

Strand 4: Safe and Sustainable Homes for All





Glossary

Hackitt Report

Is the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety that was announced by government in July 2017, following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and was led by Dame Judith Hackitt.

Council's Carbon Neutral Plan

The Royal Borough of Greenwich declared a climate emergency in 2019 and agreed to set an ambitious target to reach net zero carbon emissions 20 years ahead of the national target. We've now published a draft carbon neutral plan and the draft plan sets out what changes we'll make and what actions are necessary to make sure we reach our ambitious target of becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2030.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper

Sets out the actions the government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong.

The Regulator of Social Housing

The Regulator of Social Housing regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs.

The Building Safety Regulator

A new regulator has been set up in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster following Dame Judith Hackitt's report. It will oversee the safe design, construction and occupation of high-risk buildings so that residents are safe and feel safe. The regulator will be independent and provide expert advice to the industry as well as residents

Cladding and ACM Cladding

The term cladding refers to components that are attached to building to form non-structural, external surfaces (usually flat coloured panels). ACM stands for Aluminium Composite Material which has been linked to a number of major fires.

House in multiple occupation (HMOs)

It is a house or flat which is let to three or more tenants, who form two or more households and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet. The full definition and exclusions can be found in the Housing Act 2004, Section 254 to 264 and Schedule 14.

Mandatory HMO licensing

The Housing Act 2004 introduced the mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Many HMOs are now required to be licensed by the local authority. royalgreenwich.gov.uk/hmollicence



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Additional licensing

In addition to the mandatory licensing of certain larger houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), the Housing Act 2004 gives local authorities the power to impose additional licensing on smaller HMOs beyond the national mandatory regime.

Selective licensing

This enables local authorities to extend the benefits of licensing beyond the mandatory licensable properties (large HMOs); it focuses on improving the management of privately rented properties accommodating single households. It is a discretionary scheme applicable to all privately rented properties with single households in a given area. The area must have demonstrable issues in line with the legislation, such as poor property conditions, anti-social behaviour or deprivation. Schemes that cover more than 20 per cent of the private rented stock in the borough must have secretary of state approval for the scheme.

Carbon neutrality

Carbon neutrality, or having a net zero carbon footprint, refers to achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by balancing carbon emissions with carbon removal or simply eliminating carbon emissions altogether.

Carbon offsetting

A carbon offset is a way to compensate for emissions by funding an equivalent carbon dioxide saving elsewhere.

Fuel poverty

A person is to be regarded as living “in fuel poverty” if they are a member of a household living on a lower income in a home which cannot be kept warm at reasonable cost. The South London Healthy Homes scheme may be able to help if you’re struggling to keep your home warm, or to afford your energy bills, if you meet certain criteria. Call **0808 169 1779** or visit cact.org.uk/swtw.

Hoarding

A hoarding disorder is where someone acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner.

Compliance

Compliance refers to the state of being in accordance with established safety standards and regulations, or the process of becoming so.

Tenure

The term tenure refers to the various ways that you can own a property or rent a property e.g. Owner-occupier, freehold, leasehold, or private-rented, council or a housing association tenant.



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Housing and Planning Act 2016

The Act provides powers that permit local authorities to impose a civil penalty of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution for a range of offences under the Housing Act 2004, and where a landlord or property agent has breached a banning order under the Housing and Planning Act 2016. Civil penalties for certain housing offences came into force on 6 April 2017. The guidance has been updated to reflect that from 6 April 2018 a civil penalty can also be imposed for breach of a banning order.

Autodialler devices

An electronic device that monitors alarm signals for a problem, when a problem is detected it will instantly communicate the problem to the correct on call personnel, so it can be quickly rectified.

Retrofitting

Making an existing building more energy efficient. This could include insulating walls, roofs and floors; upgrading windows and doors and heating systems; and swapping to low carbon heating sources.

Heat Networks

A heat network, sometimes called district heating, is a distribution system of insulated pipes that takes heat from a central source and delivers it to a number of domestic or non-domestic buildings.

Ground Source heat pumps

A ground source heat pump (GSHP) also known as a geothermal pump, harvests solar heat absorbed by the ground.

Solar Photovoltaic systems

Is a power system designed to supply power by the direct conversion of sunlight into electricity.

Low Carbon buildings

Low-carbon buildings are buildings designed and constructed to release very little or no carbon at all during their lifetime.

Illegal Conversions

Houses illegally converted into House in Multiple Occupation or garages/out buildings illegally let as domestic accommodation or commercial accommodation used as domestic accommodation without a change of planning permission.

Safe and Sustainable Homes for all



Our Commitments

- Ensure our Council homes are safe and have modern facilities.
- Support and enforce safety standards in privately-owned and rented homes.
- Improve the energy efficiency in homes owned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
- Support carbon reduction and improved energy efficiency in all homes in Royal Greenwich.

We have consulted on the key objectives and aims in this strategy and listened to your feedback and will help us focus on the priority issues and help shape our approach to addressing them, in a way to achieve the best outcomes over the next five years.

This strand is underpinned and will be informed by the Social Housing White Paper, the review of building safety standards and evolving green agenda, including the Council's Carbon Neutral Plan.

Good quality housing is essential for everyone's health and wellbeing; safe and sustainable housing can support good physical and mental health, reduce fuel poverty, decrease carbon emissions, reduce hospital admissions and help people live independently for longer.

We are committed to work with our partners with the aim of ensuring high quality housing for all our residents. Promoting prevention by empowering our tenants and those in the rented sector with the tools to help themselves.

It is important that we get the best outcomes for our tenants and residents by reducing inequality and narrowing the gap in quality of housing across

tenures. We can achieve this by partnership working and tackling challenges through positive collaboration.

As a landlord, we will implement legislation and good practice recommendations to improve building safety and empower residents.

In addition, we will use our roles as a partner to many housing providers; and as an enforcer, to implement the new building safety standards.

Using the opportunities, we have to engage with residents, housing associations, and the private rented and home ownership tenures, we will support the improvement of energy efficiency of homes across the borough.

By providing information, and referral to services which support landlords in the private rental sector and those homes undergoing disability adaptations to retrofit their properties. Updating the information, we provide to private sector landlords through enforcement and licensing processes; encouraging increased energy efficiency standards in the private rental. Making every opportunity count when engaging with residents on housing plans to provide fuel poverty and energy efficiency advice.

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Taking into consideration sustainability and the long-term implications on our environment; we will ensure we support council wide action on carbon reduction in all housing tenures across the borough; and continue to engage with residents, businesses and

organisations to encourage them to share ownership of our Carbon Neutral Plan and to jointly make the changes that will be required to achieve carbon neutrality.



Ensure our Council homes are safe and have modern facilities

- Agree an Asset Management Strategy to support the long-term investment programme for Council homes and estates.
- Enhance resident engagement in line with the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry and the proposals contained in 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper'.
- Produce a comprehensive Compliance Strategy for our housing services, encompassing all areas of the Royal Borough's landlord compliance obligations, including the proposals contained in the Fire Safety Act and Building Safety Bill.
- Work collaboratively with the London Fire Brigade and other partners to reduce fire risks inside people's homes and communal areas.

We will develop a Housing Asset Management Strategy to underpin our long-term investment programme to improve the quality and safety standards of our housing stock; whilst improving energy efficiency and helping to alleviate fuel poverty. Our planned maintenance programme will upgrade and modernise external parts of the home, such as roofs and inside the home, such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Over the past 18 months, the Repairs and Investment Service have embarked on creating an entirely new customer experience for its residents, to ensure their voices are heard and we learn from their feedback.

This has included engaging with an independent organisation to gain feedback on the service we provide. Our challenge now is to learn from the feedback and start to put in place a service that meets our residents' needs. This includes developing an engagement strategy that allows us to engage with our residents and staff through various forums.

The strategy will set out our vision, values and priorities for the next three years. In developing this document, we have talked directly to over 25,000 residents (through surveys), staff and reviewed

complaints. We have agreed that over the next three years our service should centre around five themes:

- Resident Voice
- Make every visit count
- Pride in our homes
- Digital by choice
- Tenants of the future

We will review our working practices with the emerging and evolving agenda around fire and building safety, including the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry and proposals contained in 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper'. This includes council officers working solely on safety issues, as the purpose of their job.

Fire safety remains as a top priority for our residents in all tenures.

We will ensure compliance with the requirements proposed in forthcoming fire and building safety legislation, including the Fire Safety Act and Building Safety Bill. And, we will embed the core principles of these new laws within our working culture. This will include producing a comprehensive Compliance

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Strategy for our housing services, encompassing all areas of the council's landlord compliance obligations.

We will embrace the latest good practice to ensure we have clear and up-to-date policies and procedures for each area of landlord compliance covering; fire safety, asbestos, gas safety, electrical safety, water hygiene and lifts. To help us achieve this, we will work with the Regulator of Social Housing and Building Safety Regulator.

To support a comprehensive Compliance Strategy, we have already produced up-to-date policies on these big six areas of compliance.

- We will remove asbestos wherever possible, or alternatively, safely manage it within the building.
- We will undertake annual inspections inside properties, to make sure gas appliances are safe and, where necessary, upgrade and replace gas installations we are responsible for. Ensuring all locations with a gas supply has an in-date Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR) certificate.
- We will risk assess each property for the hazards associated with water and implement the remedial work identified.

- Our passenger lift improvement plans include installing autodialler devices to allow trapped passengers to call for emergency help.
- We will ensure electrical safety precautions are implemented and will appoint a competent person to lead the management of electrical safety, ensure compliance is achieved and maintained; and provide an Electrical Installation Condition Report. This will include completing electrical tests for all residential properties at least every five years.
- We will work collaboratively with the London Fire Brigade, our Health and Adults social care services and the Oxleas NHS mental health service, to tackle fire safety risks caused by excessive hoarding of personal items and smoking in blocks of flats.

In addition, we will look at safety in the wider environment and including the play areas on housing land; ensuring all play areas are regularly serviced and inspected and highway areas, under our responsibilities as a landlord ensuring they are inspected and maintained.



Support and enforcing safety standards in privately owned and privately rented properties

- Introduce a selective licensing scheme in private rented accommodation, to tackle unethical landlords and to improve living standards.
- Lobby central government for structural changes including improving security of tenure and affordability.
- Use enforcement action when required to improve standards in the minority of homes that are poorly managed.

Poorly-managed privately rented properties have a negative impact on many neighbourhoods. Anti-social behaviour (ASB), noise complaints, nuisance neighbours, accumulations of rubbish and other problems.

Overcrowding and illegal conversions are also features of the private rented sector and all contribute to neighbourhood problems.

Currently the council operates the Mandatory Licensing scheme covering larger Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and has also designated the whole borough in an Additional Licensing scheme, this commenced in October 2017.

Mandatory Licensing of HMOs applies only to the largest HMOs and is compulsory for all councils across the country.

The Additional Licensing of HMOs is a discretionary power, local councils have to introduce licensing schemes for other HMOs, not already included in the mandatory scheme. We can specify what type of HMO will be covered by an Additional Licensing scheme based on the problems with housing conditions in our area.

Both types of licensing are valid for five years. However, if we want to keep discretionary schemes after five years, further public consultation and Cabinet approval is required.

Our Additional licensing is now in its 4th year and therefore our scheme is currently being reviewed and this will then help inform the decision whether to renew the scheme in 2022.

Currently there are over 1,200 actual licensed HMOs, however we will continue to promote the need to licensing HMO's and will continue to encourage and enforce compliance.

We will work with landlords to support and encourage them, so together we can drive up standards in the private rented sector, whilst also cracking down on rogue private landlords.

We will continue to use the powers provided to local authorities in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 which have strengthened our ability to act against criminal landlords with civil penalties, banning orders, extended rent repayment orders and use of a national database to track rogue landlords across council boundaries.

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We believe everyone should have a good quality home no matter who their landlord is. We want to work with landlords to increase security, certainty, affordability and stability for their tenants; however, we will use our enforcement powers where needed.

We will provide more advice and support to victims of unscrupulous landlords. Take enforcement action against landlords who rent sub-standard accommodation and exploit vulnerable tenants and

those from marginalised groups. We will regularly meet and work with organisations representing these affected communities, to develop service improvements such as awareness of remedies available and confidence building, to support enforcement action.

Our use of enforcement powers is a key part of our broader strategy that aims to improve the lives of our residents in the private rented sector.



Improve the energy efficiency in homes owned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich

- Make existing homes owned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich more energy efficient, including insulating walls, roofs and floors and upgrading windows and doors.
- Pilot a whole block approach to reduce carbon emissions in a cost-effective way.
- Reduce the dependence on fossil fuels by replacing communal heating systems to carbon neutral alternatives such as heat pumps; explore new technologies and opportunities for funding to enable wider roll out.
- Install individual meters, moving communal heating charges away from pooled to an individual billing model, providing transparency and for residents to pay for their actual consumption.
- Through Greenwich Builds - Build all new Royal Borough of Greenwich council homes to zero-carbon standards.
- Work with partners and other agencies to develop schemes and initiatives to help alleviate fuel poverty.

The substantive work to transition council homes towards zero carbon will commence in 2021 and be part of the Five-Year Investment Plan being developed.

To achieve our carbon-neutral objectives with our own housing, we will:

- **Making our existing homes more energy efficient:** Retrofit our existing homes more energy efficient by installing additional insulation and upgrading windows and doors.
- **De-fossilise energy systems:** By shifting energy systems away from fossil fuels, such as gas and towards low carbon renewable sources of energy, such as air and ground source heat pumps, and solar photovoltaic systems.
- **Smart energy systems:** Using technology and data to monitor, control and optimise low carbon buildings and energy assets, so they are more efficient, generating cost savings and further reduce emissions; Introducing new technologies which can provide flexibility to local energy networks and enable greater impact to be gained from defossilised energy systems, such as battery storage.
- **Support council tenants:** Give tenants the necessary tools, whether that be technology, advice or knowledge to better manage household energy consumption, make the most of retrofitted homes and low carbon energy technologies, use low emission modes of travel, and tackle fuel poverty.

Support carbon reduction and improved energy efficiency in all homes in Royal Greenwich

- We will support council wide action on carbon reduction in all housing tenures across the Borough and continue to engage with residents, businesses and organisations to encourage them to share ownership of our 'Carbon Neutral Plan', and to jointly make the changes that will be required to achieve carbon neutrality.

Our programme of resident engagement will focus on involving residents with the development and implementation of services to make homes safer and environmentally sustainable.

We recognise that one method of engagement is not suitable for all residents, and we will therefore provide a range of engagement opportunities.

Action includes: all council homes to be heated and powered by non-fossil fuels; procuring 100 percent green electricity; building low carbon homes; creating safer routes for walking and cycling; installing electric vehicle charging points; planting thousands of extra

trees; and setting up a partnership of businesses and local organisations to help reduce emissions across the borough.

Being carbon neutral means reducing emissions arising from the Royal Borough of Greenwich as far possible, and to very low levels. As well as reducing the amount we emit, offsetting of the residual emissions is possible, by reducing emissions elsewhere.

We gave residents the opportunity to have their say on the draft carbon neutral plan before it is published in October 2021.

