



Climate Change Annual Report

Foreword from the Leader of the Council

Reacting to climate change and the effect it is having on all of us continues to be one of the biggest challenges we as a local council face.

In 2019 we declared a climate emergency and since then we have been diligently working to reduce our carbon emissions while encouraging all those who love and work in our borough to follow suit. Year-on-year, we are seeing tangible results.

In the 12 months covered by this report, this council's emissions have fallen from 2027.63 tCO₂e to 1951.56 tCO₂e, but we will never rest on our laurels.

This report explains how we have made progress this year, which has seen highlights including:

- A successful bid to the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund for energy efficiency measures at Cygnets Leisure Centre, with a focus on pool cover installation and refurbishment of the swimming pool hall Air Handling Unit (AHU).
- The continuing upgrade of our van fleet to electric vehicles, and work towards converting our HGV fleet from diesel fuel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO).
- A successful application to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.2 bid, which included loft and cavity wall insulation, better ventilation, and double glazing for 105 council-owned homes.
- The continued retrofitting of council dwellings to improve their EPC rating from D to B or higher.
- The installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers at Carl Ekman House, Bishops Court, and Valley Drive.
- Starting work on 46 new council homes at St Columba's Close, Gravesend, which will have above-average building fabric performance, high levels of air tightness, and ground source heat pump heating and hot water systems.
- The identification of potential sites to develop a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) strategy.
- Supporting the Kent County Council (KCC) Tree plan, identifying two publicly accessible sites for the planting of 2,500 whips.
- The launch of a recycling small electricals campaign with more than 27,400 items recycled weighing 24.9 tonnes.

It's fair to say that ensuring every aspect of our work has measures to combat climate change at the forefront of its objectives has become deeply ingrained in our methods since 2019.

But it's also clear that the obstacles in the way of achieving net zero remain high and challenging to overcome, hence the decision of this council in September to refocus its limited resources to activity that will make the most impact to the emissions of the borough as a whole.

Only by working together can we make a real difference for future generations.

Cllr John Burden
Leader of the Executive



Introduction

During 2024, 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 outlines the council's key initiatives for the past year which offers a transparent and public framework for how the council plans to achieve its operational net zero ambitions and collaborate with its tenants, borough residents, and businesses to lower emissions in its housing stock and the borough at large.

The report also highlights the most recent data from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) which indicates that the council's own carbon emissions, i.e. 1951.56 tCO₂e for the last financial year only account for around 0.54% of those across the Borough as a whole which is 361 KtCO₂e.

The council recognises the challenges ahead to meet its operational net zero target by 2030. The fleet replacement program, which aims to replace electric waste vehicles, is not feasible due to their insufficient range and reliability and if full decarbonisation of the fleet were to be possible, it would cost approximately £12 million to replace the whole fleet. The new leisure centre at Cascades is financially unviable without significant external funding. Decarbonising other key buildings and housing stock is estimated to cost over £20m and £107m, respectively. Offsetting emissions will be beyond the council's available resources.

The council has therefore commenced a programme of consultation which will be used to inform a refocused climate change strategy to ensure that it is concentrating its efforts on those activities that will make the most impact to the emissions of the borough as a whole. This adjustment of approach will continue to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and recognise the importance of the 'partnership first' approach referenced in the Corporate Plan, alongside embracing the promotion of Gravesham being a listening council.

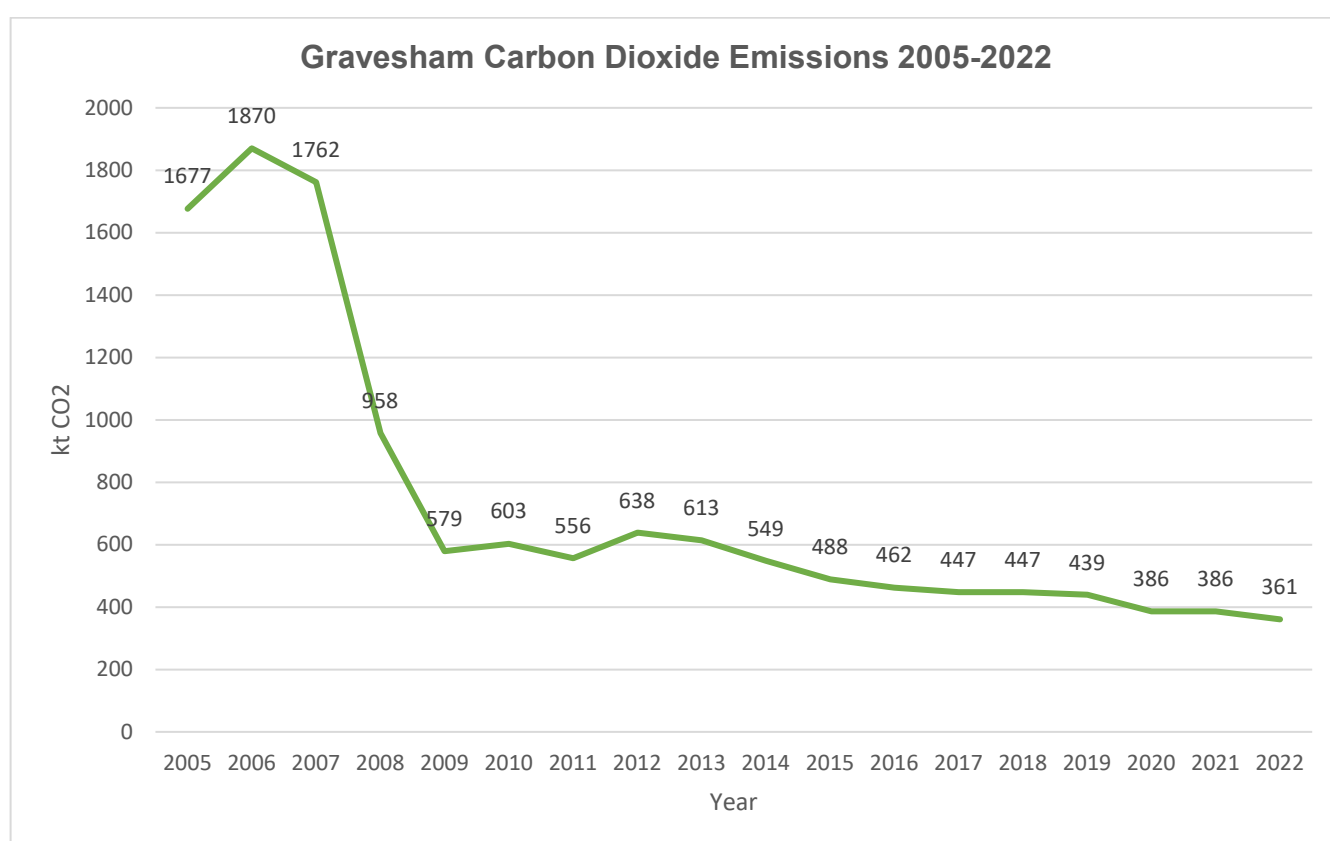
The new strategy will have a robust and inclusive approach and continue to ensure that climate change is consistently at the forefront of all Council decisions, across all service areas, innovating and working together to instil positive behaviour change.

Update on Borough and Council Emissions

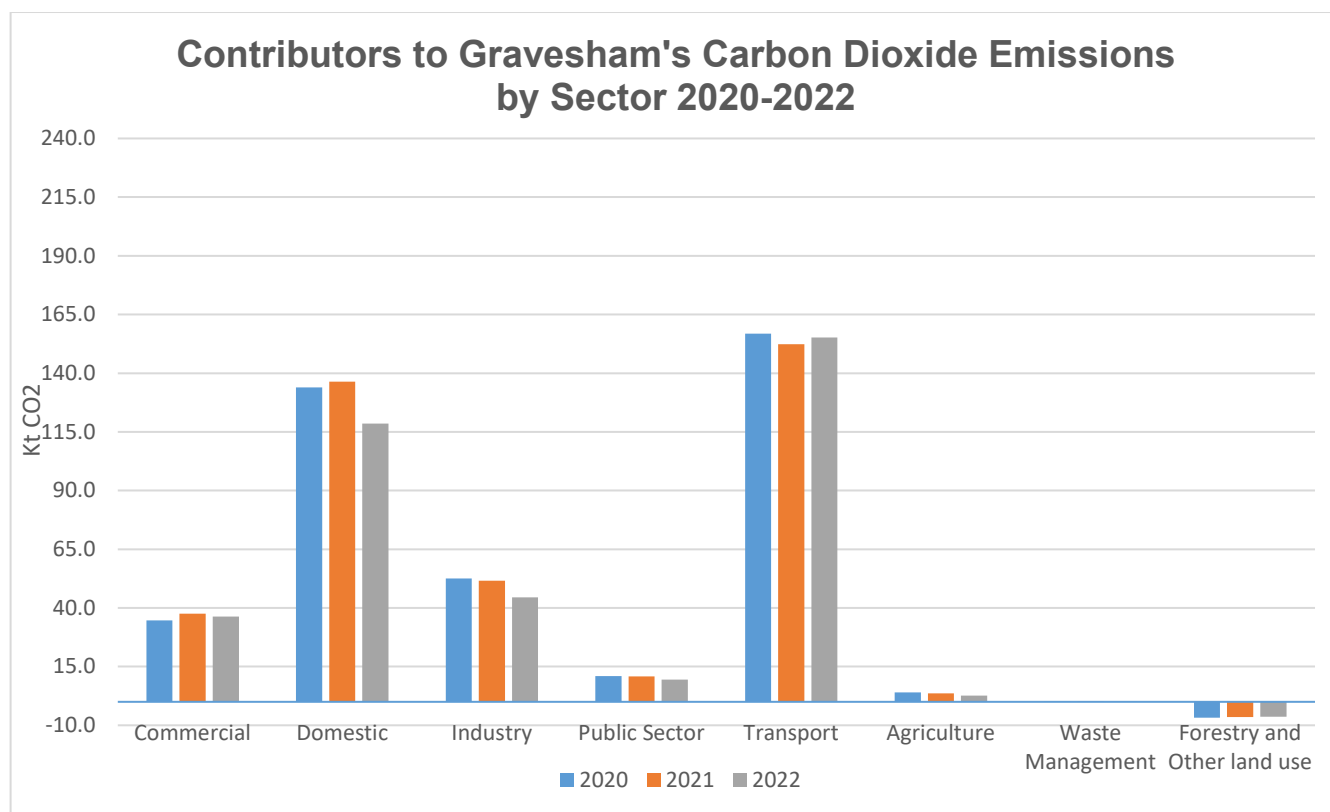
Borough Emissions

Data on local and regional end-user carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions is collated annually by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) 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 2022 was published in June 2024 and shows a continuing decrease in CO₂ emissions within Gravesham.

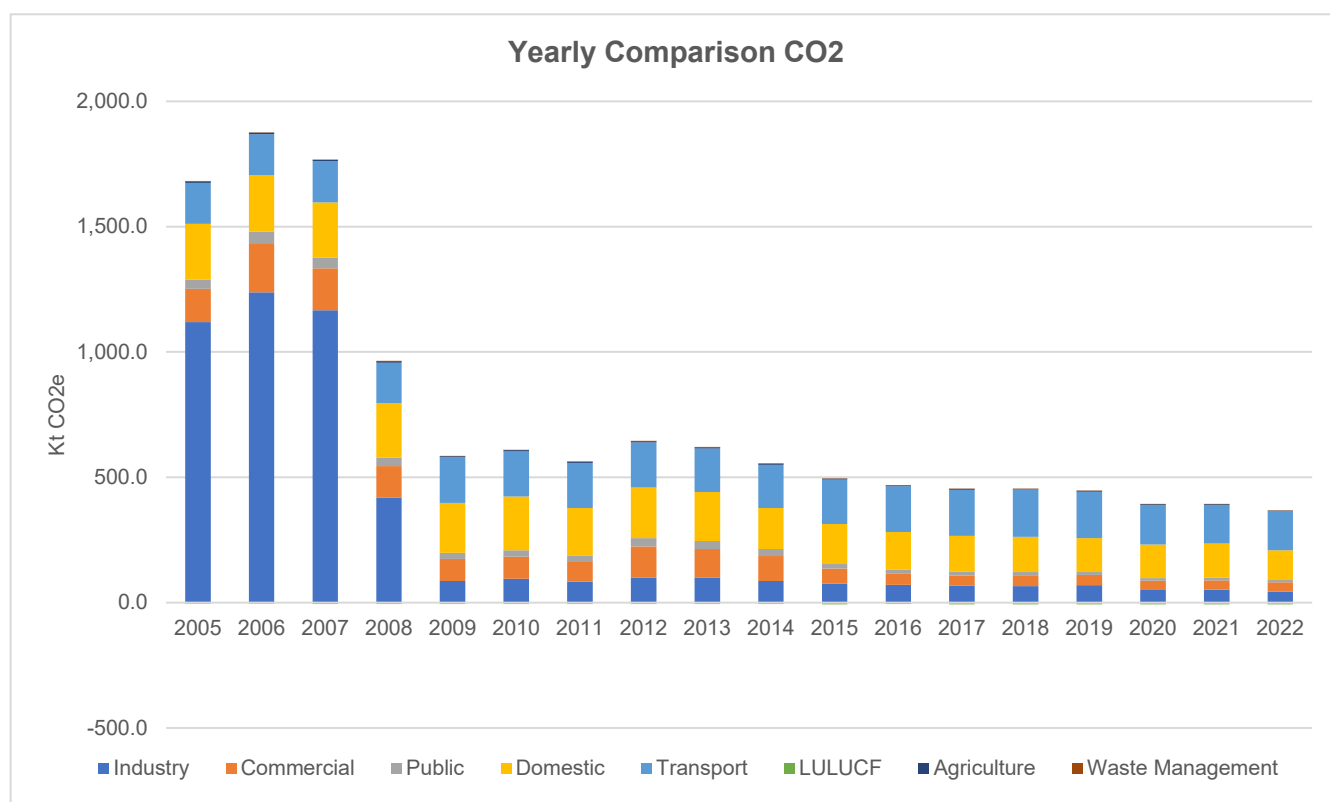
The method of calculating the data is constantly being refined to provide the most accurate picture possible. It is not unusual for previous years information to be updated and the figures used in previous reports to be revised. The Council will always use the latest available data when reporting, including any updated data for previous years, to ensure all data is consistent and using the same methodology.



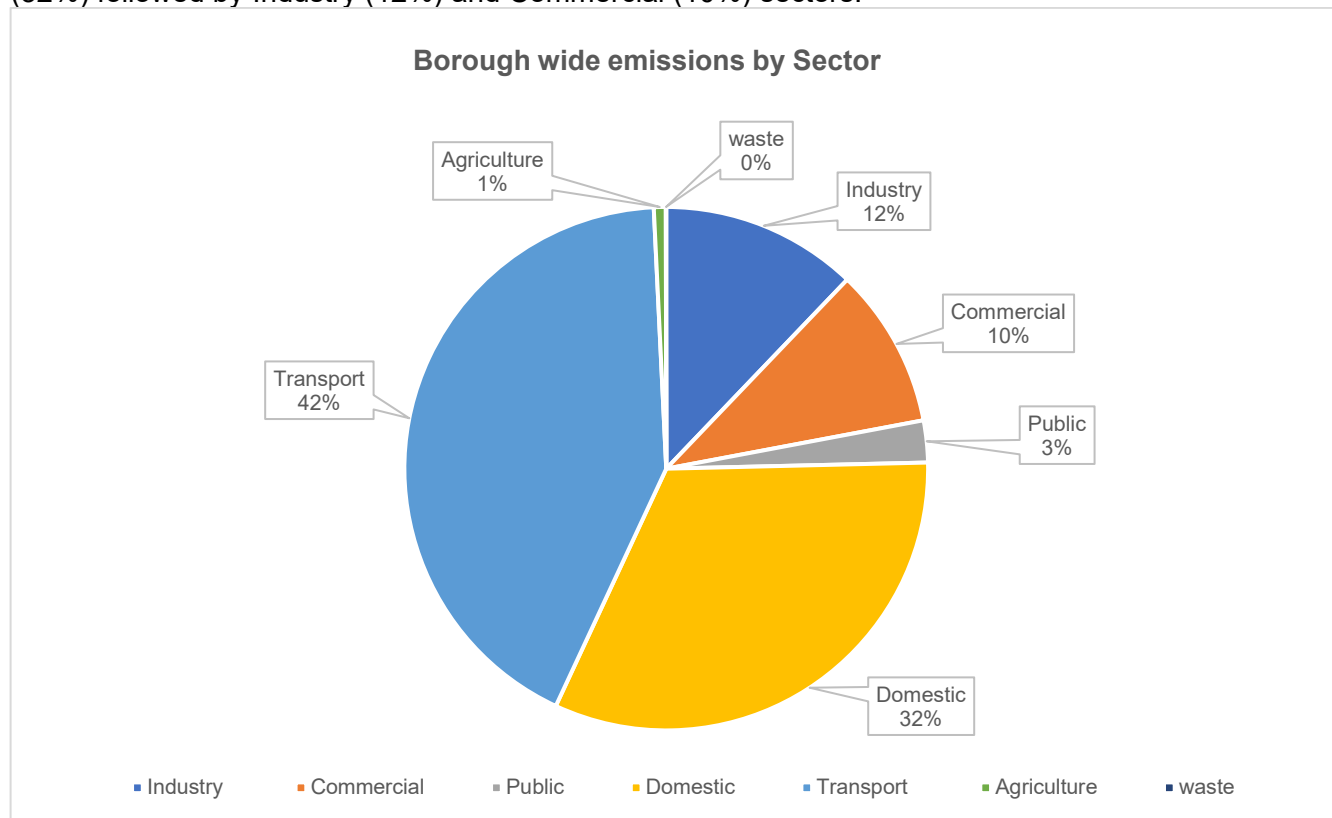
The emissions data for the borough from each sector from the years 2020 to 2022 are displayed in the graph below.



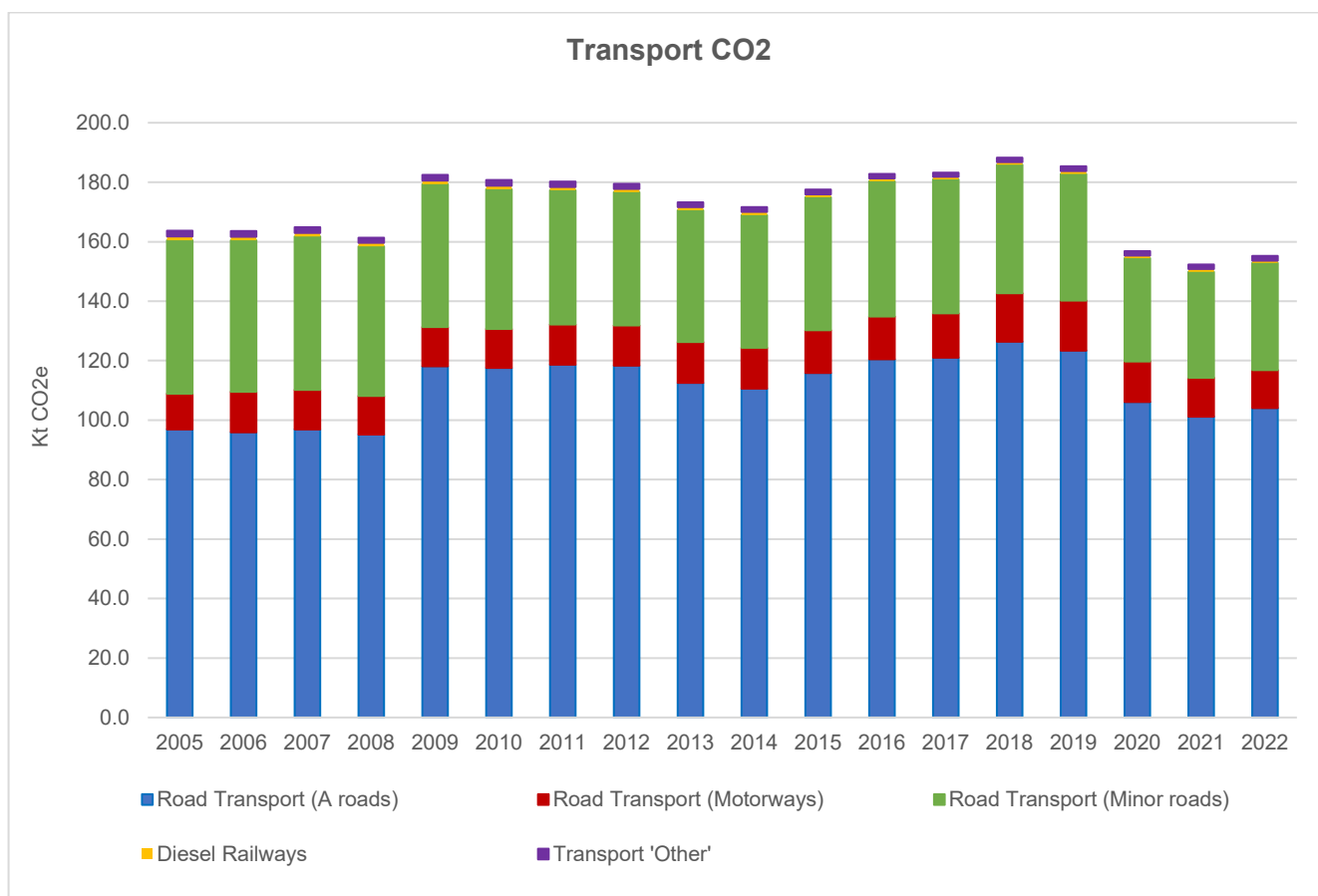
A yearly comparison of all sectors from 2005 to 2022 is provided below.



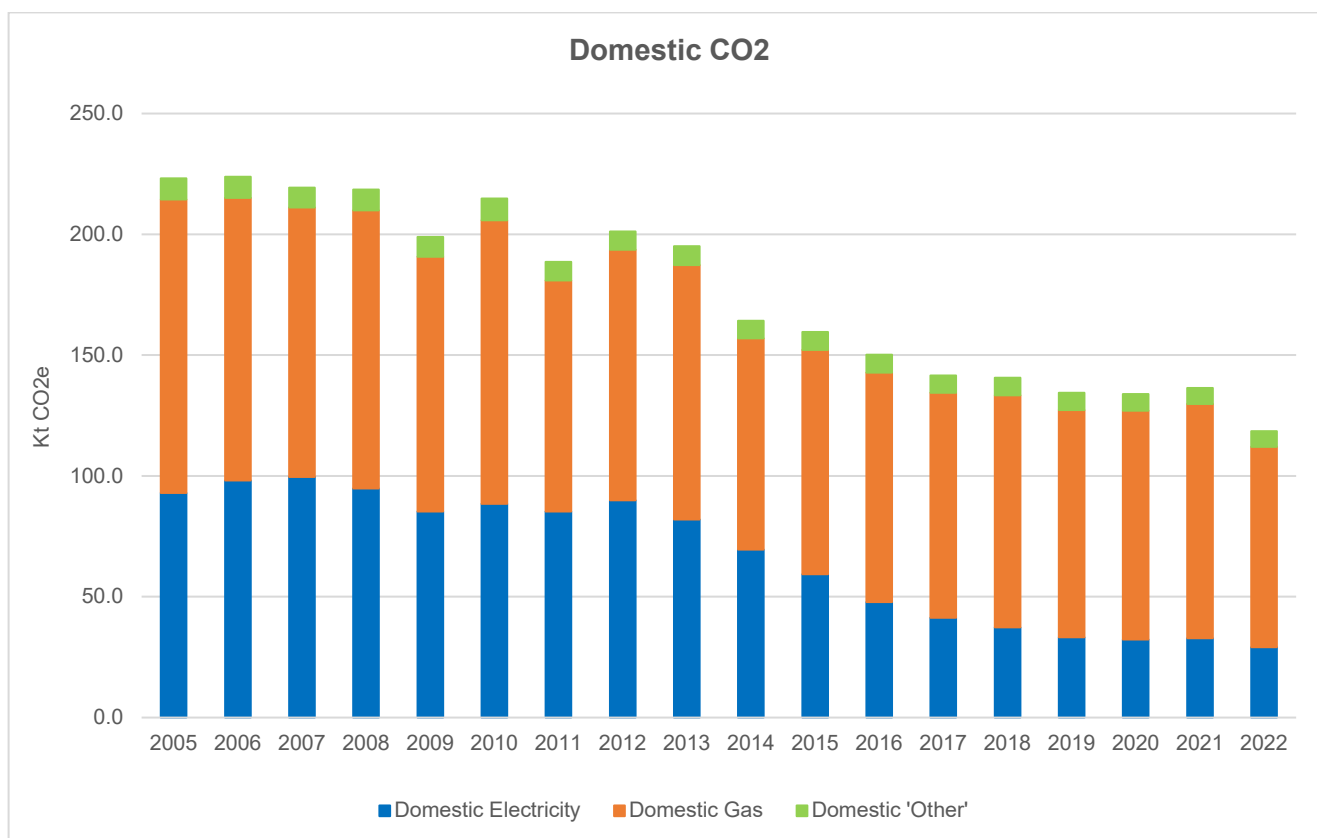
The largest areas for emissions within the borough are Transport (42%) and Domestic Properties (32%) followed by Industry (12%) and Commercial (10%) sectors.



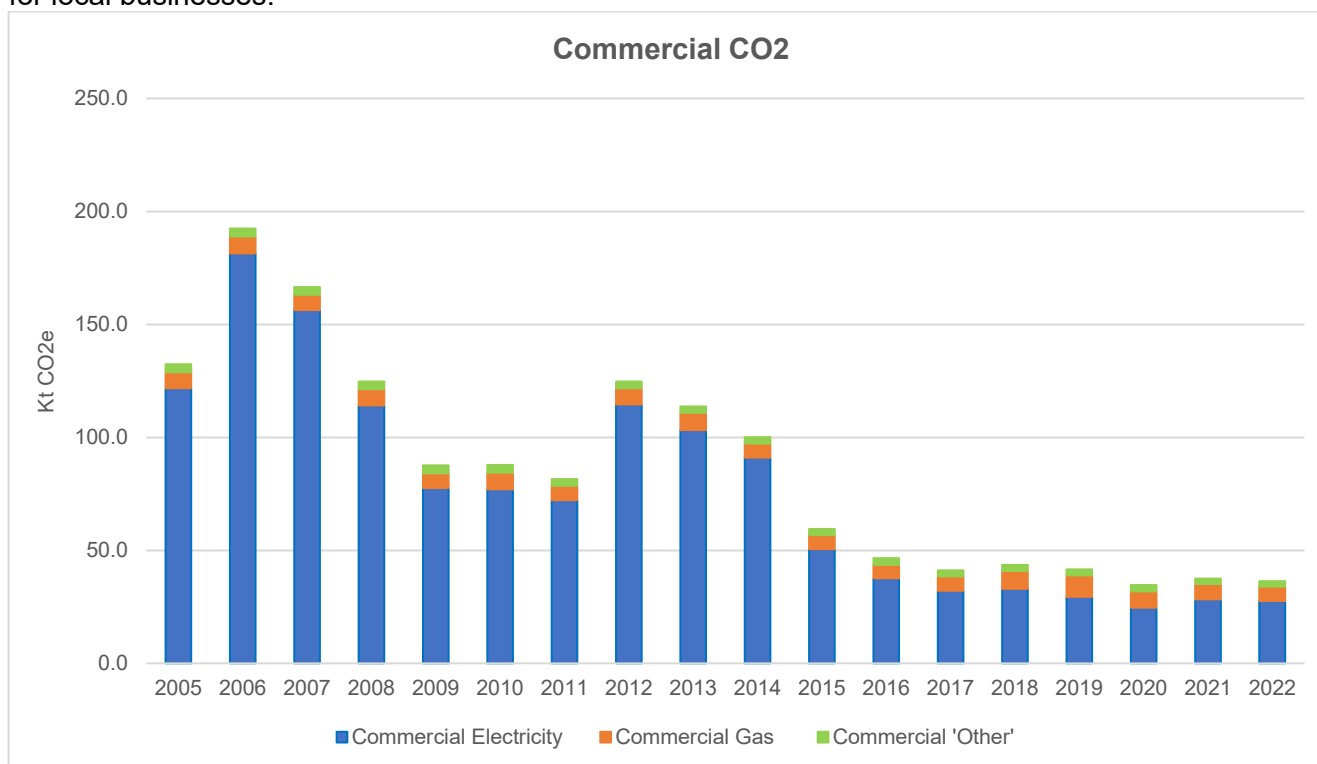
Within the transport category, the largest contributor to emissions is A roads, which includes the A2 carrying through traffic which does not originate or terminate within the borough. DESNZ only consider Motorways and Diesel Railways outside of our sphere of influence, and it has been highlighted during consultations on the Lower Thames Crossing that should the new development proceed, our A road emissions will likely increase in line with additional traffic travelling through the borough to access the tunnel.



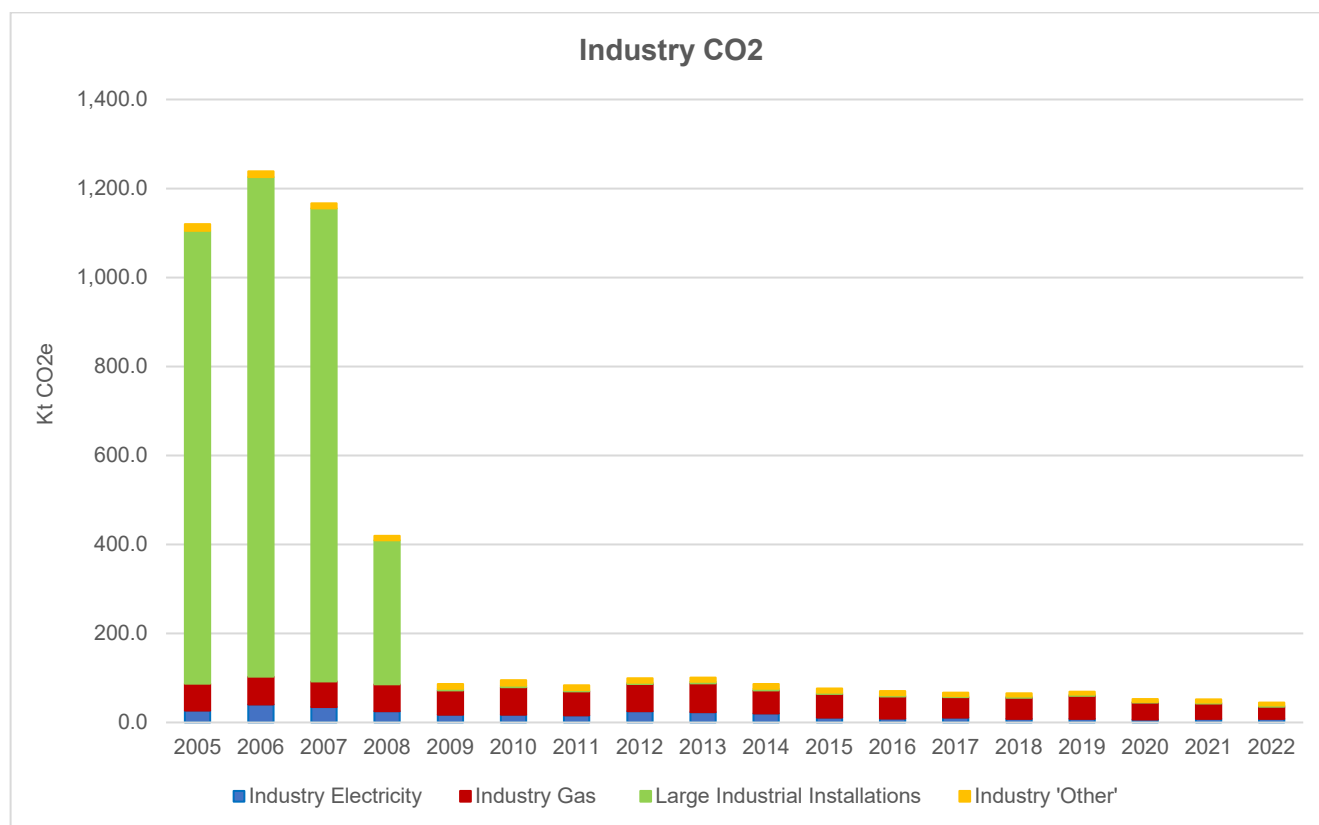
Domestic CO2 emissions are dominated by the use of gas. This highlights that the most effective way to decarbonise our social housing stock and the wider private stock is to move to heating solutions that do not use fossil fuels. The downward trend in domestic electricity emissions will largely be driven by the decarbonisation of the electric grid by the use of renewables rather than a result of reduced consumption.



Commercial CO2 emissions are dominated by electricity usage. The use of solar panels on commercial buildings or shared solar farms could be an effective way to reduce emissions and costs for local businesses.



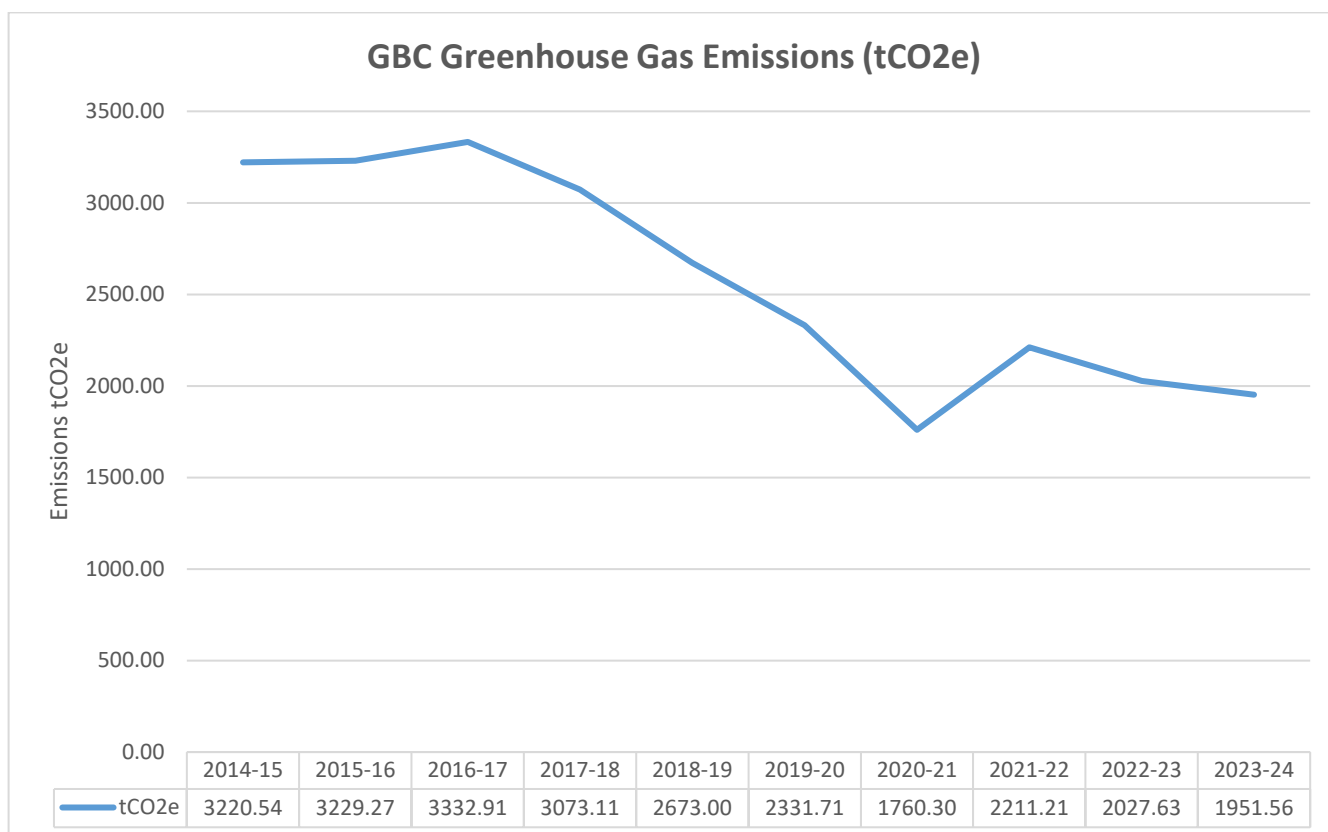
The CO2 emissions for Industry in the borough are now dominated by gas usage.



Council Operational Emissions

Since 2021 the council continued to progress activity to drive long-term, sustainable reductions in 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:

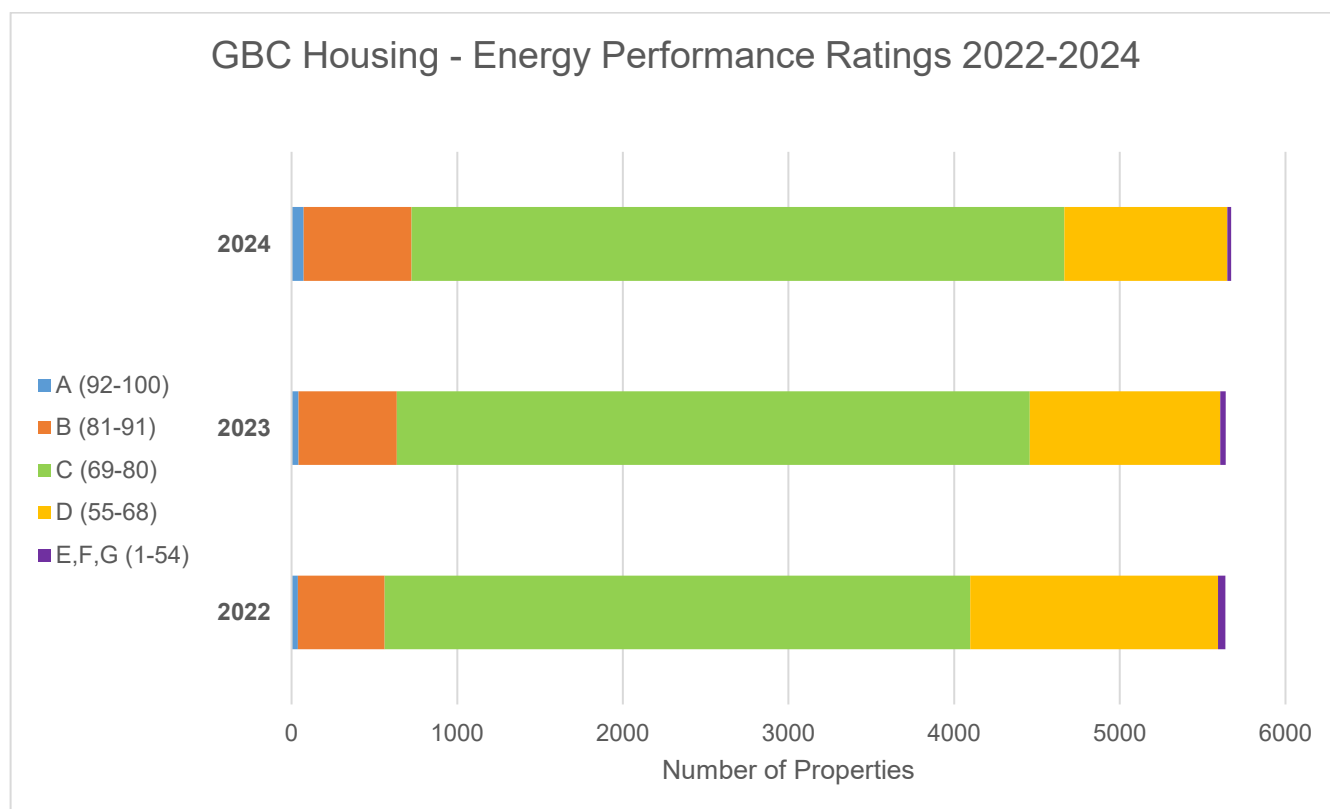
- **Scope 1** – All Direct Emissions from the activities of an organisation or under their control. Including fuel combustion on sites such as gas boilers, fleet vehicles and air-conditioning leaks.
- **Scope 2** – Indirect Emissions from electricity purchased and used by the organisation. Emissions 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 (2023-24) was **1951.56 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 2022 and 2024.



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 83%, up from 79% in 2023 and up from 73% in 2022.

Carbon Reduction Actions during 2024

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. Cygnet Leisure Centre

A bid to the Capital Element of the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund was submitted in respect of energy efficiency measures relating to Cygnet Leisure Centre and the application was successful. Decarbonisation works have commenced with a focus on installing pool covers and refurbishing the swimming pool hall Air Handling Unit (AHU). Estimated yearly savings of £20,000 and carbon savings of 533 kgCO₂e are anticipated after the work is completed.

2. Implementing plans to decarbonise the vehicle fleet

18 out of 120 vans have been replaced with electric vehicles, representing 15% of the fleet. Further investigation was undertaken into using HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) as it eliminates 90% of net carbon dioxide (CO₂) and significantly reduces nitrogen oxide (NO_x), particulate matter (PM) and carbon monoxide (CO) emissions. The cost of HVO has fallen in recent months, reducing the gap with the close of standard diesel. As a result, the Council will consider utilising HVO as a diesel fuel replacement beginning next year. Based on initial estimates, the move to HVO fuel can reduce the fleet's emissions from 22.4% to 2.3% (based on last year's outturn).

3. Promoting Active Travel within the workforce

The Council introduced the 'Electric Vehicle (EV) Salary Sacrifice Scheme' as a new staff benefit and to encourage active travel. The 'Cycle to Work' scheme is still in existence, with more successful applications since last year and a lot of encouraging feedback. An evaluation survey will be conducted to assess the scheme and identify areas for future expansions or changes. Additional considerations are now being made about future bike storage and charging sites.

4. IT Infrastructure improvements

Last year, Council IT Services launched a program for IT equipment that provides residual value for devices that are no longer required or that cannot be repurposed within the organisation. Existing hardware can be purchased by employees and members, reducing e-waste and carbon emissions.

The Council has adopted a cloud-first approach to all new software/hardware procurement reducing energy consumption within our own server infrastructure estate. In addition, the Council has cloud infrastructure to transfer on-premises infrastructure to the cloud, which is a more sustainable and ecologically friendly solution than service contracts for the fire suppression and air conditioning equipment needed to keep a server room operational.



Priority 2 Highlights - Gravesham Borough Council the housing provider

1. Improving the council-owned housing stock

The Council successfully bid on the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.2 early this year, consisting of loft and cavity wall insulation, improved ventilation, and double glazing to 105 dwellings. The programme is currently in the surveying process, and the work is planned to be completed in March 2025, in line with DESNZ requirements. This will save an estimated 65 tCO₂ annually and will bring all 105 properties to an EPC Rating of C or above.

The council completed major retrofit works to 21 properties (10 voids, and 11 tenanted properties) consisting of insulation upgrades, and installations of air source heat pumps and solar panels. Each property had inefficient heating systems and was rated EPC D or lower prior to retrofitting work. Once work is completed, all properties will reach an EPC Rating of B or higher with an estimated savings of 28.4 tCO₂ annually.

The installation of Ground Source heating and Solar PV panels to power the residential flats and the communal area of Cleveland House is currently in progress and due to be completed in early 2025. Once work is completed, all properties should meet EPC rating A and be assessed at net zero. As part of our solar PV feasibility studies, Cleveland House was identified to install an EV (Electric Vehicle) charger which will be made available to the public to encourage and support EV ownership and generate revenue.

EV chargers installed at Carl Ekman House, Bishops Court, and 340 Valley Drive are now open to the public to encourage and support EV Ownership. Between June 2024 and September 2024, there were 19 charging sessions.

A number of new contracts have been procured with a focus on a change to the procurement approach to require supplier selection criteria to include an assessment of their waste and carbon emission reduction targets

The project with Ellenor Hospice has been processing well with 100% of the items collected being recycled and not going to the landfills. Around £4,200 was raised by the charity from the collections of unwanted items to date.

2. Ensuring sustainability in new housing developments

St Columba's Close project has commenced on-site. A ground source heat pump system is being installed to heat the homes and mechanical heat recovery ventilation is being considered to all blocks as part of the design assessment to meet a higher target than the minimum for Building Regulations. The site has also been identified to install approximately 70 cycle spaces. Furthermore, monitoring of on-site waste from the demolition of the buildings is being undertaken with a view to minimising waste to landfill.

The Worcester Close project has received planning approval and the contractor selected will be using modern methods of construction to assist in ensuring build quality and thermal efficiency are optimised.

The proposed development target of annual regulated carbon emissions against Building Regulations' target emissions reduction is expected to be exceeded for both projects against Government Building Regulations "Conservation of fuel and power: Approved Document L".



Priority 3 Highlights - Gravesham Borough Council the community leader

1. Procurement Strategy

The council adopted a new procurement strategy which includes actions to review council procurement policies and practices to help mitigate Climate Change, alongside actively assessing major contractors' commitment to achieving net zero by 2050 in the UK and working with these suppliers to improve their performance.

An increasing number of officers and councillors at the Council are now Certified Carbon Literate, ensuring that the foundation of our organisational approach is built on knowledge and understanding.

2. Recycling Services

The council has continued its recycling programme since August 2021, increasing recycling opportunities for those living in flats in the borough. Since the last annual report, recycling collections have been added to +13 blocks of flats, with +231 flats with recycling and +69 with food waste collections. The percentage of flats with recycling collections has increased from 60.1% to 62.5%, with 1,442 more flats having dry mixed recycling collections and 887 more having food waste recycling collections. In total, 85 blocks of flats have been given recycling provisions.

Educational recycling leaflets have been delivered to 222 flats this year, increasing the total from 1,815 to 2,037 flats covering 29.9% of total Council and private flats. Currently, 62.5% of flats have recycling and 16.9% have food waste collection.

The new town centre recycling round has yielded approximately 80.3 kg of recycling (not including food waste) per household in its first year. A targeted communications campaign facilitated by our digital systems and consistent messaging to residents has reduced contamination to 13% in 2023-24, from a peak of 21% in Quarter 4 of 2022-23. The tonnage of recycling rejected due to contamination decreased by 26% in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23.

Since launching our small electrical bring-banks and collection points in November 2023 Gravesham residents and staff have donated more than 27,400 small electrical items, weighing in at 24.9 tonnes with a savings of 49.8 tonnes of CO₂.

The new collection points have improved recycling opportunities for residents so that almost all residents can now easily recycle their small electricals within a one-mile radius of their homes, without the need to book a visit to Pepperhill Household Waste Recycling Centre. Total small electrical recycling through Brookvale depot and Pepperhill Centre has increased by 5.4 tonnes per month (+26.9%) throughout the project compared to the four-year average. Total small electrical, television and battery recycling through Brookvale depot and Pepperhill Centre has increased by 6.5 tonnes per month (+23.6%) compared to the four-year average.

According to "Freegle" local authority re-use data, an average of 856 kg of items were reused each month between January 2022 and September 2024, resulting in 29.1 tonnes of reuse and 14.8 tonnes of CO₂ savings. "Freegle" is a UK organisation that aims to increase reuse and reduce waste by offering a free Internet-based service where people can give away and ask for things that would otherwise be thrown away. Freegle has been promoted by the Council in the Your Borough magazine and on our website (bulky waste pages). Between January 2024 and October 2024, 3.2 tonnes of CO₂ were saved by exchanging 6.3 tonnes of things for reuse on Freegle.



The council has actively promoted initiatives such as the Gravesham Repair Cafe to encourage repair, reuse, and upcycling of items.

3. Biodiversity

The Council has implemented a new green waste management system to reduce landfill disposal. Over the past year, over 4,427 tonnes of green waste were generated, with much still being processed at Pepperhill landfill facility. The Council is reviewing methods to divert waste away from landfills through mulching, composting, and biomass conversion.

The Council is committed to improving its green waste management, aiming to divert waste from landfills and create valuable resources for local landscaping and gardening projects. This move is seen as a significant step towards sustainability and a way to reduce environmental impact.

22 potential sites have been identified that could contribute to biodiversity enhancement and potentially generate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits. These sites could support the development and implementation of a future BNG strategy while offering potential revenue streams through credit sales to help offset habitat management costs.

The council is exploring the 'EcoPillar' initiative, an urban design concept that enhances estates and town centres' aesthetics while providing environmental benefits. EcoPillars, which harvest rainwater, are installed on lighting columns or street infrastructure and monitored using sensors. The design improves air quality, provides habitats for pollinators and wildlife, and contributes to heat mitigation. It also beautifies public spaces and supports local biodiversity.

The Council has secured funding for a 'Green Community Hub' initiative to improve connections between residents and local green spaces. The initiative aims to understand different community usage of parks, identify accessibility barriers, develop accessibility solutions, and create inclusive programming. It also aims to increase park usage, improve physical and mental wellbeing, build environmental awareness, and foster community-led initiatives.

The Council is pushing for North Kent Woods and Downs to be designated a National Nature Reserve (NNR) by Natural England. The proposal is in its proposal stages, with a potential launch in Spring 2025. NNR status would offer enhanced protection, legal safeguards, targeted conservation efforts, and increased public engagement with the environment.

The Council have continued to support the KCC Tree Plan by identifying two public sites for planting 2500 whips. The plantings will be done in both urban and rural settings, minimising disruption, and environmental risk. A further 30-40 standard trees and specimen trees are planned to be planted within our open spaces to mitigate surface water run-off and flooding. The Council is working with KCC to plant 10 drought-resistant elm trees in the local area, with monitoring taking place over the next few years. The initiative is scheduled to run from October 2024 through March 2025.

4. Supporting Businesses

The Lower Thames Crossing Supply Chain Directory, which is promoted by the Council, now has 36 potential suppliers from Gravesham, second only to Medway (38) in Kent. This should benefit local businesses through supply chain opportunities, carbon-neutral construction and upskilling to meet net-zero challenges.

The council has commenced a study to inform activity to create a local skills training provision for new entrants and upskilling of existing workforce, focused on construction and



decarbonisation.

Council has consistently promoted events and schemes of advice and financial assistance to businesses through our digital channels and 'Gravesham Business Network' newsletters and associated 'in person' events. A new dedicated web page has also been created, including details of national and regional schemes of support. In the past 12 months, the economic development team estimate that we have promoted at least 6 individual schemes or events.

The Council has actively sought to develop new partnerships, including via the Thames Estuary Growth Board and Innovate UK ('Net Zero Go'), to bring forward investment opportunities for the Borough, in relation to business decarbonisation and other environmental measures. In the past year, Kimberly Clark gained planning approval from the Council, for a green hydrogen boiler to supply their Northfleet plant.

5. Supporting Residents

For the third year in a row, the council participated and promoted the Solar Together scheme. The resident group-buying platform for PV panels, battery storage, and EV (Electric Vehicle) charging stations has been in high demand since its launch and has helped many Kent region homeowners reduce their energy expenses and carbon emissions.

A total of 66 residents have installed 784 solar panels, 24 batteries, 4 retrofit battery storage, and 5 Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) since Phase Three was introduced last year. Over a period of 25 years, this amounts to an approximate removal of 1678 tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Phase Four was launched in two stages this year and the scheme was promoted through social media platforms, direct mail, posters, flyers, etc. There have been 140 registrations for solar panels and 6 for retrofit battery storage from the Spring Auction and the Autumn Auction is in progress.

The Council supported 'KCC Household Support Fund 5' and DFG Heating grants to support residents with energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating measures. The Council was able to assist four residents from the private housing sector through the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) scheme to improve the energy efficiency of their homes using various insulation measures and green energy while also improving their health and welfare.

The council continued to use its position as a community leader to promote initiatives intended to support residents in making changes, including 'Small electrical recycling programme', 'Great British Spring Clean', 'Street Champions', active travel, e-waste, public consultation for parks and open spaces, 'Kent Green Drive' and more throughout the year through social media platforms and newsletters.

In the first three months of our Cleaner, Safer Streets campaign, 81 sacks of litter have been collected on days of action and 25 fly-tipped items have been identified for removal.

More than 630 civic-minded individuals and group members who take pride in improving their local environment have joined Gravesham's Street Champions network, which was established with the council's assistance. As of October 2024, the Street Champions have been on 1,800 litter picks and gathered 3,500 sacks of litter; and we are looking to increase that number in the coming year.

The Council work with colleagues from other public sector organisations in Kent as part of the Kent and Medway Environment Group and the Kent Climate Change Network to share best practices and identify common areas of interest for collaborative working.



The Council continues to update residents with available schemes, grants, energy-saving advice and more through our social media platforms and newsletters.

6. Supporting Schools

The Council is collaborating with Kent County Council (KCC) on its Greener Schools Programme launched in September 2024 for the academic year 2024/25, which is open for all schools in Kent to become involved in. The programme offers support to help schools connect with the Department for Education (DfE) Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. The aim is to create an engaging and thriving community of School Sustainability Leads, working collaboratively to take climate action within their school communities and beyond through a six-week termly support programme designed on topics such as Climate Action Plans, Food, Energy, Travel and Nature. To date, 93 Kent School Sustainability Leads have already signed up for the programme, six of which are Gravesham-based schools. The programme aims to share facts and to have a wider community impact beyond pupils and staff and all schools to have a sustainability lead and climate action plan in place by 2025.

Future Carbon Pressure

The borough of Gravesham continues to see a number of 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

The detailed examination of the Lower Thames crossing ended on 20 December 2023, with the examining authority subsequently submitting their recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport. The Secretary of State's decision has been delayed initially due to the 2024 General Election and then subsequently as stated by the Secretary of State "to allow more time for the application to be considered further, including any decisions made as part of the spending review". The revised deadline is for a decision to be made by 23 May 2025.

As part of the examination process, the Council made representations to the examining authority on a number of matters including transport, housing, environmental, health and amenity, as the proposal will have impacts on the Borough's residents, businesses, visitors, and environment. The Council has continued to make representations to National Highways and others on these points. Whilst the Council continues to object to the current location of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, as a decision could be made to allow the project to go ahead, the Council is actively making representations to ensure that National Highways and their project delivery partners deliver the required mitigation to offset the detrimental impacts of the project within the Borough.

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 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is currently in its seventh assessment cycle formally beginning in July 2023. The report is expected to be released in late 2029. The report will be the Synthesis Report and will also produce three Working Group contributions to the report.

At its Forty-third Session in Nairobi, Kenya, (11-13 April 2016), the Panel determined that the seventh assessment cycle will include a Special Report on Climate Change and Cities, in addition to the outputs of the sixth cycle. The Special Report will be developed under the joint scientific leadership of Working Groups I, II and III with support from the Working Group II Technical Support Unit.



Areas of Focus for 2025

In June 2019, the council declared a climate emergency and pledged to take action and prepare for the borough to become net zero by 2030. This was followed in December 2021 with the publication of the council's ambitious Climate Change Strategy.

Over the last five years, the council has developed and delivered a wide range of projects which have contributed to and supported residents, businesses, communities, and schools to undertake their own actions and initiatives to deliver reductions in the borough's carbon emission levels.

However, the Council's operational net zero target by 2030 is unlikely to be met due to increasing challenges and significant barriers the Council is facing. Additionally, the Council's emissions account for 0.5% of emissions generated within the borough and 99.5% of emissions are not directly related to the Council.

Therefore, the Council proposed to shift its pledge to working with the community to reduce carbon emissions in the wider sector, particularly in transport, domestic, commercial, and industrial sectors and this was agreed by the Cabinet in September this year.

While the Council will continue to reduce the council's own operational emissions where this is practical and financially viable to achieve, the Council are best placed to make a difference in reducing the carbon emissions of the Borough through its community leadership and placemaking role, working in partnership and engaging with its residents, businesses and local community groups to raise climate awareness and promote opportunities to take action to reduce emissions whilst also emphasising the co-benefits of doing this. In practice, this could mean:

- Improved engagement with the local community to increase awareness and delivery of climate action.
- Promoting active travel and collaborating with partners to provide the necessary infrastructure for alternative travel solutions.
- Work to improve energy and water efficiency of council-owned and privately-owned dwellings.
- Work to improve energy and water efficiency within the Gravesham business community.
- Improve the availability of reuse and recycling opportunities.
- Promote the benefits of the natural environment.
- Within the resources available, continue to look for ways to reduce the council's own emissions as a community leader.

The Council has commenced with the consultation exercise and will be assessing the evidence available with a view to adopting a refocused strategy during 2025.

Key deliverables in 2025

Along with working on developing a revised climate change strategy, the council will be focusing on:

- **Decarbonising Operational Buildings** - Progressing plans to seek funds to decarbonise the Council's operational buildings.
- **Deliver conversion to HVO** - Reduce the carbon emissions from the council's fleet of vehicles by 90% by gradually switching from regular diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) with a goal to mostly use HVO from April 2025.

- **Council Housing stock improvement** - The Council has submitted a bid for the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (WH: SHF) Wave 3 to make further energy efficiency to 300 council-owned dwellings, increasing all targeted properties from an EPC Rating of D or below to a B and save an estimated 406.09 tCO₂.

The Council will commence a program of heating improvements to our off-gas properties that now rely on inefficient heating and will evaluate the Housing Energy Performance Strategy with an aim to raise the ratings of the remaining housing stock to meet EPC C. This approach will improve fuel bills, heating efficiency, energy efficiency, and the risk of mould and dampness over a number of years. Additionally, we will keep implementing a ventilation and insulation program for houses with damp and mould issues that have an EPC Rating of C or above.

- **Ensuring sustainability in new housing developments** - Development schemes will be designed to meet energy efficiency standards, preparing for the Future Homes Standard. Renewable energy technology will be used and building fabric solutions will be optimised where possible. Thermal imaging will be used during defects liability to ensure thermal insulation quality and on-site environmental best practices will also be promoted. Use of the Supply Chain Sustainability School tool, which is a free virtual learning platform around sustainability, will be encouraged by the Council for partners to use.
- **Commercial Waste Recycling Service** - The Council currently offers a paper and cardboard recycling service to our commercial waste customers. As per the 'Simpler Recycling' regulations, businesses with more than 10 employees must have a full recycling service in place by 31st March 2025, and so the Council will be working to deliver full recycling collection to as many of our 537 commercial waste customers who decide to take up the service.
- **GBC Flats Recycling Project** - The Council is aiming to provide recycling collections to the 634 GBC apartments that do not currently have a dry mixed recycling collection in advance of the "Simpler Recycling" requirements, which stipulate a complete recycling service for homes by March 31, 2026. Our goal is to provide food waste collection services to the 1,872 GBC apartments that do not currently have recycling services.
- **Narrow Access Round** - In order to provide a recycling and food waste collection service to the 420 (mostly rural) households that do not currently have a full recycling service, we will be working to implement a new recycling round using a narrower collection vehicle over the course of the next year.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** - To introduce a digital mapping platform for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) sites; develop appropriate monitoring and management protocols for the sites and credit purchase schemes. To create educational programmes around those sites and establish volunteer programmes to include biodiversity workshops.
- **Tree Planting** - To create a tree health monitoring programme and develop a community tree stewardship programme, a tree sponsorship programme, establish a tree nursery for native species and investigate innovative irrigation systems.
- **Enhanced green waste management** - To investigate a community composting scheme, with a view as to whether more local management of composting can be achieved on council-owned land.
- **Business Engagement** - 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.

- **Resident Support** - Continuing to provide support to eligible private sector households in making their homes more energy efficient through different schemes such as Warm Homes Local Grant and DFG Heating Grants.
- **Active travel** - Furthering work and incentives to encourage staff to use alternative greener and sustainable travel options to reduce emissions and also be cost-effective.
- **Procurement** - To reduce barriers to local SME/VCSEs, which would reduce road miles, and offer the Council opportunities to help de-carbonise the supply chain in line with the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

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.