

Net Zero Carbon Advice Note

Report of the Planning Portfolio Holder and the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

1. That the Net Zero Carbon Advice Note, attached at the Annex to the report, be approved.
2. That the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development be given delegated authority to make changes of a minor nature prior to publication.

SUMMARY:

- The report is proposing that the appended Net Zero Carbon Advice Note is approved.
- The Net Zero Carbon Advice Note is based on a Net Zero Carbon toolkit and will be used as a resource to inform building professionals on how to achieve net zero carbon in relation to housing. It includes advice for new buildings and retrofit of existing homes.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report is proposing that the appended Net Zero Carbon Advice Note is approved. Subject to the recommendations being supported, the Advice Note would be published on the Council's website as an information resource.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 that included a commitment to work with our communities and partners to identify opportunities for making the borough carbon neutral. The Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020) includes actions around the theme of housing, development and infrastructure. Actions within this theme reflect on sharing best practice and sharing advice on energy efficiency improvements.
- 2.2 The Net Zero Carbon Advice Note is based on a Net Zero Carbon Toolkit, which was originally produced on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council, Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council via a license that enables others to use it. Given the range of information provided within this document, the opportunity was identified to use this resource to share information with those in Test Valley.

- 2.3 The note will be a resource for building professionals and homeowners to provide guidance on how to achieve net zero for new build homes and via retrofit of existing homes. It would not have any formal status (such as Supplementary Planning Guidance), so it would not be something that the Council could enforce compliance with. The Council is in the process of preparing its next Local Plan which currently includes draft policies that would introduce requirements for new homes to be built to be net zero in terms of their operation. The Advice Note would help to promote consideration of such matters prior to any such policies, or changes to Building Regulations, come into place.
- 2.4 The wider aim of the Net Zero Carbon Advice is to help guide users on lower embodied and operational carbon, with the aim of producing net zero carbon buildings in the future. The note outlines guidance specifically on new housing, retrofit, key products and materials, and advice on how to specify key elements. Guidance on the retrofit of existing homes is split based on those properties built pre or post 1950 to reflect heritage matters within the borough. It also provides a checklist of key actions at each design stage to meet performance indicators for new homes, signposts to additional resources, and refers to matters beyond energy including efficiency use of water and supporting biodiversity.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The note aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan and Climate Emergency Action Plan. The Corporate Plan includes a strategic priority relating to the environment and the intention to work towards a greener borough for our communities. As part of this, it reflects on the importance residents place on tackling climate change and the role the Council can play in supporting communities to adapt to the challenges presented by climate change. This advice note enables the Council to share information on best practice with the wider community, businesses and construction industry by providing guidance on how to achieve this.
- 3.2 As noted above, the Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020) sets out actions to help reduce carbon emissions for both the Council and wider community. The Net Zero Carbon Advice Note will help to deliver the actions within this document.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 To adapt the document from the original toolkit, we have engaged with officers in the Planning & Building and Housing & Environmental Health Services. We also appointed an external building services consultant to review the note to make sure it was up to date and consistent with the most recent Building Regulations. No external consultation has been undertaken reflecting the document being a technical advice note and not adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

5 Options

- 5.1 The options available are whether to approve the Net Zero Carbon Advice Note, or not to approve it. At this stage, there is no option to seek to progress this document as a Supplementary Planning Document as there is no relevant link within the adopted Local Plan to enable this.

6 Option Appraisal

Option 1 (Approve the Net Zero Carbon Advice Note):

- 6.1 The advantage of the Net Zero Carbon Advice Note is that it will provide building professionals with guidance on how to reach net zero carbon via new builds and retrofit. While we cannot require adherence to the advice it provides it is considered to be a useful resource, particularly in the shorter term as expectations, awareness and understanding develops over time.

Option 2 (Do not approve the Net Zero Carbon Advice Note)

- 6.2 A range of information resources are available but as there is currently no document or resource like this provided by the Council, this note will make it easier for building professionals to be aware how to reach net zero carbon.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 An evaluation of the risks indicates that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 The note has been prepared through adapting an existing document prepared on behalf of other authorities that has a license that enables others to use it. This has involved officer time and some support from a building services consultant as indicated above. This note is not expected to have wider resource implication to the Council following its publication.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 If approved, the Net Zero Carbon Advice Note would provide an information resource. It would not have any formal status in the planning system; therefore, there would be no means of requiring compliance with any suggestions contained within the document.
- 9.2 Within the note, it is made clear that anyone having regard to the content of the Advice Note is encouraged to seek their own advice and guidance on suitable approaches for the specific project. It is set out that the Council does not provide recommendations and notes that approvals or consents may be needed for works outlined in the Advice Note.

10 Equality Issues

10.1 An EQIA screening has not identified any potential for unlawful discrimination or adverse impact.

11 Other Issues

11.1 Community Safety – none identified.

11.2 Environmental Health Issues – no direct issues but within the Advice Note there is reference to potential noise considerations for some technologies.

11.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – The Net Zero Carbon Advice Note is intended to reduce the embodied and operational carbon of new build and retrofitted buildings. It is intended to provide this guidance to building professionals. The overall contribution to the environment will be to lower carbon emissions and hopefully enable building professionals to build net zero carbon buildings.

11.4 Property Issues – none identified.

11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – the Advice Note would be relevant across the borough.

12 Conclusion

12.1 It is recommended that the Net Zero Carbon Advice Note is approved and subsequently published on the Council's website as a resource for those looking at new build or retrofit of existing homes.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u> Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020) Original Toolkit			
<u>Confidentiality</u> It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	1	File Ref:	Pt4.15
(Portfolio: Planning and Climate Emergency and Countryside) Councillor P Bundy and Councillor A Johnston			
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