

CLIMATE CHANGE & PLANNING – WHAT'S THE LATEST?

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It's a Climate Change Emergency

Last month on the 6th August 2021 the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) released their most recent report on climate change advances and how human influence needs to evolve to respond to this. The Sixth Assessment Report shocked many and made us think more about what we can do as groups and as individuals to help towards the change needed.

The headline statements from the report included important findings, such as;

- The current state of the climate 'observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence'.
- Possible climate futures include 'Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decades.'
- To limit future climate change 'limiting human-induced global warming to a specific level requires limiting cumulative CO₂ emissions, reaching at least net zero CO₂ emissions, along with strong reductions in other greenhouse gas emissions.'

'Newspapers reported these findings across the globe, highlighting the importance of acting fast to help reduce these negative impacts on the planet.'

BBC News reported headlines across multiple articles. A couple of these can be read here, to help increase the awareness of the IPCC's report:

[Climate change: IPCC report is 'code red for humanity'](#)

[Climate change: Five things we have learned from the IPCC report](#)

It is clear that the findings are strong, and the assessment is confident of the consequences if no political action is achieved in the fight for protecting the planet.

Climate Change is Impacting the Planning System

An example of action and planning, when it comes to climate change, was reported on 12th August this year. The High Court dismissed a challenge for Britain's first zero-emission street!

Beech Street, located in the City of London Corporation, was to close as part of an experiment with sole access for zero-emission vehicles.

It was concluded that the experiment was to continue to help to fully assess air quality of the street, which would further assist in the consideration of a permanent solution.

'This is the first temporary zero-emission street in the UK, and a step in the right direction. It shows how political action can help towards limiting climate change and how changes as part of the planning system are more important than ever.'

Planning Policy Push to Respond to Climate Change

When it comes to planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has already shown modifications that help towards the joint goal.

The updated text refers to the increased requirement for planning applications to assess flood risk in detail, including within a coastal context. Paragraph 161 requires the assessment of all sources of flood risk.

- Paragraph 161 reads;

All plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development – taking into account all sources of flood risk and the current and future impacts of climate change – so as to avoid, where possible, flood risk to people and property.

This means that even a site in a high surface water or ground water area may need to undergo a Sequential Test. This is a test to 'steer new development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source' (Paragraph 162 of the NPPF 2021).

An exception to requiring a detailed assessment may be that for proposed minor developments and/or change of use applications.

'Although we are starting to see a degree of policies linked to climate change the practical transfer of this into reality is slow. Hands-on guidance and backing on how to secure these

changes on-the-ground is limited.'

Our Role as Planners

The role planning has to play in fighting climate change is of particular importance. As planning consultants, we can advise clients and propose appropriate solutions to low-energy and low-carbon alternatives. This would support elements such as, sustainable construction and design, energy efficiency, zero-emission transport, zero-waste solutions, and low flood risk locations for development. All of which would assist in reducing our carbon footprint for new or existing development.

The opportunities to make a world of difference are available, but we must make use of them. The Planning Insight team will be keeping an eye on further climate change updates at government and local levels to keep our knowledge and approach up to date.

Sources:

IPCC - <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/#SPM>

ENDS Report -

<https://www.endsreport.com/article/1724610/high-court-dismisses-challenge-britains-first-zero-emission-street>

Ambiental Environmental Assessment -

<https://www.ambiental.co.uk/july-2021-nppf-and-climate-change-updates/>

TCPA - <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/planning-for-climate-change>