

Draft Milton Keynes Sustainability Strategy

2025-2050

v 0.1 for consultation



1. Foreword – Cllr Shanika Mahendran, Cabinet Member for Planning and Placemaking

Five years ago, we produced Milton Keynes' first Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan. Great progress has been made since then. The City of Milton Keynes has reduced its emissions by hundreds of thousands of tonnes since 2019. The City Council has cut its own carbon emissions by tens of thousands of tonnes, and we have reduced the City Council's energy consumption by 80% since 2019. For more information on Milton Keynes' climate achievements since publication of the first Sustainability Strategy for Milton Keynes, see the accompanying document.

There is much to celebrate, but we know our work on sustainability is more important now than ever. Milton Keynes has already seen several climate events over the past 5 years, and we know how disruptive and costly these events are to residents, businesses and the city itself.

With the scale of this challenge in mind, we recently established a new approach to sustainability work within Milton Keynes City Council. We have separated and resourced the twin agendas of our sustainability work as an organisation, and that of our role in leading sustainability work in the City itself.

This new Strategy sets out clearly the direction of travel for both the City Council's work, and the work we will undertake in the city. We have revised and simplified the themes of our Sustainability to five main themes: Economy, Energy, Emissions, Environment, and Engagement.

This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Sustainability Action Plans, which outlines in detail the specific actions and work the City Council will undertake. The Sustainability Strategy and Action Plans will be reviewed in 2028, and an annual report of progress will be provided to the Council's Cabinet each January.

We also recognise that climate action goes beyond what we can achieve as one city, and we will continue to work with, and speak with UK government to ensure we have the support and funding that our city needs.

With the City Council responsible for approximately 4% of total emissions in the City, this strategy will ultimately need the organisations and people of Milton Keynes to play their part in assisting the Council to deliver the City's aims. We recognise that the City Council has an important leadership role to play in convening the city to take action to deliver these goals.

We invite everyone in Milton Keynes to be part of the journey with us to make Milton Keynes a world leader in sustainability.

2. Milton Keynes climate in context

What do we mean by net zero for Milton Keynes?

Net Zero is the concept of achieving a zero balance between the Greenhouse gases produced to the amount that are removed from the environment. By 2050, the UK is legally required to have reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 100% from levels in 1990. The more Greenhouse Gases there are in the atmosphere, the warmer the planet becomes.

What are the current Greenhouse Gas emissions for Milton Keynes?

The majority of Greenhouse gas emissions in Milton Keynes currently come from domestic housing (30%) and transport (28%). The commercial and industrial sectors account for another 25%, with waste, and the public sector accounting for the remaining 15%.

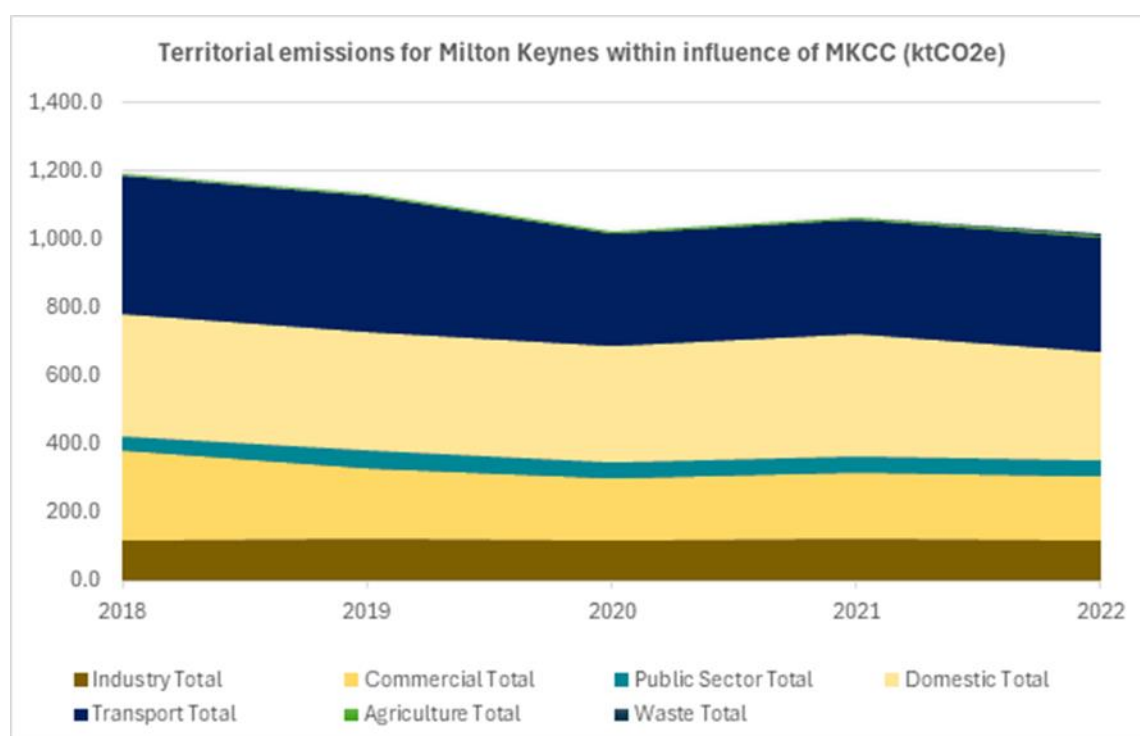


Figure 1: Territorial Emissions for Milton Keynes

The public sector shown in figure one includes emissions from Milton Keynes University Hospital, emergency services, and the City Council. The City Council itself is responsible for just 4% of Greenhouse gas emissions in Milton Keynes, demonstrating the importance of joint working.

What impacts will Climate Change have on the City of Milton Keynes?

Milton Keynes is already feeling the impacts of climate change, from the heatwave in July 2022, to more recent surface water and fluvial flooding across the city.

Local climate projections shown in the graph below from the Met Office show how our summer temperatures are likely to increase relevant to the three future global warming scenarios (1.5°C, 2°C and 3.5°C). The IPCC, or Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, has identified 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming as a crucial threshold. This is because, according to the IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, even this level of warming can lead to significant risks for health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth. We are already experiencing air temperatures exceeding 1.5C of warming that are projected to be normalised by 2050. Climate Change will affect everyone in Milton Keynes.

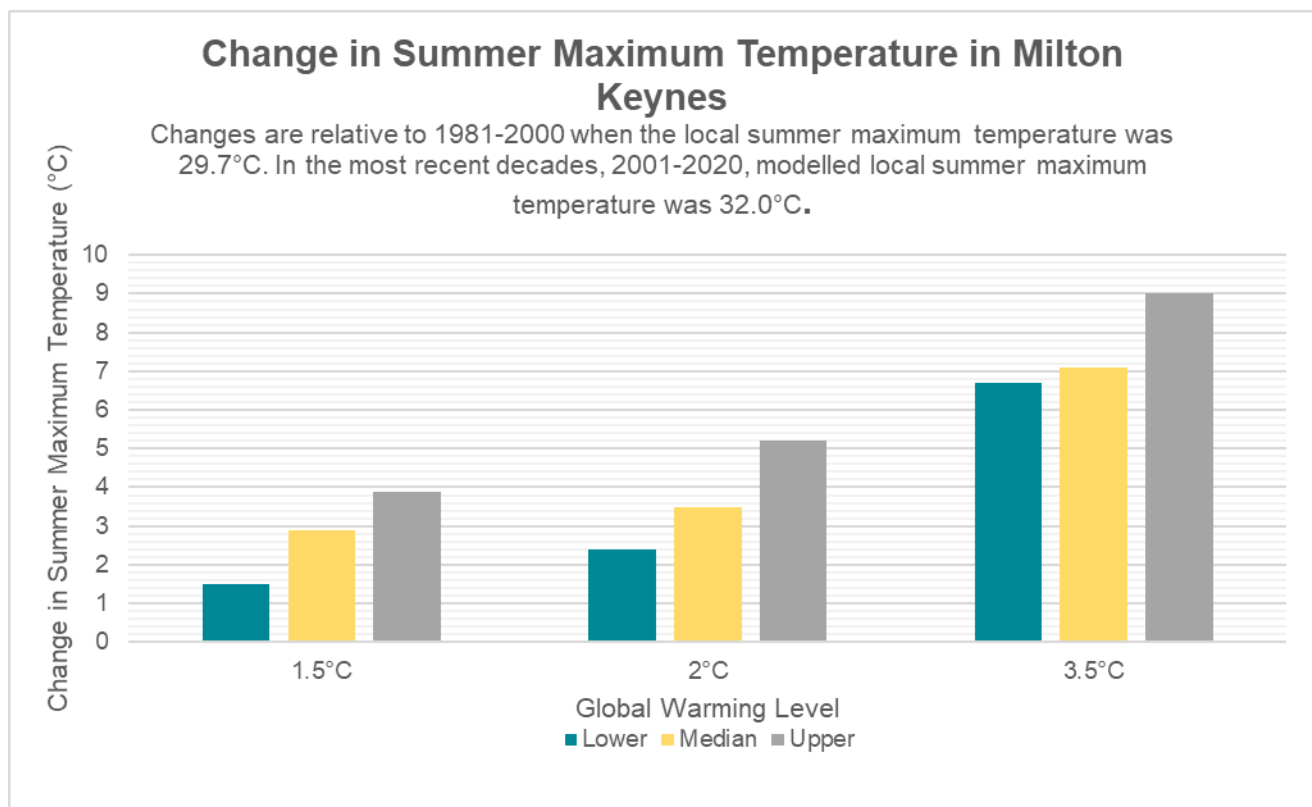


Figure 2: Change in Summer Maximum temperatures in Milton Keynes.
Source: Met Office Local Authority Climate Service

The impacts of Climate Change are likely to include:

- Warmer summers
- Wetter winters
- More flooding events (fluvial, and surface water)
- More extreme heat events including heatwaves, elevating risk of wildfires, and the risk to human health
- More periods of drought
- More frequent and extreme weather events
- Loss of biodiversity

These impacts are likely to disproportionately affect urban areas as can be seen in the figure below, showing the urban heat island effect on England's hottest day on record.

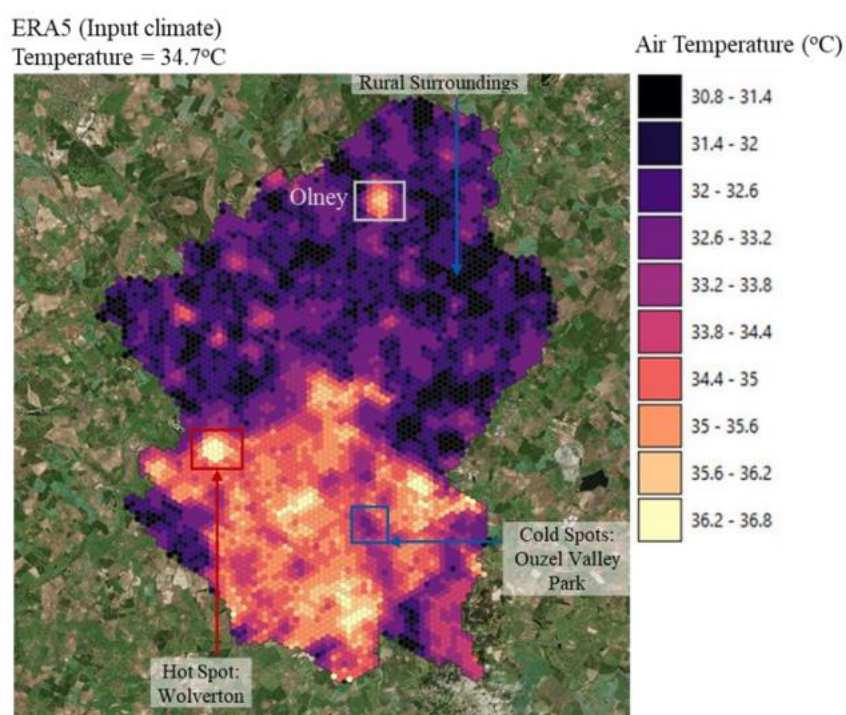


Figure 3: Peak daytime urban heat island intensity from England's Hottest day on record.
Source: Climate and Environmental Action Topic paper, supporting the MK City Plan 2050.

3. Our vision for Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes City Council recognises that local government has an important role to play in setting the vision for Milton Keynes, but also in showing leadership when it comes to Climate issues. In this strategy, we set out our renewed vision for a more sustainable Milton Keynes.

Our vision:

Milton Keynes can be a world leading sustainable city, using the opportunities of growth to tackle the challenges of climate change and resource competition to create a more prosperous city for all our people and future generations.

The City of Milton Keynes will aim to:

- Reach net zero by 2030
- Limit rising heat to 1.5 degrees based on the [Paris Agreement](#)
- Prepare for the current and future impacts of climate change
- Reach net zero for the City Council's activities by 2030

We recognise the impacts of Climate Change are not equally felt by all communities, and we will encourage initiatives that create a just transition in Milton Keynes.

The actions relating to each theme can be found in the accompanying Sustainability City and Council Action Plan, available on the City Council's [Net Zero webpage](#).

Sustainability themes:

- **Economy**
- **Energy**
- **Emissions**
- **Environment**
- **Engagement**

Economy

A city that uses the opportunities from growth to achieve its climate goals

Milton Keynes is the UK's fastest growing city, with a highly productive, strong, and growing economy. Milton Keynes remains a pro-growth city, and also recognises that balancing this growth with environmental sustainability is necessary. It is recognised that the global net zero transition itself represents a clear economic opportunity, through the supply of goods and services to enable the net zero transition.

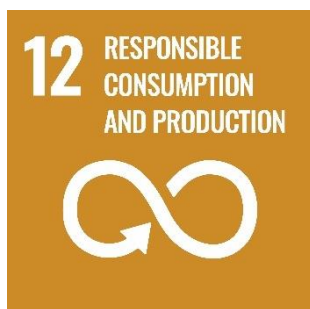
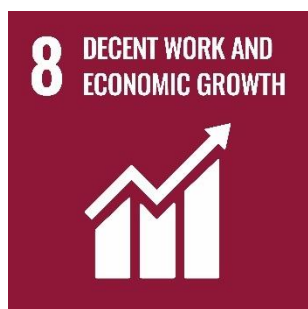
Through initiatives to develop a more circular economy in the city, taking steps to ensure our people can develop green skills, and ensuring that businesses play their full part in the climate transition, we will use the opportunities presented from Milton Keynes' economic growth to make progress on the sustainability agenda.

What are we going to do?

For the City Council work, activity under the Economy theme focusses on the City Council as a business, how it makes Council services more sustainable, and on how MKCC's supply chain can better meet the sustainability ambitions of the city.

For our City based work, our activity will focus on working with businesses/industry to deliver our climate targets (including green economy and green skills work), the development of the city's circular economy, and encouraging innovation to support work on the climate agenda in Milton Keynes..

Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



Energy

A resilient and energy secure city, producing clean energy, and using energy in moderation

The decarbonisation of energy is critical to meeting climate and sustainability targets. As we can see from the emissions in Milton Keynes, a large proportion come from domestic, commercial and industrial buildings.

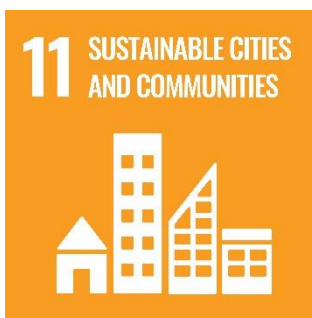
The way we live and work means we are increasingly reliant on the provision of energy, it is critical that energy is used in moderation and that the local energy system is fit for the future. Energy security is an increasingly important consideration, as well as increasing sustainable energy generation. Work to deliver greater energy efficiency of buildings will be an essential part of ensuring a reduction energy consumption, and the resulting impact on emissions.

What is Milton Keynes going to do?

For Milton Keynes City Council, our work on this theme will focus on the reduction of our energy use, renewable energy generation and resilience of energy.

For our city wide work, we will focus on energy resilience and transition, maximising renewable energy generation and use, and reducing energy demand to produce carbon reductions. We'll also be demonstrating real place leadership through supporting the creation of a District Heating network for the city.

Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Emissions

A city actively reducing its impact on the climate through lowering emissions

Milton Keynes has seen recent falls in greenhouse gas emissions, but has considerable work to do in order to meet its net zero targets. Emissions remain high in the city from the built environment (representing 45% of greenhouse gas emissions, majority of which is from domestic buildings) and from transport. These are specific areas of focus for our sustainability work. Transport is an area in which Milton Keynes' emissions remain stubbornly high, and on which a step change is needed.

As the City continues to grow, it is likely that emissions will too, so careful thought and action, like that seen in the [MK City Plan 2050](#), is needed to continue to reduce the emissions of Milton Keynes, its residents, and its businesses.

What is Milton Keynes going to do?

For Milton Keynes City Council, activity on this workstream on the reduction and mitigation of MKCC's direct emissions, including the decarbonisation of its fleet vehicles and building heating systems.

For the city wide work, this theme focusses on reducing emissions in the city and mitigation, to ensure clean air, with a focus on reducing and mitigating transport, domestic, and industry emissions. This will include the development of plans for step change in public transport provision in Milton Keynes by realising the plans for the Milton Keynes mass rapid transit system.

Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Environment

A city adapting to climate change, to ensure it remains a great place to live

Milton Keynes has been purposely designed to be a great city in which to live and work, and major consideration in the city's design on the environment has always been central to its plans. Milton Keynes is one of the most physically green cities in the UK. Parks, woodlands and lakes are easily accessible to most of our residents and businesses. Climate change means that greater focus is needed to preserve these spaces, and the biodiverse species that call our city home. Urban cooling will increase in importance as an issue, and clean air enhancements are likely to be needed to ensure the city remains a great place to live.

Recent changes to waste collections in the city saw the biggest increase in recycling of any authority in the country, demonstrating how the City Council and Milton Keynes residents can work together for the benefit of the city's environment.

What is Milton Keynes going to do?

For the City Council, this work will focus on physical environment, biodiversity, and nature that the Council's teams are directly responsible for, with the city wide work focussing on the same issues, but outside the City Council's direct control. We will take forward our aim for Milton Keynes to be a leading green city.

Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Engagement

A city that encourages everyone to get involved in the Climate agenda

The City Council is committed to showing leadership on the sustainability agenda, but also recognises it cannot deliver on this agenda on its own. MKCC will show clear leadership through delivery of its own net zero 2030 plans, but it will also bring together partners across the city who share its ambitions to deliver change for the people and businesses of Milton Keynes. We will work to better inform people and organisations about opportunities they have to get involved related to the climate, and to promote and celebrate the great work being undertaken in the city on the sustainability agenda.

What is Milton Keynes going to do?

For MKCC work, we will focus on working across the organisation to share best practice between departments, other public sector bodies, and engage Council suppliers in the conversation about our climate aims.

For our city wide work, we will focus on working with our citizens, organisations and businesses to achieve the goal of a net zero Milton Keynes, recognising that MK City Council's direct impact alone cannot achieve our bold aims for the city.

Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

