

Staffordshire's Climate Emergency - planning policy commitments

1. Introduction and background

Almost all Staffordshire District and Borough Councils have declared Climate Emergencies and have a variety of net zero targets in place. Whilst planning policies cannot achieve net zero in isolation, the planning system still plays a crucial role in reducing emissions in multiple sectors. Proactive policies can help to facilitate the transition necessary to achieve Staffordshire's net zero target whilst ensuring that more of the cost of meeting this is shouldered by the development industry, rather than being borne solely by public bodies to improve matters such as transport and energy efficiency through more costly retrofit measures. This shared statement aims to ensure that all signatory local planning authorities respond appropriately to Staffordshire's declared climate goals, by implementing the shared Staffordshire-wide climate evidence base and policy recommendations.

2. Planning policy measures identified for Staffordshire

With these principles in mind, Staffordshire Councils¹ prepared an evidence base for a number of climate change mitigation policy directions in 2020. These are set out in the Staffordshire County Council - Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation Final Report 2020 ('the 2020 study'). For clarity, these are set out alongside the relevant supporting paragraph references from the 2020 study.

A. Policies for new build developments:

- Implement the highest CO2 reduction targets for new buildings that can practically and viably be achieved, e.g. achieving net zero regulated emissions and considering options to go beyond this to achieve net zero unregulated emissions (3.1.3.1, 3.1.1.6)
- Require new development to achieve a target fabric and energy efficiency performance and be designed in accordance with an energy and heat hierarchy (3.1.3.2, 3.1.3.3)
- Achieve at least BREEAM 'Excellent' or 'Outstanding' for non-domestic buildings, considering setting minimum targets for BREEAM credits in Ene01 (3.1.3.1)
- Require all new developments to maximise opportunities for renewable energy (4.1.5.1)
- Require developers to monitor and report on operational energy use and / or CO2 emissions, in order to confirm that the required level of improvement has been achieved, to help to close the 'performance gap' (3.1.3.1)
- Require developers to undertake Lifecycle Carbon Assessments and minimise embodied carbon. (3.1.1.3)
- Require high standards for water efficiency and conservation (3.1.3.4)

¹ With the exception of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

B. Policies and joint working for transport/location of development:

- Require new developments to reduce reliance on private vehicles, including consideration of altering densities to support mixed uses, demonstrating adequate links to bus routes and pedestrian and cycle networks through spatial strategies and Local Transport Plan (3.2.4)
- Supporting provision of ULEV vehicles, particularly within new developments, car parks and public realm facilities (3.2.4)
- Implement plans and/or new policy that promotes walking and cycling e.g. by establishing new cycle lanes, pedestrian routes, and public transport links within Staffordshire and beyond (3.2.4)
- Ensure that any transport planning, or road network expansion is required to quantify and take steps to significantly reduce emissions (3.2.4)
- Consider how they can use their licensing authority and other powers to promote sustainable transport modes, for instance by introducing low / zero emission zones or congestion charges, workplace parking charges, differential charges for parking permits, or requiring all taxis and buses to be ultra low emission or EV (3.2.4)

C. Policies for renewable energy generation

- Requiring all new developments to maximise opportunities for renewable energy, including considering requiring all new developments to include some form of onsite renewable electricity or heat generation and/or battery systems or setting a minimum target for the proportion of energy demands that should be met with renewables (4.1.5.1)
- Increase policy support for low and zero carbon (LZC) energy schemes and broaden policy criteria for acceptability, including identifying all of Staffordshire as being 'strategically suitable' for wind energy (whilst recognising that there is very limited land available in either Tamworth or Cannock Chase), acknowledging the need to achieve at least a tenfold increase in renewable energy generation in the County (4.1.5.2)
- Where appropriate for an individual local authority, consider other options for increasing renewable energy delivery, including issuing a 'call for sites' for large scale LZC schemes, considering issuing Local Development Orders to extent permitted development rights for large scale LZC schemes, working with community groups to deliver local energy projects and reviewing subsidy schemes to ensure these are compatible with the Net Zero target (4.1.6)

D. Policies for carbon sequestration and biodiversity

- Increase tree planting and afforestation rate, increasing forestry cover through the planting of broadleaf and conifer woodland each year, improving the yield class (productivity) of new trees, and increasing management of existing woodlands (4.2.4)
- Increase agroforestry and extend hedgerow length with an aim to increase carbon sequestration by increasing the amount of permanent vegetation on agricultural land whilst maintaining agricultural production (4.2.4)

- Involve ecological experts in the delivery of biodiversity net gain and carbon sequestration in the writing of planning conditions relating to biodiversity and environmental net gain, habitat or protected species to ensure the conditions are appropriately worded (4.2.4)

3. Further future evidence to reach net zero by 2050

In addition to the above it will also be necessary to address the gap in evidence regarding how far the above recommendations will go towards achieving net zero in Staffordshire by 2050, a matter which is not addressed in the 2020 study. In order to determine what other planning policy interventions may be required to achieve the County's net zero target it will be necessary to commission additional joint evidence to address the following;

- A.** The impact of the 2020 study's climate change mitigation policy recommendations on the County's net zero pathway.
- B.** Where policy targets may need to be raised or refined in future to achieve net zero in Staffordshire by 2050.
- C.** The extent of the net zero target which can reasonably be influenced by planning policies and where wider initiatives outside of planning may be required to achieve this.

4. Agreed position between Staffordshire authorities

The authorities' position on this matter is a live issue and subject to any policy approach being found sound at local plan examination. Notwithstanding this, the following authorities commit to fully exploring the proposed policy directions set out in the 2020 study, as summarised in this statement, in their emerging Local Plans. This is subject to Member approval, policies being feasible and viable and not superseded by a subsequent study and/or revised evidence and provision of adequate resources to deliver the necessary evidence base:

- **South Staffordshire District Council**
- **Stafford Borough Council**
- **Cannock Chase District Council**
- **Tamworth Borough Council**
- **East Staffordshire Borough Council**
- **Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council**
- **Lichfield District Council**
- **Staffordshire Moorlands District Council**

Staffordshire County Council commit to proactively supporting and facilitating the delivery of the 2020 study measures through joint working with Staffordshire Local Planning Authorities, particularly on areas such as sustainable transport, active travel and carbon sequestration/biodiversity net gain.

Signatories to this statement

Cannock Chase District Council

Name:

Position:

East Staffordshire Borough Council

Name:

Position:

Lichfield District Council

Name:

Position:

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Name:

Position:

Stafford Borough Council

Name:

Position:

South Staffordshire District Council

Name:

Position:

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Name:

Position:

Tamworth Borough Council

Name:

Position:

Staffordshire County Council

Name:

Position: