



## Greater Cambridge Local Plan Consultation – response on behalf of the Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026

### Introduction

Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum (CLAF) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan. CLAF is a statutory advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 with a remit to advise local authorities on access to land for open-air recreation and the management, protection and improvement of public rights of way and access networks across Cambridgeshire.

Our comments focus on policies and proposals in the Draft Local Plan that relate to public rights of way, green infrastructure and connectivity, movement and access, and the interaction of development with the wider countryside, reflecting CLAF's remit and statutory role.

### 1. Principle: Rights of Way and Access as Essential Infrastructure

CLAF strongly supports the Plan's strategic aim to direct development to locations where active and public transport can be prioritised and where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development. It is essential that public rights of way and other access networks are recognised and safeguarded as core infrastructure, equivalent in importance to transport, utilities and community facilities.

We recommend explicit wording in relevant policies to:

- Protect existing public rights of way from loss, severance or compromise as a result of development proposals.
- Ensure that any necessary alterations are only permitted where they result in like-for-like or improved access for all lawful user groups, including walkers, equestrians, cyclists, carriage drivers and people with limited mobility.

### 2. Policy Integration: Green Infrastructure and Access Networks

The Draft Local Plan identifies strategic priorities for increasing and improving green spaces and networks for people and wildlife, including Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives which aim to enhance green spaces across Greater Cambridge.

CLAF welcomes this approach but emphasises that:

- Rights of way and public access routes must be fully integrated into Green Infrastructure networks. Strategic green infrastructure planning should explicitly reference legal rights of way and multi-use route connectivity.

- Policies should ensure that natural green spaces are not only accessible but are linked by high-quality route networks that support recreational access and sustainable travel.
- Consideration should be given to cross-boundary connectivity, ensuring that strategic initiatives do not create fragmented or isolated access corridors.

### **3. Development and Connectivity**

For new development sites, particularly on the edge of Cambridge, in new settlements, and in the rural southern cluster, CLAF expects:

- Early engagement with rights of way teams and access stakeholders during site master planning.
- Provision of safe, convenient, coherent and attractive routes that connect new communities to existing path networks, services, public transport nodes and green spaces.
- Routes designed to enable a range of non-motorised users, recognising that multi-user access benefits health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

### **4. Movement, Sustainable Transport and the Countryside**

Policies within the Infrastructure theme (including sustainable transport and connectivity) are central to reducing reliance on cars and supporting active travel.

CLAF endorses the move towards pedestrian and cycle priority, but highlights the need for:

- A strategic approach that maintains rural rights of way connectivity, not only within built areas.
- Recognition that, for many people accessing the countryside, rights of way are the primary means of travel for recreation and short utility journeys.

### **5. Mitigation and Enhancement**

Where new development is likely to increase recreational pressure on the countryside, CLAF supports:

- Proactive mitigation measures, including improved access infrastructure and circular routes, to disperse recreational use and reduce impacts on sensitive landscapes.
- Securing access improvements through planning agreements to ensure timely delivery and long-term maintenance.

### **6. Monitoring and Delivery**

CLAF recommends that:

- The Monitoring Framework includes specific indicators related to rights of way condition, connectivity and user satisfaction.
- Delivery mechanisms are clearly identified for the implementation of access improvements, including collaboration with parish councils, landowners and user groups.

### **Conclusion**

CLAF supports the overall vision of the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan but urges stronger, more explicit policy commitments to protect, enhance and integrate public rights of way and access networks across Greater Cambridge. Clearer policy language and delivery mechanisms will help ensure that access infrastructure contributes fully to the Plan's objectives for sustainable development, healthy communities and green infrastructure.

In summary, CLAF **objects** to two Policies as they are now envisaged:

**Policy WS/CF: Community, sports and leisure facilities and**

**Policy I/ST: Sustainable transport and connectivity**

CLAF welcomes continued engagement as the Plan progresses to submission and examination.