

# **Climate Change Strategy September 2020**

## Foreword by portfolio holder

Climate Change has now reached a point where we must all take immediate action, and with its declaration of a climate emergency in June 2019, Stevenage Borough Council is committed to tackling this head on. We have a holistic vision which focuses on cutting our own emissions to net zero and supporting our businesses and residents to do the same by 2030. This strategy begins to set out how we plan to achieve this and the actions we can all take which will have the most far reaching impacts. The steps we must take in order to ensure a climate safe future will also have significant positive impacts on health and wellbeing within the community, as we look to champion warm, energy efficient housing and the protection of green space.

Climate Change by its nature is a global issue which requires real change in the way our current globalised production and consumption systems operate. Although it can seem like a daunting task, the reality is that locally driven action will be pivotal in realising national and international targets to keep global warming to a level that can continue to sustain life on earth. The current crisis presents an opportunity to prioritise a fair and just transition to a sustainable era of living. The Strategy details the evidence at both local and national levels, setting out how we as a cooperative council can address our collective impacts.

Following the climate emergency declaration, The Council has been working to understand what action can be taken to not only reduce the carbon outputs of its assets and activity, but also in what ways to act as a community leader to empower the whole town to take action. The declaration was a direct result of collective action from ordinary citizens, and therefore The Council believes the response should be community led. For this reason, it was important to reach as many people as possible to establish how people felt impacted by the changing climate and what ways The Council can empower residents to make changes.

Cllr John Gardner

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## Section 1: The Vision for Change

In using the evidence base as a foundation, discussing with interest and stakeholder groups, then having widespread consultation, Stevenage Borough Council has coproduced a Climate Change Strategy and outlined an Action Plan. In doing this, The Council have followed these approaches:



Understanding the emissions will involve building up a detailed picture of what Stevenage's outputs are.

Lead the way by ensuring Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) is producing as little greenhouse gases as possible as quickly as possible

Advocating for and facilitating real change will see SBC lobbying for more drastic action at County and Central Government level, as well aiding local stakeholders' efforts to shrink their carbon footprints.

The response to the climate change emergency will be resident led which means the community will be fully involved throughout the process.

SBC will utilise this opportunity to improve our residents quality of lives, by striving to end fuel poverty, improve the built environment to encourage the shift to active travel and making healthy plant based food accessible.

Clear targets will be set with regular monitoring in place.

## 1.1: A Co-operative Approach

Stevenage is proud to be a co-operative council and understands the importance of a co-operative approach when addressing a complex and systemic issue like the climate emergency. The climate crisis impacts the most vulnerable people in society disproportionately, and the local level is no exception. Stevenage was built on a foundation of co-operation as policy makers and residents sought to rebuild the community following the Second World War, and this ethos will be of paramount importance when tackling climate change. There can be no climate safe future while there is injustice and inequality. It is critical that as SBC looks at community wealth building the climate is considered and prioritised as much as economic growth.

To maximise engagement, The Council strived to use an array of traditional consultation as well as lots of online methods, including a digital Facebook engagement campaign which received over 1,400 responses. Further to this, a cross party Member Working Groups has been established as well as cross county coloration groups to maximise engagement and our effectiveness. Stevenage Borough Council has and will continue to reach out to our businesses and residents to enable the changes the whole town needs to pull together. This will allow the whole town to capitalise on the social justice benefits of tackling climate change. For example, prioritising cleaner air for all, healthier diets, and improved public transport. Stevenage Borough Council strives to embody the following co-operative principles:

- The Council as a strong community leader.
- Working together with the community and other agencies to provide services based on needs.
- Communities empowered to design and deliver services and play a role in their local community.
- A clear understanding between the council and our communities.
- Joined-up and accessible services that offer value for money and focus on the customer.



## Section 2: Engagement

### 2.1: Our Extensive Local Consultation Feedback

The declaration was a direct result of collective action from ordinary citizens, and therefore The Council believes the response should be as community led as possible.

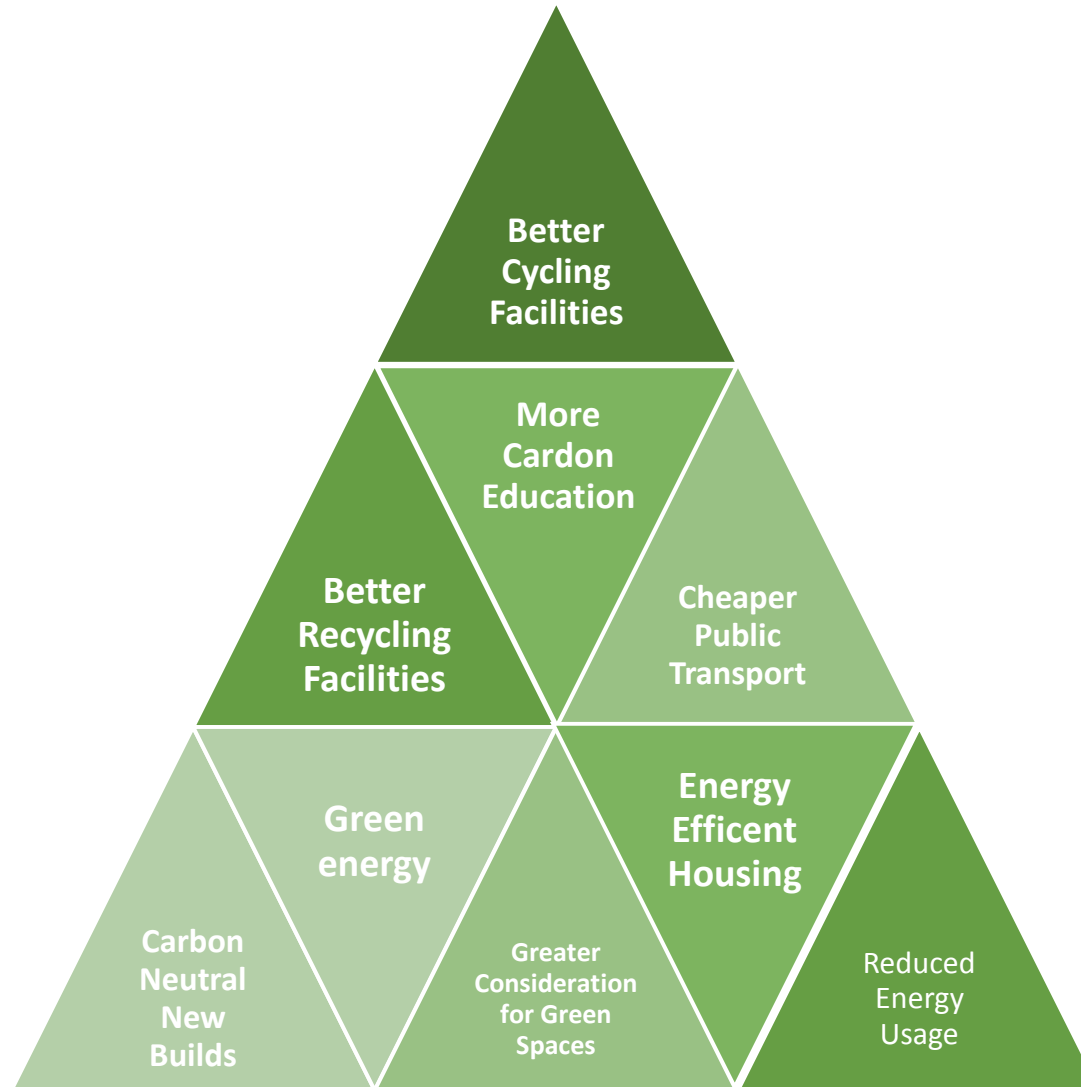
From January – April 2020 The Council have been engaging with residents both face to face and virtually to establish what issues the community would like to see addressed. Although this will be an ongoing process please see the most dominant themes raised by respondents displaced in the pyramid.

This will give valuable direction for the development of a Stevenage tailored action plan to net zero by 2030 and will be investigated further.

Stevenage Borough Council continues to plan for a Citizens' Panel style event to happen when government guideline permit, or virtually.

Following the climate emergency declaration, The Council has been working to understand what action can be taken to not only reduce the carbon outputs of its assets and activity, but also in what ways they can act as a community leader to empower the whole town to take necessary action.

The Highlights of the feedback are in the diagram below, with the details in the appendices.



## 2.2 Friends of the Earth (FOE) Assessment of Stevenage's Climate Change Emergency Response

<https://takeclimateaction.uk/climate-action/how-climate-friendly-your-area>

FOE helpfully produced a high-level assessment of the emissions in Stevenage alongside a series of interventions to address them. This is detailed below:

**The Stevenage area's performance on climate change is average compared to other Local Authority areas. Stevenage particularly needs to do much better on increasing the use of public transport, cycling, and walking, increasing renewable energy, and increasing waste recycling.**

There are different estimates of how fast the UK should reduce greenhouse gas emissions if it's to do its fair share in combatting climate change, ranging from around 7% to over 25% per year. Researchers at the Tyndall Centre in Manchester University say that Stevenage should reduce emissions by at least **13%** per year.

### Housing

Only **44%** of homes are well insulated in Stevenage. This leads to high greenhouse gas emissions and unnecessarily high energy bills, with **8%** of households in the area experiencing fuel poverty. Poor insulation contributes to this problem.

Upgrading the insulation of **2,088** homes per year within the Stevenage area will ensure all homes are properly insulated by 2030, lifting as many people as possible out of fuel poverty.

There also needs to be a switch from gas central heating, which is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, to eco-heating or electric (renewably sourced), which does not burn fossil fuels. There are only **15** government funded eco-heating systems in the Stevenage area, yet the UK needs to fit around 1 million per year. A fair share for Stevenage would be fitting **1,387** eco-heating systems every year.

### Transport

Transport is the biggest source of greenhouse gases in the UK, and emissions continue to grow. In Stevenage only **14%** of people commute by public transport, **3%** cycle, and **10%** walk. In the best performing similar Local Authority area, the proportions are **39%**, **6%** and **14%** respectively.

Much more is possible. Research shows that **25%** of commuter journeys in Stevenage could be by bike, better walking routes can encourage more journeys on foot and improve health, and 6 in 10 drivers would shift to public transport if its quality improved.



When cars are needed, they should be electric and shared as much as possible. Only **10%** of commuters share their car when commuting in the Stevenage area. Stevenage should have a target of 40% of their staff sharing journeys to work.

Stevenage area has **10** electric vehicle charging points (EV chargers). The Committee on Climate Change, which advises the government, says there should be 1 EV charger for every thousand cars by 2030. This suggests that in Stevenage there should be at least **42** EV chargers. There is a real need for a much faster transition to electric cars, which means many more EV chargers than this.

## Energy

Currently the Stevenage area has **3MW** of renewable power. If the Stevenage area matched the best of similar Local Authority areas, it would have **22MW**. To give an indication of what this means in practice, the average onshore wind turbine in Europe is 2.7MW and a 25-acre solar farm will produce about 5MW of electricity.

## Trees

Trees play an important role in sucking the main greenhouse gas carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it as carbon. They also provide a home for nature, clean up air pollution and reduce flood risk. According to the Government's National Forest Inventory (NFI) **6%** of the Stevenage area is woodland. The highest proportion in similar areas is **20%**. The Stevenage area should aim to increase tree cover to **20%**.

## Waste

Making the stuff we buy, using it, and throwing it away all contribute to climate change. Buying less stuff is an important step in cutting greenhouse gases. For the stuff we do buy, we should reuse, recycle or compost it. Stevenage reuses, recycles and composts **38%** of its household waste. This compares to the best figure of **59%** in similar Local Authorities.

## Section 3: Zero Carbon by 2030 – 8 Themes for the Strategy that will lead the Action Plan

The Action Plan will be a live document that is responsive to the opportunities that new technologies and bids for funding may allow. The 8 themes below detail the expected areas of focus and have been justified and explained. Following the Citizen Panels and other stakeholder engagement the Action Plan may further evolve and adapt to reflect the suggestions put forward. The Action Plan aligns with the work HCC are preparing and many other local authorities across the country.

## People

- SBC will produce a Climate Change Communications Plan to help education and inform our residents.

- Continue to work with youth groups, Youth Council and local schools to help both understand their Climate Change concerns and also empower them to make changes.

## Biodiversity

- Tree protection and Planting Strategy

- Biodiversity Plan and Actions

- Plant over 2,000 trees by 2030.

- Construct at least 3 new lakes or ponds by 2030

## Transport

- Electric Taxis and support to drivers to transition their fleet.

- Electric Buses, with expanded routes and frequencies.

- With HCC, introduce work place parking charges

- Living Streets through the Borough.

- Decarbonising the SBC fleet before 2030.

- Bike and E scooter hire

## Energy & Water

- Promote cross county purchase of renewable energy supply

- Identify the opportunity for local renewable energy generation.

- Test a Combined Heat & Power Station as part of any new swimming pool development.

- With Affinity Water & HCC, support thier move to zero carbon, and reductions in water usage and leaks.

## Businesses

- Lobby government to support our businesses and a Green Recovery

- Using our network s shared knowledge to support SME to adapt to climate change opportunitites

- Share knowledge and improved ways or working across our business community to redcued carbon.

## Homes

- Energy efficient housing (including retrofitting of current council housing stock and subsidies for private homes).

- Planning Poliicy for zero carbon homes on all large scale developments.

- Zero carbon development at the Station Gateway

- Fully electric / zero carbon heat and power on SBC lead developments

## Construction & Regeneration

- Designed a Carbon Neutal new Civic Hub

- Work with Regneration Partners that are committed to zero carbon operations

- Fully electric SG1 residential development

- Zero carbon state schools

## Waste & Recycling

- Develop a new Waste Strategy promoting reduction, reuse and recycling.

- Zero waste to landfill or incineration

- With HCC produce biogas

### 3.1 Theme visions:

#### People

The only way we can achieve the goal of carbon zero by 2030 is if everyone plays their part. Through educating, engaging, supporting, listening and communicating with our residents from all background, positions, ages and interests can we collectively make the required changes to our behaviour.

#### Biodiversity

Ensuring our biodiversity is improved as part of the carbon reduction measures will ensure we have a holistic approach to the wider sustainability impacts we as humans are having on our local ecology. Using nature's natural way of addressing the human impact of climate change is the most effective method of taking action. Ensuring that one area of improvements does not undermine the other is vital.

#### Transport

Making up nearly a third of our emissions Transport is a key area for us to address, and one that behaviourally we as residents, employers, employees or visitors make every day. Big changes and support from the Transport Authority can have huge transformational impacts not only on our carbon outputs, but also health and employment opportunities.

#### Energy & Water

The source and use of energy has the opportunities to make significant changes in our carbon emissions relatively quickly, particularly while we are still trying to change behaviours. It is expected that the general electrical grid will be fully re-carbonised by 2050 which is too late for our targets, so encouraging all energy users to not only consider where they source their energy from but how much is used, is one of the first major actions. As our temperature increases, our water usage increases and availability decreases. Hertfordshire is already one of the driest regions in the UK yet we use twice as much water as people in places like Manchester. Actions to address leakage and chalk stream sourcing need to also be considered.

**Businesses & Homes**

Industrial and residential users make up nearly two-thirds of carbon emissions, investment in de-carbonising industrial processes, and home heating / energy use are key areas to support and educate our businesses and residential to make the changes. Government financial support will be required too.

**Construction & Regeneration**

As a leader in building new homes and regenerating the town centre the Council will have significant powers and opportunities to build better buildings and places, which are designed in sustainable ways, in sustainable locations.

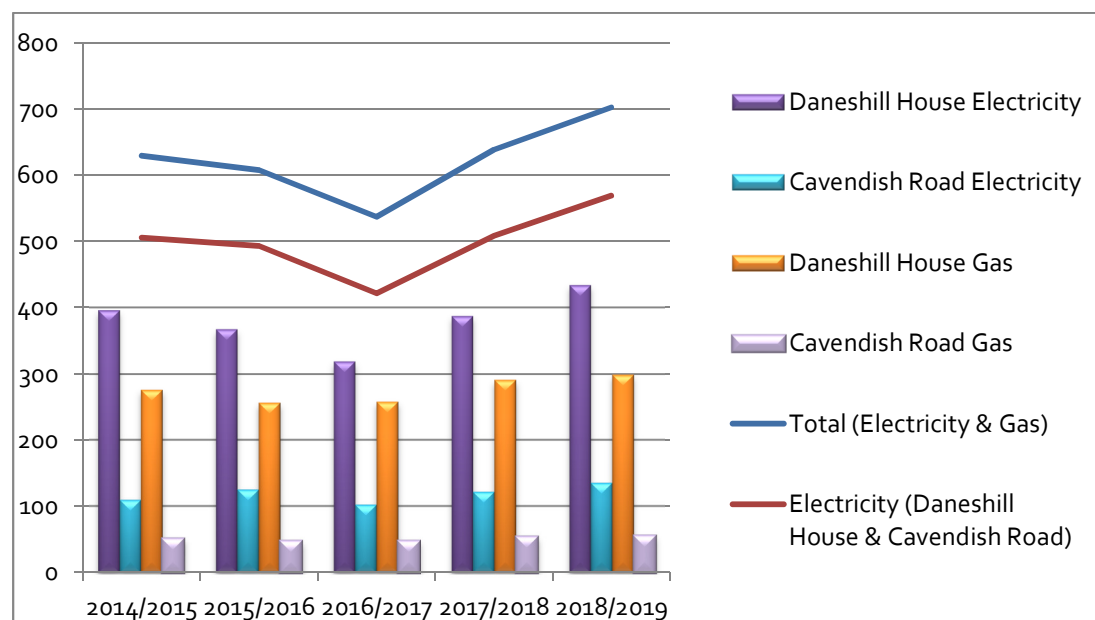
**Waste & Recycling**

Reducing, reusing, then recycling need to be at the heart of what we do as a Council collecting and processing waste but also in educating our residents and businesses.

### 3.2 SBC's Carbon Management Plan

The Council has two main office sites, Daneshill House and Cavendish Road. Most office-based staff are based at the larger Daneshill House which is evident in the data. Emission levels have been increasing since 2016/2017 and reconsidering SBC energy efficiency is a priority as well as looking at methods to decarbonise the building's heating system. Although it is now unclear what will happen following the COVID19 pandemic, it is still critical that the buildings are as energy efficient as possible while they remain in use.

Figure 1: SBC's CO2 emissions for 2014/2015 – 2018/2019 in CO2 tonnes for main two office sites



Further to this data, The Council has been working with CLS Energy Ltd who is an energy consultancy to produce a baseline carbon footprint. CLS energy use the international protocol, the relevant ISO standards, and the government's annually revised data for carbon conversions. This method gives an industry recognised calculation of our carbon emissions. The Council are working with the data produced to assess what steps can be taken to improve energy efficiency and reduce consumption as soon as possible

### 3.3 The Climate Change Strategy

This document will act as a starting point for the development of a resident-led, co-produced more focused Climate Change Strategy for Stevenage. The Council will act as a community leader and facilitate local people and businesses during the decarbonisation process. Through consultation with academics and climate change organisations the Council has taken this first-step to consult with residents and businesses.

This document aims to provide contextual information and focusses on the Council's proposed approach for tackling climate change. This is a vital strategic task which will consider the role the Council must play as a facilitator for change and advocate for radical transformation of the transport and energy systems, as well as having a robust plan for reducing emission from the Council's own land, buildings, fleet and assets. It is critical that the carbon footprint and wider environmental impacts of all new developments in the town are now considered through planning and residents are informed and empowered to be able to make the meaningful lifestyle changes required for Stevenage to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

To achieve this, The Council will focus on four main areas. Most of the carbon emissions in Stevenage come from Transport, People's home and businesses, construction, and utilities. Through focusing on these areas, better understanding their requirements, and engaging with them Stevenage can reach the zero-carbon target.

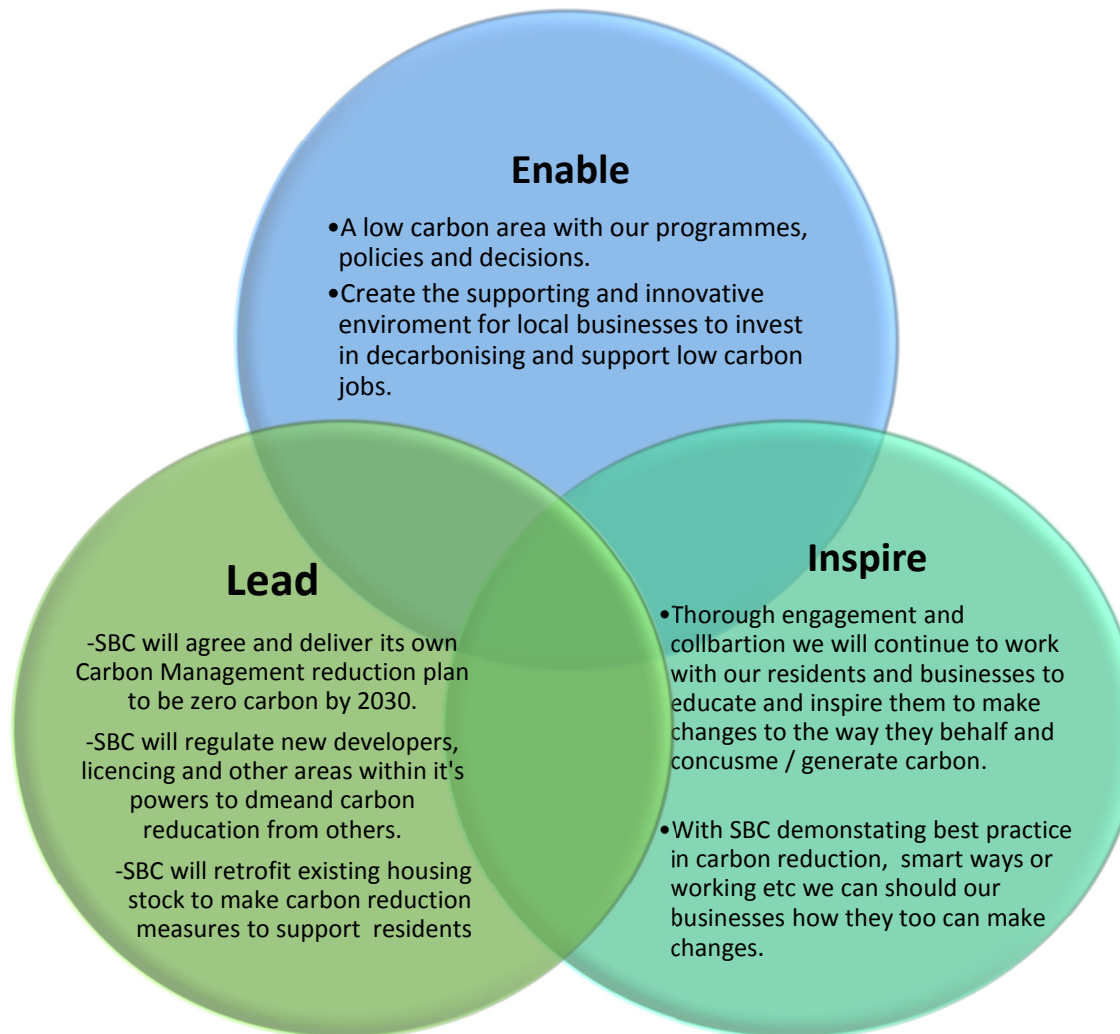
### 3.4: The three areas of influence for SBC as a Local Authority

When discussing how best to address the climate emergency, the focus is rightly placed on climate change mitigation, i.e. reducing greenhouse gas emissions (particularly carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), as well as methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O)) and identifying action to address how the town sources, consumes, and produces energy. However, in mitigating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions the town will influence, and be influenced by, a range of other issues and strategies including energy security, fuel poverty, climate adaptation and resilience.

These strategies will need to be well integrated to reduce duplication, share resources and costs, and maximise co-benefits. For this reason, The Council, following Hertfordshire County Council, will be looking approach the climate emergency through three specific themes: Enable, Lead, and Inspire. While Stevenage Borough Council is fully committed to being net zero carbon itself by 2030, it is also committed to achieving that for all within Stevenage. To achieve this, The Council can only do this in partnership and with the support of the town. Through identifying these 3 approaches and effective engagement it is possible to empower everyone to reduce their carbon emissions.

When approaching emissions, it is important to understand the three scopes. Scope 1 refers to direct emissions from sources owned or controlled by the organisation, for example, emissions from the combustion of gas or diesel in owned or controlled boilers or vehicles. Scope 2

refers to emissions from the generation of purchased electricity consumed by the organisation. This electricity is purchased or otherwise brought into the organisation's building. Scope 3 concerns all other indirect activities which result in emissions outwith direct control. If Stevenage is to become a truly net-zero town, all three scopes must be addressed and everyone in Stevenage must play their part.





### 3.5: Case Study - Biodiversity Action Plan

Stevenage Borough Council is extremely proud to have a longstanding commitment to preserving and enhancing biodiversity in the borough. The vision has always been to increase Stevenage's biodiversity by conserving, restoring, recreating and reconnecting wildlife habitats; to increase awareness and appreciation of Stevenage's wildlife; to encourage participation in conserving its biodiversity; and to ensure that nature is close to everyone's doorstep. The Council has worked closely with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife trust for many years and continues to work in partnership with this organisation to improve our green spaces. As The Council looks to tackle the issues presented by the changing climate, there is an opportunity to continue to prioritise the towns' natural environment, while being mindful of what species and ecosystems already exist, when considering projects such as tree planting.

A link to The Councils Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2020<sup>1</sup> details actions being taken for wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, and ancient hedgerows. The Council reaffirms its commitment to biodiversity in the town and will strive to protect and enhance woodlands.

### 3.5 Working across Hertfordshire

SBC at officer and member level have been working closely with and leading on certain areas for the Hertfordshire-wide Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership and the Sustainability Officer Group. This ensures we are collectively across Hertfordshire using the same approach, sharing ideas and collaborating across the county to have the maximum impact. The Growth Board and Herts LEP have Climate Change as a key theme in their work, demonstrating a commitment to address Climate Change in our area and in our future planning.



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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/content/15953/24701/24704/Biodiversity-Action-Plan-2017-2022.pdf>

## Section 4: THE EVIDENCE

### 4.1 What is Climate Change and how do you mitigate its effects?

Climate change refers to the impact on the climate of too many greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, causing accelerated global warming. This is a result of many different human activities such as burning fossil fuels (e.g. gas, coal and oil), intensified agriculture, polluting industrial processes and the clearance of vegetation. Greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide trap heat in the atmosphere which would otherwise escape into space. Although this is a global issue, urgent efforts must be made by The Council along with the town's residents and businesses to halt carbon emissions and remove the greenhouse gases from the atmosphere to prevent unsustainable global warming resulting in sea level rising and increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters.

"Business as usual" is no longer an option. As depicted in figure 1, if we as a global community continue to emit greenhouse gases at current rates, we are set for at least a 4 degree increase in global surface temperatures which is far beyond what is considered climate safe.

The levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) now exceed both atmospheric and ice core recorded concentration levels for the last 800,000 years. Fossil fuel emissions, as well as changes to how we use land, have caused carbon dioxide levels to rise by 40% since the pre-industrial era<sup>2</sup>.

Since the mid-20th century changes in terms of sea levels and temperatures have had huge effects on the climate system. Consequently, the polar ice caps are rapidly melting, and we are increasingly at risk of worldwide crop failure. To avoid climate breakdown, we must commit to deep and rapid emissions reductions, the creation of new carbon sinks, and bringing down atmospheric greenhouse gas levels globally from 400 parts per million (ppm) to below 350ppm. This will involve scaling up current efforts to combat climate change significantly.

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<sup>2</sup> IPCC, 2013: Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1](http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1)

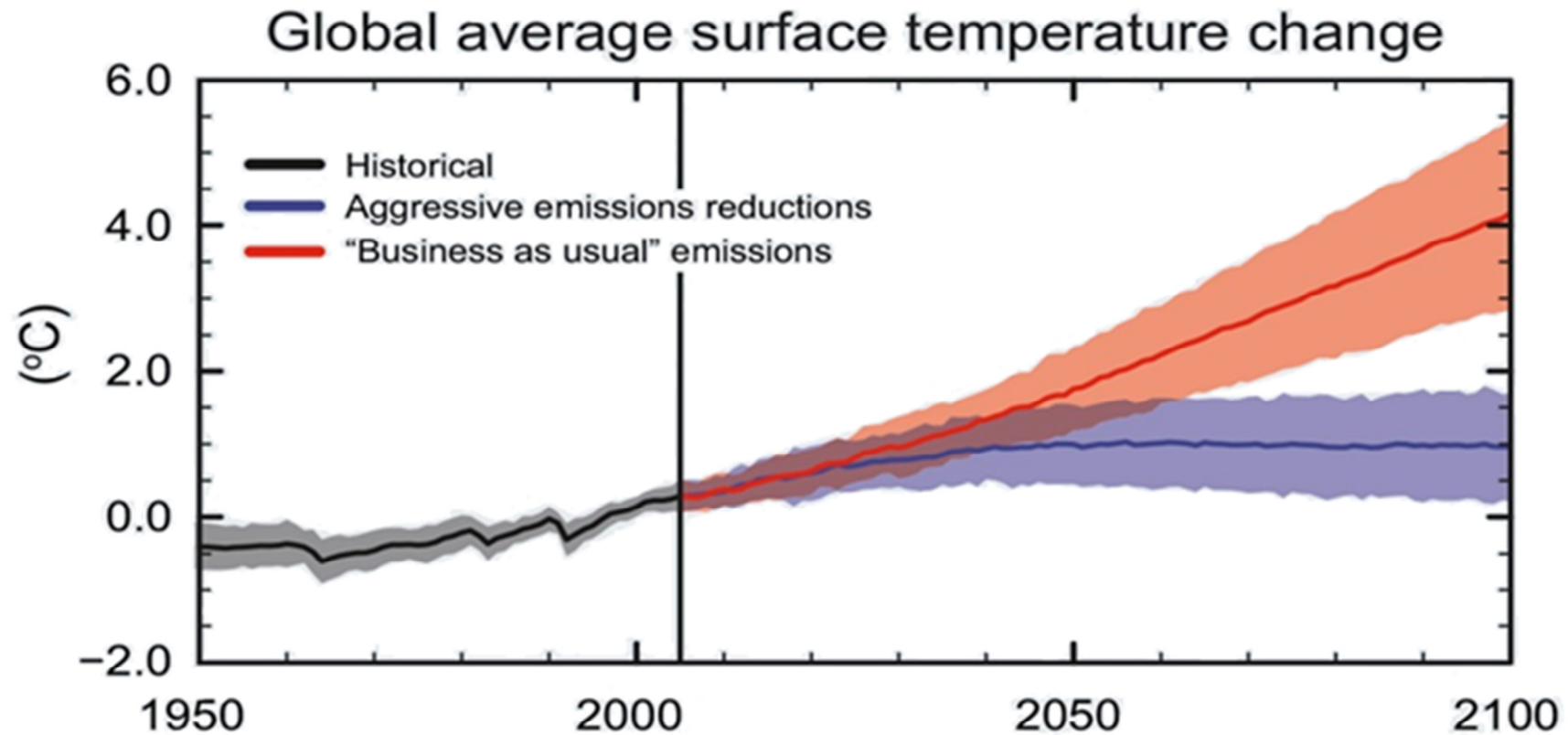


Figure 2: Global Average Surface temperature changes<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The Royal Society – Climate Change Evidence and Causes, Basics of Climate Change

<https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/climate-change-evidence-causes/basics-of-climate-change> see also the National Centre for Environmental Information [www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/global/time-series](http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/global/time-series)

## 4.2. The UK Position

The UK has made a commitment, under The Paris Agreement (2015), to achieve a 'net-zero' target by 2050. Net zero refers to achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and emissions taken out of the atmosphere<sup>4</sup>. Achieving net-zero in the UK would lead the global effort to limit the global rise to 1.5°C. Some key actions which we will need to see immediately include a move to green energy, better land use planning, and more sustainable food systems.



<sup>4</sup> LSE (Burke 2019) [www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/news/what-is-net-zero](http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/news/what-is-net-zero)

In February 2020, The British Court of Appeal has ruled that the government's plans for a third runway at Heathrow failed to consider the UK's commitments to reduce carbon emissions under The Paris Agreement, a landmark decision which Stevenage Borough Council fully supports. Local Authorities across the UK are coming up with innovative new ways to allow people to navigate their neighbourhoods safely, with social distancing potentially in place for a long time. At the heart of these initiatives will be localism and active travel, a helpful part of the UK's net zero pathway.

#### 4.3 Carbon Emissions in Stevenage – our baseline

Based on the most comprehensive and current Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) data available, a total of **350kt** CO<sub>2</sub> was emitted by Stevenage in 2018. The data illustrates 42% of the emissions came from industrial and commercial uses in the town, 31% from domestic emissions and 27% from the transport sector<sup>5</sup>. This compares to the national breakdown of 35%, 33% and 32% respectively. It must be stressed that this method of calculation considered only goods and services produced within the geographical area of Stevenage, and therefore those that are imported will not be included. It is therefore not surprising to see high levels of emissions in Stevenage from industry and commercial uses. The chart below shows the makeup of the emissions. This data set concerns Local Authority territorial CO<sub>2</sub> emissions estimates, and excludes large industrial sites, railways, motorways and land-use.

While figures and baselining are a critical part of reaching net zero, it is important to understand and expect that these will always be estimates, and therefore wider structural decarbonising processes, such as ending the use of gas, must be the foundation of all climate action. All measurements will be based against this level of emissions for the geographic area of Stevenage Borough Council.

**Our goal of achieve net zero by 2030 is based on a 350kt reduction in carbon.**

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018>

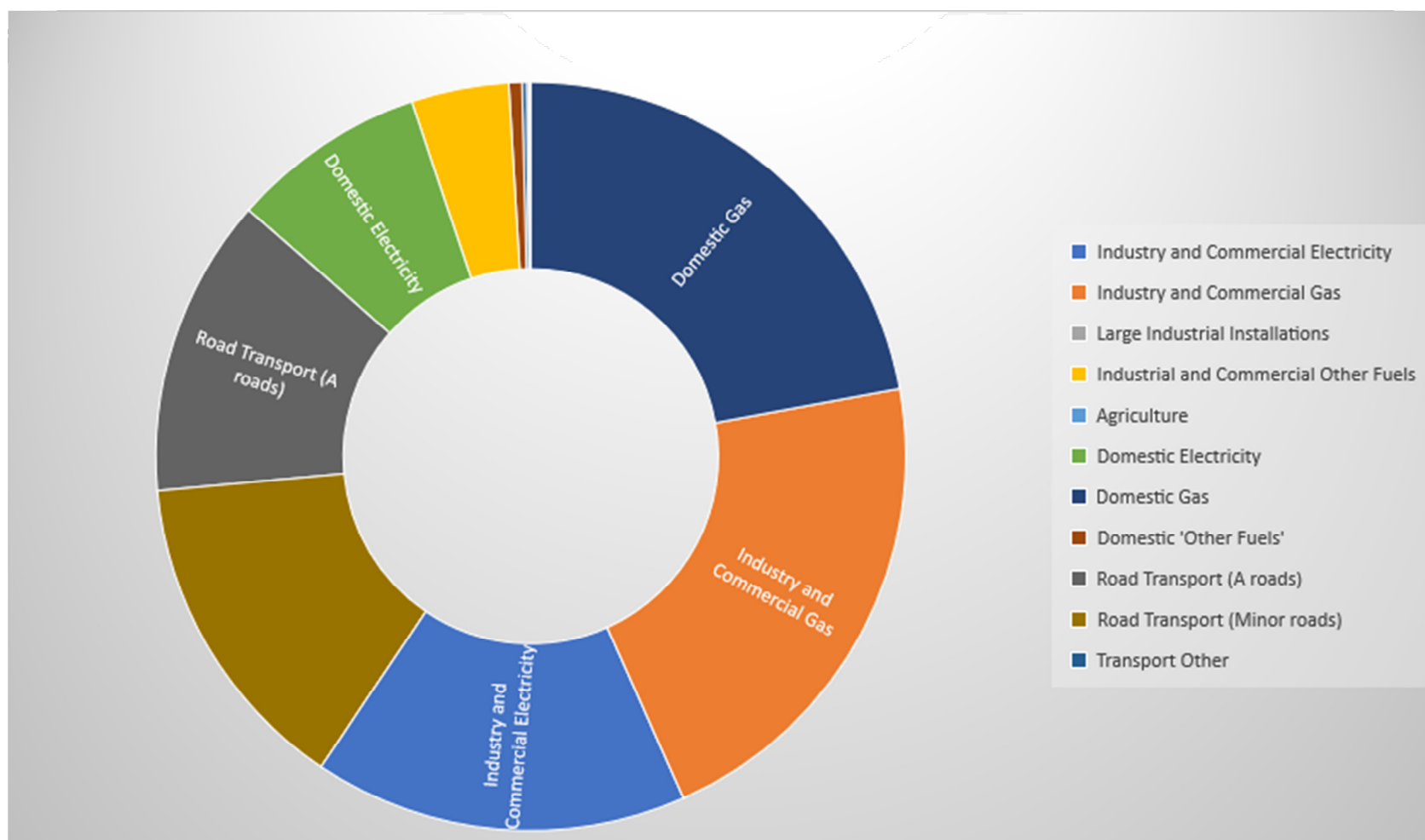


Figure 3: Stevenage Emissions in Kt CO2 for 2018<sup>6</sup>

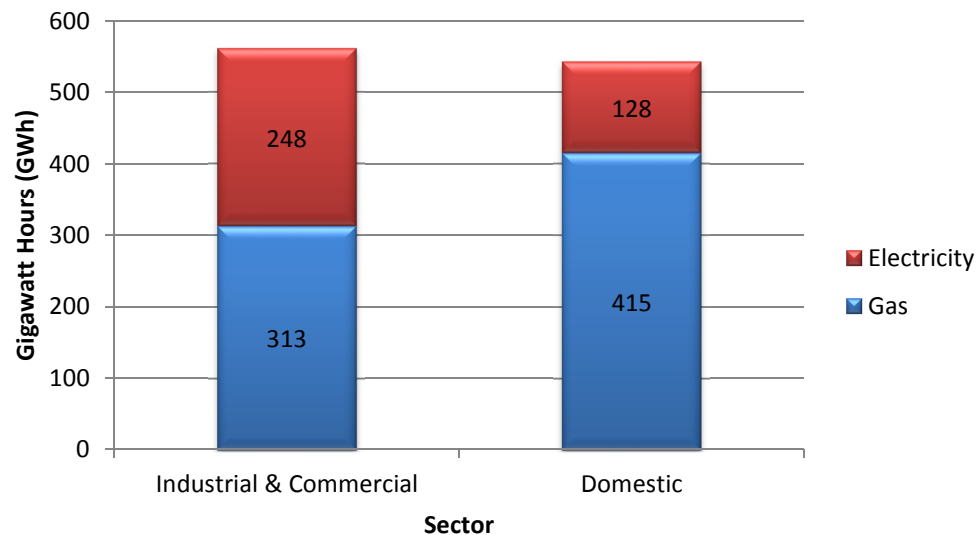
<sup>6</sup> Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018>

#### 4.4: Stevenage Borough Council Position

The council's role as a land and asset owner, a regulator and as an agent for change will be addressed. The battle against climate change goes beyond reducing single use plastic and planting more trees. Although these things are extremely important, we must also consider factors such as improving energy efficiency, transforming transport, protecting biodiversity, and ending the reliance on fossil fuels. It is important to nurture the sense of social responsibility which has come from collective action in recent years and set firm goals for reducing emissions.

Stevenage is well placed to become a carbon neutral town by 2030 ahead of the UK government target of 2050. The residents and businesses care about climate change and are already acting within their communities. The town boasts an outstanding cycle network, excellent rail links, thriving green spaces and is home to an impressive range of small businesses and lots of tech-based industry. Building on the 2009 Climate Change Strategy, in June 2019 Stevenage Borough Council declared a climate emergency, reaffirming commitment to this cause.

Figure 4: Stevenage's Energy Consumption by Sectors (2017)<sup>7</sup>



A crucial way to reduce carbon emissions is to invest in and switch to green, renewable energy. Although it must be stressed that many providers of green tariffs are merely offsetting, it is still a worthwhile initial step, albeit not a long-term solution. Further to this, it is critical that the energy sector shifts fully away from the use of gas as this is an extremely harmful fossil fuel, whereas electricity has better scope to be produced from renewable sources such as solar and wind.

As depicted, Stevenage's domestic sector is disproportionately reliant on gas for energy. This shows the need to shift the town's energy mix drastically to strive towards to goal of carbon neutral. Secondly Figure 3 depicts the fuel vehicle mix used in Stevenage for the year 2017. Approximately 42,000 tonnes of fuel were consumed in 2017 of which 49% was diesel and 38% was petrol. It is critical that there is shift towards electric vehicles, and diesel-powered vehicles are left in the past, with a greater emphasis on green public transport at the heart of future planning.

Figure 5: Fuel Vehicle Mix for Stevenage (2017)<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Strategy <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-transport-energy-consumption-at-regional-and-local-authority-level>



## Section 5: COVID-19 – a green recovery

The global pandemic has brought with it many new challenges and has transformed the way society operates. As Stevenage Borough Council looks to the future, climate justice must be at the forefront of recovery plans. The pathway to zero carbon has never been clearer, as this public health crisis forces everyone to re-imagine how we operate. Continued support for homeworking wherever possible, a halt to air traffic expansion and an end to over consumption must all be championed. It is crucial that economic recovery after lock down is directly linked to cutting emission to reach net zero as quickly as possible. This is since any short-term solutions which do not contribute to active achievement of net zero, will exasperate climate threats.

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air have reported that the UK is estimated to have avoided 1,752 deaths due to lower air pollution during the Covid-19 outbreak so far (April 2020)<sup>9</sup>, with Europe as a whole avoiding up to 11,000. While these figures can seem insignificant when compared to the huge numbers of people who have lost their lives to COVID-19, it is critical that we keep air pollution down to mitigate the chances of people developing respiratory complications such as asthma, which would make people more vulnerable to the virus.

The pandemic has laid bare the glaring socio-economic inequalities in the UK as the most vulnerable are adversely impacted. This event serves as a reminder of what our future could like if we do not act against climate change before it is too late. It is essential that we not become distracted by short sighted economic solutions at the expense of the commitment Stevenage Borough Council has made to reduce emissions by 2030. This is a unique opportunity to build a fairer, greener world. It is also important to consider how the pandemic has brought around drastic changes to the way we live and how this is impacting emissions and the climate emergency is viewed.

The green recovery also presents opportunities for our residents and local businesses in adapting to climate change. Through training and support schemes SBC and partnerships including Stevenage Works can help ensure local people and businesses have the skills to match these opportunities for new jobs and contracts.

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<sup>9</sup> As reported by The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/30/clean-air-in-europe-during-lockdown-leads-to-11000-fewer-deaths>

## Short term

- The pandemic has done a lot for climate change in the short term. This includes inactivity improving air quality globally, and at the height of lockdown at the beginning of April global carbon emissions dropped by 17%.
- The majority of this dip was down to fewer car journeys taking place, as well as the drops in power generation and industry activity. The UK has gone over two months without burning coal to generate power. The pandemic has also shown that it is possible to carry out major behavioural shifts when necessary.

## Medium term

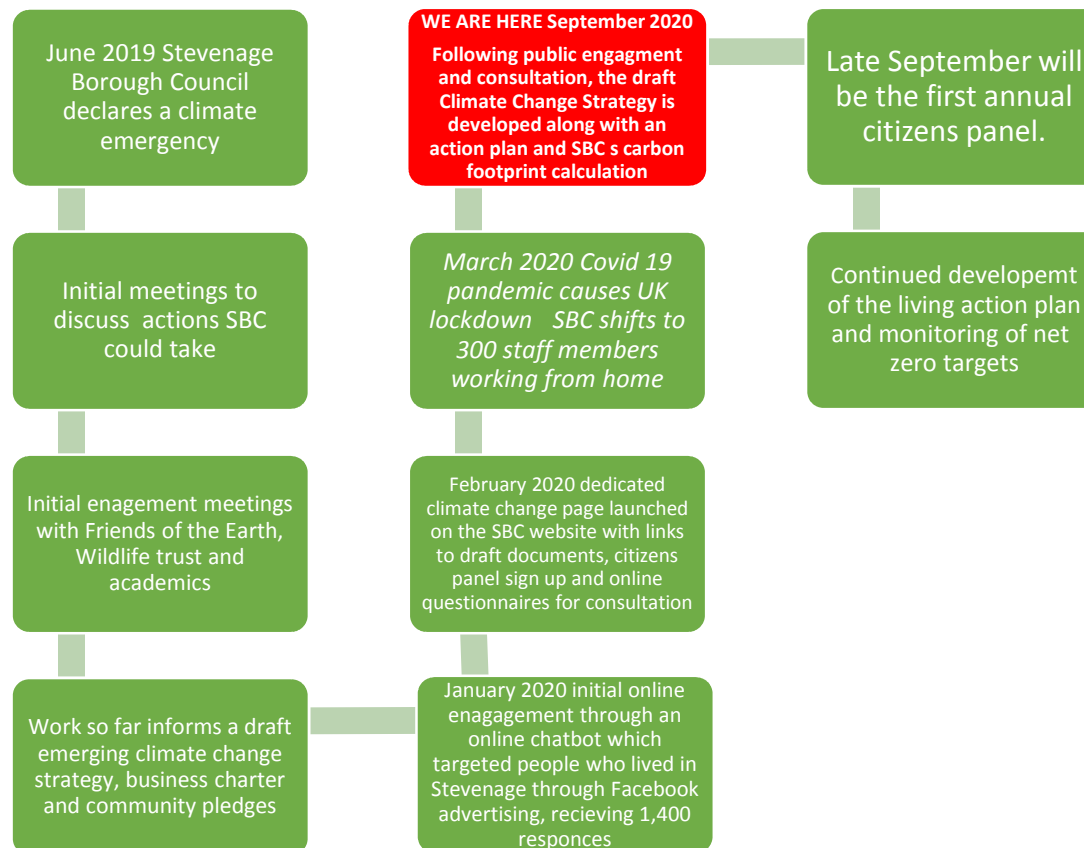
- The UK transport secretary had pledged £250 million for walking and cycling infrastructure, but has advised that if people are unable to walk or cycle to work, and have access to a car, they should use it rather than take public transport. There is a real concern that people will shun public transport for fear of COVID-19, and therefore it is important that able-bodied people continue to limit unnecessary journeys in non-electric vehicles.
- The continued support for homeworking will be important when keeping down Stevenage Borough Councils carbon footprint.

## Long term

- To contextualise these changes in line with the national target of net-zero by 2050 as agreed at The Paris Agreement, the UK would need to see the same levels of reduction that we would likely see if lockdown was to remain in place for much of 2020, approximately 5% reduction in global CO2e emissions.
- This would have to continue as a minimum every year going forward to keep global warming below the crucial 1.5 degrees figure.

## Section 6: Next steps

As with the COVID-19 pandemic, the sooner action is taken the less serious the repercussions will be, and there is no space for complacency when addressing the climate emergency. The emerging strategy will be accompanied by a living action plan (to be continuously developed with the community) which will lay out specific actions The Council will take to tackle climate change. The Timetable for the project is as follows:



## 6.1 Funding & Governance.

Clearly the Council is not able to fund all the potential projects, but working with our partners, stakeholders and government we will bid for money to deliver the projects. Residents and employers in Stevenage will have to play their part too, in investing where they can in improvements but most importantly making behavioural change to help us meet our common goal of being net zero carbon by 2030.

For example retro-fitting the existing housing stock of approximately 38,000 units (of which 8,000 are SBC) would have a significant carbon reduction impact. However, neither SBC nor the private owners have the funds to commit to doing this. Central government would need to contribute to this through enhanced grants and loans, which SBC will lobby for.

SBC is working with HCC and their emerging climate change work, ensuring we have shared methodologies, approaches and coordinated projects. SBC is also working with HCC to secure many of the Transport improvements which we will be dependent upon them as Local Transport Authorities to deliver.

The Council has set up Member and Officer Working Groups to support the delivery of projects. We are also establishing a Citizen Panel, including a cross section of residents, which will oversee and guide ideas for resident's actions.

All Executive and Planning & Development Committee report now have Climate Change consideration in, so that the decision makers can consider the climate change impacts of their decisions.

Some projects will fall in and out of the Action Plan as technologies and funding's change. However it will be updated annually, so our emissions reductions can be tracked and reported back to the Panel, Working Groups and Executive.

As a regulator the Council can control new buildings and developer to support lower carbon developers and more sustainable locations. Through design and location new developments and reduce carbon emissions and offer a positive future for places.

**ZERO**  
**CARBON**