

# Planning & Land Use

Planning powers are the most under-utilised climate tool a local authority\* has. Planning policy determines where new developments are built, the standards they are built to, and impacts how people travel and their greenhouse gas emissions for decades. This section covers the main enabling actions councils\*\* can take to reduce emissions from new development within their area. Most of the questions in this section only apply to councils that are “planning authorities”, which have the powers over the building of new housing in their area. In the UK “planning authorities” are English district councils, Northern Irish districts councils, and all single-tier authorities, including all councils in Wales and Scotland.

**Average score<sup>1</sup>**  
by council type

**35%** Single Tier

**23%** District

**-25%** County

**14%** Northern Ireland

## ADAPTING



**59%** of planning authorities set the highest water efficiency standards for new builds<sup>2</sup>



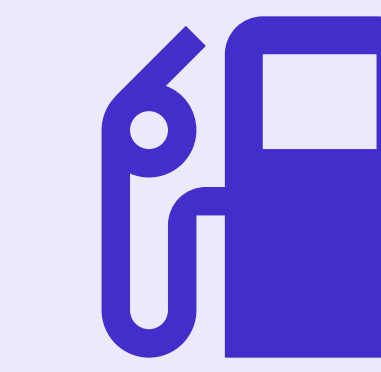
**42%** of planning authorities avoid building new developments on land that is most at risk of flooding<sup>3</sup>

## STRONGER STANDARDS NEEDED

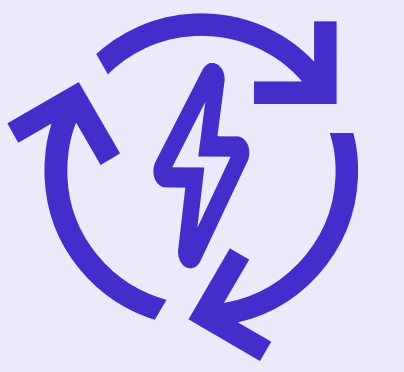
**14%** of planning authorities have set net zero standards for building new housing<sup>4</sup>

**19%** of planning authorities require the measurement of a development's embodied emissions<sup>5</sup>

**46%** of planning authorities require onsite renewable energy generation in new developments<sup>6</sup>



FOSSIL FUELS Vs RENEWABLE ENERGY



**58%** of planning authorities have mapped where new solar, wind or district heating infrastructure can be built<sup>7</sup>



**but only 8% have mapped for all three**

**33%** of English, Scottish and Welsh councils have approved 3 or more renewable energy projects<sup>8</sup>

**11**

mineral planning authorities<sup>9</sup> have approved new, or the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure<sup>10</sup>

(\*) “local authorities” excludes combined authorities • (\*\*) “councils” include all 389 UK local and combined authorities assessed in the 2023 Council Climate Action Scorecards • (1) See average scores here → [councilclimatescorecards.uk/sections/s3\\_p.lu/](https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/sections/s3_p.lu/) • (2) Question 5 in Planning & Land Use. The highest water efficiency standards are 110 litres of water per person per day in England and Wales, with Scotland using a per appliance metric. • (3) Question 8 in Planning & Land Use. The land most at risk of flooding is the functional flood plain, labelled 3b in Scotland and England and C in Wales • (4) Question 3c in Planning & Land Use. 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. • (5) Question 4 in Planning & Land Use. Embodied emissions are often measured via a whole life cycle assessment, which assesses the total emissions from construction and operation of a new building. • (6) Question 9 in Planning & Land Use. • (7) Question 10a in Planning & Land Use. • (8) Question 10b in Planning & Land Use. Over the timeframe of the Scorecards - Jan 2019 to March 2023. Renewable energy projects are defined in the Scorecards as new or expanded solar, renewable district heat networks, wind developments or battery storage. • (9) “mineral planning authorities” includes all single-tier councils and English county councils only. • (10) Question 11 in Planning & Land Use. Approving new, or the expansion of, fossil fuel infrastructure includes new oil, gas or coal projects or any infrastructure which includes an increase in capacity. Over the timeframe of the Scorecards - Jan 2019 to March 2023

