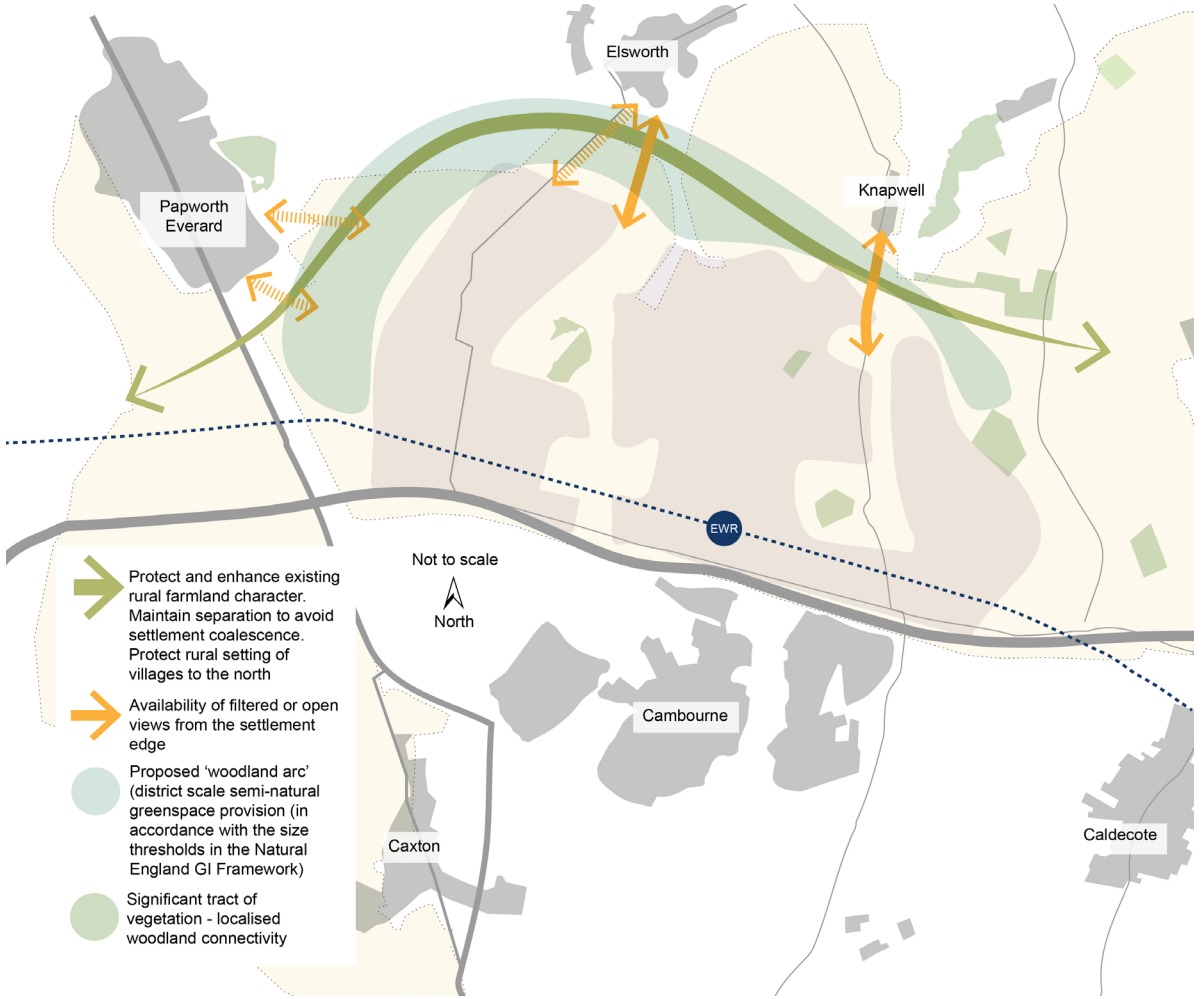
Development of the GBI Framework

Landscape integration and protection of the existing rural landscape

Development of the GBI framework has sought to integrate the rural landscape forming the setting of the network of small villages to the north and west. A swathe of existing rural farmland provides separation between settlement edges, contributing to the setting of the villages of Elsworth and Knapwell. Between Papworth Everard and the proposed settlement extent, a new wooded semi-natural greenspace woodland will provide multi-functional benefits, complementing the characteristically well wooded edges of existing villages.

Topography and the existing integration of village edges by mature trees, dense hedgerows, tree belts and woodland tracts restricts views out to new settlement. However, the siting of the landscape linkages ensures the availability of some framed open views from Elsworth and Knapwell across the landscape to the south.

Refer to Phase 1 – Evidence (GBI and Biodiversity) for further details of how the GBI approach has been informed by the 'key characteristics' and summary descriptions within the *Greater Cambridgeshire Landscape Character Assessment* (2021).



Development of the GBI Framework

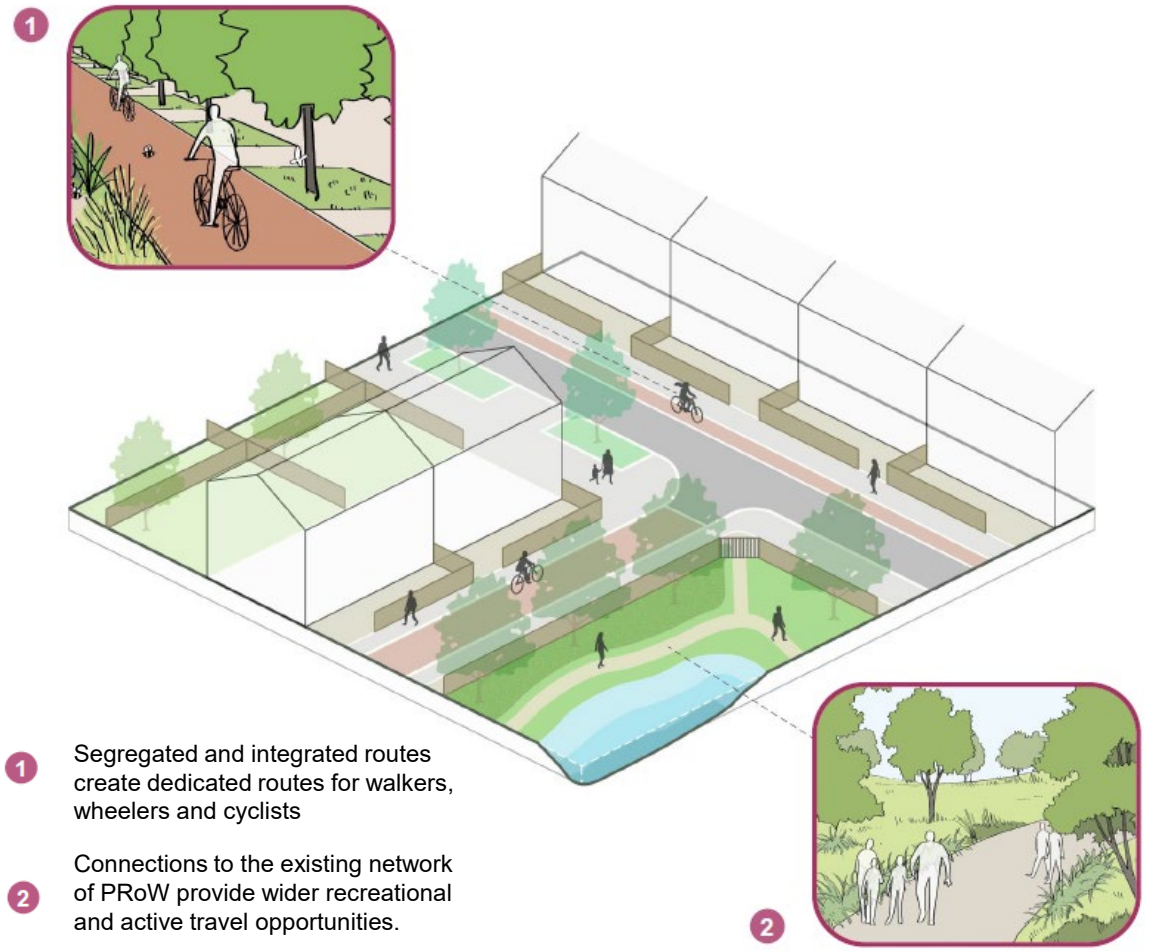
Integration of active travel networks

Active travel networks and low carbon transport networks support physical activity and well-being associated with access to greenspace and nature. The integration of GBI into these networks also offers the opportunity to create an attractive environment and setting for travel.

The inclusion of active travel networks as part of the GBI framework aims to maximise multi-functionality. The provision of segregated active travel routes combined with appropriately sited tree planting / vegetation provides the opportunity to encourage active lifestyles. Connections to existing PRoW also offer recreational opportunities for users to access the wider rural landscape.

Careful planting design associated with active travel should ensure sight lines and views are maintained; providing shade and shelter where necessary. Locations to stop, rest or look at a view should be incorporated with opportunities for seating to promote inclusivity of users of all ages and abilities.

See slide 16 of the GBI Framework for details of the hierarchical approach to lighting of the landscape linkages.



1. Segregated and integrated routes create dedicated routes for walkers, wheelers and cyclists
2. Connections to the existing network of PRoW provide wider recreational and active travel opportunities.

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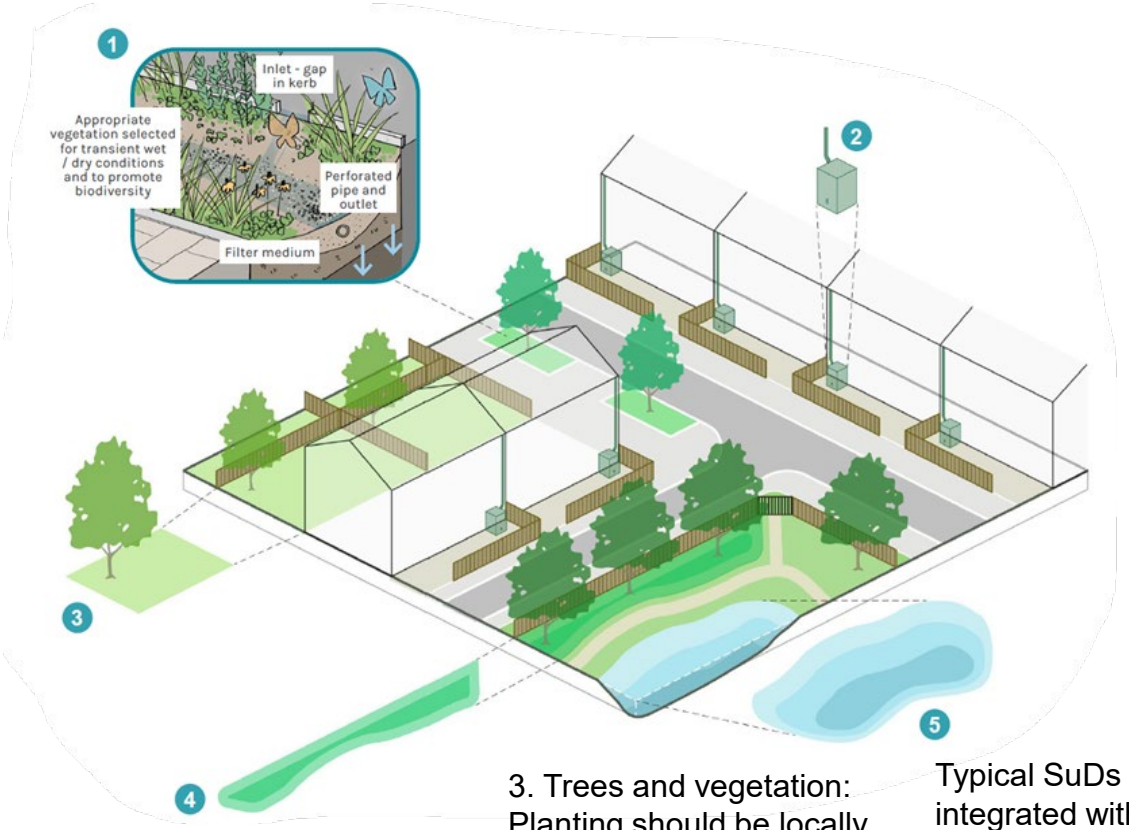
Development of the GBI Framework

Integrated water management

Water management mechanisms will be integrated within the GBI Framework to provide multiple benefits, including climate resilience. Examples include:

- New tree and woodland planting as part of a wider catchment management-based approach (across the urban and rural landscape) to intercept rainfall at source, reducing surface water run-off and flood risk.
- Use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to manage surface water run-off, improve water quality, provide flood protection, enhance biodiversity and contribute to an attractive environment. Community scale rainwater harvesting and other mechanisms should be considered to enable storage and re-use of water.
- New water features and integrated drainage as part of new park and green space design to enhance water storage capacity, provide opportunities for recreation and biodiversity as well as contribute to urban cooling.



Typical SuDs GBI design solutions integrated within a residential context

1. Rain gardens: A shallow landscape depression that allows water to pond temporarily on the surface before filtering through vegetation and underlying soils prior to collection or infiltration.

2. Rainwater harvesting: Rainwater is collected from built form and stored for re-use.

3. Trees and vegetation: Planting should be locally appropriate and climate resilient. Species choice should also consider the recommendations of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

4. Swales (adjacent highways and footways): A vegetated channel used to convey and treat runoff.

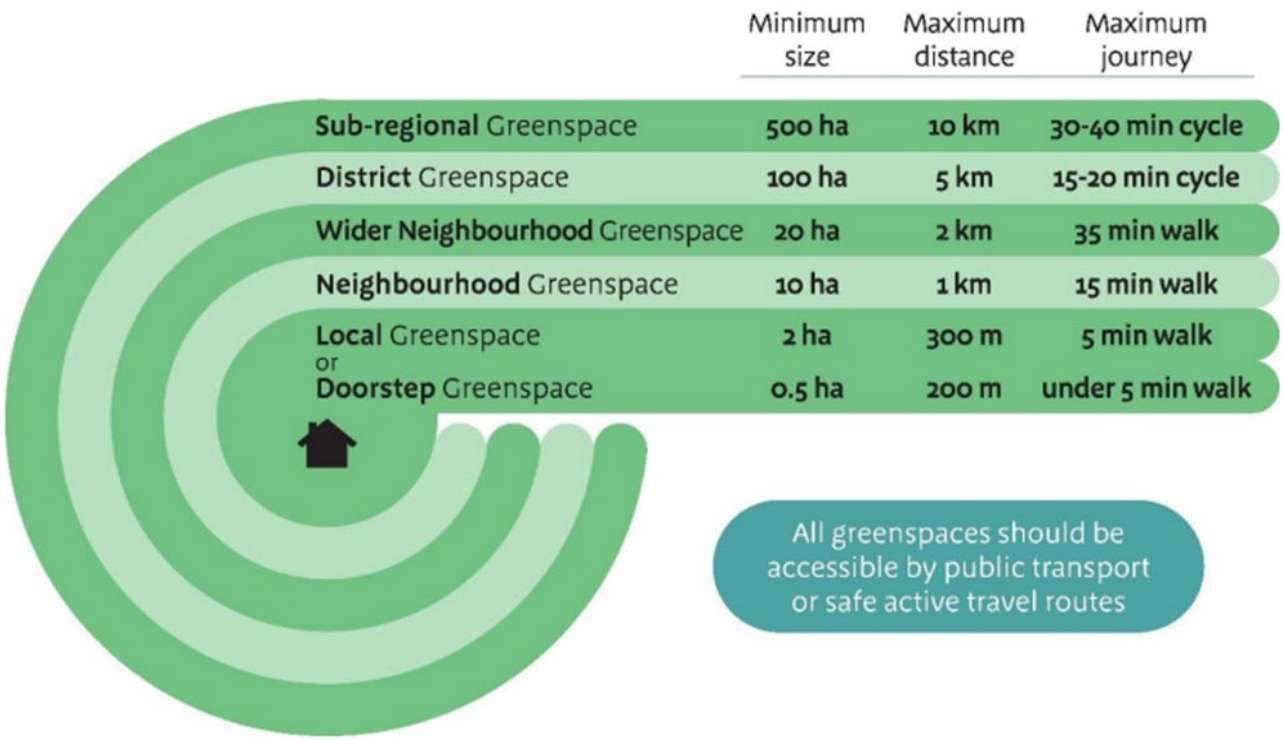
5. Attenuation ponds and wetlands: Surface water runoff drains to a landscape depression which is seasonally wet, often with semi-aquatic margins

Development of the GBI Framework

Integration of open space standards

The Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping (2021) identified (non-spatially specific) opportunities to tackle deficiencies in open space provision (including sports provision) and community access to natural greenspace. The report also states that many villages in South Cambridgeshire are deficient in almost all types of open space and accessible natural greenspace. Future development driven by population growth is likely to exacerbate this pattern by adversely affecting how an area performs against the quantity standards. Consequently, there is a need for more open spaces of all typologies to meet current standards.

The GBI Framework has potential to address some of these deficiencies and respond to opportunities by increasing and improving provision based on the analysis of spatially specific data. The spatial framework will incorporate a network of open spaces which meet the Accessible Greenspace Standards size and proximity criteria, with a focus on access to green and blue spaces within 15 minutes' walk from home.



Accessible Greenspace Standards defined by Natural England

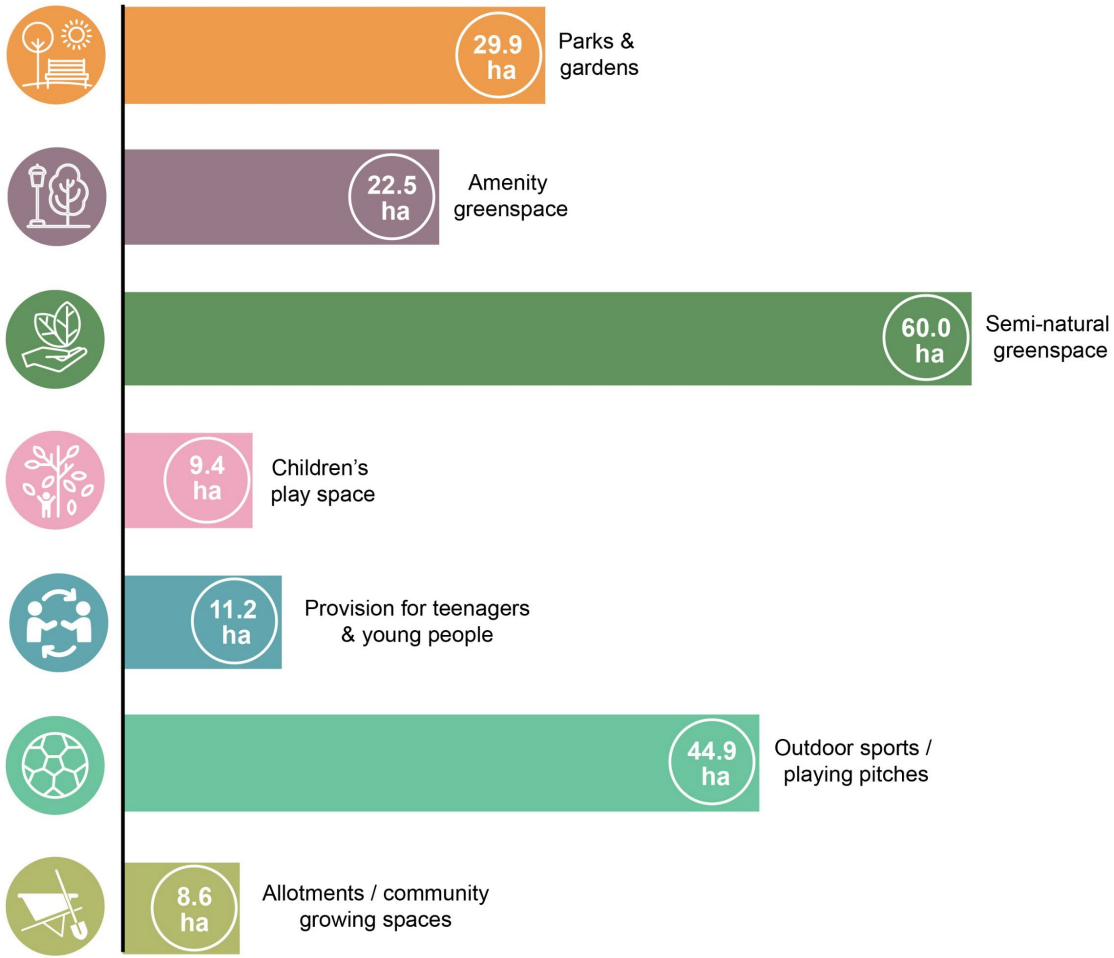
Development of the GBI Framework

Integration of the open space standards - quantity

The GBI framework should provide the equivalent of at least three hectares of accessible greenspace per 1,000 of the population, in accordance with the standards set out in the Natural England GI Framework. As a guideline, the three hectares of provision should include:

- 0.8 hectares per 1,000 of the population of greenspace with characteristics of parks and gardens, including paths, seating, and planting;
- 1.6 hectares per 1,000 of the population of greenspace comprising of accessible biodiverse, naturalistic habitats such as woodland, wetland and wildflowers meadows; and
- 0.6 hectares per 1,000 of the population of greenspace comprising useable amenity space, offering opportunities for informal games or run-around and dog-walking.
- The Fields in Trust Standards recommends a minimum of 0.25 hectares of children's play space per 1,000 people, coupled with 0.3 hectares of provision for teenagers / young people per 1,000 people. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners suggest a quantitative standard of 0.23 hectares of allotments per 1,000 people.

Note: These open space standards are proxies in lieu of the agreed policy position.



Development of the GBI Framework

Integration of open space standards – quality

Greenspace provision is concerned with quality as well as quantity. Greenspaces will be designed and managed to high standards. To provide welcoming places by being inclusive, accessible and safe for all. This includes actively involving the local community to foster a sense of ownership, providing long term management as well as regular maintenance to ensure quality is upheld.

Green spaces will promote biodiversity and enhance local character / and heritage, providing opportunities for educating people about nature, local history and the environment.

The Green Flag Award is the UK (and internationally recognised) benchmark standard for well-managed parks and green spaces. Parks and greens spaces within the GBI framework will achieve and attain Green Flag Awards for quality.

Up to date guidance on inclusion (e.g. the Make Space for Girls campaign which promotes facilities and public spaces for teenage girls) should be adhered to as best practice.

Key drivers and local needs

Cambourne
Growth
Strategy
Programme

Key drivers and local needs

Demographic and socio-economic profile of Cambourne ward

There are **12,400** residents in Cambourne ward and **4,400** households (Census 2021)

77% of the population in Cambourne ward are economically active, with an unemployment rate of **2.9%** (compared to 3.5% in England) (Census 2021)

Most of the neighbourhoods in Cambourne ward (i.e. Lower Super Output Areas) are ranked within the **10-20% least deprived** in the country, with one area of the town centre ranked within the **40% least deprived** (IMD 2019)

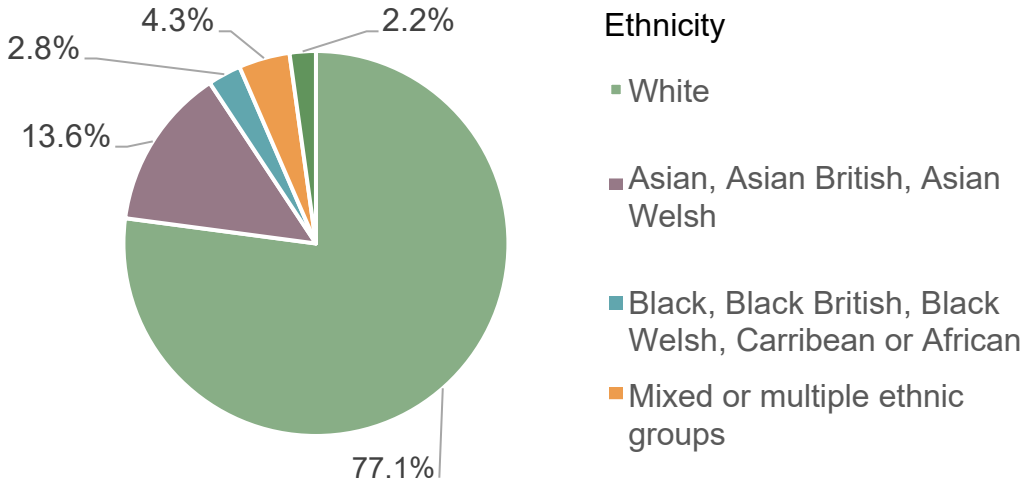
59.4% of the population in Cambourne ward are in "very good health", compared to 48.5% across England (Census 2021)

Cambourne ward has a young population compared to much of the country, with:

- **29.6%** of the population under 15 years, compared to 19.6% across South Cambridgeshire
- **4.9%** of Cambourne's population are over 65 years, compared to 19.6% across South Cambridgeshire

(Census 2021)

The median age is **34**, compared to 42 across South Cambridgeshire District.



Key drivers and local needs

Environmental profile of Cambourne ward

Environmental Justice Index

Overall, Cambourne ward has an Environmental Justice Index score of **70**, performing worse than much of South Cambridgeshire. This score is on par with Cambridgeshire's other urban areas. The score combines the following:

- **Health and Deprivation Indicator score (17.8)** (combining Index of Multiple Deprivation, long-term health or disability data, childhood obesity and Small Area Mental Health Index). Cambourne performs well against wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- **Environmental Risk Indicator score (28)** (combining air pollution risk, noise pollution risk, urban heat island (local climate) risk, flood risk). Cambourne performs poorly against wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, in line with other urban areas.
- **Natural Green Space and Access and Demand Indicator (24)** (Accessible nature demand and Accessible Greenspace Standards (AGS)). Cambourne performs poorly, in line with much of Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County.

(Natural Capital Solutions (2022) Developing an Environmental Justice Index for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough)

Cambourne ranks poorly in terms of **access to greenspace**. South Cambridgeshire District as a whole, has low access to greenspace compared to the adjoining local authorities to the north (i.e. East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough).

Like other urban areas, Cambourne ward is at higher risk of the **urban heat island effect** compared to surrounding rural areas.

Cambourne experiences worse **noise pollution and air pollution** compared to surrounding rural areas, due to its proximity to the A428.

Much of Cambourne ward **fails to meet** Natural England's **Accessible Greenspace Standards (AGS),** including local, neighbourhood, wider neighbourhood, district and sub-regional standards, with small areas around meeting the doorstep standards. (Natural England GI Mapping, 2025)

Policy Review

Cambourne
Growth
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Programme

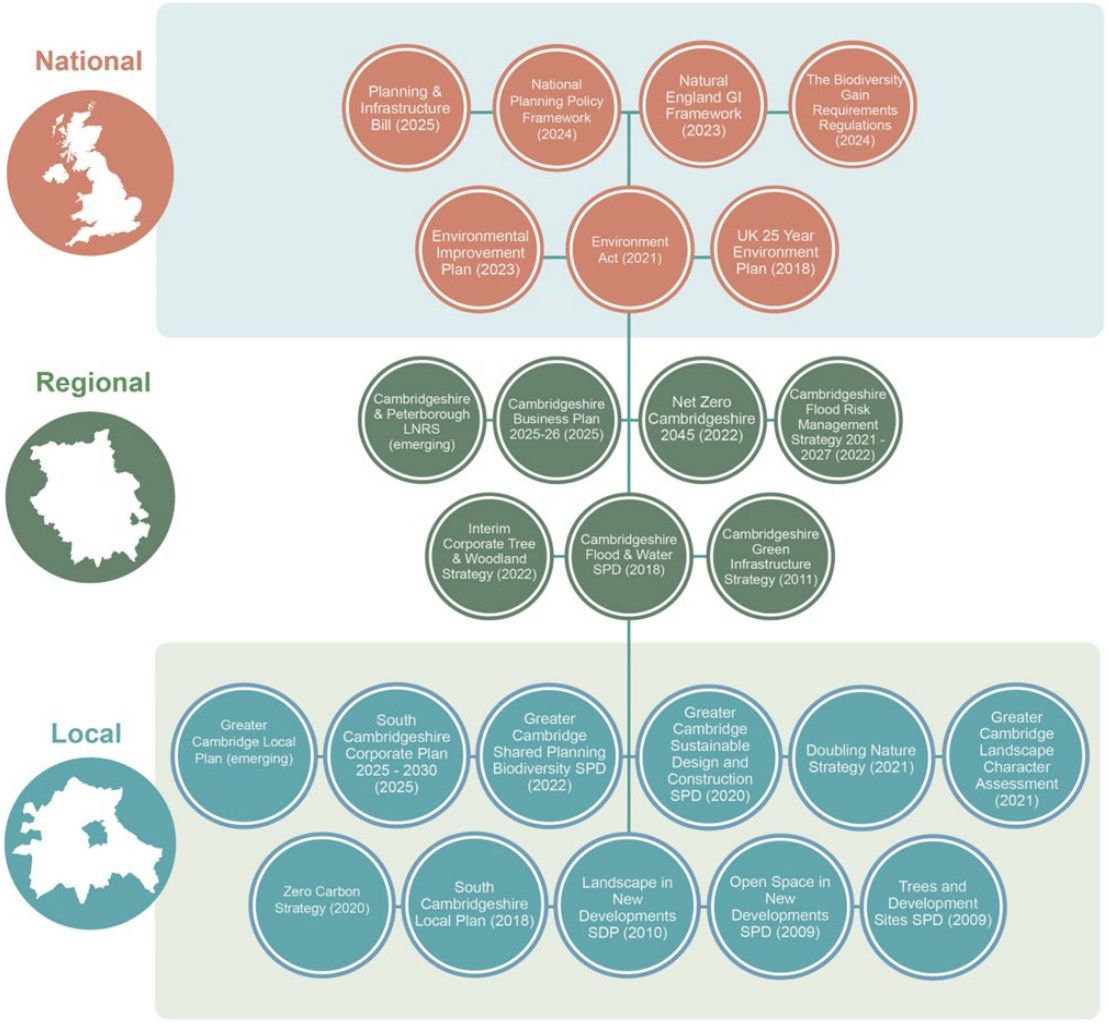
Development of the GBI Framework

Summary of policy context

At national level, the UK 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) sets long-term targets for national environmental improvements. The Environment Act (2021) transcribes key components of the 25YEP into law and sets out government actions over the next 25 years for nature recovery and the environment. The NPPF (updated 2024) requires planning authorities to take a landscape-scale approach to the maintenance and enhancement of GI / GBI. Planning authorities and developers are supported in the delivery of GI / GBI at national level, with the introduction of Natural England's GI Framework (2023), which sets out guidance for the principles of good quality GBI and the tools and mechanisms for its delivery.

At county level, key policy documents relevant to the delivery of GI / GBI in Cambourne include the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, the emerging Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LNRS (both undergoing preparation), as well as other key documents relevant to the county's business and corporate planning, climate change mitigation, flood risk management, and development planning – all of which make reference to the role of GI / GBI. The Cambridgeshire GI Strategy (2011) aims to shape and coordinate GI / GBI across the county.

South Cambridgeshire Council has published its Corporate Plan 2025 - 2030, Doubling Nature Strategy (2021) and Zero Carbon Strategy (2020), each of which set ambitions for enhancing sustainability. The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) includes planning policies for the conservation and enhancement of GI / GBI in the district. The emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan is undergoing preparation.



National policy context

Policy Name
Planning and Infrastructure Bill (2025)

Policy Purpose
Aims to kickstart economic growth, raise living standards and support the delivery of the government's Plan for Change by streamlining the planning process for housing and infrastructure project in England. The Bill is subject to amendment and assent in parliament.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Seeks to speed up the planning process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)
- Introduce a more strategic approach to nature recovery;
    - Introduce a new Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) that will unlock and accelerate development; and
    - Allow Natural England (or other designated delivery body) to bring forward Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) to address the impact that development has on a protected site or species. These can be utilised by a developer who would then no longer be required to undertake their own assessments or project-specific interventions for issues addressed by the EDP;
- Improve certainty and decision-making in the planning system;
- Unlock land and secure public value for large-scale investment; and
- Introduce new mechanisms for cross-boundary strategic planning, including;
    - Implementing the production of Spatial Development Strategies to facilitate effect cross-boundary working to development and infrastructure needs.

Policy Name
National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

Policy Purpose
Provides guidance to planning authorities on the plan making process and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Emphasises that GI is a strategic priority and requires planning authorities to take a landscape-scale approach to planning for the maintenance and enhancement of GI networks, including cross-boundary enhancement of natural capital;
- Requires that all new development should have sufficient provision of new GI;
- Makes reference to safe and accessible GI to facilitate active, healthy lives and reduce health inequalities between the most and least deprived communities;
- Stipulates the requirement for open space needs assessments;
- Emphasises that GI should be used as part of climate change mitigation methods in new development and air quality enhancement;
- Highlights the need for mapping of ecological networks to inform biodiversity and geodiversity protection and enhancement; and
- Outlines mechanisms for the protection of green spaces through designation and conditions through which development on open space could be permitted.

Policy Name
The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024

Policy Purpose
Outlines how BNG applies to irreplaceable habitats

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Defines irreplaceable habitats i.e. some of England's most ecologically valuable habitats (ancient woodland, blanket bog, lowland fens, etc.)
- Sets out that planning permission will only be granted for development that results in loss of irreplaceable habitat in exceptional circumstances.
- Outlines that the 10% BNG requirement does not apply for its loss because it would be impossible to achieve. Instead, a compensation strategy must be agreed with the LPA.

National policy context (continued)

Policy Name
Natural England GI Framework (2023)

Policy Purpose
Assists planning authorities and developers to meet the GI requirements of the NPPF.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Provides guidance on the principles of 'good quality' GI and sets out standards on the quantity, quality and accessibility of GI which should be provided in an area to meet these principles;
- Includes a mapping tool to support standards and target locations for creation or improvement of GI; and
- GI planning and design guide provides advice on good quality design and GI process journeys provide guidance on the application of all products in the framework.

Policy Name
Environmental Improvement Plan (2023)

Policy Purpose
Builds on the 25YEP vision, setting out how government, landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each goal for improving the environment, matched with interim targets to measure progress.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
The delivery of GI will contribute to the delivery of several of the updated targets the EIP sets against the 25YEP's 10 goals. The headline targets within the EIP which GI will contribute to include:
- Habitat restoration and enhancement;
- Improving air quality by tackling NO2 hotspots;
- Reducing nutrient pollution in waterways;
- Contributing to climate mitigation and adaptation;
- Reducing flood risk;
- Meeting greenspace access targets ensuring everyone has access to greenspace within a 15-minute walk of their home; and
- Improving active travel and increasing the number of journeys cycled or walked to 50%.

Policy Name
Environment Act (2021)

Policy Purpose
Sets out government actions over the next 25 years for the environment and nature recovery and transcribes key components of the 25 Year Environment Plan into law.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Requires local authorities to review all nature conservation policies every five years;
- Makes reference to new Local Nature Recovery Strategies to establish priorities and map proposals for cross boundary actions to drive nature recovery and realise wider environmental benefits based on identified need. They will provide a framework for developing and applying GI policies to promote urban nature conservation, meet local biodiversity priorities and support delivery of BNG; and
- Requires the implementation of BNG to ensure all new development delivers a measurable enhancement of biodiversity of at least 10%.

Policy Name
UK 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)

Policy Purpose
Sets long-term targets for national environmental improvements.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Specifies requirements for habitat creation, multi-functional SuDS and semi-natural places close to where people live;
- Commits to establishing a nature recover network (delivered through Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)) and the GI Framework; and
- Embedded the principle of Biodiversity Net Gain for new developments.

Regional (county-wide) policy context

Policy Name
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) (emerging)

Policy Purpose
Will set out priorities for nature recovery in the region. Draft LNRS due to be published for consultation in 2025.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Will set out that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is one of the most nature-depleted areas in England and set out, as a minimum:
    - A description of biodiversity for the strategy area;
    - Opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity in the strategy area;
    - Prioritise areas and species for recovering or enhancing biodiversity in the strategy area; and
- Identify priorities for recovery or enhancing biodiversity in the strategy area.

Policy Name
Cambridgeshire Business Plan 2025-26 (2025)

Policy Purpose
Sets out the County Councils' budget allocations, business cases and planned activities for the next five years, with the aim of creating a 'greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire'

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Includes seven ambitions for Cambridgeshire. Of key relevance to GBI, these include:
    - Achieving net zero by 2045 and ensuring communities and the natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes; including maximising the extent and quality of nature areas across the County, improving access to green space;
    - Making travel across the County safer and more environmentally sustainable; including becoming an Active Travel Centre of Excellence; and
    - Reducing health inequalities by creating an environment that gives people the opportunities to be as healthy as they can be.

Policy Name
Net Zero Cambridgeshire 2045: Cambridgeshire County Council's Climate Change and Environment Strategy (2022)

Policy Purpose
Outlines how Cambridgeshire can sustainably manage its waterways to manage flood risk across the County.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Highlights investing in natural capital as one of the key themes for actions to frame their response, plans and actions to tackle climate change.
- Sets out 11 strategic priorities for the County to be net zero by 2045. Of relevance to GBI, these include:
    - Enabling and encouraging use of low-carbon transport;
    - Strategic impact through collaboration;
    - Manage climate risk and develop climate resilient services, people, places and infrastructure;
    - Working with partners to improve water-security and flood risk;
    - Benefiting nature and biodiversity; and
    - Ensuring sustainable land use and green spaces.

Policy Name
Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy 2021

Policy Purpose
Provides technical guidance for managing flood risk and the water environment.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Sets out the need for local partnership and contributions in delivering local flood schemes;
- Outlines measures for understanding and managing the likelihood of flooding in Cambridgeshire; and
- Seeks to ensure appropriate development in Cambridgeshire, including incorporation of SuDS in all new developments, while delivering water quality, amenity and biodiversity benefits.

Regional (county-wide) policy context (continued)

Policy Name
Interim Corporate Tree and Woodland Strategy (2022)

Policy Purpose
Seeks to maximise the benefits of Council trees in tackling the nature crisis and supporting biodiversity.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Aims to improve the condition and resilience of trees, woodlands and hedgerows to maximise benefits to communities;
- Aims to improve the Council's understanding of their tree and hedgerow assets and design planting approached that support access to trees and woodlands;
- Aims to expand and connect trees, woods and hedgerows access the county; and
- Sets out funding approaches to deliver the future full strategy and opportunities for partnership working.

Policy Name
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2018)

Policy Purpose
Provides detailed planning guidance on flooding and drainage issues

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Provides detailed technical guidance for the management of flood risk and the water environment in planning applications, including site selection considerations, pre-application consultation, assessing site suitability and managing and mitigation flood risk;
- Provides guidance on the incorporation of SuDS that is functional, aesthetically pleasing, conserves and enhances biodiversity/the historic environment and provides amenity for residents, into new development. This includes considerations for biodiversity and GBI;
- Sets out the 'Cambridgeshire SuDS Design Principles'; and
- Sets out a pre-application Checklist (Appendix E) and Surface Water Drainage Pro-forma (Appendix F).

Policy Name
Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)

Policy Purpose
Aims to assist in shaping and coordinating the delivery of GI across the county.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Establishes a Strategic Network of GI for the county up to 2031 based on themes of biodiversity, climate change, GI gateways, heritage, landscape, publicly accessible open space, rights of way, economic development, health, and water and land management.
- Locates Cambourne a 'Target Area' within the 'Cambridge and Surrounding Areas' Strategic GI Area with key opportunities identified in it including:
    - Biodiversity: continued green spaces management and enhancement;
    - GI Gateways: creation of extensive natural open spaces with Rights of Way links to the wider countryside improved (including Fen Drayton Lake, Coton Countryside Reserve and Wimpole);
    - Heritage: opportunities for conservation, enhancement and interpretation;
    - Landscape: opportunities to preserve and enhance existing landscape elements and extending green connections to the wider countryside;
    - Publicly Accessible Open Space: addressing the ANGSt deficiency in and around the target area'; and
    - Rights of Way: opportunities for further connections within the built areas and wider countryside as Upper Cambourne is developed.

Local policy context

Policy Name
Greater Cambridge Local Plan (emerging)

Policy Purpose
Will supersede the Local Plans for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The Councils intend to submit a Local Plan by December 2026.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- The first proposals for the Emerging Plan include:
- The urban expansion of Cambourne (taking in committed development, strategic allocations, and future allocated sites yet to be defined);
- Ambitions to increase and improve the network of habitats for wildlife, green spaces and ensuring development leaves the natural environment better than it was before; and
- Aims to transition to net zero by 2050, ensuring development is sustainably sites, and resilient to current and future climate risks.

Policy Name
South Cambridgeshire Corporate Plan 2025 – 2030 (2025)

Policy Purpose
Sets out a vision for the district, priorities and key actions for the council over the next five years.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Sets out the vision for a 'fairer, kinder and greener South Cambridgeshire, where all residents will be equal partners in their communities. Of relevance to GBI, priorities and associated actions include:
- Healthy and supported communities, including;
    - Collaborate to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and environmental health issues, promoting a safe and healthy community;
- Sustainable homes and vibrant places, including;
    - Work with partners to support healthy and connected communities, with access to green space.
- Being green to our core, including;
    - Support others (including parish councils, local communities and businesses) to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies, with the ambition of halving emissions by 2030, putting them on a path to net zero by 2050; and
- Helping businesses thrive in South Cambridgeshire, including;
    - Working with partners to promote the vibrancy and health of South Cambridgeshire high streets, markets and commercial areas.

Policy Name
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (2022)

Policy Purpose
Provides practical advice and guidance, supporting existing and future Local Plan policies relating to biodiversity.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Summarises local biodiversity strategies and projects of relevance to Greater Cambridge.
- Highlights key local resources including designated and non-designated biodiversity sites, protected species and priority habitats across Greater Cambridge.
- Outlines considerations for biodiversity at every stage in the development management process, from pre-application through to post-construction, relating to site selection, surveys, pre-application advice, design stages, BNG, planning application validation requirements, construction and post-construction management, monitoring and enforcement.

Local policy context (continued)

Policy Name
Doubling Nature Strategy (2021)

Policy Purpose
Sets out actions to double nature in South Cambridgeshire by 2050.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Sets out three aims for supporting the vision to double nature in South Cambridgeshire by 2050:
  - More wildlife-rich habitats;
  - An increase in tree canopy cover; and
  - Better accessibility to greenspace.
- Sets out mechanisms to support the vision relating to management of the Council's own estate, influencing through policy, and using wider influence by working with public, private and voluntary organisations including Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.

Policy Name
Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (2021)

Policy Purpose
Provides an up-to-date and consistent record of the landscape across Greater Cambridge.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Forms part of the evidence base informing the development of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, identifying and recording the patterns, features and elements of the landscape types and distinctive areas of Greater Cambridge. Provides an evidence base to inform the preparation of GI strategies, biodiversity and trees/woodland strategies.
- Records features of the landscape around Cambourne including geology, topography and hydrology, woodland and trees, priority habitats, designations, land uses and field patterns, recreational access and human influences.

Policy Name
Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2020)

Policy Purpose
Provides additional technical guidance on the implementation of relevant adopted Local Plan policies

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Outlines the role of GI in climate change adaptation (including tree planting, green/brown roofs, urban cooling, etc.);
- Provides detailed guidance on delivering biodiversity protection and enhancement and securing BNG;
- Supplements the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD to provide wider guidance on flooding, drainage and SuDS;
- Highlights approaches to food growing and health and wellbeing, including well-design public spaces, as part of new development; and
- Sets out a Sustainability Checklist for applications in South Cambridgeshire including considerations relating to transport, energy and carbon reduction, water efficiency, climate change adaptation (including the role of GI), biodiversity and geodiversity, pollution, SuDS, heritage assets, recycling and waste and other sustainability considerations.

Local (district-wide) policy context

Policy Name
Zero Carbon Strategy (2020)

Policy Purpose
Outlines commitments to reduce emissions and protect the environment.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Promotes the adoption of active travel and decarbonising transport;
- Outlines the Council's tree-planting project; and
- Sets out support for the creation of new woodland, trees and hedgerows across the district to help achieve Net Zero ambitions.

Policy Name
South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018)

Policy Purpose
Sets out the spatial strategy for the district and key policies for informing planning decision-making.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Allocates land at Bourn Airfield (south of the A428 and east of Cambourne) for 3,500 dwellings and a new village which will incorporate a significant network of GI (Policy SS/7);
- Allocates land at Cambourne West allocates land for 1,200 dwellings by 2031 with high levels of GI (Policy SS/8);
- Promotes mitigation and adaptation to climate change (Policy CC/1);
- Seeks to protect and enhance water quality (Policy CC/7), manage and mitigate flood risk (Policy CC/9), and requires SuDS to be incorporated into all development proposals, demonstrating they have taken opportunities to create amenity, enhance biodiversity, and contribute to a GBI network (Policy CC/8).
- Requires the incorporation of high-quality design, including landscaping and public spaces into new development, supporting healthy lives, biodiversity, SuDS and climate change mitigation (Policy HQ/1);
- Aims to protect and enhance landscape character and distinctiveness (Policy NH/2);
- Sets out requirements for protection and enhancement of biodiversity (Policy NH/4), sites of biodiversity or geological importance (Policy NH/5), and ancient woodland and veteran trees (Policy NH/7).
- Incorporates a standalone GI policy (Policy NH/6), which seeks to conserve and enhance GI within the district, encouraging proposals to reinforce, link, buffer and create new GI and promote, manage and interpret GI, enhancing public enjoyment of it. It requires all new developments to contribute to the enhancement of GI in the district;
- Seeks to protect village character, including amenity areas (Policy NH/11), Local Green Spaces (Policy NH/12), and countryside frontages (Policy NH/13;
- Sets out requirements for outdoor play space and informal open space in new developments (Policy SC/7), and for the protection of existing recreation assets, allotments and community orchards (Policy SC/8); and
- Sets out requirements for planning for sustainable travel, including encouraging new cycle and walking routes and strengthening connectivity (Policy TI/2).

Local (district-wide) policy context (continued)

Policy Name
Landscape in New Developments SDP (2010)

Policy Purpose
Provides further technical guidance for landscape impacts, mitigation and enhancement in new development.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Seeks to protect and enhance the character and appearance of landscapes and natural heritage and protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Encourages the delivery of high-quality landscape in the district by:
    - Promoting landscape character, promoting a sense of place,
    - reducing visual impacts of development via landscaping and visual screening,
    - adding maturity to developments utilising existing trees and hedgerows,
    - improving the physical environment with shelter and shade as well as noise buffers and pollution mitigation,
    - enhancing biodiversity,
    - improving sustainability within development via SuDS and planting,
    - providing opportunities for recreation, and
    - providing a 'feel good factor' to enhance desirability of development.
- Sets out development management processes for landscape considerations including requirements for a detailed landscape scheme for certain types of development.

Policy Name
Open Space in New Developments SPD (2009)

Policy Purpose
Informs standards for children's play, outdoor sports and informal open space for new developments.

Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Seeks to ensure the proper provision and maintenance of open space and sports facilities consistent with levels of planned residential development and identified open space standards; and
- Provides more detailed guidance to support the delivery of local plan policy, including open space standards and development management processes.

Policy Name
Trees and Development Sites SPD (2009)

Policy Purpose
Provides further guidance for development affecting trees.

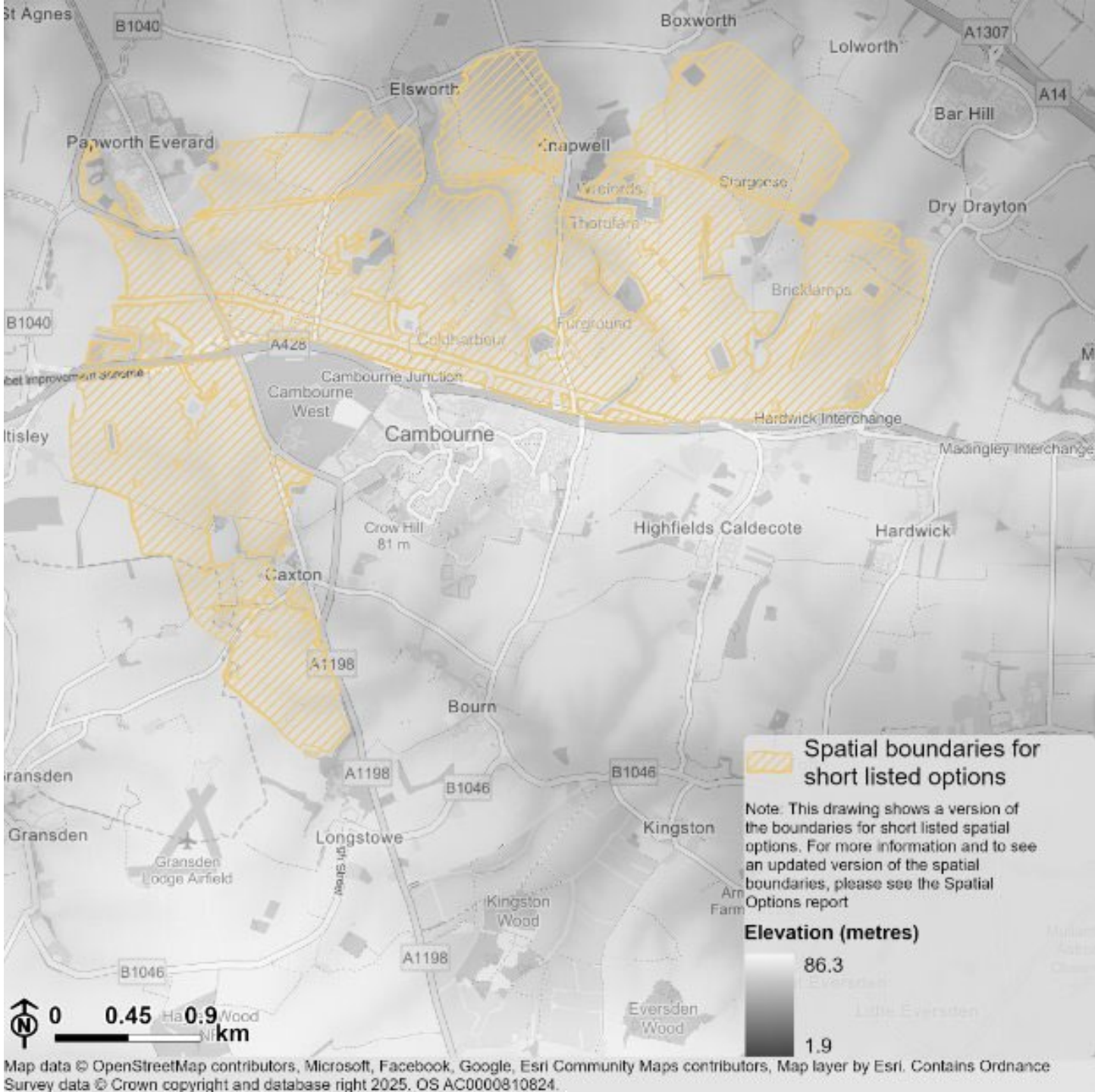
Key relevance to Cambourne GBI Framework
- Seeks to protect and enhance the character and appearance of landscapes and natural heritage and protect and enhance biodiversity; and
- Outlines survey requirements and development management processes for development affecting trees.

Baseline Mapping

Cambourne
Growth
Strategy
Programme

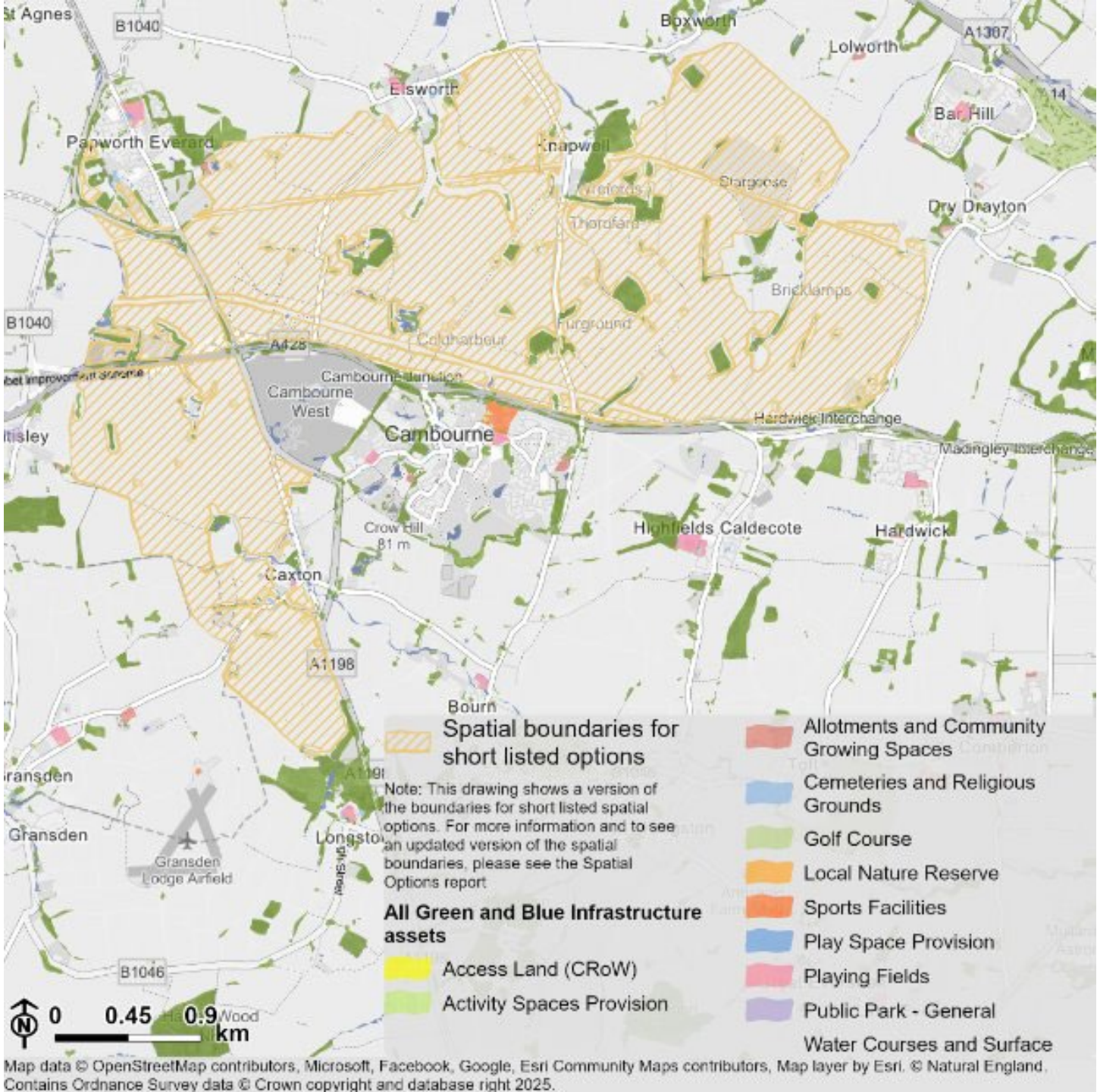
Baseline mapping

Topography



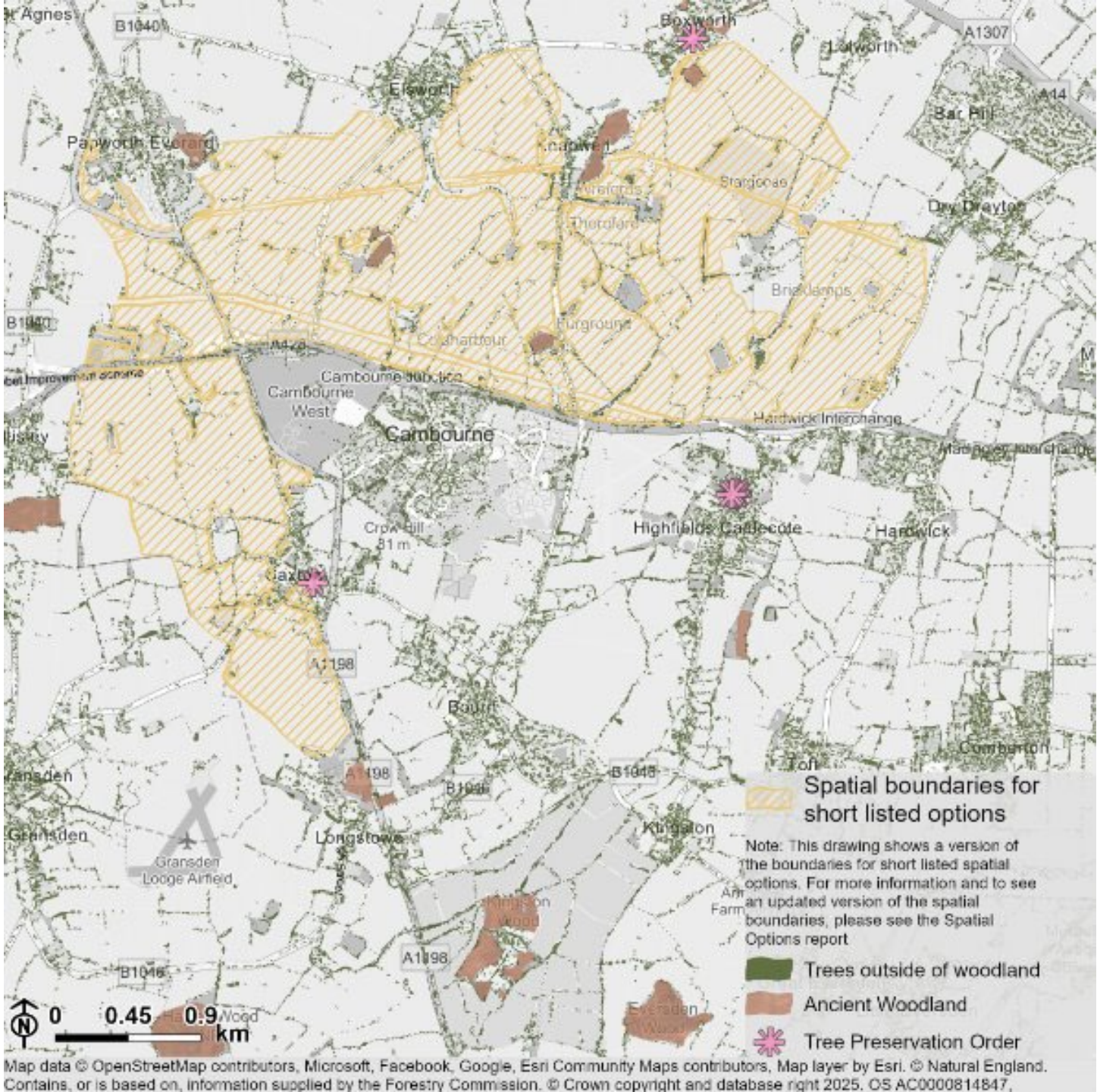
Baseline mapping

Existing green and blue infrastructure assets



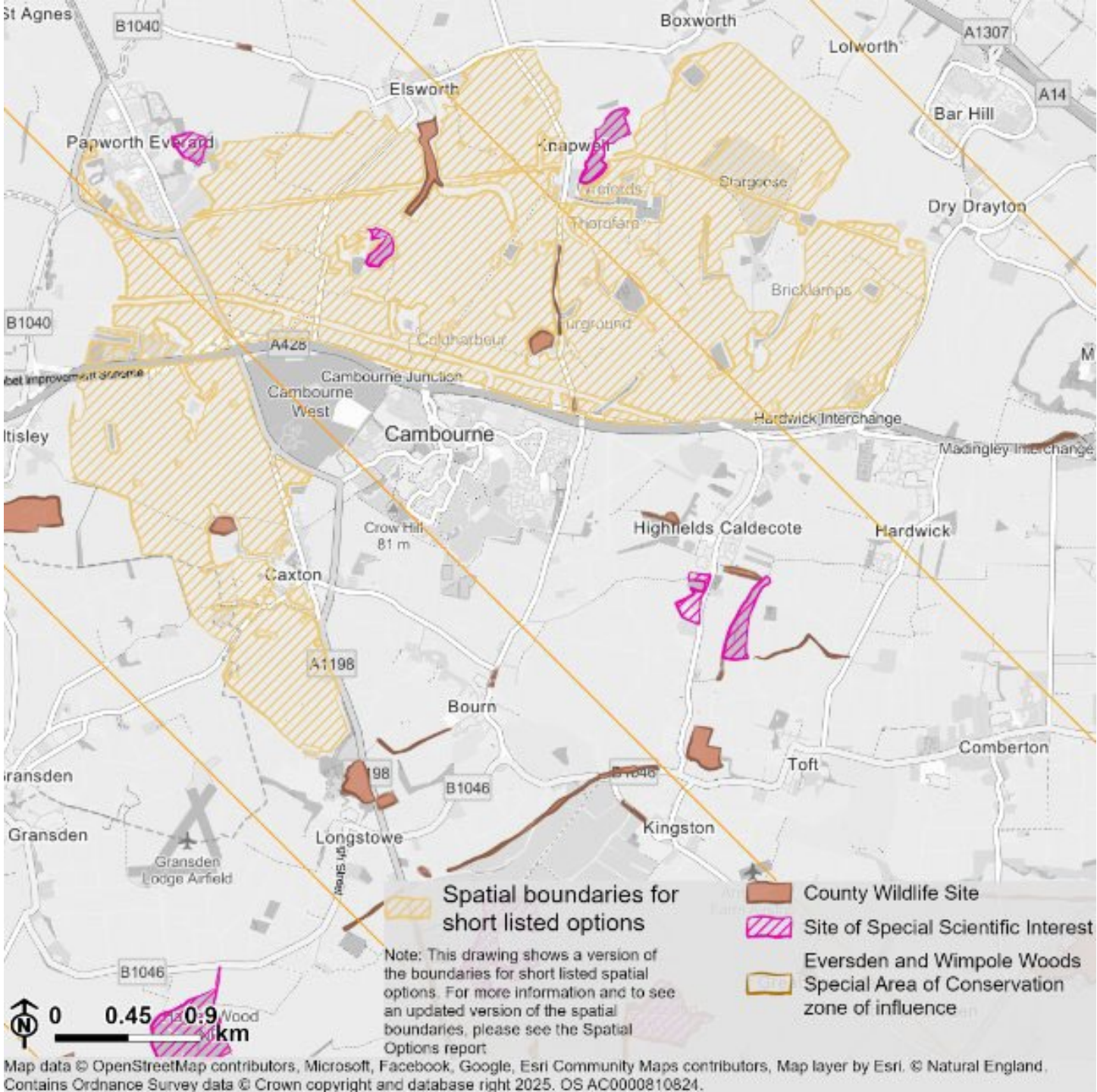
Baseline mapping

Tree cover



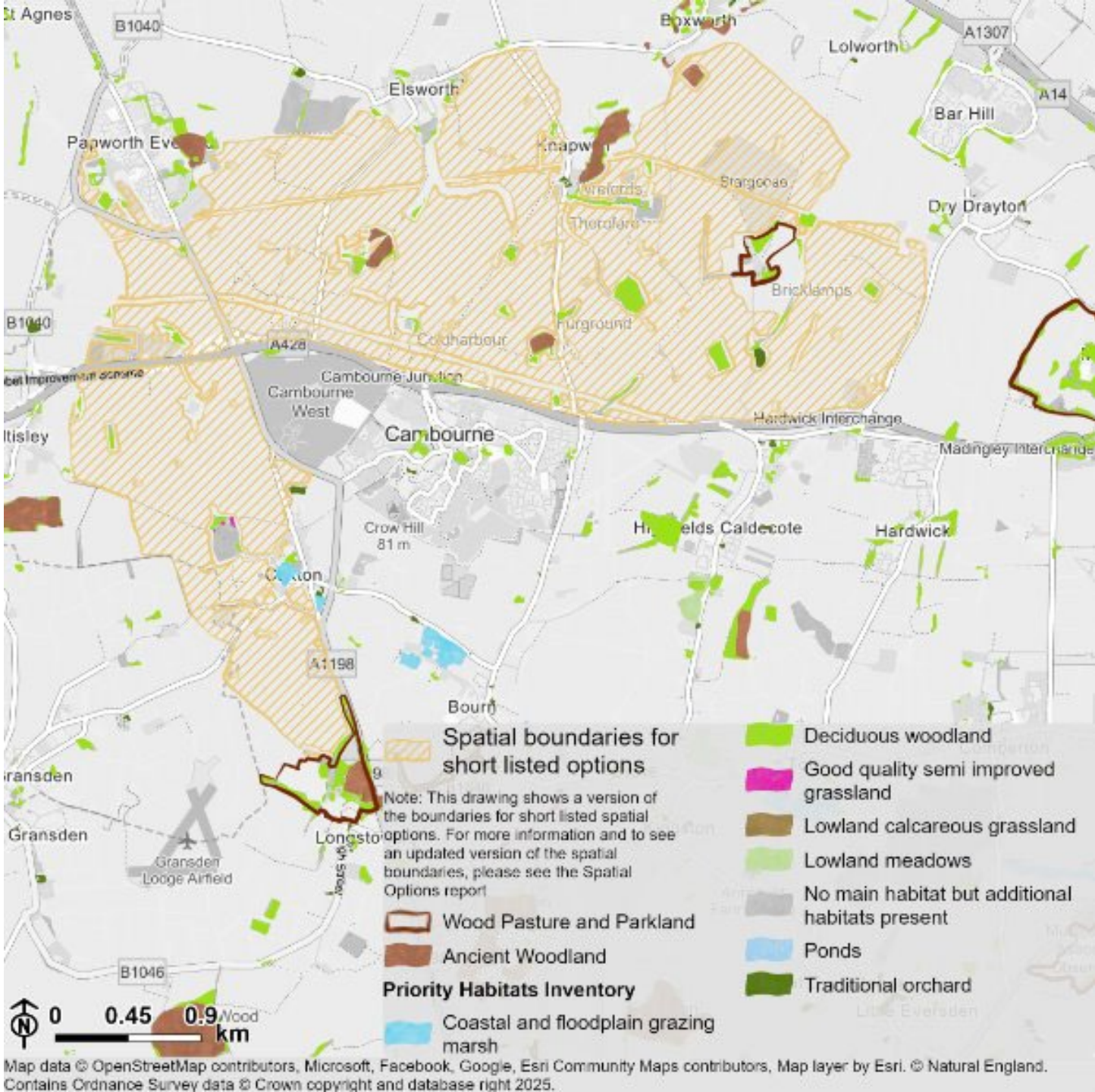
Baseline mapping

Nature conservation designations



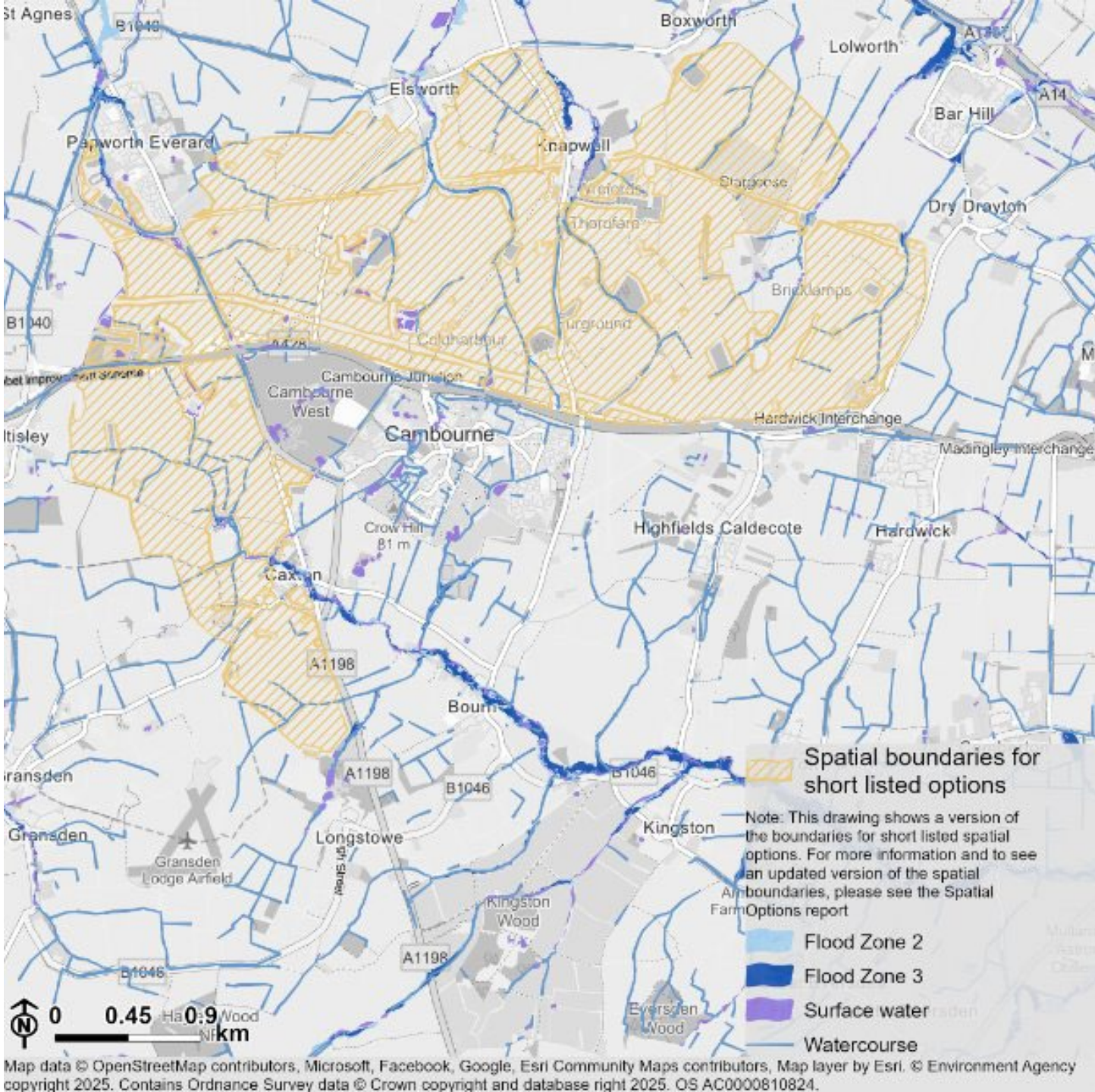
Baseline mapping

Habitat networks



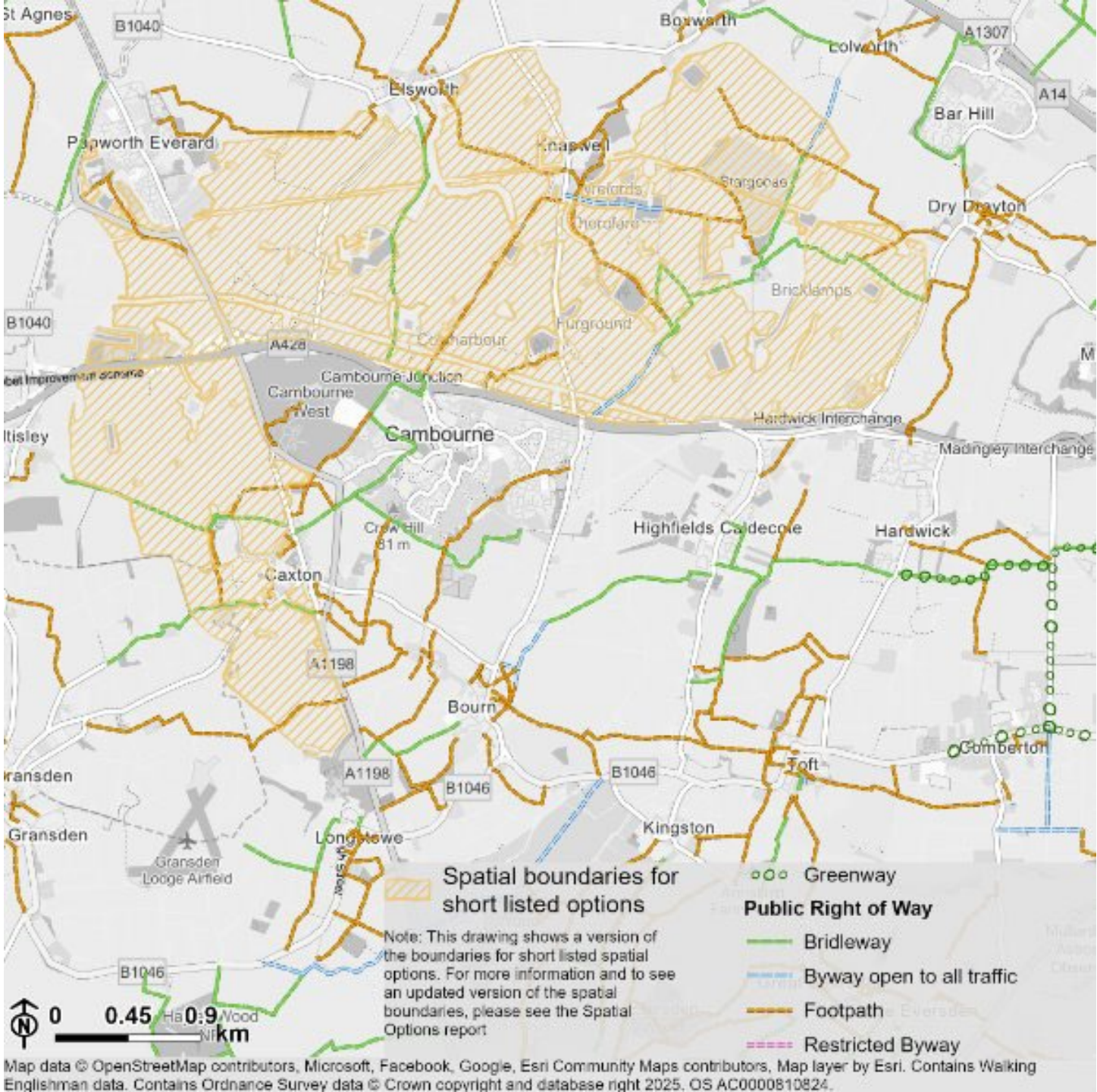
Baseline mapping

Hydrology



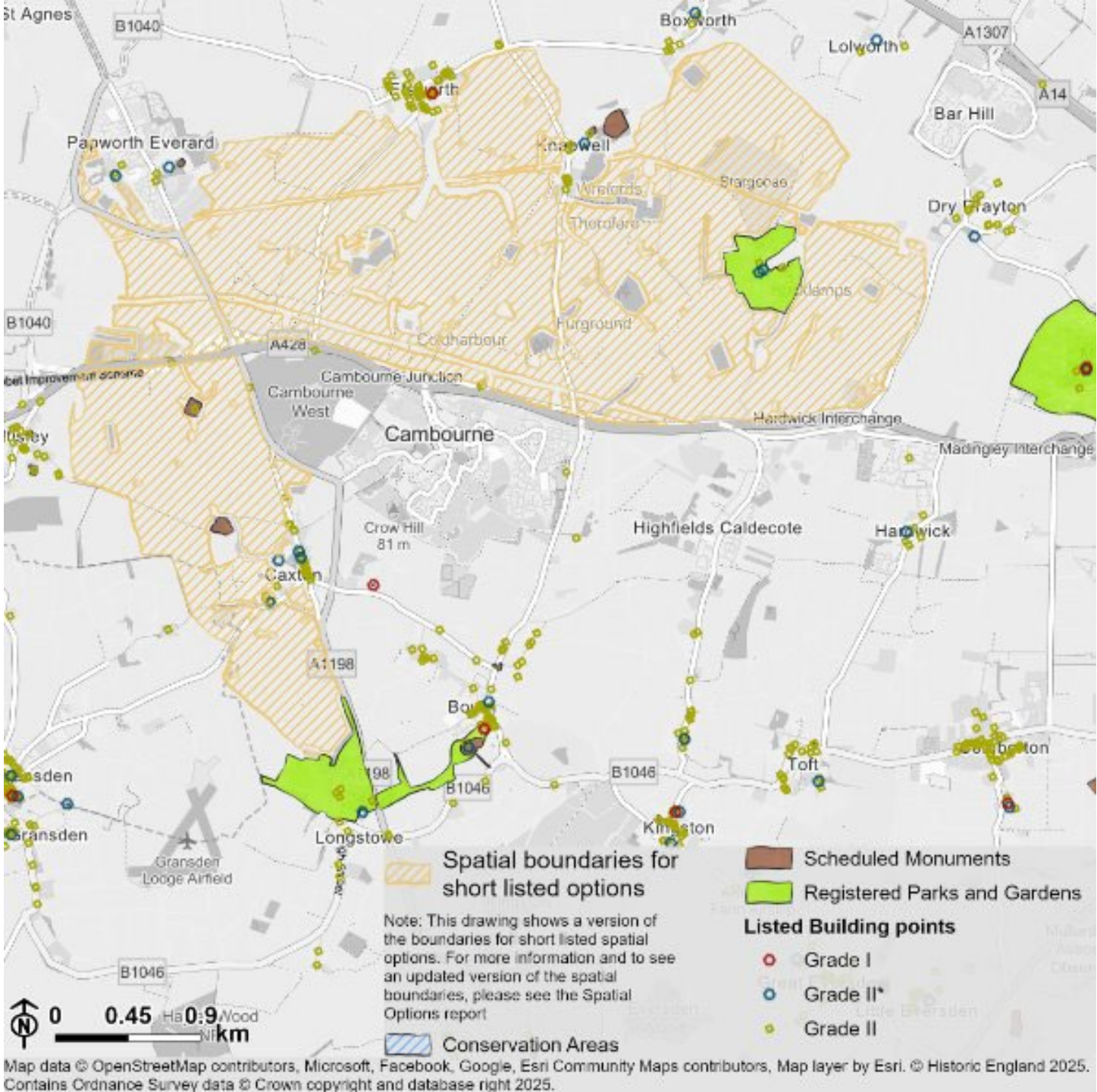
Baseline mapping

Public rights of way network



Baseline mapping

Heritage assets




WW+P

Jas Bhalla
Works

Turner & Townsend

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