

# Cambridgeshire ACRE Strategy 2025 - 2028

Empowering rural communities  
to thrive





## About us

Established in 1924, Cambridgeshire ACRE has been standing up for rural communities for over a century. As we move beyond our centenary year, our new three-year strategy sets out an ambitious yet practical vision for the future, one that ensures every village, parish and rural place across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough can flourish.

This strategy is rooted in the belief that rural communities know their own strengths - and that with the right support, they can shape a sustainable and inclusive future for themselves.

### Our vision

Rural communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough where people flourish, connections grow and everyone can thrive.

### Our mission

To inspire, lead and partner with rural communities, enabling local people to create positive, lasting change for themselves.



## Our values

### 1. Empowerment

We believe rural communities hold the answers to their own success. Our role is to provide the tools, support and encouragement that enable local people to lead and act.

### 2. Collaboration

We achieve more together. Through genuine partnerships built on trust and understanding, we work alongside communities and stakeholders, pooling expertise and resources.

### 3. Integrity

Honesty, openness and accountability are non-negotiable. Communities trust us because we always act independently and ethically, placing their needs above all else.

### 4. Creativity

Innovation drives us forward. We proactively seek imaginative, effective solutions that address rural challenges sustainably and uniquely.

### 5. Commitment

Our dedication to rural communities runs deep. We remain proactive, reliable and driven, tirelessly advocating and working for a sustainable, inclusive future for rural Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.



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## What makes us different

Cambridgeshire ACRE offers a unique blend of deep local knowledge, practical support and strategic influence. We help rural communities:

- Shape their future through housing, planning and leadership
- Run vital spaces like community buildings and hubs
- Improve wellbeing and reduce isolation
- Protect their environment and build resilience to climate change
- Support local economies by connecting businesses and services

Our social infrastructure role means we're well-placed to connect local voices with national policy, respond quickly to emerging needs and make sure rural Cambridgeshire is never left behind.



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# Our strategic aims



## 1. Rural Leadership

**Strengthen Cambridgeshire ACRE as a leading, influential organisation, ensuring we are a trusted, proactive resource for rural communities, valued for our expertise, guidance and community-driven impact.**

We are strengthening our role as a trusted, proactive voice for rural Cambridgeshire. Our leadership helps shape local policies, unlock funding and open doors for community groups.

Through growing our membership, raising our profile and offering consultancy services, we aim to ensure that rural needs are clearly heard and acted upon. Our influence means more investment, better decisions and stronger communities.



## 2. Community Buildings

**Support and sustain community-run assets and services, equipping local groups with the skills, confidence and resources needed to manage and maintain essential spaces that enhance rural life.**

Our support helps over 250 community buildings stay open, accessible and future-ready. These spaces are vital to rural life, places where people gather, access services and build connections.

We're helping volunteers and trustees manage buildings confidently, improve energy efficiency and plan for the long term. Our training, advice and peer support mean local groups can lead with clarity and creativity.

## Our strategic aims



### 3. Rural Housing

**Help communities shape their own futures by facilitating rural and community-led housing development, rural planning and local leadership for sustainable growth.**

We empower communities to lead on local housing solutions, helping them plan, gather evidence and develop affordable homes that meet real needs.

Our expert advice supports the delivery of community-led housing, rural exception sites and neighbourhood plans. We're also expanding our housing consultancy offer, helping more communities navigate planning with confidence.



### 4. Wellbeing and Inclusion

**Enhance the physical and mental health and wellbeing of rural communities by expanding opportunities for participation, improving access to healthcare, tackling rural loneliness and developing initiatives that support healthier lifestyles.**

Health isn't just about hospitals. Our work supports the social and emotional wellbeing of rural residents, particularly those who are isolated, elderly or facing financial pressure.

Our Village Agent programme and Community Hubs help people connect, access services and live more independently. We're growing this support, embedding youth engagement and creating inclusive activities that make rural communities stronger, healthier places to live.

## Our strategic aims



### 5. Environment

**Encourage communities to take an active role in protecting their natural surroundings by conserving landscapes, safeguarding water resources, improving sustainable water management and enhancing biodiversity, creating a more climate-resilient Cambridgeshire.**

We're supporting rural Cambridgeshire to play an active role in tackling climate change, protecting biodiversity and managing water sustainably.

From community-led conservation to partnerships with landowners, our projects encourage environmental stewardship and climate resilience. We're also embedding sustainability across everything we do, from buildings to biodiversity.



### 6. Economic Growth

**Foster a sustainable and inclusive rural economy by supporting local businesses, driving innovation and improving access to employment, training and long-term economic resilience.**

A vibrant rural economy is essential for long-term sustainability. While our current economic activity is modest, we're preparing to play a larger role.

We're supporting rural businesses, social enterprises and employment initiatives—especially where they link with housing, digital inclusion and wellbeing. We're also building our consultancy offer so we can respond quickly to new opportunities.

## What this means for Cambridgeshire

When our strategy succeeds, rural communities benefit in clear, practical ways:

- More affordable homes tailored to local needs
- Welcoming, well-managed community buildings
- Reduced isolation through accessible, inclusive services
- Stronger rural voices influencing local policy
- Greener, more resilient environments
- New opportunities for young people, businesses and volunteers

We are creating a Cambridgeshire where rural communities are not just sustained, they're supported to lead, innovate and thrive.





# How we work with you

## Working together

We don't do this work alone. Our strategy reflects the voices of the people we serve, shaped through conversations with our members, partners, staff and trustees.

We're proud to collaborate with parish councils, volunteers, housing associations, health providers, local authorities and funders. Together, we are building the conditions for success.

## Our commitment

We are serious about impact. We measure what works, share our results and continuously improve. Every project we deliver is driven by community insight and designed to leave a lasting legacy.

Cambridgeshire ACRE remains committed to equity, sustainability and inclusion - ensuring that rural communities have the same opportunities as anywhere else.



## Join us in shaping the future of rural Cambridgeshire

This strategy sets out Cambridgeshire ACRE's vision for thriving rural communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is ambitious, but it is also practical; grounded in the voices of the people we serve and the partnerships that make progress possible.

The next three years will be shaped by collaboration. We know that real change only happens when residents, volunteers, local councils, funders and partners work alongside us. Together, we can make rural life fairer, more sustainable and full of opportunity.

We warmly invite you to join us on this journey:

- Become a member – add your voice to a strong, united rural network and help shape the decisions that affect your community.
- Partner with us – collaborate on projects that improve housing, wellbeing, the environment and local economies.
- Commission our expertise – draw on our consultancy services to bring insight, evidence and solutions to your own work.
- Volunteer with us – share your time, skills and passion to strengthen community life.



## Contact us

Every conversation starts with a simple step. If you'd like to explore how we can work together, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Call us on 01353 860850

Email us at [enquiries@cambsacre.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cambsacre.org.uk)

Keep up to date on our work by visiting our website  
[www.cambsacre.org.uk](http://www.cambsacre.org.uk)

Find us on social media by searching for [@cambsacre](#)



Cambridgeshire ACRE

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