

DIGITAL SOLUTIONS PROOF

In the surrounding areas, each local authority has seen a downward trend since 2012. This trend is starting to level out in the least emitting boroughs such as Bracknell Forest and Wokingham. Wokingham is the second lowest due to the nature of the industries that operate in the borough. Generally, these are office-based operations which mainly relies on electricity which can be supplied through renewables, rather than gas or any other form of energy which can be offset.

Offsetting

Offsetting carbon is very important in order for the borough to grow in a sustainable way, as to reach net zero carbon the borough can only emit what it offsets. Presently, the borough offsets 15.2 ktCO_{2e} a year through forestry and land use. These levels have been steadily increasing over the data period with an average annual increase in carbon capture of 0.4 ktCO_{2e}. Wokingham sequesters a middling level in terms of surrounding local authorities. Although the carbon captured has increased over the data period, there is a large range through the region. Rural West Berkshire offsets 65.5 ktCO_{2e} while Slough and Reading as more built up areas only sequester 3 ktCO_{2e} through forestry and land use. Nationally, recent figures suggest that 11323.4 ktCO_{2e} is offset through this sector, this amount has been increasing in the 5 years up to 2017.

There is a large scope for improvement in this sector as Wokingham is a semi-rural borough with a lot of open space. Thousands of trees have already been and continue to be planted in Wokingham Borough. More tree planting is part of Wokingham Borough Council's future planning policies where a quota for offsetting construction with trees can be set. Conserving our current trees is very significant, as mature trees sequester a much higher amount of carbon than new trees which take years to reach the same level of maturity depending on the tree type.

Carbon Budgets

The Tyndall Centre from the University of Manchester¹⁴ have created a projection based on the borough's maximum carbon budget of 5.0 MtCO₂, to stay within Paris Agreement Requirements, until the end of the century. At current consumption rates, Wokingham Borough would use this budget in seven years. This allocated carbon budget is middling in terms of surrounding local authorities with West Berkshire having the highest budget of 8.2 MtCO₂ and Bracknell allocated the lowest at 3.0 MtCO₂. Minimum average annual reduction rates to keep within these budgets in the area are all between 12.3-13.7%. Across the whole South East Region this percentage in 13.3% and in Wokingham specifically it is just under this regional reduction rate at 13.1%. This again confirms that Wokingham Borough Council is on track with the rest of the region in terms of a carbon reduction pathway. However, the Tyndall Centre has created this reduction until the end of the century, therefore the council's projection to net zero emissions by 2030 is significant. This will allow the council to prioritise and map the Action Plan accordingly to meet the 2030 target.

¹⁴ <https://carbonbudget.manchester.ac.uk/reports/E06000041/>