



31 Climate Actions for Councils

Has your council declared a climate emergency?
Do you need to develop a climate action plan?
We've come up with 31 actions that can immediately help.

Introduction

[Ashden](#) and [Friends of the Earth](#), with the support of [CDP](#), have put together an evidence-based list of the most effective actions councils can take on climate. This easy-to-use list highlights the co-benefits for each action, whether it be better health, improved economy, increased equity or resilience.

The majority of local authorities across the UK have declared a climate emergency following the release of the IPCC 1.5 report, which called for urgent climate action by 2030. As local authorities work to develop their climate action plans, this tool can be used to help prioritize what actions councils can take.

However, no action is too big or too small, as every tonne of carbon saved is good for the climate.



The actions are downloadable as an Excel spreadsheet that can be filtered for ease-of-use. Download below or from Ashden's web page under 'Our Work'.

[Download Spreadsheet](#) →

Methodology

These 31 actions are quantified in terms of likely carbon savings, approximate cost and co-benefits. They also point to examples of best practice around the UK. Because one size does not fit all, our hypothetical 'Ashden town' consists of 100,000 residents in order that data can be extrapolated to fit the size of your town or city.

We have looked for real examples of where these actions have been implemented, wherever possible, and have used the best data we can find but have had to make a range of assumptions. More information about the methodology and sources of information for each action can be found on the 'Actions' tab of the excel spreadsheet.

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Raising Money

Introduce a workplace car parking levy and/or similar initiative to fund sustainable transport

Greatest
co-benefit
potential:



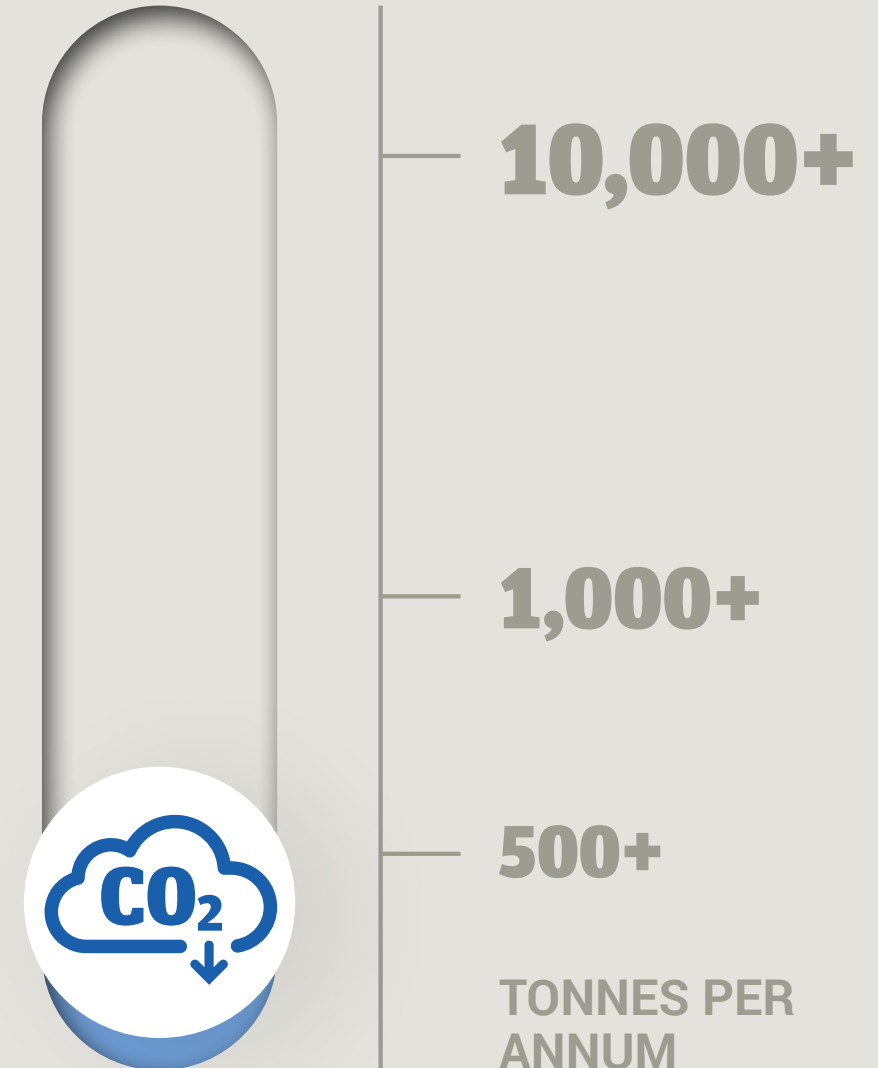
HEALTH



EQUITY

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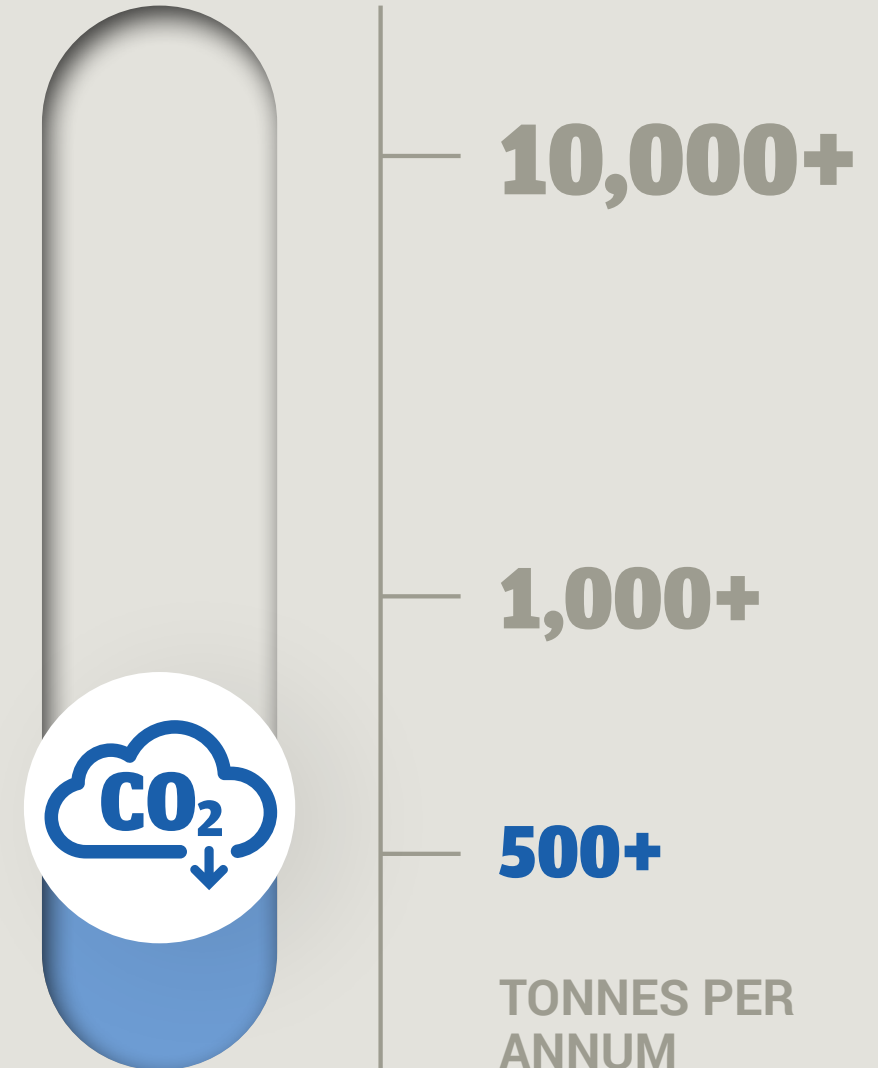
Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



Set up a Carbon Offset Fund through Section 106 agreements

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Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



A photograph of a row of terraced houses, likely in a residential area. The houses have multiple windows and doors, some with shutters. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent green filter. The word "Buildings" is written in large, white, bold letters across the center of the image.

Buildings

Enforce minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rental sector

Greatest co-benefit potential:



HEALTH



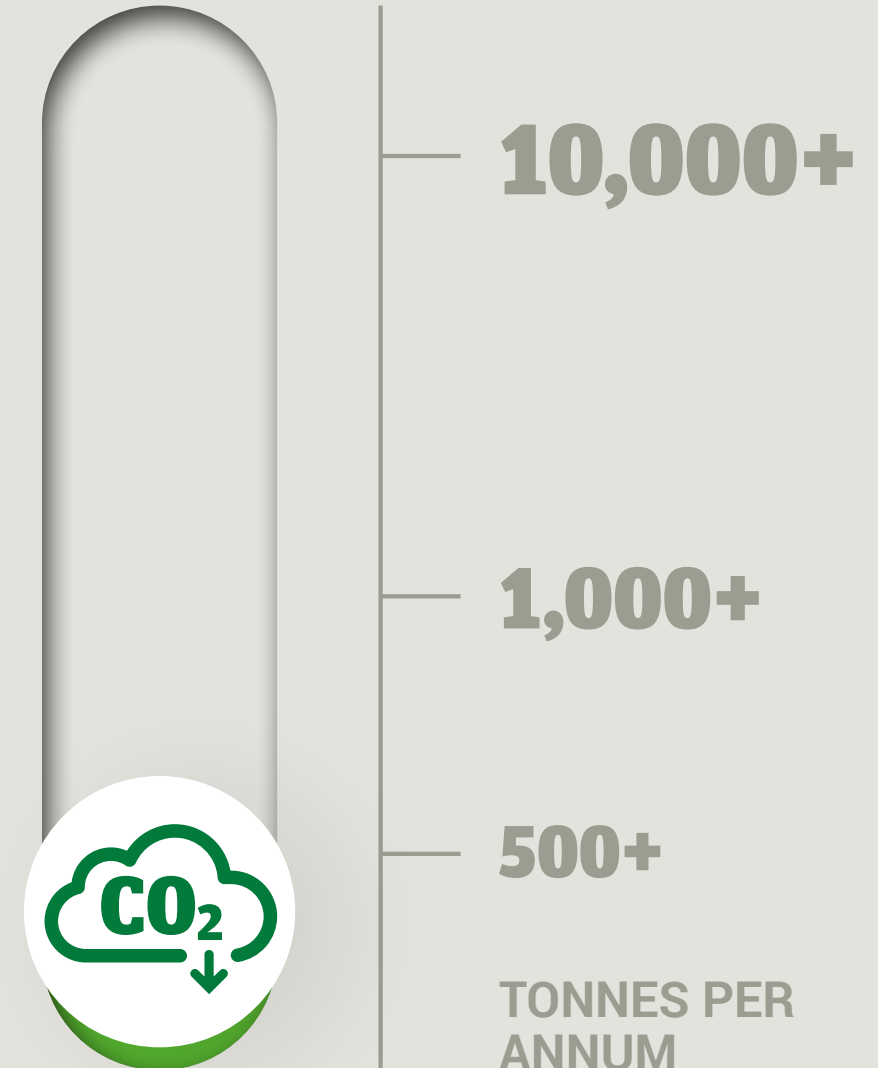
EQUITY



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Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



**Encourage 100 Energiesprong
(or similar) retrofits a year -
initially in social housing
and then rolling out to the
private sector**

**Greatest
co-benefit
potential:**



HEALTH



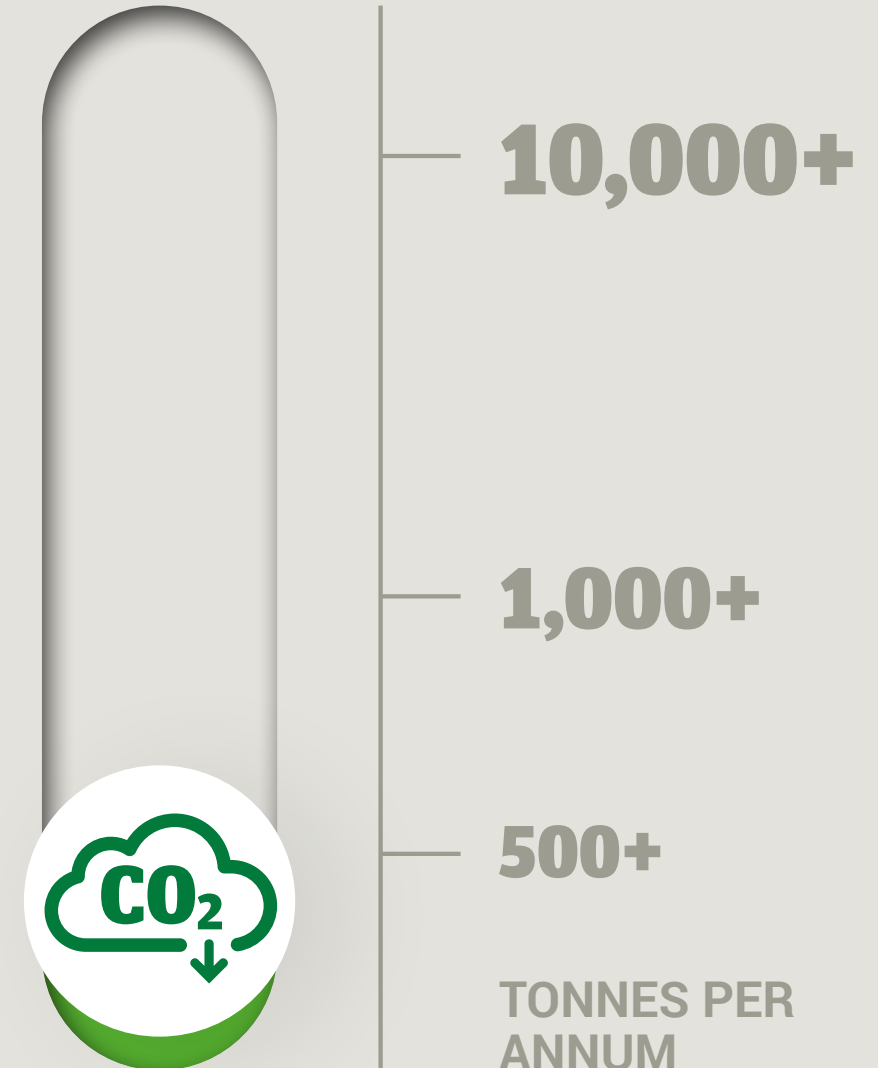
EQUITY



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Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



Retrofit council-owned homes to EPC C

Greatest co-benefit potential:



HEALTH



ECONOMY



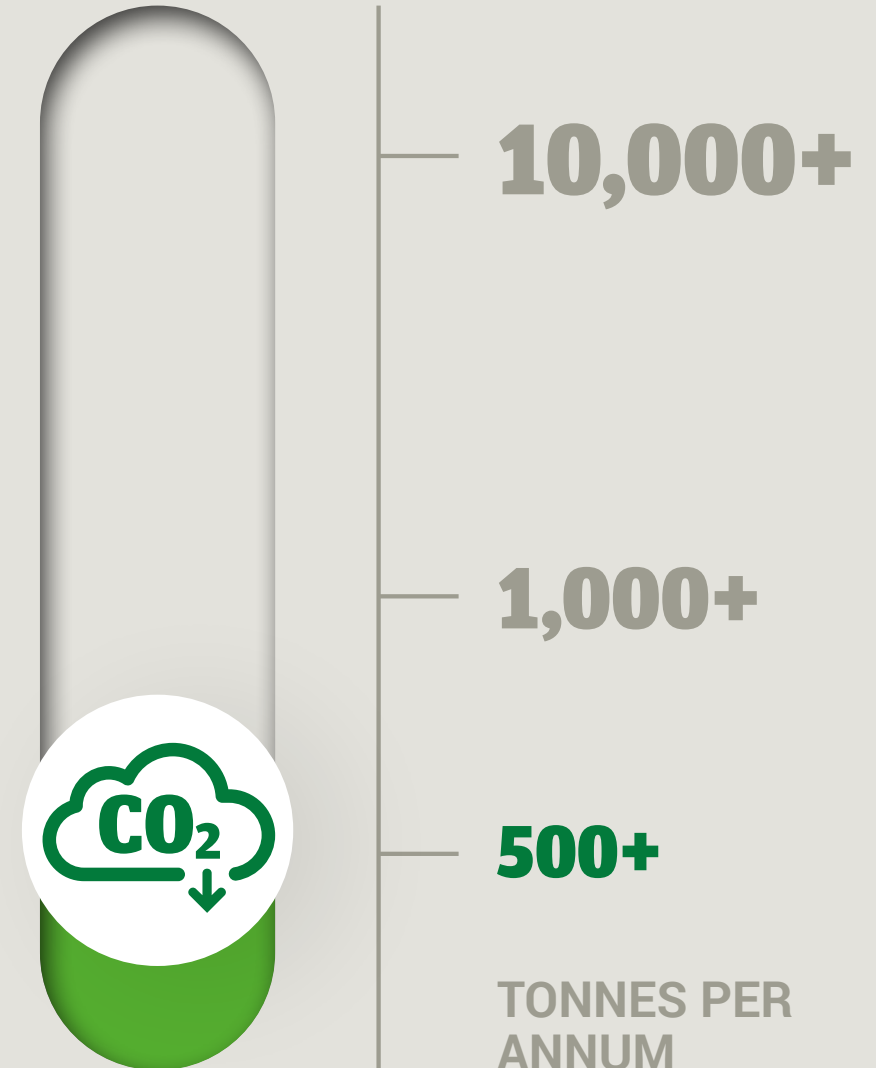
EQUITY



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Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



**Require higher than
current national
energy efficiency
standards for privately
built new homes**

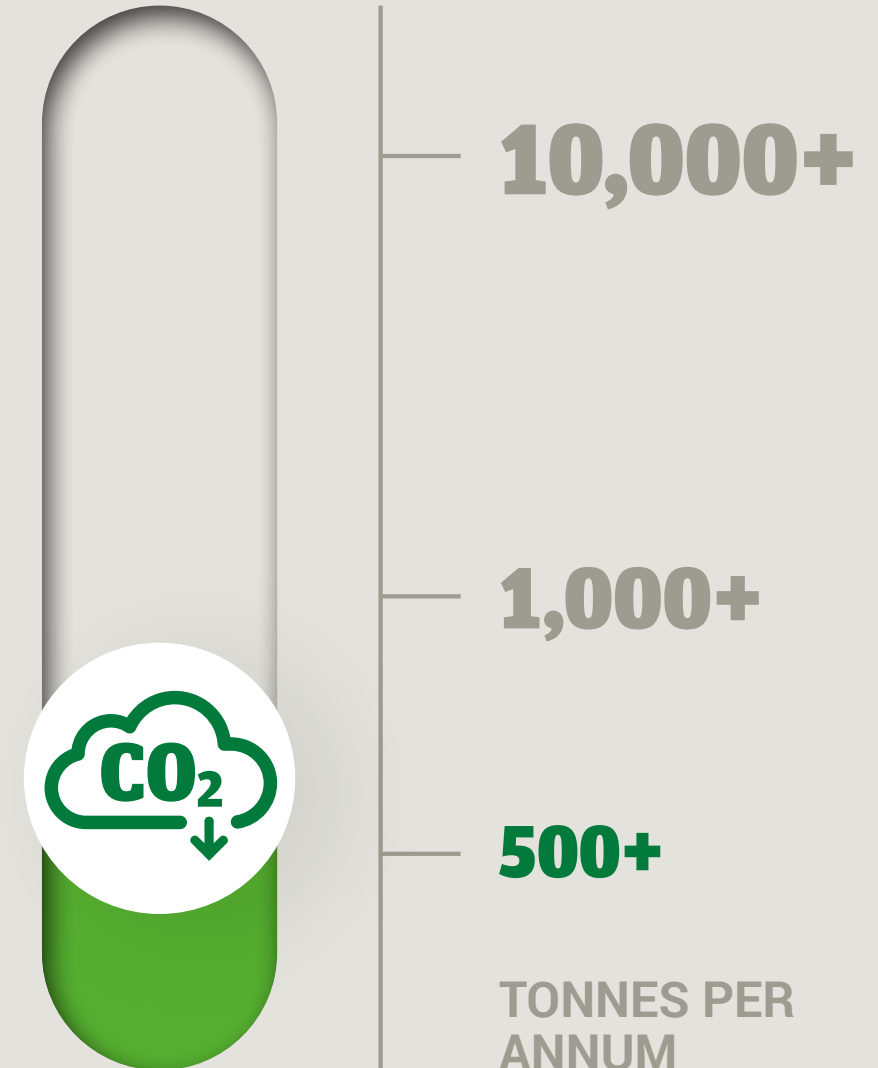
**Greatest
co-benefit
potential:**



RESILIENCE

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Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



**Encourage/enable
retrofit of all existing
owner-occupied
housing stock to EPC
level C or above**

**Greatest
co-benefit
potential:**



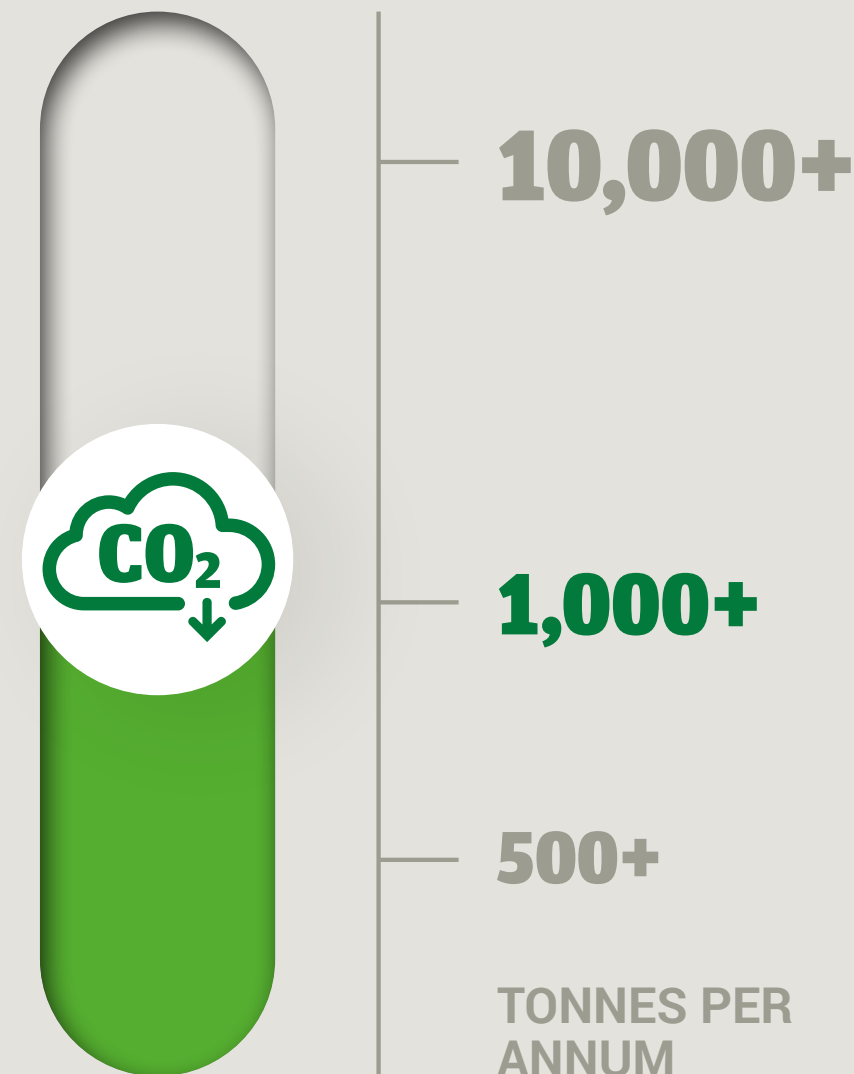
ECONOMY



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Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



Require homes built on council land to be Passivhaus standard or similar (and, if developing new council facilities, ensure they are built to the highest standards e.g. BREEAM excellent)

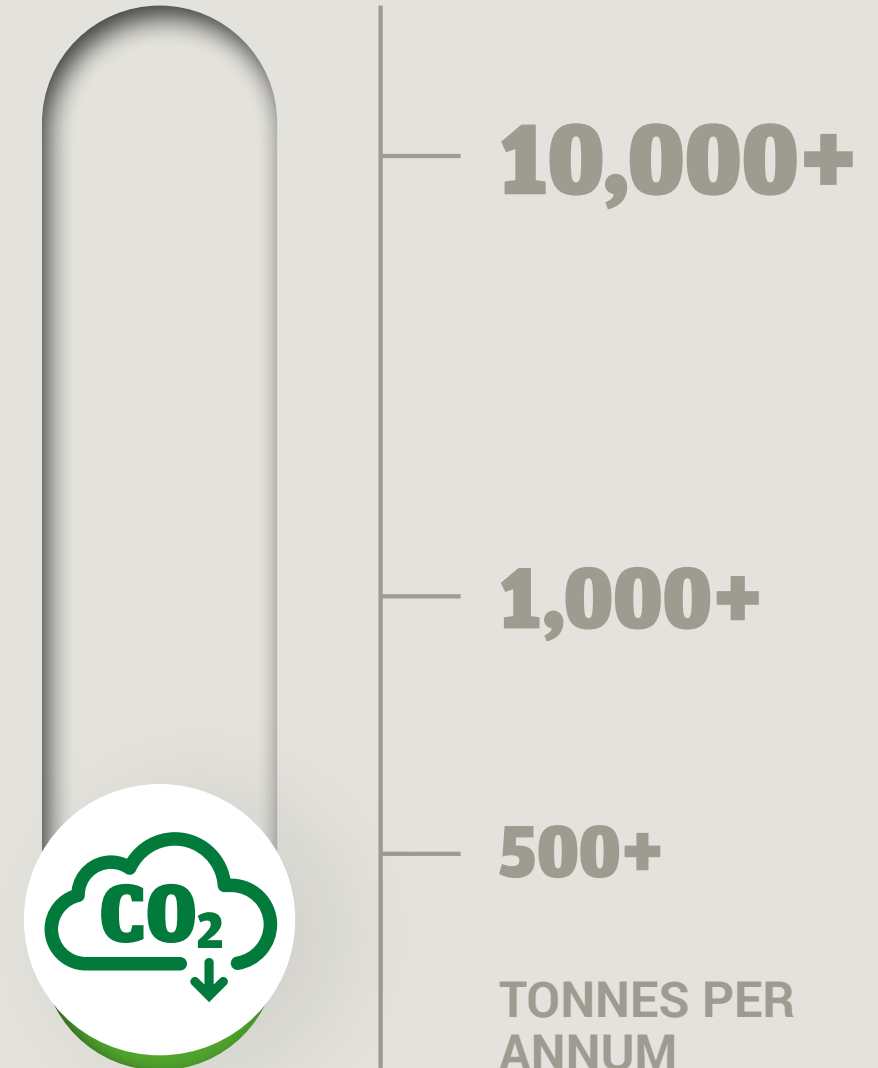
**Greatest
co-benefit
potential:**



RESILIENCE

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Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



A photograph of a city street scene, likely in Copenhagen, featuring a tram and buses. The image is overlaid with a dark red filter. The word "Transport" is written in large, white, bold letters across the center of the image.

Transport

Introduce measures to encourage cycling and walking

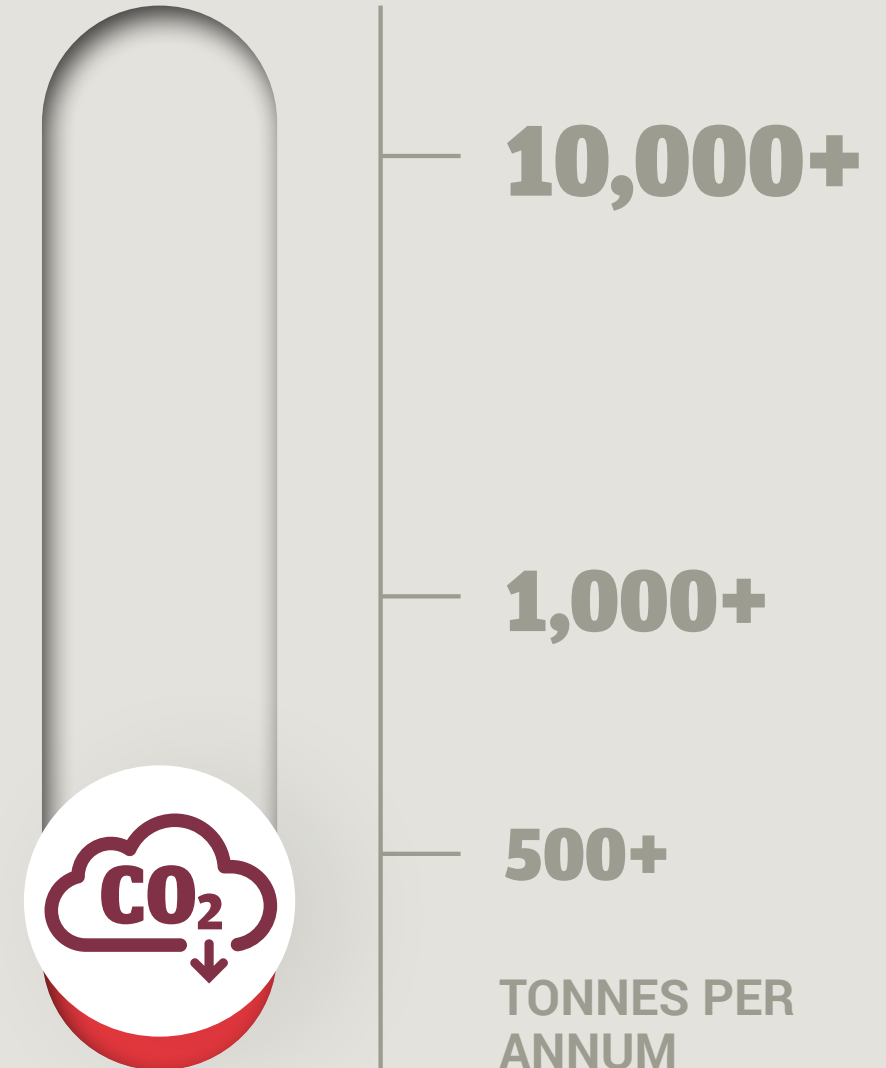
Greatest
co-benefit
potential:



HEALTH

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Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



Ban or discourage private cars from the city centre

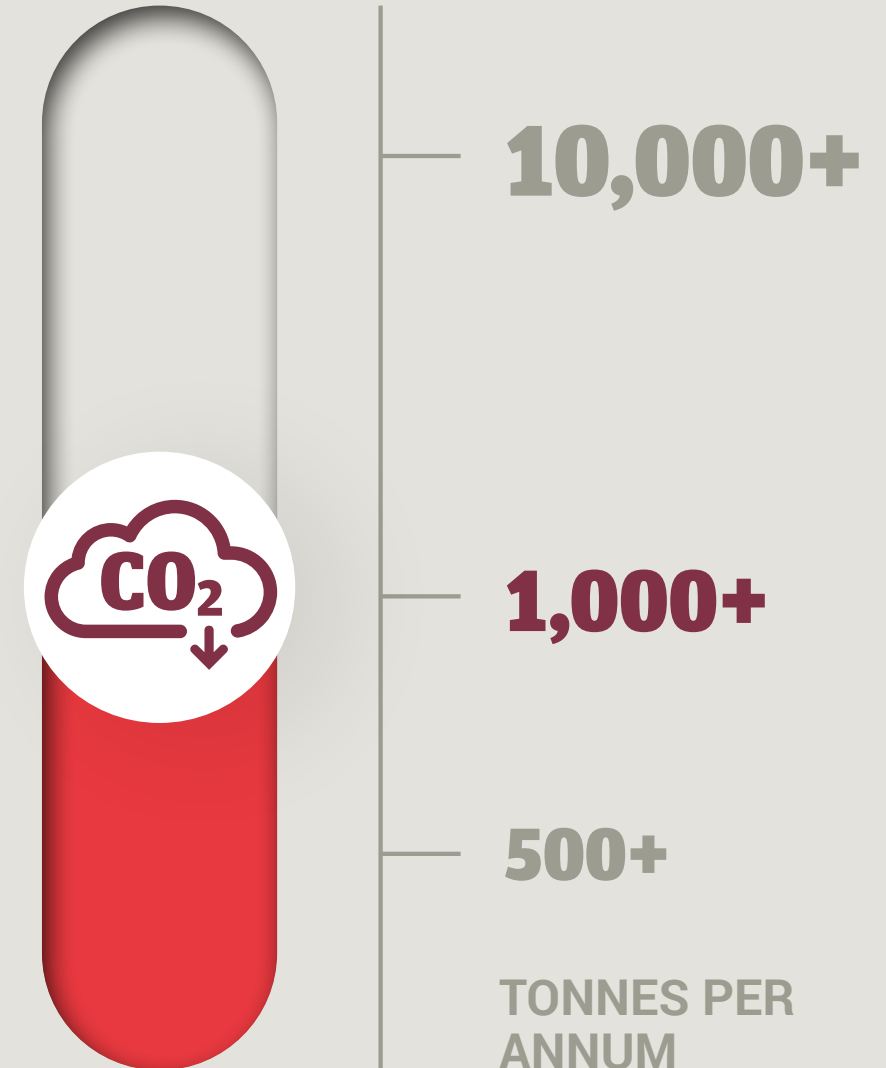
Greatest
co-benefit
potential:



HEALTH

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Establish urban consolidation centres

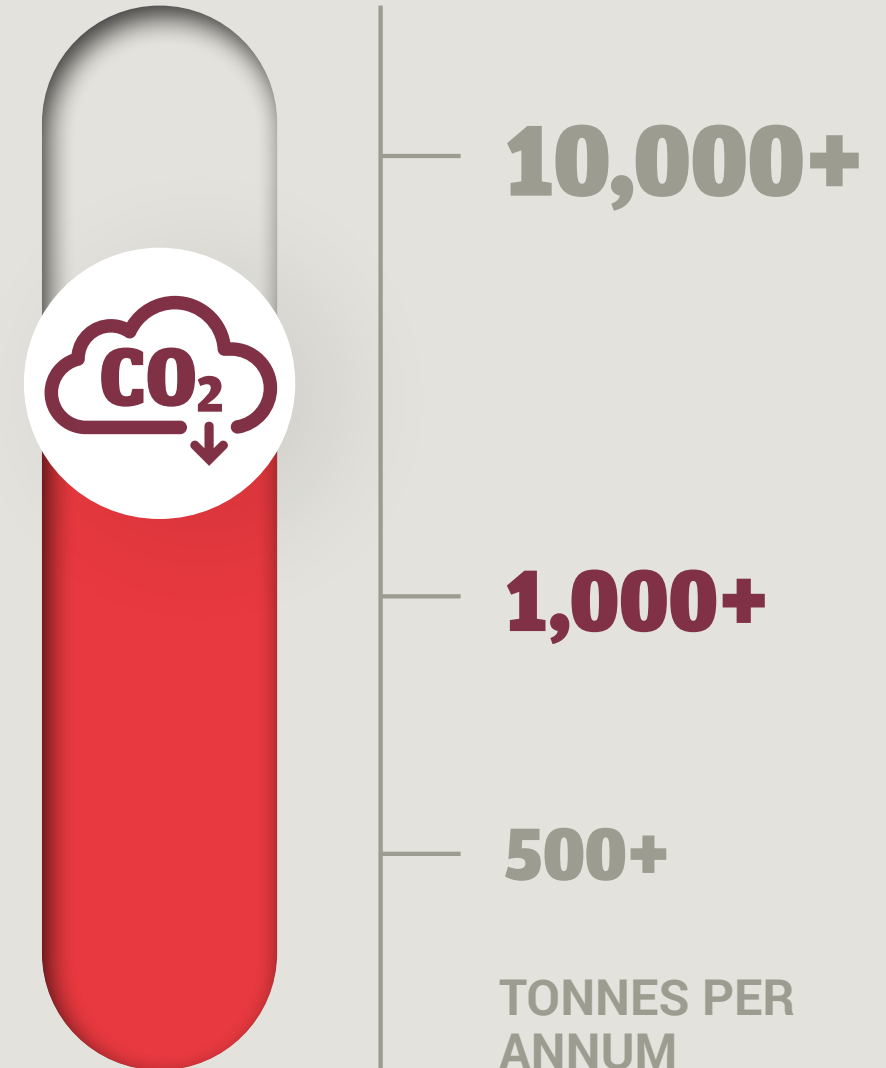
Greatest
co-benefit
potential:



HEALTH

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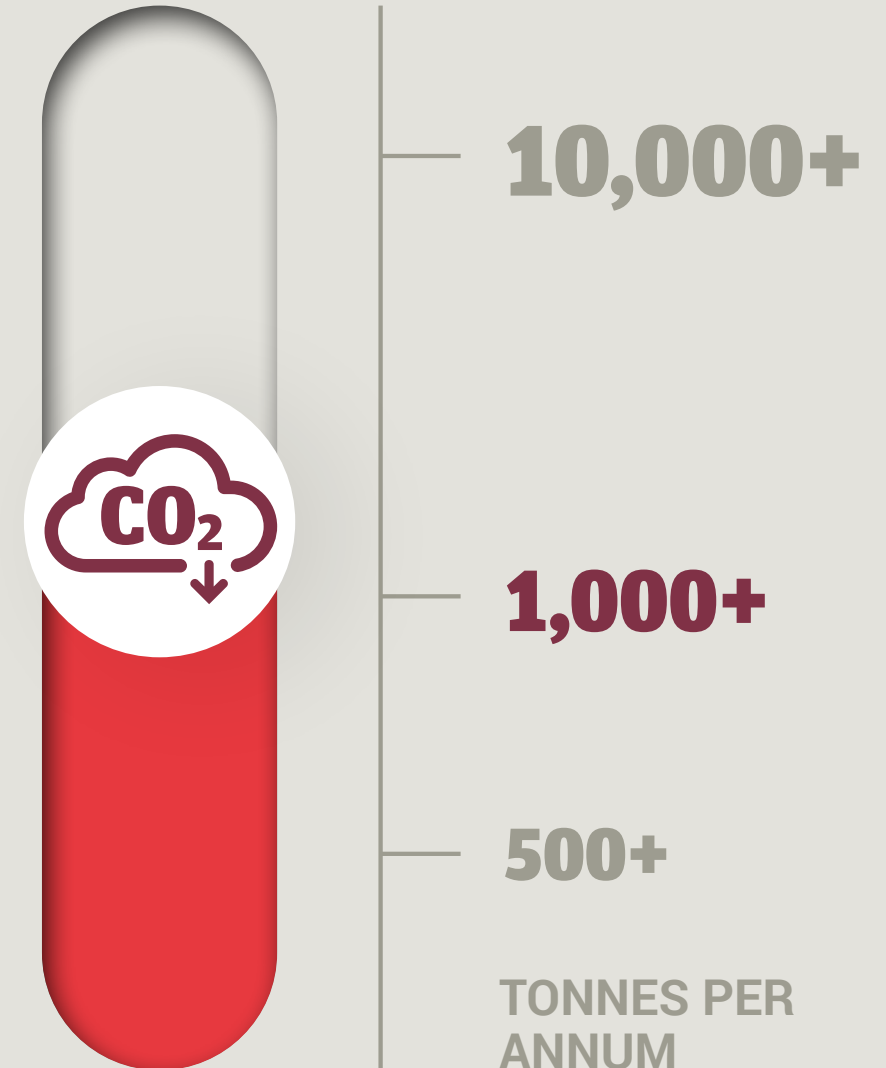
Estimated carbon savings based
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Encourage car sharing

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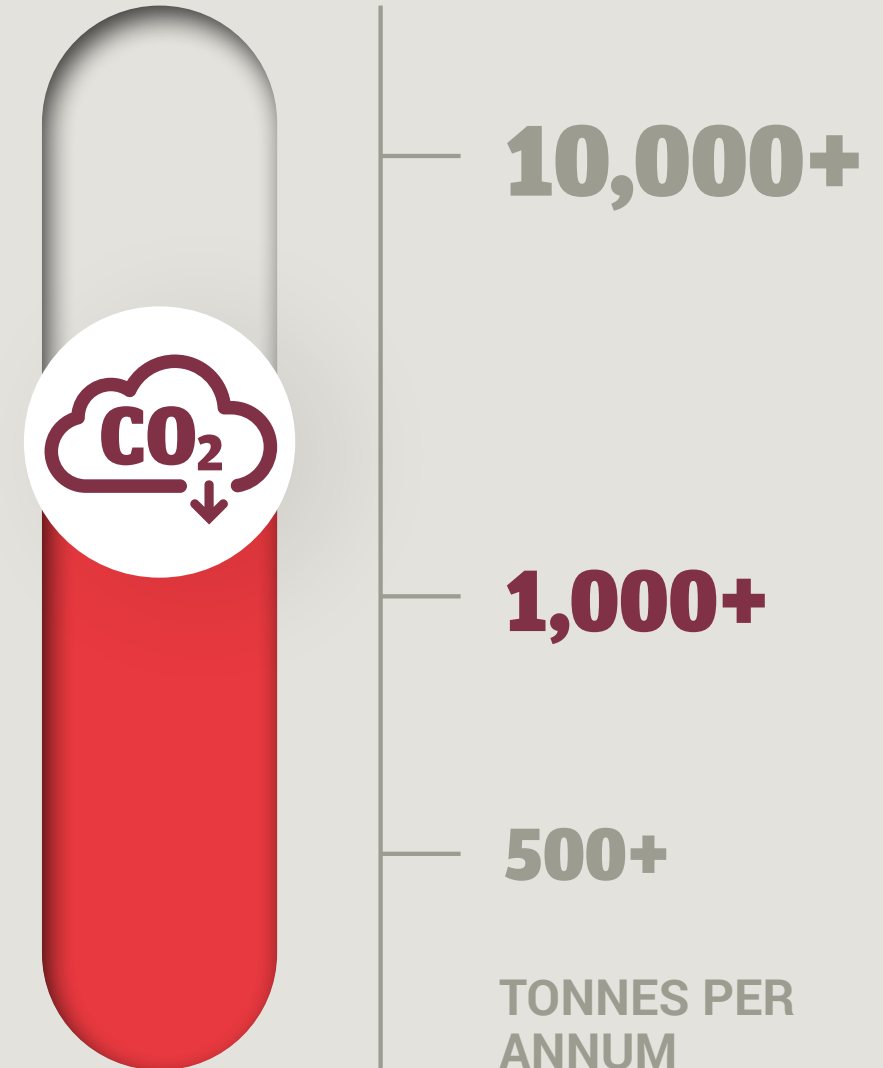
Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



**Enable the rapid
shift to electric
vehicles through
putting in place EV
charging**

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Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



Replace existing buses with electric buses

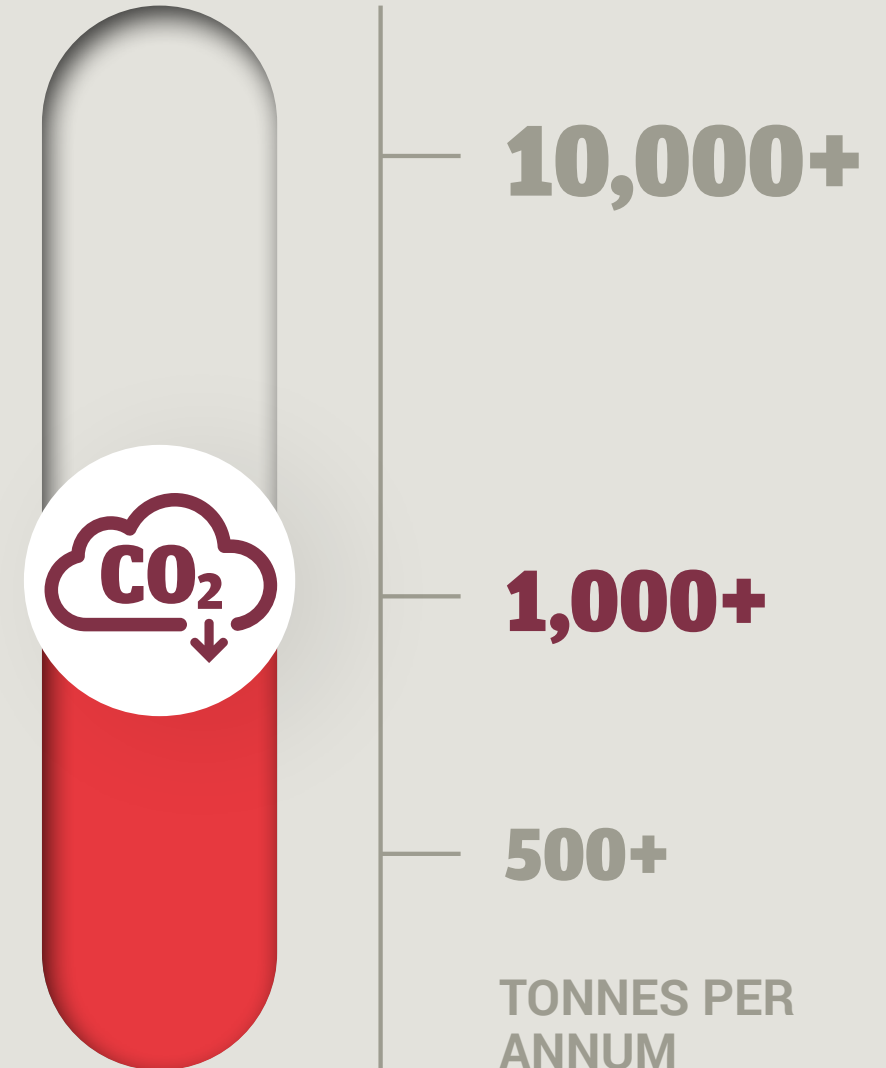
Greatest
co-benefit
potential:



HEALTH

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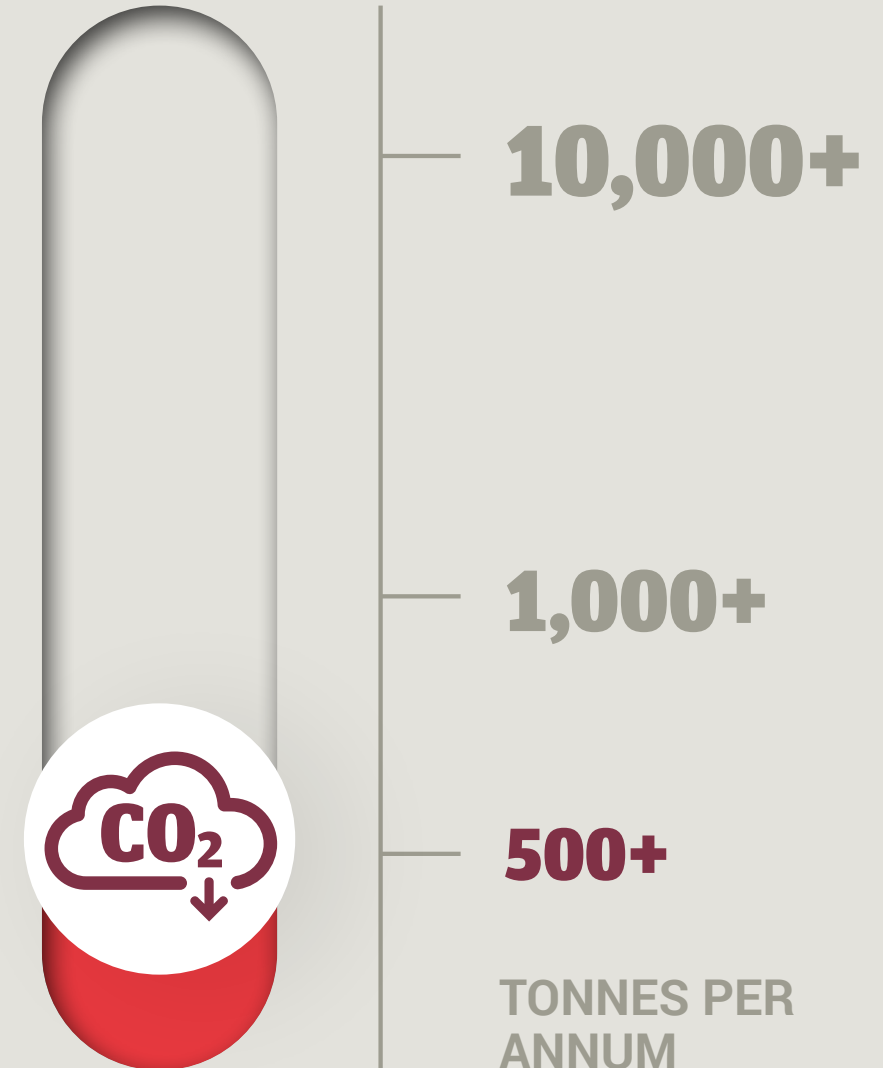
Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



Deliver a rapid transition of the council's own fleet to electric

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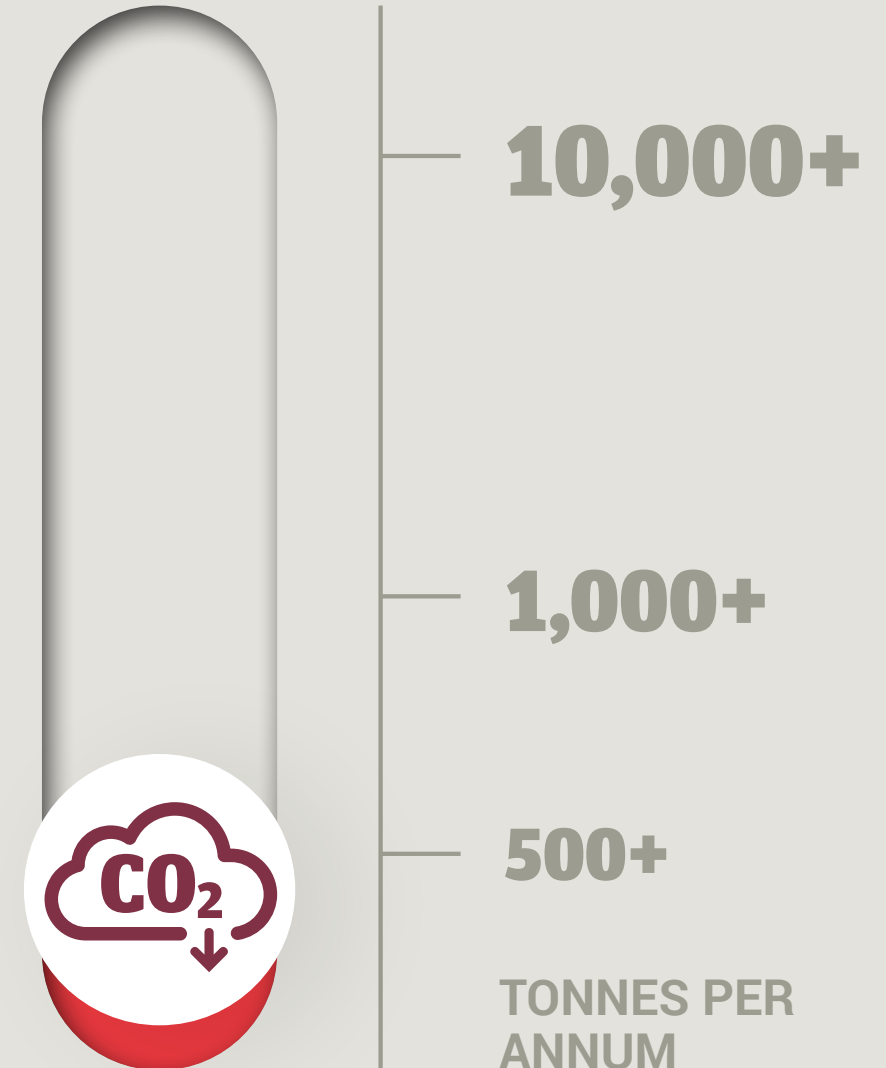
Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



Require all taxis to be electric through licensing

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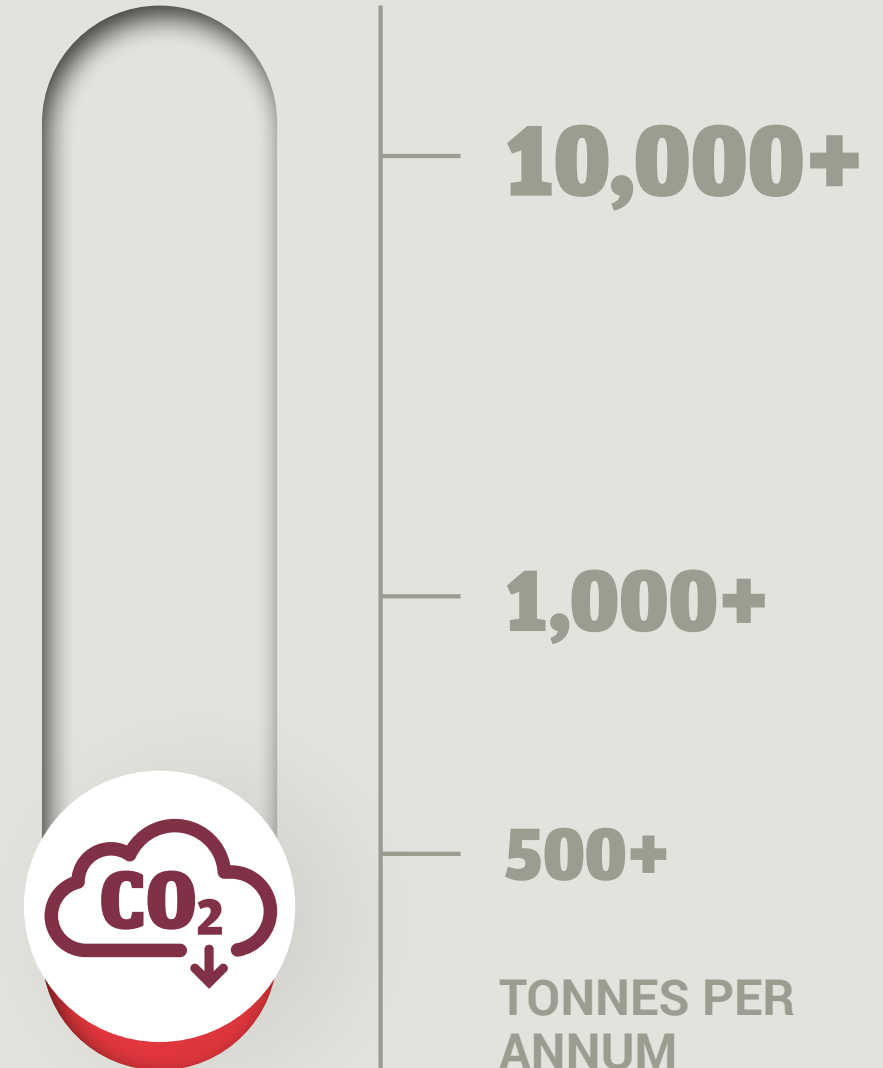
Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



Reduce the need to own and use a car through managing developments in the local plan

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Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



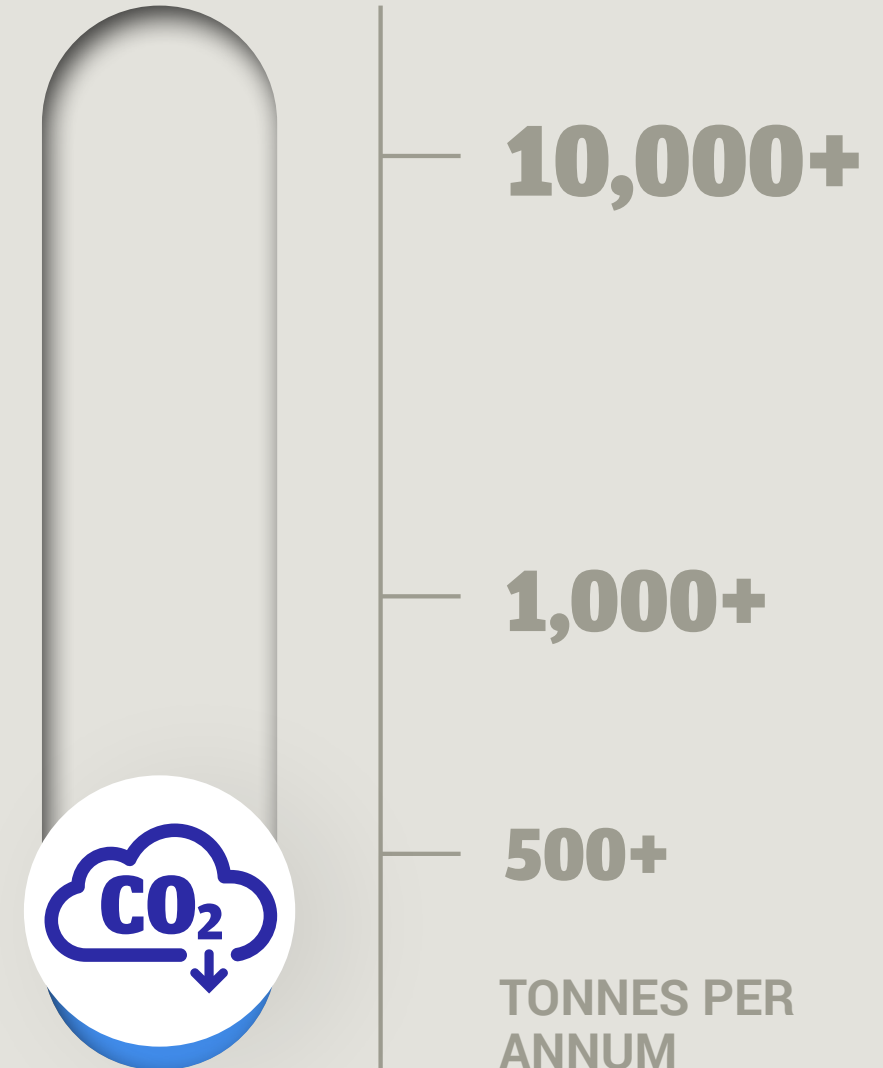
A blue-tinted photograph of a historic brick building with Gothic-style windows and a canal in the foreground. The building features multiple gables and large, multi-paned windows. The canal in the foreground reflects the building and the sky. The overall scene is serene and historical.

The Council's Estate

**Encourage and
enable energy
saving behaviour
by all council staff**

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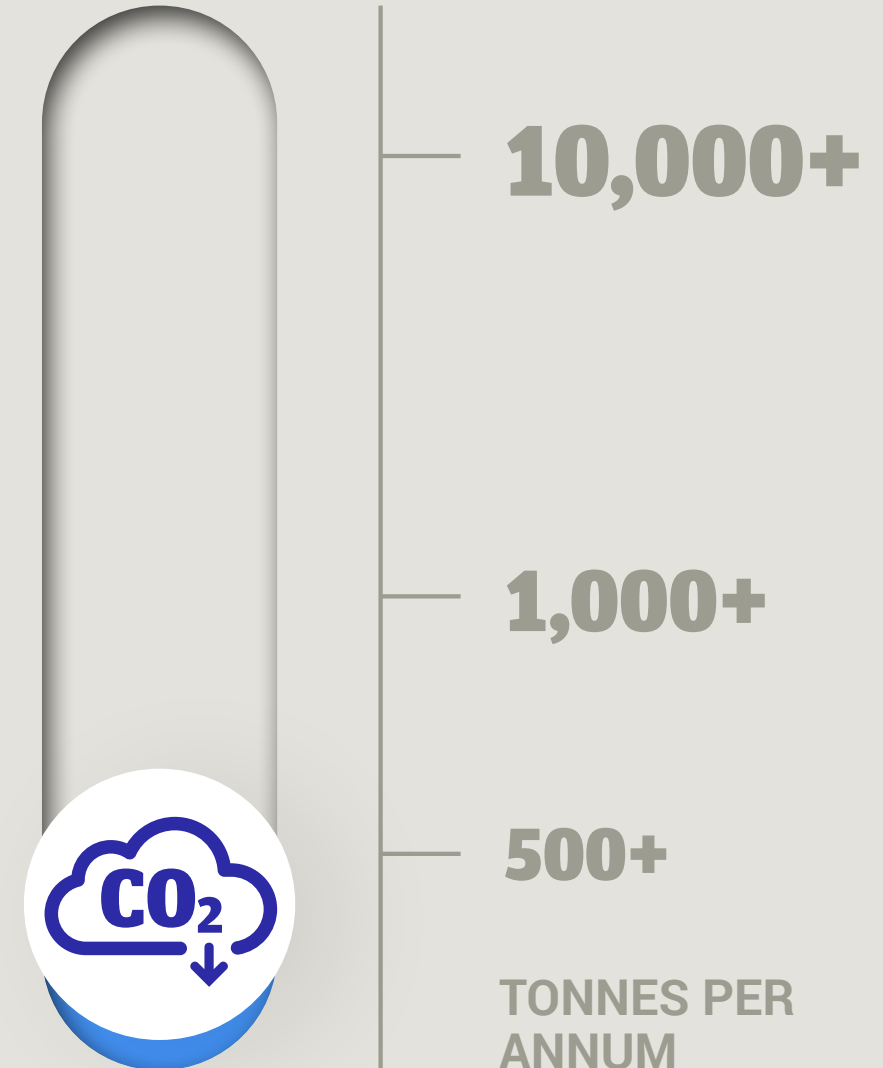
Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



**Ensure council's
procurement
strategy specifies
that low carbon
lights and appliances
are procured**

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Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



**Upgrade the insulation
and heating systems of
council buildings, taking
advantage of interest-free
finance available**

**Greatest
co-benefit
potential:**



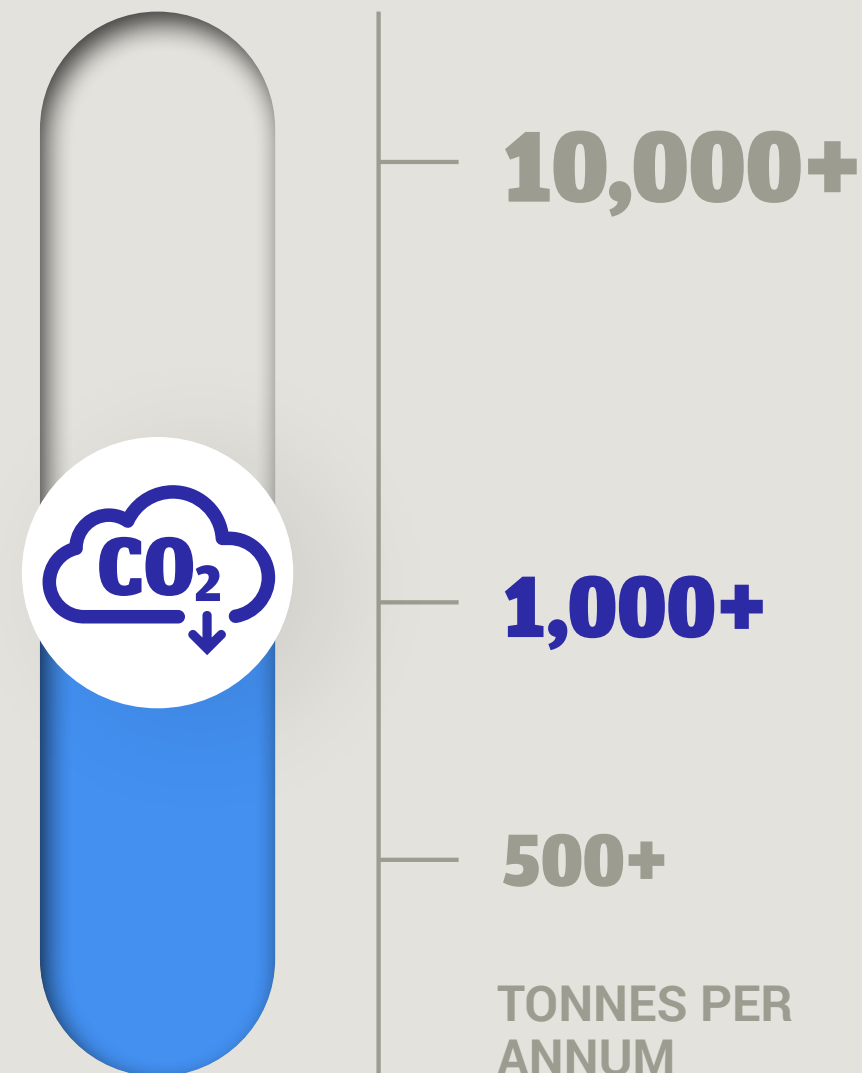
ECONOMY



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on a town of 100,000 people



Switch street lighting to well-designed and well directed LED lights

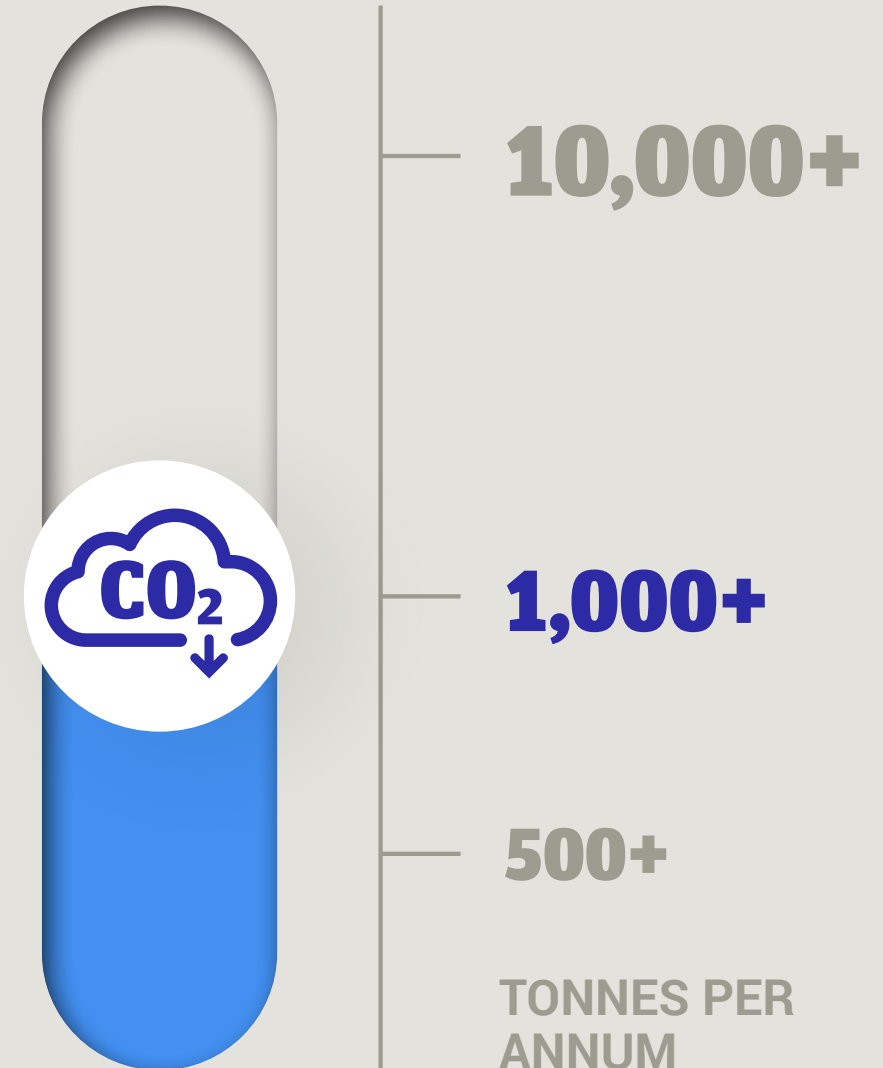
Greatest
co-benefit
potential:



ECONOMY

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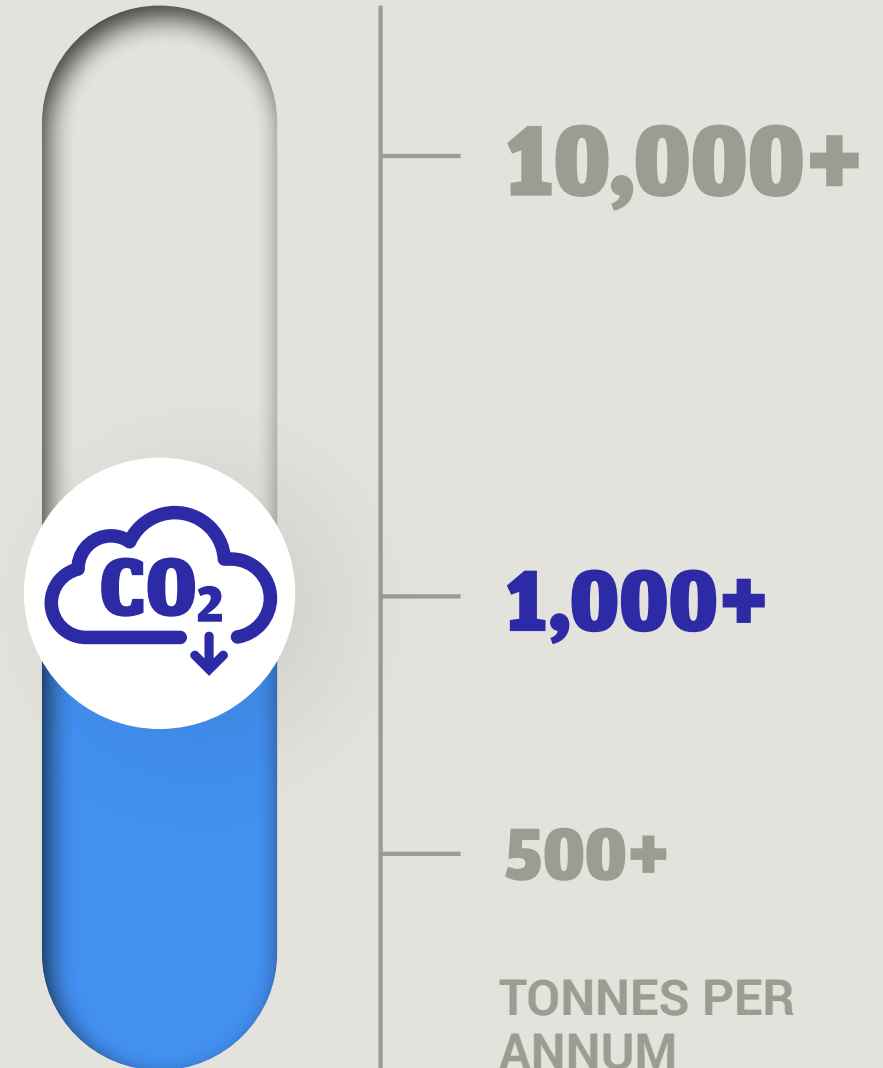
Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



**Require the integration
of renewable energy
such as solar thermal,
PV or heat pumps in
local authority owned
buildings**

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Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



The background of the slide features a landscape with wind turbines and solar panels. A large, semi-transparent purple rectangle is overlaid on the entire image, creating a monochromatic effect. The text 'Power Generation' is centered in white, bold font.

Power Generation

Identify areas suitable for renewable energy in the local plan

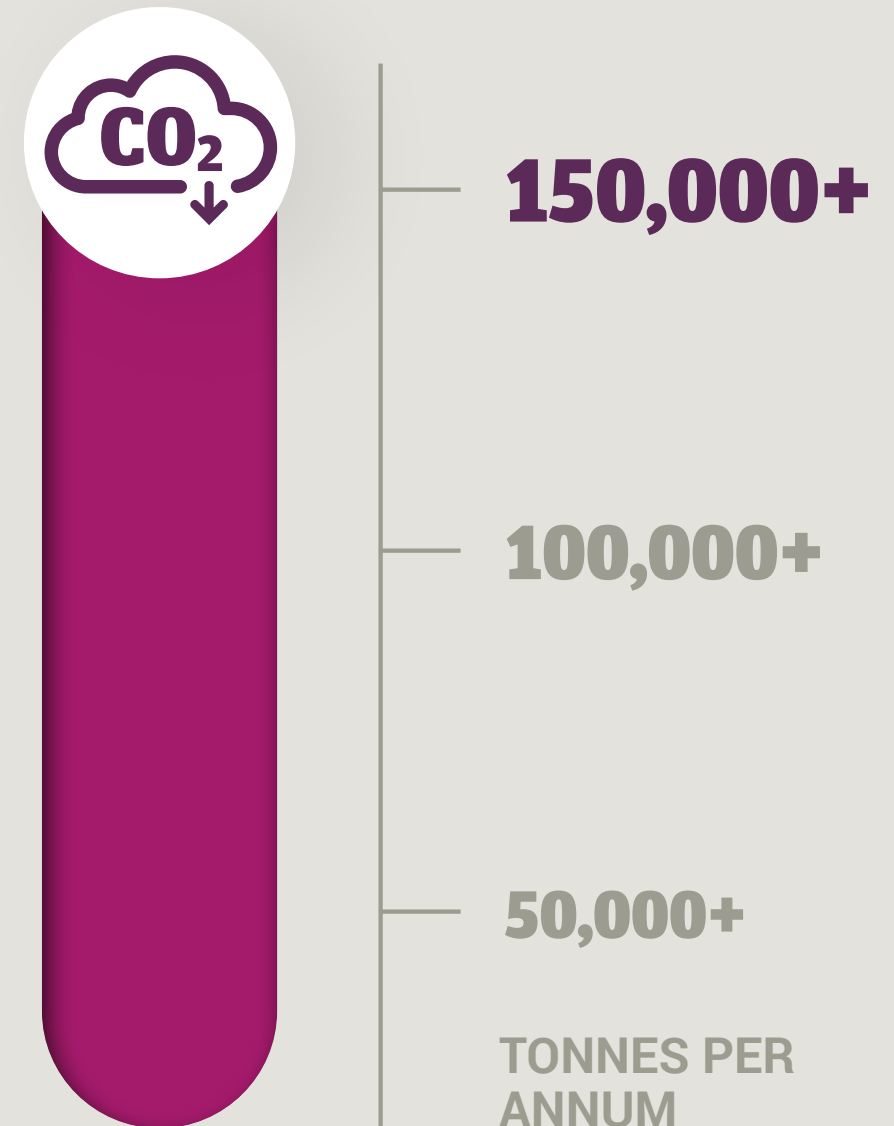
Greatest
co-benefit
potential:



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Estimated carbon savings based
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Invest in the development of renewable energy and energy storage

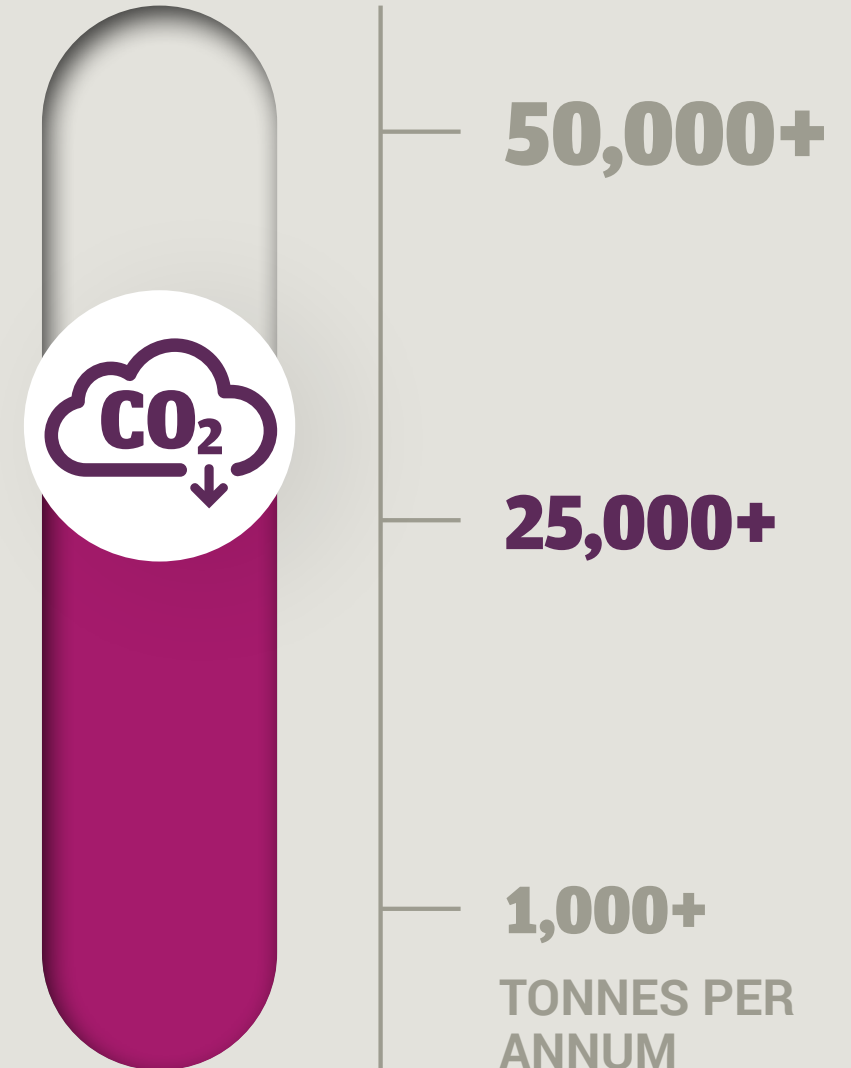
Greatest
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ECONOMY

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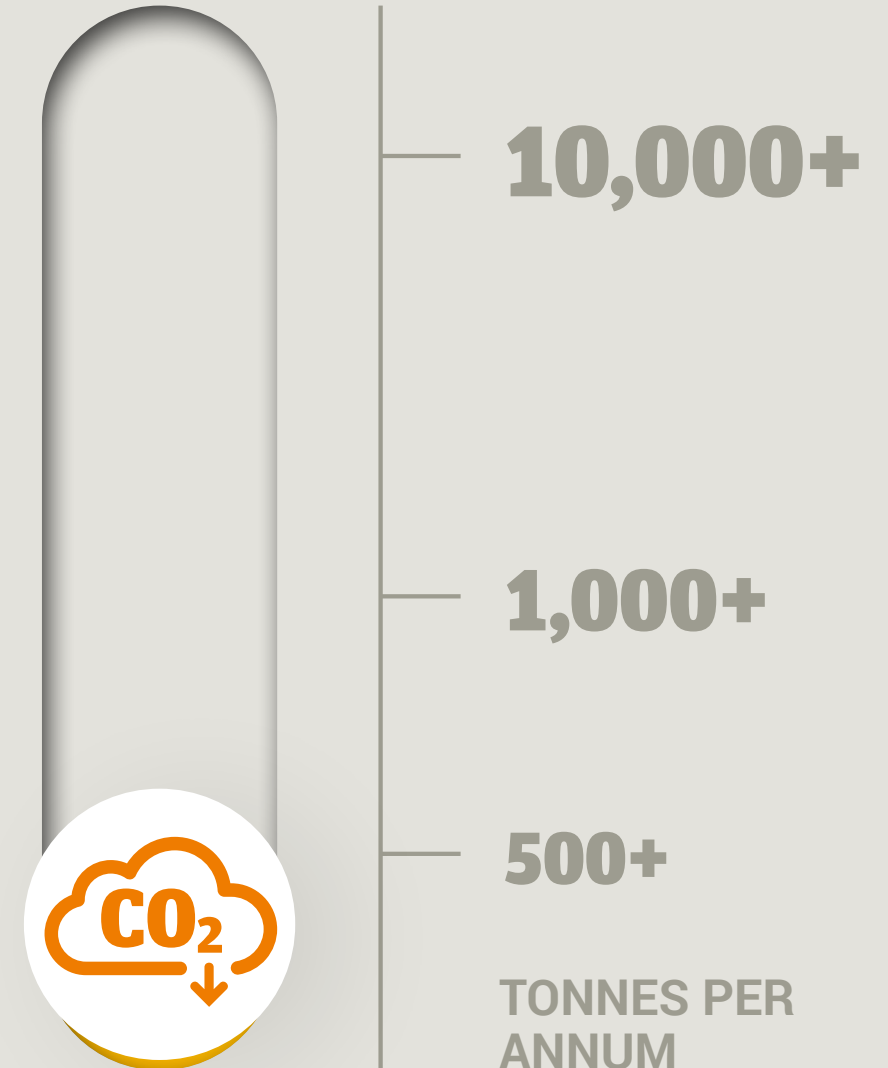


Waste

Cut the council's paper waste by offering papers electronically

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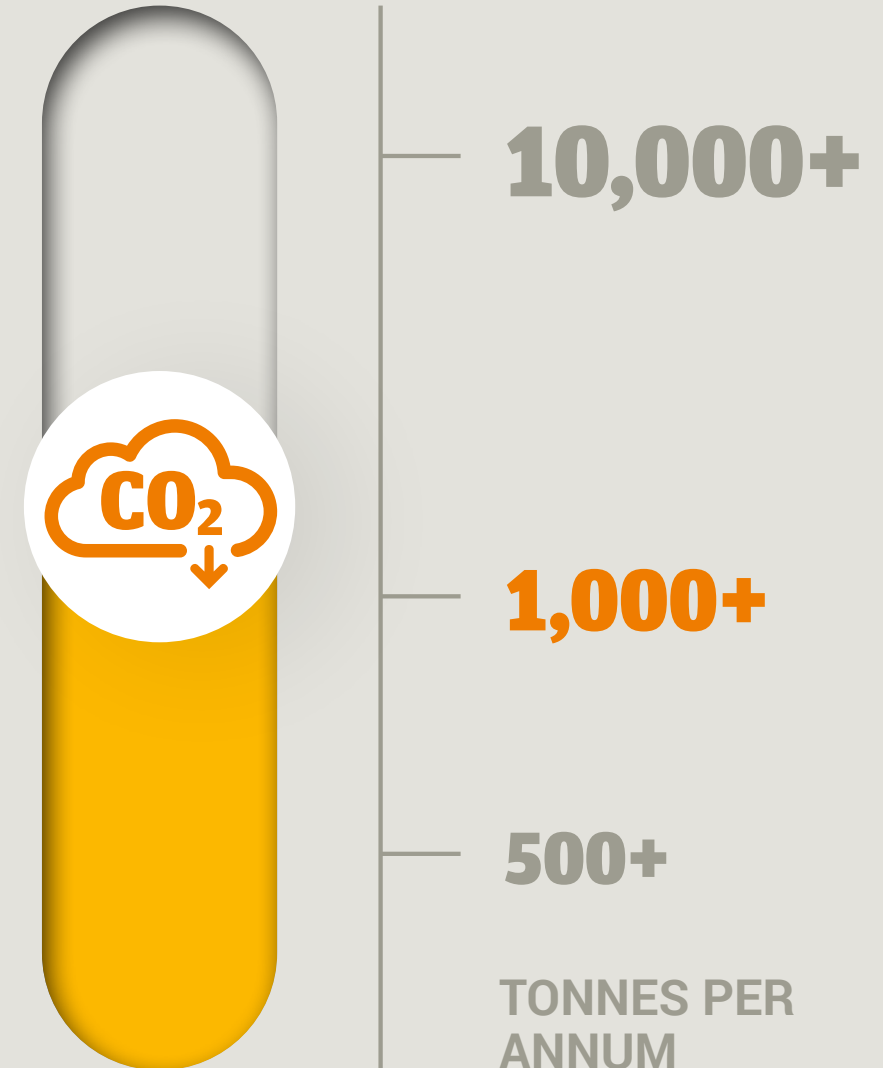
Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



Use food waste according to the food waste hierarchy of prevent, reuse, recycle, and use remaining biodegradable waste to generate biogas

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Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



Land Use

Increase tree cover on council owned land and on streets; update local planning strategies to encourage nature based solutions such as increasing tree cover across the council area

Greatest co-benefit potential:



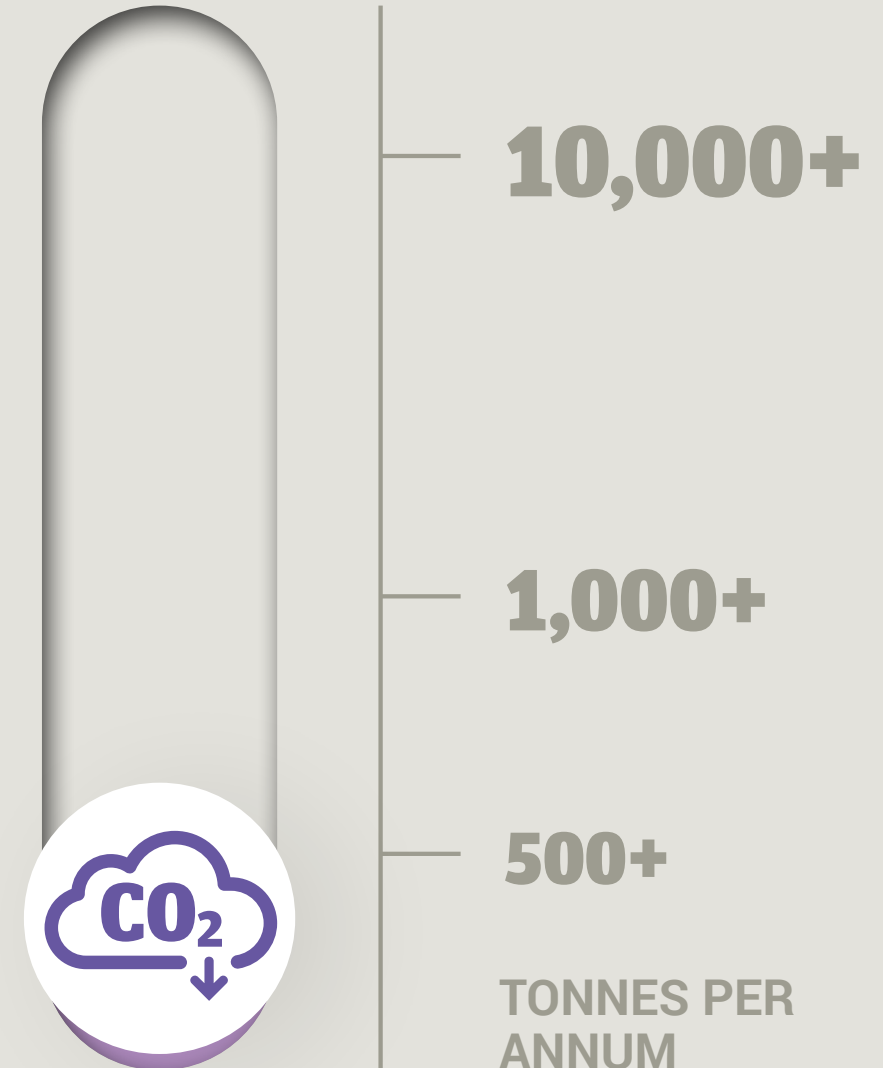
HEALTH



RESILIENCE

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A photograph of three people standing in a forest, overlaid with a teal color filter. On the left is an older man with white hair, wearing a light-colored jacket over a patterned shirt and dark trousers. In the center is a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and light-colored cargo pants. On the right is a younger man wearing a dark beanie, a light-colored jacket, and dark trousers, gesturing with his hands as if speaking. The background shows bare trees and a stream.

Influencing Others

**Support particularly
SME businesses to
access funds and
expertise for reducing
carbon pollution**

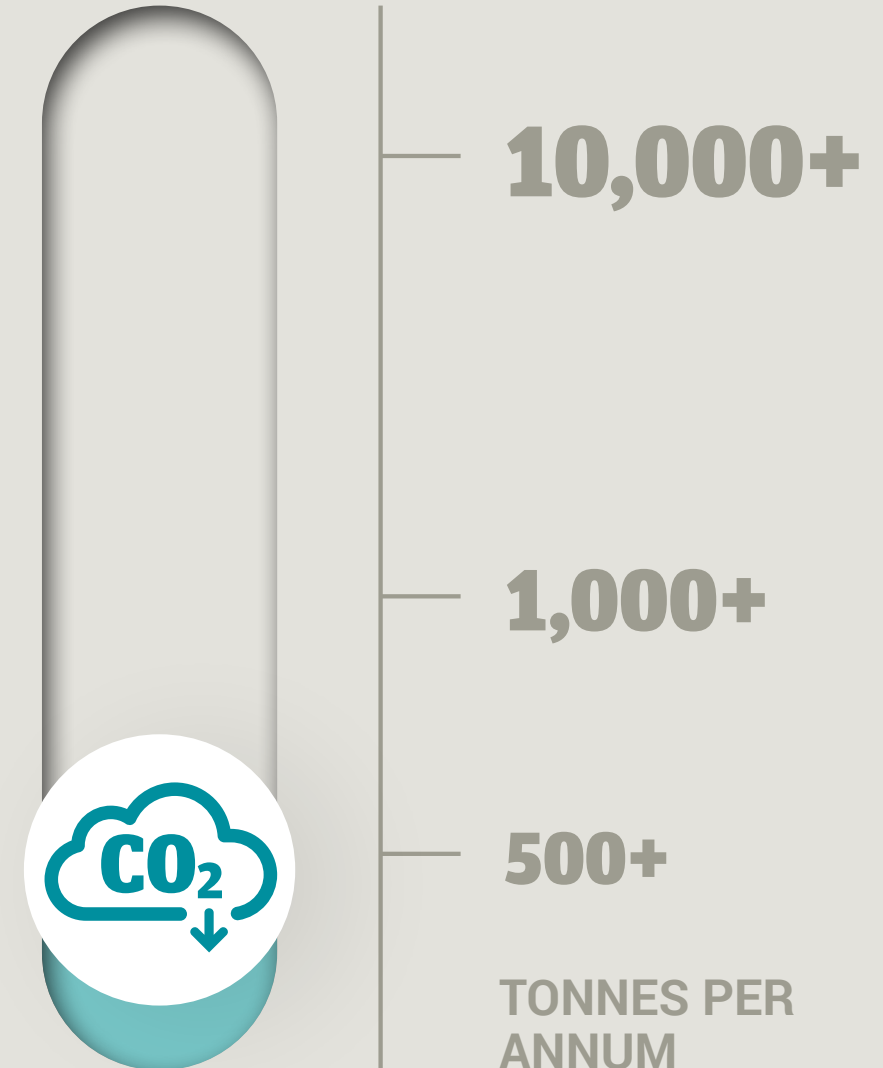
**Greatest
co-benefit
potential:**



ECONOMY

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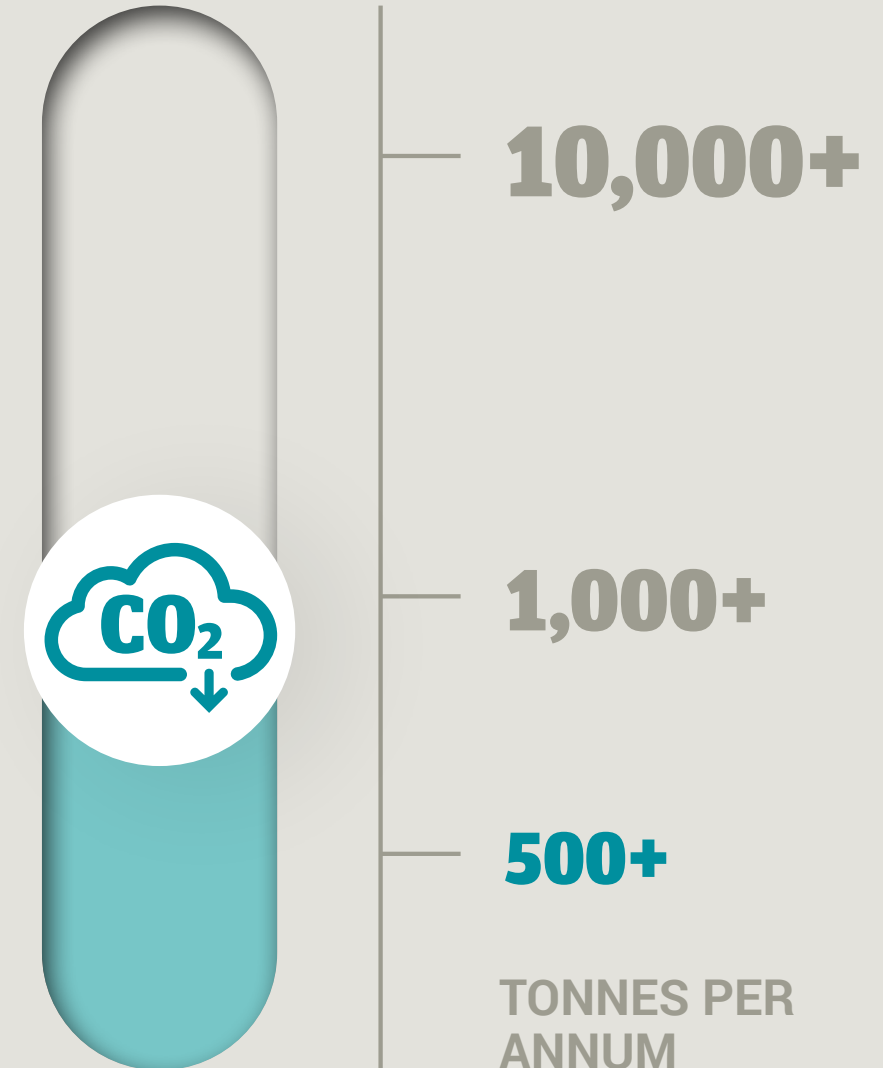
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Encourage and support schools to cut carbon e.g. through participating in the LESS CO₂ programme and through accessing Salix finance

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Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



Engage with schools to ensure meals are delivered in accordance with the official Eatwell Guide and the majority of options on menus are healthy and plant-based, with less and better meat

**Greatest
co-benefit
potential:**



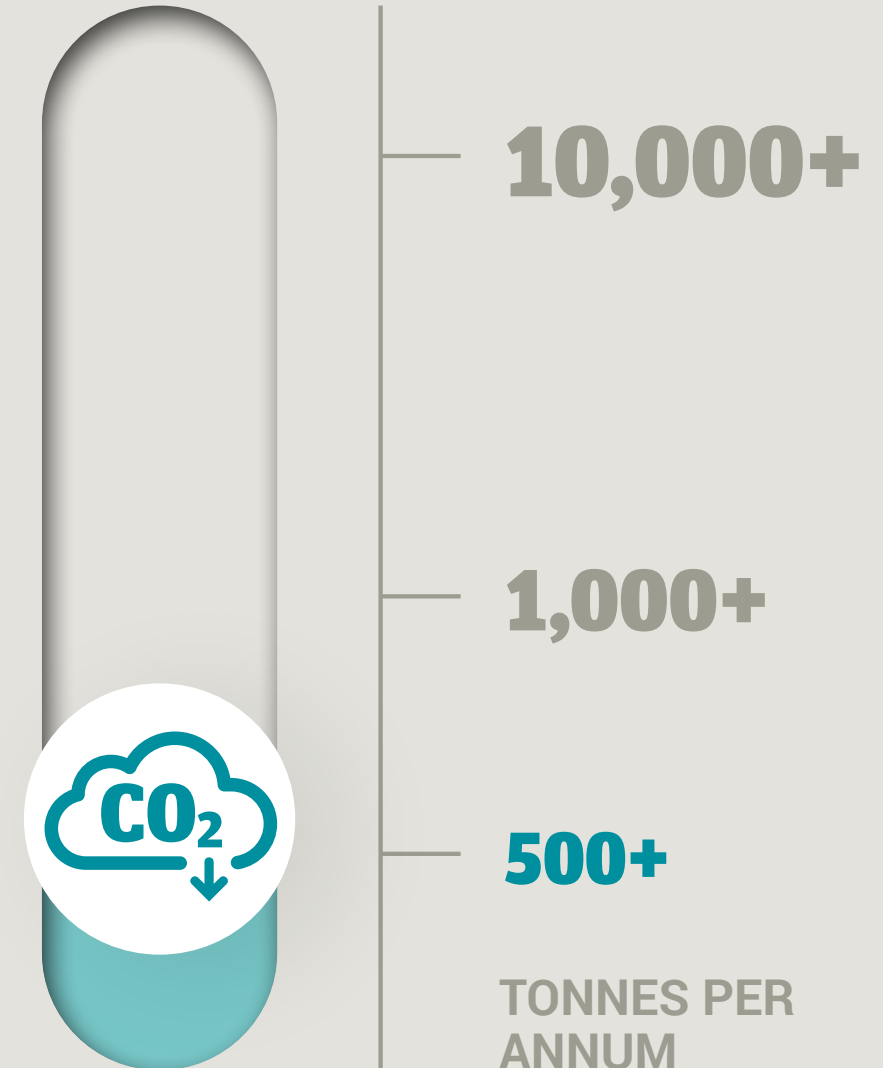
HEALTH



EQUITY

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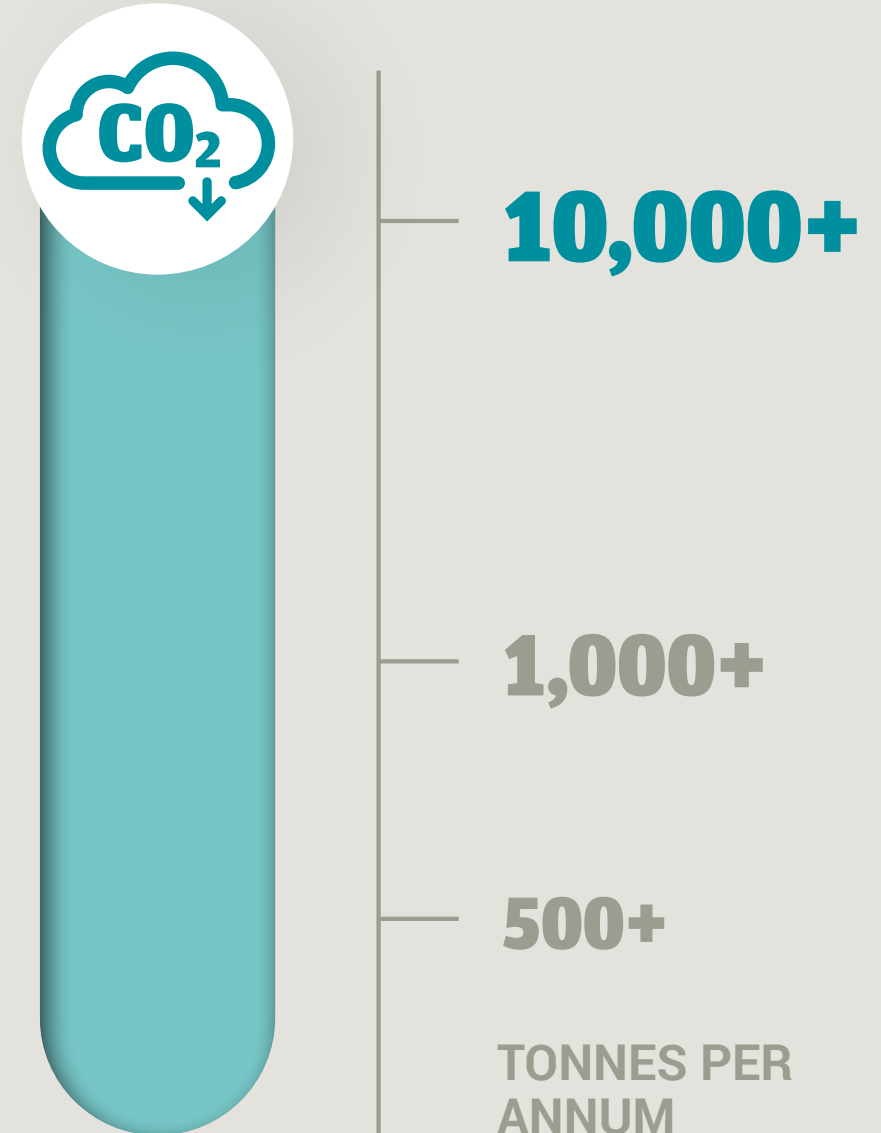
Estimated carbon savings based on a town of 100,000 people



**Through procurement,
ensure the local
authority supply chain
is minimising carbon
emissions**

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Estimated carbon savings based
on a town of 100,000 people



Partners



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[Download Spreadsheet →](#)



Ashden is working with UK cities to help them realise their sustainability ambitions. Our vision is of healthy, liveable cities where people want to live and work. Through our Liveable Cities programme, we created the Sustainable City Region Network – to help sustainability leaders to realise this vision and tackle common challenges. Realising the wider benefits of climate change such as better homes, more money in local economies, clean air, healthier travel options, and new employment opportunities is essential to connect climate policy to the needs of all citizens, demonstrating that action to combat climate change can improve lives, not diminish them. We are working with city regions to develop policy that delivers these wider benefits, securing a Just Transition. Find out more about our work: <https://www.ashden.org/programmes/liveable-cities-programme>



Friends of the Earth is a grassroots environmental campaigning community. From our campaigners and lawyers to local groups and supporters, we push for change at local and national level, and offer solutions on causes that affect us all: protecting your home and local environment; adopting alternative energy solutions, and fighting for environmental and social justice globally. Find out more: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/>



CDP is a global non-profit that drives companies, local and regional governments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard water resources and protect forests. Voted number one climate research provider by investors and working with institutional investors with assets of US\$96 trillion, we leverage investor and buyer power to motivate companies to disclose and manage their environmental impacts. Over 8,400 companies with over 50% of global market capitalization disclosed environmental data through CDP in 2019. This is in addition to the over 920 cities, states and regions who disclosed, making CDP's platform one of the richest sources of information globally on how companies and local governments are driving environmental change. CDP, formerly Carbon Disclosure Project, is a founding member of the We Mean Business Coalition.

<https://cdp.net/en/cities> or follow us [@CDP](#) to find out more.