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2016 Manifesto for Cambridge



Green Party

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Part 1: A Green City Deal - bold solutions to make Cambridge a less congested, healthier city

The City Deal will shape the way people travel around Cambridgeshire for decades to come. It gives us an opportunity to create a modern, efficient and environmentally friendly system which benefits everyone. The finances must be invested in making cycling, walking and public transport attractive alternatives to private car use. The deal must also take into account Cambridge's pledge to become a zero carbon city and the necessity to drastically reduce air pollution to improve citizens' quality of life.

Unfortunately, the current projects bear the signs of a foregone conclusion that more bus lanes and more capacity for motorists is best for local residents. To tackle the congestion crisis, we propose the following alternatives:

Improve public transport, walking and cycling

Improve the bus network with smart ticketing, live information, more evening services and lower prices

Stagecoach has promised for about 15 years to introduce a smartcard ticketing system to speed up boarding but hasn't delivered. This system would reduce journey times for bus passengers and reduce congestion. If bus lanes are built as part of the City Deal, they should be central tidal-flow lanes for inward buses in the morning and outward buses in the afternoon and evening. Furthermore, the benefits and feasibility of a school bus system should be investigated. We would like the City Council to regulate local bus services and will ask for this to be included in any possible future devolution settlement for the city.

Transform Cambridge into a world-leading cycling and walking city with a city-wide plan, ending the current piecemeal approach

Cambridge is flat, compact and has relatively low levels of car ownership. We should be a leading Cycling City where more than half of all journeys are made by bike as in Copenhagen and Groningen (*currently it's about 30%*). The current City Deal [Cross City Cycling proposals](#) are piecemeal projects which do not meet the best practice collected by the [Cambridge Cycling Campaign](#). We will work towards a city-wide plan for a joined-up network of segregated cycling routes and prioritize the involvement of actively engaged cycle campaigners in the city. To cater for increased numbers of cyclists we pledge to increase the number of cycle parking hoops across the city.

Make park-and-ride sites free of charge, more attractive and self-sustaining

The decision by the County Council to introduce fees at the park-and-ride sites has led to a decrease in passenger numbers [by 15% with no signs of recovery](#). Commuters are now using free on-street

parking in Cambridge and surrounding villages to avoid the charge. This has led to increased congestion and is adding to unacceptable levels of air pollution in the city. We will work to remove all charges and invest in renewable energy at the sites so they are self-sufficient. To increase their attractiveness, we will locate small shops on the sites.

Campaign for new railway stations at Addenbrooke's and Cherry Hinton

New stations can help to relieve congestion and reduce air pollution. We are in favour of new stations at Addenbrooke's and Cherry Hinton. The fourth track on the southern approach to Cambridge Station should be reinstated and the link to Oxford completed with high priority.

Ensure genuine consultation with residents and local groups from the start of the planning process

Many residents and local groups are unhappy about being consulted on very detailed proposals without having had initial consultations on the general direction of plans. We do not think people's concerns have [so far](#) been taken on board by the City Deal decision makers. Decisions are taken by a very small number of people and too few residents are even aware of the process. We aim to ensure that residents' views are taken on board.

Reduce traffic and air pollution

Transition to electric bus and taxi fleets

We will require the city's taxi and bus fleet to be electric by 2030 and will support the introduction of more charging points for electric cars. Government grants for converting the bus fleet to electric may periodically be available and the County Council should bid for them.

Phase in a fair congestion charge to reduce dangerous air pollution and to pay for improvement of public transport

As our proposed public transport improvements begin to take effect, we will phase in a daily charge of a few pounds for all motor vehicles travelling within the City Council area. There will be exemptions for people with restricted mobility, families, carers, buses, taxis, and some local businesses with the possibility of including others following a public consultation. The charges will ensure that more polluting cars will pay more by varying the charge depending on the CO2 equivalent, NOx and particulate emissions of the vehicle. Charges will not apply at night, on Sundays and public holidays. This policy aims to reduce congestion, improve air quality and raise revenue to be used to further improvement of other modes of transport as successfully showcased in London. The charge is part of our wider vision of a city where truly affordable and social housing is available in the city, enabling families and people on low incomes to live within city.

Reduce amount of council owned car parking and increase car parking charges

As the improvements in public transport take effect, this measure is introduced to reduce the amount of traffic coming into the city in real terms by making it less attractive to drive into the city. Discounted rates will be available for those that cannot use alternative means of transport. The free space should be used for cycle storage and plans should be developed to transform it into desperately needed inner-city social and affordable housing.

Remove all free non-resident parking in the city

Free non-resident parking within the city encourages motorists to drive directly into the city and park in residential neighbourhoods instead of using park-and-ride or public transport. Removing free parking will reduce traffic into the city and encourage the use of public transport. Increased use of public transport will lead to increased revenue and hence a more reliable service.

Restrict the entry of HGV's into the city and support options for inner-city deliveries to be made by smaller vehicles and bicycles

HGVs block roads and can cause a hazard in the city centre. We support depots on the edge of the city where goods can be transferred to smaller vehicles or cycles. These depots must be carefully sited so as not to cause additional congestion and pollution. We will provide incentives for new and existing cycle courier services on the condition that they treat their employees fairly.

Introduce a Smart Traffic Management to better control the remaining traffic

We support the introduction of smart traffic management to eliminate congestion. Gates would limit the flow of cars into the city to a level which allows traffic to flow freely and would prevent entry to cars at busy times, principally in the morning peak. Buses would pass the gates without a wait and priority could be given to vehicles with more than one passenger. Since it takes only a few extra vehicles to move from free-flowing traffic to gridlock, in the current situation the number of vehicles held back under smart traffic management would be low.

Part 2: A Zero Carbon City; Making Cambridge a world leader in tackling climate change

The battle to stop climate change is heating up, quite literally. February 2016 was the hottest month ever recorded globally. Climate change is already making weather patterns more unpredictable and is contributing to extreme weather events across the globe. Famine and drought are key factors behind the refugee crisis.

To meet the aim of the Paris Climate Change talks to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees, developed countries need to begin making rapid and deep cuts in their carbon emissions. Cities, which account for 80% of these emissions, must lead the transition to a low-carbon future. Cambridge is well placed to lead this change due to our opportunities for investment, our knowledge and enthusiasm and our status as a leading cycling city.

The policies we will campaign for in Cambridge will combat social injustice at the same time as climate change, by contributing to ending fuel poverty, air pollution that often hits most vulnerable people the hardest and inequality.

Tackling climate change is an opportunity, not a burden. The economies of the future must be low carbon. Cambridge is well placed to lead the change and enhance its position as a hub for new technology, industry and creativity.

Greening the council

Reduce emissions from the council's estates and operations

The council has a leadership role in the City and can model change so demonstrating to other sectors the advantages of rapidly reducing carbon emissions. Installing more sources of renewable energy, increasing efficiencies in its operations and council homes, moving its vehicle fleet to be all electric, are just some of the ways this can be achieved. We would work with residents, the community and environmental groups to generate the ideas necessary to significantly reduce emissions.

Make training in sustainability mandatory for council officers to ensure awareness of environmental issues in their everyday work

Sustainability should be at the heart of everything the council does particularly in planning for their future. We will encourage training on sustainability to be made available to council employees and staff so well informed and educated council officers take a pro-active approach to sustainability.

Aim to get the council's energy from 100% renewable sources

The current City Council is proposing a move away from an energy supply that comes mainly from renewables. The Council has significant purchasing power and should be using this power to press companies to invest in renewable sources of energy rather than fossil fuel sources. We would ensure we use an energy supplier committed to investing in the production of renewables.

Making LED lighting as widespread as possible.

The City Council has begun installing energy efficient lighting at some of its car park facilities and other operations. We will support further rolling out of this measure to all facilities and press the county council to use the most efficient technology possible for its street lighting.

Explore options to use residual waste to produce useful products such as biogas for heating systems or powering public transport

Our aim is to reduce waste as much as possible and to use gases from residual waste to create energy, heat buildings and power public transport, in line with guidance from the EU and DEFRA. Combined heating systems in public and municipal buildings could use waste including such that is produced in these buildings as an efficient source of heat.

Encouraging sustainability and resilience

Support the public to reduce consumption and live sustainably

Consumption is the greatest driver of carbon emissions and includes a significant contribution from products imported from overseas. We would be honest with the people of Cambridge about this and lead an engaging and inspiring project to showcase the positives of living sustainably.

Open a city centre 'green hub' to highlight the city's moves to reduce carbon emissions

Citizens of the city need to be actively involved in the movement to stop climate change. We would open a hub in the city centre to showcase the activities and ideas behind this movement. Cambridge has a global reputation and could also use this hub to have a significant positive influence on visitors and tourists.

Promote and showcase the efforts of businesses and organisations which become sustainable and reduce emissions and waste

We would work with local businesses to help them share good practice in reducing carbon emissions and sourcing products locally and sustainably. We would advertise these initiatives and widely publicise those businesses and organisations that meet high standards of sustainability to reward their

efforts and help citizens make informed choices. The City Council should lead the way and aim to have zero waste by 2020.

Provide water fountains in public spaces and promote sustainability at council meetings and events

To be a leader in tackling climate change the Council should be a role-model for citizens and organisations in ending unsustainable practices. More water fountains should be made available in public spaces and in council operations to reduce the need for bottled water. The council should promote diets with less meat, fish and dairy by inviting local caterers specialising in such foods to cater at their meetings and events.

Use council spaces and events to promote activities which involve repairing, reusing, growing and exchanging

We would assist city residents to become more resilient and self-sustaining by using council spaces and events to give people the skills need to repair, reuse, grow and exchange. Doing so makes our communities more sustainable, healthier and more resistant to economic and climate shocks and reduces the need to buy and import goods which contribute to carbon emissions.

Protecting the local environment

Increase tree cover in the city

Increasing the tree coverage in cities by just 10% can maintain temperatures at current levels despite climate change, as well as protecting people from severe heatwaves and making the city a nicer place to live. We would increase the planting of trees in the city and support the turning of derelict and unused land into green spaces.

Produce an 'urban greening' strategy to turn our derelict and empty spaces green

We would put policies in place to avoid the damage to our green spaces, such as that which has occurred on Parker's Piece or Midsummer Common, by better balancing the protection of green spaces with the enjoyment city residents get from fairs and events on our commons,. We would work to ensure the continued stewardship of the River Cam as a leisure resource for the people of the city and a wildlife corridor linking the city and the green belt. To encourage resilience and sustainability in our local communities we would seek to expand the space in the city afforded to allotments.

Part 3: Housing for all – Homes for people, not for profit

Cambridge is in the grip of an unprecedented housing crisis. The Conservative Party, dancing to the tune of the wealthy property speculators and developers who back them financially, continue to pursue policies which are denying many in Cambridge their right to an affordable, warm and secure home.

The city continues to lose much of its social housing, developers refuse to build sufficient numbers of truly affordable properties and large proportions of new homes are sold to property investors and foreign speculators. House prices have risen by more than the average wage in the last two years, rents continue to skyrocket and letting fees continue to increase. People on low incomes and government support are forced to leave the city, homelessness is increasing and more live in poor quality rented properties.

Houses should be homes and not exploited for blatant profiteering. We believe in renters' rights, a rented property is the tenant's home first and a landlord's property second.

Nationally a Land Value Tax, the ending of council house sell offs, reforms to the housing market and a genuine house building programme would end the crisis. In Cambridge we will pursue the following policies to do what we can locally to help the citizens of the city.

Promote affordable housing

Set a target for new developments requiring 50% of the new homes built to be truly affordable.

Too few truly affordable homes are being included in new developments. The Government's definition of 'affordable' is also not appropriate for Cambridge. We support a definition of affordable as being around 65% of market rents. In Cambridge, we will aim for 50% of a new built development to meet this criterion. Such targets have been introduced by many council and are proposed for London. We will further negotiate strongly with developers to ensure these affordable homes are built.

Fight the selling of council and social housing

We believe council and social housing are a vital part of the housing market, providing a place in cities for those on lower incomes. Almost half of the homes sold under 'Right to Buy' in Cambridge are now rented privately, at a cost to tenants and the public. We will support all measures to protect council and social housing stock.

Return empty properties to use

Charge council tax premiums on long term empty properties as soon as possible

2013 figures suggest there were 1,345 vacant properties in the city. With up to 30% of new homes in the city sold to foreign buyers, many likely never living in the property, this number is likely to have increased significantly. Nationally the Green Party would ban non-UK residents from owning property. Locally we support reducing the incentive to invest by taxing empty homes as fully as possible, aiming to return them to the market for local buyers. We will press the council to lobby government to reduce the qualifying period to one year for the council tax premium for empty properties.

Bring empty homes in the city back into use

We would press the council to use their powers to purchase empty homes and return them to use for local residents or community groups as much as possible. There is a severe lack of community spaces for groups in Cambridge and too many forced to sleep rough. This should not be the case in a city with a significant number of empty properties.

Support renters' rights

Campaign to have housing allowance levels set appropriately

Local Housing Allowance is used to support those on low incomes to meet the costs of renting properties. The rate of housing benefit in the City is calculated according to the 'Broad Rental Market Area' of the wider region, which means the level paid in Cambridge is often not sufficient to allow those on low incomes to reside here. We would campaign for the level to be adjusted so it supports people on low incomes to stay in the city.

Run a 'Living Rent' campaign

Huge numbers of people in the city are paying large proportions of their incomes to private landlords. Average rent for a one bedroom flat is now £800 a month. We will run a Cambridge 'Living Rent' campaign, opposing above-inflation rent rises and campaigning for rents to be no more than a third of people's incomes.

Expand the property accreditation scheme for landlords and letting agents

80% of the city's homes are privately owned and at last count only 600 were accredited under this scheme, which aims to ensure a good standard of rented homes. We would support the expansion of this scheme, the offering of more incentives to landlords to join and the promotion of the scheme to allow those looking for properties to find high-quality homes.

Support tenants to claim rent repayment and to avoid unfair eviction

The Housing and Planning Bill, currently passing through the House of Lords, will give tenants the opportunity to claim 'Rent Repayment Orders' when the quality of their rented housing has been sub-standard. As it is likely this will be unaffordable and difficult to achieve for many tenants, we will push for council resources to support tenants to claim their redress. The Bill is also likely to allow landlords to evict tenants without going to court for 'abandoning' the property, a proposal open to widespread abuse. We will give council officers specific responsibilities to as far as possible prevent tenants from being made homeless.

End fuel poverty and make green choices easier

Increase community resilience and reduce carbon emissions with high standards of planning

Cambridge City is on the verge of huge growth, with 33,000 homes projected to be built around the City. This is a unique opportunity to improve our quality of life and health, promote green choices and reduce carbon emissions. We will press constantly for high levels of energy and water efficiency in new developments, easier options for active travel and public transport, local renewable energy generation and measures to adapt to expected climate change.

Advocate the passivhaus standard as the standard of energy efficiency for new homes, reducing energy bills by up to 90%

National government has abandoned the 'zero carbon homes' standard for new developments. We will push for the highest possible standards of energy efficiency in new homes. For developments on current or ex-council land we will require new buildings to be constructed to the 'passivhaus' standard, which can drastically reduce energy bills, limit carbon emissions and free residents from fuel poverty.

More homes for those with complex needs

Re-allocate housing and empty properties for the homeless

The numbers forced into homelessness have risen sharply since the beginning of austerity. Too many are forced to sleep rough in Cambridge and the lack of housing options means families are often given emergency housing in other areas such as Peterborough. We would advocate the use of empty properties for those made homeless.

Ensure sufficient planning of housing for those with disabilities

There is a lack of housing suitable for individuals and families with disabilities and complex needs who face significant financial penalties in meeting these needs. This also puts severe pressure on local NHS

services which are unable to safely discharge individuals home. We would ensure more joined up planning of housing needs in conjunction with the local health authorities.

Part 4: A fair Cambridge for all

6 years of austerity imposed by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have forced the poorest and most vulnerable citizens of the country to pay for the mistakes of politicians, banks and financiers.

Public services have been undermined and the cost of living has risen drastically while wages have stagnated. The UK's richest 1000 families have more than doubled their wealth since 2009 while more than a million visits are made to food banks every year.

Nationally we are committed to ending austerity, to altering our national economy so it works for people, and to reducing inequality.

In Cambridge we will take action to protect the most vulnerable from austerity. We will press to ensure companies pay their fair tax and visitors to the city contribute to its upkeep. We welcome our brothers and sisters, the victims of the refugee crisis and offer sanctuary and shelter.

To meet these challenges we need to inspire and engage the people of Cambridge. We would reinvigorate local democracy by lowering the voting age and changing the voting system.

*Cambridge is a great city; **all must share in its success.***

Fighting poverty

Reduce fuel poverty by investing in energy efficiency and community energy generation

Nearly 7000 households in the city were experiencing 'fuel poverty' at the last count. These tend to be poorer households in the private rented sector who cannot afford rising energy bills and live in poorly insulated buildings. In winter 2014/2015 there were nearly 44,000 excess winter deaths in the UK, a national shame. We support the measures included in the council's anti-poverty strategy. We would allocate more resources to reduce fuel poverty, expect high standards of efficiency in new developments, and explore options to increase local energy generation.

Bold Solutions to help those that are the least visible

Homelessness in Cambridge is mainly due to family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate people, loss of rented accommodation and domestic violence (Review of Homelessness 2015).

We propose that homelessness is tackled in four ways. A prevention strategy will provide diverse emergency support for those in danger of homelessness. We will fund targeted research to identify the real issues so that the right policies and strategies are made. We will explore alternative models of housing to provide alternative, cheaper housing. We will create a new service to partner with local

organisations to ensure that people are reintegrated into society and not just given a roof over their head.

Support the victims of welfare reform and benefit sanctions

The welfare state was created to support individuals when struck by misfortune through unemployment, disability or illness. Recently welfare has been rolled back and used to bully people into low paid work. The cruellest of government cuts to disability support were recently dropped, though the disabled have already been punished by the closure of the Independent Living Fund and the disgraceful 'fitness to work' assessments by private contractors. We will lobby against further reform, explore creative ways of ensuring benefit take up by families and communities, support the Citizen's Advice Bureau, and will back the use of local discretionary housing payments to mitigate the bedroom tax.

Expand the role of credit unions in the city

Credit Unions offer a wide range of services that can help people on low incomes. We would work closely with them to promote their visibility and attractiveness and explore ways to help them spread in our communities. This could include advertising and a presence at council events, at local health services, in council spaces or in the central marketplace.

Oppose closure of the Cambridge Local Assistance Scheme

We will fight tooth and nail to oppose the closure of the County Council's Local Assistance Scheme, which provides small emergency loans in times of crisis.

Support food banks, reduce food waste

There were nearly 5000 visits to the Cambridge City foodbank in 2013/2014. To help tackle hunger we are working to support community groups such as 'Foodcycle' to reduce food waste and provide nutritious meals. We would fund a cycle courier system to take food waste to community organisations, provide training to volunteers to navigate legal requirements and use council events and spaces to give education on cooking cheap nutritious meals.

A fair contribution from everyone

Roll out a 'fair tax' mark for business

Councils in England alone spend around £45 billion a year purchasing goods and services. That money should not subsidise companies which do not pay their fair level of tax, especially when council services are being drastically cut. We have already had a motion passed at the City Council to ask that companies receiving money from the public purse demonstrate that they have paid their fair share of

tax in recent years. We will ensure this becomes a reality and we will award a 'fair tax' mark to businesses trading in Cambridge to help customers make informed choices and remove the incentive to avoid taxation.

Introduce a tourism levy so our city is kept clean and beautiful

While we are all proud of Cambridge as a tourist destination, the council spends significant amounts of money providing facilities for visitors and keeping the city clean. Much of the money spent by visitors does not stay in the area. We would add a few pounds to the cost of a hotel stay in the city, as is done in many other tourist destinations, to bring in additional revenue that could be used to keep the city clean and beautiful for visitors and residents.

Reinvigorate local democracy

Lobby for proportional representation and pilot change locally

The current UK system produces staggeringly disproportional results that rob the public of the kind of politics they want to see. The huge numbers of wasted votes leads to low turnout, cynical tactics by politicians and a lack of faith in democracy. We want to see proportional representation introduced so everyone's votes matter. We will lobby government to change and to allow Cambridge to pilot a new system in our local elections, like that employed to elect the Scottish and Welsh assemblies.

Lower the voting age so 16 and 17 year olds have the vote

16 and 17 year olds can pay tax, join the army, consent to medical treatment or get married, yet they are unable to cast a vote in an election. The Scottish Referendum showed that the young can be trusted to take an interest in politics and there has been a blossoming of activism and increase in political activism since that vote. We would ask the council to lobby for the lowering of the voting age and the inclusion of Cambridge City in any pilot of the scheme, so that the young people of our city can join in and invigorate our local democracy.

Encourage participation at all levels of government

To many, politics can seem like a closed shop. The challenges of raising issues, taking part in council meetings, and the negative bickering of political parties put many off engaging in local democracy. Our council is less informed, less responsive and less able to implement positive change because of this lack of engagement. Our councillors and activists will always act politely, will be respectful of other's views and will seek out opportunities to involve all parts of the community in decision making.

Welcome and support refugees

Offer more housing and support for refugees while lobbying to change the asylum system

Cambridge has reacted positively to the great refugee crisis with many expressions of solidarity. We were glad to help make Cambridge a 'City of Sanctuary' for refugees. We would offer to house more refugees and work with the community to provide the often complex support needed to people who have fled war and repression. We will lobby the government to reform the asylum system which is unfit for purpose and which often exacerbates the challenges faced by refugees.