

OUR LOCAL MANIFESTO

FOR A FAIRER, GREENER
WORCESTER

2024-2028

Our priorities for Worcester

Image: The River Severn that runs through the heart of Worcester

Promoted on behalf of Worcester Green Party by C Wratten, 3 Mayfield Road, Worcester WR3 8NS.

INTRODUCTION

This manifesto focuses on things that elected Greens on Worcester City Council are working hard to influence and deliver, giving examples of our recent achievements and future priorities.

Who runs Worcester City Council?

Worcester City Council has mainly been in no overall control since the first Green was elected in 2012, with 35 councillors split between three or four political groups. Since then, the Greens have steadily increased their numbers and are now the second largest group. The Greens favour the more democratic committee system of running the council and helped bring it about in 2018.

In May 2023, joint leaders of the council were elected, one from the Green group – Marjory Bisset – and one from the Labour group.

Greens do politics differently

The leaders of the Greens on the city council, first Louis Stephen then Marjory Bisset, have encouraged a better culture of collaborative working, listening, and treating people with kindness and respect.

With more Green councillors elected, we have made much more progress. For example, the city will have real-time air pollution monitors thanks to the perseverance of the Greens.

Greens are needed, now more than ever

These are difficult times, due to climate change, the inequality scandal and the years of chronic underfunding of public services by the Government. Our city needs councillors who bring hope with solutions and who listen to residents. Greens are ethical, responsible and kind and will help local communities through actions not just words.



Louis and Marjory shaking hands outside the Guildhall.

OUR LOCAL MANIFESTO – SIX KEY THEMES

1. Urgent action on the climate emergency
2. Cosy and affordable homes - in the right places
3. Supporting local communities and vulnerable people
4. Green spaces for people, wildlife and food growing
5. Enabling small businesses, tourism and culture to thrive
6. A transport system for clean air and liveable streets

For each theme we outline:

GREEN VISION

What we are aiming for overall

GREEN PRIORITIES

What we will aim to do in the next four years

GREEN ACTION

What we have already done

For the Green Party's national policies
(e.g. on health, education, taxation and much more):

manifesto.greenparty.org.uk



THE GUILDHALL – The front elevation of the Guildhall

URGENT ACTION ON THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

GREEN VISION: What are we aiming for overall?

Urgent action is needed to avoid large-scale human suffering and the loss of many more species. We can only avoid catastrophic climate and ecological breakdown by leaving fossil fuels in the ground and rapidly moving towards net-zero carbon emissions. Worcester residents know that climate change is real because we see the River Severn flood our city more often and more seriously, bringing disruption and suffering. We need to adapt the city not only to more floods but also to increasingly hot summers and more frequent and intense storms. We need action from politicians to help bring the changes that are needed to achieve climate goals- how we travel, heat our buildings, produce food, generate electricity, keep warm, and reduce waste.

GREEN PRIORITIES What we will try to do in the next four years

- Continue to reduce the energy use of council buildings, generate renewable energy and support staff and councillors to walk and cycle.
- Ensure that the city is prepared to adapt to the local and global impacts of climate breakdown such as extreme weather, flooding, displacement of people and disruption to supply chains and provide support for residents and businesses.
- Get council caterers to offer more plant-based food and push for other local institutions and event organisers to do the same.
- Encourage residents to produce less waste, improve recycling rates, bring in food waste and the collection of a wider range of materials.
- Continue to oppose national environmental deregulation.
- Lobby the government to provide funding for flood defences and recovery for the city .



Councillors and campaigners highlight the impact of flooding on the city

URGENT ACTION ON THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

GREEN ACTION What have we already done

Through working collaboratively across the city council, we have:

- Prioritised the climate emergency to be carbon neutral by 2030 (city) and 2050 (county).
- Introduced free licenses for electric taxis.
- Adopted better local planning policies for sustainable development, including high standards of energy efficiency for all new housing.
- Supported the roll-out of electric vehicle charging points in public places in the city and ensured that new council-owned vehicles are or are programmed to be electric.
- Improved our community response and resilience to flooding and other emergencies.
- Led a successful motion to support the Climate and Ecology Bill.

As community campaigners we have:

- Taken part in many bike rides to highlight the need to travel sustainably. Organised bike security marking and free bike maintenance.
- Supported student climate strikes.
- Cllr Katie Collier set up the school bike buses which are expanding across the city and runs women's confidence cycling sessions.
- Candidate Leisa Taylor leads group discussions on the reality of climate breakdown.
- Used councillor funding to install swift boxes.



The installation of swift boxes



A free social and repair bike event organised by Greens

WARM AND AFFORDABLE HOMES - IN THE RIGHT PLACES!

GREEN VISION What we are aiming for overall

We want everyone to have a warm safe home. In Worcester, we have a long waiting list for housing and too many families in temporary accommodation. Too many houses are not well-insulated and are too expensive to heat. We want to address the increasing number of neglected empty homes which also negatively impact neighbours.

We need more social and affordable housing and more homes that are suitable for our ageing population. We support community-led development. Well-designed new and retrofitted housing will reduce carbon emissions, bring down energy bills and reduce illnesses caused by living in cold and damp homes. We oppose the development of green space and instead empty brownfield land should be developed for new homes.

Good planning should enable most people to live no more than a 15-minute walk from public transport hubs, shops, workplaces and community facilities.

GREEN PRIORITIES What we will try to do in the next four years

- Get a zero-carbon housing development built.
- Get developers to build new homes to the highest possible standards for sustainability (insulation, renewable energy and water efficiency).
- Create a charter for all registered housing providers to achieve zero carbon by 2030.
- Make sure that the city council takes full advantage of schemes that fund the retrofitting of older homes and supports residents' applications.
- Pursue all options available for the council to provide more social and council housing whilst campaigning for better funding from the government.
- Increase council tax for long-term empty homes.
- Bring long-term empty homes back into use and take action against private landlords who do not improve poor quality housing.
- Reduce the number of families living in temporary housing and improve the quality of emergency temporary housing.

WARM AND AFFORDABLE HOMES - IN THE RIGHT PLACES!

GREEN ACTION What we have already done

Through working collaboratively across the city council, we have:

- Worked with Worcestershire Society of Architects to introduce an annual award for sustainable development.
- Helped residents to access government funds to retrofit their houses housing to reduce energy consumption and bills.
- Increased the numbers of homes in the city centre on upper floors of businesses and shops.
- Increased the council tax charged on empty properties.

As community campaigners:

- Arboretum councillors helped residents apply for funded home improvements to make them more energy efficient and worked with Sanctuary Housing to improve the old swimming pool site social housing development.
- Cllr Andrew Cross has conducted surveys of houses to help residents implement simple energy-saving measures.
- Louis Stephen instigated Energy Trace surveys for homes to help address draughts and insulation gaps.
- Leisa Taylor has arranged for an expert to advise the Diglis Hub charity on how to save energy for the planned community centre.



New doors, windows and solar panels on an older property in the Arboretum



Cllr Stephen Cockeram with a thermal imaging camera

SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

GREEN VISION What we are aiming for overall

Everyone should be able to live with dignity with access to social activities and essential support services when needed.

In Worcester, we see homelessness and dependence on food banks increasing and this must end. Nobody should have to sleep rough, choose between heating and eating, or be stigmatised by poverty, disability, or mental ill health.

Councillors cannot solve these deep social problems on their own, but they can make a difference, by listening to people with lived experience of social exclusion and advocating for equality, diversity and inclusivity. We will support the local voluntary sector to access funding and resources and work to improve the accessibility of Worcester to meet specific local needs.

GREEN PRIORITIES What we will try to do in the next four years

- Support organisations that help people and families to access accommodation and other services to overcome problems that can lead to homelessness.
- Support community centres, parish halls and sports and arts organisations, which provide vital activities for young, vulnerable and older people.
- Respond to the mental health crisis, for example, by partnering with voluntary sector organisations who are working to address this.
- Stand up for refugees and asylum seekers, welcoming them to our district, and working for Worcester to be a City of Sanctuary.
- Sign up to the Age Friendly Community process to become a district where all people are able to live healthy and active later lives.
- Support the Open Doors campaign by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

GREEN ACTION

What we have already done

Through working collaboratively across the city council, we have:

- Set up and led a cost-of-living group, which obtained funding to provide free school meals during school holidays.
- Supported the Worcester Food Bank.
- Set up a fund to cover the costs of pest control and free bulky waste collection for people on low incomes.
- Reduced impact of increasing allotment costs to the lowest income residents.

As community campaigners:

- Councillors have organised and led countless food collections for the Food Bank.
- Cllr Hannah Cooper sits on the board of Disability Sport Worcester.
- Leisa Taylor was one of the initiators of local Reclaim the Night marches.
- Hannah Cooper paid for staff at the Museum and Art Gallery to have deafness awareness training.
- Candidate Alex Mace has raised money for Only A Pavement Away, a charity that helps homeless people into work.
- Candidates Jon Bodenham and Leisa Taylor are members of the Diglis Hub group, which aims to have a community building for residents.
- Karen Lewing has supported the Family Space that provides play and a nutritious hot meal in a warm space in the Arboretum.



Supporting Worcester Food Bank



Cllr Elena Round highlighting the importance of inclusive well-maintained play spaces

GREEN SPACES FOR PEOPLE, WILDLIFE AND FOOD GROWING

GREEN VISION *What we are aiming for overall*

We want everyone to live within easy walking distance of a high-quality public green space, for relaxing, playing and growing food. Worcester residents love our parks and open spaces including the canal and River Severn and we know how important they are for people's mental and physical health. Outdoor inclusive space is important for children and young people. We want every part of the city to have plenty of tree cover – the right trees in the right places. More trees will mitigate the effects of climate change by providing shade and keeping our streets cooler in extreme heat.

We must also halt the loss of wildlife- both for its own sake and for all the ways we rely on it, such as crop pollination. We can support this by growing more food locally and making it easier for people to get involved in food production. We want to be a herbicide- and insecticide-free city and improve the water quality of the River Severn.

GREEN PRIORITIES *What we will try to do in the next four years*

- Continue to improve council-owned parks and other open spaces, keeping them clean, green and safe, with space for wildlife to thrive.
- Deliver new high quality play spaces that are suitable for all ages and abilities using the city's Play Strategy.
- Ensure that all new developments include plenty of high-quality green spaces, including seating, growing areas, trees, wildflower areas and habitats for wildlife.
- Encourage more local food-growing initiatives such as allotments, school growing plots and community gardens.
- Set up groups to care for neglected green spaces in the city.



Working with the community to enhance their green spaces



The Community Garden shares food growing skills

GREEN SPACES FOR PEOPLE, WILDLIFE AND FOOD GROWING

GREEN ACTION What we have already done

Through working collaboratively across the city council, we have:

- Changed the council's mowing regimes to create many more wildlife-friendly verges and wildflower meadows.
- Lobbied the county council to reduce its use of toxic weed killers.
- Achieved Green Flag status for more city council spaces.
- Supported the establishment of the Worcester Way wildlife corridor around the city.

As community campaigners we have:

- Organised countless community litter picks, bulb and tree planting sessions and wildlife-friendly projects including the swift box project.
- County Cllr Matt Jenkins has run the Worcester Canal Litter Pick for over ten years and is the Worcester Canal Group secretary while Alex Mace and Karen Lewing are the co-chairs.
- Protested against the dumping of sewage in the River Severn by Severn Trent Water.
- Karen Lewing sits on the board of Transition Worcester.
- Hannah and Karen sit on the Friends of Gheluvelt Park.
- Jon Bodenham is a trustee of Worcester Community Garden and supports Worcester Food Rescue.
- Leisa Taylor has organised balsam-bashing sessions on Diglis Fields.



Campaigning to keep the River Severn clean



A Community Litter pick in St Clements

ENABLING SMALL BUSINESS, TOURISM & CULTURE TO THRIVE

GREEN VISION What we are aiming for overall

Worcester is an historic city with a strong arts and culture sector and has many local independent shops that all contribute to the vibrancy and strength of our city.

We support the reuse and regeneration of the city's built environment for arts activities, workshops and businesses and to provide new jobs and apprenticeship opportunities.

We support a transition to a Green economy to address the growing inequality in society. We need a fair and sustainable local economy with positive social and environmental outcomes. The council has a critical role in preparing people and places to the impacts of climate change.

GREEN PRIORITIES What we will try to do in the next four years

- Support small businesses, market traders and co-operatives to create local wealth and jobs, through providing affordable spaces for them.
- Develop the skills of local people to decarbonise our local economy and housing stock, in partnership with local training providers.
- Continuing to support the redevelopment of the Shrub Hill Quarter to provide better facilities for arts organisations and small businesses.
- Deliver the Council's Culture and Heritage Strategy.
- Find cost-effective ways to support local museums, arts venues and visitor information services.
- Support Small Business Saturday and shopping locally all year round.
- Develop a Climate Adaptation Plan for the city.



Candidate Annie Swift highlighting the importance of good local transport networks

ENABLING SMALL BUSINESS, TOURISM & CULTURE TO THRIVE

GREEN ACTION What we have already done

Through working collaboratively across the city council, we have:

- Helped to fund community arts projects such as Light up the Arbo and street art, Vamos, Severn Arts, Worcester Literary Festival, Worcester Musical Theatre Company, All Sorts of Performing Arts and Threads (Worcester Stitch and Textile Art Group).
- Supported the regeneration of the city centre in the north with the Arches and La Scala projects.
- Passed a Fair Tax Motion so that council procurement considers company ethics.

Green councillors and candidates collectively have a lot of experience of running culture and heritage projects and small businesses locally.

As community campaigners we have:

- Elena Round, Katie Collier and Karen Lewing are trustees of the Hopmarket Charity, supporting small independent businesses.
- Louis Stephen is on the board of the Museum of Royal Worcester
- Hannah Cooper and Karen Lewing ran outdoor Christmas carol services during COVID.
- Cllr Tor Pingree is on Worcester Arts Council, which supports local amateur arts organisations
- Matthew Jenkins uses his divisional funds to support many local cultural groups.
- Andrew Cross is helping the Malayali Community and their tug of war team Worcester Themmedi.



Councillors supporting Small Business Saturday



Campaigners Annie Swift and Rob Otto supporting a new independent shop

A TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR CLEAN AIR & LIVEABLE STREETS

GREEN VISION What we are aiming for overall

Essential services should be a short distance away from where residents live, reducing the need to travel. Everyone will benefit from cleaner air, fewer road deaths and injuries, and more pleasant streets.

We want safe walking and cycling routes integrated with high-quality, electric-powered public transport that is affordable for everyone - including free or affordable buses. Community car-share and bike-share schemes will help to reduce dependency on private car ownership. Train stations must be fully accessible with staffed offices.

The city council doesn't directly control transport, but we can still influence it. We do this through planning what gets built, managing own car parks, and talking to the county council, which is responsible for roads, pavements, and buses.

GREEN PRIORITIES What we will try to do in the next four years

- Make it easy for visitors to the city to use sustainable transport such as park-and-ride schemes, electric taxis, buses and bikes.
- Review car parking in the city centre, making sure that there are enough, well distributed disabled spaces and more electric points for car charging.
- Provide safe, secure and accessible parking for cycles across the city.
- Keep pressuring the county council to adopt the city council's traffic plan. This would tackle congestion, improve routes for pedestrians and cyclists, improve the bus station and restrict heavy goods vehicles in the city centre.
- Protect and improve bus services, including frequent, faster and affordable buses.
- Implement schemes to encourage children to get to school by bike, bus or on foot.
- Restrict vehicular access to streets where there are schools during the start and end of the school day (school streets).
- Ensure that potholes in pavements and roads are quickly repaired.
- Campaign to implement 20mph areas where there is local support.

A TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR CLEAN AIR & LIVEABLE STREETS

GREEN ACTION What we have already done

Through working collaboratively across the city council, we have:

- Worked to improve planning applications for new developments with inadequate sustainable transport plans.
- Secured road safety improvements and resurfacing of some local roads and pavements.
- Instigated the Enterprise Community car-share scheme in the Arboretum

As community campaigners we have:

- Campaigned to get the Bilford Road-Astwood Road junction redesigned to make it safer for all road users.
- Installed new benches to encourage walking.
- Supported safe school travel.
- Worked with the county council to set up a residents' parking scheme in the Arboretum.
- Helped set up and run bike buses for local schools and supported the Bike Worcester bike recycling scheme.
- Got bike parking hoops installed outside the Museum and Art Gallery.
- Worked on Bike Worcester's barrier review to submit to the county council to open up paths for cyclists, mobility scooters and pushchairs.



Councillors and Green campaigners on a busy Worcester road campaigning for clean air



Councillors and campaigners at Worcester bus station campaigning for better bus services



JOIN US AND GET INVOLVED!



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