

Co-creating a climate action plan for a zero carbon city

Summary





CLIMATE CHANGE IN WESTMINSTER

Burning fossil fuels and other human activity has caused greenhouse gases to increase significantly in the atmosphere. This process causes the earth's atmosphere to trap more heat and is the main driver of climate change.

Since the 19th century, the average global temperature has risen by 1 degree Celsius. The Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change, aims to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. To achieve this, **global emissions must reach net zero by 2050.**

Westminster City Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 and committed to achieving **net zero carbon emission from council operations by 2030 and across the city by 2040.**

The ambitious level of change required to meet this target will affect almost every aspect of our daily lives. It is vital we work together to create a climate emergency action plan that reflects the priorities of all those who live, work and study in Westminster.

By tackling climate change, we will achieve many benefits including lower energy bills, better health and wellbeing, improvements to our surrounding environment and a city that is prepared for extreme weather.

Net zero carbon
emissions from
council sources
by **2030**

Net zero carbon
emissions city-wide
by **2040**

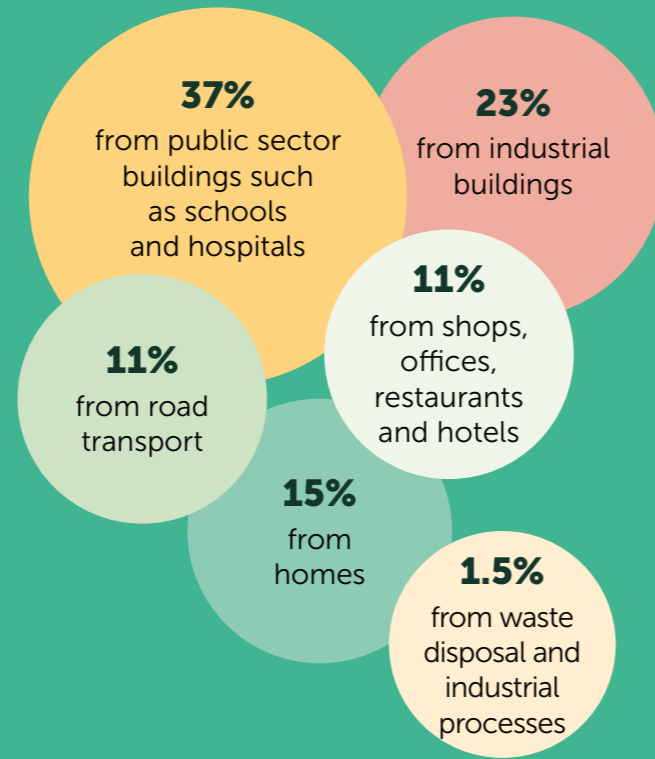
NET
ZERO
EMISSIONS

Notes

Net zero is the balance between the emissions we produce and those we remove through emission saving activities and carbon offsetting. We will achieve net zero when the amount of emissions we produce is equal to or less than those we take away.

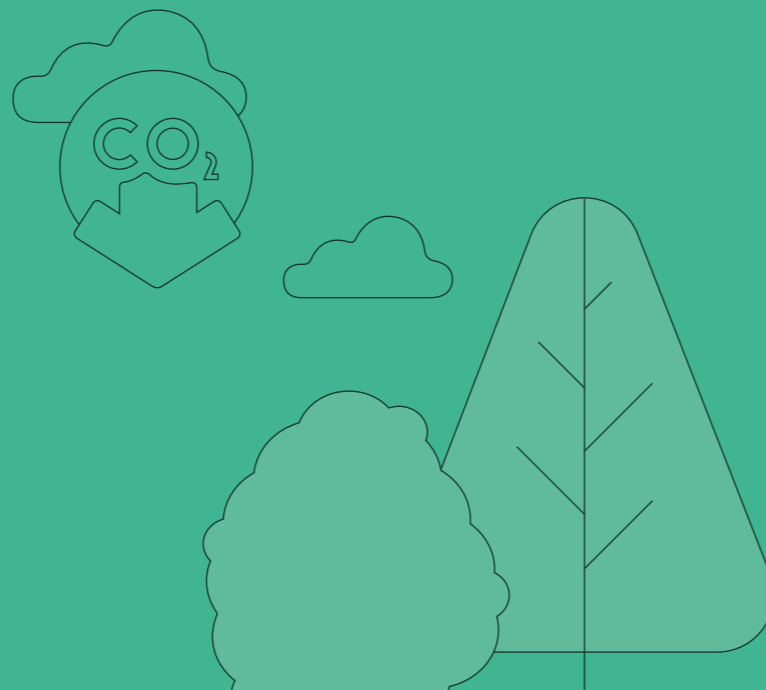
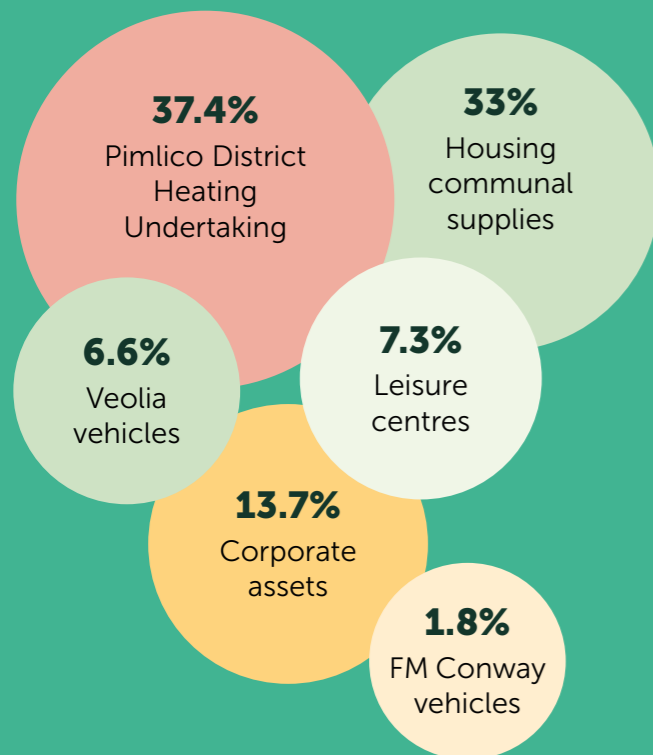
EMISSION SOURCES

Across the city, we produced 2.2 million tonnes of CO₂e in 2017, the highest level of emissions per local authority in London. Most of these were from buildings, with around 71% from offices, shops, restaurants and public buildings and 15% from homes. A further 11% of emissions come from transport.



Council emissions

The council generated almost 45,000 tonnes of carbon from our buildings and activities in 2018. We need to reduce our emissions by 8.3% each year to achieve our target of net zero by 2030. Our largest source of emissions is the Pimlico District Heating Undertaking which accounts for 37.4% of all council emissions. We are exploring options to decarbonise the heating scheme which supplies heat to 3,200 households.



DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

The council has worked with Anthesis Environmental consultancy to identify the impact of different types of carbon saving actions. We have used this information to create a series of recommended actions under four themes: people and communities; organisations and economy; buildings and energy and movement and places.

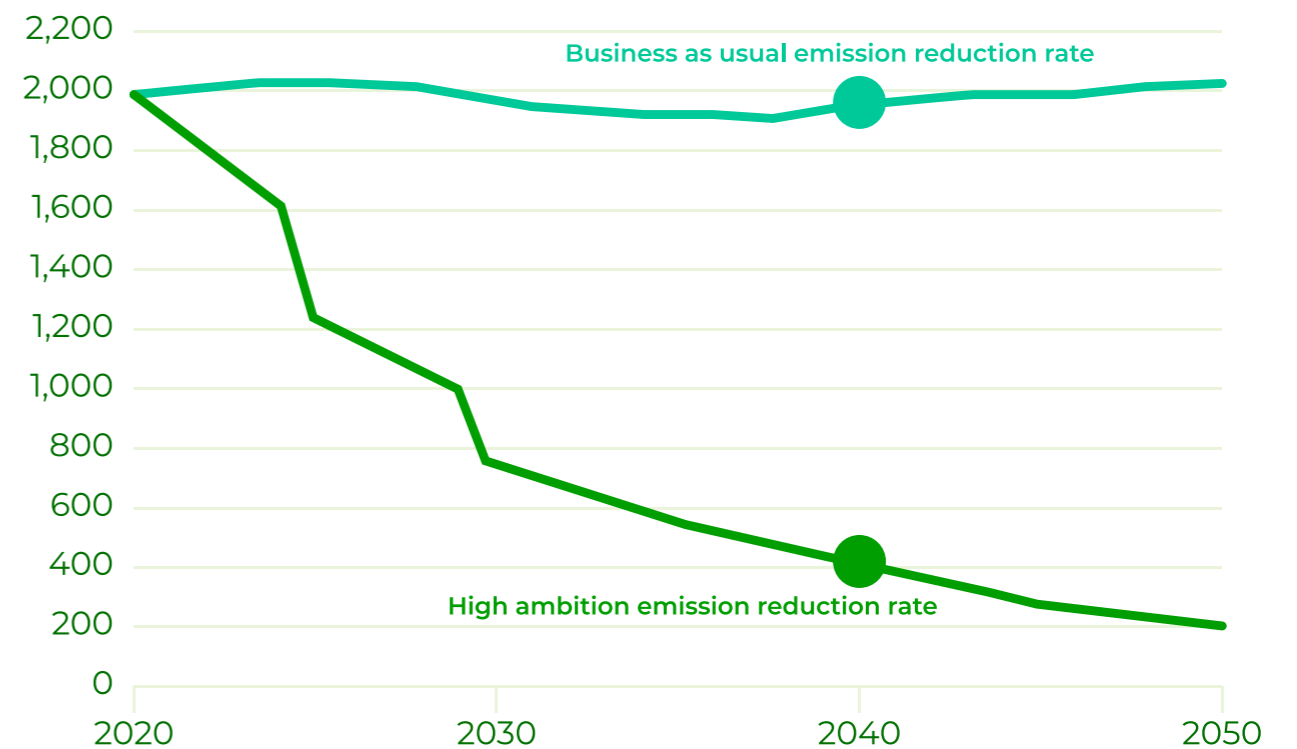
We are inviting your feedback on these draft recommendations as well as your priorities and ideas for action to create a climate emergency action plan.

Our vision is to work in partnership with everyone who lives, works or studies in Westminster to achieve a net zero carbon city by 2040: a greener, cleaner and healthier Westminster where everyone can thrive and is more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

To achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040, the modelling proposed an ambitious programme of actions through which we can achieve an 84% reduction in emissions across Westminster, with the remaining emissions (16%) to be offset through other activities.

This recommendation requires a reduction rate of more than 82,000 tonnes of CO₂e every year up to 2040.

Volume of carbon emissions (Kilotonnes of CO₂e)



Business as usual

emission reductions account for changes implemented by the government, such as increasing energy supplied from renewable sources, and no specific local action. It offers us a 29% reduction by 2040.



High ambition

emission reductions will require us to ambitiously reduce emissions from every aspect of our lives including energy supply and demand, transport and waste. It offers an 84% reduction by 2040.

Prioritising actions

Our draft recommendations to take us to our **2040** target are presented in order of priority, based on those offering the largest potential carbon savings. The prioritisation principles for recommendations related to buildings and energy are provided below as an example:

1. Reducing energy demand including retrofitting buildings to be more energy efficient to avoid relying on long-term, higher risk renewable energy supply infrastructure
2. Switching to low-carbon energy systems including moving away from gas towards electric and renewable energy
3. Decarbonising the energy supply through measures such as installing solar panels
4. Carbon offsetting to address remaining emissions whilst benefitting the local economy.



People and communities

Community involvement will be vital across all elements of the climate emergency, from shaping the action plan to behaviour change and rolling out local programmes. Your input will ensure a clear role for the community is incorporated into the action plan.

There are **125,001 homes** in Westminster of which **40%** are rented, **31%** are owned and **26%** are socially rented. This includes **20,931** social housing properties of which **57%** of residents are tenants and **43%** are leaseholders¹. As most homes are not managed or owned by the council, community action is essential to meet net zero by **2040**.

The energy used in these homes accounts for **15%** of the city's emissions, higher than those from road transport. Just over half of all homes in Westminster have an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of D or lower, with a further **31%** being C-rated.

Vision

Residents, workers and visitors actively adopt behaviours that reduce their carbon impact and communities work together as part of a city-wide partnership to tackle climate change.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Example actions
Raise awareness of climate change and promote behaviour that reduces emissions and delivers local sustainability benefits such as local shopping.	Produce a series of 'how to' guides for community development towards net zero such as access to funding, resources, opportunities and support networks.
Empower resident and community groups to craft their own proposals for reducing carbon emissions in their local area.	Launch an interactive web page for residents to share projects, ideas, best practice and experiences.
Support residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce energy use.	Support and drive energy improvements in privately rented homes, focusing on the worst performing properties.
Encourage and empower tenants to report landlords of rental properties with poor energy efficiency performance.	Work with private rented sector landlords to identify and improve properties with poor energy performance
Promote local generation and use of affordable, clean energy.	Share local community examples including action taking place in schools.
Increase take up of sustainable and active transport such as walking and cycling and reduce reliance on private vehicles.	Encourage active transport through cycle support schemes and walking routes.
Support residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce and increase reuse and recycling.	Support residents through information and communication campaigns.
Review the number of general waste collections to reduce waste, increase recycling rates and minimise emissions from collection services.	Develop a new waste strategy.

¹ Census 2011

Organisations and economy

Emissions from non-domestic buildings represent a high proportion of our emissions and tackling energy consumption and fuel usage will be vital in tackling climate change.

The large number of listed buildings and significant conservation area coverage pose large challenges for the city as it seeks to reduce energy use in buildings whilst conserving the unique characteristics of Westminster's built environment.

Vision

Businesses take collective action to reduce their carbon emissions and help to shape a thriving and sustainable local economy.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Example actions
Promote collaboration and provide support and information for organisations and landlords to improve the energy efficiency of the buildings they own, maintain or occupy, and reduce their energy use.	<p>Establish working groups, shared sources of information, best practice guides and funding resource guides to help businesses navigate and implement the necessary changes.</p> <p>Run an information campaign to help tenants understand why action is needed and promote positive behaviour change.</p> <p>Explore green clauses in lease terms to ensure businesses are accountable for their performance.</p> <p>Foster city-wide collaboration with organisations to tackle the climate emergency.</p>
Build the capacity of organisations to understand, report and reduce the carbon emissions associated with their operations.	<p>Introduce standardised performance measurement and transparency requirements for commercial developments to report on operational energy performance beyond the five years stipulated in the new London Plan.</p> <p>Encourage greater accountability for emissions through a new Westminster Sustainable City Charter, a shared commitment for businesses to reduce carbon emissions.</p>
Support small businesses to access finance and skills for projects that reduce their carbon impact, such as accessing and installing low carbon energy.	<p>Simplify and increase access to green finance.</p> <p>Support the green agenda through our economic development and business support programmes.</p>
Maximise emissions savings through purchasing sustainable goods and services and using local supply chains.	Promote the low carbon agenda through our procurement approach and supply chains.
Harness opportunities to stimulate a green economic recovery of the city, including low carbon skills and jobs, sustainable investment or clean technology.	Community take-up of programmes such as Repowering London which offer youth skills and training opportunities.
Reduce emissions from freight, servicing and deliveries through fewer vehicle trips into and through the city and switching to electric vehicles.	Launch our Freight, Servicing and Deliveries (FSD) Strategy and Action Plan and consider the feasibility of local distribution hubs for home deliveries across Westminster which utilise low-carbon last-mile deliveries.
Support and incentivise organisations to reduce the amount of waste they produce, working in partnership to improve waste reuse and recycling, and maximise circular economy opportunities.	<p>Explore opportunities for waste consolidation schemes.</p> <p>Create partnerships between businesses and academics to explore opportunities in the circular economy.</p>
Organisations and local waste management companies work together to reduce the carbon impact of their waste collection services.	Extend waste collection consolidation activity such as The Crown Estate's Regent Street programme.

Buildings and energy

Westminster has a lower capacity for renewable energy technology such as solar energy than other London boroughs. Installation is made difficult due to the number of listed buildings and conservation area status of much of the city. However, the density of energy use makes it a favourable location for the development of heat networks and waste heat from the tube and locally linked high-consumption sites provide significant opportunities to access otherwise wasted energy.

To achieve the necessary changes to reduce emissions from homes, changes to the planning and legal requirements for the private rented sector, external social housing providers and homeowners need to be made.

Significant funding will be required to make the necessary changes, which will also depend on the availability of new renewable technologies such as combined heat and power systems.

Vision

New developments meet net zero carbon standards and emissions from existing buildings are significantly reduced. Westminster's energy supply comes from affordable, low carbon sources.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Example actions
Support improvements to energy efficiency in buildings and increase the use of renewable energy.	<p>Review planning policy relating to retrofitting historic buildings.</p> <p>Collaborate with other councils around consistent planning laws and guidance.</p>
Retrofit buildings across Westminster to improve their energy performance and increase renewable energy sources, targeting net zero emissions where possible.	<p>Encourage the sensitive retrofit of historic buildings, where possible.</p> <p>Explore funding to decarbonise the Pimlico District Heating Undertaking (PDHU)</p>
Ensure that new developments minimise their whole life carbon impact, reduce emissions on site as far as possible in line with industry best practice, and rely less on carbon offsetting to achieve net zero carbon standards.	Set out higher environmental standards for development in Westminster through our City Plan and new Environmental Supplementary Planning Guidance.
Support landlords and homeowners to improve minimum energy efficiency standards, prioritising improvements to those with the lowest energy performance ratings.	Ensure landlords and homeowners have access to a holistic retrofit advice service like London Councils' Ecofurb programme, or a similar model.
Maximise the generation, distribution and use of renewable and low carbon energy across the city such as district heat networks and biogas.	Expand existing district heat networks and require new developments to link up to heat networks within future planning policies.
Improve energy efficiency in council buildings and housing stock and ensure that purchased electricity is 100% renewable.	Carry out of major retrofit of the Council's own social housing estates, targeting an average of EPC Band B.

Movement and places

Road transport represents **11%** of Westminster’s emissions but compared to emissions from the built environment, this is lower than the average local authority.

The arrival of the Elizabeth Line in 2022 and the redevelopment of Victoria Coach Station provide opportunities to reduce congestion and increase the use of active travel and public transport instead of private vehicles.

Westminster recorded the second highest number of Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) registrations in 2020 and will become part of the ULEZ in 2021, requiring minimum emission standards for vehicles. Parking surcharges for diesel vehicles and resident permit discounts incentivise the transition to ULEVs. There are over **1,000** electric vehicle charging points across Westminster, the highest rate per capita of any UK local authority.

Green spaces have a significant role in removing carbon emissions from the atmosphere and improvements also enhance biodiversity, air quality and enhance wellbeing. We are home to some of the UK’s most famous parks, owned and managed by the Royal Parks. The council manages around **200** smaller parks and open spaces and the average distance to the nearest open space is just under **300m**. There are approximately **20,000** trees in Westminster and up to **200** new trees are being planted every year.

The council’s Freight, Servicing and Deliveries (FSD): **Strategy and Action Plan 2020 – 2040** aims to achieve reductions in freight vehicle numbers and emissions.

Vision

Transport emissions and air pollution are minimised through sustainable and active travel. Our green streets and open spaces absorb carbon, build climate resilience and improve health and wellbeing.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Example actions
Encourage sustainable and active travel through the creation of traffic free zones, supporting walking or cycling infrastructure and facilities (e.g. cycle storage).	Support safer, healthier and greener travel across the city through the Council’s Movement Strategy.
Increase the use of electric vehicles through more charging points and stakeholder partnership working to promote a shift to electric public and private vehicles.	Continue to expand electric vehicle charging points beyond the 1,000 already installed across the city.
Reduce Westminster’s contribution to transport emissions outside the city, including through reduced air travel.	Discourage business air travel.
Develop and promote a local approach that enables Westminster’s organisations and communities to offset their carbon impact and retain project benefits within the city.	Facilitate better access to finance, such as the Carbon Offset Fund.
Maintain existing tree coverage and look for opportunities to further ‘green’ the city.	Commit to the protection and improvement of open spaces. Promote nature-based projects to support local carbon saving activity.
Understand the potential impacts of climate change to Westminster and take action to improve local climate resilience and protect vulnerable people, livelihoods, businesses and services.	Assess future climate risk to the city and ensure new infrastructure is designed with the long-term impacts of climate change in mind.



To have your say on our draft recommendations and to feed into the climate action plan, please submit your feedback, ideas and comments in our online survey at westminster.gov.uk/climate-change

For a printed version of the survey, please email climateemergency@westminster.gov.uk

37%

from public sector
buildings such
as schools
and hospitals

23%

from industrial
buildings

11%

from shops,
offices,
restaurants
and hotels

11%

from road
transport

15%

from
homes

1.5%

from waste
disposal and
industrial
processes