

CGC Advisory Council Advisory Council – July 2025

Agenda Item 5: Adoption of Environment Principles

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Since its inception in May 2024, the Cambridge Growth Company (CGC) has been making strides to progress the government's ambitions for housing and economic growth in Cambridge.
- 1.2. Partners and stakeholders are eager to understand the direction CGC is taking to support and deliver the Government's ambitions for Cambridge. There is also an appetite for communities to learn about and understand the potential environmental impacts of growth and how those impacts might be avoided or mitigated.
- 1.3. Communities and NGOs have raised concerns about how any proposed growth for Greater Cambridge could either protect or harm natural systems, impact water quality, address water scarcity, influence the ability of development to adapt to a changing climate, and how the project will support and enable the transition to net zero.

2. The potential application of the OxCam Environment Principles by the CGC

- 2.1. There is a desire amongst stakeholders to ensure that environmental sustainability is woven into the programme by design.
- 2.2. A primary option for consideration could be for the CGC to adopt, or commit to, the suite of Environmental Principles¹ established and adopted by the OxCam pan-regional partnership in November 2024. Such an adoption is a mechanism by which confidence and assurance can be provided to the public and to stakeholders on CGC's commitment to achieving sustainable, inclusive growth.
- 2.3. Supporting the rationale for endorsement or commitment to the Environment Principles considers:
 - That the Environment Principles are up-to-date² and relevant to the geography in which CGC operates. They are evidence-based, technically accurate, and politically nuanced, creating a transparent and actionable framework to stimulate collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders on shared objectives.

¹ See [Environment Principles](#) which are now being governed by the CPCA

² Aligned to the 25-year environment plan and the Environmental Improvement Plan, see [OxCam PRP Covering Report](#)

- The opportunity to explore how the Principles, originally funded by MHCLG and created with the input and support of DEFRA group, can be applied locally and how they can be translated across the wider geography.
- The Environmental Principles align with the broader objectives of CGC to facilitate sustainable, inclusive economic growth and to enable the region to articulate a strong, environmentally progressive agenda to underpin growth priorities.
- The Environment Principles offer a shared and public commitment to creating spaces and places resilient to future challenges, that contribute positively to the global environment and enable a firm sense of place for communities.

3. Principles and Relevance to Cambridge

3.1. Many of the Environment Principles are of particular relevance to the ambitions of Cambridge. By way of illustration and to demonstrate their applicability,

- Principle 1: Net Zero Carbon, identifies pathways that CGC could adopt, such as developing and applying net zero principles, incorporating passive design features in construction and design, and recognising the need to minimise the carbon intensity of building
- Principle 2: Nature and Land sets out a series of principles by which CGC can consider landscape-scale opportunities for nature recovery, supporting local ambitions to double the area of land management for nature, reversing habitat fragmentation and integrating nature, heritage, and the built environment.
- Principle 3: Water, in alignment with the water scarcity agenda, recognises the need to manage water efficiently to secure water availability. Pathways include advocating for water efficiency standards, the application of rainwater harvesting systems in new developments, and the retrofit of existing buildings. At the same time, understand that in the Cambridge context, there is a strong link between water and culture.
- Principle 4: A circular economy acknowledges the need to maximise the economic value of materials, developing and creating high standards for material efficiency in development, and subscribing to the proximity principle for mineral extraction and waste management, where possible.
- Principle 5: Climate Change Adaptation will ensure that growth is resilient to the challenges of a changing climate. This includes taking a nature-led approach to flood risk mitigation, considering resilience to overheating in community spaces and working with climate-adaptive design principles in place-based design.

- 3.2. The endorsement and commitment to applying the Environment Principles, where suitable and appropriate, clearly express the intention to ensure that nature, water, and climate considerations underpin and support CGC's work programme.

4. Advisory Council Discussion

- 4.1. CGC seeks the views of the Advisory Council on whether the CGC should:
- a. look to adopt or commit to a set environmental principles, and if so,
 - b. whether the OxCam principles are suitable and appropriate for the CGC

5. Next steps

- 5.1 For CGC to seek the advice from the AC around the potential adoption of, or commitment to, a set of environmental principles
- 5.2 Should there be a consensus with partners that this is the right approach, and subject to ministerial agreement, the potential next steps may then be for the CGC to:
- a) Continue to engage with partners (including with the CPCA who now govern the environmental principles for Oxford-Cambridge previously developed by the PRP) and MHCLG to shape and define a funded programme that supports, complements, and delivers relevant, appropriate, and applicable activities and initiatives aligned with the Environment Principles and supporting the CGC programme of activity.
 - b) Additionally engage with partners to consider opportunities for mechanisms that provide a space for appropriate input and engagement with stakeholders to bring forward opportunities for investment in environmental infrastructure.
 - c) Subject to progress made against items (a) and (b) above and feedback from AC partners, establish an appropriate public statement of intent for partners to adopt at a future AC meeting formally.