

Hearing statement by Wymondley Parish Council on Matters Related Air Quality - Matter 17

The Residents of Wymondley Parish are deeply concerned about the impacts arising from increased journeys via the A1M abutting the Parish to the East and the A602 dissecting the Parish to the South. The Local Plan proposals will adversely change the traffic pattern, which will increase air pollution from the roads. In addition an Industrial Estate at Stevenage Road and junction 8 of the A1M (planned by Stevenage Borough Council) and a Peaking Power Gas Fired Power Station to the west at Little Wymondley Sub Station will add to these concerns. The NHDC proposed WY1 Housing development will likely add further to these issues and provide up to an additional 1,000 motor vehicles accessing the already congested road structure around the Parish and in particular around and through the village of Little Wymondley. These concerns are repeated across the district and have been the subject of scrutiny by NHDC at the AQMA sited little more than one mile from the Parish.

To address these issues WPC commissioned a report from Dr Claire Holman, Air Quality expert. Her report attached, provides an assessment of the air quality impacts arising from the proposed local plan. Her conclusions are:

1. The NHLP proposes approximately 13,800 additional homes in the District around Stevenage which will increase traffic and may give rise to poor air quality.
2. Health effects are observed at levels below the current statutory air quality standards, and advice to local authorities from Defra, Public Health England and the Local Government Association is to reduce exposure even when the statutory standards are achieved.
3. WHO guidelines for particulate matter are much lower than the current standards. WHO is currently reviewing the other air quality guidelines with a view to reducing them, particularly NO₂.
4. Even if the air quality standards are achieved there are likely to be adverse public health effects of traffic.
5. The Transport Strategy has not explicitly considered how to improve air quality in the two existing air quality management areas in Hitchin, or to reduce exposure more generally with the increased traffic with the NHLP.
6. The Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment does not adequately consider the air quality impacts of the local plan, and therefore it is not possible to assess whether it will result in a continuing breach of the statutory standards, or whether, as required by the High Court, that the NO₂ standard will be achieved "in the shortest possible time".
7. Therefore it is unknown whether or not the NHLP will have a significant adverse effect on public health. This is a major shortcoming of the evidence provided.

Submitted by Richard Buxton Environmental & Public Law

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