

Planning & Land Use

Planning powers are the most under-utilised climate tool a local authority has. Planning policy determines where new homes are built, the standards they are built to and how people will travel in their community; locking in their greenhouse gas emissions for decades.

Most of the questions in this section only apply to councils that are “planning authorities”, which are English district councils, Northern Irish districts, and all single-tier authorities, including in Wales and Scotland.

2025 average score and 2023 comparison¹

by council type

43% Single Tier ▲ 8

28% District ▲ 5

-33% County ▼ 8

12% Northern Ireland ▼ 2

The growth in renewable energy projects is clear, as well as improvements in onsite renewable energy and over half of councils that own/manage housing committing to stronger standards. However, the vast majority of new development is still lacking, while embodied emissions continue to go unchecked.

GREEN AND WARMER HOMES



53% of authorities that own or manage housing have committed to building new housing to a high energy efficiency or operationally net zero standard²



52% ▲ 6 versus 2023 of planning authorities require onsite renewable energy in new developments³

STRONGER STANDARDS NEEDED

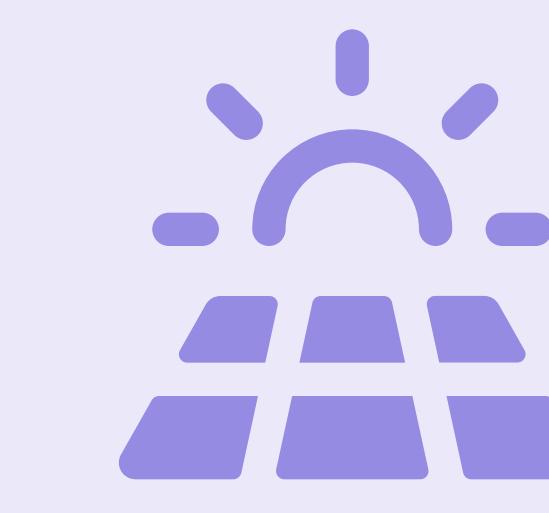


21% ▲ 2 versus 2023 of planning authorities require the measurement of a development's embodied emissions⁴



18% ▲ 4 versus 2023 of planning authorities have set net zero standards for building new housing⁵

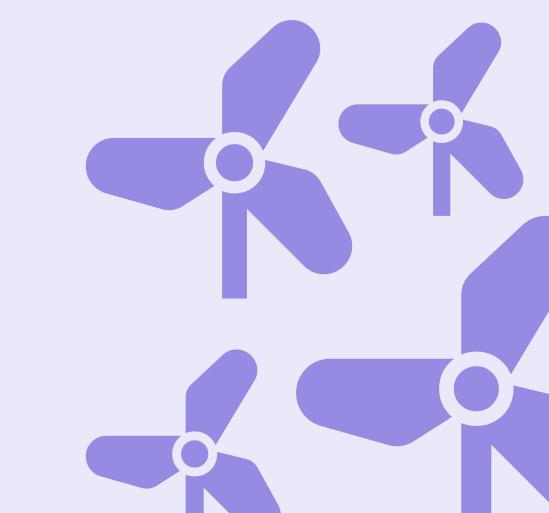
FOSSIL FUELS VS RENEWABLE ENERGY



65% ▲ 7 versus 2023

of planning authorities have mapped where new solar, wind or district heating infrastructure can be built⁶

! but only 11% have mapped for all three



57% ▲ 24 versus 2023

of British local authorities have approved 3 or more renewable energy projects⁷



8 mineral planning authorities⁸ have approved new, or the expansion, of fossil fuel infrastructure⁹

(1) Average scores here: https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/sections/s3_p_lu/ · (2) Question 2: Has the council committed to building all future council-owned or managed housing to a high energy efficiency or operationally net zero standard? · (3) Question 9: Does the council have a minimum requirement for on-site renewable energy generation for new building development? · (4) Question 4: Embodied emissions are often measured via a whole life cycle assessment, which assesses the total emissions from construction and operation of a new building · (5) Question 3c: A net zero standard is defined as when the regulated operational emissions, which are the emissions from the use of the building, are zero or negative. See UKGBC for more detail · (6) Question 10a: Has the council identified suitable areas for new solar energy, wind developments and district heat networks? · (7) Question 10b: Over the timeframe of the Scorecards - 2020 to Spring 2025. Renewable energy projects are defined in the Scorecards as new or expanded solar, renewable district heat networks, wind developments or battery storage · (8) “mineral planning authorities” includes all single-tier councils and English county councils only · (9) Question 11: Approving new, or the expansion of, fossil fuel infrastructure includes new oil, gas or coal projects or any infrastructure approved which increases capacity