

Warwickshire Sustainable Futures Strategy

Response to public consultation by Warwick District Green Party

Summary

The Warwickshire Sustainable Futures Strategy document outlines proposals to reduce carbon emissions to net zero from WCC's own activities (20,000 tCO₂e/yr) by 2030 and the wider County (5,000,000 tCO₂e/yr) by 2050.

The report admits that, based on the proposed plan, neither of these targets will be met. For WCC's own emissions, the proposed actions will only reduce the annual emissions by 46% leaving over 50% requiring offsetting. For County-wide emissions, WCC predicts only a 40% reduction in emissions by 2050 which would require a massive 60% of emissions to be offset. These are unacceptably high figures.

Carbon offsetting through the proposed tree planting and natural sequestration plans will not meet the offsetting gap. A sustainable strategy needs to be significantly developed through more ambitious actions around energy use savings (e.g. retrofitting), generation of renewable energy and transport infrastructure.

Therefore, the stated strategic objectives are not matched by Actions of sufficient detail or magnitude. This implies a lack of leadership and commitment to reaching the legally binding national targets for net zero carbon emissions. Where firm actions are agreed these should not be delayed.

The 2021 Council Climate scoring exercise pointed to Mitigation/Adaptation, Emission Targets, Co-Benefits, Diversity/Social Inclusion, Education, Skills and Training, and Ecological Emergency as weaknesses in WCC policy. The document gives little confidence that these weaknesses have been addressed. <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/scoring/county/#jump=warwickshire-county-council>

Detailed points

Numbers. The draft Action Plan (p. 30-34) has very few numbers. The plan could clearly set out which actions would have the biggest carbon reduction impacts. The sections for each sector list Objectives and Key Performance Indicators but these are only rarely quantified in terms of levels, magnitudes, or timescales.

The Action Plan covers 28 points where 23 are related to the WCC's own activities or buildings. These only emit ~4% of the County's total GHG emissions. Which means that 96% of the County's emissions are to be dealt with through 5 actions that are all about carbon offsetting within the County through sequestration and storage (enhancing soil and numbers of trees). There is little mention of Scope 3 emissions.

The transport sector contributes 40% of the County-wide carbon emissions. Yet there appear to be no strategic plans for promoting active travel, reducing road use and improving public transport. Strategy relies almost entirely on moving to electric vehicles rather than modal shift. No estimates for carbon emissions are given for modal shift options.

Finance and influence. Carbon emission reductions and climate adaptation require investment and possible changes in spending priorities. WCC spends £672 million annually on services, but the

document does not make the link between this financial power and making strategic policies or decisions around carbon reductions. WCC invests annually £41m in schools, £81m in the 'Vibrant Economy' and have created a Capital Investment Fund of £32m but no Actions are specifically related to these.

There is no sense of using WCC's significant influence in taking net zero arguments to local businesses, energy sector/renewables, communities etc except to 'engage' with pension funds rather than divesting from fossil fuels. Reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals is misleading as these were aimed at strategic planning by national governments.

Inconsistencies and omissions. There are inconsistencies in the document, especially within detailed Action Plans that omit plans that are described elsewhere in the text. For example, none of these following points (shown with our further questions) described under 'What we have Planned' for 'Transport' (p.17) is shown within the Action Plan for 'Transport' (p.30):

- *"Progress with plans on sustainable transport to include engaging with the Government's strategy for Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging and seek funding through government schemes for EV developments. [but what are the plans for sustainable transport excluding EVs?]*
- *Implement a pilot to assess the suitability of delivering on street, residential EV charge points using existing street lighting connections as part of a trial in 2022/23. [but this will be mainly completed by the time of the publication of the WSFS – what about the future?].*
- *Progress with plans on sustainable transport to include investigating the development and implementation of rural charging hubs in Warwickshire. [but where and when?]*
- *We are currently drafting our Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) which prioritises a shift in travel behaviours. As part of this, we are developing strategies on active travel, public transport, motor vehicles and managing space to support." [but when?]*

A Climate Adaptation Plan is mentioned (p. 8) but no details are given. There is no detailed strategy for renewable energy. There is much mention of the Levelling Up agenda but the links between sustainable Actions and greater public benefits are weak. More solar panels will clearly reduce energy bills but the assessment of the need for renewable energy is vague, leaning heavily on encouraging more solar on domestic roofs or referencing non-WCC ambitions, for example WDC's active plans for a hydrogen hub.

The use of simplistic statements and truisms in many places in the document suggests a lack of understanding as to the aim of a strategy document. For example, the strapline (p.21) *"You can help by improving the energy efficiency of your house through using energy responsibly and prioritising retrofit options."* is an advisory note for the public that has no place in a strategy document. Turning this sentiment into strategy requires a professional assessment of how much carbon emission could be saved through domestic energy efficiencies, followed by a strategic plan to deliver retrofitting through a mix of domestic, private and public funding. Such a plan is not contained in the document.