

North Hertfordshire Council

Climate Change Strategy

Proposed Actions

2022- 2027

Taking Action

Taking direct action to reduce the Council's carbon emissions

Enabling Carbon Savings

Ensuring that our policies enable citizens and businesses to reduce their emissions

Inspiring the Community

Encouraging citizens and businesses to take action to go further and faster in cutting carbon emissions

TAKING ACTION

Objectives

- *Achieve Carbon Neutralityⁱ for the Council's own operations by 2030 (at least Scope 1 and Scope 2)ⁱⁱ.*
- *Ensure all operations and services are resilient to the impacts of climate change.*

Reducing the Council's own carbon emissions by targeting:

Council Buildings and Property

- Ensure that new system installations are renewable electricity rather than gas-fired, where this is deemed the best option after thorough consideration
- Consider replacing gas with electricity from renewable sources where appropriate
- Ensure no new buildings use gas-fired systems
- Explore use of heat pumps (ground source or air source) to provide heating as the technology develops
- Continue to identify ways to improve building energy management systems to reduce waste
- Improve building insulation and conduct lighting surveys to reduce energy outputs

- Increase incorporation of green clauses in leases and licenses for NHC's property estate (e.g encouraging tenants to consider whole life carbon assessments when selecting construction methods or materials in their leased property)
- Build on the environmental, economic, and social sustainability principles presented in NHC's Property Acquisition & Development Strategy when appraising prospective property acquisitions, to ensure pre-acquisition due diligence is comprehensive and not solely focused on financial drivers
- Explore and progress on-site generation of electricity from solar or wind
- Explore opportunities for the sustainable heating of swimming pools

Transport

- In accordance with the Council's 2019 resolution, continue replacing all future operational vehicles leased or purchased by the Council with Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) or zero emission vehicles until the last non-ULEV vehicle leases expire; and encourage contractors to adopt similar measures
- All council-owned or leased cars and light goods vehicles acquired from 2025 onwards to be zero emission wherever feasible. All heavy goods vehicles acquired from 2025 will have the lowest practical emissions at the time of acquisition. The council will ensure that it has a strategy for dealing with the emissions of any such vehicles by 2030 (if they are expected to be still in use at that time) as part of its organisation wide offsetting plans
- Reduce staff and Councillor business travel through use of Zoom and similar technologies as much as possible
- Reduce staff commuting unnecessarily through home working as much as practical
- Explore opportunities around low-emission refuse freighters

Offsetting

- Quantify the contribution that tree planting and soil sequestration within North Herts could make to offsetting the Council's carbon emissions.
- Seek to retain and preserve scrub and woodland edges to protect trees and maintain natural boundaries to woodlands
- Where appropriate, change grass verge cutting regimes to allow more plant species to grow
- Create more wildflower areas across the district
- Seek to strengthen hedgerows and have them connect fragmented habitats

Explore options for the preparation of an evaluation, updated each year showing:

- Carbon savings that have been achieved since the 2019/20 baseline
- The savings identified to make progress towards the carbon neutral by 2030 target
- The savings still to be identified

Continue to consult with the public and with interest groups on strategies for achieving zero carbon emissions for the Council by 2030, and the District by 2040.

TAKING ACTION: 2022 ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

- Provide climate change training for staff and councillors
- Implement relevant actions from the HCCSP strategic action plans on [Water](#), [Biodiversity](#), [Carbon](#), and [Transport](#)
- Ensure all other Council strategies reflect the climate emergency and our net zero targets (e.g Air Quality Strategy; Biodiversity Strategy; Green Infrastructure Strategy)
- Investigate low carbon solutions for the next waste contract which will commence in 2025
- Ensure our waste depot has the appropriate infrastructure to support low carbon solutions and our climate targets
- Utilise the Climate Change and Sustainability Officers Group to assign actions to officers and teams, setting measurable outcomes and time frames to develop an internal action plan
- Put in place a process to enable us to identify and collate risks to Council services from climate change, and a framework for how to respond and mitigate
- Explore the potential for offsetting the balance of the Council's irreducible carbon emissions using renewable energy generation
- Establish a way of allocating the cost of offsetting measures to understand the true cost of emission-generating decisions

Having explored options for the preparation of an annual evaluation, we will:

- Publish the findings of our carbon baseline report
- Produce an annual estimate of the Council's carbon emissions that is comparable to the 2019/20 baseline
- Publish forecast progress to achieving our 2030 net zero target
- Establish a process for ascertaining and reporting the carbon impact of proposed projects and decisions

ENABLING CARBON SAVINGS

Objectives

- *Achieve a Net Zero Carbon district by 2040.*
- *Become a district that is resilient to unavoidable impacts of climate change.*

- Work to develop and support policies that encourage electric vehicle use and other 'cleaner air' initiatives across the district, including:
 - Providing more electric car charging facilities in our car parks
 - Exploring the possibility of making it cheaper for zero emission vehicles to use Council car parks compared to petrol and diesel vehicles
 - Working with the County Council to improve the provision of on-street Electric Vehicle (EV) charging
 - Exploring the opportunities for a holistic approach to a town-wide Electric Vehicle strategy which will include all users and operators, both public and private
 - Working with other public and private entities/partners to improve provision of EV charging
 - Progressing the implementation of a better cycle network in North Herts, linking the district and beyond
 - Working with the relevant portfolio holders to prepare an annual Electric Vehicle Action Plan

- Further to the requirement for all new and replaced taxi vehicles to be ultra-low emissions from 2028, explore how we can support transitions to low emission vehicles before this date and to zero emission vehicles when the necessary infrastructure is in place

- Ensure that masterplans and planning applications for new development are designed around streets and routes for active travel (rather than cars) and create walkable neighbourhoods

- Explore how a Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) could encourage and provide guidance on how new development can use resources more efficiently, reduce carbon emissions, incorporate carbon sequestration measures, and adapt to climate change

- Introduce a standard within a Sustainability SPD to support more energy efficiency buildings to the equivalent of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes

- Set out comprehensive planning guidance within a Sustainability SPD on reducing carbon emissions, adapting and mitigating climate change

- Require Passivhaus, BREEAM, or similar standards for all developments on land sold by the Council
- Explore how a Biodiversity SPD could help to provide a clear ecological network plan, further enhance and create new habitat (e.g. woodlands, grasslands, and hedgerows) within new development and on Council owned land as part of an offsetting strategy to deliver biodiversity net gain
- Update the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy to identify where new green spaces and corridors should be provided as part of new development to support further carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and flood and surface water management
- Signpost residents to funding for retrofitting of insulation, heating and energy reduction features to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes
- Lobby government to introduce more funding for retrofitting of insulation, heating and energy reduction features, for both privately-owned and social housing
- Work with the Herts Waste Partnership (HWP) to investigate how we could secure the use of anaerobic digestion to deal with food waste from 2024
- Ensure recycling and waste collection arrangements promote reduction and reuse
- Encourage and support community tree planting initiatives
- Evaluate the success of the Solar Together Scheme, and explore further renewable energy opportunities for residents, businesses, and community groups – such as the Solar for Business Scheme run by West Suffolk Council.

ENABLING CARBON SAVINGS: 2022 ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

- Work with the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and our Risk Management group to identify and collate climate risks from across the district and county, and establish how mitigative action could be taken.
- Review opportunities for guidance or policy on renewable energy generation within Supplementary Planning Documents and the Local Plan Review process

INSPIRING THE COMMUNITY

Objectives

- *Achieve a Net Zero Carbon district by 2040.*
- *Become a district that is resilient to unavoidable impacts of climate change.*
- Enable residents to assess their carbon emissions, comparing them with the district and best practice

- Encourage residents to make behaviour changes by highlighting positive actions that can be taken, and informing them of more environmentally friendly options
- Encourage alternative models of working and transportation to reduce emissions and impact across the district.
- Work with the HCCSP to promote low carbon construction (timber buildings, offsetting of carbon, etc.)
- Run food waste awareness programmes
- Run waste reduction awareness programmes and continue to support community plastic free initiatives
- Explore opportunities for certification/awards for Green/Sustainable businesses
- Explore the possibility of tree planting awards
- Consult with the public to identify further means by which the Council can assist the residents and businesses of North Herts to achieve the target of zero emissions across the district by 2050
- Develop communications to raise awareness of the benefits of retrofitting of insulation, heating and energy reduction features, and the long-term cost-saving potential

INSPIRING THE COMMUNITY: 2022 ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

- To create and execute a Climate Comms plan which promotes the Council's climate initiatives and encourages residents to engage and take action.
- Use our new community engagement platform to encourage resident participation on climate change issues. This will be used to target residents that may not have previously engaged with the climate change agenda.
- Recruit a shared Waste Awareness Officer with East Herts Council prior to the new waste contract commencing in 2025, to encourage waste minimisation and recycling habits.

ⁱ *Carbon Neutrality* is defined by Oxford Languages, as 'making or resulting in no net release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, especially as a result of carbon offsetting'. *Net Zero Carbon* is typically held to indicate the same concept, often being described as the balancing of carbon emissions with removal (i.e. you offset or sequester the same amount of carbon emissions that you emit). Though, as The Carbon Trust noted in November 2019, 'Net Zero' does in fact lack an official or commonly agreed definition.

In contrast, *Zero Carbon* is typically considered to mean that there is no emission of Carbon Dioxide at all from a product or service, and therefore no use of offsetting.

It should be further noted, however, that all of the above terms have frequently been used interchangeably and without precision in public discourse.

ⁱⁱ According to the Carbon Trust, *Scope 1* covers direct *emissions* from owned or controlled sources. *Scope 2* covers indirect *emissions* from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling consumed by the reporting company. *Scope 3* includes all other indirect *emissions* that occur in a company's value chain
<https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/briefing-what-are-scope-3-emissions>