



HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2025

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1. Introduction

Hertford Town Council declared a climate emergency in July 2023. To help tackle this emergency, the Council has put together this environmental sustainability strategy, declaring both its commitment and its aim to be carbon neutral by 2030 and to do all in its power to protect our environment and make Hertford as sustainable as possible.

As a Council, we have begun work on making our own buildings and operations more sustainable in order to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030. This strategy outlines how we will continue to improve our own buildings and operations whilst also tackling the climate and ecological emergency across the town.

2. Vision

2.1 Objectives and Aims

In October 2023 the Council adopted the objectives for the 2023-2027 administration.

These are:

1. To safeguard and enhance the natural environment and increase net biodiversity.

2. To build strong links with residents, business and other stakeholders and empower them to develop vibrant communities.
3. To foster a spirit of Hertford – celebrating its rich historical, natural and cultural heritage through the arts, music, culture and sport.
4. To support the continued environmental, spatial and economic development of Hertford with a focus on enhancing the vibrant town centre.
5. To operate with sound financial management and good governance in all our activities.

These objectives are complemented by:

Mission Statement: "We will work together with the people of Hertford to make our town even more vibrant, green and inclusive. A historic town that is ready for tomorrow."; and

Aims: To make Hertford:

- a welcoming place to live, work and learn
- a place where diversity is recognised and celebrated
- a place where the natural environment is valued and enhanced
- a place where strong local partnerships deliver for all
- a place where business and local groups will thrive.

2.2 Goals

1. We will work in partnership with residents, businesses, charities and other organisations to influence positive behavioural change to improve the environment and sustainability of Hertford.
2. We will use our role as the most local tier of local government to influence policy that affects Hertford –working with both District and County Councils on issues such as public transport and roads, waste and recycling, and planning.
3. We aim to transform the way we operate as a Council and to improve those areas of the town over which we have direct control, such as our own buildings, operations, and green spaces.

We will achieve these goals through implementing work within the following themes:

1. Helping Hertford to be more sustainable (*GREENER COMMUNITIES*)
2. Enabling more sustainable forms of transport (*WALKING, WHEELING AND CYCLING*)
3. Protecting and enhancing nature and biodiversity (*NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY*)
4. Transforming our own estate and operations (*A GREENER COUNCIL*)

2.3 Themes

Greener Communities

1. Use our Influence to push for more sustainable development and infrastructure decisions at both a County and District level.
2. Provide advice on grants for projects that help deliver this strategy, such as energy efficiency improvements to homes and businesses' potentially saving money for our residents and businesses.
3. Engage with the community about our strategy and provide advice to residents and businesses on how they can reduce their impact on the environment and be more sustainable.

4. Enable members of the community to be greener by supporting initiatives and partnerships that help deliver this strategy.
5. Support the development of the Castle Plus Neighbourhood Plan to improve the sustainability of any new development in the town and to protect and enhance green space and biodiversity.

Walking, Wheeling and Cycling

1. Encourage and support initiatives to encourage active travel – for environmental benefit as well as improved health and wellbeing.
2. Encourage and support projects to improve air quality by reducing traffic and congestion.
3. Encourage and support initiatives to make public spaces safe, accessible and inclusive.

Nature and Biodiversity

1. Protect and enhance our green spaces.
2. Enhance biodiversity in the town with nature-friendly green space and new wildlife habitats.
3. Take action where we can, to improve the quality of our water bodies and increase water efficiency.

A Greener Council

1. Make our buildings and operations more energy efficient and sustainable, showcasing best practice.
2. Develop a Sustainable Procurement policy; implementing high sustainability standards for anything we procure and giving priority to recycled, fairtrade, and locally sourced products.
3. Be mindful of offering environmentally friendly choices through our events by, for example, plant-based food and drink options at Castle events, and sharing via Council communications why these choices are better for the environment and potentially better for health and wellbeing.

3. The Four Themes, Objectives and Actions

This section provides background to our objectives and actions. Full details of actions are in Section 3 - The Action Plan on page 10.

3.1 Greener Communities

Key objectives

- 1. Use our influence to push for more sustainable development and infrastructure decisions at County and District level.**

As a Town Council we are a statutory consultee on planning applications. Our Planning Sub-Committee holds regular meetings and comments on a wide range of applications including larger developments. We will:

- Comment on planning applications according to our planning aspirations for the town and pass our comments to the District Council, especially focusing on issues such as climate change, environmental quality and water policies in the East Herts District Plan 2018.

- Request that new developments provide safe and effective cycle paths that link to pre-existing routes where possible, as well as adequate pathways and walking routes to encourage active travel.
- Contribute to consultations on the new District Plan, and other initiatives such as the Nature recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

2. Provide advice on grants for projects that help deliver this strategy, such as energy efficiency improvements to homes and businesses’ potentially saving money for our residents and businesses.

Making changes to be more energy efficient and sustainable can sometimes be expensive and it can be difficult to know what to do for the best. Community-led renewable energy projects can provide an affordable supply of renewable energy to residents and businesses whilst also giving them more control and potentially saving money in the long run. To support the community:

- We will support green projects and initiatives that align with the outlined strategy through allocation of the Hertford Town Council Community Fund.
- We will work with other agencies such as the District Council to deliver Energy Hubs alongside the Home Energy Support Service, to share reliable advice on environmental grants to residents and businesses. This may include projects to reduce the energy consumption of their homes and buildings.
- We will signpost residents to resources and other available funding that support these projects and provide general support to those wishing to apply for external funding.

3. Engage with the community about our strategy and provide advice to residents and businesses on how they can reduce their impact on the environment and be more sustainable.

All of us as individuals can make a difference. Businesses, community groups and charities also play a vital role in improving the environment. To facilitate this process, we will:

- Increase presence of Energy Hubs and Home Energy Support Service at Town Council events, with support from volunteers, to provide advice and support on home energy efficiency to residents, including its benefits for the environment and the potential for saving money.
- Run events throughout the year that provide information and education about sustainability, energy efficiency and the environment, as well as how these interventions can save people and businesses money. This may be in the form of an annual event day, and/or smaller events throughout the year including clothes swaps and sustainable gardening workshops.
- Engage with young people through schools, youth groups, and local youth councils on environment and sustainability, providing educational resources and seeking youth input on how the strategy is implemented.
- Work with the local library and museum to create displays on the environment with the goal of informing and educating the public – in the most sustainable way possible.

We will work with East Herts District Council (EHDC), Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and the community to reduce litter, encourage recycling and reduce waste on schemes such as HCC Waste Aware, as well as other Cleaner Streets initiative.

4. Enable members of the community to be greener by supporting initiatives and partnerships that help deliver this strategy.

We will support initiatives and partnerships which help residents and businesses to reduce their energy use and carbon footprint, such as group buying schemes that can help to reduce costs for individuals whilst incentivising a wider uptake of sustainable products and technologies.

- We will continue to promote the water bottle Refill scheme, which created water refill stations in cafes and shops in the town, reducing the use of single-use plastic.
- We will continue to support and advise businesses on how to reduce their carbon footprint and adopt more circular business models through our Business Breakfasts scheme.
- We are keen to support group buying schemes for renewable technologies such as solar panels and batteries and sustainable office products. We will investigate if it is feasible to encourage participation in the District Council group buying scheme (the Solar Together scheme) or to establish a scheme specific to Hertford.
- We welcome additional ideas from community members on how we can further collaborate on initiatives and partnerships to create greener communities, such as through green business networks.
- Explore replicating or introducing the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust Wilder Communities initiative in Hertford.

5. Support the development of the Castle Plus Neighbourhood Plan to improve the sustainability of new development in the town and to protect and enhance green space and biodiversity.

Neighbourhood Plans are an important tool for improving the sustainability of new development in a town. They give communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and to influence new development in aspects such as the location of new homes, shops and offices, what new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. They also allow the community to require biodiversity enhancements and the designation of green spaces within new developments.

We will support and facilitate local communities in Hertford, to develop plans for their neighbourhoods that ensure proposals for new developments follow the energy hierarchy, adopt sustainable construction practices, specify low-carbon heating and hot water systems and incorporate on-site renewable energy generation wherever possible, as well as including enhancements to both biodiversity and green spaces.

3.2 Walking, Wheeling and Cycling

Key objectives

1. Encourage and support initiatives to encourage active travel – for environmental benefit as well as improved health and wellbeing.

To reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality and reduce traffic in the town we need to reduce individual car use as much as possible. This means we need to encourage active travel - walking, wheeling and cycling – as much as possible. We plan to:

- Press for and support all initiatives to improve cycle and pedestrian routes. Whilst as a Town Council we do not have direct control over highways, roads and pavements, we will use our position to do our utmost to influence the County Council to make improvements to active travel infrastructure.
- Explore creating a high-quality cycle route between the two train stations in the town (Hertford East and Hertford North) as well as improving and expanding cycle lanes across the

town. We will also support plans to make pathways through Hertford Castle's grounds cycle friendly through the Hertford Castle Greenspace Renewal project.

- Improve wayfinding in the town, so that pedestrian and cycle routes are clearly signposted. This will be in line with Hertford Town Council's Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
- Work with organisations and businesses in the town to promote and encourage cycling, as well as its benefits for the environment and for people's health and wellbeing.

2. Encourage and support projects to improve air quality by reducing traffic and congestion.

We hope that improved active travel facilities will reduce the need to travel by car. This will improve air quality in the town by reducing levels of harmful pollution from cars whilst also reducing traffic and congestion. Better air quality also means less harm to people's health. We plan to:

- Work with partners to seek the installation of Car Park Variable Message Signs (VMS) to assist drivers to find car parking spaces and reduce time spent driving around looking for spaces.
- Reduce idle car engine use through working with schools and local supermarkets, as well as via our communications strategy, to provide information about the impact on air quality.
- Engage with locally operating bus companies and provide clear information about available bus services on event days, as well as making bus timetables easy to access via the Hertford Town Council website.

3. Encourage and support initiatives to make public spaces safe, accessible and inclusive.

We recognise that not everyone is able to travel by foot, bike, scooter or car. So, we plan to:

- Press for improvements to the accessibility and inclusivity of public spaces in the town for those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams/buggies and walking aides.
- Explore how we could create more areas of the town that are segregated from vehicles and better suited to walking and wheeling. This could include working with the highways authority to widen pavements, implement more dropped kerbs and improve surfaces.

3.3 Nature and Biodiversity

Key objectives

1. Protect and enhance our green spaces.

The Town Council directly manages five allotment sites and Hertford Cemetery, sensitively maintains four closed churchyards and maintains and manages Pinehurst Play area (other open spaces in the town are directly managed by the County or District Councils. We have already adopted Greenspace Action Plans for both the Cemetery and the All Saints Churchyard. We plan to:

- Continue to implement these plans and to explore opportunities to protect and enhance our green spaces for the benefit of both nature and people.
- Work with local communities to protect and enhance existing green spaces through the identification and designation of local green space in Neighbourhood Plans.
- Work with local wildlife organisations to identify and map local protected species to ensure that biodiversity protection and enhancement is considered in planning decisions.
- Identify and highlight nature corridors to allow the movement of wild species as set out in the Hertfordshire County Council Nature Recovery Strategy.

2. Enhance biodiversity in the town, including in Council managed greenspaces like Churchyards and allotments, with nature-friendly green space and new wildlife habitats.

The most recent State of Nature report concluded that there has been a 13% decline in the average abundance of wildlife in the UK since the 1970s. We strive for a town that contributes towards restoring and enhancing local biodiversity; this is possible by supporting more nature-friendly green spaces, wildlife habitats, and by creating and protecting nature corridors to allow the movement of wild species. We have already had success in our allotments through interventions such as planting and sensitively managing hedgerows, creating insect hotels and bee friendly spaces, implementing community gardens and orchards, and increasing education around pesticide use with a view to phase out pesticide and herbicide use by April 2025. To continue this success, we plan to:

- Sensitively manage all green spaces and planting under our direct control to enhance biodiversity, by, for example, phasing out pesticide and herbicide use and planting more species that support pollinators in green spaces, hanging baskets and planters in the town where pesticides and herbicides are not being used.
- Create places for new wildlife habitats such as mini rewilding areas, planting wildflower meadows and micro forests through using Miyawaki planting methods. We will also create natural homes for insects, such as log piles, in Council managed greenspaces such as churchyards and allotments.
- Finalise our Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan.
- Support residents, growers and schools to make private gardens, school gardens and allotments more nature-friendly, by providing advice on nature-friendly planting and regenerative agriculture practices.
- Use our position as a statutory consultee on planning applications in the District to ensure that proposals for all new development are assessed with thorough consideration of the natural environment policies in the East Herts District Plan 2018. This includes ensuring that proposals follow the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy and make a net positive contribution to biodiversity and wildlife above the 10% statutory minimum wherever possible.
- Work with local wildlife organisations, Herts Environmental Record Centre and volunteer conservation groups to identify and protect local wildlife, whilst providing more opportunities for members of the community to contribute to conservation and wildlife projects.
- Support work being proposed in the Hertford Castle Greenspace Renewal project that aims to improve natural heritage at Hertford Castle, such as riverbank restoration, wildflower planting and an annual BioBlitz.

3. Take action where we can to improve the quality of our water bodies and increase water efficiency.

As the home of several rivers and chalk streams, water bodies are an important aspect of Hertford town centre's identity, with the confluence of the Lee (Lea), Mimram, Beane and Rib occurring within Hertford. They provide essential habitats for wildlife as well as pleasant and attractive environments for residents. They are in need of cleaning up after many years of pollution. So, we plan to:

- Explore ways that we can restore the quality of our water bodies to good ecological health.
- Support the Charter for Rivers created by River Action UK that proposes solutions to restore rivers and freshwaters to health by 2030. This includes ending raw sewage pollution,

agricultural run-off, preventing harmful chemicals at source, securing water supply and creating safe habitats for wildlife.

- Use our connections with the County and District councils to push for more stringent controls on pollution of water bodies. We will also use our position as a statutory consultee on planning applications to ensure proposals for all new developments in the District are assessed with thorough consideration of the water policies in the East Herts District Plan 2018.
- Help residents, businesses and schools to reduce their water use by working with the local water supplier, Affinity Water, to develop educational resources on water efficiency and to support their Behaviour Change campaigns.
- Work with local wildlife organisations and volunteer conservation groups to develop ways to clean up the local water environment and create safer habitats for wildlife.
- Explore ways to increase water efficiency, such as using self-watering hanging baskets and rainwater harvesting where appropriate.

3.4 A Greener Council

Key objectives

1. Make our buildings and operations more energy efficient and sustainable, showcasing good practice.

We plan to:

(A) Complete our Eco Audit

In 2021 we commissioned an Eco-Audit (Appendix 1) which made recommendations on how to make our buildings and operations more energy efficient and sustainable. As outlined in the 2024 Eco-Audit Update Report (Appendix 2) we have implemented 80% of them including:

- Installing loft insulation at the Castle and Seed Warehouse.
- Replacing 90% of all lights in the Town Council Offices with LEDs.
- Replacing the Castle's old heating system with infra-red heating, significantly decreasing energy consumption.

(B) Continually improve the sustainability of our buildings and operations

We will implement the remaining recommendations of the Eco Audit where possible and additional actions including:

- Working towards an environmental accreditation scheme such as Green Mark
- Continuing to install insulation and draught-proofing measures in all Council owned buildings.
- Switching to low-carbon heating systems such as heat pumps or other infra-red heating where feasible and appropriate.
- Upskill our facilities management staff on energy efficient building management practices by providing training.
- Work with Councillors and staff to ensure that best practice is followed where possible through training, workshops and regular internal communications on sustainable practices.

2. Develop a Sustainable Procurement policy

We know that often the biggest environmental impact comes not from our own activities but from the goods and services we purchase. So, we plan to:

- Develop a Sustainable Procurement Policy that ensures any products we purchase are sustainably and responsibly sourced. Locally sourced products and those made from recycled or reused materials will be prioritised.
- Ensure our suppliers are aligned with our Sustainable Procurement Policy and that their approach to sustainable and responsible procurement is detailed in contracts.
- Engage with our suppliers to help them develop more sustainable practices, such as adopting reusable packaging.

3. Be mindful of offering environmentally friendly choices through our events by, for example, plant-based food and drink options at Castle events, and sharing via Council communications why these choices are better for the environment and potentially better for health and wellbeing.

We hope to lead by example by adopting the highest environmental standards and sharing good practice. More sustainable choices don't have to be more expensive or less enjoyable – in fact, they can and should be the opposite! So, we plan to:

- Provide healthier, more high-quality plant-based food options at our events, as well as prioritising producers and suppliers that align with our sustainability goals.
- Champion and support food and drink providers that adopt innovative sustainable practices.
- Develop a communication, engagement and marketing strategy that informs residents and businesses about the improvements we are making, as well as providing advice and support on sustainable living practices with a goal of influencing positive behavioural change.

4. A Role for Everyone

We recognise that in order to achieve our ambitious environmental objectives, everyone has an important role to play.

At Hertford Town Council,

- we will help our staff to develop the right skills, capabilities and tools to contribute to achieving our goals
- we will embed sustainability and environmental concerns into our organisational culture, with all staff taking an active role.
- we will hold ourselves to account on our goals and targets by monitoring progress on our action plan and publishing annual reports.

In the community,

- We will work collaboratively with residents, businesses, schools and community groups to ensure we can achieve our wider objectives for the town.
- Residents are invited to submit ideas for projects or initiatives that the Council could support or champion either through grants or through our communications.
- A selection of case studies are provided in Appendix 3 below to demonstrate how local communities and councils can work together effectively to address the climate and ecological crises.

5. Appendix

6.1 Appendix 1: Eco Audit 2021

3 Acorns (2021) *Eco Audit for Hertford Town Council*. Accessed via:

<https://hertford.gov.uk/uploads/cms/document/295/hertford-town-council-eco-audit-report-document.pdf>

6.2 Appendix 2: Eco Audit Update 2024

3 Acorns (2024) *Eco- Audit Update Report for Hertford Town Council*. Accessed Via:

<https://www.hertford.gov.uk/uploads/cms/document/485/hertford-town-council-3-acorns-eco-audit-update-2024-document.pdf>

6.3 Appendix 3: *Best practice case studies of collaborative community and council action*

1. [Forest of Dean Climate Action Partnership \(FODCAP\)](#) is a diverse partnership of local communities, businesses and organisations who want urgent and fair climate action. It aims to connect, inspire and enable groups and organisations to take effective action on climate change.
2. [Entrust](#) is a joint venture between [Capita and Staffordshire County Council](#) to develop strategic decarbonisation plans with schools across Staffordshire. The team undertook holistic survey of the schools and worked with school leaders to deliver energy efficiency improvements.
3. [Hampshire County Council Climate Change Expert Stakeholder Forum](#) is made up of approximately 20 key organisations that have a significant role in climate change in Hampshire. The Forum was established to help challenge and inform the County Council's approach and to bring together experts to help with engagement and delivery of actions across Hampshire.
4. [Totnes Climate Hub](#) was founded in response to Totnes Town Council declaring a Climate & Ecological Emergency in 2018. The Hub is run by volunteers and hosts meetings and events to help local residents take action on the climate and ecological emergency.
5. [Act for Ealing Climate Action Hub](#) is a central hub for anyone interested in environmental action in Ealing. It was created by Ealing residents with support from the council to boost local action to combat climate change and to restore nature and biodiversity.