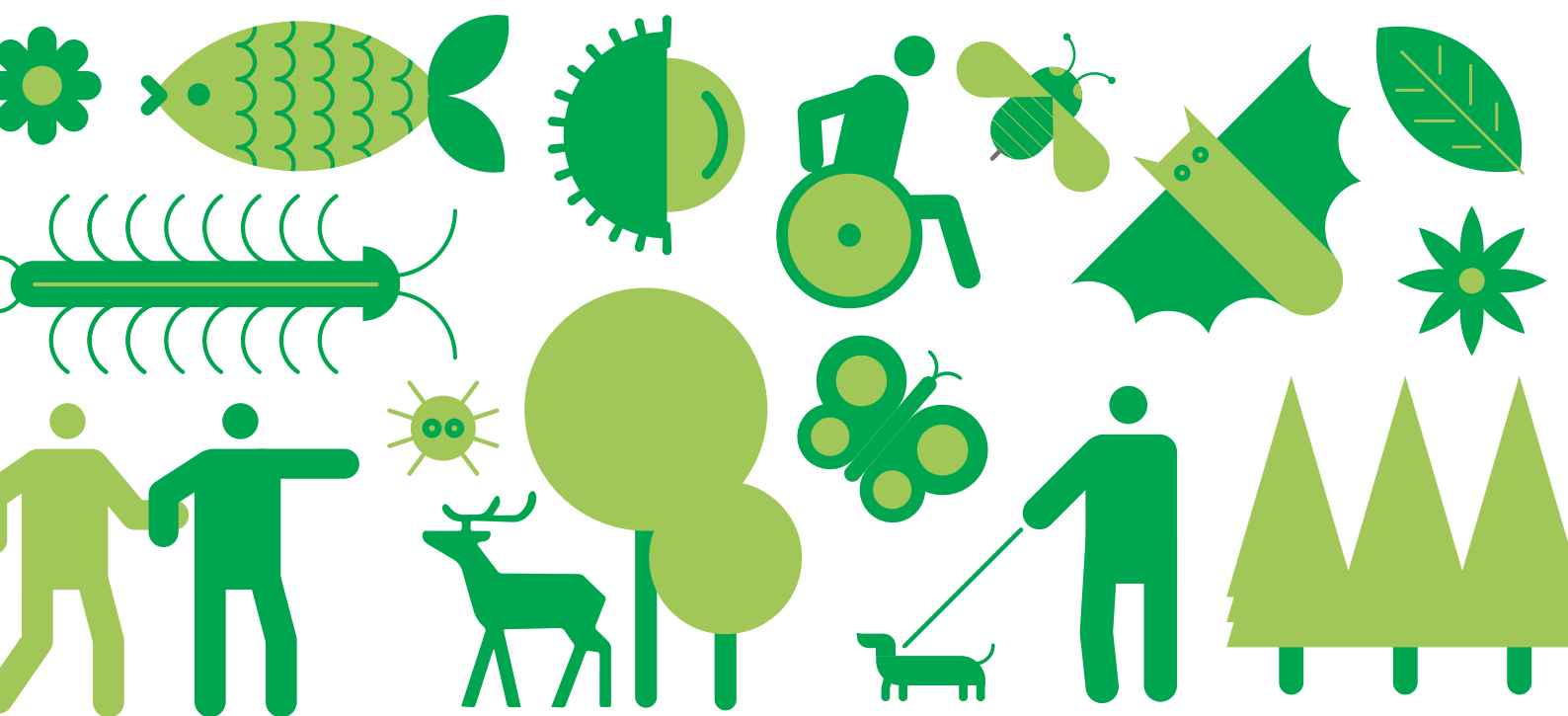


# Biodiversity and Green Spaces

## Topic Paper



### Greater Cambridge Local Plan

Topic Paper published as part of the Proposed Submission  
Local Plan - Regulation 19 consultation (August 2026 -  
September 2026)



GREATER CAMBRIDGE  
SHARED PLANNING

# Topic Paper: Biodiversity and Green Spaces

## 1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 This is one of nine topic papers produced to accompany the Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) consultation on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The topic papers are:

- Development strategy (with appendices)
- Site allocations
- Climate change
- Biodiversity and green spaces
- Wellbeing and social inclusion
- Great places
- Jobs
- Homes
- Infrastructure

1.2 All of the papers can be found on the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website as part of the document library for this stage. The topic papers set out how each policy under the relevant Local Plan 'theme' has been updated following on from the Draft Local Plan stage. As such, the topic papers support and complement the Proposed Submission consultation document as they provide a detailed explanation of the basis for each policy.

1.3 The topic paper has a section for each policy which sets out:

- Policy context update – Any national or local policy changes, or other context changes which impact on the policy approach.
- New or updated evidence – Highlighting where new evidence has been prepared since the draft plan stage.
- Additional alternative approaches considered – If any additional reasonable

alternative approaches were identified to the policy.

- Proposed approach – changes that have been made to the approach in the Draft Local Plan, and why they have been made.

- 1.4 Representations received at previous stages, including to the Draft Local Plan consultation, are summarised in the Statement of Consultation. This also includes responses to the issues raised.
- 1.5 The topic papers at previous consultation stages including those which accompanied the Draft Local Plan as are still available to view in our document library.
- 1.6 The Local Plan is supported by a wide range of evidence which can be found in our document library. Key supporting documents to the plan include:
  - Statement of Consultation
  - Sustainability Appraisal
  - Habitats Regulations Assessment
  - Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)
- 1.7 A draft NPPF was published for consultation on 16 December 2025 with comments required by 10 March 2026. The two Councils have submitted their response to this consultation. A final version of the NPPF has not yet been published at time of preparation of the Proposed Submission Local Plan. As a legacy plan, being prepared under the previous plan making system, transitional arrangements mean that the soundness of the Local Plan will be considered against the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024.

## 2. Biodiversity and green spaces policies

2.1 The following proposed policies areas are addressed in this topic paper:

- Policy BG/BG: Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Policy BG/GI: Green infrastructure
- Policy BG/UGF: Urban Greening Factor (New Policy)
- Policy BG/TC: Improving tree canopy cover and the tree population
- Policy BG/RC: River corridors
- Policy BG/PO: Protecting open spaces
- Policy BG/EO: Providing and enhancing open spaces

### 3. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to BG/BG: Biodiversity and geodiversity

#### Policy context update

3.1 The [Cambridge City Biodiversity Strategy 2026-2031](#) (March 2026) sets out a renewed commitment to address the biodiversity emergency declared by the council in 2019 and sets out CCCs vision that by 2031 Cambridge will achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity (including a minimum 20% net gain on all Council-led developments and a net increase in biodiversity units across Council-managed natural green spaces by 2031), ensuring priority habitats and species are protected, enhanced, and connected. This strategy aims to reverse biodiversity decline, strengthen ecological resilience, and embed nature at the heart of Cambridge's communities. Key themes within the strategy are:

- **Biodiversity Mainstreaming:** Integrate biodiversity considerations into council procurement supply chains, planning, housing, and operations; help deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy; achieve 20% biodiversity net gain for councilled developments.
- **The Core:** Enhance the habitat condition of all Local Nature Reserves and Commons; support Cambridge Nature Network; restore chalk streams; review and monitor grazing practices.
- **Nature in Your Neighbourhood:** Promote community-led projects, Nature City Accreditation, pollinator-friendly initiatives, and biodiversity education, targeting support for wards with lower tree canopy cover, fewer wildlife rich sites, or greater social disadvantage.

3.2 The [SCDC Climate and Nature Strategy 2026-2030](#) (March 2026) sets out SCDCs vision is to create a greener, healthier district, allowing wildlife, people and local businesses to thrive; to help achieve this vision, it continues to aim to double nature and reach Net Zero emissions across the district by 2050 (in 2021, SCDC adopted the Councils 'Doubling Nature Strategy' planning to significantly enhance nature and biodiversity across the district by 2050 and to double South Cambridgeshire's natural capital by providing more wildlife-rich

habitats, increasing tree canopy cover, and improving access to green space).

- 3.3 Both Councils' strategies align with the Environment Act 2021, with the Natural Cambridgeshire (Local Nature Partnership) 'Doubling Nature' ambition, and with the [Cambridge and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) (CP LNRS).
- 3.4 The final CP LNRS was published in December 2025. It includes a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities Areas of particular importance for biodiversity, and Areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity, with actions associated with these. In relation to Policy BG/BG it sets out a quantified goal of doubling wildlife rich habitats in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough from 8% to 16% by 2040. See Appendix 1: Review of Greater Cambridge Local Plan and draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy to understand how the Greater Cambridge Local Plan has regard to the Cambridge and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- 3.5 The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Executive Board (made up of elected member representatives from Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, and Cambridge City Council, together with non-voting representatives from the University of Cambridge and chair of the CPCA business advisory board) approved a target of 20% BNG across the GCP programme in 2021 and set out a pathway for doing so in 2025.

### New or updated evidence

- 3.6 National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 74-006-20240214) on BNG continues to set out that plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain. To justify these policies, Local Authorities must be justified and provide:
  - Local Need for a higher percentage
  - Local opportunities for a higher percentage; and
  - Impacts on viability for development.
- 3.7 Local Authorities must also consider the implementation of the 20% requirement for BNG. This is set out in the supporting text of the policy BG/BG

and the Biodiversity SPD. Further detail will be set out in any successor documents, future supporting technical notes, the Sustainability Checklist and the Validation Checklist.

### **Local Need for a higher percentage**

- 3.8 The Cambridge City Biodiversity Strategy 2022-30 and (March 2026) and the SCDC Climate and Nature Strategy 2026-301 (March 2026) as above, highlight that Cambridgeshire is one of the most nature-depleted areas within the country. It is therefore vital to create quality, species-rich habitats, and in doing so increase residents' access to nature and green spaces in Greater Cambridge.
- 3.9 The CP LNRS highlights that Cambridgeshire has one of the lowest proportions of priority habitats in England (less than 10%), and this coupled with the county's population has increased by 20% since 2000 is putting 'intense pressure' on local habitats such as Wicken Fen. The CP LNRS (published December 2025) identifies Cambridgeshire as one of the most nature-depleted counties in England, requiring substantial intervention if biodiversity decline is to be reversed.
- 3.10 Publications prepared by the Wildlife Trust<sup>2</sup> and recently by the National Trust in local news media have highlighted the county's significant local need for more and better habitats and, more natural greenspaces and open access land for people. Cambridgeshire has one of the [lowest percentages of open access land and accessible natural greenspaces](#), a deficit that has been exacerbated by rapid economic and population growth. The National Trust has highlighted<sup>3</sup> that the County has one of the lowest percentages of land designated for nature in the UK at 3.3%, it also has the second lowest woodland cover at 4.8% and one of the lowest proportions of nature-rich habitats at approximately 8%<sup>4</sup>). That Cambridgeshire is one of the most nature depleted counties in England is a crucial planning consideration because a uniform national minimum standard

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<sup>1</sup> [South Cambridgeshire Climate and Nature Strategy 2026-2030](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Cambridge Nature Network Report \(2021\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge Evening News Article 'Act now on nature crisis in our county' – (May 2026)

<sup>4</sup> [Pg.13 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

for Biodiversity Net Gain does not reflect local ecological circumstances. Areas with relatively intact ecological networks may be able to recover with smaller gains, however Greater Cambridge starts from a significantly lower baseline.

- 3.11 In summary, Greater Cambridge can justify the higher percentage because Greater Cambridge has an evidenced local biodiversity deficit. Local evidence as set out above provides a strong justification for exceeding the national 10% BNG minimum as only providing 10% biodiversity net gain is not sufficient to address this deficit. Requiring 20% BNG from major development sites will also support delivery of the county-wide nature recovery target.

### **Local opportunities for a higher percentage**

#### **Overview**

- 3.12 Greater Cambridge has multiple local opportunities for a higher percentage. These include a number of existing planning applications aiming to achieve 20% BNG already as demonstrated by the Councils' Biodiversity Duty Report, and the Councils' creation and delivery of offsite advance habitat creation sites.
- 3.13 As of December 2025, within Greater Cambridge, almost 200 planning applications for which the mandatory BNG Condition applies has been secured for onsite BNG. The BNG resulting or expected to result from these collected activities both on and offsite is difficult to quantify at present (it is early in the process of receiving off-site reports and for collating and tracking onsite BNG). The reports note that as of September 2025 the offset providers in Greater Cambridge have provided 177 BNG Units to developers.
- 3.14 The Plan proposes a minimum of 20% BNG for all major development because development at this scale is best placed to achieve meaningful and lasting biodiversity improvements. The opportunity for smaller sites to deliver meaningful BNG is likely to be constrained by size and available open space, making it more likely for developers to have to purchase off-site units or statutory credits to deliver BNG even when delivering a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain. In contrast, larger sites typically have: greater land availability; opportunities for habitat creation; capacity to deliver strategic green infrastructure; ability to create connected ecological networks; and economies of scale in long-term habitat management.

3.15 The examples set out below illustrate that it is feasible for a range of development at different scales, locations and typologies in Greater Cambridge to deliver above 10% BNG (both through onsite and offsite delivery). The examples below also support the policy approach to require 20% for major development and that encourages delivery above the statutory minimum for exempted or minor development where such opportunities arise.

### **Sites delivering 20% BNG**

3.16 GCSP have agreed twelve Section 106 (s106) Agreements for on-site delivery of BNG. For eight out of the twelve developments with Section 106 agreements for on-site delivery of BNG, the measurable net gain to be provided has been/or is already planned to be delivered at 20% or above (see table 1 below). It is of note for some of these sites that the LPA asked for "no net loss" as per the NPPF (as mandatory BNG was not required because they were exempt or they were approved prior to mandatory 10% BNG being introduced) and yet these sites still delivered over 20% (an example being 24/01080/OUT).

App No	Site Address	Decision	Ward	District	Type	Deed Date
21/00660/FUL	Land Adj 129 - 131 Ditton Fields Cambridge Cambridgeshire	Granted	Abbey	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	05/11/2021
22/01384/FUL	Beech Farm Church Street Harston Cambridgeshire CB22 7NR	Granted	Harston & Comberton	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	23/02/2023
22/02088/FUL	Bourn Golf Club, Health and Fitness Club Toft Road Bourn Cambridgeshire CB23 2TT	Granted	Caldecote	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	18/11/2022
22/05549/OUT	TWI Granta Park Great Abington Cambridgeshire CB21 6AL	Granted	Linton	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	18/01/2024
23/01335/OUT	Land East Of Ermine Street Caxton Cambridgeshire	Granted	Caxton & Papworth	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	26/07/2024
23/04233/FUL	Fitzwilliam College Storeys Way Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB3 0DG	Granted	Castle	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	09/08/2024
23/04590/OUT	Land South Of Coldhams Lane Cambridge Cambridgeshire	Granted	Cherry Hinton	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	31/01/2025
23/04687/FUL	Barnwell Local Centre Barnwell Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB5 8RG	Granted	Abbey	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	26/11/2024
23/04952/FUL	19 - 35 Regent Street Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB2 3AS	Granted	Market	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	18/12/2024
24/01080/OUT	Land At Green End/Heath Road Gamlingay Sandy SG19 3JZ	Granted	Gamlingay	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	10/04/2025
24/01354/FUL	137 And 143 Histon Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB4 3HZ	Granted	Arbury	Cambridge City Council	BNG - Provision	06/03/2025
24/03285/OUT	Land Southwest Of Lanacre 86 Chrishall Road Fowlmere Cambridgeshire SG8 7RY	Granted	Foxton	South Cambridgeshire District Council	BNG - Provision	31/07/2025

**Figure 1: Section 106 Agreements for onsite delivery of BNG in Greater Cambridge**  
(Source <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/d2pnpljk/biodiversity-duty-report.pdf>)

**Table 1:** Developments with Section 106 Agreements for on-site delivery of BNG, with the measurable net gain to be provided has been/or is already planned to be delivered at 20% or above

<b>Application Number</b>	<b>Typology</b>	<b>BNG delivered or planned to be delivered</b>
21/00660/FUL	Minor, Residential (6 Dwellings)	32.52% (Habitat Units), 304.68% (Hedgerow units)
22/01384/FUL	Minor, Residential (9 Dwellings)	23.99% (Habitat Units) 86% (Hedgerow units)
22/02088/FUL	Major, Commercial (12 Holiday lodges and associated ancillary development)	23.99% (Habitat Units)
23/01335/OUT	Minor, Residential (9 Dwellings)	23.46% (Habitat units)
23/04590/OUT	Major, Mixed use. (Parcel A for Offices (Use Class E(g)(i)), Research and Development (Use Class E(g)(ii)), ancillary retail & facilities (Use Classes E(a) and E(b)), the Hub Building (sui generis), and the Pavillion Building for community uses (Use Class E (a-f))	22.8% (Habitat units) 29.94% (Hedgerow units)
23/04687/FUL	Major, Mixed use (a new community centre, library, preschool, retail, food and commercial space, 120 homes)	Net gain of not less than 20% (Habitat Units) [the biodiversity report evidenced the development will lead to a net gain of 21.19%]
24/01080/OUT	Minor, Residential (9 self/custom build residential dwellings)	39.48% (Habitat units) 33.47% (Hedgerow units)
24/01351/FUL	Major, Residential (70 Dwellings)	Net gain of not less than 20% (Habitat Units) [secured through s106 agreement which required the BNG scheme to be submitted to and agreed in writing by Cambridge City Council]

3.17 For sites where 20% BNG has been/or is already planned to be delivered prior to mandatory BNG coming into force, this has been secured through a pre-commencement condition(s) or through a S106 agreement. For the major development schemes which were referenced within the Draft Plan Biodiversity

and Green Space Topic paper where 20% BNG has been/or is already planned to be delivered in Greater Cambridge on major developments the below table shows the type of development proposed and the measurable net gain which has been/or is already planned to be delivered at 20% or above.

**Table 2:** Sites referenced within the Draft Plan Biodiversity and Green Space Topic paper, with the measurable net gain to be provided has been/or is already planned to be delivered at 20% or above

Application Number/Site	Typology	BNG delivered or planned to be delivered
S/4329/18/COND21, Wellcome Trust Design Guide	Major, Mixed Use/Commercial (up to 1500 Dwellings)	A minimum 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) (DEFRA Metric 4 methodology) must be achieved (in accordance with the OPP). Improved targets and measures: • BNG should be increased as close to 25% as possible within the strategic landscape components located outside the Development Areas. Additional contributions to the site's BNG should also be provided within the Development Areas- <a href="#">Design Guide pg.40</a>
S/0559/17/COND10(n), Waterbeach New Town	Major, Mixed use (Retail, Services and Employment, Community and Leisure, Residential-2,700 dwellings (C3) or up to 600 residential institution units (C2) with the balance up to 2,700 dwellings (C3)	25.40% (Habitat units) 36.68% (Hedgerow units) 10.61% (River units)
21/05165/REM, Phase 2, Granta Park	Major, Commercial	40.85% (Habitat units)
21/03822/FUL, Site 1, Granta Park	Major, Commercial	Condition was for a minimum 10% BNG [10.83% (Habitat units) 10.05% (Hedgerow units)] but this site has overdelivered and a predicted 25% on area habitat and +30% BNG is now predicted (when vegetated gardens and in-

Application Number/Site	Typology	BNG delivered or planned to be delivered
		parcel landscaping included).
23/00240/FUL, Cambridge Cancer Research Hospital, Cambridge	Major, Commercial (new Cambridge Cancer Research Hospital building (C2 use))	63.93% (Habitat units) 10.05% (Hedgerow units)
23/02467/FUL, The Way, Melbourn	Major, Commercial (Class E commercial, business and services)	30% (Habitat units) 42.77% (Hedgerow units)
22/01993/FUL, Voland, Twenty Pence Road, Cottenham	Major, Commercial (Use Class E(g) and B8) and (Use Class E(g))	20.48% (Habitat units) 32.89% (Hedgerow units)

3.18 **The Way, Melbourn (23/0267/FUL)** has a self-imposed target of 30% BNG for their development. The site is comprised of commercial buildings, hardstanding, trees, grassland, a watercourse, and scrub. The development will partly demolish and then rebuild a modern research & development facility. The site is constrained by both its size and the number of commercial units to develop on site. The development will lose 19% of its baseline habitat units and is required to deliver an additional 2.68 units of scrub, tree, and general medium distinctiveness habitat units to achieve the 30% BNG goal. The additional units will be purchased from a local Habitat bank. This target was secured through pre-commencement condition (17) prior to mandatory BNG coming into force.

3.19 **Site 1, Granta Park (21/03822/FUL) and Phase 2, Granta Park RM (21/05165/REM)**: Granta Park (Welding Institute) is to achieve above 20% through a combination of redline and bluesline delivery (on-site delivery within the boundary for the development application and off-site on land under the applicants control). This development has wider land ownership than the development site, with adjacent farmland that can be used for delivery of BNG.

3.20 Additional sites (beyond those listed identified in Table2) since the Draft Plan consultation, where 20% BNG has been/or is being planned to be delivered in Greater Cambridge on major developments are identified below:

- 16 [Cambridge Investment Partnership \(CIP\) sites](#) (the minimum 20% BNG for these sites aligns with the voluntary target adopted for all City developments within the Cambridge City Biodiversity Strategy 2022 – 2030 and reaffirmed in the 2026-2031 strategy):
  - Aragon and Sackville Close (22/00583/FUL)
  - Aylesborough Close (22/01995/FUL)
  - Borrowdale (21/03498/FUL)
  - Fanshawe Road (23/04686/FUL)
  - Fen Road (21/00659/FUL)
  - Meadows/ Buchan Street (19/1756/FUL)
  - Sackville Close (22/00583/FUL)- (same reference as Aragon and Sackville as this is the same application site)
  - East Barnwell (23/04687/FUL)
  - ATS and Murketts, 137 and 143 Histon Road (24/01354/FUL)
  - Eddeva Park (19/1168/OUT)
  - Ekin Road (26/00039/FUL- this is a live application)
  - Stanton House (No reference as at pre-application stage)
  - Hanover and Princess Court (25/04187/FUL)
  - Ironworks, Mill Road (17/2245/FUL)
  - Timber Works, Cromwell Road (19/0288/FUL)
  - Paget Road (24/00973/FUL)
- [Cambium Square](#) (23/00123/FUL), South Cambridgeshire Investment Partnership site.
- Babraham Research Park (25/04634/OUT), this application is currently under consideration)

3.21 **The East Barnwell Local Centre** (23/04687/FUL): is as an example of how major development can achieve 20% BNG. This application is for the residential and commercial redevelopment of the East Barnwell Local Centre to provide a new community centre, library, preschool, retail, food and commercial space, 120 council homes, car and cycle parking with associated landscaping and access. A Biodiversity Net Gain Plan was submitted and discharged (February 2025) under Condition 64 of the planning consent which

demonstrated how the development was likely to lead to a net gain of 21.19% in biodiversity. This net gain was initially intended to be provided through the enhancement of 0.12 hectares of off-site calcareous grassland at Coldham's Common, the creation of 0.266 hectares of biodiverse green roofs on-site and the net gain in hedgerows achieved through the creation of a 30m off-site native species-rich hedgerow in moderate condition at Coldham's Common. However, due to issues relating to issue with registering Common Land with DEFRA (which has now been resolved), the offsite BNG which was required was in practice provided through the purchase of off-site habitat bank credits. This BNG is secured through the S106 agreement which requires a BNG scheme to be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the City Council (including details of how the developer of the land will achieve a minimum of 20% BNG and details of proposals for monitoring and monitoring for 30 year life of scheme).

**3.22 Cambium Square, Cambourne (23/00123/FUL):** this development will deliver 20% BNG and new trees, hedgerows, and wildflowers were planted while existing trees are preserved. The net gain being secured by both on site enhancements and off site and the Biodiversity Net Gain details secured via planning condition and the Section 106 agreement which requires the details of the management/ monitoring for a 30-year period.

**3.23 Babraham Research Park (25/04634/OUT):** (application still under consideration): this development is aiming to achieve 20% using offsite land under their control (this site has a wider land ownership than the development sites with adjacent farmland that can be used for delivery of BNG).

### **Offsite habitat creation delivery**

**3.24** GCSP has facilitated the creation of 8 [offsite advance habitat creation offset sites](#) which cover a total land area of approximately 200 hectares. These sites are either already listed on DEFRA's [Biodiversity Register](#), or are in the process of finalizing the Section 106 Agreements and registering. Through the negotiation and creation of Section 106 Agreements, GCSP has put in place a chargeable monitoring regime for the offsite BNG Providers to cover the costs of LPA monitoring of BNG on their recovery sites by the LPAs ecology team.

## **Evidence on impacts on viability for development**

3.25 The Local Plan has also been subject to a whole plan Viability Assessment, to test that proposed policies are realistic and capable of being delivered by developers alongside the infrastructure they would need to deliver or fund. Following the Regulation 18 consultation on the Draft Plan, the assessment was revised to reflect recent proposed changes to policies, where these would have a direct impact on development viability, and test a different range of development typologies which more closely reflects the final proposed site allocations. The assessment demonstrates that developments are viable when the requirements of the Local Plan are considered, and will be able to contribute effectively to the delivery of infrastructure. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan Viability Assessment (2026) demonstrates that it is viable to seek 20% BNG from all major developments.

## **Summary**

3.26 In summary, Greater Cambridge has a local need for a higher percentage, because the area has an evidenced local biodiversity deficit. There are many local opportunities for delivering 20% BNG; indeed development proposals at a range of different scales, locations and typologies in Greater Cambridge are already delivering 20% BNG (both through onsite and offsite delivery). The Greater Cambridge Local Plan Viability Assessment (2026) demonstrates that it is viable to seek 20% BNG from all major developments.

## **Additional alternative approaches considered**

3.27 No additional alternative approaches identified.

## **Proposed approach**

The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- Amendment to policy point 2 adds a new final sentence “or off-site where onsite options for BNG have been evidenced to be exhausted

as agreed with the Local Planning Authority (LPA).”. This change has been made to provide additional clarity within the same policy section of the policies approach and recognition that on-site delivery of BNG may not always be feasible and for the flexibility to deliver off-site provision where it cannot be provided on site (this was previously included under policy section 3 as a separate point of policy).

- Addition of new point 3 which sets out that “Planning applications subject to mandatory BNG will require a Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the LPA prior to commencement of development.”. Additional supporting text paragraphs have been added which support the submission requirements for the biodiversity gain plan, the requirement to observe the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric (SBM) and trading rules and, set out how the Councils will secure off site habitat creation and its long-term management. A biodiversity gain plan (BGP) is designed to demonstrate how a development will meet the biodiversity net gain (BNG) objective, ensuring that natural habitats are enhanced rather than diminished. Under the Environment Act 2021, every planning permission in England (with some exceptions) must include a BGP approved by the local planning authority before development can start. This section and supporting text are added to the policy to clearly set out how and when the council expect applicants to fulfil this requirement (and reflects the current in practice approach which is currently applied to applications made to GCSP).
- Addition of new point 4, “Opportunities to deliver measures which align with those identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy as part of any net gain provision should be prioritised, particularly where a proposal is within a habitat priority area identified within the LNRS.” This change has been made to strengthen the policy approach to encouraging the delivery of BNG within Greater Cambridge to align with the aims of the LNRS.

- Point 5 (previously part of point 3) sets out how off-site BNG should be delivered. This change has not altered the policy approach, but additional wording has been added to provide clarity under which circumstances the LPA will encourage delivery of replacement habitat within habitat priority areas identified within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Addition of new point 8, “Proposals coming forward on sites within the Natural England Impact Risk Zone for the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC and/or identified as having moderate or high suitability to support Barbastelle bats, will be required to undertake bat surveys in order to identify impacts and any necessary mitigation measures”. A supporting text paragraph has been added to provide rationale and to signpost to relevant updated documentation for proposals coming forward on sites within the Natural England Impact Risk Zone for the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC. The policy has been updated to comments received in representations, further discussion with Natural England, the DEFRA Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC Barbastelle Bat Protocol (or successor document) [\[add link to doc library\]](#) and, the findings of the HRA (2025) which stated that the potential impacts on physical damage and disturbance to offsite functional habitat in relation to the SAC should be assessed on a site-by-site basis as these developments come forward. The policy sets out that proposals coming forward on sites within the Natural England Impact Risk Zone for the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC and/or identified as having moderate or high suitability to support Barbastelle bats, will be required to undertake bat surveys in order to identify impacts and any necessary mitigation measures.
- Point 9 has been amended to include “sites which meet the published criteria for selection” in addition to those sites of biodiversity or geological importance identified on the policies map. This change has been made to align with the approach set out in the supporting text.

- Addition of new point 11 and associated supporting text, the policy sets out that “Development proposals within or near to Important Invertebrate Areas (IIA) (as mapped by Buglife England) should protect and enhance habitat features for invertebrates via site design and ongoing management.” This additions have been made following comments received from Natural England which suggested that any proposals in or near to an IIA, should aim to protect and enhance habitat features for invertebrates having regard to Important Invertebrate Areas (IIA) (as mapped by Buglife England and specifically the section of IIA mapped within South Cambridgeshire, associated with the Fens IIA.
- Addition of new point 12, “All development must provide integrated nest boxes (a combination of bird, bat & insect boxes) appropriate to type and scale of development to target protected, priority and other species associated with the built environment (such as swift, house sparrow, starling and pipistrelle bats). This change was made based on responses received during the draft plan consultation and with consideration to the current guidance for application in Greater Cambridge on the provision of bird, bat or insect boxes (as set out within the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD, Issue B5 – Biodiversity provision in the design of new buildings and open space). This approach is consistent with national planning guidance (NPPG 2025 Natural Environment paragraph 17) which highlights the importance of integrated nest boxes and with National Planning Policy which expects development proposals to bolster wildlife by incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs. Additionally, integrated nest boxes (including swift bricks) are excluded from the DEFRA BNG metric, which further justifies the inclusion of a separate clear policy as this requirement is not deliverable through other requirements within the local plan, national policy or building regulations.
- Alterations to the supporting text have been made to set out that “ where opportunities arise to secure BNG on exempted sites, or

where there are opportunities for minor development to bring further net gains beyond the 10% required nationally this is also encouraged.” This change has been made due to updated evidence which shows that both exempted and minor developments in greater Cambridge have, on a case-by-case basis, delivered net gains beyond the mandatory requirement. Encouraging all development proposals to consider how they can deliver greater gains for biodiversity supports the local need for biodiversity restoration.

- The supporting text has been amended to provide clarity that the delivery of on-site BNG is the Councils preference and that this approach is in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy (BGH). An additional explanation has also been added to this paragraph which sets out why, and under what circumstances, off-site delivery for BNG may be the best option. Changes and additions provide additional detail and explanation of the policies approach to off-site delivery to BNG.
- Supporting text has been added based on a response from the RSPB received during the draft plan consultation. This change has been made to provide the suggested clarity regarding the strict tests imposed by the Habitats regulations for developments affecting European Sites (which in the Greater Cambridge context means the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC).
- A new sub-heading ‘The LNRS and BNG’ has been added, which includes previous wording included as supporting text. This new section and paragraph provide additional rationale for the policy approach to encourage delivery of off-site BNG within sites identified within the LNRS priority areas. Clearly setting out that this approach is aligned with both the BNG follows the ‘proximity principle’ and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- A new sub-heading ‘inter-relationship between Biodiversity Net Gain, Urban Greening Factor and green infrastructure’ and

paragraphs have been added to ensure that when read as whole the plan is clear that the requirements of the policy BG/BG should be met in addition to the relevant UGF targets of policy BG/UGF “ Where protected species or priority habitats or species are found on a development site or a proposed development may impact a Site of Importance for nature conservation”. It also provides an explanation of the inter-relationship of BNG and GI. This change has been made to highlight that there are specific elements within the BG/BG policy that are directly related to other policies within the plan, and that these should be considered together.

- Minor amendments have been made to the policy and supporting text arising from a review of clarity of expression (this includes re-ordering of supporting text).

## 4. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to BG/GI: Green Infrastructure

### Policy context update

- 4.1 This policy is supported by the Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Strategy 2026 (GI Strategy 2026) sets out the vision for green infrastructure in Greater Cambridge, and the actions being taken by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council to deliver that vision, including through the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, and through wider activities.
- 4.2 The GI Strategy 2026 shows how a range of policies across the plan, informed by supporting evidence, will contribute to delivering our vision for GI. The Strategy incorporates the outputs of green infrastructure evidence bases prepared by LUC and Chris Blandford Associates that have been instrumental in informing the green infrastructure policy approach set out in the Local Plan.

### New or updated evidence

- 4.3 Since the Regulation 18 version of the plan, further work has been completed to define the rationale for, and inform the application of, a Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard in the Local Plan. The Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026) highlights that as part of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Headline GI Standard, the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework (NEGIF) recommends requiring a GI Statement / GI Plan to be submitted with every application for major development, and that this helps to ensure that GI is integrated into development from the outset and ensures its long-term management / maintenance. Requiring evidence to be provided in one place which demonstrates that each GI / open space standard has been met, makes GI provision easier to assess when determining planning applications. The policy has been amended to reflect the recommend approach set out in this evidence, requiring planning applications for major development to submit a Green Infrastructure Plan, and at the outline planning stage provide a Green Infrastructure (GI) Statement.

## Additional alternative approaches considered

4.4 No additional alternative approaches have been identified.

### Proposed approach

The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- Point 2 has been amended, “Planning applications for major development must submit a Green Infrastructure Plan, and at the outline planning stage must also provide a Green Infrastructure (GI) Statement, that demonstrates how green and blue infrastructure has been integrated into the design approach at an early stage...”. This changes has been made in-line with the recommendations sets out in the Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026).
- Additional wording has been added to Point 2, d. of the policy “ Resilient – responds to the climate emergency in a positive, contributory way, **reducing flood risk where possible;**” This ensures that the policy makes specific reference to the potential for green and blue infrastructure to reduce flood risk and responds to comments made by the Environment Agency.
- Point 3 of the policy has been revised to reflect what scale strategic development is for clarity of expression and implementation of the policy.
- The previous point 4 of the policy that set the requirement for all major developments to meet a minimum green factor has been removed from this policy. This change has been made as the policy requirement for all major development proposals to meet and demonstrate how the development will achieve specified Urban Greening Factor scores is now included in the plan as standalone policy BG/UGF.
- The second sentence of previous point 6 (now point 5) has been

removed. This change has been made because the policy requirement for green space and/or, open space, play and food growing space the scale and type of on-site provision, and any required financial contribution for any shortfall to off-site provision is now set out in policy BG/EO. Including this previous point of policy within BG/GI would be duplication and is therefore no longer required.

- New point 6 has been added “ A GI Operation and Maintenance Plan must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any development is occupied. The approved plan shall thereafter be implemented for the lifetime of the development.”. This policy has been added to ensure the long term management and maintenance of all green infrastructure provision on an area wide basis.
- The supporting text has been revised to reflect the definition of green infrastructure, including green infrastructure being an umbrella term for green and blue infrastructure and to make reference to the Greater Cambridge Infrastructure Strategy. Further detail has been included in the supporting text to set out how green infrastructure should function, how the Natural Green Infrastructure standards should be applied and how the long term priority enhancements to the green infrastructure network have been identified. A new section paragraph has been added into the supporting text to set out what should be included in GI Plans.

## 5. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to BG/UGF: Urban Greening Factor

### Policy context update

5.1 No additional policy context update.

### New or updated evidence

#### **Viability Assessment (2026)**

5.2 The Local Plan has also been subject to a whole plan Viability Assessment, to test that proposed policies are realistic and capable of being delivered by developers alongside the infrastructure they would need to deliver or fund. Following the Regulation 18 consultation on the Draft Plan, the assessment was revised to reflect recent proposed changes to policies, where these would have a direct impact on development viability, and test a different range of development typologies which more closely reflects the final proposed site allocations. The assessment demonstrates that developments are viable when the requirements of the Local Plan are considered, and will be able to contribute effectively to the delivery of infrastructure.

#### **Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026)**

5.3 Policy BG/UGF within the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan proposed applying an Urban Green Factor (UGF) for all major residential development proposals, or proposals that are predominately residentially led. This approach was based on previous work undertaken by the Councils to explore the use of Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework and also Building with Nature standards to the Greater Cambridge context. The Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026) has updated the evidence base for the Local Plans approach to GI standards and has therefore informed this policy. The report recommends a single, standalone Urban Greening Factor policy covering both residential and commercial applications of the Urban Greening Factor.

## Additional alternative approaches considered

5.4 Progress policy direction as proposed as part of the Draft Plan i.e. within a single policy covering green infrastructure including an urban greening factor. This is not the preferred approach given the complexity of having a policy combining both qualitative green infrastructure design requirements alongside the more technical urban greening factor requirements. The proposed approach provides two policies, one setting out the qualitative green infrastructure design requirements (BG/GI), and one setting out technical requirements for urban greening (BG/UGF). This provides greater clarity on what will be required in each policy.

### Proposed approach

This policy applies to all major development proposals, requiring site developers to include urban greening as a fundamental element of site and building design, and to incorporate measures such as high-quality landscape (including trees), green roofs, green walls and nature-based sustainable drainage. This policy introduces an Urban Greening Factor for commercial development in Greater Cambridge, aiming to raise the benchmark for greening of commercial sites. All major development proposals must include the latest version of Natural England's Urban Greening Factor User Guide and User Guide Spreadsheet, demonstrating how the development will achieve Urban Greening Factor scores of at least:

- 0.3 for predominantly commercial development;
- 0.4 for predominantly residential development within Cambridge Defined Development Extent; or
- 0.5 for predominantly residential development outside Cambridge Defined Development Extent, except where it can be demonstrated that more than 50% of the site area equates to accessible greenspace.

This policy places Urban Greening Factor requirements for both residential and commercial developments in one dedicated 'Urban Greening' policy, separate from the broader Green Infrastructure policy (BG/GI) (for policy clarity and based on practice within other local authorities). The intention in taking this approach is so the

policy is clearer and easier to implement, monitor and examine. This is because Urban Greening Factor is a technical, quantitative development management tool, rather than a strategic, network-level policy. It also makes it easier for applicants to quickly find the scoring system, requirements and submission expectations. The use of UGF is designed to also protect trees and replace the Tree Canopy Cover requirement, as evidenced by LUC's Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026).

The rationale for this approach is informed by the findings of the testing within the Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026) which indicates that the Urban Greening Factor target scores set out in the Natural England GI Framework are potentially achievable by commercial development in Greater Cambridge and may help achieve a greater level of green cover within development proposals.

## 6. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to BG/TC: Tree canopy cover and the tree population

### Policy context update

#### **Cambridge City context**

- 6.1 Cambridge City Council's (CCC) Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036 (approved by Cabinet on 24 March 2026) reaffirms CCC's promise to protect and enhance Cambridge's tree canopy cover to 20% by 2050, within the context of a changing climate and the rising threat of pests and diseases. It recognises the long-term benefits of a healthy, mature tree population aiming to improve the condition and longevity of existing trees, and supports biodiversity and habitat connectivity, recognising the roles trees have in supporting wider urban biodiversity.
- 6.2 The Urban Forest Strategy updates the amenity consideration and assessment methodology (Policy P1) by which trees, groups of trees and woodlands will be assessed by the Councils in relation to this policy. This method of assessment has been developed in accordance with Planning Practice Guidance which advises authorities to develop their own methods for assessing amenity value taking into consideration visibility, individual, collective and wider impact. The Strategy provides detail on how Cambridge's urban forest and canopy cover has increased between 2008 and 2018; with growth in canopy cover concluded to be largely due to both the continued growth of existing trees and due to new planting. The report also sets out how protecting existing large species trees usually gives more benefit to overall canopy cover more quickly.

#### **South Cambridgeshire context**

- 6.3 The updated South Cambridgeshire District Council Doubling Nature Strategy 2026-30<sup>5</sup> prioritises maximising co-benefits for nature and air quality through increasing nature-based solutions and green infrastructure including the introduction of species-rich planting which supports biodiversity and improves

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<sup>5</sup> [scdc-climate- -nature-strategy-2026.pdf](#)

air quality by absorbing pollutants, and trees to provide shading and reduce urban heat.

### New or updated evidence

6.4 The Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026) considered the rationale for requiring an Urban Tree Canopy Cover standard, noting the draft plan policy approach requiring a minimum future tree canopy cover of 30% for major development, as well as the interrelation of such a standard alongside other GI standards proposed in the emerging plan. See more on this under draft plan approach.

### Additional alternative approaches considered

6.5 None.

### Proposed approach

The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- The most substantive amendment to the Draft Plan Policy is that Point 1 (as previously included in the Draft Plan policy) has been removed as the policy no longer requires major development proposals to demonstrate how it will achieve a minimum future canopy cover of 30% on site. Instead, the Councils' shared aim of increasing canopy cover will be delivered by the following policy measures:
  - Policy BG/UGF - UGF weighting factors reward, and the policy encourages, the retention, planting and integration of trees within proposed development schemes.
  - Policy BG/BG – meeting the 10% or 20% biodiversity net gain policy requirement, whether on or off site, via the biodiversity metric which rewards retention and planting of trees.
  - This policy BG/TC – which now requires development proposals to achieve no net loss of tree and/or hedgerow cover where felling of existing trees or hedgerows is approved as part of a planning application.

- The Tree Canopy Cover standard has not been taken forward within the policy, largely due to the likely interaction/overlap with both the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) and statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements. The overall approach to ensuring increased tree canopy seeks to support the Councils' aim of delivering a net increase in tree canopy cover across the district via a policy framework that is clearly written and straightforward to apply. The amended policy approach draws on the findings of The Greater Cambridge GI and Open Spaces Standards Framework (2026, Chapter 2) which had assessed the issue of the interaction of proposed standards. On review, applying Biodiversity Net Gain, Urban Greening Factor and a tree canopy cover standard together all of which would likely result in protection of existing and promotion of additional trees, was considered to be duplicative, noting that duplication of standards is likely to be time consuming and impractical for both developers to evidence and Development Management officers to assess. Each of biodiversity net gain, urban greening factor, and a tree canopy cover standard involve a calculator approach, such that in a scenario where all three were applied, one tree might be counted three times in three different calculators. These changes also respond to concerns made in representations around the achievability of a tree canopy requirement and competing requirements (such as SUDs and BNG). The GI Standards Framework also highlights how a tree canopy cover standard could also deviate from best practice guidance in relation to the 'right tree in the right place'.
- The no net loss requirement in this policy helps to maintain the overall tree canopy cover of the district which is vital to various environmental, social, health, economic and community benefits (for example providing shade, cooling, rain capture and habitat for wildlife). The policy ensures replacement planting (which is essential for future canopy cover but can take many decades to mature) alongside protection for existing trees of amenity value (including

long lived trees). This is important, as ensuring that development both retains existing canopy now alongside ensuring species appropriate replacement planting (where agreed to by the LPA) supports the district wide actions seeking to increase overall canopy cover (see Cambridge City Councils Urban Forest strategy). Consequential changes have been made inserting new supporting text paragraphs.

In addition to the above, the following alterations have also been made to the Draft Plan policy and supporting text:

- Alterations to point 7 have been made to require development to be in accordance with both the most up to date Natural England and Forestry Commission standing advice regarding ancient woodland buffers, including the aim of achieving a buffer of 50 metres from the boundary of any ancient woodland (in line with Woodlands Trust Guidance). This change also reflects engagement between the Councils and the Woodland Trust who advised a 50-metre buffer as 'a precautionary principle', as set out in the Woodland Trusts Planners' Manual (2019).
- Amendments to the supporting text explain the requirement for applicants to demonstrate the justification for any smaller buffer (this required to be greater than the 15 metres minimum requirement in standing advice) and, 'should' has been changed to 'must'. These changes to supporting information add further explanation to amended point 7.
- Alterations to supporting text to set out that development proposals must provide adequate buffers and root protection areas where there are trees either on, or within close proximity to a development site. This change has been made to provide a clear high level summary of the approach which development proposals must and/or should take in regard to buffer zones and root protection areas (section 1, 7 and 8 of the policy) either following standing advice and/or through recommendations and guidance on the principles to be applied (Woodland Trust Guidance and BS 5837:2012) as appropriate.

- Additional detail added to the supporting text to add in examples of ‘other impacts’. This change has been made to ensure that the supporting information is clear on what ‘other impacts’ are likely to be considered through an assessment of a proposal which is likely to need a larger buffer zone.
- Addition of new point 9 “ Development proposals must maintain a buffer zone’ around individual ancient or veteran trees of at least 15 times the tree's diameter, or 5m from the edge of the tree’s canopy if that area is larger.” A new supporting text paragraph has also been added. These changes respond to advice from the Woodland Trust and provides clarity for applicants making development proposals in respect to the expected approach to buffer zones following both standing advice and relevant British Standard.
- Addition of new point 4 to set out that to protect retain trees, conditions may be attached to any grant of planning permission requiring the submission and approval of an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP) prior to the commencement of development. This change has been made following further advice from the Councils’ arboricultural officers and consideration of the conditions to be applied in practice in relation to the policy.
- Amendments have been made to point 6 (previously 5) to also include hedgerows. These changes made to be consistent with policy approach to protect both trees and hedgerows.
- Amendment to supporting text so that it adds further detail: “The size and type of buffer zone will vary depending on the scale, type and impact of the development”. This change has been made to provide additional explanation for the site-specific approach of the policy which goes beyond a minimum buffer standard, seeking to prevent development which would result in the deterioration of ancient woodland and aims to better secure "room and space" for irreplaceable woodland and tree habitats across Greater Cambridge.

- Addition of new supporting text that states “To ensure the protection of any trees which are to be retained, conditions may be attached to any grant of planning permission requiring the submission and approval of an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP) in accordance with BS5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations) prior to the commencement of development. The AMS must clearly explain how trees will be protected and how demolition, deliveries, storage and construction activities will be managed to avoid material damage to trees. This requirement is to ensure that the tree protection measures are installed in accordance with the approved methodology and that they remain in place throughout the construction period and only removed following completion of all of the construction works. Seeking the approval of an AMS or discharge of tree protection conditions should not be pursued without all pertinent construction details and therefore might not be possible without the involvement of the main contractors”. This change has been made following further discussion with the Councils’ arboricultural officers.
- Amendments and additions have been made to the supporting text to make distinct the point that the potential effect of development on trees is a material consideration and provide further narrative on the effect through inclusion of sentence “Trees adapt to their immediate surroundings, and any changes will have some effect.”. This paragraph provides additional detail on the guidance and the accepted methodology for surveying, categorising, and assessing trees in relation to development proposals which the policy expects applicants to provide. This change has been made following further advice from the Councils’ arboricultural officers.
- Amendments to the supporting text, such that the first sentence now includes “for trees required to be planted pursuant to a planning condition” to provide clarification that council will serve category C TPOs for trees required to be planted pursuant to a planning condition (all young trees are automatically categorised as category C trees). The amenity assessment criteria has also been updated following the adoption of the Cambridge City Councils Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036 (this document being the

successor document to the Cambridge City Councils tree strategy (2016-2026)). The policy approach to the use of the assessment criteria within the relevant tree strategy has not changed.

- Addition of supporting text sentence " Where new trees are provided, consideration must be given to the potential conflict between new trees and built form, and be compatible with existing or planned underground utilities (such as sewers)" . This change has been made in response to comment received within representations from Anglian Water which suggested that the policy reference this issue.
- Minor amendments have been made to the policy and supporting text to ensure clarity of expression.

## 7. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to BG/RC: River corridors

### Policy context update

7.1 No additional policy context update.

### New or updated evidence

7.2 No updated evidence.

### Additional alternative approaches considered

7.3 No additional alternative approaches identified.

### Proposed approach

The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- Additional wording ‘such as essential infrastructure’ has been inserted into the end of the second sentence of point 2. This change has been made considering comments received in representations from Anglian Water. The supporting text has also been updated to provide clarity that the policy does not seek to prevent development within the riparian buffer zone for certain types of essential infrastructure development (for example to address both surface water and wastewater drainage) required as consequence of the statutory responsibilities for water companies.
- The first sentence of point 2 has been amended to “ To help protect water quality and watercourse habitats, development proposals should retain or reinstate a buffer zone of at least **10m** from the watercourse bank top, or **5m** from a ditch bank top, according to the River/Ditch definitions set out under current BNG User Guidance.”. This is a factual change and corrects an error in the draft plan policy which included incorrect higher figures for the riparian zone width, it now reflects correctly the definition within current BNG user guidance.
- Additional wording has been added as new Point 2, d. of the policy

“That there will be no loss of floodplain storage or impedance to flood water flows” This amendment has been added following advice from the Environment Agency, to ensure there is no cumulative loss of floodplain storage due to development within riparian buffer zones, which could increase flood risk elsewhere.

- Point 1 has been reordered to move “Protects and enhances views to and from the river;” to 1d. (previously 1a). This change has been made considering comments received to the draft plan and to align with the priority order for the key roles, challenges and opportunities for our river corridors as set out in within the supporting text to the policy.
- Additional supporting text has been added which clarifies that for a given development proposal, the challenges and opportunities referenced in the policy will need careful balancing, to be explicit that in certain contexts there may be tensions between these. In addition, wording here is added to clarify that to avoid harming sensitive wildlife in certain areas, the proposed continuous Cam Valley Trail is not proposed to follow the riverbank or floodplain along its full length. This change was made following consideration of comments received by the Wildlife Trust.
- An additional paragraph has been added to the supporting text, to set out that Section 25 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 which requires riparian landowners to maintain ordinary watercourses, the Watercourse Reinstatement Guide (2022) from Cambridgeshire County Council should be followed and to note that constructions or alterations within an ordinary watercourse (temporary or permanent) require consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority under section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

## 8. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to BG/PO: Protecting open spaces

### Policy context update

8.1 No additional policy context update.

### New or updated evidence

#### **Protected Open Space Review (2026)**

- 8.2 The Protected Open Space review (see Appendix 2 of this Topic Paper) is a desk-based review which demonstrates that the open spaces identified for protection meet the policy criteria to justify designation as a Protected Open Space, Protected Village Amenity Area (PVAA) or Local Green Space (the study also assesses Important Countryside Frontages, protected by Policy GP/LC).
- 8.3 The review aims to adopt a uniform approach to protecting open spaces across Greater Cambridge by applying a common Protected Open Space designation to sites across Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.
- 8.4 The Protected Open Space Review (2025) outlined how a review was undertaken of all the existing sites in both the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire adopted Local Plans to check that they still met the criteria to warrant designation or identify any potential amendments (e.g. boundary changes if part of a site had been developed). This process ensured that policy designations remained appropriate and accurately reflected current conditions.
- 8.5 The Protected Open Space Review 2026 builds on the earlier report (2025) but also identifies additional open spaces with an important community function which lie outside the defined development extent and new sites brought forward in new residential development. It also reviews the interaction with other policies in the Local Plan, including allocations and policy areas, so as not to constrain their primary purpose for delivery growth and/or redevelopment. Further to this, the Review identifies criteria by which unmapped Protected Open Space can be identified as being environmental and/or recreational importance, and assesses mapped informal open spaces

against these, noting that other typologies (e.g. Recreation Grounds) by definition meet such criteria.

## Additional alternative approaches considered

8.6 No additional alternative approaches have been identified.

## Proposed approach

The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy:

- Insertion into point 1 of 'function and quality', to ensure that nearby development to a Protected Open Space does not undermine the integrity of or people's ability to use and enjoy the spaces. Open spaces have been designated for the character, function and qualities inherent to the space in its particular location. The amendment to the policy seeks to ensure that development does not undermine the integrity of or people's ability to use and enjoy the spaces.
- Update to point 2 a. to reference Natural England's Accessible Greenspace "size and proximity criteria", this is a factual update to reflect the latest national guidance.
- Insertion of new supporting text paragraph stating that proposals resulting in loss of protected open space within school, college and university grounds need to demonstrate a clear need which cannot be met elsewhere. The policy allows for the loss of open spaces though development where it meets a demonstrable educational need and does not adversely affect playing fields or other formal sports provision on the site; the amendment to the supporting text clarifies that applicants will need to demonstrate a clear need for development which cannot be met elsewhere.
- Amendment to supporting text, that ancillary uses for open spaces will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into consideration their location and context. This addition made as it is recognised that in some instances a need may arise for ancillary development,

such as storage or changing facilities associated with sports facilities.

- Supporting text amended to recognise unidentified open spaces being brought forward within new developments can still qualify as protect open space if it meets the criteria for designation. Unidentified sites can qualify as protected open space if they meet the criteria, to reflect that new open space continue to be brought forward within new developments. New developments, in particular strategic scale urban extensions and new settlements, can take several years to deliver on the ground. As a result, the Proposed Submission Plan identifies these development sites with a policy area until they are fully built out; open spaces within these sites will not be identified on the Policies Map until a DDE is in place.
- Supporting text amended strengthening wording on Local Green Spaces to prevent development except in exceptional circumstances. This change has been made to ensure consistency with national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework, which applies Green Belt policy to prevent inappropriate development except in exceptional circumstances.
- The Proposed Submission identifies Protected Open Spaces which lie outside the defined development extent where the Protected Open Space Review (2026) confirmed they met the criteria to warrant designation, in contrast to the Draft Plan (Regulation 18) Policies Map which only designated open spaces within the Defined Development Extent (DDE) of settlements. This change is to account for the fact that DDE boundaries for many settlements are tightly drawn around the built-up area and can exclude open spaces, such as sports and recreation grounds and allotments, leaving many open spaces of importance to local communities undesignated on the Draft Plan Policies Map. Whilst taking the Draft Plan approach undesignated sites outside the DDE could meet the policy criteria for protection, the Councils consider that identifying

open spaces within and outside the DDE on the Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) Policies Map provides greater clarity.

## 9. Proposed Submission Local Plan update to BG/EO: Providing and enhancing open spaces

### Policy context update

9.1 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was published on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2025. See more on this in policy context update relevant to BG/BG: Biodiversity and geodiversity.

### New or updated evidence

9.2 Since the Regulation 18 version of the plan further testing has been completed to define the standards for enhancing green and open spaces in the Local Plan. The testing and recommendations within the Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026) have informed the selection of standards in this policy. This report completed an assessment of the potential standards that could be used to enhance the quality and the amount of open space.

9.3 In the Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026), LUC built upon the previous Green Infrastructure Strategy Interim Approach by CBA published at draft plan stage to finalise the standards that would be brought forward in the Local Plan. The standards not brought forward were deemed not to achieve the overall requirements. The additional standards considered and not brought into policy were:

- Building with Nature Standards (Core Quality / Wellbeing Quality / Water Quality / Wildlife Quality) (This is included in Policy BG/GI to secure Green Infrastructure but not considered as a standard to explicitly enhance open spaces.)
- Overall Nature Recovery Area Wide Standard
- Country Parks Quality Standard
- Children and Young People Quantity / Quality Standards
- Food Growing Space Accessibility Standard

- Suitable Alternative Nature Greenspace Quantity and Quality Standards

- 9.4 Greater Cambridge Food Growing Spaces Study (2026) provides an evidence base about current supply, demand, and quality of allotments and other food growing spaces; a needs assessment to inform Emerging Local Plan policy and standards; and recommendations on delivery, stewardship (to be finalised), and potential policy wording.
- 9.5 The definition of food growing space is intentionally broad, covering allotments, community gardens, community orchards, community farms, informal growing areas, roof gardens and edible landscaping.
- 9.6 The Study notes that provision varies significantly between Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and whilst incomplete, allotments waiting list data suggests acute demand within Cambridge City and growing pressures elsewhere.
- 9.7 The Local Plan proposes a standard of 0.4 hectares of food growing space per 1,000 population. The study considered the different site typologies in the Emerging Local Plan and their capacity to provide on-site food-growing space by site typology. The report sets out indicative capital costs for different types of provision.

### Additional alternative approaches considered

- 9.8 None.

### Proposed approach

The following amendments have been made to the Draft Plan policy (noting that all the changes to the policy have been made as a result of further evidence and discussion with key stakeholders including Natural England):

- The Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces Standards Framework Final Report (June 2026) has made recommendations for policy wording in GB/EO based on the proposed standards suggested by the study. These are: Accessible Green and Open Space (Residential and Commercial); Urban Greening Factor (Residential and Non-Residential) (sits within

B/UGF Urban Greening Factor); Play and Youth Space and Food Growing Space.

- The policy has been re-organised into headings that apply to each standard. Point 2 has been included to set out that for each standard dependent on the scale and type of onsite provision a financial contribution will be required in agreement with the Local Planning Authority. This needs to take into account site-specific constraints and opportunities and existing local provision and identified gaps as set out in the associated Figure identifying Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards: Size and Proximity Standards. The introduction of a financial contribution for the shortfall in meeting the standards would fund strategic GI projects supporting the objectives of the strategic green infrastructure initiatives identified in policy BG/GI (see below).
- The Accessible Green and Open Space Standards section and point 3 have been revised to include a standard for major residential development of accessible greenspace equivalent to 7.0 hectares per 1,000 population, with 3.0 hectares as a minimum of onsite accessible greenspace provision. Accessible greenspace provision must also ensure access for all residences within the development to at least one appropriate tier of greenspace within the size-proximity criteria. This will ensure that development delivers open spaces at the correct tier of open space. Section 4 sets out the equivalent standard for major non-residential development.
- Point 5 has been included to set out how that accessible greenspace must be welcoming and accessible and meet best practice Green Flag Award criteria.
- Point 6 sets out that offsite contributions should go towards provision of greenspace and support the objectives of the Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping Recommendations Report (2021) and green infrastructure schemes identified within the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Infrastructure

Delivery Plan (or successor document).

- Point 7 covers the relationship between accessible green space and SSSIs, and how impacts on SSSIs should be managed.
- Point 8 sets out the standard for 0.6ha per 1,000 of the population of Play and Youth Space, including 0.25 ha per 1,000 of equipped play and at least 0.3 ha per 1,000 population of informal play provision. and Points 9 and 10 set out how this should be designed and secured with an offsite financial contribution for play and youth space where there is a shortfall.
- Points 11 and 12 sets out the standard for major development to deliver 0.4 ha per 1,000 population of food growing space with a preference of onsite provision. Point 13 sets out the financial contribution for provision of food growing spaces where there is a shortfall.
- Point 14 has been included to introduce the GI Operation and Maintenance Plan. This plan is scheduled via condition and is required to set out how the space will be managed over a 30 year period include the funding and stewardship arrangements. This is required for GI delivered by all of the standards listed in the policy.
- The supporting text has been revised for clarity of expression and to reflect the rationale and implementation of the standards listed in the policy.