

A GREEN FUTURE FOR CAMBRIDGE AND SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE 2024

As a society we are facing linked climate, nature and inequality crises and worsening economic conditions. The Green Party of England and Wales has a vision for a Green Recovery that will both promote social justice and tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. Policies to reverse inequality, climate breakdown and shrinking biodiversity are at the very heart of our thinking.

For real progress, we need more Green voices in Parliament and ambitious, evidence-based policies promoting both social justice and climate justice. The need is all the more urgent here given the strategy recently imposed upon Cambridge by central government, which would involve a massive increase in development and population in this region.

A General election has been called for 4th July 2024, when all residents of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire will have an opportunity to cast their vote for a local Green MP candidate; all such votes will contribute much needed funds towards the Parliamentary administrative costs of those Green MPs who are elected elsewhere in the country, thus ensuring a more powerful and effective challenge to government - whoever is in charge.

The City Council held elections on the 2nd of May 2024. We now have five Green councillors in Cambridge, and we shall be campaigning in the future to secure more Green council seats so we can become an even more powerful voice for social and environmental justice. South Cambridgeshire will have local elections in 2025 – when the whole of the County Council is up for election – and then in 2026, when South Cambridgeshire District Council has its elections.

HERE IS OUR VISION FOR CAMBRIDGE AND SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE UNDER GREEN-LED COUNCILS:

Real action on the climate emergency

Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambs District Council all declared climate and ecological emergencies in 2019. Cambridgeshire is one of the hottest parts of the UK while globally 2023 was the hottest year on record. Climate justice and social justice are inextricably linked and Green-led councils would put them at the heart of every decision, especially in relation to planning. The Green Party of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire endorses the Doughnut economics model (the notion that society must meet everyone's needs without exceeding the capacity of the earth to sustain us) and we want to see the concept fully honoured and acted upon.

A Green City Council would encourage and support businesses and institutions to adopt more ambitious net-zero commitments and implement actions to reach net-zero by 2030 at the latest, in line with the Cambridge Climate Change Charter. It would encourage businesses to include weather extremes in their business continuity strategies. It will build on the "Green Transport Revolution" by installing many more free or low-cost charging points for electric vehicles. It will continue to put pressure on large institutions to break their ties with the fossil fuel industry.

A fairer, more equal society

The Green Party nationally is calling for a wealth tax, the introduction of an unconditional Universal Basic Income and free school meals for all primary and secondary schoolchildren.

We would lobby for a Universal Basic Income pilot in the city, ensure policies take account of the mental health crisis, promote disability rights and endorse the social model of disability, tackle misogyny and violence against women and girls and defend LGBTIQ+ rights, rekindle Cambridge's Neighbourhood Watch and Speed Watch schemes and improve street lighting. We would continue to promote Cambridge as a City of Sanctuary welcoming refugees and would identify and act on the needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.



Adequate, available and affordable housing and an end to homelessness

Greater Cambridge has a housing crisis with a lack of available and affordable housing forcing many to live miles from their place of work and four out of five people unable to afford the average rent. We would ensure that the provision of homes at social rents is central to council-driven development; reinforce the Housing First initiative and set up a “Redundant Buildings Taskforce” to bring empty properties back into use; replace council houses lost to “right to buy” by buying back properties and letting them out at genuinely affordable rents; explore alternative housing delivery options, including creative use of empty buildings and innovative schemes such as Property Guardianship.

Comfortable, energy-efficient buildings

Everybody should be able to live and work in safe, comfortable buildings that make minimum use of carbon-intensive materials and are efficient to run. Wherever possible, existing buildings should be renovated rather than rebuilt. We would fund accessible, lower cost retro-fitting, such as insulation, for as many Council homes as possible and continue to work for and with social housing residents to get hazards like mould and condensation rapidly resolved.

A Green transport revolution

We need a rapid shift to greener travel, with a more joined-up approach to transport planning and a focus on ending fossil fuel dependency. We would improve the bus service and cycle network and discourage driving so as to reduce congestion as well as carbon emissions. Funds raised by a Workplace Parking Levy paid by large employers (but with suitable exemptions including the NHS and disabled parking spaces) would be invested in major improvements to public transport, resulting in modernised, well-connected, fast and easy to use bus services. We would introduce emissions-based parking charges for residents’ parking and support innovative ways to reduce private car use, such as car-sharing schemes and electric scooter/bicycle hire. We would engage with the design of Greenways, making sure the views of residents and users are taken into account.

Protecting nature and green spaces for everyone

Despite Cambridge’s iconic green spaces and commons, an estimated 68% of the city’s residents do not enjoy the level of access to green spaces recommended by the World Health Organization, while Cambridgeshire is one of the most nature-depleted areas in the country.

A Green City Council would oppose further losses of urban green space and Green Belt through unfettered development. Brownfield sites will be prioritised where there is a genuine need for development. The Green Party would promote the expansion and full protection of the network of City Wildlife Sites, Country Parks and Local Nature Reserves, enabling connectivity. It would continue to build on Cambridge’s achievements as a Sustainable Food City by promoting sustainable food growing initiatives.

Caring for our rivers and streams, safeguarding water supplies and addressing flooding

The Cambridge region is experiencing an accelerating water crisis, with severe drought in 2022 and 2023 and flooding in 2024. With increasing climate change-driven weather extremes, summer rainfall is predicted to fall by 60% and winter to increase by 30% by 2080. The region is classified by the Environment Agency as “seriously water-stressed,” and the city’s supplier, Cambridge Water, predicts that the region will run into a water deficit by 2029/30. Water quality is rapidly worsening as rivers and streams are becoming highly polluted by sewage and chemical toxins. Large-scale housebuilding and business development will make this worse. Nationally the Green Party is calling for water companies to be brought into public ownership, since a resource as vital as water needs to be run by the public and for the public good. The water companies and the Environment Agency must address drought and flood issues together. Green-led Councils in this region would oppose any development unless there is certainty of adequate water and the highest water efficiency credentials. They would engage with water companies to rapidly reduce abstraction of the chalk aquifer and push for the prioritisation of nature-based solutions, including restoration of flood plain habitats and appropriate vegetation management to slow down surface run-off, reduce the risk of flash-flooding and minimise pollution.