
Air Quality Action Plan 2025-2030

Decision to be taken by: Council

Decision to be taken on/Date of meeting: 20th March 2025

Lead director/officer: Daniel Pearman, City Transport
Director

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All wards
- Report author: Anthea Anderson
- Author contact details: 0116 454 2889
- Report version number: 01

1. Summary

This report recommends the approval to adopt a new Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) (2025-2030) for Leicester (see appendix 1).

This AQAP has been produced as part of our statutory duties required by the Local Air Quality Management Area. It outlines the proposed actions we will take to improve air quality in Leicester between 2025 and 2030 and will replace the previous action plan which ran from 2015-2026.

The AQAP has been approved by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and is now subject to approval by Full Council for the local authority to formally adopt the Plan, as agreed with Defra, by March 2025.

2. Recommended actions/decision

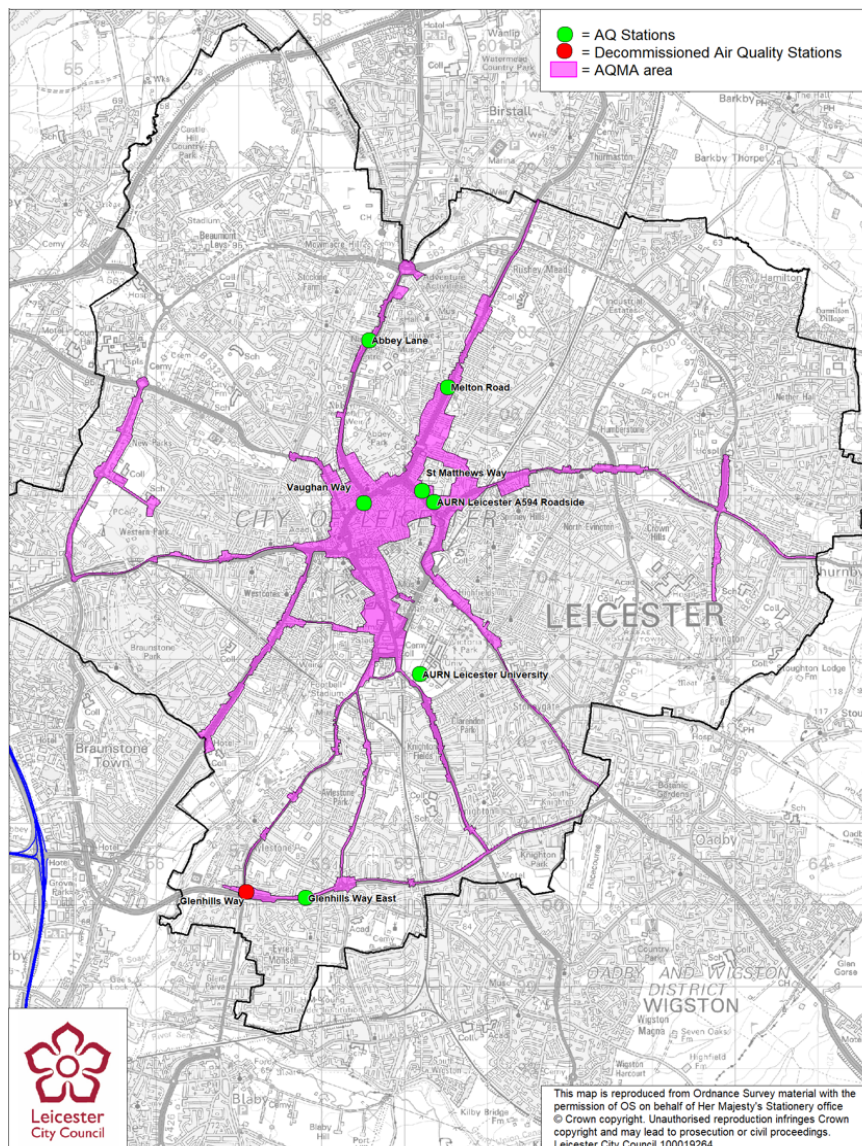
It is recommended that the Council approves the Air Quality Action Plan 2025-2030 for adoption.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- Public consultation took place from 31st July – 27th September 2024.
- The consultation was promoted via the Council's Consultation webpage (including an easy read summary version of the Plan), direct email to stakeholders (including neighbouring local authorities, NHS Trusts, representatives of business and community groups with an interest in transport and advocates for people with disabilities), presentation at meetings including the Walking Forum and the Head Teachers Keep in Touch meeting, adverts on Clear Channel screens in the city centre, posters at the Bike Park, promoted on our website and social media, advertised on various newsletters.
- Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Strategy Commission (EDTCE) reviewed the draft AQAP on 28th August 2024. At the meeting, Members received a presentation from the City Transport Director inviting them to comment on the Plan.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

4.1 Local authorities with an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) are required to produce an AQAP. The extent of the AQMA is shown below:



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4.2 Leicester's current AQAP is nine years old and we have agreed with Defra to approve an updated Plan no later than March 2025.

4.3 Leicester is currently compliant with government targets at all 5 monitoring stations (based on year 2023 data, data for 2024 is due to be received by the end of March 2025) – compliance with the NO₂ limit has been achieved since 2022, with a number of monitoring sites showing compliance earlier.

4.4 The biggest contributor to NO₂ emissions is road transport, with 2022 data suggesting 66.4% can be attributed to road network contributions.

Themes and priorities

4.5 The format for an AQAP is heavily prescribed by DEFRA, but retains the need to identify themes, priorities, and an overall key outcome.

4.6 Recognising that transport remains the largest contributor and is the area over which the authority has the most ability to directly influence along with transport operators, the

proposed AQAP continues to target improvements to the transport network through modal shift and vehicle efficiencies. The five themes identified in the plan are:

- i. **Air Quality Monitoring, Public Awareness and Engagement** – this includes maintaining and enhancing the air quality monitoring network to understand any pollution hotspots, enabling targeted interventions, supporting awareness campaigns and working with communities, businesses and schools. Maintaining, and expanding where necessary, monitoring networks to understand where legal limits are exceeded.
- ii. **Promoting, Supporting, and Encouraging Sustainable Transport** – this includes expansion of the walking and cycling network to create a top-quality, connected and cohesive network of attractive routes, and continued delivery of our Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- iii. **Reducing Emissions from Transport** – this includes adopting cleaner transportation methods, such as encouraging the use of electric vehicles (EVs) for public transport, freight and private vehicles.
- iv. **Optimising Traffic Management** – this includes continuing to provide and enhance infrastructure to help people walking, cycling or using public transport, whilst ensuring effective management of traffic flow. Major schemes and complementary work programmes have the potential to contribute directly to air quality improvements.
- v. **Development Control and Regulatory Services** – this includes ensuring air quality considerations are considered in the planning process and other Council policies and strategies. Continue to control domestic and industrial emissions.

4.7 The Air Quality Action Plan includes the following four priorities:

1. Providing residents and workers of Leicester with active and sustainable transport choices.
 2. Promoting awareness of air pollution and engaging with schools, communities and businesses, whilst maintaining and expanding our monitoring network.
 3. Reducing air pollution exposure and improving conditions for those who live and work in Leicester.
 4. Mitigating the impact of future growth on air quality.
5. Overall, the key outcome is improving the health outcomes for all and providing opportunities to live healthy lives.

Measures

4.8 The new Air Quality Action Plan includes measures to support these themes, including continued development of infrastructure to support sustainable travel, management and maintenance of the monitoring network, and to continue to support the electrification of buses operating within the city.

4.9 The results and analysis of the public consultation undertaken are presented in Appendix 2. In summary, 85% of responses stated that people agreed that poor air quality

was an important issue in Leicester and the majority of respondents agreed that each theme should be a priority. 40% of respondents also stated that there were other actions or measures we could do to improve air quality in Leicester. Comments from this question were grouped into the following broad topic areas listed in order of most comments:

- Vehicle Demand and Traffic Management
- Improving Passenger Transport
- Walking, Wheeling and Cycling
- Publicity, Engagement and Monitoring
- School Travel
- Electric Vehicle (EV) provision
- Trees, parks and green spaces
- Sustainable development and planning
- Not relevant to air quality
- Do more do quicker
- Non-transport sources

4.10 In response to this, we have reviewed what we are already doing to improve air quality, what we could do more of, where there are other interventions we could be doing and what we should not be doing. Our detailed response to each of the topic areas is presented in Appendix 2. A new action of 'Trees, parks and green spaces' has now been included within the AQAP. However, overall, the Council will continue to build on the existing work it has been delivering over the last action plan period.

4.10 The progress towards Actions under the AQAP will be overseen by members of the steering group. Additional measures will be considered if progress is not being made.

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

Given the financial position of the Council, significant reliance is placed on central government providing grant funding to support schemes which improve air quality. The financial viability, and priority, of measures set out in this report will be considered in the context of the available funding.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy, Head of Finance

Dated: 10th March 2025

5.2 Legal implications

Background

Local authorities have legal duties to act to address elevated concentrations of local air pollution under the Environment Act 1995. The 1995 Act was then updated by the Environment Act 2021 which updated the Local Air Quality Management system (LAQM). Local authorities are required to assess air quality in their area and to designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) if improvements are necessary. Where an AQMA is designated, local authorities are required to co-ordinate the production of an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) describing the pollution reduction measures to be put in place and by when measures will be taken. The air quality objectives set out in the Air Quality (England)

Regulations 2000, as amended by the Air Quality (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002, provide the statutory basis for the air quality objectives.

Section 82 of the Environment Act 1995 provided that every local authority should review the air quality within its area. Section 83 requires local authorities to designate an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) where air quality objectives are not being achieved, or are not likely to be achieved, as set out in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000. Once the area has been designated, Section 83A requires the local authority to develop an AQAP detailing remedial measures to tackle the problem within the AQMA.

AQAP

Under Government Guidance, local authorities must consult on their preparation of an AQAP, ideally in both draft and final form. The AQAP should take account of consultees' comments on the draft. Further consultation would be required if the initial proposals are revised significantly or in a potentially contentious way while implementing the plan.

Signed: Zoe Iliffe, Principal Lawyer (Property Highways & Planning)

Dated: 3rd March 2025

5.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty should be paid before and at the time a decision is taken, in such a way that it can influence the final decision.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The report is seeking approval to adopt the Air Quality Action Plan 2025-2030, if agreed this will benefit people from across a range of protected characteristics as identified in the action plan and across the five themes and four identified priorities, with the overall, key outcome to improve the health outcomes for all and providing opportunities to live healthy lives.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken and this has been updated to take into account the consultation outcomes. The EIA identifies that those with certain protected characteristics (i.e. the young, pregnant, elderly, certain disabilities), pre-existing or more prone to health issues will disproportionately suffer from poor air quality. Air pollution is an equality issue and tackling it will help to address Leicester's health inequalities. The EIA provides further detail on this and is attached for information.

In order to ensure that people are aware of the AQAP and its aims, communication of the plan needs to be accessible and targeted to the relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 6th March 2025

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

The council's approaches to tackling climate change and air quality are fully aligned, so delivery of this Air Quality Action Plan will make a significant, positive contribution to reducing carbon emissions in the city and from the council's own operations. As noted in the plan, many of the interventions will have an indirect positive impact on emissions, such as by influencing travel choices towards lower or zero emissions modes of travel. However, some will have a direct impact, such as the introduction of more electric buses.

In addition to reducing carbon emissions in tandem with air pollution emissions, the plan can make a positive contribution to Leicester's adaptation to the changing climate through the tree planting action included in the action plan. As well as reducing the impact of air pollution, trees can moderate the 'urban heat island' effect and provide shade – both helping to reduce the negative impacts of heatwaves. It is recommended that decisions about tree planting take account of how both air pollution and heatwaves impact different areas of the city, so that new planting makes the maximum contribution to tackling both.

Signed: Duncan Bell, Change Manager (Climate Emergency). Ext. 37 2249

Dated: 3rd March 2025

5.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

Health - Air pollution has long been associated with several adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease, cancer, dementia and other illnesses. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children, older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. Areas with poor air quality are often less affluent areas, leading to a strong correlation with inequality. This air quality action plan will ensure we do not remain complacent in our efforts to improve the health of people in Leicester.

Access to employment, services and amenities – the plan will improve a range of travel and access options for people including active travel and public transport – enabling everyone, irrespective of their income, to access the things they need.

Trees and green spaces – using trees and green spaces to reduce air pollution.

6. Background information and other papers:

Minutes of the Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny:

[Agenda for Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission on Wednesday, 28 August 2024, 5:30 pm](#)

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1: Air Quality Action Plan 2025-2030

Appendix 2: We Asked, You Said, We Did for Air Quality Action Plan Consultation.

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

No