

Central Bedfordshire Council Draft Waste Strategy

August 2025

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1.0 Executive Summary

This is the first Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy; it includes three objectives to support Central Bedfordshire residents and communities to reduce the waste they produce, while increasing, reuse, recycling and composting. The Waste Strategy will guide decision making and help prioritise resources for waste services in Central Bedfordshire. The Waste Strategy objectives are:

- To reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste, collected and treated
- To maximise reuse, repurposing, recycling and composting
- To deliver effective, cost efficient and compliant services that are robust, reliable and resilient to change

The Council's Strategic Plan¹ states that 'environmental, sustainability and climate resilience impact will be at the heart of all Council decision-making'. The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy realises this commitment and sits alongside the Council's Sustainability Plan², outlining Central Bedfordshire's sustainable waste management ambitions. The Waste Strategy forms the long-term (25-year) strategic framework for waste management in Central Bedfordshire.

Nationally, waste management practices and requirements have changed significantly following the publication of the Resources and Waste Strategy (RWS)³ for England (2018). The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy describes both current and future impacts for the Council arising from changes in the waste sector and how it will adapt to new requirements and maximise opportunities as they arise.

The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy will be reviewed at least every five years to make sure it is fit for purpose and continues to provide the framework for ensuring waste services are compliant, cost-effective and performance is maintained and improved wherever possible.

¹ [Our Strategic Plan 2024-27 | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

² [Climate Change - tackling it and our strategy | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

³ [Resources and waste strategy for England - GOV.UK](#)

2.0 Context

2.1 Central Bedfordshire Council's Responsibilities

As a unitary Council, Central Bedfordshire is a statutory waste collection and disposal authority. This means that the Council is required by law, (Environmental Protection Act (1990)⁴) to collect and dispose of household waste (defined by the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012⁵) throughout Central Bedfordshire. The Council must also provide at least one household waste site (Household Waste and Recycling Centres) where residents can reuse, recycle and dispose of materials.

Waste services affect all residents in Central Bedfordshire, with approximately 1.2 million kerbside bin collections every 4 weeks. Waste services are highly visible, relied upon and are strictly regulated because of the major environmental impacts that can be caused by poor waste management practices.

Central Bedfordshire's residents are key partners in avoiding, reducing, reusing, recycling and composting as much waste as possible. The Council provides services which encourage effective reuse, recycling and composting of waste and, where possible and appropriate. It will work with residents and communities to facilitate and encourage sustainable waste management behaviours.

2.2 Scope of the Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy

The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy forms the long-term (25-year) strategic framework for waste management in Central Bedfordshire. It will be used to guide short, medium and long-term decision making about waste which arises in Central Bedfordshire.

The Waste Strategy considers all the waste collected, managed, treated and disposed of by Central Bedfordshire Council when performing its waste collection and disposal function. It includes waste from all activities i.e. kerbside collections, Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), street sweepings and litter, glass bring banks, as well as waste or recycling collected from other properties (such as schools) and waste from fly-tipping incidents.

The Waste Strategy covers all waste streams managed by the Council: residual (non-recyclable) waste, commercial, dry mixed recycling, garden and food waste, clinical and bulky waste, hazardous waste, textiles, waste electrical items and batteries etc. Waste arising from street cleansing activities (i.e. litter, refuse and detritus) is also included in the scope of the Waste Strategy.

⁴ [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)

⁵ [The Controlled Waste \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2012](#)

2.3 Waste Services in Central Bedfordshire

Resident satisfaction with refuse collection services was 79% in 2024, above the national average of 76%; whilst satisfaction with recycling services was 72% in 2024⁶.

The Council offers comprehensive, reliable waste services that in summary include (but are not limited to) fortnightly dry recycling and non-recycling collections, chargeable fortnightly garden waste collections, weekly food waste collections, other specialist kerbside collections (such as clinical waste), glass bring banks and four Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Full details of all waste collection services and how waste and recycling is managed and treated in Central Bedfordshire can be found via the Council's website - [Waste and recycling | Central Bedfordshire Council](#).

2.4 Waste and Recycling Performance

Central Bedfordshire's recycling rate has been consistently higher than the national average. The most recent published annual performance from 2023/24⁷ highlights that Central Bedfordshire's recycling and composting rate was 46% compared to just over 42% in England (Figure 1).

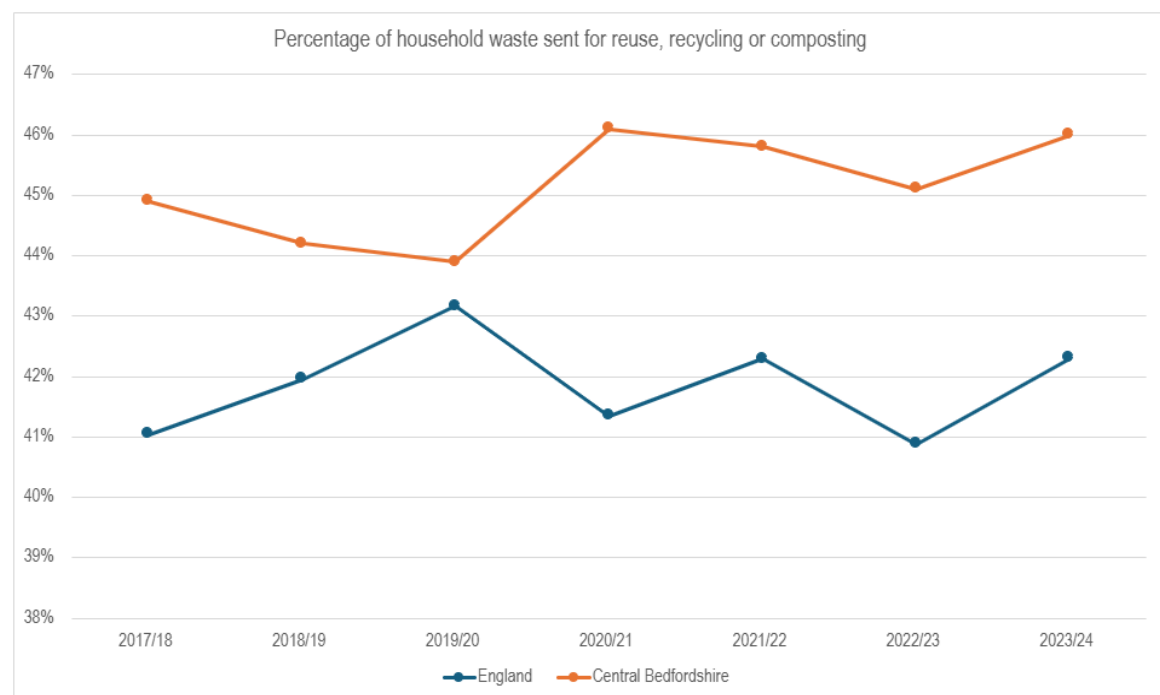


Figure 1 – Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting

⁶ [12.2 Appendix A Residents Survey 2024 Summary Report CROSC.pdf](#)

⁷ [Local authority collected waste management – Provisional annual results 2023/24 - GOV.UK](#)

Central Bedfordshire has experienced an increase in recent years in the amount of household waste collected that is not sent for reuse, recycling or composting in Central Bedfordshire. The disposal of waste via landfill or energy from waste treatment is not only more environmentally detrimental, but also more costly for the Central Bedfordshire taxpayer. This trend therefore confirms the importance and need for the objectives to reduce the amount of residual waste collected and treated and maximise reuse, repurposing, recycling and composting within the Waste Strategy.

2.5 Legislative changes and targets

The Environment Act⁸ (2021) realises the aims and ambitions of the Resources and Waste Strategy for England (2018) and seeks to preserve resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy, focusing on reducing waste and pollution by keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible through reuse, repair, recycling and regeneration. The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy aligns with the Resources and Waste Strategy for England (2018) and complies with the requirements within the Environment Act. Over the coming years the Council will be required to comply with, or implement, new measures introduced by the Government:

Simpler Recycling

- The Council will be required to collect a consistent set of recyclable materials from the kerbside – specifically glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, food and garden waste from all households (by 31st March 2026)

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging

- This places the responsibility on producers to minimise the amount of packaging used and ensure it is more easily recyclable. Producers are also required to make a financial contribution to improve recycling and disposal services. This aims to reduce the volume of waste sent to landfill or Energy from Waste and thus will influence how Central Bedfordshire manages recyclable waste and waste services are funded.

Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers

- This aims to encourage consumers to return plastic and metal (aluminium and steel) drinks containers to collect deposits paid, to increase recycling and reduce littering (to be introduced by October 2027). The way Central Bedfordshire Council manages recyclable waste and how this is funded will be impacted by this initiative.

Other changes anticipated to impact upon the Council's services include:

- Introduction of Emissions Trading Scheme to Energy from Waste (EfW) and incineration facilities (January 2028) – this is likely to require local authorities to

pay an additional charge for waste delivered to EfW facilities based on the amount of carbon dioxide emitted from the burning of waste

- Changes to collections of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (from 2026) – this may require collection of a wider range of waste electrical items from households
- A ban on disposable vapes (from June 2025) – aiming to reduce littering and encourage reuse of these items that contain both valuable and dangerous materials
- Digital Waste Tracking (from April 2026) – this aims to improve the transparency of the movement and management of waste from production to final disposal

In addition, the Government has set the following waste management targets:

- By 2028, eliminate all biodegradable waste from landfill (waste originating from plants or animals such as food waste, compost, paper, cardboard)
- By 2030, 60% of all waste to be re-used or recycled
- By 2035, 65% of all waste to be re-used or recycled
- By 2042, residual waste per head reduced by 50% (down to 287kg nationally) compared to 2017 levels
- By 2050, England achieves net zero and is carbon neutral (i.e. reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted and increase the amount of greenhouse gases removed from the atmosphere)

3.0 Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy Approach

The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy approach supports the principles of the waste hierarchy and the circular economy, both defined below. The approach includes learning from others to understand how outcomes can be optimised. Central Bedfordshire's residents are key partners to successfully reducing waste and reusing and recycling more. CBC provides services which enable residents to reuse and recycle their waste.

Where possible, CBC will support residents to reduce their residual waste (by considering what they buy and consume), reuse as much waste as possible and separate as much high-quality waste as possible for recycling and composting.

Initiatives to increase sustainable practices and direct residents to information and other resources will be used alongside the influence of Central Bedfordshire communities to empower local leadership and ensure activities can continue effectively in the long term without further intervention.

3.1 The Waste Hierarchy and Circular Economy

The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy seeks to apply the principle of the waste hierarchy when managing and delivering waste services in Central Bedfordshire.



Figure 2 – The Waste Hierarchy

The first step is to avoid buying items or products in the first place, by becoming more conscious consumers. Second is to reduce what we buy, buying only what we need to avoid creating unnecessary waste (i.e., buying loose fruit and vegetables rather than pre-packaged ones). Thirdly, wherever possible, items should be reused or repaired (i.e., using and reusing refillable coffee cups and water bottles or selling items on online marketplaces) or repurposed (i.e., giving items a second life by using them in other ways). Next in the hierarchy is recycling items (i.e., using them to create valuable new materials, rather than depleting global resources) followed by recovery, where energy (heat and power) and other useful resources can be generated (such as incinerator bottom ash being turned into aggregates for construction).

The waste hierarchy is a commonly accepted approach to deliver sustainable resource use. It describes the steps that should be considered (from best to worst as described above) with the least preferable options including treatment of waste that cannot be reused, recycled or composted and finally, disposal of any remaining waste. Central Bedfordshire Council will deliver services and facilities that enable residents, customers, stakeholders and community groups to apply the principles of the waste hierarchy.

The waste hierarchy aligns with the circular economy.

The circular economy is an economic model that focuses on reducing waste and pollution by keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible through reuse, repair, recycling, and regeneration

The first principle of the circular economy is to eliminate waste and pollution. The economy is currently linear operating in a {take-make-consume-throwaway manner}. As resources are finite, this model is not sustainable. In a circular economy, materials re-enter the economy at the end of their use. Many products could be circulated by being maintained, shared, reused, repaired, remanufactured, and, lastly, recycled.

The second principle of the circular economy is to circulate products and materials at their highest value. This means keeping them in use, either in a product or as components or raw materials. This could include business models based on sharing, so users get access to a product rather than owning it and more people get to use it over time. It could involve reuse through resale. It could mean cycles of maintenance, repair, and refurbishment.

The third principle is to regenerate nature. By moving to a circular economy, natural processes are supported, leaving more room for nature to thrive. The focus moves from extraction to regeneration, which emulates natural systems. The waste strategy approach aims to support community action to embrace the circular economy.

3.2 Learning from Others

The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy approach involves continued investigation and benchmarking of good practice from other Councils, partners and stakeholders. This will continue to assist the development of strategies, approaches, or activities that have been shown through research and evaluation to be effective, efficient, sustainable, and transferable.

3.3 Working in Partnership with Residents, Customers, Stakeholders and Community Groups

It is recognising that residents' actions are key to sustainable waste management. The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy approach includes supporting and signposting to empower individuals, groups or organisations best placed within the community to deliver activities that align with the waste hierarchy and circular economy. This approach ensures activities remain self-sustaining and effective within communities now and in the future.

3.4 Delivering the Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy

The following section describes what the Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy will deliver now and in the future. The overall objectives are intended to be broad to allow more specific tasks to be able to be delivered in accordance with the objectives over time.

3.5 Reduce the amount of residual waste produced, collected and treated

How this objective will be delivered:

Central Bedfordshire Council will:

- Facilitate community leadership of waste hierarchy and circular economy activities and behaviours by:
 - Using the Council's resources, like its website, to inform, educate, signpost and connect individuals, groups or organisations. There is lots of information about waste services available via the CBC website here: [Waste and recycling | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)
 - Engaging with individuals, groups or organisations to identify self-sustaining partnership opportunities
 - Encouraging advocacy and practice of sustainable waste management and circular economy behaviour by engaging with members of the public and volunteers within the community etc.

- Improve Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) operations and manage demand by:
 - Enhancing the customer experience, reducing queues and providing better support for residents
 - Diverting as much waste from HWRCs for reuse, recycling or composting to avoid Energy from Waste treatment or landfill
 - Ensuring only Central Bedfordshire residents use HWRCs (therefore only allowing HWRC use by residents who pay for the service through council tax and reducing demand and costs caused by non-resident use)
 - Preventing commercial / trade waste from being delivered and managed at the expense of residents
 - Considering how different waste types are accepted and managed to minimise the amount of waste that needs disposal
- Consider review of kerbside residual waste collection frequencies
- Wherever possible, reduce kerbside residual waste bin capacity
- Continue to support, and where appropriate, facilitate initiatives that quantifiably prevent unnecessary waste such as home composting and real nappies
- Consider opportunities to support the work of others to deliver targeted activities that reduce waste such as repair cafes and libraries of things

3.6 Maximise reuse, repurposing, recycling and composting

How this objective will be delivered

Central Bedfordshire Council will:

- Expand the glass kerbside recycling service to include all households by 31 March 2026 (replacing glass bring banks)
- Expand the food waste recycling service to include all households by 31 March 2026
- Provide plastic films/bags (i.e. soft plastics) kerbside recycling for all households by 31 March 2027
- Consider introducing separate paper and card kerbside collections to optimise the quality of recycling materials

- Seek to optimise the amount of litter and street sweepings that are recycled or composted, rather than being treated by Energy from Waste or landfilled
- Consider a review of the reuse offering at HWRCs
- Consider further reuse and recycling opportunities at HWRCs (such as electrical equipment, plastic toys, furniture and mattresses)
- Continue to support, and where appropriate facilitate, initiatives that quantifiably increase reuse, repair, recycling and composting
- Facilitate and, where appropriate, enable reuse, repurposing, recycling and composting initiatives by stakeholders and partners who are in the best place to provide sustainable community initiatives
- Explore commercial waste recycling and composting opportunities such as providing waste collections from schools and / or other non-domestic premises

3.7 Deliver effective, cost-efficient and compliant services that are robust, reliable and resilient to change

How this objective will be delivered

Central Bedfordshire Council will:

- Deliver robust, timely and competitive procurement processes, to secure best value for residents.
- Consider how services are delivered, including investment in infrastructure within Central Bedfordshire to improve service resilience and performance, provide longer term budget certainty (including opportunities to generate income) and enhance flexibility to adapt to market and legislative changes.
- Work with the Government, other Councils, representative bodies and stakeholders to ensure risks and opportunities are identified, managed and realised.
- Consider alternative fuel for CBC's fleet of waste collection and street cleansing vehicles, to align with Milestone 3.7.2 of the Sustainability Plan.

4.0 Reviewing and Communicating Progress

The Central Bedfordshire Waste Strategy will be reviewed at least every 5 years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and appropriate within the local and national context at that time.

Performance information and data will provide evidence that will inform decisions made regarding sustainable waste management in Central Bedfordshire.

Furthermore, Central Bedfordshire's waste and recycling performance will be reported regularly through statutory reporting mechanisms and other processes as required.

Central Bedfordshire in contact

Find us online: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Call: 0300 300 8000

Email: customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ