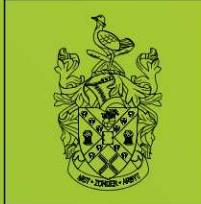


# Zero Carbon Strategy



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

2020



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# Foreword

## Foreword from Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader

**For the past two years it has been my ambition that South Cambridgeshire be the greenest district council in the country and that has not changed.**

Climate change remains the biggest threat to the future of our world, even more so than Covid 19 or even God forbid, any future pandemics. But we undoubtedly have to rethink how we do this in light of significant economic and financial uncertainty and a lack of clarity on how people will be living their lives after this crisis has passed. It may well be that more people will be working from home, it may be that public transport will look very different but we cannot wait for all these questions to be answered before we start to act. Having a really aspirational Zero Carbon Strategy will help us to maintain the improved air quality we now have, to keep people walking and cycling more and hopefully to help us rebuild our economy to be fit for a really low carbon future.



## Foreword from Cllr Pippa Heylings, Chair of our Climate and Environment Advisory Committee

**Covid-19 has changed our world with huge human cost to so many and this will have an impact on all we do.**

However, it will not make the climate crisis go away. Indeed, scientists have pointed to the likely links between climate change, the destruction of nature and pandemics. Meanwhile, we are already feeling the effects of climate change in the UK through the increased frequency and intensity of storms, flooding and heatwaves; as well as problems with water scarcity and air pollution. We have limited time to act and we need to tackle all these crises at the same time through a green recovery that lifts up communities and businesses in ways that slash carbon emissions and increase our resilience. As a council we have a significant role to play here. Now more than ever, we need our Zero Carbon Strategy to guide the ways in which homes and workplaces are designed and constructed; to ensure that any new development is well served by low carbon transport links like public transport, cycling and walking; and to work in partnership with our communities towards widespread adoption of zero-carbon lifestyles.



# Our vision

**We will lead the transition to low carbon living in South Cambridgeshire.**

We will put our own house in order, so it is an example to others, and work with partners to encourage the adoption of our own high ambitions at scale.

We'll look at all our work through a green and fair lens, promoting innovative low carbon solutions that also address problems of fuel poverty and lack of access to affordable housing and good public transport.

We will encourage low carbon energy generation in the district in suitable settings.

We will be ambitious in our support of new woodland, which will help us double nature as well as reach net zero carbon.

# Our targets

We share, with partners and the community, the aspiration to deliver a 50% reduction in carbon emissions from the South Cambridgeshire area by 2030 relative to a 2018 baseline, reducing to net zero carbon by 2050 at the latest.

This target is in line with the scale of reduction required to keep any global temperature increase below 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures based on the concept of a global carbon budget.

For our own estate and operations, over which we have direct control, we will deliver a reduction on 2018-19 levels of at least 45% by 2025, and at least 75% by 2030.

This includes:

- For our fleet of vehicles, a 50% reduction by 2025, and a 90% reduction by 2030
- For our main office at South Cambridgeshire Hall, a 50% reduction by 2025 and a 75% reduction by 2030

Targets for reducing emissions from our housing will be developed upon completion of preparatory work. See page 8.

## What do we mean by net zero carbon?

When we burn fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas, greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere. Like a greenhouse, these prevent heat from escaping, and so, keep the world warm.

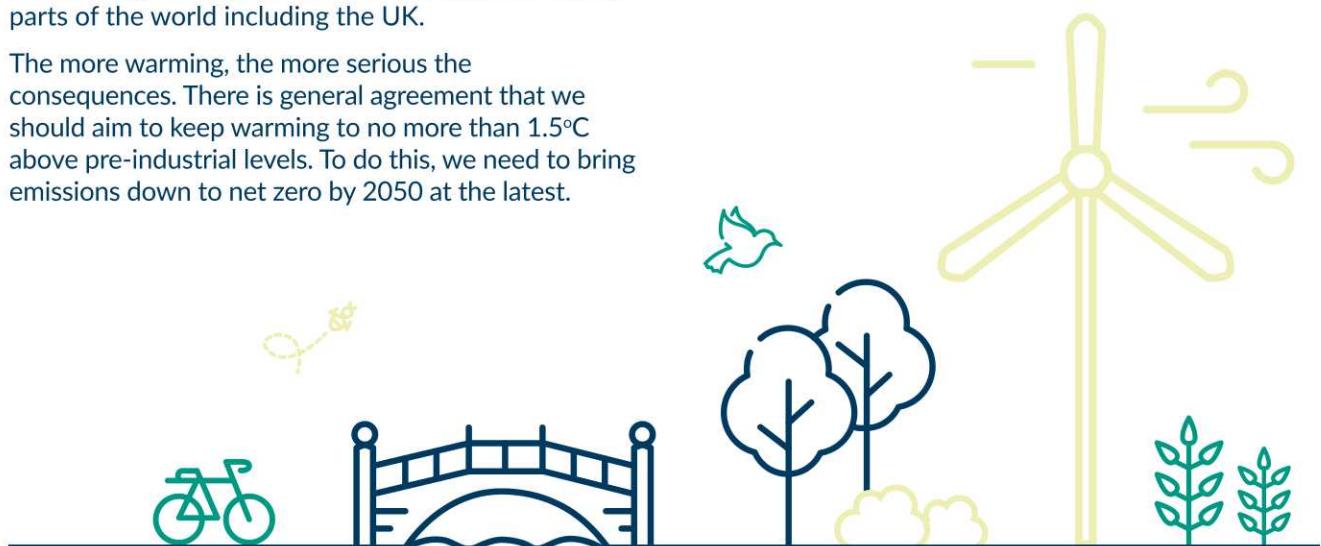
The main greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide, (CO<sub>2</sub>), and it is responsible for over 80% of global warming, and so, for shorthand, we talk about carbon.

Over the years, greenhouse gases have accumulated in the atmosphere, and their warming effect is now leading to rising sea levels and the breakdown of our climate. Extreme weather is becoming more common and causing floods, heatwaves and droughts in many parts of the world including the UK.

The more warming, the more serious the consequences. There is general agreement that we should aim to keep warming to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. To do this, we need to bring emissions down to net zero by 2050 at the latest.

The way to do this is to reduce the energy we use, and instead of using energy derived from fossil fuels, switch to energy from low carbon sources.

Net zero carbon means balancing any remaining carbon emissions by removing an equal amount of carbon from the atmosphere, for example by growing more trees.



# Our approach

As a Council, we have direct control of a tiny proportion of carbon emissions from the South Cambridgeshire district – less than 1%. But there is a lot we can do to influence the remaining 99%, and we will encourage progress towards net zero carbon emissions wherever we can.



# What we're doing

In November 2019, we declared a climate emergency, and pledged to:

- ✓ Publish a report, within 6 months, about our carbon reduction targets and projects for our own buildings and operations
- ✓ Ensure all our strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning decisions are in line with a shift to zero carbon
- ✓ Ensure the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan fulfils its role in bringing forward net zero carbon development, particularly in new housing and infrastructure, as well as ensuring new development can adapt to our changing climate
- ✓ Work with partners across the district to deliver the net zero target through investment (including grants), skills, strategies and planning

This strategy outlines our approach to supporting the transition to net zero carbon in the district. We know from the most recently available government data that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from South Cambridgeshire totalled 1,255,000 tonnes tonnes in 2017.

Over the following pages, we have split our approach to lowering the district's carbon emissions into how we can influence several areas, including:

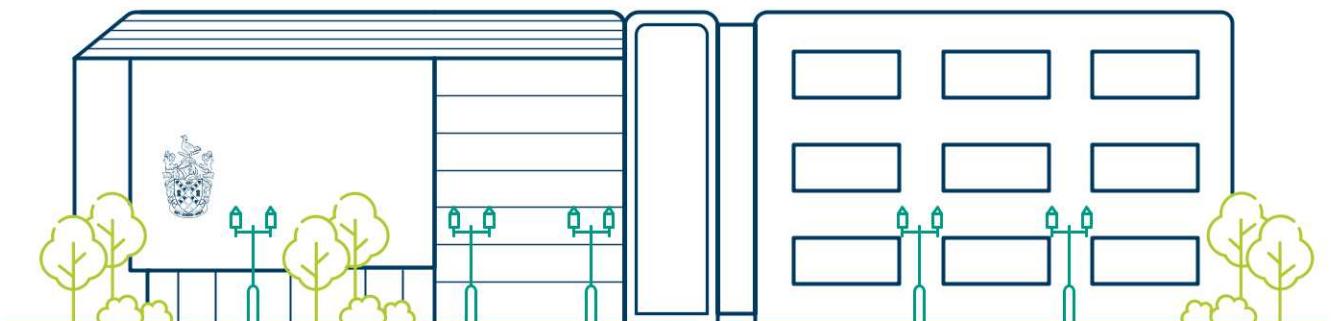
- Homes
- Workplaces
- Transport
- Recycling and waste
- Energy
- Land and trees

Each section provides a brief overview of the issues involved in tackling emissions from the sector, followed by a broad outline of the main ways in which we are taking action using our widening circles of influence:

- Putting our own house in order so we can be an exemplar to others
- Using our direct influence through policies
- Making the most of our wider influence

## Implementation

The Zero Carbon Strategy will support the Council to deliver on its corporate priority of Being Green to Our Core. Actions to implement the strategy and deliver the targets for carbon emissions reductions will be developed by each of the Council's Service areas and incorporated into the Council's Business Plan. Progress on these actions will be monitored by the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee and reported to Cabinet at the end of each year.





# Homes

**There are around 67,000 homes in South Cambridgeshire. Providing heating and power for them gives rise to nearly 250,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. That is around 20% of the district's carbon footprint.**

Reducing carbon emissions from housing is a huge task. In our largely rural district, around a third of houses are off the gas grid, and we have fewer flats and more large and detached homes. Many homes in the district were built recently and so have relatively high energy efficiency standards, but still, 15% of homes were built before the Second World War and have hard-to-insulate solid walls. We have nearly 3,000 heritage buildings which are particularly challenging to make energy efficient.

Decarbonising homes will mean replacing gas and oil heating systems with low carbon alternatives. In many cases these will be heat pumps (or hybrid heat pump and gas systems) powered by electricity which increasingly comes from renewable energy and other low carbon sources. It will also be essential to minimise the need for heating by improving the fabric of buildings.

We know many more homes will be built over the coming years. We need to ensure these are designed to be as low carbon as possible in operation, and that carbon emissions associated with their construction are as low as possible. We also need to consider how to make the most of the opportunity to lock carbon into new buildings in the materials used in construction, especially timber and to minimise water consumption.

The costs of keeping warm in poorly insulated homes can be crippling for vulnerable and low-income households. We recognise this and will focus on helping make the homes of these households more energy-efficient, in both the owned and rented sectors.

# Homes: Our approach



## Put our own house in order so we can be an exemplar to others

We own 5,300 Council homes. Although we don't directly control energy use, and hence emissions, from these properties, we have a significant opportunity to reduce these emissions through improvements to their energy performance. During recent years we have invested in making them cheaper and easier to heat, to the benefit of our tenants' health and wellbeing. Our Council homes now have an average energy performance rating of 75.9, compared with an average of 60.3 in the private rented sector.

We are commissioning an audit of our housing stock, which will then determine what steps we need to take to bring carbon emissions down to zero by 2050. This will inform the development of a four-year programme of work to tackle the areas of highest priority.



## Use our direct influence through policies

### • Planning Policy

Climate change was a major theme in The First Conversation for the new joint Local Plan for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire (the Greater Cambridge Local Plan), which will guide decisions on planning matters for years to come.

We will support the transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 through the Local Plan and have commissioned evidence to inform the development of appropriate policies. We will also develop policy to ensure that new development is capable of adapting to our changing climate, giving consideration to issues such as reducing flood risk through the use of sustainable drainage systems, and reducing the risk of overheating in new homes without the need for energy and carbon intensive systems such as air conditioning.

Meanwhile, our current Local Plan has 12 policies relating to sustainable design and construction. We have developed a supplementary planning document for developers and planners to ensure that these policies are implemented as effectively as possible.

### • Private Rented Sector

About 5,500 homes in the district are in the private rented sector (8.5%). New Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) legislation means that from April 2020 properties with EPC F and G must not be rented out unless a valid exemption has been registered. We will support private landlords with advice and guidance to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Most private landlords take a responsible approach; where this is not the case we will take appropriate enforcement action.

### • Investments

Ermine Street Housing is a housing company set up and owned by the Council to generate income to protect and provide services to residents. It owns and leases over 500 properties. The company will work towards taking the same approach to reducing energy use and carbon emissions on these properties as we do on our Council homes.



## Make the most of our wider influence

We own fewer than one in ten homes in South Cambridgeshire. A huge amount of work is needed to reduce carbon emissions from homes owned privately and by housing associations. This includes improving insulation and building materials to reduce the need for energy for heating and replacing oil and gas heating systems with low carbon alternatives such as heat pumps.

We will continue to work with partners including our neighbouring local authorities through the Cambridgeshire Energy Partnership to find ways of supporting and encouraging this work such as exploring options for funding and delivering energy efficiency projects for our residents.

We will focus especially on vulnerable and low-income households who struggle to afford adequate heating. Our work here will include working with partners to provide home surveys, advice and free insulation and other measures for households in fuel poverty.



# Workplaces

We have around 8,500 enterprises in South Cambridgeshire that employ 87,400 people in a broad range of industries including farming, retail, health, education, science and technology, manufacturing, IT and the public sector.

Many businesses are small; over a thousand have fewer than 10 employees. A few are large; 40 have more than 250 employees. Providing heat and power for these enterprises gives rise to 326,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> – around 30% of the district's carbon footprint.

Since we have relatively little heavy industry in our district, it is likely that most of the emissions from workplaces come from buildings. This means that many of the considerations for decarbonising this sector are the same as for domestic properties.

40% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in this sector are from electricity, 25% are from gas, and 30% are from other fuels such as oil and coal. Emissions from electricity will fall as government policies to decarbonise the grid take effect. The major task is therefore to reduce the use of gas and other fuels; switching to low carbon heating will be a key challenge.

Businesses often operate from properties they lease. As with the private rented homes sector, this can complicate decisions to invest in energy-efficiency measures, as investors do not automatically benefit from savings to utility bills.

# Workplaces: Our approach



## Put our own house in order so we can be an exemplar to others

- **Our own buildings**

We publish an annual report of our greenhouse gas emissions. In 2018-19 our Scope 1 and 2 emissions (direct emissions and indirect emissions from energy) totalled 1,745 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. These include emissions from our two main premises: South Cambridgeshire Hall in Cambourne, and the Waterbeach depot, home to our Recycling and Waste department and base for our refuse vehicle fleet. 331 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> were emitted to heat and power South Cambridgeshire Hall (2018-19). The figure for the much smaller Depot was 21 tonnes.

- **Greening South Cambs Hall**

We are tackling emissions from South Cambs Hall with a major retrofit project which will include a solar car port, a ground source heat pump, an LED lighting upgrade, renewal of the building energy management system, improvements to the chiller efficiency and replacement of the air handling unit fan. The work will be delivered through an Energy Performance Contract under which our contractor provides a binding guarantee to achieve the energy savings set out in the proposals. The work will achieve an immediate reduction in carbon emissions of 49%. As the carbon intensity of electricity falls in line with planned government policy, this figure will fall further, resulting in a 75% reduction by 2030 and 90% by 2050.

- **Waterbeach Depot**

We have installed solar panels to the roof at the Waterbeach Depot and are exploring the scope for additional energy efficiency improvements.

- **Streetlights**

We own 1,804 streetlamps, not including those on our Council housing estates, and are upgrading these to LEDs. This will reduce their energy requirements by 60-70%, saving significant sums by parish councils, (who pay the bills on these), and reducing carbon by at least 78 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

- **Investments**

We have a portfolio of investment properties including a small trading park at St Neots and office buildings at Cambridge Science Park. We will investigate options for making improvements to the energy performance of these buildings and future investments.



## Use our direct influence through policies

- **Planning Policy**

See identically named section on page 9.

- **Procurement**

We procure goods and services to the value of approximately £16 million every year, providing us with an opportunity to influence businesses to reduce their climate change impact. Changes have been made to the Contract Regulations section of our Constitution to require bidders to confirm that they monitor their existing carbon emissions and submit their plans to achieve net zero carbon emissions. These will be assessed as part of the procurement process.



## Make the most of our wider influence

- **Advice for businesses**

Whilst many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) recognise they can and should do more to reduce their carbon emissions, they often struggle to find the time and money to invest in energy savings and postpone taking action because they do not know where to start.

We will raise awareness amongst local businesses of the financial, reputational and well-being benefits of reducing their environmental impact. We will also make it easier for them to access information, advice and funding on how they can improve their energy efficiency, increase their water and waste recycling and generate their own energy. For businesses impacted by the Covid-19 crisis in particular, the ability to access funding to invest in carbon reduction and reduce costs will be critical.

In addition, we will investigate innovative opportunities to work with businesses and our partners to support the reduction in energy and resource use across the South Cambridgeshire economy, for example exploring group purchasing of solar panels.

We will work towards divestment from fossil fuels in all investments including our staff pension funds.



# Transport

**Transport accounts for over half of the district's carbon footprint, around 679,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. 98% of these emissions are from road traffic, mainly from the M11 and major A roads running through South Cambridgeshire.**

The Covid-19 crisis brought an extraordinary reduction to traffic levels during the period of lockdown and may result in longer term shifts. Before this, emissions from this sector had stayed pretty much the same since 2005, during which time cars had become more efficient, but this had been offset by increased distances travelled. Cars and vans account for 77% of emissions, with HGVs accounting for most of the remainder.

For cars and vans, decarbonisation is likely to be mainly through switching from petrol and diesel fuelled vehicles to electric vehicles, (which will also make the air cleaner and reduce traffic noise). For HGVs, especially long-distance ones, solutions are being worked on and may include hydrogen fuel cells.

Barriers to electric vehicles are falling fast. New electric cars typically do 150 miles or more, and so range is no longer the issue it was. They cost more to purchase than vehicles with conventional engines but are cheaper to run, with lower maintenance costs and a full battery charge overnight at home typically costing around £7. Already, for high mileage users, electric cars are competitive on cost grounds, and will become more so as costs of new cars fall. Most charging of electric vehicles is done overnight at home with vehicles parked on driveways or in garages. Charging points are straightforward to install, and not prohibitively expensive. Where home-charging is not possible, alternative infrastructure will be needed including at workplaces, and public charge points.

Reducing the need for car travel will also be essential as we decarbonise transport. New developments provide excellent opportunities for creating settlements where people can work, play and learn locally, meaning many residents will choose not to own a car. More homeworking, lift-sharing, car clubs and electric bicycles; and better cycling and walking routes and public transport will all reduce car use, and also bring other benefits including improved health, reduced isolation, more pleasant neighbourhoods and less road congestion.

# Transport: Our approach



## Put our own house in order so we can be an exemplar to others

### • Our refuse vehicles

67% of our carbon emissions come from our fleet of vehicles, mainly recycling and waste collection vehicles. These travel over 1,500,000 km each year, use over 700,000 litres of diesel and emit approximately 1,140 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually (2018-19). We already have some smaller electric vans and have ordered our first electric 26 tonne refuse collection vehicle. The new vehicle will have a range of more than 80 miles. During the coming years, we will replace all our vehicles with electric or hydrogen trucks. In partnership with key stakeholders, we also plan to develop a new solar photovoltaic array at our Waterbeach Depot to provide low carbon power for these vehicles.

### • Our travel

By reducing the need to travel for business purposes, we are making significant improvements in our transport carbon footprint. Even without the Covid-19 crisis we expected to see reductions to staff and Councillor business mileage as a result of increased remote working thanks to recent investments in 'Council Anywhere' IT improvements.

We are also making it easier for staff to switch to electric vehicles by installing electric vehicle charge points for use by staff and visitors as part of the major works to South Cambridgeshire Hall. We will explore further options to increase take up of electric vehicles by staff.



## Use our direct influence through policies

### • Planning Policy

Our existing Local Plan includes policies that seek to ensure that development is located and designed to reduce the need for car ownership and to promote sustainable travel appropriate to the location. This approach will be carried forward into the developing Greater Cambridge Local Plan, and consideration will also be given to the role of policy in supporting the development of infrastructure required to support the increased use of low emissions vehicles.

### • Taxi licensing policy

We have revised our taxi policy to include requirements to move to ultra-low or zero emissions vehicles. We are installing electric vehicle charging points at selected locations for exclusive use by taxis.



## Make the most of our wider influence

We will continue to explore ways to reduce the carbon footprint from staff commuting. For example, we operate a 'salary-sacrifice' cycle purchase scheme allowing staff to save money and spread the cost of a new bike and accessories.

We will continue to fund community projects to reduce carbon emissions through our annual Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme, providing grants of up to £15,000. In the first round funds were awarded to a total of 19 projects, including seven projects to encourage cycling such as a subsidised electric bike rental scheme, a pop-up bike repair shop and a community electric cargo bike.

We will continue to work alongside partners at Cambridgeshire County Council, the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to deliver projects that will enhance sustainable transport in the district including cycling provision.



# Recycling and waste

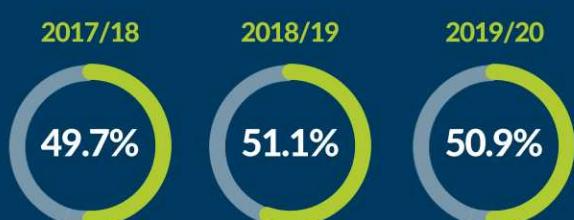
The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service, a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, covers both areas. It collects recycling and waste from 126,000 households and 4,000 commercial customers. It empties 32,000 bins a day and collects over 50,000 tonnes of recycling each year.

In the previous sections we have been primarily concerned with CO<sub>2</sub>, which is the main greenhouse gas released when fossil fuels are burned to provide energy. With waste we are also concerned with methane, which is released from landfill, and, like CO<sub>2</sub>, is a greenhouse gas, but a much more powerful one.

Much of the methane is captured at landfill sites and converted into CO<sub>2</sub>, but not all of it is, so anything we can do to reduce waste going to landfill helps. This is especially the case with organic waste such as food. Currently a third of the rubbish ending up in landfill is food waste. The more this can be diverted so that it can be composted and recycled, or better still avoided in the first place, the better.

We will continue with our work to influence waste and recycling behaviour by individual residents and businesses as well as at community level. We don't have to act alone to do this but seek to collaborate with partners on initiatives.

## Waste recycled or composted



# Recycling and waste: Our approach



**Put our own house in order so we can be an exemplar to others**

## • Our facilities

We will minimise waste in our own operations. We have largely eliminated single-use plastics and minimised paper use through improved IT and back office systems which eliminate the use for printed paperwork. We have also improved recycling facilities in our offices.



**Use our direct influence through policies**

## • Dry mixed recyclables

We will continue to encourage recycling through our recycling and waste collection policies, for example we collect extra recycling from households where their recycling bin is full and also provide an additional recycling bin for residents where needed at no extra charge.

## • Food and garden waste

We will continue to collect green bins monthly in winter when they are less frequently filled up. This avoids unnecessary vehicle journeys, and associated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

We currently collect food waste alongside garden waste placed in the green bin. We are trialling weekly separate collection of food waste at some homes. Separate collections help people to identify how much food they are wasting. If the trials succeed in reducing food waste in the black bins, we will consider rolling these out.

## • Bring banks

We will increase the number of facilities for the collection of clothing and small electrical items. These products are resource intensive to produce. Collecting more of these items for reuse and recycling will allow some of their value as waste products to be captured and turned back into new products.

**As we move towards a sustainable future, waste will increasingly need to be 'designed out' and resources kept in use for as long as possible. This approach is summed up in the idea of a circular economy (see diagram).**



**Make the most of our wider influence**

## • Our campaigns

We will continue to run a number of campaigns to get people to think more about what they are buying and what will happen to it once they have finished with it. These campaigns include the Love Food, Hate Waste campaign which we deliver in collaboration with other councils and with local community groups such as Cambridge Sustainable Food and Food Cycle, and the Refill campaign which helps minimise single-use plastic by encouraging locations to provide free tap water.

## • Helping communities help themselves

We will create a resource toolkit for community groups and parish councils to improve recycling and reduce waste at smaller community events. For larger events, we provide equipment and an information kit to minimise and separate recycling.

We will continue to support waste reduction events at community level. We have worked closely with community organisation Cambridge Carbon Footprint to develop local Repair Cafes. These sociable volunteer-led events bring people who love repairing things together with people who have items to be repaired over a cup of tea or coffee. The Greater Cambridge area now has the greatest concentration of Repair Cafes in the country with at least 14 operating in South Cambridgeshire.

The National Recycling and Waste Strategy has been out to consultation this year and we have ensured that our voice has been heard on the range of proposals suggested. We have done this both individually and collaboratively with neighbouring councils.





# Energy

**Transitioning to Zero Carbon will require a fundamental change in how we generate and consume energy in all aspects of our lives. The Committee on Climate Change reports that the supply of low-carbon electricity will need to quadruple by 2050 in order to meet the needs of the switch to electric vehicles, the move to electric heating and further growth.**

The energy infrastructure in the UK is already changing to accommodate more localised renewable energy sources including solar and wind. This section focuses on opportunities from the generation, storage and supply of renewable energy.

In South Cambridgeshire, there are 14 solar parks in operation with a combined installed capacity of 250MW electricity. There is one large-scale wind farm operational with 13 turbines and an installed capacity of 26MW electricity.

There are two important factors affecting the ability for more renewable energy projects to come forward within South Cambridgeshire. Following changes in national planning policy in 2015, a wind energy development can only be permitted if it is on a site identified as suitable for this purpose in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan. Onshore wind power remains the cheapest form of energy although there can be local concerns. A factor affecting all types of renewable electricity generation is ability to connect to the grid. Our area is one of the most constrained in the whole of the UK and significant grid reinforcement is required to establish the infrastructure for new renewable energy generating assets to connect.

# Energy: Our approach



## Put our own house in order so we can be an exemplar to others

- **Our buildings**

We will continue our programme of retrofit projects to improve the energy performance of the buildings and infrastructure we own and manage. This includes provision for local energy generation, supply and storage. We have completed the installation of a solar panel array at the Waterbeach Depot to provide electricity for the office there. Improvements to South Cambridgeshire Hall in Cambourne include a Ground-Source Heat Pump and a Solar Carport which will provide electricity, including for electric vehicle charge points.

- **Generating clean, renewable energy**

We will explore opportunities for local electricity generation and supply to ensure our buildings and operations reach zero carbon by 2050. For example, we are scoping the generation of low-carbon electricity to supply our fleet of recycling and waste collection vehicles and exploring smart electrical grids in relation to generating and supplying electricity to our housing and offices.



## Use our direct influence through policies

- **Planning Policy**

Our current Local Plan includes policies encouraging the use of renewable and low carbon energy solutions. Our evidence base to support the development of net zero carbon in the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan will explore further opportunities to produce more of our energy in this way. It will also give consideration to how to address electricity grid infrastructure capacity issues through the use of innovative solutions such as smart grids.

- **Investments**

Through our Investment Strategy, we will continue to explore renewable energy projects to invest in which realise financial as well as environmental benefits, with up to £50m to invest between now and 2024. These investments provide an opportunity to supply clean and green heat and power for local communities and explore business models to co-invest with communities. The investments will be good for the environment; meeting our heat and power needs through clean and green energy generation. The investments will be good for the Council; they will provide steady income for us to deliver important front-line services. Business rates from renewable energy projects are ringfenced within our Renewables Reserve for re-investment in programmes such as our Zero Carbon Communities Fund.

We have a growing portfolio of commercial property, and will ensure all are assessed for opportunities to improve energy efficiency, reduce bills for businesses and generate clean and green heat and power on-site.



## Make the most of our wider influence

- **Working with communities**

Community energy refers to the delivery of community led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by communities or through partnership with commercial or public sector partners.

We will support the development of community energy projects in South Cambridgeshire, through our Zero Carbon Communities programme, which includes an e-newsletter, information-sharing workshops and a grant scheme offering up to £15,000 for community led projects which reduce carbon emissions.

We will promote group-buying schemes for renewable energy.



# Land and trees

**Plants naturally capture carbon from the atmosphere. It is stored in leaves, stems and roots and eventually accumulates in the soil. However, agriculture can cause it to be released from the soil at a faster rate than it is replaced, and the latest figures for South Cambridgeshire (2017), show there was a net loss (albeit very small) from the land of 5,400 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. This contributed 0.4% of the total emissions for the district.**

Afforestation and other land-management practices including peatland restoration are ways of increasing the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> captured from the atmosphere and locking it in the land over the long-term.

As a rule of thumb approximately one hectare of woodland is needed to capture 10 tonnes of carbon per year. South Cambridgeshire has some of the best farmland in the country, but relatively few trees. If we are to become a net zero carbon district more trees and hedgerows will be needed and we will need to look at restoring peatland. As well as locking up carbon, these can provide other valuable benefits including amenity and wildlife habitat.

# Land and trees: Our approach



**Put our own house in order so we can be an exemplar to others**

- **Our land**

There are a significant number of trees on land owned by the Council across the district. We will commission a survey to determine how best to manage and protect these trees and to identify areas where more trees could be planted. In the meantime, we are running a small tree-planting project in collaboration with our housing repairs contractor, and we welcome parish councils and residents contacting us with a view to planting suitable trees on appropriate plots of Council land.



**Use our direct influence through policies**

- **Planning policy**

We have a number of planning policies relating to woodland, and/or peatland conservation, including to ensure these are retained and respected on development sites, to require developments to provide additional woodland, trees and hedgerows, appropriate to the setting, for amenity, biodiversity and longevity, and to support appropriate changes of land use, or agricultural diversification, which could include planting of woodland.

We will support the aim of doubling nature in Cambridgeshire through the developing Greater Cambridge Local Plan and have commissioned evidence to inform the enhancement and expansion of our existing green spaces network and supporting policies, including investigation into the potential for carbon sequestration through tree-planting and peatland restoration and conservation.

We will continue to work closely with the government to ensure that a commitment to embed 'natural capital' thinking runs through the approach to developing the OxCam Arc. This is essential so that sustainable places are created for people and wildlife, and the environment is left in a better state for future generations as a result of the initiative.



**Make the most of our wider influence**

- **Tree planting**

We will continue to support tree-planting in the district through our Tree Wardens Network, open to anyone interested in trees and hedgerows. Through the network we provide guidance, information and training to volunteer tree wardens, enabling them to protect and manage existing trees, and encouraging them to take a forward-looking approach.

We will continue to fund community tree-planting projects through our Community Chest (up to £1,000) and our Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme (up to £15,000). This year, to highlight the need to plant more trees, we ran a popular 'Three Free Trees scheme' for our parish councils.



# We need to do this together

**Everyone living and working in South Cambridgeshire has a role to play in the transition to a low carbon society.**

Here are some ways, large and small, we can work together on this.

Get in touch and tell us what else you are doing - [zerocarbon@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:zerocarbon@scambs.gov.uk)

- Cut waste - refuse, reduce, reuse, repair, recycle
- Slim your bin - make your own compost
- Travel less – work at home if you can
- Travel active – can you walk or bike?
- Buying a car? Think electric! Check out the Go Ultra Low website
- Building an extension? Make your home low carbon at the same time
- Heritage home-owner? Get advice on energy from our Heritage Team
- Apply for a Zero Carbon Communities grant – with your parish council or local community group

## Sources used throughout this document

Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

Greater Cambridge Local Plan consultations:

Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange – Net Zero Cambridgeshire

UK Local Authority and Regional Carbon Dioxide Emissions National Statistics 2005-2017

Renewable Energy Planning Database, December 2019

Committee on Climate Change Net Zero – The UK's Contribution to Stopping Global Warming