

**Riverside Area Vision – a first outline.
January 2026**

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1. Preface

In 2010, Cambridge City Council endorsed a 'Riverside Vision' to create *"a pedestrian and cycle priority route linking the two green spaces of Stourbridge Common and Midsummer Common"* with a *"pleasant promenade"* along the riverfront. Described as *"a strategic project with city-wide benefit"*, the first phase of the Vision was completed in 2011 for the west end of Riverside. With Riverside now set to be the entry point to Cambridge for three new Greenways, work is underway with Greater Cambridge Partnership to create a *"landmark public realm"* along the length of Riverside which is both safe and inspiring.

However, the Riverside 'boulevard' is only one part of a wider Riverside area with a unique mediaeval and industrial history and distinctive character, much of it little known. This Riverside Area Vision document is a first step towards creating a clear picture of the wider area and its benefits and opportunities, to help shape future policy and decision making.

Our first aim is to describe what makes the Riverside area such an attractive place to live in and to visit. To this end, the document gives a brief overview of the history of the area and its many current attractions in terms of habitat, heritage and facilities.

Our second aim is to provide a Vision of the area's future potential as a strategic asset for the City as a whole. We outline a range of ideas and opportunities with potential to enhance and improve the future amenity of the area for residents, the wider City and for visitors.

The Riverside area sits alongside the Eastern Gate Opportunity Area (proposed Public Realm Improvement Area) and close to four designated Areas of Major Change. It is surrounded by development proposals which have major implications for the area, and further proposals will surely follow. Any decisions about these should understand their relationship with the profile and characteristics of the Riverside. For example, we believe there is potential for these combined developments to form an East Cambridge Innovation Hub, with the Riverside area at its centre.

We hope that some of the projects and suggestions outlined here will help inform decisions about current developments interfacing with the Riverside area now, and start to shape new conversations about the future. Your interest, feedback and involvement is invited.

Riverside Area Residents Association (RARA)
January 2026

2. Current Riverside Vision Statement and Objectives

IMPORTANT NOTE: The current Vision Statement and Objectives relate specifically to the Riverside boulevard. Our longer-term aspiration is to expand and enhance these to encompass the wider Riverside Area.

VISION STATEMENT

A vibrant connected urban riverfront destination with city-wide benefit that celebrates Cambridge's relationship with water. Riverside unites Stourbridge Common and Midsummer Common through an elegant inclusive promenade that enhances community life, local heritage and ecological sustainability, making walking and cycling joyful experiences.

OBJECTIVES

Character, identity and heritage: A distinctive, animated promenade that reflects local historic character and strengthens identity.

Riverside is a unique stretch of the Cam with one of the only developed and accessible riverside frontages in Cambridge. It also has a rich mediaeval and industrial history, with heritage assets which should be conserved and enhanced.

Connectivity: Create a pedestrian and cycle priority route linking Stourbridge Common and Midsummer Common for safe, seamless movement. Ensure vehicular movement and parking is facilitated where required, but active travel is prioritised.

Riverside is a nexus point for many journeys, but there are accident hot spots and conflicts between users. Connectivity should be conserved and enhanced.

Safe, accessible and inclusive: A place for all people to enjoy.

The existing condition is fragmented, making legibility challenging and causing conflicts. Vehicle access and parking must be managed in ways that support a pedestrian-led hierarchy of users.

Activation: Three key spaces (two gateway spaces at the Commons and a central cultural hub near the museum) to focus social and cultural engagement and support commercial opportunities such as markets and events.

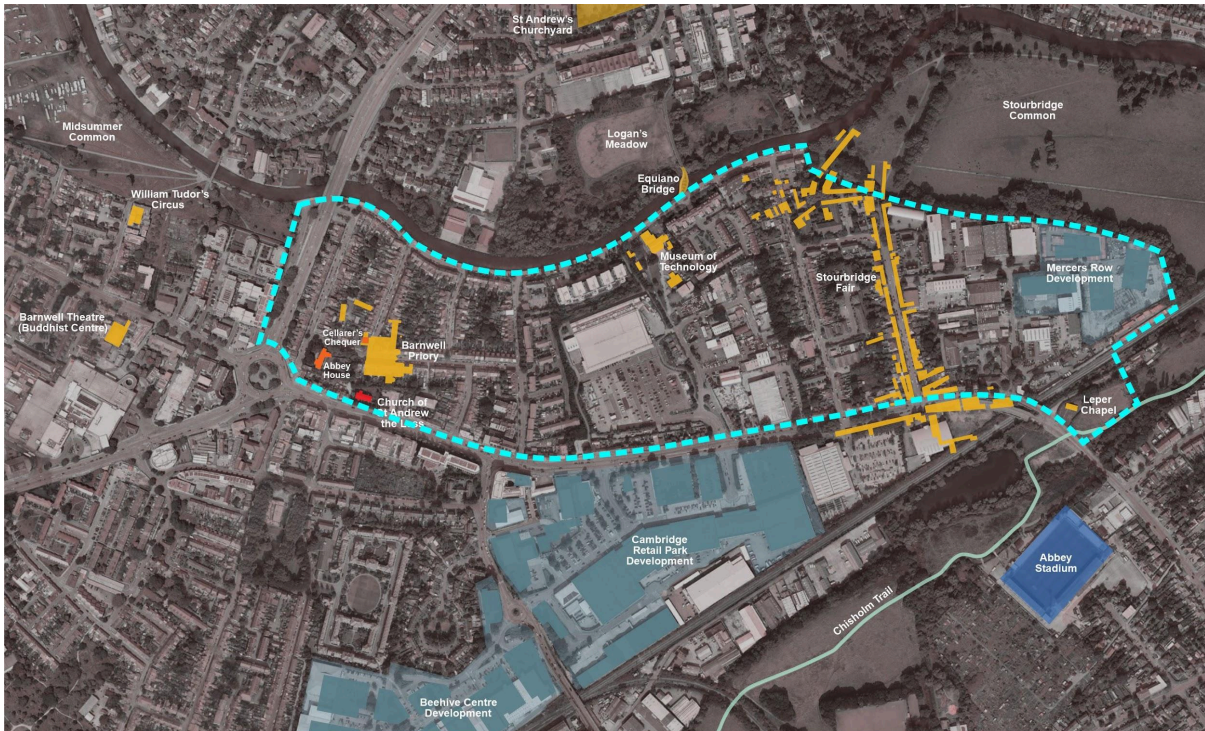
There are opportunities to create active spaces with commercial opportunities, exploiting the draw of the Museum of Technology and Engineer's House midway along Riverside.

Environment & biodiversity: Integrate sustainable and ecological features throughout Riverside to promote environmental enhancement and expand amenities for residents and visitors.

Incorporating green and blue infrastructure will enhance ecological benefits and extend the aesthetic character of the adjacent green spaces of Stourbridge and Midsummer Commons, and Logan's Meadow Nature Reserve.

3. Shaped by history: how the Riverside Area evolved

The Riverside area is a distinct parcel of land shaped rather like a fish. It is defined by one man-made and three natural boundaries: the ancient Roman highway of Newmarket Road to the south, the River Cam to the north and the two green spaces of Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common at each end.



The history of the Riverside area really begins with the Normans. While the Romans used Newmarket Road as a route to Cambridge and undoubtedly used the river as a waterway, this area lay far outside the small Roman settlement at Castle Hill. There is also little evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The form and character of the area has been shaped by three eras in particular: its early mediaeval roots, a 19th century industrial transformation, and 20th century redevelopment.

MEDIAEVAL BEGINNINGS

The foundation of Barnwell Priory in 1115 created a wealthy walled settlement between River Lane and Walnut Tree Avenue that defined the area for over 800 years. At its height it was the largest religious house in Cambridge. The small hamlet of Barnwell grew up nearby to serve it. Soon after the Hospital of St Mary Magdalene was established near Stourbridge Common in 1125, far away from town, to treat lepers. King John granted both institutions the right to raise income from local fairs – Midsummer Fair for the Priory and Stourbridge Fair for the Hospital. Just two former Priory buildings survive: the **Cellarer's Chequer** in Beche Road and the village church of **St Andrew's the Less**. Of the Hospital, only its chapel remains, now known as the **Loper Chapel**.



Map dated 1285 (Cambridge Collection)

19th CENTURY INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION

In the early 1800s, the area was still mostly fields and former Priory land, with some buildings along Newmarket Road. By the end of the century it had been transformed:

- Brick kilns, tile works and clay pits replaced fields between Stourbridge Common and Cheddars Lane (then Brick Kiln Lane). The riverfront became a brick yard.
- In 1826, the riverfront was picked as the site for the City's first coal-fired gasworks: the coal came by river from Kings Lynn on barges called 'lighters'. The gasworks dominated the area for over 170 years until the last holder came down in 2000.
- In a dramatic development, the old Priory site was finally broken up in 1889. Green space and a gravel pit would soon be replaced by streets of terraced housing.
- A public health crisis led to a combined sewage pumping and waste destructor station being built on the riverfront in 1894. Like the gasworks, it represented the most advanced technology of its day. Now the **Museum of Technology**, the building is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and main landmark of the area's industrial past.



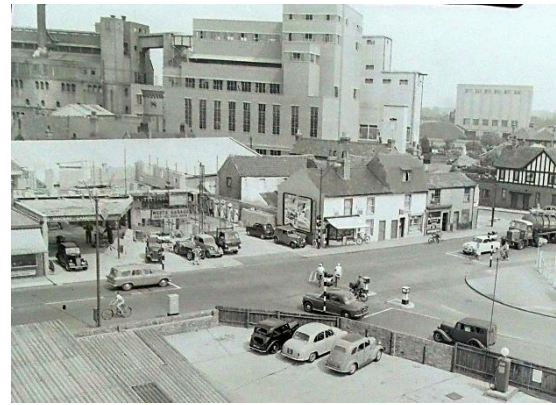
The river being pumped out in the 1940s



Newmarket Road brickworks, 1938



Largest gas holder in East Anglia, built in 1927



The Cambridge Gas Works in 1959

20th CENTURY REDEVELOPMENT

By the early 1900s, today's terraced street layout was fully established west of River Lane. To the east it was a different story. The local landscape was still largely industrial or post-industrial, and many former sites remained undeveloped until the 1990s or later. Land contamination and undocumented landfill made it very costly to redevelop old pits and brickworks. The Riverside area was also seen as poor and undesirable, polluted by smoke blowing east from all the town's chimneys. In 1968 the **Old Pumping Station** closed and a new all-electric pumping station built next door in a new sewage works. This was demolished in 1999 and – after extensive land clearing and remediation – the site was redeveloped as St Bartholomews Court. The towering gasworks buildings came down in 1971, and was replaced by The Mallards in 1989 and by new houses along River Lane. In the 1980s, the Mercers Row industrial estate was established on the sites of two former brick and tile works. The last major change to the Riverside street scene came in 2000, when the last and largest of the original four gas holders was finally demolished. A Tesco store and the Riverside Place apartment complex have taken their place.

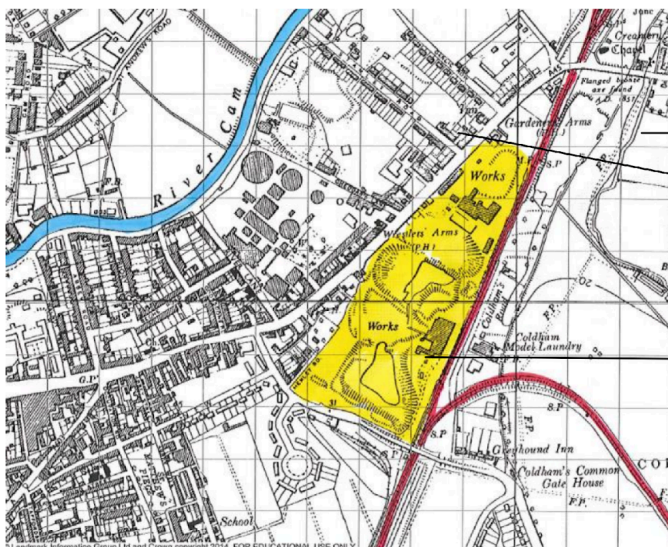


Fig 24: OS map of Cambridge, 1960

4. Here and now: a unique amenity for Cambridge

The Riverside area provides a rich and varied environment for residents, commuters and visitors. A primary attraction is the Riverside 'boulevard' which links the two green spaces of Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common. Riverside also has a rich historical landscape. Whilst the area's industrial history is represented in the Cambridge Museum of Technology, its earlier mediaeval heritage is less well known, though hinted at in local street names and by buildings such as the Cellarer's Chequer and the Leper Chapel, both built during Norman times, St Andrew the Less and Abbey House.

THE RIVERFRONT IS AN EXCEPTIONAL ASSET

The River Cam

The river is an extraordinary resource, and Riverside offers unique opportunities to experience its charms, with the Logan's Meadow nature reserve opposite. Wildlife include fish of all sizes, ducks and swans with their young, and herons, kingfishers and cormorants fishing just yards from Riverside. Otters have been seen.



The river was vital to Cambridge life until the coming of the railways in the 19th century. It brought food, fuel, textiles, building materials and a host of other goods to the city. The Riverside riverfront provided mooring for barges and serviced a riverfront industry including brickworks, gasworks and the pumping station. Modern-day river traffic includes university and town rowers, canoeists and paddle-boarders, pleasure trips running from Jesus Lock and Fen Ditton, and domestic craft. Down river, boats take to the water at Ditton Fields in rowing regattas throughout the year. These include the Dragon Boat Race, the Autumn Regatta and various "bumps" races (May, Lent and Town). Visitors can meander along the river to view the action or stay put to watch competitor craft rowing to and from the events.

The Riverside 'boulevard'

Riverside is an attractive walking and cycling route with little vehicle traffic. It provides fine views of the river and nature reserve, and of local domestic and industrial architecture. Growing numbers of commuting and leisure cyclists, walkers and tourists are drawn to the heritage, river, nature and parkland features. It has been described as 'Cambridge's beach'.

Cultural events along Riverside and nearby

In addition to the river-based activities mentioned above, the Riverside area provides a scenic backdrop to a variety of other sporting and cultural events. Runners can enjoy views from Riverside as they take part in the Cancer Research Race For Life in June or the Town and Gown in October, while locals applaud their efforts. Cyclists meanwhile can join the Reach Fair Ride in May or hit the town with the Cambridge Bike Party, normally on the 3rd weekend of each month.

In 2022, the amazing Our Place in Space exhibition came to Cambridge, landing a scale model of the solar system in the city. With a model of the Sun located on Midsummer common and the planets arranged along the river heading east, visitors who thought they were passing along Riverside were actually somewhere beyond Mars and heading towards Jupiter! In 2024, an amphitheatre on Midsummer Lawn provided the stage for a magical adaptation of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, featuring performances by local residents.

A WALK THROUGH THE RIVERSIDE AREA

The area offers glimpses of many different eras, making it a fascinating destination away from the 'classic' Cambridge sights. Starting on Newmarket Road, today's visitor can explore the following local landmarks in addition to simply enjoying the river and riverfront:

- St Andrew the Less – 13th century church built for Barnwell village parishioners by the canons of Barnwell Priory, now a Grade II Listed Building
- Abbey House – 16th century house built on the site of Barnwell Priory, Grade II listed
- Cellarer's Chequer – also 13th century. The only surviving Priory structure, and a Grade II* Listed Building
- Cambridge Museum of Technology – built in 1894, the Old Pumping Station is now a museum, community hub and Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Dinky Doors and the Riverside 'spiky' postbox
- Equaino Bridge – named after writer and leading abolitionist Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797), a former slave who married and settled in Cambridge
- Stourbridge Common – site of Stourbridge Fair, first held in 1211 and once considered the largest fair in Europe
- Leper Chapel – 12th century Norman chapel, Grade I listed.
- Cambridge Gas Company War Memorial 1921 – Grade II listed monument, the only visible reminder of the giant gasworks that once dominated the area.



St Andrews-the-Less



In the early 13th century, the church was built as a *capella ante portas* (chapel outside the gates) of Barnwell Priory, a once thriving Augustinian establishment founded a century earlier. It was built for the village that had grown around the priory, so survived destruction when the Priory itself fell victim to Henry the VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. Over the last half century, the church fell into disuse and is now closed. The St Andrew the Less

Community Project has been established to revive the church for community benefit.

Abbey House



Abbey House was once claimed to be the most haunted house in all England. The oldest part of the house was built in 1578 in the old Priory grounds. The Priory buildings were demolished and most of the stone given to build Corpus Christi College. Later owners extended and improved Abbey House up to the 1780s. In 1886 the house and gardens were walled off, the Cellarer's Chequer was given to Cambridge Antiquarian Society and the rest of the site was sold for housing. Abbey House is now home to a Buddhist community. It is open to the public one day every year, in September.

Cellarers Chequer



This attractive single-vaulted chamber was built between 1213 and 1265. It is the only building from the Barnwell Priory grounds to survive destruction following dissolution in 1538. It may have been used as a store or barn due to its close proximity to Abbey House. The Cellarer made sure the Priory had the provisions it needed week to week. The Chequer was where he conducted his business and was also a trading point with villagers and suppliers. It is now owned by Cambridge City Council. Visitors can

see inside one day each year, on the Abbey House open day. The grounds are now used for monthly Sunday gatherings during warmer months, bringing together residents of all ages.

Cambridge Museum of Technology



By the late 19th century Riverside was an overcrowded working-class district, widely viewed as a den of crime and vice. It was also where all the sewage of Cambridge washed up. In 1894 a fine pumping and waste destructor station was built – an early energy recycling plant. It burned domestic waste to power boilers which pumped the town's sewage away for treatment. The two engines in the main engine room pumped non-stop for 74 years, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, until the site shut down in 1968. They are the last of their kind in the world. The museum holds regular steam days and displays celebrating local industry, including the huge gasworks that once dominated the area and the world-leading Pye company over the river, a vital early contributor to the Cambridge Phenomenon of high tech industry.

Oludah Equiano Bridge and access to Logan's Meadow



This attractive bridge connects Riverside to Logan's Meadow across the river. Built in 2007 following a design competition, it was renamed in 2022 after Oludah Equiano who bought his freedom from slavery and was a leader in the anti-slave trade movement in the UK. He is generally acknowledged as the first political activist within Britain's African community in the 18th century. He lived and married in Cambridge. There is a moving memorial to his daughter at Chesterton Church.

Logan's Meadow nature reserve

Formerly a grazing marsh, [Logan's Meadow](#) lies just across the river from the Riverside area and offers a delightful detour for nature lovers. It was designated as a local nature reserve in 2005. In 2025 the City Council constructed [two major new ponds](#), encouraging new wetland wildlife such as reed warblers, water vole, kingfishers, reed specialist moths and Daubenton's bats. The colourful [Swift Tower](#) sculpture was constructed in 2011 and aims to provide a home for up to 150 swifts. Swift calls are played from the tower in early summer to attract young returning birds to nest. The [Friends of Logan's Meadow](#) are very active, and run bat walks and moth identification events among others.

The Engineer's House and Kerb Collective

The Museum of Technology hosts two local businesses which provide food, drink and

excellent views of the river. The Engineer's House was built in 1898 to house the first Engineer of the Pumping Station. After decades of use as council accommodation it was reunited with the Museum and refurbished. It now houses a popular bar and pizza business. Next door, the Kerb Collective is a thriving café and bakery with outdoor tables.

Dinky Doors and the Riverside 'spiky' pillar box



Dinky Doors' unique [miniature sculptures](#) are an increasingly popular feature of Cambridge, and Riverside has two: the 'emailerator' next to the postbox at the junction with Priory Road, and the space-craft outside the Museum of Technology.

The Riverside pillar box is a rare 'anonymous' model as it lacks the royal cypher and the words "Post Office", made all the more unusual because of the spikes on top. It is thought to have been located by the Riverside gasworks originally and that spikes were added to stop people using it to climb over the gasworks wall.

Stourbridge Common



The Common is both part of the pedestrian and cycle corridor through Riverside, and a vital amenity in its own right for dog-walkers, runners and lovers of peace. Stourbridge Fair, was set up as a fundraiser for the leper hospital of St Mary Magdalene. Helped by its location at the point where the River Cam, then navigable by sea barges from the Wash, crossed the Newmarket Road, it became one of the biggest fairs in Europe, lasting for almost 2 months each year at its peak. John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Pepys and

William Thackeray all mention the fair, and Isaac Newton bought the prism there that led to his theory of optics. Many street names nearby have their origins in items traded at the fair, such as Oyster Row, Garlic Row, Mercers Row and Cheddars Lane.



The Leper Chapel

Known locally as the Leper Chapel, this 12th century building is Grade I Listed and forms a beautiful oasis just off Newmarket Road. It is the only building that remains of the Hospital of St Mary Magdalene, which was located well away from the town to treat lepers. It is one of the best

surviving examples of a Norman chapel in England, with much of its original structure intact. The chapel is significant for another reason as in 1199 King John granted the hospital a licence to hold Stourbridge Fair as a fundraiser. The fair's success went far beyond fundraising: along with the university it is credited with helping make Cambridge so prosperous. The Chapel hosts occasional theatrical performances and is open on alternate Sundays to the public. On the first Saturday in September it is the venue for a re-enactment of Stourbridge Fair <https://cambridgeppf.org/etn/leper-chapel-open-day-10-2/> .



Memorial

the huge gasworks that once towered over Riverside – only this monument, it was first erected in 1921 and pays tribute to those who died in two World Wars. It was relocated to Newmarket as it was redeveloped into a Tesco supermarket and apartments.

5. Looking ahead: a Riverside Area Vision

We propose a community-driven review to shape a future Riverside Area Vision which highlights opportunities to make the area a vibrant attraction for Cambridge residents and visitors. Present amenities are poor for such a significant asset, and the area lacks community space and provision. There is also a near total lack of awareness of the area's rich medieval history and of its place in Cambridge industry and economy.

We have grouped our emerging ideas and suggestions under the following themes:

- Enhance the Riverside 'Boulevard'
- Revitalise heritage assets for community benefit
- A possible Heritage Trail
- Nurture the environment and promote biodiversity
- Future industry and opportunities
- Fresh thinking about Newmarket Road and Elizabeth Way roundabout.

ENHANCE THE RIVERSIDE 'BOULEVARD'

The Cam is a jewel in the Cambridge crown and Riverside can enhance it. The 'boulevard' idea was first articulated in 2010, when the City Council endorsed an outline vision to *"create a pedestrian and cycle priority route linking the two green spaces of Stourbridge Common and Midsummer Common"*; a *"pleasant promenade"* which would *"accommodate walkers and cyclists in safety."* We are working with the City to get this aspiration into the next Local Plan. There are many ways to improve current amenity and achieve a better match to different needs.

Improve safety

Riverside needs careful planning and investment to make it safe and attractive for both pedestrians and cyclists, especially given predicted traffic increases from converging Greenways. [Current traffic](#) on Riverside includes few cars, but over 3,000 bicycles per day. However, the path next to the river is either narrow or non-existent in places, which results in large numbers of pedestrians walking in the road, many with children and buggies. There are areas of potential conflict, such as the junction with Equiano bridge near the Museum of Technology, and stretches where riverfront parking or EV charging points obstruct walkers. The needs of different users need to be carefully balanced.

Improve amenity

A starter list of ideas to increase the vitality of Riverside boulevard might include:

- [Creating opportunities for small businesses](#) which cater to both locals and passers-by. The popularity of new food and drink outlets at the Engineer's House has shown the commercial potential for new enterprises.
- [New attractions](#): a continuous boulevard could feature attractive seating, guides to nature, and possibly chess-tables and other amenities.
- [Wildlife walks](#): the close connection with Logan's Meadow nature reserve across the Equiano Bridge makes it (or the Museum) an attractive start point for wildlife walks.
- [Non-residential moorings could be provided to support commercial opportunities](#), for example a moored river boat might operate as a café, offer cycle accessories and repair,

or sell arts and crafts. The Museum has in the past organised boat trips dedicated to Cambridge's industrial heritage, and new moorings could facilitate additional trips.

- **Dinky Doors** team have indicated possible sites for more installations and will consider new projects – perhaps with figures for a potential Heritage Trail.

An annual Cambridge River Festival

A vibrant one-day river festival could be a joyful event and an opportunity for local businesses and organisations. River festivals are typically community events that celebrate a city's relationship with the river, highlighting local culture, creativity and environmental themes. They feature water-based activities, like raft or dragon boat racing, and other water sports. In Cambridge there is an opportunity to involve the city and college boat clubs and boat dwellers. The railings along the side of the river on Riverside could provide a safe viewing spot, whilst entertainment on Riverside could include live music, theatre and dance performances and family friendly attractions, such as crafts, face painting, and community stalls along with mobile food vans.

Revitalise dead space

There is potential for temporary, non-fixed commercial activity on largely 'dead' highway space at each end of the Riverside boulevard. For example, a regular farmers or mixed market, food vans, performance and busking space or specialist pitches. A feasibility study would of course be needed to consider how infrastructure issues such as toilets, power, waste, storage, traffic flow and parking are addressed, along with site management, business planning and marketing. The areas identified are:

- **Adjacent to Midsummer Common:** the combined spaces of Walnut Tree Avenue, road and pavement under Elizabeth Way bridge, the council-owned car park on Abbey Road, and nearby road/pavement. This largely-unused space offers a combination of space, river location, partial overhead cover, high footfall and a near-central location. It is close to residential catchments but with few close neighbours – a council-run hostel is built into the bridge, so careful consultation would be needed. Cycle traffic is likely to increase under Greenway plans, and traffic flow would need to be carefully managed.
- **At the Stourbridge end of the Riverside corridor** there is highway space between the junction with Stanley Road and the gateway to the Common that could provide for temporary commercial uses similar to some of those suggested above. Scale and format would need to be tailored to the more constrained space with more neighbours nearby.

REVITALISE HERITAGE ASSETS FOR COMMUNITY BENEFIT

The historic buildings below are all important components of a future Heritage Walking Trail (see below). There is also potential to expand their role within the community.

Cambridge Museum of Technology

A major renovation project will soon commence, with the dual aims of making the Engineer's House area an even more vibrant gathering spot for the community and uncovering more exhibition potential to supplement the main Museum space. Opening hours have been extended recently and further improvement initiatives are in the pipeline. The museum plans to open more – mainly during the school holidays – and to

continue expanding its offer. It would benefit from new attractions in the area, and new infrastructure such as moorings.

St Andrews-the-Less

This 13th century Grade-2 listed building, now deconsecrated, is currently on the Heritage-at-Risk Register and closed to visitors. Restoring and revitalising the building can help redefine the area as a cultural and economic centre, and a key part of Cambridge's historical story. The St Andrew the Less Community Project has been established to revive the church around three core ideas which could collectively create significant social impact:

- **Heritage:** Restoring the physical building of the church is vital to saving and sharing Riverside's heritage. St Andrew the Less has the potential to become an innovative and immersive heritage centre, linking up with other local heritage sites for both local people and visitors to Cambridge.
- **Community:** Once the church is restored, we will seek to create projects around community and belonging.
- **Biodiversity:** We hope to open up the garden for mental well-being and environmental learning and to connect St Andrew the Less with other environmental and biodiversity sites, such as Logan's Meadow, Abbey House Gardens and both commons.

Cellarers Chequer

The Cellarers Chequer building, owned by the City Council, is open only one day each year at present. Visitors must be supervised as stone fragments, coffins and lids are scattered around inside. It also lacks mains supply or water. We would like to see appropriate uses come forward which could help restore this historic building to a more active life, both in its setting and use of the internal space.

Leper Chapel

The Leper Chapel building and grounds could be further used for community events. Cambridge Past Present and Future which owns the building are applying to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to fund essential roof repairs and install a toilet for use when the building is open to the public. See also biodiversity proposals later in this section.

A POSSIBLE HERITAGE TRAIL

There is potential to draw visitors to Riverside with the lure of an attractive heritage trail. This would incorporate all the present-day landmarks listed earlier (see 'A walk through the Riverside Area'), but in a carefully integrated way, supported with information. The route could be punctuated with plaques that describe the historical significance of each spot, which would also catch the attention of passers by. Eventually visitors could access a digital version of the trail with further information and visuals, via QR code. There could be different trails with alternative routes, for example a trail focused on the area's industrial history might include Mercers Row industrial estate, with its many road names from Stourbridge Fair. In the long-term the trail could extend to town, bringing the more energetic tourist along the beautiful walks through Jesus Green and Midsummer Common.



NURTURE THE ENVIRONMENT AND PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY

The River Cam

While the river is attractive and well-used, it needs careful nurturing. The Friends of the Cam report that it is polluted with EColi and Enterococci, and with agricultural pollutants such as phosphates and road run off. Continued abstraction of water from the aquifer means that the river is recharged with processed water, which affects wildlife and habitat. There are still occasional discharges directly into the river, and the Cam at Riverside is also affected by discharges further upstream. Reducing pollution will require a sustained effort – see rainwater harvesting below

Cellarers Chequer

A volunteer team is implementing a wild flower project for the grounds that will exemplify diversity in planting and rainwater harvesting. We also hope to install bat boxes under the eaves and explore other habitat ideas that might be suitable.

Rainwater Harvesting

The Riverside neighbourhood relies on a combined sewage system for wastewater management, which means surface water and domestic waste go into the same pipes to the water treatment facility. During periods of exceptional rainfall, the system overflow outfall releases untreated sewage into the River Cam. The neighbourhood is also downhill from Newmarket Road, a major transport and development corridor. When it rains heavily, Riverside area residents report standing water on roads and water back flowing from street drains. Without intervention the situation is likely to get worse, exacerbated by new development.

We can make Riverside a model for community-led Sustainable Drainage Systems which increase local drainage capacity to reduce flood risk and river pollution. They will also help us adapt to climate change, create habitats for wildlife and cool the streets. Water can be collected through rainwater harvesting, rain gardens (shallow planted areas which receive run-off from roofs and other hard surfaces) and SlowFlow planters installed next to downpipes which act both as an attenuation tank and a self watering planter. By installing

these simple solutions across houses and streets in Riverside, we can test and demonstrate the cumulative effect of decentralised drainage systems.

FUTURE INDUSTRY AND OPPORTUNITIES

A strategic plan for Mercers Row industrial estate

The Mercers Row industrial estate is a protected industrial site under Policy 41 of the current Local Plan. The land is owned by the City Council and the site supports assorted businesses including car dealership, storage, metal recycling, trade supplies, electrical trade/retail, a fitness centre, and a nursery and soft play centre. However, the road and public fabric of the area has been in decline for some time, and is now somewhat run-down.

We consider the future of the industrial site to be very significant for the Riverside Area. High quality proposals will create local jobs and could catalyse other commercial and community opportunities – for example, encouraging local innovation and networking. In March 2025 a two phase regeneration plan for a ‘mid tech’ overhaul of most of the site was approved, submitted jointly by developer Wrenbridge and the City Council. Clearly there is scope for residents to engage with the developer and the Council on this project to ensure all the potential benefits are delivered.

However, a broader strategic view is also needed to develop a view on how the site as a whole could and should develop over the next 5 to 10 years. This also needs to recognize potential constraints and concerns: the site is adjacent to the Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Area, and close to both the Grade I Listed Leper Chapel and Stourbridge Common, which is a Local Nature Reserve and City Wildlife Site.

An East Cambridge Innovation Hub

The area surrounding Riverside is about to undergo a major transformation, with new development taking place at all four corners. We believe there is potential for these combined developments to form an East Cambridge Innovation Hub, with the Riverside area at its centre. If other initiatives suggested in this Vision are successful, Riverside area will be increasingly able to provide cultural and recreational space for those working nearby. The Riverside boulevard will be a charming, peaceful place attracting growing numbers of people to walk, talk and admire the views. The developments putting Riverside area at the heart of new innovation include:

- To the north and northwest, Railpen, the second largest landowner in Cambridge, is redeveloping both the Cambridge Retail Park and the Beehive Centre. The latter will create space for laboratories and offices and is expected to bring 6,000 new jobs to the area.
- To the west, the Grafton Centre is also being redeveloped, also to create laboratory space and offices, and expected to create 2,000 new jobs. Anglia Ruskin University, (ARU) has plans for a Creative Quarter, with a planned new media building on East Road.
- To the east, on the site of Cambridge Airport, 1,400 new homes have already been built on the Marleigh development and there are plans for a further 7,000 homes and 9,000 new jobs once Marshall’s have vacated the full site.

FRESH THINKING ABOUT NEWMARKET ROAD AND ELIZABETH WAY ROUNDABOUT

Newmarket Road is a major transport artery into and out of the City. It is also the historic high street for the Riverside neighbourhood. The transport artery function is currently the focus of a wider 'sustainable transport review' by the Greater Cambridge Partnership, in the context of plans to comprehensively redevelop Cambridge Airport and local redevelopment plans for nearby retail parks. The Elizabeth Way roundabout and bridge opened in 1971 and radically changed local street layout and traffic flows, perhaps not always for the better.

A high street, not just a highway

The 'high street' role of the Riverside stretch of Newmarket Road has never been formally recognised as a planning issue. This has contributed to changes such as the loss of a well-used local post office, loss of ground level retail/professional services shop fronts, a dominating budget hotel cluster at the River Lane junction and a sense of separation between the communities to the south and north of the road. Through the 'Vision' we will seek to articulate a local centre and high street function for the Riverside section of the Newmarket Road 'eastern access' which is recognised in local planning policies. This should include commercial and community opportunities serving the Riverside neighbourhood. We hope this will provide a degree of 'future proofing' against inappropriate development proposals and decisions, and encourage desirable outcomes.

Elizabeth Way Roundabout – Underpass Project



The Elizabeth Way / East Road Roundabout is a well-known 1970s piece of infrastructure containing a pedestrian underpass, reached through tunnels decorated with Cambridge-themed murals. About a third of it is landscaped, containing 3 mature plane trees, and, to get a sense of its scale, the IMAX cinema in Waterloo could fit into it. Current GCP

plans propose to infill the drum with concrete and replace it with an at-grade 'Cyclops' intersection, which all traffic users would negotiate at ground level. The draft plans have undergone several public engagements but were in the majority rejected.

If current plans can be set aside, there is potential for adaptive reuse of the space, which would save the thriving biodiversity and maintain separation between pedestrians and traffic. Possible uses could address Cambridge's insufficient space for young people by way of community centres. A Youth Zone in the space could offer a varied and intergenerational programme, including podcasting studios, arts and crafts, repair workshops, a community kitchen, and an auditorium.