



East Herts Council

Climate Change Strategy

2022 – 2026

Latest version incorporating the outcome of the consultation and responses to comments raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 21st June 2022

Design of the document to be finalised following consideration by Council

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Foreword

In July 2019, East Herts Council unanimously approved a Climate Change Declaration in recognition of the climate emergency we are all facing. This declaration commits the council to take action to address the causes and impacts of climate change across the district.

East Herts is a wonderful place to live, work and visit and so as a council we have put sustainability at the heart of everything we do.

At the same time, we recognise that it is vital that we build on our track record of engagement with our communities and partners to accelerate the work we have undertaken to date to reduce emissions and adapt to a changing climate.

There are steps that we can all take to make more sustainable choices. This strategy lays out how the council, residents, business and other partners can all pull together and help each other make significant and long lasting improvements to the sustainability of our precious environment. Please join us!

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Executive summary

The need for action

In July 2019, East Herts Council unanimously approved a Climate Change Declaration in recognition of the climate emergency we are all facing. This declaration committed the council to take action to address the causes and impacts of climate change across the district. This strategy lays out a route map for the council itself becoming carbon neutral by 2030 while at the same time working with residents, community groups and other public and private sector partners to encourage the whole district to become carbon neutral by the same date.

For the year 2020/21, the council's annual own net carbon emissions stood at 2,565 tonnes CO_{2e}, while total district-wide net emissions stood at 630.5 kilo tonnes CO_{2e}. Both figures are falling but there is clearly still much to do.

The council's role

It would clearly be naïve to think East Herts Council can tackle climate change alone. There is much for the national government to do, both unilaterally and through international cooperation. Furthermore, we operate within a three tier model of local government composed of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), East Herts Council and town councils and parish councils throughout the district. All have a role to play.

That said, we recognise the powerful influence of the council and our privileged position as a community leader and role model for good behaviours. Thus, this strategy lays out how we aim to make a real difference by:

- making changes to the council's own premises and the services we deliver
- using our regulatory powers to promote action by others
- influencing and encouraging others to do things.

Becoming a carbon neutral council

To reach a carbon neutral position, we will:

- continue to develop a sustained approach to reducing our own carbon footprint over the lifetime of this strategy. We will *not* leave the majority of our reductions to the end of this time frame
- constantly review carbon reduction measures in light of competing service and financial demands
- look to *only* use offsetting to handle the impact of any residual emissions once it

has become clear that we've done all we possibly can to reduce emissions.

Here's our route map to carbon neutrality.

2021 – 2022 – work in progress

- Replacement of the council's fleet of diesel with e-vehicles
- Reduction in business mileage

2023 – 2026 – planned actions

- Energy efficiency works to upgrade the energy performance of the council's buildings
- Reduction in gas usage in our leisure buildings and services
- Ground maintenance contract redesign to move to e-vehicles and battery usage while looking to enhance land sequestration possibilities

2027 – 2030 – actions to be assessed when the Climate Change Strategy is refreshed

- Further reduction in business mileage
- Further energy efficiency works to upgrade the energy performance of the council's buildings
- Consideration of reduction of waste management's reliance on diesel-powered vehicles
- Offsetting of any remaining carbon usage

Using our regulatory powers

The council's emissions form an integral part of the total emissions across the district. The fact that the council's own emissions only account for around 0.4% of all emissions underlines that the council must do more than just managing its own behaviour. The council must support everyone living in, working in or visiting East Herts to play their role in the collective effort to achieve carbon neutrality across the whole.

We will use our regulatory powers to promote action by others. This includes:

- our planning powers and duties regarding the development of new homes and commercial buildings as well as conversion or extension of existing buildings
- our duties regarding the licensing of the taxi trade, in particular the setting of standards for vehicles that are used as taxis in the district
- our environmental health powers regarding standards in the private housing sector.

Involving and influencing everyone

A key strand of our efforts to reduce carbon emissions across East Herts is based on influencing, encouraging and making it as easy as possible for our residents and businesses to take action that will enhance sustainability.

We recognise that community groups are ideally placed to 'spread the word' and act as credible communicators throughout their networks. Over the lifetime of this strategy we anticipate new ideas and groups emerging and we see the East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum as the ideal way to marshal a joint effort across the district which is far greater than the sum of its parts.

Monitoring progress

We are determined to make our efforts towards meeting the council's ambitious Climate Change Declaration aspirations as inclusive and transparent as possible.

Our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan is a living document which officers of the council review and update every month.

We recognise and do not seek to hide the fact that financing the delivery of this strategy will be a major challenge. Mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change will require far more resources than those held by the council. Thus, we will continue to explore and bid for different funding mechanisms, opportunities and investments to help support delivery of our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan.

We will keep our action plan under continuous review and publish progress updates on a monthly basis on the [Environmental Sustainability pages on our website](#).

Terminology used in this strategy

We realise that not everyone will be familiar with the terms we have used in this strategy, so we have included a glossary at Appendix A.

1. The Case for Action

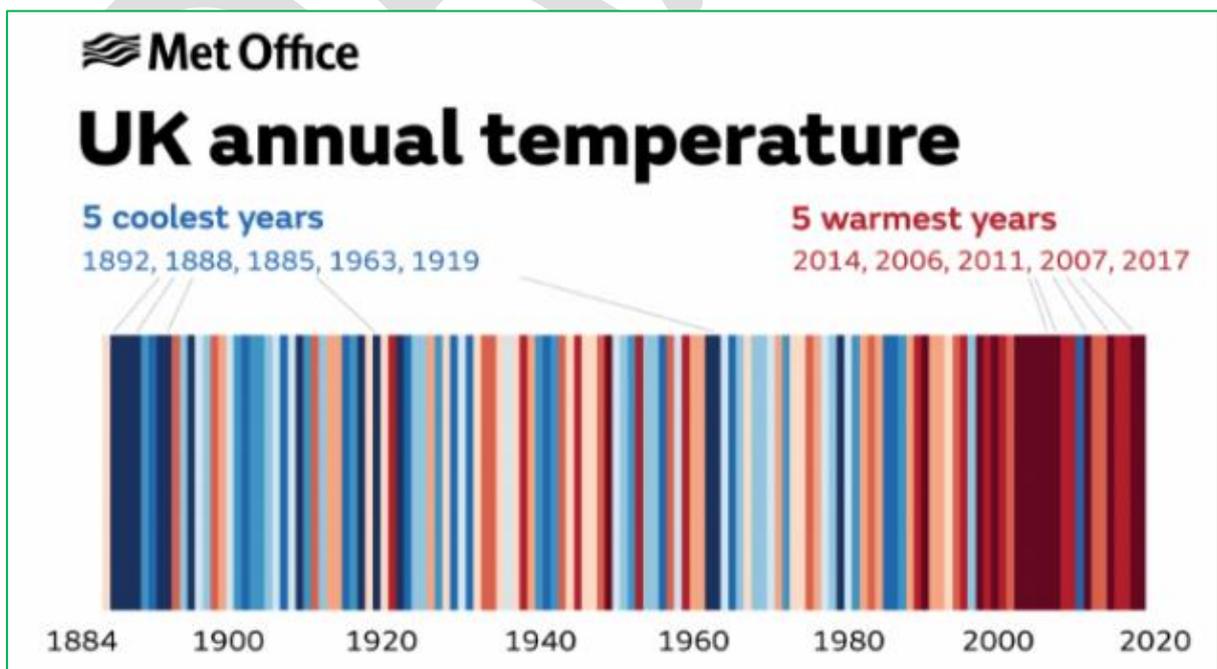
1.1 What is climate change?

Climate change refers to a large-scale identifiable change in the planet's weather patterns that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer

The current period of warming of the world's climate is occurring more rapidly than in the past. Scientific evidence concludes that the natural fluctuation of temperature has been overtaken by a human-induced warming. This warming has principally arisen from burning fossil fuels since the start of the industrial revolution. These human induced changes have serious ongoing implications for the future stability of the planet.

The global increase in temperature of 0.85°C since 1880 is mirrored in the UK climate's higher temperatures. This in turn gives rise to more extreme weather events caused by the warming temperature. The Met Office has reported that the ten warmest years since 1884 have occurred since 2002.

Both extreme weather events and accelerating climate change will have wide-ranging implications that are already being felt world-wide and in the UK. In the UK we are expecting increasingly hot dry summers and warmer wetter winters, alongside more floods, storms and heat waves of greater severity and frequency. If the current rate of warming continues, the impact on biodiversity and human populations will be catastrophic.



1.2 International mandate for climate action

In 2015, at the COP21 meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, member states, including the UK, reached a historic agreement to strengthen the global response to climate change. This agreement included a landmark commitment to *“holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre- industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre- industrial levels”*.

The latest COP26 meeting, held in Glasgow in 2021, brought together senior politicians, scientists, businesses and community groups from around the world and furthered the agenda. It would be fair to say that there have been mixed views about the outcome of COP26. The conference did, however, produce new “building blocks” to advance implementation of the Paris Agreement through actions that participants agreed can get the world onto a more sustainable, low-carbon pathway forward. The key headline was the agreement of a Glasgow Climate Pact including in the following:

- reaffirmation of the Paris Agreement goal of limiting the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and recognised that the impacts of climate change will be much lower at a temperature increase of 1.5°C compared with 2°C with the emergent Glasgow Climate Pact calling on countries to present stronger national action plans next year, instead of in 2025 as previously determined
- a phase-down of coal power and a phase-out of “inefficient” fossil fuel subsidies
- doubling of finance to support developing countries in adapting to the impacts of climate change and building resilience.
- clarification of the norms related to carbon markets for trading emissions reductions.

COP26 also led to a series of new deals and announcements outside of the Glasgow Climate Pact. These are as follows:

- 137 countries committed to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030
- 103 countries, including 15 major emitters, signed up to limit methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030 compared with 2020 levels
- over 30 countries, six major vehicle manufacturers and other partners, such as city authorities, set out their determination for all new car and van sales to be zero-emission vehicles by 2040 globally.

These pledges, if fully implemented, will reduce emissions by another 0.1°C below current estimates.

1.3 National mandate for climate action

The Climate Change Act 2008 provides the UK's long-term framework for tackling climate change. The Act aims to facilitate the UK's transition to a low-carbon economy by 2050. The Act was hugely important it requires that emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are reduced and that climate change risks are adapted to.

Subsequently in 2018, following the Paris Agreement, the UK became the first major country to assess how it will meet the terms of the agreement. After an original target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% based on 1990 levels and transition to a low-carbon economy by 2050, in June 2019 Parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% relative to 1990 levels by 2050.

This target was adjusted on the recommendation of the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC), following both the Paris Agreement and a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicating an aspiration to limit warming to 1.5°C rather than 2°C. The CCC noted that the target is achievable with current technologies and improvements in people's lives but that it will require the introduction of more stable, challenging, and well-designed policies.

In April 2021, the Government further strengthened the UK's climate commitments setting in law the world's most ambitious climate change target, cutting emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. This is aimed at bringing the UK more than three quarters of the way to net zero by 2050. Additionally, for the first time international aviation and shipping emissions were also included.

At the national level, since the Climate Change Act 2008, a number of initiatives have been introduced to help meet the Government's increasing targets, including:

- **The Carbon Plan 2011** – identifies the emission reductions needed in five key areas of the economy, buildings, transport, industry, electricity and agriculture to meet targets
- **The Clean Growth Strategy 2017** – outlines the plan to grow the national income while cutting greenhouse emissions
- **The 25 Year Environment Plan 2018**– sets comprehensive goals and targets to improve the UK's air and water quality and protect threatened plants, trees and wildlife species

- **The Resource and Waste Strategy 2018** – outlines the actions the UK will take to minimise waste, promote resource efficiency and move towards a circular economy
- **The Clean Air Strategy 2019** – demonstrates how the national government will tackle all sources of air pollution and boost the economy
- **Climate Emergency Motion 2019** – affirmed Parliament’s commitment to addressing Climate Change. While there is no single definition of a Climate Emergency, the general consensus is to work toward becoming carbon-neutral by 2030
- **The Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021** - sets out how the UK will decarbonise homes, and commercial, industrial and public sector buildings, as part of setting a path to net zero by 2050
- **The British Energy Security Strategy 2022** – sets out how Great Britain will accelerate homegrown power for greater energy independence and lower carbon future.

1.4 East Herts Council’s Climate Change Declaration

The issues caused by climate change will have a profound effect on our planet and the lives of everyone for centuries to come. That is why in July 2019 East Herts Council unanimously approved a Climate Change Declaration in recognition of the climate emergency we are all facing. This declaration committed the council to take action to address the causes and impacts of climate change across the district.

East Herts Council's Climate Change Declaration

- 1) Join with other councils in recognising and declaring formally the necessity to do everything within the authority's power to reduce its impact on the climate and moreover everything we can in supporting the whole of East Herts District to become carbon neutral by 2030
- 2) Develop an ambitious sustainability strategy for reducing the council's own emissions, with an objective that the Council becomes carbon neutral by 2030
- 3) Work with national and regional partners to ensure that where at all possible we support climate friendly planning and building control regulations and seek where possible to include the very best measures into the Local Plan to minimise any negative impact on the environment
- 4) Call on National Government for more powers and resources to make this pledge possible, and ask the Council's Leader to write to the Secretary of state for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to this effect
- 5) Continue to work with partners across the District, County and Region to deliver this new goal, through all relevant strategies and plans
- 6) Take account of climate impacts within existing decision-making processes
- 7) Set up an Environmental and Climate Forum, in line with the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group which were approved by this Council on 5th March, 2019
- 8) The Environmental and Climate Forum to monitor progress regularly and to report back
- 9) Commit to making available the appropriate training to members and officers to promote carbon neutral policies in order to achieve these aims

[Our Declaration on Climate Change](#)

We, of course, have only limited powers, responsibilities, resources and finances. Many of the changes that will be required to achieve carbon neutrality and climate resilience must be the responsibility of others including public, private and third sectors and individuals. It is therefore important that this strategy and our accompanying Environmental Sustainability Action Plan are widely owned and delivered by residents, businesses and communities within the district and that it is evidence-based and built upon ground-up engagement with these groups. We will continue to work with the local community, partners and stakeholders in the district, across Hertfordshire and nationally to identify ways in which the council can work towards the goal of achieving a carbon neutral district.

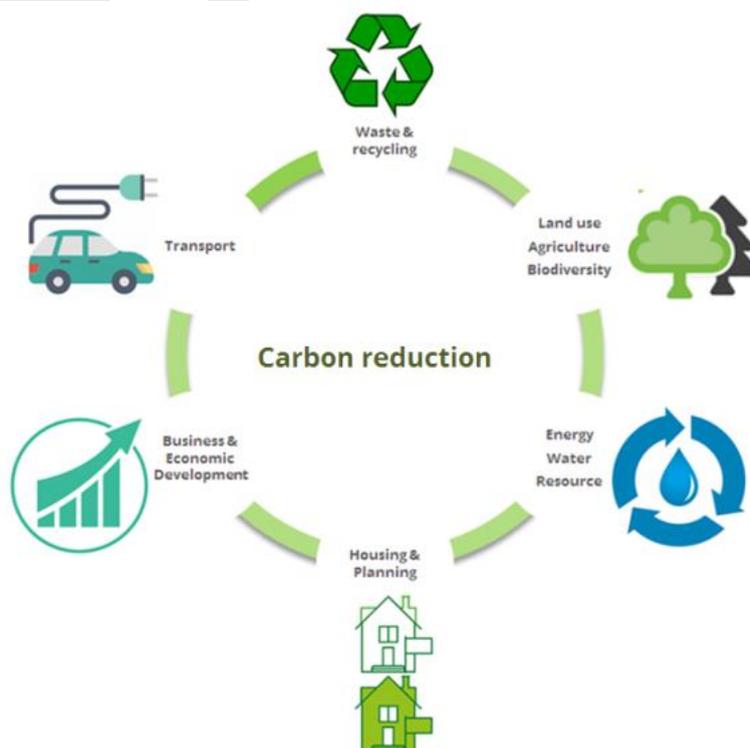
2. East Herts Council's approach to tackling climate change

2.1 The issues of most importance to our residents and partners

During consultation on preparation of this strategy, we canvassed the views of our residents and partners on sustainability priority areas of most importance to them. The following issues were mentioned most frequently:

- active, greener transport, including public transport, walking, cycling and promotion of low emission and e-vehicles
- domestic energy efficiency in both new and existing homes
- biodiversity and wildlife protection
- waste reduction and maximising recycling
- using planning policies to tackle climate change
- involving individuals and community groups.

These priorities accord with own understanding of the interconnectedness of the issues impacting carbon reduction and wider sustainability as illustrated in the following diagram. Through this strategy, we will strive to balance delivery of actions that address the issues of most importance to local people, those actions that are scientifically most impactful in relation to carbon reduction and value for money as well as address interrelated sustainability objectives such as biodiversity and air quality.



2.2 Working in a three tier local government environment

It would clearly be naïve to think East Herts Council can tackle climate change alone. There is much for the national government to do, both unilaterally and through international cooperation.

It should also be borne in mind that at the local level, East Herts Council operates within a three tier model of local government composed of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), East Herts Council and town councils and parish councils throughout the district.

Within this structure, HCC are the lead authority for a number of functions crucial to fostering sustainability. These include highways, flood risk management and countryside management, as well as responsibility for key service areas including education, social care and children's services.

East Herts Council is responsible for other key functions which are likely to have a direct impact on sustainability, including planning policy and decision-making over the development of residential and commercial premises, waste collection, promoting and enforcing standards in existing housing and licensing taxi vehicles.

Town councils and parish councils are very near to their localities and in many cases directly manage community facilities such as community halls and allotments.

While the three tiers have different responsibilities and duties, it is clearly in all parties' interests to work together to achieve common goals and so, for example, we aim to dovetail our sustainability priorities with those in the county council's own [Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy 2020](#) while also promoting sustainability issues through the regular Town and Parish Council conferences and meetings.

Both the council's and HCC's Climate Change Strategy focus on mitigation measures to reduce carbon emissions, as this is the key way to tackle global warming, as well as, increasingly focusing on adaptation.

Many sustainability issues are, however, inextricably linked to our strategies' goals. We know, for example, that high biodiversity levels can improve ecosystem reliability and increase the effectiveness of their functions, one of which is carbon capture. Recent research has shown that high levels of plant diversity can enhance storage of soil organic carbon.

In addition to mitigation measures we recognise the need to adapt to the ongoing effects of climate change. Even if all carbon emissions were to cease immediately, the global climate would continue to change for some time due to the current high levels of carbon already released into the atmosphere. Therefore, our approach needs to include a wide

range of adaptation measures to take account of changing climate related risks. Examples include strengthening the ability of the wider district and our local community to combat potentially more extreme weather events such as excessive heat, cold and storms. This *could* include enhanced policies relating to construction in flood prone areas as well as cross-integration between our environmental sustainability action plan and the council's emergency planning, public health and resilience services.

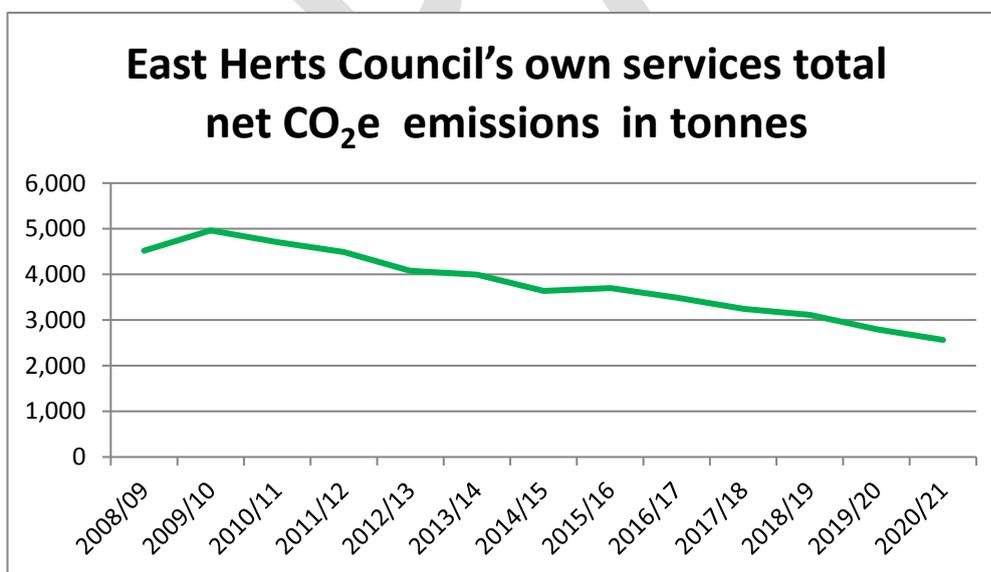
2.3 East Herts Council's approach

Maximising sustainability in all its forms has long been a corporate priority for East Herts Council. Our current corporate plan commits us to put *sustainability at the heart of everything we do*.

The council will continue to strive to:

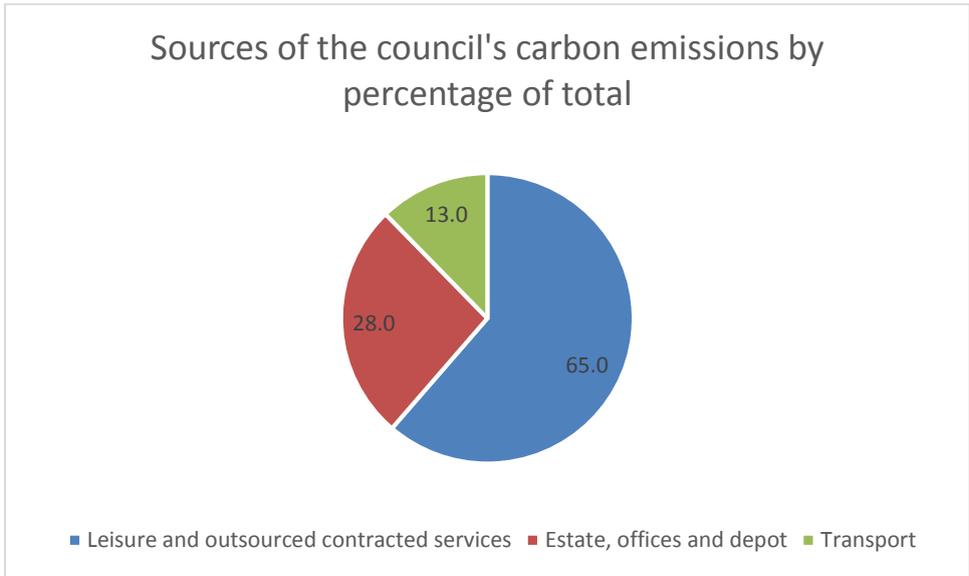
- provide a clean and safe environment
- facilitate new development which meets local needs while protecting the best of the district's natural and built environments
- take a responsible approach to waste and recycling
- promote green transport
- tackle environmental crime and reduction of air pollution.

Total net emissions of CO₂e have been falling steadily across the district over the last fifteen years although there is clearly much progress still to be made.



Source: East Herts Council using Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy national methodology

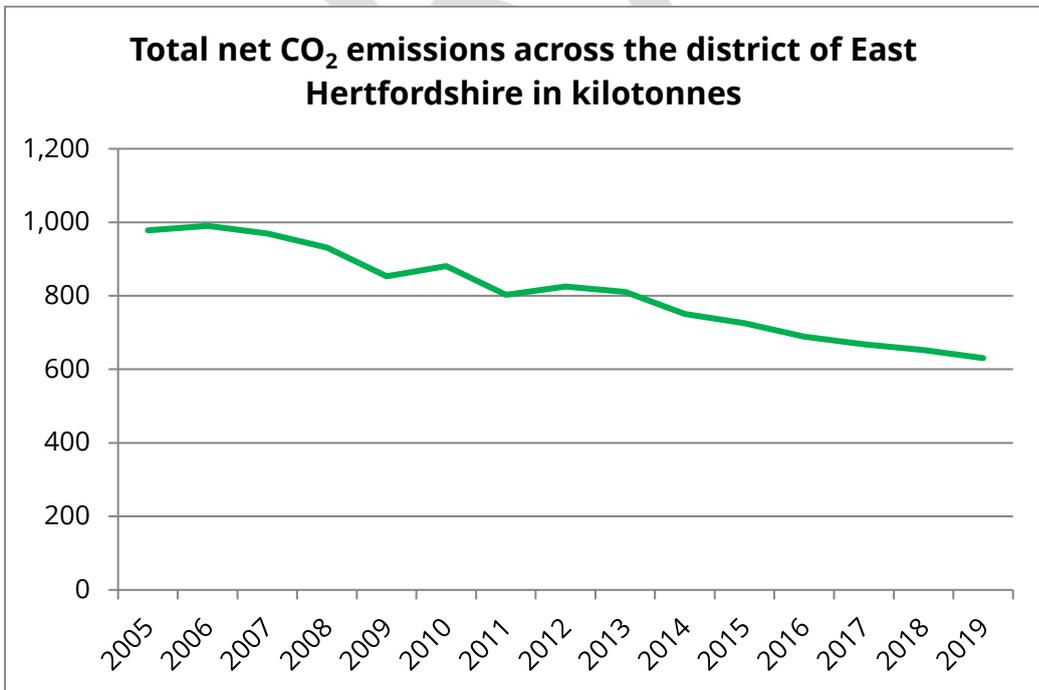
The sources of carbon emitted by the council, by percentage, are listed below.



Source: East Herts Council using Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy national methodology

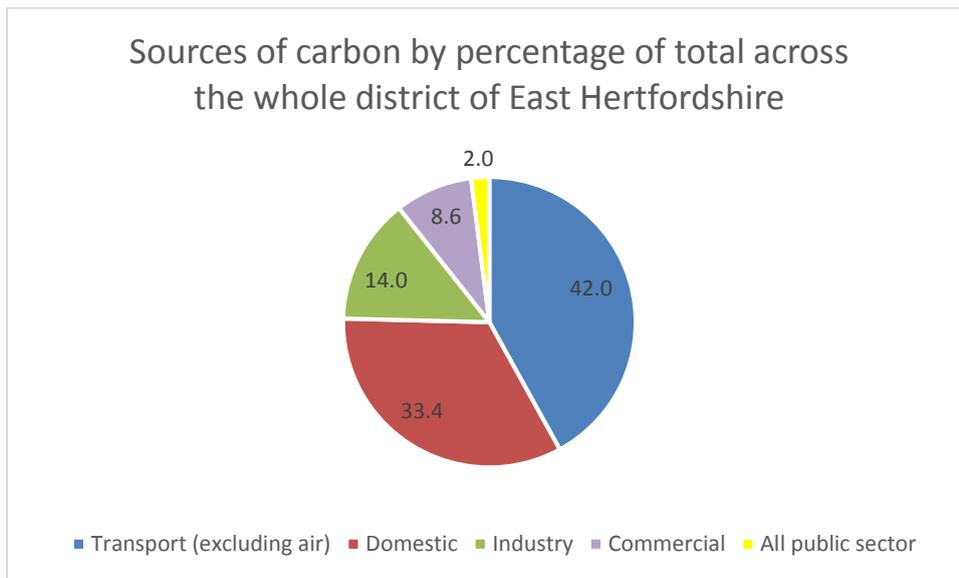
Over the last two decades the council has worked continuously to reduce our CO₂ emissions and improve energy efficiency. The council's success to date in reducing its own emissions is displayed in the graph.

When in July 2019 the Council unanimously passed a motion making a Climate Change Declaration, it pledged its commitment to do everything within its power to make East Hertfordshire carbon neutral by 2030.



Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The sources of carbon emitted across the whole district, by percentage, are listed below.

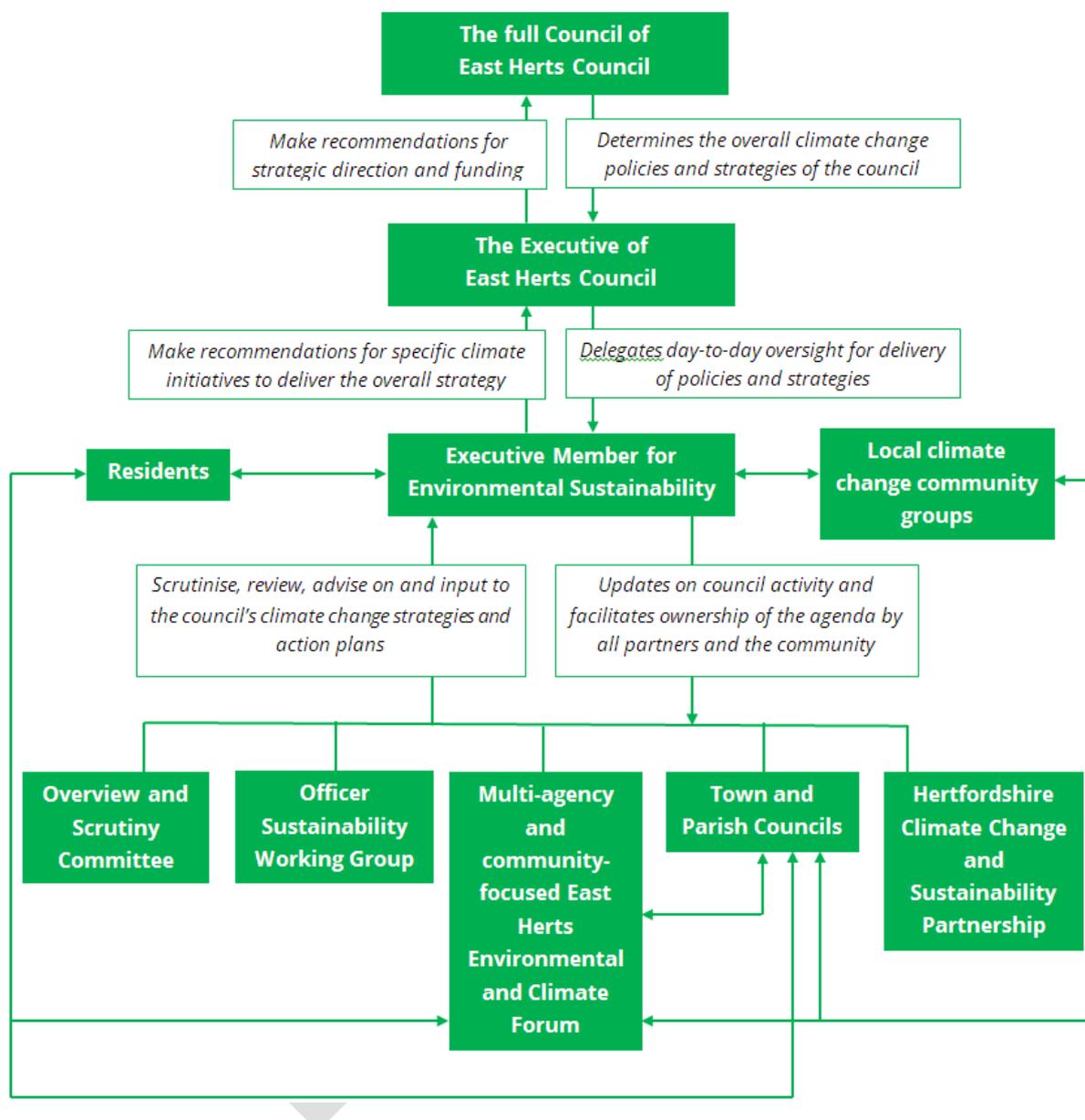


Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

We are acutely aware that tackling climate change and improving sustainability requires action – now!

2.4 Governance of the climate change agenda in East Herts

The overall governance of this important agenda is as follows:



We now have the building blocks in place to make our aspirations a reality, including:

- climate change firmly within the remit of our Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability
- establishing a cross-service officer Sustainability Working Group which meets monthly
- drawing up a detailed Sustainability Action Plan which is kept under review and updated each month. It is also published on our website each month

- setting in place an East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum which brings together the council, other public sector partners, local community groups and residents to review sustainability work to date, share best practice and recommend future priorities. The group meets every two months, is open to all and is a key way of fostering community ownership of the climate change agenda
- being pro-active members of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, a grouping composed of all ten districts in Hertfordshire, the county council and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- building and continuing to develop an informative sustainability website providing practical information to our residents, business and other partners along with clear details about how well our efforts are doing.

We have already forged new relationships with partners and will continue to expand on this. For example, we are in dialogue with the two members of parliament covering the vast majority of the district and are discussing rural issues with local farm owners, the Soil Association and the National Farmers' Union.

2.5 East Herts Council's role

We recognise the powerful influence of the council and our privileged position as a community leader and role model for behaviours to reduce carbon emissions and improve the sustainability of our overall environment. This strategy lays out how we aim to make a real difference by:

- making changes to the council's own premises and the services we deliver
- using our regulatory powers to promote action by others
- influencing and encouraging others to do things.

While achieving our aspirations will not be easy, we understand how crucial it is to tackle climate change to avoid an even greater impact on the lives of people across East Hertfordshire. So, we are in this for long haul.

We will deliver our strategy through:

- continuing to approach climate action in an inclusive, fair and effective manner
- forging cross sector partnerships wherever possible
- bidding for and assembling funding, investment and sponsorship opportunities with key suppliers, local authority partners and private enterprise
- celebrating successes along the route to carbon neutrality.

We will keep our action plan under continuous review and publish progress updates on a monthly basis on the [Environmental Sustainability pages on our website](#).

2.6 Our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan

This strategy provides an overview of our approach and lays out a pathway to achieving the commitments in our Climate Change Declaration. This is presented in Chapter 3.

The delivery of our ambitions depends on the setting, monitoring and continuous review of detailed targets. These are contained within our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan which is reviewed and updated on a monthly basis. It is shared with a wide range of partners, not least of which through the multi-stakeholder, community-focused East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum.

The carbon impacts of specific initiatives within the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan are quantified where applicable and whenever possible. This enables our partners as well as ourselves to keep a close eye on how well we are doing.

As we progress, we will deliver some actions and see the resulting carbon emissions reductions and co-benefits in relation to health and wellbeing, biodiversity, the local economy, society or education and skills of the population. Other actions will be modified in light of emerging evidence while completely new actions will be added as the situation, funding and pressures changes over time.

The council's corporate plan places *Sustainability at the Heart of Everything we Do* and while, of course, the council has to work with the resources available, our annual budget-setting process already seeks to align expenditure with this over-arching priority.

3. Turning Strategy into Action

Irrespective of intention, there are no results without action. This section explains how we have grouped together the full range of actions we are taking, and aim to take in coming years, under three main themes.

We have included details of successes to date throughout this section of the strategy so as to emphasise that we mean business and demonstrate that we can achieve our goals if we make sufficient plans.

3.1 Making changes to the council's own premises and services we deliver

The council is on a journey to become carbon neutral by 2030.

In 2019, when the council made its Climate Change Declaration, the council's own CO₂e stood at 2,800 tonnes.

Our approach to plotting our carbon footprint is based on government guidance¹. This splits emissions generated by an organisation into three areas or 'scopes':

- scope 1 – direct carbon use. These are emissions given off by the direct combustion of fuel such as burning gas for heating ; petrol/diesel in transport fleets; industrial process emissions; and fugitive emissions from air conditioning and refrigeration
- scope 2 – indirect carbon use from energy. This relates to emissions arising from consumption of purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling
- scope 3 – other indirect carbon use. This scope covers all other emissions including purchased materials; transport related activities by staff in their own vehicles; waste disposal; leased assets and franchising and outsourcing; sold goods and services.

Our measurements currently take in scope 1 and scope 2 in line with government guidance for local authority reporting although over time we are increasingly considering widening our scope 3 emissions reporting.

To reach a carbon neutral position, the council will:

- continue to develop a sustained approach to reducing its own carbon footprint over the lifetime of this strategy. We will *not* leave the majority of our reductions to the end of this time frame
- constantly review carbon reduction measures in light of competing service and

¹ HM Government 2019, Environmental Reporting Guidelines: Including streamlined energy and carbon reporting guidance

- financial demands
- look to *only* use offsetting to handle the impact of any residual emissions once we've done all we possibly can to reduce emissions.

We have a track record of success!

Achievements to date

- Switched our electricity supply to a low carbon tariff
- Improved the energy efficiency of our existing building stock
- Trained our staff in sustainability, promoted less commuting and encouraged and enabled more sustainable travel
- Created a new website hub for sustainability, embraced behaviour change strategies and ramped up our sustainability campaigns and communication
- Created a 'living' Sustainability Action Plan and the framework for its continual evaluation
- Devised carbon assessment and tracking tools to assess all council projects

The pace of change and innovation in, for example, renewable energy, zero emission vehicles and sustainable heating systems is growing day-by-day and so it's impossible to predict every single measure we'll take to see the council itself achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. We can, however, identify the aspects of our services we need to review in the run up to 2030.

We can do this!

Our route map to the council becoming carbon neutral by 2030

Route map to carbon neutrality of East Herts Council services

2019 – Council makes Climate Change Declaration

- Aspiration to draw up a strategy to achieve carbon neutrality of council services by 2030

Baseline emissions = 2,800tCO₂e

2020 – Actions completed

- Installation of LED lighting throughout the council's buildings
- Switch to 100% carbon free electricity

Emissions reduced to 92% of 2019 baseline

2021 – 2022 Actions in progress

- Replacement of the council's fleet of diesel vehicles with e-vehicles
- Service redesign to reduce business mileage

Target to reduce emissions to 68% of 2019 baseline

2023 – 2026 Actions to be assessed

- Energy efficiency works to upgrade the energy performance of the council's buildings
- Reduction in gas usage in leisure buildings and services
- Ground maintenance contract redesign to move to e-vehicles and battery usage while looking to enhance land sequestration possibilities

Target to reduce emissions to 37% of 2019 baseline

2027 – 2030 Actions to be assessed

- Further service redesign to reduce business mileage
- Further energy efficiency works to upgrade the energy performance of the council's buildings
- Consideration of reduction of waste management's reliance on diesel-powered vehicles
- Offsetting to any remaining carbon usage

Target to achieve zero net carbon emissions = carbon neutrality

3.2 Using our regulatory powers to promote action by others

We recognise that, as important as it is for the council to get its own house in order and, in doing so, demonstrate what can be done. The fact that the council's own emissions only account for around 0.4% of all emissions underlines that the council must do more than just managing its own behaviour. The council must support everyone living in, working in or visiting East Herts to play their role in the collective effort to achieve carbon neutrality across the whole.

The council has a number of ways that it can promote action by others. Not least of which is the use of our regulatory powers. This includes:

- our planning powers and duties regarding the development of new homes and commercial buildings as well as conversion or extension of existing buildings. Further strengthening our planning policies within the framework of national guidance is a crucial way in which we can increase district-wide sustainability and so we will use the Sustainability Action Plan to drive forward the climate change and sustainability agenda during revisions to the District Plan
- our duties regarding the licensing of the taxi trade, in particular the setting of standards for vehicles that are used as taxis in the district
- our environmental health powers regarding standards in the private housing sector.

We recognise that we are partners within a wider enterprise working towards enabling the whole district of East Hertfordshire to strive to become carbon neutral by 2030. To this end, we know we will need to continually strengthen our regulatory advice and requirements over the coming years.

Importantly, the council is committed to working across the public sector family in Hertfordshire. As proactive members of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) we are jointly developing and implementing a series of Strategic Action Plans on key sustainability issues. These Plans seek to combine the efforts, resources and impetus of all partners so as to maximise the likelihood of a step change across the county.

We will continue to incorporate countywide actions into the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan and it is important to recognise that the work of the HCCSP forms an intrinsic and important part of our approach to seeking to achieve carbon neutrality across the wider district.

We have a track record of success!

Achievements to date

- Published a comprehensive Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document that both advises developers on sustainable considerations and makes clear our expectations
- Surveyed locally active, national developers to better understand barriers to energy efficient/Passivhaus development
- Integrated sustainability into all planning considerations associated with the Harlow Gilston Garden Town
- Ensured sustainability is a consideration regarding the use of capital resources arising from planning agreements
- Developed a Housing Strategy for 2022-2026 encompassing social and private sector housing and all elements of energy efficiency and fuel poverty
- Introduced stricter emissions standards for District taxis and waived fees for e-taxis

We can do this!

Key changes to our regulatory tools to be delivered by 2026

- Fully update, adopt and implement planning policies forming the District Plan so as to further the sustainability of the district and help mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Align s106 contributions accordingly.
- Publish a Vehicle Parking in New Development Supplementary Planning Document.
- Publish a Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document and leverage Biodiversity Net Gain legislation
- Continue to reduce emission regulations for locally licensed taxis, including incentivising low emission and e-taxis

3.3 Influencing and encouraging others to do things

Much research, and indeed our everyday experience, tells us that we often form opinions and make decisions based on the views and advice of our friends, family and neighbours. Therefore, there's much to be gained by the council investing its time and efforts in working with residents and community groups as they will then be able to 'amplify the message' among their networks and thus enact significant behaviour change.

A key strand of our efforts to reduce carbon emissions across East Herts is based on influencing, encouraging and making it as easy as possible for our residents and business to take action that will enhance sustainability.

Just as we work with public sector colleagues, we act collaboratively with community groups and individuals across the district. The East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum meets every two months to review our Sustainability Action Plan but also, crucially, to share knowledge, expertise and ideas. As a direct result of the Forum, we have developed closer working relationships with local climate and community groups and aim to continue to expand our work together to achieve ever more effective joint action.

Community groups are ideally placed to 'spread the word' and act as credible communicators throughout their networks. We are therefore keen to adopt a model whereby formal or informal agreements can be struck between the council and different groups so that both parties can pledge to take certain actions contingent on the other's involvement and commitment.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we anticipate new ideas and groups emerging and we see the East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum as the ideal way to marshal a joint effort across the district which is far greater than the sum of its parts.

We will draw on the excellent support available from the University of Hertfordshire, the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the plethora of active climate change-focused community groups in the district to maximise our reach so as to effect significant and lasting behaviour change.

We have a track record of success!

Achievements to date

- Created an Action Plan and the framework for its continual public monitoring and evolution
- Set up a bi-monthly community Environmental and Climate Forum
- Provided grants, assistance and/or promotion for events associated with climate change awareness and action including webinars, e-v roadshows, festivals and environmental awareness film screenings
- Completed underpass upgrades in Hertford to encourage a switch to walking from car use
- Installed new racks for 80 bicycles in our market towns and secondary school settings
- Installed more than 60 e-chargers and 26 anti-idling signs in council car parks
- Planted over 350 trees in community projects associated with the Queen's Green Canopy scheme

We can do this!

Key ways in which we wish to work with partners to nudge behaviour change over the period to 2026

- Draw on the National Behavioural Insights Team to promote a simple model called EAST: Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely to help design effective behaviour change programmes
- Use apps and other social media to give residents the means to make informed choices about their own energy use and carbon footprints
- Work with partners to encourage greater uptake of low emission vehicles and install more e-chargers to further nudge the switch to e-vehicles
- Provide practical ways of encouraging sustainable options as the default position for residents and businesses notably with regard to greener travel, renewable energy, low carbon domestic heating and hot water
- Work with our farming community, which is developing environmental land management schemes, to support productive and sustainable food production
- Deliver the actions set for each district council in the HCCSP's Strategic Action Plans regarding the combining of efforts across the county to enable lasting behaviour change among residents and businesses

4. Working with all our communities to tackle climate change

The council has a duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

We believe that our Climate Change Strategy can and should act as a means of advancing the equality of opportunity in the district. At the same time, however, we recognise that some residents will find it easier to make sustainable choices and/or modify their behaviour than others with, among other things, health, income and family circumstances all having an impact. Furthermore, we are aware that some residents may unfortunately face discrimination because they are from a group with a protected characteristic along with other daily barriers which act against them taking the environmental action they might wish. For example this may be because of barriers to joining community groups, accessing information, arguing for tailored services and such like. We wish to do everything in our power to recognise, understand and tear down any such barriers for the simple reason that we need everyone in the district to pull together to tackle the threats caused by climate change and we see it as wholly unacceptable for anyone among us to feel their opportunities or actions are unduly curtailed.

To this end, we already:

- conduct detailed equalities impacts assessment on new policies and schemes across the council and work hard to mitigate any issues uncovered
- promote a range of grants and loans for those on limited means to fund insulation and other energy efficient improvements to their homes. Some groups with protected characteristics, such as disabled people or those of minority ethnic heritage, may be over-represented among our residents with lower incomes and thus such actions could enable them to participate more fully in the making sustainable choices.

4.1 The interaction of climate change, equalities and wellbeing

The national Climate Change Committee recently stated that global temperature increases of between 1.5°C and 2°C will affect the wellbeing of everyone and vulnerable people most of all². Vulnerable people are also more likely to benefit disproportionately from co-benefits associated with a transition to net zero carbon emissions, such as reductions in air pollution³.

In addition, research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁴ found that the extent to which individuals are able to cope with the impacts of climate change is related to the interaction between personal factors, such as health and age, social factors, including income, and environmental factors, such as the quality of someone's home and local public realm.

The potential impacts of climate change on residents with protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010, along with mitigating actions, are described below.

Protected characteristic	Issues	The council's mitigation
Age	Older people potentially more to vulnerable to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heat waves • water shortages • extreme weather events due to a combination of age, health issues and greater social isolation 	Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership's (HCCSP) priorities for Water Sustainability embraced by the council The council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document sets out guidance on how developers can build houses that minimise negative environmental impacts
Disability	Potentially more vulnerable to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heat waves • extreme weather events due to a combination of health issues and lower average incomes 	The council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document sets out guidance on how developers can build houses that minimise negative environmental impacts

² Climate Change Committee, 2020, Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming page 31

³ Climate Change Committee, 2020, Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming page 218

⁴ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014, Climate Change and Social Justice: an Evidence Review

Protected characteristic	Issues	The council's mitigation
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>There are several potential differential impacts on pregnant women, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heatwaves and higher average temperatures could impact on pregnant women more than other residents • any increases in stress, anxiety or other mental health issues as a result of extreme weather events or other climate change impacts could have a greater impact on pregnant women • extreme weather events could create potential difficulties in accessing to hospital or health visitors 	<p>The council believes that actions to reduce energy costs, including grants and loans for works and information about sustainable options, can act to reduce anxiety about, notably, fuel costs which could have a particularly beneficial impact on pregnant women.</p> <p>The council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document sets out advice on how developers can build houses that minimise under/overheating</p>
Race	<p>In some instances, people of black or minority ethnic heritage can have lower incomes than the overall population and thus face particular barriers when seeking to make sustainable choices</p>	<p>The council promotes a range of grants and loans for lower income households wishing to insulate their homes and/or make other energy efficiency improvements. See below for the council's stance on Sharia-compliant loans.</p> <p>Information can be made available in other languages if/as required</p>
Religion and belief	<p>Potential impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water shortages may impact on washing after prayers for Muslim residents • any shortages of particular food items caused by global impacts of climate change on agriculture may lead to shortages of foods required to meet special dietary requirements for some religious groups 	<p>Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership's (HCCSP) priorities for Water Sustainability embraced by the council.</p> <p>The council works with the farming industry to maximise sustainable food production.</p> <p>We recognise the potential need for Sharia-complaint loan products so as to ensure all Muslim residents can access this financial support. We will provide such assistance as required</p>

Protected characteristic	Issues	The council's mitigation
Sex	National studies reveal that women tend to have lower incomes than men and lone parents are more likely to experience poverty than other household types (Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2020), 'UK Poverty 2019/20') with 90% of lone parents being women (ONS (2019), 'Families and Households')	The council makes available a range of grants and loans for lower income households wishing to insulate their homes and/or make other energy efficiency improvements. The Sustainability Action Plan and the council's Housing Strategy both prioritise the promotion of Passivhaus type homes which can dramatically reduce heating bills
Sexual orientation Gender reassignment Marriage and civil partnership	We do not anticipate specific differential impacts for people with these protected characteristics	

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5. Monitoring and reviewing our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan

We are determined to make our efforts towards meeting the council's ambitious Climate Change Declaration aspirations as inclusive and transparent as possible.

Our [Environmental Sustainability Action Plan](#) is a living document which officers of the council review and update every month.

Actions for inclusion in the plan are likely to arise from:

- East Herts Council's members' scrutiny of the plan and, from time-to-time, working groups on particular issues
- countywide priorities and actions stemming from the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership
- the East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum
- ad hoc groupings which the council convenes or participates in, such as the Rural Roundtable to consider sustainability issues as they pertain to the district's rural communities
- government guidance.

We recognise and do not seek to hide the fact that financing the delivery of this strategy will be a major challenge. As noted earlier in this strategy, the council has a head start regarding identifying council resources given that our annual budget-setting process already seeks to align expenditure with the council's climate change and sustainability priorities. That said, mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change will require far more resources than those held by the council. Thus, we will continue to explore and bid for different funding mechanisms, opportunities and investments to help support delivery of our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan.

We know we need to be brave and bold so as to demonstrate our genuine commitments. To this end, we welcome scrutiny of and feedback on our plans, proposals and performance. Actions will continue to be monitored by officers by reference to progress against delivery. Furthermore, we will continue to:

- share progress with the East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum
- publish detailed updates on progress on our website every month
- publish on our website an annual update to date of our progress towards the carbon neutrality of our own services
- invite scrutiny of progress by the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other partners

In due course, we will work collaboratively to conduct a thorough review in the run up to drafting of our 2027 – 2030 to replace this strategy.

6. How to find out more about Sustainability in East Herts

There is a wealth of information on our website. Please click on the following links to find out more.

[Environmental Sustainability Action Plan](#)

[East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum](#)

[More information about sustainability in East Herts](#)

[Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership](#)

[Hertfordshire County Council's Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy 2020](#)

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Appendix A: Terminology used in this strategy

We need to be clear about the terms that are used in this strategy.

Adaptation refers to actions which are necessary to deal with the impacts of climate change that cannot be mitigated.

Carbon emissions relates to various greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, principally carbon dioxide, which contribute to global warming and climate change. Greenhouse gases include methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated-gases and taken together with carbon dioxide, CO₂, are typically referred to as CO₂e, meaning, the equivalent of carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide emissions will be the major focus for our action due to their prevalence and the opportunities for reduction that exist.

Carbon neutrality means “achieving net zero carbon emissions by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset” (UN Environment, 2018).

Climate resilience means ensuring that our communities are adapted to cope with the projected impacts of global heating locally.

Co-benefits are secondary or ancillary benefits of an action that are also a relevant reason for that action in their own right. Many actions to mitigate and adapt to the climate emergency will have co-benefits such as improving health and wellbeing, improving air quality and building biodiversity.

Mitigation refers to actions which will lead to the avoidance or reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Offsetting is a way of compensating for emissions arising in one place by taking action elsewhere. For instance, it may not be possible, feasible or viable to actually reduce emissions from a particular source any further, so instead money would be diverted to deliver additionality in mitigation/sequestration projects elsewhere to make up for the emissions that will remain.

Sequestration is the process of capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and the long-term storage of it in trees, plants, soils, geological formations and the ocean. Though it should be noted that increasing sequestration by oceans leads to harmful acidification.