



# Dacorum Home Energy Conservation Act Progress Report 2021-23

**Name of Local Authority**

Dacorum Borough Council

**Type of Local Authority**

District Council

**Name, job title and email address of official submitting report**

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## Headline and Overview

**Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties?**

Historically, we have not had a specific strategy, carbon reduction and energy efficiency has been incorporated into the maintenance and improvement of our own Council stock (c.18% of total of homes in the Borough) and our work to improve private sector homes.

**If yes, please provide a link**

**If no, are you planning to develop one?**

In July 2019, we declared a climate and ecological emergency and made a pledge to become net zero by 2030, and for our housing stock to become net zero by 2050 in line with UK targets.

Although wider carbon emissions are outside of our direct control, we have also pledged to support the borough to become net zero by 2050. We will work alongside individuals, community groups, businesses and schools to help achieve this. This particular target is the responsibility of everyone and we all have a part to play.

The Council published its draft Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan in the Spring of 2020 which included the baseline positions and targets. The final Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan is currently under development and will be released later this year, which will provide more information on our carbon emission targets and objectives.

**What scheme(s) is your Local Authority planning to implement in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation properties in the next two years?**

We plan to install the following measures for the council housing stock, funded by the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery 2 and the Housing Revenue Account: External wall insulation for 19 houses; Insulating a timber framed block of flats; Insulating 3 wimpey no fines blocks of flats. We will invite neighbouring private properties to have insulation installed as well, funded by the Green Homes Grant LAD scheme, where applicable.

We will continue to install energy saving measures in Council Housing as part of our ongoing programme of works; promote ECO and ECO Flex grants to private residents across the borough; work with private landlords to ensure the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards are met.

**What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and administering the scheme(s), such as the value of grants and other support made available, plus any other costs incurred (such as administration) as desired.**

From April 2019 - March 2021 we have contributed £ 26,937 for top up grants for ECO funded measures via the Better Care Fund and Disabled Facilities Grants. Grants administration and the work to engage with landlords has been covered by existing staff resources.

We have a boiler and window replacement programme for the existing Council Housing stock. There is an annual budget of approximately £2.5 million for heating replacement and approximately £400,000 for window and door replacement.

Our Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery 2 allocation is £0.4 million, including £25,000 for administrative and ancillary costs. The Housing Revenue Account will cover a third of the capital costs for Council Housing properties included in the scheme.

**What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?**

We are currently working with YES Energy Solutions and the National Energy Foundation's network of ECO Flex installers to deliver ECO funded measures for private sector housing.

We are using Osborne Property Services Limited (OPSL) to deliver the bulk of our programme of works for Council Housing and Green Homes Grant Local Delivery 2 projects.

**What has been, or will be, the outcome of the scheme(s)? These outcomes could include energy savings, carbon savings, economic impacts such as job creation and/or increased business competitiveness or societal impacts such as alleviation of fuel poverty and/or improved health outcomes etc.**

**Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards**

We are working with private landlords to improve the energy efficiency of privately rented properties. This has benefited the tenants' health and reduced carbon emissions and heating costs. New data provided by the Energy Saving Trust estimates that 3.29% of privately rented properties in Dacorum have an EPC of F or G.

**Energy Company Obligation**

From April 2019 - March 2021, the following measures were delivered by YES Energy Solutions, 13 heating replacements, 2 cavity wall insulation installations and 3 loft insulation installations.

The annual energy bill and carbon savings for Dacorum residents achieved by our partnership with YES Energy Solutions is estimated to be in the region of £2,290 per year and over 23 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>/year respectively.\*

In addition, removing the hazards of excess cold and damp and mould from vulnerable private residents' properties will have resulted in improved health for the residents and reduced costs for the NHS.

### **Existing Council Housing Stock**

Approximately nine hundred boilers are replaced each year based on their reliability and age. There is a window replacement programme, which ensures all Council Housing properties have double glazing where practicable. Loft and cavity wall insulation is installed on a responsive basis as properties are identified which were missed in previous programmes of work.

Boiler replacements provide an estimated £145,000 per year in fuel bill savings plus estimated carbon savings of 1500 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> per year. The window replacement programme provides an estimated £3,500 in fuel savings per year.\*

As part of the longer term Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan the Council has pledged that its Council Housing stock will be net zero carbon by 2050. This will commence with a focus on energy efficiency measures such as insulation, external cladding, floor insulation and Solar Thermal and PV in advance of the alternatives to fossil fuel energy sources. Work is already underway but will develop further each year from 2022/23 onwards.

\* These figures are based on the Energy Saving Trust's estimated energy bill and carbon savings for an average semi detached property and Green Business Watch's estimated carbon savings from upgrading from a standard to a condensing boiler.

## **Communications**

**Does your Local Authority provide any advisory services to customers on how to save energy?**

• If yes, please briefly outline how this is undertaken.

Our Tenancy Sustainment team support homeless applicants in temporary accommodation and those with complex needs across Dacorum borough council's stock. As part of their support they may provide the following advice:

- Where possible, they support tenants to move from a pre-payment meter to a monthly tariff and shop around for the best deal.
- They assist them to apply for winter fuel payments.
- They advise on how heating controls can be used effectively and how to ventilate sufficiently to prevent damp and mould.

In January 2020 14 home visiting staff attended Fuel Poverty Training provided by National Energy Action with many going to achieve their Fuel Debt Advice in the Community Level 2 City and Guilds award.

**How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses?**

We encourage energy saving via our [website](#) and social media as well as posters and leaflets distributed at events.

## Local Green Supply Chain

**Have you made any assessment, or undertaken any analysis of the existing capacity in your local energy efficiency retrofit supply chain to support the decarbonisation of buildings by 2050? If Yes, please summarise the outcomes.**

No

**• What actions are you taking, if any, to upskill and/or grow the local energy efficiency installer supply chain? This could include the facilitation of training, and local installer networking opportunities.**

We support the local supply chain by promoting the funding schemes available to private households, signing Local Authority ECO Flex declarations and providing top up grants where applicable.

OPSL is the principal contractor for Dacorum's Council Housing stock. They have engaged a cross-market sector supply chain to establish competencies, capacities and future opportunities specific to these activities. They recently hosted a Supply Chain Day webinar to understand key pressures, risk and opportunities to inform the next steps in how they can support the supply chain's development, upskilling and achieving their MCS / PAS2030-2019 accreditations.

Recognising future demand and maintenance requirements, with the support of a strategic partner, OPSL are developing sector specific syllabuses for New Tech engineers, focusing on upskilling existing maintenance engineers to support the significant future shift in reactive maintenance and service requirements.

OPSL are currently in the process of finalising their Trust Mark membership and PAS2030-2019 accreditation, in addition upskilling staff to complete their MCS accreditations. Fifteen percent of OPSL staff are completing UDR NOCN Level 2 qualification by the end of June 2021.

OPSL are creating customer engagement content to support the fundamental behaviour change required to adopt some of the very different technologies that will be used in their properties. Which, from experience, will be one of the critical factors in realising the performance requirements as set out in the Retrofit Assessor' survey and Retrofit Coordinator Risk path Assessment for the properties 30 years performance projections.

**• What actions are you taking, if any, to promote energy efficiency and the installer supply chain to consumers, and encourage households to consider energy retrofit?**

We have encouraged private householders to consider retrofit by publicising Green Home Grants and ECO through social media, the Council's quarterly newsletter for all residents and plan to send a mailshot to private residents with one of our ECO partners, YES Energy Solutions. Further promotional activity will take place to encourage uptake of Green Homes Grant LAD 2 by private residents.

OPSL are developing a suite of marketing and customer engagement materials, which will be published shortly, along with a programme of networking days and customer engagements sessions. They have also recently hosted a customer / resident engaging session to better understand how this journey will impact them (the end user), shaping future delivery and engagement for the whole house retrofit journey.

OPSL have recently established a strategic alliance, whom have access to a significant portion of whole house and component/measure funding, subject to property condition etc.

- **If no action is taking place in either of these two areas, please let us know of any barriers you have encountered.**

OPSL have made great strides in developing a robust delivery solution and will continue to evolve at pace over the next 12 weeks. Barriers that are prevalent at this moment are accrediting bodies being overwhelmed by demand, significant skills shortages in and out of sector from retrofit assessors, coordinators and evaluators, to skilled trades persons to support the government's Deep Retrofit Strategy. OPSL are working with their partners to reduce these areas and gaps.

- **How effectively is your LA able to engage (Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 certified) installers?**

For private sector housing, we engage with Trustmark / PAS2035 / PAS2030 certified installers via YES Energy Solutions and the National Energy Foundation.

OPSL have reported that there are few installers that have the necessary accreditations to the new PAS2030-2019 standard (SS PAS2030-2017). However, concessions are being made with certification bodies to support real-time assessment and accreditations.

- **Do you have any plans to develop policies or initiatives in this space over the next five years as part of supporting your local decarbonisation efforts?**

We will continue to invest in our own housing stock and encourage the uptake of low carbon measures in private sector housing, which, in turn, will support the local green supply chain.

OPSL have created a suite of new and amended policies and developed a sector specific QMS & IT system to support all zero carbon activities through to commissioning, customer handover / training, monitoring and servicing.

## Social Housing

**What action, if any, has your LA taken to install energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures in social housing? Have these been installed to a satisfactory quality? What actions (if any) have your social housing partners taken?**

We have a rolling programme of boiler replacement and external wall insulation installation. We also plan to install solar panels and air source heat pumps on a number of sites over the next 2 years.

- **Do you have easy access to the information/knowledge within your organisation that you would expect to need for social housing retrofit projects? (e.g. stock condition; property data; approach to procurement; alignment with existing internal maintenance/upgrade plans; tenant engagement and management plans; costings)**

Yes

- **If no, would it be easy/difficult to obtain this information?**

N/A

- **Have you experienced any challenges to retrofit, including during any previous government schemes you have taken part in (e.g. supply chain, funding, tenant cooperation, mixed tenure, split incentive, policy clarity, etc)? Please provide some detail. Have social housing partners reported any challenges to retrofit?**

It has been difficult to access ECO and Green Homes Grant funding for properties with an energy rating D or above, which is the bulk of our housing stock. Ensuring our supply chain has the right accreditations in place to access funding has been a challenge. Short timescales make it difficult to plan effectively.

• **How does your LA currently/how will your LA in future plan to go about identifying suitable housing stock and measures for retrofit? How do social housing partners identify suitable stock? By the same measures or via a different method?**

We have a year's access to Parity Project's Portfolio database (for housing stock owned by Dacorum only) and the Energy Saving Trust's Home Analytics and PEAT database (for all tenures of housing in Dacorum). We are looking to commission a new stock condition survey in the next 12 months.

• **What considerations would make you more or less likely to apply for government funding? If known, what is the opinion of your social housing partners?**

Availability of funding for properties with energy rating of D or above and sufficient time to prepare a bid and deliver measures.

• **To what extent are social housing tenants willing or unwilling to undergo retrofit, and what are the barriers and facilitators to their participation? If known, is this the same opinion across all social housing tenants or is it different with HA and ALMO tenants?**

Most tenants are willing to undergo retrofit and understand the benefits. We anticipate it will be more difficult to switch from gas central heating to air source heat pumps. Tenant education will be crucial to the success of future retrofits.

• **Does the approach to retrofit change for leaseholders in mixed tenure blocks? What encourages them to co-operate?**

We have a fabric first approach, which captures the whole building regardless of tenure. Leaseholders may need to make a financial contribution. The works will reduce their fuel bills and potentially increase the value of their home through a higher EPC rating.

## **Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards**

• **Is your authority aware of the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards regulations requiring private rentals in England and Wales to meet a minimum energy performance rating of EPC Band E as of April 2020, unless a valid exemption applies?**

Yes

• **Which team within your authority is responsible for, leading on enforcement of the PRS minimum standard? Please provide the contact details of the person leading this team.**

The Private Sector Housing Team is responsible for the enforcement of the PRS minimum standard. Lynne Hunt is the Private Sector Housing Team Leader.

**Address:** Private Sector Housing  
Strategic Housing  
Dacorum Borough Council  
Marlowes  
Hemel Hempstead

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**• What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?**

In June 2019, we gave a presentation on Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and ECO funding at the Landlords Forum. We have also raised awareness via the Private Sector Team's quarterly newsletter, social media and our website.

**• What barriers, if any, does your local authority face enforcing these regulations (e.g. identifying non-compliant properties/landlords, budgeting/resourcing, any legal issues)?**

The pandemic has increased the workload of the Private Sector Housing Team and has had an impact on the staff resources available to enforce MEES.

**• Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties to enforce these regulations? If yes, how? If no, please explain.**

We have written to landlords with privately rented properties with an energy rating below E regarding the minimum energy efficiency standards and advised on how they may comply. We routinely check the energy rating of a property and ensure there is compliance with MEES when responding to complaints from privately renting tenants and licencing Houses in Multiple Occupation.

## Financial Support for Energy Efficiency

Where possible, please set out your answers to the following questions by tenure (owner occupied, privately rented, or social housing).

**• What financial programmes, if any, do you have to promote domestic energy efficiency or energy saving? If applicable please outline the budget (and % of the budget that is used), where such funding is sourced and where it is targeted.**

We do not have a specific budget for promoting domestic energy efficiency but use existing resources such as the Council's bi-annual magazine, e-newsletter and social media to get the message across. We also have a supply of free booklets provided by National Energy Action, which we give to residents who need help with managing their fuel bills.

**What future investment for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures do you have planned, and when are these investments planned for?**

We are currently developing a strategy to bring our housing stock to net zero by 2050. To achieve this we will need to systematically introduce low carbon heating measures. This will be dependent on the availability of the Housing Revenue Account and external funding.

## Fuel Poverty

**Does your Local Authority have a Fuel Poverty Strategy?**

No

- **What steps have you taken to identify residents/properties in fuel poverty? What blockers, if any, have there been in identifying households in fuel poverty?**

The Energy Saving Trust has provided data on EPC energy ratings and fuel poverty across all tenures of housing that we have access to for 2021/22. This will help us target support to where it is needed.

- **How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall Carbon Reduction Strategy?**

There are plans to tie fuel poverty reduction into the Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan.

- **Please highlight any fuel poverty issues specific to your area.**

Dacorum is in the London commuter belt, so housing and living costs are high. Lockdown restrictions on work that cannot be done from home has made financial problems more acute for residents already on a low income.

- **What measures or initiatives have you taken to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty? Include information on partnerships with local businesses or energy providers you have.**

When Council Tenants sign up to a new tenancy, they are advised to contact British Gas to provide meter readings and to discuss tariff options available to them, they can also exchange the meter to the payment method of their choice and a SMART meter if not already done.

New tenants can change suppliers after 28 days their tenancy has commenced they are advised this by the Lettings Officers at the time of sign up.

Our website gives information on switching utility suppliers for all residents including those in the private sector.

## **Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery**

Of the £2bn Green Homes Grant scheme introduced in summer 2020, £500m was assigned for Local Authority Delivery (LAD). LAD enables Local Authorities to bid for grant funding to support low income households in their area with energy efficiency and low carbon heating upgrades. £200m was made available through Local Authority grant competitions in 2020, known as phases 1A and 1B and £300m was allocated under Phase 2 between the five regional Local Energy Hubs.

- **Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD? If yes, please indicate which phase you participated in and briefly outline the project.**

Yes, we are participating in GHG LAD Phase 2. We plan to install the following measures for the council housing stock, funded by the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery 2 and the Housing Revenue Account: External wall insulation for 19 houses; Insulating a timber framed block of flats; Insulating 3 wimpey no fines blocks of flats. We will invite neighbouring private properties to have insulation installed as well, funded by the Green Homes Grant LAD scheme, where applicable.

- **If no, please indicate what barriers prevented you from participation in the scheme.**

N/A

- **Would your Local Authority be in a position to manage the delivery of upgrades through a scheme such as LAD in 2022? If yes, please indicate the anticipated number of homes that could be upgraded per year.**



Yes, if we have sufficient resources to do so. The number of properties is to be confirmed.

If no, please indicate what barriers would prevent you from delivering upgrades in your area.

N/A

## The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures. Following the Spring 2018 consultation, the Government set out in its response that ECO3 will fully focus on Affordable Warmth - low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

The ECO “Local Authority flexible eligibility” (LA Flex) programme allows LAs to make declarations determining that certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes and vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, are referred to ECO obligated suppliers for support under the Affordable Warmth element of ECO.

LAs involved in the LA Flex programme are required to issue a Statement of Intent that they are going to identify households as eligible, and the criteria they are going to use; and a declaration that the LA has been consulted on the installation of measures in a home.

Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)

Yes

Please answer the following questions to help us to understand LA Flex delivery in more detail:

• How many declarations were issued for low income vulnerable households?

Five (From August 2019 until March 2021)

• How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?

One (From August 2019 until March 2021)

• How many declarations were issued for in-fill?

None to date

• What is the highest income cap published in your Sol?

£29,480 after Council Tax and housing costs for a household with two adults and 4+ children

• If you have used an income over £30k gross, what reason have you given?

N/A

• Do you charge for declarations to be signed? If so, please state how much?

No

## Smart Metering

• Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to promote smart meter take up and supporting residents to achieve benefits.

We have a supply of leaflets on smart meters that we distributed at community events in 2019 and plan to do so again, when Coronavirus guidance and regulations allow. We will consider what other actions we can take to promote the uptake of smart meters in addition to arranging for smart meters to be fitted in Dacorum's vacant Council Housing properties.

- **Please provide further information on activities relating to smart metering, including but not limited to:**

- a. Integrating approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation**
- b. Arranging for smart meters to be installed by energy suppliers in vacant social housing premises**

When a property is vacant we work with British Gas who is our single supplier for gas/electric utilities.

Where possible SMART meters will be fitted whilst in the void period but this is subject to their appointment availability. However if the property has been re-let we will ensure the new tenant is aware of this and to provide access for meter installation.

We have noticed an increase in properties which are becoming vacant already have SMART meters in situ.

We have properties where SMART meters are not able to be fitted due to the entry feed, which unfortunately is something we cannot overcome at this time.

N Power are installing SMART meters across Dacorum's communal sites. Where they are unable to trace we are working with them to locate.

- c. Using social landlords to promote smart meter uptake**
- d. Including smart meters in landlord licencing schemes**
- e. Supporting residents who have had appliances condemned for safety reasons**
- f. Other supporting activities**

## **Future Schemes and Wider Incentives**

- **Please outline any further schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve energy efficiency in residential accommodation.**

### **Dacorum Borough Council New Build Housing Development Projects**

Dacorum's Housing Development department is dedicated to helping the council achieve its aim of making all new build assets carbon neutral by 2030. For all future Dacorum Borough Council new build housing development projects, development officers are required to engage with their Architects/ EAs and in particular the contractor on a project, so that the most environmentally friendly design, construction methods and materials are utilised. When engaging with consultants the following staged approach is to be considered:

**Stage 1 Passive Design Measures and Features. 'Be Lean'**

New dwellings design should adopt a 'Fabric First' approach and as such benefit from - low U-values, high standards of air tightness, beneficial use of daylighting and high levels of insulation to initially reduce the energy demands and associated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the building.

**Stage 2 Passive and Active Energy Efficient Building Services. 'Be Clean'**

In addition to passive 'Lean' measures, the dwellings should include high standards of energy efficient building engineering services. These measures to include the following: high efficiency lighting design and associated controls, high efficiency fan motors, variable temperature and volume control of the heating systems.

### Stage 3 LZC/Renewable Energy Provision 'Be Green'

Over and above passive and active measures to achieve further overall reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Air source heat pumps, photovoltaic panelling or other renewable technology could be provided to reduce emission figures.

Whilst employing the design methodology outlined in stage 1 and 2 is commonplace in most schemes in order to provide homes that are better built and better the requirements of Building Regulations.

Stage 3 provides the area where options for renewable technologies vary greatly and when analysed individually some forms may only be suitable for particular types of development based on size and scale, location or the like.

To better understand the various options available for the 'Be Green' stage the following section examines the potential on site renewable technologies that can be installed to provide further carbon dioxide reductions.

- Wind Turbines
- Photovoltaic
- Heat Pumps - Ground and Air Source

### **Hemel Garden Communities Solar Bulk Buy Initiative**

The Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) team has identified domestic photovoltaics as a potential 'early win' opportunity for the HGC programme to drive sustainable energy generation and to move towards net-zero carbon. The HGC team has been exploring opportunities to facilitate a solar bulk-buy initiative for private residents across Hertfordshire which would match customers with solar panel providers in a cost effective way, and at scale. This would require the assistance and sponsorship of the local authorities. However, it would be cost-neutral to the authorities. The HGC team has sought buy-in for the project from the HGC Board, and is currently having conversations with a potential provider, Greater South East Energy Hub and Hertfordshire County Council to gauge interest from authorities across Hertfordshire.