



# Liberal Democrats

DEMAND BETTER  
FOR A CLEANER,  
GREENER, FAIRER  
CAMBRIDGE

## OUR TRACK RECORD

### **It takes the Liberal Democrats**

***- from opposition, to influence the city for the better to***

- get Labour's unfair charges scrapped on disabled and elderly people using the city council's Shop Mobility service
- press for incentives encouraging the switching from diesel and petrol taxis to electric and hybrid vehicles, now in place
- initiate a scheme to improve the Market Square, which is now under way
- get the Council to fund a source of advice to refugees coming to Cambridge
- persuade the Council to plant as many trees as it cuts down in the city
- establish an independent Inquiry into the £750,000 bail out of 'Cambridge Live'
- persuade the Council to develop 'Housing First' provision to address the city's serious problem of entrenched rough sleepers
- initiate Council enforcement work on properties operating dedicated Airbnb businesses without planning permission
- reduce single use plastics and pursue a zero- waste policy in the council's operations
- appoint a caseworker to engage individuals living on the street in positive plans to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle

### **It took the Liberal Democrats**

***- when in control of the Council, to put in place some of today's vital policies***

- The council's first Climate Change Strategy which has driven progressive carbon reduction and now needs stepping up in response to the global climate emergency
- £500m government funding for a Greater Cambridge City Deal so mounting congestion can be averted through better sustainable transport
- One of the country's most generous council tax benefit schemes for disadvantaged households
- Established the demanding 40% affordable housing target in new developments and achieved 50% on council-owned sites
- The building of thousands of new homes meeting the needs of all sorts of residents in new quarters of the city in Trumpington, CB1, Darwin Green and Eddington
- Creation of Area Committees and the Environmental Improvement programme, giving voice and involvement to the city's neighbourhoods and communities – which Labour is now eroding
- Committing the Council to pay the Real Living Wage and campaign for it among other employers
- Creation of the city's current system of domestic recycling collections which achieved steadily increasing recycling across the city, now being reduced by Labour
- Established a programme of insulation improvements in City Homes which cut bills for tenants and carbon emissions from council housing stock.

# LIB DEMS DEMAND BETTER: FOR A CLEANER, GREENER, FAIRER CITY

Our purpose is to make Cambridge a cleaner, greener and fairer city for its current and future residents. Liberal Democrats have a long, practical record on this, both as leaders and opposition on the city council.

Our goals sit in the context of growth, which is putting all three under pressure; whether that's from air pollution, carbon emissions or costs of housing. Clean, green and fair are an important part what it takes to be a successful, thriving modern city – but it takes leadership, vision, values and determination to make it happen.

Our primary commitment is to make a difference with powers, resources and partnerships the council has - and can gain. In support, the council may speak for Cambridge on the national stage. But we do not seek to hi-jack the council to advance wider party political goals or to divert attention from what we could do ourselves.

Governments can help or hinder us (obviously we argue for the former), but the big spread of achievement levels across the country demonstrates that local action can make a big difference.

With our 3 priorities, we bring our own values which we believe reflect those of our city:

- Building strong, healthy and safe communities which safeguard the vulnerable
- Nurturing the city's character, without freezing it in aspic or erecting barricades round it
- Embracing diversity and staying open to the world
- Involvement, openness, evidence-base and outcome focus in decision making
- Careful priority-setting and husbandry of the council's resources

Labour has become Cambridge's new establishment: unimaginative, defensive and self-serving. Their failed experiment of huge new charges on disabled people using the council's Shop Mobility service show that the ideals have long gone. Splurging millions on a B&Q store in Haverhill instead of investment in 'living rent' housing in Cambridge suggests a distorted sense of values. A frantic last minute bail-out of Cambridge Live, using £750,000 of public money, questions whether they have been asleep at the wheel.

Politically correct words abound, but they are losing their meaning. Leadership is hard to detect. The knee-jerk reaction is to reject new ideas, congratulate themselves and attack the government: hardly a formula for going the extra mile.

Cambridge's residents are its key assets. Under Liberal Democrat leadership, the city topped the national survey of residents' feeling that they could influence public decision making. Today under Labour, fewer residents will even be notified of planning applications in their vicinity and more planning decisions are set to be taken by officers in secret. These are moves we are fighting. But they are moves that would not even be made by a Liberal Democrat council.

# A Cleaner Cambridge

*With a growing population, working harder to make Cambridge cleaner is a priority for us. It is important for community pride and cohesion. Our inefficient transport system, consisting of just too much traffic and too much pollution, is in dire need of fixing. Poor air quality is a scourge threatening our health. Street cleanliness is often a losing battle.*

## 1. The way we get around

*Our poor transport system is more and more exposed as Cambridge grows. It creates damaging pollution which can shorten people's lives. It holds back the development of new homes in the area. It reduces the productivity of our local economy. It eats time and patience on a daily basis.*

*It was to help tackle this that the last Lib Dem leadership of the City Council successfully negotiated £500m of 'City Deal' funding from government up to 2030. This creates an unequalled opportunity for the City Council as a member of the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), which must be grasped with vision and determination.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to:*  
**Transforming public transport, reduce car use, make more safe space for cycling and walking.**

- We have fought hard for the GCP's recent public conversation on means of **making public transport the motorised option of choice** within our area and on ways of affording it. We aim to build a consensus for a radical solution which achieves both these objectives on a durable basis, while recognising the diversity and complexity of people's needs in the modern city.
- We will press the Combined Authority to hasten its work to provide a new framework for the **public**

**accountability of bus operators**, capable of ensuring benefit from a substantial public subsidy.

- We want to see **more segregated cycleways** in the city, such as the Chisholm Trail – on which the City Deal has already enabled a start. And through the current 'Spaces and Movement' plan, we will press for the city centre to become **more comfortably walkable** for all.

## 2. Making Vehicles less polluting

*We don't only need less traffic, but cleaner traffic. The evidence of harm to health from toxic fumes is stark and compelling. The impact on climate change is alarming.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to:*  
**Immediate action to deter polluting use of today's vehicles and encouragement of early switching to electric vehicles.**

- We will introduce a community education campaign to discourage the **idling of engines** by drivers when they are stationary and out of traffic, already established in several other cities. And we will use mobile monitoring equipment to create an evidence base for pollution reduction measures beyond the city centre, such as near schools.
- Following the recent adoption of our suggestion of incentives for taxis to

### Ask for Angela

Cambridge is a vibrant venue for people getting to know each other. Liberal Democrats want them to feel safe if they are meeting up in a pub or bar, as unfortunately dates which turn sour carry a risk of developing into sexual harassment or even violence. We are pleased that proprietors are supporting the globally acknowledged scheme which uses the “Ask for Angela” codeword, but they would welcome more awareness, so it can be surer to help those who need it. The City Council could assist with appropriate publicity, but it so far hasn’t - and we would put that right.

switch to electric vehicles, we will demand that the Greater Cambridge Partnership pioneers the introduction of **electric buses** with operators. We support a Clean Air Zone in the city centre to accelerate the transition of public transport and commercial vehicle fleets to electric vehicles.

- We will develop a strategy for the **charging of electric vehicles** across the city, making it more attractive for car users to switch to electric.

### 3. Pride in our public places

*Cleanliness in our streets and public places affects people’s attitude to their community. Along with residents, we remain deeply frustrated about the cuts made last year in the budget for that service, given the growth of the city’s population and its number of visitors.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to:*

- Finding ways of **re-investing savings from the cutbacks** made last year in

order to expand environmental patrols in evenings, weekends and holidays; improve litter picking frequency in residential areas around shopping centres; create an additional litter collection team for the city centre; increase the frequency of bin cleaning; enable wider hours of opening of public toilets and intensify routine maintenance inspections.

- Modernising **city centre street cleansing** through the acquisition of electric, self-propelled street sweepers to replace existing handcarts.
- Introducing a new focus for the residential waste service on **leaving streets tidy on collection days** and explore more frequent **servicing of neighbourhood recycling centres**
- Promoting the establishment of ‘**A GoodGym for Cambridge**’ - fostering volunteering sessions which combine physical exercise for participants with improvement to cleanliness and appearance of the built environment.

### Simplifying local government

Labour has locked the city council into the new Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with its expensive elected mayor – a structure unsuited to the area. Any benefits seem to have been available elsewhere without this extra layer of government. Liberal Democrats will build support to simplify the cumbersome local government structure that has resulted, both to reduce cost and increase accountability - reflecting the reality of interdependencies between people and communities today. In the meantime, we will fight for responsiveness to the needs of Cambridge.

# A Greener Cambridge

*The need for action against climate change and the timeline for taking it are closing in on us. US cities have shown that effective leadership and ownership can be taken at local level, even when national government fails. Although Cambridge City Council has recently - rightly - proclaimed a climate emergency: it is not acting like it is one.*

## 1. Taking on the challenge

*The Liberal Democrats created the council's Climate Change pioneering programme over 10 years ago and much progress has been made. But the frame needs now to change from directionally positive measures to results which simply must be achieved to stave off disaster. The pressure is on the city council, both as an organisation and as our democratic city leader, to interpret the need for our city and take and seed ownership for action.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to:*

**Making the climate emergency meaningful by embracing and leading on a target for Cambridge carbon neutrality by 2030**

- We will urgently review the **council's Climate Change Strategy 2016-21** in the light of the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report and the latest council data
- We will continue to **work with partners** across the city projecting the need to share ownership for the target
- We will introduce as part of the council's own contribution, an **energy investment scheme** for the shops, offices and industrial units in its £150m property portfolio
- We will **challenge the UK government** to provide additional powers and resources to make local action on climate change easier,

notwithstanding the goal of securing voluntary local enrolment in necessary action.

## 2. More trees, more biodiversity

*Trees help mitigate climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and emitting oxygen. They also help to cool the planet. Biodiversity is threatened by climate change and badly needs protecting.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to:*

- Boosting the council's approach to tree planting by securing a **net positive annual target** for trees on council-managed land;
- Introducing a **Children's Tree Scheme** in partnership with the city's schools, capturing the imagination of the young and gifting trees to year 4 pupils for planting in private gardens;
- Embracing **'biodiversity net gain'** in local planning policy and public scheme design and management and increase funding for bio-diversity in council-managed open spaces.

## 3. Recycling

*Recycling reduces consumption of natural resources and reduces the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in production. It requires less manufacture for single use and more separation for reclamation. It is disappointing that the council's recycling collection has plateaued and that they have reduced green recycling collection.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to:*

- Exploring the introduction of **weekly food waste collection** to maximise ease of separation and storage by residents and in the process increasing awareness of food waste;
- Renewing **public education** on the need for recycling and use of the system to practice it;
- Introducing a series of **water fountains** in public places in a bid to reduce purchase of high sugar drinks in single use plastic containers.

### **Water play**

Water play is an eternal pleasure for children, even more sought-after as summers get hotter. Yet in Cambridge it could be available in open spaces in more areas of the city, helping to integrate new communities in Trumpington and Eddington. Investment in modern splash pads would conserve water and the inclusion of a community café, combining oversight and care of changing rooms and toilets would extend the season and provide much needed income to the city. Lib Dems will develop with residents a plan to upgrade existing facilities and add new ones elsewhere.

## **A Fairer Cambridge**

*Cambridge has been defined as the most unequal city in the UK, though mainly because the flight of the wealthy has not happened here. Remaining an inclusive city is a priority for us: we must make this a more affordable place to live for those on all incomes. This is exceptionally tough for many, and also plays through into difficulties for employers to recruit staff. In a world where the tide is against them, liberal values have never been more important in the way the city is governed.*

### **1. Housing**

*The supply of housing of all kinds falls short of demand and the sellers' and the landlords' markets will only be rebalanced overtime if the council as a planning authority enables more new homes to be built. Otherwise Cambridge will become a steadily more polarised community.*

*Development takes time and tenacity. The building going on today in Trumpington and North West Cambridge is the product of Lib Dem long term planning over 10 years ago. It is important that the council retains control over growth, but unless it is proactive, the chances of this are reduced.*

*So, tackling the city's housing problem requires both measures for the short-term*

*and for the long-term and we intend to address both with determination.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to: **Ambitiously addressing Cambridge's overall long-term housing shortage in work on the new Local Plan.***

- We want to see the two large remaining brownfield sites on the edge of Cambridge brought into use: **the Sewage Works** (on which planning has recently restarted) and **Marshalls airfield**, as we foresaw in previous Local Plans. Labour's leadership has dragged its feet with the first and actively fought against the second. Both are consistent with Cambridge as a 'compact city' but would enable its gradual evolution from a centralised

model to one of interdependent quarters of character, with dispersed jobs and services.

- We will mobilise all the powers and pressure the Council has to **expedite delivery of housing** which has planning approval and is in the development pipeline.
- While housing is short, we will apply a high hurdle against the erosion of existing housing into other uses including **dedicated ‘Airbnb’ type accommodation**, and intervene as strongly as possible to bear down on homes being kept empty.

### Why we need local living rents

Property prices and rents make it difficult for key workers to live in Cambridge, fuelling both longer and longer commutes and big recruitment challenges, especially for public services. Liberal Democrats propose a tenancy model targeted at public sector workers such as teachers and nurses: a local living rent. Rents would be set at one third of household income and linked to inflation, rather than the market. To make this happen, we want the council to invest in housing specifically to apply this formula, providing both a social and financial return for the city, and pioneering a model that could be more broadly adopted within new developments.

*While Cambridge’s housing shortage continues, social and affordable housing remains critical to override the market and enable a place in the city for people of all means.*

*Social housing is a vital part of the mix in future housing provision in order to ensure the range of local need is met. The City Council must be a leading provider of this.*

*Private development is the primary means of acquiring new land for these interventions and Liberal Democrats are proud to have set the current planning*

*policy that 40% of new developments should be assigned to affordable and social housing providers.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to: **Maximising the delivery of affordable homes, with the council as a leading social provider, and pioneering new models of tenure to meet other needs not met by the market.***

- We will use all available powers to insist on developers at least meeting this exacting 40% standard for **affordable housing**.
- We will ensure prompt delivery and occupation of the **500 new council homes** which the government has funded for Cambridge. It is regrettable that a large number of these look destined to be substitutes for affordable housing which would have been built anyway: to the degree still possible, we advocate including council homes in redevelopments of council-owned properties, such as the Queen Anne and Grafton West carparks.
- We welcome the government’s recent decision to allow councils like Cambridge to borrow to build. Seizing this opportunity, Liberal Democrats aim for up to 1000 further new council homes and a parallel programme of renovation or replacement of ageing parts of the existing stock over the next 10 years. We will immediately resource the scoping of a detailed strategy **‘Our Cambridge 2030 – Housing for All’**, taking in funding, identification of sites and most efficient delivery.
- From opposition, Lib Dems have already put on the council’s agenda the potential to line up general investment strategy with meeting those housing needs which neither the market, nor social housing is good at

serving – namely key workers. But Labour’s response has been timid. We will invest in providing the council’s first tenancies at **Local Living Rents** targeted at essential workers in the city’s public services: rents related to household incomes – an approach which Labour has repeatedly rejected.

*To fill out its role as social landlord, the council must shape its approach sensitively to tenants needs.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to:*

- Recognising that council properties are people’s homes - by listing sensible exceptions to the council’s recently adopted ‘**zero tolerance**’ policy for items placed by residents in communal areas. It is unnecessarily stringent. While items that obstruct access or fire exits or are unsightly have no place, it insults the intelligence of residents to forbid doormats or potted plants outside their own front
- **Modifying the rents** proposed for the letting of the new council homes, so that those tenants with families who take accommodation of 3 bedrooms or more are not charged the council’s higher level of rent, recognising that Universal Credit will particularly apply a pinch in their situation.

## 2. Disadvantage and Diversity

*The value of ‘fairness’ in a city is shaped by the way it treats those experiencing disadvantage and those who don’t easily conform to tidy stereotypes. Cambridge has a proud liberal tradition with both - and it needs its council to embody them.*

*Liberal Democrats are committed to:*

- Standing resolute against policies like Labour’s **Shop Mobility charges** which hit those experiencing the double misfortune of a disability and a tight budget. We eventually forced a U-turn on their charges after a lot of damage was done, but this so-called ‘experiment’ should never have been started.
- Filling the void of political leadership on rough sleeping and street life issues that are prevalent in our streets by developing a charter, engaging the whole city in a clear sense of purpose. We will also expedite the long overdue expansion of **Housing First**, to address entrenched rough sleepers, and invest in expanding shared housing to help prevent homeless individuals with low needs avoid rough sleeping in the first place.
- Championing enlightened social progress wherever we can. We will promote and apply equal rights in the city – including for LGBT people - in conformance with the law and will support this by nurturing a **spirit of tolerance and mutual respect**.

### Fighting Period Poverty

The plight of women and girls experiencing ‘period poverty’ is now nationally recognised – both for patients in the NHS and for students in secondary schools. This is just the sort of welcome change in social attitudes which Cambridge should respond to positively. With the voluntary sector, Liberal Democrats will supplement this by designing a Cambridge scheme offering free sanitary products in other public places such as toilets and community centres, to bid for council funding.

