

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS SECTION

If you are unsure of the environmental implications of your decision/report/recommendations/policy, please speak to a member of the Policy & Strategy team at the earliest opportunity.

Please email: policy@north-herts.gov.uk

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.0 What is meant by Environmental Implications?

In May 2019, North Herts Council declared a Climate Emergency. As part of that motion it was agreed that ***'officers would ensure that, as the Council's policies are routinely reviewed, specific consideration is given to how policies and our related decisions and actions, affect our contribution to climate change, and where necessary, update these policies to reduce our impact wherever possible.'***

In July 2023, we declared an Ecological Emergency, setting out our commitment to nature recovery, biodiversity net gain and habitat restoration through strategic priorities and planning and development. It shows that the council understands the seriousness of the biodiversity crisis and acknowledges the need to take urgent action to support nature.

The aims of the Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 are:

- **Achieve Net Zero by 2030 for the council's own operations.**
- **Achieve a Net Zero North Herts district by 2040.**
- **Ensure all operations and services are resilient to the impacts of climate change.**
- **Become a district that is resilient to unavoidable impacts of climate change.**
- **Increase biodiversity in North Herts.**

This guidance provides a means to undertake this specific consideration when reviewing policies and any related decisions and actions.

The revised report template will carry this additional section for completion by officers:

"ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1. All recommendations/actions of the council, and those identified in this report strive for positive impacts on the environment as per the Council's Sustainability priority. This report/actions/recommendations supports the following aims of the Sustainability Strategy [include all that apply]:.

- Achieve Net Zero by 2030 for the council's own operations.**
- Achieve a Net Zero North Herts district by 2040.**
- Ensure all operations and services are resilient to the impacts of climate change.**
- Become a district that is resilient to unavoidable impacts of climate change.**
- Increase biodiversity in North Herts.**

14.2. Pick one of the following statements:

- A. There are no significant environmental impacts or requirements that apply to [the actions/ Policy/this report/recommendations].**
- B. There are tangible [positive or negative] environmental impacts or requirements that apply to [the actions/ Policy/this report] and these are (xyz... author to include).**
- C. Positive or negative environmental impacts have not been identified at the time of writing. As the project progresses, if there are impacts identified, the need to complete an Environmental Impact Assessment will be identified.**
- D. Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken. [The actions / Policy /this report] have been considered and [there are/ are no relevant adaptations/ mitigation measure that could be applied] [the following adaptations/ mitigations have been included – as detailed in X].”**

If the report has identified environmental impact, then this guidance assists the author to articulate them in a uniform manner.

2.0 Identifying who is responsible for the Environmental Impact Assessment

The person identified to undertake the Environmental Implications Assessment should be the person with whom responsibility for evidencing need to change a policy or service decision rests.

It is advisable that assessment should only be taken by council officers in their relevant policy/service areas. This will ensure that proper ownership of the analysis is maintained, that there is sufficient knowledge of the service itself, and any results of the analysis inform future service development and improvement.

3.0 Conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment

The assessment and its principles apply to existing as well as new and proposed policies. In order to be most effective, any Environmental Impact Assessment should begin with analysis during policy development or at the early stages of a policy review, considering its possible effects well in advance of implementation. The assessment form includes example questions to help guide your consideration of the environmental impact of the policy.

<h3>3.1 Undertaking analysis: what environmental information can I use?</h3>

The analysis you undertake will inform your assessment. It is important that information about the projected impact of the policy is appropriate, factual and reliable.

If you do not have environmental information about a particular policy, consider whether you need to fill these information gaps by surveys or other engagement or stakeholder meetings. This may include, in the longer term, questions included in the District Wide or Citizens Panel surveys, for example, or the making use of community events to test agreement with a policy

decision that clearly impacts our contribution to climate change. You might also consider engaging with environmental organisations.

3.2 The findings

Having reviewed your analysis and assessment, there are four main steps that you can take with regard to any proposal you are making:

No major change – The analysis demonstrates that the policy is robust, and the evidence shows no potential of adverse impacts.

Adjust the policy – This involves taking steps to remove barriers or to better promote a reduction in the impact on the environment. It can mean introducing measures to mitigate the potential effect.

Continue the policy – This means adopting your proposals, despite any adverse effect or missed opportunities to reduce the impact on the environment.

Stop and remove the policy – If there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, you will want to consider stopping the policy altogether.

4.0 Monitoring and review

Assessment is an ongoing process that does not end once a policy has been agreed or implemented. Service provision, demographics, and the physical environment may change, or new options to reduce an adverse effect could become apparent. This does not mean repeating the analysis, but using the experience gained through implementation to check the findings and to make any necessary adjustments.

Consider:

- How you will measure the effects of the policy
- When the policy will be reviewed and what could trigger an early revision
- Who will be responsible for monitoring and review
- What type of information is needed for monitoring and how often it will be analysed
- How to engage stakeholders in implementation, monitoring and review

5.0 Publication

It is recommended that the Council should publish information on environmental analysis alongside the policy or decision that it refers to. Arrangements have been made to ensure that reference to environmental analysis appears in all formal committee reports on the corporate template.

Environmental Impact assessment

1. Name of activity:					
2. Main purpose of activity:					
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:					
Area of Potential Impact	Examples to Consider (non-exhaustive)	Neutral (X)	Negative (X)	Positive (X)	<p><i>Describe the contribution/impact on the area that the decision may have - assess whether this impact is a negative or positive or neutral one.</i></p> <p>Negative: What are the risks?</p> <p>Positive: What are the benefits?</p>
1. Impact on greenhouse emission and support adaption to the effects of climate change	Will energy needs be met through renewable sources?				Negative
	Will it reduce emissions through retrofitting new technology?				
	Will it reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy consumption and the need to travel?				Positive
2. Use of natural resources including water and energy	Will it reduce water consumption?				Negative
	Will it reduce energy consumption?				
					Positive

<p><i>3. Minimisation of flood risks to the area (i.e. promotion of SUD's. protect surface and ground water quality)</i></p>	<p>Will it minimise flood risk from all sources of flooding?</p> <p>Will it reduce property damage due to storm events/ heavy rainfall by improving flood resistance and flood resilience?</p>				Negative
<p><i>4. To protect, enhance and create environments that encourage and support biodiversity</i></p>	<p>Will it protect, enhance and increase biodiversity and protect habitats?</p> <p>Will it improve access to and promote educational value of sites of biodiversity interest?</p>				Negative
<p><i>5. To improve Air Quality</i></p> <p><i>(air quality describes how polluted the air we breathe is)</i></p>	<p>Will it improve air quality?</p> <p>Will it reduce emissions of key pollutants?</p>				Negative
<p><i>6. To reduce need to travel, the use of private motorised vehicular transport as well as encourage walking, cycling, and use of public transport</i></p>	<p>Will it encourage increased walking, cycling and use of public transport?</p> <p>Will it increase the proportion of journeys using modes other than a car?</p>				Negative

<i>7. To reduce waste production and increase recycling, recovery and reuse of waste</i>	<p>Will it lead to reduced consumption of materials and resources?</p> <p>Will it reduce household waste?</p> <p>Will it reduce construction waste?</p> <p>Will it increase recovery recycling and re-use?</p>				Negative
					Positive
<i>8. To enhance the public realm and street improvements</i>	<p>Will it reduce litter?</p> <p>Will it enhance the quality of public realm?</p>				Negative
					Positive
<i>9. To protect, enhance and seek opportunities to increase open space</i>	<p>Will it improve open space?</p> <p>Will it improve landscape character?</p> <p>Will it minimise development on Greenfield sites?</p>				Negative
					Positive
<i>10. To reduce noise and impact of noise</i>	<p>Will it reduce noise pollution from vehicles?</p>				Negative
					Positive

6.0 Results			
	Yes	No	
Were positive impacts identified?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7.0 Consultation, decisions and actions			
Describe the decision on this activity (refer to section 3.2)			
List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positive impact			
Action	Responsible person		Completion due date
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?			
8.0 Signatures			
Assessor (report author):			
Name:		Signature**	
Validated by (line manager):			
Name:		Signature**	
Forward to the Policy inbox: policy@north-herts.gov.uk			
Signature**			
Assessment date:		Review date:	

**** Please type your name to allow forms to be sent electronically.**
A copy of this form should be forwarded to policy@north-herts.gov.uk and a duplicate filed on the council's report system, alongside any report proposing a decision on policy or service change.