

Meeting date: 27th July 2021
Report to: Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing



Subject/report title: Solihull's Draft NZAP

Report from: Alan Brown – Assistant Director Highways & Environment

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Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: Not Applicable

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for public consultation on Solihull's Draft Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP). It includes information on the content of the Draft NZAP and next steps.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1 The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing is asked to:
- a. Consider the Draft NZAP and Executive Summary contained in Appendices A and B;
 - b. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Highways & Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing, to approve any final amendments to the Draft NZAP and Executive Summary prior to public consultation;
 - c. Approve public consultation on the Draft NZAP and Executive Summary.

3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 The purpose of developing the NZAP (NZAP) is to create a prioritised plan that

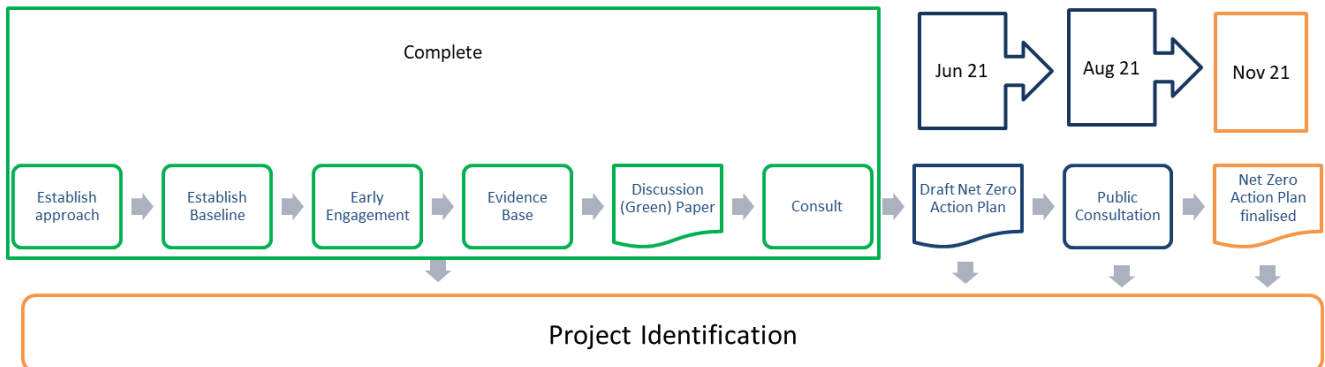
identifies actions to support the Borough's decarbonisation and aim to be net zero by 2041.

- 3.2 The NZAP will help Solihull rise to the challenge of decarbonisation, whilst helping maximise the co-benefits from reducing CO₂ emissions. These benefits are wide-ranging and include better air quality, improved natural environment, more comfortable homes, cost savings and new green jobs.
- 3.3 The Council will monitor progress on its individual decarbonisation actions as listed in the NZAP.

Work to Date

- 3.4 In February 2021, a Green Paper was considered by Full Cabinet. The Green Paper set out the high level interventions required to help the Borough move towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions. It also provided the evidence base that was used to create the Draft NZAP.
- 3.5 Following Cabinet approval, a public consultation was carried out to assist the development of the NZAP. Key consultation activities to date have included:
 - Virtual Members workshop (November 2020).
 - 6 week public consultation (February to March 2021).
 - Solihull's Climate Change Commission¹ discussed the Green Paper and provided detailed feedback (April 21).
 - A two-day innovation tournament involving, key Council and external stakeholders, was held (May 2021). This tournament sought to identify decarbonisation projects which could support Solihull's Net Zero journey.
- 3.6 There is already a significant amount of work underway across the Council which links to Solihull's net zero journey. This ongoing work is included within the draft NZAP.
- 3.7 The NZAP is the driving force of the Low Carbon Energy Framework (LCEF).
- 3.8 The NZAP's primary purpose is to help deliver the Council Plan priority of "Actioning our Climate Declaration". It also has far reaching linkages with other important policy areas, including improving air quality, supporting the economic recovery and enhancing Solihull's natural environment.
- 3.9 The process for developing the NZAP is outlined below:

¹ Solihull's Climate Change Commission (SCCC) is an independent group of experts appointed to act in a critical friend role to consider Climate Change Prospectus actions. The SCCC reports to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Housing.



3.10 The Draft NZAP is an expression of the actions Solihull will need to consider to help meet its aspiration of being a net zero Borough by 2041. The NZAP is a key element in planning the Council’s response to the Climate Emergency.

3.11 The NZAP helps develop a priority list of actions to take forward, define which stakeholders in the Borough need to be engaged, and focus resourcing and funding towards those actions with the greatest positive impacts.

3.12 The Draft NZAP action plan seeks to:

- Identify actions the Council can take to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the Borough;
- Estimate the carbon savings, costs or payback and co-benefits associated with implementing the individual actions;
- Develop a method of prioritising the actions needed to enable the net zero transition.

3.13 The Draft NZAP highlights actions that are within the Council’s capacity to deliver directly or influence and support others to deliver. It is important to acknowledge that, whilst the Council needs to play a key part in the transition, it is one of many stakeholders that will need to make the required changes.

3.14 The Council will need to:

- Enable, facilitate and encourage others to take action to decarbonise, e.g. Solihull residents and businesses;

- Work with key regional and national stakeholders such as the WMCA, Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and national government;
- Ensure net zero carbon is incorporated into local policies and strategies;
- Lead by example in decarbonisation of the Council's own operations.

3.15 In developing the NZAP, key enablers have been identified that are required to facilitate climate action across the Borough:

- **Policy and Governance.** Local and National policy changes can have a significant impact on the success of the actions outlined in the NZAP;
- **Resource and Leadership.** In order to ensure there is ownership of actions and that progress is monitored, there will need to be resources dedicated to deliver and lead in all sectors identified in the Plan;
- **Finance.** Actions will require varying degrees of financing and the Council will need to consider new and alternative financing models;
- **Education and Engagement.** Maintaining targeted and effective engagement to support behaviour change will be a crucial factor in ensuring that the plan is delivered.

3.16 As there are a large number of actions within the NZAP, it is important to both sequence and prioritise the actions. The sequencing of actions ensures that the enabling actions are carried out before their respectively dependent actions. In addition, actions have been prioritised in terms of their:

- **Cost and payback.** Potential relative cost and financial payback of actions;
- **Carbon savings.** Potential amount of greenhouse gas emissions reduced or avoided;
- **Co-benefits.** Potential benefits that are additional to 'carbon saved' and 'cost benefit'. The main additional benefits selected as the main priority areas are 'inclusive growth', 'environmental' and 'health' benefits.

The prioritisation process is used to identify the priority or "key" actions

Narrative on the Draft Actions

3.17 The Net Zero Action Plan contains 52 goals and 177 actions of which 63 have an element of communication and engagement, 58 involve implementation, 38 involve research and 18 are directly linked to policy and strategy (actions can sit within more than one category). This shows the breadth of actions required and the need to include actions that relate to all aspects of decarbonisation including behaviour change and technology.

3.18 The actions within the NZAP have also been categorised by the *timescale*. They are

split by: immediate / short term actions (within the next two years), medium term actions (3-6 years) and long term actions (7 years onwards). Within the plan, there are 100 immediate / short term actions, 48 medium term actions and 29 long term actions.

3.19 Actions are categorised into strategic actions, indirect (or enabling) and direct actions. Strategic actions (57 actions) are actions that ensure stakeholders have the best possible operational, administrative, and governance practices in place to support Solihull's net zero journey. Indirect or enabling actions (90 actions) are specific supporting actions that can facilitate and underpin the development of carbon saving actions, but do not lead to direct carbon reductions. Direct actions (30 actions) lead directly to reduced carbon emissions, such as reduced consumption, improved efficiency, or more renewable energy supply.

3.20 Following on from the Green Paper, actions have also been grouped by *sector* into Buildings (Domestic and Non-Domestic), Transport, Waste and Industry, Natural Environment and Energy Supply. An additional category of 'Council Engagement' has also been added.

3.21 A summary of the actions by *sector* is included in the following table:

Sector	Description of actions	Number of goals and actions	Council's role	Example actions
Buildings	Includes actions across non-domestic and domestic building types	13 goals, 47 actions, including 26 key actions	Communication & Engagement, 42% of actions	Extend Town Centre Energy Network to fulfil its maximum viability to connecting supply to non-domestic buildings in the Town Centre
Transport	Includes actions across active travel, electric vehicle uptake, public transport and commercial journeys	13 goals, 48 actions, including 23 key actions	Communication & Engagement, 32%. Implementation, 30% of actions	Identify sites for EV infrastructure through consultation and strategic assessment
Waste	Includes reducing waste and increasing recycling	6 goals, 22 actions	Implementation, 48% of actions	Support community groups to develop sharing/circular economy e.g. repair café, library of things, community fridges
Industry	Includes advancing low carbon technologies and industry support	2 goals, 6 actions	Implementation, 50% of actions	Refresh of the Borough's Economic Growth Vision and Strategy to put Solihull on the map for investment in low carbon technologies
Natural Environment	Includes actions relating to tree coverage, land use management and offsetting	7 goals, 28 actions, including 6 key actions	Communication & Engagement, 37% of actions	Engage with private landowners to identify opportunities for tree and hedge planting through 'Planting Our Future'
Energy Supply	Includes actions on understanding feasibility of energy infrastructure and installations	6 goals, 15 actions, including 5 key actions	Research & Design, 42% of actions	Consult with residents on the benefits of installing solar panels and the potential opportunities from initiatives like solar streets

Council Engagement	Includes key actions for SMBC to deliver relating to procurement and Council behavior change	5 goals, 11, including 5 key actions	Implementation, 78% of actions	Deliver 'carbon literacy training', or a similar educational programme, to all Council staff & Members and incorporate this training into the 'on-boarding' process.
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Proposed Next Steps

3.22 The next steps for the Council include:

- Confirming priority action areas, given that the Council's role and ability to influence each action varies greatly;
- Allocating and seeking funding/ financing for additional resources needed to implement the NZAP;
- Identifying areas of opportunity to work with WMCA and GBSLEP as well as other local authorities;
- Defining accountability and governance structures for key actions and agreeing the process to monitor progress;
- Continuing communication of action progress to external stakeholders such as residents and businesses.

3.23 To ensure continued engagement a consultation on the Draft NZAP is proposed. The aims of this consultation are to:

- Gain feedback on the Draft NZAP to incorporate into the final Plan;
- Raise awareness of the Council's efforts to decarbonise the Borough and the timescales for doing so;
- Work with key stakeholders and partners to identify areas of collaboration and alignment of communications to strengthen messages;
- Work closely with elected Members to gather feedback and shape the Action Plan;

3.24 Communication will be through a variety of channels including: emails, direct discussions with key stakeholders, news releases, social media, 'Stay Connected' email bulletin, the Net Zero Solihull microsite, webinars and roadshow events.

3.25 Solihull's net zero microsite www.netzerosolihull.co.uk has been established to be a hub for Borough decarbonisation activity. This site will evolve throughout the development and implementation of the action plan.

3.26 The COVID-19 pandemic prevented face to face consultation on the Net Zero Green Paper. Given the anticipated changes to restrictions it is hoped that a hybrid approach that incorporates some face to face activity will be possible. As part of this

consultation process, the following community activities are proposed:

Event 1	Mell Square
Event 2	Shirley Park (Council Event 'Wild World Heroes')
Event 3	Chelmsley Wood (Asda Carpark)
Webinar 1	Business focus
Event 4	Solihull Carnival (Tudor Grange Park)
Webinar 2	Resident focus
Event 5	Dorridge Day (Dorridge Park)

3.27 In addition to the above events, the Council acknowledges the importance of engaging with young people on this agenda. Focussed engagement on this agenda is currently planned with Young People and Schools. Options that the Council is investigating include:

- InterClimate Network (ICN) Conference. This event is aimed at secondary school aged young people. It involves a mini climate change conference based on the international 'COP26' Climate Change Conference;
- ICN's Climate Action network meeting with secondary school teachers is an opportunity to discuss the involvement of secondary school pupils in the NZAP;
- The Sustainable Schools Conference for teachers and school staff will take place online in the autumn term. The plan is for Session 1 of the Conference to focus on Net Zero;
- Applications for Greener Solihull School Awards will be submitted at the end of the summer term. It is expected to see evidence of schools' Net Zero activities with pupils that have taken place over the school year. It is planned to share the best practice from this activity at the Sustainable Schools Conference;
- Identify events taking place for college age young people in the autumn term where students can be involved in the consultation. Such events might include 'fresher's fairs', new student conferences, etc.;
- Through the primary school 'eco-leader' network, teachers can be asked to involve pupils in consultation activities.

3.28 Businesses and other organisations within the Borough have a vital role to play in decarbonisation. Consultation with Solihull's business community and other employers activities will include a mix of business –focussed workshops, engagement via the local business led 'Solihull Sustainability Visioning Group' (SSVG), utilising existing events such as the Chamber of Commerce's Net Zero event and reaching out to strategic organisations.

3.29 During the consultation window, advice will be sought from Solihull's Climate Change Commission on the Draft NZAP.

A Member's Workshop is planned for 29th September 2021, providing an opportunity

to discuss the Draft NZAP and provide direct feedback. This will be supplemented by a dedicated Members survey;

3.30 The NZAP will be finalised created after public consultation and it is anticipated it will be considered at the November meeting of Cabinet, which aligns with COP 26.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

Alternative options include:

- Not consulting on the Draft NZAP;
- Undertaking limited consultation on the Draft NZAP.

4.1 Without consultation the plan would be created in isolation. This option was rejected as it would not allow the NZAP to be appropriately refined and would not gain ‘buy-in’ from required stakeholders.

4.2 If consultation is limited to certain stakeholders then this may result in an unbalanced portfolio of actions within the NZAP.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

5.1 Continued consultation on the NZAP is recommended with an appropriately wide range of stakeholders. Such consultation will help facilitate the discussion around what net zero might be like for Solihull and also raise awareness of the scale and speed of change required to meet the Council’s aspirations.

6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revitalising our towns and local centres. 2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2. 3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing. 	<p>The Low Carbon Energy Framework (LCEF) is part of the Council’s UK Central Programme. The related NZAP will look to support green recovery from COVID and will look to maximise the co-benefits of decarbonising the Borough which may include far reaching economic benefits.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Enhance Solihull’s natural environment. 5. Improve Solihull’s air quality. 6. Reduce Solihull’s net carbon emissions. 	<p>The purpose of this project is to allow Solihull to take a strategic approach to decarbonisation of the Borough. It will allow Solihull to move towards net zero carbon in an effective and planned manner.</p> <p>The NZAP seeks to identify ways to</p>

	maximise co-benefits, including improvements to air quality and the natural environment.
<p>People and Communities:</p> <p>7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>8. Enable communities to thrive.</p> <p>9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs.</p>	<p>One of the core principles of the Low Carbon Energy Framework is to decarbonise the Borough without 'leaving anyone behind'. As such, a key consideration in developing the NZAP is inclusive growth and maximising the benefits of decarbonisation to Solihull's communities.</p>

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

- 6.2.1 A communications plan has been developed. Details of the overarching approach to engagement are set out in the main body of the report.
- 6.2.2 Progress on the wider Low Carbon Energy Framework, including the NZAP, was considered by the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board in November 2020. The Draft NZAP will be considered by Scrutiny Board in September 2021.

6.3 Financial implications:

- 6.3.1 The NZAP (NZAP) is being developed as part of the Low Carbon Energy Framework which is being progressed using funding secured from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), with up to £625,000 having been unlocked to support its development.
- 6.3.2 There are no immediate financial implications arising from the proposed consultation exercise, however potential future projects and actions within the NZAP (NZAP) will likely require additional resources to deliver. Funding and financing of these projects and actions will be addressed during the development of the plan and the wider Low Carbon Energy Framework, including the defining of potential funding sources and financial mechanisms for delivery. Any financial implications arising from such funding and delivery will be considered and managed on a case by case basis.

6.4 Legal implications:

- 6.4.1 None directly arising from this report.

6.5 Risk implications:

- 6.5.1 A risk register has been developed and is maintained in accordance with the UK Central Project Management Framework. Key risks for this project include: lack of buy in from key stakeholders and the NZAP not being adequately aligned with government or WMCA policy and strategy. Mitigations for these key risks include developing and delivery of a communications plan and continued close engagement with WMCA and to continue to keep abreast of emerging government policy via officer knowledge

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 One of the key considerations for the NZAP to be most effective is to ensure that it supports inclusive growth: enabling a just transition to net zero ensuring that “we leave no one behind”.

6.6.2 A Fair Treatment Assessment will be undertaken to inform the final NZAP.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix A; Draft NZAP Executive Summary

7.2 Appendix B; Draft NZAP

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 Background papers to the NZAP Green Paper are referenced within the document.

9. List of other relevant documents

9.1 N/A