



SEP 2025

A partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling



Contents

Executive summary	3
Background, policy, context and vision	4
Background	
Existing policy	
New and emerging policy	
Context	
Our vision	
Key drivers and priorities	11
Drivers for change	
Key priorities	
The partnership approach to delivering our vision and priorities	15
Targets	
Strategic objectives and actions	
Monitoring, review and revision	
Glossary	19
Appendix 1: Current performance and waste composition	22

Executive Summary



SEP (Surrey Environment Partnership) continuously strives to improve collection and disposal services in Surrey and aspires to be among the best nationally on all key performance indicators.

Since the Resources and Waste Strategy (RaWS) for England was published in December 2018, the Government has consulted on a number of the strategy's ambitions across a range of subjects, the results of which will provide policy direction, which we eagerly await. The policy situation combined with Surrey's growing population, increasing numbers of households, and changes in the types of waste produced by our residents means change is a certainty. However, the exact direction of the change and the impact it will have on our collection and disposal services remains unclear.

Whilst things are so uncertain, now is not the right time to update the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) and consult with residents, so we need a short-term approach to help manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable way.

SEP 2025 has been developed to bridge the gap between our existing out-of-date JMWMS and further clarity from central government. It will reflect the vision of SEP and provide clear strategic direction for the partnership for the next three years to 2025 and a longer-term vision that will allow SEP to continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste.

SEP continuously strives to improve collection and disposal services in Surrey.

SEP 2025 is therefore a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling, and has been developed on behalf of all Surrey local authorities through the SEP.

Background, policy, context and vision

Background

SEP is made up of Surrey County Council (SCC) and the 11 district and borough councils in the county (as shown in Figure 1 below). It was formed originally as the Surrey Waste Partnership (SWP) in 2009 to overcome the challenges of two-tier service delivery and aims to manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical, and sustainable way possible. SEP's plan (the JMWMS) outlined our approach to achieving this.

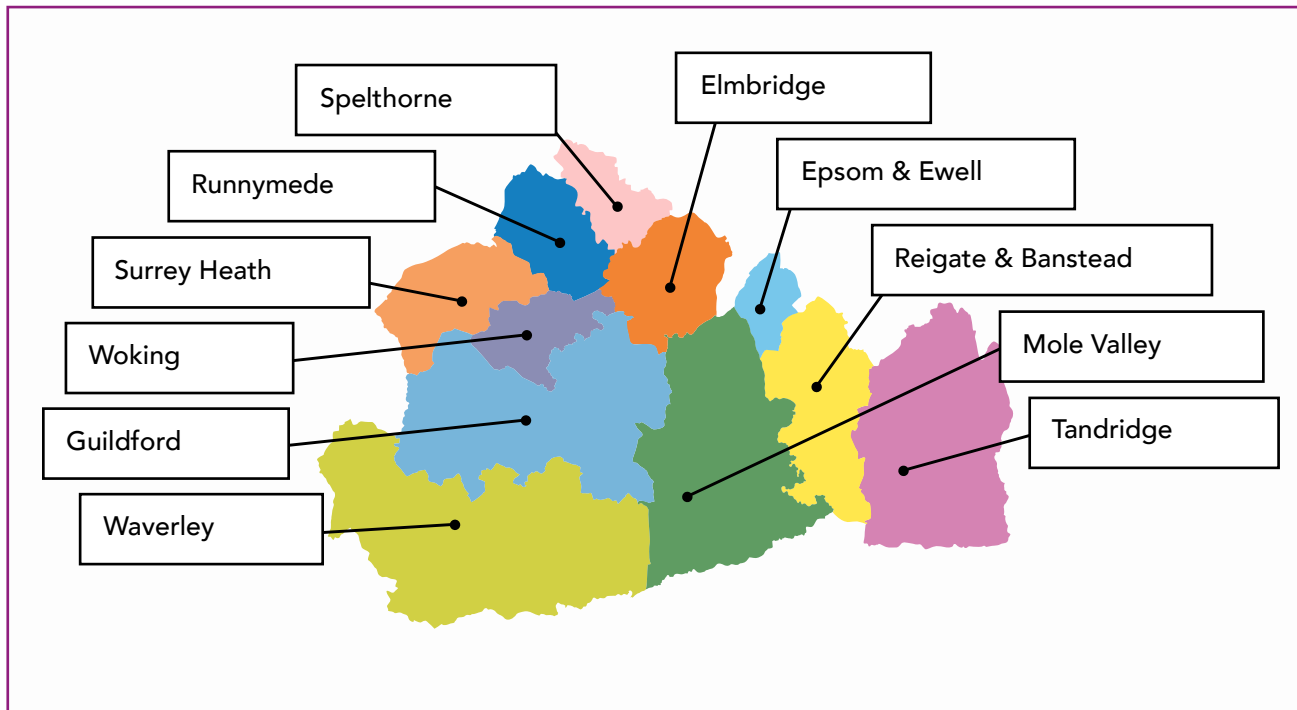


Figure 1: A map of Surrey showing the district and borough council areas

SEP's current JMWMS is meant to run until 2024–25. However, it was last updated in 2015 and is therefore considered to be 'out-of-date'. This was delayed due to the publication of the RaWS, which proposes some fundamental changes on how recycling and waste services will be funded and delivered in the future (further explained below). The key policy to support the RaWS is still emerging and therefore, the review has been postponed until national direction is clearer.

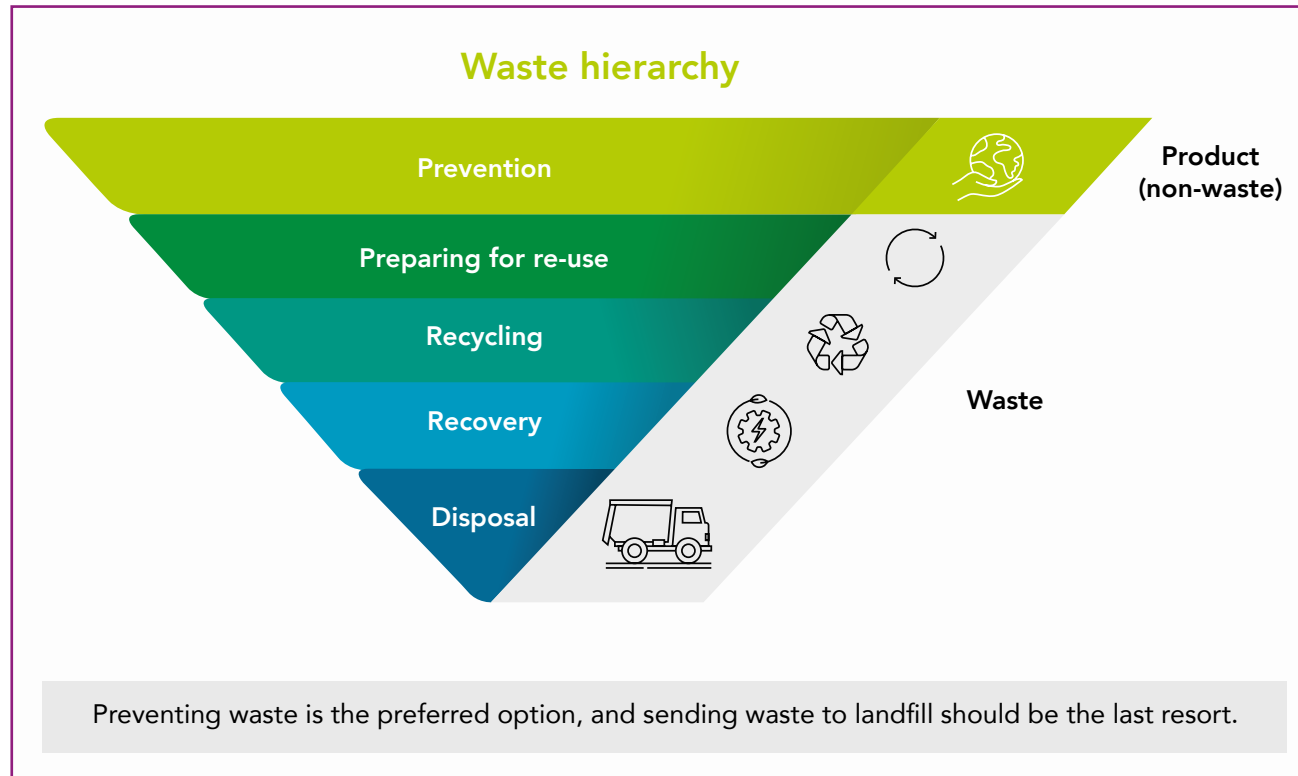
It was also decided to stop the annual monitoring of the JMWMS's action plan at the end of 2017–18 and in its place annual work programmes were developed instead. They have been in place each year through to the latest programme for 2022–23. These have effectively been the plan for working together in partnership since 2018–19. The current SEP work programme for 2022–23 can be found in Annex 1.

The partnership name was changed from SWP to SEP in April 2019 to reflect a growing remit and desire to tackle wider environmental issues in Surrey.

Existing policy

As a group of councils providing recycling and waste management services, we have several duties and responsibilities in accordance with relevant key legislation. These are set out in Annex 2, which has been the legislative framework that we have operated under during the last 30 years.

A key concept set out here is the 'waste hierarchy', which 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 reuse, then recycling, then recovery (this is where most of our residual waste goes in Surrey), and last of all disposal, e.g., landfill, as shown in Figure 2 below.



The waste hierarchy gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place.

Figure 2: Waste Framework Directive – five step waste hierarchy

New and emerging policy

Several policies are currently being developed following the publication of the RaWS. Launched in December 2018, RaWS is the Government's plan to preserve material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy. This will see products kept in use for as long as possible, making it easier to reuse, repair, refurbish or recycle them (as illustrated in Figure 3 below).

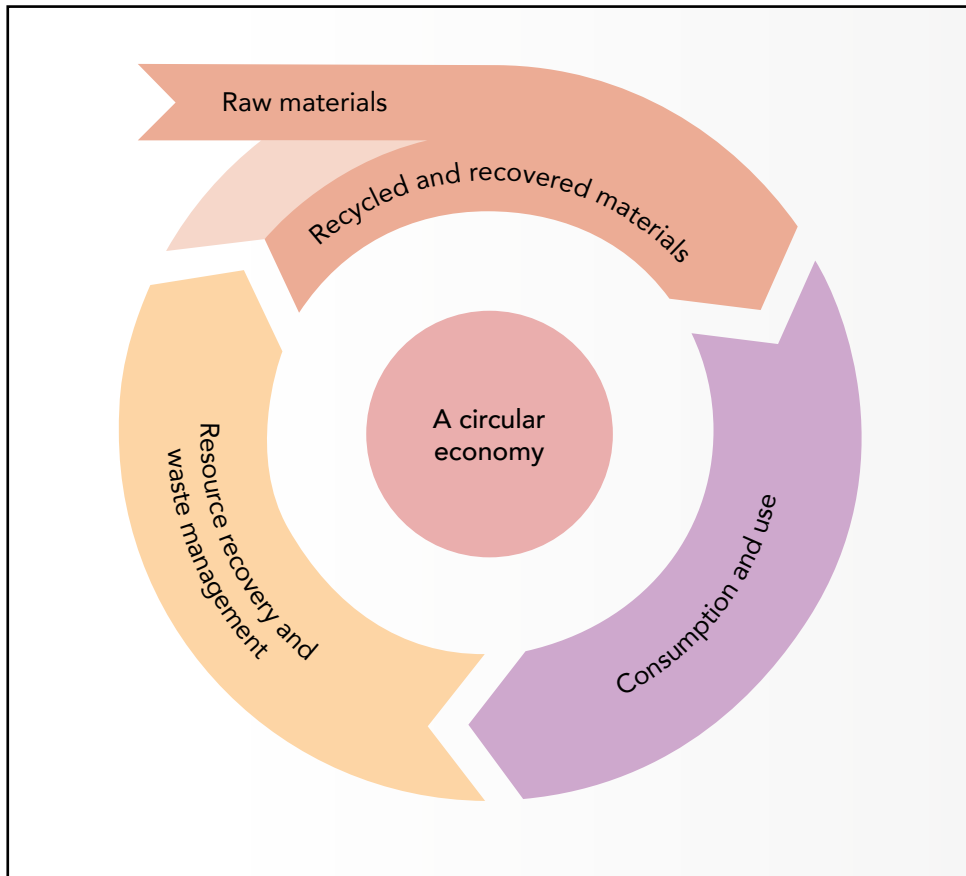


Figure 3: A circular economy



RaWS combines actions the Government will take now with firm commitments for the coming years and gives a clear longer term policy direction in line with its 25 Year Environment Plan. RaWS has set out several proposed policy reforms including to:

- Invoke the 'polluter pays' principle through extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging to ensure producers of products bear financial responsibility for the management of the waste stage of a product's life cycle (except ground litter). The Government has committed to introducing this from April 2024. The key change for local authorities is that they will be compensated for the necessary costs of managing packaging waste from households, community recycling centres and street bins. Defra is still working on the details of this with more clarity expected in 2023.
- Introduce a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers to reward residents for bringing back bottles and encourage them not to litter them; thereby increasing the quality and quantity of recycling. This is to include cans and plastic bottles of between 50ml and 3l and will include containers sold both individually and as part of a multipack. Glass bottles will not be included. The scheme is still under consideration for implementation from late 2024.
- Improve recycling rates by ensuring consistency in household and business recycling collections. This is still under consideration for implementation from 2023–24, but are likely to be delayed slightly to coincide with EPR.

Key proposals to create consistency include:

- > Collection of the same dry recyclable materials (glass, metal, plastic and paper and card) as separately as possible (with consideration given to circumstances where separate collection of recyclable waste streams may not be technically or economically practicable or may not provide a significant environmental benefit).
- > Collection of additional dry recycling (metal jar lids, aerosols, cartons, aluminium foil and trays, aluminium tubes, and plastic films and pouches). The Government has so far stated that plastic films and flexibles must be collected by local authorities for recycling by 31 March 2027.
- > Collection of food waste separately at least once a week.
- > Collection of garden waste for free or for a maximum cost.
- > Service standards for collection arrangements and frequency.

- The above proposals on recycling consistency together with EPR and DRS are now collectively known as the collection and packaging reforms (CPR).



- Stimulate demand for recycled plastic by introducing a tax on plastic packaging manufactured in or imported into the UK that contains less than 30% recycled plastics. This came into effect on 1 April 2022.
- Reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic (SUP) products including bans on items such as plastic straws, cotton buds, and drink stirrers. These were banned from 1 October 2020 and supply stopped from 3 July 2021. Proposals to ban plastic plates and cups, balloon sticks, polystyrene cups, expanded polystyrene food boxes, trays and pots. If agreed these proposed bans would come into effect in April 2023.
- The introduction of a mandatory takeback scheme for the collection and recycling of fibre-based composite cups (disposable coffee cups). This is set to come in from 2024.



The measures in RaWS alongside other key plans have set out strategic ambitions to be achieved nationally over the next 30 years such as:

- Increase the municipal recycling rate to 55% by 2025 and 65% by 2035.
- Near elimination of biodegradable municipal waste to landfill from 2028.
- Work towards eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030.
- 76% recycling rate for packaging by 2030.
- Business fleet owners and operators work towards 100% of vehicle fleets being zero emission by 2030, or earlier where markets allow (COP26 ambition).
- No more than 10% of municipal waste to landfill by 2035.
- 50% reduction in per capita residual waste (excluding major mineral wastes) by 2042 from 2019 levels (proposed).
- Work towards eliminating avoidable waste by 2050.
- Net zero domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

To that end, the Government introduced the Environment Act 2021 in November 2021 that makes provision for most of these targets and gives them the legislative power to introduce the measures above. The act will also make some changes to existing legislations to enable consistency in collections.

Context

In Surrey about £105 million¹ is spent each year collecting, managing and processing recycling and waste. By increasing the amount of waste prevented and the proportion recycled in the county it enables the cost of this service to reduce. It also benefits the environment; less raw materials are required, saving energy, emissions and protecting natural resources.

Significant achievements have been made possible by working together as a partnership; the most notable being our improved recycling rate, which in 2010–11 was 46.4% (13th highest nationally) and by 2020–21 was 55.1% (3rd highest nationally). More information on current performance can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of the document.

Despite this, it's now the right time to revisit how we work together, considering some of the challenges we face including the emerging policy to support RaWS. The direction of travel is not clear on this yet but should become apparent over the next couple of years. So, while now is not the right time to update the Surrey JMWMS and consult with residents whilst things are so uncertain, we do need a short-term approach to help us ensure we continue to manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable way.

Therefore, our response to this emerging situation is to develop a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling in Surrey for the next three years. This will look to, as a minimum, align with the Government's ambitions such as a 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 65% by 2035. There might be a requirement as a high performing county in England to go beyond this. In any event, we will strive to go beyond the national targets where possible and begin to respond to decarbonisation by planning changes to our vehicle fleets and infrastructure to reduce emissions in the shorter term and move towards net zero emissions in the longer term.

The approach will:

- Bridge the gap ahead of further clarity from central Government.
- Consider the anticipated changes that may result from the key emerging national policy to support RaWS.
- Provide clear strategic direction for the next three years and a longer-term vision for the partnership that will continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste reducing emissions in the process. This will aid the future development of a new JMWMS for Surrey post 2025.
- Enable us to drive down waste (particularly food and SUP waste) and increase the quality and quantity of our recycling.

1. From the Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing: 2020–21 Final Outturn, England

Our vision

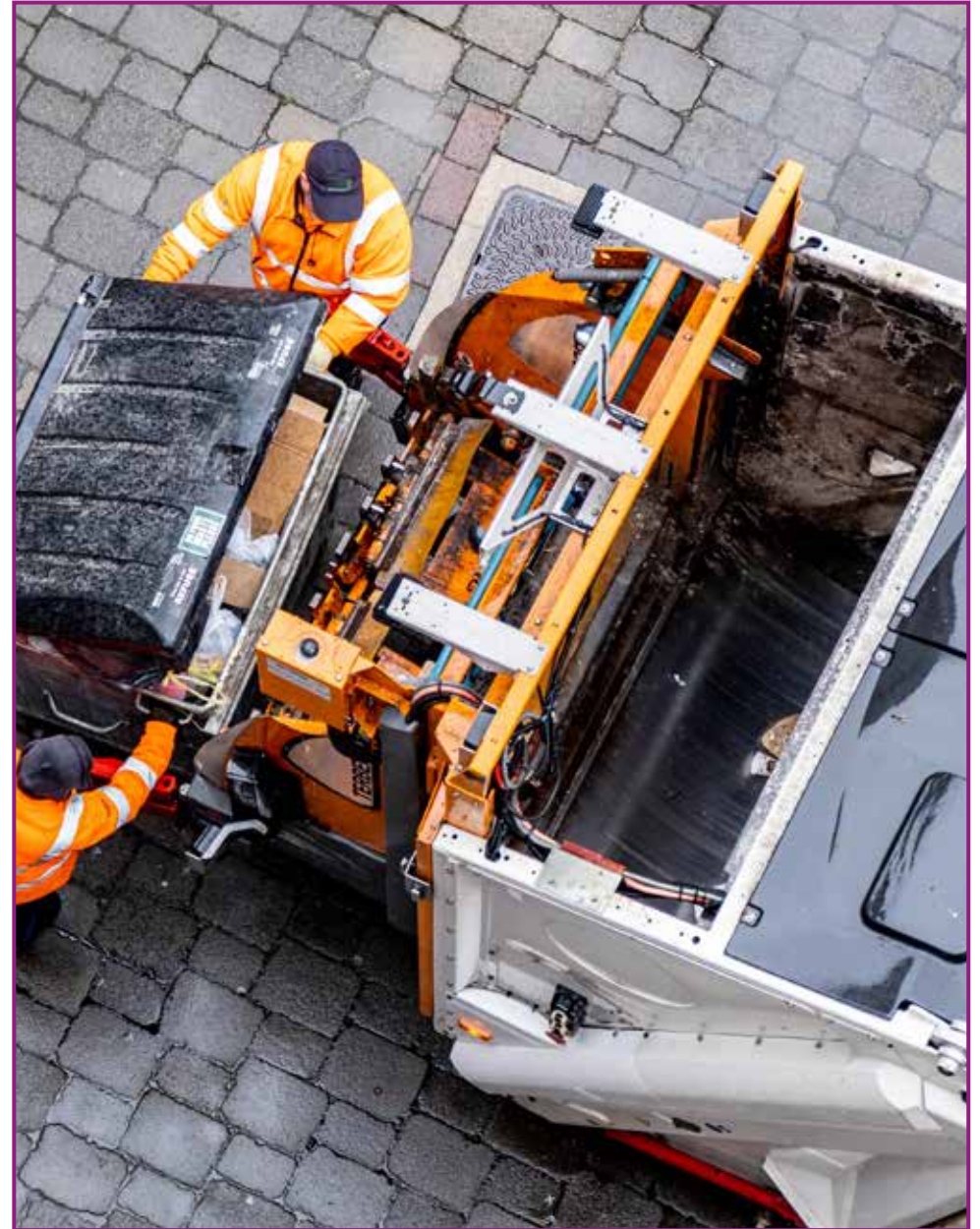
With the above in mind, we have developed the following vision statement for SEP 2025:

Our vision is to eliminate avoidable waste and reuse, repair, recycle and recover any waste which cannot be eradicated in the most economical way.

Surrey's councils will continue to work in partnership to ensure our residents receive the highest quality of collection and disposal services possible and encourage our residents to reduce their household waste and own their impact on the natural environment.

Our ambition is to decarbonise our fleet and ensure that any new infrastructure is built and operated to minimise carbon emissions.

Our vision is to eliminate avoidable waste and reuse, repair, recycle and recover.



Key drivers and priorities

Drivers for change

We are at a crucial point now where we must reconsider how we can prevent more waste from arising, increase the quality and quantity of recycling and manage waste in the long term to minimise the impact on the environment and move towards a circular economy, which is being driven by several pressures including:

Emerging national policy

We will need to align with emerging national policies (as outlined above) that will be enshrined in legislation. While the policies aren't clear yet, they will fundamentally change the way recycling and waste services are funded and delivered. Therefore, we'll need to be mindful for future service provision and well prepared to deliver any required changes resulting from new national policy in the best way possible.



2. Office for National Statistics

Reducing carbon at pace

Most authorities in Surrey have declared a climate emergency and all have set a target for reaching net zero emissions as individual organisations. Of the 12 authorities in Surrey, nine have agreed to be carbon neutral organisations by 2030, one authority by 2035, and two by 2050. The climate change strategies and action plans that have been produced by Surrey authorities recognise the carbon that recycling, and waste collection and disposal operations emit. They also recognise the role that preventing and reducing waste, increasing reuse and recycling and planned changes to vehicle fleets and infrastructure will play in tackling climate change.

Increasing population and number of households

The population of Surrey could rise to an estimated 1,309,500 by 2041, which could translate into 34,000 new houses being constructed². This will result in more recycling and waste and therefore more pressure on our waste collection and disposal services.

Budget pressures

Surrey's authorities are facing unprecedented challenges because of reduced financial support from the Government combined with an increasing population and greater demand for our services. In addition, we are now experiencing the cost-of-living crisis in which prices for many commodities have risen sharply meaning services and infrastructure projects will cost more. This situation is being caused in part by a rise in inflation in the UK, in addition to the economic impact of global issues including the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and COVID-19 pandemic (which had already reduced economic activity across the county whilst further increasing the support our communities need from us).

Infrastructure limitations

There is only one energy from waste type facility (an Eco Park which includes a gasifier and an anaerobic digestion plant), a lack of recycling processing infrastructure and there are limitations with transfer stations in the county such as the distance to/from them for some waste collection and street cleansing rounds. This situation drives up cost and emissions, which come from transporting waste over longer distances. Also, where we use third party sites to sort recycling, we are limited by what the operator chooses to accept, which drives up inconsistency and causes confusion for household waste collection regimes. Over the next two to three years, SEP will need to consider infrastructure options for future service delivery that reflects the plans and strategies across authorities and enables successful attainment of the performance objectives and targets set out in this document.

Stalling performance

The amount of residual waste per household in Surrey has been falling since 2013-14, hitting a low of 450.9kg per household in 2019-20. However, the COVID-19 pandemic saw this figure increase with more people being at home. While this is starting to decrease again as we move away from the pandemic, much more will need to be done to reach the proposed national target of a 50% reduction on 2019 levels by 2042.

Also, recycling rates levelled off back in 2016-17, and Surrey's performance has stayed around the 55% mark. While this meets the national target for 2025, significant investment and/or changes to approach will likely be required to meet the 65% recycling rate target by 2035.

A recent composition analysis (set out in Appendix 1) highlighted there is still an estimated 90,000 tonnes of material in residual bins which can be recycled. So, the scope for significant improvement on both residual waste reduction and recycling does exist.

There is an estimated
90,000 tonnes
in residual bins which can be recycled.

Key priorities

The challenges set out above mean that the current situation is unsustainable. We need to reduce costs where possible whilst increasing performance and still providing a high-quality service to Surrey residents. To that end, we believe our key priorities should be to:

Table 1: SEP 2025 priorities

1. Reduce all residual waste with a particular focus on food waste

To ensure focus is applied at the top of the waste hierarchy and to align with national targets, we will focus on reducing residual waste by preventing it in the first place. Compared to high performing authorities in England, Surrey has a much higher level of residual waste. We will use the learning gained from these authorities in our future work programmes, and we will continue to engage with Surrey residents to reduce their waste, especially food waste.

2. Promote and maximise reuse

To support the principle of a circular economy, we will seek to maximise opportunities to keep products in use for as long as possible through sharing, reuse, repair and refurbishment. This is an area we'll provide focus and priority to by developing a reuse strategy for Surrey.

3. This should be done in a completely enclosed process such as a food waste digester as to not attract vermin

3. Increase participation in food waste recycling

Of course, it's best to reduce food waste where possible, but any food that is left over should be composted or recycled, not only for the environmental benefits, but because of the money that can be saved, as it costs less than a third to recycle food waste than it does to dispose of it as rubbish. Our capture rate for food waste recycling in Surrey in 2021 was 43%, and as the composition analysis highlighted, there is still an estimated 50,954 tonnes of food waste in residual bins that could be recycled. Therefore, as well as trying to reduce food waste from arising at all, increasing participation in food waste recycling will continue to be a priority for us.

4. Increase the quality and quantity of dry mixed recycling (DMR)

The recent composition analysis highlighted that there are still over 20,000 tonnes of plastic, paper and card, glass and metals that could be collected³ for recycling. Increasing the quantity collected and reducing contamination of DMR further (13,837 tonnes of recycling was rejected in 2020–21) will boost performance towards the 65% recycling rate target and will improve the quality of material and the prices we receive for selling it to re-processors. Therefore, we will work to improve the quantity and quality of the DMR recycling that we collect, which aligns with emerging policy.

5. Decarbonise our waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleet

To align with our ambition to reach net zero emissions, we must look to reduce emissions from our collection vehicle fleet and switch to alternative fuels⁴. Therefore, SEP will develop a plan over the next couple of years to look at how we can achieve this objective to decarbonise our waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleet that recognises the challenges that exist including affordability.

6. Support the development of infrastructure

We will consider what appropriate infrastructure is required to power our vehicles and how we create it, addressing limitations with the lack of recycling and waste infrastructure in the county and work together to develop solutions that address our collective needs.

7. Support optimised collections

We will help review collections, especially with the upcoming national changes in mind, so services run in the most optimal way from a financial and emissions viewpoint.

4. This could include renewable diesel, biodiesel, electric or hydrogen. Options appraisal to be determined.

8. Reduce fly-tipping

We will work with enforcement teams to help bring those who fly-tip to justice, with the longer-term impact of reducing fly-tipping.



9. Reduce litter

We will develop a strategy which sets out our approach to tackling litter, and how we will work with different groups to take advantage of any funding opportunities that arise to reduce litter.

The partnership approach to delivering our vision and priorities

Targets

We appointed Eunomia Research and Consulting to develop a long-term waste flow model for Surrey. The model was created to help us understand how far upcoming national changes and the work we do will get us towards achieving national and existing local targets. Working with Eunomia, we reviewed a range of different scenarios to enable us to set realistic targets for the next three years (the monitoring period of SEP 2025) that keep us on track in the short term to meet longer term national targets. Our partnership targets are set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: SEP 2025 targets

Measure	SEP 2025 (monitoring period)			
	2021–22 (unaudited) ⁵	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Residual waste per household (KG)	471.0	461.0	449.0	446.0
Recycling rate (inc DRS)	54.4%	56.0%	57.0%	58.0%
Food waste capture rate	43.0% ⁶		48.0% ⁷	
DMR contamination rate	8.9%	<8.0%	<8.0%	<8.0%
Waste to landfill	15.1%	<6.0%	<3.0% ⁸	<3.0%

5. Data for a financial year is confirmed and made available to the public once information has been validated by the WasteDataFlow team and the Environment Agency. This usually happens on the following December.

6. Figure from 2021 composition analysis

7. To be measured when the next composition analysis is carried out in 2024/25

8. Aligns with SCC's target set out in their waste disposal contract re-procurement

The targets set out above have factored in the following measures that we think will happen nationally and locally over this three-year period:

National measures

- The SUP bans on plastic plates and cups, balloon sticks, polystyrene cups, expanded polystyrene food boxes, trays and pots come in from April 2023.
- The implementation of EPR from 2024, through a combination of mandatory labelling, consistency in collections and national communications campaigns, is expected to increase capture rates of recyclable packaging material.
- It is expected that there will be a change in waste composition due to EPR fee modulation and recyclability requirements when this comes in from 2025. There is likely to be a shift from non-recyclable pots, tubs and trays and composite packaging to recyclable alternatives, and some change from flexible composites to mono-material flexible polyethylene. There could be further changes in the recyclability of 'other plastics'; more challenging formats (composite flexible packaging and tubes) could also become recyclable.
- The UK Government introduce an additional set of core materials that must be collected at the kerbside for recycling. This will result in kerbside collections of at least cartons, aluminium foil and trays (from 2024), and film and plastic bags (from 2027).
- The UK Government introduce a DRS for plastic bottles and cans from late 2024, whereby materials will be returned via a separate network, but the recycling rate is apportioned to local authorities.

Local measures

- Food waste collections will be rolled out to all flats in Surrey where space and operations permit.
- The food waste recycling and DMR contamination reduction intervention work will continue to be developed and delivered by SEP in collaboration with Surrey's councils.
- SEP will continue to encourage Surrey residents through multiple platforms to participate in food waste recycling.



Strategic objectives and actions

To address our priorities above and meet our targets, we must deliver the work which is described in the strategic objectives and key actions in Table 3 below.

Table 3: List of strategic objectives and key actions

Strategic objective	Key actions
Deliver joint work programmes that focus on partnership priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued creation of annual work programmes that address the key priorities of the partnership to reduce waste, increase food waste recycling, reduce contamination to improve the quality and quantity of DMR and decarbonise our vehicle fleet. This will move to a new level of focus which will tie in with the individual authority delivery plans mentioned below. • Develop an infrastructure and transport plan that enables us to comply with the RaWS and key emerging policy; and decarbonise the fleet ideally by 2030 but in line with existing local authority policies. • Develop key countywide strategies for reuse and litter.
Set local targets and actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and agree annual performance indicators for each Surrey council that will contribute towards the overall partnership targets, along with individualised delivery plans that will enable the realisation of local and countywide targets.
Exploit further opportunities to work jointly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on past work and look at opportunities to carry out joint processes where viable to procure required products (vehicles and bins/containers) to introduce consistent collections as determined by emerging Government policy.

Strategic objective	Key actions
Respond to policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to respond to consultations held by Government on proposed policy to ensure our collective views are heard and that SEP 2025 remains aligned. • Engage positively with industry groups such as the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT), The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) and The National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO) to raise concerns and share thoughts and ideas on future policy and its implementation.
Adopt best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to research top performing authorities in England that are comparable to Surrey's authorities using rurality and deprivation as a starting point, and overlaying delivery factors, and then feed this learning into the development of the above annual work programmes and individual delivery plans. • Work with the fly-tipping enforcement teams to continue to share and develop intelligence, knowledge and best practice.

Monitoring

Progress against the targets, key actions including the annual SEP work programme and local delivery plans will be monitored quarterly. A standard template will be developed for this, and it will be reported back to the SEP Officers and Members Group at their quarterly meetings.

Review

Targets and the work programme/individual delivery plans will be reviewed annually with adjustments to targets made where necessary including adding new projects to the annual SEP work programme and individual delivery plans, where required to support target achievement. This will be developed and agreed with the SEP Officers and Members Groups.

Revision process

SEP 2025 is set to run to 2025. At the start of 2025 (the final year for SEP 2025) we'll begin work on developing a new Surrey JMWMS. At this point we should have further clarity from Government on the way forward following the implementation of the RaWS measures which are set to start from 2024–25. Once the Surrey JMWMS is drafted, consulted on, approved and adopted, this will be our new plan for partnership working from 2026.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Anaerobic digestion	A process which uses micro-organisms (living things too small to be seen without a microscope) to break down biodegradable material.
Biodegradable	Able to decay naturally and in a way that is not harmful.
Capture rate	A measure of how much of material we are collecting for recycling.
Carbon neutral	If an organisation or activity is carbon neutral it does not add to the total amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, for example by doing things such as planting trees in order to remove as much carbon dioxide as it creates.
Circular economy	A concept where products are kept in use for as long as possible, making it easier to reuse, repair, refurbish or recycle them.
Climate emergency declaration	An action taken to acknowledge climate change exists and the impact its causing is dangerous and requires immediate attention to address the situation.
Community Recycling Centre	A place where Surrey residents can take household waste to be recycled or disposed of.
Composite packaging	When two or more substances are combined to create one that can be used for packaging products.
Consistency in household and business recycling	A measure that encourages all local authorities and businesses to collect the same suite of materials for recycling.
Contamination	Occurs when materials that cannot be recycled are put in recycling bins.
Decarbonise	A process to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide through the use of low carbon power sources.

Term	Definition
Deposit return scheme	Where customers pay an upfront deposit on a product (such as a drinks bottle) which can be redeemed on return of the product.
Disposal	The last resort for managing waste where it is either landfilled or incinerated without energy recovery.
Dry mixed recycling	A combination of dry recyclables (paper, card, metal, plastic and glass) that are collected together.
Extended producer responsibility	Where producers are given significant responsibility (financial or physical) for the recycling or disposal of products at the end of their life.
Fly-tipping	The illegal deposit of any waste onto land that does not have a licence to accept it.
Gasifier	A facility that converts waste into energy.
Household waste	Waste generated by householders, of which the cost of disposal or reprocessing is included within council tax payments.
Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy	A legal requirement in a two-tier system of local government (county council and district, borough and city councils in an area) to have in place a joint strategy for the management of waste from households.
Mandatory labelling	Producers are required to label all packaging types with 'recycle' or 'do not recycle'.
Mono-material flexible polyethylene	A single type of flexible plastic.
Net-zero	Means achieving a balance between the carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon dioxide removed from it.

Term	Definition
Recovery	For waste that can't be recycled, it may be possible to recover energy in the form of 'waste to energy'. Waste to energy is the process of incinerating non-recyclable waste to produce electricity.
Recycling	Turns waste into a new item or product, reducing the number of raw materials required.
Repair	Mending items such as clothes or electricals so that they can continue to be used.
Reuse	Using an item straight away without any processing – for example refilling a water bottle, using a bag for life, or passing on items when you have finished with them.
Rubbish	Anything that cannot be reused or recycled.
Single-use	Any disposable item which is designed to be used only once.
Transfer station	Where waste from various sources is consolidated before being further transported to an end point of disposal, usually landfill or waste to energy facilities, but can also include recycling.
Waste	Refers to everything that is thrown away, recyclables and rubbish.
Zero waste	Means that at least 90% of operational waste has been reduced, reused, repurposed or recycled compared to the original baseline (starting point for making comparisons).

Appendix 1 – Current performance and waste composition

Current performance

Recycling and waste performance in Surrey is currently monitored by measuring the amount of household waste generated within the county and how much of it is either recycled, recovered or sent to landfill. The most recent revision of the Surrey JMWMS gave performance data up to and including 2013–14, which showed that:

- The quantity of household waste generated in Surrey decreased by 9% from 583,518 tonnes in 2006–07 to 532,773 tonnes in 2013–14.
- The proportion of household waste that was recycled increased from 31% in 2006–07 to 52% in 2013–14.
- The amount of rubbish sent to landfill declined dramatically from 67% in 2006–07 to 11% in 2013–14.
- The amount of rubbish sent for energy recovery went from 2% in 2006–07 to 36% in 2013–14.

Since 2013–14, the total amount of household waste generated in Surrey has continued to fall, reaching a low of 507,428 tonnes in 2018–19 (a 5% reduction from 2013–14). In 2020–21 it increased significantly to 539,777 tonnes as shown in Figure 1 on page 24. However, this large spike correlated with the coronavirus pandemic and more people being at home. Provisional data for 2021–22, currently being audited by Defra ahead of publication in February/March 2023, shows that household waste decreased to approximately 520,000 tonnes.

Between 2013–14 and 2016–17 there was a steady increase in the proportion of household waste that was recycled each year, reaching a peak at 57.7% in 2016–17. From this point forward, SCC lost markets for recycling carpets and rigid plastics, and the ability to compost autumn leaf litter from street cleansing. Also, standards applied by the Environment Agency around what could be recycled began to tighten at this time with re-processors focussing more on quality, and not quantity, and demanding material with less contamination, which led to more recycling being rejected by materials recovery facilities (MRFs). Furthermore, Surrey had already realised most of the benefits associated with changes to recycling services such as the rollout of separate food waste collections from households, which has been provided by every Surrey authority since around 2012–13. With the above in mind, Surrey's recycling rate has fluctuated, but has remained around 55% for the last four years (Figure 1). Provisional data for 2021–22 indicates an unaudited recycling rate of 54.4%.

We have continued to reduce the amount of rubbish sent to landfill (Figure 1), hitting lows of around 4% in 2017–18 and 2020–21, although it has fluctuated around an average of 6–7%. However, provisional data for 2021–22 indicates that it has gone up to an estimated 15.1%. This was due to operational shutdowns at facilities used to treat Surrey's rubbish and a reduction in the amount of waste that was sent to facilities in Europe.

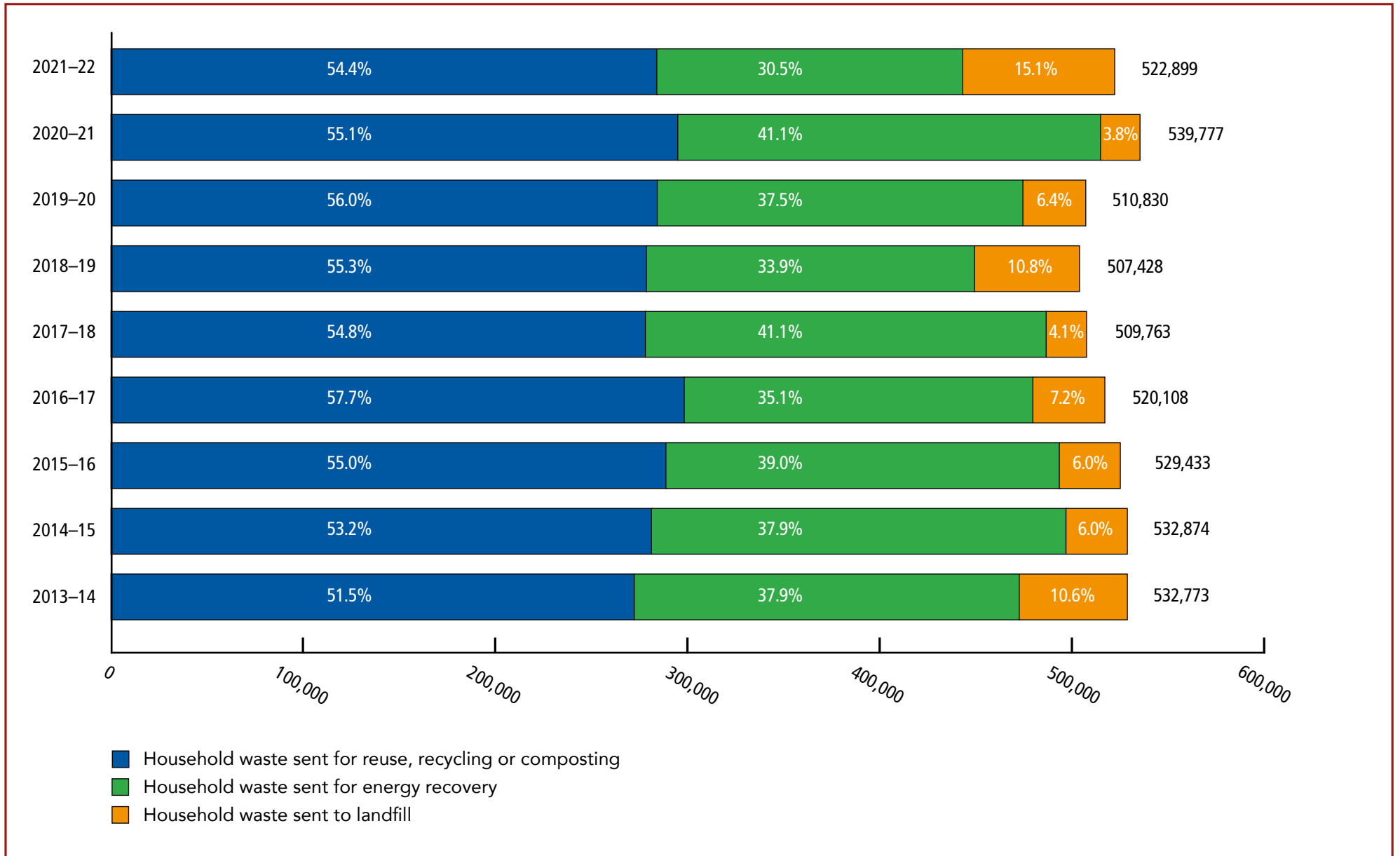


Figure 1: Household waste treated in Surrey from 2013-14 to 2021-22

The amount of residual household waste collected per household in Surrey has been falling since 2013–14 hitting a low of 450.9kg per household in 2019–20 (Figure 2). However, there was a large spike in 2020–21, taking it up to 479.1kg per household, but again this correlates with the coronavirus pandemic and more people being at home. The unaudited data for 2021–22 now puts this at 470.9kg per household.

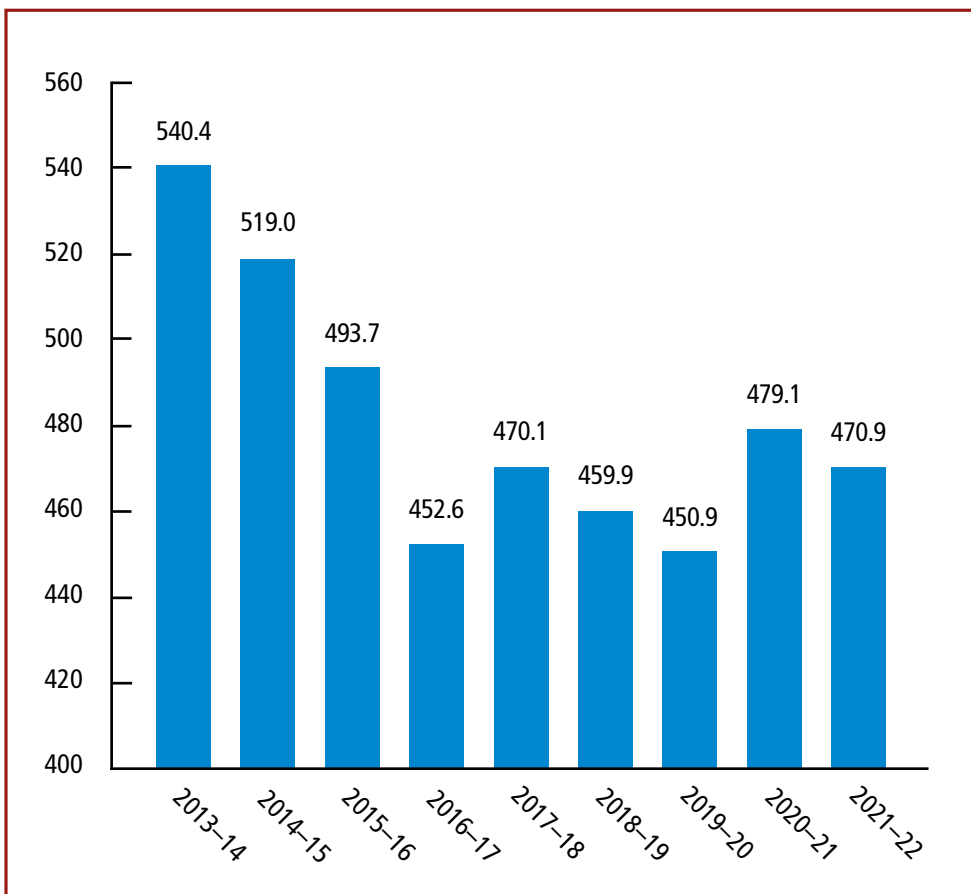


Figure 2: Residual household waste per household (kg) in Surrey from 2013–14 to 2021–22

The amount of household waste collected per person in Surrey has also been falling since 2013–14 (Figure 3) hitting a low of 423.3kg per person in 2018–19. Again, there was a large spike shown here in 2020–21, taking it up to 448.2kg per person, but again this correlates with the coronavirus pandemic and more people being at home. The unaudited data for 2021–22 indicates that this has dropped to 433.7kg per person.

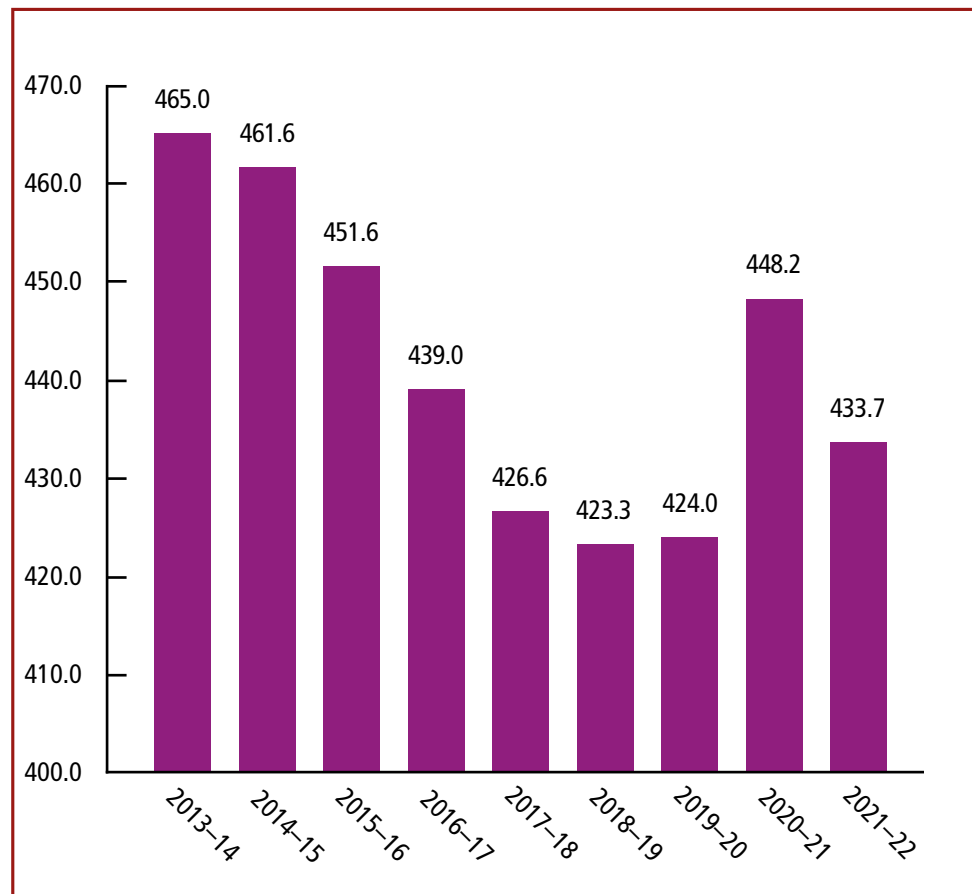


Figure 3: Collected household waste per person in Surrey from 2013–14 to 2021–22

In 2015–16, data began to be collected on contamination of dry mixed recycling (DMR) following the introduction of legislation that required Material Recovery Facilities to sample material being delivered. Figure 4 shows a large spike in 2018–19, which was when data was consistently reported for all D&Bs, as it was limited before this. Since then, SEP has worked to drive down contamination, the effects of which can be seen in 2019–20 and 2020–21.

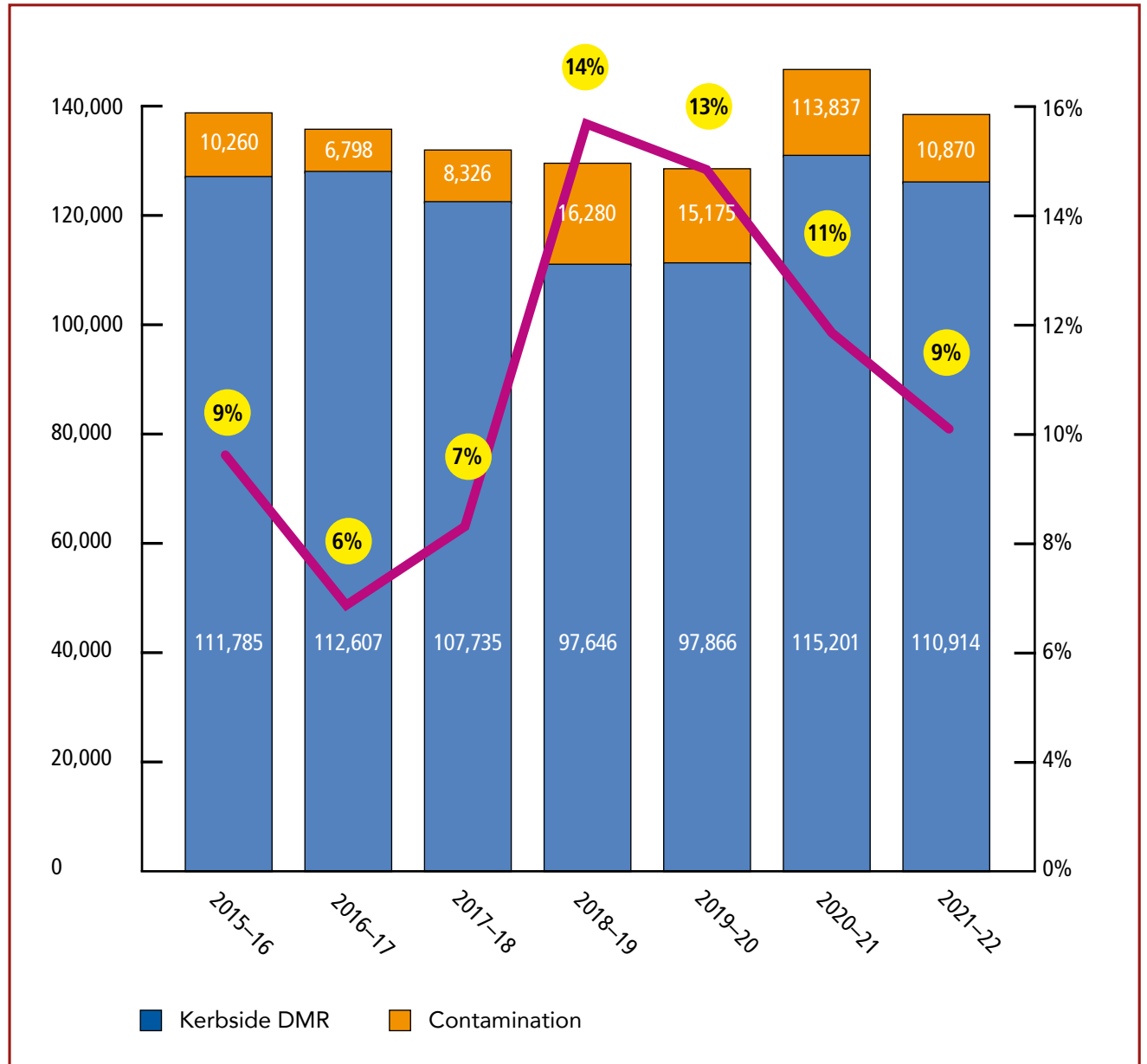


Figure 4: Contamination of DMR in Surrey from 2015–16 to 2021–22

How we compare with others

Defra publishes performance data on an annual basis for each local authority in England. Table 1 below shows Surrey's position in a league table with all other local authorities in England in relation to performance data on recycling rates, residual waste per household, and collected household waste per person for 2020–21.

Figure 3: Collected household waste per person in Surrey from 2013–14 to 2021–22

Authority	% recycled, reused or composted	Rank in the league table	Residual household waste per household (kg)	Rank in the league table	Total household waste per person (kg)	Rank in the league table
Disposal Authorities Only (out of 30)						
Surrey County Council	55.1	3	479.1	6	448.2	17
Waste Collection Authorities Only (out of 308)						
Elmbridge	54.5	37	469.1	101	440.5	264
Epsom & Ewell	53.7	43	447.0	77	388.3	129
Guildford	58.9	15	389.2	32	373.7	102
Mole Valley	56.6	25	426.5	59	437.0	259
Reigate & Banstead	53.2	51	413.2	49	368.3	92
Runnymede	49.0	76	411.9	47	334.8	31
Spelthorne	46.4	102	457.0	85	369.8	95
Surrey Heath	61.3	5	364.9	22	397.1	155
Tandridge	59.9	10	379.6	29	397.8	157
Waverley	57.0	22	388.9	31	391.2	140
Woking	54.3	40	434.5	66	408.2	190

Surrey has one of the best rates of recycling, reuse and composting at 55.1% (3rd) and residual waste per household at 479.1kg (6th) of all disposal authorities in England. However, it ranks around mid-table for landfill usage (14th) and collected household waste per person (17th).

Landfill rates are also provided, but this can only be compared by disposal authority. In 2020–21, Surrey ranked 14th out of 30 disposal authorities with a landfill rate of 3.8%.

Most waste collection authorities in Surrey (9 out of 11) rank in the top 50 for recycling, reuse and composting performance with Surrey Heath Borough Council placed at fifth.

However, performance on residual waste is less encouraging with just over half (6 out of 11) place in the top 50 for residual household waste per household with the rest between 59th and 101st. Only one authority of 11 is in the top 50 for collected household waste per person with the rest between 92nd and 264th.

In summary, while recycling performance is mostly encouraging, residual waste volumes are high compared to other authorities in England. To that end, there is more that can be done to improve performance in Surrey. We have looked at the top authorities in England that are comparable to Surrey's authorities in terms of rurality and deprivation to see what we can learn from them, and this thinking has been incorporated into the key actions referred to in the section on the partnership approach to achieving our vision, objectives and targets in the main SEP 2025 approach document.



Where our recycling and waste goes

Surrey's residents have a keen interest in what happens to their recycling and waste with previous research suggesting that increased transparency around what happens to recycling and waste once collected can positively affect recycling behaviours.

A report, What Happened to Surrey's Waste, 2020/21, is available on SEP's website. In summary, Figure 5 below shows that of the 539,777 tonnes of household recycling and waste generated in Surrey in 2020–21, 76.9% of it remained in the UK, 15.7% was treated in Europe (largely Germany and the Netherlands) and 7.4% was treated outside of Europe (largely India).

Of the 297,409 tonnes of recycling collected in 2020–21, 83.4% was processed in the UK, 3.1% in Europe and 13.3% outside of Europe.

Of the 242,368 tonnes of rubbish collected in 2020–21, 69.2% was treated in the UK with the remaining 30.8% treated in Europe.

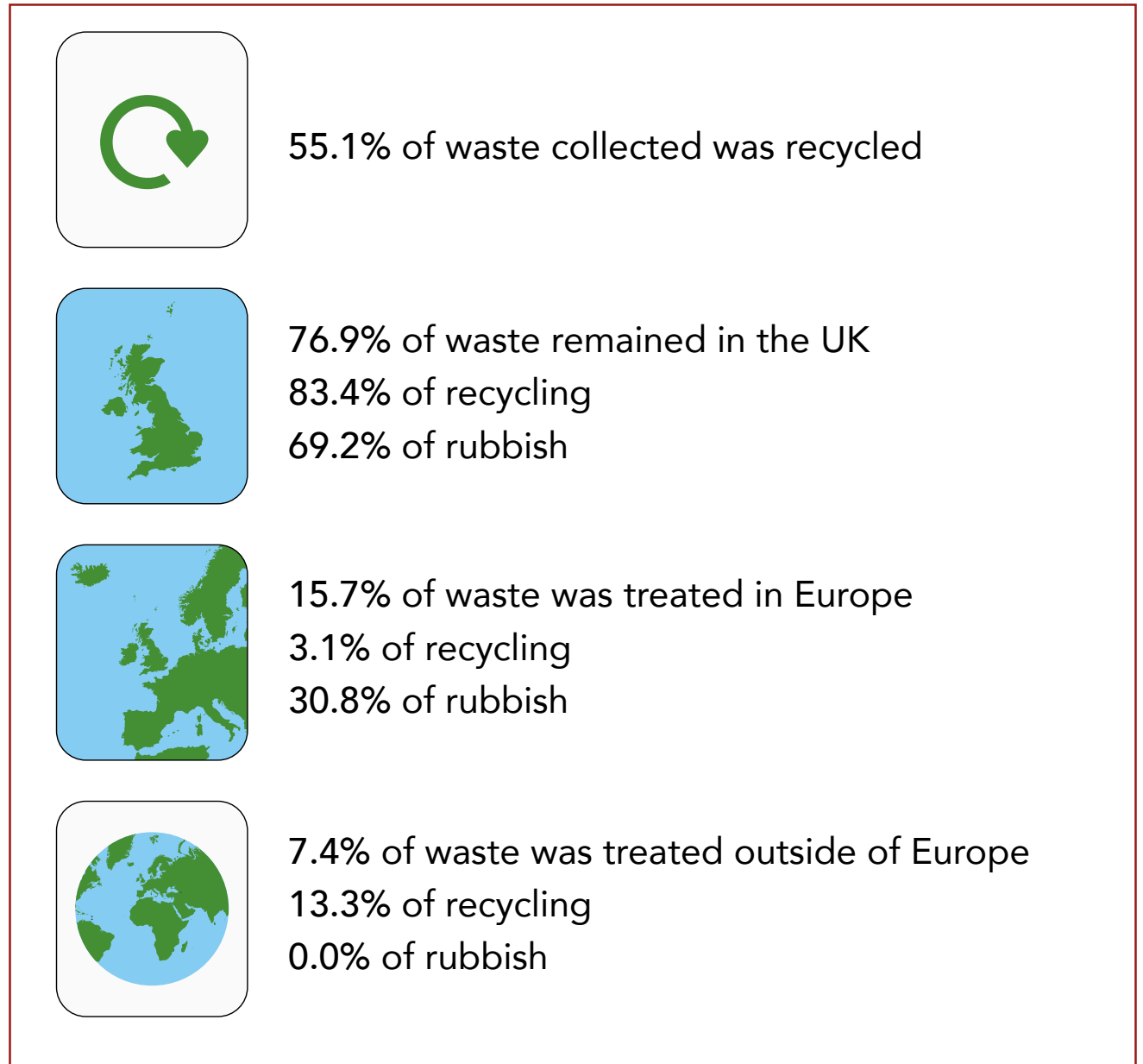


Figure 5: Where our recycling and waste went in 2020-21

Waste composition

Understanding the composition of waste in Surrey provides a valuable insight on where to target future resource to reduce waste and increase recycling. To that end we undertook detailed sampling and analysis of recycling and residual bins at houses and flats in the summer of 2021. Based on the materials that each of the authorities are currently able to accept for recycling, Figure 6 on page 31, shows the proportion of each material that was presented in the rubbish bin but that the analysis shows could have been recycled.

In summary this shows that:

- Nearly 90,000 tonnes of material in kerbside rubbish bins could be recycled. Likewise, nearly 90,000 tonnes are not currently recyclable. A further 7,600 tonnes could be recycled at bring banks or Community Recycling Centres.
- The largest proportion of material which could be recycled is food waste at nearly 51,000 tonnes, over half the recyclable material. Only a small proportion of food waste is not recyclable – 2,700 tonnes of liquids and oils.
- There are significant quantities of plastics and paper and card in residual waste. However, only 40% and 30% of these respectively are recyclable, at 11,000 and 9,000 tonnes. Some plastics such as films and flexibles aren't accepted at the sorting facilities we use. This is because they can become entangled in equipment causing blockages increasing machinery downtime and, crucially, the current onward market for these materials isn't substantial. Paper and card can become contaminated when mixed with food waste, so is rejected for recycling when presented in this state. Some paper and card (shredded paper, glittery Christmas cards and wrapping paper etc.) aren't accepted for recycling as it can cause problems at the sorting facilities we use and the paper fibres are often of low grade or can't be separated.

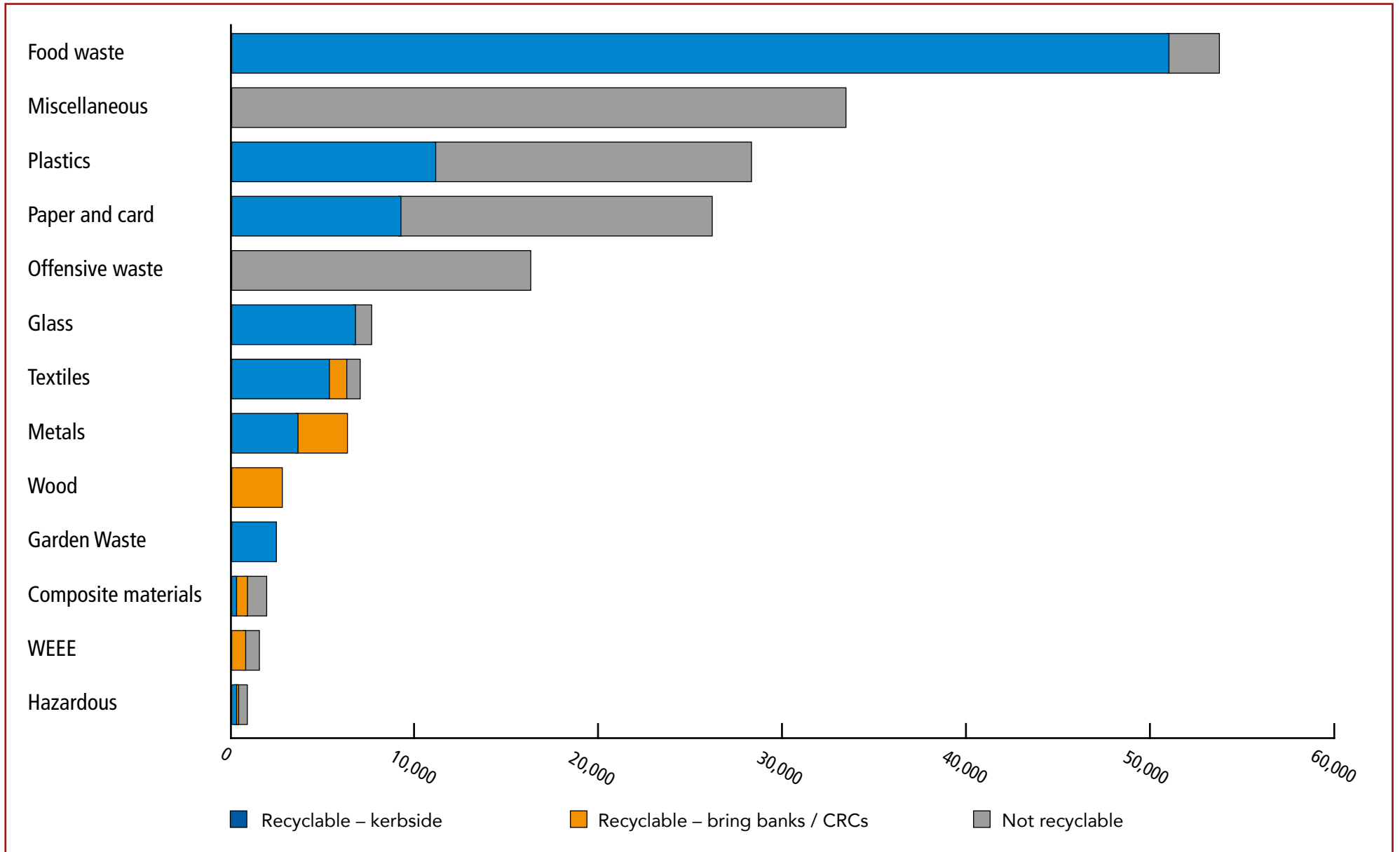


Figure 6: Recycling potential of residual waste 2021



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