

# Climate Change Annual Report

Gravesham Borough Council

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## Foreword from the Leader of the Council

Welcome to our fourth annual report detailing our progress towards our target for the borough to achieve net zero by 2030.

Since we declared a climate emergency in 2019, we have made significant progress on the road to net zero, with areas of our work attracting national recognition and rewards, reflecting the innovation and creative thinking we are bringing to overcome the challenges we face.

This report goes into detail on much of the work we are doing, but there are some significant steps I believe are worth highlighting here.

We are a Carbon Literate organisation, having achieved bronze status, with training ongoing for members and staff as we work towards silver accreditation.

Low-carbon renewable heating will be specified in the Employer's Requirements for new housing developments where appropriate and practical. The recent specification of heat pumps for the design and build of our council-owned housing at St Columba's Close and Worcester Close shows this being implemented.

100% of our green waste is being used for composting and biomass through specialist facilities. We now have 52 council-owned electric vehicle charging points operated through Connected Kerb and BP Pulse in the borough.

We continue to work with residents to help them reduce their carbon footprint. A Net Zero Information event was held in September with around 150 residents attending, and we are working with Ellenor Hospice to help residents reuse unwanted furniture to minimise waste and carbon dioxide emissions. This is just a snapshot of what we are doing, and I hope this report will give you a real feel for the full extent of our work.

Of course, since 2019, and particularly recently, there has been debate around the need to pursue net zero and other climate-related objectives. This council remains firmly of the view that we must act now to preserve our environment for our children and future generations. You don't need to look too far for evidence to support that view. September this year was the joint hottest on record in the UK, with seven days when the temperature reached 30C, a new record for the UK. The north of our borough has 11km of river frontage, with homes, businesses and valued open spaces at increasing risk of flooding as environmental conditions change.

Of course, the measures we are introducing have wider tangible benefits; well-insulated homes, alternative transport options, and protected environments have huge benefits for the general health and well-being of local residents.

And with the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis still all too real, we can all appreciate the benefits of reduced energy bills.

We make no excuse for doing all we can to protect our borough for now and for tomorrow.

Cllr John Burden

**Leader of the Executive**

## Introduction

The council's Climate Change Strategy was adopted in December 2021. During 2023, the council has continued to progress in the delivery of actions to reduce carbon emissions across council operations, its housing stock, and the wider borough, but with an increased recognition of the value of the co-benefits from such activity to the health of its residents, making homes more affordable to heat, improving air quality, encouraging active travel and the contribution to the creation of new economic opportunities for business.

This report sets out the key activities undertaken by the council in the last year to deliver against the action plan within the strategy, which provides a clear and public framework for how the council intends to meet its operational net zero ambitions by 2030, as well as work with its tenants, borough residents, and businesses to reduce emissions in its housing stock and the wider borough.

This year has seen the council increase public engagement and public accountability of its actions through the continuation of the Climate Change Advisory Board, revision of the web pages hosted by the council on climate-related matters and its hosting and being involved in several events and activities aimed at supporting and enabling residents to take action to benefit from climate change initiatives, both as a contribution to the wider community and their own personal circumstances.

This year the council has:

- Progressed projects to increase the efficiency of council housing stock, including installation of solar panels, heat pumps, water flow regulators and LED lighting in communal areas.
- Doubled the installation of electric vehicle charging points in the borough including taxi chargers.
- Has installed 18 Electric Vehicle charging points at our Brookvale site along with electrifying 15% of our council's fleet vehicles.
- Achieved Bronze level as a carbon literate organisation and continuous delivery of Carbon Literacy Training to Officers and Members.
- Introduced a Cycle-to-work scheme for employees to promote active travel.
- Supported residents, schools, and businesses by hosting informative events and signposting advice and schemes through our digital platforms and newsletter to support them in their journey to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Collaborated with the Ellenor Hospice, Vinted, Depop and Freegle to help residents reuse unwanted items to minimise waste and carbon dioxide emissions.
- Introduced recycling collections to 228 hard-to-reach areas and enabled weekly food waste collection to 71 houses.

The council remains committed to its 2019 pledge to take action to prepare for the borough to become carbon net zero by 2030. Its ability to deliver against this pledge, however, has become increasingly challenging in the last year with revised plans issued by the Central Government on the country's path to net zero and a lack of funds available to support climate initiatives. The council's own resources for the climate agenda are also becoming increasingly tight given the ongoing structural under-funding of local councils. During 2024 the council will need to review its programme of activity to ensure that it is focusing on those activities that are truly going to make a difference.

## Update on Borough and Council Emissions

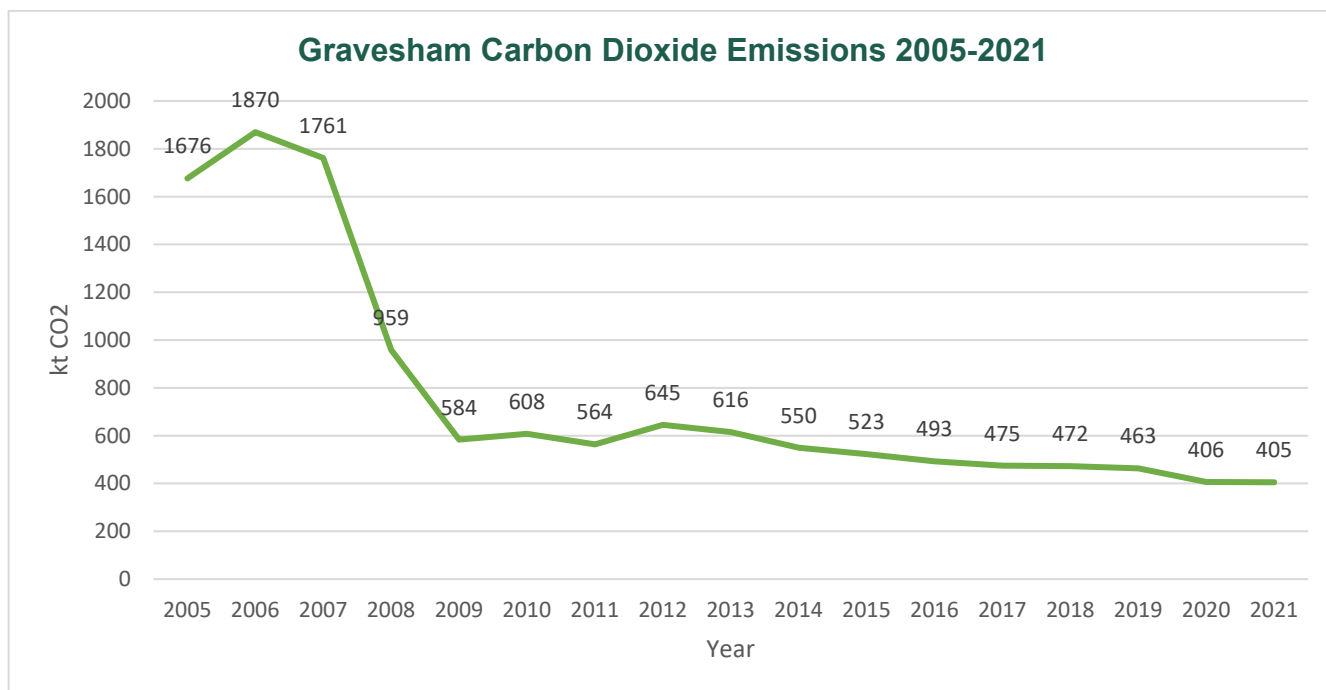
### Borough Emissions

Data on local and regional end-user carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions is collated annually by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to provide a nationally consistent evidence base for greenhouse gas emissions which lags by two years due to the amount of data used to compile the statistics. The latest data for 2021 was published in June 2023 and shows a continuing decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions within Gravesham.

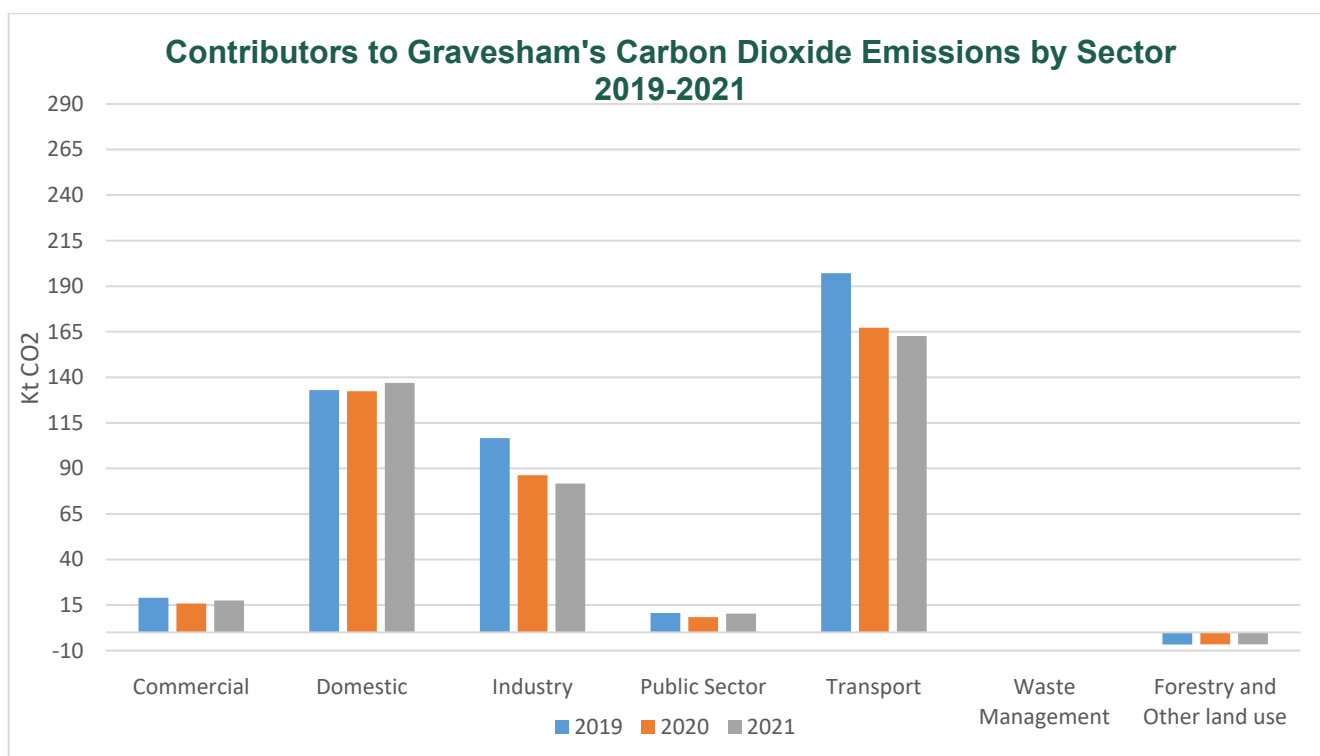
The method of calculating the data is constantly being refined to provide the most accurate picture possible. It is not unusual for previous years information to be updated and the figures used in

previous reports to be revised. The Council will always use the latest available data when reporting, including any updated data for previous years, to ensure all data is consistent and using the same methodology.

With the closure of the Northfleet Blue Circle clinker furnaces in 2009, emissions for the borough have been reducing steadily in most years since this time. The yearly total CO2 emissions for the borough dropped in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns and the reduction of traffic; emissions remained stable in 2021 and did not increase as had been expected due to the return of activity.

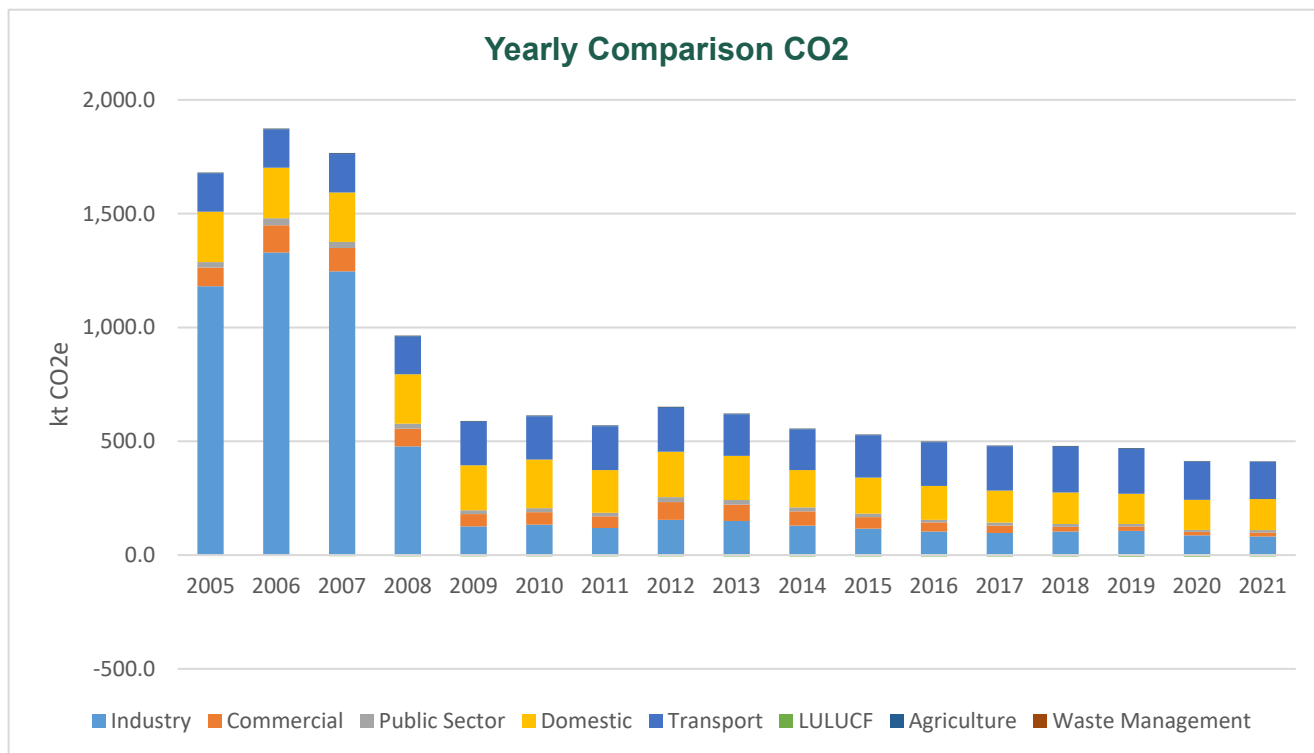


The emissions data for the borough from each sector from the years 2019 to 2021 are displayed in the graph below.

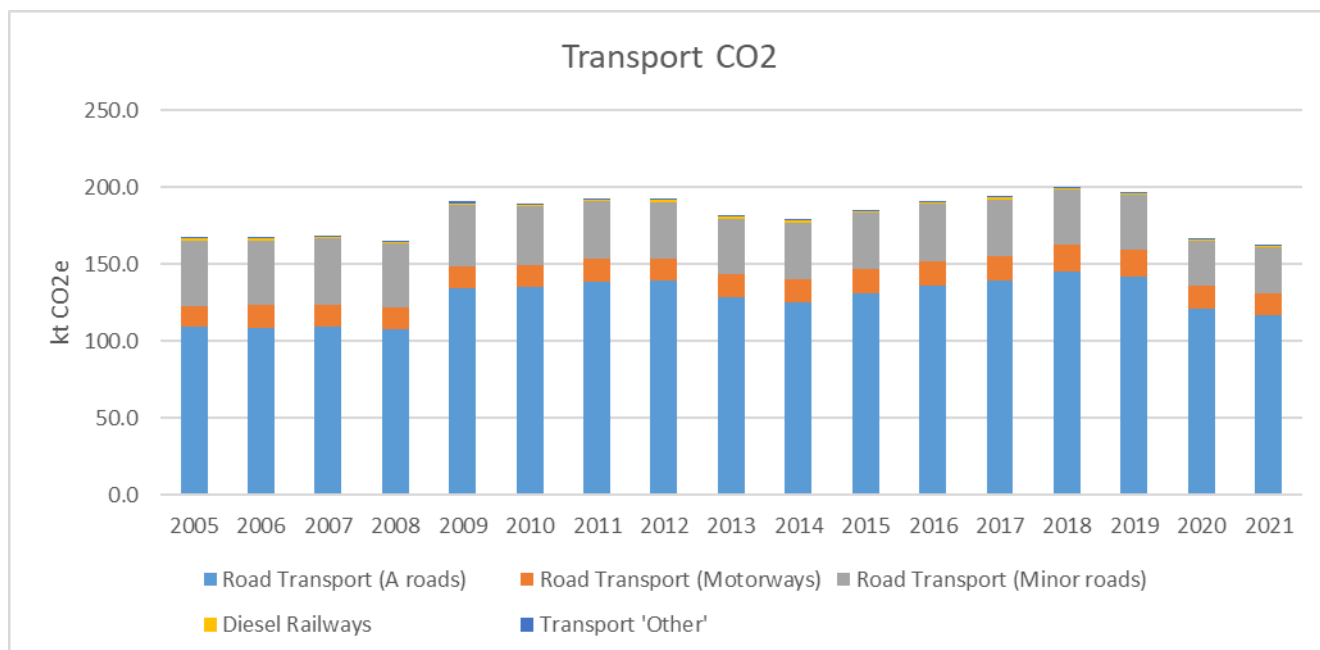


With heavy industry no longer playing a part locally, the two largest areas for emissions within the borough are Domestic Properties and Transport. The remaining industries in the borough are the third

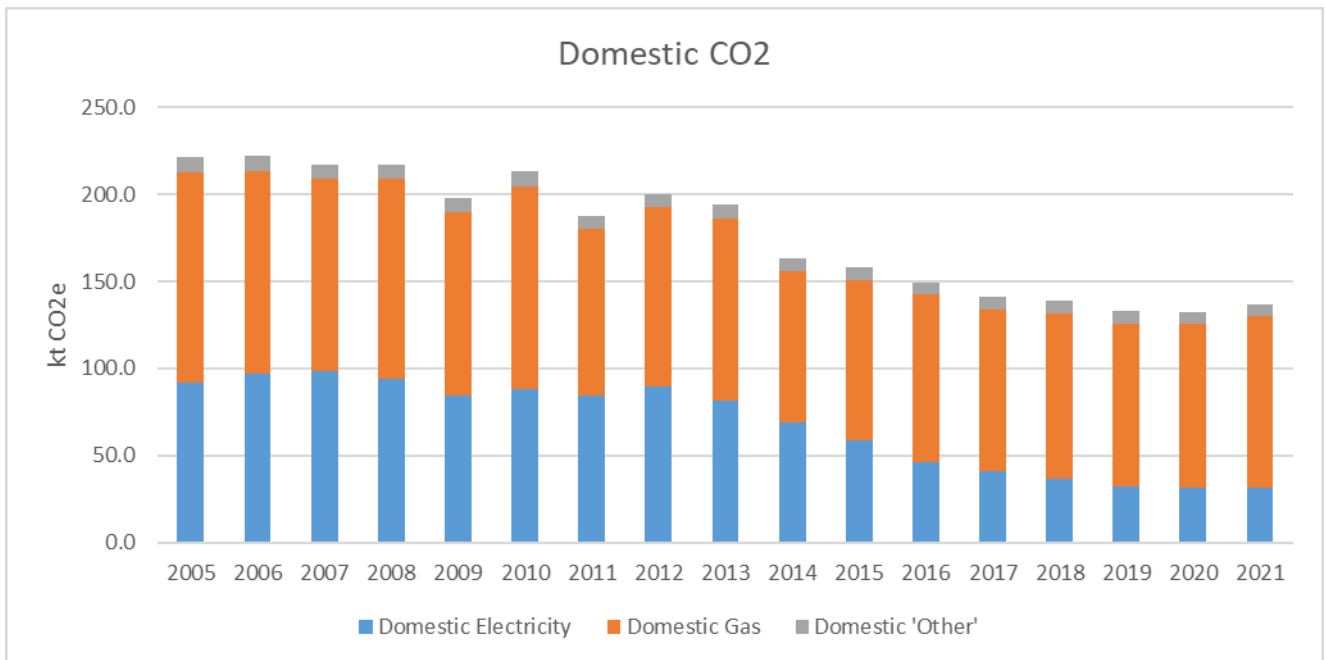
highest emitter.



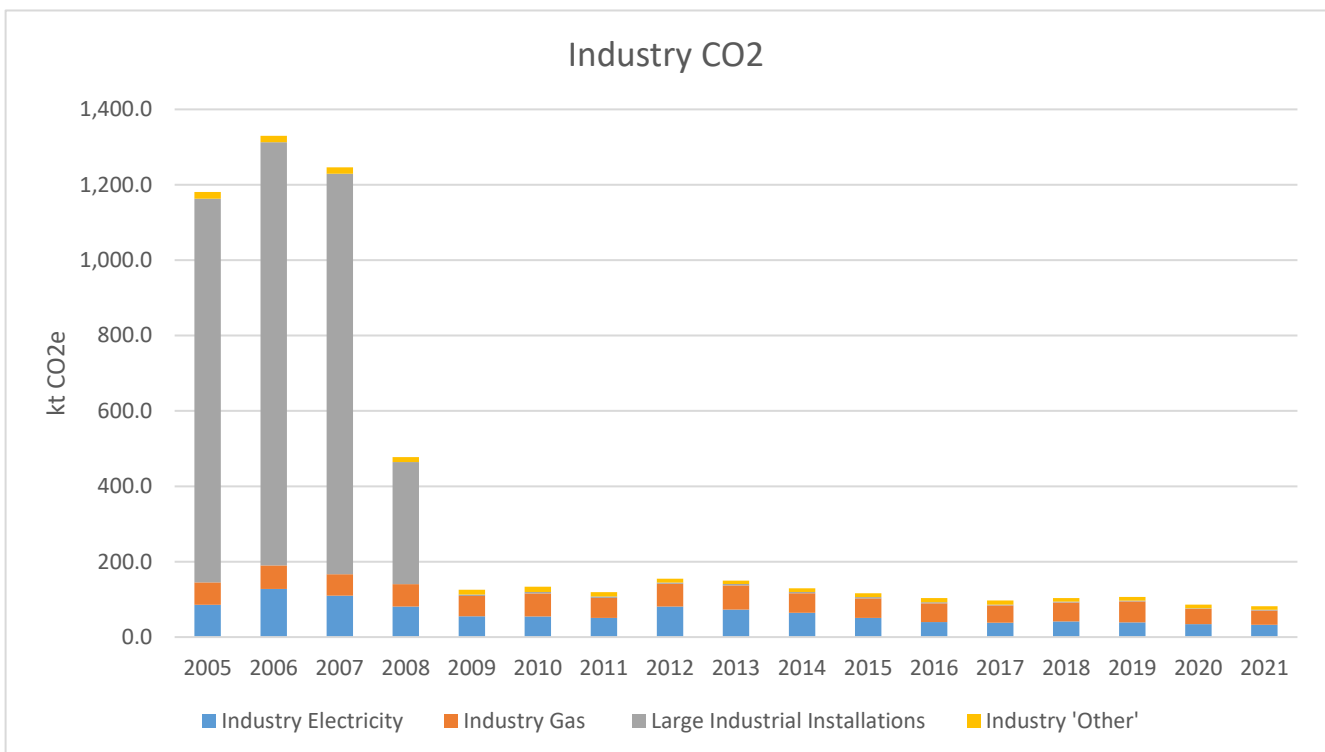
Within the transport category, the largest contributor to emissions is A roads, which includes the A2 carrying through traffic which does not originate or terminate within the borough. The council has for some time publicly voiced its concerns over the detrimental impact the Lower Thames Crossing would have on the borough, which goes beyond pure emissions, should the project be allowed to proceed.



Domestic CO2 emissions are dominated using gas. This supports the founding principle of the council's programme to decarbonise its social housing stock and its project to support private homeowners and landlords to move to heating solutions that do not use fossil fuels. The downward trend in domestic electricity emissions can currently be largely attributable to the decarbonisation of the electric grid using renewables.



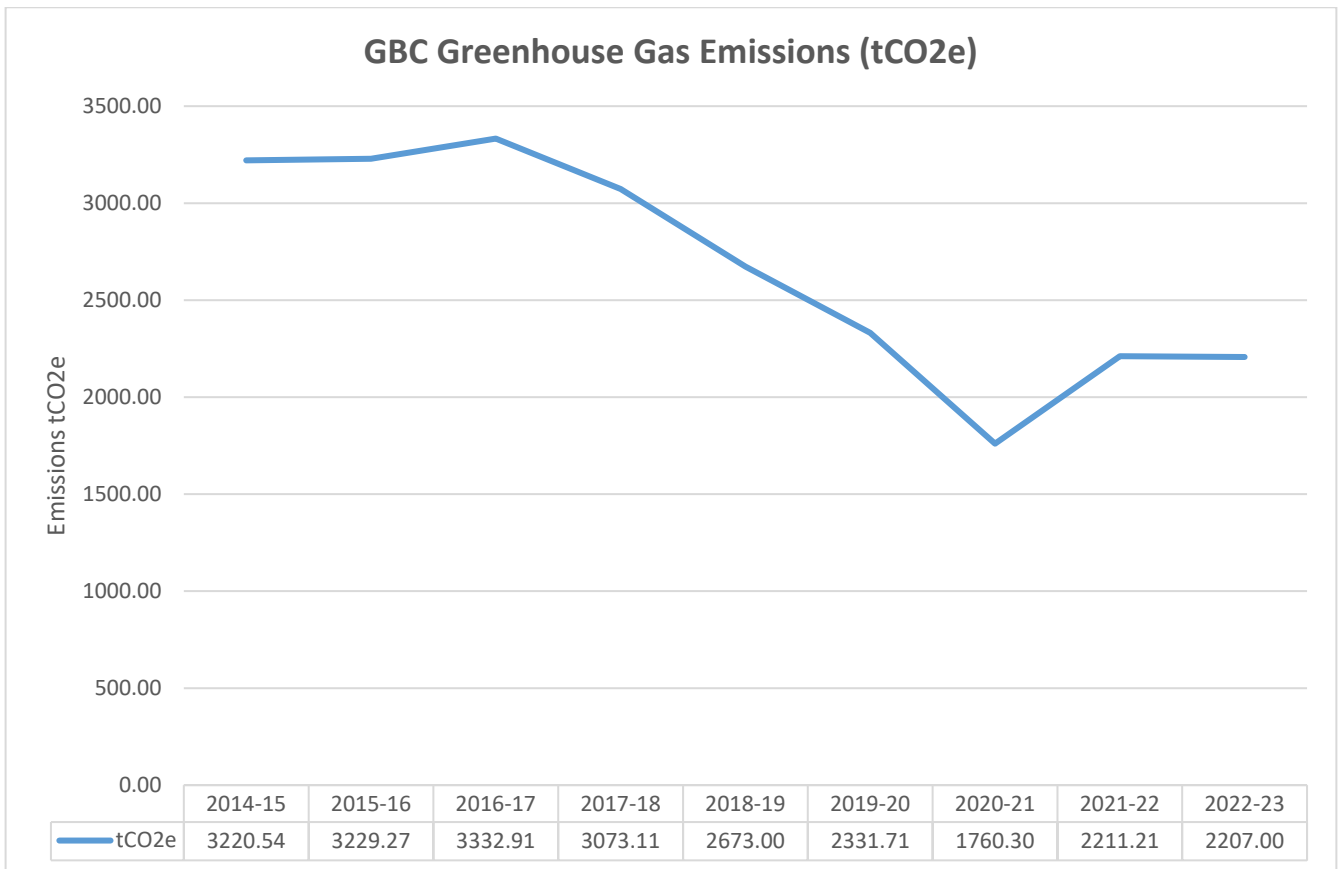
The CO2 emissions for Industry in the borough are now dominated by gas usage.



### Council Operational Emissions

During 2021 the council continued to progress activity to drive long-term, sustainable reductions in the emissions across its own estate.

The council has measured incremental change in the level of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from its own GBC operations since 2014-15:



The Council's total gross greenhouse gas emissions continue to be recorded against the three specific 'scopes' for categorising the emissions:

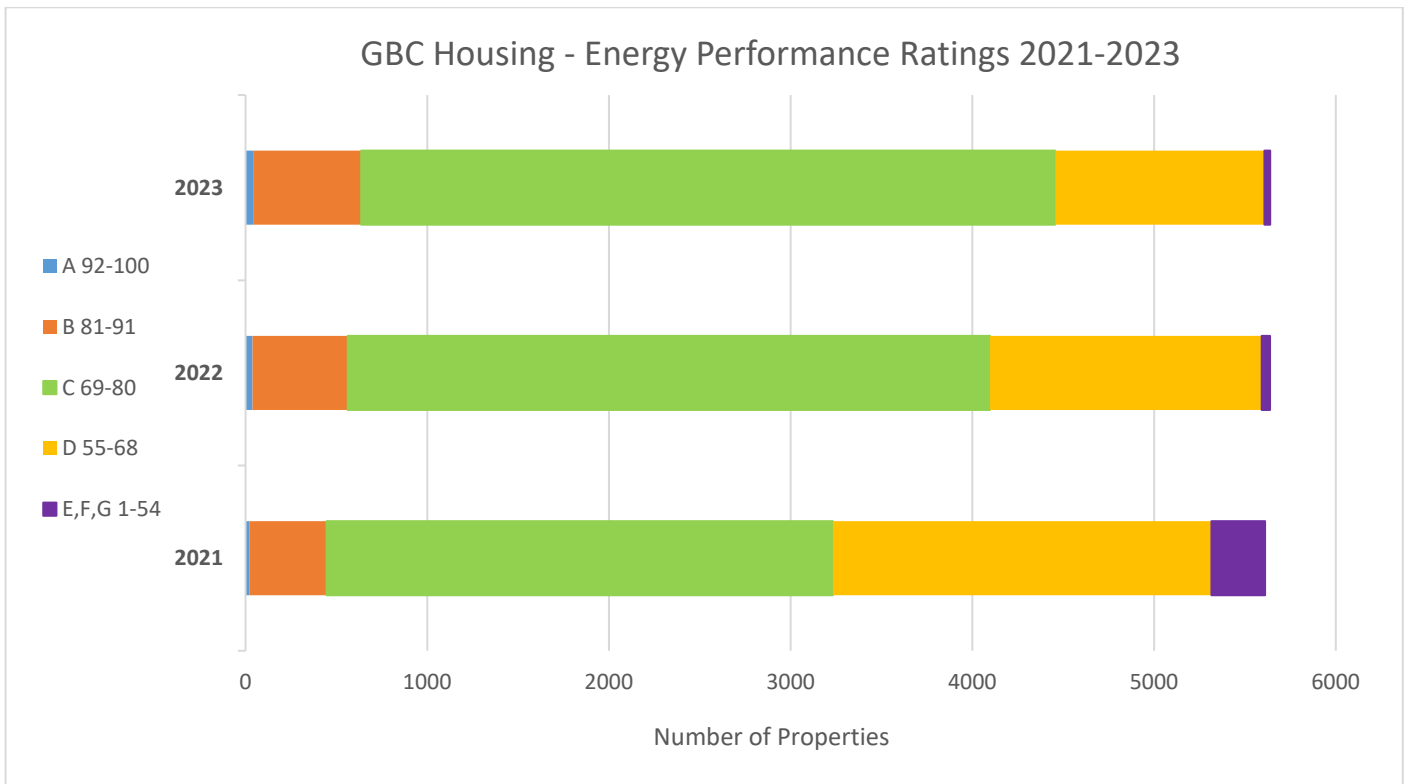
- **Scope 1** – All Direct Emissions from the activities of an organisation or under their control. Including fuel combustion on sites such as gas boilers, fleet vehicles and air-conditioning leaks.
- **Scope 2** – Indirect Emissions from electricity purchased and used by the organisation. Emissions are created during the production of the energy and eventually used by the organisation.
- **Scope 3** – All Other Indirect Emissions from activities of the organisation, occurring from sources that they do not own or control.

Total gross greenhouse gas emissions for Scope 1, 2 and 3 for the last financial year (2022-23) was 2,207 tCO2e (tons of carbon dioxide equivalent – taking account of methane and nitrous oxide as well as carbon dioxide emissions). The Council has been able to maintain a stable position in its emissions levels during the year as we continue to develop and progress plans to decarbonise our operating facilities and vehicle fleet, which account for the majority of our operational greenhouse gas emissions.

### GBC Housing Stock Emissions

Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are required in the UK to provide a prospective owner or tenant with information on the energy performance of a building and recommendations for improvement. EPCs for homes use an A-G rating scale based on the modelled energy bill costs of running the building. As per new EPC Regulations, all existing council-owned homes are to meet EPC Band C or better by 2035, where practical, cost-effective, and affordable.

The graph below shows the improvement in energy performance for the council's social housing stock between 2021 and 2023.



The graph demonstrates that planned council activity during the year had a significant impact on improving the energy efficiency of its housing stock since the strategy was adopted in the year 2021; the proportion of homes with an EPC Rating of C or above is at 79%, up from 73% in 2022 and up from 58% in 2021.

### Carbon Reduction Actions during 2023

The Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030 sets in place a clear programme of actions and interventions for the council to prepare the Borough to be carbon net zero by 2030, and to do what is within its power and resources to make Gravesham Borough Council carbon net zero by 2030.

In identifying the key Climate Change action priorities for the council and the Borough as a whole, it has been clear that there are some aspects for which the council has full control and others for which the council will need to work with others to instigate change to reduce emission levels.

The actions are therefore split into three priority areas which reflect its scope of influence.

#### Priority 1 – Gravesham Borough Council – the organisation

The council is targeting its operations to be carbon net zero by 2030.

#### Priority 2 – Gravesham Borough Council the housing provider

The council will do what is possible within the resources available to work towards the UK Government’s target for social housing providers, as set out in the Clean Growth Strategy, to attain the minimum rating of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C for rented properties by 2035 where practical, cost-effective, and affordable. We will work with tenants to support them in the use of the tools and technology they have available to improve energy efficiency in the council housing stock.

#### Priority 3 – Gravesham Borough Council the community leader

The council cannot tackle climate change alone. By working with partners, residents, community groups, and other interested parties across the borough, we can continue to drive down the level of emissions across Gravesham, helping the borough to focus on those areas where emissions are highest.

The following highlights show progress made against each of these priority areas over the last year.

## Priority 1 Highlights - Gravesham Borough Council – the organisation

### 1. *Delivery of Carbon Literacy Training*

The Council continues to deliver Carbon Literacy Training to council officers and key Members, helping to ensure that those responsible for making decisions on the delivery of council services are aware of the impact their actions may have on climate change. To date, 68 Officers and Members have completed the training.

### 2. *Becoming a Carbon Literate Organisation*

The Carbon Literate Organisation (CLO) Awards recognise the exceptional efforts made by accredited CLOs to educate and engage their workforce and stakeholders about climate change, promote sustainable practices, and reduce organisational carbon emissions. Gravesham Borough Council fulfilled the criteria to become a Carbon Literate Organisation and received a Bronze certificate in February 2023 and a Trophy in June 2023.

### 3. *Progressing plans for Cascade Leisure Centre*

Planning permission has been secured to bring forward the new leisure centre with the plans setting out that it will be built to the highest environmental performance standards and will be more efficient in terms of carbon usage than the existing Cascades, contributing to our next zero ambitions.

### 4. *Energy Renewal Contract*

The council has renewed its energy procurement contract with LASER ahead of the contract expiring in September 2024. The new contract is expected to protect the public sector from rising market prices by timely sourcing and monitoring energy needs.

LASER's flexible procurement strategies have the ability to amend and introduce new trading strategies to meet bespoke customer requirements and changing market conditions

LASER Framework agreements mandate suppliers to support Net Zero goals through renewable energy investments and offer support to the Council for the decarbonisation of its operational buildings, including onsite renewables and heat decarbonisation projects. It also mandates suppliers to create a Social Value Plan by January 2024, with annual funding for customer initiatives, supplier volunteering days, and funding for customer projects.

### 5. *Implementing plans to decarbonise the vehicle fleet*

The Council continues with the electrification of its fleet, with 15% of the total fleet now formed of Electric Vehicles. In preparation for the next phase of fleet conversion, the council has also installed 18 Electric Vehicle charging points at our Brookvale site. The installation of the new infrastructure will allow the council to further increase its electric vehicle fleet. Given the proposed reforms by the Central Government to waste and recycling, as well as rapidly changing technology in how heavy vehicles can be fuelled, the council will proactively work with partners and industry over the coming months to understand the future of alternatively fuelled vehicles so that it can make informed decisions as to which options are likely to be the most cost-effective and sustainable.

### 6. *Promoting Active Travel within the workforce*

The Council implemented a 'Cycle to Work' scheme for staff this year and continued its work with Arriva Buses to promote the use of public transport within its workforce. The council has also commenced activity to research other initiatives to encourage its staff to consider green travel arrangements, such as car sharing.

### 7. *IT Infrastructure improvements*



Council IT Services introduced an IT equipment programme which offers residual value on devices that are no longer needed or cannot be redeployed within the organisation. Employees and Members can buy back existing hardware, reducing carbon footprint and e-waste.

The Council has also adopted a cloud-first approach to all new software/hardware procurement and now has cloud infrastructure to move on-premise infrastructure to the cloud, which is a more environmentally and sustainably friendly approach than service contracts for the air conditioning and fire suppression systems required to maintain a server room.

## Priority 2 Highlights - Gravesham Borough Council the housing provider

### 1. *Improving the council-owned housing stock*

The Council completed the communal LED lighting replacement programme at Pegasus Court, Portreeve Court and Longferry Court and this will result in annual carbon savings of 56 tonnes.

The external works for the ground source heat pumps at Springvale Court have now been completed with our contractor Swale Heating commencing the internal installations. The installation of solar panels at Springvale Court has also commenced which will see each resident benefit and will play a vital part in the decarbonisation of the block. On completion of the works, all flats will become net zero with an annual carbon reduction of 32 tonnes a year with improved EPC ratings. Tenants will see improved heating, hot water and thermal comfort within their homes with expected bill savings of 1/3<sup>rd</sup>.

The programme of heat pumps and solar panel installation for 15 homes is progressing well. Once completed, all 15 homes will have net zero energy, an EPC of A, and an annual carbon savings of 83 tonnes. The tenants will also see a reduction in their fuel bills which are estimated to be around 1/3<sup>rd</sup> and will receive improved heating, hot water and thermal comfort in their homes.

At the new housing development at Valley Drive, the Council has installed two 22kWh electric vehicle chargers for resident's use, to support residents in converting to electric vehicles.

The council has installed control flow regulators to water appliances at 13 of our highest consuming sites, with expected yearly savings of 292,000 litres of water and energy savings of 9,840 kWh.

Work continues on the council's insulation programme, with property surveys now completed on 1000 properties within the housing stock. The first phase of the project will see installations to be delivered to 180 properties which will result in better thermal performance of these properties to reduce heat loss and ultimately result in bill savings and improved thermal comfort for tenants. The installation of insulation in these properties will also improve the EPC ratings and bring the properties up to a minimum rating of C.

### 2. *Ensuring sustainability in new housing developments*

Going forward, low-carbon renewable heating such as Ground Source Heat Pumps, Air Source Heat Pumps and Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure will be specified in the Employer's Requirements for new housing developments where appropriate and practical.

The St. Columbas new build project has been granted planning consent and is expected to be in contract by the end of 2023. The project is expected to see the delivery of 25 car parking spaces with EV charging infrastructure – 10 active and the rest with passive infrastructure for future upgrades.

The 8-unit scheme at Worcester Close has obtained planning permission with ASHPs (Air Source Heat Pumps) as the main heating source for all units alongside the provision of active charging points.

## Priority 3 Highlights - Gravesham Borough Council the community leader

### 1. *Electric Vehicle Charging Points*

The Council continued to deliver more charging points in the borough this year, with the number of chargers more than doubling in the year and to a level that puts us well placed in Kent on the number of EV Chargers per 100,000 of the population.

The council continues to signpost and promote carbon reduction schemes, such as those available to flat owner-occupiers, tenants, and residential landlords to seek grant funding to install Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points.

### 2. *Recycling Services*

Since August 2021, 1,211 (+42.8%) more flats in the borough have dry mixed recycling collections and 818 (+308.7%) more flats have food waste recycling collections. In total, 72 blocks of flats have been given recycling provisions.

Educational recycling leaflets have also been delivered to 1,815 flats in the borough (27.0% of total Council and private flats). Currently, 60.1% of flats now have recycling and 16.1% of flats have food waste collection.

A new town centre recycling round is now in place to offer recycling collections to 229 additional houses and flats in hard-to-reach areas where a typical refuse collection vehicle (RCV) cannot reach. The new arrangement has also enabled an additional 71 houses to have a weekly food waste collection. The new service has yielded approximately 22.1kg of recycling (not including food waste) per household in the past eleven weeks.

Since the beginning of this year, 10,578 letters have been written to properties explaining the contamination issue and the correct way of recycling. Comparing overall recycling contamination between Q1 and Q2, the average rejected tonnage has reduced from 28.4 tonnes per week in Q1 to 13.6 tonnes per week in Q2.

Small electrical 'amnesty' events took place for International e-Waste Day 2023, during which 216 individual items were donated for recycling, weighing in at 159.2kg.

Since launching our Council household battery collection points in December 2022, 196.0kg of batteries have been collected and recycled.

### 3. *Biodiversity*

The Council is now using a local contractor who is removing 100% of our green waste for use as composting and biomass through local specialist facilities.

Total green waste collected from the council including domestic garden waste is 2478.1 tonnes (April – August), an increase of 1,587.9 from the same period last year.

As part of the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) strategy, the objective is to identify 10 primary sites to begin this initiative, which will be a mix of urban, peri-urban, and open space. The proposal will be used to develop the Parks and Open Space strategy, the Tree Planting strategy, and the Design Code.

The council is working on a proposal to look at evidence and research that had been collected by Kent County Council and Kent Wildlife Trust to establish wildlife habitats.

North Kent Countryside Partnership agreed to work with 'North Kent Mind' to help the council improve Gordons Promenade. They have spent a total of 120 hours restoring the promenade's attractiveness, working with the clean-up after flooding in the Dell, transplanting reeds into the lake, weeding, and planting spring bulbs.

The council has ordered 300 standard trees, which, depending on their maturity, can absorb approximately 10 kilogrammes of CO2 each year from the atmosphere along with an application of 800 whips from the Woodland Trust for wildlife habitat.

The council is also in the process of being affiliated with the Super National Nature Reserve.

#### 4. *Supporting Businesses*

Discussions are in progress with two of the Borough's largest employers about renewable energy and circular economy projects and prospects for a local (renewable energy) generation scheme will be considered at Springhead Enterprise Park.

The intention is to scope the pros and cons of a scheme to help reduce energy costs for occupiers and provide an alternative energy source, alongside the main grid connection.

Council officers are working to develop partnerships including via the Thames Estuary Partnership and other prospective partners undertaking decarbonisation-related work such as Innovate UK and their 'Net Zero Go' tool.

The Gravesham Business Awards ceremony will be held in November 2023, with a greater emphasis on an explicit environmental category – Business Decarbonisation (Green) this year.

#### 5. *Supporting Residents*

The Council hosted an "Improving your property for sustainable living event" on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023 with the University of Greenwich to help residents understand more about their property and how to make it more sustainable.

A Net Zero Resident Information event was held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 with around 150 residents attending the event. Supported by partners including Citizens Advice North & West Kent, the University of Greenwich, E-on, Southern Water, Carbon 3, Kensa Engineering, Cycling UK, Better Points Active Travel, Julis Creations and LM Renewables, the event provided first-hand advice and support to assist residents in making meaningful changes as a contribution to reducing their carbon footprint as well and providing ongoing health and financial co-benefits.

A total of 1,576 installations were made in the Kent region through Solar Together Phase 2, a group-buying platform for PV panels, battery storage, and EV charging stations for residents. Over a 25-year period, this equates to an estimated 39,000 tonnes of carbon reduction. With the installation of 1,000 solar panels, 83 batteries, and 5 EV chargers by 87 Gravesend residents, 86,255 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> was removed from the atmosphere.

Due to popular demand and delivering a successful Phase 2, Solar Together Phase 3 was launched in two parts this year, from the Spring Auction, there has been a total of 97 registrations for solar panels (95) and battery storage (2) and 30 EV charging points and the Autumn Auction is in progress.

Changes to the Housing Assistance Policy have enabled the Council to use Disabled Facilities Grant Funding more flexibly to assist five residents of the private housing sector with Insulation, heating measures and boiler replacement grants.

The Council is presently aiming to reach out to targeted areas of low-income, off-gas households to benefit from the Home Upgrade Grant 2 Scheme, which will help them improve the energy efficiency of their homes using various insulation measures and green energy while also improving their health and welfare.

The council promoted several other initiatives, supporting the Plastic Free July campaign, reuse of materials such as textiles and furniture, promoting textile banks, home composting, Electric Cars, Greener Travel, and our housing team's work with Ellenor Hospice throughout the year through social media platforms and newsletters.

#### 6. *Supporting Schools and Gravesham's Youth*

In response to the students' letters concerning climate change, a council officer and The Mayor of Gravesham visited Springhead Park Primary School to address the points raised in the letter, provided advice, and answered questions posed by pupils. The Mayor of Gravesham also facilitated the pupils in becoming climate champions.

Council representatives addressed over 350 students at Tymberwood Academy at a complete school assembly about recycling. The council suggested pupils bring in small electrical items

for recycling and was able to collect 44 items weighing 69.6kg.

In November, 200 students aged between 16-19 years, parents and teachers attended a Climate Change & Green Economy event at The Woodville which included keynote speakers Lord Deben, the head of the UK's independent Committee on Climate Change, and Sir John Armitt, the chair of the government's National Infrastructure Commission. The purpose of the event was to educate the youth of Gravesham about the careers and employment opportunities that will be crucial to the response to the impacts of climate change.

## 7. *Climate Change Branding & new webpage*

In line with our Net Zero ambitions, the council has developed the climate change brand "Net Zero Gravesham" this year. Furthermore, the council has launched a new webpage that offers helpful information to help businesses and residents on their climate change journeys.

## Future Carbon Pressure

The borough of Gravesham continues to see several nationally significant infrastructure projects in the area as well as experiencing, like the rest of the world, the global impact of Climate Change.

### Local Future Pressures

National Highways re-submitted their application to the Planning Inspectorate for Development Consent in October 2022. The six-month examination began in June 2023 and that was the month that the council reiterated its opposition to the principle of a Lower Thames Crossing to the east of Gravesend, because of the impact it will have on our residents, businesses, and the environment.

A lot of our focus is on the environmental impact, noise, disturbance, and health concerns we have for those living closest to the tunnel portal and the approach road in Gravesend. But the impact will be felt far more widely than that. We have very real concerns about the effect of the big increases in traffic on the A227 corridor through Vigo, Meopham and Instand Rise, and the A226 between Higham and Gravesend and all the health implications that bring for residents in those areas.

At the examination, we have continued to argue our case on two fronts – firstly, that this is the wrong place for it; secondly, if it is to go ahead, this borough deserves full and proper mitigation measures to compensate for the huge impacts it will have on our quality of life.

### Global Future Pressures

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 and is the United Nations body for assessing the science relating to climate change. The IPCC concluded its sixth assessment report (AR6) in early 2023 which is made up of the reports of three working groups (WG I, II, and III) and a synthesis report.

According to the synthesis report, the main source of the increase in global warming is due to the increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, stating that it is likely or very likely to exceed 1.5 °C under higher emission scenarios.

The key findings of the report are as follows,

- Climate change poses a threat to humans and the planet, necessitating international cooperation, inclusive governance, and coordinated policies. Clear goals, diverse knowledge, finance, and technology are essential for achieving sustainability, despite barriers to global capital.
- Human-induced global warming, primarily due to greenhouse gas emissions, has led to severe environmental and human impacts, with communities with the least contribution being disproportionately affected, with unequal contributions across regions and countries.
- Adaptation gaps persist, with some ecosystems and regions reaching their limits. Maladaptation can be avoided through effective planning and implementation, but current financing is insufficient, particularly in low-income countries.

- Mitigation efforts have increased but limiting warming to 2°C is challenging due to gaps between policies and NDCs, and insufficient financing.
- Global warming due to increased greenhouse gas emissions will reach the 1.5°C limit in the near term, intensifying negative impacts, increasing risks, and making adaptation options less effective, leading to more complex and difficult-to-manage situations.
- To limit warming to 1.5°C and 2°C, immediate reductions in GHG emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions by early 2050s and early 2070s are necessary.
- Overshooting 1.5°C of warming could potentially reduce it through negative emissions, but this would require more carbon dioxide removal, posing significant feasibility and sustainability issues.
- Fast, far-reaching system transitions, including significant upscaling of mitigation and adaptation options, are necessary for sustainability, reducing losses and delivering co-benefits.
- Accelerated and equitable climate action is crucial for sustainable development, promoting equity, climate justice, social justice, inclusion, and a just transition, requiring increased support for vulnerable populations.

## National Policy Direction

Former Energy Minister Chris Skidmore's Net Zero Review published in January 2023 highlighted the UK's 2050 Net Zero target as a science-backed, widely followed, and real opportunity. The review emphasises the benefits of Net Zero for the economy and the need for work to secure benefits and minimise costs. Skidmore presents Net Zero as a gateway to UK growth and a potential economic opportunity for global players.

According to the report, harnessing the opportunities will require adherence to three key principles - Swift action, Stable policy & finance and a Place-based approach.

The report recommends 129 Net Zero transition pillars, with 25 priorities for 2025, including cleaner homes and offshore industries strategy, focusing on securing, powering, economy, community, individuals, and future.

The review emphasised the need for clarity, consistency, and continuity from the government, leading to the identification of ten priority missions for public and private action until 2035.

- **Grid and Infrastructure:** A strategic framework and delivery plan for the critical networks of the future to turbocharge onshore and offshore development.
- **Solar:** Full-scale deployment of solar, including a rooftop revolution to harness one of the cheapest forms of energy, increase our energy independence and deliver up to 70GW of British solar generation by 2035.
- **Onshore Wind:** Pave the way for onshore deployment, working closely with communities to deliver local benefits.
- **Nuclear:** A programmatic approach for a next-generation fleet of nuclear, supporting a high-tech British industry covering the whole supply chain.
- **Energy Intensives and Industry:** Setting a clear plan for industry decarbonisation built around long-term investment in carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) and hydrogen networks and technologies.
- **Circular Economy and Waste:** Stimulate the efficient and circular use of resources across the economy, stimulating action on recycling and the reuse of critical materials.
- **Net Zero Local Big Bang:** Unblocking the planning system and reforming the relationship between central and local government to give local authorities and communities the power they need to act on Net Zero.
- **Energy Efficiency For Households:** Working towards gas-free homes by 2035 and giving consumers a greater understanding of their household through a new Net Zero Performance Certificate (NZPC).
- **Net Zero Nature:** Embed nature and habitat restoration throughout transition plans, maximising co-benefits for climate and nature wherever possible.
- **Research & Development And Innovation:** Catalyse decisions and action with an R&D and technology roadmap to 2050, pushing for more agile regulation and supporting up to three 10-year demonstrators.

In September 2023 the Prime Minister recommitted the UK to reaching Net Zero by 2050, pledging to set in place a “fairer” path to achieving target to ease the financial burden on British families.

## Areas of Focus for 2024

The council will continue to follow its adopted Climate Change Strategy during 2024, focusing on the following three key areas:

### Gravesham Borough Council – the organisation

Focusing on how the council can change its own operations, and those of its employees, wherever possible to reduce the level of carbon emissions it produces.

### Gravesham Borough Council – the housing provider

Exploring opportunities to bring the council’s current housing stock up to a better level of energy efficiency standard where it is possible to do so; ensuring new council housing is built to a high level of sustainability and ensuring local planning policy reflects the need for the borough to consider energy efficiency in all developments moving forward.

### Gravesham Borough Council – the community leader

The council cannot directly affect all the changes that are needed across the borough. However, in its role as a community leader, it can work with residents, community groups, and partners to educate and support them in making changes that will have a positive impact on the level of carbon emissions in the borough.

## Key deliverables in 2024

The council’s Climate Change Strategy for 2022-30 sets out several high-level actions against each of the three areas above, focusing on those areas that will have the greatest impact on reducing the level of emissions across the borough. The high-level delivery plan is supported by a detailed management action plan.

For 2024, the council will be focusing on:

- Developing a Carbon Literacy Programme to provide general climate awareness training to all council staff
- Progressing plans to deliver a sustainable leisure centre at the Cascades site
- Progressing plans to seek funds to decarbonise the Council’s operational buildings in particular the Civic Centre and Brookvale site.
- Continuing to decarbonise our smaller fleet vehicles and develop a wider fleet replacement programme based on the procurement of alternatively fuelled vehicles. Proactively work with partners and industry to understand the future of alternatively fuelled vehicles, particularly for larger vehicles.
- Engaging with key local businesses and networks to increase options to share decarbonisation opportunities, learn from others, celebrate good practices in reducing business environmental footprints and promote business trading in the Low Carbon Environmental Goods or Services sectors.
- Continuing to deliver a programme of activity to improve the energy efficiency of council-owned homes like installing LED lights, loft & wall insulation, heat pumps, solar panels, electric vehicle charging points and more and seeking opportunities to apply for Government funding where these are available.
- Continuing to provide support to eligible private sector households in making their homes more energy efficient through different schemes such as Household Support Fund to replace/repair/upgrade gas boilers, Home Upgrade Grant 2, ECO 4, Great British Insulation Scheme.
- Continuing the council’s tree planting programme to help sequestration of carbon as well as promoting the health and well-being of residents and visitors to the borough. Developing Bio-

diversity Net Gain (BNG) strategy, Open Space Strategy, Tree Planting Strategy and the Design Code.

- Collaborating with Kent County Council on 'Plan Tree' and 'Making Space for Nature' initiatives to design appropriate habitat corridors using visioning techniques, as well as build ties with partners such as Kent Wildlife Trust and Ecologi.
- Furthering work and incentives to encourage staff to use alternative greener and sustainable travel options to reduce emissions and also be cost-effective.
- Progress plans to increase opportunities for recycling for local residents, including recycling banks in the borough for residents to recycle small electrical items within a one-mile radius of their homes.
- To plan and host informative events for residents in the borough about recycling, waste reduction initiatives, sustainable living, energy-efficient practices and more, as an extension of the information that can be promoted through the Net Zero Gravesham website.

The actions set out will continue to be progressed and monitored both through the council's internal officer working groups and the Climate Change Advisory Board which will report directly to Cabinet.