

# Waste management strategy 2018 to 2028

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## Foreword from Luton Council's leader, Councillor Hazel Simmons

Waste collection and disposal is a key service provided by the council to all residents of the borough. The costs of collecting, recycling and disposing of waste in 2015-16 totalled £13.6m - that's around £170 for each of Luton's households.

Given the unprecedented budget reductions imposed by Government austerity measures, we need to have efficient and effective waste services in place.



This will also help to:

- protect our local environment
- ensure taxpayers money is well spent
- change behaviours to reduce waste generated
- improve recycling
- stimulate the local economy

Reducing the environmental and financial impacts of the waste we generate will help us deliver a sustainable solution over the next 10 years and beyond.

Changes in service provision over the years have meant that our communities are able to reuse, recycle and compost materials in a more convenient and reliable way than ever before. Recently we provided more than 30,000 bigger recycling bins to replace older smaller bins and help residents recycle more.

In 2015-16 we collected 94,625 tonnes of municipal waste, the vast majority being from borough householders. With residents' help we recycled more than 35% of this waste.

Luton compares reasonably to similar urban unitary authorities in the amount of waste generated per resident and recycling performance. However, with increasing financial pressures, decreasing budgets, a national 50% recycling target and the need to meet the requirements of our residents, we need to look at a refreshed strategy to take us forward.

At the heart of our new strategy is a drive to promote wider social responsibility for managing waste. We all need to work together - it is up to all of us to play our part and rise to the challenge of meeting our vision which is to quite simply: **Waste Less, Recycle More.**

We are committed to doing all we can to increase recycling, reuse and recover value from the waste generated in the town.

This strategy looks at where Luton is now and explores a range of issues and challenges facing Luton in managing its waste over the next 10 years.

Greater community engagement and the promotion of social responsibility are key to any strategy. This waste strategy will be key to providing integrated, efficient services, linking into the council's vision; 'Enabling Luton to be proud, vibrant, ambitious and innovative'.

**Waste Less**  

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**Recycle More**

# Introduction

Waste management is a fundamental part of the services provided by the Council. It helps protect the local environment through the safe collection and disposal of household waste. It also plays an important role in promoting social responsibility by helping residents understand the impact of waste and how everyone can work towards an environmentally sustainable future.

How waste is managed varies according to the collection methods adopted by councils. These are chosen based on their suitability for the local area and the availability of facilities for recycling, reprocessing, treatment and disposal. Luton, like any forward-thinking council, must plan ahead. This draft waste strategy provides the framework upon which appropriate resources, contracts and facilities will be developed.

Local and national drivers impact on the challenges Luton is facing and influence what can be achieved, how and when. The strategy has been developed to ensure that our waste and recycling policies and objectives are best aligned with, and respond to, these challenges. A number of assumptions have been used in the development of the strategy.

## Assumptions

### Legislation and targets

Based on what is already known about current targets, such as the 50% recycling target by 2020 and the expectation that higher rates will be required in the future.

### Residents

Based on what our residents will expect in the future, or how the behaviours of our residents will change, such as, when the economy becomes stronger will waste increase as people have more disposable income?

### Local facilities and technology

Looking at what facilities will be available to us and/or needed to help transfer and manage our waste in the future. This includes the existing waste management contract and diversion of household waste from landfill to EfW (Energy from Waste) facilities.

### Market dynamics

Based on how the waste resources market develops and changes in the global economy.

### Economic and financial outlook

Based on the finances which will affect the council up until 2028 and beyond.

### Local demographics

Based on the local demographic make-up of the borough and how this will change between now and 2027 and beyond. This includes the significant increase in population and changes in housing types such as the expected increase in the numbers of people living in low rise properties or high rise flats.

### Local economy

Based on local and strategic business growth influenced by the long term Luton Investment Framework and expansion of London Luton Airport.

# 1 Where are we now?

This section provides:

- background information on Luton's waste
- the services provided by the council
- what's in your waste
- information on how Luton compares with other similar councils
- key challenges

## Luton in numbers

- In 2017 the population of Luton was 217,000. It is expected to increase by 26,600 over the next 10 years.
- Waste created by residents and businesses: 94,265 tonnes.
- We have a 35% recycling rate.
- The cost of collection and disposal: more than £50,000 per working day.
- We provide more than 8.5m kerbside household collections each year, using 24 dustcarts.
- Reducing household waste by 1 tonne saves £160.
- Recycling an extra tonne saves £84 of landfill tax.
- There are currently 79,800 households and this will rise to over 91,900 by 2027.
- 18% of households in Luton are flat or houses of multiple occupation.

## Luton's total annual waste (tonnes)

- Total: 94,265
- Household: 81,905
- Non-household: 12,360
- Kerbside collection, recycling centres (NRCs) and bulky waste: 68,412 tonnes
- Residual weekly collections: 49,017
  - Mixed dry recycling: 10,351
  - Kerbside glass: 1,431
  - Garden waste: 6,886
  - NRCs: 727
- Household waste recycling centres: 16,091
  - Residual: 3,398
  - Total separate recycling streams: 6,521
  - Green waste: 1,204
  - Reuse: 4,279
  - Waste, electrical and electronic equipment: 689
- Other: 9,762
  - Street sweeping: 1,047
  - Parks' green waste: 323
  - Non-household residual: 7,142
  - Trade recycling – mixed: 177
  - Fly tipping: 1,073

## Where did the waste go?

- Reuse and recycling: 35,799 tonnes
- Energy recovery / energy from waste (EfW): 20,843 tonnes
- Landfill: 37,623 tonnes

**Note:** tonnage data taken from [WasteDataFlow](#) 2015-16, includes household and non household tonnages.

## What services do we provide?

### Household collections

The following list details how we collect your waste and where it goes.

#### **Residual**

- Weekly black wheeled bin residual waste collection (black sacks for those properties unable to be served by wheeled bins – principally town centre and terrace-type properties).
- Destination: EfW at Greatmore, Bucks and landfill at Bletchley, Bucks

#### **Mixed recycling**

- Fortnightly wheeled bin mixed recycling collection: food and drink cans, mixed paper and card, cartons (Tetra Pak), aerosols, foils and plastic bottles.
- Destination: Luton MRF - UK and European markets

#### **Glass**

- Monthly 55 litre box collection of mixed glass to approximately 56,000 households.
- Destination: UK glass reuse market

#### **Garden**

- Fortnightly brown wheeled bin garden waste collection from March to November for 60,000 households.
- Destination: local compost facility

#### **Communal**

- Weekly residual/fortnightly mixed from flats.
- Destination: as residual or mixed recycling

#### **Bulky**

- A bulky waste collection service costing £25 for up to three items, additional items at £5 each to a maximum of ten items in total.
- Destination: landfill

#### **Healthcare**

- Healthcare and sharps collections.
- Destination: incineration or landfill

#### **Neighbourhood recycling centres (NRCs)**

- NRCs are located across the whole town where residents can recycle paper/cardboard/cans and aerosols/ foil/glass/plastic bottles.
- Destination: UK recycling markets

#### **Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)**

- Two Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) for residents to deposit bulky waste items in cars operated by FCC on behalf of the Council. We offer a resident permit service for larger vehicles and a commercial waste chargeable service at Progress Way.
- Destination: 70% recycled at UK markets and 30% landfill or EfW

#### **Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and batteries**

- Disposed via household waste recycling centres, community locations and bulky household collection.

- Destination: UK and European recycling markets

### Non-household waste

In addition to managing waste from households, we also provide for collection, processing and disposal of waste arising from parks and streets cleansing, gully waste operations, and from Council trade waste services. Street sweeping arising from cleansing operations are sent for recycling.

### Waste disposal

Our waste is managed through an arrangement with a leading waste management contractor (FCC) under a public private partnership (PPP) arrangement which will run to 2021.

FCC (environment) operates waste transfer stations (WTS), materials recovery facilities (MRF) and the HWRCs, providing all staff, equipment and handling infrastructure.

This provides for the onward transfer, treatment, recycling, re-processing or landfill of waste including both household and commercial waste.

### How much waste do we generate?

With **Waste Less, Recycle More** as the vision of the strategy, how much waste we generate in Luton is a key indicator for assessing our progress throughout the life of the strategy. In 2015-16 Luton managed 94,265 tonnes of waste overall.

Household waste totalled 81,905 tonnes ([see page 4 for breakdown](#)) equating to 377kg per year or 7.3kg per week for each of Luton's residents. This was collected from the kerbside, NRCs, HWRCs and other frontline operations.

### What's in your black rubbish bin?

Waste analysis undertaken in 2014 showed that substantial amounts of material in your black waste bin could be prevented, recycled or composted. The list below shows how this would have looked in 2015-16:

- total black bin waste: 47,017 tonnes
- 40% wasted food
- 37% non recyclable material
- 18% dry recycling
- 3% discarded textiles
- 2% garden waste recycling

This equates to the following tonnages and disposal costs for the council and ultimately local taxpayers.

#### Wasted food - 19,607 tonnes

- equivalent weight of 292,639 people
- collection and disposal cost: **£3,137,088**

#### Dry recycling – 8,823 tonnes

- equivalent weight of 131,687 people
- collection and disposal cost: **£1,411,690**

#### Garden waste recycling - 980 tonnes

- equivalent weight of **14,632** people
- collection and disposal cost: **£156,854**

**Note:** average Weight of person is assumed to be 67kg.

## What's in your dry recycling bin?

Waste analysis undertaken in 2014 showed what people were recycling and indicated that there was room for 20% more recycling in the bin.

- 67-73% paper, card, cartons
- 12-18% contamination
- 9% plastic
- 5% metal, tins
- 1% textiles

**Note:** all percentages are by weight not volume.

## How Luton compares

Luton as a unitary authority provides for both collection and disposal of household waste and non-household waste.

As detailed on [page 5](#), in addition to its mixed recycling collections, Luton also provides glass collections and free garden waste collections which all have capacity to accept more relevant recycling material.

It is classed as a densely populated, predominantly urban area with high levels of deprivation and similar demographics to some London Boroughs.

We have compared our performance to 16 similar unitary authorities including Medway, Derby, Blackburn and Leicester.

Luton could do better. With your help, we want to ensure that the vision of this strategy helps improve our recycling performance in the future.

- **Dry recycling rate:** Luton ranks 8th out of 16 comparable councils
- **Composting rate:** Luton ranks 14th out of 16 comparable councils
- **Total recycling rate:** Luton ranks 12th out of 16 comparable councils

**Note:** where 1 is highest.

## Key challenges

- Population growth
- Large quantities of food waste
- High birth rate, generating above average quantity of nappies
- High proportion of: under 25s and over 65s
- Large families
- High percentage of flats and houses with multiple occupancy (HMOs)
- Cultural barriers
- High population density with significant numbers of multi occupancy per dwelling
- High population turnover and student turnover
- Austerity measures creating financial constraints

Changes in service which require additional funding will be difficult to finance and there is pressure for waste services to contribute to overall council savings targets. This, and the other challenges highlighted will heavily influence the delivery of this strategy.

## 2 What do we want to achieve?

Residents have told us they want to **Waste Less and Recycle More**.

### Waste Less

This simply means reducing your waste:

- 10% reduction in average household waste over the strategy's lifetime
- equates to 100kg per household

### Key targets

Targets to be achieved by no later than the end of the strategy period:

- reduce the amount of wasted food from 245kg per household to 182kg per household
- reduce the average annual amount of wasted food from 19,600 tonnes to 15,000 tonnes
- through waste minimisation schemes, reduce the average annual amount of waste in the black bin a year by 80kg from 614kg per household to 534kg
- reduce the amount of waste through household recycling centres from 200kg per household to 180kg per household
- taken together these targets will achieve our objective of reducing waste by a 100kg per household and save up to £12 per household in disposal costs (based on current costs)

### Recycle More

This means increasing the quantity and quality of your recycling:

- achieve a 50% recycling rate by 2020
- implement a social responsibility agenda that incorporates key message: **Waste Less and Recycle More**

### Key targets

Waste analysis shows that more than 30% of the black bin waste collected in Luton could be recycled or composted through services we already offer. Through sustained and targeted communications campaign Recycle Right aims to promote behaviour change and encourage residents:

- to recycle 50% of the possible recyclable material currently in their residual bin
- to capture or divert more than half of the green waste currently placed in their residual waste bin
- to reduce contamination of recycling streams
- to improve the quality of the recycling captured

## 3 How can we meet our objectives?

In summary:

### Waste Less

- Waste minimisation and education
- Not wasting 5,000 tonnes of food waste
- Reducing overall black bin waste (including wasted food) by 80kg per household per year
- Reducing HWRC waste by 20kg per household



- A reduction in average household waste of 10% and a potential saving of up to £1m in disposal and taxation costs alone

## Recycle More

- Recycling awareness and communications
- Capturing just half (4,400 tonnes) of the dry recycling material currently lost in the black bin and putting it into the recycling bin would increase our recycling performance by 6%
- Putting half of the green waste (around 400 tonnes) left in black bin waste would increase recycling performance by around 0.4%
- This would increase overall recycling performance by 6.4% and could save up to £363,000 per year

The combined impact of Waste Less and Recycle More would see Luton's recycling performance **increase by at least 10% from 35% to 45%** and could save the council up to **£1.3m**.

## 4 How will we get there?

In recent years, the council has increased the sustainability and efficiency of its waste collection and disposal services. Changes have included 4 day working for kerbside collections, larger recycling bins for residents and increased diversion of waste away from landfill to EfW.

In addition, in keeping with some other councils, it is introducing more robust enforcement procedures including 'compulsory recycling'.

However, to deliver the Waste Less Recycle More targets the council must make a step change. Service change is seen as critical to reducing the amount of waste collected, increasing the amount recycled and improving the effectiveness of the service.

### Possible service changes

A wide body of evidence now exists to show that to stimulate higher levels of recycling and waste minimisation councils have to reduce the capacity of black bin waste they provide to residents.

Recent national guidance has suggested that councils provide residents with up to a maximum of 120l of residual waste capacity each week (the equivalent of half the size of Luton's standard 240l black bin). We can do this in Luton by moving most household collections to an alternate bin system which would see black bin waste collections one week and recycling the next.

This approach would not only encourage recycling, but also improve waste minimisation. Additionally, it would release local authority funding to reinvest in improving waste services further, or tackling other spending priorities.

### Alternate bin collections

Moving residual collections to fortnightly has commonly been associated with the provision of weekly food waste collections, but a number of urban councils have done so recently without doing this.

The food waste trials undertaken in recent years in Luton did not result in substantial quantities of food waste being captured and were consequently stopped as they were not economically sustainable.

However, food waste still represents more than 40% of Luton's black bin waste and future plans must examine the potential for its cost-effective collection. Introducing food waste collections is one

area in which future waste services could be improved and the savings from alternate bin collections could assist with this.

The provision of alternate bin collections will not be suitable for all households, for example flats or households where there is a lack of storage capacity or communal collections are provided.

Where necessary weekly collections will be maintained. Service provision will also have to take into account the needs of larger families.

## Education, engagement and communications

To support the Waste Less Recycle More strategy, it is acknowledged that many of the current practices and policies need updating to bring them in line with current industry best practice.

It is proposed that these are consolidated and replaced by a service standard between the Council and the residents, which would be reported annually. This service standard will be communicated to householders, staff and other stakeholders.

All education and communications campaigns will be linked to this service standard, the foundations of which will be the core principles of the 4Es:

- Engage
- Enable
- Encourage
- Enforce

### Engage

Engaging with residents will increase the quantity and quality of recycling collected in areas where there is low participation in recycling or a high level of contamination.

Similarly, re-engage with schools with the relaunch of a schools education programme.

### Enable

Enable residents to Recycle Right by ensuring that there is sufficient capacity across black bin waste, recycling and indeed HWRCs. Where appropriate, utilise bespoke containment in flats and HMO's based on best practice to increase the volume and quality of the material collected.

### Encourage

Encourage residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce through high-profile ongoing, borough-wide 'one less bin' campaign, with a particular focus on food waste. Continue communications and support for our Recycle Right reward tag scheme as well as other schemes such as home composting and real nappies.

### Enforce

Enforce waste service standards through a range of escalating enforcement measures to support all education and communication activities, focused on the quality and quantity of material collected.

We will continue to evaluate the success of these schemes and explore means of best practise ensuring that, where possible, these are adopted.

# Planning for the future

## Infrastructure to deliver the strategy

The existing waste infrastructure has been in place for many years and in that time the Kingsway WTS/MRF and two HWRCs have provided the strategic disposal routes for household waste in the town.

Over the life of the strategy, the technology and infrastructure to help deliver our targets, aims and aspirations will need to be reviewed and where necessary updated.

Currently all waste is bulked for onward final disposal in the case of residual waste and further sorting in the case of recyclables. Luton now sends 80% of black bin waste to EfW facilities as we move away from landfill as a primary means of disposal.

Specialist disposal and treatment options and facilities may be needed to support future waste services in Luton. These take time to develop and commission and the strategy is needed to give direction to the development of appropriate facilities to meet local and regional needs

## Legislation and policy

- European Environmental Action Plan, 7th edition (2015)
- Waste Framework Directive (2008) Proposed Circular Economy package (2014)

### National

- Environmental Protection Act (1990) England's Revised Waste Strategy (2011) Waste (England and Wales) Regulation (2012)
- A Framework for greater consistency in household recycling in England (2016)

### Local

- Luton Borough Council – Mission, vision and priorities
- Luton Investment Framework

## Glossary

**Circular Economy** - A circular economy is an alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life.

**EfW** - Energy from Waste is used to describe technologies that generate energy from the treatment of waste.

**Food waste (avoidable)** - is food and drink that would have been edible at some point prior to being thrown away, for example slices of bread, apples, yoghurts etc. Estimated in 2012 as 60% of total food waste.

**Food Waste (possibly avoidable)** - includes things like bread crusts and potato peelings that some people eat but others do not. Estimated as 17% of total food waste.

**Food waste (unavoidable)** - is inedible food waste such as tea waste, banana skins, poultry bones, onion skins and orange peel. Estimated at 23% of total food waste.

**Household waste recycling centre (HWRC)** - provided for household waste items which residents cannot fit into their normal kerbside bin.

Neighbourhood Recycling Centres (NRC) – sites provided for residents to take recycling that they cannot fit into their bin due to it being full. Larger recyclable items should be taken to the HWRC.

Recycling - items which can be collected and then recycled back into similar products.

Residual waste - items thrown away in the black bin that cannot be recycled, composted or re-used and are sent for disposal to an energy recovery facility or landfill.

Reuse - according to WRAP, reuse is any operation by which products or components that are not waste are used again for the same purpose for which they were conceived through repair or refurbishment.

Transfer stations – sites provided for dustcarts to tip waste so that it can be bulked up into large haulage containers for onward processing.

Waste – any item that is thrown away, either for disposal or recycling.

Waste hierarchy -ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery, and last of all disposal.

Waste minimisation – diverting waste away from final disposal.

Waste prevention – waste avoidance, reduction, reuse and preparing for reuse.

WEEE – Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment.

WRAP – Waste and Resources Action Programme.