

Report sponsor: Director of Communities
Report author: Technical Manager (Waste)

Update on blue and brown bins

Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Communities Board regarding blue and brown bin services.
- 1.2 To advise of forthcoming service changes and developments.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the contents of the report.

Reason

- 3.1 This report has been produced at the request of the Chair to provide a current update on the blue and brown bin services, as well as information about future developments.

Supporting information

- 4.1 Blue bins are provided for household recycling, including the collection of:
 - paper and cardboard
 - food tins and drinks cans
 - plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays
 - glass bottles and jars
 - food and drink cartons
 - aerosols
 - clean kitchen foil and foil trays
- 4.2 The service is well established and has been in place for many years. Data held by the service shows over 95% of households in Derby have a blue bin or have access to shared recycling facilities.
- 4.3 The remaining 5% are either able to opt-in to receive the service at their house if they wish, or may live at one of a small number of communal locations where recycling has proven unviable, for example, there may be nowhere to locate bins.

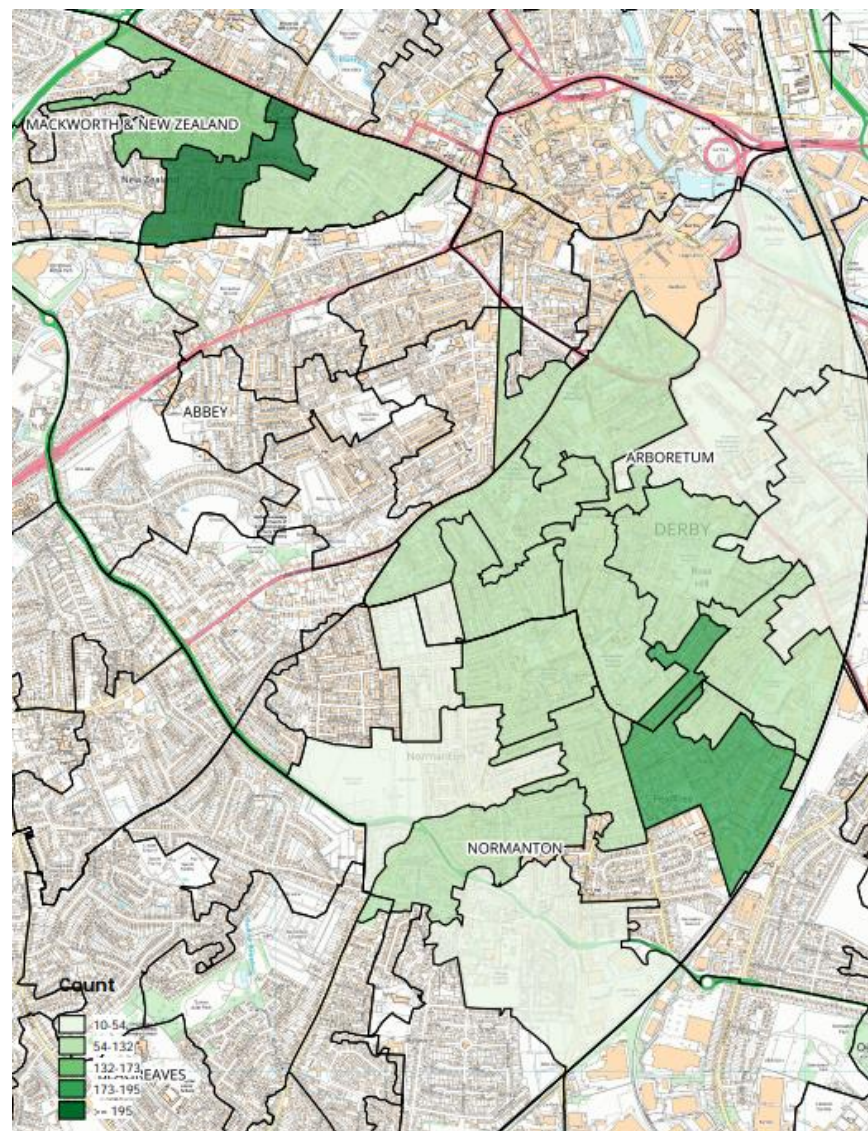
- 4.4 An opt-in recycling service has operated in sections of three ward areas since autumn 2019, these are Arboretum, Mackworth and Normanton. Of the 4955 properties in this area, 1403 have opted to have a blue bin for recycling, with a sign-up rate as follows:

Arboretum – 19%

Mackworth - 70%

Normanton - 27%

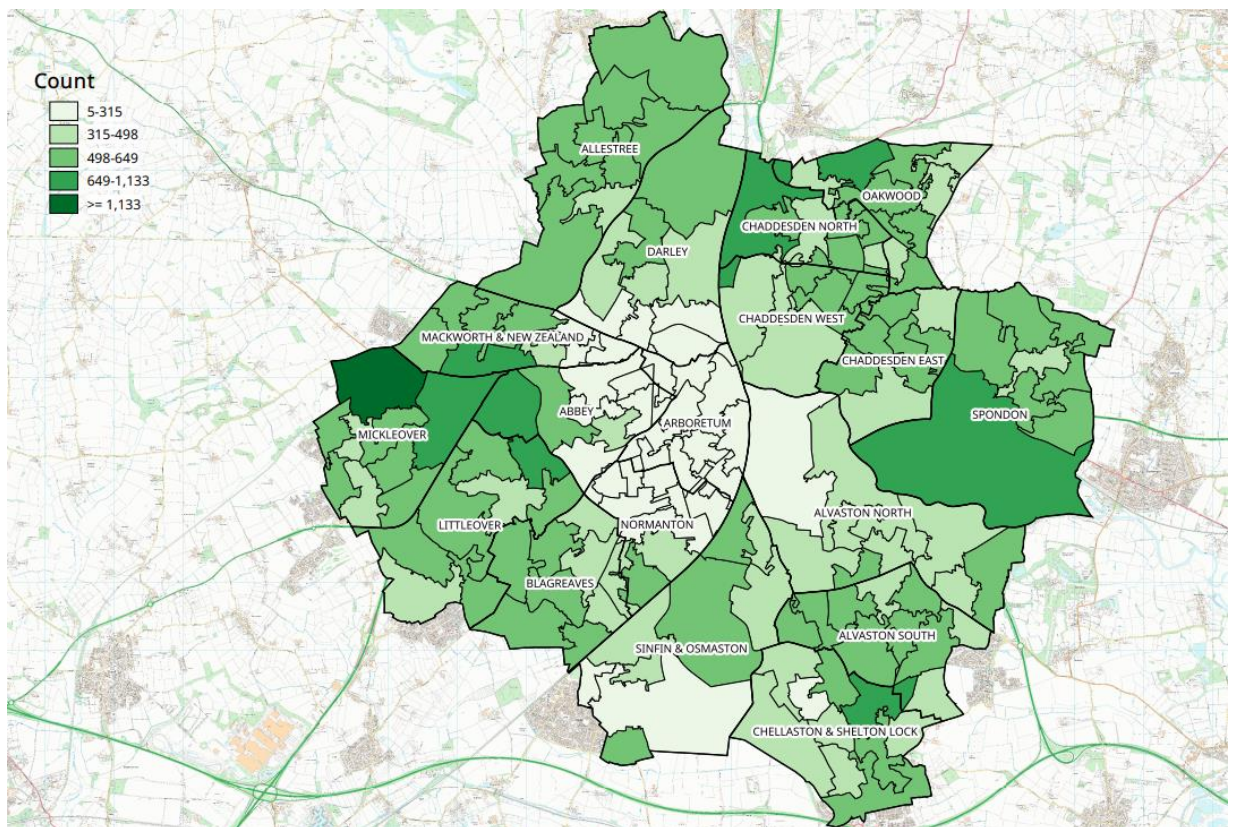
- 4.5 Current take-up and distribution in these wards can be seen on the following map. However, it is important to note that this will also be influenced by the density of housing; the more industrial or commercial areas will inevitably receive less signups. Also, parts of these ward areas have the standard service, where take-up remains higher.



- 4.6 The mixed recycling collected from bins across the city is bulked locally in Sinfen. Any large pieces of contamination (items not asked for) are removed by hand. The material is then transported to a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Alfreton where it is sorted mainly by machinery, but also by hand.

- 4.7 The sorting process produces around 13 different types and grades of good quality, separate materials which can be sent on to be recycled into new products.
- 4.8 Doubts are often expressed about whether materials are actually recycled, which can undermine confidence in recycling. To ensure Derby's recyclates are managed appropriately, contracts are only let to legitimate service providers who can demonstrate they are suitably licensed and reputable. In turn, they undertake due diligence with their off takers which includes site inspections and audits to verify good practice. The MRF regularly samples Derby material so they can provide information on the composition of the material and where it goes on to be recycled.
- 4.9 The process also produces waste (as contaminants are removed during sorting) which requires disposing of.
- 4.10 A particular challenge relating to the blue bin service is contamination. Sometimes this is done with good intentions ("wishcycling"), it may be due to lack of knowledge, or can be done deliberately.
- 4.11 Contamination accounts for almost 20% of the material we collect from blue bins and costs a significant amount to manage and dispose of properly, approaching £0.5m per annum.
- 4.12 A portion of this is unavoidable (small fragments of material that cannot be recycled) but for the most part this is due to the inclusion of materials that can't be recycled in the blue bin, most commonly:
- Food waste
 - Garden waste
 - Plastic bags or film
 - Polystyrene
 - Hard plastics, such as toys and homeware
 - Textiles
 - Nappies
 - Electrical items
 - Batteries
- 4.13 The brown bin service is for organic garden and food waste, including:
- Grass cuttings
 - Leaves/weeds
 - Plants and flowers
 - Hedges and shrub cuttings
 - Small twigs and branches (up to 12cm thick)
 - Vegetarian pet waste (from rabbits, guinea pigs)
 - Food waste including cooked, uncooked, plate scrapings, peelings and bones.

- 4.14 The most recent version of the brown bin service has been in place since 2019. There are currently 67,722 brown bins in use across the city. Current take-up can be seen in the following map.



- 4.15 Participation in the food waste aspect of the brown bin service is fairly minimal, however fortunately so is contamination. We attribute this to the fact that customers have opted in to the scheme, as well as the scheme making customer's lives easier (not having to visit Raynesway Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) to dispose of garden waste) so they participate correctly.
- 4.16 The organic waste collected from brown bins across the city is bulked locally, then hauled to Crewe to be treated by in-vessel composting. As the material may contain some food waste, it is composted in an enclosed vessel where it is exposed to high pressure and temperatures, before being left to mature outdoors. The whole process takes around 6 weeks to produce BSI standard compost, some of which is resold at Raynesway HWRC.
- 4.17 Over winter 2023/24 brown bin collections were moved from a fortnightly to a monthly collection schedule to coincide with the natural reduction in garden waste tonnages at this time of year. The impact on customers being they received four fewer collections between November and March.
- 4.18 Compared to the previous year, this winter the Council collected 622 tonnes less garden waste, a variance of nearly 23%. Black bin tonnages over the same period remained stable.

- 4.19 Recently, some challenges in waste have led to some brown bin collections not being made as scheduled or not being made at all.
- 4.20 The disruption has been caused by a combination of issues, the main ones being:
- insufficient collection staff due to absence levels within the council team and agency.
 - transition issues with 15 new refuse collection vehicles.
 - smaller vehicles (which service hard to access locations) were off the road in the workshop for an extended period.
 - vacancies in the workshop due to suitably qualified staffing shortages nationally.
- 4.21 At times, when there are insufficient resources to carry out scheduled collections, the collection of black and blue bins are prioritised. However, to mitigate against further significant disruption, the Council is looking to adjust servicing schedules to achieve more on a Monday when the services don't operate and be quicker to hire vehicles when required. In terms of staffing levels, the Council is in the process of recruiting additional drivers and loaders, as well as another intake through the agency, however the picture regarding recruitment generally, remains challenging.
- 4.22 Currently Derby is recycling, composting or reusing just over 38% of household waste each year. This figure includes all sources of household recycling, not just blue and brown bins.
- 4.23 The Disposal/Waste Minimisation Team have an annual engagement workplan, comprising all waste services, and many different aspects of waste minimisation, ranging from supporting national campaigns to school talks.
- 4.24 In terms of the blue and brown bin services, most recently the team have been focussing on improving the quality of blue bin recycling and encouraging customers to receive the blue bin service in the opt-in wards.
- 4.25 Both Waste Minimisation Officers (WMO's) have recently undertaken a doorstepping campaign in Mackworth and Normanton, encouraging residents to opt-in to receive a recycling bin. The same is to be undertaken in Arboretum in due course.
- 4.26 Each July, the WMO's coordinate a campaign to encourage customers living in the opt-in blue bin ward areas to do so. They work with community groups and colleagues from the Neighborhoods Team with the aim of encouraging take-up and removing barriers to recycling.
- 4.27 Over the last year the WMOs have heavily engaged with the blue bin collection teams to minimise recycling contamination. This has built a really positive working relationship between the teams and has improved the quality of materials collected.
- 4.28 Now it's spring and fortnightly collections have resumed, we plan to carry out door knocking in areas with gardens but where there is lower brown bin participation, to encourage sign-ups and the use of the bin for food and garden waste.

- 4.29 Looking to the future, in 2023, DEFRA announced the Simpler Recycling reforms. Introduced by the Environment Act 2021, they will deliver a range of changes across the country. By 31 March 2026, residents across England will all be able to recycle the same core set of materials.
- 4.30 For Derby City Council, this means that plastic film packaging and plastic bags (soft or flexible plastics) will become recyclable. Simpler Recycling will also see the introduction of a weekly food waste collection, which will eventually lead to brown bins being for garden waste only. More information is available within the referenced background paper.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 The service employs two Waste Minimisation Officers. Their primary function is to engage with customers, often face to face, regarding waste issues such as reducing waste, encouraging recycling and correct participation. Also, as the waste service touches every household, we receive a significant amount of customer contact.
- 5.2 As a result, the team is very aware of the issues customers encounter, the common questions and misconceptions they have and a good understanding of the barriers to reducing waste and recycling more or participating correctly.

Other options

- 6.1 Not applicable – update only.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 Not applicable – update only.

Legal implications

- 8.1 As a unitary authority, Derby City Council has both collection and disposal functions as set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This specifies that collection authorities have a duty to separately collect recyclables.
- 8.2 The Government has mandated Simpler Recycling and that waste collection authorities operate a weekly food waste collection service under the Environment Act 2021.

Climate implications

- 9.1 Not applicable – update only.

Socio-Economic implications

- 10.1 Responsible waste management and successful participation in recycling is very much linked to socio-economic factors. The Council is mindful of this when helping customers overcome barriers to using our services.

Other significant implications

- 11.1 None.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	NA update only	
Finance	NA update only	
Service Director(s)	Charles Edwards	18.04.24
Report sponsor		
Other(s)	Simon Aitken	16.04.24

Background papers: [Food Waste – weekly collection service 13.03.24](#).

List of appendices: None