

***A Sustainability Strategy for the Local
Borough of Barnet***

1 February 2022

Barnet and the Climate Emergency

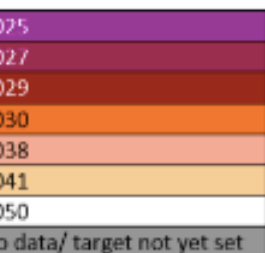
- **July 2019:** *“Councillors failed to back a call to make Barnet a carbon neutral borough by 2030 – despite growing concerns over the effects of global warming.”* [Barnet Times](#)
- **June 2021:** *“A fresh call for Barnet Council to declare a climate emergency was voted down by Tory councillors who claimed the borough was already pursuing green policies. The decision means Barnet is set to remain one of only four councils in London not to have declared a climate emergency – a formal recognition of the threat posed by climate change.”* [Barnet Times](#)



25 London boroughs have now published a Climate Action Plans detailing how they will seek to meet their targets

The forthcoming Sustainability Strategy will be Barnet Council's first attempt to detail how the council will respond to recent announcements made by Government in areas such as energy efficiency, retrofit and renewable energy, as highlighted recently at COP 26 in Glasgow.

net zero or carbon neutral by:



A Barnet Sustainability Strategy...?

A paper to the Council's Environment Committee in March 2021 first provided information on what will be "Barnet's first Sustainability Strategy"

Stated there "is a clear case for the development of a strategy which looks to combine the sustainability aspects of existing strategies and plans, such as the Long Term Transport Strategy, the Growth Strategy and the Air Quality Action Plan."

"...the Resident Perception Survey, carried out in Autumn 2020, highlighted that 87% of residents strongly agree / tend to agree that tackling environmental issues should be included in the Council's priorities and future plans".

"...Initial discussions around the production of a Sustainability Strategy took place with relevant lead members and the Leader over Summer 2020. Following this, officers were instructed by the Leader to begin work on the production of a strategy."

Sustainability in Barnet - a statement from the Leader

Published: 22nd October 2021



Barnet Council Leader, Councillor Dan Thomas

In the lead up to COP26, and following the government's announcement of its Net Zero Strategy, the Leader of Barnet Council has released a statement on sustainability in Barnet.

Cllr Dan Thomas, Leader of Barnet Council, said: "Across London, we have seen how climate change is playing a role in extreme weather events, such as storms and flooding.

These events in the context of the recent report published by the IPCC make it clear that important decisions need to be made at COP26, and we must all play our part in supporting the government's commitment of being net zero by 2050 and cutting emissions by 78% by 2035, compared to 1990 levels.

We are developing a Sustainability Strategy which aims to make Barnet the leading borough in London in sustainability and ensure we match the government's ambition that we have a sustainable and prosperous country for future generations.

Barnet Sustainability Framework

- Barnet Council's [Policy and Resources Committee](#) (PRC) held a meeting Thursday 9 December 2021 – this included the first detail of Barnet's forthcoming Sustainability Strategy via a [Sustainability Strategy Framework'](#)
- This stated that the *“Sustainability Strategy Framework ...will be used to scope and inform the forthcoming Sustainability Strategy. This framework builds on existing sustainability action the Council is taking and has been written in the context of the agreements reached at COP26 and the Environment Act 2021.”*

Sustainability Framework 1

It was anticipated we would see a draft Strategy by the end of 2021.

...the Strategy *“will be presented to Policy & Resources Committee in the new year”*

The Framework sets out targets for Barnet which is in line with the majority of other councils in London, for the Council to be net zero by 2030, and for *“Barnet as a place to be net zero as soon as possible following this, and by 2050 at the latest”*.

Emissions baseline report by Ernst & Young (EY)

Barnet’s emissions (1.7mtCO₂) 58% from buildings (two-thirds of this from residential buildings), 35% from transportation, and 4% from waste.

- The Framework states *“Although, as a local authority, Barnet Council has limited influence over privately owned homes and buildings, there is still the potential for action through signposting and supporting residents to access and utilise government schemes.”*

Sustainability Framework 2

“...highlighted several other key areas where data is lacking. This is most notable within the housing and buildings realm, where significant work needs to be undertaken...”

*“The Council has already undertaken several major pieces of work in order to improve the sustainability of the organisation and the borough. Officers have begun work on mapping out these projects, as well as other work that is being done through existing strategies and action plans; **this will allow us to identify areas where action is required and therefore where the Council must look to focus its energy in order to chart a comprehensive route to net zero.**”*

*“Only 41% of homes in Barnet are well insulated (at least EPC C-rated)... The Council has a further role to help address and target incidences of fuel poverty, **with almost one in ten households in Barnet living in fuel poverty**”.*

Sustainability Framework 3

Retrofit Barnet's **social housing stock** to an average of EPC B by 2030, and net zero as soon as possible"

Assist residents within private sector housing to make their homes more sustainable"

Make **schools** more sustainable"

...the installation of **solar panels** across LBB's existing real estate portfolio"

We will therefore begin work to explore the viability of the **implementation of [district heating schemes**

...published a series of sustainability webpages which lays out the work the Council is already undertaking to ensure the borough is more sustainable"

We will therefore **continue to communicate with residents**, to not only make them aware of the work of the Council, but also so that they can feed in and contribute to the development of the Sustainability Strategy."

Engagement and communications, January – March 2022 (prior to the pre-election period)- public engagement with residents to provide them with the opportunity to help shape the development of the Sustainability Strategy and test the content of this framework; **this will include events with a representative group of residents and sessions with young people.**"

Any funding for specific proposals will be explored in the forthcoming Sustainability Strategy and will be sought in accordance with the existing budgetary approval framework"

Some context

- Recently published Council Climate Scorecards by Climate Emergency UK gave Barnet 0%.
- Top 3 boroughs in London were Southwark (80%), Hammersmith and Fulham (79%) and Richmond upon Thames (78%)
- Barnet is behind others in terms of climate action – others have developed strategies and action plans and are delivering these.
- Examples of actions delivered that are mentioned in the framework are minimal, also rely on external funding that has been available, rather than a climate focus for the organisation
- At best they are 18 months behind, at worst they are 3 years behind

Transport

- Transport makes up over a third of boroughwide emissions – transport is a problem area as emissions across the UK have not gone down, whereas emissions in other areas like power have
- Barnet's Long Term Transport Strategy 2020-2041 is already in place
- Much of the areas identified in the framework are already covered in this strategy
- Focus areas of electric vehicles and vehicle charging, orbital travel, school streets, active travel and car clubs

Transport - analysis

- Electric Vehicles: Commitment to 500 additional EV chargepoints in addition to 150 existing points– bearing in mind Westminster is already over 1000, there are 3 others who will be over 1000 by the end of 2022
- Orbital Travel: Depends on working in partnership with TfL, who have significant funding challenges – but could link with the Mayor of London’s increased climate ambitions
- Active travel: not a lot of detail on what they will deliver – will need much more detail in strategy

Waste

- Linked together with Renewable Energy in same section
- Very little narrative on waste apart from mentioning the Environment Act and reviewing policies and practices in light of this
- No focus areas identified on waste
- Possibly the weakest area – no recognition of the important role of waste, no commitments on anything, no mention of circular economy or food waste

Business, skills and partner organisations

- Recognises role of council as an influencer and leader
- Highlights ecargo bikes, work with schools and skills providers, some community projects
- Also work with West London Businesses
- Focus areas of library of things and green skills

Business, skills and partner organisations - analysis

- Library of things: this probably fits better with waste, is a really good approach
- Green skills: working with skills providers such as local colleges
- No mention of further working with other partner organisations such as schools, or other public sector partners such as NHS or Middlesex University

Natural environment and biodiversity

- Framework mentions the greenness of Barnet, key role of nature and biodiversity in the response to climate change for mitigation and adaptation.
- Highlights Tree Policy and Silk Stream Flood and Resilience project
- Focus areas include Biodiversity Action Plan and ecology, understanding of the borough's canopy cover, biodiversity improvements and improve water management

Natural environment and biodiversity - analysis

- Biodiversity Action Plan: should be a priority for biodiversity approaches and also needs to involve local groups
- Canopy over:
- Lot of this is about preparing to take action rather than action itself
- No mention of working with local groups – who can bring valuable insight, experience and resource to biodiversity

Communication activity

- Published more information on sustainability on the Council website
- Doesn't say much about why communication and engagement is important apart from telling people what Barnet is doing
- Focus areas are on consultation around the Sustainability Strategy
- No mention of ongoing engagement and communication with residents and communities on climate change or leading behavioural change

Reflections on Sustainability Strategy

- Not confident on meaningful engagement through the approach set out on consultation
- Lack of partnership and resident engagement throughout the framework – stuff that the council will do to Barnet rather than with Barnet residents and communities
- Need a stronger approach and commitment on actions in the strategy, and also some very clear actions as it's really not clear from the framework what Barnet will be doing
- Waste area really needs strengthening
- Clear targets on emissions reductions – for borough and for the council itself
- Identification of funding apart from government grants that are sometimes available is needed.