

Chapter 5: Green Infrastructure

Introduction

- 5.1 Green infrastructure consists of multi-functional networks of protected open space, woodlands, wildlife habitat, parks, registered commons, village and town greens, nature reserves, waterways and bodies of water, historic parks and gardens, and historic landscapes. Different aspects of green infrastructure provide recreational and/or cultural experiences, while supporting and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity, enhancing air and/or water quality and enriching the quality of life of local communities.
- 5.2 Both Councils have endorsed Natural Cambridgeshire's vision for doubling nature by 2050. South Cambridgeshire District adopted the Doubling Nature Strategy in February 2021, recognising the role development management and planning obligations play in the protection and enhancement of nature, and provision of green space. Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Strategy 2022 recognises the pressure rapid growth places on Green Infrastructure and the need protect and enhance biodiversity whilst also ensuring there is sufficient outdoor recreational space for residents to be able to access and enjoy.

Policy Context

Cambridge

- 5.3 Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 8: Setting of the City supports Development on the urban edge, including sites within and abutting green infrastructure corridors and the Cambridge Green Belt, open spaces and the River Cam corridor, where it: a. responds to, conserves and enhances the setting, and special character of the city, in accordance with the Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2003, Green Belt assessments, Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and their successor documents; b. promotes access to the surrounding countryside/open space, where appropriate; and c. safeguards the best and most versatile agricultural land unless sustainable development considerations and the need for development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of land; and d. includes landscape improvement proposals that strengthen or recreate the well-defined and vegetate urban edge, improve visual amenity and enhance biodiversity.

- 5.4 This is complemented by Policy 68: Open Space and Recreation Provision through New Development, which seeks to deliver new on-site open space, or appropriate contributions to off-site provision.

South Cambridgeshire

- 5.5 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 Policy NH/6 Green Infrastructure requires that all new developments contribute towards the enhancement of the green infrastructure network within the district. These contributions will include the establishment, enhancement and the on-going management costs.

Greater Cambridge (Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire)

- 5.6 The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) identifies a range of opportunities for enhancement in and around the district and has Cambridge and the surrounding area as one of its strategic areas. The Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping Baseline Report, produced to support the emerging local plan, also identifies a network of enhancement opportunities.

Development types from which Obligations will be sought

- 5.7 All new residential and commercial development is to make provision to enhance the Green Infrastructure network.

Form in which contributions should be made

- 5.8 Applications should consider and detail how they are addressing the requirement to enhance the Green Infrastructure network.

Cambridge

- 5.9 Reflecting Policy 8, development sites on the urban edge will be expected to provide opportunities to extend or enhance the Green Infrastructure network directly as part of their development. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis reflecting the wider aspirations of the development plan.
- 5.10 The informal open space standard, which forms part of the public open space standards addressed in chapter 14, incorporates natural greenspace.

South Cambridgeshire

- 5.11 Reflecting Policy NH/6 and its requirement for all development to contribute to the GI network, where GI enhancement is not part of an onsite proposal, offsite contributions to address the needs generated by a development may be considered acceptable. Contributions will be based on the cost of acquiring land and maintaining it.
- 5.12 Financial contributions have been informed by the 8 hectares per 1,000 population Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) measure by Natural England. The cost of acquiring agricultural land is typically in the order of £20,000 per hectare and the cost of creating green infrastructure on that land is £6,500.
- 5.13 Maintenance costs associated with green infrastructure equate to £2,000 per hectare per year which across a 15-year maintenance period results in £30,000 per hectare.
- 5.14 For residential development offsite contributions will be calculated using the following approach.

Table 5-1: Green infrastructure contributions by dwelling size for development within South Cambridgeshire

Number of beds	Capital cost by dwelling size (£)	Maintenance cost per dwelling (£)	Total cost per dwelling (£)
1 Bed	260.76	295.20	555.96
2 Bed	436.72	494.40	931.12
3 Bed	599.96	679.20	1,279.16
4 Bed+	691.12	782.40	1,473.52

Source of costs: Infrastructure Costing Review – Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations SPD July 2025

Exemptions

- 5.15 Apart from any exemptions set out in the Local Plan policies, there are no exemptions from providing enhancements to the Green Infrastructure network on suitably sized schemes.

Further guidance

Cambridge

- [Cambridge Biodiversity Strategy](#) Cambridge City Council (2022)

South Cambridgeshire

- [South Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature Strategy](#), South Cambridgeshire District Council (2021)
- [South Cambridgeshire Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature Action Plan](#), South Cambridgeshire District Council (2021)

Greater Cambridge (Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire)

- [Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) Cambridgeshire County Council (2011)
- [Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping Baseline Report](#) Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (2020)
- [Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping Recommendations](#) Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (2021)
- [Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document](#) Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (2022)

Other Sources

- [Green Infrastructure Framework - Principles and Standards for England](#) Natural England (2023)
- [The Cambridge Nature Network: A nature recovery network for Cambridge and its surrounds Final Report](#) Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire (2021)