

Appendix B - Transition to Net Zero Strategy

Public Consultation

1. Introduction

A Transition to Net Zero strategy, was written after Members of the Climate Biodiversity Cabinet Panel requested a robust standalone climate change strategy document. This strategy replaces the old one and is more aligned with a new corporate priority, 'Action on Climate'. It supports all four objectives within that priority and sets out an overall vision for the borough". The subsequent Climate Action Plan sets out approximately 100 actions required to support the delivery of this strategy.

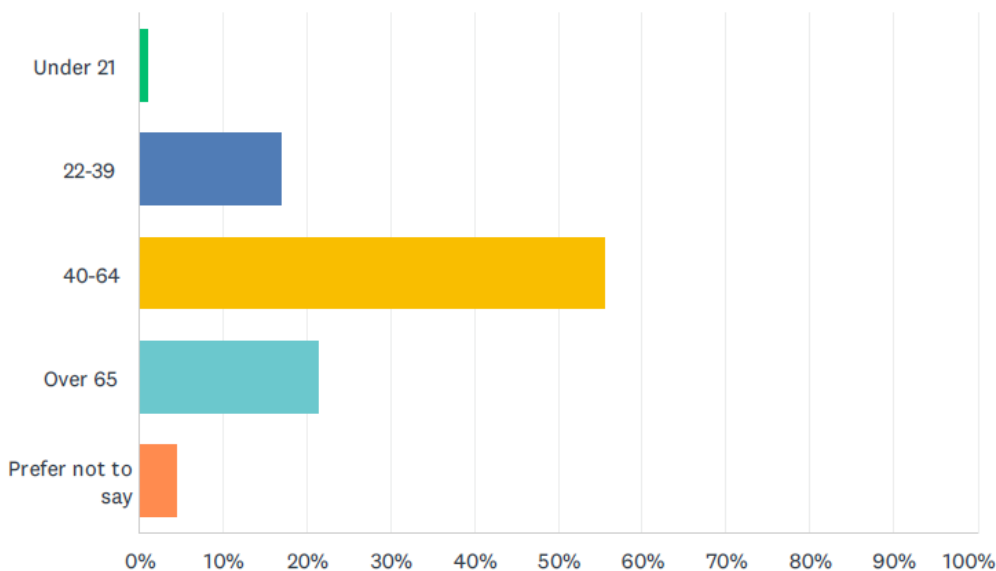
After Members approved the Transition to Net Zero Strategy at the Climate Biodiversity Cabinet Panel on Tuesday 10th July 2024, it was later released for public consultation for a six-week period, closing on 11th October.

This report collates all the responses, outlines the key findings from the consultation and recommends next steps.

There were 88 responses in total.

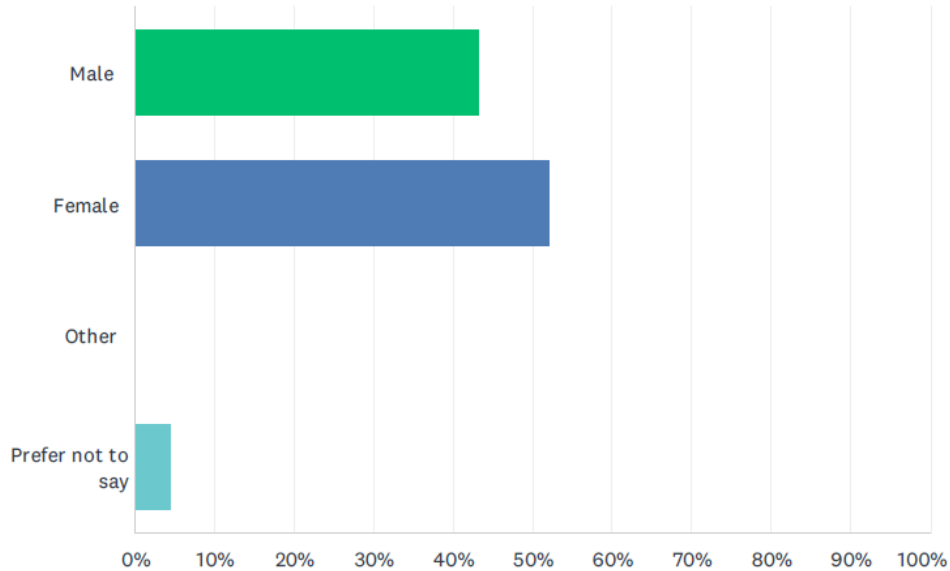
2. What age category do you fall within?

The majority of respondents were aged between 40 and 64 (56%), followed by over 65 (22%), 22-38 (17%), 4% preferred to not say and 1% was under 21.



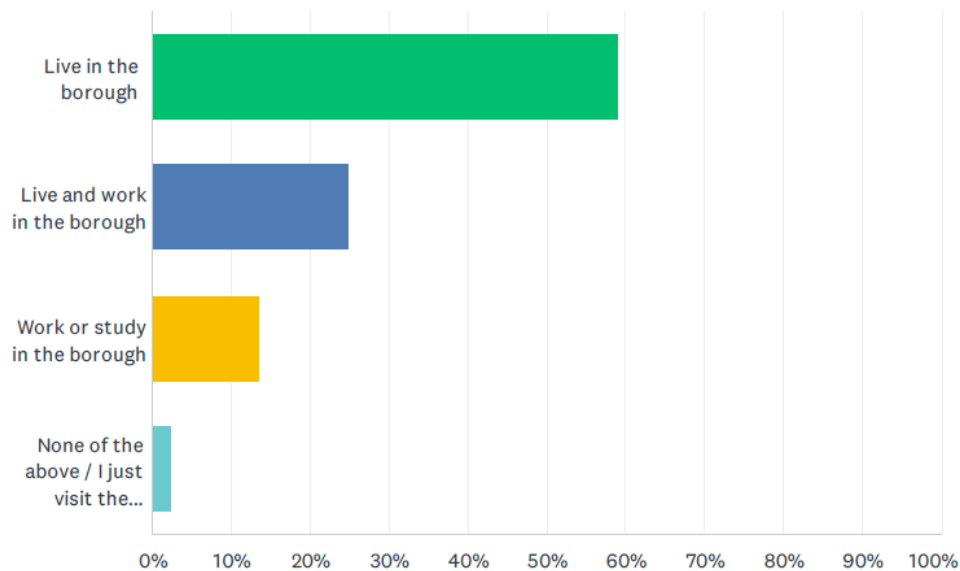
3. How do you identify?

52% of respondents were female, whilst 43% were male and 5% preferred not to say.



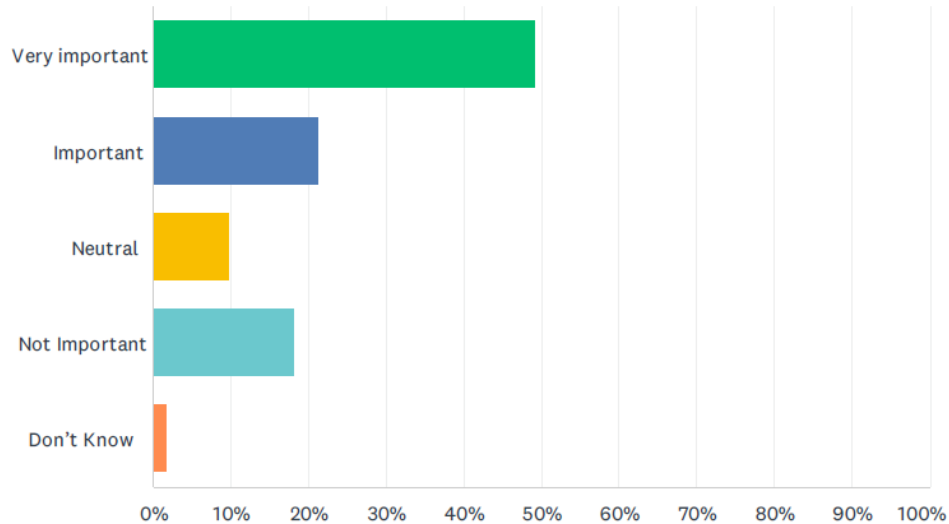
4. Which of the below describes you best?

The majority of respondents (59%) live in the borough, 25% live and work in the borough, 14% work or study in the borough and 2% do neither, but visit the borough.



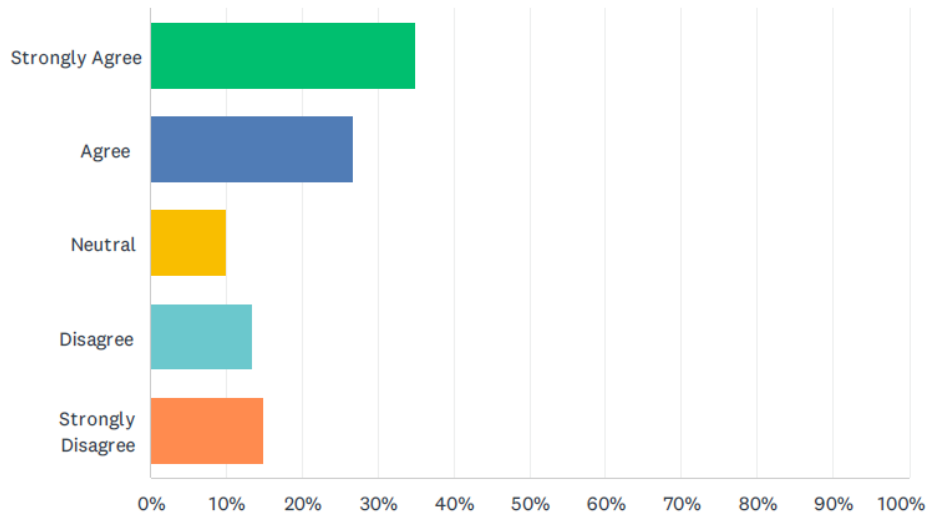
5. How important is it to you that we address climate change as a council and as a borough?

The majority of respondents said that addressing climate change as a council and as a borough is very important to them (49%), followed by important (21%), not important (18%), neutral (10%) and 2% said they didn't know.



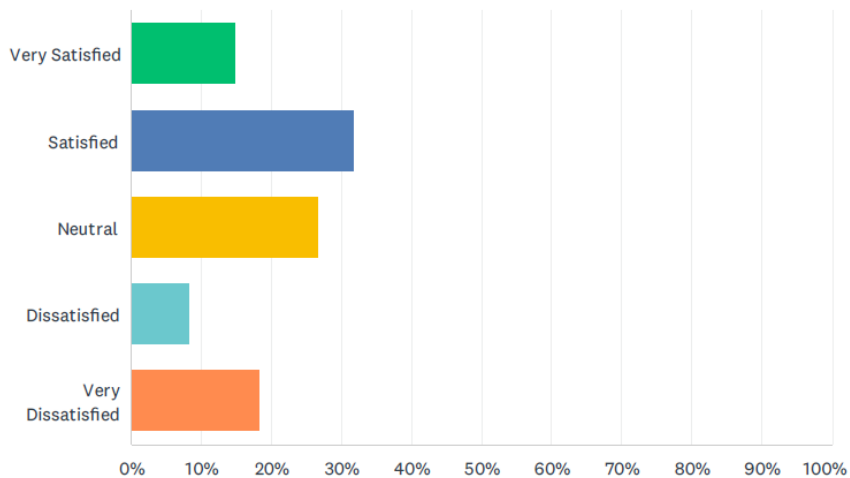
6. To what extent do you agree with this statement “The Council’s Transition to Net Zero Strategy will have a positive impact on Welwyn Hatfield Borough”.

35% of respondents said that they strongly agree with the statement “The Council’s Transition to Net Zero Strategy will have a positive impact on Welwyn Hatfield Borough”. 27% agreed with the statement, 15% strongly disagreed, 13% disagreed and 10% were neutral.



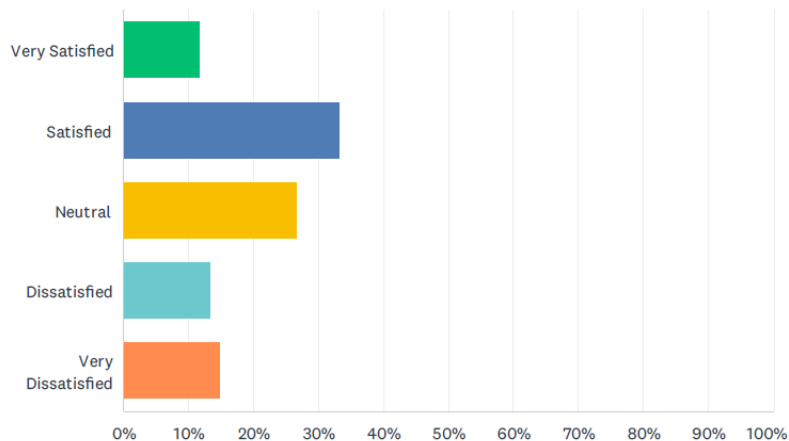
7. To what extent are you satisfied that we are addressing the right issues within the Transition to Net Zero Strategy?

32% of respondents said they were satisfied that we are addressing the right issues within the strategy. 27% were neutral, 18% were very dissatisfied, 15% were very satisfied and 8% were dissatisfied.



8. To what extent are you satisfied that the aims and targets listed in the Strategy are appropriate and achievable?

33% of respondents said they were satisfied that the aims and targets listed in the strategy are appropriate and achievable, 27% were neutral, 15% were very dissatisfied, 13% dissatisfied and 12% very satisfied.



9. Additional impact areas/themes that respondents think we should consider.

The following comments were provided by respondents when asked what additional impact areas/themes should be considered in the Strategy.

<p>Old gas boilers should be replaced in council housing and other council buildings with environmentally friendly heating.</p> <p>More cycling infrastructure is needed. A cycle way is needed from Welwyn village to Digswell.</p>
<p>I'm not convinced this strategy assures me there's a culture change in local govt to show that this really is important or relevant to everyday business in wel-hat. it feels like a cautious strategy, with piecemeal, incremental progress at its heart. maybe that's a good thing- in that it's achievable and feels like it won't trip over political or culture wars hurdles. But equally it doesn't feel ambitious or transformative. It doesn't embed nature-positive action at the centre of everything. It doesn't centre active travel, better footpaths, greening schools, verges and public amenities. Nature-positive development is 'encouraged', and you'll 'aim' to develop design briefs. that's not enough. include net zero & emissions inequalities - and indicate how you'll help the areas most impacted by poor air quality, heat stress, flooding, poor access to nature-rich green space and accessible travel options. There's space in the strategy document to tell residents to only half fill the kettle, but nothing on agriculture or industry, or mineral extra</p>
<p>I think there should be focus on making homes as energy efficient as possible, and as a borough we should protect, sustain and develop our green and wooded spaces - we are a garden city after all, and this is our heritage which we should protect</p>
<p>The whole report is based on a false premise. The only change in climate that has occurred is an increase in temperature. The IPCC finds no evidence of increased storminess, flooding or droughts. There is no scientific proof that manmade CO2 is responsible for most or all of the warming. It is all just models which have consistently failed to predict temperature changes with any accuracy (they all predict greater increases than have been observed). I have read the IPCC technical reports, not just the summary for policy makers which contains misleading statements.</p>
<p>By ripping up viable farmland used in food production to lay solar farm is completely fool hardy in an area that has little sun for more than 5 months of the year.</p>
<p>Enterprise Car Clubs) car share to bring in for all new development. After speaking to the developers at St Christopher's in Hatfield, they were open to expand / introduce an operation in this area, and would like to accommodate a car club as part of their development at that site. Someone like</p>

<p>Enterprise could accept some funds to purchase an additional car club vehicle for the town which could be used on a pay-as-you-go basis by car club members. If it is feasible, we would like to offer all of our new residents a free membership for a time and would make some space for a car-club only parking space on the site.</p> <p>This would benefit new residents on our site, but also potentially neighbours to the scheme.</p>
<p>Encourage use of renewables on a larger scale than just householder level. Brown field development sites and rooftop installations for commercial developments as well as suitable greenfield sites for solar farms.</p>
<p>There are very few empirical targets in the strategy and none of them relate to net zero emissions.</p>
<p>The impact of cars is huge in the borough. The movement of shops out of local shopping centres into large retail parks that can only be accessed by car is not moving towards net zero. A large percentage of households have multiple cars and this should be discouraged</p>
<p>Wake me up when China and India are net zero</p>
<p>WHDC will do what they always do, waste money on vanity projects</p>
<p>If people are that worried then go to China first and stop them and the USA and once they are sorted maybe then we start at home this is just another con to hit the working class tax payers yet again</p>
<p>Sustainable food from local farmers</p>
<p>Recycling for houses communal facilities could be improved</p>
<p>It is fantastic that the new administration is taking this issue so seriously and has produced this strategy report which is a great deal more user friendly, inclusive and wide reaching than what came previously. Thank you to everyone involved. If there is anything missing it is more information about pollution which is key to the ecological crisis and the health of the nation and the future of the planet. It would be good to know that this was being taken seriously. Air pollution in WH is bad. Specific planting programmes would be good, encouraging people not to idle in their cars, something about wood burning stoves which unbelievably are still being fitted, plus the huge issue of plastic pollution (including cigarette ends) etc.</p> <p>I also think that nearly 40% of the people in your survey were not concerned about climate change. What more can you do to reach out and educate them if anything? One common attitude is that it is not worth doing anything locally because of China! How can this be addressed. It would also be great if people feel that as a council you are lobbying our MP and central government to act more. It is great to have suggestions about what individuals can do but the key to net zero is leadership and action from the centre. I also feel there is not enough emphasis on how measures will make all our lives better. Yes, we want to achieve net zero but we want to really emphasise that most of the measures along the way should make our lives better. The strategy does say this but I feel as though it should be shouted from the beginning.</p> <p>I know the Strategy is huge already and feel that I am nit picking now. Thanks for doing such a great job.</p>
<p>Have you considered an 'adopt a verge' scheme? Schools, businesses, local communities, individuals could take responsibility for a verge and be given advice and support in creating a space to encourage biodiversity by planting flowers or fruit/veg. Businesses and schools could include a small plaque/signage to advertise themselves.</p> <p>Vancouver has regulations in place whereby residents are responsible for maintaining their front gardens and verges to a set standard. That may be a challenging change for a lot of people but offering up the opportunity and support for people to take responsibility could help. It can in still pride and a feeling of community, as well as improving the environment.</p> <p>More communal fruit and veg plants would also be good, both for the environment and for families who are struggling with the cost of living and buying healthy foods.</p>
<p>Need do more to reduce transport emissions by, for example, encouraging businesses to reduce car use and parking demand pressures;</p> <p>ensuring that planning decisions on developments encourage reductions in transport use and ensure that each development pays fully for transport infrastructure (for increased road use that realistically will arise in spite of visionary wishes).</p> <p>Ensure that all developments pay fully their CIL for their infrastructure impacts (in terms of requirements) and costs - including for transport above plus for water supply and sewage treatment.</p>

Ensure and incentivise residents at new housing to achieve target water consumption (110 litres per person per day) by working with Affinity so that they increase water charges if consumption is higher than the target with the increased revenue used to support social tariff and water saving work.

LPA to implement increased planning charges on new developments (in line with MHCLG's consultation on NPPF reforms) to assess properly new developments (eg infrastructure impacts, costs and CIL payments) – including for HCC Ecology to be able to police properly Biodiversity Net Gain proposals.

Secure funding for renewable energy and energy saving projects and improve procurement and contracting for them. In 2012 the Mill Green Renewable energy Trust developed a viable Archimedean screw to install as part of the renewal of the sluice for the mill. This could have been generating electricity for 9 homes, saving 9t CO₂e pa or 350T over the 40 year life and yielding £9k and payback in 14 years (or 5% real return on the 100k capital costs). But Contractor for the sluice went over budget and refused to reduce them, so WHBC abandoned the Archimedean screw. WHBC then sacked the contractor and found a replacement who did the work within budget so that WHBC could have afforded the Archimedean screw that could now be operating and generating real benefits. Sorry tale. Now too late for such an initiative. But shows need for more efficient procurement and costing.

More work with schools and also with WHBC Youth Council

I do not wish to pay for net zero schemes which will make us poorer and colder

Welwyn Jungle City

Insulate all council buildings and make as carbon neutral as possible

Encourage sustainable travel from employees

Encourage local businesses to become carbon neutral maybe with incentives to do so (reduced business rates for example)

Encourage local community energy projects with more information and incentives

Insulate all council housing and install solar, electric heating systems and rainwater harvesting

More sustainable travel - electric buses, cycle paths which join up and are safe, clear pavements of overgrown vegetation to make walking safer, car share schemes, electric car hire schemes

Encouraging training for people in sustainable industries

Ensure all new housing projects are carbon neutral, with solar, heat pumps, rainwater harvesting and nature-friendly gardens and nest boxes etc. More information on why community decarbonising is a good thing - might cost a bit more in the short term but eventually we all benefit - better and cheaper transport, better air quality, cheaper energy, access to green spaces for mental health and wellbeing

First and foremost making sure all Council buildings and centres are energy efficient and carbon neutral. Encouraging sustainable travel to work for staff. Hoping you are also already implementing

More and better public transport

More cycle lanes

More information and help for insulating homes and energy efficiency - installing solar and heat pumps

Phase out pesticides in the borough

More flood prevention schemes based on nature solutions

Car sharing schemes. More help and information about Community renewable energy schemes

Building new houses to the highest environmental standards with good insulation, heat pumps, solar panels, rainwater harvesting and nature friendly gardens and nest boxes Encouraging local businesses to become carbon neutral maybe by offering incentives

Encourage and prioritise sustainable planning applications

More public transport, some creative thinking and action on getting around without personal car ownership.

With disappearing industry we will only have housing stock. Everyone will be travelling out of the area which seems wrong way round.

2050 is too late, we need to act faster

How much is this going cost council taxpayers who pay enough in these hard times

10. Other ideas provided by respondents to help make Welwyn Hatfield a net zero borough by 2050

The following comments were provided by respondents when asked what additional things we could do to ensure Welwyn Hatfield reaches the boroughwide net zero target of 2050.

Remove DIESEL cars from the borough - these are filthy vehicles and contribute significantly to particulate matter
I would like to see a total cost benefit analysis for monies spent on climate related goals. How can WHBC spend these monies when social care is in a very poor state and pensioners are having the fuel allowance withdrawn? Surely we should be prioritising our spending there and not on some daft net zero agenda which will have no impact on temperatures this century.
I live in a Grade II listed old farm. Your climate department should first speak to the planning department as I'm not allowed even modern insulation, or double glazing let alone heat pumps and solar panels. Your whole effort is a complete white elephant and a waste of money whilst China is opening a new coal fired power station every 3 weeks. Please concentrate on mending potholes and lowering our vastly over inflated council tax. None of you that sit on the council are qualified for this undertaking, know your limitations.
There should be charging points to charge hybrid and electric vehicles for free, everywhere. Fit solar panels on every roof
All electric buses and better bus routes between local town centres
It would be good to see a simple action plan for reducing emissions from activities under your control
Make it easy for people to install electric charging points for vehicles in their properties. Maybe consider a surcharge for people with more than two cars
Stop wasting my council tax
More EV points, reasonably priced
No - recycling on streets sufficient
Grant for a heat pump
Cancel this stupid idea
Continue advertising discounted items and offering simple advice that will help individuals live more sustainable (water butt's, period products, etc).
Assess scale, nature and location of needs for EV charging esp for HHs without forecourts or garages and reliant on on-street parking. Work with communities with these HHs to devise a realistic EV charging facilities for them. Facilitate use of PV on houses; demonstrate costs, benefits and viability. Clarify position regarding conservation areas or neighbourhood with designations Organise your consultations (as in MHCLG consultations) so that one can save it and discuss with colleagues and then finalise it.
Provide recycling facilities for residential flats
Encourage people to use alternative ways of travelling than the car (walk, cycle, bus, train and aeroplane (trains))
Rubbish!!
Maybe hold a Citizen's Assembly to get residents together and devise good local strategies to de-carbonise their housing, transport and daily living - involve everyone more in the decision-making
Subsidised solar panels for my home.
Be more flexible with the conservation area in WGC in allowing the installation of high performance windows, PV, Heat pumps etc.
Stop putting council tax and rents up and get other countries to join in first before you ask the taxpayers all of this is a farse to up council tax and council rents

11. Respondents who went on to sign up to potential newsletter about climate action updates.

11% of respondents said they would like to stay informed and sign up to any potential newsletter about climate action updates. This adds to the circa 400 people already signed up in response to the Great Big Green Week and the Resident Climate Action Survey.