Watford Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report

2025-2026



WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. Net Zero Commitment

Watford Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has committed to achieving net zero carbon equivalent by 2030 for its own operations. This means we are measuring and reducing the greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted through our operations and activities (both direct and indirect), and then, for those emissions which can't be eliminated, offset to achieve net zero.

Key greenhouse gases we are including are carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. Other greenhouse gases, such as refrigerants, will not be included in our calculations but we will seek to ensure that these GHGs are identified if we use or emit them, and eliminated or reduced and offset.

To achieve net zero by 2030 for Council emissions, the below stepped increases in reduction have been agreed.

Table 1 – Watford Borough Council emissions reduction trajectory

Year	Percentage reduction (%)	Percentage offsetting (%)	Total (%)
2025	22	6	28
2027	40	11	51
2029	60	19	79
2030	75	25	100

To find out more about our path to achieving net zero, read *Watford's Environmental Strategy: Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency, 2023-2030* and the accompanying *Delivery Plan, 2025-2027.*



2. Council Overview

Watford is a vibrant and diverse borough, located just within the M25 in the south-west of Hertfordshire and is one of ten districts within the county. Watford is a predominantly urban borough, with a population of 102,000 (Census, 2021) covering just 8.3 square miles making it the most densely populated local authority area within England.

Table 2 – Watford Borough Council overview

Year	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026
Number of full-time officers	244 FTE	207 FTE
Operational sites – owned	36	36
Operational vehicles – owned	6	4
Leased sites – owned	2	3

Watford has a relatively small number of officers because several key services, such as leisure centres (Everyone Active), waste collection and parks and green spaces maintenance (Veolia), are contracted out. Watford does, however, own the waste collection and green space maintenance vehicles used by Veolia.

3. Reporting Period

April 2025 – March 2026.



4. Reporting Boundary

Watford Borough Council uses an operational control boundary methodology, as established by the GHG Accounting Tool produced by Local Partnerships for the Local Government Association (LGA).

This means the council will report on all sources of greenhouse gas emissions over which it has operational control. The authority has operational control over a service if it has full authority to introduce and implement its operating policies.

The council continues to seek to influence the reduction of emissions beyond its operational control.

5. Reporting Scopes

Watford Borough Council has included emissions for Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 categories. Of the fifteen Scope 3 categories identified by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (WRI, 2011: P.32), the following have been included either in-part or fully:

- Purchased goods and services
- Fuel and energy related activities
- Waste generated in operations
- Business travel
- Employee commuting (and home working)
- Downstream leased assets

These categories are an expansion of the 2019 greenhouse gas emissions report and follow the same framework as the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Greenhouse Gas Emissions reports (available here). We continue

to review opportunities to expand our Scope 3 emissions reporting, with a particular focus on Purchased Goods and Services and Downstream Leased Assets. In the 2025/26 financial year the Colosseum has been included as a downstream leased asset.

Below is a detailed explanation of the data collection process for these categories and our efforts to improve the completeness of our Scope 3 emissions data.

i. Purchased Goods and Services

Our 2019 baseline greenhouse gas emissions report only included emissions from water supply. Similar to the last 2 reports, this year we have included emissions from our IT equipment and paper and board, calculated based on the tonnage of materials used. For future reports, we continue to review how we might incorporate other purchased goods and services and the benefits of doing so.

ii. Fuel and Energy Related Activities

This refers to activities not included in Scope 1 or Scope 2, such as upstream emissions from purchased fuels and electricity. These are commonly referred to as Well-To-Tank (WTT) emissions for fuels, and Transmission and Distribution (T&D) losses for electricity. Both our 2019/2020 baseline and our 2024/2025 greenhouse gas emissions report include WTT and T&D emissions.



iii. Waste Generated in Operations

Calculating our waste generated in operations was added into our report in 2023/24. Like previous years, we have calculated a proxy waste estimate for some of our operational sites, the Town Hall and the Market. For the Town Hall, we tracked how full the bins were in September and December 2025 and converted the volume into tonnage, then into emissions.

iv. Business Travel

Business travel was included in 2019 baseline greenhouse gas emissions report. We use the expenses data for business travel by car to calculate the emissions. We do not have the relevant data to include business travel by public transport, and this is unlikely to change in the near future.

v. Employee Commuting and Homeworking

While employee commuting was included in the previous 2 years' greenhouse gas emissions reports, it was not part of our original 2019 baseline. We continued to calculate emissions from employee commuting this year. In 2025/26, we completed 2 staff surveys with questions about commuting habits and homeworking. We had 98 responses to the survey in September and 44 responses to the survey in December. With this information we were able to estimate the associated emissions for both activities. To improve the consistency and accuracy of our data, we aim to have a quarterly staff travel survey and also have a Staff Travel and Homeworking Working group to encourage more sustainable travel across the organisation.



vi. Downstream Leased Assets

Our 2019 baseline greenhouse gas emissions report included emissions from our leisure centres, parks and green spaces maintenance and waste contractors. This year, for the first time, we have included the Colosseum as a downstream leased asset. The Colosseum was handed over to the operators in July and opened to the public in September 2025, however we are still working to separate metered data between the Town Hall and Colosseum.



6.2019/2020 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Baseline year)

Watford Council commissioned APSE to calculate our greenhouse gas emissions in the financial year 2019/ 2020.

In 2019/2020, Watford Council emitted 2,228 tonnes CO_2e[1].

Table 3 – Watford Borough Council Baseline Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2019/2020

Scope	Emission Source	Tonnes CO_2e	% Split
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	278.24	12.49
	Fuel – Petrol	9.66	0.43
	Fleet – Waste Collection	297.25	13.34
	Fleet – Parks and Green Spaces	165.05	7.41
2	Electricity	431.39	19.36
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	3.87	0.17
	Fuel/Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	221.71	9.95
	Business Travel (Car)	5.63	0.25
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	815	36.58
Total		**2227.8**	**100**

[1]Our baseline figure was revised from 1,980 to 2228 tonnes CO_2e, after updating our leisure centres data and including the WTT emissions of our contractor travel.

7. 2025/2026 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Overview

The Council reports greenhouse gas emissions using two figures. The first is the 2025/26 emissions calculated using the same emission sources as the 2019/20 baseline year. The second is the total 2025/26 emissions based on updated and expanded emission sources, which now include the additional Scope 3 emissions introduced in the 2023/24 greenhouse gas report and the additional downstream leased asset. This dual-reporting approach allows for consistent comparison with the baseline, while also presenting a more complete dataset.

2025/2026 Greenhouse Gas Emissions – baseline emission sources

1750.65 CO_2e

Council emissions have dropped by over 475 tonnes CO_2e since our 2019/2020 baseline. This reduction is largely due to the installation of solar photovoltaics at Woodside Leisure Centre and the Town Hall decarbonisation works, which have significantly lowered gas and electricity demand in key operational buildings,

2025/2025 Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions – updated emission sources

2,163.99 CO_2e



8. 2025/2026 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Baseline)

In 2025/2026, Watford Council emitted **1750.65 tonnes** CO_2e. Per resident, that's **17.16** kilograms CO_2e.

Table 4 – Watford Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2024/2025 (baseline)

Scope	Emission Source	% Split	Tonnes CO_2e		% Change from 2019
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	9.27%	162.25	872.64	-26.15%
	Fuel – Petrol	0.00%	0		
	Fleet – Waste Collection	23.53%	411.97		
	Fleet – Parks and Green Spaces	8.47%	148.2		
2	Electricity	8.58%	150.22**		
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	0.20%	3.44**	880.48	-15.84%
	Fuel/Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	4.18%	73.23		
	Business Travel (Car)	0.38%	6.64		
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	45.39%	794.7		
Total		**100**	**1750.65**		**-21.42**

*Table 5 – Watford Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emission Progress**

Scope	Emission Source	2019/20	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	278.24	161.21	137.48	128.86	162.25
	Fuel – Petrol	9.66	0	0	0	0
	Fleet – Waste Collection	297.25	462.53	459.04	441.75	411.97
	Fleet – Parks, Green Spaces and Streets	165.05	181.22	156.52	146.99	148.2
2	Electricity	431.39	254.54	244.78	274.13	150.22
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	3.87	1.35	2.04	0.58	3.44
	Fuel/Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	221.71	103	92.19	95.96	73.23
	Business Travel (Car)	5.63	5.48	5.75	6.02	6.64
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	815	903.2	993.9	948.8	794.7
Total		**2227.8**	**2072.53**	**2091.7**	**2,043.09**	**1750.65**

*Financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 have not been included in this progression comparison because lockdowns from Covid-19 render results a misrepresentation of typical council operations.

**Colosseum data for electricity and water is through a single meter to the Town Hall. Separate sub metering monitoring is being implemented. For 2025/26 a pro rata approach has been taken, with estimates of usage removed from the baseline and added to the Colosseum emissions. The Colosseum became operational from 1st July 2025.

In 2024/25, the Council received £892,000 in funding from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to support energy efficiency improvements across three buildings. This investment has allowed essential upgrades to take place, including replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps and installing new insulation. This will have a positive impact on carbon emissions.

There is an increase in CO_2e emissions from gas compared to 2024/25. At the introduction of the bureau service to manage energy usage there was a spike in gas usage which is likely due to all meters being accurately reported and no estimated readings remaining in the system. This is a one off occurrence.

The emissions from purchased goods and services (water) have increased again. Any adjustments have been included as we moved to a new water supplier in Summer 2025. The increase in water usage, and therefore emissions, is likely due to more accurate water metering across our sites. Our Town Hall water meter also included water usage at the Colosseum for their toilets and offices. We have included an estimated reduction of 25% from when the Colosseum was handed over, however, we are working on separating the two sites to ensure more accurate data.

The emissions from the leased assets – Leisure centres have reduced considerably from 2024/25, with a 18% reduction, and a 2% reduction compared to 2019/20. This is mainly due to the installation of solar photovoltaics (PVs) at Woodside Leisure Centre (which saw a 27% reduction), and also reflects work done on improving the efficiency of the combined heat and power plants. Additional work due to routine maintenance and replacement is likely to show improvements in the 2026/27 emissions.

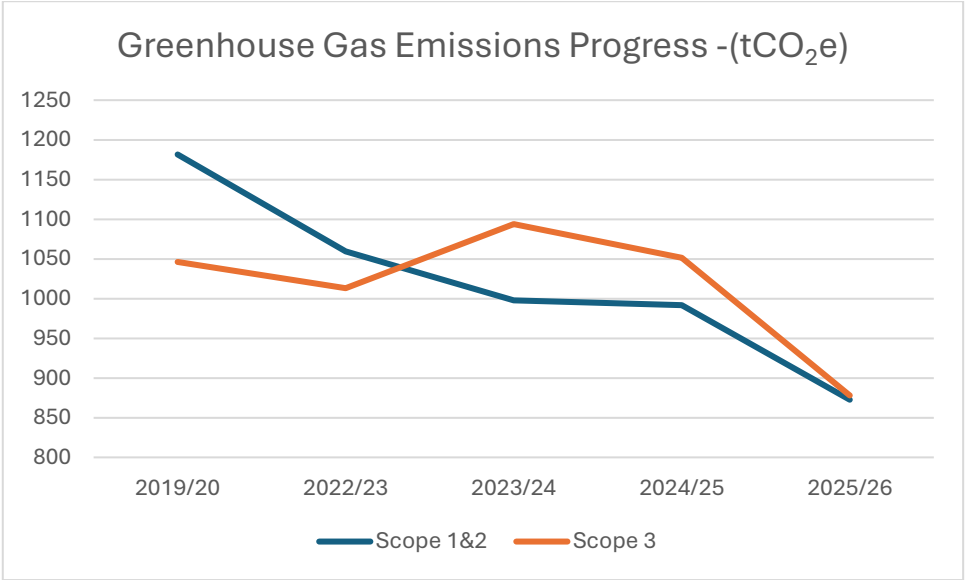


Electricity usage has decreased significantly compared to the 2024/25 Greenhouse Gas Report. This is likely to be due to a number of reasons, including improved monitoring of usage, reduction of estimated bills and the completion of energy intense drying out works in the Town Hall / Colosseum complex. However, the Town Hall electricity meter included the Colosseum, so, similar to the water usage, we have estimated the proportion of energy usage for the Colosseum, based on previous proportional usage pre-renovation. We will be monitoring sub meter readings for 2026/27 to obtain a more accurate reading. For 2025/26 it has been assumed that the electricity associated with the Colosseum is 45% of electricity use from that meter.

We will continue to work with Facilities Management and relevant teams to monitor and manage the gas and electricity usage in our buildings. We now have a monitoring system which provides monthly usage to assist with this.



Figure 1 - Cumulative Progress for Environmental Strategy period 2023-2030



9.2024/2025 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Updated)

Table 6 - Watford Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2024/2025 (updated)

Scope	Emission Source	2025-2026 Tonnes CO_2e	% Split
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	177.12	8.18
	Fuel – Petrol	0	0
	Fleet – Waste Collection	411.97	19.04
	Fleet – Parks, Green Spaces and Streets	148.2	6.85
2	Electricity	150.22	6.94
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	3.44	0.16
	Purchased Goods and Services – Paper, IT	39.29	1.82
	Fuel and Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	76.64	3.54
	Waste Generated in Operations	11.77	0.54
	Business Travel (Car)	6.64	0.31
	Employee Commuting and Home Working	223.36	10.32
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	794.7	37.24
	Downstream Leased Assets - Colosseum	120.64	5.57
Total		**2163.99**	**100**

Table 7: Watford Borough Greenhouse Gas Emissions updated comparison to 2023/2024

Scope	Emission Source	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	% Change from 2024/25
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	137.48	128.86	177.12	-10.80%
	Fuel – Petrol	0	0	0	
	Fleet – Waste Collection	459.04	441.75	411.97	
	Fleet – Parks, Green Spaces and Streets	156.52	146.99	148.2	
2	Electricity	249.2	277.38	150.22*	
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	2.04	1.07	3.44*	-20.88%
	Purchased Goods and services-Paper, IT	285.12	238.8	39.29	
	Fuel/Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	92.19	98.31	76.64	
	Waste Generated in Own operations	12.25	12.63	11.77	
	Business Travel (Car)	5.75	6.02	6.64	
	Employee commuting and home working	150.8	307.75	223.36	
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	993.9	948.8	794.7	
	Downstream Leased Assets - Colosseum	-	-	120.64*	
Total		**2554.72**	**2,610.13**	**2163.99**	**-17.09**

*Colosseum data has been separated out based on an estimate of usage from handover on 1st July 2025. Sub meter reading is now being carried out monthly, meaning a more accurate figure should be available for 2026/27. The emissions for the Colosseum also included well to tank and distribution losses for the electricity and gas used.

References

- WRI (2011) Greenhouse Gas Protocol Scope 3. Available at: Corporate-Value-Chain-Accounting-Reporing-Standard_041613_2.pdf (ghgprotocol.org).

